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**TRANSLATIONS OF ANNA KARENINA IN ENGLISH-  
LANGUAGE BY TENSION**

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# Translations of Anna Karenina in English-Language by Tension

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**Abstract – One of the key issues in recent translation theories has been on whether translation should domesticate or foreignize the source text. Venuti (1995) defines domesticating translation as a replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the target-language reader. Foreignizing translation is defined as a translation that indicates the linguistic and cultural differences of the text by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language. Other scholars, like criticize this dichotomy by pointing out that a translation may be radically oriented to the source text in some respects, but depart radically from the source text in other respects, thus denying the existence of the single polarity that describes the orientation of a translation. For my research I have chosen English translations of Lev Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, covering over a century of the history of translations into English.**

**Keywords: Anna Karenina, English, Translations, Tension, Language, etc.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Constance Garnett had wanted to translate Anna Karenina since she read it in Russian in September 1896. Richard Garnett, her biographer, says that were already 'at least two English translations. Vizetelly had been first off the mark in 1884, followed by Nathan Haskell Dole two years later.' (Richard Garnett 1991, 191) This is most likely a mistake, since Vizetelly was a publisher, not a translator, and there is no evidence that Anna Karenina existed in English before 1886. Dole's translation must have been the only one before the 20th century, and Constance Garnett read it and thought it 'so exceptionally bad that it gives hardly any idea of the original'. (Ibid. 191) She started translating the novel on her own initiative, and in January 1900 Edward Garnett went to see Heinemann, but failed to persuade him to undertake the publication. She continued translating, confident that her Anna Karenina would be 'of use sooner or later'. Only in June, by which time Garnett had already translated a third of the novel, Heinemann agreed to take it on, paying her at the rate of 12 shillings per 1000 words and with no royalty. The translation of the whole book took less than eighteen months. During that time, according to her son, Constance Garnett was 'a very busy woman and for several hours a day the affairs of Vronsky, Levin and Dolly were perforce as real to her as those of her own household.' (David Garnett 1973, 117-118) The translation was finally completed in May 1901. A reviewer in The Nation compared it to Dole's translation.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In this paper I am going to explore the relationship between foreignization and domestication in translations of *Anna Karenina* into English. Henry Gifford points out that 'Tolstoy's readers in the English language are not greatly outnumbered by those who read him in Russian' (Gifford 1978, 17). There have been at least ten translations of *Anna Karenina* into English, covering over a century of the history of literary translation. Gifford points out that with so many readers depending on the English translation for their knowledge of a very important writer, the question of how to communicate his effect is quite as central nowadays as that of how to represent Homer was for Matthew Arnold when he wrote his famous essay *On Translating Homer* (Ibid. 17.) It is therefore worth trying to establish certain parallels between successive translations of classic authors and successive translations of Russian classics.

Since modern English language readers are more familiar with Russian language, literature and culture as well as with Tolstoy's works than the 19th century readers were, theoretically speaking, translating Tolstoy in 2000 should be easier than it was in 1886. In reality each translator still had to choose between the adequate representation of Tolstoy's text and the acceptability of their translation for their contemporary English speaking audiences on a sliding scale between audience and text. In a way, with the higher development of the art and scholarship of translation,

the expectations of readers and critics grow, and adequate representation of a text in a different language becomes more challenging.

In 1893 William Heinemann accepted Garnett's translation of *A Common Story* and also commissioned her to translate Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is within you*. In 1894 Garnett travelled to Moscow where she met Tolstoy and his wife at their home in Khamovniki. Tolstoy was anxious to see her translation of *The Kingdom of God is within you* and said he liked the English translations of his works better than the French ones. (Ibid. 122) Later Tolstoy was very pleased with her translation of *The Kingdom of God*.<sup>i</sup>

It is now accepted that Garnett's knowledge of Russian was not perfect (Gifford 1978, 21), and that can explain occasional blunders in her translations and her difficulties in translating conversations. Before she went to Moscow she had already translated three Russian novels, yet even after a month in Russia she confessed: 'It is disappointing that I still cannot follow a conversation in Russian'. (Cit. Richard Garnett 1991, 130) As a classicist she had been trained to read Latin and Greek without speaking those languages, and her Russian was probably equally stilted. Even in 1894 she admitted: 'the construction of the sentences – almost always in the impersonal, and in the general, like Latin – and so much more positive than ours – is still very difficult for me'. (Ibid. 130) When in July 1894 Garnett's translation of *Rudin* was published, an anonymous reviewer in *Daily Chronicle* wrote. 'If in subsequent volumes Mrs Garnett can keep up to the level of excellence attained in '*Rudin*' we shall have to thank her for one of the best series of translations in the language'. (Cit. Ibid. 139.) By 1899 she had translated the whole of Turgenev. Because Mr. Dole's translation is faulty (...) it does not follow that Mrs. Garnett's is impeccable. It is certainly closer to the original than any that have come to our notice, yet it can hardly be called a "literal" translation, though the English, in many places, is clumsy enough for that. The magical simplicity of Tolstoy's style in "*Anna Karenin*" evaporates, and that smooth polish is lost in her English.

The reviewer concluded: 'With all its shortcomings, this is a conscientious translation of Tolstoy's masterpiece, and if all the works of the Great Russian were to be rendered as scrupulously as this, it would be a great boon to English readers.'

A reviewer in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* noted that Anna Karenina was less fluent than Garnett's translations of Turgenev:

Whether the style of Tolstoy be more complicated than that of Turgenev we know not, but surely Mrs Garnett's later work is far more closely involved than her former. Nevertheless, - the reviewer continued, - we are exceedingly grateful to her, since she has given us for the first time the complete and workmanlike version of a masterpiece. Having read this review, Garnett wrote

to her father-in-law that she herself considered her translations of Turgenev less successful than her Anna Karenina.

## CONCLUSION:

This paper traces the history of translating Anna Karenina into English against the background of the general history of English language translation. 'Domestication' and 'foreignization' was first defined in Venuti's works. Domesticating translation is defined as a replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the target-language reader (Venuti 1995, 4-5; 18). 'Foreignizing translation indicates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, but it can do so only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the domestic language' (Venuti 2002, 10.) For example, Venuti describes Patrick Creagh's translation of a novel by Antonio Tabucchi as foreignizing (from the point of view of an American reader), since Creagh renders the Italian expression 'in ferie' as 'on holiday', whereas the American English rendering is 'on vacation'. Therefore, as it was said in following Venuti, one can talk about two different types of foreignizing discursive strategies. One is the deformation of the target language in order to match the source language, and the other one is the deformation of the target language without matching the source language, simply to indicate the general 'foreignness' of the source text. In my research I see foreignization more as the first type, as an attempt to recreate certain aspects of the source text.

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