

УДК 82.09

Filming the Classics: Tolstoy's Resurrection as 'Thaw' Narrative

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Received 21.10.2016, received in revised form 10.01.2016, accepted 03.02.2017

Russian film adaptations of the literary heritage have been part of Russian cultural history for over a hundred years, with works by Pushkin, Chekhov, Gogol, Tolstoy and Dostoevskii adapted for the screen before the Revolution and the dawn of the 'Golden Age' of Soviet cinema. The director Mikhail Shveitser (1920-2000) came to specialize in adapting Russian literary works for the screen, and his film of Tolstoy's 1899 novel Resurrection (Bockpecehue) was his first attempt to film the classical heritage, and one of the first Soviet adaptations of Tolstoy's work. Released in two parts in 1960 and 1962, the film is a faithful rendering of the plot of Tolstoy's novel about a repentant nobleman, social injustice and the corruption of the Russian legal system. Moreover, it also has a contemporary relevance, and explicitly references the injustices of the penal system under Stalin and the liberalization of the post-Stalin 'Thaw'. The film Resurrection, consequently, serves as an example of the particular Russian approach to filming classical literature by not only bringing the literary heritage to life on the screen, but also making cultural politics the focus of attention for the time in which it was made.

Keywords: film history; literary adaptation; post-Stalin 'Thaw'; cultural politics.

DOI: 10.17516/1997-1370-0041.

Research area: philology.

Introduction

Resurrection (Bockpecehue) was the first of Tolstoy's "big" novels to be adapted for the Soviet screen (not counting the filmed MKhAT version of *Anna Karenina*, directed in 1953 by Tat'iana Lukashevich). Released in two parts in 1960 and 1962, it was directed by the relative newcomer Mikhail Shveitser (1920-2000). The release of a film about a miscarriage of justice, arbitrary punishment and the iniquities of the legal system at this time in post-Stalin history

would, of course, have had a resonance beyond the immediate cultural context, and more of this will be said later¹.

The Director

Mikhail (real name Moisei) Abramovich Shveitse was born in Perm' on 16 March 1920, and studied in VGIK (Vsesoiuznyi gosudarstvennyi institut kinematografii: the All-Union State Cinematographic Institute) during the War under Sergei Eisenstein,

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graduating in 1943. That year he began working in Mosfil'm, and co-directed (with Boris Buneev and Anatolii Mikhailovich Rybakov, fellow students at VGIK) his first film, *The Path of Glory* (*Путь славы*) in 1949.

Apparently because of his Jewish origins Shveitser was dismissed from Mosfil'm in 1951, during the "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign of the late Stalin years, and was able to get work in the Sverdlovsk Studio only through the support of Mikhail Romm, another director of Jewish descent whose eminence in the Soviet cinema industry was largely due to his "Lenin" biographies of the 1930s. In Sverdlovsk Shveitser made documentaries and educational films, then in 1953 he moved to Leningrad to work in the Lenfil'm studio. Here, in 1954, he co-directed the film *The Dagger* (*Копьё*), based on a novella by the writer Anatolii Naumovich Rybakov, later the acclaimed author of the key glasnost' novel *Children of the Arbat*, (*Дети Арбата*, 1987), and not to be confused with Shveitser's collaborator on *The Path of Glory*.

Resurrection was Shveitser's fourth film as director. The first two films of which he was sole director were adaptations of novellas by the writer Vladimir Tendriakov, then one of the key writers of the Khrushchev Thaw. Shveitser's first sole-directed film was *Alien Kin* (*Чужая родня*), made at Lenfil'm and released in 1955 and based on Tendriakov's 1954 story "The Face Doesn't Fit" ("Не ко двору"). Ivan Pyr'ev, director of several celebrated "kolkhoz" comedies of the 1930s and 1940s, then invited Shveitser to work at Mosfil'm, where in 1956 he directed *Sasha Goes Into the World* (*Саша вступает в жизнь*), based on the novella *A Tight Spot* (*Тугой узел*), published in the journal *Novyi mir* in February-March of that year. *Sasha Goes into the World* was criticized as "anti-Party, anti-Soviet" and shelved. Shveitser is not very complimentary about Pyr'ev's role in the

fate of his film. In its restored version in 1989 this film was given its original title *A Tight Spot* (Shveitser, 1996: 180-81)

This was followed in 1960 by the historical film *Midshipman Panin* (*Мичман Панин*), based on the memoirs of an Old Bolshevik and set in 1912 and which proved popular with audiences. But it is the Russian and Soviet literary heritage that comprises the bulk of Shveitser's directing career. *Resurrection* was Shveitser's first adaptation of classical Russian literature. Works of Soviet literature subsequently adapted for the screen include Valentin Kataev's *Time, Forward!* (*Время вперед!*) in 1965, Il'f and Petrov's comedy classic *The Golden Calf* (*Золотой теленок*) in 1968, and Leonid Leonov's *The Flight of Mr McKinley* (*Бегство мистера Макинли*) in 1975. *Carousel* (*Карусель*) in 1970, and *Ridiculous People* (*Смешные люди*) in 1977, are both based on Chekhov short stories and sketches, and his rendering of Lev Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (*Крейцерова соната*), made in 1987, is notable for its faithful rendition of the author's frank and often harrowing account of male sexual jealousy and its tragic consequences. With its discussion of taboo subjects such as male homosexuality and the use of a particularly powerful Russian obscenity, the film was ground-breaking, and very much part of the opening up of the closed Soviet consciousness that characterised the glasnost' years. Shveitser also directed adaptations for TV, including Pushkin's *Little Tragedies* (*Маленькие трагедии*) in 1979 and Gogol's *Dead Souls* (*Мертвые души*) in 1984. In the cash-strapped 1990s Shveitser made two more films, *How Are You Doing, Stoolies?* (*Как живете, караси?*, 1992), a satire on KGB surveillance, and *Listen, Fellini!* (*Послушай, Феллини!*, 1993), a TV film about an actress (the late Liudmila Gurchenko) who plays out her life story before a portrait of the great Italian director.

The Work

Resurrection was Tolstoy's last long novel, which he began in 1889-90, working on it again in 1895-96 and finally completing it in 1899, although apparently he regarded it as still unfinished. The novel itself has a social conscience impossible to ignore, and was written with a specific social purpose in mind: Tolstoy intended the proceeds to finance the fundamentalist Christian Dukhobors' emigration to Canada, and was rushed to complete it in time (and thus his seeming dissatisfaction with the final product). As it was his first novel in twenty years it was eagerly awaited by the international community. It was also his most successful in terms of copies sold, and provoked a storm of debate (Figes, 2002: 343-44). It should be noted that its first Russian publication was heavily censored, especially Tolstoy's criticism of the Church, and the "sex scene" was cut from the American translation (Christian, 1969: 228; Simmons, 1973: 194)² With its attack on the Church and institutions of the state, the novel undoubtedly contributed to Tolstoy's excommunication by the Orthodox Church in 1901.

The novel was based on a true story from the 1870s recounted to him by his lawyer friend Anatolii Fedorovich Koni in 1887. A prostitute was tried for theft and was recognised at the trial by her former lover, now sitting on the jury, an ironic concept of the morally guilty sitting in judgment over those they have themselves wronged. Struck with guilt and remorse, the man wanted to marry her to make up for his seduction and abandonment, but she died in prison of typhus. Viktor Shklovskii notes, "What astonished Tolstoy in the first place was the young man's determination to atone for his own sin." (Shklovskii, 1978: 635) In other words, Tolstoy recognized the call of a moral conscience. There may also have been some recognition on Tolstoy's part of his own guilt in a similar situation, as he had seduced and abandoned a maid in the

household where he was staying while a student at Kazan' University (McLean, 2002: 97).

The central male character is Prince Nikolai Nekhliudov, who at the beginning of the novel is an indolent, rather cynical and world-weary representative of the idle rich, but who by the end of the novel has been reborn morally and spiritually, renouncing his class and turning his property over to the peasants. Nekhliudov's "resurrection" is occasioned by his presence as a jury member at the trial of Katerina Maslova, a prostitute accused of robbery and murder. Nekhliudov recognises in her the girl he seduced and abandoned three years previously, and is immediately overcome with remorse, believing himself to blame for her dramatic fall. He visits her in prison, and offers to marry her. He then follows her to Siberia, where she has been sentenced to hard labour. She rejects his proposal, choosing instead a platonic relationship in exile with Simonson, a People's Will revolutionary.

It is accepted that the novel began in Tolstoy's mind as a denunciation of the consequences of male lechery and sexual exploitation, to end with the motif of repentance, but as it progresses it becomes a wholesale attack on the upper classes, the criminal justice system, and the Orthodox Church. Mass destitution and hunger of the peasantry are similarly deplored and condemned.

Tolstoy's interest lies not so much in the fallen woman motif, a common one in nineteenth-century Russian literature, or even the inner torment and regeneration of Nekhliudov, but rather in broader questions of social justice, the corruption of the criminal justice system, and the hypocritical ways of the upper classes. Tolstoy lists with increasing indignation the crimes for which some of Maslova's cellmates have been convicted, including the farcical but tragic plight of a woman about to be exiled to Siberia despite her reconciliation with the husband she tried to

poison. It is clear in the novel that all the women in prison have known nothing but pain and violence all their lives, and all at the hands of men.

Maslova is convicted of attempting to murder a client by administering him poison. The jury believes her when she insists she simply wanted to put him to sleep so he would stop pestering her. The intent is missing from the action, but the judge fails to remind the jury of this, and she is sentenced to four years hard labour. In other words, although everyone realises that a mistake has been made, largely through the judge's incompetence, nothing can be done to rectify it. This farce is heavily satirized by Tolstoy, as is the whole appeals procedure, where lawyers and judges realise a miscarriage of justice has taken place, but shrug their shoulders. Nekhliudov's attempt to have her pardoned is eventually successful.

Tolstoy's attitude to the land question is also evident in the novel. Nekhliudov plans to give his lands away to the peasants, outraged that since the abolition of serfdom in 1861 the lot of most peasants has actually worsened, placing those who do not have any land at the mercy of those who do. Serfdom has been replaced by "slavery" (202), and Nekhliudov conveys Tolstoy's own ideas on what is wrong and how it can be put right:

Now it was as clear to him as day that the main reason for the people's poverty, of which the people itself was aware and always expressed, was that the land which alone could feed them had been taken away from the people by the landowners. And at the same time it was absolutely clear that children and old people were dying because they had no milk, and there was no milk because there no land on which cattle could graze and which would provide corn and hay. It was absolutely clear that all of the people's misery, or at least the main and most immediate cause of it, lay in the fact that the land that fed the people did not belong to the people, but belonged to people who used their right to the land to live on the labour of the people. It was the land, which was so essential to the life of the people, that was worked by people brought to the extremes of poverty in order for the corn cultivated

on it to be sold abroad and the landowners could buy themselves hats, walking canes, carriages, bronze busts and so on. This was as obvious to him now as it was obvious that horses locked away in an enclosure where they had eaten away all the grass that had grown beneath their hooves would be thin and die of hunger unless they were given the opportunity to find another pasture. And this was horrifying; it could not be and should not be. (221)

As will be seen below, this and other passages in the novel have a direct twentieth-century relevance.

With Nekhliudov's journey to Siberia, the reader gets a panoramic view of Russian life, from the upper classes, the privileged ways of the legislature through the police and warders who serve them, right down to the peasants and convicts, the lowest of the low. Tolstoy is enamoured of Katiusha Maslova as he is with Anna Karenina, and shows through her own consciousness how she evolves from an insulted and injured innocent as she is dismissed from her employment, the loss of the child she bore from her seduction by Nekhliudov, and her descent into poverty and prostitution. When we see her in prison she is a worldly wise individual, but whose inner strength and wisdom remain intact, so much so that she rejects Nekhliudov's offer of marriage, realising that he is above all interested in saving himself, not her. Nekhliudov follows her into Siberian exile, where he learns that his petition to have her pardoned has been successful. Nevertheless, she decides to remain in Siberia and devotes herself to the cause of the People's Will revolutionaries.

In the first two parts of the novel Tolstoy's tone is one of moral indignation and heavy satire detailing the cynicism, infidelities, and sheer venality of those involved in the legal profession, from judges to defence lawyers, and the cumbersome nature of the appeals procedure (which enables the author to mock the pretensions and hypocrisies of St Petersburg high society). He is also not afraid to mock social pretension, such

as the “French phrases of the Slavophile Katerina Alekseevna” (92). By the third part of the novel he has adopted an increasingly strident moralistic and didactic tone that is dominated by a rejection of the socio-political status quo. Maslova remains in a platonic relationship with the other-worldly radical Simonson, having found some stability and meaning in her life. The novel ends with Nekhliudov vowing to live a new and better life having read the Gospels, his “resurrection” complete with his realization that it is the fate of man not to follow his own will, but to carry out the will of God on earth.

The novel includes many secondary characters whose personalities are strikingly conveyed. From the upper classes, these include the cynical and venal lawyer Fanarin and the bombastic, self-important Vice-Governor of St Petersburg Maslennikov, the Korchagin family who wish their flighty daughter to marry Nekhliudov (his dismissal of the idea testifies to his growing disillusionment with his own class), Toporov, the Chief Prosecutor of the Holy Synod whose very name (“axe”) suggests ruthlessness, and who is seen as a caricature of the reactionary Procurator of the Holy Synod, the ambitious and influential Konstantin Pobedonostsev, and the flighty Mariette, a former friend whose suggestion of a liaison Nekhliudov equates with the propositioning of a street prostitute. Throughout Tolstoy equates real criminals such as murderers with “respectable” businessmen and military leaders.

From the lower classes and convicts, we have generally positive portraits of Kitaeva, the brothel keeper who helps Maslova with money while in prison; Simonson, whose rather puritanical views on sex clearly resemble Tolstoy's at the time (a female equivalent is the prisoner Mar'ia Pavlovna, the daughter of a general who has turned her back on her class); the peasant Nabatov, who embodies Tolstoy's ideal of how best to live and whose

name (“alarm”) suggests moral disquiet and a call to penance, and Kryl'tsov, a revolutionary who advocates peaceful social change. There are some characters who represent shades of grey among this otherwise highly schematized list, such as Selenin, a time-serving lawyer who still recognises that he once had ideals. Of particular interest to the author is Novodvorov, a revolutionary who wishes to impose his views on others, is convinced he is right in everything, and seeks only to destroy. Novodvorov's single-mindedness and ends-justifies-the-means ruthlessness are explored over several pages, the authorial conclusion being that his radicalism is the result of personal shortcomings.³ This character is recognizable as a future socialist realist “positive hero” and is clearly based on Rakhmetov in Nikolai Chernyshevskii's 1863 novel *What is to be Done?* (*Что делать?*), looking forward to Pavel Korchagin in Nikolai Ostrovskii's 1934 socialist realist classic *How the Steel Was Tempered* (*Как закалялась сталь*). In the novel Novodvorov reads Karl Marx, does not drink or smoke, rejects religion and despises women.

Critics have also noted that the use of the name “Nekhliudov” would arouse the attention of readers familiar with the writer's career, as a character with this surname appears in several much earlier works, such as *Boyhood* (*Отрочество*, 1854), *Youth* (*Юность*, 1857), *A Landowner's Morning* (*Утро помещика*, 1856), and *Lucerne* (*Люцерн*, 1857). It has been noted that the same character, the “seeker after truth,” appears in later works as Levin in *Anna Karenina* (1875-77) and Olenin in *The Cossacks* (*Казак*, 1863) (Cain, 1977: 44). In *Resurrection* Nekhliudov abandons his class, and turns his property over to the peasants as he follows Maslova to Siberia, where he discovers his own truth of moral and spiritual rebirth.

Resurrection is generally regarded as inferior to Tolstoy's earlier novels not only because of

the didactic tone and polemical content, but the lack of clear psychological motivation in the protagonist's actions. Nekhliudov's spiritual odyssey is schematic and predictable, driven not by the character's inner needs but by the author's artistic design. This is perhaps best summed up by T. G. S. Cain: "In setting Nekhlyudov on a spiritual journey of which he already knows the destination, Tolstoy denies his novel the possibility of that marvellously fresh apprehension of the complexity and irrationality of human experience which is one of his greatest strengths as a novelist" (Cain, 1977: 180). It can be argued, however, that Tolstoy as a thinker has moved on from the earlier novels where he demonstrated his mastery of character and situation: in this novel he shows himself to be a clear-sighted social critic with a radical agenda for change. Criminality is a direct consequence of social deprivation, Tsarist society governed by a corrupt, self-serving and morally bankrupt ruling class.

The Film

As noted earlier, the decision to adapt *Resurrection* for the screen at this time in Soviet history is particularly revealing. A film about unjust punishment and a corrupt legal system were very topical issues of the day. Certainly, the director Alexander Mitta notes in his memoirs that this was the first time that prison life had been shown in any Soviet film; therefore, the scenes set in prison and exile were "staggering" for Soviet audiences: "For the first time on the screen the lack of people's rights in Russia screams out candidly and fiercely." (Mitta, 2000: 14). Although it is not yet known exactly how the decision to film this novel was taken at an executive level, or the development of the screenplay, both Mosfil'm administrators and those directly involved in the film's production would have been keenly aware of how it would be viewed by those accustomed to reading between the lines of official rhetoric

for hints of deeper truths. Later in 1962 Soviet readers would themselves read in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (*Один день Ивана Денисовича*) that the terrible conditions in Stalin's Gulag differed little from the prison and transit experiences of Tolstoy's time that the film depicts in such detail.

One probable source for the film's screenplay is Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko's 1930 stage version for the Moscow Art Theatre. In it the actor Vasilii Kachalov took the role of the author, commenting on the action and on characters' words, deeds and thoughts, thus externally verbalizing Tolstoy's psychological exploration. Irina Solovyova notes that Kachalov's "ironic attitude towards social construction could not conceal an inexhaustible Tolstoyan – and personal – feeling and enthusiasm for life." Also, Nekhliudov is shown as simply the cause of Katiusha Maslova's sufferings, and it is Katiusha who is more prominent. Shveitser's film is obviously influenced by Nemirovich-Danchenko's "ironic and sarcastic" tone, and similarly remaining "indifferent to his [Tolstoy's] religious and ethical preaching" (Solovyova, 1999: 346). As in the theatrical adaptation, Katiusha Maslova is the film's moral focus, not the repentant nobleman Nekhliudov.

Shveitser asserts that until *Resurrection* his films had been "something of a compromise." (Shveitser, 1996: 184) It is not hard to see why: Tendriakov's works offered partial social criticism that did not impinge on the Party's prerogative to rule, pitting youthful idealists against older managers representing the "old" mentality. The idea that the system needed to be changed wholesale could not be embraced; instead reform and change came about with the replacement of "backward-thinking" cadres by the younger generation. In these early films Shveitser chose to concentrate on the emotional dramas of the main characters, pointing to social change through

the vicissitudes of personal relationships and the clash of generations. In *Resurrection* the approach is broadly similar, but with one key difference: social change is promoted through the relationship of the two central characters who represent not different generations, but social classes. In 1960 the director could embrace Tolstoy's call for morality and atonement at a time when such concerns were urgently relevant and given impetus by Khrushchev's leadership. Of course, Tolstoy's exploration of an individual conscience that is aroused when that individual is faced with the consequences of his actions is very different from the Thaw's examination of individual and collective moral accountability, but Shveitser's film demonstrates that adaptation is above all liberating the 'idea' from the 'text'.

Although the film is long at almost three hours, it is inevitable that the novel would have to be pared down, and so whole scenes and characters are either removed from the film or significantly reduced in significance. Thus, the Korchagins, whose daughter is meant to marry Nekhliudov, are given very little screen time, as are other representatives of the court and high society. More significantly for the film's radical politics, various political prisoners are not represented, most notably the single-minded Novodvorov.

Most of the film is shot indoors, where the black-and-white photography is used to effective use for the contrast of good and evil. In prison and court, for instance, Katiusha is always associated with white, so the viewer is left in no doubt about her innocence and inner goodness.

Prince Nekhliudov is played by Evgenii Matveev, who was previously best known on screen for his performance as the rough-hewn and impulsive Cossack Makar Nagul'nov in Aleksandr Ivanov's three-part film of Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* (*Поднятая целина*, 1959-1961), about the collectivization of agriculture. The role of Nekhliudov, therefore, is

very different, demanding not so much physical presence as a more extensive and subtle range of emotional responses. Maslova is played by Tamara Semina, twenty-one years old at the time and still a student at VGIK, but chosen because of her fresh-faced youth.

The "epic" stature of the film is asserted at the very start, as Tolstoy's image is superimposed over the opening credits. The film's visual realization owes much to the illustrations of Leonid Pasternak, whom Tolstoy invited to work on the production design of the book in 1898. Tolstoy had been impressed with Pasternak's work on an 1893 special album dedicated to *War and Peace* (*Война и мир*), and Pasternak subsequently produced 33 illustrations for the new novel that earned him international acclaim. Michael Holman comments: 'As a panorama of Russian life at the turn of the century the cycle remains unsurpassed to this day.' [Holman, 1995/96: 28] Thus, scenes set in the crowded, smoky prison cell and the courtroom, Katiusha's white headscarf as she is flanked by other prisoners, the Easter church service, poverty in the countryside with barefoot children, and the two rows of prisoners separated by the wire fences, the space between them patrolled by warders, are all obviously influenced by Pasternak's original illustrations. Some of these illustrations are reproduced below, with their corresponding scene from the film.

The film closely follows the Nekhliudov-Maslova plot, complete with flashbacks, ironic asides and authorial voice-overs, and with a surprisingly positive, if muted, attitude to religion, a clear signifier of the increased liberalism of the time. It is no surprise that Nekhliudov's "resurrection" takes place without its Biblical context, but such an excision effectively means that Tolstoy's hero merely has a change of heart based on an acknowledgement of his guilt, but he has not found God. Rather, the moral high ground is consequently occupied by Katiusha Maslova.



1. Maslova in her cell



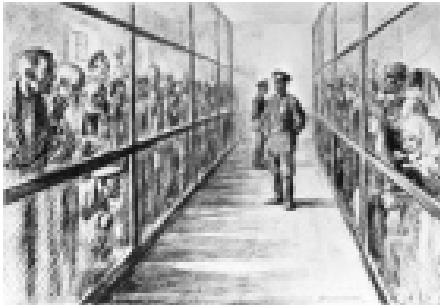
2. Maslova on her way to court



3. The Judges



4. At the morning service



5. Visiting prisoners behind bars



6. Poverty in the countryside

Given that the novel contains an angry denunciation of a corrupt criminal justice system, and focuses on a person innocent of any crime but still convicted and sentenced, the contemporary parallels with post-Stalin society are obvious. This is particularly obvious in a scene not in the original novel. In the novel Nekhliudov meets with Maslennikov, the Vice-Governor of St Petersburg, and brings up the topic of the mistreatment of prisoners. In Tolstoy's text Maslennikov simply replies with platitudes about the need to maintain

“order” (“порядок”). In the film, however, Maslennikov says something more: “Интересы народа, охраняемые нами, так важны, что излишние усердия к вопросам, касающимся охраны этих интересов, не так страшны и важны, как излишнее равнодушие.” (“The interests of the people that we protect are so important that excessive zeal in issues concerning the preservation of these interests are not as fearsome and importance as excessive indifference.”) It is clear here that Shveitser is addressing not nineteenth-century penal

conditions but rather violations of legality in a more recent past.

As a recent Russian history of the period bluntly states, "the best thing that Khrushchev really did in his life was his attack on the Gulag system and the freeing of millions of political prisoners." (Aronov, 2008: 72). The novel also attacks the various forms of corporal punishment handed out in the prison, including whippings, all of which are actually illegal, as well as the absurdities of the legal system, where 130 people spend more than a month behind bars simply because their passports have expired. It is clear that many if not most of those in prison have not committed any crime.

That the film wants both to have its cake as a literary text and eat it as a contemporary narrative is most clearly seen in Nekhliudov's meeting with Maslennikov, the Vice-Governor of St Petersburg. Nekhliudov brings up the topic of the mistreatment of prisoners, and in the text Maslennikov simply replies with platitudes about the need to maintain "order". In the film, however, Maslennikov says something substantially more: "The interests of the people that we protect are so important that excessive zeal in issues concerning the preservation of these interests are not as fearsome and important as excessive indifference." It is clear here that Shveitser is addressing not so much nineteenth-century penal conditions but rather violations of legality in the recent past, where the "excessive" punishments in defence of the "interests of the people" were simply mass repressions.

Tolstoy's anger is also directed at the general who ordered the massacre of civilians in the Caucasus and Poland, and who now presides over prison conditions which lead to one half of prisoners dying or killing themselves. When Nekhliudov later travels to the countryside he learns of a family left in hardship without their breadwinner, who has been imprisoned merely

for cutting down some trees (ironically, on Nekhliudov's own estate). Again, contemporary parallels with "violations of socialist legality" and the draconian punishments for minor offences that characterized Stalinism are not hard to find.

As the novel also shows Nekhliudov's moral awakening, and his sense of responsibility and guilt for past misdeeds, the film can also be seen as a call for Soviet society to look into its own soul and seek "repentance" decades before Tengiz Abuladze's film of that name defined the political agenda of Gorbachev's perestroika. In both the novel and the film Nekhliudov's social conscience is awoken when he sees how men and women are prepared to suffer real hardship for their beliefs, and bear this with great fortitude and dignity.

Shveitser uses visual metaphors from the outset. In an early scene that cleverly uses both close-ups of faces and amplified sound effects, Nekhliudov first visits Maslova in prison and begs for forgiveness amid the tumult of the crowd of other visitors and inmates, all separated by high wire fences. Nekhliudov puts his hands to his ears as his senses are assaulted by "a deafening cry of a hundred voices merging into one clamour", 144. His words of remorse for past deeds are drowned out, as are the calls of all the others around him. This is a major scene that lasts for several minutes, foregrounding many anguished expressions as the camera swings from one person to another, and the viewer is left in no doubt about the inhumanity of this system. This is a visually powerful scene that successfully transposes the association Nekhliudov initially makes of the cacophony with the buzzing of flies. Individual voices are not heard, the wire fences remain the dominant symbol of the regime's callousness and oppression, its ability to prevent communication, understanding and forgiveness.

Similarly, later in the film when the convicts are marching towards the railway station before

being transported to Siberia, there is a glaring contrast between the barefoot children of the convicts, dressed in rags and thumbing their insolence to bystanders, and the affluent children of the well-to-do who watch them pass. The blank faces of their dolls serve as an apposite symbol of the superficiality and indifference of their class. However, a more important scene occurs immediately afterwards, when a prisoner collapses from heat exhaustion. In the novel this scene is merely an illustration of the callousness of the penal system, but in the film it lasts for several minutes. The indifference of the guards is starkly offset by the concern of ordinary people who insist that a doctor be called. The prisoner dies, and the tragedy of the loss of one life is not confined to a nineteenth-century narrative. This scene also includes an uncredited cameo by the actor Rolan Bykov as a man obviously unhinged by his incarceration, another signifier to a contemporary audience of political oppression and its psychological impact.

Whereas Tolstoy begins his narrative with a description of Spring in the city and the revival of nature despite the depredations of man, in the film the first images we see are of an overcrowded prison cell holding dozens of women and children. This is a visual image of hell that effectively conveys Tolstoy's descriptions of the cell's sights and particularly its smells. Shveitser generally avoids depicting nature, apart from when Nekhliudov visits the countryside, and even then the camera lingers on the images of human misery, not the landscape. Thus, for the director the Tolstoyan contrast between the serenity and majesty of the natural world and the sordidness of human affairs is not important. The corrupt world of men and the beauty of nature are contrasted throughout the novel from the opening pages. Later, when Nekhliudov feels "shameful and vile, vile and shameful" (100) at the hypocrisy of high society, this repulsion is offset by the beauty

of a moonlit garden. The film, though, is a much more direct call for social justice to correct the mistakes of the past.

The contemporary parallels remain obvious as men and women, even in childbirth, are transported by train to Siberia. In the film contrasts abound, between rich and poor, purity and corruption, high society and the poor classes, but nowhere does Shveitser use nature as a counterpoint to social evils.

When Katiusha Maslova is introduced, she is wearing a cross that leaves the audience in no doubt about her purity and her future martyrdom. The prison is a dark place with looming shadows, and Maslova's white headscarf stands out in stark contrast. The darkness of the prison is jarringly replaced by the bright sunshine as Maslova steps outside on her way to her trial. As she is escorted to the courthouse, the look of shock on people's faces registers the kindness of ordinary folk and their intuitive recognition of an injustice. In the next scene, when Nekhliudov gets out of bed, the camera lingers on his procedure of washing and dressing, the superficiality of a carefree life emphasised.

At the trial itself, Tolstoy is careful to convey the thought processes of the main officials. Shveitser registers the leering male faces of the court, clearly showing that power engenders lust. The viewer gets a close-up of Maslova's face, then Nekhliudov's as he recognises her, his shock and horror graphically expressed. Then a voice-over explains how they met, and the history of their relationship is detailed as Nekhliudov's flashback. This use of voice-over can easily be seen as a traditional way of "filling in" information for the viewer's benefit, especially the viewer with little or no knowledge of the original text. But it is also an implicit acknowledgement of the Kachalov role in Nemirovich-Danchenko's stage version, with one crucial difference: Kachalov would comment

and pass judgement on the proceedings, whereas the voice-over here simply relays information.

In the long court scene Shveitser frequently uses close-ups of lecherous, judgmental male faces to denote the corruption of the whole legal process. Whereas Tolstoy lists the unhappy marriages, alcohol abuse, extra-marital affairs and brothel visits of court officials and jury members, Shveitser superimposes asides showing these erstwhile upstanding citizens all merrily availing themselves of the very sins they are about to condemn. Whereas Tolstoy's tone is stern, Shveitser's visual realization is highly comic, intensifying the irony but also introducing a humorous, almost slapstick quality that remains absent in the rest of the film. Some acquaintance with the source text is nevertheless useful: the judge constantly looks at his watch, giving the impression that he is impatient with the proceedings and not very interested in the course of justice. Only the viewer familiar with the literary work would know that he is anxious not to be late for a tryst with his lover.

The use of voice-over as Nekhliudov recalls his seduction and abandonment of Maslova may be old-fashioned and traditional, but it serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, the viewer is reminded that this is an adaptation of a work by one of the Russia's greatest writers, while on the other it is something of an anomaly given that the film's moral core is transferred from Nekhliudov to Maslova. The director has nevertheless succeeded in recontextualising a classical text: the focus of his narrative is not the self-pitying male, but rather the wronged female who overcomes and forges her own destiny.

Psychological examination is subordinate here to a more explicit moral condemnation, both of Nekhliudov and the court officials. The director is anxious to convey the novelist's indignation, but the thought processes of individuals are of lesser interest. The source text is itself treated with due

reverence, as whole sentences and speeches are reproduced, both by characters and the off-screen narrator. Undoubtedly, because of both the time when the film was made, and the exalted position of the author in the Russian literary canon, the depiction of religion (if not the Church) is remarkably sympathetic, with a depiction of an Easter service and a montage of church icons reminiscent of stills from Eisenstein's abandoned 1936 film *Bezhin Meadow*. Not only is the service shown in some detail, but it also brings out good, friendly feelings among the congregation. The film contains several shots of crucifixes, and scenes of people devoutly praying.

In the novel Tolstoy does not particularly dwell on the characters of the prison guards, apart from the head warder. His clear depiction of the us-and-them division between the lower classes, including both guards and prisoners, who share the same food and conditions, and the jury and court officials is easily transferred to the film. The jury are regarded as "blood-suckers" by the prisoners, a clear nod to the Marxist designation of the bourgeoisie as "vampiric."²⁴ Another detail from the novel is in the film's flashback when Maslova follows the train carrying Nekhliudov away, and her Anna Karenina-like temptation to kill herself. She stops herself when she feels the baby inside her.

Shveitser uses music and soundtrack to traditional effect, that is, to intensify the film's emotional impact and thus to foreground the human drama. When Nekhliudov travels to the countryside and witnesses the widespread poverty there, orchestral strings rise on the soundtrack. A baby cries, and the audience's heart-strings are blatantly plucked. Music rises again as he hands out money to the villagers, and inevitably he does not have enough to go round all the poor and hungry. In the novel Nekhliudov travels to the countryside in order to give his land to the peasants who work it, but in the film he

wants to find out what happened to Maslova's (and his) child, only believing that the child is dead when an old woman confirms it in the film. There is no meeting with the male peasants, no awkward conversation with the estate steward. Nekhliudov is profoundly affected by the poverty and deprivation he sees all around him, and although he gives away what money he has on his person, there is no discussion of giving away his land. Shveitser has remoulded Tolstoy's espousal of Henry George's views on universal land ownership into a more immediate and relevant human drama.

The starving peasants (all women and children) are crudely contrasted to the well-fed, self-serving Senators of St Petersburg, where Nekhliudov pleads unsuccessfully for Maslova's release. Orchestral music (composed and conducted by the eminent composer Grigorii Sviridov) is again used for dramatic effect when we see thousands of convicted men, women and children on the march, clearly indicating to the viewer two things: the extremely harrowing plight of these people, and the gross unfairness at the heart of Russian justice.

Whereas the religious impulse, and its positive impact on ordinary people, is shown sympathetically, institutionalized religion is mocked for satirical purposes. The prison church service which aroused so much anger on the book's publication is shown as contradictory to Christ's teachings and Tolstoy goes so far as to refer to it as "deception" (141). Clearly, for Tolstoy the closer one was to the Orthodox Church, the further away one was from God. In the film, a sermon by the English preacher Kizeveter calling for salvation through Jesus, as attended by well-to-do society ladies, is thoroughly at odds with the lot of the prisoners, who are offered no chance of salvation, even the illusory salvation on offer by Kizeveter, only more suffering. Nekhliudov, too, remains unmoved by it, using the occasion

to argue for better prison conditions. In the film Kizeveter's young female translator relates his words with earnest passion, but this, however, merely helps to satirize the cant and hypocrisy of the well-heeled audience.

Nekhliudov embarks on a journey of self-discovery and moral and spiritual renewal from the moment he first sees Maslova in court. His inner salvation comes when he admits to Simonson at the end of the film "I am not free, but she is free", 416-17. Maslova learns that Nekhliudov's efforts to have her sentence reduced from hard labor to exile have been successful, but she remains in Siberia with Simonson. Both she and Nekhliudov may have become different, in other words, better people, but the film's ending does not contain the explicit religious exhortation that brings the novel to an end (indeed, the novel opens with four quotations from the Bible as epigraphs). Nekhliudov and Maslova have changed internally, but external social conditions remain the same. Shveitser's film draws contemporary allusions to the crimes of the recent past, and, perhaps more speculatively, points to the need for Soviet's society's spiritual rebirth. The ideological need to remove the Biblical frame of reference for Nekhliudov's spiritual rebirth in effect makes Katiusha Maslova the moral centre of the film, and so the film represents a call for repentance for past misdeeds, and for social justice.

Critical reception

Contemporary reviews of the film undoubtedly reflected its topical relevance, though were inevitably couched in the deliberately opaque language of the time. For instance, in his review in 1962 the film scholar Semen Freilikh uses the scene when Nekhliudov first visits Maslova in prison as an unmistakable allusion to the present:

What the writer *thought*, the cinematographer saw through the eyes of a modern man. Indeed, it was

necessary to live through the war, to know about the concentration camps and the wire that separated people in order to show the prison in this way and especially the scene where Nekhliudov and Katia first meet, when both the visitors—old men, women, and children—and the inmates, separated by two lines of mesh, are crowded together and yell words that the others are barely able to understand (Freilikh, 1962: 69).⁵

Freilikh then goes just about as far as then was possible to show how past and present are linked:

There is no modernization here, only a totally natural artistic aspiration. Does a man, as he thinks of the past, really not juxtapose it with what is happening to him now? Does a classical work come to us today really as just an expensive museum exhibit? No. If a work has been created in accordance with the truth of its time, it continues to live even today, revealing more and more new links with the reality developing around us [Freilikh, 1962: 69].⁶

It was easy for Soviet critics in the 1960s to praise the film for its denunciation of the vices of Tsarist society, very much in line with the author's intention. Uran Gural'nik, writing in 1968, emphasised that the film was about the "moral health of the people" above all (Gural'nik, 1968: 317). He goes on to outline the very shortcomings of the Tsarist past, thus seeing in the film little more than a traditional Soviet attack on the old regime:

The significance of this picture is in its reproduction of a broad panorama of Russian life at that time: the boundless expanses of Russia through which those sentenced to hard labor wander, the decayed atmosphere of the prison, the gloomy smell of the work-place, the old manor house, luxurious apartments of Russian aristocrats, and the terrible tragedy of the poverty-stricken and famished village [Gural'nik, 1968: 328].

Lev Anninskii in 1980 developed explicit links between then and now through the film's use of metaphor. While accepting that Shveitser's approach to adapting Tolstoy was the only correct one, that is, based on his own reading, this reading was "through the eyes of the year 1960." (Anninskii, 1980: 202). Throughout his analysis

Anninskii argues that Shveitser is emphasising Tolstoy's affirmation of "immutable values, necessary to our time," such as moral responsibility for one's actions. Thus, *Resurrection* is "a real modern drama," the actors called upon to "avoid stylization" and "play out modern feelings." Even the costumes and make-up are reminiscent of the present-day, so that when watching a film about the 1890s, we should not forget that we are still in the 1960s (Anninskii, 1980: 204-05, 209).

Anninskii also places the film in its cultural context, noting that when Part Two was released, in early 1962, the theme of moral integrity was one that was currently being explored in other films, such as Iulii Raizman's *And What If It Is Love?* (*А если это любовь?*, 1961), and Mikhail Romm's *Nine Days of One Year* (*Девять дней одного года*, 1961): "M. Shveitser has made a film based on Tolstoy's novel about personal moral responsibility." (Anninskii, 1980: 212).

It is clear that the wire fences in the prison separating the prisoners and their visitors attracted much critical attention following the film's release and were viewed as an obvious metaphor, with the contemporary parallel hard to avoid. Since then, some more nuanced views have emerged. Post-Soviet critics who, with the benefit of substantial hindsight, have attempted to place the film in the greater context of Soviet cultural history. In 2002 Vladimir Semerchuk saw the film as "tendentious" because of its social and political themes. Contradicting Anninskii's view of 1980, Semerchuk stated that *Resurrection* was out of kilter with other films of the 1960s that emphasised individual responsibility, such as Romm's *Nine Days of One Year*, and thus had little in common with other literary adaptations, such as Ivan Pyr'ev's *Idiom* (*The Idiot*, 1958), Sergei Bondarchuk's *The Destiny of a Man* (*Судьба человека*, 1959), and Iosif Kheifits's *The Lady with the Lapdog* (*Дама с собачкой*, 1960). These latter films, according to Semerchuk, testify to the

increasing interest in individual consciousness, and the crisis of collective anonymity, and set the scene for the later emergence of other impressive literary adaptations, such as Grigorii Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (*Гамлет*, 1964), Bondarchuk's *War and Peace* (*Война и мир*, 1965-67), Alexander Zarkhi's *Anna Karenina* (*Анна Каренина*, 1967), Ivan Puryev's *Brothers Karamazov* (*Братья Карамазовы*, 1968), Andrei Konchalovskii's *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (*Дворянское гнездо*, 1969) and *Uncle Vania* (*Дядя Ваня*, 1970), and Kozintsev's *King Lear* (*Король Лир*, 1971) (Semerchuk, 2002: 132).

On the other hand, in 1996 Andrei Shemiakin explained the "success" of the film through Shveitser's reading of Tolstoy not as a "mirror" of revolution in Lenin's sense, but of inner revolution: "For Tolstoy sanctioned not revolution as such but the desire to remake the world for the sake of universal happiness, and consciously entreated himself and others not to follow this desire but to turn to one's own soul." (Shemiakin, 1996: 147). For Shemiakin, therefore, Shveitser's film was significant in that it showed Soviet cinemagoers that it was possible to improve oneself and change one's life through personal choice and inner development. It is a film that is of its time, showing the re-emergence of humanity and asserting the importance of the individual life and the precious nature of freedom, rejecting state-controlled coercion and injustice.

Conclusion

A particular feature of Soviet cinematic history is that literary adaptations have always been part of the struggle of ideas. If historical films always needed to say more about the present than the past, then the classical literary text was also a source of what Solzhenitsyn would term an "alternative truth". The rejection of collective morality and the consequent appeal to individual responsibility that the Thaw encouraged

enabled Shveitser to make a film that could both faithfully reflect its literary text as well as make a pointed statement about the need for social and psychological change in Khrushchev's Thaw. A novel about social injustice, terrible penal conditions, a fractured social structure and the corruption and indifference of the political elite, could, should, and would have obvious topical relevance.

Evgeny Dobrenko recently wrote: "As regards the Stalinist era specifically, the issue is not just the 'distortion' of the classics to fit the Soviet historical model but also the literary provenance of the model itself. Literature has in no sense always played second fiddle to politics; frequently politics itself has been the fruit of literature." (Dobrenko, 2008: 110). This can also be said about the post-Stalin period. Indeed, no other national cinema has been so in thrall to its classical literary heritage, and after the death of Stalin that heritage regained its civilizing function.

The greatness of Russian literature is in its concern for the individual at the mercy of impersonal historical and social forces. The film adaptation of *Resurrection* does remove some of Tolstoy's anti-establishment rhetoric, no doubt partly in order not to overly bitter the pill, but also to make it more coherent aesthetically. Crucially, however, the removal of the Biblical references and context for Nekhliudov's spiritual rebirth dilute the rationality of this particular "resurrection", and directs attention towards Katiusha, so that by the end of the film hers is the real moral victory. The film's very last scene, when Nekhliudov returns to his carriage, downcast and head bowed, after Katiusha has told him that she is staying in Siberia, acts as visual confirmation of this. Shveitser has succeeded in transferring the real "resurrection" from a Nekhliudov shorn of Christian enlightenment to a Katiusha Maslova once cruelly abused but now worldly-wise and stronger. Within the moral and

ideological framework that Soviet cinema had to work in, even during the "Thaw", Shveitser's film version of *Resurrection* advances the cause of the individual over the collective.

Moreover, the film has to be seen in the context of its time, for whereas Tolstoy attacks

civilization and the corrupting effect on the individual of all social norms, Shveitser can only go so far, and that is as a pointer to more immediate social realities. A Soviet adaptation of a classical Russian text could engage only with the letter of the original, not its soul.

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- ¹ All page references to Tolstoy's text are to the following edition: Lev Tolstoy (1982). *Voskresenie [Resurrection]*, Chekok-sary, Chuvashskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo. All translations are my own.
- ² Tolstoy's criticism of the Church still upset Western scholars many decades later. R. F. Christian wrote in 1969 that the scene of the prison chapel service was "bitterly ironical, polemical and blasphemous", while Ernest J. Simmons in 1973 similarly complained that this scene was one of several "lapses of taste" and was "blasphemously satiric".
- ³ Novodvorov has the major attributes of the future socialist realist 'positive hero', and is clearly based on the character Rakhmetov in Nikolai Chernyshevskii's 1863 novel *What Is To Be Done? (Что делать?)*, and looking forward to Pavel Korchagin in Nikolai Ostrovskii's socialist realist classic *How the Steel Was Tempered (Как закалялась сталь, 1934)*. Novodvorov reads Karl Marx, is totally devoted to the struggle, rejects religion, does not smoke or drink and despises women. This character is not developed in the film version.
- ⁴ Karl Marx famously said in *Das Kapital* (1867) that "capital is dead labour that vampire-like only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks." (*Das Kapital*, Vol. I, Chapter 3, l. 7). The reference is in *Lev Tolstoy. Voskresenie [Resurrection]*, p. 113.
- ⁵ The official four-volume *Istoriia sovetskogo kino [The History of Soviet Cinema], 1917-1967*, was also reasonably positive in its appraisal of the film's depiction of the prison: "the scenes in prison structurally clashed with the episodes painstakingly reproducing the life of the gentry and their particular love of material objects. The figurative, cinematographic interpretation of Tolstoy's work was not entirely successful, but much was made up by the magnificent shots of the meeting between Katiusha and Nekkhludov in the prison – with throngs of human bodies separated by wire and the measured pacing of the guards in the passageway between them" (*Istoriia sovetskogo kino, 1917-1967 [The History of Soviet Cinema, 1917-1967]*, 4, Moscow: Iskusstvo).
- ⁶ The writer Iurii Khaniutin was not as well disposed towards the film, complaining that "not only Tolstoy's moral but also his social protest (*pafos*) is missing". For Khaniutin, the most important aspect of the novel was that it shows 'that society's greatest crime is that it debauches and corrupts people who are originally good'. See Iu. Khaniutin, 1961: 71. Khaniutin, of course, had only seen the first part of the film, as Part Two was released only in March the year after his review appeared. He would no doubt have changed his view on seeing the completed film.

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Экранизация классической литературы: «Воскресение» Л.Н. Толстого как лейтмотив постсталинской «оттепели»

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Экранизация произведений литературного наследия являлась частью истории российской культуры на протяжении более ста лет. При этом постановка фильмов по мотивам произведений А. Пушкина, А. Чехова, Н. Гоголя, Л. Толстого и Ф. Достоевского проходила в дореволюционный период во время эпохи «золотого века» советского кино. Режиссер Михаил Швейцер (1920-2000) был одним из тех, кто занимался съемкой картин на основе оригиналов классической литературы. Его экранизация Л. Толстого романа «Воскресение» стала первой попыткой снять фильм по мотивам русской классической литературы. Это была одна из первых экранизаций произведений Л. Толстого в советском кинематографе. Данный фильм вышел в двух частях в 1960 и 1962 годах. Фильм представляет собой точный пересказ сюжета романа Л. Толстого о раскаивающемся дворянине, социальной несправедливости и коррумпированности дореволюционной русской системы правосудия. Кроме того, данный фильм затраги-

вает злободневные проблемы того времени, указывая на несправедливость законодательной системы в те времена и либерализацию политического климата постсталинской «оттепели». Таким образом, фильм «Воскресение» является примером особого подхода к экранизации классической литературы не только через отражение на экране классических литературных сюжетов, но также посредством иллюстрации культурной политики, проводимой в период создания фильма.

Ключевые слова: история кинематографа, экранизация литературных произведений, постсталинская «оттепель», культурная политика.

Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки.
