

Title: East vs. West in Post-Soviet Film Adaptations of Anna Karenina
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Abstract:

My paper will focus on a crucial recurring motif in the latest Russian adaptations of Tolstoy's novel: East vs. West: post-Soviet directors model the space of Asia as traditional and genuine one and contrast it with the consumerist West. In the new paradigm, this contrast functions in the same way as an opposition between the countryside and the city in Tolstoy. In Zeldovich's/Sorokin's *Target* and Shakhnazarov's *Anna Karenina*, East functions as a new ethical and epistemological point of reference for the main action, a place setting a special optics, a locus of estrangement where the character who undergoes a crucial spiritual transformation is placed. In Omirbaev's adaptation *Shuga* the whole action is transposed to Kazakhstan and develops between the more traditional Almaty (replacing Moscow) and Astana (standing for St. Petersburg).

The female version of Levin's character in the end of *The Target* returns to the East and chooses to possess nothing, to live in solitude among the mountains and free herself from all desires and passions; this way, she manages to achieve a balance between her recently acquired immortality and the scale of the natural world around her. In Shakhnazarov's *Anna Karenina*, East is a physical locus where the characters, Vronsky and grown-up Serezha, recollect the events of Tolstoy's novel, and the process of their spiritual healing starts: it allows them to reach the geographical distance from the place of the catastrophic love affair – that matches the temporal distance of the thirty years that have passed from that moment. But, perhaps, most obviously the opposition between East and West is represented in Omirbaev's *Shuga*: the director contrasts the consumerist western style of life of Anna and Vronsky and the traditional Kazakh values represented by Kitty and Levin.