

ILLUSTRATE AND CONDEMN:
THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF VISION IN *ANNA KARENINA*

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Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead are but as pictures. Macbeth
II, 11

Looking and Killing

Parables, moral tales, fables and textual illustrations meant to pursue a moral point, illustrate by condemning and condemn by illustrating. *Anna Karenina* is persistently read as a text that illustrates, an *exemplum* or *conte moral* meant to present a picture of the horrors and fatalities that inevitably follow upon the wrong moral choice. In the novel itself, illustrations and illustrative texts, like Countess Lidia Ivanova's Sunday School tracts, function ambiguously, questioning the value of textual or narrative exemplarity. At the same time, the centrality of vision and visual art in the novel urges a recognition of the significance of illustrative imagery. The action of viewing and judging—landscapes, portraits, illustrations—becomes paradigmatic of the reader's response to the novel and its heroine; a dynamic of the text that will be explored here according to the principles of phenomenological criticism and within the context of Tolstoy's own evolving views on aesthetics.

The novel's focus on the visual, on beauty, on art, and art theory prompted Bayley to comment: "*Anna Karenina* puts Tolstoy's view of art into a deeper and closer relation with the rest of life than does *What is Art?*" (236)¹. Throughout the novel, characters create landscapes and visions, both material and imaginative, to illustrate—almost obsessively—their philosophies, plans, and interpretations of life. For example, the scenes Anna views from the windows of her carriage and train just before she commits suicide become for her a series of framed pictures that illuminate her despair at inhumanity and justify her subsequent action. Anna's city scenes ("cries of Moscow") have their corollary in Lyovin's habit of turning his visions of working peasants and nature into genre paintings and landscapes to illustrate his current intellectual preoccupations and plans:

'How beautiful,' he thought, looking at the strange, as it were, mother-of-pearl shell of white fleecy cloudlets resting right over his head in the middle of the sky. 'How exquisite it all is in this exquisite night! And when was there time for that cloud-shell to form? Just now I looked at the sky, and there was nothing in it—only two white streaks. Yes, and so imperceptibly too my views of life changed. (252)²

Both sets of illustrations are hermeneutically flawed—Anna sees only the negative, a veritable mystery play procession of the Seven Deadly Sins, while Lyovin idealizes and romanticizes peasant life on the basis of its

aesthetic appeal. The risks of illustration impinge on Anna herself, when, the subject of portraiture and the object of the reader's gaze, she is judged by the reader who is in turn imperiled by the danger of condemning what is illustrated.

In the course of the novel, Anna herself becomes an aesthetic object, the subject of three different portraits that focus and figure the gaze of the reader into the text, and that emphasize the readers' action of viewing and judging—both the actual paintings of Anna and the novel's assumption of the rhetoric of portraiture. Descriptions of Anna become ekphrastic, as though describing an *objet d'art*; for example, at the ball, Anna's "full shoulders and bosom look as though *carved* of old ivory" and her neck is "finely *chiselled*" while her "black dress...was only the *frame* and all that was seen was she" (72). Anna sets off for the opera with "costly white lace on her head that *framed* her face...setting off her dazzling beauty" while at the opera Vronsky observes "Anna's head, proud, strikingly beautiful, and smiling in the *frame* of lace..." (495, emphases added). Anna is on display throughout the novel, while her insistence on being the object, rather than the subject of the gaze is figured in her habit of screwing up her eyes, wanting to be seen rather than to see. Thus Anna, like the novel, seeks our appraisal, both aesthetic and moral.³

The act of judging Anna is accomplished in front of her portraits by three men. Karenin reacts with hostility:

Alexey Alexandrovich glanced at [the oval portrait of Anna, a fine painting by a celebrated artist]. After looking at the portrait for a minute, Alexey Alexandrovich shuddered so that his lips quivered and he uttered the sound 'brrr.' (259-60);

Vronsky is exposed as having had only a physical understanding of Anna's beauty:

It was strange how Mikhailov could have discovered just her characteristic beauty. 'One needs to know and love her to discover the very sweetest expression of her soul,' though it was only from this very portrait that he had learned for himself this sweetest expression of her soul. (434);

Lyovin experiences a change of heart toward Anna, who he had previously characterized as undeserving of his pity and incapable of experiencing tragedy:

Lyovin gazed at the portrait...and he could not tear himself away from it. He positively forgot where he was, and not even hearing what was said, he could not take his eyes off the marvellous portrait....He kept looking at the portrait and at her...and he felt for her a tenderness and pity which surprised him (630, 633).

Anna is also judged by women. In Dolly's case, an initial inclination toward complete exoneration and condonement of Anna's actions is adjusted

by her confrontation with the (for her) morally unacceptable aspects of Anna's actions (notably, contraception). Nonetheless, Dolly's charitable forgiveness and compassion for Anna never falter. Kitty as well, completely and instantaneously forgives and compassionates Anna, although she has many strong reasons for condemning her: "Kitty had been thrown into confusion by the inward conflict between her hostility to this bad woman and her desire to be condescending to her. But as soon as she saw Anna's beautiful and attractive face, her hostility immediately vanished" (684) and she meets Anna's "hostile gaze" with a "look of compassion." Kitty's final verdict on Anna expresses only compassion: "She is just the same as ever, just as charming! Very pretty! But there is something piteous about her. Awfully piteous!" (684).

The reader is thus presented with forgiving and compassionate feelings towards Anna, not only from the men who have loved and destroyed her, but from those characters most likely to be considered the positive protagonists in the novel: Lyovin, Kitty, and Dolly. Furthermore, these compassionate feelings are aesthetic in their original impulse, as Lyovin is moved by the portrait, and Kitty unites the two judgements simultaneously: "Very pretty," and "Awfully piteous!" That the aesthetic response supercedes an ethical judgement becomes the cornerstone of Tolstoyan aesthetics: a genuine aesthetic response is one of Christian love (*agape*) that precludes judgement, renders moral abstraction supererogatory, and compels compassion.

The aesthetic and ethical judgement of Anna before her portraits is paradigmatic (although not necessarily determinative) of the reader's critical process of viewing and judging the heroine. The judgement of Anna Karenina is also connected thematically to another scene of ethical judgement embedded within aesthetic judgement: the viewing of Mikhailov's illustrative painting of Christ judged by Pilate.

The unveiling of Mikhailov's painting of Christ before Pilate in the scene where Vronsky, Anna and Golenishchev visit the artist's studio creates a *mise-en-abîme* of judgement: Anna, Vronsky and Golenishchev are judging Mikhailov's paintings, Mikhailov judges his visitors, Christ is judged by Pilate, ultimately Anna is held over for the reader's judgement. The reader has earlier noted that the novel itself insists on judgement or its deferral, as its performative dimension, instigated by the epigraph, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay."⁴ Since Tolstoy does not cite chapter or verse for his epigraph, it is unclear whether he was referring to the Old or New Testament versions of the edict, or whether he intended to set up a tension between the two. Interpretations of the novel based on the epigraph have tended either to assume that it reflects the Old Testament legal system (stoning of adulterers) and the punitive action of a wrathful God through worldly events, or that it evokes the Christian precept expressed in Paul's exhortation of Romans 12: 19-21, that it is not for humanity to judge, but for God.⁵

The idea of Christian, non-judgemental mercy is expressed by Anna as she views Mikhailov's painting: she observes that Christ is sorry for Pilate. Anna, however, removes herself from the possibility of Christian forgiveness:

She knew that the support of religion was possible only upon condition of renouncing what made up for her the whole meaning of life. She was not simply miserable, she began to feel alarm at the new spiritual condition, never experienced before, in which she found herself (263).⁶

She displaces the agony of a self-imposed condemnation onto a landscape, externalizing her emotional state by means of a hermeneutic refocusing that anticipates her later habit of screwing up her eyes:

Looking at the tops of the aspen-trees waving in the wind, with their freshly washed, brightly shining leaves in the cold sunshine, she knew that they would not forgive her, that every one and everything would be merciless to her now as was that sky, that green (265).

By making nature illustrate her predicament she paints her conflict into ineluctable destiny, rendering what had been her free choice into predetermined natural law. This has the ultimate effect of condemning Anna's condemners for their lack of mercy. Anna's unforgiving landscape—illustrating her own false deductions and erroneous reasoning—serves as a pointed example of the errors of illustration that seduce characters throughout the novel. The contrast of direct vision to distorting illustration is re-drawn as a dividing line between false, bourgeois art and genuine Christian art in Tolstoy's later treatise, *What is Art?* In that work, Tolstoy defines Christian art as art that, without necessarily adhering to religious themes or illustrating moral principles, successfully conveys—immediately and directly—the effect of Christian love, uniting artist and viewers in Christian brotherhood. Many of the issues discussed in *What is Art?* are anticipated in *Anna Karenina* during in the debate on aesthetics and religious art stimulated by the viewing of Mikhailov's religious painting of Christ before Pilate.⁷ Without intending to read backward from *What is Art?* to *Anna Karenina* in any schematic way, the following discussion of the debate over Christian art and illustration in the novel is unavoidably influenced by considerations of Tolstoy's more mature views on the same topic.

Gaze and Witness: John's Gospel According to Tolstoy

The painting Mikhailov's visitors have come to see is itself an illustration of a Scriptural scene: Christ's exhortation to Pilate. In describing his painting to his visitors, Mikhailov refers to Matthew 27, yet the witness in his painting is John the evangelist. The choice to depict John as witness to the scene is both Tolstoy's and Mikhailov's: the gospels do not verify John's attendance at the trials. A more likely choice would have been Peter whose cowardly presence at the trials was notorious; obviously, Peter's triple betrayal of Christ would have propelled our reading in a different direction. Therefore the reader on some level must ask, "What about John?"⁸ In addition, we learn that this figure of John is deeply loved

and valued as perfection by Mikhailov,⁹ faintly echoing John's privileged standing in the Fourth Gospel as the "beloved disciple" (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 24)¹⁰

Elsewhere in *Anna Karenina*, the reader's gaze is implicated in a *mise-en-abîme*, as mentioned above in the scenes where Karenin, Vronsky, and Lyovin view Anna's portraits¹¹ or earlier in the Mikhailov chapter, when Vronsky, Anna, and Golenischev view his paintings. In those instances, the observer *in* the text replicates the observer *of* the text, that is, the reader gazes at the same object as the observer in the text while the observer in the text is also the object of the reader's gaze. In this case, the observers in the text are reduplicated by the actions of the observer in the text within the text (John), so that the reader's actions of observing and witnessing are doubled and emphasized.¹² Thus, John's witnessing gaze reflects back our observance and implicates us in the scene of judgement. In this scene we are convicted by our responses to the defendants, Christ and in the surrounding novel, Anna, and also by our Pilate-like hesitation to commit ourselves. Like Pilate, we hesitate to condemn. In the passage that follows, our eyes rest more comfortably on the figure of John; yet even in so doing, we are reflected back on ourselves as witnesses.

After the canvas is viewed and the visitors have departed, Mikhailov forces the reader to contemplate the figure of John, "which his visitors had not even noticed but which he knew was beyond perfection....He would have covered the picture, but he stopped, holding the cloth in his hand, and smiling blissfully, gazed a long while at the figure of John" (433-34). Whatever final meaning might be read into Mikhailov's painting is derived, at least partially, from this closing and final emphasis.

Is there any significance to be drawn from the fact that John the evangelist figures in Mikhailov's painting? John's gospel is distinguishable from the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke) in several ways which are significant for our consideration here. Kujundzic has recently observed that the Gospel of John is intertextually related to *Anna Karenina* in that it contains Jesus' encounter with two adulteresses, the woman at the well (John 4: 1-27), and the woman taken in adultery (John 8: 1-11).¹³ Kovarsky has pointed out that Tolstoy was concerned to address Pilate's rhetorical question, "What is truth?" which appears only in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁴

Most important for our consideration here is the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on "signs" (τὰ σημεῖα), by which the evangelist intends, "miracles," "testimony," "witness" and "seeing." This thematic is underscored by the complete absence of parables in the Gospel of John (as opposed to 31 which occur in the synoptics) and the presence of discourses predicated on figurative language ("I am the way, the bread of life, the vine, etc."). The gospel's rhetorical dimension thus subtly rejects exegesis in favor of diegesis. Krystyna Pomorska has argued that Tolstoy's own bias as a writer is in favor of showing rather than telling, hence his development of the technique of *ostranenie*. John's gospel has its emphasis on the image rather than the word, in the repeated invitation to "come and see" (John 1:39 and 1:46b) as opposed to the exhortation of the synoptics: "Let those who have ears hear" (Matthew 13:9).

The telling of parables was pronounced by Christ to be a judgement on the sceptical multitudes, who did not know how to "read" the signs: "That is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing they do not hear or understand." (Matthew 13:13).¹⁵ The parable itself, in its incomprehensibility, can be characterized primarily as a narrative requiring interpretation. In commenting on the New Testament parables, Frank Kermode argues for the exclusivity of hermeneutic initiation which distinguishes carnal from spiritual perception: "There is seeing and hearing, which are what naive listeners and readers do; and there is perceiving and understanding, which are in principle reserved to an elect" (3). Kermode thus arrives at the inevitable insight that (like looking into a microscope and seeing one's own eye) "interpreters often see the Problem of Interpretation" and since "interpretation is bound to fail . . . it is always unsuccessful." Thus, "being an insider is only a more elaborate way of being kept outside" (27). John's gospel lifts this judgement and circumvents the hermeneutic vicious cycle by presenting signs (*semeia*) rather than discourse,¹⁶ to the extent that one scholar was motivated to characterize the Johannine gospel as "a literary icon" (Schneiders 371).

The Icon and the Act

The deferral of meaning accomplished by the telling of parables is ultimately a denial of essence in presence and diminishes the performative aspect of direct experience by replaying it in explication. Moments of *différance* occur in *Anna Karenina* when vision is replaced by discourse or tied to *explicatio* in the form of illustration.¹⁷ However, vision and illustration are also suspect in the novel. What emerges from the twin abysses of word and image is the possibility of action, an interior movement towards inner conversion whose potential to infect the reader would later become the hallmark of Tolstoyan aesthetics.

The negative aspects of illustration are discussed explicitly in the scene where, immediately after viewing Anna's portrait, Lyovin engages his hostess in a discussion of Bible illustrations:

The conversation turned on the new movement in art, on the new illustrations of the Bible by a French artist. Vorkuev attacked the artist for a realism carried to the point of coarseness.

Lyovin said that the French had carried conventionality further than any one, and that consequently they see a great merit in the return to realism. In the fact of not lying they see poetry.

Never had anything clever said by Lyovin given him so much pleasure as this remark. Anna's face lighted up at once, as at once she appreciated the thought. She laughed.

'I laugh,' she said, 'as one laughs when one sees a very true portrait. What you said so perfectly hits off French art now, painting and literature too, indeed—Zola, Daudet. But perhaps it is always so, that men form their conceptions from fictitious, conventional types, and then—all the combinations made—they are tired of the fictitious figures and begin to invent more natural, true figures' (631).

Lyovin and Vorkuev reject not just illustration, but specifically realist illustrations of the sacred or spiritual which cannot be represented, just like the shadows on the statue of the poet Lyovin criticizes at a different salon:

He cited the sculptor who carved in marble certain poetic phantasms flitting round the figure of the poet on the pedestal. 'These phantoms were so far from being phantoms that they were positively clinging to the ladder,' said Lyovin (620).¹⁸

The debate reiterates the objection raised by Golenishchev to Mikhailov's painting:

'That is, that you make Him the man-God and not the God-man. But I know that was what you meant to do.'

'I cannot paint a Christ that is not in my heart,' said Mikhailov gloomily.

'Yes; but in that case, if you will allow me to say what I think....I imagine that if Christ is brought down to the level of a historical character, it would have been better for Ivanov to select some other historical subject....'

'But if this is the greatest subject presented to art?'

'But the point is that art cannot suffer doubt and discussion. And before the picture of Ivanov the question arises for the believer and the unbeliever alike, 'Is it God or is it not God?' and the unity of the impression is destroyed.'

'Why so? I think that for educated people,' said Mikhailov, 'the question cannot exist' (432).

Golenishchev's criticism echoes Lyovin's in its dual rejection of a naturalistic realism and any attempt to illustrate the spiritual. Similarly, Tolstoy was to question a purely thematic or ideological approach to aesthetics and literary criticism: "people are needed for the criticism of art who can show the pointlessness of merely looking for ideas in a work of art and can [instead] steadfastly guide readers through that endless labyrinth of connections which is the essence of art..." (*Letters* 1:296). This view prompted Tolstoy to argue for the salience and immanence of his novel over any interpretation of it: "If I were to try to say in words everything that I intended to express in my novel [*Anna Karenina*], I would have to write the same novel I wrote from the beginning" (*Letters* 1:297) The novel is the novel, Anna is Anna. To make Anna stand as an illustration of any moral precept as many critics have done, is to read counter to Tolstoy's stated notion of artistic design and the novel's rhetorical attack on illustration and hermeneutics. The very process of reading through such a sustained recounting of failed interpretations and flawed illustrations must undermine the reader's own confidence in hermeneutic practice, and ought to engage critical interest in the processes of such a literary experience. The attempt is made here to follow this experience by tracing what Iser has termed the "virtual" dimension of the text (the intermediate realm between the text's

determinative structures and the reader's concretizing perceptions), in the single case of responses to the (re-)presentations of Anna in the novel.

Anna on View

Because Anna is repeatedly painted into portraits or described as an *objet d'art*, she is constituted as the object of the reader's gaze; the reader is made aware of the focus of her vision and the degree to which the novel presents Anna as spectacle and implicates the reader in that specularly as a Johannine witness. In the course of the novel, the reader is infected by and affiliated with the responsive gazes and judgements of observers and witnesses whose emotional relationship to Anna mirrors and models our own. Our reading of these observations creates a performative dimension within our critical response; Tolstoy discussed this phenomenon according to his theory of infection:

The author wishes to transmit to the spectators pity for a persecuted girl. To evoke this feeling in the audience by means of art, the author should make one of the characters express this pity in such a way as to infect every one (*What is Art?* 105).

Recently, phenomenological literary criticism has suggested a more sophisticated model for the way in which reading becomes transformative of consciousness:

Text and reader no longer confront each other as object and subject, but instead the "division" takes place within the reader himself (sic!). In thinking the thoughts of another, his own individuality temporarily recedes into the background since it is supplanted by these alien thoughts, which now become the theme on which his attention is focussed...In the act of reading, having to think something that we have not yet experienced does not mean only being in a position to conceive or even understand it, it also means that such acts of conception are possible and successful to the degree that they lead to something being formulated in us (Iser 398)

There are arguably four major "viewers" or witnesses of Anna in *Anna Karenina*: Karenin, Dolly, Lyovin, and Kitty, whose responses are mirrored in the reader's action of reading and interpreting.¹⁹ In all instances, with the exception of Dolly, the reader is assimilated into a textual repetition of the process of an initial condemnation reversed by forgiveness.

Karenin, the character who has most reason to judge Anna harshly when asked, immediately and tearfully forgives her when she appears close to death and is thereby exalted in his spirit of Christian forgiveness and love. It is a spirit and role he cannot sustain, yet as one critic has observed, it is Karenin, not Vronsky, who appears as the victorious lover at the close of Part II. In the case of Lyovin, the reader witnesses a reversal of Lyovin's initial blanket rejection of all fallen women as "vermin" which dissolves into compassion as he views Anna's portrait:

Lyovin looked...at the portrait and at [Anna]...and he felt for her a tenderness and pity which surprised him....though he had judged her so severely hitherto, now by some strange chain of reasoning he was justifying her and also sorry for her (633).²⁰

Critics have argued that Lyovin's charitable compassion for Anna is corrupted by her acknowledged sinister intent to seduce him and by Kitty's own accusation—which Lyovin cannot refute—that he has been "bewitched" by Anna. The fact that the scene of Lyovin's visit to Anna is not entirely free of eroticism, as LeBlanc so convincingly demonstrates, not only does not negate the more spiritual dimension of Lyovin's response to Anna, but necessarily informs it. Christian mercy proceeds from an initial conviction of one's own sinfulness and need for forgiveness, a process Kovarsky has shown to be central in Tolstoy's rhetorical strategy of infection in *Anna Karenina*. Lyovin's glance in the mirror, taking in his red face and disheveled hair, immediately precedes his viewing of Anna's portrait, thereby instituting a subtle comparison. Lyovin's own weakness for drinking, dining, and..., which he recognizes and repents of in this section of the novel, causes him to indict himself in such a way as to be excluded from judging others. A similar situation shapes most Russian literary accounts of visits to brothels from Dostoyevsky's *Notes From the Underground* to Chekov's "Nervous Breakdown": the visitor seeks his own pleasure, unfolded into both eroticism and the fragile narrative of redemption. In this sense, Tolstoy also polemicizes the Kantian notion of aesthetic disinterest which he will actively attack in *What is Art?* Furthermore, Kitty herself later completely and instantaneously forgives and compassionates Anna, although she has many personal reasons for condemning her:

Kitty had been thrown into confusion by the inward conflict between her hostility to this bad woman and her desire to be condescending to her. But as soon as she saw Anna's beautiful and attractive face, her hostility immediately vanished (684).

Kitty's final verdict on Anna expresses only compassion: "She is just the same as ever, just as charming! Very pretty! But there's something piteous about her. Awfully piteous!" (643).

To the extent that the reader shares in the charitable feelings of those characters usually considered to be the positive protagonists of the novel—Lyovin, Dolly, Kitty—the reader is called to witness the spectacle of Anna's fall with terror and pity.²¹ Notably, the experience of compassion is *aesthetic* in its origin, as Lyovin is moved by the portrait, and Kitty unites the two judgements simultaneously, "Very pretty" and "Awfully piteous!" That the aesthetic response supercedes an ethical judgement becomes the cornerstone of Tolstoyan aesthetics; a genuine aesthetic response is one of *agape* that precludes judgement, renders moral abstraction supererogatory, and compels compassion.²²

Parting Shots and Last Glimpses

In one of the most striking contrasts of the novel, Anna casts herself under a train while Lyovin leaps into faith: the two interarticulated sequences are joined by the characters' mental habits of illustration. During Anna's last rides, she assembles a series of images framed by her carriage and train coach windows and assigns these frames captions which accumulate to define a world view based on despair. By contrast, Lyovin liberates his visualizations from ratiocination, and frees vision from discourse. In the closing passage of the novel, Lyovin asserts the primacy of unmediated perception:

Lying on his back, he gazed up now into the high, cloudless sky. 'Do I not know that that is infinite space, and that it is not a round arch? But, however I screw up my eyes and strain my sight, I cannot see it not round and not bounded, and in spite of my knowing about infinite space, I am incontestably right when I see a solid blue dome, and more right than when I strain my eyes to see beyond it (721).

Lyovin overrides what his intellect would explain about what he sees and refuses to take the sky for anything other than what it perceptibly is. Insisting on its presence in its own right and in his own sight, rather than on his intellectualizing interpretive practise of framing and explicating, he acknowledges the presence of the sky in his field of vision as an analog for the mystery of divine grace present in his corporeal existence. This witnessing of the sublime is characterized by Lyovin elsewhere in the novel as precisely the gap between reason or rational explanation and vision or witness, as experienced in the face of death or birth:

All he knew and felt was that what was happening was what had happened nearly a year before in the hotel of the country town at the death-bed of his brother Nikolay. But that had been grief—this was joy. Yet that grief and this joy were alike outside all the ordinary conditions of life; they were loopholes, as it were, in that ordinary life through which there came glimpses of something sublime. And in the contemplation of this sublime something the soul was exalted to inconceivable heights of which it had before had no conception, while reason lagged behind, unable to keep up with it (644).

This fundamental difference in the ends of the two protagonists, that Lyovin—escaping hermeneutics—achieves grace and Anna remains enslaved by illustrations and is thereby driven to take her own life, that Lyovin lives and Anna dies, can only be taken as an illustrative precept condemning Anna within a materialist criticism. For example, feminist critics have argued that the difference in outcomes between Lyovin and Anna expresses the misogynist bias of the novel:

Anna, many feminist critics would remark, ends the novel dead: the inequalities between women and men that constitute a major feature

of Western society are vividly portrayed in the novel—bourgeois heterosexuality kills women and ruins men (Evans 3-4).

Another feminist critic draws the same conclusion:

The overall message is to all intents unequivocal: in *Anna Karenina* Levin makes the right choices and so lives and flourishes beyond the back cover of the book; Anna chooses wrongly, and therefore must die even before the last chapter. Nothing could be clearer (Armstrong 24).

However, from a spiritual perspective, Anna and Lyovin exit the novel on equal terms; Anna is not ultimately condemned, but redeemed. As Donna Orwin has recently pointed out:

Like Levin, Anna is and remains a seeker. In this sense, for Anna as for him, the future is 'open' to the very end. Anna's options end with her suicide, of course, but the fact that she draws back at the last moment from this fatal step is a testimony to the fact that spiritual (if not physical) choices remain for her (186).

In fact, Anna's act of crossing herself is not an empty gesture but initiates a sea change in her thoughts:

That familiar gesture brought back into her soul a whole series of girlish and childish memories, and suddenly the darkness that had covered everything for her was torn apart...(692).

Although she precedes to jump under the train, her action is almost a genuflection,²³ as she "lightly, as though she would rise again at once, dropped to her knees" at which moment she becomes

terror-stricken at what she was doing. 'Where am I? What am I doing? What for?' She tried to get up, to drop backwards; but something huge and merciless struck her on the head and rolled her on her back. 'Lord, forgive me all!' she said.

Anna's last words are a prayer of repentance and a return to accepting the forgiveness she had earlier rejected, suggesting a penultimate spiritual victory.

On the basis of the characters' responses to Anna and the concluding emphases in Anna and Lyovin's last scenes, the case can be made that the novel's dynamic is propelled by the ethos of Christian mercy, a modality which shapes, or, arguably, infects the reader's response. That this response is most strongly elicited during the successive visitations of *Anna Karenina* to pictured moments and momentous pictures, suggests a coherent strategy centered on the novel's main theme and its fulfillment. This brief consideration of the themes of illustration, visualization, and witness has disclosed not only a thematic coherence, but a performative dimension in

the text's insistence on condemnation transmuted into compassion. As we have seen, the novel leads its readers through the movements of viewing, judging and forgiving in order to impel us to responsible witness, mirrored in the gaze of the disciple of divine love. The repeated connection of an aesthetic response with the movement to Christian mercy and love anticipates Tolstoy's later claims for a Christian aesthetic. The novel thus attains, despite its author's subsequent repudiation of it, that moment of union with the art work and communion between its creator and readers that Tolstoy later proclaimed as the universal unity of humanity in Christian love.

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NOTES

¹ This observation has motivated many critics (Gustafson, Mandelker, Orwin, Silbajoris) to read into *Anna Karenina* many of the theories that are nascent and emergent in the novel, but which only achieved complete articulation in *What is Art?* Gustafson in particular, has argued effectively for viewing Tolstoy from a unitary perspective, rather than artificially separating his oeuvre according to the biographical chronology of pre- and post-conversion. I am deeply indebted to colleagues who have read and commented on this manuscript in preparation, in particular, Caryl Emerson, Dale Irwin, Gary Jahn, Cathy Popkin, Donna Orwin, and Victor Terras. I would also like to thank the graduate students of the City University of New York Graduate Center who attended my seminars on "History and Theory of Aesthetics," "Tolstoy," and "Slavic Theory in Western Practice."

² Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*. Trans. Constance Garnett. New York: Doubleday. All subsequent quotations from the novel are from this translation, which I have silently corrected when necessary. I have discussed the theme of art and the visual in *Anna Karenina* at greater length in my book, *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993.

³ Caryl Emerson has recently described Anna as "decaying art" that rots in its own insistence on stasis. In Emerson's account, somewhat related to the "Portrait of Dorian Gray," Anna strives to exist in a freeze-frame rather than to modulate and mature according to life's experiences, as for example, in her insistence on remaining in the erotic stage of her love with Vronsky. Thus she disintegrates morally ("Prosaics," this issue).

⁴ For a discussion of the Mikhailov scene in connection with the theme of judgement and pardoning see Dragan Kujundzic, "Pardoning Woman in Anna Karenina," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* VI (1993): 66-85.

⁵ What we know about the origination of the epigraph in Tolstoy's novel argues for this latter interpretation. Eikhenbaum demonstrates that Tolstoy originally borrowed the biblical quotation from a passage in Artur Schopenhauer (*The World as Will* book 4, chapter 62), in which the philosopher demands the suspension of human judgement: "No person has the authority to set himself up as a moral judge and avenger, to punish the misdeeds of another with pain which he inflicts on him This would be, rather, presumption of the highest degree; hence the Biblical 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.'" Boris Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoy in the Seventies*. Trans. Albert Kaspin. Ann Arbor: Ardis Press, 1972. It is the task of this paper to demonstrate the way this theme is enacted in the novel according to Tolstoy's theory of art as infection, elaborated in *What is Art?*

⁶ Kujundzic interprets this scene as reflecting Anna's rejection of the "paternalistic pardoning machine." I prefer the simpler and more "classical" reading: that she cannot repent and "sin no more", therefore she cannot seek divine forgiveness. The lack of divine forgiveness, pictured in the natural world and rendered into a chilling landscape, is what is painful. "They" will only reenact what she perceives as God's condemnation.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Amy Mandelker, "Tolstoy's eucharistic aesthetics," in Andrew Donskov and John Woodsworth, eds. *Lev Tolstoy and The Concept of Brotherhood*. Ottawa: Legas, 1996: 116-127. The dangers of "readign backwards" and across generic boundaries are advanced by Svetlana Evdokimova in her essay in this issue. However, whether a reading of *Anna Karenina* must be restricted only to the text of the novel, as Evdokimova argues, depends on the critic's own orientation and preference for a formalistic rather than a structuralist or even post-structuralist approach.

⁸ A similar discrepancy, the mistaken attribution of a "shadow story" to Grimm (instead of Andersen), similarly provides a hermeneutic challenge to the reader. See Mandelker, "The Woman with a Shadow: Fables of Demon and Psyche in *Anna Karenina*" *Novel* 24 (Fall) 1990: 48-68.

⁹ ". . . the figure of John in the background, which his visitors had not even noticed, but which he knew was beyond perfection" and ". . . he stopped, holding the cloth in his hand, and smiling blissfully, gazed a long while at the figure of John." *Anna Karenina*, 433-434.

¹⁰ Although theologians and exegetes have established various theories about the identity of the authorship and redactorship of John, separately identifying the character of the BD ("beloved disciple"), John the son of Zebedee, and John the evangelist, in this discussion, I will

assume the unity of these figures as Tolstoy no doubt did. For a discussion of various positions on John accessible to the layman, see Gerard S. Sloyan, New York: Paulist Press, 1991.

¹¹ This scene is discussed in greater detail in Mandelker, "A Painted Lady: Ekphrasis in *Anna Karenina*," *Comparative Literature* 43 (1991): 1-19.

¹² Lotman discusses this phenomenon as it occurs in the use of mirrors in Baroque painting giving the example of Van Eyck's "Portrait of the Banker Arnolfini and his Wife": "Na portrete Van Eycka efekt eshche bolee usloven: Visiashchee v glubine kartiny na stene zerkalo otrazhaet so spiny figury Arnolfini s zhenoi (na polotne oni povernuty *en face*): i vxodiashchix so storony zritelei gostei, kotorykh oni vstrechaut. Takim obrazom, iz glubiny zerkala brosaetsia vzgljad, perpendikuliarnyi polotnu (navstrechu vzgliadu zritelei) i vxodiashchii za predely sobstvennogo prostranstva kartiny." "Tekst v tekste" *Trudy po znakovym sistemam XIV* (1981): 3-18, p. 14. Foucault makes a similar point in his discussion of *Las Meninas* in *The Order of Things*, New York: Vintage, 1970, 4-5. Gina Kovarsky has independently formulated this observation in her doctoral dissertation in progress, *The Moral Education of the Reader in 'Anna Karenina'*, Columbia University.

¹³ The earlier manuscripts do not have John 7:53-8:11 and it is occasionally placed differently.

¹⁴ See Kovarsky's essay in this issue, footnote 48. John's gospel has the further distinction of seeming to be written for a community of believers rather than for evangelistic purposes, as argued by Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). Additionally, the Johannine gospel was favored among the Alexandrian Church Fathers and hence would have been more influential within the Russian Orthodox tradition. Tolstoy himself rejected the separation of the Fourth Gospel from the synoptics in his *Harmonized Gospel*, "Vstuplenia, Soedinenia i perevod chetyrekh Evangelii," PSS 24: 18.

¹⁵ Christ's judgement is tempered by mercy, he is not silent, but presents the multitudes with a conundrum that they will persist in trying to solve, and that is therefore in some sense, a delayed action salvation capsule.

¹⁶ The semiotic character of John's gospel directed several scholars to suspect a "signs-source" (*semeia-quelle*) for John separate from the hypothesized "source" (*quelle*) that the synoptics theoretically drew upon. See, for example, Robert T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

¹⁷ Examples are not limited to the field of vision alone, although constraints of space suggest the economy of limiting the discussion in this way. But throughout the novel, the status of art works tied to "texts" is interrogated, as, for example, when Lyovin critiques programme music for being illustrative.

¹⁸ Lyovin was probably referring to the sketch for a statue of Pushkin submitted in competition for the centennial by M. M. Antokol'skij (1843-1902). The sketch was exhibited in Moscow in 1875.

¹⁹ I exclude Vronsky, although his gaze certainly constitutes Anna's beauty. However, because he is implicated in her fall, he cannot stand outside of guilt to condemn or judge her. In her contribution to this issue, Kovarsky brilliantly delineates the reader's progress through the stages of conviction and compassion to arrive at the "moral beauty of living by the law of love" (p.15). She accomplished this description by a subtle and commanding analysis of the tropes of infection and characterological infectiousness throughout the novel. My own use of the concept of infection is strongly connected, in this article, to moments of vision, specularly, and picturing, where the infection is accomplished through a figurative *mise-en-abime*.

²⁰ The fact that Lyovin's sympathy for Anna is attacked by Kitty as tinged with sexual seduction, an accusation sustained in Anna's own subsequent thoughts and her cruel thrust at Kitty at their last meeting, does not diminish that aspect of his response that is genuinely compassionate. Kitty forgives Anna instantly, a forgiveness that does not waiver even with Anna's hostile jibe.

²¹ I am expressing in truncated terms, my thesis that *Anna Karenina* is a tragedy, evoking in its readers the classic Aristotelian cathartic response of fear and pity. Curiously, the dimension of forgiveness in the novel has received little critical attention, notable exceptions being Kujundzic, Hogan, and V. Z. Gornaia (1963) cited in C. J. G. Turner, *A Karenina Companion*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1993: p. 195. Kovarsky makes a similar point in her essay in this issue (p.1-2).

²² This precept, which can only be discussed briefly here, is thoroughly elaborated in *What is Art?* Tolstoy's aesthetic philosophy takes us beyond a response of "hate the sin, love the

sinner" to disconsidering the sin and responding only to the suffering of the sinner. Hate has no part in it. Elsewhere I have argued that this response occurs in Tolstoyan aesthetics in response to great art, which I have termed iconic. See *Framing Anna Karenina*.

²³ The Eastern Orthodox manner of genuflection, or more accurately, prostration, is accomplished on both knees. I am thankful to Elizabeth Pallitto for drawing my attention to this.