

ANNA'S ADULTERY: DISTAL SOCIOBIOLOGY VS. PROXIMATE PSYCHOANALYSIS

DANIEL RANCOUR-LAFERRIERE, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

Anna Karenina is, among other things, a novel about adultery. In particular, it is about female adultery, not male adultery. Stiva Oblonsky may be as adulterous as his sister Anna, but the focus is on Anna. Stiva's behavior is unmarked, Anna's is marked. Tolstoy instinctively understands that a woman's adultery is more interesting than a man's. Great novels of adultery — e.g., Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and Fontane's *Effie Briest* — consistently center about an adulteress, not an adulterer.

Some scholars have noticed this asymmetry (e.g., Tanner, 13; Cooke speaks of a "literary focus on female, as opposed to male, infidelity" — 112). The literary asymmetry derives in turn from a rather banal, yet essential biological asymmetry: a man can be cuckolded, and this fact opens up interesting possibilities for fiction; a woman cannot, and *this* fact is about as interesting as a happy family (to extend a Tolstoyan trope).

When a woman has extramarital sex she places in jeopardy her husband's paternity of any subsequent offspring, but when a man has extramarital sex his wife's maternity is not questioned. From this it follows (all other things being equal) that the genes of men who tolerate sexual infidelity in their spouses have a lesser chance of being replicated than do the genes of sexually possessive men. That is, there has been natural selection against tolerance of female adultery. Presumably this is why most men in most cultures have become what they are: bossy, possessive, and generally sexist. They wouldn't be that way if they didn't need women to have their babies for them.¹

Dolly is capable of forgiving Stiva for his sexual escapades or at least looking the other way. Karenin cannot, in the long run, forgive Anna. Nor can society at large. Oblonsky continues to function in society while he is being unfaithful to his wife, but Anna becomes a pariah as a result of being unfaithful to her husband.

Tolstoy means for us to compare male adultery with female adultery, even though the latter is of central interest. He makes siblings of the two major adulterers in the novel, and he repeatedly invites the reader to compare the two of them. The similarity is particularly painful for poor little Serezha, the neglected victim of Anna's sexual waywardness and Karenin's obstinacy. When Stiva accidentally encounters Serezha on a visit to Karenin's, the boy blushes with shame: "He felt uncomfortable at meeting his

¹For abundant cross-cultural documentation, see my *Signs of the Flesh* (91-100) and the references cited therein. For a very interesting application of the sociobiological theory of male jealousy to Pushkin's *Tsygany*, see Cooke.

uncle, *who resembled his mother*, because it awakened those very memories which he considered shameful" (657, italics added).²

The similarity is also painful to Anna, who even tries to deny it in the early stages of falling in love with Vronsky:

'This is a confession of something that oppresses me, and I want to make it to you,' said Anna, determinedly throwing herself back in an arm-chair and looking straight into Dolly's eyes.

And to her surprise Dolly saw that Anna was blushing to her ears and to the curly black locks on her neck.

'Do you know,' continued Anna, 'why Kitty did not come to dinner? She is jealous of me. I have spoiled . . . I mean I was the cause of the ball being a torture instead of a pleasure to her. But really, really I was not to blame, or only a very little,' she said, drawing out the word 'very' in a high-pitched voice.

'Oh how like Stiva you said that,' remarked Dolly laughing.

Anna was annoyed.

'Oh no, no I am not Stiva,' she said frowning. 'The reason I have told you is that I do not even for a moment allow myself to distrust myself.'

But at the moment when she uttered these words she knew they were untrue: she not only distrusted herself but was agitated by the thought of Vronsky, and was leaving sooner than she had intended only that she might not meet him again.(90)

First there is a practically Freudian *Verneinung* ("Oh no, no I am not Stiva..."), but then it is insightfully discarded ("... at the moment when she uttered these words she knew they were untrue...."). But the insight cannot block Anna's free fall into Vronsky's arms. She can no more stop herself than her brother can stop himself.

Early in the novel Anna feels obliged to deal directly with her brother's philandering. But this effort is the start of her own unfaithfulness: while taking the train to Moscow to counsel Dolly regarding Stiva's sexual misbehavior, she first encounters the man who will be her ruin. Before she has even had an opportunity to start repairing her brother's marriage, her own begins to crumble:

The trained insight of a society man enabled Vronsky with a single glance to decide that she belonged to the best society. He apologized for being in her way and was about to enter the carriage, but felt compelled to have another look at her, not because she was very beautiful nor because of the elegance and modest grace of her whole figure, but because he saw in her sweet face as she passed him something specially tender and kind. When he looked round she too turned her head. Her bright grey eyes which seemed dark because of their black lashes rested for a moment on his face as if recognizing him, and then turned to the passing crowd evidently in search of some one. In that short look Vronsky had time to notice the subdued animation that enlivened her face and seemed to flutter between her bright eyes and a scarcely perceptible smile which curved her rosy lips. It was as if an excess of vitality so filled her whole being that it betrayed itself against her

²Page numbers refer to the Maudes' translation; passages quoted in the original Russian are indicated by volume number (Roman numeral) followed by page number.

will, now in her smile, now in the light of her eyes. She deliberately tried to extinguish that light in her eyes, but it shone despite of her in her faint smile. (56)

Again, she cannot stop herself. Some inner light has been lit, and it will not go out until she herself puts it out toward the end of the novel. In the meantime, we as readers are already preparing to excuse Anna for her adultery. As Anthony Thorlby has observed, this particular passage, the first depiction of Anna in the novel, reveals Vronsky falling in love at first sight (Thorlby, 43). Vronsky's first impression is our first impression. How can we not fall in love with Anna as well?

If early in the novel Anna convinces Dolly to forgive Stiva, later on Dolly attempts to return the favor. Having heard of Anna's liaison with Vronsky, Dolly goes to Karenin and manages to speak with him alone. She tries valiantly to soften his heart:

'What can I do?' said Karenin, shrugging his shoulders and raising his eyebrows. The recollection of his wife's last delinquency irritated him so much that he again became as cold as he had been at the beginning of the conversation. 'I am very grateful for your sympathy, but it is time for me to go,' he said rising.

'No, wait a bit! You should not ruin her. Wait a bit. I will tell you about myself. I married, and my husband deceived me; in my anger and jealousy I wished to abandon everything, I myself wished . . . But I was brought to my senses, and by whom? Anna saved me. And here I am living; my children growing, my husband returns to the family and feels his error, grows purer and better, and I live . . . I have forgiven, and you must forgive.'

Karenin listened, but her words no longer affected him. All the bitterness of the day when he decided on a divorce rose again in his soul. He gave himself a shake and began to speak in a loud and piercing voice.

'I cannot forgive; I don't wish to and don't think it would be right. I have done everything for that woman, and she has trampled everything in the mud which is natural to her. I am not a cruel man, I have never hated anyone, but I hate her with the whole strength of my soul and I cannot even forgive her, because I hate her so much for all the wrong she has done me!' he said with tears of anger choking him. (359)

What Dolly fails to observe here, in her fit of Christian kindness, is that Karenin's situation is much worse than hers had ever been, biologically. Her many children are thriving, but Karenin's one child may not even be his own. It's fine for *her* to be forgiving, for she is a great reproductive success. But Karenin cannot forgive for the perfectly good biological reason that Serezha's paternity is doubtful in his mind: "I doubt everything so much that I hate my son, and sometimes believe he is not my son. I am very unhappy" (358).

Of course neither Dolly nor Karenin consciously compute reproductive success in order to arrive at their respective, diametrically opposed decisions. Rather, they behave *as if* they had made such computations. That is all that is required by abstract, Darwinian mathematics. It is psychological mechanisms which do the real work. In Dolly's case masochistic inclinations keep her in the vicinity of her faithless inseminator as she continues to produce offspring. In Karenin's case vengeful, sadistic feelings are (at this

point) directed against the woman who cuckolds him.³ Tolstoy disapproves of such feelings, of course, as is clear from the repeated biblical epigraph stating that only the highest ranking male — God — is permitted to be a sadist ("Mne otmschenie, i az vozdam").

What about Anna herself? What is the distal, Darwinian cause of her adultery, and what proximate psychological mechanisms move her to an action which, theoretically at least, might foster the further replication of her genes?

A woman who rejects a husband and takes a lover is putting herself at risk of losing resources for herself and her previous offspring while at the same time she is not necessarily gaining any increased probability of producing more offspring. She can only give birth once every year or so at the most, after all (while a man could theoretically parent several children by different women in that same period of time). What, then, is the reproductive advantage for a woman to commit adultery?

Elsewhere I have proposed several possible advantages (*Signs of the Flesh*, 83-90), but here I wish to concentrate specifically on the advantages available to Anna Karenina in her specific social situation. Anna has had one child by Karenin. But that was approximately eight years previous to the time frame of the novel. In the meantime, the marriage has been sterile in both the reproductive and psychological senses. There is no hint that further offspring could be produced with Karenin. Anna is a young woman in her prime, and her maternal inclinations and abilities are obvious (she is devoted to Serezha, Dolly's children climb all over her at the beginning of the novel, etc.). Karenin, on the other hand, is twenty years older than she is and, more important, he is sexually uninteresting. Tolstoy makes this clear in the early bedroom scenes. For example:

Exactly at midnight, when Anna was still sitting at her writing-table finishing a letter to Dolly, she heard the measured tread of slippers, and Karenin entered, freshly washed, his hair brushed, and a book under his arm.

'It's time! It's time!' said he with a significant smile, going into their bedroom.

'And what right had he to look at him as he did?' thought Anna, remembering how Vronsky had looked at Karenin.

When she was undressed she went into the bedroom, but on her face not only was there not a trace of that animation which during her stay in Moscow had sparkled in her eyes and smile, but on the contrary the fire in her now seemed quenched or hidden somewhere very far away. (103)

At a purely intellectual level Anna believes her husband is a kind, truthful, and generally admirable person. He has moral stature (even if his ears stick out in an annoying way). It is alright to sleep with him (even if he comes to bed with a book under his arm, even if in a later bedroom scene he falls to loudly snoring right after having declared "I love you"). Anna *could* go on living with Karenin in this fashion, she *could* deflect Vronsky's

³For a brief period, when it appears that Anna is going to die (and will therefore not be able to cuckold Karenin anymore), Karenin takes a forgiving stance. This is only temporary, however. Later he becomes spiteful again and is ashamed of having forgiven Anna.

advances. But she cannot seem to do without that special animation which Vronsky brings to *her eyes*.

'So you really are going tomorrow?' said Vronsky.

'Yes, I think so,' Anna replied as if surprised at the boldness of his question; but the *uncontrollable radiance of her eyes* and her smile set him on fire as she spoke the words. (76, italics added)

... Just for an instant as she looked at [Vronsky] he saw *a gleam in her eyes* and, though the spark was at once extinguished, that one instant made him happy. (97, italics added)

'Do this for me [Anna says to Vronsky]: never say such words to me, and let us be good friends.' These were her words, *but her eyes said something very different*. (127, italics added)

The most distal possible interpretation of this gleam in Anna's eye is the advantageousness of more offspring. An obvious proximate interpretation is sexual desire. As it turns out, going over to Vronsky does pay off reproductively, for Anna gives birth to a daughter. Psychologically, however, she remains unfulfilled. She may have done the right thing from a sociobiological perspective, but something is very wrong at the psychological level. This suggests that the obvious interpretation of the gleam in Anna's eye is incomplete at best.

Of course, Tolstoy *needs* for something to be wrong in order to give his readers a juicy plot. But a closer look at Anna in sexual situations even early in the novel reveals why something *had* to go wrong later.

The curious thing about Anna's itch for sexual change is that it is not really very sexual at all. The gleam in her eye signifies so much more than her sexuality. Many critics mistakenly believe that Anna is "swept away by physical passion" (Wasiolek, 131). In fact, eroticism is only a small part of Anna's growing need for a new sexual object. When she does have sex with Vronsky for the first time there is not the slightest indication that she gains sexual pleasure, although it is clear that Vronsky does.

The two of them are on the floor next to a sofa right after the act is over. Anna is filled with shame and horror at what she has just done. Her humiliation is practically physical ("fizicheski chuvstvovala svoe unizhenie" — VIII, 178). In vain Vronsky tries to console her. Suddenly she pushes him away and sits up:

'It's all over,' she said. 'I have nothing but you left. Remember that.'

'I cannot help remembering what is life itself to me! For one moment of that bliss. . .'

'What bliss?' she said with disgust and horror, and the horror was involuntarily communicated to him. 'For heaven's sake, not another word!'

She rose quickly and moved away from him.

'Not another word!' she repeated, and with a look of cold despair, strange to him, she left him. She felt that at that moment she could not express in words her feeling of shame, joy, and horror at this entrance on a new life, and she did not wish to vulgarize that feeling by inadequate words. Later on, the next day and the next, she still could not

find words to describe all the complexity of those feelings, and could not even find thoughts with which to reflect on all that was in her soul. (136)

The word "bliss" ("*schast'e*") actually disgusts Anna here, although bliss is supposedly what Anna has been seeking with Vronsky for "nearly a year."

Very well, then, perhaps the first time is not the best time. But subsequent times are not much better either. The slightest indications of any sexual pleasure are regularly and massively cancelled out by feelings of humiliation, shame, degradation. Sociobiological expectations about the slightly greater modesty and sexual repression in females than in males (see my *Signs of the Flesh*, 162 ff.) are not enough to explain Anna's severe reaction to her own sexual misbehavior. Even when Anna manages to take pride in Vronsky's love, shame springs back to overwhelm her:

She had only his love left, and she wanted to love him. 'Try to understand that since I loved you everything has changed for me. There is only one single thing in the world for me: your love! If I have it, I feel so high and firm that nothing can be degrading for me. I am proud of my position because . . . proud of . . . proud . . .' — she could not say what she was proud of. Tears of shame and despair choked her. She stopped and burst into sobs. (288-89)

Through the middle parts of the novel Anna's pride ("*gordost'*") and shame ("*styd*") are in precarious balance, with little room left for actual pleasure, sexual or otherwise.

What Vronsky *does* give Anna, and what she gains immense pleasure from early in the novel is his slavish devotion. Nontechnically speaking, she is more concerned that he stroke her ego than stroke her erogenous zones:

She turned round, and instantly recognized Vronsky. With his hand in salute, he bowed and asked if she wanted anything and whether he could be of any service to her. For some time she looked into his face without answering, and, though he stood in the shade she noticed, or thought she noticed, the expression of his face and eyes. It was the same expression of respectful ecstasy that had so affected her the night before. She had assured herself more than once during those last few days, and again a moment ago, that Vronsky in relation to her was only one of the hundreds of everlastingly identical young men she met everywhere, and that she would never allow herself to give him a thought; yet now, at the first moment of seeing him again, she was seized by a feeling of joyful pride [*ee okhvatilo chuvstvo radostnoi gordosti*]. There was no need for her to ask him why he was there. She knew as well as if he had told her, that he was there in order to be where she was.

'I did not know that you were going too. Why are you going?' she asked, dropping the hand with which she was about to take hold of the handrail. Her face beamed with a joy and animation she could not repress.

'Why am I going?' he repeated, looking straight into her eyes. 'You know that I am going in order to be where you are,' said he. 'I cannot do otherwise.' (94/VIII, 124)

Vronsky is true to his word. He goes where Anna goes for the rest of the novel (except under the wheels of the train). In traditional psychoanalytic terms, Vronsky is constantly

shoring up Anna's delicate self-esteem with needed narcissistic supplies.⁴ In Kohutian terms, Vronsky becomes complicit in Anna's growing narcissistic personality disorder.⁵ Vronsky may be a gambler and a good-for-nothing, he may not treat Frou-Frou very well, but he does not let up on the servility toward Anna. Even late in the novel he is remarkably patient with Anna's jealous tantrums, and he never stops making adjustments for *her* benefit: "He, so virile a man, not only never contradicted her, but where she was concerned seemed to have no will of his own and to be only occupied with anticipating her every wish" (422). At one point Anna herself compares him to an obedient dog (690).

If toward the end of the novel this servility is no longer an adequate support for Anna's self-esteem, at the beginning it was essential to her move toward adultery. Karenin, after all, was doing nothing to satisfy her narcissistic wants (cf. Rothstein, 237-40). He, in effect, induced her dissatisfaction with herself. Thus, shortly after receiving the servile salute from Vronsky, Anna arrives back in Petersburg to confront a lower opinion of herself: "She was particularly struck by the feeling of dissatisfaction *with herself* which she experienced when she met him [Karenin]" (95, italics added).

The narrator focuses not so much on Anna's sense of her sexuality as on her sense of herself, that is, on her narcissistic concerns. A striking example of this is the early bedroom scene with Karenin, right after he has begun his famous snoring. An opportunity for sexual interaction has just been missed. Anna is now thinking of Vronsky, naturally, and her heart fills "with excitement and guilty joy at the thought." But it is the eye-imagery which (again) reveals her very deepest thoughts:

'It's late, it's late,' she whispered to herself, and smiled. For a long time she lay still with wide-open eyes, the brightness of which it seemed to her she could herself see in the darkness [blesk kotorykh, ei kazalos', ona sama v temnote videla]. (134/VIII, 176)

In other words, Anna is so much on her mind to herself that she can practically see herself. At this moment she is a female Narcissus positively evaluating the image of herself, her "*blesk*," her *glory* — to give the Russian word its standard metaphorical meaning.

Then, on the very next page, she sleeps with Vronsky for the first time, and never again will have sex with Karenin. There is no sign of an orgasm, but there is "*blesk*." Meantime, a "new Anna" has come into existence, and there begins the long process of the disintegration of her personality (cf. Bulanov on the "*raspad sobstvennogo ja*" in Anna, 32; Sémon on Anna's "*clivage de la personnalité*," 324-28; also Thorlby, 79 and Mandelker, 61).

The bedtime self-observation scene is but one of many instances where Anna seems to split, psychologically. Her splitting is an important feature of her growing narcissistic disturbance. On the train ride back to Petersburg, for example, she falls half asleep and

⁴See Fenichel (135-36; 387-89) on the notion of narcissistic supplies.

⁵For a psychoanalysis of Anna from the viewpoint of Heinz Kohut's theory of the narcissistic personality, see Rothstein (235-49). Armstrong (70-106) utilizes what might be best characterized as a "French Freud" approach to Anna's narcissism.

asks herself: "...am I here, myself? Am I myself or another [*Ja sama ili drugaia*]?" (92/VIII, 122). Shortly after giving birth to a daughter she declares to Karenin that "there is another in me," that is, the person who fell in love with Vronsky is not really Anna herself ("*Ta ne ia*" — 375/VIII, 483). That "other" person will eventually have to be (self-) punished for what she does, and the punishment will ultimately take the form of suicide. In the meantime that "other" continues to be in desperate need of narcissistic supplies. The fits of jealousy are designed to provoke even more adoration than Vronsky has already given. Anna recognizes that her love for Vronsky grows not only increasingly passionate, but also increasingly narcissistic ("*strastnee i sebiplibfubivee*" — IX, 382, emphasis added). At one point, when Vronsky is away, Anna splits in two again and gives *herself* a little narcissistic boost:

‘Who is that?’ she thought, gazing in the mirror at the feverish, frightened face with the strangely brilliant eyes looking at her. ‘Yes, that is I!’ she suddenly realized, and looking at her whole figure she suddenly felt his kisses, shuddered, and moved her shoulders. *Then she raised her hand to her lips and kissed it.*

‘What is it? Am I going mad?’ and she went to her bedroom, where Annushka was tidying up. (683, italics added)

The answer to Anna’s question has to be affirmative: she *is* going mad if she is willing to accept *herself* as a substitute for Vronsky to gratify herself. This is not mere masturbation. It is a crumbling of narcissistic structure, a disintegration which Tolstoy emphasizes by placing *four* "Annas" within the one scene:

- 1) *Anna* herself (to the extent that she is herself)
- 2) *Anna’s reflection* in the mirror
- 3) The little daughter *Annie*, with whom Anna has just played, but who has just disappointed her because she is not her son ("How is this? That’s not it — this is not he!" — 682)
- 4) *Anna’s maid Annushka*⁶

Tolstoy’s heroine seems to be breaking up into narrative bits and pieces. This fragmentation presages the physical smashing up of Anna’s body by the train a few pages later.

It would be tempting to conclude that the way Tolstoy treats Anna toward the end of her life reflects hostility toward her (he would not treat his other double, Levin, that way). Such a conclusion would require evidence from outside the novel, however, for unlike the rather sloppy elimination of H el ene Kuragina from *War and Peace* (see Rancour-Laferriere, 1993, 216-19), Anna’s destruction is organic to the overall narrative trajectory of *Anna Karenina*. It is clear and credible that Anna experiences great hostility toward *herself*. She is a masochist — quite apart from the issue of whether Tolstoy is a sadist in his treatment of her.

⁶Anna’s little English proteg e, *Hannah*, is not present in this scene, however. Cf. also Armstrong, 123 and Mandelker, 61.

The masochism is not erotogenic, but moral.⁷ Anna gains no sexual pleasure from the harm she does herself. There is perpetual guilt (see, e.g., Stern, 371; Rothstein, 242-43; Gustafson, 121-27), which is an internal form of self-punishment. As for external punishment, Anna arranges for that as well. She gets into a position where she *knows* she can expect nothing but suffering:

She sat down at her writing-table, but instead of writing she folded her arms on the table and put her head on them, and began to cry, sobbing with her whole bosom heaving, as a child cries.

She wept because the hopes of clearing up and defining her position were destroyed for ever. *She knew beforehand that everything would remain as it was and would be even far worse than before.* She felt that, insignificant as it had appeared that morning, the position she held in society was dear to her, and that she would not have the strength to change it for the degraded position of a woman who had forsaken husband and child and formed a union with her lover; that, however much she tried, she could not become stronger than herself. She would never be able to feel the freedom of love, but would always be a guilty woman continually threatened with exposure, deceiving her husband for the sake of a shameful union with a man who was a stranger and independent of her, and with whom she could not live a united life. *She knew that it would be so,* and yet it was so terrible that she could not even imagine how it would end. And she cried, without restraint, like a punished child. (267-68/VIII, 345, italics added)

Here Anna is aware in the depths of her soul that she is never going to experience that "freedom of love" ("*nikogda ne ispytaet svobody liubvi*") which she supposedly committed adultery for. Such knowledge should certainly make her cry "like a punished child," as Tolstoy's narrator says — or rather like a child who has *invited* punishment, to be psychoanalytically specific. Passages such as these convey the impression that Anna maintains her illegitimate affair with Vronsky *in order to harm herself and to be humiliated, not only to gain narcissistic supplies.* If Dolly's moral masochism resides in her humble acceptance of Stiva's constant philandering, Anna's consists of an ever-increasing, depressive self-destructiveness which climaxes in the most masochistic conceivable act: suicide.

Anna's narcissism may be what sets her adultery in motion, but her masochism is what gives it its decisively downward trajectory. It was perfectly possible for a woman to be adulterous, even in late nineteenth century Russian high society, without having to destroy herself into the bargain. For example, Anna could have continued seeing Vronsky discreetly, away from the Karenin household. For a while Karenin is willing to look the other way. But no, Anna invites her lover over, and the two Aleksei's meet at her entranceway (there is a male homosexual fantasy buried here). Or, she could even have divorced Karenin at one point. But instead she runs off to Italy with Vronsky without

⁷Freud's essay "On the Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924) establishes this basic distinction. Etymologically the word "masochism" derives from the name Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895), an author of novels describing desired sexual humiliation.

bothering to obtain a divorce, and leaving her supposedly beloved son behind. Subsequent misery is inevitable.

Most of the critics have understood how self-defeating and self-destructive is Anna's behavior. The psychoanalytic label "masochism," however, has not been applied, nor has the relevant psychoanalytic literature been cited⁸ — partly out of ignorance, partly out of the traditional Slavistic aversion to psychoanalysis, and partly just because it is so difficult to understand why anyone would *consistently seek self-humiliation and self-defeat*.

In Edward Wasiolek's sensitive reading of the novel, for example, there are many observations about Anna's deliberately keeping her love for Vronsky unsatisfied and her tendency to set up bad situations for herself. Here is an example:

...there is evidence that Anna needs a rejecting society—even its insults and cruelties. There is a very revealing scene after her return to Russia from Italy that underscores this need. Anna insists on going to the opera in a low-cut dress with the Princess Oblonsky, a person of doubtful reputation. By going out openly in society when her cohabitation with Vronsky is known, she exposes herself to public humiliation. Vronsky, horrified by Anna's intention, is astonished at her inability to understand what she is doing. Anna does understand, of course, but she purposely misunderstands. She knows that she is throwing down the gauntlet to society. Yet Anna wants to be humiliated, cut off from society, because by so doing she will also cut Vronsky off from society. (Wasiolek, 146-47)

There is considerable (unacknowledged) psychoanalytic insight here — except for the very last clause: Anna does not humiliate herself *because* of a need to "cut Vronsky off from society." Such a *sadistic* wish is really irrelevant at this point. Anna's *masochism*, however repulsive to the normal reader, is what makes her go out and seek public humiliation. Eventually she does "punish" Vronsky by killing herself, of course, but the sadism of this act pales by comparison with its self-destructiveness. Anna is really too preoccupied with herself, too childish, in effect, to understand how much she hurts Vronsky. Her major project is to hurt herself.

How is Anna's masochism possible? Here the psychoanalytic literature on the ontogeny of moral masochism can be of some help. Freud was inclined to trace masochistic practices back to defective early interaction with the parents, especially the Oedipal father. More recent psychoanalytic studies, however, focus on problematical pre-Oedipal interaction with the mother. For example, the mother may not have been sensitive enough to the child's need for milk, she may have been emotionally unresponsive (or responded inappropriately) in dyadic interaction with the child, she may have physically abused the child, she may have abandoned the child at some point, etc. Such a mother has, in a sense, defeated her child, and the child, having had no adequate experience of

⁸The only exception I am aware of is Judith M. Armstrong's interesting study titled *The Unsaid Anna Karenina* (and the comments on this study by Adelman, 89-90). Armstrong, however, gives the impression that Anna's masochism is erotogenic rather than moral (see especially pp. 89, 96, 105-6), or that it is a manifestation of the Freudian death drive (i.e., "primary masochism"). Most psychoanalysts reject the idea of a death drive. Anna's death wish, the existence of which is abundantly demonstrated by Armstrong, is best viewed as the emotional extreme of Anna's moral masochism.

what it means to be victorious may grow up to be someone who tends to engage in self-defeating behavior. The masochist *repeats* prior defeats. In effect: "I shall repeat the masochistic wish of being deprived by my mother, by creating or misusing situations in which some substitute of my pre-oedipal mother-image shall refuse my wishes" (Bergler, 5). The mother herself is not necessarily "at fault" in the problematical early interaction (e.g., her child may suffer from a genetic defect which makes the interaction difficult, or she may die unexpectedly). In any case, it is the psychoanalytic consensus that *something* went wrong in the masochist's early interaction with his or her mother — regardless of who was "at fault." As Kerry Kelly Novick and Jack Novick assert, "...the first layer of masochism must be sought in early infancy, in the child's adaptation to a situation where safety resides only in a painful relationship with the mother" (Novick and Novick, 360).

Wasiolek (157) claims that nothing is known of Anna's childhood. This is not true, however. Some crucial information is available: Anna was brought up by her aunt (673), and when she married it was the aunt who made the arrangements (461). Therefore Anna must have been deprived of her mother for much of her childhood, for whatever reason. Perhaps also her father was absent. In any case she is essentially an orphan — as are so many of Tolstoy's major characters — e.g., Pierre Bezukhov, Andrei Bolkonskii, Aleksei Karenin, Konstantin Levin (see Gustafson, 14; see also Armstrong, and Rancour-Laferriere, 1993, 64-67 on the importance of motherlessness in Tolstoy's works). If *most* of the upbringing was accomplished by the aunt (as suggested by the imperfective verb "*vospityvalas*" — IX, 361), then Anna probably lost her mother early. This loss, which would normally be experienced by a young child as painful abandonment, is a plausible ontogenetic basis for Anna's masochism (as well as her generally disturbed narcissism). Wasiolek himself (without citing any of the psychoanalytic literature on masochism) suspects that Anna's suicide has something to do with her mother (157). Anna's last thoughts concern childhood. She tucks her head down ("*vzhav v plechi golovu*" — IX, 389) just before leaping under the train, as if going into a fetal position. She recalls the childhood sensation of preparing to go into the water for a swim ("*voiti v vodu*"). In Russian folklore water is often characterized as maternal: "*Plevat' na vodu, vse odno, chto materi v glaza,*" to quote a peasant proverb (see my *Slave Soul of Russia*, Ch. 8 for more examples). The psychoanalytic literature on water symbolism (e.g., Dundes) would indicate that Anna is making one last desperate attempt to retrieve the mother. Some of the clinicians who work with masochistic patients believe that masochistic sequences are unconsciously intended to enact a merger with the mother (e.g., Asch).

Anna herself is a mother. Within the time-frame of the novel she gives birth to her second child, a daughter by Vronsky. The post-partum period is intensely depressive and masochistic. Anna is certain she is going to die. She persists in this belief even after she has recovered from her puerperal fever. Karenin has (temporarily) forgiven both her and Vronsky, yet she still anticipates death. She hates Karenin, perhaps because his own current masochistic stance reflects hers. She sees suicide as the only way out. But her light-hearted, nonmasochistic brother and fellow-adulterer Stiva intervenes, persuading Karenin to go through with a divorce. Anna understands this to mean she is free to leave Karenin, and she does leave him, thereby averting immediate self-destruction. But she

cannot stop punishing herself. She refuses the divorce decisively, and makes no effort to take her son with her as she runs off to Italy with Vronsky. She never will bring herself to divorce Karenin and marry Vronsky, believing that marriage to him would only be continuation of the (unrecognizedly self-inflicted) "*muchen'e*" (IX, 383) she endures with him toward the end of the novel.

Anna eventually comes to believe that life is nothing but suffering for everyone, not just herself. Florid projection characterizes her final hours. Seeing a beggar-woman (mother) and child in the street, she thinks: "Are we not all flung into the world only to hate each other, and therefore to torment ourselves and others [*muchat' sebia i drugikh*]?" (691/IX, 384). We are all created *in order to suffer* ("*...vse my sozdany zatem, chtoby muchat'sia...*" — IX, 386). In other words, in creating us our mothers deliberately meant for us to suffer. That is the accusation Anna is unconsciously hurling at her mother, after having hurled similarly narcissistic accusations at her mother-icon, Vronsky, on many of the preceding pages of the novel.

There is much else of psychoanalytic interest which takes place just before Anna commits suicide. But we have come a long way from her adultery. After death, of course, there is no adultery. The light which goes out at the end ("*...svecha...potukhla*" — IX, 389) is precisely the one Anna could not put out upon first seeing Vronsky ("*Ona potushila umyshlenno svet v glazakh, no on svetilsia protiv ee voli...*" — VIII, 77). But, although that light signified adulterous sexual desire, it also represented Anna's narcissism, as we have seen. In the traditionally collectivist Russian culture it is even more important to quash narcissism than to prevent adultery. By killing herself Anna may not turn outward to busy herself with the concerns of others. But she does put a definite stop to her obsessive self-concern.

Anna's suicidal masochism not only puts a stop to her adultery and narcissism, it also forecloses further reproductive success. This is the distal, Darwinian consequence of her last act. And it is an appropriate consequence. From a sociobiological perspective, an individual who can no longer either reproduce or render altruism to others in the collective — especially genetically related individuals — is as good as dead anyway. Technically speaking: "...suicide typically occurs among individuals whose residual capacity to promote inclusive fitness is seriously impaired" (de Catanzaro, 319). We would all live forever if we could all reproduce and care for offspring and relatives forever. Anna is not just psychologically disturbed (depressed, narcissistic, masochistic, etc.) toward the end of her life; she is also a reproductive wreck. She is emotionally incapable of either producing more offspring or of caring for the offspring and other relatives she already has. It is especially difficult to imagine how she might render altruism to anyone related to her (sharing genes with her). The psychological appropriateness of her death reflects its biological appropriateness, proximate mechanisms match distal, Darwinian considerations. This does not always happen in unruly reality, of course, but somehow it seems right that it should happen in great art.

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