'WINDOWS TO THE SOUL': Seeing Through the Illuminating Eyes of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*

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"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

- Matthew 6: 22-24[1]

As scholars and artists alike have understood since the earliest records of humanity, eyes are one of the most important gateways into a person's complex inner identity. Connected directly to this scripture from Matthew, Leo Tolstoy is another such writer who adeptly employs the motif of eyes in his masterpiece *Anna Karenina* to help his readers not only unlock glimpses into protagonist Anna's moral character and harrowing internal struggle, but also link her to characters Alexei Vronsky, Konstantin Levin, Alexei Alexandrovich, and even horse Frou-Frou. Throughout the novel, this ever-evolving optic symbolism exhibits Anna's inner struggle between the hedonistic passions of her body, which transport her to a world of fantasy, and the guilty reasoning of her mind, which relegate Anna to her agonizing reality. Heavily

[1] *New International Version Holy Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.

drawing upon the socio-religious implications of Anna's choices to pursue an adulterous relationship with Vronsky, and later, commit suicide, Tolstoy artfully pivots between depictions of Anna's eyes as "shining," "narrowing," "fiery," and "cold" to accentuate her battle against constraining societal and gender norms, against religious condemnation, and especially, against herself.

Through the eyes of Vronsky, her soon-to-be lover, the reader first meets Anna as she steps out of the train:

> *the restrained animation…fluttered between her shining eyes….as if a surplus of something so overflowed her being that it expressed itself beyond her will, now in the brightness of her glance, now in her smile. She deliberately extinguished the light in her eyes, but it shone against her will in a barely noticeable smile.*[2]

Vronsky's first impression of Anna immediately reveals her fight to suppress her inmost feelings that manifest as if "beyond her will." Here, one also makes the important realization that Anna's eyes are beacons of her true feelings, becoming bright with passion and having to be forcefully "extinguished" when they do not fit her society's definition of "proper" body language. In line with Anna's initial "extinguishing" of her eyes, whenever Vronsky or her husband Alexei Alexandrovich are involved, Anna's eyes often relay her passion and vulnerability toward the former and her guilt and deceit toward the latter. For example, when the newly acquainted pair meets Anna's husband at the station, "something flashed in [Anna's] eyes and although this fire went out at once, [Vronsky] was happy in that moment."[3] The rhetoric surrounding these early attempts to "extinguish" the "fire" in Anna's eyes links directly to her suicide and to the eternal damnation she faces by giving into this dangerous love.

Both notions of Anna's impending suicide and her religious damnation are present when her husband Alexei seeks her out to discuss

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[2] Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina,* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin, 2003), 61.

[3] Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina,* 106.

her rumored infidelity. This topic causes Anna's "face [to glow] with a bright glow; but this glow was not happy – it was like the terrible glow of a fire on a dark night."[4] After Alexei tells Anna, "Only a crime can break this bond, and a crime of that sort draws down a heavy punishment," the "mocking spark" in her eyes goes out completely, alluding to the life leaving her body at the end of the novel.[5] The "shine," "terrible glow," and fiery "spark" in Anna's eyes throughout this confrontation represents her passion and, according to Alexei, her deceit, sinfulness, and purposeful devilishness. Afterward, Tolstoy writes that Anna's "eyes lay open, and it seemed to her that she herself could see them shining in the darkness."[6] Anna's awareness of her "shining" eyes highlights the adulterous guilt that already plagues her and the conscious attempts she repeatedly makes to deceive society, her husband, and even herself about her true feelings.

Anna's torturous entrapment within this socio-religious, self-deceiving struggle is most evident in Tolstoy's intentional comparison between her and Vronsky's cherished racehorse, Frou-Frou. After Vronsky and Anna's sexual episode, Anna's humiliation and guilt surrounding their act causes Vronsky to feel "what a murderer must feel when he looks at the body he has deprived of life," and to feel that this body:

> *deprived of life was their love….There was something horrible and loathsome in his recollections of what had been paid for with this terrible price of shame. Shame at her spiritual nakedness weighed on her and communicated itself to him.*[7]

Swapping one sin (adultery) for another (murder), Tolstoy's diction here makes it clear that the "shame," "spiritual nakedness," and this

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[4] Tolstoy, 145.

[5] Ibid., 147.

[6] Tolstoy, 148. Alexei Alexandrovich can be viewed as a synecdoche for—or at least archetype of—aristocratic society.

[7] Ibid., 149.

"terrible price" all weigh on Anna to such an extent that they consume her, and Vronsky is the one to deliver the final blow. Moreover, Vronsky viewing Anna as a dead body instead of a living human paves the way for her comparison to the horse Frou-Frou.[8]

In a parallel situation during the race, Vronsky feels "to his horror that, having failed to keep up with the horse's movement, he, not knowing how…had made a wrong…unforgivable movement as he lowered himself into the saddle."[9] In these two instances, Vronsky indirectly (and "unforgivably") murders both Anna and Frou-Frou: he *acts* on his love for the former, which dehumanizes her and transforms her into a shame-filled corpse, while he *forgets* to act on behalf of the latter, which also leads to her death. Further interweaving Anna and Frou-Frou's fates, Tolstoy also pays special attention to Frou-Frou's eyes, which, like Anna's, are "fire-filled"[10] and "lovely" to Vronsky.[11]

Bringing this condemning comparison to its pique, Tolstoy parallels Frou-Frou's loss of physical control with that of Anna's simultaneous loss of emotional control during Vronsky's fall. Crucially, when Frou-Frou is "fluttering on the ground at [Vronsky's] feet like a wounded bird,"[12] Anna gasps loudly and a change comes over her face in a "positively improper [way]….She was completely at a loss. She [too] started thrashing about like a trapped bird…"[13] This impactful parallel between Anna and Frou-Frou's premature deaths, fiery eyes, and

[8] Ibid., 520: As Alexei disapprovingly surmises later, "…these Vronskys and Oblonskys…these gentlemen of the bed-chamber with their fat calves…[are] juicy, strong, undoubting people" who "feel," "love," and "marry differently." From Anna and Vronsky's sexual episode, it is clear that Anna has given in to the excessive, animalistic, and worldly pleasures that both these "gentlemen of the bed-chamber"—her brother Stiva Oblonsky and her lover Vronsky—enjoy.

[9] Ibid., 199.

[10] Tolstoy, 195.

[11] Ibid., 200.

[12] Ibid., 199-200.

[13] Ibid., 210.

birdlike powerlessness to hide their mortal weaknesses denotes Anna's inability to defeat religious condemnation, master her romantic vulnerability, and veil her true feelings from society, as is evident in her involuntary bodily reactions and her burning, shining eyes.[14]

As the narrative progresses, Anna's struggle to conceal her vulnerabilities stemming from the adulterous affair reaches new heights. Tolstoy often notes that Anna is "afraid" of Vronsky's love. Most notably, this fear comes across when Vronsky first confesses his love and Anna, "…all aflame with the blush that burned her face," rests her "eyes on him, filled with love, and made no answer. 'There it is!' he thought with rapture….'She loves me. She's confessed it.'"[15] This moment displays Anna's "confession" of her true feelings as revealed through her eyes, even when reason demands otherwise. Likewise, Tolstoy's diction of "burned" and "aflame" to describe Anna's eyes embodies the fantastical world in her heart, which is gradually being smothered by the socio-religious consequences of the sins connected to this love. Another example of Anna's vulnerability to Vronsky is evident during their getaway to Italy, specifically when Tolstoy writes that her "…admiration for [Vronsky] often frightened her: she sought and failed to find anything not beautiful in him….she feared nothing so much now, though she had no reason for it, as losing his love."[16] Even in fantastical moments most far removed from reminders of her sins, Anna still irrationally fears that by acting on her love for Vronsky, she

[14] Ibid., 547: This public airing of Anna's vulnerability is similar to the opera scene, as viewed through Vronsky's perspective, during which Anna is openly ridiculed by Madame Kartasov. Here, "Vronsky did not understand precisely what had taken place…but he realized that it had been humiliating for Anna. He realized it both from what he had seen and, most of all, from Anna's look. He knew she had gathered her last forces in order to maintain the role she had taken upon herself." Here, Anna blames Vronsky for her humiliation because she faced it on her own, just like she does during the racing fiasco, and just like she does when she dies alone.

[15] Tolstoy, 140.

[16] Ibid., 463-64: Finally removed from society's hateful gaze, Anna experiences this trip like a "blissful, feverish dream."

has permanently closed all other doors to happiness, both in traditional Petersburg society and in the eyes of the Divine; thus, Vronsky's love is the last remaining hope to which Anna can cling.

Conversely, Tolstoy purposely describes Anna's eyes as "impenetrable" when viewed from her husband Alexei's perspective. Her "laughing eyes" frighten him "in their impenetrability,"[17] and later, while gazing at Anna's portrait, the same "impenetrable eyes" look at Alexei "insolently and mockingly….[and] the sight of the black lace on her head …impressed him as unbearably insolent and defiant."[18] Likely, Anna's eyes appear "impenetrable" to her husband because she does not feel romantic love for him, and therefore cannot be as vulnerable with him as she can be with Vronsky. Anna also puts up this emotional shield toward Alexei because he and the overall society he represents are the main aspects of Anna's reality that she despises most. Despite Anna's "luminous, serene" eyes showing "rapturous tenderness" toward Alexei when she almost dies in childbirth and begs his forgiveness, Alexei's otherwise lack of insight into his wife's world feeds into Anna's broader habit of narrowing her eyes when she must face the harshness of her present reality and the gloominess of the future.[19] While Anna makes her eyes "impenetrable" to Alexei and society because she does not want them to see into the "darkness" of her inner soul, Anna narrows her eyes because she is trying to deceive *herself* regarding her own oppressive and miserable reality.

From sister-in-law Dolly's shrewd observations, we are introduced to Anna's habit of narrowing her eyes "precisely when it [is] a matter of the most intimate sides of life…As if she narrows her eyes at life in order not to see it at all."[20] Dolly first notices Anna's eyes narrowing after she asks Dolly's opinion about her current societal

[17] Ibid., 146.

[18] Ibid., 284. Significantly, this portrait of Anna is the first of three in the novel.

[19] Tolstoy, 412-13.

[20] Ibid., 628.

situation, to which Dolly replies, "'I have no opinion…but I've always loved you, and when you love someone, you love the whole person, as they are, and not as you'd like them to be."[21] Ever the voice of compassion and truth, Dolly's words cause Anna's eyes to narrow as she struggles to accept her friend's advice, considering particularly that in relation to Vronsky, "…at every meeting, [Anna] was bringing together her imaginary idea of him (an incomparably better one, impossible in reality) with him as he was"[22]; furthermore, that "all the cruelest words a coarse man could say, he said to her in her imagination, and she could not forgive him for them, as if he had actually said them to her."[23] Clearly, Anna's narrowed eyes which distance herself from her unpleasant reality complement her disjointed, often incongruous and unrealistic expectations of Vronsky.

From this episode onward, Anna also narrows her eyes each time Dolly brings up her children and future plans. When Dolly asks Anna whether she will have more children, Anna answers by "narrowing her eyes…as if peering at something in the distance"[24] and responds, "What children?"[25] Instances like this one demonstrate Anna's attempt to avoid dwelling on her current reality and on the futures of her children, whose lives, simply by being related to her, have been tainted by her transgressions—or at least, so she seems to believe. Ominously, the last time Anna visits Dolly before her suicide, Dolly asks her twice "When are you leaving?", to which Anna looks "straight ahead with narrowed eyes" and does not answer.[26] Though Dolly is simply referring to Anna leaving the city, it is clear that this question symbolically alludes to

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[21] Ibid., 614.

[22] Ibid., 357.

[23] Ibid., 751.

[24] Tolstoy, 618-19.

[25] Ibid., 637.

[26] Ibid., 759.

Anna's continued avoidance of her circumstances and her growing desire to "leave" life in order to be permanently rid of her pain.

Further exemplifying this struggle between Anna's fantasies of the heart and body versus socio-religious realities of the mind, Tolstoy infuses hot versus cold symbolism and diction when portraying Anna and Vronsky's relationship. Throughout the novel, Vronsky's love remains the "very thing that [Anna's] soul desire[s] but that her reason fear[s];"[27] however, the pair's feelings toward each other devolve as the narrative continues. In the earlier stages of their relationship, Anna feels "joy shining in her eyes" that she cannot "extinguish" and feels her soul "lit up"[28] by Vronsky's presence. Contrastingly, by the end of the novel, Anna's "incomprehensible,"[29] "coldly stern"[30] gazes at Vronsky are met by equally "cruel, menacing,"[31] "stony, stern expression[s]"[32] that "[grow] colder and colder"[33] and carry the "look[s] of a persecuted and embittered man."[34] Apart from extreme external pressures facing the couple, this slow "cooling off"[35] of their love is also a direct result of both Vronsky's lack of communication and Anna's "painful [purgatory-like] state of expectation, between heaven and earth, in which she live[s] in Moscow" with him.[36] Unlike Alexei, whom Anna never fully allows into her inner world, Vronsky *has* seen Anna beneath the "veil," at her

[27] Ibid., 103.

[28] Ibid., 128-29.

[29] Ibid., 543.

[30] Ibid., 750.

[31] Ibid., 744.

[32] Tolstoy, 667.

[33] Ibid., 706.

[34] Ibid., 668.

[35] Ibid., 666. – fittingly.

[36] Ibid., 740.

most vulnerable, which causes her not only to fear that Vronsky's "cold hatred"[37] will replace his warm love for her, but also to realize that the exciting feelings of her romantic (yet embarrassingly unofficial) union with Vronsky do not compensate for the societal backlash and impending religious damnation awaiting her.

Subsequently, Anna's recurring nightmare which foretells her death also bolsters Tolstoy's presentation of her constant battle between her fiery, hell-bound fantasy with Vronsky and her lonely and cold reality. During the early train ride when Anna convinces herself that there is nothing shameful about her feelings toward handsome stranger Vronsky, Anna's "eyes open wider and wider…and all images and sounds in that wavering semi-darkness impressed themselves on her with extraordinary vividness;" after which, she has a strange, hallucinogenic moment in which a dirty muzhik enters the train, the carriage fills with "a black cloud," "…a red fire blind[s] her eyes," everything becomes "hidden by a wall," and Anna feels like she is "falling through the floor," which is not "frightening but exhilarating" for her.[38] This moment of semi-magical realism marks Anna's first of several encounters with the muttering, French-speaking muzhik who is always accompanied by iron and fire. Moreover, Anna's eyes widening in the "semi-darkness" exhibits both the unveiling of her hidden passion and the almost purgatorial-like position in which this desire puts her. Anna's strange exhilaration as she falls, meets a wall, and is blinded by fire figuratively suggests her initial enjoyment of descending into hell because of her growing love for Vronsky. While Vronsky also once shares this nightmare of the Hephaestus-like[39] muzhik, Anna's last encounter with

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[37] Ibid., 748.

[38] Ibid., 101. On the previous page, Anna's "inner voice" tells her, 'Warm, very warm, hot!'" when she thinks of Vronsky.

[39] Ю. Сато and Сорокина, В. В., "Маленький Мужик С Взъерошенною Бородой" *Philologica* 5, no. 11–13 (1998). These authors say the muzhik fantasy "combines all…characteristic features of the folklore and mythological 'blacksmith' (Hephaestus), who has an ugly appearance and works with fire and iron. The motif of iron…links…two symbolic images - a man and a railway. The latter is

this nightmare is perhaps the most significant. After subconsciously planning to punish both Alexeis by killing herself, Anna awakens from another "dreadful nightmare," in which she sees the muzhik "muttering meaningless French words" and "doing this dreadful thing with iron over her,"[40] directly foreshadowing the last scene of her life, during which her notice of a familiar muzhik causes her instantly to recall her recent dream and tremble with fear. The conductor asks her if she "Would like to get out?", and Anna reacts with a silent, unnoticed "expression of terror…under [her] veil."[41] Reminiscent of Dolly's persistent questions regarding when Anna planned to "leave" the city, the conductor's question here perhaps more deeply asks Anna "Would you like to get out…of life altogether?" Furthermore, Anna's pain under her veil is another example of her suffering going unnoticed by the very society that causes it. Then, right before she jumps in front of the train, Anna sees the muzhik again, "muttering" and "working over some iron."[42] The muzhik's persistent visitation in Anna's psyche accentuates her overwhelming socio-religious guilt and the inescapably damning fate she faces for acting on her hedonistic love for Vronsky.

The candle serves as another important symbol related to Anna's recurring nightmare, her relations with Vronsky, and her suicide. When Anna wakes up from the last nightmare before her suicide, Tolstoy notes that the "impressions of the horrible dream and of the darkness when the candle had gone out merged into one, filling her heart with cold

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synonymous with progress and European civilization, leading Russia along a false path, from Tolstoy's point of view." I would note that his speaking French relates to Tolstoy's contempt for Westernization and modernization, too. The muzhik's relation to fire not only corresponds with his railway position and Anna's impending mode of death, but also with the motif of hell that Tolstoy consistently attaches to Anna.

[40] Tolstoy, 752.

[41] Ibid., 765.

[42] Ibid., 768.

terror."[43] This motif of the candle blowing out specifically correlates to Anna's eyes shining with passion for Vronsky and burning with devilishness (according to her husband), but slowly being "extinguished" over time by the quadruple threat of external, socio-religious ostracization; Anna's own internal guilt of her actions; her displeasure about airing her emotional vulnerability to Vronsky (and indirectly, to society); and her lack of autonomy (which could have been granted if Alexei had agreed to sign the divorce papers). Moreover, when Anna decides to commit suicide, she thinks to herself, "Why not put out the candle, if there's nothing more to look at, if it's vile to look at all?"[44] This notion of "putting out" or "extinguishing" her life like a candle because it is "vile" for her—and for society—to view and scrutinize her person reinforces Anna's eye-narrowing habit, the veiling of her pain to society, and the idea that the wider, shinier, and fierier Anna's eyes are, the more that they reveal her unforgiveable sins.

Correspondingly, when Anna jumps under the train and says, "Lord forgive me for everything!" she experiences "the candle of light by which she had been reading that book filled with anxieties, deceptions, grief and evil, flared up brighter than ever, lit up for her all that had once been in darkness, sputtered, grew dim, and went out forever."[45] In this scene, Tolstoy powerfully ties together Anna's worldly pleasures and pains, her ultimate reckoning with—or shedding light on—her sins through her plea for God's forgiveness, and the literal "sputtering" out of her life as she dies. Like a candle herself, Anna's fiery love for others makes her simultaneously dangerous and miraculous. Unfortunately, this likeness also means that the more she loves and the more she reveals her inner world, the quicker Anna is snuffed out by the pressures and expectations of her traditional, patriarchal, and highly religious society.

[43] Tolstoy, 754.

[44] Ibid., 766-67.

[45] Ibid., 768.

Though Stiva, Dolly, Vronsky, and a select few other characters greatly mourn Anna, society's view of her *after* her suicide remains synonymous with how she was misunderstood and misjudged *during* her lifetime. Thus, the harmful and gendered socio-religious norms that cage Anna during her life attach themselves to her tainted legacy. For example, when speaking to Levin's brother Sergei about the state of her son Vronsky, Countess Vronskaya hatefully says, "even the death [Anna] chose was mean and low," "…she took no pity on him but deliberately destroyed him completely, [and]…her death was [that] of a vile, irreligious woman" whose memory the Countess "can't help hating…[while] looking at the ruin of [her] son."[46] To this, Sergei responds compassionately: "It's not for us to judge, Countess…but I understand how hard it was for you."[47] While it is true that Anna wished to punish both Vronsky and Alexei for her situation, more than anything, it is clear that she wanted to—and successfully did—punish *herself* for her choices by ending her life. In this almost epilogue-like conversation, Sergei's voice of forgiveness is a small light in the sea of dark, condemning portrayals of Anna by the larger society that individuals like Countess Vronskaya and Alexei Alexandrovich represent.

Because of such derogatory posthumous descriptions of Anna, the reader does not even require her physical— or inscribed— presence to feel the shining, fiery pain that such comments would bring into her eyes. Nevertheless, in the train to Serbia, Tolstoy's final depiction of Vronsky pacing like a "caged animal" with eyes that "kept the expression of angry suffering" illuminates the fact that the intense pain Anna felt the full force of alone has now been transferred to Vronsky and his "suffering" eyes; thus, Anna's vengeance is successful.[48] What is more, the simile of Vronsky as a "caged animal" displays that he has now been dehumanized by their love, just as Anna was during her lifetime, as

[46] Tolstoy, 778.

[47] Ibid., 778.

[48] Tolstoy, 779-80.

shown by her comparison to a dead body during their sexual episode, and later, to Frou-Frou the horse during the racing incident.

Before Anna's death, Vronsky, like "a hungry animal seizes upon every object it comes across, hoping to find food in it," takes to Anna and to enjoyable hobbies like painting with vigor.[49] Specifically, Vronsky's superficial, imitative, and primarily physical understanding of art— evident in his depiction of Anna— proves his former lack of personal depth as well as his lack of understanding of Anna. However, once a lover of "all…those animal pleasures,"[50] Vronsky's hedonistic self becomes inverted after Anna's suicide; now, he no longer sees value or bodily pleasure in life, his physical pain is nothing compared to his emotional pain, and his body, the vessel of his happiness, is an empty shell— just like the flatly rendered portrait of Anna he created in Italy. Though our last glimpse of Vronsky is a dismal one, we can hope that Vronsky's newly acquired emotional depth (thanks to Anna's death) flourishes and matures within him so that, as Sergei says, "God [can] grant [him] outward success – and inner peace."[51]

While Anna's suffering finds permanent residence in Vronsky's eyes, mind, and physical being, she also lives on in talented artist Mikhailov's portrait of her. Unlike Vronsky, Mikhailov is able to "find this special beauty," truth, and "sweetest inner expression" of Anna that is quite the opposite of her first portrait's cruel, veiled, and wicked appearance from Alexei's perspective.[52] Significantly, Levin, Tolstoy's only other main protagonist with whom Anna only shares a single— albeit crucial— scene, encounters this truthful third portrait of Anna, not the "impenetrable" one from the Karenins' home. Before Levin

[49] Ibid., 465. This lack of artistic depth is one of many ways Tolstoy indirectly shows his disdain toward the Westernized, modernized, and aristocratic institutions, attitudes, and individuals whom the Vronsky character embodies.

[50] Ibid., 359.

[51] Ibid., 780.

[52] Tolstoy, 477.

officially meets Anna herself, he is transfixed by Mikhailov's portrait, which "step[s] out of its frame in the brilliant light" and causes him to "gaze…without taking his eyes from [her]….troubling eyes."[53] After Levin says he has never seen a better portrait, he "glance[s] from the portrait to the original," and a "special glow [lights] up Anna's face."[54] Levin's pivoting from the image to Anna emphasizes the authenticity and vulnerability evident in their interaction; the "brilliant light" literally showcases Anna's "troubled" yet bright eyes in both her portrait and in her real being, which also indirectly reveal to Levin her tormented yet compassionate character as a whole. And, while Anna narrows her eyes momentarily, the longer she speaks with Levin, the more that "her eyes, her smile, everything told him that she was…valuing his opinion and…knowing…that they understood each other;" furthermore, that "each word of conversation with her acquired a special meaning."[55] This tête-à-tête between Anna and Levin is a pivotal moment in which both characters let down their guards and gain access into the inner world of a surprisingly perceptive and likeminded stranger. From his conversation with Anna, Levin comes to greatly admire the "…intelligence, grace, beauty…[and] truthfulness in her," the fact that "she did not want to conceal from him all the difficulty of her situation," and the manner in which she radiated and gave happiness, "which the artist had caught in [her] portrait."[56] Poetically, Levin's newfound understanding, appreciation, and pity for the woman he, like most of society, had so severely judged without cause is all that Anna wants from Vronsky and never receives. Instead, Anna continues with the "deception" of the life she leads, consoled only by the "feeling [of] tears

[53] Ibid., 696

[54] Ibid., 697.

[55] Ibid., 698-99.

[56] Ibid., 700.

of self-pity [coming into] her eyes" until she can no longer shoulder the burden any longer.[57]

Hence, Anna's brief, yet overwhelmingly moving interchange with Levin serves to implant a piece of her into Levin's mind and heart that lives on through him after she dies. In many ways, Levin is Anna's "counterfactual": he shares her depth of emotion and her pain for not conforming to society's expectations; however, Levin has male privilege and financial autonomy that Anna can never have. Additionally, Levin spends most of his time away from the unpleasantness of aristocratic society by *choice,* while Anna only avoids society because she is perniciously excluded from it. By the novel's end, Levin is also able to find the light of religious salvation while Anna finds nothing but darkness. Anna's downfall is directly related to her reliance on reason and religious guilt to explain her situation, which leads her to the final conclusion that "reason was given [to] us in order to rid ourselves of it. So I must rid myself of it,"[58] whereas Tolstoy states that though Levin also falls into a deep depression over his struggle between reason and faith, he "did not shoot…or hang himself and went on living."[59] Here again, Levin is the "counterfactual" for Anna, in that he is able to live and prosper, while she dies and disappears. The last moments we see Anna, whose life is extinguished like a candle, directly contrast with the last moments we see Levin, who instead experiences pure, religious joy when he understands that happiness and faith cannot be found through reason, stating, "I am freed from deception, I have found the master."[60] Through Levin's kindling of

[57] Tolstoy, 704.

[58] Ibid., 766-67.

[59] Ibid., 789.

[60] Ibid., 796-97. Levin finds that "Reason discovered the struggle for existence and the law which demands that everyone who hinders the satisfaction of my desires should be throttled….Reason could not discover love for the other, because it's unreasonable….But the answer to my question [of faith] could not come from thought….The answer was given by life itself, in my knowledge of what is good and what is bad. And I did not acquire that knowledge through anything, it was given to

religious understanding and faith, one can perhaps hope that Anna's death does not happen in vain; rather, that somehow, the fire of her religious conviction and of her love lives on abstractly in Levin's newly awakened emotional connection to God and to all other humans.

In tandem with Matthew 6:22-24, Anna's eyes are in fact the "lamp" that allows Tolstoy's readers and her fellow characters to understand her innermost feelings. They reveal her love for Vronsky, her pain caused by society, religion, and gender norms, and her internal struggle between body and mind. After Anna is gone, the cold eyes of society replace her own, continually judging her harshly for her choices and relegating her memory to hell. However, Anna lives on through Mikhailov's life-like portrait of her. More importantly, Anna's eyes and emotions continue to shape those of individuals like Vronsky and Levin, producing changes within them after her death that suggest her continual existence in their memories and actions both when they suffer and when they rejoice. While much speculation has been made regarding whether or not Anna deserves the fate she receives, one can applaud Tolstoy for his incredibly moving effort to delve deeply into Anna's sometimes "shining" and "fiery," sometimes "narrowing" and "cold" eyes in order to expose and critique the unspoken and endless socio-religious hypocrisy, the oppressive gender roles, and the personal, painful toll of bearing the weight of emotional vulnerability alone. While Anna is convinced that the light within her is all darkness, from her complex and beautiful narrative one can hope that perhaps when her candle is extinguished, she plunges not into deeper damnation, but rather, transcends society's cruelty and finally finds peace.

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me as it is to everyone, *given* because I could not take it from anywhere." He poignantly surmises that, "I haven't discovered anything. I've only found out what I know. I've understood that power which not only gave me life in the past but is giving me life now. I am freed from deception, I have found the master." The great and tragic irony here is that perhaps by continuing to live, Anna could have found this freedom; however, because of the gendered and societal expectations stifling her, even if she had persisted, she most likely would not have met the conditions needed to bear witness to the same, life-changing truths that Levin finds.

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