The Woman with a Shadow: Fables of Demon and Psyche

Taking it in its deepest sense, the shadow is the invisible saurian tail that man still drags behind him.

Jung

“We’ve discovered that it’s a monstrous, twining, twisted, coiling, venomous, swollen-throated, ravenously gaping-jawed Serpent that reposes with you secretly in the night.”

Psyche’s sisters in The Golden Ass

And the Lord God said unto the Serpent: Upon your belly you shall go . . . And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; they shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise their heels.

Genesis 3:15

Tolstoy’s Quest for Mythopoiesis

As we saw in the previous chapter, Anna’s light illumined her reading and despair; in the current chapter, we will find that Anna’s shadow and darkness symbolize her liberation. The shadow Anna casts is a mythological one, drawn from folklore. The discussion of the shadow thus returns us to a consideration of the issues of heroes and heroines broached earlier. While a folkloric or mythic hero is an amalgam of the hero and his shadow double, the heroine’s acquisition of a shadow
calls more disturbing forces into play. Already constituted as other, a woman with a shadow is a doubled marker of gender and otherness. Tolstoy's use of a folkloric motif to develop the mythological potential of Anna's heroism makes her singular among the heroines of nineteenth-century realist prose, and it renders his artistic achievement unique.

In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy's use of shadow imagery and reference to a subtext (the folk tale of the "man without a shadow"), like the light imagery discussed in chapter 6, suggests the implementation of a mythological archetype and a sustained symbolic system that challenges our perception of the novel as an exemplary realist work and moves it closer to a symbolist mode. The presence of the subliminally evoked motif of the shadow figure of folklore and mythology reveals the extent to which random textual detail, seemingly motivated by the demands of verisimilitude, may be enlisted to illustrate a subtextual narrative. Tolstoy's subtext, the folk legend of a man without shadow, recalls at least three myths of transgression in pursuit of knowledge: the Faust legend, the myth of Amor and Psyche, and the biblical narrative of the fall in Genesis. As shown in chapter 6, light and shadow considered as symbols of *gnōsis* evoke the shadow figures and light of truth of Plato's cave analogy. *Anna Karenina* thus acquires a mythopoetic resonance while the eponymous heroine achieves mythological status and her actions are made meaningful because they are seen as a quest.

In his recent article, "On the Spatiality of Plots in the 19th-Century Novel," Iurii Lotman observes that the invariant plot structure of most folktales, as outlined by Vladimir Propp, consists of the hero's quest to improve his position in the world by winning necessary magic items, overcoming obstacles, performing tasks, exposing usurpers, and so on. Within such a paradigm, the hero is little more than a constituted plot function while the enactment of his triumph represents a Napoleonic victory over the chronotope of the narrative. Lotman contrasts this folkloric heroic course to the trajectory of the mythic hero, where the emphasis is on restructuration and the questioning of the conditions of character and environment. The hero pursues a quest where the goal is genesis or rebirth of the self and the cosmos
and the return from chaos to order. The European novel more closely resembles the fairy tale in its bourgeois obsession with material benefit and social victories; by contrast, Lotman proposes, the Russian novel is mythological: it responds to social crisis and its heroes must either assume or reject Messianic status. Tolstoy’s combination of mythic and folkloric paradigms in *Anna Karenina* results in an adaptation of the narrative structure of the European novel of adultery to the Russian social novel’s formula of the failure of the superfluous man; the effete, disengaged anti-activist overcome by inertia. Bending the novel of adultery to this purpose required a gender inversion that cast a woman in the (anti)heroic role rather than in her traditional part as the “strong woman,” the superfluous man’s foil.

Novelistic rewritings of invariant plots automatically acquire variant nuances in meaning through the encoding of the semiotics of the culture and ideology within which the text is generated. Tolstoy’s rejection of realism involved the denigration of the verisimilitudinous application of detail in favor of an exploitation of universally comprehensible metaphors and symbols. The use of mythic and folkloric elements in *Anna Karenina* thus constitutes the opening moves in Tolstoy’s polemic with the European realist novel. In *What Is Art?* his views are stated as an unrestrained antirealist, antimimetic program:

> The essence of [mimesis] consists in supplying details accompanying the thing described or depicted. In literary art this method consists in describing, in the minutest details, the external appearance, the faces, the clothes, the gestures, the tones, and the habituations of the characters represented, with all the occurrences met with in life. . . . this abundance of detail makes the stories difficult of comprehension to all people not living within reach of the conditions described by the author. . . . Strip the best novels of our times of their details and what will remain?

In Tolstoy’s view, “to compose a fairy tale . . . which will delight dozens of generations or millions of children and adults, is incomparably more important and more fruitful than to compose a novel or symphony.”

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Tolstoy’s valorization of folk literature, particularly the popular genres of the folk tale (skazka), fable (basnja), and proverb (poslovitsa), antedates his conversion: he had adopted a new aesthetic in the 1860s and 1870s as a result of his work with the peasant children on his Yasnaya Polyana estate (“Who Should Teach Whom How to Write?” [1865]). His interest in folk literature led him to compose almost exclusively within these genres, beginning with his Primer (1875) and continuing with his postconversion “Stories for the People.” This preoccupation dominated his artistic practice as he began Anna Karenina; his inspiration for the novel seems to have been the result of his resolution that the only hope for Russian literature was a union of popular art with belles lettres. The intention was not for belles lettres to masquerade in folkloric costume or for authors to rewrite mythology in a schematic, Wagnerian manner; rather, Tolstoy desired to infuse developed literary models with mythic tonality. In its most subtle application, the mythological modality could be elicited by what Lotman has termed a “cliché” or what Jungian critics consider an archetypal figure or motif: a detail, fragment, or block of text that activates in the reader’s consciousness the entire meaning and resonance of myth. Tolstoy’s famous attack on the “superfluity of detail” as the characterizing feature of mimetic realism must, therefore, be juxtaposed with his other view of textual detail, the “labyrinth of linkages” (labirint stseplenii), the explication of which, in Tolstoy’s opinion, constitutes the most essential task of literary criticism. Inside Tolstoy’s labyrinth, “realistic” details are subverted into a symbolic system.

Despite the dark coloration and foreshadowing role of the imagery in Anna Karenina, most critics have minimized Tolstoy’s patterns of imagery, seeing them as unmotivated textures, and have failed to acknowledge their semiotic potential. For example, William Rowe notes: “In Anna Karenina more than any other work of his, Tolstoy established ominous connections between apparently insignificant details.” Yet Rowe’s own discussion of the novel’s imagery is limited to a catalog without commentary.

The perfusion of shadow imagery throughout the novel creates a series of penumbral duplications of the same shape. The shadow figure cannot be devalued as an “insignificant detail” once the notice-
able citation of the literary subtext of the shadow story causes the reader to recall a narrative tradition that explicates the otherwise enigmatic motif. We are even more inclined to ascribe significance to the shadow subtext when we note that its citation in the novel occurs in the first scene Tolstoy composed.8

“Anna has changed a great deal since her trip to Moscow. There is something strange about her,” her acquaintance said.

“The main change is that she brought back with her the shadow of Aleksei Vronsky,” said the ambassador’s wife.

“Well, what of it? Grimm has a fable: the man without a shadow, a man deprived of a shadow. And this was his punishment for something. I never could understand how it was a punishment [v chem nakazanie]. Although it should be unpleasant for a woman without a shadow.”

“Yes, but women with shadows usually come to a bad end,” said Anna’s acquaintance. (144)

Little critical attention has been paid to the implications this passage has for the novel, perhaps because there is no known fable or folktale about a man without a shadow by Grimm. Other possible subtexts that have been proposed are two *Kunstmärchen*, both pseudofolkloric versions of the Faust legend: Chamisso’s *Peter Schlemihl* and Andersen’s “The Shadow.”

The numerous revisions Tolstoy made of this first scene suggest that considerable reflection accompanied the placement of the shadow subtext here in the final version of the novel. In the earlier redactions of this scene, the guests take an almost satanic pleasure in anticipating Anna’s fall: “the conversation crackles merrily like a bonfire” (143). In the final version, the diabolical tone of the conversation is muted but still audible in the reference to an outfit of *diable rose* and in the demonic nuances of the shadow tale. The discussion of a story of transgression and punishment emphasizes these intimations of descent.

The reference to a fable suggests to the reader the inevitability of outcome and the didactic, even simplistic, presentation of a morally divided universe that characterizes literary reworkings of Aesopian
genres. These are the same features that readers often resent in Tolstoy's authorial voice. Perhaps no critic has stated the case against Tolstoy the moralist as well as D. H. Lawrence in his famous indictment: "When the novelist puts his thumb in the scale to pull down the balance to his predilections, that is immorality." Indeed, Tolstoy, in directing the course of his heroine's life, often seems every bit as heartless and relentless as the aspen leaves Anna gazes upon: "Standing still and 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 everyone and everything would be as merciless to her now as was that sky, that green" (307). Reading Anna Karenina as a fable lends the novel the tone of a fictive universe where ends are ineluctably determined by beginnings and where, as in tragedy, the character's hamartia brings about a fall, inspiring the audience with fear and pity. Yet the discussion of the shadow story in debate dialogizes what would otherwise be perceived, in Bakhtin's terms, as a monologic resolution of the novel's problematic theme.10

The fable, like the proverb or parable, is a genre composed in what Mikhail Bakhtin terms "absolute language": the language that "does not say, but is itself a saying." The clear tone of distanced authority in which Tolstoy wrote fables, parables, and science lessons for his Primer is an inimitable example of that pure, laconic, and commanding type of discourse advocated by his beloved Schopenhauer, who wrote in The Art of Literature: "There is no style of writing but should have a certain trace of kinship with the epigraphic or monumental style, which is, indeed, the ancestor of all styles." It has become a commonplace among Tolstoy critics to observe that Tolstoy's implied narrative voice resonates with authority precisely because of the impression that it is authorless. This sense of a dispassionate, Olympian creator made Tolstoy's readers "feel that an eye watches from above," or that Tolstoy "watches life from on high and only rarely makes a remark similar to a scientific generalization." This sense of height or distance, achieved by what D. S. Mirsky calls Tolstoy's "puritanical prose . . . purged to chemical purity" impelled Bakhtin to hypostatize Tolstoy as an exemplar of a "monolithically
monologic” author, whose characters’ voices are ultimately silenced by the “last word” of their creator.16

In his analysis of Tolstoy’s absolute language, Morson observes that Tolstoy often employs absolute language in the margins of discourse: in chapter titles, epigraphs, appendices, and digressions.17 In Anna Karenina Tolstoy all but avoids this use of absolute language by scrupulously removing all chapter titles and epigraphs that appeared in the earlier variants, except for the chapter title “Death,” and he places all quotations, allusions, parables, and disquisitions in the mouths of his characters. The notable exceptions are the novel’s epigraph and opening proverbial sentence. By giving his characters proverbs and biblical quotations to recite, Tolstoy dialogizes all recognized authority while purifying the authorial discourse of any identifiable opinion or ideology. As a result, the authorial voice remains insistently neutral and dispassionate, unrelated to any specific personality, milieu, or linguistic style. Instead of relying on the literary or topical allusions so commonly found in the nineteenth-century European novel, the implied narrator illustrates with unadorned descriptions of common physical sensations or experiences. Tolstoy’s authorial voice in Anna Karenina thus sounds sourceless and traditionless, disembodied and dispassionate. It has the resonance and authority of biblical and philosophical diction while all other “authorities,” from Plato to Scripture itself, are contaminated by their association with the character who recites and often distorts the quotation.

The citation of the shadow story is no exception: despite its status as a monologic genre, the fable is quoted in dialogue, not in the voice of absolute authority, and thus the moral of the fable is dialogized as well. As in Socratic dialogue, the reader is summoned to play the role of an interlocutor who is wiser than the one instructed by Socrates. The unnamed speaker who refers to the fable has missed the point (“I never could understand . . .”) and has given the wrong author’s name. Her perplexity anticipates the critical debate over Anna Karenina, particularly over the novel’s epigraph, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay.” The reader thus attempts, if only momentarily, to resolve the novel’s problematic of guilt and punishment through reference to the mysterious and ambiguous folktale.
The reader must begin by solving the riddle of which shadow tale the unnamed speaker had in mind. The misattribution of the story to the Brothers Grimm is puzzling, unless the evocation of the English denotation of the name Grimm was intentional, and this is a valid conjecture in the case of a novel that is replete with descriptions of English manners and contains many English phrases, puns, names, and expressions. Alternately, the citation of Grimm may have been intended to legitimize a literary work by attributing it to a genuine folk source.

The speaker calls the story not a folk tale (skazka or märchen, the genre in which it belongs) but a fable (basnia). While working on Anna Karenina, Tolstoy read and translated numerous märchen and fables for his previously mentioned anthology, the Primer. Among them is his version of Aesop’s (or possibly Ovid’s) fable of a dog and her reflection, which Tolstoy retitled, significantly enough, “A Dog and her Shadow.” The aforementioned two stories usually proposed by commentators—Chamisso’s Peter Schlemihl and Andersen’s “The Shadow”—both exhibit significant intertextual connections with Anna Karenina. Of the two authors, Andersen seems to be the more likely choice since Tolstoy’s admiration for him is well documented: he translated Andersen’s “The Emperor’s New Clothes” (Novoe tsarskoe plat’e) for his Primer, and his diaries mention other translations of Andersen tales. The reference to Grimm, a collector of märchen, further implicates the writer of Kunstmärchen, Andersen rather than Chamisso. Although Andersen thus seems to be the most likely source, both shadow stories will be considered here as an intertextual unit, especially since Andersen’s tale opens with a reference to Chamisso’s tale as the protagonist recalls his homeland, “the cold climates [where] everyone knows the story of the man without a shadow.” The intertextual dependence of Andersen’s story on Chamisso’s tale affords another reason for assuming that the unnamed speaker read and did not understand Andersen (rather than Chamisso), since she is confused about the reason for and mode of the punishment. In Peter Schlemihl, the crime and punishment are clearly described and motivated while Andersen’s more subtle, psychologized version requires the reader to interpret the story within a literary tradition.
Both stories typify nineteenth-century European literary treatments of the Faust legend and other tales of demonic possession or haunting by doubles, shadows, and men in black, in the tradition of Hoffmann and Poe and culminating in Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* and other fin-de-siècle explorations of the divided self. The modern exploration of the psychological nuances of the Faust legend has resulted in an interpretive introjection of (external) demonic figures into the psyche of the protagonist. Reading stories of demonic shadows as psychic projections places these narratives in the tradition of tales of split personalities, alter egos, doppelgängers, autoscopy, lost reflections, and the like, especially since the shadow is obviously a duplicate, dark self. In Russian literature the tradition initiated by Mozart’s “man in black” in Pushkin’s *Mozart and Salieri* would culminate in the shadow-populated world of Bely’s *Petersburg*, where each protagonist is haunted by his enantiomorphic, mirror-image shadow self.

The ubiquitous occurrence of the shadow figure in world literature and in dreams caused Jung to identify it as one of the primary archetypes in his theory of the collective unconscious: in Jungian theory the “loss of the shadow” is a metaphor for intrapsychic conflict, repression, and projection; the stories about the man without a shadow relate in mythologic terms the struggle for psychic integration, and the resolution of the philosophical and ethical problem of good and evil in the world and in the psyche.

The evil nature of the Mephistophelean figure in Chamisso’s *Peter Schlemihl* renders the tale an obvious adaptation of the Faust legend. Peter Schlemihl is pursued by a mysterious man in gray who is capable of granting his most extravagant wishes. The man in gray offers Peter a purse containing an inexhaustible supply of gold pieces in exchange for the loan of Peter’s shadow. Peter assents to the exchange; yet he finds that as a shadowless man he must avoid daylight or any light that would reveal his lack of a shadow and expose him to social ostracism and persecution. He has several social and romantic misfortunes when his lack of a shadow, which he cleverly conceals, is nonetheless revealed by moonlight or by informers. He is continuously pursued by the man in gray, who now proffers a new contract:
return of the shadow to Peter in exchange for his soul. Peter resists this temptation, even when it is the only opportunity to save his beloved from a terrible fate. He ends by roaming the world, forever isolated from human contact.

In Andersen’s “The Shadow,” a scholar traveling in the south confines himself to the indoors during the day to avoid the heat. In the evenings, music, shadowy images, and a single glimpse of a woman from a neighboring balcony attract his attention, but he fears to leave his study. Impulsively acting at his shadow’s urging, the scholar allows his shadow to separate from him and cross to the neighboring balcony to gain entrance to the house where the scholar hesitates to enter. The shadow disappears and does not return. The scholar soon grows another shadow, albeit a thin and sickly one, and returns to his native land. Sometime later he is accosted by a well-dressed man in black who is in fact his former shadow in disguise and who now convinces him to accept him as a companion. Eventually, the shadow succeeds in claiming that it is the real man and the scholar is his shadow. Under these terms, the shadow usurps the scholar’s position in the world, steals his beloved’s affections, and arranges for the scholar to be executed.

Andersen’s scholar, seduced by the influence of music and beauty but enervated by his agoraphobia, willingly yields control of his vital darker self, as Dr. Jekyll, exhilarated by the Promethean quest for scientific knowledge, legitimizes and enables Mr. Hyde’s emergence and autonomy. The Andersen story also retains the role reversal of Mephisto-servant to scholar-master; yet in this treatment the demonic shadow is clearly recognizable as an extension of the scholar’s personality, an embodiment of that anarchic spirit of initiative and passion that breaks free of its enforced confinement indoors. That is why Andersen’s story is more psychological in tone than Chamisso’s tale; the crime is repression and the punishment is the loss of one’s position in the world. In Andersen’s story of psychic conflict, symbolized by the separation of a man and his shadow, no diabolical intermediary is required. Instead, we see the introjection of the diabolical into a personality ruptured by an intrapsychic fissure. Tolstoy’s depiction of Anna’s cognitive dissonance rests tensely between these two
meta-narratives; that is, between the superstitious folk notion of demonic possession and the psychological reading of demons as projections or archetypes of the collective unconscious.

The Shadow of Anna Karenina

Anna enters the novel as a Victorian stereotype of the Angel in the House, making peace in the Oblonsky household and surrounded by a bevy of children. She is almost immediately transformed into the demonic siren or femme fatale possessed by passion in the tradition of the mid-Victorian sensation novel of adultery such as Wuthering Heights or Lady Audley’s Secret. Nina Auerbach suggests that this fusion of angelic and demonic characteristics in nineteenth-century representations of women reflects social ambivalence toward and patriarchal distrust of feminine sexuality.22 Since angels are asexual, the expression of sexuality in the Angel in the House is perceived as a fall to the demonic and anarchic. In von Hofmannsthal’s libretto, The Woman without a Shadow (Die Frau ohne Schatten [1915]), the androgyny of the peri (the bisexual angel of Persian mythology) is expressed as the lack of a shadow that prevents the peri from becoming a human woman who will conceive and bear children.23 The shadow in this case becomes the signifier of fecundity and thus reaffirms the demonic or dark qualities attributed to feminine sexuality.

The story of the temptation of a woman and the exchange of her shadow for eternal beauty is told in a work with which Tolstoy may have been familiar, a poem by the Austrian poet Nikolaus Lenau (1802–1850) entitled, significantly enough, “Anna.” At the beginning Anna of the poem is admiring her reflected beauty in a pond when a supernatural figure appears to offer her eternal beauty in exchange for her shadow and the promise that she will renounce childbearing. The narcissism of this Anna recurs in Anna Karenina, who practices birth control to remain sexually attractive to Vronsky. Thus, the transformation of gender in Anna Karenina from a “man without a shadow” to a “woman without a shadow” abrogates any straightforward, psychological reading of Tolstoy’s use of the “man without a
shadow” as a metaphor for the struggle between the rational and the irrational self. When this psychic struggle is enacted by a female protagonist, the motif evokes male anxiety about female sexuality and the desirability of the female body. The shadow (feminine in gender in Russian) is a penumbral, feminine Other, a demonic seductress, an archetypal Eve. If we return to the primary text of original sin we find the shadow in its originary shape as the serpent in Eden. When God condemns it to slide along the ground worrying the heel of woman and her offspring, forever crushed beneath her heel, the early conflation of serpent, shadow, and woman is revealed.

Early variants of the novel emphasized the demonic nature of Anna’s vitality: the title of the chapter describing Anna’s passion for Vronsky was “The Devil” in an early draft, and Anna and Vronsky refer to her jealousy as “the demon.” Anna has “something uncanny, demonic and fascinating in her” (89); her face glows “with a bright light, but this glow was not one of joyfulness, but suggested the terrible glow of a conflagration in the middle of a dark night” (154).

Vronsky’s role as shadow demon is implied by imagery that associates Vronsky both with shadow and with Faust: in the early stages of his pursuit of Anna, he is cast as Mephistopheles in the form in which he first appeared to Faust, a dog. Vronsky is repeatedly described as expressing “humble submission” (87), “reverential ecstasy” (109), the look of an “abject setter-dog” who wishes to please. It is this “utter subjection, that slavish devotion, which [does] so much to win her” (199). At the scene of their first meeting, the whining of a dog in the luggage compartment is audible as Anna’s train arrives from Petersburg. In an episode subsequently removed from the novel, Lyovin is terrorized by a mad dog that exacerbates his obsessive dread of death and is somehow linked in his mind with the fearful image of a peasant. The emblem of Lyovin’s panic thus connects the demonic Mephistopheles in his incarnation as a dog with Lyovin’s vision of a peasant with a matted beard, undoubtedly the same disheveled peasant who haunts Anna and Vronsky and plays the role in the novel of the “shadow of death.” The hierophantic nature of this peasant with matted beard and sack recalls the Tiresias figure of the blind, leprous peasant who fulfilled a similar function in Madame Bovary.24 An
enigmatic statement of Anna’s may be explained as an obscure reference to Mephistopheles in his canine incarnation and as her recognition of demonic figures as projections from a troubled psyche: on her final journey to the train station, Anna silently addresses a family embarking on an outing, “The dog you’re taking with you will be of no help to you—you can’t get away from yourselves” (792). Her observation is immediately followed by recollections of the early days of Vronsky’s courtship and her memories of him as an “abject setter-dog” (792).

In addition to his trait of doglike servility, Vronsky is repeatedly accompanied by shadows throughout the novel. In the fateful meeting at Bologoe station, as Anna steps onto the platform, “the bent shadow of a man glided by at her feet” (109) (emphasis added). Vronsky then interposes himself between Anna and the light of the lamp-post and stands in the shadow. Anna must “gaze into the shadow” to read his expression. Whenever Vronsky contemplates nature, his vision includes shadows, as when he admires the cloud of midges and the shadow over his carriage “in the already lengthening shadow of a lush lime tree” (307) or the slanting shadows over the fields as he rides to a rendezvous with Anna: “Everything he saw from the carriage window . . . was as fresh, and gay, and strong as he was himself: . . . the slanting shadows that fell from the houses, and trees, and bushes, and even from the rows of potatoes” (332). Later, at his estate, his face will be shadowed by leaves as he discusses his relationship to Anna with Dolly: “Daria Aleksandrovna looked with timid inquiry into his energetic face, which under the lime trees was continually being lighted up in patches by the sunshine, and then passing into complete shadow again” (653). After Anna’s death, as he waits at the train station to depart for the Balkans: “In the slanting shadows cast by sacks piled up on the platform, Vronsky . . . strode up and down like a wild beast in a cage” (812).25

The definitive association of Vronsky with the shadow figure occurs in the conversation quoted above. In the various redactions of the dialogue, an interesting evolution in grammatical structure suggests a shift in emphasis that resulted from the introduction of the shadow subtext. In the earlier versions of the passage, before the
shadow story was mentioned, the acquaintance states that Vronsky has become Anna’s shadow (сделался ей тению). In the final version of the passage, when the reference to the shadow story is introduced, Anna is said to have brought back with her the “shadow of Aleksei Vronsky” (тен Алексея Вронского): Vronsky no longer exists; his shadow has been snared by Anna. His diabolical nature is expressed in his exultant acquiescence in the “terror” of their passion: “Our love, if it could be stronger, will be strengthened because there is something terrible in it” (456). This demonic statement was even more villainous in the earlier version, where their love was to be strengthened “by the crime, the evil that we have done to [Karenin].” Tolstoy’s revisions minimize Vronsky’s role: no longer the primary actor (“he became her shadow”/сделался ей тению), he becomes the passive agent of Anna, who “brings back with her” the shadow of Vronsky.

Tolstoy used shadow imagery with precisely the same nuances in his dramatic work A Living Corpse, a curious reprise of Anna Karenina. In the play, the characters of Karenin and Anna are rearranged, although the basic plot of an adulterous love affair remains the same; it concludes, however, with a fictitious suicide derived from Chernyshevsky’s What Is to Be Done? Karenin, stuffy and old-fashioned as ever, now plays the adulterous lover while the husband, Fedya, is a rake and spendthrift who simulates his suicide in order to permit his wife to remarry without being subjected to the stigma of divorce. In recounting the experience of his loveless marriage to Liza, Fedya credits his wife with being consciously faithful to him; yet he recognizes the force of her unconscious passion for Karenin. As was the case with Chernyshevsky’s Olga, the heroine’s unconscious, repressed sexuality is first recognized by her husband. In Fedya’s account, Liza’s repressed desire casts a shadow over his family life, although the dialogue that follows questions the source of the shadow: Is it Liza’s passion for Karenin? Or Fedya’s animosity and suspicion toward his wife?

_Fedya:_ The very best love is unconscious love. I believe she always did love him; but as an honest woman, she did not confess it even to herself. But . . . a shadow of some kind always lay across our family life . . . but why am I confessing to you?
Prince Abrejkov: Please do! . . . I understand you, I understand you, I understand that the shadow, as you so well express it, may have been . . .

Fedya: Yes, it was; and that perhaps is why I could not find satisfaction in the family life she gave me, but was always seeking something and being carried away.  (Act 3)²⁶

If we view Vronsky as a shadow and the power relationship of Anna and Vronsky as that of owner and shadow, or a lady and a dog (in Chekhov’s retelling), Anna would appear to be the passive victim who succumbs to, rather than the one offering temptation, as Princess Migaokaia subsequently argues: “How can she help it if they’re all in love with her and follow her about like shadows?” (145). When we pursue this interpretation, it is Vronsky who, having become possessed and having yielded to his shadow, now seduces and compromises Anna to gain authority over her soul. In the course of the novel Vronsky assumes the powerful position, just as the shadow usurps the scholar’s position or the man in gray (Mephistopheles) gains power over Peter Schlemihl. Vronsky’s power over Anna gives him the responsibility and culpability for the problematic aspect of their “position.” The description of Vronsky as a murderer bending over Anna’s body after the consummation of their love affair suggests that he is morally responsible for her fall, just as he is to blame for the death of his horse, Frou-Frou. This view has been argued convincingly by many critics; the most convincing textual support for this interpretation is the scene at the races where Vronsky makes a “clumsy” movement in the saddle and breaks Frou-Frou’s back.

In discussing this scene, Barbara Hardy rejects as too schematic any facile comparison of Anna to Frou-Frou or a reading of Vronsky’s horsemanship as an allegory of the course of his relationship to Anna: “[the events] exist in themselves, as characteristic and particular demonstrations.”²⁷ Yet the comparison of a woman to a horse and man’s command over woman to his horsemanship is a commonplace in literature. For example, in Can You Forgive Her?, a novel that is a significant intertext for Anna Karenina, Trollope related the attempts of a handsome rake, Burgo Fitzgerald, to seduce into adultery the
spirited Lady Glencora, who is married to a passionless bureaucrat. Burgo enters the novel on horseback and recklessly rides a horse to death, destroying a creature "much nobler than himself": "He rode at the bank as though it had been the first fence of the day, striking his poor beast with his spurs. . . . The animal rose at the bank, and in some way got upon it, scrambling as he struck it with his chest, and then fell headlong into the ditch at the other side, a confused mass of head, limbs, and body. . . . Poor noble beast, noble in vain! . . . His master's ignorance had killed him." In a subsequent ballroom scene, when Burgo waltzes Lady Glencora to exhaustion until she is on the verge of eloping with him, she is compared to a winded horse: "The waltzers went on till they were stopped by want of breath. . . . Then she put up her face, and slightly opened her mouth, and stretched her nostrils—as ladies as well as horses do when the running has been severe and they want air."

In Russian literature, brutalizing horses has traditionally been used as a metaphor for the abuse of women, from the exchange of a woman for a horse in Lermontov's "Bela" to the implicit connection between Raskolnikov's dream vision of a horse flogged to death and his murder of Lizaveta and the pawnbroker.

Alternately, Gustafson has recently argued for Anna's culpability; he suggests that she falls because of her rejection of psychic growth; her repression forces her inner demons to "escape" as projections that control her and propel her into adultery. Possessed by the chthonic forces of her own unconscious, she succumbs to despair and ends her life. According to this interpretation, Vronsky has no autonomous existence and serves merely as the pretext for Anna's projection of her inner demons and as the chosen catalyst for the irrepressible irruption of her inner conflict. In this sense, Anna conjures Vronsky's appearance at Bologoe station.

Achieving psychic integration, or what Gustafson terms "at-onement," may be translated into Jungian terms as "assimilating the shadow." Such a process in folk or mythological narratives may be represented in the figure Campbell describes as the liminal threshold guardian, who blocks the path prescribed for the hero/ine, and who withholds the essential aid (information or magic items) without
which the quest will fail. The true hero/ine is known by his or her ability to conciliate the threshold guardian. Thus, it is the task of the archetypal hero/ine to master and assimilate the shadow in order to fulfill his or her quest. The quest internalized becomes a fable of psychomachy; such a narrative achieves mythic status and signals the return of the novel to mythology. As Freud suggested, “The psychological novel in generalprobably owes its peculiarities to the tendency of modern writers to split up their egos by self-observation into many component egos, and in this way to personify the conflicting trends in their own mental life in many heros.”31 Jung’s description of the shadow figure as a psychic projection matches Freud’s view of novelistic personae as component egos. According to Jung, the shadow is a symptom of repression, a form of psychic disturbance resulting from the repression of taboo libidinal impulses: “Where [vital forces] are repressed or neglected, their specific energy disappears into the unconscious with unaccountable consequences. . . . Such tendencies form an ever-present and potentially destructive ‘shadow’ to our conscious mind. Even tendencies that might in some circumstances be able to exert a beneficial influence are transformed into demons when they are repressed.”32 It is the total suppression of vital forces (or the “animus”) that we recognize as one of Anna’s most characteristic traits. In her first appearance at the train station, “her nature was so brimming over with something that against her will it showed itself now in the flash of her eyes, and now in her smile. Deliberately, she shrouded the light in her eyes, but it shone against her will in the faintly perceptible smile” (67). The same light will be entirely repressed when she returns to Karenin: “Undressing, she went into the bedroom, but her face had none of that eagerness which, during her stay in Moscow, had fairly flashed from her eyes and her smile; on the contrary, now the fire seemed quenched in her, hidden somewhere far away” (119).

Anna’s repression and internal conflict are easily described as a classic case study of psychic dissociation: “everything was beginning to be doubled in her soul” (305) and “her soul was beginning to split in two” (311). Her very name, being palindromic, suggests a doubled self, a reflecting center. By the time she gives birth, she describes
herself as two separate beings. Her sense of emotional dualism is mirrored in her dream of having two husbands (both named Aleksei); her conflict is literalized when she finds herself pulling her hair on both sides of her head (306). Her sense of dissonance increases to the extent that she feels alienated from her own identity—a sensation that initially allows her to indulge in an uncensored manner in the fantastic images produced by her unconscious on the train ride from Moscow to Petersburg: “And what am I myself? Myself or some other woman?” (107). Her estrangement from herself, which Jung would define as possession by an alien psychic element, the animus, becomes uncanny when, just prior to her suicide, she fails to recognize herself in the mirror and indulges in a narcissistic, autoerotic moment: “‘Who’s that?’ she thought, looking in the mirror at the swollen face with strangely glittering eyes that looked at her in a frightened way. ‘Why, it’s me!’ she suddenly understood. . . . Then she lifted her hand to her lips and kissed it” (784–85). The novel promotes a schizoid vision of multiple Anna’s as she is surrounded by doubles of herself: her servant, Annushka, her daughter, Annie, and her adopted daughter, Hannah. Anna expresses her sense of self-alienation when, close to death, she pleads with Karenin for forgiveness: “There is another woman in me, I’m afraid of her: she loved that man, and I tried to hate you, and could not forget about her that used to be. I’m not that woman. Now I’m my real self, all myself” (434).

Anna’s failure to achieve psychic integration, or to assimilate the shadow, has often been juxtaposed to Lyovin’s achievement of a tenuous balance in his striving toward good. In keeping with the novel’s structure of consistent parallels between the two protagonists, Lyovin must master his own shadow, the “shadow of temper” (ten’ ogor-cheniia) (581). In learning tolerance, relaxing his demands for perfection, Lyovin acknowledges his own imperfections and accepts the checkered pattern of daily life, the flaws and inadequacies of human nature. Emblematic of Lyovin’s transformation is his attitude toward fallen women, whom he initially classifies as “all disgusting” and beyond pity: “in such love there can be no tragedy” (46). His rejection of Christ’s chastisement, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone,” is criticized by Stiva: “‘You want the reality to be invariably corre-
sponding all the while with the aim—and that’s not how it is. You want a man’s work, too, always to have a definite aim, and love and family life always to be undivided—and that’s not how it is. All the variety, all the beauty of life is made up of light and shadow)” (47).

Lyovin’s acceptance of darkness as a necessary component of light accompanies his growing acceptance of imperfection in himself and others, as discussed in chapter 5. Lyovin’s achievement of grace involves the recognition that faith must be preserved under the imperfect circumstances of life: “Real life had only for a time overcast the spiritual peace he had found, but it was still untouched within him” (837). At the height of his ecstatic conversion, Lyovin contemplates the alternation of light and dark in the sky as lightning flashes: “At each flash of lightning the Milky Way, and even the bright stars vanished, but as soon as the lightning died away, they reappeared in their places” (849). His ultimate realization is of the inseparability of light and shadow: “I shall go on in the same way, losing my temper . . . falling into angry discussions. . . . But my life has an unquestionable meaning of goodness which I have the power to put into it” (957).

Contrasting Anna’s failure to Lyovin’s (relative) success, as so many critics have done, is too facile a construct that ignores the all-important significance of gender difference. In a system that oppresses women and morbidizes their sexuality, what other choice is there but repression for a woman who experiences all of her psychosexual drives? It is hard to suppose what kind of movement toward a sustained inner life and toward psychic autonomy a woman can accomplish when her husband denies her any separate existence at all: “[Karenin] began to think of [Anna], about what she was thinking and feeling. For the first time, he vividly imagined her private life, her thoughts, her desires, and the thought that she could and should have her own autonomous life seemed to him so dreadful (strashno) that he hastened to drive it away” (153) (emphasis added). Within the confines of a life that denies her spiritual growth and autonomy, Anna’s only avenue for the pursuit of complete psychic awareness is through adulterous passion. Thus, Anna’s captivation by a shadowy demon lover may be read as a version of the originary myth of the ecstatic lover, who engages in the passionate, erotic pursuit of endless
desire ultimately subtended by the death drive.35 Jung would consider that the attraction of this type of shadow figure is that it reflects animus possession, domination by a demonic lover who, like Eros in the Psyche myth, “lures women away from all human relationships and . . . cut[s] a woman off from the reality of life.”36

Amor and Psyche

Casting Vronsky as an animus or Eros, the erotic death demon, is textually supported by the echoes of Apuleius’s “Amor and Psyche” in the novel: Vronsky’s role as the dutiful son of a mother renowned for her beauty and promiscuity reflects the relations of Amor and Venus. Like Venus, Mme. Vronksaia is responsible for introducing her son to the woman he will fall in love with and whom she will later persecute. Like Amor and Psyche, Vronsky and Anna have a daughter. The seclusion enforced on Anna by her separation from society encloses her in Amor’s dwelling and provokes in her the types of doubt that drove Psyche to violate Amor’s edict and examine the sleeping God by candlelight. In a tableau reminiscent of the myth, Anna illuminates the sleeping Vronsky: “He was asleep there, and sleeping soundly. She went up to him, and holding the candle above his face, she gazed a long while at him. Now when he was asleep, she loved him so much that at the sight of him, she could not keep back tears of tenderness. But she knew that if he awakened he would look at her with cold eyes” (781). Anna’s illumination of Vronsky follows a scene where, reading by candlelight, she senses the inevitability of suicide as the only escape from her situation. Her candle gutters and shadows descend upon her from every direction and plunge her in darkness. Anna’s reading by candlelight becomes the controlling metaphor for the entire novel when Tolstoy repeats the metaphor to describe her last hours and death. Thus, lifting her lamp to see and casting shadows and light in order to read and know love—this image interconnects every illumination in the novel and suggests the ultimate meaning of the shadow imagery. Anna’s candlelight reading of the novel, of love, of life, repeats Psyche’s transgression in pursuit of knowledge and her
own weakness in needing to affirm with the light of reason the intuitive life of passion associated mythologically with darkness and shadow. Yet it is a light of knowledge that is suppressed by the patriarchy; the transgression consists of lighting a lamp to see the truth, but the light will drive the beloved away.37

In the final sequence of the novel’s penultimate part, Anna, like Psyche, is cast out of Amor’s paradise of love and embarks on a journey as a result of Mme. Vronski’s machinations, which recall Venus’s scourge on Psyche. In Anna’s final views of life framed by the windows of her carriage and train, the controlling metaphor of light and shadow takes on two different and opposing meanings, reversing the standard valuation. The ambivalence of light and shadow in the final passages of Anna’s life plays upon the salvific potential of each and allows them their essential integration. As in Plato’s cave analogy, any interior illumination becomes an artificial construct, brightening a dark perception with the false assurance of vision. Amor’s palace thus repeats Plato’s cave, a region of confinement in which illumination may either reveal the artifice or display and varnish it. The cave is also a symbol of the womb, as Luce Irigaray notes in her commentary on Plato’s “Hystera.”38 Men may remain in Plato’s cave out of ignorance or pleasure; women must remain there by the demands of Love. Thus, Lee Edwards writes of Psyche’s lamp of truth: “Once lit in the novel, Psyche’s lamp reveals the stark harshness of the system that has so long confined her.”39 As long as Anna is confined to reading by candlelight, she can never escape her confinement, the imprisonment of the scholar without a shadow. Trapped indoors, she can never see the light of genuine enlightenment that will blind Lyovin, the wanderer in nature, at the close of the novel.

The death or departure of revolutionary or deviant heroes and heroines in Russian literature—from Chatsky in Woe from Wit (1825) or Bazarov in Fathers and Sons (1862) to Anna Karenina—evokes another archetypal paradigm, that of askesis or transcendence, the martyrdom and agonistic self-immolation of the avant-garde on the barricade or cross, which redeems and inspires those who remain bound to the mundane. While it has been suggested that the death and transfiguration of such a character may reflect the author’s am-
bivalence in affirming deviance, the fall may reenact Satanic splendor; the martyrdom may be an imitatio Christi. Thus, the pursuit of a tragic end ultimately challenges the system that predicts and enforces such a doom. For Anna Karenina, a victim of the oppression and dependent status of women in the nineteenth century, the pursuit of passionate love is the only action available that will liberate her from social constraints and place the life of the individual spirit above the life of the social body. The quest is that of Psyche, who transgressed in her desire to know love and thus is cast out of paradise. Psyche's reward and apotheosis, like Ulysses's return, affirm the reader's positive view of Olympus. The death of the hero/ine may seem a punishment in this tradition of the folktale or romance, where physical and material benefit (beauty rather than ugliness, wealth rather than poverty) reflect the evaluative dimension of good and evil. But mythic figures transcend this dichotomy by constituting an amalgam of oppositions and a restructuration of the material plane according to spiritual imperatives. Such a process characterizes the action of myth, where heroes and heroines die in order to be transfigured for a cosmic benefit.

Within the tragic and mythic tradition, Anna's death does not constitute a punishment but instead a liberation from her confinement in a social arena where the quest for the development of an autonomous self, emblematized as the acquisition of a shadow, represented an unforgivable transgression.