

## *"Anna Karenina: Specular Moments in the Lover's Discourse"*

### *A. Introduction*

The notion of a 'specular moment' is a metaphoric reading of Jacques Lacan's description of the 'mirror stage' in the development of the child. According to Lacan, the child sometime between six and eighteen months recognizes himself in a mirror, and perceives in the mirror image before him a totality, and anticipates a sense of identity and wholeness of the self through this specular Other. The child derives its value and it gains its identity through this external, reflected image by imagining to coincide with it. "Whereas it [the child] experienced itself as a shapeless mass, it now gains a sense of wholeness, an ideal completeness, and this without effort. This gratifying experience of a mirror image is a metaphorical parallel of an unbroken union between inner and outer, a perfect control that assures immediate satisfaction of desire" (Wright, 108). This is a moment of idilic communication and reciprocity between the child and its mirror image. "Here signifier and signified are as harmonious as they are in Saussure's sign" (Eagleton, p. 166). By observing its mirror image imitating the motion it dictates, the infant discovers and asserts its powers of manipulation. Ragland-Sullivan notes that Lacan's mirror stage must be understood as a "metaphor for the vision of harmony of a subject essentially in discord" (27). Lacan's mirror stage involves numerous phases, the first of which is the 'specular moment'.

In this paper I would like to draw a metaphoric parallel between Lacan's child in the specular moment of the mirror stage and instances in the discourse of

the amorous subject, in Tolstoy's novel Anna Karenina, where the subject, in search of some truth, experiences moments of total recognition and perception of that truth. Another metaphorical reading of the specular moment that we will apply in the reading of this novel is that it is a depiction of the subject's unrelenting desire to find the perfect sign that leads to understanding the meaning of his or her existence, or the lover's place in the amorous relationship. It is an instance when the subject imagines that this desire has been attained.

To identify the specular moments in the novel should be a simple undertaking. What may reveal more about the general aesthetics of the novel is to observe how the author motivates them, and to investigate the place of the linguistic sign in the specular moment. I believe, and I hope to show in this paper, that the specular moments in the discourse of the lover in Tolstoy's novel are in fact unique experiences in that they are phenomenal experiences beyond the reach of language, and yet they beg to become the subject of discourse. The characters' use of signs informs their psychological self-constitution. It is this structure of the characters' self through language that suggests turning to the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan for theoretical nuancing. The characters' need to manipulate the world around them through language can be most clearly delineated with reference to Lacan's theory on the mirror stage.

Amorous intersubjectivity in the phenomenal world can only be established through discourse. However, discourse is always constrained by the rules of language. For this reason language in the specular moment is often absent; it fails to act as an adequate vehicle for communicating the sublimity of what is an untranslatable presence, a presence that cannot be objectified in

language (in the signifier). When language is present it assumes a function quite different from that established by Saussure; here language "offers the possibility to say something quite other than what it says" (Lacan, 113). Through the discourse of the characters in the novel, Tolstoy often questions the validity of the desire for self-expression through precise representation; in other words, for the transparent rendition of experience in language. "Whether he seeks to prove his love, or to discover if the other loves him, the amorous subject," says Barthes, "has no system of sure signs at his disposal" (214). Therefore, an analysis of the use of language by the amorous subject should also consider its rejection. In this study of the amorous intersubjectivity in *Anna Karenina*, we agree with Barthes's understanding that the discourse of the lover is essentially a soliloquy. Sydney Schultze notes that in the novel "people can never really achieve total communication with one another, even when they are bound by a common passion or by marriage" (134). This may explain why it is impossible for Tolstoy's characters to communicate their feelings to each other. The discourse of the lover is always directed at his ego, its understanding by the beloved is immaterial.

#### B. *Constitution of the Amorous 'I'*

In Tolstoy's novel, the lover's entry into amorous discourse is marked as a moment of idyllic exchange and reciprocity between the subject and the beloved. Although each member of the love dyad in this specular moment is constantly bombarded by a profusion of verbal and non-verbal (and sometimes incomplete) messages, the lover's identification of the intended signified is quite complete, and is reached effortlessly. The 'truth', or 'validity' of the message is

unquestionable; there is no possibility for misinterpretation in the specular moment.

The role of the narrator's voice here is also quite unique. Through language he attempts to communicate a moment of idyllic amorous discourse to a reader who is absent from that moment. The narrator in *Anna Karenina* frequently accomplishes this by assuming the amorous subjectivity of one of the characters in the discourse. Thus, the being (I) of the narrator describing the specular moment is one who has taken residence in the being of an amorous interlocutor, and he may switch from one character to another in the course of the narration. In this type of narration the narrator seems to be temporarily 'attached' to the character, merging with the character's special position and his ideological and psychological systems (Uspensky, 58). We know from Tolstoy's later writings on art that in his esthetics the activity of art includes precisely this necessity for an idyllic transference of feelings from author to reader. In *What is Art* he writes: "And it is upon this capacity of man to receive another man's expression of feelings and experience those feelings himself, that the activity of art is based" (50). Later in the same chapter he writes, "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them" (51).

How this happens, Tolstoy doesn't tell us. For those with unperturbed tastes, this just happens naturally. The narrative event in Tolstoy's aesthetics takes place as an idyllic relationship. There is unity, or specular identity in the character-author-reader relationship; the feelings of the author are reflected onto

the being of the reader. This is also an aesthetic representation of the idyllic union of signifier and signified, the source and its reflection (in Lacan's mirror stage).

Keeping in mind that the specular moment in Lacan's theory occurs at the beginning of the mirror stage, we can now draw a parallel between this moment and moments in the discourse when the communicants in the novel are beginning to define the nature of their amorous relationship. In the Anna-Vronsky relationship the first occurrence of this takes place in Chapter 18 of Part I, when the two meet at the train station. This is how the narrator introduces the scene: "S privychnym taktom svetskogo cheloveka, po odnomu vzgliadu na vneshnost' etoj damy, Vronskii opredelil ee prinadlezhnost' k vysshemu svetu." And what attracts Vronsky to Anna at this moment is not her beauty but "potomu, chto v vyrazhenii milovidnogo lica, kogda ona proshla mimo ego, bylo chto-to osobenno laskovoe i nezhnoe." We are introduced here to the beginning of a lovers' discourse that takes place immediately before the first verbal interchange between Anna and Vronsky. The lover's discourse here is devoid of language, and yet is quite effective in facilitating amorous contact between the participants. In this activity it is not only language that can participate, but the entire being of the subjects as well. Amorous expression can be manifested not only through speech but in the entire organism (Zinkin, 77). In conveying Vronsky's first notice of Anna, the narrator constructs the narration through Vronsky's subjective viewpoint. In doing so, Anna becomes external to the narrator (Uspensky, 91). Anna's first notice of Vronsky is also described externally, through the subjective viewpoint of Vronsky's consciousness:

Blestiashchie, kazavshiesia temnymi ot gustikh resnic, serye glaza druželiubno, vnimatel'no ostanovilis' na ego lice, kak budto ona priznavala ego... V etom korotkom vzgliade Vronskii uspel zametit' sderzhannuiu ozhivlennost', kotoraiia igrala v ee lice i porkhala mezhdublestiashchimi glazami i chut' zametnoi ulybkoi, izgibavsheiu ee rumianye guby. Kak budto izbytok chego-to tak perepolnial ee sushchestvo, chto mimo ee voli vyrazhalsia to v bleske vzgliada, to v ulybke. Ona potushila umyshlenno svet v glazakh, no on svetilsia protiv ee voli v chu' zametnoj ulybke. (Part I, Chapter 18)

In this brief interlude the absence of linguistic contact in no way prevents the initiation of amorous discourse.

For any discourse to take place, two subjects are needed: 'I' and 'you'. 'I' is the person who utters, verbally or nonverbally, the present instance of discourse. 'You' is the person who perceives himself to be the intended recipient of the discourse, who desires to take residence in this pronoun. "The pronoun 'you' only means something to the degree that the viewer identifies with it, recognizes him or herself in the subject of speech" (Silverman, 49). The messages of the speaker, therefore, are meant for whoever desires to take residence in the pronoun 'you'. In the specular moment of idyllic communication quoted above, Vronsky perceives himself to be the 'you', or recipient of the non-verbal amorous messages communicated by Anna. When the narrator's voice tells us that Anna's eyes rested "druželiubno, vnimatel'no" on Vronsky's face, we also recognize that this perception, or interpretation, originates in the being of the amorous 'you', of Vronsky, who has chosen to allow his face to be the resting place for Anna's eyes.

Although it is 'I' that utters the discourse, its meaning is controlled by the 'you', the recipient.

We find a more obvious example of this 'appropriation' of the pronoun 'you' in Part I, Chapter 21. In this chapter Vronsky comes to Stiva's house at half-past nine to inquire about a certain dinner party. At this time the Oblonsky's are having a conversation and are looking at picture albums. Anna gets up and goes upstairs to get a picture of her son. A ring is heard in the hall. As Anna gets to the top of the staircase, Vronsky walks in and has a short conversation with Stiva about the dinner party. He refuses to come up into the house. This simple incident strikes everyone, except the narrator, as very strange, because of the uncertainty of who is the 'true' intended 'you', or recipient of Vronsky's discourse, and because of the possibility that Vronsky's verbal discourse may be hiding another message for the intended recipient. Each of the three characters (Stiva, Anna, and Kitty) recognizes himself or herself in the subject of speech and reacts accordingly. Stiva is addressed by Vronsky directly, therefore he perceives himself to be the intended 'you'. The only thing that Stiva finds strange about the event is that Vronsky did not come up into the house. Kitty, the amorous subject, interprets Vronsky's conversation with Stiva as insignificant, and she finds more significance in the very fact of his arrival. By appropriating to herself the pronoun 'you', she interprets Vronsky's arrival as a message intended for her. From Anna's viewpoint, Vronsky's arrival also carries a message that is intended only for her. She comes to this conclusion by examining her own uncontrollable response to his arrival: "... strannoe chuvstvo udovol'stviia i vmeste strakha chego-to vdrug shevel'nulos' u nee v serdce" (Part I, Chapter 21).

Having taken residence in the 'you' uttered by the beloved, the recipient becomes jubilant, like Lacan's child, at the possibility of being able to manipulate the discourse of the other. In the scene at the train station, this experience for Vronsky is also a state of exultation. He has succeeded at reaching the intended signified, the 'real', in Anna's various gestures without any effort. He experiences a sense of unity with, and a sense of sharing of Anna's 'being'. The narrator illustrates this through the extensive use of metaphors that indicate physical proximity, and metaphors of transference. For example, he notices something "laskovoe i nezhnoe" in Anna. Both of these adjectives suggest a quality that can be perceived only through tactile contact with an object. In another example, the narrator tells us that Anna's eyes "ostanovilis' na ego lice". The gaze in this metaphor takes the material form of the organ producing it, the eye, which migrates onto the beloved. In Lacan's language these are instances of a metaphoric transference of the 'being' of one subject onto another. The amorous subject and the beloved become one being, an androgyny. The set of gestures communicated by Anna and perceived by Vronsky in this scene "has no content or meaning taken by itself in isolation from the communicative act" (Zinkin, 88). Gibian also notes that "this is presented by Tolstoy as a subtle communication superior to the intellectual. It is an intuitive, non-verbal, non-analytic process" (315).

The second stage of the amorous discourse between Anna and Vronsky takes place after the characters have established verbal contact. The interplay between the verbal and non-verbal messages in the lover's discourse makes the meaning of the event quite incomprehensible to an outside observer. At the level



of the message, this duality of information is defined by what communication theorists have termed the 'content', or digital, and the 'command' or analog. The content level of the message consists of the 'data' of the communication, which is usually coded verbally. It refers exclusively to what the communication is about (Sousa-Poza, 331). The nonverbal, command (analog) cues provide qualifications about how the verbal message should be interpreted. This mode of communication often escapes conscious censoring and thus may reveal the true, primitive, or repressed side of personality (Ekman, 390). "The task of the verbal sign will be to silence, to mask, to deceive .... I can do everything with my language, but not with my body. What I hide by my language, my body utters. I can deliberately mold my message, not my voice... My body is a stubborn child, my language is a very civilized adult" (Barthes, 43-44). The analog message is highly antithetical; it lends itself to very different and often quite incompatible digital interpretations (Watzlawik, 100). "Digital language has a highly complex and powerful logical syntax but lacks adequate semantics in the field of relationship, while analogical language possesses the semantics but has no adequate syntax for the unambiguous definition of the nature of relationships" (Watzlawik, 66). The verbal exchange between Anna and Vronsky in the scene at the train station can be characterized as "small talk". And yet when the messages are accompanied by the meta-information communicated by Anna's body, Vronsky interprets the exchange as an initiation of an amorous interpersonal relationship.

While still on the train, Vronsky's mother tells him about her conversations with Anna. Anna responds, "-Da, my vse vremia s grafinei govorili,

ia o svoem, ona o svoem syne, - skazala Karenina, i opiat' ulybka osvetila ee lico, ulybka laskovaia, otnosivshaiasia k nemu" (Part I, Chapter 18). The digital message here is contained in Anna's utterance, the analog part of the message is the accompanying smile. The message transmits both information and meta-information simultaneously. The juxtaposition of the two messages does not yield a unitary signified, but rather is interpreted subjectively by Vronsky, who chooses to become the subject of speech, to recognize himself in the discourse of the speaker. Let us remember that the previous contact between Anna and Vronsky was not only non-verbal, but it was impersonal as well. She does not yet know the identity of the man upon whom she has rested her gaze. During the long train ride Vronsky's mother presents a certain depiction of Vronsky to Anna. From Anna's standpoint, Vronsky at that time resides in the third person, 'he' (or 'histoire', in Benveniste's terminology). When she sees him for the first time at the train station she recognizes a unity between the 'he' depicted by the old woman and the person waiting at the station. In her first recognition of him she may have experienced a sense of jubilation having perceived this unity between the 'histoire' and the man at the station. After they establish verbal contact, Anna still refers to Vronsky in the third person when he is the subject of speech. She tells him that the countess talked "o svoem syne", when she could have used the second person pronoun, "o vas". This attitude may indicate that she wants him to remain the subject of discourse, but not yet a *partner* in the discourse. It is one of the many signs that Vronsky interprets as 'flirtation'.

Vronsky's perception of the smile as lighting up Anna's face, as being caressing and intended for him, is reported to the reader by a narrator who has

taken residence in Vronsky's amorous subjectivity. We are not yet sure of Anna's intentionality in this act. The smile as an analog message gains greater semantic significance here because it is juxtaposed against a rather semantically empty digital message. The verbal equivalent of this interplay of digital and analog messages Vronsky interprets as 'coquetry' (koketstvo), because in Vronsky's view Anna's discourse and mannerisms seem to borrow from the familiar verbal practices of flirting. The discourse for Vronsky is significant for its connotative meaning. To Anna's comment, Vronsky replies, "-Veroiatno, eto vam ochen' naskuchilo, - skazal on, seihas, na letu, podkvvatyvaia etot miach koketstva, kotoryi ona brosila emu" (ibid.). We notice here again the metaphor of transference; flirtation acquires material form, it can be passed like a ball from one individual to another. There is nothing in Vronsky's verbal message to indicate that he has accepted Anna's flirtation and is willing to participate in her discourse. The message gains such meaning only because it is a semantically empty reply to Anna's equally empty digital message. This is the beginning of the game of flirtation. And why should Anna's behavior be interpreted by Vronsky as flirtation? As we have noted, she initiates the game by referring to him in the third person. Also, in her discourse and mannerisms there is a hint of fleeting submission followed by aversion. This interplay is repeated several times. Flirtation, according to the German sociologist Georg Simmel, "must make the person for whom it is intended feel the variable interplay between consent and refusal" (134), and "insofar as both are played continually off against each other, so that neither is sufficiently serious to repress the other from consciousness, the possibility of the Perhaps still stands above the Negative. Indeed, this Perhaps, in

which the passivity of submitting and the activity of succeeding form a unity of enticement, circumscribes the entire inner response to the behavior of the flirt" (143). The interpretation of Anna's behavior in this scene as a game of coquetry on Anna's part originates from an amorous subject, Vronsky, in whose being the narrator has taken residence for the moment. We cannot be sure that Anna has also meant her discourse to be flirtatious. However, as Vronsky describes himself to be a "man of the world", he is probably familiar with all the signs of flirtation. Anna is already familiar with this aspect of Vronsky's personality having heard many things about him from his mother; she knows that such a man can easily interpret certain behavior as flirtation, and she decides to initiate it. According to Simmel, "Inwardly, the flirtatious woman is completely resolved in either one direction or the other. The meaning of the entire situation lies only in the fact that she has to conceal her resolve and that, as regards something that is intrinsically certain, she can place her partner in a state of uncertainty or vacillation which holds true only for him" (142). In his decision to participate in the game, Vronsky acts instinctively, having rehearsed this same response numerous other times in his amorous escapades. He is "predisposed to the interpretation which Anna's eyes suggest" (Jones, 97). He 'catches the ball of coquetry', by pretending that 'he', the third person self created by his mother, is very much unlike the present being, 'I', conversing with Anna. Simmel identifies this type of verbal activity as the "domain of intellectual self concealment: the assertion of something that is not really meant" (138). Flirtation is not necessarily the beginning of an amorous relationship; rather, it is the mating dance that prepares the participants for the amorous relationship. Flirtation emphasizes the genital aspect of amorous

feelings. It fulfills a type of need that can be easily appeased. It differs from love in that, "The being of love, the pure phenomenon of which is desire, cannot be terminated by the appeasement of this desire." (Simmel, 133)

This chapter ends with the famous scene of the death of the guard. The significance of this event as a foreboding of Anna's death is quite familiar to readers by now. This event is also significant in the Anna-Vronsky relationship because it offers Vronsky another opportunity to take residence in the pronoun 'you' and thus become a partner in Anna's amorous discourse. When Anna hears of the accident, she says in a whisper: "Nel'zia li chto-nibud' sdelat' dlia nee? [the widow]". The indefinite "chto-nibud' sdelat'" in this "request" is accompanied by an implied "kto-nibud'", the agent who will, through a definite tangible act, 'replace' both of these indefinite pronouns with definite ones. To Anna's suggestion Vronsky replies: "Ia seichas pridu", and gives the widow 200 rubles. In this indirect interchange, Anna's language puts forth 'empty' (indefinite) forms, which Vronsky, through his acts, appropriates to himself and relates them to his person in the exercise of the amorous discourse. According to discourse theory, one takes up residence in a pronoun through an act. There is no doubt that all present agree that the widow should be helped. Granting Anna's request may serve a double purpose: to help the widow simply because one feels sorry for her, or to communicate a message to Anna (a subtext under the text of granting the request). Vronsky's verbal reply to Anna's request is addressed to his mother. But the narrator also tells us that before Vronsky addresses his mother he glances at Anna. Therefore, there are two addressees to whom the message "Ia seichas pridu" is sent. Vronsky replaces Anna's indefinite "chto-nibud' sdelat'" with the

act of 'giving the money', and the implied "kto-nibud'" with 'you' which he appropriates to himself. He identifies with it, recognizes himself in the subject of speech, and takes up residence there. Lacanian psychoanalysts have noted that, "...language in the psychoanalytic setting transmits meaning through its ambiguities, denials, and ignoring of intentions" (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 72).

This sort of discourse between Anna and Vronsky continues through the early stages of their relationship. When the characters function in the field of the specular moment, the idyllic communication and reciprocity continue, all the constraints of language are eliminated. When they are outside of this moment, however, the characters perceive and interpret their being and reality through thought and language. On the level of discourse, Anna's unrelenting desire to find meaning in the relationship through language is the main reason for the faltering of the relationship and for her thoughts of suicide. When Vronsky is absent from her several times, through language, Anna attempts to figure out the reason for the absence. This leads her to using more language and to a sense of abandonment. The abandonment is not only physical, but linguistic as well, because language can't convey to her the essence of the Real. The amorous relationship between Anna and Vronsky becomes perverted when the specular moment shifts into the sphere of the corporeal world, where the relationship becomes genitalized and language takes over. In the specular moment all desires are fulfilled. When the moment becomes sexualized, the Other becomes an object separated from "I", and "the logic of desires begins to function, the will-to-possess returns" (Barthes, 104).

Specular intersubjectivity, in the sense of subject to subject relationship in this corporeal world is an impossibility, because one's relationship to the Other is based on conflict. William Barrett explains: "To the other person, who looks at me from the outside, I seem an object, a thing; my subjectivity with its inner freedom escapes his gaze. Hence his tendency is always to convert me into the object he sees. The gaze of the Other penetrates to the depths of my existence, freezes and congeals it. It is this, according to Sartre, that turns love and particularly sexual love into a perpetual tension and indeed warfare. The lover wishes to possess the beloved, but the freedom of the beloved (which is his or her essence) cannot be possessed; hence, the lover tends to reduce the beloved to an object for the sake of possessing it" ( 257). Wasiolek comes to a similar conclusion in his observation of the Anna-Vronski relationship: "It is the nature of physical passion that works for the destruction of Anna's and Vronsky's love, brings them to hatred of each other, brings Anna to hatred of herself, makes their relationship more and more spectral, breaks down the communication between them, brings them into a situation where they cannot speak frankly to each other, makes them avoid certain subjects, and forces them to surround themselves with other people so as to make each other's presence tolerable" (153).

In the specular moment, there is no possibility for replaceability of the Other with just any Other. In the corporeal world and the world of language, this possibility is not excluded. For Vronsky, Anna can be replaced by someone else, she is just a woman. Initially Vronsky thinks that he is attracted to Anna because for him she represents the "noble female". His need for Anna disappears once the desire to possess her sexually is fulfilled.

*C. Discourse of the Amorous Subject in the Specular Moment*

Through language, according to Lacan, the subject moves from the specular order of being to the symbolic. Lacan's mirror-stage child eventually comes to realize that it cannot possess reality (his mirror image), but only represent it symbolically in language. In Lacan's view, the individual's identity, the structure of his being, is also constituted by language. Amorous subjectivity in the specular moment, as we have noted earlier, cannot render its emotions through language, but only through its subtexts. Merezhkovskij (1902), Wierzbicka (1973), and numerous other critics have pointed out that Tolstoy's characters in *Anna Karenina* for their expression, or comprehension, of emotions rely less on language and much more heavily on external (gestural) expressions. What we have in the novel, then, in essence are numerous instances where communication of emotion is facilitated in the absence of language. The stylistic features of the novel that are related to this and which I would like to consider here are these: how amorous relationships in the novel function in the absence of language, and how the author, through language, relates these emotions to the reader.

Our example is from Chapters 22 and 23, when Kitty learns, indirectly, that Anna and Vronsky are in love. She comes to this conclusion by observing them dancing mazurkas and polkas at a ball. Through the subtexts of dance Kitty discovers a 'dialogue' taking place between the two amorous characters, a dialogue whose signifieds are inexpressible through language.

Certain social dances have an extremely rigid kinesic and proxemic structure. They consist of movements that are confined to established patterns that



are repeated at regular intervals. Depending on the type of dance, the distance between dance partners, and between dance couples, is also regulated. One can observe the dance and its participants from two perspectives: from the perspective of the dancer and from the perspective of the non-participant, or audience. In the first instance, the observer has an opportunity to observe a dancer, or a couple, from various distances and perspectives as the dance progresses. In the second instance one can observe the dance couple in relation to other dancers or couples. By observing the 'subtexts' of an individual dancer, the observer can make inferences about the state of mind of the dancers. The narrator in these two chapters enters Kitty's subjectivity and relates her discovery of the love relationship from her perspective, first as a dance participant and then as an observer. This narrative approach is a repetition of the narrative method in the scene at the train station at the beginning of the novel, where everything is related from Vronsky's subjective viewpoint.

Kitty first notices a change in Vronsky's behavior when he fails to respond to the look full of love that she had given him. In Chapter 23, Kitty is dancing with some gentleman, while Anna is dancing with Vronsky. As the dance progresses, "Ei sluchilos' byt' vis-a-vis s Vronskim i Annoi." Now she sees a completely different Anna from the one she had expected and attempts to figure out the cause for the change. Kitty seeks to understand the 'being' of the Other, Anna, by identifying Anna's subjectivity with her own, "Ona znala eto chuvstvo i znala ego priznaki i videla ikh na Anne - videla drozhashchii, vspykhivaiushchii blesk v glazakh i ulybku schast'iaq i vozbuzhdeniia, nevol'no izgibaiushchuiu guby, i itchetlivuiu graciuiu, vernost' i legkost' dvizhenii" (Chapter 23). In Anna's

image and behavior Kitty sees a specular reflection of her own amorous subjectivity, and concludes that Anna must be experiencing the same feelings as she. Phenomenologists, such as Sartre, have noted that one can know the Other only through the signs that it exteriorizes:

Despite the fact that I am an interiority, my interiority manifests itself outwardly in bodily movements of expression. There exists a certain constancy in the relationship between my interior states and my bodily expressions: particular inner states are exteriorized in and by particular bodily movements. Now, I perceive in the other person the expressive movements through which I myself exteriorize particular inner states. This analogy gives me the right to conclude that an interiority is present in the other and that in him also there are those inner states to which I myself give expression by means of the bodily movements I perceive now in the other. (quoted by Luijpen, 275)

The signs that Kitty observes in Anna are signs that belong strictly to amorous subjectivity, and because the specular moment provides a total comprehensible image, there cannot be any confusion for Kitty as to the validity of these signs. Amorous subjectivity, however, always implies the presence of a beloved. The question that Kitty now asks is, who is Anna's beloved, the cause or condition, or recipient of her amorous feelings: "Net, eto ne liubovan'e tolpy op'ianilo ee, a voskhishchenie odnogo. I etot odin? Neuzheli eto on?" Kitty discovers the identity of the amorous Other during one of the dances: "To, chto Kiti tak iasno predstavialos' v zerkale lica Anny, ona uvidela na nem." Judith Armstrong reminds us that at this point it is impossible not to be reminded of Lacan's mirror

stage metaphor, as "each partner experiences a sense of loss of self as the object libido is brought to the object with the accompanying exhilaration of release as if from bondage, and, simultaneously, a re-identification of self with the other." (83)

In reading this passage we should keep in mind that the observations, and interpretation, of Vronsky's various movements are communicated by a narrator who has entered Kitty's amorous subjectivity. The specular moment allows her to see the signs of amorous feelings in Vronsky as easily as she saw them in Anna. At this point the amorous inter-subjectivity among the characters becomes triangular. At first Kitty is not sure that what she has seen is real or imaginary. Her initial observations are confirmed after she observes their behavior during the dance as a couple from various angles and at various distances: "Ona videla ikh svoimi dal'nozorkimi glazami, videla ikh vblizi, kogda oni stalkivalis' v parax, i chem bol'she ona videla ikh, tem bol'she ubezhdalas', chto neschastie ee svershilos'. Ona uvidela, chto oni chuvstvovali sebia naedine v etoi polnoi zale" (Chapter 23). In this moment of non-verbal amorous communication, the use of language seems to accomplish nothing more, it becomes superfluous. It signals the final break in the Kitty-Vronsky relationship.

-Prekrasnyi bal! - skazal on ei, chtoby skazat' chto-nibud'.

-Da, - otvechala ona.

Language, in Lacanian theory, draws the subject away from the specular moment and it provides the final break between the ego and reality. The image, according to Barthes, is much more painful for the lover than what one knows through language:

In the amorous realm, the most painful wounds are inflicted more often by what one sees than by what one knows... The image is presented, pure and distinct as a letter: it is the letter of what pains me. Precise, complete, definitive, it leaves no room for me, down to the last finicky detail: I am excluded from it as from the primal scene, which may exist only insofar as it is framed within the contour of the keyhole. Here then, at last, is the definition of the image, of any image: that from which I am excluded.

(132)

It is interesting to note that this very significant scene, which confirms amorous intersubjectivity between Anna and Vronsky, is conveyed to the reader by a subject who is outside of that relationship. This can only lead us to conclude that the scene is less about Anna and Vronsky, and more about the break of the Kitty-Vronsky relationship. Kitty realizes that she is cast away from the relationship, she becomes the other (*histoire*), and can no longer participate in the amorous discourse. In the specular moment the subject recognizes only two beings: 'I' and the 'Other', and the 'Other' is only a reflection of the 'I'. At the ball, Kitty comes to realize that the 'Other' is also reflected in a third image, one that is preferred over 'I'. She is no longer Vronsky's 'Other', but one among others. The image of the 'I' loses its preferred status, the specular moment ends and language takes over.

#### *D. Levin and the Longing for Meaning in Love and Life*

Invariably critics often compare the Anna-Vronsky relationship with that of Kitty-Levin, and provide numerous reasons for the failure of the first and the

success of the second. My intention in this section is not to provide more reasons for each, but rather to see how the success of the latter is expressed in the discourse of the lovers.

During each meeting between Kitty and Levin, it is apparent that the characters hardly use any language to communicate about their relationship, and whenever language is used, communication is either not accommodated, or language is used to communicate something other than what the subjects intended it to communicate. My contention is that the means of communication (language or otherwise) reflect the intentionality of the communication, which at times may be outside of the communicant's control. In Lacanian terms, language communicates not only a message but also projects the desires and fantasies of the characters. For our first example let us examine the scene at the skating rink when Levin is about to meet Kitty. We are told by the narrator that upon his visit to his brother, Levin had meant to tell him "o svoem namerenii zhenit'sia i sprosit' ego soveta, on dazhe tverdo reshilsia na eto" (Chapter 8). And later in the same chapter, Levin decides that "dlia togo chtoby imet' dushevnoe spokojstvie, nado bylo reshit' to delo, dlia kotorogo on priekhal v Moskvu", that is, to propose to Kitty.

Levin's attitude toward marriage at this point can be compared as being very probably similar to Karenin's when he was about to propose to Anna. Both characters looked at marriage as something one has, or needs to do. Karenin decides to get married because it is necessary for his social standing. Marriage for him is a social necessity. At this stage in his life Levin reduces the notion of marriage to an object and refers to it accordingly in his discourse. One gets the

impressions that he feels that marriage does not really concern his being, does not concern him personally. Marriage is outside of his being, an 'it', separated from 'I'. It is in this state of mind and from this subjectivity that he approaches Kitty at the skating rink. As Levin is about to meet Kitty, another part of him attempts to take control of his being. As soon as he approaches the Zoological Gardens he becomes "conscious of his throbbing heart". The heart is often used as a metaphor of another, a specular image of the self. Levin is aware of the otherness of his heart - his specular other, and is in the same confused state as Anna is when she meets Vronsky, when she does not know whether the real Anna is one who married Karenin, or the one who is falling in love with Vronsky: "Am I another", she asks herself. Levin's conflict is expressed in his discourse as he is about to see Kitty. He begins to talk to his other, his heart: "'Nado ne volnovat'sia, nado uspokoit'sq. O chem ty? Chto ty? Molchi, glupoe', - obrashchalsia on k svoemu serdcu.'" The image of the Lacanian specular moment, and the desire of the subject to control the reflection of the self in this scene is quite obvious. As we read further, we notice that the mirror images of Levin's subjectivity take turns in the discourse. One side of the image is that of a man who needs a wife, and finds in Kitty a suitable subject. The other side is the image of the amorous subject. The second image is represented metaphorically by the heart. The heart also competes for the attention of the same subject. Levin's state of mind in this scene is a structural parallel to that of Anna when she first meets Vronsky at the train station, when she can't decide if she is Anna, Karenin's wife, or another Anna.

Even though Levin does not see Kitty yet, his heart knows that she is there: "On uzna, chto ona tut, po radosti i strakhu, okhvativshim ego serdce." To

his heart, Levin's specular other, Kitty is also another, not the same woman that Levin was thinking of marrying. She is very unlike the subject Levin desires (wife-mother), but is a subject whose being does not belong in discourse, she is almost a holy object. The narrator tells us that, "Mesto, gde ona byla, pokazalos' emu nedostupnoi sviatyni" (Chapter 9). Kitty's entire being, and especially her smile transported Levin to an enchanted world "gde on chuvstvoval sebia umilennym i smiagchennym, kakim on mog zapomnit' sebia v redkie dni svoego rannego detstva". For Levin's specular other, Kitty represents the possibility (mother) of regressing to childhood, and the mirror stage, when all desires are fulfilled. Once Levin makes contact with Kitty, his discourse becomes jumbled and confused because two subjectivities are trying to communicate with Kitty simultaneously: 'I' and 'heart'. When Kitty asks him if he has been there long, Levin replies: "Ia? ia nedavno, ia vchera... nynche to est'... priekhal." This confusing response is repeated again in Chapter 13, when Levin attempts to propose to Kitty: "Ia skazal vam, cto ne znaiu, nadolgo li ia priekhal... chto eto ot vas zavisit... Ia khotel zkazat'... ia khotel skazat'... Ia za etim priekhal... chto... byt' moeiu zhenoi! - progovoril on, ne znaia sam, chto govoril."

Levin's discourse is riddled with confusion that originates in the question: Do I want a wife, or a mother? Levin's 'I' wants a wife, his 'heart' a mother. A woman, according to Lacan, can be for a man either a mother or a whore, but not both. Vronsky is attracted to Anna because she represents a whore figure for him. In Kitty Levin is looking for the mother figure. This is what he admires most about her, especially later in the novel when Kitty is pregnant. She stands for the bliss of the motherly embrace.

Throughout the novel Levin longs for a structure of meaning in love, marriage and life with which to identify. He is Lacan's child acquiring his identity through the specular image that offers him coherence, totality, and meaning. He is jubilant when he recognizes complete symbiosis between himself and the universe around him. He desires to read signs transparently and longs for a legible universe. At the end he finds it. He tries to find signs in an inimical world that would be understandable and transparent to himself. The mirror image, of course, would be the perfect, absolute sign.

By the time Levin is ready to propose to Kitty once more, he comes to realize that he cannot experience love through language, nor can language explain the reason for his existence. Once he rejects the desire for self expression through precise representation, in other words, for the transparent rendition of experience in language, he begins to experience a totality and an identity with Kitty and with the universe around him. Levin's second attempt at proposal, where he and Kitty are exchanging messages by writing the first letter of each word, is successful for the reason that language is rejected, and because Levin is no longer confused as to who is proposing - he or his heart, or what he wants, a wife or a mother. He likes the mother in Kitty. In this sense he is unlike Vronsky, who only wants to possess objects, and finds joy through this possession. In this moment Levin has no need for language, language is there only to embellish speech, not to deliver a message. Wierzbicka notes that "An emotion is something that is felt and not conceived verbally...An emotion cannot be rendered in words, what can be rendered in words is only some correlate of the feeling." (502)



Levin's rejection of language as means of knowing the other can also be seen in his attempts to find the meaning of his life. To believe that language can transmit eternal truths is like believing that the signifier and the signified are of the same essence: to believe that by possessing the signifier one can possess the signified. By the end of the novel, Levin comes to realize that "Slova eti i sviazannye s nimi poniatiia byli ochen' khoroshi dlia umstvennykh celei; no dlia zhizni oni nichego ne davali..." (Part VIII, Chapter 8). Levin's mirror-stage behavior is exemplified by his attempt to find, in his search for the meaning of his life, the perfect, absolute sign, or the reflection of the self, in nature. Nature gives him, as it did to Olenin in *The Cossacks* in the famous scene inside the stags lair, a sense of totality in which he can disappear. Through nature he experiences the motherly embrace, he feels oneness with it. Metaphorically, then, both Levin and Olenin in this ecstatic moment realize that there is no difference between the mirror and the source -- the reflection and the projection. As the amorous embrace "seems to fulfill, for a time, the subject's dream of total union with the beloved" (Barthes, 104), so nature enchants Levin and Olenin into a world that gives them coherence, totality, and meaning. Since nature (this world, universe) is identical with his personal being, Levin concludes that the infinite God must be also mirrored in him. God, the source of the reflection and the projection in the mirror, is the final signified for which Levin had searched.

#### D. Conclusion

Thinking, as opposed to perceiving, takes place only through language. Through the novel Anna relies on language in her attempts to define her new place in society and in the amorous relationship with Vronsky. By the end of the

novel she comes to realize that this leads to nowhere. Language only leads to more language. We find similarity between her discourse and Levin's in that they both unrelentingly desire to find the perfect, limpid, that is, completely literal sign. In this Anna betrays a certain linguistic disorder: in her longing for immediacy she cannot read for figural meaning. Later in the novel Levin finds satisfaction in his relationship with Kitty, he recognizes the meaning of his life, the essence of his existence and his place in the universe only after he has abandoned the linguistic sign as the tool to understanding the ultimate signified. In her study of Lacan, Anika Lemaire reminds us that, "The single word implies a series of references to other words in the code, so that one could go right through the dictionary and still come up with nothing but a tautology. The final signified for which one searches is radically excluded from thought as it concerns an incommensurable dimension, namely the Real" (41). Kitty and Levin in this novel, and Pierre and Natasha in *War and Peace* find happiness in marriage once they come to realize that the ultimate purpose of their existence and of history is beyond human reason (Singer, 53).

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