

**Title:** Anna Karenina's Faustian Pursuit of Desire  
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Throughout his life, Tolstoy's views on Goethe's *Faust* (1832) serve as a revealing touchstone for his artistic vision and views on artistic production. He read the drama many times throughout his life, especially in his youth, and called it the "greatest drama in the world" in 1861. However, in his later years, he expressed disgust for the work's "deplorable lack of religiosity" and its absence of "genuine artistic expression." As I will show, Tolstoy rewrites Goethe's Faustian myth through Anna's story by framing her adultery as a Faustian pursuit of desire. All essential components of the Faustian myth are present in *Anna Karenina* (1877): a Faustian figure (Anna), a Mephistophelean figure (Vronsky), desire (sexual fulfillment), and a pact (exchange of family and social position for desire). However, Tolstoy strips the myth of all supernatural elements, thus creating a more "prosaic" Faust.

This paper will reveal that Tolstoy borrows Goethe's Faustian myth, but his treatment sharply diverges from Goethe's, as he denies any redemption to his Faustian figure, Anna. After many damnable actions, Faust can still redeem himself through constant striving for his own salvation. Thus he is able to both satisfy his desires and achieve final redemption. Tolstoy rejects this vision: Anna strives for both her desire (Vronsky, sexual fulfillment) and salvation (her son Seriozha), but it is this duality in her that ultimately causes her destruction. I suggest that this divergence from Goethe anticipates Tolstoy's religious, artistic, and moral conversion that began one year after the novel was completed.