

Title: Anna Karenina as a Gothic Figure
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Lev Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877) is widely regarded as the height of Russian realist fiction. At the time many writers of social and psychological novels adopted Gothic conventions as a means of exploring human psychology and spirituality – Tolstoy was no exception. A closer examination reveals that Anna is analogous to a villain of the Victorian urban Gothic à la *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). In this paper I show how Anna's characterization, her psychological transformation, and the feeling of the uncanny she arouses in herself and others are all informed by the Gothic mode.

As I show, Anna falls under the category of the "hero-villain" associated with Gothic convention whose "madness and evil derive from the conflict within them" (MacAndrew 1979). Like the monsters and villains of Gothic, Anna's actions blur moral boundaries in society – prompting those around her (including the reader) to question the nature of good and evil. Also typical of Gothic villains is Anna's psychic transformation, which commences after she brings a "shadow" back from Moscow. The shadow (representing Anna's depraved half) grows and eventually encompasses her. Finally, I show how Anna's split self provokes a sense of the uncanny (as defined by Freud and Royle): a terrifying yet intriguing sensation calling one's self-identity into question (Royle 2003).

Many scholars (Morson, Wasiolek) see Tolstoy as being highly critical of Anna, yet admit that he drew "a powerful portrait of a woman tortured and torturing, loving and hurting and being hurt" (Wasiolek 1978). A Gothic reading of the novel, specifically the segments in which Anna appears, helps to elucidate Tolstoy's complex relationship with his own character.