Examining Leo Tolstoy's Character Anna Karenina through the Lens of Erich Neumann's Thoughts on the Medusa Myth[1]

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Abstract: If anyone says that the character of Anna in Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is a strong and powerful woman then it is labelled as a rather banal and commonplace observation. I argue, however, that such a statement fails to appreciate the depth of Anna's power. This article applies the mythology and symbology of the Medusa to Anna which will allow the reader to better understand Anna's moral and feminine strength. To do this, I will examine the Medusa myth through a framework provided by Erich Neumann. This framework will allow me to advance the argument that Anna's femininity is a creative and transformative power. Anna is not simply powerful but as powerful as an Infernal Goddess like Medusa who challenges relationships, institutions, and morality itself.

Keywords: Medusa, Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina, femininity, Erich Neumann, Jungian philosophy

Introduction

The Medusa myth has petrified and intrigued readers, listeners, and cinematic viewers through out history. Classical Greek and Roman writers[2] have contributed to this mythology as well as artists[3], poets[4], feminist thinkers[5], psychologists[6], lawyers[7], and clothing designers[8]. According to Marjorie Garber and Nancy Vickers, Medusa is "at once Monster and beauty, disease and cure, threat and protection, poison and remedy, the woman with snaky locks who could turn the unwary onlooker to stone has come to stand for all that is obdurate and irresistible" (Garber and Vickers, 2003, p. 1). This sense of daulity is a key reason for the myth's durability. Garber and Vickers continue to state that Medusa is a powerful feminine figure who is "elusive, elliptical, [and] unable to be subdued' whilst being 'the all-too-perfect emblem of what is wrong with powerful women" (Garber and Vickers, 2003, p. 3).

This article will use the Medusa myth as a lens to explore the character of Anna in Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. My aim is to demonstrate that the myth allows the reader to better understand Anna's moral and feminine strength. Anna's moral value is seen in her transformative capabilities. Anna can morally transform certain characters, such as Levin, and some actions, such as suicide. Ultimately, this article argues that the literary character of Anna Karenina should be categorized, alongside Medusa, as a powerful and 'Infernal' Feminine Goddess figure.

To argue that Anna, akin to Medusa, is a powerful and Infernal Feminine Goddess, this article will utilize Amy Mandelker's analysis of Tolstoy's use of literary framing techniques. Justin Weir notes that for Mandelker, literary framing techniques "mediate the way we view Tolstoy's most famous heroine" (Weir, 2011, p. 26). Mandelker writes:

> By creating a series of framed portraits of Anna – texts within text – [Tolstoy] repeatedly arrests his narrative flow in order to frame his heroine and alter the reader to the existence of the frame of beauty, corporeality, and the marketplace of both, that confines her. (Mandelker in Weir, 2011, p. 144).

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This article will explore two literary framing techniques which are identified by Mandelker. First, there is Mikhaylov's portrait of Anna within the novel. Mikhaylov's portrait is an integral literary frame technique that facilitates Levin's moral transformation. Second, Anna's body after her suicide is framed to turn her into a self-portrait. This article, however, will extend on these literary framing techniques to argue that Anna is not just a powerful woman. Rather, Anna is a powerful, and powerless, Infernal Feminine Goddess, like Medusa, who challenges men, women, Society, and morality.

In the scholarship surrounding the cinematic representation of the novel, we can see references to the Medusa myth. For example, Emily Pierce focuses on the representation of the female characters in Joe Wright's 2012 cinematic portrayal of *Anna Karenina*. Pierce references the scene in which Anna's hair is "spread out like Medusa on her pillow" where she is 'dying' after the birth of her daughter (Pierce, 2014, p. 21). Pierce notes that within these scenes, Karenin, the husband, and Vronksy, the lover, are with Anna. The 'dying' Anna with her Medusa hair is powerful enough to reconcile both Karenin and Vronsky. Furthermore, for Monika Pietrzak-Franger, the cinematic scene of Anna's "illness after the birth of her daughter … carries clear intertextual references" (Pietrzak-Franger in Hassler-Forest and Nicklas 2015, p. 250) to Caravaggio's painting of Medusa's decapitated head. Pietrzak-Franger continues: "Psychanalytically, she is here allied with the fear of castration; from the feminist perspective, this Medusa suggests Karenina's rage" (Pietrzak-Franger in Hassler-Forest and Nicklas 2015, p. 250).

Although these are scholarly examinations of a cinematic portrayal of the novel, the theoretical framework of applying the Medusa myth to the literary character of Anna exists. For example, Dragan Kujundžić writes: "Levin's words also betray a fear of his own castration, a 'horror,' 'a Medusa like effect' … when facing feminine sexuality" (Kujundžić, 1993, p. 74). In addition, R. P. Blackmur invokes the Medusa myth when analyzing the scene where Levin meets Anna. Blackmur writes that when Levin "sees her face as stone and more beautiful than ever, the very Medusa-face of life … for a moment he succumbs" (Blackmur, 1950, p. 453). For Blackmur, Levin's succumbing to Anna's powerful feminine sexuality is connected to seeing "death as a raw force, a concrete, focal, particular epiphany of the raw force of death" (Blackmur, 1950, p. 453). Blackmur continues and holds that when Levin sees Anna's face and encounters her beauty, his steadfast moral principles mingles with her erotic temptation. Set against "the strange intimate noise which Shakespeare calls the endless jar of right and wrong in which justice resides" (Blackmur, 1950, p. 453), Anna's face becomes the Medusa-face that is stone and more beautiful than ever.

This article intends to develop these scholarly examinations by incorporating Erich Neumann's thoughts on the Medusa myth and feminine power. Building on Mandelker's idea of literary framing, I will argue that the Medusa mythology, using Mary Evans' words, demonstrates "all that is seductive … and potentially destructive about female sexuality" (Evans in LeBlanc, 1990, p. 20) whilst acknowledging the "moral abyss into which adultery has thrown Anna Karenina" (LeBlanc, 1990, p. 14). In other words, I argue that Neumann's ideas on Medusa mythology can help us better appreciate that Anna is not simply powerful but as powerful and powerless as an Infernal Goddess like Medusa who challenges relationships, institutions, and morality itself which the current scholarly literature has acknowledged but not fully developed.

In doing this, I want to clarify that this article will only examine how Neumann's theoretical framework applies to the character Anna to better understand her powerful (Infernal) femininity. This article will not use the character to explore Neumann's thought as it would deviate from a thorough analysis of the character. Consequently, I will not examine Neumann's wider thought on the Archetypal Feminine, The Great Mother, and how the term 'Feminine' is a "symbolic" and "transpersonal" expression (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. xxii) which "must not be reduced to biological or sociological terms" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. xxii). Furthermore, I will not explore how these concepts progress through Anima, Unconscious, Consciousness, and into figures in the World. This deliberate omission should not block subsequent thought from exploring such a possibility. My

intention is to use Neumann to analyse Anna which will create an opportunity for future research to re-examine Neumann's thought on Femininity through the character herself.

I will structure my article in the following way: First, I will examine the Medusa myth itself and its symbology in Neumann's philosophy. I will then apply the myth to the character of Anna. This will involve looking at several key characteristics of Anna and how they correlate to the Goddess Medusa. Finally, I shall explore Levin's moral transformation due to Anna. In this section, I shall argue that the reflection of Medusa in Perseus' shield is structurally similar to Mandelker's concept of the literary framing of Anna.

The Medusa Mythology and Symbolism

In viewing Anna through the lens of the Medusa myth, I am not merely arguing that both are powerful women who men have tried to conquer and tame. Instead, I am arguing that there are mechanical similarities between Anna and Medusa which provides a new perspective on Anna. If we examine Anna through the symbols within Medusa then we can see how she becomes both a powerful and powerless Goddess who challenges men, women, Society, and morality.

To appreciate this further, I will explore key symbols within the Medusa myth such as her snake hair and petrifying gaze. Also, I will examine a key feature in the myth which concerns the beheading of the Goddess. These symbols provide an insight into Anna's interactions with other characters. It can achieve this through the structural similarities of the Medusa myth to Anna's non-verbal "phatic" (Mandelker, 1993, p. 3) communication.

The Medusa Myth

The "slaying of the Medusa" is a "primordial" (Neumann 1954/2014a, p. 218) and symbolic myth that has been "told and retold since antiquity" (Adler, 2009, p. 240). Although there is a "dizzying array of variations" (Adler, 2009, p. 240) of the Medusa myth, there are central key features of the story depicted "by storytellers from Homer to Ovid, that has generally been accepted as the definitive myth of Medusa" (Leeming, 2013, p. 10). Medusa is the only mortal sister of the three Gorgon sisters. The Goddess Athena punished Medusa for either having "dallied with" or having "been raped by" Poseidon in the Temple of Athena (Garber and Vickers, 2003, p. 2). Medusa's punishment was to be exiled whilst her hair was to be turned into a nest of snakes with a "deadly stare" that could turn "men into stone" (Adler, 2009, p. 240). Eventually, Medusa is slain and decapitated by Zeus' son Perseus. To decapitate her, "Perseus outsmarted Medusa by looking at her in the reflection of his shield" (Adler, 2009, p. 241) which rendered her deadly gaze harmless.

There are symbols within the Medusa myth which can help us better understand the true extent of Anna's feminine power. The first symbol centers on Medusa as a powerful and destructive force. In the myth, Perseus appropriates Medusa's head "as a device for his own protection" (Garber and Vickers, 2003, p.2). Additionally, Medusa's head becomes a divine object as it is displayed on the Aegis of Athena to "subdue her foes" (Garber and Vickers, 2003, p. 2). In Homer's *The Iliad*, Medusa's powerful force is harnessed by Athena as she prepares for war (Homer, c.750-725 BCE). In Palaephatus' *Daughters of Phorcys*, we see a version of the Medusa myth where Perseus engages in "piratical raids" (Palaephatus in Garber and Vickers 2003, p. 21) and after killing Medusa he places her head on a ship. In Palaephatus' account, Perseus uses Medusa's head as a weapon to extort money under the threat of being turned into "man-sized stones" (Palaephatus in Garber and Vickers 2003, p. 22). Essentially, the myth holds that, under the control of Perseus and Athena, Medusa's head becomes a dangerous weapon for warfare and self-protection. This idea of protection, however, stemming from Medusa's head predates Homer. Judith Suther highlights that "the Greeks used the Gorgon head as a talismanic mask on clothing, coins, weapons and other objects long before the time of Homer" (Suther in Leeming, 2013, p. 20). In relation to Anna, this article will examine how she uses her gaze as a tool for either scrutinizing people or as a weapon.

Additionally, there are other symbols in the Medusa myth which can be applied to Anna. For example, Christine de Pizan offers an argument centered on Medusa's "striking beauty" which can render "every mortal creature upon whom she looked … immovable" (Pizan in Garber and Vickers, 2003, p. 57). She continues: the "amazing and supernatural" beauty of Medusa with "her long and curly … hair" enchanted people to the extent the "fable claimed that they had turned to stone" (Pizan in Garber and Vickers, 2003, p. 57). In this account, people are not being turned to stone due to Medusa's acts of force. Instead, her beautiful femininity itself enchants and immobilizes people. I will later argue that Anna's beauty and curly hair resonates with the Medusa myth and has a similar immobilizing effect on men and women.

Furthermore, Medusa represents the power of transformation. In Hesiod's *Theogony* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, once Perseus slays the Gorgon, Pegasus and Chrysaör are born from her blood (Hesiod, c.700 BCE in Garber and Vickers, 2003). In death, Medusa becomes a creative and transformative power. This transformative power emanating from Medusa is apparent in Anna too. Anna is a figure of moral transformation for Levin; and, in death, she transforms the moral perspective surrounding suicide.

I want to stress, however, that I am not advocating that Tolstoy embedded these symbols of the Medusa myth into his writing of *Anna Karenina*. Rather, I intend to use Neumann's treatment of the Medusa symbology to interpret and re-envision the depth of Anna's character.

The Symbolism of Medusa – Neumann's Framework

Before examining Neumann's thoughts on Medusa, it is prudent to note a relevant criticism of his approach. Camille Paglia sums the criticism: "Neumann's manipulation of material is improvisational rather than schematic, though he does draft illustrative psychic graphs that will inevitably seem quirky or bogus to the non-Jungian" (Paglia, 2006, p. 10-11). This "improvisational" approach, however, is necessary when applying the Medusa myth to Anna Karenina because the flexibility of Neumann's framework can accommodate both the myth itself and the character of Anna. Neumann's approach of "removing historical artifacts and documents from their cultural context" (Pasto, 1958, p. 129) may appear "bogus" but this fluidity allows for a creative "art form" (Paglia, 2006, p. 12) to construct "a universal view of mankind, a mankind which embraces a multiplicity of cultures and goals" (Pasto, 1958, p. 129). The flexibility and fluidity within Neumann's philosophy, including his views on the symbolism of the Medusa myth, provides an interpretative model which can be applied to Anna. Consequently, we can better understand the true and Infernal Femininity of Anna.

For Neumann, there are several important features of the Medusa myth that provide an insight into femininity. Neumann examines one feature of the Medusa myth which concerns the early artistic depictions of the Goddess as being part-Centaur. This article, however, will not explore this part of the myth. Although in *Anna Karenina* there is an allusion that Vronksy's relationship to his racehorse Frou-Frou is equivalent to that of Anna herself, there are stronger characteristics and symbols within the Medusa myth which can applied to Anna.

Initially, Neumann provides the following description of Medusa: "[S]erpent-haired and serpent-engirdled, tusked like boars, bearded and barbed, and with protruding tongues, are uroboric symbols of what we might justly call 'the Infernal Feminine'" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 214). Neumann, however, goes onto to emphasize the importance and power of Medusa's gaze. For Neumann, the "petrifying gaze of Medusa" is a category of the "Terrible Great Goddess" and "Terrible Mother" (Neumann, 1955/2015b, p. 166). Since Medusa's gaze can render men "rigid" this is in a sense "terrible" because it "stands in opposition to the mobility of life" (Neumann, 1955/2015b, p. 166). Ultimately, Medusa is the "Infernal Feminine" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 214), a 'fallen' Goddess with a "destructive will" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 178).

Medusa is the "Terrible" and "Infernal" woman that the male "hero" must overcome (Neumann 1955/2015b, p. 168). The chief weapon of Medusa is her stare. Neumann notes that "to look directly

upon the Gorgon's features is to risk certain death by being instantly turned to stone" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 214). This is because the "power of [Medusa] is too overwhelming for any consciousness to tackle direct. Only by indirect means, when reflected … can the Gorgon be destroyed" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 216). Therefore, the reflection of Medusa's face in Athene's shield provides Perseus with the opportunity "to kill her" with Zeus' sword (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 214). The decapitation of Medusa indicates that the "primordial power of the female has been subdued" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 217). For Neumann, the "fact that Perseus then gives the Gorgon's head to Athene, and that she emblazons it upon her shield, crowns this whole development as … [a] victory" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 217). In essence, it is a celebration of the subjugation of Infernal Feminine power with Athene now wearing "the Gorgon's head as a trophy upon her shield" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 217).

For Neumann, the "snake hair of the Terrible Goddess corresponds … to a 'negative radiation'" (Neumann, 1955/2015b, p. 168). This negative radiation is the representation of the destructive feminine power of the Terrible Goddess and Terrible Mother. The "snake hair" is a destructive force of the Terrible Goddess and Terrible Mother because it stands in contrast to the symbol of the skull which is associated with the Great Mother. For Neumann, the "Gorgon is the counterpart of the life womb" and the "skull is a symbol…of death" (Neumann, 1955/2015b, p. 166). The "bald" skull, found amongst "shaven priests of Isis to the … Catholic monks" are "initiates of the Great Mother" (Neumann, 1955/2015b, p. 166–167). In contrast, Medusa, the Terrible Goddess, with her snake hair is antagonistic to the bald skull. The snakes on the Terrible Mother's head 'radiate' destruction rather than a personal choice of "sacrifice" and "castration" (Neumann, 1955/2015b, p. 166) to the Great Mother.

Medusa's destructive snake hair is more deeply appreciated when seen in conjunction with the characteristic of the protruding boar tusks. The protruding boar tusks from Medusa's mouth are an important sexual symbol in the myth. Neumann places considerable emphasis on the connection between the boar tusks and the mouth. Neumann writes:

> Probably the most primitive and most ancient of the pig associations is with the female genitals, which even in Greek and Latin were called 'pig' … Wherever the eating of pork is forbidden and the pig is held to be unclean, we may be sure of its originally sacred character. The association of pigs with fertility and sexual symbolism lingers on into own day, where sexual matters are still negatively described as 'swinishness' (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 85–86).

Therefore, sacred sexual power resides in Medusa's tusks as they derive from a boar and the associations of sex with "swinishness". Neumann elaborates on this feminine sexual power by highlighting that there is both a "destructive side of the Feminine" with her "womb" and "positive femininity of the womb … as a mouth." Neumann continues to state that "'lips' are attributed to the female genitals" and are indicative of feminine sexual power and are called the "'upper womb'" (Neumann, 1955/2015b, p. 168). This mouth, with its powerful feminine lips, is deeply connected to Medusa's snake hair. Neumann writes:

> The gnashing mouth of the Medusa with its boar's tusks … [and] protruding tongue is obviously connected with the phallus. The snapping – i.e., castrating – womb appears as the jaws of hell, and the serpents writhing round the Medusa's head are not personalistic – pubic hairs – but aggressive phallic elements characterizing the fear aspect of the uroboric womb (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 87).

Medusa's "overwhelming" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 216) feminine power is a petrifying force to masculinity. Despite Perseus successfully killing Medusa, Neumann considers him to be "barely man enough" to execute the task (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 215). Ultimately, Medusa's stare and gaze is such a formidable weapon that only the framing of her face in Perseus' shield provides an opportunity for Perseus to kill the Goddess. This framing of powerful femininity allows men to non-fatally engage with the feminine form.

Anna's Characteristics and Medusa

The following section will explore some of Anna's characteristics through the lens of the Medusa myth. First, there will be an examination of Anna's gaze and hair. Anna uses her gaze to not only render men rigid but also as a tool to display her feminine power. Similarly, her hair can demonstrate her Infernal Femininity. Second, we turn to an important feature in both the Medusa's and Anna's death. With the former, her head is decapitated; the latter retains her head. This is significant because Medusa becomes a trophy on a shield, whereas Anna remains powerful in death. Although it could be argued that Medusa's head on the Aegis of Athena transforms her into a very powerful object, there is a fundamental distinction between the Gorgon and Anna. Anna chooses to remain powerful in death whereas Perseus slays Medusa which removes her autonomy in becoming a powerful object.

Anna's Gaze

Anna's eyes and gaze are important characteristics. The reader is told that Anna uses her eyesight as a "bright light in which she saw everything" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 690) and as a "search-light" to ascertain the "hidden recesses" of people's "souls" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 693). In addition, Weir notes that Anna uses her eyesight as a tool to "analyze her relationships with Dolly, Kitty, and Vronsky" (Weir, 2011, p. 144). Anna's gaze is not just reserved for men. It is a tool or weapon which can scrutinize women too.

Akin to Medusa's deadly stare, Anna's eyes are a powerful weapon which she uses to engage with the world. Anna's gaze ties with the Medusa myth in that it can demonstrate her powerful feminine expression especially with its effects upon men. There are two ways in which Anna's gaze and stare can impact men. First, Anna's stare, as with Medusa's, has the potential to render men to stone. For example, in the carriage after the race, Karenin turns his face to Anna. The narrator states that Karenin's expression was that of the "solemn immobility of the dead" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 194). Anna also looks at Vronsky in a "cold and hostile" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 638) manner which produces a "similar cold expression … on his face" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p.638).

Second, Anna's stare has the ability to entice and display her feminine power which can, to use Neumann's terminology, overwhelm men. For example, when Levin visits Anna, she gazes at him which has a mesmerizing effect on Levin.

> Again she [Anna] glanced at Levin. And her smile and glance told him [Levin] that she was speaking for him alone, valuing his opinion and knowing in advance that they would understand one another.
> 'Yes, I quite understand,' Levin replied ….
> After a pause she smiled (Tolstoy 1875–77/1970, p. 633).

The feminine power of Anna's gaze is attractive and appealing to Levin. We can see this in the following comment from the narrator:

> Never had any clever thought uttered by Levin given him so much satisfaction as this. Anna's face brightened all over when she suddenly appreciated the remark. She laughed ….
> 'What a woman!' thought Levin, and, quite forgetting himself, he gazed fixedly at her beautiful mobile face (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 632).

Here, we can see the overwhelming tempting and enticing power of Anna's stare that emanates from her "brightened" and "beautiful" face (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 632). This, however, is ultimately dangerous for Levin as it almost jeopardizes his marriage to Kitty. Eventually, Levin confesses that "he had yielded to Anna's artful influence, and that he would avoid her in future" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 637) thereby "narrowly" escaping "her grasp" (Weir, 2011, p. 208).

In addition, when Anna dresses to attend the theatre in a "light silk dress cut low in front and trimmed with velvet" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 493), Vronsky asks if she is "really going" whilst "trying not to look at her." Anna responds: "Why do you ask in such a frightened way?" (Tolstoy,

1875–77/1970, p. 493). Vronsky is frightened because he caught sight of Anna's feminine sexuality and he can neither control nor comprehend it. Vronsky wished for Anna to not attend the theatre as he was worried that it would "acknowledge" Anna's "position as a fallen woman" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 494) but he was too fearful to exert his wishes and chose to avert his gaze away from her "brilliant beauty."

By choosing to attend the theatre, Anna is challenging her social exile as the "fallen woman." Anna does not repent her affair with Vronsky. Anna screams: "Do I repent of what I had done? No! No! No!" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 493). Anna then uses her gaze to re-assert her position and subdue Vronsky. Anna asks Vronsky: "Why don't you look at me?" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 493) upon which Vronsky looks at her. The narrator informs us: "[Vronsky] saw all the beauty of her face" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 493). Anna's stare is impotent as Vronsky says to her: "My feelings cannot change, you know that; but I beg you not to go! I entreat you!" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 493). Although Anna is unsuccessful in the use of her stare, it still demonstrates that she does try to use her gaze in a manner to exert control and regain "full mastery" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 605) over Vronsky.

One of the strongest examples, however, of Anna displaying her Medusa and 'Infernal Feminine' power is when Vronsky meets her for the first time. Upon their first meeting, Vronsky notices a "subdued animation that enlivened [Anna's] face and seemed to flutter between her bright eyes and a scarcely perceptible smile which curved her rosy lips" (Tolstoy, 1875–77/1970, p. 56). There is a sexual attraction to Anna with the curvature of her "rosy lips." Anna is speaking through the poetic beauty of her body drawing Vronsky closer to her through her feminine power. Levin also notices Anna's lips when gazing at her portrait. Levin is drawn to the framed and reflected – and ultimately, the harmless – sexual allure of Anna with her "upper womb." Later, we will see how Levin can gaze at Anna's lips without consequence but when Anna appears with a cigarette, with its sexual undertones, she almost compromises the sanctity of Levin's marriage.

Returning to Vronksy's first meeting with Anna, he notices the curvature of her "rosy lips" and her "bright eyes" which ignite a deep attraction within him. Both Anna's eyes and the curvature of her lips are akin to the deadly stare and tusks of the Gorgon Medusa. The "animation" in Anna's face between her eyes and lips is structurally similar to the 'Infernal Feminine' power that moves between Medusa's gaze and the Goddess' tusks. Anna's curved lips are akin to Medusa's curved boar tusks which, along with her snake hair, convey the sexual power of the Goddess' femininity.

Anna uses her "bright" eyes to draw Vronksy ever closer. For Anna, her eyes are an enticing sexual weapon just like Medusa who deploys her gaze as a potent weapon to turn men to stone. Vronsky is enchanted by the feminine power which "drives mad and fascinates … [and is a] seducer and bringer of delight, the sovereign enchantress. The fascination of sex and the drunken orgy culminating in unconsciousness and death" (Neumann, 1954/2014a, p. 60). Vronsky does indeed become fascinated by Anna, the married woman, and pursues her. After Anna's suicide, however, Vronksy is bereft and goes to war for he is now "in the jaws of hell." Vronksy says:

> I do not value my life at all and that I have physical energy enough to hack my way into a square and slay or fall – that I am sure of. I am glad that there is something for which I can lay down the life which I not only do not want, but of which I am sick! It will be of use to somebody (Tolstoy 1875–77/1970, p. 706).

Vronksy's nihilism here is the "death" that Neumann speaks of after the "fascination of sex." Anna's "bright" eyes drew Vronsky into the 'Infernal Feminine', but after her death, he is left with feelings of self-loathing.

Anna's Hair

Anna's physical appearance can also demonstrate a power similar to the Infernal Femininity of Medusa. The clearest example can be seen with Anna's hair. This sub-section will explore two ways

in which we can appreciate Anna's feminine strength through her hair. First, I will examine the curliness of Anna's hair and how that corresponds to the "negative radiation" of Medusa's snake hair. Thereafter, I will examine how the power within Anna's hair engages with male dominance. Ultimately, this power within Anna's hair leads to her self-portrait in death where she appears as a powerful heroine.

Briefly returning to Neumann, we noted earlier that he stated that the "snake hair of the Terrible Goddess corresponds … to a 'negative radiation'." This "negative radiation", which stems from the snake hair of Medusa, correlates with Anna's curly hair. I shall now argue that this negative radiation can be seen in two ways regarding Anna's hair. Anna's hair radiates both supernatural and seductive qualities which interact with men. Looking ahead a little, I shall argue that once Anna is framed within Mikhailov's portrait, men are able to gaze at her without having to engage with her 'Infernal Femininity' and negative radiation. For now, we can unpack how Anna's hair radiates these supernatural and seductive qualities.

At the ball, Kitty's jealousy after seeing Anna interacting with her fiancé, Vronsky, alters her once significant admiration and perception of Anna. For Kitty, Anna starts to develop an appearance which one can categorize as being like a Gorgon – Medusa, herself. The narrator notes:

> Anna smiled – and the smile passed on to him [Vronsky]; she became thoughtful – and he became serious. Some supernatural power attracted Kitty's eyes to Anna's face. She looked charming in her simple black dress; her full arms with the bracelets, her firm neck with the string of pearls round it, her curly hair now disarranged, every graceful movement of her small feet and hands, her handsome face, – everything about her was enchanting, but there was something terrible and cruel in her charm (Tolstoy 1875-77/1970, p. 76).

Moments later, Kitty thinks to herself: "'Yes, there is something strange, satanic, and enchanting about her [Anna]'" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 76). Anna's "disarranged" hair is part of her seductive charm. It is Anna's "negative radiation" stemming from her hair that Kitty is perceiving as "satanic." Kitty is observing the "Terrible Goddess" who is drawing closer to her fiancé.

Furthermore, when Anna visits Dolly for the first time, the reader is informed of Anna's "black tresses, which always catch on something" (Merezhkovsky in Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 770). D. S. Merezhkovsky points out that in "those unruly curls … there is such tension, 'the sign of something' ever-ready for passion, as there is in the extremely bright glitter of her eyes … [and] in … [her] smile'" (Merezhkovsky in Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 770). The unruliness of Anna's hair thus demonstrates that femininity is beyond physical confinement and instead pulsates like the "negative radiation" coming from Medusa's "snake hair."

Anna's hair represents the multiplicity of her internal strength and feminine power which are at their lowest ebb in the novel when her hair is short. We can see the power within Anna's hair through its relationship with two central male characters – her husband, Karenin, and her lover, Vronsky. Both figures attempt to exert dominance over Anna which involves her head and curly hair.

Karenin and Vronsky can comprehend and dominate the Gorgon power of Anna when her hair is short. For example, Anna, due to the trauma of childbirth, became weak and feared an attack from Karenin. The narrator informs the reader: "Suddenly she [Anna] recoiled, became silent and frightened, and put her arms before her face as if in expectation of a blow, she had seen her husband" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 375). Anna protects her head and face from a potentially imminent attack due to Karenin's position of dominance. Otherwise, like Medusa, Anna could lose all her power and life at the hands of a male. Also, Karenin notices something in Anna after she was recovering from her illness due to childbirth: "Karenin began to notice that Anna feared him, was oppressed by his presence, and avoided looking at him straight in the eyes" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 382). Karenin noticing that Anna is not looking at him re-asserts his dominance. In her weakened state, one of Anna's most powerful weapons – her "bright" eyes – are not staring at him which has the power to turn his expression into the "solemn immobility of the dead." Consequently, this allows

Karenin to force his opinion that she still looks "feverish" despite her claims that she is feeling "better" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 384). Without her Medusa-like stare, Anna cannot resist against male oppression which is trying to subdue her.

Additionally, Vronsky attempts to diminish Anna due to her "cropped" hair (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 395). The narrator tells the reader that despite Anna's "black hair" being "cropped short", it was "already growing again like a thick brush over her round head" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 384). When, however, Vronsky visits Anna a month before leaving for abroad, she takes his hand and places it on her "cold cheek and cropped hair" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 395). Vronsky remarks: "I don't know you with this short hair! You have improved so, you little boy! – But how pale you are!" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 395). In this sense, Vronsky is exerting his male dominance over Anna. Consequently, Anna's Medusa and feminine power is significantly diminished as the 'radiating snakes' around her head are cropped but they are not extinguished.

In death, Anna's curly hair becomes a significant symbol which pushes against domineering masculinity. The "heavy plaits" and "curls" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 707) around Anna's temples, frames her as the powerful Medusa-heroine. Anna's suicide and the plaits and curls, which frame her face, complete her "self-portrait" (Mandelker, 1993, p. 104). Anna's suicide characterizes her as a powerful heroine. Since her head remains intact, she does not suffer the same fate as Medusa. Perseus was triumphant over Medusa; however, Vronsky feels that Anna was triumphant. Anna does not throw herself in front of the train for the sake or in the absence of love. Anna's suicide is not an act of a 'fallen' woman but that of a 'heroine' who has remained steadfast against male dominance. Now, Anna is the one who is delivering the 'deathblow' rather than living in fear of receiving a 'blow' from a man.

Framing Anna – A Reinvention of Perseus' Shield

In Italy, the artist Mikhaylov paints Anna. For Weir, there is "something in Anna that provokes the best art of the entire novel, Mikhaylov's portrait of her" (Weir, 2011, p. 208) which is a significant event in the novel. The narrator informs us:

> After the fifth sitting the portrait struck every one not only by its likeness but also by its beauty. It was strange that Mikhaylov had been able to discover that special beauty. 'One needed to know and love her as I love her, to find just that sweetest spiritual expression of hers,' thought Vronsky (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 433-434).

The framing of Anna in Mikhaylov's portrait provides an insight into Anna's Infernal Femininity. Concerning framing, Mandelker writes:

> What seems to be true in the case of both painting or verbal art is that the action of framing, enclosing, and outlining seems in itself to impose an absolute perspective; the frame serves not so much as a break between the real and the represented worlds as an indexical arrow directed inward. Drawing a frame thus draws a conclusion, as if what has been chosen to be framed is intended to serve as the absolute symbol of itself (Mandelker, 1993, p. 92-93).

Crucially, Mikhaylov's portrait provides a safe symbol of Anna herself. The *real* Anna is a dangerous and seductive force but the portrait imitates her without jeopardizing her "special beauty" and "likeness." The frame of the portrait confines Anna – a harmless Anna – which Levin can engage with. The process of looking at the portrait and meeting the real Anna contributes to Levin's moral transformation.

Levin experiences a sense of conquering Anna who occupies the moral and societal position of a 'fallen woman' due to abandoning her son as a result of her adultery. Both Karenin and Vronsky categorize Anna as 'fallen' in some sense. In Part V, the reader is given an insight into Vronsky's thoughts on Anna attending the opera. For Vronsky, if Anna were to attend the opera with Princess Betsy "dressed" as she was then this would "acknowledge" her "position as a fallen woman" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 494). Since Anna attends the theatre with the gaze of Society upon her, she has

become the 'fallen woman.' Furthermore, Karenin considers Anna to be a "depraved" and "despicable woman" who has "committed a crime" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 254) whose "guilt should meet with retribution" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 257).

For LeBlanc, Levin completes a process of moral transformation when he meets Anna, the 'fallen woman.' LeBlanc writes: "In Part I, Levin had acted like a puritanical prig, heartlessly condemning as horrible moral abominations the painted Frenchwoman at the restaurant" (Le Blanc,1990, p. 16). For Levin, those "painted" Frenchwomen with their "curls out … are an abomination" and are considered to be "creatures" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 38). In fact, Levin expresses to Oblonsky that he has "a horror of fallen women" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 38). These 'fallen women', with their sexual freedom, are morally repugnant to Levin. According to LeBlanc, Levin's "willingness" (LeBlanc, 1990, p. 16), however, to visit Anna, which is "metaphorized as a trip to a brothel" (Le Blanc, 1990, p. 15)[9], indicates "the tremendous progress he has made during the novel toward overcoming his narrow moral righteousness" (LeBlanc, 1990, p. 16). LeBlanc characterizes this as a "process at work" whereby "the hero gradually loses his innocence and compromises his values as he becomes less a 'savage' and more a 'civilized' nobleman" (LeBlanc, 1990, p. 15). Levin moves from being "more and more in doubt as to whether he was acting well or badly" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 630) to eventually pitying Anna (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 634). Levin, for LeBlanc, has "grown" with "human understanding" and "Christian compassion and forgiveness, that he is now able and willing to appreciate the beauty, intelligence and sincerity of the novel's central 'fallen woman,' the curly-haired Anna herself" (Le Blanc, 1990, p. 17).

LeBlanc's mapping of Levin's journey of becoming a civilized nobleman is seen in reference to appreciating the fallen and "curly-haired" Anna. The curly-haired Anna can be linked to the curls of the Frenchwoman who filled Levin with horror and loathing. The framing of Anna in Mikhaylov's portrait, however, has allowed Levin to comprehend her sexual and feminine nature:

> He forgot where he was, and … gazed fixedly at the wonderful portrait. It was not a picture, but a living and charming woman with curly black hair, bare shoulders and arms, and a dreamy half-smile on lips covered with elegant down, looking at him victoriously and tenderly with eyes that troubled him (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 630).

Anna's ideal feminine beauty and sexual allure are framed in the portrait where "she was more beautiful than a living woman could be" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 630). Upon meeting Anna, "the very woman whom he had admired in the portrait" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 630), she is described to be "less brilliant, but there was something about her new and attractive which was not in the portrait" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 630). The real Anna is an alive and "attractive" sexual power which can threaten the sanctity of Levin's marriage. Levin is drawn to Anna's real "lips" which can smoke a cigarette thus carrying significant sexual undertones (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 630). Furthermore, the real Anna responds to Levin's gaze whereas the portrait, the framed Anna, does not. Consequently, Levin becomes aware that his glances "from the portrait to the original" produces a "special brightness" on Anna's face since "she felt his eyes on her" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 631).

Similarly, staring at the real Medusa has consequences. Medusa is a powerful being and deadly to the male gaze. When Medusa is framed in Perseus' shield, however, her feminine and sexual power are rendered harmless. In relation to Anna, men can now stare at her in the portrait without the fatal consequences of attraction upon their marriages and relationships. Although the real Anna is "less brilliant" than the portrait, like Medusa, her sexual and Infernal Feminine power is far stronger in reality than when framed. Levin is 'safe' when looking at the portrait, just as Perseus is safer when Medusa is reflected in his shield.

With the portrait, the male viewer's gaze excavates the power of the female. It can be stated that "[w]hen Perseus slays Medusa he removes the 'monstrous' threat" (Leeming, 2013, p. 78) of the feminine gaze, man "is now free to look at her without her looking back at him" (Adler, 2009, p. 243). Although Anna's portrait can invoke feelings and impressions in Levin – feelings which dem-

onstrate that Anna is victorious over him – he is safe despite being unable to "tear himself away from it" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 630). However, the real Anna can engage with his gaze and, if she pleases, "awaken love in Levin (as at that time she always did to all the young men she met)" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 637).

The longer Levin converses with Anna, he notices her "sincerity" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 634) in addition to her "intelligence, grace, and beauty" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 634). In fact, Anna's face "seemed even more beautiful than before" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 634) when Levin "again looked at that portrait and at her figure…he felt a tenderness and pity for her which surprised him" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 634). The portrait of Anna allows Levin to not only appreciate her but, in a sense, conquer his moral pre-conceptions of 'fallen' women and see her as a figure of pity. Mandelker writes that Levin's "encounter with Anna, an educated woman of high society with a complex, sensitive character, necessarily breaks the frame of his own expectations and provokes in him not the feeling of disgust he had anticipated" (Mandelker, 1993, p. 113) but, as the narrator informs us, a sense of pity. Levin "who had formerly judged her so severely, now by some strange process of reasoning justified her and at the same time pitied her" (Tolstoy, 1875-77/1970, p. 634). Levin morally transforms his "horror of fallen women" by pitying Anna's 'Infernal' femininity.

From looking at Anna's portrait, a process is initiated whereby Levin pities her and is able to overcome his moral repugnance towards "fallen women." Anna is a Gorgon – Medusa – the Terrible Goddess of feminine power, who is overcome by the hero, Levin. The shield of Perseus is substituted for the framed portrait. Anna's portrait is an imitation of her feminine sexual attraction. Although Levin was captivated by the real Anna, the imitation of feminine power within the portrait renders Anna not only an object of art but a figure of pity.

In classical mythology, Medusa is a marginalized and "monstrously deformed figure" (Leeming, 2013, p. 35). However, it "was not until the story was taken up allegorically in the Middles Ages that Perseus is in any sense threatened morally by Medusa" (Leeming, 2013, p. 35). Within this framework, "Perseus [is] the personification of virtue' who defeats "the evil tendencies represented by Medusa" (Leeming, 2013, p. 35). Similarly, Levin can 'conquer' the erotic and seductive qualities and tendencies of the feminine power and recalibrate his moral compass to become more understanding of the position of 'fallen women' in society. Mandelker writes that:

> [Levin's] revelation before Anna's portrait initiates the spiritual conversion he will achieve by the close of the novel … [and] … his recognition of and tolerance for the imperfection of human life and his resulting compassion … [Levin] thus plays the role of Christ asked to judge the fallen woman (Mandelker, 1993, p. 115).

If seen through the Medusa myth, then Levin's moral transformation is not just being a case of re-evaluating his values of "fallen women" but as conquering the 'Terrible Goddess' and the 'Infernal Feminine.'

Conclusion

Anna is a complex character who not only leaves a firm impression on other characters but forms significant relationships with them too. The Goddess Medusa is a powerful and powerless figure in mythology. Similarly, by using the frameworks provided by Mandelker and Neumann, we can better understand the extent of Anna's powerfulness and powerlessness. Anna, like Medusa, is a formidable challenge to Society, masculinity, and femininity itself. The Medusa myth can help us appreciate Anna as a heroine who is challenged by masculine counterparts and overcomes them. Furthermore, the Medusa myth allows us to understand the true power of Anna's femininity. It is a femininity which is terrifying and yet enticing to men and women.

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Notes

[1] I would like to thank Professor Justin Weir (Harvard University) who has been a source of inspiration, encouragement, and support during my study of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.
[2] Hesiod, Homer, Ovid, Palaephatus.
[3] Caravaggio and Leonardo da Vinci.
[4] Dante, Goethe, Percy Bysshe Shelley.
[5] Christine de Pizan and Hélène Cixous.
[6] Sigmund Freud and Eric Neumann.
[7] Amy Adler.
[8] Gianni Versace.
[9] LeBlanc references Irina Gutkin's "The Dichotomy between Flesh and Spirit: Plato's Symposium in Anna Karenina" in *In the Shade of the Giant: Essays on Tolstoy*, ed. Hugh McLean (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) to emphasise that Levin and Oblonsky's trip to see Anna as akin to visiting a brothel. From Gutkin's observation that food and sex are involved in the meetings between Levin and Oblonsky, LeBlanc states that the a pattern has emerged where the reader expects 'sexual love after an evening of eating at the club.' (LeBlanc, 1990, p. 8, footnote. 17)

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