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VIRTUE AND THE RENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE
FICTION OF DOSTOEVSKY
AND HIS EUROPEAN CONTEMPORARIES

by
NORA TEIKMANIS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative
Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

VIRTUE AND THE RENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE FICTION OF DOSTOEVSKY AND HIS EUROPEAN CONTEMPORARIES

by

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The present study focuses on Fyodor Dostoevsky's representation of virtue, its significance and the difficulties such representation poses. Virtue is linked with the revelation of the sources of conflict and the renunciation of the violence which arises from such conflict. Dostoevsky's mature works are considered in relation to those of other European novelists, drawing primarily on the mimetic theory elaborated by René Girard and secondarily on the ethical phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas.

Chapter one offers an exposition of the mimetic theory and an overview of critical gaps in recent modern criticism of Dostoevsky's novels. Chapter two, an analysis of Dostoevsky's "The Meek One" (1876), highlights Dostoevsky's examination of the unseen roots of violence in a story that is meant to be understood as a "text of persecution." Chapter three employs the metaphor of triangular desire to consider the relation between self-sacrificial behavior and suicide in Dostoevsky's "A Meek One," in George Sand's early novels Indiana

(1832), Jacques (1834), Lucrezia Floriani (1847) and in Chernyshevsky's What's to be done ? (1863).

Chapter four explores the obstacle/model relation in Crime and Punishment (1866) to reveal the "good mimesis" which is under-emphasized in Girard's early critical writing. Sacrifice is depicted in the novel as a species of gift given without expectation of return. Chapter five elaborates the "foolish" virtue of magnanimity in Don Quixote, (1605, 1615), Pickwick Papers (1836) and The Idiot (1868). The quixotic heroes' gratuitous acts of charity are examined in relation to the texts' interrogations of justice and law.

Chapters six and seven expound the nature of Myshkin's foolish "offense." Dostoevsky imitates gospel structure to lead his reader to an apprehension of the trap to which conflictive desire leads. Critical difficulty in appreciating Dostoevsky's "perfectly good man" involves recognizing the author's attitude towards altruism and ethical relation. Chapter eight analyzes the mimesis of apprenticeship in the decomposition of Zosima's status as "idol" (obstacle) and the remaking of Zosima as "icon" (model) in Alyosha's experience.

Dostoevsky's representation of virtue serves to advance a cultural critique of a scientistic, materialist epistemology and a secular metaphysic which abets unbalanced individualism.

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I am grateful to my sisters, Mahra Teikmanis and Silvija Teikmanis Scott, and my sisters-in-law, Laila and Lalita Salins for being a source of constant support and delight. My friends, Drs. Monica Calabritto, Anja Grothe, and Anneta Greenlee have sustained me with their friendship and good counsel. I am thankful, too, for the rich occasions for growth offered me by "the group" and Dr. Darryl Feldman, as well as my children, Andrejs and Alida, who have encouraged me to recognize my limitations and sometimes to stretch beyond them.

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Finally, my husband, Laris Salins, is largely responsible for seeing me through the long process of doctoral study. I could not have completed the dissertation without the time we have spent discussing the mimetic theory and its applications to our lives and the biblical and literary texts which we love.

Note on Translations and Transliteration

Citations of Dostoevsky's fiction in Russian are from The Complete Collected Works in Thirty Volumes (Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh, Leningrad: Nauka, 1972 -), henceforth referred to as PSS. The PSS volume and page number accompanies each citation in Russian; the corresponding English references include chapter and page number of one of the translations named below, except where I offer my own translation. When citing A Writer's Diary, I rely on Kenneth Lantz's translation. As for the novels, with the exception of Notes from the Underground (in M. Katz's translation) and Crime and Punishment (the Coulsen translation), I cite from the Garnett translations, which offered me my first exposure to Dostoevsky in English translation when I was a teenager. Now that I am able to compare Garnett's translations to the Russian original, they still strike me as faithful to the religious, philosophical and moral spirit of Dostoevsky's endeavor. The new Pevear / Volokhonksy translations (The Brothers Karamazov, Crime and Punishment, Notes from the Underground, The Idiot, The Eternal Husband and Other Stories) are excellent and often more exact than Garnett's, but Garnett's decidedly Victorian diction serves as a welcome reminder of the nineteenth century flavor of Dostoevsky's Russian prose. My use of Katz's and Coulsen's translations has been dictated in part by the desire to make my work accessible to my students who frequently use the Norton editions of Notes from the Underground and Crime and Punishment because of the excellent compendium of supplementary materials available in those editions.

When transliterating a Russian word, I use the Library of Congress transliteration system except when quoting from other translators or critics who use other transliteration systems or when proper names (such as Dostoevsky) and geographical names (such as St. Petersburg) are more recognizable in their conventional anglicized form.

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Chapter One:

Virtue in the Novel: Dostoevsky in Light of the Mimetic Theory

How is virtue represented in the novels of Dostoevsky? The question itself may elicit confusion, for there is little consensus about what constitutes virtue these days; certainly its literary reputation has undergone considerable change over the ages.¹ In representing virtue, Dostoevsky does not merely advance a conventional understanding of virtue as a moral capacity which focuses on the conformity of actions to an approved end. Indeed, he occasionally produces narratives in which characters who act in a way that generally might be considered virtuous within the context of a Judeo-Christian ethos (i.e., compassionate and charitable towards others) nevertheless experience a tragic downturn. Virtue is not consistently or even often rewarded in the Russian writer's fiction. But Dostoevsky also puts before us cases in which a character offers a positive and loving model or acts magnanimously towards another, thereby initiating a positive succession of such beneficence. Dostoevsky often presents such action as extending beyond a tit-for-tat economy which demands "what's in it for me?" Such literary depictions, for a variety of reasons, have frequently been met with critical disdain. Thus it appears that narrating virtue poses particular problems, not the least of these being that certain representations do not prompt a rush to identification on the part of some readers.

The representation of virtue in Dostoevsky's novels echoes Biblical sources. In the Tanakh or Hebrew scriptures, virtue is identified with purity of heart and righteousness (*temimut*). Mildness, forgiveness and moderation of

passion along with temperance are also extolled. In the rabbinic literature of the Midrash, virtue is within the grasp of the believer. Envy can be transformed into the emulation of the wise, and greed can be directed towards accumulating knowledge of Torah rather than money. The separate virtues enumerated in the Torah and collected in the Talmud and Midrash are founded on the understanding of divinity, creation and human subjectivity: a foundational triangle. That dynamic is reiterated in the Christian gospels in which the individual is also represented in relation to an immediate other and a transcendent other. In enjoining virtue, the New Testament repeats the love commandment laid down in Leviticus 19: 18. ² Dostoevsky follows suit, naming compassion (*сострадание*) in the words of one of his characters (Lev Nikolaevich Myshkin) as "the chief and perhaps only law of all human existence" (PSS 8, 192; II, 5, 223). The love commandment is further reiterated and elaborated in The Brothers Karamazov in Zosima's injunction to undertake the practice of "active love." ("Strive to love your neighbor actively and indefatigably." « Постарайтесь любить ваших ближних деятельно и неустанно ... » PSS 14, 52 ; 1, 4, 48)

Nietzsche irrevocably problematized the very notion of virtue, setting the stage for subsequent critical appraisals of Dostoevsky's narrative re-creations of virtue. In Beyond Good and Evil (1886), he argues that morality, particularly Judeo-Christian morality which calls for love of one's neighbor, is not "natural" and thus should not serve as a guide to life. In The Will to Power (1888), section 326, Nietzsche describes virtue as a mask for oppressive cultural convention. ³ Dostoevsky would no doubt agree with Nietzsche that Judeo-

Christian morality is not "natural," for humans, unlike animals, do not "naturally" put a check on that rivalry. Nevertheless, unlike Nietzsche, Dostoevsky does not declare that Judeo-Christian morality offers a poor guide for life. Dostoevsky and Nietzsche do share common ground in their appreciation, as Edith Clowes has put it, of an "inwardly generated transfigurative moral consciousness" as opposed to an "externally imposed" moral system.⁴ This is not to say that the Russian writer finds himself at odds with a dominant Judeo-Christian morality which seeks to guide human behavior by "externally imposing" the ten commandments. It is Nietzsche, not Dostoevsky, who appears to regard categories of moral good and evil as outworn and useless.

In spite of the profound difference between the two, the specter of Nietzsche arises when speaking about Dostoevsky's texts, particularly representations of virtue. This is because Nietzsche raises questions about the attitude one should take towards an inherited moral framework: should we treat it respectfully, contemptuously, playfully? "Morality," Nietzsche observes (in Twilight of the Idols, 1889) "has always been a bed of Procrustes." He alerts us to the fact that in the name of virtue, all sorts of unjust social practices may assert themselves as unquestionably right.

In addition to characterizing virtue as unnatural and a mask for both oppressive social convention and divine authority, Nietzsche attributes yet another valence of meaning to virtue when he speaks of it as a kind of excess. Subsequent critics who trace their critical genealogy to Nietzsche echo him. In Beyond Good and Evil, #62, Nietzsche speaks of virtue as something practiced

by "great men," who are presumably capable of self-overcoming by leaving behind the merely conventional. Among such great men he certainly includes Dostoevsky (in "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man" in Twilight of the Idols, 1889). Nietzsche's remarks about virtue as excess and the great man as artist suggest that the elusive quality, virtue, is located in sheer literary inventiveness.

Nietzsche comes close to recognizing the distinctive hermeneutic function the victim bears in Dostoevsky's fiction. This is evident in Nietzsche's positive valuation of the prisoners of the *katorga* (in Notes from the House of the Dead, 1862). Those whom Dostoevsky initially judged as incapable of returning to society, turned out to be, in Dostoevsky's estimation, as Nietzsche puts it, "the most valuable timber growing anywhere in Russia." They are the ones whom the public despises, who are treated as not only unequal but absolutely unworthy, a source of "pollution." Nietzsche thereby asserts that those who have been excluded and expelled are paradoxically the certain foundation of the society which considers them "pollution." Nietzsche esteems the scapegoated common criminal, at least in theory. He sees exclusion and expulsion as structuring principles in society. Nietzsche's insight arises from the very Judeo-Christian morality which denounces exclusion and expulsion as an authentic means of structuring community. (Religious institutions, however, have historically been guilty all too often of these very practices.) The difference between Nietzsche's thought and his Judeo-Christian inheritance is that he sides with the victim, glorifies the victimizer, and refuses to renounce the mechanism of victimization.

Nietzsche's notion of virtue as excess is echoed by Michael Bakhtin when the Russian critic writes of "a surplus inhering in the human condition."⁵ In the work of Georges Bataille, who claims a profound debt to Nietzsche, this "surplus" might be conceptualized as the excess of the signifying over the signified.⁶ Bataille's privileging of excess makes a virtue of the sublime, the unsayable, the unmasterable, something imaginable only in its absence. Bataille's sublime effectively removes virtue from the ethical sphere, rendering it an abstract aesthetic, linguistic or intellectual phenomenon.

Identifying virtue with plenitude rather than excess, I undertake the present investigation of virtue in Dostoevsky's novels within the context of ethical relation and personal accountability. I draw on the mimetic theory of French cultural critic René Girard, whose reading of Dostoevsky's texts led to an analysis of desire in the European novel. While Girard does not use the term "virtue" in his elaboration of mimetic theory, his conception of positive modeling or "good mimesis" might be a rough equivalent. In Girard's theory, "good mimesis" emerges as a response to the demystification and renunciation of rivalrous desire and "conversion" (or transformation) to the imitation of a transcendent benign model. "Good mimesis" arises when a subject imitates a model who is beyond all differences that are the source of rivalry. The divine model to which Girard refers is one that is not "part of the differential system that requires exclusion, victimization and the latter's ritualization in sacrifice." "Good mimesis" is underwritten by a divine model, not on "the basis of retribution and the possibility of revenge."⁷ It is not a matter of reciprocating hostility. We might "do unto others" as we would have them "do unto us," but

our actions need not be determined by literal expectations of reward or punishment.

Characters who embody "good mimesis" in Dostoevsky's late novels recall some of the "pure hearted" who play an important role in a number of other European novels. They include Picwick in Pickwick Papers (1836), Betsey Trotwood and Mr. Dick in David Copperfield (1849-50), Joe in Dickens' Great Expectations (1860-61), Natalya Savishna in Tolstoy's Childhood (1851) and her successor, Countess Mary Bolkonskaya in War and Peace (1865 - 1869). Many others might be named. In Dostoevsky's novels, as in the works just mentioned, the depiction of virtue matters because it is through such characters and the *telos* which they represent that the author shapes a cultural critique, revealing the disparity between human plots and divine order. Because the individual and the community are imperfect, an on-going self-criticism is required. Such self-criticism, for Dostoevsky, does not stem from a deliberate program, plotted and executed by human visionaries. Dostoevsky has no faith in utopian plans for social betterment, for humans, as he sees them, are not mere clay to be molded by some law or theory which is externally imposed. Instead, his representations of good mimesis always hark to his ideal and model, Christ, whom he sees as having a benign transformative influence on the lives of humans. That influence may work to resolve conflicts not only in the intrapersonal sphere but the interpersonal sphere.

Dostoevsky also goes beyond social critique, not only challenging social conventions but examining the fundamental structure of human subjectivity and the causes for human conflict. In doing so, he directs his reader towards a

Judeo-Christian anthropology which asserts that humans are made in God's likeness. Dostoevsky glosses this anthropology in the following lines from his notebooks, "Note that human nature unfailingly demands something to worship" (*obozhenie*).⁶ (Perhaps "something to deify" might be a better translation.) Makar Ivanovich in The Adolescent expands the idea: "And if a man should reject God, then he will bow down before an idol— before a wooden one, or a gold one, or one made of thought." Dostoevsky consistently shows that an ill-guided search for the image of the divine may ultimately lead to humans making other humans their gods.

To be created in the "image of God" is a complex concept that has been the subject of diverse biblical and theological study. In addition to highlighting humans' thirst for "something to deify," Dostoevsky's novels reveal another aspect of biblical anthropology. They show humans as fundamentally in relation, capable even of suffering the pain of another rather than inflicting pain, being open to the wounds of the world and ready to "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Over the course of the nineteenth century, educated Russians (*intelligenty*) began to question the validity of the Christian anthropology which Dostoevsky takes to be central. They often favored a romantic cult of genius founded on the heroic evaluation of Napoleon I, and stirred by Rousseau, fed by Hegel, but critiqued by Pushkin in Eugene Onegin (1833). Such radical individualism was encouraged by the Westernizers of the 1840's (Belinsky, Herzen, Bakunin) and the radicals and nihilists of the 60's.⁹ Educated Russians also responded increasingly favorably to positivism originating with

Western thinkers (Comte, Mill, Spencer, and Lewes), a scientistic epistemology, and a rational egoism (advanced by J. S. Mill and Jeremy Bentham but spread in Russia by Nikolai Chernyshevsky).¹⁰ Dostoevsky's work calls into question both utilitarian self interest and radical individualism.

Rejecting the idea that humans act according to rational principles or in a manner which advances their own self-interest (or "advantageous advantage" as the underground man says), Dostoevsky argues against a mechanical determinism while he lays the groundwork for the modern rejection of the Cartesian idea of the discrete, stable, separate ego. Opposing the belief that humans become fully individual in separation from the world, Dostoevsky instead insists on the relational self, the self who comes into being by engaging with others. Dostoevsky then explores the ethical range of human affairs, and rather than claiming that all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, attitude or feeling, Dostoevsky seeks to locate the source for ethical decision in the example of Christ.¹¹

The novelization of virtue has not been neglected in the study of Dostoevsky's texts. (See Mathewson, 1958; Krieger, 1962, Vetlovskaya, 1977; Linner, 1975; Gorodetzky, 1976; M. Ziolkowski, 1988; Morris, 1993.) The present analysis will reveal the Russian writer's distinctive depiction of virtue as a means of countering the conflictual desire which drives people apart and leads to suicide, failed relationships and murder.

In Dostoevsky's work, violence often begins with a misapprehension about the other, and a tendency to regard the other as the source of conflict, as the underground men do in Notes from Underground (1864), Crime and

Punishment (1866), and "A Meek One" (1876). Certain cultural habits reinforce the desire to obtain what the other *has* (or is perceived to have) even to the point of trying to acquire what the other *is*. Such an extreme of rivalrous desire is illustrated in The Idiot in the murder of Nastasya Filippovna by the man who idolizes her as "queen of his heart." The opportunity to minimize conflict arises by consciously recognizing the models which guide the desiring subject, choosing beneficial models, and being guided by a transcendent benign deity who does not require retribution. Dostoevsky consistently reveals that "the good" may not be found in reason or in "rational self-interest" or even in the search for justice. It is not a matter of having one's own "independent desire" (which leads to the dream of pride for the pawnbroker in "A Meek One" and Ivan's Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov). In terms put forward by Dostoevsky's Elder Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov, the good arises in the practice of "active love" which begins with an understanding that "I am" means "I am in relation to the other," "I am responsible towards the other."

Being responsible to the other may seem an immeasurable task, a huge project. It is indicative of desire that Girard calls metaphysical. Metaphysical desire has often taken quixotic forms in the novel, beginning with Cervantes' Don Quixote (1605, 1615), which not only served as a paradigm for the modern novel but greatly influenced Dostoevsky's own conception of human reality. Cervantes' deluded knight conflates Christian and chivalric ideals as did many of Cervantes' contemporaries. Seemingly innocent in the ways of the law, Quixote serves as a vehicle for the author's oblique interrogation of the legitimacy and efficacy of legal compulsion. Dickens picks up where Cervantes'

novel leaves off, revealing the conflict between foolish virtue and legal force in Pickwick Papers (1836). In the course of an encounter with the criminal justice system, Pickwick learns that violence is not merely the stuff of dramatic melodrama (the interpolated stories); it can arise out of the attempt to seek justice. He finds, moreover, as Auden has pointed out, that the law is neither just nor efficient nor infallible.¹² While Dickens draws on the comic aspect of the quixotic character, Dostoevsky emphasizes the tragic, ultimately reducing his "perfectly beautiful man" to "idiocy." In doing so, Dostoevsky nevertheless illuminates the ethical significance of Myshkin's gratuitous acts of charity (*milost*), offered with no expectation of return.

The desire for the other's benefit, which is evident in Myshkin, as well as other characters in Dostoevsky's novels, is plotted rather differently in several early novels of George Sand and in Nikolai Chernyshevsky's What is to be done? (1863). Sand romanticizes the nobility of self-sacrifice in erotic love while Chernyshevsky revises the romantic cliché to envision a radical reorganization of desire which a revolutionary society would require. Chernyshevsky's novel anticipates later socialist realism in which violence is primarily located in the structure of an unjust social hierarchy.

In Dostoevsky's novels, however, violence resides not only in institutions. It denotes more than physical coercion. It includes rivalrous desire that can lead to the killing of a surrogate victim (as in The Demons) but there are more subtle forms of it as well, including an envious disposition (evident in Notes from Underground) and an apprehension of the other as an obstacle to the fulfillment of one's desire.

The "positive mimesis" which counters violence is easily recognizable in a number of Dostoevsky's unforgettable characters in the period which follows the publication of Notes from Underground (1864) and culminates in the last novel: these characters include Sonya in Crime and Punishment (1866), Myshkin in The Idiot (1868), Tikhon in The Possessed (1872), the Meek One in the 1876 story of that name, and Alyosha and Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov (1879). A number of prior studies (Vetlovskaya, 1977; M. Ziolkowski, 1988; Morris, 1993) which have dealt with virtue in Dostoevskye texts have tended towards the typological, focusing on monks, saintly figures and the influence of early Russian hagiographic texts. Others have explored the historical models for such characters as Gorodetzky does in her study of Tikhon of Zadonsk, one of the real-life models for Zosima. Still other critics such as Linner have charted the increasing assurance with which Dostoevsky draws his "positive heroes," gradually eliminating presumed "flaws."

Yet analysis of the representation of virtue need not be confined to character and typological analysis; analysis must include plottings of virtue with a view to the *telos* towards which the narratives move. Dostoevsky's novelistic representations of virtue strive to suggest a completeness or wholeness within (and even beyond) the predictable boundaries of plot. He refigures the Christian passion narrative in characters' experience, employs ekphrasis, explores the possibility of radical personal transformation and reveals the objects of obsessive cultural fascination.

In general terms, the difficulties which Dostoevsky and his contemporaries face in narrativizing virtue may be conceived as the forms the

realistic novel may take and its relation to "things as they are." In an influential comparative study, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol (1965), Donald Fanger describes Dostoevsky as an inheritor of romantic realism. Fanger concludes, however, that Dostoevsky's brand of realism transforms reality,¹³ while that of Dickens, by contrast, romanticizes reality. Fanger asserts that Dostoevsky's "visionary" or transformative tendency means that the internal divisions (*razlad*) of the characters offer a more realistic representation of people than do older, more conventional depictions, at least for readers accustomed to the categories of modern psychology.

The reader's receptiveness to the writer's psychological, ethical and religious vision may determine the perceived success of "good mimesis." In Dostoevsky's ideological novels, in particular, it may appear left up to the reader to bridge the gap between the Christian frame of reference to which Dostoevsky adhered and his novelistic narratives which appear to counter it. Some readers have perceived a fundamental dualism in the supposed silence of the author. Readers as diverse as Vasily Rozanov,¹⁴ Lev Shestov¹⁵ and D. H. Lawrence¹⁶ have read Dostoevsky as torn between a passionate desire for belief and a fundamental skepticism. Dostoevsky's theodicy in The Brothers Karamazov is read by such critics as a failure. Lawrence even goes so far as to argue that Dostoevsky is on the side of the Grand Inquisitor. In response to such critical misapprehension, Robert Belknap has proposed a criterion for determining Dostoevsky's attitude towards his characters and their ideas: Dostoevsky reveals the gap between what they say and what they do.¹⁷

Those who explicitly denounce the writer's Christian orientation have read in his representations of virtue a justification for an unjust status quo. This is indeed how Maxim Gorky and Anatoly Lunacharsky read him,¹⁸ and a whole line of negative Marxist appraisals followed.¹⁹ Gorky asserted that Dostoevsky, like Tolstoy, offered an "apology for passivity" and actually supported violence by "preaching patience, reconciliation, forgiveness."²⁰

On aesthetic rather than political grounds, other writers such as Ivan Bunin, Marina Tsvetaeva, and Vladimir Nabokov condemned Dostoevsky, disdainfully perceiving in his work the "low" style of the "boulevard" novel. Responding to the popularity of Dostoevsky in the west, Nabokov described Dostoevsky as a "cheap sensationalist, clumsy and vulgar, a "claptrack journalist" who was an "overrated sentimental and Gothic novelist."²¹ (Nabokov is particularly dismissive of Sonya and Raskolnikov's Bible reading in Part IV, chapter iv of Crime and Punishment). Professor of Russian at the University of California, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere shares Nabokov's distrust of Dostoevsky but for different reasons. Rancour-Laferriere places Dostoevsky within a "tradition" of Russian moral masochism.²² Rancour-Laferriere elides the transcendent dimension of faith, pathologizing it, in his effort to provide an ethno-psychological account of the Russian response to suffering and violence.

It is important to acknowledge the difficulties which arise in the reader's reception of the novelistic representation of virtue; yet seeing in such representations only the sentimental, gothic, or masochistic is reductionistic in the extreme. While the critic may be attentive to reader reception, to seek the meaning of the text in the audience of the text alone is to obscure the specific

narrative choices which the author has made, as Belknap has demonstrated. The mimetic theory of René Girard offers an alternative interpretive approach that renders psychologically intelligible the ethical and religious concerns of the Russian orthodox writer, bringing to the fore those insights of Dostoevsky which have been passed over, aestheticised, pathologized, or otherwise misapprehended by formalists, Bakhtinians, structuralists, existentialists, Freudians and neo-Freudians. Girard's later development of the mimetic theory — particularly his admission that mimetic desire can have positive consequences and "sacrifice" need not always be understood negatively — inspires my readings of "good mimetic desire" in Dostoevsky's texts which significantly expand on and differ from Girard's own earlier readings of Dostoevsky.

A brief and admittedly polemical overview of twentieth century critical approaches to Dostoevsky reveals a certain critical inattention among theorists to the sources of violence and human conflict on the one hand and an appreciation of Judeo-Christian virtue on the other. Indeed, a review of the enormous secondary literature generated separately over Dostoevsky's novels shows that a systematic analysis of violence (and the renunciation of any "right" to violence) has been curiously circumscribed (even implicitly proscribed) by certain critical paradigms.

Such circumscription is apparent in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), which has exerted a considerable influence on French, Anglo-American, Soviet and post-Soviet criticism of Dostoevsky. In Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (1929, 1963), "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-5) and

"Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," (1937-8) Bakhtin hails Dostoevsky's novels as "polyphonic," privileging no final point of view. Alerting readers to the dangers of identifying the author with his characters, Bakhtin argues that author and characters are co-creators, and Dostoevskyeian closure leaves the world "open and free." Observing Dostoevsky's mixture of an official sacrosanct ("high style") language of the dominant culture with the "low style" of the historic speech community, Bakhtin sees Dostoevsky as imitating the carnivalesque. The holy foolishness of some of Dostoevsky's characters, for Bakhtin, bespeaks the "joyful relativity" of the carnival.²³

Bakhtin's emphasis on the "polyphony" of Dostoevsky's novels suggests that all ideological positions depicted in the novels receive equal treatment because the confrontations between idea-bearing characters supposedly lack resolution. Actual resolutions of ideological positions are described as "monological;" they do not interest Bakhtin. Asserting that Dostoevsky's polyphonic approach is not relativistic, Bakhtin nevertheless does not say what is ethically definitive in the novels. Insisting that Dostoevsky's truth is "born between people," Bakhtin is at a loss to say what that truth is.

Moreover, in the theory of carnival and the description of carnival laughter as liberating, Bakhtin avoids the issue of violence. Bakhtin's Rabelaisian fantasy of carnival has little to do with the cruel and seemingly intractable fact of violence in the real world as it is writ large in the novelistic worlds of Dostoevsky. The envious underground men, the passionate masochists, the child molesters and reported rapists, the abused little girls, the murderers, the homicidal revolutionaries are not readily "reduced" by laughter.

While Bakhtin's foremost English translator, Caryl Emerson, takes Bakhtin's avoidance of the issue of violence to be Christian,²⁴ I am persuaded that a nonviolent response to violence, rather than the avoidance of the issue of violence, is an integral part of the gospel message. Christianity teaches that violence is humanity's great affliction and that the absolute value of love, repeatedly to be found in Biblical texts, and ultimately in the example of Jesus himself, is the antidote to violence.

A further problem with Bakhtin's readings of Dostoevsky's texts arises in the critic's unwillingness to engage with the notion of an iconic image which has the capacity to transform. The iconic power of face to face encounters in The Idiot is not elaborated in a Bakhtinian reading. Nor does Bakhtin take up the radical turn-around (*metanoia*) associated in Judeo-Christian theology with conversion and conveyed in the transformation of Raskolnikov in the epilogue of Crime and Punishment. Bakhtin does not address the Christian writer's understanding of altruistic behavior; the critic offers no reading of the magnanimity of Dostoevsky's meek ones: Sonya in Crime and Punishment, the teenage bride in "A Meek One," or Alyosha and Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov.

Yet another problem in Bakhtin's interpretations of Dostoevsky arises with his concept of the hero's unfinalizability (*nezavershennost*) and his insistence on the hero's "loophole." While some have seen in this formulation traces of a tolerant, Christian, nonjudgemental apprehension of the other,²⁵ Bakhtin's view of the hero's holding in reserve of his final word hints at the Russian critic's reluctance to see selves in dialogue with a real other.²⁶ As Olga

Meerson has put it, the notion of unfinalizability does not explicitly state what ethical goal Dostoevsky had in mind when he "tempted and provoked his readers to agree with ... his opponents" or "to jump to conclusions which he himself considered patently false."²⁷ Structuralists who employ a Bakhtinian paradigm tend to sever word and body in Dostoevsky's work, favoring Bakhtin's reduction of bodies to "voices." A corollary outcome is the separation of violence in the text from violence in the real world as Dostoevsky strives to bring it to our attention via "fantastic realism."

In Bakhtin's defense, we might observe that he could not advance his ideas as freely as he might have liked. Indeed, judging from remarks that Bakhtin made towards the end of his life to Sergei Bocharov, it is clear that in the book on Dostoevsky's poetics, Bakhtin refrained from explicitly religious considerations. He reportedly told Bocharov that in the book on Dostoevsky, he had not been able to "speak out directly about the most important questions ... the philosophical questions that tormented Dostoevsky his whole life, the existence of God. In the book I was forced to prevaricate, to dodge constantly back and forth ..." ²⁸ While Bakhtin's silence on the subject of Dostoevsky's ethical model and the sources of violence may be understandable in the context of Soviet authority's scrutiny of the critic, neither present day Russian nor Western critics are obliged by reigning political authorities to duplicate Bakhtin's omissions.

Bakhtin's avoidance of the religious-ethical content in Dostoevsky's novels is echoed in the 1957 book, For and Against: Notes on Dostoevsky (Za i protiv: zametki o Dostoevskom) by the Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky

(1893 - 1984). Shklovsky considered tensions, oppositions, and dualities in Dostoevsky's texts. Reading Dostoevsky as a dualist, Shklovsky did not engage with Dostoevsky's explicit incorporation of a Judeo-Christian ethical vision. Echoing Bakhtin, Shklovsky credited Dostoevsky with a "polyphonic" novel in which all characters have equal rights and the writer does not seek to resolve ideological differences.

Another version of Dostoevsky is offered by Lev Shestov (1866 - 1938) whose work initiates the existentialist appropriation of the Russian writer. A key critical example of Shestov's reading of Dostoevsky is evident in his interpretation of Notes from Underground.²⁹ Shestov sees the underground man as tragically and defiantly asserting the freedom of his personality in the embrace of irrationalism and amorality. Shestov's reading is fundamentally romantic and Nietzschean in his identification of transcendent with secular authority and his emphasis of the "dual" Dostoevsky whose texts purportedly are at odds with his Christian conviction. Shestov's analysis overlooks the divergence between part 1 and part 2 of Notes from Underground; in the former, the reader encounters the disappointed forty year old who clings to his theories and his underground existence while in the latter, the reader sees the protagonist's real interactions with Zverkov, Liza, and the servant Appolon. Shestov fails to perceive that the novel is, as Richard H. Weisberg has argued, "a brilliant critique of those who flaunt their freedom but whose philosophy actually derives from (and leads to) passive resentment and repressed violence."³⁰

Still another problematic critical approach to the question of violence and Judeo-Christian virtue in the work of Dostoevsky is that of Freud. Leaving aside the issue of Freud's factually unreliable psychopathologizing of Dostoevsky,³¹ the most striking disjunction between the two is that the novelist was the defender of religious faith while the psychologist was inclined to characterize religious faith as a kind of universal neurosis that substitutes for a more authentic personal reality based on scientific knowledge. While Freud must be credited for his understanding of humans' profound capacity for self-deception, his underlying mechanistic and naturalistic assumptions lead to reductive explanations on matters of religion and ethics. The ethic implicit in Freudian analysis as it emerges in Civilization and its Discontents vacillates between ethical egoism and a "cautious but fair reciprocity."³² Dostoevsky argued against rational egoism in his novels and journalistic writings alike; he represents people as capable of extending themselves beyond a cautious or minimal reciprocity. Although no doubt Freud is right to observe that a person's efforts to represent himself as acting in a pure and noble fashion may be self-deceptive, (as Dostoevsky illustrates with the pawnbroker in "A Meek One"), the ethic of a "cautious but fair reciprocity" and the "culture of detachment" which it implies stands in stark contrast to the outgoing love (*agape*) that distinguishes a character like Sonya Marmeladova. While Freud is reluctant (in Civilization and its Discontents) to consider altruism as leading to anything but unhappiness and neurosis, Dostoevsky is so persuaded of the efficacy of real-life examples of neighbor love (such as Tikhon of Zadonsk) that he repeatedly strives to re-create them in his novels. Dostoevsky gives novelistic form to the

commandment "love thy neighbor as thyself" which Freud would prefer to amend to "love thy neighbor as thy neighbor loves thee."³³

Freud explains violence by positing a theory of instinctual drives to account for violent and aggressive forms of interaction. This theory (which Don Browning describes as of a piece with Freud's "metaphors of ultimacy") informs the scope of a Freudian conception of ethics in which other-regarding behavior remains possible but the expansive loving initiative towards the stranger (which is often associated with *agape*) is ruled out in view of humans' posited sexual drives and overtly destructive and aggressive death instincts.

If the metapsychological assumptions of the Freudian paradigm are inimical to Dostoevsky's texts, in the respects elaborated above, the psychological depths of the texts may, nevertheless, still be fruitfully analyzed. Indeed, the mimetic theory, which emerged from an investigation of Dostoevsky's fictive writing, can usefully address psychological dynamics. There are, moreover, important points of overlap between a mimetic analysis of Dostoevsky's texts and contemporary psychoanalytic theory, particularly the school of object relations and the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva. The mimetic theory is also usefully supplemented by Emmanuel Levinas' ethical phenomenology which highlights Dostoevsky's own difference with nineteenth century utilitarian ethics and other ethical theory (both relativistic and contractual) which arise from a fundamental conception of self as separate. The inclusion of Levinas, who was both a philosopher and talmudic commentator, highlights the effort in this study to recuperate the Jewish part of the Judeo-Christian tradition which informs Dostoevsky's discoveries concerning the

sources of human conflict. This strain in Dostoevsky's fiction is by no means emphasized by Dostoevsky himself, for he seems to have perceived Judaism as a rival messianic movement to Christianity, particularly Russian Orthodoxy.

Because I use, defend and occasionally criticize Girard's mimetic theory in this study, a brief exposition of the theory is in order. It will be brief because the development of the theory has been described by a growing number of commentators.³⁴ The mimetic theory arose from the study of literary texts, first among them, Dostoevsky's. In Deceit, Desire and the Novel (1965; French, 1961), Girard described mimetic desire, which may be briefly defined as "the fundamental human orientation toward possessing what another person considers worthy of desire."³⁵ Girard described Dostoevsky, Cervantes, Stendahl, Flaubert, and Proust as romanesque or "novelistic revealers" of human reality rather than romantic dissemblers who mask cultural illusions.³⁶ Girard's exploration of a tradition of novelistic revealers has been expanded by many of the Girardian circle. Among them, Natalia Reed traces a tradition of mimetic revelation in nineteenth century Russian literature to include Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov, Zhukovsky and Dostoevsky.³⁷ Perhaps Tolstoy might be included as a sometime "revealer" of mimetic desire who was intermittently governed by romantic illusions about the "independent" desire of the ego. Were the British version of novelistic revealers of mimetic desire to be named, Dickens would arguably fit there. But the mimetic theory may also usefully open up other texts which would not conform to Girardian standards of novelistic revelation: in this study those texts include novels by Nikolai Chernyshevsky and George Sand.³⁸

The most obvious narrative expression of desire, as Girard describes it, is found in a triangular dynamic of relationships. Konstantin Mochulsky, the Russian critic, once observed that the "triplicity of human interrelations is affirmed by Dostoevsky as a psychological law and expresses something very profound and mysterious in his art."³⁹ Girard shows that this "triplicity of human interrelations" in Dostoevsky's work need not be considered mysterious. The metaphor of the triangle describes the path of desire as not direct, but running from the desiring subject (at one base of the triangle) through the subject's mediator or model (at the apex of the triangle) to the desired object (at the other base of the triangle.) That is, rather than desire originating spontaneously with the self, it emerges as a function of relations with real or imagined others towards whom the subject feels a dependency or inferiority. While Girard sees Notes from Underground (1864) and "The Eternal Husband" (1870) as Dostoevsky's first works which dramatically highlight the role of the mediator in the mimetic triangle, the triangular dynamic is already evident in the early work, Poor Folk (1845). In this work, the protagonist, poor and middle-aged Makar Devushkin desires a young woman, Varenka, but he is too timid to actually have any real contact with her, afraid of what others (the mediating third) may think. He exchanges letters with her, indicating how the opinion of others torments him: "You know it is not money but all the bothers of life, all those whispers, the faint smiles, the little cutting words ..." Makar is an example of the mimetically constituted self who perceives himself through the eyes of others and prepares to respond to their real or imaginary accusations. Maintaining a relationship through a correspondence, and avoiding

direct meetings, Makar ends up enthusiastically participating in Varenka's preparations for her wedding to another. The Double (1846) even more clearly depicts the imitative nature of desire and the mediating nature of the "other." Like Devushkin, Golyadkin believes he is being constantly looked at by others and the intensity of the other in mediating Golyadkin's desire for status, regard and "being" itself emerges in an experience of splitting or doubling. He is particularly overcome by his suspicion and fear of his boss and the medical doctor (Rutenspitz) who seem to Golyadkin to possess a reality which he lacks. His double, Golyadkin Junior, succeeds in getting closer to the powerful others whose approval Golyadkin Senior longs to enjoy. A Girardian analysis of Golyadkin's splitting may be usefully supplemented by R. D. Laing's insights in The Divided Self (1959) concerning the "false self": a schizoid mode of being by which a subject avoids the experience of engulfment.

When the distance in terms of time and space between the subject and the mediator is great, then the result is imitation without rivalry. Girard calls this "*external mediation*." When the distance between subject and mediator is close, a case of "*internal mediation*," then the result is "*mimetic rivalry*." When the subject and the mediator compete for a common object (which can include a person, a thing or a highly abstract quality such as prestige), then the model not only serves as the subject's guide in desiring, the model becomes an obstacle to fulfilling the desire. The model is the guide to desire by blocking and thereby perpetuating desire. In Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World, (French, 1978; English, 1987), Girard designates such a relationship by the phrase the "*model-obstacle*." When the model imitates in the other the desire

the other first found in him / her, ("*double mediation*" or "*reciprocal mediation*") then desire circulates with increasing intensity and may result in severe conflict and end in violent eruption. Dostoevsky regularly refigures these varieties of deformed desire which Girard describes. In Notes from Underground (1864), the underground man makes the insolent officer his model-obstacle and it is this type of mediation which the protagonist repeatedly seeks in his relationships with others. In "The Eternal Husband," (1870) Velchaninov plays the role of the towering model-mediator to the husband Trusotsky. In Crime and Punishment (1866), the chief investigator, Porfiry Petrovich functions as the fascinating other, the worthy opponent to Raskolnikov, and in The Demons (1871), Stavrogin enthralls Verkhovensky, Shatov, and Kirilov. But Dostoevsky also gives form to more benign mediators, whose righteousness (Hebrew, *temimut*) or faithful incorporation of a divine model does not necessarily convert anyone away from violence and the cultural habits which sustain it. While Sonya draws Raskolnikov towards a new life, Tikhon does not succeed in persuading Stavrogin to leave behind his underground of pride. Myshkin does not save Nastasya Filippovna. Zosima does not "convert" either Fyodor Karamazov or his son Ivan although he successfully guides Alyosha. Alyosha's active love makes a difference in the lives of the boys and Dmitri, although Alyosha does not induce Lize to abandon her sadomasochistic inclinations. Apart from their relative success or failures in bringing about change in others, Sonya, Tikhon, Myshkin, Zosima and Alyosha all represent the alternative to arrogant dominance, blind submissiveness, or sadomasochistic appropriation.

Girard's meditations on the triangularity of desire differ from Freud's formulations as well as Lacan's, which overlap to some extent with Girard's. In a departure from Freud, Girard identifies the other to whom the subject is drawn in gender neutral fashion as the model, not the father (as in the Oedipal theory). While Girard observes that mimetic desire can prepare the way for the Oedipus complex, he sees the dynamics of identification as primary rather than the desire for the object. In this respect, Girard differs from many psychoanalysts who see both identification and desire for the object as primary; he also differs from those who see identification with the mother as primary. Unlike psychoanalysts, he does not hypothesize about early infancy; instead, he pays attention to the moment when human culture shapes instinct.

Like Girard, Lacan describes desire as always for the desire of the other. This has a two-fold meaning for Lacan: first, that desire is inevitably displaced through an other, whose "object" the subject wants to become, and, second, that the subject wishes to assume an identity other than his/her own. An important difference between Girard and Lacan arises in their theorizing about how desire emerges. Lacan describes desire as emerging from a repudiation or a primary splitting, while Girard says that desire is engendered as a means by which to mimetically appropriate the other. Girard uses the term "desire" to refer to the *consequence* of the mimetic appropriation of the other.

Girard argues that human desire is imitative and nonconscious; we learn what to desire by observing the desires of others. Desire is distinguished from needs and drives.⁴⁰ Indeed, only through imitation do drives, needs and precognitive feelings become desire. Humans resemble the higher primates in

their capacity to imitate; humans differ from them in that humans override instinctual mechanisms for limiting inter-species aggression.

Human imitation does not rest, as Paul Dumouchel observes, "upon any representation in our mind of the other as the model to imitate. We counterfeit his motion spontaneously, so to speak. We need not know that we are imitating in order to know how to imitate ..." ⁴¹ The non-conscious aspect of imitation is evident in Raskolnikov's sense of fateful destiny which brings him to commit murder. The desirability of violent social change is "in the air" among young people in Russia of the 1860's. The conversation which Raskolnikov recalls between a student and an officer concerning the "justice" of murder, particularly the moral desirability of "eliminating" Alyona Ivanovna confirms his sense of destiny. Raskolnikov persuades himself that acting on the idea will free him from the domination of others.

Girard observes that humans seek to obtain the object that their models desire, to have what the models have and even to be what the models are. One desires only what is given value by another. Thus, mimetic desire is acquisitive. It is this acquisitive nature which Girard wishes to emphasize when he calls desire "mimetic," for "imitation" bears resonances of Platonism, and does not therefore carry the necessary connotation of acquisitiveness. The desire not only to possess the "things" of the mediator, but to assume the place of the mediator significantly resonates with the concept of aggressive incorporation advanced by Melanie Klein and taken up by later object relationists. ⁴²

Not only is desire acquisitive, it is also potentially conflictual, for when the desire of the imitator and the model converge on the same object, violence

may result. Conflictual or escalating mimesis generates false representations or misinterpretations of the conflict. Thus Girard asserts: "human behavior is determined not by what really happened but by the interpretation of what happened."⁴³ Misinterpretation strengthens the tendency to deny imitation and leads to an exacerbated situation of mimetic rivalry in which the object of desire becomes less important and the rivals focus on each other. The cult of romantic individualism adds to the difficulty of perceiving that one's desires have been learned from others.

Mimesis begins with the desire to have what the other *has*; mimetic rivalry advances beyond this stage to try to possess what the other *is*. In Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Girard calls this "*metaphysical desire*." The other is perceived as possessing a god-like self-sufficiency. Pyotr Verkhovensky perceives Stavrogin in this way. (Girard's treatment of this subject parallels object relationists' work on defensive projection and the schizoid subject's desire to be an omnipotent object to himself.) From infancy through adulthood, the subject repeatedly encounters others who seem to have just such a self-sufficiency. The rivalry may acquire a repetitious character in which the adversaries come more and more to resemble each other. This doubling does not signify interchangeability of the doubles; it does reveal, though, the impersonal nature of the mimetic struggle.

Thus Girard's elaboration of mimetic desire follows three stages. In the initial stage of primary mimesis, the importance of the object is stressed. The mediator's significance is hidden from the subject's point of view, but the mediator's presence reveals that the object is not simply intrinsically valuable: it

is valued because the mediator values it. In the second stage of mimetic desire, conflictual or escalating mimesis arises and misinterpretations of the conflict proliferate. The third stage of mimetic desire is characterized by the metaphor of contagion. Individual differences break down; uninvolved spectators are drawn into mimetic conflict and institutions whose prohibitions had previously successfully regulated conflict lose their authority to put a stop to violence. Collective violence takes over.

In Violence and the Sacred, (French, 1972; English, 1977) Girard offers an analysis of collective violence which uncovers its sacrificial aspect. Through an examination of structure in myth and ritual, he discovers a consistent tendency in myth to attribute the origins of violence to a divine source. Girard reveals how mythical inscriptions serve to cover up human involvement and culpability in violence.

Girard observes that the resolution of conflict is frequently reached through the sacrifice of a surrogate victim. He calls this channeling of violence by which an arbitrarily chosen victim is expelled, excluded or murdered the *scapegoat mechanism*.⁴⁴ Once aggression is displaced onto the sacrificial victim, the victim, in death, becomes the object of veneration. Girard describes the scapegoat mechanism not as an archetype, as Jung and his successors do,⁴⁵ or as a ritual transference, as Frazer did, in The Golden Bough (1899, 1915). Instead, like Walter Burkert (Homo Necans, 1972), Girard presents a theory of religion based on the phenomenon of sacrifice. According to Girard, the scapegoat mechanism resembles a process of displacement or transference reminiscent of Freud, but Girard sees it as operating in a more powerful way as

an active, non-conscious generative cultural impulse which is often reinforced in mythic narratives but uniquely exposed in the Gospels and the Hebrew Bible. Girard posits the scapegoat mechanism as the very means by which culture is generated.

When Girard discusses mimetic desire in the process of subject formation, he sees mimetic conflict as tied to the subject's desire for being itself. The subject who seeks in the model the being he or she lacks, finds that sacrifice confers a plenitude of being.⁴⁶ When examining the sources for conflict in society at large, Girard observes that sacrifice confers the same sense of plenitude upon the social order.

Indebted to Freud's Totem and Taboo, Girard nevertheless parts company with Freud in seeking to resolve the tension between desire and violent deed. Girard also takes Lacan and Lévi-Strauss to task on the same count. Girard faults Lacan for failing to account for the emergence of violence within temporal rather than merely symbolic structure.⁴⁷ Girard sees Lacan merely focusing on word-play in the laborious construction of a subject at the expense of an emphasis on the struggle of emergent subjectivity. Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myth suffers from a related failing. Lévi-Strauss observes a curious pattern in mythic narratives: people who are somatically marked or treated with suspicion by their neighbors because of their difference or marginality tend to be the object of violence. While the pattern attests to the occurrence of violence in real historical contexts, Lévi-Strauss treats these themes as if violence were merely lessons in cultural linguistics. Girard affirms that the pattern which Lévi-Strauss observed is not revelatory merely of the structure of language; the

exclusion, murder and expulsion of those who are perceived as markedly different is regrettably a means which is regularly employed in human society to resolve conflict.

A central motif in Girard's sacrificial theory is the concept of the sacred, which is what "engenders, organizes, observes and perpetuates structure but which may also "dissolve, transform and on a whim destroy it." ⁴⁸ Girard accepts as a given the notion that human societies strive for a kind of harmony in which checks may be placed on forms of competition which may lead to violence. Girard observes, however, that human communities are themselves the product of violence which they strive to contain.

The mimetic nature of desire has implications for benefit as well as conflict. Indeed, Girard actually asserts that our capacity for mimesis is good, because it enables us to enter upon and sustain cooperative relations with others. ⁴⁹ If one acknowledges the need for a model, consciously chooses appropriate models and accepts the relationship of apprenticeship, then one may do well. The problem — mimetic rivalry — arises when desire is not aroused by a benign, transcendent source but results from the imitation of another human being. The Biblical term for this is "idolatry." Although people may consistently be drawn into conflict with one another, there is always the possibility of renouncing conflict. Such a renunciation may take place not through an act of will but by transformation through adherence to a positive model. In Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, this transformation is figured in Markel's conversion and the ripple effect that it sets off in the lives of Zosima, Alyosha, Dmitri, Grushenka and others.

Although Girard's first book, Deceit, Desire and the Novel takes up conflictual desire at the individual level, Violence and the Sacred expounds a more thoroughgoing thesis about cultural and individual formation by examining sacrificial ritual. With the later text, Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World, Girard explores the individual's break away from the mimetic madness of the group (which relies on the scapegoating effect) as a true coming into one's own. Girard starts with the individual who is "determined" (that is, mimetically fascinated) by the group; Girard then elaborates authentic social subjectivity as arising when an individual actively rejects both her own and her group's inclination to scapegoating violence. In other words, given that the problem of limiting and preventing violence is central to Girard, and given that he sees culture as engendered by a scapegoat mechanism, authentic subjectivity is tied to renouncing a hierarchy of dominance which is underwritten by force.

Girard's work, particularly Violence and the Sacred and Deceit, Desire and the Novel, has earned much positive critical attention among theologians, economists, peace activists and professors of literature but his reception among Slavists, particularly in the study of Dostoevsky, has more often been inhospitable. An example is Caryl Emerson's defense of Bakhtin's theory of carnival as more "tolerant of ambivalence" than Girard's mimetic theory. Emerson claims that Bakhtin and Girard may be distinguished "not by the presence or absence of violence in their scenarios, nor by their differing images of the Christian ideal." Emerson approvingly cites Dominick LaCapra's criticism of Girard for his "intolerance for ambivalence and . . . desire for clarity

and fullness of being ... (whereas) the carnivalesque as interpreted by Bakhtin is a way of relating to ambivalence that counters the violence at work in the deadly serious scapegoat mechanism." ⁵⁰ Unlike LaCapra, Emerson does not note that it is Girard, not Bakhtin, who engages in analysis of the "deadly serious scapegoat mechanism," for as LaCapra observes, Bakhtin tends to exclude or underemphasize aspects of carnival, including "victimization, repressive social control and the manifestation of ordinary social grievances or conflict." ⁵¹ Girard, by contrast, sees the scapegoat mechanism as too important to ignore, and he views Dostoevsky as particularly adept at disclosing how it works in the experience of individuals and groups.

Some critical hostility to Girard may arise from a present-day resistance in Western academia to a religious hermeneutic which supposedly functions as an "agent of closure" (to use a phrase employed by Edward Said). ⁵² Criticism that treats religious issues, as Girard's does, is often equated with the dogmatic, while criticism which is wholly secular is sometimes regarded as necessarily more honest, less dependent on the "protection" of systems of belief which are thought to dull critical faculties. As a result, the sacred is sometimes bracketed, rendering it taboo from critical discourse. Such is Michael Holquist's approach, at times, for example, in Dostoevsky and the Novel (1977). In arguing against Girard's readings of Dostoevsky, Holquist calls on Freud in a way that is curiously uncritical of Freud's characterization of religious belief as a comforting illusion with which we shield ourselves from an ambiguous and threatening universe. ⁵³ Such a characterization of religious belief so

contradicts Dostoevsky's own approach that one wonders why Holquist himself does not reflect on the disparity between critic and author.

Like Emerson and Holquist, David Bethea is not persuaded by Girard's readings of Dostoevsky but perhaps for a different reason. In The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction (1989), Bethea asserted that Girard's treatment of the Dostoyevskian apocalypse in Deceit, Desire and the Novel, while interesting, was "remarkably ill-informed." Bethea's own work reveals that he prefers to engage in thick description of specific cultural subtexts which govern Dostoevsky's use of the apocalyptic, and he chooses not to explore Dostoevsky's novelistic analyses of the sources of violence. Girard is more interested than Bethea in identifying a paradigm for inter-personal, intra-personal, societal, and theological issues, not for their historical significance alone but for their meaning for present day culture. On this count, Girard might be accused of engaging in an "a-historical" analysis of Dostoevsky. However, using the mimetic theory in an analysis of Dostoevsky's texts will show that the theory fits very well with an historical appreciation of Dostoevsky's educated Russian readership.

Outside the community of American Slavists, Girard has also been criticized for his lack of attention to issues of gender. Feminist critic Luce Irigaray has argued that the mimetic theory is not attentive to female desire.⁵⁴ It is true that Girard does not attend systematically to issues of gender or female positionality, yet he is far from inattentive to such issues. He does not attach mimesis to "genetic heritage, anything biologically preordained or a universal family structure or situation,"⁵⁵ yet the mimetic theory is not at odds

with feminist concerns. To correct the apparent inattentiveness to gender in mimetic theory, Martha Reineke links Julia Kristeva's gender sensitive psychoanalytic approach with Girard's social psychology and sacrificial theory, for Reineke maintains that taken together, these theoretical approaches serve to illuminate the way in which the victimization of women is sustained by the linguistic code of patriarchy and manifested in religion.⁵⁶ Like Reineke, Susan Nowak observes that the Girardian claim that violence can be located at the foreground of human culture reflects the reality of events of collective violence and victimization. Girard's insistence that texts may have historical referents supports feminist efforts to uncover the actual history of a victim. Moreover, as Nowak asserts, Girard's concept of difference itself usefully corrects a trend in feminist criticism to employ a typology of oppositionalism in which man is opposed to woman and the patriarchal to the feminist.⁵⁷

Other objections to the mimetic theory have arisen from a profound critical discomfort with a search for origins. Thus, Hayden White, for example, in responding to Violence and the Sacred, declares that any theory that offers an account of origins or proposes a key to mythologies must be insufficient. Yet even if Girard's account of the violent origins of human culture is not provable, and merely a "likely story," Girard's identification of violence as the energy of the social system functions as a useful hermeneutic in literary and cultural criticism, for it deconstructs the means by which violence becomes repressed and misattributed to another. It is thus a deconstructive strategy, a "hermeneutic of suspicion," (Jürgen Habermas' phrase) but rather unlike that of Jacques Derrida.

From the perspective of Derrida, the triangular notion of desire which Girard posits is inadequate, perhaps a throwback to Hegel's or Levi-Strauss's triad. Derrida discusses a fourth term in Dissemination as a means by which "ternary rhythms" of "Oedipus, Trinity and Dialectics" which have governed metaphysics may be suspended.⁵⁸ Derrida is interested in disrupting the notion of full presence (*parousia*) as theologocentric; instead of presence he proposes *différance*. He describes his work as a "philosophy of ashes," a philosophy of resistance to totalizing systems:

We write with ash on ash. And not only is that not nihilistic; I would rather say that the experience of the gift, of defenselessness, of the relation to the other as interruption of economy — that experience of ash is also the possibility of the relation to the other, of the gift, of affirmation, of benediction, of prayer . . .⁵⁹

Andrew McKenna observes that in the ellipses at the end of this statement, Derrida "hovers at the threshold of what the West has stipulated as positive religious values."⁶⁰ McKenna proposes that Girard's response to this obstacle to reasoning is to be found in a theory of sacrifice where the signifier is the victim, the signified the "actual and potential meaning the community confers on the victim" and the sign is the "reconciliatory victim."⁶¹ In a world after the Soviet gulag, after Hiroshima, Auschwitz, and Bosnia, the challenge to speak of what is unspeakable is necessarily located in the fact of victimage. Writing before these historical events, Dostoevsky is curiously prescient of them as he explores

explores the fundamental dynamics of conflictual rivalries that end in dead ends, gutted relationships, loss of community, and even apocalyptic horror.

The mimetic theory can be productively applied to analyze literary texts in order to explore questions raised about human agency, cultural formation and the role of violence. The conjunction of virtue and violence in the nineteenth century texts to be studied will be shown to be far from accidental. Dostoevsky's representations of virtue, like Dickens', often emerge amidst the grimmest kinds of circumstances which apparently incline a subject (or desiring self) to give in to the urge towards a violent resolution. That inclination towards violence is often what makes a story. Rather than conveying sadistic predilections on the part of the writer, the narrative movement towards violence (both other directed and inwardly directed) shows how human imitation may have destructive consequences for individuals and their societies at large.

While Girard's explanatory model has functioned well as a way to focus on human culpability in violence, the question arises whether it adequately elucidates non-violent, non-conflictual mimesis. The mimetic theory has often seemed stronger as a critique of evil than an explication of the good. It is unclear whether the mimetic theory can adequately account for either a lived experience or novelistic depiction of interiority which is presumably necessary for a subject to enact "good mimesis." Indeed, whether the mimetic theory satisfactorily deals with the construction of subjectivity, the desire for others' well being, and the explication of narcissistic states are worthwhile questions to be addressed. Reading Dostoevsky and other European novelists from the

perspective of mimetic theory offers an opportunity to simultaneously read and re-evaluate the theory itself.

The world within the texts of Dostoevsky parallels the world outside the texts inasmuch as the characters, like ourselves, are strongly determined by a social order which favors a dominance hierarchy underwritten by violence. Those characters are bound by appropriative and conflictual desire which can lead to violence, yet even within settings which are "over-determined" by violence, Dostoevsky's characters, like real people, can exercise the freedom to choose non-conflictual desire, turning away from violence.

Thus, in Crime and Punishment, for example, Raskolnikov's murder of the pawnbroker is not shown in the novel to be the outcome of poverty. Nor is he ultimately determined by his illness, which is, in any case, symptomatic of the sickness of his society. The murder is a consequence of Raskolnikov's own profound self-division and the conflicting models which he has interiorized. Idealism and compassion co-exist in the troubled protagonist with an uncritical justification of violence. His desire for redressing wrongs overrides his child's faith in Christian love and forgiveness. Ultimately, he will need to recover his faith before he can renounce the Napoleonic delusion of becoming a great man. Raskolnikov's ethic of romantic egoism and utilitarianism incline him to see the pawnbroker Alyona Ivanovna whom he murders as a justifiable object of hatred, not a person, but an insect. (This is in spite of his hatred of such a utilitarian approach towards others embodied in Rodya's sister's suitor, Luzhin.) In his first dream, he identifies Alyona Ivanovna with Mikolka, the drunken peasant who beats the pitiful mare to death, declaring "she's my goods." After the murder and

a curious encounter with Razumikhin, he lies down to dream, shuddering "like an overdriven horse" (II, ii). The author suggests by this linkage between the poor mare and Raskolnikov that Raskolnikov is not ready to tread the path of the murderer. Indeed, he awakes from his first dream wondering "Can it be that I will take an axe ...". In the second dream, when Raskolnikov is persuaded that his landlady is being beaten by Sergeant "Gunpowder," Raskolnikov is not the persecutor. The terror that he feels indicates that he identifies with the victim, who in the second dream is the landlady. In the third dream, the murdered pawnbroker herself becomes Raskolnikov's persecutor. The dreams reveal that Raskolnikov comes to exclude from his consciousness the recognition that he is as capable of being the victimizer as being the victim. The physical or psychological violence of others (Mikolka, Alyona Ivanovna, Ilya Petrovich, Luzhin, Svidrigailov, Porfiry) remains easy for him to perceive; his own violence against the pawnbroker and her sister to a significant degree eludes him.

Raskolnikov's final apocalyptic dream in the epilogue reveals a change: he dreams that those infected by a plague of violence think themselves wise ("superior men"). The awareness of his own "infection" which Raskolnikov has previously banished from consciousness comes to the fore. The antidote is not to be found simply in formally submitting to the law whose representative is Porfiry Petrovich. It is found, instead, in responding to the compassionate love which Sonya embodies. Compassion may also prove contagious.

The reader is presented with a text which gradually reveals the delusion to which Raskolnikov is chained; his liberation or conversion away from the

murderous lie which requires others' deaths is an "unbinding" in spite of the fact that Raskolnikov ends up, like Dostoevsky himself, in a Siberian prison. Raskolnikov is long bound by self-deception which leads him to choose conflictual mimesis and to embrace the notion of a separate, self-sufficient "I" who does not need others. His unbinding occurs through the mediation of Sofiya Marmeladova and her consistent model of positive mimesis.⁶² Rather than simply articulating the delusion by which Raskolnikov is bound, Dostoevsky carefully prepares the reader for Raskolnikov's radical conversion away from the murderous lie.

Dostoevsky shows that his characters' illusions are fed by the impulse to imitate others' desires as the means to acquire often highly symbolic objects. The growth of the characters is not only a matter for literary analysis. By different narrative techniques (such as the use of an unreliable narrator), the author implicates the reader in the demystification of rivalrous desire.

From a Dostoevskyeian perspective, the education of the characters (and the reader) may be understood by glossing the term education, which in Russian, is *obrazovanie* — becoming like icons (*obraz*). For Dostoevsky, the *Bildung* of Raskolnikov requires turning towards Sonya who models divine love and nurture. In phenomenological terms adapted from Emmanuel Levinas, turning towards the embodied immediate other opens the subject towards a transcendent Other. That presence, which deconstruction "reads" as absence, is figured, in the Russian's writer's work, in the icon. The icon conveying (to the Russian Orthodox) real divine presence rather than serving merely as beautiful artistic object or the copy of a copy is significant for understanding

Dostoevsky's visionary aesthetics which are inseparable from the ethical interest of his novels.

The plotting of virtue in the nineteenth century text presents peculiar difficulties for the novelist who is writing at a time of epistemological crisis when scientific positivism unsettled received notions of truth. Responding to narrative and iconic representations of virtue also poses difficulties at the beginning of the twenty first century which has inherited that epistemological crisis.

Notes

¹ Once identified in Homeric literature as *arete*, and expressed in the cunning and inventiveness of Odysseus *polutropos* and the special excellence of the home-keeping spouse, Penelope, virtue was revisioned by Virgil as the epic *pietas* of Aeneas. In the Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle asserts that virtue is a matter of one's own disposition: yet according to Aristotle, if one is unlucky enough to have a character that is morally unbalanced, virtue can be cultivated. The Stoic position as it is represented by Seneca is that there is virtue in living in accordance with the Law of Nature, which is Reason. All such formulations of virtue, however, differ from the Biblical understanding in that the Greek view assumed a natural morality while the Judeo-Christian ethic is based on a revealed law.

² The love commandment in the New Testament appears in Matthew 5:43; Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22: 39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27, Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14 and James 2: 8.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Book Two: Critique of Highest Values in The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968) 178. Fragment # 326 reads: "Virtues are as dangerous as vices in so far as one lets them rule over one as authorities and laws from without and does not produce them out of oneself, as one should do, as one's most personal self-defense and necessity, as conditions of precisely *our own* existence and growth, which we recognize and acknowledge independently of whether other men grow with us under similar or different conditions."

⁴ Edith W. Clowes develops this parallel in "Self-Laceration and Resentment: The Terms of Moral Psychology in Dostoevsky and Nietzsche" in Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson, eds. Gary Saul Morson and Elizabeth Cheresch Allen (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995) 119.

⁵ The Dialogic Imagination, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1992) 37.

⁶ Similarly, in Anti-Oedipus (1977), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer an alternative view of desire as primarily excessive.

⁷ James G. Williams, The Bible, Violence and the Sacred: Liberation from the myth of sanctioned violence (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991) 261.

⁸ Dostoevsky, Neizdannyyi Dostoevskii: zapiski knizhki i tetradi, 1860 - 1881 eds. I. S. Zilberstein and L.M. Rozenblum (Leningrad: Nauka, 1971) 221.

⁹ In Belinsky's writings, this cult is associated with the critic's acceptance of the romantic *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling, while it finds expression in Herzen's publications, such as "Whims and Reflections III. New Variations on Old Themes" (1847), written under the influence of Feuerbach.

¹⁰ In "The Anthropological Principle of Philosophy" (1860) and What is to be done? (1863), Chernyshevsky advanced the idea that human behavior is based solely on the force of self interested need.

¹¹ In notes to Kavelin, Dostoevsky writes: "It is not enough to define morality as being true to one's convictions. One must also constantly raise the question: are my convictions true? There is only one way to test them — Christ ... I cannot recognize a burner of heretics as a moral person for I do not recognize your thesis that morality is being in harmony with internal convictions This is only *honesty* (the Russian language is rich), but not morality. For me, there is only one moral model and ideal, Christ. I ask: would he have burned heretics — no. So that means that the burning of heretics is an immoral act." The Unpublished Dostoevsky, vol. 3, ed. Carl Proffer, trans. Arlene Boyer and David Lapeza (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976) 152.

¹² Auden discusses this idea at some length. W. H. Auden, "Dingley Dell and the Fleet," in The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays (New York: Vintage Press, 1968) 418.

¹³ Dostoevsky might well disagree with Fanger that he transformed reality, for he was given to remark that reality in all its complexity was actually "fantastic." Moreover, as Sven Linner observes, Dostoevsky would have denied that he saw the world as better — more spiritual, beautiful or moral — than it is. Sven Linner, Dostoevskij on Realism (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967) 118.

¹⁴ Vasily Rozanov, Legenda o velikom inkvizitore F. M. Dostoevskogo, (1891, 1894). Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, trans. Spencer Roberts (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972).

¹⁵ Lev Shestov, Dostojevski i Nietzsche: Filosofija tragedii (St. Petersburg, 1903; Paris: YMCA Press, 1971).

¹⁶ D. H. Lawrence, "The Grand Inquisitor" in The Brothers Karamazov, a Norton critical edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1976) 829 - 835.

¹⁷ Robert Bellnap, "The Rhetoric of an Ideological Novel," Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800 - 1914, ed. William Mills Todd III (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1978) 173 - 202.

¹⁸ For Gorky, Dostoevsky was the "evil genius of cultured Russia ... a man who with the greatest power and lucidity depicted the spiritual illnesses ingrafted on us from the Mongol, from the mutilation inflicted on our soul from tormenting Moscow history." So Gorky wrote in "On Karamazovism," a letter to the editor of *The Russian Word* which appeared on September 22, 1911. Cited in F. M. Borras, Maxim Gorky: the Writer (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1967) 41.

¹⁹ Typical of some of the militant Bolshevik criticism of Dostoevsky are D. I. Zaslavski's 1947 work on Dostoevski (F. M. Dostoevski) and V. Ermilov's F. M. Dostoevski (1956). Vladimir Seduro offers a detailed study of Russian criticism of Dostoevsky through the early 1970's in Dostoevski's Image in Russia Today (Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1975).

²⁰ Maxim Gorky, Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i, S. M. Breithurg (Moscow: Gosudarstvo, 1937 [1905]) 8 - 9.

²¹ Vladimir Nabokov, Lectures on Russian Literature, Fredson Bowers, ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981) 110ff.

²² Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

²³ While Bakhtin seems to view Dostoevsky's bearers of virtue in a relatively benign fashion, placing Prince Myshkin in "carnival heaven," the foremost English translator of Bakhtin, Caryl Emerson, condemns Myshkin for "monologizing" others, that is, for striving to "finalize others benevolently," thereby presumably denying the reality of their negativity. See Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, trans. and ed. Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984) 173-174 and Caryl Emerson, "Word and Image in Dostoevsky's Worlds: Robert Louis Jackson on Readings that Bakhtin Could Not Do," in Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson, eds. Elizabeth Cheresch Allen and Gary Saul Morson (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995) 255 - 256.

²⁴ Caryl Emerson, "Bakhtin's Carnival Idea: its checkered past and its uncertain, exciting future." City University of New York, Graduate Center, 12 March 1999.

²⁵ Alexander Mihailovic, who reads Bakhtin as a religious thinker, takes this position in "Mikhail Bakhtin's Conception of Interpenetration: The Theological Sources," Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin, Caryl Emerson, ed. (New York: G. K. Hall, 1999) 300 - 320.

²⁶ I am indebted to Natasha Reed for this insight. See also Natasha Reed, "The Philosophical Roots of Polyphony: A Dostoevskian Reading" in Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin, ed. Caryl Emerson (New York: G. K. Hall, 1999) 117 - 152.

²⁷ Olga Meerson, Dostoevsky's Taboos, (Dresden: Dresden University Press, 1998) 26.

²⁸ S. G. Bocharov, ed. Vadim Liapunov, trans. Stephen Blackwell, "Conversations with Bakhtin," PMLA, vol. 109, #5 (October 1994), 1009-1024.

²⁹ These readings appear in Na vesakh Iova, 1929 (In Job's Balances) and in Dostojevski i Nitzsche: Filosofija tragedii (St. Petersburg, 1903), which appeared in English as Dostoevski, Tolstoi and Nietzsche, trans. Bernard Martin (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969).

³⁰ Richard H. Weisberg, "The Formalistic Model: Notes from the Underground" from The Failure of the Word (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) and reprinted in Notes from the Underground, a Norton Critical edition, ed. and trans. Michael R. Katz, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001) 202.

³¹ Freud's interpretation of the causes of Dostoevsky's epilepsy has been eloquently contested by Joseph Frank, Jacques Catteau, Gary Saul Morson and others. See Joseph Frank, Appendix: Freud's Case History of Dostoevsky in Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821 - 1849 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976) 379- 391.

³² Don S. Browning, Religious Thought and Modern Psychologies (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 49.

³³ Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its discontents, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961) 57.

³⁴ See an exposition of the theory by Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly, "Religion and the Thought of René Girard: An Introduction" in Curing Violence, Mark I. Wallace and Theophus H. Smith, eds. (Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1994) 3 - 24 or Raymond Schwager, Must there be scapegoats? Violence and redemption in the Bible, trans. Maria L. Assad (New York: Harper and Row, 1987). (Brauchen Wir Einen Sündenbock? München:

Kosel, 1978.) A review of critical responses to the theory is to be found in Robert Hammerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 189 - 199.

³⁵ Hammerton-Kelly, Curing Violence, 3.

³⁶ Girard later extended the list to include Kafka and Joyce and he clarified that the portrayal of human reality by these canonized writers is not exhaustive nor is it limited to the novel. René Girard, "An Interview with René Girard," in "To Double Business Bound": Essays on Literature, Mimesis and Anthropology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 221 - 222. Paul Dumouchel observes that the list of novelistic revealers is exclusive, however, of most of Balzac, Victor Hugo, Benjamin Constant, D. H. Lawrence and parts of George Eliot. Paul Dumouchel, ed., Violence and Truth: on the work of René Girard (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988) 3.

³⁷ Natasha Alexandrovna Reed, "Reading Lermontov's *Geroj Nashego Vremeni* : Problems of Poetics and Reception," dissertation, Harvard University, 1994.

³⁸ The works which will receive particular attention include "A Meek One," (1876), Crime and Punishment (1866), The Idiot (1868), and The Brothers Karamazov (1879) while the Dickensian text that will be featured here is Pickwick Papers (1836). Sand's early romantic work from 1827 - 1837 will be singled out, particularly Indiana (1831), Jacques (1834), and Lucrezia Floriani (1846).

Dickens' work received an enthusiastic reception in Russia. Dostoevsky himself read David Copperfield, Hard Times, Pickwick Papers, Dombey and Son, Little Dorritt, Barnaby Rudge and The Old Curiosity Shop. Indeed, he took David Copperfield and Pickwick Papers (in Vvedensky's translation) to the hospital for reading during his 1849-59 imprisonment. He recommended Dickens' work along with Pushkin's and the Bible as basic required reading for every young Russian.

As for Sand's novels, they too were enthusiastically received by the Russian intelligentsia. Sand's novels addressed the Russian liberal's interest in socialism and the woman question at a time when strict censorship forbade free circulation of writing on such issues. Thus Dostoevsky declares that in the 40's, "we had faith in her genius." A. L. Bem tallies the Sandian works which Dostoevsky mentions in his own writings although it is generally agreed that he read other works of hers as well: "La Marquise" (1832), Leone Leoni (1834), André (1835), L'Uscoque (1839), Jeanne (1844), Teverino (1845), Les Dames Vertes (1859), Confessions d'une fille (1865), Césarine Dietrich (1871), Les Maîtres Mosaïstes (1837), Mauprat (1837), La Dernière Aldini (1838), Le Meunier

d'Angibault (1845), Lucrezia Floriani (1846), L'Homme de Neige (1859), Journal d'un voyageur pendant la guerre (1871), Flamarande (1875), and Les Deux Frères (1875). Bem, O Dostoevskom (Prague, 1933), Vol. 2: 7 - 24.

³⁹ Mochulsky, Dostoevsky: His Life and Work, trans. Michael Minihan (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978) 207 - 8.

⁴⁰ Schwager, Must there be scapegoats? Violence and redemption in the Bible, trans. Maria L. Assad (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

⁴¹ Dumouchel, Violence and Truth, 11.

⁴² Conceding that Klein acknowledges the place of rivalry, Girard nevertheless objects that "in Melanie Klein ... there is nothing but conflict; but fundamentally this conflict has no real existence because it is fixed and given an almost other wordly status by a notion of the first relationships with the mother. Girard, with Oughourlian and Lefort, Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 361. I am persuaded that the overlap between the mimetic theory and object relations is greater than Girard credits.

⁴³ Girard, with Oughourlian and Lefort, Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World, 78.

⁴⁴ Girard, with Oughourlian and Lefort, Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World, 24 - 25.

⁴⁵ Sylvia Bronton Perera, The Scapegoat Complex: Toward a Mythology of Shadow and Guilt (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1986).

⁴⁶ Girard, Violence and the Sacred, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1977) 146. (La Violence et le sacré. Paris: Grasset, 1972.)

⁴⁷ Girard, Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World, 402.

⁴⁸ Girard, Violence and the Sacred, 242.

⁴⁹ Girard expresses this idea in an interview with Rebecca Adams. See Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice: A Conversation with René Girard," Interview with Rebecca Adams. Religion and Literature. 25.2 (Summer 1993), 9 -34.

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- ⁵⁰ Caryl Emerson, ed. Introduction to Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1999) 14. Emerson cites from LaCapra's "Bakhtin, Marxism and the Carnavalesque" in Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983. LaCapra's essay is anthologized in Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin.
- ⁵¹ Dominick LaCapra, from "Bakhtin, Marxism and the Carnavalesque" in Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin, Caryl Emerson, ed. (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1999) 239.
- ⁵² Edward Said, The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983) 290.
- ⁵³ In The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents and Moses and Monotheism, Freud asserts that humans create an imaginary deity in order to stave off anxiety, exorcise the terrors of nature, and seek compensation for the sufferings which a civilized life has imposed on them.
- ⁵⁴ Luce Irigaray, "Women, the sacred and money." Paragraph: The Journal of the Modern Critical Theory Group (Vol. 8, 1986), 6 - 18.
- ⁵⁵ James G. Williams, ed., The Girard Reader (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996) 226.
- ⁵⁶ Martha Reineke, "The Mother in Mimesis: Kristeva and Girard on Violence and the Sacred," Body/Text in Julia Kristeva: Religion, Women, and Psychoanalysis (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992) 67 - 86.
- ⁵⁷ Susan Nowak, "The Girardian Theory and Feminism: Critique and Appropriation." Contagion: journal of violence, mimesis, and culture, Vol. 1. Spring 1994, 19 -30.
- ⁵⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Outwork" in Dissemination, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 25.
- ⁵⁹ "Entretien avec Jacques Derrida," Diagraphe 42, (1987), 23-24, cited in Andrew J. McKenna, Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida and Deconstruction (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992) 130.
- ⁶⁰ McKenna, Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida and Deconstruction, 130.

⁶¹ René Girard, Things Hidden, 103.

⁶² I focus here on the narrative conclusion rather than the imagery which shows how the transformation in Raskolnikov is effected.

Chapter Two: Virtue and the Violence of Looking Askew: Dostoevsky's "The Meek One"

The triangular nature of desire which Dostoevsky discloses in his fiction (and which Girard formalizes in the mimetic theory) focuses the reader's attention on the dynamics of desire, violence and responsibility. The mimetic theory makes explicit the relationship between the persistent and seemingly intractable fact of violence in everyday life and its presence in Dostoevsky's "fantastic" art. The key discoveries of the mimetic theory (the imitative nature of desire, the mechanism of scapegoating, the possibility of "conversion" from scapegoating) shape the following analysis of Dostoevsky's "The Meek One," published in the November 1876 issue of A Writer's Diary. Dostoevsky's understanding of violence is consistent with Girard's exposure of the cultural underpinnings of violence. The mimetic theory proves surprisingly complementary to the understanding of ethical subjectivity posited by the philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, whose thought was perhaps shaped as strongly by his youthful reading of Dostoevsky's novels as by his later education as a philosopher.¹

Dostoevsky's story reminds us that violence between people does not always present itself in terms of physical assault. The unnamed heroine turns violence on herself; her narrator-husband, also nameless, deflects it from himself as he describes the world threatened by "inertia" (*козность*). The *коз*-root is repeated frequently in this non-penitential confession; the connotation of seeing "askance," "askew" or "obliquely" is significant inasmuch as the narrator takes pains to keep his own violence at bay to the point of slanting the truth of

his responsibility in his wife's death.² His "slanted" apprehension begins with the delusion that he is "original," that is, possessed of a desire that is utterly independent of others. Dostoevsky reveals that the man's desire is actually mediated by others.

The story is written at a time when suicide was increasingly described by positivistic scientific discourse as the outcome of external determining forces.³ By contrast, in this story as elsewhere in A Writer's Diary, Dostoevsky focuses on suicide as the outcome of a failed relationship. Dostoevsky portrays a female suicide who is "gentle," and not nihilistic, in contrast to many other suicides or would-be suicides in Dostoevsky's works (Kirilov and Stavrogin in The Possessed, Ippolit in The Idiot, Kraft in The Adolescent).

The story is situated in the context of a reported "epidemic" of suicides in Russia of the 1870's; the author writes, inspired by the case of the young seamstress Borisova, who, newspapers reported, threw herself from a window holding an icon.⁴ The word "krotkaya" (a "meek one") appears in Dostoevsky's journalistic description of her case (PSS 23:146). Dostoevsky's fictional transfiguration of this "meek one" is profoundly sympathetic. The writer refuses to take up the conventional ecclesiastic condemnation of suicide as sin; he hints at the woman's state of grace by the presence of the icon. His attitude anticipates that of one of his later characters, the Elder Zosima, who does not join his church in condemning suicides, but prays for them. In these particulars, we see Dostoevsky's private difference with both ecclesiastical and secular law that maintains social order by expulsion and exclusion (*otluchenie*, which signifies both secular exclusion and spiritual excommunication). Rather than

reproaching the woman who kills herself, Dostoevsky shows her overcoming her resentment of her domineering husband. She finds the strength to counter the temptation to murder, ultimately refusing to retaliate against her husband who appears to "deserve" a retaliatory response. To renounce the right to violence is consistent with that teaching of the Gospels which philosopher Lev Shestov once named as the most difficult teaching of Christianity. It is the teaching which Lev Tolstoy singled out as distinctive, for like Dostoevsky, he interpreted the Gospels as revelatory of the possibility of peace from conflictual relations. Girard describes this gospel revelation in the following way: "what must be given up," he says, "is the right to reprisals and even the right to what passes, in a number of cases, for legitimate defense."⁵

The repudiation of violence, for Dostoevsky, is a virtue which goes unrecognized in a society in which occupying a dominant position (which is underwritten by force and backed by violence) is understood as the greatest good. As Dostoevsky observes repeatedly in his journalistic writings, in a Russia profoundly influenced by social Darwinism, positivism, and a utilitarian ethic which advocated the primacy of "rational" self-interest, the gospel message of nonviolence goes unheeded. Injunctions to love one's enemies, to turn the other cheek, not to take revenge (Matthew 5:38 - 48) are dismissed by those who view them as trivial commonplaces. Moreover, Dostoevsky notes that among the Russian educated public, there lurks a fear that "speaking the truth according to one's convictions" means subjecting oneself to ridicule for clinging to "copybook" imitation (PSS 18, 52). To the extent that Dostoevsky's story discloses the "good mimesis" of non-violent love, which society might dismiss as

"a platitude," the author reveals the remedy for the narrator's and his society's distress. The reader is left, however, with the disturbing fact of the meek one's suicide: one wonders about the author's attitude towards the woman who turns violence upon herself: does Dostoevsky choose to "liberate" her from the unsatisfactory obligations of the marriage plot, particularly when the marriage is revealed to be a sacrificial sort of exchange ?

The story is told from the perspective of her husband, whose hedges and logical inconsistencies alert us to its structure as a text of persecution. Girard defines such a text as a retrospective "account of real violence . . . told from the perspective of the persecutor(s), and therefore influenced by characteristic distortions."⁶ The reader is obliged to consider what might constitute a reliable hermeneutic in approaching the story. The hermeneutic which Dostoevsky himself might favor is provided in the gospels just as it is present in The Book of Job: the structuring principle in these texts, as Girard describes it, is that the story of victimage is to be understood from the victim's perspective rather than the persecutor's. It is only from the perspective of a persecutor that the victim is guilty.

At the same time, the reader needs to resist the temptation to read the woman as emblematic of everything good and her husband, as everything bad. As O'Toole observes, the antithetical pairs which the two represent might be conceived in the following terms: pride/ humility, corruption/ purity, wealth/ poverty and so on; however, to globalize these differences as "godly" versus "ungodly," and assign all the "godly" features to the meek wife and the "ungodly" features to the proud husband does a disservice to Dostoevsky's vision inasmuch

as both characters have "symptoms of, or at least a potential for the antithesis of their primary features."⁷

Dostoevsky shows in the marriage of the man and woman how conflictual desire leads to failed relationships, much unhappiness and a violent outcome. Our own responsibility is the very thing that we strive to conceal from ourselves when we blame others. To reveal the human propensity to violence, Dostoevsky employs "fantastic realism,"⁸ for as Dostoevsky observed in 1873, in A Writer's Diary : "truth almost invariably assumes an entirely fantastic character" and it is the artist's task to see reality "whereas another man may see nothing."⁹

The fantastic realism of Dostoevsky, Gogol and their successors has recently been defined by Malcolm Jones and Robin Feuer Miller as a mode of writing that places a "question mark over the reliability of a positivistic view of health, the reasonable, the rational and the ability of logic and science to contain reality and plunge its depths."¹⁰ Such a definition might well be extended. In "The Meek One," the "fantastic" form of a monologue renders visible and noticeable the ordinarily ill-perceived or inaccessible reality of violence, its ubiquity, and its alternative. Dostoevsky propounds the efficacy of fantastic realism to convey what more "realistic" fiction fails to through its adherence to an empirical, naturalistic or proto-sociological method. In Dostoevsky's "fantastic realism," the ordinary, readily apprehensible "everyday" (быт) is contrasted with that which is hidden from sight because it is ordinarily excluded from consciousness.

The narrator's view of himself emerges in his famously unreliable and skewed account of his marriage. He reveals himself to be in thrall to what Girard calls "the romantic lie" of spontaneous desire. The pawnbroker, like the romantic *vaniteux*, sees his desire as emanating from his own subjectivity, "the creation ex nihilo," as Girard puts it, "of a quasi divine ego."¹¹ He sees himself, unlike his wife or women in general, as an original. He is powerfully invested in the notion that he — unlike a woman — imitates no one. Echoing J. S. Mill, he declares: "Women have no originality: why that's an axiom." (691; PSS 24: 15) And yet Dostoevsky makes it clear that when the protagonist claims originality, the larger mythical model in which he is actually invested is that of a Napoleon, the incarnation to nineteenth century Russia of absolute, ruthless despotic power. The pawnbroker is inclined, like Raskolnikov, and before him, Pushkin's Onegin, to imitate others but to be blind to the fact of his imitation.¹² Like the underground man, he embraces a profoundly modern (and still widely held view) of self as independent of others when instead he is repeatedly engaged in a struggle with others (particularly his wife) to assert his superiority and dominance.

The husband's courting of the gentle creature, like Luzhin's of Dunya in Crime and Punishment, consists of a series of calculated investments.¹³ His wooing is part of a plan to exploit the meek one in an apparently high minded way, having grasped that she is unable to find paid work away from her exploitative relatives. The pawnbroker proceeds according to a utilitarian ethic, with which Dostoevsky had already polemically engaged, notably in Notes from Underground (1864). To use terms advanced in the ethical philosophy of

Levinas, the pawnbroker refuses the spontaneous ethical response towards the other when he rates her according to the calculus of utility; his error lies, in part, in building an abstract representation of himself as separate.¹⁴ To the pawnbroker, the young woman, who at first glance resembles a fourteen year old girl, is a sort of bargain basement bride, the object of "particular" thoughts — a euphemism for erotic objectification. But it is also clear that he is also impressed with the gentle creature's "youthful magnanimity," her "greatness of soul" (683) / великодушие (PSS 24: 10) and he tries, in his fashion, to imitate it with a certain decorum of his own. He would like to see himself, after all, as the "most magnanimous of men" (благороднейший из людей).¹⁵ Thus he rescues the meek creature from a marriage with a fat butcher who has already "driven two wives to their graves." While the girl distinguishes herself by her direct manner of speaking, he too, describes himself as "straightforward" in his proposal of marriage. "I didn't say a single word to her then about my doing a good deed." (686; PSS 24: 12) She declines to haggle over the items she brings to the pawnshop; he will quietly give the woman's ferocious aunts gifts of money, so as not to "grieve her with sordid dealings like this." (687; PSS 24: 13) She initially tries to pawn the remnants of an old hare-skin jacket; later, he will insist on purchasing a trousseau for her.

Defending himself against his own sense of lack, he begins to see her youthful magnanimity as "cheap" (дешевое великодушие), an "excess of energy," "a passionate longing for beauty" (689; PSS 24: 14). The husband cannot imitate his wife without wishing to outdo her, and because he cannot outdo her, he asserts his dominance by interpreting her spontaneous displays of

affection as "unhealthy and hysterical" and insisting on his need for "solid happiness" and "respect," rather than love (*milost*), which he proudly declines as "charity." (689; PSS 24: 14.) He diagnoses his young wife as full of "cheap convictions" and suffering from the "blindness of the beautiful soul." The pawnbroker imitates his wife whom he views as a model of genuine magnanimity; he is in conflict over this highly abstract "object" and his rivalry with her is fed by his misinterpretations of her actions. He also imitates a prior literary text when he paraphrases a remark of Mephistopheles from Goethe's Faust.¹⁶ The Faustian intertext alerts the reader to the man's plot (whose self-serving nature the author illuminates) to treat the woman as an object of his desire (as Faust does Gretchen) rather than a subject in her own right. Dostoevsky shows that the pawnbroker is culturally habituated (that is, mimetically inclined) to believe he is acting "originally" when he tries to keep her subordinate. The pawnbroker's allusion to Faust is also part of his strategy to capture the meek one's imagination by way of an "indirect hint" and "slipping in a mysterious phrase." («Ну, а косвенным намёком, пустев таинственную фразу, оказалось, что можно подкупить воображение.») The man strives to preserve the upper hand through secrecy about his past.

A pretender to the role of Faustian hero, the pawnbroker casts himself as a hero for having refused to duel while belonging to a regiment. "You must realize," he tells his wife, "that standing up to that sort of (regimental) tyranny and accepting all the consequences meant showing far more courage than fighting in any duel." (695; PSS 24: 18)¹⁷ The reader deduces, however, that his refusal to engage in any action when a fellow officer was insulted, derives

from fear of seeming foolish rather than the renunciation of violence. His pride is evident in the immediate subsequent events. Once parted from the regiment, he turns down a civilian job and lives on the streets, for he reasons: "if it's to be shame, then let it be shame . . . the worse, the better" — « чем хуже, чем лучше » (703, PSS 24: 24).

His view of himself when he is most deluded tends towards the heroic which is conveyed in his perception of his own magnanimity. He hopes to accommodate the meek one to his fantasy of acquiring an estate in the Crimea and "magnanimously" helping the neighboring farmers in some indistinct future. He has wanted to see himself as heroically rescuing the meek one through marriage; on this last point, he resembles Dostoevsky's underground man, who imagines himself re-enacting the hackneyed role of redeemer of a fallen woman. Ironically revising the stereotypical plot of the "fallen" woman saved by a virtuous man, Dostoevsky shows that both Liza and the meek one are the potential mediators of salvation of the "magnanimous" protagonists rather than the other way around. When both the meek creature's husband and the underground man appear to be concerned about the vulnerable women they encounter, they are both in fact acting out their superior positions in revenge for the humiliations they feel they have suffered at the hands of others. The underground man is revenging himself for the humiliation suffered at the farewell party for Zverkov and the pawnbroker is revenging himself on society as a whole and his wife in particular for the past humiliation in his regiment. The pawnbroker's resentment is directed not towards a single other (his wife alone) but towards all who, he feels, have humiliated him.

The man's resentment is given an apt fictional form in his address of an imaginary court from a hallucinatory underground. Like the underground man who refuses to emerge from his mouse hole, the pawnbroker is terrified at the destruction of illusions that may result from contact with real people and yet, like the underground man, he too needs a friend. He is inclined, however, to see only foes, as becomes evident in his explanation for opening his pawnshop: "You have rejected me (you people, I mean); you have cast me out with your scornful silence. You answered my passionate longing to love you with an insult that I will feel all my life" (692). (« Вы отвергли меня, вы, люди то есть, вы прогнали меня с презрительным молчанием. На мой страстный порыв к вам вы ответили мне обидой на всю мою жизнь.» PSS 24: 16.) He consistently projects the responsibility for offense on others.

Like the underground man, the pawnbroker believes that a man "needs only one thing — his own *independent* desire, whatever that independence might cost and wherever it might lead." (« Человеку надо одного только самостоятельного хотения, чего бы эта *самостоятельность* ни стоила и к чему бы ни привела. ») ¹⁸ His notion of agency is defined by the romantic delusion that he is capable of exercising a "free autonomous desire" which is utterly unmediated by others. In fact, he finds himself constantly in conflict with others including his wife. Like the underground man, the pawnbroker cannot "conceive of love in any way other than a struggle." ¹⁹ (« Я . . . не представлял себе любви, как борьбою . . . »)

The man maintains a positive self- image through prohibitions which he imposes on his wife. She is never to leave the house alone, never to appraise

pawn articles on her own terms, never to express affection spontaneously, never to spend more than minimally necessary on housekeeping, and never to speak about his past. In order to maintain an unambivalently positive (yet undeniably partial) picture of himself, he repeatedly tries to locate the blame for their unhappy marriage in her: "And so I'll tell the truth; I'm not afraid to face that truth head on: it was *her* fault, *her* fault ! . . ." (693; PSS 24: 17) He disclaims his own rage by projecting it on her.²⁰

Here enters the second discovery of the mimetic theory: the emergence of the "mechanism of scapegoating" by which individuals, families and whole nations achieve order through assigning blame to one (individual, group, opposing nation, etc.) so that the individual or group doing the scapegoating may continue to regard themselves positively and re-establish a threatened sense of harmony. The scapegoating mechanism is activated at times of crisis.²¹ Psychologist Rusty Palmer observes how the notion of scapegoating functions in human relationships: we struggle to maintain an image of ourselves as "good people" through multiple sets of rituals and prohibitions.²² We form alliances about my/our goodness and such alliances consistently employ scapegoating someone else's "badness."²³

The meek one is certainly drawn up in this cycle as well. When she pays a visit to the man's regimental rival, Efimovich, she exacerbates the rivalry between herself and her husband. The husband subsequently accelerates the confrontation between himself and his wife. Efimovich's sexual interest in the young wife clearly arouses the husband's appreciation for his spouse, but the rivalry which he had felt with Efimovich is transferred to his wife. The duel

which the husband does not fight with Efimovich is fought with the wife when the husband provocatively leaves a loaded gun by the bedside. She comes close to accepting his challenge, pointing the gun at his head but ultimately renouncing the temptation to kill.

The turning point of the story comes after the near murder attempt. When the woman fails to shoot the gun which she has set at his temples, he rejoices at his moral "triumph" over her. He treats her like a "delinquent" wife and buys her a separate bed and a screen. Later, when he hears her singing, he wonders, "Has she forgotten about me or what?" (707, PSS 24: 27). As Gary Saul Morson observes, this is a key moment in the first person narrative where the protagonist "who has been constructing one account for himself realizes that something else might have been going on;" the pawnbroker "begins at last to grasp that other people have other stories." ("Introductory Study" prefacing A Writer's Diary, 88) The man has been attempting to fashion for himself a story of triumphant conquest while she, as we might glean from her last words to him, has been trying to see herself within a story of repentance and reconciliation.

The man's tendency to view the relationship in terms of dominance or submission is evident throughout the story, but particularly clear in the following passage from the chapter titled "The Veil Suddenly Fell." He recounts the occasion several days before her death when he approached her:

I went straight over to her and sat down on a chair right beside her, like a crazy man. She gave me a quick look, as if frightened: I took her hand, and I don't remember what I said to her, that is, wanted to say, because I couldn't even speak properly. My voice

faltered and wouldn't obey me. And I didn't know what to say, only I was suffocating.

"Let's talk ... you know ... say something ! I suddenly babbled some stupid thing — oh, as if intelligence was the point ! She gave another start and drew back in great fright, looking me in the face, but suddenly - stern astonishment showed in her eyes. Yes astonishment and it was *stern*. She was looking at me with big eyes. This sternness, this stern astonishment, all at once demolished me: "So you also want love ? love?"- this astonishment as if suddenly asked, though she was silent. But I could read everything, everything. Everything in me shook, and I simply collapsed at her feet. Yes, I fell at her feet. (708)

Я прямо подошел и сел подле на стул, вплоть, как помешанный. Она быстро на меня посмотрела, как бы испугавшись: я взял ее за руку и не помню, что сказал ей, то есть хотел сказать, потому что я даже и не мог говорить правильно. Голос мой срывался и не слушался. Да я и не знал, что сказать, а только задыхался.

- Поговорим ... знаешь ... скажи что-нибудь ! - вдруг пролепетал я что-то глупое. - о, до ума ли было? Она опять вздрогнула и отшатнулась в сильном испуге, глядя на мое лицо, но вдруг - *строгое удивление* - выразилось в глазах ее. Да, *удивление* и *строгое*. Она смотрела на меня большими глазами. Эта строгость, это строгое удивление разом так и разmozжили меня: Так тебе, еще любви ? любви?- как будто спросилось вдруг в этом удивление, хоть она и молчала. Но я все прочел, все. Все во мне сотряслось, и я так и рухнул к ногам ее. Да, я свалился ей в ноги.
(PSS 24: 27 - 28)

Thinking better of his "triumph," the man approaches his wife, at last appearing to recognize the love she has to offer, just as Onegin once approached Tatyana.

The meek one shows surprise: "But I thought you would just let me go on like that. " (709, PSS 24: 28) («А я думала, что вы меня оставите так.») She expected them to continue to live in a celibate marriage. The woman had earlier received coldness and correctness from him; it seems she had been relieved that he no longer meant to single her out as the object of adoration or disdain. He reads rejection in her astonished glance. The man seems to expect that she will dominate him just as he has attempted to dominate her.²⁶ It does not occur to him that neither dominant nor submissive roles fit the economy of love. Before, he had rejected her love with silent superiority. He had been "stern" with her; now he believes she will be "stern" with him. This moment is a type of false *peripeteia* before the true one. It anticipates the later recognition that he was indeed a responsible party in his wife's death. He was called to respond to her but it was an opportunity he repeatedly missed. His abject cringing sends her into hysterics. When the fit passes, she begs him not to torment himself, to calm himself. Retrospectively he sees that he had exhausted her. Ultimately he recognizes his responsibility in her death that he has struggled to keep at bay: "I tormented her till she couldn't take it any more. That's it !" (716; PSS 24: 35). («Измучил я ее - вот что ! »)

The woman is remorseful for her part in their conflict: this is evident in one of her last reported statements "that she was the guilty party and she knew it, that her crime had tormented her all winter" (712; PSS 24: 32). "I will be your faithful and loving wife," she has vowed to her husband, shortly before her suicide. (712, PSS 24: 32.) Through suicide, the meek one annihilates any anxiety that she will forego her pledge. She is not immune to rivalry; perhaps

she even has an acute fear of accepting either dominant or subordinate positions. She does not wish to leave the marriage via desertion or infidelity. It appears that she cannot raise a safe barrier between herself and her husband which would render her less vulnerable to his demands. When she picks up the gun her husband has provocatively left on the bedside table, the rivalry between them has reached crisis proportions. Indeed, it amounts to a sacrificial crisis in which a hierarchy of dominance has come undone. Once she puts the gun down, she renounces her right to strike at him. Instead, however, she turns the violence upon herself. In Girardian terms, a suicide is the result of turning the "scapegoating mechanism" within, yet this does not appear to be Dostoevsky's emphasis. In the story, Dostoevsky places greater emphasis on the meek one's refusal to blame her husband, to rage against him, to murder him.

The reader may wonder, however, at the implosive gesture of the woman's withdrawal. We are told that she suffers from a cough, "weak lungs," and anemia: the vague diagnosis hints at the nineteenth century epidemic, tuberculosis. But the young wife's withdrawal and retreat into relative silence also mimic depression.

Julia Kristeva's analysis of narcissistic wounds and depression may usefully supplement the mimetic theory in approximating the state of mind of Dostoevsky's heroine in contemporary psychological terms. Freud argued that melancholia, like depression, conceals an aggressiveness towards a lost object. Kristeva, however, posits a second kind of depression which does not consist of a hidden attack on another who is thought to be hostile. This second kind of depression, says Kristeva, is the experience of the subject who feels herself

"wounded, incomplete, empty." In contrast to Freud and Lacan, Kristeva describes such a person as mourning not an object but the Thing (*das Ding*), something that is seen by the already constituted subject as elusive and unspecified. The lost "thing" is a mark, an imprint, as opposed to a symbol created by the symbolizing faculty identified with judgment. For such depressed persons, Kristeva claims, "suicide is not a disguised act of war but a merging with sadness, and beyond it, with that impossible love, never reached, always elsewhere . . . " ²⁵ Thus, with the help of the Kristevan paradigm, we might read the meek one as seeking to secure a hold over the "lost thing" by imagining the delights of a reunion in suicide with an infinite in which there is no "marrying nor giving in marriage." (Matthew 22:20) That is a kind of liberation from the marriage plot as the husband has narrowly conceived it.

Throughout the tale, the reader has little direct access to the reality of the meek creature, whose designation recalls the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (In Russian: « Блаженны кроткие, ибо они наследуют землю. ») The words of Jesus (Matthew 5:5) are a citation of Psalm 37:11. By alluding to the Gospel notion of meekness, Dostoevsky clearly means to distinguish the meek from the weak. The meek are not motivated by pride, revenge or meanness in the sense conveyed in Matthew 5:5, where the Koine Greek term (πραΰτης / *prautes*) suggests consideration, humility, gentleness. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible tells us that the word (אָנָו / *anav*) in the Hebrew Bible (for example, in Psalms 37:11) was used to express "the attitude of the truly religious person, as opposed to the rich and arrogant, who relying upon themselves or their secular alliances were defiant

towards God and oppressive toward those weaker than themselves." ²⁶ Without the Biblical frame of reference, the word "meek" in English has acquired unfortunate associations, however, often signifying one who is timid or inadequately assertive. ²⁷ It is worth recalling the Biblical context for this term, since it is precisely the Biblical allusion which is important to Dostoevsky. Jesus' assertion that the meek are the recipients of a unique divine legacy was provocative at a time when some saw themselves as privileged by virtue of race, power or learning. The meek, by contrast, are not aggressive, harsh or envious because they are "gladdened and overcome by God's greatness." ²⁸ This is what renders their personalities, in Dostoevsky's terms, "all-of-a-piece" (односоставные). (This is Myshkin's term in The Idiot, IV, 5,507; PSS 8, 433.) They are not hounded by the "bifurcated mind" (раздвоенный ум). In terms of the mimetic theory, the meek are those who refrain from rivalry. They don't construct a sense of self in opposition to a hostile, fascinating other. They don't adopt an adverse relation to the other in a desire to be "original," enigmatic, or admired for their good sense, their high culture, nice manners, idealistic daydreams or financial independence. They are not meek in order to inherit the earth. The earth is already theirs, as George Konrad has argued, "with all its wonders and squalor." ²⁹

However, the designation, "a meek one," also carries an ironic valence. The irony arises because the husband and the woman's aunts demand her submissiveness in order to enjoy their own (illusory) sovereignty: the woman is clearly not always "meek" in the meaning of submissive towards their petty tyranny.

Dostoevsky valorizes meekness as a paradoxical expression of genuine moral strength. The biblical notion of "weak strength" which emerged in the image of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 and again in the writings of the apostle Paul ³⁰ contradicts the notion popular in nineteenth century Russia that human behavior is based solely on the force of self- interested need. Major ethical theories of the present century (relativism, contractualism, and utilitarianism), like nineteenth century utilitarianism, build on a sense of the self as discrete and separate. Valuing "weak strength," Dostoevsky calls into question the notion that ethical relation begins with a sense of self as separate. Girard formalizes Dostoevsky's interrogation of a fixed, consistent concept of self by describing subjectivity as "mediated." Levinas provides a framework complementary to Dostoevsky and Girard by theorizing a radically different notion of subjectivity which in its most responsible form means responding to the other prior to any code of behavior or calculus of utility. Such subjectivity, in Levinas' terms, as in Dostoevsky's, is "kenotic." ³¹

While meekness, from the protagonist's quasi-Napoleonic perspective, is equivalent to feminine weakness and a lack of originality, Dostoevsky treats it, in contrast to his narrator, as the source of ethical strength. He thereby radically reconceives the human subject. ³² Dostoevsky shows us that originality is identified by the pawnbroker with a kind of unregenerate egoism which focuses on achieving financial and psychological domination of the other. Originality, in a positive sense, as Dostoevsky reveals it in this story as well as other work, emerges in the imitation of a divine beneficent model. Such originality is rejected in a world governed by the values of "enlightened self-

interest." ³³ The meek one repeatedly demonstrates that she wishes to imitate a divine model. She observes that one can "do good" in any profession, including that of a pawnbroker. She does not take revenge on her aunts for their treatment of her but instead includes them in her wedding ceremony. Early in the marriage, she responds to her husband with love: she rushes to greet him when he has been away from home; she confides in him about her childhood. Once she is married, she returns a widow's treasured locket in exchange for the widow's far less valuable bracelet. There is no indication that she does so because she wishes to anger her husband or because she believes a great bookkeeper in the sky will credit her account.

There is no suggestion that she is meek in order to "triumph" over her husband. She is not insulted, suspicious, or bloated with self-importance. After the episode with Efimovich, treated by her husband as a "delinquent wife," she keeps to herself and when he unexpectedly reverses his position (without referring to her "delinquency"), she responds to his capricious grovelling with compassion. The reader cannot help but admire her, for against all odds, she does not revenge herself on her husband for the injuries she has sustained before their marriage and during it. One feels dismay at the husband's treatment of his young wife, and an impatience at his long delayed recognition of his role in her breakdown and death.

He is inclined to engage in explanations which defer his own culpability for her death. He speculates that her suicide was a "horrible senseless accident," which might have been prevented had he happened to arrive home several minutes earlier. He also attributes her suicide to her illness: her fatigue and

anemia. His third explanation is that she killed herself because she did not want to deceive him and could not love him "entirely." The first explanation becomes discredited when the reader recognizes that it is consistent with the man's equivocating strategies. The incident in the regiment was also reportedly "a horrible senseless accident," ("chance") but the description of the subsequent events leads the reader to infer that the incident arose from the man's refusal to be involved or take any responsibility for his fellow officers. Her death also cannot be simply a matter of his arriving home "too late." His "belatedness" is evident much earlier in his failure to respond to her love which he had proudly rejected as a form of charity. Crediting her anemia and fatigue as the real reasons for her suicide also amounts to a deferral of the recognition of his own unhappy part in her death.

His unwillingness to recognize his responsibility is evident in his use of the word, "косность," which may be translated as insensibility, stagnation, inertia, or, as Kenneth Lantz has it, "immutability." In his notebook of 1863-64, Dostoevsky names "inertia" as the doctrine of the materialists, a positivistic erasure of the soul or the possibility of "eternal memory."³⁴ Dostoevsky's pawnbroker declares: "What hurts me most is that the whole thing (his wife's death) was a matter of chance — simple, barbaric, blind chance !" (715; PSS 24: 34) (« Главное. обидно то, что всё это случай - простой, варварский, косный случай ») "Why did this blind, immutable force destroy what was dearest to me ?" (716; PSS 24: 35) (« Зачем мрачная косность разбила то, что всего дороже ? ») And, again, at the end of the story he apostrophises "inertia" as he reflects on human solitude: « Косность ! О, природа ! Люди на

земле один - вот беда ! » (716, 35). Liza Knapp observes, "In using the epithet 'inertial' (*kosnyi*) to characterize this chance occurrence, the husband reveals the close link between fatalism and mechanical determinism, the upshot of both outlooks being the same: a denial of self-determination."³⁵ He employs images of an "inertial" force of nature to hide from the tragic reality of his own responsibility for his failed marriage. Moreover, the man does not only deny his capacity for agency; the use of "inertia" highlights his tendency to deny his own violent inclinations, projecting them on to someone or something else. In conflict with the other, he strives to conceal his violence towards her even from himself. The pawnbroker views things "slant" or sideways. (The "kos" root is reiterated in the reflexive Russian word for looking askance: *покоситься*.) He consistently approaches her from an angle. He avoids straightforward rapport with her.³⁶ Dostoevsky suggests that the pawnbroker's skewed approach in his marriage is of a piece with the positivist view which he embraces.

The richly ambiguous Russian word *kosnost'* which the man uses to describe the force that dominates human relationships shares the same root with the adjective in the expression "indirect hint" (*kosvennyi namek*) used to describe the man's equivocating strategies as Natasha Reed has pointed out.³⁷ When we take the two root related words together, *kosnost'* acquires an additional meaning of something straying from its course, misguided, misdirected, or "crooked." Reed suggests that "inertia" thus becomes roughly equivalent with what Girard calls "deviated transcendence" — the deviation of the trajectory of desire for transcendence from the divine to the human model.

The third explanation which the husband offers for his wife's suicide emerges as the most plausible one. He speculates that she killed herself because she did not want to deceive him and could not love him "entirely." In the last section of the story, the pawnbroker observes that she was "too chaste" and "too pure" to deceive her husband. "She didn't want to deceive me with a half-love or quarter love that masked as complete love." The reader can deduce that the scene in which the man fell at his wife's knees reinforced her earlier awareness that he desperately wished to be regarded by her as magnanimous even when he was not. (Earlier, she had smiled in response to his railing against her "false magnanimity.") Her idealistic unwillingness to compromise her understanding of love contributes to her end.

The man's "slanted" approach to his wife closes the door to "living life" and enthralls him to a kingdom of death. Thus, by the end of the story, the pawnbroker imagines dead bodies everywhere: "Everything is dead ... and all around are corpses ..." (« Все мертво, и всюду мертвецы ...») The man is enslaved by the fear of death and the "determinism" of inertia: that is, he is afraid that the violence he turns on others might rebound on him. While he is invested in his entrapment in the solitary underground of resentment, he does not see the possibility of liberation from a world of death. Nevertheless, he does apprehend that loving the other is not a copybook maxim nor is it a truth to be arrived at cognitively.

This revelation occurs only fleetingly to the man. "People, love one another ? (« Люди, любите друг друга ...») "Who said that ? Whose testament is that ?" (« Кто это сказал ? чей это завет ?» 717; PSS 24: 35)

The phrase, "love one another," surfaces from his consciousness. The pawnbroker's fleeting awareness of his responsibility in his wife's death is tied to his apprehension of the love commandment. The truth is not the pawnbroker's "inability to ever reach the truth" or the "inability of the pawnbroker to achieve wholeness in his own voice."³⁸ The truth is that "love one another" (a shortened form of the love commandment, "love God and neighbor as self") may help to undo the logic of persecution which insists that the other is "bad" while self is "good."

The meek one's spontaneous responses to the pawnbroker in contrast to his calculated entrapment of her alert us to their difference. It is important, however, not to reify the difference between the meek woman and her "bad" husband. The Italian feminist Marina Mizzau does this when she responds to the oppositions set up in the story from a binary critical paradigm which posits the meek one as embodying "good feminine desire" and the pawnbroker as "bad masculine desire." Mizzau describes the meek girl's suicide as a protest against male-dominated society. Nina Pelikan Straus is similarly inclined to see the meek one's suicide as the end of her "energized rebellion" against patriarchy. Straus describes the pawnbroker as slowly approaching an understanding of her suicide as a "protest." As Reed has observed, however, "there is a strange silence on the part of Mizzau and like-minded critics concerning the incompatibility of the Christian model of mutual love and forgiveness and the idea of struggle and protest."³⁹ It is the pawnbroker who refers to his wife as rebelling against him when, before their marriage, she tries to pawn something of little value at his

Barbara Heldt offers an additional feminist criticism of the story and of Dostoevsky's conception of women in general. Heldt lodges against Dostoevsky's female characters (as well as Pushkin's Tatiana) the burden of the virtuous paragon; Heldt argues that such characters lack complexity and are described physically (that is, she says "voyeuristically"). Their dignity, declares Heldt, lies in their "terrible perfection."⁴⁰ Heldt's objections rest on the assumption that it is not empowering for a reader to admire such virtue, which, she implies, is merely a male device for keeping women subordinate. Heldt's reference to Pushkin's heroine is particularly significant, for Dostoevsky was indeed inspired by Pushkin's Tatiana, who, Dostoevsky observes, in his Pushkin speech, "rejects a happiness that would be built on another's sorrow."⁴¹ There is a valuable insight in Heldt's denunciation of "terrible perfection," amidst much with which I disagree. Cultural expectations of women to behave "virtuously" have been issued by persons and institutions desirous of dominating women or asserting control over them, perpetuating an unjust hierarchy. That fact nevertheless does not negate the ethical significance of the refusal to respond to violence with violence. As for Heldt's concern about empowerment, it may well be that an account of the death of the nameless girl of the story, like the death of Borisova, is not "empowering" to those who seek in texts such an experience, but what does it mean to apply such criteria? Perhaps the real question which Heldt's criticism raises is the following one: is Dostoevsky holding up the meek one as a model to his reader? It seems to me that the gospel story of repentance and reconciliation which the meek one wishes to make her own is Dostoevsky's

model, not the woman herself. He admires the "meek one" for her attempt to incorporate the model.

In spite of these caveats about particular feminist readings of the story, a feminist concern about female victims of violence is not out of place in the context of Dostoevsky's reflections in A Writer's Diary about women who are abused by their husbands and children who are abused by their mothers. His articles reveal an awareness of a sacrificial economy.⁴² By the phrase "sacrificial economy," I refer to a whole structure of prohibition (identified by Girard in Violence and the Sacred and The Scapegoat) which regularly designates certain "proper" places for people in order to minimize rivalry. This structure of prohibition uses violence, particularly the violence of assigning a surrogate victim, to reinforce that order. Understanding the seemingly impersonal mechanism by which the "rights" of some are asserted to the detriment of others is significant for understanding Dostoevsky's reflections about violence against women as they take form in "A Meek One" and elsewhere in A Writer's Diary. Dostoevsky makes plain the fact that women are physically and economically vulnerable to male violence. The newly instituted law courts, he suggests, are too often ineffective in halting long term physical and emotional abuse which a man might mete out to his spouse. Yet men are not unique in their capacity to physically dominate or emotionally abuse. Women are also capable of dominating and abusing those who come under their care and protection. Dostoevsky attends to the abuse of women by men, and the victimization of children by their mothers; he also observes institutional acquiescence in such abuse.

An overview of the representation of suicide in Dostoevsky's work shows that female suicides tend to evoke the writer's sympathy for the "insulted and injured": consider Olga in The Adolescent (1875) or the violated child Matryosha in Demons (1871). Similarly, the young Ippolit in The Idiot (1868), who makes an unsuccessful suicide attempt, from the perspective of Myshkin, is to be pitied rather than scorned for he is young and the burden of his terminal illness is mostly unrelieved by a "good memory" from childhood. With the exception of Ippolit, Dostoevsky's male suicides tend to be nihilists who understand human freedom as the "right" to murder or perform self-slaughter. We might consider in this light the suicides of Svidrigailov in Crime and Punishment (1866), Stavrogin in Demons, the imaginary suicide in "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," (1877) and Smerdyakov in The Brothers Karamazov (1879). Other examples of suicides include men possessed by a "great idea" (such as Kirilov in Demons and Kraft in The Adolescent) which Dostoevsky pointedly contrasts with the Christian "idea" of reciprocal love and forgiveness. The "great idea" of such suicidal men is shaped by their delusion about the nature of desire.

Dostoevsky's analyses of notes left by real-life and novelistic suicides emphasizes the suicide's horizon of expectations. This is particularly well illustrated in "Two Suicides" and "The Sentence," in the October 1876 issue but it is also evident in The Adolescent where Dostoevsky's Olga apologizes to her mother for leaving life behind before she has experienced her "debut." Traumatized by financial setbacks and having been briefly lured (against her will) into a brothel, she leaves a suicide note which recalls the note that

Dostoevsky believed Elizaveta Herzen left.⁴³ By contrast, the meek one, like the child Matryosha in The Demons, leaves no note behind. There are no last words, for the fatal course, it is implied, is undertaken without offering elaborate self-justification or attack. The meek one goes to her death with a smile on her face, having said her prayers. From Dostoevsky's perspective, her action is thereby rendered particularly blameless.

In examining the "epidemic" of suicides, Dostoevsky seeks to determine what failure of relationships has occurred in the world of the victim. When it comes to female suicides, Dostoevsky often points to the men who have been responsible for wounding the victims. It appears that he does not exclude himself from a sense of culpability towards all those who are "insulted and injured." Dostoevsky remarks about the meek one's real life prototype:

Этот образ в руках - странная и неслыханная еще в самоубийство. Это уж какое-то кроткое, смиренное самоубийство. Тут даже, видимо, не было никакого рапорта или попрека: просто - стало нельзя жить, бог не захотел и - умерла, помолившись. Об иных вещах, как они с виду ни *просты*, долго не перестаете думать, как-то мерещится, и даже точно вы в них виноваты. Эта кроткая, истребившая себя душа невольно мучает мысль. (PSS 23, 146)

This icon in the hands is a strange and unprecedented feature in suicides ! This, now, is a meek and humble suicide. Here, apparently, there was no grumbling or reproach: it was simply a matter of being unable to live any longer - "God did not wish it" - and so she dies having said her prayers. There are some things which, no matter how simple they seem on the surface, one still goes on thinking about for a long time: they recur

having said her prayers. There are some things which, no matter how simple they seem on the surface, one still goes on thinking about for a long time: they recur in one's dreams, and it even seems as if one is somehow to blame for it. (October 1876, "Two Suicides" in A Writer's Diary, Vol. I, 653)

Dostoevsky does not indict himself as a man and as a husband. He shows us that everyone, like the pawnbroker, is capable of attacking the meek. He wonders if he has failed to attend to a "meek one" somewhere; he invites his reader to mourn the loss of the humble, the readily forgotten innocent who suffers alone. His sense of ethical responsibility is consistent with the observation of Father Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov: "Everyone is really responsible to all and for all and I more than others." («... всякий из нас пред всеми во всем виноват. а я более всех. ») “

Ultimately, Dostoevsky shows through key triangular configurations what he unashamedly calls the truth — the injunction to love one another — as an antidote to violence. The pawnbroker as a desiring subject may be said to occupy one base of a triangle. The “objects” of his desire are often highly abstract things including others’ positive regard. He places his own wife at the apex of the triangle: he perceives her as both model and obstacle to his desire. He sees her as embodying a youthful magnanimity and a love for the beautiful; he comes in conflict with his wife over these highly symbolic properties. Wounded first by others, the man projects his injured pride on the meek one. He demonizes and reveres her by turns. He catalogues her changes of expression: her “bold gaze,” her “flashing eyes,” a “fleeting wrinkle.” He is

Her death, like her plaintive broken song, opens him to the raw epiphany of her otherness. In his moments of clarity, when the impulse towards love undoes his self-justifications, she is not the idol who excites or fascinates, but an icon whose luminosity may ultimately direct him towards a divine model with whom there need be no rivalry. The woman's death, like her life, is a gift which announces to him the reality of otherness. At the ending of the story, it is uncertain what he will make of the gift. It is possible that in mourning her, he will retain her as an idol of mimetic desire. To do so, however, would mean condemning himself to a solitary existence in the underground of pride and envy. It is clear in the story that Dostoevsky sees "love one another" not as a cliché but as the way out of existence in the underground.

A bifurcated critical approach is inadequate to the interpretive demands of the text. The pawnbroker's resentment is directed not towards a single other (his wife alone) but towards all whom he feels have humiliated him. An approach which sees the meek one as paradoxically exerting greater power than her husband merely duplicates a power dynamic which is just as abhorrent when it is advanced from the perspective of the man. If the critic sees truth as equivalent to the "justice" of sexual rivalry, it is very likely not the truth as Dostoevsky apprehends it.

In the story, virtue is linked with the moral discernment that understands love (*caritas, agape*) to be neither dominating nor masochistically submissive. Love is treated by Dostoevsky as an active principle, not the outcome of a pre-meditated utilitarian ethic which sees humans as acting simply for their own self-benefit. Moreover, in presenting us with a picture of a suicide

who is God-loving rather than nihilistic, Dostoevsky shows us how the desiring subject — even in extremis — might understand her relation to a divine model.

The meek one does not succeed in changing her husband within the frame of the story. Indeed, if such a "conversion" signified success, this is a narrative of "failed" virtue. Dostoevsky elucidates the failure to love one another that has prefaced the tragic ending, and he takes pains to indict the cultural habits which encourage domination of the other. Through the "fantastic" confession of a man addressing an invisible stenographer, Dostoevsky reveals the man's complicity in his wife's death, his responsibility for the other. Through the first person narration, Dostoevsky invites readers to see how we, like the narrator, might engage in the "subtle" violence of evading responsibility for the other. The author enjoins us not to duplicate the man's mistake, not to embrace the same sort of delusion which prompts a skewed picture of self and other and feeds the mechanism of self-justification and scapegoating violence.

Notes

¹ In a talk, "Origins in Heidegger: Deconstruction and the Mimetic Theory," given at the Colloquium on Violence and Religion at Boston College (June 1, 2000), Girard passingly referred to Levinas as employing a Heideggerean language. Given Girard's critique of Heidegger as embracing a "Heracletean logos," we might assume that Girard does not recognize a commonality with Levinas, who like Girard, owes much to Dostoevsky. I am persuaded that there is such a connection between the two writers which Girard has failed to observe.

² In this analysis, I am indebted to Natalia Reed on many counts including the observation about the frequency of the *kos-* root words and their significance in detecting the self-deception of the narrator.

³ See Irina Paperno's discussion of changes in nineteenth century legal, scientific, and journalistic discourse having to do with suicide in Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky's Russia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁴ In the October 1876 number of A Writer's Diary, Dostoevsky compares the suicide of Lisa Herzen (who goes unnamed) with that of Borisova, the destitute young seamstress who leaped to her death holding an icon in her hands. See "Two Suicides" and "The Sentence" in A Writer's Diary, Volume I, trans. Kenneth Lantz (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1994) 652 - 656; PSS 23, 145-148.

⁵ René Girard, Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987) 198.

⁶ Girard, The Scapegoat, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 9.

⁷ L. Michael O'Toole, "Point of View: Dostoevsky, A Gentle Spirit; Tolstoy, 'Father Sergius,'" Structure, Style and Interpretation in the Russian Short Story, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 41.

⁸ Dostoevsky refers to his concept of realism in the often cited passages which follow. In a letter to Maikov, dated 11 December (23 December) 1868, Dostoevsky writes: "I have a wholly different conception of reality and realism than our realists and critics." («Совершенно другие я понятия имею о действительности и реализме, чем наши реалисты и критики. ») PSS, 28, Book 2, 329. In a letter to Strakhov (dated 26 February, 1869) after having read some negative reviews of The Idiot, Dostoevsky wrote: "I

own peculiar view of reality (in art), and that which a majority (of critics and writers) calls almost fantastic and exceptional, sometimes contains for me the very essence of reality. A (presentation of) a number of ordinary day - to - day phenomena and a routine view of these is not, in my opinion enough to make for realism, but rather, the contrary ... Is not my fantastic *Idiot* reality, and most ordinary day-to-day reality at that? It is precisely now that such characters (must appear) in those strata of our society that are torn from the soil, strata that become fantastic in reality. But *no use* talking! Much in the novel is written hurriedly, much is longwinded and didn't come off right, but some things did. I am not defending my novel, but I will stand behind my idea." «У меня свой особенный взгляд на действительность (в искусстве), и то, что большинство называет почти фантастическим и исключительным, то для меня иногда составляет самую сущность действительного. Обыденность явлений и казенный взгляд на них, по-моему, не есть еще реализм, а даже напротив ... Неужели фантастичный мой "Идиот" не есть действительность, да еще самая обыденная! Да именно теперь-то должны быть, такие характеры в наших оторванных от земли слоях общества - слоях, которые в действительности становятся фантастичными. Но *нечего* говорить! В романе много написано наскоро, много растянуто и не удалось, но кой-что и удалось. Я не за роман, а за идею мою стою.» PSS 29, 19.

⁹ See Dostoevsky's defense of Nedolin's "The Deacon" in *A Writer's Diary*, Vol. I, "An Impersonator" (1873), 222, where he declares "... when one describes actual events by scrupulously observing all their random nature, they nearly always take on a fantastic, almost improbable character. The task of art is not to portray the random bits of daily life but their general idea, perceptively read and faithfully drawn out from the entire broad range of similar phenomena of life." PSS 21:82.

¹⁰ Malcolm Jones and Robin Feuer Miller, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Classic Russian Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 8.

¹¹ Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965) 15.

¹² Pushkin revealed Onegin's imitation of western models to be a sign of the times. Pushkin saw his generation fascinated with the notion of the superman: «Мы почитаем всех нулями. А единицами - себя./ Мы все глядим в Наполеоны; / Двуногих тварей миллионы/ Для нас орудие одно./ Нам чувство дико и смешно.» (II,14) A. S. Pushkin, *Evgenij Onegin*, (Paris: Bilingual International, 1994) 40 - 41. In Arndt's translation this runs: "... we count as zeros/ All other men except ourselves./The world's Napoleons bemuse us: /Mankind we think is there to use as / So many million biped tools,/"

and Feelings are for cranks and fools." Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin, trans. Walter Arndt (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981, 1963) 43.

¹³ Luzhin, the "new man," a "rational" man, expounds a theory of "the advantages of wives taken from poverty" to Dunya, observing, "I decided to take you, so to say, when the gossip of the town about your reputation had spread all over the district. Scorning public opinion for your sake and vindicating your reputation, I was certainly completely and absolutely entitled to count on being recompensed and even to demand your gratitude." Crime and Punishment, trans. Jessie Coueslin, ed. George Gibian, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), IV,ii, 258; PSS 6: 32.

¹⁴ Levinas describes subjectivity as beginning with the social relation: "Identification denotes not abstract representation of self by self but a concrete relationship between an I and a world." Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Dusquesne University Press, 1969) 37.

¹⁵ See the rest of the title for chapter 3: "The Noblest of Men, but I Don't Believe It Myself."

¹⁶ "The Meek One," of course, leads to the same tragic denouement for the woman in this story as in Faust. In her 1841 novel, Horace, George Sand also reveals the powerful attraction for the would-be romantic hero of the Faustian prototype.

¹⁷ Grossman, by contrast, sees the pawnbroker as having behaved generously by his unwillingness to fight the duel as an officer. Leonid Grossman, "The Tragic Short Stories/ A Gentle Creature," Chapter XVIII, Dostoevsky as a Journalist in Dostoevsky: His Life and Work, trans. Mary Mackler (New York and Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co, Inc., 1975 [1963]) 527 - 536.

¹⁸ Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground, trans. Michael Katz, I, vii, 18.

¹⁹ Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground, 86. For the Russian text see PSS, 5, 176.

²⁰ The use of the verb, "project," here is global rather than technical, especially in light of the disagreements in psychoanalytic circles concerning whether projection is a one-body (intrapsychic) or two body (interpersonal) process. In a review of literature concerning projection, projective identification and introjection, Jill Savage Scharff observes the slipperiness of all three terms. Scharff notes that Melanie Klein bunches together splitting, projection, projective identification and introjection, while using the term "splitting" to refer to an interpersonal situation where one person splits off and expels unwanted parts of himself

into another person. Scharff refers to Klein's 1946 work, "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms." Jill Savage Scharff, Projective and Introjective Identification and the Use of the Therapist's Self (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc.: 1992) 20.

²¹ Girard refers to such times as "sacrificial crises." This phrase denotes the crumbling of an order that a ritual of sacrifice constantly renews and guarantees. When fundamental differences between the sacred and profane break down, says Girard, when prohibitions and rituals no longer succeed in displacing mounting tension arising from conflict, then suppressed rivalries gain the upper hand and violence spreads.

²² I am indebted to Rusty Palmer and Tom Pace for delineating these connections during their workshop "Socrates had it easy" (June 2, 2000) at the conference of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, Boston College, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

²³ Palmer's description of the scapegoat function resembles analyses of projection and psychological splitting found in object relations theory. While the mimetic theory frames conceptions of self in terms of a subject's perception of benevolent or destructive models, object relationists like W. R. D. Fairbairn and Otto Kernberg describe the main determinant of the personality to be the internal images we carry within us of the primary relational figures of our past ("objects" such as mother and father). In addition to these internal representations of others, we have internal representations of ourselves. See Fairbairn, An Object Relations Theory of the Personality (New York: Basic Books), 1954 and Kernberg, Object Relations Theory and Clinical Psycho-Analysis (New York: Jason Aronson) 1976. According to Kernberg, splitting is "the active keeping apart of contradictory experiences of the self and of significant others." O. F. Kernberg, Internal World and External Reality (New York: Basic Books) 1980, 6.

²⁴ An identical relationship dynamic is at work in Nabokov's Lolita as revealed in the following passage: "Sometimes . . . while Lolita would be haphazardly preparing her homework, sucking a pencil, lolling sideways in an easy chair with both legs over its arm, I would shed all my pedagogic restraint, dismiss our quarrels, forget all my masculine pride — and literally crawl on my knees to your chair, my Lolita ! You would give me one look - a gray furry question mark of a look: "Oh no, not again" (incredulity, exasperation); for you never deigned to believe that I could, without any specific designs, ever crave to bury my face in your plaid skirt, my darling! The fragility of those bare arms of yours- how I longed to enfold them, all your four limpid lovely limbs, a folded colt, and take your head between my unworthy hands, and pull the temple-skin back on both sides and kiss your chinesed eyes, and- "Pulease, leave me alone, will you," you would say, "for Christ's sake leave me alone." And I would get up from the floor while you looked on, your face deliberately twitching in

imitation of my tic nerveux. But never mind, never mind, I am only a brute, never mind, let us go on with my miserable story." Vladimir Nabokov, The Annotated Lolita (1955), Alfred Appel Jr., ed, (New York: Random House / Vintage, 1991) Part 2, chapter 10, 192.

It appears that Nabokov's criticism of Dostoevsky conceals both his rivalry and his profound indebtedness to the nineteenth century author. Moreover, in Lolita, Nabokov shares Dostoevsky's intuition that desire is imitative, that it can assume metaphysical proportions, and as the rivalry for an "object" intensifies, the adversaries concentrate more and more on each other. Humbert Humbert locates a love "object" in his past who is a dim model for Lolita; he fans his obsession with the "nymphet" through appeals (sometimes ironic) to romantic fiction. The very unattainability of the object leads in acquisitive mimesis to a fascination which acquires a metaphysical dimension. (One certainly can't call Humbert Humbert's fascination "love.") When Lolita doesn't return his interest, he demonizes her, and only when he is entrapped by Quilty, his double, does he begin to realize the enormity of the injury he has done Lolita. That is, much of Humbert Humbert's account is a text of persecution, as Girard describes such texts in The Scapegoat. The reader should not be beguiled by the unreliable narrator; Lolita tells a story of real violence, told from the perspective of the persecutor and it is therefore influenced by characteristic distortions. Humbert Humbert is by no means the victim of the child he seduced, as he often makes himself out to be.

²⁵ Julia Kristeva, Black Sun, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 12 - 13.

²⁶ "Meekness" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, George Buttrick, et. al. eds. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962) 334. See Amos 2:7; Isaiah 14:32; Psalms 37:11.

²⁷ Aware of this problem, Jackson prefers to translate the "meek one" as the "gentle creature," for Jackson asserts that "in the conception of Dostoevsky, she is gentle but not weak or meek." I am not persuaded that "gentle" adequately allows the Biblical resonance to be heard in Dostoevsky's designation. Robert Louis Jackson, "The Temptation and the Transaction: A Gentle Creature." Chapter IX of The Art of Dostoevsky: Deliriums and Nocturnes (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) 257.

²⁸ George Buttrick, et. al. eds. "Matthew" in The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VII, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951) 282.

²⁹ George Konrad, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth," The Melancholy of Rebirth: Essays from Post-Central Europe, 1980 - 1994, trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995) 154.

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 1: 25 Because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

1 Corinthians 15: 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.

2 Corinthians 12: 9 But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you: for power is made perfect in weakness. So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

2 Corinthians 13: 4 For he was crucified through weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God."

³¹ Kenosis in the Christian context is understood as referring to the mystery of the Trinity and the "emptying" of Christ's human nature in order to make room for the other persons of the Trinity. Asserting that kenoticism is entirely consistent with the relationship of humans to divinity that is described in the Hebrew Bible, Levinas asserts that the self can transcend egocentric tendencies and even desire what is radically other than itself, what cannot be comprehended, controlled or consumed. See Totality and Infinity for Levinas' construction of subjectivity. For a discussion of the Hebrew sources of the notion of kenosis, see "Judaism and Kenosis," In the Time of Nations, trans. Michael B. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 114 - 132.

³² Murav also affirms that Dostoevsky does not value her "originality" or "as Bakhtin glosses this term, "self utterance." "Indeed, he does not value originality in either the female or male protagonist." Harriet Murav, "Reading Woman in Dostoevsky" in A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature, ed. Sona Stephan Hoisington (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995) 51. The rest of the relevant passage from Murav reads as follows: "Whatever woman is in Dostoevsky - absence, memory, trace, a blank space, albeit a Christological blank space - she is not a speaking subject. In the Christian context in which she is found, subjectivity is not constituted by self - utterance but by proximity to the divinity . . ." When I consider Sonya Marmeladovna, the first part of the Murav's statement strikes me as inadequate characterization of woman in Dostoevsky, while I would agree with the second part of the statement that Dostoevsky's depiction of Christian subjectivity (for men or women) is indeed not constituted by "self-utterance."

³³ In The Idiot, Gavril Ardalionovitch is initially governed by such values; it is money, he feels, that will make him an "original man." Dostoevsky's narrator observes that Ganya is "infected from head to foot with the desire for originality" (IV, i, 449; PSS 8, 385). In other respects, too, he is the divided man of Dostoevsky's time, for he has "a profound and continual consciousness of his own lack of talent, and, at the same time, the overwhelming desire to prove to himself that he is a man of great independence ..." (The Idiot, IV, i, 450; PSS 8, 386).

³⁴ Dostoevsky, Neizdannyyi Dostoevskii: zapiski knizhki i tetradi, 1860 - 1881, eds. I. S. Zilberstein, M. Rozenblium (Leningrad: Literaturnoe nasledstvo, 1971) 175.

³⁵ Liza Knapp, The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics (Evanston: Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1996) 38.

³⁶ There is a striking consonance between Dostoevsky's characterization of the misguided protagonist and Levinas' discourse on rhetoric as distinguished from ethical rapport which is dominated by geometrical figures of facing and the angle.

³⁷ I owe this insight to Natasha Reed who discussed it in a presentation, "Dostoevsky's *Krotkaya*: The Metamorphosis of a Truism." Colloquium on Violence and Religion, Chicago, Illinois. June 1, 1995. Reed cites this passage from the text, adding emphasis to reveal the man's strategies: "Wait, gentlemen, I was the first to hate that pawnshop all my life but, in essence, although it's silly to speak to oneself in *mysterious phrases*, I was after all "taking my revenge on society," I really, really, really was! And for this reason her morning witticism about my "revenge" was unjustified. You see, had I *directly* told her in so many words: "Yes, I am avenging society," she would have burst into laughter, as she did in the morning, and the whole thing would have, in fact, appeared *ridiculous*. But through an *indirect hint*, by uttering a *mysterious phrase*, it proved possible to *trick the imagination*."

³⁸ The text mitigates against dismissing her as mere linguistic entity and the "truth" to which the author refers as inapplicable. My interpretation differs in emphasis from that of Morson, Holquist and O'Toole. Gary Saul Morson argues that the pawnbroker is unable to ever reach the truth. Morson, The Boundaries of genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Tradition of Literary Utopia (Austin: University of Texas Press) 14. Holquist's emphasis on the protagonist's illusion of an entirely separate consciousness, metaphorized as "voice," downplays the signifying presence of the body of the suicide. In his rich structuralist analysis, L. Michael O'Toole seems to amend Holquist's emphasis, describing the dead woman's body as speech; hers is the silent comment, says O'Toole, to which the pawnbroker's speech is

oriented. L. Michael O'Toole, "Point of View: Dostoevsky, *A Gentle Spirit*," Structure, Style and Interpretation in the Russian Short Story, 63.

Harriet Murav argues that the meek creature is a referent in and not an addressee of the protagonist's discourse. Harriet Murav, "Reading Woman in Dostoevsky," A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature, 48.

³⁹ Natasha Reed, "Fantastic Realism as Commonplace Reality: The Structure of Victim and Persecutor in Dostoevsky's Short Fiction." Unpublished manuscript, circa 1997.

⁴⁰ Barbara Heldt, Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) 32 - 37.

⁴¹ Dostoevsky, A Writer's Diary, Vol II, trans. Lanz, June 8, 1880, 1287.

⁴² For Dostoevsky's musings on a man acquitted in his wife's murder, see "Environment," 1873, A Writer's Diary, Vol. I, 132 - 145; PSS 21: 13 - 22 and "Vlas," (1873), 165; PSS 21, 38. He also repeatedly returns to the case of Ekaterina Kornilova, who threw her step-daughter from a window.

⁴³ Dostoevsky apparently misunderstood this as Elizaveta Herzen's own addition, but it was in fact the commentary of his correspondent.

⁴⁴ Levinas often cites this statement as encapsulating a paradigm of ethical subjectivity.

⁴⁵ This Levinasian formulation comes from Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Penn: Dusquesne University Press, 1969) 24. (Totalité et infini. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961.)

Chapter Three: Virtue, Self-sacrifice and Suicide

In Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Girard observes that for a subject to desire an object, he must convince himself (or she, herself) that this object is already desired by a third party to whom he or she attaches a certain prestige. The third party (named the mediator), when located on the same "plane" as the desiring subject, constitutes a rival who exercises a sort of fascination. Lacking an Absolute Other to which to attach itself, desire is displaced onto a secondary other. As I have shown in the previous chapter, this dynamic is revealed in "A Meek One" as the man tries to persuade himself that his desire is original when he in fact diminishes the role which the other plays in his desire. At the end of Dostoevsky's story, the husband imagines himself as the self-sacrificing celibate partner in an "open" marriage. If his wife were still alive, he thinks, he would be ready to remain together "like that," that is, as they lived when they kept separate beds. He imagines a future together in which he does not have the upper hand:

Everything would have been *like that*, everything would have remained *like that*. You would only have talked to me as to a friend, and we would have been happy and laughed joyously as we looked into each other's eyes. And so we would have lived. And if you had come to love another, well, so be it! You would have walked with him, laughing and I would have watched you from the other side of the street ... (A Writer's Diary, Vol. I, 716-7)

Всё и было бы так, всё бы и оставалось так
 Рассказывала бы только мне как другу, - вот бы и
 радовались, и смеялись радостно, глядя друг другу в
 глаза. Так бы и жили. И если б и другого полюбила - ну
 и пусть, пусть ! Ты бы шла с ним и смеялась, а я бы
 смотрел с другой стороны улицы ... (PSS 24: 35)

One suspects that the *vaniteux* would not so readily yield his position to a love rival unless some masochistic pleasure were involved. He seems more envious than grateful for his wife's generosity at that moment as he engages in a fantasy of what could have been. His fantasy of magnanimity recalls his earlier daydream of purchasing an estate in the Crimea and helping the neighboring farmers. Such imagined romantic generosity and self-abnegation might actually arise from envy of his wife. As Girard has argued in Dostoievski: du double à l'unité, (French, 1963; English, 1997), in Dostoevsky's later works (beginning with Notes from Underground and "The Eternal Husband") certain examples of romantic generosity and self-abnegation which were offered the reader in Dostoevsky's earlier works are shown to arise from interpersonal conflict rather than genuine beneficence. "The Meek One" is an example of this later tendency to explore the self-aggrandizing pride which masquerades as magnanimity.

George Sand (1804 - 1876) and Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828 - 1889) also produced fiction in which they, like Dostoevsky, show desire to be mediated. Unlike Dostoevsky, they are inclined to see mediation as entirely benign when they depict romantic love. Sand never considers the possibility that romantic generosity may be subject to self-deception and Chernyshevsky is inclined to see mediation as only beneficial rather than harmful. Thus we see that the love triangle which he represents in What is to be done ? resolves the

problem of one partner's inclination to emotionally withhold himself from his spouse, and the spouse, in turn, is relieved to be free to pursue another.¹ Sand and Chernyshevsky re-create love triangles in their novels in which the moment of magnanimously yielding one's place to a love rival is repeatedly recapitulated. Sand employs the love triangle in Indiana (1830) and Jacques (1834) as well as many other novels. Chernyshevsky, an admirer of Sand, reproduces such a triangle in What is to be done ? (1863), modelling his according to Jacques, but to rather different purpose and without the tragic outcome. A comparison of the treatment of triangular desire in Sand's early novels and Chernyshevsky's What is to be done ? underlines the real divergence between the "fantastic" realist, Dostoevsky, the romantic utopian, Sand and the socialist utilitarian, Chernyshevsky and their respective visions of the sources of human conflict.² Uncritical of Sand's art and ideologically at odds with Chernyshevsky, Dostoevsky takes a different course from both when he plots suicide and self-sacrifice.

Comparing George Sand's work with Chernyshevsky's usefully highlights nineteenth century disagreement about the nature of virtue at a time of extraordinarily heightened conflict among Russian radicals, conservatives and liberals. Sand's work enjoyed great popularity among Russians of the 1840's and 60's. The radical "westernizers" of the 40's, Alexander Herzen and Michael Bakunin, spoke of her adoringly. While Vissarion Belinsky was initially less positive towards her work, he soon came around (by the winter of 1841) to championing her and the socialist idealism of Pierre Leroux which she promoted in novels like Horace and Mauprat. (In an 1873 entry to A

Writer's Diary, Dostoevsky lists Sand along with Cabet, Leroux and Proudhon as French socialists whom Belinsky particularly admired.) The consequence of Belinsky's enthusiasm was that Sand's novels began to be translated into Russian in the journal, Notes of the Fatherland, written by Belinsky's friends.

Many educated Russians responded appreciatively to Sand's romantic fiction. Naomi Schor attributes Sand's popularity among Russian (and English readers) to Sand's view that art and morality are intimately linked. Schor makes this explicit in a comparison of Sand and Flaubert: "... Sand totally rejected Flaubert's vaunted doctrine of impartiality ... According to Sand, the writer, far from being absent from his work like a *deus absconditus*, must intervene, judge his characters, and above all provide his readers with a moral compass ... what Sand objected to in Flaubert's writing was less its failure to take a moral stance than its refusal to provide moral examples." Schor cites one of Sand's letters to Flaubert, in which Sand defends the novelist's ethical engagement: "Don't hold virtue to be a cliché in literature. Give it its representatives; portray the honest and the strong, along with the maniacs and dolts you so love to ridicule." ³

In the years 1840 - 43 when Dostoevsky belonged to Belinsky's pléiade, along with Nekrasov, Goncharov, and Saltykov-Shchedrin, Dostoevsky did not unreservedly share all of Belinsky's enthusiasms but, like Belinsky, Dostoevsky did favor Sand. ⁴ Indeed, in 1844, Dostoevsky had begun work on a translation of Sand's La Dernière Aldini (1837), only to learn that it had already been translated. He never renounced his fondness for her work. Attacked on the one hand by the official censors and on the other by the enemies of radicals and

liberals, such as Nikolai Strakhov and Lev Tolstoy,⁵ Sand's work nevertheless found support from divergent parties. Respected by Chernyshevsky and the 1860's radicals, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev, Sand also earned praise from the Slavophile, Aleksei Khomyakov, who refused to blame Sand (as reactionary critics Osip Senkovsky and Faddei Bulgarin did) for corrupting society.⁶ Neither did Dostoevsky blame her or indict her for her insistence on woman's right to erotic fulfillment.

Despite Dostoevsky's claim that his earliest acquaintance with Sand's work came at the age of 16, that is, in 1838,⁷ it may well have been only in 1839 that he became acquainted with Sand's novels while at the St. Petersburg Academy of Engineers. There the lectures of Dostoevsky's professor of French literature, Joseph Cournant, covered not only classical but contemporary writers, including Sand. In May 1839, Dostoevsky writes to his father, indirectly appealing for money, saying that it is "absolutely necessary" for him to subscribe to a French circulating library."⁸ It is possible that he read something of Sand's then. In 1867, Dostoevsky still recalls Sand's work affectionately when he prompts his second wife, Anna Grigorevna to read all of Balzac and Sand, whom she says Dostoevsky especially valued.⁹ In the eulogy to Sand that Dostoevsky writes in 1876, it is evident that in the forties Sand had been the vehicle of progressive and revolutionary ideas for him and his generation. He writes that Sand was then more popular in Russia even than Dickens or Balzac because "what mattered most was that the reader was able to derive, even from her novels, all the things the guardians were trying so hard to keep from them ... "¹⁰ Dostoevsky himself was most taken, in retrospect, with

with two aspects of Sand's work: first, the "acknowledgement of the human personality and its freedom (and accordingly its responsibility)" which is a "basic idea of Christianity" (513). Secondly, he is moved by the "sublime moral purity" of some of Sand's heroines, which he observes emerging in her "La Marquise" (1832), La Dernière Aldini (1837), L'Uscoque (1838), and Jeanne (1844) :

We see depicted the upright, honest but inexperienced character of a young female having that proud chastity, a girl who is unafraid and who cannot be stained by contact with vice even if she were to find herself in some den of iniquity. The need for some magnanimous sacrifice (which supposedly she alone must make) strikes the heart of the young girl and without pausing to think or spare herself, she selflessly, self-sacrificingly and fearlessly takes a most perilous and fateful step. (A Writer's Diary, Vol. I, 512)

Изображается прямой, честный но неопытный характер юного женского существа, с тем гордым целомудрием, которое не боится и не может быть загрязнено от соприкосновения даже с пороком, даже если б вдруг существо это очутилось случайно в самом вертепе порока. Потребность великодушной жертвы (будто бы от нее именно ожидаемой) поражает сердце юной девушки, и, нисколько не задумываясь и не щадя себя, она бескорыстно, самоотверженно и бесстрашно вдруг делает самый опасный и роковой шаг. (PSS 23, 36)

It is almost as if Dostoevsky were describing the unnamed heroine of "The Meek One," a story he writes six months after the appreciation of Sand. Like

the Sandian heroes in Dostoevsky's description, the meek one appears capable of a fundamental generosity towards the other, a generosity summed up as "magnanimity" or greatness of soul (*великодушие*), coupled with an intense youthful idealism. When we apply Dostoevsky's words to the unnamed heroine — "the need for some magnanimous sacrifice (*which supposedly she alone must make*)" (my italics) — we get a sense of her calling, a kind of responsibility which "strikes at the heart." The Sandian heroine, for Dostoevsky, became the young idealist coming of age in the late 1870's, a person whose sense of responsibility towards her society was altruistic, not nihilistic. Dostoevsky's portrait of such a person is decidedly more psychologically complex than Sand's, as I shall show.

Sand's Indiana (1830) and Jacques (1834)

In Sand's Indiana, published in Russian in 1831, the triangle created by wife, lover and husband (who will later be replaced by the wife's cousin) illustrates the imitative nature of desire and the part which envy plays in turning love to hate. The young landowner Raymon, a French Lovelace, falls in love with the chaste yet married Indiana. When Indiana proves to be not immediately accessible, Raymon pursues her beautiful maid, Noun, a kind of passionate double of Indiana. Their first encounter is sweetened by Raymon's triumph in carrying Noun off at a village dance, away from a score of rivals. From Raymon's side, the others' envy initially heightens Noun's desirability. The affair soon loses its charm for him, however, when there are no rivals present to covet his success. His pride prevents him from appreciating the risks which Noun takes to maintain the affair. Sand's limited omniscient narrator

observes Raymon's reflections about the affair and the jeopardization of his social position:

If it were the wife of a peer of France running such risks, that would indeed be a priceless conquest - but a lady's maid ? What is courage in one is nothing but presumption in the other. In the first case, a world of jealous rivals envies you, in the second, a rabble of scandalized servants condemns you. (52)

La femme d'un pair de France qui s'immolerait de la sorte serait une conquête précieuse; mais un femme de chambre! Ce qui est héroïsme chez l'une devient effronterie chez l'autre. Avec l'une, un monde de rivaux jaloux vous envie: avec l'autre, un peuple de laquais scandalisés vous condamne. (I, iv, 75)

Raymon's concern with his privileged status in the social order is reflected in his gift for rhetoric. Indeed, the facility with language — or rather the lack of it — is the very thing which deals the death blow to Raymon's and Noun's affair. Fearing that Raymon will abandon her, Noun writes him a letter: its style, ungrammaticality, and orthographic mistakes make the seducer blush. The pregnant maid, abandoned by her lover, eventually drowns herself, leaving behind no suicide note.

Raymon's artful rhetoric is the very thing lacking in Ralph (who will emerge as Indiana's "true" lover). Ralph's speech is characterized as wooden, lacking the power of persuasion, and absolutist. Ralph is an awkward conversationalist; he acquires persuasive speech only when he is ready to perish

with Indiana in his arms. There is a political significance in the antitheses of speaking styles. Raymon is a champion of the political status quo, the master of the idiom of high society and power while Ralph is a democrat who argues for the return of the French republic. Delmare, the husband, is an old Bonapartist whose political loyalties, Isabelle Naginski observes, are reflected in the "fossilized forms of his speech."¹¹ While Indiana's servant, Noun, is the representative of the underclass whose access to literary language and its concomittant power is circumscribed, the meek Indiana becomes capable of using language forcefully. So, for example, her protest against French marriage and property laws emerges boldly (if melodramatically) when Indiana addresses the following speech to Delmare, her domineering husband:

I know that I am your slave and you are the lord.
The laws of this land have made you my master.
You can tie up my body, bind my hands, govern my
actions. You have the right of the strongest, and
society confirms it; but over my will, monsieur, you
have no hold, only God can curb and abate it.
Search if you will a law, a prison, an instrument of
torture that could give you a hold over me ! It's as if
you wanted to touch air and grasp nothingness.
(184)

Je sais que je suis l'esclave et vous le seigneur. La loi
de ce pays vous a fait mon maître. Vous pouvez lier
mon corps, garrotter mes mains, gouverner mes
actions. Vous avez le droit du plus fort, et la société
vous le confirme; mais sur ma volonté, monsieur,
vous ne pouvez rien, Dieu seul peut la courber et la
réduire. Cherchez donc une loi, un cachot, un

instrument de supplice qui vous donne prise sur moi! C'est comme si vous vouliez manier l'air et saisir le vide. (II, 21, 232)

The master-slave bond — expressed here in a melodramatic encounter between "vice" and "virtue" — is not renounced until the end of the novel, when Indiana will seek a different relationship with those over whom *she* might exercise domination. Sand's heroine indirectly identifies herself not only with women who are oppressed by domineering husbands or social codes, but with all subjects of political oppression against whom force is used. God, identified in the passage above as the symbolic guarantor of an individual's free will, potentially resembles the political law which binds, governs, and curbs, although Indiana's later remarks will distinguish the "god" of society from the God of the oppressed. Sand's condemnation of French property law and the unequal relation of the sexes in marriage remains ambivalent, however, for Indiana will eventually trade Delmare's domination for Raymon's as becomes clear in the passage below, where she addresses Raymon, having left her husband:

I come to offer you happiness, to be everything you wish, your companion, your servant or your mistress ... I no longer have the right to refuse you any sacrifice. Dispose of me, of my blood, of my life; I am yours, body and soul. I have traveled three thousand leagues to belong to you, to say this to you, take me, I am your property, you are my master. (238)

... je viens pour te donner du bonheur, pour être tout ce que tu voudras, ta compagne, ta servante ou ta maîtresse ... je n'ai plus le droit de te refuser aucun

sacrifice. Dispose de moi, de mon sang, de ma vie; je suis à toi corps et âme. J'ai fait trois mille lieues pour t'appartenir, pour te dire cela; prends-moi, je suis ton bien, tu es mon maître. (IV, xxviii, 296-297)

The master-slave conception persists, only in this case the slave is willing to be "possessed." Indiana appeals to her lover as sacrificer; she is a willing victim. Sand's emphasis is not yet feminist in any recognizably modern sense, for her female protagonist ultimately achieves happiness by being liberated into the plenitude of romance by the right man. Even when the love for Raymon is demonstrated as built on illusion, Indiana still requires a lover who will be saviour, liberator, messiah. (The idolization of the loved one illustrates a false transcendence, but this is not what Sand herself presents in the novel.) Raymon is ultimately condemned as a false love "object" for Indiana; instead, Ralph, whom Indiana long fails to appreciate, is the true lover even though he does not conform initially to any literary preconceptions about the romantic hero.

Sand interrogates romantic egoism.¹² Like her but in a more thoroughgoing way, Dostoevsky will dispute the "received truth" of romantic egoism. In Crime and Punishment, for example, in the person of Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky challenges the notion of an élite of superior intellectuals who may transgress existing moral norms for the sake of some grand project and in "A Meek One," he shows his hero to be deluded when he sees himself as an original man who triumphs over "the others." Sand attends to the artful use of rhetoric as capable of reinforcing an unjust hierarchical social system. Her suspicion of rhetoric recalls Dostoevsky's emphasis in "A Meek One" on the man's slanted approach towards his wife and her silent but perceptible non-verbal language.

Dostoevsky's affinity with Sand also emerges in their shared critique of the cooptation of religious authority. In *Indiana*, we see that Indiana's disillusion with Raymon issues from her vision of divine authority. His God, she declares in a letter, "is the god of men." Raymon's god, written with a lower case letter, is an idol. Indiana contrasts the conception of a god as the upholder of privilege with the God who is the hope of all, not just the powerful:

(your god is) the king, the founder and upholder of your kind; mine is the God of the universe, the creator and the support of the hope of all His creatures . . . You think that God protects you and authorizes you to rule the earth; I think that He may allow it for a little while but that the day will come when He will scatter you to the winds with a breath. (198)

Le votre, c'est le dieu des hommes, c'est le roi, le fondateur et l'appui de votre race; le mien, c'est le Dieu de l'univers, le créateur, le soutien et l'espoir de toutes les créatures . . . Vous pensez que Dieu vous protège et vous autorise à usurper l'empire de la terre; moi, je pense qu'il le souffre pour un peu de temps, et qu'un jour viendra où, comme des grains de sable, son souffle vous dispersera. (III, xxiii, 248-249)

The cooperation of religious and political authority in making a virtue of the subordination of others is a theme to which Sand will return repeatedly. Sand's notion of God as the upholder of the oppressed ("the support of all his creatures") and the guarantor of equality is clearly in keeping with Dostoevsky's perception that the Biblical God is a God of victims, and not persecutors. Thus,

in The Brothers Karamazov, the Grand Inquisitor, who presents his participation in violence as noble self-sacrifice is discredited by the author as a follower of Christ. The implied Biblical allusion in Indiana's words (reminiscent of Jeremiah 13: 24) reinforces a millenarian expectation to be found in Dostoevsky's work as well. This expectation indeed was particularly strong in nineteenth century Russia,¹³ and can be located in the writing of Slavophile and Westernizer alike. Sand's utopian idealism will come to the fore in novels which follow Indiana, and take an increasingly socialist emphasis, but it is distinguishable from Dostoevsky's sense that the "kingdom of God" is right around the corner, for in the period following his Siberian exile, Dostoevsky came to identify socialism as an ideology which justifies violence. Thus, in the following passage from A Writer's Diary, he expresses a profound awareness of the way in which violence may be institutionalized, and the beautiful ideal of *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* negated by those impatient for radical change:

What sense is there in setting up an institution and inscribing on it: "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*"? You will achieve nothing at all worthwhile here through an institution, so that it will be necessary - absolutely, inescapably necessary - to add to these three "institutional" words a fourth: "*ou la mort*," "*fraternité ou la mort*" and brother will go off to chop the head off brother so as to achieve brotherhood by means of this civic institution." (A Writer's Diary, August 1880, 1319)

Что толку поставить "учреждение" и написать на нем: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*? Ровно никакого толку не добьетесь тут "учреждением". так что придется -

необходимо. неминуемо придется - присовокупить к трем 'учредительным' словечком четвертое "ou la mort," "fraternité ou la mort" - и пойдут братья откалывать головы братьям, чтоб получить чрез 'гражданское учреждение' братство. (PSS 26:167)

That same concern is echoed in Myshkin's criticism of the turn to freedom "through violence" (IV, 7, 528; PSS 8, 451).

In the world of Sand's novel, *Indiana*, suicide emerges as an alternative in a world in which God has not yet "scattered the unjust to the winds." Romantic despair takes over and suicide as an exit from failed romance is repeatedly re-played. Noun chooses suicide when she is held hostage by her love for Raymon, and dare not reveal her lover's identity to her beloved mistress. Suicide also appears as the choice of the "true" love who would rather die than exist without the beloved: faced with the (false) news of Indiana's death in a riding accident, Ralph attempts suicide. (He is foiled by Raymon, who keeps the knowledge of Ralph's passion a secret from Indiana.) In a third incident involving attempted suicide, like a sleep-walker, Indiana walks into the Seine to drown herself when she has lost her last shred of hope in Raymon. Some correlation between Sand and her heroine is evident as Sand recalls in her autobiography an occasion when she herself, without any forethought, attempted suicide, experiencing a surge of delight when she came close to drowning.¹⁴ Indiana is saved by her cousin Ralph, whom she promises to join in a suicide in the future. Soon the cousins will decide on a site for their suicide: a precipice on the Ile Bourbon, which is crowned by a waterfall. For Ralph, their death together is clearly imagined as a *liebestod*, a convention of romantic

literature. Moreover, the "double sacrifice" (as he calls it) takes on a religious coloration. The joint suicide, as Ralph sees it, needs to be carefully orchestrated so that the victims — who will also perform the priestly function as sacrificer — will meet death in a meditative state:

For us the whole world is the temple in which we worship God, and it's in the solitude of majestic virgin nature, free of all human contamination, that we can best sense his power. We should therefore return to the wilderness where we will be able to pray. I know that here, in this country swarming with men and their vices, in the heart of this civilization that denies or belittles God, I would be distracted and disturbed. (246)

Pour nous, l'univers est le temple ou nous adorons Dieu. C'est au sein d'une nature grande et vierge qu'on retrouve le sentiment de sa puissance, pure de toute profanation humaine. Retournons donc au désert, afin de pouvoir prier. Ici, dans cette contrée pullulante d'hommes et de vices, au sein de cette civilisation qui renie Dieu ou le mutile, je sens que je serais gêné, distrait et attristé. (IV, xxix, 307)

Ralph's declaration is couched in terms of the romantic celebration of nature as an immanent source of divine presence. The passage hints at a Rousseauian conception of the universal man at one with nature (whom Dostoevsky derisively refers to in Notes from Underground as *l'homme de la nature et de la vérité*).

Sand's novel reveals the significance of the mediator in constituting desire. Having previously surrendered her desire to Raymon, Indiana now simply repeats the procedure with Ralph. Ralph, in turn, deems the world "of men and their vices" as responsible for his unhappiness. Sand's narrator, however, offers no comment that would encourage the reader to distance herself from Ralph's inclination to externalize his psychic difficulties. The significance of the model - mediator is emphasized as Indiana and Ralph hover near the precipice where Ralph reveals that his mother could not love him and so, for him, Indiana alone became the source of plenitude and joy. Rather than desire originating with the self, it emerges as a function of relations with real or imagined others to whom the characters feel a dependency or inferiority.¹⁵

There is also the matter of a prior literary model for a lovers' suicide. As Marylyne Lukacher observes, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's Paul et Virginie (1788) set a literary precedent for this would be suicide. Indiana differs from Paul et Virginie, however, inasmuch as Indiana and Ralph ultimately reject the double suicide and instead, welcome love (which appears as new utopian romance) by secluding themselves on their island home and freeing their slaves.¹⁶ Just as Sand asserts the legitimacy of her text over the prior one, her characters assert the legitimacy of desire unconstrained by the marriage bond considered by law, custom and novelistic convention as inviolable. Sand's utopian romance will prove too constraining a plot line for Chernyshevsky whose characters set out to radically transform themselves as well as their society.

While it is too great a leap to claim Sand's "influence" on Dostoevsky, who read voraciously and adapted liberally from whatever moved him, certain concerns in Sand's early novel Indiana re-surface many years later in Dostoevsky's "Meek One." These concerns include the triangular configurations (with which both Dostoevsky and Sand intermittently dealt in their own love affairs), an interrogation of romantic heroism, hope for the future couched in millenarian terms, and an appeal to divinity who is a God of victims rather than victimizers. In Indiana, a critique of religious authority also emerges, directed against Catholic ecclesiastic authority, and in Dostoevsky's late novels, the critique of religious authority is often directed both against Western Catholicism and Protestantism, as for example, in Myshkin's tirade in the Epanchin's salon about the (Catholic) church's assent to secular structures of power. While it is uncertain whether Dostoevsky read Indiana, when it comes to Sand's 1834 novel, Jacques, there is little doubt that Dostoevsky knew it. Published in Russian in 1844 without the last seven chapters, it was a sensation that provoked several Russian imitations, including Aleksandr Druzhinin's Polinka Saks (1847) and Chernyshevsky's What is to be done? ¹⁷

In Sand's epistolary romance, Jacques, which is presented from Jacques' point of view, Jacques marries Fernande, a woman half his age. (The age difference recalls the difference between Dostoevsky's pawnbroker and his wife.) Just as Dostoevsky's pawnbroker enjoys "saving" the meek one from her ferocious aunts, Jacques takes pleasure in delivering Fernande from her difficult mother. So he explains in a letter to a woman friend, his real love interest: "Je l'épouse ... pour deux raisons: la première, parce que c'est l'unique moyen de la

posséder; la seconde, parce que c'est l'unique moyen de l'arracher des mains d'une méchante mère, et de lui procurer une vie honorable et indépendante. (Jacques, 38) ("I am marrying her for two reasons: the first, because it is the only way she can become mine and the second, because it is the only way to tear her from the hands of a cruel mother and to offer her an honorable and independent life." My translation.)

For her part, Fernande offers an account of the marriage in her correspondence with Clémence, who warns Fernande that Jacques is too old, too experienced and too idealistic for her. She cannot be happy with him and yet she also cannot remain at home with her domineering mother. Fernande bears twins; she and Jacques choose to be sexually abstinent, with the understanding that this is for the good of the children. But family happiness and sexual abstinence give way to boredom. Fernande enters a love affair with Octave, a young man near her own age. In a story that hints at the attraction of incestuous bonds, Jacques corresponds about his marriage with Sylvia, the former lover of Octave and (it will later be revealed) perhaps the half-sister of Jacques.

Fernande engages in melodramatic scenes in which she requires her husband to swear that he has never been in love with Sylvia (who comes to visit them). Imagining that her husband has lost interest in her, Fernande throws herself at his feet to beg his forgiveness. This dramatic gesture, reminiscent of the pawnbroker who throws himself at the meek one's feet, repulses Jacques rather than moving him. In a letter to Sylvia, he regrets "qu'au lieu d'avancer dans le vie morale elle recule, et perd, à écarter les moindres épines de son

chemin, le temps qu'elle pourrait employer à s'ouvrir une nouvelle route, plus belle et plus spacieuse." (Jacques, 156) ("...that instead of making progress in her moral life, she is falling backward and that, by removing the tiniest thorns from her path, she is wasting the time she could spend opening up a new, fairer and wider way.") Unintentionally chancing upon a letter from Octave among Fernande's papers, Jacques determines that all Fernande truly desires is to be liberated from their marriage in order to be happy with Octave. Deciding that his existence is unnecessary to all, Jacques plans to kill himself, making the death appear an accident rather than a suicide. He composes a last letter to Fernande when he is away from home. He also writes Sylvia that he has been careful to employ a calm and hopeful tone so that Fernande will not be unhappy and blame herself when she receives word of his death. Sylvia, however, suggests that romantic love is not the only reason to live; perhaps, she writes, a new start is possible in the New World. (Curiously, "going to America" will be Svidrigailov's euphemism for committing suicide.)

While Sand declares in her preface to the novel that she is not offering an apology for suicide, Jacques' attitude towards suicide is consistent with the romantic *mal du siècle* which Sand's novel epitomizes. Jacques' willingness to commit suicide in order to free his wife for a new life probably strikes most modern readers as melodramatic and such gestures indeed soon fell out of literary favor. But Jacques' renunciation of his own place struck a powerful chord with some Russian readers. Indeed, it may have been Jacques' renunciation which moved Belinsky to incorporate a Sandian idea in his credo

of a golden age of Socialism. Echoing Fourier who discussed the "egoist love called fidelity," Belinsky declared:

And there will come a time - I fervently believe it -
when ... there will be no senseless forms and rites, no
contracts and stipulations on feeling, no duty and
obligation, and we shall not yield to will but to love
alone; when there will be no husbands and wives, but
lovers and mistresses, and when the mistress comes to
the lover saying: I love another," the lover will answer "I
cannot be happy without you, I shall suffer all my life,
but go to him whom you love," and will not accept her
sacrifice, should she through generosity wish to remain
with him, but like God will say to her: I want blessings
and not sacrifices ...¹⁸

The allusion to Hosea 6: 6, (echoed in Matthew 12: 7) in which God is reported to require mercy (covenantal faithfulness, Hebrew, *hesed*) and not sacrifice (*zebah*) is interesting in that it points to the Russian radical's re-valuation of love and self-sacrifice, which is suggested in Belinsky's disappointment with the fidelity of Pushkin's Tatiana to her "fat general." The radicals of the 1860's moreover often felt impelled to either exclude Christ from socialist ethics or reinscribe him within them. As Dostoevsky reports in an 1873 entry to A Writer's Diary, entitled "Old People," Belinsky's impulse was for exclusion until a friend of Belinsky's persuaded him that if Christ were to be appear among them, he would take his place at the head of the socialist movement. (Such an image was later crystalized in Aleksandr Blok's 1918 poem, "The Twelve.")

Jacques' suicide substantially differs from the suicide of Dostoevsky's meek one whose death frees no one but herself. Unlike Jacques, it seems that she does not premeditate suicide. Clinging to her icon, she gestures towards divine charity rather than divine judgment. The vertical dimension is by no means elided in the suicide. While Jacques' "magnanimity" is emphasized in Sand's novel, in Dostoevsky's story, as we observe in the narrator-husband, seeing oneself as magnanimous (and excluding any other possible characterization) is self-deluding. The meek one, unlike her husband, and unlike either Jacques or Fernande, is capable of seeing herself as participating in the failure of their marriage. While Sand does not emphasize the "mediated" nature of Jacques' desire for his wife's happiness, it is exactly the mediation of others (and a divine Other) which Dostoevsky focuses on in his story. Jacques finds himself useless in a world of others who are indifferent (and a beloved woman, Sylvia, who is unavailable); the suicidal Ralph similarly sees himself always at odds with the "world of men and their vices." In Dostoevsky's "Meek One," blaming the other(s) for one's unhappiness reveals an investment in a sacrificial economy — the "underground" world of resentment. That investment is evident in the underground man's plaintive cry: "They won't let me be good." Dostoevsky suggests in "A Meek One," as well as in Notes from Underground, that reciprocal love may liberate the consciousness caught in an "underground" of resentment.

In Sand's Lucrezia Floriani (1847), loosely based on Sand's own love affair with Frederic Chopin, the manner in which the ego must stretch to accommodate the needs of the other is explored in greater depth than in the

previous novels and a difference with Dostoevsky's "Meek One" again becomes evident. The meek one's offering of love to her husband, which he proudly disdains as "charity" at first glance seems of a piece with the view which Sand's actress-heroine takes of love, as she discusses a past affair. In a discourse with her friend Salvator who wonders if there is a "metaphysical essence" to grasp in romantic attraction in order to determine if love is "noble and sincere" or "baleful and destructive," Lucrezia declares that the answer to the riddle of love is to be found in the Gospels. When Salvator objects that romantic love has nothing to do with the gospels because it is a selfish feeling incompatible with Christian charity, Lucrezia differs, arguing that love is greater in its cause than in its object and that the more unworthy recipients are of Christ's generous love, the more it strives to envelop them in its ardent embrace. (Lucrezia Floriani, chapter VIII, 56)

Sand's heroine insists that *eros* closely resembles *agape*. However, in the light of this and similar passages, the heroine's response to the "culpable, feeble and unworthy man" (Prince Karol) focuses on the heroine's magnanimity, not the generosity of a divine mediator. Once the passionate heroine becomes involved with her opposite, Karol, a refined, moody, and aloof aristocrat, the narrator returns to Lucrezia and Salvator's earlier exchange, and underlines the "attraction of generous souls" for those they are inclined to pity and fear. The heroine is revisioned as a kind of female Christ, the very appellation accorded Sand herself by many of her Russian admirers (but not Dostoevsky). Where Sand collapses *eros* and *agape*, Dostoevsky shows them to be two intertwined forms of desire that are not necessarily identical. Dostoevsky's distinction

between these two forms is illustrated at the end of "A Meek One." In the husband's fantasy of magnanimous behavior which he would accord his wife and a love rival, we see the husband's *eros* as deformed by envious conflict although he takes it to be reformed by generosity and consensuality.

The renunciation of selfish desire in Lucrezia Floriani is identified as first arising in the "attraction of generous souls" for those they are inclined to pity. The narrator's commentary makes it clear that we are to see Lucrezia's attraction towards Karol as founded in a generous maternal tenderness. Towards the end of the affair, when Karol has proposed marriage to the unconventional actress-mother, Karol is depicted as both ambitious and desirous of self sacrifice. While willing to "sacrifice his whole life" for Lucrezia, Karol is also at once capable of making Lucrezia out to be a criminal if by some single gesture, she arouses his jealousy (XXI, 170). The tendency to describe Lucrezia as magnanimous and Karol as poisoned by jealousy suggests Sand's desire to exculpate herself from responsibility for any failure in the relationship with Chopin.

In her novels and her life, Sand asserted the primacy of love and the right of a woman to romantic fulfillment. By contrast, in What is to be done?, Chernyshevsky has his heroine live not for love alone but for work that is socially useful and personally satisfying. Resuscitating the image of the "new people" (the radicals of the 1860's) from the harm Turgenev had supposedly done them in Fathers and Children, Chernyshevsky depicts the radical cause as of a piece with the emancipation of women. That emancipation involves freedom in love as well as independence from and equality with men. In the

marriage of Vera Pavlovna and Dmitri Sergeevich, the author advances the idea that love between men and women is inconsistent with dominance or blind submission. (Dostoevsky would agree, and yet he shows how both extremes may actually take hold in intimate relationships.) Chernyshevsky argues against many of the presuppositions and values of the nineteenth century novel in his "anti-novel," asserting that love cannot evolve when affections are constrained by a fundamental inequality between spouses underwritten by law. He discounts novelistic accounts of love as the product of an inadequately advanced revolutionary consciousness. If novels describe love between men and women as "disquieting" or anxiety provoking rather than "happy and carefree," this is consistent, according to Chernyshevsky, with fundamental novelistic misapprehensions about family and society. So, for example, he has Vera Pavlovna decide that what she has learned about women, love, and the poor from novels, even the best, is inadequate. "The best" novels include the work of George Sand and Charles Dickens, who are critiqued in the following passage in which Vera Pavlovna reflects on what she knows about love:

Take George Sand, for instance - she's so kind and upstanding, but in her books it's all only dreams. What about our own writers ? No, they have nothing of this sort at all ! Or take Dickens. He has it, but he really doesn't expect it to happen; he merely desires it because he himself is so kind, but he knows that it can never be. Why don't they know that this is impossible to do without, that this really must be accomplished, that it certainly will be - so that no one will ever be poor or unhappy again. (II, v, 103)

Ведь вот Жорж Занд - такая добрая, благойная, - а у ней всё это только мечты ! Или наши - нет, у наших уж вовсе ничего этого нет. Или у Диккенса - у него это есть, только он как будто этого не надеется; только желает, потому что добрый, а сам знает, что этому нельзя быть. Как же они не знают, что без этого нельзя, что это в самом деле надобно так сделать и что это непременно делается, чтобы вовсе никто не был ни белен, ни несчастен.

"It" alludes to the long-awaited revolution which will bring about the economic, legal and moral changes that are "destined" to occur: *it is the millennial event which will mark a radical break with the past.*

Chernyshevsky follows Sand's Jacques by arranging for the rescue of a woman (Vera Pavlovna) from her domineering mother through a marriage with the medical student Lopukhov, a *raznochinets*, like Chernyshevsky (that is, people of various classes who left the class to which their parents belonged). The author then posits a mediator emerging between spouses in the person of the husband's friend (Kirsanov), whose presence is the catalyst for Vera Pavlovna to first experience sexual relations with her husband. Vera Pavlovna gradually realizes that while she admires and respects her husband, she loves Kirsanov passionately. The husband for his part, is relieved from the obligation to give his wife the sexual attention she requires for which his "temperament" supposedly makes him unsuitable.

In Chernyshevsky's novel, as in Sand's Jacques, the satisfactions of love take precedence over the fulfillment of a maternal role. Fernande accords priority to her love relationships with Jacques and later Octave; her children remain peripheral to the novel. Similarly, while Chernyshevsky leads us to expect an announcement of Vera Pavlovna's pregnancy five months after her

marriage to Dmitri Lopukhov (III, 2), it turns out that Vera has something else in mind: a Fourierist - type producer cooperative. As Dawn Eidelman puts it, Vera Pavlovna gives birth to an idea (a sewing collective) rather than a baby.¹⁹

Thus, erotic triangulation is presented in Chernyshevsky's novel as fundamentally benign. The contrast with Dostoevsky's love triangles could not be more acute. In "The Eternal Husband," for example, the presence of the lover inspires the husband's erotic desire and stimulates his masochistic suffering. In "A Meek One," Efimovich's sexual interest in the young wife stirs the husband's own appreciation of his spouse. Chernyshevsky's "new man" reflects the revolutionary call for a reorganization of desire. Desire which leads to monogamous marriage must be eventually "sacrificed," banished from the new society to be. A sacrificial economy is still at work among the "new people" but through some agile rhetoric, this will be sidestepped in Chernyshevsky's novel.

In the fictional suicide with which the novel opens, Lopukhov has designated himself as sacrificial victim, becoming thereby invulnerable to the taxing requirement of responding to his wife. "Liberating" his wife from marriage to him, he frees himself from a relationship which requires reciprocity and active engagement with the other. Returning to Russia after a period of exile abroad (and a fictitious death), he is transformed, invulnerable to the onslaught of jealousy, feelings of sexual inadequacy, etc. Lopukhov concurs with the "necessity" for a sacrifice, and colludes with a society which makes it necessary, only to return as one of the revolutionary "saviors."

Chernyshevsky takes pains to present Lopukhov's marriage to Vera Pavlovna and his fictitious suicide as magnanimous and yet consistent with the

requirements of "self-interested" rationalism. The "sacrifice" which Lopukhov undertakes in marrying her is presented in a colloquial expression borrowed from Gogol's Dead Souls: "жертва - започи всмятку." ("Sacrifice is half-baked boots." II, xix, 149) By Chernyshevsky's utilitarian standard, the very idea of undertaking a sacrifice for another's benefit is suspect.²⁰ Thus he has Lopukhov consider that Vera Pavlovna is under no particular obligation to him in the first place for his marrying her and freeing her from her "cellar." Although he must interrupt his medical studies to marry her, thereby giving up the chance for a brilliant medical career, Lopukhov determines that he himself felt released from captivity when *she* was freed from her parents' home: thus, there was no sacrifice. Later, as if following the advice of Sand's Sylvia's to Jacques, in order to free Vera Pavlovna for love with Kirsanov, Lopukhov goes to the New World. From abroad he writes Vera Pavlovna under an alias, claiming that in freeing her to marry Kirsanov, he made no sacrifice:

I was acting under the influence of what I can call nobility, or more accurately, noble calculation ... And here I learned what a sublime pleasure it is to feel oneself acting like a noble person ... what a sublime pleasure to feel oneself simply a man ... This feeling is too powerful; ordinary natures such as mine cannot endure too often being elevated to this level of feeling." (IV, i, 321)

Тут я поступал уже под влиянием того, что могу назвать благородством, вернее сказать, благородным расчётом, расчётом, в котором общий закон человеческой природы действует чисто один, не заимствуя себе подкрепления из индивидуальных особенностей, и тут я узнал, какое высокое

наслаждение – чувствовать себя поступающим как благородный человек, то есть так, как следует поступать вообще всякому человеку ... Это чувство слишком сильно; обыкновенные натуры, какова моя, не могут выносить слишком частого возвышения до этого чувства ...

Such "noble calculation" must be understood against an interpretive horizon in which humans have replaced God and the necessity of revolutionary virtue carries a gospel fervor. "Magnanimity" and "noble calculation" have become interchangeable. Experiencing the "sublime pleasure" of acting well involves no reference to a divine model, whose position as transcendent referent has been elided. This is typical of Chernyshevsky's embrace of Feuerbach's materialist and empiricist principles.²¹ From Dostoevsky's perspective, however, the moral overconfidence of a Lopukhov and the Feuerbachian dismissal of God as a human projection conceal a human tendency to idolize other humans.²²

Chernyshevsky celebrates the "enlightened" man's good conscience which claims to satisfy its own desire when acting generously towards the other. While he says that only a few such men exist, he asserts that their number is growing. The novel intends to mediate at more conversions to the "enlightened" ideals of the new people. Indeed, it was, in a sense, enormously successful, perhaps more successful than any of its contemporaries which are regarded as literary classics. Lenin praised the novel, describing its author as the "greatest and most talented representative of socialism before Marx."²³ As Mathewson observes, the characters of Kirsanov, Lopukhov, Vera Pavlovna and Rakhmetov anticipated the positive hero of socialist realism.

"new man," Rakhmetov, but advocated the necessity of conventional family arrangements. Later Western neo-Marxism as represented by Herbert Marcuse²⁴ reclaimed the privilege of "polymorphous perversity" hinted at in the love triangle of Vera Pavlovna, Lopukhov and Kirsanov. Of course, by contemporary standards, the triangle in Chernyshevsky's novel seems almost decorous.

Dostoevsky had engaged polemically with Chernyshevsky already in Notes from Underground, striking at Chernyshevsky's "rational egoism" and determinism.²⁵ Dostoevsky continued the polemical engagement with these ideas in "A Meek One" when he has the pawnbroker, desirous of behaving in a "magnanimous" fashion approach the meek one with an agenda about her utility. Magnanimity and calculation, from Dostoevsky's perspective, are necessarily at odds. Chernyshevsky, on the other hand, accepted the Benthamite premise that every human being seeks his or her own pleasure, but he modifies this premise by demonstrating that the individual's good is identified with the common good. Thus he shows us that some people, like Vera Pavlovna, Lopukhov and Kirsanov, find pleasure in benefitting others, and these people Chernyshevsky clearly considers good. According to this line of thinking, as historian of philosophy Frederick Copleston elaborates, "there is, therefore, a distinct line of conduct which can be described as altruistic, even though all feelings and actions are based on the thought of personal interest, personal gratification and personal benefit."²⁶

Gospel texts are reinscribed in Chernyshevsky's novel to express a millenarian faith in a coming socialist society in which an instrumentalist ethic

has a place. Gospel texts are re-encoded with the newly received gospel of revolution.²⁷ So for example, (in III, xxix, 293), the new people are named as the "salt of the earth" (an echo of Matthew 5:13) who are destined for a new Eden in New Russia (IV, 9, 375) They will transform society, thereby establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Vera Pavlovna's very name (Vera - belief; Pavlovna - daughter of Paul) alerts us to her status as the prototypical apostle of the new faith. This is most pointedly demonstrated in her fourth dream, in which a hierarchy of female beauty and virtue through the ages appears. Chastity, who resembles Mary, mother of Jesus (IV, 3, 364) is one of the avatars who is judged inadequate, and one who can only be replaced, ultimately, by the dreamer herself. (IV,5, 367) Liturgical resonances are also employed by Chernyshevsky to relay the new revolutionary gospel: the returning Lopukhov (known in his new incarnation as Charles Beaumont) is greeted by Vera Pavlovna in the words of the Easter Orthodox liturgy: "He has risen indeed !" (VI, xix, 427) Chernyshevsky also draws on the hagiographic tradition to demonstrate the virtue of the "new people" whose most extraordinary representative is Rakhmetov.²⁸ Rakhmetov reads the signs of the times in Newton's commentary on the apocalyptic texts, The Book of Daniel and Revelation (IV, xxix, 273). Like the hagiographic hero, Alexei, he engages in self mortification by arduous exercises, eating huge quantities of meat, and even sleeping on nails as a "trial" for greater difficulties to come (III, xxix, 288). Nicknamed Nikitushka Lomov, he is likened to the legendary folk hero in the bogatyr tradition of morally pure men. (We might recall here that Dostoevsky's pawnbroker ends his monologue wondering if there is a single

bogatyr left on the field.) If we apply Girard's basic insight about romantic desire as a form of deviated transcendence, we see that the revolutionary movement itself in Chernyshevsky's novel becomes a parodic version of biblical faith. What is to be done? anticipates a world in which men (and women) become gods in the eyes of other men.

Like Dostoevsky, Chernyshevsky recognizes the potential power of literary models to shape real-life desires. So, for example, his Katerina Vasilevna, who will become Lopukhov's second wife and who functions as a kind of double of Vera, like Vera admires George Sand. In her imagination Katerina takes some of Sand's heroines as models: "... but she imagined herself not as Lélia, Indiana, Cavalcanti or even Consuelo; in her dreams she was either Jeanne or more often Geneviève."²⁹ (IV, viii, 407) In Katerina Vasilevna's fantasies, Geneviève unites with the image of Florence Nightingale. Fantasies remain fantasies, however, until Katia's desire is mediated by the "new man," Lopukhov, now returned to Russia as Charles Beaumont.

Both Dostoevsky and Chernyshevsky applaud a woman's desire to accomplish something for others beyond the private domain. In fact, Chernyshevsky's Katerina Vasilevna recalls one of Dostoevsky's young visitors described in A Writer's Diary, who resembles the meek one. The visitor Dostoevsky describes is an eighteen year old girl from a wealthy family. She confides in the writer her desire to serve as a nurse in the Crimea. To him she resembles the magnanimous young heroines he has admired in Sand's novels:

She had just the same sort of direct, honest, but inexperienced young feminine character, along with

that proud chastity which is unafraid and which cannot be stained even by contact with vice. The girl felt the need for sacrifice, for undertaking a task that seemed to be asked of her specifically; she had the conviction that she must begin with herself, with no excuses, to do all those fine things we expect and demand from others. This is a conviction which is genuine and moral to the highest degree, but which, alas, is most often characteristic of youthful purity and innocence. But the main thing, I repeat, is that there is only a cause and not the slightest element of vanity, conceit, or infatuation with one's own heroism, something that we very often see among today's young people, even among mere adolescents. ("About Women Again," A Writer's Diary, June 1876, 533 - 534)

Ну, вот это именно вроде тех девушек, тут именно тот же самый прямой, честный, но неопытный юный женский характер, с тем гордым целомудрием, которое не боится и не может быть загрязнено даже от соприкосновения с пороком. Тут потребность жертвы, дела, будто бы от нее именно ожидаемого, и убеждение, что нужно и должно начать самой, первой, и безо всяких отговорок, всё то хорошее, чего ждешь и чего требуешь от других людей, - убеждение в высшей степени верное и нравственное, но увы, всего чаще свойственное лишь отроческой чистоте и невинности. А главное, повторю это, тут одно дело и для дела и ни малейшего тщеславия, ни малейшего сомнения и самоупоения собственным подвигом, - что, напротив, очень часто видим в современных молодых людях, даже еще только в подростках. (PSS 23, 53)

Dostoevsky insists on the self-forgetfulness of the magnanimous gesture, and the absence of "vanity, conceit, or infatuation with one's own heroism." (533). True magnanimity is implicitly part of the project of uncovering in the human

Dostoevsky insists on the self-forgetfulness of the magnanimous gesture, and the absence of "vanity, conceit, or infatuation with one's own heroism." (533). True magnanimity is implicitly part of the project of uncovering in the human being the divine iconic image. By Dostoevsky's standards, then, there is something self-congratulatory about revolutionary virtue in Chernyshevsky's novel. Moreover, Chernyshevsky's insistence on the originality of the ascetic revolutionary, Rakhmetov, flies in the face of Dostoevsky's often elaborated contention that it is the simple goodness of ordinary people that is most valuable to society. (Gary Saul Morson identifies this tendency as typical of Dostoevsky's "prosaics.") Indeed, the notion of the "superior man" which informs the character of Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov, a representative of vanguard revolutionary consciousness, is ideologically contested by Dostoevsky in his depictions of men who believe they are original as we see in "A Meek One," or Ippolit in Idiot or Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment — or any of Dostoevsky's underground. Dostoevsky argues that fear of 'living life' closes one off, and he demonstrates it repeatedly in his fiction. Dostoevsky shows that at a time when the romantic cult of originality predominates, to accept the love commandment means that one risks being regarded a mere imitator, not an "original."

Dostoevsky had already engaged with Chernyshevsky on the subject of free will versus determinism in Notes from Underground and in "A Meek One," as well as subsequent works, Dostoevsky continue to explore these issues. Chernyshevsky insists, like Rousseau, on the necessarily corrupting power of external structures. Dostoevsky raises the objection that if external

structures are credited with such thoroughgoing influence, there is no accounting for individual responsibility. While Dostoevsky is willing to concede in A Writer's Diary that the "environment" may contribute to shaping an individual, he rejects any uncomplicated determinism that would credit external institutions alone with shaping desire, eliding the possibility for an individual to exercise free will.³⁰

Moreover, Dostoevsky distinguishes generous desire for the others' well-being from the practice of scapegoating others or scapegoating oneself. Dostoevsky's understanding of Christian self-sacrifice arises from an apprehension that violence belongs to humans. This is illustrated in his texts by characters who, for the most part, tend to see violence as belonging to others or arising from the fault of others. In Notes from Underground, we encounter the tendency to locate fault in the other. In response to the humiliation the underground man suffers at the party for Zverkov, he locates an acceptable scapegoat in Liza, the prostitute, and humiliates her. He dreams about further revenge against others who might be thoroughly humiliated before his astonishing magnanimity. In his fantasy, he would "triumph over everything," compel others through "their own free will to acknowledge all my perfections," and become a multi-millionaire "who devoted all his wealth to the improvement of the human race."³¹ The pawnbroker in "A Meek One" is similarly transfixed by the fantasy image of his own magnanimity.

In Crime and Punishment (1866), the novelist destroys the illusion that violence always arises with others (an illusion to which the reader, too,

"poem" of the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky contests the illusion that harmony in the social order should be maintained by the sacrifice of a single child, by revealing the Grand Inquisitor's failure to recognize his own participation in violence. The Grand Inquisitor presents his willingness to execute others as a noble act of self-sacrifice. Thus he tells his visitor:

"Oh, we shall allow them even sin ... and they will love us like children ... We shall tell them every sin is expiated, if it is done with our permission ... and the punishment for these sins we take upon ourselves ..." ³²

The Grand Inquisitor's purported self-sacrifice is in fact a means of covering up from himself his programmatic murder of others.

Dostoevsky's understanding of Christian self-sacrifice is inextricably linked to understanding cultural violence from the perspective of its victim. He repeatedly shows individuals tending to locate in others their own violence. This tendency finds an outlet in locating a scapegoat, someone who is most vulnerable. In his fiction, Dostoevsky generally observes them as occupying the bottom rung in a hierarchy of dominance. (Thus, there are the prostitutes Liza in Notes from Underground and Sonya in Crime and Punishment, Shatov, the object of revolutionary fury in The Demons and the monk Tikhon in the suppressed chapter of The Demons.) Dostoevsky's representation of psycho-social dynamics from the perspective of the victim lays the groundwork for a critique of sacrificial economies in which the propensity to fall on a victim is presented as justified.

A sacrificial economy is one founded on a pattern of dominance which acquires cultural authority. A sacrificial economy participates in violence — particularly violence against those who are most vulnerable — and it exerts a coercive, immobilizing effect, discouraging opposition and assertion of agency. Postulating that human culture is the result of the unconscious operation of a scapegoat mechanism that is set into play at the time of crisis, Girard observes the substitutionary path of violence and its internal logic (as I have summarized in chapter one). Julia Kristeva focuses on substitutionary violence in the construction of the subject. Because Kristeva's analysis explores the area of narcissistic injury, it is a useful adjunct to the mimetic theory and it sheds light on the suicide of the meek one, whose tragic death leads her husband to recognize his inclination to blame the other.

Kristeva sees humans as establishing the terms of their existence on the basis of a sacrificial contract.³³ When a boundary failure (or *thetic crisis*) between self and other occurs, or when a subject perceives it as threatening to occur, a subject returns to an experience of inchoate chaos, a primary narcissism. The conflict the subject experiences is tantamount to what Girard calls a mimetic crisis which calls for differentiation from the other whom Kristeva identifies as the maternal body.³⁴ Kristeva describes the subject as contesting with the maternal body, struggling for differentiation from a matrix that might subsume it. Under threat of a radical loss of place, the self seeks containment, and in a sacrificial gesture, the subject sets out to expel what threatens it. While Kristeva's identification

of the internal other-as-obstacle with "mother" may be problematic,³⁵ Kristeva's description of the mimetic crisis in the experience of the subject clearly parallels the expulsion of the other which the pawnbroker attempts in "A Meek One" and which the meek one herself performs in suicide. Her suicide with icon in her arms serves to direct the reader towards the life-giving model incarnated by the transcendent divine image in the icon, the model which saves one from making another human one's model or obstacle (i.e. thereby engaging in a form of idolatry).

A Girardian analysis establishes the suicide as one who turns the scapegoating mechanism within; a selective use of Kristeva's psychoanalytic approach to a personal sacrificial economy supports the Girardian analysis while describing it from a psychoanalytic perspective. Dostoevsky's choice of narrative perspective alerts us to the husband's responsibility for the victim's death. Dostoevsky indicts the man. Dostoevsky tells the meek one's story from her husband's perspective to address all who are culturally habituated to rationalize their domination of others (which would clearly include the educated Russian public of the nineteenth century and its contemporary counterpart in the contemporary world). The aim of the iconic appeal is to encourage us to recognize ourselves and be re-directed to a transcendent mediator.

The comparison of Sand's novels, Chernyshevsky's novel, and Dostoevsky's story in the context of novelistic self-sacrifice highlights the respective authors' implicit apprehension of a sacrificial economy. In the previous chapter, I described a sacrificial economy as denoting a structure of

prohibition which regularly designates certain "proper" places for people in order to minimize rivalry; it uses violence, particularly the violence of assigning a surrogate victim, to reinforce that order. The novels of both Chernyshevsky and Sand reveal an incipient awareness of the "false sacred" which declares the unequal distribution of power, including the power relationships written into property and marriage laws, to be "natural" and "proper." Yet Chernyshevsky and Sand reinscribe the sacred, albeit somewhat differently. Sand eroticizes magnanimous self-giving. Chernyshevsky endows the ascetic revolutionary with the aura of the sacred, diminishing the role of envy in humans by showing the "new people" to be curiously immune to it. Chernyshevsky's humanism clearly takes as its model the Christian ethic of self-sacrifice while eliminating the transcendent "referent." Dostoevsky shows that magnanimous behavior without the transcendent referent becomes a form of idolatry: an obsessive fascination.

Notes

¹ Irina Paperno observes the "benign" influence of internal mediation in her analysis of Chernyshevsky's novel and its biographical parallels with his famously open marriage. See Irina Paperno, chapter two of Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988) 89 - 149.

² I do not argue for Sand's place in the literary canon nor do I make any strong claim for Sand's direct influence on the Russian writer as, for example, Isabelle Naginski does. I find more persuasive Robert Bellnap's observation that Dostoevsky was a prolific reader; Bellnap adds that a writer did not have to be great to stir Dostoevsky's imagination. Robert Bellnap, The Genesis of The Brothers Karamazov: The Aesthetics, Ideology, and Psychology of Making a Text (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1990).

³ Naomi Schor, George Sand and Idealism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 202. The letter which Schor cites is taken from Sand's Correspondence, Vol. 2 of 25 vols., ed. George Lubin (Paris: Garnier, 1964 - 1990) 519.

⁴ Sand, Balzac and Hugo were reportedly Dostoevsky's favorite writers at the time. Orest Miller, Biographiia, pis'ma i zametki iz zapisnoi knizhki Dostoevskogo (St. Petersburg; 1883, 2 - 74) cited in Peter Sekirin, ed., The Dostoevsky Archive: Firsthand Accounts of the Novelist from Contemporaries' Memoirs and Rare Periodicals (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1997) 52.

⁵ Carole Karp reports an anecdote supplied by the novelist Dmitri Vasilievich Grigorovich (1822 - 1899) in his memoirs. In the 1860's, Grigorovich had warned the young Tolstoy not to share his poor opinion of Sand before the editorial board of The Contemporary. After hearing Sand repeatedly praised, Tolstoy burst out that Sand's heroines, if they existed in reality, "ought to be tied to a pillory for the edification of the populace and dragged through the streets of St. Petersburg." Cited in Karp, "George Sand and the Russians," George Sand Papers (Hofstra University. New York: AMS Press, 1980) 158. Karp gives the original source as A. Grigorovich, "Literaturnye vospominaniia," Russkaia Mysl', II (1893) 69.

⁶ Khomyakov declared, "The depravity of men presupposes the depravity of women. And thus the teachings of George Sand are justified." Aleksei S. Khomyakov, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (Moscow: Universitetskaiia, 1900) III, 254 - 55. Cited in Carole Karp, "George Sand and the Russians," 158.

⁷ "A Few Words about George Sand," June 1876, A Writer's Diary, Vol. I, 509; PSS 23, 32 - 33.

⁸ Cited in Joseph Frank, Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821 - 1849, 93.

⁹ A. G. Dostoevskaya, Vospominaniya (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1971) 166-67. Anna Dostoevsky, Reminiscences, ed. and trans. Beatrice Stillman (New York: Liveright, 1975) 135. Anna Grigorevna observes how surprised she was at the time to see how well Dostoevsky recalled details of plot and characters' names in both Balzac and Sand's works which he had presumed read many years before, when he seemed to have poor powers of recollection about the recent past.

¹⁰ A Writer's Diary, Vol. 1, June 1876, 507 - 514; PSS 23: 30ff.

¹¹ See Isabelle Naginski's discussion of this in "The Creation of a Literary Voice," George Sand: Writing for Her life (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991) 53 - 76.

¹² Sand's rejection of romantic male heroism comes forward more clearly in her critique of Goethe's *Faust* and her re-telling of the *Faust* story from the perspective of the woman in Les Sept Cordes de la lyre (1838).

¹³ Apocalyptic expectation in Russia, linked to the notion that Moscow was the third Rome, has been described by Nikolai Berdyaev and Yuri Lotman among others.

¹⁴ Sand writes that her religion forced her to regard the suicide as a crime, and thus she had on previous occasions overcome the temptation until riding one day on the banks of the Indre River. George Sand, Story of My Life: The Autobiography of George Sand, ed. Thelma Jurgrau, group translation, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991) IV, vi, 792 - 795.

¹⁵ Thus Oughourlian describes hysterical suicides as individuals struggling to win recognition for their desires while avoiding the violence resulting from mimetic conflict. Jean-Michel Oughourlian, The Puppet of Desire: the Psychology of Hysteria, Possession and Hypnosis, trans. Eugene Webb (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991) 187.

¹⁶ Schor argues for the indeterminacy of their lives after the failed suicide attempt and the unsettled questions of Indiana and Ralph's innocence or guilt. Schor observes that although the ending appears to be a fulfillment of Sand's ideal of the erotic, this may not be the case because "their antislavery politics remain purely local, more philanthropic than revolutionary, they live exiled from the polis ... and perhaps most disturbing ... it is not at

all even clear that they are married or even lovers." Naomi Schor, George Sand and Idealism, 106.

¹⁷ Eidelman establishes resonances between Sand's Jacques, Mauprat and Horace and several other nineteenth century Russian novels including Turgenev's Iakov Pasyunkov, On the Eve, and Rudin; Goncharov's Obломov and A Common Story, Herzen's Who is to Blame, and Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment and Brothers Karamazov. Dawn Eidelman, George Sand and the Nineteenth Century Russian Love-Triangle Novels (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1994).

¹⁸ Frank, Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821 - 1849 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976) 123.

¹⁹ Dawn Eidelman, George Sand and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Love-Triangle Novels, 52.

²⁰ William Woehrlin observes that many years after writing the novel Chernyshevsky revised his allegiance to an ethic of calculation and wrote of human beings' "innate inclination toward mutual good will and . . . the ability to enter relationships founded on human kindness rather than calculation." Woehrlin observes that the message Chernyshevsky conveyed to his own generation (particularly as this is evident in the novel and in his philosophical writing) was that love and self-sacrifice represented calculated self-interest. William Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii: The Man and The Journalist, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971) 133. Woehrlin cites Chernyshevsky's change of heart as evident in Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, eds. V. I. Kirpotin et al. (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1939-1953) Vol. X, 923.

²¹ Woehrlin tallies the references to Feuerbach in Chernyshevsky's diaries and observes a progressive attitude towards religious skepticism by the time of his graduation from university (circa 1851). Woehrlin also cites E. A. Liatskii's conclusions that Chernyshevsky had probably read Vorläufigen Thesen zur Reform der Philosophie (1842) and Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft (1843). Woehrlin describes Chernyshevsky's basic world view as built on his reading of Das Wesen des Christenthums. Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii: The Man and The Journalist, 52 - 53. In Das Wesen des Christenthums, 1841 (Essence of Christianity) and Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft, 1843 (Lectures on the Essence of Religion), Feuerbach argued that God and other religious images derive from the projection of idealized human characteristics onto personified deities as a result of ignorance and fear.

²² As one commentator on Feuerbach has put it, Feuerbach's critique "involves an empirically unjustifiable assumption that human reason, will and feeling are perfect." See A. L. Teikmanis, dissertation, Feuerbach and Christianity, Harvard University, 1953, 312.

²³ See Rufus W. Mathewson, The Positive Hero in Russian Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958) 105.

²⁴ Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: a Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (New York: Vintage, 1962).

²⁵ A rancorous personal relationship between the two writers has been suggested by those readers of Dostoevsky's Crocodile (1865) who believed Dostoevsky to be mocking Chernyshevsky, imprisoned in 1863 and exiled for twenty years in 1864. In an 1873 entry, "Something Personal," in A Writer's Diary, Vol. I, 146 - 155 (PSS 21, 23 - 31), Dostoevsky refuted such a reading at length, taking care to add that he had had limited but cordial personal contact with Chernyshevsky. That contact included a visit by Dostoevsky to Chernyshevsky's home in May 1862 after the fires set presumably by radicals in St. Petersburg's market. Dostoevsky believed Chernyshevsky was esteemed by the 60's radicals who (so Dostoevsky thought) would surely be dissuaded from similar violent action if Chernyshevsky were to publicly discourage it. The meeting between the two men was brief, indecisive and interrupted when another visitor came to call.

²⁶ Frederick Copleston, Philosophy in Russia from Herzen to Berdyaev (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), Chapter 5: "The New Men," 108.

²⁷ Gorky will do the same in Mother (1905). Gorky rejects Dostoevsky's paradigm, erasing the necessity for the imitation of a transcendent benign model, and in its stead, placing as an ideal a human model — the ascetic revolutionary whose concept of justice makes violence a virtue. In The Demons, Dostoevsky debunks faith in a revolutionary movement by exposing the scapegoating mechanism necessary to draw the movement together and by treating some of the unsavory types who are drawn to the revolution (such as Shigalev, Peter Verkhovensky). Dostoevsky makes it clear that the characters in his novels are free to renounce the conflictual desire that leads to violence. Gorky, by contrast, has his characters in Mother affirm the right of former victims of state violence to take violent action against the state. Gorky plots the rivalry between the people on the one hand and "the chief sinners and deceivers," "the most poisonous insects" that harass the human race" on the other. The ruler-capitalist Other, like Pavel's abusive father, is repeatedly described as monstrous and beastly. The judges at the trial in part two of Mother are characterized as kindled by "sinister, impotent envy felt by wasted and sick people for the strength of the healthy." (A Nietzschean

echo is emphatically present, as Nietzsche interpreted Christians as always bound by resentment.) Part two of the novel is marked by the imagery of devouring appetite. The people's vanguard, the revolutionaries, with few exceptions, are presented as having generous natures. The people who work for socialism are characterized as keeping the faith: they work "calmly and resolutely," engage in self-criticism, and remain optimistic in adversity. The rulers and bourgeoisie, on the other hand, are universally "unprincipled and greedy, cunning and heartless." Victor Terras observes that the novel refuses to be objective. Terras, "Maksim Gorky" in Handbook of Russian Literature, Victor Terras, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 181.

Mother's son, Pavel replaces Christ as "the consecrated one." The task of the revolutionary socialists is represented as restoring the image of God - an idea consistent with the philosophy of *bogostroitel'stvo* or god building which asserted that God did not exist but could be created through the collective efforts of humanity. "Restoring the image of God" in the novel involves replacing a Christ who, in Rybin's words, was "not strong in spirit." "It's the masters who take pleasure in Christ as he groans on the cross," proclaims Rybin. The revolutionaries engage in heroic self-sacrifice which imitates the Christian passion narrative with a difference: all along the revolutionaries assert the right to violence rather than its renunciation. This is presented as the newly received gospel.

In Mother, it is only the monstrous other who is endlessly rivalrous towards the selfless decent revolutionary. Dostoevsky, by contrast, doesn't hesitate to show that human relationships are marked by rivalry; envy is not the exclusive property of the privileged. M. Gorkij, Izbrannye sochineniya (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1946.) Citations in English are from Maksim Gorky, Mother, trans. Isidore Schneider (New York: Citadel Press, 1947.)

²⁸ See Katerina Clark, The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

²⁹ These are all protagonists from Sand's novels: Lélia from Lélia (1833, 1839), Cavalcanti from Le Secrétaire intime (1834), Consuelo from Consuelo (1842), Jeanne from Jeanne (1844) and Geneviève from André (1834). Lélia is an unwitting femme fatale who suffers from religious doubt and Byronic alienation. Consuelo is the orphaned daughter of a Spanish gypsy. Her musical talent leads her to work as a private music tutor in an aristocratic family, sing opera, and study freemasonry, eventually travelling through Europe with her husband preaching the love of humanity through music. Princess Quintilia Cavalcanti is a stereotypical volatile Italian who protects her reputation while enjoying a private love life. Geneviève is a peasant girl, an artisane who makes artificial flowers. She becomes pregnant by the son of a country squire. Her lover satisfies Geneviève's thirst for knowledge in botany

and other sciences, but she becomes pregnant by him and dies in childbirth. Jeanne is a beautiful and simple peasant girl who honors a promise to her dying mother never to marry. Three men unsuccessfully try to win the girl who ends up dying young.

³⁰ See the 1873 entry, "Environment," in A Writer's Diary, Vol. I, 132 - 145; PSS 21: 13 - 22 and also the discussion of agency in "Anna Karenina as a Fact of Special Importance" in the 1877 July and August issue of A Writer's Diary, Vol. II, 1070ff; PSS 25, 198- 201.

³¹ Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground, PSS 5, 133.

³² Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, Garnett translation, R. Matlaw, ed., (New York: Norton, 1976) 240.

³³ Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time" ("Les temps des femmes," French, 1979), trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake in The Kristeva Reader, Toril Moi, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 200.

³⁴ Julia Kristeva, Tales of Love, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 23. When Kristeva speaks of maternal body, she does not mean a specific parental figure of infancy and childhood but a pre-symbolic irrecoverable space of difference which mirrors the subject's sense of estrangement. Kristeva's notion of maternal matrix thus differs from Lacan's, for whom maternity is viewed only in terms of its contribution in the mirror stage that announces the symbolic order.

³⁵ It seems that Kristeva brings the sexually differentiated sign of "mother" across this inchoate space of the emergent subject although she claims that the subject's space of origins is inaccessible by way of signs.

Chapter Four:

Virtue as Discarded Value in Crime and Punishment

Ten years before writing "The Meek One," in Crime and Punishment (1866), Dostoevsky had already given novelistic form to generous self-giving love in the character of Sonya Marmeladova. In Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky also demonstrated in the relationship of Sonya and Raskolnikov that outgoing concern for the other arises out of a non-intellectual recognition that we may try to be to the other person what God is to us. Outgoing love cannot arise out of "rational self-interest" or a utopian socialist agenda (as Chernyshevsky had it). Opening oneself to the divine, for Dostoevsky, was a necessary prerequisite for both an individual and a community to experience wholeness.

Well aware that he could not prove the necessity for belief in God, he nevertheless could and did show how powerful divinely inspired self-giving love can be. He chose, unlike Sand, not to eroticize such love. Indeed, in the notebooks to Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky insists that nothing particularly erotic takes place between Raskolnikov and Sonya, although theirs is clearly a real and profound intimacy. They are not like Dmitry and Grushenka in The Brothers Karamazov — who, following Dmitry's arrest and imprisonment, are moved to a greater spiritual intimacy which complements their passionate mutual attraction. In Crime and Punishment, by contrast, the relationship between Sonya and Rodion has a primarily eschatological dimension, especially evident in the quickly sketched hints in the epilogue of transformation, joy, and fulfillment.

Sonya's mediation of Raskolnikov's desire demonstrates the positive aspect of mediated desire. It also reveals the Dostoyevskian respect for a law of love as opposed to the force of law. While some readers credit Porfiry as instrumental in Raskolnikov's reformation, I argue that Porfiry as a representative of the law cannot bring about this change; it is Sonya alone who guides Raskolnikov to spiritual regeneration. Dostoevsky depicts the legal system as incapable by itself of bringing about an internal transformation on the part of the murderer. The public sphere of judgment cannot transform the individual. The punishment which the court metes out to the convicted murderer is merely mechanical. Raskolnikov's turn around — sketched in the epilogue but prepared for in the body of the novel — arises from the experience of being forgiven. Sonya makes this possible.

The compassion which Sonya shows to Raskolnikov is clearly a poorly regarded virtue at a time when radical notions which favor the "justice" of murder are growing in popularity. Radical ideas are espoused initially by the nameless officer and student whose conversation Raskolnikov overhears, and Raskolnikov elaborates similar ideas in his article (which predates the conversation). The justification for murder is presented as on a continuum with another idea favored by the Russian nihilists of the 1860's: the "practical necessity" of treating others as a means to an end. The absolute moral imperative to treat others as ends and not means is discounted by Dunya's suitor, Luzhin, but consistently upheld by the writer himself who ironizes about the ethics of radical utilitarianism when he has Luzhin refer to "new and beneficial ideas" which have arisen in place of the "old fantastic and romantic

ones" (II, v, 126) such as "love your neighbor."¹ Compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation — all are anachronistic virtues at a time when the love commandment is disdained in favor of radical ideas for transforming society. It is a time when murder has been ideologically reconceived as virtue and "love your neighbor" is regarded by some — like Luzhin — as a sure formula for personal failure. The "new word" which Raskolnikov wishes to embody is clearly in keeping with Luzhin's utilitarian ethic. Dostoevsky uses the novel to reveal the dead-end of the "new and beneficial ideas" and the value of the old and beautiful ones. (Such an opposition between old ways and new ones, according to semiotician Yuri Lotman, aside from being one of the most persistent characteristics of Russian culture, "proves to be so vigorous and significant that ... it absorbs into itself or subordinates to itself other most important oppositions of this type: Russia - the west, Christianity - paganism."²) The "new word" of the nihilistic personality is dramatically counterposed to the old and ever renewed Word of the humble Christ. Compassion and forgiveness are depicted as the values capable of transforming the transgressive protagonist and reconciling him with the community.

The profound tavern speech uttered by Marmeladov in Part I, chapter 2 opens the narrative door to the renewing possibility of forgiveness. Bound by the constraints of poverty and alcoholism, Marmeladov nevertheless foresees entry into a new continuance. In chronological time, he will shortly go home and face the abuse that Katerina Ivanovna will heap on him. He will even declare that he feels "sweet satisfaction" when she drags him into their room by his hair. (I, ii). In the new continuance, however, at the end of time, he foresees

being welcomed and accepted by Christ. On the threshold at the end of history, as he envisions it, divine mercy rather than retribution awaits his daughter and even himself. ("And He will stretch out His arms to us and we shall fall at his feet and weep . . ." I, ii, 19) In a speech full of gospel allusions, Marmeladov anticipates Christ's forgiveness — His suspension of judgment — rather than the punishment which Marmeladov feels he rightly deserves. While putting the apocalyptic vision in the mouth of the self-dramatizing drunk, Dostoevsky by no means discredits it. That is, although Marmeladov may indeed serve as an example of "self-interested suffering" as Wasiolek has described him,³ Marmeladov also reminds us about the value of forgiveness which Raskolnikov has yet to learn.

Marmeladov's vision is the first mention in the text of the transformative power of forgiveness. ("You are forgiven by God for misdeeds; therefore, you must forgive others as God forgives you." Matthew 6: 15) The paradigmatic expression of this in the Hebrew Bible is the ending of the Joseph story: Genesis 50:15 - 21: "The evil you meant to do me has, by God's design, been turned to good . . ." To turn evil to good, in Sonya's case, means suspending judgment of the other and halting the movement toward vengeance. This is by no means commonly recognized at the time (or in our own) as good and it is an ethical demand which is emphatically not governed by a system of rewards and punishments. There is no indication in the text that Dostoevsky subscribed to a conventional (and one might add, egotistical) view in which an afterlife provides a site where some are punished and some are rewarded.

Raskolnikov has no desire to be the object of others' ridicule like Marmeladov. Indeed, he frequently fears others' mockery. (He regularly reminds Porfiry: "I will not permit anyone to laugh in my face." IV, v, 290; PSS 6, 264) By contrast to Marmeladov, he lacks certain faith in a transcendent vision of mercy and he is accordingly inclined to rely on his own intelligence and desire a god-like self sufficiency. Even when he collapses with fever after the murder, he wants none of Razumikhin's ministrations. ("I don't want your kindness." II, vi, 142; PSS 6, 129) More sensibly, he also rejects Dunya's projected sacrifice (a marriage to Luzhin) for his benefit.

He neglects, however, to see in himself the very qualities which he condemns in his sister. ("She is proud, and unwilling to admit that she wanted to be able to confer benefits on me." III, iii, 196; PSS 6, 178) One of the most striking aspects of the filial resemblance is Rodion's and Dunya's proud and passionately idealistic nature which is ready to choose martyrdom for the sake of a great idea. Indeed, Porfiry describes Raskolnikov to his face as "one of those who would allow themselves to be disemboweled, and stand and face their torturers with a smile — if they had found faith, or found God" (VI, ii, 388; PSS 6, 351) and Svidrigailov observes towards the end of the novel that he can readily imagine Dunya as a second or third century martyr who "smiles when they burnt her breast" or a fourth or fifth century ascetic who lives in the Egyptian desert on "roots, ecstasies, and visions." (VI, iv, 401; PSS, 365)

Raskolnikov, however, does not decisively find his faith in the body of the text, only in the epilogue, and he actively seeks a self-aggrandizing kind of suffering. He is ashamed of his poverty and struck by the injustice of his society.

His shame and sense of injustice feed his hatred of others. He attributes his own resentment to the other, observing about his family, "Their love is like hate ..."
(III, iii, 196; PSS 6, 178) He is drawn to the image of the "extraordinary man," making up for his own sense of lack through grandiose fantasy. The object relations therapist might say that a grandiose sense of self-sufficiency is a fantasy maintained to defend oneself against feeling intense involvement with others.⁴ In particular, Raskolnikov defends himself against the threat of engulfment by women. His psychological defense finds an ideological corollary in a fascination with the "world historical individual" (a parody, of Hegel's notion, as Philip Rahv has it).

Raskolnikov sees the world historical individual as divided into two types, the "master of the present" who enjoys the benefits of power in his lifetime and the "lord of the future." The superiority of the latter type, he observes, goes unrecognized by the unappreciative masses who will "behead or hang him ... fulfilling their conservative function" although "in the following generation these same masses put their former victims on a pedestal and worship them (more or less)." (III, v, 221) Raskolnikov justly detects a pattern of scapegoating in history, in which leaders may be murdered only to be sacralized after death. "The lord of the future" who is apt to be "beheaded or hanged" rather than the "master of the present" is the messianic type with whom Raskolnikov feels a particular affinity. The idea of the holy ruler, the one who is set apart is clearly biblical, as we see, for example in the suffering servant of second Isaiah, but both second Isaiah (specifically, Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12) and the gospels exalt a meek one who governs not by the power of the sword but by

love. Raskolnikov's idea, biblical in origin, is corrupted by a misguided clinging to the desire for power.

His Christian upbringing inclines him to heed the suffering of the victim. This is evident in his first dream (I, v). His child dream self is disturbed at the injustice of Mikolka's violence against the poor mare. Later Raskolnikov only fleetingly recognizes himself as having acted, by murdering, like Mikolka who treats the meek creature as "my goods" (моё добро), an object which one might abuse or kill simply because he wants to. Raskolnikov experiences himself instead as powerless and persecuted. He feels his vulnerability most acutely after the murder when standing in trepidation at Alyona Ivanovna's door, waiting for Koch and Pestryakov to move away. At that moment he is "as if turned to stone, like a sleeper who dreams that he is being hotly pursued and threatened with death, and finds himself rooted to the spot, unable to stir a finger" (I, vii, 70). Perceiving himself the victim of the hostile other, he is not fully aware of his own hostility or its origins. After the murder Raskolnikov again feels powerless, like the mare against whom violence was visited in the dream. He returns to his room and lies down "shuddering like an overdriven horse" (II, ii, 97). His second dream, in which Ilya Petrovich is beating his landlady, reveals his feeling that he is threatened by others' violence. The fear of being dominated by the other feeds his grandiose fantasies about the power which will be his once he has "tested" himself by committing murder. Thus he concludes soon after the murders:

My life did not die with the old woman ! May she
rest in peace - and, enough, old woman, your time

has come ! Now comes the reign of reason and light
and ... and freedom and power ... now we shall see!
Now we shall measure our strength !" (II, vii, 161)

Не умерла еще моя жизнь вместе с старою
старухой ! Царство ей небесное и довольное.
матушка. пора на покой ! Царство рассудка и
света теперь и ... и боли, и силы ... и посмотрим
теперь ! Померяемся теперь ! (PSS 6, 147)

The "reign of reason and light" is the rhetoric of the utopian socialist; the goal of "power" and strength," however, reveals that Raskolnikov's values are not communitarian but proto-Nietzschean. As Raskolnikov observes later, "I do not want to wait for the common weal." (III, vi, 233) He longs for a position of dominance.

At times Raskolnikov does not wish to be a victimizer (the role played in his dreams by the abusive peasant Mikolka, the police lieutenant Ilya Petrovich, and the pawnbroker herself) but neither does he wish to be the victim (the mare, the landlady in the dream, Lizaveta, Sonya). He rationalizes away his victimization of others. Porfiry sums up the situation well: "he [Raskolnikov] committed murder, yet he thinks of himself as an honorable man, despises other people and goes about like a martyred angel." (VI, ii, 385)

Raskolnikov is blind to the fact that his desire — to distinguish himself, to kill, and to confess — is mediated by others. (This is not to say that others are somehow entirely responsible for his actions.) The author shows us, however, that Raskolnikov's desire is shaped by his perception of others, his imitation of others' hostile behavior and his desire to "free" himself from the "tyranny" of others, whether they behave in a hostile or loving manner.

Dostoevsky reveals that we are constituted by the other whom we internalize as models and who become the unconscious basis of our desires. In acting on the desire to murder, Raskolnikov means to shake off the mediation of others.

Persuaded that he is ruled by an original idea by which he may prove himself an exceptional man, to whom overstepping (*prestuplenie*, crime or transgression) is permissible, Raskolnikov develops a theory justifying murder, a theory which is actually not even very original, as Porfiry observes (VI, ii, 388). Such ideas about the towering superman are "in the air" in Petersburg in the mid 1860's. They are to be found in Dmitri Pisarev's 1862 essay on Turgenev's hero, Bazarov, where Pisarev elucidated the gap between the masses and an elite that is to be found in Raskolnikov's "extraordinary man" theory. In the conversation which Raskolnikov overhears between the officer and student six weeks prior to his crime, it is evident that some of Raskolnikov's educated contemporaries view murder, at least in theory, as Raskolnikov does: they see it not only as palatable but even highly moral. In the conversation which Raskolnikov overhears, the murder of Alyona Ivanovna is theoretically conceived, in utilitarian fashion, as a good deed from which many stand to benefit. The student describes Russia of the 1860's as full of idealistic youth who could assuage poverty and prevent crime, given the "right" to wipe out those who are perceived as standing in the way of such progress:

... you have new, young forces running to waste for want of backing, and there are thousands of them, all over the place. A hundred, a thousand, good actions and promising beginnings might be forwarded and directed aright by the money that old

woman destines for a monastery; hundreds, perhaps thousands of existences might be set on the right path, scores of families saved from beggary, from decay, from ruin and corruption, from the lock hospitals - and all with her money ! Kill her, take her money, on condition that you dedicate yourself with its help to the service of humanity and the common good: don't you think that thousands of good deeds will wipe out one little, insignificant transgression ? (I, vi, 56)

... молодые, свежие силы, пропадающие даром без поддержки, и это тысячами, и это всюду! Сто, тысячу добрых дел и начинаний, которые можно устроить и поправить на старужины деньги, обреченные в монастырь! Сотни, тысячи, может быть, существований, направленных на дорогу: десятки семейств, спасенных от нищеты, от разложения, от гибели, от разврата, от венерических больниц - и все на ее деньги. Убей ее и возьми ее деньги, с тем чтобы с их помощью посвятить потом себя на служение всему человечеству и общему делу: как ты думаешь, не загладится ли одно крошечное преступленье тысячами добрых дел ? (PSS 6, 54)

The fundamental injunction against murder may be disregarded, according to the student, if a hundred or a thousand good actions for "the common weal" follow the "little insignificant transgression." This is "simple arithmetic," that is, "rational" utilitarian calculation. When the officer genially objects that "she [Alyona Ivanovna] doesn't deserve to live, certainly, but that's nature," the student insists that

nature must be guided and corrected or else we should all be swamped with prejudices. Otherwise there could never be one great man ... (I, vi, 56)

да ведь природу поправляют и направляют, а без этого пришлось бы потонуть в предрассудках. Без этого ни одного бы великого человека не было ...
(PSS 6, 54)

Raskolnikov extends the notion that murder is not only permissible, but highly moral. In his journal article, he argues that it is the prerogative of certain "extraordinary" men who rise above the "common herd" to "wade through blood" if necessary for the ultimate advancement of humankind (III, v, 221). For an educated man to advance the notion that shedding blood is a moral necessity is clearly consistent with the temper of the times in which, as Porfiry observes, the "heart of man has grown troubled" and "people quote sayings about blood 'refreshing'" (VI, ii, 385). Raskolnikov's Napoleonism reveals a moral malady that is characteristic not only of the 1860's nihilists and radicals; it is a temptation to a destructive will to power to which anyone might succumb, particularly when the absolute value of concern for the victim has become secularized, torn from its religious moorings.

Dostoevsky presents the destructive will to power as a profound temptation for his contemporaries. This is why Porfiry inquires ironically, "... who among us in Russia doesn't think of himself as a Napoleon these days?" (III, v, 225).

The image of Napoleon as the symbol of the will-to-power in the Russian imagination was further entrenched by the 1865 publication of a work

by Napoleon's nephew, Napoleon III, ⁵ History of Julius Caesar (Histoire de César), which stirred Russian and European public opinion with its affirmation of Napoleon's doctrine on the role and significance of exceptional people. The leading newspapers in Petersburg and Moscow (*Sankt-Petersburgskie vedomosti* and *Moskovskie vedomosti*) published translations of Napoleon's preface in February 1865; reviews and debates soon filled other periodicals. The History of Julius Caesar espoused something very like Raskolnikov's "extraordinary man theory," arguing that ordinary men cannot be considered in the same light as exceptional men, whose overstepping of "ordinary" morality is justifiable. ⁶ For Dostoevsky, however, as for Tolstoy, true greatness did not reside in the will to dominate over others, which a recent feminist critic, Nina Pelikan Straus, has aptly described as a "masculinist fantasy." ⁷ Greatness, for Dostoevsky, is built on a relational understanding of the self which he generally refers to in terms of Christian self-sacrifice.

Raskolnikov's Napoleonic pride — his Napoleonic "I" arises from a falsely constructed sense of self. This explains why Razumikhin tells him in exasperation: "Your first concern is how not to resemble a human being." Raskolnikov suppresses positive emotions such as compassion in the style of the nihilists which Turgenev made famous in the character of Bazarov in Fathers and Children (1862). Raskolnikov's attitude is in keeping with Pisarev's praise for Bazarov in his 1862 essay for thinking only of himself and being incapable of any self-sacrifice. ⁸ For Pisarev, the affirmation of the individual ego meant the individual was emancipated, which he regarded as a necessary first step to a true critical apprehension of things. Raskolnikov's rejection of his own altruistic

actions accords with the utilitarian calculus which Pisarev embraced prior to his own imprisonment. On the occasions when Raskolnikov acts in a spontaneously generous fashion, for example by rescuing a young girl from an older sexual predator, he later chides himself: "Why did I take it on myself to interfere ? ... Let them eat one another — what is it to me ?" (I, v, 43) In The Brothers Karamazov, Ivan says something quite similar of his brother Dmitri and his father "with a malignant grimace": "One reptile will devour the other." («Один гад съест другую гадину.») Social Darwinism would annul acts of altruism and erase a sense of personal responsibility.

Such indifference to the other, from Dostoevsky's perspective, is consistent with extreme Western individualism, a tendency which Razumikhin observes besets his friend, who is "a confounded fool, a translation from the original" (II, vi, 143; PSS 6, 130). In Winter Notes on Summer Impressions (1862 - 3), Dostoevsky describes such extreme individualism which he has detected in the West as "the principle of isolation, of intense self-preservation, of self-solicitousness, of the self-determination of one's own ego, of opposing this ego to all of nature and all other people as a separate autonomous principle completely equal and equivalent to everything outside itself." (PSS 5: 79) Dostoevsky implies that our freedom depends on being constituted by others. Raskolnikov is misguided in his rejection of a freely chosen communal identity (*sobornost*).⁹

Raskolnikov is not alone in being attracted to the role of the "extraordinary man." The novelist shows that the physically unprepossessing Porfiry is also drawn to the role. Ironically referring to Raskolnikov's

extraordinary man theory, Porfiry asserts, "I ought to have had a military career, really. I might not have become a Napoleon, but I should have become a major, he, he, he!" IV, v, 289) Porfiry's office of examining magistrate permits him to partially realize such an ambition. Judging from his encounters with Raskolnikov, he may behave in a fairly autonomous fashion.

He is gifted with an understanding of Raskolnikov because he is also desirous of exercising power and he knows what it is to deceive others. He may take others in but does not himself wish to be deceived. Razumikhin recalls that Porfiry has pretended to be getting married (with no intentions of doing so) just as he has pretended to join a clerical order, with no intention of doing that either.

Raskolnikov's encounters with Porfiry and other representatives of the law illuminate not only Raskolnikov's rivalry with the law but the very nature of the law. It cannot ensure justice inasmuch as it condones deception and tactics of intimidation as a means of asserting its own authority. This is evident in Raskolnikov's first encounter at the police station and his subsequent three interviews with Porfiry. The meetings with Ilya Petrovich (Lieutenant "Gunpowder"), the chief clerk, Zamyotov and the three interviews with Porfiry Petrovich reveal that the law is the object of Raskolnikov's rivalry. It is the hated model which he wishes to bring down in order to occupy its privileged position.

The principle of force underwrites the law represented by these officials. This is explicit in the case of the first meeting with Ilya Petrovich and more understated in the encounter at the Crystal Palace with Zamyotov. Ilya

Petrovich is touchy and hot-tempered, a failing well known to his superior, the district police officer, Nikodim Fomich, who observes "thunderstorms, tornadoes, waterspouts and hurricanes again !" (II, i, 85) But Raskolnikov by no means will consent to being intimidated or humiliated. Raskolnikov takes pleasure in addressing the lieutenant as an equal rather than being abashed or humiliated by Ilya Petrovich's attempt to assert his authority in the name of the law. Raskolnikov's resistance arouses Ilya Petrovich's anger and wounds his vanity which he assuages by willfully shouting at Louisa Ivanovna and browbeating Raskolnikov.

The law does not deal with individuals but with "cases." When Raskolnikov unexpectedly pours out the details of his debt to his landlady, including his relationship with the landlady's sickly daughter, his fiancée, Ilya Petrovich reminds him that he is not to be dealt with as an individual. ("All these sentimental details, my good sir, do not concern us." II, i, 87) Raskolnikov's social vulnerability, shabby appearance, and proud manner call forth a sadistic response from "Gunpowder" and the officer's desire to abase him induces in Raskolnikov a "desolating and painful emotional experience." The narrator tells us that to be treated as he is confirms in Raskolnikov the sense that there is no reciprocal understanding possible between himself and anyone else.

He did not so much understand with his mind as feel instinctively with the full force of his emotions that he could never again communicate with these people in a great gush of feeling, as if he had just now, or in any way whatsoever. Even if they had

been his own brothers and sisters, instead of police officers, it would still have been impossible ... (II, i, 87)

Не то чтоб он понимал, но он ясно ощущал, всю силу ощущения, что не только с чувствительными экспансивностями, как давеча, но даже с чем бы то ни было ему уже нельзя более обращаться к этим людям в квартальной конторе, и будь это все его родные братья и сестры, а не квартальные поручики, то и тогда ему совершенно незачем было бы обращаться к ним ... (PSS 6, 81)

The lieutenant succeeds in alienating Raskolnikov by his hostile behavior, although even before this interaction, the murders have decisively set Raskolnikov apart.

Raskolnikov imitates the hostile behavior of Ilya Petrovich in his encounter with Zamyotov at the Crystal Palace. Just as Ilya Petrovich judged Rodion Romanovich negatively because of his poor appearance (although Nikodim Fomich reminds him that "poverty is not a crime"), so Rodion Romanovich makes rude innuendoes about Zamyotov's dandified looks. In the previous encounter, Zamyotov had regarded Raskolnikov with a "smile of condescending pity but also with an air of triumph," (II, i, 83) and Raskolnikov repays him by making daring, enigmatic remarks concerning the identity of the murder and the way in which a thief and a murderer would need to behave in order to elude apprehension. Raskolnikov re-experiences the hostility he had felt towards Koch and Pestryakov while standing behind the door of the murdered Alyona Ivanovna. Filled with the desire then "to shriek out, to exchange oaths with them, to stick out his tongue at them, mock at them and

Raskolnikov takes a malicious pleasure in demonstrating that he is not a coward like the captured counterfeiter whom they discuss and that he would not so easily give himself away. Metaphorically sticking his tongue out at this representative of the law, Raskolnikov nearly claims responsibility for the murders without actually confessing. But his triumph over Zamyotov is too easy; he needs a more demanding opponent; Porfiry provides that challenge.

The introduction of the worthy opponent sustains the narrative suspense. Although Porfiry is not the judge but the examining magistrate, he is the representative of the law who can act as a law himself. Each interaction with Porfiry reveals the role that Porfiry plays for Raskolnikov: the powerful other who must be bested. Raskolnikov's feelings towards Porfiry range from the fear of being caught to the fear not being pursued at all. Perhaps worst of all, he fears being judged as only "ordinary."

The "disconcerting and overwhelming" serious attention which Porfiry offers Raskolnikov in their first informal interview calls for the most careful strategizing on Raskolnikov's part. It is clear that the encounter with Porfiry is a serious game from which only one is likely to emerge the victor. Raskolnikov imagines confessing to Porfiry as a way of showing his utter disdain for the law and his intellectual superiority to its representatives. He repeatedly wishes everything to be over with, just as he wished with Koch and Pestryakov and later with Zamyotov. Porfiry is capable of dreadfully prolonging Raskolnikov's anguish, and he does so as a deliberate strategy while he notes, whenever questions come close to the truth, that Raskolnikov turns pale and his lips tremble.

In the first informal interview, Raskolnikov expatiates on his extraordinary man theory. He upholds bloodshed "as a matter of conscience" (III, v, 223). He admires the "extraordinary man" for his independence ("one in ten thousand men born capable of standing on his own feet"), his intellect, and his indifference to fundamental norms of human behavior. At the same time, in response to Porfiry's probing, he asserts his belief in "the New Jerusalem," God, and the resurrection of the body (the raising of Lazarus).

Porfiry's questions concerning Raskolnikov's faith reveal that the inquisitorial authority of the law does not recognize a difference between the private and the public: all is open to its penetrating gaze. Since the reader learns later that Raskolnikov scoffs at religious faith, we must conclude that in his responses to Porfiry's questions about belief, either Raskolnikov lies or he affirms what he once cherished because he still believes it, even if only intermittently. It may be that Dostoevsky wishes to show us that some, like his younger self, inspired by radical ideas, accept them on a continuum with Christian values. (This became true of the Russian populist socialists of the 1870's in spite of the fact that the Slavic section of the First International in 1873 declared itself in favor of materialism and atheism.) The attitude of Dostoevsky's first influential admirer, the westernizer critic Vissarion Belinsky, illustrates the conflict of values between Russian political radicalism and Christian faith. In his famous Letter to Gogol, (1847), which Dostoevsky read to the Petrashevsky before his arrest, Belinsky spoke of Christ in utopian socialist fashion as the harbinger of liberty and freedom, although, he did not consistently regard Christ in this fashion.¹⁰

Raskolnikov, whose very name indicates that he is a man divided, internalizes fundamentally conflicting values. On the one hand, Raskolnikov asserts belief in transcendent authority, a future community built on a principle of love, and the immortality of the soul, while on the other, he asserts his admiration for transgressive human law givers who function as laws to themselves, desiring no higher authority and ignoring the fundamental injunction which binds the community: do not kill.

He is able to embrace radically divergent values while inclined to see himself as capable of delivering justice. Focusing on the murder of Alyona Ivanovna and forgetting Lizaveta, he tells himself that he has killed not a human being but a principle (III, vi, 233). Raskolnikov persuades himself that he has secured the "utmost justice" by singling out Alyona Ivanovna for execution. The student and officer whose conversation Raskolnikov overheard weeks before the murder also echoed the idea that murder may be carried out "for the sake of justice" - справедливость (I, vi, 56). In the language of the rational egoist, Raskolnikov thinks that he has "accurately calculated by weight and measure; from all the lice on earth [he has] picked out absolutely the most useless" (III, vi, 233). The notion that justice is achieved by murdering those who exploit others was taken seriously by the revolutionaries in the 1860's and 70's as well as those who came to power after the second 1917 revolution. It has been the ideological justification for reigns of terror around the world. Such "justice" is identical with retribution and it is the privilege of those who regard themselves as uniquely permitted to assert a destructive will to power presumably in the name of victims of an oppressive order.

regard themselves as uniquely permitted to assert a destructive will to power presumably in the name of victims of an oppressive order.

Porfiry recognizes Raskolnikov's desire for power and accordingly, in the second interview, Porfiry pretends that there is no power differential between them: they are two "intelligent men" who should be able to speak to each other. Although Porfiry has (unknown to Raskolnikov) received the damning testimony of the working man (*meshchanin*) who accuses Raskolnikov of murder, Porfiry insists that he looks upon Raskolnikov as a "visitor" who has arrived for a "chat," not an interrogation, and thus he suspends the "formalities." His casual and friendly manner, however, is part of a carefully considered strategy, for he freely admits that it is "better to keep the suspect in a feverish anxious state until he can stand no more and will somehow blunder, incriminating himself" (IV, v, 287). Arresting a suspect too early would provide him undesirable moral support. Porfiry implies that only by confessing can a criminal shed the burden of guilt and concealment. Raskolnikov does not wish to surrender, and he is anxious not to reveal his increasing hostility. When he loses his temper twice during this interview with Porfiry (IV, v, 290, 295), he feels compelled to lower his voice and imitate Porfiry's whisper for he fears that giving vent to his rage will indeed incriminate him. The chief investigator manipulates Raskolnikov's anxiety by assuring him that "there's plenty of time" (« Ycneem-c. ycneem-c !») and by deferring any "formal" interrogation in order to maximize Raskolnikov's anguished uncertainty as to whether or not Porfiry has definite proof of Raskolnikov's culpability. Porfiry also reminds Raskolnikov that the "psychological means of defense" offered in court by the

magistrate are "very insubstantial": they are (to translate the Russian phrase literally) "the stick of two ends." As Coulsen translates it: "they cut both ways" (IV, v, 294). They may exculpate or they may indict. Porfiry seems to suggest that without physical evidence or a confession, the psychological evidence remains inadequate proof. Yet the fact that Raskolnikov revisited the pawnbroker's apartment, asked about blood and rang the bell apparently confirms his guilt in Porfiry's mind, for as we learn from the man "from the ground" who was privy to the second interview that when he had given his evidence against Raskolnikov, an agitated Porfiry observed: "If I had known about this, I would have sent guards to fetch him !" (IV, vi, 302)

At the beginning of the second interview, Raskolnikov tells Porfiry that he expects the interrogation process to consist of "distract[ing] the suspect's attention, lull[ing] his mistrust and then "hitting him on the crown of the head with the most dangerous and fatal question" (282 - 283). Raskolnikov's self-incriminating metaphor is noted with delight by Porfiry (285, 294) who further irritates Raskolnikov to the point that he angrily declares to Porfiry : "You knew my nature, you wanted to drive me mad, and then stun me with priests and witnesses." (296) Porfiry reserves for himself the role which had often been entrusted to ecclesiastical authority; priests were sometimes summoned to assist in the extraction of a confession before the Judicial Act of 1864 and the subsequent reforms of 1865.

When Nikolai bursts in with his confession, disrupting Porfiry's plan to "stun" Raskolnikov with the accusation of the working man (hidden behind the door), Raskolnikov tells Porfiry that he recognizes the technique which the

magistrate must have employed with Nikolai, first suggesting that he is guilty and then insisting that he is not, thereby denying the suspect the tranquillity of a "definite position." Porfiry knows how to activate the suspect's fear until confession will seem the best and only way out. He encourages the suspect's anxious uncertainty about his sense of self and about what is real, resulting in Raskolnikov's feeling of insubstantiality. The law relies on confession not in order to transform the suspected criminal as the religious rite of confession is meant to transform, but in order more efficiently to assign guilt and to punish.

Porfiry opens the interview with a semblance of forthrightness, yet he eventually warns Raskolnikov: "Perhaps I am hiding something from you even now." (VI, ii, 387) The suspect's ambiguous position can be prolonged as long as it is in the examining magistrate's interest to do so. He may tell the suspect: (1) I haven't adequate evidence to indicate that you are guilty and I will no longer trouble you, or (2) I have evidence that you are guilty and I will arrest you; or (3) I have evidence that you are guilty but I will not arrest you. Could it be that Raskolnikov consents to struggle with Porfiry, because he hopes his mediator will choose the third alternative? Might Porfiry recognize the murder and its cover-up as the game of masterful player, an "extraordinary man," and let him go? This would satisfy the wounded pride of the man who has learned, as he tells Sonya, that he is not "extraordinary" because he has experienced guilt over murder and theft. Porfiry indicates in the third interview that he is "well disposed towards Raskolnikov," that he believes he "cannot be an authority for Raskolnikov," and that he will "falsify matters in his office" so that Raskolnikov's appearance and confession will seem utterly unexpected, and a

result of a "clouding of faculties." Moreover, Porfiry declares that although Raskolnikov's theory is base, he does not regard Raskolnikov as base. Indeed, as noted earlier, Porfiry sees him as one who might "allow himself to be disemboweled and stand and face his torturer with a smile." When Raskolnikov wonders at Porfiry's speaking "on high," Porfiry declares that he is simply someone who has developed as far as he can, but that Raskolnikov may pass into a "different category of men." Porfiry may be speaking "frankly and openly," but Porfiry's readiness to concede his admiration of Raskolnikov is also a demonstration of masterful interrogation technique. His apparently sincere willingness to recognize Raskolnikov's "superiority" may actually contribute to Raskolnikov's pro-forma confession but it does not inspire real remorse. Porfiry's affirmation that Raskolnikov has the potential to surpass him is an attempt to placate the desiring self who wishes to win pre-eminence over its model.

In all three interviews, Porfiry has repeatedly hinted that he has some evidence against Raskolnikov, but in the third interview, he says that in order to be convinced of the suspect's culpability, he needs to get just some "small thing ... the tiniest detail" (380) (черточка ... махочкая черточка). Suddenly, Porfiry announces that God has finally granted him the opportunity to witness this "scrap of proof" (387) and he refuses Raskolnikov's plea to explain the mistake the murderer made. The reader never learns what that mistake is either. Perhaps Porfiry is bluffing, for he knows of Raskolnikov's need for a "definite position" when he declares: "You can't get on without us." « Без нас вам нельзя обойтись. » (VI, ii, 389; PSS 6, 352) Who is "us"? It is the community which

cannot maintain itself without giving laws (such as the sanction against murder) that must not be transgressed. As I have already indicated, the "us" is regarded by Raskolnikov as the powerful other, the hated law, the model as embodied for Raskolnikov by the "womanish" but powerful Porfiry. The model is the one who can confer "psychological certainty and tranquillity" or "deny [one] a definite position" (IV, v, 286).

Like the examining magistrate, the attorney for the defense must also use dissimulation as best as he can which is why Porfiry recommends to Raskolnikov that being brought to trial, he might argue that he has suffered from temporary insanity (*αποφρεν*). Raskolnikov ultimately will refuse to avail himself of a defense on the basis of mental illness; Porfiry, for his part, true to his promise, never mentions the role radical ideology has played in Raskolnikov's actions. The jury remains ignorant of the real workings of Raskolnikov's mind. At the trial, because Raskolnikov never used any of the wealth he stole from Alyona Ivanovna and had not even counted it, the jury determines that this is a case of murder and theft without motive or calculation. The narrator ironically notes that the jury's conclusion "coincides happily with the latest fashionable theory of temporary insanity, which our contemporaries so often try to apply to various criminals." (Epilogue I, 452) The jury does not understand — although the reader should — that Raskolnikov's illness and his intoxication with radical ideology are intimately related.

Just as Raskolnikov's illness and an ideology of destructive will are related, so too, the criminal and the representatives of the legal system are depicted as existing on a continuum. The legal system is undermined by the love

of violence; nevertheless, until "the New Jerusalem," the human community cannot do without prohibitions which that system enforces. Dostoevsky asserts that there must be legal consequences for criminal action. Indeed, in "Environment," an 1873 entry to A Writer's Diary, Dostoevsky criticizes a tendency of Russian juries (following the Judicial Reform of 1864) to acquit criminals or to recommend leniency for them, for he argues that such leniency is a disservice to the criminal himself, weakening his moral sense. Dostoevsky insists that particularly the criminal who has ceased to regard himself as a criminal (which partially describes Raskolnikov) cannot be reformed "without the stockade and penal servitude." While Dostoevsky's conviction on this point strikes this reader as unpalatable, it is evident that Dostoevsky's notion of the purification which would be meaningful for such a criminal ultimately rests in the re-emergence of the voice of conscience in the ill-doer. And Raskolnikov has a conscience even if he strives to silence its promptings.

Raskolnikov's conscience which directs him to treat others as an end and not a means emerges briefly on several occasions. He rescues a drunken young woman from the attentions of a sexual predator. He attends the dying Marmeladov and when Sonya's half-sister Polechka stops him on his way out from the Marmeladovs' lodging, and asks for his name, he is gratified by her embrace and he asks her to pray for him. (II, 7, 161) He is scornful of the utilitarian ethic of Luzhin when he recognizes it as a mask for egotistic domination of others (II, v), although he is reluctant to admit that his own actions are in keeping with Luzhin's ethic. He finds himself on occasion at odds with his other double, Svidrigailov, when he sees that Svidrigailov's masculine

"freedom" consists in violating girls and women (nearly including Dunya). While it is not in the scope of this chapter to consider the obsessive fascination which Svidrigailov exerts over Raskolnikov, suffice it to say that Svidrigailov is similar to Raskolnikov and Porfiry in that all three possess a manipulative intelligence.

Raskolnikov's encounters with the law reveal that agents of the law, being finite and flawed human beings, may be under the same sway of violence as criminals. (Camus echoes Dostoevsky's picture of the examining magistrate as in thrall to violence in his depiction of Tarrou's magistrate/father in La Peste, 1947.) Even though we may like to think that we are superior to a murderer, the murderer's actions exist on a continuum with our own. Dostoevsky's use of free indirect discourse and the partially omniscient narrator who enters the consciousness of Raskolnikov shows us how we, like Raskolnikov, may repeatedly justify the harm we do others. Like Raskolnikov, refusing to recognize our own violence, we may end up focusing on the real or imagined hostility of the other person and reciprocate it.

This is not to say that Dostoevsky recognizes no difference between the criminal and the detective. A moral hierarchy surely exists in Dostoevsky's thinking, as Scanlon has pointed out in his recent book, Dostoevsky The Thinker, and that hierarchy is evident in the novel.¹¹ The murderer who feels no remorse but knows that it is wrong to kill (Raskolnikov) does not occupy the same step in Dostoevsky's moral hierarchy as the examining magistrate who tries to entrap him. Those at the top of Dostoevsky's moral hierarchy (Sonya)

are relatively free of egocentric defensiveness and are capable of empathetically entering the experience of another, even when the other is a murderer.

Dostoevsky is appreciative of the law's potential for convicting the conscience of a criminal while he is aware of the unregenerate violence of which the law may partake. He accepts the necessity for the law in a fallen world. At the same time, he presents as a contrast to Porfiry's legal authority a communitarian sense of justice represented by the *meshchanin*, the "stranger from under the ground" (IV, vi, 301) who initially accuses Raskolnikov of murder.¹² The man insists on a face to face encounter: having been present at Raskolnikov's return to the scene of the crime, and prepared to bring him to the police, the *meshchanin* indicts Raskolnikov as a murderer (III, vi, 231). (Убийцу! ... Ты убийцу! PSS 6, 209) As a concrete person rather than an individual cloaked in an institutionally defined role (of examining magistrate), he calls Raskolnikov to responsibility to the community. He addresses Raskolnikov by the familiar "you." He is an ordinary person, one of those whose Raskolnikov's theory disdains. He feels personally affronted by what he presumes to be Raskolnikov's blood guilt, but he changes his mind concerning Raskolnikov's culpability once he has been privy to the second interview between Raskolnikov and Porfiry. Then he apologizes for having convicted Raskolnikov in his heart (« Виноват ... в злобных мыслях. » PSS 6, 274) and he asks forgiveness for "evil thoughts" (IV, vi, 301). "Forgive me for slandering you and for my spite." (« За оговор и за злобу мою простите. » PSS 6, 275) The man corroborates the impression that Porfiry has engaged in a sadistic practice: "And I heard it all, the way he was tormenting you." (IV, vi, 302) (« И

все слышал, все, как он вас истязал. » PSS 6, 275) The man is wrong to believe that the cat and mouse game played by Porfiry exonerates Raskolnikov, but he is right to recognize inquisitorial authority.

The man from the earth represents Dostoevsky's conviction that there is a "ground of truth," to which he refers in a letter to his editor concerning the novel. In the letter to Katkov, he writes that Raskolnikov will ultimately confess because "God's truth, the law of the earth" would take its due."¹³ The "law of the earth" recalls Dostoevsky's association with the *pochvenniki*, or native soil philosophers¹⁴ but it is also generally symbolic of panhuman ideals regarding the connections which sustain the human community. The phrase recalls Sonya's injunction to Raskolnikov to "stand at the crossroads and kiss the earth which you have desecrated ..." (V, iv, 355). The biblical resonance is inescapable as Sonya's (and Dostoevsky's) words recall Cain's question to God "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4: 9) and God's words to Cain following the first murder: "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand." (Genesis 4: 10 - 11) The earth in the biblical passage is the source of fertility, the sanction for family and community ties. In the Biblical passage, as Claus Westermann observes in his Genesis commentary,¹⁵ the ground appears as a being which swallows the blood of the murdered brother and denies the farmer produce. The magical element — which suggests that punishment consists of the consequence of the deed — is mitigated by God's address in which Cain is set apart from the community because of his deed. Raskolnikov, like the primordial biblical murderer, has

chosen a route which has led to isolation and alienation from the community. Before and after the murder he has felt like a man "condemned to death" (I, v, 53; II, vii, 159-160) like Hugo's condemned criminal in Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné (1829). He finds himself living "on a hair's breadth of earth" (II, vi, 135; V, v, 360), an image found in Hugo's Notre Dame du Paris (1831).¹⁶ He has been bowed by the weight of mortality.

It is no accident that he turns to Sonya. She does not speak "on high," as does Porfiry, nor is she the representative of any official instance as he is. She speaks plainly and does not dissimulate. A loving and imperfect human being, she purveys divine forgiveness and mercy to him. Like Raskolnikov, she, too, is pressed by things beyond her control. She has been obliged to face a variety of trials: hunger, poverty, prostitution, the death of her father, the temptation to suicide. She halts the spiral of inter-personal violence by not responding to hostility in kind. One of the "injured and insulted," Sonya does not turn her injury on herself or her loved ones. Indeed, Sonya's description of her family — "we live as one" — affirms her non-intellectual understanding of a fundamental human commonality and responsibility, one for the other. She does not attack Raskolnikov even when he mocks the beliefs which she has cherished in the midst of "an unhappy father, a stepmother crazed by grief, and hungry children, in an atmosphere of hideous shrieks and reproaches." She is even capable of regarding him with "insatiable compassion" - *ненасытимое сострадание* (IV, iv, 268), a striking contrast to Raskolnikov's earlier disclaimer of responsibility, "Let them eat one another alive — what is it to me?" Sonya's "insatiable compassion" has been characterized by psychoanalytic critic Louis

Breger as representative of the overflowing maternal abundance which Raskolnikov desperately seeks and does not find in his relationship with his own mother. As Breger sees it, a longing for loss of self in a blissful merger with an infinite transcendent Other is typical of Dostoevsky's "maternal" religion. However apt Breger's reading may seem at a psychological level, it eliminates the ethical question which Raskolnikov's and Sonya's encounter raises. That is: how far does our responsibility towards another go? Drawing on the work of Levinas, we gain an additional perspective on Sonya's "insatiable compassion." Levinas interprets it as an ethical and phenomenological event which is representative, to him, of a radical asymmetry between God and human and human and human, an imbalance which opens the self to the pain of the other. "It is as though the compassion that goes from Sonya to Raskolnikov were a hunger which the presence of Raskolnikov nourishes beyond any saturation, increasing this hunger to infinity."¹⁷

Sonya models for Raskolnikov a confession of faith as well as an admission of wrong-doing. She insists: "God does everything for me." She regrets having repeatedly driven her step-mother to tears. She finds herself guilty of refusing her father's request to read together less than a week before he died; she recalls having denied her step-mother some lace cuffs, saying: "What use are they to you, Katerina Ivanovna?" (IV, iv, 270) In other words, she recognizes that she has caused others pain, however unwittingly and even that she has on more than one occasion treated her step-mother according to a utilitarian calculus. Unlike Raskolnikov, her knowledge is not limited to the

wrongs which others have done her; she understands also the harm she has done others.

Sonya discloses precisely what both faithful affirmation and penitential admission are and she does this even though he mocks her faith and is inclined to dismiss it to himself as "religious mania" (юродство). When he tells her with "malicious enjoyment" that perhaps the God on whose protection she relies does not exist, she gazes at him without speaking, unable to say a word. She covers her face with her hands and sobs bitterly. The image of the meek Sonya being bullied by Raskolnikov is a clear example of his desire to dominate and his use of his intelligence to do so. His concern about being either a Napoleon or a louse is of a piece with the obsessive fear that he will be crushed by others.

When he suddenly falls to the ground and kisses Sonya's foot, the reader is prepared for a *peripeteia*, but it is a false alarm. He declares: "I prostrated myself not before you, but before all human suffering." (IV, iv, 272) (« Я не тебе поклонился, я всему страданию чековеческому поклонился ... » PSS 6, 246) The gesture does not show that Raskolnikov is repentant. He undertakes suffering to exalt himself. He is not interested in self-renunciation for others. The bow is consistent with Raskolnikov's attempts to blot out his own self-hatred. To Sonya's query, "What must we do?" he insists that the path to follow is one of destruction of the present order in order to acquire power. His words anticipate those of the Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov:

Demolish what must be demolished once and for all, that is all, and take the suffering on ourselves !
What ? Don't you understand ? You will understand afterwards ... Freedom and power, but above all,

power ! Power over all trembling creatures, over the whole ant-heap ! ... (IV, iv, 279)

Сломать что надо. раз навсегда, да и только: и страдание взять на себя ! Что ? Не понимаешь ? После поймешь ... Свободу и власть, а главное власть ! Над всею дрожащею тварью и над всем муравейником ! (PSS 6, 253)

Suffering, from Raskolnikov's perspective, may be taken on for a greater reward: dominance over the "ordinary" men, "the ant-heap."

It is surely ironic that he who excels at dissimulating and manipulating others (his family, his friend Razumikhin) wonders if Sonya's reason is sound. "You say Katerina Ivanovna's mind is deranged; your own mind is deranged," he tells her. (IV, iv, 273). He concludes this after she reveals her faith (which he is loathe to say he shares). He thereby echoes the bias of many of Dostoevsky's educated readership who regard religious faith as naive or superstitious. The narrator remarks: "He clung to this idea. It was a solution that he preferred to any other." Some readers may assume from the dialogue between Sonya and Raskolnikov that faith, for Dostoevsky, is an irrational refuge. Sonya's relationship to her family and to Raskolnikov indicates, instead, that her faith is a non-rational mode of cognition which follows upon a healthy intuitive understanding of the connection between self, other, and Other. "We are as one; we live as one" she has said of her family. "God does everything for me." (248) Hers is a radical conception of the self, developed in the ethical phenomenology of Levinas, which offers an alternative to Raskolnikov's self-hatred. Sonya is renewed by contact with the intimate other and the transcendent Other.

When Raskolnikov learns that Sonya knew Lizaveta, and that Sonya believes Lizaveta will "see God," (« Она Бога узрит »), he decides that both Sonya and Lizaveta are holy fools. (« Тут и сам станешь юродивым ! ») and he observes, "I shall become one myself here ... It's infectious !" (« Заразительно! » PSS 6, 249) Indeed, ultimately, in the epilogue, we learn that Sonya's faith *is* "infectious." At present, however, Raskolnikov clings to his skeptical cynicism, ("a solution that he preferred to any other") even as he asks her to read to him the Biblical passage on the resurrection of Lazarus. (John 11). In spite of Sonya's hopes, Raskolnikov is not converted. But Dostoevsky succeeds in showing us that like Lazarus, who is dead and mourned by his family, Raskolnikov is a man whose self-willed isolation is a source of sorrow for *his* family. Christ restores Lazarus to life and connection with his loved ones four days after his death; will Raskolnikov, who has murdered four days previously, be similarly restored to life by Sonya's mediation of the Biblical Word ? The change seems profoundly unlikely, for he is still guided by his pride and his obsession with the homicidal prerogative of the "great man."

Sonya's recitation of the resurrection of Lazarus culminates in a moment of joy and triumph, but the narrator also attributes to her a passing censure of the Jews which is striking for its hint of anti-Semitism:

In the verse: "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind ... "[John 11:37] she lowered her voice, and the warmth and passion of it expressed the doubt, reproach, and censure of the blind unbelieving Jews, who were so soon, in an instant, to fall to the ground as if struck by lightning, sobbing and believing

... [Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him." John 11:45] And he, he who is also blind and unbelieving, he also will hear in a moment, he also will believe. (IV, iv, 277)

При последнем стихе: «не мог ли сей, отверзший очи слепому ...» – она, понизив голос, горячо и страстно передала сомнение, укор и хулу неверующих слепых иудеев, которые сейчас, через минуту, как громом пораженные, падут, зарыдают и уверуют ... И он, он – тоже ослепленный и неверующий, – и он тоже сейчас услышит, и он тоже уверует ... (PSS 6, 251)

In the passages which follow in John 11, the Jews are characterized as either believing in Jesus or in league with his persecutors. The Gospel of John is often thought by contemporary biblical scholars to have been written later than the synoptic gospels, at a time when Christian and Jews felt their group identities challenged by each other. This antagonism is more marked in John than in the synoptics, but it is representative of traces of the sacrificial language which is to be found in the gospels. Dostoevsky could not have known of the reasons for the antagonism represented in John, and it is disappointing but not surprising that he partook in what is today called "super-sessionism," the idea that the New Testament supersedes and is superior to the Hebrew Bible. It is curious, however, that this censure of "unbelieving Jews" is attributed to Sonya, who is otherwise depicted as one who does not judge others.

The narrator's conclusion to the biblical reading draws attention to the fullness of the moment in which mere clock time and human limitation might yet be transfigured. The narrator declares: "The candle end had long burned low

in the twisted candlestick, dimly lighting the poverty-stricken room and the murderer and the harlot who had come together so strangely to read the eternal book." (IV, iv, 277-78) (Огарок уже давно погас в кривом подсвечнике, тускло освещая в этой нищенской комнате убийцу и блудницу, странно сошедшихся за чтением вечной книги. PSS 6, 251) The weighty dramatic statement is followed by a brief stage-like direction: "Five minutes passed." The hoped - for miraculous turn - around is not accomplished — yet. The poor dimly lit room reminds us of the fact that the murderer has "nowhere else to go" as Marmeladov had once described himself. Raskolnikov sees Sonya as perched above "the abominable stench of the pit of corruption" in which her purity will ultimately be snuffed out; his position is even more perilous. Having no place else to go, one might either try to snuff out feeling entirely or instead, turn to a divine mediator. Sonya, who is likened through the use of the biblical term "harlot" (блудница) to the woman "taken in adultery" (John 8) whom Christ saves from stoning, is the unlikely mediator of Raskolnikov's turn-around.

In Lectures on Russian Literature, Nabokov perceives in the declaration of the narrator cited above "a gust of false eloquence." It is true that the narrator's tone is melodramatic, but Dostoevsky uses melodrama to heighten the means by which a moral universe may be revealed. Nabokov's criticism of the encounter between Sonya and Raskolnikov in Part IV, chapter iv is typical of his disdain for Dostoevsky; he refuses to recognize Dostoevsky's melodramatic moments as artistically viable. His criticism of this particular chapter is couched in the language of an aesthete: he asserts that there is no "rhetorical link between a filthy murderer and this unfortunate girl." The "link"

between Raskolnikov and Sonya is not rhetorical; it is governed by the dynamic counterposing of opposites of which Dostoevsky is so fond. Nabokov curiously refuses to discuss the ethical-religious dimension here. Perceiving in this chapter a failure in verisimilitude, he writes

...We have been shown Raskolnikov's crime in all its sordid detail and we also have been given half a dozen different explanations for his exploit. We have never been shown Sonya in the exercise of her trade. The situation is a glorified cliché.¹⁸

Nabokov requires the description of Sonya's "trade" which might be provided in a naturalistic novel, perhaps something by Zola. But inasmuch as Dostoevsky means to suggest by dramatic presentation and indirect analogy that Sonya is to Raskolnikov as Christ is to Lazarus, a naturalistic method would not serve the purpose. Nor would it necessarily draw our attention to Sonya's understanding of herself in relation to others. To those readers who find Sonya sympathetic but too unbelievably pure considering her trade and her surroundings, one can only answer that her faith prevents her from turning her hurt on herself; her faith sustains her in spite of her suffering, and it is her suffering that has brought her to a precipice — choose to live by the law of love or perish.

Sonya's refusal to assign blame (in contrast to requiring Raskolnikov to accept responsibility for his actions) is an indication of her fidelity to the law of love. It is particularly striking in the second dialogue with Raskolnikov, where she would appear to have good reason for wishing Luzhin ill, having just been humiliated him. Raskolnikov asks: Who should die, Katerina Ivanovna or

Luzhin ? Sonya challenges Raskolnikov's deluded clinging to death-giving reason (рассудка) which demands revenge. She reminds Raskolnikov that humans have no right to judge who is to live and who to die (V, iv, 344). She asks him not to speak in his abstractions. ("Say straight out what you mean." V, iv, 344) Raskolnikov's manner radically softens and he admits: "What I said about Luzhin and about God was for myself ... I was asking for your forgiveness, Sonya ..." On this as on other occasions he has found that living for himself, according to "reason" and "calculation" is not what he wants at all. There are moments, like this one, when it is evident that he has a moral conscience even though he has not always followed its dictates and he is able to experience the positive feelings that he has deliberately repressed: tenderness, love, remorse. While usually he forgets the fact that he has murdered Lizaveta, he feels obliged to confess this fact to Sonya, who has become united in his imagination with Lizaveta, both "poor, meek creatures ... They give up everything ... they look at you meekly and gently ..." (III, vi, 234) (Бедные, кроткие, с глазами кроткими ... Они всё отдают ... глядят кротко и тихо ... PSS 6, 212)

One of the things which Sonya has given up is the right to reprisal, as is revealed in her response to Raskolnikov's confession: "What have you done, what have you done to yourself?" (V, iv, 347) (« Что вы, что вы это над собой сделали ? » PSS 6, 316) She does not condemn him. She refrains from shaming Raskolnikov for the murders, especially the murder of her friend. When she further declares: "There is no one, no one unhappier than you in the whole world," and breaks into sobbing, her capacity to feel the pain that he has

kept at bay overwhelms him. ("Long unfamiliar feelings poured like a flood into his heart . . . He did not withstand them; two tears sprang into his eyes . . .") He feels some of the anguish which he has been so hard pressed to avoid. He briefly recognizes his desperate vulnerability and desire for acceptance — only to muffle it again. ("Then you will not forsake me, Sonya ?") She acts as a container for his toxic self-loathing which he has kept from coming to the fore.

Sonya, one of the "meek ones" who gives up everything, yields herself to God, expectant of protection. Here we see that sacrifice is not always coterminous with violence as Girard has it in Violence and the Sacred. Sacrifice may be understood as free offering with no expectation of return. Sonya's surrender to God, as Lotman describes religious surrender, is "an unconditional act of self-giving rather than an act of exchange." Between "action and the response there is no necessary connection [and] absence of reward cannot be grounds for a break in the relationship."¹⁹ Sonya surrenders to the divine voluntarily, not under compulsion, and she understands that her relationship with God is not one of equivalence nor is it in any way conditional. Her relationship to the Other takes the form of an *unconditional gift*. The dynamics of gift also shape her relationship to Raskolnikov.

But Raskolnikov has become accustomed to thinking in terms of a different economy, and like the underground man or the pawnbroker in "The Meek One," and he briefly grows suspicious of Sonya's gift of love. When she tries to determine what motivated him, he fears that she is looking for his repentance, which he interprets as her desire to impose her authority on him. ("What could you find in such a meaningless triumph over me ?" V, iv, 349)

The very act of confession brings out into the open his profound ambivalence towards the other. He alternates between love and hatred towards Sonya. He is not instantly transformed by her mediation of divine acceptance but his elaborate self-defense structure sustains an irreparable fissure.

Sonya offers him acceptance that he cannot get from anyone else, not even his doting mother who elevates her son excessively, as is evident in her readiness to sacrifice her daughter's happiness (by assenting to a loveless marriage with Luzhin) to ensure her son's professional future. While her tendency to idealize her son is not as greatly developed in the novel as in the writer's notebooks, there are hints of it in Pulkheria Alexandrovna's letter in which she declares to him that he is "everything to us, our only hope and trust." (I, iii, 25).

Psychoanalytic critics from R. D. Laing to Louis Breger have focused on that letter, arguing that Pulkheria Alexandrovna places her son in a double bind by giving him a profoundly ambivalent message. Laing argues that she suggests that, as a Christian, Raskolnikov must gratefully accept his sister's loveless marriage undertaken for his sake, but that if he welcomes the wealth and improved social status that will accrue to himself because of the marriage, then he is spiteful, and no Christian. Laing implies that a fundamental splitting has taken place in Raskolnikov. This emerges in the polarized terms which often shape a child's understanding. There is an "all bad" self who murders the pawnbroker and her sister and there is an "all good" self who must conceal the rage intended for mother but directed at mother substitutes (the pawnbroker and Lizaveta), for fear that the mother will utterly reject him were he to express

his rage directly to her. Laing describes an additional fear on the part of Raskolnikov: the fear that mother and sister are capable of determining his future: "Through their [the mother's and sister's] actions, his future is decided, unless he does something terrible, and the future is impossible."²⁰ Both Laing and Breger see Raskolnikov as governed by a rage towards his mother for the double bind in which she places him and both argue that this rage is directed against Alyona Ivanovna and Lizaveta. Insisting on Raskolnikov's ambivalence towards his mother can become reductionistic. The psychological dynamics should not obscure or elide the ideological moment: Raskolnikov's disturbed psyche finds a satisfying outlet in radical theory, masculinist fantasy, egotistic individualism and the "extraordinary man" idea.

Dostoevsky shows that Raskolnikov's Pulkheria Alexandrovna, for her part, is frustrated by her son's seeming indifference to her. (Girard recently has defined narcissism as the frustrating experience we undergo as a result of the indifference of other people.)²¹ Raskolnikov's indifference arouses in her an anxiety which culminates in an unreasonable condemnation of her son's one time fiancée and a barely concealed jealousy of Sonya. Pulkheria Alexandrovna's confession of her shock and displeasure at Rodya's betrothal to the sickly daughter of Mrs. Zarnitsyna conveys a curious maternal reluctance to share her son with another woman:

... do you know [she tells Razumikhin] how surprised and stunned I was indeed, it almost killed me, when he took it in his head that he was going to marry that ... what's her name ? the daughter of this Mrs. Zarnitsyna, his landlady. Would you not

think ... that my tears, my entreaties, my illness, my possible death from grief, our poverty would have stopped him ? (III, ii, 183)

... меня изумил, потряс и чуть совсем не уморил, когда вздумал было жениться на этой, как её, - на дочери этой Зарнищной, хозяйки его ? Вы думаете ... его бы остановили тогда мои слезы, мои просьбы, моя болезнь, моя смерть, может быть, с тоски, наша нищета ? (PSS 6, 166)

Having suffered from poverty, she clings to the desire to retain respectability and improve her family's lot through a child's "successful" marriage. Unhappy at Rodya's alliance with Sonya, with whom he is unlikely to enjoy respectability or a positive reversal of financial fortune, when her son fails to visit her, and she finds his room empty, she says: "If he is well enough to go out, that means he has forgotten his mother ... I see that he has time for *his own girl*." (VI, i, 373) Her unrealistic expectations of her son are most vividly expressed at their last meeting when Raskolnikov finds his mother has been reading his article. She tells him: "But Rodya, you will be one of the first, if not the very first among our men of learning." (VI, vii, 434) Raskolnikov's mother obsessively clings to the hope that her son will distinguish himself and thereby (we may assume) be a credit to his mamma. Towards the end of the novel, it is suggested that she has learned of her son's culpability in the murders in spite of her daughter's attempt to shield her from this knowledge, and sorrow dislodges her reason.

Sonya, by contrast to Pulkheria Alexandrovna, does not encourage Raskolnikov's grandiosity. She recognizes in him a fundamental splitting. She has seen him acting generously but she has also "heard the voice of the

murderer." As we learn through the partially omniscient narrator, Sonya perceives that Raskolnikov's "gloomy creed, his "faith and his law" lies in this: "whoever is most audacious is most certainly right" (V, iv, 353). He is enclosed in a life of mimetic rivalry which not only leads to actual violence but also justification for violence. She concludes that he has been given over to the devil. Her simple conclusion makes eminent sense. She conceives of evil in personal terms: the devil, for her, is not merely a philosophical, intrapsychic or interpsychic metaphor. A gloss from Girard on Satan is useful here: Girard observes that Satan is the one who presents himself as a model for our desires, "and it is certainly easier to imitate Satan than Christ, for [Satan] counsels us to abandon ourselves to all our inclinations in defiance of morality and its prohibitions."²² Although Raskolnikov's first response to Sonya's remark suggests that he ridicules her supposedly "primitive" and "superstitious" conception, he subsequently admits indeed that "it was the devil dragging me along." Shortly thereafter, however, he says that it is the devil who killed "the old hag," not he. (Again, he has forgotten Lizaveta.) Sonya does not contest his statement but neither does she go along with his disclaimer of personal responsibility. Instead, she calls on him to acknowledge his real guilt. She tells him: "Accept suffering and achieve atonement through it — that is what you must do." V, iv, 355. (« Страдание принять и искупить себя им, вот что надо. » PSS 6, 323) Sonya requires Raskolnikov's repentance even though she understands that it will lead to a new kind of suffering for him.

Dostoevsky shows us that nothing motivates to change like profound suffering. He repeatedly suggests in his novels that a certain type of suffering or

a certain attitude towards suffering presents a distinctive opportunity to the individual to grow in faith, moral conscience and spiritual perfection. He draws on a Russian Orthodox conception of the sanctification of suffering.²³ While Porfiry calls attention to this idea, he is nevertheless not a reliable exemplar of it. Porfiry's words about the "great idea" in suffering fall flat when considered in the light of his deliberate prolongation of Raskolnikov's anguish. It is in his interest not to feel the suspect's pain but to exploit it. Sonya, by contrast, suffers without lacerating herself or attacking another.

Dostoevsky shows us that when one experiences profound suffering, there are two typical resolutions: (1) self or other scapegoating or (2) an attempt to reconciliation with the other and a retreat from condemnatory judgment or exclusionary violence. Self-interested suffering draws on feelings of resentment, the re-experiencing of a wound. Dostoevsky's example of the self-interested suffering of Katerina Marmeladova reveals this dynamic and has much in common with Raskolnikov's martyr-like passion for suffering (мучительство). Katerina Ivanovna's overarching pride exacerbates her suffering. She insists on revisiting her former prestige (an officer's daughter, she danced at the governor's ball) and she punishes the husband who saved her from destitution by reminding him of her former social superiority. At the same time she insistently searches for justice, expecting that "there ought to be justice in everything" and unaware, as Sonya observes, that "one can't expect justice from people." (IV, iv, 268) Raskolnikov, like Katerina Ivanovna, also desires justice: he clings to a legalistic framework of reward and punishment. Such a framework leaves no room for mercy or compassion. Dostoevsky implies that

there is a misfit between humans' demand for justice and God's own requirements.

Through Sonya, Raskolnikov is re-acquainted with the gospel of love which can lead him away from self laceration or violence towards others. A new and authentic sense of self is slow in taking place in the body of the novel, although it is rapidly but explicitly brought about in the epilogue. The conversion which leads towards a new configuration of self and other is nevertheless implicit in the moments when Raskolnikov is moved to act altruistically and on the occasions when he permits himself to feel remorse, tenderness and sympathy. His turn-around is a matter of responding to Sonya, not as an abstraction but as a real human being whose thin face, irregular features, and clear bright eyes convey a simple hearted goodness (III, iv, 201).

The effect she has on him is something like that of an icon as it is understood in the Russian Orthodox church. The icon directs the faithful gaze to a transcendence beyond itself. Raskolnikov looks at Sonya or avoids her gaze in ways that suggest approach or avoidance of such transcendence. When Sonya leaves his apartment after her unexpected first visit, he wishes to gaze into her eyes but "seems somehow unable to." (III, iv, 205) Later, when he enters her room for the first time, he "tries not to look at her" (IV, iv, 266), and when he returns to visit her, gripped by the overwhelming feeling that he must confess to her, he looks her in the eyes. He eventually communicates about the identity of Lizaveta's murderer in a gaze (V, iv). Looking in the face of the other is an opportunity to see the divine Other refracted. Raskolnikov stands before Sonya defaced by his deed (*bezobrazie*, disfigured), yet she assures him that she can

still see his face, still see not the category ("a murderer") but a suffering human being, made in the image of God.

It is ultimately Sonya's influence which brings him to the police station to confess. There he is reduced initially to uttering incoherent sounds, like Augustine in his moment of conversion. Not only must the former divided self pass away, the very idea of utter self-sufficiency must be exposed as illusion. Raskolnikov is not yet changed, but the new configuration yet to come is implicit in this moment which anticipates Raskolnikov's non-verbal turn around in the epilogue.

In the epilogue Raskolnikov's dream of the trichinae, a dream which coincides with Easter, prepares us for this turn around, for the dream implies his own recognition of his violence. In the dream, he has fallen "victim to a terrible, unknown pestilence," caused by trichinae which cause those infected to become "like men possessed and out of their minds" while persuaded of their own wisdom and "unshakeable grasp of the truth." The dream of the trichinae betokens a world caught up in the mimetic rivalry which has guided Raskolnikov. Virtue has been discarded; those possessed "could not agree what was evil and what was good." The plague of violence reigns unchecked; soldiers of great armies fall on each other: "they killed and ate one another." (Epilogue, II, 461) All imitate each others' hostile desires; the world is given over to mimetic contagion (which Girard would denote as *mimétisme*).²⁴

The apocalyptic vision of a world governed by human violence contrasts with the hope for a new life, embodied by Sonya. Raskolnikov's earlier false *peripeteia* makes way for a true one. "How it happened, he himself did not know,

but suddenly he seemed to be seized and cast at her feet ... and now at last the moment had come ...” As in the police station, Raskolnikov is rendered without words. The moment of conversion has arrived. In the story hinted at — beyond the end of the novel — Raskolnikov will be governed by a *telos* which embraces the formerly discarded virtue of compassion and mercy. The force of law, as embodied by Porfiry, gives way to gospel, as represented by Sonya.

This key conflict between a sense of law undergirded by force and a gospel of love which exposes violence is further developed in the upcoming chapter.

Notes

¹ ... new, beneficial ideas have been propagated, and new and wholesome writings disseminated in place of the old fantastic and romantic ones; literature has been given a tinge of maturity, many harmful prejudices have been rooted out and held up to ridicule ... In a word, we have irrevocably severed ourselves from the past, and that in my opinion, is an achievement, sir ... (Crime and Punishment, trans. Coulson, II, v, 126)

... распространены новые, полезные мысли, распространены некоторые новые, полезные сочинения, вместо прежних мечтательных и романтических; литература принимает более зрелый оттенок; искоренено и осмеяно много вредных предубеждений ... Одним словом, мы безвозвратно отрезали себя от прошедшего, а это, по-моему, уж дело-с ... (PSS 6, 115)

If, for example, in earlier times it was said to me: "Love your neighbor" and I acted on it, what was the result?" ... The result was that I divided my cloak with my neighbor and we were both left half-naked, for according to the Russian proverb: "If you run after two hares, you will catch neither." Science, however, says: love yourself first of all, for everything in the world is based on personal interest. If you love yourself alone, you will conduct your affairs properly and your cloak will remain whole. (II, v, 126 - 127)

Если мне, например, до сих пор говорили: "возлюби" и я возлюблял, то что из того выходило? ... выходило то, что я рвал кафтан пополам, делился с ближним, и оба мы оставались наполовину голы, по русской пословице: "Тюйдешь за несколькими зайцами разом, и ни одного не достигнешь." Наука же говорит: возлюби, прежде всех, одного себя, ибо все на свете на личном интересе основано. Возлюбишь одного себя, то и дела свои обделаешь как следует и кафтан твой останется цел. (PSS 6, 116)

² Yuri Lotman, "The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture," trans. N. F. C. Owen, in The Semiotics of Russian Culture, ed. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Michigan Slavic Contributions, 1984) 5. Trudy po russkoj i slavjanskoj filologii, XXVIII, Tartu, 1977.

³ Edward Wasiolek, Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M. I. T. Press, 1964) 63.

⁴ Arnold Modell discusses a functional understanding of narcissism with reference to Kernberg's 1970 study. Arnold H. Modell, "A Narcissistic Defence Against Affects and the Illusion of Self-Sufficiency," Essential Papers on Narcissism Andrew P. Morrison, M.D., ed (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 197 - 209.

⁵ A nephew of Napoleon I, Louis Napoleon (later Napoleon III) was elected President of the French second republic in December 1848 and he became emperor of the French in 1852.

⁶ Like Dostoevsky, Tolstoy saw Napoleon as a figure of moral hypocrisy and tyranny. In War and Peace, Tolstoy compares Napoleon to a carved figure on the bow of a ship, which only the misguided think actually powers the vessel. At another point in the novel, he compares Napoleon to a child who, grasping the ribbons and braid that decorate the inside of a carriage, thinks he is driving it. Tolstoy uses Napoleon to argue that those who are typically regarded great men are not in fact the movers of history.

⁷ "Dostoevsky's critique of man's freedom suggests the woman violating form to which socially constructed masculinity is sometimes addicted." Nina Pelikan Straus, Dostoevsky and the Woman Question: Readings at the End of the Century (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 33.

⁸ D. I. Pisarev. Sochineniia (Moscow, 1955-56), vol. 2, 11.

⁹ *Sobornost'* is a concept popularized in the writing of the Slavophile Aleksei Khomyakov (1804-1860). W. J. Leatherbarrow's definition of it is a "sense of communality and unity freely acknowledged rather than externally imposed." See W. J. Leatherbarrow and D. C. Offord, eds. A Documentary History of Russian Thought: from the Enlightenment to Marxism (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, 1987) 65.

¹⁰ In the first entries to A Writer's Diary, 1873.

¹¹ James Scanlan has summarized such a moral hierarchy in Dostoevsky's thinking in general in the following manner: the morally highest state is that of a persons who typically if imperfectly follows the law of love. The next highest state is that of individuals whose conscience is not strong enough to prevent them from acting contrary to the law of love, although they recognize when they have done wrong and repent it. The next level is that of the person who knows that it is wrong to violate the law of love but does so and feels no remorse for doing so. In the last level, both remorse and a sense of guilt are absent and there is no acknowledgment that the law of love is morally binding. James P. Scanlan, Dostoevsky the Thinker (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002) 92 - 93. As I see it, Svidrigailov occupies the last step, Sonya the first, while Raskolnikov is one step above Svidrigailov, and one below Porfiry.

¹² I am indebted to Leslie Johnson's discussion of communitarian justice as represented by the working man in "Raskolnikov's Suspense: The Case Against Porfiry," The Experience of

Time in Crime and Punishment (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1984), 76 - 95. Like Johnson, I take exception to the popular critical notion that Porfiry guides Raskolnikov to spiritual regeneration. My analysis of the law and the adequacy of Porfiry's representation of it differs from Johnson's in that I emphasize the model-obstacle relationship and the law as an institution of violence.

¹³ Dostoevsky, PSS 7: 310 - 11.

¹⁴ A group of intellectuals of the 1860's gathered around the Dostoevsky brothers' journals, *Vremya* (1861 - 1863) and *Epokha* (1864- 65). The *pochvenniki* were close to the Slavophiles in that they claimed the educated classes had lost contact with the soil and they sought a synthesis between Western and Russian orthodox culture. Unlike the Slavophiles, they did not advocate a return to pre-Petrine Russia. They combatted the liberals and radicals, charging that both were assuming artificial, theoretical positions.

¹⁵ Claus Westermann, Genesis 1 - 11: A Commentary, trans. John J. Scullion, S.J., (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984) 305ff.

¹⁶ Hugo's Notre Dame du Paris was first published in Russian in Dostoevsky's short-lived magazine Vremya (Time) in 1862.

¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," trans. Alphonso Lingis, in Deconstruction in Context, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 351. ("La trace de l'autre," 1963, reprinted in En decouvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger.)

¹⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, Lectures in Russian Literature, Ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt brace Jovanovich, 1981) 110.

¹⁹ Yuri Lotman, "'Agreement' and 'Self-Giving' as Archetypal Models of Culture," trans. N. F.C. Owen, The Semiotics of Russian Culture, 125. Yuri Lotman, Testo e Contesto, Bari, 1980.

²⁰ R. D. Laing, Self and Others (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969, second edition) 153.

²¹ René Girard, I See Satan Fall Like Lightning trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2001) 390. (Je vois Satan tomber comme l'éclair Paris: Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1999).

²² "Satan does not warn us of the trap that awaits us." Girard, I See Satan Fall Like Lightning, 32.

²³ Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind (New York: Harper, 1960), 341.

²⁴ Girard, I See Satan Fall Like Lightning, 32.

Chapter Five:

Virtue as "Foolish" in Don Quixote, Pickwick Papers and The Idiot

Don Quixote (1605, 1615), Pickwick Papers (1836) and The Idiot (1868) all feature heroes whose virtue in the sense of moral disposition puts them at odds with their societies which judge such virtue to be without efficacy, power or practical significance. (Indeed, the heroes are often seen by their novelistic peers as fools.) In English, Russian, and the romance languages, "virtue" primarily conveys a moral sense (that is, the conformity of actions to approved standards or ends) and secondly, a non-moral sense concerned with the power of an action or actor to act effectively or achieve a desired result.¹ The opposition between virtue as moral disposition and virtue as efficacious action often provides an occasion for humor as well as cultural critique. The gratuitous charitable acts undertaken by the heroes often serve to interrogate the legitimacy and efficacy of legal, social and ecclesiastic authority.

Dickens and Dostoevsky built on the anachronistic virtue of an impoverished sixteenth century hidalgo who fancies himself a knight errant. One of the first Russian writers to observe in Quixote a resemblance to Christ and in Pickwick a resemblance to Quixote,² Dostoevsky justly admired both Cervantes and Dickens for their humor. Seeking models for "the beautiful man," who, for Dostoevsky embodied an ethical ideal and offered an intimation of divine harmony, he observed in a letter to his niece :

The beautiful is an ideal, but the nature of the ideal — whether it be ours or that of civilized Europe — is far from having been worked out. There exists in the world

only one positively beautiful person — Christ, so that the appearance of this immeasurably infinitely beautiful person is, of course, an infinite miracle. The whole Gospel of Saint John was conceived in this spirit; he finds the whole miracle in the one Incarnation, in the one appearance of the beautiful ... Of the beautiful characters in Christian literature, the most fully achieved is Don Quixote; but he is beautiful simply because he is also comic. Dickens' Pickwick (an infinitely weaker conception, but nevertheless immense) is also comic, and only for that reason convinces us ...

Прекрасное есть идеал, а идеал — ни наш, ни цивилизованной Европы — еще далеко не выработался. На свете есть одно только положительно прекрасное лицо — Христос, так что явление этого безмерно, бесконечно прекрасного лица уж конечно есть бесконечное чудо (Все Евангелие Иоанна в этом смысле; он все чудо находит в одном воплощении, в одном появлении прекрасного) ... Упомяну только, что из прекрасных лиц в литературе христианской стоит всего закончилось Дон-Кихот. Но он прекрасен единственно потому, что в то же время и смешон. Пиквик Дикенса (бесконечно слабейшая мысль чем Дон-Кихот; но все-таки огромная) тоже смешон и тем только и берет ...³

Except for the note on humor, Dostoevsky does not comment on any specific artistic technique which might render a "perfectly beautiful man" — and the plot in which he is embroiled — compelling or believable. Like Cervantes and Dickens, however, he will employ a narrator who is often removed from the action of the protagonist. Cervantes creates such a distance by inventing the fiction of a "first author," (presumably himself) a "second author" (Cid Hamete) and a bilingual young Arab who translates Cid Hamete's text from Arabic to Castilian. In Pickwick Papers, Dickens makes use of a

narrator who maintains an ironic distance from the facetious doings of the protagonist for much of the novel. Dostoevsky's narrator in The Idiot is a chronicler who himself grows increasingly puzzled by the actions of the protagonist, particularly in Parts III and IV of the novel. Such removed narrative positions ultimately serve to reveal the foolishness of the reader's illusion of distance and superiority from the "foolish" protagonist. Thinking that we are not "fools" to be so readily deceived as is Don Quixote, or Pickwick or Myshkin, we fall into a trap cleverly planned by the writer, and ultimately realize that we can not afford to be so detached. The reader is by no means immune to self-deception.

The paradoxical nature of foolery and the fool in the Bible is clearly a topos which attracts Cervantes, Dickens and Dostoevsky. 'Holy foolery' has its basis in the injunction of the apostle Paul to become "fools for Christ's sake, for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God and the foolishness of God is wiser than men." (I. Corinthians 4:10, 3:19, 1:25). Paul instructs those who consider themselves wise to turn to divine wisdom which appears to be foolishness in the eyes of the worldly-wise. In the biblical tradition, cleverness in mundane things and an abundance of empirical knowledge are one thing, but wisdom is another. Paul says that one who chooses a life of folly for the sake of Christ does so as an act of love. To follow Christ — to imitate Christ — means (I Corinthians 4: 12) "when reviled, we bless, when persecuted, we endure, when slandered, we conciliate." To act in this fashion may result in incurring others' distrust, hatred and even murderous attention for such imitation rejects a hierarchy of dominance which is underscored and enforced by violence.

Christian "foolishness" draws on the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible in which the prophet appears as apocalyptic messenger, outsider and mediator between God and God's people. Yet "foolishness" is by no means unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition: it is evident in the figure of the Buddhist adept whose trials are celebrated and mocked in Zen koans; the figure of the holy fool is played, with a different variation, in the mystic discourse of the Sufi.

For Cervantes, the biblical relationship of wisdom and folly is mediated through Erasmus; for Dickens, through Shakespeare,⁴ and for Dostoevsky, through Pushkin and the Russian Christian hagiographic tradition. Dostoevsky was well aware of Pushkin's revision of the fool figure in Boris Godunov (1825, published 1831), where Nikolka the fool is the single truth-teller in a landscape of royal intrigue. (Taunted by boys, he tells the tsar, whose murderous secret had been unspoken: "Have these children killed as you had the little tsarevich killed.")

In the Russian Christian context, the figure of the fool acquired a different import than in the west as Ewa Butler's study documents (Understanding Russia: The Holy Fool in Russian Culture, 1987). Combining Christian and pagan elements, holy fools (*iurodovii*) sometimes engaged in extravagant behavior, went naked, dressed in rags or carried iron on their bodies in the form of iron or copper rings. In the Russian tradition, holy foolery was longer a more visible and vigorous phenomenon in Russia than in Western Europe, perhaps because a Cartesian respect for reason which accompanied the European Age of Enlightenment was a long-resisted foreign import in Russia. With the establishment of the first insane asylum in Russia (circa 1787), the

European taxonomy of mental illness was also introduced. Holy foolery was subsequently brought under the normalizing prescriptions of law and institution. However, the European formulations about mental illness were long in taking hold, and were not sufficiently strong to eradicate a reverence among peasants as well as the intelligentsia for the *iurodovii*, the holy fool which took a variety of literary forms in the nineteenth and twentieth century Russian novel.

Foolishness is a richly ambivalent concept, for it suggests transcendent wisdom as well as ignorance, gullibility, victimization or imposture or self-deception. Fools may be madmen or tricksters or rogues or they may enact a pure and unwavering relation to eternal things. Myshkin is most clearly a stylized Russian holy fool in the last sense.

Cervantes, Dickens and Dostoevsky share an understanding of the "foolish" virtue of charity (*caritas*, *agape*) and the difficulties of putting it in practice. All three evince an awareness in their novels that justice by itself is incomplete; it cannot bestow grace. The foolish virtue of the quixotic hero is demonstrated most clearly in a gratuitous charitable act. Such acts become charged with meaning according to changing conceptions of justice, which in turn, illuminate novelistic attitudes towards violence enacted by individuals as well as authoritative institutions.

In the Quixote, a gratuitous charitable act is dramatically forefronted in the episode of the galley slaves in Part I, chapter XXII. Quixote requires Sancho's translation of the significance of the sight of the ragged and sweaty chained men. This is an ironic turn of events as Quixote has often insisted on mediating his reality to Sancho. Sancho tells Quixote: "That's a chain gang,

people compelled by the king, heading for the galleys." (*"Ésta es cadena de galeotes, gente forzada del rey, que va a las galeras."*)⁵ In Sancho's description of the chain gang, Quixote recognizes an abstract issue at stake. Indeed, it is partly due to Sancho's mediation of the spectacle of the galley slaves that Quixote perceives in it a global meaning with a particular significance for him.

"Slaves?" asks Don Quixote. "Is it possible that the king actually enslaves anyone? (*"¿Cómo gente forzada? ... ¿Es posible que el rey haga fuerza a ninguna gente?"*) The word play in the two conceptions *gente forzada* (people who are compelled) and *hacer fuerza* (to do an injury or to do violence) alerts the reader to the issue of compulsion. Sancho replies: "That's not what I said ... except that these are condemned criminals going to serve the king in his galleys, whether they like it or not." Committed to the use of force in the service of the oppressed, Quixote observes about the galley slaves: "Then it is my obligation as a knight errant to intervene. I have no choice but to undo compulsion and give aid and assistance to all sufferers." (*"Pues desa manera aquí encaja la ejecución de mi oficio: desfacer fuerzas y socorrer y acudir a los miserables."*)

The galley slave episode is one of the many occasions when Quixote's ingenious disposition brings him into conflict with the norms of society, occasionally rendering him a public menace. Bringing comfort to the afflicted is no doubt laudable, unless it means unleashing a host of potentially predatory criminals on the unsuspecting inhabitants of the Sierra Morena. The reader knows that Quixote's administration of justice very often backfires, as was

evident in one of Quixote's earliest sallies in which Quixote intervened for the shepherd Andres (Part I, chapter iv).

While Sancho presents the scene of the galley slaves as familiar, acceptable, and understandable, given the state's need to deal with crime, Quixote radically reframes the scene, thereby indirectly interrogating the state's use of force, its legitimacy and efficaciousness. Quixote sees an opposition between voluntary cooperation and externally imposed constraint, but Sancho avers that "Justice - which means the King "only punishes criminals for crimes, rather than compelling or injuring people." Cervantes' complex irony surfaces here. Cervantes shows in the episode of the galley slaves and in the expulsion of the moors (as elsewhere in the text) that compulsion and injury *do* take place in the name of the king, although Cervantes takes care to protect his text (and himself) from the censors by having Sancho assert that the king cannot be said to compel or injure anyone. Apparently disregarding Sancho's warning, Quixote insists on a higher justice which knights errant alone might deliver. Such justice, the reader must infer, is not synonymous with retribution.

In his interviews with the prisoners, Quixote's relative innocence concerning the coercive power of authority is disclosed in his unfamiliarity with prison jargon. He does not understand the guards' mocking reference to the prisoner who "sang." "Sunk in silence and misery," the prisoner has confessed under torture to the crime of animal rustling. Having offered evidence against himself under torture, he no longer has anything to say. His fellow prisoners mock him for his "singing," his supposed display of "cowardice," as does the guard who tells the silent one's story. Quixote concurs with the guard in

blaming the criminal for failing to hold his tongue. In this first encounter, Quixote gives the censor no cause for alarm for he appears to be fully on the side of punitive "justice," which is to say, the king.

In the subsequent interviews, Quixote questions each prisoner concerning the cause of his misfortune. Each responds with the subtle verbal evasions of the *pícaro*. Quixote understands that they are convicted criminals and yet it is not certain whether he recognizes the prisoners' self-descriptions as cunning impostures. The contrast between Quixote's gentlemanly "high" style of speaking and the *pícaro's* euphemistic circumlocutions makes for a great deal of humor as does the face to face encounter between the chivalric and the picaresque which climaxes in the meeting between the knight who authors himself, and the *pícaro*, Gines de Pasamonte, who has written *his* own history.

The prisoners often refer to their actions with strong sexual innuendoes. The first prisoner who speaks declares that love (*por enamorado*) has brought him to his present condition of servitude. (The object of his affections was a basket of laundry.) Quixote observes that if it is love that has put him there, then he too, who is in love (*enamorado*), would already be rowing in the galleys himself. The fifth prisoner explains his position as the result of having "fooled around (*me burlé*) too much with a couple of my cousins, plus two other girls (*hermanas*) who weren't my sisters" (*hermanas*, i.e. nuns). Robert ter Horst detects in these descriptions a rhetoric that opposes compulsion (*por fuerza*) to the free expression of desire (*de mi voluntad*).⁶ Yet the text regularly demonstrates that choices that are "freely chosen" are nevertheless guided by some prior model. Quixote's desire is mediated by Amadis (and the novels of

chivalry), so too, the story of Marcela and Grisostomo illustrates the mediation of pastoral poetry in the pursuit of *eros* (in the case of Grisostomo) or its renunciation (in the case of Marcela). Similarly, the story of Cardenio, Fernando and Dorotea and the interpolated story of the curious impertinent also illustrate the mediated nature of desire. The *caritas* of the self-made Christian knight is mediated as is the *eros* and the acquisitiveness of the *picaro*.

As Quixote listens to the accounts of the galley slaves, the *hidalgo* experiences compassion and pity even though none of the prisoners deny that they have committed crimes. Moved by fellow feeling, Quixote observes that humans are created by God to be free and it is not right that honorable men should be the instruments of punishment inflicted on others. Thus he shifts the focus from the prisoners' guilt to their compulsion by their captors. As individuals, Quixote observes, the prisoner cannot desire such external compulsion. Moreover, Quixote declares that not every prisoner is necessarily guilty in proportion to his punishment. Thus he tells the prisoners:

From all that you have told me, dearest brothers, I have clearly deduced that though you have been punished for your faults, the penalties you are going to suffer are not much to your taste and you are going to them with poor appetite and much against your will; it could be that the lack of spirit that one possessed under torture, the lack of money in another, the lack of favor, or finally, crooked thinking on the part of the judge, has been the cause of your ruin and of failing to receive the justice due to you. (132)

De todo cuanto me habéis dicho, hermanos carísimos, he sacado en limpio que, aunque os han castigado por vuestras culpas, las penas que vais a padecer no os dan mucho gusto, y que vais a ellas muy de mala gana y contra vuestra voluntad; y que podría ser que el poco ánimo que aquél tuvo en el tormento, la falta de dineros éste, el poco favor del otro, y finalmente, el torcido juicio del juez, hubiese sido causa de vuestra perdición, y de no haber salido con la justicia que de vuestra parte teníades. (273)

Assuming that the guards will respond to his courtesy, he pleads with them to release the prisoners; the guards mockingly refuse, arousing the hero's anger. The hidalgo's choleric temperament asserts itself in an attack on the guards and in the subsequent melee, the prisoners break their chains, and join the attack on the guards, who flee. Once the prisoners are free, Quixote addresses them as their liberator and tells them to show their gratitude by taking themselves to Dulcinea. The prisoners mock their mad benefactor, stoning him and Sancho, stealing their clothes, and leaving them half naked. The prisoners prove to be unworthy of Quixote's beneficence. Quixote seems to recognize that he has acted in violation of social and legal norms, for he is subsequently persuaded by Sancho to flee from the avenging authority of the Holy Brotherhood. Quixote's later encounter in Part II, chapter LX, with the Catalan brigand Roque Guinart provides one of the text's many curious mirror images of Quixote. Roque admits to being led to a life of murder and thievery by a thirst for vengeance, even though he believes himself to be by nature benevolent and kind-hearted. A distraught woman, Claudia, suddenly appears, pleading for Roque's assistance. She has shot her lover, Don Vicente, who, she

believed, was unfaithful. Roque rides with her to find the man. It turns out that Claudia's suspicions of Vicente's infidelity were unfounded. Her lover dies of the wounds she has inflicted. The story illustrates that the motive "to right offenses" (*vengar agravios*) may end, non-productively, in a loss for all.

But to return to the episode of the galley slaves, Quixote engages in what appears to be a gratuitous act of mercy and compassion by bringing about the release of the galley slaves. If we see Quixote acting as choleric will, according to the medical and psychological standards of Cervantes' time,⁷ then his action can readily be dismissed as "simply" mad. But to read him in this way is to disallow the peculiarly literary fashion that his madness has taken. If we see Quixote as acting out of Christian *caritas* to relieve the suffering of the afflicted, then his action acquires a different ethical resonance. It becomes a gratuitous act of compassion, bestowed not by a madman but by a person of discernment without regard to the recipients' merits. The Christian is called to act according to the law of Christian love even if this might violate established social order. Even without meaning to pit himself against the authority of the king, Quixote does so. However, he is guided by the delusion that he thereby brings honor to himself and tribute to Dulcinea, which is foolish to anyone who realizes that Dulcinea is a fiction, a poetic cliché that Quixote has constructed as a requisite property of a knight errant.⁸ Given Quixote's delusion as to his own merits, to claim that Quixote is acting as a person of great discernment is therefore also questionable. Nevertheless, as in many other cases in the novel where Quixote acts in a way that shows he is strikingly deluded about his own worth, his speech reflects some sound thinking. It is sensible to observe, as he

does, that a penal system may act disproportionately, thereby failing to deliver a fair judgment. Indeed, there are other occasions in the novel when the text draws our attention to the indiscriminating nature of punitive authority. Sometimes Quixote is on the delivering end, at other times — the receiving end.

The validity of religious authority's effort to externally impose conviction is implicitly questioned in Quixote's first sally (Part I, chapter IV) when he encounters the silk traders whom he haughtily challenges to acknowledge that "nowhere on earth is there a damsel more beautiful than the Empress of La Mancha, she who has no equal, Dulcinea del Toboso." He requires that the merchants "believe, confess, affirm, swear and defend" Dulcinea's perfection, without having seen as much as a picture of her. Cervantes would appear to be targeting the theological virtue of faith, but to think so would be to attribute a degree of skeptical detachment to the author which was unthinkable to the religiously committed writers of the Golden Age. (Post-modern perspectivism would overlook such commitment.) It is more reasonable to assume that on this occasion, Quixote mirrors the Spanish Inquisition's insistence on outward pietistic performance as opposed to the interior devotion advocated by Erasmus in Enchiridion militis christiani (the Manual of the Militant Christian).⁹

A second occasion when the legitimacy of a punitive authority is subtly questioned takes place at the close of the "inquisition" of Don Quixote's books (in Part I, chapter VII). That is when the barber's and the priest's sorting of chivalric books according to their respective merits comes to nothing. The

housekeeper, whose action parallels that of the Inquisitorial tribunal, collects all the books, both those to be saved and those to be burned. The narrator remarks:

That night the housekeeper burned to ashes every book lying out in the yard, and all the ones left in the house, too, and among those that perished in the flames there must have been some which deserved to be preserved forever. But fate was against it, as was the laziness of their inquisitor, thus fulfilling the words of the old proverb about the upright sometimes having to pay for sinners' crimes. (40)

Aquella noche quemó y abrasó el ama cuantos libros había en el corral y en todo la casa, y tales debieron de arder que merecían guardarse en perpetuos archivos; mas no lo permitió su suerte y la pereza del escrutiñador, y así se cumplió el refrán en ellos de que pagan a las veces justos por pecadores. (123)

The comment passed the censors; to this reader, however it is an indication of Cervantes' private sympathy for the victims in spite of his public, deferential loyalty to the victimizers.

A similar sympathy is detectable in Part II, chapter LI when Sancho relates that Quixote has taught him that justice must be tempered with mercy. In Part II, when Sancho serves as "governor" of his "island," he is called upon to resolve a classic paradox involving the letter versus the spirit of the law. He orders the release of a man who seemed "destined" to die on the gallows. Explaining his decision, Sancho cites Quixote: "Any time justice is doubtful,

lean toward compassion and take shelter in mercy." ("... cuando la justicia estuviese en duda, me decantase y acogiese a la misericordia." II, LI, 427)

Another occasion when the reader may detect a private sympathy with victims and a measure of distance from social authority concerns Sancho (an "old Christian") and his *morisco* neighbor, Ricote, whom he meets on the road traveling with pilgrims (Part II, chapter LIV). Ricote tells Sancho that he has been exiled from Spain because he is a Moor. Ricote is returning to his hometown to recover some gold which he has buried outside the town; he hopes then to somehow rejoin his daughter and wife from whom he has been separated. He recounts the *morisco* reaction to the Spanish monarchy's 1609 expulsion of Moors:

... it seemed to me that nothing less than divine inspiration could have led His Majesty to promulgate such a courageous decree — not that all of us were equally guilty, some Moors having become firm and reliable Christians, but most were, and the minority among us could not have successfully opposed the vast majority and why nourish a viper in your bosom ... Truly, the penalty of perpetual exile fell upon us for good cause and though some may think it a mild and gentle punishment, to us it was the most terrible we could have received. Wherever we are, we weep for Spain, for after all we were born here and this is our native country ... (647; my emendations to the translation)

... me parece que fue inspiración divina la que movió a su Majestad a poner en efecto tan gallarda resolución, no porque todos fuésemos culpados, que algunos había

cristianos firmes y verdaderos: pero eran tan pocos, que no se podían oponer a los que no lo eran, y no era bien criar la sierpe en el seno, teniendo los enemigos dentro de casa. Finalmente, con justa razón fuimos castigados con la pena del destirro, blanda y suave al parecer de algunos, pero al nuestro, la más terrible que se nos podía dar. Doquiera que estamos lloramos por España: que en fin, nacimos en ella y es nuestra patria natural... (450 - 451)

It is apparent from these remarks that Cervantes shared his contemporaries' apprehensions about the *moriscos* and so considered their expulsion necessary, but unlike other writers, he was also able to see them as men and women who were driven from their ancestral homes.

But to return to Quixote's act of charity towards the galley slaves, we should observe that an appeal to Quixote's individual psychology does little to explain the inconsistencies with which his action is fraught. The inconsistencies arise both from his notion of honor and his interpretation of justice.

For Quixote, honor is a moral virtue. His preoccupation with honor underscores sixteenth and early seventeenth century Spain's cultural valorization of honor and its relation to morality and blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*). Quixote's honor obsession, which reflects the Inquisition's insistence on blood purity becomes an occasion for Cervantes' ironizing about the limitations of justice as it is conceived by the Inquisition. Quixote's "mad" questioning of the legitimacy of external constraint indirectly addresses the questionable legitimacy of the state's punitive justice system and the Church's alignment with secular structures of authority.

Quixote's gratuitous act of charity is further complicated by the quixotic conception of justice. Quixote views justice as divinely ordained if faultily implemented by humans with the exception of knights errant. Quixote has declared that the members of his knightly profession are "ministers of God on earth;" they are "the arms which execute God's justice" (I, XIII, 173) and as such they are exempt from all judicial authority. Quixote asks, "Who does not know that the law of the knight errant is their sword, their charters, their courage, their statutes their will?" (I, XLV, 547- 8) Quixote reminds Sancho that no knight errant has ever been tried for homicide.

Intermittently aware that revenge is not justice, Quixote nevertheless often speaks as if the two were identical. So, for example, he is enflamed by the damage which the man from the Basque has inflicted on his helmet, and he swears "by the Creator of all things and by the four holy gospels" that he will lead his life like a chivalric hero (the Marquis of Mantua) until he can take revenge "on the man who has thus wronged me." (Part I, chapter X) It is the peace-loving Sancho who reminds Quixote that if the Basque presents himself to Dulcinea, he will have discharged his debt and he deserves no other punishment. Quixote quickly recovers his feeling for the right, annuls his oath, and re-affirms his devotion to the chivalric model whose virtue he perceives to be of a higher order than the peaceful *real-politik* of Sancho. When Sancho declares that he will not draw a sword on anyone and will instead pardon the injuries done to him, Quixote rebukes him for preparing thereby to put knights errant out of business (Part I, chapter XV). The code of honor calls for revenge.

At the same time, Quixote's insistence on the chivalric hero's mission appears to parallel a Christian insistence on service. Indeed, this is how the young Teresa of Avila (1515- 1542) and Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), avid readers of chivalric romances, understood the works which Cervantes parodies in Quixote. Quixote's chivalric purpose — "to defend maidens, to protect widows, and to succor the orphans and the needy," and "to give aid and assistance to all sufferers"— allusively refers to Jesus' own mission as he names it in Luke 4: 18. In that passage, Jesus describes his own task in a synagogue reading of Isaiah 61:1:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The portion of Isaiah 61:2 which Jesus does not read is: [because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim] "the day of vengeance (*naqam*) of our God." In Isaiah, human violence is turned over to Yahweh (the embodiment of divine mercy) whose covenant with the people of Israel ensures that the requirements of justice will be met by God rather than humans. Like Isaiah, Jesus distinguishes human retribution from divine justice and mercy. While various Christian confessions do not agree as to what extent Jesus ultimately endorses the believer's accommodation to secular structures of power, it is evident in Luke 4: 18, as in other gospel passages, that for Jesus, human revenge and divine justice

are by no means equivalent, for the divine guarantor of mercy is represented as assuaging the pain of the victim (the poor, the captive, the blind, the oppressed).

Quixote's estranged view of civil justice in the galley slaves episode anticipates his response to his defeat at the hands of the disguised Sansón Carrasco on the sands of Barcelona. There Quixote declares, after his defeat, "Dulcinea is the most beautiful woman in the world and I am the most unfortunate knight on earth, and it is not right that my frailty should defraud this truth." (II, LXVIV) Quixote rejects the "sentence" that Carrasco's superior force would pass on him, even if he has accepted the premises of the chivalric code which requires a knight to bow to the "justice" of greater force exercised by his knightly foe. On the occasion when Quixote stands defeated by another "knight," paradoxically the "justice" of the stronger does not permit Quixote to be swayed from his faith in the fiction of Dulcinea. It is an occasion, then, when Quixote observes that might does not make right. His "defeat" in the staged trial by combat paves the way for the death bed recognition of the delusion which he has harbored.

Quixote's hunger for a justice higher than a legal code is foolish inasmuch as he believes the chivalric knight capable of delivering such justice, but it is not foolish inasmuch as justice may indeed mean more than the punishment that a legal, ecclesiastic or social order may see fit to administer. While the justice which Quixote means to enact in much of the novel is retributive, in the galley slave episode, in Quixote's framing of the situation, a different notion of justice as mercy emerges. As Quixote describes it, justice cannot mean external compulsion, which Quixote sees as failing to have any

truly regenerative power. He is himself caught up in paradox inasmuch as he rejects the guards' external compulsion of the prisoners, but he sees his own compulsion of the guards as just. Cervantes' foolish hero is entertaining when he clings to ideas incongruous with his actual position, but he also serves as vehicle for an oblique commentary on the foolishness of human self-deception. At the same time, he reveals the doubtful efficacy of externally imposed authority (legal, ecclesiastic, social) to effect true change in the individual.

While Quixote takes life and literature to be identical, to Pickwick, literature and life "are separate universes," as Auden has observed, for "evil and suffering do not exist in the world he perceives; they emerge only in the world of entertaining fiction" (the interpolated stories).¹⁰ Pickwick's relationship with the letter is as innocent as his relationship to the law before he is confined at the Fleet.¹¹ Pickwick's reliance on a nebulous "Pickwickian" sense as a means for negotiating differences will be challenged when he is tried for breach of promise in "Bardell versus Pickwick" at the Chancery, which adjudicates inheritance, trusts, debts, business transactions, and so on. The "dead letter" of the Chancery whose bureaucratic workings are indifferent to fair practice is as oddly ambiguous as the "Pickwickian" sense of things.

The reader is introduced to the "Pickwickian" way of negotiating conflict in the opening chapter of the novel, which offers a kind of burlesque of parliamentary procedure or some scholarly association.¹² The social harmony of the group is breached when Pickwick alludes to a rival's censures. Blotton, the offended member of the Pickwick club declares Pickwick to be a "humbug."

The internal division of the club must be resolved if the club is to function again. The club is a typically British, typically male middle-class nineteenth century entity, a caricature of a sportsman's club. Nevertheless, the way the division is resolved is instructive of a characteristic means of defusing potential group violence which arises from rivalrous desire: establish a taboo. The source of dissension centers on leadership: who is the man best suited to represent the club in forays in the outside world? Will it be Pickwick or Blotton? Conflicting desire is managed in the first chapter by an appeal to a "Pickwickian" sense of things. The offended member, Blotton, concedes that he was using the term "humbug" in the "Pickwickian" sense rather than the "common sense;" Mr. Pickwick declares his own comments bore a Pickwickian construction, and the club is united again, having reached "this highly satisfactory and intelligible point" in the debate, as the narrator ironically observes. In this first example of group conflict, the Pickwickian sense is left undefined; meaning is still negotiable. The Pickwickian sense, a nebulous linguistic frame which defies any common sense interpretation of language, functions as a kind of gentlemanly prohibition by which the club's solidarity may be maintained. Thus the Pickwickian sense parallels the linguistic mobility of the British law, which will falsely find Pickwick guilty of breaching a marriage contract. The difference between the law's mobility and the Pickwickian sense of things is that the club is the voluntary organization of people who attempt to suspend rivalry; the British law coerces solutions through violence and it does so, in Dickens' novel, not so much to resolve conflict but to perpetuate the legal institution itself and to reward its corrupt practitioners.

Pickwick's club members pride themselves on thirsting for scientific knowledge, but like the town of Rochester which awaits a grand review of the army, in fact, the Pickwickians seek entertainment. While watching spectacles, such as the army review, a cricket game or a pre-election campaign, Pickwick takes copious notes. Curiously distant from all events, he himself occasionally becomes a spectacle. In his deluded fancy of conducting scientific research, he fails to realize that he cannot stand outside others' lives.

Pickwick and company live in a decidedly quixotified world, in which illusion is preferred to any grim reality. They are not unlike the average British citizen in this respect as the prototype is represented in Eatanswill (a telling name !). There the local inhabitants must be bribed with community meals to take any interest in the local parliamentary election. Party politics offers the occasion for more entertainment. The Pickwickians await spectacle and story as eagerly as the frequent dinners, snacks and drinks which they enjoy. They are disposed to appreciate any story they are told; it is precisely their appetite for imaginative entertainment which Jingle is able to exploit. The interpolated tales in the novel ultimately prepare the reader for the reorientation of the innocent Pickwick in a world whose appearances are deceptive.

Far from being mere melodramatic episodes which fatten the text, these tales are a significant addition.¹³ As Steven Marcus has observed, in almost every one of the tales, "even the funny ones, someone is paralyzed, immobilized, or locked up and imprisoned in something."¹⁴ Thus, they not only anticipate Pickwick's brief imprisonment but they gesture at the obsessed imagination which engineers its own unhappiness. The tragic stories generally target various

deformations of desire. Four of the nine narratives are accounts of solitary men undone by envious malice or the desire for revenge; seven of them feature conflictual relationships between sons and fathers or they allude to such conflict ("The Convict's Return," "The Queer Client," "The Legend of Prince Bladud," "A Madman's Manuscript"; "The Bagman's Story," "The Parish Clerk"). Sons imitate fathers who have refused to nurture their offspring.

Revenge is depicted in the tales as the response of the unbalanced son who becomes like the abusive parent or parent surrogate. In "A Madman's Manuscript," (chapter XI) for example, a wealthy man is locked in an asylum, haunted by the specter of the wife he has killed. Having inherited a "mad" disposition from his careless father, the madman murdered his wife. The murder was a retaliation against the wife's father and brothers who had forced her into the marriage to relieve their poverty. By contrast, renouncing the temptation to reprisal comprises the theme of "The Convict's Return" (chapter VI). In this story, a young man initially rejects the model of his gentle mother and follows his abusive and misanthropic father's example. The son commits robbery for which he is caught and tried. Awaiting deportation in prison, he is unable to visit his dying mother whose forgiveness he seeks. After his term is served, he returns to his village, where he unexpectedly encounters his father, who strikes the son across the face with a walking stick. Longing to throttle the father, the son recalls the filial relation, and abstains from violence. In the comic mode, a father's failure to provide nurture in "The Bagman's Story," (chapter XIV) means that he will not succeed in his bigamous intentions towards an attractive widow. The story opens with a traveler, Tom Smart, who is

caught in a night time storm and stops at an inn owned by the widow. Tom Smart drinks a good deal of rum punch and retires to his room where he finds an old chair animated and talkative. The old gentleman- chair takes a paternal interest in Tom and tells Tom that the tall man who is courting the widow is not a fit suitor, for he is already married and has six little children. The next day, Tom reveals the man's fraud to the attractive widow and marries her himself. By contrast, the son's vengeful response to an abusive father-in-law is played out in "The Queer Client" (chapter XXI). A man in debtors' prison watches his family starve to death. On his release from prison, the man, Holingway, constantly recalls how his wife died before his eyes, and directs his thwarted indignation against his father-in-law who drove the man into debtors' prison and thereafter abandoned both daughter and grandchild. Holingway enjoys a reversal of circumstances and obliges his father-in-law to experience the same sort of despair which Holingway had known at losing his child, his wife, and all of his wealth. The widowed husband unwittingly lets his father-in-law mediate his desire; he thereby becomes exactly the sort of man that the father-in-law was.

The interpolated tales prepare us for Pickwick's initiation in a world that is no innocent idyll. The initiation is partially effected by Sam who wonders at Pickwick's ignorance of a world in which violence is an everyday occurrence. Pickwick's lack of awareness leads Sam to remark, "Where was you half baptized?" XIII, 166) Sam understands that violence is not an aberration in human culture; it defines human culture. The father-son conflict featured in the tales contrasts with the mutually satisfying relationship of Pickwick and

Weller, which clearly recalls Quixote and Sancho.¹⁵ Girard has characterized Quixote and Sancho and Quixote and Amadis as examples of "external mediation" — imitation without rivalry. The Pickwick - Weller relationship at first appearance is also a case of external mediation, for the distance between Pickwick and Weller in terms of education, literacy, street smarts, wealth and social status is great. The master and servant do not compete with each other over desired objects. But in the case of Quixote and Sancho, as with Sam and Pickwick, "reciprocal mediation" would more aptly describe the relationship. Sam mediates for his master a "full baptism" in the ways of men. Sam functions as a model, indirectly instructing his master but Sam also imitates Pickwick's essential benevolence. In this case, mediation does not result in conflict or lead to violence.¹⁶ This is the mimesis of positive apprenticeship.

Savvy about linguistic nuance and knowledgeable in the ways of the world, Weller is drawn to serve Pickwick who is exceptionally innocent about language and the law. Not easily taken in, nor easily moved, Sam is sanguine when Pickwick is choleric. Sam mediates a necessary change in Pickwick who must understand the limitations of innocence if he is to effectively put in practice his benevolence. The relationship is not one-sided, however. Not only does Pickwick benefit from Sam's mediation, but Sam enjoys the affection of a father-surrogate (Pickwick) who attends to Sam in a way that Weller Senior did not. We learn that the elder Weller's "great deal o' pains" with Sam's education meant letting Sam "run in the streets when he was very young and shift for himself" (XX, 271). Weller Senior's incompetence in money matters — his inability to invest four hundred pounds, a legacy from his first wife — are a

"grievance" (XIII) to Sam, but neither Weller Senior's financial incompetence nor his failure to supply nurture stimulate Sam's desire to avenge himself on his father.¹⁷

The inception of the Weller - Pickwick apprenticeship has been alluded to by one critic as Pickwick's begetting a son: a curious "immaculate conception"¹⁸ apropos of a novel which opens with a comic evocation of the Gospel of John. Weller's and Pickwick's understanding comes about while Pickwick is having a conversation with Mrs. Bardell that is rich with sexual double-entendre which Pickwick fails to understand. His innocence on this occasion, like others in which he and the Pickwickians are involved, gets him into trouble. It is by virtue of Sam Weller's greater linguistic sophistication and imaginative inventiveness that Pickwick is eventually brought around to understand where best to apply his benevolence.

Sam demonstrates his wit in the famous trial scene where he is the only one of Pickwick's companions who succeeds in eluding the prosecuting attorney's linguistic snares. He responds in a typically unruffled way to the hectoring of Sergeant Buzfuz. When the latter badgers him about whether he saw Mrs. Bardell fainting in Pickwick's arms the morning that Pickwick hired him, Sam replies that he saw nothing. "Have you a pair of eyes, Mr. Weller?" demands Buzfuz. Sam replies

Yes, I have a pair of eyes and that's just it. If they was a pair o' patent double million magnifying gas microscopes of hextra power, p'raps I might be able to see through a flight of stairs and a deal door; but bein' only eyes, you see, my wision's limited. (XXXIV, 484)

Sam prevails: he does Messrs Dodson and Fogg's case "as much harm as he conveniently could" while saying "just as little respecting Mr. Pickwick as might be." (XXXIV, 485) Pickwick is nevertheless found guilty and told to pay legal damages. He refuses to pay on principle. "Huoorar for the principle, as the money-lender said ven he wouldn't renew the bill" cheers Sam, (XXXV, 489) and as his curious analogy suggests, Pickwick's principle has little to do with the way punitive justice actually functions. The *habeas corpus* is prepared (aptly referred to by Sam as the "have-his-carcasse") and Pickwick is sent to the Fleet.

Soon enough, Pickwick notices that the law has not dealt efficiently or justly with the Fleet's inmates. Sam explains the fundamental inequality with one of his typical analogies:

them as is always a idlin' in public houses it don't damage at all, and them as is always a vorkinn' ven they can, it damages too much. "It's unekal," as my father used to say ven his grog worn't made half-and-half — It's unekal, and that's the fault on it. (XLI, 576)

Pickwick's brief acquaintance with the inhabitants of the Fleet reveals this inequality. He meets Smangle, who is sooner a thief than a debtor. Pickwick rents a room from the nameless Chancery prisoner, a gaunt and cadaverous man whose particular history is lost. Pickwick encounters Sam's roommate, the cobbler, who was ruined not by spending money but by receiving an inheritance and having his case locked in the Chancery "where it is still and where it ever shall be." From the point of view of the law, all three prisoners are equally

guilty. More unequal still, money retains its value even in debtor's prison for "money was, in the Fleet, just what money was out of it" (XLII, 592). The Dickensian narrator ironically observes the injustice of the situation whereby poor debtors rely on the charity of their fellow prisoners while ordinary criminals are themselves fed by the State:

but we still leave unblotted in the leaves of our statute book, for the reverence and admiration of succeeding ages, the just and wholesome law which declares that the sturdy felon shall be fed and clothed, and that the penniless debtor shall be left to die of starvation and nakedness. (XLII, 595)

There is no justice in punishment rendered so unequally, leading sometimes to the death of the innocent. Dickens argues that the law which establishes a debtors' prison is ultimately guilty for murder, as is illustrated in the case of the Chancery prisoner. It is the dead letter of the law emblematic in the dealings of the Court of Chancery which murders the Chancery prisoner who was imprisoned "long enough to have lost friends, fortune, home and happiness." Through the experience in the Fleet, Pickwick learns, as Auden remarks, that the "division between those who are suffering and those who are not is more significant than the division between the just and the unjust, the innocent and the guilty."¹⁹ On this last point Dickens and Dostoevsky are in agreement.

Aside from actually enacting changes to the law which the novel shows to be long overdue, a means of countering the "letter that kills" is by giving generously as Pickwick does when he tells Jingle: "Take that !" and offers him a

coin rather than a blow. (XLII, 598) "God loves a generous giver," says Paul (2 Corinthians 9:7). In the course of his novel, Dickens translates this: "God loves a hilarious giver." The "majestic wrath" Pickwick had felt (X, 130) toward Jingle entirely dissipates. Pickwick's gift in prison renders Jingle relief; it also "somehow or other imparted a sparkle to the eye and a swelling to the heart" of the giver. The gratuitous nature of the act of compassion renders it a singularly virtuous one in the sense that it is efficacious for the recipient as well as for the giver. There is no suggestion that Pickwick's gift is proffered with an expectation of return. Such benevolence is at odds with a legalistic contractual understanding of justice, which is the sort of justice that the Chancery is ostensibly interested in advancing.

The utilitarian might say that Pickwick's charity is simply the means by which a middle class businessman eases a bad conscience, and it is clear that Pickwick's acts of charity by no means address the root of social injustice. But Dickens, who, like Dostoevsky, saw utilitarian ideas as having a pernicious effect on society,²⁰ shows that Pickwick's renunciation of revenge on Jingle (and Bardell) puts an end to violent reciprocity. It is up to Jingle whether he wishes to renew his entanglement in a sacrificial order in which he assures his own comfort while hurting another. In Pickwick Papers, we do not yet find Dickens' proposals for social, political and economic reform.

Pickwick's generosity moves Weller to observe to Jingle's servant, Job, that Pickwick is an "angel in tights and gaiters" (XLV, 642). The narrator's ironic distance from Pickwick is diminished and even reversed by Sam's engagement with Pickwick. Pickwick's virtue is decidedly foolish. What, indeed,

could be more foolish than a fat "angel in tights and gaiters" or a manservant who sees his master as such? Clearly Weller, for all his street savvy, is, in his way, quite as foolish as his master for preferring imprisonment to receiving a wage for staying comfortably at home. Pickwick doesn't ask for such service. Indeed, when Sam Weller wants to join Pickwick in prison, Pickwick comments on his own previous naiveté as he declines Weller's offer: "... old men may come here [the Fleet] through their own heedlessness and unsuspicion, and young men may be brought here through the selfishness of those they serve." (XLII, 599) Weller insists, however, on arranging for his own imprisonment for debt and echoes Pickwick's stiff-necked reliance on principle as he does so. "I takes my determination on principle, Sir ... and you takes yours on the same ground; vich puts me in mind o' the man as killed his-self on principle, vich o' course you've heerd on, Sir ... " (XLIV, 616) Wellerisms abound with references to violence, but Sam is not apt to enact any. He alludes to violence to cure it: he names it to bring home to his master, in language, the reality of violence in the world.

Pickwick performs another gratuitous benevolent action when he puts aside principle, and pays Mrs. Bardell's lawyers' fees, thereby freeing Bardell, himself and Sam from debtors' prison. Pickwick does it to reconcile the Winkles, son and father, after the former has eloped with the penniless Arabella Allen. Mr. Pickwick then pays the debts of Jingle and Job, hopeful but uncertain that the two will permanently reform. Pickwick's lawyer, Perker, observes that Pickwick's object is "honorable, whatever the result." Coming from Perker, who coolly appreciates the cleverness of Dodson and Fogg, this positive valuation of

Pickwick's generosity again bridges the distance between the ironic narrator and the comic protagonist. Speaking on this occasion for Dickens, Perker distinguishes between true benevolence and its false semblance:

Whether that species of benevolence which is so very cautious and long-sighted that it is seldom exercised at all, lest its owner should be imposed upon, and so wounded in self-love, be real charity, or a worldly counterfeit, I leave to wiser heads than mine to determine." (LIII, 746)

Dickens targets false benevolence in the person of the drunken deputy "shepherd," Rev. Stiggins, an evangelical who is indirectly the cause of the second Mrs. Weller's death. (Dickens will repeatedly satirize such false benevolence in subsequent novels, for example, with the Murdstones in David Copperfield and Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle in Bleak House.) Pickwick, by contrast, is neither "wounded in self-love" nor stingy with his benevolence. His ready generosity and his alliance with young lovers seems foolish in the extreme, but it inspires Weller's own generous service.

Dickens represents virtue in Pickwick Papers as linked to benevolent disposition in Pickwick. That trait clearly sets Pickwick at odds with the law, which ensures that the Dodsons and Foggs of Chancery will continue to plan the downfall of the innocent. They are accomplished at it; they understand how to gain the upper hand. Their professional virtue, a sign of the presumably degraded times, is opposed to the imperiled virtue of benevolence.

Dickens' depiction of virtue entertains while it offers a critique of the law and legal institutions which he will greatly extend in his subsequent work. But the text also offers a Victorian updating of the biblical virtue of righteousness (*temimut*). *Temimut* is not "an action appropriate to the attainment of a specific goal." Rather, as the Biblical scholar E. R. Achtemeier observes, it is the fulfillment of the demands of a relationship and the restoration of ethical order in a community; it reflects a covenantal relationship between human and divine.²¹ Dickens sees its increasing rarity in his society; he redirects his Victorian reader to the biblical value of virtue in a society which is dominated by conflictual mimesis.

Some readers will reject out of hand the possibility of disinterested benevolence which Dickens strives to represent, noting that it is a luxury that the middle-class Pickwick can well afford. His middle-class charity does little to unsettle the unjust division of material privileges, but that is a project that is not within his (or Dickens') scope.

Readers may also object that Pickwick does not face real evil: Jingle and Job or Dodson and Fogg hardly qualify. While Dickens will explore the human face of evil in greater depth in his later work, his first novel emphasizes through comedy and occasionally, through melodrama, that the Judeo-Christian virtue of benevolence is a generative force rather than a regulative principle.

Dickens' use of the melodramatic mode, particularly in the interpolated stories, is an artistic choice rather than an artistic lack. As Peter Brooks has demonstrated, the "mode of excess" is itself a method which is conscious, deliberate and artistically legitimate. Melodrama is not merely a crude lack of

control. As Brooks argues, melodrama and melodramatic fiction represent the "principle mode of uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe in a post-sacred era."²² Like Dickens, Dostoevsky is not averse to employing the melodramatic and for the same reasons that Brooks describes. Terror and pathos frequent Dostoevsky's narratives as do standard melodramatic elements such as fascinating hypnotic eyes, dark - haired beauties, and villainous pale red-lipped men. A single example will suffice here to illustrate the underlying moral universe revealed by Dostoevsky's use of the melodramatic. Myshkin's tortured awareness of Rogozhin's menacing eyes makes the reader aware of Myshkin's heightened state of consciousness prior to the epileptic fit. The Prince is painfully cognizant of his friend's fascinated malevolent gaze, although he is consciously reluctant to attribute murderous intentions to Rogozhin. At the same time, Rogozhin's mesmerizing eyes reveal Rogozhin's jealous apprehension of Myshkin as a rival for Nastasya Filippovna.

The anachronism of the courtly, chivalric ideal of Quixote is re-made in Pickwick as a more recognizably Christian ideal. Cervantes obliquely questions the efficacy of retributive justice; Dickens follows suit. In the context of Pickwick's 1830's England, justice becomes a matter of contract, a rigid principle which deforms human relations. It is the letter that kills, the father that neglects. In The Idiot, Dostoevsky will similarly see in the newly reformed courts in Russia and in the radical posturings of the generation of the 1860's a perversion of justice. For Dostoevsky, as for Dickens, contractual relationships

spelled out by law run counter to the kind of relationship which does not rely on force or compulsion.

The gratuitous acts of charity of Dostoevsky's protagonist, Myshkin, appear to be without real efficacy, but only if one insists on applying a utilitarian standard, which Dostoevsky, like Dickens, consistently defies. Dostoevsky takes true magnanimity to mean action that is undertaken without thought for benefit to oneself. Making a character who engages in such action credible, sympathetic and trustworthy is a daunting task.

The gratuitous acts in which Myshkin engages include his proposal of marriage to Nastasya and his gift of money to Burdovsky. Each of these actions may appear to the reader foolish in the sense of ill-considered. Far from being ill - considered, they reveal Dostoevsky's understanding of virtue in action, and his awareness (sometimes subtle, and sometimes obvious) that even those who wish to give selflessly and generously, are at times deluded as to their ability to bring about change in the other.

The gratuitous acts in which Myshkin engages also highlight the nature of the obstacle which virtue represents to those who encounter it. In the incident with Burdovsky and the young nihilists (Part II, chapters 7 - 9), for example, we see that Myshkin's ethical comportment — his essential kindness and regard for the other — is devalued by those who are invested in their "rights" to the exclusion of the ethical. Even those who are fond of Myshkin (Madame Epanchina and Aglaia) condemn Myshkin for his tolerance of the young visitors who have unexpectedly arrived. They number four in all: Antip Burdovsky, who speaks very little but stutters when he speaks, Vladimir

Doktorenko, Lebedev's self-interested nephew, Ippolit Terentyev, the eighteen year old consumptive, and Keller, the retired army man, who has authored an article libeling Myshkin. Before Myshkin's numerous guests, (Lebedev, his daughter, the Epanchin family, the Ptitsyns, General Ivolgin, Kolya, Ganya and Evgeniy Pavlovich), the young men claim that Myshkin has no right to his inheritance from Pavlishchev. They insist the money rightfully belongs to Burdovsky, who they say is the illegitimate son of Pavlishchev. According to the article Keller has anonymously written about the Prince, Burdovsky does not ask for charity or assistance, but for his "right and due," even though he has "no legal claim." They do not *ask* or beg, they *demand* that Myshkin give Burdovsky his inheritance. Doktorenko insists that "though there is no legal claim, there is a human, natural claim, the claim of common sense and the voice of conscience . . . we assumed you to be a man of common sense, that is of honour and conscience" (259). It is of course ironic that a nihilist appeals to "honour and conscience."

Myshkin has known of Burdovsky's claim and has had Ganya verify the facts of the matter. He explains that Burdovsky is mistaken to think he is Pavlishchev's illegitimate son; instead, he is only the nephew of a woman whom Pavlishchev once loved. In memory of his dead guardian, and because he believes Burdovsky to be a hapless victim of a scheming attorney, Myshkin offers to give Burdovsky 10,000 rubles, which is approximately the amount that Pavlishchev had spent on Myshkin's education and medical bills. Myshkin admits that he had thought of devoting 10,000 to founding a school in memory of Pavlishchev, but he decides that Burdovsky is quite as good a cause.

Madame Epanchin, who has before this occasion, admired and respected the Prince, is aghast at the extravagance of the gift and angered that Myshkin responds courteously and generously to his attackers. She is appalled when he apologizes warmly to Burdovsky, but Myshkin regrets the "unnecessarily candid statements" he has made to the effect that Burdovsky perhaps suffered from the same disease for which Myshkin himself had been treated. He regrets that he mentioned the school, for he accurately intuits that Burdovsky will feel humiliated and treated like a charity case.

Radomsky, meanwhile, alerts the company (and the reader) that in this scene, one may read a sign of the times. When lawyers offer poverty as a defense for robbery and murder, says Radomsky, one needn't be surprised to see young people demand their "rights." Yevgeniy Pavlovich recounts the case of a convicted murderer (Danilov) whose lawyer cites his client's poverty in his defense (II, 9, 274). While Radomsky is not a reliable barometer of the author's views elsewhere in the novel, he is no doubt speaking for Dostoevsky on this occasion when he observes that Ippolit and like-minded men are interested only in the "triumph of the right . . . even before finding out what that right consists in" (284). Elizaveta Prokofeyevna wonders about the changing times when magnanimity such as the Prince's meets with no gratitude, for gratitude itself is considered outmoded. (This is an indirect reference to Chernyshevsky's What is to be done, where Lopukhov insists that Vera Pavlovna is under no particular obligation to him although he has interrupted his medical studies to marry her.)

Girard's formulation of the model - obstacle relationship in Things Hidden elucidates the difficulty which other characters have in dealing with

Myshkin. Myshkin is a kind of model who is perceived by others as an obstacle. He rehearses the "scandalon" of Christian folly, yet his behavior raises the question as to whether his imitation of Christ is authentic. Myshkin's "breaches" in society, like the Christian *scandalon* and the Jewish tradition of prophecy, are more than breaches of decorum. They pose an interpretive quandary to the other characters in the novel as well as to the reader, who is inevitably triangulated into the text to determine whether Myshkin is "sick," "saintly" or perhaps both. The reader is obliged to judge from the information supplied in the text whether Myshkin's desire for the other reveals a true renunciation of selfish desire. "Renunciation" may not be an adequate term to describe Myshkin's apparently excessive desire for the others' grace.

The difficulties inherent in speaking of desire — whether framed by the logic of renunciation or excess — are echoed in the use of heightened and extraordinary states in both Don Quixote and The Idiot. Quixote is "mad," Myshkin, epileptic. Quixote's "madness" is a conception so boggling as to beg for imitation, although none but Sancho can quite outdo the genius of the impoverished hidalgo cum knight errant. In The Idiot, epilepsy is a condition presented as both exalting and degrading. Holy foolery is distinguished from other kinds of foolery in Dostoevsky's novel by pairing Myshkin with those who mock his foolishness or mirror it with "aweful symmetry." Similarly, Quixote's "madness" is contagious but inimitable. In the Quixote, many — including the travelers at the inn, the Duke and Duchess, and Sancho Panza himself — act as if contaminated by the knight's "mad" desire. But such contagion often points

up the difference between Quixote's (apparently) genuine *foolishness* and others' playful, cunning or sadistic impostures.

Myshkin and Quixote are characters who resist the romantic vision at the same time that they are enthralled by it. Such resistance and contagion is expressed in Quixote's being both victim and victimizer. Quixote is the "wise fool" who believes he is sent to redress the wrongs but also the "foolish fool" who believes himself immune to foolishness. Quixote takes up the cause of the victim: the beset virgin, the orphan, the poor, and in his deluded enactments of a knightly commitment, he is himself often a victim of others' violence. Yet until his conversion experience, when he sees his madness as delusion, he actually invites violence because he has adopted the role of a victimizer: every passer-by who does not respond to Quixote's chivalric delusions has been subject, without warning, to a "lesson" from Quixote's lance. Quixote is dedicated to victims, but one of his first adventures ironically backfires inasmuch as the young man whom the Knight rescues from a beating is subject to an even worse beating once the Knight has left.

Myshkin is more clearly a "victim" than a victimizer, yet the admission that Myshkin is bedeviled by "double thoughts" suggests that even in his "heroic," "foolish" offer of marriage to Nastasya, Myshkin may be invested with the glamour of self-sacrifice and thus, that his performance of holy foolery on the occasion that he proposes marriage is perhaps tainted by the delusion that he is capable of "saving" her.

Often enough, however, Myshkin (and Quixote as well) stand outside the circle of mimetic rivalry, the rivalry which emerges when desire is structured by

the principle of imitation. To stand outside mimetic rivalry is to reject the mechanism of social disorder which seeks to impose order through the sacrifice of a victim. For Girard, to defy the sacrificial order does not guarantee that one will avoid its violence; to the contrary, rejecting the mechanism of victimization may incur others' distrust, hatred, and homicidal attention. As Myshkin voluntarily assumes the role of the scapegoat, he becomes the focus of Rogozhin's homicidal attention. As Quixote identifies with the prisoner, the beaten servant, and the woman who has been exploited by her aristocratic lover, he imaginatively places himself in the role of the scapegoat. When he acts to defend the oppressed, however, he is motivated by the desire to acquire honor. Like Pickwick, who pridefully insists on principle, Quixote's motivation is suspect. Both Quixote and Pickwick are brought around to recognize the delusion of self-importance. Pickwick learns through the mediation of Sam that there are others who are more vulnerable than he and that he is no martyr. He recognizes that those like the Chancery prisoner are the true scapegoats.

For both Myshkin and Quixote, the comic vision is not sustainable. It gives way to something much darker. Both heroes mediate at humorous and potentially liberating reversals of established hierarchies in which masters and servants are upended, lover and beloved exchange places, men become feminized and women, masculinized. In both novels, the first parts reveal a comic vision, but in the later parts, the laughter becomes reduced, and foolish antics of every description take on a tragic aspect informed by the ultimate antic, Death.

To sum up, in the episode of the galley slaves in Don Quixote, Cervantes' hero demonstrates that external compulsion and retributive punishment cannot bring about a lasting change of heart in the criminal. While Quixote observes that legal justice is administered unequally, Pickwick learns this only after himself being confined in the Fleet. Pickwick's encounter with the law — as it is interpreted and enacted by the Courts of Chancery — reveals that the law which is underwritten by the use of force can confine, bind and destroy but it cannot bestow grace. An informed benevolence, by contrast, transforms both givers and receivers. In The Idiot, as in Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky offers an even more unsettling notion of benevolence which does not partake of an economy of reward and punishment. Myshkin does not give *in order to* receive. Dostoevsky demonstrates that exchanges between people may extend quite beyond friendly reciprocity. Myshkin's benevolent response to others, for the most part, comes from the realm of grace which cannot be measured or weighed, expected or demanded, bought or sold.

The importance of the Quixotic figure for Dostoevsky is not only in the foolish hero's idealism but in the paradoxical nature of foolishness itself. The reader need not duplicate Dostoevsky's romantic view of Cervantes' hero to see the similarities which emerge between the foolishness of the chivalric knight and the holy fool, figures who are built on paradox. The metaphor of triangular desire highlights displacements of metaphysical desire in both texts while it also refers to the reader's triangulation into the heroes' foolishness.

The reader's participation in the "foolishness" of The Idiot, which is the subject of the next two chapters, must be informed both by the specific narrative

choices the author has made and by the hermeneutic component implicit in the text itself. Girard's understanding of "scandal," which emerges from his reading of the Gospels, helps to illuminate Dostoevsky's conception of Christian "folly." I will show in the next two chapters that Myshkin's enactment of such "folly" suggests that Dostoevsky imitates gospel structure in order to lead his reader to an apprehension of the trap (Greek, *skandalon*) to which conflictive desire leads.²³

Notes

¹ "Virtú in and Since the Renaissance." Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas. Vol. IV. Philip P. Wiener, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) 476.

² The resemblance between Quixote and Pickwick, by now a commonplace, was first noted by an early reviewer in Monthly Magazine. Dickens' biographer, John Forster, writing after Dickens' death, concurred, declaring that "Sam Weller and Mr. Pickwick are the Sancho and Quixote of Londoners." John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens, 1872 - 4, ed. J. W. Ley, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1928) II. 1. We know that Dickens, like his creation, David Copperfield, had read Don Quixote as a child, but it is uncertain whether Dickens consciously followed Cervantes. As Walter L. Reed has argued, Dickens' imitation of Cervantes is an imitation via Fielding, Smollet and Sterne. Walter L. Reed, An Exemplary History of the Novel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 168. To the list of prior models, Steven Marcus appends Oliver Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield (1766), which Dickens claimed had instructed more kinds of people on virtue than any other book. Steven Marcus, "The Blest Dawn," in Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey (New York: Basic Books, 1965), 13 - 53.

³ Dostoevskii, Pis'ma, Vol. II, A. S. Dolinin, ed., 13 January 1868, to Sofiya Alexandrovna Ivanova, #294, 71.

⁴ Dickens highly praised a restoration of the original text of Lear, acclaiming the Fool as "one of its most affecting and necessary features" and asserting that "it would be difficult to praise so exquisite and delicate an assumption too highly." Examiner, 27 October 1849, quoted in Robert McCarron's "Folly and Wisdom: Three Dickensian Fools," Dickens Studies Annual, Vol. 6, 1977, 41.

⁵ Miguel de Cervantes, El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha. 2 vols. ed. by John Jay (Madrid: Catedra, 1989) I, XXII. Don Quijote: A Norton Critical Edition, ed. Diana de Armas Wilson, trans. Burton Raffel, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 127.

⁶ Robert ter Horst, "Sex and the Chaingang" in Don Quijote: A Norton Critical Edition, 806ff. (A revised and abridged version of "The Sexual Economy of Miguel de Cervantes," in Bodies and Biases: Sexualities in Hispanic Cultures and Literatures, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 1 - 23.)

⁷ Quixote displays symptoms of an unbalanced choleric temperament according to the medical discourse of the time. In 1575, Juan Huarte de San Juan (1526?-1588) published

Examen de Ingenios (Examination of Men's Wits) in which the notion of the four humors was elaborated; this work was known to all educated Spaniards.

⁸ "Dulcinea" is all poetic make-believe. She is a composite of every poetic cliché about the ideal woman, a parody of Petrarchan convention. She is a fixed role which can be performed by anyone, male or female. In fact, "Dulcinea" is played, in turn, by Aldonza Lorenzo, then by the first peasant girl whom Sancho sights, and later, by a male page at the court of the Duke and the Duchess. Dulcinea is summed up by Quixote in the convention of the rhetorical figure, the blazon: "... her rank must be at least that of a princess, since she is my queen and a lady, and her beauty superhuman, since all the impossible and fanciful attribute of beauty which the poets apply to their ladies are verified in her. Her hairs are gold, her forehead Elysian fields, her eyebrows rainbows, her eyes suns, her cheeks roses, her lips coral, her teeth pearls, her neck alabaster, her bosom marble, her hands ivory, her fairness snow and what modesty conceals from sight is such, I think and imagine, as rational reflection can only extol but not compare." ("... su calidad, por lo menos, ha de ser de princesa, pues es reina y señora mía, su hermosura, sobrehumana, pues en ella se vienen a hacer verdaderos todos los imposibles y quiméricos atributos de belleza que los poetas dan a sus damas: que sus cabellos son oro, su frente campos elíseos, sus cejas arcos del cielo, sus ojos soles, sus mejillas rosas, sus labios corales, perlas sus dientes, alabastro su cuello, mármol su pecho, marfil sus manos, su blancura nieve, y las partes que a la vista humana encubrió la honestidad son tales, según yo pienso y entiendo, que sólo la discreta consideración puede encarecerlas, y no comprarlas. (I, xiii, 176) When "Dulcinea" is figuratively taken apart, her mechanical construction is revealed: behind the 'figure' of the woman is nothing at all. "Dulcinea" is a set of properties. The very name "Dulcinea" (*Dulce*, sweet) is a kind of treacly joke. The ideal woman's virginity and beauty is emphasized and then parodied when contrasted to the sweaty, garlicky and virile athletics of the peasant girl whom Sancho chances upon to satisfy his master's delusions.

⁹ Erasmus' Enchiridion was translated into Spanish in the 1500's.

¹⁰ Auden, "Dingley Dell and the Fleet," The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays (New York: Vintage Press, 1968) 418.

¹¹ Auden spells out these Pickwickian assumptions about the law in "Dingley Dell and the Fleet," The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays, 420.

¹² While the Pickwick club's meeting serves as a lampoon of the talking shops and debating chambers of England in the 1820's and early 1830's, they call to mind any recent scholarly

conference where paper topics are no less abstruse than Pickwick's "Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with Some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats."

¹³ In this I concur with a number of critics who tend to take the tales seriously: these include Auden in The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays; Robert L. Patten, "The Art of Pickwick's Interpolated Tales," English Literary History, 34, 1967 and James R. Kincaid, Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter (New York: Clarendon Press, 1971). Dickens' reason for including the interpolated tales may well have been because he was hard-pressed to meet the publisher's deadlines in the serial publication of Pickwick Papers. To recognize the deadline pressure experienced by the writer by no means subtracts from the tales' significance in the text.

¹⁴ Steven Marcus, "Language into Structure: Pickwick Revisited," in Charles Dickens, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 145.

¹⁵ Just as Quixote and Sancho cannot be simply reduced to a pairing between idealist and realist, so neither can Pickwick and Weller. Girard observes that "romantic readers have seen in the novel little more than the contrast between Don Quixote the idealist and the realist Sancho. This contrast is real but secondary: it should not make us overlook the analogies between the two characters." Girard, Deceit, Desire and the Novel, 4. Just as Amadis, the hero of the chivalric romances after which Quixote patterns himself, offers a code by which to understand reality, Quixote models for Sancho a way of interpreting the world. Amadis is Quixote's mediator; Quixote, Sancho's mediator. Sancho, the supposed realist is not purely practical, otherwise he would never expect material rewards from his master. In spite of his moments of doubt about his master's sanity, and in spite of occasional moments of disgust and disillusion, he falls in with his master's folly.

¹⁶ Girard has described reciprocal mediation as leading to violence and the mimesis of apprenticeship as fraught with difficulties which arise when a disciple threatens to overtake the master. Girard, Things Hidden, 290ff. One wonders, however, whether Girard's emphasis of the difficulties inherent in the master-disciple relationship suggests a kind of scapegoating logic by which Girard expels that part of his theory which focuses on "good" mimetic desire. Rebecca Adams has presented an argument along these lines in "Mothers, Metamorphs, Myth and Mimesis: A Creative Reassessment of Mimetic Desire." Colloquium on Violence and Religion. Loyola University, Lake Shore campus. Crown Center Auditorium. Chicago, Illinois. 2 June 1995. Adams argues that "the 'scapegoating' of positive desire is not central to the structure of the mimetic hypothesis but is an effect created by not following the hypothesis through to its logical conclusion. The scapegoat effect is created not because Girard does not speak centrally of positive desire or love as the

fundamental metaphysical and/or ethical reality, which he does, but because he does so in a way which remains within the very violent system of representation he seeks to undo."

¹⁷ The Freudian "family romance," as Jean Harris relates it to Pickwick Papers has Sam and Stiggins competing for father, Weller Senior. Such an interpretation insists on conflict between Weller Junior and Senior. I am not persuaded that the text represents such a conflict. Jean Harris, "But He Was His Father": The Gothic and the Impostorious in Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* in Psychoanalytic Approaches to Literature and Film, eds. Maurice Charney and Joseph Reppen, (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1987), 69 - 79.

¹⁸ Steven Marcus, "Language into Structure: Pickwick Revisited," 143.

¹⁹ Auden, "Dingley Dell and the Fleet," 428.

²⁰ Dickens' antagonism to utilitarian ideas at the practical level is expressed in Oliver Twist, which attacked the changes brought about by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.

²¹ E. R. Achtemeier, "Righteousness" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, R - Z, George Arthur Buttrick et. al, eds. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962) 80 - 85. Achtemeier asserts that the failure to truly comprehend what is meant by this Hebraic term is "perhaps most responsible for the view of Old Testament religion as 'legalistic'."

²² Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, reprint 1995).

²³ Robin Feuer Miller has also observed that "the figure of Christ and the style of the Gospels, which portray Him through parables and stories rather than through authorial explanations, provide Dostoevsky with models for characterization and narration." Dostoevsky and the Idiot: Author, Narrator and Reader (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981) 84.

Chapter Six:
Virtue as Scandalous : A Defense of the "Offense"

Writing about scandal in the New Testament in Things Hidden, Girard observes that

modern scandal excites a feverish desire to differentiate between the guilty and the innocent ... The person who is scandalized wants to bring the affair out into the open; he has a burning desire to see the scandal in the clear light of day and pillory the guilty party.¹

One critical tendency in dealing with Myshkin has indeed consisted of "pillorying" Myshkin, who is described by some critics as uniquely guilty for the downfall of Aglaia, Nastasya Filippovna, and Rogozhin. Numerous critics have been vexed by Dostoevsky's "perfectly good man." A typical objection to Dostoevsky's Myshkin is that of the American critic Murray Krieger. Writing in the 60's, Krieger indicted Dostoevsky's Prince as a "self-sacrificing enthusiast"² whose "irrational Christ-like transcendence of mere ethical judgment turns deadly." Myshkin persists, "becoming dangerously offensive himself."³ Krieger described Myshkin as burdened by the "psychosis of humility" and responsible for causing others' falls. Another critic, Freudian psychoanalyst, Elizabeth Dalton, faults Myshkin along similar lines for being a moral masochist. Following Freud, she writes: "the moral masochist ... (makes) ... use of opportunities in the external world to reenact the relationship with a loved and punishing parent."⁴ Dalton concedes, however, that "the charm and sweetness

of Myshkin's personality cannot be fully comprehended under the rubric of moral masochism." She qualifies her concession, however, by adding "neither can the terrible effects of this personality (i.e. Myshkin's) be understood without it."⁵

Both critics are right when they imply that Myshkin offends, although unlike these critics, I understand the nature of the "offense" in the Biblical sense as the overturning of idols. According to the Gospels, Christ himself offended (Greek, *skandalizein*) in this fashion.⁶ Myshkin, of course, is not Christ but a fictional transfiguration of a Christ-like figure,⁷ but he enacts "Christian folly." His meekness, compassion and detachment from others' desires poses a riddle to the other characters.⁸ Myshkin also offends by not conforming to a principle of utility. He offends by challenging the often cherished assumption that genuinely altruistic action is to be found exclusively in fiction, not real life. He offends by appearing inadequately self-interested. Myshkin offends when he embraces a non-violent ethic of compassion which dictates a regard for both victimizers and victims.⁹

While Dostoevsky presents us with a Christ-like figure, he obliges the reader to determine if she/he will be scandalized by him. Indeed, many take Myshkin's trusting forthrightness to be evidence of a dull wit. Myshkin himself knows that his illness and his trusting disposition have set him apart, branding him an object of ridicule, yet he does not doubt his own worth. Thus, at the Epanchins, he reflects about others' belittling perception of him, employing the term "idiot" in its common popular sense (one who is mentally incapable) and its medical sense:

Every one looks on me as an idiot, too, for some reason. I was so ill at one time that I really was almost like an idiot. But can I be an idiot now, when I am able to see for myself that people look on me as an idiot ? As I come in, I think, 'I see they look upon me as an idiot, and yet I am sensible and they don't guess it.' (I, 6, 71)

Меня тоже за идиота считают все почему-то. я действительно был так болен когда-то, что тогда и похож был на идиота; но какой же я идиот теперь. когда я сам понимаю, что меня считают за идиота ? Я вхожу и думаю: 'Вот меня считают за идиота, а я все-таки умный, а они и не огадываются.' (PSS 8, 43)

"Idiot !" serves as the refrain other characters utter on observing the spectacle of Myshkin's "folly." Ganya, Nastasya Filippovna, and Aglaya, by turn, use the term or its synonyms (*durak*, *urod*) as a form of abuse. Curiously, Myshkin's mimetic rival, Rogozhin is one of the few to actually consider Myshkin a kind of "blessed innocent" (Garnett's translation). That is, on learning of Myshkin's sexual inexperience, Rogozhin refers to him not as *idiot* or *durak* but as *iurodovii* (which may be glossed as holy fool but also eccentric, madman, half-wit). Although Myshkin has little in common with some of the extravagant doings of the holy fools of Russia, he is clearly a Christian "fool" in the Pauline sense as he takes little umbrage at others' estimation of him.

Myshkin's epilepsy dramatizes the anachronistic virtue of Christian meekness in the world of the novel in which most are Christian in name but few in deed.¹⁰ Some feel superior to the man who suffers from "idiocy." The illness leaves the sufferer maximally exposed and vulnerable. Dostoevsky suggests, however, that his protagonist's vulnerability becomes the source of his ethical

capacity and his spiritual health. This is dramatically illustrated in the description of the pre-epileptic aura which is presented with a nearly clinical realism. Prior to Rogozhin's murder attempt, Myshkin wanders about in a state of extreme distraction and confusion, morbid anguish and oppression, evincing the symptoms preceding an epileptic fit which Dostoevsky himself experienced. When the fit comes on, it is metaphorically described as "a flash of lightning" which ruptures the stability of clear skies. The typical thought process is flooded; it bursts like a dam, like thunder:

The sense of life, the consciousness of self, were multiplied ten times at these moments which passed like a flash of lightening. His mind and his heart were flooded with extraordinary light; all his uneasiness, all his doubts, all his anxieties were relieved at once; they were all merged in a lofty calm, full of serene, harmonious joy and hope ... "What if it is disease? he decided at last. "What does it matter that it is an abnormal intensity, if the result, if the minute of the sensation, remembered and analyzed afterwards in health, turns out to be the acme of harmony and beauty, and gives a feeling, unknown and undivined till then, of completeness, of proportion, of reconciliation, and of ecstatic devotional merging in the highest synthesis of life?" (II, 5, 218)

Ошущение жизни, самосознания почти удесят�ерялось в эти мгновения, продолжавшиеся как молния. Ум, сердце озарялись необыкновенным светом; все волнения, все сомнения его, все беспокойства как бы умиротворялись разом, разрешались в кайое-то высшее спокойствие, полное ясной, гармоничной радости и надежды, полное разума и окончательной причины ... "Что же в том, что это болезнь? - решил он

наконец - Какое до того дело, что это напряжение ненормальное, если самый результат, если минута ощущения, припоминаемая и рассматриваемая уже в здоровом состоянии, оказывается в высшей степени гармонией, красотой, дает неслыханное и нагаданное дотоле чувство полноты, меры, примирения и востороженного молитвенного слияния с самым высшим синтезом жизни ?" (PSS 8, 188)

After the initial turbulence comes a higher tranquillity, a sense of peace and reconciliation. The clear lines which are drawn between healthy and unhealthy by a positivistic discourse (popular at the time and not uncommon in our own) are here dissolved.¹¹ For Dostoevsky, biological explanations for illness do not trump all others. The medical condition does not invalidate a spiritual one. If Myshkin's fit recalls Apostle Paul's vision on the road to Damascus, this is not simply because he suffers from a lesion of the occipital cortex. Dostoevsky problematizes medical materialism,¹² while he ascribes to Myshkin an experience of light, "proportion, reconciliation, and ecstatic devotional merging." The bane of a terrible physical illness is reconceived by Myshkin as a rare opportunity to discern ultimate meaning.

As the description of the fit discloses, Dostoevsky's Christ, as refracted through Myshkin's imitation of him, is blessed with a singular vision.¹³ In Myshkin's first visit with the women of the Epanchin family, he describes a subject for a painting — the face of a man to be executed — which serves as a meditation on human violence, the desire for meaning and the function of art. Rather than looking away from suffering, passing it by or seeing it as alien, Myshkin's descriptions of the face of the condemned man convey an empathy for the condemned victim who is to be pitied rather than judged and scorned.

before the gaze of thousands. Myshkin advises Adelaide to paint the face "the moment before the blade falls." Levinas supplies a relevant gloss. It is possible, Levinas says, to witness the "exposure" and vulnerability of the other when one is in proximity to the other,¹⁴ particularly in proximity to the face of the other:

Prior to any particular expression and beneath all particular expressions, which cover over and protect with an immediately adopted face or countenance, there is the nakedness and destitution of the expression as such, that is to say, extreme exposure, defenselessness, vulnerability itself.¹⁵

Such vulnerability summons us and calls us into question as if the death "that must be faced by the Other were my business." It is precisely in extending himself towards the Other that Myshkin experiences a sense of infinity which justifies existence. The face of the other recalls a primordial responsibility which Myshkin acts upon. Myshkin feels called upon not to abandon the other to suffer and die alone, for as Levinas puts it:

The other man's death calls me into question, as if, by my possible future indifference, I had become the accomplice of the death to which the other, who cannot see it, is exposed: and as if, even before vowing myself to him, I had to answer for this death of the other, and to accompany the Other in his mortal solitude. The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question.¹⁶

To pass by the condemned man, or to refuse to gaze at his face, for Myshkin, means becoming the unwitting accomplice in someone's death. This care for the other involves an undoing of conventional boundaries between self and other. The ethical face to face relation with the Other, while immediate and singular, is also transcendent. It precludes what Dostoevsky calls "the bifurcated mind,"¹⁷ a division which arises, in the words of Levinas, from resisting "the call of the other."¹⁸

Myshkin is obsessed with the Other. It is not a neurotic obsession, but an ethical obsession. In conventional Christian terms, Myshkin's responses to others reveal him to be implicitly engaged in the imitation of Christ as Myshkin seeks reconciliation with others and encourages forgiveness. As the novel opens, he fails to be offended by Rogozhin's brusque questions. With the Epanchins, he recounts as a love story his part in the reconciliation of Marie and the children who have taunted her. (There are clear allusions to Luke 18:16: "Let the children come to me" and John 8, which tells of the near-stoning of the woman taken in adultery.) Later, among the Ivolgins, Myshkin prevents Ganya from attacking his sister (I, 10, 111; PSS 8, 99). He receives the slap intended for her. He spontaneously offers himself as a bridegroom to Nastasya Filippovna (I, 15, 157-58; PSS 8: 138 - 139). He draws the ire of Nastasya Filippovna's horsewhipped "admirer," while supplicating afterwards for peace with open hands (III, 2, 340 ff; PSS 8: 290ff). Some are scandalized, others, inspired by Myshkin's compassionate regard: he wins his way quickly into the hearts of Rogozhin, the Epanchins, and the Ivolgins. Nastasya Filippovna herself is also drawn to him; she describes him as "the first man I have met in my whole life

Rogozhin, the Epanchins, and the Ivolgins. Nastasya Filippovna herself is also drawn to him; she describes him as "the first man I have met in my whole life that I have believed in as a sincere friend. (« Я в него в первого. во всю мою жизнь, как в истинно преданного человека поверила. » I, 14, 149; PSS 8, 131.)

The manly and the preeminently humane coexist in Nastasya's summation. In spite of his ambivalence towards Myshkin, Ippolit also turns to him as one who embodies the humane and the Christ-like. Recalling Pilate's "Behold the man !" (« Се, человек ! » - John 19: 5), Ippolit ends his "testament," by saying to Myshkin: "Stand like that and let me look. I say goodbye to man." (III, vii, 406) (« Стойте так. я буду смотреть. Я с Человеком прощусь. »)

The parallel with Christ is made most explicit in ecphrastic terms when Myshkin is described as stroking the sobbing Nastasya's head (after the scandal scene with Aglaia in Part IV) ("... as soon as he fancied she was beginning to grieve again, or to weep, to reproach him or complain, he began at once stroking her head again, and tenderly passing his hands over her cheeks, soothing and comforting her like a child." IV, 8, 556) (*... вряд ли понимал что-нибудь, но тихо улыбался и чуть только ему казалось, что она начинала опять тосковать или плакать, упрекать или жаловаться. тотчас же начинал ее опять гладить по головке и нежно водить руками по ее щекам, утешая и уговаривая ее, как ребенка* PSS 8, 475) It is a gesture which Myshkin repeats when he comforts Nastasya's murderer. ("Myshkin was sitting beside him motionless on the floor, and every time the delirious man broke into screaming or babble, he hastened to pass his trembling hand softly over his hair and cheeks, as though caressing and soothing him ..." (IV, 11, 594) ... *и тихо, каждый раз при взрывах крика или*

compassion that would be difficult for most of us to duplicate under similar circumstances.

Myshkin is not "without desire," but he remains, for the most part, "untouched by others' desires," as Girard puts it.¹⁹ The state of grace which he embodies might be described in terms of mimetic theory as Myshkin's renunciation of acquisitive desire. Put positively, Myshkin's desire is successfully mediated by his transcendent model, Christ, whose distant "mediation" does not bring him into conflict with the other. Instead, he experiences a strong desire for the other's beatitude. Myshkin's refusal to adapt to mechanisms of violent differentiation marks him as going against the mimetic flow which accepts as the norm material accumulation at all cost, jockeying for position, power and prestige.

The notebooks to The Idiot bear out the perception that Dostoevsky's "perfectly beautiful man" began as a devil, a Stavrogin type, but ended up as something like an angel. Both demonic and angelic types, however, may be described as bearing what Girard calls "metaphysical desire." Taken in its negative aspect, metaphysical desire is the apotheosis of a deviated transcendence, resulting when the gap between the desirer and his/her object becomes an abyss. Thus, metaphysical desire, in its negative aspect, may function as the caricature of religious faith. Rogozhin's response to Nastasya serves as an illustration of this deviated transcendence. In its positive aspect, metaphysical desire, as Myshkin embodies it, is the representation of a religious faith which accepts the gap between a desirer and the transcendent model.

Myshkin's renunciation of acquisitive desire is represented as a spontaneous imitation of Christ. Myshkin is inspired to respond to others' faces. This is no simple response to physiognomy but instead, as Levinas has it, a particular kind of ethical disposition.²⁰ "Regard" for the face of the other, as Levinas puts it, is the basis for conduct, for such an attitude shows regard for the image of God. The encounter with the face of the other functions, from Levinas' perspective, as the ultimate summons to validate another human being, who cannot be incorporated into oneself. Prince Myshkin, as Leslie Johnson has argued in a Levinasian reading of The Idiot, is an expert practitioner of such regard (a concept which might be translated into Russian as *prilichie*, whose root is related to *litso*, face) — a kind of thorough-going decorum that has little to do with mere etiquette. He practices it when he looks, for the first time, at the portrait of Nastasya Filippovna. His "regard" is by no means, however, limited to her.

At first Myshkin's regard is contrasted with the kind of decorum (*prilichie*) by which many other characters in the text are motivated. Ultimately, Myshkin's difference is evident in his rejection of a dominance hierarchy which is underwritten by violence. Others are often eager to appropriate status at the expense of another: thus, for example, Ganya, Totsky and General Epanchin compete in trying to acquire Nastasya Filippovna. Rogozhin also wishes to gain her regard, but he differs from the others in his willingness to sacrifice everything in order to achieve it. In this, he and Myshkin, although antipodes, resemble each other, for both are moved towards an "expenditure" which is not utilitarian. Rather than treating Nastasya Filippovna as a commodity available

to the highest bidder, the Prince offers himself to her as a bridegroom. The explicitly biblical allusion (Matthew 9:15 and 25:1) to Christ as the bridegroom and his ministry as a wedding feast indicates that this is no painful self-sacrifice to Myshkin, but a pleasure.

But there is more at stake than the upsetting of hierarchy in the spectacle of Myshkin's folly. Like the meek one in the story by that title, he renounces the "right" to reprisal against Rogozhin's assault and the young nihilists' blackmail. Just as he did not condemn the convicted murderer whose execution he repeatedly described in part I, he does not condemn Rogozhin as he lies on the floor near the murdered Nastasya Filippovna. Embodying non-violent love requires a redefinition of subjectivity. Myshkin's example challenges those around him to reconsider the pleasure they experience in controlling, dominating, and overcoming the other. Thus, the question posed by Myshkin's humility is "far more radical [than a social critique], challenging not only conventions of a particular social milieu but the structure of life in any society and the fundamental structure of personality."²¹

A desired object may be money, status, beauty or even the "being" which an individual is perceived to possess. Rivalry over such objects can escalate into violence. Myshkin's Petersburg is rife with imitative desire, whose symptomatic expression is evident in increasing litigation. Burdovsky's friends libel Myshkin and try to extort money from him while calling this justice. Finding a legal means to exert power over others is the accepted norm. Thus Myshkin's going "against the flow" in his enactment of Christ-like non-violent love functions as a critique of his society whose values are radically different.

An example of such difference arises in the triangular configuration created with Nastasya Filippovna and Rogozhin. Myshkin is introduced to Nastasya through Rogozhin, who has identified her as the "queen" to whom his heart aspires. Myshkin appears to desire her initially in imitation of Rogozhin, although inexperienced in erotic love, Myshkin's interpretation of Rogozhin's desire is informed by the prior "love story" with Marie which recalls Christ's response to the woman taken into adultery (John 8). Rogozhin desires Nastasya sexually, while for Myshkin, she sparks admiration for her beauty and pity for her suffering. When Rogozhin observes the warmth which Myshkin's regard inspires in Nastasya Filippovna, he grows increasingly more inclined to see Myshkin as his rival.

The model of Christian love, forgiveness and renunciation of the right to reprisal which Myshkin embodies proves a challenge to Nastasya, Aglaia, and Rogozhin. (Ippolit's response to the Prince will be taken up in the next chapter.) The tragic shape which desire takes in the novel builds on several triangles in which Myshkin serves as a model whom others perceive as an obstacle to the fulfillment of their desires. Even those who are sometimes moved by his example respond to him as one whom they wish to dominate or one who requires their abject submission. But Myshkin requires neither the one response or the other. The ambivalence which others on occasion feel towards him by no means indicts him or his model: it does reveal the resistance of many to the notion of returning good for evil and refraining from violent reprisal.

Myshkin responds to the suffering he sees in Nastasya's face when he first looks on her portrait (I,3,34; PSS 8, 31 -32). The face in the portrait,

Myshkin responds to the suffering he sees in Nastasya's face when he first looks on her portrait (I,3,34; PSS 8, 31 - 32). The face in the portrait, like the woman herself, turns outward. In spite of her suffering, Nastasya Filippovna is capable, throughout Part I, as Johnson observes, of "holding the face of another in ethical regard."²² Her choice of company in Part I reveals this capacity; she has an "unaccountable affection for ... queer old men and women, and crazy people (*iurodovii*) even." (I,13,135; PSS 8, 119)

As the narrative progresses, however, Nastasya Filippovna turns inward, away from the other. Myshkin's regard for her does not reach her in her increasingly debilitating state of mind. He does not succeed in relieving her sense of shame; she clings to feelings of resentment. "Do you know," the Prince tells Aglaia, "that in that continual consciousness of shame there is perhaps a sort of awful, unnatural enjoyment for her [Nastasya Filipovna], a sort of revenge on some one." (III, 8, 420 - 421; PSS 8, 361) Her illness is described as a bondage to violence, a chain which she does not break. At the moment that Myshkin sees her as mad, he is described as plunged into the despair of one who sees a beloved woman "suddenly ... in chains behind an iron grating and beneath the rod of a prison warder." (III, 2, 339; PSS 8, 289) The reference here to Pushkin's 1833 poem, "God grant that I not lose my mind," underlines Nastasya Filipovna's precarious vulnerability, which Myshkin, himself having come from a sanatorium for mental patients, might well understand.²³ In this, he resembles his author who felt terrorized by his prison guards while in Siberia, and years later in Switzerland, became anxious that his epilepsy and the accompanying nervous debilitation would render him a helpless inmate of a

mental asylum. While the incarcerated woman and the chivalric desire to liberate her is a feature of gothic novels, (and is employed to radically different ends, for example, by Diderot in La Religieuse, published in 1796), Dostoevsky uses the gothic convention to explore the pathos of the human condition. Nastasya Filippovna is linked to the condemned man described in part I, to Ippolit, who lives with the death sentence of his illness, to Rogozhin, who will be sentenced to fifteen years at hard labor for Nastasya's murder, and finally, to Myshkin himself, the sufferer of epilepsy whose illness underscores human mortality.

Implicit in the description of Nastasya Filippovna as "suddenly ... in chains behind an iron grating and beneath the rod of a prison warder" is the sense that erotic desire itself may turn violent unless transformed by compassion. Her sexual awakening by Totsky has excited in her the desire to be possessed by one she loves to hate. Humiliated by Totsky's use of her, Nastasya Filippovna can only find her self-esteem in a victory over the one who offends her. First, he is Totsky; later, he is Rogozhin, whose love, Myshkin observes, cannot be distinguished from hate. Musing on the contrariness of such passion, Myshkin tells Rogozhin:

Any man would be better than you, because you really may murder her; and she knows that only too well now, perhaps. Is it because you love her so passionately? It's true that may be it. I've heard there are women who want just that sort of love ... (II, iii, 206)

Всякого, кроме тебя, лучше, потому что и впрямь, пожалуй, зарежешь, и она уж это слишком, может быть,

быть, теперь понимает. Что ты любовь-то ее так сильно ? Вот, это разве ... Я слыхивал, что есть такие, что именно этой любви ищут ... (PSS 8, 171)

"That sort of love" is a deformed *eros*, violent and acquisitive. Rogozhin feels that he needs to possess her. Her own pleasure arises from a narcissistic identification with his desire for her. She is early on well aware that Rogozhin may really murder her as Rogozhin's hangers-on warn her (II, 204) and as she herself observes (II, 205). Torn and divided, she is obliged to continually reproduce the condition of the original offense with Totsky, thereby bringing it about again.

Nastasya Filippovna is held hostage by pride and resentment. She identifies with the rejected fallen woman. She internalizes society's picture of her as a "street wench" and "Rogozhin's woman" (I, 15, 158; PSS 8, 138): at the end of the novel, she is said to be reading Flaubert's Madame Bovary. She "cries out that she was the victim of others ... but whatever she may say ... she's the first to disbelieve it." (III, 8, 421; PSS 8, 361) She sets out to break out of the "prison" of her past history with Totsky. ("I've spent ten years behind prison bars and now it is my turn to be happy," she tells the assembled company at her birthday party.) Insisting that she is the victim of others (*жертва людей*), she nevertheless will not let go of her sense of shame, and thereby she sabotages her own happiness. She is moved by Myshkin's message that she is not to blame for her past and that she is lovable as she is. (Thus she tells him: "... I dreamed of you long ago ..." I, 16, 165; PSS 8, 144). Her image of Myshkin resembles the painting which she imagines of Christ with a child at his knee (III, 10),²⁴ but she is incapable of consistently holding the image of divine forgiveness

before her. Wounded by Totsky, the surrogate father, she rejects a beneficent divine father available in the image of Christ as conveyed by Myshkin. In Girardian terms, she has internalized the voice of the crowd which condemns her. She dreamt of a "savior" who would tell her "you are not to blame" and "I love you" but when his proxy appears, she rejects him as too good for her. (II, 16, 165; PSS 8, 144) As the novel progresses, even though she throws herself at the feet of the "savior" (443), in time, she cannot forgive him for loving her, as Myshkin himself observes (III, viii, 422). By turns she idealizes him and despises him for his supposed "superiority" to her. Myshkin describes this struggle to Aglaia when he pleads with her not to "cast a stone" (*не бросайте камня*) at Nastasya. Recalling a brief period when he and Nastasya lived together, he observes that sometimes he succeeded in bringing her "to see light around her" (a phrase which reinforces other allusions in the text to the Gospel of John), but he did not succeed in effecting a radical conversion:

Sometimes I did bring her to seeing light around her once more, as it were. But she would grow restive again at once, and even came to accusing me bitterly of setting myself up above her (though I had no thought of such a thing) and she told me in so many words at last, when I offered marriage, that she didn't want condescending sympathy or help from anyone, nor to be elevated to anyone's level. (III, 8, 421)

Иногда я доводил ее до того, что она как бы опять видела кругом себя свет; но тотчас же опять возмущалась и до того доходила, что меня же с горечью обвиняла за то, что я высоко себя над нею ставлю (когда у меня и в мыслях этого не было). и

прямо объявила мне наконец на предложение брака,
 что она ни от кого не требует ни высокомерного
 сострадания, ни помощи, ни возвеличения до себя.
 (PSS 8, 361)

Myshkin is not wholly successful with Nastasya, but as some critics have noted, Christ himself did not always succeed in persuading others to let go of their shame, pride and rage.

Nastasya Filippovna comes to envy the Prince's detachment and she parodies it in a morbid fashion, writing in a letter to Aglaia: "But I have renounced the world." (III, x, 441) Nastasya's self-division brings her to the brink of madness and ultimately towards Rogozhin's knife. This is what Myshkin fears, foreseeing it most vividly when he falls asleep on the green bench, waiting for Aglaia. He is visited by a vision of Nastasya whose face reveals "remorse and horror" as if she were a "dreadful criminal" (III, vii, 411). He is troubled by a foreboding that she has condemned herself to life in the underground.

The image of imprisonment and confinement — the beloved woman who is "suddenly in chains" — is suggestive given that the murderer, Rogozhin will suffer "brain fever" and face imprisonment for murder. The violence Nastasya Filippovna turns within, the violence which Rogozhin visits on her, and the violence perpetrated by a legal system are represented as on a continuum. Each case is governed by a principle of exclusion. Nastasya Filippovna's masochistic delight in suffering, Rogozhin's murder of her, and the violence which the state visits on the condemned criminal, are related phenomena. Nastasya condemns herself as unworthy having internalized others'

condemnation of her; Rogozhin's pursuit of her intensifies her self-condemnation. Judgement is passed on one convicted by society or condemned by a court, but such "justice" alone cannot bring about the convicted one's genuine conversion away from the desire to inflict violence on self or others. The state which executes the criminal simply mirrors the violence of the criminal (as Myshkin suggests in Part I, and surely Dostoevsky agrees). Medical discourse, too, may function to exclude from human experience what is most difficult to quantify. It may operate in a court of law as a means of assessing an individual's culpability (as in Rogozhin's case, when he receives fifteen years at hard labor for Nastasya's murder) without ever fully addressing the causes for the tragedy. The alternative to violence is offered in the text in the example of Myshkin. Even with a disabling illness, there is still a point at which Myshkin exercises ethical choice. Myshkin's very capacity for inclusivity taxes him beyond measure, suggesting the author's fear that even the most generous people are not capable of sustaining a disinterested outgoing love (*agape*).²⁵

Myshkin's compassion for Nastasya, like his fellow-feeling for the convicted murderer whom he describes in Part I, arises from an intuitive understanding of the vulnerability of the victim. Myshkin is aware of an alternative to resentment which tears at Nastasya. The vulnerability he himself has experienced as an epileptic, rather than destroying him, has paradoxically been the source of growth, opening him to regard for the face of the other.²⁶ Even the face of Rogozhin, which is marked by a vindictiveness and "a painfully passionate expression" (I, i,3) reveals to Myshkin that no one is beyond

redemption. No one deserves to be left alone, like Christ, or like the condemned criminal, to die.

Myshkin himself is not immune to self-deceit. His confusion is foregrounded in Part II, chapters 3 - 5, where Myshkin's triangulation with Rogozhin and Nastasya Filippovna becomes most evident. Rogozhin identifies Myshkin as his rival, the one who has won Nastasya's regard but whom she will not marry. The two men exchange crosses in a gesture of Christian brotherhood and Rogozhin "renounces" his claim to Nastasya. As soon as Myshkin leaves his friend's house, he is drawn to see if Nastasya is at home. Rogozhin, for his part, watches him and waits for Myshkin with a knife. Myshkin wishes not to think evil of his friend, and tries to ignore the mesmerizing eyes (Rogozhin's) which he feels following him. "I am not his rival," Myshkin thinks. Linking Rogozhin with Gorsky, the real-life murderer of the Zhemarin family and Lebedev's nephew, Doktorenko, the "future allegorical murderer of the Zhemarin family," Myshkin still tries to deny Rogozhin's murderous intentions towards him. Indeed, he later considers his suspicions of Rogozhin a sin which puts him on par with the would-be murderer. (After the attack he tells Rogozhin: "I did suspect you of the attack; our sin was the same." III, 3, 354; PSS 8, 303) Here we meet with a curious characteristic of Dostoevsky's notion of the ethical: the pure and the just are unwilling to think another capable of evil. Sonya does not suspect Raskolnikov of murder until he actually communicates his crime. The working man who accuses Raskolnikov later retracts his accusation and asks forgiveness for his "evil thoughts." When we consider that Dostoevsky's model of the good is always Christ, as he wrote in his letter to Kavelin, we might

consider whether Christ sometimes knew others to be capable of ill doing and we would have to say that he did, and justly so. So it is not Myshkin's suspicion of Rogozhin which makes him the latter's rival; it is his naive unreadiness to fully recognize Rogozhin's rivalry which exacerbates the rivalry. Because Myshkin is accustomed to think of himself as awkward and unpresentable, he neglects to consider himself as capable of attracting women's interest and men's jealousy. Were he to recognize the full extent of Rogozhin's jealousy, he might have chosen not to seek Nastasya Filippovna out on leaving Rogozhin's. At the same time, however, the reader should recognize that Myshkin has no supernatural power: he is incapable of preventing the murder which ultimately takes place. He is not, however, solely responsible for the rivalry which contributes to the exacerbated tension between Nastasya and Parfyon and ultimately leads to Nastasya's murder.²⁷

A psychological history for Myshkin is not provided in the text: almost nothing is said about his early life except that he was ill and raised by two elderly ladies, relatives of his guardian, Pavlishchev. A detail concerning these two ladies emerges in a passing reference to them in Part IV: one was nearly abusively strict and the other, saintly and charitable. It appears that Myshkin wishes to follow the model of the latter, without harboring resentment towards the former. For the most part, however, Myshkin's past is veiled, as if his epilepsy was paradoxically primarily responsible for his turn towards the other. He appears on the scene like an apocalyptic messenger from a foreign land. Rogozhin, on the other hand, is another case. The text invites us to see what has happened to the son of a father who modelled the goodness of rivalrous desire.

Rogozhin's ambivalence towards Myshkin, as Myshkin interprets it, is of a piece with the senior Rogozhin's suspicious nature. ("When I am with you, you believe me, but when I am away, you leave off believing me at once and begin suspecting me. You are like your father." II, 3, 202) Rogozhin's father, whose full-length portrait hangs in the son's bed room, stares at the viewer with "suspicious, secretive and melancholy eyes." (II, 3, 200) Myshkin looks at the painting of the father and observes to Rogozhin: "if it were not for this burden laid upon you, if it were not for this love [for Nastasya], you most likely would have become exactly like your father." (Nastasya Filippovna echoes this, gazing at the portrait and telling Rogozhin: "And you might be another such one.") A merchant who has accumulated a large fortune, Rogozhin Senior placed his faith in acquisition. He would "do for a man" (*схитрит за человека*) over a small sum (I, i, 11). He admires violent manifestations of religious devotion, respecting the self-mutilating cult, the Skoptsi, whose members are his tenants. Since Rogozhin was dominated by his father (whose fierce beating had impelled Rogozhin to leave Petersburg), he rejects the role of the apparently submissive partner, his mother whom he loves as perhaps he loves Myshkin. Towards both Nastasya Filippovna and Myshkin, Parfyon Semyonovich revisits the violence that his father, Semyon Parfyonovich, had directed towards him. The son outstrips the acquisitive rival-brother who shares the father's name. The rivalry which Rogozhin experiences with his biological brother is extended in his relationship with his cross-brother.

Myshkin responds by modelling to Rogozhin a benign transcendent parent who does not rework the son by imposing a sadistic domination. In the

exemplary tale which the Prince tells of the peasant woman whose tiny baby smiles a first smile, he suggests to Rogozhin that God is a fond father or a caring mother, not an abusive or domineering parent. When the mother in Myshkin's story compares her joy at her baby's first smile to God's on receiving the tears of a penitent sinner, she reveals an illuminating connection between the human and the divine. The transformation of the man and the baby (the sinner's tears, the baby's smile) implies a dawning of receptivity to the other, an awareness of transcendence. Like the fond parent, Myshkin sees Rogozhin as capable of responding to the "call of the other."

Using the object relations model ²⁸ which to some extent parallels the Girardian emphasis on personal modelling, Myshkin might be said to represent for Rogozhin an introjected version of Rogozhin's religious mother, who, we are told, (according to Nastasya) "must have had a great deal of sorrow to bear." (II, iii, 207) That sorrow is not named; perhaps her life was not easy with Rogozhin's dictatorial father or perhaps she suffered, seeing the escapades of Rogozhin, who is identified as her "favorite son." The mother, senile and child-like, spends her days reading the *Lives of the Saints* like Rogozhin's widowed aunt. Rogozhin is by no means converted by such exempla, but he is apparently sometimes moved by them, as he leads his "cross-brother" to his elderly mother for a blessing as if "to put a check" on himself, as Myshkin observes later. (III, iii, 353)

Rogozhin rarely awakens to a regard for the face of the other. While he is briefly transformed when he renounces Nastasya, he acts on his envy of Myshkin, even aiming at his face in an unsuccessful assault. Rogozhin

subsequently expresses no contrition over the attempted murder. Even though Myshkin hurries to offer forgiveness, Rogozhin remains angry with Myshkin, who appears to Rogozhin masterfully detached from passionate desire. Rogozhin rejoices at the thought that Myshkin will be as undone by jealous passion as Rogozhin is. (III, iii, 354-355)

Myshkin does, in fact, begin to lose his detachment when romantically attached to Aglaia. So new is romantic desire to him that he fails to recognize it and he even repeatedly denies it. Disowning his feelings of attraction, he apparently tries to protect himself from vulnerability to possible rejection. As in his relationship to Nastasya, Myshkin is admired by Aglaia as a model of noble-hearted generosity, but she scorns him when she is unable to accept meekness as a virtue.

Aglaia's desire, informed by a high-minded idealism, is at the same time, deformed by extreme pride. She equates Myshkin with the chivalric knight (II, 7), but she is offended by his refusal to be offended by Burdovsky and company.²⁹ She finds the figure of the chaste courtly lover as ridiculous as he is attractive. Myshkin is troubled by her ambivalence as he reflects on her recitation of Pushkin's poem: "how could such a genuine and noble feeling be associated with such unmistakable malice and mockery?" (II, 7, 244; PSS 8, 209) She is disappointed that the man whom she recognizes as exceptional in "noble simplicity" and "boundless trustfulness" (IV, 8, 551; PSS 8, 471) is meek. Aglaia is divided between her admiration for meekness and her desire for ascendancy in an order of dominance. She hopes Myshkin will duel with the man who has insulted him. He says he will not fight. Myshkin does not fulfill

his quixotic promise in Aglaia's eyes.³⁰ While the image of Quixote distantly resonates with the image of Christ as the male warrior, Myshkin appears to have more in common with the "kenotic Christ," the humbled man.³¹

In his relations with Aglaia, Myshkin for some time excludes from his consciousness the possibility that she might love him and that he loves her. (The text refers to this as a "double thought.") Thus, when he receives Aglaia's letter arranging a meeting, the narrator informs us: "And if anyone had added that Aglaia's letter was a love letter, arranging a tryst with a lover, he would have been hotly ashamed of such a man, and would have perhaps challenged him to a duel." (III, iii, 351) Where dueling would have been out of the question before, it suddenly becomes a possibility. The narrator who has observed that Myshkin would be ready to answer a challenge to a duel stresses Myshkin's unfamiliarity with the experience of erotic attachment.

Myshkin's response to Aglaia's jealous fury over Nastaya's letters reveals his tendency to idealize her. Aglaia complains to Myshkin: "if she dares to write me a single line again, tell her I shall complain to my father, and have her put into a House of Correction." (III, 8, 423; PSS 8, 364) Her desire for reprisal against Nastasya takes Myshkin by surprise in the same way that he was surprised by Rogozhin's attack. ("Parfyon, I don't believe it," he said at the time.) He gazes in alarm at Aglaia's fury: "a mist seemed to fall before his eyes." His inclination to idealize her has blinded him to her jealousy. Eros is the breeding ground for unacknowledged projection: the loved one may be seen as the repository of all good attributes.

On subsequent occasions too, it is clear that the Prince suffers in his romantic attachment to Aglaia, who calls him to participate in everyday life even when he is distracted, absent-minded and tempted to stay outside the "eternal festival" of human society which he sees around him. (III, 7, 410) Alone and sad, at times he sometimes wishes to return to the "other world" of the Swiss mountains, whose vertical uplift bears elements of the romantic Russian sublime.³² He is dreadfully vulnerable in his romance with Aglaia: he is wounded and despairing at Aglaia's thoughtless irascibility but propped up again by her subsequent unexpected recoveries. (See IV, v, 496.) Her "gloomy and capricious" behavior "crushes" him. (IV, vi, 508) Her anxiety about his performance at the momentous high society party infects him. For her sake, and perhaps for his own, he fears making a fool of himself. At the party arranged to expose him to society and test his suitability as Aglaia's suitor, the courtesy of the "high society" which he encounters makes a favorable impression on him, for he is, we are told, "perhaps prejudiced and predisposed to favorable impressions." (IV, vi, 518) The petty vanities of the assembled guests are catalogued by the narrator as is Myshkin's trusting and innocent regard for them. He sees what he believes are their genuine personalities (*lichnost'*) rather than the masks, and it is possible that his perception is not entirely false. It is possible that Myshkin, who is gifted with a penetrating vision, sees in each guest a beauty the guests themselves do not even suspect they have.³³ Even Myshkin's tirade against Roman Catholicism on that occasion is not out of character, for in that speech, Myshkin opposes Western Catholicism's identification with secular power structures and lapsed Catholics' subsequent disillusion with

Christianity. (Western Protestantism fares just as badly in Dostoevsky's novels.) Myshkin observes the failure of historical Christianity to honor Christ's kingdom which is "not of this world" (John 18:36) and which therefore must not rely on the reciprocal violence which the world accepts.³⁴ While Myshkin is inclined to see Western Christianity as uniquely responsible for devaluing Christ's teaching, the novel nevertheless shows us that Christian Russia, too, is inclined to disregard it. The tirade against Western Catholicism and the smashing of the vase ends with Myshkin's enumeration of the guests' virtuous deeds, performed at one time or another. As Roger Cox observes in Between Heaven and Earth, "the scene resembles a final judgment in which men are forgiven and reconciled," having been made fully aware of their shortcomings.³⁵

But to return to the problem of Myshkin's illusions about others, we see that his tendency towards idealization leads him to discount his intuition that "there is a person [Nastasya Filippovna] who stands between" him and Aglaia. (IV, 511) Indeed, even after the two womens' angry face-off, Myshkin still credits Aglaia with the ability to understand his response to Nastasya. He sees her as capable of the same generous and non-possessive love which he offers Nastasya Filippovna.

While Myshkin is on occasion blinded by such projection, he is perhaps less at fault for others' downfalls than Krieger and other critics believe. An examination of the double thoughts (*dvoinye mysli*) for which he faults himself is revealing. "Double thoughts" become the topic of a conversation with Keller, who offers a confession to Myshkin, admitting to being drawn to both noble and base thoughts. Keller's confession is self-serving inasmuch as it is a means

for him to borrow money from Myshkin. (The self-serving confession made an appearance in Nastasya Filippovna's birthday party at the end of Part I; it has many intertexts in Dostoevsky's work, often involving a polemical engagement with Rousseau.) Myshkin does not judge Keller as much as he sees in himself the same fault. He too confesses to "double thoughts." (II, 11, 300; PSS 8, 258) modeling what a confession without a self-serving motive might be. Myshkin blames himself for being buffeted between two extremes: his "excessive senseless and impertinent readiness to trust people and at the same time, his gloomy suspiciousness." (II, xi, 292) This "tiresome trustfulness" has arisen in the "unnecessary candid statements" he made to Burdovsky (II, 8, 267), while his suspiciousness, as mentioned above, has to do with his misgivings (entirely justified but suppressed) about Rogozhin's capacity for violence towards him. On another occasion, Kolya guesses that this suspiciousness springs from a jealousy towards Ganya over Aglaia (II, ii, 303). The text hints at such jealousy. As if to discount such a motive, however, it shows that Ganya and his sister have intrigued to renew Ganya's chances for marriage to Aglaia. Aglaia herself considers Ganya as her fall-back for a marriage (perhaps a fictive one) which would release her from the confines of her predictable "proper" existence. Myshkin is fearful that Aglaia's idealism may blind her to Ganya's opportunism.

"Double thoughts" turn out to be emblematic of modernity. The modern age, as Dostoevsky represents it in the later 1860's, is ideologically diffuse: it lacks a moral compass. It is no longer capable of the single idea, "love your neighbor." Thus Lebedev drunkenly but aptly observes: the current age lacks the "binding idea" which once "guided men's hearts" (III,4). In the modern age, as

opposed to the reign of Peter the First, as Myshkin observes, "everyone is more nervous, more developed . . . (and) this prevents . . . being all-of-a piece." (IV, 5, 507; PSS 8, 433) Everyone is inclined to experience fragmentation by following numerous models; everyone internalizes the voice of the crowd. The text, however, presents evidence again and again for Myshkin's "simplicity," his "singularity," even his anachronicity, inasmuch as he holds to a single divine model. His reproduction of the Abbot Pafnuty's signature in Epanchin's study (I, iii, 31) alerts the reader to the kind of originality to which he subscribes. It is not the originality of which Ganya speaks (much like Arkady Dolgoruky in A Raw Youth or the pawnbroker in "A Meek One"). Ganya imagines that he will become original when he is a wealthy man (I, xi, 119), that is, when he imitates other men whose ruthlessness has aided them in accumulating wealth. Nor is Myshkin's originality that of "the practical man" whose absence, Dostoevsky observes, is so profoundly felt in Russia. (III, i, 315) Myshkin's originality lies in his fidelity to the Christian model of compassion.

Several objections here arise concerning Myshkin from a Freudian reading (in contrast to the "friendlier" analysis which object relations might offer). A Freudian reader faults Myshkin for his "extreme tenderness" for his rival, Rogozhin, particularly in the closing scene.³⁶ Such an interpretation begins with Freud's analysis of Dostoevsky's epilepsy as having a psychogenic rather than physiological cause: that cause is his supposed antagonism towards his father which is experienced through displacement when the father is murdered by his serfs. The oedipal conflict which Dostoevsky's and Myshkin's epilepsy reveals, from a Freudian point of view, is betrayed in the "extreme

tenderness for the rival" which can be explained by a latent homosexual content in the author and in his protagonist. Following this line of thought, both author and his hero must be subject to a morbid jealousy. Dalton extends the Freudian paradigm, reading in the final tableau a "sodomasochistic primal scene" which she claims to be the dominant unconscious motif of the novel.³⁷

One might extend the Freudian assessment to suggest that in imitating Christ, Myshkin acts the part of the domineering super-ego to Rogozhin's naughty id. Such a reading, however, suggests that together Myshkin and Rogozhin make a whole and that Rogozhin's active libido provides a healthy alternative to Myshkin's. (Indeed, Dalton is inclined to understand Myshkin's sexual inexperience and his chastity as sexual immaturity.) Yet the two characters are doubles not in the sense of one being a weak reflection or a hallucinatory image of the other, but in that both desire Nastasya, but from radically different perspectives. Rogozhin wishes to possess her, Myshkin to save her from her own worst impulses. The Freudian view does not distinguish between what Girard calls an acquisitive mimesis (in which Rogozhin is embroiled) and Myshkin's mimesis of apprenticeship.

Certainly, reducing the desire evident in the Rogozhin-Nastasya-Myshkin triangle to a matter of "latency" between Rogozhin and Myshkin adds little to the interpretation of the final tableau. As we focus on the presentation of Nastasya's corpse, it becomes evident that she has functioned as an idol of romantic love for Rogozhin. His desire is acquisitive, a variation of the mimetic sickness around him. Rogozhin seeks to impose order through the sacrifice of a victim. Harold Rosenberg asserts that Myshkin's embrace of the murderer by

the bedside of the bride "transforms the killing into a ritual sacrifice."³⁸

Rosenberg does not elaborate, but as the culmination of a mimetic rivalry exacerbated by Rogozhin's jealous desire, the murder is Rogozhin's parody of the Christian passion. In this case, however, the Christ-like figure remains alive to weep over his brother and the murdered victim.

If Myshkin's "tenderness for his rival," from a Freudian perspective, is pathological, then a saintly life must necessarily also be "sick." From this perspective, Myshkin must be driven by a need to suffer: this is not unlike Krieger's assertion that Myshkin endures a "psychosis of humility." There is an established tradition in Dostoevsky criticism, going back to Mihailovsky, that claims Dostoevsky is a "cruel talent" who romanticizes suffering or finds it magically redemptive. Nothing could be further from the truth in The Idiot. Myshkin acts as he does, not because he seeks suffering, but because he wishes to relieve it.

A Freudian reader might also say that Myshkin is simply caught in the severity of the demands of the super-ego, which "troubles itself too little about the happiness of the ego." Freud writes: "If more is demanded of a man, a revolt will be produced in him or a neurosis, or he will be made unhappy."³⁹ From this perspective, imitating Christ means being caught in a double bind, reduced to unhappiness and neurosis. "The commandment, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself' is the strongest defence against human aggressiveness," says Freud, but anyone "who follows such a precept . . . only puts himself at a disadvantage *vis à vis* the person who disregards it." If virtue is unrewarded in this life, argues Freud, then

loving one's neighbor as oneself "can only offer the narcissistic satisfaction of thinking oneself better than others." ⁴⁰

It may well be that some who strive to follow the love commandment enjoy the narcissistic satisfaction of thinking themselves better than others, but when Freud suggests that the healthy subject would never put himself at risk by following the precept "love thy neighbor" with a person who disregards this injunction, Freud can only account for altruistic behavior by crediting it as motivated by narcissistic satisfaction. Those, like Myshkin, who model "love thy neighbor" by Freudian lights must be "moral masochists." Yet this does not appear to be the case with Myshkin. Moreover, Myshkin demonstrates a capacity for extending himself beyond "a cautious but fair reciprocity" (which Freud advocated in Civilization and its Discontents).

Like Freud's advocacy of "cautious but fair reciprocity," theories of moral contractualism or utilitarianism which guide many contemporary psychologists, sociologists, economists and political scientists are often centered in the ego. These are modern variations of the utilitarianism which Dostoevsky repeatedly opposed. Even Kantianism (and neo-Kantianism) begins with the claim that the origin of ethics lies in the ability of reason to arrive at moral requirements. For Kant, too, then, ethics begins with the autonomous ego rather than originating in the Other. Some contemporary ethicists such as MacIntyre return to a Aristotelian focus on virtue and "natural" right action. Natural law theory also begins with the assumption that the ego is the center and origin of ethical behavior. Virtue, from such a perspective, is treated as a property of the ego.

The radical alternative to egoistic theories of ethical action which is offered by Levinas' phenomenology better fits the Dostoevskyeian text. This radical alternative points to the worthiness of others and the needs of others, calling us to a responsibility prior to reason, beyond our individual desire for happiness, before forming any contract with others. Levinas posits an ethical theory that is centered in the rights of others rather in the right of the ego. From the standpoint of our mutual humanity, Levinas elevates the preference to suffer rather than commit injustice; from the perspective of his ethical optics, "that which justifies being" (ethical relation) is preferred over "that which assures it." What justifies being is the regard for the existence of the other which Levinas represents as preferable to assuring being in terms of survival. This by no means involves a masochistic submission to the other.

Girard helpfully distinguishes between authentic Christian values and masochism in Deceit, Desire and the Novel:

For cynical moralists, and in a different way, for Nietzsche, all altruism, every identification with weakness and impotence, results from masochism ... All the values of Christian morality can be found in masochism but their hierarchy is inverted, Compassion is never a principle but a result. Good is loved in order that Evil may be hated more. The oppressed are defended for the sake of overwhelming the oppressors.⁴¹

Can we say that Myshkin loves good only in order to hate evil ? Or that he defends the oppressed only to overwhelm the oppressors ? The text does not

show this to be the case. Moreover, Myshkin's meekness, far from being a masochistic weakness, echoes the Russian orthodox emphasis on the meekness (*smirenie*) of Christ while Myshkin's epilepsy is the means by which Dostoevsky problematizes positivistic, scientific discourse of his time which made spiritual experience an illness.

What is striking is that Myshkin, who has foreseen the possibility of Rogozhin's murder of Nastasya, neither rails against the murderer nor invokes the mechanism of legal justice against him. Instead, he strokes the murderer's head, wordlessly consoling him. Rogozhin begins to babble; brain fever is coming on. Myshkin does not desert the sick man. In Levinas' terms, Myshkin's compassionate response is prior to the realm of free choice. It is a sign of his being gripped by the "Good beyond being," despite one's will and being "ordered to the other."⁴² Myshkin's gesture shows him wanting to be for the other what God is for him.

In the fourth part of the novel and particularly in the final tableau, the narrator seems puzzled by such behavior, observing in the final scene that the Swiss doctor who earlier treated Myshkin would despairingly again diagnose "idiocy." As Robin Feuer Miller has argued, there is a gap between author and narrator, and the reader is called on to resist the ironic detachment which accompanies the narrative voice. When we look to the other characters for guidance (someone to imitate?), we observe that the author offers help by showing where various deformations of desire have led. Nastasya's shame leads her towards Rogozhin's knife, Aglaia's pride toward a marriage based on deception, Rogozhin's acquisitive desire towards killing the "queen of his heart."

Each of these three characters might have chosen a different path; each tragically rejects it. This is not because Myshkin calls them to be something other than what they are. By example, he invites them to experience themselves more fully by opening themselves to regard for others.

While occasionally self-deceived, Myshkin is incapable of willfully hurting another. He is a doer of good in small gestures. It is not his conception of a particular idea which distinguishes him as much as his embodiment of one. Thus Yevgeney Pavlovich Radomsky's criticism of Myshkin at the end of the novel misses the mark.⁴³ Speaking with "positive eloquence" (IV, 9, 564; PSS 8, 483), Radomsky insists that Myshkin has been subject to an "intellectual enthusiasm" (*golovnoi rostorg*, cerebral delight or rapture) in his behavior towards Nastasya and Aglaia. This assertion coincides with the voice of rumour which attributes the Prince's conduct towards Nastasya to a nihilistic liberal excitement about "the woman question." Radomsky suggests that Myshkin's motives in responding to Nastasya Filippovna were "democratic." Yet Myshkin's compassion for the victim has little to do with intellectual convictions. Myshkin's goodness exceeds democratic motives or "common sense." He is capable of a spontaneous gesture of compassion as is evident in the final tableau. He resists a response of revenge towards the murderer. Following Christ whose death is described in the Gospel of John as an "act of love," he offers a gift of love with no expectation of a return.

The scandals in which Myshkin is involved — including the last in which he shares a similar end with his rival — do not indict the ethic of compassion which Myshkin embodies. His response to the other in concrete

interactions in the text shows that he operates from a sphere of accountability which is prior to any utilitarian calculus of effect. Drawing on the ethical phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas, the reader of The Idiot can sooner approach the moral universe of the Prince which is strongly anti-nomian. Indeed, Myshkin's actions can hardly be described as dictated by a "law" at all, if by "law" we understand an intellectual construction which precedes ethical behavior. What law could dictate how one might ethically respond, on every occasion and in all particulars, to the other? Myshkin's imitation of a divine model offends. His offense rests in his desire to remain true to his benign transcendent model and his recognition, implicit in his identification with the victimizer in the ending tableau, that he is not immune to rivalrous desire which ends in violence.

Myshkin's fidelity to an ethic of compassion is "idiotic" in the eyes of other characters who regard Myshkin as inadequately self-interested. Indeed, a critic like Krieger would diagnose Myshkin as psychologically sick. Krieger sees Myshkin as uniquely culpable for others' tragic choices. Although Myshkin is drawn into others' triangles, he is the best demonstration in the novel of the kenotic capability of the self, the one who is, as Zosima states in The Brothers Karamazov, responsible or guilty (*vinovat*) for everyone else. This readiness to see responsibility as starting with oneself rather than the other indicates a radical humility and even a fundamental asymmetry between myself and the other. As Levinas puts it: the self is "sub-jectum; it is under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything."⁴⁴ Rather than condemning us all to a sense of shame or helpless guilt towards the other, this formulation speaks of a

model of ethical subjectivity which is posited by a sense of originary responsibility for the other. Responding to the other, paradoxically, is the means by which the self is brought into being and replenished.

Notes

¹ Girard, Things Hidden, 426. In Things Hidden and The Scapegoat, Girard points out the prominent role which *skandalon* (stumbling block, offense, or scandal) plays in the Greek New Testament. "Scandal" in Girard's work, is a technical term, as Robert Hammerton-Kelly has pointed out, which refers to the desirer's wish to be like and to conquer the rival at the same time." Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly, The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994) 46, 134.

² Murray Krieger, "The Curse of Saintliness" in Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Rene Wellek, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 40.

³ Krieger, "The Curse of Saintliness," 48.

⁴ Elizabeth Dalton, Unconscious Structure in the Idiot (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 81.

⁵ Dalton, Unconscious Structure in the Idiot, 82.

⁶ To his own disciples, Christ observed: "You will be offended in me." (Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27.)

⁷ Holquist calls him "almost a parody" of Christ and Don Quixote. Holquist, Gaps in Christology in Dostoevsky and the Novel (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 132. Guardini and Nigg see him as a "symbol of Christ." Romano Guardini, "Dostoevsky's Idiot: A Symbol of Christ," Cross Currents 6 (1956): 359-82. 359; Walter Nigg, Der christliche Narr (Zurich: Artemis, 1956) 44.

⁸ Reading The Idiot in the light of Gospel scandal as Girard himself delineates it in Things Hidden leads to a more appreciative evaluation of Myshkin than Girard offers in his earlier work on Dostoevsky, while highlighting Dostoevsky's artistic purpose where Girard detects uncertainty or even ambivalence. Girard describes Myshkin as "not truly incarnate." When Girard considers the relationship of Rogozhin and Myshkin, he concludes that they are "two halves, forever disjointed and mutilated of underground consciousness." Moreover, he argues in Resurrection from the Underground that "the entire spiritual life of Myshkin, which is tied to epilepsy and his passion for humility, may be only the supreme form of that voluptuousness which makes the inhabitants of the underground relish humiliation." Girard, Resurrection from the Underground, trans. and ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad Herder Book, 1997), 79 - 80. (Dostoevski: du double à l'unité. Paris: Librairie plon,

Translation of Dostoevski: du double à l'unité (1963); republished in Critiques dans un souterrain, 1976. The translation is based on the later publication.

⁹ As Liza Knapp has observed, in Russian Orthodoxy, the non-condemnation of a sinner is presented as an ideal. Knapp cites the Tales of a Pilgrim as she observes that such love which does not make distinctions violates some sense of order and form. I would add: it scandalizes as Christ scandalizes. Knapp, "Myshkin, Through a Glass Murkily, Dostoevsky's The Idiot: A Critical Companion (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998) 203.

¹⁰ The parallel with Kierkegaard's *Anti-climacus* is apparent in this regard.

¹¹ Psychiatric pigeonholing in this century has been contested by R. D. Laing and others who argue that psychiatric affliction should be understood not as mere illness but as an attempt to find ultimate meaning. R. D. Laing, "Transcendental Experience in Relation to Religion and Psychosis" in Spiritual Emergency, eds. Stanislov Grof and Christina Grof (New York: Putnam, 1989), 53 - 54.

¹² William James will later do the same in The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902).

¹³ I am indebted to Jaroslav Pelikan's study of the image of Christ across the centuries, particularly Pelikan's appreciation of typical nineteenth century representations of Christ. Jaroslav Pelikan, Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

¹⁴ Levinas calls my inescapability from the call of the Other *proximity*: he uses this term to refer to the always there of the Other. He calls the radical otherness of the Other *transcendence*. That is, rather than suggesting a rising above one's baser self to a higher self, transcendence for Levinas is the incessant escape of the Other from my grasp.

¹⁵ Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," (from Justifications de l'éthique (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1984, 41 - 51) in The Levinas Reader, ed. Sean Hand. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1989) 83.

¹⁶ Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," The Levinas Reader, 83.

¹⁷ In A Writer's Diary, Dostoevsky described the bifurcated mind (*razdvoennyi um*) as a condition from which the Russian intelligentsia rather than the simple Russian people themselves suffered: [I]t is my life-long conviction that our . . . [Russian] people's mind is not bifurcated to such an extent as to cherish, side by side, with a noble idea, its dirty little

antithesis. This we frequently see in our intelligentsia. Besides, they entertain both ideas at one and the same time, not knowing which to believe and choose as a guide to action, denoting this state of their mind and soul as "wealth of development" and "blessings of European civilization." Dostoevsky, "Ob anonimnykh rugatel'nykh pis'makh," PSS 25, 129; "About Anonymous Abusive Letters," in A Writer's Diary, vol. II, May and June 1877, 976.

¹⁸ In Totalité et infini (1961) Levinas delineates an ethical face to face relation with the Other which while immediate and singular at the same time bears a transcendent import.

¹⁹ Girard, Deceit, Desire and the Novel, 163.

²⁰ Levinas locates the ethical moment on the level of the level of sensibility when the self encounters the other as a felt weight. The other is a transcendence that comes from beyond the categories of thought. The other catches me off guard. This catching off guard makes me aware of the presence of the other as one who merits my concern, not because I choose to give it to the other, but because it is demanded of me.

²¹ On this point, I agree with Dakon. Dalton, Unconscious Structure in the Idiot, 73.

²² Johnson, "The Face of the Other in *Idiot*," Slavic Review 50, no. 4 (Winter 1991), 876.

²³ "Не дай мне бог сойти с ума." Pushkin, Pushkin Threefold, trans. Walter Arndt, Dana Point, California: Ardis Publishers, 1993, 252 - 255. "... сойди с ума, / И страшен будешь как чума, / Как раз тебя запрут. / Поцадят на цепь дурака / И сквозь решетки как зверка / Зразнить тебя придут. / А ночью слышать буду я / Не голос яркий соловья, / Не шум глухой дубров - / А крик товарищей моих / Да брань смотрителей ночных, / Да визг, да звон оков. " ... go off your mind, / And men will dread you like the plague, / (And) straightaway lock you up, / will put the madman on a chain / And through the screen like some small beast, / will come to harass you. / And in the night I shall not hear / The nightingale's clear voice, / Nor oak groves' murmurous rustle — / But my companions' cries, / And the night warder's curses, / And shrieks, and clanging chains ... "

²⁴ In spite of the traditional picture of piety suggested in her view of Christ, Nastasya is no unsophisticated reader: she prescribes Sergei M. Solovyov's History of Russia (Volume I appeared in 1851) for Rogozhin, whose lack of cultural sensibility she abhors.

²⁵ Dostoevsky remarks (16 April 1864) about the gap between human love and Christian love as he sits by the bier of his first wife: "Masha is lying on the table. Will Masha and I ever

see each other again? It is impossible to love oneself *as oneself* according to Christ's commandment ... Only Christ could do this, but Christ was eternal, an eternal ideal, toward which man strives and must, by the laws of nature, strive. At the same time, after the appearance of Christ as *the ideal of man in the flesh* it became clear as day that ... the highest use to which man can put his personality is ... to destroy, as it were, that *I*, to give back in full to each and every one selflessly and wholeheartedly ... It is precisely this that is the paradise of Christ." Neizdannyi Dostoevskii, 173 - 75.

²⁶ Myshkin's growth through trial resonates with a recognition in Dostoevsky's life when he looked back on the period of his incarceration in Peter Paul Fortress, a time of maximal nervous strain. His retrospective analysis of his own mental condition emphasizes not the physiological but the ethical: this affliction, he feels, awakened in him a sense of his responsibility towards the other. Pis'ma, Vol. 1, 106.

²⁷ Dalton and Krieger are inclined to blame Myshkin alone for the rivalry rather than seeing other characters as responsible for their own actions. Krieger maintains that Myshkin "continually drove Nastasya into Rogozhin's murderous hands and ... at the same time whipped Rogozhin into the frenzy needed to turn Rogozhin homicidal." Certainly Myshkin is drawn into a triangle with Nastasya and Rogozhin. And while it is true, as Krieger asserts, that Myshkin becomes Rogozhin's rival, the two men differ radically in their intentions towards her. For her part, Nastasya Filippovna is free to act as she will; tragically, she sees herself as acting freely even when she is in fact most constrained by a masochistic shame. Krieger evidently regards Myshkin as solely responsible for failing to redeem the fallen woman, but Krieger disregards Nastasya's own surrender to despair and shame.

²⁸ That is, Rogozhin's relationship with Myshkin might be conceived as a matter of projective identification and introjection, processes traceable to the primary relational figures of the past ("objects" such as mother and father). Projection is defined by Laplanche and Pontalis as the psychological process whereby a subject assimilates an aspect or attribute of the other and is transformed wholly or partially in accord with the model which the other provides. Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, Language of Psychoanalysis, trans. Donald Nicholson (New York: Norton, 1977).

²⁹ Several commentators have observed that Aglaia's equation of Myshkin with the "poor knight" is of a piece with Kierkegaard's "knight of faith" in Fear and Trembling who must make a teleological suspension of the ethical. See E. Ziolkowski, The Sanctification of Don Quixote: from Hidalgo to Priest (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) 142; Anthony J. Cascardi, The Bounds of Reason: Cervantes, Dostoevsky, Flaubert. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 94 -95 and Joseph

Frank, "The Idiot" in Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865 - 1871 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.) I am not at all persuaded, however, that the Prince "suspends" the ethical.

³⁰ Faulting Myshkin for Aglaia's fate (marrying a poseur and converting to Catholicism), Krieger fails to attend to Aglaia's wish to violently champion the underdog. Aglaia expects Myshkin to behave like a Quixote who will enforce his vision at the point of a sword, and when he does not, she is disappointed.

³¹ In The Russian Religious Mind (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 1946-1976, George Fedotov describes kenoticism as a central feature of Russian Christianity. Sergius Bulgakov similarly highlights the importance for the Russian Orthodox tradition of the image of the "humbled Christ" and the Russian valorization of the "people of God": the poor and the simple. Sergius Bulgakov, The Orthodox Church, trans. Lydia Kesich, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 1988 (1935), 150 -151.

³² James Billington observes the romantic confluence, for Russians, of Raphael's Sistine Madonna and the vertical uplift of the Alps. Raphael's painting, which was on exhibit in Dresden, became a stopover point for Russians traveling by land to Western Europe. Billington, The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966) 348. The painting "inspired Russians to sigh for a world of beauty and freedom." It was apotheosized by Zhukovsky who wrote of it in the following lines: "Ah, not in our world dwells / The genius of pure beauty: / Only for a time it visits us/ From the heights of heaven."

³³ Myshkin's vision of the beauty of his interlocutors recalls an entry in the January 1876 number of A Writer's Diary, in which Dostoevsky reflects on the insecurity of Russians, so grotesquely demonstrated at "the governor's ball, the ball of the beau monde." Dostoevsky suddenly wonders: "What if each of them should suddenly learn how much straightforwardness, honesty, most sincere, heartfelt cheerfulness, magnanimous feelings, good will, intellect ... there is in each of them." Even if Dostoevsky is joking, he is at the same time seriously reflecting on one of his favorite themes: the role of beauty in the world.

³⁴ A principle of duality of temporal and spiritual authority as laid down in Matthew 22:16 - 22 was elaborated in the Byzantine church. It seems likely that Dostoevsky treasured this legacy of his church. Richard Pipes observes that had the church in Russia upheld this principle, it might have succeeded in limiting the state's authority and the later egregious development of secular power. See Richard Pipes, Russia under the Old Regime (New York: Penguin, 1993), 244. Not all would agree with Pipes that the Russian church docilely placed

itself at the disposal of the autocratic state. Indeed, tensions between the Russian church and the secular Russian authorities from the 1860's through the last decades of the tsarist state may have been too readily overlooked by Russian historians like Pipes who have tended to identify the interests of church and state rather than treating the church as an organization with its own set of interests.

³⁵ Roger Cox, Between Heaven and Earth: Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and the Meaning of Christian Tragedy (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969) 189.

³⁶ Nowhere does Freud talk about The Idiot; a Freudian reading of Myshkin must be extrapolated from his writing.

³⁷ Dalton, Unconscious Structure in The Idiot, 170.

³⁸ Harold Rosenberg, Introduction to The Idiot, trans. Henry and Olga Carlisle, (New York: Penguin, 1969) viii.

³⁹ Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961) 90.

⁴⁰ Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, 90.

⁴¹ "Pour les moralistes cyniques et, en un sens un peu différent, pour Nietzsche, tout altruisme, toute identification à la faiblesse et à l'impuissance relève du masochisme... Toutes les valeurs de la morale chrétienne sont présentes dans le masochisme mais leur hiérarchie est inversée. La compassion n'est jamais le principe mais la conséquence. Le principe, c'est la haine du méchant triomphant. On n'aime le Bien que pour mieux haïr le Mal. On ne défend les opprimés que pour mieux accabler les oppresseurs." Girard, Mensonge romantique et Vérité romanesque, 216. Deceit, Desire and the Novel, 189.

⁴² Levinas, Otherwise than Being, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981) 116.

⁴³ Dostoevsky critics are divided about the author's attitude towards Radomsky. Joseph Frank calls Radomsky "the perfect model of a sympathetic and well-bred Russian gentleman whose delicacy and courtesy is beyond reproach; his skeptical intellect does not allow his emotions to go beyond the rules of decorum that protect his inner complacency." ("The Idiot" in Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 324.) Wasiolek argues that "Radomsky — on whose words Krieger's whole thesis rests — is not the moral norm of the novel against which Myshkin is to be judged. Radomsky has one of those glib, rational, pragmatic, balance-sheet

minds that Dostoevsky held in loathing." Introduction to The Notebooks to *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, trans. Katharine Strelsky (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 16 In Krieger's view, Radomsky has Dostoevsky's approval and "is there to help us judge Myshkin." I find Frank's and Wasiolek's estimation of Radomsky more persuasive than Krieger's. We might observe that Radomsky's ultimate summation of Myshkin is "ha, ha ... poor idiot" (*bedny idiot*). Nevertheless, in an ending beyond the ending, one wonders if Radomsky, like Rogozhin, may ultimately be transformed either by gazing at the face of the Prince whom he undertakes to visit in Switzerland or by his relation to the young madonna figure, Vera Lebedev.

⁴⁴ Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 116.

Chapter Seven:
Staging Scandal: The Holbein Christ and the Final Tableau in The Idiot

Dostoevsky offers the reader guidance as to how to understand his depiction of Christian folly through the numerous narrative perspectives on a painting of the dead Christ generally attributed to Holbein the Younger. For Myshkin, the painting represents a realistic kind of art which calls faith into question although it does not shake his own faith. For Rogozhin, the painting is emblematic of his own loss of faith and for Ippolit Terentyev, the dying young consumptive, the painting represents not only his own loss of faith but his fear that the world is devoid of compassion. Dostoevsky himself saw Holbein's Christ in the Tomb in 1867 in a museum in Basle, Switzerland. His wife Anna reported that seeing the painting moved her husband to remark that one could lose one's faith looking at the picture — a sentiment which Myshkin echoes. The painting of the dead Christ fascinated Dostoevsky, and it scandalizes the characters in his text. This scandal is staged in the characters' responses to the Holbein Christ and revisited in the final tableau in which Myshkin wordlessly consoles Rogozhin, Nastasya Filippovna's murderer while the murdered woman's corpse presides in the background.

Robin Feuer Miller has asserted that the Holbein painting in The Idiot presents the same test of faith for the characters of the novel as the ending tableau does for the reader. Certainly, Holbein's dead Christ poses an interpretive quandary to the characters in the novel. Similarly, Dostoevsky's final tableau puts some hard questions to the reader. How can Myshkin, who loved Nastasya Filippovna with pity and paternal compassion, resist hating her

murderer ? Why does he waste a gesture of compassion on a man who seems not to deserve it ? And finally, if we identify with the victim, does that exclude sympathy for the victimizer ? In seeking answers to these questions, I will argue that while the painting rehearses "scandal" to the characters, the final tableau succeeds in scandalizing the reader to the extent that Myshkin's compassionate response towards the murderer presents a model of behavior difficult to appreciate much less to emulate. How the reader is implicated in the tragic dénouement of the novel may be explicated by drawing again on Girard's Biblical reading of scandal, which is traceable to Gospel treatment of the *skandalon*, (*soblazn* in Russian) translated as "offense," "obstacle," "stumbling block," or "snare."

Girard sees scandal as uncovering a mechanism of violence in which individuals, families and societies are enmeshed. "Scandal," as Girard describes it, designates the obstacle [to desire] that both attracts and repels at the same time." In desiring what another desires, a desiring "subject" makes a rival and obstacle of this model. Scandal is an irresistible compulsion, an obsession. The underlying principle of this obsession is violence, the desire to dominate or be dominated. For Girard, Christ, like the prophets in the Hebrew Bible decisively exposes violence as humanity's greatest affliction which myths, unlike gospel, seek to justify. ¹ From the point of view of Girard's mimetic theory, Jesus' exposure of the mechanism of violence makes him a model who becomes an obstacle to everyone caught in the illusion created by desire, imitation and rivalry. ²

The figure of Christ in the painting of the dead Christ in the novel functions as a model to Myshkin, and both model and obstacle to Rogozhin and Terentyev. This is evident in the differences and parallels between the characters' reactions to the painting of Christ. When contrasted with the final tableau, the painting reveals the sense in which Myshkin's imitation of Christ becomes an obstacle to Rogozhin, and perhaps the reader as well. Myshkin's "offense" resides in his identification with the victimizer as well as the madwoman who has been victimized. The presentation of the Prince's "offense" climaxes in the final tableau.

Paintings of Christ Described in the Text

The painting of the dead Christ which suggests "scandal" to Myshkin, shows up in Rogozhin's apartment in Part II (chapter iv) of *The Idiot*.³ The narrator registers the painting's dimensions, (about 6 feet long and a foot high), and offers the briefest of comments about its subject: "It was a painting of the Saviour who had just been taken from the cross" II, iv, 210. (*Она изображала спасителя, только что снятого со креста*. PSS 8, 149) Myshkin observes the painting at first without comment, but feels drawn to leave as soon as possible, as if to get away from the picture. When Rogozhin detains him, however, Myshkin notes that he has seen the painting's original in Basle and that this seems a good copy. (The reader will observe, though, that the Holbein painting referred to is not a picture of a man that has been "just taken from the cross.") Rogozhin confesses that he likes to look at the painting. (« А на эту картину я люблю смотреть. ») Indeed, that is all that Rogozhin offers by way of description or interpretation. Myshkin expresses surprise: "At

this picture!" *« На эту картину ! Да от этой картины у иного еще вера может пропасть. »* "One could lose one's faith looking at this picture !" (my translation). Rogozhin answers: *« Пропадает и то. »* (II, iv, 211, PSS 8, 182) "That's just what it's doing" or "Indeed, faith could disappear." The reader is introduced to the painting through the effect it works on these two viewers. A paltry amount of realistic description is offered. Myshkin registers the religious-aesthetic effect the painting might have; Rogozhin notes the anti-religious effect the painting actually has had on him.

A full physical description and interpretation of the painting is provided only much later in the text by Ippolit in his "testament" (III, vi), a long confessional document in which he intends to display his originality before preceding with a melodramatic suicide. Ippolit notes, as did the narrator, that the picture shows Christ just taken from the cross. Ippolit contrasts the portrayal of Christ in the painting with a more recognizable, conventional one which favors an "extraordinary beauty of face" (*с оттенком необыкновенной красоты в лице*).

Such a conventional picture is suggested in Dostoevsky's text by Nastasya Filippovna (III, x). In a letter to Aglaia, Nastasya Filippovna imagines Christ with a little child beside him. One might find Nastasya's picture in a children's religious primer like the one from which Dostoevsky learned to read.⁴ In her picture, Christ is resting his hand on a child's fair little head, looking into the distance, as the child looks intently at the man, leaning his elbow on Christ's knees. Both man and child are thoughtful, both illuminated, as if by an icon light, by the "slanting rays of the setting sun" (*косые лучи заходящего*

солью), a favorite Dostoyevskian topos (III, x, 441; PSS 8, 380.) The image of loving paternal nurture is presented us again in IV, viii, where Myshkin strokes the head of the increasingly frenzied Nastasya in exactly the way he will later stroke her murderer's.

In contrast to the picture of a living Christ which Nastasya Filippovna imagines, the picture of Christ which Ippolit describes stresses the physical agony, the torture (*страшная мука*) which is evident in the realistic presentation of the aftermath of the crucifixion. Ippolit describes the painting in this fashion:

I believe artists usually paint Christ, both on the cross and after he has been taken from the cross, still with extraordinary beauty of face. They strive to preserve that beauty even in his most terrible agony. In Rogozhin's picture, there's no trace of beauty. It is in every detail the corpse of a man who has endured infinite agony before the crucifixion; who has been wounded, tortured, beaten by the guards and the people when he carried the cross on his back and fell beneath its weight, and after that has undergone the agony of crucifixion, lasting for six hours at least (according to my reckoning). It's true it's the face of man only just taken from the cross — that is to say, still bearing traces of warmth and life. Nothing is rigid in it yet, so that there's a look of suffering in the face of the dead man, as though he were still feeling it (that has been caught very well by the artist). Yet the face has not been spared in the least. (III, 6, 395-96)

Мне кажется, живописцы обыкновенно повадились изображать Христа и на кресте, и снятого со креста, все еще с оттенком необыкновенной красоты в лице;

эту красоту они ищут сохранить ему даже при самых страшных муках. В картине же Рогожина о красоте и слова нет; это в полном виде труп человека, вынесшего бесконечные муки еще до креста, раны, истязания, битье от стражи, битье от народа, когда он нес на себе крест и упал под крестом, и наконец, крестную муку в продолжение шести часов (так по крайней мере по моему расчету). Правда, это лицо человека *только что* снятого со креста, то есть сохранившее в себе очень много живого, теплого; ничего еще не успело заостенеть, так что на лице умершего даже проглядывает страдание, как будто бы еще и теперь им ощущаемое (это очень хорошо схвачено артистом); но зато лицо не пощажено нисколько; тут одна природа, и воистину таков и должен быть труп человека, кто бы он и был, после таких мук. (PSS 8, 333- 334)

Ippolit notes, as Myshkin did, that the painting has a potentially faith-shattering effect because of the realistic portrayal. Ippolit appears to elaborate Myshkin's initial response to the painting by attributing the painting's distressing effect to its lack of transfiguring effulgence. To his description Ippolit adds:

In the picture the face is fearfully crushed by blows, swollen, covered with fearful and blood-stained bruises, the eyes are open and squinting: the great wide-open whites of the eyes glitter with a sort of deathly, glassy light. But, strange to say, as one looks at this corpse of a tortured man, a peculiar and curious question arise; if just such a corpse (and it must have been just like that) was seen by all his disciples, by those who were to become his chief apostles, by the women that followed him and stood by the cross, by all who believed in him, and worshipped him, how

could they believe that martyr would rise again? (III, 6, 395-96)

На картине это лицо страшно разбито ударами, вспухшее, со страшными, вспухшими и окровавленными синяками, глаза открыты, зрачки скосились: большие, открытые белки глаз блещут каким-то мертвенным, стеклянным отблеском. Но странно, когда смотришь на этот труп измученного человека, то рождается один особенный и любопытный вопрос: если такой точно труп (а он непременно должен был быть точно такой) видели все ученики его, его главные будущие апостолы, видели женщины, ходившие за ним и стоявшие у креста, все веровавшие в него и обожавшие его, то каким образом могли они поверить, смотря на такой труп, что этот мученик воскреснет ? (PSS 8, 333- 334)

Ippolit echoes Myshkin's initial sentiment that a picture may destroy faith, that art, particularly religious art, may not only fail to deliver an edifying message, but that the message which is received may be most unedifying. Christ's dead body is a sight which Ippolit imagines as scandalizing to the faithful, although he readily concedes that the first followers must have seen something like it, and still believed. Indeed, for Ippolit, the figure in the painting is an enigma, a source of obsessive fascination. Christ, for Ippolit, is an obstacle to the fulfillment of his own desire to live and not to die. Attracted though he to nihilism, he is horrified at the denial of transcendence, and for it, he substitutes a romantic urge to show himself independent of all in his testament and his suicide attempt.

The subject of the picture is identified by Ippolit as the man who was "wounded, tortured, and beaten" (*раны, истязания, битье*), the object of others' fear and hatred, the quintessential victim. Christ is also described as one who

had foreknowledge of a painful death, and still chose it, which is nonsensical to the dying Ippolit. (*И если б этот самый учитель мог увидеть свой образ накануне казни, то так ли бы сам он взошел на крест ?*) Christ in the picture, as Ippolit sees it, has been crushed by nature which has acted "like a huge machine."

Looking at such a picture, one conceives of nature in the shape of an immense, merciless dumb beast, or more correctly, much more correctly, speaking, though it sounds strange, in the form of a huge machine of the most modern construction which, dull and insensible, has aimlessly crushed and swallowed up a great priceless Being ... (396)

Природа мерещится при взгляде на эту картину в виде какого-то огромного, неумолимого и немого зверя или, вернее, гораздо вернее сказать, хоть и странно- в виде какой-нибудь громадной машины новейшего устройства, которая бессмысленно захватила, раздробила и поглотила в себя. глухо и бесчувственно, великое и бесценное существо ... (PSS 8, 334)

Ippolit rejects the awful spectacle, repelled by the cruelty to the victim which is so evident in the description. It is an attitude that a non-Christian and a Christian alike might share. Ippolit's horror at "nature's" apparent victory is a post-romantic inversion of the romantic image of nature as loving mother (so evident in Rousseau and Wordsworth). This is nature from a Darwinian perspective but with a sadistic twist: in Ippolit's description, nature is monstrous, engulfing, unthinking, and all-powerful. Ippolit reads in the mechanical crushing of Jesus something which he fears himself: that he too will

be reduced to a thing. Myshkin invites Ippolit to forgive others for living when he, Ippolit is dying. It is evident that Ippolit cannot. He is inclined to blame his own death, like Christ's death, on all-powerful nature which functions as a cover for an Other or others whom he wishes to impress and scandalize.

One Holbein painting or two ?

In comparing the paintings to which Myshkin, Rogozhin, and Ippolit respond, it appears that two actual paintings have been conflated. The one hanging in Rogozhin's house fits the dimensions of Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb* ; the painting described by Ippolit as the work at Rogozhin's corresponds to Holbein's *Descent from the Cross* or Grunewald's *Lamentation*. Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb* presents a Christ whose body is already undergoing rigor mortis, as suggested in the peculiar jutting angle of the chin, the greenish color of the body and the discoloration on hands and feet. The painting which appears in Ippolit's description, however, shows the man just taken from the cross, "still warm." Ippolit does describe the eyes of the dead man as they appear in *Christ in the Tomb* : "the great wide-open whites of the eyes glitter with a sort of deathly, glassy light." Curiously, the angle of the subject in the painting is elided in Ippolit's description, but for the viewer of the painting to take in the details of the bruises to the face and body as Ippolit describes them, the body must be posed frontally or at least turned towards the viewer. This difference emphasizes Dostoevsky's creative reworking of his artistic sources. Moreover, the different emphasis in Ippolit's description of the painting and the actual painting suggests what troubled Dostoevsky about the Holbein painting in the first place: not only does it reflect a Renaissance tendency to humanize the

figure of Jesus and the story of his passion but to the extent that the painting suggests some kind of theology, it reflects a theology of the cross (to use Luther's phrase) rather than a theology of glory.⁵ Generally speaking, the former has been favored in the iconography of the Protestant and Catholic West, the latter, in Russian Orthodoxy.

While the dimensions of the painting observed by the narrator in the text correspond to the Basle deposition — that is, it is as long as a six foot tall man, laid out horizontally — neither the narrator nor Myshkin, Rogozhin, nor Ippolit mention that the corpse is seen from the side, its head slightly turned toward the viewer. None remark the horizontal presentation nor the peculiar sense of confinement conveyed in the upper border of the painting titled *Christ in the Tomb*. *Christ in the Tomb* evidently did not serve as Dostoevsky's sole model for the painting which appears in Ippolit's description.⁶ The painting of Ippolit's description shares with Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb* the absence of tendencies to ennoble the subject or to fast-forward over the violence done to him.

What further diverges from Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb* in Ippolit's description is the focus on the face of the man. Ippolit says it has been "fearfully crushed by blows, swollen, covered with fearful and blood-stained bruises." (Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb*, by contrast, shows a face which lacks these grotesque details of torture but is instead slightly swollen and bluish-gray in color.) In particular, Ippolit describes the eyes as glittering "with a sort of deathly, glassy light." That is, this once live and suffering human being has been transformed into an unseeing thing, now an object of others' gazes. In a text

replete with descriptions of faces, Ippolit's description of the painting is remarkable in that the face, one of the most prominent aspects of Ippolit's description, has been "smashed." Thus the painting has the force of a ruined icon, particularly shocking in a culture in which the icon is conceived as embodying divine presence. The unseeing gaze of the Christ in the Holbein painting appears, in Ippolit's description, to be a "profane image" (an idol) rather than an icon as it absorbs his gaze rather than leading his regard toward an invisibility beyond itself. It is in such terms that Jean-Luc Marion discusses the difference between an idol and an icon in La Croisée du visible et de l'invisible (1991).⁷

Curiously, the stigmata — probably characteristic of every *Descent of Christ* ever painted — are not even mentioned in Ippolit's description. The painting of Christ of Ippolit's description is emblematic of any victim. Nor does Ippolit distinguish between a victim of murder or legal violence in his description of the "wounded, tortured, beaten" human figure. This fact links the painting with the final tableau (IV, i), where we find Myshkin and Rogozhin posed beside the body of the murdered Nastasya, waiting for the police to arrive.

The Holbein Painting(s) and the Final Tableau Compared

The reader is initially invited into the final scene at Rogozhin's from the perspective of Myshkin, who enters the room almost gropingly, for in this house of the dead, Rogozhin refuses to light a candle. Only the full moon casts light. Myshkin enters the darkened room where "someone" (*kto-to*) sleeps.

... Myshkin's heart beat so violently that it seemed as though it were audible in the death-like stillness of the

room. But his eyes were accustomed by now to the darkness, so that he could make out the whole bed. Someone lay asleep on it, in a perfectly motionless sleep, not the faintest stir, not the faintest breath could be heard. The sleeper was covered over from head to foot with a white sheet and the limbs were vaguely defined; all that could be seen was that a human figure lay there, stretched at full length. All around in disorder at the foot of the bed, on chairs beside it, and even on the floor, clothes had been flung in disorder; a rich white silk dress, flowers, ribbons. On a little table at the head of the bed there was the glitter of diamonds that had been taken off and thrown down. At the end of the bed there was a crumpled heap of lace and on the white lace the toes of a bare foot peeped out from under the sheet; it seemed carved out of marble and it was horridly still. (IV, 11, 589)

... у князя билось сердце, так что, казалось, слышно было в комнате, при мертвом молчании комнаты. Но он уже пригляделся, так что мог различать всю постель; на ней кто-то спал, совершенно неподвижным сном; не слышно было ни малейшего шелеста, ни малейшего дыхания. Спавший был закрыт с головой белой простыней, но члены как-то неясно обозначались; видно только было, по возвышению, что лежит протянувшись человек. Кругом в беспорядке, на постели, в ногах, у самой кровати на креслах, на полу даже, разбросана была снятая одежда, богатое белое шелковое платье, цветы, ленты. На маленьком столике, у изголовья, блистали снятые и разбросанные бриллианты. В ногах сбиты были в комок какие-то кружева, и на белевших кружевах, выглядывая из-под простыни, обозначался кончик обнаженной ноги; он казался как бы выточенным из мрамора и ужасно был неподвижен. (PSS 8, 503)

It is a painting in chiaroscuro; the dominant colors are black (the darkness) and white: the sheet, the dress, the lace, ribbons, diamonds, and "marble" toe. The bride is dead; where all is stillness, silence and disorder, her resurrection is implicitly called into question. Nastasya, who was ever in motion between the two men, is now "perfectly motionless;" there is not the "faintest stir" (*не было ни малейшего шепота*) in the room except for Myshkin's almost audible heart-beat. Alive, Nastasya was remarkable for her tempestuous mutability; dead, all is stillness and silence around her. Alive, she was an individual and had a face which Myshkin remarked for its "strange beauty." Now, wrapped from head to toe in a sheet, she has become "someone," a "sleeper," her face concealed in the make-shift shroud of the sheet. The detail of the toe, visible outside the sheet, white and marble-like, suggests that there is only a trace of woman-as-beautiful-statuary. The toe is the only part of Nastasya which evades the temporary shroud in which Rogozhin has enveloped her. It is a hint of Nastasya as resisting subject, the subject who refuses to be treated as object.⁸

Nina Pelikan Strauss has also observed the similarity between Nastasya's corpse and a Holbein painting of the Dead Christ. She notes that Nastasya's body is horizontally presented, like Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb*. Myshkin's gaze at once takes in the whole bed on which Nastasya Filippovna is posed. Her sex and identity, though, unlike the Christ whom Holbein painted is, at first glance, indeterminate (*видно только было, по возвышению, что лежит протянувшись человек*); she is an emblematic victim. Strauss concludes that Nastasya as female victim de-centers the representability of a Christian male Savior, and that this is indicative of Dostoevsky's displacement of "the woman

question" with "an answer in anachronistic Christianity."⁹ Strauss does not elucidate her adjective "anachronistic" and she patently ignores the fact that the Christ-like figure in the text, Myshkin, is not the murder victim. In contrast with Strauss, I argue that paintings of the dead Christ described in the text and recalled in the final tableau reveal that the representation of Christ as victim interrogates the sacralization of violence.

Not only is Nastasya a prominent "object" in Rogozhin's room, posed on a bed around which bed curtains are arranged, she is not identified at once by name. The stillness and silence add to the horror of the scene, which Nastasya herself imagined when alive. Her anticipation of her own death (in Part III,x) adds another similarity between the picture of her corpse and the Christ of Ippolit's description. Both victims have foreseen others' violence against them. The fate of both is tragically overdetermined, given others' negative responses to them and their own "scandalizing" performances. Both have been treated as "objects;" both have faces whose beauty is obscured. Nastasya Filippovna's face is covered, while Christ's face, according to Ippolit, bears the imprint of nature "red in tooth and claw."

No longer an "infinitely precious being," Christ, in Ippolit's view, has been made into a thing. Nastasya Filippovna has suffered the same fate. Rogozhin, possessed by a variation of his acquisitive father's mania, has succeeded in possessing Nastasya Filippovna in the ultimate sense, by taking her life. He has made Nastasya into the emblem of a possessible transcendence, the idol of an erotic faith. While the Holbein Christ functioned for Rogozhin and Ippolit as a picture of failed transcendence, so Nastasya's corpse functions

symbolically as the site of deviated transcendence. That is to say, in the "French triangle" of Rogozhin, Myshkin and Nastasya, Rogozhin has placed Nastasya at the apex of the triangle (a place which Myshkin also occupied).

While the Holbein Christ has been presented in the text as questioning religious faith, the picture of Nastasya's corpse throws into doubt a faith in that desire which is acquisitive by nature. It is a picture which questions not physical love but that kind of human desire which wishes to subsume the other's very being in oneself, rendering the other an acquirable object.

Many nineteenth century romantic novels feature dying or dead heroines, including Flaubert's Madame Bovary, Poe's "Ligeia," Alexandre Dumas (fils) La Dame aux Camélias, and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and it is certain that Dostoevsky was familiar with all of these works. Barbara Heldt has recently expressed her objections to the final scene precisely because of this similarity. In an introduction to her book in which she tells the reader where not to look for representations of women in Russian literature, Heldt describes the scene with Nastasya's corpse as "melodramatic pornographic posing." Voicing distaste for the "voyeuristic" response which she says Dostoevsky invites, Heldt declares:

Dostoevsky has taken the stereotype of the woman of ill repute and transmuted her into a dead princess dressed in bride's clothes grieved over by men - Snow White, Desdemona, Madame Bovary or Lily Bart. Only the tip of her foot conveys a slightly necrophilic touch to what would have been a Victorian painting had the scene been in an English novel.¹⁰

Heldt is "scandalized" because Dostoevsky's heroine chooses badly. Heldt fails to recognize that the tableau with Nastasya does not conform to the convention of a glorifying or eroticized portrayal of the suffering body as in Madame Bovary. One can distinguish between Rogozhin's "framing" of Nastasya and Myshkin's. Rogozhin "framed" her and "staged" the scene, but it is from Myshkin's perspective that the reader observes this framing. While the narrator is intermittently unreliable, in this scene the picture of Nastasya is related from the perspective of Myshkin.

As Myshkin and Rogozhin take up a vigil by the corpse, words are no longer adequate to express what they are feeling. Rogozhin begins to babble with brain fever; Myshkin to comfort him, silently, patting his head. The text is reduced to a picture without comment except by the (notably unreliable) narrator. The narrator, who as Robin Feuer Miller notes, had temporarily disappeared, returns and remarks that if Schneider were to return, "idiocy" would be his despairing diagnosis of "the perfectly beautiful man." But neither the narrator's distanced analysis nor the hypothetical medical one decodes the sign of the compassionate gesture.¹¹ That is a "speech" of its own; a code at which the "idiot" excels. It is a critical moment which is coherent and defining. Its import will be taken up in the final movement of this chapter.

In the scene in which Myshkin and Rogozhin view the painting of the dead Christ in Part II, the difficulty of communicating the truth of faith directly is implied. As the two men stand by the painting, Rogozhin asks the Prince if he is a believer. In response, Myshkin offers neither a direct "yes" or "no" but rather several parable-like stories, recounting kinds of piety. One kind

is that of a murderer who killed a friend for a watch, praying as he cut his friend's throat, that Christ would forgive him. The second type of piety, a peasant woman's, is summed up as the woman devoutly crosses herself at her baby's first smile. She explains as she does so that God rejoices like a mother at her smiling baby when a sinner is praying to him with all his heart. These examples illustrate the Prince's characteristic manner of exposition; he calls into question any rhetorical performance of belief, although this opens up his own performance to question. Myshkin's parable directs his friend (and the reader) to the image of successful imitation of a divine model: smiling baby-grateful mother-loving God. Concurrent with this is the image of unsuccessful imitation of a divine model, in which we see the murdered owner of the watch and the murdering peasant for whom faith wipes out individual responsibility.

As the two men exchange crosses, Rogozhin links the exchange of crosses to the woman they both desire, although from opposing perspectives. Rogozhin relinquishes Nastasya Filippovna to Myshkin. ("Don't be afraid ! Though I've taken your cross, I won't murder you for your watch ... well, take her then, since it's fated ! She is yours ! I give in to you !" (II, 4, 215; PSS 8, 185) *« Небось ! Я хоть и взял твой крест, а за часы не зарежу ! Так бери ж ее, коли судьба ! Твоя ! Уступаю ! »*) Rogozhin appears to recognize himself as both victimizer (the murdering peasant) and victimized (the peasant who is murdered). He takes the exchange of crosses as prompting him not to murder Nastasya, not to treat her as a thing to be acquired. His implicit comparison of her with the watch, however, makes it clear that he thinks of her as an object of exchange, as his offering of a hundred thousand rubles for her in Part I

indicated. Nastasya, like the cross and the painting, from Rogozhin's perspective, is the object of desire which will magically quell desire and confer being itself.

The Holbein painting, like the brotherly exchange of crosses which follows its first appearance in the text, functions as a bond between the two men as Nastasya Filippovna has been. The challenge which the Holbein painting issues is crucial for Myshkin and Rogozhin; the painting marks a turning point in their relationship. In part I, both men were established as rivals for Nastasya Filippovna, as Girard observes in Deceit, Desire and the Novel. Girard describes this resemblance between Myshkin and Rogozhin as an example of mimetic doubling (which is to be distinguished from the Freudian concept of the double as one who represents some displaced, repressed aspect of the self.) In later work, Girard characterizes the wish to appropriate what another has because the other has it as "mimetic desire," which tends to escalate towards violence. Myshkin's and Rogozhin's desires converge on Nastasya Filippovna, but their intentions towards her differ. Rogozhin wishes to possess her; Myshkin, to protect her, to save her from her own worst impulses. Yet when Myshkin sees a copy of the Holbein painting at Rogozhin's house, (in part II,iv), their rivalry — from Rogozhin's side — is temporarily cancelled, because, as Rogozhin puts it, he "believes in" Myshkin when they are together. That is to say, Rogozhin appears drawn to the Prince's *imitatio Christi*, but both Myshkin and Christ prove to be models whom Rogozhin perceives as obstacles to desire. Rogozhin loses faith in the good, as Myshkin exemplifies it, when Myshkin is absent.

Similarly, for Rogozhin, the Holbein painting is an emblem of divine absence and loss of faith.

The friends' exchange of crosses is mediated by the discussion of the painting, but just as the painting means something different to both men, the "sign" of cross brotherhood evidently differs radically. Rogozhin offers his cross to Myshkin, claiming, in a peculiar reading of Myshkin's parable, that he will not kill Myshkin to possess Nastasya Filippovna. The cross is linked to Rogozhin's renunciation of Nastasya, although shortly he attempts to murder his cross-brother. Myshkin himself has promised not to see Nastasya, but immediately makes a trip to her apartment. To Myshkin the exchange of crosses appears to mean that both men are drawn to Christ as a model to imitate. But to Rogozhin, Myshkin's cross seems to function as a talisman which will ensure that he can acquire what his rival has already gained without compelling it: Nastasya's regard.

Reflecting later on the painting and the exchange of crosses, Myshkin takes the painting as evidence that Rogozhin is struggling to renew a faith which he has lost, that he is struggling against a force that compels him to look at the picture.

He had said that he liked looking at that picture; it was not that he liked it, but that he felt drawn to it. Rogozhin was not merely a passionate soul; he was a fighter, anyway; he wanted by force to get back his lost faith. He had an agonizing need of it now ... Yes, to believe in something ! To believe in someone. (II, v, 223)

Он говорит, что любит смотреть на эту картину; не любит, а значит, ощущает потребность. Рогожин не одна только страстная душа; это все-таки боец; он хочет силой воротить свою потерянную веру. (PSS 8, 192)

Perhaps Rogozhin's fascination has to do with his admiration for Christ's love but his desire not to share the same end. Myshkin feels the painting to reveal the attraction both men share for Christ as a model, but by the end of the novel, we see that Rogozhin has rejected the model. Myshkin holds himself responsible for Rogozhin's action because he had foreseen it but not been able to prevent it.

Myshkin can imagine being scandalized by the painting; Ippolit actually is scandalized. Robin Feuer Miller explains how their responses differ. "Myshkin can maintain his faith, his belief in the possible resurrection of beauty even in the face of such a painting but Ippolit cannot."¹² It is the subject of the painting, in fact, which brings up the problem, not the painting itself. The realistic treatment in the painting in itself is not a scandal: what is scandalous, offensive, and uncomfortable is the fact of human violence enacted against a single victim.

Although the painting has succeeded in moving Ippolit, he judges it to be "bad art" as it inspires nightmarish visions which implicitly deny both beauty and order in the world. « В ней не было ничего хорошего в артистическом отношении. » (PSS 8, 333) "There was nothing good in it in an artistic sense." (My translation.) Ippolit links Rogozhin to the image of chaos (*безобразие*), Myshkin to an image of order and beautiful form (*образ*).¹³ Ippolit sees in the Holbein Christ the effacement of the divine, and subsequently, a loss of faith in beauty. For Dostoevsky, however, the painting was transfixing. It was this

painting (in contrast to Holbein's *Danse Macabre*) that made the writer declare Holbein "a painter and a creator of the first rank."¹⁴ Perhaps the crisis of faith which Dostoevsky felt brought on by such a picture was a result of the emotional recognition that the man depicted in the painting, like Dostoevsky's Christ in the Grand Inquisitor episode in The Brothers Karamazov was granted no miracle and no supernatural power to side-step suffering. The cross was no magic talisman.

The Holbein portrait "deconstructs" the conventional representation of the crucified Christ. It conveys no theology of sacrifice, which deems the death of the victim necessary.¹⁵ It does not emphasize the idea of mankind's salvation through sacrificial atonement, and thus, ends up being in step with eastern Christian theology which has emphasized the redemption of mankind as taking place through the Incarnation. The emphasis, then, is on the murder of the man.

The Holbein picture is a picture which is offered, as Julia Kristeva notes, without embellishment or ennoblement or the company of mourners who suggest what attitude the viewer might adopt. Holbein "leaves the cadaver alone," Kristeva writes, adding that "it is perhaps this isolation — a matter of composition which imparts a major weight of melancholy to the picture— much more than does its drawing or color scheme."¹⁶ "With no intermediary, suggestion or indoctrination," adds Kristeva, "whether pictorial or theological, other than our ability to imagine death, we are led to collapse in the horror of the caesura constituted by death or to dream of an invisible beyond."¹⁷ Kristeva appears to be complaining that there is no one in the painting to copy in taking

an attitude toward the "spectacle" presented. Yet why is this so problematic? Isn't "crossing into the land of belief" — which Kristeva with an ironic distance calls the "dream of an invisible beyond" — a decision which must come from each individual separately? Could the sense of abandonment in the painting come, not from the exclusion of mourners, but from the viewer's own reluctance to compassionately identify with a figure so abject?¹⁸

The violence that has been enacted against the human body in the Holbein painting or paintings is desacralized. That is, without a sacrificial theology, this violence cannot be construed as the sanctioned murder of a son by his sadistic divine father: a sacrificial bargain struck on behalf of humanity. The man in the painting is not such a "sacrifice" but a tortured victim. Sanctioned, legalized violence is the horrible "necessity" crushing him (and not some sadistic Darwinism, as Ippolit imagines). The man is the victim of a murder, not one who has in a masochistic fashion conspired in his own end. His humanity is emphasized in the painting. He is not all powerful, but most powerless. The painting emphasizes human violence; it does not mythify violence as "divine." It challenges us to identify with the human victim.

The Impact of the Final Scene on the Reader

Our attitude towards the emblematic victim portrayed in the painting is crucial for interpreting the final tableau. The Holbein Christ is a portrait which, in the novel, portends a tragic, not a transcendent, vision. Similarly, the word picture with the corpse of Nastasya, presiding over Myshkin's lapse into "idiocy," and Rogozhin's descent into brain fever, appears to enforce the bankruptcy of what Sven Linner has called the "mimesis of virtue." Robin Feuer Miller writes:

"One must ask whether the tableau at the end of the novel ... is another example [like the Holbein portrait] of this kind of dangerous art in which the laws of nature have defeated the good and the beautiful."¹⁹ The idea that there is "dangerous art" which defeats the "good and the beautiful" is communicated in Myshkin's, Rogozhin's and Ippolit's responses to the painting. However, the very conception that the laws of nature will "defeat the good and the beautiful" is a romantic presupposition which Ippolit expresses and which we need not share. Instead, we may see the violence done to a sacred image is staged in Dostoevsky's text. That does not mean that violence to the historic human person is merely imagined. The romantic conception that the laws of nature may defeat the good and beautiful obscures what is scandalous in the pictures of the dead Christ and the dead Nastasya. The Holbein paintings which rehearse the unromantic picture of a man crushed by other men's violence prepare us for the "aha" experience which the final tableau affords.

In the final tableau, we see Myshkin lapsing into idiocy, his rival and friend, into brain fever, and the woman who has drawn both of the men together, murdered. It is a disturbing picture, but not because it is a "voyeuristic melodramatic posing," in Heldt's terms, nor because, as Nina Pelikan Strauss suggests, Nastasya Filippovna as Woman replaces Christ.

It is disturbing because it disrupts plots of romance or revenge. Myshkin, who loved Nastasya Filippovna with pity and paternal compassion, resists hating her murderer because he sees not only Rogozhin but himself as responsible for her murder. The prince's gesture is scandalizing in that it challenges the reader to love the victim, but to refrain from condemning the

victimizer. Myshkin's spontaneous response of compassion for Nastasya's murderer stands out as a flicker of hope in Rogozhin's house of death.

Notes

¹ Girard describes the quintessential scandal in the Hebrew Bible as idolatry; scandal in the Christian gospels, he argues is "the other as the object of metaphysical fascination." René Girard, Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World, 425.

² In passing, it should be noted that Girard's reading of scandal may be contrasted with Jacques Derrida's. Derrida has addressed the question of scandal as a literary phenomenon in Writing and Difference. For Derrida, as for Girard, scandal is an illusion, but not for Girard's reasons. Derrida sees scandal as a violation of the "rule of explainability." Since Derrida believes the rule of explainability must be transgressed, scandal, for him, is an illusion, a deconstructive tool that interrogates accepted truths. Derrida's scandal, as David McCracken has pointed out, is finally nonexistent, for once distinctions are abolished, scandal is no longer scandal. David McCracken, The Scandal of the Gospels: Jesus, Story and Offense, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 11.

³ New Testament references to *skandalon* are numerous and include Matthew 13:21, 15:12, 16:23, Mark 9: 42, Luke 17:1, 1 Corinthians. 1:23.

⁴ This eighteenth century primer is a translation of Johannes Hubner's Hundert und vier heilige Geschichten aus den Alten und Neuen Testament (1714) from which Dostoevsky's mother taught her children how to read, according to Dostoevsky's brother Andrei. Joseph Frank, Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821 - 1849 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976, 43. (In VI, ii (B), Father Zosima claims to have been taught to read from the same book.)

⁵ Luther distinguishes between a "theology of the cross and "theology of glory" in theses 21- 24 of his "Theses for Heidelberg Disputation," Martin Luther: Selections from his writings, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961).

⁶ When closely examining Ippolit's description, it becomes apparent that some other image of the dead Christ is conflated with the Holbein painting. Anna Dostoevsky's remarks on the *Christ in the Tomb* in her published diary include only that painting; Grossman quotes her and also only refers to the *Christ in the Tomb* on exhibit in Basle. In Dostoevsky's Quest for Form, Jackson also refers only to *Christ in the Tomb* in connection with the novel; Frank, however, mentions the *Descent from the Cross* in Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, but only speaks about *Christ in the Tomb* in his most recent discussion of The Idiot, where he

respectfully cites Kristeva's examination of this painting in her study on melancholia, Black Sun. Kristeva cites Ippolit's description of the painting, and remarks the Holbein, Grunewald and Mantegna treatments of the subject of the descent from the cross and the entombment but does not engage with a close analysis of the text and thus does not note the apparent difference between Ippolit's description and Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb*. Harriet Murav refers to the painting which serves as the object of horror as *Descent from the Cross*. It seems that two paintings are conflated in the novel: either the Holbein paintings *Christ in the Tomb* and *Descent from the Cross*, or the Grunewald deposition of Christ and Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb*. One wonders whether Dostoevsky himself was aware of this conflation.

⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, La Crois   du visible et de l'invisible (1991) cited in Eugene Webb, The Self Between: From Freud to the New Social Psychology of France (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993) 248.

⁸ Nastasya's portrait, which Myshkin regards in Part I, similarly reflects a subject who refuses to be made object.

⁹ "Nina Pelikan Straus, "Flights from the Idiot's Womanhood," Dostoevsky and the Woman Question: readings at the end of the century (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 52.

¹⁰ Barbara Heldt, "Misogyny and the Power of Silence," in Terrible Perfection (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992) 36.

¹¹ Harriet Murav has examined the use of nineteenth century medicalization of discourse in her study on holy foolishness in Dostoevsky's novels. Murav, Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique.

¹² Robin Feuer Miller, Dostoevsky and the Idiot: Author, narrator, and reader (Cambridge: Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1981) 212.

¹³ Jackson discusses this in Dostoevsky's Quest for Form.

¹⁴ Anna Dostoevsky, Reminiscences, ed. and trans. Beatrice Stillman (New York, 1975).

¹⁵ Where Latin Christianity emphasized the idea of mankind's salvation through sacrificial atonement (a position argued, for example, by Anselm of Canterbury in *Cur Deus Homo* (1098), eastern Christianity has emphasized the redemption of mankind as taking place through the Incarnation.

¹⁶ Julia Kristeva, Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 124.

¹⁷ Black Sun, 124.

¹⁸ Kristeva sounds an indeterminate note about the viewer's engagement with the spectacle of the Holbein Christ. Expressing a post-modern indecidability, she queries: "Does Holbein forsake us, as Christ, for an instant, had imagined himself forsaken? Or does he, on the contrary, invite us to change the Christly tomb into a living tomb, to participate in the painted death and thus include it in our own life, in order to live with it and make it live?"

¹⁹ Robin Feuer Miller, Dostoevsky and the Idiot: Author, narrator, and reader, 213.

Chapter Eight: Decomposition and the Saint: Father Zosima

The portrayal of "the wholly beautiful person" occupies Dostoevsky once again in The Brothers Karamazov (1880) in the depiction of Zosima and his disciple, Alyosha. Through Zosima, Dostoevsky himself is performing an *imitatio Christi*. In a letter to Maikov, where Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724 - 1783) is described as a model for a literary picture of a saint, Dostoevsky declares: "Truly, I am not going to create, I am only going to portray a real Tikhon whom long ago, with deep delight, I received into my heart."¹ Dostoevsky's inscription on the page of his novel of the image outlined in his heart echoes Apostle Paul's insistence that believers write the word of Christ on the "fleshy tables" of their hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3; King James translation). Like the apostle, Dostoevsky intends to bring about a change in the reader: that is, he attempts to mediate a transformation in the reader's own consciousness that would reflect his experience of the Christian ideal. It is an ideal which is often discarded or judged inefficacious or foolish, or thought all too invisible in the real world.

Robert Louis Jackson tells us that Dostoevsky's preferred means of showing how the visible and invisible intersect is through scenes of life that could be categorized as "bezobrazie" (deformation, without form, derived from "bez" without and "obraz" image or icon) in order better to reveal the transfiguring power of the "obraz."² In this study I have sought to investigate such iconic aesthetics primarily in terms supplied by mimetic theory. The dynamics which I have traced in other Dostoevskyeian representations of virtue

are again present in the episodes dealing with Zosima, the scandal which arises following his death, and the meaning of this scandal in Alyosha's experience. There arises a model/obstacle relationship; a mimetic crisis takes place in the community and in the young initiate when the model is perceived as an obstacle. In the community of the monastery, the mechanism of scapegoating is activated, but for Alyosha, who recognizes himself as capable of rejecting another person, the temptation to locate all fault in the other comes to a dramatic halt.

Zosima's corpse scandalizes some of the monastery's inhabitants in the same way that Christ's crucifixion appalled and frightened his own disciples, most of whom stayed away from Golgotha. Before his death, Christ's refusal to seek power and prestige surprises his disciple Peter, who expresses the hope that he will be seated at Christ's right hand in the kingdom of heaven. Zosima's putrefaction takes by surprise those who believe, as Peter briefly believes, that following Christ should be accompanied by some special favor. With some exceptions, the inhabitants of the monastery and the town are shocked when Zosima's corpse rapidly decomposes. Alyosha is also shaken by the absence of a miracle. Although usually remarkably tolerant and non-judgmental, he begins to resent those who mock his dead teacher. Zosima's putrefaction "in excess of nature," as it is perceived by many, proves a *stumbling block* (in this case, an obstacle to the desire for special prestige). Zosima recognizes that virtue itself may be regarded by some as an obstacle when he observes: "Men love the downfall and disgrace of the righteous." (IV, i, 309) Unlike Zosima's detractors, Alyosha wishes for the worldly elevation and favor of the righteous

teacher. He bases his faith on a miracle and thereby falls prey to the second temptation of Christ — the desire for worldly recognition and power. His desire puts him at odds with others, who seem to him unlovable. He is unaware that his resentment sets him apart from others and ultimately potentially alienates him from God, whose creation he says (in VII, iii; 14; 308), as Ivan has said (V, iv), he cannot accept. To understand Alyosha's ultimate reconciliation with his neighbor, we need to first consider his teacher, a representative of both religious authority and psychological acuity.

Some would dispute that Zosima the character is a reliable exponent of the Orthodox tradition, but few would disagree, whatever their ethical or religious inclinations, that the elder is a model of moral excellence. Zosima obeys the primary biblical injunction to love God and one's neighbor as oneself. Although a Russian Orthodox monk, he is not safely contained within a rule-bound tradition and it is this representation of Orthodoxy which has unsettled some critics.³ He is not represented as transgressing any biblical commandments but he is not bound by small rules. He does not insist on ascetic prohibitions regarding food; he recommends medicine for a monk who hallucinates devils, and he permits his novice, Alyosha, to come and go freely.

As a representative of an Orthodox church elder tradition which Sven Linner observes was little known and at the time, poorly regarded,⁴ Zosima embodies a new Christian discourse which is assimilated to the already existing "authoritative" Christian discourse which for Zosima is not merely a matter of rules and regulations. The structure of the monastery, the decorum of the monk, the imperatives and codes of the church "bind" Zosima, but he remains

free. Zosima follows the "via negativa" of kenotic emptying. He bears an excessive desire for the other's beatitude.

Zosima puts his personality at the service of others as does a good therapist. Like the therapist, the saintly confessor is obliged to find resources deep within himself in order to deal with those who seek him out. The therapist chooses to repair damage he/she has suffered from his "object." ("Object" here has multiple meanings: it refers to the internal object or the psychic structure formed by an early caretaker and the external object who is either the early significant other or a present significant other.)⁵ Zosima's loss of his brother in his childhood may have been a significant factor which initially inclined him to heal parts of himself that he saw in others, for example: the mysterious visitor. But when the reader encounters him as an elder, we see that he has no masochistic need to suffer if he ever did; indeed, his discourse with his fellow monks emphasizes his intense joy at contemplating his fellows and creation. (The adjectives *svetlymi i radostnymi* — "bright and happy" — accompany the elder throughout the text.) Both the saint and the psychoanalyst are witness to the others' unmanageable feelings, their ways of interacting and what that implies about how they perceive themselves. The therapist bears the patient's anxiety, anger, distress, and ambivalence. The saint (or in this case, the saintly elder) also tolerates and empathizes with the other's difficulties and so, eases them. In the therapeutic relationship, transference is essential before analysis can have therapeutic value. And in the relationship between initiate and elder, the elder's self-relinquishment precedes beatitude.

The figure of Zosima underscores the notion that the Christian saint ostensibly performs an *imitatio Christi*. The dilemma to represent what is itself not wholly conceivable or representable thereby emerges. Writing on saints and their imperative power in a postmodern age, Edith Wyschogrod explains the dilemma in these terms: "Even when saintly life is an expression of obedience to institutional norms or revealed laws, there can be no rules to guide that aspect of saintly life which admits of no conceivable realization, to fully represent the divine life."⁶ I take Wyschogrod to mean that there is no rigidly fixed definition which would dictate how a saint (or simply one aspiring to moral responsibility or spiritual perfection) might act on every occasion.

Dostoevsky chose to make Zosima quietly resist pietistic expectation, as is evident in the first encounter with the Karamazovs. They congregate in Zosima's cell, a place where "for forty or fifty years, from the time of the former elders, visitors had been coming ... but always with the deepest reverence ... " (II, 2, 34) (*В этой самой келье, может быть, уже сорок или пятьдесят лет, еще при прежних старцах, собирались посетители, но всегда с глубочайшим благоговением, не иначе. PSS 14: 39.*) First Miusov, the 40's liberal, enters, and bows stiffly, hyper conscious of decorum but not actually respectful of ecclesiastical authority. Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov follows, "aping him." Fyodor Pavlovich acts the buffoon who strives for shocking and comic effects. Fyodor Pavlovich's behavior and way of addressing the elder are inappropriate appropriations of pietistic formulas ("Blessed elder") and Biblical quotations gone awry. ("Blessed be the paps that gave thee suck" is a profanation of Luke 11:27.) Fyodor's buffonery brings Alyosha close to tears, but Zosima fails to be

disturbed. He is not drawn into defensive posturing, for it seems that he does not feel vulnerable to others' ridicule.

The monk's cell is briefly made over into a space where the penitence and reverence with which Zosima is typically approached is conspicuously absent. But Zosima takes no offense. Fyodor Pavlovich's mockery and disbelief cannot shake Zosima. He remains receptive to his guests. He contains the other's hostility without acting in turn in a hostile fashion. His presence moreover invites his interlocutors to reveal themselves — to confess. Ivan indirectly confesses his profound doubt. Dmitri confesses his rage at his father. Fyodor Pavlovich confesses his characteristic tendency to lie. It is a truthful declaration, wrapped in a dissembling simulation of honesty. In unusually perceptive fashion, Zosima tells Fyodor Pavlovich that he should not be ashamed of himself, for it is shame which is the root of his troubles. Zosima also observes: "The man who lies to himself can be more easily offended than anyone. You know it is sometimes very pleasant to take offense, isn't it?" (I, 2, ii, 36) Zosima targets the delight which Fyodor takes in resentment.

In addition to real psychological acuity, Zosima is marked by his active listening, his withholding judgment, his generous tolerance.⁷ Zosima is the image of an ideal authority who consoles, heals and responds to his visitors' most heartfelt questions. A "wailer" (like Alyosha's mother) is quieted. A mourning mother is comforted. She struggles with the very problem which occasioned Dostoevsky's own trip in 1879 to Optina Pustyn Monastery, where,

in the company of the young Vladimir Solovyov, Dostoevsky met one of the models for the Elder Zosima, Father Amvrosy (1812 - 1891).⁸

In the novel, Zosima calms the bereft mother by telling her the tale of the Blessed Father Daniel; he gives meaning to her suffering by linking her loss to that of the children killed by Herod at the time of Jesus' birth. He observes that she weeps "like Rachael of old" (from Matthew 2:18, an echo of Jeremiah 31:13). Such is the lot of mothers, he says. But tears may yet give way to "quiet joy." Such a change will also take place for Alyosha, who will grieve for his spiritual father, who dies a day before his biological father.

The grieving mother is described by the narrator as suffering a "laceration of the heart," (*nadryv*) a grief "that breaks out" (*но есть горе и надорванное*). Such "laceration" links her to the next mother, Mrs. Khokhlakova, with whom Zosima meets before returning to the Karamazovs. While the peasant mother suffering from emotional trauma turns to Zosima for an answer, perceiving him as a model and not an obstacle, in conversation with Zosima, Mrs. Khokhlakova treats Zosima as an honored teacher but her ambivalence towards him and the generous love which he embodies is apparent in her self-lacerating tone. Khokhlakova speaks about her love for mankind and her desire to be appreciated for her service. She speaks in a "very paroxysm of self-castigation," looking with "defiant resolution at the elder."⁹ Quoting Turgenev's Bazarov, ("what if there's nothing but burdocks growing on my grave?" 47), Khokhlakova expresses a profound unwillingness to live a life of love. Echoing the materialists of the day (and of our own), she asks:

... if everyone has faith, where does it come from?

... they do say that it all comes from terror at the menacing phenomenon of nature, and that none of it is real. (47; PSS 14: 52)

She wonders if the notion of disinterested love is a foolish illusion. Rather than engaging in an intellectual argument with her, Zosima tells her that if she genuinely wishes to strengthen her faith, the way to do so is in the exercise of active love of neighbor. A ready expression of outgoing concern, active love is "labor and fortitude." The elder contrasts it with love which is "greedy for immediate action" and "rapidly performed in the sight of all." In contrast to good deeds that are discharged in order to win recognition, esteem or gratitude, active love is a free donation given with no expectation of reward. It requires patience and dedication to be to the other what God is to us. It requires a still and receptive heart. But Khokhlakova rides the waves of her emotions; she is easily drawn to the prestige of "progressive" ideas as is evident in her skepticism and as is also demonstrated in her later rejection of Zosima. Like Katerina Ivanovna, whom she champions, she loves her own "virtue."

Zosima is a witness to everything which the peasant women and Khokhlakova and the Karamazovs find intolerable about themselves. His empathy for others is extended to the criminal, as we observe in the discussion concerning Ivan's article: "Why . . . all these sentences to exile with hard labor and formerly with flogging also, reform no one, and what's more, hardly deter a single criminal, and the number of crimes does not diminish but is continually on the increase." The only effectual chastisement, according to the elder, is the one which lies in the "recognition of sin by conscience." It is the job of the elder, unlike the therapist, to stir the conscience of those with whom he comes in

contact. Through Zosima, Dostoevsky affirms the potential for spiritual and emotional rehabilitation for those who are capable of experiencing remorse.

In the Karamazovs' meeting with Zosima, the elder rebukes neither Dmitri nor his father. Instead, before withdrawing because of his physical weakness, Zosima bows to the floor before Dmitri, saying "Forgive me, forgive me, all of you." By his example, Zosima implies that repentance may restore harmonious relations between people in a group. Zosima's bow suggests that he recognizes the great burden which Dmitri will eventually be willing to undertake: to accept a guilty sentence not because he killed his father but because he wished to kill his father. Dmitri's willingness to assume such a burden is directly related to his incorporation of Zosima's example as mediated by Alyosha.

In the chapters prior to Zosima's death, we learn of another one of Zosima's key teachings. Summed up in Zosima's dying words in book four, it is as follows: "everyone is really responsible to all men for all men and everything , and I most of all ... (*« всякий из нас пред всеми во всем виноват, а я более всех ... »*) This teaching re-appears again in book six where it is described as a feeling and a conviction passed down from Zosima's brother Markel. The idea re-surfaces in Dmitri's willingness to accept guilt for his father's murder. As such it arises in a dialectical opposition to the notion that "everything is permitted." To be responsible to all and for all means that humans are not constituted as ethical agents in isolation: to be means to be in relation with others, to engage compassionately with others. Taking the injunction to heart means that a positive chain reaction may result: Markel's reflection is treasured

by Zosima and passed on to Alyosha who communicates it to his brothers, to Grushenka, to Lise and to the boys. To be responsible to all means that it is possible to respond generously to the other without a calculus of utility. It means that one may be open to suffering the pain of the other rather than inflicting pain, which Grushenka intuitively understands in her meeting with Alyosha. Universal responsibility means recognizing one's own responsibility and acting on it rather than waiting for others to be responsible. Both Grushenka and Dmitri come to this recognition through sorrow which is transmuted into a powerful loving bond between them.

Dostoevsky recognizes that the notion of moral agency which Zosima advocates does not accord with the materialist and positivist epistemology embraced by much of the intelligentsia of his time who sooner ascribed to the idea that one need only care for oneself. Social Darwinism, rational egoism, and nihilistic scorn for the ethical are counterposed to Zosima's view. Ivan is inclined to dismiss his responsibility to his brother Dmitri and his father, suggesting that the struggle for survival in the animal kingdom is identical to the struggle in the human world. ("One reptile will devour another.") He dismisses the importance of the ethical: Ivan's response to Lize's pathological fantasy about eating pineapple compote while watching a child being crucified is simply: "that's nice" (*xopowo*). His indifference to the ethical leads him to assent, half consciously, to Smerdyakov's murder of Fyodor Karamazov. The novel as a whole shows that numerous people are directly or indirectly culpable for the murder of Fyodor Karamazov and the unjust conviction of Dmitry.

One critic, Professor Rancour-Laferriere, is by no means appreciative of Dostoevsky's notion of universal responsibility. He disputes Zosima's moral authority, psychological health (and presumably artistic veracity), claiming that Zosima is shaped by a masochistic philosophy originating in his (or rather, his brother Markel's) desire to please mother.¹⁰ Rancour-Laferriere imports a Freudian meaning to the text where Dostoevsky has not supplied one. Zosima's statement, "Everyone is responsible for all," from Rancour-Laferriere's perspective, denotes not only a characteristically pathological weak sense of psychic boundaries purportedly common to Russians; it accords well with an attitude common to Russian peasantry of the displaceability of responsibility between individuals or between the individual and the collective. Rancour-Laferriere fails to see the ethical import of the teaching, and even fails to note that Zosima strives to make the notion of universal responsibility psychologically plausible to his listeners, as James Scanlan has observed in Dostoevsky, The Thinker.¹¹

When we believe we are responsible for all, says Zosima, "our heart is moved to infinite, universal, and insatiable love." (PSS 14:149) Zosima also describes it as a psychological antidote against despair over the power of sin and evil. Zosima's words suggest that one's actions might have been a contributing cause in the action or inaction of another. "If you had been a light, by your light you would have illumined the path for others, too, and the person who did evil might not have done so in the presence of your light." (VI, iii, 301; PSS 14: 291-92) But the efficacy of good works is not always readily apparent: to echo the epigraph to the novel, the good may be a seed that is planted; the sower may

not live to see the seed flower. Thus, "everyone is responsible for all" means that the dead and the living are connected and that working for the other means participating in a future which one will not survive to enjoy. Dostoevsky's notion of universal guilt begins with a sense of causality but it moves beyond causal understanding.

Dostoevsky "tips the scales" in favor of Zosima's teaching by showing that the doctrines which oppose it (nihilism, rational egoism, and social Darwinism) may ultimately lead to the conclusion that no one is responsible for anything. He counters Zosima's disinterested regard for the other with the grim and self-interested fear of Ferapont. He opposes the image of Zosima, who guides by love, to that of the Grand Inquisitor, who governs by fear. He contrasts Zosima's active love for real individuals to the theoretical love of Ivan (or Khokhlakova or Rakitin) for suffering humanity. As Linner has observed, Dostoevsky abandons theodicy as a theoretical problem and replaces it with an ethical choice: should we live like Ivan or Zosima? ¹² Dostoevsky also offers a further criterion by which the reader may assess the value of Zosima's teaching: that is, by showing the transfiguring power which Zosima's example has on Alyosha, and through Alyosha, to Dmitri, Grushenka, and the boys.

As the mediator between the Karamazovs, Zosima plays the part of the model whom scandal cannot touch. In death, however, he — or his corpse — is the very site of scandal to the monastery and the community, who expect a miracle. The "breath of corruption" rising from his corpse is more than a breach of decorum: it is a "stumbling block." The local community expects a miracle, but Zosima's authority — and Christ's authority — is not linked to a worldly

desire for miracles. The desire for miracles is rejected categorically for it is represented as arising from a materialist insistence on signs and marvels which Christ rejects.

The model of love, affirmation, and acceptance which in life Zosima has embodied is perceived by some of the local community and even some of the monks as a disgrace. The putrefying corpse is rendered ignominious from the perspective of Father Ferapont, the eccentric anchorite.¹³ Ferapont's hysteria reinforces the view that triumphs among the majority of the monks: the rapid putrefaction of Zosima's body is a sign of judgment from heaven.

Ferapont is Zosima's ascetic counterpoint. Ferapont disdains the standards of the monastery, imposing more stringent ones on himself than he is required to; the monks fear to ask him to fast or observe prayer times for he already practices all kinds of extreme self mortification. He clanks onto the scene of the wake with leg irons, denouncing Zosima for having given medicine to a monk who saw devils. Ferapont authors a world filled with devils. Ferapont seeks not the other's bliss but his own. He regrets that only a few prayers will be said over his own corpse in contrast to the service that will be said for Zosima. In his joy-denying asceticism, Ferapont offers a striking contrast to Zosima. For Ferapont, Zosima's putrefaction is a sign that challenges Zosima's teaching and practice. This is most apparent in the dramatic exchange between Ferapont and Paissy following Zosima's death and bodily corruption:

Father Ferapont: "The dead man, your saint," he turned to the crowd, pointing with his finger at the coffin, "did not believe in devils . . . And now he has begun to stink himself. In that we see a great sign from God." . . .

"Go away, father !" said Father Paissy in a commanding voice, "it's not for man to judge but for God. Perhaps we see here a 'sign' which neither you, nor I, nor any one of us is able to comprehend." (III, vii, 314)

[отец Ферапонт] - Покойник, святой-то ваш, - обернулся он к толпе, указывая перстом на гроб, - чертей отвергал . . . А днесь и сам провонял. В сем указание господне великое видим . . .

- Изыди, отче ! - повелительно произнес отец Паисий, - не человеки судят, а бог. Может, здесь 'указание' видим такое, коего не в силах понять ни ты, ни я и никто. (PSS 14: 303)

Zosima did not describe hell in the literalist fashion which Ferapont obviously prefers. Zosima had instead interpreted it metaphorically as a condition brought about by humans' destructive will (VI, ii and iii). Ferapont's animus towards Zosima is evident in the words he chooses: instead of the more genteel word "smell" (*propakh*) he uses the vulgar "stink" (*provonia*). The "sign" (*знак*) which Ferapont sees is a sign of judgment (*указание* becomes *наказание*). The "sign" which Paissy sees is a challenge to ordinary logical comprehension. Where Ferapont's viewpoint is macabre, other-condemning, and self-interested, Paissy's tolerant viewpoint is more persuasive.

The "odor of corruption" refers to the smell of Zosima's body but it also refers to the theological category of spiritual depravity in which Ferapont and Zosima share, according to the Christian paradigm, which declares that only God is perfect. Zosima's corruption inspires Alyosha's temporary lapse of faith. The putrefying corpse is a reminder of everything excessive which Zosima's interlocutors have displaced onto Zosima. The saint becomes "the sinner writ

large.”¹⁴ That displacement includes emotional, rational and sensuous excesses to which the “Karamazov nature” is driven.

When Zosima dies, his rotting corpse appears at odds with Zosima the teacher, Zosima, the embodiment of Christian love. Zosima’s corpse is unseemly to the monks who demand “signs and marvels” and thus see the putrefying body as proof that Zosima was no saint. The singling out of Zosima’s fleshy nature is troubling to Alyosha as well, for whom not only the absence of a miracle but the community’s response is worrisome. For Alyosha, who has believed that his elder should “have been exalted above everyone in the whole world,”¹⁵ the rapid putrefaction of Zosima’s body is at first a sign which unsettles his faith in the benevolence of Nature and a providential order.

It was justice, justice he thirsted for, not simply miracles . . . And now the man who should, he believed, have been exalted above everyone in the whole world, that man, instead of receiving the glory that was his due, was suddenly degraded and dishonored ! What for? Who had judged him ? Who could have decreed this ? Those were the questions that wrung his inexperienced and virginal heart. He could not endure without mortification, without resentment even, that the holiest of men should have been exposed to the jeering and the mockery of the frivolous crowd so inferior to him. (III, ii, 318)

Но справедливости жаждал, справедливости, а не только лишь чудес ! И вот тот, который должен бы был, по упованиям его, быть воснесен превыше всех в целом мире, – тот самый, вместо славы, ему подобавшей, вдруг низвержен и опозорен ! За что ? Кто судил ? Кто мог так рассудить – вот вопросы.

которые тотчас же измучили неопытное и девственное сердце его. Не мог он вынести без оскорбления, без озлобления даже сердечного, что праведнейший из праведных предан на такое насмешливое и злобное глумление столь легкомысленной и столь ниже его стоявшей толпе. (PSS 14: 307)

The narrator explains that youthful hearts may be misled by the desire for justice. Alyosha wishes his teacher-confessor to be an exception to the rule of mortality and physical corruption. Zosima's rotting corpse obliges Alyosha to confront the question: "How will I come to terms with my bodily inheritance?" Zosima's living word — and his putrefying body — point to the necessity of embodying the "ideal other." Alyosha learns this when he briefly abandons the monastery for a visit to Grushenka. Encouraged by the conniving Rakitin, Alyosha is first inclined to look on Grushenka as an opportunity to indulge a sensual appetite until he realizes that she is not merely the coquette she pretends to be. This meeting with his "sister" paves the way for Alyosha's transforming experience back at the monastery in the chapter, "The Marriage at Cana."

This chapter brings together Zosima as teacher, subject of the hagiography, and iconic presence. As Alyosha listens to a reading from the Gospel of John, he sees Zosima and himself as guests at the Canaan marriage feast. A Bakhtinian might say that Alyosha has now "tested" the authoritative discourse, "assimilated" it and "re-accentuated" it, rendering it his own "internally persuasive discourse" (*нутренне убедительное слово*).¹⁶ Zosima performs the role of the saint for Alyosha and for the reader for whom Alyosha's "internal discourse" is persuasive. Alyosha enjoys a foretaste of a

heavenly marriage celebration without end, a celebration of abundance in spite of Zosima's death, which significantly, takes place at Lent. The ecstasy which Alyosha experiences accords with his elder's declaration "For men are made for happiness and anyone who is completely happy has a right to say to himself, I am doing God's will on earth."¹⁷ Zosima is resurrected in the inner world of Alyosha who succeeds in personalizing both the authoritative discourse of the Bible and the dictum of his teacher to seek happiness in sorrow. The decomposition of the saint precedes his recomposition in Alyosha's experience.

The use of the Gospel of John, and specifically, the marriage at Cana adds a dimension to the narrative insistence on the "sign" of sanctity. The Gospel of John is perhaps the most important gospel in the Russian Orthodox tradition, and of great personal significance to Dostoevsky, judging from the marginalia and underlinings of his New Testament.¹⁸ The Gospel of John opens with the sign of the body which is an iconic presence "not made by hands." Dostoevsky similarly attempts the literary creation of an iconic presence.

John stresses the meaning of the miracles for the "insiders" who believe as opposed to the those who regard such signs and marvels as hocus-pocus. Dostoevsky similarly addresses readers who are Christian believers and those who aren't. The text of the marriage at Cana is often read as a text of messianic fulfillment, of glory and abundance. Traditional expectations are overturned: the "best wine" is served at the end. In the Christian reading, the marriage at Cana is a story which prefigures the Eucharist. The miracle in the authoritative

Biblical text is contrasted with the wished for miracle following Zosima's death in the literary text.

The sacramental dimension which the Biblical text prefigures is echoed and extended by Zosima's kissing the ground and Alyosha's tears and mystical sense of union with the earth (*zemlia*), which in Russian is feminine. Zosima is renewed and resurrected in Alyosha's memory. Moreover, Zosima's and Alyosha's reverence for nature, which is feminized, is a mark of their exaltation of a divine principle.

Through Zosima, Alyosha is reconciled to the image of a father who will not disappoint in the same way that his biological father, Fyodor Karamazov, does. In his attachment to Zosima, Fyodor Karamazov's image of paternal nurture is replaced by Zosima's (or what psychologists call transference) although Alyosha continues to love his father as a father in spite of his failings. He shares in the paternal inheritance of *karamazovshchina* (karamazovism) as he also shares in his brothers' guilt for his father's death. His failure to keep Dmitri uppermost his mind, to seek him out as Zosima had instructed him to do, arguably contributes to Dmitri's impulsive and wild behavior which persuades the jury of his guilt in the murder.

Zosima transforms the image of the father in Alyosha's experience by enacting the part of caring and forgiving father. Such caring paternal nurture is also provided the young Alyosha by Yefim Petrovich Polyonov, the heir of the widow who had been benefactress and tormentor to Sofiya Ivanovna, Alyosha's mother. Like Yefim Petrovich, Zosima is a surrogate father, a fill-in for an almighty father. Such a figure, Julia Kristeva observes, may be the object of wish

fulfillment: "An almighty father ? Patients miss one, want one, or suffer from one." ¹⁹ Dostoevsky does not debunk the image of the loving father, however.

Through Zosima, Dostoevsky attempts to heal the father-son relationship at a time when he felt moral authority — particularly paternal authority — was breaking down. The iconic image of the father is restored by the good father (Zosima) and by Alyosha's imitation of him. At the same time, Dostoevsky invests the mother who had been tormented by both "benefactress" and "benefactor," with that special sympathy he has for the injured and insulted. Moreover, Alyosha's physically weak mother (the *klikusha*) is presented as possessing a certain spiritual strength. She is faithful to an image of the divine which the sensualist-materialist Feodor Karamazov mocks and dishonors. Alyosha's transference to Zosima, who functions as an imaginary father, can be traced to Alyosha's identification with his mother. The appeal of the icon is linked both to Alyosha's spiritual father, Zosima and to Alyosha's mother, Sofiya Ivanovna.

Dostoevsky's representation of Zosima as a good father is in keeping with other depictions in the novel of men caring for children and nurturing them. Ivan's concern with the mis-treatment and suffering of children, Dmitri's transforming vision of the hungry babe, and Alyosha's parenting of a group of boys serve as examples. Men who have not been, on the whole, nurtured by their biological fathers, may nevertheless be capable of nurturing others; moreover, sometimes children may call up the best in their parents as we observe in the two following examples. Fyodor Karamazov's most attractive trait (and perhaps his only attractive trait) is his love for Alyosha, who, he observes, does not judge

him. Snegirov's difficult circumstances are transformed by love for his son whom he calls *batiushka* (daddy).

Sons (and daughters) may always desire loving parental nurture but there comes a time in life when they might learn to give it. This is an opportunity which Alyosha dramatically experiences with Zosima's death. Zosima's physical corruptibility marks a rupture with Alyosha's past, childlike dependence on his teacher. Zosima is a symbolic pole with which Alyosha identifies, away from his biological father, but Alyosha's re-identification with Zosima does not serve to elevate the spiritual above the physical. Instead, Zosima, especially the rotting Zosima, like Alyosha's long-dead mother, Sofiya Ivanovna, serves as a reminder to Alyosha of finding an authentic way of being (a body and a spirit) in the world.

Zosima's fondness for vespertine light (VI, ii; PSS 14:263) also links him with Sofiya Ivanovna, who once held Alyosha before an icon of Mary under the "slanting rays of the setting sun" (I, iv, 85; PSS 14:18). As Durylin has noted, the setting sun is also the rising sun, and so, this favorite Dostoevskyeian image is a symbol of faith in immortality.²⁰ More religious imagery is evident in Sofiya Ivanovna's first name which asserts her connection with the Divine Sophia, the image of Divine Wisdom which Dostoevsky's friend, Solovyov, celebrated, drawing on Kabbalistic and early Christian Chokma - Sophia traditions. The mother proves an unexpected source of strength, the "one good powerful memory" which Alyosha tells the boys, one cannot do without. The mother's presence is to Alyosha what Alyosha's face (*lik*, the biblical equivalent

of *litso*, face, visage, aspect) is to Zosima: a "remembrance and a prophecy,"²¹ a visible manifestation of the divine.

Fyodor Karamazov recounts that Sofiya Ivanovna howled at his desecration of an icon. She communicated a pre-linguistic sense of unity with the icon and an eloquent if unarticulated testimony to suffering as "fools for Christ." Both Zosima and Sofiya Ivanovna represent the tie to the body and to an emotional apprehension of the image of the meek Christ.

The emblemizing of Zosima as icon only inadequately accounts for the disruptive force of the image of the putrefying body. The corpse functions as an interrogative mark at the end of Zosima's word. The putrefying corpse questions received pieties. Zosima's rotting body is an image whose wrenching power is similar to the tortured figure of the dead Christ in Holbein's "The Dead Christ in the Tomb." It is the tortured decomposing corpse of Christ, like Zosima's putrefying body, which questions the possibility of resurrection and communion, opening to interpretation what the viewer makes of the spectacle of decomposing flesh, a subject which has several intertexts in Dostoevsky's writing. Zosima's putrefying body is reminiscent of the resurrection of the stinking Lazarus at the climax of Crime and Punishment. Zosima, who has voluntarily taken on himself the "odor" of others' depravity, smells when he dies.²²

The presentation of the unrepresentable mysteries of the Eucharist and the resurrection culminates in the chapter considered above, "The Marriage at Cana." The rupture Alyosha experiences in the "sign" of putrefaction turns to rapture. In life, Zosima has instructed Alyosha to kiss the earth, to seek

forgiveness and to leave the monastery. Zosima's example and injunction resonate in a new way for Alyosha. The narrator presents Alyosha's wish for forgiveness as an unexplainable outpouring, not the result of a conscious intention to satisfy a law, or a rule. Alyosha now feels free to act on his elder's instructions to leave the monastery and to marry. Alyosha's experience can be seen as an illustration of unconscious desire — coming to the surface, with a great sense of release as the result.

Zosima's death and the scandal caused by the corruption of his corpse grants Alyosha the opportunity to grow spiritually and psychologically. Rather than operating as a sign of judgment (as Father Ferapont sees it), the putrefying corpse becomes a harbinger of divine mercy; instead of an idol in Alyosha's experience, Zosima becomes an icon. Dostoevsky links the death of the "good father," Zosima, Alyosha's model, and his physical corruption to a corresponding decomposition of his status as an idol for Alyosha and the recomposition or incorporation of the gospel message in Alyosha's experience.

Notes

¹ Dostoevskii, Pis'ma (Letters), Vol. II, 25. March 1870, #346, letter to Maikov, 264, my translation. *Правда, я ничего не создам, я только выставлю действительного Тихона, которого я принял в свое сердце давно с восторгом.*

² Robert Louis Jackson, "Two Kinds of Beauty." Dostoevsky's Quest for Form : a study of his philosophy of art (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1966, 40 - 70.

³ Writer Konstantin Leontiev (1831- 1891), who spent time at the Optina Pustyn monastery expressed doubts about Dostoevsky's fidelity to Orthodox sources, insisting that Dostoevsky's "rosy" Christianity is a heretical version of utopian socialism. Konstantin Leontiev, "Nashi novye khristiane," 1882 ("Our New Christian, F. M. Dostoevsky and Count Leo Tolstoy," cited in Leonard J. Stanton, The Optina Pustyn Monastery in the Russian Literary Imagination: Iconic Vision in Works by Dostoevsky, Gogol, Tolstoy and Others (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 231 - 233. More recently, Sergei Hackel has argued that Zosima is more a figure resulting from a nature mysticism than a Christian discourse. Sergei Hackel documents this difference with tradition by showing how Dostoevsky's nature mysticism as it appears in Zosima's memoirs and admonitions is at odds with specifics of the Orthodox faith. Sergei Hackel, "The Religious Dimension: vVision or Evasion ? Zosima's Discourse in *The Brothers Karamazov*" New Essays on Dostoevsky, eds. Malcolm V. Jones and Garth M. Terry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 139-168 Hackel's argument side-steps the issue: the authoritative language of scripture and liturgy may be absorbed and re-enunciated in the experience, language and action of the believer.

⁴ Sven Linner, Starets Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov: A Study in The Mimesis of Virtue, (Stockholm:Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1975).

⁵ I am following the lead of Jill Savege Scharff and David Scharff as they discuss internal and external objects, transference, and the use of the therapist's self. Jill Savege Scharff, M.D. and David E. Scharff, M.D., The Primer of Object Relations Therapy (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1995).

⁶ Edith Wyshogrod, Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁷ From Bakhtin's perspective, we might say that Zosima is able to make use of the "surplus of vision" with respect to others, seeing what they cannot see about themselves. (Emerson and Morson refer to it as "addressive surplus.") Zosima asks the sort of question which will "provoke or invite [the other] to reveal and outgrow himself." Gary Saul Morson and Caryl

Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin: The Creation of a Prosaics, (Stanford, University: Stanford University Press, 1990) 242.

⁸ Scholars have debated Zosima's prototypes in real life, hagiography, and literature. Mochulsky, Linner, Dunlop, M. Ziolkowski, Vetlovskaya and others have offered illuminating possibilities: Tikhon of Zadonsk, Amvrosy, Zosima of Tobolsk, Partenii, Isaac Sirin as well as Victor Hugo's Monsignor Bienvenu.

⁹ Она была в припадке самого искреннего самобичевания и кончив, с бывающею решимостью поглядела на старца.

¹⁰ Rancour-Laferriere, The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering, 236.

¹¹ James P. Scanlan, Dostoevsky, The Thinker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 106 - 7.

¹² Sven Linner, Starets Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov: A Study in The Mimesis of Virtue (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1975).

¹³ Margaret Ziolkowski has noted in her taxonomy of saintly personalities in Dostoevsky's works, that Ferapont is the figure of a degenerate type of Josephite, a caricature of an unproductive monk in contrast to the model elder embodied by Zosima. Ziolkowski, "Saintly Personalities in the Novels of Dostoevsky," Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988) 138 - 170.

¹⁴ Robert Coles reports his college professor, Perry Miller, as offering a "personal surmise" about what constitutes sainthood: "A saint is a sinner, writ large, someone who struggles exceptionally hard to turn a bad thing into a good one." Coles' introduction to A Tremor Of Bliss: Contemporary Writers on Saints, ed. Paul Elie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1994) xx - xxi.

¹⁵ BK, Book 7, Chapter 2, 318; PSS, 14; 307.

¹⁶ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1992) 341.

¹⁷ БК, Book 2, Chapter 4, 47. PSS, 14; 51. *Ибо для счастья созданы люди, и кто вполне счастлив, тот прямо удостоен сказать себе: Я выполнил завет божий на сей земле.* Terras notes that this statement contradicts not only the Grand Inquisitor and Schiller's "Resignation," but is apparently at odds with the dogma of the Orthodox Church. Victor Terras, A Karamazov Companion (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981) 149.

¹⁸ Dostoevsky, Dostoevsky and His New Testament, ed. Geir Kjetsaa (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press) 1984.

¹⁹ Kristeva, In the Beginning Was Love, Psychoanalysis and Faith, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 40. (Au commencement était l'amour, 1987.)

²⁰ S. N. Durylin, "Ob odnom simvole u Dostoevskogo (1928), cited in Terras, A Karamazov Companion, 248.

²¹ БК, Book 6, Chapter 1, 264; PSS, v. 14, 259. Mochulsky reports Anna Dostoevsky noting the correspondence between her husband and Solovyov and Zosima and Alyosha. Dostoevsky evidently loved and looked up to Solovyov, many years his junior, seeing a resemblance between his visage and the face of Christ in Caracci's painting. Mochulsky, Dostoevsky: His Life and Work, trans. Michael Minihan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) 566.

²² In the carnival paradigm which Bakhtin uses, the medieval conception of the underworld as being the farthest removal from God is turned upside-down, becoming the place of greatest proximity to the divine. Kristeva echoes this in her elevation of the abject. The upended medieval conception recognizes Christ as abject hero: "the food that Hell swallows but cannot digest." Imitating Christ, Zosima offers to Alyosha, who re-animates his word, a foretaste of sacred food which gives new life. To echo the novel's epigraph, in assimilating Zosima's model, Alyosha swallows Zosima's words.

Afterword

As I observed in chapter one, the plotting of virtue in the nineteenth century text presents peculiar difficulties for the novelist who is writing in the wake of the enlightenment, at a time of epistemological crisis which we in the twenty-first century have inherited. Dostoevsky's response to that crisis is evident in his depictions of virtue which disrupt a positivistic secularism. Observing the loss of religious faith in his contemporaries, he offers his readers representations of virtue which rest on his perception of fundamental truth which has its ultimate guarantee in divine revelation.

Dostoevsky was well aware of the difficulties inherent in advocating Christian truth, particularly an ethical ideal, which many of his educated peers regarded as naive, banal or reactionary. He found a number of ways of conveying a transcendent ethical vision whose fundamental principle is to be found in the biblical love commandment: love God and neighbor as self. He drew on the gospels for characterization of his positive characters and he refigured the Christian passion narrative in characters' experience. Guided by a fundamentally biblical notion of scandal, he staged scandal scenes in his novels not in order to shock but to reveal the trap of conflictive desire. He employed a variety of narrators whose occasional unreliability or curious detachment called for the reader's active involvement. Not leaving the reader's response to chance, at times he even provided internal hermeneutic commentary (for example, in The Idiot, in the discussion of the painting of the dead Christ) so that the reader might understand the fact of victimage to be central to his "fantastic" art.

He often presented his positive characters as exercising an iconic power, leading others' gaze toward an invisibility beyond themselves.

In my analysis of "The Meek One," Crime and Punishment, The Idiot and The Brothers Karamazov, the metaphor of triangular relation featured in the mimetic theory helps to recognize the means Dostoevsky and his European contemporaries use to depict virtue. The mimetic theory also defines the discoveries Dostoevsky shares with Dickens (in Pickwick Papers) concerning authentic human subjectivity and the deviated transcendence which leads away from it. The triangular metaphor draws attention to the reader's engagement with (or resistance to) the authors' underlying ethical and religious assumptions. The relational dynamics of mimetic theory prove surprisingly complementary to Emmanuel Levinas' ethical phenomenology, which glosses the ethical import of the "face to face" encounters in "A Meek One," Crime and Punishment and The Idiot.

The mimetic theory also provides a useful corrective to Freud in reading Dostoevsky's texts. Neither Dostoevsky nor Girard shares Freud's analysis of aggression, his deterministic and mechanistic view of humans, or his inimical position towards religion and altruistic action. Moreover, unlike Freud, neither Dostoevsky nor Girard views the psychologist (in contrast to the artist) as alone capable of understanding human desire.

Contemporary psychological paradigms need to be applied cautiously to the study of Dostoevsky's texts for a variety of reasons, a few of which have been elaborated in this study. A clearly articulated stable ethical system is often not a part of such systems, while there are clearly articulated ethical principles in

Dostoevsky's texts. One of these is that a law of love is a universal principle. Another point of potential conflict between psychological paradigms and Dostoevsky's texts arises in the contrasting considerations of good mimesis: Dostoevsky probably did not see a state of "grace" (often experienced by his positive characters) as necessarily identical to psychological wholeness and self-awareness, although moving toward a closer connection to the divine is depicted in his works as tied to spiritual health. Yet another difference in fundamental assumptions between Dostoevsky and contemporary psychology is located in epistemology. It is doubtful that Dostoevsky would find amenable to his own thinking the subjective epistemology to which contemporary psychology adheres. His epistemology, like Girard's, is biblical in its emphasis on understanding violence from the perspective of the victim.

Having made such disclaimers concerning Freud and contemporary psychological theory, I nevertheless have selectively included insights from contemporary object relations and Julia Kristeva's eclectic psychoanalytic approach in my readings of Dostoevsky's texts. Object relations supplants Freud's drive theory and offers a relational model of identity which in some respects parallels Dostoevsky's (and Girard's) approach to self and other. Object relations updates certain useful Freudian concepts such as projection, splitting, and narcissism. Object relations theory contributes the notion of mimetic interiorization versus envious appropriation, which parallels Girard's mimesis of apprenticeship versus the mimesis of rivalry. As for Kristeva's approach, it is particularly helpful in illuminating those aspects of Dostoevsky's texts which treat depression, repentance and pardon, and the transferential relation. In my

reading of "The Meek One," Kristeva's analysis of depression as tied to an experience of mourning and loss illuminates the woman's silent withdrawal and suicide. Kristeva's recent remarks on pardon and repentance inform my analysis of Sonya's mediation of forgiveness in Crime and Punishment. Kristeva's psychology also offers an aperçu on Dostoevsky's Zosima, whose function Kristeva might liken to that of a good therapist.

My readings of Dostoevsky differ from Girard's in several respects. I apply Girard's elucidation of the biblical *skandalon* as presented in his last two books, which appeared only many years after the book on Dostoevsky and the early exploration of mimetic desire in the nineteenth century novel (Deceit, Desire and the Novel). I read Dostoevsky as less beset by religious skepticism than Girard sees him. Although Girard himself has said that positive mimetic desire is central to the structure of the mimetic hypothesis, it seems to me that Girard's work of the sixties and seventies, particularly Violence and the Sacred, focused on "bad sacrifice" and the "false sacred" while his more recent work (perhaps in part due to the friendly influence of Father Raymond Schwager, author of Must There Be Scapegoats?) shows Girard to be appreciative of "good sacrifice" in the meaning of self-giving love and the "good sacred" as the seemingly indecipherable and unexpected movement away from conflict. Girard has said that the mechanism of human conflict resides in a mimesis that precedes representation; perhaps then nonconflictual mimesis also precedes representation and defies the rational mind which tries to name it. Rather than therefore experiencing language as a "prison house," as Frederick Jameson describes it, we may see language, particularly the language of Dostoevsky's

novels, as a powerful attempt to reveal the transformative power of biblical truth. Dostoevsky remains aware that he cannot demonstrate the scientific truth of religious faith, but neither does he perceive such truth to be simply irrational or mystical.

In this study, I have not echoed or corroborated Girard's claims about the absolute uniqueness of the Christian revelation. There are other world religions which embrace the values of compassion and forgiveness. In writing about Dostoevsky, though, I naturally draw on the religious tradition which shaped him. I see that in Dostoevsky's use of Biblical allusion there is a fundamental continuity between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian gospels, a continuity which Dostoevsky himself does not emphasize. Indeed, the anti-Semitic remarks that creep into his novels — and which are outdone in toxicity in his letters and A Writer's Diary — are not the product of his Christianity. They do partake of a Christian "super-sessionism" which judges Christian gospels to be superior to Jewish law. I do not concur with this super-sessionism nor do I agree with scholars like Burton Mack who are eager to convict the gospels of anti-Semitism. Mack argues (contra Girard) that the gospels are not revelatory of persecution but are in fact persecutory texts.

The occasions when the mimetic theory and Dostoevsky's texts don't "fit" are rare. One example of a minor misfit is to be found in my analysis of "The Meek One," where Dostoevsky chooses not to emphasize the wife's suicide as a self-scapegoating gesture. Instead, Dostoevsky focuses on the man's loss of his wife as potentially opening him to the radical difference of the other and the necessity to follow the love commandment. The man's experience of mourning

is not necessarily the last word; in an ending beyond the ending, his suffering might be given meaning just as in The Brothers Karamazov, the suffering of the faithful peasant woman grieving the loss of her child, may ultimately be transmuted by faith into a keener apprehension of a merciful and loving God.

In the academy in the West an approach which takes a faith perspective seriously often is regarded as somehow "suspect." Such disdain for religious faith recalls secular enlightenment philosophy which Dostoevsky himself defied. As Girard describes it: in the academy, faith in truth has often been replaced by a faith in no truth or a faith in the defeat of Western metaphysics. The referentiality of texts is sometimes discredited, implying that there is no truth in any text except (perhaps) the absence of truth. The mimetic theory takes exception to such an approach and helps us see how and why texts like those of Dostoevsky matter.

We live in a time that has seen too much violence — not only on a global scale but in everyday life — yet we may be erroneously convinced that we ourselves are victims and never persecutors. We need works like Dostoevsky's because they alert us to the nature of conflictual and rivalrous desire in ourselves and our communities and its real alternative.

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