SENTENCED TO LIFE:
WRITING THE SELF IN DOSTOEVSKY AND JAMES

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

2013

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This manuscript has been read and accepted by the
Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the
Dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This thesis is the first full-length study to compare Dostoevsky's and James's mutually illuminating concepts of art and its relation to life. It examines Dostoevsky's and James's artistic and intellectual kinship through the hitherto overlooked structural and thematic parallels between their fiction and criticism. Both authors distinguish between two concepts of reality: the external, objective reality—the raw material of life, infinitely rich and abundant, but ultimately meaningless in its indiscriminate inclusiveness; and what James calls the "transmuted real," reality rendered meaningful through individual perception and experience and reflected in art. When it comes to the inner reality of the self, one finds in the fiction of Dostoevsky and James the same distinction between the "raw" material of interior reality, indeterminate and "unfinalizable," and the meaningful social identity formed in the process of self-actualization—the creative effort of life-writing.

Dostoevsky's "White Nights" and James's "The Beast in the Jungle" are examples of failure at life-writing resulting from individual consciousness' disengagement and isolation from external world. Concerned as they are with the inner workings of the psyche, Dostoevsky and James nevertheless stress that a living consciousness is characterised by interaction, i.e. it is always conscious of other consciousnesses. Yet *Daisy Miller* and *Notes from the Underground* dramatize the problems inherent in such interaction. Both novellas focus on the discrepancy between the essential indeterminacy of the self and the social and cultural identities

through which it is allowed to express itself in a social setting. The freedom to preserve indeterminacy and potentiality is presented in both novellas as the chief law of life, yet indeterminacy is incompatible with communal living. In *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove*, Dostoevsky and James present artistic imagination and such forms of literary activity as plotting, scripting, reading and narrating as essential parts of self-scripting strategies of the characters confronted with this predicament. Despite Myshkin's and Milly's failures as heroes, they nevertheless succeed in realizing their artistic potential, embodying art's capacity for reconciling the self's vital impulses for being and for seeing, and therefore for meeting both aesthetic and ethical demands of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of my committee for the invaluable guidance and support to me throughout the process of writing this dissertation. I am especially grateful to my advisor, Professor André Aciman, for encouraging me to trust my intuition, and for inspiring me to become a better writer; and to Professor Elizabeth Beaujour, whose scholarship and mentorship has been an immense source of guidance to me. I am also very grateful to Professor Giancarlo Lombardi for his valuable comments and suggestions during the defense.

I am forever grateful to my amazing family who have been supportive and encouraging beyond words: this is your achievement as much as it is mine. To my loving parents for always believing in me. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my mother and mother in-law for practically raising my children while I was pursuing my degree. Above all, I thank my husband, Aleksey, for his love, support, and infinite patience, and for showing me the bright side of things; and my children, Arkady and Ada, for making all sides of my life so much brighter.

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Chapter 1.

The Art of Making Life

In a short article titled “A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors,” T. S. Eliot writes: “James did not provide us with ‘ideas,’ but with another world of thought and feeling. For such a world,” Eliot continues, “some have gone to Dostoevsky, some to James…” (qtd. in Krook 2). James would probably be very surprised—perhaps even insulted—by the comparison with a writer in whom he saw so little *artistic* skill. According to Robert Louis Stevenson, James could not even finish *Crime and Punishment*: he “did not care for it because the character of Raskolnikov was not objective” (Stevenson 310), and his repulsion from Dostoevsky is expressed unambiguously in a well-known letter to Hugh Walpole:

> Tolstoi and D[ostoevsky] are fluid puddings, though not tasteless, because the amount of their own minds and souls in solution in the broth gives it savour and flavour, thanks to the strung, rank quality of their genius and their experience. But there are all sorts of things to be said of them, and in particular that we see how great a vice is their lack of composition, their defiance of economy and architecture, directly they are emulated and imitated; *then*, as subjects of emulation, models, they quite give themselves away. (*Letters* 2:237)

While Eliot implicitly acknowledges the stylistic differences between the two authors which James was so keen on emphasizing, his remark simultaneously points to the profound affinity between the worlds evoked by Dostoevsky and James in their fiction. Indeed, the connection noted by Eliot is a deep-seated one, and it is rooted in the two writers’ kindred visions of art and its relation to life.

Unlike James, Dostoevsky never gave us a systematic theory of art, but, like James, he wrote about art continuously and prolifically. Read side by side, the non-fiction writings of Dostoevsky and James—journalism, criticism, personal and professional correspondence—reveal a remarkable similarity of opinions about art and its relation to life, and point to an artistic kinship between these two "fathers" of modern psychological prose. In fact, Dostoevsky and James build their views on the art of fiction around the same key ideas and standards, emphasizing, in theory and practice, the freedom of art from prescriptions and obligations, the central value of interesting and engaging the reader in a work of fiction, and the primacy of impressions and point of view which form the basis of realism in fiction. These standards reflect Dostoevsky's and James's vision of the dynamic relationship between art and life, expressed not only in critical writings, but also in the respective narrative methods of each author.

James's 1884 essay "The Art of Fiction" is undoubtedly one of the most famous defenses of the freedom of art in literature. Directing his polemics against Walter Besant, James insists that any attempt to subject art to a set of rules, be they moral or formal, is futile at best, fatal at worst:

> To indicate the danger of such an error as that has been the purpose of these few pages; to suggest that certain traditions on the subject, applied *a priori*, have already had much to answer for, and that the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. (*LC* 1:49)[1]

James was almost certainly not aware that more than twenty years earlier (and hundreds of miles away), Dostoevsky had written a no less inspired defense of art's freedom in his polemical essay

[1] Henry James, *Literary Criticism*. 2 vols. (New York: Library of America, 1984). Cited hereafter as *LC*.

"Mr. –bov and the Question of Art,"[2] directed against the influential Russian critic Dobrolyubov, whose utilitarian views restricted art if not to a set of technical rules, at least to a set of practical aims. Dostoevsky agrees that "art can be of help to some cause by rendering assistance to it, for it comprises enormous means and great powers," but he is unshakeable in his defense of art from any obligations:

> …one can only wish it, one cannot demand it, if only because one demands mostly when one wishes to compel by force, and the first law of art is freedom of inspiration and creation. Everything that has been imposed from above, everything that has been obtained by force from time immemorial to our own day has never succeeded and, instead of being beneficial, has been only harmful. The defenders of "art for art's sake" are chiefly against the utilitarians because by prescribing certain aims for art, they destroy it, for they encroach on its freedom… (*OW* 96)[i]

The two essays resemble each other in many ways, and the fact that James, who could not have read Dostoevsky's essay, repeats some of his key assertions almost verbatim is somewhat startling, particularly in light of his later dismissive remarks on the Russian's art. It is interesting, for example, that both James and Dostoevsky challenge not the general ideas of their opponents, which, they concede, are not entirely devoid of truth and insight, but the idea of prescriptions per se, the attempt to direct the creative process of novelists along pre-determined paths. The problem, as Dostoevsky and James express it, is that we simply do not possess the complete knowledge and foresight to predict the result of one or another artistic endeavor, which is

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[2] When available, I cite current English translations of Dostoevsky's works within the text, and include original quotations in the endnotes. Most of the essays and articles cited in this chapter have been translated by David Magarshack and collected in Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Dostoevsky's Occasional Writings* [hereafter cited as *OW*], trans. David Magarshack (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1997).

precisely why Besant, according to James, despite the overall soundness of his observations, makes a mistake "in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be" (*LC* 1:49). Dostoevsky articulates a very similar view in "Mr. –bov:" even if one agrees with utilitarians that usefulness is the ultimate aim of fiction (and Dostoevsky would be the last to deny its usefulness), it is impossible to predict with precision what kind of art will be useful, or at what historical point, for "the normal historical process of usefulness of art to mankind is still unknown" (*OW* 97)[ii]. Both essays elaborate on the dangers inherent in such *a priori* judgment, pointing out to the limits of human knowledge and foresight, which make it impossible to judge in advance whether the choice of a writer, be it the story or the manner of telling it, will be successful—regardless of what is implied by "success." And the lack of consensus on the value of the novels already written indicates that opinions about what constitutes a successful novel are numerous and diverse, and it would be impossible to meet them all. Thus, Dostoevsky writes that if "one were to define the aims of art beforehand and determine what it ought to be useful for, one could make a terrible mistake and, instead of doing good, only do harm (*OW* 98)[iii], and that "the normal and natural ways of usefulness are not altogether known, at least [...] they have not been calculated with accuracy" (*OW* 126).[iv]Not only is it impossible to "determine *absolutely correctly* what is harmful and useful," but

> we cannot have precise and positive knowledge of all the ways and deviations, in short, of the whole normal progress of the useful even in our past. We study those ways, we make guesses, we build systems, we draw conclusions, but, all the same, we cannot draw up a calendar even here, and to this day history cannot be regarded as an *exact* science, though we have practically all the facts before us. And therefore how can you possibly determine, measure and weigh the benefit the

> *Iliad* has conferred on humanity as a whole? Where, when, in what particular cases has it been useful, what influence did it have on certain nations at a certain period of their development and how much of this influence has there been (well, let us say, in pounds, tons, yards, miles, degrees, etc.)? And if we cannot determine even this, then it is quite possible that we can err even now when we tell people sternly and categorically what each of them has to do and point out to art its normal ways or usefulness and its true purpose. (*OW* 126)[v]

"Protestant communities" to which James refers in "The Art of Fiction" resemble in many ways the utilitarian critics Dostoevsky addresses in "Mr. –bov and the Question of Art." Like utilitarians, these "people who read novels as an exercise in skipping" often suppose that the art—by which here James means formal and stylistic elements—has "some vaguely injurious effect upon those who make it an important consideration, who let it weigh in the balance. It is assumed to be opposed in some mysterious manner to morality, to amusement, to instruction." But, James points out, even if one puts aside the artistic element, or the question of execution, such critics would still find it difficult to agree on what constitutes a good novel:

> They would argue, of course, that a novel ought to be "good," but they would interpret this term in a fashion of their own, which, indeed would vary considerably from one critic to another. One would say that being good means representing virtuous and aspiring characters, placed in prominent positions; another would say that it depends for a "happy ending" on a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks. Another still would say that it means being full of incident and movement, so that we shall wish to jump ahead, to see who was the mysterious

> stranger, and if the stolen will was ever found, and shall not be distracted from this pleasure by any tiresome analysis or "description." (*LC* 1:48)

James expresses the same distrust of *a priori* judgment when he responds to one of Besant's specific rules, which states that the "sole end, aim, and purpose" of fiction is "to portray humanity and human character," and that the characters must be "such as might be met with in actual life" (Besant 24). "It goes without saying that you will not write a good novel unless you possess the sense of reality," James concedes, "but it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being. Humanity is immense and reality has a myriad forms; the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odour of it, and others have not; as for telling you in advance how your nosegay should be composed, that is another affair" (*LC* 1:51-2).

Another point which both essays address is the relationship between form and content in a work of fiction, or, more precisely, both defend the "artistic" aspect of fiction against disparaging views of Russian utilitarians and Victorian moralists. "The truth is," Dostoevsky writes, "that you despise poetry and true art [*khudozhestvennost'*]; all you are concerned about is your cause, you are practical men." What utilitarians fail to see, Dostoevsky explains, is that "so far as the masses are concerned, art is the best, the most persuasive, the most incontestable and the most intelligible method of presenting in images the very cause about which you are so concerned, the most businesslike way, if you like, you who are so keen on putting everything on a businesslike basis" (*OW* 123).[vi] Similarly, James complains that "people who read novels as an exercise in skipping" are convinced "that the 'artistic' idea would spoil some of their fun. One would hold it accountable for all the description, another would see it revealed in the absence of

sympathy. Its hostility to a happy ending would be evident, and it might even, in some cases, render any ending at all impossible" (*LC* 1:47-8)

When it comes to the "artistic" idea, Dostoyevsky and James stand firmly on the same ground, insisting on the inseparable unity of form and content, for art is "an organic whole" (Dostoevsky, *OW* 124), or, to use James's metaphor, "the story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle or the needle without the thread" (*LC* 1:60). "The high artistic quality of a work of art," according to Dostoevsky, is nothing less than "the fullest possible harmony between the artistic idea and the form in which it is embodied" (*OW* 100-1)[vii]. James formulates the same conclusion in his theory of the novel: "a novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like every other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts" (*LC* 1:54).

Art, according to both James and Dostoevsky, lives and thrives by its own mysterious laws, and any attempt to subject it to a set of rules is bound to do damage, for such an attempt shows "a misunderstanding of the fundamental laws of art and its nature—freedom of inspiration. It means simply a refusal to recognize […] that art has an independent, inseparable, organic life of its own and hence also fundamental and unalterable laws for this life" (Dostoevsky, *OW* 124)[viii]. This is Dostoevsky's answer to those who think that "[art] can be ordered about just as you please, that inspiration is something everyone has in his pocket and can be fetched out on demand, that it serves this and that and follows the road you want it to follow" (*OW* 124)[ix].

In the same vein, James urges his fellow novelists to embrace the vast freedom of art and to defy both the puritans' and the pure aesthetes' prescriptions: "All life belongs to you," he

writes, "and don't listen either to those who would shut you up into corners of it and tell you that it is only here and there that art inhabits, or to those who would persuade you that this heavenly messenger wings her way outside of life altogether, breathing a superfine air and turning away her head from the truth of things" (*LC* 1:64). "The province of art," James passionately declares, "is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision. […] it is all experience," which, he contends, is "a sufficient answer to those who maintain that it must not touch the painful, who stick into its divine unconscious bosom little prohibitory inscriptions on the end of sticks, such as we see in public gardens—'It is forbidden to walk on the grass; it is forbidden to touch the flowers; it is not allowed to introduce dogs, or to remain after dark; it is requested to keep to the right'" (*LC* 1:59).

Much of "Mr. –bov" and "The Art of Fiction" is devoted to proving that there is no recipe for a good novel, and that there is no checklist for measuring the value of the finished product. Nevertheless, lack of clearly defined criteria does not entail the impossibility of judgment, and time and criticism work together to sort good art from bad. As Dostoevsky states elsewhere[3], "under the influence of time, just as under accurate criticism, the tinsel tarnishes and breaks down: the clear and naked truth persists"[x] ("Exhibition" 152). Moreover, in another striking similarity, both writers ascribe a decisive role to the reading public in recognizing, and thereby promoting, good art. "The measuring rod is simple," Dostoevsky writes in "Mr. –bov,"

> the more sympathy a poet arouses in the masses, the more he justifies his appearance as a poet. Here, too, no doubt great mistakes can be made. There have been examples of it: the masses may not know at a given moment what they want, what they ought to love or sympathize with. But these deviations soon pass away

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[3] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, "Vystavka v akademii khudozhestv za 1860-1861 god" (*The Exhibition in the Academy of Arts: 1860-1861*), *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 30 Tomakh [Complete Collected Works in 30 Volumes])* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1986) 19:151-69. Cited hereafter as "Exhibition."

> by themselves and society can always find the right way by itself. The important thing is that art is always true to reality to the highest degree—its deviations are transient and pass away quickly; it is not only always true to reality but it cannot possibly be untrue to contemporary reality. (*OW* 134)[xi]

James appears to draw on abundant evidence of such mistakes on the part of the masses when he talks about "the enormous number of works of fiction that appeal to the credulity of our generation," and he admits that "good novels are somewhat compromised by bad ones, and that the field, at large, suffers discredit from overcrowding" (*LC* 1:49). Like Dostoevsky, however, he regards these mistakes as temporary, stating that "this injury is only superficial" (*LC* 1:49). Despite apparent vulgarization of fiction, "there is as much difference as there ever was between a good novel and a bad one," and James is convinced that notwithstanding its credulity, the reading public will ultimately make the right choice: "the bad is swept, with all the daubed canvases and spoiled marble, into some unvisited limbo or infinite rubbish-yard, beneath the back-windows of the world, and the good subsists and emits its light and stimulates our desire for perfection" (*LC* 1:49). The process by which this selection takes place has nothing to do with the public's standards and everything to do with the "closeness of relation" between fiction and life: "I am quite at a loss to imagine anything (at any rate in this matter of fiction) that people *ought* to like or to dislike," writes James with surprising trust in the instinct of the audience, "selection will be sure to take care of itself, for it has a constant motive behind it. That motive is simply experience. As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it" (*LC* 1:58).

Just as both Dostoevsky and James use the public's lasting interest as a "measuring rod" for determining the quality and value of a work of fiction, so they hold the writer responsible for

engaging the readers' interest. Robin F. Miller not only rightly notes that "in his letters and journalism Dostoevsky frequently stressed the importance of interesting and entertaining the public" and that "capturing and holding the reader's interest took precedence over any predetermined aesthetic requirements" (23), but she is also the only critic to have observed that "Dostoevsky's emphasis on the quality of interest […] closely resembles the formulations of Henry James" (31).[4] Thus, for example, in a letter to his brother, Dostoevsky describes his final plan for *The Notes from the House of the Dead* emphasizing interest as one of his chief aims: "My person will disappear. These are the notes of an unknown person; but I vouch for the interest. The interest will be most capital. […] I am certain that the public will read it avidly. […] I am as *certain* of its interest as that I am alive" (*Complete Letters* 1:390).[xii] Dostoevsky expresses the same concern in the 1865 letter to his editor Katkov, writing about *Crime and Punishment*: "I vouch for the interest; as for the artistic execution—I do not venture to judge" (*Complete Letters* 2:175).[xiii] His 1870 letter to Sofya Ivanova shows that Dostoevsky's concern with interest is consistent. After sending the beginning of *The Devils* to *Russian Messenger*, Dostoevsky expresses some doubts about it, along with the confidence in the success of the continuation and the ending of the novel: "at least it will turn out to be entertaining [*zanimatel'no*] (and I have reached the point where I value entertainment above the artistic execution). As regards the artistic execution I don't know; I think it ought to have a success"[xiv] (*Complete Letters* 3:277).[5] Finally, in his 1860 article on "Pedantry and Literacy," Dostoevsky pronounces that "the best book, whatever it is and whatever its subject, is always interesting [*zanimatel'na*]"[xv] (*OW* 205).

[4] Robin Feuer Miller, *Dostoevsky and The Idiot: Author, Narrator, and Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981).
[5] translation emended

Interest is, of course, one of the major concerns for James, who repeatedly stresses in "The Art of Fiction" that "the only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. […] The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable and such as can only suffer from being marked out, or fenced in, by prescription" (*LC* 1:49). Like Dostoevsky, James places artistic execution at the service of interest, as opposed to regarding it as an end in itself. In the famous 1915 letter to H.G. Wells, James admits that interest is so important that other things may be sacrificed to achieve it: "I hold that interest may be, must be, exquisitely made and created, and that if we don't make it, we who undertake to, nobody and nothing will make it for us; though nothing is more possible, nothing may even be more certain, than that my quest of it, my constant wish to run it to earth, may entail the sacrifice of certain things that are not on the straight line of it" (*Letters* 2:486-7).

Admittedly, the desire to interest and engage the reader is widespread, if not universal, among writers, but allotting interest the central place in the quality of the novel cannot be taken for granted in writers who regard fiction as an essential aid to human development, and as a way of meeting not only aesthetic, but also ethical demands of life. In the last years of his life, Dostoevsky is recorded by a friend making a statement that James will repeat almost verbatim: "They say art should reflect life, etc. It is all nonsense: a writer (poet) creates life, and of such magnitude as did not fully exist before him" (in Opochinin 472). This is just what James claims in a famous letter to G. H. Wells: "It is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance, for our consideration and application of these things, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process" (*Letters* 2:490). The structure of James's famous pronouncement nearly equates making life with making interest and importance. Just how the novel's potential to

interest is related to its capacity to "make life" can be better understood by turning briefly to an example from Tolstoy's diary. The following entry sheds light on the problem both Dostoevsky and James sought to resolve through art:

> As I was walking around dusting things off in my room, I came to the sofa. For the life of me, I couldn't recall whether I had already dusted it off or not. Since these movements are habitual and unconscious, I felt that it was already impossible to remember it. If I had in fact dusted the sofa and forgotten that I had done so, i.e., if I had acted unconsciously, then this is tantamount to not having done it at all. If someone had seen me doing this consciously, then it might have been possible to restore this in my mind. If, on the other hand, no one had been observing me or observing me only unconsciously, if the complex life of many people takes place entirely on the level of the unconscious, then it's as if this life had never been. (Tolstoy 141-142)[6]

What Tolstoy relates in this entry, and what Dostoevsky and James have observed as well, is the wasting of life that takes place every day, because it "takes place entirely on the level of the unconscious," i.e. because it is lived mechanically, without being consciously appreciated. In his 1869 letter to Strakhov, Dostoevsky expresses the same concern with reality slipping by, unnoticed and unlived. Insisting on his "own special view of reality (in art)," he explains:

> The ordinariness of phenomena and the banal view of them are not yet realism, in my opinion, but even the contrary. In every newspaper issue you come across reports of the most real facts and the most odd ones. For our writers they are fantastic; and besides, they don't even deal with them; but meanwhile they are

[6] I am using Benjamin Sher's translation of this passage quoted in Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. By Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive, 1991) 5.

> reality, because they are *facts.* Who is going to notice them, elucidate them, and record them? […] We'll let all of reality slip by right under our noses that way. Who is going to note facts and delve deeply into them? (*Complete Letters* 3:137-8)[xvi]

The same awareness is expressed in "Two Suicides" several years later: "We know only the daily flow of the things we see and this only on the surface; but the ends and the beginnings are things that, for human beings, still lie in the realm of the fantastic" (*Diary* 1:651). An entry in his notebook for *A Raw Youth* again shows Dostoevsky worrying about life being wasted due to lack of awareness: "Facts. They are passing by. They don't notice. There are no *citizens*, and nobody wants to make an effort and force himself to think and to notice things" (425).

James, too, comments on "the splendid waste" of life, which "persistently blunders and deviates, loses herself in the sand" because "life has no direct sense whatever for the subject" (*LC* 2:1139). Luckily, humanity also possesses "the sublime economy of art, which rescues, which saves, and hoards and 'banks,' investing and reinvesting these fruits of toil in wondrous useful 'works' and thus making up for us, desperate spendthrifts that we all naturally are, the most princely of incomes" (*LC* 2:1139). "There is life and life," he writes in the preface to *The Tragic Muse*, "and as waste is only life sacrificed and thereby prevented from 'counting,' I delight in a deep-breathing economy and an organic form" (*LC* 2:1108). In other words, there is life that takes place independently of our awareness and experience of it—the infinitely abundant, varied, formless raw material—and there is life that "counts" because it is noticed, experienced, appreciated.

As Sallie Sears explains, "James's second definition of life really comes down to this: *a response of consciousness*" (44, footnote), or, as James calls it elsewhere, a "mark made on the

intelligence" (*LC* 2:1074). This view of life entails a dynamic relationship between the external world and individual consciousness, which takes the form of an impression. For the novel to "make life," therefore, is to make the reader respond to, or grow conscious of, those aspects of external reality that would otherwise be wasted or lost on the consciousness, and therefore unlived. And indeed, Dostoevsky states that "Talent is given to a writer for the purpose of producing an impression. One can know a fact, one can see it a hundred times oneself and still not get such an impression as when someone else, a person of special talent, stands beside you and points out the very same fact to you, but from his point of view, explains it to you in his own words and makes you look at it through his eyes"[xvii] (*OW* 118).[7] In other words, the artist has a certain freshness of perception, the capacity to penetrate the crust of deadening habit, which is also a powerful light source that allows familiar and unperceived phenomena emerge with fresh potential for meaning and value. The artistic talent—and task—is nothing less than the ability to breathe *life* back into life—that is, to raise life to the level of conscious experience.

That James was preoccupied with just such a task is evident from his preface to *What Maisie Knew*. As a central "register of impressions" in the novel, Maisie "has the wonderful importance of shedding a light far beyond reach of her comprehension; of lending to poorer persons and things [...] a precious element of dignity." The child's " 'freshness' for appearances" transmutes "appearances in themselves vulgar and empty enough" into "the stuff of poetry and tragedy and art; she has simply to wonder [...] about them, and they begin to have meanings, aspects, solidities, connexions – connexions with the 'universal'!" (*LC* 2:1162). The account of the function of Maisie's consciousness here strongly resembles James's description of the artistic sensibility in "The Art of Fiction:" "when the mind is imaginative—much more

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[7] translation emended

when it happens to be that of a man of genius—it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations" (*LC* 1:51-2). Maisie's function and importance reflects the function and importance of fiction as James envisioned it: that of making "*appreciable*" that which in everyday life appears "sterile" (*LC* 2:1163). This sheds light on James's confession in a 1904 letter to Edward Lee Childe: "reading," writes James, "tends to take for me the place of experience or rather to *become* itself (pour qui sait lire) experience concentrated. You will say this is a dull picture, but I cultivate dullness in a world grown too noisy" (*Letters* 2:11).

To sum up, Dostoevsky's and James's concern with interesting and engaging the reader complements their claims that art makes life, because life as the highest value is understood by them as a conscious response to external phenomena, where experience takes the form of an impression. However, the capacity for receiving impressions, just like the ability to impart them to others, requires a special artistic vision, the ability to discern and to select which both authors regard as a distinguishing characteristic of an artist. Dostoevsky states that "[n]ot only to create and to write a work of literature, but merely even to pick out the fact requires something of the artist" because "the capacity and the vision" necessary to see "a depth" in "some fact of real life" are extremely rare:

> For some observers all the facts of life pass by in the most touchingly simple manner and are so plain that it's not worthwhile to think about them or even to look at them. Those same facts of life will sometimes perplex another observer to the extent that he (and this happens not infrequently) is at last incapable of simplifying and making a general conclusion about them, of drawing them out into a straight line and so setting his mind at rest. […] These are only the two

> extremes, but between them lies the entire range of all available human meaning." (*Diary* 1:651; translation emended)[xviii]

Indeed, between these two extremes, between the complete lack of awareness and overwhelming consciousness, lies art, which, if it does not always draw a straight line, at least draws a circle, as James imagines it: "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall *appear* to do so" (*LC* 2:1041). Like Dostoevsky, James acknowledges that "[t]he effort really to see and really to represent is no idle business in face of the *constant* force that makes for muddlement" (*LC* 2:1164). It is the task of the artist to master this force through discrimination and selection:

> […] one's subject is in the merest grain, the speck of truth, of beauty, of reality, scarce visible to the common eye – since, I firmly hold, a good eye for a subject is anything but usual. Strange and attaching, certainly, the consistency with which the first thing to be done for the communicated and seized idea is to reduce almost to nought the form, the air as of a mere disjoined and lacerated lump of life, in which we may have happened to meet it. Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent *value* with which alone it is concerned, sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference here, however, is that, while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in *his* tiny nugget, washed free of awkward accretions and hammered into a sacred hardness, the very stuff for a clear affirmation, the happiest chance for the indestructible. (*LC* 2:1138-9)

At this point it is important to note that when Dostoevsky and James talk about life, or for that matter reality, they can refer to two distinct concepts: the external, objective reality perceived by them as raw material, infinitely rich and abundant, but ultimately meaningless in its undiscriminating inclusiveness; or what James calls the "transmuted real," the moment when the external world makes an imprint on individual consciousness, causing it to respond, to vibrate, to seek meaning and value, in short, causing it to live. Their shared conception of reality as a meeting between the internal and the external results in what one might call perspectival realism which they oppose to the photographic realism of the Naturalists.

Two essays, "The Exhibition in the Academy of Arts: 1860-1861"[8] and "On the Stories of N.V. Uspensky,"[9] shed light on Dostoevsky's conception of realism. A large part of the former is devoted to "A Halt of Convicts," a Realistic, politically charged painting by Valery Yakobi, which was the center of public and critical attention. As Joseph Frank explains, "such a canvas would have been impossible to exhibit earlier, and the subject alone [at the center of the picture was a corpse of an evidently political prisoner] was enough to attract the attention of a socially conscious public; but the artist had also done his best to draw out the full political pathos of his theme" (*The Stir of Liberation* 89). After giving a detailed description of the painting, Dostoevsky admits to being stricken by its verisimilitude (which he could confirm with authority drawing on his personal experience as a convict), but his praise is only a preparation for his attack on Naturalism: "Everything happens in nature exactly as it is depicted by the artist in the

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[8] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, "Vystavka v akademii khudozhestv za 1860-1861 god" [The Exhibition in the Academy of Arts: 1860-1861], *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 30 Tomakh [Complete Collected Works in 30 Volumes])* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1986) 19:151-69.

[9] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, "Rasskazy N.V. Uspenskogo" [The Stories of Uspenskiy], *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 30 Tomakh [Complete Collected Works in 30 Volumes])* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1986) 19:178-86. Hereafter cited as "Uspensky."

picture—that is, if one looks at nature only on the surface" ("Exhibition" 153). Dostoevsky admits that the convicts look as "real" as they would have looked in the reflection of the mirror or in a photograph, but this very exactness indicates "the absence of art," for "a photographic image and a reflection in the mirror are not works of art. If they were works of art, we would be satisfied with photographs and good mirrors, and the Academy of Art itself would become one enormous irrelevance" ("Exhibition" 153). Dostoevsky goes on to distinguish between factual truth (*pravda deystvitel'naya*), which is only the surface, and artistic truth (*pravda khudozhestvennaya*), which represents something "larger, wider, deeper." Factual truth—verisimilitude, or mechanical accuracy—is essential, but it is only the means, not the goal of art: "Exactness and accuracy are useful, and essentially indispensable, but they are not sufficient; exactness and accuracy are, so far, only the material from which a work of art is created; they are artistic tools" ("Exhibition" 153).[xix] What distinguishes a work of art from a mirror reflection is a point of view: "A reflection in the mirror doesn't show how the mirror sees the subject, or, more precisely, it shows that the mirror doesn't see at all, but reflects passively, mechanically. A true artist can't do this; he will necessarily be seen in a painting, or a short story, or a musical composition; he will be reflected inadvertently, even against his will, he will express all his views, his personality, the level of his development" ("Exhibition" 153).[xx] It is this human, individual aspect that makes a representation truly realistic, because perspective or point of view itself is ultimately the reality of human condition. Unlike the camera, the artist not only sees, but also feels and judges his material: "In the old days people would say that he must see with physical eyes, but above that, with the eyes of the soul, or spiritual eye" ("Exhibition" 154).[xxi]

Dostoevsky elaborates this idea in his 1861 article on the writer Uspensky. The problem with Uspensky's stories, according to Dostoevsky, is that he attempts to give a photographic

image rather than to represent reality. Here Dostoevsky explains that to demand mere mimetic representation of reality, to reduce art to "analysis and collection of data," without drawing any meaning from this data, without showing certain prejudice for things that interest the artist, in short, without selection, "is tantamount to saying: don't look with your eyes, don't smell with your nose" ("Uspensky" 179).[xxii] Dostoevsky's criticism of Uspensky's realism is very Jamesean. The two faults he finds in the writer are lack of selection and of a defined point of view. Dostoevsky compares Uspensky's technique to that of a photographer who, arriving to a public square, does not think of selecting a vantage point for his shoot, but rather sets his camera in the first available spot and captures everything without focus or selection.

> As a result, anything that happens in some corner of the square will be captured accurately, *as is*. Naturally, everything completely irrelevant to this picture, or, more precisely, to the idea of this picture, will also be depicted. Mr. Uspensky cares little for this. He would like, for example, to depict a town market in his photograph and give us an idea of what a town market is. If at that moment an air-baloon descended upon the market (which could happen), then Mr. Uspensky would capture this accidental and completely irrelevant event. If, at this instant, a cow's tail would appear from beyond the frame, he would keep it, too, decidedly not caring about it being unnecessary to the picture. This is what happens in almost all of Mr. Uspensky's stories. He clings to all the irrelevances and doesn't bother in the least to connect these irrelevances with his purpose in order to explain these irrelevances to the reader, so that they wouldn't scream with irrelevance and wouldn't tetanize the reader with their sudden appearance. Some will say, 'But this, this very accuracy is what's good.' But is this accuracy? Is that

> what constitutes accuracy? It is mishmash, and not accuracy. And what can you possibly convey by a mere copying of raw material? ("Uspensky" 180-1)[xxiii]

Once again Dostoevsky draws a distinction between factual (superficial) realism and artistic (authentic) realism, linking the latter with art's edifying quality. "The problem is that nature lies before us unconsciously. If we unconsciously describe raw material, we will not learn anything; but then the artist comes and imparts to us *his view* on this material," naming phenomena and people and illuminating the event with the lamp of his special vision ("Uspensky" 181).[xxiv] For this reason, perspective on and personal perception of reality—what James will call the "transmuted real," and what Dostoevsky calls in the passage below "the ideal"—occupy a central place in Dostoevsky's realism:

> 'One must portray reality as it is,' they say, whereas reality such as this does not exist and never has on earth because the essence of things is inaccessible to man; he perceives nature as it is reflected in his ideas, after it has passed through his senses. Accordingly, more scope must be given to the idea, and the ideal should not be feared. A portraitist, for example, seats his subject to paint its portrait; he prepares; he studies the subject carefully. Why does he do that? Because he knows from experience that a person does not always look like himself, and therefore he seeks out "the principal idea of his physiognomy," that moment when the subject most resembles his self. The portraitist's gift consists in the ability to seek out and capture that moment. And so what is the artist doing here if not trusting first his own idea (the ideal) more than the reality before him? The ideal is also reality, after all, and just as legitimate as immediate reality." (*Diary* 1:214)[xxv]

It should be noted, however, that despite Dostoevsky's emphasis on subjective perception and interpretation, reality for him is not purely the function of consciousness. Instead, his conception of life could be described in José Ortega Y Gasset's words:

> We must get over the error which makes us think that a man's life takes place inside himself and that, consequently, it can be reduced to pure psychology. Would that our lives did take place inside ourselves! Then life would be the easiest thing imaginable: it would be to float in its own element. But life is as far as possible from a subjective phenomenon. It is the most objective of all realities. It is a man's *I* finding itself submerged in precisely what is not himself, in the pure *other* which is his environment. […] This unity of dramatic dynamism between the two elements, the I and the world—is life." (Ortega Y Gasset 141-2)

Hence, art that claims to represent life must reflect both elements: the I and the world, which explains Dostoevsky's insistence on impressions derived from personal experience of external world as the only valid source of fiction. Even when a work of fiction is created with the sole purpose of conveying an idea, the idea must not be prescribed by some external authority or derived from a secondary source, but has to emerge directly out of the lived experience of the author. Such an idea, Dostoevsky concedes, may turn out to be erroneous, but it is nevertheless more real than any attempt at mimesis or objectivity. Years later, writing his notes for *A Raw Youth*, he continues to maintain that personal experience forms the foundation for a work of fiction: "In order to write a novel, one must acquire, first of all, one or several strong impressions actually experienced by the author's heart. This is the poet's job. <from> this impression there are developed a theme, a plan, a harmonious whole. This is already the artist's

job, although artist and poet help each other in one thing as well as the other, in both instances" (*The Notebooks for A Raw Youth* 31).

Dostoevsky's note brings to mind James's famous definition of the novel as "a personal, a direct impression of life; that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression" (*LC* 1:50). Hence, "the one measure of the worth of a given subject," James argues, is its being "genuine, […] sincere, the result of some direct impression or perception of life" (*LC* 2:1075). In the "Letter to the Deerfield Summer School," James urges the aspiring writers "to consider life directly and closely," stressing that "any point of view is interesting that is a direct impression of life." His message to the students is to take "an impression colored by your individual conditions" and "make that into a picture […] framed by your own personal wisdom" (*LC* 1:93).

Just as James's stress on personal impression and point of view coincides with Dostoevsky's position, so does his aversion to Naturalism echo Dostoevsky's criticism of Uspensky and naturalistic tendencies in art in general. While praising *Madame Bovary* as Flaubert's "masterpiece," James declares that "Realism seems to me with 'Madame Bovary' to have said its last word" (*LC* 2:171), because Flaubert's theory, which "in this case at least was applied with brilliant success," is essentially flawed. The problem with Flaubert and his followers is that they concern themselves solely with "the pictorial side of life," what Dostoevsky called the "raw material" of reality: "Human life, he says, is before all things a spectacle, a thing to be looked at, seen, apprehended, enjoyed with the eyes. What our eyes show us is all that we are sure of […] We care only for what *is*—we know nothing about what ought to be" (*LC* 2:170). This leads Naturalists to their major error—that of " 'render[ing]' things—anything, everything, from a chimney-pot to the shoulders of a duchess," without selection or

analysis (*LC* 2:170), showing "no moral emotion, no preference, no instincts—no moral imagination, in a word" (*LC* 2:166). "Moral imagination" is as important for James as "the eyes of the soul, or spiritual eye" for Dostoevsky. It is what he elsewhere describes as "a happy faculty for which all the notes in the world are an insufficient substitute, namely, the faculty of feeling as well as seeing" (*LC* 2:217). A writer in possession of this faculty "never sees plain prose. He discovers everywhere the shimmer and murmur of the poetic" (*LC* 2:217), and exemplifies the kind of treatment of the real that both Dostoevsky and James pursue: "It is the real—the transmuted real—that he gives us best; the fruit of a process that adds to observation what a kiss adds to a greeting. The joy, the excitement of recognition is keen even when he object recognized is dismal. They are part of his spirit— part of his way of seeing things" (*LC* 2:237).

In contrast, the school that claims to be true to reality, that derives inspiration from the observation of all the corners of life, produces works that grossly *mis*represent reality: "Reality is the object of M. Zola's efforts, and it is because we agree with him in appreciating it highly that we protest against its being discredited. In a time when literary taste has turned, to a regrettable degree, to the vulgar and the insipid, it is of high importance that realism should not be compromised. Nothing tends more to compromise it than to represent it as necessarily allied to the impure" (*LC* 2:866–7). As Rob Davidson aptly notes, "The telling word here is *necessarily*," for "the thrust of [James's] critique is that Zola has done as a novelist what James had warned critics not to do— namely, to import a prefigured theory and to insist upon it, rather than remaining open to the material. James, as critic, novelist, and critic of critics, is an antitotalist, always preferring multiplicity and endless possibility. The idea of a novel being written according to a formula […] was anathema to James" (Davidson 28-29).

Because James defines the novel as "a personal impression of life," to represent reality, a novelist must, like Balzac, be "personally overtaken by life" even as he appeals to science (*LC* 2:895-6). In contrast, Zola was never "obliged to quit […] his magnificent treadmill of the pigeonholed and documented—the region we may qualify as that of experience by imitation." Consequently, his "weakness was in that inexperience of life from which he proposed not to suffer, from which he in fact suffered on the surface remarkably little, and from which he was never to suspect, I judge, that he had suffered at all" (*LC* 2:874). Echoing Dostoevsky's criticism of Uspensky, James condemns Zola's "sturdy resolution with which breadth and energy supply the place of penetration" contending that "vision and opportunity reside in a personal sense and a personal history, and no short cut to them in the interest of plausible fiction has ever been discovered" (*LC* 2:878). Like Dostoevsky, James deplores "the mere triumph of a mechanical art" (*LC* 2:887), and criticises photographic realism which represents without illuminating, whereas art's role for Dostoevsky and James extends beyond mere mimesis. Thus James wonders "what pearl of philosophy, of suggestion or just of homely recognition, the general picture […] has to offer. Our various senses, sight, smell, sound, touch, are, as with Zola always, more or less convinced; but when the particular effect upon each of these is added to the effect upon the others the mind still remains bewilderedly unconscious of any use for the total" (*LC* 2:889).

Writing on his favorite writer Ivan Turgenev in 1874, James observes that "The great question as to a poet or a novelist is, How does he feel about life? what, in the last analysis, is his philosophy? When vigorous writers have reached maturity we are at liberty to look in their works for some expression of a total view of the world they have been so actively observing. This is the most interesting thing their works offer us. Details are interesting in proportion as

they contribute to make it clear" (*LC* 2:992). Numerous readers and critics have turned to the works of Dostoevsky or James with just the same question—What is his philosophy?—seeking to find a character or words articulating the author's ideas and ideals and reflecting his feelings about life. Given how much stress Dostoevsky and James put on the function of the author's personality, experience, and point of view in the production of a work of art, their conscious efforts to remove or hide authorial voice in their own fiction may come as a surprise. The Jamesian narrator, for instance, reports almost exclusively from the "centres of consciousness," relating via free indirect discourse the point of view of a given "register of impressions" while "seated" "at the window" of the character's consciousness, and "from that admirable position [he] 'assist[s]'" (*LC* 2:1067, 1157). The role of the narrator is reduced " to watching […] through the successive windows of other people's interest" (*LC* 2:1303). James confesses his "beautiful infatuation" with " the intensity of the creative effort to get into the skin of the creature; the act of personal possession of one being by another at its completest – and with the high enhancement, ever, that it is, by the same stroke, the effort of the artist to preserve for his subject that unity, and for his use of it […] that effect of a *centre*, which most economise its value" (*LC* 2:1068). Commenting on *The Golden Bowl*, he writes that "the whole thing remains subject to the register, ever so closely kept, of the consciousness of but two of the characters." But, James adds, "It 's not that the muffled majesty of authorship doesn't here *ostensibly* reign; but I catch myself again shaking it off and disavowing the pretence of it while I get down into the arena and do my best to live and breathe and rub shoulders and converse with the persons engaged in the struggle that provides for the others in the circling tiers the entertainment of the great game" (*LC* 2:1322-3).

James's last statement calls to mind Dostoevsky's "narrator-chronicler" who "lives in the town where the action occurs, has access to minute details of that action, but does not participate in it. He does not shrink, however, from judging or interpreting the people and events around him" (Miller 2). Throughout his career, Dostoevsky experimented with a variety of narrative styles, but he remained consistent in that he "sought always to conceal his own narrative voice" (Miller 6). He first made this clear in a letter to his brother written after the publication of *Poor Folk*, in which he remarks that the public has "gotten used to seeing the author's mug in everything," and that "they can't even imagine that it's Devushkin speaking, and not I" (*Letters* 1:122), and "this concealment of the author's voice," Miller observes, "continued as a principle of Dostoevsky's narrative technique for the next thirty-five years" (6). However, it is not so much concealment of the authorial voice itself that links Dostoevsky's narrative technique to James's, but the purpose it serves in their quests for aesthetic—and, as we shall see, ethical—ideals as it is reflected in their fiction. It is therefore fitting to conclude this chapter with a general comparison of the narrative styles with which the names of James and Dostoevsky have become synonymous: Dostoevsky's polyphonic method and James's center-of-consciousness technique.

James elaborates on his method throughout his prefaces to the New York edition, as in the following passage:

> I have already betrayed, as an accepted habit, and even to extravagance commented on, my preference for dealing with my subject matter, for 'seeing my story', through the opportunity and the sensibility of some more or less detached, some not strictly involved, though thoroughly interested and intelligent, witness or reporter, some person who contributes to the case mainly a certain amount of

> criticism and interpretation of it. Again and again, on review, the shorter things in especial that I have gathered into this series have ranged themselves not as my own impersonal account of the affair in hand, but as my account of somebody's impression of it – the terms of this person's access to it and estimate of it contributing thus by some fine little law to intensification of interest. The somebody is often, among my shorter tales I recognise, but an unnamed, unintroduced and (save by right of intrinsic wit) unwarranted participant, the impersonal author's concrete deputy or delegate, a convenient substitute or apologist for the creative power otherwise so veiled and disembodied. (*LC* 2:1322)

Repeatedly emphasizing the economy of his method throughout the prefaces, James claims to stay true to it even when he employs more than one center of consciousness in his novels and tales. He describes the process in the preface to *The Wings of the Dove* as the "fun" of "establishing one's successive centres—of fixing them so exactly that the portions of the subject commanded by them as by happy points of view, and accordingly treated from them, would constitute, so to speak, sufficiently solid *blocks* of wrought material, squared to the sharp edge, as to have weight and mass and carrying power" (*LC* 2:1294). He goes on to insist that " From the moment [he] proceed[s] by 'centres' […] they must *be*, each, as a basis, selected and fixed; after which it is that, in the high interest of economy of treatment, they determine and rule" (*LC* 2:1297).

James's preference for "fixed" centers and compositional "economy" appears on the surface to be directly opposed to the polyphonic quality of Dostoevsky's novel, characterized by "*a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of*

fully valid voices […] *with equal rights and each with its own world*" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 6).[10] After all, it is precisely the "plurality" of voices that James takes for "lack of composition" and "defiance of economy and architecture" in the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, which he describes in a well-known letter to Hugh Walpole as "fluid puddings, though not tasteless, because the amount of their own minds and souls in solution in the broth gives it savour and flavour, thanks to the strung, rank quality of their genius and their experience" (*Letters* 2:237). James's failure to perceive the architecture or compositional value underlying the "plurality" of voices—matters of great concern to Dostoevsky, as his numerous notebooks show—are not entirely unaccountable, and are in line with Dostoevsky's English reputation. It is unlikely, for example, that James was familiar with Dostoevsky's early tales in which the Russian has "discovered" the famous Jamesean principle of composition through a "centre of consciousness," such as the third-person narrator in *The Double* who bewildered Dostoevsky's unprepared audience as his voice gradually merged with that of the hero while retaining its ostensibly third-person point-of-view. Moreover, early translations tended to focus on Dostoevsky's "ideas" with minimum regard for his artistic experiments with modes of narration, such as his strategic use of free indirect discourse, or deliberate alternations of point of view.[11]

But the differences between Dostoevsky's and James's narrative methods are nevertheless worthy of examination, for, to quote James, "We may strike lights by opposing order to order, one sort to another sort; for in that case we get the correspondences and equivalents that make differences mean something" (*LC* 2:1149-50), and it is order to order that

[10]Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1984).
[11] For an overview of English translations of Dostoevsky's major works, see Olive Classe, "Dostoevskii," *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), I:367-71.

we oppose when we talk about polyphony and center of consciousness, and not Jamesian order to Dostoevsky's disorder, as James had unfortunately envisioned it.

The most characteristic difference between Dostoevsky's polyphony and James's center-of-consciousness technique resides, as James would have agreed, in selection. Only, contrary to James's suggestion, it is not lack of selection that makes Dostoevsky different, but his criterion for selection. As Bakhtin notes,

> Dostoevsky's extraordinary artistic capacity for seeing everything in coexistence and interaction is his greatest strength, but his greatest weakness as well. It made him deaf and dumb to a great many essential things; many aspects of reality could not enter his artistic field of vision. But on the other hand this capacity sharpened, and to an extreme degree, his perception in the cross-section of a given moment, and permitted him to see many and varied things where others saw one and the same thing. […] Dostoevsky's visualizing power was locked in place at the moment diversity revealed itself— and remained there, organizing and shaping this diversity in the cross-section of a given moment. (*Problems* 30)

In other words, Dostoevsky selects a *moment* and illuminates it from various angles, showing its multifariousness, presenting it from various aspects almost simultaneously, but nevertheless not as an objective reality, but as a concomitance of aspects each of which is presented from a particular point of view. James, on the other hand, focuses on a *fixed* point of view, a center of consciousness from which particular aspects of various things, people, and events will be illuminated. As he writes in the preface to *The Princess Casamassima*,

> I never see the *leading* interest of any human hazard but in a consciousness […] subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement. It is as mirrored in that

> consciousness that the gross fools, the headlong fools, the fatal fools play their part for us – they have much less to show us in themselves. The troubled life mostly at the centre of our subject – whatever our subject, for the artistic hour, happens to be – embraces them and deals with them for its amusement and its anguish: they are apt largely indeed, on a near view, to be all the cause of its trouble. […] By so much as the affair matters *for* some such individual, by so much do we get the best there is of it, and by so much as it falls within the scope of a denser and duller, a more vulgar and more shallow capacity, do we get a picture dim and meagre. (*LC* 2:1092-3)

If we define Jamesian "centre" as a "register of impressions," a "reflector," and a "window," we will see that its fundamental characteristics match the peculiar characteristics of Dostoevskian hero:

> The hero interests Dostoevsky not as some manifestation of reality that possesses fixed and specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits, nor as a specific profile assembled out of unambiguous and objective features which, taken together, answer the question "Who is he?" No, the hero interests Dostoevsky as a particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality. What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself. (*Problems* 47)

Like Jamesian "centres," who interest the author "only in proportion as they feel their respective situations" (*LC* 2:1088), Dostoevsky's hero represents a certain position, a way of

feeling and seeing, a certain point of view from which he or she illuminates (to other characters, to the reader, and arguably even to the author), particular aspects of reality revealed through the character's unique position vis-à-vis the world. Only while James presents his centers in a strict, fixed alternation, Dostoevsky gives us all of his centers in the moment of interaction. What is crucial is that both Dostoevsky and James use their respective techniques to highlight the co-existence of multiple, possibly infinite perspectives and the multitude of aspects to be revealed through them, Dostoevsky's method being more direct (showing plurality), and James's indirect (implying plurality by showing the limitations of a particular position). Thus, Dostoevsky and James use the same principle, differing only in its application—differing, that is, except where James strives for the same dramatic effect Dostoevsky's polyphonic style delivers.

James's interest in the dramatic method of representation is well known, and his application of it to his fiction resembles the structure of Dostoevsky's works. Despite his professed devotion to this economic "principle of composition," James is fascinated with the same plurality that, according to Bakhtin, is the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novel. This fascination manifests itself in James's preference for the dramatic or "scenic" form. Thus he admits in the preface to *The Tragic Muse* that it is "not easy to say which of the situations concerned in it predominates and rules. What has become in that imperfect order, accordingly, of the famous centre of one's subject?" He talks of the excess of consciousness—a hallmark of Dostoevsky's style—on the part of several characters which prevents singling any one of them as the novel's "centre." He goes on to present "a different view and a different placing of the centre," which consists in the "objective" subject of analysis divided into "aspects" that will be illuminated by individual consciousnesses, "the whole thing has visibly, from the first, to get itself done in dramatic, or at least in scenic conditions."

> The charm of the scenic consistency, the consistency of the multiplication of *aspects*, that of making them amusingly various, had haunted the author of *The Tragic Muse* from far back […] To put himself at any rate as much as possible under the protection of it had been ever his practice […] No character in a play (any play not a mere monologue) has, for the right expression of the thing, a *usurping* consciousness; the consciousness of others is exhibited exactly in the same way as that of the 'hero'; the prodigious consciousness of Hamlet, the most capacious and most crowded, the moral presence the most asserted, in the whole range of fiction, only takes its turn with that of the other agents of the story, no matter how occasional these may be. It is left in other words to answer for itself equally with theirs […] (*LC* 2:1111-3)

Thus he writes in the preface to *The Awkward Age*, arguably his most dramatic novel:

> I remember that in sketching my project […] I drew on a sheet of paper […] the neat figure of a circle consisting of a number of small rounds disposed at equal distance about a central object. The central object was my situation, my subject in itself, to which the thing would owe its title, and the small rounds represented so many distinct lamps, as I liked to call them, the function of each of which would be to light with all due intensity one of its aspects. I had divided it, didn't they see? into aspects […] and by that sign we would conquer. […] Each of my 'lamps' would be the light of a single 'social occasion' in the history and intercourse of the characters concerned, and would bring out to the full the latent colour of the scene in question and cause it to illustrate, to the last drop, its bearing on my theme. I revelled in this notion of the Occasion as a thing by itself,

> really and completely a scenic thing, and could scarce name it, while crouching amid the thick arcana of my plan, with a large enough O. The beauty of the conception was in this approximation of the respective divisions of my form to the successive Acts of a Play […] The divine distinction of the act of a play […] was, I reasoned, in its special, its guarded objectivity. This objectivity, in turn, when achieving its ideal, came from the imposed absence of that 'going behind', to compass explanations and amplifications, to drag out odds and ends from the 'mere' storyteller's great property-shop of aids to illusion […] (*LC* 2:1129-32)

By juxtaposing various points of view, whether by engaging them in a dramatic dialog or by shifting the center of consciousness, Dostoevsky and James reveal limitations characterizing human perception, our positionality vis-à-vis the world. Moreover, their method draws the audience into an awareness of their own limitations, because the reader must "discover" that the view presented to at one point of the reading process is incomplete or contradictory when measured against another point. The latter point, however, equally lacks authority, and the reader must attempt to combine the various perspectives or aspects into a single picture, filling in the gaps by projecting the missing aspects, as he or she grows aware of the plurality of possible perspectives. This acknowledgement of plurality of visions in Dostoevsky and James does not result in relativism, however. Not only do they accept, they embrace the limits of perception as potentially liberating and enriching for the individual consciousness. Awareness that one's viewpoint is but one of the many serves as an invitation to look at the world from another angle—or, to borrow from James's recurrent image, from another "window." James's famous metaphor of the house of fiction aptly characterizes Dostoevsky's art as well:

> The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million – a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather; every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will. These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, hang so, all together, over the human scene that we might have expected of them a greater sameness of report than we find. They are but windows at the best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. […] The spreading field, the human scene, is the 'choice of subject'; the pierced aperture, either broad or balconied or slit-like and low-browed, is the 'literary form'; but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher – without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist. Tell me what the artist is, and I will tell you of what he has *been* conscious. (*LC* 2:1075)

The fiction of Dostoevsky and James shows their consciousness of the vital resemblance the house of fiction bears to life in its very structure. In so far as the windows of James's metaphorical house hang over the human scene, and "are not hinged doors opening straight upon life," James's metaphor suggests that writing is consciousness of other consciousnesses, for "the human scene" after all, is comprised of individuals, each representing in turn a distinct view of the self and its surroundings. The reader, in turn, develops consciousness of the artist's consciousness. Dostoevsky and James foreground this interactive, intersubjective nature of

literary activity by representing the relationships between characters in their fiction in literary terms. Just as the artist in James's metaphor observes "the human scene" and not raw reality, the stories and novels of Dostoevsky and James dramatize the conflict between the self and other individual selves, and not between the self and 'society,' or the self and 'the world.' Each voice, each center in their fiction represents a distinct way of seeing, and much of the drama centers on the perpetual battle of perspectives competing for validity. But these perspectives are rarely fixed pictures of reality: by presenting them in interaction, Dostoevsky and James show how various ways of seeing inform and influence each other, and shape the very apertures through which we look.

Because of this fundamental interdependence of literature and life, the same principles that Dostoevsky and James use to define the art of fiction also characterize the life-writing efforts of their heroes and heroines. Their insistence on the freedom of art from prescriptions and obligations is mirrored in their characters' resistance to objectification and superimposed systems of morality; the central value of interest in a work of fiction, and the vital role with which they endow the reader is reflected in the vital role the other plays in the self-scripting efforts of Dostoevsky's and James's heroes and heroines. The primacy of impressions and point of view which Dostoevsky and James postulate as the basis of realism in fiction become the very air of reality their characters breath, and their arduous pursuit of realism—of realism "in the higher sense," as Dostoevsky put it—takes in their characters the form of a quest for genuine, "living life."

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[i] … этого только можно желать, но не требовать, уже по тому одному, что требуют большею частью, когда хотят заставить насильно, а первый закон в искусстве - свобода вдохновения и творчества. Всё же вытребованное, всё вымученное спокон веку до наших времен не удавалось и вместо пользы приносило один только вред. Защитники "искусства для искусства" собственно за то и сердятся на утилитаристов, что

они, предписывая искусству определенные цели, тем самым разрушают само искусство… (*Sobraniie sochinenii v pyatnadtsati tomakh* [hereafter cited as *SS*] 11:56)

[ii] ведь еще неизвестен в подробности нормальный исторический ход полезности искусства в человечестве. (*SS* 11:57)

[iii] если давать заранее цели искусству и определять, чем именно оно должно быть полезно, то можно ужасно ошибиться, так что вместо пользы можно принести один вред (*SS* 11:58)

[iv] нормальные, естественные пути полезного нам не совсем известны, по крайней мере не исчислены до последней точности (*SS* 11:77)

[v] Но не только о будущем, мы даже не можем иметь точных и положительных сведений о всех путях и уклонениях, одним словом, о всем нормальном ходе полезного даже и в прошедшем нашем. Мы изучаем этот путь, догадываемся, строим системы, выводим следствия, но все-таки календаря и тут не составим, и история до сих пор не может считаться точной наукой, несмотря на то, что факты почти все перед нами. И потому, как, например, вы определите, вымеряете и взвесите, какую пользу принесла всему человечеству "Илиада"? Где, когда, в каких случаях она была полезна, чем, наконец, какое именно влияние она имела на такие-то народы, в такой-то момент их развития и сколько именно было этого влияния (ну, хоть фунтов, пудов, аршин, километров, градусов и проч., и проч.)? А ведь если мы этого не можем определить, то очень возможно, что можем ошибиться и теперь, когда будем строго и решительно определять людям занятия и указывать искусству нормальные пути полезности и настоящего его назначения. (*SS* 11:77)

[vi] В сущности вы презираете поэзию и художественность; вам нужно прежде всего дело, вы люди деловые. То-то и есть, что художественность есть самый лучший, самый убедительный, самый бесспорный и наиболее понятный для массы способ представления в образах именно того самого дела, о котором вы хлопочете, самый деловой, если хотите вы, деловой человек. Следственно, художественность в высочайшей степени полезна именно с вашей точки зрения. (*SS* 11:75)

[vii] Чем познается художественность в произведении искусства? Тем, если мы видим согласие, по возможности полное, художественной идеи с той формой, в которую она воплощена. (*SS* 11:60)

[viii] Но такое желание, переходящее в требование, по-нашему, есть уже непонимание основных законов искусства и его главной сущности — свободы вдохновения. Это значит просто не признавать искусства как органического целого. […] у искусства собственная, цельная, органическая жизнь и, следовательно, основные и неизменимые законы для этой жизни. (*SS* 11:76)

[ix] Вы как будто думаете, что искусство не имеет само по себе никакой нормы, никаких своих законов, что им можно помыкать по произволу, что вдохновение у всякого в кармане по первому востребованию, что оно может служить тому-то и тому-то и пойти по такой дороге, по которой вы захотите. (*SS* 11:76)

[x] От времени, точно так же как и от верной критической оценки, мишура чернеет, опадает; остается чистая и голая правда. ("Vystavka" 152)

[xi] Эта мерка в том: чем более симпатии возбуждает в массе поэт, тем, стало быть, он наиболее оправдывает свое явление. Конечно, тут могут быть большие ошибки, капитальные уклонения; примеры были: масса иногда в данный момент и не знает, чего ей нужно, что именно надо любить, чему симпатизировать. Но эти уклонения сами собою скоро проходят, и общество всегда само отыскивает потерянный путь. А главное в том, что искусство всегда в высшей степени верно действительности,— уклонения его мимолетные, скоропреходящие; оно не только всегда верно действительности, но и не может быть неверно современной действительности. (*SS* 11:84)

[xii] Личность моя исчезнет. Это записки неизвестного; но за интерес я ручаюсь. Интерес будет наикапитальнейший. Там будет и серьезное, и мрачное, и юмористическое, и народный разговор с особенным каторжным оттенком (я тебе читал некоторые, из записанных мною на месте, выражений), и изображение личностей, никогда не слыханных в литературе, и трогательное, и, наконец, главное, - мое имя. Вспомни, что Плещеев приписывал успех своих стихотворений своему имени (понимаешь?). Я уверен, что публика прочтет это с жадностию. Но в журналах печатать это, - теперь уж не надо! […] За интерес я уверен, как то, что я живу.

[xiii] За занимательность ручаюсь, о художественном исполнении - не беру на себя судить. (*SS* 15:275)

[xiv] Я только что теперь успел отослать в редакцию "Русского вестника" начало моего романа, за которым так долго сидел, и всё еще недоволен. Зато за продолжение и за конец романа спокоен: по крайней мере выйдет занимательно (а занимательность я, до того дошел, что ставлю выше художественности). Насчет художественности не знаю, кажется, должно бы иметь успех. Мысль смелая и большая. То-то и есть,

что всё беру темы себе не по силам. Поэт во мне перетягивает художника всегда, а это и скверно. (*PSS* 19:143)

[xv] А талантливо составить — значит занимательно составить, потому что самая лучшая книга, какая бы она ни была и о чем бы ни трактовала,— это занимательная. (*SS* 11:140)

[xvi] 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. В каждом нумере газет Вы встречаете отчет о самых действительных фактах и о самых мудреных. Для писателей наших они фантастичны; да они и не занимаются ими; а между тем они действительность, потому что они факты. Кто же будет их замечать, их разъяснять и записывать? Они поминутны и ежедневны, а не исключительны. […] Мы всю действительность пропустим этак мимо носу. Кто ж будет отмечать факты и углубляться в них? […] Неужели фантастичный мой "Идиот" не есть действительность, да еще самая обыденная! (*SS* 15:405-6)

[xvii] На то и талант у писателя, чтоб произвести впечатление. Можно знать факт, видеть его самолично сто раз и все-таки не получить такого впечатления, как если кто-нибудь другой, человек особенный, станет подле вас и укажет вам тот же самый факт, но только по-своему, объяснит вам его своими словами, заставит вас смотреть на него своим взглядом. Этим то влиянием и познается настоящий талант. (*SS* 11:71)

[xviii] Действительно, проследите иной, даже вовсе и не такой яркий на первый взгляд факт действительной жизни, - и если только вы в силах и имеете глаз, то найдете в нем глубину, какой нет у Шекспира. Но ведь в том-то и весь вопрос: *на чей глаз и кто в силах?* Ведь не только чтоб создавать и писать художественные произведения, но и чтоб только приметить факт, нужно тоже в своем роде художника. Для иного наблюдателя все явления жизни проходят в самой трогательной простоте и до того понятны, что и думать не о чем, смотреть даже не на что и не стоит. Другого же наблюдателя те же самые явления до того иной раз озаботят, что (случается даже и нередко) - не в силах, наконец, их обобщить и упростить, вытянуть в прямую линию и на том успокоиться, - он прибегает к другого рода упрощению и *просто-запросто* сажает себе пулю в лоб, чтоб погасить свой измученный ум вместе со всеми вопросами разом. Это только две противуположности, но между ними помещается весь наличный смысл человеческий. (*SS* 13:319)

[xix] Точность и верность нужны, элементарно необходимы, но их слишком мало; точность и верность покамест только еще матерьял, из которого потом создается художественное произведение; это орудие творчества. ("Vystavka" 153)

[xx] В зеркальном отражении не видно, как зеркало смотрит на предмет, или, лучше сказать, видно, что оно никак не смотрит, а отражает пассивно, механически. Истинный художник этого не может; в картине ли, в рассказе ли, в музыкальном ли произведении непременно виден будет он сам; он отразится невольно, даже против своей воли, выскажется со всеми своими взглядами, с своим характером, с степенью своего развития.

[xxi] В старину сказали бы, что он должен смотреть глазами телесными и, сверх того, глазами души, или оком духовным.

[xxii] Нельзя сказать человеку: удовольствуйся анализом и накоплением матерьяла и не смей мыслить и выводить заключения. Это всё равно если сказать: не гляди глазами, не нюхай носом.

[xxiii] Таким образом, всё, что делается в каком-нибудь уголке площади, будет передано верно, как *есть.* В картину, естественно, войдет и всё совершенно ненужное в этой картине или, лучше сказать, в идее этой картины. Г-н Успенский об этом мало заботится. Ему, например, хотелось бы изобразить в своей фотографии рынок и дать нам понятие о рынке. Но если б на этот рынок в это мгновение опустился воздушный шар (что может когда-нибудь случиться), то г-н Успенский снял бы и это случайное и совершенно не относящееся до характеристики рынка явление. Если б из-за рамки картины проглядывал в это мгновение кончик коровьего хвоста, он бы оставил и коровий хвост, решительно не заботясь о его ненужности в картине. Так почти и во всех рассказах г-на Успенского. Он цепляется за все ненужности и даже не заботится хоть сколько-нибудь связать эти ненужности с делом, чтоб объяснить их по крайней мере читателю, чтоб не кричали эти ненужности и своим неожиданным появлением не повергали в столбняк читателя. Скажут нам: "Да это-то и хорошо, вот именно эта точность хороша". Да разве это точность, и разве в этом должна состоять точность? Это путаница, а не точность. И что вы передадите исключительно одним списыванием матерьяла?

[xxiv] В том-то и дело, что перед нами бессознательно лежит природа. Если бессознательно описывать один матерьял, то мы ничего не узнаем; но приходит художник и передает нам *свой взгляд* об этом матерьяле и расскажет нам, как это явление называется, и назовет нам людей, в нем участвующих, и иногда так назовет, что имена эти переходят в тип, и наконец когда все поверят этому типу, то название его переходит в имя нарицательное для всех относящихся к этому типу людей. […]

[xxv] “Надо изображать действительность как она есть”, - говорят они, тогда как такой действительности совсем нет, да и никогда на земле не бывало, потому что сущность вещей человеку недоступна, а воспринимает он природу так, как отражается она в его идее, пройдя через его чувства; стало быть, надо дать поболее ходу идее и не бояться идеального. (*SS* 12:90)

Chapter 2.

The Dreamer and the Beast:

White Nights and *The Beast in the Jungle*

Wasted, unlived life is one of the most recurrent themes in Dostoevsky and James. Like Tolstoy in the diary entry quoted earlier, Dostoevsky and James acknowledge that if life takes place entirely "on the level of the unconscious, then it's as if this life had never been" (Tolstoy 142, qtd. in Shklovsky 5). Like Tolstoy, they also acknowledge that a conscious observer can restore the 'missed' experience to our consciousness. The artist in Dostoevsky and James appears to be just such a conscious observer who, thanks to his or her heightened capacity to receive and impart impressions, rescues us from the oblivion of non-life. But the same qualities that enable the artist to capture and appreciate the beauty and complexity of life render one more susceptible to isolation and merely illusory experience. If, as James insists, "impressions are experience," then the more imaginative, the more impressionable the mind, the richer is its adventure. But imagination is capable of producing fantasies as well as impressions; and just as the genuineness of a work of art can only be determined by the resonance it finds in the minds of the audience, so vibrations of consciousness acquire value and meaning of genuine experience only in relation to others.

This vital distinction between art and artifice, between imagination and fantasy, between consciousness and illusion, is vividly captured by Dostoevsky in *White Nights* and by James in *The Beast in the Jungle,* the two minor masterpieces in which Dostoevsky and James dramatize the perils of an insulated, self-absorbed consciousness and disengaged reflection. These two tales show that despite their emphasis on the subjective experience, Dostoevsky and James are far from suggesting that life takes place entirely on the inside. Instead, their protagonists' respective

failures to live remind us, as Jill Kress puts it, that “consciousness […] depends upon actions such as ‘taking things in,’ identifying with others, arranging relations, seeing through another’s eyes. As such, consciousness […] is always about other people’s consciousnesses” (Kress 105).[12]

2.1 *White Nights*[13]

In his *Petersburg Chronicle*, a feuilleton out of which the hero of *White Nights* directly emerged, Dostoevsky proclaims that “Life is an art in itself,” and “to live means to make a work of art of oneself.” He adds that a “good heart can be ground and polished into a precious, sparkling and genuine diamond” through sympathy for the demands of others, and not in solitude, “not by drowsiness and indifference” (*OW* 14).[i] *White Nights* can be seen as a development of this theme as its narrator and protagonist, known only as the Dreamer, recounts his awakening from “drowsiness and indifference” under the influence of the events that took place fifteen years earlier. The “event” consists in his brief spring romance with a young woman Nastenka whom he encounters one night on the bank of the canal. Sensitive and impressionable, the Dreamer, who has thus far avoided human contact, particularly with women, immediately falls in love with the sprightly, young girl. However, Nastenka longs to reunite with her fiancé, and the Dreamer, torn between his love and his desire to see his beloved happy, does everything to bring about the reunion and nothing to advance his own cause. With the fiancé’s return, the Dreamer’s hope for a real relationship with a real (as opposed to imaginary, ideal) woman is finally shattered, but the “ moment of bliss” during which he had truly lived impels him to rescue what is left of his wasted life by literally turning it into a work of art.

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[12] Jill M. Kress offers an illuminating analysis of the “interrelational” nature of consciousness in James in “Relations, Receptacles and Worlds of Experience: Gendered Metaphors and *The Golden Bowl*,” *The Figure of Consciousness: William James, Henry James, and Edith Wharton* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 89-130.
[13] The English edition cited in this chapter is Fyodor Dostoevsky, “White Nights,” *Best Stories of Fyodor Dostoevsky*, trans. David Magarshack (Westminster, MD: Ballantine, 2005) 3-67.

In the opening section of the Dreamer's confession ("The First Night"), the narrator describes, largely through the eyes of his former, younger self, the growing sense of strange sadness, anxiety, and loneliness apparently triggered by the departure of St. Petersburg residents for their summer country homes: "All of a sudden it seemed to me as though I, the solitary one, had been forsaken by the whole world, and that the whole world would have nothing to do with me"[ii] (3). His sadness is "strange" because the hero leads a deliberately secluded life and has never sought the society of the people he begins to miss as the summer approaches. It soon becomes clear that the real source of his disquiet lies within himself, and that it is not "the whole world" that abandons him, but *he* is forced to let go of "the whole world"—the enchanting, mysterious world erected by his imagination during the long hours of seclusion and day-dreaming. We get a glimpse of this world (and the extent of his detachment from reality) in the Dreamer's description of the purely subjective relationship with his surroundings: "I have not been lucky in acquiring a single acquaintance in Petersburg during the eight years I have been living there," he confesses, "But what do I want acquaintances for? I know the whole of Petersburg without them" (4).[iii] The idea that he knows "the whole of Petersburg" without making any acquaintances echoes James's famous claim that that "one way of taking life was *to go in for everything and everyone*, which kept you abundantly occupied, and the other way was to be as occupied, quite as occupied, just with *the sense and the image of it all*, and on only a fifth of the actual immersion" (*Autobiography* 164). But the Dreamer forgoes immersion completely. Objects and people from the external world are transformed into idealized presences in his mind, where even the basic distinction between inanimate objects and living persons is blurred. First, he gives an account of his 'acquaintance' with an old gentleman he sees on the

Fontanka embankment, revealing at once the unreciprocal nature of his ‘relationship’ with the city and its inhabitants:

> It is true I am a complete stranger to these people, but they are not strangers to me. I know them rather intimately, in fact […]. Why, there is an old gentleman I see every day on the Fontanka Embankment with whom I have practically struck up a friendship. He looks so thoughtful and dignified, and he always mutters under his breath, waving his left hand and holding a big knotty walking-stick with a gold top in his right. I have, I believe, attracted his attention, and I should not be surprised if he took a most friendly interest in me. In fact, I am sure that if he did not meet me at a certain hour on the Fontanka Embankment he would be terribly upset. That is why we sometimes *almost* bow to one another, especially when we are both in a good humour. Recently we had not seen each other for two days, and on the third day, when we met, we were *just about* to raise our hats in salute, but fortunately we recollected ourselves in time and, dropping our hands, passed one another in complete understanding and amity. (4, emphasis added)[iv]

What the Dreamer knows is his idea of the old man, the old man as he wishes to see him, and he is therefore grateful that no external action, such as raising a hat or saluting, occurs, because he does not want any intrusion from the external world. As long as they pass each other unnoticed, the Dreamer can continue to project his own thoughts, ideas, and feelings onto the gentleman, denying his existence as an autonomous subject. This dehumanization of a living person is paradoxically highlighted by the immediately following personification of houses to which he attributes thoughts, feelings, and even dialogues in the same manner he did with the old

gentleman. The absence of any distinction between persons and things in this introductory passage foregrounds the pure subjectivity of the Dreamer's consciousness.

Nonetheless, at the point where the narrator begins his account, the Dreamer's illusion begins to dissipate. As he observes "the whole of Petersburg [...] about to turn into a desert," he is "overwhelmed with shame, humiliation, and sadness" upon realizing his complete lack of real human contact: "I am willing to leave with every cart or every gentleman of respectable appearance who hails a cab; but no one, absolutely no one, invites me to go with him, as though they had all forgotten me, as though I were no more than a stranger to them!" (7).[v] As long people around him followed the habitual routine of their lives, like the old gentleman on the Fontanka embankment, it was possible for the Dreamer to appropriate them into his consciousness, for habit, making it possible to predict the next move, upholds a sense of mastery and control over our lives and, by extension, over those around us. But the seemingly minor deviation from the usual observed by the hero forces him to acknowledge others as independent subjects—persons with thoughts, feelings, desires and plans of their own. As a result, he must reconceive his world on inter-subjective terms. He can no longer pretend that his life is complete in his isolation, and this leads him to a sense of uneasiness and longing to establish a genuine human contact through which he could participate in life.

The Dreamer's awakened awareness of the other is manifested in his actual, physical response to the suffering of another being. As he walks back home in this troubled state, the hero passes a young woman leaning against the railing of the canal, and, in his typical manner, he begins to speculate about her. The sound of her sobbing, however, interrupts his speculations, prompting him to approach the girl. The Dreamer himself acknowledges the moment as a critical opportunity: "My heart contracted with pity. And timid though I am with women, this was too

good a chance to be missed" (*takaya minuta*!) (9). The moment becomes the first in the series of tests he is about to submit to. On the one hand, the fact that his usual manner of projecting his own imaginary story onto another being is superseded by a desire to *act* suggests a new awareness of those around him as individuals with feelings and needs independent of his own. Nevertheless, his capacity for action is challenged when instead of responding spontaneously, he is tempted to see the situation as if it were a scene from a romance of the kind that fueled his imagination. As he walks up to the girl, he checks himself, for "in another moment I would have certainly said 'Madam!' if I had not known that that exclamation had been made a thousand times before in all Russian novels of high life" (9).[vi] But as he searches for the right word with which to address her, the latter recollects herself and leaves the embankment. It is clear that the chance which the Dreamer sees in the moment still has a double appeal to him: on the one hand, the whole scene, and not just his intended address, evokes the atmosphere of a novel; on the other hand, it presents the opportunity to make a real (as opposed to previously imaginary) human contact and thus escape alienation and loneliness of which he had grown so painfully aware in the preceding days. While the first reason nearly costs him Nastenka's acquaintance, the second compels him to pursue her, and he gets a second chance to act by "rescuing" the girl from the harassment of a drunken passerby.

Immediately at the start of the conversation, the hero betrays his overwhelming excitement about their meeting: "I've entirely lost the habit of talking to women. I mean, I never really was in the habit of talking to them. You see, I'm such a lonely creature. Come to think of it, I don't believe I know how to talk to women" (11).[vii] The Dreamer confesses that imaginary life has replaced actual experience for him. While admitting to his lack of contact with women, he adds that he was often in love with imaginary women, "Just with my ideal, with the woman I

see in my dreams. I make up all sorts of romantic love stories in my dreams." He then clarifies, "It's true I have known two or three women— you can't help that, can you?—but what sort of women were they? They were all so mercenary (*vsyo takiye khozyaiki*) that . . . (12).[viii] The hero's relationship with women encapsulates his relationship with the world at large in general: just as the women he met in life faded in comparison with the ideal erected by his imagination, so does the world around him appears vulgar and insignificant in contrast to the enchanted world he imagines, where he stands at the center as a towering, heroic figure. As a result of this contrast, the Dreamer not only further withdraws from the world and people around him, but becomes incapacitated for action, as evidenced by his extreme timidity with women. Dostoevsky gives a detailed description of this process in *Petersburg Chronicle*:

> quite often reality produces a painful, hostile impression in the dreamer's breast, and he hastens to hide himself in his precious golden corner, which, as a matter of fact, is often dusty, untidy, unswept and dirty. Little by little our reprobate begins to shun crowds, to take no interest in general affairs, and gradually and imperceptibly *the talent of real life becomes blunted in him*. He quite naturally begins to believe that the pleasures that his uncontrolled imagination gives him are fuller, more splendid and more enchanting than real life. At last, in his delusion, he completely loses the moral judgment that enables men to appraise the full beauty of the present; he is at a loss, he gets flustered, he lets the moments of real happiness slip by, and, in his apathy, he folds his arms indolently and does not want to know that a man's life is continual self-contemplation of nature and actual reality.[ix] (*OW* 37, emphasis added)

While the Dreamer of *White Nights* awakens from his delusion, his relationship with Nastenka will determine the extent to which his "talent for real life" is blunted. As Gary Rosenshield rightly posits, the Dreamer's confession to Nastenka "introduces the thesis that is to be tested in the rest of the work: has the hero's long addiction to dreaming rendered him permanently incapable of adjusting to the demands, as well as of profiting from the richness, of real life" ("Point of View" 193).

The love triangle in which the Dreamer finds himself, with Nastenka's being in love with an absent fiancé, requires that he take action to win the woman of his dream, but the Dreamer slips into a familiar pattern of detachment and interiorization. Instead of wooing the woman who, for the first time, surpasses his imaginary ideal, he detaches the image of her from the present moment and places it in the safety of his imagination: "I am a dreamer. I know so little of real life that I just can't help re-living such moments as these in my dreams, for such moments are something I have very rarely experienced. I am going to dream about you the whole night, the whole week, the whole year. I'll most certainly come here tomorrow. Yes, here, at this place and at this hour. And I shall be happy to remember what happened to me today. Already this place is dear to me"[x] (14). Ironically, instead of trying to make the most of the rare experience afforded him—his potentially romantic relationship with Nastenka, in this case—he regards the moment as a dream, as something to think about in the future rather than something to act upon. In the fourth part of Petersburg Chronicle, Dostoevsky describes this detrimental characteristic "*to test and weigh* without any need, just by force of habit, a little too accurately *our impressions;* sometimes to weigh only impending, future pleasures, to appraise and find satisfaction in them beforehand in our daydreams, to be satisfied with fancies and, quite naturally, to be quite incapable of dealing with the real thing afterward" (*OW* 31-32).[xi] Paradoxically, in the attempt to

grasp and hold, to appreciate the valuable moment, the Dreamer actually wastes it by re-living it in his mind at the very time when he should be living in it.

In the course of his confession, the Dreamer ultimately recognizes the falsity and emptiness of his existence. When he describes to Nastenka the fantasies that comprise most of his life, he conjures up a "magical and thrilling" picture in which "he himself, our dreamer, in his own precious person, occupies the most prominent place! Look what an amazing sea of adventures, what a never-ending paradise of ecstatic dreams!" He imagines himself on "the mission of the poet, first unrecognized, then crowned with laurels," and dreams "of what a heroic role he would have played at the taking of Kazan by Ivan Vassilyevich" (25-26). While in his egocentric fantasies the Dreamer envisions himself as an epic hero, his response to Nastenka's request to tell the story of his life reveals that he is a "hero" without a story:

> "The story of my life?" I cried, thoroughly alarmed. "But who told you there was such a story? I'm afraid there isn't any."
>
> "But how did you manage to live, if there is no story?" she interrupted me, laughing.
>
> "Without any stories whatsoever! I have lived, as they say, entirely independently. I mean by myself. Do you know what it means to live by oneself?"
>
> "How do you mean by yourself? Do you never see anyone at all?"
>
> "Why, no. I see all sorts of people, but I'm alone all the same."
>
> "Don't you ever talk to anyone?"
>
> "Strictly speaking, never."[xii] (17)

Significantly, having a "story" is tied not so much to action or adventures, but to having other people in one's life. Nastenka, for instance, was literally pinned to her blind grandmother, yet

even within her restricted situation, she has managed to "write" a story for herself that has the elements of adventure and romance while at the same time remaining touchingly real. When the Dreamer tells Nastenka that he does not have a story, he is correct on more than one level. He does not have a "story" in the sense that his life is completely uneventful, but he also does not have a story because his isolation strips his life of the human meaning that characterizes a story. It is not action, but interaction that makes a story meaningful, and the Dreamer's conversations with Nastenka become the basis of the only story he will be in a position to write about himself. Nastenka's question forces the Dreamer to make a story out of his story-less life, a story that would have a meaning, and that would establish his relation to the outside world. He can only do this by presenting himself as a "type," and throughout his confession, he refers to himself in the third person. Paradoxically, while his life consists of nothing but stories—various fictions in which he imagines himself as a heroic figure—none of these stories belong to him: they have been authored by others, as the settings and quests he imagines arise not from his own relationship with the world, but from his fervent reading.

> You will perhaps ask me what is he dreaming of? But why ask? He is dreaming of everything— of the mission of the poet, first unrecognized, then crowned with laurels, of St. Bartholomew's Night, of Diana Vernon, the heroine of 'Rob Roy,' of what a heroic role he would have played at the taking of Kazan by Ivan Vassilyevich, of Walter Scott's other heroines— Clara Mowbray and Effie Deans, of the Council of the Prelates and Huss before them, of the rising of the dead in 'Robert the Devil' (remember the music? It smells of the churchyard!), of the Battle of Berezina, of the poetry reading at Countess Vorontsova-Dashkova's, of Danton, of Cleopatra *i suoi amanti*, of Pushkin's 'Little House in Kolomna,' of his own little

home and a sweet creature beside him, who is listening to him, with her pretty mouth and eyes open, as you are listening to me now, my dear little angel. . . . (25-26)[xiii]

In view of this, his confession to Nastenka represents a significant shift. Using the familiar literary frame, he takes a view of himself from an authorial position. While his bookish style and the need to represent himself as a hero show the extent to which his ability to make direct human contact has suffered, these same devices also allow him to reevaluate his life from a distance:

> A dreamer— if you must know its exact definition— is not a man, but a sort of creature of the neuter gender. He settles mostly in some inaccessible place, as though anxious to hide in it even from the light of day; and once he gets inside his room, he'll stick to it like a snail, or, at all events, he is in this respect very like that amusing animal which is an animal and a house both at one and the same time and bears the name of tortoise. Why, do you think, is he so fond of his four walls, invariably painted green, grimy, dismal and reeking unpardonably of tobacco smoke? Why does this funny fellow, when one of his new friends comes to visit him (he usually ends up by losing all his friends one by one), why does this absurd person meet him with such an embarrassed look? Why is he so put out of countenance? Why is he thrown into such confusion, as though he had just committed some terrible crime within his four walls? As though he had been forging paper money? Or writing some atrocious poetry to be sent to a journal with an anonymous letter, in which he will explain that, the poet having recently died, he, his friend, deems it his sacred duty to publish his verses? [xiv] (20)

This authorial perspective allows the Dreamer to see not only the fantastic side of his life, but also the real, more vulgar aspects of his existence. Whereas as a “dreamer” he identified with characters created by others, as an author of his confession he speaks of his own self as if it were another being altogether: “what can he, voluptuous sluggard that he is, what can he find so attractive in the life which you and I desire so much?” This enables him to foretell his own “unhappy hour […] when he will gladly give up all his fantastical years for one day of that miserable life, and give them up not in exchange for joy or happiness, but without caring what befalls him in that hour of affliction, remorse, and unconstrained grief”[xv] (26).

Even more importantly, the story he begins to compose suggests a shift from a self-absorbed position to one that is conscious of others, from subjectivity to inter-subjectivity. The major distinction between fancy and artistic imagination is that the latter is always directed outwards; imagination, as James suggests in the statement quoted earlier, is a way of immersion into life, not an escape from it. In the state of dreaminess, the hero walked the streets without “be[ing] able to remember anything, neither where he has been, nor where he is standing now” (24). When the old lady politely asked him for directions, he walked away “frowning with vexation […] scarcely aware of the passers-by” (24). He was equally unaware of the natural world around him: “It is not with indifference that he looks at the sunset which is slowly fading on the cold Petersburg sky. When I say he looks, I’m telling a lie: he does not look at it, but is contemplating it without, as it were, being aware of it himself, as though he were tired or preoccupied at the same time with some other more interesting subject, being able to spare only a passing and almost unintentional glance at what is taking place around him”[xvi] (23). These descriptions stand in contrast to his encounter with Nastenka the night before, and to his selfless endeavors to help her reunite with her fiancé once he learns her story. His devotion almost wins

him her love, but when the missing fiancé finally returns, the Dreamer retreats into his dingy corner, where everything appears even worse than before, and where the narrator finds himself still fifteen years later, reliving in his mind the short excitement of real life and real love.
The Dreamer's return into his shell suggests that his fears that he "shall never be able to start living in earnest" and that he "ha[s] lost all touch with life, all understanding of what is real and actual"[xvii] have come true (30). In this respect, the ending marks the failure of the hero who can neither escape into the world of fantasies after tasting the bliss of "real" life and "true" love, nor, having lost his talent for life, seek that love again. After all, despite his realization that he has "been wasting the best years of [his] life," and that such a life is "a crime and a sin" (39), there is no indication that during the fifteen years following his four-night romance he has ventured to face the world and the people outside his green walls.[14]

And yet, while as a hero of the novella, the Dreamer fails to establish a lasting and meaningful human relationship, as an author of his memoir he draws on his imagination and his failed experience to establish a different but related kind of relationship: between his mature self and his "gentle reader" whom he evokes in the opening of the novella. While the story he tells—his "sentimental romance"—has many elements of his "dreams;" while he still indulges in sentiments and emotions the source of which is present only in his memory; while he continues to present himself as a character in a story that has already been written (this time, by life itself), the vital difference is that his imagination, his creative effort turns its direction outward. As Victor Terras points out, "intensely conscious of his role as narrator and orator, he always speaks as if he were facing a sympathetic, yet highly critical audience" (*Young Dostoevsky* 31). This

[14] Victor Terras persuasively argues that the Dreamer's failure is two-fold: "Dostoevsky's Dreamer is a failure in the role assigned to him, because he has too strong a sense of reality after all. When it becomes clear to him that he cannot go on dreaming, what is left of him is a dreamer who can no longer make himself dream-for he is neither able nor willing to give 'real life' another try" ("Problems of Human Existence" 87).

audience may include someone like Nastenka, who temporarily "replaces the reader" in the middle section of the novella (Terras, *Young Dostoevsky* 31), but the form in which the narrator casts his story—sentimental romance—presupposes an audience more sympathetic than critical: "dreamers" much like the narrator's former self, the social "type" which he evokes during his confession to Nastenka, and which Dostoevsky identifies in *Petersburg Chronicle.* These would be real people whose lives could possibly be salvaged with the help of some conscious observer who, in this case, registers not what had actually happened to one performing the action unconsciously (i.e. dusting the couch mechanically), but what had *not* happened to one living solely within one's own isolated, egocentric consciousness (i.e. the dreamer). Gary Rosenshield aptly notes that "the events, imagery, and structure" of a sentimental romance allow the older Dreamer "not only to indulge in his own emotions and sentiments, but also to evoke the same emotions and sentiments in the reader" ("Point of View" 195). But while the ornate language and emotional pathos of the confession appeal to sentimentality of such a reader, the final image of the aging Dreamer in his unswept corner conveys the ultimate impression of waste and irretrievable loss, an image that cautions against detachment and isolation. Thus, despite his ultimate loss of "talent for life," the narrator finds a way to establish real human contact, to reach out to and touch others without abandoning the safety of his corner and the rewards of the imagination. Moreover, the story he creates triumphs over the deficiencies of both the fantastic and the vulgar spheres of which he was so painfully aware by interweaving his fantasies and his lived experience into a story that projects the enchantment of dreams and the immediacy of life. In this sense, the narrator does "make a work of art of [him]self" through human contact and sympathy for others.

2.2 *The Beast in the Jungle*

The Beast in the Jungle reflects James's lasting preoccupation with the theme of wasted life—the idea of "too late,"[15] as he calls it in his notebooks. John Marcher, one of James's "poor sensitive gentlemen," believes that he is destined "for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible" (502), which he metaphorically describes as "a crouching beast in the jungle" laying "in wait for him" (508). When, as the novella opens, Marcher resumes his acquaintance with May Bertram, to whom he had confessed his secret ten years earlier, they decide to wait and watch together. With May at his side, Marcher spends years waiting for the beast to spring, occupied with nothing but the possible form the event can take, only to be told by May shortly before her death that she has seen the beast, leaving Marcher alone to search for clues in his past. It is not until a year after her death that he discovers the answer: "he had been the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened" (540), and all the while his doom was the waiting itself, for which he had sacrificed the chance for a genuine human relationship with May which would have filled the "void of his life" (539).

Millicent Bell calls *The Beast in the Jungle* "one of the most philosophic of James's tales—crystallizing in a fable his ideas about the self disassociated from act" (262).[16] To be sure, characters reduced to "mere spectatorship of life" without an active role in it are the Jamesian signature that marks his early and mature works alike, but it is impossible to say of Ralph Touchette or Lambert Strether, for example, what Marcher comes to discover about himself: that "he had been […] *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened." On the contrary, these other "sensitive gentlemen" prove Jamesian thesis that experience is a product of consciousness, and a person "occupied […] just with *the sense and the image of it all*, and on only a fifth of the actual immersion" can partake of life equally to someone "go[ing] in for

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[15] *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (New York: Oxford UP, 1987) 112.
[16] Millicent Bell, *Meaning in Henry James* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991).

everything and everyone" (*Autobiography* 164). What sets Marcher apart from James's other "poor sensitive gentlemen" is his utter egocentrism, his complete insulation from people in his life. Unlike the Dreamer, Marcher is not isolated socially: we first meet him at a party in an old country house; we know that he succeeds in keeping the appearance of a "normal" man of his position, that he has "his little office under Government" and regularly accepts and repays invitations of "the people in London" (510). But none of this is reflected in his consciousness, and as he is the "center" from which the narrator presents his impersonal account, James literally limits the cast of characters to Marcher and, to the extent that she can be called a character, May Bartram. Because the story is narrated from Marcher's point of view, and because he is concerned solely with his remarkable future, it is as though those others did not really exist. Similarly, social events that we know Marcher attends are mentioned in passing, but, with the exception of the opening party, are never dramatized before the eyes of the reader, nor are they used as a setting. It is as if they did not really "happen" to Marcher, because he lives through them mechanically. This absence of characters—even of names, of references to other people—underscores the absence of human bonds in Marcher's life which he shares with Dostoevsky's Dreamer.

But even before we are explicitly told that Marcher's social identity is "a mask painted with the social simper, out of the eye-holes of which there looked eyes of an expression not in the least matching the other features" (510-11), we recognize Marcher's loneliness from his surprise at finding out that May had not forgotten him: "He had thought of himself so long as abominably alone, and lo he wasn't alone a bit. He hadn't been, it appeared, for an hour—since those moments on the Sorrento boat" (503). While these thoughts are reassuring to Marcher, they signal the danger. Marcher is confusing "thinking about" someone with "being with" someone,

and this will keep him in delusion throughout his relationship with May, for even as they become real companions and get to spend a lot of time together, May is more a presence in his mind than a presence in his life. She might as well be the ideal woman of the Dreamer's fantasies, for Marcher denies her the subjectivity of her own and uses her as if she were "a means or tool to further [his] egotistic ends" (Gargano 164).[17]

Marcher's dehumanization of May is evident in the imagery he applies to his dying friend: the first is that of a "serene and exquisite but impenetrable sphinx" who holds the key to his mystery, and the second is that of an artificial flower: "She was a sphinx, yet with her white petals and green fronds she might have been a lily too—only an artificial lily, wonderfully imitated and constantly kept, without dust or stain, though not exempt from a slight droop and a complexity of faint creases, under some clear glass bell" (521-22). Discussing these two images, Gargano remarks that "James's imagistic language […] leaves no doubt that Marcher has turned the natural woman into an artificial being preserved in an inviolate, inhuman state. Far from being the free germinal impulse she should naturally be, May is an object in a glass cage, a perfect victim of a monstrous egotist afraid to respond to her unspoken pleas" (168). But it is Marcher who is really trapped in the glass cage of his consciousness. Ironically, it is the artificial flower "wonderfully imitated and constantly kept, without dust or stain" (521), and not the wild beast in the jungle, that embodies the sterility of his life.

Like the metaphors he applies to May, the central metaphor in the story—that of the beast in the jungle—illuminates Marcher's detachment while at the same time capturing the potentially

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[17] See James W. Gargano, "Imagery in Action in 'The Beast in the Jungle,'" rpt. From *Arizona Quarterly* 42 (1986): 351-67. In Richard Hocks, *Henry James: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1990) 160-71.

destructive side of imagination run wild. In her illuminating essay,[18] Ruth Bernard Yeazell observes that "metaphoric thinking allows [Marcher] to evade immediate reality and its demands, to avoid the risk of passionate confrontation" (171). Like the Dreamer of *White Nights*, he prefers imaginary confrontation with exotic horrors to ordinary human contact and love (Yeazell 171). Thus, for example, rather than facing the real fears that underlie his opposition to marriage, Marcher uses the metaphor as a legitimate, even noble basis that prevents him from marrying May:

> His conviction, his apprehension, his obsession, in short, wasn't a privilege he could invite a woman to share; and that consequence of it was precisely what was the matter with him. Something or other lay in wait for him, amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years, like a crouching Beast in the Jungle. It signified little whether the crouching Beast were destined to slay him or to be slain. The definite point was the inevitable spring of the creature; and the definite lesson from that was that a man of feeling didn't cause himself to be accompanied by a lady on a tiger-hunt. Such was the image under which he had ended by figuring his life. (508-509)

Marcher's metaphoric thinking, like the Dreamer's fantasies, allows him to sustain a heroic vision of himself which underscores his egocentrism. Unlike the creative imagination of the artist, which takes "the faintest hints of life" and converts "the very pulses of the air into revelations," Marcher's narcissistic fantasies render him blind to the complexity of life and all the possibilities for self-realization it can offer. We see this early in the opening chapter when, failing to remember his previous encounter with May correctly, "Marcher could only feel he

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[18] Ruth B. Yeazell, "The Imagination of Metaphor," *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Ruth B. Yeazell (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994) 171-89.

ought to have rendered her some service—saved her from a capsized boat in the bay or at least recovered her dressing-bag, filched from her cab in the streets of Naples by a lazzarone with a stiletto. Or it would have been nice if he could have been taken with fever all alone at his hotel, and she could have come to look after him, to write to his people, to drive him out in convalescence" (499-500). But when Marcher's heroic fantasy is corrected by May's "strictly historic" account "he only felt […] there didn't appear much of anything left" (499).

The fact that he cannot recall his story with May but is eager to fill in the gap in his memory with a fantasy not only shows his lack of appreciation for "ordinary" human contact, but also betrays his inability to live in the present. As Leo Bersani observes, Marcher's life is "a life that never really is, that is lived entirely as that which still is to be" ("The It and the I" 210). Like Dostoevsky's Dreamer, Marcher lives in perpetual anticipation or retrospection. The most obvious example of this is the crucial scene when May offers herself to Marcher in the last attempt to "save" him:

> She had, with her gliding step, diminished the distance between them, and she stood nearer to him, close to him, a minute, as if still charged with the unspoken. Her movement might have been for some finer emphasis of what she was at once hesitating and deciding to say. He had been standing by the chimney-piece, fireless and sparely adorned, a small perfect old French clock and two morsels of rosy Dresden constituting all its furniture; and her hand grasped the shelf while she kept him waiting, grasped it a little as for support and encouragement. She only kept him waiting, however; that is *he only waited*. It had become suddenly, from her movement and attitude, beautiful and vivid to him that she *had something more to give him*; her wasted face delicately shone with it—it glittered

> almost as with the white lustre of silver in her expression. She was right, incontestably, for what he saw in her face was the truth, and strangely, without consequence, while their talk of it as dreadful was still in the air, she appeared to present it as inordinately soft. This, prompting bewilderment, made him but *gape the more gratefully for her revelation*, so that they continued for some minutes silent, her face shining at him, her contact imponderably pressing, and his stare all kind but all expectant. The end, none the less, was that what he had expected failed to come to him. Something else took place instead, which seemed to consist at first in the mere closing of her eyes. She gave way at the same instant to a slow fine shudder, and though he remained staring—though he stared in fact but the harder—turned off and regained her chair. *It was the end of what she had been intending*, but it left him thinking only of that. (526-27; emphasis added)

Instead of acting in the present by responding to May's offer of love, with which "her wasted face delicately shone," he reads "the truth" in her face as an indication of future revelation, and, failing to respond to her gesture, he is left with the past—with "what she *had been* intending." After this meeting, May's health rapidly declines, but as her death looms near, Marcher suffers not from the knowledge of her current pain, but from "the foreknowledge of his loneliness to come."

With May dead, and her final assurance that whatever was meant to happen *had* happened, Marcher can no longer escape into the uncertain future, so his imagination changes course and turns the present into a retrospective of his past in which he desperately tries to locate the beast. If in the past his goal was to discover what fate was awaiting him, he now resolves to *re*cover "the lost stuff of consciousness," making "this idea his one motive" and "his passion"

(534). With the escape door to the future closed to him, he retreats into the past, "feeding all on the sense that he once *had* lived, and dependent on it not alone for a support but for an identity" (537). But the past into which he retreats is largely the product of the same heroic fantasy that produced his speculations about the future:

> He had settled to his safety and accepted perforce his extinction; figuring to himself, with some colour, in the likeness of certain little old men he remembered to have seen, of whom, all meagre and wizened as they might look, it was related that they had in their time fought twenty duels or been loved by ten princesses. They indeed had been wondrous for others while he was but wondrous for himself; which, however, was exactly the cause of his haste to renew the wonder by getting back, as he might put it, into his own presence. (536)

Nevertheless, even Marcher is forced to admit that "his own presence" can only be confirmed by another. What Bakhtin says about a Dostoevskian hero is equally applicable to Jamesian heroes and heroines: "The hero's attitude toward himself is inseparably bound up with his attitude toward another, and with the attitude of another toward him. His consciousness of self is constantly perceived against the background of the other's consciousness of him — 'I for myself' against the background of 'I for another'" (*Problems* 207). Marcher never reaches the level of inter-subjectivity to perceive his "I for another" accurately—not until his final revelation. Because he is only conscious of himself, representation of May's consciousness in the story merely duplicates Marcher's. Nevertheless, this illusion of inter-subjectivity is necessary for Marcher to sustain his heroic self-image. Consequently, upon May's death, Marcher feels abandoned and, acutely aware of the void in his life, sets out to travel, only to confirm that "for a man who had known what he had known the world was vulgar and vain" (535). What he misses

is “the state of mind in which he had lived for so many years”—the state in which he saw himself as a heroic figure destined for a heroic event (535). That idea, which May (at least in his view) encouraged, “shone out to him, in reflexion, as a light that coloured and refined, a light beside which the glow of the East was garish cheap and thin” (535). With May gone, he is stripped of the only identity he believed to be true to his self, and in a desperate attempt to regain it, he makes regular visits to her grave, for “the creature beneath the sod knew of his rare experience” and “this garden of death gave him the few square feet of earth on which he could still most live. It was as if, being nothing anywhere else for any one, nothing even for himself, he were just everything here” (536). Ironically, May’s grave is destined to become the place where he will live most intensely, but his rare experience—rare for his insulated self—will be brought about by his consciousness of another—living—person.

The moment arrives when Marcher comes face to face with a mourner from another woman’s grave and is “confronted” with “the image of scarred passion” in the men’s face.

> Marcher knew him at once for one of the deeply stricken—a perception so sharp that nothing else in the picture comparatively lived, neither his dress, his age, nor his presumable character and class; nothing lived but the deep ravage of the features that he showed. He showed them—that was the point; he was moved, as he passed, by some impulse that was either a signal for sympathy or, more possibly, a challenge to an opposed sorrow. He might already have been aware of our friend, might at some previous hour have noticed in him the smooth habit of the scene, with which the state of his own senses so scantly consorted, and might thereby have been stirred as by an overt discord. What Marcher was at all events

> conscious of was in the first place that the image of scarred passion presented to him was conscious too— of something that profaned the air […]. (538-39)

For the first time, Marcher exhibits consciousness of another consciousness without reducing that other to an object, and, as it happens with other Jamesian heroes and heroines (Isabel Archer and Maggie Verver, for example), this attempt to imagine the state of others, to see oneself as perceived by others, leads to a profound revelation. He asks himself, "What had the man *had*, to make him by the loss of it so bleed and yet live?" (539) only to realize that what the man had and he, John Marcher, had not, was true passion and love, which "He had seen *outside* of his life," but which "hadn't come to him […] on the wings of experience" (539). This immediately leads him to a change in perception of May: whereas he previously perceived a living woman as an artificial flower, now the cold stone at her grave appears to have a subjectivity of the living person, as if it were the woman he had failed to know and love: "The name on the table smote him as the passage of his neighbour had done, and what it said to him, full in the face, was that she was what he had missed" (539-40). Gazing in pain and dismay at "the sounded void of his life" as at "the open page of his story" and "stupefied at the blindness he had cherished," Marcher realizes that that all the while his doom—the beast of the jungle of his life—was the waiting itself (540). Thus, "paradoxically, the metaphor through which Marcher has escaped comes in the end to signify both the experience which he fled and the very flight itself" (Yeazell 172), and the final melodramatic scene of *The Beast in the Jungle* serves at the same time as a confirmation of Marcher's failure to live, and as the moment when he is truly alive:

> This horror of waking—this was knowledge, knowledge under the breath of which the very tears in his eyes seemed to freeze. Through them, none the less, he tried to fix it and hold it; he kept it there before him so that he might feel the pain.

> That at least, belated and bitter, had something of the taste of life. But the bitterness suddenly sickened him, and it was as if, horribly, he saw, in the truth, in the cruelty of his image, what had been appointed and done. He saw the Jungle of his life and saw the lurking Beast; then, while he looked, perceived it, as by a stir of the air, rise, huge and hideous, for the leap that was to settle him. His eyes darkened—it was close; and, instinctively turning, in his hallucination, to avoid it, he flung himself, face down, on the tomb. (541)

Ora Segal suggests that Marcher's intense recognition allows him to "transcend the fate of the man who has never lived; for his acute consciousness of what he has missed, his bitter realization of his life-long inadequacy, his tragic sense of the cruel mockery of his fate make Marcher (though belatedly) 'live,' feel and vibrate with the greatest intensity a Jamesian vessel of consciousness is capable of" (214).[19] It is important, however, that what causes these "vibrations" is the confrontation with another person: it is the stranger's face, and not Marcher's retrospection that produces the powerful impression and causes him to "bleed." This leads Marcher to the realization that his "escape would have been to love [May]; then, then he would have lived" (540). Almost with envy he admits that "*She* had lived—who could say now with what passion?—since she had loved him for himself" (540).

On the outside, May's life would be similar to Marcher's: they lived in the same society, attended social events together, and when they were alone, they were united in anticipation and speculation about Marcher's future. And yet while their lives were equally uneventful, May, we are led to believe, lived an intense life, whereas Marcher's existence was sterile. The difference between the two is the difference between life and non-life, and it involves the shift of the center

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[19] Ora Segal, *The Lucid Reflector: The Observer in Henry James' Fiction* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1969).

of interest from one's self to another. Because we were largely limited to Marcher's point of view throughout the story, we, too, cannot say "with what passion" May had lived. Because of his blindness and "the chill of his egotism" we have missed her story. This void, nevertheless, only makes us feel more acutely that she had a story, for while Marcher's fantasies were self-centered, *she* was "imaginatively guessing." This explains why May had lived whereas Marcher had failed to live: "she achieved, by an art indescribable, the feat of at once—or perhaps it was only alternately—meeting the eyes from in front and mingling her own vision, as from over his shoulder, with their peep through the apertures." She has what Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl* calls the "imagination of the states of others" (486), and it is this kind of imagination that produces real art and real life.

Marcher's fateful encounter with a stranger's face shows how vital human interaction is to James's conception of life, even if this interaction takes place only on the level of consciousness. But since it is the *image* of the stranger's face that leaves Marcher transformed through a sudden, powerful impression, the passage also suggests a connection between aesthetic and interpersonal experience, for both offer an opportunity to cultivate the "imagination of the states of others," and, by extension, a deeper understanding of one's own state. Literary experience (reading and writing) in particular is closely linked to imagining the states of others—the states of characters, the state of the author writing about them, and the state of the reader responding to the text. Michael Wood observes that "literature has this kind of power over us: we often see in it what we would rather not know about ourselves" (Wood 57). Just as the "deep ravage of the features" the stranger shows force Marcher to recognize "the chill of his egotism," so the image of Marcher overwhelmed with "the horror of waking," which arrives as suddenly

for the reader as it does for Marcher himself, urges us to reconsider our own relationship with the people around us in light of this recognition.

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Long before Ortega y Gasset calls in *Dehumanization of Art* to "get over the error which makes us think that a man's life takes place inside himself and that, consequently, it can be reduced to pure psychology," first Dostoevsky, and later James, dramatize the ruinous effects of this misconception in *White Nights* and *The Beast in the Jungle*. "Would that our lives did take place inside ourselves!" writes Ortega y Gasset, "Then life would be the easiest thing imaginable: it would be to float in its own element. But life is as far as possible from a subjective phenomenon. It is the most objective of all realities. It is a man's *I* finding itself submerged in precisely what is not himself, in the pure *other* which is his environment" (141-142). But while the failed lives of the Dreamer and John Marcher testify to our need to step outside ourselves, to realize ourselves through relations with others, Dostoevsky and James rarely fail to remind us how complex and risky, how potentially hazardous and limiting the world of human interaction can be. This, however, is the subject of the next chapter.

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[i]" жизнь — целое искусство, что жить значит сделать художественное произведение из самого себя; что только при обобщенных интересах, в сочувствии к массе общества и к ее прямым непосредственным требованиям, а не в дремоте, не в равнодушии, от которого распадается масса, не в уединении может ошлифоваться в драгоценный, в неподдельный блестящий алмаз его клад, его капитал, его доброе сердце!" (*SS* 2:8)

[ii] Мне вдруг показалось, что меня, одинокого, все покидают и что все от меня отступаются. (*SS* 2:152)

[iii] вот уже восемь лет, как я живу в Петербурге, и почти ни одного знакомства не умел завести. Но к чему мне знакомства? Мне и без того знаком весь Петербург. (*SS* 2:152)

[iv] Они, конечно, не знают меня, да я-то их знаю. Я коротко их знаю; я почти изучил их физиономии — и любуюсь на них, когда они веселы, и хандрю, когда они затуманятся. Я почти свел дружбу с одним старичком, которого встречаю каждый божий день, в известный час, на Фонтанке. Физиономия такая важная, задумчивая; все шепчет под нос и махает левой рукой, а в правой у него длинная сучковатая трость с золотым набалдашником. Даже он заметил меня и принимает во мне душевное участие. Случись, что я не буду в известный час на том же месте Фонтанки, я уверен, что на него нападет хандра. Вот отчего мы иногда чуть не кланяемся друг с другом, особенно когда оба в хорошем расположении духа. Намедни, когда мы не

видались целые два дня и на третий день встретились, мы уже было и схватились за шляпы, да благо опомнились вовремя, опустили руки и с участием прошли друг подле друга. (*SS* 2:152-3)

[v] казалось, весь Петербург грозил обратиться в пустыню, так что наконец мне стало стыдно, обидно и грустно: мне решительно некуда и незачем было ехать на дачу. Я готов был уйти с каждым возом, уехать с каждым господином почтенной наружности, нанимавшим извозчика; но ни один, решительно никто не пригласил меня; словно забыли меня, словно я для них был и в самом деле чужой! (*SS* 2:156)

[vi] Боже мой! У меня сердце сжалось. И как я ни робок с женщинами, но ведь это была такая минута!.. Я воротился, шагнул к ней и непременно бы произнес: «Сударыня!» — если б только не знал, что это восклицание уже тысячу раз произносилось во всех русских великосветских романах. Это одно и остановило меня. (*SS* 2:157)

[vii] "Я совсем отвык от женщин; то есть я к ним и не привыкал никогда; я ведь один... Я даже не знаю, как говорить с ними." (*SS* 2:160)

[viii] "в идеал, в ту, которая приснится во сне. Я создаю в мечтах целые романы" (160). "Правда, нельзя же без того, я встречал двух-трех женщин, но какие они женщины? это всё такие хозяйки, что..." (*SS* 2:160)

[ix] Нередко же действительность производит впечатление тяжелое, враждебное на сердце мечтателя, и он спешит забиться в свой заветный, золотой уголок, который на самом деле часто запылен, неопрятен, беспорядочен, грязен. Мало-помалу проказник наш начинает чуждаться толпы, чуждаться общих интересов, и постепенно, неприметно, начинает в нем притупляться талант действительной жизни. Ему естественно начинает казаться, что наслаждения, доставляемые его своевольной фантазиею, полнее, роскошнее, любовнее настоящей жизни. Наконец, в заблуждении своем он совершенно теряет то нравственное чутье, которым человек способен оценить всю красоту настоящего, он сбивается, теряется, упускает моменты действительного счастья и, в апатии, лениво складывает руки и не хочет знать, что жизнь человеческая есть беспрерывное самосозерцание в природе и в насущной действительности. (*SS* 2:33)

[x] "Я мечтатель; у меня так мало действительной жизни, что я такие минуты, как эту, как теперь, считаю так редко, что не могу не повторять этих минут в мечтаньях. Я промечтаю об вас целую ночь, целую неделю, весь год. Я непременно приду сюда завтра, именно сюда, на это же место, именно в этот час, и буду счастлив, припоминая вчерашнее. Уж это место мне мило." (*SS* 2:162)

[xi] Отчего, например, в нас так сильно развит один пренеприятный обычай (не спорим, он, может быть, там как-нибудь и полезен в нашем общем хозяйстве) — всегда, часто без нужды, так, по привычке поверять и уже слишком точно взвешивать свои впечатления, взвешивать иногда только предстоящее, грядущее наслаждение, еще не осуществившееся, оценять его и удовлетворяться им заранее, в мечтах, удовлетворяться фантазией и, естественно, быть потом негодным в настоящее дело? Мы всегда разомнем, истерзаем цветок, чтоб сильнее почувствовать его запах, и ропщем потом, когда вместо аромата достается нам один чад. А между тем трудно сказать, что бы сталось с нами, если б не выдавались нам хоть эти несколько дней в целый год и не утоляли разнообразием явлений природы нашу вечную ненасытимую жажду непосредственной, естественной жизни. И как не устать наконец, как не упасть в бессилии, вечно гоняясь за впечатлениями, словно за рифмой к плохому стиху, мучась жаждою внешней, непосредственной деятельности и пугаясь, наконец, до болезни своих же иллюзий, своих же химер головных, своей же мечтательности и всех тех вспомогательных средств, которыми в наше время стараются кое-как дополнить всю вялую пустоту обыденной бесцветной жизни. (*SS* 2:28-29)

[xii] — Историю! — закричал я, испугавшись, — историю!! Но кто вам сказал, что у меня есть моя история? у меня нет истории...

— Так как же вы жили, коль нет истории? — перебила она смеясь.

— Совершенно без всяких историй! так, жил, как у нас говорится, сам по себе, то есть один совершенно, — один, один вполне, — понимаете, что такое один?

— Да как один? То есть вы никого никогда не видали?

— О нет, видеть-то вижу, — а все-таки я один.

— Что же, вы разве не говорите ни с кем?

— В строгом смысле, ни с кем. (*SS* 2:164).

[xiii] Посмотрите на эти волшебные призраки, которые так очаровательно, так прихотливо, так безбрежно и широко слагаются перед ним в такой волшебной, одушевленной картине, где на первом плане, первым лицом, уж конечно, он сам, наш мечтатель, своею дорогою особою. Посмотрите, какие разнообразные приключения, какой бесконечный рой Восторженных грез. Вы спросите, может быть, о чем он мечтает? К

чему это спрашивать! да обо всем... об роли поэта, сначала не признанного, а потом увенчанного; о дружбе с Гофманом; Варфоломеевская ночь, Диана Вернон, геройская роль при взятии Казани Иваном Васильевичем, Клара Мовбрай, Евфия Денс, собор прелатов и Гус перед ними, восстание мертвецов в «Роберте» (помните музыку? кладбищем пахнет!), Минна и Бренда, сражение при Березине, чтение поэмы у графини В—й-Д—й, Дантон, Клеопатра e i suoi amanti1, домик в Коломне, свой уголок, а подле милое создание, которое слушает вас в зимний вечер, раскрыв ротик и глазки, как слушаете вы теперь меня, мой маленький ангельчик... (*SS* 2:171).

[xiv] Мечтатель — если нужно его подробное определение — не человек, а, знаете, какое-то существо среднего рода. Селится он большею частию где-нибудь в неприступном углу, как будто таится в нем даже от дневного света и уж если заберется к себе, то так и прирастет к своем углу, как улитка, или, по крайней мере, он очень похож в этом отношении на то занимательное животное, которое и животное и дом вместе, которое называется черепахой Как вы думаете, отчего он так любит свои четыре стены, выкрашенные непременно зеленою краскою, закоптелые, унылые и непозволительно обкуренные? Зачем этот смешной господин, когда его приходит навестить кто-нибудь из его редких знакомых (а кончает он тем, что знакомые у него все переводятся), зачем этот смешной человек встречает его, так сконфузившись, так изменившись в лице и в таком замешательстве, как будто он только что сделал в своих четырех стенах преступление, как будто он фабриковал фальшивые бумажки или какие-нибудь стишки для отсылки в журнал при анонимном письме, в котором обозначается, что настоящий поэт уже умер и что друг его считает священным долгом опубликовать его вирши?(*SS* 2:166-67)

[xv] …что ему, что ему, сладострастному ленивцу, в той жизни, в которую нам так хочется с вами? он думает, что это бедная, жалкая жизнь, не предугадывая, что и для него, может быть, когда-нибудь пробьет грустный час, когда он за один день этой жалкой жизни отдаст все свои фантастические годы, и еще не за радость, не за счастие отдаст, и выбирать не захочет в тот час грусти, раскаяния и невозбранного горя. (*SS* 2:171)

[xvi] Неравнодушно смотрит он на вечернюю зарю, которая медленно гаснет на холодном петербургском небе. Когда я говорю — смотрит, так я лгу: он не смотрит, но созерцает как-то безотчетно, как будто усталый или занятый в то же время каким-нибудь другим, более интересным предметом, так что разве только мельком, почти невольно, может уделить время на всё окружающее. (*SS* 2:169)

[xvii] Потому что мне уже начинает казаться в эти минуты, что я никогда не способен начать жить настоящею жизнию; потому что мне уже казалось, что я потерял всякий такт, всякое чутье в настоящем, действительном… (*SS* 2:174)

Chapter 3.

Against the Formula:

Notes from the Underground and *Daisy Miller*

Standing at their respective windows in the house of fiction and observing the human scene before them, Dostoevsky and James focus their penetrating vision on the perpetual drama of self confronting the external world, the world of other selves engaged in a similar confrontation. To be sure, other writers, particularly of the turbulent 19th century, depicted the conflict between individual and society, while scientists and philosophers attempted to explain the nature of this conflict and propose new solutions to the moral crisis of the age. What makes Dostoevsky and James stand apart from—and in many ways ahead of— their contemporaries is that they locate the source of the conflict not in society, but within the individual whose inner indeterminacy on the one hand, and assumed or prescribed social identity on the other, exist in perpetual struggle for balance and integrity.[20] As a result, Dostoevsky and James portray life as a creative effort similar to the one described by them in their essays on art: to become "I for another," the raw material of our inner selves must be selected and shaped into a meaningful form. Because of this fundamental affinity between art and life, when it comes to laws that govern human relationships, Dostoevsky and James put forth freedom as the underlying value and necessity in life, just as it is the only law to which they subject art. "Everything that has been imposed from above, everything that has been obtained by force from time immemorial to our own day has never succeeded," writes Dostoevsky in "Mr. –bov and the Question of Art," "and,

[20] See, for example, Malcolm V. Jones, *Dostoyevsky after Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoyevsky's Fantastic Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 55-56. As Jones cogently puts it, "On the level of personal interaction Dostoyevsky's characters constantly label, define, objectify themselves and others in terms of conventional social stereotypes and these labels are constantly found wanting in social contact and in contact with individual subjectivity. Some of his characters are desperate to assume such a socially acknowledged identity. Success depends not on desperation, but on a satisfactory and relatively stable match between the hero's self-image and the defining glance of others" (55).

instead of being beneficial, has been only harmful" (*OW* 96).[i] The same principle lies at the heart of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* and James's *Daisy Miller*. While clearly different in form and tone, these two novellas show that Dostoevsky and James share a common intellectual and artistic platform from which they contest the reduction of a complex interplay between self and society to a set of predictable rules and universal laws.

3.1. *Notes from the Underground*

One of the most widely read and discussed of Dostoevsky's works, *Notes from the Underground*[21] has been thoroughly analyzed from a variety of perspectives, including psychological, social, and of course, philosophical. This 1864 novella consists of two parts, with a gap of sixteen years separating the narrator from the events of Part Two. In Part One the Underground Man articulates his philosophical position by dismantling the arguments of rationalists, utilitarians, and positivists whose ideas have become extremely influential in the 1860s, particularly after the publication of Chernyshevsky's immensely popular novel *What Is to Be Done?* In the second part, the Underground Man recalls a series of events from his youth, all of them failed attempts to establish meaningful relations with others in his life, which foreground the disparity between his youthful ideals of "the beautiful and sublime" and reality of his daily life and inner self. Taken together, the two parts of the novella offer the critique of two popular systems that have shaped the two consecutive generations in nineteenth-century Russia: the Romanticism of the 1840s, and the progressive ideas of the 1860s.

What sets Dostoevsky's work apart from many others devoted to this generational split is that the two systems are not directly opposed to each other, as they are, for example, in Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*. Instead, Dostoevsky opposes the throbbing complexity of the

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[21] The following English translation is used here: Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground." In *The Best Stories of Fyodor Dostoevsky*, trans. David Magarshack (New York: Modern Library, 2005) 107-238.

human psyche, with its mixture of good and evil, of low and lofty impulses, to the very idea of a system, of intransigent categories and values extraneous to the individual, living self. Each of these systems, which the Underground Man first digests with his reading, then rejects through his experience, advances its central value through a literary embodiment of its ideal—the Romantic Hero, the Rational Egoist—who represents the only "right" course of action or manner of conduct. The problem of right and wrong is translated into terms corresponding to the given value—honorable/ignoble, sublime/base, reasonable/unreasonable. By having the Underground Man "try on" and discard these ideals for the same reason—their incongruity with his own experience—Dostoevsky underscores their common flaw: the deadening reduction of infinitely complex and multifarious human experience to a narrow set of predetermined laws.

Joseph Frank appositely notes that throughout the novella, we see the Underground Man "torn apart by an inner dissonance that prevents him from behaving in what might be considered a 'normal' fashion—that is, acting in terms of self-interest and reason in Part One, or giving unhindered expression to his altruistic (or at least amiably social) impulses in Part Two" (*The Stir of Liberation* 317). His reminiscences foreground the disparity between the romantic values which the narrator ardently espouses through reading, and his own impressions of actual life that surrounds him. When he goes to the tavern to seek adventures, determined to engage in a "literary" fight for his honor with an officer who picked him up and moved him to make way for himself "as if [he] didn't exist" (1), he finds himself deterred from action because the Romantic concept of honor that propels him to act is not rooted in actuality of human life. The essential artificiality of the concept is highlighted by the hero's acknowledgement that he "cannot speak of a point of honour— not of honour, mind you, but of a point of honour (*point d'honneur*) except in literary language. You cannot even mention a "point of honour" in ordinary language" (154-

155).[ii] Unlike the Dreamer of *White Nights*, the young Underground Man is not content with the imaginary experience he derives from reading and is painfully conscious of his dependence on others for actualizing his potentials and Romantic self-image. Moreover, he is conscious of others as independent subjects whose thoughts, feelings and actions diverge radically from his adopted vision:

> What I was afraid of was that every one in the billiard room from the cheeky marker to the last rotten, pimply little government clerk in a greasy collar who was fawning upon everybody in the room, would misunderstand me and jeer at me when I protested and began addressing them in literary language. […] I was absolutely convinced (the sense of reality in spite of all romanticism!) that they would all simply split their sides with laughter and that the officer would not just simply, that is to say, not inoffensively, thrash me, but would certainly push me round the billiard-table with his knee and perhaps only then would he have taken pity on me and thrown me out of the window. (154-155)[iii]

Throughout his account of his youth, the Underground Man's futile attempts to act out his romantic principles in life produce a painful disappointment and subsequent inertia, as in the case of his impulses to "embrace mankind" brought about by months of ecstatic dreaming.
It is important to note that, unlike the Dreamer, the Underground Man does not view his reading and dreaming as an escape; he turns to it for inspiration and direction, but does not mistake his fantasies for reality. Thus, he is "never able to spend more than three months of dreaming at a time without feeling an irresistible urge to plunge into social life," which, due to the limited number of friends and acquaintances, to him meant visiting the head of his department, Anton Antonovich Setochkin, his "only permanent acquaintance" (163-164).[iv] The Underground Man

is not content with imaginary relations with people, and when he feels "an instant and irresistible urge to embrace all my fellow-men and all humanity," he is conscious that for this, "one had at least to have one man who actually existed" (164).[v] Unlike literary heroes, however, the Underground Man cannot succumb to his honorable impulses spontaneously, for society—even if it amounts only to Anton Antonovich—follows its own rules, and because Anton Antonovich accepted visitors only on Tuesdays, he admits with frustration that"it was necessary to work myself up into the right mood for embracing all mankind on that day" (163).[vi] But even if he manages "to work himself up into the right mood" on a Tuesday, the "fellow-men" he meets at Anton Antonovich's home are not heroes and heroines waiting to be embraced, but giggling daughters or visitors whose "usual topic of conversation was excise duties, the hard bargaining in the Senate, salaries, promotions, His Excellency, the best way to please him, etc., etc." (164). What we observe here is the Underground Man's failure "to impose literary systems comprehensively on lived experience" (Jones 68), and the reason he fails is not necessarily that the principles themselves are invalid (later in this part, Liza embodies many of them), but that, to use James's phrase, "humanity is immense and reality has a myriad forms," and to live among people is to accept their individual sensibility and needs at a given moment. The hero's "working himself up into the right mood" shows that even a "romantic" cannot be defined solely by his "romanticism," for there are always other sides, other potentials waiting to be revealed and realized.

Consequently, it is not only external reality that the Underground Man finds in conflict with his romantic ideas. One of his principal traits is his agonizing self-awareness, and whenever he sets out for one of his heroic adventures prompted by his romantic sense of honor and superiority, his heroic self succumbs to the petty concerns of a poor self-conscious government

clerk. While he feels spiritually superior to those around him, he is crushed by the sense of his inferior appearance and dress and ends up devoting more attention to these petty concerns than do the people he despises for this. Thus, as he prepares his "revenge" on the officer, he scrupulously works on the proper outfit, determined "to be as well dressed as possible". He despises the superfluous public, but is unable to reject its superfluous standards, and genuinely believes that "one had to be decently dressed" in case a public scandal took place, for only "good clothes impress people and will immediately put us on an equal footing in the eyes of society"[vii] (158). His preparations link him more with the Gogolian clerk than with the romantic hero: he carefully chooses "a pair of black gloves" and "a smart hat at Churkin's," but the execution of his plan is delayed by the state of his overcoat:

> My overcoat was not at all bad. It kept me warm. But it was wadded and had a raccoon collar, which made one look altogether too much a flunkey. The collar had to be changed at all costs for a beaver one, like one of those army officers wore. To acquire such a collar, I began visiting the Arcade, and after a few attempts decided to buy a cheap German beaver. These German beavers may soon look shabby and worn, but at first, when new, they look very decent indeed. And I wanted it for one occasion only. I asked the price: it was much too expensive. On thinking it over, I decided to sell my raccoon collar and to borrow the rest of the money (and a considerable sum it was, too) from the head of my department, Anton Antonovich Setochkin (158-159)[viii]

Similarly, when he prepares for a dinner with former classmates, whom he despises for their superficiality, he cannot take his mind off the enormous yellow stain on the knee of his trousers.

He realizes that not so much the stain, but his awareness and attitude about it are incompatible with the character of the romantic ideal he longs to embody:

> I had a presentiment that that stain alone would rob me of nine-tenths of my self-respect. I knew, too, that it was a thought unworthy of me. “But this is no time for thinking: now I have to face reality,” I thought with a sinking heart. I knew, of course, perfectly well at the time that I was monstrously exaggerating all these facts. But what could I do? It was too late for me to control my feelings, and I was shaking with fever. I imagined with despair how patronisingly and how frigidly that “rotter” Zverkov would meet me; with what dull and irresistible contempt that blockhead Trudolyubov would look at me; with what unbearable insolence that insect Ferfichkin would titter at me in order to curry favour with Zverkov; how perfectly Simonov would understand it all and how he would despise me for the baseness of my vanity and want of spirit, and, above all, how paltry, *unliterary*, and commonplace the whole affair would be. (175)[ix]

Thus, rather than giving him a sense of order and direction, the romanticism of the 1840s creates a rip in the Underground Man’s perception of the world and of himself, a rip the maturing narrator tries desperately but unsuccessfully to patch with mockery of the values of his youth and allegiance to new progressive ideas, which, incidentally, are equally “literary” or “bookish.” Chernyshevsky’s novel, which became the code of conduct for the progressive youth of the 1860s, replaces one type—the romantic hero—with another: the “New Man” Rakhmetov. The new type is a completely rational being conscious of the laws of nature which dictate that, as rational animals, mankind will always act in self-interest, and that the sooner our highest interests are understood, the sooner happiness will be achieved. The Underground Man tries to

embrace the new theory, derived from the writings of Fourier, Considerant, Feuerbach, among others, but as soon as he relies solely on reason, he finds himself incapable of any action. Just as in Part Two there is a vast gap between romantic principles and reality (both external and internal) on which the Underground Man tries to impose them, so there is an obvious dissonance between rationalist and utilitarian theories and factual and historical evidence, not to mention his own awareness of human capacity for self-sacrifice and even self-destruction. Hence, the Underground Man declares that "all these fine systems, all these theories which try to explain to man all his normal interests so that, in attempting to obtain them by every possible means, he should at once become good and honourable, are in my opinion nothing but mere exercises in logic" (127). The problem with systematization of the complex human experience is that classification and typification necessarily entails the reduction of the individual to a set of predictable traits and acts, to a formula that, leaving out "the evidence of his senses" (128), distorts the truth.

For Dostoevsky, and, as we shall see, for James, individual life is a process of self-creation, an artistic process that requires audience (the other) for its consummation. Just as artistic creativity demands freedom of expression and inspiration, the Underground Man proclaims that "all man wants is an absolutely *free* choice, however dear that freedom may cost him and wherever it may lead him to" (130-131). Consequently, the Underground Man declares free will humanity's supreme value: "One's own free and unfettered choice, one's own whims, however wild, one's own fancy, overwrought though it sometimes may be to the point of madness— that is that same most desirable good which we overlooked and which does not fit into any classification, and against which all theories and systems are continually wrecked" (130).[x] Bakhtin aptly sums up the Underground Man's basic argument as "the idea that man is

not a final and defined quantity upon which firm calculations can be made; man is free, and can therefore violate any regulating norms which might be thrust upon him" (*Problems* 59). The problem of free will occupies a central place in Dostoevsky's writing. In *Notes from the Underground*, however, this issue is not yet examined in its full scope. As Rozanov rightly notes in one of the earliest commentaries on the novella, Dostoevsky's view of freedom in *Notes from the Underground* is purely approbatory (127). Here, the emphasis is not on the role of free will in the battle between good and evil that takes place in the human soul, as it will be in *Brothers Karamazov* or *Crime and Punishment*. Nor does Dostoevsky fully develop here the relationship between free will and self-sacrifice. Instead, in *Notes from the Underground* Dostoevsky postulates free will as the defining characteristic of human nature without which "living life" is impossible. As the Underground Man concludes, "the whole meaning of human life can be summed up in the one statement that man only exists for the purpose of proving to himself every minute that he is a man and not an organ-stop!" (136).[xi]

On the level of plot, it is Liza who represents a living, positive challenge to all the literary and scientific formulas the Underground Man denounces in his argument. The hero's encounter with Liza lies at the heart of the second part of the novella and crowns his argument just as it haunts his memory. She embodies the "living life" and shatters all the artificial notions and categories by which the Underground Man tries to live. When they wake up together in the brothel, the Underground Man tries to play a hero by lecturing Liza about the depravity and perils of her profession, but she remains unresponsive to his moralizing. It is only when he changes his "strategy" and begins talking "indirectly as though I never intended to draw her out at all" (201),[xii] when he invokes images and scenes from ordinary human life that he wins her trust and attention:

> Just imagine a rosy little baby boy sucking at your breast— what husband's heart is not touched at the sight of his wife nursing his child? Oh, such a plump and rosy baby! He sprawls, he snuggles up to you, his little hands are so pink and chubby, his nails are so clean and tiny—so tiny that it makes you laugh to look at them, and his eyes gaze at you as if he understands everything. And while he sucks he pulls at your breast with his sweet little hand— plays. If his father comes near, he tears himself away from the breast, flings himself back, looks at his father and laughs as if goodness only knows how funny it is— and then he begins sucking greedily again. […] Isn't everything here happiness when the three of them— husband, wife, and child— are together? One can forgive a great deal for the sake of these moments." (204)[xiii]

While the Underground Man continues to communicate in a literary fashion, using rhetoric and imagery strategically, the scenes he evokes originate from life, not books. The energy and intensity of the scenes engage Liza's imagination, eliciting her spontaneous, profoundly human response to the hero, who in turn responds to her in the same simple, sympathetic, non-literary manner. There is nothing theatrical or calculated in her agony and gratefulness, and her unbroken spirit gives a sense that she is not defined or limited by her "fallen woman" status. Before they part, Liza proudly shows the Underground Man a love letter from a medical student, suggesting that she refuses to be defined by her present role, and her later decision to leave the brothel is governed not by the norms imposed by society, but by her determination to pursue personal happiness: it is her pride, not her shame that directs her actions.

In the same spontaneous, irrational vein, Liza's pride gives way to empathy and compassion during her visit to the Underground Man's apartment, where she finds him in his

shabby surroundings bickering over money and authority with his insolent servant. Unable to bear a witness to his social and moral debasement, the Underground Man cruelly insults Liza, who responds with pity and compassion that leave him even more humiliated and abject. As he pours vitriol on her and pronounces her a naïve dupe, Liza remains impervious to his abuse and applies herself to alleviate his suffering. Her spontaneous, irrational compassion, her warm embrace of her insulter defies all the social and scientific formulas of human behavior. She readily subjects herself to cruelty and puts aside her "honor" to console the suffering being before her, showing no trace of self-interest or self-righteousness. Even when she leaves the money which the Underground Man puts into her hand as a last act of cruelty, she does it quietly and spontaneously, without a "bookish" display of her wounded pride. The hero senses that all of her actions are expressions of her inner essence, whereas his are dictated by the exaggerated, "bookish" concepts of love and cruelty.

But whereas Liza embodies the freedom of human spirit, the dominance of individual will over superimposed standards and external pressure, the Underground Man's "notes" reflect this freedom on another level. As Bakhtin has pointed out, Dostoevsky's heroes "acutely sense their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them. As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word" (*Problems* 59). This is perhaps more true of the Underground Man than of any other character, for in *Notes from the Underground* "inner unfinalizability" lies at the heart of the argument of the first part and determines the events of the second. The hero's inner conflict is a result of his awareness that none of the roles and functions by which an individual is recognized in society, be they imposed on him from above or deliberately chosen from existing models, fully reflect his essence, which

consists of conflicting impulses, desires, and inclinations.[22] As he speaks to Liza in a brothel, he cannot decide whether his words, his feelings and his motives are truly noble or base, because genuine feelings and pity for a fellow human being are mixed with equally genuine vanity and desire for dominance. "'It is with pictures, with pictures like these, that you will beguile her," he thinks to himself, adding immediately "though, goodness knows, I spoke with real feeling, and suddenly blushed" (204).[xiv] On the one hand, his passion and interest are authentic ("I felt a lump rising to my throat"); on the other hand, the more he became convinced that his words make a profound impression on Liza, "the more eager [he] was to finish what [he] had set out to do as expeditiously and as thoroughly as possible." "It was the sport of it, the sport of it, that carried me away," he claims, only to contradict himself immediately "it was not only the sport of it" (210).[xv]

In reality, both sentimentality and vanity are aspects of his multifaceted self, but both the norms by which success is measured in his society and the ideals promoted by the literary culture of his time endorse one side of his personality while ignoring the other. Determined to preserve his inner indeterminacy and freedom, but lacking spiritual resources and Liza's moral strength, the Underground Man resorts to writing as a means of protecting his self-integrity while simultaneously overcoming his egocentrism. While he is too self-conscious to become "a man of action," that is, to choose a path and actualize some of his potentials and thus exercise his freedom of self-definition, he uses the act of writing to resist any definition, from within and from without. His confession is not an attempt to answer the question "who am I?", but an

[22] Svitel'skii also notes that not only the Underground Man, but Dostoevsky's heroes in general, " 'try on' various life roles and social functions, some of the functioning being imposed on them by the surrounding environment and people, but these roles and functions most of the time do not correspond to the hero's essence, which turns out to be broader and more multifaceted and doesn't fit into the frame of a precise mission or mechanical, literal functioning." This lack of correspondence results "in the triumph of 'human nature,' of 'living life,' of the complex essence of human personality, which occasionally frustrates not only other characters, but also those readers who prefer greater certainty" (Svitel'skii 15).

expression of the essential characteristic of this "I"—its indeterminacy. Hence, it employs what Bakhtin calls "a word with a loophole," defined as "the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words" (*Problems* 233). Thus, whenever the hero defines himself, especially in negative terms, i.e. as a scoundrel, or a masochist, whenever he condemns himself, he actually "wants and demands that the other person dispute this self-definition, and he leaves himself a loophole in case the other person should suddenly in fact agree with him, with his self-condemnation, and not make use of his privilege as the other" (*Problems* 233). In this way, the structure of discourse in *Notes from the Underground* itself reinforces its narrator's argument about the indeterminacy of the self.

The inner self is thus conceived by Dostoevsky as potentiality, as an infinite number of possible identities and choices. At the same time, "living life"—life among people—demands a free sacrifice of some of these possibilities for the sake of actualization of others. But sacrifice, or even compromise, are not the Underground Man's forte ("either a hero or dirt— there was no middle way" (161), he writes). When he embraces indeterminacy as the true essence of his self, he does it with the same extremism with which he had previously devoted himself to romanticism and rationalism. And thus writing becomes for him the only act through which he *can* preserve his indeterminacy without completely severing his ties with external reality.

That his longing for self-realization and a full, "living life" leads him to a literary activity may seem like another paradox, for throughout the novella, literariness (*knizhnost'*) is opposed to life. In Part Two, for example, the Underground Man blames his mistaken notions and values on his reading, and ascribes the same dependence on books to everyone else: "we do not even know where we are to find real life, or what it is, or what it is called. Leave us alone without any books, and we shall at once get confused, lose ourselves in a maze, we shall not know what to

cling to, what to hold on to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise" (238).[xvi] And yet the Underground Man's writing is not necessarily a renunciation of active life: unlike his previous creative effort, the narrator's notes represent his last chance to annex life which seems to be evading him, and his evolution as a writer is inseparable from his "philosophy."

In his youth, the narrator is not only an avid reader of romantic fiction, but, like the Dreamer of *White Nights*, is also a maker of one, for his rapturous dreams and fantasies manifest clear narrative structure and stylistic awareness. At these moments, the Underground Man gives himself up to "the sublime and the beautiful," and his heroic self-image drives out "the gentleman who in his pigeon-livered confusion had sewed a piece of German beaver to the collar of his overcoat" (161). A sense of power and purpose replaces prior hesitation and confusion:

> … in those days I believed blindly that by some miracle, by some outside event, all this would suddenly draw apart and expand, that I would suddenly catch a glimpse of a vista of some suitable activity, beneficent and beautiful, and, above all, an activity that was absolutely ready-made (what sort of activity I never knew, but the great thing was that it was to be all ready-made), and then I would suddenly emerge into the light of day, almost mounted on a white horse and with a laurel wreath on my head. (161)[xvii]

Although on some occasions the hero seeks this "activity" in his immediate surroundings, trying to enact the roles and plots of romantic fiction in his life, most of the time these "hours of 'salvation through the sublime and the beautiful'" ended "in an indolent and rapturous transition to art," which at this point amounts to forms and plots "all ready-made, snatched forcibly from

the poets and novelists and adapted to every possible need and requirement" (162).[xviii] It is noteworthy that in his imagination, the role of the hero is inseparable from the role of the poet: "I was a famous poet and court chamberlain, and I fell in love; I became a multi-millionaire and at once devoted all my wealth to the improvement of the human race, and there and then confessed all my hideous and shameful crimes before all the people; needless to say, my crimes were, of course, not really hideous or shameful, but had much in them that was 'sublime and beautiful,' something in the style of Manfred" (162-163).[xix] His dreams of being a poet represent his actual literary ambitions, and despite the use of literary clichés, he does not lose sight of the artistic, even technical side of his fantasies: "And let me assure you that certain things were not so badly worked out by me [*nedurno sostavleno*], either. . . . (162-163)[xx]

His revenge plot on the officer who has insulted him in the tavern also leads him to writing. "One morning," he confesses, "though I had never indulged in literary work, it suddenly occurred to me to write a story round this officer, a story in a satiric vein, in order to show him up for what he was. I wrote this story with real pleasure. I exposed, I did not hesitate even to libel him […] and sent the story to 'Homeland Notes.'" The journal, however, declined to publish his story, and the narrator "felt very sore about it" (155).[xxi] The alternative to this thwarted plan involved a literary activity of a different—epistolary—genre. Two years after the insult, the Underground Man crafts for his adversary "a most beautiful, most charming letter," in which he demands either an apology or a duel. And even twenty years later the narrator delights in his artistic skills, praising the letter's formal qualities even as he mocks his romantic naïveté. (155-156).[xxii] His next experiment with the epistolary genre (the letter he writes to Simonov after embarrassing himself at the farewell party for Zverkov) is, in his own estimation, more successful, for "to this day" the narrator is "lost in admiration at the gentlemanly, good-

humoured, frank tone" of his creation. The "success" the Underground Man refers to amounts to his effective mastery of the art of disguise, and he admiringly recalls "certain lightness," "offhandedness" and "marquis-like playfulness" in style which "gave them to understand at once better than any arguments that I took a very detached view of 'all that ghastly business of last night'; that I was not at all so crushed […] but on the contrary look upon it just as any self-respecting gentleman ought to look on it" (214-215).[xxiii] These examples testify to the Underground Man's enduring literary ambitions, but at these stages, he directs his creative efforts at concealing or deforming rather than revealing the truth, and the ready-made forms to which he resorts in both art and life have an equally stifling effect on his literary talent and on his "talent for life."

Unlike all previous examples, the Underground Man's conversation with Liza during their first meeting reveals not only his literary ambitions, but also the seeds of genuine talent. His speech in the brothel bears many resemblances to a literary work: for one, it is not a spontaneous expression of his ideas, but a crafted composition: "I must find the right tone," he says to himself as he speaks (200), but this lack of spontaneity does not mean that his feelings or aims are not what they appear to be, for "guile accommodates itself so easily to true feeling" (200).[xxiv] In fact, throughout his speech, the narrator talks about concealing his artifice—that is, the strategy behind the apparent spontaneity and feeling—but the strategy itself is preceded by genuine feeling of shame for the just committed act of "vice which, without love, grossly and shamelessly begins where true love finds its consummation"[xxv] (194), and, perhaps most importantly, real desire to bond with a fellow human being. Paradoxically, artistic form here serves at once as a mask of his true feelings and as a means of communicating them with minimal risk, for should his feelings come under ridicule, which the Underground Man fears

obsessively, he can dismiss them as a craft. The Underground Man's strategy in this episode bears another similarity to Dostoevsky's own vision of art. This strategy—reliance on images and impressions instead of moralizing and criticizing—echo Dostoevsky's own pronouncement that "art [*khudozhestvennost'*] is the best, the most persuasive, the most incontestable and the most intelligible method of presenting in images" any cause (123).[xxvi] The narrator's literary ambitions are therefore not ungrounded, for he appears to possess artistic talent as Dostoevsky defines it: "Talent is given to a writer for the purpose of producing an impression. One can know a fact, one can see it a hundred times oneself and still not get such an impression as when someone else, a person of special talent, stands beside you and points out the very same fact to you, but from his point of view, explains it to you in his own words and makes you look at it through his eyes. A real talent is recognized by this sort of influence he exerts" (*OW* 118).[23] This is precisely what the Underground Man accomplishes: he points out well-known facts to Liza, but presents them in such a way that the influence they exert exceeds even his own calculations, and he gets "frightened" when Liza's agony and despair prove that he "had succeeded in making an impression" (211).[xxvii] Instead of using ready-made forms and adjusting reality to fit them, here the narrator is searching for appropriate form to reflect the message and the purpose of his narrative. Sixteen years later, with the expression of Liza's face after his insult to her still haunting and oppressing him, the Underground Man is once again in search of a literary form for his story, only this time, he is a not only an older man, but is also arguably a more mature writer.

Thus the style and structure of Part One mirror life as the narrator presents it here: not as a logical arrangement, but as a contention of possible choices, apparent and hidden, actual and potential. Hence, his notes contain contradictory statements which exist side by side with equal

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[23] Translation emended.

potential for validity, leaving the reader face-to-face with potentiality as a fact, and not as an abstract statement. His attack on determinism and defense of free will are reflected in the language of Part One, where, as Zakharov notes, free will determines the very nature of the spoken word: “word loses its definiteness, word negates word, and the uttered word loses its value. […] Words often mean not what the hero is saying, but what he conceals” (107-108). Dostoevsky thus uses the Underground Man and his narrative style to transfer what may appear to be the protagonist’s personal problem into the reader’s field of experience.

The narrator compels the reader to experience first-hand the inadequacy of labeling and objectification through the numerous assumptions he lets slip about his audience. [24] Thus, for instance, in the opening pages of Part One, immediately after describing his spiteful behavior during the years of civil service, he addresses the readers with contempt: “doesn’t it seem to you, gentlemen, that I might possibly be apologising to you for something? Asking you to forgive me for something? Yes, I’m sure it does. . . . Well, I assure you I don’t care a damn whether it does seem so to you or not. . .” (109).[xxviii] Only a couple of paragraphs later, he again presumes to know his readers’ thoughts and reactions: “I expect you must be thinking, gentlemen, that I want to amuse you. Well, you’re mistaken there too. I’m not at all the jolly sort of person you think I am, or may think I am. However, if irritated with all this idle talk (and I feel that you are irritated), you were to ask me who I really am, then I should reply, I’m a retired civil servant of humble rank, a collegiate assessor” (110).[xxix] The opening remark of the second chapter directly

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[24] See Jones, 60: “The hero assumes we are intelligent people, abreast of current intellectual trends and followers of Chernyshevsky, that we are blessed with health, emotional balance and self-respect. And, in spite of his wish to engage us in dialogue, he holds us in contempt. He assumes that what he says will upset our sense of propriety and decorum and scandalize us and that we will at first not understand and then find distasteful his constant display of spite and his wish to tell repellent details about his private life. He presumes we shall think (wrongly) that he is making a kind of confession to obtain our forgiveness. He imagines that we shall attribute what he says to a desire to score points off 'men of action'. In general he takes it for granted that we shall adopt a superior, mocking attitude to everything he writes. We represent 'normal reality' and by means of this strategy he convinces us that he retains a tenuous hold on the 'reality' which we inhabit.”

slights the reader's freedom: "I should like to tell you now, gentlemen, whether you want to listen to me or not, why I've never been able to become even an insect" (111). In chapter three, he is absolutely convinced that we foolishly take his examples (i.e. the feelings of one slapped in the face) as his personal experience, and again shows his contempt for the reader: "But don't worry, gentlemen, I've never had my face slapped, and I don't care a damn what you may think about it. […] But enough! Not another word about this subject which seems to interest you so much" (117).[xxx] Further into this part, the narrator puts his readers in the camp of Chernyshevsky and other utopian socialists: "You, gentlemen, have, so far as I know, drawn up your entire list of positive human values by taking the averages of statistical figures and relying on scientific and economic formulae. What are your values? They are peace, freedom, prosperity, wealth, and so on and so forth" (126).[xxxi] He literally puts words into the readers' mouths, attributing to the audience the denial of free will and acceptance of scientific determinism and utilitarian ethics. The reader, as the narrator "quotes" him, could be one of Chernyshevsky's heroes: " 'But there's really no such thing as choice, as a matter of fact, whatever you may say,' you interrupt me with a laugh. 'Today science has succeeded in so far dissecting man that at least we now know that desire and the so-called free will are nothing but—'" (131).[xxxii]The Underground Man continues to make similar assumptions throughout the novella (although he directly expresses them mainly in Part One), objectifying and defining the reader just as the theorists and statisticians he attacks objectify and define man in general. In doing so, as Malcolm Jones observes, he is "placing us in a double bind: if we wish to continue reading we have to accept a definition of ourselves which we probably (especially now that the days of crude scientific determinism are over) find uncomfortable and would wish to argue about" (60). Thus the Underground Man puts his audience in the position in which he finds himself with his classmate Simonov, who infuriates

the narrator with his ability to "to read [him] like a book." Yet this is precisely how the narrator is treating his readers—as fully predictable and, consequently, lacking the capacity for self-definition. This, of course, has made many a reader furious, or at least alienated, and since, unlike Simonov, the Underground Man is mostly wrong in his assumptions, the reader learns from experience what the Underground Man arrives at rationally: namely, that human beings will always resist the deadening effects of objectification and classification through the exercise of freedom for self-definition.

At the end of Part One, the Underground states his reason for writing his "confession:"

> […] what do I want to write it down for? What is the object of it all? If I'm not writing for the reading public, why not simply recall these things in my mind without putting them down on paper?
>
> Well, I suppose I could do that, but it will look more dignified on paper. There is something imposing about that. There will be a greater sense of passing judgment on myself. The whole style, I'm sure, will be better. Moreover, I really may feel easier in my mind if I write it down. I have, for instance, been latterly greatly oppressed by the memory of some incident that happened to me a long time ago. I remembered it very vividly the other day, as a matter of fact, and it has since been haunting me like some annoying tune you can't get out of your head. And yet I simply must get rid of it. I have hundreds of such memories, but at times one of them stands out from the rest and oppresses me. So why shouldn't I try?

> And, lastly, I'm awfully bored, and I have nothing to do. Writing down things is, in fact, a sort of work. People say work makes man better and more honest. Well, here's a chance for me at any rate. (145-146)[xxxiii]

In other words, the three reasons that dictate the Underground Man's writing strategies are as follows: to confront the truth about himself ("passing judgment"), to accept responsibility for his actions, and to achieve salvation by becoming "better and more honest."[25] These needs determine the emphatically "dialogic" form of *Notes*. "I should like to make it clear once and for all," the narrator states at the end of Part One, "that if I address myself in my writings to a reader, I'm doing it simply as a matter of form, because I find it much easier to write like that. It is only a form, an empty show, for I know that I shall never have any readers" (144-145).[xxxiv] But form is never superfluous in Dostoevsky, and the Underground Man's evolution as a writer involves a greater sense of unity between form and content. Prior to beginning his memoir, the Underground Man states that he has made up his mind to write down his haunting, painful memories "to see whether I can be absolutely frank with myself and not be afraid of the whole truth" (144). To see "the whole truth," he must not only see it from a certain distance, but see it from multiple perspectives. Since the mere distance between his former and older selves is not sufficient to overcome the risk of succumbing to vanity and transcending egocentrism, the

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[25] For a positive view of the narrator's confession as a step to possible salvation, see Gary Rosenshield, "The Fate of Dostoevskij's Underground Man: The Case for an Open Ending," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 28.3 (1984): 324-39. Rosenshield argues that "One of the signs pointing to the possibility of the Underground Man's regeneration is his remarkable similarity in situation […] to the 'saved' heroes of Dostoevskij's later fiction, in particular, Raskornikov, the Ridiculous Man, and Dmitrij and Ivan Karamazov. It is true that the Underground Man is not saved at the end of the novel, but neither are the others: they have taken, at most, only the first important step toward regeneration. Furthermore, it is implied that for all of them a long period of suffering and additional testing lies ahead. […] More important, in the Underground Man we find, as in all of these heroes, the same elements presented as necessary for resurrection into a new life and the experience of a hitherto undreamed-of reality: the acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibility; compassion; guilt (both conscious and unconscious); the compulsion to confess; and the need to expiate the crimes contemplated or committed" (325)

imaginary unsympathetic reader adds another possible perspective on the events of his past. This perspective is by no means an objective one, and the narrator is eager to expose its flaws, but it nevertheless introduces some aspects of truth which have to be reckoned with, which furthermore imply other, hidden aspects to be taken into account if one is to see “the whole truth.” The imaginary reader is, to use a Jamesian term, another “lamp” that illuminates the corners of the Underground Man’s past which would otherwise have remained obscured, another pair of eyes with which he can examine his “crime” and thus achieve “a greater sense of passing judgment” on himself. This strategy proves to be effective: “I have felt ashamed all the time I have been writing this *story*,” the narrator writes at the end, “so it seems this is no longer literature, but a corrective punishment” (237).[xxxv] Whereas previously the Underground Man painfully sensed the split between literature and life, now the distinction between the two is blurred: literature is a corrective punishment, and the suffering it exacts qualifies it as experience. What was previously an escape from life becomes for the mature narrator the only means of engaging with it, and rather than isolating him, literature allows him to overcome “the [moral and intellectual] ignorance peculiar to isolated consciousness” (Rosenshield “Fate” 328). Whereas in his youthful days the Underground Man repeatedly tried and failed to impose familiar literary forms on life, which resulted in distortion of his actual experience, his present writing marks a shift in his view of literature and life. Before, writing was his way of making reality “fit” the ready-made concepts derived from fiction. In contrast, the need to write his confession is dictated by the moral and epistemological urge to make sense of his experience, past and present, and, perhaps most importantly, to take responsibility—the ultimate manifestation of free will—for his actions.

3.2 *Daisy Miller*

Unlike Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, famous for its philosophical density, the immediate success and immense popularity of *Daisy Miller* is due to its deceptive simplicity. One may be tempted to ask what could link this seemingly light tale of manners with the ideological confessions of Dostoevsky's paradoxalist. For one, the intellectual climate in which James composed *Daisy Miller* is not very different from Dostoevsky's, and although James never participated in the intellectual and religious debates directly, he was not, contrary to Leon Edel's claim, "impervious on the whole to the great scientific strains of his century" (169).[26] James was facing the same moral and epistemological problems that confronted Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and other nineteenth-century writers, and like Dostoevsky, "finding himself attracted to and repelled by both the romantic idealism of the mid-nineteenth century and the psychological realism and naturalism of the new scientific era, he reconciled the two and worked out his own philosophical solution" (Goldsmith 109).[27] Edel claims that "the challenge of evolution and the debates about determinism" interested James strictly in their "literary manifestations, in the *naturalisme* of Zola" (169). But "the new science" was not just a science; as Andrew J. Scheiber[28] explains,

> the notions of biological evolution popularized by Darwin and his disciples had even previous to the 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species* provided an explanatory paradigm for other arenas of human inquiry more familiar—and interesting—to James: history, sociology, and, particularly, morality and aesthetics. Darwin-inspired discussions of such issues were frequent in the magazine culture from which James's career was launched. Publications such as

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[26] Leon Edel, *The Conquest of London: 1870-1881.* 1962, vol. 2 of *The Life of Henry James,* 5 vols. (New York: Avon, 1978).
[27] Arnold L. Goldsmith, "Henry James's Reconciliation of Free Will and Fatalism,"*Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 13.2 (1958): 109-26.
[28] Andrew J. Scheiber, "Embedded Narratives of Science and Culture in James's 'Daisy Miller,'" *College Literature* 21.2 (1994): 75-88.

> *The Nation* and *The Atlantic* carried articles on the latest thinking in paleontology and anthropology alongside James's reviews, sketches, and early fiction. So there is ample circumstantial encouragement to consider how Darwinist paradigms might have found their way into James's framing of his own inquiries, and how an awareness of this influence might inform our understanding of James's fictions as cultural products of the age. (76)

In short, evolution and determinism were not just popular subjects for scientific debates: they affected the way individuals perceived themselves and others around them, influenced their ethical choices and their aesthetic preferences, and by the time James wrote *Daisy Miller*, "the new science," in its various manifestations, was changing the landscape of that "garden of life" from which art "plucks its material."

While James did not engage in scientific controversies, he, like Dostoevsky, regarded scientific and cultural determinism as a reductionist approach to human character. Focusing exclusively on physical reality, it tended to eliminate what James, in his 1865 review of Anne Moncure Crane's novel *Emily Chester*, called "the spiritual principle" (*LC* 1:592), something that both the ethics of determinism and aesthetics of naturalism tended to ignore. Just as forty years later James will accuse Zola of simplifying "inordinately" and of "leav[ing] out the life of the soul, practically, and confin[ing] himself to the life of the instincts, of the more immediate passions, such as can be easily and promptly caught in the fact" (*LC* 2:129), in this early review James criticizes the author of *Emily Chester* for making "the action of the story rest, not only exclusively, but what is more to the point, avowedly, upon the temperament, nature, constitution, instincts, of her characters; upon their physical rather than upon their moral sense" (*LC* 1:591). He laments that "there is hardly a page in which the author does not insinuate her conviction

that, in proportion as a person is finely organized, in so far is he apt to be the slave of his instincts" (*LC* 1:592). James deems this view simply absurd: "Beasts and idiots act from their instincts; educated men and women, even when they most violate principles, act from their reason, however perverted, and their affections, however misplaced" (*LC* 1:592). James's major objection here, as in almost all of his criticism of Naturalism, is against the naturalists' disregard for the arbitrariness of the self which ultimately recognizes only one authority: its own capricious—and what James will call "mighty"—will. James's conclusion echoes the central theme of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*: "We are not particularly fond of any kind of sentimentality," James writes, "but Heaven defend us from the sentimentality which soars above all our old superstitions, and allies itself with anything so rational as theory" (*LC* 1:594-5).

This review, which appeared a year after *Notes from the Underground* was published in Russia, echoes some of the key arguments of Dostoevsky's novella: the rejection of the deterministic view of human nature that reduces the individual to a slave of his instincts or environment; the need to account for individual will—one's "reasons" and "affections" that distinguish men from strictly instinctual creatures; and the refusal to see life reduced to "anything so rational as theory." James' critical reviews were not limited to fiction, and his 1875 review of Charles Nordhoff's *The Communistic Societies of the United States* offers some valuable insights into his view of another 19th century development to which Dostoevsky so eloquently responded in *Notes from the Underground*: the Fourierist concept of a rationally organized and carefully calculated utopian society. The utopian communities Chernyshevsky described in his novel—and Dostoevsky attacked in his work—were already a reality in some of the parts of the United States, and Nordhoff's book offers his observations on the material and moral condition of the communities which he had visited as part of his year-long tour. James's

review, in turn, not only familiarizes the reader with Nordhoff's account, but betrays the profoundly disheartening impression it had made on him. Nordhoff's account, James writes, is interesting and informative, particularly from the economic point of view; but it fails to persuade and explain "how twenty-five hundred people […] can be found to embrace a life of such organized and theorized aridity" (*LC* 1:565). James is clearly horrified by Nordhoff's report, and what he refuses to accept above all is the idea that material well-being, which most of these communities guarantee to their members, can bring satisfaction and contentment. He is particularly appalled by the report on the Oneida Perfectionists, a community in which "ladies and gentlemen are all indifferently and interchangeably each other's husbands and wives." This practice, as others in the Oneida settlement, aimed at subordination of the individual to the community and complete eradication of privacy, since personal attachments, including those between parents and children, were regarded as threatening and even evil. James writes the community's "industrial results are doubtless excellent; but morally and socially it strikes us as simply hideous," and he ends with an expression of his abhorrence of such attempts "to organize and glorify the detestable tendency toward the complete effacement of privacy in life and thought everywhere so rampant with us nowadays" (*LC* 1:567). Dostoevsky's Underground Man expresses a similar dismay before the Crystal Palace, with its disregard for individuality and privacy, which represents to him the same idea of "industrial results" without ethical foundation.

What naturalist writers and utopian socialists have in common—and what Dostoevsky and James are united against—is a systematic, pre-calculated approach to human nature and life, which eliminates the arbitrary, capricious will from the equation of human problem. This approach relies on classes, types, and rigid categories for understanding of human character, which for both James and Dostoevsky is by its very nature changing and unstable, complex and

contradictory. It is therefore not surprising that in *Daisy Miller*, James dramatizes the predicament in which a categorical mind finds itself when confronted with "living life" in all of its beauty, versatility, and capriciousness.

The novella's original subtitle: "A Study," is a sufficient indication of its rootedness in the scientific era, but, in a characteristically Jamesian manner, the object of this study is not Daisy Miller, as the title suggests, but Winterbourne, whose "studying" consciousness is the real center of interest.[29] If Daisy is "a child of nature and of freedom" (*LC* 2:1269), Winterbourne is the product of the scientific era, as indicated by the language used to represent his probing mind. From the opening lines, the narrative voice, which will serve almost exclusively to represent Winterbourne's "vexed" consciousness, is engaged in categorizing: "the little town of Vevey" is categorized as a resort town, with "an unbroken array of establishments of this order, of every category" (3), and the inhabitants of the hotel are immediately presented in their national categories: "neat German waiters who look like secretaries of legation; Russian princesses sitting in the garden; little Polish boys walking about, held by the hand, with their governors" (4). And Winterbourne himself is introduced as studying the scene from a detached perspective: "I hardly know," the narrator begins, "whether it was the analogies or the differences that were uppermost in the mind of a young American, who, two or three years ago, sat in the garden of the "Trois Couronnes," looking about him rather idly at some of the graceful objects I have mentioned" (4). We also learn that "when his friends spoke of him they usually said that he was at Geneva 'studying,'" although "certain persons […] conveyed that the reason of his spending so much time at Geneva was that he was extremely devoted to a lady who lived there– a foreign lady, a person older than himself" (4). These conflicting accounts point to the dislodgement of personal

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[29] See, for example, Bell 54.

attachments by scientific, objective inquiries in Winterbourne's life, and foreshadow the inner conflict between his "liking" Daisy Miller and "studying" her.

As Millicent Bell notes, "Winterbourne's own observations exhibit from start to finish the categorical judgment which is the object of major scrutiny in 'Daisy Miller'" (57). The first conversation in which we hear Winterbourne speak shows him comfortable applying categories to people as well as things. At first it may seem that Winterbourne is simply playing along with Randolph, Daisy's young brother, who introduces categories into their conversation by proclaiming that "American candy's the best candy." But Winterbourne goes further to categorizes people by asking whether "American little boys [are] the best little boys." Randolph, who, as Daisy's brother, is also "a child of nature and of freedom," reveals discomfort with categorizing people: "I don't know. *I'm* an American boy." While the boy declares that "American men are the best," (but only after establishing that Winterbourne belongs to this category), he cannot equate "American" with "the best" when it comes to his sister: "She's an American girl, you bet!" he introduces her, but promptly observes that "My sister ain't the best!" because "She's always blowing at me" (6-7). In other words, while naively applying categories, Randolph also instinctively makes a distinction between the class and its individual members when facing a particular case—i.e. Daisy—whereas Winterbourne sees only a type, exclaiming "How pretty *they* are! " (7; emphasis added). In contrast, when Randolph introduces Winterbourne as "an American man," Daisy "gave no heed to this circumstance" (7), indicating that such categories have no place in her value system and foreshadowing her refusal to discriminate between various "types" of acquaintances later in Rome.

After exchanging only a few superfluous words with her, Winterbourne is already applying preconceived generalizations to "the charming creature:"

> She might be cold, she might be austere, she might even be prim; for that was apparently—he had already so generalised—what the most "distant" American girls did: they came and planted themselves straight in front of you to show how rigidly unapproachable they were. There hadn't been the slightest flush in her fresh fairness however; so that she was clearly neither offended nor fluttered. Only she was composed—he had seen that before too—of charming little parts that didn't match and that made no *ensemble*; and if she looked another way when he spoke to her, and seemed not particularly to hear him, this was simply her habit, her manner, the result of her having no idea whatever of "form" (9-10)

Winterbourne's initial observations reveal his " habit of scanning bodies for the marks of their national or class or even species specificity" (Wardley 243)[30], hence his focus on "her habit, her manner" and "her complexion, her nose, her ears, her teeth" (10). The narrator informs that Winterbourne "took a great interest generally in that range of effects and was addicted to noting and, as it were, recording them"[31] (10), revealing "an attitude that perversely substitutes the language of scientific process for sensual passion or even aesthetic engagement" (Scheiber 77). Indeed, Winterbourne is more interested in what "class" Daisy's "type" belongs to than in her personal charm:

> Never indeed since he had grown old enough to appreciate things had he encountered a young compatriot of so "strong" a type as this. Certainly she was very charming, but how extraordinarily communicative and how tremendously easy! Was she simply a pretty girl from New York State—were they all like that,

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[30] Lynn Wardley, "Reassembling Daisy Miller," *American Literary History* 3.2 (1991): 232-54.
[31] In the first edition (1878), "He had a great relish for feminine beauty; he was addicted to observing and analysing it; and as regards this young lady's face he made several observations."

> the pretty girls who had had a good deal of gentlemen's society? Or was she also a designing, an audacious, in short an expert young person? Yes, his instinct for such a question had ceased to serve him, and his reason could but mislead. Miss Daisy Miller looked extremely innocent. Some people had told him that after all American girls *were* exceedingly innocent, and others had told him that after all they weren't. He must on the whole take Miss Daisy Miller for a flirt—a pretty American flirt. He had never as yet had relations with representatives of that class. (15)

Having thus found "the formula that applied to Miss Daisy Miller" (15), Winterbourne feels immediate relief and proceeds to "place" her by determining "the regular conditions and limitations of one's intercourse with a pretty American flirt" (15). For assistance in this task, he turns to his "exclusive" aunt, Mrs. Costello, whose "picture of the minutely hierarchical constitution of the society of that city […] was, to Winterbourne's imagination, almost oppressively striking." Mrs. Costello's categories are very rigid, which is evident from her judgment of Winterbourne himself. She warns her nephew that he is "too innocent" because he has "lived too long out of the country," and when he protests that he is "not so much" innocent, she immediately suggests that he must be "too guilty then" (22). Like Winterbourne, who was closer to her than "her very own" (19), Mrs. Costello regards the Miller family not based on their personal merits or shortcomings, but based on characteristics that identify them as members of a certain class: " 'They're horribly common'– it was perfectly simple. 'They're the sort of Americans that one does one's duty by just ignoring'" (20). Like Winterbourne earlier, she refers to Daisy as "they," i.e. American girls: "'She has that charming look they all have,' his aunt resumed. 'I can't think where they pick it up; and she dresses in perfection […] I can't think

where they get their taste'" (20). Even something as particular as a name reflects nothing more than a category for Mrs. Costello: in a conversation that takes place later in the novella, she accuses Winterbourne of thinking "of that young lady's, Miss Baker's, Miss Chandler's—what's her name?—Miss Miller's intrigue with that little barber's block" (65). Just as Daisy is generalized into a distinct class of "American girls," the entire family, in Mrs. Costello's system, is pigeonholed under the category of tradesmen.

While Winterbourne is reluctant to accept his aunt's verdicts as final, he nevertheless "listened with interest to these disclosures," which "helped him to make up his mind about Miss Daisy. He "at once recognised from her tone that Miss Daisy Miller's place in the social scale was low" (20), and he concludes that Daisy "was rather wild" (21). However, any conclusion he arrives at is challenged by Daisy's unpredictable and baffling behavior, and Winterbourne finds himself over and over again searching for that ever-evading formula that could be applied to "the little American flirt." Throughout the novella, Winterbourne is "puzzled," "mystified" "baffled" and "vexed" as Daisy continues "to present herself as an inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence" (51), but failing to grasp these contradictory manifestations of her character (what he earlier calls her "lack of form") as signs of rich complexity and unrealized potentiality, he studies her as if her character and her actions were fully predetermined and fixed, seeking closure to the story before he gives it a chance to be written.

To escape uncertainty, Winterbourne resorts to "ready-made" social and literary models through which he tries, unsuccessfully, to define Daisy once and for all. When he struggles to explain to himself why she is not impatient to be left alone with Giovanelli, whom he can only see as her "*amoroso*," he reasons in trite literary clichés: "It was impossible to regard her as a wholly unspotted flower—she lacked a certain indispensable fineness; and it would therefore

much simplify the situation to be able to treat her as the subject of one of those visitations known to romancers as 'lawless passions.'" But Daisy does not fit the plot of a vulgar romance, and while Winterbourne wishes to see her trying to get rid of him, which would allow him to "think more lightly of her" and "would have made her less perplexing," Daisy continues "to present herself as an inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence" (51). His possible interpretations of Daisy are restricted from the onset by the limited number of familiar plots in which his imagination alternately places her character. This approach is the opposite of James's creative method which he claims to have first discovered in Turgenev. Turgenev, James writes, shows "a respect unconditioned for the freedom and vitality, the absoluteness when summoned, of the creatures he invokes" (*LC* 2:1032-33), and thus his stories begin "almost always with the vision of some person or persons, who hovered before him, soliciting him, as the active or passive figure, interesting him and appealing to him *just as they were and by what they were*" (*LC* 2:1073, emphasis added). Winterbourne denies Daisy the authority with which James invests his own characters, and instead allows conventions, both social and literary, to dictate his view of her. Instead of seeking answers in Daisy's enigmatic personality, he relies on the setting and the situation to make his final— and fatal— judgment of her character on the night at the Coliseum. When he witnesses Daisy alone with Giovanelli in the arena of the moon-lit Coliseum associated with Romantic atmosphere and pernicious air, Winterbourne finally makes up his mind about Daisy:

> Winterbourne felt himself pulled up with final horror now—and, it must be added, with final relief. It was as if a sudden clearance had taken place in the ambiguity of the poor girl's appearances and the whole riddle of her contradictions had grown easy to read. She was a young lady about the *shades* of whose perversity a

> foolish puzzled gentleman need no longer trouble his head or his heart. That once questionable quantity *had* no shades—it was a mere black little blot. He stood there looking at her, looking at her companion too, and not reflecting that though he saw them vaguely he himself must have been more brightly presented. He felt angry at all his shiftings of view—he felt ashamed of all his tender little scruples and all his witless little mercies. He was about to advance again, and then again checked himself; not from the fear of doing her injustice, but from a sense of the danger of showing undue exhilaration for this disburdenment of cautious criticism. (74-75)

Paradoxically, the scene that brings Winterbourne the long-sought relief from uncertainty also ascertains his unreliability as an observer by literally placing him in the position that allows only a vague view of the couple, for "the great cross in the center" by which Daisy was seated "was almost obscured" from his view (74). At the same time, Winterbourne is "more brightly presented," and for a moment the reader's perspective joins Daisy's, who remarks, " Well, he looks at us as one of the old lions or tigers may have looked at the Christian martyrs" (74). Robert Weisbuch[32] argues that "when James dramatizes desecrations of the Church or makes scriptural allusions, […] he is advertising his ultimate values by characterizing a threat to them as sacrilegious unto Satanic. These values—the sanctity of other people, the rich solidity of the world, equal (not domineering or enslaved) participation in social life—constitute James's American sacred" (217). From this perspective, the setting and the situation that convince Winterbourne of her "perversity" point to a different story—one in which Daisy is a martyr who refuses to compromise her faith in the underlying freedom of human character in the face of

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[32] Robert Weisbuch, "James and the American Sacred," *The Henry James Review* 22.3 (2001): 217-28.

imminent danger.[33] To be sure, her behavior is imprudent, but it is deliberate imprudence which echoes the Underground Man's contention that "all man wants is an absolutely *free* choice, however dear that freedom may cost him and wherever it may lead him to," that "one's own whims, however wild, one's own fancy, overwrought though it sometimes may be to the point of madness" constitute " that same most desirable good […] which does not fit into any classification, and against which all theories and systems are continually wrecked" (Dostoevsky, *Notes* 130-131). This view challenges the well-known explication James himself provided in the 1880 letter to Eliza Lynn Linton. Linton asked James to settle a dispute over two possible readings of Daisy's character and behavior, the first reading her actions as a straightforward "defiance of public opinion," and the alternative as her being "simply too innocent, too heedless, and too little conscious of appearance to understand what people made such fuss about." In short, Linton's question is, "was she obstinate and defying, or superficial and careless?" (Layard 232). The most fitting answer to this seems to stare one in the face from the pages of the text itself: "She did what she liked" (80), but James, somewhat uncharacteristically, issued a more definite—and less textually justifiable—statement. He replied that he understood Daisy to be "too ignorant, too irreflective, too little versed in the proportions of things" to consciously intend to "outrage and irritate" public opinion. He proceeds to declare that "she was not *defiant*," even though he admits that "the word 'defiant' is used in the tale," and adds that she did not want to hear anything about "a fuss […] being made about her," "she never had a thought of scandalizing anybody" and "only wished to be left alone" (qtd. in Jobe 84). James's description echoes

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[33] Bell argues that while to consider Daisy "a martyr to her own faith in an unconfined selfhood seems too large a claim—and James undermines our readiness to give her such grand proportions by making her literally the victim of imprudence," but insightfully observes that "her posture in the arena where Christian martyrs had died before her is not entirely an ironic touch. Her individuality, such as it is, is doomed by Winterbourne's decision to 'cut her dead' and the stiff box into which his categorical mind has thrust her is in effect a coffin" (Bell 64-65).

Winterbourne's reassurance of his aunt that the "dreadful" Millers are "very ignorant—very innocent only, and utterly uncivilised. Depend on it they're not 'bad.'" In conclusion, James declares "the whole idea of the story" being "the little tragedy of a light, thin, natural, unsuspecting creature being sacrificed, as it were, to a social rumpus that went on quite over her head & to which she stood in no measurable relation" (qtd. in Jobe 84).

It is striking how little the text of the novella offers to support James's famous explication. To begin with, Daisy is without a doubt aware of—and appears to take pleasure in—"making a fuss" well before the fateful scandal in Rome. During her first meeting with Winterbourne, she confesses that her mother "makes a fuss" whenever the girl introduces her gentlemen friends. "But I *do* introduce them—almost always," Daisy proclaims, "If I didn't introduce my gentlemen friends to mother, […] I shouldn't think I was natural" (27). She is no less conscious than the Underground Man that her "natural" inclinations are at variance with the socially accepted norms, and willfully chooses to preserve self-integrity even if it means defying the norms. Even her name is not really her name "on cards," (her "real" name is Annie P. Miller) (11), which points to her resistance to any superimposed, formal, social identity (whereas the name "Daisy" links her to the natural world). That she takes pleasure in defiance is clear from her announced intention to go out in a boat with Winterbourne one night in Vevey. When Eugenio, the courier who accompanies the Millers, gives his "permission," despite obvious disapproval, Daisy's reaction is one of disappointment: "Oh I hoped you'd make a fuss! I don't care to go now," and when Winterbourne declares that he, in turn, will make a fuss if Daisy does *not* go, she acknowledges, regaining her good humour, that all she wants is "a little fuss!" Afterwards, when Daisy prepares to leave with her mother, she leaves Winterbourne "puzzled," "mystified," and "baffled" as she announces, "all lighted with her odd perversity," her hope that

he is "disappointed or disgusted or something!" (33). Her "odd perversity" and "sudden caprices" combined with the desire to elicit a strong personal response, even if only a negative one, bring to mind Dostoevsky's paradoxalist, who was similarly craving attention and "fuss." Thus it is clear that, contrary to James's assertions, Daisy, not unlike the Underground Man, seeks a chance to assert her will against the restrains of social norms, and this resistance attracts her more than the anticipated pleasure of the evening out in a boat.

Daisy's defiance appears to be conscious throughout the rest of the novel, as when she announces to Winterbourne that she has "never allowed a gentleman to dictate to [her] or to interfere with anything [she does]" (49), or when, shortly afterwards, "Winterbourne saw she scented interference" from Mrs. Walker, who has offered Daisy the last chance to salvage her reputation by joining her in her carriage while the latter, responding that she was "more than five years old" (53), chose to walk alone with the "handsome" Giovanelli. Just as "Dostoevsky's hero always seeks to destroy that framework of other people's words about him that might finalize and deaden him" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 59), so Daisy, until the very end, when Winterbourne "cuts [her] dead" (75) with his final verdict, "perversely" refuses to give him any facts or evidence that can lead him to a final, settled view of her. Instead of denying or confirming her mother's assumption that she is engaged to Giovanelli, for example, Daisy deliberately leaves the question open to conflicting interpretations:

> "Since you've mentioned it," she said, "I *am* engaged." He looked at her hard—he had stopped laughing. "You don't believe it!" she added.
>
> He asked himself, and it was for a moment like testing a heart-beat; after which, "Yes, I believe it!" he said.

> "Oh no, you don't," she answered. "But *if* you possibly do," she still more perversely pursued— "well, I ain't!" (73)

In this dialogue, Daisy resorts to the same "word with a loophole" which Bakhtin identifies as the Underground Man's signature strategy for retaining the right of self-definition. Like Isabel Archer and numerous other Jamesian heroes and heroines, Daisy Miller shares with Dostoevsky's characters the acute sense of "their own unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 59). And if Daisy is "pure poetry" as James claims in his preface (*LC* 2:1271), then she is the embodiment of that "free spirit" which James describes in his preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*: "the free spirit, always much tormented, and by no means always triumphant, is heroic, ironic, pathetic or whatever, and […] 'successful', only through having remained free" (*LC* 2:1147).[34] It is therefore not surprising that the final words spoken about Daisy by Giovanelli and Winterbourne stress not only innocence, but even more so her willful independence:

> "She was the most beautiful young lady I ever saw, and the most amiable." To which [Giovanelli] added in a moment: "Also—naturally!—the most innocent."
> Winterbourne sounded him with hard dry eyes, but presently repeated his words, "The most innocent?"
> "The most innocent!"

[34] See Bell, 49: "He seems to have conceived of a romantic idealization that abstracted certain mythic American qualities—while still preserving an illusion of ordinary portraiture. The naïve rebel, Daisy, an embodiment of willful freedom from conventional definition, might seem more eccentric than real. Yet such a figure might represent a significant resistant impulse at work in American life."

> It came somehow so much too late that our friend could only glare at its having come at all. “Why the devil,” he asked, “did you take her to that fatal place?” Giovanelli raised his neat shoulders and eyebrows to within suspicion of a shrug. “For myself I had no fear; and *she*—she did what she liked.”
>
> Winterbourne’s eyes attached themselves to the ground. “She did what she liked!” (80)

This doubling of “*She did what she liked,*” combined with the solemn circumstances under which these last words are uttered, add particular weight to their meaning. It is as if Giovanelli’s excuse becomes a sudden revelation, the final answer to the search for a formula for little Miss Miller that serves as a foundation for the novella’s plot. However, both Winterbourne and Giovanelli fail to grasp the full implication of this stated truth as they continue to insist on the certainty of Daisy’s supposed intentions: Giovanelli is “convinced” that Daisy would never have married him (although her many resemblances with Isabel Archer, who marries the least “eligible” suitor, suggest that such a possibility is not entirely out of the question), and Winterbourne agrees wholeheartedly (80). Giovanelli’s “conviction” is, from the epistemological point of view, just as invalid as Winterbourne’s “formulas.” Both men make assumptions about her behavior based on the idea that her potential actions are predetermined, that they would have been dictated by her essential innocence or corruptness, and in doing so, they deny Daisy the very freedom that they see as the defining mark of her character. While he seems to acknowledge self-will as the leading force behind her baffling behavior, Winterbourne fails to grasp its implications for the quest for certainty on which he had embarked at the beginning of the novella. Because of his inability to move beyond the conception of the self as something fixed, defined, and pre-determined (he is referred to as “stiff” at several points in the text), he ends up

at the end of the novella exactly where he had begun: “he soon went back to live at Geneva, whence there continue to come the most contradictory accounts of his motives of sojourn: a report that he’s ‘studying’ hard—an intimation that he’s much interested in a very clever foreign lady” (81).

Similarly to *Notes from the Underground*, the ambiguity of the ending in *Daisy Miller*, its failure to give a definitive account about Winterbourne, underscores the indeterminacy and “unfinalizability” of the self embodied in the novella’s heroine and compels the reader to experience the predicament of James’s categorizer first-hand. Just as Winterbourne is left to reconcile the conflicting “theories” about Daisy Miller, the reader is left with two competing explanations of Winterbourne’s return to Geneva: “a report that he’s ‘studying’ hard” and “an intimation that he’s much interested in a very clever foreign lady” (81). Nothing we know about Winterbourne endorses either of these views, and the reader is left facing the uncertainty about Winterbourne that mirrors the latter’s uncertainty about Daisy Miller. Thus, Daisy Miller the character and *Daisy Miller* the story share the unresolved ambiguity that characterizes life in general, compelling the reader to share with Winterbourne “the desperation underlying the need of category generally” (Bell 59). This is what makes, in Collin Meissner’s view, James’s stories “fully real, in the sense that the readers live through the experience of them as something more than fictional” and “ineluctably, […] become readers of themselves” (74).[35]

Daisy and the Underground Man embody the rich complexity, elusiveness, and contrariety of human nature and its capacity to outgrow and resist any superimposed label or law which impinges on its freedom of self-definition. In their resolve to resist external “finalization,”

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[35] Collin Meissner, “The Matter of Perception: American Girls and English Ghosts,” *Approaches to Teaching Henry James's Daisy Miller and the Turn of the Screw*, ed. Kimberly Reed and Peter Beidler (New York: MLA, 2005) 72-81.

they take this freedom to the extreme by refusing the choice itself, thus upholding the inner indeterminacy as their only defining characteristic. But while they triumph over the artificial restraints of science, culture and society, they also renounce their chances for cultivating meaningful relationships with others that enable one to actualize the self's inner potentiality and bring out its latent value in the form of a relatable identity that "describes but does not prescribe" (Westbrook & Wilson 273).[36] In other words, they win their claim to authorship over their lives, but they do not get to write their stories: Daisy dies, leaving Winterbourne's final verdict about her innocence unchallenged, and the Underground Man's inability to finish his story results in the fictional editor's deciding what makes the appropriate ending for his story. The Underground Man's and Daisy's failures to consummate their stories points to the need for a balance between the capricious, unpredictable self-will characterized by defiance and independence, and the kind of "mighty will" James evokes in his 1884 notebook entry: "*A mighty will*, there is nothing but that! The integrity of one's will, purpose, faith. To wait, when one must wait, and act when one can act! (*Notebooks* 30). This latter idea evokes James's vision of artistic purpose:

> Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent *value* with which alone it is concerned, sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference here, however, is that, while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in *his* tiny nugget, washed free of awkward accretions and hammered into a sacred hardness, the very stuff for a clear affirmation, the happiest chance for the indestructible. (*LC* 2:1138-9)

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[36] Max Westbrook and Frankie Wilson, "Daisy Miller and the Metaphysician," *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* 13.2 (1980): 270-79.

While the self in Dostoevsky and James is characterized by indeterminacy and "unfinalizability" (one can say it is "all inclusion and confusion," as it encompasses an infinite range of possible identities, an array of potential choices), life-writing demands not only "freedom of inspiration and creation" which Dostoevsky and James posit as the chief law of art. In order to get "the hard latent value" out of this inner chaos, it is also essential to master the art of "discrimination and selection" (*LC* 2:1138-39). It is the same art that Dostoevsky describes when he writes about a portraitist who knows that no static representation of his subject can express the full range of its features, and whose "gift consists in the ability to seek out and capture" that "moment when the subject most resembles his self" (*Diary* 1:214). This is the gift that Dostoevsky and James rely on to give us the two original literary types whose chief feature is the defiance of typification: the Underground Man and the American Girl. Accordingly, *Daisy Miller* and *Notes from the Underground* simultaneously expose the inadequacy of the reductionist view of life as embodied in "the new science" and its cultural and social extentions, and affirm the need for "discrimination and selection" that defines art—the art of fiction, and the art of self-scripting.

Taken together, Dostoevsky's *White Nights* and *Notes from the Underground* and James's *The Beast in the Jungle* and *Daisy Miller* evoke a vision of life characterized by a seemingly irresolvable conflict: on the one hand, life is what happens when the consciousness engages with the external world—the world represented by other consciousnesses. Only when one opens oneself to others and is conscious of others can one be said to be living. On the other hand, this very opening up of oneself to others—to their interpretations and judgment—poses a threat to the self's indeterminacy by replacing it with artificial concepts and categories. It is for these reasons that living is presented as such a difficult task in the fiction of James and Dostoevsky and why it requires a special "talent for life." It is for this reason that their fiction is

peopled with characters who seek to resist the deadening effects of the social system while at the same time desperately longing for a meaningful role within that system. The last set of works discussed in this dissertation will focus on James's and Dostoevsky's treatment of this conflict in the two of the most enigmatic novels in their respective canons: Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* and James's *The Wings of the Dove*.

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[i] … первый закон в искусстве - свобода вдохновения и творчества. Всё же вытребованное, всё вымученное спокон веку до наших времен не удавалось и вместо пользы приносило один только вред. (*SS* 11:56)

[ii] Потому что о пункте чести, то есть не о чести, а о пункте чести (point d'honneur), у нас до сих пор иначе ведь и разговаривать нельзя, как языком литературным. На обыкновенном языке о «пункте чести» не упоминается. (*SS* 4: 488)

[iii] Я испугался того, что меня все присутствующие, начиная с нахала маркера до последнего протухлого и угреватого чиновничишки, тут же увивавшегося, с воротником из сала,— не поймут и осмеют, когда я буду протестовать и заговорю с ними языком литературным. […] Я вполне был уверен (чутье-то действительности, несмотря на весь романтизм!), что все они просто лопнут со смеха, а офицер не просто, то есть не безобидно, прибьет меня, а непременно коленном меня напинает, обведя таким манером вокруг биллиарда, и потом уж разве смилуется и в окно спустит. (*SS* 4:488)

[iv] Больше трех месяцев я никак не в состоянии был сряду мечтать и начинал ощущать непреодолимую потребность ринуться в общество. Ринуться в общество означало у меня сходить в гости к моему столоначальнику, Антону Антонычу Сеточкину. Это был единственный мой постоянный знакомый во всю мою жизнь[…]. (*SS* 4:494)

[v] … мечты мои доходили до такого счастия, что надо было непременно и немедленно обняться с людьми и со всем человечеством; а для этого надо было иметь хоть одного человека в наличности, действительно существующего. (*SS* 4:494)

[vi] К Антону Антонычу надо было, впрочем, являться по вторникам (его день), следственно, и подгонять потребность обняться со всем человечеством надо было всегда ко вторнику. (*SS* 4:494)

[vii] Первое то, что во время исполнения нужно было быть в более приличнейшем виде и позаботиться о костюме. «На всякий случай, если, например, завяжется публичная история (а публика-то тут суперфлю: графиня ходит, князь Д. ходит, вся литература ходит), нужно быть хорошо одетым; это внушает и прямо поставит нас некоторым образом на равную ногу в глазах высшего общества». (*SS* 4:490)

[viii] Сама-то по себе шинель моя очень была недурна, грела; но она была на вате, а воротник был енотовый, что составляло уже верх лакейства. Надо было переменить воротник во что бы ни стало и завести бобрик, вроде как у офицеров. Для этого я стал ходить по Гостиному двору и после нескольких попыток нацелился на один дешевый немецкий бобрик. Эти немецкие бобрики хоть и очень скоро занашиваются и принимают мизернейший вид, но сначала, с обновки, смотрят даже и очень прилично; а ведь мне только для одного разу и надо было. Спросил я цену: все-таки было дорого. По основательном рассуждении я решился продать мой енотовый воротник. Недостающую же и весьма для меня значительную сумму решился выпросить взаймы у Антона Антоныча Сеточкина […]. (*SS* 4:490-91)

[ix] А главное, на панталонах, на самой коленке было огромное желтое пятно. Я предчувствовал, что одно уже это пятно отнимет у меня девять десятых собственного достоинства. Знал тоже я, что очень низко так думать. «Но теперь не до думанья; теперь наступает действительность»,— думал я и падал духом. Знал я тоже отлично, тогда же, что все эти факты чудовищно преувеличиваю; но что же было делать: совладать я с собой уж не мог, и меня трясла лихорадка. С отчаянием представлял я себе, как свысока и холодно встретит меня этот «подлец» Зверков; с каким тупым, ничем неотразимым презрением будет смотреть на меня тупица Трудолюбов; как скверно и дерзко будет подхихикивать на мой счет козявка Ферфичкин, чтоб подслужиться

Зверкову; как отлично поймет про себя всё это Симонов и как будет презирать меня за низость моего тщеславия и малодушия, и, главное,— как всё это будет мизерно, не *литературно*, обыденно. (*SS* 4:503)

[x] Свое собственное, вольное и свободное хотенье, свой собственный, хотя бы самый дикий каприз, своя фантазия, раздраженная иногда хоть бы даже до сумасшествия,— вот это-то всё и есть та самая, пропущенная, самая выгодная выгода, которая ни под какую классификацию не подходит и от которой все системы и теории постоянно разлетаются к черту. И с чего это взяли все эти мудрецы, что человеку надо какого-то нормального, какого-то добродетельного хотения? С чего это непременно вообразили они, что человеку надо непременно благоразумно выгодного хотенья? Человеку надо — одного только самостоятельного хотенья, чего бы эта самостоятельность ни стоила и к чему бы ни привела. Ну и хотенье ведь черт знает… (*SS* 4:468-69)

[xi] […] всё дело-то человеческое, кажется, и действительно в том только и состоит, чтоб человек поминутно доказывал себе, что он человек, а не штифтик! (*SS* 4:474)

[xii] — Если б я был отец и была б у меня своя дочь, я бы, кажется, дочь больше, чем сыновей, любил, право,— начал я сбоку, точно не об том, чтоб развлечь ее. (*SS* 4:522)

[xiii] Знаешь — розовенький такой мальчик, грудь тебе сосет, да у какого мужа сердце повернется на жену, глядя, как она с его ребенком сидит! Ребеночек розовенький, пухленький, раскинется, нежится; ножки-ручки наливные, ноготочки чистенькие, маленькие, такие маленькие, что глядеть смешно, глазки, точно уж он всё понимает. А сосет — грудь тебе ручонкой теребит, играет. Отец подойдет,— оторвется от груди, перегнется весь назад, посмотрит на отца, засмеется,— точно уж и бог знает как смешно,— и опять, опять сосать примется. А то возьмет, да и прикусит матери грудь, коль уж зубки прорезываются, а сам глазенками-то косит на нее: «Видишь, прикусил!» Да разве не всё тут счастье, когда они трое, муж, жена и ребенок, вместе? За эти минуты много можно простить. (*SS* 4:524)

[xiv] «Картинками, вот этими-то картинками тебя надо! — подумал я про себя, хотя, ей-богу, с чувством говорил, и вдруг покраснел.— А ну если она вдруг расхохочется, куда я тогда полезу?» (*SS* 4:524)

[xv] Давно уже предчувствовал я, что перевернул всю ее душу и разбил ее сердце, и, чем больше я удостоверялся в том, тем больше желал поскорее и как можно сильнее достигнуть цели. Игра, игра увлекла меня; впрочем, не одна игра... (*SS* 4:528)

[xvi] Ведь мы даже не знаем, где и живое-то живет теперь и что оно такое, как называется? Оставьте нас одних, без книжки, и мы тотчас запутаемся, потеряемся,— не будем знать, куда примкнуть, чего придержаться; что любить и что ненавидеть, что уважать и что презирать? (*SS* 4:549-50)

[xvii] Мечтал я ужасно, мечтал по три месяца сряду, забившись в свой угол, и уж поверьте, что в эти мгновения я не похож был на того господина, который, в смятении куриного сердца, пришивал к воротнику своей шинели немецкий бобрик. Я делался вдруг героем. Моего десятивершкового поручика я бы даже и с визитом к себе тогда не пустил. Я даже и представить его себе не мог тогда. […] То-то и есть, что я слепо верил тогда, что каким-то чудом, каким-нибудь внешним обстоятельством всё это вдруг раздвинется, расширится; вдруг представится горизонт соответственной деятельности, благотворной, прекрасной и, главное, совсем готовой (какой именно — я никогда не знал, но, главное,— совсем готовой), и вот я выступлю вдруг на свет божий, чуть ли не на белом коне и не в лавровом венке. Второстепенной роли я и понять не мог и вот именно потому-то в действительности очень спокойно занимал последнюю. Либо герой, либо грязь, средины не было. (*SS* 4:492-93)

[xviii] "совсем готовым, сильно украденным у поэтов и романистов и приспособленным ко всевозможным услугам и требованиям" (*SS* 4:493-94).

[xix] Я, например, над всеми торжествую; все, разумеется, во прахе и принуждены добровольно признать все мои совершенства, а я всех их прощаю. Я влюбляюсь, будучи знаменитым поэтом и камергером; получаю несметные миллионы и тотчас же жертвую их на род человеческий и тут же исповедываюсь перед всем народом в моих позорах, которые, разумеется, не просто позоры, а заключают в себе чрезвычайно много «прекрасного и высокого», чего-то манфредовского. […] И к тому же поверьте, что у меня кой-что было вовсе недурно составлено... Не всё же происходило на озере Комо. (*SS* 4:494)

[xx] И к тому же поверьте, что у меня кой-что было вовсе недурно составлено... Не всё же происходило на озере Комо. (*SS* 4:494)

[xxi] Раз поутру, хоть я и никогда не литературствовал, мне вдруг пришла мысль описать этого офицера в абличительном виде, в карикатуре, в виде повести. Я с наслаждением писал эту повесть. Я абличил, даже поклеветал; фамилию я так подделал сначала, что можно было тотчас узнать, но потом, по зрелом

рассуждении, изменил и отослал в «Отечественные записки». Но тогда еще не было абличений, и мою повесть не напечатали. Мне это было очень досадно. (*SS* 4:488)

[xxii] Наконец я решился вызвать противника моего на дуэль. Я сочинил к нему прекрасное, привлекательное письмо, умоляя его передо мной извиниться; в случае же отказа довольно твердо намекал на дуэль. Письмо было так сочинено, что если б офицер чуть-чуть понимал «прекрасное и высокое», то непременно бы прибежал ко мне, чтоб броситься мне на шею и предложить свою дружбу. И как бы это было хорошо! Мы бы так зажили! так зажили! Он бы защищал меня своей сановитостью; я бы облагораживал его своей развитостью, ну и... идеями, и много кой-чего бы могло быть! Вообразите, что тогда прошло уже два года, как он меня обидел, и вызов мой был безобразнейшим анахронизмом, несмотря на всю ловкость письма моего, объяснявшего и прикрывавшего анахронизм. Но, слава богу (до сих пор благодарю всевышнего со слезами), я письма моего не послал. Мороз по коже пробирает, как вспомню, что бы могло выйти, если б я послал (*SS* 4:488-89)

[xxiii] Особенно доволен остался я этой «некоторой легкостью», даже чуть не небрежностию (впрочем, совершенно приличною), которая вдруг отразилась в моем пере и лучше всех возможных резонов, сразу, давала им понять, что я смотрю «на всю эту вчерашнюю гадость» довольно независимо; совсем-таки, вовсе-таки не убит наповал, как вы, господа, вероятно, думаете, а напротив, смотрю так, как следует смотреть на это спокойно уважающему себя джентльмену. Быль, дескать, молодцу не укор.

— Даже ведь какая-то игривость маркизская? — любовался я, перечитывая записку. […] Солгал Симонову; солгал бессовестно; да и теперь не совестно... (*SS* 4:532)

[xxiv] «В тон надо попасть,— мелькнуло во мне,— сантиментальностью-то, пожалуй, не много возьмешь».

Впрочем, это так только мелькнуло. Клянусь, она и в самом деле меня интересовала. К тому же я был как-то расслаблен и настроен. Да и плутовство ведь так легко уживается с чувством. (*SS* 4:521)

[xxv] Теперь же мне вдруг ярко представилась нелепая, отвратительная, как паук, идея разврата, который без любви, грубо и бесстыже, начинает прямо с того, чем настоящая любовь венчается. (*SS* 4:517)

[xxvi] [То-то и есть, что художественность есть самый лучший, самый убедительный, самый бесспорный и наиболее понятный для массы способ представления в образах именно того самого дела, о котором вы хлопочете]

[xxvii] Но теперь, достигнув эффекта, я вдруг струсил. Нет, никогда, никогда еще я не был свидетелем такого отчаяния! Она лежала ничком, крепко уткнув лицо в подушку и обхватив ее обеими руками. Ей разрывало грудь. Всё молодое тело ее вздрагивало, как в судорогах. Спершиеся в груди рыдания теснили, рвали ее и вдруг воплями, криками вырывались наружу. […] Она кусала подушку, прокусила руку свою в кровь (я видел это потом) или, вцепившись пальцами в свои распутавшиеся косы, так и замирала в усилии, сдерживая дыхание и стискивая зубы. Я было начал что-то говорить ей, просить ее успокоиться, но почувствовал, что не смею, и вдруг сам, весь в каком-то ознобе, почти в ужасе, бросился ощупью, кое-как наскоро сбираться в дорогу. (*SS* 4:529)

[xxviii] Уж не кажется ли вам, господа, что я теперь в чем-то перед вами раскаиваюсь, что я в чем-то у вас прощенья прошу?.. Я уверен, что вам это кажется... (*SS* 4:452)

[xxix] Наверно, вы думаете, господа, что я вас смешить хочу? Ошиблись и в этом. Я вовсе не такой развеселый человек, как вам кажется или как вам, может быть, кажется; впрочем, если вы, раздраженные всей этой болтовней (а я уже чувствую, что вы раздражены), вздумаете спросить меня: кто ж я таков именно? — то я вам отвечу: я один коллежский асессор. (*SS* 4:454)

[xxx] Но успокойтесь, господа, я не получал пощечин, хотя мне совершенно всё равно, как бы вы об этом ни думали. Я, может быть, еще сам-то жалею, что в мою жизнь мало роздал пощечин. Но довольно, ни слова больше об этой чрезвычайно для вас интересной теме. (*SS* 4:459)

[xxxi] Ведь вы, господа, сколько мне известно, весь ваш реестр человеческих выгод взяли средним числом из статистических цифр и из научно-экономических формул. Ведь ваши выгоды — это благоденствие, богатство, свобода, покой, ну и так далее, и так далее; так что человек, который бы, например, явно и зазнамо пошел против всего этого реестра, был бы, по-вашему, ну да и, конечно, по-моему, обскурант или совсем сумасшедший, так ли? Но ведь вот что удивительно: отчего это так происходит, что все эти статистики, мудрецы и любители рода человеческого, при исчислении человеческих выгод, постоянно одну выгоду пропускают? (*SS* 4:466).

[xxxii] — Ха-ха-ха! да ведь хотенья-то, в сущности, если хотите, и нет! — прерываете вы с хохотом.— Наука даже о сю пору до того успела разанатомировать человека, что уж и теперь нам известно, что хотенье и так называемая свободная воля есть не что иное, как... (*SS* 4:470).

[xxxiii] Но вот что еще: для чего, зачем собственно я хочу писать? Если не для публики, так ведь можно бы и так, мысленно всё припомнить, не переводя на бумагу?

Так-с; но на бумаге оно выйдет как-то торжественнее. В этом есть что-то внушающее, суда больше над собой будет, слогу прибавится. Кроме того: может быть, я от записывания действительно получу облегчение. Вот нынче, например, меня особенно давит одно давнишнее воспоминание. Припомнилось оно мне ясно еще на днях и с тех пор осталось со мною, как досадный музыкальный мотив, который не хочет отвязаться. А между тем надобно от него отвязаться. Таких воспоминаний у меня сотни; но по временам из сотни выдается одно какое-нибудь и давит. Я почему-то верю, что если я его запишу, то оно и отвяжется. Отчего ж не испробовать?

Наконец: мне скучно, а я постоянно ничего не делаю. Записыванье же действительно как будто работа. Говорят, от работы человек добрым и честным делается. Ну вот шанс по крайней мере. (*SS* 4:481)

[xxxiv] “Я же пишу для одного себя и раз навсегда объявляю, что если я и пишу как бы обращаясь к читателям, то единственно только для показу, потому что так мне легче писать. Тут форма, одна пустая форма, читателей же у меня никогда не будет” (*SS* 4:480-81).

[xxxv] По крайней мере мне было стыдно, всё время как я писал эту повесть: стало быть, это уже не литература, а исправительное наказание. (*SS* 4:549)

Chapter 4.

Self and Other:

The Idiot and *The Wings of the Dove*

In *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove*, Dostoevsky and James test the possibility of ideal self-other relationships that accommodate individual will and sense of selfhood with the demands of social life and the needs of others. Unlike previous works discussed in this study, these novels share not only thematic, but also plot and character parallels that illuminate the artistic and intellectual kinship between the two writers. The protagonists of *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove*, Prince Myshkin and Milly Theale, are generally strangers to life who descend to the arena of busy social life—Petersburg and London—from the mountains of Switzerland, a place of innocence and Romantic isolation. In both novels, the values of the "real world," where money, appearances and social conventions drive the actions of most characters, are played against the idealistic values of the incredibly uncorrupted inner worlds of the saintly protagonists who, suffering from debilitating illnesses, long to take risks to see and live the life with which they were thus far acquainted largely through books.

"To live means to make a work of art of oneself,"[i] Dostoevsky writes, and the characters of *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove* exemplify this principle by representing themselves and those around them in literary terms, shuffling their roles as writers of their own stories and as readers of those of others'. We have already seen that characters in Dostoevsky and James refer to various forms of literary activity: they "read" and "interpret" each other, often relying directly or indirectly on types, characters, and stories from existing literature. The Dreamer of *White Nights* expresses his failure to live by acknowledging that he has no story, and John Marcher's failure is foreshadowed when he fails to recall the beginning of his story with May. The

Underground man and Winterbourne try to superimpose existing literary modes on reality. But nowhere perhaps do literature and literary activity play such a central role as they do in *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove*, where narrating and plotting become the very basis of interaction between characters. Life in these novels is presented as a contention of plots, each representing an effort on the part of individual characters to assert their story about themselves and the world and to convince or compel others to play the required part in the realization of their vision. Not only the protagonists, but all major characters in these novels are striving to create a story for themselves, to control the plot of their lives and their role within the stories of others. "While the idea that telling stories about oneself and the world around one is a basic human activity may now be a commonplace," Sarah Young appositely points out, "the notion that this impulse to story-telling is in fact of necessity a collaborative activity" which both novels advance is "highly unusual. It suggests that the stories one tells about oneself and the world are ultimately meaningless if they remain in isolation and are not confirmed by the other and, equally, that they risk failure if they are incompatible with the stories told by those around one" (Young 17).[37]

Like other characters in these novels, Dostoevsky's prince and James's heiress long for self-actualization, but unlike others, they do not have a preconceived plot to enact, nor do they have a clearly identifiable role or place among people. They are given no living family relations in the novel: both are unmarried, childless orphans, without past (we know very little about their life prior to their arrival) or future (Milly's life-threatening illness and Myshkin's unstable mental health make any long-term plans impossible). Their lack of human ties, of a meaningful relation to others, together with their heightened awareness of death make them all the more eager to endow their life with meaning and value, and they seek the society of people in the hope

[37] Sarah J. Young, *Dostoevsky's "The Idiot" and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative: Reading, Narrating, Scripting* (London: Anthem, 2004).

of writing *their* stories. There is a sense of urgency to their self-scripting endeavors, which consist of discovering their potentials and consummating them through complementary plots and their roles within them. Consequently, they need other people in their lives who, like the Jamesian "centers" or "lamps," can reveal the various aspects of their relation to the world and on whom they depend for engaging some of the possibilities thus revealed, thereby affirming their being in the world. [38] In the course of Myshkin's and Milly's adventures, Dostoevsky and James test the alternative mode of creating a story—in both literature and life. The unmistakable connection between the saintly protagonists and the figure of the Christ suggests that the faith in human goodness and especially human freedom is about to be tested in these novels. But as this saintly pair moves in the dark maze of human relationships, they are guided not by moral principles or religious beliefs, but by their moral imagination—their capacity to see and feel others as free, self-willing subjects. As Dostoevsky's prince and James's heiress struggle to balance their unwavering respect for individual freedom of the will in others with their own need for self-actualization, Dostoevsky and James portray a vivid picture of the risks and rewards of freedom and self-sacrifice. At the same time, they reveal their own creative predicament. If free will is the defining trait of human nature, then creating a character true to reality demands that the author sacrifice some of his authorial power to allow characters, and not his own personality, vision, and intentions to dictate the plot and structure of the novel. As a

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[38] As Bakhtin says about Dostoevsky's characters, "A single person, remaining alone with himself, cannot make ends meet even in the deepest and most intimate spheres of his own spiritual life, he cannot manage without another consciousness. One person can never find complete fullness in himself alone" (*Problems* 177). "The orientation of one person to another person's discourse and consciousness" is the basic theme not only of Dostoevsky's works, as Bakhtin has noted, but also of James's, as shown in previous chapters. What Bakhtin claims about Dostoevsky's hero is equally true of Jamesian heroes and, especially, heroines: "The hero's attitude toward himself is inseparably bound up with his attitude toward another, and with the attitude of another toward him. His consciousness of self is constantly perceived against the background of the other's consciousness of him —'I for myself' against the background of 'I for another.' Thus the hero's words about himself are structured under the continuous influence of someone else's words about him" (*Problems* 207).

result, both novels lack a certain wholeness and clarity of vision, as evidenced by the variety of contradictory interpretations they elicit. Like life itself, they are filled with blanks and ambiguities that readers must confront on their own, growing aware of how we know and interpret the world around us, the persons who inhabit it, and even our own inner selves.[39] The resulting interaction between the reader and the text duplicates the interaction among characters in *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove*. In *The Act of Reading*, Iser points out the fundamental similarity between reader-text and self-other relationship, because both processes are governed by the element of unpredictability or contingency, which, as a constituent of interaction, arises from "man's invisibility to man:"

> It is this invisibility that forms the basis of interpersonal relations—a basis of what Laing calls a 'no-thing.' […] In all our interpersonal relationships we build upon this 'no-thing,' for we react as if we knew how our partners experienced us; we continually form views of their views and then act as if our views of their views were realities. Contact, therefore, depends upon our continually filling in a central gap in our experience. (165)

4.1 *The Idiot*

The theme of "man's invisibility to man" is introduced in the very opening lines of *The Idiot*[40], which immediately plunge the reader into the world were vision is obscured and the individual is lost in the crowd:

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[39] In many ways, both Dostoevsky and James anticipate Iser's view of reading as a "communication" between the reader and the text that arises from the same conditions that give rise to interpersonal communication. "Reading is an activity that is guided by the text; this must be processed by the reader, who is then, in turn, affected by what he has processed." See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) 163-167.

[40] The following English edition is used here: Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 2003).

> Towards the end of November, during a warm spell, at around nine o'clock in the morning, a train of the Petersburg–Warsaw line was approaching Petersburg at full steam. It was so damp and foggy that dawn could barely break; ten paces to right or left of the line it was hard to make out anything at all through the carriage windows. Among the passengers there were some who were returning from abroad; but the third-class compartments were more crowded, and they were all petty business folk from not far away. Everyone was tired, as usual, everyone's eyes had grown heavy overnight, everyone was chilled, everyone's face was pale yellow, matching the color of the fog. (5)[ii]

A warm spell unusual for November weather conveys a sense of disorder, a departure from the natural course of things, while the yellow fog in which the faces of tired passengers disappear evokes the atmosphere of depersonalization, emphasized by the repeated use of "everyone" in the passage. At the same time, the opening captures a moment of transition, a threshold to something obscure and invisible: the train *approaching* the station, the station itself as a place of transition, as well as the month (November, a transition between autumn and winter) suggest the liminality that characterizes all interpersonal relationships. As Leslie A. Johnson aptly notes, "the entire novel may be viewed as an exploration of a primordial event: face-to-face encounter" (868), and the second paragraph of the opening chapter presents the first face-to face encounter between the two protagonists not so much as an event that takes place in the present, but as threshold to a remarkable relationship:

> In one of the third-class carriages, at dawn, two passengers found themselves facing each other just by the window—both young men, both traveling light, both unfashionably dressed, both with rather remarkable physiognomies, and both,

> finally, willing to get into conversation with each other. If they had known what was so remarkable about the one and the other at that moment, they would certainly have marveled at the chance that had so strangely seated them facing each other in the third-class carriage of the Petersburg–Warsaw train. (5)[iii]

With the last sentence of the passage above emphasizing the absence of knowledge, the face of the other, like the fog in the opening paragraph, stands for the need to discern, to penetrate the veil of invisibility that underlies all interpersonal relations.

Throughout the opening section, Myshkin repeats several times that he came from Switzerland "to get to know people" (27),[iv] "to get acquainted," and as he literally gets to know the cast of characters in Part One, Dostoevsky explores what it means to know the other by contrasting various modes of knowledge and interpretation on which characters rely as they build and maintain their relationships with each other. One of the first characters Myshkins meets on the train is Lebedev, who professes to know everyone and everything, and is, indeed, a walking database of public facts and rumors, which prompts the narrator to dub him Mr. Know-it-all (*vseznaika*):

> These Mr. Know-it-alls are occasionally, even quite frequently, to be met with in a certain social stratum. They know everything, all the restless inquisitiveness of their minds and all their abilities are turned irresistibly in one direction, certainly for lack of more important life interests and perspectives, as a modern thinker would say. The phrase "they know all" implies, however, a rather limited sphere: where so-and-so works, who he is acquainted with, how much he is worth, where he was governor, who he is married to, how much his wife brought him, who his

> cousins are, who his cousins twice removed are, etc., etc., all in the same vein. (8)[v]

Lebedev's knowledge is undermined not only by the ironical tone of the narrator, but also by the irony of his response to Myshkin's introduction of himself: "Prince Myshkin? Lev Nikolaevich? Don't know it, sir. Never even so much as heard it, sir […] I don't mean the name, the name's historical, it can and should be found in Karamzin's *History*, I mean the person, sir, there's no Prince Myshkins to be met with anywhere, and even the rumors have died out" (9).[vi] While the person (Dostoevsky uses the word "*litso*" here, which can mean both "face" and "person" in Russian) is facing Lebedev, Lebedev rejects the opportunity to find out more about him, to really "know" prince Myshkin personally, in favor of his own collection of rumors. Lebedev's disregard for the individual is also signaled by referring to people by their last name in plural (Epanchins, Myshkins, Rogozhins) indicating his interest in general knowledge and social status as opposed to the individual per se.

In contrast, Myshkin emphasizes his lack of adequate knowledge: "I can't argue, because I don't know everything" (7),[vii] "They found it impossible to educate me systematically because of my illness" (9).[viii] Without systematic learning—and without the knowledge of the system, or society, he is about to enter, Myshkin on his quest "to get to know people" will have to move through the fog relying on insight and impressions rather than sight. And indeed, he uses the word "know" only in the negative. Instead of "know" (*znayu*), he repeatedly uses the more subjective "it seems to me" (*mne kazhetsya*).

Myshkin's knowledge consists of impressions, not facts, but his impressions reveal almost telepathic abilities as he "guesses" with paranormal accuracy the hidden feelings and motives, and even actions of those he encounters for the first time. He is what James would call

“the man of imagination” for whom “the minimum of valid suggestion serve[s] . . . better than the maximum” (*LC* 2:1175). “When the mind is imaginative,” James writes in “The Art of Fiction,” “it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations,” and this is precisely what Myshkin does in the novel. In the foggy maze of interpersonal relationships, Myshkin possesses a set of indispensable gifts: “the power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it” (James, *LC* 1:53). These gifts, together with his calligraphic and storytelling talents, link Myshkin to a literary artist, and the “examination” to which Mrs. Epanchin and her daughters subject him during his first visit reveals the transformative power of imagination and storytelling—the power that will be tested for its potence throughout the subsequent parts of the novel.

During his introduction, Mrs. Epanchin requests Myshkin to tell them something to see “if he knows how to speak.” Myshkin responds with his first impression of Switzerland, recalling how foreign his new surroundings seemed to him, and how tormented he was by this foreignness, until one day he was awakened by the braying of an ass in the town market. “Since then,” Myshkin tells, “I’ve had a terrible fondness for asses. It’s even some sort of sympathy in me. I began inquiring about them, because I’d never seen them before, and I became convinced at once that they’re most useful animals, hardworking, strong, patient, cheap, enduring; and because of that ass I suddenly took a liking to the whole of Switzerland, so that my former sadness went away entirely” (56).[ix] The sisters openly laugh at Myshkin’s story, and Mrs. Epanchin suggests to “skip the ass” and “go on to some other subject,” but the episode is hardly irrelevant: Alexandra’s observation that Myshkin’s narrative conveys “very interestingly […]

how he came to like everything because of one external push" (57)[x] echoes Dostoevsky's insistence on the transformative power of impressions.

Myshkin begins this narrative—twice, because of the interruptions—by stating that "the impression was a strong one," and each of the subsequent narratives he relates in the course of his "examination" illustrates the power of impressions to yield profound understanding of life. One of these narratives, which Myshkin tells in response to Adelaida's asking for help in finding a subject for her new painting, transforms the examination into a lesson on "how to look," a skill which Myshkin says he cannot teach, but which he nevertheless demonstrates as he verbally sketches an imaginary portrait of "the face of a condemned man a minute before the stroke of the guillotine, when he's still standing on the scaffold, before he lies down on the plank" (63).[xi] Adelaida cannot understand "what sort of a picture would it make" to portray "just the face" (63), and asks the prince to tell how he imagines it himself. Myshkin recalls an impression such a face once made on him, as he caught a glance of the condemned man stepping onto the scaffold: "He glanced in my direction; I looked at his face and understood everything..." (64).[xii] The prince finds it difficult to express what exactly he had understood, but believes that a painting could express that "everything," adding that such a painting would be very "useful" (*poleznaya*) (64). As he proceeds to describe the imaginary painting, he foregrounds the impression it would evoke more than the physical features of the face, moving from the selected external details to the drama unfolding within the condemned man's soul.[41] In Myshkin's imagination, the portrait—the face of the other—becomes a story as he imagines the man's life in prison, his expectation

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[41] See, e.g., Tatiana Goerner, "The Theme of Ar and Aesthetics in Dostoevsky's The Idiot," *Ulbandus Review* 2.2 (1982): 79-95. Goerner observes that "the painting is a direct rendition of Myshkin's imaginative, intuitive, emotional perception of the scene, which captures not only the surface reality but the inner truth of the picture, everything the man had to go through on his way to the execution" (86). His "inner vision […] sheds its particular light on the scene and transforms the gross reality into a vivid, expressive image, revealing the higher truth beneath the surface" (87).

that the execution would be delayed, his surprise and preparations, his thoughts on the way to the place of execution, his physical feelings as he steps onto the scaffold: “Probably his legs went weak and numb, and he felt nauseous— as if something was pressing his throat, and it was like a tickling” (65).[xiii] He ends with a “summary” of the suggested painting:

> Portray the scaffold so that only the last step is seen closely and clearly; the criminal has stepped onto it: his head, his face white as paper, the priest offering him the cross, he greedily puts it to his blue lips and stares, and— knows *everything*. The cross and the head— there’s the picture. The priest’s face, the executioner, his two assistants, and a few heads and eyes below— all that could be painted as background, in a mist, as accessory... (65-66).[xiv]

While the notion that a work of art should reveal some hidden truth may not be original, what is unique about Myshkin’s rendering of the portrait is that it attempts to fuse two distinct perspectives: the scene as it appears to the condemned man himself, hence the focus on the last step of the scaffold and the cross, and the perspective of the external artist-observer. If Myshkin does indeed give a lesson on how to look, his lesson consists in de-objectification of the other, in treating the object of his observation—which means anyone with whom he comes in contact—as a subjectivity, as an individual whose point of view, whose perception and self-perception is unique and does not necessarily coincide with the point of view of the observer.

What Myshkin demonstrates here and, as we shall see, in several other key instances in the novel, is a kind of aesthetic reaction that Bakhtin associates with the author in “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity.”[42] Significantly, Bakhtin uses author-hero relationship as a model for ideal interpersonal relations. The author in Bakhtin’s essay is not “author as person” but a

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[42] Michail M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. by Vadim Liapunov (Austin, TX: U of Texas, 1995) 4-256.

creative consciousness, and the "hero" is any image of a human being seen as a whole. "In life," Bakhtin writes, "we are interested not in the whole of a human being, but only in those particular actions on his part with which we are compelled to deal in living our life and which are, in one way or another, of special interest to us. And […] least of all are we ourselves able or competent to perceive in ourselves the given whole of our own personality" (*Art* 5). The wholeness, Bakhtin explains, cannot be experienced by ourselves because the essence of a living self is indeterminacy: "I have to be, for myself, someone who is axiologically yet-to be" (13). Hence the sense of wholeness can only be "bestowed […] as a gift—from another active consciousness: from the creative consciousness of an author," which Bakhtin defines as "the consciousness of a consciousness" (12). In contrast to objectification that usually characterizes interpersonal relationships, an aesthetic consummation, as Bakhtin defines it, is "active and productive" (24), because it is preceded by "living into" the object of contemplation, that is, by treating it as a subject and temporarily experiencing its life from within: "I must empathize or project myself [*vchuvstvovat'sya*] into this other human being, see his world axiologically from within him as *he* sees this world; I must put myself in his place and then, after returning to my own place, 'fill in' his horizon through that excess of seeing which opens out from this, my own, place outside him. I must enframe him, create a consummating environment for him out of this excess of my own seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling" (25). In Bakhtin's essay, and in Dostoevsky's novel, the "outward expressedness"—particularly the face[43]—serves as a gateway into the soul of another. It is by reading the face, what it expresses and what it conceals, that Myshkin is able to "live-into" those around him and give such accurate accounts of their thoughts and feelings.

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[43] Leslie A. Johnson claims that "the prince's susceptibility to the face is the very mark of his much-disputed goodness," for Dostoyevsky's "notion of the good in this, his most ethical, novel is a way of seeing the face of the other" (Johnson 867).

Myshkin's ability to assume the point of view of the other is his most important and distinguishing characteristic stressed repeatedly in the opening sections of the novel, as, for example, during his conversation with a lackey at the general Epanchin's house. When the servant, unable to properly "categorize" Myshkin as a visitor, inquires whether the prince really comes from abroad, the narrator interjects, "perhaps he had wanted to ask: 'But are you really Prince Myshkin?'" Immediately, Myshkin echoes the narrator's guess: "It seems to me you wanted to ask if I'm really Prince Myshkin, but did not ask out of politeness" (19).[xv] During the meeting with general Epanchin soon after Myshkin reveals that, despite his admitted lack of "practical knowledge either of local customs or of how people normally live here," he is not entirely socially naïve. He "anticipated" that the general would attribute some "special purpose" to his visit, exclaiming, to the amazement of his host: "There, by God, General, […] things went with us just now as I thought they were certain to go. Well, maybe that's how it should be..." (26)[xvi]. His anticipation of the general's reaction is based neither on personal experience nor on indirect knowledge, since he lacks both. Instead, it appears to be a result of his ability to assume the point of view of others, to see with their eyes and think with their thoughts. What is crucial, however, is that he is able to simultaneously preserve his own distinctive vision of things, which in turn affects his interlocutors. His remark at the end of their conversation illustrates his unique position vis-à-vis the other: "And, finally, it seems to me that we're such different people, by the look of it...in many ways, that we perhaps cannot have many points in common, only, you know, I personally don't believe in that last notion, because it often only seems that there are no points in common, when there really are a lot . . . it comes from people's laziness, that they sort themselves out by looks and can't find anything..." (27).[xvii] Myshkin begins his remark by acknowledging Epanchin's position, then adds what Bakhtin calls his "excess of seeing," just as

his imaginary painting of the face of the condemned man combines the convict's perception with that of the observer.

Myshkin's ability to read the face of the other is stressed repeatedly throughout the opening pages.[44] We have seen that Myshkin rarely uses the word "know," preferring a more subjective construction "it seems to me." However, when, following one of Aglaya's tart remarks, Mrs. Epanchin asks the prince to excuse her daughters, saying, "they already love you. I know their faces," Myshkin, "giving special emphasis to his words," replies "I know their faces, too" (66),[xviii] and he stands by his words when he offers his astonishingly accurate portraits of everyone with the exception of Aglaya:

> You asked me about your faces and what I observe in them. I'll tell you with great pleasure. Yours, Adelaida Ivanovna, is a happy face, the most sympathetic of the three. Not only are you very pretty, but one looks at you and says: 'She has the face of a kind sister.' You approach things simply and cheerfully, but you are also quick to know hearts. That's what I think about your face. Yours, Alexandra Ivanovna, is also a beautiful and very sweet face, but you may have some secret sorrow; your soul is no doubt very kind, but you are not joyful. There is some special nuance in your face that reminds me of Holbein's Madonna in Dresden. Well, that's for your face— am I a good guesser? You yourselves consider me one. (76)[xix]

As for Aglaya's face, the prince refrains from interpreting it because of its beauty, remarking that "Beauty is difficult to judge; I'm not prepared yet. Beauty is a riddle" (77).[xx] Myshkin does, however, attempt to solve such a riddle in the face of Nastasya Filippovna whose portrait he gets

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[44] For a detailed analysis of the "face" in *The Idiot*, see Leslie A. Johnson's "The Face of the Other in Idiot." *Slavic Review* 50.4 (1991): 867-78.

to examine twice during his first visit to Epanchins. A single glance at the “astonishing face” on the portrait results in his profound “reading” and understanding of Nastasya Filippovna’s story and character: “I’m convinced that her fate is no ordinary one. It’s a gay face, but she has suffered terribly, eh? It speaks in her eyes, these two little bones, the two points under her eyes where the cheeks begin. It’s a proud face, terribly proud, and I don’t know whether she’s kind or not. Ah, if only she were kind! Everything would be saved!” (36).[xxi] Later, he takes another look at the portrait when he is asked to bring it to the Epanchin ladies:

> It was as if he wanted to unriddle something hidden in that face which had also struck him earlier. The earlier impression had scarcely left him, and now it was as if he were hastening to verify something. That face, extraordinary for its beauty and for something else, now struck him still more. There seemed to be a boundless pride and contempt, almost hatred, in that face, and at the same time something trusting, something surprisingly simplehearted; the contrast even seemed to awaken some sort of compassion as one looked at those features. That dazzling beauty was even unbearable, the beauty of the pale face, the nearly hollow cheeks and burning eyes— strange beauty! The prince gazed for a moment, then suddenly roused himself, looked around, hastily put the portrait to his lips and kissed it. (79-80)[xxii]

As in previous examples, Myshkin’s reaction is based on the two steps that characterize aesthetic consummation, or the ideal response to another: he treats the “outward expressedness” of Nastasya Filippovna’s face as a threshold to her inner world of conflicting feelings, seeing at once her eyes and *with* her eyes. He simultaneously acknowledges the various conflicting sides of her character, and, with his kiss and compassion, affirms her potential for kindness.

Nastasya Filippovna's portrait presents a "riddle" to all characters in the first section of the novel, but whereas for Myshkin the "riddle" is the person herself, others interpret the meaning of the portrait in relation to their lives: Ganya suspects it is a "hint" that he came to Nastasya Filippovna without a present; Mrs. Epanchina fears the portrait is a gift from Nastasya Filippovna to her husband; Aglaya's reaction is that of a rival beauty; Ganya's mother is convinced that the portrait announces Nastasya Filippovna's consent to marry her son . In other words, each character projects onto the portrait his or her own fears or desires. Similarly, the stories that introduce Nastasya Filippovna prior to her appearance in the novel are either narrated by other characters, as in the case of Rogozhin's story, or reported from the point of view of another person, such as the narrator's account of Nastasya Filippovna's childhood presented from Totsky's point of view. These various reactions to the portrait foreground the difference between Myshkin's mode of reading, which is creative and "consummating," and that of other characters, whose reading is objectifying and finalizing, because it reduces her to an object of their desire, fear, hatred. Instead of seeing a self-willed individual, these characters only see the parts that immediately concern them.

Introducing such an important figure through the attitudes of other characters, Dostoevsky underscores one of the novel's central themes: the seminal role of the other in the formation of inner identity and its external manifestation. Bakhtin observes that in Dostoevsky, "the hero's words about himself are structured under the continuous influence of someone else's words about him" (*Problems* 207). Nastasya Filippovna can be seen as an extreme example of this tendency as she self-consciously enacts the roles projected onto her by others, but such "orientation of one person to another person's discourse and consciousness" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 207) is a running theme throughout the novel. This theme, like other key themes in the novel, is

initially expressed through one of the stories Myshkin recounts to the Epanchins during his first visit—the story of the peasant Marie.

When Marie, a poor village girl seduced and abandoned by a traveling salesman, returns to her village, all the villagers, including her own mother, callously cast her out. “There was no compassion for her in anyone!” Myshkin remarks passionately, “How cruel they are about that! What harsh notions they have of it all!” Myshkin proceeds to describe how the entire village gathered at the cottage of Marie’s old mother predaciously watching the humiliation of the girl: “Everybody around looked on her as if she were vermin; the old men denounced and abused her, the young ones even laughed, the women abused her, denounced her, looked at her with contempt, as at some sort of spider” (68-69).[xxiii] Later, when Myshkin became acquainted with her, he “noticed that she approved of it herself and considered herself the lowest sort of creature” (69),[xxiv] and his compassionate response consisted not so much in giving her the eight francs he received from selling his only valuable possession—a small diamond pin—but in trying “to assure her that she shouldn’t regard herself as so low before everyone,”[xxv] that he “never regarded her as guilty but only as unfortunate” (70).[xxvi] Unlike the village preacher, who “finalized” Marie by labeling her once and for all as a fallen woman, Myshkin strives to change Marie’s self-image by offering an alternative interpretation of her “fall,” treating it as a misfortune and not as a sin. When Myshkin observes the village children’s cruelty and abuse of Marie, his response is to elicit their compassion by talking to them about Marie’s misfortune and suffering and “explaining everything to them without hiding” (70-71).[xxvii] Through his stories, Myshkin alters the attitude of the children, who begin to pity and “love” Marie. While her material and social situation in the village remains the same, Myshkin tells that “because of them […] she died almost happy. Because of them she forgot her black woe, as if she had received

forgiveness from them, because till the very end she considered herself a great criminal" (73).[xxviii] The forgiveness is Marie's own, and her story illustrates the power of another's vision and expectations to shape not only one's relationships with others, but also one's relationship with oneself.

The extent to which one's self-perception and actions are shaped by expectations of others becomes apparent during Nastasya Filippovna's first appearance in the novel. By this time, she has already been introduced through other characters' visions of her, and the moment she enters Ganya's apartment, we see her self-consciously confirming the negative images of her presented earlier. Ganya was "convinced" that Nastasya Filippovna "was only seeking a chance to shower him and his household with mockery" (107),[xxix] and accordingly she encourages general Ivolgin's foolish lies only to expose them and thus embarrass the family. Rogozhin is determined to "buy" her from Ganya, and she shamelessly bargains with him: when he offers her eighteen thousand, Nastasya Filippovna laughs and "with brazen familiarity" taunts him, causing him to raise his "bid" first to forty thousand, then to a hundred (114-115).

While Nastasya Filippovna's behavior confirms the mostly unflattering images of her presented earlier by other characters, Myshkin's capacity for seeing imaginatively—for "guessing the unseen from the seen"—allows him to see through the false identities she assumes during her odious performance:

> "And you're not even ashamed! You can't be the way you pretended to be just now. It's not possible!" the prince suddenly cried out in deeply felt reproach. Nastasya Filippovna was surprised, smiled, but, as if keeping something behind her smile, slightly embarrassed, she glanced at Ganya and left the drawing room.

> But before she reached the front hall, she suddenly came back, quickly went up to Nina Alexandrovna, took her hand, and brought it to her lips.
>
> "He guessed right, in fact, I'm not like that," she whispered quickly, fervently, suddenly flushing and becoming all red, and, turning around, she went out so quickly this time that no one managed to figure out why she had come back. They only saw that she whispered something to Nina Alexandrovna and seemed to kiss her hand. But Varya saw and heard everything, and in astonishment followed her with her eyes. (117)[xxx]

Varya is immediately intrigued by the marked effect of Myshkin's words on Nastasya Filippovna: "You told her she was ashamed, and she suddenly changed completely. You have influence over her, Prince" (119).[xxxi] Varya's observation is only partially accurate, however: the prince does not change Nastasya Filippovna, but publicly affirms her potential for kindness which he intuits through his extraordinary psychological insight, and his recognition prompts her to actualize this potentiality just as before Rogozhin's and Ganya's attitudes triggered other, less noble impulses. "You notice things that other people never notice" (120),[xxxii] Ganya tells Myshkin soon after the incident, and his conversation with the prince shows how what one notices in the other can influence what that other becomes: "I'm speaking from the heart maybe for the first time in a whole two years," Ganya confesses, "There are very few honest people here. […] Scoundrels love honest people— did you know that? And I'm… However, in what way am I a scoundrel? Tell me in all conscience. Why do they repeat after her that I'm a scoundrel? And, you know, I also repeat after them and her that I'm a scoundrel! That's the most scoundrelly thing of all!" Hearing this, Myshkin replies, "I'll never consider you a scoundrel now," thus affirming Ganya's potential for an alternative identity (122).[xxxiii]

This sort of influence on characters was conceived by Dostoevsky as Myshkin's primary "field of action," according to his notebooks: "He restores N.F. and exerts influence over Rogozhin. He moves Aglaya to humanity, and drives the general's wife to distraction in her attachment to the prince and her adoration of him. A more powerful impact on Rogozhin and his reformation. [...] On Ganya—to agony" (204).[xxxiv]. Although none of Dostoevsky's plans for the novel can be considered definitive, these ideas certainly correspond to Myshkin's "field of action" in Part One, where his participation in the plot is limited to the almost uncanny influence he exerts on other characters' self-image. What is crucial is that this influence takes place in the middle of a battle for control: as Sarah Young points out, two fundamental impulses govern the characters in *The Idiot*: in relation to one's own self, the impulse is to resist any image imposed by others; in relation to others, the impulse is to control the image of others—including their self-image. "Therefore control involves the tendency to finalize the other (in Bakhtinian terms, to utter what claims to be the final word about the other) and to objectify them (to deny the other's sense of their own subjectivity) whilst simultaneously evading the others attempts to finalize and objectify oneself" (Young 12). Because the strategies characters use to control the images of themselves and others relate to literary activities of reading and writing, Young uses the term scripting to describe actions and interactions among characters in the novel, which has the following four main goals:

> 1. to elude the definitions others try to impose on one;
>
> 2. to establish a distinct social identity for oneself;
>
> 3. to break down other peoples' scripts for themselves where they are in conflict with (1) and (2);
>
> 4. to make others act according to one's own script(s). (Young 17)

Throughout most of Part One, Myshkin, despite his involuntary influence on the course of events, remains outside of the scripting activity that characterizes the Petersburg social life. He does not have an established or projected social identity to assert or resist, nor does he possess sufficient knowledge of those he meets to undermine their scripts. What is more, he is conscious that he has no right to control others, to impinge on their freedom of self-definition, even if it means letting them make a mistake. Even when he resolves to go to Nastasya Filippovna's nameday party without an invitation, he does so without a clearly defined plan:

> […] the question: "What would he do there and why was he going?"—to this question he was decidedly unable to find a reassuring answer. Even if it should be possible in some way to seize an opportunity and tell Nastasya Filippovna: "Don't marry this man and don't ruin yourself, he doesn't love you, he loves your money, he told me so himself, and Aglaya Epanchin told me, and I've come to tell you?" it would hardly come out right in all respects. (134-135)[xxxv]

In every respect, Nastasya Filippovna's nameday party at the end of Part One is a turning point, the real beginning of the major conflicts enacted through the rest of the novel. Its purpose for everyone involved was to bring to a desirable conclusion the scripts of the most powerful members of this society—Totsky and general Epanchin. Nastasya Filippovna's marriage to Ganya, which everyone expected to be settled, would relieve Totsky of his responsibility for his past with her, and would leave him free to marry Alexandra Epanchin, to her father's satisfaction. The general himself would have the freedom to court Nastasya with the implied consent of Ganya as her husband. But Myshkin's unexpected arrival unsettles everything. Coming uninvited, he shows the precedence of genuine human impulse towards another over the artificial laws of society. By this time, most of those gathered there are familiar with his general

outlook, and his presence, his consciousness illuminates aspects of the situation that have hitherto been unnoticed or dismissed. Everyone present has been playing and rehearsing his or her part for such a long time that they have come to be defined by their roles. Myshkin, with his ability to see “man in man,” resembles a child who has seen the actors in their true identity behind the curtains and refuses to accept their stage performance. By refusing to accept what he believes are false identities—and Nastasya Filippovna’s especially—Myshkin gives those he comes in contact with a chance to reinvent themselves, to rewrite their scripts in a more humane—and more responsible—manner. In this respect, his “saintly scripting” resembles the game proposed by the clownish Ferdyschenko at the party in which the guests are requested to tell stories about the worst acts they have committed. The game offers Totsky the last chance to acknowledge his crime against Nastasya Filippovna, and thus relieve her of her own sense of guilt. In the same manner, Nastasya Filippovna subjects Ganya to the test when she throws a hundred thousand rubles into the fire and tells him the money is his if he takes it with bare hands. But Nastasya Filippovna’s actions are ultimately a means of controlling her own her self-perception, for the only way she can stop feeling base is by persuading herself and others that her “fall” is the result of the baseness of others.

Myshkin, is not blind to the flaws of those around him; nevertheless, he appeals to their positive, less self-centered and more humane side, and his acknowledgement of this side gives others freedom to act it out. The key to Myshkin’s influence, however, lies in his lack of active involvement in the lives of others, in his remaining outside of plot, which eliminates the threat of control or “finalizing” that all the characters desperately try to resist. Significantly, even the main event of the party—Myshkin’s proposal to Nastasya Filippovna —is not a result of his deliberate intention: Myshkin does not so much propose marriage as he confirms Ferdyschenko’s words

that the prince would marry her. Nevertheless, it is the party that inaugurates Myshkin's entrance into the plot and marks the beginning of his conflict, his direct engagement with other people, and the new life he has come to seek.

While Myshkin's marriage proposal to Nastasya Filippovna comes as a surprise, particularly in view of his earlier claim that his condition makes it impossible for him to marry, it is soon overshadowed by the announcement of his inheritance of a significant fortune. Up until this point, Myshkin repeatedly eluded classification: his manners, his dress, his name and title confused rather than pointed to a recognizable social rank. As a wealthy heir, he immediately acquires in the eyes of others a definite, recognizable social identity which changes his relations with them. This "recognition" and "acceptance" is signaled when everyone in the room comes to embrace him, whereas in previous scenes Myshkin's presence was often ignored or unnoticed. Thus Myshkin enters the stage which he had previously observed from the distance, but as he finally joins the cast, he forfeits the "surplus of vision" which he enjoyed from his position as an outsider, and the creative, "consummating" power that defined his presence in Part One begins to dissipate. The change in his relation to others is signaled immediately when Nastasya Filippovna, comprehending the news about the inheritance and Myshkin's proposal, suddenly turns to him "with a menacing scowl" suspecting a joke or a mockery on his part (166).[xxxvi] In the society Myshkin thus enters, money is a source of power, a means of control, and as soon as the prince receives a share of this power, other characters begin to treat his innocence and selflessness with suspicion, and his vision of others, previously creative and consummating, is now perceived by them as potentially finalizing, as an attempt to assert his own script, no matter how "noble" it might be.

Myshkin's shift from an "authoring" bystander to participating character is reflected on the level of narration.[45] The generally reliable narrator of Part One remains outside of action and, being a detached observer who permits himself occasional judgements and comments, particularly on secondary characters, he earns the reader's trust by occasional access to characters' interior lives. He employs an ironic tone when presenting the views characters have of themselves when these views do not correspond with the views others, including the reader, might have of them, or when reporting rumors and public opinions which the reader is not presumed to share. For example, describing Totsky's relationship with Nastasya Filippovna, he gives his account from Totsky's point of view, but the reader cannot miss the irony in the narrator's tone which indicates that he does not share Totsky's bafflement over why Nastasya Filippovna would not accept his "generous" arrangements. Like the Bakhtinian author, the narrator of Part One has access to characters' subjectivity and to the objective view they present to others. Even when the narrator enters the mind of Myshkin and describes his uncertainty or confusion, there is a sense that he, unlike the hero, knows what that "certain thought" is but simply withholds the information, just as in the opening chapter he appears to know that the newly-acquainted Myshkin and Rogozhin are destined to play an important role in each other's lives without specifying the details.

As Robin Feuer Miller notes, the narrator withholds progressively more information in Part Two and increasingly relies on rumors for his account, which creates "a growing sense of the narrator himself as a character in the novel" (123). As a result, it becomes increasingly harder for the reader to rely on the narrator. This change forces the reader to take an active part in

[45] For a detailed and illuminating analysis of various narrative styles employed by Dostoevsky in this novel and their effect on the relationship between the reader in the text, see Robin Feuer Miller's *Dostoevsky and The Idiot: Author, Narrator, and Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981) .

making judgements, filling-in the gaps in the plot and connecting the dots in the story. The readers must discriminate between facts and rumors, and make their own interpretations and assumptions based on the limited bits of information and subjective perception of the world and of the characters. In other words, Dostoevsky uses a generally reliable, if not omniscient, narrator in Part One to introduce the characters, but beginning with Part Two, the narrator leaves the reader on his own. Without the guidance of the narrator, the reader must rely on impressions instead of facts. The information we receive comes increasingly more in a dramatic form—that is, as one would encounter it in life, or as characters themselves experience it in the novel. In this sense, the reader, too, becomes like a character in the novel, while at the same time facing the "authoring" duties abandoned by the narrator—that is, "consummating" the characters and the novel in general in such a way that it appears "whole" and meaningful.

The tension that results from this double role—the reader as character facing the same epistemological and moral dilemmas that the characters do, and the reader as author who must perhaps close the book in order to gain the distance from action and examine it against the background of his own life—mirrors Myshkin's very own tension. The prince we encounter after his return to St. Petersburg no longer tells stories; moreover, now it is his inarticulateness that is frequently emphasized, including in the following passage where he himself acknowledges it:

> There are certain ideas, there are lofty ideas, which I ought not to start talking about, because I'll certainly make everyone laugh; […] My gestures are inappropriate, I have no sense of measure; my words are wrong, they don't correspond to my thoughts, and that is humiliating for the thoughts. And therefore I have no right... then, too, I'm insecure, I...I'm convinced that I cannot be offended in this house, that I am loved more than I'm worth, but I know (I know

> for certain) that after twenty years of illness there must surely be some trace left, so that it's impossible not to laugh at me...sometimes...is that so?" (342)[xxxvii]

Myshkin's speech reveals a split between his developed convictions, which are based on his relations with the family, and his knowledge, which is based on his ability to look at himself through the eyes of another. His interests, his life at this point are too tangled with the lives and interests of others whom he now must regard in relation to himself. When he first arrived, impressions were sufficient, as his only goal was merely to "get acquainted" with people. But impressions are not a sufficient guide to action to which Myshkin's present status compels him, for in order to establish one's relation to others, one must act as if one knows what one is and what others are. Impressions, on the contrary, convey the simultaneous presence of contradictory but equally valid potentialities and therefore inhibit such final judgments of others. Thus, for example, when Myshkin looks at Nastasya Filippovna's portrait in Part One, he senses in her "boundless pride and contempt, almost hatred […] and at the same time something trusting, something surprisingly simplehearted" (79)[xxxviii] and cannot decide whether she is kind or not. But when prompted to action, i.e., proposing marriage to her, Myshkin has to act on his faith that she is, in fact, kind, that she is "perfection." What one *chooses* to believe about another person is critical. When one participates in the human scene, as opposed to merely observing and commenting on it, as the prince had done in Part One, one not only reveals the hidden potentials of others, but introduces new ones and triggers their actualization.

The prince is conscious of this and is frequently afraid of his thoughts, reminding himself that he has no right to judge anyone. This change is first brought out after Myshkin's meeting with Rogozhin at the latter's dark and "formless" house. Immediately after his arrival to the station, Myshkin feels that he is being followed by Rogozhin (although he only sees "the eyes"

in the crowd). In the house, his attention is fixed on the brand-new garden knife on Rogozhin's table. Before Myshkin leaves, Rogozhin asks him to exchange crosses, then leads the prince to his mother for a blessing, saying to her that "he was like a brother to me in Moscow" (222).[xxxix] Nevertheless, as Myshkin wanders the city streets recalling Rogozhin's words, he cannot escape a certain "dark thought," "different, dark, tormenting curiosity" (227).[xl] The impression he took from his conversation with Rogozhin is the opposite of what the facts suggest, for despite the exchange of the crosses, he acutely feels Rogozhin's hatred and suspects that the latter wishes, if not intends, to murder him:

> […] if Rogozhin kills, at least he won't kill in such a disorderly way. There won't be this chaos. A tool made to order from a sketch and six people laid out in complete delirium! Does Rogozhin have a tool made from a sketch... does he have...but...has it been decided that Rogozhin will kill?! The prince gave a sudden start. "Isn't it a crime, isn't it mean on my part to make such a supposition with such cynical frankness?" he cried out, and a flush of shame all at once flooded his face. He was amazed, he stood as if rooted to the road. He remembered all at once the Pavlovsk station earlier, and the Nikolaevsk station earlier, and his direct question to Rogozhin about the *eyes*, and Rogozhin's cross that he was now wearing, and the blessing of his mother, to whom Rogozhin himself had brought him, and that last convulsive embrace, Rogozhin's last renunciation earlier on the stairs— and after all that to catch himself constantly searching for something around him, and that shopwindow, and that object . . . what meanness! And after all that he was now going with a "special goal," with a specific "sudden idea"! Despair and suffering seized his whole soul. The prince immediately wanted to go

> back to his hotel; he even turned around and set off; but a minute later he stopped, pondered, and went back the way he had been going. (228-229)[xli]

Despite Myshkin's acute impression and the numerous facts supporting it, he feels "unpardonably and dishonorably guilty" for allowing himself to think of it as truth. His perturbing suspicion is based not only on such facts as Rogozhin's denial of following him and his dubious reaction to the knife, but also on various stories of murders he has been exposed to during his stay, which force him to acknowledge that "another man's soul is murky, and the Russian soul is murky." Exposed to man's capacity for evil, he nevertheless chooses "to believe passionately in the Russian soul," which entails his denial, for fear of complicity, of the darker sides of those around him. It is based on this denial that he allows Rogozhin to follow him up to the moment of the attack,[46] when, facing Rogozhin's knife, he exclaims, "Parfyon, I don't believe it! ..." (234).[xlii] It remains unclear whether it is the seizure or Myshkin's words that prevent the murder, but after Rogozhin's attack, Myshkin's incipient belief in the Russian soul takes the form of a conviction. It is as if the only way for him to avoid responsibility for someone else's wrongdoing is by disbelieving its possibility entirely. This, however, presents a different problem, for by casting everyone in positive light, by excusing their faults entirely, Myshkin denies them the responsibility for their actions which is the very mark of the freedom they all desperately try to preserve. Thus, for example, in Part Three, Rogozhin reprimands the prince for his clemency:

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[46] Young correctly interprets Myshkin's guilt as "his own complicity in his rival's future crime" (111), but, contrary to Young's reading, his decision to proceed to Nastasya Filippovna's apartment is not meant not prove his suspicion true, thereby provoking Rogozhin, for , but to annihilate it entirely and thus avert any harm his thoughts might have induced.

> You write that you've forgotten everything and only remember your brother Rogozhin that you exchanged crosses with, and not the Rogozhin who raised a knife against you that time. But how should you know my feelings? […] Maybe I never once repented of it afterwards, and you've gone and sent me your brotherly forgiveness. Maybe that evening I was already thinking about something completely different [...]. (364-5)[xliii]

Myshkin's passionate belief in the Russian soul, his conviction that people inflict suffering on themselves and those around them due to their ignorance or, in Nastasya's case, "madness," has a negative effect on his relationships with others. As Joseph Frank points out,

> The contours of reality have here began to cloud and blur for the poor Prince, and he finds it difficult to distinguish between what he ardently longs for and what the true situation (as regards Rogozhin and Nastasya) really is. Under the influence of this confusion, he convinces himself that Rogozhin would be capable of compassion for Nastasya, despite the mountains of humiliation that she has heaped on him as revenge for accepting his attentions. "Compassion would teach even Rogozhin and awaken his mind. Compassion was the chief and perhaps the only law of all human existence" The Myshkin of Part I would certainly have subscribed to this sentiment; but there has been no previous indication that his outlook was a sublime illusion distorting a true vision of reality. (*Miraculous Years* 326).

Although Myshkin's vision is not as distorted as Frank presents it (after all, he is the only one who believes in the innocence of Burdovsky, and his faith ultimately leads the latter to abandon the nihilists and express sincere gratitude to Myshkin), what is unquestionable is that his

conviction that there is a universal law of human existence elicits a feeling of revolt from those whom he treats as subjects to this "law." A vivid example of this is Ippolit's sudden rage at the end of the episode with the nihilists, when immediately after he confesses his longing for love and attention of the people he professed to scorn, and for beautiful Pavlovsk nature which he finds mocking and unjust, he is crushed with shame for his "faintheartedness:"

> Suddenly Ippolit stood up, terribly pale and with a look of dreadful, despairing shame on his distorted face. It was expressed mainly in the glance that he shot hatefully and timorously at the gathering, and in the lost, crooked, and creeping grin on his twitching lips. He lowered his eyes at once and trudged, swaying and still smiling in the same way, towards Burdovsky and Doktorenko, who stood by the terrace door: he was leaving with them.
>
> "Well, that's what I was afraid of !" exclaimed the prince. "It had to be so!" Ippolit quickly turned to him with the most furious spite, and every little line of his face seemed to quiver and speak.
>
> "Ah, you were afraid of that! 'It had to be so,' in your opinion? Know, then, that if I hate anyone here," he screamed, wheezing, shrieking, spraying from his mouth, "and I hate all of you, all of you!—but you, you Jesuitical, treacly little soul, idiot, millionaire-benefactor, I hate you more than anyone or anything in the world! […] You've driven a dying man to shame, you, you, you are to blame for my mean faintheartedness! I'd kill you, if I stayed alive! I don't need your benefactions, I won't accept anything from anybody, do you hear, from anybody! I was delirious, and don't you dare to triumph! ...I curse you all now and forever!" By then he was completely out of breath.

> "Ashamed of his tears!" Lebedev whispered to Lizaveta Prokofyevna. "'It had to be so!' That's the prince for you! Read right through him..." (298-9)[xliv]

Here, Myshkin again demonstrates his keen insight into the other's heart, but he insults Ippolit by reading him as an open book. As Rowan Williams cogently puts it, "To see the truth in someone is not only to penetrate behind appearances to some hidden static reality. It also has to be, if it is not to be destructive, a grasp of the processes and motors of concealment, a listening to the specific language of the person hiding himself. It is perhaps the difference between 'seeing through' someone and understanding him" (51).[47] Myshkin's "It had to be so" implies that Ippolit follows a predictable pattern, that his actions and feelings are predetermined by the "law of compassion" rather than an expression of his free will, and to Ippolit, who is willing to commit suicide in defiance of the law of nature that condemns him to death, this remark is particularly wounding. The same applies to Myshkin's insistence on Nastasya Filippovna's insanity. Lebedev tells Myshkin: "She's afraid of you, Prince, even more than of [Rogozhin], and that's— most wise!" (200),[xlv] and Rogozhin himself tells Myshkin "The surest thing of all is that your pity is maybe still worse than my love!" (213).[xlvi] Myshkin's conviction that Nastasya Filippovna is mad implies that she is not in control over her actions and decisions, whereas she is obsessed with preserving her freedom. When Lebedev describes her to Myshkin, he keeps stressing her insistence on her freedom, which is perhaps her most defining characteristic: "She's still on her own. I'm free, she says, and, you know, Prince, she stands firm on it, she says, I'm still completely free! […] just yesterday she kept boasting to Nikolai Ardalionovich about her freedom. A bad sign, sir!" (200).[xlvii] What Lebedev sees, and what Myshkin fatally refuses to

[47] Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction* (Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2008).

acknowledge, is that like Ippolit, she is willing to commit suicide by marrying Rogozhin as an ultimate manifestation of her freedom.

Myshkin, however, is aware that the demands of social life for which he had longed are taking a toll on him, and he pines for the clarity of vision he possessed when he could observe this life from a distance:

> The prince was very glad to be left alone at last; he went down from the terrace, crossed the road, and entered the park; he wanted to think over and decide about a certain step. Yet this "step" was not one of those that can be thought over, but one of those that precisely cannot be thought over, but simply resolved upon: he suddenly wanted terribly to leave all this here and go back where he came from, to some far-off, forsaken place, to go at once and even without saying good-bye to anyone. He had the feeling that if he remained here just a few more days, he would certainly be drawn into this world irretrievably, and this world would henceforth be his lot. But he did not even reason for ten minutes and decided at once that to flee was "impossible," that it would be almost pusillanimous, that such tasks stood before him that he now did not even have any right not to resolve them, or at least not to give all his strength to their resolution. In such thoughts he returned home after barely a quarter of an hour's walk. He was utterly unhappy at that moment. (306-307)[xlviii]

It is not clear from this passage which "tasks" Myshkin envisions before him. While many critics take it for granted that Myshkin's main mission is to rescue and restore Nastasya Filippovna, such interpretations tend to ignore that Myshkin had a "task" in mind way before meeting Nastasya Filippovna: during his first visit to Epanchins, he says "I sat on the train

thinking: ‘Now I’m going to be with people; maybe I don’t know anything, but the new life has come.’ I decided to do my duty honestly and firmly. Maybe it will be boring and painful for me to be with people. In the first place I decided to be polite and candid with everybody; no one can ask more of me” (75)[xlix]. In other words, the only preconceived “task” Myshkin arrives with is establishing his own place among people, writing his own story, defining his duty and serving it “honestly and firmly.” The challenge, however, as Dostoevsky presents it, is to remain loyal to one’s own sense of selfhood as well as to one’s duty before others.

In the first part of the novel, Dostoevsky presents Myshkin as a sensitive reader of others, a reader whose moral imagination and psychological insight reveal and validate the hidden drama unfolding behind the screen of social identities that other characters try to sustain or resist. Beginning with the second part, Myshkin’s own drama, and the drama of those involved in it, moves to the foreground. Partly due to his illness, partly to his impressionable mind, Myshkin is acutely conscious of death and of the fragility and transience of life. While in Switzerland, he had longed above all for life among people: “I kept dreaming of a big city like Naples, where it was all palaces, noise, clatter, life... I dreamed about all kinds of things!” (59).[l] The view of the village and of nature around him heightened his sense of isolation from life, which explains the zeal with which he takes up any task presented to him:

> What had tormented him was that he was a total stranger to it all. What was this banquet, what was this great everlasting feast, to which he had long been drawn, always, ever since childhood, and which he could never join? Every morning the same bright sun rises; every morning there is a rainbow over the waterfall; every evening the highest snowcapped mountain, there, far away, at the edge of the sky, burns with a crimson flame; every “little fly that buzzes near him in a hot ray of

> sunlight participates in this whole chorus: knows its place, loves it, and is happy"; every little blade of grass grows and is happy! And everything has its path, and everything knows its path, goes with a song and comes back with a song; only he knows nothing, understands nothing, neither people nor sounds, a stranger to everything and a castaway. (422-423)[li]

Beginning with the second part, the prince is no longer a castaway. On the contrary, his life is now deeply entangled with the lives of others, and he is often overwhelmed by the ongoing feast of life which he has finally joined. Nevertheless, he is still in search of his path, of his purpose and his place among the people, which he must discover and assert among the competing stories in which other characters try to involve him. A. Skaftymov points out that in *The Idiot*, "each of the major characters is caught in an inner struggle between his or her own particular manifestation of egoism and a desire to overcome it in some appropriate form" (qtd. in Frank, *Miraculous Years* 324). Myshkin's struggle is determined by, on the one hand, his desire to establish a distinct identity for himself, to leave his mark on this world, and on the other hand, the need for self-effacement if he is to actualize his potential as an ideal other. In this respect, he dramatizes the conflict between the law of the self and the law of humanism which Dostoevsky describes in the famous notebook entry on the death of his first wife:

> To love your neighbor as yourself, according to Christ's commandment, is impossible. The law of personality on earth prevents it. The *I* prevents it [And yet] Christ alone was able to do it, but Christ is eternal, an eternal ideal toward which man aspires and is bound to aspire according to nature's law. And yet after Christ's appearance as *an ideal of man in the flesh* it became as clear as daylight that the highest and last development of personality must (at the very end of its

development, at the very point of achieving its goal) reach the point at which man will find out, realize and become convinced, utterly convinced, that the greatest use a man can make of his personality, of the fullest development of his *I,* is in one way or another to destroy this *I,* to give himself up wholly to all and everyone, selflessly and wholeheartedly. And that is the greatest happiness.

> "Thus the law of *I* becomes merged into the law or humanism, and in this union of the two both I and everyone (apparently extremes), while destroying themselves for each other, achieve at the same time the highest goal of one's own individual development, each one separately.
>
> "This is Christ's heaven. The whole history or humanity and, to a certain extent, of each individual is merely the development, the struggle, the aspiration for and the achievement of this goal. (*OW* 305-6)[lii]

In the same entry, Dostoevsky states that the attainment of this ideal means the end of human life on earth, and yet it is Myshkin's aspiration and struggle that make him a "positively beautiful person" in the words of his creator. As Myshkin struggles to keep the balance between "the law of the I" and "the law of humanism," he develops his own scripting strategy. Young calls it "'saintly scripting' which is aimed not at self-assertion, but at allowing the other to attain selfhood" (93-94). There is, however, an element if not of self-assertion, at least of self-searching in Myshkin's strategy. By allowing others to draw him into their scripts, Myshkin gets glimpses of himself from the outside. If, as Bakhtin argues, we cannot "perceive in ourselves the given whole of our own personality," then in the absence of an ideal other, the closest one can arrive at this whole is by combining the various aspects others perceive and reflect back on the self and measuring them against one's own sense of selfhood. As a result, the middle section of

the novel comprises largely other characters' inserted narratives commenting on Myshkin, and it becomes the reader's task to create a whole of Myshkin's character. The task is made more difficult because Myshkin, like Nastasya Filippovna in the opening part, is presented largely through rumors or narratives reported by other characters. Some of them, like Keller's article, are obviously libelous, others, such as Aglaya's rendition of 'The Poor Knight,' combine irony and admiration. Ippolit's confession, which aims to undermine Myshkin's ideals, simultaneously reveals the deep affinity between him and the prince. Each of these narratives, and many rumors surrounding Myshkin's six-month absence, have fragments of truth and falsehood, and it is only through the act of imaginative guessing and aesthetic consummation that the reader can construct the whole.

While various characters, major and minor, offer their versions of Myshkin's character, place, and duty, it is the two beauties—Aglaya Epanchin and Nastasya Filippovna —who represent the two appealing yet conflicting paths to the prince: the path of self-assertion and the path of self-sacrifice. The law of humanism—his compassion for a fellow human's suffering and desire to alleviate it—compels him to follow Nastasya Filippovna and give himself up completely to her each time she flees Rogozhin. When Myshkin is with Nastasya Filippovna, he is largely effaced from the plot, and it is only through rumors or recollections that we can piece together the incomplete picture of their relationship. His "romance" with Aglaya, on the other hand, unfolds before the eyes of the reader (and other characters), and it gives him a sense of belonging, placement, as well as an anticipation of future filled with personal happiness. It is important to note that Myshkin's "love" for Aglaya is pure in the sense that it is completely asexual: "for him the height of bliss was the fact alone that he could again visit Aglaya without hindrance, that he would be allowed to talk with her, sit with her, walk with her, and, who

knows, perhaps that alone would have contented him for the rest of his life! (It was this contentment, it seems, that Lizaveta Prokofyevna was secretly afraid of ; she had divined it; she secretly feared many things that she did not even know how to express) (518).[liii] There is a sense that, like Tolstoy's Levin in *Anna Karenina*, Myshkin is in love with the family. He simply cannot imagine Aglaya without her family, and when she proposes that they elope, because she wants to escape the "tyranny" of her family, he cannot force himself to take it seriously.

The triangle between Nastasya Filippovna, Myshkin, and Aglaya is further complicated by the fact that Aglaya and Nastasya Filippovna themselves are torn between similar conflicting impulses that underlie Myshkin's predicament. Aglaya is attracted to Myshkin because she sees him as someone who does not feel compelled to blend, who stands apart and above the materialistic, ego-driven society and thus resembles the kind of romantic hero (or a knight) who would allow her in turn to enact her own rebellious Romantic fantasies. She admires his idealism, honesty, and virtue, but she also wants him to assert his "I" more aggressively. She resents Myshkin's disregard for how others perceive him, and she herself undertakes to control and assert his image (or rather, her image of him) in public. Like others, Aglaya does it through literary activity: her passionate rendition of Pushkin's "Poor Knight," during which she replaces the initials "A.M.D." with "N.F.B." casting Myshkin in the role of the knight. Before reciting the poem, she explains her "deepest respect" for the "poor knight," "because this poem directly portrays a man capable of having an ideal and, second, once he has the ideal, of believing in it and, believing in it, of blindly devoting his whole life to it. That doesn't always happen in our time. In the poem it's not said specifically what made up the ideal of the 'poor knight,' but it's clear that it was some bright image, 'an image of pure beauty'" (248-249)[liv] While Aglaya admires the knight's (and the prince's) idealism and asceticism, even more important for her are

his heroic deeds. She concludes her explanation, "At first I didn't understand and laughed, but now I love the 'poor knight' and, above all, respect his deeds." (249)[lv] There is something of a contradiction in her admiration—and in her feeling for Myshkin in general. The knight's asceticism lies in his absolute self-sacrifice—or self-effacement. When Adelaida and Kolya discuss the poem as a subject for a painting, Adelaida says, "How could I paint it, and whom? The subject says about this 'poor knight': 'From his face the visor/He ne'er raised for anyone.' What sort of face could it be, then? What should I paint— a visor? An anonymity?" (247).[lvi] But Aglaya does not want Myshkin to be an anonymity. On the contrary, it is important for her that others see him as a heroic figure, that he preserves a public face, and she cannot tolerate his lack of pride. When Myshkin publicly acknowledges his awkwardness, as if forgiving others for laughing at him, she bursts out in indignation:

> "Why do you say that here?" Aglaya suddenly cried. "Why do you say it to *them*? To them! To them! […] There's no one here who is worth such words! […] No one, no one here is worth your little finger, or your intelligence, or your heart! You're more honest than all of them, nobler than all of them, better than all of them, kinder than all of them, more intelligent than all of them! There are people here who aren't worthy of bending down to pick up the handkerchief you've just dropped...Why do you humiliate yourself and place yourself lower than everyone else? Why have you twisted everything in yourself, why is there no pride in you?" (342)[lvii]

Nastasya Filippovna is also torn between the two competing scripts for the prince, just as she is torn between a desire to be restored to life and a desire to punish herself. Her punishment consists in giving up her dream, which she has cherished ever since she became Totsky's

concubine as a teenager, of being loved for herself, of being absolved of all the guilt that poisons her. Rogozhin for her is at once a proof of her fall, and, with his jealousy and violent temper, the tool of punishment. But by sacrificing her chance for happiness, she seeks more than punishment. She sees it as an opportunity to realize her own potential for goodness, for she does not simply give up Myshkin, after his first proposal and on other occasions, but gives him up to Aglaya. In many ways, it is her scripting that is responsible for Myshkin's "romance" with Aglaya. Although Myshkin has warm feelings for Aglaya from the beginning (he sends her a note from Moscow in which he expresses his need for her and his wish to be in her thoughts), these feelings were never romantic. It is only after others—first Nastasya Filippovna in her letters to Aglaya, then Aglaya herself and the Epanchin family with her—begin to see him as a suitor that Myshkin finds it conceivable. But side by side with this longing for self-sacrifice there is a contrary, vindictive force that urges Nastasya Filippovna to embrace the opportunity Myshkin offers her and thus triumph over the society that allowed for and perpetuated her suffering.

These inner conflicts—Myshkin's, Nastasya Filippovna's, and Aglaya's—come to a disastrous culmination during the critical face-off between the two women in Part Four. What we witness during this critical meeting is the struggle for control, and the real victim of this struggle is the prince himself. At this point in the novel, Myshkin is engaged to Aglaya, which is exactly what both women worked for. But although the engagement is a part in both Aglaya's and Nastasya Filippovna's scripts, each woman wants to ensure that it is she, and not her rival, who is responsible for this course of events. In other words, the rivalry between Aglaya and Nastasya Filippovna is not over the prince himself, but over authorship of what both women deem is the right story for him. Their desire for control overshadows whatever consideration they

have for the man they love and respect, and it is then that the prince must make a choice. Contrary to popular interpretation, Myshkin does not "choose" Nastasya Filippovna, and as his conversation with prince Sch. later shows, he never gives up Aglaya. In fact, he responds to Aglaya's suffering first, and remains by Nastasya Filippovna's side only when she physically prevents him from leaving: "The prince also ran [after Aglaya], but arms seized him on the threshold. Nastasya Filippovna's stricken, distorted face looked at him point-blank, and her blue lips moved, saying: 'After her? After her?..." (572).[lviii]

Myshkin ends up with Nastasya Filippovna almost against his will, overcome by the force of her suffering, in which his own self is completely dissolved, but the numbness this self-annihilation brings is hardly the paradise Dostoevsky invokes in his diary, nor does it appear like the highest use Myshkin could make of his "I." Myshkin instinctively consoles Nastasya, laughing when she laughs and weeping at her tears, yet his extreme empathy lacks the restorative, transformative power manifested earlier. By denying his selfhood completely, Myshkin ceases to be of any use: instead, he is merely duplicating the suffering. As Bakhtin puts it,

> The life situation of a suffering human being that is really experienced from within may prompt me to perform an ethical action, such as providing assistance, consolation, or cognitive reflection. But in any event my projection of myself into him must be followed by a *return* into myself, a *return* to my own place outside the suffering person, for only from this place can the material derived from my projecting myself into the other be rendered meaningful ethically, cognitively, or aesthetically. If this return into myself did not actually take place, the pathological

> phenomenon of experiencing another's suffering as one's own would result—an infection with another's suffering, and nothing more. (*Art* 26)

"Nothing more," or "nothing *any*more" is what best describes Myshkin from this moment on, including the striking scene when Rogozhin and Myshkin spend the night by Nastasya's body after the murder, where Myshkin is little more than Rogozhin's shadow and suffering double. Hence the impression of which Dostoevsky writes in his notebook: "everything he might have done and undertaken perishes with him..."[lix] (193), and then again, "Everything that would have been developed in the Prince is extinguished in the tomb. And therefore showing step by step *the Prince in a field of action* will be enough"[lx] (203-4[48]).

As in *Notes from the Underground*, Dostoevsky presents here the discrepancy between "the field of action" and the character's potentials ("everything that would have been developed in the Prince"). This results in Myshkin's failure to actualize himself as a hero, hence "everything he might have done and undertaken perishes with him..."[lxi] (193). While Myshkin failed on his heroic quest to save Nastasya Filippovna and transform the world into a better place, and most of the characters "are living as before [and] have changed little"[lxii] (612), the influence he exerted through his "authorial" position in Part One continues to operate even after he falls back into insanity. It is when Myshkin was functioning as an artist—as someone who presented his unique vision through images and impressions—that he was able at once to possess his vision and to affect others. Paradoxically, the people who benefit most from his vision in the end are those with whom he was least directly involved: Evgeny Pavlovich, who has arranged for Myshkin's care and who frequently visits him at Schneider's facility, and the young Kolya Ivolgin and Vera Lebedeva. The strange and unexpected relationship between these three

[48] Translation emended.

characters is hinted at by Dostoevsky in his letter to Maikov: "If there are readers of *The Idiot*, then perhaps they will be somewhat astonished by the unexpected ending; but, having given it some thought, they will of course agree that this was the right way to end it" (*SS,* 15:388).[lxiii] This budding relationship based on genuine feelings of friendship and intimacy shared through letters between previously unrelated characters presents an alternative to relationships based on profit and egoism which have dominated the novel, and the fact that these characters have come together on the prince's account suggests that Myshkin has been able to sow the seeds of which Ippolit had spoken so passionately in his confession: "all your thoughts, all the seeds you have sown, which you may already have forgotten, will take on flesh and grow; what was received from you will be passed on to someone else. And how do you know what share you will have in the future outcome of human destiny?"[lxiv] (404-405). This also echoes Dostoevsky's note: "The Prince only *touched* their lives. […] But wherever he *touched* - everywhere he left an ineffaceable trace"[lxv] (193).[49] Yet as they carry on Myshkin's vision, Kolya, Evgeny Pavlovich and Vera show signs of certain distance from the external world: Kolya's mother "fears for him because he is too thoughtful for his years" (612), a suggestions that he spends too much time in reflection; Evgeny Pavlovich "has gone abroad, intends to stay in Europe for a very long time, and candidly calls himself 'a completely superfluous man in Russia" (613), and his warm, intimate relationship with Vera Lebedeva takes the form of writing.

4.2 *The Wings of the Dove*

In *The Wings of the Dove*, one of his most ethically charged works, James, like Dostoevsky in *The Idiot*, tests the possibility of ideal self-other relationships that accommodate individual will and self-integrity with the demands of society in which wealth, power, and social

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[49] Translation emended.

status take precedence over more humane values, and where “the working and the worked were […] the parties to every relation” (333). The opening scene of James’s novel, in which Kate Croy waits impatiently for her shady but enigmatic father in order to propose a deal to him, vividly captures the novel’s central tensions and concerns. Merle A. Williams, for instance, insightfully observes that “the slow uncoiling of the very first sentence, ‘She waited, Kate Croy…’ points at once to James’s preoccupation with the issue of identity. Personal identity, rather than emerging ready-made and complete, has to be examined and established” (90).[50] The ensuing conversation between a father and a daughter focuses on the first of the many bargains in the book: if Kate, who is virtually penniless, cuts all relations with her father, her wealthy aunt, Maud Lowder, will take care of her and presumably will arrange for her a very promising marriage. This is the first “offer to exchange moral for practical benefit” in the novel (Bell 292), and Kate’s father encourages her to leave aside all moral scruples and extract as much practical and financial value from her situation as she can. Kate’s “hesitation amid the shabby furnishings of her father’s dreary flat sets the tone for a variety of conflicts that are to develop,” including “the need to reconcile competing loyalties to other people, while also allowing due weight to one’s own integrity of existence, and the constant chafing of private desires against social requirements” (M. A. Williams 92). But perhaps even more central to the novel’s interlinked ethical and aesthetic concerns is the problem of knowing the other—what Iser calls “man’s invisibility to man,” and what Myshkin expresses with the popular Russian proverb, “the soul of another is darkness.” This “darkness” confronts the characters whether they seek to use others as a means of attaining their own egoistic, “practical” aims, or genuinely wish to respond ethically to another person. Kate’s visit to her father encompasses both: she wishes to assert her family

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[50] Merle A. Williams, *Henry James and the Philosophical Novel (*New York: Cambridge UP, 2009).

loyalty even at the cost of material advantage provided by her aunt, and at the same time she openly pursues a more "selfish" goal of ensuring her freedom to be with Merton Densher.

Iser posits that "in all our interpersonal relationships […] we react as if we knew how our partners experienced us; we continually form views of their views and then act as if our views of their views were realities" (*The Act of Reading* 165). By presenting Kate's father—the heroine's closest blood relation whom she gives up the hope of ever "knowing"—the novel immediately questions the possibility of going beyond the "as if" in our knowledge of the other. Several pages are devoted to Lionel Croy, and yet these pages convey no information about the man or about the mysterious dishonor he brought upon his family: "his folly and cruelty and wickedness" remain unnamed. The dominant impression of him is one of being impossible to make out, and Kate's sentiment, "I don't know you, father" (223), is shared by the reader. As if to emphasize this further, Kate's parting remark reiterates the same idea: "She turned her handsome quiet face upon him at such length that it might indeed have been for the last time. 'I don't know what you're like,'" to which Lionel Croy responds, " 'No more do I, my dear. I've spent my life in trying in vain to discover. Like nothing—more's the pity. If there had been many of us and we could have found each other out there's no knowing what we mightn't have done. But it doesn't matter now. Good-bye, love.' He looked even not sure of what she would wish him to suppose on the subject of a kiss, yet also not embarrassed by his uncertainty" (229). Thus the father and the daughter share at least one critical trait: they both accept the "uncertainty" surrounding the other, and as the novel unfolds, Kate, like her father, will learn to use this uncertainty to her own advantage.

The same cannot be said of Kate's older sister, Marian. Like Lionel Croy, Marian believes that it is Kate's duty to "work" Aunt Maud's interest in her and thus rescue her, Marian,

from poverty in which her husband had left her and her children at his death. “I can’t imagine,” Marian reprimands Kate, “how you can think of anything else in the world but the horrid way we’re situated” (240). It is not, however, the unscrupulous egoism of her sister’s words that stirs up Kate’s indignation, but her assumption of complete knowledge of Kate’s thoughts and feelings: “And, pray, how do you know […] anything about my thoughts? It seems to me I give you sufficient proof of how much I think of *you*. I don’t really, my dear, know what else you’ve to do with!” (240). Kate’s retort suggests that appearances in the world of this novel are at once everything (“what else you’ve to do with!”) and nothing, in so far as they can be controlled or even dissimulated. Like the face in *The Idiot*, which is at once a mask that hides and a mirror that reflects the inner depths of character, appearances in *The Wings of the Dove* are at once walls that isolate individuals and gateways to their souls.

James evokes the image of the wall describing, from Kate’s perspective, the first encounter between herself and Densher and the lovers’ interest in getting to know each other.

> It wasn’t, in a word, simply that their eyes had met; other conscious organs, faculties, feelers had met as well, and when Kate afterwards imaged to herself the sharp deep fact she saw it, in the oddest way, as a particular performance. She had observed a ladder against a garden-wall and had trusted herself so to climb it as to be able to see over into the probable garden on the other side. On reaching the top she had found herself face to face with a gentleman engaged in a like calculation at the same moment, and the two enquirers had remained confronted on their ladders. The great point was that for the rest of that evening they had been perched—they had not climbed down; and indeed during the time that followed Kate at least had had the perched feeling—it was as if she were there aloft without

> a retreat. A simpler expression of all this is doubtless but that they had taken each other in with interest… . (251)

Unlike previous examples, this metaphor depicts an attempt to transcend the boundary that separates two people from each other, but while the image of two lovers "perched" on the ladder face-to-face suggests a promise of a genuine human bond, the fact remains that the garden on the other side—the other's inner world—is inaccessible, and only the face of the other is immediately visible.

As the focus of the novel—and its narrative center-of-consciousness—shifts to Milly, the question of interpersonal knowledge becomes even more central, for Milly, like Myshkin, is a stranger in search of meaningful human relationships. Accordingly, the entire conversation between Lord Mark and Milly during the dinner offered by Mrs. Lowder to honor her American guests is devoted to the possibility of knowing the other, and Lord Mark appears as a more refined (and, of course, English) version of Dostoevsky's Mr. know-it-all, Lebedev. Milly's attention and imagination is immediately captured by Kate Croy, "the great reality," "the handsome girl" who "would indulge in incalculable movements that might interfere with one's tour" (313). While Milly is interested in individual persons, primarily "by the commanding character" of Mrs. Lowder and Kate (313), Lord Mark's account suggests a complete disregard of the individual. In response to Milly's curiosity about Mrs. Lowder's niece and guests, he explains "that there was no such thing to-day in London as saying where any one was. Every one was everywhere—nobody was anywhere" (313). He confesses, with a tinge of irritability and regret, that he cannot "give a name of any sort or kind to their hostess's 'set,'" that is, to "place" it within the social hierarchy. "*Was* it a set at all, or wasn't it," he continues, "and were there not really no such things as sets in the place any more?—was there anything but the groping and

pawing, that of the vague billows of some great greasy sea in mid-Channel, of masses of bewildered people trying to 'get' they didn't know what or where?" (313). The image evoked by Lord Mark echoes the scene at the railway station at the beginning of *The Idiot* in which people are presented as a mass moving without direction, lost and disconnected, and suggests the same atmosphere of chaos and lack of clarity. Milly observes that "he spoke as if he had given them up from too much knowledge. He was thus at the opposite extreme from herself, but, as a consequence of it, also wandering and lost" (313).

With this conversation, James introduces the difference between various kinds of interpersonal knowledge, as Dostoevsky did in the beginning of his novel. For Lord Mark, as for Dostoevsky's Lebedev, knowledge amounts to facts—particularly those facts that establish one's social identity and rank; and Milly finds herself surprised "by his visibly knowing, having known from afar off, that she was a stranger and an American, and by his none the less making no more of it than if she and her like were the chief of his diet" (315). Like Marian, who presumes to know Kate's thoughts and feeling, Lord Mark strikes Milly as certain in his *a priori* knowledge of her:

> He took her, kindly enough, but imperturbably, irreclaimably, for granted, and it wouldn't in the least help that she herself knew him, as quickly, for having been in her country and threshed it out. There would be nothing for her to explain or attenuate or brag about; she could neither escape nor prevail by her strangeness; he would have, for that matter, on such a subject, more to tell her than to learn from her. She might learn from *him* why she was so different from the handsome girl—which she didn't know, being merely able to feel it; or at any rate might learn from him why the handsome girl was so different from her. (315)

As the conversation unfolds, we get the first glimpse of Milly's mode of knowledge, particularly knowledge of other people, which, as we shall see, resembles that of Dostoevsky's prince in several key respects. "You all here know each other—I see that—so far as you know anything," she tells Lord Mark, "You know what you're used to, and it's your being used to it—that, and that only—that makes you. But there are things you don't know." When her interlocutor points out that he takes "all the pains" and "run[s] about the world to leave nothing unlearned," she rejoins, "You're *blasé*, but you're not enlightened. You're familiar with everything, but conscious really of nothing. What I mean is that you've no imagination" (321-322)

The idea that habit saps vitality from life, the juxtaposition of familiarity, or taking things for granted, and conscious experience, are questions that both Dostoevsky and James keep coming back to in their fiction, criticism, and personal writing. We have already seen that for both writers, one of the greatest values of art and imagination lies in its capacity to "undo" the deadening effects of habit. In this sense, art teaches us how to look in the same manner as Myshkin does during his first visit to Epanchins. Milly's remark to lord Mark can be seen in the same light, and her "imaginative" seeing is presented as an alternative to passive, habitual perception. But in this novel, James, like Dostoevsky in *The Idiot*, is particularly concerned with the relationship between imagination and the ethics of interpersonal relationships. Lord Mark's lack of imagination is not just a minor flaw that prevents him from experiencing the world richly and consciously. It has a "deadening" effect on others, which Milly immediately senses with terror:

> she accepted almost helplessly—she surrendered so to the inevitable in it—being the sort of thing, as he might have said, that he at least thoroughly believed he had, in going about, seen enough of for all practical purposes [...] and she was

> more and more sharply conscious of having—as with the door sharply slammed upon her and the guard's hand raised in signal to the train—been popped into the compartment in which she was to travel for him. (318)

Lord Mark's "placement" of Milly, his finalizing view of her instills a real terror in her: "She wished to get away from him, or indeed, much rather, away from herself so far as she was present to him" (322). The fear that passes over her under Lord Mark's deadening vision is related, as will subsequently be revealed, to her fear of death, for the box in which he places her might as well be a coffin.

In "The Art of Fiction," James writes extensively about the value of artistic imagination. One example in particular can help us understand the relationship between imagination and interpersonal relationships in *The Wings of the Dove*. There, James relates a story about Anne Thackeray Ritchie, who was praised for her very realistic portrayal of French Protestant youth in her first novel:

> She had been asked where she learned so much about this recondite being, she had been congratulated on her peculiar opportunities. These opportunities consisted in her having once, in Paris, as she ascended a staircase, passed an open door where, in the household of a pasteur, some of the young Protestants were seated at table round a finished meal. The glimpse made a picture; it lasted only a moment, but that moment was experience. She had got her impression, and she evolved her type. She knew what youth was, and what Protestantism; she also had the advantage of having seen what it was to be French; so that she converted these ideas into a concrete image and produced a reality. Above all, however, she was blessed with the faculty which when you give it an inch takes an ell, and which

> for the artist is a much greater source of strength than any accident of residence or of place in the social scale. (*LC* 1:52-53)

The faculty to which James refers is imagination, "The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life, in general, so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it" (*LC* 1:53). In this example, imagination takes Ritchie from impression to actual (and, as everyone confirms, accurate) knowledge of her human subject. James uses Ritchie's story as an example of an artist taking "the faintest hints of life" and "converting the very pulses of the air into revelations," but it can also serve as a model for interpersonal relationships as they are represented in *The Wings of the Dove*. Ritchie's position at the threshold from which she observes the young Protestants is similar to the position of one person in relation to another: in both cases, only a partial picture is observable, and the visible side implies other, invisible sides. It is the function of the imagination to construct the whole by supplying the "missing" parts—by filling in the gap in our knowledge of the other. This is precisely what Milly does when Mrs. Lowder asks her to find out from Kate whether Densher has returned to London. Milly uses her "power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things" to find the answer without asking Kate, much in the way Ritchie learns everything she needs about the Protestant youth without crossing the threshold of their household:

> The conscious eyes, the added advantage were but those she had now always at command—those proper to the person Milly knew as known to Merton Densher. It was for several seconds again as if the *total* of her identity had been that of the person known to him—a determination having for result another sharpness of its own. Kate had positively but to be there just as she was to tell her he had come

> back. It seemed to pass between them in fine without a word that he was in London, that he was perhaps only round the corner; and surely therefore no dealing of Milly's with her would yet have been so direct. (395-396)

Imagination, therefore, is essential to making sense of the other, just as it is necessary for Ritchie to compose a story about the Protestant youth. Interpersonal relations are in this respect a creative process in which one consciousness composes a story about another. In fact, all interactions between characters in *The Wings of the Dove* are modeled on such literary activity: the other to the self is what the protestant youth is to Richie. To interact with others is to see them in a certain light, in a certain setting, and in a certain plot—in other words, to write a story for them. It is therefore not surprising that Milly manifests some key qualities associated with the Jamesian artist—and with the narrator of *The Wings of the Dove*.

Like the narrator, who presents Milly through the impressions she makes on others, Milly draws the portrait of her friend based on the various aspects Kate reveals in relation to those surrounding her—Mrs. Lowder, Lord Mark, Densher, her sister. In the preface, James announces his dislike for dealing with characters directly, preferring, instead, indirect presentation through the eyes and thoughts of others. This method not only allows James to stay "behind the scenes" and avoid the "muffled majesty of irresponsible 'authorship,'" but also to examine and illuminate his subject from multiple perspectives. What links Milly to Myshkin is her ability to enter the point of view of another, thereby enriching her own vision with otherwise hidden aspects of reality. It is what Bakhtin would call an authorial position, and the multiplicity of perspectives incorporated into Milly's vision provide that "surplus of vision" which Bakhtin associates with the creative, consummating consciousness of the "author."

Like Myshkin, Milly is aware that there is always more than one side to any medal, and to know, for her, involves shifting one's position relative to the object of study. Beginning with their first meeting, Milly is curious about Kate, and her quest for knowledge compells her to distance herself. The passage quoted above is not the first instance when Milly, like James, studies Kate "indirectly," that is, by looking at her through the eyes of another. Earlier in the novel, when she finds out from her companion Susan Stringham that Kate Croy knows Densher, she tries to see Kate from Densher's point of view and discovers a certain side of Kate's character that hitherto remained hidden from her:

> Milly found herself seeing Kate, quite fixing her, in the light of the knowledge that it was a face on which Mr. Densher's eyes had more or less familiarly rested and which, by the same token, had looked, rather *more* beautifully than less, into his own. She pulled herself up indeed with the thought that it had inevitably looked, as beautifully as one would, into thousands of faces in which one might one's self never trace it; but just the odd result of the thought was to intensify for the girl that side of her friend which she had doubtless already been more prepared than she quite knew to think of as the "other," the not wholly calculable. It was fantastic, and Milly was aware of this; but the other side was what had, of a sudden, been turned straight toward her by the show of Mr. Densher's propinquity. She hadn't the excuse of knowing it for Kate's own, since nothing whatever as yet proved it particularly to be such. Never mind; it was with this other side now fully presented that Kate came and went, kissed her for greeting and for parting, talked, as usual, of everything but—as it had so abruptly become for Milly—*the* thing. (340-341)

This passage encapsulates Milly's mode of knowing the other, whereby she sees the individual not as a static and one-dimensional identity, but as something that, like reality described by James, "has a myriad forms," depending on who looks at it and from what angle. This way of seeing the other links Milly to Myshkin, whose descriptions of Nastasya Filippovna's face and of the convict on the way to a beheading also combine multiple perspectives. But Milly's thoughts immediately following her "discovery" of "the other" Kate capture another important theme. Milly becomes aware of "her own possible betrayals" and begins to wonder "if the matter hadn't mainly been that she herself was so 'other,' so taken up with the unspoken." She would like to see her idea confirmed or rejected by Kate, but decides that "Kate would never—and not from ill will nor from duplicity, but from a sort of failure of common terms—reduce it to such a one's comprehension or put it within her convenience" (341). Here, Milly's consciousness becomes a stage on which the interplay of knowledge and self-knowledge, discovery and self-discovery, unfolds, and this essential interdependency of the two explains why Dostoevsky and James stress so rigorously the necessity of interaction between individual consciousness and the external world. Paul Armstrong provides an illuminating analysis of this process based on the example of Ritchie's story in James's essay:

> To the extent that Ritchie's impression explicates her prior stores of experience, it is not only an act of perception; it is also, at the same time, an act of self-examination. By drawing on her own resources to complete the scene before her, she thematizes and brings into the open aspects of herself that may have hitherto been unformulated and unrecognized. Imaginative acts of seeing are thus for James one way of transforming unreflective experience into conscious awareness. Ritchie's story implies that the challenge of understanding others can lead to

> growth in self-understanding. As we shall see with Isabel Archer and Maggie Verver, for whom unexpected impressions of their spouses give rise to more explicit and extensive self-recognition than Ritchie achieves, the act of knowing becomes an occasion for self-knowledge when indeterminacies and anomalies compel the perceiver to turn inward to examine his or her own consciousness and memory. Consciousness is never far from self-consciousness for James. (44)

This relationship between imagination, seeing and self-examination is what compels both Myshkin and Milly to seek the society of people in spite of the pitfalls they sense in the process. But in addition to offering the opportunity for self-examination and self-reflection, the other is important for the perspective he or she can provide on oneself. When Milly observes Kate, she not only grows conscious of what makes her perceive the way she does, but also wants to see herself through another's eyes, wants to see in Kate either a confirmation or denial of her own self-image that evolves in the process. If the first stage (self-examination) is characteristic of only the select characters in *The Wings of the Dove*, the second (confirmation of one's self-image by another) lies at the heart of all major relationships and conflicts in the novel.

The propensity of Jamesian characters to see each other in literary terms has been long noted by critics of *The Wings of the Dove*: [51] Densher admiringly calls Kate "a whole library of the unknown," an "uncut volume," whereas Milly, herself seen by Susan as a romantic heroine, pictures Kate as a heroine in the realist Victorian novel, and throughout the novel, the verb "read" or "read into" is repeatedly used to describe communication between the characters. Equally important, however, is that while characters "read" and "write" stories about those around them, they also show awareness of being interpreted, studied, and "scripted" by others;

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[51] See, for example, Millicent Bell's insightful analysis in *The Meaning of Henry James* (314-323).

and because this is the world of "the working and the worked," their survival, their integrity depends on their ability to control the self-image they project and thus exercise authority over the stories others write about them. One's self-image—one's place in society in relation to others—can only be asserted through the confirmation by others (just as Richie's portrayal of the Protestant youth can be deemed realistic only when her readers proclaim it as such). This is what being worked means in this society. What you are is what others make of you. This is the only way for characters to feel that the identity they project is legitimate. For all the ostensible superficiality of Lancaster Gate, this is not the world of masks and dissimulation: all characters strive to live, not merely play the part they choose for themselves. Thus, for example, Mrs. Lowder wants to *be* aristocracy—it is not enough for her to live like one, and she "works" Kate and Lord Mark to add a title to her fortune; Lord Mark, in turn, wants a fortune to match his title, and attempts to "work" Milly by undermining Kate's and Densher's plot. As characters shuffle their roles as readers of others and as writers of their own stories, narrating and plotting become the basis of interpersonal relations in *The Wings of the Dove*, where, like Dostoevsky, James emphasizes the collaborative nature of such life-writing, which is precisely what Sarah Young distinguishes as the most remarkable feature of *The Idiot*. James himself mentions collaboration as one of the key elements of Milly's story in his preface to the novel: "her impulse to wrest from her shrinking hour still as much of the fruit of life as possible, [...] this longing can take effect only by the aid of others" and "their participation (appealed to, entangled and coerced as they find themselves) becomes their drama too" (*LC* 2:1287). In the preface, James devotes considerable attention to the interdependency of individual life-stories or dramas in the novel:

> [Milly] would meanwhile wish, moreover, all along, to live for particular things, she would found her struggle on particular human interests, which would

> inevitably determine, in respect to her, the attitude of other persons, persons affected in such a manner as to make them part of the action. If her impulse to wrest from her shrinking hour still as much of the fruit of life as possible, if this longing can take effect only by the aid of others, their participation (appealed to, entangled and coerced as they find themselves) becomes their drama too—that of their promoting her illusion, under her importunity, for reasons, for interests and advantages, from motives and points of view, of their own. Some of these promptings, evidently, would be of the highest order—others doubtless mightn't; but they would make up together, for her, contributively, her sum of experience, represent to her somehow, in good faith or in bad, what she should have *known*. Somehow, too, at such a rate, one would see the persons subject to them drawn in as by some pool of a Lorelei—see them terrified and tempted and charmed; bribed away, it may even be, from more prescribed and natural orbits, inheriting from their connexion with her strange difficulties and still stranger opportunities, confronted with rare questions and called upon for new discriminations. (*LC* 2:1289-90)

The concept of "scripting" which Young uses to describe the interactive nature of narratorial activity in *The Idiot* is equally fitting and illuminating when applied to various "plots" through which characters of *The Wings of the Dove* participate in Milly's drama, revealing their own dependence on the aid of others and their participation as they try to enact their stories. In James's novel, as in Dostoevsky's, characters' attempts to establish a desirable social identity for themselves are invariably threatened when others try to impose other, frequently false or inadequate roles on them. Scripting as a strategy is introduced almost immediately via Kate's

dilemma in the beginning of the novel and her resolution to overcome it. As she awaits her father in the opening scene, she reflects on her family history:

> Her father's life, her sister's, her own, that of her two lost brothers—the whole history of their house had the effect of some fine florid voluminous phrase, say even a musical, that dropped first into words and notes without sense and then, hanging unfinished, into no words nor any notes at all. Why should a set of people have been put in motion, on such a scale and with such an air of being equipped for a profitable journey, only to break down without an accident, to stretch themselves in the wayside dust without a reason? (218)

Kate is resolved to take authorship into her own hands, to give her story the meaning that would satisfy her: "She hadn't given up yet, and the broken sentence, if she was the last word, *would* end with a sort of meaning" (219). But this is not an easy task in the world characterized by contending plots: her father, her sister, and her aunt, each have a story for her. Kate's father urges Kate to use Aunt Maud, and believes himself useful to his daughter, for by rejecting him Kate can gain her aunt's trust and, with it, her money: "Your duty as well as your chance, if you're capable of seeing it, is to use me. Show family feeling by seeing what I'm good for. If you had it as I have it you'd see I'm still good—well, for a lot of things. There's in fact, my dear, […] a coach-and-four to be got out of me" (30). The scripts of Lionel Croy, Aunt Maude, Mrs. Condrip, and finally of Kate herself are propelled by specific, materialistic goal: Aunt Maude seeks entrance into higher society, Mrs. Condrip hopes to improve her financial situation through Kate, and Kate herself does not want to give up anything—she wants to have the man she loves and the material comfort of Lancaster Gate.

Kate’s script, however, is more complex. As we have seen in the opening chapter, she was initially willing to give up Lancaster Gate. Her plot is motivated not by the fear of privation, but by her desire for authorship, by her desire to assert herself fully and without compromise. In many ways, she resembles Nastasya Filippovna, in so far as she is also the object of exchange placed in Aunt Maude’s shop-window. She wants freedom, and she is acutely aware that freedom requires money. And James justifies her desire by portraying her made for life, and yet entangled in other people’s constricting plots for her: “There was no such misfortune, or at any rate no such discomfort, she further reasoned, as to be formed at once for being and for seeing. You always saw, in this case something else than what you were, and you got in consequence none of the peace of your condition” (239). In the context in which these thoughts appear, “something else than what you were” is really “something else than what you were” *to others*—to “Her haunting harassing father, her menacing uncompromising aunt, her portionless little nephews and nieces” and, especially Marian, whose script for Kate is perhaps the most narrowly prescribed:

> Kate’s most constant feeling about her was that she would make her, Kate, do things; and always, in comfortless Chelsea, at the door of the small house the small rent of which she couldn’t help having on her mind, she fatalistically asked herself, before going in, which thing it would probably be this time. She noticed with profundity that disappointment made people selfish; she marvelled at the serenity—it was the poor woman’s only one—of what Marian took for granted: her own state of abasement as the second-born, her life reduced to mere inexhaustible sisterhood. She existed in that view wholly for the small house in Chelsea; the moral of which moreover, of course, was that the more you gave

> yourself the less of you was left. There were always people to snatch at you, and it would never occur to *them* that they were eating you up. They did that without tasting. (238-239)

In Marian's selfish script, "It was through Kate that Aunt Maud should be worked, and nothing mattered less than what might become of Kate in the process. Kate was to burn her ships in short, so that Marian should profit" (239). Aunt Maude, in turn, has her own plans for Kate. Kate describes her as "ineffaceably stamped by inscrutable nature and a dreadful art" (400), and at one point Densher cannot help thinking of Kate as an actress managed and directed by Mrs. Lowder, and of himself "relegated to mere spectatorship, a paying place in front, and one of the most expensive" (440). Like Marian, who cannot admit that Kate's interests may differ from her own, Aunt Maude presupposes that Kate's interest coincides with hers. Her script for Kate involves marrying her to a nobleman so that she herself can enter the high society. Like Marian, she does not think of her actions as manipulation, for she simply refuses to believe that Kate may have a different vision of happiness and success. Kate, however, is acutely aware of being objectified: "I *am*," she tells Milly, "on the counter, when I'm not in the shop-window; in and out of which I'm thus conveniently, commercially whisked: the essence, all of it, of my position, and the price, as properly, of my aunt's protection" (400).

While the examples discussed above link scripting to objectification of the other, they simultaneously suggest that conscious involvement in other people's scripts can set off the process of self-discovery and thus enrich one's own sense of selfhood, for these scripts present a view of oneself from the outside, a view a person can never have of oneself. Thus Kate regards Mrs. Lowder's scripting with curiosity rather than revolt, for she senses in it the possibility to discover her own value. "You may ask," she says after explaining to Milly her position in

Lancaster Gate, "what in the world I have to give; and that indeed is just what I'm trying to learn. There must be something, for her to think she can get it out of me. She *will* get it—trust her; and then I shall see what it is; which I beg you to believe I should never have found out for myself" (333). Kate's curiosity proves to be contagious, as Milly, in her turn, becomes eager to know what plans Mrs. Lowder has for *her*. Similarly, Densher is genuinely interested in what Mrs. Lowder makes of him. "I was really curious, you see," he tells Kate after his visit to Mrs. Lowder, "to find out from her what sort of queer creature, what sort of social anomaly, in the light of such conventions as hers, such an education as mine makes one pass for" (276-277). When Kate asks why Densher would care for Lowder's opinion of him, he says that he is interested in her as a public mind: "for a man of my trade, her views, her spirit, are essentially a thing to get hold of: they belong to the great public mind that we meet at every turn and that we must keep setting up 'codes' with" (277). But he confesses that he also wants "to please her personally," that is, not as Kate's suitor, but in his own right. Mrs. Lowder's view thus has a larger importance for him. Insecure as he is, and unplaced, he hopes to draw from her favorable view of him something with which to uphold his pride despite his low social and financial status.

Of all the characters, it is Milly who is most conscious of the need of others in her life, and particularly of her dependence on the scripts in which others place her. Desperate to live her life to the fullest in the small time allotted to her, Milly is eager to explore her potentiality. In the preface, James describes her as "passionately desiring to 'put in' before extinction as many of the finer vibrations as possible, and so achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived," stating explicitly that this "can take effect only by the aid of others" (*LC* 2:1287). Lord Mark's finalizing view instills terror in her precisely because in his vision, she has nothing to "put in," and the Bronzino portrait he shows her at his estate encapsulates this vision for Milly:

> She couldn't help that—it came; and the reason it came was that she found herself, for the first moment, looking at the mysterious portrait through tears. Perhaps it was her tears that made it just then so strange and fair—as wonderful as he had said: the face of a young woman, all splendidly drawn, down to the hands, and splendidly dressed; a face almost livid in hue, yet handsome in sadness and crowned with a mass of hair, rolled back and high, that must, before fading with time, have had a family resemblance to her own. The lady in question, at all events, with her slightly Michael-angelesque squareness, her eyes of other days, her full lips, her long neck, her recorded jewels, her brocaded and wasted reds, was a very great personage—only unaccompanied by a joy. And she was dead, dead, dead. Milly recognised her exactly in words that had nothing to do with her. "I shall never be better than this." He smiled for her at the portrait. "Than she? You'd scarce need to be better, for surely that's well enough." (359)

Milly is dead for Lord Mark from the beginning, and his view of her as a static, framed, finished object forces her to acknowledge her sickness and impeding death. As if trying to protect herself, she is reluctant to recognize a resemblance between herself and the Bronzino portrait, while Lord Mark continues to impose his view "as if it were important to his character as a serious man not to appear to have invented his plea" (360). This is one of the most explicit examples of objectification in the novel whereby one character is trying to force another to accept his version of that character's identity. Finally, instead of confirming or rejecting Lord Mark's view, Milly says, "I don't know—one never knows one's self" (360). Milly cannot accept Lord Mark's script because she longs for self-discovery, for actualization of her potentials which would give her the "sense of having lived." Since she does not have a lifetime to discover who she is, she needs as

many people, "whatever others, oh as many as the case requires," to make her life "a sight for the gods" in the limited time allotted her. Thus, like Dostoevsky's prince who repeatedly vows that he came to St. Petersburg simply to be with people, Milly realizes

> that what she wanted of Europe was "people," so far as they were to be had, and that [...] the vision of this same equivocal quantity was what had haunted her during their previous days, in museums and churches, and what was again spoiling for her the pure taste of scenery. She was all for scenery—yes; but she wanted it human and personal, and all she could say was that there would be in London—wouldn't there?—more of that kind than anywhere else. She came back to her idea that if it wasn't for long—if nothing should happen to be so for *her*—why the particular thing she spoke of would probably have most to give her in the time, would probably be less than anything else a waste of her remainder. (304)

In London, Milly senses the threat society poses to the integrity of her self, and at one point she, like Myshkin in Pavlovsk, contemplates an "escape:" "She seemed to have seen in a quick though tempered glare that there were two courses for her, one to leave London again the first thing in the morning, the other to do nothing at all. Well, she would do nothing at all; she was already doing it; more than that, she had already done it, and her chance was gone. She gave herself up—she had the strangest sense, on the spot, of so deciding" (319).

Unlike the Underground Man or Daisy Miller, both Myshkin and Milly realize that despite the dangers inherent in social life (Milly compares it to moving in a labyrinth or walking along the abysses), it is the only way to *live* one's life—by allowing others to take part in it, and thereby risking loosing one's control over it. Like Dostoevsky's heroes, the characters in *The Wings of the Dove* perceive themselves against the views others hold of them, and this is

especially important for Milly who turns to others for their views of her in attempt to picture herself in as many potential plots as possible. She is "delighted to know that something was to be done with her" when both Lord Mark and Kate suggest to her that Mrs. Lowder is "working" her (334). She is drawn to Kate precisely because she feels that Kate can "use" her, and because of Kate's originality and "talent for life," Milly feels the role she can play can be interesting. Finally, a telling example of this is her special interest—and disappointment—in Densher's view of her:

> It was at this point that she saw the smash of her great question complete, saw that all she had to do with was the sense of being there with him. And there was no chill for this in what she also presently saw—that, however he had begun, he was now acting from a particular desire, determined either by new facts or new fancies, to be like every one else, simplifyingly "kind" to her. He had caught on already as to manner—fallen into line with every one else; and if his spirits verily *had* gone up it might well be that he had thus felt himself lighting on the remedy for all awkwardness. Whatever he did or he didn't Milly knew she should still like him—there was no alternative to that; but her heart could none the less sink a little on feeling how much his view of her was destined to have in common with—as she now sighed over it—*the* view. She could have dreamed of his not having *the* view, of his having something or other, if need be quite viewless, of his own; but he might have what he could with least trouble, and *the* view wouldn't be after all a positive bar to her seeing him. The defect of it in general—if she might so ungraciously criticise—was that, by its sweet universality, it made relations rather prosaically a matter of course. (415)

Because Milly does not have time to find out what she is good for, she is turning to others in the hope that they will reveal her hidden potentials by "working" her, in the same way Kate, for instance, allows Aunt Maude to proceed with her plan. She quickly finds herself in possession of many labels applied to her. She is, of course, The American girl; she is a princess, but also a "poor girl," as Densher and Kate refer to her between themselves. While she cannot be reduced to any one of these categories, she nevertheless eagerly tries them on as if they were dresses and hats, and reflecting whether they suit her. As Milicent Bell puts it, "if [Milly] is a book, [she] is a text that is not so much unprecedented in its design as one that invites, being postmodernly 'scriptable,' each reader's imagination to write the story" (316). Milly "accepts" the view of her as a princess from Kate: "It was a fact—it became one at the end of three days—that Milly actually began to borrow from the handsome girl a sort of view of her state; the handsome girl's impression of it was clearly so sincere. This impression was a tribute, a tribute positively to power, power the source of which was the last thing Kate treated as a mystery" (330). But it is not as a princess that Milly comes to see her power, but as a dove—another view that Kate persuades her to accept immediately after she herself is presented to Milly as a predator. This decisive conversation takes place when they are left alone in Milly's hotel, and Kate, in one of the most memorable scenes in the novel, gives Milly her "honest advice"—and there is no reason to doubt her honesty here—"to drop us while you can" (402). Her words frighten Milly, who sees Kate in a new light, as "a creature who paced like a panther" (402), all the more so when Kate suggests Milly may very well come to loathe her, to which Milly responds with a question that is almost a plea, "Why do you say such things to me?" Touched by her innocence, Kate replies, "Because you're a dove," which suddenly affects Milly "like an inspiration: she found herself accepting as the right one, while she caught her breath with relief, the name so given her.

She met it on the instant as she would have met revealed truth; it lighted up the strange dusk in which she lately had walked. *That* was what was the matter with her. She was a dove. Oh *wasn't* she?" (403). Immediately following this, Milly performs her first "dove-like" act: she "covers" Kate with her wings by lying to Mrs. Lowder about Densher's return (of which Milly herself finds out not directly from Kate, but from imaginative "guessing"). "It was in the tone of the fondest indulgence—almost, really, that of dove cooing to dove—that Mrs. Lowder expressed to Milly the hope that it had all gone beautifully," by which she means, of course, that Milly has managed to find out from Kate what she, Mrs. Lowder, wanted to know.

> But Milly's answer had prepared itself while Aunt Maud was on the stair; she had felt in a rush all the reasons that would make it the most dove-like; and she gave it, while she was about it, as earnest, as candid. "I don't *think*, dear lady, he's here."
>
> It gave her straightway the measure of the success she could have as a dove: that was recorded in the long look of deep criticism, a look without a word, that Mrs. Lowder poured forth. And the word, presently, bettered it still. "Oh you exquisite thing!" The luscious innuendo of it, almost startling, lingered in the room, after the visitors had gone, like an oversweet fragrance. But left alone with Mrs. Stringham Milly continued to breathe it: she studied again the dovelike and so set her companion to mere rich reporting that she averted all enquiry into her own case. (404)

While Milly accepts the name as a revelation of truth about herself ("She was a dove. Oh *wasn't* she?") her decision to behave in a dove*like* manner—particularly her manipulation of her new identity worthy of Mrs. Lowder—and the "complication" she sees in the form of "her

need, each time, to decide" and "to be clear as to how a dove *would* act," point to the artificiality of this imposed identity. Nonetheless, the name serves her as an escape not only from her immediate predicament with Mrs. Lowder, but also from a more profound sense of isolation and confusion. It alludes, of course, to the Bible, and here, as in *Daisy Miller*, scriptural allusions point to values that comprise what Robert Weisbuch calls "James's American sacred," namely, "the sanctity of other people, the rich solidity of the world, equal (not domineering or enslaved) participation in social life" (217). Milly is a Jamesian, not a Christian, "saint," which is why she can lie and dissimulate as long as she continues to protect the sacredness of individual autonomy and will.

While Milly accepts the name from Kate, she is not defined by her, for Milly's imagination is richer than Kate's, who "simplified in advance" (335). Milly, on the other hand, sees more in the name given her than naiveté and kindness Kate associates with it. To be a dove is to be kind and protective, but it is also, as Densher notes to himself, to "have wings and wondrous flights, have them as well as tender tints and soft sounds" (565). In fact, it seems that the image of the dove Milly embodies comes from Psalm 55, in which the psalmist, betrayed by "my other self, my comrade and friend" (Ps 55:14-15) and tormented by the fear of death evokes the image of the dove's wings as a means of escape: "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest" (Ps 55:4-8). The fear of death, the betrayal by friends, the desire to escape by turning into a dove indeed make this role "the right one" for Milly. Thus Kate at once presents her with the cause of her fear and, by "naming" her a dove, gives her the

wings for her flight. Only Milly has already rejected the idea of an easy escape—once in the Swiss Alps, and once in London. She is not about to flee the danger; she will, indeed, "remain in the wilderness," but the wilderness in the novel is the society itself.

In *Henry James and the Philosophical Novel*, Merle A. Williams reads Milly's acceptance of the "dove" role as a practice of Sartrean *bad faith*, whereby the individual comes to see a superimposed role or category as a total of his or her identity. According to Williams, by "choosing a part which offers a respite to the others, but contains very little comfort for herself" Milly "gives up the anguish and desperation" of the struggle that characterizes 'living:' "The dangers and challenges of giving full expression to her freedom as an individual are neatly removed; she can shelter behind various carefully controlled presentations of a selected role model" (113, 117-18). However, Milly's affinity to Myshkin, and the numerous thematic parallels between *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove* call for a different interpretation, one that can be illuminated by Dostoevsky's famous diary entry already quoted in relation to *The Idiot* in which he concludes "that the greatest use a man can make of his personality, of the fullest development of his *I,* is in one way or another to destroy this *I,* to give himself up wholly to all and everyone, selflessly and wholeheartedly. And that is the greatest happiness" (Dostoevsky, *OW* 305-6).

That James was interested in self-sacrifice as a form of self-realization is evident from his early sketches for the novel.

> I seem to get hold of the tail of a pretty idea in making that happiness, that life, that snatched experience the girl longs for, BE, *in fact*, some rapturous act of that sort—some act of generosity, of passionate beneficence, of pure sacrifice, to the man she loves. This would obviate all 'marriage" between *them*, and everything

> so vulgar as an 'engagement,' and, removing the poor creature's yearning from the class of egotistic pleasures, the dream of being possessed and possessing, etc., make it some fine and strange. […] It is with the vision of what she could do for *him* that she renewedly pleads for life. (*Notebooks* 105).

Indeed, following her "revelation," Milly "renewedly pleads for life" by enacting her own 'script,' which, not coincidentally, mirrors Myshkin's "saintly scripting" directed at allowing others to attain selfhood.[52] It is significant that before Milly consciously assumed the role of the dove, she felt she was in a current determined by others: "It pressed upon her then and there that she was still in a current determined, through her indifference, timidity, bravery, generosity—she scarce could say which—by others; that not she but the current acted, and that somebody else always was the keeper of the lock or the dam" (397). Soon after accepting the 'dove' role, Milly herself becomes the "current" (hence James's apt metaphor of the pool of a Lorelei in the preface). This shift is manifested in her moving to Venice, where she, and not Mrs. Lowder, acts as a hostess and stages various events. Some critics interpret Milly's position in Venice, high up in her palazzo, as a removal from the world of human relations.[53] But she is nothing like the Dreamer or John Marcher. I suggest that, on the contrary, it allows her to actualize her potentiality most fully. At one point she says to Susan, "Since I've lived all these years as if I

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[52] See Kristin King, "Ethereal Milly Theale in The Wings of the Dove : The Transparent Heart of James's Opaque Style." *The Henry James Review* 21.1 (2000): 1-13. King's analysis of Milly's "writing strategies" echoes Young's description of Myshkin's "saintly scripting:" "The stillness, silence, and inactivity of these writing strategies contrast with the busy self-interested world of Lancaster Gate. They also clarify how Milly's influence operates. In the same way that James's style increasingly demands participation and acts of mutual construction from readers and characters alike, Milly's reticence and withdrawal force characters to engage in the action and reveal themselves" (4).

[53] See, for example, Merle A. Williams: "She is completely at ease with the 'cool pavements' and the 'painted "subjects" in the splendid ceilings' (vol. 20, p. 132); in fact, she surrounds herself with the artificial and the inert. She withdraws from the active life of Venice and avoids joining her friends' excursions to explore the city. Like the noblewoman in Bronzino's portrait, she has assumed her pose: the palace acts at once as an impressive backdrop and as a guarantee of her artificial security. The insatiable desire to do everything, and to learn about people, has been frozen" (120).

were dead, I shall die, no doubt, as if I were alive" (347). To be alive is to play a part in other people's lives, to leave a mark and with it, carve out a place for oneself in the future. In the preface, James claims that Milly's "stricken state was but half her case, the correlative half being the state of others as affected by her." In a 1902 letter to Ford Madox Ford, James suggests that the state of others as affected by her was in fact the very subject of the novel: "the subject was Densher's history with Kate Croy—hers with him, and Milly's history was but a thing involved and embroiled in that." In any case, it is clear that Milly's sense of being alive is directly related to the difference she can make. Hence, Volume Two of the novel focuses on "the other half," that is, on the effect Milly has on others. Her function in this part of the novel is similar to Myshkin's in the first part of *The Idiot*: that of allowing others to actualize their potentialities. The person most affected by this is the person Milly is most concerned with: Merton Densher.

It is significant that both Dostoevsky and James place their "positively beautiful" protagonists in love triangles. In both cases, the resulting drama is reminiscent of medieval allegories: Nastasya Filippovna is torn between the dark, satanic Rogozhin and fair, Christ-like Myshkin, as if the forces of heaven and hell were fighting for her soul. In *The Wings of the Dove*, Bersani observes, "Kate and Milly have […] become, allegorically, representatives of the way of the lioness and the way of the dove in Densher himself" ("Narrator as Center" 137).[54] There are, of course, significant differences between the two triangles: the drama in *The Idiot* unfolds almost entirely in public, and while the motives of the participants remain obscure or ambivalent, there is no deception involved, except perhaps occasional self-deception. The opposite is true of the relationship between Kate, Densher, and Milly. The actions of each are calculated, and most of their drama unfolds behind the curtains. But just as Nastasya Filippovna is the dramatic center

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[54] Leo Bersani, "The Narrator as Center in 'The Wings of the Dove,'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 6.2 (1960): 131-44.

of *The Idiot*, so it is Densher, as Bersani rightly claims, “who is really the central dramatic character of *The Wings of the Dove,* […] because it is the state of Densher’s soul […] around which the moral action of the novel is built” (“Narrator as Center” 137).

From his first appearance in the novel, Densher is presented as lacking determinacy: he begins by walking “with a certain directness” but then appears “noticeably wanting in point” and moving “seemingly at random from alley to alley” (247). The narrator concludes that “Distinctly, he was a man either with nothing at all to do or with ever so much to think about, and notes that it was “almost impossible to name his profession” based on his appearance:

> He was young for the House of Commons, he was loose for the army. He was refined, as might have been said, for the city, and, quite apart from the cut of his cloth, he was sceptical, it might have been felt, for the church. On the other hand he was credulous for diplomacy, or perhaps even for science, while he was perhaps at the same time too much in his mere senses for poetry, and yet too little in them for art. You would have got fairly near him by making out in his eyes the potential recognition of ideas; but you would have quite fallen away again on the question of the ideas themselves. The difficulty with Densher was that he looked vague without looking weak—idle without looking empty. […] He suggested above all, however, that wondrous state of youth in which the elements, the metals more or less precious, are so in fusion and fermentation that the question of the final stamp, the pressure that fixes the value, must wait for comparative coolness. (247-248)

It is not surprising that Milly, whose own “elements” are “cooled” by the stamp of impending death, is attracted by Densher’s indeterminacy. Milly knows that she is doomed, which makes

her, like those condemned to death in Dostoevsky, "conscious of a great capacity for life" and "enamoured of the world." Like Ippolit in *The Idiot*, who is eager to leave a mark before he dies, Milly, according to James's preface, "passionately desir[es] to 'put in' before extinction as many of the finer vibrations as possible, and so achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived" (*LC* 2:1287). Another Jamesian character who is trying to do that is Ralph Touchette in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Conscious of his near death like Milly, and aware that he cannot fully participate in life, he achieves his sense of having lived by putting wind into Isabel's sails. Condemned to death, both Ralph and Milly are drawn to those who embody potentiality, because whatever they invest into these individuals will last beyond their own death. Bakhtin writes that in Dostoevsky, "As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word" (*Problems* 59). But Ralph and Milly, as well as Dostoevsky's Ippolit, are already stamped by death. Consequently, investing into those whose paths and future are not yet determined is their only way of partaking of the excitement of life, with its unpredictability and, as Milly puts it, abysses. They can look forward with curiosity and wonder to what will happen next, as opposed to facing the cruel certainty of the wall. For this reason, when Milly sacrifices herself, when she allows others to make use of her, she also gains something she seeks. The real gift she makes with her bequest to Densher—her stamp on his personality—is freedom, and with it, she ensures her own lingering impact on the future from which she will be absent.

While Milly does not know that Densher is manipulated by Kate, she is conscious of the pressure exerted on him by the demands of Lancaster Gate in general. She knows it because Kate has been open about it; she also knows it because she has felt this pressure herself in Lancaster Gate. But, most importantly, she knows it when she senses the difference between Densher she

met in New York and Densher she meets in London. During their first London meeting, she observes that "he was now acting from a particular desire, determined either by new facts or new fancies, to be like every one else, simplifyingly 'kind' to her. He had caught on already as to manner—fallen into line with every one else" (415). Milly feels disappointed when she sees "how much his view of her was destined to have in common with […] *the* view. She could have dreamed of his not having *the* view, of his having something or other, if need be quite viewless, of his own" (415). By moving her social stage to Venice, Milly establishes herself as an author and director, while simultaneously "trying to make it appear that she is acting on others' versions of what is good for her" (Bersani, "Narrator as Center" 136). While everyone around her is busy plotting and scheming, she is writing her own "sacred script," whereby her "reticence and withdrawal force characters to engage in the action and reveal themselves" (King 4).

The effect of her scripting strategy is most obvious in Densher's growing desire for authorship and control, for he is, after all, the one on whom she builds. It is particularly evident in the contrast between Densher's relationship with Kate and Mrs. Lowder on the one hand, and with Milly on another. As Densher is himself aware, the women who surround him all envision a narrowly prescribed role for him: "She wanted, Susan Shepherd then, as appeared, the same thing Kate wanted, only wanted it, as still further appeared, in so different a way and from a motive so different, even though scarce less deep. Then Mrs. Lowder wanted, by so odd an evolution of her exuberance, exactly what each of the others did; and he was between them all, he was in the midst" (559). In contrast, Milly is careful not to push him in any direction he himself is not willing to take. Densher is aware that Milly does not expect anything from him but that he be himself and be at ease. It is for this reason that he feels free and easy in her presence.

The following passage vividly captures the change in Densher's inner state as he shifts from oppressive, manipulative relations with Kate and Mrs. Lowder to Milly's "easy" company:

> He was to dine at the palace in an hour or two, and he had lunched there, at an early luncheon, that morning. He had then been out with the three ladies, the three being Mrs. Lowder, Mrs. Stringham and Kate, and had kept afloat with them, under a sufficient Venetian spell, until Aunt Maud had directed him to leave them and return to Miss Theale. […] What he could as little contrive to forget was that he had, before the two others, as it struck him—that was to say especially before Kate—done exactly as he was bidden; gathered himself up without a protest and retraced his way to the palace. […] He had found Milly Theale twenty minutes later alone, and he had sat with her till the others returned to tea. The strange part of this was that it had been very easy, extraordinarily easy. He knew it for strange only when he was away from her, because when he was away from her he was in contact with particular things that made it so. At the time, in her presence, it was as simple as sitting with his sister might have been […]. (534)

Whereas Milly gives Densher an illusion that he acts from his own free will, Kate's ever-present influence makes it impossible for Densher to enjoy things he would have enjoyed had they not happened to be part of Kate's plan: "As soon as Kate appeared again the difference came up—the oddity, as he then instantly felt it, of his having sunk so deep. It was sinking because it was all doing what Kate had conceived for him; it wasn't in the least doing—and that had been his notion of his life—anything he himself had conceived" (535). Milly, on the other hand, is entirely taken up with whatever Densher is capable of doing: "She might have been conceived as doing—that is of being—what he liked in order perhaps only to judge where it would take them"

(588). Her excitement when Densher tells her (lying about his staying in Venice) that he is writing a book further testifies to her desire to see him as an author. But the lie is not entirely a lie, for under Milly's influence, Densher does indeed awake to his sense of authorship. He continuously tries to see his relationship with Milly as his own doing, and this is also not entirely a self-deception on his part. Throughout his stay in Venice, he is torn between his genuine (although, it must be added, asexual) attraction to Milly which has begun in New York, and, on the other side, the haunting, distressing sense that he is merely enacting a play produced and directed by others. Ultimately, it is what he does with the money that Milly leaves him that will determine for him the meaning of this relationship—and the extent of his control over his life and identity. Milly's generosity, therefore, is not just an act of forgiveness: it is an act of faith, her final (but not finalizing) "stamp" on Densher's personality, and in the end she does die as if she were alive, for it is in her death that she achieves what she was longing for: not so much Densher's love, but a distinct presence in his life. His vision of her is also altered: whereas previously he had accepted the common view of her, or "*the* view," now it is *his* view that shapes the way everyone else remembers her, and in his view, Milly's type, be it a dove or the American girl, is wonderfully elastic. As if to honor and protect this elasticity, Densher decides not to read Milly's last letter, to hear her "last word," thereby preserving her in his memory as forever a potentiality. By refusing to read the letter, he can continue conceiving of her as he wishes, and thus carrying on the game they were playing when she was alive.

In the end, Kate's last words, "we shall never be again as we were," testify to the triumph of Milly's script. Not only does Densher keep his integrity and freedom by refusing to accept the bequest, but he himself adapts Milly's scripting strategy with respect to Kate by giving ger her the freedom to choose between what Bersani calls the "way of the lioness and the way of the

dove." First, he gives her Milly's last letter, "the sacred script," as he calls it, without having read it, but Kate, concerned as she is exclusively with financial consequences of Milly's death, throws it in the fire, because she knows that official documents from New York will announce the sum. During their next meeting, Densher makes his scripting strategy even more explicit: as Kate returns with a letter from New York, Densher expresses his disappointment with her breaking the seal. When Kate rejoins that he had not given her such directions, he says, "I didn't want to. I wanted to leave it to yourself. I wanted—oh yes, if that's what you wish to ask me—to see what you'd do" (685). Thus Densher duplicates Milly's last act in relation to him: she, too, leaves him her fortune to see what he'd do with it, as an acknowledgement of his freedom and the "dove-like" in his nature.

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[i] " жизнь — целое искусство, что жить значит сделать художественное произведение из самого себя" (*SS* 2:8)

[ii] В конце ноября, в оттепель, часов в девять утра, поезд Петербургско-Варшавской железной дороги на всех парах подходил к Петербургу. Было так сыро и туманно, что насилу рассвело; в десяти шагах, вправо и влево от дороги, трудно было разглядеть хоть что-нибудь из окон вагона. Из пассажиров были и возвращавшиеся из-за границы; но более были наполнены отделения для третьего класса, и всё людом мелким и деловым, не из очень далека. Все, как водится, устали, у всех отяжелели за ночь глаза, все назяблись, все лица были бледно-желтые, под цвет тумана. (*SS 6*:5)

[iii] В одном из вагонов третьего класса, с рассвета, очутились друг против друга, у самого окна, два пассажира — оба люди молодые, оба почти налегке, оба не щегольски одетые, оба с довольно замечательными физиономиями и оба пожелавшие, наконец, войти друг с другом в разговор. Если б они оба знали один про другого, чем они особенно в эту минуту замечательны, то, конечно, подивились бы, что случай так странно посадил их друг против друга в третьеклассном вагоне петербургско-варшавского поезда. (*SS 6*:5)

[iv] с людьми сойтись (*SS 6*:28)

[v] Эти господа всезнайки встречаются иногда, даже довольно часто, в известном общественном слое. Они всё знают, вся беспокойная пытливость их ума и способности устремляются неудержимо в одну сторону, конечно за отсутствием более важных жизненных интересов и взглядов, как сказал бы современный мыслитель. Под словом «всё знают» нужно разуметь, впрочем, область довольно ограниченную: где служит такой-то, с кем он знаком, сколько у него состояния, где был губернатором, на ком женат, сколько взял за женой, кто ему двоюродным братом приходится, кто троюродным и т. д., и т. д., и всё в этом роде. (*SS 6*:8-9)

[vi] Князь Мышкин? Лев Николаевич? Не знаю-с. Так что даже и не слыхивал-с, — отвечал в раздумье чиновник, — то есть я не об имени, имя историческое, в Карамзина «Истории» найти можно и должно, я об лице-с, да и князей Мышкиных уж что-то нигде не встречается, даже и слух затих-с. (*SS 6*:9)

[vii] я спорить не могу, потому что всего не знаю (*SS 6*:7)

[viii] Меня по болезни не находили возможным систематически учить. (*SS 6*:10)

[ix] С тех пор я ужасно люблю ослов. Это даже какая-то во мне симпатия. Я стал о них расспрашивать, потому что прежде их не видывал, и тотчас же сам убедился, что это преполезнейшее животное, рабочее, сильное, терпеливое, дешевое, переносливое; и чрез этого осла мне вдруг вся Швейцария стала нравиться, так что совершенно прошла прежняя грусть. (*SS 6*:59)

[x] князь рассказал очень интересно свой болезненный случай и как всё понравилось чрез один внешний толчок. (*SS 6*:60)

[xi] …лицо приговоренного за минуту до удара гильотины, когда еще он на эшафоте стоит, пред тем как ложиться на эту доску. (*SS 6*:66)

[xii] Тут он взглянул в мою сторону; я поглядел на его лицо и всё понял... (*SS 6*:67)

[xiii] Наверно, у него ноги слабели и деревенели, и тошнота была, — как будто что его давит в горле, и от этого точно щекотно… (*SS 6*:68)

[xiv] Нарисуйте эшафот так, чтобы видна была ясно и близко одна только последняя ступень; преступник ступил на нее: голова, лицо бледное как бумага, священник протягивает крест, тот с жадностию протягивает свои синие губы, и глядит, и — *всё знает*. Крест и голова — вот картина, лицо священника, палача, его двух служителей и несколько голов и глаз снизу, — всё это можно нарисовать как бы на третьем плане, в тумане, для аксессуара... (*SS 6*:68-69)

[xv] — Да вы точно... из-за границы? — как-то невольно спросил он наконец — и сбился; он хотел, может быть, спросить: «Да вы точно князь Мышкин?»

— Да, сейчас только из вагона. Мне кажется, вы хотели спросить: точно ли я князь Мышкин? да не спросили из вежливости. (*SS 6*:20)

[xvi] И вот, ей-богу же, генерал, хоть я ровно ничего не знаю практически ни в здешних обычаях, ни вообще как здесь люди живут, но так я и думал, что у нас непременно именно это и выйдет, как теперь вышло. Что ж, может быть, оно так и надо... Да и тогда мне тоже на письмо не ответили... Ну, прощайте и извините, что обеспокоил. (*SS 6*:26)

[xvii] И, наконец, мне кажется, мы такие розные люди на вид... по многим обстоятельствам, что у нас, пожалуй, и не может быть много точек общих, но, знаете, я в эту последнюю идею сам не верю, потому очень часто только так кажется, что нет точек общих, а они очень есть... это от лености людской происходит, что люди так промеж собой на глаз сортируются и ничего не могут найти... (*SS 6*:28)

[xviii] — И я их лица знаю, — сказал князь, особенно ударяя на свои слова. (*SS 6*:69)

[xix] Вы спрашивали меня про ваши лица и что я заметил в них. Я вам с большим удовольствием это скажу. У вас, Аделаида Ивановна, счастливое лицо, из всех трех лиц самое симпатичное. Кроме того, что вы очень хороши собой, на вас смотришь и говоришь: «У ней лицо, как у доброй сестры». Вы подходите спроста и весело, но и сердце умеете скоро узнать. Вот так мне кажется про ваше лицо. У вас, Александра Ивановна, лицо тоже прекрасное и очень милое, но, может быть, у вас есть какая-нибудь тайная грусть; душа у вас, без сомнения, добрейшая, но вы невеселы. У вас какой-то особенный оттенок в лице, похоже как у Гольбейновой Мадонны в Дрездене. Ну, вот и про ваше лицо; хорош я угадчик? Сами же вы меня за угадчика считаете. (*SS 6*:79)

[xx] — Красоту трудно судить; я еще не приготовился. Красота — загадка. (*SS 6*:80)

[xxi] …я уверен, что судьба ее не из обыкновенных. Лицо веселое, а она ведь ужасно страдала, а? Об этом глаза говорят, вот эти две косточки, две точки под глазами в начале щек. Это гордое лицо, ужасно гордое, и вот не знаю, добра ли она? Ах, кабы добра! Всё было бы спасено! (*SS 6*:38)

[xxii] Ему как бы хотелось разгадать что-то скрывавшееся в этом лице и поразившее его давеча. Давешнее впечатление почти не оставляло его, и теперь он спешил как бы что-то вновь проверить. Это необыкновенное по своей красоте и еще почему-то лицо сильнее еще поразило его теперь. Как будто необъятная гордость и презрение, почти ненависть, были в этом лице, и в то же самое время что-то доверчивое, что-то удивительно простодушное; эти два контраста возбуждали как будто даже какое-то сострадание при взгляде на эти черты. Эта ослепляющая красота была даже невыносима, красота бледного лица, чуть не впалых щек и горевших глаз; странная красота! Князь смотрел с минуту, потом »друг спохватился, огляделся кругом, поспешно приблизил портрет к губам и поцеловал его. (*SS 6*:82-83)

[xxiii] Все кругом смотрели на нее как на гадину; старики осуждали и бранили, молодые даже смеялись, женщины бранили ее, осуждали, смотрели с презреньем таким, как на паука какого. (*SS 6*:71-72)

[xxiv] Мари всё переносила, и я потом, когда познакомился с нею, заметил, что она и сама всё это одобряла, и сама считала себя за какую-то самую последнюю тварь. (*SS 6*:72)

[xxv] ...что она не должна себя такою низкою считать пред всеми... (*SS 6*:73)

[xxvi] ... что я с самого начала ее нисколько за виноватую не почитал, а только за несчастную. (*SS 6*:73)

[xxvii] ... я от них ничего не таил; я им всё рассказал. (*SS 6*:74)

[xxviii] Через них, уверяю вас, она умерла почти счастливая. Через них она забыла свою черную беду, как бы прощение от них приняла, потому что до самого конца считала себя великою преступницею. (*SS 6*:76)

[xxix] Настасья Филипповна «только случая ищет, чтобы осыпать его и его домашних насмешками». (В этом он был убежден). (*SS 6*:111)

[xxx] Настасья Филипповна удивилась, усмехнулась, но, как будто что-то пряча под свою улыбку, несколько смешавшись, взглянула на Ганю и пошла из гостиной. Но, не дойдя еще до прихожей, вдруг воротилась, быстро подошла к Нине Александровне, взяла ее руку и поднесла ее к губам своим.

— Я ведь и в самом деле не такая, он угадал, — прошептала она быстро, горячо, вся вдруг вспыхнув изакрасневшись, и, повернувшись, вышла на этот раз так быстро, что никто и сообразить не успел, зачем это она возвращалась. Видели только, что она пошептала что-то Нине Александровне и, кажется, руку ее поцеловала. Но Варя видела и слышала всё и с удивлением проводила ее глазами. (*SS 6*:121-122)

[xxxi] Вы ей сказали, что ей стыдно, и она вдруг вся изменилась. Вы на нее влияние имеете, князь… (*SS 6*:123)

[xxxii] Вы замечаете то, чего другие никогда не заметят. (*SS 6*:124)

[xxxiii] …Я первый раз, может быть, в целые два года по сердцу говорю. Здесь ужасно мало честных людей; честнее Птицына нет. Что, вы, кажется, смеетесь али нет? Подлецы любят честных людей, — вы этого не знали? А я ведь... А впрочем, чем я подлец, скажите мне по совести? Что они меня все вслед за нею подлецом называют? И знаете, вслед за ними и за нею я и сам себя подлецом называю! Вот что подло так подло!

— Я вас подлецом теперь уже никогда не буду считать, — сказал князь. (*SS 6*:127)

[xxxiv] Он восстановляет Н<астасью> Ф<илипповну> и действует влиянием на Рогожина. Доводит Аглаю до человечности, Генеральшу до безумия доводит в привязанности к Князю и в обожании его. (*PSS* 9:252)

[xxxv] «Что же он там сделает и зачем идет?» — на этот вопрос он решительно не находил успокоительного ответа. Если бы даже и можно было каким-нибудь образом, уловив случай, сказать Настасье Филипповне: «Не выходите за этого человека и не губите себя, он вас не любит, а любит ваши деньги, он мне сам это говорил, и мне говорила Аглая Епанчина, а я пришел вам пересказать», — то вряд ли это вышло бы правильно во всех отношениях. (*SS 6*:139)

[xxxvi] Потом она вдруг обратилась к князю и, грозно нахмурив брови, пристально его разглядывала; но это было на мгновение; может быть, ей вдруг показалось, что всё это шутка, насмешка… (*SS 6*:171)

[xxxvii] Есть такие идеи, есть высокие идеи, о которых я не должен начинать говорить, потому что я непременно всех насмешу; […] У меня нет жеста приличного, чувства меры нет; у меня слова другие, а не соответственные мысли, а это унижение для этих мыслей. И потому я не имею права... к тому же я мнителен, я... я убежден, что в этом доме меня не могут обидеть и любят меня более, чем я стою, но я знаю (я ведь наверно знаю), что после двадцати лет болезни непременно должно было что-нибудь да остаться, так что нельзя не смеяться надо мной... иногда... ведь так? (*SS 6*:343)

[xxxviii] Как будто необъятная гордость и презрение, почти ненависть, были в этом лице, и в то же самое время что-то доверчивое, что-то удивительно простодушное… (*SS 6*:83)

[xxxix] …он мне за родного брата в Москве одно время был… (*SS 6*:224)

[xl] Другое, мрачное, мучительное любопытство соблазняло его. (*SS 6*:229)

[xli] А впрочем, что же он взялся их так окончательно судить, он, сегодня явившийся, что же это он произносит такие приговоры? Да вот Лебедев же задал ему сегодня задачу: ну ожидал ли он такого Лебедева? Разве он знал такого Лебедева прежде? Лебедев и Дюбарри, — господи! Впрочем, если Рогожин убьет, то по крайней мере не так беспорядочно убьет. Хаоса этого не будет. По рисунку заказанный инструмент и шесть человек, положенных совершенно в бреду! Разве у Рогожина по рисунку заказанный инструмент... у него... но... разве решено, что Рогожин убьет?! вздрогнул вдруг князь. «Не преступление ли, не низость ли с моей стороны так цинически-откровенно сделать такое предположение!» — вскричал он, и краска стыда залила разом лицо его. Он был изумлен, он стоял как вкопанный на дороге. Он разом вспомнил и давешний Павловский воксал, и давешний Николаевский воксал, и вопрос Рогожину прямо в лицо о *глазах,* и крест Рогожина, который теперь на нем, и благословение его матери, к которой он же его сам привел, и последнее судорожное объятие, последнее отречение Рогожина, давеча, на лестнице, — и после

этого всего поймать себя на беспрерывном искании чего-то кругом себя, и эта лавка, и этот предмет... что за низость! И после всего этого он идет теперь с «особенною целью», с особою «внезапною идеей»! Отчаяние и страдание захватили всю его душу. Князь немедленно хотел поворотить назад к себе, в гостиницу; даже повернулся и потел; но чрез минуту остановился, обдумал и воротился опять по прежней дороге. (*SS 6*:230-231)

[xlii] Парфен, не верю!.. (*SS 6*:236)

[xliii] Ты вот пишешь, что ты всё забыл и что одного только крестового брата Рогожина помнишь, а не того Рогожина, который на тебя тогда нож подымал. Да почему ты-то мои чувства знаешь? […] Да я, может, в том ни разу с тех пор и не покаялся, а ты уже свое братское прошение мне прислал. Может, я в тот же вечер о другом совсем уже думал, а об этом... (*SS 6*:366)

[xliv] Вдруг Ипполит поднялся, ужасно бледный и с видом страшного, доходившего до отчаяния стыда на искаженном своем лице. Это выражалось преимущественно в его взгляде, ненавистно и боязливо глянувшем на собрание, и в потерянной, искривленной и ползучей усмешке на вздрагивавших губах. Глаза он тотчас же опустил и побрел, пошатываясь и всё так же улыбаясь, к Бурдовскому и Докторенку, которые стояли у выхода с террасы: он уезжал с ними.

— Ну, вот этого я и боялся! — воскликнул князь. — Так и должно было быть!

Ипполит быстро обернулся к нему с самою бешеною злобой, и каждая черточка на лице его, казалось, трепетала и говорила.

— А, вы этого и боялись! «Так и должно было быть», по-вашему? Так знайте же, что если я кого-нибудь здесь ненавижу, — завопил он с хрипом, с визгом, с брызгами изо рта (я вас всех, всех ненавижу!), — но вас, вас, иезуитская, паточная душонка, идиот, миллионер-благодетель, вас более всех и всего на свете! Я вас давно понял и ненавидел, когда еще слышал о вас, я вас ненавидел всею ненавистью души... Это вы теперь всё подвели! Это вы меня довели до припадка! Вы умирающего довели до стыда, вы, вы, вы виноваты в подлом моем малодушии! Я убил бы вас, если б остался жить! Не надо мне ваших благодеяний, ни от кого не приму, слышите, ни от кого, ничего! Я в бреду был, и вы не смеете торжествовать!.. Проклинаю всех вас раз навсегда!

Тут он совсем уж задохся.

— Слез своих застыдился! — прошептал Лебедев Лизавете Прокофьевне. — «Так и должно было быть!». Ай да князь! Насквозь прочитал... (*SS 6*:302)

[xlv] "Она, князь, вас еще более его боится, и здесь — премудрость!" (*SS 6*:202)

[xlvi] Вернее всего то, что жалость твоя, пожалуй, еще пуще моей любви! (*SS 6*:214)

[xlvii] Я, говорит, свободна, и, знаете, князь, сильно стоит на том, я, говорит, еще совершенно свободна! Всё еще на Петербургской, в доме моей свояченицы проживает, как и писал я вам.

— И теперь там?

— Там, если не в Павловске, по хорошей погоде, у Дарьи Алексеевны на даче. Я, говорит, совершенно свободна; еще вчера Николаю Ардалионовичу про свою свободу много хвалилась. Признак дурной-с! (*SS 6*:202)

[xlviii] Князь очень был рад, что его оставили наконец одного; он сошел с террасы, перешел чрез дорогу и вошел в парк; ему хотелось обдумать и разрешить один шаг. Но этот «шаг» был не из тех, которые обдумываются, а из тех, которые именно не обдумываются, а на которые просто решаются: ему ужасно вдруг захотелось оставить всё это здесь, а самому уехать назад, откуда приехал, куда-нибудь подальше, в глушь, уехать сейчас же и даже ни с кем не простившись. Он предчувствовал, что если только останется здесь хоть еще на несколько дней, то непременно втянется в этот мир безвозвратно, и этот же мир и выпадет ему впредь на долю. Но он не рассуждал и десяти минут и тотчас решил, что бежать «невозможно», что это будет почти малодушие, что пред ним стоят такие задачи, что не разрешить или по крайней мере не употребить всех сил к разрешению их он не имеет теперь никакого даже и права. В таких мыслях воротился он домой и вряд ли и четверть часа гулял. Он был вполне несчастен в эту минуту. (*SS 6*:310-311)

[xlix] "Я сидел в вагоне и думал: «Теперь я к людям иду; я, может быть, ничего не знаю, но наступила новая жизнь». Я положил исполнить свое дело честно и твердо. С людьми мне будет, может быть, скучно и тяжело. На первый случай я положил быть со всеми вежливым и откровенным; больше от меня ведь никто не потребует." (*SS 6*:78).

[l] …такой большой город мне всё мечтался, как Неаполь, в нем все дворцы, шум, гром, жизнь... Да мало ли что мечталось! (*SS 6*:62)

[li] Мучило его то, что всему этому он совсем чужой. Что же это за пир, что ж это за всегдашний великий праздник, которому нет конца и к которому тянет его давно, всегда, с самого детства, и к которому он никак не может пристать. Каждое утро восходит такое же светлое солнце; каждое утро на водопаде радуга; каждый вечер снеговая, самая высокая гора там, вдали, на краю неба, горит пурпуровым пламенем; каждая «маленькая мушка, которая жужжит около него в горячем солнечном луче, во всем этом хоре участница: место знает свое, любит его и счастлива»; каждая-то травка растет и счастлива! И у всего свой путь, и всё знает свой путь, с песнью отходит и с песнью приходит; один он ничего не знает, ничего не понимает, ни людей, ни звуков, всему чужой и выкидыш. О, он, конечно, не мог говорить тогда этими словами и высказать свой вопрос; он мучился глухо и немо; но теперь ему казалось, что он всё это говорил и тогда, все эти самые слова, и что про эту «мушку» Ипполит взял у него самого, из его тогдашних слов и слез. Он был в этом уверен, и его сердце билось почему-то от этой мысли... (*SS 6*:425-426)

[lii] Возлюбить человека, *как самого себя,* по заповеди Христовой, — невозможно. Закон личности на земле связывает. *Я* препятствует. Один Христос мог, но Христос был вековечный от века идеал, к которому стремится и по закону природы должен стремиться человек. Между тем после появления Христа как *идеала человека во плоти* стало ясно как день, что высочайшее, последнее развитие личности именно и должно дойти до того (в самом конце развития, в самом пункте достижения цели), чтоб человек нашел, сознал и всей силой своей природы убедился, что высочайшее употребление, которое может сделать человек из своей личности, из полноты развития своего я, — это как бы уничтожить это *я,* отдать его целиком всем и каждому безраздельно и беззаветно. И это величайшее счастие. Таким образом, закон *я* сливается с законом гуманизма, и в слитии, оба, и я и *все* (по-видимому, две крайние противоположности), взаимно уничтоженные друг для друга, в то же самое время достигают и высшей цели своего индивидуального развития каждый особо.

Это-то и есть рай Христов. Вся история, как человечества, так отчасти и каждого отдельно, есть только развитие, борьба, стремление и достижение этой цели.

Но если эта цель окончательная человечества (достигнув которой ему не надо будет развиваться, то есть достигать, бороться, прозревать при всех падениях своих идеал и вечно стремиться к нему, — стало быть, не надо будет жить) — то, следственно, человек, достигая, оканчивает свое земное существование.

[liii] Бесспорно, для него составляло уже верх блаженства одно то, что он опять будет беспрепятственно приходить к Аглае, что ему позволят с нею говорить, с нею сидеть, с нею гулять, и, кто знает, может быть, этим одним он остался бы доволен на всю свою жизнь! (Вот этого-то довольства, кажется, и боялась Лизавета Прокофьевна про себя; она угадывала его; многого она боялась про себя, чего и выговорить сама не умела). (*SS 6*:517)

[liv] —Потому глубочайшее уважение, — продолжала так же серьезно и важно Аглая в ответ почти на злобный вопрос матери, — потому, что в стихах этих прямо изображен человек, способный иметь идеал, во-вторых, раз поставив себе идеал, поверить ему, а поверив, слепо отдать ему всю свою жизнь. Это не всегда в нашем веке случается. Там, в стихах этих, не сказано, в чем, собственно, состоял идеал [250] «рыцаря бедного», но видно, что это был какой-то светлый образ, «образ чистой красоты» (*SS, 6*:250-251)

[lv] Я сначала не понимала и смеялась, а теперь люблю «рыцаря бедного», а главное, уважаю его подвиги. (*SS 6*:251)

[lvi] — Да как же бы я нарисовала, кого? По сюжету выходит, что этот ‘рыцарь бедный’ “С лица стальной решетки/Ни пред кем не подымал.” Какое же тут лицо могло выйти? Что нарисовать: решетку? Аноним? (*SS 6*:249).

[lvii] — Для чего вы это здесь говорите? — вдруг вскричала Аглая, — для чего вы это им говорите? Им! Им!

Казалось, она была в последней степени негодования: глаза ее метали искры. Князь стоял пред ней немой и безгласный и вдруг побледнел.

— Здесь ни одного нет, который бы стоил таких слов! — разразилась Аглая, — здесь все, все не стоят вашего мизинца, ни ума, ни сердца вашего! Вы честнее всех, благороднее всех, лучше всех, добрее всех, умнее всех! Здесь есть недостойные нагнуться и поднять платок, который вы сейчас уронили... Для чего же вы себя унижаете и ставите ниже всех? Зачем вы всё в себе исковеркали, зачем в вас гордости нет? (*SS, 6*:343)

[lviii] Побежал и князь, но на пороге обхватили его руками. Убитое, искаженное лицо Настасьи Филипповны глядело на него в упор, и посиневшие губы шевелились, спрашивая:

— За ней? За ней?.. (*SS 6*:572)

[lix] *то,* что бы он мог сделать и предпринять, то все умерло с ним. Но где *только он* ни *прикоснулся* — везде он оставил неисследимую черту. (*PSS* 9:242)

[lx] Все, что выработалось бы в Князе, угасло в могиле. И потому, указав постепенно на Князя в действии, будет довольно. (*PSS* 9:252)

[lxi] *то,* что бы он мог сделать и предпринять, то все умерло с ним. Но где *только он* ни *прикоснулся* — везде он оставил неисследимую черту. (*PSS* 9:242)

[lxii] Лебедев, Келлер, Ганя, Птицын и многие другие лица нашего рассказа живут по-прежнему, изменились мало, и нам почти нечего о них передать. (*SS* 6:613)

[lxiii] "Если есть читатели «Идиота», то они, может быть, будут несколько изумлены неожиданностию окончания; но, поразмыслив, конечно согласятся, что так и следовало кончить" (*SS* 15:388)

[lxiv] … все ваши мысли, все брошенные вами семена, может быть уже забытые вами, воплотятся и вырастут; получивший от вас передаст другому. И почему вы знаете, какое участие вы будете иметь в будущем разрешении судеб человечества? (*SS 6*:406-407)

[lxv] «Князь только *прикоснулся* к их жизни. Но *то,* что бы он мог сделать и предпринять, то все умерло с ним. *Россия действовала на него постепенно. Прозрения его.* Но где *только он* ни *прикоснулся* — везде он оставил неисследимую черту. (*PSS* 9:242)

Conclusion:

Scripting the Self in Dostoevsky and James

Responding to the question about the relationship between art and reality in "Mr. –bov" and "The Art of Fiction," Dostoevsky and James present art as antidote for the raw chaos of life. Together with other writings, these essays draw a distinction between two concepts of reality: the external, objective reality—the raw material of life, infinitely rich and abundant, but ultimately meaningless in its indiscriminate inclusiveness; and what James calls the "transmuted real," the imprint of the external world on individual consciousness which causes it to respond, to vibrate, to seek meaning and value, in short, causing it to live. Dostoevsky's and James's shared conception of human reality as a meeting between the internal and the external results in what one might call perspectival realism which foregrounds what is at once our limitation and our asset: our essential positionality vis-à-vis the world, which precludes individual access to objective reality, but which also results in the rich diversity and complexity of human experience. It is the "transmuted real" expressed in art—the artist's selection and shaping of insensible, all-inclusive reality—that makes it possible to experience the same phenomenon anew and fight the deadening effects of habitual perception.

When it comes to the inner reality of the self, one finds in the fiction of Dostoevsky and James the same distinction between the "raw" material of interior reality, the indeterminate and elusive "I for myself," and the "I for another," the social identity forged from this material through a similar process of selection and shaping. It is through "surrender and sacrifice" of the self's essential potentiality that a distinct, meaningful identity is formed. The transition from potentiality to actuality is therefore an artistic, creative endeavor, and is often presented by Dostoevsky and James in the form of life-writing. In this respect, it is life that mirrors art, and

not vice versa; and the same principles that Dostoevsky and James see at the heart of the art of fiction also underlie the life-writing efforts of their heroes and heroines.

"Life is an art in itself," Dostoevsky writes, and just as the artist works, in James's words, "in face of the *constant* force that makes for muddlement," so the characters discussed in this study confront persistent forces, from within and from without, that make the task of self-scripting so difficult to accomplish. The theme of the first pair of works discussed in this study, Dostoevsky's *White Nights* and James's *The Beast in the Jungle*, is wasted life, or life as a non-story. Concerned as they are with the inner workings of the psyche, Dostoevsky and James nevertheless stress that these workings can qualify as an adventure—as experience, as a story, as life—only when they are interactive in nature. Dostoevsky and James endow the protagonists of these novellas, The Dreamer and John Marcher, with active imaginations and artistic sensibilities, but what initially may appear as an exciting adventure of the imaginative mind is invalidated because these adventures leave no mark outside of the insulated consciousnesses of the protagonists, no relation to the external world. Just as the value and "authenticity" of a work of fiction, according to Dostoevsky and James, is ultimately determined by the amount of life the readers feel in it, so the various vibrations of consciousness qualify as genuine life, or life-story, only when they resonate with others. A living consciousness for Dostoevsky and James is always consciousness *of* something external to itself, particularly, consciousness of another consciousness. It is when the Dreamer and John Marcher consciously look in the face of another, actual person for reflection of their being in the world that they acknowledge their lives as non-stories.

Notes from the Underground and *Daisy Miller* represent a different kind of failure at life-writing. The Underground Man and Daisy Miller embody the rich complexity, elusiveness, and

contrariety of human nature, which recognizes only one law, one authority—its own capricious will. Writing at the time when the influence of determinism pervaded not only the scientific and the philosophical, but also social and cultural spheres of life, Dostoevsky and James insist that individual life cannot be reduced to neat categories or explained by predefined universal laws, because the chief law of life, the essence of human nature, is its freedom—the same "freedom of inspiration and creation" which Dostoevsky and James posit as the chief law of art. This freedom entails the capacity to outgrow and resist *all* categories and challenge even the most reasonable laws, which is precisely what the Underground Man and Daisy Miller do: they exercise this freedom not through self-definition, not by choosing or creating an identity for themselves, but by refusing the choice itself, thus upholding their inner indeterminacy as their only defining characteristic. In this respect, the Underground Man and Daisy Miller represent the triumph of the self over the artificial, narrow restraints superimposed on it by science and established conventions. But, paradoxically, this triumph also presents a setback to the characters' efforts at self-actualization, at living what the Underground Man calls the "living life," for while the concept of a stable and definable identity is artificial, the illusion of stability is essential to forging and sustaining meaningful relationships with others. While the self in Dostoevsky and James is characterized by indeterminacy and "unfinalizability," that is, it encompasses of a range of possible identities, an array of potential choices, some of which will never be actualized but will continue to exist as potentiality, finding a plot for oneself demands that some of these possibilities be sacrificed for the sake of actualizing others.[55] One must, to use James's metaphor, draw artificial circles in order to make a work of art of oneself. This is where

[55] As Armstrong aptly notes, "the unlived life always haunts the life we have lived as the ghost embodying the possibilities we have not selected," but "these 'other chances' will remain empty possibilities until some of them are actually engaged" (Armstrong 107).

the Underground Man and Daisy Miller deliberately fail: they refuse to "surrender and sacrifice," the task Dostoevsky and James associate with the work of an artist. By choosing indeterminacy and potentiality, they sever their connection with "the human scene," which, in the worlds of Dostoevsky and James, is tantamount to death or non-life. Hence, their triumph is undermined by the ways the two novellas are framed. Ironically, while the Underground Man and Daisy Miller sacrifice their lives for their "unfinalizability," (their right to invalidate any definition of them by others), the final words about them are not their own: the fictional editor of *Notes from the Underground* decides when to end the Underground Man's notes based on what seems to him a logical conclusion to the ongoing contradictory narrative; and Daisy is no longer present to challenge or confirm Winterbourne's allegedly "final" verdict about her innocence. Moreover, the original title of the novella, *Daisy Miller: A Study in Two Parts*, conveys the very sense of definitiveness which Daisy sought to escape. This suggests that by refusing to script our selves in a way that realizes our potential for being, we risk becoming the raw material of life from which others will create their versions of our stories without any regard for our sense of selfhood.

Taken together, Dostoevsky's *White Nights* and *Notes from the Underground* and James's *The Beast in the Jungle* and *Daisy Miller* establish the foundation for what becomes a central problem in *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove*: the problem of the self-other relationship in the face of the intractable conflict between one's sense of inner freedom and indeterminacy and the demands of social relations which constitute the only form of genuine, "living" life. The saintly protagonists of *The Idiot* and *The Wings of the Dove*, Prince Myshkin and Milly Theale, step down from their Romantic isolation to the arena of busy social life—Petersburg and London—in order to take risks to see and live the life with which they were thus far acquainted largely through books. Yet life itself in these novels is presented as a contention

of plots: narrating, plotting, and scripting become the very basis of interaction between characters competing for authorship over the plots of their lives, resisting images imposed on them by others while simultaneously trying to make others act in accordance with their scripts. Myshkin's and Milly's precarious health condition and lack of experience add a sense of urgency to their self-scripting efforts, but these efforts are at once enriched and hindered by their moral imagination—their ability to "live-into" other characters and see the world—and themselves—from multiple subjective perspectives. On the one hand, this results in a richer, fuller, more profound experience of life—what James calls "experience concentrated"—but the resulting "surplus of vision" is predicated on their position as outsiders and on the distance and uninvolvement from the human scene which at ones beckons and terrifies them. Myshkin and Milly are aware that by joining the cast of actors in this scene, they will be limited by their assigned roles and will miss parts of the drama of life which absorbs them. This is particularly important because they sense that their acting career cannot be a long one, and the curtains of death can close on them at any moment. At the same time, they are not content with "mere spectatorship" of life: conscious as they are of mortality, they want to leave a lasting impression with the audience, to add their story to the great book of life.

As Myshkin and Milly struggle to realize their capacity for both being and seeing, they resort to what Sarah Young calls "a strategy of 'saintly scripting' which is aimed not at self-assertion, but at allowing the other to attain selfhood" (Young 93-94). The chief goal of this strategy, however, is not self-effacement, as Young suggests, but self-actualization and self-discovery which underlie Myshkin's and Milly decision to be with the people in the first place. By allowing others to script them or "work" them, Myshkin and Milly seek to get a sense of what they are good for, for these scripts present a view of them from the outside, a view a person

can never have of oneself. What they discover is that they are not good for action, for the acts dictated by the narrow, egocentric scripts of other characters clash with their self-integrity. But as they become aware of the limitations of others, they begin to see their field of action. Since they are good at seeing, and since being amounts to leaving one's mark on the world and affecting the being of others, their act, their imprint upon the consciousnesses of others is their vision, which erases the stamp of normality from relationships based on profit and egoism and reverses the ossifying effects of established conventions which all the characters accept.[56] Kate's final words in *The Wings of the Dove*, "We shall never be again as we were," encapsulate Myshkin's and Milly's achievement: while they do not succeed as heroes in transforming the world into a better place, while they allow others to make disastrous mistakes, they nonetheless make it impossible for those who make them to feel innocent and avoid moral responsibility for their actions. Dostoevsky states that "Talent is given to a writer for the purpose of producing an impression. One can know a fact, one can see it a hundred times oneself and still not get such an impression as when someone else, a person of special talent, stands beside you and points out the very same fact to you, but from his point of view, explains it to you in his own words and makes you look at it through his eyes (*OW* 118; translation emended). While Myshkin and Milly fail to create meaningful plots for themselves—fail, that is, in action—they nevertheless succeed in realizing their artistic potential, embodying art's capacity for reconciling the vital impulses for being and for seeing, and therefore for meeting both aesthetic and ethical demands of life.

[56] For discussion of Myshkin as a destroyer of stagnation, see Orwin, 410.

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