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IN MELVILLE AND DOSTOEVSKY.

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THE ICONOGRAPHY OF MADNESS:

A STUDY IN MELVILLE AND DOSTOEVSKY

by
Joan Barbara Gorin Magretta

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(English Language and Literature)
in The University of Michigan
1976

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Marvin Felheim, Co-Chairman
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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

In a somewhat cavalier gesture of dismissal, one of Dostoevsky's contemporaries referred to him as "the Shakespeare of the lunatic asylum."[1] For the average nineteenth-century reader, Melville was even worse. How could his work be taken seriously when the characters he created were "all mad as March hares"?[2] His fiction, one reviewer complained, was absolute "trash belonging to the worst school of Bedlam literature."[3] That we are no longer disturbed by madness in literature, that we have, indeed, come to accept its appropriateness as a subject for art, is due to the influence of Melville and Dostoevsky on modern fiction and to the general transformation of our relationship to unreason which they helped to bring about. But the fact that so troubled nineteenth-century readers remains somewhat of a mystery. Why, after all, were Melville and Dostoevsky so interested in madmen?

The major effort to deal with this question has been biographical. We begin with the tacit assumption that writers draw upon their own most intense and deeply-lived experiences. It is, then, an easy step from Dostoevsky's ambivalent feelings about his own epilepsy to the gallery of half-mad, half-inspired epileptics that pervade his fiction. We know that he was himself treated for mental illness in the 1840's[4] and although he believed

that he had been effectively cured, he continued to be plagued throughout the rest of his life by nervous ailments and by the painful consciousness of a radical split in his nature.

Melville, too, knew madness from experience: his father went mad before he died; his cousin, Henry Melville, was declared legally insane; his friend, George Adler, was confined to the Bloomingdale Asylum; and his oldest son committed suicide while suffering from what the officials termed temporary insanity.[5] After reading Pierre, the reviewer of the Southern Quarterly Review concluded, "The sooner this author is put in ward the better."[6] The fact that the Melville family called in doctors to judge Herman's sanity, among them Oliver Wendell Holmes, offers some evidence that they shared the reviewer's opinion.

The problem with the biographical explanation is that it sheds a good deal more light on the life than on the art. It draws our attention to the radical uniqueness of the individual artist and away from the deepest community which art and all other forms of communication naturally draw upon.[7] The art of Melville and Dostoevsky depends in large measure on their grasp of the relationship between their own experience and the contradictions of their age, on their ability to perceive in the seemingly eccentric what was, in fact, the common property of all. In his preface to The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky acknowledges

this facet of his work: "For not only is an eccentric 'not always' a particularity and a separate element, but, on the contrary, it happens sometimes that such a person, I dare say, carries within himself the very heart of the universal, and the rest of the men of his epoch have for some reason been temporarily torn from it, as if by a gust of wind."

As W. H. Auden indicates, the preoccupation of Melville and Dostoevsky with madmen is as much a cultural question as it is a matter for psychobiography:

> The kinds of individuals which writers in various periods have chosen for their heroes often provides a useful clue to the attitudes and preoccupations of each age, for a man's interest always centres, consciously or unconsciously, round what seems to him the most important and still unsolved problem. The hero and his story are simultaneously a stating and a solving of the problem.[8]

It is the purpose of this study to identify and explore the unsolved problems of the age that find expression in Melville and Dostoevsky through images of madness. The task is more complex than it may, at first, appear. We are concerned not only with the meaning of an image within the context of specific literary texts, but also with the larger cultural context which imposes its meanings on the image. In a broader sense, then, this is an exercise in the kind of analysis which Raymond Williams proposes: to establish the relationship of cultural work "to the whole

organization within which it was expressed."[9] This organization is never merely "background," as literary historians have been inclined to study it, but in Williams' words, "the mould in which general experience was cast."[10]

It is essential to recognize that madness is not a "thing" with a life of its own, but a label by which we designate complex states and forms of behavior. The definition of madness depends as much on the attitudes of a society towards deviant behavior as on that behavior itself.[11] The universal application of the term "madness" over time and across cultural boundaries can be misleading. It implies a constancy in our experience of unreason that simply does not exist.

In Graeco-Roman civilization, madness testified to supernatural incursion. The classical world established the polar extremes of madness which persisted for centuries: the madman was either blessed with divine inspiration or cursed with the demonic affliction of meaningless irrationality. Early Christianity linked madness to prophecy and revelation, whereas the Middle Ages saw madness as a sign of divine punishment. From the Middle Ages until the Renaissance, in the words of a leading historian, "man's dispute with madness was a dramatic debate in which he confronted the secret powers of the world; the experience of madness was clouded by images of the Fall and the Will of God, of the Beast and the Metamorphosis, and of all the

marvelous secrets of Knowledge."[12] These experiences are far removed from our own enclosure of madness within the confines of mental illness, our perception of insanity as an accident of physio-chemical or psycho-social dysfunction. Once a potent religious experience, madness now belongs to the relatively tame realm of positive science. Unreason has finally been made to yield to the superior force of reason.

What we are trying to describe, then, is a major transformation in the sensibility of Western man. The seminal study in this field is Michel Foucault's Madness and Civilization,[13] which traces the history of unreason from the Middle Ages through the Age of Reason. Foucault explains that before the Enlightenment, the iconographic power of madness rested on its reference to a world beyond our own: the madman came from the realm of the irrational, bearing witness to its disturbing powers. But in the classical age, "Madness has ceased to be--at the limits of the world, of man and death--an eschatological figure; the darkness has dispersed on which the eyes of madness were fixed and out of which the forms of the impossible were born."[14]

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a new perceptual structure of madness was constituted, one more in harmony with society's attempt to organize itself along consciously rational principles. Madness lost its power

as revelation. Unreason became merely an embarrassment, a public nuisance. The decisive date is 1657, the year the Hôpital Général was created and what Foucault calls "The Great Confinement" began. Those who deviated from reason and its right use were exiled from the social scene, incarcerated in large custodial institutions. The madman had become a social problem to be removed from view. Madness lost its special status and was perceived as simply another form of personal failure, no different in essence from poverty, prostitution, crime or incurable disease. This situation persisted until 1794, when a new attitude toward the insane, symbolized dramatically by Pinel's liberation of the chained inmates of Bicêtre, began to take shape.

What happened to madness during The Great Confinement has been described in a recent study of madness and literature in the eighteenth century:

> In earlier periods madmen normally lived among relatives or upon the charity of the community, and the devils thought to cause madness were exorcised openly, driven out in public ceremony (Foucault does tell how some German coastal villages at the end of the Middle Ages would bribe passing ships to transport and unload elsewhere the local mad, thus creating an actual ship of fools). The imprisoning of the insane stands in startling contrast to the freedom of movement of Don Quixote and King Lear, and even Tom o'Bedlam--freedom from convention, in fact, was one of the traditional privileges of the insane--and confinement helps to mark a new era, a new tone of life. For confinement implies a desire on the part of ordinary men to avoid (except on Sundays!) the very sight--the shocking and scandalous sight--

> of madness; it reshapes the social landscape and experience of the community, and it makes the madness thus hidden somehow shameful. In no possible way divinely inspired, the insane now belong properly only within the walls of a quasi-medical prison alongside other criminals, degraded and exiled and also punished; madness is indistinguishable from crime.[15]

The end of The Great Confinement brought with it a period of great confusion, as Foucault indicates. It was difficult "at the moment when 'humanity' was being re-evaluated, to determine the place madness was to occupy within it; . . .difficult . . .to situate madness in a social sphere that was being restructured."[16] Out of this confusion at the close of the eighteenth century there emerged gradually a medical perception of unreason. Around the turn of the century, madness began to assume the form we recognize today.

This transition in the perception of unreason was a gradual and complex process. The debate over the status of madness was to occupy a central place in the intellectual life of the nineteenth century. In a very literal sense, the madman was a new and unsolved problem for the age. If it was recognized that the madman was not some sort of demon-possessed beast, it was still unclear just what he was. The question of madness was placed in a context new to nineteenth-century thought, that of "the medical bipolarity of the normal and the pathological."[17] But the definition of normality was no easy task: it involved

nothing less than a new social order, a new science, a new philosophy--in short, a new definition of man.

Before moving into such broad areas as these, we must understand the nature of the relationship between the literary image and the historical reality on which it is based. The changing perception of madness over time is essentially an historic problem, the use of the madman as hero a literary one. It is possible to trace the history of madness in a relatively simple manner by studying the development of medical theory. At the same time, we can observe that as the perception of madness changes over time, its literary representation changes accordingly. On this level, which we may term the mimetic function of the image, its ability to show us how a thing looks, literature and history are intimately linked. As E. H. Gombrich has explained, the way something looks is dependent on the mental set of the observer as much as on the properties of the thing observed; periods of history and their characteristic styles of art can be defined by dominant mental sets.[18] The image of madness, be it historic or literary, is not simply what we perceive, but the way our perceptions are organized. Foucault makes this very crucial point in relation to the changing pattern of madness in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

> What was constituted . . . under the influence of images, was therefore a perceptual structure, and not a conceptual system or even a group of

> symptoms. The proof of this is that, just as in a perception, qualitative transitions could occur without affecting the integrity of the figure. . . . The essential thing is that the enterprise did not proceed from observation to the construction of explanatory images; that on the contrary, the images assured the initial role of synthesis, that their organizing force made possible a structure of perception, in which at last the symptoms could attain their significant value and be organized as the visible presence of the truth.[19]

If literature and history are closely related in terms of the mimetic function of images and the underlying mental sets essential to their creation and perception, the literary image has a second function which divorces it from history. That function is, broadly speaking, metaphoric or symbolic. In historic or scientific discourse the image refers only to a specific entity in the real world. The literary image contains additional dimensions; it means more than itself, referring to other entities and creating new realities. A generation of New Criticism has conditioned us to consider this function primarily in terms of how symbolic meaning is generated within the closed context of any given literary work. What needs to be emphasized instead is that symbolic meaning is to a large degree dependent upon the mimetic function, the way the image is related to the perception of reality. The nature of the vehicle, to use I. A. Richards' terms, defines, in part, the range of tenor it can carry. For Shakespeare, Lear's madness is perceived within a coherent system of analogies

which relates personal breakdown to cosmic disorder. Madness occupies a final and unambiguous place in the total order of things. Despite Melville's preoccupation with Lear at the time he created Ahab, it was no longer possible for him to see madness in those terms. The image now leads inward to the depths of personality rather than outward to an entire cosmology. It has lost its significance as a commentary on experience and universal order. There is no correlative of mental balance in nature. Like Shakespeare, Melville felt that madness, to paraphrase R. D. Laing, was not only a breakdown but also a breakthrough--a revelation of truths too terrifying to endure. What has changed, from the Renaissance to the mid-nineteenth century, is the nature of those truths.

Our task, then, is to examine the new perceptual structure of unreason in the nineteenth century and the new range of symbolic meaning which could be derived from it. What concerns us here is not the history of science, per se, but the history of a cultural debate over the meaning of madness as it was interpreted and fought out, in complex ways, in science, in philosophy, in art. I do not wish to suggest that any one of these areas should be given priority over the others. But we must turn our attention more to medical history because literary critics have ignored it in the past and by so doing have failed to appreciate just what the debate was all about and how

pervasive it was in nineteenth-century life.

First, we must recognize that a fairly elaborate system of dynamic psychiatry existed in the nineteenth century. This fact has been clearly established by recent studies in intellectual and social history[20] but its implications for literary studies have yet to be explored. We cling tenaciously to the notion that the twentieth century has exclusive claim over psychological discovery. Freud is the Great Wall we have erected to distinguish an enlightened present from a barbaric past. When we find a pre-Freudian writer whose psychology rings true, we say that he "anticipated Freud,"[21] a phrase which carries with it assumptions about cultural history which are patently ludicrous. There is undoubtedly much to be gained by seeing Melville and Dostoevsky as forerunners of modern psychoanalytic thought, but, as Northrop Frye has indicated in an essay on the so-called "pre-romantics," the prefix "pre" commits us to "anachronism before we start, . . . imposing a false teleology on everything we study. Not only did the 'pre-romantics' not know that the Romantic movement was going to succeed them, but there has probably never been a case on record of a poet's having regarded a later poet's work as the fulfillment of his own."[22] Like it or not, writers belong to a complex cultural matrix of their own. "Great geniuses," wrote Melville, "are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a corresponding

coloring."[23]

By the 1840's, psychiatry was a recognized specialty. The psychiatrist was called an "alienist" and the illness he treated was "mental alienation." The terminology is significant. From the close of the eighteenth century, the medical perception of madness involved an analysis of modernity, an awareness of social and historic context. Most alienists believed that the incidence of mental illness was increasing at an alarming rate. This was due, they thought, to the terrible strains which modern life imposed on mental health. Instability and mental disorder were produced by urbanization, by industrialization, and by democracy.[24] A cliché of mid-century thought was the idea that insanity is "the price which we pay for civilization."[25] The image of madness, when drawn along these lines, has the potential for a range of reference it did not have before. It can deal with man's relationship to his society, moving toward the concept of alienation developed by nineteenth-century philosophers, most notably Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx.

The notion that insanity's causes were social in origin was discussed in a wide range of publications, from medical journals like the American Journal of Insanity, to popular magazines like The North American Review.[26] It is not hard to see the broader implications of this view. It depends, in the first place, on the assumption that man is

by nature innocent and not depraved. The sources of corruption are external. A new tool was developed in the nineteenth century to "explain" crime, insanity, and poverty, the major forms of deviant behavior. That tool was the "case history," a form which developed at roughly the same time as the Bildungsroman in literature.[27] By retracing the biography, one could presumably understand the determining effects of environment and experience on the development of the individual. Both Melville and Dostoevsky, as we shall see in greater detail later, were horrified by this view, and much that they wrote was shaped in response to it. They understood that this attempt to absolve man from guilt and responsibility also deprived him of the very freedom that constituted his humanity. In protest, Dostoevsky's Underground Man cries out: "Men still are men and not the keys of a piano, which the laws of nature threaten to control so completely that soon one will be able to desire nothing but by the calendar."[28]

In addition to raising new questions about man's relationship to his environment, the debate over what constitutes mental health generated new models of mind. By "model," here, I mean the manner in which mental phenomena are described and conceptualized, including the assumptions implicit in the descriptions.[29] In literary studies, we are all familiar with the effective use to which this concept was put by Meyer Abrams in The Mirror

and the Lamp.[30] He has shown that the shift in aesthetic theory which occurred between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be mapped by the change from imitation to expression, from mirror to fountain, lamp, and related analogues, which was part of a corresponding change in popular epistemology. With the aid of recent historical studies, we are now in a better position to elaborate and refine Abrams' formulation.

First, as Maurice Mandelbaum has indicated, the nineteenth century saw a "change in the traditional categorization of mental activities."[31] In addition to Understanding and Will, "a third distinct and coequal faculty was recognized--that of Feeling."[32] Although no one definition of this new faculty was standard, all involved the notion of "subjectivity," whereas Understanding dealt with a realm of experience that was "objective." Following this recognition that there were two separate spheres of knowledge, "there arose a series of challenges to the view that intellectual analysis and the canons of logic are the best ways of comprehending man and his place in the world."[34] We are obviously confronted here by a psychological model with far-reaching philosophical implications. In Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener," this challenge to the primacy of reason is dramatized in the conflict between the narrator, a man of "assumptions," and Bartleby, a man of "preferences." What is at stake here is the attempt to define the limits of reason and

its proper place in human affairs.

As significant as this new model is as an indication of man's changing conception of himself, the fact that it retains an organization based on discrete faculties still reflects an older way of thinking. At the same time that traditional psychology was trying to deal with unreason without altering its basic premise that the mind is composed of discrete faculties, a truly new approach to the study of mind was developing. Hypnotism and animal magnetism have long been dismissed as pseudo-scientific quackery, topics of interest only to historians of popular culture. Only recently have we come to appreciate that these "fads" constituted the core of what may properly be called the first dynamic psychiatry.[35]

The study and practise of animal magnetism and hypnotism led directly to the discovery of the unconscious, an accomplishment usually attributed to Freud and his followers. Early nineteenth-century observers were struck by the fact that under hypnosis, as Ellenberger recounts, "a new life manifested itself of which the subject was unaware, and that a new and often more brilliant personality emerged with a continuous life of its own. The entire nineteenth century was preoccupied with the problem of the coexistence of these two minds and of their relationship to each other."[36] Out of this preoccupation came a "model of the human mind as a double ego, a conscious but

restricted ego that the individual believes to be the only one, and a subconscious, much wider ego, unknown to the conscious one, but endowed with unknown perceptive and creative powers."[37] This dipsychic model was later modified to a polypsychic one, that is, a notion of the mind as a master ego with a cluster of subpersonalities. Ellenberger notes that as early as 1803, the German physician Johann Christian Reil, in his Rhapsodien über die Anwendung der psychischen Curmethode Geisteszerrüttungen, "connected the phenomenon of dissociated personalities with a similar occurrence that is manifested in a certain type of normal dreams."[38] Reil cites the case of a man who dreamed that he was relating a story to a second person when a third man interrupted him to remind him of a detail which he was leaving out. "Why did his fantasy," asked Reil, "create a third person who surprised him and made him feel ashamed, how can the ego divide itself into persons who, out of himself, produce things of which he is not aware that they were in him, and surprise him as outside wisdom?"[39]

Not only was the unconscious manifest in dreams and under hypnosis, it could also be observed in cases of multiple personality which occurred spontaneously and naturally. Ellenberger writes:

> By the end of the eighteenth century and during all of the nineteenth century, occurrences of divided personality became known, at first as very rare if not legendary happenings. After 1840, they were regarded in a more objective

> manner, and by 1880 this problem was among the most discussed by psychiatrists and philosophers.[40]

This pervasive interest of the nineteenth century in the disunity of personality should be of great interest to students of The Double in literature, a theme whose popularity in this period has not been understood in historical context. We have tended to subscribe to the theory that literary doubles, which serve to dramatize endopsychic conflict, arise from a writer's introspective awareness of his own inner divisions.[41] It would seem pertinent to consider to what extent that awareness is related to, and perhaps defined by, larger cultural conditions. The experience of alienation and self-division, which we think of as characteristic of our own age, has, as we have seen, firm roots in the last century.

It is not possible here to rehearse in any detail the history of psychiatry and psychology in the nineteenth century. I have tried to indicate only some of the developments which are frequently overlooked and their role in a general debate which pervaded many areas of thought, a debate, which we said earlier, involved nothing less than a new definition of man in a world that was being restructured. Western man's two greatest stays against confusion, God and Reason, were failing. The age was faced with a crisis which, said Nietzsche, called for "the revaluation of all values." The old questions needed new answers.

The novel as it had developed in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not well-suited to cope with the pressing metaphysical and religious questions that troubled the age. The European novel, while certainly not abandoning completely the questions which stood at the heart of epic and tragedy, did shift its primary focus away from the other world and toward this one--it paid more attention to sociology and psychology than to metaphysics and religion. Tragedy and epic had portrayed timeless man confronting his soul and his gods. The novel dealt with historic man confronting his psyche and his world.

It was a major breakthrough to make the values of tragedy and epic the conscious center of prose fiction. This was the supreme accomplishment of Melville and Dostoevsky, and of Russian and American literature of the nineteenth century. It was surely this achievement that D. H. Lawrence had in mind when he wrote that these "two bodies of modern literature . . . have come to a real verge."[42] Beyond that verge lay expanded possibilities for the art of the novel.

Melville and Dostoevsky are, in some ways, curious subjects for comparative study. Although they were contemporaries, we have no evidence that they had any knowledge of each other's existence. Thus, there can be no question of influence here, the traditional mainstay of

comparative literature. Nor can we base this study on the premise that Melville and Dostoevsky are kindred literary souls, sharing a common sensibility or working within a common tradition. Melville's bitterly ironic vision can never be reconciled with Dostoevsky's mysticism.

Melville's life-long quest for Truth was doomed to failure, but he stubbornly refused to abandon it. As Hawthorne observed, Melville "can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other."[43] Dostoevsky was tormented by the same struggle between faith and doubt, as this passage from a letter to a friend indicates: "I am a child of the age, a child of nonbelief and doubt. . . . What terrible torments has this thirst to believe cost me."[44] But Dostoevsky also said that if he had to choose between Christ and Truth, he would take Christ any day. It is not hard to imagine what Melville would have thought of that decision.

There is also a problem in range and stature. Melville, at his best, is truly sublime. But we must admit that his greatness rests primarily on Moby Dick. Dostoevsky's genius was more consistent. As George Steiner remarked,

> Melville's rendering of the human condition is marvelously intense, and few writers have evolved symbolic equivalents and settings more appropriate to their purpose. But the vision is eccentric and severed from the more general currents of existence as a ship is severed from land on a three years' voyage. In Melville's cosmology,

> men are very nearly islands and vessels unto themselves. Dostoevsky's range is much greater; it encompasses not only the archipelagos of human affairs--the extremes of solitude and unreason--but also the continents.[45]

What, then, are our grounds for comparative study? In the first place, Melville and Dostoevsky are symmetrical figures in the history of fiction. To understand the nature of that symmetry, as Steiner has suggested, "one must consider the contrast not between Russia and America, but between Russia and America on the one hand and nineteenth-century Europe on the other."[46] This was a period of nationalism in Russian and American letters; the time was ripe to forge a native literature. "Men not very much inferior to Shakespeare are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio," wrote Melville. "And the day will come when you shall say, Who reads a book by an Englishman that is a modern?"[47] In 1860, Dostoevsky wrote, "We too are a distinct nationality, in the highest degree original, and . . . our task is to create our own new form, one native, proper to ourselves, taken from our soil, taken from our national spirit."[48] Criticism has paid ample tribute to the success of these programs, but perhaps at the cost of failing to appreciate the vast common territory shared by these two writers and these two nations.

Lacking a long cultural tradition of their own, Russian and American writers naturally drew upon the richness of European literature. But although Melville and

Dostoevsky readily acknowledge their debt to European writers and thinkers, they were,nevertheless, consciously seeking to discover and express the uniqueness of their own national experiences. The assumptions of European culture had to be tested critically in Russia and America. As F. O. Matthiessen points out, America's "distance from the center of civilization has repeatedly caused our writers to question things that Europeans took for granted. Endless scrutiny of what belonged to the American through his new circumstances, in contrast to what he was merely imitating from custom"[49] was the common enterprise of American intellectuals. This observation could have been made about Russia as well.

If the relationship to Europe was often ambiguous and always problematic for Russian and American writers, their relationship to their own emerging cultures was no simple matter either. As Steiner has observed, common to both literatures "was the theme of the artist seeking his identity and his public in a culture too new, too disorganized, and too preoccupied with the demands of material survival."[50] Russia and America were enormous countries, wild countries, countries lacking the social and geographical stability which was a basic assumption upon which the European novel depended. All comparative studies of Melville and Dostoevsky and all attempts to assess their role in the history of fiction must begin with this recog-

nition of the historical and cultural posture of nineteenth-century Russia and America in relation to Europe.

But beyond this, we are concerned with issues which transcend national boundaries, issues which belong more to time than space. Melville and Dostoevsky were born only two years apart and their lives spanned most of the nineteenth century. Whatever their differences of temperament and experience, they were both active participants in an age which changed the way Western man thought about himself and his world, a transformation which, as we have indicated earlier, can be traced through the debate over models of mind and mental illness. Of all the writers of the period, none were more actively engaged by these topics than Melville and Dostoevsky. We discover in their fiction a reflection of the struggle to redefine madness which played a major role in the intellectual life of the age. But much more important that this, we find a heightened sensitivity to the larger significance of this debate, an awareness that there was something critically important at stake, that not only the outcome but the very terms of the debate would be definitive. Melville and Dostoevsky saw more clearly than their contemporaries that our relationship to madness and unreason would commit us to a vision of what was "normal" that would embrace all aspects of life, social and spiritual as well as psychological. The complex iconography of madness in Melville and Dostoevsky

emerges from concerns which were pervasive in Western thought of the nineteenth century. But the images of unreason which Melville and Dostoevsky created out of the matrix of their age also point forward in the direction which Western culture was to take. They have established with greater authority than any of their contemporaries a perceptual structure of madness which continues to shape not only the way we think about literature, but also the way we see ourselves.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I.

[1]The comment, made by Count Melchior de Vogué, is cited in René Wellek's "Introduction" to his Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 1.

[2]Anonymous review of Pierre in the Southern Quarterly Review, October 1852, cited in Hugh W. Hetherington, Melville's Reviewers (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 235.

[3]Henry Chorley, review of Moby Dick in the Athenaeum, 25 October 1851, cited in Hetherington, p. 192.

[4]Konstantin Mochulsky, Dostoevsky: His Life and Work, trans. Michael A. Minihan (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), p. 54.

[5]For accounts of these events see Leon Howard, Herman Melville: A Biography (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1951).

[6]Same as note 2.

[7]For an extended discussion of this see Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), pp. 46-48.

[8]W. H. Auden, The Enchafèd Flood (New York: Vintage, 1950), p. 90.

[9]Williams, p. 53.

[10]Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), p. 31.

[11]This topic is discussed at length by George Rosen, Madness In Society: Chapters in the Historical Sociology of Mental Illness (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968).

[12]Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1965), p. xii.

[13]See note 12.

[14]Foucault, p. 35.

[15]Max Byrd, Visits to Bedlam (Columbia, S.C.: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1974), pp. 44-45.

[16]Foucault, p. 240.

[17]Michel Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1973), p. 35.

[18]E. H. Gombrich, Art and Illusion (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1960).

[19]Foucault, Madness and Civilization, p. 135.

[20]See for example Mark D. Altschule, Roots of Modern Psychiatry (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1957); Norman Dain, Concepts of Insanity in the United States, 1789-1865 (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1964); Robert Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968); John D. Davies, Phrenology: Fad and Science (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955); Henri F. Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious (New York: Basic Books, 1970); David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

[21]This comment is typical: "It is a commonplace that Dostoevsky anticipated Freud. . . . All insights that have become commonplaces since Freud were clearly his own." Eliseo Vivas, "The Two Dimensions of Reality in The Brothers Karamazov," Creation and Discovery (New York: Noonday, 1955), rpt. in René Wellek, ed., Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 74.

[22]"Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," English Literary History, 23 (June 1956), rpt. in James L. Clifford, ed., Eighteenth Century Literature (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 311.

[23]Cited by F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), p. 414.

[24]Dain, p. 89.

[25]Gerald N. Grob, ed., Insanity and Idiocy in Massachusetts: Report of the Commission on Lunacy, 1855 by Edward Jarvis (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 50.

[26]Rothman, p. 109.

[27]Ellenberger suggests that the Bildungsroman may have inspired alienists to record the case histories of their patients, although he offers no conclusive evidence for this theory. See The Discovery of the Unconscious, pp. 200-01.

[28]Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Notes From the Underground," in Three Short Novels of Dostoevsky, trans. Constance Garnett, ed. Avrahm Yarmolinsky (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 205-06. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[29]This concept is developed and applied by Bennett Simon and Herbert Weiner, "Models of Mind and Mental Illness in Ancient Greece: I. The Homeric Model of Mind," Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 2, No. 4 (1966), pp. 303-314.

[30](New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953).

[31]Maurice Mandelbaum, History, Man, & Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 274.

[32]Mandelbaum, p. 274.

[33]The view I am describing was that held by philosophers and psychologists. During this period, the English Romantics questioned the "objectivity" of Understanding.

[34]Mandelbaum, p. 274.

[35]Ellenberger, p. vii.

[36]Ellenberger, p. 145.

[37]Ellenberger, p. 168.

[38]Ellenberger, p. 146.

[39]Cited in Ellenberger, pp. 127-28.

[40]Ellenberger, p. 126.

[41]That the Double is more a product of individual experience than of tradition is the view of Carl F. Keppler, The Literature of the Second Self (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1972), pp. xii-xiii.

[42]D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (Garden City: Doubleday, 1923) from the Foreward, n. pag.

[43]Cited in Lawrance Thompson, Melville's Quarrel With God (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952), p. 143.

[44]Cited in Mochulsky, p. 152.

[45]George Steiner, Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), p. 127.

[46]Steiner, pp. 35-36.

[47]"Hawthorne and His Mosses," rev. of Mosses from an Old Manse, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Literary World, 17 August 1850, rpt. in Edmund Wilson, ed., The Shock of Recognition (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 195.

[48]Cited in Mochulsky, p. 219.

[49]Matthiessen, pp. 474-75.

[50]Steiner, p. 39.

CHAPTER II.

"BARTLEBY" AND "NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND"

If "Notes From the Underground" offers an example of Dostoevsky's technique of portraying the abnormal from within, "Bartleby the Scrivener" is its inverse, a study of the abnormal from without. The Underground Man lets loose his defense of unreason in a compulsive confessional outpouring. The trouble with people who live in the silence of the underground, he tells us, is that when they do come into the light of day they "talk and talk and talk" (p. 211). In stark contrast to this incessant flow of words is the forlorn silence of Melville's Bartleby, who uses language only to deny its very function as a means of communication. The steady voice we hear in "Bartleby" is the narrator's, the man of reason and common sense, trying to fathom the mystery of Bartleby's unreasonable silence. These two novellas about deranged and discontented nineteenth-century clerks make mutually illuminating companion pieces. Together they explore the whole range of mid-century attitudes toward the problematic status of unreason in philosophy, in psychology, and in political theory.

"Notes From the Underground" is clearly a polemical work. What begins as confessional monologue is quickly transformed into combative dialogue between the Underground Man and the imaginary "gentlemen" he addresses, who are

conceived as the avatars of utilitarianism, positivism, and rationalism. More specifically, we know that in 1864 Dostoevsky planned to write a review of Chernyshevsky's novel What's To Be Done? for the new publication Epoch which he and his brother were mounting.[1] Chernyshevsky was a leading spokesman for the liberal empiricism which Dostoevsky so hated, and What's To Be Done? was an unequivocal putting forth of the party line: egoism is the sole motivation of man; evil will vanish when man learns that the rational calculation of his own advantage demands that he be good.

Dostoevsky never wrote the proposed review of Chernyshevsky's novel. Instead, he incorporated his critical analysis of utilitarianism in "Notes Fron the Underground." "Oh, tell me," asks the Underground Man,

> who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal interests, man would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else, and we all know that not one man can, consciously, act against his own interests, consequently, so to say, through necessity, he would begin doing good? Oh, the babe! Oh, the pure, innocent child! Why, in the first place, when in all these thousands of years has there been a time when man has acted only from his own interest? What is to be done with the millions of facts that bear witness that men, consciously, that is fully understanding their real interests, have left them in the background and have rushed headlong on another path, to meet peril

> and danger, compelled to this course by nobody and by nothing, but, as it were, simply disliking the beaten track, and have obstinately, willfully, struck out another difficult, absurd way, seeking it almost in the darkness. So, I suppose, this obstinacy and perversity were pleasanter to them than any advantage. . . . Advantage! What is advantage? And will you take it upon yourself to define with perfect accuracy in what the advantage of man consists? And what if it so happens that a man's advantage, sometimes, not only may, but even must, consist in his desiring in certain cases what is harmful to himself and not advantageous? And if so, if there can be such a case, the whole principle falls into dust. What do you think--are there such cases? (p. 196)

The Underground Man is himself such a case, as he makes clear later on. In the first part of the "Notes" he argues against the doctrine of enlightened self-interest; in the second part, he illustrates the absurdity of the theory with an episode from his own life.

One advantage has been left out of the rationalist's elegant system, the one most "advantageous advantage" that cannot be calculated and that destroys the whole design:

> That is, that man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may choose what is contrary to one's own interests, and sometimes one positively ought (that is my idea). One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy--is that very "most advantageous advantage" which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man

> wants a normal, a virtuous choice? What has made them conceive that man must want a rationally advantageous choice? What man wants is simply <u>independent</u> choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. (p. 201)

The "Notes" raise the most politically controversial questions of psychology and philosophy: one, the nature of human motivation; two, whether human nature is determined or free; and three, whether human nature is plastic or fixed. The "gentlemen" argue that man is motivated by self-interest alone, which by a logic which would have delighted Voltaire's Pangloss, becomes one and the same with universal advantage, Bentham's "greatest good for the greatest number." Selfishness, by a curious twist of utilitarian logic, is indistinguishable from selflessness. And the best of all things in this best of all possible systems is that this not only <u>may</u> come about, but it positively <u>must</u>. Man is infinitely moldable, thus the nineteenth century's great zeal for education and reform. Once he has been educated he can not but choose his own interest and, therefore, the interest of all.

Of course, this whole edifice rests on the foundation of reason, of <u>enlightened</u> self-interest. And here, for Melville as well as Dostoevsky, was the rub. In response to the Enlightenment thesis of the primacy of reason came Rousseau's antithesis: "Man who meditates is a depraved animal." Rousseau's attitude was not merely

a personal eccentricity, nor was it restricted to the more extreme practitioners of Romantic literature. One of the most influential alienists of the age, Jean Etienne Dominique Esquirol (1772-1840), recognized that man's reasoning ability is dependent upon his emotional needs. In his Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity[2] (first published in French in 1838), a book which was regarded as a basic text in the field for half a century, Esquirol cites Rousseau on the unnaturalness of reflection and agrees that man is generally an incoherent being. He succeeds in reasoning, Esquirol writes, "only when he arrests his attention."[3] The sane can do this when they have to, although it is not the natural state of the mind. The insane, Esquirol goes on to say, have completely lost this ability to fix their attention.

The medical question spills over into the philosophical debate concerning the limits of reason. The issue is simply this: is the human intellect a reliable means of knowing ourselves and the world? As Maurice Mandelbaum has pointed out, the rebellion of Jacobi, Fichte and Hegel against Kant shared one underlying goal: "Each sought to put an end to the critical, analytic spirit of the Enlightenment. . . . In short, this revolution took the form of asserting that the Understanding not only does not have a monopoly on truth, but actually debases our conception of reality."[4]

Esquirol's notion that reason is subservient to emotional needs is echoed by Schopenhauer's idea that the "will creates the intellect for its own purposes."[5] Despite fundamental differences in their moral and metaphysical views, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche shared a voluntaristic conception of human nature. And, as Mandelbaum has observed, "each was led by his form of voluntarism to disparage the authority of reason within its own traditional province, rejecting the canons of rationality as adequate tests of truth."[6] Although thinkers such as Locke, Hume, and Kant had earlier questioned the limits of reason, they were not concerned with the one problem which Mandelbaum finds to be extremely widespread in nineteenth-century thought: "a distrust of the conceptual aspect of thought, a doubt that the concepts we employ in the sciences and in the practical affairs of everyday life are really adequate to the tasks which we ordinarily assume they perform."[7]

It is in the best voluntarist tradition, then, that the Underground Man utters the following:

> You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there's no disputing that, but reason is nothing but reason and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole of human life including reason and all the impulses. And although our life, in this manifestation of it, is often worthless, yet it is life and not simply extracting square roots. Here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live, in order to satisfy all my capacities for life, and not simply my

> capacity for reason, that is, not simply one-twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning (some things, perhaps, it will never learn; this is a poor comfort, but why not say so frankly?), and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong, it lives. (p. 203)

What is expounded argumentatively in the first part of "Notes From the Underground" is embodied as dramatic conflict in "Bartleby." If we can imagine one of the "gentlemen" of the "Notes" narrating the events of the Underground Man's tale "Apropos of the Wet Snow," we have an analogue to "Bartleby." The unnamed narrator of Melville's novella is, like the "gentlemen" of the "Notes," a man of reason and common sense, a utilitarian who believes in the calculus of enlightened self-interest. The narrator embodies the principles of liberal humanitarianism: he means well and his intentions are basically decent. But there is in "Bartleby" an implicit criticism of humanitarianism, one that becomes bitterly explicit in The Confidence-Man: the liberal is too often self-deceived, ultimately incapable of effecting any good and more likely to do ill. Although Melville treats the narrator of "Bartleby" with sympathy, he does give him just enough rope to hang himself. At the start of the story, the lawyer tells us that he is, above all, "an eminently safe man,"[8] "a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best" (p. 92).

Bartleby is the embodied denial of all the lawyer's convictions and his story an account of what happens when irreconcilable theory and fact collide.

The arrival of Bartleby is not the first time the lawyer's theory has been put to the test. His two clerks, Nippers and Turkey, Melville's most Dickensian characters, stubbornly refuse to be "reasonable" at all times. The older man, Turkey, is an excellent worker in the morning, but his weakness for the bottle renders him useless after dinner. Without provoking a direct confrontation with his clerk, for the lawyer is a man with a great distaste for disruption of any sort, he very gently hints that due to Turkey's advancing years he might be wise to put in only a half day's work. Turkey firmly opposes this plan: "'Old age--even if it blot the page--is honorable. With submission, sir, we <u>both</u> are getting old'" (p. 96). The lawyer's response to Turkey is characteristic: "This appeal to my fellow-feeling was hardly to be resisted. At all events, I saw that go he would not. So I made up my mind to let him stay" (p. 96). Melville makes it clear that underlying the narrator's humanitarian motive is a stronger one--necessity. As the Underground Man says of all normal men of action, "confronted with the impossible, they subside at once" (p. 188). The lawyer is a master at making a virtue of necessity; although he means well, his virtue is ultimately self-serving.

The second clerk, Nippers, is unruly in the morning, but a fine worker in the afternoon. So that even if the narrator can do nothing to eliminate the eccentricities of his clerks, at least he never has to put up with them at the same time. "Their fits," he writes, "relieved each other, like guards. When Nippers's was on, Turkey's was off; and vice versa. This was a good natural arrangement, under the circumstances" (p. 98). Melville's irony is here quiet but effective. There is nothing at all "natural" about this arrangement. Nippers and Turkey bear witness to the ravages of human wholeness which a society that subscribes to the selfish principle is capable of inflicting. The only interest served by this so-called "natural" arrangement is that of the employer and his liberal blindness prevents him from seeing this. Unreason, though a nuisance, has been brought under control and turned to profit. Nippers and Turkey remain in the lawyer's service; they are "useful."

Having rationalized the irrational in Turkey and Nippers, the lawyer has no doubt he can do the same with Bartleby. He learns slowly, however, that Bartleby's challenge is more formidable. Like the Underground Man, Bartleby chooses to act against his own interests as they are perceived by reason. He is the living case that shatters the system.

Faced with Bartleby's assertion of will, his laconic "I would prefer not to," the lawyer demands the reason

for such extraordinary conduct: "'Why do you refuse?'" To which Bartleby replies, "'I would prefer not to'" (p. 102). Hardly a dialogue, this exchange is rather a confrontation between two modes of experience which have no means of communicating with each other, a stalemate of will and reason.

It is this stalemate that generates the tension of the narrative. All of the lawyer's attempts to engage Bartleby in rational debate fail miserably. But reason is not to be thwarted so easily. Dialogue with Bartleby is impossible and so it must be abandoned. Instead, the lawyer will supply the scrivener's silence with his own rational voice; he will explain Bartleby if Bartleby will not explain himself. The attempt begins with a hypothesis about Bartleby's peculiarity that is based on the most simplistic form of determinism:

> He lives, then, on ginger-nuts, thought I; never eats a dinner, properly speaking; he must be a vegetarian, then; but no; he never eats even vegetables; he eats nothing but ginger-nuts. My mind then ran on in reveries concerning the probable effects upon the human constitution of living entirely on ginger-nuts. Ginger-nuts are so called, because they contain ginger as one of their peculiar constituents, and the final flavoring one. Now, what was ginger? A hot, spicy thing. Was Bartleby hot and spicy? Not at all. Ginger, then, had no effect upon Bartleby. Probably he preferred it should have none. (p. 104)

Later, when Bartleby renounces copying in addition to proofreading, the narrator, unable to accept the fact

that there is no particular "reason" for this decision, quickly invents one himself: "I looked steadfastly at him, and perceived that his eyes looked dull and glazed. Instantly it occurred to me, that his unexempled diligence in copying by his dim window for the first few days of his stay with me might have temporarily impaired his vision" (p. 115). But like the ginger-nut theory, this one too falls flat in short order.

Unable to subdue Bartleby's will by reason, the lawyer invokes the rule of necessity: "'You must go,'" he announces (p. 116). He gives Bartleby some money and instructs him to leave the premises before the next morning. As he walks home, the lawyer congratulates himself on the skill with which he has handled such a delicate situation. "There was no vulgar bullying, no bravado of any sort. . . . Without loudly bidding Bartleby depart--as an inferior genius might have done--I <u>assumed</u> the ground that depart he must; and upon that assumption built all I had to say. The more I thought over my procedure, the more I was charmed with it" (p. 117). But with the light of the next day an unhappy realization dawns on the lawyer: "It was a truly beautiful thought to have assumed Bartleby's departure; but, after all, that assumption was simply my own, and none of Bartleby's. The great point was, not whether I had assumed that he would quit me, but whether he would prefer so to do. He was more a man of preferences than assumptions" (p. 117). It would seem, at last, that the lawyer

has come to realize the meaning of his struggle with the scrivener.

Arriving at his office that morning, the lawyer's fears are confirmed. Bartleby has preferred to remain. And here is the lawyer's fantastic response:

> What was to be done? or, if nothing could be done, was there anything further that I could assume in the matter? Yes, as before I had prospectively assumed that Bartleby would depart, so now I might retrospectively assume that departed he was. In the legitimate carrying out of this assumption, I might enter my office in a great hurry, and pretending not to see Bartleby at all, walk straight against him as if he were air. Such a proceeding would in a singular degree have the appearance of a home-thrust. It was hardly possible that Bartleby could withstand such an application of the doctrine of assumptions. But upon second thoughts the success of the plan seemed rather dubious. I resolved to argue the matter over with him again. (p. 119)

Of course, the lawyer knows by now that it is pointless to argue. The best commentary on the lawyer's behavior, on his initial plan to pretend that Bartleby is not there and his final decision to reason with him again, is the following observation of the Underground Man: "Man has such a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth intentionally, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses only to justify his logic" (p. 198).

It is in this light, perhaps, that we should consider the ending of "Bartleby," the "one little item of

rumor" which the lawyer appends at the close of his tale. Bartleby, according to "vague report," had been a clerk in the Dead Letter Office in Washington. Here, at last, the lawyer has unearthed a "reason" for Bartleby's strange behavior. "Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames?" (p. 131). It is very comforting, indeed, to find out "who done it" at the end of a mystery. That is why we read such stories. Our will to believe the lawyer's explanation is great, but if we have read his tale carefully, our skepticism must be greater. We must, after all, remember the Underground Man's searching question, "What does reason know?" (p. 203).

So far we have been primarily concerned with a philosophical issue, the limits of reason. Both the "Notes" and "Bartleby" deny the primacy and sufficiency of reason in human affairs and in so doing, refute the viability of utilitarianism, of enlightened self-interest, as the basis for social organization. In denying the validity of such a system, the "Notes" and "Bartleby" also expose the moral bankruptcy at the core of the theory, the profound debasement of human nature upon which it rests.

The normal man, the man of action, says the Underground Man, will push forward until he runs up against a

stone wall, sign of the impossible. "What stone wall?" he asks.

> Why, of course, the laws of nature, the deductions of natural science, mathematics. As soon as they prove to you, for instance, that you are descended from a monkey, then it is no use scowling, accept it for a fact. When they prove to you that in reality one drop of your own fat must be dearer to you than a hundred thousand of your fellow-creatures, and that this conclusion is the final solution of all so-called virtues and duties and all such prejudices and fancies, then you have just to accept it, there is no help for it, for twice two is a law of mathematics. Just try refuting it. (pp. 188-89)

The lawyer in "Bartleby" accepts without question this solution to the problem of virtue. Worried that he might lose his temper and do violence to Bartleby, a horrible act not only in moral terms but also for its consequences to the lawyer's snug business, he is "saved" by recalling the divine injunction of brotherly love. "Aside from higher considerations," the lawyer remarks, "charity often operates as a vastly wise and prudent principle--a safeguard to its possessor. . . . Mere self-interest, then, if no better motive can be enlisted, should, especially with high-tempered men, prompt all beings to charity and philanthropy" (p. 120).

Refusing this tawdry compromise, this vice in virtue's clothing, the Underground Man continues his diatribe:

> Merciful heavens! but what do I care for the laws of nature and arithmetic, when, for some reason, I dislike those laws and the fact that

> twice two makes four? Of course I cannot break through the wall by battering my head against it if I really have not the strength to knock it down, but I am not going to be reconciled to it simply because it is a stone wall and I have not the strength.
>
> As though such a stone wall really were a consolation, and really did contain some word of conciliation, simply because it is as true as twice two makes four. Oh, absurdity of absurdities! How much better it is to understand it all, to recognize it all, all the impossibilities and stone walls; not to be reconciled to one of those impossibilities and stone walls if it disgusts you to be reconciled; by the way of the most inevitable logical combinations to reach the most revolting conclusions on the everlasting theme that even for the stone wall you are somehow to blame, though again it is as clear as day you are not to blame in the least, and therefore grinding your teeth in silent impotence to sink voluptuously into inertia . . . (p. 189)

Inertia, that is, "conscious sitting-with-the-hands-folded" ("Notes," p. 193), is Bartleby's chosen state. For Dostoevsky's Underground Man, it is, he explains, the only legitimate fruit of consciousness. For Bartleby, it simply <u>is</u>, and it is pointless to seek an explanation when the text offers us none. What we do know, however, is that Bartleby, like the Underground Man, is a contemplator of walls in this "Story of Wall Street."

Wall Street in Melville's story is clearly not the symbol of American capitalism which it was to become for later generations.[9] There is no mention of the stock market or high finance. The scene in which the story unfolds is a law office and not a brokerage firm. Melville is interested in exploiting the more literal possibilities

of his setting: Wall Street is a place of walls, of a walled-in existence, of life reduced, constricted, confined. One end of the lawyer's chambers faces a white wall, the other a black one. "This view," he remarks, "might have been considered rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call 'life'" (p. 93). Deficient in life is surely a euphemism for dead. The Underground Man is more blunt when he declares that anything as positive as a stone wall "is not life, gentlemen, but is the beginning of death" (p. 208).

To acquiesce in a life so constricted, life limited to the calculable certainties of reason alone, is to accept one's own dehumanization, the loss of individuality and personality. Man "will at once be transformed from a human being into an organ stop or something of the sort; for what is man without desire, without free will, and without choice, if not a stop in an organ?" ("Notes," p. 202). In the eyes of reason, men are reduced to objects. Bartleby is, at first, "a valuable acquisition" (p. 107), later, "a fixture in my chamber . . . a millstone . . . not only useless as a necklace, but afflictive to bear" (p. 115).

What is lost when men treat each other as objects is the nexus of inter-subjectivity which can be the only healthy basis for human intercourse. R. D. Laing discusses this problem in terms of what he calls the idea of confirmation and disconfirmation: "The slightest sign of recognition from another at least confirms one's presence in <u>his</u> world.

'No more fiendish punishment could be devised,' William James once wrote, 'even were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof.'"[10]

It is precisely this "fiendish punishment" which the lawyer unwittingly inflicts upon Bartleby. Since he cannot make the scrivener go, he must let him stay--not as a human being, however, but as a piece of furniture: "Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen, thought I; I shall persecute you no more; you are harmless and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short, I never feel so private as when I know you are here" (p. 121).

The theme of dehumanization is a pervasive concern in "Notes From the Underground." The Underground Man suffers terribly from his failure to elicit confirmation from others that he exists as a human being. Thus his repeated references to himself as an insect, a mouse. Two incidents he relates indicate his painful longing to be recognized.

The first is his account of witnessing a tavern brawl in which a man is thrown out of a window. He comments, "I actually envied the gentleman thrown out of the window--and I envied him so much that I even went into the tavern. . . . 'Perhaps,' I thought, 'I'll have a fight, too, and they'll throw me out of the window'" (p. 221). Even this violent confirmation would be better than none at all. But once in the tavern, the Underground Man suffers a great humiliation. Standing at the side of a billiard table, he

unknowingly blocks the way of an officer who wants to pass. He relates how the officer "took me by the shoulders and without a word--moved me from where I was standing to another spot and passed by as though he had not noticed me. I could have forgiven blows, but I could not forgive his having moved me without noticing me" (p. 221).

The second incident centers in the Underground Man's exhortation to the prostitute Liza that she give up her wicked career. She will die in oblivion, he tells her, having thrown away her life like a dishclout. No one will remember her, no one will care. "Your name will vanish from the face of the earth--as though you had never existed, never been born at all!" (p. 272). Here the Underground Man stops short. He has worked himself up to a pitch of excitement. He tells us he "had reason to be troubled. . . . I was suddenly panic-stricken. Never before had I witnessed such despair!" (p. 272). Liza's plight, at bottom, is no different from the Underground Man's. Both are condemned to oblivion, the tragedy of the unlived life. Such is also the fate of Bartleby.

Having considered the "Notes" and "Bartleby" as protests against positivism and the dehumanized social order which is its inevitable result, we now turn to an analysis of the more purely psychological implications of the two novellas. Both authors engage in similar explora-

tions of the depths of human nature, and the basic logic of both narratives is the same: man is capable of acting against his own self-interests. If this is so, and Bartleby and the Underground Man are offered as proof that it is, then the old psychology based on the primacy of reason and consciousness must be abandoned, and a new definition of man formulated. The model of a mind divided against itself was to provide the core of that new formulation for Melville and Dostoevsky.

It is necessary to recall here our earlier discussion of the "medicalization" of the concept of madness at the end of the eighteenth century, the new perception of unreason in the context of the bipolarity of the normal and the pathological. We indicated then[11] that this shift in perspective, although it appeared to involve a simple dichotomy between health and disease, raised very complex and far-reaching questions concerning the definition of "normality." The meaning of "Bartleby" and the "Notes" depends, in large part, on the subtle manipulation of this concept of "normality."

To the rationalist, it is normal to act in one's own best interests, unhealthy not to do so. The strategy of the "Notes" is to begin by apparently accepting this assumption. "I am a sick man," the "Notes" open (p. 179). The narrator concedes at the outset that anyone who acts against advantage must be "an absolute madman" (p. 197). The simple duality of pathological and healthy is complicated

a bit in the logic of the Underground Man: the antithesis of the normal man, he tells us, is the man of acute consciousness. And it is this consciousness which is "an illness--a real thoroughgoing illness" (p. 182).

The Underground Man tries to explain the contradiction between his consciousness which is good and noble, and his actions which are base and vile:

> The more conscious I was of goodness . . . the more deeply I sank into my mire and the more ready I was to sink in it altogether. But the chief point was that all this was, as it were, not accidental in me, but as though it were bound to be so. It was as though it were my most normal condition, and not in the least disease or depravity, so that at last all desire in me to struggle against this depravity passed. It ended by my almost believing (perhaps actually believing) that this was perhaps my normal condition. (pp. 183-84)

In this passage from the "Notes" we see the first stage of a subversive process whereby the boundary between normal and abnormal is gradually dissolved. Here the Underground Man admits that sickness is <u>his</u> normal condition. By the end of the "Notes" he will argue that his condition is really no different from that of all so-called "normal" men. "As for what concerns me in particular," he writes, "I have only carried to an extreme in my life what you have not dared to carry halfway" (p. 297). The Underground Man differs from the rest of us only in degree and not in kind. Once we understand this paradox that the Underground Man's abnormality is actually normal, the whole concept of

normality becomes absurd.

In this marvelous feat of dialectics, Dostoevsky has demolished the rationalist's only possible explanation of the man who acts against advantage--that he is mad, that is, sick. We are led initially to see the Underground Man as a madman only to have the meaning of madness undercut so seriously that it loses all its power as an explanatory image. If unreason can not be "explained away" as the product of an unnatural aberration, then how is it to be accounted for? This problem led both Melville and Dostoevsky to consider two questions which perplexed their age, the unity of personality and the nature of the unconscious.

True autobiography, it is observed in the "Notes," is difficult to write. Rousseau, for one, surely told many lies about himself. There are some secrets we reserve for our closest friends, some which we keep for ourselves alone, and finally "there are other things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things in his mind" (p. 213). If so much of ourselves is unknown to us, repressed within our unconscious as is here suggested, then it is very difficult indeed, if not impossible, to tell the whole truth about ourselves.

There was a good deal of speculation in the nineteenth century about the nature of the unconscious. Dostoevsky was so impressed by Carl Gustav Carus' Psyche (1846) that

he proposed to translate it into Russian, a project which he never carried out. Carus (1789-1869), a Romantic philosopher and physician and good friend of Goethe, believed that the greatest and most important part of mental life belonged to the realm of the unconscious. Consciousness always remains under the influence of the unconscious, to which it returns periodically in sleep as a source of restoration and health. Carus writes:

> The key to the understanding of the essence of conscious mental processes lies in the region of the unconscious. All the difficulties, nay, the seeming impossibility of understanding precisely the mysteries of the mind become from this point of view understandable. If it were really impossible to find in consciousness the unconscious, one should resign oneself not to understand the psyche. That is to say, ever to understand one's own self. However, should the impossibility be only apparent, then the first aim of the science of psychology should be to determine in which way the human mind can descend into these depths.[12]

We need not see Carus as the "source" for Dostoevsky's psychology in any limited sense of the word. It is sufficient to recognize that the two men shared many common assumptions then current about the workings of the mind and the nature of mental life.[13] Dostoevsky's persistent goal in fiction was to realize Carus' program for psychology, the descent into the depths of the psyche.

Dostoevsky's exploration of the different modalities which give access to the unconscious--dreams, fantasy, imagination, memory--is the hallmark of his fiction. The

Underground Man vacillates between periods of self-indulgent dissipation and periods spent immersed in the world of dreams. Dreaming, he recognizes, is "a means of escape that reconciled everything" (p. 228). In them, he rises above the filth of his lowly degradation and becomes heroic, a defender of the good and the beautiful.[14]

But it is only in dream and fantasy that the divided soul can find unity. From the confrontation with life comes the suffering which awakens our consciousness of disharmony, and this consciousness can lead only to inertia and boredom. The Underground Man wears his contradictions on his sleeve, the extremities of pride and self-abasement, lust for power and utter powerlessness, the desire to create and the need to destroy, spitefulness and generosity. As Simmons has pointed out, "Every positive human attribute seems to inspire its negative quality in him."[15] But underlying all of these self-contradictory energies is one crucial and irreconcilable dualism. In a notebook entry written at the death of his wife and shortly after the "Notes" had been completed, Dostoevsky defines the conflict between natural law and spiritual law, the one requiring the primacy of self, the other demanding total self-surrender:

> To love a person as one's own self, as Christ commanded, is impossible. On earth the law of personality binds us; the I stands in the way. . . . After Christ's appearance, it became clear that the highest development of personality must attain to that point where man annihilates his own "I," surrenders it

> completely to all and everyone without division or reserve . . . . This is Christ's paradise. . . . And so, on earth man strives toward an ideal contrary to his nature. When man has not fulfilled the law of striving toward the ideal, i.e., has not by love offered his "I" in sacrifice to people or another being, . . . he experiences suffering and has called this condition sin.[16]

It is this ultimate self-division, the internalized struggle between mutually exclusive intentions, that is the cause of the Underground Man's "divorce from real life" (p. 296). In the thinking of nineteenth-century alienists, this divorce, this extreme of human self-enclosure, was madness itself.[17] If that is so, argues Dostoevsky in the "Notes," then we are all mad. "We are all divorced from life" (p. 296), declares the Underground Man. "I have only carried to an extreme in my life what you have not dared to carry halfway, and, what's more, you have taken your cowardice for good sense, and have found comfort in deceiving yourselves" (p. 297).

"Notes From the Underground" represents one solution in Dostoevsky's continuing struggle with the problem of how to dramatize the conflicts and movements of the inner life. The symbolic geography of the "Notes," that they are issued literally from "below," from the space beneath the floor boards, suggests that we are here confronted by the unseen depths of our nature. Simultaneously, however, we must bear in mind that the Underground Man is a whole being, not simply the underside of one, or the dark half of a

personality seeking its complement. In the "Notes" the mind divided against itself is portrayed through the self-contradictory confessions of a single voice.

In "Bartleby," Melville approached the problem of self-division through the technique of the Doppleganger, or double, the decomposition of one personality into two seemingly autonomous characters. The idea of the double has been so carelessly applied by literary critics as to become almost meaningless.[18] If the term is to have any value as a critical tool, we must be prepared to accept a severely restricted definition of it.

As we noted earlier[19], the appearance of the double in nineteenth-century literature must be seen as part of a larger cultural movement, the general preoccupation of the age, stimulated by the discoveries of animal magnetism and hypnotism, with the nature of mind and the problem of the unity of personality. Hoffmann, creator of the prototypical literary double, was himself a hypnotist. His medical friend, Koreff, acted as a "mesmerist literary agent" in France and Germany.[20] The technique of the double was a literary response to the enigma of multiple personality and the mystery of unconscious life which so fascinated psychiatrists and philosophers. It was surely a baffling paradox that a person could be at once whole and divided. It was, as Carl Keppler has put it in his study of the double, "the mystery of a contradiction, of simultaneous

distinction and identity, of an inescapable two that are at the same time an indisputable one."[21]

We should limit our definition of the double, as Keppler suggests, to instances which display both independent external reality of two figures and their simultaneous inward continuity or psychical identity. By accepting this limitation, the technique of the double emerges clearly as a means of exploring the radical disunity of personality. This eliminates the confusion, for example, which results when Ivan Karamazov's devil is called his "double," when obviously we are dealing there with a distinct mental phenomenon, hallucination and aberration. It also eliminates the confusion which results from the tendency of many critics to identify the literary double with the psychoanalytic concept of decomposition, a process whereby we represent our ambivalence toward a character type by breaking the type down into component figures.[22] According to this view, for example, Hamlet's father, Polonius, and Claudius are doubles because they represent the decomposition into autonomous characters of one figure toward which we feel ambivalence, the father. This identification of the psychoanalytic notion of decomposition with the literary technique of the double blurs more distinctions than it makes. It not only denies the possibility of real external conflict by reducing all oppositions to psychic ambivalences in the mind of the writer, but it also makes it very difficult to imagine two characters who could not be seen as

doubles.

We will follow Keppler's requirement that the double, or as he calls it, the second self, must embody "a paradox of simultaneous outwardness and inwardness, of difference from and identity with the first self. . . . He is always 'there,' a self in his own right, never translatable into a product of mental aberration; yet he is always 'here' as well, his psyche intergrown by untraceable shared tendrils with that of his counterpart, and so never translatable into a purely external fellow being."[23]

We would be mistaken, then, to think of Bartleby and the lawyer as doubles merely because they represent aspects of human nature that are either plainly complementary or diametrically opposed. What makes them true representatives of the doubling technique is not only the peculiar qualities of each, but their special relationship to each other. As Keppler indicates, it is pointless to seek a logical explanation for the uncanny affinity between first and second selves, for their strange preoccupation and emotional involvement with each other. Logic "can deal only with the condition of separateness or that of identity, never with both at once."[24] It is this paradox that signals the presence of the double figure. And it is this paradox which Melville insists upon in the relationship between Bartleby and the lawyer.

Faced with Bartleby's refusal to perform his duties,

the lawyer discovers his own inability to function normally: "With any other man I should have flown outright into a dreadful passion, scorned all further words, and thrust him ignominiously from my presence. But there was something about Bartleby that not only strangely disarmed me, but in a wonderful manner, touched and disconcerted me" (p. 102). Strangeness and wonder are hardly characteristic modes for the man of common sense.

Later, the man we have already seen go to great lengths to avoid any disruption of his peace, utters the following: "I closed the doors, and again advanced towards Bartleby. I felt additional incentives tempting me to my fate. I burned to be rebelled against again" (p. 106). This from a man who has spent his life in a "snug retreat" doing a "snug business"? And when the lawyer discovers that Bartleby has remained in the office despite his assumption to the contrary, the man of reason again pays tribute to the power of wonder. He admits he is forced to obey "that wondrous ascendancy which the inscrutable scrivener had over me, and from which ascendancy, for all my chafing, I could not completely escape" (p. 118).

Unable to convince Bartleby to leave him, the lawyer decides to leave Bartleby. But when all the furniture has been moved from the office and the two figures are left face to face, it is not the relief of escape the narrator experiences: "strange to say--I tore myself from him whom

I had so longed to be rid of" (p. 124).

What does all this strangeness and wonder add up to? The relationship between the narrator and the scrivener defies logical explanation, and that is the whole point. The lawyer is haunted and moved by Bartleby with a force which can come only from within, from the most profound depths of the psyche. Bartleby appears as a revelation of all that the narrator has been forced to stifle in his pursuit of the "safe" life, as witness to just how badly the narrator has suffered from what we now call the dissociation of sensibility, the divorce between emotion and intelligence.[25] Into the lawyer's soul which, like the view from his office, is "deficient in life," comes the one force which the Underground Man says preserves us from extinction: unreasonable caprice, desire, free choice. The lawyer is touched for an instant by Bartleby's meaning, but he is incapable of saving himself, incapable of accepting the whole of life in all its unruly totality. One is reminded of an anecdote which George Steiner recounts about Tolstoy's inability to comprehend the irrational. Steiner writes that Tolstoy was unable "to convey genuine disorder, to commit his style to the portrayal of mental chaos. Tolstoy's genius was inexhaustibly literal. In the margin of his copy of Hamlet, he placed a question mark after the stage direction 'Enter Ghost.'"[26]

So, too, the lawyer temporarily places a question mark after the strange entrance of Bartleby into his life,

but unable to accept that there can be such ultimate uncertainties in his universe, he erases the mark and writes in an explanation. Bartleby is mad, demented, deranged. It is reason's only defense against unreason to label it "sick" and be done with it. But "Bartleby" in its own way is as subversive as the "Notes" in blurring the distinctions between sane and insane. The validity of reason is undercut time and time again, its inadequacy to cope with experience underscored with each succeeding "explanation" the lawyer advances. So that finally we must view Bartleby's alleged madness in the same ironic light as the supposed "naturalness" of Nippers and Turkey. It is a self-serving, defensive designation. And if we follow closely the logic of the narrative, the process of reversal whereby the authority of the narrator erodes to the point that he must abandon his own office, we must grant supremacy to Bartleby's unreason. Reason has, quite literally, been routed and forced to retreat.

We have briefly touched on several problems of technique related to the attempt to bring unreason within the bounds of literary form--the use of the confessional mode, the incorporation of dreams and fantasy, the experimentation with the double. That leaves us with a larger question concerning the aesthetics of unreason, if it is possible to talk about such a thing. Does the commitment

to explore the life of unreason alter the economy of narrative structures?

The Underground Man defiantly announces that the "Notes" are formless, written without any "system or method" (p. 214). Of course, this claim is as false as his repeated assertion that he is writing for himself only and will never have real readers. The fact that these two statements are literally untrue does not render them meaningless. On the contrary, they call attention to the most fundamental of literary problems, the relationship of form to experience and the determing nature of the relationship between author and reader. What is indicated is a radical dissatisfaction with traditional literary form, with the imposition of a logical narrative structure upon a reality which, for both Melville and Dostoevsky, was essentially alogical.

There is a pervasive uneasiness in the "Notes" about the validity of narrative which follows orderly chronological sequence, the rational progression of events over time. Ultimately this sort of narrative rests on a world view which respects the logic of cause and effect, which believes that life is intelligible when seen as history. Implicit in the chronological narrative is the idea that character is determined or at least shaped by experience and environment. Man becomes, to paraphrase Faulkner's Mr. Compson, the sum of his climatic experiences. The writer has simply

to add them up.

Dostoevsky protested against this deterministic view of human nature and the chronological narrative which logically derives from it, but at the same time, he was unable to divorce himself from it completely. The result is an unresolvable contradiction in the "Notes." On the one hand we see Dostoevsky's revolt against determinism and logical chronology: the "Notes" are a paen to caprice, to freedom, to the irreducibly unpredictable element of human life. On the other hand, Dostoevsky himself vindicates the traditional narrative form of cause and effect by announcing at the beginning of the "Notes" that his hero has been determined by external forces: "the writer of these notes not only may, but positively must, exist in our society, when we consider the circumstances under which our society was formed" (p. 179). The Underground Man, who throughout argues that man is a creature free and undetermined, betrays his own argument by explaining that he is the product of an unhappy childhood. Left an orphan by the death of both parents, he was shipped off to boarding school by unloving relatives. "'If I had had a home from childhood,'" he tells Liza, "'I shouldn't be what I am now'" (p. 263). What is at stake here are two conflicting views of human nature, and the two conflicting views of narrative structure which arise from them. Dostoevsky refuses to choose. Does man's past compel him, then, to be

what he is, or is man a creature somehow able to transcend the limits of his circumstances. The contradiction is never reconciled in the "Notes." We must finally accept the paradoxical solution of "both/and"--man is both free and determined, sane and sick--rather than the discrete logic of "either/or." And it is this same sort of ambiguity which marks Melville's "Bartleby."

Several critics have suggested that the figure of Bartleby is Melville's self-dramatization of the forlorn and unappreciated writer he felt himself to be after the failure of Moby Dick and Pierre.[27] However useful this interpretation might be from the perspective of the psycho-biographer, it should not obscure the fact that it is the lawyer, and not Bartleby, who narrates this tale. If we have here a parable of the plight of the writer, it resides in the efforts of the lawyer as storyteller to discover his story. What is there to tell about Bartleby? Never was subject matter more unyielding and recalcitrant. Not one single fact about Bartleby's past or his motives is ever revealed by him. What we witness, then, is not the triumph of art over life, but the distortion of life's mystery by false art, by the imposition of logical structure on experience that is stubbornly irrational. For the lawyer, Bartleby's death and the story about the Dead Letter Office constitute a true conclusion to his tale. For the reader, there is only unresolved ambiguity and

doubt. The story has been a series of fragmented incidents rather than a complete biography, and it simply stops without ever really ending.

The same is true in "Notes From the Underground," which closes with this parentheticál note from the imaginary editor who has supposedly come into possession of the manuscript: "[The 'notes' of this paradoxalist do not end here however. He could not refrain from going on with them, but it seems to us that we may as well stop here]" (p. 297). Of course the author of the manuscript would have been delighted with his editor. This attempt to leave us with the feeling that the work is unfinished is wholly consistent with the Underground Man's attitude toward form, toward completion. Man, he says, is like a chess player who "loves the process of the game, not the end of it. And who knows (there is no saying with certainty), perhaps the only goal on earth to which mankind is striving lies in this incessant process of attaining, in other words, in life itself, and not in the thing to be attained" (p. 208).

What would happen if reason could reduce all of life to a mathematical formula, if even man's most unreasonable caprice could be calculated in advance? Very simple, replies the Underground Man. In that case, "man would purposely go mad in order to be rid of reason" (p. 206). In a world which demands that man shed his humanity in order that reason may reign, madness becomes the last

refuge, an ironic affirmation of life. And in "Bartleby," the final irony is no less extreme. The only way Bartleby can preserve his humanity, his capacity for "preferring," is to prefer not to live at all.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II.

[1]For an account of this period in Dostoevsky's life see Mochulsky, Chapter XII.

[2]J. E. D. Esquirol, Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity, trans. E. K. Hunt (1845; facsimile rpt. New York: Hafner Pub., 1965).

[3]Esquirol, p. 28.

[4]Mandelbaum, History, Man, & Reason, p. 283.

[5]Mandelbaum, p. 308.

[6]Mandelbaum, p. 312.

[7]Mandelbaum, p. 349.

[8]Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street," in Herman Melville: Selected Tales and Poems, ed. Richard Chase (New York: Rinehart, 1950), p. 93. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[9]For an identification of Melville's Wall Street with American capitalism, see Leo Marx, "Melville's Parable of the Walls," Sewanee Review, 61 (1953), 602-627.

[10]R. D. Laing, Self and Others, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Pantheon, 1969), p. 82.

[11]See above, p. 7.

[12]Cited and trans. by Franz G. Alexander and Sheldon T. Selesnick, The History of Psychiatry (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 145.

[13]For a similar argument, see George Gibian, "C. G. Carus' Psyche and Dostoevsky," The American Slavic and East European Review, 14 (1955), 371-82.

[14]The German physician Karl Ideler (1795-1860) felt that dreams were an escape from the frustrations of reality. When man can't find satisfaction in real life, he "takes flight into fantasy where he can revel in the measureless joy of his dream world, or justify to himself his sufferings in horrifyingly distorted images" (Ellenberger, p. 213).

[15]Ernest J. Simmons, Dostoevski, The Making of a Novelist (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1940), p. 133.

[16]Cited in Mochulsky, p. 261.

[17]The maniac, writes Esquirol, "lives isolated from the physical and intellectual world, as if he were shut up in an obscure chamber" (p. 385).

[18]For a review of the major problems of "double criticism" see Keppler, pp. ix-13, 182-210.

[19]See above, pp. 15-17.

[20]Robert Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 149.

[21]Keppler, p. 1.

[22]Robert Rogers, A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1970), is representative of this approach.

[23]Keppler, p. 10.

[24]Keppler, p. 11.

[25]We should note that the Underground Man is a fellow sufferer. After making love to Liza, he humiliates her by giving her money. "Though I did that cruel thing purposely," he explains, "it was not an impulse from the heart, but came from my evil brain" (p. 294). Intellect and feeling are hopelessly out of touch with each other.

[26]Steiner, p. 249.

[27]For example, see Richard Chase, Herman Melville (New York: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 146-48.

CHAPTER III.

PIERRE AND THE IDIOT

Dostoevsky's Idiot and Melville's Pierre are novels that explore the unreason of sacrifice, that aspect of Christian heroism embodied in the image of Christ on the Cross. As Dostoevsky explained in a letter to his niece, in January of 1868, he wanted "to depict a positively beautiful individual. . . . The beautiful is an ideal, but neither our ideal not that of civilized Europe has been in the least perfected. On earth there is only one positively beautiful person--Christ, so that the appearance of this immeasurably, infinitely beautiful person is, of course, an infinite miracle in itself."[1]

Melville, unlike Dostoevsky, is far too skeptical to believe in miracles. If Myshkin represents Dostoevsky's attempt to create a model of Christian heroism, Pierre is Melville's way of exposing the whole notion of Christian heroism for the snare and delusion he believes it to be. While Dostoevsky clings to a vision of holy purity, Melville can see nothing but demonic "ambiguities."

Yet despite the apparent irreconcilability of these views, the finished novels offer visions which are by no means incompatible. It was D. H. Lawrence, who in his own characteristically perverse fashion, first perceived the similarity: Melville "wrote Pierre to show that the more you try to be good the more you make a mess of things. . . .

The meek are evil. The pure in heart have base, subtle revulsions: like Dostoevsky's Idiot. The whole Sermon on the Mount becomes a litany of white vice."[2] Of course, the problem of Christian heroism is a good deal more complex than Lawrence's own bias will allow him to consider, but he has, at least, pointed us in the right direction. Pierre and The Idiot do share a common intention: they attempt to explore in contemporary terms the meaning of Christian unreason. As Foucault indicates, this theme has undergone major transformations since the Renaissance:

> The great theme of the madness of the Cross, which belonged so intimately to the Christian experience of the Renaissance, began to disappear in the seventeenth century. . . . Or rather, it subsisted, but changed and somehow inverted its meaning. It was no longer a matter of requiring human reason to abandon its pride and its certainties in order to lose itself in the great unreason of sacrifice. When classical Christianity speaks of the madness of the Cross, it is merely to humiliate false reason and add luster to the eternal light of truth; the madness of God-in-man's-image is simply a wisdom not recognized by the men of unreason who live in this world. . . . The scandal of Christian faith and Christian abasement, whose strength and value as revelation Pascal still preserved, would soon have no more meaning for Christian thought except perhaps to reveal in these scandalized consciences so many blind souls. . . . Christian unreason was relegated by Christians themselves into the margins of a reason that had become identical with the wisdom of God incarnate. After Port-Royal, men would have to wait two centuries--until Dostoevsky and Nietzsche--for Christ to regain the glory of his madness, for scandal to recover its power as revelation, for unreason to cease being merely the public shame of reason.[3]

In the preoccupation of Melville and Dostoevsky with the unreason of Christ there is a kind of return to the concerns of an earlier period. Thus it is not at all surprising that both novels are conceived in terms of Renaissance literary models of madness: Myshkin as Don Quixote, Pierre as Hamlet. But what must be stressed is that this return is in no way simply a repeating or a restating of the Renaissance experience. By the second half of the nineteenth century, such a restatement was impossible: the radically altered perceptions of mind and madness, the new iconography of unreason, was to lead Melville and Dostoevsky to vast and unexplored territories.

Pierre is, as Murray Krieger suggests, a kind of "self-appointed Jesus,"[4] a self-conscious imitator of Christ. Like Christ, Pierre sacrifices himself to a higher ideal of duty and truth. This sort of ultimate self-sacrifice is madness in the cool eyes of "horological" wisdom, the extreme case of the Underground Man's assertion that man is capable of acting against his own best interests. But although what is suggested in the model of Christian sacrifice is a fairly simple but absolute conflict between the ways of God and the ways of man, Melville's analysis of the theme of Christian unreason opens out into infinite complexity.

Plinlimmon's pamphlet, "Chronometricals and Horo-

logicals," provides us with an apparent standard of practical, earthly wisdom by which to judge Pierre's conduct:

> "Christ was a chronometer; . . . And the reason why his teaching seemed folly to the Jews, was because he carried that Heaven's time in Jerusalem, while the Jews carried Jerusalem time there. Did he not expressly say--My wisdom (time) is not of this world? . . . Though the earthly wisdom of man be heavenly folly to God; so also, conversely, is the heavenly wisdom of God an earthly folly to man. . . . But here one thing is to be especially observed. Though Christ encountered woe in both the precept and the practise of his chronometricals, yet did he remain throughout entirely without folly or sin. Whereas, almost invariably, with inferior beings, the absolute effort to live in this world according to the strict letter of the chronometricals is, somehow, apt to involve those inferior beings eventually in strange, unique follies and sins, unimagined before."[5]

Certainly Pierre is involved in rather singular follies and sins, but beyond this Plinlimmon's schema is totally inadequate to encompass the experience of the novel. Christ may have been a chronometer, but Pierre is not. And it is precisely Pierre's imitation of Christ, his commitment to the unreason of self-sacrifice, that reveals to him how false the image of Christian virtue is as a model of man. The extremity of Pierre's unreason could not serve Melville simply as an ironic commentary on the wickedness of this world. Instead, it served to reveal the hidden nature of man's innermost life.

In a valuable introduction to Pierre, Henry Murray writes: "Surely Melville deserves to be commemorated as

the literary discoverer of . . . the mythological unconscious. As a depth psychologist he belongs with Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, the greatest in the centuries before Freud. This claim could not easily be supported without Pierre.'[6] What dominates this highly flawed novel, and in some ways redeems it, is Melville's relentless probing of the life of unreason, his commitment to "follow the endless, winding way,--the flowing river in the cave of man" (Pierre, p. 135).

The novel begins with the Adamic Pierre on the eve of his expulsion from the Edenic Saddle Meadows. The cloying parody of Melville's prose signals the falsity of this fairy tale world and, more specifically, the opening paragraphs of the novel convey a dream-like sense of unreality:

> There are some strange summer mornings in the country, when he who is but a sojourner from the city shall early walk forth into the fields, and be wonder-smitten with the trance-like aspect of the green and golden world. . . . Pierre . . . entered the long, wide, elm-arched street of the village, and half-unconsciously bent his steps toward a cottage. . . . The verdant trance lay far and wide; and through it nothing came but the brindled kine, dreamily wandering to their pastures. . . . As touched and bewitched by the loveliness of this silence, Pierre neared the cottage. (p. 23)

The novel chronicles Pierre's awakening from this magical dream of innocence to the reality of life's complexities. But as Melville conceives life's complexities, Pierre must

not simply abandon his mysterious dreams. Instead, he must enter into a more profound relationship with them and the life of the unconscious to which the deepest dreams give access.

Pierre's life at Saddle Meadows is, above all, reasonable, orderly, and harmonious. It is only the appearance of the dark stranger, Isabel, that forces Pierre to confront the irrational. His first glimpse of her produces the following reaction:

> The emotions he experienced seemed to have taken hold of the deepest roots and subtlest fibers of his being. And so much the more that it was so subterranean in him, so much the more did he feel its weird inscrutableness. . . . He would lose himself in the most surprising and preternatural ponderings, which baffled all the introspective cunning of his mind. Himself was too much for himself. He felt that what he had always before considered the solid land of veritable reality, was now being audaciously encroached upon by bannered armies of hooded phantoms, disembarking in his soul, as from flotillas of specter-boats. (p. 73)

The imagery of descent, of the mind as a dark, buried labyrinth, pervades the novel. Self-discovery is imagined as a jorney to this underworld. That the highest truth lies inward in the depths of personality and not upward or outward in any conventional spiritual source is clearly established by Pierre's vow after reading the letter in which Isabel reveals her identity: "'Henceforth I will know nothing but Truth; glad Truth, or sad Truth; I will

know what is, and do what my deepest angel dictates'" (pp. 90-91). Traditionally the best angels are the highest. Melville's, not surprisingly, are the deepest.

Pierre's initial discovery is like Hamlet's: unsuspected evil is found in an idolized parent. For both, the shock of recognition produces profound distrust in the truthfulness of appearances. But whereas Hamlet's madness finally leads to a mature acceptance of the order of things, a trust in the providential universe which demands of man only "readiness," Pierre's madness leads down into a vision of negation:

> The old mummy lies buried in cloth on cloth; it takes time to unwrap this Egyptian king. Yet now, forsooth, because Pierre began to see through the first superficiality of the world, he fondly weens he has come to the unlayered substance. But, far as any geologist has yet gone down into the world, it is found to consist of nothing but surface stratified on surface. To its axis, the world being nothing but superinduced superficies. By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the cental room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid--and no body is there! --appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man! (p. 323)

Although Melville denies the possibility of ever reaching the "bottom" of the psyche, of ever attaining the kind of understanding of behavior which is the goal of psychoanalysis, he does, nevertheless, assert the primacy of unconscious forces. Under the influence of Isabel, Pierre behaves as one in a trance, and the images Melville uses to describe their relationship are taken directly from

the language of nineteenth-century animal magnetism. Repeatedly, Isabel's "magnetical" power over Pierre is stressed. This description of Pierre's response to Isabel's strange music is typical: "To Pierre's dilated senses Isabel seemed to swim in an electric fluid; the vivid buckler of her brow seemed as a magnetic plate. Now first this night was Pierre made aware of . . . an extraordinary physical magnetism in Isabel" (p. 181). In the writings of nineteenth-century theoreticians of the mental life such as Mesmer and Carus, the magnetic metaphor is used to explain the powerful unconscious attraction which draws two people together. This metaphor is used extensively in Pierre and also in The Idiot.

From the very first, Pierre is aware that his response to Isabel is based not on any reasoned estimation of his duty to redeem the sins of his father, but on a purely intuitive recognition that her irrational force is part of his own deepest nature. He knows, although he would escape his knowledge that, "From without, no wonderful effect is wrought within ourselves, unless some interior, responding wonder meets it" (p. 76). The "irresistible admonitions and intuitions of Fate" (p. 87) which rule Pierre's conduct from the moment he first sees Isabel are, in fact, Melville's metaphor for psychological necessity. To suggest then, as Murray Krieger has done, that "Pierre's dedication to virtue stems from a prideful and highly

self-conscious assumption of righteousness"[7] is to miss the point entirely. The driving thrust of Pierre is the frightening revelation of how un-self-conscious are our most momentous actions:

> So strange and complicate is the human soul; so much is confusedly evolved from out itself, and such vast and varied accessions come to it from abroad, and so impossible is it always to distinguish between the two, that the wisest man were rash, positively to assign the precise and incipient origination of his final thoughts and acts. Far as we blind moles can see, man's life seems but an acting upon mysterious hints; it is somehow hinted to us, to do thus or thus. For surely no mere mortal who has at all gone down into himself will ever pretend that his slightest thought or act solely originates in his own defined identity. (pp. 207-08)

Throughout Pierre, Melville uses metaphors of mind which convey the sense that one's "defined identity"--that is, the conscious, rational self--has but a tenuous hold over the mind. Pierre feels "two antagonistic agencies within him; one of which was just struggling into his consciousness, and each of which was striving for the mastery" (p. 88). The nurse who hears the ambiguous ravings of Pierre's father on his deathbed "trembled to think of that mysterious thing in the soul, which seems to acknowledge no human jurisdiction, but in spite of the individual's own innocent self, will still dream horrid dreams, and mutter unmentionable thoughts" (p. 96).

In Isabel there is hardly a rational self to take

hold at all. Her sense of personal identity is so weak that she prays for the day she will cease to exist as a being separate from the "pervading spirit animating all things" (p. 146). She repeatedly ascribes her actions to an agent other than herself. She tells Pierre that she doesn't know why she wrote to him in the first place, "'for poor Bell was too delirious to have planned and winnowed motives then. The impulse in me called thee, not poor Bell'" (p. 189). Or, again, Isabel reveals the radical split in her personality in a later conversation: "'Pierre, ere now,--ere I ever knew thee--I have done mad things, which I have never been conscious of, but in the dim recalling. I hold such things no things of mine'" (p. 375).

The theme of the disunity of personality revealed in the treatment of the life of the unconscious is also explored through the novel's preoccupation with "doubleness." What so baffles and maddens Pierre is not simply the discovery of his father's tainted past, as embodied in the chair portrait, but the paradoxical co-existence of <u>two</u> portraits: each contradicts the other, yet both are true. The chair portrait seems to say to Pierre, "believe not the drawing-room painting; that is not thy father. Consider in thy mind, Pierre, whether we two paintings may not make only one" (p. 109).

That it is this paradoxical doubleness and not the

discovery of hidden evil which so shatters Pierre's serene conception of the world is made clear in the following passage:

> On all sides, the physical world of solid objects now slidingly displaced itself from around him, and he floated into an ether of visions; and starting to his feet with clenched hands and outstaring eyes at the transfixed figure in the air, he ejaculated that wonderful verse from Dante, descriptive of the two mutually absorbing shapes in the Inferno:
> "Ah! how dost thou change,
> Agnello! See! thou art not double now,
> Nor only one!"
> (p. 111)

We are faced here with the same challenge to logic raised by the figure of the double, the impossible yet existing condition of simultaneous separateness and identity. And it is precisely this problem that Kierkegaard identified as being a philosophical dilemma characteristic of the nineteenth century:

> The present age is one of understanding lacking in passion, and has therefore abolished the principle of contradiction [which means "this is not that, one thing is not another, and individuality can be preserved."] . . . The abolition of the principle of contradiction, expressed in terms of existence, means to live in contradiction with oneself. The creative omnipotence of the differentiating power of passion, which makes the individual completely at one with himself, is transformed into the extended scope of reflective understanding: as a result of knowing and being everything possible, one is in contradiction with oneself, i.e., nothing at all.[8]

What Pierre learns from the "doubleness" of his father

and also from his double attraction to Isabel and Lucy is that his own nature is ambiguously mixed. From the beginning, Pierre recognizes this fact intuitively, yet his conscious mind struggles desperately to refuse its horrifying truth. The idea that one can be at odds with oneself, that one can hold two conflicting ideas in the mind is, to the early Pierre, "an immense scandal upon his common sanity" (p. 201). We are reminded of the Underground Man's suggestion that there are some things "which a man is afraid to tell even to himself" (p. 213). And the narrator of Pierre echoes this belief that we know more than we know we know, a phenomenon impossible without the existence of some form of unconscious life: "And here it may be randomly suggested, by way of bagatelle, whether some things that men think they do not know, are not for all that thoroughly comprehended by them; and yet, so to speak, though contained in themselves, are kept a secret from themselves?" (p. 333).

That Pierre finally grasps his situation at the deepest levels of his being is revealed in his dream of Enceladus and The Mount of Titans. According to the alienist Karl Ideler (1795-1860) when man is frustrated by reality he "takes flight into fantasy where he can revel in the measureless joy of his dream world, or justify to himself his sufferings in horrifyingly distorted images."[9] The latter seems a fairly accurate description

of Pierre's vision of himself as the impotent Enceladus, product of an incestuous mating of earth and heaven. Imprisoned in the earth, which is his nature, Enceladus is forever compelled to assault the sky, which is also his nature. One is struck by the similarity of Dostoevsky's conception of the duality in human nature, expressed in a letter to his brother in 1838: "The atmosphere of man's soul consists in a fusion of heaven with earth; and man is a kind of illegitimate child. The law of man's inner nature is beyond him."[10]

Here we come to the crux of the complicated relationship of Melville and Dostoevsky to nineteenth-century science. For although both writers adopt the new model of mind which posits the primacy of the unconscious, both reject the scientist's faith that this newly discovered realm could be rationally explained; the law of man's nature is, for them, unknowable. In contrast, many nineteenth-century alienists believed that madness was curable precisely because it was understandable; it was possible, they thought, to use logic and reason to "argue" the madman out of his illness. The new structure of the insane asylum, designed to restore the mad to order and reason, "was not created to liberate unreason, but to master it, to abolish its autonomy."[11] To the alienists, whose faith in reason was firm, madness was a state of unreason and error alien to the human constitution.

And it is precisely this view which Melville and Dostoevsky combat in all their work. As we have seen in our discussion of "Bartleby" and "Notes From the Underground," the efficacy of human reason as a means of knowing ourselves and the world is seriously challenged. In Pierre, we again see Melville's critique of pure reason when he asserts that the strongest emotions "defy all analytical insight" (p. 92). True knowledge is arrived at not "by any covertly inductive reasoning process," but through an inexplicable intuitive flash which is "like electricity" (p. 114).

It is faith in reason that cripples the art of fiction, according to Melville. Novels fail because of,

> their false, inverted attempts at systematizing eternally unsystemizable elements; their audacious, intermeddling impotency, in trying to unravel, and spread out, and classify, the more thin than gossamer threads which make up the complex web of life . . . while countless tribes of common novels laboriously spin veils of mystery, only to complacently clear them up at last . . . yet the profounder emanations of the human mind, intended to illustrate all that can be humanly known of human life; these never unravel their own intricacies, and have no proper endings. (p. 170)

How to reconcile the irrational roots of human nature with the rationale of narrative structure is a constant aesthetic problem for Melville, and one which he never does resolve. In The Idiot, Dostoevsky repeatedly expresses similar concerns about the impossibility of accu-

rate storytelling. He warns us not to forget "that the motives of human actions are usually infinitely more complex and varied than we are apt to explain them afterwards, and can never really be defined with certainty. It is sometimes much better for a writer to content himself with a simple narrative of events."[12]

Melville's scorn for the "easy" solution in fiction is matched by his disdain for the cold rationalism of the scientists who presume to define the limits of man's sanity. Of Pierre's fit of perverse humor when he writes the strange letter to his valet, Dates, Melville writes: "The cool censoriousness of the mere philosopher would denominate such conduct as nothing short of temporary madness; and perhaps it is, since, in the inexorable and inhuman eye of mere undiluted reason, all grief, whether on our own account, or that of others, is the sheerest unreason and insanity" (p. 218). Melville's image of madness is forged in opposition to the dominant rational assumptions of his culture. The eye of undiluted reason which presumes to dismiss Pierre by labelling him "mad" is, for Melville, "inhuman," and therefore blind to all human truth.

In the passage cited above, Pierre's insanity is linked to his grief. Later we are told that Pierre's mother went mad from a "hate-grief unrelenting," his father "from a sin-grief irreparable" (p. 325). Grief had

a special place in Melville's thought, as the following observation by F. O. Matthiessen indicates: "It is significant that he [Melville] checked the note, in his edition of Shakespeare, on Enobarbus' answer to Cleopatra at the moment of the rout of her forces: 'What shall we do Enobarbus?' 'Think, and die.' The note said: 'To think or take thought, was anciently synonymous with to grieve.'"[13] In this complex of associations--grief, thought, and insanity--we perhaps come closest to an understanding of the status of madness in Melville's imagination. All of Melville's mad heroes experience what Ishmael calls "the wisdom that is woe" and "the woe that is madness." Madness is the affliction of those who think deeply, those who are unafraid to confront the harshest truths of life, even though those truths are inevitably debilitating, woeful, maddening. More than any other writer of his age, Melville sought to re-establish the link between truth and madness which the Age of Reason had so completely severed. But in Melville's imagination the kind of truth which is allied to the vision of madness is always terrible, never joyous or ecstatic as in Dostoevsky.

Dostoevsky's conception of madness emerges in opposition to the rationalist's view in much the same way as Melville's. Dostoevsky is aware that the medical definition of insanity relies on socially-defined normative values that are as shallow and narrow as those of Melville's

Reverend Falsgrave. Near the end of The Idiot Lebedev hopes to thwart Myshkin's marriage to Nastasya Filippovna by having the Prince declared legally insane, a strategy also considered to keep Lucy from moving in with Pierre. But the doctor who surreptitiously examines Myshkin tells Lebedev, after smoking the Prince's "excellent cigars," savoring a "most delicious liquer," and improperly flirting with Vera, "that if such people were to be put under restraint there would be no one left to keep an eye on them" (p. 632). Since Nastasya Filippovna is not only beautiful but also wealthy, Myshkin's forthcoming marriage is judged by the worldly doctor as anything but proof of insanity. Rather, it is a sign of "the shrewd and calculating intelligence of a man of the world" (p. 632). The rational voice of science is clearly not to be trusted.

If, at the end of Pierre, we are left with the sense that the essence of madness lies in the perception of the ambiguous truths from which our common sanity shields us, the same can be said of The Idiot. Pierre's attempt to imitate Christ, to live by the extreme unreason of Christian self-sacrifice, is the crucial experiment which exposes him to all of life's terrifying contradictions. Myshkin, too, undergoes the madness of the Cross. Dostoevsky's struggle with the meaning of Christ's suffering is most clearly demonstrated in one of the notebook

versions of The Idiot. Umetskaya, a holy fool who was eliminated in the finished novel, speaks to another character with "inspired madness" about the crucifixion:

> "Death on the cross disconcerts reason. But he has overcome reason too."
>
> "What is this--a miracle?"
>
> "Of course, a miracle, but besides. . . ."
>
> "What?"
>
> "There was, besides, a terrible cry."
>
> "What sort of cry?"
>
> "Eloï! Eloï!"
>
> "Then this is the eclipse."
>
> "I don't know, but it is a terrible cry."[14]

Dostoevsky's portrait of Myshkin manages to embrace both of these extremes, the miraculous transcendence of divine unreason and the horrible anguish of human despair. But despite Dostoevsky's avowed intention to portray a "positively beautiful individual," his genius was more at home with human failure. As Alfred Kazin observes, "It is not faith that Dostoevsky has ever brought us. . . . His greatest gift has been icy and merciless clarity; an awareness of man, as man, in his social loneliness, his emotional cheating, his fertile and agile hostility, his limited power to love--always Dostoevsky's subject is the war in man."[15] And The Idiot is no exception.

The careers of Pierre and Myshkin are roughly

parallel. Both begin in a state of naive innocence. In Pierre's attraction to the dark Isabel his education about his own deepest nature begins. It is not only Isabel's beauty which is so alluring, but also her "long-suffering, hopeless anguish" (p. 73). This combination of beauty with suffering is precisely what draws Myshkin so inexorably to Nastasya Filippovna. Both of these women are dark and sensual, social outcasts tainted by hints of madness.[16] Although Myshkin and Pierre are both drawn to this demonic force, they are also equally attracted to figures of light, Aglaya and Lucy. Pierre actually sets up a grotesque ménage à trois in which his sister masquerades as his wife, and his fiancée poses as his cousin. Myshkin is prevented from such folly only because his two women flee from him in panic. Myshkin's confession that he wants to love both of them leaves the worldly Radomsky with the conviction that "the prince was not entirely in his right mind. . . . And how can one love two persons at once? With two different kinds of love? That was interesting--the poor idiot!" (p. 627).

As practical courses of action, these "double loves" are rather foolish. As parables of the radical doubleness in human nature, they make more sense. Dostoevsky goes further in probing the meaning of this doubleness when he has Radomsky observe that self-destruction is as much the normal law of humanity as self-preservation. Although

Radomsky is not always to be trusted, here he is taking Dostoevsky's side in an argument against rational utilitarianism. And to further establish the validity of this thought Lebedev, generally critical of Radomsky, says, "'you don't realize yourself how profound your idea is--how true it is! Yes, sir. The law of destruction and the law of self-preservation are equally strong in humanity!'" (p. 412).

Myshkin and Pierre both undertake Christ-like projects. In Switzerland, Myshkin befriends the seduced and abandoned Marie; Pierre assumes a similar role in relation to the fallen Delly Ulver. Both renounce marriages of love, with Aglaya and Lucy, in order to marry out of "charity," with Nastasya Filippovna and Isabel. But in this latter action is revealed an essential difference between Myshkin and Pierre. In trying to behave like a chronometer, Pierre learns that, in fact, he isn't one at all. As a man, Pierre is incapable of pure agape. His love for Isabel can not be divorced from eros, as the ironic narrator makes clear: "But Pierre, though charged with the fire of all divineness, his containing thing was made of clay" (pp. 134-35).

Myshkin is more nearly chronometrical. As Plinlimmon notes, "'To turn the left cheek if the right be smitten, is chronometrical; hence, no average son of man ever did such a thing'" (p. 247). Of course Myshkin literally does

this in the frantic drawing room scene when Gania slaps him. In the notebooks we see Dostoevsky pondering the difficulty of how to make a Christ-like character appealing to his readers: "If Don Quixote and Pickwick as philanthropists are charming to the reader, it is because they are comical. The hero of this novel, the Prince, is not comical but does have another charming quality: he is innocent!"[17]

This is true, but Dostoevsky doesn't take his analysis far enough. Myshkin's "innocence" largely consists in his complete lack of sensuality. It results not from any arduous subduing of the rebellious flesh, but from the simple fact that he has been sick. "'And are you fond of the ladies, Prince?'" Rogozhin asks in the very first chapter. "'Me? N-n-no! You see, I--Perhaps you don't know, but, you see, I've been ill since I was a child and I have no knowledge at all of women.'" "'Well,' Rogozhin cried, 'if that is so, then you are a regular holy fool, Prince, and such as you God loves'" (p. 38).

From the beginning, Myshkin is set apart from other mortals by the illness which is an integral part of his characterization. That Dostoevsky should have labelled Myshkin an "idiot" is somewhat curious, since his condition in no way resembles either the popular or medical uses of that term in the nineteenth century. It does, however, reflect the way others in the novel see him. Obviously,

as demonstrated in the passage just cited, Dostoevsky wants us to think of Myshkin as a "holy fool," one of the "Eastern saints who, in order to vanquish spiritual pride and concern for human esteem, voluntarily feign imbecility as an heroic feat . . . and expose themselves to humiliations."[18]

Myshkin's true illness, like Dostoevsky's, is epilepsy. Carus' theory "that abnormal states of mind may be the gateway to supernormal experiences that are very close to divine"[19] must surely have appealed to Dostoevsky's sense of the meaning of his own affliction. Myshkin experiences before each epileptic fit a moment of intense calm and joy, an intuitive flash of the highest knowledge:

> Reflecting about that moment afterwards, when he was well again, he often said to himself that all those gleams and flashes of the highest awareness and, hence, also of 'the highest mode of existence', were nothing but a disease, a departure from the normal condition, and, if so, it was not at all the highest mode of existence, but, on the contrary, must be considered to be the lowest. And yet he arrived at last at the paradoxical conclusion: 'What if it is a disease?' he decided at last. 'What does it matter that it is an abnormal tension, if the result, if the moment of sensation, remembered and analysed in a state of health, turns out to be harmony and beauty brought to their highest point of perfection, and gives a feeling, undivined and undreamt of till then, of completeness, proportion, reconciliation, and an ecstatic and prayerful fusion in the highest synthesis of life?' . . . That it really was 'the highest synthesis of life', he could not doubt. For it was not abnormal and fantastic visions he saw at that moment, as under the influence of hashish, opium, or spirits, which debased the

> reason and distorted the mind. He could reason sanely about it when the attack was over and he was well again. Those moments were merely an intense heightening of awareness--if this condition had to be expressed in one word--of awareness and at the same time of the most direct sensation of one's own existence to the most intense degree. (pp.258-59)

Several points raised in this passage deserve attention. First, we see that Dostoevsky grapples with the problem of unreason within the perceptual structure new to the nineteenth century: the medical bipolarity of the normal and the pathological. In the terms in which Dostoevsky considers the status of his ecstatic vision, there is an implicit acceptance of the emerging medical definition of man. Experience is evaluated by the categories of sickness or health rather than good or evil, saved or damned. But although Dostoevsky cannot divorce his perceptions from the dual structure of sickness or health, he will not abandon his intuitive knowledge that abnormal can be "higher" or "better." This ultimate reliance on intuition plays a vital role in the nineteenth-century philosophical attack on the limits of reason. In Mandelbaum's words, "it was assumed that genuine knowledge necessarily involves some form of immediate apprehension, in which what we know must be both directly present and grasped in concrete detail."[20] The validity of Myshkin's state of awareness is beyond question or appeal.

Another crucial point raised by Myshkin's descrip-

tion of his epileptic ecstasy is that it is only in the abnormal or diseased state that man experiences "reconciliation," "fusion," or "synthesis." Thus, for Dostoevsky, man's normal condition involves a kind of radical disunity, a perpetual internal strife, "the war in man." Again we see, as in "Notes From the Underground," Dostoevsky's inversion of the values which the voice of reason ascribes to mad and sane, sick and healthy. And we are very close in spirit to Melville's dismissal of the "inhuman eye of mere undiluted reason" which would attempt to disarm the meaning of Pierre's grief by labelling it insanity.

Although Myshkin's illness saves him from one form of doubleness--the opposing tensions of body and spirit which tear Pierre apart--nevertheless The Idiot as a whole raises the same questions about the disunity of personality as Pierre. When Keller admits that his motives for confessing his guilt to Myshkin are hopelessly mixed, that he is doing it for his own "spiritual development" and, at the same time, to extract money from the Prince, Myshkin reassures him that this unthinkable contradiction is perfectly normal:

> "Two ideas occurred to you at one and the same time. This happens very often. It always happens to me. Still, I don't think it's a good thing and, you know, Keller, I blame myself most of all for it. . . . Sometimes, indeed, I couldn't help thinking . . . that everyone is like that, so that I even began patting myself on the back, for it is terribly difficult to fight against these double

> thoughts. I've tried. Goodness only knows how they come and how they arise." (p. 346)

Even the "positively beautiful" Myshkin can be possessed by what he calls "his demon," a dark unconscious force. We learn of this most dramatically in the brilliant sequence which ends abruptly in Rogozhin's attempt to murder the Prince. After Nastasya Filippovna runs away from Rogozhin, Myshkin visits him and promises that he will not attempt to see her. The two men exchange crosses and Myshkin goes to the railway station, planning to leave for Pavlovsk. Suddenly aware that he is being followed, Myshkin throws his ticket away and leaves the station. On the street, "He suddenly caught himself consciously doing something he had been doing for a long time, but that he had not noticed till that very moment" (p. 257). For several hours, Myshkin has been looking "round uneasily, as if expecting to see someone" (p. 257), an impulse which he characterizes as "morbid" and "unconscious." We will see why in a minute.

Acting like one in a trance, Myshkin finds himself standing before a cutler's window, staring at a knife identical to Rogozhin's. And when he turns round suddenly, "He caught Rogozhin's eyes fixed upon him. . . . But a sort of overpowering inner loathing again got the better of him: he did not want to think it over and he didn't" (p. 258). Next, Myshkin is "suddenly seized by an intense, irresistible desire, almost a <u>temptation</u>" (p. 260, italics

mine). He sets off for the Petersburg suburb where Nastasya Filippovna had been staying, although "he knew almost for certain that he would not find her at home" (p. 260). There is a strange new idea animating Myshkin now, but he finds thinking about its implications "repugnant to him and almost impossible" (p. 260). His mind turns to the murderer of the Zhemarins, and from him to Rogozhin, but he admits his inability to fathom either: "a stranger's soul is a dark mystery, and a Russian's soul is a dark mystery" (p. 261). Myshkin's mind is spinning freely:

> Still, if Rogozhin did kill, he would not kill in such a horrible way. There would not be that chaos there. A weapon made to a previously prepared pattern and six people butchered in a state of absolute delirium! But had Rogozhin ordered a weapon made to a pattern? He had--but was it certain that Rogozhin would kill? The prince shuddered suddenly,'Isn't it criminal, isn't it base of me to assume such a thing with such cynical frankness?' he exclaimed, his face flushing all over with shame. (p..261)

In the deepest part of his psyche, Myshkin not only suspects but is certain that his "brother" is guilty, capable of unspeakable horrors. Myshkin's conscious self tries to reject his unconscious thoughts, and he feels shame. But he also understands what his capacity for such "double thoughts" reveals about himself: "Oh! how unpardonably and dishonourably he had wronged Rogozhin! No, it was not the Russian soul that was dark mystery, it was

his own soul that was plunged in darkness, if he was capable of imagining such a horror" (p. 263). Myshkin at last understands that his sole reason for going to the house in the Petersburg suburb was to provoke Rogozhin, to confirm the worst about him. Myshkin realizes that despite the admonitions of his better self, he has been ruled by "the outrageous whispered suggestions of his demon" (p. 265).

Myshkin's ability to conceive of guilt at the deepest levels of his being is, for Dostoevsky, sufficient proof that he is capable of it. This is the only way we can possibly understand Myshkin's later forgiveness of Rogozhin: "'As I looked at you that morning, I had a feeling that you were going to do it. . . . You felt just as I did. We both felt the same. . . . For I did suspect you all the same. The fact is, we were both guilty!'" (p. 402). This episode surely illustrates Donald Fanger's perceptive comment that Dostoevsky saw "a latent criminality in all men, even the most apparently healthy. Alyosha Karamazov was to admit as much, and Freud to generalize the admission. This perception led naturally to an awareness of that thin experiential line which divides fantasy from reality and impulse from accomplished fact, and it led Dostoevsky to illuminate as has never been done before the twilight zone of dreams and hallucination, the link between inner and outer reality."[21]

As we have seen earlier, the most eloquent expression of Pierre's condition is found not in the language of rational discourse but in the symbolic language of the dream. In The Idiot, Dostoevsky is even more explicit about the nature and function of dreams, a topic of considerable contemporary interest. Dostoevsky knew something of Gotthilf von Schubert's Symbolism of Dreams (1816), a work which expressed the idea also proposed by Carus that dreams use a universal symbolic language. As we shall see, Dostoevsky seems to share von Schubert's notion that although some dreams are prophetic, they "more often have an amoral and demonic character because the neglected, repressed, and strangled (vergewaltigte) aspects of personality come to the fore."[22]

That the dream gives access to unconscious strife is demonstrated in the troubled dream Myshkin has while dozing on the park seat before his early morning assignation with Aglaya. He dreams of a woman he knows "agonizingly well," and although he can identify her, "she did not seem to have the same face as he had always known, and he felt an agonizing desire not to acknowledge her as the same woman" (p. 463). The look on her face makes her seem "a great criminal. . . . His heart stood still; nothing, nothing in the world would make him admit that she was a criminal" (p. 463). This dream clearly presupposes a dynamic model of mind in which opposing forces are in

constant and irreconcilable conflict. Myshkin can not help recognizing Nastasya Filippovna, who corresponds to the destructive impulse within him, although part of him wants desperately not to acknowledge her. And although he can't escape the perception of her criminality, as his "demon" earlier forced him to imagine Rogozhin's, neither can he accept it.

It is when this bad dream recurs a short time later that Dostoevsky inserts what is almost a self-contained essay on the nature of dreams. It is worth quoting in full:

> Sometimes one dreams strange dreams, impossible and grotesque dreams; on waking you remember them distinctly and you are amazed at a strange fact. To begin with, you remember that your reason never deserted you all through the dream, you even remember that you acted with great cunning and logic during all that long, long time when you were surrounded by murderers who tried to deceive you, hid their intentions, treated you amicably, while they had their weapon in readiness and were only waiting for some signal; you remember how cleverly you cheated them in the end and hid from them; then you realize that they are perfectly well aware of your deception and are merely pretending not to know your hiding-place; but you have cheated and hoodwinked them again--you remember all that clearly. But why does your reason at the same time reconcile itself with such obvious absurdities and impossibilities with which, among other things, your dream was crowded? One of your murderers turned into a woman right before your very eyes, and from a woman into a cunning and hideous little dwarf, and you accepted it at once as an accomplished fact, almost without the slightest hesitation, and at the very moment when your reason, on the other side, was strained to the utmost, and showed extraordinary power, cunning,

> shrewdness, and logic? Why, too, when awake and having completely recovered your sense of reality, you feel almost every time, and sometimes with extraordinary vividness, that you have left some unsolved mystery behind with your dream? You smile at the absurdity of your dream, and at the same time you feel that in the intermingling of those absurdities some idea lies hidden, but an idea that is real, something belonging to your true life, something that exists and that has always existed in your heart; it is as though something new and prophetic, something you have been expecting, has been told you in your dream; your impression is very vivid: it may be joyful or agonizing, but what it is and what was said to you--all this you can neither understand nor remember. (p. 492)

Filled as dreams are with absurdities and impossibilities, they take us closer to the heart of life than any waking logic. The unreason of the dream contains "an idea that is real" and provides the only access we can have to the "true life." But ultimately the dream eludes rational analysis by the waking mind. The marvelous thing told in the dream can be neither understood nor remembered. We go through life carrying the "unsolved mystery" within us, just as Pierre carries within the lining of his coat the pamphlet which he thinks he has lost. Melville's comment about Pierre's situation applies as well to Myshkin's: "Could he likewise have carried about with him in his mind the thorough understanding of the book, and yet not be aware that he so understood it?" (p. 333).

We observed earlier that Pierre's discovery of his own mixed nature is linked to the revelation of the guilt,

and hence the doubleness, of the father. The doubleness of Glendenning Sr. is for Melville emblematic of the human condition in general and not an attempt to explain the uniqueness of Pierre's "case history." There are analogous examples of emblematic doubleness in The Idiot which serve not to explain why Myshkin is as he is, but which rather illustrate what he is. Since Myshkin is an orphan we learn almost nothing about his parents. Thus the one fact we do have about Myshkin's father, the hint of his guilt, is thrown into sharp relief: "'My father died awaiting trial,' the prince observed again, 'though I could never find out what he was accused of'" (p. 125). The ambiguity of innocence and guilt, left because the trial never took place, and the unspecified nature of the crime loom darkly over Myshkin's origins.

A more literal doubleness is used in the description of Myshkin's childhood. We learn that he was raised by two old maids, relations of Pavlishchev. Like the wicked and kind step-sisters of fairy tales, the elder woman, Marfa Nikitishna was strict and birched the sick Myshkin, while the younger Natalya Nikitishna treated him with great tenderness.

There is yet another striking analogy between the concept of doubleness in Pierre and The Idiot. The ambiguity Pierre discovers in the two portraits of his father involves, on the surface, a moral duality of good

and evil, light and dark, saint and sinner, spiritual and physical. If we follow closely the logic of the novel we can go further than this. As the son of the "good" father, Pierre is the very model of exuberant health, the embodiment of a primary life force. Isabel, product of the "evil" father, represents a morbid self-destructiveness; she is sickly and life-denying. She prays not for happiness, but for what amounts to death: "'I pray for peace--for motionlessness--for the feeling of myself, as of some plant, absorbing life without seeking it, and existing without individual sensation. I feel that there can be no perfect peace in individualness. Therefore, I hope one day to feel myself drank up into the pervading spirit animating all things. I feel I am an alien here'" (p. 146). In the double portraits and the brother and sister which issue from them, Melville is suggesting the very same duality which we noted earlier in The Idiot: the law of self-destruction and the law of self-preservation hold equal sway in man.

If Pierre's ambiguity is embodied in the two conflicting portraits of his biological father, Myshkin's is suggested in the one picture of his spiritual father, the copy of Holbein's Christ which hangs in Rogozhin's house. The Holbein Christ is the closest thing in the finished version of The Idiot to the passage from the notebooks we cited earlier.[23] There Dostoevsky considers the crucifixion

as an act of miraculous transcendence, but at the same time, an act which contains an element of the irreducibly terrifying. Strictly speaking, the Holbein Christ represents the latter aspect of the crucifixion, but the former remains as an implicit dimension inherent in the subject of the painting.

The picture shows Christ immediately after he has been removed from the cross, but unlike most paintings which attempt to preserve a shade of spiritual beauty even at this moment of extreme suffering, Holbein renders the body of Christ as he would the corpse of any man who had been subject to such extreme physical abuse. Myshkin is horrified when Rogozhin admits that he likes looking at this picture. "'At that picture!' the prince exclaimed, struck by a sudden thought. 'At that picture! Why, some people may lose their faith by looking at that picture!'" (p. 251). It is Ippolit who later explains why this picture shatters faith:

> "If such a corpse (and it must have been just like that) was seen by all His disciples, . . . by all who believed in Him and worshipped Him, then how could they possibly have believed, as they looked at the corpse, that that martyr would rise again? Here one cannot help being struck with the idea that if death is so horrible and if the laws of nature are so powerful, then how can they be overcome? How can they be overcome when even He did not conquer them. . . . The picture seems to give expression to the idea of a dark, insolent, and senselessly eternal power, to which everything is subordinated, and this idea is suggested to you unconsciously." (p. 447)

This idea of the senselessly destructive power of nature is so inimical to faith that it makes Ippolit wonder if Christ would have allowed himself to be crucified if he could have seen in advance what he would look like when taken from the cross. Ippolit then describes his delirious vision of the embodiment of that all-powerful force of negation in one vivid image: he sees the form of a horrible tarantula, and immediately after this Rogozhin, or his ghost, enters the room. This apparition so disgusts Ippolit that he must choose suicide: "It is impossible to go on living when life assumes such grotesque and humiliating forms" (p. 450).

But as Dostoevsky here identifies Rogozhin with the destructive force of nature which overcomes the spiritual and renders life meaningless, he also leads us to see that Rogozhin represents an internal force within Myshkin. The external forces of light and dark embodied in the Holbein Christ ultimately point to the internal struggle in Myshkin's nature, just as the light and dark portraits of Pierre's father reflect the son's inner split. Rogozhin is Myshkin's double.

Even without relying on the "genetic" argument provided by the notebooks that these two are aspects of what was originally one character, it is impossible to ignore the special quality of their relationship in the finished novel. That Myshkin and Rogozhin find themselves

sitting opposite each other in a railway car as the novel begins is what George Steiner calls "one of those coincidences essential to the Dostoevskyan scheme of things. . . . It is a defining proximity."[24] "Such coincidences," Melville writes in Pierre, "however frequently they may recur, ever fill the finer organization with sensations which transcend all verbal renderings. They take hold of life's subtlest problem. . . . The query is spontaneously propounded--chance, or God?" (p. 138). For both Melville and Dostoevsky, coincidences are rarely accidental; rather they are compelled by the dynamics of inner necessity.

Myshkin and Rogozhin confess at their first meeting that they have taken a great fancy to each other (p. 38) and from this moment their fates are inextricably linked. Both are drawn "magnetically" to Nastasya Filippovna, Rogozhin with a sensual passion as pure as Myshkin's spiritual one: it is another Dostoevskyan "coincidence" that Rogozhin's Christian name, Parfyon, means "virginal." And just as Myshkin admits his share of the guilt in Rogozhin's attempt to murder him, their joint vigil over the corpse of Nastasya Filippovna signifies their mutual responsibility for her death. As Steiner observes, Myshkin's "relations to Rogozhin are unequivocal. Rogozhin is Myshkin's original sin. To the extent that the Prince is human, and thus heir to the Fall, the two men must remain inseparable companions. . . . Their inextricable nearness

is a Dostoevskyan parable on the necessary presence of evil at the gates of knowledge."[25]

The complexity of the Myshkin-Rogozhin relationship takes us to the heart of The Idiot. Just as nature destroys Christ, Rogozhin destroys the Christ-like Myshkin, and in a way so terrifyingly senseless as to shatter our faith. But if we have followed Dostoevsky's analogy between the destructive force in external nature and man's inner nature, it is clear that Myshkin is ultimately destroyed not by an external agent, but by the Rogozhin within, the radical disunity in his nature which prevents him from ever being "one."

Both Myshkin and Pierre attempt to live by the light of Christ's example but neither can escape the dark, destructive powers within. If in their original sacrifices there is a kind of divine unreason, a transcendent and redemptive rejection of the world's common sense, in the end the realization of what Rogozhin and Isabel represent drives Myshkin and Pierre into a state of madness that signals their defeat.

The unreason of Christ was a triumph over nature, an affirmation of higher truth. The final madness of Myshkin, and of Pierre, denies the possibility of any such victory. In the end, both must face the basic contradiction of their aspirations, a contradiction inherent in human nature. This awareness is more than man

can bear. In Myshkin and Pierre, the image of madness comes finally to embrace contradictory extremes: it is both the ultimate recognition of the human condition and the ultimate escape from it.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III.

[1]Cited in Mochulsky, p. 345.

[2]Lawrence, p. 154.

[3]Foucault, Madness and Civilization, pp. 78-79.

[4]Murray Krieger, "Dostoevsky's 'Idiot': The Curse of Saintliness," The Tragic Vision (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960), rpt. in René Wellek, ed., Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 40.

[5]Herman Melville, Pierre, Or The Ambiguities (New York: New American Library, 1964), pp. 245-46. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[6]Henry A. Murray, "Introduction" to Pierre, Or The Ambiguities by Herman Melville (New York: Farrar Straus, 1949), p. xxvi.

[7]Krieger, p. 40.

[8]Søren Kierkegaard, The Present Age, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 68.

[9]Ellenberger, Discovery of the Unconscious, p. 213.

[10]Cited in Mochulsky, p. 17.

[11]Rothman, Discovery of the Asylum, p. xviii.

[12]Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot, trans. David Magarshack (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1955), p. 523. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[13]Matthiessen, American Renaissance, p. 407, n. 4.

[14]Cited in Mochulsky, p. 342.

[15]Alfred Kazin, The Inmost Leaf: A Selection of Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955), pp. 253-54.

[16]There is some evidence, although it is admittedly slim, that both women share a common ancestor in Mignon of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. In an early draft of The Idiot Nastasya Filippovna was actually named Mignon. Isa-

bel's strange past and mystical music-making are very much like Mignon's. Whether or not Melville and Dostoevsky were thinking specifically of Mignon, it is clear that they were working within the nineteenth-century tradition of fair and dark heroines so prevalent, for example, in Scott and Poe. The dark heroine of this tradition possesses powers whose sources are erotic and irrational. The madness of Isabel and Nastasya Filippovna is largely a matter of literary convention rather than a critical response to contemporary models of actual madness, and thus is subsidiary to the main concern of this study.

[17]Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Notebooks for The Idiot, ed. Edward Wasiolek, trans. Katherine Strelsky (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 191.

[18]Mochulsky, p. 339, n. 1.

[19]Simmons, Dostoevski, p. 77.

[20]Mandelbaum, History, Man, and Reason, p. 350.

[21]Donald Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), p. 219.

[22]Ellenberger, p. 206.

[23]See above, p. 82.

[24]Steiner, Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, pp. 140-41.

[25]Steiner, p. 141.

CHAPTER IV.

MOBY DICK, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, AND THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

Moby Dick is such an eccentric novel that it seems to defy the kind of comparative study we are engaged in here. Yet when we consider Melville's masterpiece side by side with Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov we find that the central concerns of these three works are closely related. A preoccupation with the act of transgression lies at the heart of Melville's novel of the quest-voyage and Dostoevsky's two novels of crime.

Transgression is a common theme in literature as it is a common concern of all societies. But the act of transgression has, for Melville and Dostoevsky, a special status which is seen most clearly when we consider the cultural context from which it emerged. The nineteenth-century crisis of reason which we have discussed in previous chapters constituted only one element in what was a general upheaval of the major assumptions upon which Western civilization rested. It was not only faith in reason which was destroyed by the age of Melville and Dostoevsky, but faith itself as well, the last a culmination of a steady process of erosion which had been going on for at least two centuries. If the two principal coordinates by which man was able to take his own measure, Reason and God, lost their absolute authority, what was needed was nothing less than a new definition

of man and his place in the scheme of things--if indeed there was a scheme left at all. If there were no God, perhaps man could himself fill the void left by His absence. To see if such an enterprise were possible man had to put his powers to the test. For Melville and Dostoevsky, and for such contemporaries as Hawthorne, the act of transgression becomes the principle means by which man can come to know himself. Transgression is, for Melville and Dostoevsky, a test of the limits of the self: boundaries are perceptible only after they have been crossed.

What distinguishes this new conception of transgression from earlier ones is that the transgressor is essentially uninterested in either the content or the results of his action. Macbeth murders to obtain a crown, not, as Raskolnikov does, to discover what he is, a man or a louse. The Romantics transgress to flaunt bourgeois values, to protest the restrictions of conventional morality, and to induce that most delectable of sensations--guilt. Transgression is the means by which the Romantic--Manfred, for example--proclaims his individuality and his isolation from the rest of mankind.

For Raskolnikov, Ivan, and Ahab the principal motivation of their transgressions is the desire to know the self, to discover the limits imposed by their humanity. The desire for power and mastery which we associate with the Renaissance transgressors such as Faust plays only a

minor, secondary role, as does the fascination with the forbidden which is a dominant characteristic of the Romantics. In Moby Dick, Crime and Punishment, and The Brothers Karamazov the need to know the self assumes a special urgency because it is inextricably related to the extreme spiritual crisis of the age, the agonizing debate of faith and doubt which so troubled the century. And in all three novels, this spiritual crisis is inseparable from the new crisis of sanity. Raskolnikov, Ivan, and Ahab are all mad heroes; in these works Melville and Dostoevsky use the image of madness to explore the most pressing concerns of their era.

This choice of the iconography of madness is no mere accident, nor is it the result of a peculiarity of temperament in Melville and Dostoevsky. Rather, it is dictated by the terms in which the age perceived the relationship between sanity and divinity. Again, Foucault's observations on the transformation of sensibility between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are essential:

> The classical mind condemned in madness a certain blindness to the truth; from Pinel on, madness would be regarded rather as an impulse from the depths which exceeds the juridical limits of the individual, ignores the moral limits fixed for him, and tends to an apotheosis of the self. For the nineteenth century, the initial model of madness would be to believe oneself to be God, while for the preceding centuries it had been to deny God.[1]

This change in the nineteenth-century model of madness is crucial. How closely this new psychological perception corresponds to the age's central spiritual crisis is apparent in F. O. Matthiessen's formulation of that crisis:

> Anyone concerned with orthodoxy holds that the spiritual decadence of the nineteenth century can be measured according to the alteration in the object of its belief from God-Man to Man-God, and to the corresponding shift in emphasis from Incarnation to Deification. Melville did not use those terms, but he had been responsive himself to that alteration, from belief in the salvation of man through the mercy and grace of a sovereign God, to belief in the potential divinity in every man. That alteration centered around the Crucifixion. By Melville's time, and especially in protestant, democratic America, the emphasis was no longer on God become Man, on the unique birth and Divinity of the Christ, who was killed and died back into eternal life; but on the rebel killed by an unworthy society, on Man become the Messiah, become God. That celebration of Man's triumph involved also the loss of several important attitudes: that there was anything more important than the individual; that he might find his completion in something greater than himself; that the real basis for human brotherhood was not in humanitarianism but in men's common aspiration and fallibility, in their humility before God.[2]

The nineteenth-century debate over the new status of madness was related not only to the question of the man-god, but also to another one which was so unsettling to the age--the issue of free will and responsibility. The medicalization of madness at the close of the eighteenth century was accompanied by two developments which

tended to deny responsibility to the perpetrator of aberrant or antisocial acts. The first, which we have discussed earlier[3], was the view that all criminal behavior was produced by the determining effects of environment. Since society at large must bear the responsibility for all deviant behavior, the individual is absolved of all personal guilt. But at the same time, he is deprived of free will. The second development was the new importance of forensic medicine. It became increasingly common to enlist the testimony of medical experts in criminal cases, a trend illustrated in both Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov. Isaac Ray's influential A Treatise on the Medical Jurisprudence of Insanity (1838) is representative of the legal-medical view of its day: "In general, insanity is an excuse for the commission of any crime, because the party has not the possession of his reason, which includes responsibility."[4] This whole issue was a terribly complicated one for the nineteenth century, and it has continued to be so in our own day. First, there was the problem of determining whether an offender was sane or insane. Ray, a medical man with an appropriate reverence for his profession, agrees that this task is difficult, but he denies that it is impossible. Since it is man and not nature who draws dividing lines in the realms of moral or natural science, he argues, "Why, then, should it be thought so strange that the empire of health

should be divided by no palpable line from that of disease; or that this fact does not authorize the conclusion that their representative phenomena can seldom be accurately distinguished from one another?"[5] Dostoevsky, for one, took a less sanguine view of the competence of doctors to distinguish mad from sane. One need only look at Dmitri's trial in The Brothers Karamazov where three so-called "experts" come forth with three contradictory diagnoses.

But there was a much more subtle problem raised by the debate over forensic medicine. Assuming that it is possible to identify insanity, and granting the legal position that only those responsible for their actions can be held accountable before the law, it was still not clear, to a large number of nineteenth-century thinkers at least, that the madman should be considered totally guiltless. For even though he might not be technically responsible for his crime, there was a strong current of thought in the age that would make him responsible for having gone mad in the first place. One commentator explains this mid-century attitude as follows:

> Mental illness, though somatic in nature, could have psychological as well as physical causes. Thus it was the abnormal behavior of the individual (who possessed free will) that was the primary cause of insanity, leading as it did to the impairment of the brain (the organ of the mind). Mental illness, therefore, was in some respects self-inflicted; by ignoring the laws governing human behavior the individual placed himself on the road to disease.[6]

It is important to emphasize that what we are describing here was a debate over an issue which elicited much fervent argument and little in the way of definitive solutions: the problem was too complex for that. As Otto Marx, a medical historian observes, "Much of the discussion about law and medicine, which went on then as it still does today, was concerned with the metaphysical question of free will which neither judge nor psychiatrist could answer."[7] What interests us here is the fact that the discussion was not an isolated matter of interest only to lawyers or doctors; it was central to the intellectual life of the age and thus engaged the attention of writers such as Melville and Dostoevsky.

Ahab and Raskolnikov are characterized by their creators as suffering from monomania, a form of mental illness which enjoyed the same kind of vogue at mid-century as did hysteria in the age of Freud and schizophrenia in our own time. The term, originated by the French alienist Esquirol, was used to describe patients who were irrational on one subject only, who suffered from an obsessive fixation on one idea. The term quickly became part of the popular vocabulary of the age and was used rather loosely to describe anyone who had an exaggerated enthusiasm for any one subject. Why monomania was such a popular concept in the middle decades of the nineteenth century is a sub-

ject which deserves separate examination. Surely the distaste for extreme and obsessive behavior, for enthusiasm of any sort, was part of the inheritance which rational science retained from the eighteenth century. Perhaps the fear of monomania at mid-century was part of a reaction against the Romantic exaltation of excess in preceding decades.

What we can point out with some degree of assurance is that the concept of monomania was directly related to the new historicism of the nineteenth century, the belief in what Mandelbaum terms "the doctrine of the malleability of man."[8] This doctrine involves a radical break with the long-held view that human nature is essentially constant; instead, it offers "the purely negative thesis that there are no specific ways of thinking and acting which are so deeply entrenched in human nature that they cannot be supplanted either by the effects of the circumstances in which men are placed or by means of man's own efforts."[9] Since human nature is not fixed, but alters in response to changing cultural conditions, what becomes inevitable is the view new to the nineteenth century that what is possible in one age may not be in another. There is an awareness among medical thinkers that the character of madness changes from era to era, that mental illness is rooted firmly in history. This is particularly true of monomania, as Esquirol describes it:

> It [monomania] is also, in direct relation in point of frequency, with the development of the intellectual faculties. The more the understanding is developed, and the more active the brain becomes, the more is monomania to be feared. There has been no advancement in the sciences, no invention in the arts, nor any important innovation, which has not served as a cause of monomania, or lent to it, its peculiar character. The same is true of the prevailing notions, general errors, and universal convictions, whether true or false, which impress a peculiar feature upon each period of social life. . . . There has been no social epoch, which has not been remarkable, in consequence of some indications which monomania furnishes, of the intellectual and moral character of each.[10]

What we have here, in essence, is the view that we can discover in the sufferings of the monomaniac a key to the intellectual history of his time. And, in Ahab and Raskolnikov, such is the case.

Ahab and Raskolnikov are the extreme isolatoes of nineteenth-century fiction. Raskolnikov is as far removed from society in his airless chamber as is Ahab aboard the Pequod. Their isolation is at once spatial, psychological, and spiritual. Cut off from the normal world of reciprocal relationships through which most men come to know their limitations, Ahab and Raskolnikov embrace a radical form of Emersonian self-reliance and self-enclosed individualism. Quentin Anderson points out that the American tendency to extol individualism as a national virtue has prevented us from confronting its darker significance in nineteenth-century cultural history. What happened, ac-

cording to Anderson, most particularly in the United States and Russia, was "that the presumptions on which Western society had been built began to die out."[11] What we have seen in the positive guise of individualism was in essence an "imaginative desocialization . . . an increasing measure of personal isolation, something which followed a lessening of both the density and the stability of the social medium."[12] A new consciousness emerged, one "which denies that our sense of ourselves is based on a reciprocal or dramatic or dialectic awareness of one another."[13]

In the most profound sense, the experience of Ahab and Raskolnikov illustrates the emergence of this new consciousness. In the monomaniacal obsession with the limitlessness and the autonomy of the self, what matters is not our relationship to the "other" but the unfettered exercise of free will which is the medium of self-affirmation. According to Raskolnikov's theory, the self-affirmation of the "extraordinary" man involves, by definition, a criminal act:

> "Legislators and leaders of men, such as Lycurgus, Solon, Mahomet, Napolean, and so on, were all without exception criminals, from the very fact that, making a new law, they transgressed the ancient one, handed down from their ancestors and held sacred by the people, and they did not stop short of bloodshed either, if that bloodshed--often of innocent persons fighting bravely in defence of ancient law--were of use to their cause. It's remarkable, in fact, that the majority, indeed, of these benefactors

> and leaders of humanity were guilty of terrible carnage. In short, I maintain that all great men or even men a little out of the common, that is to say capable of giving some new word, must from their very nature be criminals--more or less, of course.[14]

When Raskolnikov tells Sonia that he murdered not the old pawnbroker but himself he reveals the monomaniacal self-enclosure of his perceptions. He functions in a world where all actions are locked ultimately in the confines of self-consciousness. What is striking about Raskolnikov's crime is that he insists on playing all the roles: he is both agent and object of the action, at once the murderer and the victim of his crime. Lukacs relates this peculiarity of Raskolnikov's action to a broad cultural trend: "The experiment with oneself, the execution of an action not so much for the sake of the contents and effects of the action, but in order to know oneself once for all, in depth, to the very bottom, is one of the main human problems of the bourgeois and intellectual world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."[15] That Raskolnikov's murder is finally executed for the purpose of self-discovery is made clear in his confession to Sonia:

> "I wanted to murder without casuistry, to murder for my own sake, for myself alone! I didn't want to lie about it even to myself. It wasn't to help my mother I did the murder--that's nonsense--I didn't do the murder to gain wealth and power and to become a benefactor of mankind. Nonsense! I simply

> did it; I did the murder for myself, for myself alone, and whether I became a benefactor to others, or spent my life like a spider catching men in my web and sucking the life out of men, I couldn't have cared at that moment. . . . And it was not the money I wanted, Sonia, when I did it. It was not so much the money I wanted, but something else. . . . I know it all now. . . . Understand me! Perhaps I should never have committed a murder again. I wanted to find out something else; it was something else led me on. I wanted to find out then and quickly whether I was a louse like everybody else or a man. Whether I can step over barriers or not, whether I dare stoop to pick up or not, whether I am a trembling creature or whether I have the right . . ." (p. 377)

Like Raskolnikov, Ahab's monomania involves an obsession with the question of whether or not he is constrained by limits which cannot be trespassed. To Starbuck, Ahab's revenge is blasphemous, a rebellion against the order of things. For Ahab, blasphemy is a meaningless word. The inscrutable malice of Moby Dick provokes him:

> "That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play herein, jealousy presiding over all creations. But not my master, man, is even that fair play. Who's over me? Truth hath no confines."[16]

Starbuck, who stands in a somewhat similar relationship to Ahab as Razumihin to Raskolnikov, understands the human consequences of Ahab's words: "Who's over him, he cries;--

aye, he would be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below!" (pp. 166-67). In elevating themselves to the status of the man-god, both Ahab and Raskolnikov deny their bonds with common humanity. To Ahab, man in general is "sordid" (p. 209), to Raskolnikov he is a "scoundrel" (p. 25). The superman is severed not only from God, but from his fellow man as well.

Ahab's self-enclosure is as extreme as Raskolnikov's. Stopping before the dubloon which he has nailed to the Pequod's mast, Ahab studies its strange figures "as though now for the first time beginning to interpret for himself in some monomaniac way whatever significance might lurk in them" (p. 425). Ahab's perceptions, like Raskolnikov's, turn always in on the self:

> "There's something ever egotistical in mountain-tops and towers, and all other grand and lofty things; look here,--three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that too, is Ahab; all are Ahab; and this round globe is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self." (p. 427)

In Ahab's defiance of the whale, as in Raskolnikov's murder of the pawnbroker, there is an element of rebellion against the undeniable injustice of the universe. There is plausible motivation for their transgressions in the objective conditions of their worlds, a matter which will

be discussed fully when we consider the common ground shared by Ahab and Ivan Karamazov. But for now, Ahab's action, like Raskolnikov's, can be understood as an act of self-affirmation, an assertion of the self in a universe in which all traditional boundaries have been dissolved. Near the end of Moby Dick, Ahab addresses the spiritual power of the universe against which he rebels:

> "I now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy right worship is defiance. To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill; and all are killed. No fearless fool now fronts thee. I own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquake life will dispute its unconditional, unintegral mastery in me. In the midst of the personified impersonal, a personality stands here. Though but a point at best; whencesoe'er I came; wheresoe'er I go; yet while I earthly live, the queenly personality lives in me, and feels her royal rights." (pp. 498-99)

The terms in which Ahab expresses his defiance deserve close attention for this passage contains nothing less than a declaration of absolute independence. Ahab challenges the void not as a member of humanity, a representative of mankind, but as a personality, that is, an autonomous self. That Ahab conceives of his personality as feminine further emphasizes his autonomy--in a sense, he is bisexual. It is only in the nineteenth century that the word "personality" acquired its modern meaning of unique personal identity.[17] This change in the language,

along with the appearance of the related words "individualism" and "individualist," signals the emergence of new preoccupations and concepts for which new terminology was necessary. The problematic status of personality and its relationship to community and divinity was one of the major unsolved issues of the age. Through Ahab and Raskolnikov, Melville and Dostoevsky achieve what Lukács calls "significance and typicality" because they show their "characters directly grappling with the most abstract issues of the time as their own personal and vital problems."[18]

We are repeatedly reminded throughout Moby Dick and Crime and Punishment that the protagonists are mad, that what they do is the result of disease. For doctors and lawyers, madness is an explanation, the answer to the question, why was this act committed? For Melville and Dostoevsky madness itself is a question, the condition of simultaneous responsibility and compulsion, innocence and guilt which constitutes what George Steiner calls "the ancient riddle of the tragic hero."[19] Melville and Dostoevsky found in the age's perception of madness the very essence of tragedy--a discovery that explains more forcefully than any biographical argument why these two writers repeatedly experiment with the madman as hero. Outraged by Raskolnikov's treatment of his mother and sister, Razumihin declares, "'Only a monster or a madman could treat them as you have'" (p. 396). Like Starbuck,

Razumihin is an extremely likeable fellow. Although their personal qualities differ--Starbuck is cool and collected where Razumihin is impetuous--both men function as loyalty figures reminiscent of Shakespeare's Horatio and Kent. Starbuck and Razumihin are admirable, even exemplary men, but their ineffectualness in dealing with Ahab and Raskolnikov points to the insufficiency of mere "right reason" as a means of coming to grips with the profundities of human experience. Razumihin can perceive the question of human responsibility only in terms of the common sense logic of either/or--either Raskolnikov is evil, or he is not responsible for his actions because he is sick. Razumihin is incapable of entertaining the more complex notion that Raskolnikov is both innocent and guilty at the same time, a proposition which applies to Ahab as well.

What is revealed in the madness of Ahab and Raskolnikov, as in so many of the mad heroes of Melville and Dostoevsky, is the radical disunity of personality which makes such a paradoxical doubleness possible. Both heroes are compelled to transgress by an inner force so powerful that it can not be resisted. We are able to sympathize with them, despite the grievous injury they do to others, primarily because we are aware of their own struggles against themselves. Sensing that Raskolnikov will condemn him for his depravity, Svidrigailov poses the very question which we must ask about both Ahab and Raskolnikov: "'The

question is, am I a monster, or am I myself a victim?'" (p. 253).

Raskolnikov's intellect gives birth to the theory that compels him to commit murder. How loathesome the consequences of this theory are to his deeper nature is revealed to Raskolnikov in the dream he has of the peasants beating to death a helpless mare. Raskolnikov understands the relationship of this dream to his own criminal intentions. He wakes from this vision in a state of absolute horror and disgust and immediately renounces his plan to murder the old woman. For a brief moment, Raskolnikov feels a sense of relief and peace: "It was as though an abscess that had been forming for a month past in his heart had suddenly broken. Freedom, freedom! He was free from that spell, that sorcery, that obsession!" (p. 56). Then, by accident, he overhears that Lizaveta will be away from home the next day at seven o'clock; the pawnbroker will be all alone. Suddenly Raskolnikov becomes a prisoner of compulsion once again: "He thought of nothing and was incapable of thinking; but he felt suddenly in his whole being that he had no more freedom of thought, no will, and that everything was suddenly and irrevocably decided" (p. 58). It is Raskolnikov's failure of self-control, his inability to direct his thought or his will, that leads to disaster. The crime is committed in this strange, trance-like state of "will-lessness," a

fact Raskolnikov remembers in his confession to Sonia: "'But how did I murder her? Is that how men do murders? Do men go to commit a murder as I went then?'" (p. 377).

There is a similar dialectic of freedom and compulsion in Ahab's pursuit of Moby Dick. Parallel to Raskolnikov's moment of peace and freedom before being caught inexorably in the fatal action is Ahab's moment of calm awareness immediately before the final three-day chase begins. The tear Ahab sheds seems to hold out the promise that he will at last exorcise the inner demon that so mercilessly drives him on. Starbuck makes one last plea that they turn the ship around and head for home, but Ahab has already reverted to the bondage of his obsession: "'What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it, what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself an all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare?'" (pp. 534-35).

That hidden lord and master is to be found within Ahab. As in the case of Raskolnikov whose dreams are the measure of his self-division, the split in Ahab's nature is revealed most strikingly by the intensity of his nightmares:

> With glaring eyes Ahab would burst from his state room, as though escaping from a bed

> that was on fire. Yet these, perhaps, instead of being the unsuppressable symptoms of some latent weakness, or fright at his own resolve, were but the plainest tokens of its intensity. For, at such times, crazy Ahab, the scheming, unappeasedly steadfast hunter of the White Whale; this Ahab that had gone to his hammock, was not the agent that so caused him to burst from it in horror again. The latter was the eternal, living principle or soul in him; and in sleep, being for the time dissociated from the characterizing mind, which at other times employed it for its outer vehicle or agent, it spontaneously sought escape from the scorching contiguity of the frantic thing, of which, for the time, it was no longer an integral. But as the mind does not exist unless leagued with the soul, therefore it must have been that, in Ahab's case, yielding up all his thoughts and fancies to his one supreme purpose; that purpose, by its own sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself against gods and devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own. Nay, could grimly live and burn, while the common vitality to which it was conjoined, fled horror-stricken from the unbidden and unfathered birth. Therefore, the tormented spirit that glared out of bodily eyes, when what seemed Ahab rushed from his room, was for the time but a vacated thing, a formless somnambulistic being, a ray of living light, to be sure, but without an object to color, and therefore a blankness in itself. God help thee, old man, thy thoughts have created a creature in thee; and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus; a vulture feeds upon that heart for ever; that vulture the very creature he creates. (pp. 198-99)

In the instances we have just examined the madness of Ahab and Raskolnikov is equated with a state of compulsion which drives them to do deeds as horrifying to themselves as they are to those around them. They are trapped by the inner necessity to defy not only the external order of things, but their own deepest humanity

as well. It is in this sense that Ahab and Raskolnikov are innocent victims deserving of our sympathy and our understanding. But at the same time we are confronted with evidence, wholly consistent with the contemporary model of mental illness, which suggests that both men are responsible for having gone mad in the first place. The monomania of Ahab and Raskolnikov consists of an obsessive self-absorption, an exclusive devotion to the problem of the autonomous self. Isolation is the model of their madness.[20] At the same time, however, isolation is the principal cause of their madness, and for their initial withdrawal from the human community both men are responsible. Raskolnikov recognizes this in his confession to Sonia. The cause of his isolation is never made clear--Dostoevsky is not interested in the rational explanation of behavior. Man is not a mechanism whose actions can be reduced to anything as simple as a motive. Raskolnikov's withdrawal is plausible in terms of his circumstances--his pride, his poverty, his illness--but it is not determined by them. He admits that he could have earned enough money to stay at the university by working as Razumihin did. "'But I turned sulky and wouldn't. . . . I sat in my room like a spider. . . . Ah! how I hated that garret! And yet I wouldn't go out of it! I wouldn't on purpose! . . . I ought to have studied, but I sold my books; . . . I preferred lying still and

thinking. And I kept thinking'" (p. 375).

Ahab also comes to recognize that his madness was caused, in large part, by isolation; in his case the divorce from normal human sympathy is demanded by his vocation:

> "Forty years of continual whaling! forty years of privation, and peril, and storm-time! forty years on the pitiless sea! for forty years has Ahab forsaken the peaceful land, for forty years to make war on the horrors of the deep! Aye and yes, Starbuck, out of those forty years I have not spent three ashore. When I think of this life I have led; the desolation of solitude it has been; the masoned, walled-town of a Captain's exclusiveness, which admits but small entrance to any sympathy from the green country without--oh weariness! heaviness! Guinea-coast slavery of solitary command!" (p. 533)

But immediately preceding this avowal of his plight to Starbuck, Ahab has rejected the last human bond which could have restored him to sanity. Ahab banishes Pip from his presence because the spontaneous sympathy he feels for the mad cabin boy might cure him and Ahab prefers to remain sick. In Pip's madness we see the inverse image of Ahab's: Pip's total loss of self in the immensity of the universe is the opposite condition of Ahab's imaginative expansion of self which engulfs the universe. Pip's mad self-denial is the complement of Ahab's mad self-affirmation. Ahab understands that in his bond with Pip lies his salvation, but he will not

accept it. And here we find the crucial difference between the worlds of Melville and Dostoevsky.

For Melville, madness is the affliction of the truly heroic, those who relentlessly pursue the truth even though by so doing they risk being "eternally stove in." Madness involves a naked perception of the order of things which is permanently debilitating because there is something unbearably horrifying at the heart of reality. With knowledge comes grief, as we have seen in Pierre, but at some imperceptible point grief shades off into madness; and once this point has been passed, there can be no return. Ishmael, who himself stops just short of that fatal vision, issues the book's central warning: "Give not thyself up, then, to the fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did me. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness" (p. 421).

There is nothing of wisdom in Raskolnikov's madness, only tremendous error and suffering. And it is perhaps for this reason that he can be "cured" whereas Ahab cannot. In Ahab's madness lies his greatness, in Raskolnikov's his human susceptibility to the Fall. Through his sympathetic bond with Sonia, who like him has transgressed and suffered, Raskolnikov can pass beyond his madness. Dostoevsky's Christian imagination can envision the possibility of rebirth; madness becomes a

stage in spiritual development something like the "furnace of doubt" which Dostoevsky himself experienced. Madness is not only a psychological state of inner division, it is also a spiritual condition of alienation from God. The defining difference between Melville and Dostoevsky is illustrated by the divergent fates of their mad heroes: for Raskolnikov, madness is only temporary; for Ahab, madness and the alienation it signifies is permanent and final. Christ will forgive man in Dostoevsky's universe; in Melville's, it is man who cannot forgive God.

Ivan Karamazov is in many ways a later embodiment of Raskolnikov, and much that can be said about one would apply to the other. Despite the overall similarities of these two characters and their situations, however, what we hope to reveal by comparing each one separately with Ahab are differences in emphasis. What Ahab and Raskolnikov share is primarily the monomania of self-enclosure. When we compare Ivan with Ahab, what emerges most forcefully is the model of madness as rebellion.

At the heart of the madness of Ahab and Ivan is an inability to accept the world as it is, an unwillingness to submit to what Geoffrey Clive calls the "offense of unconnected matters of fact."[21] Ahab and Ivan refuse to be reconciled to the apparent injustice and meaninglessness of the universe. In one sense, as Clive indicates,

this offense, since it poses "the mystery of abused innocence,"[22] is the basis for all tragic literature. But in another sense, this problem has a particular urgency in the age of Melville and Dostoevsky:

> As the offense of unsatisfied desire in modern literature is symptomatic of a pervasive Romanticism that may be said to have reached a climax with Rousseau, the offense of unconnected matters of fact is, in its radical manifestations since the Enlightenment, an outgrowth of an uninterrupted spiritual crisis. Dostoevsky's novels are filled with characters who, with little expectation of finding any answer, probe relentlessly, even masochistically, the mysteries of human existence.[23]

Melville's novels are also filled with such characters.

That the spiritual crisis of the age demanded some new form of consolation or release from the offense of unconnected matters of fact helps us to understand why both Melville and Dostoevsky were so preoccupied with the Book of Job. Here, the issue is presented with stark clarity and simplicity: that Job should be punished although he is innocent is an intolerable affront which forces him to question the meaning of his existence. Job is a rebel because he refuses to accept the unreason of God's universe. For Melville and Dostoevsky, the contemporary debate of faith and doubt hinges on the experience of Job. Together, Moby Dick and The Brothers Karamazov constitute a nineteenth-century dialogue about the meaning of Job's suffering.

Ahab and Ivan both share Job's fate of being born into a world whose order is incomprehensible to them. What most provokes Ahab is not Moby Dick's malice but his "inscrutableness," as we have seen earlier. That the kind of knowledge Ahab must seek is beyond human ken is revealed not only in the futility of his pursuit of the whale, but also in Ahab's reaction to the hieroglyphic tatoos which cover Queequeg's body, marks which supposedly contain "a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth" (p. 476). Queequeg carries about with him a riddle

> whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last. And this thought it must have been which suggested to Ahab that wild exclamation of his, when one morning turning away from surveying poor Queequeg--"Oh, devilish tantalization of the gods!" (p. 476)

Throughout Moby Dick, the gods or fates function as metaphors for internal agents or compulsions; Ahab is the victim of his own nature. The mental anguish Ahab suffers is directly related to the age's emerging perception of the limits of reason. His plight is the embodiment of the following Kantian dictum: "Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to

ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer."[24]

Whereas Ahab refuses to accept the fact that certain questions transcend the limits of human reason, Ivan acknowledges this as a "given" of the human condition. It is, in fact, the basis of all his beliefs:

> "I accept God simply. But you must note this: if God exists and if He really did create the world, then, as we all know, He created it according to the geometry of Euclid and the human mind with the conception of only three dimensions in space. Yet there have been and still are geometricians and philosophers, and even some of the most distinguished, who doubt whether the whole universe, or to speak more widely the whole of being, was only created in Euclid's geometry; they even dare to dream that two parallel lines, which according to Euclid can never meet on earth, may meet somewhere in infinity. I have come to the conclusion that, since I can't understand even that, I can't expect to understand about God. I acknowledge humbly that I have no faculty for settling such questions, I have a Euclidian earthly mind, and how could I solve problems that are not of this world? And I advise you never to think about it either, my dear Alyosha, especially about God, whether He exists or not. All such questions are utterly inappropriate for a mind created with an idea of only three dimensions."[25]

What is appropriate to Ivan's Euclidian mind is the world of facts. Ivan does not reject God because to do so would be to deal with something beyond fact, a metaphysical concept, and Ivan refuses to do this. He is willing to accept, as a hypothesis rather than a belief, that God exists, but he rejects His universe: "'It's not that I

don't accept God, you must understand, it's the world created by Him I don't and cannot accept'" (p. 279).

Ivan's rebellion, and it is expounded in a chapter with just that title, is based on the injustice of the world, the purest example of which is found in the suffering of innocent children:

> "Listen! I took the case of children only to make my case clearer. Of the other tears of humanity with which the earth is soaked from its crust to its centre, I will say nothing. . . . I recognise in all humility that I cannot understand why the world is arranged as it is. . . . With my pitiful, earthly, Euclidian understanding, all I know is that there is suffering and that there are none guilty. . . . I know that, and I can't consent to live by it! . . . I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself. . . . I want to be there when every one suddenly understands what it has all been for." (p. 289)

Ivan rejects the traditional consolation of religions that promise a future day of forgiveness and harmony because the human price of innocent suffering required to bring about that eventual harmony is too high: "'And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price. . . . Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it'" (p. 291).

Unlike Ivan, Ahab is not content to stick to facts. Indeed, his madness involves the obsessive attempt to reach the metaphysical through the physical. By destroying Moby Dick, Ahab believes he will destroy the animating principle of the universe responsible for all evil. This crucial difference aside, however, Ahab and Ivan do share the same agonizing question: can the universe be meaningful if the innocent are made to suffer? Ahab's revenge is not only personal. Like Ivan, he wants an answer for all the injustice which mankind endures. Ahab pauses to contemplate the decapitated head of a whale hanging alongside the Pequod. It seems to him like the Sphynx in the desert:

> "Speak, mighty head, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Of all divers, thou hast dived the deepest. . . . Thou hast been where bell or diver never went; hast slept by many a sailor's side, where sleepless mothers would give their lives to lay them down. Thou saw'st the locked lovers when leaping from their flaming ship; heart to heart they sank beneath the exulting wave; true to each other, when heaven seemed false to them. Thou saw'st the murdered mate when tossed by pirates from the midnight deck; for hours he fell into the deeper midnight of the insatiate maw; and his murderers still sailed on unharmed--while swift lightenings shivered the neighboring ship that would have borne a righteous husband to outstretched, longing arms. O head! thou hast seen enough to split the planets and make an infidel of Abraham, and not one syllable is thine!" (pp. 308-09)

Lest we make the mistake of dismissing this perception of injustice as the subjective aberration of Ahab

and Ivan, both Melville and Dostoevsky allow other characters to corroborate their observations. Out of the Job-like suffering of Dmitri comes his strange vision of the weeping babe among the starving, burnt-out peasants. Their suffering is incomprehensible to Dmitri, who persists in demanding why, why is this so? "And he felt that, though his questions were unreasonable and senseless, yet he wanted to ask just that, and he had to ask it just in that way. And he felt that . . . he wanted to do something for them all, so that the babe should weep no more, so that . . . no one should shed tears again from that moment" (p. 616). In contrast to the pious tone of Dmitri's vision is Melville's black humor in describing the response of Queequeg, that most noble of savages, to the injustice of his world. After a run-in with the sharks, which represent all that is cruel and ferocious in the universe, the harpooner has this to say: "'Queequeg no care what god made him shark, . . . wedder Fejee god or Nantucket god; but de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin'" (p. 300).

The question of God's existence becomes all but irrelevant for Ahab and Ivan, because even if he does exist man can expect no answers and no comfort from him. That there is no justice on earth is sufficient proof of God's indifference, if not his downright malevolence. Like Job, Ahab and Ivan both suffer from a sense of abandonment so severe that it undermines the very possi-

bility of purposeful existence. Their sense of abandonment is dramatized and perhaps to some degree explained by the fact that both are orphans: Ahab's father died before he was born, his mother when he was a year old; Ivan's mother died when he was seven, at which point he was completely forgotten by his father. To the failure of either an earthly or a heavenly father to provide any coherent vision of life, Ahab and Ivan both make the same response: better my justice than no justice at all, better a man-god in the here and now than the promise of a god-man in the future. It is here that spiritual crisis and insanity become one: the rebellion against God involves an apotheosis of the self which is the age's model of madness.

Although Ahab never articulates his position as clearly as Ivan does, the logical conclusions of their revolt against God converge in action: underlying both Ahab's pursuit of Moby Dick and the murder to which Ivan drives Smerdyakov is the hypothesis of absolute free will, that without God, "all is permitted." Ivan himself is so paralyzed by thought that he does not live this way, but his theoretical exaltation of the self unaided by a higher power is expressed unequivocally in his article on the ecclesiastical court and embodied in both Smerdyakov and the Grand Inquisitor. For anyone who does not believe in God, according to Ivan, "'egoism, even to crime, must be-

come, not only lawful but even recognised as the inevitable, the most rational, even honorable outcome of his position'" (p. 79).

Beginning with an abstract love for humanity, Ahab and Ivan see themselves as saviors of mankind, willing to take on the suffering of a Prometheus or a Grand Inquisitor so that the mass of mankind can be spared. But this is only theory, divorced from any vital connection to life. Ahab and Ivan only love humanity in the abstract, and such is not love at all. The doctrine that "all is permitted" with its corollary belief in the man-god leads not to a heaven on earth, as Ivan had hoped, but to the base murderousness of the lackey Smerdyakov. Edward Wasiolek correctly observes, in a fine discussion of The Brothers Karamazov, that "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is "Ivan's dream of a world built on enlightened, virtuous, self-interest; but Smerdyakov is the real embodiment"[26] of that world. In Moby Dick, the consequences of limitless individual freedom border on the apocalyptic: Ahab's self-enclosure brings destruction not only to himself but to all those who surround him. What begins as a rebellion against the incomprehensibility of the world, for both Ahab and Ivan, ends as a betrayal of one's own humanity. Belief in the boundless freedom of the man-god is a form of madness because it necessarily denies the existence of the limitations that make man what he is. It

is a refusal to be human.

Melville and Dostoevsky both agree that this attempt to escape or deny the burdens of the human condition by exceeding the limits of the self is a form of madness. But in respect to the more basic question with which we began, the unreason of Job's suffering, Melville and Dostoevsky cannot agree. Recounting the story of Job to his followers, the elder Zossima weeps with wonder and awe:

> I've never been able to read that sacred tale without tears. And how much that is great, mysterious and unfathomable there is in it! Afterwards I heard the words of mockery and blame, proud words. "How could God give up the most loved of His saints for the diversion of the devil, take from him his children, smite him with sore boils so that he cleansed the corruption from his sores with a potsherd--and for no object except to boast to the devil? 'See what My saint can suffer for My sake.'" But the greatness of it lies just in the fact that it is a mystery--that the passing earthly show and the eternal verity are brought together in it. In the face of the earthly truth, the eternal truth is accomplished. The Creator, just as on the first days of creation He ended each day with praise: "that is good that I have created," looks upon Job and again praises His creation. And Job praising the Lord, serves not only Him but all His creation for generations and generations, and for ever and ever, since for that he was ordained. Good heavens, what a book it is, and what lessons there are in it!
> (pp. 347-48)

In Zossima's faith and submission is the answer to Ivan's rebellion. The unreason of Job's suffering, meaningless to the Euclidian understanding, contains the priceless

mystery of creation.

The chasm between Dostoevsky's Job and Melville's is enormous. Whereas Dostoevsky presents his interpretation of Job through the saintly Zossima, Melville uses the Shakespearean technique of allowing his clown figures, Stubb and Flask, to treat the topic with comic irreverence:

> "I don't know, Flask, but the devil is a curious chap, and a wicked one, I tell ye. Why, they say as how he went a sauntering into the old flag-ship once, switching his tail about devilish easy and gentlemanlike, and inquiring if the old governor was at home. Well, he was at home, and asked the devil what he wanted. The devil, switching his hoofs, up and says, 'I want John.' 'What for?' says the old governor. 'What business is that of yours,' says the devil, getting mad,--'I want to use him.' 'Take him,' says the governor--and by the Lord, Flask, if the devil didn't give John the Asiatic cholera before he got through with him, I'll eat this whale in one mouthful. . . . Damn the devil, Flask; do you suppose I'm afraid of the devil? Who's afraid of him except the old governor who daresn't catch him and put him in double-darbies, as he deserves, but lets him go about kidnapping people; aye, and signed a bond with him, that all the people the devil kidnapped, he'd roast for him? There's a governor!" (pp. 323-24)

Faith and submission are unacceptable solutions to Melville. Ahab is certainly in the wrong, but so, obviously, is the old governor. If God will not prevent injustice and evil, He is simply unfit to rule the universe. To serve Him would be, as the Grand Inquisitor explains his rejection of Christ, to serve madness. The story of Job affirms Dostoevsky's faith and destroys Melville's. Ivan's

madness lies in his failure to understand, in Dostoevsky's terms, the mystery of Job: faith is a miracle that requires no justification. Ahab's madness lies in his having understood the story of Job, in Melville's terms, only too well: there is no justification for faith since God is a heartless tyrant in league with the devil.

Although Melville would certainly scoff at Zossima's faith (and we can only imagine in what tone of voice Melville would have read the elder's pious exclamation about Job, "Good heavens, what a book it is") he would also recognize how close much of Zossima's philosophy is to his own. The cornerstone of Zossima's teachings is that "'we are all responsible to all for all'" (p. 362). It will take a great spiritual and psychological transformation before mankind will be ready to accept this lesson. The present age, as Zossima had learned when he was a young man from the unhappy murderer who confided in him, is undergoing a crisis of isolation:

> "For every one strives to keep his individuality as apart as possible, wishes to secure the greatest possible fullness of life for himself; but meantime all his efforts result not in attaining fullness of life but self-destruction, for instead of self-realisation he ends by arriving at complete solitude. All mankind in our age have split up into units, they all keep apart, each in his own groove; each one holds aloof, hides himself and hides what he has, from the rest, and he ends by being repelled by others and repelling them. He heaps up riches by himself and thinks, 'how strong I am now and how secure,'

> and in his madness he does not understand that the more he heaps up, the more he sinks into self-destructive impotence. . . . Everywhere in these days men have, in their mockery, ceased to understand that the true security is to be found in social solidarity rather than in isolated individual effort. But this terrible individualism must inevitably have an end, and all will suddenly understand how unnaturally they are separated from one another." (p. 363)

This passage describes not only the crisis of the age, but also the madness of Ivan, of Ahab, and of Raskolnikov. Sanity lies in brotherhood, the acceptance of Zossima's precept that all are responsible for all. Refusing to concern himself with what will come of Dmitri's feud with Fyodor Pavlovitch, Ivan echoes Cain's question: "'What have I to do with it? Am I my brother Dmitri's keeper?'" (p. 275). Dostoevsky's answer, through Zossima and Alyosha, is an unequivocal yes. Melville's answer, through Ishmael, is the same.

Like Ahab, Ishmael is an orphan and an isolato. He suffers from the "hypos," the popular term for the early stages of a melancholic mental illness called lypemania. Like Ahab, he is quick to perceive the horrors of the universe. He is sensitive to "the heartless voids and immensities" which threaten man with meaningless annihilation and he knows that although "in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright" (p. 192). What keeps Ishmael from passing beyond this wisdom that is woe to Ahab's

madness is his acceptance of the limits of the human condition which gives him the capacity to love his fellow man. In his "marriage" to Queequeg, in the delight he finds in "A Squeeze of the Hand," Ishmael is firmly anchored in a reality beyond the self. In "The Monkey-Rope" we see that Ishmael is prepared to accept the limitation of his freedom as Ahab is not. Queequeg, working dangerously on the back of a whale, is attached by rope to Ishmael on board ship, an arrangement designed to guarantee that the former will not be allowed to fall into the shark-infested waters. If Ishmael permits Queequeg to slip, both will be dragged into the sea:

> So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two: that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death. Therefore, I saw that here was a sort of interregnum in Providence; for its even-handed equity never could have sanctioned so gross an injustice. And yet still further pondering--while I jerked him now and then from between the whale and the ship, which would threaten to jam him--still further pondering--I say, I saw that this situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes; only, in most cases, he, one way or other, has this Siamese connexion with a plurality of others. If your banker breaks, you snap; if your apothecary by mistake sends you poison in your pills, you die. True, you may say that, by exceeding caution, you may possibly escape these and the multitudinous other evil chances of life. But handle Queequeg's monkey-rope heedfully as I

> would, sometimes he jerked it so, that I came very near sliding overboard. Nor could I possibly forget that, do what I would, I only had the management of one end of it. (pp. 317-18)

Ishmael understands that there is something profoundly unfair in this monkey-rope organization of life. His realization that his temporary literal tie to Queequeg is emblematic of the permanent condition of the human race is tantamount to a denial of God as an active principle of the universe. What Ishmael initially perceives as a "sort of interregnum in Providence" becomes the more tragic awareness that the "even-handed equity" of Providence never has had and never will have anything to do with human reality. Ahab's madness lies in his rebellion against the injustice of life and his refusal to accept his own limits. Ishmael's wisdom lies in accepting stoically what cannot be changed. With or without God, man can be only man. The most he can do is accept the responsibility for managing his end of the rope.

Ishmael's sanity is defined by the two opposite poles of madness, Pip's and Ahab's, which he manages to avoid. Pip's response to the indifference of God is, in a sense, to let go his hold on the rope completely. Pip's madness is his refusal to be Pip, and although there is a certain appropriateness in this response, his is not a human wisdom. Pip's madness is a form of suicide. Ahab's response to the indifference of God is not to drop his end

of the rope, but rather to live as if he had sole control of all the ropes attached to him, treating all men as his agents and not as autonomous human beings. This, too, is madness and it is not only suicidal but murderous. The measure of Ishmael's sanity is his ability to maintain a delicate balance between his separateness as an individual and his participation in the human community. Alienation from God is not sufficient in Melville's world to produce madness; if it were, we would all be mad. Men can retain their sanity without the support of God provided they are not alienated from each other.

For Dostoevsky, alienation from God is the root of all other alienations. Although Ivan warns Alyosha not to worry about whether or not God exists since the matter is beyond man's Euclidian capacities, he himself cannot ignore the question. Like Ahab, his intellect is burdened by questions which it is both unable to ignore and unable to answer. Hawthorne's well-known characterization of Melville is a fitting description of Ivan: he can neither believe nor be comfortable in his unbelief. Zossima perceives this immediately when he observes that despite Ivan's intellectual rejection of God, "'The question is still fretting your heart, and not answered'" (p. 79). Ivan's reason demands the solution to a problem which only the heart can settle. To accept God, Ivan must renounce his pride in intellect and submit to the unreason of

faith. The inner division which Ivan suffers is thus directly dependent on his alienation from God. The Ivan we see throughout most of the novel is so passive, so withdrawn from life and obsessed with his own thoughts that we are likely to forget his confession to Alyosha: "'I have a longing for life, and I go on living in spite of logic. Though I may not believe in the order of the universe, yet I love the sticky little leaves as they open in spring. I love the blue sky, I love some people, who one loves you know sometimes without knowing why'" (p. 273). As Mochulsky observes, "Ivan's personal tragedy is that 'his mind is not in harmony with his heart': with his feelings he loves God's world, although with his reason he cannot accept it."[27]

Ivan believes that without immortality there can be no such thing as virtue or crime. Like Raskolnikov, he thinks that such concepts are mere "prejudices" of the unenlightened. Only when Raskolnikov accepts his guilt and his responsibility can he be restored to sanity. And for Dostoevsky, this acceptance is one with Raskolnikov's submission to God. At the start of Raskolnikov's penal servitude he feels not guilt, but wounded pride. Unrepentant, he is still convinced that his "criminality" was only in not succeeding. Raskolnikov is isolated from his fellow prisoners who attack him not because he is a murderer, but because he is an infidel. Then come Ras-

kolnikov's feverish dreams which last symbolically from Lent to Easter. Suffering and isolation result in conversion; Raskolnikov stops analyzing and starts feeling. "Life had stepped into the place of theory and something quite different would work itself out in his mind" (p. 491).

In Ivan's case, the resolution is not so simple. By the time Dmitri is brought to trial, Ivan's inner division is so severe that it erupts first in the form of Ivan's hallucinatory devil and finally into the brain fever to which he succumbs. The question of responsibility lies at the heart of the trial scene and all the events which surround it. The defense lawyer admits that Dmitri is unruly and unreasonable, but asks, "'Who is responsible for his life?'" (p. 901). The lawyer would blame the crime on Fyodor Pavlovitch for his failure to be a good father. The contemptible Rakitin wants to show that Dmitri is a criminal because of his environment, the socialist-utopian view which Dostoevsky also mocks in Crime and Punishment. If environment is all and man is nothing, as this theory would have it, personal guilt is simply an impossibility. Finally, the doctors would reduce the whole human tragedy of Fyodor Pavlovitch's murder to mental aberration, which in Crime and Punishment Dostoevsky dismisses as "the most recent fashionable theory" (p. 479). Dostoevsky's hatred for this legal excuse of insanity is based on his awareness that what

appears in the guise of humanitarianism is, in fact, a denial of man's freedom to be human. Dostoevsky perceives the circularity of the medical-legal logic which makes sin and guilt impossible: since crime is irrational and contrary to common sense then all criminals must be insane, at least at the time they commit a crime. There is, then, no crime--only madness. Dostoevsky expresses his scorn for the theory of aberration by allowing the scatter-brained Madame Hohlakov to expound it:

> "Well, you see, a man may be sitting perfectly sane and suddenly have an aberration. He may be conscious and know what he is doing and yet be in a state of aberration. And there's no doubt that Dmitri Fyodorovitch was suffering from aberration. They found out about aberration as soon as the law courts were reformed. It's all the good effect of the reformed law courts. . . . And, besides, who isn't suffering from aberration nowadays?--you, I, all of us are in a state of aberration. . . . [A man suddenly commits murder] and no one blames him for it. I read that lately, and all the doctors confirm it. The doctors are always confirming; they confirm anything." (pp. 702-03)

Dmitri refuses to accept this form of defense. He has undergone a spiritual regeneration which has opened his heart to his responsibility for all, as we saw earlier in his vision of the suffering babe, even though he is technically innocent of his father's murder. In Ivan's final confession of guilt at the trial we have a sign that he is moving toward a similar regeneration. Alyosha tells the crowd not to believe what Ivan has said because

he is ill with brain fever. Ivan rejects this attempt to discredit him: "'I am not mad, I am only a murderer'" (p. 835). For Ivan to admit his guilt would be also to admit that God exists, for the one is impossible without the other. Since Ivan collapses at the moment of his confession and we don't see him again, it is impossible to say whether his heart has really been moved to an acceptance of his responsibility that will allow him to be saved as Raskolnikov was. We do have reason to hope for Ivan's recovery in that his case parallels that of the repentant murderer who had long ago confided in Zossima and who was rejected as a madman when he tried to confess his guilt. But Dostoevsky leaves Ivan's fate in a state of suspension. Whether or not Dostoevsky intended to write a sequel to the novel is irrelevant. What we are left with at the end of The Brothers Karamazov is a series of unanswered questions. We do not learn if Alyosha will marry Lise, if Dmitri will carry out his plan to escape, if Ivan will recover from his illness. Dostoevsky's respect for the complexity of the human struggle denies the neat novelistic conclusion.

Instead, Dostoevsky chooses to leave us with an image which suggests the possibility of resolution on a mystical level which transcends the individual fates of the Karamazov brothers. The coffin of Ilusha is lowered into the earth, taking us back to the epigraph from Scriptures

which stands at the beginning of the novel: "'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit'" (p. 2). The final mystery of the novel is religious. Without faith there can be no life.

Moby Dick also ends with the image of a coffin, but there is no funeral. Queequeg's empty coffin becomes Ishmael's life preserver, the purely human bond which the two men shared finally keeps Ishmael afloat. The Biblical epigraph at the end of Moby Dick takes us back to the beginning of the Book of Job. There has been no transcendent resolution, but Ishmael has shown us that one can survive sanely whether or not God exists. We must learn to live with Job's unanswered question.

Melville and Dostoevsky discovered in their age's perception of madness the essence of tragedy, that mysterious and paradoxical combination of freedom and compulsion, innocence and guilt. Once the image of madness had been liberated from the eighteenth century's comedy of illusion and error it could be remade into a vehicle capable of exploring the most serious human concerns. The new awareness of the relationship between madness and history, the recognition that madness is rooted in culture, contained the startling implication that the sufferings of the madman, that extreme eccentric, would reveal to the

age the image of its deepest and most pervasive problems. This, finally, is what Melville and Dostoevsky force us to contemplate in the madness of Ahab, Ivan, and Raskolnikov.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV.

[1]Madness and Civilization, p. 264.

[2]American Renaissance, p. 446.

[3]See above, pp. 12-13.

[4]Ed. Winfred Overholser (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), p. 314.

[5]Ray, p. 357.

[6]Gerald N. Grob, "Critical Introduction" to Insanity and Idiocy in Massachusetts: Report of the Commission on Lunacy, 1855 by Edward Jarvis, ed. Gerald N. Grob (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 12.

[7]Otto Marx, "J. C. A. Heinroth (1773-1843) On Psychiatry and Law," Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 4, No. 2 (1968), p. 164.

[8]Mandelbaum, History, Man, and Reason, p. 141.

[9]Mandelbaum, p. 141.

[10]J. E. D. Esquirol, Mental Maladies, pp. 200-01.

[11]Quentin Anderson, The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History (New York: Vintage, 1971), p. 3.

[12]Anderson, p. 4.

[13]Anderson, p. 5.

[14]Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Random House, 1950), pp. 234-35. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[15]Georg Lukács, "Dostoevsky," Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur (Berlin, 1949), rpt. in René Wellek, ed. and trans., Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 149.

[16]Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: Rinehart, 1959), pp. 161-62. All subsequent references will be to

this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[17]In the O. E. D. the following definition of the word personality appeared only after 1835: "Personal existence, actual existence as a person; the fact of there being or having been such a person; personal identity." A related usage of the word appears only after 1795: "quality/ies which makes a person what he is, as distinct from other persons; distinctive personal or individual character, esp. when of a marked or notable kind." While we are discussing the appearance in the language of new words, it is worthwhile to point out that the earliest citation for unreason is 1827. The word became commonly used only at mid-century.

[18]Lukács, Writer and Critic and Other Essays, ed. and trans. Arthur D. Kahn (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1970), p. 154.

[19]Steiner, Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, p. 158.

[20]We have already pointed out that Esquirol thought of madness as an extreme form of isolation. See above, p. 64, n. 17.

[21]Geoffrey Clive, The Romantic Enlightenment (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), p. 136.

[22]Clive, p. 138.

[23]Clive, p. 137.

[24]Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 7.

[25]Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 279. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[26]Edward Wasiolek, Dostoevsky, The Major Fiction (Cambridge, Mass.: The M. I. T. Press, 1964), p. 172.

[27]Mochulsky, Dostoevsky, p. 600.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONFIDENCE-MAN AND THE POSSESSED

Madness reaches epidemic proportions in The Confidence-Man and The Possessed, but, in both cases, it is less literal than in any of the works we have discussed so far. By less literal I mean that madness is more an epithet loosely hurled in all directions than an image clearly seen and drawn in detail. In "Bartleby" and "Notes From the Underground," in Pierre and The Idiot, in Moby Dick, Crime and Punishment, and The Brothers Karamazov, the principal figures are thrown into sharp relief by a context of what the world calls sanity which isolates and defines their madness. This is not to say that the image of madness in these works is unproblematic. On the contrary, in each case the madness of the hero provokes us to a critical reassessment of that elusive boundary which divides the sane from the insane and forces us to reconsider our own relationship to unreason. But in The Possessed and The Confidence-Man the context of sanity has atrophied so much that it no longer serves as a norm against which insanity can be measured. We are asked to contemplate not the literal madness of a central figure, but the metaphoric madness of a whole society. Madness no longer serves as the vehicle of personal tragedy, as in Moby Dick, Crime and Punishment, and The Brothers Karamazov; it is, rather, symptomatic

of a collective breakdown into disorder. The vision of chaos and negation at the heart of both novels is expressed in The Possessed through a frenzy of noise and activity, and in The Confidence-Man through a reigning calm that is no less disturbing.

These two novels are the most bitter and satiric which Melville and Dostoevsky ever wrote. They attack specific individuals, such as Emerson and Turgenev, as well as the more general aspects of the contemporary scene which they find offensive. Dostoevsky attacks nihilists, socialists, bluestockings, atheists, bureaucrats, revolutionaries, intellectuals. Melville's target is, as Richard Chase observes, the failure of American liberalism with "its commercialism, its superficiality, its philistinism, its spurious optimism, its glad-handed self-congratulation, its wish-fulfilling vagueness, its fondness for uplifting rhetoric, its betrayal of all tragic or exalted human and natural values, its easy belief in automatic progress."[1] The prevailing satiric intention of The Possessed and The Confidence-Man invites us to compare these novels to the great satires of the Augustan Age. And particularly in terms of the iconography of madness, such a comparison is instructive.

The Augustan Age experienced madness as folly divorced from truth. The madman, chained like a beast and besmeared with excrement, is the ultimate image of

degradation and punishment. For the Augustan poets, most notably Pope and Swift, madness is the principal metaphor around which satire is constructed because for them and their readers madness is an unambiguous term of abuse. When Pope afflicts the hack writers of the Dunciad with madness, he is obviously using the image metaphorically and not literally. The object of his attack, as Max Byrd has pointed out, is not actual insanity but people who are supposedly sane.[2] In Pope and Swift madness is a form of unequivocal invective. It means folly, filth, poverty, blindness, animality. No complex or ambiguous possibilities reside in the image.

In the age of Melville and Dostoevsky the perceptual structure of madness has altered drastically and nowhere is this more apparent than in The Possessed and The Confidence-Man. As in the Dunciad and The Tale of A Tub, we find in these two novels the conjunction of madness and satire. But because the nineteenth century perceives in madness truth as well as folly it is no longer possible for Melville and Dostoevsky to construct satire around the metaphor of madness. It is impossible for them to see the madman as a beast, to deny that his madness is situated on a continuum of experience which begins in normality. And it is impossible to laugh at madness, to dismiss it as having no human significance. The comedy of foolishness or buffoonery in The Possessed and The

Confidence-Man is tempered by the tragedy of human suffering. It is hard to laugh at sickness, and that is at least in part what the image of madness has come to mean.

As a result of this transformed sensibility concerning unreason there is a striking affinity between the satire of The Confidence-Man and The Possessed and the tragedy of Moby Dick, Crime and Punishment, and The Brothers Karamazov. Madness is collective and epidemic in the satires, individual and contained in the tragedies, but its roots are identical: the crisis of sanity is the inescapable consequence of the age's spiritual crisis. Madness and alienation have become one.

The link between madness and unbelief in The Possessed is expressed most clearly by Kirillov, the monomaniac who has been tortured all his life by the thought of God. Like Ivan and Raskolnikov he is tempted by the logic of the man-god: only by destroying God can man attain freedom and happiness. In one of his notebooks, Dostoevsky calls Kirillov "a Russian idealist. . . . His instinct is true (like Belinsky: first we must decide about God, and only then will we have dinner)."[3] Kirillov loves Christ, but refuses to believe in his divinity:

> "Listen: that Man was the loftiest of all on earth, He was that which gave meaning to life. The whole planet, with everything on it, is mere madness without that Man. There has never been any like Him before or since, never, up to a miracle. For that is the

> miracle, that there never was or never will be another like Him. And if that is so, if the laws of nature did not spare even Him, have not spared even their miracle and made even Him live in a lie and die for a lie, then all the planet is a lie and rests on a lie and on mockery. So then, the very laws of the planet are a lie and the vaudeville of devils. What is there to live for? Answer, if you are a man."4

Kirillov's analysis and the terms in which it is expressed take us to the heart of The Confidence-Man. Without belief, or in Melville's language, "confidence," life is madness, a lie, a mockery. Melville's novel is precisely a vaudeville of devils, life reduced to one long, and rather unpleasant, April Fool's joke. The Confidence-Man opens with two literal signposts that establish the spiritual poles that define the action to follow. The mute stranger writes on his slate injunctions to charity and faith taken from The New Testament and the ship's barber hangs out his gilt sign with the inscription, "No Trust." To the worldly pilgrims aboard the Fidèle the mute is clearly a "simpleton," if not an actual "lunatic," while the barber is a man of unexceptionable good sense. We learn at the outset that the nominally Christian passengers of the ship are men of little faith.

Shortly after this, we are warned that faithlessness and mistrust are the causes of insanity. When the cynical man with one leg, an Ahab-in-miniature, tries to expose the dishonesty of Black Guinea he is rebuked by

the militant Methodist:

> "Spleen, much spleen, which is the rickety child of his evil heart of unbelief: it has made him mad. I suspect him for one naturally reprobate. Oh, friends," raising his arms as in the pulpit, "oh beloved, how are we admonished by the melancholy spectacle of this raver. Let us profit by the lesson; and is it not this: that if, next to mistrusting Providence, there be aught that man should pray against, it is against mistrusting his fellow-man. I have been in mad-houses full of tragic mopers, and seen there the end of suspicion."[5]

The Methodist here speaks of mistrusting Providence and mistrusting humanity as two separate pitfalls, one more dangerous than the other. It is the satanic function of the Confidence-Man to convince his victims that one necessarily involves the other. If he succeeds, the nominal Christians of the Fidèle will be forced to deny God. The rather pathetic Old Man who at the end of the novel is about to be duped into displaying his want of confidence agrees with the Cosmopolitan that "'To distrust the creature, is a kind of distrusting of the Creator'" (p. 210).

The Confidence-Man in his guise as the cosmopolitan, Frank Goodman, explains to the rogue Charlie Noble that misanthropy and infidelity are coordinates:

> "For misanthropy, springing from the same root with disbelief of religion, is twin with that. It springs from the same root, I say; for, set aside materialism, and what

> is an atheist, but one who does not, or will not, see in the universe a ruling principle of love; and what a misanthrope, but one who does not, or will not, see in man a ruling principle of kindness? Don't you see? In either case the vice consists in a want of confidence." (pp. 136-37)

If want of confidence is a vice that can lead only to madness, one should be able to assume that confidence is a virtue necessary for sanity. In the world of The Confidence-Man, however, such is not the case. Mistrust may be madness, but trust is simply folly. Nothing in this world can be trusted because nothing is what it appears to be. Everything is undermined and inverted by irony: the Devil comes to tempt men into true Christianity, the passengers of the Fidèle are faithless, the misanthrope is the only lover of humanity, and the man named Noble is a base scoundrel. The ironies multiply endlessly throughout the novel--nothing is as it should be. "'Irony is so unjust,'" says the Confidence-Man, ironically, feigning injured innocence at the misanthrope's biting critique of society. "'Never could abide irony; something Satanic about irony. God defend me from Irony, and Satire, his bosom friend'" (p. 119). The Confidence-Man, whose ironic manipulations control the novel, is right: there is something satanic about irony. With its doubleness of vision, its inversions of expectations and values, irony is inimical to faith. If the crisis of sanity as it is depicted in The Confidence-Man and The

Possessed rests ultimately on the age's spiritual crisis, the ironic vision is seen as one of the leading causes of unbelief.

It is not at all surprising to learn that Stavrogin has been tormented all his life by "the demon of irony" (p. 190), a phrase whose accuracy is undiminished despite the fact that it is the product of Stepan Trofimovitch's poetical foolishness. Stavrogin, like the Confidence-Man, is a master of irony in that he himself believes in nothing yet he tempts and inspires those around him to beliefs which destroy them. As Irving Howe writes,

> Stavrogin is the source of the chaos that streams through the characters; he possesses them but is not himself possessed. . . . His tragedy is that he can replace the sense of cosmic fear only with the sense of cosmic void: the awareness of human limits which Dostoevsky regards as essential to life he entirely lacks. A "subtle serpent" who is one of the Devil's party, though from metaphysical despair rather than a Faustian bargain, and a typically modern personality haunted by "the demon of irony," Stavrogin suffers from acedia, that torpor of the spirit which provides the greatest resistance to God because it lacks the power to resist anything.[6]

The world of The Possessed, like that of The Confidence-Man, is inverted by irony: Kirillov sees salvation in suicide, Shatov bases his philosophy of life on a God in which he himself cannot quite believe, Shigalov's political theory intended to liberate men will actually

enslave them, Virginsky's respect for his wife increases when she is unfaithful to him, and so the ironies multiply.

One of the darker ironies of The Confidence-Man, whose relevance to The Possessed we will examine in a moment, is revealed by the Confidence-Man in his guise as Frank Goodman. The modern age, he says, is characterized by "'the advancing spirit of geniality'" (p. 153). Goodman predicts that this spirit will prevail over mankind to such an extent that someday even misanthropes will be infected by it:

> "Now, the genial misanthrope, when, in the process of eras, he shall turn up, will be the converse of this [i.e., the surly philanthropist] ; under an affable air, he will hide a misanthropical heart. In short, the genial misanthrope will be a new kind of monster, but still no small improvement upon the original one, since, instead of making faces and throwing stones at people, like that poor old crazy man, Timon, he will take steps, fiddle in hand, to set the tickled world a' dancing. In a word, as the progress of Christianization mellows those in manner whom it cannot mend in mind, much the same will it prove with the progress of genialization." (p. 154)

Goodman predicts that the misanthrope will be so softened in appearance as to become actually popular. The irony of this passage is that Goodman is describing not some fantasy of the future, but himself. The age of the genial misanthrope is already upon us. He is the demonic fiddler whose Timonism sets the world a' dancing.

The genial misanthrope also exists in the world of The Possessed: he is Pyotr Stepanovitch. Like Stavrogin, who he calls his "better half," Pyotr Stepanovitch believes in nothing. Always ready to play the buffoon in order to achieve his ends, Pyotr is a thoroughly debased petty devil, inciting chaos wherever he goes. As Edward Wasiolek observes, the relation of Pyotr to Stavrogin is pivotal to the novel's structure:

> The metaphysical and political plots come together when Peter and Stavrogin come together. Stavrogin does not believe in the dialectics of Kirilov or the messianic nationalism of Shatov, and Peter believes neither the "bright hopes" of Virginsky or the Fourieristic dreams of Liputin. Peter destroys the world about him, and Stavrogin destroys the world within him. They are body and soul, noise and silence, destruction and unfaith.[7]

Dostoevsky sees the epidemic madness of The Possessed as an extension of the political and spiritual nihilism propagated by Pyotr Stepanovitch and Stavrogin.

Pyotr Stepanovitch readily admits to Stavrogin that he is really not a Socialist at all, but a "scoundrel." He doesn't hope to create a new society through revolution; he simply wants to see destruction and chaos all around him. His plans for Russia, expounded in the chapter, "Ivan the Tsarovitch," are truly horrifying and Stavrogin, hearing them for the first time, is sure that Pyotr is either drunk or mad. In Pyotr's world all will be slaves and equal in their slavery. Great men will be destroyed:

"'Cicero will have his tongue cut out, Copernicus will have his eyes put out, Shakespeare will be stoned'" (p. 424). Desire and suffering will be eliminated. Absolute submission will be the fate of the masses. Pyotr describes with positive glee the signs of upheaval and anarchy which have already begun to appear in Russia: murder is condoned, teachers laugh at God, mothers and their children are drunk, God has "'been vanquished by cheap vodka'" (p. 427). Pyotr claims that Russia needs a generation or two of vice, "'monstrous, abject vice by which a man is transformed into a loathesome, cruel, egoistic reptile. That's what we need!'" (p. 428). Like the Confidence-Man, Pyotr is the fiddler who sets the tickled world a' dancing toward final perdition: "'We will proclaim destruction. . . . We'll set fires going. . . . Well, and there will be upheaval! There's going to be such an upset as the world has never seen before. . . . Russia will be overwhelmed with darkness, the earth will weep for its old gods'" (pp. 428-29).

Pyotr's nihilism ends in a vision of universal destruction, a senseless apocalypse without Final Judgment. When life is reduced to the vaudeville of devils even its end has no meaning. Take away Pyotr Stepanovitch's frenzy and flames, and the resemblance of his vision to the end of The Confidence-Man emerges with frightening clarity. Pyotr would end the world with a bang, the Confidence-Man

with barely a whisper. But the finality and emptiness of that whisper are just as terrifying as all the fires Pyotr would set. The good Old Man of the last chapter has been gulled into displaying his distrust of his fellow man which, by his own admission, implies distrust of the Creator. As it grows dark in the cabin, the Old Man pathetically clutches a foul-smelling chamber pot which he believes to be a life preserver as trustworthy as "'a special providence'" (p. 217). The Confidence-Man assures his victim that they will be safe during the night, "'since in Providence, as in man, you and I equally put trust'" (p. 217). After this final and quiet irony, there is nothing more to say. The Confidence-Man silently extinguishes the last light in the cabin and with it all faith. The reign of darkness begins.

The iconography of madness in The Possessed is controlled by the two epigraphs which Dostoevsky has chosen for the novel, the first from Pushkin, the second from Luke. The first is the cry of the lost who have been bewitched by demons and led astray. The parable from Luke tells how Jesus causes the devils who possess a sick man to enter the bodies of swine who then plunge to their destruction leaving the man "'clothed and in his right mind'" (p. xi). The model of madness Dostoevsky invokes is the ancient and primitive one of demonic possession which he

uses as a controlling metaphor for the novel as a whole. During Stepan Trofimovitch's quixotic "last wandering" the parable of the swine strikes him as a fitting allegory for the situation of Russia:

> "You see, that's exactly like our Russia, those devils that come out of the sick man and enter into the swine. They are all the sores, all the foul contagions, all the impurities, all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia, in the course of ages and ages. . . . But a great idea and a great Will will encompass it from on high, as with that lunatic possessed of devils . . . and all those devils will come forth, all the impurity, all the rottenness that was putrefying on the surface . . . and they will beg of themselves to enter into swine; and indeed maybe they have entered into them already! They are we, we are those . . . and Petrusha and les autres avec lui . . . and I perhaps at the head of them, and we shall cast ourselves down, possessed and raving, from the rocks into the sea, and we shall all be drowned--and a good thing too, for that is all we are fit for. But the sick man will be healed and 'will sit at the feet of Jesus.'" (p. 665)

Madness as demonic possession is the metaphor which defines the novel's collective experience and controls Dostoevsky's analysis of the state of contemporary society, but it does not really account for all of the individual cases of madness which appear in The Possessed. Pyotr Stepanovitch and Lizaveta Nikolaevna are the two characters most simply "possessed" by demonic madness, fascinated with chaos and destruction. But in other characters the face of madness is more complex. The crippled Marya

Timofyevna is mad with delusion yet clairvoyant in her unreason. She alone perceives the true shabbiness of Stavrogin and is not afraid to denounce him: "'No, my dear, you're a poor actor, worse than Lebyadkin even. Give my humble greetings to the countess and tell her to send some one better than you. Has she hired you, tell me? Have they given you a place in her kitchen out of charity? I see through your deception. I understand you all, every one of you'" (p. 282). Lembke, the bumbling governor, is a fool when sane. Only when he loses his mind does he see the truth. Rushing to the fire which has been set during the disastrous fête, Lembke screams, "'It's all incendiarism! It's Nihilism! If anything is burning, it's Nihilism! . . . The fire is in the minds of men and not in the roofs of houses'" (pp. 524-25). Lembke is mad, but for the first time in his life he is right.

There is a residue of truth and dignity even in the mad buffoonery of Lebyadkin. As Irving Howe observes:

> It is raining. Stavrogin offers Lebyadkin an umbrella. In an oversweet voice Lebyadkin asks, "Am I worth it?" Stavrogin replies, "Anyone is worthy of an umbrella." And then Lebyadkin suddenly pours out: "At one stroke you define the minimum of human rights . . ." Such a passage, deepening buffoonery into tragic statement, is the unique mark of Dostoevsky, possible only to the writer who had once said, "Man is a crook--and a crook is he who says so."[8]

And, finally, there are the elements of truth and courage

that are born of Stepan Trofimovitch's madness. Delirious in the end, he finally understands that he is responsible for what has happened. He knows that he must plunge to destruction along with the other mad swine. But Stepan Trofimovitch's description of himself belies the sympathetic image we see before us. In the end his madness is not of the devil, rather it is the redemptive unreason of Cervantes' mad knight.

In The Confidence-Man we see once again Melville's identification of madness with wisdom and grief. Although the Confidence-Man would have us believe that madness springs from mistrust alone, Melville's novel teaches us that this is only a half-truth. If we look at the exemplary tale about madness, the "Story of the Gentleman-Madman," we see that madness is caused not because the hero lacked trust, but because there is nothing in the universe which can be trusted. Charlemont, the "gentleman-madman," is mad with the wisdom that is woe: he retreats from the world because he knows that the friends of his prosperity will, like Timon's friends, abandon him in his poverty. Charlemont knows the worst about humanity; that his love persists despite this is the mystery of his madness. Charlemont explains to a curious friend why he vanished from sight when he lost his fortune:

> "If ever, in days to come, you shall see
> ruin at hand, and, thinking you understand
> mankind, shall tremble for your frienships,

> and tremble for your pride; and, partly through love for the one and fear for the other, shall resolve to be beforehand with the world, and save it from a sin by prospectively taking that sin to yourself, then will you do as one I now dream of once did, and like him will you suffer; but how fortunate and how grateful should you be, if like him, after all that had happened, you could be a little happy again." (p. 160)

After hearing this explanation of Charlemont's secret, the friend leaves with the conviction that he must still be a bit mad. But if this be madness it is what Melville called, in "Hawthorne and His Mosses," the "madness of vital truth." Melville admired in Shakespeare those "short, quick probings at the very axis of reality. . . . Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things which we feel to be so terrifically true that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them."[9] Charlemont's madness consists in seeing things as they are and daring to speak honestly of what he has seen.

The good merchant of the first chapters of the novel displays this same madness of vital truth. After generously showing confidence in Black Guinea, the Man with the Weed, and the agent of the Black Rapids Coal Company, the kind merchant sits down to drink with the Confidence-Man. The wine goes straight to the merchant's heart and he utters the following:

> "Ah, wine is good, and confidence is good; but can wine or confidence percolate down through all the stony strata of hard considerations, and drop warmly and ruddily into the cold cave of truth? Truth will not be comforted. Led by dear charity, lured by sweet hope, fond fancy essays this feat; but in vain; mere dreams and ideals, they explode in your hand, leaving naught but the scorching behind!" (p. 57)

The Confidence-Man pretends to be shocked by this confession of distrust, and the good merchant is himself confounded by what he has said. He leaves the table "mortified at having been tempted by his own honest goodness, accidentally stimulated into making mad disclosures--to himself as to another--of the queer, unnaccountable caprices of his natural heart" (p. 58).

The wisdom-in-folly of The Possessed and the woeful-truth-that-is-madness of The Confidence-Man depend on intuitions about insanity that are essentially timeless. In the images of madness in these two novels there is relatively little that depends on the more literal features of nineteenth-century madness: the radical disunity of personality, the concern with the life of the unconscious, the underlying logic of disease. What remains characteristic of the age is the overall attitude toward madness. The essential seriousness of madness is respected for its truth as well as its human suffering. And more specifically, the image of madness is valued for its

ability to reflect the troubled features of contemporary culture.

If the eighteenth century fears in madness an encroaching irrationality, Melville and Dostoevsky see the danger in their own day as an engulfing rationality. Men are mad not from the lack of reason but from too much of it. The socialists who, in The Possessed, are all described as madmen are mad because they want to organize life according to reason and science. Shatov, defending Dostoevsky's most cherished notions about human freedom and the spiritual sources of life which are beyond reason, explains the folly of socialism:

> "Science and reason have, from the beginning of time, played a secondary and subordinate part in the life of nations; so it will be till the end of time. Nations are built up and moved by another force which sways and dominates them, the origin of which is unknown and inexplicable: that force is the force of an insatiable desire to go on to the end, though at the same time it denies that end. It is the force of the persistent assertion of one's own existence, and a denial of death. It's the spirit of life, as the Scriptures call it, 'the river of living water,' the drying up of which is threatened in the Apocalypse." (p. 253)

Translated into American society, which was not threatened as Russia was by revolutionary socialism, the attack on reason and science becomes a critique of the spirit of rational humanitarianism. The Confidence-Man with his Rational World Charity scheme exposes the foolishness of

the American liberal's faith in reason's ability to work miracles. Melville scorns the shallow optimism of those who believe that the rational solution to material problems will eliminate men's spiritual ills. Such a solution is the Confidence-Man's Protean easy-chair, "'a chair so all over bejointed, behinged, and bepadded, everyway so elastic, springy, and docile to the airiest touch, that in some one of its endlessly-changeable accommodations of back, seat, footboard, and arms, the most restless body, the body most racked, nay, I had almost added the most tormented conscience must, somehow and somewhere, find rest'" (p. 33).

Reliance on reason is ultimately related to the age's crisis of unbelief. The greatest hindrance to religious faith in the nineteenth century, according to Kierkegaard, is the demand that belief somehow be reasonable. In The Present Age (1846), Kierkegaard characterizes the age of Melville and Dostoevsky as reflective and passionless, transforming everything into a feat of dialectics.[10] In Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846), he writes that it is harder to be a Christian than it ever was before:

> In the nineteenth century it is not easier to be a Christian than it was in the first age, on the contrary, it has become more difficult from year to year. The predominance of intellect in the man of culture, and the direction toward the objective, will

> in his case constantly cause resistance against becoming a Christian, and this resistance is the sin of the intellect: lukewarmness.[11]

We find a confirmation of Kierkegaard's diagnosis of the lukewarmness of the "present age" in Melville and Dostoevsky. The skeptical Missourian asks the Confidence-Man if he is an abolitionist:

> "As to that, I cannot so readily answer. If by abolitionist you mean a zealot, I am none; but if you mean a man, who being a man, feels for all men, slaves included, and by any lawful act, opposed to nobody's interest, and therefore, rousing nobody's enmity, would willingly abolish suffering (supposing it, in its degree, to exist) from among mankind, irrespective of color, than I am what you say." (p. 97)

For this lukewarm evasiveness, the Missourian has nothing but contempt: "'Picked and prudent sentiments. You are the moderate man, the invaluable understrapper of the wicked man. You, the moderate man, may be used for wrong, but are useless for right'" (p. 97). The Confidence-Man later hints that his own refusal to make a firm commitment is characteristic of the lukewarmness of the age. The ship's barber, whose motto "No Trust" is a challenge to the Confidence-Man's wiles, is finally forced to admit that he will trust some men but distrust others. The Confidence-Man has triumphed:

> "By your opposite replies to my question at the time, you showed yourself much of a piece

> with a good many other men--that is, you have confidence, and then again, you have none. Now, what I would ask is, do you think it sensible standing for a sensible man, one foot on confidence and the other on suspicion? Don't you think, barber, that you ought to elect?" (pp. 196-97)

Toward the end of The Possessed, Stepan Trofimovitch, delirious with fever, asks the gospel peddlar Sofya Matveyevna to open the Bible at random and read the first thing she comes across. It is his way of "'trying our future fortunes by the book'" (p. 663). She reads, most appropriately, the judgment of Jesus from Revelation:

> "'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot.
> "'So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.
> "'Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'" (p. 663)

It is fitting that both novels, dominated as they are by the imagery of the Apocalypse, should draw on the condemnation of lukewarmness from Revelations. But, as we have seen so many times before, Melville and Dostoevsky agree about the problem but not its solution. The antidote to the epidemic madness of The Possessed is implicit in the parable of the swine that is the book's epigraph: only Christ can heal ailing humanity. Man must abandon his pride in intellect and submit to the redemptive

unreason of faith. The end of The Possessed points the way toward the later affirmation of Zossima and Alyosha in The Brothers Karamazov. Melville can find no cure for the madness of The Confidence-Man because madness has merged with truth and, as the good merchant insists, "'Truth will not be comforted'" (p. 57). The crisis of unbelief drives men mad but the tragedy for Melville is that there is nothing to believe in. Rejecting the herb doctor's Samaritan Pain Dissuader, the giant frontiersman speaks the darkest truth of the novel: "'Some pains cannot be eased but by producing insensibility, and cannot be cured but by producing death'" (p. 74). Melville has reached the final impasse of his career. His only solution to the madness of life is that there is no solution. The Possessed is a novel about nihilism, The Confidence-Man is itself nihilistic. Although Stavrogin hangs himself, Dostoevsky continues to write; Melville quietly abandons the art of fiction.

The experience of madness is, for Melville and Dostoevsky as it is for their age, essentially tragic. In an age zealously devoted to the pursuit of progress and committed to the idea that man is evolving steadily toward perfection, the face of madness appears as a haunting reminder of human limitation. Madness is the dark side of the age's optimism, the price modern man must pay for

civilization.

The iconography of madness in Melville and Dostoevsky reveals a vast store of preoccupations and presuppositions which these two writers shared with each other and which point to the most unsettling problems of the era--the limits of reason, the disunity of personality, the nature of the unconscious, the troubling and ambiguous relationship of individuality to community and divinity, the crisis of alienation and unbelief. All of these perplexing dilemmas were reflected in the nineteenth century's perception of the life of unreason. Melville and Dostoevsky were drawn continually to the image of madness because it took them to the heart of so many of the age's unsolved problems.

Melville and Dostoevsky played an active, shaping role in the nineteenth-century debate over madness and models of mind. Although their images of madness emerged from the cultural matrix which I have attempted to define, Melville and Dostoevsky did not simply absorb and reflect the temper of their times. Their function was the creative one of art. They have given us images of the life of unreason so powerful that these images have assumed an authority of their own. More than any other writers of their age, Melville and Dostoevsky have taught us to see the life of unreason in all its complexity and ambiguity. This has been their greatest legacy to our own age and

perhaps explains their tremendous stature and influence.

It is my hope that this study has revealed not only unexplored areas of the fiction of Melville and Dostoevsky but also something about the continuity of nineteenth-century culture and the complex ways in which cultural codes and conventions are translated into the coded messages of literary texts. In examining the iconography of madness in Melville and Dostoevsky I have attempted to sort out the attitudes toward unreason which were widely-shared and characteristic of their age and I have attempted to show how these attitudes or perceptual structures gave form to their images of madness.

Throughout this study there has been an attempt to maintain a certain doubleness of vision: the iconography of madness has been seen as part of the cultural matrix which gave it form and, at the same time, as an autonomous element within the closed system of each literary text. What is lost by this method is the possibility of anything as neat as a summary about the meaning of madness in Melville and Dostoevsky. What is gained is an analysis which reflects the complex process by which literature is written and read. If we must abandon the notion of a unitary "meaning" we can nevertheless talk about the meanings of madness in Melville and Dostoevsky. What we have seen is that those meanings may be plural but they are neither infinite nor random. In each of the pairs of

works we examined we noted that the image of madness depended on a culturally-defined perceptual structure which ultimately limited and defined the range of meaning which that image could generate. In "Bartleby" and "Notes From the Underground," Melville and Dostoevsky perceive the image of madness within the terms of the debate over the limits of reason; in Pierre and The Idiot, the model of madness is the radically discontinuous self; in Moby Dick, Crime and Punishment, and The Brothers Karamazov, madness is the condition of absolute autonomy of the self; in The Confidence-Man and The Possessed, madness is seen in its aspect of alienation and unbelief. In each case, the perception of madness is culturally determined, and the form which that perception takes defines what we might think of as a kind of force field of meaning for the novel as a whole. What this suggests, I believe, is that we should begin to formulate a grammar of imagery in cultural terms. The iconography of madness in Melville and Dostoevsky is related to its cultural matrix as the raw materials of a language are to its grammar: just as a grammar determines both the forms an utterance can take and the meanings it can express, so a culture determines both the way an image is perceived and the meanings it can communicate. The age of Melville and Dostoevsky offered them a grammar of madness which corresponded to their own most intensely personal responses to the life of unreason.

From this conjunction of the private worlds of these two writers with the shared perceptual structures of their age has come an iconography of madness of compelling richness.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V.

[1]Richard Chase, Herman Melville: A Critical Study (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 206.

[2]Max Byrd, Visits to Bedlam: Madness and Literature in the Eighteenth Century (Columbia, S.C.: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1974), p. 14. I have profited from Max Byrd's fine discussion of madness in the eighteenth century.

[3]Dostoevsky, The Unpublished Dostoevsky: Diaries and Notebooks (1860-81), Vol. II, ed. Carl R. Proffer, trans. Arline Boyer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975), p. 3.

[4]Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Possessed, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Random House, 1936), p. 629. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[5]Herman Melville, The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade, ed. Hershel Parker (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 12. All subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be included in the body of the text.

[6]Irving Howe, "Dostoevsky: The Politics of Salvation," Politics and the Novel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), rpt. in René Wellek, ed., Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 62.

[7]Edward Wasiolek, "Introduction" to The Notebooks for The Possessed (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 18-19.

[8]Howe, pp. 61-62.

[9]rpt. in Edmund Wilson, ed., The Shock of Recognition (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 193.

[10]For these observations about Kierkegaard and the citations from his works, I am indebted to Maurice Mandelbaum, History, Man, and Reason, pp. 325-338. The following passage, which Mandelbaum cites from The Present Age, provides an interesting commentary on Kirillov: "Nowadays not even a suicide kills himself in desperation. Before taking the step he deliberates so long and so carefully that he literally chokes with thought. It is even questionable whether he ought to be called a suicide, since it is

really thought which takes his life. He does not die with deliberation but from deliberation" (p. 327).

[11]Cited in Mandelbaum, p. 334.

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