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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING

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Imagine that Raskolnikov is a patient in psychoanalysis and Crime and Punishment the story he tells. In other words, let us read the novel as if it were a series of analytic sessions, or view it as a group of interrelated dreams. Taking the psychoanalytic process as our model for interpretation, the task will be to formulate hypotheses, trace out patterns, note regularities of emotion and relationship, in short, to construct a map of Raskolnikov's unconscious. Of course Raskolnikov is a figure in a novel, not a patient in treatment, and the difference must be kept in mind. Still, even as a fictional character, he has provoked a variety of critical reactions; readers with diverse perspectives -- philosophical, social, economic, religious -- have attempted to account for his motivation. Raskolnikov is a disorganized person, at odds with his own plans and emotions. his actions arising from unknown inner sources. A psychoanalytic interpretation is one way of making sense of his fragmented personality.²

Dostoevsky's own intentions are of interest in relation to a psychoanalytic approach. In a letter to his editor, Katkov, he describes the novel as "a psychological account of a crime" (Notebooks, p. 171) and, as we know from The Notebooks, he originally wrote it as a first-person narrative, as Raskolnikov's confession. In many ways the novel retains a flavor of confession and free-

association. And, it is a very dream-like text; not only are several detailed dreams central to the plot, but Raskolnikov lives and acts as if he were in a dream. This is true in two ways: first, he is pushed and pulled by forces he barely comprehends and, second, many of the subplots appear before him — and the reader — as tableaux. We watch these scenes with Raskolnikov as he is effected and drawn into them.

First Impressions

There are times when the initial contact with a patient contains, in condensed form, a great deal of what we will later discover about him. The first encounter with Raskolnikov is like this, we find him ruminating in his closet-like room. In order to leave the room he must pass his landlady's kitchen and, already, there is deep conflict. He is in debt to the landlady and fears meeting her; as he sneaks past her door he feels "a nauseous, cowardly sensation." He has been lying in the room for at least a month, depressed, talking to himself, eating little, neglecting his appearance and avoiding people.

As he came out onto the street the terror that had gripped him at the prospect of meeting his landlady struck even him as odd. 'Imagine being scared of little things like that, with the job I have in mind!' he thought, smiling strangely.

(p. 13-14)

The "job" is, of course, his plan to murder and rob an old woman, a pawnbroker to whom he is indebted.

Two sides of Raskolnikov emerge with great force from these initial passages -- our first encounter with the patient, as it were. Contact with reality -- with the world of people, sights, sounds and sensations -- is oppressive, irritating, even terrifying, and must be avoided.

Outside the heat had grown ferocious. Closeness, crowds, scaffolding, with lime, brick and dust everywhere . . . The intolerable stench of saloons . . . the melancholy and repulsive tone of what confronted him. An expression of the deepest loathing flashed for a moment across his sensitive face. (p. 14)

He has, for the most part, withdrawn from all this into the world of his thoughts and schemes. And here, "somehow, and even against his will, the 'hideous' dreams had turned into a project, though he did not yet quite believe it." (p. 15) He struggles to see the "project" as an original act, a transgression requiring courage and will, something that can redefine his separation from others as greatness rather than inferiority.

From the outset, the project -- the plan to murder and rob the pawnbroker -- forms itself in his mind as a solution to all that has been troubling him. His rage acquires a definite target, someone who he can hate with justification. And his fear seems less demeaning; he is frightened because he is engaged in a daring and dangerous crime. The project is like the thought structure of an obsession: it is, at once, a defensive resolution of unconscious conflict and a symbolic

statement of that same conflict. Once the crime has been committed, Raskolnikov's fear and guilt will seem to center, exclusively, on it. But we should remember that the core reactions -- the isolation, anger, fear and guilt -- were all present before the murder. The crime is itself a symbolic act, in need of interpretation.

What hypotheses are suggested by these first impressions, by Raskolnikov's state, the relationship with his landlady and the project he is planning? One is immediately struck by the severity of his disturbance, his isolation from people and withdrawal from reality, the lability of his moods and the crazed quality of his thoughts. And this includes a distortion of the reality of his own body -- his outer self -- which he treats as an unimportant shell. The inner thoughts and fantasies have come to dominate the whole person and they are becoming more grandiose.

The manner in which Raskolnikov experiences his room and surroundings, and the relationship with the landlady, suggest a first hypothesis about the conflicts behind his severe disturbance. This is his home and the landlady the source of food, shelter and comfort, -- it takes little imagination to see her as a mother-figure, as the woman in his current life responsible for maternal care. And it is clear that, for Raskolnikov, this care is oppressive -- the cupboard-like room -- and wrought with almost unbearable conflict. Despite not having eaten for two days, the odors from her kitchen make him nauseous. He is in debt to her and feels such a mixture of anger and need that he is afraid to meet her and must sneak in and out of the building: intense and pervasive feelings of guilt are at the core of

these reactions. After the crime has been committed, Raskolnikov is summoned to the police station because the landlady has filed a claim for unpaid rent. He, and the reader, at first connect the summons with the murders. This, plus the fact that he is indebted to both pawnbroker and landlady, suggest a link between the feelings of guilt in both relationships.

All of this leads to the hypothesis that he sees the landlady as a "bad mother," one whose care is bound up with anger, fear and guilt. Later, we will see that Raskolnikov has made her into such a figure, for we learn that his view of her is not necessarily to be trusted. His friend, Razumikhin, meets her and reports that she is not so unreasonable about the rent, she just needed a little friendly attention. He even finds her an attractive woman, something that one would never have guessed from Raskolnikov's image of her. And we also learn, later, that Raskolnikov's state of poverty is due to his own refusal to work. He could have earned money doing translations, as Razumikhin has done, but he chose not to. So his poverty, as well as the relationship with the landlady, are matters of his own creation. He needs to have a "bad," depriving mother outside himself. This tendency to "split" the primary love object -- the source of maternal comfort and care -- is completed by the character of Nastasia, the landlady's maid, who feeds Raskolnikov and attends to his needs in a simple and straightforward manner. The relationship with her is singularly lacking in guilt.

But why must Raskolnikov maintain these split versions of the maternal figure? We later learn that a few years prior to the events

being described, he was engaged to the landlady's daughter, a sickly girl who died before the marriage could take place. He was drawn to her, as he is to a number of other victims and abused children. Here is how he puts it:

She was quite sick -- he lowered his eyes -- ailing all the time. She used to love giving to beggars, and she was always dreaming about a nunnery. Once when she started to tell me about it, she wept. Yes, I remember, I remember that very well. Sort of a homely-looking thing. I don't know why I felt so attached to her, to tell you the truth, maybe because she was always sick, if she had been lame or hunchbacked I might have loved her even more. (p. 229-230)

Raskolnikov's attachment to this girl suggests two dynamics. There is the indirect hostility involved in a relationship with a degraded love-object. Raskolnikov's speech, quoted above, is directed at his attractive mother -- who had opposed the marriage -- and his beautiful sister; it carries an implicit rejection of them. The sickly girl serves as Raskolnikov's statement to the world of the inadequacy and uselessness of women. This is one meaning to Raskolnikov's attraction to degraded and damaged women, but it is not the main meaning. He has more direct ways of expressing his hostility. Of greater significance is his identification with victims. His involvement with these poor creatures, and his acts of generosity toward them, express what he wants for himself. In a deep way he feels deprived, sick, unfairly treated by life; he craves love

and care that will restore a sense of well-being, health and integrity.

If the rage that fuels the murder -- along with the guilt in relation to women -- is one side of Raskolnikov's reaction to maternal figures, the identification with victims is the other. It symbolizes the longing to be taken care of, the wish to be dependent, to give in, all of which are associated with a sense of helplessness so powerful that it prefigures death. Another way of stating this is in terms of the sadistic and masochistic components of his dilemma. He can attack the maternal figure or submit to her. He is caught between these two possibilities and, whenever he moves toward one, the dangers associated with the other are felt. As we will see, two of the subplots of the novel deal with these two sides, expressed in exaggerated terms: Svidrigailov the sadistic and Marmeladov the masochistic.

The project to murder the pawnbroker emerges from Raskolnikov's initial state as a solution to the conflicting forces that have left him nearly paralyzed. Calling it a "project" is his effort to isolate, depersonalize and scientize his emotional turmoil. From a state of helplessness, deprivation and crippling guilt, he imagines himself as powerful -- even great -- a man whose rage is justified, who will right the wrongs perpetuated on the weak, and acquire treasure to fill up the world's needy ones. The project, like his creation of a "bad mother" of the landlady, is an attempt to externalize his overwhelming ambivalence so that he can take action in the world.

The Marmeladov "Dream"

Raskolnikov goes to the pawnbroker's a first time, in preparation for the crime, and, returning home, wanders into a saloon. Here he sits, watches and listens, as if in a dream, as Marmeladov tells his story. In psychoanalysis when we hear two dreams together they typically display related aspects of a single underlying theme. The setting and characters may change as the dreamer struggles with his conflicts, yet small elements serve as clues linking the dreams together. One dream may be anxious and the next show the anxiety overcome, or the two may experiment with different solutions to a common problem. Taken together, the pair of dreams contain converging sources of information that we can use in formulating an interpretation. I propose to treat Marmeladov's story as if it were Raskolnikov's dream, a second source of information from a common unconscious reservoir.

Marmeladov, a middle-aged clerk -- a "titular councillor" -- sunk in the depths of alcoholism, is one of those characters who regales everyone with his pitiful saga. On the first encounter with Raskolnikov, he calls attention to the connection between them: they are both educated men, men of talent and abilities despite their poor and disheveled outer appearance. And, as the story unfolds, it is revealed that the destitution they suffer is not due to external misfortune in any simple way; each had a hand in creating his plight.

The outline of Marmeladov's story is as follows. A widower with a fourteen year old daughter, Sonia, he marries Katherine, herself a widow with three young children. He works for a time,

supporting the new family but, eventually, through a combination of bad luck and his own weakness, falls into drink and his present state of destitution. Not only is he a drunk but, he confesses, the family's lack of money has driven Sonia into prostitution and, even then, he does not stop: he sells his wife's clothes, steals money from the house and even takes Sonia's earnings to keep himself in alcohol. All of this is told with an exaggerated sense of self-pity.

When I am destitute no one is quicker to humiliate me than I myself. (p. 23) (And,) . . . do you dare -- you who gaze on me as I am now -- do you dare state definitely that I am not a pig? (p. 24)

Marmeladov is a man who humiliates himself before others, makes himself ridiculous, destroys his integrity and very body: but why? What lies behind all this? The relationship with his wife emerges as a central factor.

. . . well, then, so be it. I am a swine. But she is a lady! I am the shape of a beast, but Katherine Ivanovna, my wife -- she is an educated person, she was born the daughter of a staff officer. So be it, so be it. I am a scoundrel, while she is lofty in spirit, and her feelings have been ennobled by education. Ah still, if only she pitied me! My dear sir, why my dear sir, everyone needs a small place somewhere, where he knows he will be pitied! (p. 24-5)

When his story is examined closely, we see that, mixed in with

the attack on himself, is an attack on her. His very praise, exaggerated as it is, has a mocking underside. He tells how he rescued her and her children from their penniless state, yet she throws up the memory of her first husband to him. She is proud, he says again and again, yet he describes her as self-centered. She loves her children, spends all day scrubbing and cleaning, but she beats them when they cry and is, throughout, useless as a mother. She is cruel to her step-daughter, Sonia, drives her into prostitution, and then falls at her feet. And she is sick, wasting away with tuberculosis, which aggravates her temper and instability. In all these ways, Marmeladov shows her to have the outer appearance of a fine woman -- a good mother and wife -- an appearance that is belied by her actions. She lives in the past, in a fantasy of lost social status and seems little able to give to the real people in her current life: to her step-daughter, her children or her husband. Indeed she shows affection for him only when he assumes a respectable position and that is precisely when he throws it all up and sinks into drink. In his case, too, his actions are at odds with his words, there is an image of respectability but his acts reveal his rage at her failure to accept him for himself.

Marmeladov attacks the "bad mother," represented by his wife, both directly and with masochistic aggression. He does the opposite of what she demands of him, losing his job and respectable position. He steals her clothes and sells them to support his drinking, including the woolen shawl she needs to keep warm, thus hastening her death from tuberculosis. He breaks into her chest, just as

Raskolnikov will with the pawnbroker, steals the family money and, having drunk it all up, returns home with Raskolnikov and allows himself to be attacked, accepting his punishment from her:

Suddenly she seized him in a frenzy by the hair and dragged him into the room. Marmeladov made it easier for her by meekly sliding after her on his knees.

‘And I tell you I enjoy it! I tell you I feel no pain, but I actually enjoy it, my dear sir!’ This he shouted out as he was being shaken by the hair, and once his forehead even struck the floor. (p. 36)

His enjoyment of punishment -- a definition of masochism after all -- has two sides. It alleviates guilt; it is penance for his transgressions; but it is penance that permits him to go out and get drunk again. And, more, it serves to locate the aggression in Katherine. By provoking her to attack him, he succeeds in demonstrating to one and all -- and these scenes are always played before an audience -- that she is the aggressor and he the victim. The masochist attacks by dragging others down, by arousing angry and uncomfortable feelings in them. Marmeladov is continually heaping excrement on himself, but a lot of it splatters on the others who are nearby.³

Let us, view the Marmeladov story as if it were a dream that presents an alternative solution to the conflicts Raskolnikov suffers, in other words, think of Marmeladov as the masochistic side of Raskolnikov, a side displayed in extreme form. This "dream" shows the

danger of the masochistic course, for Marmeladov ultimately succeeds in destroying both himself and his wife. Raskolnikov comes upon him after he has been run over by a horse and carriage, drunk and dying in the street, and has him carried home. There, he dies, while Katherine berates him and carries on her fight with the neighbors over social position. Marmeladov's blood, and that which Katherine is already beginning to cough up from the tuberculosis that will later kill her, are almost too obvious links with the murders. Blood is one of those "dream" elements that ties the Marmeladov subplot to the central action. It stands for the guilt associated with hate and aggression leveled at the maternal figure, directly in the case of Raskolnikov's murder of the pawnbroker, and masochistically in the case of Marmeladov and his wife. Another significant element in both "dreams" is the presence of the idealized, potentially loving and forgiving mother figure. In the murder scene, it is the innocent Lizavetta; in the Marmeladov family, it is Sonia who, we later learn, was a friend of Lizavetta's. Raskolnikov first sees Sonia as he leaves Marmeladov's death-bed, himself covered with blood. He has offered money and help to the family, obviously out of his own sense of guilt, and the possibility of a connection with an innocent child-woman arouses hope for a way out of his conflicted and isolated state.

To sum up the connections between Raskolnikov and Marmeladov, we note that both appear poor and disheveled on the outside but feel "better," more valuable within. Both have humiliated themselves by borrowing money, Raskolnikov from the pawnbroker and Marmeladov -- as always in a more ludicrous fashion -- from a "high official." Both

steal money from the maternal figure, breaking into her treasure chest in similar ways. And both kill the woman -- directly and indirectly -- feel guilt and seek punishment. Of course there are important differences: where Marmeladov is garrulous and humiliates himself, Raskolnikov is isolated and proud. Marmeladov exemplifies the masochistic and dependent course -- let us not forget that he is an alcoholic, devoted to the escape and gratification of the bottle -- while Raskolnikov, when they first encounter each other, is wavering between action and passivity, attack and submission, sadism and masochism.

A Letter From Home, A Dream, The Murder

The encounter with the Marmeladov family leaves Raskolnikov in a state of uncertainty about his project. He is then propelled into the crime by two experiences: reading a letter from his mother and a dream, both of which illuminate, in striking fashion, the unconscious forces at work within him. The letter is our first contact with the mother and it is a masterpiece at revealing her character; Dostoevsky understood the "double-bind" long before it was discovered by modern students of the schizophrenic family.

The letter begins:

My dear Rodia, it is a little over two months now since I've chatted with you by mail, and this has caused me some distress and I've even lain awake nights thinking about it. But you won't blame me for my involuntary silence. You know how much I love you. You are all we have left, Dunia and I, you are our

everything, all our wishes and all our hope. (p. 40)

Immediately the theme of blame is introduced with the implication that someone is causing someone else pain. The mother is in distress, she lies awake at night: why? Because she hasn't written to him. But he shouldn't blame her -- was he about to? -- because it was "involuntary" and, besides, she loves him. This communication can be decoded as: "you may be about to blame me but, before you do, I block it, let you know that I love you and am suffering on your account." The very next passage then turns the blame on Raskolnikov: why did he leave the university, why isn't he working? Mother has almost no money, but she will send what little she has. The guilt has been shifted onto his shoulders, but subtly; mother's accusations are indirect and always mixed together with protestations of love and references to her suffering and self-sacrifice. There are a number of additional instances of these double-binding communications, and there is the central theme of the letter; it too places Raskolnikov in an impossibly conflicted position.

Mother describes Dunia's suffering on Raskolnikov's behalf. She was employed as a governess in the Svidrigailov household, in order to earn money to support her brother at the university. Svidrigailov conceives a passion for her -- we learn more about this later -- and asks her to run away with him. His wife, Martha Petrovna, overhears some of this, does not know that Dunia has rejected his advances, and drives her from the house in a shameful manner. Martha then spreads gossip all over the town, causing Dunia

and her mother much humiliation and pain. Dunia is strong, she bears all this but the mother "takes sick." Martha then learns of Dunia's innocence and goes to great lengths to undo the harm she has caused. Dunia's reputation is cleared and, through Martha's efforts, a suitor is found, Luzhin, a prosperous lawyer and businessman. The mother's description of Luzhin and the proposed marriage is, again, a masterpiece of double-think.

He is ' . . . in general quite a solid and reliable man. A bit morose, perhaps and haughty. But this may be merely a first impression.' And he is ' . . . an extremely worthy man. . . a practical man . . . (but) a little bit vain and enjoys having people listen to him'. (And,) 'of course, love is not especially involved, either on her side or his.' (p. 44)

There is more of the same, making it clear that Luzhin is really a grasping, self-centered prig whom Dunia is only considering because of the family's financial straits. Just in case Raskolnikov hasn't gotten the message, his mother includes the following information: Luzhin says that he wishes to marry

'An honorable girl who had no dowry and who knew what it was like to be poor; for, as he explained, a husband should not be obliged to his wife for anything, since it is much better the other way around, if the wife considers the husband her benefactor.' (p. 45)

Luzhin is, in other words, a crass version of the type who uses obligation and indebtedness, for whom this sort of control takes

the place of love. The mother has just been controlling Raskolnikov with guilt, and we have seen his rage at the maternal figures -- the landlady, the pawnbroker -- to whom he feels indebted. What the mother's letter conveys, in its indirect way, is that she and Dunia are sacrificing themselves for Raskolnikov.

Love her as she loves you; and know that she loves you infinitely more than she loves herself. She is an angel; but you, Rodia, you are all we have -- all our desire and all our hope. (p. 47)

As Raskolnikov says later, in reference to his mother and sister's efforts to sacrifice themselves for him:

She's (Dunia) a proud one! Refuses to admit she wants to play the benefactress! Oh what low characters! They even love as though they were hating, oh how I hate them all! (p. 231)

His mother's letter arouses strong and conflicting feelings: hope for closeness and love, frustration and rage, guilt and unworthiness. Yet the letter is so mystifying that Raskolnikov cannot consciously focus these reactions; the feelings of oppression and rage are quickly displaced away from her. At first, he cries when reading the letter, then becomes angry; his heart pounds and his thoughts are confused:

He felt it grow close and stuffy in that little yellow room so much like a chest or cupboard. . . . His mother's letter made him suffer. About the most important point . . . he had no doubt at all. . . . "As long as I'm alive this marriage will not take

place, Mr. Luzhin can go to hell!" (p. 48)

The oppressive feeling her letter creates in him is projected onto his physical surroundings -- his room -- and the rage that rightfully belongs to her is shifted to Luzhin. He is a suitable candidate, of course, since the mother describes him as someone who controls others by keeping them obligated and in debt. Throughout is the theme of exploiter and victims. Those without (here it is money) are controlled and victimized by those who have -- Dunia by the Svidrigailovs and, if the marriage takes place, by Luzhin, the mother herself by her creditors and, of course, Raskolnikov by all those to whom he is indebted. The rage engendered by this is about to explode, and first does so in a dream of extreme violence.

Raskolnikov dreams that he is a small boy walking with his father in the country. They pass a tavern overflowing with drunken, rowdy peasants, led by Mikolka, owner of a large wagon that is hitched to an aged, skinny, sorrel mare. At Mikolka's urging a group piles in the wagon and he begins to beat the mare, though it is obvious she cannot even move the heavily loaded wagon from its tracks. The more he beats her, and the less able she is to pull, the more enraged he becomes until he finally, with a shaft and then a crowbar, smashes her to death in a violent frenzy. To the protests of onlookers he yells "my property"; his ownership of the mare entitles him to kill her, she is old and useless anyway. The boy Raskolnikov in the dream is horrified, he makes futile efforts to help, flings himself at Mikolka and embraces the dead mare, kissing her on the eyes and mouth. Raskolnikov wakes from the dream and immediately knows its connection with his project.

‘God’ he exclaimed. ‘Will I really? Will I really take the ax, will I really hit her on the head, split open her skull, will I really slip in the sticky warm blood, break open the lock, steal, and shiver and hide, all bloody with the ax, Good Lord, will I really?’
(p. 67)

In Raskolnikov's own "interpretation" he sees himself as Mikolka, the dream portraying his plan to kill the aged and useless old woman. In the image of Mikolka, the rage is laid bare, stripped of its intellectual justifications. But we can add additional interpretations. Since a dream arises entirely from the mind of the dreamer, its different characters and emotions can represent different sides of his personality. Raskolnikov is not only the angry attacker, he is also the innocent young boy who loves the maternal figure and is horrified at the violence visited upon her. And he is, as well, the victim, the beaten old mare, for we have seen several other examples of his identification with those treated unjustly. Indeed, it is precisely this sense of the unfairness of life that fuels his rage.

While these different meanings are all present in the dream, Raskolnikov's first reaction recognizes its active, emotional core. He has been impelled along a single road from the outset of the novel: money owed the landlady and the pawnbroker; anger at those who have and to whom he is indebted; the guilt-inducing letter from his mother, with the anger immediately displaced; the dream in which the anger explodes at a useless old nag; and now, he is ready to put his project into action.

The dream has revealed his own motives to him. At first, he tries to convince himself that he won't go through with it, but he has become "superstitious"; that is, he allows external events to move him along the path of his own unconscious intentions. He overhears some students discussing the pawnbroker and her sister, and also hears that Lizavetta will be out of the apartment at a specific time, and this tips the balance, he will carry out his project.

He sneaks out of his room, hides an ax under his coat, enters the pawnbroker's apartment with a phony item to pawn and, while she examines it, brings the ax down on her head. He strikes her twice more and, as her blood gushes out, takes her keys and goes searching for her money and pledges. As he is stuffing his pockets he hears someone enter the apartment, runs back and finds Lizavetta staring at her murdered sister. She backs away from him, hardly raising her arms or protesting as he splits her head with the ax. The two women make sharply different impressions on him. The old pawnbroker is hostile, suspicious and only grudgingly lets him into her apartment; as he hits her she appears physically repulsive, with greasy hair in a rat's-tail plait. Lizavetta is all innocence, she barely protests as he moves to kill her, her posture is almost receptive.

Having killed the second woman, panic and disgust overtake him. He cannot go back for the rest of the money or jewelry, his thoughts are confused, he becomes obsessed with washing the blood off the ax, his hands and clothes, and he thinks of escape. He was only marginally in control of himself to begin with and this second, unexpected, murder has tipped the precarious inner balance toward fear

and guilt. Two men approach the apartment and he hides inside the door as they bang and shout for the old lady. They leave, he makes his escape and returns to his room in a terrible state. Even before the crime, on his way to the pawnbroker's, the thought had flashed through his mind that he was being led to his own execution. Now, the crime has been committed and the punishment begins.

Guilt, The First Phase

Having killed the two women, Raskolnikov returns to his room and collapses in a feverish delirium. For the next few days he is powerfully torn in two opposing directions. There is the wish to confess, get it over with, give in and not have to bear his guilt and isolation. And there is the impulse to mock authority, his rage and pride at having gotten away with it. The impulse to confess appears as both a conscious wish and as a variety of unconscious acts which betray his guilt. Dostoevsky was aware of how a person can unconsciously seek punishment for his crime; he anticipated what Freud later called "criminality from a sense of guilt."

Both sides of Raskolnikov's state are revealed by the incidents at the police station. He is summoned because of the money he owes the landlady and he both argues with the officials and courts their favor. Then, hearing them discuss the murders, he faints, drawing suspicion to himself. Yet, later, he swings to the other extreme.

'Damn it all!' he thought suddenly in a fit of boundless rage. . . 'How I lied today, how I humiliated myself! How nastily

I fawned and played up to the bastard Ilia Petrovich (the police assistant superintendent) awhile ago. That's dumb, too! To hell with them all, I don't care.' (p. 114-115)

This raging, prideful state causes him initially to reject the concern of his friend Razumikhin. And it finds a suitable target in Luzhin when he visits Raskolnikov in his room. He provokes an argument over Luzhin's theories of "enlightened" self-interest.

'What are you worried about?' Raskolnikov unexpectedly broke in.

'All this fits in with your theory!'

'What do you mean it fits in with my theory?'

'If you took what you were preaching a little while ago to its logical conclusion, it would turn out people can be done away with. . .'
Raskolnikov lay there, face pale, breathing hard, upper lip quivering.
(p. 156)

He rages on at Luzhin over the latter's wish to control Dunia, to "lord it over her and remind her she's in your debt." Of course it is Raskolnikov who has "done away" with people, and precisely those to whom he is in debt.

His wish to confess and guilt are as strong as his rage: both drive him along a vacillating course. He meets a police clerk in a tavern and makes a mocking-hostile confession to his face, then pretends it was a joke. He returns to the scene of the murders, rings the bell and talks to the workman who are repairing the apartment. He even asks them about the blood that was on the floor. As in the

police station, he draws suspicion to himself and, as he leaves, seems on the brink of turning himself in. It is then that he comes upon Marmeladov who has been run over by the horse and carriage.

Though some readers may see his encounter with the dying Marmeladov as merely a clumsy device to keep the plot going, it has, I think, a much deeper significance. Marmeladov represents Raskolnikov's masochistic side, and his death symbolizes the logical end of this course. It is a reminder to Raskolnikov of the danger of "confessing," of giving in to his guilt. He emerges from the Marmeladov family scene with a new will to live, and with hope for rebirth in a relationship with a different kind of woman. But it will take some time for this to happen. His mother and sister make their appearance and, again, he faints from guilt. Why? Clearly they remind him of who he has killed -- and who he still feels like killing -- though his rage at his mother remains unconscious.

Raskolnikov's vacillation between pride and guilt -- between angry isolation and the wish to confess and rejoin humanity -- continues for a very long time. Indeed, more than half the novel is taken up with this protracted struggle; it is only at the very end that he makes the decisive move back into life. In my account so far I have kept to the chronology of the novel. I will depart from this format now and trace Raskolnikov's struggle as it appears in four relationships -- with his mother, Porfiry Petrovich, Svidrigailov and Sonia -- each followed to their conclusion. Each of these characters represents, either in himself or in relation to Raskolnikov, a possible solution to his conflict. They all come to know of his crime

and he seeks something from each: love, forgiveness, a model, cure, rebirth. If we again use the analogy of the novel as psychoanalysis, we can view the playing out of these four dramatic lines as the exploration of different therapeutic approaches to Raskolnikov's dilemma. As we will see, only one -- that embodied in Sonia -- will succeed.

Mother

We have already gotten some sense of the mother from her long letter to Raskolnikov, a letter which "made him suffer" and aroused his rage at Luzhin. Mother and Dunia arrive in Petersburg and Raskolnikov comes upon them in his apartment.

He did not know why they had been the last people in the world he had expected, why he had never thought of them, although twice that day he had received news that they were on their way and would be there at any moment. (p. 195)

This is another of Dostoevsky's marvelous psychological touches: Raskolnikov's mother is blotted out of his mind which is filled, instead, with her split-off replacements: the landlady, the pawnbroker, Katherine Marmeladov. Suddenly to encounter her is most threatening. Mother and Dunia fling themselves on him with joy, "yet he stood there as one dead. A sudden intolerable awareness struck him like a thunderbolt. And he could not even lift his arms to embrace them." (p. 196) He faints and, when he is revived, sends them away. When mother expresses concern he responds "Don't torment me. . . . I can't stand it, I can't stand it. . . . Don't torment me! Enough.

Go away, I can't stand it!" (p. 197). This is plain enough talk, though everyone is only too eager to attribute it to his "illness." He delays them long enough to express his anger at the Luzhin affair before they leave this meeting with the son and brother they have not seen for three years.

What is it about his mother that Raskolnikov finds so tormenting, that arouses a rage so powerful it leads to murder? As we have seen, she is continually putting him in a guilty position, letting him know of her love and self-sacrifice. This arouses anger that he finds difficult to express directly, especially since she so readily weeps and becomes sick. Her arousal of anger and guilt accounts for part of what Raskolnikov feels but is not sufficient to account for his powerful rage. Its deeper source is to be found, I believe, in her total inability to see him as himself; to respond to him as the living person he is. She has an idealized version of him -- he is "their everything, all their wishes, all their hope"; he is brilliant, has a great career before him, is beautiful -- and she clings to this image with great tenacity. Her idealization is one source of Raskolnikov's own grandiosity, of course, it puffs up his sense of himself. But since it is not based on a realistic assessment, it must lead to disappointment and frustration.⁴

Here are some examples of the mother's unrealistic idealization. Raskolnikov has driven her and Dunia from his apartment, displayed his wrath over the Luzhin affair and insulted his sister; he then makes a small gesture of reconciliation to Dunia:

"And how well he brings it off" his mother thought to herself. "What

noble impulses he has. How simply and delicately he ended the whole misunderstanding of yesterday . . . what beautiful eyes he has, and how beautiful his whole face is! (p. 224)

And, later, after he tells her he has given away her money to the Marmeladov family:

‘Enough, Rodia. I’m convinced that everything -- everything you do -- is excellent!’ his mother said, over-joyed.

‘Don’t be too sure;’ he answered, twisting his mouth into a smile. (p. 226)

Her idealization of him shows the hollowness of her love. She cannot respond to Raskolnikov, only to her own image, and her continued attempts to define his character as pure, virtuous and without anger is a gross distortion of reality, the reality of his refusal to work, his self-induced poverty and dishevelment, and his obvious anger. The more she persists in this sort of "love," the more frustrated he becomes. His anger -- the irritability and outbursts as well as the murders themselves -- is an effort to break out of her false and oppressive definition of him. It is a communication to her, to Dunia and Sonia, and to the world: "This is how I really am, filled with rage, a murderer. Can you still love me now?" He needs a mother who will see him as he really is, not as a purified ideal, and the impulsion to confess is a search for such an empathic-accepting figure.⁵

The mother's lack of empathy, her inability to see people as they are, is portrayed in several additional ways. She is naive, trusting and always ready -- on the surface -- to think well of others. But her naiveté shields an unconscious blindness which places her children in destructive situations. She is taken with Luzhin -- a man of wealth and respectable appearance -- and supports his marriage to Dunia. There is plenty of evidence that reveals Luzhin's unsavory intentions but mother doesn't want to see this until Dunia, Raskolnikov and Razumikhin force her too. Her response to Sonia shows another side of this same trend, for Sonia is disreputable on the outside but virtuous within. She functions in the novel as a touchstone of the perceptiveness of the other characters: which of them can see her real worth beneath her "degraded" appearance. The mother's first reaction to Sonia is hostile: "I have a premonition, Dunia. Believe it or not, as soon as she came in I thought -- here we have what's behind it all." (p. 239) As with Luzhin, the mother has great difficulty in seeing the person beneath the appearance.

The destruction brought about by a mother who is fixated on appearance -- who cannot see the members of her family as real and complete people -- is exemplified by Katherine Marmeladov. All the Marmeladov's are exaggerated versions of the characters and conflicts in the central plot and Katherine serves, in this way, as a commentary on Raskolnikov's mother. Both mothers are initially taken in by Luzhin and both are ready to turn against Sonia. Katherine's obsession with social standing, and her unrealistic idealization of her father and first husband, are central to her sadomasochistic

struggles with Marmeladov. As she becomes sicker and crazier, these qualities become more extreme and her final madness and death display the full tragedy of her inability to see others, and herself, as they are. Her dying words -- "Enough! It's time! Goodbye you poor thing (to Sonia). They've finished off the old nag! She's overstrai-- overstrained!" (p. 421) -- tie her to Raskolnikov's dream in which the old mare is beaten to death, to the murders, and back to his mother, who, like Katherine, is destined to go mad and die in a closely related way.

Raskolnikov goes to see his mother a last time before turning himself over to the police. At this point, his secret is out: he has confessed to Sonia, Svidrigailov has overheard the confession and passed it on to Dunia, and Porfiry has guessed it. He seeks his mother's acceptance and she has been exposed to enough to sense what has occurred. Yet the possibility of really knowing him drives her to ever more frantic idealizations. She has read his article in which murder is justified for "extraordinary men":

'I may be stupid, Rodia, but I can tell that you will soon be one of the top people in our learned world, maybe the very top. And they dared to think you were mad.' (p. 494)

He tries to tell her what is really going on in his life:

'No matter what had happened, Mama dear, no matter what you had heard about me, what people said to you about me -- would you still love me as you do now?' He asked this all of a sudden, as if it flowed out of him, as if not thinking about his words or weighing

them.

And here is her reply:

"Rodia, what's wrong with you, Rodia? How can you even ask such questions! Who is going to say anything to me about you? Anyway, whoever came to me, I wouldn't believe anybody -- I'd simply chase them away." (p. 495)

She must turn away from reality, she cannot see either his anger or his pain. No wonder that, a bit further on, we find him thinking, "Enough, Mama dear" Raskolnikov said, regretting deeply that he had decided to come." (p. 497)

The mother must maintain her idealized image of Raskolnikov to the very last and the increased distortion of reality that this requires is precisely what characterizes her final madness. He has been tried, convicted and sent to Siberia and Dunia and Razumikhin -- aware of the mother's inability to deal with this -- attempt to shield her from the truth. She develops a ". . . rather peculiar mental derangement." (p. 515) While there is, by now, abundant evidence -- including his unexplained absence and the lack of letters that she always depended on -- to suggest that something has gone seriously wrong, she pretends that all is well. She carries on to one and all about her son's many accomplishments, sleeps with a copy of his article under her pillow and stops strangers in the street to boast of his brilliant future career. Her contact with reality increasingly slips away until she finally becomes convinced of his imminent return:

After an alarming day given to fantasies, happy delusions, and tears, she took sick . . . within two weeks she died. In her delirium she uttered words indicating she surmised more about her son's awful fate than they had suspected. (p. 518)

One might say that she died rather than face the reality of her son's rage and pain.

Porfiry

Porfiry Petrovich is the police investigator, charged with uncovering evidence and apprehending the murderer. As a criminal investigator he is very much the psychologist; he relies on his understanding of the subtleties of human motivation and his interviews with Raskolnikov are clever games: mixtures of philosophical discussion, indirect probing, teasing and confrontations, all of which Raskolnikov finds most unsettling. Porfiry is far from a typical policeman; he is Razumikhin's cousin, hence partly family and friend, and there is "something almost maternal" about him. In a final interview, he tells Raskolnikov he knows he is the murderer and could arrest him, yet, even at this point, he shows sympathy, gives him time and helpful advice. Despite these softening qualities, Raskolnikov experiences him as a mocking-accusing figure; Porfiry arouses fear and anger as he strips bare Raskolnikov's secrets and rationalizations.

In their long first interview, Porfiry reveals his familiarity with Raskolnikov's article "On Crime." This is the article in which the theory is put forth that certain "extraordinary" individuals, like Napoleon, are morally justified in overstepping the boundaries of law

on the way to their great deeds. Porfiry pushes and prods Raskolnikov as they discuss this theory and even asks whether:

'You thought yourself -- well, just a little bit, now, you know -- one of those "extraordinary" men, somebody who has a new word to say . . . And if that were so, you might have decided yourself, well, in view of the setbacks and limitations in your day-to-day life, maybe even to hurry mankind progressively along a bit, to transgress an obstacle? Let's say, for example, to murder or to rob?' (p. 262)

In the interview, such probing both puts Raskolnikov on guard and arouses his anger. He tries to cover his tracks and fears Porfiry will find him out. But there is a deeper source for his fear. Porfiry, the student of motivation, concentrates on Raskolnikov's psychological defenses, particularly the extraordinary man theory which serves as intellectual justification for the crime. This theory is Raskolnikov's grandiose defense against profound feelings of inferiority, as seen in his preoccupation with whether he is a Napoleon or a louse, whether he is a great man or a worthless, dependent bloodsucker. In justifying the crime he has tried to convince himself that the pawnbroker is a louse and his actions worthy of Napoleon. In other words, Porfiry upsets Raskolnikov both by guessing that he has committed the crime and by ridiculing his pretensions to greatness. It is the second -- the attack on his great man theory -- that is most unsettling, that tips Raskolnikov's inner balance back towards inferiority. Indeed, the effect of the interview is a breakthrough of terrifying feelings of guilt and helplessness,

and a profound distortion of his sense of reality. We see this shortly after the meeting with Porfiry, when Raskolnikov encounters an artisan on the street -- we can't tell whether this is a hallucination or not -- who calls him "murderer!" He returns to his room and falls into one of those states of semi-delirious free-association and dreaming and it is here that we see his grandiosity break apart.

'No, such people (Napoleon) aren't made like that. The real master to whom all is permitted. . . . No, it's clear, such people are made of bronze, not flesh and blood. . . . Napoleon, the pyramids, Waterloo -- and that vile, skinny clerk's widow, that wizened old bag, the pawnbroker woman with the red trunk under her bed -- well, how could even Porfiry Petrovich make a stew of that one! Would Napoleon sneak up to an old bag like that along her bed! Oh, hell! The old bag's rubbish!' he thought heatedly and impetuously. 'She may even have been a mistake; anyway, she's beside the point! The old woman was only a disease I wanted to step over as quick as I could. . . . All I could do was kill. Couldn't even do that it would seem. . . . I'm an esthetic louse and nothing more,' he added suddenly and laughed like a madman. 'Yes, I'm really a louse', he went on. He fastened on the thought, reveling in it, playing and picking at it for comfort. . . . 'And so, I am decisively a louse,' he added, grinding his teeth, "because I am myself nastier and fouler than the louse that was killed. . . . Oh, not for anything, not for anything, shall I ever forgive that old hag! . . . My mother, my sister, how much I loved them! Why do I hate them now? Yes, I hate them. . . . Oh, how I hate that old hag (the pawnbroker) now!

If she came to, I think I'd kill her again! Poor Lizavetta! Why did she have to turn up at that point! Strange though, wonder why I almost don't think of her, as if I hadn't killed her at all? Lizaveta, Sonia! Poor creatures . . . they give everything away, they look out meekly and gently, Sonia, Sonia! Gentle Sonia!'

(p. 271-2)

He passes directly from this state of delirium into a dream. In the dream, he returns to the scene of the crime, finds the old hag in a chair, and again smashes her head with the ax. But his blows have no effect; she sits silently laughing at him and the room fills with people, laughing and staring as he is unable to move.

In these remarkable passages Dostoevsky shows us what lies beneath Raskolnikov's grandiosity, beneath his philosophical preoccupations and theories. He has tried to get rid of his own sense of guilt and helplessness by projecting them onto the pawnbroker: she is the louse and he will rid the world of her. His inner rage will be justified, he will be a great man. But, -- as is inevitable when action is based on projection and splitting -- it doesn't work. He still feels a louse, guiltier than ever for having openly expressed his rage. What is more, he has killed an innocent woman -- Lizavetta, a loving figure -- along with the hated "old hag." And his delirious associations even link the murderous rage directly to his mother and sister. Porfiry's attack on his grandiosity brings Raskolnikov's identification with victims -- "I am myself nastier and fowler than the louse that was killed" -- to the surface. His fantasy of being a great man to whom "everything is permitted" expresses a wish for

complete emotional autonomy, but an awareness of his actual state -- the sordid, sloppy murder with blood and dirt everywhere, his isolation in a filthy cramped room -- make him feel anything but great.

The dream that follows the delirium shows that the breakdown of defense, with all his hatred unleashed, has not produced any sense of relief: he remains as angry as ever. Killing the split-off bad mother is useless; it intensifies guilt and helplessness, as portrayed by the mocking laughter and his ineffective actions. And there is the additional danger, one kills the innocent-loving mother in the process. This is one of the rare times that Raskolnikov even thinks about his murder of Lizavetta. The delirium ends, as have related states, with his hope for a way out: a connection with Sonia, the loving woman who gives freely.

In their later interviews, Porfiry makes it more and more plain to Raskolnikov that he knows he is the murderer. To Raskolnikov's challenge that he arrest him, Porfiry responds that he prefers to let him run loose and be done in by his own guilt. In any case, there is nowhere to run to:

Not just that he isn't going to get away from me -- he has no place to get away to. Psychologically he won't get away from me. (p. 332)

Porfiry's message here, like that of the dream, is that Raskolnikov cannot get away with the crime, even if the police cannot prove he did it, because his guilt is within. He ends their final

interview by urging Raskolnikov to confess, to own up to what he has done, take his punishment and go on living.

Raskolnikov's reacts to Porfiry with suspicion, fear and mounting rage. As he approaches their second meeting

He suddenly felt he was trembling and he seethed with indignation at the thought that he was terrified before the prospect of confronting the odious Porfiry Petrovich. He felt the most terrible thing of all was having to meet this man again. He hated him without measure, infinitely, and even feared he might somehow give himself away through this very hatred. (p. 325)

Why does Porfiry provoke such fear and rage? Again, I think an analogy with psychoanalytic therapy is useful. Porfiry is like an old-style psychoanalyst who knows the patient's secret and strips away his defenses so that the unconscious material is revealed. In one sense he is effective, his tactics break Raskolnikov down and the unconscious material -- his identification with victims and feelings of inferiority -- bursts forth. But it is not "insight" that the patient can use, it is too frightening, too overwhelming and, most important, the process by which the insight was achieved feels like an attack. While Porfiry is correct in his understanding of Raskolnikov, and while he urges the course that Raskolnikov will ultimately take, Raskolnikov cannot hear or accept what he says because of the nature of the relationship, the form in which it is presented. If Raskolnikov is to confess and rejoin humanity it will be in a context of empathy and acceptance, not one of exposure and forced insight.

The Svidrigailov "Dream"

Raskolnikov awakens from the frightening dream in which he is trying, ineffectually, to kill the old woman:

Strange, though. The dream seemed still to be going on. His door was wide open, and a man he didn't know at all stood on the threshold and was examining him intensely. (p. 275)

Thus does Svidrigailov emerge out of Raskolnikov's dream, a representation of one side of his personality. Other characters in the novel can be seen as aspects of Raskolnikov -- Marmeladov his masochistic side, Porfiry his accusing conscience -- but Svidrigailov is the most explicit "double;" he floats into the action as if he is a part of Raskolnikov's mind. There are, of course, a number of explicit connections between them. Svidrigailov was deeply in debt and was bought out of prison by his wife who has a hold of indebtedness over him similar to the pawnbroker's (landlady's, mother's) hold on Raskolnikov. The wife's death is attributed to a beating administered by Svidrigailov and, when Raskolnikov has just dreamed of the woman he beat to death, Svidrigailov tells of being visited by his wife's ghost. Svidrigailov uses the money from his wife's estate to help the needy -- he saves the Marmeladov orphans and Sonia -- thus carrying out what Raskolnikov intended to do with the pawnbroker's money. They are both aware of their connection; when Svidrigailov tells of being visited by his wife's ghost, Raskolnikov comments

"Why was it I thought something like this was happening to you?"

Raskolnikov said this suddenly, astonished that he said it.

He was quite excited.

"You don't say? That's what you thought?" Svidrigailov asked in surprise. "Really? Well, didn't I tell you we had a certain something in common, ah?" (p. 282-3)

When Raskolnikov makes his confession to Sonia, Svidrigailov is conveniently positioned behind a door, listening. On the face of it, this seems a cumbersome plot device but, if we think of Svidrigailov as another aspect of Raskolnikov -- as another self living in his mind -- then "overhearing" the confession is less contrived. As Svidrigailov notes later "when I said we were berries from the same field, wasn't I right?" (p. 285)

Many commentators on the novel have seen Svidrigailov as a split-off part of Raskolnikov, and this seems to have been Dostoevsky's intention. But what, exactly, does Svidrigailov represent? Here, things became more complex. In The Notebooks Dostoevsky says:

Svidrigailov knows mysterious terrors about himself which he doesn't relate to anyone, but which are revealed by the facts: This is a convulsive and bestial need to tear apart and to kill, coldly passionate. Animal. Tiger. (p. 198)

Raskolnikov aspires to be a "bronze man," a Napoleon whose actions are not constrained by the fears and weaknesses of those made of flesh and blood and Svidrigailov is meant to be such a creature. He is not so much immoral as he is amoral, he has no conscience, feels no guilt,

all acts are of equal value — or lack of value — to him. He is rumored to have killed, we see his lust, yet he is charming and altruistic — more effectively so than the "moral" and guilt-ridden Raskolnikov.

In these ways he functions as a representation of impulse unchecked by morality, as a man without God. Svidrigailov's boredom, his inability to find any meaning in life, and his eventual suicide are counterposed with Raskolnikov's guilty struggle and eventual confession. The attraction to Svidrigailov represents an alternative to the confession and reunion with the moral universe that Sonia stands for.

It was either her (Sonia's) way or Svidrigailov's. At the moment especially, he was in no shape to see her. No, it was better to try Svidrigailov, wasn't it? What was he up to? Within himself he could not help realizing that he really had needed Svidrigailov for some reason for a long time. (p. 447)

Just as Marmeladov runs out the possibilities of dependence and masochism to their end, so Svidrigailov plays out the drama of amorality and self-indulgence. This is what Dostoevsky intended, it is how most critics have viewed Svidrigailov, and it states part of the truth. Yet, more than any other character in the novel, Svidrigailov takes on a life of his own. While Dostoevsky may have originally meant him to serve only as a symbol of general amorality — ". . . bestial need to tear apart and to kill, coldly passionate. Animal. Tiger" — he is not actually characterized by such raw and

pandemic violence. Indeed, as we learn more about him, it becomes questionable just how violent he has been: his wife may have enjoyed the few switches he gave her, Dunia, who was in the household, reports that he never beat anyone. What, then, constitutes his immorality? Sexual depravity: as more is revealed about him, it becomes clear that Svidrigailov is a Don Juan, an expert at the seduction of women and that he has a particular sexual perversion: he is drawn to young girls.⁶ It is of great interest, in my view, that of all the possible forms of criminal, illegal, and immoral activity, it is this specific sexual perversion that emerges at the heart of his character. It is of great interest because it can be explained by -- and helps explain, in turn -- the dynamics of Raskolnikov.

Svidrigailov's sexual activity expresses another version of Raskolnikov's unconscious conflicts: the need for maternal love, the hatred associated with its frustration, and the taking of revenge on women. Svidrigailov is driven by the same forces as is Raskolnikov and his fate reveals why he, like Marmeladov, is ultimately a false trail; the path he represents cannot be a solution for the underlying conflicts that he and Raskolnikov share.

Svidrigailov is all sexual license and Raskolnikov all sexual repression. Raskolnikov is young and attractive yet at no point in the novel does he show the least sexual or romantic interest in women. His engagement to the landlady's sickly daughter and his attraction to Sonia are both devoid of sexuality -- he seeks a child-like innocence in these victimized women. Such an absence of normal romantic interest -- Razumikhin is, again, a healthy contrast -- suggests an

inhibition with a powerful unconscious source. Raskolnikov is blocked from the direct experience of desire and this inhibition can be traced to the conflict between early need and rage. He is not inhibited because he feels guilty about sex per se (the sort of conflict that would arise from a later -- Oedipal -- level of development). He is cut off from sexual feeling in the same way, and for the same reasons, that he is cut off from all life-related emotions.

Svidrigailov, in contrast, seems to have no sexual inhibitions whatsoever. As a double, he expresses what is missing in Raskolnikov. But, again, his sexual depravity is not a general, amoral sinfulness, it takes a specific form. In their last long encounter this form is revealed. Svidrigailov tells of coming to Petersburg in search of women: sex is all that can give a spark of interest to his life. During the years of his marriage, he and his wife had an understanding: he had a free hand with the young servant girls as long as he told her what he was doing. Dunia, then governess in the house and, like Raskolnikov, "terribly chaste -- to an unheard-of degree . . . perhaps to the point of morbidity" (p. 458) is appalled by Svidrigailov's pursuit of the servants and attempts to reform him. Experienced Don Juan that he is, he lets her try, sensing that her heated sermons and moral passion, may lead to other forms of passion and heat. He almost succeeds in this seduction, but his lust is too strong, he gives himself away and she turns on him in anger. Her rejection inflames him all the more, now he must have her.

Lest there is any doubt about his proclivity for young girls, he tells Raskolnikov of his proposed marriage to a girl not yet

sixteen:

'an unopened bud, and she colors, and blushes like the dawn . . . I don't know how you feel about feminine faces; I think these sixteen-year-olds, with their eyes still child like, their modesty, their sweet little tears of shyness -- I think what they have is better than beauty. . . Whenever I go there I take her on my knee at once and I don't let her down. Well she colors up like the dawn, but I keep kissing her.' (p. 462)

To which Raskolnikov, himself drawn to young girls, but only for the most "moral" of purposes, responds, "In brief, this monstrous age difference rouses your lust."

What lies behind Svidrigailov's Don Juanism and the particular need for young girls? From what is known, clinically, about such patterns, and from what we see in the novel, the following hypothesis is suggested. A man who engages in repeated games of seduction has experienced some kind of deprivation, frustration, rejection or humiliation at the hands of women -- most often the mother in childhood -- and now turns things around. He seeks to control them sexually as his mother once controlled him emotionally, obtains the pleasure and gratification, now, that he was denied in the past, and takes his revenge -- expresses his anger -- by playing with women: by lying, seducing and using them. But why young girls? They are children, of course, easy to manipulate, less critical and ready to idolize an older man. But there is more that arises from the two sides of the unconscious conflict. While the seductions serve the

purpose of revenge, there is an identification with the young girls that represents the search for love. Svidrigailov would like to be a sweet and innocent young child who is taken on someone's knee and kissed. Both he and Raskolnikov respond sympathetically to deprived children; they see themselves in these poor victims and their desire to help is both genuine and a wish to provide love for the self they see in the child. Svidrigailov tells Raskolnikov "But I love children, in general. I am very fond of children" and describes how he befriended a penniless thirteen year old girl, rescued her from a situation in which she was almost seduced by an older man (p. 464). Action based on this identification gives some satisfaction to the need for love but it is dangerous: when one goes too far in this direction one can feel too much the victim. There are connotations of helplessness and the anger returns. Playing the seducer is a safer course; it is a compromise in which sexual satisfaction -- if not other forms of affection -- is obtained and anger is expressed. Most important, the seducer remains in control, it is all a game.

But, ultimately, it is an empty game and Svidrigailov has become "bored" to the point of death. His attraction to Dunia has more behind it than just the urge for another conquest; what began as a game of seduction has drawn him closer to real love and, together with her rejection of him, has disrupted the smooth functioning of his Don Juanism. His confrontation with her represents a crucial turning point in his life. He has lured her into his Petersburg apartment and attempts to both seduce her and declare his love and win her affection. He tells her of Raskolnikov's crime -- now all the hidden

immorality is in the open -- and begs and pleads for her love:

'I love you, too, I love you incredibly. Let me kiss the hem of your dress -- let me, please! I can't bear hearing it rustle. . . I'll do anything. I'll do the impossible. Don't you know you are killing me. . . . ' (p.475)

The child-like side of his need for her is apparent here. Like Raskolnikov, he longs for a loving mother-figure. But this is quickly overtaken by rage: he tries to blackmail Dunia with his knowledge of her brother's crime and then is on the verge of raping her; helpless love has turned to a cold, sexual violence. She draws a revolver, fires a shot that grazes his head; he enjoys this: now love and murderous rage are all at play. He asks her to shoot again but she throws the revolver aside. He puts his arm around her, a crisis has been reached.

'Let me go' Dunia said imploringly . . .

He asked softly. . . 'You don't love me?'

Dunia shook her head in the negative.

'And, you could, never?' he whispered in despair.

'Never,' Dunia whispered. (p. 478-9)

A "terrible struggle" takes place within him; he releases her and she leaves the apartment. He takes the revolver and, from that precise moment, we know he will use it on himself. He has approached the genuine love of a woman and come as close as he could to breaking out of his Don Juanism. But it was not close enough and Dunia's

rejection is the final note; he is condemned to never really love or be loved, he has lost hope of ever finding the idealized "good mother," the "positive" to which the seduced or tricked woman is the "negative." He is trapped in the repetitive hell of his perversion.

His final nightmares reveal, with great clarity, both his deepest needs and the failure of his perverted sexuality to satisfy them. He wanders through streets in the rain and finally comes to spend the night in a version of Raskolnikov's room, a "cell so tiny, he could hardly stand up in it," with the familiar shredded yellow wallpaper. The images are of disgust, despair, and loneliness. It is rainy and cold, it feels like the whole city will be flooded and he dreams of vermin running over his body in the cramped and smelly room. He also dreams of a young girl

. . . only fourteen, but her life had been broken and she had destroyed herself, outraged by an offense that had horrified and appalled her childlike sensibility and infused that soul of angelic purity with a sense of undeserved shame, wrenching from her a last despairing cry that went unheard and was brazenly cursed on a dark night in the gloom, in the cold, in the damp thaw, while the wind howled. . . .

(p. 488)

This girl was, apparently, a victim of his lust, an example of innocent love corrupted and destroyed. And then, the final and most significant dream. He is walking in the dark corridors of the hotel and finds a girl of five "in a sopping wet dishrag of a dress, weeping and shivering." She babbles at him about her "mommy"; he gathers she

is the unloved child of a drunken mother, beaten and abandoned. He picks her up, takes her to his room, removes her wet clothes and tucks her snugly in his warm bed. He reproaches himself for having gotten involved, but goes to look at her beneath the covers. She is blissfully asleep. But then her cheeks begin to flush, her lips look hot and burning, she opens her eyes and looks at him provocatively. As he watches, she undergoes a transformation from an innocent, deprived little girl to a shameless voluptuary:

'She was laughing, laughing openly. Something brazen and provocative radiated from that completely childlike face. It was corruption. It was a harlot's face, the brazen face of a venal French whore. . . . There was something infinitely horrible and outrageous in that laughter, in those eyes, in all the lewdness in the child's face. 'What? A five-year-old?' Svidrigailov whispered in genuine horror. 'Oh, you damned!' (p. 491)

He awakens, it is morning; he takes the revolver, leaves the room, goes out and puts a bullet in his head.

How does this final dream help us understand the meaning of Svidrigailov? As in Raskolnikov's dream of the old nag, we must keep in mind that the different characters can all symbolize aspects of the dreamer. Svidrigailov feels like a deprived and abandoned little child -- Dunia's final rejection has confirmed this -- and his deepest wish is to receive the sort of love and care that he first gives to his little-girl-self in the dream. He rescues this victim from a bad mother and gives her loving maternal attention. Seeing her/himself

turn into a whore shows him the other side of himself. He has spent his life seducing young girls and chasing whores, keeping away from his deep desire to receive the love a mother can give to an infant. The dream confronts him with the perverse solution to his deprivations and longings, a confrontation that leaves him disgusted and ashamed. In other words, dreaming of himself as a little girl-whore symbolizes his self-defilement, her mocking laughter represents his own cynical, self-mocking side. Taken together with the failure of his final effort to obtain a woman's love, he is left without hope: only suicide remains.

The possibilities symbolized by Svidrigailov have been played out to their end. The "dream" has run its course and Raskolnikov wanders back on stage:

His clothes were in terrible shape, dirty and shredded and torn from a whole night spent out in the rain. . . . He had spent the whole night alone, God knew where. But at least he had made up his mind. (p. 493)

The path of Svidrigailov has led to death, Raskolnikov is now left with the road that has beckoned him for so long, and which he has been so reluctant to follow: that represented by Sonia.

Sonia: Rebirth

The figure of Sonia, an innocent young woman forced into a life of shame by the troubles in her family, has captured Raskolnikov's attention from very early in the novel. He hears about her during his first encounter with Marmeladov, before the murders,

and later sees her when he leaves her father's deathbed. From the beginning, there is something about her childlike nature and position as a victim that draws him; he imagines her as a solution to his terrible dilemma. Though she exists in his consciousness from very early, he circles warily around, testing her to the very end. Sonia passes all tests, her love and acceptance are steadfast, she is a saint. Indeed, her saintliness makes her quite unreal as a character and has posed a problem for critics. Dostoevsky is clearly capable of creating characters of full-bodied reality, why has he made Sonia one-sided to the point of artificiality? We know from The Notebooks that he deliberately modified her in this direction; in earlier drafts there were suggestions of romance and she was capable of anger, he had her quarreling with Dunia, for example. There is none of this in the final version: no hint of romance or sexuality, Sonia's response to all provocations is resignation, sympathy for the other and understanding.

Sonia is so saintly, so one-sided, because this is precisely what Rasolnikov needs. She offers him a way out of the isolated state in which he is precariously balanced between the need for love and rage. Dostoevsky has created the fantasy of a perfect "therapist" for a person like Raskolnikov. Sonia is a mirror for him, he sees his victimized child-self in her. But she is a mirror that reflects the possibility of a different self, a way other than the angry-guilty path he is on. In the end, Raskolnikov goes over to Sonia's way, he accepts the suffering he has endured and moves past his prideful rage. Having accepted it, he is capable of love, a love not fouled with

indebtedness, anger and guilt.

We must remember that Raskolnikov's reactions to women are dominated by splitting, he feels them to be all bad or all good, all withholding or all giving, all hateful or all loving. He sees Sonia, initially, as the idealized mother figure, she "gives everything away," her love is free and, contrasted to such "bad mothers" as the pawnbroker, Katherine Marmeladov or his actual mother, she never responds in a way that makes him feel guilty. He tests her again and again on this issue, most importantly by confessing to the murder of Lizavetta; he must be absolutely certain that this woman won't make him feel the rageful indebtedness that has pervaded his relations with the other women in his life.

Raskolnikov's first sustained contact with Sonia occurs when she comes to invite him to her father's funeral. Mother and Dunia are there and the whole Luzhin affair has just been aired, with all its machinations and deviousness. Sonia appears as a stark contrast:

he saw a modestly, rather shabbily dressed girl, quite young, still childlike, modest and attractive in manner, with a bright but somewhat cowed face. . . . he suddenly realized that this downtrodden creature was downtrodden to such a degree that he felt sorry for her. She made a frightened move to run away, and something inside him seemed to heave. (p. 234-5)

Immediately, we see his visceral identification with her fear and downtrodden position. Her childlike innocence also strikes him.

Although she was eighteen, she still seemed like a little girl

much younger than her years, almost a child. (p. 237)

She has only come to deliver a message, but Raskolnikov insists on seating her — a prostitute — next to his respectable mother and sister, an incident that Luzhin later tries to use against him. Throughout this meeting, the contrast between Sonia, on the one hand, and Luzhin, mother and Dunia, on the other, is apparent. She is the "criminal," the shameful and degraded one, yet her shame seems like humility. She is modest and possesses the innocence of childhood. The others, outwardly respectable, are scheming, exploitative and dishonest. Raskolnikov is drawn to Sonia for this reason, as well as by his identification with her pain and unhappiness.

They meet next when Raskolnikov goes to her room. He has more or less chosen her as the one he will confess to but, during this visit, he must first test her reactions. Her room, like his, is small, poor and dirty with the same shabby yellow wallpaper. Raskolnikov begins by interrogating her about Katherine, her stepmother. Didn't Katherine beat you, he asks? expecting her to feel anger about her mistreatment and deprivation, as he would in her situation. Sonia says no, she loves Katherine, feels sympathy for her and understands why this unfortunate woman has mistreated her.

A kind of insatiable compassion, if one may put it that way, suddenly etched itself into all the lines of her face. (p. 311)

Though they are in the same position vis-a-vis their mothers, Sonia's reaction is the opposite of his; he can find no anger in her.

He next attempts to try her faith: Katherine will die, Sonia cannot make enough money as a prostitute, the younger children will be forced on the streets. "God will not permit such a horror!" she cries, "He permits others . . . Maybe there's no God at all," Raskolnikov counters. She holds firm and he backs away from his attack: he falls to the floor, kisses her foot, says he is bowing down to "all of suffering humanity" and calls her a "holy fool." His mood shifts again, he berates her for accepting her shame and degradation and asks why she hasn't killed herself. It is clear in all this that he sees himself in Sonia; the struggle he projects onto her is his own. While upset by his attack, her faith does not waver.

Raskolnikov then picks up a bible -- it is Lizavetta's significantly -- and asks Sonia to read the story of Lazarus. The symbolism here is obvious, he is asking her to lead him out of his dead existence; he will be reborn, as Lazarus was, in her love and faith. He tells her he has abandoned his family, that she is all he has, that they must "go together." And now he becomes carried away in his identification with her.

'Haven't you done the same? You, too, have transgressed, you found within yourself you were able to transgress. You laid hands on yourself, you took a life, your own -- what's the difference!. . . If you're alone, you'll go out of your mind, like me. You behave as though you're mad already, so we have to go the same way together. Let's go!' (p. 322)

Sonia doesn't feel all this, though she merely answers "Why? Why are

you like this?" And, "what can be done?" Raskolnikov swings back again and talks of smashing things and gaining power and then takes his leave, vowing to return and tell her who killed Lizavetta. Despite his hints she still does not suspect him; her reaction: "How terribly unhappy he must be."

The connection between Sonia and Lizavetta has been established in these passages; they are both "holy fools," they give everything away, they have the same childlike faith and trust. It is significant that Raskolnikov says he will tell her who killed Lizavetta, rather than the pawnbroker. He is going to reveal his murderous attack on a version of her; this will be the ultimate test of her love and capacity to accept him.

He approaches his confession to Sonia with a jumble of contradictory feelings: he is terribly excited, he will ". . . have to tell her" yet he foresees "his own terrible anguish." And then he feels "helpless and afraid" and wonders "Do I need to tell who killed Lizavetta?" (p. 394) He begins by again trying to provoke her anger. They are fresh from the incident where Luzhin falsely accused Sonia of stealing and Raskolnikov asks her if she doesn't think Luzhin should be done away with. He is posing the question to which his theory led, the theory that rationalized the killing of the pawnbroker. In other words, he is asking Sonia if she, too, doesn't feel the world should be rid of such unscrupulous villains. She responds.

ˆ . . . why do you ask what shouldn't be asked? Why these empty questions? How could it ever depend on my decision? And whoever made me judge of who was to live and who not to live?ˆ (p. 396)

She will not play the angry avenger, even as a game. He feels a flare-up of "bitter hatred" for her, looks and sees the love in her gaze and the ". . . hatred disappeared like a phantom." Now he must confess and he hints more and more directly who the murderer is.

'I must be a great friend of his, since I know,'

Raskolnikov said, looking steadily at her face, as though he no longer had the power to take his eyes away. 'He didn't want to kill this Lizavetta. He killed her accidentally. He wanted to kill the old woman, when she was alone, and he came, and then Lizavetta came in, and he was there, and he killed her. . . can't you guess?' 'N - no' Sonia whispered. . . 'Take a good look.' As soon as he said it another old, familiar sensation suddenly turned his soul to ice: he looked at her, and suddenly he seemed to see in her face the face of Lizavetta. (p. 398)

What we see is not just the confession of the murder but the overcoming of Raskolnikov's splitting; he is confronting a version of the idealized mother with his murderous deed. The dread he feels is what the splitting has served to protect him from, what the infant must feel when it wants to kill the very mother whose love its life depends on.

Sonia's reaction is crucial, of course. She takes his hand, looks him in the eyes

'Enough, Sonia! Don't torture me! he begged.

(And her response) . . . 'Why, why did you take this upon

yourself!" she said in despair. Rising from her knees, she threw her arms around his neck and hugged him very tight. . . .

"How strange you are, Sonia. Embracing me and kissing me after I've told you about that." (And, Sonia) "No, no, there is nobody, there is nobody anywhere in the world now unhappier than you!" . . .

A feeling he had not known for a long time surged into his soul and softened it at once. He did not resist. Two tears started from his lashes. He said almost with hope as he looked at her: "then you won't leave me, Sonia?" (p. 339-400)

The splitting has been bridged, murder and his need for love have been brought together in one relationship, his primitive fear of desertion confronted -- "you won't leave me?" -- and Sonia has responded with acceptance, empathy for his pain, and physical affection.

His confession and her loving acceptance mark the turning point for Raskolnikov. He is not reborn on the spot, there will be more testing, but he has taken a significant new direction. Sonia's skill as a "therapist" continues. Immediately after the confession, Raskolnikov swings back to pride and anger. He runs through a variety of reasons and explanations for the crime but Sonia does not get caught up in any of these intellectualized justifications. Her reactions: ". . . you're in pain, aren't you?"; ". . . it's better I should know -- much better!"; and "Talk, go on, talk! I'll understand, I'll understand it all inside!" (p. 402) Her final message: he must admit to the world he has killed, bow down and kiss the earth he has defiled and then God will send him life again. He

leaves, the Svidrigailov drama is played out, and he comes to her a final time before turning himself in.

In this visit, before Raskolnikov makes his public confession, Sonia's love and the trust he feels for her have the upper hand, though his other reactions are still active. He can even recognize the sadism that he directs toward her.

'Do I love her? Surely I don't? I drove her away like a dog just now. . . . what I wanted was her tears; I wanted to watch her fear; I wanted to see her aching, suffering heart! I had to have something to hang on to, a chance to linger and watch a human being suffer! . . . What a beggar I am, what a nobody! How vile, vile!' (p. 504)

This is an accurate insight, yet the guilt associated with it does not disrupt their connection. Sonia takes two crosses, her's and Lizavetta's and they each put one on. "She's going to be my nursemaid" (p. 503) he thinks. And then, still hesitantly, he goes to kiss the earth and confess to the police.

Raskolnikov's rebirth -- his final emergence from schizoid isolation -- does not occur until he has been in prison for some time. Sonia has accompanied him to Siberia, lives nearby, and visits him whenever possible. In the prison camp, Raskolnikov, both literally and symbolically, lets himself drift toward death. He avoids the other prisoners and they come to dislike him. Their response to Sonia makes a sharp contrast; they recognize her gentle, loving nature and greet her with ". . .you're our tender, aching mother!" Raskolnikov is

silent for days on end, eats little and finally becomes quite sick. During his illness he has a final dream. He dreams that the whole world suffers a plague, everyone except a handful of the chosen are doomed to die. The plague is caused by a new germ that infects the soul as well as the body. Its effects, interestingly enough, are unconscious: those infected consider themselves clever, scientifically correct and above the morality of others. This is the madness caused by these germs of the mind, by these destructive ideas. Once infected, each man believes in his own truth, no one understands anyone else, war, chaos and senseless rage overtake the world, and civilization breaks down in an orgy of self-centered destructiveness.

The dream is a commentary on the ideology behind Raskolnikov's crime; it shows him where he will end if he continues in his withdrawn state, nursing his anger and grievances, trying to exist without human contact. The dream foreshadows the end of this path. That "self," and everything associated with it, has run its course; the way is finally open to a new mode of life. Sonia does not visit him for awhile, due to an illness, and he realizes how much he misses her. He begins to see nature and the people around him in new ways and he lets feelings of hope enter his soul. Sonia returns and he finally experiences the full force of their love for each other

Tears came. They were both pale and thin; yet in those pale, sickly faces there already glowed the light of the renewed future, resurrection to a new life. Love resurrected them; the heart of one contained infinite sources of life for the heart of the other. . . . He knew that he was born again. . .

He could not think very long or steadily about anything that evening or focus his mind on anything; nor did he come to any conscious decision; he had merely become aware. Life replaced logic, and in his consciousness something quite different now had to elaborate and articulate itself. (p. 527-8)

FOOTNOTES

1. This essay is adapted from chapter 2 of a book in progress, tentatively titled Love and Rage: 'Crime and Punishment,' Dostoevsky and a Modern Raskolnikov. The comments of Stuart Ende, N. Katherine Hayles, W. T. Jones, Jay Martin and Randolph Splitter were helpful in preparing this version.

I do not read Russian; my work is based on English translations, both of the novels, and of Dostoevsky's notebooks, letters and other sources. I have attempted to partly remedy this deficiency by working from and comparing four different translations of Crime and Punishment, those of Constance Garnett, Jessie Coulson, David Margarshack and Sidney Monas. All quotations are from the Monas translation.

2. For a sampling of different critical readings of the novel see the collections edited by Gibian (1964); Jackson (1974); Wasiolek (1961) and Wellek (1962). Informed and sensitive readings can be found in Peace (1971) and Wasiolek (1964.) Psychoanalytic interpretations of Dostoevsky begin, of course, with Freud's 1928 essay which does not, however, deal with Crime and Punishment. Increasingly sophisticated and refined interpretation of this novel can be traced from Kanzer's 1948 paper, through Snodgrass (1960) and Wasiolek (1974) to Kiremidjian's sensitive reading (1976.)

The application of psychoanalysis to literature has also

undergone progressive refinement. The most comprehensive discussion can be found in Meredith Skura's excellent Literary Uses of the Psychoanalytic Process. Skura reviews the several ways in which psychoanalysis has been used, concluding with the most sophisticated, that which takes the psychoanalytic process itself as model for the interpretation of literature. One reason her approach represents an advance over so many others is her first-hand knowledge of psychoanalysis, her grasp of both theory and clinical practice. Many attempts to apply psychoanalysis to literature in the past have been flawed by the critic's lack of direct acquaintance with the observations and experiences from which the theory is constructed. Lacking this grounding, the critic easily loses his way, mixing together, for example, interpretations based on a great deal of clinical evidence with theoretical speculations of doubtful validity. Critics are not the only ones prone to this error of course, some psychoanalysts go on repeated dicta, derived from Freud or some other authority, even though their own observations have never confirmed such beliefs. Clinical experience is essential yet it is no guarantee.

3. No one has improved on Freud's original description of masochistic aggression in "Mourning and melancholia":

The self tormenting in melancholia, which is without doubt enjoyable, signifies . . . a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been turned round upon the subject's own self. . . . The

patients usually succeed, by the circuitous path of self-punishment, in taking revenge on the original object and in tormenting their loved one through their illness, having resorted to it in order to avoid the need to express their hostility to him openly. After all, the person who has occasioned the patient's emotional disorder, and on whom his illness is centered, is usually to be found in his immediate environment. (1917 p. 251)'

4. Raskolnikov's reaction to his mother is a classic version of "narcissistic rage" (see Kohut 1972 and 1976 -- especially pps. 90-92 and 120-125.) The rage displayed by persons like this is aroused when a current event evokes an early experience of empathic failure by the mother. In analysis we see this in the transference when we misinterpret or are not in tune with the patient and he reacts to us, in Kohut's terms, "as a nonempathic attacker on the integrity of the self."

Narcissistic rage is primitive and frightening; it easily flips over into guilt, and its expression in analysis -- in contrast to the venting of anger by less disturbed patients -- gives no relief. Quite the contrary, it can threaten the whole analysis. Why is this so? The basic integrity of the self develops in an understanding and empathic relationship with the mother, and serious failures of empathy constitute a threat to the person's very sense of existence. Narcissistic rage is like the anger of a cornered animal who is frightened for its life.

In the novel, we see the repeated empathic failures of Raskolnikov's mother; she is unable to confirm his experience of himself. This is the stimulus, in their relationship as adults, for rage and guilt which are almost always too dangerous to direct at the mother herself. We also see flare-ups of Raskolnikov's rage at various characters who challenge his grandiosity or prick his image of himself.

5. The mother's idealization and unconscious blindness is precisely the kind of distortion of reality that occurs in families which produce schizophrenic children. There is the concern with maintaining a facade of respectability coupled with great anxiety that conflicts within the family will become publically known. Particular, vulnerable children then become caught in the family's defensive distortions. A common example occurs when the normal assertive anger of an adolescent, attempting to define his separate identity, is seen as a threat and his anger repeatedly misdefined: "he doesn't really mean it," "Oh, its nothing." When the frustrations of such distortions lead to ever more extreme outbursts on the part of the child, they are countered by further misdefinitions, until, in the most serious cases, it is labeled "illness" and "madness."

Research on such families provides many examples that are strikingly like those portrayed in the novel, (see: Henry, 1971; Laing and Esterson, 1964; Lidz, 1963; Wynne et. al, 1958.)

6. I am using the term "perversion" in its technical or clinical

sense, where it refers to the acted out version of a specific unconscious conflict. The best account of this sort of unconscious pattern is Robert Stoller's Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred, (1975.) See, also, his Sexual Excitement: Dynamics of Erotic Life (1979.)

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