

# Dismemberment: the necessity of inarticulate memory

**A Dissertation**

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## *Dismemberment: the necessity of inarticulate memory*

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## ***1.0 Introduction: Parricidal wishes, western heroism, and inarticulate memory***

*Repetition and first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as question of the ghost.*<sup>1</sup>

– Jacques Derrida

The parricidal wish has long been attributed with occupying a founding position in the enfoldment of civilization. The subject of ‘wish’ separated from parricide invites a myriad of speculation as to the inexplicable means by which intention can produce causal effects in the psyche and further, in material reality as such. When intention is aligned with parricide, the effect is so egregious that the force produced is substantial enough to span western history in its entirety. In an article entitled “From Myth to Agape,” Slavoj Zizek observes that the ancient hero, Oedipus, acts because he does not know. The early modern hero, Hamlet, knows, therefore he cannot act, and the contemporary hero knows fully well and acts nonetheless.<sup>2</sup> While in the article the contemporary hero remains unnamed, Freud offered a suggestion when he wrote: “It can scarcely be owing to chance that three of the masterpieces of the literature of all time – the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* – should all deal with the same subject, parricide... The naked admission of *intention* to commit parricide, as we arrive at it in analysis, seems intolerable without analytic preparation.”<sup>3</sup> (emphasis added) Derived from the two observations is the suggestion that the modern day hero can be found in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*. In observing this trilogy Zizek places

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx*. trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994 pg. 10

<sup>2</sup> Slavoj Zizek. “From the Myth to Agape” in *Psychomedia*. JEP articles, number 8-9, Winter-Fall 1999 pg. 3

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Collected Papers*, vol 5. trans. Joan Riviere. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1959, pg. 235

emphasis on knowing while Freud underscores the importance of intention. Here, neither knowledge nor intention will be indispensable in the investigation of the death of the father.

This enigmatic trilogy holds more in common than the event of parricide, with the intention behind the act becoming ever more revealed in each incarnation. Along with the growing exposure of the parricidal wish, the subject of mourning and memory is sketched with increasing significance in each text. While Oedipus never mourned his father, Hamlet's cry, "Thrift! Horatio! Thrift!" comes in the face of the abuse of mourning rites, specifically the double use of the funeral meal for the wedding reception: "O God! A beast, that wants discourse of reason, Would have mourned longer."<sup>4</sup> With increasing sordidness, the boorish Fyodor, when he should have been mourning the death of his wife, rapes the deaf mute Lizveta. His breach of the rites of mourning, of a time devoted to a crisis in memory and shown to be marked by ambivalence, engenders the birth of Smerdyakov, the epileptic and illegitimate son that will ultimately perform the parricidal act. Therein, the importance of properly mourning emerges as paramount in the death of the father. Why the dead return is answered by Zizek (following Lacan): "because they were not properly buried, i.e., because something went wrong with their obsequies. The return of the dead is a sign of a disturbance in the symbolic rite, in the process of symbolization; the dead return as collectors of unpaid debts."<sup>5</sup> In this trilogy, the

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<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Zizek writes of this statement, "The key point is here that "thrift" does not designate just an indistinct frugality, but a specific refusal to pay its due to the proper ritual of mourning: thrift (in this case, the double use of food) violates the ritual value, the one that, according to Lacan, Marx neglected in his account of value" Slavoj Zizek. "From the Myth to Agape" in *Psychomedia*. JEP articles, number 8-9, Winter-Fall 1999 pg. 3

<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Zizek. *Looking Awry*. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991 pg. 23

parricidal wish is not the sole complication – ritual (and its handmaiden, memory) surfaces as an additional conspirator in the production of the tragic.

Mourning indicates a crisis in memory, and in turn, complications in memory imply hysteria. Freud utilizes the thread of memory in the three texts to posit a corollary between remembrance and male hysteria. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes of Oedipus, “But, more fortunate than he, we have meanwhile succeeded, in so far as we have not become psychoneurotics, in detaching our sexual impulses from our mothers and in *forgetting* our jealousy of our fathers.”<sup>6</sup>(emphasis added) Memory, or more specifically, a lack thereof, is crucial in the avoidance of neurosis. Freud writes in the same text, “...if anyone is inclined to call him (Hamlet) a hysteric, I can only accept the fact as one that is implied by my interpretation.”<sup>7</sup> In this same section Freud notes that Hamlet was written directly after the death of Shakespeare’s father. This biographical note is paralleled with Freud’s father’s death prior to the writing of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and thus Freud himself is incriminated. Twenty years later Dostoevsky emerges in Freud’s work as the figure of male hysteria *par excellence*, a condition that exceeds him and invests all of his characters. Freud refers in a letter to a friend of, “the unusual violence of Dostoevsky’s case of hysteria.”<sup>8</sup> The death of Dostoevsky’s father is what Freud attributes as having the dominant role in the formation of the writer’s psyche (and subsequent biology).<sup>9</sup> Therein, the mourning of the father as well as the parricidal wish –

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<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. trans and ed. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1972 pg. 296

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pg. 299

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in James L. Rice. *Freud’s Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 116

<sup>9</sup> In Dostoevsky’s instance the incestuous desire for the mother has completely slipped away in Freud’s account of the forming of neurosis.

be it Freud's, Oedipus', Hamlet's or Dostoevsky's – emerge as the issues of primary concern in the construction of heroism in western civilization.

Ambivalence, as well as the crisis in memory, dominates the work of mourning. The text where Freud formulates his thoughts on the correlation between ambivalence and mourning is in *Totem and Taboo*. Freud suggests a pre-cultural society where the father dominates both the mother and a band of brothers. The brother horde, jealous of the father's power and sole access to the mother, collectively kill him. The brother horde's fixation on their father was not vanquished by his murder, rather, the ensuing guilt alongside the euphoria at the success of their plan produced ambivalence, thus intensifying their conflict. Here, as with the other parricidal stories, the unmourned father returns symbolically. Zizek writes that the lesson in *Totem and Taboo* is, "the exact obverse of that of Oedipus; that is to say, here, far from having to deal with the father who intervenes as the Third, the agent who prevents direct contact with the incestuous object (and so sustains the illusion that his annihilation would give us free access to the object), it is the killing of the Father-Thing (the *realization* of the Oedipal wish) which gives rise to symbolic prohibition (the dead father returns as his Name)."<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, the totem meal following the parricide is an attempt to vanquish, or purify, the memory of the death of the father – a ritual dominated by ambivalence. Freud writes,

It is certainly noticeable the ambivalence attached to the father complex also continues in totemism and in religion in general. The religion of totemism included not only manifestations of remorse and attempts at reconciliation, but also serves to commemorate the triumph over the father. The gratification obtained thereby creates the commemorative celebration of the totem

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<sup>10</sup> Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject*. New York and London: Verso, 1999 pg. 315

feast at which the restrictions of subsequent obedience are suspended, and makes it a duty to repeat the crime of parricide through the sacrifice of the totem animal...<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, it is ambivalence itself that is reenacted in the commemoration; a memory of an event dreadful and simultaneously victorious. Subsequent the murder of the father is a dual obligation to forget (the horror of parricide) and to remember (their triumph) through the ritual of the totem meal. Ritual is then seen as suffused with ambivalence in that it contains both dread/euphoria and remembering/forgetting. In Freud's paper *Mourning and Melancholia*, he states that mourning is the process whereby, "each single one of the memories and hopes which bound the libido to the object is brought up and hyper-catheted, and the detachment of the libido from it is accomplished ... The fact is, however, that when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again."<sup>12</sup> He remarks that this process appears 'natural' to us and that it is thought wise to abstain from interfering with its course. However, in the melancholiac, the additional presence of self-debasement is located as in the case of Hamlet. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud writes, "Mourning has a very distinct function to perform, namely, to detach the memories and expectations of the survivors from the dead."<sup>13</sup> In this manner, mourning is nothing less than the process by which the subject retrieves the emotional investment he has imbued the memories of the dead with – a cleansing of memory. This project, however, is complicated by the presence of ambivalence, which robs the subject of a sure position from which to engage in the extraction of emotion.

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<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 187-188

<sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Collected Papers, vol. 4*. trans. Joan Riviere. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1959 pg. 154

<sup>13</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 86-87

The trilogy directly indicates the connection between mourning and purification. The tie between mourning and purification explains the pestilence in Thebes, for, again, Oedipus never mourned his father. While the common interpretation is that the crime of Oedipus is the combination of parricide and incest, I suggest that this does not account for the manner by which Thebes is punished, namely, by widespread lack of cleanliness. The chorus laments, “From the fire and pain of pestilence save us and make us clean.”<sup>14</sup> Oedipus himself is aghast that the King’s murder had been neglected, “Indeed I am surprised that no purification was made, Even without the express command of heaven. The death of so worthy a man, and your King, Should surely have been probed to the utmost.”<sup>15</sup> The breach of purification/mourning is explained by Creon, “The Sphinx with her riddles forced us to turn our attention, From insoluble mysteries to more immediate matters.”<sup>16</sup> The distraction offered by a female questioner, the Sphinx, prompts the desertion of the mourning/purification of the death of the father.<sup>17</sup> The un-cleansed memories are displaced and return in the form of pestilence, abjection, and demand that Oedipus himself be abjected.

Hamlet’s un-mourned father returns as a ghost, a presence linked to abjection in that it troubles the positioning of proper objects. William Beatty Warner writes, “As a trace which eludes the opposition presence/absence, the ghost in its disclosure obeys the

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<sup>14</sup> Sophocles. *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E. F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947 pg. 29

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 32

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 30

<sup>17</sup> See Avital Ronell. *Finitude’s Score*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994 pg. 108-09 “As threshold to all pedagogy, the Sphinx has participated in the acquisition of a feminine trait. Monsterized, as far as pedagogical figurations go, she is interspecial and, like her question, double-meaning.”

logic of the traumatic event: it can have singular self-defining force in this text only because it repeats what rested latent, already half-known and half desired, in Hamlet.”<sup>18</sup> The ghost then, mimics Thebes’ pestilence and serves as the defiling quasi-presence, demanding to be cleansed – symbolically reinstated – through mourning. Freud writes that the emergence of ghosts or demons is directly produced by the ambivalence associated with mourning:

Now it is quite possible that the whole conception of demons was derived from the extremely important relation to the dead. In the further course of human development the ambivalence inherent in this relation then manifested itself by allowing two altogether contrary psychic formations to issue from the same root, namely, the fear of demons and of *ghosts*, and the reverence for ancestors. Nothing testifies so much to the influence of mourning on the origin of belief in demons as the fact that the demons were always taken to be the spirits of persons not long dead. Mourning has a very distinct function to perform, namely, to detach the memories and expectations of the survivors from the dead. When this work is accomplished the grief, and with it the remorse and reproach, lessens, and therefore also the fear of the demons. But the very spirits which at first were feared as demons now serve a friendlier purpose; they are revered ancestors and are appealed to for help in times of distress.<sup>19</sup>

The footnote attached to this passage reads, “In the psychoanalysis of neurotic persons who suffer, or have suffered, in their childhood from the fear of ghosts, it is often not difficult to expose these ghosts as the parents.”<sup>20</sup> In Hamlet it is precisely his father who is the ghost, and his final instruction is to “Remember me!” The problematic of memory in mourning is multifaceted; of what is remembered, of whom, of its accurateness, and

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<sup>18</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare’s Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg 293

<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918. pg. 86-87

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 86-87

not insignificantly, of its timeliness, for the filial duty is nothing if not bound to perpetual memorializing of the father. The common reference to Hamlet's father's ghost instruction to avenge his murder overshadows the true injunction, coming at the end of his speech, "Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, Remember me."<sup>21</sup> To which Hamlet responds "O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?"<sup>22</sup> The ridiculousness of the request is not that, obviously, Hamlet will "what else" remember him. Rather, the absurdity is in that, of course, he will be unable to do so; a point that Avital Ronell makes by observing that Hamlet, during his protestations of "Remember Thee!" nonetheless picks up a tablet and writes down the instructions to insure they are not lost.<sup>23</sup> Warner writes the following in regards to the Ghosts last words:

These words articulate the problem. 'Adieu' announces a departure and a fact of absence; 'remember me' demands that Hamlet's mind and heart stay present to the ghost – but as a memory...A memory is like a ghost – the haunting ghost of the father, that is, something once full and powerful, but now only a trace of its former self. And as a memory trace, it is deposited in proximity to innumerable other traces that have been etched in the mind by time and numberless others the future will bring.<sup>24</sup>

Mourning and memory therefore engender a metonymic hailstorm, spiraling nowhere and with the most egregious of implications, parricide, inextricably present.

The murdered father in *The Brothers Karamazov* again serves as the focal point of the novel's events. However, it is at the novel's end, in a seemingly unrelated portion of

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<sup>21</sup> William Shakespeare. 'Hamlet' in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. London: Magpie Books, 2000 pg. 818

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pg. 818

<sup>23</sup> Unpublished lecture, August 2001

<sup>24</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare's Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 235

the book that Dostoevsky offers a nebulous treatise on the subject of mourning and memory. By exploring the tenuous thread of memory as it traces itself through a sampling of subjects found at the novel's close, "The Speech by the Stone," a hypothesis is produced as to a hitherto largely unexamined portion of the psychic makeup, namely, inarticulate memory. Dostoevsky writes in the closing pages of *The Brothers Karamazov*, of a type of memory that he depicts as possessing the potential to redeem the subject. While the form of memory described by Dostoevsky is not explicitly posed as a dichotomy, one will here be constructed in order to better explicate his final nebulous offering. Simply stated, when "The Speech by the Stone" is extrapolated upon the distinction between concrete, subjectivizing memory and a form of recall that is here being named inarticulate is evidenced.

The forming of the subject, as described by Lacan in the 'mirror stage,' is dependent upon his internalizing of the mirror image; an initial imago which is later called upon – repetitively remembered. The recollection of the coherent body aids in the formation of the necessary fiction of solidity, the component required for the emergence of the ego. Samuel Weber writes, "The jubilant reaction of a child who has recognized its mirror-image is a sign not of the recognition of the subject's identity but of its constitution."<sup>25</sup> However, the thrill of recognition is accompanied by a splitting of the subject who finds himself dislocated – 'me', over there. The body is then repetitively and coherently remembered as its mirror-image, fictive and itself a dismembering, simultaneously splitting and forming the ego. The inherently ambivalent reaction the

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<sup>25</sup> Samuel Weber. *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's dislocation of psychoanalysis*. trans. Michael Levine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990 pg. 12-13

child has to its image, elation at the display of bodily coherence and aggressivity that this coherence is displaced, can be said to be in part due to the nature of image as such.

Weber notes the following about the Lacanian concept of image, "...it depicts not so much by reproducing or representing an object, as by taking it apart, dismantling it.

Nothing can be said to stand *before* the image – its model, for instance – that does not in effect come *after* it, just as the ego comes after the mirror-image and depends upon it.”<sup>26</sup>

The ongoing repetition of re-collecting the body/subject is done in concert with the dismembering of the same said body/subject; and thereby the ego is always already split. Yet, the ambivalence associated with the remembering of the mirror-image is in need of further exploration. For what is remembered is ambivalence itself, which is herein postulated as expressing itself as inarticulateness. Inarticulate memory assumes the guise of vagueness, gently cutting the fiction of coherent subjectivity seamlessly – a subtle fragmentation. The presence of this alienated and alienating aspect of the ego leads to more manifest fantasies of destruction. As Weber writes, “The sense of identity and even of reality that the subject obtains from its ego thus harbors in it the irreality, deception, and non-identity that will take on a variety of (familiar) guises, among which Lacan mentions: phantasies of dismembered bodies, hallucinations of doubles, Hieronymous Bosch’s paintings, and Hans Bellmer’s puppets.”<sup>27</sup>

Other important theoretical works substantiate the presence of internal dissembling operations within the subject, notably Freud’s death drive or death instincts and Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection. A crucial distinction between their work and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pg. 16

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pg. 15-16

what is being posed here is the question of temporality. The death drive and abjection are both primarily concerned with futurity, or presentness, while inarticulate memory invests the present with an indistinguishable past time. In *The Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva's text on abjection, what is abject falls roughly under moral, sanguine or dietary categories and inasmuch memory is not broadly discussed. However, what I pose as an invaluable component of subjectivity, inarticulate memory, can not be firmly distinguished from the abject and is evidenced by looking at Kristeva's own thoughts on memory and abjection. The following is Kristeva's definition of abjection, "what is abject...draws me to the place where meaning collapses...what does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."<sup>28</sup> The abject functions as the underside of the symbolic; it dissembles self itself, drawing one closer to the edge of subjectivity by demonstrating the impossibility for clear-cut borders or a concrete articulation of the body; by indicating the fragility of substratum that subjectivity rests upon. However, abjection is also necessary to the formation of subjectivity, "I expel myself, I abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself...I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit."<sup>29</sup> The threatening of the subject, then, becomes the very activity that defines it. Therein, subjectivity requires a portion of our psyche to be perpetually living in the borderlands between what is 'I' and 'not I'. While what is abject indicates this nether subject within the material present (the body's porosity is indicated by the encounter with blood and feces), inarticulate memory invests the present with an unassumable past. Kristeva writes, "The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-ject, an

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<sup>28</sup> Julia Kristeva. *The Powers of Horror*. New York: Columbia, 1982 pg. 4

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pg. 6

otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire...the abject has only one quality of object – that of being opposed to the I.”<sup>30</sup> Not only does the abject stand in opposition to the I and in fact works at its dismantling, it also always remains in proximity to the I, taunting it. “It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated.”<sup>31</sup>

Kristeva makes several references to the relationship between the abject and memory, or more specifically, to a “boundless bottomless memory.” This passage elucidates the rapport between memory and the abject:

For it is out of such straying on excluded ground that he draws his jouissance. The abject from which he does not cease separating is for him, in short, a land of oblivion that is constantly remembered. Once upon blotted-out time, the abject must have been a magnetized pole of covetousness. But the ashes of oblivion now serve as a screen and reflect aversion, repugnance. The clean and proper (in the sense of incorporated and incorporable) becomes filthy, the sought-after turns into the banished, fascination into shame. Then, forgotten time crops up suddenly and condenses into a flash of lightning an operation that, if it were thought out, would involve bringing together the two opposite terms but, on account of that flash, is discharged like thunder. The time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth.<sup>32</sup>

Here, she conceives that the abject at one time was more openly yearned for, or at least, the subject must have more willingly yielded to the drive for disassembling itself.

However, that the subject “constantly remembers” this land of oblivion indicates a category of memory hinted at though un-discernable. Inasmuch as the subject is never

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pg. 1

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pg. 1

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pg. 8-9

separate from the space of abjection and in fact “constantly remembers” it, so too must there be some concealment – some ashes veiling and reflecting – that renders this memory never recalled. Therein, inarticulate memory is omnipotent – something anterior and at once always occurring – while never fully known or even knowable. It has us in its debt and simultaneously threatens our very extinction. Kristeva indicates abjection’s tether to inarticulate memory when she writes, “Thus, fear having been bracketed, discourse will seem tenable only if it ceaselessly confronts that otherness, a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate: the abject.”<sup>33</sup> She states that this “deep well” of “unapproachable” memory is abject, but offers no further definition. This is perhaps due to that abjection is far more often described by Kristeva as spatial than as temporal (“forgotten time” indicates its temporal component). Memory, opposed to feces, blood, and corpses, is traversed with temporality and differentiates itself from abject matter in that it is ubiquitous and insubstantial. Rather than a stranger, it is a placeless companion and in so does not often need to be abjected and yet is nonetheless abject. What remains is to investigate this “unapproachable and intimate well” and indicate the discourse of this oblivion.

The last instance where Kristeva includes memory in her discussion of the abject is in reference to the sublime. The abject, she writes, is tinged with the sublime:

The sublime object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory. It is such a memory, which, from stopping point to stopping point, remembrance to remembrance, love to love, transfers that object to the refulgent point of the dazzlement in which I stray in order to be. As soon as I

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pg. 6

perceive it, as soon as I name it, the sublime triggers – it has always already triggered – a spree of perceptions and words that expands memory boundlessly. Then I forget...<sup>34</sup>

Inarticulate memory is malleable and mutable, a fluidity of thought that eludes the ability of the subject to conjure back what has gone before. It presents itself in confusion, in inexact reminiscence, and, in the case that is herein most pressing, undefined pathos – precisely what Dostoevsky claimed possesses redemptive ability. Inarticulate memory is juxtaposed against articulate memory, a phenomena that re-consecrates our subjectivity by supplying the necessary fiction of solidity to which we are also infinitely and unendingly indebted to. Articulate memory, from its onset in the ‘mirror stage’, contains its own dismantling in that it rests upon a splitting – hovering always beneath the surface of the mirror image is the uncertainty of inarticulate memory, equally fictive yet without claiming rapport to truth. It reveals our inability to harbor exactitude and in so doing is of the greatest necessities. It is ethical, this subtle breaking of the drive for substantiation. If articulate memory re-substantiates the subject through a re-membering, then inarticulate memory offers a subtle loosening of that artifice, a dis-membering. Inarticulate memory poses a second and opposite end pole to the fully articulated subject – and being occurs in oscillation between the two.

In the Oedipus myth, the oracular prophecy illustrates the first pole, highly articulate memory, instituted by way of a performative speech act. Therein, the trajectory that Žižek posits can be traced in an entirely different light, whereby the problematic of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pg. 12 While it is not a long or very involved discussion, in *Powers of Horror* Kristeva’s utilizes Dostoevsky as a starting point to her work on literature. She writes, “Dostoyevsky has X-rayed sexual, moral, and religious abjection, displaying it as the collapse of paternal laws.” pg. 20

memory grappled within each text slides from one end, articulate memory in Oedipus, to the other, the inarticulate variety suggested in “The Speech by the Stone.” Therein, to explicate the possibility of the existence and necessity of inarticulate memory an inquiry of “The Speech by the Stone” will be conducted as well as questioning the performative speech act in Sophocles’ *King Oedipus*: to the end that an illumination occurs of an obscure corner of subjectivity where memory, childhood, repetition, and mourning meet and suggest an invaluable component of our psyche – inarticulate memory.

## 2.0 Repetition

*Remembering that it is unsatisfactory when a peculiar feature is found singly, let us hasten to add another to it which is even more striking.*<sup>35</sup>

– Sigmund Freud

Memory, articulate or inarticulate, is difficult to conceive of without first considering repetition; to recollect, to bring back what has already gone, plunges the subject into the impossible chasm of repetition. True repetition is not necessarily an altogether accomplishable task; rather, repetition is always indivisible from the creation of difference. To repeat something is to move away from its source – unavoidably creating difference and alterity (*differance*). *Differance* is only perceptible if the originary element is remembered. Therein, repetition is never pure repetition precisely due to memory. Repetition can be seen in the three following categories; firstly as pure and impossible, secondly as *differance*, and thirdly, symbolic repetition as discussed by Freud.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.1 Repetition as Impossible: Kierkegaard

Soren Kierkegaard explicates the predicament of the first type, impossible and pure, in his novella *Repetition*, which links the query of repetition implicitly to memory. In *Repetition*, Kierkegaard's character Constantin Constantius embarks on a project

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<sup>35</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. trans Alan Tyson. ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989 pg. 47

<sup>36</sup> Certainly Nietzsche's eternal recurrence of the same would be in this category yet falls beyond the scope of this study.

designed to see if he is capable of repeating his life.<sup>37</sup> For Constantin, the gesture of repetition is where the chance to escape finitude resides, the hypothesis being that in achieving a reenactment of life's events they can be saved from the jaws of temporality. On his character's journey a conclusion is reached: there is no repetition, or rather, the only element repeated is the impossibility of repetition. The genesis of this realization is found through simple comparison. As he attempts to reenact a trip to Berlin he finds that the coach is not the same, the performance at the theatre is not the same – there is no sameness to be identified anywhere. Two components are in operation at this juncture. Firstly, the recognition of the impossibility of repetition is only accomplished through remembrance of what *was*. This is somewhat contrary to what Kierkegaard himself conjectures in regard to repetition. He states in the beginning of the book: “Repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward.”<sup>38</sup> Here the distinction between recollection and repetition is in that repetition is to be based only on futurity – so completely so that it robs from futurity its very substance. As he discounts the possibility of being able to repeat, he moves outside his own delimitations in order to do so by relying on what *had been* in order to recognize *what is* as being dissimilar to *what was*. Secondly, the repetition experiment is unsuccessful based on a lack of sameness; he does not again encounter precisely what *was*. Therein, the project is dismissed by bringing the anterior into the present as well as

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<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that to a well determined degree the question of theatricality is at hand. Kierkegaard employs a persona, Constantin, in order to investigate the question and also, the trip involves a visit to the theatre. While obvious, it is worth stating that performance (and in the case of Kierkegaard and Shakespeare's Hamlet, a double performance) is a crucial element in nearly all the textual artifacts introduced in this study.

<sup>38</sup> Soren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling, Repetition*. trans Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983 pg. 131

by implementing an unarticulated and possibly unnecessary criterion of regimented sameness. Kierkegaard's argument is that the details have to be the *same* in order to thwart finitude, however, were it not the case this tenet of his concept of repetition becomes a little more fluid and needs greater consideration.<sup>39</sup> He could have moved away from his theory hastily, for Kierkegaard acknowledges that the impossibility of repetition is repeating itself, therefore, repetition is at play – impossibility returns ad infinitum.

If an attempt to redeem Kierkegaard's concept of repetition were to be made, to revive it as some sort of post mortem favor, the effort would have to delve directly into the question of remembrance. Kierkegaard's idea fails in that it defines repetition as too much of an object – a contained entity able to be held up for the scrutiny of the light of day – rather than a boundless quasi-form. However, once memory is rethought, as it always rethinks itself, what becomes necessary to produce repetition is a strategy of forgetting. In order to repeat, in a Kierkegaardian sense, one must temper remembering with a quick and radical forgetting, bringing to present just enough to be cognizant that the enactment has gone before, yet not to the degree that the details of the prior motion can be perceived clearly enough for comparison. Memory and forgetting require and implicate each other much the same way as recollection and repetition.<sup>40</sup> The question of *what* is to be remembered is addressed by Wolfgang Schirmacher, "It is the signature of truth to erase its signing right after the fact in order to allow the on-going folding,

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<sup>39</sup> See Appendix 2 for Alain Badiou's productive contribution to the topic.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Weber noted the following in an interview with Terry Smith pertaining to Kierkegaard's *Repetition*, "...repetition cannot be recognized as such without there being some sort of recollection. So, to the extent that repetition entails recognition as such, the two cannot be separated or simply opposed to one another.... They cannot be simply treated as alternatives since each implies and requires the other." [standford.edu/dept/HPS/WritingScience/etexts/Weber/Repetition.html](http://standford.edu/dept/HPS/WritingScience/etexts/Weber/Repetition.html)

unfolding, and refolding to be done in peace....In ethical life humanity fulfills itself, of which we are vaguely aware and which we need to forget at once.”<sup>41</sup> Forgetting is found elsewhere in Schirmacher’s work, “Yet, by the same token, forgetting is an intrinsic part of perception, our guard against the exaggeration of the historical sense, which would lead to the poisoning of memory.”<sup>42</sup> While in both citations forgetting is an operation working for us, a vital necessity, they differ in that in the first citation, forgetting is a duty while in the second it occurs as a matter of course. Obviously, to offer the injunction TO FORGET! (Schirmacher would never consider forgetting as an injunction as it happens always on its own accord) quickly acquires the same problem as TO REMEMBER! – how to accomplish this with any relative certainty against the fluid and occasional structure of memory.

Near the end of *Repetition* Kierkegaard writes, “...I have abandoned my theory, I am adrift. Then, too, repetition is too transcendent for me. I can circumnavigate myself, but cannot rise above myself. I cannot find the Archimedean point.”<sup>43</sup> According to the texts’ endnote, the Archimedean point is referring to the Greeks’ claim, “give me a place to stand (a fulcrum) and I will move the world.”<sup>44</sup> Therein, Kierkegaard’s frustration is one of instability, lack of substratum; he is seeking to rise above himself yet simultaneously unable to maintain his devotion to his repetition work in that it is too transcendent. Unfortunately he is adrift without arising, if he were able to gain a firm ground beneath him then he would be able to be lifted, maintaining fidelity to a thought

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<sup>41</sup> Wolfgang Schirmacher. “Cloning Humans With Media: Impermanence and Imperceptible Perfection.” in *Poiesis: A Journal of the Arts and Communication*, vol. 2. Canada: EGS Press 2000 pg. 41

<sup>42</sup> Wolfgang Schirmacher. “Art(ificial) Perception: Nietzsche and Culture After Nihilism” in *Poiesis: A Journal of the Arts and Communication*, vol. 1 Canada: EGS Press 1999 pg. 4

<sup>43</sup> Soren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling, Repetition*. trans Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983 pg. 186

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 370

form of transcendence. Stability, he hypothesizes, will transmute adrift into a movement towards elevation. Herein lies the misbegotten thought. Repetition must, and does emerge not from a fulcrum (nor will memory ever be stable), but from what lies beyond any ill-perceived stability, the ever present oscillation behind it. In order to galvanize adrift into a rising above – which the transcendence of repetition promises – one would necessarily need to seek an instability to rest upon rather than a point of fixity, or, said again, stability would be found only inasmuch as it would rest upon the unstable, recalling the thought of Heraclitus; that everything is in flux, becoming its opposite, and, herein stated, back and forth again, at an imperceptible vibration. This is precisely what Dostoevsky endeavors to accomplish: an inarticulate memory whose substratum is precariously fluid, a quivering composed of repetitious injunctions to remember. Oedipus, on the other hand, is saddled with a memory that is suffused with inescapable solidity. His memory repeats, dictates, and determines due to its overabundant rigidity – it can not be altered, ignored, or forgotten.

Suggesting oscillation as a priori to memory is not entirely precise; more specifically, oscillation is the substratum to being as such. This is not so much a thesis that can be proven as much as it is one that can be cautiously implied. The oscillation that can be extrapolated upon from the thought of Heraclitus is, first off, a treatise in support of duality. The effort to undermine duality has currently come in the form of offering a vision of a world infused with multiples: a spectrum without end points. This well-intended re-imaging is offered in an attempt to complicate the intrinsic privileging of a position formed once a binary is constructed. However, the emergence of preference

and aversion inherent in the construction of a binary can only be accomplished with the additional element of contemplation. Contemplation demands a temporal delay, even a quick one; a second in order to complete the task of forming a thought (and memory) of an assessment. If the movement between opposites occurs, in a flashing, without allowing any time for thought (or memory) then it can not be recalled later – no emergence of privilege is possible and yet the binary is existent. From this perspective Kristeva’s previously quoted passage can be comprehended in a slightly different manner: “Then, forgotten time crops up suddenly and condenses into a flash of lightning an operation that, if it were thought out, would involve bringing together the two opposite terms but, on account of that flash, is discharged like thunder. The time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth.”<sup>45</sup> The proposition that being is emergent from a quick oscillation between opposite pairs implicates the presence of repetition as well as the impossibility of an articulated focal point.

## ***2.2 Repetition as vacillation and symbolic in Freud***

*There can be no fort without da and, one might say, without Dasein.*<sup>46</sup>

– Jacques Lacan

Duality and oscillation hold positions of importance in Freud’s conception of the construction of the psyche. Freud quotes G. T. Fechner early in his text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and derives much of his subsequent thought from him:

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<sup>45</sup> Julia Kristeva. *The Powers of Horror*, New York: Columbia, 1982 pg. 8-9

<sup>46</sup> Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973 pg. 239

‘In so far as conscious impulses always have some relation to pleasure or unpleasure, pleasure and unpleasure too can be regarded as having a psycho-physical relation to conditions of stability and instability. This provides a basis for a hypothesis into which I propose to enter in greater detail elsewhere. According to this hypothesis, every psycho-psychical motion rising above the threshold of consciousness is attended by pleasure in proportion as, beyond a certain limit, it approximates to complete stability, and is attended by unpleasure in proportion as, beyond a certain limit, it deviates from complete stability;....’<sup>47</sup>

From the onset, Freud’s probing of repetition and the death drive is inseparable from questions of the stable and unstable. Evidence of this is when Freud formulates the death drive (death instincts) and positions them in relation to the life instincts, “It is though the life of the organism moved with a vacillating rhythm. One group of instincts rushes forward so as to reach the final aim of life as swiftly as possible; but when a particular stage in the advance has been reached, the other group jerks back to a certain point to make a fresh start and so prolong the journey.”<sup>48</sup> Vacillation, then, explicitly arrives from dual drives: “Our views have from the very first been dualistic, and to-day they are even more definitely dualistic than before – now we have described the opposition as being, not between ego-instincts and sexual instincts but between life instincts and death instincts.” Directly after this section, Freud attempts to make a corollary between the dual structure of drives and the love-hate found in ambivalence, “We started out from the great opposition between life instincts and death instincts. Now object-love itself presents us with a second example of similar polarity – that between love (or affection) and hate (or aggressiveness). If only we could succeed in relating these two polarities to

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Sigmund Freud. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961 pg. 2

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 34-35

each other and in deriving one from the other!”<sup>49</sup> Freud is unable to delineate the correlation between the two, instead he pursues a tangent devoted to sadism. However, his indication of their interrelatedness should remain noted. It could be that while equivalences between life/love and death /hate (or a variation thereof) can not be strictly made, there is, nonetheless, a correlation in that the presence of ambivalence is operative in each structure. In Lacan’s discussion of the *fort* and *da* game observed by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, vacillation is again noted: “The function of the exercise with this object refers to an alienation, and not to some supposed mastery, which is difficult to imagine being increased in an endless repetition, whereas the endless repetition that is in question reveals the radical vacillation of the subject.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, the “radical vacillation of the subject” is emergent out of the ambivalence of repetitious duality.

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* additionally studies symbolic repetition and memory.

The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it. Thus he acquires no sense of conviction of the correctness of the construction that has been communicated to him. He is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past. These reproductions, which emerge with such unwished-for exactitude, always have as their subject some portion of infantile sexual life – of the Oedipus complex, that is, and its derivatives....<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pg. 47

<sup>50</sup> Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973 pg. 239

<sup>51</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961 pg. 12

Here, contrary to Keirkegaard, repetition – with “unwished-for exactitude” – is the inescapable given, while remembering is posited as a potentially curative agent. The suggested repressed content generating the repetition is none other than the Oedipus complex, a stage which along with mourning, is described as being profoundly marked by ambivalence. The question can then be asked, what produces the subsequent symbolic repetitions, the unacceptable presence of antipathy towards the father or, with a slightly different connotation, ambivalence itself? If it is accepted that the repression of ambivalence (love/hate) produces repetition – hypothetically cured by remembering – then the vacillation between the life and death drives (life/death) is again implicated. For would not the ambivalence in the polar set of life/death as well be repressed and therefore generate repetition, which could be only halted through the remembrance of a nearly simultaneous yearning for life and death? The memory of simultaneously opposed aims would be, no doubt, inarticulate – a remembering of which would halt the unconsciously generated symbolic repetition. Therefore inarticulate memory presents itself as a necessity again in that it holds with it the potential to sever repetition.

### ***2.3 Repetition as Ritual: Oedipus***

In “From the Myth to Agape” Slavoj Žižek evokes Lacan, stating that “...in the accommodations worked out by modern society between use values and exchange values, there is perhaps something that has been overlooked in the Marxian analysis of economy, the dominant one for the thought of our time – something whose force and extent we feel

at every moment: ritual values.”<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, this assertion leaves the questions: how does one feel the force and extent of this overlooked ritual value? Precisely what is the phenomenological experience of a ritual value, moreover, an unacknowledged one?

Zizek then moves to illuminate how ritual leads to generous consumption:

Here, we should return to Hamlet and to the ritual value: ritual is ultimately the ritual of sacrifice which opens up the space for generous consumption – after we sacrificed to gods the innermost part of the slaughtered animal (heart, intestines), we are free to enjoy a hearty meal of the remaining meat. Instead of enabling free consumption without sacrifice, the modern ‘total economy’ which wants to dispense with this "superfluous" ritualized sacrifice generates the paradoxes of thrift – there is NO generous consumption, consumption is allowed only insofar as it functions as the form of appearance of its opposite.<sup>53</sup>

Zizek derives his thought from *Totem and Taboo* where Freud writes of the totem meal subsequent to the murder of the father: “But after this mourning there follows loud festival gaiety accompanied by the unchaining of every impulse and the permission of every gratification.”<sup>54</sup> Ritual functions in opening the space for generous consumption as well as maintaining the subject in a strange dance of simultaneous remembering and forgetting where, “...the memory of that first great sacrifice had proved to be indestructible despite all attempts to forget it, and just at the moment when men strove to get as far away as possible from its motives, the undistorted repetition of it had to appear in the form of the god sacrifice.”<sup>55</sup> Therein, a memory which is not ever fully remembered, which is nothing if not inarticulate, functions to embroil the subject in a

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<sup>52</sup> Slavoj Zizek. “From the Myth to Agape” in *Psychomedia*. JEP articles, number 8-9, Winter-Fall 1999 pg. 4

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pg. 4

<sup>54</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 181

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pg. 195

compulsory repetition (ritual) that provides the space for consumption, a filial obligation, and at the same time a way in which to keep this filial obligation concealed and forgotten.

The etymology of the word tragedy points cryptically to “goat song,” this insight illuminates more than one might initially presume as “goat song” is synonymous in ancient Greece for ritual, where people dressed in goat skins and sang and sacrificed for the benefit of everyone.<sup>56</sup> The tragic then, derives directly out of activities that had previously enabled generous consumption. Ritual, traced to rite, is primarily concerned with liturgics, consecrations and, in short, that which must be done over and over; for ritual has no value as a singularity, its very power acquired through symbolic repetition. Following Freud, this would be the earliest presence of a substitute for parricide: “The original animal sacrifice was already a substitute for a human sacrifice, for the solemn killing of the father.”<sup>57</sup> Ritual sheds its sacred and literally sacrificial context for the more metaphorically sacrificial allusions in tragedy (poor Oedipus as goat as father), giving birth to perhaps the first self reflexive art form by way of the dramatic playwright who has, at this point supplanted god in that he is now receiving credit for authoring these rituals. As the ritual-to-tragedy transformation took place, the ostensible link is the repetitious quality of both events (in addition to the parricide). When Aristotle comments that the function of tragedy is, in part, to “... evoke pity and fear,” this evocation leading to catharsis is a necessity that demands to be accomplished over and over again.<sup>58</sup> In exploring this theme Freud writes about the hero in tragedy: “He had to suffer because he

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<sup>56</sup> *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*. ed. Robert K. Barnhart. New York: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd. 1988 pg. 1157

<sup>57</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 195

<sup>58</sup> Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Malcolm Heath London: Penguin Books 1996 pg. 20

was the primal father, the hero of that primordial tragedy the repetition of which here serves a certain tendency, and the tragic guilt which he had to take upon himself in order to free the chorus of theirs.”<sup>59</sup>

The substratum that tragedy rests upon is inherently cyclical and therefore, unsurprisingly, curious emanations of repetition appear throughout the tragic texts of ancient Greece. Repetition can also be found in the tragic most overtly by the audience’s engagement in the expected (much like genre films). They know in a general way what will happen prior to their attendance due to the play’s always already known quality; they watch, not so much for surprise, but for the minutia of deviance between dramas. In attending the theatre to watch each new hero who dared thwart the gods fall prey to fate, a re-consecration of culture is accomplished as is (according to Aristotle) a re-indoctrination of the individual into said culture through group catharsis. The play itself is frequently a variation of a previous work, and most certainly a deviation from an already known theme (the destruction of the individual and the triumph of the universal, the collision of equally opposing ethical aims, etc). The key ingredient being the “individual” now has taken center stage in the ritual-drama. The details particular to Oedipus’ character masquerade as possible reasons for his fall, while underneath this cover story of individual-with-potential-agency-into-culture it is simultaneously recognized that fate will always prevail. Tragedy introduces the individual into, at this point, a semi-sacred context, affirming the existence of the “individual” while in the very same gesture negating any claim he might think to have to a possible rapport with causation. A similar system of networks is present, though less pronounced, in *Hamlet*,

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<sup>59</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 201

which focuses more on the subject of choice. Shakespeare's writing of *Hamlet* valorizes of the sovereignty of the subject, furthering the humanistic move from the playwright to the main character. Warner writes, "But everything we have noted about this crime embeds its singularity in a network of repetitions: the rivalry that precedes the ghostly account of the crime; Hamlet's uncanny foreknowledge of it; its impossible instantaneity; its intertextual repetition of (non-) original biblical crimes...to suggest that the singularity of the crime, and of Hamlet's position as it is projected by the crime, is an effect of an artificial coupure, which cuts us (and the Ghost? and Hamlet?) off from seeing the matrix of repetitions within which the singularity of the person-as-person is inscribed."<sup>60</sup>

In Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, one way the network of repetitions is observed is in the remarkable doubling that occurs throughout its structure, most famously his crime and punishment. Kristeva writes the following about his punishment:

There is, first of all, a spatial exclusion. Oedipus must exile himself, leave the proper place of his sovereignty, thrust defilement aside so that the boundaries of the social contract may be perpetuated at Thebes. At the same time, there is an exclusion from sight. Oedipus blinds himself, so as not to have to suffer the sight of the object of his desire and murder.... Blinding is thus an image of splitting; it marks, on the very body, the alteration of the self and clean into the defiled—the scar taking the place of a revealed and yet invisible abjection. Of abjection considered as invisible. In return for which city-state and knowledge can endure.<sup>61</sup>

Through his punishment – scarring *and* expulsion – he is branded abject and then abjected. But as Kristeva notes, the revelation of his abjection – as his status as abject –

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<sup>60</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare's Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 295

<sup>61</sup> Julia Kristeva. *The Powers of Horror*, New York: Columbia, 1982 pg. 84

is not determined by his unknown engagement with incest and taboo so much as it is his relationship to ambiguity:

His abjection is due to the permanent ambiguity of the parts he plays without his knowledge, even when he believes he knows. It is precisely such dynamics of reversals that makes of him a being of abjection and a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat who, having been ejected, allows the city to be freed from defilement. The mainspring of the tragedy lies in that ambiguity; prohibition and ideal are joined in a single character in order to signify that the speaking being has no space of his own but stands on a fragile threshold as if stranded on account of an impossible demarcation.<sup>62</sup>

The impossible demarcation of the position of Oedipus is illustrated by his insistent marking. His body and psyche are perpetually and permanently scared by the other (fate); his mutilated feet, eyes, and the memory of the oracular prophecy trump his claim to agency, display his precarious status and unrelentingly traverse his beingness.

There are an abundance of additional couplets in the myth and play of Oedipus. Illustrative of this is the frequently noted mythic events that precede the actions of the play. As legend has it, the Oracle of Apollo informed Laius and Jocasta that their son would kill his father and sleep with his mother. Laius and Jocasta now confront two options: adhere to their fate and do nothing, betraying their yet unborn son; or thwart the Oracle – the far more favorable choice. Their first effort was to refrain from sexual intercourse, a project destroyed by an unhinged Jocasta who, in a fit of excitement, convinced her husband to drink excessively, this allowing her to lure him to bed. However, all aspects of import are done not once but twice in Oedipus. The following is a small list of doubles that are found in Sophocles' version of *King Oedipus*: Oedipus'

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pg. 84-85

nobility (son of King Polybus and King Laius), his crime (kills father and sleeps with mother), his punishment (he is blinded and exiled), his suffering (physical and spiritual), his flaw (physical and moral), his greatness (solves the riddle of the Sphinx and saves Thebes by discovering the killer of Laius), and, finally, his piercing (once by Jocasta with needles through his ankles and once by himself with needles from Jocasta's body thrust through his eyes). It is then to be expected that Laius and Jocasta would, for a second time, attempt to betray their fate by disposing their son. A young Oedipus follows in the family tradition of thwarting the Oracle and, upon hearing its pronouncement for him, immediately seeks to evade its prediction. Had he resigned to his fate he would have knowingly betrayed both parents and yet been faithful to the Gods. However, in attempting to betray his fate he, of course, unknowingly does the same thing anyway and his betrayal is doubled. In this play doubles themselves are present repetitively, and as much, contaminate the play. Kristeva writes, "Defilement will now be that which impinges on symbolic oneness, that is, sham, substitutions, *doubles*, idols."<sup>63</sup> (emphasis added)

Dostoevsky as well is famous for his use of doubles. Avital Ronell discusses the thread of doubles present throughout his text, *The Idiot*.

In a sense there are nothing but body doubles, reflecting one another as if to mark the failure of integrating the traumatic singularity of what is given to us as our ownmost body. Thus there are two sick bodies, those of Myshkin and Ippolit; Myshkin is split between two women, Natasya and Aglaya, and there is an articulated split between the blood brothers Rogozhin and Myshkin. The proliferation of doubles continues, having originated in the double body of God, which appears to

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pg. 104

lose its transcendence until, as if compressed in the end of the novel, there remains one corpse watched over by Myshkin and his negative mirror, Rodozhin.<sup>64</sup>

Joyce Carol Oates' essay "Tragic and Comic Versions in *The Brothers Karamasov*" is entirely devoted to exploring the novel's proliferation of doubles. She writes that, "These doubles, imagined fantastically, exert influences upon one another that cannot be explained in any naturalistic way. There are moments of doubleness, of understanding and insight that must be denied (one always denies the double), and there are peculiar echoing of ideas, ideas doubled and tripled as the novel proceeds."<sup>65</sup> While not stated in her text, Oates' essay delineates two different types of doubling that take place in the novel. The first level of doubling is the shadow variety: the double as a dramatic counter to the original, evident in her observation, "The most interesting doubling is in relationship to the figure of the 'father' in this novel. Alyosha's physical father, old Fyodor, is paralleled by Alyosha's spiritual father, Zossima..."<sup>66</sup> This would also be of the sort that Ronell observes in *The Idiot*. Oates characterizes the use of doubles in this way as illustrative of, "...the author's conscious or unconscious desire for a wider range of action, possibilities of behavior for his hero that go beyond the morally acceptable, and his wish will create itself in the form of a double, or antihero."<sup>67</sup> The dynamic of this first type of doubling can be observed towards the ending of Echo and Narcissus. Echo emerges and reveals the double, the echo, to be radically other to the original, Narcissus. However, I would suggest there is a second type of doubling at work in the book, a

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<sup>64</sup> Avital Ronell, *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 196

<sup>65</sup> Joyce Carol Oates. "Tragic and Comic Versions in *The Brothers Karamasov*" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter 1968-69, pg. 8

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 8

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 8

premise that Oates hints at when she writes, "...the relationship between Ivan and Smerydakov is an obvious example of the relationship between mysterious doubles, with Ivan apparently the stronger and more intelligent, and Smerydakov the instrument of his will."<sup>68</sup> The interplay in this second type of doubling is closer to what is found in the beginning of Echo and Narcissus, where repetition hints at both radical otherness and likeness; Narcissus' words are doubled by the echo (Echo) and marked by difference, however, through the suppression of the echo's source (Echo remains hidden), not experienced as an altogether distinct entity. This is an example of doubling that is closer to what is found in the *King Oedipus*, where the second (parents, crime, flaw, etc.) is not a radical departure from the first, but rather an echo, a reiteration. Here the double as reiteration of the singular, is not the same, is not an indeterminate multiple, and is not radical otherness. Rather, this form of the echo (as uncanny double) suggests that doubles (repetition) mutate the original in a continuum and thus indicates two possibilities. If the interaction between doubles is repeated over and over, as it is in Echo and Narcissus, the second, the (E)cho, comes to be revealed as radical otherness. Or is it that the (E)cho is at first *not* radical otherness, but through repetition (as *differance*), becomes further and further disparate from the original, and thus ultimately emerging as its counterpoint.<sup>69</sup>

In writing, when a singular theme is repetitiously woven throughout a text, it invariably gives rise to *something* else – another presence, an additional register of meaning. Literary repetition primarily operates as supplemental, and then secondarily as subtractive (as when, once established, the allusion undoes itself through excessively and

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pg. 8

<sup>69</sup> Hubertus von Amelunxen notes that Echo is pure reference towards otherness without reference to self. Unpublished Seminar, June 2002

ecstatically indulging itself). Reproduced imagery initially operates as a dismantling, as in the case of the Benjaminian aura, and then, secondarily as a supplement.<sup>70</sup> Simply stated, within literature repetition operates as an additive, while repetition of imagery serves to subtract, and then, when temporally carried out further, the same motion achieves a reversibility in each case. The hypothesis being that the operation of repetition is dually (or chiasmically) structured, one level as productive and a second as destructive, and this, perhaps, always undergoes a transmogrification.<sup>71</sup> A similar idea is found in the social sciences called Mere Exposure Theory. In the study that figured the theory, a student attended a university classroom wearing a black bag over him. The initial response from his fellow students was hostile, but, with repeated exposure they slowly warmed. The key factor was (supposedly) that the only element determining the varying emotional response from the other students was repeated exposure. After many weeks, the students grew to have feelings of affection for him – he became the mascot of the class. According to this theory, repeated exposure to novel stimuli produces two effects: firstly, “hedonic valence”, whereby the stimuli gains attractiveness, and secondly, “wear out”, where the positive attributes acquired through repetition dissipate and the stimulus induces tedium.<sup>72</sup> This theory is interesting in that it recognizes what we all have experienced to be true; given a long enough time line, repetition elicits dissimilar emotional responses. In regards to imagery and literature, the genesis of the response is

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<sup>70</sup> See Walter Benjamin. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in *Illuminations*. ed. Hannah Ardent. trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969

<sup>71</sup> Another correlation is, as Baudrillard says, while literature seduces, imagery fascinates. Unpublished Seminar, June 2002

<sup>72</sup> See Richard M. Perloff *The Dynamics of Persuasion*. New Jersey: Cleveland State University Press, 1993 pg. 59-61

determined by which medium is being repeated. An excellent example of this is found in Sophocles' master work *King Oedipus*.

In the words of *King Oedipus* a conflation, through repetitious metaphor, is made between vision, truth, and light. In the beginning, upon discovering the reason for the pestilence, Oedipus vows, "To bring to light the killer of Laius ...."<sup>73</sup> Later, Teiresias curses, "He came seeing and blind shall he go."<sup>74</sup> Similar overt allusions are peppered throughout the text with the dramatic irony within this being that the blind man, Teiresias, located within "darkness" is the one who can "see" the "truth" and the discovery of the "truth" is blinding (with Oedipus literally blinded), etc. While clever, it is in the modality that this reversibility and conflation is achieved, namely repetition, which is presently relevant. The entire text continuously plays with light, truth, and vision until it escalates to the point where it ecstatically undoes itself. At the end of the play, once all is known, the attendant enters to inform the audience about the off stage happenings in regards to Jocasta's fate, "Her own hand did it. You that have not *seen*, And shall not *see*, this worst, shall suffer the less...."<sup>75</sup> (emphasis added) He continues his monologue, saying in regard to Oedipus' current condition, "*Eyes* that should *see* no longer his shame, his guilt, No longer *see* those he had longed to *see*, Nor *see*, *unseeing*, those he had longed to *see*, Henceforth *seeing* nothing but night,"<sup>76</sup> (emphasis added) Here is the ultimate orgy of sight references, where the very repetitious nature of the allusion reduces the meaning that has been built up throughout the play back to nothing,

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<sup>73</sup> Sophocles. "King Oedipus" in *The Theban Plays*. trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947 pg. 33

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pg. 38

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pg. 59

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pg. 60-61

and meaning is no longer clearly derived. Creon enters and states, referring to Oedipus, “The unclean must not remain in the *eye* of the day....Take him within; pity at least demands that none but kinsmen should hear and *see* such suffering”<sup>77</sup> (emphasis added) Creon’s thought echoes the attendant’s first comment when he stated that the no one should be made to *see* matter. In insisting that the audience must not be made to *see*, the implication is that they should not be forced into a state of truth, of knowing, or rather, of remembering. Freud writes, “A process like the removal of the primal father by the band of brothers must have left ineradicable traces in the history of mankind and must have expressed itself the more frequently in numerous substitutive formations the less it itself was to be remembered.”<sup>78</sup> The sacrifice of Oedipus (goat/father) is meant to enable the masses to live in the darkness, dreaming, unhurt by destructiveness of the light of day/ the eye of day/ the truth of light – the force which ultimately blinds and scarifies the subject, rendering him unfit, unclean, and, ultimately exiled.<sup>79</sup> In Sophocles’ last work, *Oedipus at Colonus*, he returned, on the eve of his own death, to revisit one of his most popular characters and rewrite him. Now the abject and abjected Oedipus looks back and blames the unconscious city of Thebes for his current state, “Then, then, so late, my city banished me, By forced expulsion.”<sup>80</sup> Derrida comments on Oedipus’s belated condemnation of Thebes:

To vindicate himself, in a way to plead his case, Oedipus does accuse, he accuses without accusing anyone, he accuses something rather than someone. In fact he denounces the figure of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pg. 65

<sup>78</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 200

<sup>79</sup> Again, the ironic turn is that while in the beginning Oedipus conceives of truth/light/vision as a liberating force, in the end, it turns out to be entirely destructive (to the individual Oedipus, but, of course, the City of Thebes is redeemed). A similar turn is seen in Romeo and Juliet where pulling their romance from the dream state of the night –untruth-, in to the light of day – truth, spells out death to them yet repairs Verona.

<sup>80</sup> Sophocles. “Oedipus at Colonus” in *The Theban Plays*. trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947 pg. 84

the city, Thebes. The guilty one is Thebes. It is Thebes which, without knowing it, unconscious Thebes, the city unconscious, the unconscious at the heart of town, the *polis*, the political unconscious... – it is Thebes, then, which, unawares, bears the responsibility for the crime.<sup>81</sup>

Sophocles, in producing an at once abject and holy figure in *Oedipus at Colonus* indicates the inherent ambiguity of the sacred. On the one hand Oedipus is blessed, “These ugly scars must not forbid your kindness. I am a holy man, and by holy ordinance, My presence here is to bring this people blessing,”<sup>82</sup> On the other, “I am a man of misery, Corrupt with every foulness that exists! I cannot let you touch me.”<sup>83</sup> Giorgio Agamben’s book, *Homo Sacer*, demonstrates how ambiguity is indivisible from the production of the “ban” and the sacred. He writes, “The analysis of the ban – which is assimilated to the taboo – determines from the very beginning the genesis of the doctrine of the ambiguity of the sacred: the ambiguity of the ban, which excludes in including, implies the ambiguity of the sacred.”<sup>84</sup> Agamben quotes William Robertson Smith’s *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, the book which influenced Freud’s writing of *Totem and Taboo*, “...alongside of taboos that exactly correspond to rules of holiness protecting the inviolability of idols and sanctuaries, priests and chiefs, and generally of all persons and things pertaining to gods and their worship, we find another kind of taboo which in the Semitic field has its parallel in rules of uncleanness. Women after childbirth, men who have touched a dead body, and so forth are temporarily

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<sup>81</sup> Jacques Derrida *Of Hospitality*. trans. Rachel Bowlby. California: Stanford University Press, 2000 pg. 39

<sup>82</sup> Sophocles. “Oedipus at Colonus” in *The Theban Plays*. trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947 pg. 79

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 106

<sup>84</sup> Giorgio Agamben. *Homo Sacer*. trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. California: Stanford University Press. 1995 pg. 77

taboo...”<sup>85</sup> The similar treatment of the defiled and exalted leads Smith to note, ““In most savage societies no sharp line seems to be drawn between the two kinds of taboo just indicated, and in even more advanced nations the notions of holiness and uncleanliness often touch.”<sup>86</sup> This point of touch between the pure and impure in the region excluded from culture precisely indicates the ambivalence associated with the sacred giving rise to Freud’s discussion of ambivalence.

Kristeva writes a different account of Oedipus’ redemption which as well indicates the juncture between the abject and the sacred:

*Oedipus the King* handed over to Freud and his posterity the strength of (incestuous) desire and the desire for (the father’s) death. However abject these desires may be, which threaten the integrity of individual and society, they are nonetheless sovereign. Such is the blinding light cast by Freud, following Oedipus, on abjection, as he invites us to recognize ourselves in it without gouging out our eyes. But after all, what saves us from performing that decisive gesture?...The border between abjection and the sacred, between desire and knowledge, between death and society, can be faced squarely, uttered without sham innocence or modest self-effacement, provided one sees in it an incidence of man’s particularity as *mortal and speaking*.<sup>87</sup>

In Kristeva’s work on *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus’ purification is accounted for by his recognition of his mortality and as subject to the symbolic. As the abjected figure, Oedipus’ rescue is found in the acknowledgment, as Kristeva writes, that, “I am abject, that is, mortal and speaking.” In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky offers the converse, redemption is found in “Eternal Memory” – what is precisely *not* mortal

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, pg. 76

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, pg. 76

<sup>87</sup> Julia Kristeva. *The Powers of Horror*, New York: Columbia, 1982 pg. 88

married to a that which evades the system of the symbolic; inarticulate memory. Again Oedipus and *The Brothers Karamazov* stand in marked contrast to one another.

#### ***2.4 Repetition as Difference: Oracular Iterability***

*But by chance he came to hear, by mouth of Apollo's ministers, the terrible prediction concerning him.*<sup>88</sup>

– Sophocles

*What is repeated, in fact, is always something that occurs – the expression tells us quite a lot about its relation to touché – as if by chance.*<sup>89</sup>

– Jacques Lacan

Consider again how the problems of Oedipus began: the locus of his dilemma can be situated with the proclamation of the Oracle. There are several similar accounts of how Oedipus gained knowledge of his fate from the Oracle of Apollo, all of which indicate that his life was going well until he heard the pronouncement. The prophecy of the Oracle institutes a new path for Oedipus, and by its institutive force, the prophecy can be distinguished as a performative speech act. In the case of the most “proper” and explicit performatives, an instituting of action occurs upon the very moment of the utterance. In the case of the prophecy a disjunction of time occurs between what is said and when it happens, casting doubt upon whether these are, indeed, “properly” explicit performative speech acts. Is something actually instituted at the moment of utterance? While what has been spoken by the prophet does not, in fact, occur at the same said time

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<sup>88</sup> Sophocles. *The Theban Plays*. trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947 pg. 24

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973 pg. 54

of utterance, an instantaneous action does take place. The subject in question becomes married to the very words spoken (a marking through language) which determine a more limited course of action for him (even if the subject chooses to disbelieve the prophecy, an (re)action of refusal is obligatory). Just as when a pronouncement of man and wife is made it is no longer possible to engage in an affair without the knowledge that a betrayal is taking place, so does the subject become unable to disentangle all consequential action from the prophets' prediction; the true culprit is memory in the form of impossible forgetting. Through an unintended motion of recollection the subject is incapable of evading the mark of the Oracle's words. The situation is similar to the narrations claim in Chris Marker's film, *La Jette*, "moments become memories by the scars they leave." The prophecy marks the subject with an ineradicable scarring and therefore does indeed have a directly institutive effect at the moment of its utterance; only through a strategy of forgetting would a divorce be accomplished. There is no remedy for the prophecy, no counter performative can be performed – ostensibly no manner in which a properly conducted prophecy can be vitiated; there is only-ever a potentiality of forgetting.

To move to a discussion of the performative speech act is, rather than a departure from the query into ritual/repetition, simply a shift in approach – for the operation of language is nothing if not a meditation on repetition. By now turning to the performative utterance and the structure of language itself, an antecedent level of, perhaps, a phenomenological ritual value is observed. The question is how does the performative speech act in the form of a prophecy carry with it the authority to trap a subject in a narrower range of possible actions? The subject of intention and language is addressed

by Derrida in his essay “Signature, Event, Context”. In it he responds to J. L. Austin’s construction of the performative speech act in the formative lecture series published as *How to do Things with Words*. The most often used examples to illustrate the explicit performative speech act are usually either “I now pronounce you man and wife” or “I hereby Christian this ship the Juliet”, in both a crucial point is temporality; the action is instituted immediately at the time of the utterance. Austin says that there are six conditions that must be in place in order to institute a performative. They are as follows: (1) an existent accepted conventional procedure, (2) the persons and circumstances must be appropriate, (3) the procedure must be executed properly, (4) completely, (5) the participants must intend to conduct themselves accordingly, (6) and then must actually conduct themselves subsequently. Early on in his formulations on the performative, Austin observes that they are neither true nor false: the performative escapes dichotomous reasoning by being institutive; what is becoming can neither be true nor false. However, there are plenty of ways in which a performative can be compromised. Austin writes, “. . .if we sin against any one (or more) or these six rules, our performative utterance will be unhappy.”<sup>90</sup> He follows by distinguishing between the levels of unhappiness encountered relative to which of the rules are broken. For instance, in marriage, if the priest is not really a priest (a violation of the second rule), the marriage, the performative in question, is not actually instituted. Furthermore, if the groom is insincere in his “I do” (a violation of rule five) an abuse of the performative has occurred. If the bride is already married (again, a violation of the second rule) the performative is voided. Interestingly, here it isn’t that *nothing* happens, for bigamy has been achieved,

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<sup>90</sup> John L. Austin. *How to do Things with Words*. ed. by F. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1975 pg. 15

but, the intended performative is negated in that with bigamy one does not accomplish the marriage act twice, the second act is never accomplished. To sum, the possible *infelicities* associated with the performative are misinvocations, where the act is disallowed, misexecutions where the act is vitiated, and abuses, where the act is performed but hollow. Therefore, whereas the performative itself is neither true nor false, it can be falsified – made improper.

Austin's regimented description of how performatives function invited the deconstructionist critique found in Derrida's essay "Signature, Event, Context", wherein Derrida asserts that rather than an occasional *infelicity*, language itself is based upon them – propriety being only ever a possibility. He writes, "To communicate, in the case of the performative, if in all rigor and purity some such thing exists..."<sup>91</sup> Prior to his discussion on the performative, Derrida proposes the concept of iterability, the manner in which language is detachable, repeatable, and therefore escaping specificity – and always structured around absence (the absence of the addressee and the absence of the object which demands to be made present – a demand that engenders the sign). The iterability of language ensures that intention can never be fully determined, there is always another, albeit, unintended meaning possibly present.<sup>92</sup> Written language is also incapable of singularity in that spacing allows for, almost invites, temporal intruders.

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<sup>91</sup> Jacques Derrida. "Signature Event Context." in *Margins of Philosophy*. trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1982 pg. 321

<sup>92</sup> "It must be repeatable iterable in the absolute absence of the addressee or of the empirically determinable set of addressees. This iterability (*iter*, once again, comes from *itara*, other in *Sanskrit*, and everything that follows may be read as the exploration of the logic which links repetition to alterity), structures the mark of writing itself, and does so moreover for no matter what type of writing ( pictographic, hieroglyphic, ideographic, phonetic, alphabetic, to use the old categories)" Ibid., pg. 315

Derrida discounts the possibility of Austin's concept of a performative by noting the implausibility and impossibility of all the exigencies which Austin outlines ever being in place. In particular, he critiques Austin's substratum of the *context* of a performative, "For a context to be exhaustively determinable, in a sense demanded by Austin, it at least would be necessary for the conscious intention to be totally present and actually transparent for itself and others, since it is a determining focal point of the context."<sup>93</sup> As has been indicated, the parricidal intention is never able to be "transparent for itself and others" in that it is rarely conscious, and yet, this egregious intention pervades the psychic structure as well as western culture. Additionally, as Derrida demonstrates, the iterable (ritual) component of language undermines the context by muddling the intention of the utterance. To which set of Oedipus' parents was the Oracle of Apollo referring? The slippery and repetitive element of language both makes language possible and at once always undermines its potential to explode within the present moment in a manner truly transformative.<sup>94</sup> So seen, even when intention is conscious and recognizable to oneself and others it can never be contained by language. Nor can intention be willed with enough force to detach the performative from its linguistic structuring, enabling it to be fully present to itself and excluding any possible remainder; therefore the utterance of a performative can not be accomplished in Austin's sense.<sup>95</sup> There is always an excess, a

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pg. 327 It might be interesting to note Derrida's discussion of the link between spacing and the mark. "This force of rupture is due to the spacing which constitutes the written sign: the spacing which separates it from other elements of the internal contextual chain (the always open possibility of its extraction and grafting), but also from all the forms of a present referent (past or to come in the modified form of the present past or to come) that is objective or subjective. This spacing is not the simple negativity of a lack, but the emergence of the mark."<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pg. 317

<sup>94</sup> "Could a performative statement succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable statement...?" Ibid., pg. 326

<sup>95</sup> "...given the structure of iteration, the intention which animates utterance will never be completely present in itself and its content. The iteration which structures it a priori introduces an essential dehiscence and demarcation". Ibid., pg. 326

remainder, which evades the symbolic system of language and gestures towards something beyond the present, *no matter how much one wills it to be otherwise*.

Derrida additionally critiques Austin in that he refuses to consider the nonserious performatives, those that are “in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on a stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy.”<sup>96</sup> Austin “excludes” these from consideration and views them as superfluous (an excess that is dangerous and corrupting) to the proper, entirely parasitical in nature. Derrida turns this around, claiming that these citations are not only germane to, but elemental of, performatives *and* all of language.

Austin does not ask himself what consequences derive from the fact that something possible—a possible risk—is *always* possible, is somehow a necessary possibility. And if, such a necessary possibility of failure being granted, it still constitutes an accident. What is a success when the possibility of failure continues to constitute its structure? <sup>97</sup>

In moving to say that the relative purity of the performative is constructed against these “parasites,” it is worth considering one of Austin’s early statements with regard to the performative that is not referenced in Derrida’s essay. While this specific tenet is not addressed again in his lecture series, Austin, in the first paragraph of the first lecture, introduces the performative concept and states:

The type of utterance we are to consider here is not, of course, in general a type of nonsense; though misuse of it can, as we shall see, engender rather special varieties of ‘nonsense’.

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<sup>96</sup> J. L. Austin. *How to do Things with Words*. ed. by F. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1975 pg. 22

<sup>97</sup> Jacques Derrida. “Signature Event Context.” in *Margins of Philosophy*. trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1982 pg. 324

Rather, it is one of our second class – the masqueraders. But it does not by any means necessarily masquerade as a statement of fact, descriptive or constative. Yet it does quite commonly do so, and that, oddly enough, is when it assumes its most explicit form. Grammarians have not, I believe, seen through this disguise, and philosophers only at best incidentally.<sup>98</sup>

The masquerade (as it has elsewhere been shown in relation to the feminine<sup>99</sup>) by its veiledness, more closely resembles being than what asserts itself as truth. As such, the performative appears as a language structure that refers back to being – being as becoming, institutive, and yet always concealing.<sup>100</sup> This renders the point of the performative as figured by failure somewhat mute in the same manner that any immanent failure of being (as well as the absence inherent to the subject) is of little consequence to the ongoing occurrence of being. As Derrida exhibits the fragility of the substratum of language, and, by inference, being, it is at once observed that the very same fragility is effecting little in that this is not a matter of truth asserting itself as truth, but of masquerade performing (what will never be) truth. Austin says two things; 1) the performative does not necessarily masquerade as a statement of fact and 2) it does do so and this is when it assumes its most explicit form. So, the performative which does put on the guise of, the performance of, truth is precisely the one that Austin is asking we see

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<sup>98</sup> J. L. Austin. *How to do Things with Words*. ed. by F. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1975 pg. 4

<sup>99</sup> For an excellent example of this one need look no further than *Hamlet*, “God hath given you one face and you make yourself another.” Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. London: Magpie Books, 2000 pg. 828

<sup>100</sup> “...it could appear that Austin has exploded the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept. The performative is a ‘communication’ which does not essentially limit itself to transporting an already constituted semantic content guarded by its own aiming at truth (truth as unveiling of that which is in its Being, or as an *adequation* between judicative statement and the thing itself)”. Jacques Derrida. “Signature Event Context.” in *Margins of Philosophy*. trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1982 pg. 322

through; the explicit, truth asserting, masquerade. There can be none better than the prophecy.

If the infelicities that Austin later develops are joined together with the opening statement on masquerade the following can be inferred 1) the performative proper is a masquerade, but one that is *not* hollow or void because 2) there are performatives hollow and void in that they are explicitly masquerades (in the form of a play, poem, or soliloquy). It is these that are a “special variety of nonsense.” While neither Austin nor Derrida make this leap, could it not then be said that a double masquerade – the “special variety of nonsense”– hollow and void, gestures to the hollowness of the singular masquerade and, this, by inference, to the hollowness of Being. Derrida’s illumination is similar to this, yet somehow adjacent, in that he rescues the nonserious performative from Austin’s dismissal, noting that these anomalies make the proper performative (which is always potentially improper) tenable. The performative, once the general displacement of it is first recognized (a displacement which is necessarily in addition to the already displacing structure of language), is more along the lines of what occurs in Hamlet, a play within a play. The structure of the primary play is mocked by the inclusion of a second play which lays open 1) the masquerade (the whole discussion of the actors and performance in Hamlet sneakily being self-referential), 2) the “truth” (Hamlet’s father was killed by his brother) and then finally, 3) the truth as masquerade (Hamlet’s father was killed by his brother but not really because this is a masquerade). So, the act of marriage, is not, in fact, made possible by its inclusion in various plays, poems, or soliloquies. Rather, it comes undone, allowing the masquerade of everything to be

displayed. However, this is perhaps less crucial than the next inference which is, once again, a gesture to the hollow and void state of being that nonetheless is occurring. This is an end point mirroring the conclusion that Derrida reaches when he, at the close of his deconstruction of the performative, notes that marriages and the like “perhaps” “occur” yet with their inherently iterable and citational structure operating without perception.

When looking at the prophecy as performative, the mark (semiotic) of the prophecy *marks* the subject – a certain scarification. Derrida writes the following, “Ritual is not an eventuality, but as iterability, is a structural characteristic of every mark.”<sup>101</sup> The potential of the reproduction of a determinable context is rejected by Derrida and also any repeating is always defined by difference, leaving the question of to what degree is difference created, the hidden echo of reiteration or the emergent (E)echo of radical otherness. Language has an overflowing of meaning and a tendency to wander – problematizing the containment of intention, “Thereby, performative communication once more becomes the communication of an intentional meaning, even if this meaning has no referent in the form of a priori or exterior thing or state of things. This conscious presence of the speakers or receivers who participate in the effecting of a performative, their conscious and intentional presence in the totality of the operation, implies teleologically that no *remainder* escapes the present totalization.”<sup>102</sup> As much as it is impossible to contain intention, the converse also occurs in regards to insufficiency – moments when the context is at least in part reproducible and yet this reproduced context is met with a lack of meaning, or said again, when what should be iterable refuses to

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pg. 324

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pg. 322

presence itself with enough force to be distinguished as anything at all. These moments must as well be seen as ritual in nature, however, a ritual of insufficiency manifested as inarticulateness. Iterability, linked to repetition/alterity, is, as Derrida states, the ritual component to every mark. Therefore, the prophecy, ritualizes the addressee twice; once, through the external context as ritual, and again, by the iterability of the mark that *marks* – the first pole of memory. The converse position holds the mark of inarticulateness and also *marks*, precisely through its insufficiency of manifest intention.

However, if the structure of a performative is not stated in first-person present as Austin generally discusses it (“I, hereby ...” or “I, now...”) the situation becomes slightly different. In the case of the prophecy as performative one is more likely to find the future anterior at work in the utterance (“You will have done...”). When Žižek makes his observation about western heroism (the ancient hero, Oedipus, acts because he does not know; the early modern hero, Hamlet, knows, therefore he cannot act, while the contemporary hero knows fully well and does it nonetheless<sup>103</sup>) it is not entirely accurate. For it is not that Oedipus did not know, precisely the opposite, he knew very well that he was to sleep with his mother and kill his father. In Sophocles’ account of the Oedipus tale the following is stated in *The Theban Legend* prior to the play, “But *by chance* he came to hear, by mouth of Apollo’s ministers, the terrible prediction concerning him.”<sup>104</sup> (emphasis added) The problem for Oedipus was located in his certainty that he did know very well who his parents were ( meaning, of course, his adoptive and excessive parents

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<sup>103</sup> Slavoj Žižek. “From the Myth to Agape” in *Psychomedia*. JEP articles, number 8-9, Winter-Fall 1999 pg. 3

<sup>104</sup> Sophocles. “King Oedipus” in *The Theban Plays*. trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947 pg. 24

the King and Queen of Corinth), and in his determination to refrain from betraying them, which *he knew* he would do, started out on his course. It is his certainty, *his knowing*, that engenders his ability to sleep with his mother without being bothered by the *knowledge* of her true identity. His hearing, by chance, again speaks to the problem of intention, and, in general, the fallibility of language as discussed by Derrida:

...there is no less a force of breaking by virtue of its essential iterability; one can always lift a written syntagma from the interlocking chain in which it is caught or given without making it lose every possibility of functioning, if not every possibility of ‘communicating’ precisely. Eventually, one may recognize other such possibilities in it by inscribing or *grafting* it into other chains. No context can enclose it.<sup>105</sup>

In fact, were it not for the potentiality towards failure inherent in language, the Oedipal myth would not have been consummated at all, depending as it did on Oedipus’ misplacement (he hears the oracle, by chance), mistaken singularity (parental excess), and (mis)epistemological certainty (he knows he knows) – a par excellence exhibit of the Derridean critique of the impossible context of the performative. What was the performative/prophecy of the oracle *supposed* to do? For who was the message *addressed*? Was the overhearing and misunderstanding *intentional*? Considering that structure of the prophecy occurs in future anterior so that it is less of a warning and more of a you-will-have-done, it must be, given the outcome, that: 1) the infelicity of the performative was presupposed by the oracle; Apollo counted on the fallibility of language, or 2) infelicities are irrelevant in the case of the performative of a prophecy in that the prophecy eludes the first-person perfect tense. In this sense, the problem of the

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<sup>105</sup> Jacques Derrida. “Signature Event Context” in *Margins of Philosophy*. trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1982 pg. 317

prophecy can be seen as corollary to the problem of the formation of the ego. Sam Weber writes concerning the Lacanian ‘mirror stage’:

The perfect tense is supplanted by the future anterior, thus calling into question the very foundations of subjective identity conceived in terms of an interiorizing memory. In invoking the future anterior tense, Lacan troubles the perfected closure of the always-already-have-been, a time which can never be entirely remembered, since it will never have fully taken place. It is an irreducible remainder or remnant that will continually prevent the subject from becoming self-identical. In the psychoanalytical perspective, then, memory becomes something very different from what it was for metaphysics – not because of a future that the subject will never be able to catch up with fully, but because every attempt by the subject of the unconscious to grasp its history inevitably divides that history into a past that, far from having taken place once and for all, is always yet to come. Consequently, the living present of the subject emerges as a focal point whose actuality can reside in an *anticipated belatedness*.<sup>106</sup>

The structure of the performative reiterates the hollowness of being, and, more specifically, the prophecy as performative echoes the formation of the ego. The subject, marked by the oracular pronouncement, “resides in an *anticipated belatedness*,” waiting for what it has already been shown – with any attempt at deviation resulting in a subsequent division. Weber’s writing evidences the simultaneity of the two poles of memory in the formation of the ego, where concrete and inarticulate memory emerge at once, undermining the subjective interiorizing memory at the same time it is posited. That they overlap at this juncture in no way precludes their operating independently and dually once the ego is formed. Rather, the concrete pole always contains within itself its

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<sup>106</sup> Sam Weber. *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan’s dislocation of psychoanalysis*. trans. Michael Levine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990 pg. 9

own splitting while inarticulate memory is the very manifest version of infinite fracturing, with a possibility that there is a drive towards each (as in life/death instincts).

In the closing section of the paper Derrida discusses signatures, “By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical non-presence of the signer. But it will be claimed, the signature also marks and retains his having-been present in a past now or present which will remain future now or present, thus in a general *maintenant*, in the transcendental form of presentness....”<sup>107</sup> One of the earmarks of the prophecy is that it is most frequently conveyed through an intermediary – an angel, messenger, or attendant in this case – thus ensuring a delay. The prophet is there no more, what was said has already (was already) been said and there is no possibility of retraction. As Derrida further notes, a signature must at the same time, be singular and repeatable, belonging solely and authentically to the individual, and to be able to be seen, with sameness, over and over again. The authenticity of the prophecy lays within, of course, its relation to the prophet. The prophecy acts as the oracles’ detached and iterable mark, capable of being transmitted through another and *marking* its intended audience – *even if that one hears it ‘by chance’*. Rather than an event constituted by a masquerade aiming at truth, the prophecy as performative is a doubling back, an informing of what will have been; an occurrence that challenges the necessity of context while binding the one who is marked in repetition (he will go on to enact an action that has already been seen and therefore acted). Weber writes of this difficulty, “At this point it is important to bear in mind that any interpretation of a discourse whose temporal medium is the future anterior must itself

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<sup>107</sup> Jacques Derrida. “Signature Event Context.” in *Margins of Philosophy*. trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1982 pg. 328

be caught up in a process of repetition difficult to master or to situate temporally.”<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, prophecy, at the same time that it skirts being damaged by the form of repetition inherent to language, indicates and institutes another enactment of repetition.

The Oracle of Apollo’s ability to prophesize appears to be unhindered by infelicities and untroubled by any lack of singularity of event disallowed by the iterability of language and citational doubling. Rather, the intention behind the utterance is able to manifest with enough force that it survives the double displacement of being uttered by a messenger and then overheard *by chance*. Chance always poses a problem to the effort of stabilizing reason. Warner writes, “...chance is a dissonant factor which must be suppressed as to avoid two kinds of loss – the suffering that accompanies the violence of the accidental, and the incomprehensibility that shadows every event described as chance. In this configuration the suppression of the alterity of chance and language establishes the individual person as the locus as of uniqueness, value, knowledge, sympathy and control.”<sup>109</sup> Therein, chance aligns itself with the function of inarticulateness, serving to rupture, ever so slightly, the seamless presentation of a subject governed by reason. The most elusive question left is, whose intention is it? Once metaphysics is collapsed, and the intention of Apollo becomes an impossibility, the story must be read differently; this is Oedipus’s intention. Oedipus, speaking from the future back to the present, announcing to himself what he will-have-done. Here, the excessive intention is the driving force of the matter, spilling out of the subject, unwanted and unrecognizable (a remainder),

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<sup>108</sup> Sam Weber. *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan’s dislocation of psychoanalysis*. trans. Michael Levine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990 pg. 12

<sup>109</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare’s Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 16

appearing and returning to the subject as fate. The supposed suppression of the freedom of the subject by fate is then synonymous with the suppression of the subject by his own indeterminate and escaped intention – intention which has divested itself of the subject and assumed the form of fate by manifesting itself as the performative speech act of the Oracle.

### 3.0 *The Speech by the Stone*

*The small error in its formation consists of a repetition...It is only a small detail and anyone who was not a psycho-analyst would attach no importance to it...the psycho-analyst thinks differently...He has learned long ago that such cases of forgetting or repetition are significant...*<sup>110</sup>

– Sigmund Freud

Prior to discussing the content of “The Speech by the Stone,” the existing critical context of the book merits some observations. The close of *The Brothers Karamazov* has received, surprisingly, an unsatisfactory amount of attention. It would be thought that a book whose content inspired the scrutiny and praise of thinkers ranging from Albert Camus and D.H. Lawrence, to Freud, would have been contemplated in its full, especially given that Dostoevsky wrote in a letter that the closing pages are a “completely separate scene: the burial of Ilyusha and the graveside speech of Aleksey Karamazov to the boys in which in part is expressed the meaning of the whole novel.”<sup>111</sup> Oates’ essay, “Tragic and Comic Visions in *The Brothers Karamazov*,” echoes the general consensus about the text: that although it contains some of the most astute observations on the human condition ever conveyed through literature, it is, ultimately, unsatisfying as a comprehensive whole. Oates writes of the “...bewildering sense of incompleteness one feels after having read the novel...,” and that the novel “...moves toward one clear statement about the transformation of suffering into joy.”<sup>112</sup> The book’s somewhat

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<sup>110</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. trans Alan Tyson. ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989 pg. 79

<sup>111</sup> From Pis’ma vol IV, pg. 139 in Diane Oenning Thompson. *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 pg. 120

<sup>112</sup> Joyce Carol Oates. “Tragic and Comic Versions in *The Brothers Karamazov*” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter 1968-69 pg. 1

improbable ending is cited frequently as being one of the main culprits for this “unsatisfactory” quality, and, it must be said, there is anything but a clear statement made at its finish. The operatic epic ends with Alyosha, the spiritual Karamazov, lecturing a group of boys at the graveside of the fallen child, Ilyusha. He tells them how grand it is to be suffering at the loss of one of their own.<sup>113</sup> The boys, moved by Alyosha’s speech, start cheering “Hurrah for Karamazov!” and “Eternal Life!,” after which they all go to eat pancakes (or *blins*, depending on the quality of the translation – for it might be argued that it is far more likely one’s suffering would be assuaged with the promise of a *blin* over a pancake). Many Dostoevsky scholars have offered the reminder that this was intended to be the first book in a series, supposing that if he had not died his subsequent novel would have made sense of this seemingly incongruous ending.<sup>114</sup> Others, such as Oates, have taken the ending in earnest yet paid it little attention.

Another essay which exemplifies the frequent difficulty scholars have had with interpreting the ending is found in the *Norton Critical Edition of The Brothers Karamazov*. R. P. Blackmur writes:

Again, lastly, the final chapter is by way of a sermon, a prayer, and an invocation... I suggest that in the last words of the novel – “Hurrah for Karamazov!” – Dostoevsky is making for his whole novel one of those tragic phrases which comfort the heart beyond possibility and denying necessity, and which must be forgiven, for ‘without them, sorrow would be too heavy for men to bear.’... Hurrah for all the Karamazovs!<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>114</sup> This might very well be the case. In researching the scholarship surrounding the ending of this book there were some avenues that did not fall within my delimitations but are more than worth mentioning, nonetheless. Appendix 3 exemplifies this point.

<sup>115</sup> R.P. Blackmur in *The Brothers Karamazov: A Norton Critical Edition* by Fyodor Dostoevsky ed. Ralph E. Matlaw trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976 pg. 886

If this interpretation is accurate, Dostoevsky's closing thought is inconceivably simplistic and incompatible with the rest of the book. Would he truly offer "Hurrah for Karamazov!" as a balm so lovely as to comfort the heart – soothing it after the grueling look at the state of Man found in such chapters as the "The Grand Inquisitor"? Furthermore, if the final pages are in fact a "...sermon, a prayer, and an invocation...", the sermon at hand is hardly concerned with cheering on the Karamazovs. More frequently, in the many essays written on the novel, the ending is ignored altogether, suggesting that Dostoevsky's final published words have simply eluded a contemplative or critical interpretation on par with the attention that has been given the rest of his oeuvre. Dostoevsky, foreseeing some difficulty in the interpretation of this ending, left the reader some very deliberate clues. For instance, irony is explicitly ruled out as an interpretive option within the speech itself. Alyosha says, "Let him smile to himself ironically, that does not matter, a man often laughs at what is kind and good; it comes of mere frivolity; but I want to assure you, gentlemen, that when he smiles that way, he will at once say within his heart: 'No, I act badly in smiling ironically, for those things one must never laugh!'"<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, without irony's aid, we are left in the peculiar position of interpreting the scene with unequivocal earnestness – everything to be resolved through the "kind and good" graveside pep talk and the promise of pancakes.

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<sup>116</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 892

Along with the curious ending, another aspect of the book that has puzzled scholars is Dostoevsky's claim that this was a book about children. He wrote in letter to a writer, V.V. Mikhailov, dated March 16<sup>th</sup> of 1878:

...What interests me particularly in your letter is that you love children, have lived among children a great deal, and do so even now. Here, then, is my request, dear Vladimir Vasilyevich: I have conceived and will soon start writing a large novel in where, among other things, children, particularly youngsters aged approximately seven to fifteen, will play a great role. Many children will be introduced. I am studying them and have studied them all my life, and love them dearly, and have children myself.<sup>117</sup>

Given the main event, parricide, and the cast of characters – Lucifer, Ivan the intellectual, the Grand Inquisitor, and Jesus – it does seem a bit odd that the intention was ever to be a work substantially about children. While they do pop up here and there, often either brutish or pathetic, there is little to suggest these characters are to be given serious consideration. As with the ending, there is scholarship that obscures Dostoevsky's incongruous statement. David McDuff's essay is representative of the scholarly consensus surrounding Dostoevsky's stated intention to write about children, "Thus the original plan of a novel about children and childhood gradually became supplanted by a larger and more complex project..."<sup>118</sup> In May of 1878, just two months after the letter to V.V. Mikhailov was written expressing his great love of children, Dostoevsky's two year old son Alyosha died. The author's grief is evident in a letter to his brother:

My very dear brother Nikolay Mikaylovich, today our Alyosha died from sudden attack of epilepsy, which he had never had before. Yesterday he was still merry, sang, ran around, and

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<sup>117</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov: A Norton Critical Edition*. ed. Ralph E. Matlaw trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976 pg. 755

<sup>118</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. xv

today he is laid out for burial. The attack started at 9:30 in the morning, and at 2:30 Lyoshechka died. He will be buried Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> in the Great Okhtensky Cemetery. Goodbye, Kolya, pity Lyosha, you petted him frequently (remember how he imitated a drunk, “Vanka the foo”?). I have never felt so sad. We all grieve.

Your brother, F. Dostoevsky<sup>119</sup>

This biographical fact suggests the writer’s choice to close the book with the funeral of a dead boy was far from an arbitrary decision. Additionally, two elements in this letter are echoed in the ending of the book. Firstly, the statement “We all grieve,” is reiterated in the many references to the importance of collective suffering in the end of the text. Secondly, the side reference to memory (“remember how he imitated the drunk...”) In the last three pages of the novel, Alyosha’s speech and the boys’ response, Dostoevsky alludes to memory no less than twenty-one times. Dostoevsky, by having Alyosha’s lecture include, an albeit obscure anaphora, indicates memory as being a matter of import. Diane Oenning Thompson’s book, *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*, contemplates the thematic of memory in the book as a whole though unfortunately without particular attention to the novels conclusion. She observes Dostoevsky’s concern with memory throughout the text, positing that it is not simply memory that is an imperative strand, but, more specifically, childhood memory, “...childhood memories which acquired a salvational function at a moment of extreme crisis.”<sup>120</sup> This emphasis on the memories from childhood illustrate that Dostoevsky never deviated from his original intention and that this is a book about children and,

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<sup>119</sup> From Pis’ma ed. A.S. Dolinin, vols. II-IV. Moscow, 1930, 1934, 1959 in Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov: A Norton Critical Edition* ed. Ralph E. Matlaw trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976 pg. 756

<sup>120</sup> Diane Oenning Thompson. *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 pg. 119

furthermore, that the ending is substantially more than a puzzling exit after an exhilarating eight hundred pages. “The Speech by the Stone,” with its abundant calls for memory, substantially undermines any claim that the ending is without purpose; for repetition is not to be overlooked.

### **3.1 Childhood Memory**

*Mnemonic exercises aim at preserving one’s memory of something by repeatedly reminding him of it; which implies nothing else than the frequent contemplation of something as a likeness, and not in its own right.*<sup>121</sup>

– Aristotle

The close of *The Brothers Karamazov* employs repetition by mentioning memory twenty-one times, highlighting the connection between memory and repetition. This unrelenting drumbeat behind the ending of “The Speech by the Stone” is not so much an offhand reference to memory so much as it is an order TO REMEMBER! The act of memory, of recall, is heralded as an imperative, a duty, though precisely what is to be remembered remains unclear. The reader is left with the scene of a dead child, mourning boys, pancakes, and calls for it to be remembered. The investigation that follows will demonstrate that the call for memory at this juncture is not so much disingenuous as it is shrouded in additional mandates.

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<sup>121</sup> Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford translation*. ed. Jonathan Barnes. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984 pg. 716

As with all of the central themes of the book, the subject of childhood memory is peripherally introduced early in the book. Thompson notes that throughout the novel childhood memories play a key role in the adult characters' lives:

The bond between Lise and Alyosha is anchored in their childhood and is mentioned several times. Lise makes her first appearance with allusions to her childhood memories of Alyosha. At the end of her mother's conversation with Zossima, she bursts out: 'And why has he forgotten everything? He use to carry me about in his arms when I was little, we use to play together...he said that he would never forget me, that we are eternal friends, eternal, eternal, eternal!'<sup>122</sup>

"The Speech by the Stone" echoes this when a slippage occurs, leading to repetitious and heroic calls for the eternal. Thompson also observes that childhood memories hold importance for Grushenka and Dmitry. "Both Grushenka and Mitya have been saved from potential criminal acts by latent childhood memories which acquired a salvation function at a moment of extreme crisis. The two will be joined in 'real' life, share childhood memories joined by the motif of a guardian angel and two ordinary foods which become transformed into spiritual nourishment."<sup>123</sup> Unnoted by Thompson, the importance of childhood memory *and* food (*blins*) is precisely what comprises the subject matter in "The Speech by the Stone." Alyosha himself is first described in the book through the connection to a childhood memory of his mother. Several pages into the novel the narrator gives a descriptive account of the remembrance:

I have mentioned already, by the way, that though he lost his mother in his fourth year he remembered her all his life- her face, her caresses, 'as though she stood living before me.' Such memories may persist, as every one knows, from an even earlier age, even from two years old, but

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<sup>122</sup> Diane Oenning Thompson. *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 pg. 107

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pg 119

scarcely standing out through a whole lifetime like spots of light out of darkness, like a corner torn out of a huge picture, which was all faded and disappeared except that fragment. That is how it was with him. He remembered one still summer evening, an open window, the slanting rays of a setting sun (he recalled the slanting rays most vividly of all); in a corner of the room the holy image, before it a lighted lamp, and on her knees before the image his mother, sobbing hysterically with cries and shrieks, snatching him up in both arms, squeezing him close till it hurt...<sup>124</sup>

The phrase “he remembered her all his life” is echoed multiple times in the “The Speech by the Stone.” Also bearing a strong similarity to the ending is that this memory is suffused with the hysterical suffering of his mother, who, mourning, squeezes him *till it hurt*, and yet what he remembers most about the experience is the slanting rays of the setting sun. The somatic expression of suffering is present, yet without the power to overwhelm the aesthetic value of the image, rendering it impossibly traumatic.<sup>125</sup> In contrast, Thompson notes that the lack of sacred childhood memory is what fails to redeem Smerdyakov. She makes this assumption on the premise that Dostoevsky’s religiosity is to be taken in earnest.

In the Orthodox tradition, the activation of memory proceeds by an internalization of the sacred texts (Zosima takes the Word into his consciousness in childhood). One’s experiences in the world are then interpreted by this standard. This way they grow in the conscience and are resurrected at critical moments as a realization of what the higher reality is. Smerdyakov’s

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<sup>124</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov: A Norton Critical Edition*. ed. Ralph E. Matlaw trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976 pg. 13

<sup>125</sup>The strange and seemingly insignificant mention the narrator makes that ‘Such memories may persist, as every one knows, form an even earlier age, even from two years old...’ might reference the autobiographical trauma of the death of Dostoevsky’s two year old son Alyosha. Refer also to the dispute in Freud’s work over da Vinci’s early account of a childhood memory.

immunity to the Word left him without this crucial internal formation and thus he cannot ascend through memory to a vision of the higher reality, to redemption.<sup>126</sup>

While certainly a viable reading, it fails to explain what is occurring in “The Speech by the Stone” in that there is a blatant omission of the Word in Alyosha’s address to the boys. Thompson attempts to account for this by stating, “There is not a single canonical reference in Alyosha’s last speech, but in the way he apotheosizes Ilyusha’s suffering for his father, his standing up alone for ‘honour’, there is an implied variation on the Urbild of Christ’s suffering for His Father.”<sup>127</sup> If the place of the Word was what Dostoevsky thought important in the formation of the redemptive childhood memory, it seems improbable that he would neglect its mention in Alyosha’s speech. Thompson’s book, while thoroughly devoted to the subject of memory in *The Brothers Karamazov*, pays little attention to “The Speech by the Stone.” The two pages that discuss the ending offer substantially more than what is found in most other criticisms, however, her conclusion as to the significance of Ilyusha is, I believe, in error. She writes, “Alyosha’s commemoration of Ilyusha takes place in a context of loss, death and impending dispersal, which he tries to compensate by leaving the boys (and his reader) with a lasting memory of Ilyusha,” and that “He presents Ilyusha to the boys as a spiritual model in order to give a permanent future meaning to Ilyusha’s suffering and death, to insure that Ilyusha did not live, suffer and die in vain.”<sup>128</sup> Examining the broader context of the ending and closely probing the words of the speech casts substantial doubt as to the importance of Ilyusha in Alyosha’s speech.

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<sup>126</sup> Diane Oenning Thompson. *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 pg. 154

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 121

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 121

To suggest that Dostoevsky is mandating that the dead boy, Ilyusha, be perpetually memorialized and thus “the meaning of the whole novel,” is suspect at best. While he is spoken of in the last few pages – “Let us remember his face, his clothes, his poor little boots....”<sup>129</sup> – the memory of the boy, this being the same child at whom the speech’s audience once threw rocks, torturing and taunting him with little regret. The command “to remember” is a call to preserve the feeling that the boys have shared in being there, together, at Ilyusha’s grave, more than it is concerned with the child himself. Alyosha outlines the precise content of the memory being sought after, “...let us never forget how good we found it here, all of us in association, united by such good and happy feeling, which for this time our love for the poor boy has possibly made us better than we are in actual fact.”<sup>130</sup> Alyosha defines that the memory that should never be forgotten is one defined by collectivity, “all in association” and “united”; the singular love of, or for, the boy is strategically absent, rather the band of brothers is raised to the position of prominence.<sup>131</sup> Dostoevsky has excused Ilyusha’s parents from attendance at the grave site, a move that neatly creates a leveling effect upon all of the attendees, where no *one* stands apart in their intensity of mourning. The few mentions of the boy, placed alongside the many insistences upon collectivity, a proportion that is substantially

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<sup>129</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 893

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 891

<sup>131</sup> The emphasis placed on “association” begs to be addressed, if even haphazardly, by Freud’s definition of the term. Consider the following from *Interpretation of Dreams* in regards to the relationship between association and memory. “Our perceptions prove also to be connected with one another in memory, and this is especially so if they originally occurred simultaneously. We call this the fact of association.” and “It is a similar fact that we retain permanently something more than the mere *content* of our perceptions which impinge upon the system *Pcpt.* Our perceptions are linked with one another in our memory – first and foremost according to simultaneity of occurrence. We speak of this fact as ‘association’...” Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. trans and ed. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1972 pg. 577

lopsided, render it deeply questionable if the love of the boy is at all important to Alyosha's project. Alyosha further proclaims,

Know then that there is nothing more lofty, nor more powerful, nor more healthy nor more useful later on in life than some good memory like that, one preserved from childhood, from one's parents' home. Much is to be said about your education, but a beautiful memory like that, one preserved from childhood, is possibly the very best education of all. If he gathers many such memories in his life, a man is saved for all of it. And even if only one good memory remains within our hearts, then even it may serve some day for our salvation.<sup>132</sup>

Here, Alyosha has moved away from contemplating Ilyusha at all and the supposition has become that redemption resides in the collective experience of suffering-as-joy (certainly what Oates is referring to when she claims that the ending "...moves toward one clear statement about the transformation of suffering into joy"<sup>133</sup>). However, this is not entirely precise in that the prescription for redemption is more specifically the *memory-of-collectively-experiencing-suffering-as-joy*. Suffering is necessarily secondary to memory; suffering itself apparently does not hold redemptive power unless it is capable of being recalled. This passage further conjectures that a multitude of this type of memory is better – as if the boys should seek to acquire additional experiences of collective-suffering-as-joy. Alyosha's proposition that memory of collective suffering is an agent of possible salvation is damning in that we are all, despite any possible intention, bound to forget. Hamlet's cry "Remember Thee!" and his subsequent reach for the pen is here analogous to the boys cry "Eternal Memory!" coupled with their exit for pancakes –

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<sup>132</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 891

<sup>133</sup> Joyce Carol Oates. "Tragic and Comic Versions in *The Brothers Karamazov*" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter 1968-69 pg. 1

forgetting is implicit. Alyosha also proclaims that the experience has, "...united us in this kind and good emotion, one which we shall always, all our lives, remember and are resolved to remember..."<sup>134</sup> Therefore, the boys are being asked to inscribe into and onto themselves the experience of sharing collectively, more than anything else, an *emotion*. This is at best precarious in that emotion is defined by fluidity, lack of form, and, customarily can not to be trusted. To posit the ability to remember (only-ever a possibility) an emotion (which are perilously structured metonymically as well as always fleeting) as the agency of redemption, is, to say the least, difficult to achieve. The phrase "...always, all our lives remember and are resolved to remember," already implies forgetting – this, of course, possibly being what Alyosha had already anticipated. Alyosha's repeated insistence to the boys and the reader to remember is nothing if not an acknowledgment that the pit of forgetting lies everywhere. The implication becomes, to have the suffering-as-joy experience is meaningless unless it can be assured that one will be able to bring it to mind at some later point with sufficient enough force that unforeseen events will be altered, or at least perceived differently. Alyosha's elaborate construction of "eternal memory," potent enough in its collectivity and suffering-as-joy, is done with the knowledge that it will be forgotten.

The frequent remarks on memory found in "The Speech by the Stone" designate Dostoevsky's writing as excessively determined and at the same time undeterminable. Alyosha's technique of multiple commands to remember encounters the moment, where, what was once an accumulation, becomes a dismantling. Towards the end of Alyosha's

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<sup>134</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 892

speech he rambles on in the following manner, "...let us never *forget* one another. This I *repeat* again. I give you my word, gentlemen, that I will never *forget* a single one of you; each face that gazes at me now, this moment, I shall *remember*...."<sup>135</sup> (emphasis added)

The passage is exemplary in that everything is eliminated save remembrance, forgetting, and repetition. It also bears a similarity to the moment in *King Oedipus*, where a certain prominence, having been built up for some time, unravels itself via an orgy of repetition, making any specificity of meaning a certain improbability. The injunction to remember has been made so often, and with regards to enough different aspects of *the moment*, that it is no longer certain what is of paramount importance to remember. It could be the boy, or the boys, or the feeling of suffering-as-joy – it has become extremely difficult to tell. The unraveling is furthered, until the final exchange that takes place prior to the exit for pancakes is simply shouts of, "Eternal memory!" between Alyosha and the boys (the absurdity of marrying the term "eternal" to "memory" equaling the apparent silliness of the pancake). At issue is either that Dostoevsky is incapable of containing his intention through written language or, that by employing repetition, his character Alyosha is deliberately creating an inarticulate memory and calling for it to be eternal.

### **3.2 A Response for Ivan: Kitsch**

*If he still retains a certain lucidity, all he can do is turn back towards his childhood which, however his guides and mentors may have botched it, still strikes him as somehow charming.*<sup>136</sup>

– *Andre Breton*

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pg. 892

<sup>136</sup> Andre Breton. *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1972 pg. 3

The suffering and death of a child is the sole concern of Ivan's rant against God in "Mutiny." His precise criticism is that the death of children ought never to be used to "replenish the sum of suffering that was needed in order to purchase truth": "And what harmony can there be when there is hell: I want to forgive and I want to embrace – I don't want anyone to suffer any more. And if sufferings of children have gone to replenish the sum of suffering that was needed in order to purchase truth, then I declare in advance that no truth, not even the whole truth, is worth such a price."<sup>137</sup> While Alyosha does not respond to Ivan at the time, the ending of the book could be read as Alyosha's delayed reply – one countering Ivan's earlier stated objections by expressly utilizing the suffering of a child in order that others could be redeemed – this then is Dostoevsky's final word on the matter. Indeed, there is a sum of suffering to be paid, and a truth to be purchased, truth in the form of collectively-experiencing-suffering-as-joy and most crucially, the preserving of its memory. While inarticulate memory of suffering-as-joy becomes the elevated condition, this further renders the suffering-as-suffering found in the specificity of the individual ( also seen in the text as children, Ilyusha and Ivan's child that is ripped apart by dogs, but also in the suffering of Ilyusha's parents and Lise) insignificant.

In action shortly prior to Ilyusha's funeral the following vignette between Dmitri and Katya is depicted:

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., pg. 282-283

‘Why have I come?’ she began again, frenziedly and hurriedly. ‘To embrace your feet, to press your hands, like this, to the point of pain, you remember, the way I used to press them in Moscow, to say again to you that you are my God, my joy, to say to you that I love you madly,’ she almost groaned in torment and suddenly avidly nestled her lips against his hand. Tears gushed from her eyes.

Alyosha stood speechless and embarrassed; he had absolutely not expected what he saw.

‘Love is past, Mitya!’ Katya began again, “But dear unto pain to me is what is past. Know that for ever. But now, for one little moment, let there be what might have been,’ she mouthed with a twisted smile, again looking joyfully into his eyes. ‘Both you and I now love another, yet all the same I shall love you eternally and you me, did you know? Do you hear, love me, all the rest of your life love me!’ she exclaimed with a kind of almost menacing vibration in her voice.

‘I shall love and...you know, Katya,’ Mitya began to say, taking breath at each word, ‘you know, five days ago, that evening, I loved you...When you fell faint, and were carried out.. All the rest of my life! So it shall be, so it shall eternally be...’

Thus did they babble to each other words that were almost without sense and uttered in frenzy, perhaps not even truthful, but at that moment all was truth, and they themselves believed themselves unstintingly.<sup>138</sup>

This bears an uncanny similarity to what transpires between Alyosha and the boys a short time later. Firstly, Katya’s “To embrace your feet, to press your hands...” mirrors the manner in which Ilyusha is described, “...his face, his clothes, his poor little boots...” In both this scene and Alyosha’s speech, the aspects to be recalled about an interpersonal relationship are these small, physical details. Furthermore, this conversation also serves

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<sup>138</sup> It should be noted that this is taken from the text as is, there have been no ellipsis added to condense the passage. It appears as Dostoevsky wished it to be read. Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 882

as a eulogy of sorts; the two are engaged in memorializing their prior relationship in a manner that will enable them to carry a memento into the future, precisely what Alyosha attempts to achieve for the boys. Yet, in this exchange the call for a memory of love eternal is ridiculed by Dostoevsky's narrator as babble and Alyosha looks on in shock; this specific instance of pathos and memory is apparently strongly disdained and might have been included as a cautionary tale. No similar indications exist to suggest that "The Speech by the Stone" be taken as anything but entirely sincere. After the chapter "The Grand Inquisitor," Alyosha, duplicating a move made by Jesus in the *poeme*, gets up and kisses Ivan, who exclaims, "Plagiarism!" Now, at the books end, Alyosha is plagiarizing again. Having watched in shock at what unfolded between Katya and Dmitri, he simply lifts elements of the scene and incorporates them into his speech. This would render Alyosha a character, like Oedipus or even Echo that embodies the double, constantly embroiled in reiteration. "The Speech by the Stone" is then the second time he offered Ivan a plagiarized response.

If the close of the book is Alyosha's belated response to Ivan, then certain problems arise. From this viewpoint, if the interpretation of the ending is that it is nearly void of meaning, as is commonly thought, then Dostoevsky's close would be an unacknowledged acquiescence to Ivan's thesis. Yet, rather than void of meaning, the repeated command to remember undoes the allusion and it is brought through the crucible of the nothing point to re-emerge as something altogether different, a hail to the powers of inarticulateness. Arguing that this vignette suggests inarticulateness through its usage of repetition (together with its concern for memory and its depiction of collectivity and

children) can best be made by interpreting the scene as kitsch. Kitsch has long been thought of as a counterpoint to the aesthetics of modernity, and, by extension, individualism versus collectivity. Taking this dichotomy and applying it to the one I have constructed for memory aligns articulate memory with the aesthetics of modernity/individualism and inarticulateness becomes aligned with kitsch/collectivity. Alyosha's counterpoint to Ivan's position is kitsch. Perhaps employing kitsch is the wisest recourse in the face of existentialism as seriously taken as Ivan's. From this perspective the double plagiarism is not a reiteration (the first echo), but the sharp contrast of radical otherness (the second echo).

### **3.2a Clement Greenberg**

In the hundred year dialogue surrounding kitsch aspects of repetition have been observed as one of its defining features. The discussion in the first half of the twentieth century was largely a unilateral attack by the intelligentsia against what has been seen as certain corrupting qualities of kitsch. At the heart of the offensives has been the question of imitation and duplication, or mass reproduction – both of which are seen to undermine the tenets of bourgeois authority (a premise notably championed by Walter Benjamin). Clement Greenberg's famous essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," economizes and politicizes kitsch in the following manner:

The encouragement of kitsch is merely another of the inexpensive ways in which totalitarian regimes seek to ingratiate themselves with their subjects. Since these regimes cannot raise the

cultural levels of the masses- even if they wanted to- by anything short of surrender to international socialism, they will flatter the masses by bringing culture down to their level.<sup>139</sup>

Any work by Dostoevsky is hard to locate among the lower rungs of the cultural ladder, and, in fact, this writer does not see Dostoevsky's final move as a big play to win the masses approval.<sup>140</sup> However, Greenberg formulates the aesthetic of kitsch as one that is, above all else, capable of being shared by the masses (a sensitivity that can be shared over and over in a nonspecific fashion), while the avant-garde sensibility is not intended to be widely received. Dostoevsky, in his final move is certainly calling for valorizing the collective moment over the specificity of individuated experience, and by extension, the inarticulate over the subjectivizing memory.

### **3.2b Sam Brinkley**

The second half of the last century saw a project to recoup kitsch. In Sam Brinkley's recent article, "Kitsch as a Repetitive System," he argues that the value of kitsch is due precisely to its repetitive quality. He maintains that kitsch is a "...transmutation of failed imitation into a repetitive character, an aesthetic value itself."<sup>141</sup> For Brinkley, the importance of kitsch has to do with what he calls a "corrective" to the aesthetics of autonomy presented within high art with kitsch offering a

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<sup>139</sup> Clement Greenberg. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in *Clement Greenberg: the collected essays and criticism, vol. 1 Perceptions and Judgments*, 1939-1944. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986 pg. 20

<sup>140</sup> An interesting discussion in regards to Dostoevsky's loyalty to the Tsar or lack there of would be productive in regards to this tenet of kitsch. See Appendix 3

<sup>141</sup> Sam Brinkley. "Kitsch as a Repetitive System: A Problem for the Theory of Taste Hierarchy" in *Journal of Material Culture*. New York; Sage Publications, vol. 5, no.2. pg. 6 1999

universal value in the form of a shared emotion, balancing the push towards individualism found within its avant-garde counterpart. While Brinkley sharply discounts the previous scholarship on kitsch as thinly veiled hierarchical elitism, he too employs dichotomous thinking. The substrata of his argument is the accepted idea that singularity is aligned with the innovative, creative and forward thinking aspect of culture while repetition is paired with what is easily understood by many. He writes,

I will argue for the uniqueness of kitsch as a distinct style, one which celebrates repetition and conventionality as a value itself. The kitsch sensibility I will uncover is one which employs the thematics of repetition over innovation, a preference for formulae and conventions over originality and experiment, an appeal to sentimental affirmation over existential probing.<sup>142</sup>

While it might be easy to utilize Brinkley's definition at this point – Alyosha is certainly pushing hard for sentimental affirmation over (Ivan's) existential probing – his dichotomy disallows repetition from the category of creativity or individuality. Dostoevsky's closing, while somewhat confusing, is employing repetition in a manner that is rubbing shoulders with collectivity and sentimental affirmation, and the innovative realm. This is an instance where kitsch is seen outside of hierarchical elitism and beyond the dichotomy of autonomy/ creativity as opposed to collectivity/ repetition. It is, rather, an inarticulateness bred from creatively employed repetition (a non-binary kitsch).

Brinkley evades offering a discussion on repetition itself, preferring to use it as a free floating concept applicable to many different modalities. He writes that the repetitive aspect of kitsch can be found in three ways. The first is its emulation of cultural products

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pg. 2

(here repetition is synonymously used with copies). Secondly, he noted kitsch's tendency to be located within the household and sees this as repetition in the habitual, what he calls embeddedness (repetition related to routine). Thirdly, Brinkley highlights kitsch's fondness for the feeling, for leveling the complexity of human experience down to melancholy and nostalgia (here, and most unclearly, repetition is aligned with reductive sentiment). In regards to Dostoevsky, it is Brinkley's third area of repetition that is of primary concern. While I observe that repetition is exhibited by the twenty one injunctions TO REMEMBER, Brinkley notes that the emotional operation of kitsch is based in repetition, that this third aspect of the repetitive in kitsch is, "...kitsch's love for all things sentimental, expressing a joy in feeling itself, whether that feeling is elation, sorrow, or fondness. This feeling for feeling lies at the root of kitsch's imitative scheme...."<sup>143</sup> This figures repetition, as it pertains to pathos, as being both reductive and also linked with some sort of generalized déjà vu; where we are, all of us, feeling this feeling *again*. It is precisely an inarticulate collective déjà vu that Alyosha is paying homage to and trying to cement for the future.

### **3.2c Milan Kundera**

Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* offers a definition of kitsch in response to an incident sparked at the sight of *children* running on the grass.

When the heart speaks the mind finds it indecent to object. In the realm of kitsch, the dictatorship of the heart reigns supreme. The feeling induced by kitsch must be the kinds the multitudes can share. Kitsch may not, therefore, derive from an unusual situation: it must derive from the basic

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pg. 8

images people have engraved in their memories.... Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch. The brotherhood of man on earth will be possible only on a basis of kitsch.<sup>144</sup>

Kundera's description of kitsch lends itself neatly to what is found in "The Speech by the Stone." The figures in both texts that generate the first tear are children, the significance of which is multifaceted. Children arouse little thinking: the heart dances right past any plausible or possible mental objection. Furthermore, childhood is the most elemental of shared experience. Also, in Dostoevsky and Kundera's vignettes, the children, or the child, serve only insofar as they engender the second tear to flow; they are innocent functionaries to the experience of being moved together with all of mankind. Therefore, interchanging the two, what Alyosha is prescribing for the future salvation of these boys is the memory of the experience of the "brotherhood of man on earth" and, then, the experience of "brotherhood of man on earth" must be nothing less than suffering-as-joy. This examination leads to the conclusion that kitsch, beyond an aesthetic category, is a phenomenological experience witnessed in inarticulate memory (synonymous to déjà vu).

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<sup>144</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. Michael Henry Heim, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984 pg. 250-251

#### ***4.0 Additional Literature Suggesting the Dual Construction of Memory***

*It is only at the instant when the state or affection is implanted in the soul that memory exists, and therefore memory is not itself implanted concurrently with the implantation of sensory experience.*<sup>145</sup>

– Aristotle

With the question of déjà vu raised, an examination of the work of two other writers on the subject of memory is productive. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a period in which many writers engaged in questioning memory, two of them suggesting a duality of structure. *The Brothers Karamazov* was first published in 1880. In 1896 Henri Bergson published *Matter and Memory*. Proust's novel *Remembrance of Things Past* (more accurately translated as *In Search of Lost Time*) was published between 1913 and 1927 (an additional connection is Bergson and Proust were related by marriage). Freud's thought on memory spanned nearly this entire period. Julia Kristeva, in her book on Proust, *Time and Sense*, notes the seeming importance that memory held for the writers of the day. However, she invokes Theodule Ribot's article *La Psychologie des Sentiments*, to make the point that it was not necessarily memory as such that held a "hypostatized" position. Memory was seen only as important in that it served as an instrument that gave rise to sensation. While this could very possibly be accurate, it nonetheless stands that during this period of history the theme of memory was subjected to the humanistic rigors of cataloguing in a manner never seen before or arguably since. The hypothesis must be that the preoccupation with memory found at the same moment in France, Austria, and Russia (and also intersecting or presupposing the

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<sup>145</sup> Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford translation*. ed. Jonathan Barnes. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984 pg. 717

avant-garde art movements of the early twentieth century) was brought about at least in part by the rapid innovations in technology and, in particular, the growing proliferation of mechanical imagery. The technologizing of the human condition is always in concert with the ongoing modification of memory.<sup>146</sup> The mechanical reproduction of imagery and its subsequent bearing on the structuring of the psyche is a rich subject yet to reach its pinnacle of discussion. Much of Bergson's book is a study of the similarities and differences between the image and memory as he launches concepts such as the memory-image (an echo that is later found in Deleuze) while at the same time it clearly states that memories are not representations:

Consider memory. The body retains motor habits capable of acting the past over again; it can resume attitudes in which the past will insert itself; or again, by repetition of certain cerebral phenomena, which have prolonged former perceptions, it can furnish to remembrance a point of attachment with the actual, a means of recovering its lost influence upon present reality: but in no case can the brain store up recollections or images. Thus, neither in perception, nor in memory, nor a fortiori in the higher attainments of mind, does the body contribute directly to representation.<sup>147</sup>

The works of Bergson and Proust are here briefly included in order to substantiate the claim that memory is dually structured and to further contextualize the time period. Both of these authors similarly split memory into divergent poles, not one agreeing with or reiterating the other. The effort of this paper is not to controvert any of these premises, but, rather, to offer an addition.

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<sup>146</sup> See Serena Dawn Hashimoto. "Is this Desire; Nothingness in Communication" in *New York Studies in Media Philosophy*, ed. Wolfgang Shirmarcher, vol. 6 2001. In this text I argued this same hypothesis in regards to Italian Futurism.

<sup>147</sup> Henri Bergson. *Matter and Memory*. trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer New York: Zone Books, 1988 pg. 225-226

#### 4.1 Bergson

... but pure memory is a spiritual manifestation. With memory we are, in truth, in the domain of spirit.<sup>148</sup>

– Henri Bergson

Bergson's discussion and devotion to the subject of memory left a body of work vast as it is nuanced. *Memory and Matter* offers at least ten different veins in which memory is categorized and explored. The subjects of duration, habit, and spontaneous memory are here sketched to the exclusion of the rest of his elaborate thesis. Duration is a key component to how Bergson viewed the relationship between memory, matter, and perception. The accumulatory economy of duration creates difference in a manner very similar to how repetition leads inevitably to difference (*differance*).

Let us take the most stable of inner states, the visual perception of a motionless external object. Even though the object remains the same, even though I look at it from the same side, from the same angle, the perception I have of it is nevertheless different from the one I have just had, even if it is only because my perception is a moment older. My state of mind, as it advances along the path of time, swells continually with the duration it gathers; one could say that it grows as it goes on, accumulating substance from itself.<sup>149</sup>

The close relationship between duration and difference would seem to lead to the conclusion that which is dwelled upon ultimately is altered. However, Bergson refrains

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., pg. 240

<sup>149</sup> Quoted in Henri Bonnet. "Proust and Bergson" in *Critical Essays on Marcel Proust* ed. Barbara J. Bucknall. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1987 pg. 34

from making this claim in that he distinguishes between, on the one hand, mechanical memory or habit-memory, and on the other, individual memory which refers to a unique moment in time which is incapable of being repeated; this he calls spontaneous memory. The later is considered by Bergson to be “pure” form. Spontaneous memory is seen as impervious to alteration by either repetition or duration.

But how can we overlook the radical difference between that which must be built up by repetition which is essentially incapable of being repeated? Spontaneous recollection is perfect from the outset; time can add nothing to its image without disfiguring it; it retains in memory its place and date. On the contrary, a learned recollection passes out of time in the measure that the lesson is better known; it becomes more and more impersonal, more and more foreign to our past life. Repetition, therefore, in no sense effects the conversion of the first into the last; its office is merely to utilize more and more the movements by which the first was continued, in order to organize them together and, by setting up a mechanism, to create bodily habit. Indeed, this habit could not be called a remembrance were it not that I remember that I have acquired it, and I remember its acquisition only because I appeal to that memory which is spontaneous, which dates events and records them but once.<sup>150</sup>

Repetition therefore draws memory out of time, strips it of its personal residue, and creates habit; this, then, is indebted to the originary spontaneous memory. At the same time, repetition can not affect the spontaneous memory, and “in no sense effects the conversion of the first into the last.” This differentiation between the two types of memory has implications for what is found in “The Speech by the Stone.” The obvious conclusion to draw would be that the type of memory Alyosha is attempting to create and

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<sup>150</sup> Henri Bergson. *Matter and Memory*. trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer New York: Zone Books, 1988 pg. 83-84

instill is of the spontaneous variety. Yet, within the Bergsonian framework, Alyosha's repetitious injunctions to remember must be seen not as additional assurance that the memory is made, but as obscuring it somehow, drawing the moment out of time in the very same instance the moment is being experienced. The assumption must be that the children are indeed in the moment of acquiring a spontaneous memory and the repetitious injunctions are more surely being conducted in order to distort the vividness of the spontaneous memory, to insure that the memory is as inarticulate as it is spontaneous.

Lastly, it is essential to note that for Bergson spontaneous memory is found in a pronounced way in children, "The extraordinary development of spontaneous memory in most children is due to the fact that they have not yet persuaded their memory to remain bound up with their conduct. They usually follow the impression of the moment, and as with them action does not bow to the suggestions of memory, so neither are their recollections limited to the necessities of action. They seem to retain with greater facility only because they remember with less discernment."<sup>151</sup> The very trajectory of Alyosha's speech suggests a growing lack of discernment, facilitating the improbable "Eternal Memory!" Thus childhood and inarticulateness are optimistically intertwined.

#### **4.2 Proust**

*Is not the involuntary recollection, Proust's memoire involontaire, much closer to forgetting than what is usually called memory?*<sup>152</sup>

– Walter Benjamin

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., pg. 153-154. Directly after this quote Bergson writes, "Indeed we observe this same exaggeration of spontaneous memory in men whose intellectual development hardly goes beyond childhood." This immediately brings to mind the figure of *The Idiot* and might suggest a thread in Dostoevsky's work.

<sup>152</sup> Walter Benjamin. *Illuminations*. ed. Hannah Ardent. trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969 pg. 202

Proust's dual construction is between voluntary and involuntary memory. While certain tenuous links to Bergson's thought can be made, substantial differences exist between the two paradigms. Henri Bonnet observes,

...the conception of the real is no way the same in Proust and Bergson and that in the later it is directed towards the future (which does not necessarily mean towards action). What is real for Bergson is, in fact, whatever is in motion. But is the past, in contrast, the primordial reality for Proust? We do not think so. Reality for Proust, who in this is quite different, is outside of *time*.<sup>153</sup>

Therefore, the idea of duration is not in any way compatible with how Proust viewed the function of memory within the subject. In reference to the past Proust wrote,

It is, no doubt, the existence of our body, which we may compare to a vase enclosing our spiritual nature, that induces us to suppose that all our inner wealth, our past joys, all our sorrows, are perpetually in our possession. Perhaps, it is equally inexact to suppose that they escape or return. In any case if they remain within us, for most of the time it is in an unknown region where they are of no use to us, and where even the most ordinary are crowded out by memories of a different kind, which preclude any simultaneous occurrences of them in our consciousness. But if the context of sensations in which they are preserved is recaptured, they acquire in turn the same power of installing alone in us the self that originally lived them.<sup>154</sup>

Proust proposes the body is responsible for our past being somehow in our possession, acting like a "vase." Memories are contained, but in a manner that is "of no use" this unknown region is crowded by memories of a "different kind." This "different kind" of memory is remains undefined though this "different kind" of memory could very easily

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<sup>153</sup> Henri Bonnet. "Proust and Bergson" in *Critical Essays on Marcel Proust* ed. Barbara J. Bucknall. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1987 pg. 49

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 40

be likened to inarticulate memory. Proust then follows by writing that if the context is preserved and reconstructed the self that experienced the moment will be returned to us. The subject of the contexts' role in the expression of intention, as discussed in the section on the performative speech act, is returned and witnessed as crucial in the problematic of memory. Julia Kristeva writes on the subject of involuntary memory:

A sensation from the past remains within us, and involuntary memory recaptures it when a related perception in the present is stimulated by the same desire as the prior sensation. A spatio-temporal association of sensations is thus established, relying on a link, a structure, and reminiscence. Sensation takes refuge in this interwoven network and turns into an impression, which means that sensation loses its solitary specificity.<sup>155</sup>

This is almost the verbatim definition of *déjà vu*, a feeling of already experiencing something occurring at the present. *Déjà vu*, in English primarily used as a phenomenological term, etymologically places an emphasis on the visual. *Déjà vu* translates roughly to “now already seen”, or to see “now what has already been seen.”<sup>156</sup> Lacan makes the observation, “...what is not recognized erupts into consciousness in the form of the seen...the ambiguous phenomenon of *déjà vu*, which lies between these two modes of relation, the recognized and the seen.”<sup>157</sup> *Déjà vu* can not be properly recognized and is nonetheless seen. Yet, when the subject wanders into a region where some element of context is being repeated and what Proust would call an involuntary

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<sup>155</sup> Julia Kristeva. *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*. trans. Ross Guberman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996 pg. 251

<sup>156</sup> Chambers Dictionary of Etymology. ed. Robert K. Barnhart. New York: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 1988 pg. 261

<sup>157</sup> Jacques Lacan. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I, Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*. ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. John Forrester. New York: W.W. Norton & Company 1975 pg. 59

memory is generated, what exactly is *seen*?<sup>158</sup> The answer must be that what is *seen* is precisely what is not *seen* insofar as the absence of the previous experience is presently manifested. Derrida writes, “*Already (deja)* such is the name for what has been effaced or subtracted beforehand, but which has nevertheless left behind a mark, a signature which is retracted in that very thing from which it is withdrawn.”<sup>159</sup> What is *seen* is time itself, or, to use Bergson’s phrase, duration, in that time has continued on and the context has been emptied of the substance of the memory, a mark generated from a withdrawal. Déjà vu is the moment that inarticulate memory most firmly asserts itself as a phenomenological experience; the sense that one has *seen* what one is *seeing* previously – a phenomenon generated by an insufficiency or surplus of intention which is therefore never substantiated or assumable.

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<sup>158</sup> Walter Benjamin wrote, “To be sure, most memories that we search for come to us as visual images. Even the free-floating forms of the *memorie involontaire* are still in large part isolated, though enigmatically present, visual images. For this very reason, anyone who wishes to surrender knowingly to the innermost overtones in this work must place himself in a special stratum—the bottom-most-of this involuntary memory, one in which the materials of memory no longer appear singly, as images, but tell us about a whole, amorphously and formlessly, indefinitely and weightily, in the same way as the weight of his net tells a fisherman about his catch.” in *Illuminations*. ed. Hannah Ardent. trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969 pg. 214

<sup>159</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Spurs*. trans. Barbara Harlow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978 pg. 39

## 5.0 Freud: remembering childhood

...At the same time we are all too ready to forget that in fact everything to do with our life is chance, from our origin out of the meeting of spermatozoon and ovum onwards – chance which nevertheless has a share in the law and necessity of nature, and which merely lacks any connection with our wishes and illusions.<sup>160</sup>

– Sigmund Freud

In 1928 Sigmund Freud completed a paper entitled “Dostoevsky and Parricide” – a culmination of what had been over a decade of thought in regards to the famous writer. In it Freud levies an irregular attack on Dostoevsky, predicated on an assumption that Dostoevsky’s memories pertaining to his father’s murder and his imprisonment by the Tsar were inaccurate. Freud’s doubt as to the veracity of the personal memories of others is found earliest in his work when he abandons the ‘seduction theory’, the reason cited that he no longer believed the accounts of childhood abuse given by his patients to be accurate. From this point forth, Freud maintains skepticism of his patient’s memories, in particular, those from childhood. Freud criticizes Dostoevsky in his paper and even proclaims in a letter to colleague Theodor Reik, “I do not really like him.”<sup>161</sup> Simultaneously, he writes with particular reverence for one of author’s texts, *The Brothers Karamazov*. The given rationale as to his affection is the novel’s concern with parricide, a subject key in several of Freud’s texts including *Totem and Taboo*. There are many accounts of Freud’s great pleasure at reading *The Brothers Karamazov*, including a statement from a former Russian patient of his known as the Wolf-Man, Sergi Pankeev,

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<sup>160</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. trans Alan Tyson. ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989 pg. 100

<sup>161</sup> Theodor Reik. *The Search Within*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956 pg. 76

who in his own reflections upon his therapy, notes Freud's enthusiasm over the accounts of the Oedipal complex and parricide in the book.<sup>162</sup> However, *The Brothers Karamazov* contains other themes, not the least of which is memory. While by no means the thematic centerpiece of the novel, memory might be the most important. It certainly has proven to be the most elusive, omitted as it is from the plethora of scholarly attention the book has received. While Freud may not have realized it, he was praising on the one hand, Dostoevsky's masterwork concerned with memory, while disparaging, on the other, the writer's ability to remember.

### ***5.1 The formulation of memory and fantasy in psychoanalysis***

*Is there any reason why a memory of childhood should offer us more difficulty than a dream?*<sup>163</sup>

– Sigmund Freud

In the 1890's the groundwork was laid for Freud's formative work, the *Interpretation of Dreams*; a labor which came during a time of intense personal turmoil. Freud wrote in the forward to the second edition, "During the long years in which I have been working at the problems of the neuroses I have often been in doubt and sometimes been shaken in my convictions."<sup>164</sup> The mid 1890's were, for Freud, marked by a number of events that proved to have a lasting impact on his thought. The first event of note is that in 1896, Freud's father Jacob died at the age of eighty-two. Freud wrote that the *Interpretation of Dreams* was in part a reaction to the death of his father, "...that is to

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<sup>162</sup> S.K. Pankeev. *The Wolf-Man by the Wolf-Man*. ed. by Muriel Gardner. New York: Basic Books, 1971

<sup>163</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. trans Alan Tyson. ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989 pg. 47

<sup>164</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. trans and ed. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1972 pg. xxvi

say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life."<sup>165</sup> In Freud's correspondence with his primary confidant of the time, Wilhelm Fleiss, he wrote, "By the time he died, his life had been long over, but in my inner self the whole past has been reawakened by this event. I now feel quite uprooted."<sup>166</sup> His account connects the reoccurrence of memories from the past, most certainly, childhood memories, and his feeling of being "uprooted"; this was not to be the sole event to provoke the sense that he was losing his footing. Simultaneously, Freud, having long been at work researching the cause of neuroses, was prepared to offer his findings. In 1896 Freud gave a paper entitled "The Aetiology of Hysteria" suggesting the 'seduction theory,' which states the problems witnessed in hysterical patients are derived from memories of sexual abuse found in their childhood.<sup>167</sup> Freud specified that it is the memories of abuse from childhood – not the experience itself – that are responsible for the resultant symptoms. "Another objection might arise from the exception being taken to the supposition that the memory of infantile sexual experience produces such an enormous pathogenic effect, while the actual experience itself has none. And it is true that we are not accustomed to the notion of powers emanating from a mnemonic image which were absent from the real impression."<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., xxvi

<sup>166</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss, 1887-1904*. trans. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985 pg. 202

<sup>167</sup> It should be noted that in the original paper the word seduction (verführung) is not used solely to describe the childhood trauma. Rape, abuse, attack, assault, aggression, and trauma are all utilized to describe the event (vergewaltigung, missbrauch, angriff, attentat, traumen). See Jeffrey M. Masson. *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. New York: Farrars Strauss and Giroux, 1984 pg. 3

<sup>168</sup> Sigmund Freud. "The Aetiology of Hysteria" read before the Society for Psychiatry and Neurology, Vienna, April 21, 1896 in *Collected Papers, vol 1*. trans. Joan Riviere. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1959 pg. 209

The reception of the paper was a disaster and Freud found himself ostracized by the psychoanalytic community. In response to this event Freud wrote in a letter to Fleiss, “Now I have no idea of where I stand,” and in his autobiography he writes of this time period that he felt “helpless bewilderment,” “completely at a loss” and, echoing his comment to Fleiss, “reality was lost from under one’s feet.”<sup>169</sup> It is from this state of confusion and groundlessness that, as William Beatty Warner writes, “(there) opens a clearing for an understanding of fantasy.”<sup>170</sup> While apparently true, the understanding of the formation and function of fantasy was not made without the simultaneous move away from believing his patients’ childhood memories. The suggestion has been made, most famously by Jeffery M. Masson, that motivating Freud’s rejection of the ‘seduction theory’ was the desire to regain the confidence of the psychoanalytic community. In his book, *The Assault on Truth: Freud’s Suppression of the Seduction Theory*, Masson also claimed that Freud rejects the ‘seduction theory’ in an unconscious attempt to cover up a botched surgery that Fleiss performed on one of Freud’s patients, Emma Eckstein. Freud’s relationship to Fleiss can be characterized as overly yielding and inexplicably powerful given Fleiss’ lesser intellectual ability. Warner characterizes the importance of the friendship with Fleiss:

...by occupying the position of ‘analyst’ and father figure in their transference triggered by the self analysis Freud undertakes after his real father dies in 1896...Fleiss is a stabilizing authority whom Freud begins by esteeming and overvaluing; this attitude allows Freud a time of

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<sup>169</sup> Sigmund Freud. “The History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement,” *S.E.*, XIV, pg. 17 and An Autobiographical Study, *S.E.*, XX, pg 34 in William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare’s Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 40

<sup>170</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare’s Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 49

adventurous exploration; finally, a disillusionment sets in which makes Fleiss a false ‘father’ and an authority Freud must overcome.<sup>171</sup>

Masson maintains that Freud, in defense of his relationship with Fleiss, abandons the ‘seduction theory,’ coming to view Emma’s problems resulting from the surgery as further evidence of her hysteria. Conjecture aside, the fact remains that in 1896 Freud was embroiled in the problematic of childhood memory in both his personal life, brought on by the death of his father, and in his public life, through his suggestion of the ‘seduction theory.’ His confrontation with this decidedly unsure terrain left him slipping.

Emma, one of the first patients of modern psychoanalysis, was considered by Freud to be a hysteric. Additionally, she complained of menstrual problems, a malady then commonly thought brought on by the aberration of masturbation, further indicating to Freud that she was in need of help to alleviate her condition. In these sessions with Emma in 1896 Freud is thought to have generated his early hypothesis that childhood sexual assault is causal in the formation of neurosis and hysteria. The first account of Freud’s ‘seduction theory’ came in April of 1886 in a paper that he read to the society, and later published in the *Journal Revue Neurologique*. In it he states that, “Sexual experiences in childhood consisting in stimulation of the genitals, coitus-like acts, and so on, must therefore be recognized, in the last analysis, as being the traumas which lead to a hysterical reaction to events at puberty and to the development of hysterical symptoms.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pg. 79

<sup>172</sup> Sigmund Freud. “The Aetiologoy of Hysteria” *Collected Papers, vol 1*. trans. Joan Riviere. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1959 pg. 202

Freud consulted with Fleiss through letters about Emma's condition and believed that Fleiss, a nose and throat doctor, had valuable medical council to offer. Fleiss, and apparently Freud, thought sexual dysfunction was associated with the nose, the mucus lining of the nasal cavity being in direct connection to the vagina. Freud, while in the midst of closing in on the non-physiological hypothesis that Emma's condition was caused by a childhood "seduction," allowed Fleiss to perform surgery on her nasal cavity in attempt to cure her. History will bear out that Freud was unable to hold the positions that her condition had simultaneously a physiological as well as a psychological source. During the surgery Fleiss left a large amount of gauze in the surgical site undiscovered until weeks later, a mistake that caused a hemorrhage that almost killed her; her bleeding continued intermittingly for months. In the letters to Fleiss that track her extended and very troubled recovery, Freud applies substantial polemical exertion to convey to Fleiss that he does not consider the situation to be his fault.

...I had every reason to entrust you with such a matter and more. You did it as well as one could. The tearing off of the iodoform gauze remains one of those accidents that happen to the most fortunate and circumspect of surgeons...Of course, no one is blaming you, nor would I know why anyone should...and rest assured that it was not necessary for me to restore my trust in you once again.<sup>173</sup>

Masson traces the correspondence, noticing the simultaneous increase in flattery and avowed faith in Fleiss, and Freud's slowly growing conviction that Emma's reoccurring

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<sup>173</sup> Jeffrey M. Masson. *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1984 pg. 65

nasal hemorrhages are hysterical bleeding rather than resultant of the surgery. Masson writes of the absurdity of the situation:

Freud had the option to recognize this, confess it to Emma Eckstein, confront Fleiss with the truth, and face the consequences. Or he could protect Fleiss by excusing what had happened. But in order to do this, to efface the external trauma of the operation, it would prove necessary to construct a theory of hysterical lying, a theory whereby the external trauma's suffered by the patient never happened, but are fantasies. If Emma Eckstein's problems (her bleeding) had nothing to do with the real world (Fleiss' operation), then her earlier accounts of seduction could well be fantasies too. The consequences of Freud's act of loyalty toward Fleiss would reach far beyond this single case.<sup>174</sup>

Mason's argument focuses on Freud's relationship with Fleiss and Emma but does not factor in the additional complication of Jacob's death. As his own childhood memories returned (in that he was mourning his father), Freud develops a hypothesis discounting the validity of his patients' memories. Shortly thereafter, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he rigorously commences a self-analysis that places fantasy in a valorized position in the psyche. Freud's defense of Fleiss coincides with his move away from the 'seduction theory.' He ultimately states that the memories of his clients could not be trusted; that, in all likelihood, they were fantasies. Regardless of whether it was motivated by his honest opinion, desire to re-ingratiate himself to the community, or, possibly, to protect his father figure (Fleiss), Freud eventually offered up the following retraction through mortification: "I believed these stories, and consequently supposed that I had discovered the roots of the subsequent neurosis in these experiences of sexual seduction in childhood....If the reader feels inclined to shake his head at my credulity, I

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., pg. 99

cannot altogether blame him.”<sup>175</sup> For the remainder of Freud’s life memories from childhood are viewed in a different light. Freud’s final conclusion on the topic of hysterical patients is that they had, as a whole, fictionalized a trauma in order to explain their own childhood masturbatory behavior: “Since childhood masturbation is such a general occurrence and is at the same time so poorly remembered, it must have an equivalent in psychic life. And, in fact, it is found in the fantasy encountered in most female patients – namely, that the father seduced her in childhood.”<sup>176</sup>

To maintain this position Freud states that it is irrelevant whether the childhood abuse happened in material reality or in fantasy; what is important to his work is the impact that the remembered event – real or imagined – has on the patient. The enormity of this proclamation, whatever its genesis, should not be underestimated. For the first time the nonsubstance of dreams, fantasies, and desire are promoted to a place of prominence in the investigation of the human condition, evidenced in Freud’s thorough investigation of his own dreams directly hereafter. Without the work of Freud, it would be impossible to even discuss the possibility that intention alone holds with it the potential for causation. The abandonment of the ‘seduction theory’ has also been read as Freud’s continued effort to insist upon the existence of childhood sexuality. Laplanche and Pontalis write:

There would seem to be a danger in such a revival of the seduction theory – namely, that of re-opening the door to the pre-analytical view of the child as sexually innocent until perverted by adult sexuality. The notion that the child inhabits a private, autonomous world until such time as a

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., pg. 11

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., pg. 11-12

violation or perversion of this kind occurs is precisely what Freud rejected.<sup>177</sup>

These positive attributes of Freud's decision are herein offered to halt the error of dwelling solely on the odd circumstances surrounding this time period. Nonetheless, it remains evident that opening the door to the enormous implications of the unconscious is indebted to the unsure terrain of childhood memory.

The culmination of Freud's work of self-analysis in *The Interpretation of Dreams* was synchronized with a break from Fleiss. Warner writes:

During the course of Freud's speculative adventures – in self-analysis, in finding the aetiology of neurosis – Fleiss is companion, judge, and steady support. Fleiss is imbued with those qualities of strength and omniscience the child attributes to the father. ..The very analytical work Fleiss helps make possible also renders him unnecessary. Thus, the murderous feeling for the father-figure analysis uncovers is in this instance focused upon the authority of traditional physiology and the interlocutor in analysis. The father/Fleiss must be overcome; the intimacy and collaboration with Fleiss must end.<sup>178</sup>

From this perspective, Freud himself emerges as another figure in the tale of parricide and memory.

The question of the validity of childhood memories haunted Freud throughout his life. The events that transpired in the end of his next most significant male relationship, that with colleague, Sandor Ferenczi, indicate as much. By 1932 Ferenczi had reached a

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<sup>177</sup> Laplanche, J and Pontalis, J.B. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973 pg. 407

<sup>178</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare's Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 85

conclusion similar to Freud's from 1896, namely, that his patients suffered greatly from memories of childhood sexual assault. Ferenczi gave a paper of his findings which was poorly received and he himself suffered a similar stigmatizing as did Freud thirty- five years earlier. Freud writes another colleague, Etington, in 1933 about the fate of Sandor Ferenczi,

His source is what his patients tell him when he manages to put them into what he himself calls a state similar to hypnosis. He then takes what he hears as revelations, but what one really gets are the fantasies of patients about their childhood, and not the real story. My first great etiological error also arose in this very way. The patients suggest something to him, and he then reverses it. I have insisted for years that he regresses to his earlier neurosis as he grew older.<sup>179</sup>

Interestingly, Freud intimates that Ferenczi's willingness to believe the memories of his patients is indicative of a neurosis within his own psyche. The rupture with Ferenczi, who was Freud's primary confidant after Fleiss, transpired over Ferenczi's move to a position of believing his patients memories of childhood traumas. Eerily reminiscent of the isolation that befell Freud after his paper on the 'seduction theory,' Freud and his followers broke with Ferenczi over his refusal to alter his view and claim his patients were recalling fantasies rather than memories. Ferenczi was inclined to believe that Freud was especially invested in his refusal to not acknowledge the actuality of traumatic events occurring in childhood, writing in his diary (August 4, 1932), "In his behavior Freud plays the role of the castrating god. He does not want to know anything at all about the traumatic aspects of his own castration in childhood, and deems himself the

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<sup>179</sup> Quoted in Jeffery M. Masson. *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1984 pg. 182

only one who need not be analyzed.”<sup>180</sup> This is perhaps unfair in seeing that Freud used his own dreams as a subject for analysis and his emphases on the castration complex and other developmental occurrences indicate his commitment to the implications of childhood trauma. However, it could be that after the disaster of the ‘seduction theory’ Freud was unwilling to investigate the traumatic events of childhood without simultaneously asserting that memory bears only a hesitant relationship to material reality. Warner writes,

...Freud’s account of the psychic process will never allow us to say only ‘memory’ or only ‘fantasy’. Freud’s strategic, nonsynthetic equivocation on memory and fantasy force his readers to recognize two impossibilities. The first impossibility is that the mind never contains something which is just memory – a pure repeatable fact in the mind that one could retrieve – even in the ‘deepest reaches’ of the unconscious... Thus he eventually discards the theory of the actual seduction, in favor of seduction as a wish which is later subject to repression. Then Oedipus Rex can become a master text ...”<sup>181</sup>

In this light, the dominance of Oedipus is indebted to the interminable complication of, most specifically, childhood memory.

## ***5.2 Screen Memories***

Freud’s most elaborated upon contribution to the subject of childhood memory is found in his paper of 1899 entitled, “Screen Memories.” He postulates ‘screen memories’ – childhood recollections that are particularly vivid but with no obvious meaning – are in

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., pg. 232

<sup>181</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare’s Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 51-52

fact compromise formations assembled from repressed and displaced fantasies, with displacement as the primary mechanism. Freud analyzes his memory of a girl in a yellow dress, in which the yellow of the dress stands out with exaggerated sharpness. Freud claimed that all of what was essential from childhood can be located in these types of memories; the question is simply one of knowing how to extract the information since the content is coded. Freud uses the term ‘memory-trace’ to denote the portion of the recollection which holds with it a direct relation to material reality. While present within ‘screen memories’ are ‘memory-traces,’ what is contained in them is not “the relevant experience itself...what is recorded is another psychological element closely associated with the objectionable one.”<sup>182</sup> In this manner, it is not the memory-trace which is of interest, but the repressed and displaced content itself.

But suppose now that this cannot occur unless there is a memory-trace the content of which offers a point of contact – comes, as it were, half way to meet it. Once a point of contact has been found...the remaining subject matter of the phantasy is remodeled with the help of every legitimate intermediate idea...It is very possible that in the course of the process the childhood scene itself also undergoes a change; I regard it as certain that falsifications of memory are brought about this way.<sup>183</sup>

Here the conjecture of a hypothetical point of contact between fantasy and memory-trace gives rise to a considerable amount of unanswered questions. If the memory-trace is inarticulate – as many childhood memories would be – the contact with fantasy would serve to provide not only language (and narrative) to the inarticulate memory, but also what language inevitable leads to, a fictive solidity. From this vantage point, in the

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<sup>182</sup> Sigmund Freud. “Screen Memories” *Collected Papers, vol 5*. trans. Joan Riviere. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1959 pg. 52

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 64

instance of screen memories, inarticulate memory would be seen as transformed into its converse, exaggerated articulateness as in the instance of the yellow dress. When Freud writes, “Not only some but all of what is essential from childhood has been retained in these memories” the content, repressed and displaced, could be none other than inarticulate memory itself.

Freud’s trajectory of thought in “Screen Memories” leads to the following conclusion:

It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating* to our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were revived. In these periods of revival, the childhood memories did not, as some people are accustomed to say, *emerge*; they were *formed* at that time. And a number of motives, which had no concern with historical accuracy, had their part in thus forming them as well as in selection of the memories themselves.<sup>184</sup>

However politically motivated this final dismissal of the validity of childhood memories may have been, Freud’s work in this area reiterates the significance of fantasy in the psyche. The suggestion here is that fantasy is a catalyst, serving as one of the ways by which inarticulate memory makes itself known, vividly present and at once gesturing to something coded and indecipherable. Warner writes of the importance of Freud maintaining the concept of the memory-trace when it would have been, “simpler and

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., pg. 69

clearer to dissolve memory into the operation of fantasy.”<sup>185</sup> For Warner, “...the memory-trace also gives us access to a certain wealth: it insists with the specificity of its shape and tone so as to mark each person with memory; this chain of single marks of memory confers a sense of being oneself – of being this one self, and no other.”<sup>186</sup> From this interpretation, the inarticulate memory-traces of a child, necessarily desubjectivizing, can be formed through their connection with fantasy to become marks initially working to subjectivize the subject. This is analogous to how the memory of the ‘mirror stage,’ while serving the creation of subjectivity, also works to alienate the subject in that it is split.

### ***5.3 Leonardo da Vinci***

The year 1910 marks Freud’s first attempt at the post-mortem analysis of a great artist. His book *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* exhibits what is considered Freud’s mature interpretation of childhood memory. The concept of ‘screen memory’ is now ten years old and, though unnamed, evident in this text. He writes of da Vinci’s reported recollection from the crib,

What we have here then is a childhood memory; and certainly one of the strangest sort. It is strange on account of its content and on account of the age to which it is assigned. That a person should be able to retain a memory of his suckling period is perhaps not impossible, but it cannot by any means be regarded as certain. What, however, this memory of Leonardo’s asserts – namely that a vulture opened the child’s mouth with its tail – sounds so improbable, so fabulous,

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<sup>185</sup> William Beatty Warner. *Chance and the Text of Experience: Freud, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare’s Hamlet*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986 pg. 52-53

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 52-53. In this way, psychoanalysis sees memory as a chain of signifiers, or as Lacan put it, something is memorable only when it is ‘registered in the signifying chain.’

that another view of it, which at a single stroke puts an end to both difficulties, has more to commend it to our judgment. On this view the scene with the vulture would not be a memory of Leonardo's but a phantasy, which he formed at a later date and transposed to his childhood. This is often the way in which childhood memories originate. Quite unlike conscious memories from the time of maturity, they are not fixed at the moment of being experienced and afterwards repeated, but are only elicited at a later age when childhood has already past; in the process they are altered and falsified, and are put into the service of later trends, so that generally speaking they cannot be sharply distinguished from phantasies.<sup>187</sup>

Therefore the process of repeating, of recall, in terms of a memory from childhood, is distinguished from recollection once subjectivity is more firmly established. Here the repetition of a memory (and possible construction of a memory) is occurring only after a temporal delay, till "a later age when childhood has already past." This temporal gap provides a distance, a clearing which insures that the motion of recall (repetition) is a process where experience is thus "altered and falsified." What occurs in the experiences of childhood that are not recalled, those that evade the recollection of a fully formed subject and are never "put into service of later trends?" Inarticulate memory, an undefined morass escaping the confines and servitude of subjectivity, eludes perception and is able to continue its function of dismembering by eluding the construction of a screen memory via a contact point with fantasy.

Later, in 1919, Freud attached a footnote to this portion of the document.

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<sup>187</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. trans Alan Tyson. ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989 pg. 33 It is commonly noted that Freud is erring in his translation of the dream and that what Leonardo is referring to is more probably a kite than a vulture.

In a friendly notice of this book Havelock Ellis has challenged the view put forward above. He objects that this memory of Leonardo's may very well have had a basis of reality, since children's memories often reach much further back than is commonly supposed...It happens, indeed, as a general rule that the phantasies about their childhood which people construct at a late date are attached to trivial but real events of this early, and normally forgotten period."<sup>188</sup>

The mention of Ellis' disagreement demonstrates, again, that the question of the veracity of childhood memory is doggedly following Freud throughout his life's work. His willing inclusion, indeed his subsequent addition of this disagreement, hints that the questioning of his position is in some way being encouraged by Freud, raising the possibility that he never completely resolved this matter for himself.

The small text on da Vinci simultaneously signals Freud's entrance into the arena of analyzing artists and suggests a continuity of thought in regards to childhood memory. Freud's conception of a 'screen memory,' published in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in 1901, must indeed be the type of memory Freud is referring to in the case with Leonardo, though he does not state it as such. Anticipating a thought later found in "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," he writes, "What someone thinks he remembers from his childhood is not a matter of indifference; as a rule the residual memories – which he himself does not understand – cloak priceless pieces of evidence about the most important features in his mental development."<sup>189</sup> The footnote attached to this sentence is a brief synopsis of Freud's interpretation of a childhood memory/fantasy of Goethe's, a work done seven years later entitled, "A Childhood Recollection from

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., pg. 33

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., pg. 35

‘Dichtung Und Wahrheit.’” Freud interprets Goethe’s boyhood memory of throwing crockery out of the window as a reaction to the birth and death of a younger brother. Throwing the crockery is seen by Freud, “as a magical act directed against a troublesome intruder; and at the place in the book where he describes the episode the intention is to triumph over the fact that a second son was not in the long run permitted to disturb Goethe’s close relation with his mother.”<sup>190</sup> In the case of da Vinci and in Goethe, Freud’s study of artists immerges as inseparable from the study of childhood memory.

The conclusion of the text, the Freudian point to be made in regard to da Vinci, is that the Mona Lisa’s smile actually belongs to da Vinci’s overly affectionate mother. In that this affection is both enjoyed and ultimately the ingredient that renders him sexually malformed; the smile is ambivalent. Freud writes of the “double meaning which this smile contained, the promise of unbounded tenderness and at the same time sinister menace...then here too he has remained true to the content of his earliest memory.”<sup>191</sup> Freud finds Leonardo to be engaged in an Oedipal conflict based on his father’s absence during the early years, whereby there was no injunction made against the mother’s affection to him. However, unlike what will be demonstrated in the case of Dostoevsky, Freud exhibits nothing but kindness towards the artist and, indeed, proclaims that, “Like others I have succumbed to the attraction of this great and mysterious man...”<sup>192</sup> When the subject of neurosis is breeched Freud hastens to proclaim that, “We must expressly insist that we have never reckoned Leonardo as a neurotic....We no longer think that health and illness, normal and neurotic people, are to be sharply distinguished from each

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., pg. 36

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., pg. 76

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., pg. 97

other, and that neurotic traits must necessarily be taken as proofs of general inferiority.”<sup>193</sup> This sentiment is sharply altered eighteen years later when Freud takes up the subject of Dostoevsky.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., pg. 92

## 6.0 'Dostoevsky and Parricide'

*Discomfort, unease, dizziness stemming from an ambiguity that through the violence of a revolt against, demarcates a space out of which signs and objects arise. Thus braided, woven, ambivalent, a heterogeneous flux marks out a territory that I call my own because the Other, having dwelt in me as alter ego, points it out to me through loathing.*<sup>194</sup>

– Julia Kristeva

It is difficult to convey the extent to which Dostoevsky became the vogue in Germany and neighboring countries in the early part of the twentieth century. R. Piper & Co. of Munich began to publish translations of his collected work in 1905 and these twenty-two volumes, co-edited by Dmitri Merezhkovsky, were acquired by Freud in 1910. However, Freud refrained from publicly commenting on Dostoevsky until the 1928 article "Dostoevsky and Parricide." The probability is that it was Stefan Zweig's essay on Dostoevsky in 1920 that prompted Freud to write "Dostoevsky and Parricide," evidenced by Freud's statement in a letter to Reik, "I think you applied too high a standard to this trivial essay. It was written as a favor for someone and written reluctantly."<sup>195</sup> While the novels of Dostoevsky were in literary favor, praised highly by the intellectual elite, he was also undergoing a post-mortem analysis that was far from flattering. In the twenty years prior to the writing of Freud's essay numerous papers on the subject of Dostoevsky were published, reports given to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Freud's library containing many of them.<sup>196</sup> While Freud does not specifically refer to any of these reports in his paper, it is certain that he had been more than casually

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<sup>194</sup> Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982 pg. 10

<sup>195</sup> Theodor Reik. *The Search Within*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956 pg. 75

<sup>196</sup> See James L. Rice. *Freud's Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 123. This book contains a highly detailed account of the various papers on Dostoevsky given during this time period.

familiar with the psychoanalytic community's work on the subject; a fact relevant in that Freud's high praise and numerous condemnations of Dostoevsky in the paper were in keeping with previous scholarship. For instance, the postulate that Dostoevsky did not have classic epilepsy was most likely first offered by Dr. Wilhelm Stekel in a paper in the *Brussels Journal Medical* in 1908, where he writes in relation to aspects of the symptoms of seizures, "such cases are hysterias – as for instance the case of Dostoevsky."<sup>197</sup> When Freud commences his denouncement of certain aspects of Dostoevsky's character, he is elaborating upon prior critiques of the author, serving to give his paper an amount of credibility that it might not appear to have taken out of its historic context. Devoid of the circumstantial environment that both rarified and pathologized the author, Freud's paper takes on the tenor of a far more personal attack. The recognition of the environment in which he writes the article also sheds some light on the odd references Freud makes to unnamed others throughout the essay. Freud's essay starts off with tremendous praise for Dostoevsky, referring to *The Brothers Karamasov* as a "the most magnificent novel ever written," then, shortly thereafter, likens the writer to Ivan the Terrible and proclaims, "The future of human civilization will have little to thank him for."<sup>198</sup> This vacillation continues throughout the text, reiterating both the acclaim and criticism found elsewhere in the cultural environment.

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<sup>197</sup> Herman Nunberg and Ernst Federn, eds., *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, vol. 3, pg. 365 in James L. Rice. *Freud's Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 137

<sup>198</sup> Sigmund Freud. "Dostoevsky and Parricide" in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 234-235

## 6.1 Masochism and The Father

A brief amount of attention to Dostoevsky's biography illuminates Freud's assessment of the author. The major events in Dostoevsky's life include the murder of his father in 1839.<sup>199</sup> The common, though thinly supported, biographical information on Dostoevsky states that when he was eighteen his father was murdered by an uprising of serfs who killed him by forcing vodka down his throat until he expired. In 1849, prior to any substantial success as a writer, Dostoevsky was arrested and convicted of the crime of conspiring against the Tsar – a charge of which there is little doubt he was innocent. Dostoevsky was stripped, blindfolded and placed before a firing squad that, upon the Tsar's orders, refrained from shooting him at the last minute. His sentence was commuted and he was imprisoned until 1854, doing hard labor in Siberia. This is the time period where full blown epileptic seizures are reported by Dostoevsky to have begun.

Freud writes: "The unmistakable connection between the murder of the father in *The Brothers Karamasov* and fate of Dostoevsky's own father has struck more than one of his biographers, and has led them to refer to a 'certain modern school of psychology'. From this point of psycho-analysis (for this is what they meant), we are tempted to see in that event the severest trauma and to regard Dostoevsky's reaction to it as the turning

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<sup>199</sup> The following dates are taken from Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. ed. Ralph E. Matlaw. trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. 1976 pg. 746

point of his neurosis.”<sup>200</sup> Freud’s deliberate correction to the previous scholarship on the writer and the link between Dostoevsky’s father’s murder and the diagnosis of him as a neurotic, indicate the major points of the essay. The argument for the sickened pathology of the writer becomes indistinguishable from the offensive waged at those in the intellectual community who have championed the psychological genius of Dostoevsky. Therefore, the essay serves to reassert Freud’s psychoanalytical authority, a task accomplishable through the demonstration of his prowess through the analysis of a patient, in this case, Dostoevsky. By pathologizing him, the supposition that Dostoevsky could have contributed to a “modern school of psychology,” is debunked.

Most of Freud’s discussion pertaining to Dostoevsky’s relationship with his father is centered on a reiteration of the importance of the Oedipus complex and Dostoevsky’s guilt at seeing his parricidal wish manifested in his father’s murder. According to Freud, Dostoevsky’s guilt engenders in him a wont of punishment from a father figure, most notably the Tsar or God. In Freud’s brief synopsis of the Oedipus complex, he states, “The relation of a boy to his father is, as we say, an ‘ambivalent’ one.” Ambivalence, latter shown in the instance of Dostoevsky and *The Brothers Karamazov*, emerges as a subject overdetermined. Freud describes the double reaction the child has in regard to the parricidal wish and, specifically, Dostoevsky’s reaction to it:

Of the two factors which repress hatred of the father, the first, the direct fear of punishment and castration, may be called the normal one; its pathogenic intensification seems to come only with the addition of the second factor, the fear of the feminine attitude. Thus a strong innate bisexual

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<sup>200</sup> Sigmund Freud. “Dostoevsky and Parricide” in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 239-240

disposition becomes one of the preconditions or reinforcements of neurosis. Such a disposition must certainly be assumed in Dostoevsky, and it shows itself in a viable form (as latent homosexuality) in the important part played by male friendships. In his life, his strangely tender attitude towards rivals in love and in his remarkable understanding of situations which are explicable only by repressed homosexuality, as many examples from his novels show.<sup>201</sup>

Freud believed that Dostoevsky's response to his own parricidal wish was complicated by a fear of "the feminine attitude," which causally produced a latent homosexuality and tendency toward a need for masochistic punishment at the hands of The Father. "The super-ego has become sadistic, and the ego becomes masochistic – that is to say, at bottom passive in a feminine way. A great need for punishment develops... a fulfillment of the old passive attitude towards the father."<sup>202</sup> From this framework, Freud interpreted Dostoevsky's exile to Siberia by the Tsar later in life as an experience that was at the very least accepted if not enjoyed. "Dostoevsky's condemnation as a political prisoner was unjust and he must have known it, but he accepted the underserved punishment at the hands of the Little Father, the Tsar, as a substitute for the punishment he deserved for his sin against his real father. Instead of punishing himself, he got himself punished by his father's deputy."<sup>203</sup> Freud's depiction of Dostoevsky as a latent homosexual masochist in need of paternal punishment serves to demonstrate his diagnostic prowess as well as correct the contemporary intellectual community which had attributed the novelist with psychoanalytic skill.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pg. 242

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., pg. 243

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., pg. 244

<sup>204</sup> Consider Gilles Deleuze's account of masochism: "So when we are told that the character who does the beating in masochism is the father, we are entitled to ask: Who in reality is being beaten? Where is the father hidden? Could it not be in the person who is being beaten? The masochist feels guilty, he asks to be

## 6.2 Neurosis Diagnosis

There are two inseparable components of Freud's diagnosis of Dostoevsky: the first is his change of Dostoevsky's condition from epilepsy to hysteria because, secondly, he was a neurotic. Freud spends considerable time discounting the validity of Dostoevsky's epilepsy, robbing him of the surety of a physical diagnosis, and proclaiming that "this so-called epilepsy was only a symptom of his neurosis and must be accordingly classified as hystero-epilepsy, that is, as severe hysteria."<sup>205</sup> But the evidence he offers to suggest he is neurotic, a move necessary to paint him as a hysteric (therefore, not epileptic), is at best circumstantial. Freud begins making his case for neurosis by calling Dostoevsky a criminal, pointing to his oeuvre and claiming that given the subject matter of the novels his psychical makeup must contain criminal components. In discussing what constitutes his criminality, Freud quickly shifts the focus from criminal behavior, which would not be useful given Dostoevsky's relatively legal life, to the psychological makeup felons. He writes of the "boundless egoism" and "strong destructive urge" that are aspects of the criminal psyche; the common ingredient to both of these qualities is an "absence of love" and "lack of emotional appreciation of (human) objects."<sup>206</sup> These traits, noticeably hard to quantify, are the ones Freud claims are

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beaten, he expiates, but why and for what crime? Is it not precisely the father-image in him that is thus miniaturized, beaten, ridiculed and humiliated? What the subject atones for is his resemblance to the father and the father's likeness in him: the formula of masochism is the humiliated father. Hence the father is not so much the beater as the beaten." Gilles Deleuze. "Coldness and Cruelty" in *Masochism*. trans Jean McNeil. New York: Zone Books, 1991 pg. 60-61

<sup>205</sup> Sigmund Freud. "Dostoevsky and Parricide" in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 237

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 235

present in Dostoevsky, traceable to his choice of material, “thus pointing to the existence of similar tendencies within himself.”<sup>207</sup> Freud states:

Dostoevsky’s very strong destructive instinct, which might easily have made him a criminal, was in his actual life directed mainly against his own person and thus found expression as masochism and a sense of guilt. Nevertheless, his personality retained sadistic traits in plenty, which showed themselves in his irritability, his love of tormenting and his intolerance even towards people he loved, and which appear also in the way in which, as an author, he treats his readers. Thus in little things he was a sadist towards others, and in bigger things a sadist to himself, in fact a masochist – that is to say the mildest, kindest, most helpful person possible.<sup>208</sup>

Freud’s wry reference to Dostoevsky’s sadism toward his readers is one of several times that Dostoevsky’s own writing is used to make a case for his diagnosis. The rest of the evidence given is unsupported and unelaborated upon: even Dostoevsky’s helpfulness is pathologized – further establishing the author as a masochist and incorporated into the broader argument made against him. But Freud must have realized this was a somewhat flimsy case for neurosis, defensively writing, “To consider Dostoevsky a criminal rouses violent opposition, which need not be based upon a philistine assessment of criminals.”<sup>209</sup>

Freud concedes that, “the extraordinary intensity of his emotional life, his perverse innate instinctual disposition, which inevitably marked him as a sado-masochist or a criminal” could have existed without his being neurotic and that, in fact, “there are people who are complete masochists without being neurotic.”<sup>210</sup> The diagnosis of the

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., pg. 235

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., pg. 236

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., pg. 235

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., pg. 236

neurosis is necessary in order to make the case that the epilepsy is truly hysteria (hysteria is a form of neurosis). Employing circular logic to support his assertion, the admission that masochism is capable of existing without neurosis is then covered by Freud, stating that Dostoevsky's neurosis is evidenced by the hysteria (epilepsy). However, as will be immediately demonstrated, the claim that Dostoevsky was a *hysteric* rests entirely on the premise that he fictionalized his biography because he is a *neurotic*. In this manner, Freud creates a superficially plausible case against Dostoevsky. Upon close examination, it becomes apparent that the neurosis diagnosis is hard to support and is rhetorically derived. It could have very well been that Dostoevsky was an epileptic with both sadistic as well as masochistic traits. Rice writes, "Modern medicine diagnoses Dostoevsky's illness as temporal lobe epilepsy, a condition often accompanied by complex psychiatric symptoms."<sup>211</sup>

The autobiographical account given by Dostoevsky was not in keeping with Freud's imaginings of the author's psyche, most notably he reports the internment in Siberia was indeed torturous and was synchronistic with the onset of epilepsy. To accommodate this discrepancy Freud simply re-imagines the sequence of events in order to fit the author more easily into the diagnosis that he was crafting for him. Freud states that probably the final stages of the seizures began with the murder of Dostoevsky's father a decade before the imprisonment. The justification for Freud's reading of events is completely unsubstantiated; he simply believes it would be more in keeping with what he sees as Dostoevsky's psyche if the attacks did indeed begin with the murder of his father,

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<sup>211</sup> James L. Rice. *Freud's Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 188

the seizures can then be read as a physical manifestation of his guilt over his wish to kill his father being apparently displaced and manifested in the serfs' uprising. Freud, fond of utilizing Dostoevsky's writing to make his case, is quick to note that the displacement and manifestation of a parricidal wish is precisely the content of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Freud legitimizes rewriting Dostoevsky's biography by claiming that the author, since he is a neurotic, can not be trusted to tell us the truth about himself. He further conjectures that Dostoevsky's illness, rather than exacerbated by his stint in Siberia, actually improved in that he was now receiving proper punishment from the 'little father,' the Tsar. That this is not what is reported by Dostoevsky or those close to him is again explained by the fact that the writer is a neurotic and can not be trusted.

Freud writes, "Dostoevsky called himself an epileptic, and was regarded as such by *other people*, on account of his severe attacks, which were accompanied by loss of consciousness, muscular convulsions and subsequent depression."<sup>212</sup> (emphasis added) Herein, it is not only Dostoevsky who is depicted as believing a mistaken diagnosis of his condition, but *other people* as well. This is reminiscent of how Ferenczi is characterized as neurotic in that he is willing to believe his patients accounts. The implication that an ambiguous broader circle is also in collusion with the author to grant him a physical diagnosis occurs again in a footnote on the next page. Freud cleverly handles the lack of evidence supporting his hypothesis that the attacks should have ceased while the writer was imprisoned by the Tsar. He writes in the main text on the subject of the seizures, "It would be very much to the point if it could be established that they ceased completely

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<sup>212</sup> Sigmund Freud. "Dostoevsky and Parricide" in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 237

during his exile in Siberia, but *other accounts* contradict this.”<sup>213</sup> (emphasis added) The footnote attached to this sentence reads:

*Most of the accounts*, including Dostoevsky’s own assert on the contrary that the illness only assumed its final, epileptic character during the Siberian exile. Unfortunately there is reason to distrust the autobiographical statements of neurotics. Experience shows that their memories introduce falsifications which are designed to interrupt disagreeable causal connections. Nevertheless, it appears certain that Dostoevsky’s detention in the Siberian prison markedly altered his pathological condition.<sup>214</sup> (emphasis added)

Freud’s decision thirty years earlier to discount the personal memories of hysterics, a move necessary to abandon his ‘seduction theory,’ here reappears as the tool utilized in his reading of Dostoevsky as a neurotic. The footnote also indicates (as does the event with Ferenczi) that Freud always maintained a distrust of his patient’s personal memories since the disaster over the ‘seduction theory.’ Also, the *most accounts* is of interest in that, again, Freud is attacking unnamed others who have apparently conspired in legitimizing Dostoevsky in terms of his physical diagnosis, and following metonymically, as a writer and psychoanalytic thinker.

There are many instances in Freud’s essay where it is uncertain as to whom he is referring. As previously noted, he said that the essay was written as a favor to a friend, implying he himself had no genuine interest in the matter. This is not to say that the paper itself is addressed to Zweig; references within the text indicate that the paper was targeted at a distinctly non-psychoanalytic audience. He writes early in the essay, “I shall have to

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., pg. 239

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., pg. 239

risk the danger of being unintelligible to all those readers who are unfamiliar with the language and theories of psycho-analysis.”<sup>215</sup> This statement suggests that Freud is anticipating his audience to be, most probably, of those interested in literature and without psychoanalysis as a main concern. Or, is he implying that those interested in or favorable to the author must necessarily be still unfamiliar with the “language and theories of psycho-analysis.” This sentence is succeeded by, “We have one certain starting-point. We know the meaning of the first attacks....” This ‘we’ (which is hereafter used repetitively and quite common in Freud’s writing) seems, on first read, to be including the readers in on the project of analyzing Dostoevsky.<sup>216</sup> However, on closer examination the ‘we’ is more likely the members of the psychoanalytic community who are loyal to and in agreement with Freud. This oddly formulated wording is again witnessed when he offers the following apology for the ‘fact’ of castration complex.

I am sorry, though I cannot alter the facts, if this exposition of attitudes of hatred and love towards the father and their transformations under the influence of the threat of castration seems to *readers unfamiliar with psycho-analysis* unsavory and incredible. I should myself expect that it is precisely the castration complex that would be bound to arouse the most general repudiation. But I can only insist that psycho-analytic experience has put these matters in particular beyond the reach of doubt and has taught *us* to recognize in them the key to every neurosis.<sup>217</sup> (emphasis added)

Given the extraordinary incongruities present in the text it is hard to refrain from the suspicion that Freud had a substantial, if unspecified, agenda at work in his analysis of Dostoevsky. Freud switches Dostoevsky’s diagnosis from epilepsy to hysteria,

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., pg. 240

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., pg. 240

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., pg. 242

portraying him as a neurotic – effectively robbing him of the ability to speak for himself to the extent that his own biographical information becomes questioned. The writer’s credibility as a source pertaining to his own body or biography is summarily dismissed. In addition, those who believe Dostoevsky are treated as equally suspect. To whom Freud is referring with his reference to *other people* and *most accounts* is not made explicitly clear, yet the most obvious inference would be that Freud’s contemporaries, who showed such enthusiasm towards Dostoevsky, are being incriminated and reprimanded by the Father of Psychoanalysis.

Interspersed with Freud’s extensive criticism of Dostoevsky are small passages of high praise. He opens the essay by calling *The Brothers Karamazov* the “most magnificent book ever written.”<sup>218</sup> Later, after a disparaging several pages, Freud switches tones and compares *The Brothers Karamazov* with Sophocles’ *King Oedipus* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.<sup>219</sup> This lavish praise together with the fact that the chapter ‘the Grand Inquisitor’ served to influence Freud’s writing of *The Future of an Illusion* move James L. Rice to conclude the following about Freud’s relation to Dostoevsky: “Freud was clearly attached to Dostoevsky, as a psychological genius, and only strove

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., pg. 233

<sup>219</sup> While quoted earlier in this text, the passage is here reproduced at greater length: “It can scarcely be owing to chance that three of the masterpieces of the literature of all time – the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* – should all deal with the same subject, parricide. In all three, moreover, the motive for the deed, sexual rivalry for women, is laid bare. The most straightforward is certainly the representation in the drama derived from the Greek legend. In this it is still the hero himself who commits the crime. But the poetic treatment is impossible without softening and disguise. The naked admission of intention to commit parricide, as we arrive at it in analysis, seems intolerable without analytic preparation. The Greek drama, while retaining the crime, introduces the indispensable toning-down in a masterly fashion by projecting the hero’s unconscious motive into reality in the form of a compulsion by destiny which is alien to him. The hero commits the deed unintentionally and apparently uninfluenced by the woman...” Sigmund Freud. *Collected Papers*, vol 5. trans. Joan Riviere. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1959 pg. 235

out of duty and self-defense to portray him as a clinical case.”<sup>220</sup> Reik, Freud’s colleague, wrote the following about “Dostoevsky and Parricide”: “Our first impression of this judgment is that it is stern but just. On second thought it seems sterner than just.”<sup>221</sup> While it is sheer speculation to assert the exact nature of Freud’s relationship with the writer, his article “Dostoevsky and Parricide” is reflective not of a man who harbors deep respect for another, but rather, one who has crafted a careful rhetorical attack. The small passages of praise are more probably reflective of ‘inoculation theory’ than they are of Freud’s reverence for certain aspects of Dostoevsky’s writing. ‘Inoculation theory’ states that exposure to a weak dose of opposition arguments will stimulate the subject to start producing mental defenses and should, “. . .produce the mental equivalent of antibodies – counterarguments. Counter arguing the oppositional message in one’s own mind should lead to strengthening of initial attitude and increased resistance to persuasion.”<sup>222</sup> In a converse parallel, Ronell observes that Dostoevsky utilizes the same strategy in his text *The Idiot*, “Rather like the structure of inoculation, the narrative, anxious to immunize itself, absorbs the poison by which it is menaced, assimilating and owning it; the narrative itself will have become an idiot with regard to its charge, releasing custody of the object that it had been determined to comprehend.”<sup>223</sup> Through the inclusion of the praise for the writer’s craft, Freud insures that his campaign against Dostoevsky is bolstered. It is, here, posthumously, that Dostoevsky is again

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<sup>220</sup> James L. Rice. *Freud’s Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 195

<sup>221</sup> Theodor Reik. *The Search Within*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956 pg. 66

<sup>222</sup> Richard M. Perloff. *The Dynamics of Persuasion*. New Jersey: Cleveland State University, 1993 pg. 125

<sup>223</sup> Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 173

receiving punishment from the Father (of psychoanalysis), and according to Freud he is enjoying it.

### **6.3 As a Child**

Avital Ronell has remarked that the essay by Freud serves to feminize Dostoevsky, in that hysteria is distinctly marked by femininity.<sup>224</sup> With this observation in mind, and again considering the phrase “moments become memories by the scars they leave,” a look at a text by Jean Baudrillard is productive. In “Crash” he writes, “Each mark, each trace, each scar left on the body is like an artificial invagination, like the scarification of savages, which are always a vehement response to the absence of the body. Only the wounded body exists symbolically – for itself and others....”<sup>225</sup> Taken together leads to the conclusion that the process of amassing memories/scars invaginates or feminizes the subject; puncturing, lacerating – and ultimately, a subjecting of the symbolic body to an endless and non-recuperable porosity.<sup>226</sup> From this perspective Freud was only half accurate in feminizing Dostoevsky, for by being mediator of memory, the Russian writer was both a feminist and a pornographer, exclaiming that the invaginating memory is of the highest value while also, at the same time, submitting it to endless examination.

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<sup>224</sup> Unpublished seminar, August 2001. In the same lecture Ronell mentions what is also found in Rice’s book, that “The general sexual etiology of hysteria is also of ancient origin, as indicated by the very name of the condition (derived from ‘uterus’). James L. Rice. *Freud’s Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 186

<sup>225</sup> Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*. trans Shelia Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1997 pg. 114

<sup>226</sup> Think of the overly feminized villain Scar, Simba’s uncle in ‘The Lion King’.

Beyond feminizing Dostoevsky, Freud renders him as a child. This would not be the first time Freud depicted, posthumously, a great artist as childlike. In his work on da Vinci he writes, “Indeed, the great Leonardo remained like a child for the whole of his life....”<sup>227</sup> Freud states that Dostoevsky maintained the bisexuality exhibited in childhood (“specially strong innate bisexuality”<sup>228</sup>), that the epilepsy is reoccurring expressions from childhood (“death-like attacks can thus be understood as a father-identification on the part of his ego”<sup>229</sup>), and that his gambling is a re-expression of an early masturbatory compulsion (“the ‘vice’ of masturbation is replaced by the addiction to gambling”<sup>230</sup>). Also, the psychological condition of ambivalence, which Freud saw Dostoevsky as possessing in abundance, is found most commonly in childhood. In rendering Dostoevsky as child, Freud’s manipulation of his memory becomes more tenable. Ultimately, Freud finds it necessary to flat out assert his disdain for Dostoevsky, writing in a letter to Theodor Reik, “I do not really like him,” in part due to his being “so much restricted to abnormal mental life.”<sup>231</sup> Again, Freud seems to be playing into Dostoevsky’s masochistic hand, punishing him by inflicting upon him damning judgment – primarily for his excessive stagnation and abnormal expression of the developmental components found in childhood. According to Freud himself, this is precisely what Dostoevsky would have wanted, and Freud who recognized this in him, responds by performing the task that Dostoevsky sought, working in collusion with him in producing

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<sup>227</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. trans Alan Tyson. ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989 pg. 88

<sup>228</sup> Sigmund Freud. “Dostoevsky and Parricide” in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 243

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 243

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 251

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 254

the figure of writer as child in need of punishment from the father (the biological father displaced onto the Tsar, God, or the Father of psychoanalysis).

#### **6.4 Ambivalence**

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud wrote, “We know nothing about the origin of this ambivalence. It may be assumed to be a fundamental phenomenon of our emotional life. But the other possibility seems to me also worthy of consideration: that ambivalence, originally foreign to our emotional life, was acquired by mankind from the father complex.”<sup>232</sup> Melanie Klein posits a scenario where the father is not a primal component in the founding of ambivalence. Klein, for whom ambivalence held particular importance, draws on Freud’s theory of *Unlust* to generate her ideas on how the infant relates to the maternal breast.<sup>233</sup> In *Unlust* the infant is described as, in the absence of the actual breast, hallucinating an imaginary one. This hallucination provides temporary relief without addressing the case, the infant’s hunger remains untreated. Actually, the infant’s hunger is exacerbated due to the body generating motor excitations in response to the hallucination that it is unable of discharging. It is important to note that this is a psychically phantasmatic reality without substantial correlation to ‘material reality,’ yet imbued with as much power to effect the child as ‘material reality’ itself. This is also the moment where the concepts of delay as well as the wish for instant gratification are introduced to the infant. Klein, from this premise develops the idea of the “good” breast and “bad” breast. Laplanche and Pontalis write: “For her, the instinct is ambivalent from the start:

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<sup>232</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 202

<sup>233</sup> See Serena Hashimoto “Is this Desire; Nothingness in Communication” in *New York Studies in Media Philosophy*, ed. Wolfgang Shirmarcher, vol. 6 2001

‘love’ for the object is inseparable from its destruction, so that ambivalence becomes a quality of the object itself. As such an ambivalent object, perfectly benevolent and fundamentally hostile at one and the same time, would be intolerable, the subject struggles against his predicament by splitting it into a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ object.”<sup>234</sup> Additionally, the infant engages in a fantasy of mastery over the breast wherein he is the one responsible for its appearance and/or disappearance. The infant, jealous of the creativity of the mother’s breast and indignant at its own dependence upon it, employs a psychological fantasy in which he cuts up and pollutes the mother’s body. For Klein the impulse to cut up the mother’s body is interrelated to the drive for knowledge and the death drive, the death drive being *already* in tact at this juncture in the infant’s development. The internal drives at work in this phantasmatic scenario lead to the fundamental splitting of both the ego and the other, a good breast and a bad one. The complicated relationship that Klein envisions the infant as having with the maternal body is, unlike Lacan’s version of the emergence of the ego and its subsequent split in the ‘mirror stage,’ there is little exterior circumstances that prompt this complex entanglement. The genesis of the infant’s hostility is derived almost solely from within its own phantasmatic imaginings. For Klein, the infant’s envy and resentment are to the degree that he desires to cut up (dismember) and poison the breast with its own excrement.

A supposition found in Rice’s book, *Freud’s Russia*, is that Freud’s prejudice towards Dostoevsky can be traced to his experiences with a Russian patient of his known

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<sup>234</sup> Laplanche, J and Pontalis, J.B. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973 pg. 27

as the Wolf-Man, Sergi Pankeev. It was during the Wolf-Man sessions that Freud began his assessment of the Russian character as one profoundly marked by ambivalence. He writes, “Ambivalence to a degree abnormal in the West was the dominant problem of the Russian national psyche. Such was the opinion that Freud was soon to form of Dostoevsky, a judgment first based on the analysis of Pankeev, on encounters with Speilrein, and no doubt on ‘archaic’ patterns in Freud’s own psyche.”<sup>235</sup> Rice’s convincing thesis is supported by a letter that Freud wrote to Stephan Zweig in October of 1920. The correspondence contains many of the ideas that are later elaborated on in his essay on Dostoevsky published eight years later. Freud writes:

The strong tendency toward ambivalence (demonstrated a few years ago in my case history of a typical Russian), combined with the childhood trauma, may have partly determined the unusual violence of Dostoevsky’s case of hysteria. Even Russians who are not neurotic are also very noticeably ambivalent, as are all the characters in almost all of Dostoevsky’s novels. Nearly all the peculiarities of his production, hardly one of which has eluded you, can be traced back to his – for us abnormal, for Russians fairly common – psychic constitution, or more correctly, sexual constitution. . . . With you I do not have to fear the misunderstanding that this emphasis on the so-called pathological is intended to belittle or explain away the splendor of Dostoevsky’s creative power.<sup>236</sup>

The letter indicates that Freud’s diagnosis of Dostoevsky as a hysteric was firmly established at least seven years before the writing of “Dostoevsky and Parricide.” But the last statement, as was demonstrated in the previous section, is at best suspect. It might be precisely that Freud intends very much to “belittle and explain away the splendor of

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<sup>235</sup> James L. Rice. *Freud’s Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 105

<sup>236</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, pg. 116

Dostoevsky's creative power." The letter was written at a time when the sessions with the Wolf-Man were in a state of unraveling, the Russian patient was beginning to challenge Freud's authority and analysis was discontinued for a time. Six years later Freud wrote a letter to Pankeev, asking him to verify the accurateness of a dream that they had spent years analyzing together, a dream remembered from childhood. This belated challenge to the validity of Pankeev's childhood memory was what the Wolf-Man later said drove him into a paranoid state, a condition that led to him to threaten to shoot Freud in 1927. Here, as with the hysterical patients and later with Dostoevsky, Freud demonstrates a distrust of personal memories, in particular, childhood memories. Yet, this incident is inconsistent with the claim made by Freud that the compromise formation of the fantasized memory maintains the same affective component as the real thing. If this were truly the case for Freud, why would he have needed to query if Pankeev was positive about the details of a dream years after the analysis had ended? This instance again indicates Freud's hesitancy in his stance on the subject of the veracity of the memories of his patients and, furthermore, that his expression of disbelief of personal memory is here reported to have a causal effect upon a patient. The encounter with the paranoid and threatening Russian patient came precisely while Freud was in the midst of writing "Dostoevsky and Parricide." As Rice writes, "In Freud's analysis, a murderous and self-destructive (somasochistic) tendency dominates not only the personality of Dostoevsky but also the Russian national character. The sudden paranoid hostility of the Wolf-Man undoubtedly intensified and personalized Freud's involvement with the 'case' of Dostoevsky."<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., pg. 202

The desire to kill the beloved is central to the dilemma of ambivalence and mourning: where grieving is complicated by guilt in that the death had been, to some degree, wished for.<sup>238</sup> Freud writes on the subject of the ambivalence in mourning in *Totem and Taboo*:

We have ascertained that these obsessive reproaches are in a certain sense justified and therefore are immune to refutation or objections. Not that the mourner has really been guilty of the death or that she has really been careless, as the obsessive reproach assert; but still there was something in her, a wish of which she herself was aware, which was not displeased with the fact that death came, and which would have brought it about sooner had it been strong enough. . . .Such hostility, hidden in the unconscious behind tender love, exists in almost all cases of obsessive emotional allegiance to a particular person, indeed it represents the classic case, the prototype of the ambivalence of human emotions. There is always more or less ambivalence in everybody's disposition; normally it is not strong enough to give rise to the obsessive reproaches we have described. But where there is abundant predisposition for it, it manifests itself in relation to those we love most, precisely where you would least expect it.<sup>239</sup>

Here is a glimpse at why Freud postulates that Dostoevsky was particularly predisposed to obsessive reproaches in that in him ambivalence was more pronounced.

Ambivalence was initially a term borrowed from Bleuler by Freud who was concerned with its manifestation in three different areas: the will (*Ambitendenz*), the

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<sup>238</sup> Samuel Weber delineates the differentiation between wish and desire, "Of primary importance is the prohibition of the original love object, the mother, and the consequences it has for *desire*. If this word now supplants the term "wish," it is because the Oedipus complex involves a degree of structuration difficult to reconcile with the concept of wish." Samuel Weber. *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's dislocation of psychoanalysis*. trans. Michael Levine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990 pg. 124

<sup>239</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 80-81

intellect, and, finally, affective ambivalence, as when one simultaneously possesses love and hatred for an object. For Freud, conscious love can exist side by side with conscious hatred providing that neither one is intense. It is possible for the subject to hold contradictory attitudes towards the object, loving or hating lightly certain aspects of its qualities. Once one of the emotions, or both, becomes intense they are no longer compatible and one must be suppressed and made unconscious. The intensity of emotion towards the object prompts a detaching and one of the attitudes becomes rejected and relegated to the unconscious in order to vanquish ambivalence. In J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis book *The Language of Psychoanalysis* the following is written on ambivalence:

In 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes'(1915c), Freud uses Bleuler's term apropos of the activity/passivity opposition, to express the fact that, when we consider the active instinctual impulse 'its (passive) opposite may be observed alongside of it'. But this very extended meaning of 'ambivalence' is rare, and even in the same text it is the 'material' opposition between love and hate directly towards a single object which is able to exemplify ambivalence most clearly. Ambivalence is exhibited above all in certain pathological conditions (psychoses, obsessional neurosis) and in certain states of mind such as jealousy and mourning.<sup>240</sup>

There are two import points made within this citation particularly germane to the issue at hand. The first is that in its "extended meaning" ambivalence is seen to be dually structured in a manner similar to instincts, a dualism which is not a binary in which one suppresses the other, but analogical, where the two are present alongside one another. By linking the structure of ambivalence to the drives or instincts, it becomes evident that

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<sup>240</sup>J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973 pg. 27

ambivalence is an operational state, concerned with futurity and presentness. This distinguishes ambivalence from inarticulate memory, memory necessarily concerning itself primarily to what is past and the past's interruption of the present. Furthermore, inarticulate memory is not a phenomenon emergent from the repression of oppositional affects, rather, it encompasses the seeming lack of clarity that generates from the coexistent drives. The second matter of note from the preceding passage is that ambivalence is especially exhibited in conditions such as mourning. This evokes immediately what is encountered at "The Speech by the Stone," a scene chiefly concerned with mourning. Therein, ambivalence is evident in Alyosha's speech in three different ways. First, Dostoevsky is assumed to be particularly stricken with this condition given his national identity. Second, the subject matter of the close of his masterwork is an examination of mourning. Third, the one being mourned is a child mourned by other children, a period in life where ambivalence is pronounced (and, if Freud is to be believed, Dostoevsky himself is no more than a child). It is from this integrally ambivalent substratum from which Dostoevsky's remarks on memory, on inarticulate memory, stem.

### ***6.5 Ambivalence and epilepsy***

In Freud's letter to Zweig he writes, "Even Russians who are not neurotic are also very noticeably ambivalent, as are all the characters in almost all of Dostoevsky's novels."<sup>241</sup> Pankeev concurred with the premise that the Russian character was

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<sup>241</sup> James L. Rice *Freud's Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 116

distinguished in this regard, but wrote in his reflections late in life that he disapproved of the word ambivalent, claiming it too “harmless,” preferring instead “love-hate.” Pankeev expressed that, “psychoanalysis really has nothing to say about,” this state.<sup>242</sup>

Dostoevsky’s preparation for *The Idiot* corroborates Freud’s statement; concerning Prince Myshkin he writes, “Enigmas, who is he? A terrible scoundrel or a mysterious ideal?”<sup>243</sup>

Ambivalence happens also to be the descriptive term utilized by David McDuff to describe *The Brothers Karamazov*. In his introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel he refers to the “...strange and troubling quality of ambivalence, that passes through its entire plot, characterization and structure, making them impossible to define and determine with any degree of positive certainty.”<sup>244</sup> In Avital Ronell’s work on *The Idiot*, she employs ambivalence as a primary way in which to interpret Myshkin and the Dostoevskian world. She writes:

Repugnant and uncanny, the idiot in a kind of Batailleian reversal (being at bottom unmistakably Christian), provokes...love. Everybody loves the Idiot, who becomes a global symptom within an *ambivalent* economy governed largely by disgust. The idiot evokes horror, but this circumstance does not stop the community from loving him. On the contrary. There exists a barely discernible distinction between love and disgust in the novel. One could say of every couple equally that they are drawn to each other by irrepressible hatred or unavoidable love, that desire is fueled by disgust, run on aversion – Dostoevsky makes these affective determinations reversible in a manner that retains the accent on *ambivalent* intensity. The

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<sup>242</sup> Karin Obholzer, *Gesprache mit dem Wolfsmann*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980 quoted in James L. Rice *Freud’s Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 117

<sup>243</sup> Quoted in Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 173

<sup>244</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamasov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. xx

undecidable limit between hatred and love, contempt and reverence dominates every couple.<sup>245</sup>

(emphasis added)

She also notes that the epileptic draws forth ambivalence in those who witness the condition manifest. In reference to a fit in *The Idiot*, she writes, “this scene could be viewed as the *Entstellung*, or truthful distortion, representing the severe ambivalence that the Idiot, the seriously ill subject, tends to elicit.”<sup>246</sup> Therein, the correlation between Dostoevsky and ambivalence is made elsewhere independent of Freud, by the author himself and in the criticism of McDuff and Ronell.

Pankeev’s claim decades after his sessions with Freud that psychoanalysis had nothing to say on the subject of what he called “love-hate” is contradicted by the discussion of ambivalence by Laplanche and Pontalis. For them, the role of love-hate, as well as dualism, play an integral factor in the condition.

Are we obliged, in the last analysis, to bow to the imperative of the Freudian theory of instincts, and postulate a basic dualism in order to account for ambivalence? If we do so, the ambivalence of love and hate can be then understood in terms of the development peculiar to each of them: hate has its origin in the instincts of self preservation...while love for its part originates in the sexual instincts. The opposition between life instincts and death instincts encountered in Freud’s second theory tends to root ambivalence even more firmly in an instinctual dualism.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 194-195

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 193

<sup>247</sup> Laplanche, J and Pontalis, J.B. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973 pg. 28 It also is to remembered that ambivalence is at the core of the Oedipal conflict.

Perhaps this basic dualism, the sharp contrast between intense pleasure and an expression of death, is found in no better example than Dostoevsky's own writing on the experience of an epileptic seizure. In *The Idiot* he writes:

Then suddenly something seemed torn asunder before him; his soul was flooded with intense inner light. The moment lasted perhaps half a second, yet he clearly and consciously remembered the beginning, the first sound of the fearful scream which broke of itself from his breast and which he could not have checked by any effort. Then his consciousness was instantly extinguished and complete darkness followed.

It was an epileptic fit, the first he had had for a long time.<sup>248</sup>

The almost temporarily indistinguishable division between extreme light and dark described as marking the experience of the seizure designates the fit as an almost perfect expression of an intensely ambivalent moment; the soul is flooded with light at the same instance that consciousness is extinguished into complete darkness. Rice recounts another description Dostoevsky gave of an attack from A.E. Vrangel's *Vospominaniia o F Dostoevskom v Sibiri 1854-56*, where he wrote, "Before the very onslaught, his body was seized with a kind of inexpressible feeling of voluptuousness."<sup>249</sup> Rice uses this example to substantiate Freud's diagnosis of Dostoevsky, writing, "The powerfully erotic element (*Wollustgefühl; sladostrastie*) in Dostoevsky's seizures, which he understandably suppressed and sublimated in accounts even to most of those close to him, might appear to anticipate Freud's analysis and to support the theory of 'hysteroepilepsy' with a

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<sup>248</sup>Quoted in Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2003, pg. 192. Note that in a different translation the same passage reads, "Then suddenly it was as if something opened up before him: an extraordinary *inner* light illuminated his soul". The slight differences of the emphasis added to inner is of some interest, as is the difference in open and torn. *The Idiot*. trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002 pg. 234

<sup>249</sup> James L. Rice. *Freud's Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 188

neurotic sexual etiology.”<sup>250</sup> The sexualizing of the attack further corroborates my suggestion that this moment serves as a somatic expression of ambivalence. The moment of sexual gratification has long been considered to be suffused with ambivalence: where pure pleasure also at once hints at pain in that the very limits of subjectivity are threatened. Referring again to Ronell’s contention that the witness of the fit experiences ambivalence – the cause of the attractive element of the ambivalent state can only be located in that the fit encapsulates a “desubjectivizing rapture.”<sup>251</sup> Freud joins sexuality to epilepsy and writes:

It is no wonder in these circumstances that it has been found impossible to maintain that ‘epilepsy’ is a single clinical entity. The similarity that we find in the manifest symptoms seems to call for a functional view of them. It is as though a mechanism for abnormal instinctual discharge had been laid down. . . . Nor can that mechanism stand remote from the sexual processes, which are fundamentally of toxic origin: the earliest physicians described coition as a minor epilepsy, and thus recognized the sexual act a mitigation and adaptation of the epileptic method of discharging stimuli.<sup>252</sup>

Therein, the manifestation of ambivalence – of a “desubjectivizing moment” – elicits ambivalence in the witness and, then, directly indicates the presence of the death drive. Ronell notes: “Both the addiction (gambling) and the epilepsy attack are said to grow out ambivalence toward a severe and sadistic father. . . . Ambivalence puts the death drive in gear. The attacks, which prime and mime the sexual act, also move beyond the pleasure

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., pg. 188

<sup>251</sup> Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 193

<sup>252</sup> Sigmund Freud. “Dostoevsky and Parricide” in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 238

principle to double for death.”<sup>253</sup> However, for the attack to have grown out of ambivalence varies slightly my conjecture that epilepsy is a manifestation of ambivalence as such. Freud’s writing supports the supposition that the seizure is a corporeal expression of ambivalence when he writes of the epileptic aura in its relation to parricide:

One thing is remarkable: in the aura of the epileptic attack, one moment of supreme bliss is experienced. This may very well be a record of the triumph and sense of liberation felt on hearing the news of the death, to be followed immediately by an all the more cruel punishment. We have divined just such a sequence of triumph and mourning, of festive joy and mourning, in the brothers of the primal horde who murdered their father and we find it again in the ceremony of the totem meal.<sup>254</sup>

Here the repetitious sequence of joy and mourning is of paramount importance, not only is the vacillation between the extremes indicative of ambivalence, but again the ambivalent state of mourning is prominent. Also, the dynamic metamorphosis of suffering into joy – of mourning into redemption – is the subject of concern in “The Speech by Stone,” complete with reference to the totem meal (blins).

Rice’s observes, “Dostoevsky described his own seizures and exploited them in fiction as a complex dialectic of spiritual triumph, euphoria, disintegration, and collapse.”<sup>255</sup> This is similar to Ronell’s reading of the body and epilepsy in Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*. However, epilepsy appears to have a different tenor in *The Brothers Karamazov* than it does in *The Idiot*. In *The Idiot*, it is the protagonist, The Prince, who

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<sup>253</sup> Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 233

<sup>254</sup> Sigmund Freud. “Dostoevsky and Parricide” in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 244

<sup>255</sup> James L. Rice. *Freud’s Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993 pg. 188

is epileptic and whose epileptic fit serves as a salvational instrument; the condition is determined as heroic. Ronell writes the following about the heroic epileptic episode: “As he is about to be assassinated in a dark stairwell, an epileptic seizure erupts and takes over the scene, supervening upon the intention of the murder, frightening away the killer.”<sup>256</sup> Rogozhin is thrown off course; he is prompted to “desist(s) from committing the intended murder when horrified by the fit.”<sup>257</sup> Twice in Ronell’s account *The Prince* is described as saved by the disruption of intention, intention disturbed by the corporeal expression of ambivalence. Freud wrote, “We can safely say that Dostoevsky never got free from the guilt arising from his intention of murdering his father.”<sup>258</sup> The seizures are explained by Freud as causally produced by the intention to kill. Ronell refers to a study by Marie-Therese Sutterman, “One exhaustive clinical study depicts the epileptic fit as a repetition of the infant’s terror when first faced with the parental death wish- as a response to the threat of infanticide visited upon the baby.”<sup>259</sup> In Sutterman’s hypothesis, the epileptic fit is a result of the subject intuiting or fantasizing the parental infanticidal intention.<sup>260</sup> In these accounts, the seizure can be read as an ambivalent expression at the cause or effect of intention, intention producing and intention disrupting. Ronell writes:

Hysterical epilepsy means that you have not gotten away with murder, you are the way. You have thrown your body in the way of the targeted object of a murderous impulse and will continue to trade positions with the intended other, dancing for death commissioned by you. Freud makes the macabre dance contingent on a death wish, but not on the death wish of the other, as Sutterman

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<sup>256</sup> Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 192

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 193

<sup>258</sup> Sigmund Freud. “Dostoevsky and Parricide” in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 245

<sup>259</sup> Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 194

<sup>260</sup> Here it should be recalled that Smerdaykov’s first seizure is experienced shortly after his foster father Grigory hits him squarely across the face.

subsequently contends – that is, on the likelihood, within the transmitted intimations of fantasy, that the infant has gotten the message of the near extinction wished upon her by the attending parent.<sup>261</sup>

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is the undesirable brother Smerdykov, far from a heroic entity, who occupies the place of the epileptic; the one who somatically displays ambivalence as well as the material murderer (the murderer by intention is, of course, Ivan). A further departure from *The Idiot* is rather than having an epileptic fit prevent a felony, it covers for one in that Smerdykov plans to fake an attack so as to have an alibi for his crime. This seeming shift in how Dostoevsky depicted his own illness can be accounted for by two different readings. The first is that this is yet another instance of his ambivalence: having previously glorified epilepsy the time has come for it to be denigrated. Or, it could be that the great hostility directed at the illness in *The Brothers Karamazov* is due to the biographical fact that his son (named Alyosha) died of the illness just prior to the writing of his last book. Having witnessed what had been primarily his own subjective experience located in and extinguishing his offspring could have altered his position towards the illness. It certainly could be suspected that the death of his son further exacerbated Dostoevsky's guilt at taking pleasure in his own seizures. When Freud states that, "We can safely say that Dostoevsky never got free from his feelings of guilt arising from his intention of murdering his father,"<sup>262</sup> the consistent strand of interest is the apparent inability to contain intention in a manner great enough that its discharge is made possible. The intention to kill his father was either intense

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., pg. 233

<sup>262</sup> Sigmund Freud. "Dostoevsky and Parricide" *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 245

enough to cause a mark or lingered around long enough that guilt was induced, apparent in his masochism. At the point in his life that he wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*, through the lens of the psychoanalytic reading offered herein, Dostoevsky was suffering epileptic fits as a result of his guilt at intending to murder his father while his son, Alyosha, died from seizures resultant from either perceiving his father's intention to kill him or himself wishing to kill his father.

### **6.6 Freud's Neglect**

While Dostoevsky works devotedly to tend to any and all filial duties – despite and because of his parricidal intentions – Freud acts with blatant neglect towards his obligations. He emerges, by his own account, as the son who fails doubly in his mourning rites; Jacob's funeral is, on Sigmund's order, austere and he arrives to it late. The following is an extended section of the letter, previously quoted, to Wilhelm Fleiss written on November 2, 1886, directly *after* Jacob's funeral.

Dear Wilhelm,

I find it so difficult to write just now that I have put off for a long time thanking you for the moving words in your letter. By one of those dark pathways behind the official consciousness the old man's death has affected me deeply. I valued him highly, understood him very well, and with his peculiar mixture of deep wisdom and fantastic lightheartedness he had a significant effect on my life. By the time he died, his life had long been over, but in [my] inner self the whole past has been awakened by this event.

I now feel quite uprooted.

Otherwise, I am writing about infantile paralyzes (Pegasus yoked) and am enjoying my four cases and especially look forward to the prospect of talking to you for several hours. Lonely, that is understood. Perhaps I shall tell you a few small wild things in return for your marvelous ideas and findings. Less enjoyable is the state of my practice, on which my mood always remains dependent....

I must tell you about a nice dream I had the night after the funeral. I was in a place where I read a sign:

You are requested  
to close the eyes.

I immediately recognized the location as the barbershop I visit every day. On the day of the funeral I was kept waiting and therefore arrived a little late at the house of mourning. At that time my family was displeased with me because I had arranged for the funeral to be quiet and simple, which they later agreed was quite justified. They were also somewhat offended by my lateness. The sentence on the sign has a double meaning: one should do one's duty to the dead (an apology as though I had not done it and were in need of leniency), and the actual duty itself. The dream thus stems from the inclination to self-reproach that regularly sets in among the survivors....<sup>263</sup>

Here, as in the case of Hamlet, the son arrives late to a malformed funeral “quiet and simple,” which, here, is Freud’s doing. In Hamlet, it is the family who fails in their mourning rites, thus eliciting the contempt of the son; with Freud the family reproaches him for his austerity and also his lateness to “the house of mourning.” To what extent did his breach of filial obligation impacted his subsequent loss of footing?

Freud alters the remembrance of the dream cited in the letter slightly in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. There, he writes that the dream occurred the night *before* the funeral and that the sign read either, “You are requested to close the eyes” or “You are requested to close an eye.” He then states,

Each of these two versions had a meaning of its own and led in a different direction when the dream was interpreted. I had chosen the simplest possible ritual for the funeral, for I knew my father’s own views on such ceremonies. But some other members of the family were not sympathetic to such puritanical simplicity and thought we should be disgraced in the eyes of those

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<sup>263</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss, 1887-1904*. trans. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985 pg. 202

who attended the funeral. Hence one of the versions: “You are requested to close an eye,’ i.e. to ‘wink at’ or ‘overlook.’<sup>264</sup>

In moving the dream to before the funeral, he distances the possibility that the sign is a result of the reproaches from his family on the day of the funeral (due to his lateness). Also, by including an alternative reading of the sign, “an eye,” he further substantiates the claim found in the letter to Fleiss, that this dream was meant to indicate that he should show leniency towards himself, to overlook the criticisms of his family, and perhaps, to ignore the disgrace in the eyes of the funeral attendees. While Freud states that the dual interpretation of the lettering of the sign leads in different directions, he steadfastly maintains only one. In both the letter to Fleiss and in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud revisits the austerity of the funeral, justifies his decision on this point, recalls the reproaches of his family, indicates their folly at doing so, and interprets the sign as an indicator that he should be lenient with himself. While an additional interpretation is hinted at, it never is articulated, suggesting he had a very narrowly defined agenda in working with this dream. It seems conspicuous that Freud failed to acknowledge one possible interpretation of the sign, that the “you are requested to close the eyes” could very well refer to the Oedipal act of putting his eyes out at the knowledge that he was the parricide, or that he harbored a parricidal wish. Freud’s dream could be read as the result of guilt at the long ago repressed intention to kill his father or from the ambivalence derived from his mourning (some part of him had wished his father dead), manifesting in the instruction to him and from him to “close the eyes,” an interpretation only possible

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<sup>264</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. trans and ed. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1972 pg. 353

with the reading “the eyes,” not “an eye.” Here, as in the cases of Oedipus, Hamlet, and Dostoevsky, the parricidal wish is complicated by breaches in the mourning ritual.

## 7.0 Grieving

*Some particular being, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its Being. The being of beings comes into the steadiness of its shining.*<sup>265</sup>

– Martin Heidegger

The biblical passage Dostoevsky chose to place prominently in the beginning of *The Brothers Karamazov* is from John 12:24: “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.”<sup>266</sup> The quote indicates the redemptive power Dostoevsky attributes to the state of suffering. However, there are many instances where the writer shows considerable contempt for anguish. As the biblical passage indicates, suffering is depicted as a necessary ingredient for spiritual regeneration, but only a suffering devoid of elements Dostoevsky deemed contaminatory are given wholehearted praise in the text. Here appears as another instance of ambivalence on the part of Dostoevsky. He divides suffering into two types, one egotistic and somatic and the other pathos laden and collective, and, notably, without a corporeal expression. Within *The Brothers Karamazov*, only non-somatic, controlled pathos can lead to spiritual redemption. In describing the funeral of Ilyusha, the mourners are divided into two groups, each determined by the manner by which they grieve: on the one side there is the immediate family whose excessive suffering is pathologized by the author/narrator; on the other,

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<sup>265</sup> Martin Heidegger. “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Basic Writings*. trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers. 1977 pg. 164-165

<sup>266</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. ed. Ralph E. Matlaw. trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. 1976 unnumbered opening page

there is Alyosha and the boys, whose suffering is neither bodily nor is it extreme – therefore potentially collective and subsequently redemptive.

### **7.1 Suffering**

Prior to “The Speech by the Stone” the depiction of Ilyusha’s parents’ grief receives considerable attention. Although they are not in attendance at Alyosha’s speech, they appear before, wailing and hysterical; in fact, they are depicted as nothing short of epileptic in their grief. Dostoevsky’s last look at Ilyusha’s mother is as follows:

But seeing that precious little face, which for the last three days she had only looked at from a distance, she trembled all over and her gray head began twitching spasmodically over the coffin.

“Mother, make the sign of the cross over him, give him your blessing, kiss him,” Nina cried to her. But her head still twitched like an automaton and with a face contorted with bitter grief she began, without a word, beating her chest with her fist.<sup>267</sup>

A similar account is given of Snegiryov’s grief (Ilyusha’s father), with the entire description of the mass devoted to his behavior:

During the mass Snegiryov became somewhat calmer, though at times he had outburst of the same unconscious and, as it were, incoherent anxiety. ... falling on his knees, he pressed his forehead to the stone floor and lay so for a long while. ... He seemed suddenly to shrink together and broke into rapid, short sobs, which he tried to smother, but at last he sobbed a loud.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. ed. Ralph E. Matlaw. trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. 1976 pg. 729-730

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 730

Dostoevsky chooses to depict the parents' suffering epileptically, how appropriate in that they are mourning; the parents then, somatically expressing ambivalence. In light of the disparaged position epilepsy occupies in this text, their suffering is then unsurprisingly construed as somehow negative, improper: evidenced by comments made by the narrator and Kolya, as well as looking at other instances Dostoevsky treats the thematic of pain. The funeral scene begins with Alyosha arriving and Kolya informing him, "It is awful here... Snegiryov is not drunk, we know for a fact that he has had nothing to drink today, but he seems as if he were drunk..."<sup>269</sup> After the funeral and prior to "The Speech by the Stone," Kolya returns to the subject of Ilyusha's father's drunkenness and remarks, "What do you suppose, Karamazov, should we come back again this evening? I mean, he will get drunk."<sup>270</sup> Additionally, in the middle of the funeral, Kolya remarks to Snegiryov, "Captain, that will do, a man of courage has a duty to endure."<sup>271</sup> A slightly more sympathetic depiction of the mother occurs, with the narrator repeatedly calling her insane ("crazy wife," "the crazy little mother," "the poor, crazy woman"<sup>272</sup>).

The suffering of the family epileptically invests their bodies, improperly evoking the memory of the illegitimate and, by this point in the novel, forgotten Karamazov brother, Smerdyakov. The reader is reminded that the criminal element previously found its most enunciated form in an epileptic and surrounding an epileptic moment. This condemnation slips onto the author who, himself an epileptic, pens his own name's (Fyodor is the name of the slain father) murder by one who uses his ailment (epilepsy) as

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<sup>269</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993  
pg. 884

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., pg. 890

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., pg. 889

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., pg. 885-886

an alibi. Freud makes quick note of this when he writes, "...it is a remarkable fact that Dostoevsky has attributed to him his own illness, the alleged epilepsy, as though seeking to confess that the epileptic, the neurotic, in himself was a parricide."<sup>273</sup> While Freud works feverishly to render the epileptic condition of Dostoevsky as illegitimate, Dostoevsky displaces his condition onto the illegitimate brother. Later, once Smerdyakov departs by a scarcely noted suicide, epilepsy makes a cloaked return as the manifestations of mourning in the parents of Ilyusha's, a grief mocked by the author. Implied is that Dostoevsky, plagued by epilepsy, is himself unable to suffer in the accurate way; his bodily anguish places him with those who are in error, who's suffering will not lead to transformation. Dostoevsky establishes a right and wrong way to suffer, a definition whose structure places him masochistically with those who are mistaken.

Conversely, the boys occupy the place of correct suffering, the non-corporeal variety. Consider Alyosha's misquote in "The Speech by the Stone" of Kolya's earlier pronouncement, "I want to suffer for all men!" Returning to look at what Kolya actually remarked, "Oh, if only I, too could some day sacrifice myself for truth and justice," the sacrifice for truth and justice bears a distinctly different tone than that of an epileptic fit which is defined by unreasonableness, and as such incapable of the economy of sacrifice. The suffering that Dostoevsky champions is of a caliber that is able to maintain a relation to cognition, devoid of any "crazy" or "drunken" element. The hypothesis is that the experience must be inarticulately remembered, it might be presumed that the converse to be true. The compromise of cognition (drunkenness and insanity) superficially seems

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<sup>273</sup> Sigmund Freud. "Dostoevsky and Parricide" in *Writing on Art and Literature*. ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, from The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997 pg. 247

ideal in the formation of an inarticulate memory. Dostoevsky strongly asserts, however, that this is not the case. For the mental state to be impaired enough that the body is effected, then suffering becomes devoid of its redemptive potential.

Additional instances of Dostoevsky critiquing bodily suffering are found in his texts, as with the figure little Nellie in *The Insulted and Injured* who is observed, “...purposely trying to aggravate her wound by this mysterious behavior this mistrustfulness of us all; as though she enjoyed her own pain, *by this egoism of suffering*, if I may say so express it. This aggravation of suffering and this reveling in it I could understand; it is the enjoyment of many of the insulted and injured, oppressed by destiny and smarting under the sense of injustice.”<sup>274</sup> This “egoism of suffering,” is not, for Dostoevsky, the variety that will lead to salvation due to its singular quality, its reification of subjectivity through the debasement of the body; a project potentially pleasurable (masochism). In *The Brothers Karamazov*, a similar scenario of the “egoism of suffering” is depicted when Lise – who does not engender the same sympathetic understanding from the author as does little Nellie – speaks at length incoherently to Alyosha about, of course, a mutilated child. Her barrage ends, eliciting Alyosha’s pledge of unending love as he exits. This leaves her, as if in order to generate a euphoric climax (and their conversation had been nothing short of masturbatory in its unilateral frenzy), to the following course of action:

As for Liza, no sooner had Alyosha made his retreat than she at once released the latch, opened the door in a little way, inserted her finger into the crack and slamming the door shut with all her might, crushed her finger. Some ten seconds later, freeing her hand, she

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<sup>274</sup> Quoted in Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 pg. 338

quietly, slowly, returned to her bath chair, sat down, straightened up completely, and began fixedly to look at her blackened finger and at the blood that was welling up from under the nail. Her lips trembled, and quickly, quickly she whispered to herself: 'I am vile, vile, vile, vile!'<sup>275</sup>

With little Nellie and Lise, the masochistic enjoyment of corporeal suffering, in its immediacy and reification of their singular identity, garners little sympathy. Rather, as with Ilyusha's parents, these moments appear as if instructions on what to avoid. The displays are both direct and articulate, to some degree even pictorial – representable. They function to rearticulate the initial imago – a reinvestment in the substantiation of subjectivity (hence its capacity to be pleurably experienced). Were these instances of “egoism of suffering” furthered – all out attacks on subjectivity in terms of either psychic breaking of the imago or actual physical mangling – they would be experienced as trauma, incapable of being subjectively assumed and experienced as pleasure. Even so, Freud suggests that corporeal pain supplies a meditating effect in the event of trauma and as a temporary reprieve in the case of melancholia. Pertaining to trauma he writes, “...a gross physical trauma diminishes the chances that a neurosis will develop...painful and feverish illnesses exercise a powerful effect, so long as they last, on the distribution of the libido.”<sup>276</sup> He continues, “...such severe disorders as melancholia are temporarily brought to an end by intercurrent organic illness, and indeed even a fully developed condition of dementia praecox is capable of temporary remission in these same circumstances.”<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamasov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 674. Sometimes translated with a slightly different, yet equally effective connotation as ‘wretch, wretch, wretch.’

<sup>276</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961 pg. 27

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 27

Dostoevsky writes as though he anticipated Freud's thinking, insisting that the mediating effect of physical pain be held in abeyance in order for suffering to be redemptive.

## ***7.2 Filial Duty/ Functionary – Little Boots and Heidegger***

While the Captain is ridiculed by Kolya at the funeral, the depiction is not without sympathy. Here is the last description of Ilyusha's father:

...at that same moment, before Ilyusha's little bed, in the corner, he caught sight of Ilyusha's boots that stood side by side, having only just been tidied up by the landlady – old, faded, stiffened boots, with patches. At the sight of them he raised his hands and threw himself towards them, fell on his knees, seized one boot and pressing his lips to it, began to kiss it avidly, crying aloud: 'My fellow, Ilyushechka, my dear fellow, where are your feet?'<sup>278</sup>

We are quickly reminded of the father's "sinful" qualities by Kolya, who queries Alyosha directly after the father's departure: "What do you suppose, Karamazov, should we come back again this evening? I mean, he will get drunk."<sup>279</sup> The father, in his suffering and, especially, by the manner of his suffering, evades Dostoevsky's redemption. He is the sinner who is nonetheless sympathetic despite and because of his capacity to sin. Recall again the description of the Ilyusha made by Alyosha in "The Speech By the Stone," "Let us also remember his face, and his clothes, and his poor little boots, and his coffin, and his unhappy, sinful father, and how he boldly rose up for him against the entire class!"<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamasov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 889

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 890

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 893

The short phrase “sinful father” bears a doubly determined meaning in terms of both Dostoevsky’s own psyche and the other sinful father in the text, Fyodor Karamazov. Fyodor’s position as victim of parricide has served to form the superego for the brothers, and through interdependent implication the rest of the characters with the surplus spilling over, no doubt, onto the reader. His status as ubiquitous sinner requires further treatment. While the “sinful” aspect of Fyodor Karamazov is not without built-in redemption by the author, he nonetheless lacks a champion. Dostoevsky, by choosing to have Alyosha eulogize Ilyusha, is paying homage to the champion of the second “sinful father,” Snegiryov.<sup>281</sup> The speech is in honor of the one who “boldly rose up for him (Snegiryov) against the entire class” and thereby completes Dostoevsky’s ever-present obligation to the paternal. Ronell, largely agreeing with Freud’s estimation of Dostoevsky, writes concerning the author’s relationship towards filial duties, “Aggravated or confirmed by Dostoevsky’s latent homosexuality, the father complex is largely responsible for the passive positions occupied by Fyodor Mikhailovich when faced with the massive existential insults leveled at him and informs, further, his inordinate submissiveness to the czar and God – to ‘little father’ and big daddy.”<sup>282</sup> The homage to Ilyusha is thus satisfying two requirements for the author: the scene’s honored figure is heroic by his filial piety. At the same time, sado/masochistic pleasure can still be derived in that, within the eulogy, the heroic figure himself is ignored. This signals the return of Ivan’s question as to the ethics of utilizing the death of a child for our own purposes – the collective experience of suffering-as-joy overshadows the specificity of one lost child.

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<sup>281</sup> Interestingly, there was a nineteenth-century Russian thinker, a contemporary of Dostoyevsky’s, named N.F. Fyodorov who believed “a literal, real and personal resurrection (that) will take place on the earth, and will be brought about by the efforts of living sons to resurrect their dead fathers.” Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamasov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. xxii

<sup>282</sup> Avital Ronell. *Stupidity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pg. 234

Dostoevsky, as opposed to Sophocles, withholds the honor of sacrificial object from Ilyusha, for sacrifice implies that the object becomes consecrated through its destruction. Ilyusha is not made holy at his death as is Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Rather, he is a functionary that serves to unite the boys, prompting their shared experience and instigating the creation of a potentially transformative memory.

Within the last few scenes of the book there is a double reference to Ilyusha's little boots.<sup>283</sup> One more set of famous peasant shoes, those painted by van Gough and philosophized upon by Martin Heidegger, offer an additional reading as to the functional quality of Ilyusha's death. Heidegger reflects upon the peasant shoes of van Gough to illuminate his thoughts on thingness and equipment in his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art." Heidegger initially states that the actual artistic rendering of the object is only useful insofar as it engenders the primary discussion, concerned with being, concealment, and truth. Later in the essay he concedes that it is the painting by van Gough that affords one the ability to discover the nature of equipment, initially he writes in reference to peasant shoes, "We do not even need to exhibit actual pieces of this sort of useful article in order to describe them. Everyone is acquainted with them."<sup>284</sup> Indeed, everyone is familiar with Ilyusha's little boots, so what does the double reference to them signify? What is it in the boots that moves his father to grab one and cry *hysterically*?

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<sup>283</sup> The two references are included again here for the purpose of clarity. "...at that same moment, before Ilyusha's little bed, in the corner, he caught sight of **Ilyusha's boots** that stood side by side, having only just been tidied up by the landlady- **old, faded, stiffened boots, with patches**. At the sight of them he raised his hands and threw himself towards them, fell on his knees, seized one boot and pressing his lips to it, began to kiss it avidly, crying aloud: "My fellow, Ilyushechka, my dear fellow, where are your feet?" "Let us also remember his face, and his clothes, and his **poor little boots**, and his coffin, and his unhappy, sinful father, and how he boldly rose up for him against the entire class!" Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamasov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 893

<sup>284</sup> Martin Heidegger. "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings*. trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers. 1977 pg. 162

Heidegger writes in contemplating the shoes one also conceives of their equipment quality, the way in which they were used, that is, the equipment quality of equipment.

He defines the character of equipment:

The equipment being of the equipment consists indeed in its usefulness. But this usefulness itself rests in the abundance of an essential Being of equipment. We call it reliability. By virtue of this reliability the peasant woman is made privy to the silent call of the earth; by virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is sure of her world.<sup>285</sup>

The determination of the boots is metonymically simple; the boots represent reliability and also Ilyusha himself was reliable. This would be in keeping with his purpose as defender of the sinful father. He can be relied upon to keep up filial obligation. However, taken further, it must also be that Ilyusha himself is in fact equipment. His functionary status within the novel is so complete that it is underscored by the double reference to the boots. Dostoevsky, no matter how preemptively he attempts to assuage any possible uneasiness at using Ilyusha's death as the origin for a redemptive emotion/memory that, ultimately, does *not* honor the specificity of the dead, the slippage between boot and boy affirms Ilyusha is truly no more than equipment. Ilyusha's equipment value can be doubly relied upon: once as filial upkeep, and again as funerary functionary. In a Heideggerian context this is not as dismissive as it might otherwise be interpreted in that, for Heidegger, the equipment as disclosed by the work of art does something remarkable. "This being emerges into the unconcealment of its Being."<sup>286</sup> That is nothing less than "...a happening of truth at work."<sup>287</sup> By willingly utilizing, without apology, Ilyusha as

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., pg. 163-164

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., pg. 164

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., pg. 164

equipment in his work of art, Dostoevsky enables Ilyusha to, “come(s) in the work to stand in the light of its own Being.”<sup>288</sup>

### **7.3 Mourning: Derrida**

*‘Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,  
To give these mourning duties to your father:  
But, you must know, your father lost a father;  
That father lost, lost his; and survivor bound  
In filial obligation for some term  
To do obsequious sorrow; but to preserve  
In obstinate condolment is a course  
Of impious stubbornness; ‘tis unmanly grief:  
It shows a will a most incorrect to heaven,  
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
An understanding simple and unschool’d.’<sup>289</sup>*

–Shakespeare

Dostoevsky’s ethics stand in marked contrast to Derrida’s work on funeral oration and mourning. Derrida writes within each of his offerings to his fallen friends about the dangers associated with the genre of funeral oration – about the difficulty of being called to speak at the precise moment when one is speechless. Language, in its very debt and indebtedness to repeatability (iterability), cannot help but be unfaithful to the singular event of a death. In addition to the lack of specificity inherent to language, there is the oddly metonymic structure which comprises emotion to contend with.

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid., pg. 164-165

<sup>289</sup> William Shakespeare. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. London: Magpie Books, 2000 pg. 813

Derrida writes after the death of Sarah Kofman: “Let us not hasten to think of mourning, of an impossible mourning. For we would then run the risk of missing, or actually we would not fail to miss, under some clinical category, some general type of mourning – to which a certain guilt is always associated – this incisive, singular, and unappeasable suffering that I simply could not bear, precisely out of friendship, to transfer onto something else, and even less onto some conceptual generality that would not be Sarah, Sarah Kofman herself.”<sup>290</sup> In expressing his interest in maintaining faithfulness to the departed, the dangers of remembrance are underscored; at the moment one is to mourn the question becomes “who is being mourned?” Is this grief the grief that arises from the loss of *this* person, or am I grieving another – has a slippage occurred? Worse still, for there to be any “conceptual generality” in operation.<sup>291</sup> This opposed to Dostoevsky’s previously cited words, “...united us in this kind and good emotion, one which we shall always, all our lives remember and are resolved to remember....”<sup>292</sup> Dostoevsky employs what Derrida is warning against, a generalized mourning, and prescribes it as the redemptive movement for humanity, suggesting to utilize the grief for the boy, a grief that is kind and good (suffering-as-joy), and allow it to be incorporated as a memory of unity, as an inarticulate memory which, by its nature will be without faithfulness to *anyone*. “If he gathers many such memories in his life, a man is saved for all of it. And even if only one good memory remains within our hearts, then even it may

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<sup>290</sup> Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001 pg. 172

<sup>291</sup> Žižek indicates a similar problematic in mourning, “And still more so, the enigma of mourning takes us to the function of the enigma in mourning: what does the dead person want? What does he want of me? What did he want to say to me? The enigma leads back, then, to the otherness of the other; and the otherness of the other is his response to his unconscious, that is to say, to his otherness to himself.” “From the Myth to Agape” in *Psychomedia*. JEP articles, number 8-9, Winter-Fall 1999 pg. 6

<sup>292</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 892

serve some day for our salvation.”<sup>293</sup> The ability to *repeat*, to *recall*, to will the recurrence of a memory-of-suffering-as-joy, holds with it, and only potentially, the ingredient for *redemption*. Here, again the concept of a collective déjà vu returns; for is it not exactly one of déjà vu’s defining features that one is unable to locate, with precision, the origins of the remembrance; the functionary remains anonymous, leaving the *memory* of an *emotion*.<sup>294</sup> What is happening has happened prior, and is now happening again – un-beckoned for and with only-ever a potentiality of recurrence.

Derrida again addresses the impossible ethics of the funeral oration after the death of Jean-Françoise Lyotard. Here he concerns himself with the construction of “we.” “It is of him we mean to speak, of him alone, of or on his side alone. But how can a survivor speak in friendship of the friend without a ‘we’ indecently slipping in? Without a ‘we’ in fact demanding – and precisely out of friendship – to be heard?”<sup>295</sup> In writing “of him alone” it is again evident that Derrida is carefully skirting around the pit of emotional metonymy, of the unsavory possibility of generalized mourning. Derrida constructs the problematic of how to be faithful to the dead in terms of “we,” its very indecency *and*

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid, pg. 892

<sup>294</sup> If there is an emotion associated with repetition it would be located here.

<sup>295</sup> Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. trans. Pascal-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001 pg 216 The following is another passage from the same text which contains several elements germane to this discussion. “I thus wanted to follow a thread of memory – and a particular recollection waiting for what could, one day to come, come to memory. What guided me, more or less obscurely, was an interweaving of motifs whose economy I came to see as necessary when most of the threads of the phrase ‘there shall be no mourning’ appeared woven together silently within it. First, the thread of singularity, of the event and of the destination – of the ‘to whom it happens’. Next, the thread of repetition, that is, of the intrinsic iterability of the phrase, which divides the destination, suspends it on the trace between presence and absence, beyond both, an iterability that, in dividing its destination, splits singularity: as soon as a phrase is iterable, and it is so right away, it can break loose from its context and lose the singularity of its destined addressee. A technical machinery comes in advance to strip it of the unicity of the occurrence and the destination. The tangled web of these threads (the machine, repetition, chance, and the loss of a destinal singularity) is precisely what I would like to entrust to you along with this recollection.” pg. 227

unavoidability. He follows by attempting to negotiate between the inevitability of including the “we” while at the same time allowing Lyotard to speak – to be present beyond the “we,” present at precisely the moment he is no longer present. Later in the essay Derrida comes back to the indecent “we” and writes:

First, I wanted to avoid the expected homage to Jean-Francois Lyotard’s thought and oeuvre....But I also wanted to stay away from an homage in the form of a personal testimony, which always tends towards reappropriation and always risks giving in to an indecent way of saying ‘we’, or worse, ‘me’, when precisely my first wish is to let Jean-Francois speak...How to leave him alone without abandoning him? How, then, without further betrayal, to disavow the act of narcissistic remembrance, so full of memories to cry over (*pleurer*) or to make us cry (*faire pleurer*)?<sup>296</sup>

Dostoevsky, in Alyosha’s funeral oration, directly challenges the ethics that Derrida is so carefully attempting to craft and be faithful to; he moves beyond casual betrayal and advocates it in a radical form. His choice of a child for this particular oration ensures that there is no question of oeuvre, no thought of the dead to be faithful to, rather one of a child’s defining features is their ability to evoke pure pathos. Furthermore, while Derrida tentatively negotiates a place for the “we,” careful of its inherent tendency towards betrayal, Dostoevsky quickly promotes the “we” to the sole matter of concern. If Derrida is wrestling with the double injunction to leave Lyotard alone without abandoning him, Dostoevsky offers a double imperative, to recall their togetherness *and* to recall their experience of suffering-as-joy, leaving, without regret, Ilyusha out of the equation. While Derrida struggles with allowing without abandoning, Dostoevsky abandons the departed

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., pg. 225

once through the promotion of the “we” for sole consideration, and then, once again, as this “we” hastens to go eat the eternal pancake.

Lyotard’s thought on the subject of memory, memorializing, and forgetting demands inclusion. In *Heidegger and “the jews”*, he writes:

Whenever one represents, one inscribes in memory, and this might seem a good defense against forgetting. It is, I believe, just the opposite. Only that which has been inscribed can, in the current sense of the term, be forgotten, because it could be effaced. But what is not inscribed, through lack of inscribable surface, of duration and place for the inscription to be situated, what has no place in the space nor in the time of domination, in the geography and the diachrony of the self-assured spirit, because it is not synthesizable...cannot be forgotten, does not offer a hold to forgetting, and remains present “only” as an affection that one cannot even qualify, like a state of death in the life of the spirit. One *must* certainly, inscribe in words, in images. One cannot escape the necessity of representing. It would be sin itself to believe oneself quite safe and sound. But it is one thing to do it in view of saving the memory, and quite another to try to preserve the remainder, the unforgettable forgotten, in writing.<sup>297</sup>

The first sentence, referring to the inscription of memory recalls the phrase “moments become memories by the scars they leave.” The scar/memory itself is assumable, and as such allows for a forgetting. The remainder, the moments that elude scarification, will neither be memorialized in terms of representation, nor will they be forgotten. The remainder, unforgotten, yet remaining “present” like a state of death in the life of the spirit, déjà vu. Déjà vu is not remembered fully – cannot be brought to present with sufficient force – and therefore can not be forgotten; it serves as a remainder of the past

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<sup>297</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard. *Heidegger and ‘the jews’*. trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990 pg. 26

within the present, “a state of death within the life of spirit”: never quantifiable, never reducible, and always speaking to the problem of only-ever a potentiality of remembrance.

The remainder, by definition inarticulate, eludes scarification and therefore cannot be subsequently remembered and then forgotten. The process of mourning, of removing the hyper-catheted memories, cannot be accomplished in that the object to be mourned remains beyond knowledge. The inarticulate remainder retains in it memories that have never been able to be remembered enough to be forgotten. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida writes:

(mourning) consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and *localizing* the dead (all ontologization, all semanticization – philosophical, hermeneutical, or psychoanalytical – finds itself caught up in this work of mourning but, as such, it does not yet think it...). One has to know. *One has to know it. One has to have knowledge.* Now, to know is to know who and where, to know whose body it really is and what place it occupies – for it must stay in its place...Nothing could be worse for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: *one has to know* who is buried where – and *it is necessary* (to know – to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remains there*.<sup>298</sup>

Here, Žižek’s contention – that the trilogy revolves around knowledge – returns, but not, as he states, knowledge of the crime, instead, knowledge of the one to be mourned. The importance of the mourned being known is precisely why Derrida critiques Oedipus’

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<sup>298</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx*. trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994 pg. 9

decision to withhold the site of his final resting places from his daughters.<sup>299</sup> There is always the possibility that the right *one* is not being mourned; if this *one* is misplaced or uncertain, the project becomes all the more untenable. The dead must be “made present” in order for them to be properly remembered, mourned, and then forgotten – precisely why improper funerary rites lead to the return of the (un)dead. Derrida writes that Oedipus’ concealment of his dead body robs his daughters of their mourning:

Antigone endures and names that dreadful thing: being deprived of her father’s tomb, deprived above all, like her sister Ismene, of the *knowledge* as to the father’s last resting place. And worse, in being deprived of this *by* the father, according to the wishes of the father himself. According to the wishes to an oath....It is as if he wants to depart without leaving so much as an address for the mourning of the women who love him. He acts as if he wanted to make their mourning infinitely worse, to weigh it down, even, with the mourning they can no longer do. He is going to deprive them of their mourning, thereby obliging them to go through their mourning of mourning.<sup>300</sup>

Abject, abjected, and sacred, Oedipus’ last move ensures his immortality. Depriving his daughters of their ability to mourn he thus guarantees his perennially abject status by repositioning himself as a ghost – an inarticulate remainder suffused with parricidal memories (the murder of Laius) and unattended filial duties (Oedipus’ daughters). Zizek writes, “...all our discursive formations are haunted by some ‘indivisible remainder’, by

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<sup>299</sup> Note Sophocles has Oedipus determine his daughters as his sons. Speaking to Polynices, he says, “You would have seen me dead, but I had daughters, Whose never-failing care has nursed my life. *They* are my sons; you are some other man’s.” Sophocles. *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E. F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947 pg. 110-111

<sup>300</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Of Hospitality*. trans. Rachel Bowlby. California: Stanford University Press, 2000 pg. 93

some traumatic spectral ‘rest’ that resists ‘confession’, that is, integration into the symbolic universe...”<sup>301</sup> He continues:

The Freudian name for the undead remainder is, of course, again *trauma* – it is the implicit reference to some traumatic kernel which persists as the obscene/monstrous ‘undead’ remainder, which keeps a discursive universe ‘alive’ – that is to say, there is no life without the supplement of the obscene-undead spectral persistence of the ‘living dead’. Consequently, the ultimate goal of psychoanalysis is not the confessional pacification/gentrification of the trauma, but the acceptance of the very fact that our lives involve a traumatic kernel beyond redemption, that there is a dimension of our being which forever resists redemption-deliverance.<sup>302</sup>

When Antigone mourns her mourning, she attempts to ontologize the ghostly presence of her father, who, it would seem, maintains his inarticulate status and continues on as the “undead” remainder in our discursive formation, as a “state of death in the life of the spirit.”

#### ***7.4 Blins as Totem Meal***

The great exit for pancakes is prefigured by Kolya who states just prior to “The Speech by the Stone”:

‘Strange it is, all this, Karamazov, such grief, and suddenly some kind of *blins*, how unnatural everything is in our religion!’

‘They are going to have salmon in there too,’ the boy who had discovered Troy suddenly and loudly observed.

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<sup>301</sup> Slavoj Zizek. *The Fragile Absolute*. New York and London: Verso, 2000 pg. 98

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 98

‘I would earnestly request you, Kartashov, not to meddle any further with your stupid remarks, particularly when you are not being spoken to and no one even cares whether you exist or not,’ Kolya retorted irritably in his direction.<sup>303</sup>

There is a certain slippage at this point between *blins* and religion which could easily account for much of the following brouhaha over the pancake, fitting it nicely into the reading of Dostoevsky as offered by Freud. The *blins* become seen as the symbol for religion and by extension Big Father, the faithfulness to whom, as has been determined, constitutes a Dostoevskian imperative. In this exchange Kartashov’s mistake is to mention the salmon, to offer the very idea that there is something else to be celebrated besides the pancake/father. Once the pancake/father is established as the totem meal, it is then apparent that the group of boys is synonymous with the band of brothers, this scene reenacting the events described in *Totem and Taboo*. The overcoming of the father by the brother horde is described by Freud:

One day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde. Together they dared and accomplished what remained impossible for them singly. Perhaps some advance in culture, like the use of a new weapon, had given them the feeling of superiority....Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. The totem feast, which is perhaps mankind’s first celebration, would be the repetition and commemoration of this memorable, criminal act with which so many things began, social organization, moral restrictions and religion.<sup>304</sup>

The killing of the father and consumption of him can only be accomplished by the brothers united “all in association” with one another and, possibly, with the help of

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<sup>303</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 890

<sup>304</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*. trans. A.A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1918 pg. 183

technological innovation. Why they ate the father is made clear in Freud's definition of incorporation as it is found in the oral stage. Incorporation is synonymous with the Freudian concept of cannibalism, "Actually incorporation contains three meanings: it means to obtain pleasure by making an object penetrate oneself; it means to destroy this object; and it means, by keeping within oneself, to appropriate the objects qualities."<sup>305</sup> Karl Abraham divided the oral stage into two phases, one pre-ambivalent and one ambivalent. The ambivalent phase is characterized by the biting of the breast and is the only one considered cannibalistic. The ingestion of the father both destroys and keeps him present through their consumption/ incorporation of him. Freud's next conjecture, that the totem meal would serve as the "repetition and commemoration" of the crime, is in need of further clarification. First, the totem meal, in its *repetition*, guarantees that the content of what is being repeated (the death of the father) is simultaneously being altered, moved farther away from the founding event. Second, commemoration, or memorial, is the most necessary ingredient to ensure that a forgetting takes place. As Lyotard writes,

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<sup>305</sup> Laplanche, J and Pontalis, J.B. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973pg 212. Incorporation is less broadly defined as the, "Process whereby the subject, more or less on the level of phantasy has an object penetrate his body and keeps it 'inside' his body...it has a special relationship with the mouth and with the ingestion of food, it may also be lived out in relation with other erotogenic zones and function." pg. 211 In Theodor Reik's book *The Search Within*, he analyzes one of his own dreams that occurred on the eve of his publication of Freud's letters to him: "Although there is not the slightest reason against publication – there are many for it – I unconsciously considered it a kind of profanation of Freud. Why? Every letter does credit to his memory which I hold sacred." Here the corollary between memory (sacred memory) and the father figure is laid bare. He continues his analysis which reveals the following: "...I commit the crime of excavating the mummy of an ancient Pharaoh (= publishing the letters of Freud). I am terrified and I expect to be punished. I hear the sentence of death...In it I have done the horrible deed of eating of the Pharaoh (= Freud), but that outrage marks at the same time my triumph: I found the solution of the problem that eluded all my conscious efforts...I have eaten of Freud, I have picked his brain, I have incorporated him." Theodor Reik. *The Search Within*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956 pg. 617

Whenever one represents, one inscribes in memory, and this might seem a good defense against forgetting. It is, I believe, just the opposite. Only that which has been inscribed can, in the current sense of the term, be forgotten, because it could be effaced.<sup>306</sup>

The very nature of a commemoration insures that the object memorialized may be forgotten. In that the commemoration is perpetual suggests that the object – the parricide – is constantly fed to the abyss of all that has been inscribed and assumed. However, the combination of commemoration and *repetition* gives rise to something unassumable, an inarticulate memory. For the repetition alters (at the altar) and creates an inherent unsteadiness of the memorialized object; renders it a quasi-object which can never be inscribed into memory and subsequently forgotten. The commemoration then becomes a memorial of a presence that is incapable of being forgotten yet neither fully remembered. The totem meal can be read as a repetitious activity guaranteeing the presence of a nonpresence within the society – an inarticulate memory of a parricide that refuses to be effaced. Lyotard:

But what is not inscribed, through lack of inscribable surface, of duration and place for the inscription to be situated, what has no place in the space nor in the time of domination, in the geography and the diachrony of the self-assured spirit, because it is not synthesizable... cannot be forgotten, does not offer a hold to forgetting, and remains present “only” as an affection that one cannot even qualify, like a state of death in the life of the spirit.<sup>307</sup>

Therefore, when Freud writes, “Thus totemism helped to gloss over the event to which it owed its origin,” the very opposite is actually true; totemism insures a persistent haunting

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<sup>306</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard. *Heidegger and 'the jews'*. trans Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990 pg. 26

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 26

by the “state of death in the life of the spirit.” From this vantage point it is completely understandable that while unmentioned, the parricide of Fyodor Karamazov is nonetheless being insufficiently and inarticulately manifested in this obtuse closing of the book, as is the primal father.

Zizek writes on relationship between Oedipus and *Totem and Taboo*:

We can now see, in what, precisely, consists the crucial shift from Oedipus to *Totem and Taboo*: in the ‘Oedipus Complex’, the parricide (and the incest with the mother) has the status of the unconscious desire – we, ordinary (male) subjects, all dream about it, since the paternal figure prevents our access to the maternal object, disturbs our symbiosis with it; while Oedipus himself is the exceptional figure, the One who actually *did it*. In *Totem and Taboo*, on the contrary, the parricide is not the object of our dreams, the goal of our unconscious wish – it is, as Freud emphasizes again and again, a prehistorical fact which ‘really had to happen’: the murder of the father is an event which had to take place in reality in order for the passage from animal state to Culture to take place.... In short, the traumatic event is not something we dream about, entertaining its future prospect, but never really happens and thus, via its postponement, sustains the state of Culture (since the realization of this wish, i.e. the consummation of the incestuous link with the mother would abolish the symbolic distance/prohibition that defines the universe of Culture): the traumatic event is, rather, what *always-already had to happen* the moment we are within the order of Culture.<sup>308</sup>

The distinction between the two is an issue of temporality and the schism between reality and fiction. The brother horde’s parricide happened “in reality” and prehistorically, while Oedipus is mythic and a potentiality. *Totem and Taboo* offers a complementary pole to

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<sup>308</sup> Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject*. New York and London: Verso, 1999 pg. 315

that of the articulate memory in Oedipus, as well as *anticipates* its construction in that the mourning of the father by the brother horde is necessarily a priori to the myth of Oedipus. Recall the question of the production of the proper performative. The myth (play) of Oedipus is obligatorily prior to the event of the parricide and subsequent ritual reenacting of the parricide found in *Totem and Taboo*, yet its very existence mocks it somehow – serves as a suggestion of its undoing ( as does the inclusion of marriage in a play). Here, the articulate and fictional memory located within a play indicates the potential of a “future prospect” as where the inarticulate memory of a parricide turned ritual has, requisitely, already happened. Therefore, Oedipus emerges out of *Totem and Taboo* and at the same time it only exists potentially, yet, this same potentiality, in that it exists as a play, mocks the ritual (of the traumatic event) to which it’s emergence is indebted to. Here, then, it is the work of articulate memory (the play and potential future of Oedipus) that gestures back and disturbs the inarticulate memory of what “*always-already had to happen.*” The positioning of the subject can then best be described as, I will have already killed my father in that I wish it ( potential manifested articulately in a play) and that I have already done it (inarticulately remembered yet reenacted in rituals that are always compromised by the play – which is a manifestation of my wish). Subjectivity is then placed in the balance, or the oscillation, between the past that has in fact happened and the future which makes the propriety of this past an impossibility.

### ***7.5 Whole and Part and the Identity of the Dead***

Arguing that the ending of *The Brothers Karamazov* intentionally concerns itself with a generalized mourning and, furthermore, the construction of an inarticulate

memory, is supported by the prologue of the book. In a section entitled “From the Author,” Dostoevsky, rather than clarifying his decisions, affirms their inherent uncertainties. He states his hero to be defined by vagueness, conceding that the reader might decide altogether not to read what is really “almost not even a novel” and that the book might be “excessive for such a modest and ill-defined hero.”<sup>309</sup> Additionally, he dismantles even his own prologue, affirming that it is “vague and uninteresting.”

I find myself in a bit of a quandary. To wit: though I call Aleksey Fyodorovich my hero, I am nevertheless aware that he is in no way a man of greatness, and thus do I anticipate inevitable questions of a kind such as: ‘In what respect does your Aleksey Fyodorovich stand out from the common run of men, that you have selected him as your hero?....Well, and what if the novel is read and nothing at all is seen, the notability of my Aleksey Fyodorovich unconceded? Thus do I put it, as I regretfully anticipate that it will be so. For me he is notable, but I decidedly doubt whether I shall be able to prove it to the reader. The problem is that while this man is, perhaps, an activist, his status as such is vague and unclear. Though in fact it would be strange in times like ours to demand clarity of men. One thing is, perhaps, fairly beyond a doubt: this is a strange man, an oddity, even. But strangeness and oddness are sooner a cause of harm to their possessor than any guarantee of attention, particularly in a time when all are striving to unite the details of existence and to discover at least some kind of general meaning in the universal muddle. For in most cases an oddity is a detail and an isolated instance. Is it not?... not only is an oddity ‘not always’ a detail and an isolated instance – on the contrary, it may occasionally transpire that he it is who bears within him, perhaps, the very heartwood of the whole, while, for some reason, the other men of his epoch have all of them wrenched loose from it for a time by some tidal gale... I

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<sup>309</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamasov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993  
pg. 2

should, as a matter of fact, have much preferred not to embark upon these thoroughly vague and uninteresting explanations at all.<sup>310</sup>

Despite his own admissions that seemingly undermine the authority of his protagonist, Dostoevsky nonetheless remarks that “For me he is notable, but I decidedly doubt whether I shall be able to prove it to the reader.” Alyosha is then defined by his lack of clarity, with an acknowledgment that “it would be strange in times like ours to demand clarity of men.” The epoch is characterized as “a time when all are striving to unite the details of existence and to discover at least some kind of general meaning in the universal muddle.” Dostoevsky’s astute remark on the humanistic endeavors of the day place Alyosha’s indeterminacy in pointed opposition to the then valorized epistemological drive. Alyosha’s undecideability deems him un-heroic, as “a cause of harm” within a cultural climate consumed by a prioritizing of specificity. Dostoevsky intimates that, however, the converse is true. By harboring vagueness within him, Alyosha is positioned as being the “heartwood of the whole,” opposed to his humanistic contemporaries who have been “wrenched loose from it for a time by some tidal gale.” By the separateness engendered in the reification of the subject (having swept over them like a storm), men have become detached from nothing less than inarticulateness. Alyosha – vague and unclear – emerges as the figure whom, by his very lack of heroic attributes, suggests the contemporary modern hero. Alyosha bears vagueness and inasmuch refuses the totalizing rationality of the period, reifying the “universal muddle” which is nothing short of the “heartwood of the whole.” Alyosha’s indeterminacy – the “heartwood of the

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., pg. 1 The ellipses after ‘tidal gale’ are Dostoevsky’s, not my own. Additionally of note is that ‘strange muddle’ is translated by Constance Garnet as ‘general confusion’, also, rather than ‘activist’ he translates ‘protagonist’.

whole” – is an a priori condition which “men have been wrenched loose from (it) for a time.” The imprecision of this a prior condition is analogous to Kristeva’s “once upon blotted-out time” where “the abject must have been a magnetized pole of covetousness.”<sup>311</sup> The subject is in debt to “the abject which from he does not cease separating” pulling away from this “land of oblivion that is constantly remembered” in the same manner as those who have been separated from “very heartwood of the whole” “wrenched loose from it for a time by some tidal gale.”<sup>312</sup>

In that for Dostoevsky the “heartwood of the whole” is inarticulateness itself, a return of questioning the relationship between the whole and its parts becomes necessary. As indicated above, the “heartwood of the whole” is dissembling the drive for wholeness itself, suggesting a mobius strip logic to the interaction between the whole and its parts. Psychoanalytically, Melanie Klein advances the concepts of (fantasized) dismembered bodies and partial objects in the development of the psyche. However, she is criticized by Deleuze and Guattari specifically for her reversion from fragments back to wholeness. They write, “She cannot rid herself of the notion that schizoparanoid partial objects are related to a whole, either to an original whole that existed earlier in a primary phase, or to a whole that will eventually appear in a final depressive stage (the complete Object).”<sup>313</sup> Deleuze and Guattari instead suggest the following dialogue between the whole and its parts:

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<sup>311</sup> Julia Kristeva. *The Powers of Horror*. New York: Columbia, 1982 pg. 8-9

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., pg.8-9. Kristeva also suggests here “For it is out of such straying on excluded ground that he draws his jouissance.” The inference becomes that a necessary ingredient to jouissance is inarticulate memory.

<sup>313</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977 pg. 44

We live today in the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers. We no longer believe in the myth of the existence of fragments that, like pieces of an antique statue, are merely waiting for the last one to be turned up, so that they may all be glued back together to create a unity that is precisely the same as the original in a final totality that awaits us at some future date. We no longer believe in a final totality that awaits us at some dreary, colorless dialectic of evolution, aimed at forming a harmonious whole out of heterogeneous bits by rounding off their rough edges. We believe only in totalities that are peripheral. And if we discover such a totality alongside various separate parts, it is a whole of these particular parts but does not totalize them; it is a unity of all of these particular parts but does not unify them; rather, it is added to them as a new part fabricated separately.<sup>314</sup>

By discarding the almost messianic concept of a unifying totality, Deleuze and Guattari nonetheless acknowledge the possible “discovery” of totalities in a peripheral relation to disparate parts. Their conjecture as to the interaction of the whole to the parts is, however, incomplete for the purposes of this study. In stating that the whole is a “new part fabricated separately” there is little suggested as to any involuntary interaction between the parts. This paper’s conjecture is that the dismembering function of inarticulate memory occurs in concert with the re-embodiment of articulate memory. Therein, Klein and Deleuze and Guattari are all, in a sense, accurate. Klein, in that the partial objects (inarticulate memory) are related to a whole (articulate memory) and also that there is an anterior state of wholeness as well as a wholeness yet to come (followed by another dismembering). Deleuze and Guattari rightly advocate that the parts are not fantasized, exist in a state as such, and are related analogically to the whole – without one having precedence over the other. Here suggested is that there is an involuntary

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., pg. 42

movement between the two, an oscillation, or as Lacan writes, “the radical vacillation of the subject” emergent from the ambivalence of repetitious duality.<sup>315</sup>

The last possibility to be considered is that this is Dostoevsky’s funeral and he is, then, authoring his own funeral oration. There are small details that indicate that he himself is the fallen child, and that the oration is directed to the readers. Ilyusha’s father proclaims, “Ilyushechka, old man, dear old man, where are your little feet?”<sup>316</sup> There, a confusion is suggested between the child of Ilyusha and the old man of Dostoevsky. While the “old man” is sometimes translated as “my fellow,” either wording indicates a possible conflation between Ilyusha and Dostoevsky; how fitting for Dostoevsky to cast himself in the role as filial guardian. The importance of the figure that protects the sinful father is additionally underscored in that Alyosha is prompted to begin his speech to the boys by a *memory* of Ilyusha’s pronounced grief at his father’s debasement, as no doubt Dostoevsky grieved over his father’s ridicule.

Alyosha looked, and the entire tableau of what Snegiryov had related once about Ilyushechka, how the latter, weeping and embracing his father, had exclaimed: ‘Papa, dear papa, how low they have made you fall!’ at once presented itself to memory. Something seemed to quake within his soul. With a serious and important air he took in with his eyes all these dear, bright schoolboy faces, the faces of Ilyusha’s companions, and suddenly said to them: (the speech follows)<sup>317</sup>

Also, in beginning his oration, Alyosha looks at the boys and calls them “Gentlemen” before launching into his speech. The declaration of “Gentlemen” is then repeated once

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<sup>315</sup> Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973 pg. 239

<sup>316</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 889

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 890

more. This must be some sort of slip, a deliberate and at once accidental address, for he keeps with “boys” the rest of the encounter. We are called, addressed as adults, and then quickly relegated to the position of children, as Dostoevsky has located himself – offering additional support to the book being about children. Dostoevsky, in figuring himself as a child at his funeral, and addressing us, the reader, as children, makes one of his grand, sweeping gestures that intimate that we are all children – very much like the conclusion at the end of the trial that we are all guilty.

Reading Ilyusha as Dostoevsky, and the speech as his own eulogy, changes the tenor of the interpretation that his ethics are in opposition to Derrida’s. Is he instructing us to consider him no more, and rather contemplate only the collective suffering lived at the moment of his adieu? If so, this troubles everything; the ethics of offering yourself as the functionary such that others might collectively-experience-suffering-as-joy varies sharply from utilizing a child – even Ivan would most likely not object to such an operation. Dostoevsky, in rendering himself Ilyusha, turns himself into equipment – bound to be forgotten – yet coming in the work to stand in the light of his own being.

## Appendix 1

### *'The Speech by the Stone'*

*'Gentlemen, I should like to say a few words to you here, at this very spot.'*

*The boys surrounded him and at once turned on him their fixed, expectant eyes.*

*'Gentlemen, we shall soon be parted. I am going to be for a while yet with my two brothers, of whom one is about to go into exile, and the other is lying at the point of death. But soon I am going to leave this town, possibly for a very long time. And then, gentlemen, we shall be parted. So let us here, by Ilyusha's stone, agree that we shall never forget- in the first place, Ilyushechka, and in the second, one another. And what ever may befall us in subsequently in life, even though we do not meet for twenty years hereafter- all the same let us remember how we buried the poor boy, the one at whom you had formerly thrown stones, do you remember, down at the bridge? – but whom everyone came to love so later. He was a wonderful boy, a kind and brave boy, he had a sense of the honour and of the bitter insult that his father bore, and for which he rose up. So, in the first place, let us remember, gentlemen, all our lives. And even though we may be occupied with the most important matters, attain honours or fall into some great misfortune- all the same let us never forget how good we found it here, all of us in association, united by such good and happy feeling, which for this time of our love for the poor boy has possibly made us better than we are in actual fact. My little doves- allow me to call you little doves, for you resemble them very much, those pretty, warm grey birds, now, at this moment, as I gaze upon your kind, dear faces- my dear young children, it may be that you will not understand what I am about to say to you, because I often speak very incomprehensibly, but you will none the less remember it later and one day will agree with my words. Know then that there is nothing more lofty, nor more powerful, nor more healthy nor more useful later on in life than some good memory like that, one preserved from childhood, from one's parents' home. Much is to be said about your education, but a beautiful, sacred memory like that, one preserved from childhood, is possibly the very best education of all. If he gathers many such memories in his life, a man is saved for all of it. And even if only one good memory remains within our hearts, then even it may serve some day for our salvation. It may be that we shall later even*

grow wicked, have not the strength to keep ourselves from bad action, laugh at human tears and at those men who say, as Kolya exclaimed today: "I want to suffer for all men" – and those men we shall perhaps make wicked mockery.. Yet none the less, however wicked we may be, though may God keep us from it, whenever we remember how we buried Ilyusha, how we loved him in his last days and how we spoke just now in such a friendly way and so together by this stone, then the cruelest and most mocking one of us, if thus we shall become, will none the less not dare to laugh within himself at the fact that he was kind and good at this present moment! Not only that, but perhaps this very memory alone will keep him from great evil, and he will have second thoughts, and say: "Yes, I was good that day, bold and honest." Let him smile to himself ironically, that does not matter, a man often laughs at what is kind and good; it comes of mere frivolity; but I want to assure you, gentlemen, that when he smiles that way, he will at once say within his heart: "No, I act badly in smiling ironically, for those things one must never laugh!"'

'It will definitely be like that, Karamazov, I understand you, Karamazov!'" Kolya exclaimed, his eyes a-falsh. The boys had begun to grow excited, and also wanted to exclaim something, but they restrained themselves, gazing at the orator fixedly and with tender emotion.

'I say this for the risk that we may become bad,' Alyosha resumed. 'But why should we become bad, come to think of it, gentlemen? Let us, in the first place and above all, be kind, then honest, and then- let us never forget one another. This I will repeat again, I will give you my word, gentlemen, that I shall never forget a single one of you; each face that gazed on me now, this moment, I shall remember, even though it be for thirty years.. Today Kolya tried to make Kartashov think that we did not want to know "whether he exists or not". As if I could forget that Kartashov exists and that he does not blush anymore now, as he did that day when he discovered Troy, but looks at me with those wonderful, kind, merry eyes of his. Gentlemen, my dear gentlemen, let us all be as magnanimous and bold as Ilyushecka, as clever, bold and magnanimous as Kolya (who will be far cleverer when he gets a bit older), and let us be as modest, but as clever and dear, as Kartashov. But why do I speak of those two? All of you, gentlemen, are dear to me from this day, all of you I shall enclose within my heart, as I ask you to enclose me within yours! Well, and who is it who has united us in this kind and good emotion, one which we shall always, all our lives remember and are resolved to remember, if not Ilyushecka, that kind boy, that dear boy, a boy who shall be precious to us until the end of the ages! Let us never forget him, and let there be for him an eternal and good memory within our hearts, from this day forth and to the end of ages!'

'That's right, that's right, eternal, eternal,' all the boys shouted in their resonant voices, their faces with tender emotion.

'Let us also remember his face, and his clothes, and his poor little boots, and his coffin, and his unhappy, sinful father, and how he boldly rose up for him against the entire class!'

'We shall remember, we shall remember!' the boys shouted again, 'he was brave, he was kind!'

'Oh how I loved him!' Kolya exclaimed.

'Oh, young children, oh, dear friends, do not be afraid of life! How good life is, when one does some good and upright thing!'

*'Yes, yes,' the boys repeated in ecstasy.  
 'Karamazov, we love you!' one voice, apparently that of Kartashov,  
 uncontainably exclaimed.  
 'We love you, we love you,' they all caught up. Teardrops flashed in the eyes of  
 many.  
 'Hurrah for Karamazov!' Kolya proclaimed ecstatically.  
 'And eternal memory to the dead boy!' Alyosha added once more with emotion.  
 'Eternal memory!'  
 'Karamazov!' Kolya cried, 'is it really true what religion says, that we shall rise  
 up from the dead and come to life and see on another again, and everyone, even  
 Ilyushechka?'  
 'Without question we shall rise, without question we shall see one another and  
 joyfully tell one another everything that has happened,' half-laughing, half in ecstasy,  
 Alyosha replied.  
 'Oh, how good that will be!' burst from Kolya.  
 'Well, and now let us finish our talk and go to his funeral meal. Don't let it  
 trouble you that that we shall eat blins. After all, they are a thing that is ancient and  
 eternal, and good for all that, too,' Alyosha laughed, 'Well, come on! Look, we shall go  
 hand in hand.'  
 'And eternally, like this, all our lives hand in hand! Hurrah for Karamazov!'  
 Kolya shouted once more in ecstasy, and once more all the boys caught up his  
 exclamation.<sup>318</sup>*

– Fyodor Dostoevsky

## **Appendix 2**

*The following is a copy of a personal correspondence from Alain Badiou. He is responding to a query posed to him in regards to Kierkegaard's Repetition. It is worth noting that the exchange was written in English.*

The great idea of Kierkegaard is that, when something is repeated, it's not the same thing.

If in something you have novelty, newness, the repetition is the depiction of these

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<sup>318</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1993 pg. 891-89

predicates, and so a real transformation of the thing – strictly speaking, repetition is a mode of transformation. So the existential choice is not between repetition and creation– the existential choice is between choice and non choice, even if the choice is the choice of repetition. So, the real interruption of repetition is the choice of choice. The very essence of liberty is not to contradict repetition (because repetition also is the becoming of something new), but to choose the choice. The content of the choice can be a repetition – But the question is that the real choice is not the choice of the content of the choice, but the choice of the choice itself.

### **Appendix 3**

*Below is an unedited copy of a personal correspondence with scholar James L. Rice, whose work greatly aided this paper. Dr. Rice describes evidence to rethink the ending of The Brothers Karamazov and establishes his claim to do so in the very near future.*

... I can recommend one excellent article, which is in Russian. It is about the evidence for Dostoevsky's projected SEQUEL to BROTHERS KARAMAZOV, which is clearly indicated in the preface "From the Author" and which he intended to begin writing after a few years' concentration on journalism. But of course his death intervened. The article:

D. D. Blagoi, "Put' Aleshi Karamazova" [the Path of Alyosha Karamazov], IZVESTIYA AKADEMII NAUK SSSR, Seriya literaturny i iazyka, t. 33 No 1 (January-February 1974), pp. 8-26.

In a nutshell, ALL the evidence for reconstructing the sequel's plot AS PROJECTED in 1880-81 (in my opinion) tallies with Alesha "coming at last to the idea of assassinating the tsar" (account by 'Z' in the Odessa newspaper NOVOROSSIISKII TELEGRAF May 26, 1880), or in another version (clearly the same thing) Alesha "would commit a political crime, for which he would be executed". Other version are not so specific or drastic about the outcome, but Dostoevsky was overheard (at the Pushkin celebration) to say that the title of the sequel would be DETI (i.e., 'The Children' = 'The Boys'). By the time of the sequel's plot, 13 Years would have elapsed. Alesha had become the boys' schoolteacher, and they remained under his influence even after (in some versions) he had returned to the/a monastery. (Meantime, he had been married to Lise, and after that broke up -- Grushenka had lived with him.)

The main point of Blagoi is that if all the evidence for the sequel is as convincing as it seems (to him, to me), then we need to look very carefully through the novel that exists to see signs of its plot (esp. Alesha's character-development) moving in that direction.

<It is typical that Joseph Frank, in the 5th volume of his biography, cites Blagoi in a footnote, but only to say that "he names a powerful case for accepting [Alesha future] revolutionary activity" (Chap 38, note 3,page 772) -- BUT NOT to say what Blagoi's "powerful case" amounts to, nor in any way to follow Blagoi's lead in his own account of BROTHERS K. Moreover, that is only the JUMPING OFF POINT of Blagoi's argument. Once we accept that (and most scholars have never given it much thought, including Frank), then the next step in scholarship and reading is to discover how the character of

Alesha is bent in that direction in the novel that we know, and how his potential for the later dramatic role is revealed.

You will have noted that the sequel's title THE BOYS <THE SONS, etc, literally THE CHILDREN but echoing the last half of Turgenev's famous title, FATHERS AND SONS) plunges us right into your topic, since of course the boys (Kolya Krasotkin & company) are the audience cheering for Alesha Karamazov at the end of the novel -- 'The Speech at the Stone'.

<Again typical of Joseph Frank's biography, his discussion of the sources on the sequel to BROTHERS K only picks at a couple of the (pp 727-8. I am, you see, no fan of Joe Frank. See my review of his Vol. III, "Beyond Twice-Two" in TLS, cited in bibliography to FREUD'S RUSSIA.)

Depending on how you count, there are about 8 or 10 sources from which the sequel can be reconstructed. Most of them are given in vol 15 of the great complete works (POLNOE SOBRANIE SOCHINENII I PISEM, Leningrad (1972-1990), AN, 1976, pages 485-6.

Most scholars would have to revise their notions of Dostoevsky (not just Alesha) before they would find this topic, in this light, "productive". 'Revisionist' aspects, for example, are that there was no "conversion" in Siberia (or anywhere else), that Dostoevsky was

never a "psychological sell-out" to retrograde tsarist patriotism, that he remained seditious down to the end (despite the fact that members of the Imperial family sought him out for his spiritual wisdom: That, I believe, was THEIR lookout!)

In Blagoi's article (cited above) he briefly discusses the Speech at the Stone (pages 23-4), and amazingly he somehow missed a feature (repeated more than once) that for my money proves his case; that is, when Alesha says to the boys: "if we should become evil men". Russian "zloi" = evil, or wicked. <It is the second of the three opening adjectives that the Underground Man applies to himself.) In any event, the proposition would seem to be quite out of the blue, coming from dear Alesha, unless (all along) we have seen the drift!

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