Joyful Sensibilities: Bakhtin's Polyphonic Aesthetics and the Ethics of Generosity

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Abstract

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This project seeks to make a contribution to contemporary theories of affect by putting the work of theorists Brian Massumi, Sara Ahmed, Jane Bennett, and Donovan Schaefer in conversation with the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. At the same time, it relies on these theorists' conceptualizations of embodied affect to explore the role of the body in Bakhtin's understanding of selfhood and freedom. In particular, I show how Bakhtin's incorporation of aesthetics into processes of self-creation and relationality adds to scholarship on interpersonal affective dynamics; sociocultural economies of affect; ethically potent experiences of wonder and generous behaviors; and religious impulses. Further, I demonstrate that the principles of dialogism and polyphony can be conveyed through cinematic means, and argue that Bakhtin's concept of carnival can inform analyses of sensory impact of cinema, revealing its potential to challenge politics and ideologies on an embodied and affective plane. Finally, I argue that Bakhtinian polyphony is the aesthetic modality proper to cultivation and manifestation of ethics of generosity, whereby sensations of awe, wonder, and curiosity stimulate attentive and open-minded engagement with the world.

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References and Transliteration

For transliterating Russian words, I am using the Library of Congress system without diacritics. For common names, I substitute the endings *-ia* for *-ya*, *-iu* for *-yu*, and *-yi* and *-ii* for *-y:* Dostoevsky, Nastasya, Alyosha, Mitya, etc. Words in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian are spelled as they would appear in the Latin phonetic alphabet of the language, including diacritics for *č (tsch), ć (ch), ž (zh), š (sh),* and *đ (dj).*

I cite the major works of Bakhtin and Dostoevsky in their English translations, and I provide the Russian original for longer block quotes, or in footnotes if a nuance in translations is pertinent to the discussion. For Dostoevsky, I am citing the standard Russian edition of his collected works, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* abbreviated as *PSS.* For Bakhtin, I am likewise using his collected works — *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh,* abbreviated *SS.* An exception to this are three of his wartime notebook entries — "Rhetoric, to the Extent That It Lies," "A Person at the Mirror," and "On Questions of Self-Consciousness and Self-Evaluation" — which I am citing according to the *Slavic and East European Journal* (61:2), where originals are published side-by-side with their new English translations. In my in-line citations I refer to them individually by title, but all three fall under the bibliographic entry "Mikhail Bakhtin: Selections from the Wartime Notebooks."

List of Abbreviations

Bakhtin:

SS = Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh

AH = Author and Hero

PDP = Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics

Rabelais = Rabelais and His World

"Rhetoric" / "Ritorika" = "Rhetoric, to the Extent That It Lies" / "Ritorika, v meru svoei lzhivosti" (in *Selections from the Wartime Notebooks)*

"On Questions" / "K voprosam" = "On Questions of Self-Consciousness and Self-Evaluation" / "K voprosam samospoznaniia i samootsenki" (in *Selections from the Wartime Notebooks)*

Dostoevsky:

PSS = Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii

BK = The Brothers Karamazov

Idiot = The Idiot

Theories of Affect:

Enchantment = Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*

Cultural Politics = Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*

Happiness = Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*

RA = Donovan Schaefer, *Religious Affect: Animality, Evolution, and Power*

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My writing process was quietly shaped by the spaces I inhabited and the tools that were available to me. I would like to acknowledge the formative impact of the office with a view of the Panhandle at 1864 Fell Street in San Francisco, as well as various establishments that put up with hours of writing while ordering very few drinks: Kafeterija in Belgrade; The Hungarian Pastry Shop and 10/20 in New York; Café Intimes in Berlin; and many other nooks along the way. Since I lacked a stable dwelling throughout these years, my work depended entirely on digital resources. I am deeply indebted to the library staff who made it possible for me to work remotely, from any location in the world and throughout a pandemic. I also cannot imagine completing a project of this size without Scrivener, an unsung software hero of those of us who write in patchwork and have an addiction to shuffling things around.

I am extremely fortunate to have spent four years teaching at Columbia, and to have taught a course of my own. My ideas only became truly meaningful when I was able to share them with my students, and I learned a lot from them as well.

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knowledge and continues to hold them open. Vera Senina, a friend and cohort-mate, made the work easier through years of solidarity and months of productivity apps. Elaine Wilson's kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity are a source of inspiration for a topic like mine. Igor Terzić taught me a thing or two about tenacity, which comes in handy with a dissertation-sized project. The Eucalyptus House community in San Francisco made me a better person in a challenging time, and I am particularly indebted to Lauren-Bayley McDaniel and Değer Turan for challenging my thinking and opening new perspectives.

Among many other things they brought to my life, my mother and brother dragged Dostoevsky's 30-volume collected works home from Russia as a gift for my 16th birthday, cementing my decision to pursue higher education in the humanities. My father, a man possessed of a sense of humor, neither understands nor gives a damn about my work. Despite that, he has always been a relentless champion of all my endeavors, and I seem to have made him proud.

Dedication

To my late grandfather, Vladimir Petrovich Kutsebo, a masterful storyteller who taught me how to read and sing.

Introduction

I have been told in no uncertain terms, sternly and repeatedly, that research questions are mandatory in scholarly work. However, in the four years I spent crafting this project, I never settled on any such thing, though I have, at different points, concocted passable smoke and mirrors that took the formality off my back. Rather than commit to a particular question, I have been curious about different things at different times for a variety of mostly selfish reasons.

I like to think that this unhealthy habit is fitting for the topic of my research: discovering the world as perpetually changing, and finding joy and wonder in its open-ended, unfinalizable nature. At the same time, the topic reflects my personality: it deals with the primacy of affects over cognition. Generally speaking, I suppose my research asks questions about what it means to be a good person, how embodied feelings and aesthetic experiences contribute to becoming one, and how to go about doing good in the world. However, this is both vague and, at the end, remains unanswered. In the interest of honesty — intellectual and otherwise — I'd rather admit that all I did was have fun, hoping that anyone who comes along for the ride might enjoy it as well.

I began this project when I first became acquainted with affect theory: a field that has been on a steady rise over the past two decades, and now offers a sophisticated, interdisciplinary analytical framework to explore "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement ... that can likewise suspend us … or … even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability" (Seigworth and Gregg, 1). Affect is understood as an unconscious, pre-conscious, or para-conscious force inherent to the human body, preceding both emotions (affective input cognitively processed), and feelings (emotions expressed).

The two main directions affect theory has taken over the past decades have been shaped by two seminal essays published in 1995: "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold" by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank, and Brian Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect" (later incorporated into his book, *Parables for the Virtual).* The former is grounded in the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins, and proposes a path towards a non-deterministic, postessentialist return to the pan-human biological realities of the human body as a carrier of affect. The latter, drawing on Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, and Gilles Deleuze envisions affect as a more autonomous force, an abstract intensity impossible to capture or quantify. For Massumi, affect escapes consciousness so radically that, in essence, it escapes the body itself: "Affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them … Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is" (38). Seigworth and Gregg summarize the distinction between the two branches thus: "There is … a certain sense of reverse flow between these lines of inquiry … affect as the prime "interest" motivator that comes to put the drive in bodily drives (Tomkins); affect as an entire, vital, and modulating field of myriad becomings across human and nonhuman (Deleuze)" (Seigworth and Gregg, 6). The two directions, however, are neither irreconcilable nor clearly separated, and many scholars do not adhere to a single strict interpretation. The unifying point of affect theory is its root in philosophical legacies that understand the individual not as a fixed entity, but as a process of perpetual change; affect itself is a measure of intensity that propels the bodies' becoming.[1]

[1] Pavle Levi pointed out to me that it might be possible to trace a third, almost unrecognized genealogy of affect: one that has roots in the libidinal theories of Reich, Marcuse and Lyotard, all of which make their way to Deleuze and Guattari's work on antipsychiatry which then informs Massumi's thinking. I touch on Reich in my last two chapters, but exploring his legacy in the broader context of affect theory is outside the scope of this work.

With its extraordinary degree of comfort with gray zones, blurred boundaries, and the para-discursive, affect theory provides a rigorous intellectual framework to discuss such things as "atmosphere" in the room (Teresa Brennan), or the ineffable "vibrancy" of inanimate objects (Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter)*. Whether it uses the insights from psychology or neurobiology to discuss queer theory or proposes a "virtual" dimension to physical bodies, it marries the humanities to the social sciences and the hard sciences without downplaying the value of either. The intellectual cause of affect theory is intimately connected to its subject: the early essays mentioned above "combine affect's displacement of the centrality of cognition with affect theory's own displacement of debates over the centrality of structuralism and poststructuralism" (Seigworth and Gregg, 5). Seigworth and Gregg acknowledge that the exceptional plasticity of the form and the theoretical apparatus might raise doubts about the soundness of the entire project; however, "approaches to affect would feel a great deal less like a free fall if our most familiar modes of inquiry had begun with movement rather than stasis, with process always underway rather than position taken" (4). The affective turn is a turn away from "cleanly oppositional elements or primary units" and "easy compartmentalisms" dictated by the logocentric paradigm deconstructed by Derrida. Religious scholar Donovan Schaefer observes that "affect theory takes place in the wake of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of traditional Western metaphysics, particularly the fixation of sovereign human rationality" (*RA* 15).

As such, affect theory is a response to "the linguistic fallacy", a paradigm that "assumes that the medium of power is language – that depth, complex responses, experiences, and decisions cannot take place without the machinery of a linguisticized reason" (*RA* 13). In order to escape the linguistic fallacy, Schaefer argues, it is necessary to examine "embodied histories that precede the advent of language — as well as moments when language is bound with other thick, embodied

forces" (*RA* 9). Thanks to its ability to circumvent the restrictions of language, Brian Massumi argues that affect theory "holds a key to rethinking postmodern power after ideology" (45). Crucially – and this is where the difference between the study of affect and other forms of studying of emotions is the most pertinent – since affect theory grew in response to structuralist and poststructuralist examinations of power, the affective turn is not directed inward, away from the external sociopolitical realities, but on the contrary, primarily seeks to address sociocultural, political, and ethical reality.[2] "Affect theory," Schaefer writes, "is about showing the multidirectional vectors of influence between embodied emotions and politics, not about consigning emotions to a private domain" (*RA* 8). Affect circulates among objects in the world: "the world rolls into the body, changes the body — which then reemerges into the world, reshaping the world itself" (*RA* 53). Even though it stems from individual bodies, affective forces flow beyond them. Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed argues that affect co-participates in the invisible webs of cultural, economic, and political power. She surmises that, as individuals respond to their social and environmental stimuli, they contribute to a fluid external circulation of affect that adds up to sociocultural patterns which, in turn, reinforce — or fail to reinforce — future responses as well. Individual emotions can be culturally marked as normal or abnormal, and different communities will aim to shape their members into feeling (rather than merely thinking) a certain way about particular phenomena, accepting those who feel the right feelings as normal and good, and

[2] This is the main strength of affect theory compared to some other interdisciplinary approaches to interpreting emotion within the humanities — especially those that dabble in the hard sciences. Notably, cognitive literary studies try to draw conclusions from quantitative measurements the brain's neurophysiological reactions to literature, while evolutionary literary theory speculates on the connections between evolutionary biology and literary production. Although it retains literature as the object of inquiry on the surface, this scholarship glosses over the role of sociocultural power structures in the production and reception of aesthetic works, and panders to the increasingly technocratic understanding of scholarship that demands a quantitative justification of the value of the humanities. Abandoning the methods and analytical frameworks native to the humanities in favor of neural imaging, statistical data, and evolutionary biology (often poorly understood due to a lack of training in the hard sciences) robs inquiry of the humanities of the context they tangibly contribute to, emptying insights of relevance and meaning.

ostracizing those who fail to comply for their apparent lack of common sense, acceptable behaviors, or sanity. Ahmed dubs this dynamic affective economy: "emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation. I am using the 'economic' to suggest that objects of emotion circulate or are distributed across the social as well as psychic field" (*Cultural Politics* 45). Although participants in affective economies are not necessarily aware of their own emotional conditioning, in *Promise of Happiness* Ahmed also draws attention to the subversive and transformational power of "affect aliens" — those whose emotional orientations violate the heteronormative and nationalist framework of "common sense." On a collective plane, modulations of affect have the potential to produce tangible political transformation.

Unsurprisingly, the project of theorizing affect is concerned with the desirable directions of such transformations. Going a step further, political theorist Jane Bennett proposes that affect does not simply define ethical orientations, but acts as a vehicle of turning attitudes into action. Bennett argues that cognition and embodiment are equally important in the sphere of ethics, as norms and convictions cannot materialize in the world without marshalling affective energies:

> The key claim is that ethics requires both a moral code (which condenses moral ideals and metaphysical assumptions into principles and rules) and an embodied sensibility (which organizes affects into a style and generates the impetus to enact the code). Moral codes, for example, the Ten Commandments, remain inert without a disposition hospitable to their injunctions, the perceptual refinement necessary to apply them to particular cases, and the affective energy needed to perform them. Regardless of whether the ethical code is conceived as divine command or pragmatic rule, if it is to be transformed into acts, affects must be engaged, orchestrated, and libidinally bound to it — codes alone seem unable to propel their own enactment, at least for many people under most circumstances (*Enchantment* 131).

Unlike a majority of affect scholars who focus on the power of affects that are unpleasant or have adverse ethical impact, Bennett contends that a positive affective orientation — enchantment

— can be a viable source of developing a magnanimous and caring ethical attitude towards the world. Arguing against Max Weber's contention that modernity is disenchanted because of its departure from the mystery of nature and the mysticism of divinity, Bennett seeks out the wonderful in the everyday reality of the contemporary world: "to be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday … even secular life houses extraordinary goings-on" (*Enchantment* 4). Novelty is a key part of enchantment, and encounters with the wonderful elicit both pleasure and discomfort which, together taken, generate a positive kind of excitement:

> The mood I am calling enchantment involves, in the first instance, a surprising encounter, a meeting with something that you did not expect and are not fully prepared to engage. Contained within this surprise state are (1) a pleasurable feeling of being charmed by the novel and as yet unprocessed encounter and (2) a more *unheimlich* (uncanny) feeling of being disrupted or torn out of one's default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition. The overall effect of enchantment is a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness, a sense of having one's nerves or circulation or circulation powers tuned up or recharged — a shot in the arm, a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life (*Enchantment* 5).

Through its complexity, enchantment transcends simple affect and transforms into a *mood*. Building upon the affects and emotions that emerge in response to events and phenomena, moods bring about the impulse to engage with and act in the world — sometimes, with the intention and the potential for changing it. Bennett's understanding of *mood* resonates with the Heideggerian *Stimmung*, departs from him in emphasizing agency and affect beyond the human *Dasein*, and considering a broader participation in being-with-one-another of all materiality — including that which is inanimate (*Enchantment* 10). What remains crucial, however, is an understanding of the ethical self whose agency and being in the world does not depend solely on rational cognition, but

embodiment as well, with all its ontological consequences.[3]

For Bennett, discovering and nurturing enchantment in modernity is a key ethical project. She argues that its power to create a "momentary impression that the natural and cultural world *offers gifts* and, in so doing, remind us that it is good to be alive" (*Enchantment* 156) gives rise to reciprocal generosity towards the world: a world that is full of wonder becomes worth nurturing, preserving, building, and bettering. The enchanted world becomes joyful — pleasurable in a playful and lighthearted manner that moves bodies into action. However, Bennett also notes that generous action does not come cheap: "a large quantity of energy would have to be present in order to make finite selves spend some of their limited resources, to make them give away something of themselves to other beings. Generosity is the *active dispensing of oneself*" (*Enchantment* 81). To allow for disposable resources, the joyful states that bring out this form of generosity often entail excess and overflow, jolting the organism out of affective homeostasis — as such, they are unsustainable and often unstable. Moreover, the particularly unsettling combination of discomfort and pleasure ingrained in enchantment does not always result in pleasurable moods. Capable as humans may be of wonder, joy, and impulses to act towards the betterment of the world, such aspirations can be fickle, and intertwined with much darker urges: to possess and conquer, to resent, to humiliate.

With that in mind, Bennett probes the circumstances that might bring "magnanimous sentiments of fullness of will" (*Enchantment* 81). Following Schiller and Foucault, Bennett argues that, to a large degree, the cultivation of affective and ethical sensibilities is an aesthetic project that involves, on a broader scale, cultivation of the self:

[3] My understanding of embodiment emphasizes the role of unconscious and unruly affect. Following Stephen K. White, in terms of ontological consequences I primarily refer to mortality and looming awareness thereof.

> If the point of <Foucault's> early genealogies was to expose individualism as a ruse for power and to disrupt our associations of self-discipline with freedom, the point of his later work is to enunciate the more complex thesis that there is no self without discipline, no discipline that does not harbor opportunities for arts of the self, and *no effective ethics without such an aesthetic project.* A moment of freedom survives within subjectivity after all, at least when it is not reduced to a purely intellectual formation (*Enchantment* 145-145, emph. mine).

At the same time, although processes of self-direction and self-discipline can be conscious, they more often involve "arts, techniques, and strategies applied by the self to a corporeal sensibility below the level of direct intellectual control" (*Enchantment* 146).[4] In particular, she argues that the sensibility of enchantment and joy stems from a particular aesthetic orientation, and remains such at its core. These sensibilities and the ethics that (can) emerge can be cultivated by aesthetic means, and she proposes that one effective strategy towards this goal might entail "tell<ing> exemplary stories of such <ethical> uses in the hope of enchanting bodies and inflecting imaginations towards them" (*Enchantment* 148). It is here that I arrive at my main point of divergence from her theory: *stories*, I argue, will simply not do. This is not to say that a directly mimetic approach has not been attempted and does not have its place: striving to instruct people on ethics through narratives where morally good characters are elevated and bad ones punished has advocates ranging as far back as Plato's *Ion*, and many folk tales from across the world fall under that category. However, as the study of literature shows across its many approaches, the effect of any narrative is not in the character types, the imagery, the plot — but in the *way* that the story is told. It is the main purpose of my project to argue that, if cultivation of affects rather than attitudes is at stake, narrative content matters far less than aesthetic approaches, modalities, and

[4] Despite her belief in the potential of self-creation, Bennett is careful to avoid the implication that anyone can have total personal autonomy over technologies of self. Therefore, all "self-authorship" is fundamentally diffuse and decentered; the results it yields are fickle, and positive outcomes are never guaranteed.

orientations. In particular, I will show that the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin offers an excellent existing theoretical framework to think about the role of aesthetics in cultivating affective sensibilities.

While Bakhtin's concepts mostly emerged from literary scholarship, the holistic scope of his work incorporates aesthetics, ethics, and epistemology, inviting engagement with the ethical implications of certain aesthetic structures and creative practices. His conception of the self as "unfinalizable" captures the focus on the process of becoming shared by many contemporary theorists of affect; moreover, for Bakhtin, the non-finalized image of personality is the only kind that can faithfully represent its essence, and perpetual becoming is inherent to the self. However, instead of focusing on the overall process of becoming, Bakhtin highlights points of awareness of change that expose this process: the true life of a personality, he argues, happens at a "point of non-coincidence of the self with the self." For Bakhtin, liminality and "threshold" are crucial for understanding the complete inner life of a person, as well as responsiveness, responsibility, and relationships between different selves and the world. It is only from a position of unfinalizable threshold that one can establish genuine, *dialogic* connections with equally open-ended others. In his seminal study, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (first published in 1929, substantially revised in 1963), he argues that Dostoevsky departs from literary forms that came before him, initiating an entirely novel way for an author to relate to his work. Unlike modes of representation practiced by his predecessors, Dostoevsky creates characters that are not fully determined by their social circumstances and the structural needs of the narrative, and rescinds the power of saying the "last word" that would finalize the characters' images. Here, Bakhtin not only describes a certain type of character that appears in Dostoevsky's work, but explores the type of relationship between creator and creation: in order to create a dialogic world of unfinalized consciousnesses, the author

needs to adopt a *polyphonic* orientation.

While the majority of Bakhtin's work on polyphony is focused on works of fiction, his broader conclusions about the relationship between the author and hero pertain to any "individual localized in a semiotic space"[5] (Oushakine 80, trans. mine), any "otherness" that the subject constructs in their mind upon encounter. He remarks on the dynamicity of constant image-creation of the self and other, suggesting that the formation of our perception of others constitutes a creative and interpretive act similar to that of a writer of fiction: "The world is inhabited by the created images of other people (this is the world of others, and into this world I came); among them are also images of the I in the images of other people" ("On Questions" 219). Just as Bennett contends that codes and concepts cannot be activated without affective impetus from living bodies, Bakhtin argues even further that ideas cannot even be fully *realized* without enfleshment in an unfinalizable human being. Once again, he grounds his interpretation in Dostoevsky: "according to Dostoevsky, an idea can and must not only be understood, but also 'felt'" (*PDP* 85). Thus, the non-finalizable character becomes an "idea-person:" one whose ideology is not merely thought and created, but lived and experienced, constantly morphing and becoming along with the personality. The fully valid idea can only come into existence through the Dostoevskian "man in man … with its free unfinalized nature and its indeterminacy" (*PDP* 86). While the external gaze of the author/observer may not seize control over the unfinalizable idea-people and the ideas they embody, their becoming is inseparable from the gazes and voices of other embodied selves around them. Ideas, just like characters, can only be realized in the context of a broader polyphonic environment.

> The idea … is not a subjective individual-psychological formation with 'permanent

[5] "Понятно, что под "героем" здесь подразумевается не только литературный персонаж, но любой индивид, локализованный в семиотическом пространстве, любой *субъект в тексте*, любой "речевой субъект" (Бахтин) или "субъект речи" (Бахтин/Лакан)."

> resident rights' in a person's head; no, the idea is inter-individual and inter-subjective — the realm of its existence is not individual consciousness but dialogic communion *between* consciousnesses. The idea is a *live* event, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses … the idea is by nature dialogic, and monologue is merely the conventional compositional form of its expression, a form that emerged out of the ideological monologism of modern times (*PDP* 88).
>
> Идея … это не субъективное индивидуально-психологическое образование с 'постоянным местопребыванием' в голове человека; нет, идея интериндивидуальна и интерсубъективна, сфера ее бытия не индивидуальное сознание, а диалогическое общение *между* сознаниями. Идея — это живое событие, разыгрывающееся в точке диалогической встречи двух или нескольких сознаний … Идея по природе диалогична, монолог же является лишь условной композиционной формой ее выражения, сложившегося на почве … идеологического монологизма нового времени (*SS* 6: 99-100).

In contrast to dialogism, a monologic approach to objects of representations — characters as well as ideas — engenders violence over their true nature and autonomy. Therefore, a dialogic relationship that honors unfinalizability becomes, for Bakhtin, an ethical imperative.

> The consciousness of other people cannot be (*nel'zya*) perceived, analyzed, defined as objects or as things — one can only *relate to them dialogically.* To think about them means to *talk with them; otherwise they immediately turn us their objectivized side:* they fall silent, close up, and congeal into finished, objectivized images (*PDP* 68).
>
> Но чужие сознания нельзя созерцать, анализировать, определять как объекты, как вещи, — с ними можно только *диалогически общаться*. Думать о них — значит *говорить с ними, иначе они тотчас же поворачиваются к нам своей объектной стороной:* они замолкают, закрываются, и застывают в завершенные объектные образы (*SS* 6: 80).

The Russian *nel'zya* can be rendered both as "cannot" — in the sense that it is impossible — and "must not" — an imperative demand. Indeed, in "Rhetoric," Bakhtin's directly accuses the defining and finalizing word of violence not only against the object's autonomy, but likewise against its truth. In that regard, Bakhtin's project — just like Bennett's — bears ethical and political implications, and hinges on a dialogic openness to the other and the world. The combination of suspense, discomfort, and aliveness that manifest in Bakhtinian unfinalizability and non-

coincidence closely recalls that of enchantment; and in fact, Bakhtin's answer to resisting the temptation of finalizing entails the same sensibility as Bennett — he calls for "a new philosophical wonder <udivlenie> before everything" ("Rhetoric" 215).[6] I propose that the mood of enchantment, the affect of joyful attachment, and the ethics of generosity as described by Bennett find their expression in and may be developed through polyphonic aesthetics.

Having addressed the challenges to envisioning oneself and others with respect of the principle of unfinalizability, I will turn to the potential of connecting to the unfinalizable nature of the world productively, pursuing Jane Bennett's hypothesis about the ethical value of enchantment. With regards to the concrete political practices that come out of enchantment and generosity, Bennett follows a strain of social theory that "develops its political analyses in conjunction with a set of contentions about the fundamental character of human being and the world" (*Enchantment* 61) — specifically, one grounded in Stephen K. White's concept of "weak ontology" characteristic of late modernity. White explains that premodern and early modern ontologies tend to be teleological, absolute, and grounded in metaphysics: they "claim to show us 'the way the world is,' or how God's being stands to human being, or what human nature is … it is by reference to this external ground that ethical and political life gain their sense of what is right … For strong ontologies, the whole question of passages from ontological truths to moral-political ones is relatively clear." (White, "Sustaining Affirmation" 6). In contrast, "weak ontologies" operate from a place of accepting two seemingly conflicting ideas: first, that "all fundamental conceptualizations of self,

[6] The cross-linguistic origins of the terminology I use warrant clarification. While the crux of Bennett's argument rests in the resistance to Weberian disenchantment, her broader definition of *wonder* equally connects it to *marvel* and *awe* — the etymology of latter in particular runs parallel to the Russian *udivlenie*. However, the standard Russian translation of *disenchantment* renders it as *razkoldovyvanie*. On the one hand, the contemporary meaning of *koldovat'* has a negative, manipulative and malicious connotation — there is a darkness to the magic powers of *koldovstvo,* and in that regard *razkoldovyvanie* emphasizes the unshackling effect of disenchanted modernity. On the other hand, the etymological roots of *koldovstvo* point to the verbal, sonorous (*en-chanting)* component of its power and, perhaps more importantly, suggest a potential for healing.

other, and world are contestable;" and that "such conceptualizations are nevertheless necessary or unavoidable for an adequately reflective ethical and political life" (White, "Sustaining Affirmation" 8). For both White and Bennett, a thorough reexamination of traditional assumptions about the characteristics and the status of human beings and the world on an ontological level paves the way to articulating that which needs to be cultivated and affirmed rather than opposed and deconstructed in the service of building multicultural democratic societies. In particular, coexistence with difference calls for the awareness of the speculative nature of one's beliefs: "<w>hat distinguishes a weak ontologist from a traditional metaphysician is that the former emphasizes the necessarily speculative and contestable character of her onto-story and thus does not try to demonstrate its truth in any strong sense" (*Enchantment* 160-161). This is not to say that a weak ontologist rejects the responsibility of deep commitment to an ethical and political stance; however, the openness to equal coexistence of alternatives means that "the depth of one's commitment does not translate immediately into absoluteness of conviction" (White, "Fullness and Dearth" 4). By its dynamic and unfixed nature, a weak ontology engenders a radically new relationship to difference, leading to an ethics of "presumptive generosity," a stance equally dependent on conscious cultivation. The particular value of "presumptive generosity" over related concepts[7] is rooted in the inherent fluidity of relationships and identities that belies weak ontologies, as well as the call for these identities to shape themselves in conversation with others. It requires, in Bennett's words, "rendering oneself more open to the surprise of other selves and bodies and more willing and able to enter into productive assemblages with them" (*Enchantment* 130). White highlights the political importance of such openness by pointing out its role in

[7] White situates "presumptive generosity" in adjacency to William Connolly's "critical responsiveness," Jacques Derrida's "hospitality," Romand Coles's "receptive generosity," and Alessandro Ferrara's "openness" (White, "Democratic Ethos").

accepting rather than rejecting difference:

> The ongoing process of an exemplary identity formation might be seen as crucially involving a citizen's actively seeking to slacken the persistent propensity to turn difference into otherness. This requires a kind of willingness to listen and be receptive that goes beyond merely hearing out the claims of the other (in an imagined realm of autonomous actors engaged in challenging and justifying) to include an engagement of her or him as an embodied, vulnerable and mortal self like me. … This involves being willing to 'travel' outside one's sphere of comfort (mental, physical and geographical) into the 'neighborhood' of the other; and, alternatively, playing the role of the host to the other with a kind of generosity that exceeds normal, reciprocal expectations and commitments (of the sort autonomous creatures would demand). (White, "Democratic Ethos" 663)

The mechanism by which this openness is achieved in White's reading closely resembles the Bakhtinian dialogue. The contribution garnered from introducing Bakhtin into conversation about the politics of generous ethics lies in his capacity to discuss the relationships it involves in aesthetic terms, and with reference to particular narrative structures and creative orientations; and since ethics of generosity involve both aesthetic encounters and conscious development of identities and sensibilities, his perspective both deepens Bennett's and White's analysis and provides concrete tools for the project they propose. Stepping beyond mimesis, I consider the formal and structural level of literature and film: the functions of the modes we use to narrate and imagine the world, rather than the representational content of our stories. In particular, I argue that patterns of imagining that correspond to and enable weak ontologies and, by extension, the cultivation of presumptive generosity, can be understood through Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, polyphony, and unfinalizability, and illuminate the role of aesthetics in cultivating and expressing enchantment and joy, as well as ethical orientations and actions that emerge therefrom. The core premise of my argument is that a generous ethical orientation requires acknowledging the human being as "unfinalizable" in the Bakhtinian sense: impossible to fully comprehend from the outside, and

always in possession of agency over its self-definition.[8] Generosity also calls for a dialogic relationship to others, resulting in an open, polyphonic world of interdependent voices that constantly shape one another without consolidating into a totalized image. This form of aesthetic engagement with reality brings about the affective underpinnings of "generous" ethical behavior: the disorienting mood of enchantment, the exalted feeling of joy, and a sense of communion with the world. Particularly resonant with White and Bennett is his investigation of the novel as a genre whose fluidity and constant state of "becoming" reflects the incessant flux of modern life.

I am not the first to notice the resonance between Bakhtin and theories of affect: Massumi's 1995 "Autonomy of Affect" credits him with "developing an analog theory of language and image" (263). However, in the twenty-seven years since Massumi's essay, no substantial study of Bakhtin's relevance to theories of affect has emerged, and filling this gap is another core purpose of my research. In Chapter 1, I provide an introduction into the Bakhtinian theory of the self, unfinalizability, dialogism, and polyphony, as well as the ethical and epistemological stakes of these aesthetic categories. From there, I outline a path towards using contemporary philosophers of affect — in particular Jane Bennett, Brian Massumi, Sara Ahmed, and Donovan Schaefer — to read these concepts beyond Bakhtin.

Although unfinalizability is a positively charged phenomenon for Bakhtin, allowing for freedom and agency of the self, he does note that many of Dostoevsky's characters struggle to embody it. Unfinalizability for them is a painful state of constant crisis that does not allow for productive dialogue with others, and bars them from ethically productive experiences of generosity

[8] As I will discuss later in my project, Bakhtinian unfinalizability shares its core characteristics with many other schools of conceptualizing the self as becoming rather than being. However, unlike similar concepts, unfinalizability describes not only the nature of the self, but the nature of the *imagining one's own and the selves of others.* In other words, unfinalizability describes an aesthetic and creative approach, which is precisely the scope of my discussion.

and wonder. In Chapter 2, I turn to the two protagonists of *The Idiot* (1868-69) to explore how such crises come to be. These characters fail to harmoniously consolidate their own selves, as well as to connect to others, and my goal here is to consider them from the perspective of material, embodied affect that operates both on the individual and the societal plane. Problematizing the promise of enchantment by incorporating the crisis of unfinalizability can answer not only the question of circumstances necessary for generous ethics, but of the structural nature of relationships with the self and others needed to enact them. This problematization is pertinent for Bennett's optimism about the positive affects that belie ethics of generosity.

In Chapter 3, I explore joy — the instrumental affective link between enchantment and generous action that Bennett identifies, but only briefly addresses. Like the affect itself, the word *joy* is ambivalent, used differently across different contexts, from an enraptured *rejoicing* in Christ, to the sexual connotations of Lacanian *jouissance*. For the purposes of this project, I will follow Bennett's lead in using the term "joy" to mean a sensory and affective pleasure that can emerge from the mood of enchantment and can propel bodies into acts that adhere to ethics of generosity. I turn to *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80) to look for spaces where joy meets generosity, exploring the active moods of enchantment as grounded in pre-cognitive animal religious affect described by Donovan Schaefer. I argue that such spaces can indeed be found, and they manifest in their purest form in Alyosha Karamazov, who channels enchantment towards establishing generous and dialogic relationships with others, and cultivates a polyphonic communion with the world. However, this requires a powerful affective intensity that can be difficult to sustain, and that can go in directions much more sinister than wonder and joy. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the pitfalls of animal affect: Ivan and Dmitry Karamazov, as well as their illegitimate brother Pavel Smerdyakov, all reveal the violent obverse of the same animality that is

indispensable for the emergence of wonder. I end my discussion of *The Brothers Karamazov* by elucidating the inextricable connection between destruction and joy conditioned by embodiment.

As I paint the picture of the problems of pleasure, joy, and generous ethics, doing so through analyses of Dostoevsky's works leaves one major facet unaddressed: how the relevant affects and sensibilities can be applied in the modern world Bennett focuses on, and how they can directly participate in secular politics. For that reason, in my last two chapters I turn to Dušan Makavejev, the Yugoslav director who not only engaged with the juxtaposition of capitalism and socialism, but did so through exploring embodiment. In particular, his controversial *Sweet Movie* (1974) provides a fertile ground to explore the conflict between joy, violence, and their sociopolitical impacts through another key Bakhtinian concept: the carnival.

The connection between Bakhtinian aesthetics and Makavejev's socialist politics needs to come with a caveat. First, I recognize that Bakhtin's philosophical outlook – much like Dostoevsky's poetics – stems from a Christian context. Nevertheless, since his discussion of freedom and openness is grounded in the exploration of aesthetic forms that support or inhibit it, it provides fertile ground for reading decidedly secular works like Makavejev's films; Bakhtin's shorter notes reflect his broader concerns regarding "the violence entailed in the finalization of heroes and in representation more broadly" (Denishchenko 261), asserting the development of his thought far beyond the study of literary form. As Mark Lipovetsky points out in his correspondence with Irina Sandomirskaya, taking Bakhtin beyond traditionalism, theology, and Dostoevsky, and into the context of the avant-garde, modernism, and post-modernism, is not only possible, but in fact necessary to do full justice to his philosophical legacy. The trajectory of Bakhtinian thought that leads from the Rabelaisian carnival, through formal aesthetic categories like polyphony and dialogism, and to overarching philosophical concerns with the violence of the word and certain

modes of cognition, is the backbone of my understanding of *Sweet Movie*. Through its connection to labor, its product, and the ownership of this product by the masses, the grotesque body in the Bakhtinian understanding becomes pertinent to the manner in which Makavejev explores the politics of embodiment in his film.

In Chapter 4, I introduce *Sweet Movie*, focusing on transposing unfinalizability, dialogism, and polyphony into the cinematic medium. I offer a detailed analysis of aesthetic tools particular to cinema — especially montage — that can be used to represent polyphonic worlds and push audiences into genuine polyphonic engagement on the embodied plane. Moreover, my contention is that this embodied engagement reveals the affective roots of ideology, and can convey politically potent insights indirectly, using direct affect as a carrier instead of language. I rely on Bakhtin's exploration of the medieval carnival — a key precursor to the polyphonic modality of the novel, and a prime example of high affective intensity that explodes into both violence and joy — to reveal the pathways through which Makavejev's montage and imagery engage audiences politically on the corporeal plane.

In Chapter 5, I continue my discussion of *Sweet Movie* to explore cinema's unique ability to engage the spectator's body — and, through it, affects — in a much more visceral manner than literature. This is not to say that literature has no such effect. While literary images of characters are disembodied, both the author's and the reader's bodies participate in their manifestation. More than two-dimensional words on a page, literary characters materialize through the activation of neural synapses that fire away to generate both conscious meanings and physiological responses; and, equally, through the rest of the sensing body, receptive to the heat, the sound, the smell and the scent of the world, and the movements and minds other bodies around it, affected by the chemistry of its blood, the air in its lungs, the bacteria in its gut. A holistic understanding of

literature needs to consider the affective and bodily states of the producers and consumers that shape and receive literary form.[9] Structure, just like content, translates affectively, materializes biologically and, through that, travels politically, socially, culturally, and spiritually;[10] Bakhtin argues that the text itself has a substantial degree of autonomy from its creator, not to mention any individual reader/interpreter. As such, text does not simply signify: both as a physical medium[11] and an intangible non-human artefact it assumes *agency*, a capacity of the inanimate that Jane Bennett explores in *Vibrant Matter*. Film, however, directly confronts its audience with the spectacle of the body, and *Sweet Movie* in particular leverages its visual medium and polyphonic structure to reveal the affective dimension of politics, challenge them, and perhaps even push them in a different direction. Throughout this chapter, violence through the lens of Bakhtinian carnival remains my focal point and, having establish the film's ability to engage with the spectatorial body, I turn to the ethics of such aesthetic ambitions — especially insofar as they entail the manipulation of real and equally feeling bodies in front of the camera.

It is not my intention to suggest that reading Dostoevsky and watching Makavejev's films will lead to politically potent generosity: after all, writing polyphonic novels did not prevent

[9] With this in mind, I nevertheless refrain from indulging from the pitfalls of biographical criticism that speculates on *how the author might have felt* during the creative process, and the reader response criticisms that attempt to map out the exact feelings and ideas a work can evoke in a reader; nor do I subscribe to the belief that literary studies can benefit from quantitative approaches to measuring cognitive responses, statistical trends, or purported evolutionary and biological influences on narrative building.

[10] The degree and manner of any text's ability to shape human bodies varies tremendously, depending on the body and the consciousness it encounters. Fiction is a particularly valuable medium for exploring such non-deterministic influences, as its detachment from reality highlights *virtuality* in the Deleuzian sense: a kaleidoscope of simultaneous, fluid, equally realized possibilities.

[11] While I am not aware of any works discussing the affective impact of encounters with the materiality of books, Laura Mulvey and Eugenie Brinkema have written extensively on the affective interactions between human bodies and the physical medium of film. I reference their work in more detail in later chapters dedicated to Makavejev's *Sweet Movie.*

Dostoevsky's own anti-Semitism and xenophobia. And yet, his fiction leaves a window of nuance and unsettling compassion even for its greatest villains, confronting the reader with the undeniable humanity of the merciless cynicism of the Grand Inquisitor, the baseness of Smerdyakov, the murderous jealousy of Rogozhin, the gratuitous sadism of Stavrogin. If content alone was the topic of this discussion, the author's alleged ability to compose both "open" and "closed" works would have been a contradiction. However, as Bakhtin argues, genres that prioritize form and function over content have the power to step away from the single-minded consciousness of their authors, and reveal at least a possibility, if not a yearning, for a world that is both wonderful and open-ended.

In choosing to present my project as a first-person narrative, I try to accomplish two things: first, to gesture consistently towards the beliefs and biases that come from deliberately injecting ideas I write about into my lived experiences, and conversely, allowing these experiences to enrich academic references. My understanding of enchantment, joy, and ethics is lived viscerally just as much, if not more than it is cerebrally thought — a facet of my work that is as limiting as it is enriching. Second, in structuring my argument the way I do, I inevitably stake out my own ethical position. I take Bakhtin's imperative against unfinalizability to heart, and agree with Bennett that ethics of generosity are valuable insofar as they facilitate a kind of engagement with the world that grants it freedom. While my project does not engage directly with eco-criticism, it is underpinned by the belief that generosity, kindness, and care for the world are virtues in and of itself; and while this ecological "goodness" can be argued for from a teleological and utilitarian perspective as optimizing long-term benefit to humanity, I am more inclined to subscribe to its inherent, non-teleological benefits. Namely, wonder engenders what Bennett calls en-joyment in the world and a continuous *unlearning* of doing harm. I am therefore inclined to advocate for *joy for its own*

sake, as part of practicing a life that is both pleasurable and creative, generous towards oneself and others on a day-to-day basis, and without imposing a definite purpose onto the lives of others. My hope is that Bakhtinian aesthetics, with their invitation for generous dialogism and celebration considered alongside the danger of violence, can help sustain this ethical orientation and inspire actions that bring it to the lived reality.

Chapter 1: The Imperative of Unfinalizability

> "Sometimes it seems to us as if mankind from the first flash of consciousness, through the ages has constantly told itself, in a million variants, the same single story. And this story seems to want, like the story-telling of the legendary Scheherazade, to beguile the executioner, to put off the inevitability of the tragic fate that awaits us, and prolong the illusion of life and continued existence." (Ivo Andrić, "On Stories and Storytelling")

Cultivating a disposition towards enchantment and generosity, Jane Bennett contends, requires releasing attachment to the absolute truthfulness of one's "onto-story." The goal of this project is to illuminate the structural characteristics of such stories, as well as some of their ethical challenges; but before I turn to exploring how "weak ontologists" narrate their external reality, I turn to Bakhtin to propose a type of stories that an ethical subject, attentive and responsive to the wonders of his reality, tells about himself.[12] The defining characteristic of the Bakhtinian subject is his open-endedness or unfinalizability (*nezavershimost'*): he is, in other words, perpetually in the process of becoming. This process can never take place in isolation: the self can only ever emerge from his interactions with the world around him — most importantly, the other selves inhabiting this world. At the same time, the individual self retains a degree of autonomy, and exercises it through engaging in constant interpretive activity to make sense of himself and his environment. The underlying component of meaning-making reveals that becoming cannot be impartial or spontaneous: as a creative process, it bears the markings of agency. For Bakhtin, the agency involved in creating images of the self and the world — no matter how fleeting,

[12] When discussing subjecthood, personhood, and the self in general terms, it would have been my preference to use the gender-neutral pronoun "they." However, Bakhtin and the majority of scholars discussing his work opt of for the masculine "he." As a concession to clarity and consistency between my own text and quotations, I am opting to do the same.

subconscious, and limited — engenders ethical responsibility for how we manifest ourselves in the world in which we become, and how we respond to the equally independent other selves around us.

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Bakhtin's theory of the self is not simply resonant with becoming as commonly understood in contemporary theories of affect, but can make substantial contributions to understanding the structure of the process of self-creation precisely as a creative act practiced by a concrete, embodied individual. He introduces aesthetic approaches — dialogue and polyphony, and monologism and rhetoric — proper to envisioning the world in ways that respect the open-endedness of unfinalizability or fail to do so. He dedicates particular attention to the anxiety inherent to inhabiting the unfinalizable state of becoming, and a the craving for a sense of completion and stability that can only ever be illusory; in so doing, he elucidates both an intellectual and an emotional challenges of ethically responsible meaning-making. Most importantly, he situates all these processes within the physical and sociocultural boundaries of an individual embodied human.

In the coming sections, I will elaborate on the crucial concepts of Bakhtin's philosophy, with a particular focus on the ethical and affective foci of his work. I will then point towards productive relationships between Bakhtin and affect theorists including Jane Bennett as well as Brian Massumi, Sara Ahmed, and Donovan Schaefer, which I will deepen in the remainder of my project.

1.1 The Impossible Other and the Unfinalizable Self

From his earliest writing in the 1920s, the nature of the self and its relationships to other is one of the focal points of Bakhtin's thought. He begins his exploration in the unfinished essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity "(1922-24),[13] where the discussion of the relationship between the creator and the created in a work of fiction is a thinly veiled metaphor for the relationship between God and man.

> The essay is premised on an analogy between the fictional 'hero' and an 'I-for-myself' mode of being (that is, the lived experience of the phenomenal, embodied subject) — terms used interchangeably throughout the text, as if there were no distinction to be made between a character in a work of fiction and the living subject. Conversely, the term 'author' is often replaced by 'other' with the same disregard for ontological or epistemological distinctions (Erdinast-Vulcan 26).

Already in this early work, Bakhtin imagines the self as being constantly in the process of becoming — likely influenced, as Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan notes, by the writings of Henri Bergson. As such, the self can never comprehend itself as complete, and yet yearns for such completion. In "Author and Hero*,"* Bakhtin attempts to resolve this tension by introducing a position of total outsidedness <*vnenakhodimost'*> that grants a gaze from without the hero's own temporal and spatial context,[14] and from that birds-eye perspective is capable to complete <*zavershit'*> the hero as he fully is. A position of absolute outsidedness cannot belong to other heroes — they are just as unfinished, and bound by the same constraints of space and temporality — and is as such only available to the author (in fiction), or God (in the human realm). Erdinast-Vulcan summarizes thus: "What emerges in full force from <"Author and Hero"> is a 'hunger for

[13] Henceforth *AH.*

[14] Roughly, the chronotope — a term Bakhtin will introduce in his later works in literary theory.

being,' a need for metaphysical grounding, which can only be assuaged within a religious frame of reference" (33-34). However, in Bakhtin's later works — notably, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* — he grapples with the inaccessibility of outsidedness, while confronting the "hunger" for completing both ourselves and others. He argues that Dostoevsky is a groundbreaking author who chooses to give up the power to complete his heroes in favor of highlighting their never-ending incompleteness instead. The evaluation of *zavershenie* changes in the Dostoevsky book — especially its second, 1963 edition. Unlike in "Author and Hero," where *zavershenie* is welcome, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* it reads an act of violence against the hero's inherent unfinalizability and of restricting his agency in creating himself on his own terms. The difference is captured in the English translations as well, rendered as *consummation* in early Bakhtin, and as *finalization* in his later works.

The near-equivalence Bakhtin consistently draws between the creation of the human subject and the creation of a fictional character highlights another facet of his philosophy of the self: becoming, for him, is an aesthetic process, and aesthetic creation is a necessary and omnipresent component of meaning-making writ large, reaching well beyond art. A defining characteristic of all forms of aesthetic activity is the presence of an outside spectator. Caryl Emerson summarizes:

> Bakhtin believed that aesthetic relations were both an ongoing, everyday activity and a healthy, conscious, structuring one … Aesthetic or art-generating activity is distinguished from other activity in our everyday lives (practical tasks, business, dreams, games, and fantasy) by one overwhelming factor: the presence of a spectator, an outsider (216-17).

As we infer from "Author and Hero" and *Problems…,* there are two kinds of possible spectators. One is the real, embodied other who is incapable of capturing wholeness and completing the object of its gaze; the other is metaphysical, and therefore either inaccessible or entirely absent. However, the intrinsic need for the outside gaze embedded in the omnipresent

aesthetic meaning-making activity creates a third option: the gaze of the other *as imagined by the subject himself*. Bakhtin captures this position most eloquently in a later fragment, "Person in the Mirror:" "It is not I who looks at the world with my own eyes from within, but I look at myself with the eyes of the world, with the other's <*chuzhie*> eyes … From my eyes peer the eyes of the other <*chuzhie*>" (217). However, as the subject creates the gaze of the other himself, he is likewise unable to see it fully just as he cannot be seen without complete outsidedness. Thus, the need for completion cannot be satisfied without reference to the divine: subject inhabiting a fully secular world is eternally "hungry," eager to devour.

Although it comes at the cost of comfort and reassurance, this secular perspective has a major benefit: without an authoritative, omniscient gaze, it is the embodied, phenomenal I-for-myself who becomes the sole bearer of agency in the process of his own unfinalizable becoming, and as such can be held ethically responsible for his being in the world. It is only under those conditions, Erdinast-Vulcan argues, that the Bakhtinian subject can become ethical:

> Paradoxically, this non-self-sufficiency is also what constitutes and empowers the ethical subject, for it is precisely in this absence of the authorial other that we become fully responsive to and responsible for the other. We are, indeed, storytelling beings who desire to be framed and narrativized into coherence … but it is our inability to remain cocooned within those narrative frames and our recognition of the permeability and the provisional nature of our autobiographies that, in turning us out of our metaphysical-aesthetic home, has turned us into ethical beings (48).

Furthermore, since such a subject is condemned to not knowing himself by being bound to the world he inhabits, and therefore to all others he shares it with, he is forced to rely on these others to become. As such, the subject becomes both responsible and *responsive*. The gaze of the other, while lacking total vision, is nevertheless able to perceive a part of the whole that is inherently inaccessible to the self and, as Gary Saul Morson summarizes, Bakhtin recognizes that "one always sees something in the other that one does not see in oneself" (53). The parts of the self invisible to

him — a "surplus vision" in excess of what he can perceive — can be reflected back at him through an encounter with another consciousness, facilitating his further becoming and self-knowledge. Since surplus vision hinges on a dynamic combination of exteriority and interiority in relationship to the other, Alina Wyman envisions a potential for "productive outsidedness" (202) that does not have the overreaching forces of absolute outsidedness, but retains some of its creative potential. The self and the other, she argues, can be equally connected and separated, and can equally contribute to each other's self-image.

The self emerges at the meeting point between its internal perception and external gazes, perpetually grappling with the "impossibility of sensing <himself> wholly outside of myself, completely in the external world, rather than on a *tangent* to this external world" (Bakhtin, "On Questions" 219). The self depends on external reality to compose a sense of his own wholeness, and any real connection with such a reality needs to be mediated through others. Placing the essence of the self at the mercy of external gazes highlights Bakhtin's "refusal to grant the existence of a sovereign and autonomous internal territory" and his "insistence that subjectivity is wholly and always on the boundary" (Erdinast-Vulcan 135). In keeping with the inevitable unfinalizability of the person, subjectivity that becomes realized in an encounter with the other is always liminal, bound both spatially and temporally to the moment in which it happens. Any sense of wholeness is fleeting, and entrusting an other with co-creating such a fragile wholeness poses a danger as the other too suffers from a hunger for complete stories. In *PDP*, Bakhtin looks beyond self-creation into the urge to create the stories of others as well, and it is here that his rejection of finalization becomes an ethical imperative: "a living being cannot <*nel'zya*> be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process" (58).[15] Bakhtin's *nel'zya* can

[15] "*Нельзя* превращать *живого* человека в безгласный объект заочного завершающего познания" (*SS* 6: 69).

be read as both "must not" and "it is impossible," emphasizing that finalizing discourse is not only violent, but also untrue — or rather, it is violent by virtue of its untruthfulness. With this, the need for aesthetic creation that relinquishes finalization emerges, and Bakhtin points to a possible solution in two aesthetic principles he identifies in the works of Dostoevsky: dialogism and polyphony.

1.2 Dialogue and Rhetoric

The juxtaposition between monologic and dialogic discourse is introduced in *PDP* in connection to the danger of "finalizing" the object, meant here in a negative sense. In some places in the text, monologic discourse is referred to as "rhetorical-monologic," tying in this discussion with his later text on the dangers of finalizing language, "Rhetoric, to the Extent That It Lies" which highlights the ethical implications of finalization and situates them in non-literary, phenomenological reality. Taken in the broadest terms, rhetoric for Bakhtin is nothing other than the discursive vehicle of finalization as it pertains to both individual objects and consciousnesses in the world, and the world as a whole. In pursuit of its goal to convey a singular, unified point of view, rhetoric strives to "cut <the object> off from unfinalizedness and, consequently, from freedom … from its indeterminacy and from its inner truth … the object is prescribed from without who it ought to be; it is deprived of the right to free self-definition, it is defined and stopped by this definition." ("Rhetoric" 205, 207). Although violent, Bakhtin warns, this manner of telling the word permeates both artistic forms and cognition. Rhetorical forms are characterized by a commitment to a singular, totalized perspective on the world; they are, in Bakhtin's words, *serious,* and take themselves seriously. In *PDP*, he names literary genres that have historically reflected such speech the most: the epic, the tragedy, the history, and classical rhetoric (107). These genres are inherited by the monologic novel — notably, the 19th century realist and biographic kind, of

which Tolstoy is Bakhtin's favorite example. In contrast, Dostoevsky introduces an alternative — dialogic — mode of thinking and telling in the novel.

The ancient roots of Bakhtinian dialogism in general, and the dialogic novel in particular, lie in the serio-comical genres,[16] which establish a completely different relationship between word and image and reality: "there is a weakening of one-sided rhetorical seriousness, its rationality, its singular meaning, its dogmatism" (*PDP* 107). A subtype of the serio-comical, the Socratic dialogue, underpins and lends its name to dialogism, one of the most important features of discourse in Dostoevsky's novels. Bakhtin insists that the "true" Socratic dialogue is not a rhetorical genre, saturated instead with the joyful ambiguity of a "carnival sense of the world" (*PDP* 109) and a special relationship to truth that accounts for the unfinalizable and fundamentally unknowable nature of the world. Bakhtin identifies two basic devices in the Socratic dialogue: syncrisis and anacrisis. The former juxtaposes various points of view; the latter elicits a response from the interlocutor, "forcing him to express his opinion … thoroughly," provoking the word of the other through its own word, rather than the plot. Together, the two devices "dialogize thought … turn it into a *rejoinder*, attach it to dialogic intercourse among people" (*PDP* 111), abandoning their rhetorical character in this process of collaboration. Where rhetoric and monologic speech purport to know the truth and seek to impart it to others, the nature of truth in dialogism "is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (*PDP* 110). The distinction between the two is not just that dialogism requires an interlocutor — it's that monologism hinges on denying, or rather appropriating and devouring the perspective and input

[16] Bakhtin reaches to antiquity to examine the nature of dialogic and monologic genres in depth, but their ultimate manifestation in the 19th century novel is of the essence to discussing modern (and perhaps even modernist) reality, as it is precisely this form that epitomizes the narrative landscape of modernity.

of the other. In presuming to represent the world as a finalizable totality, monologism always assumes the impossible, birds-eye position of absolute outsidedness Bakhtin describes in *AH*. In contrast, dialogism engages with truth as it is available to the incomplete human gaze, and relies on collaboration and co-creation of the image of the world to compensate for its incompleteness.

In fact, in its literary manifestation, dialogism places the entirety of knowable reality into the consciousness inhabiting that reality: "<Dostoevsky> took what had been a firm and finalizing authorial definition and turned it into an aspect of the hero's self-definition" (*PDP* 49). In the absence of the all-knowing outside position of the author, the external world and everyday life surrounding the hero are no longer constitutive of his reality, which is now transposed fully into and mediated through his self-awareness. However, in the absence of the ultimate outside position, this single consciousness is never enough, and never independent: "to the all-devouring consciousness of the hero the author can juxtapose only a single objective world — a world of other consciousnesses with rights equal to those of the hero" (*PDP* 49-50).[17] Bakhtin speaks here of relationships between heroes within the novel, but as elsewhere, his literary remarks can be read as pertaining to any two consciousnesses in a semiotic space — in this case, consciousnesses that share a lived reality and an ontological position. His use of the term "devouring" once again reminds of the inherent violence seemingly irresistible impulse to finalize; and the possibility of relating to the object dialogically is presented as a possible way out towards what is perhaps the only ethical kind of meaning-making.

Reiterating his stern *nel'zya,* Bakhtin insists:

> The consciousness of other people cannot <*nel'zya*> be perceived, analyzed, defined as objects or as things — one can only *relate to them dialogically.* To think about them means

[17] "Всепоглощающему сознанию героя автор может противопоставить лишь один объективный мир — мир других равноправных созданий." (*SS* 6: 59)

> to *talk with them; otherwise they immediately turn us their objectivized side:* they fall silent, close up, and congeal into finished, objectivized images (*PDP,* 68).
>
> Но чужие сознания нельзя созерцать, анализировать, определять как объекты, как вещи, — с ними можно только *диалогически общаться*. Думать о них — значит *говорить с ними, иначе они тотчас же поворачиваются к нам своей объектной стороной:* они замолкают, закрываются, и застывают в завершенные объектные образы (*SS* 6: 80).

The tension Bakhtin emphasizes here is that between a living, perpetually becoming, unfinalizable consciousness, and a static, reifying image. Bakhtin's *nel'zya* returns to his ethical belief that the human being has the right to agency over the messy process of their own becoming, the right to "say the last word about himself" even as he struggles to do so. If total truth is inaccessible to both the subject himself and the observer in the absence of absolute outsidedness, then the only ethically allowable mode of speaking about the subject has to be *by* the subject and *with* the subject, but never *about* him. The endless possibilities of each moment of the subject's becoming make him inherently free, and the violation of this freedom through reduction of endless possibilities (or, perhaps somewhat more accurately, virtualities in the Deleuzian sense) to a single one is the violation of not only that individual, but likewise his natural and truthful being. The inevitable contextual situatedness of the other who might speak *about* the subject is an impediment to truthful speech. In the dialogic world of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin writes, the word means differently depending on its speaker. This, in turn, becomes another thing that engenders mutual interdependence of all consciousnesses in a semiotic space.

> The truth at which the hero must and indeed ultimately does arrive through clarifying the events to himself can essentially be for Dostoevsky only the truth of the hero's own consciousness. It cannot be neutral toward his self-consciousness. In the mouth of another person, a word or a definition identical in content would take on another meaning and tone, and would no longer be the truth (*PDP,* 55).
>
> Та 'правда', к которой должен прийти и наконец действительно приходит герой, уясняя себе самому события, для Достоевского, по существу, может быть только

> *правдой собственного сознания*. Она не может быть нейтральной к самосознанию. В устах другого содержательно то же самое слово, то же определение приобрело бы иной смысл, иной тон и уже не было бы правдой (*SS* 6: 65-66).

In Dostoevsky's world, an idea cannot exist independently from the "idea person," a character who fully embodies and lives through an ideological position. Beyond the literary realm, the "idea" carried by the living person entails not only thoughts and philosophies, but likewise his immediate material reality, his body, and his affects. As a result, it is not just that the external gaze fails to see the true essence of its object — be it a person or an idea — it is that even when the external gaze catches a glimpse of the truth, the individual identity of the observer hinders any way of speaking or imaging the other's truth without distorting it. Thus, Bakhtin's model of subjectivity simultaneously redefines the notions of truth and lie. Objective truth, for Bakhtin, is inherently inaccessible to any single human consciousness, and therefore cannot be known. As a result, any perspective that purports to know the objective truth constitutes a lie in itself.

Bakhtin recognizes the broad appeal of finalization, but at the same time emphasizes its selfish violence against the world: "This word-violence (and the lie) aligns with a thousand personal motives in the creator, which cloud its purity — thirst for success, influence, recognition (not of the word, but of the creator), with the aspiration to become *a force that oppresses and consumes*" ("Rhetoric" 207, emph. mine). Word-violence is here understood to be all but omnipresent in image-creation of any kind, including images of others and reality that we offer to external spectators. In other words, this violence contaminates all the aesthetic activity that, for Bakhtin, forms an intrinsic part of our everyday being. This does not mean that art and cognition are necessarily violent, but rather that they can and often do become such — specifically, *to the extent that they lie*, that is, the extent to which they surrender to the impulse to finalize. The omnipresence of world-violence allows it to permeate and ethically compromise every form of power: "The lie

is the most current and relevant form of evil … There is still no form or force (might, power) without a necessary ingredient of the lie" ("Rhetoric" 213). In fact, for Bakhtin, having power over someone or something is equivalent to having the power to subsume and finalize it; due to the power imbalance of gaze-from-outside and gaze-from-the-object, rhetoric and monologism are prerequisite for any hierarchy.

With this in mind, it becomes clear that the kind of co-creative, diffuse truth captured by dialogism is the only ethically sufficient position for Bakhtin. The impulse to finitely determine the object and the belief that the object *can* be reliably determined once and for all is not simply an epistemological error of presuming finite knowability, but a matter of ethics. Any attempt to capture, consume, fully comprehend, and thereby *finalize* an object of cognition constitutes not only a distortion of the object's true nature, but an act of violence against it. To finalize through the monologic word is to empty the object of the continuous and unfinalized flow of life, that is — to kill.

> What constitutes the *deadening* force of the artistic image: [an attempt] to circumvent the object from the side of the future, to display it in all its exhaustiveness, and thus deprive it of an open-ended future, to present the object with all of its boundaries—both internal and external—without a way out of this boundedness. The object is all here and nowhere else; and if it is all here, in its entirety, then it is *dead and can be devoured* ("Rhetoric" 205, emph. mine).
>
> В чем умерщвляющая сила художественного образа: обойти предмет со стороны будущего, показать его в его исчерпанности и этим лишить его открытого будущего, дать его во всех его границах, и внутренних и внешних, без всякого выхода для него из этой ограниченности, — вот он весь здесь и больше его нигде нет; если он весь здесь и до конца, то он *мертв и его можно поглотить* ("Ritorika" 204).

The gravitation towards finalization is captured in the evolution (or, in Bakhtin's view, degradation) of the genre of Socratic dialogue itself whose true model, in Bakhtin's view, is gradually lost in Plato's dialogues. In Plato's later works in particular, dialogue becomes "simple

means for expounding ready-made ideas" and, having become monologic (that is, dialogue in name only), it degenerates into a tool for "established, dogmatic worldviews of various philosophical schools and religious doctrines … transformed into a simple form for expounding already found, ready-made irrefutable truth" (*PDP* 110). These remarks squarely identify monologic discourse as a servant of established power structures on a broader societal scale.

It is important here to remember that monologism does not exclude the possibility of multiple perspectives — just that it represents them as discrete parts of a complete (or completable) image of the world in its totality; they stand side-by-side, sometimes even in a semblance of equality, but they do not interpenetrate each other and they do not morph in response to one another. Dostoevsky portrays the impotence of the monologic environment especially clearly in the murder trial at the end of *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the prosecutor and the defense lawyer each give almost comically contradicting interpretations of Mitya's character based of the same "facts" surrounding the crime. Bakhtin writes of the scene that "all who judge Dmitry <Karamazov> are devoid of … a dialogic penetration into the unfinalized core of his personality. They seek and see in him only factual, *palpable definitiveness* of experiences and actions, and subordinate them to already defined concepts and schemes" (*PDP* 62). It is not impossible for monologic ideas to be informed by others and gradually change in response to them — but despite such changes, they remain capable of being *separate*, as well as forming a complete *system*.

> In the usual <monologic> ideological approach, there exist separate thoughts, assertions, propositions that can by themselves be true or untrue, depending on whom they belong. These 'no-man's' thoughts, faithful to the referential world, are united in a systemic unity of a referential order. In this systemic unity, thought comes into contact with thoughts and thought gravitates toward system as toward an ultimate whole; the system is put together out of separate thoughts, as out of elements (PDP 93).
>
> Для обычного идеологического подхода существуют отдельные мысли, утверждения, положения, которые сами по себе могут быть верны или неверны, в

> зависимости от того, кто является их носителем, чьи они (depending on their relationship to the subject and independent of the carrier to whom they belong). Эти 'ничьи' мысли предметно-верные (faithful to the referential world) мысли объединяются в системное единство предметного же порядка. (referential order). (SS 6: 105)

In contrast, the open-ended approach to truth embedded into dialogic discourse creates a landscape of multiplicity and ambiguity far more complex than a simple plurality of different and sometimes opposing voices.[18] In the monologic mode, the separate thoughts *touch* and form *bonds*; but they are not *enmeshed* and constantly in flux through a dialogic *relationship*. The dialogic mode does not allow for isolated ideas and voices: none can exist without *all* others, and *all* are always *becoming* as opposed to *changing* through individual moments or events of change.

While simple dialogic engagement takes place between consciousnesses, a similar dynamic can be extended to a broader social and ideological environment; such an environment is, in Bakhtin's terms, polyphonic. Where the monologic approach gravitates towards a totalized system of referential meanings, polyphony is an organic *eco*-system: one where ideas cannot be defined by their isolated referential content, but by their dynamic, continuously changing relationships to other ideas. Much like a living organism in nature, an idea cannot be extracted out of a polyphonic environment without substantially changing its character and behavior; its habits and mechanisms are adapted to its home (*eco/oicos*) and become meaningless when cut off from its resources, its symbioses, its own idiosyncratic struggle to survive. Just like a natural ecosystem, a polyphonic environment is more than a sum of its parts: nothing can be added to or removed from it without changing the substance of the whole, much like even the change of soil microbiome can transform the lives of gigantic trees. In opposition to the abstract-intellectual world of the "referential" order

[18] The latter can be found in monologic discourse as well, and described more aptly by another Bakhtinian term, *heteroglossia*.

that can only truly exist if an absolute outsider is there to perceive it, polyphony describes the world of interdependent, inseparable, undeterminable lived experiences. Just like the dialogic idea depends on an embodied and affect-bearing "idea-person," so does the existence of polyphony depend on constellations of lived experiences shared between individuals as well as their social, cultural, political, and natural environment. The monologic idea is depersonalized and disembodied, and therefore can be abstracted and isolated; the polyphonic idea is intrinsically tied to the unique lived consciousness that houses it, and as such cannot be disentangled from all others in its semiotic environment.

Rhetorical-monologic and dialogic discourses differ substantially in the nature of the affects they carry: the single-minded determinism of rhetoric is serious, whereas dialogism retains the echoes of the "atmosphere of joyful relativity" and "mighty life-creating and transforming power, an indestructible vitality" (*PDP* 107) that come from the genre's carnival origins. Bakhtin addresses the affective distinction in more detail in "Rhetoric": the "lying" speech of rhetoric and finalizing art and cognition is meant to evoke fear or hope, while what he calls "authentic art" — presumably, one that serves a dialogic image of truth — strives to release those feelings through either tragedy or laughter. Joy and laughter feature prominently in Jane Bennett's discussion of wonder as an ethically potent affect, too. In particular, she recalls that the etymologies of words for wonder in early modern Europe — *admiratio, mirabilia, miracula* — all point to the Indo-European word for 'smile'. Concluding his remarks on the power of laughter against seriousness, Bakhtin urges that "a new philosophical wonder <*udivlenie*> before everything is necessary" ("Rhetoric" 215) in order to overcome word-violence. Lastly, in addition to laughter, wonder, and joy, Bakhtin dedicates particular attention to love as a unifying factor for the them all.

Only love can see and represent the inner freedom of the object. Love is still serious, but it

> wants to smile; this smile and joy ceaselessly conquer seriousness … Love cherishes and caresses boundaries; boundaries acquire new significance. Love does not speak about an object in its absence, but speaks about it with the object itself ("Rhetoric" 207).
>
> Только любовь может увидеть и изобразить внутреннюю свободу предмета. Она еще серьезна, но хочет улыбаться, эта улыбка и радость, непрерывно побеждающие серьезность … Любовь милует и ласкает границы; границы приобретают новое значение. Любовь не говорит о предмете в его отсутствие, а говорит о нем с ним самим ("Ritorika" 206)

Here, in addition to recognizing the violence of the authoritative word he argues that is not the word itself that determines the extent of violence done against the object, but rather, the speaker's affective engagement with the world. The opposite of an authoritative, externally defining, purportedly truth-bearing word is not an alternative concept or form of representation: rather, it is the same medium – the word – softened and made open by the speaker's *kindness* and *love*, emotions that I will address in detail in Chapter 3.

In "Rhetoric," Bakhtin notes that the varying degree to which monologism and dialogism are able to capture ethical truths is captured particularly well in the parable of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The "poem," told by Ivan Karamazov to his Brother Alyosha during their encounter in a tavern, is one of the novel's most discussed excerpts. In Ivan's telling, Christ arrives in Spain during the time of the Inquisition, and is immediately arrested by the Grand Inquisitor, who accuses him of causing humans to suffer by giving them too much agency over their lives. The Inquisitor describes in detail how the Catholic Church rectified the matter by subjugating its flock and relieving it from a sense of its own freedom; Christ is silent, and at the end of the tale merely kisses the Inquisitor on the lips and leaves. No detailed analysis is required to see how the Inquisitor's speech is rhetorical: he delivers his argument as a monologue, without engaging his interlocutor in dialogue. For Dostoevsky, Ivan's poem was intended as "the portrayal of the uttermost blasphemy and the seed of the idea of destruction in our

time in Russia among the young people uprooted from reality;"[19] and he hoped to offer a refutation of these ideas in the chapter that followed, describing the life and teachings of the Elder Zosima.

However, the chapter in question does not directly address the Inquisitor's ideas at all, and the views on life, humanity, and Christ that can be gleaned from "The Russian Monk" are not only different in content, but presented in a completely different type of discourse. At the beginning of the chapter, the novel's narrator gives the following caveat:

> Alexey Fedorovich Karamazov wrote it down from memory some time after the elder's death. But whether it was just that <final> conversation, or he added to it in his notes from former conversations … I cannot determine. Besides, in these notes the whole speech of the elder goes on continuously, as it were, *as if he is recounting his life in the form of a narrative*, addressing his friends, whereas undoubtedly, according to later reports, it in fact went somewhat differently, for *the conversation that evening was general, and though the visitors rarely interrupted their host, still they did speak for themselves, intervening in the talk, perhaps even imparting and telling something of their own.*"(Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*[20] 243, emph. mine).
>
> Записал Алексей Федорович Карамазов некоторое время спустя по смерти старца на память. Но была ли это вполне тогдашняя беседа, или он присовокупил к ней в записке своей и из прежних бесед с учителем своим, этого уже я не могу решить, к тому же вся речь старца в записке этой ведется как бы беспрерывно, словно как бы он излагал жизнь свою в виде повести, обращаясь к друзьям своим, тогда как, без сомнения по последовавшим рассказам, на деле происходило несколько иначе, ибо велась беседа в тот вечер общая, и хотя гости хозяина своего мало перебивали, но всё же говорили и от себя, вмешиваясь в разговор, может быть, даже и от себя поведали и рассказали что-либо" (*PSS* 14: 258).

The passage above also hints at the erasure of this nuance in the act of writing, as Alyosha organizes — just as an author would — the elder's conversational interactions into a coherent narrative. Meanwhile, the voice of the narrator himself is doubting, unsure both of the events and

[19] Letter to N. A. Lyubimov of May 10 1979. *PSS* 30/1:64, trans. Joseph Frank in *Writer in His Time* p. 788

[20] Henceforth *BK*.

of the structure of Alyosha's telling. In doing so, Dostoevsky frames his narrative as unstable, incomplete, and ultimately unfinalizable, even noting at the end that the manuscript is "incomplete and fragmentary" (*BK* 275). There are no such caveats framing the conversation between the two brothers in the tavern; and the tale of the Inquisitor, unlike the tale of Zosima, is Ivan's own, existing only in his words and, because it is only oral, in his physical presence. Unlike the Inquisitor, Zosima does not speak for himself directly, nor does he provide a coherent theological narrative. His story is composed of memories and lessons learned from encounters with others; of kind addresses to those present in his cell shortly before his death; and scattered gentle advice.

The difference in modes of speech captures the degree of truthfulness for Dostoevsky. The monologic interpretation of Christianity offered by the Grand Inquisitor is a sacrilegious falsehood. In employing the persuasive and finalizing power of rhetoric, the Grand Inquisitor sacrifices truth, whereas the genuine nature of Zosima's teachings is adequately captured by the openness of the narrative. The fact that it is Alyosha, not Zosima himself, who takes on the task of organizing his narrative reflects Bakhtin's insistence that someone like Zosima would withdraw from the finalizing word altogether: "A genuinely kind, selfless, and loving person has not yet spoken; he has manifested himself in areas of everyday life; he has not touched the organized word, infected with violence and lie; he has not become a writer" ("Rhetoric" 207-208). However, despite the aesthetic consistency between the content and the type of discourse in "The Russian Monk," Dostoevsky's "fear and trepidation" in approaching Zosima's refutation of the Inquisitor turned out to be justified.[21] In the popular imagination, the violent and serious discourse of the Inquisitor left a stronger and more persuasive impression than the elder's message of kindness and love.

[21] The mediation of fragmentary discourse through a disciple is a feature of Zosima's story that he shares with Socrates (such as the latter is described in PDP).

While the significance of Zosima's biography is widely recognized by the more serious readers of Dostoevsky, Ivan Karamazov's "poem" went on to become one of the novel's most popular excerpts. Sometimes, it is even published out of context, as a standalone narrative, and therefore read as a blunt repudiation of Christianity.[22] Rhetoric is a genre of persuasion, and a successful one precisely by virtue of its single-mindedness, its striving for total coherence. Dialogism nurtures the true open-endedness of the world, it probes, questions, and challenges, but it fails to satisfy the need for concrete answers. In the above quoted letter to Lyubimov, Dostoevsky states that he considers the refutation of the Grand Inquisitor to be a "civic feat" — but his departure into polyphony, although artistically accomplished and consistent with the substance of Zosima's teaching, means that the polemical and politically potent edge is lost.

It is small wonder, then, that Dostoevsky himself abandoned the dialogic mode in his reactionary non-fiction, some of which is notoriously closed-minded, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic, starkly unwelcoming of difference and change. Where in his novels the "artistic images of ideas" are equal participants in the grand dialogue of the work as a whole, in his articles he "expressed definite philosophical, religious-philosophical, and sociopolitical *ideas*; he expressed them … as *his own confirmed* ideas in a *systemically monologic* or rhetorically monologic (in fact,

[22] This trend was started as early as 1881 by none other than the famed spiritualist Helena Blavatsky, the first translator of any fragment of *The Brothers Karamazov* into the English language, published in her own journal, *The Theosophist,* in Madras, India. Interestingly, Blavatsky made some far-reaching interventions, removing self-doubt from Ivan's speech and cutting off the text before Alyosha's kiss. Compare the final lines of Blavatsky's translation to the Pevear and Volokhonsky version of the same excerpt:

"'The kiss burns his heart, but the old man remains firm in his own ideas and unbelief.'
'And you, together with him? You too!' despairingly exclaimed Alyosha, while Ivan burst into a still louder fit of laughter" (Blavatsky).

"'The kiss burns his heart, but the old man holds to his former idea.'
'And you with him!' Alyosha exclaimed ruefully.
Ivan laughed.
'But it's nonsense, Alyosha, it's just the muddled poem of a muddled student who never write two lines of verse. Why do you take it so seriously?'" (Pevear & Volokhonsky)

journalistic form)" (*PDP* 92).[23] Dostoevsky the novelist embraces a plurality of interdependent consciousnesses that equally co-participate in creating their world; Dostoevsky the polemicist, on the other hand, sharply separates consciousnesses and ideas that are acceptable from those that are not.

Bakhtin glosses over Dostoevsky's monologic impulses, choosing instead to focus on his remarkable artistic accomplishments. Relying on *PDP* alone, it would seem that dialogism and polyphony are both only possible in the limited domain of polyphonic literature, that is — as Bakhtin repeatedly insists — a realm when form and function take precedence over substance or content. If Dostoevsky, with his undeniable capacity to produce dialogic discourse, only chose to do it in fiction, can there be room for the freedom from the violence of rhetoric outside of art? The answer to this question is particularly urgent since the one persuasive point that "The Russian Monk" does convey is that polyphony is the narrative-aesthetic form proper to weak ontology: it is able to represent "the necessarily speculative and contestable character of <the ontologist's> onto-story" (*Enchantment,* 161) while at the same time maintaining a position of its own. In view of the importance of affective sensibilities for both weak ontologies and the two Bakhtinian modalities of speech, an exploration of unfinalizability from the ground up — that is, from the affect-bearing body to the broadly social dynamics of circulation of affect — presents a possible path to a solution.

1.3 The Non-Coinciding Body of the Idea-Person

Like Jane Bennett, Bakhtin sees the emergence of the self as an affective-aesthetic project, and

[23] "В этих статьях он высказывал определенные философские, религиозно-философские, социально-политические и иные *идеи*: высказывал он их здесь … как *свои утвержденные* идеи в *системно-монологической* или риторико-монологической (собственно *публицистической*) форме." (*SS* 6: 104)

seems to agree on the types of affects that result in various types of ethical sensibilities. However, for Bakhtin, this is a problem for as long as aesthetic creation responds to the need for completion and wholeness: a self who is deluded into thinking of himself as a whole becomes ethically impotent. Worse still, a self who speaks of the other as though he is able to know their whole overreaches into their autonomous unfinalizability and commits violence against them. Dialogism and polyphony are necessary because they engender a proclivity towards viewing oneself as part of perpetually morphing constellations rather than a strictly individualized, closed-off, finalized self that would be willing and able to impose individual desires.

As mentioned, the dialogic idea is not situated in any objectively existing, internally coherent system of meanings, but is housed instead within the perpetually changing idea-bearing consciousness. In Bakhtin's reading of Dostoevsky, such a consciousness does not simply entail a subjective perspective on an objective reality, but is rather a dynamic component that participates in the collective and distributed co-creation of the only available — and therefore the only ethically valid — truth of phenomenological reality. Nietzsche, an important grounding point for Bennett, adds another layer of understanding this landscape, especially as it relates to ethics and morality. In "On Truth and Lie In the Extra-Moral Sense," he situates a distorted form of "truth" in the realm of rhetoric, understood here specifically as *habits* of speech solidified into a monolith with common use to the point of losing their connection to reality:

> "<Truth is> a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms — in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; *metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous*[24] *power*" (Nietzsche 46-47, emph.

[24] The German *sinnlich* retains more closely the connection between "sense" as a category of meaning and "sense" as regards sensory experiences.

mine).

The crucial weakness of what is commonly accepted as truth is the loss of the connection to the lived and the embodied; and Nietzsche understands this absence of sensuous power as a *loss*, implying that these "metaphors" once did have a connection to sensuousness, but have been eviscerated through linguistic overuse. Bakhtin's return to an interpersonal model of truth is housed in the living bodies of its carriers, and as such marks a return of sensuousness: truth is no longer a matter of habit, but is continuously shaped through the event(s) of becoming through *encounters.* In his notes "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book," he concludes that "*To be* means *to communicate* …To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself" (*PDP* 287). This communication happens in the lived, phenomenological realm, between bodies that serve as carriers of affect and cognition alike.

Drawing parallels between Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan understands their shared vision of truth-seeking as underpinned by an "isomorphism of the somatic and the semiotic" (135). For Bakhtin in particular, "language … is never dissociated from the body, just as it cannot be dissociated from the concrete dynamics of subjectivity" (Erdinast-Vulcan 152). The two thinkers ground their vision of truth in the "profoundly liminal vision … in the living, perceiving body, the medium of the subject's consciousness and relationship with the world, moves on to the workings of discourse, and evolves into a conception of subjectivity that is not predicated on either body, discourse, or a 'turn' from the former to the latter" (Erdinast-Vulcan 135). Merleau-Ponty situates this position in direct opposition to the Cartesian "philosophy of reflection" that proposes an abstract and universal subject in a manner that is clearly parallel to Bakhtinian rhetorical discourse. Both thinkers share a concern about the distortion of the ethical subject through relinquishing intersubjectivity; for both, the quest to defy this model lies in

reclaiming "the first casualty of the Cartesian divide — the perceiving, living, singular human body" (Erdinast-Vulcan 138). The embodied being of the subject in time and space, combined with his impossibility to fully access the other, makes its existence and manifestation completely dependent on interrelationships with all other bodies in its semiotic space. This condition "becomes, in effect, an ethical imperative more powerful than any formal categorical and abstract law: it both isolates and connects the subject and the other, and ensures their mutual decentering and mutual responsibility to and for each other" (Erdinast-Vulcan 141). Through a return to phenomenological situatedness and individuation, both thinkers propose to study the *ought* as emergent not from norms, but from a concrete moral subject who bears a certain attitude of consciousness: a specific form of attunement to the goings-on in the world, a sensibility. Jane Bennett's similar reading of affect — specifically, wonder — as the impetus for acting on of abstract moral codes additionally suggests that the embodied, individual subject is the origin not only of the sense of *ought,* but likewise of its practical execution.

Erdinast-Vulcan further notes that Merleau-Ponty highlights a particular value of wonder, and adds a particular quality to interpreting that affect that neither Bennett nor Bakhtin mention: namely, the power to facilitate "inquiry without discovery, a hunt without a kill, which is not the vice of a dilettante but the only appropriate method for describing man" (Merleau-Ponty 202). In other words, wonder is recognized here not only as an affect of non-violence and generosity, but also as an essential tool for philosophical inquiry. The recognition of affect as method as well as sensibility illuminates, in my view, the meaning of Bakhtin's call for "a new philosophical wonder before everything."

When discussing Bakhtin's insights on discourse as inseparable from the living, affect-bearing body, it becomes pertinent to distinguish between different uses of "embodiment" in his work: in

monologism, it signifies *emplotment*, an image becoming constrained by external narrative circumstances; in polyphony, on the other hand, the subject can attain vitality — a form of *enfleshment*. In the Dostoevsky book, the word for embodiment (*voploshchenie)* is used in relation to the finalizing word of the monologic novel. In rhetorical-monologic discourse, embodiment is the product of a process of finalizing *reification*, where the character is positioned as one of the objects in his referential reality, localized among other structures that are fully external to him, that finalize him by defining his boundaries against their own and, through their absolute separateness, never enter into a dialogic conversation where they could respond and be responsible to the self. In the biographical novel, "<the hero's> humanness is to such an extent made concrete and specific by his place in life that it is in itself denied any decisive influence on plot relationships. It can be revealed only in the strict framework of those relationships" (*PDP* 104). That way, the true human essence — the "eternal human nature" (*PDP* 105) — is inhibited by the hero's finalizing entanglement in the plot, his reduction to the plot alone, without opportunities to either express himself outside of its logic or engage in relationships with others that are not of immediate use to the plot.

In the polyphonic realm, however, embodiment must take on a more literal meaning: the self is not localized, but is continuously produced by his living body that is inseparable from and cannot exist without the interconnected ecosystem of other, responsive and co-creating bodies. The subject that resides in the ever-interacting body is fundamentally liminal: "If intersubjectivity is prior to subjectivity," Erdinast-Vulcan writes, "we can no longer relate to the self as a territorial enclosure" (143). By virtue of its perpetual becoming, such a body becomes the witness to non-coincidence — the fundamental incompatibility of reifying finalization and the truth of lived existence. As such, the unruly, unfinalizable, affect-ridden body is the central site of resistance to

the finalizing word, and it is unsurprising that Christ's response to the Grand Inquisitor comes as a physical gesture, a kiss — the ideal of the "genuinely kind and loving person," Christ has indeed "not yet spoken" ("Rhetoric" 207). However, since the narrative of the Grand Inquisitor is itself a fully monologic creation of Ivan's mind, it takes Alyosha's replication of Christ's gesture in Ivan's embodied reality to break the binding spell of rhetoric. Christ cannot enter a dialogue with the Inquisitor, because his kiss is where their story ends; by kissing his brother in their shared, continuous reality, Alyosha exercises his agency as an ethical subject to open the dialogic process between himself and Ivan. Alyosha's kiss reveals that it is the character of the Inquisitor who speaks the language of rhetoric. Ivan, on the other hand, creates that character dialogically, questioning his own belief (his onto-story) through a consciousness he disagrees with and bringing it into the real world dynamic with his brother.

The perpetually becoming body that situates the self in a network of others is likewise the carrier of the impossibility of overlap between the points of view from without and from within: the subject, in Bakhtin's terms, *does not coincide with himself*. The gap between the two perspectives results in "<e>ternal tense struggle in the process of self-consciousness between 'I' and 'other.'" Real events that have not yet seen their outcome have to happen at this point of non-coincidence, rather than in a "<unitary> spirit indifferent to the point of view from within and without" ("Rhetoric" 205).[25] To *coincide* with oneself is to obtain a totalized image, but any image that lays claim on total representation "forces the object to coincide with itself, plunges it into the hopelessness of the finalized and done" ("Rhetoric" 209). For Bakhtin, a moment of coinciding with one's self constitutes a form of death insofar as it eviscerates the famed Dostoevskian "man

[25] The question of temporality is outside the scope of this discussion, but very important for Bakhtin, who reminds of the importance of the completeness of the past for rhetorical genres, including the epic (a precursor for the monologic novel), and gravitates towards the present moment as the only "true" one where the self and the event can manifest.

in man," leaving behind a mere function of the plot or, in non-literary terms, external circumstances indifferent to the self's existence. It is at the dynamic point of non-coincidence — a symptom of the becoming that makes the self unfinalizable — that a subject can materialize as an agent; and it is only in dialogism that non-coincidence can be noticed, confronted, and made a productive vehicle of agency.

> In Dostoevsky's artistic thinking, the genuine life of the personality takes place at the point of non-coincidence between man and himself, at his point of departure beyond the limits of all that he is as a material being, a being that can be spied on, defined, predicted apart from its own will, "at second hand." The genuine life of a personality is made available only through a *dialogic* penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself (*PDP* 59).
>
> По художественной мысли Достоевского, подлинная жизнь личности совершается как бы в точке этого несовпадения человека с самим собою, в точке выхода его за пределы всего, что он есть как вещное бытие, которое можно подсмотреть, определить и предсказать помимо его воли, "заочно". Подлинная жизнь личности доступна только *диалогическому* проникновению в нее, которому она *сама* ответно и свободно раскрывает себя (*SS* 6: 70).

It is likewise important to remember that there are ethical stakes involved in finalizing the self, just as there are in finalizing others: if "the non-coincidence of the Dostoevskian hero with himself, or with any finalizing authorial vision, is analogous to the position of the subject of ethics, the position of I-for-myself" (Erdinast-Vulcan 131), then relinquishing this position constitutes a rejection of ethical responsibility. Once again drawing comparisons between Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty, Erdinast-Vulcan writes of the intertwinement of the body and ethics thus:

> Both Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty are working toward a recognition of the inescapable liminality of our embodiment, discourse, and subjectivity, but their respective itineraries do not lead to the disempowerment of agential subjectivity … The dynamic of mutual decentering … is precisely this living on borderlines — not *relative* but *relational* — that highlights the immense responsibility of being human (158).

For Bakhtin, then, both being and recognizing in others the unfinalizable and non-coinciding

"man in man" is not only an ontological or epistemological matter, but both the prerequisite and the goal of ethical disposition. The heavy involvement of rhetorical-monologic discourse into robbing the self of this power, as well as its inherent untruthfulness, brings about a just cause for resistance: "the word gives the object a definition, with which the object can never and out of principle, agree from within" ("Rhetoric" 207).

Seeing as aesthetic and narrative forms are deeply implicated in the distortion of the truth and humanity of the subject, such ethical manifests precisely on the aesthetic plane of continual self-creation that is, for Bakhtin, integral to condition of becoming: "Ethical subjectivity, constituted by the *I-for-myself* mode of being, is that which actively resists and subverts the narrativization or the aesthetization of the subject." (Erdinast-Vulcan 36). Through their relationships to specific conceptions of bodies and selves, monologism and dialogism are vehicles, respectively, of aesthetics of coincidence and aesthetics of non-coincidence; and the destabilizing, unsettling power of the latter opens a possible path to reinstating "sensuous power" to the falsehood of the empty metaphors Nietzsche warns against. The fissure between self-images becomes a vehicle of agency — potentially great and impactful — for an individual who gains substantial power from being always individuated but never isolated, always endowed with a potential to find strength in numbers.

The continuity of narrative plot splinters alongside the characters as action in Dostoevsky's novels "takes place at chronotopic points, taken out of the ordinary course of life and out of the ordinary space of life, at points of eccentricity, at infernal, heavenly (enlightenment, beatitude, hosanna), and purgatorial points … These eccentric, crisis-ridden, infernal points can never be added up to form a single line of biographical and historical becoming" ("Rhetoric" 203, 205). As a vehicle of dialogic engagement, the affect-laden body has the power to destabilize the oppressive

systematizing reason and logic and, by proxy, the neat organization of social fabric they impose. Dostoevsky's fiction offers an excellent framework to explore the interactions of liminal personalities defined by their enfleshed bodies with the possible aesthetic modalities of creating images of themselves and the world. In the coming chapters, I will explore how the dynamics of affect intertwine with the push for dialogism in Dostoevsky's work.

1.4 Beyond Bakhtin: Affect and Dialogue

As I demonstrated in this chapter, Bakhtin's thoughts on the intertwinement of self-creation, human relationships, and aesthetics can contribute productive lines of thought to contemporary theories of affect. In the next two chapters, I will further develop a synthesized theoretical apparatus by combining Bakhtin's terminology with resonant thoughts in theories of affect. I will rely on two of Dostoevsky's major novels — *The Idiot* (1869) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80) — to elaborate on sites where questions of unfinalizability, polyphony, and embodiment enrich analyses of affects variously implicated in ethical orientations and behaviors.

My reading of affect in Dostoevsky is informed by existing work regarding the role of emotions in his fiction. To name but a few notable contributions, Robin Feuer Miller interprets feelings from a narratological perspective; Deborah Martinsen connects them to moral sentiments; and Carol Apollonio argues that analyses of visual imagery can help access what she calls the "apophatic" level of the ineffable contained in his work. Traditional psychoanalytic approaches have generally been less successful. As Sarah Young notes in her book on *The Idiot*, "in identifying a repressed source of neurosis, Freudian theories posit a pre-determined, unchanging essence directing man's behavior, rooted in the past, and are thus incompatible with the Bakhtinian notion of selfhood, derived from Dostoevsky, as an interactive event in time" (6). While psychoanalytical lenses are not always entirely inflexible, the central observation stands: unless one completely disagrees with

Bakhtin's theory of unfinalizability, interpreting the psychology of Dostoevsky's characters has to steer clear of cause-and-effect determinism. The conceptual frameworks I draw on largely sidestep the problem through their agility in reaching beyond language and structured cognition, which is especially true of those scholars that establish a clear separation between the categories of affect and emotions.

Brian Massumi, one of the foundational figures in the field, is one of the strongest advocates for making this distinction. For Massumi, affect represents the raw capacity of the body to *affect and be affected*; it is a measure of change in bodily intensity that always precedes and runs in excess of cognition. Emotion, on the other hand, is "the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience … qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized" (Massumi xxxv). Massumi posits that affect is the source while feeling is the (incomplete) output. Most importantly, resonant with Bakhtin's emphasis on the importance of liminal states for dialogic encounters with the world, Massumi situates affect on a *threshold*: "When you affect something, you are opening yourself up to being affected in turn and in a slightly different way than you may have been the moment before … You have stepped over a threshold. Affect *is* this passing of a threshold, seen from the point of view of change in capacity." (xxxiii) Insofar as emotion represents a reduction of affect into a consolidated object, whereas affect remains the carrier of irreducibility, the former can become the object of monologic representation, but the latter can only be glimpsed dialogically — not through containment, but through attunement to the impossibility to contain. Dialogic communication must traverse the space of affect in order to proceed; and as affect is an emergent property of the body, it follows that embodiment in the literal, material sense of *enfleshment* is its key.

At the same time, by virtue of it perpetual liminality, the body has the power to destabilize the self, the other selves, and the broad interpersonal fabric around it. In Chapter 2, I will focus on Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, a novel notorious for its portrayals of affective crises and afflicted bodies. Introducing Massumi's concept of affective "bleed" alongside existing readings of empathy in the novel, I will show how the protagonist's relationship to himself — as well as the world around him — disintegrates as a result of displacement beyond one's own liminal space and into the finalized consciousness of the other.

Theorizing affect also opens doors to discussing paralinguistic forms of interpersonal engagement in search for dialogic spaces — a particularly compelling task given Bakhtin's repeated insistence on the inherent violence of the word. Theresa Brennan writes: "I define feelings as sensations that have found the right match in words. *The distinction between affects and feelings comes into its own once the focus is on the transmission of affect*;" she also argues that "affects have an energetic dimension," and that "this is why they can enhance or deplete." Though it emerges from within a single body, Brennan insists that the self is not self-contained; rather, the mind and the body alike are porous, unwittingly and unintentionally affected by the bodies and minds of others. This perspective on affect adds an energetic dimension to dialogic engagement that supplements both discourse and aesthetic sensibility. On this plane, the problem of the gap between the self and other manifests in what Brennan identifies as transmutation: the valence of affect can and often does change in the process of transmission. In *The Idiot*, the protagonist's earnest enthusiasm causes despair and anger perhaps even more often than soothing satisfaction; this phenomenon has been examined from the standpoint of a failure of empathy, which can be deepened by introducing Brennan's affective and energetic dimension.

Furthermore, the tension between the Inquisitor's rhetoric and Zosima's kindness shows that

Bakhtin's call for dialogism in the service of freedom and truth poses a significant challenge: even if it might be ethically desirable, it runs contrary to the yearning for order and completion. Affect theorist Sara Ahmed argues that *happiness* is the feeling that emerges from a totalized, organized world unmarred by suspense and incomprehensibility. As such, happiness lacks the thrill of Jane Bennett's suspenseful and joyful wonder, but offers certainty and security instead. Ahmed outlines a three-pronged model of happiness that involves "affect (to be happy is to be affected by something), intentionality (to be happy is to be happy about something), and evaluation or judgment (to be happy about something makes something good)" (*Promise of Happiness* 21).[26,27] Happiness is oriented towards goals and objects: through their involvement in generating pleasurable feelings, "things become good … insofar as they point towards happiness" (*Happiness* 24), and are thus culturally earmarked as "happy objects." A social consensus — often unspoken — exists on what objects can and should cause pleasure and therefore become "happy" or, conversely, cause pain and become "unhappy." Insofar as the pursuit of happiness is predicated on desire for happy objects, trajectories towards its attainment require their pursuit and capture. In stark contrast to the joyful attachments of ethics of generosity, attachments to happy objects engender ownership and control over the world rather than giving back to it. Happiness invites voracity, and sees nothing wrong with consumption. Understanding happiness as deterministic and underpinned by promise connects it to the kind of *hope* that, Bakhtin argues, is a servant of finalizing rhetoric alongside fear.

Since happy objects are universally deemed to bring "good," unhappy objects are marked

[26] Henceforth: *Happiness*

[27] Unlike Massumi, Ahmed chooses not to draw a strong distinction between affect and emotion, and uses the two terms more or less interchangeably throughout her work. In Massumian terms, however, "happiness" would be categorized as an emotion rather than an affect insofar as it is consolidated, observed, and interpreted by the subject.

as “bad”; individuals who, for any reason, reject the “good” and crave the “bad” are seen as having faulty moral judgment. In order to “do the right thing” and “be a good person,” one must select a happy object or pursue a happy course of action. Selecting the correct object and deriving pleasure from doing so simultaneously (re)validates both the person and the object as happy and good. Ahmed writes:

> A happy life, a good life, hence involves the regulation of desire. It is not simply that we desire happiness but that happiness is imagined as what you get in return for desiring well. Good subjects will not experience pleasure from the wrong objects (they will be hurt by them or indifferent to them) and will only experience a certain amount of pleasure from the right objects. We learn to experience some things as pleasure — as being good — where the experience itself becomes the truth of the object (“it is good”) as well as the subject (“we are good”).(*Happiness* 37)

In a paradigm where happiness and normative ethics are intertwined, personal happiness is never *just* personal: how an individual experiences happiness, what they feel happy about, and what they desire, affects their moral standing in their community. These individuals are excluded from the peaceful realm of a coherent social world: they are, in Ahmed’s words, “affect aliens.” Meanwhile, the very existence of affect aliens confronts the closed, coherent, and fully knowable world required for happiness with the possibility that the “common sense” path towards happiness might not be universal, and that the image of coherent reality might be an illusion; thus the intrusion of affect aliens into spaces of happiness triggers fear, revulsion, and anger.

Ahmed’s analysis problematizes the tradition of English utilitarian philosophy, in particular as summarized in Jeremy Bentham’s maxim that “it is the greatest happiness of the greater number that is the measure of right and wrong.” (*Happiness* 4) Although Bentham and similar thinkers were themselves cautious about the abuse of this assumption by oppressive governments, they nonetheless “did uphold the principle that increased levels of happiness function as a measure of human progress” (*Happiness* 5). Russian followers of Benthamite Utilitarianism — radicals like

Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov — championed the notion that human beings are able to suppress their negative urges, and that "rational" decisions reached through enlightened reason will inevitably lead to both selfish personal happiness, and progress towards a happier society overall. This was one of the most significant points of disagreement between Dostoevsky and the young radicals due to the former's firmly held belief that human nature is fundamentally dependent on the need to assert freedom even at the cost of a rationally conceived, normative brand of happiness. Despite the temporal and sociocultural distance between them, Ahmed's and Dostoevsky's works both challenge Utilitarian claims of liberation and progress through "rationally" determined notions of happiness; and in view of Ahmed's theoretical frameworks, Dostoevsky can be understood as an author exceptionally attuned to the external as well as internal dynamics of affective economy.

The totalized nature of the spaces of happiness makes them *normative,* and Ahmed demonstrates their pervasive involvement in structures of power and control. Building on this aspect of Ahmed's argument, I propose that *happiness* is the defining pleasurable feeling of the kind of disenchanted modernity Bennett argues against. While happiness feels pleasurable, it is a creature of finality, attainment, and, ultimately, possession. In its connection to the rise of bourgeois society, happiness — as Ahmed defines it — is unmistakably capitalist. Given the implication of normative affects in structures of power, affective alienation is anything but politically neutral. Alongside numerous other scholars — notably, Lauren Berlandt and Deborah Gould — Ahmed draws attention to the revolutionary power of negative affects.[28] In the case of unhappiness, part of this power stems from disruption of complacency of structures of happiness,

[28] While my own project probes the potential of positivity to achieve similar goals, I have these arguments in mind when I agree with Jane Bennett's insistence on the importance of retaining an awareness of suffering while embracing enchantment and joy.

which — as Ahmed shows — hinge in large part on heteronormativity foreign to many victims of the disease. With this in mind, I propose a reading of the character of Nastasya Filippovna in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* relying on Ahmed's theory of happiness, its circulations across social institutions and systems, as well as its potential to carry messages of resistance and revolt.

To probe the viability of wonder in cultivating meaningful and sustainable connections with others alongside weak ontologies, I will turn to *The Brothers Karamazov* and the strong embodied responses of its main characters have to the world. Alyosha Karamazov, Dostoevsky's most successful attempt to create a character embodying the values of Orthodox Christianity, is notable for his proximity to this goal. At the same time, none of his three brothers succeed in doing the same. Ivan Karamazov's spiritual crisis that has him is torn between an overwhelming love for life and a "rebellion" against God's can be read as a struggle between the impulse for enchantment and the burden of its obverse — the disenchantment whose primacy Bennett works to challenge. For the purposes of staying close to the central texts in this project, I will rely on Bennett's reading of the widely accepted theory of disenchanted modernity originally developed by Max Weber. She summarizes the principles of disenchantment thus:

> (1) our modern, highly rationalized world, characterized by calculation, stands in stark contrast to a magical or holistic cosmos, a cosmos toward which we have a double orientation of superiority and nostalgia; (2) although this world opens up a domain of freedom and mastery, we pay a psychic or emotional toll for demagification in the form of a lack of community and a deficit of meaning; (3) the idea of progress through science inspires both hope and desire;[29] (4) even in societies in which rationalization has advanced the furthest, recalcitrant fugitives from rationalization persist, and these errant forces are understood through the categories of the mystical and the erotic (*Enchantment* 57).

[29] I will return to this in more detail later on in my argument, but it is important to keep in mind even at the early stage of the argument that "desire" is not a positive phenomenon for most affect scholars, notably Lauren Berlandt and Sara Ahmed. I think Bennett implies a similar view even here. As I will elaborate in the remainder of this project, desire, especially the excessive and consuming hedonistic kind found in both capitalism and carnival, is arguably the main danger to the ethical potential of joy.

The rule of reason over enchantment is never complete: "Disenchantment does not mean that we live in a world that has been completely counted up and figured out but rather that the world has become calculable in principle … In a disenchanting world, the principle of calculability tends to overrule, even if it does not always overpower, experience" (*Enchantment* 59). The power to conquer the world through science and technological progress grants humans absolute agency, leaving behind a lifeless world: "because science materializes … the world, it renders nature meaningless" (64). The loss of this connection comes at the price of a spiritual sense of meaning: "when magic comingled with science, God lived in nature, agency was distributed more widely (to include non-human animals, natural forces, plants, and rocks), and human existence was meaningful by virtue of its location within a larger cosmological order" (63). However, this shift into a "cold and uninspiring world" does not come without benefits, especially from the standpoint of ethics that prize individual responsibility:

> An intrinsically meaningless word also brings new opportunities for freedom. One is now called upon to make one's own valuations, to decide for oneself what is significant, to choose for oneself among competing meanings … Because demagification … is not reversible or stoppable, it is most profitably met by the heroic will to choose rather than the cowardly slide into resentment (*Enchantment* 60).

The centrality of freedom and choice in Bakhtin's theory of unfinalizability certainly resonates with this ostensibly positive effect of disenchantment. On the other hand, the answer to disenchantment's woes, Bennett argues, need not be acquiescence to nostalgia for a past, pre-modern way of being. The rise of reason and calculability is both unstoppable and useful; and a sense of wonder and meaning can be discovered in everyday contemporary life. In response to Weber's irreconcilable dichotomy between materialism and "spirit," Bennett offers an "alter-story, of a materialism wherein matter has a liveliness, resilience, unpredictability, or recalcitrance that is itself a source of wonder for us" (*Enchantment* 64). I propose that an enchantment that retains

some connection to religiosity without Christianity is very similar — if not identical — to what Donovan Schaefer calls the religious impulse: a sensation of awe before the world that can be experienced by humans and animals alike.[30]

The core of the religious impulse, Schaefer argues, is a pre-cognitive, innate, biologically engendered affect that can be understood as a facet of what Edward Wilson labels *biophilia*. Since it is of vital importance for most organisms to seek out things that support survival and flourishing – fellow living creatures, sunshine, water – their bodies develop a strong affective pull towards such life-giving phenomena. The biophilic impulse goes beyond a mindless, mechanical urge to acquire these things as resources for survival, and engenders a deeper affective connection with the world that manifests itself as joy, or awe, or fear, as a sense of there being something *beyond* and something *greater*. To summarize, Wilson "posits that bodies experience particular affective resonances when confronted with different facets of nature — compulsions that are then absorbed into religious matrices" (*RA* 182). Biophilic impulses are not exclusive to humans: almost all organisms, Schaefer asserts, "have been equipped, by selection pressures, with an array of impulses toward life and the things that encourage or endanger life" (*RA* 194). Insofar as biophilia underpins religiosity, it seems to be manifested in the strange animal behaviors that cannot be explained away as functional rituals of mating, fighting, or procuring food. I believe that Dostoevsky aptly illustrates this affect in *The Brothers Karamazov* when he speaks of "loving the world with one's stomach" even though the love makes little rational sense; it means, in Ivan Karamazov's words, to "love life more than the meaning of it" (*BK* 195). The awe and wonder of

[30] Bennett's and Schaefer's analysis pertain to Western Christianity/ies. While I am not able to consider the impact of the theological differences between the West and Orthodoxy in detail within the scope of this project, I do want to suggest that disenchantment, despite its ties to the more pragmatic Protestantism, does bear relevance in discussing both Ivan Karamazov's disillusionment in Christianity, and Dmitry's disheartened attitude to scientific rationalism that I will address in more detail in Chapter 3.

religiosity find their expression in both Ivan and the oldest brother, Dmitry; however, both also grapple with impulses towards destruction and violence, which I argue are inextricable from the potential to experience the intensity of affect necessary to create the kind of enchantment that makes their youngest brother so open to the unfinalizable world. At the same time, their illegitimate brother Pavel Smerdyakov illustrates the even greater destructiveness of a complete absence of awe-inspiring and enchanting affects. As I bring together Bakhtin's philosophy and contemporary affect theory in my forthcoming analysis of *The Idiot* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, I will also problematize the optimism of wonder and gesture towards some of the challenges of seeking it out in the modern world.

Chapter 2: Moving Affect, Entering Dialogue

Quote from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* written in the bathroom of The Hungarian Pastry Shop, corner of West 111th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, New York City.

At the epicenter of Bakhtin's ethics lies the tension between the unfinalizable, perpetually becoming self, and the urge to fully perceive its true nature — both from the perspective of the self, and from an external position. He posits that any final, totalizing image of a consciousness is necessarily untrue insofar as it robs its object of the agency it has available to realize itself on its own terms. A healthy interaction between complementary perspectives takes place as a form of dialogue that never seeks to reach a final resolution; as such, Bakhtinian dialogue and the self are continuously ongoing processes, not static entities. However, witnessing the self and the other as

a process rather than a mere chain of changing images presents a challenge, as it requires the subject to face the discomfort of his own non-coincidence with himself.

In this chapter, I will examine the creation images of oneself and the other as an aesthetic-affective process, with a special focus on sites where a discord between perspectives might result in violations of the ethical imperative of unfinalizability. I will rely on examples from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot,* whose two protagonists inflict and suffer harm through failures to reconcile the autonomy they hold as unfinalizable beings. Through synthesizing Bakhtin with two different affect theorists — Brian Massumi and Sara Ahmed — I expand upon two dimensions of his philosophy: the embodied materiality that hosts the process of becoming; and the equally material nature of the sociocultural situatedness that both shapes and is shaped by the embodied self.

2.1 Mirror and Movement

Bakhtin articulates this discomfort of dependence on the external gaze in "Person In the Mirror": "It is not I who looks at the world with my own eyes from within, but I look at myself … with the other's [*chuzhie*] eyes; I am possessed by the other … I do not have access to my own inner image. From my eyes peer out the eyes of the other [*chuzhie*]" (217). Similarly to Bakhtin, Massumi problematizes the limitations of seeing oneself and calls the gaze at oneself *mirror-vision,* drawing attention to the inevitable flattening inherent to always only having access to a single perspective. Most significantly, Massumi emphasizes the failure of the inward gaze to capture *movement* as opposed to stasis:

> *Mirror-vision* is by definition partial ... you see yourself from one angle at a time and never effectively in movement ... either you see movement, but the movement is partial, riveted to a stationary visual axis, stiffened by the effort of maintaining that line of vision, made wooden, deadened, turned into a caricature of itself, or you make a live movement at the price of losing sight of yourself for the duration (48).

The body (and, by proxy, the self), cannot be envisioned as a fixed point – a position in space – but is rather defined by its movement; movement, in turn, is not a mere progression through a series of the object's positions, but instead, positionality is itself "an emergent quality of movement" (Massumi 29). Going a step further than Bakhtin, Massumi contrasts mirror-vision to movement-vision, which is necessary to capture the ongoing nature of the process of becoming. *Movement-vision*, while capable of capturing mutability, is itself composed of varying perspectives, which the observer can, but does not necessarily integrate into a rich but still incomplete image of the observed. The self in movement – the object of *movement-vision* – is in the purview of the external observer, and thus can be thought of as a constituent part of the Bakhtinian surplus vision.

In line with Bakhtin's insistence on the impossibility of finalizing the image even in a productive dialogic encounter of the self and the other, Massumi further states that "mirror-vision and movement-vision are discontinuous; between them there is no mediation," and that "movement-vision ... is discontinuous with itself" (50). Dostoevsky captures this disconnect: he relates the "smoothed over" linear narratives, but retains within them the fissures and incongruities that expose their illusory nature; in refusing or failing to ever settle for a fixed position in their psychosocial space, his characters are incessantly motile. Following Massumi's insistence on abandoning positionality, I would suggest stressing the mobility inherent in the change Bakhtin sees as crucial. Namely, the *point* of non-coincidence between a man and himself can be reimagined, instead, as a continuous *trajectory*, which generates an even greater, less stable sensation of crisis insofar as *not even the crisis itself has a stable form*. In "Person In the Mirror," Bakhtin's anxiety over the dependence on the external gaze in order to overcome the limitations of the mirror betrays a *craving* for capturing or appropriating such a gaze. Between mirror-vision

and movement-vision there is not only a discrepancy, but a *gap* — a space that cannot be filled by either. My contention is that this gap (whether made apparent or not through direct confrontation) is one of the impediments to stable self-creation through the dialogic process — and that this instability, which can be better defined as a form of unfinalizability, causes distress to its experiencer.

2.2 The Wound of Self-Creation

Like Bakhtin, Massumi identifies the body as the site of the perpetual disconnect between the perceived and the actual, between what one believes one knows of oneself and what one cannot escape being: "the body is radically open, absorbing impulses quicker than they can be perceived, and ... the entire vibratory event is unconscious, out of mind. Its anomaly is smoothed over retrospectively to fit conscious requirements of continuity and linear causality" (29). In *Parables for the Virtual* (2002), Massumi takes a literal perspective on vision as he explores how film technology enables the subject to glimpse that which is known to the "eyes of the other." By using a cinematic parable, Massumi probes how such engagement with the gaze of the other can make one unrecognizable to oneself, and hones in on the embodied nature of observing and being observed as a process that runs parallel to the process of becoming.

Most importantly, Massumi's parable involves a protagonist who seeks a definitive, *finalized* image of a personality: former U.S. President Ronald Reagan during the time he was preparing for his role in the critically acclaimed 1942 melodrama *Kings Row*, years before he first ran for public office. In a particularly memorable scene, Reagan's character regains consciousness after a train accident to find that both his legs have been amputated, and screams out in horror: "Where's the rest of me?" Regan's performance in *Kings Row* stands out in his generally lackluster acting career both in terms of its remarkable artistic accomplishment and Reagan's experience: it made such a

strong impression on him that the line *Where's the Rest of Me?* became the title of his 1981 autobiography. In the book, Reagan explains his transition from show business to public office. Despite trying to portray different characters, he complains, he could not help but recognize himself as *himself* in all the footage he saw: the object of movement-vision failed to coincide with the image he was trying to project from the inside. This, he acknowledges, is bad acting; but confronted with what seems to be an *other* inhabiting his on-screen body in *Kings Row*, Reagan is horrified. His acting ambition is motivated by becoming *more* than himself, a heroic celluloid image of something *greater* — but instead, when acting well, when leaving room for something *other*, he becomes *less* — a "semi-automaton," a mere vehicle for scripted words. It is this realization, Reagan claims, that motivated his transition from cinema to conservative politics, where he will find "the rest of himself" and a sense of completion through controlling various images of his own self.[31]

The difference in artistic effect between *Kings Row* and his other performances, Massumi points out, stems from a change in artistic approach, which Reagan inadvertently stumbles into. At first, Reagan prepares for *Kings Row* as he would for any other role, seeking input from physicians and amputees to "find out how it really felt, short of actual amputation" — in other words, to grasp an essential "truth" of the experience. In Bakhtin's terms, Reagan seeks a *finalized* image in a quest to embody a personality that *fully coincides* with such an illusory "truth" — and this attempt is both ethically and aesthetically lacking. The impulse to finalize and flatten prevents Reagan from engaging dialogically with the object of representation, he does not respond to the object and invite it into the process of his own becoming, and as such is condemned to remain

[31] Massumi extensively references Reagan's autobiography to tell his story. While there may be room to challenge his interpretation by examining the original text, for the purposes of this discussion I am only considering Reagan's narrative as an integral part of Massumi's (which, I acknowledge, is ironic in the context of this project).

recognizably *himself* despite his efforts to be appear otherwise. In this case, however, the object of representation resists — tellingly, at a point where it is the ever-becoming, unstable and individuated bodies that need representing. The multitude of perspectives on amputation Reagan elicits do not agree with each other, and are often even contradictory: the rebellion of embodied experiences to coalesce into a neat finalized image baffles Reagan, and he arrives on set anxious and sleep deprived, unsure that he will be able to deliver a good performance. Luckily, a clever contraption comes to his rescue: the bed he will be performing in has a rig underneath it for Reagan to hide his legs. Covered with blankets, it appears to both Reagan's and the camera's eyes as though his legs are really gone. Although Reagan's finalizing mind is helpless before the elusiveness of the body, inhabiting a simulation of the embodied experience does the trick. As he opens his eyes to the director's call, for a moment he feels disoriented: the line "Where is the rest of me?!" becomes a genuine cry, the scene is finished in a single take, and later on, watching the footage, Reagan fails to recognize himself in the image for the first time.

Massumi argues that the physical exhaustion and anxiety made Reagan susceptible to slipping from himself, interpreting this slippage as a loss of mirror-vision, a sense of self from the standpoint of the self. In a moment of displacement, Reagan loses touch with the part of himself that's capable of conscious understanding, and is reduced instead into the field of pure affect. In that moment, he folds into himself, becoming a *body without image*: "an additive space of utter receptivity retaining and combining past movements, in intensity, extracted from their actual terms … the involution of subject-object relations into the body of the observer and of that body into itself" (Massumi 63). With conscious self-awareness suspended, the body without image is left to the body's devices alone, and a form of movement vision is achieved through a move away from the outward gaze and an immersion into the proprioceptive sensation. In capturing movement from

within, this perspective captures the self as becoming, rather than a static image of what it already is. This is an open state of total porousness; and it is this porousness that lets the scene from *Kings Row* to enter Reagan's own reality so violently that it shapes the rest of his life. Massumi calls this intrusion of an event external to one's life into the depths of the self a "bleed," explaining it thus:

> The event <Reagan> recreated has bled into his everyday life, coloring it forever ... He starts from the need to portray a scene culminating in an event that can be taken as exemplary … Through his performance of the exemplary event, Reagan effects an actual change in his life. That change is expressed as a blend between the exemplary event and his ordinary world, a bleed between the two (55-56).

Through creative actualization, the external perspective or image *bleeds* into the self, causing a permanent transformation of his reality. The discrepancy between the self and being something other than what one perceives to be the self enables transformation by events external to its own reality.[32] The bleed happens not from one to the other, but *between* the two, impacting the creation process of both entities: the self (as process) and the other-than-self (as event, not image).

For Massumi, artifice is crucial for this to happen: good actors, he claims, do what Reagan did deliberately in an act of "self-affectation," and find exhilaration rather than anxiety in doing so. However, following Bakhtin's assertion that aesthetic creation permeates daily life and is especially implicated in relationships with others, I argue that the bleed is possible in any encounter that involves a temporary loss of self in a liminal affective state and that, in fact, the space of affect is precisely the site of Bakhtinian non-coincidence. In Bakhtin's terms, the bleed can be understood

[32] Massumi's interpretation is grounded in Deleuzian distinctions between the virtual and the actual. Roughly, the actual is that which has concrete, phenomenological existence; this existence has a single, finished form. The virtual has no concrete existence — it is abstract, and can endlessly multiply, presenting various versions of the real. Since the virtual and the actual both exist in reality, they are different in nature from one another and yet connected through their disparity. The transition from one to the other is a change in kind — a differential change from one mode of reality to another; Deleuze writes that "the characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated and is forced to differentiate itself, to create its lines of differentiation in order to be actualized." The gap between the virtual and the actual that precedes actualization, as well as the eternally dynamic differentiation of the virtual, makes actualization a creative act.

as an aesthetic-affective technology by which an encounter with the other infiltrates the self through the space of internal non-coincidence. It is a failed attempt at a dialogic interaction where the self cannot respond to the other because it is displaced from its unique context and suspended in time; instead of a meaningful dialogic exchange of perspectives, the event of the encounter becomes an intrusion.

Some of the more tumultuous relationships between Dostoevsky's characters can be understood as bleeds, and they often bring the unsettling nature of the bleed to the fore. Those are the characters whose actions are motivated by visceral, inarticulable sensations such as the irrational impulses *(poryv)* evoked with special insistence in *The Idiot*,[33] and the notoriously untranslatable *nadryv*, the self-inflicted emotional damage through overexertion rendered variously as laceration, tearing, and strain in the English versions of *The Brothers Karamazov*. The etymology of both words stems from the verb *rvat'* (to tear) indicating a particularly physical component as well as an element of harm. In both cases, the tearing nature of actualizing affective impact causes a wound, and it is the wound that *bleeds* as it births the unfinalizable humanity of the character. Bakhtin writes, "Dostoevsky always represents a person *on the threshold* of a final decision, at a moment of *crisis*, at an unfinalizable – and *unpredeterminable* – turning point for his soul" (*PDP* 61); and the suspenseful moment of bleed is a possible form of such crisis — one that puts the body and its unruly affect to the fore. To examine how the bleed happens in an interaction between real subjects rather than subject and artifice, I propose to consider it in the context of empathy, broadly conceived as the practice of understanding the feelings of the other to foster a positive connection.

In her study of Bakhtin's approach to empathy, Alina Wyman proposes a distinction between

[33] In particular in the final scandal scene — refer to *PSS* 8: 468-75.

passive and active empathy, with the former gravitating towards finalizing the object of empathy, and the latter being freer and more welcoming of the unfinalizability of the other. Turning to Bakhtin's early writings on outsidedness in favor of his later discussions of dialogism, she enriches them through connections to the philosophy of Max Scheler. She contends that it is possible to "live into" another human being without fully relinquishing one's own self, as a passively empathetic gesture would entail; and seeks to rehabilitate "consummation" (*zavershenie)* by suggesting that it is possible to offer the other a sense of "completeness" without denying autonomy.[34] The actively empathizing gaze offers a fresh and unique insight about its object but remains continuously attentive to the process of the object's change, stopping short of giving a finalized, objectifying vision. Wyman writes:

> Instead of passive identification, *active* understanding of one's fellow men and women … alternative to the purely empathetic, duplicating understanding resulting from a passive merging with another's psyche … a creative approach to another consciousness .. grounded in the empathizer's sovereignty as an active subject, whose unique individuality is not dissolved in the process of empathizing (15).

The object is thus offered a path towards a better version of themselves, but allowed agency and empowerment to follow — or not follow — that path. Where the gaze of active empathy captures the non-coincidence of a person with themselves and marvels at it, a gaze of passive empathy avoids this realization, and if forced to face it, shrinks away from it in revulsion. The gaze

[34] Wyman herself opts out of using the term *finalization* altogether, describing a similar process instead as "terminal" consummation (Wyman 203). Her choice is deliberate, based primarily on her focus on Bakhtin's earlier philosophic works rather than the literature-focused Dostoevsky book. However, given that finalization is an operative term throughout this discussion, I choose to subsume Wyman's "terminal consummation" under the same umbrella at the cost of losing some of her precision.

of active empathy, for Wyman, is the prerequisite for genuine love.[35]

Wyman's theory of passive empathy is developed further on the example of Prince Myshkin, the protagonist of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. The hapless prince extends earnest kindness to everyone around him, but fails to deliver salvation. This failure, according to Wyman, is the result of failed empathy; and stepping aside from the ontological grounding of Wyman's concepts, I propose to illuminate the aesthetic-affective dimension of this form of relating to others by drawing a connection to the Massumian bleed. Myshkin is not consciously aiming for performative artifice, but his engagement with people as flattened characters closely resembles Reagan's approach to acting fictional ones; and his epileptic nervous system sets him up physically to be open to affective bleeds. In the following section, I will introduce *The Idiot* in the hopes of demonstrating two insights. First, I aim to inject a fundamentally materialist dimension to the vagueness of Bakhtin's mentions of "embodiment" in the context of dialogism[36]; second, to problematize the optimism of dialogic engagement from the aesthetic-affective perspective. In the next sections, I will read Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* to show how the gap between mirror-vision and movement-vision is complicit in finalization, and helps understand the workings of a finalizing creative act.

2.3 Prince Myshkin's Bleeding Heart

The year 1867 found Dostoevsky in dire financial straits: beleaguered with debts, he and his young wife left Russia to avoid their creditors. They were spending time in Germany, Switzerland,

[35] Wyman's definition of love draws on the Christian *agape*, an unconditional love that manifests primarily between God and man, but extends to all fellow human beings. This form of "loving" does not necessarily require a close personal relationship, emerging instead from a shared communion of all humans.

[36] By contrast, Bakhtin's discussion of the material body is everything but vague in *Rabelais and His World*, another seminal work I will turn to later in this project. My aim here is to highlight that the idea-bearing person who participates in dialogue requires an equally material body. Even though not all bodies are equally exaggerated and focused on as ones that participate in the Rabelaisian carnival, it bears remembering that all dialogic and polyphonic genres share its origins, and always remain, in Bakhtin's language, "carnivalized."

and Italy, moving frequently and surviving on money borrowed from friends and advances from generous but increasingly impatient editors who were clamoring for new pages that Dostoevsky struggled to deliver on time. Separation from his homeland never sat well with Dostoevsky, and this particular trip turned out to be especially traumatic. His wife, pregnant for the first time and fearful for her life, felt isolated and depressed in small and lifeless towns with nobody to talk to in her mother tongue. Their first daughter Sofya was born in Geneva in 1868, and died at only three months of age. Dostoevsky, a doting father, was crushed. His own health was not holding up well either: his epileptic seizures were so frequent he hardly ever managed to feel sufficiently focused and healthy to work, resulting in incessant pleas for deadline extensions and advances, generously provided against the odds by his editor Mikhail Katkov. The combination of financial stress, instability, ill health, and grief impacted Dostoevsky's artistic output. The plot of *The Idiot* emerged as the novel was being written — an exception to Dostoevsky's otherwise detailed pre-planning that explains the novel's notoriously disjointed structure. His readership took note: although it is recognized as one of his major works today, *The Idiot* was initially met with unfavorable reviews.

The Idiot is a dark and convoluted text, haunted by illness, violent passions, premonitions of death, and references to the Apocalypse. This outcome is almost a cruel irony compared to Dostoevsky's original creative intentions, which he revealed in a letter to his favorite niece in January 1868: "The main idea of the novel is to portray a positively beautiful person … it's a measureless task … There's only one positively beautiful person in the world – Christ, so that the appearance of this measurelessly, infinitely beautiful person is in fact of course an infinite miracle".[37] In a notebook entry dated April 10th of the same year, he repeatedly refers to Prince

[37] *PSS*, 28/2: 240, trans. in Frank 562.

Myshkin – the novel's protagonist – as "Prince Christ" (Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for The Idiot*, 198, 201, 205).

At first, Prince Myshkin appears to be a genuinely wonderful man: he is disarmingly honest, endlessly forgiving, and a paragon of meekness. Having arrived in Russia from pastoral Switzerland where he spent years being treated for epilepsy, he commands immediate trust and affection from all his new acquaintances – most of whom, however, soon turn out to be far less beautiful than him. He becomes embroiled in a toxic love affair between Rogozhin, an uncouth merchant's son, and Nastasya Filippovna, a former "mistress" of a rich man who exploited her in childhood. Captivated by her tragic beauty, Myshkin insists on helping her escape her status of a "fallen woman," offering both social and emotional support. Meanwhile, Rogozhin befriends Myshkin, even though his pathological jealousy makes him see the Prince as a romantic rival. Despite Myshkin's efforts at conciliation, relationships between characters rapidly deteriorate into a nightmarish whirlwind: the prince's epileptic seizures return, and in the finale, Rogozhin murders Nastasya Filippovna shortly after she flees with him from her long-anticipated wedding to Myshkin.

Nastasya Filippovna's death makes it clear that, for all its attempts at *imitatio Christi*, *The Idiot* fails to deliver a savior. As Liza Knapp summarizes, many critics have, for this reason, "condemned Myshkin (as an ineffectual hero), Dostoevsky (as an ineffectual novelist), and, for that matter, Jesus himself (as an ineffectual savior or simply as a bad role model)" (191). However, the greatest paradox of the "positively beautiful man" is not just that his infinite, nauseatingly persistent kindness fails to make things better, but that it consistently makes things worse. Thus W. J. Leatherbarrow: "<Myshkin's> ideal of compassion provokes the murderous passions of Rogozhin; his treacly meekness provokes the outrage of Ippolit; his attempts to mediate between

others create chaos and dissension" (107-8). Later in Dostoevsky's career, a similar attempt at *imitatio Christi* in the character of Alyosha Karamazov will prove far more salvific for those around him: it is not that kindness and forgiveness cannot bring positive change in Dostoevsky's world – rather, their success depends on the fine-tuned mechanics of their delivery.

Some critics who read Dostoevsky from the Bakhtinian perspective – notably, Sarah Young and Alina Wyman, – devote considerable attention to the fact that Myshkin's compassion and desire to "save" Nastasya Filippovna bring mutually toxic results despite his best intentions. Young views it as a matter of imposing a "script" onto a woman who all her life craves to escape such intrusions into her self-definition; Wyman, as a problem of passive empathy substituting active love. In Wyman's reading, Myshkin's tendency to deny the flaws of his loved ones becomes a reifying rather than a loving gesture; and his failure to maintain sufficient self-autonomy when faced with the loved one's suffering renders him incapable of providing genuine, active presence. Most importantly, Wyman notes, Myshkin is himself disrupted by the failing empathy, falling into mental disarray and ultimately epileptic seizures and "idiocy." She argues that his mental collapse is caused by a loss of surplus vision; adding to that, I would propose that this loss constitutes a Massumian bleed, as it entails transformative interactions with imagined *representations* of others. What Massumi's terminology of affect brings into this equation is the understanding that the impetus for Myshkin's behavior is more than discursive, religious, or emotional: it is likewise — and perhaps primarily — a matter of visceral, pre-cognitive experience that only becomes translated into discourse partially and with limited success. His relationship to Nastasya Filippovna contains all three components of the bleed: an altered nervous and physical state; a finalized image of another person; and a slippage into this otherness at the cost of losing himself.

Myshkin's first encounter with Nastasya Filippovna is a vicarious one, and happens when he

is — just like Reagan on the set of *Kings Row* — agitated and exhausted. He arrives in the unfamiliar St. Petersburg sleepless and penniless, bearing unconfirmed and unlikely news of a large inheritance that might completely transform his life: on the train, he inhabits a moment of prolonged suspense in a state of liminality. It is there that he meets Rogozhin, an impulsive young man obsessed with Nastasya Filippovna — a woman he only saw three times and never directly spoke to. It is through Rogozhin's story that Nastasya Filippovna, a woman he will profess love and propose marriage to on the same evening, enters Myshkin's consciousness, and this rich and flattering portrayal will define his subsequent interactions.

Myshkin's next encounter with Nastasya Filippovna is likewise indirect. Straight from the train, he pays a visit to his distant relative, General Yepanchin. He learns that the general's assistant, Ganya Ivolgin, has been offered a substantial sum of money to marry Nastasya Filippovna, and is expecting her response that same night at her birthday celebration. Through their marriage, her former "keeper", Totsky, would become "free" and respectable enough to marry one of the general's daughters. The general and his assistant are both fretful about their plan: they describe Nastasya Filippovna as a capricious and unpredictable woman prone to provocative and disruptive behavior. Myshkin also learns that she is shunned by the respectable women in the general's circle despite being made a "mistress" against her will. At the end of this conversation, Ganya presents a photograph of Nastasya Filippovna. The static image meets the objectifying narrative under Myshkin's gaze: despite only hearing about her second-hand on, he readily claims that he *knows* her.

> "What, Nastasya Filippovna? Do you know Nastasya Filippovna, too?" asked the general. "Yes; only twenty-four hours in Russia and I know a great beauty like her," replied the prince, and at once told them about his meeting with Rogozhin, retelling his entire story

(Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*[38] 43).

> "Как, Настасья Филипповна! Разве вы уж знаете и Настасью Филипповну?" спросил генерал. "Да; всего только сутки в России, а уж такую раскрасавицу знаю," ответил князь и тут же передал весь рассказ его (*PSS* 8: 27).

Myshkin's claim to knowledge does not stop at simple ability to connect the name and the face from hearsay. When Ganya Ivolgin — himself ambivalent about the marriage match — asks the prince for his opinion on her character, Myshkin enthusiastically delivers a fleshed-out interpretation based on the photograph alone.

> "An astonishing face!" the prince replied. "And I'm certain that her fate is not of an ordinary kind. Her face is cheerful, but she has suffered dreadfully, don't you think? Her eyes betray it, those two little bones here, two points under her eyes where her cheeks begin. It's a proud face, a dreadfully proud one, and I simply can't tell if she is good or not. Oh, if only she were good! It would redeem everything!" (*Idiot* 46).

> "Удивительное лицо!" ответил князь, "и я уверен, что судьба ее не из обыкновенных. Лицо веселое, а она ведь ужасно страдала, а? Об этом глаза говорят, вот эти две косточки, две точки под глазами в начале щек. Это гордое лицо, ужасно гордое, и вот не знаю, добра ли она? Ах, кабы добра! Все было бы спасено!" (*PSS* 8: 32).

Myshkin delivers his interpretation with such confidence that the glaring limitations of his vision go unnoticed. Sarah Young observes that "Nastasya Filippovna comes across as a vibrant and fully-drawn character, to the extent that the first-time reader of *The Idiot* barely notices that she is absent for most of the narrative" (39). Myshkin's introduction to the general's wife and daughters gives a clue about the reason for imposing an image of suffering and redemption Nastasya Filippovna. In his conversation with the Yepanchin ladies, the prince reminisces about an acquaintance with a similar story of sexual exploitation: Marie, a poor Swiss girl, who was seduced and abandoned by a traveling salesman and shunned by the entire village. In defiance to

[38] Henceforth: *Idiot.*

everyone around her, Myshkin shows kindness to Marie, and guides the village children towards loving Marie as well. In Myshkin's narrative, this affection comforts Marie in her final days, giving her a semblance of serenity and happiness as she dies a slow death from tuberculosis. As L. A. Levina notes, Myshkin's perception of Nastasya Filippovna is clearly propelled by the urge to replicate his happy experience of "pity-love" with Marie (344).

Myshkin's clinging to a fictional character of Nastasya Filippovna even before they met makes him unable to appropriately respond to her actual presence. It does not matter to him that the narratives he heard are unreliable and uncorroborated: he will use them to challenge the inconsistency between Nastasya Filippovna's behavior and his ideal. Even as he sees her barge into the Ivolgin household, insult Ganya's family, and mock everyone present, he insists that her own words and behavior are deviations from the underlying true "essence" he believes to have grasped, and he confronts her with this flattened, finalized image: "'And aren't you ashamed of yourself? You're not like that, not like the person you pretended to be just now, are you? Is it really possible?' the prince suddenly exclaimed with a deep, heartfelt reproach" (*Idiot* 98). Although Alina Wyman claims that Myshkin's initial interactions with Nastasya Filippovna are ethically productive active empathy that helps her reconnect to her own goodness, I would argue that this cannot be the case seeing as the prince's connection is with an imagined, ideal martyr modeled on somebody else — not her living, embodied self.

Myshkin's uncanny insightfulness about the character and motivation of those around him is acknowledged by many of his acquaintances, and he is never entirely wrong. His problem lies in his proclivity to accept only a single, idealized perspective at the cost of denying others. It may be true that Nastasya Filippovna is "not like that" but any notion of a real, true core of her being is illusory, and can never be all she is: the fact that she is equally capable of malice and resentment

is affirmed through multiple instances of brazen, disruptive behavior, and throughout the novel she vacillates between multiple sides of her self. Myshkin's insistence on a singular, ideal image violates that complexity.

The tragedy of Prince Myshkin's passive empathy can be read as of lack of Massumian movement-vision. His strategy of compassion fails: as the living human beings around him move, change, and react in unfinalizable and unpredictable ways, the fissures and discrepancies between his clear-cut mirror-images inevitably emerge. The epileptic seizures that ravage his body at crucial points in the novel are an epitomic metaphor of such a disjointed, discontinuous image of the world. However, despite his reductive logic, Myshkin's idealized image of Nastasya Filippovna does contain a resonant and deeply needed grain of truth: when the prince validates her victimhood, his conviction resonates with her own search for redemption, prompting her to mirror back this image in response. "'Indeed I am not like that, he has guessed,' she whispered quickly, hotly, suddenly flaring and blushing all over, and, turning away, this time went out so quickly that no one had time to work out why she had come back again" (*Idiot* 98).

Starting from their first in person encounter, the two characters express a shared recognition rooted in their personal fantasies, experienced as an uncanny familiarity. Myshkin insists that he has seen Nastasya Filippovna before hearing about her, "perhaps in a dream" (*Idiot* 91*).* On the same evening, when he impulsively proposes to her at her birthday party, she recalls her desperate daydreams of "someone like <Myshkin>, kind, honest, good, and a bit stupid," who would "suddenly arrive and say: 'You bear no guilt, Nastasya Filippovna, and I adore you!'" (*Idiot* 133) The two protagonists of *The Idiot* become enmeshed from the first moments of their acquaintance, filling in the blanks in their emotional needs with fictions they make of the other. Each finds in the other a fictional effigy of their pre-existing desires: Myshkin — redemption and salvation for a

wronged woman; Nastasya — a savior. One of the preconditions of the bleed, Massumi argues, is artifice: imagining a fictional character might inadvertently fold into one's self. The transformation of a living other into a monologic image allows the bleed to happen between consciousnesses, and the artifice need not be fully divorced from a real person. However, such encounters have one radical difference from the kind of bleed Reagan experiences: unlike the fictional character to be acted on a screen, the living other bursts out of her flattened image, responds to the image's creator, and bleeds back. The gaze that deems itself capable of knowing its object's interiority better than the object itself is palpably intrusive. Since it participates in the process of co-creative materialization of the self, the external observer does not remain on the surface level, but penetrates and subsumes the object. It is through this movement that passive empathy enacts deadening finalization — an effect I will discuss in more detail when I turn my attention to Nastasya Filippovna's engagement with Myshkin's images of herself.

Soon after Nastasya Filippovna absconds from her birthday party to join Rogozhin's debauchery, she seeks out Myshkin again, and the pair spends a month sharing living quarters in Moscow. This period is a time gap in the novel, and the only information about it is divulged by Myshkin in his conversation with Aglaya Yepanchina. He paints a nightmarish scene of Nastasya Filippovna's constant vacillations between blaming others for her torments and outbursts of self-loathing, often prompted by his attempts to make her "see the light" *(Idiot* 296*)*. Nastasya Filippovna resists his finalization, even at the cost of immense suffering and self harm — and I will address a possible explanation of this behavior in more detail in the coming sections of this chapter. In the same conversation, Aglaya implores Myshkin to return to Nastasya Filippovna, who still loves him, but he refuses, saying that he "can't sacrifice <himself> like that" (*Idiot* 298). He remembers the time of their cohabitation with horror that manifests on a physical level: he

shudders, stutters, and covers his face when asked to speak about it. The impact Nastasya Filippovna has had on Myshkin stops short of "bleeding" into him as his refusal to sacrifice himself again sets a boundary between the two. However, this boundary will completely dissolve in their next encounter.

Irritated by Nastasya Filippovna's persistent, feverish letters imploring her to marry the prince, Aglaya Yepanchina arranges a confrontation with her rival. In the novel's last scandal scene, she uses information garnered from Myshkin to humiliate her in front of him; as tension peaks, Aglaya deliberately lies, telling Nastasya Filippovna that the prince hates her. Nastasya then goes through another extreme mood swing: first weeping and telling Aglaya to leave and take the prince with her, and then suddenly becoming spiteful and challenging the prince to abandon Aglaya. At that point, Myshkin finds himself in an altered affective and bodily state, just as he did when he first arrived to Saint Petersburg: he is sleep deprived, highly agitated, and recovering from yesterday's epileptic seizure. He experiences Nastasya Filippovna's fit as a matter of life and death: "The outburst was so violent that she might perhaps have died, or at least that was how it seemed to the prince" (*Idiot* 380). At first, the prince heads after Aglaya, who runs out of the room, but he is physically stopped: "on the threshold he was seized by two arms. Nastasya Filippovna's desolate, contorted face stared at him point-bank, and her blush lips moved, asking: 'After her? After her? …' She fell senseless into his arms" (*Idiot* 380). At this point, Nastasya Filippovna is fully reduced to her body, propelled into action by intense affect: her arms are seizing the prince, her lips are saying the words, and she eventually loses consciousness altogether. Her unresponsive body acts as a senseless "rig" that makes room for Myshkin's displacement of self. Her deranged pleas function similarly to the director's call for action on Reagan's film set: already lost in high affective intensity and confronted with a conflicting image of the other he was so intent on finalizing, the

prince breaks down fully into mirroring Nastasya Filippovna to the point of temporarily losing — and, in the long term, transforming — his own sense of self.

> Ten minutes later the prince was sitting beside Nastasya Filippovna, never taking his eyes off her and stroking her head and face, with both hands, like a little child. He laughed in response to her laughter and was ready to cry at her tears. He said nothing, but listened fixedly to her jerky, ecstatic and incoherent babbling, hardly understood anything, but quietly smiled, and as soon as it seemed to him that she was beginning to pine or weep again, to reproach or complain, he would at once begin to stroke her head again and tenderly pass his hands across her cheeks, comforting and coaxing her like a child (*Idiot* 381).
>
> Чрез десять минут князь сидел подле Настасьи Филипповны, не отрываясь смотрел на нее и гладил ее по головке и по лицу обеими руками, как малое дитя. Он хохотал на ее хохот и готов был плакать на ее слезы. Он ничего не говорил, но пристально вслушивался в ее порывистый, восторженный и бессвязный лепет, вряд ли понимал что-нибудь, но тихо улыбался, и чуть только ему казалось, что она начинала опять тосковать или плакать, упрекать или жаловаться, тотчас же начинал ее опять гладить по головке и нежно водить руками по ее щекам, утешая и уговаривая ее, как ребенка (*PSS* 8: 475).

Reading the scandal finale as an extreme instance of passive empathy, Alina Wyman writes: "Myshkin's *own* distinctive voice is silenced, merging with the voice of Nastasya Filippovna … Both situations entail the loss of one surplus of vision – as a result, only one consciousness performs the role of a thinking, emotionally active subject" (171). However, the characters' semantically empty bodily responses — crying, laughing, babbling, touching — suggest that their merging did not yield any consciousness at all, and what instead emerges as a result of their empathic convergence is a shared virtual body overflowing with affect where they both lose each other in the bleed. Later, when questioned about his behavior, Myshkin recounts a temporary loss of self: "I still don't understand how it all happened... I - ran after Aglaya Ivanovna that day, and Nastasya Filippovna fell in a swoon; and after that they won't admit me to see Aglaya Ivanovna" (*The Idiot* 387). Neither of them emerges unharmed. Myshkin spends the weeks before their

wedding as a kind of semi-automaton, every day attempting to visit the Yepanchin household, forgetting why he is no longer received; Nastasya Filippovna flees into Rogozhin's arms on her wedding day and is murdered on the same evening. Her hapless fiancé joins Rogozhin in a quiet wake over her body, loses his mind entirely and is reduced to the "idiot" he was before his treatment in Switzerland.

Bakhtin interprets this collapse of Myshkin's consciousness not as an abstract matter of an inability to cognitively conceive of others in a certain manner, but as a problem with his relationship to reality.

> Myshkin is not able to enter into life completely, cannot become completely embodied … He remains, as it were, on a tangent to life's circle. It is as if he lacks the necessary *flesh of life* that would permit him to occupy a specific place in life … and therefore he remains on a tangent … But precisely for that reason is he able to 'penetrate' through the life-flesh of other people and reach their deepest "I" (*PDP* 173).
>
> Можно сказать, что Мышкин не может войти в жизнь до конца, воплотиться до конца, принять ограничивающую человека жизненную определенность. Он как бы остается на касательной к жизненному кругу. У него как бы нет *жизненной плоти*, которая позволила бы ему занять определенное место в жизни… поэтому-то он и остается на касательной … Но именно поэтому же он может 'проницать' сквозь жизненную плоть других и в их глубинное 'я' (*SS* 6: 196).

In this instance, Bakhtin's use of "embodiment" entails a social context rather than material physicality: what Myshkin fails to engage with the network of relationships between people around him. Although Myshkin ability to perceive the "deepest 'I'" repeatedly reveals parts of those around him that they recognize but cannot see without the outside gaze. In disassociating from his embodied position in the world, Myshkin steps towards complete outsidedness, leading him to assume that this "deepest I" contains the ultimate truth of the person. His perpetually and hopelessly bleeding heart is an attempt to supplant this lack through embodying, inhabiting – or, in other words, *consuming* – whomever is within his reach. The impulse to reduce a person to a

single image of their essence is, as previously discussed, ethically suspect. With regards to Myshkin, Wyman adds another ethical problem: by displacing his consciousness through passive empathy (or, in affective terms, the bleed) he loses his "address in being" — a position from which he could respond to others and be held responsible for his actions. When all consciousness is lost in the bleed, all that remains is a body that can react, but cannot respond. Pure affect is not ethically sufficient: emotions, acknowledged and contextually situated, are necessary for address in being as a prerequisite to responsiveness and responsibility. Crucially, Wyman reveals that finalization is harmful even when paired with good intentions: Nastasya Filippovna's destruction does not only come from the cruelty of others, but from the inability of Prince Myshkin to love her in a way that grants autonomy.

A the same time, her resistance to the violence of finalization offers an alternative to abandonment of enfleshment at the cost of self-erasure. As I will show in the coming sections, Nastasya Filippovna, reduced to an object by almost everyone around her, manages to use her body as a weapon to manipulate her affective environment, challenging the comfort of those who have harmed her.

2.4 Resisting Finalization: The Right to Be Unhappy

Among Dostoevsky's characters of sexually victimized women, Nastasya Filippovna stands out for her remarkable complexity. She is, at turns and often simultaneously, modest and spiteful, proud and overcome by self-loathing. Throughout the novel, she shocks everyone around her by persistently acting against her best interest. The crescendo of her emotional instability culminates in a seemingly deliberate surrender to certain death at Rogozhin's hand. However, as Sarah Young points out, she nevertheless exercises an extraordinary degree of power over the actions and thoughts of all other characters. Tatiana Kasatkina argues that the fear and disgust she

inspires in the "polite society" of her warden and abuser, Totsky, as well as the Yepanchin family, is predicated on her freedom from attachment to any man.

> Independence is her most important asset. This, too, is interpreted as a miracle starting with the novel's first pages. After all, this woman has not belonged to anyone as a woman for as many as five years … A free woman is socially dangerous to such an extent that Totsky would not be appeased by any of her promises and guarantees, it is imperative for him that she marries someone …. As soon as she ends up with another man <Rogozhin>, Totsky no longer owes her anything (trans. mine).
>
> Но самое главное чем она обладает — это независимость. Это тоже трактуется с первых страниц романа как чудо. Ведь эта женщина уже пять лет никому не принадлежит как женщина ... Свободная женщина настолько социально опасна, что Тоцкий не был бы успокоен никакими ее обещаниями и заверениями, ему необходимо, чтобы она вышла за кого-нибудь замуж ... Как только она оказалась с другим мужчиной, Тоцкий ей уже ничем не обязан. (220-21)

Even after fleeing with Rogozhin after her birthday, Nastasya Filippovna keeps going back and forth between him and Myshkin, never fully settling into the role of a mistress, a fiancé, or a wife. Young's analysis shows that maintaining ambiguity in her relations to men is a strategy of pursuing a form of Bakhtinian unfinalizability that becomes almost synonymous with freedom and self-consciousness: "Nastasya Filippovna's actions … are aimed at promoting her script in order to establish herself as a conscious human subject, retain the right to utter the last word about herself, and escape objectification and finalization by others" (39). The urgency of her desire for freedom results in a number of disruptive behaviors, including the scandals she orchestrates in the Ivolgin household and her birthday party, her meddling into Aglaya Yepanchina's marriage matches, her public outburst of physical violence at the train station, and finally, running away from her wedding to the prince into the arms of her murderer.

For the most part, her despair and her erratic behavior are understood as tragic, yet predictable outcomes of her childhood sexual trauma. Alexander Burry interprets this behavior as a tendency to "confront trauma masochistically in order to increase pain, rather than conquer it,"

and argues that "the destructive choice Nastasya Filippovna ultimately makes by allowing herself to be murdered by Rogozhin … demonstrates her tragic failure to overcome trauma" (264). A similar assumption underlies other characters' behaviors towards her. Prince Myshkin centers his own salvific impulses on Nastasya Filippovna's unhappiness even before meeting her for the first time, and in the final confrontation between Nastasya and Aglaya, he is compelled to stay with the former precisely because he cannot stand to see her "so unhappy" (*Idiot* 308). However, contrary to everyone's expectations, Nastasya Filippovna fails to respond favorably to Myshkin's earnest affection and generosity. She does not marry him even though he abandons Aglaya, his attempts at "dispelling gloom" caused her suffering (*Idiot* 296), and, most importantly, "everyone agreed Nastasya Filippovna went mad <*soshla s uma*>" (*Idiot* 130) when he first professed his love and offered a viable way out of her social situation. While Myshkin stubbornly continues to pity Nastasya Filippovna's attachment to her suffering, Aglaya's far less generous understanding of her rival's personality captures the paradoxical interdependence between Nastasya's shifting moods: "if your disgrace had been less, or none at all," she tells her, "you'd be more unhappy than you are" (*Idiot* 378). Since Nastasya Filippovna experiences, as Myshkin puts it, "a dreadful, unnatural pleasure" (*Idiot* 296) from harping on her dishonor, her active pursuit of heightened sensations of shame is not merely a matter of self-destruction, but also of seeking a form of satisfaction precisely from circumstances everyone else recognizes as unhappy. However, if her traumatic response is contextualized within a broader economy of affect where her presence exerts an extraordinary degree of influence on the affects of others, Nastasya Filippovna can be better understood as a person with a deeply distorted relationship to the social dynamic of happy affects. The eccentricity with which she refuses the good and the happy, and embraces the bad and the unhappy, show that her trauma results in not simply suffering, but also what Sara Ahmed calls

"affective alienation" — a state that emerges from a misalignment of personal desires with the normative economy of happiness.

Since happiness is intrinsically connected to moral goodness, it is easy to see how being "out of line with an affective community" (*Happiness* 37) causes an individual to be viewed as morally abhorrent. With the exception of Myshkin, all characters see Nastasya Filippovna as inappropriate at best, and reprehensible at worst: affect aliens are not simply strange or unhappy members of the society, nor does affective alienation hinge solely on moral condemnation. Just like Nastasya Filippovna, Myshkin's Swiss acquaintance Marie is shamed and ostracized by her community for a sexual transgression. However, unlike the heroine, she responds to the consequences of the "unhappy object" of seduction and abandonment with appropriately negative affects. She accepts her guilt and does not challenge the moral righteousness of her abuse, thereby leaving the communal dynamic of happiness undisturbed. However, Nastasya Filippovna's character and upbringing make her into a radically different subject. The "young ladies' library" (*Idiot* 50) Totsky provided in the hopes of grooming a polished courtesan created a strong-willed woman who "possessed an extraordinary grasp even of legal affairs and had a definite knowledge, if not of the world, then at least of how certain matters are arranged in that world" (*Idiot* 51). This knowledge is not plainly informative: "becoming civil," Ahmed argues, "converts the language of 'must' to the language of 'might' and eventually to the language of will and choice" (*Happiness* 35). The development of Nastasya Filippovna's intellect and erudition generates a sense that a happy life requires a sense of dignity bound up with personal autonomy. This affective sensibility makes her remote from the downtrodden Marie — and dangerously close to the likes of the young ladies Yepanchin. Nastasya Filippovna and the Yepanchin girls share artistic hobbies as well as the love of books; all four women are independent-minded, intelligent, and beautiful — products

of the same kind of education that cultivates a strong sense of personal freedom. Nastasya Filippovna is not a complete outsider to high society either: she comes from a "good family of gentlefolk, even superior to Totsky in this respect" (*Idiot* 49), whose fortunes changed catastrophically after a family tragedy left her an orphan at Totsky's mercy. Her loss of station through association with a man of lower class is disturbingly similar to Mrs. Yepanchina — an impoverished Princess Myshkina forced to marry an upstart general who accumulated great wealth through the unsavory practice of tax farming. A parodic rhyme gestures towards their proximity: they are both referred to as princesses of certain *kinds <rod>*, one as a "born princess and last of her kind" (*Idiot* 29),[39] the other a "a princess of a kind"[40] (*Idiot* 31). Nastasya Filippovna's ability to leave an air of high class and refinement is cause for discomfort; and it is, in a sense, a matter of aesthetic-affective transgression.

2.5 Aesthetics of Rebellion

The elegance and poise that Nastasya Filippovna retains despite her position are intrinsically connected to her relationship to happiness and freedom. As Sara Ahmed notes, happy objects and the value attached to them are likewise marked as being in "good taste". A civil subject possessed of "good taste" knows full well which choice is *good* — and knows that aesthetic goodness is inseparable from the moral. Indeed, Totsky notices that Nastasya Filippovna has a sophisticated ability to select appropriate, tasteful objects, and she "did not turn her nose up at luxury, was even fond of it" (*Idiot* 110). However, by violating her cultivated sense of entitlement to freedom, Totsky shatters the affective connections between pleasure, moral goodness, and

[39] "урожденная княжна и последняя в роде" (*PSS* 8: 15).

[40] "в своем роде княжна" (*PSS* 8: 11).

objects socially recognized as happy. Throughout the novel, Nastasya Filippovna draws attention to this by deliberately making the *wrong* choice. In so doing, she often harms herself: even though her marriage to Ganya Ivolgin has to be bought, it would stabilize her by establishing a respectable social attachment to a man. Totsky is horrified to find that "she found it more agreeable to display her contempt in a refusal than to finally normalize <*opredelit'* — lit. *determine, define*> her position and attain an inaccessible grandeur" (*Idiot* 52). For Nastasya Filippovna orienting herself towards the "happy objects" dictated by a society that facilitated her abuse would be tantamount to agreeing that the violence she suffered was acceptable. Conversely, spitefully showcasing the alien nature of her affects, she becomes disruptive to that order — an effect especially visible in Part I, where her violation of expectations proper to her social position cause upheaval in as many as three families: the Rogozhins, the Yepanchins, and the Ivolgins.

However, the discomfort and upheaval she causes to others does nothing to remedy the harm she had experienced. Although the nature of her relationship with Totsky is well known, she is not recognized as a rape victim, nor he as rapist. Although the general maintains that the ladies Yepanchin and Ivolgin ladies should not be shunning Nastasya Filippovna, he still ascribes the fact that she had "been with Totsky" to abstract "certain circumstances" (*Idiot* 43). These circumstances are well known: she had suffered the loss of her father, family estate, social status, and sister early in her childhood, and left at the mercy of her warden, who groomed her for sexual exploitation since the age of twelve. First assaulted when she was fifteen, Nastasya Filippovna is as much of a child as the rape victim in Dostoevsky's *Demons* (1871-72), the fourteen-year-old Matrena, whose abuse is never understood as anything short of harrowing[41]. The striking difference

[41] Tellingly, the chapter describing Matrena's rape had famously been censored at the time of the novel's publication; the description of Totsky's premeditated and prolonged sexual abuse, on the other hand, does not seem to have raised any red flags.

between the extent to which Nastasya Filippovna and Matrena are recognized as victims highlights the extent to which assailants are the ones in control of rape narratives. In *Demons,* the reader witnesses the full horror of Matrena's suffering through her assailant's graphic confession, as well as his unequivocal acceptance of guilt. Totsky, on the other hand, employs an elaborate and largely successful strategy of obfuscating his blame in both his own eyes and the eyes of society, ensuring that Nastasya Filippovna's upbringing proceeds "amid taste and elegance [*iziashchno i so vkusom*]" (*Idiot* 50). The effectiveness of this obfuscation is captured in the novel's structural level. The narrator "relates Nastasya's history from the distorted, uncompassionate point of view of the seducer Totsky; he appropriates Totsky's self-justifications" (Miller 101). Further dampening the visibility of her tragedy, the story of Nastasya Filippovna's upbringing is told within the same chapter that describes the Yepanchins' contented domesticity, and in the same ironic tone — light-hearted at first, and turning cruel and cynical when it turns to Nastasya's part of the tale.

Overall, maintaining the harmonious happiness of the normative society in the face of Nastasya Filippovna's presence requires layers of discursive erasure and the imposition of a flattened, unambiguous narrative of her being. Nastasya Filippovna's narrative finalization does not happen in isolation, but within the broader social matrix: the image imposed onto her needs to fit in perfectly into a global finalized image of the world. The failure to fit in is captured in aesthetic terms, as she is often described as "original" — that is, out of the ordinary. Mrs. Yepanchina, correctly identifying the importance of aesthetic order for social safety, worries about the failure of her own family to fully conform to social harmony:

> "It was not as if, for example, this family were distinguished by any personal initiative or fell off the rails out of any conscious inclination towards originality, which would have been quite indecent … and yet in the end it turned out that the Yepanchin household, though very respected, was none the less somehow not what all respected households ought to be" (*Idiot* 231).

> “И не то чтобы, например, семейство это отличалось какою-нибудь собственной инициативой или выпрыгивало из рельсов по сознательному влечению к оригинальности, что было бы уж совсем неприлично … а все-таки в конце концов выходило так, что семейство Епанчиных, хотя и очень почтенное, было всё же какое-то не такое, каким следует быть вообще всем почтенным семействам” (*PSS* 8: 270).

The mother of the family takes it upon herself to make sure her daughters are entirely “unoriginal,” and it is precisely for that reason that proximity to Nastasya Filippovna’s “originality” causes her such revulsion. Framing Nastasya Filippovna’s situation as a matter of character failing and choice, rather than abuse, is instrumental in covering the fact that all women are vulnerable to that kind of tragedy. Her affective alienation — and insolent insistence on protesting her predicament by refusing to define her position by attaching herself to a man, and deliberate visibility where she ought to be hiding her shame — unsettles the ruse of personal freedom and choice that lies at the foundation of these women’s identities.

It would seem from the affective economy in *The Idiot* that the drive to unfinalizability — a prerequisite for polyphonic aesthetics — is incompatible with happiness. In fact, happiness *requires* monologism; and I would argue that a precise description of the monologic aesthetic of happiness can be found in Milan Kundera’s discussion of *kitsch* in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* — incidentally, the same novel Jane Bennett quotes at the beginning of her book on enchantment. Although a deeper analysis of the structure of monologic aesthetic is generally outside the scope of this project, Kundera’s definition of *kitsch* is pertinent because, like Bakhtin, he recognizes aesthetic activity across all planes of human life; establishes the connection between a certain aesthetic form and contentment; and, most importantly, inscribes ethical value, connecting it in particular to the denial of freedom. Kundera writes:

> The feeling induced by kitsch must be a kind the multitudes can share. Kitsch *may not, therefore, depend on an unusual situation*; it must derive from the basic images people have engraved in their memories: the ungrateful daughter, the neglected father, children

running on the grass, the motherland betrayed, first love (193, emph. mine).

Just like happiness, *kitsch* demands a closed, unambiguous world where certainty in what is "good" and acceptable reigns supreme, and whose "basic images" comprise a catalogue of happy and unhappy objects. It does not tolerate the disorienting mixture of pleasure and anxiety inherent to moods like Bennett's enchantment. Kundera labels this facet of kitsch "totalitarian," and explains:

> When I say "totalitarian," what I mean is that everything that infringes on kitsch must be banished for life: every display of individualism (because a deviation from the collective is a spit in the eye of the smiling brotherhood); every doubt (because anyone who starts doubting details will end by doubting life itself); all irony (because in the realm of kitsch everything must be taken quite seriously); and the mother who abandons her family or the man who prefers men to women, thereby calling into question the holy decree "Be fruitful and multiply" (194).

Kitsch's stern aversion to individualism and irony responds to the social threat of originality and affective alienation, and reacts in accordance to Bakhtin's assertion that a serious word is inherently violent. A society committed to monologic *kitsch* is totalitarian insofar as it represses difference and it is here that the liberating potential of polyphony comes to the fore. Erdinast-Vulcan writes:

> "The principle of polyphony in Dostoevsky's work ... is, first and foremost, a transition from aesthetics (as narrowly conceived in "Author and Hero" and in some of Bakhtin's unpublished fragments) to ethics, or a broader understanding of aesthetics as inclusive of and constituted by the disruptive, ethical function" (129-130).

The ethical function runs opposite to monologic aesthetics because the role of ethics for Bakhtin is precisely to question the deceptiveness of harmonious wholes. However, this ethically productive challenge comes at the cost of disrupting the equilibrium of the affective economy; to protect itself from this discomfort, normative society will rally to erase the truth of Nastasya Filippovna's position alongside her right to self-determination and justice.

2.6 The Alien Erased

By providing Nastasya Filippovna with a refined education, Totsky takes over control over her narrative, cutting her off from the image of an exploited rape victim, and imposing the label of a kept woman. Even though Nastasya Filippovna never consents to being sold, Totsky preemptively turns her body into the kind she *could* sell for a high price, and by the same token pays for it with his "care." Once bought, albeit against her will, she remains forever trapped in the function of a courtesan: Totsky's savvy manipulation of surface-level "taste and elegance" allows him to conceal the reality of his violence and escape the label of rapist, while simultaneously denying Nastasya Filippovna's the ability to reject blame for her own victimization. He relishes in euphemisms and rejects all responsibility, describing himself as a "hardened voluptuary and not his own master" (*Idiot* 53). Meanwhile, his victim's attempts to verbally counter his narrative fall on deaf ears. In the turbulent finale of her birthday party, Nastasya Filippovna openly describes Totsky as being "fond of children" (*Idiot* 132)[42] in the context of malicious exploitation, and describes her abuse in great detail: "And then that man over there would arrive: he would stay for a couple of months of the year, to disgrace, outrage, infuriate, deprave, and leave" (*Idiot* 133). Nevertheless, once she dramatically absconds with Rogozhin, followed by the desperate Myshkin, her remaining guests part rather peacefully. The general pities the infatuated Myshkin; Ptitsyn muses on the strangeness of people who injure themselves to prove their injury by others; and Totsky goes as far as to lament the waste of an "uncut diamond" (*Idiot* 136), firm in his conviction that the had done her a lot of good. His control over the narrative is so powerful that even Myshkin, who is by far the most sympathetic to the reality of her experience, only goes as far as to say she

[42] "это он младенцев любит," (*PSS* 8: 143)

is *not* guilty, failing to point out and accuse the person who is.

With the discursive narrative firmly in the hands of the assailant, the Nastasya Filippovna resorts to her body as the last remaining space of process. Sarah Young discusses in detail the preeminent importance of physical positioning and the near-absence of verbal acts in Nastasya Filippovna's disruptive effect on the narratives of others and her effort to retake control over her self-image. As society remains unresponsive to her pleas for compassion and accusations of Totsky, excluding her own words and experience from the narratives they make of her, she shows up unwelcome in situations that, without the discomfort of her presence, would otherwise be pleasant. Young calls this behavior "narrative scripting," describing how the Nastasya Filippovna is able to both "make use of her absence to manipulate the responses of others" and "use the gaps in others' scripts in her presence to implicate them in the creation of her own script" (Young 42). In terms of affective economy of happiness, such manipulation of narrative gaps and physical positionality can be understood as a strategy to expose the omitted, papered-over sites of unhappiness on which the happiness of the privileged is premised.

Nastasya Filippovna's revolt is uncharacteristic of most victimized women in Dostoevsky's work: "the shame of the sexually abused young girl," Young remarks, "frequently results in suicide" (Young 70). No matter the circumstances, shame is the normative affective response for a woman whose sexual purity has been violated. In the case of child rape — as opposed to the initially consensual "seduction" Marie fell victim to in *The Idiot*, or Sonia's economically forced prostitution in *Crime and Punishment* — this shame is meant to be too great to live with. The degree of *unhappiness* ascribed to rape is incompatible with survival, and rape is interpreted as a form of death even in much of contemporary trauma theory: even if survived

physically, it is understood as psychologically deadly[43]. In taking their own lives after the assault, rape victims assert control over their physical bodies that they were unable to exercise during the unwanted sex act; as the expected, normatively sanctioned response to the unhappy object of rape, suicide validates it as such, granting the victim the right to innocent, ideal victimhood. In her most striking expression of pain in the novel, Nastasya Filippovna voices her own suicidal ideation, and expresses guilt over not following through: "a thousand times I wanted to hurl myself into the pond, but I was base, I didn't have the courage" (*Idiot* 133). As a rape victim whose shame fails to kill her, Nastasya Filippovna is yet in another way an affect alien: in an affective economy where rape is not meant to be survivable, her failure to take her life is understood as complicity.

Nastasya Filippovna's survival forces her to internalize a self-image tainted by the idea that she had, to some degree, been a willing participant in Totsky's actions, rather than a "legitimate," unwilling victim. For a subject so deeply tied to her sense of personal freedom, there is a benefit to embracing false complicity: by conceding that she was corrupt or corruptible outside of Totsky's actions, she retroactively assumes agency over her experience. Surviving rape, and later dramatically asserting herself as "Rogozhin's woman <*rogozhinskaia*>" (Dostoevsky 128) intensifies her shame, but rejects the helplessness that stopped her from preventing the violence committed against her. At the same time, she is not only aware of the fact that an active perpetrator does exist, but understands that the society at large is responsible for his impunity. Myshkin recounts to Aglaya that Nastasya Filippovna often vehemently protests, in affect, "that she is a victim of *other people,* the victim of a libertine and a villain" (*Idiot* 296, emph. mine), and it is

[43] The exact psychic mechanisms of a subject's identification with her own trauma are outside the scope of the present discussion, but my thinking is informed, among other things, by Judith Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) and *Giving An Account of Oneself* (2005), Judith Hermann's detailed psychiatric study *Trauma and Recovery* (1997), Susan Brison's philosophical take on the effect of sexual trauma in *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (2002), as well as the various angles on trauma in literature developed by Cathy Caruth.

clear from Sarah Young's discussion that her pursuit for unfinalizability and taking control of her own narrative at the expense of others is directed not only against Totsky, but against society at large.

The fact that her refined education not only coexists but serves to cover up humiliation, debasement, and violence makes her uniquely attuned to the cruel dissonance between the kindly appearances of the "tasteful and elegant" society, and its actual hypocrisy. The comforts Totsky provided her — the French governess, the musical instruments, the pictures and prints, the "wonderful little greyhound" (*Idiot* 50) — are all tokens of the promise of a peaceful maidenly happiness attainable to the likes of the Yepanchin girls, with their indulgent family breakfasts, countless books, and lazily unfinished paintings. Totsky's effort to tempt his former ward with a "renewal of life … resurrected so beautifully in love and a family" (*Idiot* 53) cynically implies that normative domestic happiness is attainable for Nastasya Filippovna — just so long as she does the right thing of selecting the happy object of marriage to Ganya, instead of holding on to the spiteful fixation on her anguish. The parodic way Nastasya Filippovna phrases her false consent, claiming that she indeed wishes to "resurrect herself, if not in love then in a family" (*Idiot* 54), signals her clear understanding that such happiness has been forever made impossible by her sexual impurity.

Totsky's control over the narrative defines the affective valence that Nastasya Filippovna's body carries in the world as it interacts with the affects of others. As Ahmed explains, "the surfaces of bodies 'surface' as an effect of the impressions left by others … the surfaces of collective as well as individual bodies take shape through such impressions" (*Cultural Politics* 10). Affects that originate within one's own body can do little to change the position dictated by those that hold positions of discursive power. Thus, despite her capricious, manipulative behavior and a personality completely devoid of kindness, humility, and compassion, the "nihilist" Aglaya

Yepanchina remains a supremely desirable "happy object," showered with love by family and suitors. Conversely, no amount of modesty and good character Nastasya Filippovna exercises prior to her scandalous outbursts in Part I of the novel is enough to erase the effects of Totsky's defilement of her body. In fact, the mismatch between Nastasya Filippovna's polish and dignity and the position she is pressured to occupy is an object of judgment. Parroting the words of her suitor Evgeniy Pavlovich, Aglaya makes an explicit connection between her rival's education and the "vanity" of her rejection of marriage with Myshkin: "you've read too many *poemy* and are too educated for your… position … you're a bookish woman and one with lily-white hands" (*Idiot* 379). Nastasya Filippovna's virtues are not at all virtuous insofar as they are part of the reason she refuses to stay in her place. Her position cannot be fixed even by association by the nearly angelic Myshkin. Despite his kindness and benevolence, the public response is adverse: "there was indignation in the town and … some rakes really were arranging a *charivari*, with music and even poetry, specially written, and that this almost had the approval of the rest of society" (*Idiot* 393).

Unlike Myshkin, Nastasya understands that, no matter how much she longs for it, she can never be part of a "happy marriage." Her abandonment of Myshkin for Rogozhin, both on her birthday and on her wedding day is understood as a sign of the irreparable damage her trauma has caused her. As Myshkin speculates early on: "perhaps you're now so <un>happy that you really do consider yourself guilty" (*Idiot* 132).[44] What Myshkin fails to see, however, is that accepting guilt and complicity also implies having had a choice: in this sense, her rejection of Myshkin's proposal represents "a triumph of freedom over happiness" (Young 74). By declaring Nastasya Filippovna's

[44] "может быть, вы уже до того несчастны, что и действительно виновною себя считаете" (*PSS* 8:142).

The English translation I am using renders the word несчастны (unhappy) as its antonym — "happy." The error is so egregious it is, most likely, typographical.

blamelessness while failing to openly accuse Totsky of a crime, Myshkin erases the fact of her abuse; his insistence on her innocence is "not entirely unfair, but it is as if unrelated, as if tangentially bypassing her actual problem … Compassion is necessary for her, but pretending that all of it simply did not happen is fatal"(Levina 362, trans. mine).[45] Additionally, as Alina Wyman points out, the external "surplus vision" that reveals that which the subject cannot know about himself is not the only constitutive part of the self. Rather, borrowing a term from Scheler, she argues that the subject likewise possesses an impenetrable "region of absolute privacy" inaccessible to the external gaze. Myshkin's insistence on offering an image of Nastasya Filippovna that is not only complete but also exclusionary of the guilt and self-loathing she intimately knows within herself constitutes an erasure of a space crucial for retaining agency over self-determination.[46]

For the most part, Nastasya Filippovna's behavior indicates a complete and tragic rejection of all opportunities for attaining happy objects; Sarah Young surmises that "any impulse she has to respectability and order is consistently subordinated to her opposing impulse to self-destruction and vengeance" (34). However, this understanding contradicts the heroine's own words. When leaving with Rogozhin for the first time, she triumphantly exclaims: "I've spent ten years in jail,

[45] "Все сказанное ей Мышкиным не то, чтобы совсем несправедливо, но как бы не о том, как бы по касательной проходит мимо ее собственной проблемы ... Сострадание ей необходимо, но делать вид, что всего этого просто нет — губительно."

[46] Wyman argues that one of the flaws of Bakhtin's Dostoevsky book is its excessively broad reliance on the external gaze, and the erasure of anything that the subject could truly know about himself. I do not fully agree with this reading: Bakhtin focuses on the *insufficiency* of self-perception isolated from others, but in recognizing the subject's inalienable right to "speak the final word about himself" retains room for autonomous self-perception as a precursor to self-determination. I also have reservations about the static nature of some of Wyman's concepts: the notion of a singular "region" of privacy may suggest that there are fenced-off parts of the self that are indeed consolidated and intact by unfinalizability; and perhaps even that, as such, they are hierarchically more important or "true" than those that are perpetually in motion. However, even with caveats, this Schelerian term retains value as an excellent counterpart to the external gaze Bakhtin dedicated much more attention to.

now my time for happiness has come!" (*Idiot* 180) In view of the severity of her affective alienation, referring to apparent self-destruction as "happiness," is not as contradictory as it might appear. Young shows that her erratic, shocking behavior throughout the novel is motivated by "determination to free herself from the control of Totsky's script, her determination to retain the right to make her own choice and say the final word about herself, and the rejection of the finalizing judgment of others" (35). However, *saying the final word* proves impossible as she fails to establish control the affective valence of her body. Instead of freedom of choice that she has been robbed of as a child, and the freedom of word, Nastasya Filippovna chooses the freedom of affect: in her insistent attachment to her own alienation from happiness, she finds the power to rebel against the world that ruined her life. Even though asserting the presence of male violence in her life leads to her death, the pursuit of this affirmation is what gives Nastasya Filippovna a sense of purpose. Her death at Rogozhin's hand is more than "assisted suicide" (Young 70) that reunites her fate with that of the other offended children who take their own lives. The fact that she is killed by a man finally makes the annihilation of her body by male violence undeniable and unambiguous. In death, Nastasya Filippovna can finally be recognized as a victim, while at the same time retaining the claim to freedom of choice and unfinalizability by taking an active role in orchestrating her own murder.[47] Thus, for Nastasya Filippovna, the insistence on freedom means the rejection of all happy objects: unfinalizability is manifested, in effect, as affective alienation. On the interpersonal as well as the personal level, total identification with unhappiness protects her dignity; consenting to happiness would mean acquiescing to the notion that her relationship with Totsky was not exploitative but consensual, that the generosity of his gifts of elegance and

[47] Sarah Young offers a detailed analysis of the heroine's agency in "scripting" the murder, showing how her acts and words participate in gradually implanting the exact manner of death into Rogozhin's mind.

education can be graciously accepted, that there was nothing wrong, morally or emotionally, with the kind of abuse she had been subjected to.

2.7 The Alien on the Offensive

Alien affects are, as Ahmed notes, easy to weaponize: "so much happiness is premised on, and promised by, the concealment of suffering, [and] the freedom to look away from what compromises one's happiness … You become the cause of the unhappiness you reveal" (*Happiness* 196). While there is no question over the fact that Nastasya Filippovna has been wronged, her stubborn refusal to conform to expectations and occupy any of the normalized roles offered to her remains far more unsettling to those around her than the sexual transgression itself. Because the circulation of happiness and happy objects is heavily predicated on the distribution of power, affective alienation is unsettling to those who benefit from the status quo: "the affect alien is the one who converts good feelings into bad" (*Happiness* 49). Insofar as it can be used to express protest and seek freedom, unhappiness is indeed happiness for Nastasya Filippovna, and she is not wrong to say, as she finally stands up to her abuser whilst abandoning him for a humiliating escapade with Rogozhin: "today is my day, my appointed day, my high holiday, I have waited for it a long time" (*Idiot* 127). For an affect alien who has no chance of experiencing happiness from what is coded as happy, unhappiness is, in fact, the only possible site for freedom — and the pursuit of unhappiness is a manifestation of both a personal rebellion and of social subversion. Thus Sara Ahmed:

> "We would radicalize freedom as the freedom to be unhappy … the freedom to be unhappy would be the freedom to be affected by what is unhappy, and to live a life that might affect others unhappily. The freedom to be unhappy would be the freedom to live a life that deviates from the paths of happiness, wherever that deviation takes us" (*Happiness* 195).

Ahmed's framework of economies of happiness adds a layer to Sarah Young's analysis of the

rebellion Nastasya Filippovna's exacts on the narrative plane. Young writes: "Nastasya Filippovna, whose scripting is predicated on a desire for freedom of self-definition, demonstrates her ability to participate in — and subvert — the narratological conventions of the text in order to achieve her aims" (73). These narratological conventions need not be taken as purely literary artefacts, but capture discursively the circulation of affect in society; with that in mind, explaining Nastasya Filippovna's behavior as a matter of simple personal tragedy combined with eccentricity and high intellect can no longer suffice. Instead, it becomes possible to delve deeper into the connections Young points out between the heroine of *The Idiot* and Dostoevsky's other rebellious heroes. A more extensive study of the dynamics of happiness in *The Idiot* — not to mention other possible avenues offered by various emerging theories of affect — could be a fruitful framework for interpreting Ippolit's affective revolt alongside Nastasya Filippovna's, or understanding Myshkin's "originality" as a different form of affective alienation. Nastasya Filippovna's intrinsic engagement with the sensation of freedom in the face of contradictory, irrational feelings makes her "akin to Dostoevsky's ideological heroes" (Young 73), but helps illuminate their revolt against reason in favor of liberty from a more visceral, metalinguistic perspective. In the way she expresses her resentment of a society unable and unwilling to confront the immense suffering embedded in its fabric, she is not only a "sister" to Ivan Karamazov because of the words they speak and the affects they share, but becomes, rather, an affective embodiment of his brand of impassioned "rebellion" against the hidden, paradoxical cruelty of the world. They both assert their unfinalizable, free nature through resistance to the illusion of harmonious unity that would have all suffering erased. For Nastasya Filippovna it stands especially true that, in Bakhtin's words, "a passionate non-acceptance of one's own place in life becomes the pre-requisite for living"[48]

[48] "Страстное неприятие своего места в жизни становится предпосылкой жизни" ("Ritorika…" 204)

("Rhetoric*"* 205) — and *passion* here can be read with all its Christian undertones of great suffering alongside affective intensity.

The reading of Nastasya Filippovna's violent finalization through the lens of affective economy shows that the failure of dialogue — just like its success — depends on historical conditions, not abstract principles or intrinsic qualities. More importantly, it complicates Jane Bennett's overly optimistic call for joy and enchantment in the face of the eternally becoming world: it turns out that unfinalizability is not only challenging to the individual bearing it, but disruptive and actively repressed by the normative society seeking to maintain a stable and contented economy of affect. However, the possibility for unfinalizability without suffering does exist in the Bakhtinian paradigm. Although happiness is the pleasurable affect firmly entrenched in monologism, room for liberation survives nevertheless in certain forms of joy: a less stable but more viable path towards dialogue and enchantment that I will turn to in my next chapter.

Chapter 3: From Polyphony to Excess

Audio recording: *The Qur'an,* 39:21[49]

In the previous chapter, I have explored two ways in which the impulse to finalize can lead to destruction, and began an exploration of the pain that comes with living in a state of unfinalizability. However, I agree with Alina Wyman that unfinalizability can be healthily and productively resolved, and in particular that Alyosha Karamazov, Dostoevsky's second attempt at *imitatio Christi*, succeeds in being a positive ethical presence through his resistance to the finalizing impulse underlying passive empathy. I will argue that Alyosha's path towards embracing unfinalizability is grounded in the internally conflicted, "Karamazovian" nature of his body, and extends beyond communication with humans. It is the sense of unity with all of creation — notably, nature and food — that makes him a practitioner of ethics of generosity who embraces the world as polyphonic. At the same time, as the fate of the other Karamazovs shows, this fortuitous outcome seldom takes place. In the second half of this chapter, I will turn to the spiritual crises of Ivan and Dmitry Karamazov to show how their affective bodies, full of the same life-affirming potential for generosity, spiral towards destructive impulses instead. Lastly, I will examine their illegitimate brother, Pavel Smerdyakov, as an example of destruction that derives from a body bereft of this life-affirming energy, demonstrating that notwithstanding its dangers, embodied vitality is key to ethical actions and sensibilities.

Much has changed in the decade that passed between the completion of *The Idiot* and

[49] "Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky—channeling it through streams in the earth—then produces with it crops of various colors, then they dry up and you see them wither, and then He reduces them to chaff? Surely in this is a reminder for people of reason."

Dostoevsky's final work, *The Brothers Karamazov*. The author returned to Russia and, through a combination of successful literary works and the popularity of his monthly publication *The Diary of a Writer*, achieved extraordinary acclaim. His beloved Russia, however, was in a state of turmoil: as the serialized publication of *The Brothers Karamazov* began in 1879, terrorist attacks on high government officials and the Tsar have become all but common. Dostoevsky, who revered Alexander II for the abolition of serfdom, supported autocracy unfettered by a constitution, and championed imperialist expansionism, stood out as a fierce conservative critic of the proponents of radicalism. In the last years of his life, he redoubled his commitment to Slavophilia, Orthodox Christian faith and increasingly rabid anti-Semitism. However, as *The Brothers Karamazov* emerged on the literary scene, even his ideological opponents regarded him with respect and admiration. Joseph Frank writes: "He had become a revered, symbolic figure who stood above the merciless battle of ideologies. His works had raised all the burning issues of the day far beyond the limits of a narrow partisanship" (917). With each new chapter, *The Brothers Karamazov* captured the Zeitgeist of a troubled Russia, responding to questions ranging from the battle between religious belief and rationalism, to the breakdown of the traditional family, to the intricacies of the ongoing judicial reforms. The author's penchant for incorporating a variety of genres and ideas into his work reached its peak in a rich tapestry that included crime journalism, writings of the theologian Vladimir Solovyov, and his youthful fascination with Schiller. Dostoevsky's contemporaries describe a nervous, sickly man who always spoke with agitation but never failed to produce a striking effect. His many appearances at literary salons and societies drew in rapt audiences, whose reactions to the author's electrifying speeches and readings sometimes reached the point of mass hysteria. His popularity fueled his motivation for a dynamic writing schedule and a strenuous social calendar, to the detriment of his worsening health ravaged by

frequent epileptic seizures and pulmonary emphysema. Dostoevsky died in 1881, shortly after the completion of his last and greatest novel. In modern and contemporary literary criticism, *The Brothers Karamazov* is overwhelmingly acknowledged as a turning point in the history of the novel, seen variously as either the final culmination or the true birth of the genre.

The narrative of *The Brothers Karamazov* centers around the murder of the loathsome Fedor Pavlovich Karamazov. He and his oldest son, Dmitry (Mitya), are embroiled in a bitter and violent conflict over inheritance and the love of a rich man's beautiful former mistress, Grushenka. Ivan, the cerebral and cynical second son, develops a strong romantic interest in Katerina Ivanovna, a proud and powerful woman who was engaged to and abandoned by Mitya. The third brother, Alyosha, is a pious young man who lives in a monastery, devoted to the teachings of the venerable old monk Zosima. All three brothers grew up apart, and are spending time together for the first time in their lives. The bulk of the novel's plot unravels over three days preceding the murder. The rivalry between Fedor Pavlovich and Dmitry reaches a fever pitch as the son physically assaults the father, mistakenly believing that Grushenka is with him; Ivan, disgusted by the pair's antics, settles his business and decides to return to Moscow; Alyosha, an empathetic mediator for all the characters he encounters, is distraught and distracted as his spiritual mentor lies on his deathbed.

Fedor Pavlovich is found dead in his home on the night of Zosima's death, and mere hours after Ivan's departure. Dmitry has spent most of the previous twenty-four hours feverishly pursuing Grushenka, culminating in a rapturous reunion where the pair professes earnest love for each other amidst wild revelry in a nearby town. A preponderance of material evidence points to Mitya, including a large amount money roughly equivalent to the one stolen from Fedor Pavlovich. However, the real murderer is Pavel Smerdyakov, the base servant in Fedor Pavlovich's household who is assumed to be his illegitimate son. Smerdyakov acted under Ivan's indirect influence: in a

succession of veiled conversations, he elicited signals from Ivan to conspire about the death of their father — and Ivan, in turn, willfully ignored his hints, leaving Smerdyakov with the impression that he is acting on his instructions. A sensationalized trial ensues, rife with dramatic twists as Grushenka and Katerina clash in the courtroom and the latter produces a final piece of evidence against Mitya shortly after testifying in his favor. The evening prior, Ivan, tormented by suppressed guilt, finally draws out a confession from Smerdyakov, and spirals into a hallucinatory fever; on the same night, Smerdyakov commits suicide, leaving his secret with Ivan, whose credibility as a witness is crushed by his illness. Despite the involvement of a highly esteemed Moscow lawyer, Mitya is convicted to Siberian exile. The end of the novel finds Alyosha helping Dmitry plot his escape to America with Grushenka, while Ivan is still unconscious and fighting for his life. After his meeting with Mitya, Alyosha attends the funeral of the ten-year-old Ilyusha, the son of a destitute, pitiful clerk who was publicly humiliated by Dmitry. The novel ends on a heart wrenching scene of a father mad with grief, and Alyosha providing comfort and hope to Ilyusha's twelve young friends; in the sequel that never came to be, these children would grow into idealistic revolutionaries.

If *The Idiot* can be read as a novel of individual unhappiness, *The Brothers Karamazov* elevates this disillusionment to a broader societal plane. The unflatteringly named provincial town of Skotoprigonyevsk (lit. "stockyard") is perched somewhere between the urban and the rural, between the rapidly expanding railroad that carries Ivan Karamazov away from his father, and the serenity of Zosima's monastic cell. More than any other of his novels, *The Brothers Karamazov* exposes Dostoevsky's creative position at the cusp of modernity, in a world where the old social and spiritual order are disintegrating, infiltrated by mechanistic science and technology, but still in thrall with the visceral sensations of being alive: it is, in other words, a novel that grapples with

unfolding disenchantment. The passions that shake the lives of the three Karamazov brothers — different as they are — are marked by a shared familial trait, a distinctly "Karamazov nature" (*karamazovshchina*). The trait is mostly evoked in a negative context, as a source of baseness, violence, and lechery. I argue, however, that the powerful and visceral connection that the Karamazovs have to their bodies is equally indispensable for establishing meaningful and nourishing affective and ethically potent connections to the world. In the coming sections, I will explore a different aspect of the Karamazovian body through each of the brothers, problematizing the marriage of violence and exaltation, and finally turn to Smerdyakov to probe questions of personal and collective responsibility in cases of affective economies gone awry.

3.1 The Loving Gaze From the Outside

Although Dostoevsky had clearly failed in creating a truly salvific character in *The Idiot*, Alyosha Karamazov stands apart from Myshkin in his ability to offer a non-finalizing completion of the other and bestow a harmonious image without reification. Through practicing what Alina Wyman identifies as a form of active and ethically responsible empathy, Alyosha becomes attuned to those around him, and able to accept and support them on their own terms. Wyman argues that so long as the external gaze does not presume absolute knowledge and acknowledges its object's region of absolute privacy, "the self <can> transgress its psychic boundaries and enter another self in order to reach an authentic understanding of another's inner life without objectifying this life in the process" (15). Because mutual exteriority is hierarchically equal, the act of self-creation through an exchange of surplus vision is bidirectional and perpetual, never settled on a final image. As such, mutual self-creation allows for an experience of wholeness precisely by affirming, rather than violating the unfinalizability of the object of the gaze, thereby supporting the object in "saying the last word" about itself. An exchange of creative perspectives fulfills an essential need for

wholeness, even if it is illusory and temporary: "were the world only disjointed fragments," Emerson points out, "we would not trust our individual selves to exit into it" (220). As Bakhtin notes in *PDP*, the inability to safely exit one's limited perception of the self and engage with the visions of others in a non-violent manner is precisely the cause of the anguish of unfinalizability. As such, offering surplus vision in a gentle manner, attentive to the needs of its objects as well as one's own limitations, constitutes a gesture of love. Where finalization is akin to devouring and overpowering the world — a facet I will address in more detail in later chapters — in its respect for the independence of the other, love assumes an inherent inexhaustibility *(nepotrebimost')* of its object. This sentiment is echoed in Bakhtin's later work:

> "Only love can see and represent the inner freedom of the object … Only in love is it revealed that an object can never be absolutely consumed[50] … Love cherishes and caresses boundaries; boundaries acquire new significance" (*Rhetoric* 207).
>
> "Только любовь может увидеть и изобразить внутреннюю свободу предмета… Только для любви раскрывается абсолютная непотребимость предмета … Любовь милует и ласкает границы; границы приобретают новое значение" (*Ritorika* 206).

Constant relationality and responsiveness — that is, "speaking about an object with the object itself" — stands in contrast to isolated, authoritative and monologic speech about the other. To illustrate this distinction, Wyman uses the example of Ivan Karamazov, whose complicity in his father's murder is approached differently by Smerdyakov and Alyosha: while Smerdyakov completely reduces him to his role in his father's death, going as far as to label him the "main" murderer, Alyosha engages productively with Ivan's guilt and uses his external perspective to offer a way out. As a summary of all of Wyman's relevant concepts, this passage warrants quoting at length:

[50] The original does not in this instance reference finalization or consummation (*zavershenie*), but refers instead to the revelation of the *inexhaustible* nature of the object.

> Only *after* Ivan, no doubt, accuses himself … does Alyosha tell him: 'It is not you,' precisely as an *other,* adding that he is doing so at the behest of the *Absolute Other,* God. Only after Ivan's inner voice condemns him from *within*, will Alyosha's absolution come down *from the outside*, as grace. Because Alyosha thus makes room for Ivan's self-judgment, absolution does not supersede repentance, as it happens with Myshkin's instant absolution of the blatantly unrepentant Rogozhin. On the other hand, Alyosha also wants to prevent Ivan's *excessive* self-judgment (*a la* Nastasya Filippovna) … if Ivan condemns himself wholly and irredeemably, such complete loss of self-value would eventually cause him to rebel against the world in ultimate despair … Alyosha needs to use his productive *outsidedness* of Ivan's guilt-ridden consciousness, his desires appear indistinguishable from his intentions, *from the outside,* where Alyosha firmly locates himself, the boundaries between desiring and enacting murder are clear. It is this crucial distinction that Alyosha is able to demonstrate to Ivan as part of his unique *surplus of vision*: while Ivan may have desired his father's murder, he did not intend it, nor carried it out (202-203).

Wyman's analysis reflects the dynamic nature of live-entering, as Alyosha takes turns at guessing Ivan's inner feelings while remaining within himself, and retaining the ability to offer a gaze from the outside. While Alyosha's position on Ivan's guilt is different from Ivan's own, he does not completely deny it. In stating his position without erasing his brother's, Alyosha leaves the door open for Ivan to "utter the last word about himself," regardless of what this word may be.

Unlike Erdinast-Vulcan, who shies away from theological lenses even as she recognizes the parallel between God and author in Bakhtin's early works, Wyman emphasizes the Christian origins of Bakhtinian thought, focusing particularly on the Incarnation as the pinnacle of genuine, fulfilling completion. She writes that "positive revelation of value, whether it was called consummation or dialogical exchange, was modeled on the 'communicative' acts of Christ, a cherished ideal that remained a measure of dialogical achievement throughout Bakhtin's career" (57). The Christian undertones of Wyman's analysis come out in the above quoted passage: the contrast between Myshkin and Alyosha is understood as one between unsuccessful and successful likeness to Christ; absolute outsidedness, even as it is impossible in the human realm, remains a viable ontological position in relation to the divine. This interpretation is valid given Bakhtin's

own connection to Christianity alongside Dostoevsky's clear intention to explore Christ-like figures in his novels; however, it is one I seek to depart from, and will attempt to do so in the forthcoming discussion of secularized manifestations of religious affect. For now, I will settle on the hypothesis that the *absolute outsidedness* located in something external, greater, and inaccessible to humanity as a whole need not be specified as Christ (or any other particular deity) in order to inspire the kind of generous grace Alyosha extends to his brother.

Where I do agree with Wyman is the notion that ethical engagement with the unfinalizability of the other is inextricable from the emotions that accompany it. Empathy and love must be both present and active in order to achieve their ethically favorable expression in active love. For Bennett and Bakhtin as well, ethics and ethical acts are affect-driven; and where for Bennett "loving the world" is a pre-requisite for ethical action, for Bakhtin it becomes a tool. Their ideas are complementary: what Wyman labels "active love" in Bakhtin has substantial overlaps with Bennett's "energetic love" (*Enchantment,* 10). In "Rhetoric*"* Bakhtin directly describes love as a joy-bearing emotion: "Love is still serious, but it wants to smile; this smile and joy ceaselessly conquer seriousness" (207). Besides that, Bakhtin ends his note about love as the cure for the finalizing violence of the word with a call to wonder:

> A new philosophical wonder before everything is necessary. Everything could have been different. One needs to remember the world as one remembers one's childhood, to love it as one can love only something naive (a child, a woman, the past) ("*Rhetoric"* 215).[51]
>
> "Необходимо новое философское удивление перед всем … Надо вспоминать мир, как вспоминают свое детство, любить его, как можно любить только что-то наивное (ребенка, женщину, прошлое)" ("*Ritorika"* 214).

[51] Although misogynistic, this remark might be productive if we consider what Bakhtin may have seen as the naivety of women: his comment does not necessarily have to be the product of an infantilizing and romanticizing gaze, but rather a reference to those conceptions of spiritual life commonly associated with womanhood. I have in mind here, in particular, connections to nature and (re)birth.

It is possible that an initial encounter with the world triggers enchantment, and that the pleasure of enchantment then incentivizes the continued deliberate effort to sustain "focused engagement" (*Enchantment* 6). Ideally, this open, curious and generous engagement with the object — especially when the object is another self — may result in the loving wholeness Wyman describes. Bakhtin's interpretation of relationships between unfinalizable selves as acts of (co-)creation is another crucial contribution of the Bakhtinian model to the connection between enchantment and the ethics of generosity that, for Bennett, demand a generous attitude of "rendering oneself more open to the surprise of other selves and bodies and more willing and able to enter into productive assemblages with them" (*Enchantment* 13). According to Bakhtin, a loving image of wholeness that invites openness to the world without the loss of self-integrity offers a provisional structure for creating such assemblages among selves. The continuous process of healthy and ethically responsible finalization — of creation and self-creation that emerge from curiosity and responsiveness to the other — is the kind of encounter that can lead to joyful attachment. At the same time, in echoing Bakhtin's passing call for wonder before *everything* rather than just human selves, Bennett's work helps understand how Bakhtinian consummation can be extended to the world at large.

Both thinkers recognize an intrinsic connection between affect — including love, joy, and wonder — and aesthetics. For both, aesthetic activity is omnipresent, reaching far beyond formal artistic creation and into all realms of life as a fundamental tool of meaning-making. Bakhtinian polyphony situates the ethical valence of aesthetic engagement not in the content, but the structure of *how* this content is used and approached: "It is important to investigate the *function* of ideas in Dostoevsky's polyphonic world, and not only their *monologic substance*" (*PDP* 92). Consequently, the ethics of aesthetic engagement are not a matter of attunement to specific forms

of pleasure and beauty, but of the mode of relating to them — that is, of the way that the beholder-as-creator "addresses" the objects of his or her gaze. The component of joy and wonder is what activates love's ethical potential of non-violent engagement with the world and, in particular, the selves of others. For Bennett, love for the world is one of the keys for productive ethical action.

The positive ethical valence of the polyphonic word lies not only in the positive outcomes of the relationships it cultivates, but in its truth-bearing power as well. In "Rhetoric," Bakhtin states that the finalizing word is a word that lies, and insists that to violate the truth of the object is to violate the object itself. This form of truth-violation does not only define individual relationships, but acts as a weapon in the hands of power writ large: "There is still no form of force (might, power) without a necessary ingredient of the lie" (213). Conversely, insofar as it hinges on outsidedness and encounter, on unfinalizability and dialogic *syncrisis* rather than *synthesis* of interactive voices, and on honoring the ineffable truth of its object by (and not despite) never defining it fully, polyphony is the aesthetic modality proper to weak ontology. In its ideal form, polyphony also evades the trap of teleology in the cultivation of generous sensibilities: love and generosity are not the desired objective (the way happiness is), but an inherent part of polyphony as a continuous aesthetic practice of engaging with the world.

However bright the ethical and affective possibilities of polyphony may be, the problem of grappling with unfinalizability still looms large: the urge to make the world make sense as a coherent whole is a powerful one, and accepting oneself-in-the-world as unfinalizable can come with a great deal of suffering. Unfinalizability finds it fullest expression in a continual process, and being inside the process, for many of Dostoevsky's heroes, comes at the cost of the ability to function in the world. For Dostoevsky, Bakhtin points out, the underground man and the dreamer types are the maximum expression of his ability to write characters that do not only have a deep

sense of self-consciousness, but for whom self-consciousness is an "artistic dominant" to the point of becoming a pathological obsession with self-reflection that eventually makes them a-social. In *The Brothers Karamazov,* however, there appear to be glimmers of hope for encounters with unfinalizability; and the one thing that they have in common is stepping out of obsessive self-reflection to engage with the infinity of the world — an orientation that calls for outsidedness, a position that not only accepts the inability to perceive the other, but the inability to feel oneself whole *without* others.

By abandoning self-obsession, these characters enter an unfinalizable world that reaches beyond the self: either into the similarly unfinalizable world, or into the space of the self's own non-coincidence. As I will show in the two sections that follow, Alyosha Karamazov is able to experience loving completion both with another human being (Grushenka) and with the world at large after listening to a reading of the Gospel of Luke at Zosima's grave. The latter example is especially helpful in understanding the particular kind of pleasurable affect that emerges from these encounters: the scene of Alyosha's enraptured surrender to the world is the outcome of his successful spiritual processing of Zosima's passing. In that regard, it enjoins to other instances of joy in the face of death: Zosima's brother Markel finds an elated form of joy in nature and a seemingly boundless love for humanity when faced with his own imminent death, and Zosima likewise experiences his spiritual transformation before a potentially deadly duel.

In all three examples, Christian teaching facilitates joyful enlightenment through a sudden acceptance of death — the ultimate ending — as non-finalizing, but precisely the opposite: as an entry into the realm of endless, incomprehensible possibility where love is the one grounding constant. In stark contrast to the calm contentment of happiness anchored in reliably finalized desires, the joy experienced in these moments is one of crisis, of a fracture between meanings, of

liminality that does not coincide with itself; it is, in other words, the suspenseful, focused joy of enchantment. This is a form of nervous excitation — all the more pleasurable for the invigorating anxiety inherent to it — constantly aware of its obverse, similarly to the joy of carnival that so adamantly rejects sadness but gladly embraces death. The purposeful task of "en-joyment" finally finds its expression in the teachings of the Elder Zosima. In the next two sections, I will explore how Zosima's teachings shape two of Alyosha's successful consummating encounters and produce a positive ethical effect.

3.2 Grushenka's Onion and the Affective Pedagogy of Love

On the day of Zosima's death, Alyosha becomes preoccupied with the public response to the foul smell coming from the elder's body. Echoing the craving for miracles pointed out by Ivan's cynical Grand Inquisitor, the people of Skotoprigonyevsk tacitly expected Zosima's spiritual authority to be validated by a concrete proof of sainthood. For the elder's opponents — notably, the grim lunatic Father Ferapont — the otherwise natural process of decomposition is a divine rebuke of Zosima's teachings and his elevated status among other monks. The "muddleheaded" (*beztolkovye)* critics single out the elder's attachment to joy as a particular transgression: "He taught unrighteousness; he taught that life is great joy and not tearful humility … he was not strict in fasting, allowed himself sweets, had cherry preserve with his tea, and liked it very much" (*BK* 282). Faced with humiliating petty gossip and early corruption of the corpse instead of solemn reverence and miracle-working, Alyosha is beset with a heartbreaking feeling of unfairness. As he abruptly leaves the monastery, he stumbles into Rakitin, the cynical and self-serving local meddler. Rakitin is stumped at Alyosha's disillusionment, as the devout novice defiantly agrees to eating sausage and drinking vodka in violation of the fast. Sensing the opportunity to take advantage of Alyosha's vulnerable state, Rakitin offers to take Alyosha to Grushenka, who previously offered

Rakitin twenty-five rubles for bringing Alyosha to her home so she can toy with his feelings and challenge his chastity.

Grushenka's motivation for wishing to ruin Alyosha is resentment and spite: even before meeting him, she is certain that, in his exemplary devoutness, he would judge her and find her despicable. In her certainty, she has created a finalized, inflexible image. She repeatedly describes her designs against Alyosha as "eating him up" or "swallowing him whole" (*proglotit'),* echoing the premise that the deadening effect of finalization stems from incorporating a free and living being into one's own image of self and the world, as though devouring and immuring him within. However, in the exact moment of Alyosha's arrival, Grushenka is anxious and excited: she has heard from the faithless lover who dishonored and abandoned her five years ago, and she is preparing for their reunion. Her feelings about the anticipated encounter are anything but clear. Ever since he left, she has been wallowing in a mixture of sadness, anger, longing, and resentment; she is torn between hopes of forgiving her great first love, and the urge to take revenge. Hers is a state of undetermined, fluid and heightened affect.[52] Alyosha immediately notices the change in her demeanor compared to the cruel and perfidious woman he met earlier, as the transformation finds its expression through her entire body: "there was almost no trace of that sugary inflection, of those pampered and affected movements … everything was simple, simple-hearted, her movements were quick, direct, trusting" (*BK* 295). Grushenka did not expect to see Alyosha at all, whereas Alyosha, who came in determined to surrender to spiritual ruin, did not expect to see Grushenka's kind and welcoming side. Surprise makes Alyosha carefully attuned to her presence:

[52] As I discuss *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is important to note that the word "affect" features prominently in the novel itself, used to describe a loss of rational self-control – to the point of being offered as a possible way to exonerate Dmitry who, as Khokhlakova speculates, was so blinded by "affect" he had neither awareness nor responsibility for his act of parricide. The primacy of the body and its ability to take over makes this notion of affect similar to the topic of my discussion, but they are by no means identical, and the term as I use it throughout this project corresponds to the definition(s) offered by affect theory.

"however weighed down he was by his own grief, his eyes involuntarily rested on her with attention" (*BK* 295). On her end, Grushenka immediately fixates on her guest, talking incessantly and immediately putting herself in his immediate proximity. She initiates physical contact that she had originally intended as preying and exploitative: she playfully jumps in his lap, purportedly with the intention of "cheering him up" but knowing full well that this would make him uncomfortable.

However, not only had Alyosha already taken note of her affective transformation but, grief-stricken and uncertain of his spiritual alignment, he is himself in a liminal and intensified affective state. Removed as he is from his normal state, he fails to experience fear — which would have been his habitual response — and responds with marvel and curiosity instead.

> Nevertheless, despite all the *vague unaccountability of his state of soul* and all the grief that was weighing on him, he still could not help *marveling at a new and strange sensation* that was awakening in his heart: this woman, this 'horrible' woman, not only did not arouse in him the fear he had felt before, the fear that used to spring up in him every time he thought of a woman … but, on the contrary, this woman … who was sitting on his knees and embracing him, now aroused in him suddenly quite a different, unexpected, and special feeling, *the feeling of some remarkable, great, and most pure-hearted curiosity, and without any fear* now, without a trace of his former terror — that was the main thing, and it could not but surprise him (*BK* 296, emph. mine).

> Тем не менее, несмотря на всю смутную безотчетность его душевного состояния и на всё угнетавшее его горе, он всё же дивился невольно одному новому и странному ощущению, рождавшемуся в его сердце: эта женщина, эта 'страшная' женщина не только не пугала его теперь прежним страхом ... но, напротив ... возбуждала в нем вдруг теперь совсем иное, неожиданное и особливое чувство, чувство какого-то необыкновенного, величайшего и чистосердечнейшего к ней любопытства, и всё это уже безо всякой боязни, без малейшего прежнего ужаса — вот что было главное и что невольно удивляло его (*PSS* 14: 315-316).

Both Alyosha and Grushenka experience similar affects at the same time: heightened intensity, unexpected encounter, surprise, joy: the pair is *enchanted* with each other. To be enchanted, then, means attunement to perception without judgment, excitement without motion. It is the power of

enchantment to "becalm and intensify perception" where fear cannot dominate (*Enchantment* 5) that inspires Alyosha's clear-eyed curiosity. And, in confirmation of Bennett's hypothesis, the pair's encounter will soon culminate in an outpouring of joy, gratitude, and generosity.

Minutes after teasingly hopping into Alyosha's lap, Grushenka learns that the Elder Zosima had just passed. She immediately jumps off his knees, crosses herself, and sits farther away from him on the sofa. In removing herself from his lap, Grushenka not only interrupts her unsettling sexualized behavior, but physically makes space for Alyosha's grief. Alyosha's face lights up, and he addresses the mocking Rakitin: "look here, at her: I came here looking for a wicked soul — I was drawn to that, because I was low and wicked myself, but I found a true sister, I found a treasure — a loving soul … She spared me just now" (*BK* 298). Both Rakitin and Grushenka are stunned by Alyosha's strong and generous response to her simple gesture. Grushenka is deeply moved by being called a sister by a man she expected to judge her. In response to Alyosha's gratitude, Grushenka is overcome with gratitude of her own. She tells a folk parable: there was once a wicked woman whose only good deed was casually giving an onion to a beggar. After the woman dies and goes to hell, her guardian angel intercedes with God on her behalf by recalling her one generous act; God allows the angel to take that same onion and let the woman take hold of it, so he can pull her out of the lake of fire. However, as other sinners try to get a hold of the onion and follow the woman to paradise, she turns to kicking them away to claim the onion as hers alone. The onion breaks, and the wicked woman falls into hell forever. Grushenka still insists that she is "wicked," too; but concedes with elation that she too has extended an "onion" — an almost accidental gesture of kindness that could take her to salvation. Gary Saul Morson summarizes:

> Grushenka's unwitting kindness, performed as carelessly as the woman in the folktale gave the onion, turns out to make a significant difference. She hardly knows what has happened but feels their roles unexpectedly reversed. Allowing her to think of herself as the one who

> is superior, the one who has helped *him*, constitutes Alyosha's unexpected gift to her. She gives him an onion, and allowing her to do so is the onion that he gives her (114).

As she receives Alyosha's generosity, Grushenka becomes more deeply attentive to herself, discovering the potential for forgiveness and kindness for her former lover. Her newfound self-awareness allows her to overcome her resentment: unlike the wicked woman in her parable, she uses the revelation of her ability to extend an onion as an opportunity to become good. Alyosha and Grushenka exchange surplus vision: deep insights about the other that this other would not have been able to see for themselves, but is able to recognize as true.

This self-awareness, however, cannot materialize without a safe and welcoming space for her to do so: one that exists outside of social norms that label her a "fallen" woman. In contrast to Myshkin's relationship with Nastasya Filippovna, Alyosha seeks neither to forgive or redeem Grushenka: doing so would mean remaining within the confines of an affective economy that leaves cynicism, pragmaticism, bitterness, malice, and self-victimization as the only paths available to her. Unlike Myshkin, who is quick to give a definitive assessment of Nastasya Filippovna's entire being as "not guilty," Alyosha limits his insights to his own relationship and interactions with Grushenka: she is a sister *to him*, he too can be wicked just as she is, and when he speaks with admiration of her capacity to love, he is marveling at a specific, individual gesture of forgiving her faithless lover. In accepting her within the modest context of their own momentary interaction — seeing her as he is able to see her in the moment rather her as she is seen by society at large based on all that she has been but no longer has to be — he displaces them both from the affective economy they inhabit and gives them both another chance of finding a different path. She can be forgiving and kind, and he can refrain from self-destruction in a crisis: these traits existed in them before the encounter, but only became realized through it. Once again drawing on Scheler to illuminate Bakhtin, Wyman notes that "in Scheler's theory, love's creative labors result in the

actualization of those inherently present but initially inert spiritual qualities that might have forever remained within the realm of potentiality, were they not awakened by the call of love" (28). In other words, through acknowledgment of the open-endedness of his insight respect for the open-endedness of his insight, Alyosha recognizes that the surplus vision is double, and that there are parts of Grushenka that only she can know about herself — in Wyman's terminology, a "region of absolute privacy." Enriched by Alyosha's gaze at her, it is left up to her to "say the last word about herself," taking on both the empowering agency in doing so, and the responsibility for whatever she will become next.

This interaction, where the two characters reframe their images of themselves through an exchange of surplus vision, constitutes a co-creative dialogue — a dynamic exchange of perspectives generated by two unfinalizable beings. However, the content of their conversation is full of disjointed ellipses and exclamations, as they repeat the same things over and over, taking turns addressing each other and Rakitin, and cycling through an array of excited emotions. The entire marvelous encounter is witnessed by the cynical Rakitin, annoyed at his own inability to understand what is going on. By introducing Rakitin's perspective, the narrator draws attention to the irrationality of Alyosha's and Grushenka's dialogue, to the apparent meaninglessness of their enthusiastic professions of mutual gratitude, spiritual kinship, and love. The reason it is impossible for Rakitin to make sense of their conversation is his lack of attentiveness to Alyosha and Grushenka's affective states: "Rakitin … should have realized that everything had just come together for them both in such a way that their souls were shaken" (*BK* 298). On its own, discourse carries little: the sophisticated process of transformative co-creation depends on affect not only to initiate but to unravel and reach completion: they need to start out in affective states that are open to this type of interaction, and they need to exchange affects alongside verbalized insights.

The affective component of faith — particularly love and joy — is also central to the teachings Alyosha receives from Father Zosima. However, even though his lessons are profoundly Christian, he illustrates these emotions by pointing to their sources in the real world — birds, children, fellow humans. For Zosima, it is not Scripture that teaches divine love, but love that teaches the divine essence of Scripture. Sergei Gessen, in an early reading of *The Brothers Karamazov,* points out that Zosima even goes as far as to say that a heretic or an atheist who has known love still carries God in his heart. The experience of love is an experience of learning. In his paper on love, attention and pedagogy in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Peter Roberts gravitates towards the same connections as do Jane Bennett and Mikhail Bakhtin, even though his definition of love is based exclusively on Zosima's teachings. As Roberts sees it, active love entails "humble, patient attention to others … it entails accepting others as we find them and acting with a sense of equanimity and openness" (8). Roberts then suggests an additional characteristic: the intentional, willed attention that active love entails a pedagogical function, teaching the person experiencing it not only about the beloved, but the skill of loving itself. Zosima's teachings point to the importance of cultivating continuous attentiveness in reaching divine love for creation: "If you love each thing, you will perceive the mystery of God in things. Once you have perceived it, you will begin tirelessly to perceive more and more of it every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an entire, universal love"(*BK* 271). In other words, the continued choice to pay loving attention *cultivates a sensibility*, changing the overall disposition towards the beloved — arguably, regardless of whether the beloved is another human, the world, or the divine.

Love — understood in the context of synthesis of the Bakhtinian theoretical model and Zosima's practical advice — becomes not only a tool for the ethical contemplation of others, but attains the characteristics of a pedagogical tool in its own right. As such, it can hold the key to

cultivating sensibilities through affect and aesthetics; in Bennett's terms, the practice of active love can be a viable technology of self-creation towards cultivating the ethics of generosity. So far, I have looked into the possibility of cultivating this form of love in interpersonal relationships; however, Bennett extends the call to love and marvel to the entire world, including the inanimate — and so does Zosima: "Love all of God's creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love animals, love plants, love each thing" (*BK* 271). In the next section, I will turn to Alyosha's rediscovery of spirituality and devoutness through communion with nature.

3.3 Beyond the Word: The Cana of Galilee

Having reached a harmonious mutual consummation with Grushenka, Alyosha returns to Zosima's wake, reassured of his faith and overcome with joy: "in his soul there was none of that weeping, gnawing, tormenting pity[53] that had been there earlier … as he entered, he fell down before the coffin as if it were a holy thing, but joy, joy was shining in his mind an in his heart" (*BK* 305). He listens to Father Paissy's reading of the Cana of Galilee — a passage in the Gospel of Luke where Christ performs his first miracle of turning water into wine at a wedding feast. Alyosha meditates on the primacy of joy over suffering: "Not grief, but men's joy Christ visited when he worked his first miracle, he helped men's joy" (*BK* 306). Exhausted, Alyosha drifts away into half-sleep, a realm of his own sensations, memories and dreams. The fragmented text of the Gospel melds with the vision of Zosima, softly laughing as he invites his disciple to rejoice in Christ, who evokes a mixture of fear and joy characteristic of wonder: "Awful is his greatness before us, terrible is his loftiness, yet he is boundlessly merciful, he became like us out of love,

[53] The standard Constance Garnett translation renders this, perhaps more accurately, as "grief."

and he is rejoicing with us" (*BK* 307). While he is still aware of the storyline of Chris's first miracle, Alyosha's dream-state takes him away from the language of the Bible while leaving him anchored in the essence of its meaning through its familiar rhythm. Stripped to its sonority, the Gospel becomes a *refrain*. Following Deleuze and Guattari, Jane Bennett argues that the cumulative effect of aural repetition dislodges static meaning and allows it to fluctuate: "the repetition of word sounds not only exaggerates the tempo of an ordinary phrase and not only eventually renders a meaningful phrase nonsense — it can also provoke new ideas, perspectives, and identities. In an enchanting refrain, sense becomes nonsense, and then a new sense of things" (*Enchantment* 6). For Alyosha, the refrain builds up transformational affect until it spurs him into action, making him abruptly stand up and move. As he steps out of the monastic cell and falls to the earth in tears, his joy is emptied of all language and transformed fully into pure embodied affect:

> Filled with rapture, his soul yearned for freedom, space, vastness. Over him the heavenly dome, full of quiet, shining stars, hung boundlessly. From the zenith to the horizon the still-dim Milky Way stretched its double strand. Night, fresh and quiet, almost unstirring, enveloped the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the church gleamed in the sapphire sky. The luxuriant autumn flowers in the flowerbeds near the house had fallen asleep until morning. The silence of the earth seemed to merge with the silence of the heavens, the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars… Alyosha stood gazing and suddenly, as if he had been cut down, threw himself to the earth. He did not know why he was embracing it, he did not try to understand why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss all of it, but he was kissing it, weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and he vowed ecstatically to love it, to love it unto ages of ages … in his rapture he wept even for the stars that shone on him from the abyss (*BK* 307).
>
> Полная восторгом душа его жаждала свободы, места, широты. Над ним широко, необозримо опрокинулся небесный купол, полный тихих сияющих звезд. С зенита до горизонта двоился еще неясный Млечный Путь. Свежая и тихая до неподвижности ночь облегла землю. Белые башни и золотые главы собора сверкали на яхонтовом небе. Осенние роскошные цветы в клумбах около дома заснули до утра. Тишина земная как бы сливалась с небесною, тайна земная соприкасалась со звездною… Алеша стоя, смотрел, и вдруг как подкошенный повергся на землю. Он

> не знал, для чего обнимал ее, он не давал себе отчета, почему ему так неудержимо хотелось целовать ее, целовать ее всю, но он целовал ее плача, рыдая и обливая своими слезами, и исступленно клялся любить ее, любить во веки веков … он плакал в восторге своем даже и об этих звездах, которые сияли ему из бездны" (*PSS* 14: 328).

The root affect of Alyosha's delight is *vostorg*, a word that, like the previously discussed *poryv* and *nadryv* has a root in a proto-Slavic term for tearing (in this instance, *търгати*); it is, in other words, an excess of joy so powerful it produces a sensation of tearing. Alyosha's thirst for the expanses of nature echoes an inability of the self to sustain this degree of joy within its bounds; but the overflow of his own affect into the world creates a sense of unity — the heavenly with the earthly, the human with the divine. His reaction is visceral: kissing, weeping and embracing, overwhelmed by a ineffable and powerful sensation of eternal love. The dying Zosima performed the same physical motions with the same affects as he died: "<he> bowed down with his face to the ground, stretched out his arms, and, as if in joyful ecstasy, kissing the earth and praying … quietly and joyfully gave up his soul to God" (*BK* 275). As Carol Apollonio remarks, the non-verbal has exceptional importance for Dostoevsky:

> His heroes think and think, talk and talk, but their thoughts and their talk lead away from the truth. Meaning comes when dialogue ends, in moments of wordless understanding. Narrative gives way to revelation. These moments are marked by a dramatic gesture: a bow to the earth, an embrace, a kiss (5).

Building on theories of affect such as Massumi's, Ahmed's, and Theresa Brennan's, I suggest that dialogue — in the Bakhtinian sense of revealing truth through encounters with mutual unfinalizability — does not end when words do. This implies, among other things, the lack of necessity for the ability to speak at all, opening the path to entering a co-creative dialogue with the entire world — including the inanimate — just as Zosima preaches. By reimagining himself through a visceral embodied encounter with nature, Alyosha performs an act of aesthetic creation in the Bakhtinian sense, liberated from the violence of the word. The involvement of multiple

elements of nature could also be the key difference between loving one's neighbor as part of humanity in the abstract intellectualizing sense, and loving one's neighbor as part of divine creation: unlike the former, the latter depends on the material reality of embodied encounters. Individual encounters only become ethically meaningful if they act as a conduit to communion with the world at large: Alyosha's spiritual recovery comes from his ability to refocus his "universal love" from a fixation on Zosima onto the world around him. Through replicating both Zosima's affect and its physical manifestation, Alyosha replicates a death-like experience and comes out reborn: he rises up again not as a boy, but a warrior (*boets*).[54] The experience of intense wonder inspires him to start taking concrete ethical action: three days later he leaves the monastery — as Zosima commanded — to "be in the world". The exact content of Alyosha's worldly life was meant to be the plot of the fabled sequel Dostoevsky did not live to write, but Joseph Frank suggests that the unwritten novel would revolve around the culmination of his Christian ethics into idealistic revolutionary action (808).[55]

In this particular instance, it is of crucial importance that Alyosha's ethically stimulating wonder emerges from contact with the inanimate and the embodied, rather than discourse alone. Through this communion, nature itself participates in Alyosha's actions in the world. Bennett relies on the Deleuzian term *assemblage* to describe the distributed and compounded nature of synergic

[54] In another replica of Zosima's gesture, Father Ferapont throws himself on the ground after complaining about Zosima's unfair elevation despite his apparent lack of sainthood. Bowing to the sunset, he proclaims the victory of "his Lord" (*moi gospod'*) over the setting sun and weeps in front of the gathered crowd of Zosima's opponents who immediately recognize him as the superior believer. Ferapont's theatrics are a stark contrast to both Zosima and Alyosha: he denies the value of joy; he selfishly frets about Zosima's death receiving better prayers than his, craving recognition; and his God is "his" alone. Ferapont's self-obsession and the insistence on shunning the world as evil marks him as the resentful underground man type, whose inability to connect to the world and love it condemns him to remaining distant from God and never finding joy.

[55] For Dostoevsky, this transformation is misguided, yet almost inevitable: manifesting the ethics of Christian love in the worldly sphere is a tremendous and possibly insurmountable challenge. Maria Granik elaborates on this problem in her article, "The Politics of Love."

agencies between the human and non-human, constantly reiterating the equal distribution of agency and responsibility alike; as such, non-human actants play a role in affects including wonder. She writes:

> "Human agency is essentially bound up with nonhuman manifestations of it ... I project this agency as distributed, to varying degrees, to atoms that move, plants that engage their environment, and animals that communicate, as well as humans that write onto-stories, protest war, engage in hate speech, and so forth" (*Enchantment* 162-163).

Indeed, Grushenka's onion and the Cana episode are not the only instances when material artefacts will become a grounding point for some of his most meaningful interactions with other characters. Food is an especially poignant motif: the first conversation he has with Ivan since their childhood starts off with Ivan's recollection of Alyosha's love for cherry jam, and he orders some for him in the inn. Even more powerful is Alyosha's evocation of the importance of food in mourning in remembrance. After Ilyusha's funeral, deeply shaken by the hysterical grief of his devastated father, the boy Kolya Krasotkin expresses unease over joining the memorial dinner: "It's so strange, Karamazov, such grief, and then pancakes all of a sudden — how unnatural it all is in our religion!" (*BK* 657)[56] Alyosha responds with a long speech about the importance of love and remembrance, where material objects related to the dead boy figure prominently: "Let us remember his face, and his clothes, and his poor boots, and his little coffin" (*BK 659*).[57,] Alyosha concludes by affirming the importance of small things like pancakes — an emblem of forgiveness and a traditional memorial food in Russian Orthodoxy: "Don't be disturbed that we'll be eating

[56] "Странно всё это, Карамазов, такое горе, и вдруг какие-то блины, как это всё неестественно по нашей религии!" (*PSS* 15: 194)

[57] "Будем помнить и лицо его, и платье его, и бедненькие сапожки его" (*PSS* 15: 196). This part of Alyosha's speech has a pronounced repetitive rhythm in Russian, where the word *ego* (his) is emphasized through an inversion in the word order *(litso ego* instead of *ego litso*), arguably becoming an (enchanting) refrain.

pancakes. It's an ancient, eternal thing, and there's good in that too" (*BK* 659). The humble pancakes — a solar symbol — stand as a point of connection between the mundane and the wondrous, affirming the power of the divine through daily routines.

For Dostoevsky and Bakhtin alike, searching for productive communion with of all creation is ethically indispensable: for Dostoevsky, in a strictly Christian understanding of salvation and shared responsibility for the world; for Bakhtin more globally, as a matter of embracing the ethical imperative of unfinalizability and the state of non-coincidence as a phenomenon that reaches far beyond the human subject.

> Great experience is concerned with the succession of great epochs (with great becoming) … In great experience, the world does not coincide with itself (it is not what it is), it is not closed and not finalized. In it, there is memory that does not have boundaries, memory that descends and extends into the pre-human depths of matter and inorganic life, the experience of life of worlds and atoms ("On Questions" 227).
>
> Большой опыт заинтересован в смене больших эпох (большом становлении) … В большом опыте мир не совпадает с самим собою (не есть то, что он есть), не закрыт и не завершен. В нем — память, не имеющая границ, память, спускающаяся и уходящая в дочеловеческие глубины материи и неорганической жизни, опыт жизни миров и атомов" ("K voprosam" 226).

For Bakhtin just as for Bennett, vital materiality is an integral part in how the human world operates, and where agency may lie in such a world. What he adds to Bennett's conceptualization of vibrant materialism is the emphasis on its core structural unfinalizability: it is the ultimate, all-encompassing witness to the eternal non-coincidence that permeates the entire world of which human selves are a minuscule part.

In view of this, as the inanimate gradually adds to Alyosha's renewal and reinvention of the self throughout the onion and the Cana episodes, I propose that loving communion with vibrant materiality is structurally polyphonic in nature. Consequently, polyphony can be understood as a viable aesthetic technique for cultivating the generous and loving sensibility. Crucially, it is the

ability to create rather than *discover* wonder that is at stake. Nature itself is unfeeling and indifferent: we learned this lesson this from scientific rationalism. However, making it enchanted — attaching to it the *affect* of enchantment — has always been within the domain of human agency (even though such agency, as I have argued above, is never entirely individuated). True dialogue neither begins nor ends with words: it must always emerge from and continue at the affective plane. The ethical power of dialogue, too, hinges on its embodied materiality in affect — I agree with Carol Apollonio when she writes that "evil action <in Dostoevsky> is inevitable when the mind and spirit are separated from the flesh" (8). As the human flesh — just like the rest of materiality — bears witness to complete unfinalizability and non-coincidence, its ethical potential cannot be realized in a deterministic, mechanical model of the world characteristic of disenchantment.

Indeed, the near-equivalence between Alyosha's experience of rapture and Bennett's enchantment is impossible to miss. In fact, given that Alyosha's mystical experience emerges from contact with nature and the divine, it evokes the "pure" form of enchantment that Max Weber situated (exclusively) in the pre-modern world. Structurally, Alyosha's affect corresponds to Jane Bennett's description as well, and highlights the remarkable intensity of the jolt enchantment can produce, as well as the long-term impact it can have. Since this episode follows a day of deep spiritual crisis, its resolution also demonstrates the dependence of wonder on discomfort, and offers a path towards considering joy — a form of pleasure proper to enchantment — as an affect not only distinct from the complacent and finalizing emotion of happiness, but in fact defined by its power to remove the body from habit and complacency, pushing it into a moment of suspenseful unfinalizability: joy happens not only *within* a space of crisis, but *because* of it. In his Spinozist definition Brian Massumi highlights joy's discomfiting component, its fleeting and non-

teleological nature, its openness to the world:

> "Joy in the Spinozan sense refers to the intensity of the affective encounter. The intensity of the encounter in turn refers to an augmentation in powers of existence — capacities to feel, act, and perceive — that occurs through the encounter. Understood in this way, joy is not synonymous with positive emotion. It is not 'happy,' and it does not connote the attainment of satisfaction. These 'hedonic' distinctions simply do not apply to affect. They apply to emotions: the psychological capture of affect for the interiority of a supposedly individual subject. Subjects feel good about themselves emotionally (or not), in the personal refuge of their putative interiority. Affect feels out the world. It is by nature open to adventure, and adventures always involve hardship. Joy in adventure cannot be had without affirming the hardship, in the strong sense of taking it on creatively" (xlv).

Unlike happiness, which strives towards total harmony on both the individual and societal plane, joy is defined by an inherently unsustainable intensity: the physical body cannot experience prolonged excitement or agitation in a healthy manner, and having experienced an affectively powerful encounter, it will always seek to wind down and settle back into the familiar, if nothing else then as a simple matter of maintaining homeostasis. In the instance of enchantment, Jane Bennett might argue, the self will embrace the novel and strange as part of the familiar. This may well be what Massumi means by "taking hardship on creatively" through joy — a smooth integration of excitement and "adventure"[58] into the process of becoming and, ultimately, the sense of self.

Such an integration, following Jane Bennett's definition, would offer a sense of plenitude and fullness without completion. The story of the onion that so deeply marks Alyosha's transformative encounter hinges precisely on plenitude — or, rather, a lack thereof. The evil woman won't share her path to salvation with other sinners because she is afraid their weight will break the onion: her downfall lies in succumbing to a feeling of scarcity regarding God's mercy — the ultimate infinite

[58] Massumi's choice of the word "adventure" resonates with the Bakhtinian search for dialogue in unfinalizability as the latter locates the source of polyphonic genres precisely in the early adventure novels of the antiquity.

resource. In order to be generous, the evil woman had to have felt like the onion will be *enough;* and the soothing safety of an existentially vital *enough* is a compelling alternative to the consuming desire for *more* born out of a sense that the world is not *plentiful*, that there is still something that needs to be *filled*. Plenitude engenders a reassuring sense that whatever an unfinalizable and undeterminable reality might bring, sustenance and survival will not be threatened, and surrounding world can thus be explored safely. One way of achieving that experience is illustrated in Alyosha's encounter with Grushenka, where the pair welcomes each other into a space of mutual acceptance and non-judgment. Another — a more curious and complex one — is offered in passing by Ivan Karamazov, at a moment he is grappling with the inability to resolve the conflict between his passionate love for life and his religious disillusionment.

> 'And the sticky little leaves, and the precious graves, and the blue sky, and the woman you love! How will you live, what will you love them with?" Alyosha exclaimed ruefully. "Is it possible, with such hell in your heart[59] and in your head? …
> 'There is a force that will endure everything,' said Ivan, this time with a cold smirk. … 'The Karamazov force… the force of the Karamazov baseness (*BK* 223).

> "А клейкие листочки, а дорогие могилы, а голубое небо, а любимая женщина! Как же жить-то будешь? — горестно восклицал Алеша. — С таким адом в груди и голове разве это возможно? …
> "Есть такая сила, что всё выдержит … Карамазовская… сила низости карамазовской" (*PSS* 14: 239-240).

The "Karamazov force" (*karamazovshchina*) is a deeply conflicted and violent affect, but one that nevertheless possesses even the almost-angelic Alyosha, who fears it as a potential threat to his devoutness and chastity, but senses and articulates its existence. Some critics, including Alina Wyman in her analysis of active empathy, have been inclined to read Alyosha's success in

[59] In the original, Alyosha uses the word *grud'* (chest, breast) rather than the equally valid and perhaps more commonly used *serdtse* (heart) — his metaphor rests more concretely in the physical body.

establishing deep and loving connections as inseparable from Christianity and the Christian model of Incarnation. I would argue, however, that it is the quintessentially human, Karamazovian carnality that allows Alyosha to enter these fundamentally embodied connections. Unlike Prince Myshkin, with his waifish constitution and perpetual illnesses, Alyosha is described as a strong and healthy young man, "not at all a mystic" but "simply an early lover of mankind" (*BK* 13). The fact of such a stark contrast to Myshkin alone speaks to the high importance of Alyosha's vitality to his Christ-like aspirations; in fact, his ability to shy away from judgment of debauchery might lie in his intimate awareness of the obverse of his own chastity. The Karamazovian body is a body on the boundary, one that knows both vitality and destruction; as such, it is the ultimate carrier of unfinalizability that takes it beyond the rational and grounds it in the affective body.

> Love <in Dostoevsky's world> lives on the very border of hate, knows and understands it, and hate lives on the border of love, and also understands it … Faith lives on the very border of atheism, sees itself there and understands it, and atheism lives on the border of faith and understands it. Loftiness and nobility live on the border of degradation and vulgarity (Dmitry Karamazov). Love for life neighbors upon a thirst for self-destruction … Purity and chastity understand vice and sensuality (Alyosha Karamazov). (*PPD* 176)

> Все в его мире живет на самой границе со своей противоположностью. Любовь живет на самой границе с ненавистью, знает и понимает ее, а ненависть живет на границе с любовью и также ее понимает … Вера живет на самой границе с атеизмом, смотрится в него и понимает его, а атеизм живет на границе с верой и понимает ее. Высота и благородство живет на границе с падением и подлостью (Дмитрий Карамазов). Любовь к жизни соседит с жаждой самоуничтожения … Чистота и целомудрие понимают порок и сладострастие (Алеша Карамазов). (*SS* 6: 200)

Alyosha's enraptured joy, even at its highest point, is not life-affirming at the cost of denying that which is life-negating, but precisely the kind of joy that thrives on this contrast, emerging as it does from a close encounter with death and disappointment. Similarly, the violence and torment of *karamazovshchina* are not mutually exclusive with enchantment — in fact, enchantment may

be understood most productively when removing the rose-colored glasses that gloss over its less pleasurable connotations:

> Enchantment does coexist with despair … Enchantment, that energizing and unsettling sense of the great and incredible fact of existence, reflects a stubborn attachment to life that most bodies seem to possess. To be enchanted is, in the moment of its activation, to assent wholeheartedly to life — not to this or that particular condition or aspect of it but to the experience of living itself (*Enchantment* 161).

The joy of enchantment — and, if we follow Massumi's definition, perhaps even all joy — is a form of excitation derived from an encounter that creates an irreconcilable crisis: between the known and the unknown, pleasure and pain, life and death.

In the next section, I will argue that enchantment is not merely a possibility or an ability; rather, it can be an urge on a physical and biological level, which remains as a source of ethics of love, joy, and communion with the world — even if the Christian or any other God is removed. At the same time, I will explore the significant ethical implications of stripping polyphony and dialogism of the component of linguistic communication. At first glance, they might seem promising, but as I have written earlier, despite his apparent optimism about the power of dialogue Bakhtin consistently returns to the concern that not only the word, but cognition itself is inherently violent as it demand definitive meaning-making, which flattens and subjugates the object of perception. Parts of affect do end up cognitively processed and linguisticized: they are consolidated, translated, and categorized into distinct emotions and emotional expressions. However, there is always an excess that escapes direct subjugation to language; and while affect encounters language, interacts with it, and navigates the vicissitudes of a language-based world of affective economies, parts of it remain stubbornly outside, hidden in a Dostoevskian flurry of ellipses, circular repetitions, and hanging sentences. The outsidedness of excess affect makes it capable of subverting the oppressive power of language from the inside, as though stabbing it in the back. On the level of aesthetic

activity, such excess affect manifests itself in the fissures created by nonfinalized forms of discourse like the polyphonic novel — and, as I will suggest in the last chapters of my project, films that employ certain forms of associative montage.

However, this promise comes with a caveat. A similarly optimistic Jane Bennett nevertheless reminds that "a metaphysical imaginary is always engaged in political interpretations, and this imaginary works indirectly at the level of affect. To render it explicit is to make it more available as a rhetorical strategy" (*Enchantment* 161). Like the rest of nature, affect is itself ethically indifferent; I will explore Alyosha's three brothers — Ivan, Dmitry, and the oft-forgotten Pavel Smerdyakov — to consider both the positive and negative sides of exalted communion with the world.

3.4 Enchanted Secularism Against Disenchantment

In contrast to Alyosha's intimate bond with Christianity, his brother Ivan is tormented by a spiritual paradox. His bitter and monologizing tale of the Grand Inquisitor, which I touched on earlier in Chapter 1, is motivated by a sense of "rebellion" against theodicy that clashes with his visceral belief in God. The crisis of faith he imparts to Alyosha starts with effusive, emotionally charged expressions of love for life, but in his futile attempts at using reason to comprehend Christian faith, Ivan Karamazov becomes, in Carol Apollonio's words, one of Dostoevsky's characters who are "trapped fully in the territory of science and logic," and whose "intellectual pride renders them susceptible to demonic infection, over-rationalism, delusion, and ultimately … acts of violence" (8). Apollonio finds the root of this entrapment in alienation and isolation from fellow humans — an alienation so profound that it separates the human being from their own body as well. However, what I'd suggest that while Ivan may be alienated from his fellow humans, his existence – and, more to the point of the present discussion, his religiosity – are not reduced to the

cerebral and are in fact heavily inflected by his Karamazovian body acutely attuned to the vitality around it. If Alyosha's experience of rapture in the face of vibrant nature is any indicator, it might well be that such an intensely affect-laden body is empowered to produce generative and life-affirming impulses.

The viscerality of belief is a clear link between the two brothers, but there is something missing for Ivan: his energizing love for life fails to fuel ethical action. Unlike Alyosha, who maintains strong links to nature and religion — the traditional loci of enchantment — Ivan is immersed in urban modernity. He is cerebral and scientifically-minded, both a published writer himself and an avid reader of journalism whose global reach provides him with the many examples of cruelty he uses to challenge divine benevolence; his decision to abandon any responsibility for his father and leave him to Smerdyakov's mercy is enacted symbolically by choosing the train to Moscow over an carriage to a nearby village where Fedor Pavlovich had asked him to do some business on his behalf. The particular trappings of modernity that mark Ivan are those that emphasize the rising pace of travel and movement, of information and people alike — those that shrink space and speed up time and, in their break from the static in favor of the dynamic, herald the era of unfinalizable becoming that so disturbingly challenges the soothing, holistic image of the world.[60] Unlike his brother who surrenders to the magic of pre-modernity, Ivan, one of Dostoevsky's tormented liminal minds, is a creature of disenchantment.

Despite enchantment's genealogical roots in a magical and mystical experience of the world, Jane Bennett's endeavors to rediscover the affect of wonder in a profoundly and consistently secular, finding it instead in immediate materiality of any form. Though enchantment in the

[60] Rebecca Solnit writes about the role of the railroad in reshaping the human relationship to time in modernity in *River of Shadows* (2003).

Weberian sense is one that "requires a world with a telos or intrinsic purpose," Bennett argues that "this (Christian cosmological) enchantment is but one possible kind, and that there are others that do not depend on a world construed as divine Creation" (*Enchantment* 32). Bennett further demonstrates how Christianity — despite some contemporary "antimodern" criticism of disenchantment stemming from Christian theology — actually birthed the disenchanted mode and cannot help defying it. Ivan is torn between earnest belief in divine redemption, and the rage at the ubiquity of suffering in God's creation. He formulates this irreconcilable crisis as a matter of inability to grasp the logic of theodicy, comparing it to recent findings in geometry: he describes the realm of the divine as "non-Euclidean," and therefore beyond the grasp of his earthly, "Euclidean" mind.

> If God exists and if he indeed created the earth, then, as we know perfectly well, he created it in accordance with Euclidean geometry, and he created human reason with a conception of only three dimensions of space. At the same time there were and are even now today geometers and philosophers … who doubt that the whole universe, or, even more broadly, the whole of being, was created purely in accordance with Euclidean geometry … I, my dear, have come to the conclusion that if I cannot understand even that, then it is not for me to understand about God … I have a Euclidean mind, an earthly mind, and therefore it is not for us to resolve things that are not of this world … And so, I accept God … I also accept his wisdom and his purpose … I believe in order, in the meaning of life, I believe in eternal harmony … I believe in the Word for whom the universe is yearning … It's not God that I do not accept, you understand, it is this world of God's, created by God, that I do not accept and cannot agree to accept (*BK* 199).

> Если бог есть и если он действительно создал землю, то, как нам совершенно известно, создал он ее по эвклидовой геометрии, а ум человеческий с понятием лишь о трех измерениях пространства. Между тем находились и находятся даже и теперь геометры и философы … которые сомневаются в том, чтобы вся вселенная, или, еще обширнее — всё бытие было создано лишь по эвклидовой геометрии … Я, голубчик, решил так, что если я даже этого не могу понять, то где же мне про бога понять … у меня ум евклидовский, земной, а потому где нам решать о том, что не от мира сего … Итак, принимаю бога, и не только с охотой, но мало того, принимаю и премудрость его, и цель его … верую в вечную гармонию … верую в Слово, к которому стремится вселенная …Я не бога не принимаю, пойми ты это, я мира, им созданного, мира-то божьего не принимаю, и не могу согласиться принять (*PSS* 14:

214).

The core of Ivan's anxiety – the tension between the non-Euclidean and Euclidean paradigms – highlights, in Elena Fratto's words, "the Cartesian gap between the mind and the body, between unquestionable, *a priori* concepts, and sensorial experience" (397). His conflict is not a matter of insufficient intellectual ability to grasp either abstract mathematics or theological complexity. It is, rather, the inability to step beyond embodiment in the Bakhtinian sense of inhabiting one's own humanity — a position lacking absolute outsidedness by the fact of its earthly bind. However, Ivan is not strictly a materialist (as would have been the case if he was a cold scientific rationalist): while he is unable to reach the gaze from the outside, he senses on the affective plane that the palpable Euclidean world is overflowing with an incomprehensible, otherworldly fullness of divine creation that stimulates an inexplicable sensation of life-giving joy. Ivan's affective experience of the world entails both the external, tangible and visible material plane, and the reality of the sensory experience within his affectively charged body that overflows reason but feels no less real: "Sticky spring leaves, the blue sky — I love hem, that's all! Such things you love not with your mind, not with logic, but with your insides, your guts" (*BK* 195).[61] As such, the logical mind and the immediate experience simply do not coincide, leaving Ivan trapped not in the Euclidean, but in the gap between the two. Ivan vacillates between passionate professions of faith and cynical rebuttals, never settling on a complete rejection of the divine through atheism. His passion for life is a facet of *karamazovshchina* that manifests in all three legitimate brothers in manners that echo the biophilic awe of nature. Mitya and Ivan, though scarcely communicating, nevertheless express their exaltation in similar terms – in his earlier

[61] In the middle of Ivan's passionate speech about the "sticky leaves," the innkeeper brings out fish soup for Alyosha, and Ivan seamlessly switches between his big statements about the nature of life and inviting his brother to have some food — a mundane source of nourishment is once again weaved into musings about the divine.

confession to Alyosha, the oldest brother says: “Let us praise nature: see how the sun shines, how clear the sky is, the leaves are all green, it’s still summer” (*BK* 87-88). And Alyosha, of course, reveals his joyous passion for nature during his spiritual rebirth.

Under Donovan Schaefer’s paradigm of religious affect and biophilia, there is nothing paradoxical about Ivan’s clash between religious sensation and commitment to doctrine. The embodied animality of religious affect allows it to not only *precede*, but *emerge and exist independently from* consciously held principles. To think that “depth, complex responses, experiences, and decisions cannot take place without the machinery of linguisticized reason,” Schaefer argues, constitutes a “linguistic fallacy” (*RA* 13); and while linguistically articulated theology is paramount for organized religions, genuine experience of the divine is predicated on the sensational. And so, even though religious discourse falls short of satisfying Ivan’s spiritual needs, his affective impulse directed towards the divine remains strong. Paradoxically, the same affect that makes it impossible for him to deny the divine makes it equally impossible for him to accept it. The powerlessness of the Euclidean mind is one that fails to comprehend or resolve affect through reasoning that reaches into the non-Euclidean abstraction; at the same time, the firmly Euclidean body enables the simultaneous coexistence of conflicting sensations, neither of which is able to prevail or be subjugated by logic. It is because his mind resides in a Karamazovian body that Ivan is unable to simply repress any impulse towards religiosity he might have, and settle for a neat, rational explanation of the state of the world.

Since Schaefer’s understanding of religious affects separates it from theology or even rational and linguisticized human cognition, rekindling the connection between enchantment and religiosity can be achieved without abandoning the kind of secular understanding of wonder offered in Bennett’s work. Meanwhile, the (re)introduction of religiosity in Schaefer’s sense into

Bennett's theoretical framework of enchantment and vibrant materiality creates two significant contributions. First, the link between religion and biophilia can expose the potential of enchantment to stimulate creating and enacting responses that support not only one's own survival, but the survival of the world; insofar as this can stimulate action around urgent global ecological challenges — which I believe to be a strong potential — cultivating joyful attachment to the world can become a project of high political significance. At the same time, though a deeper dive into these connections is beyond the scope of this project, it bears mentioning that Schaefer's considerations of violence and condemnation that sometimes stem from bodies captivated by religious affect can be read as a valuable counterpoint to Bennett's optimistic assessment of wonder. Conversely, pre-linguistic animal religiosity understood in light of enchantment can support a valuable separation of irrational, affect-driven ethical orientation from theology. However, a major challenge to the ethical powers of embodied religious affect must be addressed: the fact that, despite their visceral, embodied attachments to life, all Karamazovs nevertheless look for the Christian God, and grieve His disappearance.

3.5 Grieving Belief

Although Alyosha is shocked by his brother's rebellion against God, he is gladdened when Ivan professes his sensual attachment for life. Recalling Zosima's teaching that even a heretic who knows love maintains a connection to Christ, Ivan's excitement about the "sticky little leaves" points to a capacity to experience religious rapture akin to the one Alyosha will go through after Zosima's death. His visceral delight in life is so powerful it generates an unshakable sensation that a tangible, conceptual cause for the joy in life must be found in the world, and frustration over failing to find an acceptable one. In view of that, it is all the more baffling that this affect stubbornly refuses to manifest in acceptance of Christ: after all, the Christian discourse, which often frames

the religious impulse in terms of joy, love, and universal compassion, seems like an irresistible framework for making sense of biophilic affect. At the same time, Ivan's religious affect persists although there is an easy way for the rational mind to resolve the paradox of human suffering: the suffering of the innocents is empirically proven and amply documented, whereas the existence of a benevolent God is not. Atheism is an easy, if heavy-handed solution to the rational side of the problem, and Dostoevsky's world is rife with cynics that reject Christianity from that angle. However, both Christian theology and its atheistic repudiations engage with the discursive level of religiosity, whereas the true source of Ivan's crisis is a lack of *affective*, rather than *rational* consolidation of the Christian paradigm. Since the former is a precursor to latter in shaping belief, it becomes impossible to override. For Ivan, a complete surrender to salvation through Christ is just as viscerally inaccessible as rationalist atheism: "I'd rather remain with my unrequited suffering and my unquenched indignation, even if I am wrong" (*BK* 208).[62] What makes Ivan's predicament all the more difficult is that the promise of Christ's divine justice in the afterlife is not only compelling and soothing, but also feels believable.

> I have a childlike conviction that the sufferings will be healed and smoothed over …. and that ultimately, at the world's finale, in the moment of eternal harmony, there will occur and be revealed something so precious that it will suffice for all hearts … to redeem all human villainy, all bloodshed … let this, let all of this come true and be revealed, but I do not accept it and do not want to accept it! Let the parallel lines even meet before my own eyes: I shall look and say, yes, they meet, and still I will not accept it (*BK* 199).
>
> <Я> убежден, как младенец, что страдания заживут и сгладятся … что, наконец, в мировом финале, в момент вечной гармонии, случится и явится нечто до того драгоценное, что хватит его на все сердца … на искупления всех злодейств людей, всей пролитой ими их крови … Пусть даже параллельные линии сойдутся и я это

[62] Ivan's declaration is a direct inversion of Dostoevsky's own statement in a famous letter to N. D. Fonvizina from 1854: "If anyone could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with the truth." Unlike his hero, Dostoevsky is open to doubting the actual existence of Christ, but just like Ivan, he prioritizes a *feeling* or experience of faith over truth, whatever it may be.

сам увижу: увижу и скажу, что сошлись, а все-таки не приму (*PSS* 14: 215).

And so, Ivan's refusal to accept the divine order is not a matter of faith, but rather a conscious and deliberate choice. However, as I had pointed out earlier, this refusal is not a matter of cold reason, but of a tension — an entrapment in the liminal space between the palpable and the abstract. As such, the rebellion is itself saturated with affect: revulsion, horror, indignation at the cruel world that lets children suffer. Ivan's embodied attachment to the world is not limited to the joy: even as he is overwhelmed by the vitality of the "sticky leaves" and the irrational love of life, so too does he viscerally experience life's cruelties. Schaefer points out that an organism's *biophilia* works alongside *biophobia*: fear and revulsion against those things that are dangerous or inhospitable to life. Insofar as the religious impulse is buoyed by the vibrancy of the former, it is tainted with disgust for the latter. The two are inextricable even on the basic, biological level: the search for biophilic stimuli usually has the goal of finding things to feed on and, conversely, the avoidance of all things biophobic often means avoiding being devoured, but both are equal in the circle of life. To be fully and genuinely attached to life itself, then, means to feel both joy and hunger, plenitude and scarcity.

Even though Ivan acknowledges the existence of Christ, in a spiritual sense God nevertheless remains lost as religion is no longer able to provide a sense of wholeness, comfort, and purpose. Mitya, faced with a vastly different predicament, feels the same. He ruminates on the scientific cynicism that surrounds his trial, reducing him to a senseless object of study to be examined by deterministic psychology. I had already mentioned that Bakhtin highlights the example of Dmitry's trial as one of the more striking examples of finalizing discourse in Dostoevsky; and Mitya acutely experiences this violence as one inflicted not only against his own, but likewise the unfinalizability of the world. Rakitin, who visits Dmitry often with the aims of collecting materials for an article

on his case, talks to him about science and rationalism. The agitated Dmitry summarizes to his brother:

> it's all there in the nerves, in the head, there are these nerves in the brain (devil take them!)… there are little sorts of tails, these nerves have little tails … and that's why I contemplate, and then think… because of the little tails, and not at all because I have a soul or am some sort of image and likeness (*BK* 499).
>
> это там в нервах, в голове, то есть там в мозгу эти нервы (ну черт их возьми!)… есть такие этакие хвостики, у нервов этих хвостики … вот почему я и созерцаю, а потом мыслю… потому что хвостики, а вовсе не потому, что у меня душа и что я там какой-то образ и подобие (*PSS* 15:28).

Dmitry recognizes his personal spiritual injury as part of a global change: "It's magnificent, Alyosha, this science! The new man will come" (*BK* 499). However, the Karamazov man, in his inability to overcome the acute sense of something greater than the measurable and the apparent, belongs squarely in the pre-modern past. Neither the cerebral Ivan nor the passionate Mitya are giving in to the promises of scientific rationalism, and both recognize its power to disappoint even if it promises new advances and a brighter future. As Jane Bennett writes:

> Modern scientific practices first induce the expectation of a telos and then flatly refuse to fulfill it; science first whets our appetite for completion of purpose and then insists that no final satisfaction is attainable. And that is why a disenchanted materialism carries with it a psychology of disappointment and an affect of meaninglessness. Disenchantment names both this subjective state and the impersonal historical condition of the flight of the gods (*Enchantment* 61).

Of course, Bennett does not see this transition into science as an exclusively negative thing from the ethical standpoint, adding that "this disappointment can issue in a cynical resentment of the world, but it also provides the occasion for a brave and responsible acceptance of the world**"** (*Enchantment* 61). For Bakhtin too, Emerson asserts, God is only a *possibility* in dialogue, but not a necessity: "Dialogue can unfold under the aegis of a third — but this third party is more a medium of communication, more a climate of trust, than it is an anchored communicant with a fixed moral

perspective and repertory of answers" (Emerson 232).[63] However, simply because God is not a necessity does not mean that he does not remain an object of yearning — especially in the realm of ethics:

> The persistent echo of Dostoevsky's 'If God is dead, everything is allowed' is an incurable homesickness … But this desire for the authorial other, for ethical grounding in what is larger than one's self, through fully recognized as a constituent of human subjectivity, remains just that: a desire that is, by definition, doomed to deferral (Erdinast-Vulcan 49).

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, this yearning finds its most striking ethical expression in the refrain "everything is permitted" (*vse pozvoleno*), a ham-fisted summary of insights from Ivan's article about the state of the Russian church, articulated second-hand by several characters. For Ivan, "everything is permitted" is a cry of despair and spiritual disorientation; for the parricidal Smerdyakov, who fails to grasp the tragedy of loss of the divine authority, it is a rule to be taken to its literal extreme. This is not to say that there is no hope for meaning and purpose in a world without the divine, as Bennett amply illustrates in a book that addresses a world far more modernized than Dostoevsky's — but the 21st century world is also far more open to a non-deterministic understanding of science and progress. However, insofar as the power of joyful, biophilic affect is of the essence to cultivating that disposition, the revolt and grief of the quintessentially vitalist Karamazovs raises serious challenges. Mitya Karamazov demands that love, gratitude, and awe be attached to something *beyond* the human, resisting the cynic Rakitin's assertion that one could just love humanity without God. Dmitry is overwhelmed with exuberant

[63] With that in mind, Erdinast-Vulcan cautions against reading Bakhtin as a fully secular thinker, as has often been done in the West. She reminds that, for example, the early and richly metaphysical *Author and Hero* had been republished with Bakhtin's permission in the 1970s, showing that Bakhtin was himself amply comfortable with the book's theological undertones; and recalls his 1972 conversation with Sergey Bocharov, where he described *PDP* as "morally flawed" for its failure to directly address the question of God's existence. I seek out resonances between Bennett's secular optimism and Bakhtinian ethics, but I do not mean to imply that Bakhtin himself would have agreed with these interpretations.

joy, and recognizes that it is indispensable to life and religiosity alike: "let me be following the devil at the same time, but I still am also your son, Lord, and I love you, and I feel a joy without which the world cannot stand and be" (*BK* 90). However, this joy is not ethically sufficient for him: "how is <man> going to be virtuous without God? … Because whom will he love then … To whom will he be thankful, to whom will he sing the hymn?" (*BK* 502-503) Jane Bennett suggests that affect itself can serve as a source of ethics, attaching itself to a variety of conceptual explanations:

> Some people are moved by the experience of divine command, some by divine love, some by humanistic sympathy, some by Kantian duty, some by a sense of correspondence between beauty and justice, and some by the enchantments of contemporary life. *My sense, however, is that all of these, in different ways, tap into a subintentional disposition in favor of life … For me, this disposition, … is the fundamental ethical source"* (*Enchantment* 158, emph. mine).

However, Dmitry insists that a joyful "disposition in favor of life" has to be imbued with gratitude and admiration, feelings that require an object; and insists that love for humanity without God — which Rakitin and the socialists suggest is possible — will not suffice. Just because a world without God *can* be joyful, meaningful, and ethically stimulating, there is no guarantee of it. In fact, as Dmitry's own example shows, there are indications that an affectively charged body so capable of connecting to salvific enchantment is the same one that reacts in horrible violence when it fails to find fullness and peace, and Dmitry, for one, even struggles to distinguish between the two: "I keep going, and I don't know: have I gotten into stench and shame, or into light and joy?" (*BK* 89) The Karamazovian body, even if infused with joy, contains more affect that in can handle rationally (Ivan), or even contain physically (Dmitry). Therefore, the bodies that ought to be most capable of cultivating a strong joyful sensibilities may also be the most at risk at spiraling into its ethical obverse.

3.6 Violence Against Disenchantment

Like the religious impulse itself, the violence of *karamazovshchina* is animalistic, and signals an exceptional degree of attunement to the pre-discursive, yet non-mechanical animal biology. However, if we follow Schaefer's assertion that animality is neither senseless nor mindless, and that it is both capable and instrumental for generating religious affect, means that we can no longer understand religion as what makes us human. Quite the opposite: it is part of what makes us animals bound with the rest of the living world. It is precisely because of its animality that the Karamazovian body is extremely attuned to its own materiality; it is radically porous, hypersensitive to the world, vibrant, caught up with compulsive, visceral awe and exaltation.

The celebratory aspect of attachment to the materiality of nature that overflows into religious sensations is expressed by all three brothers, but Ivan and Dmitry also articulate its darker side. It is in this darker side that they recognize the animal. "I am an insect," Mitya repeatedly tells Alyosha while confessing the pleasure he took in his past depravities, and Ivan says the exact same thing when explaining why his reason (a human capacity) is lacking in comprehending and accepting the paradox of theodicy: "I am bedbug … I can understand nothing of why it's all arranged as it is" (*BK* 206). In this echoed statement, the violence of desiring a carnal conquest of the world is equated with the same impulse as the inability to balance the place of suffering in a world of joy. It is worth noting that both brothers refer to themselves, specifically, as bedbugs <*klop*>. The identification with a blood-sucking nighttime parasite points to the core of Karamazovian violence as having to do with predatory hunger. Dmitry and his father want to consume the world with their bodies, indulging in sex and alcohol; Ivan, with his rational mind, wants to engulf the meaning of all creation, and his is a violence that Bakhtin identifies as the inescapable violence of the word.

The Karamazovian bodies point to the fact that biophobia is not that simple: the darker, violent aspects of the natural order are an object of fascination as well as revulsion. The root of *karamazovshchina*, after all, is Fedor Pavlovich; and as Carol Apollonio reminds us, despite his repulsive character and body, the old Karamazov's sensuality (*sladostrastie)* reflects "the life principle … directed toward living and affirming life, rather than toward resignation and denial" (145). This familial trait — contained in the bodies of all three brothers, but manifested differently in each — heightens biophilic sensations, but takes both their positive and their negative implications to the extreme. Mitya aptly captures these joint sensations, once against relating them to animality: "I loved depravity, I also loved the shame of depravity. I loved cruelty: am I not a bedbug, an evil insect? In short — a Karamazov!" (*BK* 91) For Mitya, "wickedness is sweet" (*BK* 146), but likewise connected to wonder: "I am afraid, but I am delighted! That is, not delighted, but ecstatic … Let us praise nature … " (*BK* 88). In Russian, the word rendered here as "delight" is *sladko* <*sweet*> — literally, Dmitry says, "I feel sweetness (inside)." Sweetness is likewise the root of *sladostrastie,* the word for used to describe the Karamazovian base sensuality, and Mitya draws on a poem by Schiller to connect it to his insect nature: "To insects — sensuality!" (*BK* 90). In making the connection to poetry, Mitya articulates the link between the pure affect of dark sweetness and its expressions in aesthetic creation. Like Bakhtin, political theorist George Kateb argues that aesthetics are omnipresent in day-to-day life, and that aesthetics — understood here broadly as human proclivity towards beauty and sublimity — constitute an essential and urgent need inherent to the human project of meaning-making:

> <F>or all of us, art (literary or other) is not enough; art is not enough art, not enough of a good thing. We all crave that the world give us and do for us what art gives and does — indeed that the world be even more fully, more overpoweringly, what art promises to be. The much greater aesthetic urgency is directed to life, not to art. When aesthetic desires are directed not toward art but rather toward social reality, they tend to become cravings (12).

As the aesthetic impulse cannot be contained within activity strictly devoted to it, it overflows into social and political sphere and as I will address later in the project, can become politically dangerous. Elena Namli writes, "<Mitya's> point is that Karamazov's sinful lust (*sladostrastie*) ... is indistinguishable from beauty and that what human reason regards as shame presents itself to the human heart as beauty" (7). Sensual pleasure does not need to be directly violent to be dangerous, and dangerous sensuality may even appear nourishing on its surface. In his study of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Robert Belknap recalls the strong association between sweetness and the diabolic, and the connection is especially striking in Ivan's remark to Alyosha that the Turks who murder infants are "fond of sweets," just as his brother is eating the cherry jam he enjoyed so much in childhood. Belknap writes: "sweets here become a part of the cluster connecting children with that diabolic cruelty which provoked Ivan's revolt, tempted Alyosha, and led Smerdyakov to hang cats and to teach Ilyusha how to torture dogs with pins" (28). The innocent children whose suffering Ivan finds so inexcusable are not at all incapable of casual cruelties, including not only the torture of animals but likewise the thoughtlessness of psychological torture inflicted by Kolya Krasotkin, who leads Ilyusha to believe his pin killed the dog, only to stage a theatric reveal at a later time.

In an even darker observation, Ivan points out that delight can be found not only in the obvious carnal pleasures of sex and revelry, but in cruelty against the innocents. Some parents who flog their children, he speculates, enjoy it "almost to the point of sensuality" (*BK* 204); and moreover, though violence and hunger, just like the vibrant desire for life, are indeed animal traits, there is "a beast hidden in every man, a beast of rage, a beast of sensual inflammability at the cries of the tormented victim, an unrestrained beast let off the chain, a beast of diseases acquired in debauchery" (*BK* 204-205). The difference between the violence of man and the violence of beast

is a matter of aesthetic pleasure: "no animal could ever be so cruel as a man, so artfully, so *artistically* cruel" (*BK* 202, emph. mine). While the affects of attachment to the world — positive and negative — may indeed be biological and extend into all of the natural world, Ivan astutely notes that, for humans, the destructive and the deadly can hold a particular charm. His own morbid fascination with sordid stories of torture is a case in point: he collects and recounts them with a perverse pleasure, and Alyosha too chooses to "suffer" as he listens. In the conversation between the two brothers, we get a glimpse into the moral pleasure that can be derived from violence, too: when asked whether the general who fed an eight-year-old boy to the dogs ought to be extended Christian forgiveness or shot, Alyosha says "'Shoot him!' … looking up at his brother with a sort of pale, twisted smile" (*BK* 206).[64] However, Ivan insists at the same time that the urge for such moral satisfaction runs counter to his overwhelming love for life: "They must be redeemed, otherwise there can be no harmony … But what do I care if they are avenged, what do I care if the tormentors re in hell, what can hell set right here, if these ones have already been tormented? And where is the harmony, if there is hell? I want to forgive, and I want to embrace, I don't want more suffering" (*BK* 207). Ivan suffers from the inability to overcome one's impulse for violence in the face of violence, which clashes with a powerful yearning to do just that.

When he meditates on the Cana of Galilee in Zosima's cell, Alyosha weaves Zosima's and Mitya's voices into a harmonious dialogue: together, they create a complementary image of joy as both a sacred and a secular, animalistically embodied phenomenon. In order to understand the full implications of Zosima's pious teachings on joy, that affect needs to be understood in the full force of Karamazovian carnality; and the parallels between Mitya's demeanor and the careless violence

[64] Michael Holquist goes as far as to suggest that this particular story is a recasting of Fedor Pavlovich's violence against his sons, and that Alyosha's response thus implicates him in the shared fraternal desire for the death of the father (189).

of the young Zosima (who also describes his actions as "beastly") cannot be understated. Lynn Ellen Patyk points out that although many scholars have sought to discover the "true" Bakhtinian dialogue as one that is ethically productive, dialogic engagement does bear darker aspects, problematizing polyphony and exposing that the freedom-bearing potential of perpetual unfinalizability often comes at the cost of violence against the self or others. Like many of Dostoevsky's idea-people, the Karamazovs are creatures of excess: the excess, in their case, is one of embodied animal affect, and it highlights the inextricable bond between life-affirming, nourishing religious rapture and the urge to devour the world. *Excess* with regards to joy is manifest in Ivan's rebellion, where he juxtaposes the vitality and the will to live with the torture and murder of children, an excess of joy that allows one to live *in spite of* violence, so much so that it sometimes results in one causing violence *because of it*. By its nature as an affect of unsustainable intensity, joy can explode into violence far more easily than it can be harnessed into attentiveness, love, and forgiveness.

The Karamazovian body that generates so efficiently that affect that can result in religious rapture is the same that possesses a tremendous capacity for violence, even though – as Dmitry's narrative arc reminds us – the violence comes about almost by accident, in a series of impulsive blunders, and often without any calculated, deliberate malice. However, while Dmitry's flamboyant violent outbursts may seem like the epitome of Karamazovian excess, Smerdyakov points out that it is Ivan who resembles their father the most. For all his lofty exaltation, Ivan is no less calculating than the perpetually scheming Fedor Pavlovich: he comes to Skotoprigonyevsk to clear up his finances with his father, lingers for a while because of his infatuation with Katerina Ivanovna, and leaves once he grows tired of her hysterical vacillation between him and Dmitry. In his dealings with Smerdyakov, he manages to evade direct responsibility for his father's murder,

but his covert desire is motivated by base personal gain rather than any powerful emotion against him. As Patyk points out: “Smerdyakov succeeds ... in exposing what Bakhtin refers to as Ivan’s ‘second voice’ that not only reveals his desire for his father’s murder, but the base pecuniary motives behind it” (66). Unlike Mitya’s visceral hatred against Fedor Pavlovich, Ivan has nothing to gain from his death aside from inheritance, and Rakitin even goes as far as to suggest that his interest in Katerina is likewise motivated by her sizeable dowry. The nature-loving rapture of the two older brothers Karamazov may be easy to aestheticize into images of noble spirits, but the consequences of their words and actions are destructive and self-serving nonetheless.

3.7 The Violent Lovelessness of Pavel Fedorovich

Despite his almost flamboyant violence, it is not Mitya who commits the ultimate violent act in *The Brothers Karamazov*: not only does he not kill his father — much less in cold blood — but suffers deeply from his brief belief that he had fatally injured the old servant Grigory by accident. Through his visceral aversion to taking life, Dmitry reasserts the biophilic roots of the Karamazovian body, which persist even when it is overpowered by its surplus of affect. The real murderer turns out to be the servant Smerdyakov, Fedor Pavlovich’s illegitimate son and a character so loathsome that he is often read as the embodiment of evil in the novel.

Marina Kanevskaya’s detailed analysis of the satanic aspects of Smerdyakov’s portrayal brings out several ways in which his “evil” nature manifests on — and even begins at — the physical level. Smerdyakov is presumed to be a product of an especially vile crime: the rape of the local holy fool Lizaveta by a drunken Fedor Pavlovich. In a curious resonance with Prince Myshkin, he is weak and suffers from epilepsy; he also looks older than his age and is described as resembling a eunuch. He has, in Kanevskaya’s words, “absorbed the Karamazovs’ darkest and most suppressed desires … not only parricide but suicide as well since both Ivan and Dmitry

contemplate suicide at different moments" (375). However, he is absolutely robbed of the distinct Karamazovian vitality, expressing no wonder, no joy, and no attachment to anything or anyone in his life. He is a picky eater, shuns women, and fails to find pleasure in art. He is extremely fastidious with his dress and cosmetics, but comes off as ridiculous and unpleasant; even his music and verse are characterized as meaningless. The absence of lust for life is paired with a fascination with death: as a child, he enjoyed hanging cats and burying them with ceremony. Overheard talking to his fiancé Marya Kondratyevna (whose clumsy advances seem to leave him indifferent), he says that he wishes he had never been born — and this desire is fulfilled as he ends his life with suicide. There is no biophilic attachment to life in the makeup of Pavel Smerdyakov; and, accordingly, he is not biophobic either — death and destruction inspire curiosity instead of revulsion. Insofar as life is culturally — and not just biologically — the ultimate happy object, and death the most unhappy one, Smerdyakov might be Dostoevsky's most accomplished affect alien. However, his suicide note contains a singular link to the Karamazovian body as it evokes their insect-like nature. Pavel writes: "I exterminate my life by my own will and liking" (*BK* 552),[65] and the same verb (*istrebit')* is used by Dmitry and Ivan when they refer to taking their lives, the former out of despair for Grushenka, the latter out of revolt for the lack of earthly retribution for the innocent.[66] The fourth brother is clearly not separate from the other three: he is merely a different type of bug. No less animal or human than the rest, Smerdyakov offers a stark example of the fact that even though religious affect is ingrained as a biological capacity, it is not distributed evenly across individual bodies. Accounting for this degree of variation within generalized rules is imperative in a discipline

[65] "Истребляю свою жизнь своею собственною волей и охотой" (*PSS* 15: 85)

[66] In the final version of the novel, Ivan hints at a plan to kill himself once he turns thirty so as to put an end to that base Karamazovian sensuality that forces him to rebel against God's creation. In the earlier drafts, this plan is made explicit, and the same verb (*istrebit'*) is used multiple times. See *PSS* 15: 228-229.

devoted to embodiment, which therefore constantly needs to manage the risk of essentialization. As Sedgwick and Frank remind in "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold," the differentiation of affects must be conceived of as neither binary nor infinite to the point of triviality. The three Karamazovs and Smerdyakov are bound by the same unified spectrum of biophilic intensity, not an either/or.

One of the strongest proofs of *karamazovshchina* as a spectrum rather than a unique trait is a form of similarity through peculiarity between Smerdyakov and Alyosha, the "ideal" Karamazov body. Smerdyakov's alienation starts in his childhood, and as he fails to endear himself even to his adoptive father Grigory — a household servant who demonstrated loving care to Fedor Pavlovich's legitimate sons in the time of his neglectful debauchery. In that, he is the perfect opposite to Alyosha who since early childhood "possessed in himself, in his very nature … artlessly and directly, the gift of awakening a special love for himself" (*BK* 15) and was welcomed by his likewise adoptive caregivers with an affection that Ivan failed to inspire in that same household. In both Pavel and Alyosha, the degree of ability to inspire love seems ingrained in the core of their beings, to the point of appearing predetermined, and the difference between them is all the more striking as their birth and early childhood have some marked parallels. They share a father and both their mothers are in some way associated with sainthood; they are both described as quiet; Alyosha at one point suffers a seizure resembling epilepsy, triggered by his father's tales of abusing his mother; and both are, in vastly different ways, marked as "strange" children. The radical contrast in their outcomes coupled with these parallels carries a cruel implication that does feel intuitively true: some people are simply more likeable than others.

The novel provides an abundance of reasons to treat Smerdyakov's loathsomeness as innate, a matter of a body tainted by the circumstances of its conception to the point of being almost biologically condemned to repulsiveness. Grigory in particular uses archaic Biblical language to

speak of Pavel as an abomination who came into the world by killing his saintly mother, highlighting a metaphysical rationale for his nature, but the explanation need not be metaphysical in order to be innate: according to contemporary psychiatric practice, for example, psychopathy can be observed in children as young as three or four, indicating a possible biological undercurrent of a disorder marked by underdeveloped empathy and a fascination with violence (Bradley Hagerty). However, biological and metaphysical explanations gloss over the fact that Smerdyakov does not just spontaneously inspire revulsion, but is continuously reinscribed as repulsive within the affective economy of the community. In Dostoevsky's world, no evil operates in isolation: according to Zosima's maxim, every person is "responsible for everything and everyone," and salvation from despondency lies in accepting it by "making yourself responsible for all the sins of men" (*BK* 272). The question of shared guilt plays out powerfully in the dynamic between Ivan and Smerdyakov, but Kanevskaya points to a broader communal responsibility for his transgression — in particular, the way in which everyone around him feeds the isolation from community that, as so many scholars of Dostoevsky have insisted, inevitably leads to tragedy. Not only does Fedor Pavlovich invent the humiliating last name Smerdyakov — a reference to his mother that bears connotations of "stench" and "serf" — but nobody except Marya Kondratyevna bothers to call him by his first name and patronymic.[67] The first name is one given at baptism, establishing a connection with God and the communion of Christians on earth; the patronymic grounds the individual in a family. The community erases both for Pavel, reducing his presence in their midst to foulness and baseness. The label is inescapable: people approach him in the market to share sentimental stories about his holy fool mother, and the degrading last name follows him to culinary school in Moscow. Even Alyosha, who typically rises to the challenge of assuming

[67] I am thankful to my colleague Benjamin Lussier for drawing my attention to this detail.

radical responsibility, fails to acknowledge the Karamazovs' illegitimate brother while Dmitry and Ivan quickly receive Alyosha's unconditional love despite all their failings. Apart from the spiritual responsibility of loving one's neighbor that Alyosha has to Pavel as a fellow man, he is as much of a brother to him as Dmitry, born of a different mother and raised apart until adulthood. Returning to the definition of active love I have explored earlier in this chapter, Alyosha failed to *pay attention* to Smerdyakov: to take the time to evaluate him on his own terms, and invest the active, mindful effort into loving him. At this junction, the seemingly "inherent" nature of lovability once again becomes pertinent: it is easy to love someone endearing, whereas meeting the challenge of loving in the face of repulsiveness is much harder, much more rare, and requires conscious commitment that sometimes has to push not only against personal instinct but against the structure of affective powers within the community.

Smerdyakov's exclusion is not just from the spiritual community, but from society as well, and thereby both the brotherhood in Christ and the secular world are complicit in his crime. Of course, this is not to say that the murderer is fully absolved of his blame: personal responsibility in spite of one's social circumstances is a persistent and non-negotiable principle for Dostoevsky. As Elena Namli summarizes: "It is not possible to disavow responsibility for another's suffering, regardless of whether one finds oneself in a situation where God refuses to reveal himself or whether one lacks the power to effect change" (17). At the same time, Namli notes that Dostoevsky disregards questions of social justice in favor of a personal and purely religious interpretation of individual and collective responsibility, and addresses the danger that his 'theology of suffering' may be "compatible with, and to some extent legitimizing, an attitude of social conformism" (13). Indeed, the exuberant religious enthusiasm of all three Karamazovian brothers, no matter where it previously finds its expression, fails precisely at the meeting point between compassion and class.

Unlike Zosima, whose spiritual rebirth is facilitated through recognizing the humanity of his servant, Alyosha fails to "attend" to his servant Smerdyakov, thereby missing the opportunity to prevent his father's death; Ivan condemns the murder as an act of a lackey, a person beneath him in stature despite being a half-brother; and Mitya's lofty aspiration to accept the burden of an unjust sentence to atone for his prior base behavior starts melting away as soon as the prison guards start treating him as a criminal, abandoning the respectful address he is accustomed to as a military captain and a gentleman. In spite of overwhelming derision for Pavel Fedorovich's lackey baseness, all the Russian torturers in Ivan's morbid stories are people of good breeding and high social standing; Totsky, himself a fine caregiver to a child, could have found them "tasteful and elegant." There is a clear dissonance between the noble characters' view of themselves and the real impact of their actions.

In his conversation with Marya Kondratyevna, Smerdyakov makes it clear that he is acutely aware of his exclusion. He is particularly resentful about the failure of his efforts to befriend and impress Ivan, who gives him attention for a while but then gets bored of Smerdyakov's overly simplistic mind and dismisses him as a "stinking lackey" (*BK* 191). While a large part of Ivan's appeal to Pavel lies in admiration of his high education and cerebral nature, it bears noting that the two sons may be more closely connected since childhood. Ivan is only a year younger than Smerdyakov, and as he would have been seven years old when he left Fedor Pavlovich's house, the two boys had to have played in the same garden and could well have remembered one another. Because of that, Ivan's condescending rejection is all the more painful, and Pavel's search for connection all the more meaningful. Critics largely agree that Ivan bears some of the responsibility for the murder through his refusal to acknowledge that he understands Smerdyakov's designs and directly renounce them; the servant, in turn, could not have acted without such a "permission,"

especially since there is not much cause for Pavel to murder his father. While he is constantly reminded of his status as a bastard and a lackey, Smerdyakov is also the only child who received any degree of care from Fedor Pavlovich: the old Karamazov took interest in his health and education, trusted and supported him, and may have been the only person who "for some reason even loved him" (*BK* 106). Pavel's petty pecuniary motives do not hold water: he seems to have taken the money only to further implicate Dmitry in the murder, and returns the entire amount to Ivan as proof of his confession before the suicide. His desperate desire for brotherhood might seem like a way out of the hopeless and humiliating position of a bastard son, and the failure to be accepted by Ivan is impossible to survive. Holquist writes:

> <Smerdyakov> murders his father less out of a desire for his own revenge than a desire to be a good servant of … his half-brother Ivan … When he discovers that Ivan is unwilling to grant his approval to the deed, Smerdyakov … commits suicide not out of fear of capture, but from the despair of a twice-abandoned orphan (182).

In the last conversation where Smerdyakov finally reveals his actions, Ivan repeatedly refers to him as a lackey: Pavel's social status as a servant and bastard son is once again made out to be defining force in his potential as a moral being and part of the community. In that regard, he is similar to Nastasya Filippovna, as his position in the affective economy of the Karamazov family and society at large is determined by and inscribed on those characteristics of his body that he has no control over, and that have to do with another person's sexual violence. Like the female character, he is nevertheless implicated in the shame. Smerdyakov complains: "Grigory Vasilievich reproaches me for rebelling against my nativity: 'You opened her matrix,' he says" (*BK* 190). In both cases, this violence breaks the victims' bodies away from the affective economy of happiness, denying them access to true happy objects. This dynamic, as Sara Ahmed reminds, always happens within and in favor of existing structures of power that are far more tangible than

metaphysical spiritual matters that are often the center of attention in readings of the relationships between the four brothers.

Aesthetic self-creation is not a process that occurs in isolation, or in a discreet system with two isolated participants. At no point is there a single surplus vision: they come from all sides, add up, intertwine, enter a dialogue that must remain unfinalizable in order for the self to retain its region of absolute privacy. These gazes are themselves shaped by others in a wide network — and this network, as it represents in many ways a network of affective economy, is most often monologic, aligned in a finalized manner with structures of power. With that, the idea of "cultivated" affective sensibilities hits upon the limitations and constraints imposed by existing economies. Change runs against power. When Bennett speculates on the possibilities of aesthetic-affective self-creation that would lead towards an ethics of generosity, she glosses over the concrete resources necessary to accomplish that goal. I argue that a welcoming community is one such resource. In the previous chapter, I argued that pure affect is not ethically sufficient for an individual, as a contextually situated "address in being" is required to be responsive and held responsible. The same is true of community and society: the affective valence and treatment of particular bodies cannot be considered justly without taking into account the surrounding affective economy and its power dynamics. With Nastasya Filippovna, I examined the damage that happens to the affect alien when they are shunned by their community; with Pavel Smerdyakov, I argue that the damage of exclusion extends beyond the individual and can lead to violence. If embracing the polyphonic world is indeed the way out of its darker parts, it is imperative that the world — however it might be — embraces us back.

3.8 A Conclusion: Aesthetic-Affective Self-Creation in Dostoevsky

In the preceding two chapters, I have explored multiple angles of interplay between affect and

the self-creation of the unfinalizable subject. In particular, I sought avenues where Bakhtinian unfinalizability might contribute to cultivating a mood of enchantment, an affect of joy, and an ethics of generosity as described by Jane Bennett. In Chapter 2, I problematized self-creation on both the personal and societal plane in my analysis of the two protagonists of *The Idiot*, who fail to reach productive dialogic engagement. Myshkin's failure to occupy an adequate position vis-a-vis the unfinalizability of others causes crises of the self that rattle him on the physical as well as psychological level. Meanwhile, Nastasya Filippovna's example shows how, from an affective as well as aesthetic perspective, violating the unfinalizability of a subject can be as material as the subject herself. I have also demonstrated that the discursive plane of dialogic and polyphonic engagement is underpinned by an intricate web of affects: those involved in the creation of the self (exemplified by the tension between mirror and movement visions proposed by Massumi), and those pervading society (affective economies described by Sara Ahmed). Additionally, the concept of affective economies substantially expands upon the connection Bakhtin makes between systems of power, finalizing language, seriousness, and love in "Rhetoric, to the Extent That It Lies."

Even though unfinalizability is requisite for dialogic engagement and polyphonic aesthetics, *The Idiot* clearly demonstrates that such a state can come at a cost. Both Myshkin and Nastasya Filippovna experience what might be called an acute state of unfinalizability which, just like prolonged states of intensified affect, is unsustainable and destructive. In addition to the extreme physical and mental anguish wrought by inhabiting non-consolidated selfhood (Myshkin) or subjecthood (Nastasya), the lack of stability severely hampers meaningful engagement with others. Even though the freedom of the self hinges on its perpetual becoming, the self needs to maintain integrity: an ability to maintain his/her unique and differentiated position, from which s/he can engage with others.

In the Bakhtinian framework, ethical responsibility and communal responsiveness are impossible without such individuation; and Jane Bennet argues that a "satisfying" aesthetic encounter that produces enchantment not only requires, but *engenders* a "harmony of the self," which is, in turn "the condition of possibility of any willing at all, good or ill (*Enchantment* 143). The encounter between Alyosha Karamazov and Grushenka, which I examined in the beginning of Chapter 3, achieves this goal. In a serendipitous moment of heightened affective intensity, the pair co-creates themselves by offering and inviting contributions of loving and attentive "surplus vision," and make moral decisions based on their renewed senses of self. In that encounter, they remain open-ended, unique, and non-finalized, but their self-image is nonetheless structured; and, as Bennett insists, "the ethical value of enchantment resides in its ability to persuade without compelling, to structure experience without insisting that this structure is the one that must be duplicated again and again" (*Enchantment* 27-28). In the remainder of the chapter, I examine the embodied-affective component of Alyosha's spiritual rebirth, and posit that it his vibrant Karamazovian nature — radically different from the sickly Prince Myshkin in its capacity to hold intense affect — that makes it possible for him to process sensations of enchantment and communion with the open-ended and polyphonic world. I also suggest that, although the discursive plane of Alyosha's experience is rooted in Christianity, the affective foundation of his religious experience is rooted in animal bodily impulses towards life-giving stimuli. Through connecting the Christian transformation to the biological foundations of religion alongside the ethically potent mood of enchantment, I gesture towards possibilities for secularizing these types of experiences.

However, a deeper analysis of the Karamazovian body raised two problems. First, the volatile nature of excess affect that does not always move towards generous and wondrous joy, and can cause internal spiritual crisis or spiral into outward violence. Although the engagement of the body

is indispensable for ethical thought and action, on its own it is fundamentally amoral — just like the rest of nature. Insofar as enchantment is a pleasurable affect, it can fall into the trap of solipsism, and Bennett cautions against pursuits of pleasurable excitement, which is incompatible with the ethically potent self-aware outward-oriented communion with the world. Second, a generous attitude, even if there is a general proclivity to it, can be limited, and Pavel Smerdyakov's example is a rude confrontation with the fact that some bodies can struggle to both give and receive love. Overcoming this obstacle and including them into a generous community requires initiative from those that, like Alyosha Karamazov, have a tendency towards an excess of love and attention; but that initiative is hampered by the power dynamics inherent to affective economies, manifested in *The Brothers Karamazov* through dynamics of class.

The potential of class and power imbalances to disrupt even the most earnest spiritual and affective strivings is a key motivating factor for the turn from theology to ideology I am about to make in the last two chapters of this project. In the second part of my project, I will expand my analysis of the Karamazovian *sladostrastie* by turning my attention to the affective underpinning of *sweetness* writ large, and its undercurrents in embodied encounters with ideology; and hone in on the social-affective dynamics of joy by introducing the carnival — another Bakhtinian concept that lies at the core of dialogism and polyphony.

Chapter 4: The Politics of Unfinalizability

"<*Sweet Movie* will be> as non-political as a glass of milk, as an orange, as summer shit studded with cherry pits. All these are political events." Dušan Makavejev, in an interview with Lorenzo Codelli, 1973

So far in this project, I argued that theories of affect put forward by contemporary scholars like Jane Bennett, Brian Massumi, Sara Ahmed, and Donovan Schaefer can greatly expand on Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of the self, interpersonal communication, and ethics; and that, conversely, the introduction of Bakhtinian concepts into ongoing conversations about affect is a valuable intervention that helps structure existing hypotheses that incorporate questions of aesthetics, and raise new problems in spaces where aesthetics and ethics meet. My analysis drew on Dostoevsky's work as the source of many Bakhtinian concepts. However, as I move to broaden the discussion of the pre-discursive forces of affect in the context of Bakhtin's concerns over the violence of the word, I turn to film as an aesthetic medium whose form incorporates language, but reaches beyond it.

Written literature has existed for millennia, and in arguing that the novel is the quintessential genre of modernity, Bakhtin traces its evolution from ancient predecessors, highlighting the importance of historicization to the development of aesthetic forms. Film, on the other hand, is a medium that could not have existed without the transformative effect of modernity on humankind and as such, it is perhaps a better tool than literature to explore Jane Bennett's pursuit of enchantment in phenomena like technology and the uniquely contemporary reality. However, while the medium is young, its aesthetic underpinnings could not have emerged in a vacuum. Cinematic genres draw on centuries of cultural history even as they create histories of their own. The most apparent connections to the novel can be found in plot structures and character

development in many works of narrative cinema. However, for Bakhtin, the process of "novelization" has a much deeper effect on other genres:

> They become more free and flexible … they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally — this is the most important thing — the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contract with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality … all these phenomena are explained by the transposition of other genres into this new and peculiar zone for structuring artistic models (a zone of contact with the present in all its open-endedness), a zone that was first appropriated by the novel ("Epic and the Novel" 7).
>
> Они становятся свободнее и пластичнее … они диалогизуются, в них, далее широко проникают смех, ирония, юмор, элементы самопародирования, наконец — и это самое главное — роман вносит в них проблемность, специфическую смысловую незавершенность и живой контакт с неготовой, становящейся современностью (незавершенным настоящим). Все эти явления … объясняются транспонировкой жанров в новую особую зону построения художественных образов (зону контакта с настоящим в его незавершенности), зону, впервые освоенную романом. (*SS* 5: 612)

"Novelized" cinema, then, would be one that is rooted in unfinalizability of the world and the present-focused becoming — fundamental aesthetic orientations that run deeper than specific topics, characters, and storytelling. A film whose unfinalizable aesthetic form reflects its novelization connects it not only to the novel itself, but to the novel's entire history; given the heightened corporeality that film brings by confronting the spectator with the human body in motion and close-up, it reflects with particular power the novel's roots in performance and spectacle, among which Bakhtin singles out the carnival.

For Bakhtin, the world of the carnival is one where hierarchies are inverted, and power is mocked and dethroned — features that survive in the aesthetics of the novel. To a large degree, this effect is mediated through the grotesque human body. In *Rabelais and His World,* Bakhtin stresses that his discussion of the carnival pertains specifically to medieval culture, and insists that his book does not intend to make any claims regarding aesthetics elsewhere. However, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* expands on the legacies of the carnival, discussing carnivalization more

broadly as a process that manifests across genres and temporalities. Aesthetic forms that succeed it carry on its liberatory power of destabilizing normative boundaries — a development that finds its full expression in the polyphonic worlds and unfinalizable characters of Dostoevsky's novels. As I will show later in this chapter, polyphony and unfinalizability – precisely insofar as they are a product of carnivalization of genre – are particularly relevant to both carrying the film's political message and the affective impact it has on the spectator.

As religion lost much of its power with the rise of secular societies in the 20th century,[68] ideology reigned supreme and needs to be introduced more substantially in order to understand modern enchantment divorced from its roots in magical beliefs. The opposite applies, as well: insofar as enchantment plays out beyond the personal, whether through emergence from dialogic interpersonal interactions or shaping ethics across cultures, ideologies need to be examined for their power to both enchant and produce enchantment's sinister Karamazovian obverse. The film I will be focusing on, Dušan Makavejev's 1974 *Sweet Movie*, corresponds to the goals of this analysis as it explores the two central 20th century ideologies — capitalism and communism — through engagement with embodiment and the connection between embodied knowledge and sociocultural reality. The film explores both liberatory potentialities and potential problems of intense affects, and employs formal and structural modalities that facilitate, inhibit, or question them. Both thematically and formally grounded in the on-screen and spectatorial body, and especially food and taste, *Sweet Movie* insists that politics shape the inside of the body, and are externally manifested on it. Asserting the inseparability of the body and ideology, the film

[68] The same cannot be said of the 21st century, when religious movements in the West and the East alike seem to be undergoing a renaissance, once again becoming a sociopolitical force to be reckoned with. The power of belief reigns supreme far beyond organized religion, too — Donovan Schaefer's recent work on conspiracy theorists is one convincing example of that.

prioritizes the movement of ideology from the environment into interiority, with an eye towards its expression from the inside out. In addition to contemporary film and affect theory dedicated to problems of expressing the sociopolitical through the biological, I propose an added layer of interpretation through the lens of carnival: an orientation towards the world that emerges from and manifests through the ribald and often disgusting body, but is inextricably linked to structures of power in society, as well as a broader cosmic environment inhabited by humanity. The Bakhtinian carnival, with its emphasis on the devouring and excreting grotesque body as an integral part of hierarchical inversions and decrowning through parody, helps understand the exact mechanisms by which treatment of the body in *Sweet Movie* facilitates a strong political message. Polyphony and unfinalizability – especially insofar as they are a product of carnivalization of genre – are likewise relevant to both the political message of the film, and the affective impact it has on the spectator. Contextualizing *Sweet Movie* within a broader network of genres Makavejev utilizes to create a "patchwork" film, I discuss the most ambitious challenge it poses: that of spectatorial complicity with both on-screen and off-screen violence.

In this chapter, I will introduce the film and its creator, and establish the thematic connections to the remainder of my project by examining the crucial role played by sweetness on both the symbolic and the embodied plane. I will demonstrate how the formal features of *Sweet Movie* — in particular, Makavejev's signature montage approaches — create unfinalizability and dialogism within the aesthetic structure of the work. Then, in my final chapter, I will address the power of cinematic polyphony to facilitate confrontations with ideologies through affective means, delivering it directly to the real bodies in front of the camera or the screen.

4.1 Dušan Makavejev and *Sweet Movie* (1974)

Although *Sweet Movie* is an international production, it is profoundly influenced by

Makavejev's Yugoslav origin. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was founded in the aftermath of the Second World War, shaped by a legacy of grassroots communist partisan resistance to fascist occupation. Having avoided the long arm of Stalinism, Yugoslavia was the chief founder of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1960, and it tried — arguably, with some success — to get the best of both worlds of the Cold War by walking the thin line between socialist governance and economical ties to the West. In the centuries past, its territories were split almost equally between the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empires, thus becoming home to a variety of nations and ethnicities and influenced equally by the European civilizational aspirations and the unique cultural legacies of the Near East. "Yugos, Greeks, and Turks" — a group Makavejev bands together in solidarity in *Sweet Movie* — falls under the murky category of white-but-not-quite, viewed suspiciously by the orientalist gaze of civilized Europe. Yugoslavia's bloody disintegration in a succession of nationalist wars in the 1990s gave prominence to the word *balkanization*, a term beloved by foreign journalists who often use it with a degree of *sladostrastie*. The Balkans are cast as the natural habitat of all things inadmissible in well-ordered societies; their central function is to offer a tragic counterpoint to societies who imagine themselves to have overcome "barbaric" impulses through enlightened reason. However, as motifs from Makavejev's work and the theoretical contributions of Branislav Vučićević exemplify, the natives approach their history with excellent, ironic dark humor that reflects intuitive knowledge of its own region of absolute privacy, guarded from the finalizing eye of the outsider.

Yugoslav cinema was born with the country itself. Before the Second World War, there was no film industry to speak of, and the handful of existing theaters only showed foreign works. The new socialist future, however, called for transformative modernization. In less than a decade after the war, the Yugoslav state had developed a robust infrastructure to support a budding industry,

and soon gave rise to exceptional filmmakers acclaimed on the international stage. Alongside government-supported studio productions, amateur associations and festivals thrived throughout the 1950s, providing many enthusiasts opportunities to join the cinematic community. Among these enthusiasts was one Dušan Makavejev, a graduate of psychology from the University of Belgrade, who made a series of shorts and documentaries between 1953 and 1964. Eventually, he got a big break: his first feature film, *Man Is Not a Bird*, was released in 1965 to great critical acclaim, followed closely by the equally successful *Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967) and *Innocence Unprotected* (1968). Alongside Želimir Žilnik, Aleksandar Petrović, and Živojin Pavlović, he became a figurehead of the Black Wave, a landmark movement in Yugoslav cinema. Alongside the Marxist-humanist philosophers in the Yugoslav Praxis movement, Black Wave filmmakers offered a powerful critique of Yugoslav society, which was falling short on its promise of building a bright socialist future for all. In the face of growing bureaucratization and state control, they demanded a "socialism with a human face;" Makavejev, who uniquely among them focused on the role of sexuality in individual and social life alike, demanded also that socialism should have a human body. His work was strongly influenced by the German-American Marxist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, who became the subject of Makavejev's most celebrated film: the 1971 *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism*, whose titular abbreviation that can be read both as Wilhelm Reich and World Revolution. Reich, a uniquely controversial figure across the ideological spectrum, emphasized the role of the body in psychological processes and disruption, arguing that sexual repression leads not only to mental disorders, but broader societal ills. No revolution, Reich insisted, could succeed without first liberating the body from the constraints of bourgeois sexuality — a premise that was not received well in either socialist nor psychoanalytic circles. Later in life, he developed a theory that the

human libidinal energy is connected to a larger, vital cosmic form he dubbed *orgonon;*[69] as he attempted to develop therapeutic approaches that would incorporate orgonon into treating his patients' physical ailments, he was arrested in the United States for practicing pseudo-medicine, and died in prison in 1957.

Makavejev's *W.R.* is in part a documentary about Reich's life, work, and legacy. The footage, shot in the United States, includes not only testimonials from Reich's surviving family and therapists whose practice follows in his footsteps, but likewise sequences featuring New York artists and cultural figures that explore and question liberated Western sexuality. The documentary is interspersed with a fictional storyline where a young Yugoslav woman Milena (Milena Dravić), a staunch communist and a devotee of Reich's ideas falls in love with a Soviet ice-skater Vladimir Ilych (Ivica Vidović). Her fervent advances to the Russian are met with canned political slogans extoling the virtues of communism, while in the background her roommate Jagoda (Jagoda Kaloper) has raunchy sex with Ljuba, a soldier in the Yugoslav army (Miodrag Andrić). Milena finally succeeds in attracting the sexual attention of the cold Russian, but he cannot contain the intensity of sexual passion, and decapitates his lover with his ice skate. In the final sequence, Milena's severed head is resurrected, and affirms her devotion to communism and sexuality alike. Makavejev's exquisite gift for innovative montage came to the fore in *Mysteries of the Organism*, making it his lasting masterpiece — in the West, it earned him a cult following, becoming a darling of critics in Cannes.

After the international success of *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism*, much was expected of Makavejev's next feature film. In an interview with Lorenzo Codelli, he summarized his upcoming

[69] While the notion of orgonon is widely rejected by the scientific community, it remains a productive theoretical concept in thinking through the connections between affective forces, vibrant materiality, and their ideological and societal impact.

project thus:

> The name — *A Sweet Movie*, genre — erotic comedy with a slight off-flavor of anti-psychiatry; starring in principal roles — Milena Dravić; the idea, scenario, screenplay, editing, direction, additional dialogues — Dušan Makavejev; producer — Dunav Film; headed by director Vicko Raspor; executive production — a dynamic group within Dunav film, led by Aca Stojanović and Dejan Đurković; assistant director Bojana Marijan-Makavejev; shooting to be done mostly in Yugoslavia and little elsewhere, too, it all depends; the advertising slogan — Try Me, I'm Delicious!; filming to begin at the end of September 1972; the first sound print — middle of 1973; the world premiere — May 1973, Cannes.

However, the original plans for the development of *Sweet Movie* were not meant to be. Unlike the foreign audiences, authorities in Makavejev's native Yugoslavia had little love for the political and sexual subversiveness of *Mysteries of the Organism* and the director soon found himself blacklisted by the government funding sources, making it difficult for him to find employment in his homeland.[70] Along with some other similarly controversial artists and intellectuals, he left the country in 1972. The foreign critical audience, hungry for more, welcomed him with open arms, and he had little trouble finding the means to continue his work. Instead of being shot in Yugoslavia, *Sweet Movie* turned into an international West German-French-Canadian production, supported by a hefty budget and an impressive cast. However, the outcome of these changes bore little resemblance to the originally conceived "comedy of healing and rebirth" (Mortimer 200), and had either failed or adamantly refused to convey the tongue-in-cheek playfulness and vitality of Makavejev's previous work. *Sweet Movie* turned out to be much darker, and much more emotionally and intellectually disorienting than anyone expected.

[70] Shortly after its release, *Mysteries of the Organism* became central to the critical debate over the place of sexually subversive art in the Yugoslav socialist cause. Goran Radovanović's feature documentary *The Makavejev Case, or Trial in a Movie Theater* (2018) collects existing archival records of the public debate event that show Makavejev's disagreement over the direction of development of socialism with the conservative party ideologues.

It is hard to overstate the degree of radical transformation of form and narrative *Sweet Movie* had undergone between its early drafts and the final version. To a great extent, the cacophony of interventions into the script was caused by last-minute production changes outside of Makavejev's control. Although his exile from Yugoslavia opened doors to a larger budget, an international cast, and exciting shooting locations, it also meant that Milena Dravić, famed for her electrifying lead role in *Mysteries of the Organism*, could no longer participate. Unlike the director, she would remain in Yugoslavia for the rest of her life. While her work with Makavejev did raise eyebrows among the highest echelons of the Yugoslav government establishment, her status as arguably the greatest star of Yugoslav cinematography seems to have shielded her from serious repercussions.

Milena (Milena Dravić) decapitated in the final sequence of *W. R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971).

In Dravić's absence, the leading role was initially taken on by the Canadian actress Carole Laure. However, in another stroke of bad luck for Makavejev, Laure abruptly quit in the middle

of the shooting. Scrambling to complete the project, Makavejev hastily wrote the storyline of Anna Planeta, played by Anna Prucnal, to supplement the already existing footage. In Makavejev's original design, Dravić's decapitated heroine from *W.R.* would be resurrected in a fragmented, tripartite incarnation embarking on a journey towards synthesis: "Milena Gold was to be a jet-setter devoted to pleasure, Milena Red a nostalgic figure like someone out of Gorky but with humor, and Milena Gray catatonic. Through participating in a series of experiences, they were to become one Milena who was truly alive" (Mortimer 200). Ultimately, the three Milenas did manifest between the two actresses: Carole Laure, as the troubled and victimized Miss World, traverses the path between Milena Gold and Milena Grey; Anna Prucnal as Captain Anna Planeta, the manic "prostitute of the Revolution," represents Milena Red. However, the intended bridge between *Sweet Movie* and *Mysteries of the Organism* hinged on the acting body of the *original* Milena. Dravić's spectral absence in the history of *Sweet Movie* embodies the disintegration of the optimistic promises Makavejev made in *W.R.*

Ominously set in 1984, *Sweet Movie* begins with a grotesque parody of a beauty pageant: Mrs. Martha Aplanalp (Jane Mallett), founder of the Chastity Belt Foundation, is searching for the world's loveliest intact hymen. The reward: marriage to Mrs. Aplanalp's uncouth son, Mr. Dollars/Mr. Kapital (John Vernon), the richest man in the world. Gynecological exams take place in a spinning chair in front of the cameras, to the sound of drumming performed by Orthodox priests. The Canadian contestant (Carole Laure) wins the title of Miss World and goes on a helicopter ride over Niagara Falls to new husband's cellophane-wrapped home. However, her marriage quickly sours: on their first wedding night when, instead of having sex, Mr. Dollars

disinfects her entire body with rubbing alcohol, and then urinates on her with his golden penis[71]. At this point, a parallel narrative begins to emerge: a boat called *Survival*, carrying a papier-mâché face of Karl Marx on the bow, is sailing down the Amsterdam canals, helmed by Captain Anna Planeta (Anna Prucnal). The Captain is spotted by a young sailor from the battleship Potemkin, who later introduces himself as Luv Bakunin (Pierre Clementi). After several persistent attempts to attract her attention, Bakunin makes his way onto the boat, professes love and revolutionary fervor to Anna, and proceeds to have vigorous intercourse with her, delighting the onlookers at the banks. Meanwhile, the disillusioned Miss World demands a divorce and hefty alimony, but Mrs. Aplanalp quickly disposes of her with the aid of a black servant, Jeremiah (Roy Callender), who tries to rape her prior to stuffing her into a red suitcase, and shipping her to Paris.

"Try me, I'm delicious!" Jeremiah (Roy Callender) voices the "advertising slogan" Makavejev announced for the film in his earlier interviews. Miss World (Carole Laure) accepts the invitation and licks him: "It's sweet."

[71] Mr. Dollars's presentation and demeanor is such an apt caricature of Donald Trump that it bears noting that, at the time of making of *Sweet Movie*, Trump was just beginning his career in real estate and was not by any measure a prominent tabloid figure.

In Paris, Miss World encounters El Macho (Sami Frey), a dashing Mexican singer recording a music video on the Eiffel Tower. They fall in love at first sight and start having sex on the spot, but as they are caught in the act by a group of Catholic nuns, Miss World's vagina clenches and traps El Macho's penis. In a humiliating public spectacle, they are carried off into the kitchen of a nearby restaurant and carefully separated. El Macho is immediately asked to perform a number for the kitchen staff and, to Miss World's horror, awkwardly obliges, naked from the waist down and at the verge of tears. Watching her lover dance away from her, Miss World starts breaking eggs on her head.

Miss World (Carole Laure), driven mad by humiliation, breaks eggs on her head

By this point in the parallel narrative, Anna and Bakunin are enjoying their romance inside her boat. The cabin features a large vat filled with sugar is suspended from the ceiling like a cradle, walls lined with shelffuls of candy, and a collage of posters of Hollywood stars and communist luminaries. As she bathes her lover like a child, Anna warns him of the danger of staying on her boat, but he brushes it off. In his signature montage move, Makavejev abruptly cuts to Nazi

German documentary footage of the excavation of mass graves in Katyn Forest, where the Soviet forces in the Second World War executed and buried thousands of Polish officers. The sequence finishes with a quote of Sir Owen O'Malley's response to the news of the massacre written over a shot of molten red wax: "Let us talk of it never, and remember it always." Cut to Bakunin, who joyfully jumps out of the bath tub and rolls in the bed of sugar. He and Anna are then seen sitting on the bank: she recounts her disappointments in prior revolutions, including her involvement in the Spanish Civil War; since this is temporally impossible given her age in the film, Anna's narrative attains an increasingly allegorical, fairy-tale like atmosphere. In the next sequence, Anna lures four prepubescent boys onto her boat using her ample stash of sweets. She then emerges wearing a ragged wedding dress, and seductively strips for them to the soundtrack of Orthodox wedding liturgy.

Anna Planeta (Anna Prucnal) seductively undressing for the boys. She ends her striptease by quoting Norman Mailer's interpretation of Marilyn Monroe's cinematic gaze: "You can fuck me if you're lucky, Sugar."

Next, we see a catatonic Miss World being dropped off at a therapeutic commune, a semi-documentary environment where eight members of a real-life Viennese group, led by the Reichian art therapist Otto Muehl, engaged in their usual practices with eight professional actors in front of cameras. Anna Prucnal, redheaded and seemingly unrelated to the character of Anna Planeta,[72] introduces Miss World to the group, singing a revolutionary march.[73] The ensuing therapeutic activities focus on unshackling the body from its societally imposed constraints, and involve an assortment of graphic acts. A woman breastfeeds Miss World to bring her back to life; in a grotesque banquet sequence, characters play with food using their hands and mouths, then proceed to vomit and urinate at each other, all in an atmosphere of joy and delight; the still catatonic Miss World absent-mindedly caresses a man's flaccid penis. An episode of competitive defecation into plates follows cheered on by the whole ensemble. As the event wraps up to the sounds of *Ode to Joy*, Makavejev cuts to a black-and-white German documentary about gymnastic drills for babies, and then returning to the commune to show an adult man perform a total regression into helpless infancy. The allegedly therapeutic encounter is guided by the commune's leader, Otto Muehl, who challenges the helpless "baby" with violence and aggression; later, however, all members of the commune team up to soothe him with gestures of tenderness and care. The commune festivities

[72] Prucnal is indeed not in character here: the Anna Planeta narrative was written hastily after Carole Laure abruptly quit the production. During the making of the commune sequences, Prucnal was just one of the participating background actors, albeit a prominent one.

[73] The music for this hymn purportedly dates back to Prussia at the time of the Napoleonic wars, but has been adapted by various revolutionary movements starting in the late 19th century, when the Russian lyrics, *Smelo tovarishchi v nogu* (*Bravely, Comrades, In Step*) were composed by L. P. Radin. In Germany, it was adapted by the workers' movement as *Brüder zur Sonne, zur Freiheit (Brother, to the Sun, to Freedom),* but later appropriated by the NSDAP with lyrics that glorified Adolf Hitler. In Serbo-Croatian, the melody is known as *Budi se istok i zapad* (*The East and the West Are Rising)*. In *Sweet Movie,* Anna sings it in a mixture of French and Polish — however, I have not been able to identify the lyrics, and cannot confirm whether the song exists in those languages outside the film. Given Makavejev's penchant for obfuscating the origin of some of his references, I would not exclude the possibility that the bilingual Franco-Polish variant was written specifically for *Sweet Movie*.

wrap up with a naked ball, where everyone but the visibly distressed Miss World seems to be having fun.

Otto Muehl forces a screaming man to throw up by applying pressure onto his stomach, then smears the vomit over his face, and slaps him when the man attempts to get up. The exercise is meant to be therapeutic by causing regression into an infantile state of absolute helplessness, in order to bring out and let go of the rage accumulated at that developmental stage. Miss World (Carol Laure) is seen recoiling in the background.

In a final return to the cabin of the boat, Anna and Bakunin make love in her large vat of sugar. She once again warns him about the danger, but Bakunin expresses a yearning to die for the revolution, and Anna obliges, stabbing him with a large carving knife. She is eventually arrested, and the police takes out the dead bodies of Bakunin and the four boys, wrapped up in cellophane like lollipops. Miss World, having overcome her catatonic state, nevertheless ends up exploited by the capitalist system. She is cast in commercial where she is stripped, covered in molten chocolate, and made to roll and gyrate in a pool of the sticky substance. The greedy camera follows her horrifying drowning in chocolate, as her mother-in-law returns into a voiceover to deliver a sinister monologue on the importance of discipline and sexual purity. The final sequences of the film return

to footage of the Katyn soldiers, and the corpses of the murdered boys, who slowly emerge from their cellophane cocoons, resurrected.

Anna Planeta (Anna Prucnal) licks her lips while stabbing Luv Bakunin (Pierre Clementi) in their vat of sugar.

Miss World (Carole Laure) bathed in chocolate.

A cacophonous flurry of disjointed narrative threads and jarring imagery, *Sweet Movie* marked a turning point in Makavejev's career: while he was able to make another handful of feature films, he never obtained a production budget that large, nor was he able to replicate the excitement and commercial success he had achieved with *W.R.* Given that *Sweet Movie* is such a landmark film for his development, there is surprisingly little scholarship on it, although Branislav Dimitrijević's 2017 book-length study substantially contributed to filling that gap. When attention has been given to *Sweet* Movie, critics have by and large been interested in the question of its ethics – especially the ethics of its creation – and the baffling manner in which its political message (or, indeed, even narrative sense) remains elusive. My goal in the coming sections is to build connections between the film's message and ethics, and its engagement with the bodies and affects of characters, actors, and spectators alike.

4.2 The Taste of Politics

As its title suggests, *Sweet Movie* seeks to evoke gustatory sensations: it aims to engage the spectator's body in a manner that brings it closer to the film, transforming distanced viewing into a sensation of physical touch. Jennifer Barker highlights the precarious ambiguity of tactile contact between cinema and skin: "both pleasure and horror arise from the skin's function as boundary — as something that keeps the carnality within us concealed and the carnality of the world at bay — but also as something that brings us into contact with the things in us and around us at the same time" (55). The liminality of taste is even more dangerous than touch. To eat is to allow the outside world to penetrate the viscera not only without exerting violence, but often causing pleasure. Taste is a herald of boundaries crossed: by the time the world is tasted and we know whether it is sweet or bitter, it has already made its way inside the mouth; in the project of keeping our bodies isolated from things that are abject or otherwise dangerous, "taste operates as a defense of last resort; it is

meant to catch only those things that get by the outer sensory defenses" (Miller 67). However, the risk of "tasting the world" and finding it repulsive is inevitable. As Sara Ahmed notes, "the very project of survival requires we take something other into our bodies … to survive we open ourselves up, and we keep the orifices of the body open" (*Cultural Politics* 83). When our other senses convince us that it is safe to put something in our mouths, taste can either affirm or invalidate the promise of pleasure: to be disgusted by taste is to realize not only that we have come into contact with danger, but that our body's capacity to shield us has betrayed us. The impact of taste is unavoidable: just like smell, it circumvents the barriers of the body and, by proxy, the defense mechanisms of the psyche tasked with processing sensory input. Thus, Herbert Marcuse argues, smell and taste pose a unique threat to the sociocultural repressive mechanisms that seek to discipline the pleasure principle in the human organism. He writes:

> Freud thought that 'the coprophilic elements in the instinct have proved incompatible with our aesthetic ideas, probably since the time when man developed an upright posture and so removed his organ of smell from the ground.' There is, however, another aspect to the subduing of the proximity senses in civilization: *they succumb to the rigidly enforced taboos on too intense bodily pleasure*. The pleasure of smell and taste is 'much more of a bodily, physical one, hence also more akin to sexual pleasure, than is the more sublime pleasure aroused by sound and the least bodily of all pleasures, the sight of something beautiful.' Smell and taste give, as it were, unsublimated pleasure *per se* (and unrepressed disgust). They relate (and separate) individuals immediately, without the generalized and conventionalized forms of consciousness, morality, aesthetics. Such immediacy is incompatible with the effectiveness of organized *domination*, with a society which "tends to isolate people, to put distance between them, and to prevent spontaneous relationships and the 'natural' animal-like expressions of such relations." The pleasure of the proximity senses plays on the erotogenic zones of the body — and does so only for the sake of pleasure. *Their unrepressed development would eroticize the organism to such an extent that it would counteract the desexualization of the organism required by its social utilization as an instrument of labor* (39, emph. mine).

Although the initial impact of proximity senses is pre-conscious, the sensations they convey inevitably and immediately attach to their symbolic meanings. Sara Ahmed draws attention to the

unbreakable connection between the sensory and the metaphorical meaning of "good taste" when she reminds us, following Bourdieu, that "taste is a very specific bodily orientation that is shaped by what is already decided to be good or a higher good … delight and disgust are social as well as bodily orientations" (*Happiness* 33). What tastes good or is disgusting is shaped almost entirely by what our bodies have been conditioned to recognize as delicious or dangerous. In Ahmed's view, moral and aesthetic "taste" is experienced just as viscerally as the physical flavor, and flavors acquire associations with social values, creating an unbreakable connection between value judgments and the body.

> Bodies also do not arrive in neutral: the acquisition of orientations towards some things and not others as being good. If we do not simply find happy objects anywhere, we also do not simply inhabit the right kind of body. We acquire habits, as forms of good taste that differentiate between objects in terms of their affective as well as moral value" (Happiness 34).

As our social and political lives shape our senses, so too do our embodied experiences become political on both the individual and collective plane. Categories of good and bad taste — sensory as well as metaphorical — are part of the complex affective economy that circulates both within and between bodies, and these bodies need not be exclusively human, or even exclusively animate. Makavejev's comparison of *Sweet Movie's* politics to "a glass of milk, an orange, a summer shit studded with cherry pits," recalls Bennett's reading of Deleuze and Guattari's *assemblage:* a "confederation" of vital, non-human actants that obtain agency despite their lack of will or intentionality, through the network of their interactions. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, Bennett considers such inanimate assemblages a vital part of generating enchantment in the world. In her later work, *Vibrant Matter,* she discusses them as a pathway towards considering "the active role of *nonhuman* materials in public life" (2). Her understanding of material reality as vibrant and vital posits that non-human objects and phenomena have agentic capacities that

permeate, co-create and co-participate in human affairs beyond the individual bodies — including politics

Bennett's scholarship falls under the wide umbrella of New Materialisms, theories that tend to move past or even against the kinds of historical Marxist readings that are directly aligned with Makavejev's work. The ahistorical and often posthumanist nature of materiality conceived as vibrant, embodied, and, in Lorraine Mortimer's words, "carnal," raises questions of its precarious disassociation from the human responsibility for the material circumstances caused by real sociopolitical and economic dynamics. However, I argue that the two approaches to materiality – vibrant and dialectical – enter into a dialogue that exposes the inextricable connections the human body and its immediate social, political, cultural, personal, and material environment. Rather than offer a gateway for the spectator to opt out of making judgments on the political and ethical questions raised by the film, the diffuse openness of meaning in *Sweet Movie* is a challenge "to fully assume the responsibilities accompanying the freedom granted to him or her, to choose a specific perspective, a concrete idea, he or she will stand for" (Levi, *Disintegration in Frames* 34). Rather than use carnality as a tool for alienating material realities from history, Makavejev turns to the body's vibrant responsiveness for additional perspectives on human ethical and political responsibility, stressing that non-symbolized meanings cannot be separated from the symbolic.

Food is particularly potent from the perspectives of both materialisms — the historical or Marxist, that traces the sociocultural and political history of the food's production, distribution, and consumption as a commodity; and the vital and affective materiality manifested in food's ability to interact with the interiority of the body, ultimately contributing to the creation and consolidation of minded states mediated by the gut. Foodstuffs are "conative bodies vying alongside and within another complex body (a person's 'own' body) … food will appear as actant

inside and alongside intention-forming, morality-(dis)obeying, language-using, reflexivity-wielding, and culture-making human beings, and as an inducer-producer of salient, public effects" (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* 39). Food acts both penetratively — transgressing the boundaries of the body as an object foreign to it — and constitutively — as it eventually *becomes* the body. The process of becoming can be located in the gut; Elizabeth Wilson argues that "the gut *is* an organ of the mind: it ruminates, deliberates, comprehends" (5). The histories that determine what is or isn't edible or tasteful ultimately dictate what and how a person might become physically as well as socially; and, equally, the symbolic and nutritive constituents of foods participate in the meaning-making that takes place in the body just as much as it does in the mind. *Sweet Movie* is committed to taking seriously such an embodied approach to knowing the world. In Cavell's words, it "follows out the idea that the way to assess the state of the world is to find out how it tastes (a sense modality not notably stressed by orthodox epistemologists but rather consigned to a corner of aesthetics) — which means both to find out how it tastes to you and how it tastes you, for example, to find out whether you and the world are disgusting to one another" (318). As it engages with taste on the thematic and formal level, *Sweet Movie* probes questions of edibility, pleasure, and digestibility on both the sensory and the symbolic plane.

4.3 It's Sweet!

Sweetness stands out among other flavors for its strong connection to pleasure. Sweets are not essential for nourishment and are consumed instead as an enjoyable, indulgent addition: a guilty pleasure for pleasure's sake. In the 19th and 20th century, the pleasure of sweetness became omnipresent, especially in the West: a small luxury people across social classes have grown to expect as part of their day-to-day lives. Already in *The Brothers Karamazov*, there is an apparent link between imagery of sweetstuffs and dangerous sensuality: the etymology of the word

sladostrastie literally breaks down to "passion for sweetness," and its irresistible draw is a gateway to the baseness and violence of *karamazovshchina.* The Serbo-Croatian title of *Sweet Movie* shares the same etymology: *Slatki film*.

In her exhaustive history of sugar, Elizabeth Abbott reminds that the contemporary relationship with sugar is a product of a complicated and often bloody history: the newly acquired taste for cane sugar developed by the Western elites in the 15th century emerged from the early days of colonization, and over a span of several decades led to the proliferation of sugarcane plantations in the West Indies. The powerful colonial economies driving the cultivation of sugarcane decimated native populations and were both the initial trigger and the main driver of the enslavement of thousands of Africans in the centuries to come. Though at first it remained a rare luxury available only to the elites, the increase in production and improvement of trade routes soon made it almost universally available. To the poor and the working class, and even the enslaved people who grew it, sugar long remained a caloric supplement relied upon when more substantial food was not available. At the same time, it opened up new avenues of emulating aristocratic habits for the better-off bourgeoisie. Abbott writes: "Sugar played the nefarious role of the opiate of the people. It was a psychologically addictive substance that energized and delighted; it deadened appetite and satisfied hunger pangs; and it opened up new possibilities of consumption and social respectability previously unattainable to all but the privileged classes" (Ch. 2). The economic history of sugar production closely follows that of modern capitalism itself. It was a major factor of the advent of global trade and the horrors of colonialism and enslavement that followed it; its presence helped shape the era of industrialization and the growing population of urban workers in need of fast nourishment. It remains an omnipresent commodity — at once a necessity and an indulgence — even as the agricultural workers at contemporary plantations continue to bear the

brunt of colonial legacy, subsisting in poverty and squalor, still reliant on stolen stalks of cane to soothe their hunger.

Along its economic pathway sugar accumulated cultural meanings and associations across cultures. Wendy Woloson writes:

> Sugar's qualities of sweetness became linked with specific human traits. As a rarity, sugar signified male economic prowess in America. As it became cheaper and more prolific, however, it became linked with femininity … by the end of the nineteenth century, consumer and consumed had become entirely conflated: sweets had been feminized, and women were sweet (3).

The feminization of sweetness is dramatically enacted on Miss World's body: her narrative begins with the "sweetness" of her hymen, and the chocolate she drowns in simultaneously and literally transforms her into a *sweet woman* and a commodity. The sexualization of her body — prominent throughout *Sweet Movie* — peaks in her final sequence, recalling the historical role of chocolate and sugar as a purported aphrodisiac. Mister Muscle, an extreme of brute masculine force, is the polar opposite of her virginal femininity, and in this reductive portrayal reflects the obverse facet of chocolate's commodification: the fetishization of Black bodies as dangerously sexual, freakishly strong, and barely human. His skin is "chocolate," and he invites Miss World to taste it: by virtue of his race, he is a priori "edible," a commodity safe only insofar as he cooperates with the forces that surround him. He returns in the form of a petrified chocolate statue with glowing eyes in the background of Miss World's chocolate commercial: as she is subsumed under the same kind of edible substance, they are reunited in their status as objects of exploitation. Just as ideal female bodies participate in the dissemination and commercialization of sweetened chocolate, the presence of a Black man alongside Miss World echo the realities of its production.[74]

[74] The dynamic between Miss World and Mister Muscle has not been much remarked upon in existing literature on *Sweet Movie*, but its symbolic power can hardly be overstated. Even though analyzing it in depth is outside the scope, at the very least it bears reminding that Miss World, a white woman, chooses to sell herself into chocolate-ness,

Shots of Mr. Muscle and Miss World where the pair is linked to sweetness and chocolate.

whereas Mister Muscle does not have the luxury of such a choice; in a film where gender and class dynamics are central, the presence Mister Muscle brings in the added complexity of race.

In that regard, the most relevant to the present discussion is the cultural implication of footage of a forced sexual encounter between a black man and a white woman, and the impact of showing it on screen in 1974. Violence against Black men was often justified by the alleged sexual threat they posed to white women, and the U.S. Supreme Court only struck down interracial marriage and miscegenation laws less than a decade before *Sweet Movie*, in 1967.

Even as the feminization of sweetness was driven primarily by chocolatiers, the cheaper and more readily available sugar candy was targeted primarily towards children throughout the 19th century, and continues to be so to this day. Unlike sweetened chocolate, which has a long history as a high-end commodity in the form of truffles and elaborate bonbonnieres, sugar itself is cheap, offered up as an enticing, easily accessible treat to children in the form of lollipops and hard candy; these are the exact objects, along with plain granulated sugar, that dominate Anna Planeta's lair, drawing in the four innocent boys and her infantilized lover. In contrast to Mister Dollars's garish decor dominated by gratuitous displays of wealth, Anna Planeta's boat is cluttered with castaway items, resembling something between a flea market and a landfill, offering abundance and universal availability without a trace of opulence. The narrative line that critiques capitalism is paired with the refined commodity of dark chocolate; the one that critiques socialism, with the raw product of white sugar. In pairing the two ideologies with different modes of sweetness, Makavejev gives his audience a taste of what it means to be displaced from Yugoslavia as the liminal in-between; the absurdity of extreme stereotyping within both narratives exposes the absurdity of the dichotomy in the first place.

The symbolic signification of sweets trickles into their affective reception, as they are often loaded with emotional connotations: "depending on the product and context, confectionary came to signify everything from romantic to familial love, from passion to piety" (Woloson 4). In romantic courtship in particular, chocolate functions as a stand-in for affection; sweetness, then, can be read as the site of displacement of genuine human connection into a commodity. In a manner entirely different from that in *W.R.*, *Sweet Movie* speaks of alienation — especially romantic and sexual — as the core of political failure of both ideologies. The emotional and gustatory allure of sweetness leads the victims of both ends of the ideological spectrum to willingly succumb to its

temptation; and their deaths through transformation into sweetness itself remind that excessive sweetness is nauseating, devouring, and ultimately destructive. In a way, sweetness substitutes enchanted openness to the world and a dialogic curiosity for the other, entrapping the subject instead in greedy, sensual self-indulgence.

Anna Planeta's sugary lair.

Alongside visual imagery loaded with symbolism that evokes the histories and sensations of sweetness, *Sweet Movie* uses cinematic language to touch and engage the spectators' bodies. Jennifer Barker explains the capacity of cinema to produce that effect:

> Cinematic tactility … is a general attitude toward the cinema that the human body enacts in particular ways: haptically, at the tender surface of the body; kinesthetically and muscularly, in the middle dimension of muscles, tendons, and bones that reach toward and through cinematic space; and viscerally, in the murky recesses of the body, where heart, lungs, pulsing fluids, and firing synapses receive, respond to, and reenact the rhythms of cinema. The film's body also adopts toward the world a tactile attitude of intimacy and reciprocity that is played out across its nonhuman body: haptically, at the screen's surface, with the caress of shimmering nitrate and the scratch of dust and fiber on celluloid; kinesthetically, through the contours of on- and off-screen space and of the bodies, both

> human and mechanical, that inhabit or escape those spaces; and viscerally, with the film's rush through a projector's gate and the 'breathing' of lenses (3).[75]

Through its ability to interact with the spectator, the materiality of film as medium can be understood as vibrant in Jane Bennett's sense; the film co-creates both itself and the spectator at the same time, in a process of perpetual becoming. "We do not lose ourselves in the film," Barker asserts, "so much as we exist — emerge, really, in the contact between our body and the film's body … we are in a relationship of intimate, tactile, reversible contact with the film's body — a complex relationship marked as often by tension as by alignment, by repulsion as often as by attraction" (19). The gustatory and carnal materiality of sugar and chocolate, as well as the sweetness they carry, is communicated via the soundtrack associated with edible matter and its consumption (pronounced crunching of sugar, splashing of chocolate, sounds of choking and the gag reflex); and shots that emphasize its tactile encounter with the skin (close-ups of Bakunin's sugar-covered face, Miss World smearing liquid chocolate on her body). Such impressions — sensory much more than cognitive — accumulate differently across spectators and viewings, producing a motile meaning contained not so much within the spectator's consciousness as within her dynamic encounter with the film.

Throughout the film, the morally and gustatory *tasteful* sweetness alternates with the sickly in both imagery and narrative progression, and they intertwine and manifest themselves differently across spectators. The political challenge posed by *Sweet Movie* emerges from the convergence between the human and the non-human on the plane of the gustatory and the edible, culminating

[75] Barker speaks here of celluloid film — a medium no longer present in most people's engagement with cinema. The body of digital film and video — such as the DVD recording of *Sweet Movie* I view on a computer screen or a small at-home projector is, of course, different. However, just because it might be less palpable, smoother and diminutive, the body of digital film is by no means nonexistent, and engages in tactile interactions even if it is only to evoke an eerie sensation of empty absence of touch. I am reminded here of Reinhold Martin's discussion of grandiose, sleek, and hollowed out architectural spaces in neoliberal "financial imaginaries:" the materiality of the new cinematic media might well reflect the socioeconomic developments that brought it to light.

in the ultimate taboo of cannibalism where Miss World and Mister Muscle are delectable chocolate confections, Bakunin is encrusted in sugar, and the murdered boys are packaged in cellophane like lollipops.

Miss World undressing for the commercial.

All the while, the film gradually builds its audience's sensory attunement to taste; and its sweetness operates as a carrier of seduction. For Makavejev, "seduction" is an omnipresent and not necessarily sexual phenomenon — a belief he highlights as a justification of the ethics of shooting the highly contentious scene of Anna's striptease for the children:

> Seduction happens very often, and people would never confess it, especially some mothers often seduce their children. Not to speak about children seducing parents just to get candies, or to get ice cream, or whatever. So the seduction always goes <on> in every family practically day and night, and if you have a cat or dog, they also try to seduce you, because seduction is the basic human and animal game (int. by Cowell).

Seduction by sweetness is a process of reciprocal exchange: children act *sweet i*n order to get *sweets;* mothers are *sweet* or offer *sweets* in the hopes of eliciting *sweet* behavior; and a partner will offer up the *sweetness* of sexual pleasure to invite the same in return. To seduce, then, is to intuit a desire in the other — a desire for not simply the pleasurable, but the indulgent, the

excessive, perhaps even guilty — and dangle a promise of fulfillment much more intense than the calm contentment of happiness. To be seduced is to buy into that promise, opening the mouth to receive the sweet; and, in so doing, risk realizing, dangerously too late, that the promise was false.

Sweetness, armed with the capability to seduce, thus becomes the most dangerous flavor; and in *Sweet Movie* as in life, children are especially vulnerable to both craving sugar, and consuming an excess that will make them sick. Mobilizing the power of cinematic tactility to create "music to the tongue and a juicy treat to the eyes" (Makavejev, int. by Codelli), *Sweet Movie* uses it for the macabre purpose of offering up ideologically captivated human bodies as delectable edibles for the spectator's pleasure. If it can trick the spectator into opening her mouth, regardless of her ideological leanings she might find herself in the role of Queen Agave, realizing in horror that, in a Bacchic abandon, she devoured the child of her own politics. Paradoxically, this sudden plunge into disorienting disgust simultaneously makes the spectator a victimized, seduced child of the film itself.

4.4 Gestalt Montage and Serbian Cutting

Sweet Movie's challenge to spectatorial politics and expectations unfolds within its structure: on the formal plane as well as the generic, it is characterized by excess. In cinema, writes Kristin Thompson, excess entails those elements that escape a unified structure, failing to conform to the formal or narrative patterns established by the film. In so doing, the artifice and materiality of the film medium become jarringly obvious, with the effect of "renewing the perceptual freshness of the work" (514) — even though the spectators are not necessarily aware of it. Entertaining the notion of cinematic excess bears relevant implications in the context of the present discussion. First, it suggests that no individual vision can encompass the film in its entirety, as one would from a position of total outsidedness: like the Dostoevskian novel and the human self, a film that carries

excess is *unfinalizable*. Second, unprocessed yet impactful stimuli occupy the domain of affect: it is therefore not the substance of the cinema, but its excess that has the greatest potential to bleed into the spectator in the Massumian sense, reshaping his subjecthood from the inside out.

In *Sweet Movie*, cinematic excess appears not only in the grotesque excesses in the mise-en-scéne, but largely through montage as well. His approach relies on Eisenstenian principles of montage of attraction, dialectical montage, and associative editing, used with the goal of creating a *Gestalt* effect. A film assembled according to the Gestalt principle is closely connected to associative editing, where instead of a side-by-side dialectical portrayal of juxtaposing thesis and antithesis that generate synthesis, meaning emerges from "a dialectical chain that repeats and accumulates throughout the duration of the film" (Dimitrijević 28). This accumulation of meaning proceeds from sequences connected, for example, by visual rhyme, intertextuality, or soundtrack. What Gestalt adds to such association is a degree of subtlety that emerges from a constellation of heterogenous and not entirely cohesive groups of elements, rather than holistic components of meaning; these series of sequences interact within a dynamic network rather than a linear duality, and what accumulates isn't just rhyme and repetition, but an assemblage of diverse and sometimes incompatible or irreconcilable meanings. The thematic and visual similarities of Gestalt associative elements can be traced, but never coalesce in a totality, thus generating an excess of *meaning* that bleeds from the conscious to the subconscious, the scattered pattern of repetitions and rhymes amplifies its unconscious affective impact as well. However, as I have suggested earlier, cinematic excess makes the film unfinalizable; therefore, encounters with Gestalt can proceed dialogically in the Bakhtinian sense: the dialectical outcome cannot result in *synthesis*, but brings about the *syncrisis* of perpetual non-coincidence.

Thanks to its reliance on affect as well as tensions between diverse elements, I argue that Gestalt is especially effective at conveying an embodied engagement with cinema; and, as Jennifer Barker points out, the qualitative component cinematic tactility is always ambivalent, "marked as often by tension as by alignment, by repulsion as often as by attraction" (19). Thus, the manner in which Gestalt produces meaning depends not only on a spectator's long-standing intellectual and political views, but likewise — and perhaps equally — on her current mood and bodily state, resulting in a more personal, visceral engagement. The political impact of the Gestalt effect is brought to the fore by Makavejev's use of an idiosyncratic montage move that his long-term collaborator Branko Vučićević dubbed "Serbian cutting:" the use of found footage, often documentary, within a feature film in a manner that "continues to supplement the fiction by other means" (86). By comparison, in most narrative films that incorporate ready-mades of any kind, the inserted footage is logically embedded into the storyline. For example, the protagonist of Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (1962) goes to the cinema, and a segment of Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1929) is shown as the movie she watches; in Tarkovsky's *Mirror* (1975), documentary footage of the Spanish toreador and the Civil War has a clear link to the Spanish characters within the film's main narrative. However, footage of the Katyn mass graves in *Sweet Movie* bears no direct connection to the fictional storylines, even though some associations do exist – such as the open mouths of the corpses that rhyme with Luv Bakunin's playful imitation of a corpse in sequences that immediately precede and follow the documentary, and the fact that Anna Planeta speaks mostly in Polish. Similarly, the German "gymnastics for babies" footage spliced in the middle of the commune scene *substitutes* the "therapeutic" infantilization, continuing the flow of the commune sequence, but displaces it into a different spatiotemporal and ideological plane. As Vučićević's choice of name intentionally highlights, Serbian cutting is exceptional in its ability to

generate an viscerally *cutting* effect on the spectator – so violent, in fact, that it echoes the "fondness in the disposition of the Serbian (Balkan) man for resolving problems in his private life and in war by reaching for sharp instruments fit for meals and other related (butchering) activities" (Vučićević 85). The dissociation of inserted footage from its primary context, followed by its fragmentation and reincorporation into a new one, generates formal and narrative cinematic excess that defies neat integration into a "meaning" or "message" of the film. DeCuir writes, following Trinh T. Minh-ha, that Serbian cutting is "less about 'attaching the illusion of reality' than 'displacing and emptying out the establishing of totality' ("Serbian Cutting" 3). The cutting, emergent from the viscera much like unpleasant foodstuffs, pushes the displaced and fragmented symbolic meanings carried by its imagery to the surface of consciousness, with the ambition to destabilize conformist axioms of the spectator's personal politic.

In Gestalt, symbolic meanings accrue subtly: the visual rhymes and auditory refrains are not immediately obvious, especially at first viewing. The radical sharpness of Serbian cutting punctures its flow, bringing to the fore the built-up excess of meaning which, in turn, exposes the inherent instability of any coherent perception of reality. In *Sweet Movie*, supplanting the fictional narrative with footage as disturbing as the Katyn exhumations signals an unsettling porousness between fact and fiction, as well as individual and collective histories. Moreover, the use of documentaries that include infants and corpses — the two opposing poles of human life — highlight the broader histories of the biological body, turning it into a vehicle for understanding and representing the world as a whole. As such, the symbolic and thematic elements captured by Gestalt in *Sweet Movie* are particularly resonant with the ribald and terrifying aspects of Bakhtinian carnival, particularly when they echo the grotesque body in the imagery of reproductive organs, carrying over its layers of signification into the affective and embodied spectatorial space.

4.5 Miss World and the Layers of Montage

Throughout the narrative arc of *Sweet Movie,* the orifices of the mouth and the vagina feature as simultaneously vulnerable and violent, creative and destructive. In Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, the mouth, located in the physically and hierarchically elevated space of the head, is merely a gateway to the chthonic beneath, where the reproductive and the decomposing meet. Miss World's vagina shapes the backbone of genital imagery in *Sweet Movie,* and throughout the film, it is portrayed from different formal devices, each adding a layer of meaning.

Miss World's voyage starts from the moment she demonstrates her immaculate hymen to the probing gaze of doctor Mittelfinger. The doctor, in awe, describes her hymen as "sweet… a rosebud." Later in the film, the motif of the rosebud returns after the first Katyn sequence. Red wax, reminiscent of blood, is poured in a circle; as it cools, hands are shown shaping it into a rose, connecting the deaths at Katyn to the purity of Miss World's reproductive organs. Through its link to sexual purity incarnated in the hymen, the spilled blood of the dead officers is thus associated with the blood of childbirth, as well as menstrual blood — signs of female reproductive potency. Conversely, since we have seen Miss World traumatically lose her virginity in one of the previous sequences, the connection to the deaths of the officers highlights the violence of the loss of, in her own words, "her only property" and the defining fixture of her identity. The rosebud molded from the wax does not restore Miss World's innocence: rather, much like the other resurrections in the film, it gestures towards the exasperating inevitability of historical repetition of violence.

In this instance, the fictional narrative is not supplemented by other means in a manner that would constitute Serbian cutting: the allegory is all too obvious, and the connection between the rose wax segment and the other footage very clear. Recalling a memorable political moment in the history of the Katyn exhumations, Makavejev quotes Sir Owen O'Malley's letter to the British

Prime Minister Anthony Eden – "Let us think of these things always and speak of them never" – spelling it out on the screen. There is no subconscious subtlety of Gestalt montage in this reference, and it is not so much the footage of the wax, but O'Malley's quote that is displaced from its context. Through its proximity to the narrative of Miss World's genitalia, it can be read as equally, if not more applicable to sex as it is to war crimes: the former is often thought about, but seldom spoken of in polite society. Just as he did in *W.R.*, Makavejev shows in *Sweet Movie* that politics and pornography are often one and the same when it comes to the way in which the spectators of both participate in enjoying and consuming them. As I will demonstrate later, pornography – a label given to *Sweet Movie* by some of its conservative critics – figures into the formal structure of the film on the level of its genre.

On the level of imagery, the journey of Miss World's vagina can be traced through a series of visual rhymes. As she presents herself for doctor Mittelfinger's inspection, the round shape of the vaginal orifice is hinted at by the shape of her spreading legs – even as she opens herself up to the gaze of the world, she is, for now, protected from the prying eye of the camera. She similarly spreads her legs for her husband on their first wedding night, covering herself with a glowing red wreath. The opening V-shape follows her into her traumatic loss of virginity under the metallic poles of the Eiffel Tower; and finally, she opens up her legs to the camera's gaze, covered in chocolate, fully exposing her genitals. As she journeys from sexual purity, through sexual humiliation, through brief and aborted fulfillment with El Macho, she gradually loses control over her body. This sequence of scattered yet clearly associated rhymes trace how the gradual opening of her legs to the world ultimately results in violence: the more sexually active she becomes, the more precarious her condition.

Miss World's competitive gynecological exam.

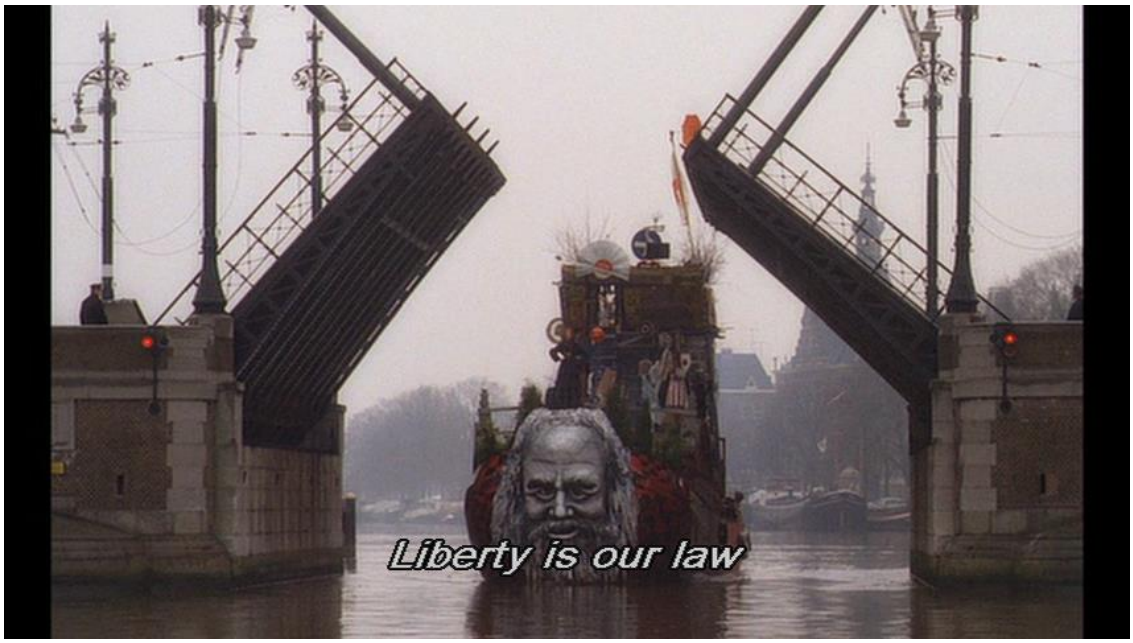
Miss World's wedding night. Her husband is using large balls of cotton wool to disinfect her body with rubbing alcohol.

Miss World's final appearance, recording a commercial for chocolate.

During mad public intercourse with her new lover, Anna Planeta makes a similar shape with her legs. Unlike Miss World, she rejoices in the act, and ultimately emerges as a perpetrator of violence, rather than its victim; while Miss World is reduced to an object of consumption, Anna Planeta consumes her lover – and the consumption begins with their initial sex act.

Anna Planeta's first sexual encounter with Luv Bakunin.

The rhymes formed by the two women's legs are further mirrored by inanimate objects: the bridges of Amsterdam that open wide to welcome Anna Planeta's boat blaring revolutionary music; and Miss World's tryst with El Macho happens against the backdrop of the V-shaped beams of the Eiffel Tower.



First appearance of Anna Planeta's ship: the bridges of Amsterdam open to let her through.

Miss World and El Macho, having sex on the Eiffel Tower, hidden behind his large cape.

Miss World and El Macho caught in the act by a group of Catholic nuns.

Both spaces are symbolically loaded. Dimitrijević remarks that the Amsterdam that so eagerly opens its canals to Anna Planeta "acts as a simulation of the revolutionary Petersburg, as we know it from another Eisenstein's film: the bridges that open to let through the boat 'Survival' recall the Petersburg bridges in the film *October – Ten Days That Shook The World* (1928)" (71). The beams of the Eiffel Tower, shown shortly before Miss World's stunted intercourse, frame the view of the Sacre Coeur. This, Dimitrijević notices, recalls a scene from Bunuel's *Phantom of Liberty* (1973), where the church, built after the fall of the 1861 Paris Commune, appears as a "symbol of the sweetened tastes of the bourgeoisie that covers up the trauma of the attempted revolution" (18). On a more obvious note, the Eiffel Tower is a symbol of conventional bourgeois romance, and its appearance as a locus where both commercialized sexualities[76] of the film – Miss World's and El Macho's – meet and fall in love, only to be interrupted and separated in a humiliating episode

[76] Commercialized, it is worth noting, within the same cultural framework that fetishizes chocolate bonbonnieres as carriers and symbols of romantic emotions.

initiated by the appearance of Catholic nuns, whose presence triggers the spasm of shame in the Catholic Miss World. In those instances, the subtle visual rhyming of Gestalt brings together the symbolism of the edifices with the women's spreading legs, social structures and politics with sex and the body, the capitalist realm of Miss World to Anna Planeta's manic revolutionary fervor. Through the Gestalt approach, these connections become not ones of equivalence, nor of simple juxtaposition. Rather than convey a consistent and stable message about the film's take on the different modes of sexuality in communism and capitalism, it asks the question of why is it that a resonance between the two worlds exists, and what is its purpose.

Lastly, the effect of Serbian cutting – specifically its last instance, when the images of Katyn corpses interject into Miss World's splashing in chocolate – brings to the fore the relationship between the violence she suffers at the hands of ideology, and those who observe and consume it. The image of the greedy camera peering into her vagina is paired with a sequence where coroners probe bullet holes in the heads of corpses with various phallic-shaped instruments. At the same time, the shots of the cameraman recall the fascinated and equally sexualizing gaze of Doctor Mittelfinger at the beginning of the film.

Close-up of a coroner measuring a bullet hole in a human skull with a ruler at the site of the Katyn massacre.

Military coroner examining a hole in a skull using a pick tool, while bystanders watch at the site of the Katyn massacre.

Medical examiners inspect corpses of the victims of Katyn before an Orthodox priest and other onlookers.

Close-up of the cameraman who smiles as he records Miss World's death in a vat of chocolate.

Close-up of Dr. Mittelfinger's face framed by Miss World's legs, as he inspects her perfect hymen.

Linked together in Gestalt montage, the three sequences of peering upon feminine or feminized, penetrable orifices reflect the connection Laura Mulvey makes between the masculinity

that is all but inherent to the traditional cinematic gaze, and the more general phallocentric culture that engenders this masculinity. However, this masculinity is abstracted from the diegetic reality of the film: that is to say, it is not the actual phalluses that threaten Miss World the most.

Namely, whether real or symbolic, most penises in the film are impotent. Whenever they are shown, they appear as infantile and urinating, or helplessly flaccid; erect penises capable of intercourse — Bakunin's and El Macho's — remain invisible to the camera. Most importantly, the two substitute phalluses — Cachorro's large chunk of meat and Mr. Dollars's golden artefact — are fetishes. Linda Williams points out that the Freudian and the Marxian understanding of the term have similarities in that they are mechanisms through which an honest confrontation with uncomfortable social realities is elided:

> In transposing earlier studies of religion, Marx and Freud share the insights that worshipers delude themselves into thinking that the fetish object has intrinsic value: the Marxian and Freudian fetishist locates illusory and compensatory pleasure and power in the glean of gold or the lacy frill of an undergarment. In a sense, then, both theorists offer an economic application of what in the eighteenth century had originally been a critique of religion, Marx in the direct economic terms of the investment of labor, and Freud in the more indirect sense of psychic investment in a libidinal economy. For both, fetishization involves the construction of a substitute object to evade the complex realities of social or psychic relations (*Hard Core* 104).

Desexualized through either infantilization or artifice, the phallic power in *Sweet Movie* is displaced from the plane of embodiment. Male sexuality in *Sweet* Movie has nothing to do with pleasure: Dimitrijević remarks that, on Miss World's sordid wedding night, "Kapital … substitutes a 'natural act' with pure spectacle, a theatric enactment of ideological power" (45, trans. mine). The enactment of ideological power through a crassly pornographic image of a urinating phallus asserts the link Makavejev sees between politics and pornography, the latter understood broadly, in my opinion, as any substitution of healthy libidinal and emotional pleasures of engagement with other human beings, with the pleasure of alienated assertion of power – especially power through

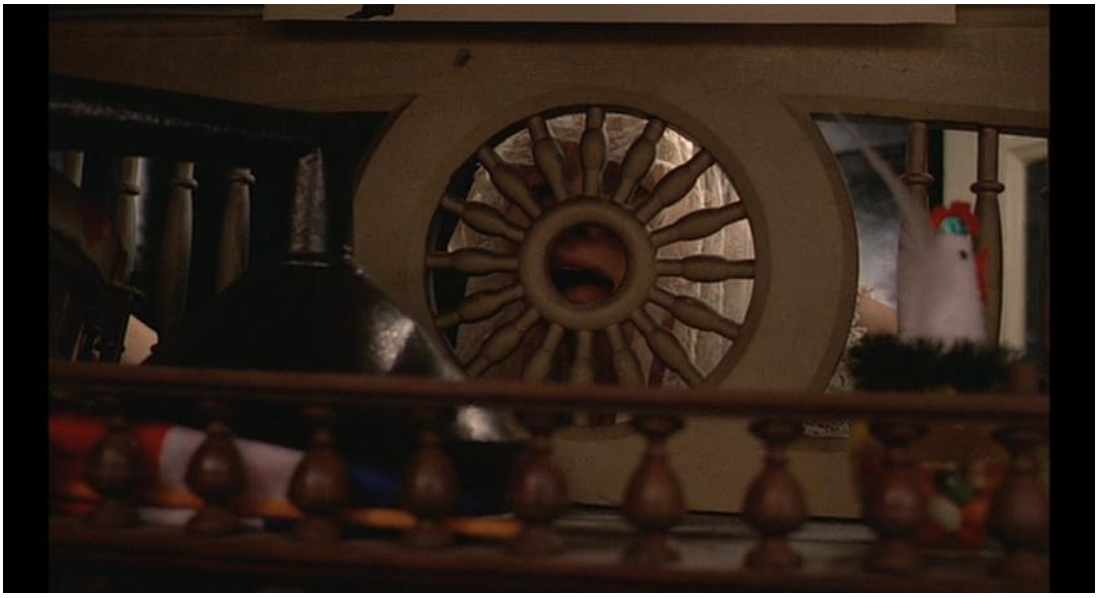
knowledge and exposure. Thus defined, a proclivity towards the pornographic is be shared between politics and cinema: Linda Williams points out that the historical tendency of cinema to *expose the body in its totality,* rooted in the exhibitionist curiosities of its early days, always has a pornographic component: "The inherent and unprecedented realism of movies seems to lead directly, then, to an equally inherent and unprecedented obscenity … Stanley Cavell in *The World Viewed*, for example, asserts that the 'ontological conditions of the cinema reveal it as inherently pornographic'" ("Body Genres" 185). When the last Serbian cut of *Sweet Movie* supplements and extends the pornographic footage of Miss World's performance with footage of exhumations, it exposes the scopophilia evident in both sequences as not just violent, but *pornographically* violent, asserting that this violence is physical and ideological at the same time. At the same time, the jarringly real, palpably documentary nature of the inserted footage – confronts the spectator with the fact that the power of the male gaze is not inherent to either an abstract manhood or a technical reality of cinematic narrative and form; rather, it is derived from the pleasure of the actual, physically and politically invested spectators, made complicit by their enjoyment.

Further displacing the symbolically masculine power structures from actual male bodies, the figures that take over the aegis of ideological discourse in *Sweet Movie* are the mothers: the controlling Mrs. Aplanalp, and the child-seductress Anna Planeta. The men are infantilized, so even the phallic instruments that probe corpses seem more like toys for curious boys than weapons. The boys play (and are played with), but the fatherly is silent and invisible;[77] and unlike the patriarchal brand of abstract *logos* that often presents itself as completely cerebral and

[77] Miss World does mention her father while negotiating with her rapist ("I'll do something to you that my father taught me," she says, offering to satisfy him by hand); likewise, the desolate Karl Marx at the helm of Anna's boat is a clear reference to the "father" of the revolution. However, these fathers remain cold and distant influences that shape their children's fates, but leave them to their own devices in confronting the world.

disassociated from the material reality of the body, a motherly delivery of ideology is bound up with motherly nourishment. The obedient children of capital and revolution in *Sweet Movie* are not taught ideology, so much as they are *fed* it; in consistence with its grounding in the body, and especially food and taste, *Sweet Movie* repeatedly insists that politics are both manifested and shaped from within.

The tragedy in the film emerges almost entirely from the fact that the "food" provided by these mothers is always deadly. The broken promise of maternal protection in *Sweet Movie* culminates at the end of Anna Planeta's narrative, when she performs an eerie striptease for the young boys she is about to murder. She gently gyrates for the victims of her sweet and haunting seduction, wearing a wedding dress, playing the role of both mother and lover, and finally, as the haunting liturgical music stops, lines up her softly singing, seducing, and devouring mouth with the spokes of a wheel, creating a horrifying image of *vagina dentata*, a carnivorous surprise that shatters the promise of rebirth as the reproductive power of the female genitalia is reduced to death that can no longer generate new life.



Close-up of Anna Planeta's face hidden by a wheel with spokes, her open mouth aligned with the opening at the center of the circle.

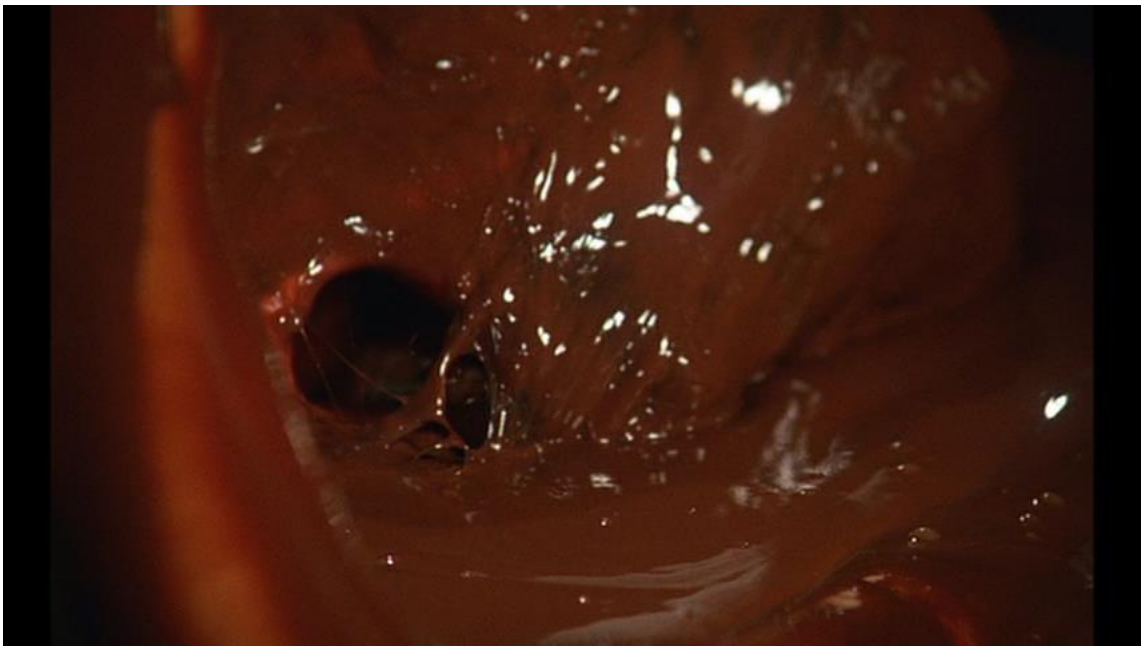
The central instance of Serbian cutting relies on visual rhyme to establish an emotionally impactful chain of connections between death and the mouth, while at the same time reinforcing the notion that, ultimately, the violent betrayal of maternal nourishment is ideological and political just as much as it is physical. In the bathing sequence inside Anna's sweets-filled cabin, Bakunin feigns death to mock the sinister warning Anna gives him, falling backwards into the bathtub. The Katyn massacre sequence follows — a segment that features multiple close-ups of open-mouthed corpses reminiscent of the previous shots of Bakunin's face.

Close-up of Luv Bakunin "playing dead," throwing his head back and dropping theatrically into the bath water, followed by three close-ups of similarly posed corpses found in the Katyn grave sites.

Leaving the Katyn officers behind, Bakunin is immediately "resurrected," and returns to singing revolutionary songs and chanting slogans with Anna and her companion. Having been bathed like an infant, he jumps out of the water and rolls, playing, in a large vat filled with sugar. At the end of the sequence, the emphasis is on his mouth as he exposes his teeth in a skull-like grin.

Close-up of Bakunin's smile, resembling the skulls of the Katyn soldiers, after he emerges from Anna Planeta's vat of sugar.

In his retelling of *Sweet Movie,* Makavejev annotates the first clip of the Katyn footage: "Touching music. Horrific sight. TEN THOUSAND SLEEPING OFFICERS, half-eaten" (*300 čuda,* 240; trans. mine). The gaping mouths are a focal point of both eating and being eaten, both riveting speech and deathly silence: even as Bakunin happily consumes the sweetness offered up by his lover, the Serbian cut reminds that he is being eaten both while and *because* he eats. In the film's final boat sequence, the vampiric Anna Planeta will indeed bite into her lover before carving him up with a large kitchen knife. Later on, the final Serbian cut will be primed with shots of the drowning Miss World that focus on her mouth, gasping for air. The noises she makes as she drowns are inhuman and terrifying. As her face is covered with a tangle of hair and thick chocolate mass, the mouth is barely recognizable as such. It becomes a gaping orifice — something like an entry to the netherworld. As she suffocates in the sweetness she willingly returned to even after the commune experience, she is being devoured: "I want them to feel as they are eating you," demands the director of the commercial right before Martha Aplanalp's repeated demand for sterile purity.



Close-up of Miss World's gaping mouth as she struggles to breathe in her chocolate bath.

In that sequence of the film, Miss World stars in a commercial that exploits her sexualized body in order to sell chocolate, embracing the capitalist ideology she remains devoted to even as it kills her — much like Bakunin actively pursues death at the hands of personified, manic Revolution (he was "jealous when Vakulinchuk was killed"). Shortly before she starts to drown, she exchanges glances with Bakunin who, resurrected, peeks at her boyishly through a high window.

Bakunin, whose murder was shown in an earlier sequence, returns to peek through the window at Miss World's death in chocolate.

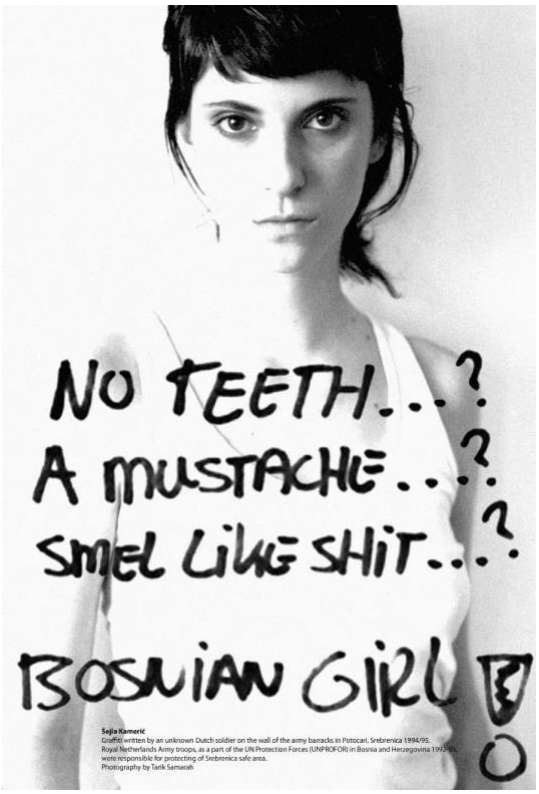
This glance solidifies the connection between the two: "both <Bakunin and Miss World> are motivated and carried by an ideology, but they are not the ones who own it, they are its objects and they perform it. Both are 'victims' of the effects of ideology, reified or at least seduced by their ideological masters" (Dimitrijević 47, trans. mine). The blood-red stain on the window right in front of his mouth once again recalls that it is through being fed ideology that both him and his counterpart have met their deaths.

Overall, both formal and narrative characteristics of *Sweet Movie* work to highlight the inseparability between the body and ideology, focused on the movement of ideology from the outside in, rather than its expression from the inside out — as was the case in *W.R.*, where the latter was explored primarily as it pertained to sexuality. As I had previously mentioned, the imagery engaged in conveying this effect is focused mostly on the body in a manner that highlights the inversion (and, in some cases, perversion) of the body's lower stratum (where the reproductive and excreting organs meet), and the privileged upper stratum of speech, intellect, and consumption;

a notable example of this inversion is the collapsing of boundaries between the bullet holes in the heads of men, and Miss World's vagina. By virtue of both the capability of Gestalt to produce a subconscious effect, and the jolting, displacing nature of Serbian cutting, these effects are experienced viscerally as well as — and perhaps more so than — intellectually; and yet, the inevitable connection between both cinematic and spectatorial bodies and ideological discourse looms large.

In the final chapter, I will probe the interplay of on-screen and spectatorial bodies elicited by *Sweet Movie* by expanding my analysis of its carnivalesque and carnivalized aspects. I will show the power of disrupting genre conventions in inflicting cinematic excesses directly on the spectatorial bodies. I will further argue that the carnivalized structure of the film, however, uncovers a disturbing fracturing of carnival liberation on the diegetic plane — and this juxtaposition emphasizes the failure to attaining harmonious communion with the world in the film's ideologically infused reality, posing a serious challenge to the possibility of generous ethics. This ethical challenge lurks in the production of the film itself, enacted on the actual bodies of people involved in its creation. In the concluding section, I will introduce profilmic corporeality into the discussion of the embodied effect of the film on the spectators, and show the jarring impact that *Sweet Movie* has on both.

Chapter 5: The Cruelty of Carnivalization



Šejla Kamerić, *Bosnian Girl* (2003).

"In *Bosnian Girl* artist Šejla Kamerić stares directly at the camera, holding our gaze. The overlaid text quotes graffiti by an unknown Dutch UN soldier found at an army barracks in Srebrenica during the Bosnian war (1992–95) … In 1993, during the Bosnian War, Srebrenica had been declared a safe zone by UN Protection Forces. The town was heavily populated by Bosnian Muslims escaping persecution by Bosnian Serb forces. In 1995 the Bosnian Serb Army invaded the town. The resulting genocide and war crimes remain one of the largest failures of the United Nations to protect those under their care" (Tate, London).

The various forms of excess in *Sweet Movie* generate a semantic whole that is by no means cacophonous and devoid of logic, even though it resolutely resists consolidation — it is, as I have shown in the previous chapter, *dialogic* in the Bakhtinian sense more so than *dialectic* in the classical Eisensteinian understanding. Writing on Bakhtin and the cinema, Robert Stam explains that Bakhtin "emphasizes dialectics as a kind of abstraction from dialogics, a residue of the dialogical process, what is left after all that is personal and vital has been taken out" (188). Where

in dialectics (and, by extension, dialectical montage) thesis and antithesis enter into conflict to generate a qualitatively new meaning through synthesis, a dialogic mode makes synthesis both undesirable and fundamentally unattainable. As a result of *syncrisis*, Bakhtin writes, "truth is born … *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (*PDP* 110), and the process of its emergence is never finalized. Dialogic montage, then, enables the film's imagery and narrative(s) to coalesce into a fully polyphonic work, where a plurality of overlapping voices are present, but no single one is prioritized — including, importantly, the director's own vision.[78] Insofar as it engenders a more active relationship between the work, the author, and the spectator, *Sweet Movie* is able not only to contain dialogism within itself, but to engage its spectators into dialogic relationships.

Engaging the spectator's body as well as her mind in this manner through the tools of cinematic form enables Makavejev to not simply create characters who fail to coincide with themselves – something Dostoevsky accomplished much earlier in his prose – but simultaneously generate a similar sense of non-coincidence with oneself in the spectator through a constant displacement of expectations on both the formal and the narrative plane. Despite the potential for discomfort, the tactility of film cannot violate the protective boundary of human skin: "when the film's and viewer's skins caress one another, there is *fusion* without *confusion*," Jennifer Barker writes of cinematic tactility, in a language that is resonant in its affectionate tone to the way Jane Bennett speaks of enchantment: "We are up against each other — entangled in a single caress, but we do

[78] The mounting production issues indeed took a lot of *Sweet Movie* out of Makavejev's control, and in addition to that, he chose to allow full freedom to Otto Muehl's commune as they worked with a group of actors to co-create an actual therapeutic environment for the fictional character of Miss World. The footage that emerged from the commune's improvisation ended up being much more extreme than Makavejev had hoped. He later stated that he knew it would ruin his career, but chose not to exclude the more jarring imagery out of deference to the reality of the commune's agency.

not elide the boundaries altogether between our body and the film's body; rather — we exist for a moment just on both sides of that boundary, as if feeling ourselves from the outside and the inside at the same moment" (36). However, this is not the case with taste, whose site of contact in the body lies in the liminal space of the mouth, dangerously close to the interiority of the body. Makavejev's montage aims to cause a fusion *for the sake of confusion*. In so doing, *Sweet Movie* aims to displace the viewer with a sharp jolt, and then push her back into herself, only to find herself changed, non-coinciding with her own self-image. Such, perhaps, is the meaning and the outcome of Makavejev's famous maxim "art needs to be jolted (*umetnost treba cimnuti).*"

Understanding how the spectator is tricked into "tasting" despite its repulsive imagery — and to the point of becoming compromised in her ethics — requires a closer look at another formal component of the film: its engagement with the tropes and conventions of a patchwork of cinematic genres interlaced in Makavejev's film. This patchwork, along with the polyphonic formal structure, makes *Sweet Movie* carnivalized; but although carnival ought to bring joy and liberation, its key components are cut off from their ethically productive potentialities: sexuality, fertility, nourishment, and unity with the world are all variously disrupted, leaving behind only terror and violence. Due to the film's unique power to impact the spectatorial body, this violence seeps over from the screen: the impact of *Sweet Movie,* an art work, is affective and corporeal first — and the messages of aesthetics, politics, and ideology obediently follow.

5.1 Problems of Genre: Between Politics and Porn

The genre of *Sweet Movie* is hard to pin down. As Branislav Dimitrijević notes, Makavejev relies on a series of disparate conventions to "create a montage 'patchwork': thriller, comedy, musical, parody, or even investigative documentary, propaganda film, or art film" (22, trans. mine); and in addition to that, of course, is the conservative critics' less generous designation of

Sweet Movie as pornography. Among the genres Dimitrijević lists, I am most interested in parody, which Bakhtin considers to be "an integral element … in all carnivalized genres" as parodying results in "the creation of a decrowning double; it is that same 'world turned inside out'" (*PDP* 127). Particularly significant are parodies of the art film due to its significance in determining high culture, and of documentary footage that raises problems of spectatorial complicity. The conventions employed in parodying these "serious" genres — that is, genres that require a discerning *taste* — can be mapped across what Linda Williams calls *body genres*: "categories of films that promise to be sensational, to give our bodies an actual physical jolt … <through> a display of sensations that are on the edge of respectable" ("Film Bodies" 2). These categories are melodrama, a genre that evokes emotional pain; horror, which evokes fear; and pornography, which evokes sexual excitation. What they have in common is "the gross display of the human body" (Williams, "Film Bodies" 3), and their bodily excesses, especially in their parodic form, make them excellent facilitators of the grotesque. Of the three genres Williams highlights, pornography is the most significant: conservative condemnations aside, I argue that its conventions play a prominent role in the structural semantics of *Sweet Movie*, shaping the modalities in which the film utilizes its capacity to engage with the spectator's body and ideology.

While much scholarly literature is dedicated to "disgust," Williams's choice of word "gross" draws attention to some of its oft-neglected affective flavors. One, that its definition is subjective: disgust is social as well as sensational, and dependent not only on class, but likewise on gender and age. Second, calling these movies "gross" highlights that disgust can be thrilling, almost childishly so. Even though it is a sensation of repulsion, it is not always a feeling we avoid, but in fact can and do seek out for pleasure. Lastly, the connection between *grossness* and lowbrow

genres of cinema is a reminder of the fact that moral and aesthetic "bad taste" is often a matter of exaggeration and transgression of boundaries.

Much of the imagery of *Sweet Movie* certainly constitutes "a display of sensations that are on the edge of respectable," and it does so within narrative structures that parody the conventions of the three "low" genres: melodrama, in Miss World's abortive affair with her star-crossed lover; horror, in the harrowing sequences of Miss World and Bakunin's deaths coated in the pleasures of sweetness and sexuality; and pornography, in portraying Mr. Dollars's perverse[79] sex act, and the extreme evacuation of bodily fluids throughout the commune sequence. The danger that such parody poses to the spectator lies in the fact that, as Williams notes, even though the corporeal overflowings of melodrama and horror do not result from a sex act, just like pornography they nevertheless "suggest components of direct or indirect sexual excitement and rapture" ("Film Bodies" 5). The interplay of low body genres and parody unmasks their sexual appeal: in other words, the spectator is seduced into sensory pleasure, and then forced to question how far the objects of her sexual interests can go towards what is deemed abnormal, perverse, and disgusting. Emphasizing the "gross" body in a generic framework that amplifies its sensory allure, and then parodying it into an extreme, results in an echo of the oft-neglected fact that emetophilia, urophilia, coprophilia, and WAM[80] are all well-documented, if somewhat uncommon paraphilias.

This is not to say that other genres, and especially art films, do not engage with the body in its extremes: after all, many films contemporaneous to *Sweet Movie* feature explicit content in the

[79] Following Linda Williams's understanding of the term, here and throughout this text I use the word *perversion* "in a neutral sense, as a swerving away from more direct forms of pleasure in general" (*Hard Core* 102).

[80] WAM, the abbreviation for "wet and messy," is a sexual fetish otherwise known as "sploshing." It involves sexual arousal derived from the tactile sensations of various "messy" substances on the body, face, or clothing. Chocolate is among the more common preferred substances; so are milk, eggs, and mud. The smearing of Miss World's body with eggs and chocolate is undoubtedly sexually charged, and there might be something to be said for a tactile Gestalt that extends the erotic sensations of watching Miss World covered in fluids to Katyn corpses excavated from slippery mud.

service of making a political point – Pasolini's *Salo* (1975) easily comes to mind. The difference, however, is that Makavejev alternates between placing the grotesque body into the serious and terrifying context of historical violence of Katyn, and the "low" genres that both offer light pleasure in and of themselves, and can easily become the object of mocking derision by more sophisticated audiences. As Williams reminds, the success of pornography, melodrama, and horror "is often measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen" ("Film Bodies" 4). Makavejev's parodic treatment of these genres inhibits the kind of true immersive identification that they strive to cause, but retains the capacity to evoke pleasure through images of "gross" bodies in various circumstances.

Engagement with body genres gives a physical and affective dimension to the previously discussed sensation of "jolting" caused by *Sweet Movie*; and perhaps a more literal (though far less elegant) translation of Makavejev's verb *cimnuti* is "jerking" — a sharp, displacing pulling motion, rather than an electric shock. The idea of "jerking" is crucial to Williams's discussion, as melodrama, horror, and pornography all revolve on portrayal of affective excess manifested through an excess of the body: they are tear-jerkers, fear-jerkers, or made for jerking off. Faced with exaggerated parodies of low genres, the spectator is tricked into deriding them, only to be confronted with the cruelty of her own ironic affect; and, conversely, being forced to "taste" the extreme bodily acts performed by characters who express joy in doing so. Herein lies *Sweet Movie's* most daunting challenge: the complex and ethically compromising dynamic between on-screen, profilmic, and spectatorial affects of joy and disgust. John Gianvito gives a detailed description of the viewing experience punctuated by these kinds of jolts:

> In the process of watching *Sweet Movie* the relationship one is having to what is taking place on screen is constantly being subverted. Practically every new sequence provokes a readjustment … Virtually every sequence is deftly built to pivot in emotionally unexpected

> ways leaving most viewers unprepared and defenseless in its wake and consequently more open to *ingest 'unprocessed' material*. When, for instance, early in the film Mr. Kapital embarks on his wedding night ceremony of first cleansing himself then his virgin wife Miss World with burring alcohol, dressed only in socks, cowboy hat, and cherry-decorated boxer shorts, most audiences, I think it would be fair to say, find the absurd, satiric tone of the scene amusing. Even when Mr. Kapital drops his shorts as Miss World shrieks and reveals a 'golden penis' the element of surprise tends to incite great laughter. Yet just as rapidly within the humorous flow of this scene we see that same golden penis pissing upon the beautiful new wife (off-screen) while Mr. Kapital whoops with delight and calls out the window to his mother. *You gag on the gag. Before you can catch yourself, in mid-laughter this altogether disturbing image unfolds and just as soon passes* (22, emph. mine).

Indeed, Linda Williams points out that the low cultural status of body genres is not so much due to the strong imagery, but to their engagement with the spectator's body rather than her mind: "what may especially mark these body genres as low is the perception that the body of the spectator is caught up in an almost involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on screen." In using its portrayals of the grotesque for building up and then challenging sensory pleasure, rather than an intellectual effect, *Sweet Movie* distances itself from the "higher" cultural status of the politically engaged art film.

Following Robin Wood's writing on *W.R.*, Bart Testa argues that the art film, challenging subversive as it may aim to be, nevertheless retains a sense of *decorum* circumscribed by the notions of organicity and expressivity:

> at the level of style Makavejev effectively, if not purposively, effaces the art film … *Sweet Movie* goes even further <than *W.R.*> in sinning against these basic critical values of the art film. Its *cruel humor, extreme sexuality, heterogenous stylistics and often awkward bluntness* constitute an open provocation against these critical values (11, emph. mine).

The exclusion of the body from engagement with intellectual judgment is crucial for excluding that which is undesirable within the limits of refined taste.[81] Thus Sara Ahmed: "To have good

[81] A cultivated taste does not necessarily mean that which is clean, subdued, modest, etc. (as is the case with the conventional petty bourgeois meaning of "tasteful"). On the contrary, as Eugenie Brinkema shows in her discussion of haute cuisine in Peter Greenway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, Her Lover* (1989), things that are *purposefully*

habits is to be oriented in the right way toward the right objects (not to insist on being proximate to objects that insist on enjoyment), and which would allow a fantasy of transcendence from the bodily domain to be sustained. To work on the body such that you have the right reactions allows the body to disappear from view" (*Happiness* 34). The politically conscious and culturally sophisticated audience of Makavejev's films enthusiastically welcomed confronting that notion on the intellectual plane offered in *W.R.*, but recoiled from it as *Sweet Movie* brought it closer to home by assaulting the spectators' bodies as well as (or, rather, as *part of*) their minds. The unforgivable sin Makavejev commits is, in essence, a return to a carnivalized mode of being that allows for a free, heterogenous mixing of the high and the low, and the participation of grotesque crassness and bodily excess in generating political meaning not only through symbolic representation, but through visceral spectatorial engagement. By confronting his progressive, left-leaning audience with the discomfort this mixture causes, *Sweet Movie* exposes its enduring entrapment in bourgeois epistemologies and thereby, as Branislav Dimitrijević argues, draws attention to the commodification of revolutionary sentiment in the Western liberal humanist circles after 1968. The bodies of spectators become embroiled with the excesses of the bodies they see on screen, immersed and implicated — for better or worse — into the politics of the aesthetic-affective impact they produce. As I will show in the next section, a large part of that impact can be discovered at the intersection of the grotesque body and politics of the carnival which, in turn, reveals deeper layers of understanding of affects of joy, violence, and communion with the world.

disgusting — moldy cheese, for example — can be admissible into certain kinds of refined circles, but only under very specific circumstances.

5.2 Vital Energy, Ideology, and the Violence of Carnival

In the world of the carnival, the privileged form of the body is grotesque, characterized primarily by its excesses. The grotesque body overflows its own boundaries, it amuses and disgusts, and in that regard becomes a crucial component of the revelry, pleasure, and entertainment. In addition to being excessively large, the grotesque body is also one that exceeds its own boundaries with an air of unfettered, ribald curiosity for the world external to it. It makes itself porous to such a degree that it stops being individualized, and turns instead into a *two-bodied* creature that captures the links between the interacting bodies more than it does their boundaries. Its most significant parts are the protrusions: the nose, the phallus, the fat belly. In exceeding its own boundaries, the grotesque body zealously maintains constant communion with the world, opening itself up to it in every possible way. Hence the importance of orifices: from the mouth to the anus, the grotesque body is a body that copulates, urinates, defecates, overeats, and expands. Bakhtin writes:

> The material components of the universe disclose in the human body their true nature and highest potentialities; they become creative, constructive, are called to conquer the cosmos, to organize all cosmic matter. *They acquire a historic character* (*Rabelais* 366, emph. mine).
>
> В человеческом теле материя становится творческой, созидательной, призванной победить весь космос, организовать всю космическую материю, в человеке материя приобретает исторический характер (*SS* 4(2): 393).

At the same time, the orifices devour, concealing the world in the darkness of interiority: such bodies live up to the origin of the word *grotesque,* which originates from paintings of malformed bodies found in underground caves (grottos). I would argue that it is because of bringing such bodies to light — along with the power they carry — that *Sweet Movie* becomes, in Stanley Cavell's words, "a film of excavation" (9). The prominence of grotesque bodies in *Sweet Movie* is

compounded by the effects of Gestalt, which layers evocative cues on top of direct imagery. Its kaleidoscopic effect augments the carnivalizing potential of the body to such a degree that it takes on a Rabelaisian capacity for engulfing, representing, and transforming the sociopolitical, historical, and cosmic world around it.

In the Bakhtinian framework, gaiety prevails over the terrifying and violent aspects of life by celebrating death and birth as a never-ending, mutually nourishing cycle, rather than a conflict of polar opposites: birth, nourishment, sex, and death all fold into one another in boundless porosity, welcomed by the grotesque body. The carnival revels in biophilia, and laughs in the face of all things biophobic, refusing to shun them in revulsion and embracing them instead as a necessary part of life. The world of the carnival is one of cyclical time and circulating energy, one where the individual human body is in communion not only with other bodies, but with cosmos itself; however, if death is separated from life, true rebirth becomes impossible. Although *Sweet Movie* does not directly reference Reich, its exploration of the impact of sexuality on social functioning does include resonances with orgonotic theory. Reich's *orgonon* is a model of vital energy that operates on the embodied and affective level, and then impacts to the conscious, rational, and ultimately political aspects of the mind. The concept is highly resonant with the bodily and sociopolitical implications of the Bakhtinian carnival, as well as theories of embodied, pre-conscious affect. For Reich, psychic health, understood in psychoanalytic terms to entail the development of genital sexuality, is dependent on a natural flow of orgonotic energy unencumbered by the repression commonly imposed upon the psyche — and, by extension, the body — by capitalist society. A person with a genital character is one "who does not suffer from any stasis of excitation or chronic inhibition of excitation" (Reich, *Character Analysis* 346). The disruption of orgonotic flow and, by extension, sexual excitation, results in various forms of

neuroticism if the disruption manifests itself as stasis, and in schizophrenia if strong excitation is inhibited from free expression.

In *Sweet Movie,* the two ideological "mothers" each beget one form of disruption. On the one end stands Martha Aplanalp, the hostess of the gynecological purity contest, mother of Mr. Dollars, and the voiceover presiding over the drowning of Miss World. In a clear reference to Reich's notion of "body armor" — a physical and muscular manifestation of psychic repression — she explains the philosophy behind the Chastity Belt Foundation: "A network of muscles forms a protective armor around the pelvic region. If not controlled and kept at bay, wild impulses will turn everyone into beastly animals, chaotic, natural beings." Reich's stance on this type of civilizing enterprise is damning, as the project of eliminating the "animal" from the human inhibits the (re)productive potency of the body:

> In the ideology of all authoritarian social organizations, vegetative life, represented as animal-like and primitive, has always been absolutely set off against the 'cultural' substitute life, represented as differentiated and highly developed. In reality, the latter, since it was torn away from the former, since it represents merely a substitute function and not a continuation of the former, is unproductive, frozen into rigid forms and formulas, as devoid of fruit as a dried-up plant (*Character Analysis* 326-237).

Recalling how deeply this repression is ingrained on the individual level, Martha Aplanalp reassures her viewers that, in order to maintain this protection from the dangers of natural existence, no physical restraints are necessary: "we advocate a simple triumph of the will." With this nod to Leni Riefenstahl's iconic film, Makavejev finalizes the arc that connects sexual purity, sterility, capitalism, fascism, and death. The sterility of bourgeois capitalism is the primary anxiety of *Sweet Movie*, placed in direct opposition to all things "natural" and "joyful." This civilizational project that relies on strict and uniform discipline has a deadening effect on the subject: to civilize is to finalize.

The motherhood of sterile capitalism begets repression of the natural far beyond the individual plane. As Mrs. Aplanalp's son and his virginal bride travel to the cellophane-wrapped mansion where they will consummate their marriage, their helicopter flies over the majestic Niagara Falls. Mr. Dollars reveals that he plans to buy them from the Canadian government, drain them, and install an artificial version with holographic lights and stereo sounds that would always "work," regardless of natural weather conditions. A formidable force of nature would thus be robbed of its power, and reduced to a symbolic testimony to the ability of human industry and technology to master its environment. The choice of Niagara Falls as the representation of the violence of the human over the natural is significant because the Falls are not simply a natural wonder, but one where nature is productively enjoined with human industry. They are the site of the world's first large-scale alternating current hydroelectric plant, built in 1895 using the polyphase system designed by the Serbian-American scientist Nikola Tesla. Tesla was a subject of lifelong fascination for Makavejev: in 1976, two years after the release of *Sweet Movie,* he spoke of Tesla as part of an elaborate vision of a uniquely Yugoslav/Serbian dreamscape. In the speech, Makavejev references Tesla's claim that, "in the moments of heightened creativity, he was radiating blue light" — the same color as Reich's speculative orgonotic energy ("Nikola Tesla" 37). Tesla's feat of illuminating the world through the Niagara Falls is a symbol of unity between the human and the cosmic. A defining landmark of modernity, it is a far cry from the decidedly pre-modern roots of the carnival, but it gestures towards a potentiality for a continued connection between humanity and cosmos in the face of the advent of technology. The awe-inspiring power of the waterfall combined with the equally wonderous ability to transform the world through technology makes Niagara a prime site of enchantment that brings joy and inspires enthusiastic and generous engagement with a world that gives so much in return. Contrary to that, Mr. Dollars's

plan to dry out the Falls and substitute the water with holographic images and an artificial sound systems would murder the capacity of the Falls to generate electricity, fracturing the productive, generative potential of humanity's unity with its environment. Unsurprisingly from the Reichian perspective, Mr. Dollars's sexual urges turn out to be completely disassociated from orgasm, and even genital arousal as such. Instead of making love to his bride, he urinates on her with his golden penis — a fetishistic substitute of the (pro)creative organ with a sterile symbol of capitalism's power. The two sequences of the waterfall that frame Miss World's abortive wedding night are shot in a rolling camera motion that pans towards the abyss: the Gestalt effect of the rhyming circularity evokes the importance of cyclical flow for the healthy natural connection of life, death, rebirth, nature, highlighting its breakdown as they bookend Mr. Dollars's failure to engage in a healthy sexual act.

Mr. Dollars's helicopter with a large banner cuts through the view of the waterfall.

A wide rolling shot of the Niagara Falls emphasizes their circular shape and the motion of water.

The rolling and circling motions of the camera represent the flow of vital natural energy as well as its endangerment. Rotating circular motions continue to be connected to vital energy flows and their breakdown throughout the rest of Miss World's narrative. Her lover, El Macho, is sporting a prominent round belt buckle, shot close-up multiple times. As she seduces him — attempting to stimulate his sexual energy — Miss World runs her finger along its edges. Similarly, in an attempt to awaken the catatonic Miss World, Mama Communa caresses her lips with a circular motion of the finger, which helps her accept the nourishing breast. By arriving to the Milky Way commune and encountering the film's only benevolent mother figure, Miss World's narrative completes the voyage from her husband's dairy enterprise where milk is stored in large circular containers that are a poor and sterile imitation of breasts, to the quintessentially natural way of receiving nourishment.

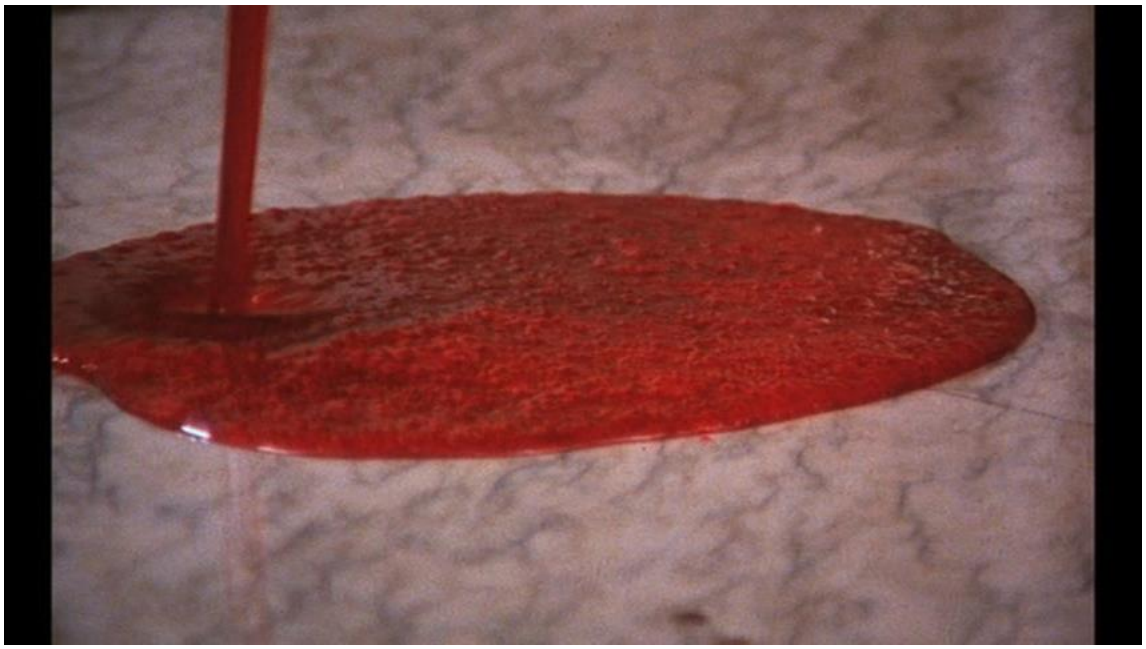
In a close-up of El Macho's circular belt buckle, Miss World runs her finger around its edges in a gesture of sexual seduction.

A close-up of Miss World's catatonic face shows Mama Communa running her finger around her lips to stimulate the reflex of breastfeeding.

Even though Miss World seeks out genuine sexual connection with El Macho, and Mama Communa's touch manages to temporarily revive her, she is ultimately unable to overcome the limitations of her own entrapment. Caught in the act by a group of Catholic nuns, Miss World's

vagina clenches, trapping her lover; and as she is invited to participate in the radical opening up of the body to the world in sequences of communal Reichian therapy, she once again shuts down. Her "body armor" is too strong to break, and she ultimately spirals back into commodifying herself to death.

At the other end of the ideological spectrum, the monstrously manic Anna Planeta is overflowing with revolutionary fervor and voracious sexual desire. However, her love affairs are always abortive: "everyone I love is dead," she laments, only to reveal that this is because she cannot resist murdering all the men who are seduced by the sweetstuffs on her boat. In Reichian terms, she represents a different category of orgonotic disruption: the schizophrenic split. In *Character Analysis,* Reich argues that the excess of energetic excitation is not stagnant or blocked in schizophrenia the way it is in the case of neuroses. Instead, it overflows and becomes externalized. For that reason, he argues, the dissolution of the body armor of schizophrenics is much more dangerous, as such powerful energies manifest in quantities that cannot be controlled, and ultimately may lead to extreme violence as it does in the case of Anna Planeta's case. As Anna makes indulgent circles with the phallic knife in her willing victim's stomach, she brings the strings of penetrative violence against innocence, and perverse martyrdom for ideology. The static wheel that covers her mouth during her previous devouring has already foreshadowed that whatever vitality she possesses is hostile and barren.



Close-up of red wax being poured in a circular motion. This sequence follows the first images of the Katyn massacre; the wax is shaped into a rose, symbolizing innocence and blood. A quote of British Prime Minister Anthony Eden's comment on the war crime shows up on the screen: "Let us remember it always, and speak of it never."

In a circular motion similar to the prior image of pouring wax, Anna Planeta stabs her lover in the stomach as they lie in her vat of sugar after making love.

In either case, the breakdown of the flow of vital energies lies at the root of ideological failures raised by *Sweet Movie*; the biological body and its connection to cosmic vitality is both the origin

and the center of the ideological conflicts represented in the film. Like Makavejev's earlier films, *Sweet Movie* is deeply invested in questions of death, rebirth, and regeneration, but on both sides of the ideological spectrum, the danger of destruction without renewal looms large: the anxiety of *Sweet Movie* is not a fear of death, but a fear of getting stuck in endless repetition, a fear of sterile recursion that stifles progress and procreation.

Comparing the two narrative lines of the film — Miss World's destruction at the hands of consumer capitalism, and Luv Bakunin's empty sacrifice at Anna's hands — Raša Popov aptly concludes that "on the one end of the ideological scale, humanity is regressing towards the cataleptic and the embryonal, and on the other, to aborted pregnancy and the stillborn. In the foundation of Dušan Makavejev's *Sweet Movie* lies a queer[82] gynecology of History" (75, trans. mine). The political failures of both ends of the ideological spectrum explored in *Sweet Movie* are indeed carried by the female body: capitalism and socialism in *Sweet Movie* are both maintained and, in a sense that is as literal as it is metaphorical, reproduced by the two maternal figures. Popov's gynecological metaphor is incarnated in grotesque bodies, where the privileged upper orifice of the sweetly seducing and greedily gaping mouth makes a katabatic journey downward to switch places with the far more dangerous, chthonic beneath, where the reproductive power of the genitals stands side by side with the expulsion of waste, recalling the inextricable connection between death and birth. The conflict between the natural and the repressive is mapped onto the bodily plane as an inversion between the female reproductive system and the mouth: the site of

[82] Popov uses the word *čudnovata*, which translates more closely to *strange* and lacks the gendered connotations contained in the English *queer*. However, Popov's emphasis on reproduction, gender, and distortion of conventional expectations do bring out the undeniable *queerness* of both the form of *Sweet Movie*, and the film's take on history; for that reason, I am choosing to read this instance of *čudnovata* in precisely such a manner.

At the same time, the etymological root of the adjective lies in the noun *čudo* (miracle), evoking the connotations of Bennett's enchantment.

taste and sweetness, the harbinger of devourment, and the source of language as the prime carrier and facilitator of the power of *logos*. The mouths of the mothers that both speak and devour — or, more holistically, devour through speech — are linked by mirror shots in which they spray breath freshener, "sweetening" the allure of their message, masking the stench of its decay.

In one of the film's opening sequences, Mrs. Aplanalp sprays her mouth with a breath freshener while she presides over the gynecological contest Miss World is about to win.

In one of the film's last sequences, Anna Planeta, facing the opposite direction from Mrs. Aplanalp, similarly sprays her mouth with a freshener. Miss World, transposed into the opposite ideological environment of the commune, is seen dancing in the background.

Both shots take place during major spectacles that crassly expose the body: the gynecological chastity contest, and the extreme dismantling of boundaries at the Milky Way commune. The former is a theatrical performance of capitalism, the latter of the liberation from the constraints of capitalist, bourgeois morality. Despite both Makavejev's and Reich's commitment to socialism, the mirror shots betray that the kind of freedom promised by Anna Planeta is not fundamentally different from the "safety" from nature advocated by Mrs. Aplanalp — the final commune sequence is shown after Bakunin's death, and so the shot of Ana using mouth spray comes after her murderous nature is revealed. The commune members go to extreme lengths to destroy the body armor advocated by Martha Aplanalp, and the presence of Anna Prucnal's body bridges the divide between the two narrative lines of the film, inviting Miss World to cross from repression into liberation. However, it is unclear whether Prucnal appears as the character of Anna Planeta; from the production perspective, this is certainly not the case, as she was only cast to play the second lead role after the commune footage proved too much for Carole Laure to bear. The change of Prucnal's hair color leaves a trace of fragmented production in the film's final version, and no spoken lines in the commune footage suggest that her commune self is identical to Planeta: in a sense, her body *does not coincide with itself,* exposing a gap that makes definitive, finalized meaning-making impossible. The enjoinment of the two strands of fictional narrative thus only brings further fragmentation rather than unity. Anna's presence situates Miss World's liberatory voyage into an obfusque spatiotemporal asynchrony that, given the fantastical and fairytale-like nature of Anna Planeta's narrative, may go as far as to suggest a complete disconnect with reality. Despite the commune's pursuit of freedom through radical defiance to body armor, the specter of

Anna Planeta brings something sinister to it nonetheless: even in the middle of gleeful festivity the schizophrenic twist into violence looms throughout.

More so than any other part of the film, the commune sequences recall Bakhtinian carnival. The grotesque body finds its most extreme expression amidst their radical play, expelling food instead of consuming it and drinking urine in a joyful reversal of appropriate food-related behavior. The atmosphere of inverted hierarchies goes as far as brazen mockery of all that is normally elevated both societally and cosmically. Most of the camera motion in the commune sequences is circular, going around the room — a move especially prominent in the "shitfest" segment, where the camera makes wide circles around an upward-moving platform; here, however, the rotation of the hand-held camera creates a dizzying effect absent from the other, calmer instances of circling. The sheer duration of the commune sequence is in itself a form of cinematic excess: while the narrative lines alternate roughly every ten or so minutes at most throughout the rest of the film, the violent, grotesque imagery surrounding Miss World at Milky Way goes on uninterrupted for twenty whole minutes, and is mostly composed of long, drawn-out shots. To make the viewing experience all the more difficult, the episode is flanked by child seduction and Bakunin's murder. Forcing the viewer to keep watching without being allowed to shift perspectives or imagery gives these segments of the fiction narrative a distinct documentary flavor, contributing to the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction in a less apparent, more fluid manner than the jolting Serbian cutting.

Commune members defecating into plates.

Disturbing as it may seem, the commune scenes aim to deliver a message of liberation from the norms, and their resonance with the carnival uncovers some of their potential for doing so. The carnival laughter — and laughter does permeate the sequence — is intimately related to freedom, while seriousness lies in the domain of the oppression of the hegemonic that the carnival overpowers. As Bakhtin emphasizes in *Rabelais and His World*, carnival proper is a distinctly ancient and medieval phenomenon that gradually fades away with the advent of the Enlightenment and the bourgeois society. The Enlightenment doctrine of reason and rationality to the exclusion of the body beyond the cerebral vehemently opposes the fluidity of the carnival way of life, demanding concrete and unambiguous truths at all times; bourgeois morality, in turn, pushes the excesses of the body from communal spaces where they were freely observed and discussed, into the realm of the private chambers where they are secretively whispered about and spied on. The joyous allure of the crass, hyper-sexual and arguably grotesque body does persist in popular folklore — a fact Makavejev draws attention to in his earlier *Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967) as well as *Mysteries of the Organism*, where Ljuba the

soldier's courtship with Jagoda consists entirely of reciting a series of humorous rhymes advertising his sexual prowess.[83] However, the difference between carnival in the medieval sense, and the surviving folkloric celebration of the grotesque body is that, unlike in Rabelais's world, crassness, farce, and laughter are now not only incompatible with erudition and philosophical exploration, but appear to be mutually exclusive. Intellectual life withdraws almost entirely into abstract concepts and a drive to discipline the world by dividing all its phenomena into strict, closely demarcated categories; the body — grotesque and otherwise — is excluded from the project of obtaining knowledge of the world. This vision of affective and bodily excess demolishes any remnants of a "tasteful" veneer that might still be ascribed to the Karamazovian *sladostrastie*, where all three brothers cite poetry and the Bible, or compose "poems" of their own. The commune finally strips the impulses underlying sensual urges, exposing their base and dangerous nature — in good part through stripping away the social markings of class.

At the core of the carnival's power of uniting the high and the low in irreverent liberatory discourse is a crude and grotesque banquet: a carnivalization of the respectable philosophical symposium. In *Sweet Movie*, the commune events are centered around food and eating. It is a

[83] In *Sweet Movie* a similar celebration of the characteristically Yugoslav mode of conveying this type of discourse is hidden from his international audience: while Anna and Bakunin are having sex at the top of her boat, one of the cheering voices from the banks of the canal is Serbo-Croatian. That exclamation (translatable along the lines of "don't go easy on her!"), is not subtitled in the 2008 DVD release.

Further, in the 2006 interview with Peter Cowie Makavejev refers to "Yugos, Greeks, and Turks" as "sexual proletariat" that, in his original vision of the film, was supposed to enjoy the benefit of a revolutionary Amsterdam brothel that would cater specifically to their needs. Just like Serbo-Croatian, Greek makes an appearance in the film in the original song by Manos Hadjidakis that plays over the Katyn footage, and it is likewise not subtitled. These voices are hidden from the West, but accessible to the East.

The lyrics to Hajidakis's song do exist, however, in both French and Italian (the latter, *I ragazzi giu nel campo* written by Pasolini): https://www.antiwarsongs.org/canzone.php?lang=en&id=46494

Later in her musical career, Anna Prucnal recorded the Italian version.

journey through the orifices of the digestive tract, starting with the consuming and evacuating mouth, and ending with the excreting penis and anus, with the riotous, repulsive communal meal serving as the centerpiece of the gathering. The devouring of food, vomit, and urine is violent, and the violence, even though it is extreme, does resonate with what Bakhtin describes as a necessary moment of the body's triumph over its environment: "In the act of eating," Bakhtin writes of Rabelais, "the confines between the body and the world are overstepped by the body; it triumphs over the world, over its enemy, celebrates its victory, grows at the world's expense" (*Rabelais* 283). The carnival meal is by definition inclusive of all layers of society, and allows for free expression of the low on equal footing with the high. Most of all, through its connection to the food as the outcome of human labor, it empowers the working class endowed with the ability to produce it:

> Work triumphed in food. Human labor's encounter with the world and the struggle against it ended in food, in the swallowing of that which had been wrested from the world … It must be stressed that both labor and food were collective; the whole society took part in them. Collective food as the conclusion of labor's collective process was not a biological, animal act but a social event … The original system of images symbolized the working people, continuing to conquer life and food through struggle and labor and to absorb only that part of the world that has been conquered and mastered. In such a system of the banquet images preserve their initial meaning: their universalism, their essential relation to life, death, struggle, triumph, and regeneration (*Rabelais* 282).

> Труд торжествовал в еде. Трудовая встреча человека с миром, трудовая борьба с ним кончалась едою — поглощением отвоеванной у мира части его. … Нужно подчеркнуть, что и труд и еда были коллективными; в них равно участвовало все общество. Эта коллективная еда, как завершающий момент коллективного же трудового процесса — не биологический животный акт, а событие социальное. … Но в системе образов трудящегося народа, продолжающего завоёвывать свою жизнь и еду в трудовой борьбе, продолжающего поглощать только завоеванную, осиленную часть мира, — пиршественные образы продолжают сохранять свое важное значение, свой универсализм, свою существенную связь с жизнью, смертью, борьбой, победой, торжеством, возрождением (*SS* 4(2): 302-303).

And so, the banquet of the medieval carnival brings together labor, liberation from both social

authority and the power of nature, and — most importantly — the grotesque and communal human body as the vehicle of those connections. The porosity of the grotesque body that facilitates this openness resonates with the liberatory potential of open, dialogical modes and artistic expression Bakhtin writes about elsewhere.

In this respect, both Bakhtin and Reich comment on the repercussions of the exclusion of the body from intellectual and political life. Where Bakhtin is concerned with the aesthetic consequences brought by modernity's constraints on the body, Reich theorizes the political implications of such constraints on the body from the Marxist perspective. He draws a clear connection between the exclusion of the body's materiality, and the failure of communist and socialist ideologies to overpower the mesmerizing appeal of fascism, despite the liberatory ideals of the former, and the oppression inherent to the latter. Reich's concern is that, by and large, revolutionary movements have retained the prudishness of bourgeois culture, effectively disabling their potential to bring genuine liberation: "Man's authoritarian structure … is basically produced by the embedding of sexual inhibitions and fear of the living substance of sexual impulses" (*Mass Psychology* 30). For Reich, the exclusion of the body entails primarily, and almost exclusively, sexuality — and Makavejev's *W.R.* articulates just that. In *Sweet Movie*, stepping beyond Reich, Makavejev expands his exploration of the political essences of the body to include eating alongside sex. The Bakhtinian framework, in turn, allows for an understanding of such relationship between the body and authoritarian discourse by offering carnivalization as a possible way out of hierarchies of power: "the grotesque symposium does not have to respect hierarchical distinctions; it freely blends the profane and the sacred, the lower and the higher, the spiritual and the material" (*Rabelais* 285-286). The implication that follows from Bakhtin's discussion is that true liberation needs to be imbued with carnivalized laughter, synthesized in the kind of community offered by

the irreverence of the grotesque banquet. The main concern Makavejev raises in *Sweet Movie* is that his fellow socialists fail to embrace that imperative.

The behavior of the members of the commune is intended as liberation from bourgeois norms: the promise of Otto Muehl's Reichian (or, quite possibly, pseudo-Reichian) therapeutic approach is the breaking of the oppressive body armor. However, something isn't right with the sequence. For all the laughter and irreverence, the on-screen joy is more likely to produce revulsion than attraction. Miss World, roused from her catatonic state, refuses to partake in the banquet, recoils at the sight of physical violence, and ultimately relapses into sacrificing her body for the chocolate sweetness of capitalism. From the standpoint of carnival logic, her failure to join the ribald community signals the failure of the same community to be truly open. Contrary to the openness to the world embodied by food in the medieval grotesque banquet, the acts of eating in *Sweet Movie* are solipsistic: food is vomited and destroyed, not enjoyed as nourishment, and the only things that get ingested are those that come from within the bodies themselves, rather than the products of their labor. Thus, instead of establishing a communion with the world — both celebratory and conquering — the participants stop at unraveling and destroying its current state. The liberation of the body is accompanied by the sounds *of* the body – babbling, laughing, crying, and inarticulate screaming – but the commune members fail to create any philosophical discourse. The latter, however, is crucial for the kind of liberation offered by the carnival. Bakhtin writes:

> The banquet images liberate speech, lending it a fearless and free tone … Free play with the sacred — this is the basic content of the symposium of the Middle Ages. This does not represent nihilism, nor the primitive enjoyment of debasing the higher level … The banquet speech is universal and materialistic at the same time. This is why the grotesque symposium travesties and debases the purely idealistic, mystic, and ascetic victory over the world (*Rabelais* 296).
>
> Пиршественные образы освобождают слово, задают бесстрашный и свободный тон всему произведению … Свободная игра со священным — вот основное содержание

> средневекового симпосиона. Но это не нигилизм и не примитивное удовольствие от снижения высокого … Пиршественное слово одновременно и универсалистично и материалистично. Поэтому гротескный симпосион пародийно травестирует и снижает всякую чисто идеальную, мистическую и аскетическую победу над миром (*SS* 4(2): 317-318).

The dearth of speech in the commune amplifies the fact that most speech in the film is a patchwork of canned phrases, cliches, and sloganeering, with little room for genuinely free verbal play without which the grotesque body cannot act as a facilitator of liberation, and instead carries terrifying destruction alone. And so it transpires that the problem of violence lies not the in the word itself, but rather in the *modality* of communication that shapes political reality; displacing the word does not make the violence disappear if the overall aesthetic modality is inhospitable to free mutual engagement and becoming. Unsurprisingly, *Sweet Movie* raises this challenge most poignantly through its cinematic form more so than direct narrative articulation. As I have argued earlier, the film's interplay of visual imagery, montage, and genre creates an environment where ideas and affects constantly morph and shape one another, supporting each other's unfinalizability — in other words, *Sweet Movie* is a polyphonic work. However, Makavejev utilizes this aesthetic approach to demonstrate the failure of polyphonic reality in the world of the film. Characters vocalize past each other, leaving no room for dialogue as they engage with the world only to subjugate and devour, and revel in destruction without creation. Vital energy — sexual in Reich, communicative and communal in Bakhtin, and pan-material for Bennett — needs to not simply flow, but to *circulate*, fixated not on a single body but engaging with the entire environment. Without constant mutual co-creation of selves and realities, there can be no polyphony; and as I argued on the example of Alyosha Karamazov in Chapter 3, a "loving communion" with the world that would produce an ethic of generosity hinges precisely on a dialogic interaction and polyphonic environments. Anna Planeta as well as the commune figures in *Sweet Movie* demonstrate the

capacity to produce strong affects that resemble *karamazovshchina* in their intensity; however, they fail to contain and exchange it in a way that would breed creation alongside dismantling, and this failure results in explosive disintegration of the schizophrenic kind. Conversely, Miss World's affective intensity can be glimpsed only through the forcefulness of the self-annihilation caused by repression of that which her body holds within. The ultimate failure of Otto Muehl's therapeutic communal liberation, then, is that the opening up of the body does not culminate in renewal and creation, but remains within the realm of destruction. The inversion of the high and low is rendered meaningless: when Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* is sung side by side with the plating of feces, it is debased precisely in the primitive manner that does not allow for an extension into the world at large. Violence is bereft of power for regeneration and rebirth, and remains fundamentally senseless, failing to meet Bakhtin's utopian vision.

Much like the catatonic Miss World, the spectators of *Sweet Movie* do by and large find this type of carnivalesque banquet horrifying even as the formal modes of its delivery ambush their proximity senses. Adding to the disorientation and distress brought about by the commune sequence, the documentary nature of the footage combined with the presence of established characters (or at least the bodies thereof) collapses the boundaries of the real and the fictional, pulling the spectator even further into the violence of the end of the film. Because of the film's ability to deliver a visceral impact through cinematic means, criticism of ideology as sweetness in *Sweet Movie* refuses to remain at the level of intellectual allegory one can impassively observe from the other side of the screen. Instead of acting simply as a metaphor, sweetness delivers a deeper level of cinematic seduction: subconscious rather than conscious, holistically embodied rather than merely cerebral. Instead of contemplating the seductive power of "sweetened" ideology, the spectator is forced to confront her own seduction, her own susceptibility to

entrapment. As Gianvito's account of the bait-and-switch affective response to *Sweet Movie* shows, the crux of this discomfort lies in confronting the spectator with complicity in violence. It is the various layers of complicity – and various modalities of violence present in both the narrative and profilmic reality of *Sweet Movie* – that I will discuss last.

5.3 Sites of Violence

Given the more glaring ethical issues involved in the making of *Sweet Movie* — notably, both shooting and showing the child seduction scene — it is somewhat remarkable that it is the commune sequence that causes the most violent, visceral revulsion in many viewers. Makavejev claimed that parts of the audience at the Cannes premiere stepped out of the room when the commune sequence started, but peeked at it from behind the door, returning to their seats once it was finished: a childish response that captures Linda Williams's understanding of "gross." Thus, on the one hand, images of the body at its extremes do often seem to be irresistible: Jennifer Barker's reminds that representations of the physical body doing bodily things "for no other reason than the sheer delight in seeing them done" (132) are the prime driver of the early cinema of attraction. On the other hand, the gripping power that this imagery possesses is employed here full-force to expose the degree to which bodily revulsion — a sensory "taste" — supersedes the moral and intellectual revulsion — the "taste" of what is appropriate. While the former was easily triggered by the sight of vomiting, the latter might have been offended by depictions of possible child molestation, but not to the point of needing to escape.

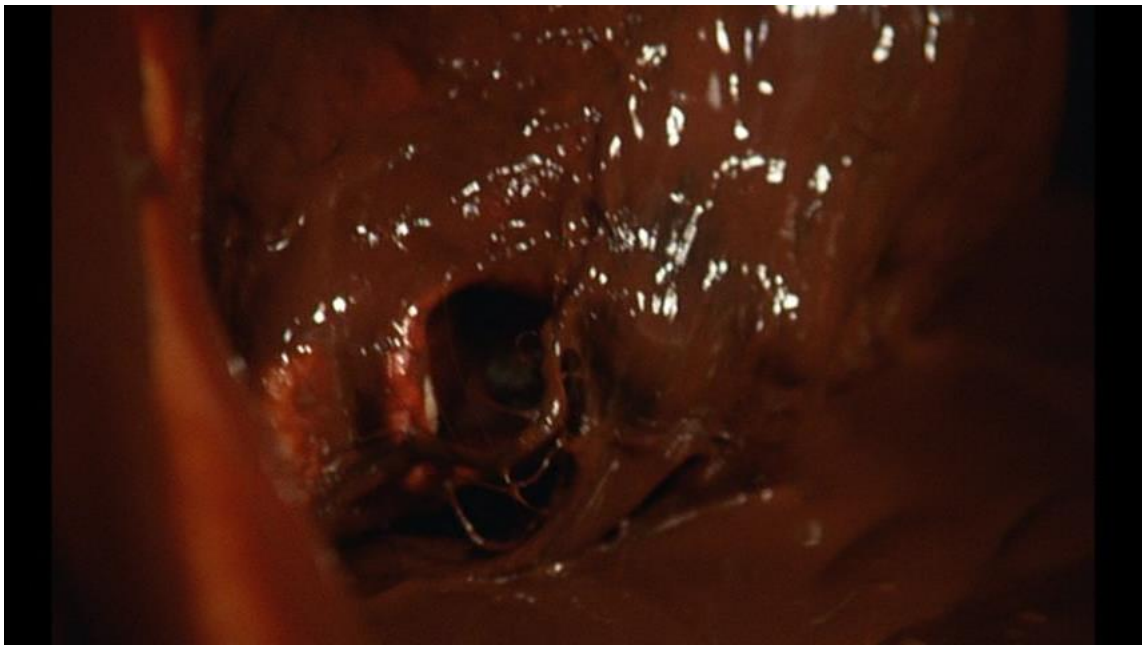
Miss World's narrative is an excellent site for probing the degree of the spectators' concessions to both on-screen and off-screen violence. On the fictional plane, the storyline is engaged with the kinds of bodily engagement that can be brough out by the tropes of body genres, as it parodies all three. Her love life is a melodrama, her death is horror, her body is pornographic throughout; the

melodrama is parodied by a crass humiliation, the horror is inverted with a link to sweetness, and the pornographic foiled with links to genuine revulsion and death. Violence – in which the spectator ends up being largely complicit by virtue of her enjoyment – looms large over the narrative line. This is unsurprising from the standpoint of body genres, seeing as "in each of these genres the bodies of women figured on the screen have functioned traditionally as the primary *embodiments* of pleasure, fear, and pain" ("Film Bodies" 4). Everywhere except in the commune — that is, in all spaces marked as Western and capitalist — Miss World is being consumed as a spectacle: greedy cameras follow her gynecological exam at the beginning of the film, her embarrassing sexual encounter with El Macho, and her death by drowning. In her final sequence, the emphasis on the connection between penetration and violence (of the camera gaze, of the measuring instruments) echoes the fact that Miss World's own descent into horror begins with her first sexual intercourse. As Linda Williams points out, the genre of horror is fixated on "punishing" sexual impurity of its female characters, and pleasure is derived from the sight of this punishment.

El Macho caught in his lover's vaginal spasm

The lovers are separated on a restaurant table, surrounded by raw food.

Miss World, dejected, breaks eggs over her head.



Miss World drowns in chocolate, emphasizing the strong connection between sweetness and horror.

The trajectory of Carole Laure's involvement in the making of *Sweet Movie*, and her departure under what seem to have been difficult circumstances involving a degree of strife brings an added layer of complexity to the problem of spectatorial complicity with the suffering of her fictional character. Echoing the problem of apparent inseparability between abstract/spectatorial and real (physical and historical) violence, the difficulties that led to her departure from the production seem to have started precisely at the point when Makavejev decided to experiment with creating semi-documentary footage.

As a reminder, half of the participants in the commune sequence were members of an existing therapeutic collective from Vienna, who agreed to follow Makavejev to Paris, along with their leader Otto Muehl. There, they were joined by eight professional actors for the purpose of co-creating "a sort of living antipsychiatry collective" that would make for a far more authentic experience than "some clumsy half-fantasy with hired actors" (Makavejev, "Destructive Art"). Together, over the course of seven days, this ensemble produced a series of mostly improvised

performances, each geared towards a specific theme: the grotesque banquet sequence, for example, was shot on "Day of Food," within two hours and without any rehearsals, in one continuous take with a hand-held camera. As a result, the repulsive bodily acts — exchanging food mouth-to-mouth, vomiting, urinating and drinking urine, defecation — were all unstimulated. At the same time, the sequence is integral to the film's fictional arc, as it is designed to portray an attempt towards Miss World's psychic recovery; outside of context of production methods, her presence obfuscates the documentary nature of the footage around her.

In Makavejev's opinion, it was the demand for communal experience that made Laure intensely uncomfortable to the point of being unable to participate. He describes her resistance with the pejorative and heavily gendered labels of narcissism and hysteria:

> At first I thought Carole Laure was a little afraid, but then she was each time more difficult, claiming she didn't understand things, not wanting to undress, afraid that parts of her body would be exposed, then not even wanting to undress in order to get into a bathtub. I finally realized she was really incapable to feel … Like most hysterical people she had a pathological fear of contact, and there she was, facing that fantastic group that worked so smoothly together, sexually free, even acting irresponsible or freakish if they felt like, and she couldn't stand the confrontation: somehow it destroyed her narcissistic fantasies. Supposed to join them, she started pulling back, and got worse and worse until she only cried and stood in a corner. Shooting with her had to stop, and the group decided to try and find out some way of helping her out of that state … After a short moment of appeasement she became irritated and refused any contact, not just physical but intellectual as well. It was at that moment that she broke with the film ("Dušan Makavejev Interview" 49).

According to the director himself, the lead actress was asked to engage in deep therapeutic work for the purposes of the film. In Bakhtinian terms, given the interactive nature of the experience this would have included a process of opening herself to self-creation and co-creation through dialogue with the gazes of others. However, as the old adage goes, the success of any psychotherapy depends on the subject's willingness to change; without informed and enthusiastic consent, the process is futile and can even be damaging. Makavejev's stubborn insistence that

participating in the communal freedom-play is a marker of psychic health is a prime example of an imposed *gaze from the outside* onto the psyche of the other; it is ethical violation of the self-autonomy of his lead actress, who remains entitled to her neuroses, or indeed any other reason for reticence. In a way, this is a Dostoevskian move: an author with a brilliant penchant for polyphonic works of aesthetic production presents as monologic and even judgmental in his own public attitudes.

The presence of the commune sequences in the final cut of the film solidify the fact that a violation of boundaries is happening not only on the formal level of the film's structure, narrative, imagery, and genre, but seeps into (or, perhaps, starts in) the profilmic realm. The overwhelming discomfort of *sweetness* transfers to the plane of off-screen labor along with the violence. The sequence where Carole Laure splashes and gyrates in a vat of molten chocolate is a notable example: Laure's doctor ordered her to take showers in twenty-minute intervals throughout the shooting of that particular scene. The cause for the doctor's concern were, as Makavejev mumbles before trailing off, "the clay, the chocolate" — components mixed together to achieve the desired color and consistency of the substance she is submerged into. The director's discomfort with specifying the nature of Laure's possible medical issues might affirm a possibility that is readily obvious to most adult biological women: from the standpoint of intimate health, full body immersion into a mixture of (drying) clay and (sugar-packed, yeast-feeding) chocolate is glaringly ill-advised. When we watch footage of Laure splashing around in the sticky substance, what we see might be an arousing image of a sexually attractive woman, or an allegory for capitalist decadence; but there is a high chance that the profilmic reality we are looking at is an ongoing disruption of the vaginal microbiome, likely to result in 7-10 days of mild to severe discomfort. I recall here Jane Bennett's discussion of the agency of foodstuffs in *Vibrant Matter* and Elizabeth

Wilson's discussion of the chemistry of the body in co-creating creating both personal and social realities in *Gut Feminism*.

When Carole Laure's body is pornographically enjoyed by the spectator, this pleasure operates less along the lines of conventional pornography, and more in the vein of sadomasochistic imagery. Sadomasochistic pornography, in Linda Williams's view, poses a particular challenge to the conventions of mainstream hardcore as it deprioritizes penetrative intercourse of any kind, favoring instead a paradoxical derivation of physical pleasure from pain. It is a genre that brings up the uncomfortable fact that a spectacle of pain and domination is sexually gratifying, while at the same time raising the question of whether the pleasure – or the pain – viewed on screen are real or simulated:

> This is where the concern over the first kind of harm, the presumed harm to the performers who receive the violence, is complicated by our relation to the cinematic image — for the image, like the woman's performance of orgasm but unlike the man's, can easily fake it. To what extent is the film or video asking the viewer to take sadistic pleasure in the real suffering of others? Is the suffering real? If it is, is it perversely (masochistically) enjoyed or painfully endured? (Williams, *Hard Core* 202)

Adjacency to the sadomasochistic mode of sexuality makes the violence in *Sweet Movie* less dark and solemn: its carnivalized nature produces a giddiness, a playfulness, at times a collaborative dynamic between the victim and the perpetrator that displaces conventional expectations of pleasure and pain. The despair and confusion it so efficiently conveys, is evoked, in large part, because a shadow of joy haunts it throughout, but inevitably fails to materialize, transforming into violence instead. The two *pornographic* sequences pose two ends of the same question. The child seduction scene asks — was there violence, even if there couldn't have been a degree of consent acceptable in normative society? The sequences of Laure's distress and her seductive death in chocolate ask, on the other hand — was the violence *real*, and what does it mean

to enjoy it?

By leaning into the displaced pleasure of non-genital gratification and pain, *Sweet Movie* challenges and parodies the conventional hardcore pornography ruled by the overpowering male gaze.[84] The main anxiety of mainstream heterosexual hardcore pornography with bringing out into the camera's field of vision that which is invisible — most significantly, the orgasm. The male orgasm can be visually conveyed through images of ejaculation: hence the importance of the omnipresent "money shot," which Williams describes as the "fetish substitute for less visible but more 'direct' instances of genital connection" (*Hard Core* 95). Identification with the pleasure represented by visible ejaculation, she points out, requires suspension of disbelief:

> For to show the quantifiable, material 'truth' of his pleasure, the male pornographic film performer must withdraw from any tactile connection with the genitals or mouth of the woman so that the 'spending' of his ejaculate is visible. With this convention, viewers are asked to believe that the sexual performers within the film *want* to shift from tactile to a visual pleasure at the crucial moment of the male's orgasm (Williams, *Hard Core* 101).

The pornographic drive to make the invisible visible in its totality, then, results in disassociation from curious, open tactility in favor of finalizing knowledge of the encounter that is, as a matter of pornographic imperative, completely teleological. By contrast, within the ethos of Dostoevsky's and Makavejev's work alike, the source of joy is radical communality: on the spiritual, socio-material, aesthetic, interpersonal, and sexual planes, it is emergent from open-ended, non-totalizing, *dialogic* contact with the other (both human and non-human). For Bakhtin, dialogism is a positively charged phenomenon, one that engenders freedom and all but excludes

[84] Pornographic content featuring all these paraphilias and more does exist, so it is important to not that the portrayal kink of any kind does not constitute a "parody" in and of itself. Most of the time, the nontraditional pornography Williams talks about relies on a subversive *perversion* rather than a subversive *inversion* of norms. However, the parodic mode is not alien to porn outside films like *Sweet Movie* either: I have in mind here the kind of tongue-in-cheek pornographic cinematography featured at HUMP! festival: https://humpfilmfest.com

violence. Similarly, enchantment is a singularly positive mood for Jane Bennett — and as I'd discussed briefly before, *Sweet Movie* does rely on some strategies that, in theory, should facilitate the generation of wonder. Its Gestalt refrains could have the power "to 'en-chant': to surround with song or incantation; hence, to cast a spell with sounds, to make fall under the sway of a magical refrain, to carry away on a sonorous stream" (*Enchantment* 6). The problem with the spectators' engagement in *Sweet Movie* might be in the substitution of *enchantment*, which extends an invitation for a "joyful attachment" to the world with no strings attached, with *seduction* — a promise of a pleasurable encounter that fulfills a more dangerous attachment to *desire for consumption* – of both commodities and exciting ideologies – rather than free attachment.

The common ground between politics and pornography so conceptualized lies in their shared insistence on consuming and destroying by way of absolute knowledge. The drive to know something completely and absolutely violates the Bakhtinian model of love proposed by Alina Wyman, where it is imperative to allow unknowability/unfinalizability of the loved one; and it likewise violates Bennett's ethics of enchantment, which always by its nature allows marvel and joy at something incomprehensible – whereby a fundamental acceptance of incomprehensibility as such is inherent. In *Sweet Movie*, Makavejev is playing a dangerous game, challenging the spectator to engage with the film and the world freely and joyfully, but in reality teasing out her perverse desire to watch the pornographic spectacle of history. Serbian cuts and cruel narrative twists into the excesses of body genres tear through the seductive, enchanting refrain of the scattered shots throughout the film, reminding that there is horror in the pleasure, there is blood in the magic, the suffering is real just as much as it is fictional, and the actress pretending to die sumptuously in liquid chocolate is no more of an allegory than a freshly excavated pile of corpses.

5.4 Tender Revolutions

On the level of structure, genre, and imagery, *Sweet Movie* utilizes the conventions of aesthetics to penetrate the process of its spectators' self-creation. In its extreme shock value, it relinquishes much of the control over the kind of conscious reaction it will elicit, but it refuses to be ignored: it produces pure intensity. The visceral immediacy of the film makes its polyphony sharply different from Dostoevsky's literature. Consider the following passage where Bakhtin speculates on the readers' reception of the polyphonic mode:

> Every *true* reader of Dostoevsky, who perceives his novels not in the monologic mode and who is capable of rising to Dostoevsky's new authorial position, can sense this peculiar *active broadening* of his consciousness …. primarily in the sense of a special dialogic mode of communication with the autonomous consciousnesses of others … an active dialogic penetration into the unfinalizable depths of man (*PDP* 68).
>
> Всякий *настоящий* читатель Достоевского, который воспринимает его романы не на монологический лад, а умеет подняться до новой авторской позиции Достоевского, чувствует это особое *активное расширение* своего сознания… прежде всего в смысле особого, никогда раннее не испытанного диалогического общения с полноправными чужими сознаниями и активного диалогического проникновения в незавершимые глубины человека (*SS* 6: 80-81).

Speculating on the impact of polyphony, Bakhtin resorts to a tautological, essentialist argument: the productive expansion of a consciousness through polyphony requires an almost mystical "true" reader. In order for literary polyphony to attune a reader to a novel, dialogic mode of relating to others, the reader's mind has to have already been prepared to receive such an influence. Tellingly, Bakhtin speaks of *consciousnesses*: those parts of the mind that have already processed affects and consolidated stimuli, and can face as much or as little of the aesthetic object as they are prepared to handle. The affective force of *Sweet Movie*, on the other hand, suggests that cinematic polyphony is able to strike the body directly, circumventing consciousness. Moreover, the film's focus on assaulting taste — a proximity sense — reveals the potential for weaponized

polyphony, rendering the body defenseless against its onslaught.

With that in mind, it is unsurprising that bodies would rather defend themselves from the attack than embrace the lessons it can teach them: *Sweet Movie* has been remarkably successful in disturbing viewers across the political spectrum. Conservatives have called it pornographic, implying a threat to public morals and propriety, to *tastefulness*, and Makavejev's usual audience of left-leaning cinephiles by and large rejected the film's excesses. Not only does Makavejev seem uninterested in "cultivating" any particular sensibilities — generous or otherwise — but on the contrary the purpose of his project seems to be the dismantling the notion of cultivation as such. By challenging the spectator into the space of her own non-coincidence, the parodies and perversions of *Sweet Movie* bring to surface and examine the nature of totalitarian aesthetics. Following Milan Kundera's definition of kitsch that I have elaborated on earlier, I argue that kitsch and refinement join forces in aestheticizing totalitarianism through one common thread: an extreme attachment to order. Their need for beauty and sublimity are satiated by an image of a totalized reality that leaves no room for ambiguity and liminality, no room for confusion. Kundera's definition of totalitarian *kitsch* extends it across the political spectrum — from the paeans to Communism blaring over the speakers on International Labor Day in Czechoslovakia to the American senator shedding a pious tear over the sight of children playing in the land of the free. I would venture to suggest that the dangerous infective potential of finalizing aesthetization can be extended to other manifestations of totalitarianism to the same degree and can, in fact, serve as a measure of totalitarian mindset.

At the same time, Makavejev shows that the aesthetics of ultimate open revelry likewise carry danger and violence. As the extreme of openness to communion with the world finds its full expression in the carnival, bodies collapse into an undifferentiated, chaotic mass of violence.

While the ethics of fascism are the extreme of rigid finalization, the ethics of carnival are entirely dismantled. However, the two polarities share one thing in common: they separate the subject from his autonomous body, either through internal repression, or dissolution in the world to the point of losing individuation altogether. In doing so, they rob the subject of the essential precondition for ethics: a vehicle for carrying "address in being" that is both firmly situated in a unique personal context and point of view from which he can *respond* to others, but at the same time attuned, attentive, to a world of equally autonomous entities to whom he is *responsible*.

I still maintain that the affect-laden body remains indispensable for ethics and the vehicle for ethical action. However, as the analysis of *The Idiot*, the pitfalls of Karamazovian sexuality and *Sweet Movie* all show, when faced with overwhelming affective forces, the body is prone to collapsing — physically or mentally, inwards onto oneself like Prince Myshkin and Nastasya Filippovna, or spilling its baser urges into the world like Dmitry and Ivan Karamazov. These pitfalls of the body carry over to the ideological and political plane, affecting, in turn, the bodies of others — often, as Makavejev shows, inflicting violence in capitalism and socialism alike. Alyosha Karamazov's two productive encounters with a generous world remain the only true examples of ethically productive polyphony throughout this analysis: such encounters are possible, but rare.

The one major factor that sets Alyosha's encounters apart from all others is a welcoming environment where he is able to be vulnerable; and meanwhile, despite Bakhtin's utopian hopes in the carnival, a space for safe vulnerability is exactly what it is missing. As a way of conclusion, I would like to propose a possible path towards creating a welcoming environment in a world that is both carnal and secular, by recalling a form of sexuality that is neither extractive nor overpowering. Psychoanalytic scholar Stephanie Koziej proposes a non-teleological model of

sexuality by rehabilitating the Freudian concept of tenderness (*Zärtlichkeit*). Koziej points out that a "civilized, healthy, adult sexuality" as conceived in psychoanalysis since its onset, has placed a "taboo on adult erotic tenderness" (342). Freud confined tenderness exclusively to the mother-child relationship, and pathologized it in adults, who ought to outgrow it to develop *sensual* desire — and *tenderness* has been largely neglected in psychoanalytic theory since. However, Koziej argues, a potential for tender desire continues to exist, and carries potential for radical transformation. Koziej uses Kristeva's concept of *reliance* (which she views as an equivalent to Freud's *tenderness*) to explain the difference between the tenderness and sensuality:

> <Kristeva> confirms that tenderness and sensuality follow different economies of desire. She writes that moments of reliance/tenderness consist in a vacillation between two states: first, a state of emergency, and second a state of reconciliation … This first state of emergency is characterized by a falling-apart of the integrated subject or Self. What seems to happen here is that the Self returns to some nonintegrated status. Kristeva refers to this as the pre-Self before the mirror stage, and characterizes it as a prediscursive, not-yet-Self. What seems to happen here is that the Self returns to some nonintegrated status. This nonintegrated pre-self Kristeva calls *abjection*, which is a state between object and subject … In this sense we could understand erotic tenderness to be situated in an intervening space before an *I* or a *you* (348).

In a precarious dialogic relationship where the two selves meet, it is this intervening space that carries the danger of veering into fear or violence, of withdrawal and isolation deep into the self, or into a hungry devourment of the other. However, if this space is filled with tenderness, the discomfort of non-coincidence is remedied through the support of the other. Most importantly, tender sexuality is non-teleological and therefore *non-finalizing*: it is not fixated on the "outcome" of orgasm (the all-important pornographic money shot), it has no interest in possession and devourment, and it is fundamentally grounded in mutual trust. Instead, it engenders a gentle and curious desire for contact and communication — a physical and sexual manifestation of that which Alyosha and Grushenka share on the spiritual plane: "Unlike Freud's phallic sexuality, tender

sexuality is able to value actions like mere touch, kissing, caressing or rocking as pleasurable in *themselves*. And unlike phallic selfhood, tender selfhood recognizes, allows, and even enjoys vulnerability and dependency" (Koziej 349). Makavejev shows a glimpse of that fantasy in a rare serene moment, set to soft music, when Mama Communa revives the adult Miss World by breastfeeding. The fantasy is short-lived: once awakened from her vegetative state, Miss World is faced with the carnivalesque horror of the commune, and collapses back into self-destruction. Anna Planeta's striptease sequence, where sensual desire is directed towards children, highlights the devouring and destructive component of sensual desire. By contrast, the tender eroticism extended from one adult woman to another exposes the power of tender acts of care to "allow a vacillation between a vulnerable disintegration and reintegration of the self" (Koziej 349). Safe passage through sites of non-coincidence depends on the nurturing presence of the other.

Conclusion

Three years into a deeply personal study of joy, wonder, generosity, and their coexistence with a troubled and violent world, the only ethical takeaway seems to be one that any daycare teacher would give: be kind. The naive simplicity of this insight begs the question: Why is it so hard?

To explore that, I looked into the processes by which people become who they are, and how their own becoming is influenced by contact with others. In Chapter 1, I outlined Bakhtin's theory of the self, which envisions the becoming self as unfinalizable as well as dependent on encounters with the gazes of others in its semiotic space. However, Bakhtin warns, the omnipresent human impulse to imagine the world as coherent gravitates towards *finalizing* images of others, violating their autonomy. The only way to overcome this danger to both the true nature of the human being and the ethical imperative of recognizing his truth is through *dialogue* — the opposite of *rhetoric*, a form of speech that strives to assert the truthfulness of a singular perspective. A truly dialogic interaction happens between two individuated consciousnesses, each willing to step aside from the comfort of a securely consolidated image of the self and the world to engage with the other in a way that might become transformative. When single-minded, closed-off rhetoric steps in place of true dialogue, the unfinalizable nature of the human is violated; as such, the question of dialogic engagement comes with high ethical stakes. I further argued that it is the body, rather than the conscious mind that mediates the process of unfinalizable becoming as well as encounters with the world — including the ethical valence of these encounters. The eternally becoming bodies — whether we are aware of it or not — bear witness to a polyphonic reality: one where all constituent parts constantly shape each other, whether we are aware of it or not.

In Chapter 2, I addressed the elephant in the room: by virtue of its liminality, unfinalizability

is often experienced as a state of crisis. The question I asked is why it is so painful, and what this pain can do to the self. Myshkin example, explored through the lens of Brian Massumi's theory of the bleed, that porousness and receptivity to external reality can be dangerous. Allowing the world to co-create us does not always feel good or lead to healthy outcomes. At the same time, Nastasya Filippovna demonstrates how the affective economy, emergent from the very same inevitable affective embodiment of polyphonic reality, can crush an individual with its tendency towards consolidating a comfortable, coherent, *finalized* world as a whole. In her encounters with both Myshkin and the hostile society that ostracizes her, Nastasya Filippovna is destroyed by being imagined as only a *single* thing, reduced by others to a fictional essence that does not correspond to the internal dynamism of her unfinalizable self. Most importantly, juxtaposition of Sara Ahmed's concept of happiness with the open-ended aspirations of Jane Bennett's enchantment bring out the importance of non-teleological attitudes to maintaining the ethical imperative of honoring the unfinalizable nature of others.

Having established the possible pitfalls of unfinalizability, I turned to exploring its ethically potent side. Chapter 3 shows how enchantment and joy can support the self in grappling with unfinalizability and uncertainty, and establish productive dialogic connections with others. Alyosha Karamazov reveals the full expression of wonder before the embodied polyphony of the world, and of the generous ethics that come out of such affects. Once again, non-teleological orientations towards others prove to be of the essence in establishing dialogic and generous relationships. Such orientations, I argue, can be fostered through loving and welcoming attentiveness to others: something Alyosha succeeds in, particularly in his interactions with Grushenka. Meanwhile, Alyosha's ability to engage with the entire material world as polyphonic and wonderful starts out with individual dialogues but grows through his extraordinary ability to

carry intense affects: a "Karamazovian" trait that he shares with his brothers. The joyful exaltations that the brothers go through, each in his own way, are all connected to Orthodox Christianity; but since Donovan Schaefer demonstrates that the roots of religious affect can be viewed as biological before they become differentiated into particular religious expressions, I argue that their affects can be extrapolated and discovered, along with Jane Bennett's vision of enchantment, in the secular world.

Illustration by DALL-E, OpenAI's machine learning model that generates digital images from natural language descriptions. This image was generated using the following prompt: "young Orthodox novice exits the monastery and throws himself on the ground, overwhelmed by the beauty of the night: the Milky Way, golden domes of the Orthodox church, sapphire sky, autumn flowers."[85]

[85] I am thankful to my friend Thibault Duchemin for helping me get access to the software.

However, a closer inspection of the Karamazovian affects has shown that the same intensities that bring so much potential for ethical rebirth can also spell destruction and death. In moments of non-coincidence and crisis encounters with the world, there seems to be a moment of suspense that can lead to enchantment and generosity — but is far more likely to veer off into darker impulses, negatively impacting both the self who experiences it, and those around him. These questions of individual embodied responses never happen in isolation from broader societal undercurrents. As with Nastasya Filippovna, the affective trajectories of the Karamazovs and the forms in which they are able to aesthetically shape the images of themselves and the world that they created, are largely determined by their position in the broader affective economies that take into account class structures of power.

In the second part of my project, I made two pivots: in my choice of media, and my choice of focus. In terms of media, I wondered about the broader applicability of Bakhtinian theories across aesthetic forms, especially those that are historically more closely aligned with the loci of enchantment discovered by Jane Bennett. As I have shown in Chapter 4, the non-verbal medium of film is nevertheless able to initiate dialogic connections both as an aesthetic artefact and in relation to its audience; it is also able to do so in more immediate affective ways. The topics of *Sweet Movie* also demonstrated that sociopolitical messages and histories can be both carried by the body, and conveyed onto it through the direct impact of cinematic tactility and taste.

In my analysis of the position of the body at the intersection of history, ideology, affect, and aesthetics, I turned to Bakhtin's concept of the carnival as the generic precursor to the novel and novelized genre. I broadened the scope of this analysis in Chapter 5, where I elaborated on the impact of carnivalized, grotesque bodies on the parodying of cinematic genres which, in turn, ambush the spectators' affects and force them to confront their own political blind spots. As I had

highlighted in my first chapter, Bakhtin is wary of seriousness as the ultimate affective factor in the violence of finalization; and Makavejev's assault on the politics of physical and political taste highlights that there are few greater dangers to the world than taking oneself seriously. However, Makavejev's important and impactful message conveyed through aesthetic means comes at a cost, and I reflect briefly on the ethics of utilizing the real bodies in front of the camera for aesthetic means. Nevertheless, I conclude with an optimistic gesture: Stephanie Koziej's rehabilitation of Freudian tenderness offers a possibility of overcoming the teleological impulses of the desiring body. If pursued, this orientation can reveal modes of intimate engagement — sexual and otherwise — that do not seek to finalize, constrain, or extract value.

One of the central questions I raise in my work is that of ethical responsibility in the context of an ever-changing self, individuated but shaped by encounters with others. Of particular interest is the problem of agency, namely: whether selves who are shaped by the world around them possess a sufficient degree of autonomy to meaningfully engage in transforming their aesthetic-affective sensibilities to channel specific forms of ethical beliefs and behaviors. Following Foucault, Jane Bennett suggests that aesthetic self-creation is possible despite the constraints of lived environments, and due to the central importance of the matter, her argument is worth quoting at length.

> If the point of <Foucault's> earlier genealogies was to expose individualism as a ruse of power and to disrupt our association of self-discipline with freedom, the point of his later work is to enunciate the more complex thesis that there is no self without discipline, no discipline that does not also harbor opportunities for arts of the self, and no effective ethics without such an aesthetic project. A moment of freedom survives within subjectivity after all, at least when it is not reduced to a purely intellectual formation **…** <Foucault> refuses to identify freedom in opposition to a system of external constraints; freedom is rather a reflective heteronomy. It is the recognition of one's implication in a web of social and physical relations within which reside vital opportunities for self-direction. Sometimes, the self-direction is direct; more often, it is by arts, techniques, and strategies applied by the self to a corporeal sensibility below the level of direct intellectual control. The experience

> of freedom is still possible; one can still experience the exhilaration of making a mark upon what one comes to be . But this liberatory self-naming is not a transcendence of power. It consists, rather, in tentative explorations of the outer edges of the current regime of subjectivity. These engagements with the frontier foreground the possibility of new configurations of identity. These novelties are themselves a function of an institutional matrix, they still are implicated in historically contingent practices of power, and they still contend with a body that never fully coincides with the subjectivity available to it (*Enchantment* 146-7).

While Bennett's optimism is welcome, the examination of a variety of unfinalizable selves in Dostoevsky's novels shows, different subjects have different degrees of ability for self-direction, and the degree of openness to self-directed change largely depends on their individual circumstances. This serves as a reminder that unfinalizability is not absolute: even if a person is allowed to "say the last word" about themselves in a welcoming dialogic interaction and a flexible polyphonic environment, their possibilities, like affect itself, are "more than two but also … finitely many" (Sedgwick and Frank 108). More importantly, I would argue, the number of finite possibilities varies depending both on the innate and environmental qualities of each individual body, the affects it is capable of carrying and producing, but likewise the position of the body in the affective economy, and the nature of its engagement with other selves, ideologies, and sites of power.

These constraints are often neglected in popular psychological and scientific discourse that resides in the rosy realm where self-help and self-improvement are far less complicated than what Foucault would permit. Speaking from the standpoint of constructivist theory of emotion, neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett surmises that "as an adult you absolutely do have choices about what you expose yourself to and therefore what you learn, which creates the concepts that ultimately drive your actions, whether they feel willful or not … 'responsibility' means making deliberate choices to change your concepts" (154). Barrett proceeds to suggest a series of endearingly simple strategies by which one might take responsibility and transform their affective

makeup for one's own and others' sake: take a walk in the park, do a crossword puzzle, get a massage from a lover. But what happens if you live in a concrete desert, if your multiple minimum-wage jobs leave you too tired to think, or worst of all — if you are unloved? What happens if your resources are depleted by chronic physical or psychic pain?

If care for the world is a cause to be taken seriously, personal responsibility means not only self-improvement, but must include constant striving to improve the resources available for others to do the same. The core of such resources are material in the conventional sense: food, water, shelter, safety from harm, healthcare, sleep — and none of these are guaranteed to all or even the majority of humanity. While resolving these remains urgent, Zosima's teachings of responsibility of all for all show us that other ethical resources are no less material and no less important to provide. Care, kindness, attention, patience, generosity — extended not only to family and friends, to that which feels close and familiar, but also to that which is foreign, new, and sometimes even frightening. Meanwhile, Grushenka's parable of the onion reminds that in a world of enchanted mood and generous ethics, no gift is too small.

In fact, some of my research suggests that the smallest things can matter the most: cultivating active, dialogic love requires attention, and attentiveness is a muscle best exercised on details. Just as important is the willingness to confront the unfamiliar, the incomprehensible, the disturbing — be it 19th century Russian literature, an almost forgotten country that no longer exists, or an eerie communist anthem sung in Greek and played over images of decomposing Polish corpses. Part of the objective of doing so lies in destabilizing totalizing and teleological epistemologies — a task for which dialogism and polyphony are particularly well suited. The fact that dialogism can only be found in art, whereas monologism dominates genres that engage with political and social life directly has nothing to do with its aptitude to efficiently engage in public discourse, and everything

to do with cultural conventions regarding truth. Journalism and non-fiction prize clarity, exactness, precision: writing that lacks them is "bad writing," because it obfuscates what the author "really" means and diffuses the range of possible interpretations. Sara Ahmed's discussion of affective charges of different objects applies to communication styles as well: what is true here is *good*, and "bad" writing, in failing to convey the truth, is bad both aesthetically and morally. Dialogism is a discursive killjoy in a world that elevates rhetoric to a moral value; and challenging the reigning structures of power with monologism, a "master's tool," reduces the efficiency of their dismantling.

As an educator, I am a strong believer in the value of uselessness: all that is not immediately interesting or applicable for our students. For that reason, I am concerned about the doctrine of individualism that pervades K-12 and universities alike, where learners are encouraged to only pursue practical knowledge necessary for highly-paid careers in STEM, business, and finance. When humanities do succeed in smuggling their way into curricula, they too must appeal to what students already are and want, especially by fostering "transferable skills." I do not have anything against transferable skills and engagement with individual personalities and interests — in fact, I consciously strive to champion them — but attuning the citizens of imperial cultures to the foreign and the marginalized is of the essence for ethical and political health. As a person from the global Southeast, my insistence on relevance of small cultures and languages comes at least partly from a personal search for relevance. But my American students seem to enjoy it, so I am hopeful.

Introducing people to a diversity of ideas whose relevance is not immediately apparent can cultivate a greater understanding of diverse affects as well. It might behoove the technocratic West, perpetually baffled and frustrated by the recalcitrance of the East and the South, to pay attention

to Nietzsche's famous maxim that "man does not strive for pleasure (*Glück)*[86]; only the Englishman does" (468). The drive towards happiness is a facet of Anglo-American culture, which has been dominating the global stage for the past century: "Americans prefer high arousal, pleasant states. We smile a lot. We praise, compliment, encourage each other … We like to be happy and to celebrate how great we are" (Barrett 149). However, Barrett's cutting-edge research in cognitive neuroscience proves what Nietzsche had intuited more than a century earlier: the primacy of happiness and pleasure is a cultural quirk, not a universal need. Moreover, as both Dostoevsky and Makavejev demonstrate, pleasurable excitements can easily go awry and dissolve into violence. There are no universal answers not only on what is ethically "good" politically and socially, but affectively as well.

The chapters on Makavejev serve to explore the potential of concrete ideologies of meeting Bennett's somewhat idealistic goals. Arguing for the value of enchantment with an implicit support for left-wing politics, Bennett expresses concern over the possibility that "acceptance of the disenchantment story, when combined with a sharp sense of injustice of things by the Left, too often produces an enervating cynicism" (*Enchantment* 13) — a cynicism that can block the impetus towards taking action to change the unjust world. However, as Makavejev's film suggests, it is overly optimistic to leave the pitfalls of normative happiness in the domain of capitalism alone: insofar as its aspirations hinge on eternal promise, an endless chase for the fulfillment of an essentially unreachable desire, it may serve as affective underpinning of any goal-oriented ideology. Socialism, insofar as it aims to achieve an ideal society by pursuing a very clear direction of tangible socioeconomic development, contains the same teleological promise of universal

[86] In most editions of this excerpt, the word is translated as "happiness," which I believe is a far more apt rendition of the German original, given that "happiness" is the operative term in Anglophone utilitarian philosophies that are the object of Nietzsche's critique.

satisfaction as the bourgeois dream of attaining material comforts. Bennett, on the other hand, makes an compelling counterpoint: cultivating an affective sensibility that, through a mood of enchantment and an affect of joy, may create impetus to act generosity *before* establishing a fixed political pathway towards that goal — with the potential, I argue, to make these pathways open rather than fixed, intertwined and collaborative even if sometimes divergent. The selective blindness of normative and revolutionary utopias alike may be avoided through embracing the aesthetically polyphonic nature of the world.

In order to honor the principle of non-teleological ethics, it is imperative to avoid framing generosity as a mandate to sacrifice oneself for the world, channeling the dispensation of oneself to bring maximum benefit to the greatest number. Rather, ethics of generosity demand an understanding of the self as inseparably enmeshed with the world that gives back and communicates. At the same time this "world" is all-encompassing, reaching beyond the human and into vibrant matter and the ineffable divine, it is crucial to ground it in concrete and individualized materiality. Causes need to be not simply fought for, but nourished. And the cause should never substitute the unique and individuated, perpetually changing human being in a way that, as Makavejev shows, capital does in capitalism, and the Revolution does in communism.

Dostoevsky's vile anti-Semitism reached a fever pitch during the writing of *The Brothers Karamazov.* His paeans to universal responsibility and pan-human unity came with a caveat: Jews, he insisted even as he was composing Zosima's teachings on universal love, were a twisted, lesser race that embodied the Antichrist and was therefore excluded from the imminent Christian salvation of all humankind. Dostoevsky's political beliefs are a sobering reminder that hateful denial of humanity can find its place alongside sophisticated ethical and aesthetic attunement to love, generosity, and community. Insofar as Bakhtin's development of connections between

dialogism, truth and ethics extends its aesthetic principles beyond Dostoevsky's work, it can still be argued that a polyphonic disposition carries a great degree of ethical power if embodied in its fullest form that entails a detachment from the notion of ultimate truths and final answers (the way Dostoevsky was certainly not). However, this condition is not a given. Polyphony alone, while potent and particularly well-suited for weak ontologies, is no more ethically sufficient than any other aesthetic sensibility. For this reason, it is of the essence to discuss how generosity and enchantment can be consciously *cultivated* by individuals; otherwise they can be essentialized, presented as an innate ability of some bodies — in Dostoevsky's case, the Orthodox Russians — and an impossible goal for others. When generosity is uncritically ascribed to the bodies of nations or other political groups, it turns into a weapon to excuse violence against others who do not belong. The alleged purity of the "Russian soul" means that any action, no matter how violent, cannot possibly be cruel; and it is impossible not to think of its romanticization in the light of recent atrocities in Ukraine.

When Bennett advocates "on behalf of a particular ethical use of affect" (*Enchantment* 148) — she acknowledges that this is not a straightforward task. Making people feel a certain way requires concentrated efforts to do so, which necessitates a form of political manipulation. However, I agree with her argument that this is an acceptable risk:

> An affective model of ethics is also seen sometimes to entail the reverse danger — it is too political. Its focus on building good character, even if framed in the more innocuous language of the cultivation of sensibility, draws perilously close to the project of sensuous manipulation and to media, state, cultural, or corporate forms of disciplinary power. I acknowledge the legitimacy of these fears. I also argue … that as long as affect remains an indispensable part of human life, it makes more sense to discipline it into a magnanimous sensibility than to try to ban it from ethical life" (*Enchantment*, 132).

In other words, since manipulation of affects is already happening, making concrete and transparent decisions about desired social outcomes and taking concrete action becomes a matter

of assuming responsibility — an ethical imperative in and of itself. At the moment, a vast amount of affective manipulation happens behind the closed doors of large corporations and in the service of capital and nefarious politics: Facebook (Meta) in particular has become notorious for this exact behavior starting from the Cambridge Analytica scandal of 2016 that influenced the U.S. elections, to revelations about knowingly acting against the mental health of children and fanning divisive and violent politics, raised by whistleblower Frances Haugen in 2021. From body issues and depression to political anger, strategies of guiding online user behavior always involve the harnessing of unconscious affects first — after that, opinions follow. Lauren Berlandt warns of the "cruel optimism" of the capitalist structures of desire, as their fulfillment remains beyond reach or, if they are attained, bring toxic outcomes.. Not only is the fulfilment of such desires prone to failing their promise and making many of us *unhappy*, but their prevalence puts material incentives front and center of our efforts to direct politics and society.

However, this narrative is incomplete; its genealogy is culturally specific, and has a clearly traceable genealogical root in exploitative capitalist and colonialist power structures. We are, as Donovan Schaefer reminds, monkeys dancing at the waterfall, and from the evolutionary standpoint we have been there much before we became owners of private property. While some religions hinge on the promise clear paths towards redemption and an ideal world where all the ambiguities are reconciled through omnipotent benevolent granted rule-abiding believers, many of the worlds ontologies are populated — and even ruled — by fickle and ambiguous tricksters. Joyful attachment to a world beyond our comprehension — a world that still exists in modernity and post-modernity — holds the potential for a non-teleological world.

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