Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Nathanael West:
triangulation of influence.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will investigate the indirect influences of the writings of Nikolai Vassilievich Gogol upon the four novels of Nathanael West. The idea of Gogol being an influence on West is, as far as we have been able to determine, almost completely unexplored in all of West criticism. We have been able to find only three or four passing references to the Russian writer by West's most well-known critics. The motivation behind this thesis' inquiry lies in the fact that, although West is not known to have been directly influenced at all by Gogol (few of Gogol's works were even available in English translation in West's day), there is between the two satirists a strong and undeniable link: Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky. It has become routine in Dostoevsky studies to refer to the influence of Gogol upon his writings. Most famous is the apocryphal statement attributed to Dostoevsky that "we all came out from under Gogol's Overcoat" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism 103). According to Donald Fanger, the influence of Gogol "is vital to an understanding of Dostoevsky and has been a commonplace in Russia for over a century, though not in the West" (101).

In his day, Gogol was considered along with Pushkin to be the greatest Russian writer, and although he is now seen as an artist of the absurd, he was in the early nineteenth century regarded as the first artist of what was then called the "naturalist school" of Russian literature. This is due in large part to his portrayal of Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, the protagonist of "The Overcoat". It was in this story that Gogol held up a civil servant of the ninth grade as a character worthy of examination and serious consideration. This most unromantic figure in an age of romanticism wielded enormous

influence upon Dostoevsky and his contemporaries and Dostoevsky's early works are commonly said to have "passed under the sign of Gogol" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism 162). His first novel, "Poor People", which brought Dostoevsky instant success, features Makar Devushkin, a solitary civil servant clearly modeled upon Gogol's Bashmachkin.

Dostoevsky later modified the figure of the solitary urban dweller to his own needs, but the shadow of Akaky Akakievich is clearly visible throughout his entire oeuvre. A man alone in a great dirty city is constantly put upon, oppressed, humiliated and defeated until one day, unable to take any more abuse or disregard from his fellows, and driven mad by his isolation and his dreams, he reacts in a way which shocks everyone around him.

In West criticism a very similar situation of influence arises, but with different players filling the main roles. It is Dostoevsky who is the direct influence upon West. West was well-known among his friends as an extremely prolific reader. In fact, during his student days at Brown University he was held to have the largest personal library of anyone on campus. His favourite writer was Dostoevsky, whose works he had apparently read in their entirety by the age of thirteen. His biographers note his returning again and again to the Russian master. His books are filled with allusions and references to the characters and situations in Dostoevsky's novels. He is even known to have trained his pet bulldog to menace anyone who attempted to disturb him while he was reading his favourite Russian novelist. West claimed he would "rewrite Dostoevsky with a pair of shears" (Light 98), and this he clearly did in his four short novels, some of the most bitter and dismaying in all of literature.

This thesis proposes what we shall call a triangulation of influence regarding these three writers. Similarities in terms of theme, character and setting are indeed abundant in West and Gogol and are refracted by or filtered through the medium of Dostoevsky. Indeed, in the course of examining the works of the three writers it becomes clear that, either because of the kind of men they were, or the kind of writing they aspired to, West and Gogol are frequently much more similar to each other than either of them are to Dostoevsky. The reader notes a reversion in West's novels in that they seem to take the themes, ideas, images and characters refined by Dostoevsky out of Gogol and cast them once again in a Gogolian theatre of the absurd and grotesque. In West, satire and superficiality once again dominate the spirit of the works, and the devil, whom Gogol believed in literally and fatally, is more than just a Dostoevskian delusion brought about by fatigue, fever and poverty. In terms of methodology, then, this thesis will be an influence study.

Establishing the fact of Gogol's influence upon Dostoevsky is a relatively straightforward task. In addition to the critical views cited above we can add Bakhtin's statement that "[i]n Dostoevsky's early novels the content of Gogol's world is unchanged" (48-49) as well as his view that "*The Double* is sprinkled with parodic and semi-parodic allusions to various works of Gogol" (Bakhtin 226). However, his opinion changes when he examines Dostoevsky's later works. In his assessment of Crime and Punishment for example, he opines that "[t]he sources of carnivalization...are no longer provided by Gogol". His preoccupation with the influence of Gogol is, however, constant. In his notes of 1961, "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book", he refers to "[t]he birth of Dostoevsky out of Gogol. The birth of personality out of character" (301).

Also helpful in pointing out the presence of Gogol in Dostoevsky's imagination are the introductory pieces heading most contemporary editions of Dostoevsky's novels and collections of short fiction. These thumbnail precis nearly always make passing reference to the imposing shadow which Gogol cast over all of nineteenth century Russian Literature.

Nathanael West, on the other hand, appears to have read few if any of the works of Gogol. Jay Martin, whose biography of West is, after nearly thirty years, still considered to be the most authoritative and comprehensive, makes no mention of Gogol as an influence. He makes only one reference, citing Edmund Wilson, as well as offering his own opinion:

> [West's] tender treatment of the underdog in his fiction may be seen as his own perfection of a well-defined folk-mode of Jewish humour. Certainly he had..."A kind of Eastern European" suffering and sense of the grotesque "in common with Gogol and Chagall," and also "a sad quick Jewish humour," a "quality of imagination which was...both Russian and Jewish" (80).

Martin also did as much historical research as was possible on West's personal reading, which was always considered by those who knew him as impressive. Although Dostoevsky tops Martin's list of West's favourite authors, it seems that he never read Gogol at all.

Aside from Martin's, the only mention of Gogol in West criticism appears to be that of Robert Long who, on the first page of his study on West, states in passing that "West was essentially a comic writer, but in the sense that Kafka and Gogol are" (1). With only one or two very minor

exceptions, it would appear that none of West's other critics take any notice of Gogol at all.

It is, on the other hand, sometimes a difficult task to try to read more than twenty or twenty-five pages of West criticism without encountering some reference to Dostoevsky and his creations. Most notable in this regard are Prince Myshkin of The Idiot, Ivan Karamazov, and of course Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. The frequency with which West's critics discuss Dostoevsky's influence is not surprising when one considers the number of specific references West himself made to him in his works. The Dream Life of Balso Snell, for instance, has as one of its main characters an insane young man named John Raskolnikov Gilson, who murders another character he finds disgusting and generally baneful to society. Like the original Raskolnikov, he botches the job and is unable to cope with the amount of literal bloodletting which he has to undergo. In Miss Lonelyhearts the eponymous central character is mocked by his co-worker Goldsmith with the sardonic salutation "How now, Dostoevski," (87) and is, according to Long, "meant to be a version of Dostoevsky's dual characters" (141-142). Miss Lonelyhearts is unable to comprehend, and therefore ridicules cruelly the sympathy and simple compassion of his love interest, Betty, just as Raskolnikov cruelly torments Sonya.

West is, however, as typically an American novelist of the twentieth century as Dostoevsky is a typical Russian novelist of the nineteenth. Martin, in a thinly disguised reference to Dostoevsky, comments on the compact nature and considerable swiftness of West's narratives, comparing them to those of the "European writer...[who] often needs three hundred pages to motivate one little murder" (148). In this compactness and speed of presentation, West is closer to Gogol, who wrote, according to his own

account no novels as such but rather short stories or, in the case of Dead Souls, poems (on the famous original title page of Dead Souls, reproduced in all scholarly editions of the work, Gogol refers to the work as a "poema" or poem). West, in similar fashion, referred to his most critically well-respected work, Miss Lonelyhearts, as "a novel in the form of a comic strip" (Reid 9).

One could continue for many pages providing critical citation supporting both the notion that Gogol influenced Dostoevsky and that Dostoevsky influenced West, however, in the interest of brevity we will make only one more observation. The notion of the validity of the influence study as a method of critical investigation has undergone some censure, and sometimes rightly so, for being too mechanical, elementary and unsophisticated. However, in writing this thesis we are trying to keep in mind Viktor Shklovsky's assessment of influence, cited by Donald Fanger in Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism:

> Books are not the world, but windows on the world. The windows of various houses can open a view on one and the same landscape; this landscape is one and the same, although it is variously seen. The likeness of the landscape, at the same time, is not a borrowing from one window by the other (253).

It is certain that West was a great reader and also that as a novelist he was a highly skilled shaper and interpreter of what had gone before him. Nothing he read escaped his writing, which was deeply involved with history, myth and the search for an explanation of humanity's seemingly

perpetual state of suffering. Comerchero, one of the first to recognize the scope of West's talent, explained his debt to the past most succinctly:

> In creating [Westian Man], West has not only translated the traditional great myth - the quest, the scapegoat and the holy fool - into present day forms, he has exploited some of the newer "pervasive myths or patterns of symbolic statement...in contemporary literature...the myth of Isolato, the myth of Hell, the myth of voyage and the myth of sanctity". These myths are played out on the streets of the city, that most recurrent of modern symbols, which in West and so many other modern novelists is "an image of despair as it is in Isaiah and Jeremiah"." (169)

Comerchero describes an aspect of West's art which will be the focus of this thesis, his development of character. Comerchero identifies three character types: the so-called Westian Man, the scapegoat, and the holy fool. While following this taxonomy generally, we have adapted it as follows: chapter one analyzes the development of clerks and women; chapter two examines the nature of the figure of the dreamer, and chapter three discusses West's villains and their relation to evil.

In terms of character, and especially in terms of the protagonists and the villains of his novels, we detect a clear literary bond between West and Dostoevsky and Gogol. Ultimately we come to the conclusion that, although Dostoevsky is the only apparent link between the two satirists, the heroes of Gogol's and West's writings are uncommonly close to each other in terms of design, depiction and personal philosophy. Dostoevsky's attitude towards character is frequently antithetical to those of Gogol and West and this is

probably what sets him apart most radically; that is, the fact that he is more precisely a realist or, as Fanger designates him , a romantic realist, while Gogol and West are satirists. Although Dostoevsky was committed to a critical literature of sociology, he was not a satirist. "In satire full truth is downright impossible" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism 230) was his credo and it shows in his writings. Just as West refers to Dostoevsky's heroes, Gogol's characters are frequently mentioned in Dostoevsky's works, and when they appear they are criticized markedly, as in this passage, from Dmitri Karamazov's trial near the end of The Brothers Karamazov:

> A great writer of the last epoch, comparing Russia to a swift troika galloping to an unknown goal, exclaims, 'Oh, troika, birdlike troika, who invented thee!' and adds, in proud ecstasy, that all the peoples of the world stand aside respectfully to make way for the recklessly galloping troika to pass. That may be, they may stand aside, respectfully or no, but in my poor opinion, the great writer ended his book in this way either in an access of childish and naive optimism, or simply in fear of the censorship of the day. For if the troika were drawn by his heroes, Sobakevich, Nozdrev,Tchitchikov, it could reach no rational goal, whoever might be driving it. And those were the heroes of an older generation, ours are worse specimens still...(845)

Dostoevsky recognized the inability of Gogol's characters to exist outside of satire. They are not realistic, or, to be more precise, they are not characteristic of the realist school of novel writing. Ultimately, Gogol was unable to develop the satirically portrayed characters from the first part of

Dead Souls into the projected second and third parts of what was to be his masterpiece. Loosely modeled thematically and stylistically on Dante's Divine Comedy, Dead Souls remains forever a vision only of hell, with characters much more similar to West's than to Dostoevsky's. These characters are uniformly "weirdly caricatured heroes without will, energy, or lofty passion, who have "no range, either of perception or expression"" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism xi). This description is equally applicable to the characters of both West and Gogol, but not to Dostoevsky. In fact, the negative points mentioned by Fanger are all reversed in the case of Dostoevsky's characters, virtually all of whom have will, energy, passion and considerable range of perception and expression.

The point of this preamble is this: there is indeed a curious reversion to Gogol's approach to character evident in the works of Nathanael West. Like Gogol, West "couldn't bring into his peculiar half-world real, sincere, honest people" (Wisker 11) because they would disrupt the created world with their nobility. Especially West's female characters, his Fayes and Bettys and Marys, although clearly modeled on the pale Sonyas and Dunyas of Crime and Punishment and other novels, are depicted and presented more as Gogolian heroines than as Dostoevskian in their ineffectiveness and shallowness. Likewise,his protagonists never rise above their own neuroses and self-centeredness long enough to become open to the spiritual awakenings which Dostoevsky's heroes experience. Because of this inability to unmire themselves from their own superficial world-views, these heroes, like Gogol's, remain forever only ludicrous, pathetic and unfortunate rather than genuinely tragic. West's villains, uniformly clownish and ignoble, are also much more similar to Gogol's than to those of his revered Dostoevsky. To sum up, we propose that, whereas Bakhtin posits the birth of

Dostoevskian personality out of Gogolian character, West's fools, dreamers, villains and clerks graphically depict the tendency of personality to revert back into character.

WOMEN AND CLERKS

Women play a significant role in the works of Gogol, Dostoevsky and West. Dostoevsky's female characters are generally presented more nobly than Gogol's and West's, but his position in the chain of influence between Gogol and West is still unmistakable. The discussion of women will also briefly touch upon the figure of the artist, who nearly always has a close and dysfunctional relationship with a female character. Gogol's and West's stories feature artist-protagonists. Dostoevsky favoured the "artist of the idea" (Bakhtin 85) as his hero, but in all respects other than actual vocation, the Dostoevskian artist is very similar to those of Gogol and West. With the possible exception of Chartkov, the artists and "artists of the idea" mentioned above all have female characters in their lives whom they find to be both tantalizing and problematic.

The treatment of female characters by all three of the writers under investigation is a significant and telling aspect of their works in general, especially in relation to West and Gogol. Once again it is as if West, who was unfamiliar with Gogol, saw in Dostoevsky's romantic realism the deeper root of Gogol's satirical and frequently cruel worldview. West's aforementioned "reversion" to Gogol is apparent in that both espoused significantly misogynist opinions in their works. Also, both writers were known in their private lives as unsuccessful with and frequently inimical towards women. West was, according to Martin, notorious among his friends as "a sexual loser" and frequently cited Pliny to bolster his opinion of woman as a "saccus stercoris". West did, however, finally manage to build a successful relationship with Eileen McKenney whom he eventually

married. By all accounts their relationship was very successful. Unfortunately, they died in a car wreck less than a year after their wedding.

Gogol was never known to have had erotic involvement of any kind with a woman throughout his entire life. The majority of Gogol's critics posit that he was in fact a homosexual, and that he was forever unable to reconcile his sexual orientation with his demanding personal vision of Orthodox Christianity.

Gogol's typically one-dimensional view of women is summed up quite nicely by Kent:

> Gogol's females are always one of four types: The vulgar and gross who actively pursue and invite sex; the ghoulish; the long suffering faceless mother figure and, most frequently, the pink-cheeked, black-browed, asexual "divinity" (58).

West's treatment of women is remarkably similar to that described in Kent's evaluation of Gogol's. The "vulgar and gross" whose actions are motivated by lust are precursors to Westian women like Faye Doyle and Faye Greener. The "ghoulish" woman is typified by West's Mrs Johnson, Tod Hackett's landlady in The Day of the Locust:

> [Tod] disliked her intensely...Later he found out that her hobby was funerals. Her preoccupation with them wasn't morbid; it was formal. She was interested in the arrangement of the flowers, the order of the procession, the clothing and deportment of the mourners (315).

Mrs Johnson is obviously a direct descendant of Amalia Ivanovna of Crime andPunishment. Like Mrs Johnson, Amalia is the landlady of a deceased lodger and takes personal pleasure in arranging his funeral. The deceased's daughter is in both cases a seventeen-year old prostitute, Faye Greener in West's novel and Sonya Marmeladov in Dostoevsky's.

Equally ghoulish in The Day of the Locust is Mrs Loomis. Her son, Adore, is described as "the Frankenstein monster" (335) and indeed seems to think he really is. Mrs Loomis has shaped his development throughout his entire life and has succeeded in her attempt to 'animate' her child. Like Victor Frankenstein, she has effectively created false life in the guise of a child, and, like the daemon, Adore eventually precipitates violence and destruction through his role in inciting the riot at the end of The Day of the Locust.

The most prevalent mother-figure in Gogol is probably Andrei and Ostap's mother in "Taras Bulba", even though women are almost completely absent, opposed as they are to the lifestyle of Gogol's cossacks. The most long-suffering and pathetic mother-figure in West is without doubt the doomed and nameless "broad shoulders" of Miss Lonelyhearts. This woman is the victim of constant torment, mostly at the hands of her husband, but also, and typically in West's world, simply as a result of cruel circumstance. Suffering mothers are, of course, present throughout Dostoevsky's mature works. In Dostoevsky, however, they act as characters rather than as background. In West and Gogol the mothers function merely as a sort of human setting, a means through which to express a general image of suffering.

It is evident, however, that just as Dostoevsky took some of the themes of motherhood from Gogol, so did West draw upon those same

themes from Dostoevsky. Lem Pitkin's mother in A Cool Million, for example, trusts her son implicitly, is "certain that her child must succeed" (144) and weeps over his death in the last pages of the novel. Mrs Raskolnikov too is overwhelmed by her son's fall from grace, his social 'death' as a convict and his exile to Siberia. Expulsion from Western Russia into Siberia is defined as death in Dostoevsky's view. Indeed, his semi-fictional account of life in a Siberian prison is called The House of the Dead. Mrs Raskolnikov treats her son's conviction as death and eventually falls sick and dies herself as a result of her anxiety. Like Mrs Pitkin, she believed in the infallibility of her son, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice her daughter, Dunya.

Both these mothers are linked to Gogol's aforementioned long suffering faceless mothers, like Taras Bulba's wife who is in a constant state of anxiety and longing for her sons, Andrei and Ostap. The mothers in Gogol, West and Dostoevsky are clearly linked for a number of reasons, perhaps most notable of which is the fact that they are always separated from their sons by long distances, communicating not at all, or only in letters which serve solely to fuel maternal anxiety.

Finally, the black-browed asexual divinity is present throughout all of Gogol's work. These women are for the most part silent, unattainable and entirely pure. Such are the dream-woman Piskaryov futilely wishes his prostitute to be, the Polish princess in "Taras Bulba", the beautiful blonde Chichikov encounters on the road in Dead Souls, and most of the females in his earlier Ukrainian folk-tales. As is the case with the vulgar, sexually aggressive female figure, in West the safe, asexual women share the same name: Betty in Miss Lonelyhearts and Betty Prail in A Cool Million. However, in West's vision these divinities suffer as much as anyone, and much more

than Gogol's. The first Betty receives numerous, vicious verbal assaults from Miss L, while Betty Prail is raped so many times in A Cool Million that the reader loses track of the quantity of her suffering.

Women, then, are typically presented hostilely and usually treated hostilely in Gogol and West. Nabokov characterizes the relationship between the two sexes in Gogol with the statement that in his vision of nineteenth century Saint Petersburg "[y]our first and only love is a meretricious woman whose purity is a myth and this myth is your life" (12). This is one of the bases of Gogol's and West's views of women: they are an illusion, not to be relied upon or trusted. They are in a very real sense not even genuine human beings and their beauty, when they are beautiful, is a purely geometrical phenomenon. This is the case with the solitary and silent Annunciata in Gogol's "Rome", "a purely structural beauty" (Zeldin 132) who has no motivation of her own but serves only to inspire her beholder. Faye Greener is another example of physical beauty bereft of humanity:

> Raging at [Tod], she was still beautiful. That was because her beauty was structural like a tree's, not a quality of her mind or heart. Perhaps even whoring couldn't damage it for that reason, only age or accident or disease (West 319).

Tod sees Faye as "Persephone, a being from the underworld, but somehow ethereal as well" (Goldstein 21-22). Randall Reid's assessment is similar. To him "Faye is a debased Venus...She embodies the fatal power of all illusions, inflaming and degrading desire without ever satisfying it" (135). The similarities between the sexually aggressive women in Gogol and West

are abundant enough to posit a linkage between them with Dostoevsky as medium.

Dostoevsky's female characters are realist developments of those created by Gogol. He takes the figures of the prostitute, the mother and the black-browed beauty and invests them with as much inner life as he does his male characters. His prostitutes or otherwise "fallen" women are most frequently warm-hearted and virtuous. Sonya Marmeladov is the clearest example of this type, but also important and equally well-developed are Nastassya Fillipovna, Grushenka and others. These women have fallen from grace to a position beyond the pale. They have in some way become sexually defiled, either as prostitutes or as seduced and ruined women. Dostoevsky, however, does not concentrate on the perceived crimes of these women, but rather on their status as wronged victims of society. Sonya is distinguished by her Christ-like demeanour, selflessness and purity of heart. Nastassya and Grushenka are portrayed as far more noble and having much more integrity and infinitely more dignity than their oafish seducers or their detractors in society. Dostoevsky brings the female character closer to God; far closer, in fact, than any of his male characters, with the possible exception of The Idiot's Prince Myshkin.

West follows Dostoevsky's lead to a certain extent in his treatment of women, but ultimately his vision as a satirist is far less hopeful. Whereas Dostoevsky enriches the female characters originally conceived by Gogol, West, through readapting them to satire, makes them again weak and flimsy human beings, fit only to torment men or ineffectually lament their suffering. While it is clear, as Kent opines, that the female characters in Dostoevsky, such as Sonya, Dunya and even the mare from Crime and Punishmentare sacrificial victims, in West there is no sacrifice. Women

such as Betty Prail and Broad Shoulders are victims, but their victimhood is unexplained and serves no purpose. Betty of Miss Lonelyhearts, with her vision of suburban bliss, is as much a failed Christ figure as Miss Lonelyhearts himself. Broad Shoulders, despite her terrible martyred life, is a failure as a sacrifice. Her martyrdom is absurd and isolated and therefore strikes the reader as tedious and merely unfortunate rather than meaningful.

The martyrdom of characters like Dunya and Sonya is nowhere portrayed by West. Martyrdom, especially of women, is a fool's dream in his America. Betty Prail, for example, the pitiful and benighted prostitute of A Cool Million, receives no vindication at the end of the novel. After being routinely raped by nearly half the male characters in the book and in practically every setting, she winds up seated silently beside Nathan Whipple, leader of the new American fascist government. Her true love, Lem Pitkin, is dead, and she ends symbolically as the concubine of American Nazism. She does not achieve the status of Sonya, who, in the epilogue of Crime and Punishment, becomes a saviour not only to Raskolnikov but to all of the prisoners in his camp. The convicts refer to Sonya affectionately as "little mother...our tender, fond little mother" (546). She becomes a symbol of love, authoritative love, to the criminal element, and the criminals strive to please her. Raskolnikov himself is the last to succumb to her influence. He gives up his destructive and evil ideology, a type of proto-fascism in its focus on "the extraordinary man", in favour of her promise of Christian love and resurrection. She is the linchpin of his rebirth and regeneration, and joined with her he will be able to fulfill the "great future deed" (551) necessary to make his regeneration complete.

No such transformation ever occurs in West. The victimized female is overcome and engulfed by harmful ideology as her suffering settles quietly into the background of the setting. Her ideology, characterized by Wisker (in terms borrowed from William James) as "the narrowness of the healthy-minded" (70), is set up in opposition to the protagonist and "the significance of the morbid-minded". The physical contact between men and women, exalted in Dostoevsky, is bereft of creative and benign energy in West and Gogol. In West the advent of sexual contact always means embarrassment and frustration. Women can do nothing for his male protagonists, who desire women sexually but are unable to connect with any of the positive principles which they seek for within them. Without this ability to connect, West's protagonists are doomed. In this way and many others the reader is, as previously stated, made aware by West of "how much our behaviour is rooted in sexuality" (Widmer 78). The position of women in Gogol is similar:

> "[The] rite [of dispelling demons] had never worked for Gogol. It was always the devil who appeared to him, never the saviour he hoped for, and when the feminine apparition toward whom he aspired comes at all close to any of his heroes, she proves to be a devil too...it was only to Dostoevsky in the next generation that the Christian revelation came. It is one of the striking features of Russian literature that Dostoevsky should not only show strongly the literary influence of Gogol but that he should even give somewhat the impression of being haunted by Gogol's devils and even of saving Gogol's soul (Karlinsky 546).

Faye Greener is the end result of West's interest in his female characters. Leslie Fiedler calls her the "most memorable and most terrible woman in American fiction of the 1930s" (Wisker 106). She is significant for her beauty and her indestructibility. Greatly harmful to all who come into contact with her, she is nevertheless "impervious to the destruction she spreads" (Reid 131). Like Dostoevsky's Sonya she has a close and dysfunctional relationship with her father. Also like Sonya she becomes a prostitute in order to meet his financial obligations (although in her case it is in order to pay for her father's funeral). She is also young like Sonya, blonde, seventeen years old and in many ways still a child.

The similarities, however, end here. Faye's character is purely Gogolian. West the satirist could not believe in the 'whore with a heart of gold' as Dostoevsky did. Like Gogol's beauties she is haughty, empty, amoral and untrustworthy. She is characterized by West as an object. She has "swordlike legs" (West 250), she is resilient and unsinkable like a cork. She is not a person to be embraced, but is rather a thing upon which a man throws himself, as if he were trying to do himself harm (West 251). Indeed, West makes it clear throughout the novel that only a man who actually wants to harm himself would attempt to love her. Like Gogol's women she resembles nothing so much as a mirage, a manufacturer of illusions, inflaming and degrading desire but never satisfying.

Faye's character manifests the tendency of West's prostitute to revert back to Piskaryov's prostitute, the Gogolian model from which Dostoevsky partially drew his images of Nastassya Filippovna, Grushenka and Sonya Marmeladov. The description of Gogol's nameless prostitute links her with Sonya and Faye:

> She was a fresh flower, only 17 years old, whose descent into this terrible depravity must have been very recent; her cheeks had not yet been touched by it and still retained their freshness and rosy bloom: she was lovely...She opened her pretty mouth and started to say something, but it was all so stupid, so vulgar...It was as though the loss of her virtue had also left her reft of all intelligence...It would seem quite impossible for depravity ever to sink in her its terrible claws ("Nevsky Prospect" 13-14).

Like Faye and Sonya, Piskaryov's prostitute is seventeen years old and still attractive despite her corrupting environment. Like Faye in particular, she is characterized by the stupidity of the words she utters, her seemingly deathless beauty and its attendant ability to charm. Like Faye, when she speaks she uses her physical features and actions to "excite her hearers into being uncritical" (The Day of the Locust 357).

The situation of Faye's suitors Homer and Tod is similar to that of Khoma Bruit in Gogol's "Viy". Khoma is initially attracted to the witch in this tale, but even after realizing the depth and completeness of her evil, he is unable to escape. He is compelled to remain in her presence, to think of her constantly and fruitlessly attempt not to look at her. Tod also attempts to look away from the Gorgon and retain his sanity, but the final explosive Hollywood riot, like the final diabolical onslaught at the end of "Viy", confirms the misrule of masquerade and illusion, with a maleficent sorceress as its queen.

Finally, the aforementioned artists of the idea, as well as the artists proper, all have significant relationships with women, whom they find to be both tantalizing and problematic. Like Gogol's artist-heroes, West's and

Dostoevsky's spend most of their time indoors, but when they do venture out onto the streets they encounter mysterious women who are either sexually victimized or willing sexual aggressors. The nameless hero of "White Nights", for example, rescues the beautiful and troubled Katerina from a drunken lecher. Like Piskaryov's prostitute, she is unattainable and his love for her must and does end in total despair. This resolution is due in large part to this nameless hero's being one of Dostoevsky's earlier protagonists, closer by far to Gogol's aesthetic than to heroes of more mature works like Crime and Punishment.

Raskolnikov also has encounters with sexually victimized women, not least of which is Sonya herself. Early in Crime and Punishment, in a scene similar to that portrayed in "White Nights", he discovers an exhausted and inebriated teenaged girl who has presumably been raped once already and who is in danger of being assaulted again now that she is out in public. At first Raskolnikov attempts to help her, calling a policeman for help and offering his own money to ensure that she gets home safely. His sense of existential despair, however, soon gains the upper hand in his mind and he rapidly deserts her, feeling that it really makes no difference whether he helps her or not.

Tod Hackett, the artist in The Day of the Locust, bears a startling similarity to Gogol's Piskaryov, the hero of "White Nights", and also to Ordynov, another artist of the idea and the protagonist of "The Landlady". This similarity has to do with plot development and the connection between the artist and the beautiful but meretricious heroine.

Gogol's Piskaryov, the hero of "White Nights' and Ordynov all pursue the beautiful and mysterious woman through the streets of a dark and suspect Saint Petersburg, through "the city that attracts, forms and tests the

artist's consciousness" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism 166). Tod Hackett, on the other hand, in a scene of powerful imagery, chases the object of his desire, Faye Greener, through a city of sets on the studio lot where he does hack work as an assistant scenarist. He walks through doors and passageways in between sets and through different eras and landscapes, all equally false and flimsy, but Faye eludes him throughout each century and ultimately Tod gives up. However, whereas Piskaryov receives a fatal shock when he discovers his beloved is a prostitute, Tod is under no illusions at all. From the beginning of his acquaintanceship with Faye, he is aware of her shallowness and amorality. When Homer refuses to accept the reality of Faye's position, Tod states with no uncertainty, "She's a whore" (360).

In conclusion, we detect many similarities between the female characters in Gogol, Dostoevsky and West. The prostitute, the ghoulish woman, the suffering mother and the beautiful but asexual divinity constitute a bond which unites the three writers in a chain of influence. Dostoevsky enobles and develops female characters more than West and Gogol, but, as is clear from the examples provided, his women function much the same as those of the two satirists in terms of plot development and their relations with male protagonists.

The figure of "the poor clerk" is another character visible in West's oeuvre, borrowed from Dostoevsky and Gogol. Although the clerk existed in prototype before Gogol, in works like Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman", it is in Gogol's "The Overcoat" that he truly came into his own as a seminal figure in Russian literature. "The Overcoat", along with its hero, Akaky Akakievich, is probably Gogol's most well-known work in North America. Its influence, once again through the medium of Dostoevsky, is apparent in

West's oeuvre, especially in The Day of the Locust. "The Diary of a Madman", with the clerk Poprishchin as its protagonist, is also important in terms of influence. In an era of romanticism "a low-level civil civil servant came to be the central figure. This was a transposition of genius, broadening the import of the story" (The Creation of Nikolai Gogol 115).

Vissarion Belinsky, the foremost Russian literary critic of his day, was deeply impressed by "The Overcoat" and called it "a plea for the little man who is victimized by an inhuman bureaucracy" (Trahan 11). Although this is true, Belinsky was in his own day, and still is today, well-known for his "total commitment to socially oriented literature" (Trahan 11). In our view what should be focussed on in stories like "The Overcoat" is not so much the inhumanity of the system, but inhumanity in general. It is not so much the willing inhumanity of the larger world, but the inability of the world's smallest independent components, that is, its inhabitants, to become human, that interests us. This is not to say that characters fitting into the clerk motif are as malevolent as the world which has produced them, but it is clear that they are in many ways only partly human. Kent assesses the clerk's position succinctly as that of a

> [c]onfused and frightened man in a world in which he functions like a puppet because he obeys impulses he cannot control and because there is no face behind the manipulator of strings forcing him to dance his macabre way through a meaningless life (36).

The civil servants of Imperial Russia greatly impressed the young Gogol on his arrival in Saint Petersburg from the Ukrainian countryside. In fact, the city horrified and tantalized him in general. Nabokov describes

Gogol's view of the city and its inhabitants as follows: "what fascinated him in Petersburg? The numerous shop signs. What else? The fact that the passers-by talked to themselves and "gesticulated in undertone" as they walked" (10) Nabokov further notes that these "mumbling pedestrians telescoped into Akaky Akakievich" (10).

The clerk is generally characterized by his isolation, his fixation on static and ultimately abstract components of existence, such as numbers and copying, and his lack of ability for change or innovation. The plots of the clerk-characters' respective stories thicken when change is thrust upon them. In Akaky Akakievich's case it is the overcoat which compels him to break out of his insular existence, with tragic results, although it is unclear what the root of the tragedy actually is. Nabokov opines that the substitution of something as mundane as the overcoat for an object or person which is truly deserving of passionate devotion is the cause of despair. In his analysis Akaky and those like him in Gogol's world are more or less doomed from the beginning by their inane environment:

> In this world of utter futility, of futile humility and futile domination, the highest degree that passion, desire, creative urge can attain is a new cloak which both tailors and customers adore on their knees. I am not speaking of the moral point or the moral lesson. There can be no moral lessons in such a world because there are no pupils and no teachers (87).

As readers we applaud Akaky's attempt to join the rest of the world, but ultimately his efforts are wasted. After taking the great step of buying a new overcoat he seems to develop more fully as an individual. He begins to

show an interest in his fellow clerks, in a social life and even in women. However, it is clear that while he may have developed, the rest of the world has not.

The other civil servants with whom Akaky works initiate some social contact with him, but after the loss of the overcoat they refuse to help him by purchasing another one. The loss of the coat itself, to robbers in the middle of a large, deserted square in Saint Petersburg, underscores the general indifference of the world to the individual. The overcoat, emblematic of a great spiritual metamorphosis to Akaky, represents only material wealth to the thieves. Likewise, the indifference of the authorities after the robbery further strengthens the notion of inescapable isolation as the locus of Gogol's sociological message. Or, to be more precise, in the absence of any recognizable human empathy, Gogol's social message is that there is no message at all.

The parallels between Gogol's Akaky and West's Homer Simpson are striking. Both are middle-aged bachelors. Both live in large cities which their authors continually characterize as false and dangerous to the soul. Both have solitary occupations characterized by repetition, and both get little respect from their co-workers. As Akaky is a copying clerk for a nameless bureau in Saint Petersburg, Homer is a bookkeeper in an anonymous hotel in Wayneville, Iowa. As well as doing work of a static nature, they are also static in terms of their positions. Homer has been doing the same work with no advancement or demotion for twenty years, while copying is apparently the only thing Akaky Akakievich has ever done in his life, aside from crying in his bed as an infant.

Gogol and West take pains to describe the monotony of their protagonists' daily routines. Akaky copies all day long and then returns to

his small room to copy even more, never venturing into the city and never having any contact with anyone besides his landlady. West describes Homer's routine with typical and significant brevity. After his encounter with Romola Martin, West writes, "[h]e settled back into his usual routine, working ten hours, eating two, sleeping the rest. Then he caught cold and had been advised to come to California" (272). When this happens, Homer makes his inner world vulnerable to encroachment. Whereas Akaky lacks even the fundamental human skills needed to open a human relationship, Homer has the poor luck to fall in love with a woman, which in West, of course, spells trouble even for those experienced in the disappointments of life. The woman he falls in love with is the terrible Faye Greener and his stunted passion for her leads inexorably to his death.

Another trait shared by Akaky and Homer is their inability to articulate. In Homer's case, however, the ineloquence is more purely physical. Although he has problems speaking as does Akaky, it is more his body he loses control over than his tongue. His hands especially 'stutter' helplessly beyond his control. The most powerful passage regarding this physical inarticulateness comes in the eighth chapter:

> He lay stretched out on his bed, collecting his senses and testing the different parts of his body. Every part was awake but his hands. They still slept. He was not surprised. They demanded special attention, had always demanded it. When he had been a child, he used to stick pins in them and once had even thrust them into a fire. Now he used only cold water. He got out of bed in sections, like a poorly made automaton, and carried his hands into the bathroom. He turned on the cold water. When the basin was

> full, he plunged his hands in up to the wrists. They lay quietly on the bottom like a pair of strange aquatic animals. When they were thoroughly chilled and began to crawl about, he lifted them out and hid them in a towel (267-268).

We should note here that this passage also points up some frightening aspects of Homer's character; namely, his status as an automaton as well as his vulnerability to 'possession' as typified by his hands acting as separate entities. His more vicious capabilities will be examined in the chapter on villains.

Akaky's lack of articulateness is more typical, and more comically portrayed:

> It might be as well to explain at once that Akaky mostly talked in prepositions, adverbs, and, lastly, such parts of speech as have no meaning whatsoever. If the matter was rather difficult, he was in the habit of not finishing his sentences, so that often having begun his speech with "This - er - you know...a bit of that, you know..." he left it at that, forgetting to finish the sentence in the belief that he had said all that was necessary (243).

Fragmentation is the clearest trope here. Akaky's speech is composed of scattered fragments of thought, while Homer's physical body is a jumble of unruly nerves and apparently artificially animated flesh. Miss Lonelyhearts in West's earlier novel wants to succour all of the "broken bastards". These two men are clearly broken. Their parts don't fit together or work together. Internally, something is wrong. Their inability to communicate,

to present themselves as a whole to the world is their central problem. Reid ably expresses the nature of this problem:

> "I can't express it" could almost be called *the* modern problem. Or, if an assertion so broad seems fatuous, I shall merely point out that modern fiction has long been obsessed with the submerged - with those individuals who are submerged in society and those impulses which are submerged in the consciousness, with all that is buried, thwarted, denied expression, all that cannot speak. More than a metaphor connects these various forms of thwarting. Coherent expression is, of course, the crucial test of any personality or any culture. Its alternatives are deadness and disorder, sterile forms and destructive violence (Reid 132).

The idea of violence as the alternative to coherence is present at the end of both stories. Both Akaky and Homer were able to maintain their incoherent existence as long as their lives remained static. However, when they have gained possession of their new prizes, the overcoat and Faye respectively, and, more importantly, when they are lost to "stronger rivals" (Tschizewskij 37), the two men lash out violently, seemingly unable to contain any longer the submerged impulses within them. Akaky becomes a ghost, stealing overcoats off the backs of other Petersburgers, including the 'important personage' who failed to help him get his precious garment back. Homer attacks Adore Loomis at the Hollywood premiere at the end of The Day of The Locust. In both cases there is a distinct element of revenge. The world must be made to pay for the pain it has caused and the indifference it has displayed.

The similarities between the two clerks of Gogol and West proliferate even further. However, the link between them, that is, Dostoevsky's clerk-characters, will now be examined. The clearest example of Gogol's influence on Dostoevsky is the main character in the latter's first novel, Poor Folk. This epistolary novel was extremely popular and Dostoevsky became an instant success after its publication. Its protagonist, Makar Devushkin, is clearly modeled after Akaky Akakievich in his timidity and isolation. At one point in the novel he even reads Gogol's story and takes offense because he thinks it is a direct parody of him. Like Akaky, Makar is a copying clerk, living alone in a tiny room in Saint Petersburg. However, the important difference between him and Akaky is that in Makar's case it is a "real live woman who ignites passion" (Tschizewskij 48) in his heart.

Bakhtin points out that what really separates Makar from Akaky is his ability to communicate, even though it is once again through the written word only that he expresses himself. Be that as it may, Bakhtin notes that the clerk has developed in terms of his relations with people around him. He pays attention to the thoughts and words of others, his world is not insular, as demonstrated by the epistolary form:

> The hero's self-awareness was penetrated by someone else's consciousness of him, the hero's own self-utterance was injected with someone else's words about him; the other's consciousness and the other's words then give rise to specific phenomena that determine the thematic development of Devushkin's self-awareness (Bakhtin 208).

Makar does not operate in the world as Akaky and Homer do. He is not dragged into life without his consent as they are. Rather he is a real and willing participant in his corner of the world. He does not, at the end of his story retreat, as Homer and Akaky do, to his bed, to lie still and await the end. He also does not lash out violently as they do. He is not the type of underdog described by Wisker who "by his violence is always trying to make the world propertyless" (30). His desire for Varenka Dobroselova, hopeless as it is, is real and feasible, if not exactly possible. The world is against him, but, unlike Homer and Akaky, his ability to interact and retaliate against it is not totally absent, merely rudimentary and poorly developed. For him "dialogue is extremely primitive, just as the content of Devushkin's consciousness is still primitive. For this is ultimately still an Akaky Akakievich, who has acquired speech and is "elaborating a style"" (Bakhtin 210).

It is clear, however, that although Makar does not operate in the same way as Akaky and Homer, he does fill the same role. Also, although he is not as stunted as his literary descendant, Homer Simpson, or Akaky his predecessor, his situation is markedly similar. Both Makar and Homer are clerical workers, occupying positions characterized by silence, solitude and repetition. As Homer has occupied his position for twenty years, Makar has been doing the same job for thirty. Both fall in love with women far younger than them and both enter into relationships with these women. However, both relationships have false foundations. Homer, for example, refers to himself as a sort of agent for Faye Greener, telling those who inquire after the nature of their relationship that he is merely taking her under his wing until she becomes a famous actress. Makar, like Homer, is unable to be a lover to the object of his affection and, dishonest to his own

feelings, refers to Varenka alternately as "mother" or "sister" in his letters. Makar and Homer also both buy clothes for their beloved young women, Homer with the false belief that he will be paid back with interest for his purchases.

The letters Makar sends to Varenka are filled with evidence of his love for her. Unfortunately, he is still unable to establish physical intimacy with her, and when she is married off to a boorish landowner he is unable to register even the smallest public protest. Again the "stronger rival" strips the clerk of his beloved. Ultimately, Makar is still cast in the same mold as Akaky Akakievich, presented more nobly by the realist Dostoevsky, but a doomed and silent clerk nonetheless. Homer, however, is another example of the satirical reversion to the Gogolian aesthetic. The utter helplessness, the total pathological inability to interact with other individuals is not present in Dostoevsky but blossoms in West. Completely incoherent and sexually incompetent, Homer's portrayal is the end result of West's readaptation of Dostoevsky's characters to their original Gogolian form.

Another of these Dostoevskian clerk-characters is Yakov Petrovich Golyadkin of "The Double". As the clerk Makar is modeled directly on Akaky Akakievich of "The Overcoat", the clerk Golyadkin is modeled directly on Poprishchin of Gogol's "Diary of a Madman". Once again, the two are both copying clerks, and, as is is the case with Poprishchin, Golyadkin falls in love with his superior's daughter. Both are eventually driven insane, apparently by their isolation. However, in Dostoevsky's tale the insanity is ambiguous. This links him closely with West, whose stories, like Dostoevsky's, are frequently peopled by the ambiguously insane.

Fragmentation is again apparent in Golyadkin as it is with Homer and Akaky. In this case it is the body itself that is split in two, as Golyadkin is

pitted against his doppelganger called Golyadkin junior. The appearance of this double is unexplained throughout the novel. The reader is presented with a thoroughly lucid narrative, but the element of magic or simply the unexplained in the person of Golyadkin junior is never adequately addressed. The most rational solution that comes to the reader's mind is insanity, the ambiguous insanity shared by such protagonists as Miss Lonelyhearts and John Raskolnikov Gilson. Complete psychosis, however, never fully descends onto the fictional worlds and this is what makes them especially horrifying. The reader is left to question the genuineness of the characters' insanity and made to ask the question: is this really physiological insanity, or just the potential for a more universal sort of madness which is present in every person?

The idea of the ambiguously insane protagonist being driven away by the authorities from the scene of his greatest disaster is common in both West and Dostoevsky. In "The Double" Golyadkin is taken away from the house of his superior, Olsufi Ivanovich, where a party has been going on which he, Golyadkin, has unceremoniously disrupted and more or less ruined. After a particularly terrible humiliation he is placed in the care of a doctor, Rutenspitz, who takes him into his carriage. After Golyadkin discovers that he is being taken to a mental institution the novel ends with the words "our hero shrieked and clutched at his head. Alas! This was what he had known for a long time would happen!" (287).

We can compare this scene with the final page of The Day of the Locust and the fate of one of its protagonists, Tod Hackett. After the scene of Tod's greatest disaster, the riot at the Hollywood premiere where he, like Golyadkin is suddenly and inescapably surrounded by his enemies, he is driven away by a police car. His story ends like this:

> He was carried through the exit to the back street and lifted into a police car. The siren began to scream and at first he thought he was making the noise himself. He felt his lips with his hands. They were clamped tight. For some reason this made him laugh and he began to imitate the siren as loud as he could (389).

Poprishchin is also driven away to an institution by some sort of civil authority. He had, like Golyadkin, burst into the home of his superior and his beloved, the superior's daughter. He tells her "that a happiness beyond her wildest dreams awaited her, and that, despite the ploys of our enemies, we would be united" (173). It is not clear whether his incarceration comes about as a direct result of this escapade, but it is quite likely that this bold and crazy statement leads to his instalment in an asylum.

Tod is not typically one of the "poor clerks", but his character does overlap with theirs. He is, for example, physically unattractive and isolated. Like the clerks he makes his living by his copying skills. However, unlike them he does not copy words, but is rather a Hollywood scenarist. He draws by rote as the clerks write by rote. He dreams of a great painting which he will someday complete, but, like so many others of Dostoyoevsky's, Gogol's and West's characters, he is unable to leave his insular existence.

Other protagonists of Dostoevsky and West, such as Captain Snegiryov of The Brothers Karamazov and Pete Doyle of Miss Lonelyhearts are also important as "poor clerk" characters. However, we move on now to one of the most enigmatic figures presented by the three writers under examination: The Dreamer.

THE DREAMER

In his assessment of Miss Lonelyhearts, Robert Emmet Long opines quite cogently that the most important line in all of West, the one that most neatly encapsulates his aesthetic, is uttered by one of the anonymous patrons of Delahanty's bar near the beginning of the novel: "the trouble with him, the trouble with all of us, is that we have no outer life, only an inner one and that by necessity" (Long 79). This is the dilemma of the character type known as the dreamer. It is Dostoevsky's characters who are most well-known as dreamers, but the type is also present in the works of Gogol and West. The dreamer is usually best defined by Dostoevsky scholars. In his introduction to an anthology of Dostoevsky's lesser-known works David McDuff describes the dreamer in the following terms:

> In these early works the writer is striving to create and elaborate a single, central, literary type, derived from both Gogol and Poe - his 'hero', the Saint Petersburg dreamer, loner and inward traveler...The central character of this writing exists in a shadowy area between his own dreams and a harsh, oppressive urban reality that appears to latch onto these dreams and become part of them, dragging their creators into an unwelcome confrontation with others and a subsequent cognizance, conscious or unconscious, of personal guilt. All...of the 'heroes'...succumb in some sense to madness...In his earliest stories and novels, Dostoevsky is at pains to map out the moral and spiritual damage that is caused by the dreamer's lack of contact with others...Annensky says that Dosto-

> evsky condemned such "moth-like" dreamers early on in his life because he had become one himself, because the dreamer is afraid of life, and 'because the dreamer is naive, sentimental and somehow spinelessly - good' (McDuff 13-16).

Another character that rates some investigation in this chapter is the underground man. This figure first appears in Dostoevsky's "Notes from the Underground" as a nameless ex-copying clerk, again living in Saint Petersburg and again utterly isolated. We take the view that the underground man is actually a sub-species of the dreamer type, a malevolent dreamer who is on the opposite end of the spectrum from those dreamers whom Annensky calls naive, and spinelessly good. Unlike the classic dreamer, the underground man can be dangerous, usually only to himself, but occasionally to others as well.

The chain of influence we propose in this chapter begins with Gogol's dreamer-in-embryo and continues with Dostoevsky's dreamers. After the Siberian imprisonment the underground man or malevolent dreamer makes his first appearance. Finally, West's protagonists complete the chain. Nathanael West was as familiar with Dostoevsky's earlier works as he was with his later masterpieces, a fact ignored by all of West's critics. This being so, we detect the presence of both the classic dreamer and the underground man in West's novels.

Gogol's characters are not dreamers in the same way that Dostoevsky's are. His urban dwellers are primarily copying-clerks and artists. However, many of them fit neatly into the dreamer category. Piskaryov of "Nevsky Prospect", although earlier designated in this thesis as an artist, is a hybrid with the dreamer type. Like Dostoevsky's dreamers he

is solitary and introspective, with a tendency to sit or lie still in his room, contemplating alternate realities while slowly letting his real life slip away. Gogol designates him an artist, but further describes his type as "for the most part kind and diffident creatures, shy and unworldly, people who are quietly devoted to painting, and fond of drinking tea with their two friends in a small room, modestly discussing the subject closest to their hearts and insensible of all other matters" (9). Significantly, the dreamer here is characterized as a product of his environment. Dreamers stay in their rooms, alone or with only a friend or two, but "were the fresh wind of Italy to blow on them [their] talent would probably blossom just as freely, generously, and brightly as a potted plant which has at last been brought outdoors into the fresh air" (10).

Gogol scholars have noted the importance of the characters in "Nevsky Prospect" as dreamers. Kent, for example, states that "Dostoevskij understood the shallowness of Pirogovs, the necessity of Piskarevs...Both ran from reality, both dream to escape" (76). He classifies "Nevsky Prospect" as "a story of psychologically ill men" (76). The idea of the dreamer as a psychologically ill man is important. Imagination in Gogol can become something which is not entirely under the control of its possessor. Kent opines that even Akaky Akakievich is a dreamer, if not very well developed. His all-consuming and enflaming dream is the overcoat, and "his tragedy consists in the fact that he is unable to dream in any other way" (133).

Zeldin, too, comments on the presence of the dreamer in "Nevsky Prospect", stating that Piskaryov and Pirogov have "both taken the false for the true" (158). He also describes Piskaryov as still young and "capable of accepting appearance for the "thing-in-itself"" (39). Finally, Donald Fanger comments on Piskaryov's importance: "[Piskaryov] is essentially a

temperament - naive, idealistic, virginal - and when he finds reality mocking his dreams of what it should be, he can only respond by fleeing reality" (The Creation of Nikolai Gogol 111).

Dostoevsky took the dreamer in embryo from Gogol and developed it fully. Especially in his earlier works the dreamer is the foremost recognizable character type. Ordynov of "The Landlady", for example, is a typical dreamer. He "had always led a quiet and completely solitary existence" (134) and when he reaches the age of majority he takes what is left of his father's inheritance, occupies the first lodging offered to him and settles down to being a complete recluse. Above all, Ordynov struggles to avoid interruption or disturbance of his dreamer's life. It is "an instinct with him to avoid anything in the outer world that might distract, startle or shock him in his inner, artistic one" (139). His situation is markedly similar to that of Homer Simpson, who also inherits from his father and spends little time choosing a house in Los Angeles. He too, of course, embarks on a completely solitary life. However, again following in Ordynov's path, his "plant-like calm" (Light 176) is shattered by an encounter with a beautiful woman and her grotesque father, that is, Faye and Harry Greener.

Ordynov, however, is not as completely alienated and stunted as West's dreamers. He does have a "passion [for] book-learning" (135), although it is both "poisonous" (135) and "intoxicating" (135), a passion which functions as "an armament against himself" (135). He is also "troubled by the fact that he's never loved or been loved" (137). The entrance of Katerina into his world has a seismic effect on him. He is now, like Piskaryov, devoted to forming a union with his beloved. This pursuit, however, ends in sorrow. Ordynov loses his beloved to the old man Murov and ends up only a dreamer again:

> Little by little Ordynov grew even more withdrawn than he had been previously...He often liked to wander about the streets, for a long time, and without purpose. He selected by preference for his walks the hour of twilight, and the places he visited during them were god-forsaken, remote ones, seldom frequented by ordinary people (211).

The idea of the existence of special places, god-forsaken and remote, for dreamers, is key to the development of setting in Gogol, West and Dostoevsky. Also of importance is the notion of ordinary people, and, what can only be posited in this case as their counterparts, the extraordinary.

A second early protagonist of Dostoevsky worth noting is the nameless hero of "White Nights". This character shares much in common with Akaky's literary descendant, Devushkin; and is also quite similar to Piskaryov's descendant, Ordynov. Like Ordynov and Piskaryov, the protagonist in question wanders the streets of Saint Petersburg alone, sunk deep in his dreams. Once again the dreamer encounters a beautiful young woman, also alone. The subject of dream-life is more directly addressed in "White Nights", in which Dostoevsky's most fully-developed and eloquent explications of his dreamers and their shared world can be found. The nameless protagonist describes himself and his dreamer's life as follows:

> I tell you what...I am a dreamer; I have so little real life that I look upon such moments as this now as so rare that I cannot help going over such moments again in my dreams. I shall be dreaming of you all night, a whole week, a whole year...[this]

> life is a mixture of something purely fantastic, fervently ideal, with something...dingily prosaic and ordinary, not to say incredibly vulgar...The dreamer is not a human being, but a creature of an intermediate sort. For the most part he settles in some inaccessible corner, as though hiding from the light of day; once he slips into his corner he grows to it like a snail...He is rich now with his own individual life...he desires nothing, because he is superior to all desire, because he has everything, because he is satiated, because he is the artist of his own life, and creates it for himself every hour to suit his latest whim...this fantastic world of fairy land is so easily, so naturally created!...Indeed, he is ready to believe at some moments that all his life is not mirage, not a delusion of the imagination, but that it is concrete, real, substantiall...one deceives oneself and unconsciously believes that real true passion is stirring one's soul; one unconsciously believes that there is something living, tangible in one's immaterial dreams! And is it delusion? (310-321)

Nastenka, the beautiful young woman mentioned earlier, responds with the words "it is not at all good to live like that" (321). Nastenka is more fully developed than Gogol's female characters. Not only is she the beloved of the dreamer; she is a dreamer herself.

After meeting the dreamer, Nastenka relates her life story, telling the protagonist that she has lived most of her life more or less in a dream world. Her consciousness is filled with fiction. As she herself puts it, "I started dreaming and thinking and - before I know it, I'm being married to a

Chinese prince" (83). Nastenka wants to hear her suitor's story as well, but after listening a short while admonishes him, saying "couldn't you somehow manage to use a style that's a little less fine? I mean you sound as though you were reading aloud from a book" (86). That she is a dreamer is certain, but in Dostoevsky's art the female is somehow immune to the most debilitating effects of dream-life. Her life is never as fully orchestrated from beginning to end as her male counterpart's is. Her life never really becomes something "out of a book".

The female dreamer is a striking innovation of Dostoevsky's. One of his earliest female protagonists, the title character of Netochka Nezvanova can also be placed in this category. Like all dreamers, she tends towards solitude, slipping slowly into dream-life as into an addiction:

> I unconsciously decided to be content for the time being with the world of dreams in which I alone was the master, and in which there was only temptation and joy, while misfortune, if admitted at all, played only a passive, transient role, essential for the sake of contrast and for the sudden turn of destiny that was to give a happy solution to the ecstatic romances in my brain. That is how I interpret my state of mind at the time. And to think that this kind of life, a life of the imagination, a life absolutely divorced from my surroundings, could last for three whole years! This life was my secret, and even at the end of those three years I did not know whether to be in dread of its sudden discovery (131).

Nastassya Filippovna of The Idiot is another female dreamer. Dishonoured and humiliated as Totsky's concubine, she also plunges into a dream world. She describes her situation to Myshkin in the following terms:

> I am a dreamer myself...I dreamed of you long ago, when I still lived in the country with him. Five years I lived there all alone. I used to think and dream, think and dream, and always I was imagining someone like you, kind and honest and good and as silly as you, so silly that he would suddenly come and say, "It's not your fault, Nastasya Filippovna, and I adore you!" Yes, I used to spend hours dreaming like that and it nearly drove me crazy (191-192).

Other female dreamers in Dostoevsky include Tatyana Ivanovna of "The Village of Stepanchikovo and its inhabitants". She too settles into a world of dreams after life has beaten her down with its constant insults. She is "morbidly impressionable and plunge[s] into daydreaming with abandon and unrestraint" (264). These women do manage to create lives outside of their dream-worlds however. They are not paralyzed, they have real friends, occupations and human contact. They never go completely underground. The female dreamer is further developed by Nathanael West in the character of Faye Greener, whose position and function will be discussed later in this chapter

The notion of the underground and its sole inhabitant, the underground man, is a great turning point in the imaginative chain of influence linking Gogol, Dostoevsky and West. It is generally thought to have occurred as a result of Dostoevsky's terrifying ordeal of imprisonment in Siberia. The phenomenon of the underground man is too complex to be

gone into fully in this thesis, however, a thumbnail sketch is essential to an understanding of the link between the three writers.

The underground man is a dreamer who has become more fully aware of himself and his place in society. He gains a wider range of vision and understands himself more complexly in relation to the world outside himself. He is not, like Piskaryov, Ordynov and the hero of "White Nights", oblivious. He is very much aware of what his life looks like and he does not like what he sees. Bakhtin posits that the underground man came into being when Dostoevsky was trying to make self-consciousness the artistic dominant in his portrayal of people:

> at this point in his work there begin to appear the "dreamer" and "the underground man." Both "dreamer-ness and "underground-ness" are socio-characterological features of people, but here they also answer to Dostoevsky's artistic dominant. The consciousness of a dreamer or an underground man...is most favourable soil for Dostoevsky's creative purposes, for it allows him to fuse the artistic dominant of the representation with the real-life and characterological dominant of the represented person (50).

The underground man typically thinks and dreams as much as the dreamers we have been discussing, but he is embittered, nasty, irascible and frequently vile. Of course, according to his nature, he knows these things about himself, but uses spite as an excuse not to change his ways.

Dostoevsky's underground men include the original underground man from "Notes from Underground", as well as his more famous

descendants Ivan Karamazov and Rodion Raskolnikov. Fanger recognizes the link of the underground man with the dreamer:

> In Petersburg he is a clerk and a dreamer, like so many early Dostoevsky heroes. His situation sounds, in fact, like a composite summary of all their situations: "My life was even then gloomy, disorderly and solitary to the point of savagery. I associated with no one, even avoided talking, and hid in my corner more and more" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism 179-180).

Fanger concludes that "[t]he tragedy of the underground man, then, does grow out of the pathos of the earlier works, from whose works he has survived" (181). Fanger's description of Raskolnikov as a type of dreamer is particularly adroit:

> Like all of Dostoevsky's dreamers, from Ordynov through the underground man, Raskolnikov "preferred lying still and thinking"...The difference is that his dreams are rational dreams -- not a substitute for the world but a plan for mastering it (197).

Nathanael West, enamoured of Dostoevsky's work from Poor Folk through The Brothers Karamazov, exploited the figures of the dreamer and the underground man in all of his novels, and hence also their prototype, the Gogolian dreamer. In A Cool Million, however, their presence is very sparse and this novel therefore will not be discussed.

The characters in The Dream Life of Balso Snell, or at least the male protagonists, are all dreamers and underground men to some extent. Long, in his examination of West's first novel, remarks that

> The impression [the characters] give of estrangement has been achieved through a variety of effects that distance them from life...faced with so many contradictions, so many characters who deceive themselves and others, the reader is swayed to regard West's characters as refugees from life rather than participants in it (Long 35).

The notion of West's estranged, self deceptive refugee from life is, in our view, nearly identical to that of the dreamers of Dostoevsky and Gogol. Like Ordynov, West's dreamer tries hard to deceive himself into believing that real passion is stirring his soul. Like Piskaryov he flees reality when it appears to mock his dream of what it should be.

Balso Snell, John Raskolnikov Gilson and Beagle Hamlet Darwin, three artists, are typically isolated and introspective, forming no relationship with other characters. Especially in their relationships with women, as is the case with Gogol's and Dostoevsky's dreamers, they are typically unsuccessful and dysfunctional. Snell, for example, when confronted by Miss McGeeney and her pseudo-intellectual speech, responds violently: "Balso wanted to bash her jaw in, but he found that he could not move" (30). When he eventually regains his strength he "hit[s] Miss McGeeney a terrific blow in the gut and [heaves] her into the fountain" (33). Near the end of the book McGeeney reappears and manages to excite Balso's interest by metamorphosing into his childhood sweetheart.

Gilson also desires Miss McGeeney. His assessment of women suggests serious problems as well. He writes, but only because he can use his works to seduce women. He laments, "how sick I am of literary bitches, but they're the only kind that will have me" (22). Beagle Hamlet Darwin, upon learning of the death of his girlfriend Janey, concocts various responses he should or could have. He is unable to have a real response to a real situation, so he must develop one.

Darwin, in his inability to treat his relationships as real, unpredictable events in his life, is a typical dreamer. He addresses Janey in a markedly Dostoevskian fashion:

> You once said to me that I talk like a man in a book. I not only talk, but think and feel like one. I have spent my life in books; literature has deeply dyed my brain its own color. This literary coloring is a protective one - like the brown of the rabbit or the checks of the quail - making it impossible to tell where literature ends and I begin (42).

Darwin is quite similar here to characters like Ordynov and the hero of "White Nights". His response to the calamity that befalls the woman he considers to be his beloved is similar to Piskaryov's. Like Gogol's dreamer, who immerses himself into an opium-induced fantasy, Darwin adopts the attitude that he "can refuse to stop dreaming, refuse to leave my Ivory tower, refuse to disturb that brooding white bird" (46).

The narrator of Gilson's pamphlet, the lover of Saniette, also displays characterological features typical of the dreamer. This character wants to consummate, validate and express his emotions but, like Dostoevsky's

dreamer, he has spent too long in seclusion over his books like the hero of "White Nights":

> I searched myself for yesterday's emotions...My "Open, oh flood gates of feeling! Empty, oh vials of passion!" made certain and immediate the defeat of my purpose...The very act of recognizing Death, Love, Beauty - all the major subjects - has become, from literature and exercise, impossible (23).

The author of the pamphlet, Gilson himself, is much more the underground man. His statements are indicative of a dreamer who recognizes his position but, unable to break free from unhealthy introspection, rails against it. He describes himself in the following terms: "In everything I was completely the mad poet..."longing for the other shore"...I practiced having hallucinations...I climbed into myself like a bear into a hollow tree and lay there long hours, overpowered by the heat, odor and nastiness of I" (16-17). Although closer to Raskolnikov here, the references to "the other shore" and the willful descent into fantasy have their roots in Gogol's "Nevsky Prospect" and its heroes, of whom Kent says, "[b]oth ran from reality. Both dream to escape" (76).

Balso Snell is also a dreamer. He is a poet, he invents imaginary men called Phoenix Excrementi. He composes a song and entitles it "Anywhere Out of this World, or a Voyage Through the Hole in the Mundane Millstone" (6). It is, however, the structure of the story itself which most clearly establishes his dreamer status. Like Raskolnikov in the epilogue to Crime andPunishment, Ivan Karamazov, Piskaryov and, perhaps most notably,the protagonist of Dostoevsky's "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man", Balso's story

is literally a dream. His dream-life is his real life and we do not even meet the man himself outside of his inner world. He possesses "no outer life, only an inner one, and that by necessity". He is the first example of what Comerchero, citing Wallace Fowlie, calls "Westian man...peculiarly modern...in [his] introspection, [his] schizoid temperament..."the unadaptable man, the wanderer or the dreamer or the perpetrator of illogical action"" (169).

Incidentally, as is the case with Raskolnikov, the dreams of Balso Snell include instances of physical conflict with women. As Raskolnikov, in one of his dreams, repeatedly attacks the old woman money-lender with an axe, so do the narrator of Gilson's pamphlet and Balso himself viciously strike women, with a real desire to do them harm.

Miss L, the hero of Miss Lonelyhearts, is also a descendant of Gogol's and Dostoevsky's dreamers. Like Gilson he is also modeled on Dostoevsky's underground men. He knows too much about his position, most importantly that it is inescapable. His crisis stems from the fact that, although by nature an introspective recluse, he is bombarded with communication from the outside world in the form of the letters sent to his advice column.

The first words the reader gets from Miss L, words that are significantly written and not spoken, are: "Life *is* worthwhile, for it is full of dreams and peace, gentleness and ecstasy, and faith that burns like a clear white flame on a grim dark altar" (59). Miss L is, however, unable to go on using such romantic imagery to extoll a dream-life which has entirely ceased to be real to him. These are the first words of Miss L, and his story constitutes the last words of the dreamer who is dying in America from what West in A Cool Million called "a surfeit of shoddy" (217). Miss L

knows that "[m]en have always fought their misery with dreams" (103), but he also knows that "[a]lthough dreams were once powerful, they have been made puerile by the movies, radio and newspapers. Among many betrayals this one is the worst" (103).

Miss L is not alone in his position as a disillusioned dreamer in a world where all of the comfortable illusions have been dispelled. The men at Delehanty's, the speakeasy where he drinks steadily in an attempt to reimmerse himself into dream-life, are also failed or fallen dreamers. They tell crude comic stories about gang-rapes they have heard about, and mock Miss L because he has not lost his inner world as fully and irrevocably as they have. They call him a "leper licker" (75) and describe him as "an escapist. He wants to cultivate his interior garden. But you can't escape, and where is he going to find a market for the fruits of his personality?" (75). At one point they are labelled "machines for making jokes" (75). The best characterization, however, is as follows:

> At college, and perhaps for a year afterwards, they had believed in literature, had believed in Beauty and in personal expression as an absolute end. When they lost this belief they lost everything. Money and fame meant nothing to them. They were not worldly men (74).

These men are clearly former dreamers. They have placed all their faith in the abstract and the beautiful, and when this faith is betrayed they react angrily to their sudden poverty. The fact that they are not "worldly men" cements their status as dreamers. They cannot simply chuck their ideals and their dreams because they are too much a part of their being and

identity. They must make do, like Piskaryov, with nothing, and like him they have no choice but to fill up this nothing with drugs, and miserably await their inevitable lonely deaths.

Like so many other dreamers and underground men in Dostoevsky and Gogol, Miss L also returns periodically to his room, takes to his bed and experiences sickness and hallucination in a state of total solitude. His state is typical of what Fanger calls "a generally run-down condition that leaves the body physically weak and the mind dangerously active...the natural state of the dreamer" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism 197). He dreams of order and its struggle against inexorable chaos. He yearns to keep everything in his life and his imagination symmetrical and predictable. By the end of the novel he has fully managed to create an insular life for himself. He now refers to himself as the rock, "an ancient rock, smooth with experience" (117), "neither laughter nor tears could affect the rock. It was oblivious to wind and rain" (123). Finally, after his full retreat into the dreamer's life, he has a powerful experience alone in his room:

> He felt clean and fresh. His heart was a rose and in his skull another rose bloomed. The room was full of grace. A sweet, clean grace, not washed clean, but clean as the innersides of the inner petals of a newly forced rosebud. Delight was also in the room. It was like a gentle wind, and his nerves under it rippled like small blue flowers in a pasture. He was conscious of two rhythms that were slowly becoming one. When they became one, his identification was complete. His heart was the one heart, the heart of God. And his brain was likewise God's...He immediately began to plan a new life (125).

This sort of fevered and irrational descent into the self is also typical of the dreamer. Once again Piskaryov, Raskolnikov and Ivan Karamazov come to mind. And once again the final thrust into isolation results in calamity or death. The new life planned, for both Gogol's and West's characters, never comes about. It is only to the realist Dostoevsky that a new life seems possible. His dreamers and underground men, instead of dying, are usually only subject, like Raskolnikov, to a long and arduous process of regeneration and atonement which follows the inevitable calamity.

The Day of the Locust is concerned almost entirely with dreams. Hollywood is depicted as the physical locus of fantasy and the dream-life of the entire nation. It is one of the special places, alluded to in the previous citation from "The Landlady", that dreamers inhabit. Its main characters, however, are not defined primarily as dreamers. Homer Simpson and Faye Greener are the only two who really fit into the category. Homer's situation and emotional make-up are closer to that of the poor clerk. He does, however, share many points in common with the dreamer. Faye's whole life is filled up with dreaming, but she is a female, and hence her story is more closely related to the female dreamers of Dostoevsky. Nevertheless, these two characters, although not 'classic' in our taxonomy, are worthy of note.

Homer is, like Akaky Akakievich and Devushkin, a low-level clerical worker. He keeps books in a hotel until his doctor advises him to move to California. His life is similar to the dreamer's in that he lives alone and is seemingly unable to initiate contact with anyone outside his home. "The forty years of his life had been entirely without variety or excitement" (275). However, unlike the other characters under discussion, Homer may be too far gone to even be classified as a dreamer or an underground man.

Conversely, it could also be argued that he is the dreamer taken to an extreme, the end result of the dreaming life. He is indifferent to and unaware of what the outer world is like and does not desire change despite his general sadness.

Homer's condition is more physiological and unmotivated than Dostoevsky's isolates. For example, he sleeps much more than the average person, about twelve hours a night. Indeed, sleep frightens him in its inexorability: "He was afraid to stretch out and go to sleep. Not because he had bad dreams, but because it was so hard for him to wake again. When he fell asleep, he was always afraid that he would never get up" (267). Waking up, as previously noted, is a terrible ordeal for Homer. He has to wait for his body to come under his control and take special care of his hands, which seem to have a life of their own. Here we see a man who clearly suffers from a different sort of affliction than the typical dreamer or underground man. His separation from others lacks any causal context that might explain it. He seems not to have chosen his life, but in fact to have been born into it.

Homer's predicament is notably similar to that of Akaky Akakievich, another character whose appalling isolation is entirely inexplicable. In the first pages of "The Overcoat" Gogol takes pains to describe the inevitability of Akaky's position. Of his name the narrator states that it "was a matter of sheer necessity and it would have been quite impossible to give him any other name" (116). When he is christened he cries and makes a face "as if he were having premonitions that one day he might become a titular councillor" (116). His career, like Homer's twenty year stint as a hotel bookkeeper, is of a sedentary and permanent nature:

> he remained in the very same spot, in the very same position, in the very same job, the very same copying clerk; so that afterwards people swore that he must have been born into the world in exactly that state, complete with uniform and bald pate (116).

When they are jolted out of their respective isolations Akaky and Homer are unable to cope with the shock and novelty and eventually die. Homer feels sexual desire, but is unable to attain any sort of satisfaction with a real woman. His tragedy is the same as Akaky's. It "consists in the fact that he is unable to dream in any other way" (Kent 133) than that to which he is accustomed.

Homer's move to California is a shocking experience altogether. Unlike Gogol's Saint Petersburg recluses, who, in their author's opinion, may need only the aforementioned fresh wind of Italy to blow on them in order to blossom like a potted plant which has up until then been left stifling indoors too long, Homer's move from the dull midwest to the vibrant coast results in a sort of sensory overload and death. The cause of his death is his relationship with Faye Greener. She callously awakens Homer, who is after meeting her unable to continue living half his life literally asleep and the other half in a stupor.

The two-page-long chapter twelve describes his awakening. He is now no longer able to drop into sleep like a stone into water. He clings tightly to his chastity, believing it to serve him as armor and a spine both. His lack of occupation frightens him, there is nothing to keep him from thinking about Faye. He wants to sleep. "He was simple enough to believe that people don't think while asleep" (290). When he does eventually fall asleep, he wakes up with Faye as his first conscious thought. He is now thrust fully

into the dreamer's life, like Piskaryov, trying desperately to become a suitor to what is essentially an imaginary woman in the guise of beauty and virtue. But, in common with Akaky, and unlike the other characters under discussion, he is unable to survive as a dreamer. The passion and desire is too much for him. West's narrator describes his situation, as well as Akaky's, most eloquently:

> There are men who can lust with parts of themselves. Only their brain or their heart burns and then not completely. There are others, still more fortunate, who are like the filaments of an incandescent lamp. They burn fiercely, yet nothing is destroyed. But in Homer's case it would be like dropping a spark into a barn full of hay. He had escaped in the Romola Martin incident, but he wouldn't escape again (290).

Homer self-destructs, but the trigger to his self-destruction is Faye Greener. She too is a dreamer.

Faye is one of West's most fascinating creations. She is a combination and a culmination of all of Dostoevsky's female dreamers: Nastenka, Netochka Nezvanova, Nastassya Filippovna and Tatyana Ivanovna. Her dreams of an actor's life are bolstered by her startling beauty and little else. Although as a female dreamer she is closer to Dostoevsky, as an illusory character she is much closer to Gogol, for whom all women are essentially illusions.

Faye, like Mary Shrike and Netochka Nezvanova, has a romantic, dreamer's view of her parentage. Netochka describes her stepfather as follows:

> My stepfather was a musician and was destined to lead a most remarkable life. He was the strangest and most extraordinary person I have ever known. He had too powerful an influence over my early childhood, and this certainly affected my whole life (7).

Mary Shrike's description of her father is similar: "My father was very cruel to [my mother]...He was a portrait painter, a man of genius" (84). Faye's description of her family fits the pattern:

> My father isn't really a peddler...He's an actor. I'm an actress. My mother was also an actress, a dancer. The theatre is in our blood...I'm going to be a star some day...It's my life. It's the only thing in the whole world I want...If I'm not, I'll commit suicide (286).

Of course, the idea of Faye committing suicide is ludicrous. It is merely another romantic conceit. Miss L's assessment of Mary Shrike could be applied equally to all three of the female characters under discussion:

> Parents are also part of the business of dreams. My father was a Russian Prince, my father was a Piute Indian chief, my father was an Australian sheep farmer, my father lost all his money in Wall Street, my father was a portrait painter. People like Mary were unable to do without such tales (84).

Faye's way of dreaming is methodical and prosaic and pragmatic. Her pragmatism is something she shares in common with Dostoevsky's female

dreamers. She does not live an entirely wasted life as a dreamer. Dreaming is an aspect of her personality, but it never takes over her life as completely as it does the lives of the male dreamers. When Tod asks her about how she dreams she answers willingly. The fact that she can describe her approach in a lucid and sequential way attests to her pragmatism. She turns on her radio and lies down in order to set the mood. Then she goes over her dreams as if they were a pack of playing cards until she happens upon one that holds her interest. When she can't choose she either goes out for a soda or, if she has no money, goes through them again and forces herself to pick one. She realizes the flaw in her way of dreaming, its lack of romance and inspiration, but this lack only strengthens her pragmatism and her resolve to become a star: "While she admitted that her method was too mechanical for the best results, and that it was better to slip into a dream naturally, she said that any dream was better than no dream and beggars couldn't be choosers" (293). Tod Hackett, who lusts after Faye as much as Homer, assesses her dreams with a satirical but enraptured eye:

> All these little stories, these little daydreams of hers, were what gave such extraordinary color and mystery to her movements. She seemed always to be struggling in their soft grasp as though she were trying to run in a swamp...Although the events she described were miraculous, her description of them was realistic. The effect was similar to that obtained by the artists of the Middle Ages, who, when doing a subject like the raising of Lazarus from the dead or Christ walking on the water, were careful to keep all the details intensely realistic. She, like them, seemed to think that fantasy could be made plausible by a humdrum technique (295-296).

Ultimately, one of the most remarkable aspects of Faye's character as a dreamer is her resilience. Tod makes much of this in his ruminations. He sees her as indestructible: "She was like a cork. No matter how rough the seas got, she would go dancing over the same waves that sank iron ships and tore away piers of reinforced concrete" (375).

Tod's view of Homer is more negative. After Homer's ordeal on the night of the cock fight and the party, Tod finds him curled up on the couch in a fetal position and compares him to a spring trying to attain its original coil. The imagery used is striking:

> In a book of abnormal psychology borrowed from the college library he had once seen a picture of a woman sleeping in a net hammock whose posture was much like Homer's. "Uterine Flight," or something like that, had been the caption under the photograph. The woman had been sleeping in the hammock without changing her position, that of the foetus in the womb, for a great many years. The doctors had been able to awaken her for only short periods of time and those months apart (372) .

Homer's situation, in Tod's mind anyway, is almost exactly opposite that of Faye's. Homer craves the womb, the 'great indoors', while Faye the cork is out in the expansive sea, impervious to the liquid surrounding her, not reliant upon it like a fetus. The two characters are, in the final analysis, quite on the opposite ends of the dreamer's spectrum.

This concludes the analysis of the dreamer and his or her evolution through the works of Gogol, Dostoevsky and West. It is, however,

important to stress in closing that West's critics, although they never refer to the Russian dreamer as a prototype for West's characters, virtually all recognize the importance of the isolated, idealistic, artistically inclined, socially challenged and neurotic character in all his novels. Max F. Schulz, for example, makes the following observation:

> West's novels make it clear that in the deeper reaches of his mind he was obsessed with man's nightmarish dual nature: his neurotic isolation and his social impulse, his deception and self-mockery... Synonymous in Western thought with falsity and the end of a civilization, the wooden horse...becomes the hallucinatory terrain over which Balso Snell wanders. Thus West clearly identifies man's dream-world with sham and *fin de siecle* (141).

Jay Martin suggests that all West's protagonists are caught "in their own or others' illusions" (113), while Arthur Cohen states that West's protagonists "are defeated by their self-deception about the world and their misapprehension of others" (48). As far as the underground man is concerned, Long makes the following astute observation:

> Dostoevsky's "underground man" supplies the model for Miss Lonelyhearts's self-division and psychological suffering; and Raskolnikov...especially prepares for him - in his impulse to play a heroic role for which he is not necessarily qualified, his fevered dreams, isolation within an oppressive society, and obsession (52).

Finally, we can compare the following two observations. The first is made by Reid in his assessment of West. The second is made by Richard Pevear in his introduction to The Eternal Husband and Other Stories:

> The typical symbolist hero was as important to West as any symbolist techniques. From Poe to Huysmans the dandy reigns supreme. He is always morbidly sensitive, exacerbated by vulgarity, tormented by dreams and fantasies, weak-willed but compulsive, fond of attenuated emotions and aesthetic eccentricities, perverse, disintegrating withdrawn (71).

Pevear breaks dreaming into two categories and describes the first as follows:

> The first is the form of a reverie produced by the dreamer, who longs to transform the squalid reality around him into something nobler, loftier, more beautiful. The dreamer is a fervent idealist, a great reader of German romantic poetry, but his consciousness is isolated and he usually ends badly. Reality triumphs (viii).

These two quotations describe more or less all the qualities of the dreamer: the use of a fantasy life to enhance the sensations not stirred deeply enough by empirical reality, the idealism and narcissism, the sensitivity and the inability, brought about by isolation, to engage with others in a meaningful way. And, most significantly, the isolation itself, which is addictive and at least potentially deadly to all who enter the dreamer's life.

All this was born out of Gogol. Piskaryov has been mentioned most frequently in this chapter as the prototype of the dreamer, but other lonely male dreamers abound in his works. Akaky, who is a dreamer albeit a narrowly focussed one; Poprishchin, who madly desires the daughter of his superior and goes crazy when she spurns him; and others who dream to a lesser extent. One thing is sure and telling in this assessment. All three of the Gogolian dreamers mentioned directly above, all of West's dreamers and all of Dostoevsky's, all of them meet with horrible personal catastrophe and anguish as a result of their self-sought isolation. The only difference between the three is that Dostoevsky's failed dreamers do not usually die. They may go insane like Myshkin and Raskolnikov, but they are usually shown the way to a process of atonement. The dreamers of Gogol and West, of the satirists, are never as lucky. They die unnoticed, unloved and, to use Tanya Donnelly's expression, "untogether".

VILLAINS AND VILLAINY

The works of the three writers are well-known for their compelling depictions of villainy. It is sure that Gogol, Dostoevsky and West were all concerned with the problem of evil and the evildoer. Gogol, for example, is well-known for his literal and specific belief in the devil of Russian Orthodox Christianity. Dostoevsky's novels and West's are brimfull of evildoers and their depraved acts.

There is one thing that can be stated for certain in a study of the works of the three writers under discussion, and that is that evil and evil persons really exist. The primary villains in their stories are bad, bad men who do bad things. One could cite characters such as Gogol's Nozdrev, or else Herbst's assertion that West "refused to create any actual villains in his vision of a world ruled by the villainy of the little" (Wisker 83), as proofs that their villains are petty, childish and ultimately ineffectual. However, upon closer investigation the reader discovers that the villains are actually evil, that they are truly, to use Gogol's parlance, dead souls, and that childishness and corruption are not mutually exclusive. This thesis takes the view of Richard Pevear, put forth in his preface to Crime and Punishment that evil is so omnipresent that it actually saturates Raskolnikov's world. We apply this notion to the imagined world of all three writers, and we believe that their works function as stages for what Simone Weil, cited by Pevear in the preface to Crime and Punishment, calls

> the monotony of evil: never anything new, everything here is

> *equivalent.* Never anything real, everything here is imaginary. It is because of this monotony that quantity plays so great a part ...Condemned to a false infinity. This is hell itself (Crime and Punishment xvii).

Evil is of great importance in the works of all three writers. The different forms it takes and the ways it manifests itself in the actions of the characters could be discussed almost ad infinitum. This chapter, however, will deal mainly with only six characters, two from each writer. We divide them into two triads.

The first triad, which could be designated as that of the lesser villains or the artist-villains, consists of Gogol's Chartkov, Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov and West's Tod Hackett. These men are not particularly dangerous and they do no actual physical violence to others. Their status as villains relies mostly on their inner villainy and state of infection by evil. Their villainy is inward-turning, resulting most notably in their own destruction. Ivan, however, is in typical Dostoevskian fashion offered a chance at redemption.

The second triad, consisting of the sorceror in Gogol's "A Terrible Revenge", Dostoevsky's Stavrogin and West's Homer Simpson are the greater villains. They are killers, filled with the senseless need to destroy. A fourth character, Crime and Punishment's Svidrigailov, also rates some examination in this chapter as he is closely related to Stavrogin

Before beginning the discussion of the villains themselves, it is necessary to say a few words about the basic ideas Gogol the Orthodox believer had about evil. The idea of evil as a hollow or empty quality has always been important in Russian Orthodox theology. This notion and

others like it come into existence in the works of early Christian theologians like Clement of Alexandria, Augustine and Origen; as well as in those of specifically Orthodox thinkers like Saint John of Damascus and Hryhory Skovoroda. Although the complexity of the Orthodox theology of evil is too great to be gone into in the scope of this thesis, we will attempt to bring a few key points to light.

Hollow evil is of interest in relation to Gogol's aesthetic. This notion arises from the idea that if God is entirely benevolent and all-powerful in the universe, then it is unclear how evil is able to exist and gain a foothold in our world. The above-mentioned theologians came to the conclusion that since all things must be inherently good, evil only comes into existence in the hollow spaces of reality and in emptiness. In a sense evil is unreal. It remained uncreated by God and grows in those places where God and goodness are not present. It essentially fills up the cracks of reality and infects the areas around it.

A second notion, closely related to the first, is that evil is pervasive and independently powerful. Evil, and specifically the devil, look for openings into our world and can affect our lives completely against our will. Our entry into the world of evil, and vice versa, may well be completely involuntary on our part, and possibly irreversible.

In Dostoevsky's vision of morality people are more or less responsible for their own acts. By all accounts Dostoevsky firmly rejected "the notion of environmental causality" (Bakhtin 29) and that is why his demons, although quite real in many respects, are generally considered to be 'internal'. We cannot, however, conclude that there is no devil in Dostoevsky, that evil is not a real and palpable thing. Ivan Karamazov's

devil, for example is presented ambiguously. Whether or not he exists only in Ivan's mind is never adequately determined.

West's vision of evil is at the same time both more and less complex. His novels offer very little insight into evil, but also proclaim its omnipresence and graphically depict its consequences. The general anonymity of the progenitor of evil is aptly characterized by R.W.B. Lewis: "The Satanic character in [The Day of the Locust], the harnesser of all that hatred, goes in fact unnamed, but we know that he will be an even greater scoundrel, making even wilder promises" (135).

Ultimately, none of the writers is able to make any clear conclusions regarding the problem of evil. It remains more or less incomprehensible to all three, but this is as it should be. Gogol and West, as satirists, were more interested in negativity than solutions. Dostoevsky offered Christianity as a defence against evil, but did not presume to fathom its origins. The evildoers are incomprehensible because of their apparent hollowness.

The concept of the appetite for destruction is a strong motivating force for the depicted villains of all three writers. Not all of them are consumed by this will, but the most isolated and morbid evildoers all experience an overwhelming desire for a pure sort of annihilation, self-justifying and relentless. Gogol's Chartkov, for example, becomes a monstrous villain at the end of part one of "The Portrait". After discovering that he has wasted his talent and therefore his life by succumbing to the temptation of being a 'fashionable artist', he becomes dedicated to destroying every beautiful work of art he can lay his hands on. He attends auctions and pays high prices for paintings which he then immediately carries back to his home and destroys. This need for destruction eventually changes his appearance: "This terrible passion stained his whole

countenance: his face became permanently jaundiced. Hatred of the world and negation of life itself were stamped on his very features" (94). He dies insane and in terrible agony.

Chartkov is literally possessed by Gogolian evil. He lets down his guard for one moment in the first pages of the story, and as a result he dies a terrible death at the end of a fruitless and wasted life. His sad fate was set in motion by diabolical chance. On the first page of the story the narrator states that he "had involuntarily stopped" (62) as he walked past the picture-seller's stall where the portrait was waiting for him. This notion of the involuntary nature of a man's descent into corruption is typically Gogolian and Orthodox. The devil found an opening, and once inside his victim there was no hope. It is typical of Gogolian evildoers like Chartkov that they did not start out as villains. Like Petro in "St. John's Eve" or Petro in "A Terrible Revenge" they simply made one wrong decision which cast them into perdition forever. Only if the characters are previously armed with a strong Orthodox faith, like B.'s father in part two of "The Portrait", are they able to withstand the devil.

In The Day of the Locust a similar situation transpires. Tod Hackett, a formally trained artist like Chartkov, heeds the call of Hollywood and the glamorous life and becomes a low-level scenarist for a film studio. Like Chartkov his physical appearance and behaviour is odd and awkward in worldly society. Both are apparent "sell-outs", seeking a better life in the larger world and all the material rewards it has to offer. Tod's predicament, however, is strikingly dissimilar to Chartkov's in one respect: he still plans to paint great pictures. Whereas in Gogol's conception of the artist's dilemma it is necessary for the true artist to remain faithful to the artistic establishment, Hackett is disillusioned with the academic approach and

rejects it precisely to become a better artist. The Hollywood work he does, although still suspect and potentially harmful in the novel's point of view, is a means to a larger end. He wants to paint a great picture entitled "The Burning of Los Angeles". Chartkov, on the other hand, completely gives up artistic discipline in order to become fashionable.

Ultimately, however, both artists fail. Chartkov and Hackett are both, by the end of their respective stories consumed with the idea of completing their projected masterworks. Tod wants to paint the above-mentioned picture while Chartkov's "whole being is aflame with one idea: to paint a fallen angel. This idea seemed to conform most closely to his state of mind" (93). Both their pictures are apocalyptic in nature, both suggest irretrievable and irremediable loss. Neither of the painters is ever able to complete his painting. Chartkov, due to his neglect of his talents, is simply unable to perform even the simplest artistic tasks. He has completely lost the discipline required by the nameless artistic Authority, which in Gogol's world is an essential component of all artistic endeavour. Tod also has no success and his vision of the fallen citizens of Los Angeles is never realized. Instead insanity, caused by the literal realization of his vision in the form of the Hollywood riot, sets in and leaves him shrieking involuntarily like Chartkov on his death bed.

Ivan Karamazov fills the role of corrupted artist in Dostoevsky. Like Tod, he is apparently the most intelligent character in the fictional world he inhabits. As Ivan ruminates and philosophizes on the nature of humanity and what it is exactly that people need in order to be happy, so does Tod construct theories regarding 'the people who come to California to die'. Both characters have a great interest in the masses and their desires. Tod

depicts these people in his mental conception of "The Burning of Los Angeles", Ivan depicts them in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor".

"The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is a "poem" created by Ivan Karamazov in his quest to effectively eradicate morality in his life. As Chartkov's fallen angel is a self-representation, and as Tod paints himself into his own projected picture of apocalypse, so is the Grand Inquisitor a representation of Ivan's own satanic posture. He himself states "I think that if the devil doesn't exist, but man has created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness" (283). The "Legend" concerns another apocalyptic motif: the return of Christ to earth. In another corruptive move, mirroring the succumbing of the fallen angel in Chartkov's painting, the Inquisitor has Christ arrested and placed in jail. The priest then declaims his theory to his purported saviour that it would have been wiser for him to have succumbed to the temptations of the devil in the wilderness, because it would "have united humanity with the three things it craves: someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all into one unanimous and harmonious antheap" (298). Incidentally, we note here the similarity between the Inquisitor's desire for human unity and the actions of the devilish fiddler (Putney 157) who presides over the dance at the end of "Sorochintsy Fair" and who "with one stroke of his bow...transform[s] all this commotion and hubbub into harmony and unity" ("Sorochintsy Fair" 33).

Ivan and Tod's shared subject is humanity. A comparison of their statements regarding this subject is telling. Ivan, speaking through the Inquisitor, makes the following observation:

> the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something

> to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance. That is true. But what happened? Instead of taking men's freedom from them, Thou didst make it greater than ever!...They will cry aloud at last that the truth is not in Thee, for they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than thou hast caused (302).

Tod's view of his subject is quite similar. He describes the Angelenos as follows:

> They were savage and bitter, especially the middle-aged and the old, and had been made so by boredom and disappointment. All their lives they had slaved at some kind of dull, heavy labor, behind desks and counters, in the fields and at tedious machines of all sorts, saving their pennies and dreaming of the leisure that would be theirs when they had enough...Where else should they go but California[?]...Once there, they discover that sunshine isn't enough...They don't know what to do with their time. They haven't the mental equipment for leisure, the money nor the physical equipment for pleasure...Their boredom becomes more and more terrible...They have been cheated and betrayed. They had slaved and saved for nothing (380-381).

Ivan's poem, although it is quite similar to the paintings of Tod and Chartkov in terms of its apocalyptic motif and implicit reference to divine judgment, is distinguished by its liability to criticism and error. Tod is

evidently the most intellectually able and clearsighted character in The Day of the Locust and there is no voice in the novel that attempts to correct his vision. The insane and evil Chartkov is also never redeemed by anyone. Neither of their visions are subject to any appraisal by their surroundings, their fellow characters or their authors. Ivan on the other hand, despite his intelligence and insight, is vulnerable to the criticism of Alyosha, to whom he reads his poem, and also to his own critical insight, his sickness, as well as his firm but unarticulated desire to believe in goodness and the necessity of morals.

Finally, one of the most important qualities of these works is the fact that they are all self-portraits to a certain extent. In Chartkov's case this is evident. The fallen angel is obviously a metaphor for himself. Ivan and Tod are less inclined to include themselves in the masses they depict, but it is clear from their actions that, despite their intelligence, they are just as confused as the citizenries of Seville and Hollywood. Tod, in his assessment of the Angelenos, misses the obvious fact that he is himself one of the 'people who have come to California to die'. Ivan as well is unable to hide the fact that "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is essentially a reflection of his own life. The Inquisitor, like Ivan, philosophizes endlessly and deduces that Christian morality is pointless, while the imprisoned Christ, like Ivan's conception of God, remains silent.

Other villains also exhibit the inexplicable appetite for destruction. In Gogol this aspect is most prevalent in Chartkov who, as previously mentioned, dedicates himself to a satanic destruction of beauty when he realizes he has eradicated his own God-given talent. It is also to be found in what may be his most unique work, "A Terrible Revenge". This story is the only offering in Gogol's artistic oeuvre which is utterly devoid of humour

and comedy. There is no caricature, no laughter or satire evident anywhere in its forty-odd pages. It is concerned exclusively with the vicious assaults of evil on the Ukrainian people. The villain in this story is a nameless sorceror who is totally devoted to serving the devil and to incestuous union with his daughter Katerina, the story's heroine. His will to destroy is inexplicable to the reader, the narrator and also himself:

> No person alive could have described the feelings which racked the sorceror's soul; and if any man had looked into it and seen its inner turmoil he would not have been able to sleep at night and would never have laughed again. It was not anger, nor fear, nor bitter resentment. There is no word in any language to describe it. A fire raged within him; he wanted to trample the world with his horse's hooves, to take all the land from Kiev to Galich, with all its people and chattels, and drown it in the Black Sea. But it was not from malice that he longed to do this; no, he himself did not know the reason (177).

We can compare the feelings racking the sorceror's soul with those of Stavrogin in Demons:

> My...feelings consisted of the desire to put some powder under all four corners of the earth and blow everything up at once, if only it had been worth it - however, without any malice, but just because I was merely bored, and nothing else...I wanted everyone to stare at me (686).

This overwhelming wish to destroy is commonly associated with evil and fallen characters like Chartkov, the sorceror and Stavrogin. It is part of their villains' make-up and character. However, destruction is not restricted only to evildoers. What is important to note is that this perverse characteristic, although it reaches full fruition only in the fallen, applies to other characters as well. Lise, for example, Alyosha's physically frail love interest in The Brothers Karamazov, is also possessed of the fatal, seemingly primeval instinct, as is clear from this conversation with him:

> "You are in love with disorder?"
> "Yes, I want disorder. I keep wanting to set fire to the house. I keep imagining how I'll creep up and set fire to the house on the sly, it must be on the sly. They'll try to put it out, but it'll go on burning. And I shall know and say nothing. Ah, what silliness! And how bored I am! (706-707).

Homer Simpson fills the role of destructive villain in West. His intense social isolation and its fearsome inexplicability are qualities he shares with Svidrigailov, Stavrogin and the sorceror. His situation is somewhat unique in that up until the last chapter he seems to be more a victim than a victimizer. However, the possession by the will to destruction is present. His truly villainous deed, the stomping of Adore Loomis, is one of the most vicious acts portrayed in the works of all three writers. The manner of its portrayal, however, is strikingly different from those cited above. The narrator merely comments in a disinterested manner on the terrible action being described. The boy throws a rock at Homer who then

retaliates, almost nonchalantly, by landing on the boy's back with both feet and then doing it again and again.

What is significant in relation to Dostoevsky's and Gogol's destructive characters is Homer's violence acting as a catalyst for the final riot at the end of The Day of the Locust and Tod's witnessing of it. Tod has been obsessed with the latent violence of "the people who have come to California to die" since the opening chapter of the novel. He has planned its grand depiction in his painting, "The Burning of Los Angeles", but he clearly does not expect Homer to play a significant role in it. After the final scene of terror however, we may assume that Tod's assessment of Homer has been wrong all along. Tod's first impression of Homer is as follows:

> Tod examined him eagerly. He didn't mean to be rude but at first glance this man seemed to be an exact model for the kind of person who comes to California to die, perfect in every respect down to fever eyes and unruly hands...Tod saw that he was mistaken. Homer Simpson was only physically the type. The men he meant were not shy (264).

Tod is obviously wrong about Homer. He is ultimately as capable as anyone of mayhem and destruction. His presence calls forth the violence in the people around him. Gogol's sorceror also incites the masses to violence, raising an army to wage an aggressive war against the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Stavrogin too, although unwillingly, inspires Pyotr Verkhovensky and the other nihilists in Demons, all of whom look to him as a leader and a catalyst for violent action.

In fact, when we take Dostoevsky's considerable influence on West into consideration, it seems as though Homer, for all his apparent meekness, acts as a sort of Anti-Stavrogin in a novel which has many thematic similarities with Demons. Homer and Stavrogin are both deeply and harmfully isolated men, emotionally empty and hence vulnerable to possession by evil. However, Stavrogin uses his isolation to his advantage, successfully repressing his conscience, if he has one at all, and allowing himself amazing acts of freedom within the community he inhabits. He insults people with near impunity and enjoys a tremendous amount of respect from those who consider themselves to be his friends as well as from his enemies. Homer's reaction to isolation is on the opposite end of the spectrum. He allows himself no freedom at all. He stays at home, unable to initiate contact with anyone.

Stavrogin and Homer are also characterized by their easy recourse to oblivion. Both can apparently sit silently for days without need for human relations of any kind. Similar scenes occur in both novels wherein the two protagonists sit quietly watching insects. Consider Stavrogin's actions in the following passage:

> A fly was buzzing over me and kept landing on my face. I caught it, held it in my fingers, and let it go out the window...I moved the chair away from the window. Then I picked up a book, threw it down again, began watching a tiny red spider on a geranium leaf, and became oblivious (699).

Homer engages in similar activities. he can sit for an entire afternoon in his backyard, watching a lizard try to catch and eat unwary flies who come too

close to its home. Homer, even though "[t]here was a much better view to be had in any direction other than the one he faced" (275), watches this animal repetition for hours without budging. The narrator concludes that "[b]etween the sun, the lizard and the house, he was fairly well occupied. But whether he was happy or not is hard to say. Probably he was neither, just as a plant is neither" (276).

In terms of the ability to exist completely within oneself, necessary to any good sociopath, Stavrogin and Homer are quite each others' equals. Another thing they share is a sordid and haunting sexual experience in their pasts. Stavrogin, in the appended chapter "At Tikhon's" relates to a priest how he raped a young child who later kills herself as a result. This crime, according to Light, "tormented West as it tormented Stavrogin himself" (89). The knowledge of guilt eventually drives Stavrogin to suicide much as it does Svidrigailov in Crime and Punishment. In his assessment of Svidrigailov, which could be equally applied to Stavrogin, Kent puts forth the following opinion:

> Svidrigailov is evil...self-willed, amoral, Svidrigailov would appear to have somehow transcended conscience, but the dream reveals that he could not, despite himself; and his suicide is the natural culmination of the consciousness of his inability to function beyond man (114).

Svidrigailov and Stavrogin both rape children. This leads to their suicides. Homer's past sexual crisis is not marked by violence. He attempts to achieve some sort of sexual contact with Romola Martin, a woman he has been sent to evict by his boss at the hotel where he works. Despite her

willingness, he is unable to place himself in a position of real intimacy with her. When she openly invites him into her bed he panics and runs from the room. This memory torments Homer as surely as Stavrogin is tormented by his own crime. Ultimately it leads to an inescapable spiritual decay in both of them. The sorceror in "A Terrible Revenge" also has a serious sexual crime on his conscience: incestuous relations with his daughter. Although this crime is never actually committed, the sorceror does torment her with his seductions, especially in dreams

Homer, like Stavrogin and Svidrigailov, effectively commits suicide at the end of The Day of the Locust. His last act, a violent attack on a helpless child, places him on a level with his two Russian forerunners. However, in true Westian fashion, the child he attacks is presented by West as undeserving of sympathy. Adore Loomis, the "Frankenstein monster", is described as another Hollywood automaton, corrupted through and through at a very young age by his surroundings and especially by his mother's drive to establish him in the movie business. The assault of the man on the child should be fundamentally wrong and immoral regardless of context, but West makes it difficult for us to see Homer the same way we see Dostoevsky's two most malefic villains.

In the final analysis we can conclude that Homer is created with many villainous aspects. Like Stavrogin's, his death comes as a result of his consciousness of his inability to function beyond man. Moreover, what links him and his rage to characters like Stavrogin, as well as Gogol's Chartkov and the sorceror in "A Terrible Revenge", is his consciousness of lack and loss. Homer has, before the action of the novel begins, lost a clear opportunity for sexual intimacy with Romola Martin. By the end of the novel his desire for Faye is also thwarted. When he enters Faye's room the

morning after the fateful party and discovers her copulating with the brutish Miguel, his loss is complete. We have no internal view of Homer after this scene and it is apparent that by the time of his final appearance in the novel he is completely emptied of hope. He is now no longer alive, but merely animated by his circumstances, reacting only to direct stimulus, with only one goal in mind: to return to Wayneville. Tod, when he sees him approaching the premiere, notes that he "walked more than ever like a badly made automaton and [that] his features were set in a rigid, mechanical grin" (381).

It is this condition of utter loss and emptiness that sets fire to the rage inside villains and fallen heroes like Chartkov, the sorceror and Stavrogin and allows evil to set up a base within them. Seemingly innocuous characters like Homer and even Akaky Akakievich are capable of villainous acts when they are forced to confront the emptiness of their lives. Orthodox evil blooms in the absence of meaning, indeed *is* the absence of meaning, in these characters.

It is no wonder that Chartkov longs to paint a portrait of a fallen angel after he discovers the extent to which he has wasted his life. His dilemma, the dilemma of all the characters described in this chapter, is his fall. Whether that fall is from grace or from blissful ignorance the result is the same: disillusionment and death. These men have succumbed to the same temptation that Lucifer did. They believed, in one way or another, with good intentions or bad, in their self-sufficiency. They relied upon it as upon a religion or well-tested philosophy and it ruined them.

In conclusion, it is clear that in Gogol's works the devil really exists, acts, talks and walks among people. Characters like the sorceror in "A Terrible Revenge", the witch in "Viy" and the evil money-lender in "The

Portrait" are proof enough of this. In his later works the devil is not as clearly named, but is no less present in characters such as Nozdrev. Even Chichikov, the 'hero' of Dead Souls, who was apparently supposed to be redeemed in its unwritten second and third parts, is viewed by at least one critic as diabolical:

> Chichikov himself is merely the ill-paid representative of the Devil, a travelling salesman from Hades, "our Mr. Chichikov" as the Satan and Co. firm may be imagined calling their easy-going, healthy-looking but inwardly shivering and rotting agent...The chink in Chichikov's armor, that rusty chink emitting a faint but dreadful smell...is the organic aperture in the devil's armor"(Nabokov 73-74).

Chichikov's job, his quest for dead souls, is the same as the devil's: to deceive. This fact signals at the very least a serious state of infection by the diabolical. Chichikov, like almost all of Gogol's major characters, from his earliest folktales to his final writings, is a human on the edge of depravity and corruption.

Dostoevsky, despite his firm classification as a realist and a psychological writer, cannot by any means be said to have disbelieved in the devil. His works are too full of fiery and seductive evil to be fully outside the realm of theology and eschatology. Although in his novels "the supernatural was rationalized...[and] ambiguity was given a philosophical basis" (Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism 126) the existence of men like Svidrigailov and Stavrogin cannot be explained without taking into account the mysterious and ominous parts of God's undiscovered creation. Besides, the rational men and philosophers in his works frequently end badly. It is

Zossima and not Ivan Karamazov who possesses the truth. Indeed, it seems that in many of his works a man must fall fully into the clutches of the devil before he can, like Raskolnikov, be completely redeemed. The best example of the ambiguous position of the devil in Dostoevsky's work comes from Ivan's devil himself. This amiable fiend remarks at one point that, after having been cured of a physical ailment by a worthy doctor, he wrote a letter to a newspaper in order to praise and thank him publicly. However, the editors, he laments, refused to publish it because to admit the existence of the devil would be reactionary, or in our contemporary parlance, 'politically incorrect'. In this and many other ways Dostoevsky argues against the notion that there is no real good or evil in the world.

Nathanael West also clearly believed in evil. The critics have not been remiss in pointing this out. Hawkes, for example, makes the observation that West and Flannery O'Connor "are very nearly alone today in their employment of the devil's voice as vehicle for their satire or for what we may call their true (or accurate) vision of our godless actuality" (Long 160). This voice comes from Shrike the "diabolical editor" (Anonymous 92), from the lying, illusive Faye, or from Nathan "Shagpoke" Whipple, who advises Lem Pitkin never to borrow and then makes him the satanic offer of a loan of thirty-five dollars at a high rate of interest. The letters Miss L receives from the slowly dying citizens of New York, from the desperate and the broad-shouldered, "make the fact of evil a concrete presence" (Podhoretz 82) in Miss Lonelyhearts. These letters, only briefly touched upon in this thesis due to spatial limitations, are impossible to ignore or dismiss as incidental to our precepts of morality. These are the voices of the innocent and the betrayed which West shaped but never modulated in his novels. They are all the more convincing when we discover that, like the tale of

Akaky Akakievich, they are based upon real-life incidents (Martin 110). "Broad Shoulders" was a real woman who wrote real letters to a real advice columnist, and she endured real suffering as a result of real cruelty and evil.

The result of evil in Gogol and West is rage. When cruelty so completely empties out characters like Homer, Akaky and the people who come to California to die, there is nothing to fill them up except the Gogolian, Orthodox evil which caused their suffering in the first place. The riot in a dark city, what Milburn in his examination of The Day of the Locust called an "American Walpurgis Eve" (68) is the consequence of this evil. The human demons which fascinated Dostoevsky are finally given free reign over the earth for one apocalyptic night and allowed to occupy all the places in which goodness has rotted away as a result of depravity and malign indifference. Gogol and West do not by any means allow the reader to ignore this rage, these demons and their victims.

CONCLUSION

In one of the numerous narratorial digressions in Dead Souls the following observation is made:

> More than once some passion - not only an overwhelming one but an insignificant urge for some trifle - has taken hold of a man born for better deeds, forcing him to forget high and sacred duties and see in worthless baubles something great and holy. Human passions are as numberless as the sands of the sea , and all unlike each other; fine or low, they are in the beginning all submissive to man but later grow to be terrible tyrants over him (264).

This may be the central notion which binds the imagined characters of the three writers together. Desire, "for a new coat, a neighbour's gun, a lost nose, a list of dead serfs" (Popkin 190), for Christian redemption, for artistic purity, an end to suffering, a movie star lifestyle, or for a cool million, is central to the inhabitants of the created worlds discussed in this thesis.

The human creations of West, Dostoevsky and Gogol are all searchers to some extent, characterized by their inability to ignore the cavities of wants and needs within them. Some of them act out, lose control and fight the communities they inhabit, informing those around them, through their acts and words, that they are unwilling or unable to continue living as though nothing were wrong in the world. Homer and Akaky, with their

violent outbursts at the end of their respective stories belong to this group. Stavrogin also fits into this group with his desire to set the world aflame. Ivan Karamazov, with his desire,as he puts it, respectfully to return his 'ticket' to God (The Brothers Karamazov 291) also belongs. These men live with stifled desire for long decades of their lives, trying to make sense, order their minds and live productively. However, when they attain new levels of self-awareness, awareness of personal sin, indignation or loss, when their dreams are shattered, they place themselves, willingly or not, onto the path of self-annihilation.

In most cases the world is prepared for their outbursts. It knows how to deal with their transgressions like the crowd knows how to deal with Homer after he assaults Adore Loomis. Or perhaps they can be placed in mental institutions. In short, the world has no meaning but it does have a system. Like the games of chance which Dostoevsky could not draw himself away from, life is depicted by the three writers as a round of repetitious actions which, although they have no meaning in themselves, serve a purpose in terms of maintenance. The game will continue, even though all odds without exception clearly favour the house, for as long as there are willing participants.

There is, however, some reprieve in Dostoevsky. Although life appears meaningless, some philosophy, namely Christian philosophy, is relevant. If one can achieve a truly sincere relationship with the divine, one might be saved as Raskolnikov is saved. Gogol's world is, like West's, quite meaningless. He may have wished to write positively near the end of his life, but ultimately those works of his which have stood the test of time are the stories which comedically explore the mundane, the empty and the grotesquely pathetic. There is little real tragedy in his prose, merely a

series of choked laughs directed at the victims of cruelty and circumstance. Gary Saul Morson describes the Gogolian attitude towards life as follows:

> Explaining a bizarre event as a freak of nature is like accounting for Einstein's creativity by saying he was a genius or explaining the ways of God by saying they are mysterious. Gogol's point - one commonly made in satires of philosophy from Aristophanes to Moliere and Sterne - is that what passes for knowledge is often counterfeit currency taken for true coin, an "insubstantial sound" passed off as substantial, an estate consisting entirely of dead souls (233).

Gogol in his heart believed fully in the Christian redemption and the return to God. It was what he yearned for and what he hoped to further in his planned Purgatorio and Paradiso, the unwritten second and third parts of Dead Souls. In life, however, he saw only ignorance and dishonesty and was too honest to portray it in a softened light. The best thing he could hope to do was to be funny and he succeeded.

West's critics take a similar view of his own writing. Wisker, for example, cites this passage by Christine Brooke Rose in his assessment of West's writings:

> Most of the novels commonly regarded as post-modernist are characteristically implausible but (technically) realistic representations of the human situation: they dramatize, that is, the theme of the world's non-interpretability (10).

West and Gogol, plainly put, are not hopeful, while Dostoevsky is.

The most significant question to arise from this discussion is what this thesis has attempted to address: it is an axiom in Russian literary studies that Gogol's influence on Dostoevsky is immense. The wealth of information which is merely anecdotal strongly suggests this. Likewise, West is only too clearly a product of his reading of Dostoevsky. His characters are named after Dostoevsky's characters, they read his books and they are even mocked by their colleagues for their emulation of him. How is it, then, that West, who was unfamiliar with Gogol, ended up creating a world so similar to the Russian satirist's?

To use Shklovsky's metaphor, cited in the introduction, we can see the three writers as all inhabiting the same literary 'house'. Their novels, or windows on the world, all look out onto the earth, but from different perspectives. West's and Gogol's rooms, to extend the metaphor, seem to be located in or near the cellar. They see closer to ground level, look more closely at the dirt and life of surface reality than at the heavens. Their rooms are closer to the room the furnace is kept in, reminding them constantly that there is no life without burning and that burning requires fuel, something is always being annihilated. It is as if life commands it. Dostoevsky saw the world from a higher vantage point which included heaven. Redemption, forgiveness and completion are present in all of his mature works. The reader gets the idea that even when suffering is at its greatest the divine is only just out of sight, waiting for the hero to see it clearly and choose to embrace it.

Passion, loosely identified in this thesis as dreams, is part of the aesthetic of all three writers. However, Dostoevsky once again depicts more positively than the satirists. Even though the cruel system he portrays

is similar in its negativity to those described by West and Gogol, dreams and passions can make a positive difference to the world. For example, Raskolnikov's harmful idea and the pain it causes will later blossom into the unknown "great future deed" referred to in the epilogue to Crime and Punishment

The self-proclaimed dreamer's suffering at the end of "White Nights" is at least mitigated by the positive effect he has had on Nastenka and her resulting affection for him. Akaky, Homer, Tod and Chartkov seem simply to slide off the face of the earth after their passion has destroyed them.

Why are West and Gogol frequently so much more similar to each other than to the Dostoevskian medium through which they are filtered? Ultimately it is impossible to say. It is merely another of the situations they depicted, wherein things worked out inexplicably, usually for the worse, but never as planned. To answer 'how' or 'why' the similarity exists would be the same as speculating how or why evil exists. We could make a good guess, but our theories are empty when faced with the stark ruthlessness of reality. We can only speculate, and conclude, that although he probably never read "Nevsky Prospect", West might have agreed with the following digression near the end of that story:

> What an amazing world we live in!...How strange, how inscrutable the games fate plays with us! Do we ever attain the object of our desires? Do we ever achieve that to which all our efforts seem to be directed? Everything happens the wrong way round. To one providence has given a pair of splendid horses, and he rides along indifferently, oblivious of their beauty, while another, whose heart is fired with a passion for horses, is forced to go on foot and must

content himself with clicking his tongue at the handsome beasts which gallop past. One fellow has an excellent cook, but , alas, is unlucky enough to possess such a small mouth that it cannot accommodate more than two pieces of meat, while another has a mouth as big as the arch of the general staff but, alas, has to content himself with some sort of German concoction of potatoes. What strange games fate plays with us (35)!

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