

THE ALIENATED HUMAN BEING AND THE POSSIBILITY OF HOME  
A COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS OF FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY'S *CRIME AND  
PUNISHMENT* AND JACK KEROUAC'S *DESOLATION ANGELS*

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the state of human alienation as a consciousness that pervades our destructive, perverse tendencies. This consciousness is readily viewable from the perspective of current environmental crisis. As such, it is proposed that an investigation into the alienated consciousness might reveal both why we dominate and destroy our environment and ourselves, as well as how we might resolve alienation and, by extension, begin to live harmoniously within our surroundings and neighbors on earth. Two texts, *Crime and Punishment* and *Desolation Angels*, by Fyodor Dostoevsky and Jack Kerouac, respectively, are exemplary of the type of human alienation discussed in this thesis: that is, the alienation that arises from our perceived existence as neither gods (stewardship) nor animals (beasts). This anomalous state is further revealed through the inclusion of Emmanuel Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, which condemns our totalistic trajectory as reinforcing alienation by obstructing the trajectory of infinity, or the proper course of humanity marked by ethics of interconnectivity and diversity. Also included is Mikhail Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which helps reveal how ethics of interconnectivity and diversity are arranged in Dostoevsky's work. By reading these texts together, we reveal that alienation is a unique derivative of particular socio-cultural spaces, and that the modernizing human trajectory since the burgeoning of capitalism in 1860s Russia to postwar America has only served to reinforce alienation, thus linking perverse destruction to exploitative societies as marked by the pursuit of material gain. We therefore conclude that keen attention must be paid to the human ego as well as dedication to sustainability through the reduction of excess if we wish to resolve alienation and the domination and exhaustion of resources and diversity that ensues.

## INTRODUCTION

*'As man is made for the sake of God, namely that he may serve him, so is the world made for the sake of man, that it may serve him.'*

(qtd. in Soper 23)

Fyodor Dostoevsky and Jack Kerouac's texts refute this quote's validity. If the reader pays attention to the dichotomy between protagonist and their surrounding environment (both societal and natural) they notice that the exploitation of these environments does not lead to a knowledge or relationship with divinity unless repentance for this hierarchical perception is present. As such, both authors lead the reader to believe that hierarchical ascension (climbing the ladder from lowly animal to Supreme Being) through domination as sanctioned by our separation from the natural promotes only alienation: not transcendence. Both authors characterize their protagonist's journeys as a search for meaningful existence: in other words—the resolution of alienation. While neither author wrote explicitly as champions of an environmental movement, they both treat the issue in subtle ways that have gone unacknowledged in past and present scholarship. Focusing on how these authors subvert or invert the above premise reveals that the alienation their characters face is closely tied to how they perceive both their societies and the environment. As such, an understanding of what lies on the edge of society and the individual consciousness for their protagonists provides the reader great insight into the role of alienation and its possible resolution. This thesis argues that the resolution of alienation for these characters is closely tied to their ability to heed environmental appellation.

To clarify the relationship between the natural world and the alienated human consciousness we must grapple with several problematic terms. This problem stems from the similarities and contrasts that must be addressed between the human and his home in the natural world. Furthermore, humanity's penchant to envelop itself with cities and structures that obscure the natural world through self-reference make arriving at a knowledge of the virtues of the natural world and humanity's responsibility toward it even more difficult. This introduction addresses the terms 'nature' and 'human nature' and relates these issues to the concepts of human alienation and natural agency.

Amidst a self-reflective modern landscape, alienation and natural agency mark important terms surrounding the paradox of perceived human homelessness. Self-reflection concerns such concepts as separation and its opposite co-existence. For if we concede that architectural environments such as cities influence the inhabitant's consciousness, then interpreting this link becomes a matter of course. Looking to nature as a constant other provides a window out of the self-reflective *mise en abyme* that characterizes life in rationalized space. If we recognize the importance of this window, we therefore must confront our domineering tendencies as the dominant planetary species. Thus, the terms 'separation' and 'mutual co-existence' are addressed. The concept of 'co-existence' implies compromise. If by recognizing alienation as contingent with separation, then co-existence functions to re-orient with what lies beyond the reflective cityscape: aesthetic diversity. Specifically, Dostoevsky and Kerouac's protagonists display this value through vacillation. By not adhering to the center through mobility between the center and the margins, as well as transversing social echelons, this

aloofness allows for an inversion of the above epigraph because sway allows one to remain in suspense, resisting totalization. As such, themes of ascension and declension within the texts capture this thesis' argument for realignment with the natural to dissolve alienation. The word *creation* is useful for this argument because it refers to a sense of interconnection as humanity, nature and God are evoked in unison as opposed to the stark regimented structure that characterizes the above epigraph. This interconnection resonates with the focus of *ecocentrism*, which promotes the study of humanity within the larger, ecosystemic framework. Therefore, this thesis argues for a re-balancing between humanity and the natural world.

Of course, the natural other and the human do not wholly occupy separate spheres. Habitat fragmentation reveals that the 'space' of the natural is obscured by the radiation of humanity. Hence, to study nature is always to study ourselves. Kate Soper writes of this paradox:

These, then, are some of the reasons for questioning the adequacy of any attempt to conceptualize 'nature', even when we are thinking primarily only of the extraneous to, and independent of, human process. Moreover...we do not simply use the term 'nature' to refer to an 'external' spatial domain, from which we and our works are clearly delineated. We also use it in reference to that totality of being of which we in some sense conceive ourselves as forming a part. We have thought, that is, of humanity as being a component of nature even as we have conceptualized nature as absolute otherness to humanity. 'Nature' is in this sense both that which we are not *and* that which we are within. (21)

The concept of nature hinges on the tension between a humanity that separates itself from nature and one that, conversely, promotes a co-substantial understanding of human civilization and the natural world. As such, tension arises when trying to represent the human among the natural instead of above it. As we perceive humanity as the dominant

planetary species, certainly this dominance, from a Darwinian perspective, comes with a sense of triumph in terms of 'fitness.' Yet, this triumph leads to two apparent and divergent avenues: the celebration of our separation from the forces of nature (i.e. medicine as triumphant over disease, technology as capable of mitigating natural disaster) versus shame for a dominance that arose from exploitation and exhaustion. That is, humanity's manipulation of the natural world to further our sense of separation and triumph (exemplified by excessive fossil fuel use and other non-renewable resource waste) reveals a tyranny. The tension between this tyranny as natural according to 'survival of the fittest' and this tyranny as ultimately debilitating to our success as a species by way of irreversible pollution or nuclear annihilation suggests that however technologically independent from the natural world we become, we nevertheless must respect the natural world as being a necessary correlative to human success as a species. While the celebration of separation may well lead to incredible technological advances that might protect the future of the human race, this technology ultimately depends on resource sustainability. Therefore, attempts to banish the natural world to the margins of our consciousness and societies as reduces our ability to maintain balance, and implicitly condones its devaluation.

Through our increasingly efficient ability to exploit the natural world, we seem to prove our lordship over it. This domination has led to the perceived 'breaking point' of today's ecological crisis. That is, humanity has begun to realize, through global climate change and the rapid depletion of resources, that the world hangs in a balance. Humanity seems to increasingly be in agreement that our treatment of the earth has a direct effect on

the earth's and, by extension, our own stability. Therefore, a sway away from the ethic of domination toward an ethic of interconnectivity has been cued by our ability to perceive and measure human impact on the environment. An investigation into the cultural and cerebral manifestation of this domination may well give clues as to how we might invert the consciousness that dominates in order to project a future that thrives through valuation of the natural other. Since separation and alienation refer to states of exclusion, perhaps an awareness of interconnectivity would realign humanity with our foundation among the natural.

Due to the close relation between human alienation and the natural world, and the confusion that arises when analyzing both the natural world and the human within that world, a keen awareness nature's function in the human consciousness leading up to our current state of ecological crisis and socio-cultural anomie is wanted. As cultural artifacts Dostoevsky and Kerouac's novels, which share a wary concern for the trajectory of humanity as separate, allow scholars to interpret the meaning of nature for the authors by analyzing the effect that both human and natural environments have on their protagonist's psyches. Soper writes of the diffuse character of the word 'nature':

'Nature', as Raymond Williams has remarked, is one of the most complex words in the language. Yet, as with many other problematic terms, its complexity is concealed by the ease and regularity with which we put it to use in a wide variety of contexts....The natural is both distinguished from the human and the cultural, but also the concept through which we pose questions about the more or less natural or artificial quality of our own behavior and cultural formations; about the existence and quality of human nature; and about the respective roles of nature and culture in the formation of individuals in their social milieu. In recent times, it has come to occupy a central place on the political agenda as a result of ecological crisis, where it figures as a general concept through which we are asked to re-think our current use of resources, our relations to other forms of life,

and our place within, and responsibilities towards the eco-system. (Soper 1-2)

Soper recognizes that diverse use of the term 'nature' violates any singularity that might otherwise hold the word in distinction. As such, already implicit in the language is domination: the desire to claim for humanity that which is other. A conception of the natural as a singular other engenders a lens, a reference point from which to regard ourselves. Since the concept of nature has become a focal point for our understanding of global processes (i.e. indicator species, trophic hierarchies, climate change, over-population etc.) there seems to be a shift in our thinking from the romantic sense of nature as an aesthetic other to the practical study of interconnection (represented by such theories as 'general relativity' and 'ecocentrism') that, by extension, reveal humanity's health as one species among many. Ecological awareness thus necessitates a conception of nature and humanity as part of the same ongoing process. Hence, as such a concept nature asks us to question, to "re-think" our trajectory and success as a race through our treatment of the natural as a constant upon which our actions leave a readable trace. That is, how we regard the natural as an other reveals the degree to which we live up to our responsibility as thinking (and hence ethical) beings. While the romantic sense of nature as an independent other is valuable for human inspiration through its ability to provide aesthetic refreshment that humanity may only ever imitate (not unlike the mimetic quality of the signifier to the signified), the conception of interconnectivity between humanity and nature forces us to ask whether or not domination without responsibility can have anything but disastrous ends for humanity. Thus, in the former case we conceive of nature as an inspirational guide through romantic aesthetics, while the latter case leads to

ecological responsibility through interconnection: both are necessary and often overlapping perspectives.

In recognizing the value of otherness we, in essence, begin to learn that as a part of something larger than us we must act accordingly with what we can perceive that larger force wills. This desire to respect otherness correlates with proliferation and multiplicity. If we desire to protect the natural world through an ethic of responsibility, then there is implied a sense of distance as well as connection. To respect natural processes is to treat the natural as (partially) independent, and therefore nature's tendency toward proliferation and evolving diversity (organisms tend to become complex through evolutionary growth) demands abstinence from interference in terms of 'playing favorites,' which leads to homogeny. For example, 'monocropping' refuses natural variance, which, although allowing for the alleviation of mass human hunger, also eliminates variety in the human diet. This leaves humanity ultimately vulnerable as was demonstrated by the potato famine in Ireland. Hence, respecting natural diversity serves as a guide for human success through following nature's lead, not the opposite: domination. The close relationship between natural success and human success demonstrated through diet reveals that while we respect nature by regarding its autonomy and ability to teach or inspire, we are nevertheless always a product and part of natural processes as well, which further entrenches the need for human care in terms of our subjective actions in and on the environment. Soper describes our relationship to a larger force as follows:

When the order of 'Nature', for example, was conceived as a Great Chain of Being, as it was in the physico-theology which prevailed from the early

Middle Ages through to the late eighteenth century, humanity was thought of very definitely as occupying a place within it, and a rather middling one at that. Based on the Neoplatonist principles of plenitude (the impossibility of a vacuum or 'gap' in being), hierarchy and continuity, the Great Chain of Being perceived the universe as: composed of an immense, or...an infinite number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kinds of existents...through 'every possible' grade up...to the highest possible kind of creature....When 'Nature' then is conceived in cosmological terms as the totality of being, humanity is neither opposed to it nor viewed as separable from it. (21-22)

This 'Chain of Being' presupposes the human as situated hierarchically between the realm of the animal at the base, and the realm of God—however unreachable—at the apex of the chain. While one may certainly interpret this middle-ground as a site of humility where one accepts one's incompleteness before the creator and simultaneously sympathizes with that which is even less so, it seems humanity has historically chosen, rather, to dominate the meager as a perverse attempt to ascend toward the creator. Soper characterizes this trend:

This is not to deny that there is much in the conception of the Chain that directly encouraged the idea of human lordship over the rest of animal (and vegetable) life. The teleological purposes it attributed to a deity, who has so designed all things and laws of nature as to place them at the service of his human servant, were frequently used to justify a dominion over all those creatures below us in the Chain, and an instrumental use of earthly resources. In the words of a key text of Scholastic philosophy: 'As man is made of the sake of God, namely, that he may serve him, so is the world made for the sake of man, that is may serve him'....We may say, then, that...the Promethean assumptions of human separation from and superiority over 'Nature' do eventually triumph over the idea of our 'middling' rank within its overall cosmology. (22-24)

This 'middling' rank resonates with this thesis' understanding of human alienation. Since in this cosmological conception one may not transverse the abyss between the creator and what is lower on the chain, a sense of alienation arose. Hence, the celebration of humanity as separate from 'nature' was a failed attempt to resolve alienation through

human determinism, or control of our own destiny. This human determinism manifests itself in such totalizing forces as rationalized city grids, skyscrapers and regimented 'clock time,' which reflect humanity at the expense of the natural world. Since this thesis argues that connection to the natural world might help resolve alienation, these reflections of humanity enforce a sense of triumph through separation. This schism from acknowledging dependence on the natural to subsuming natural dependency under the guise of human emancipation allows for a sense of willed removal from the 'Great Chain,' which we mistake for alignment with the creator; for if we perceive ourselves as in control of our own destiny, then we might interpret this freedom as divine in essence. Yet, this thesis argues that humanity's relationship to the divine is solidified through harmonic co-existence with the natural. As such, the resolution of alienation involves reunion, not separation. Hence, we may interpret modern malaise as a manifestation of the alienation that arises from separation and the resultant rationalization, exploitation and totalities that mark such human attempts at self-determination.

From this resolution of alienation through communion or brotherhood comes the ability to hear the teaching of the natural other. Cosmological nature, as a larger force than humanity, has the ability to teach. Soper describes the observable teaching of the natural other:

But if we extrapolate the cosmological principles from their theological trappings, and focus simply on the idea of plenitude, diversity and organic interconnection informing the idea of the Chain, then there would at least seem some parallel here with current arguments concerning the interdependency of the eco-system, the importance of maintaining biodiversity, and the unpredictable consequences of any, however seemingly insignificant, subtraction from it. (25)

In other words, a shift in focus, as a confrontation of the human desire for separation and domination reveals the innate responsibility humans carry as part of a larger whole, as opposed to the domination that ensues in the perceived absence of the creator. As Soper understands it, “What is being disputed here is not so much the human possession of instinct or 'animal' desire, but the ethics of human conduct, and specifically the extent to which 'nature' offers itself as an appropriate *guide* [my italics C.B.] to this; in other words, whether it is conceived essentially as a source of virtue or of vice, and thus as a mode of being we should seek to emulate or disown” (26-27). The argument for disowning nature has been made; the rise of industry and simulacra represent our unconscious desire to exist solely in and of ourselves. What we have found is that while science and technology may well allow us to self-perpetuate, this comes at the price of a loss in diversity and natural freshness. As such, the aesthetic value of nature can never be replicated, and this human interiority leaves us in a barren landscape. The current push for sustainability amidst mass, human triggered species extinction reveals that humanity does indeed value this diverse freshness, and that the loss of which would be devastating to life as we know it: making human emancipation not a lifestyle choice, but inevitability. Thus, Soper suggests an ecocentric perspective in order to extrapolate an ethic of interdependence from the natural as a guide for humanity; for if humanity requires a guide, then alienation is revealed.

It is imperative to differentiate at this point between human nature and the natural world. For our purposes human nature refers to the innate desire for understanding, which materializes in such structures as logic, categorization (separation) and

rationalization, which in turn materializes in totalities, meta-narrative and ultimately: uniformity. For example, environmental degradation implies that our concern for the autonomy of the natural other is subsumed under our desire to control our own destiny. Nature, by contrast, (here superficially held apart from human nature) implies all that is unaffected by our determination. One might call this *pristine* nature, which we treat as a necessary other (albeit an imagined one) from which we might perceive ourselves more objectively.

Looking to pristine nature to understand human domination as parasitic (as in deep ecology) is not enough. We must look out in order to look in yes, but from this perspective we must resolve alienation and the resultant domination through inversion. Soper writes, “The device used by Rabelais to assist this struggle against 'cosmic terror' was to decentralize the universe of traditional Christianity (the vertical hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being) by means of a relative re-centering of it on the underworld/underground conceived as a 'lower bodily stratum', which was also the source of all true wealth and abundance” (95). Hence, the “cosmic terror” (which, incidentally, will be characterized by Kerouac's conception of 'the void') presents itself only insofar as humanity feels alienated. The natural other provides the means for de-centering which allows us to subvert the trajectory of domination to, hopefully, realize the always already present brotherhood characterized by “true wealth and abundance.” Hence, the teaching of the other reveals itself as abundance, akin to proliferation and multiplicity. Obviously, pristine nature and human nature come into contact, most often resulting in conflict. Yet, if we regard nature as a greater force, one in which humanity plays a part,

but is ultimately independent of human subjectivity through its ability to exist autonomously elsewhere in the universe or in a time where humans do not yet or have ceased to exist; we may begin to understand nature as a force that demands respect and justice. This conception of nature hinges on the idea that it does not need to regard us. For all our destructive tendencies nature does not require humanity to function and is thus ultimately impervious (in the long run) to humankind's touch. From this understanding we begin to see that as a force untethered to human determination, we might find inspiration in nature, as teaching, for how to overcome the parasitic tendencies of human nature. As such, textual environments themselves are windows into humanity's ability to heed the natural's plan. That is, if textual environments bear agency over their character's consciousness and actions, then so too might we pay attention to how the natural world has the ability to shape our perspectives and resultant actions.

Therefore, by way of such readings we attack anthropocentrism or human egoism on the grounds that this selfishness leads only to destructive behavior both against the natural and even the fellow human. The term *ecocentrism* undermines anthropocentrism through valuation of the natural world. Ecocentrism can be defined as such:

Ecocentrism has been described as post-humanism, for it transfers the reality-spotlight from humanity to the Ecosphere, from the part to the whole. This outside-the-human focus brings with it new standards for thought, conduct and action on such seemingly intractable problems as world population, urbanization, globalization, maintenance of cultural diversity, and ethical duties to the Ecosphere with its varied natural ecosystems and their wild species. (Mosquin)

The idea that reality is shaped by cultural value is not new. As Walter Goldschmidt argues, "The central importance of entering into worlds other than our own...lies in the

fact that the experience leads us to understand that our own world is also a cultural construct. By experiencing other worlds, then, we see our own for what it is and are thereby enabled also to see fleetingly what the real world...must in fact be like” (qtd. in Castaneda xxii). Ecocentrism is not then a simple repositioning of the focus from human to other, but rather a means of 'stepping over' (an act that is personified by Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, by the way) that at once overcomes the subjective ego—or selfish desire—and simultaneously provides a lens from which to view *ourselves* more objectively—or, from the desire to understand without the violence that results from ethnocentrism. Hence, to accept the value of otherness is in direct relationship with a reduction of the ego that would otherwise seek to dominate another.

The epigraph becomes a problem for Dostoevsky and Kerouac because such totalizing premises deny the agency of the other—as a muting of environmental concerns to rationalize human domination—which interrupts peaceful co-habitation. This hierarchical arrangement seems like a simple logical proof and it finds itself in line with the rationalization of the Western world as complex interdependent concepts (nature, humanity, God) are cordoned off into self-sufficient concepts set in opposition to each other. Obviously, this quote subdues the natural into a lower caste than humanity. This allows for atrocities against the natural such that the natural's ability to act as an agent for human inspiration goes unacknowledged. That is, Dostoevsky and Kerouac's texts reveal a sense of the textual environment's role as a teacher or prophet that, once heeded, helps provide the protagonists with a sense of belonging even amidst societies that push further

and further away from the celebration of nature as communion and simultaneously move toward the celebration of separation.

Dostoevsky, for example, provides natural agency through such devices as thresholds. Bridges are frequently encountered by Raskolnikov. Usually, he comes from within St. Petersburg in a state of exasperation, as though the city's stale and stagnant air, over-crowding and lack of freshness has a direct influence over his consciousness and health. While on bridges he is able to view refreshing natural scenes such as clear and flowing water, a distant sunset or the greenery that lies just beyond the bridge. These thresholds between natural refreshment and man-made squalor become increasingly important as Raskolnikov learns to heed this natural refreshment as an appeal for reunion between the separated man and exploited nature. Thus, alienation for Raskolnikov is directly tied to the city that cordons him off from an original relationship with creation.

Kerouac's relationship with the natural as an agent for the resolution of alienation functions slightly differently because of the complication between nature and separated man in postwar American society. Whereas Dostoevsky's Russians retain a latent connection to the land through their history as tillers of the soil, by the 1950s America represents a consumer society further removed from the soil. Supermarkets with pre-packaged meat, suburban tract housing, and even recreational parks subsume nature under the ready-made access to simulacra. In such a society meat comes from the store, not the cow; the greenery that lies just beyond Dostoevsky's city is replaced by an extension of the city: suburbia; recreational space is rationalized, making 'green space'

mere mimesis of natural, untethered splendor—a reminder of nature at best. Therefore a study of Dostoevsky and Kerouac illuminates the degree to which we have separated, which also makes clear the amount of work humanity has in terms of reunification. Of course, for our purposes reunification involves the reduction and possible absolution from perceived alienation.

Dostoevsky, in 1860s St. Petersburg and Kerouac in the postwar United States were keenly aware of the tension between the human and the natural within their respective spheres. Dostoevsky's city was one in which the natural was largely erased by way of human overcrowding, while Kerouac's United States was celebrating the triumph of humanity over nature by way of commodification and uniform suburban retreats from bustling cities. This sprawl complicated the Victorian trope of the urban/pastoral dichotomy in that cities were now creeping into the natural realm, thus furthering humanity's celebration of itself by encroaching on the realm of the other. For Dostoevsky, all a character must do to quell the madness that arises from destitution in unsanitary cities is to seek refreshment beyond their borders. Kerouac's world, however, is one in which escape from the human realm is increasingly difficult because the margin is extended and blurred. Therefore, Dostoevsky's Russia is a world in which his characters more easily overcome the sense of alienation that arises when the natural, by way of human domination, cannot function to inspire humanity.

This thesis offers to rearrange the 'Chain of Being' premise by promoting the natural as an agent for the fulfillment of the human condition as opposed to being a mere tool for exploitative uses. As such, themes of ascension (as separation from the natural as

a movement toward divinity) and declension (as a turning back to the primordial human relationship with nature) are valuable for a reading of Dostoevsky and Kerouac's treatment of the alienated modern human. Bakhtin writes of the human condition, "The struggle against cosmic terror in all its forms and manifestations did not rely on abstract hope or on eternal spirit, but on the material principle in man himself; he discovered them and became vividly conscious of them in his own body. He became aware of the cosmos within himself" (qtd. in Soper 95). Hence, for Bakhtin the resolution of human alienation ultimately involves a knowledge of the human as not separate from, but itself a representation of the universe. Thus, the trajectory of separation as providing resolution of alienation fails in that it pulls us away from our true selves.

Dostoevsky and Kerouac each present us with novels driven by the vacillating motivations of characters who resist their societies as though in search of some higher or original calling. Both authors create characters whose motivation is directly related to their perception of absent creators/creation. As such, they refuse prescribed religious doctrines as mere societal distractions from the true nature of the human condition in exchange for a more personal struggle to find meaning in the modern world. Hence, their attempts to resolve alienation through ascension as a higher calling or declension as an *original* belonging problematize the 'Chain of Being' hierarchy that resides latently in the modern consciousness.

Ostensibly, Kerouac and Dostoevsky as writers who confront the hierarchical metaphysical philosophy which enforces division by way of a totem pole-like structure of nature, humanity and God. We might replace *serve* with *guide* in the latter half of the

'Chain of Being' premise, thus promoting the natural as an agent toward the resolution of modern alienation. That is, the textual analyses that follow trace the progression of a consciousness that begins to acknowledge the natural in texts of Dostoevsky and Kerouac. Each author addresses the imperative that humanity seek to coexist with the natural world. In so doing, they show how confronting separation as reinforcing alienation promotes a sense of home for the human consciousness by way of a brotherhood with the natural.

Two literary characters that will aid this deconstruction of anthropocentrism are Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov of *Crime and Punishment* and Jack Kerouac's Jack Dulouz of *Desolation Angels*. While these two characters exist separately across time and space, they both relate in their attempts to confront the ego on their paths toward self-realization. Tracing the implications of this journey provides the reader with new insights into meaning of the physical and cerebral vacillations of Raskolnikov and Dulouz. Also, through our investigation of how these authors treat the environment in/of their texts, we are shown the degree to which each author values otherness. As such, this thesis proposes to pinpoint, through the lens of Dostoevsky and Kerouac, the value of *ecocentrism* as a primary ethical concern in providing the alienated human a place in the world thereby promoting a brotherhood between the human and the natural in which co-existence takes precedent over the perverse ethic of domination.

This thesis' focus on the natural other as a cosmological older sibling thus bearing the ability to teach therefore involves a rigorous questioning of the construction and focus of human self-hood. Therefore, the inclusion of philosophy or ethics in this argument

cannot be avoided. Bakhtin and Levinas are two theorists who perhaps best understand the construction of the individual human.

Bakhtin's understanding of 'the polyphonic individual/novel' in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* mirrors such concepts as interdependence and ecocentrism, which are necessary for humanity to overcome the egocentric separation of society and the natural world. He writes:

In actual fact, the utterly incompatible elements comprising Dostoevsky's material are distributed among several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses; they are presented not within a single field of vision but within several fields of vision, each full and of equal worth; and it is not the material directly but these worlds, their consciousnesses with their individual fields of vision that combine in a higher unity...a polyphonic novel. (16)

As Bakhtin notes about the construction of Dostoevsky's novels, their very structure reveals a deep understanding of the nature of the self in relation to the environment (whether textural or social, natural etc.) as incomplete. The self here is upheld and congealed only through its interaction in overlapping spheres; interconnection thus emerges as a precondition of selfhood, and therefore undermines the self's ability to separate. Here alienation arises from the individual who refuses to accept his partiality among interconnected worlds. Ecocentrism asks us to contemplate these concepts of partiality and interconnection by questioning human separation through a polyphonic existence within an ecosystem. Thus, for Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's novels themselves mirror such ecocentrism. Bakhtin is therefore a valuable aid in analyzing how alienation is treated in these texts.

Levinas' understanding of the human tendency to totalize, which he counters with

a treatise on movement toward infinity in *Totality and Infinity* mirrors the call for respecting otherness that precedes the human's ability to receive inspiration from the natural. Also, his mistrust of egocentric representation illuminates a key divergence between Dulong and Raskolnikov as Dulong often confronts alterity subjectively rather than allowing the other to inspire, or teach. Levinas writes, "Pluralism implies a radical alterity of the other, whom I do not simply *conceive* by relation to myself, but *confront* out of my egoism. The alterity of the Other is in him and is not relative to me; it *reveals* itself. But I have access to it proceeding from myself and not through a comparison of myself with the other" (121). If pluralism proceeds from allowing alterity to remain unrepresentable instead of forcing its alterity to submit to comparison and thus reduction, we realize that absolute alterity conditions diversity. Furthermore, to confront the other, as Kerouac does by seeking the marginal in society and characterizing this alterity in relation to himself, we totalize through egoism and thus render our world both shallowly comprehensible and stock. Therefore, Levinas is important for an analysis of these texts in his treatment of alterity and totality as always in conflict, revealing that modern human alienation for Kerouac and Dostoevsky is proportional to one's pervasive ego. He states of "hedonistic moralities," "In enjoyment I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone" (134). While often Dulong wallows in this alienating hedonism, Raskolnikov searches for what lies beyond the blinding ego thus proving that, taken in tandem, these two texts reveal much about alienation and the societies from which it springs. Both theorists and their ideas are evoked in order to buffer our understanding of how the natural functions

alongside human alienation. As this analysis progresses, both theorists will be explained in order to illuminate how alienation and interconnectivity can function in the human psyche.

This thesis unfolds in three sections: the first clarifies terms and brings together various philosophical underpinnings of an ecocentric consciousness by exposing the perversity of domination and its cruel history. This will be accomplished through a discussion of totality and alienation as constituting half-brotherhood. Second, the concept of half-brotherhood with the natural is explored in the two texts by exposing and inverting the separated consciousness. It will be shown through a discussion and comparison of the texts how the sphere of the other allows for objective self-reflection and, hence, shame and responsibility. Third, the Levinasian progression from totality to infinity is traced in the texts through Dostoevsky's conception of 'the corner', and the Levinasian terms 'desire' vs. 'Desire' and the 'teacher-student' relationship as essential elements in moving toward a resolution of the half-brother consciousness. In tandem, the role of the textual environments as having direct influence over the consciousnesses of the characters is explored in order to demonstrate that as one moves toward the infinite, the natural functions as a muse thus bearing agency that demands respect. This agency is revealed by the authors through the redemptive act of confession.

From within these three chapters will emerge a clear sense of how Dostoevsky and Kerouac treat the ever-present issue of alienation in literature. Through this line of investigation it is hoped that we will arrive at a more complete sense of the texts' ethical frameworks as a response to the transitory eras in which each author resided.

Furthermore, in comparing these two textual environments it is hoped that we might come to a greater understanding of the role of the natural in the modern human consciousness.

## ALIENATION, PERVERSITY, AND THE WRONG PATH

“...nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing torments him more”—The Grand Inquisitor (*The Brothers Karamazov* 658)

As mentioned in the previous section, the complex interrelationships between humanity and our environment make an understanding of the processes of separation and destruction difficult to trace. Also, to remedy this destruction involves not only an awareness of the latent destructive tendencies of the human consciousness (such as the unabashed exhaustion of natural resources), as well as attunement to what other options the natural world might provide. This section addresses such questions as: how exactly are totality and alienation linked? By extension, how does this alienation lead to the perverse destruction of the environment? Can humanity devise an ethical framework that might curb this practice? Beginning with a discussion of the relationship between totality and separation, the relationship between separation and alienation and, finally, overcoming alienation through responsibility, these destructive and regenerative processes shall be revealed. An understanding of these processes of separation and reunion are essential groundwork for mapping how motifs of ascension and declension function in each text.

Totality and Separation

To help clarify the meaning of totality and the resultant separation and alienation, Levinas' ethical treatise on this subject is evoked. For the purposes of this thesis the term 'alienation' refers to but expands the Marxist formulation of the word as not simply

applied to a disenchanted workforce removed from its product, but applied to a disenchanted individual and society removed from a communion with the natural world. As such, alienation goes hand in hand with the totalizing systems that found society and irresponsibly lose sight of the well-being of the individual consciousness. Perhaps Levinas is most keen to this intermingling of totalizing structures and the individual consciousness. He charges representation itself as a totalizing force that removes the human from his home stating, “But in order that I be able to free myself from the very possession that the welcome of the Home establishes, in order that I be able to see things in themselves, that is, represent them to myself, refuse both enjoyment and possession, I must know how *to give* what I possess” (170-171). This quote attempts to bridge the gap between alienating totality and the individual at home with itself by heeding a perceivable 'call' to responsibility from the other. In order to view the world objectively, Levinas believes one must *give* in the sense that we gift to the unknowable other “what we possess.” As humans we attempt to possess because the selfish ego wants all. As such, we are, in a sense, possessed by the ego. Therefore, Levinas suggests that the reduction of ego comes with a reduced sense of alienation, and even allows for the other to inspire or teach. There is an acquiescence involved in learning such that we must rearrange our perceptions by being wary of insufficient representations and, most of all, our egocentrism in order to awaken to the responsibility that absolute alterity conditions. This thesis understands such an other to be natural as an animal, plant or combination thereof (i.e. an ecosystem, or even a sunset). But before we delve any deeper into the

omnipresent question of humanity's relationship to the natural, lets us first consider 'totality,' so that we may understand this foundation upon which alienation stands.

Fundamentally, this thesis makes the argument that totality evokes an original separation which precedes such modern forms of separation as worker and product, individual egoism, environmental domination and environmental devastation. John Wild defines totality by stating, "It is this outwardly directed but self-centered totalistic thinking that organizes men and things into power systems, and gives us control over nature and other people" (qtd. in Levinas 17). As Wild notes, totality arises from a simple anthropocentrism—the same anthropocentrism that rendered us certain of the earth as the center of the solar system and universe. That is, human-centered thought develops the world around us into something that reflects ourselves. As such, totality is nothing more than a mirror reflecting only what we perceive to be 'the fairest of them all'—humans. Yet, humans dominate other humans, as Wild notes. Therefore, totality does not simply celebrate humanity, it celebrates separation itself. Separation, as a simple cordoning off or compartmentalizing of difference functions to help humanity make distinctions between things and thus aids our understanding of our surroundings. However, we cannot always maintain these differences in every circumstance. One example of this would be Derrida's conception of the "law of genre" in which samenesses seep between the lines imposed by totality to promote rationalization—or the ordering of things for the purpose of distinction. This seepage undermines totalizing structures in that essences can never be totalized—tragedy and comedy overlap and thus constitute each other. Similarly, humans and nature overlap and buffer one another; on its own

each is therefore incomplete. Thus, totalities, as extensions of the human desire for regimentation and control (rationalization), ultimately fall short of Truth. Through totalizing we *render* an object's alterity and thus subsume Truth under representation. From this perspective we might interpret separation as the separation from Truth—not ascension toward divinity. We thus link totality and alienation through the concept of separation. Therefore, instances of separation and union in the texts should reveal whether a character is being acted upon by the totality or whether they are acting responsibly to move beyond totality—making amends.

Through separation we cast ourselves into ignorance through the denial of interconnectivity. To exemplify a future without 'amends' in which the narrow focus of human vanity creates a reality devoid of otherness, Dostoevsky provides in *Crime and Punishment* an apocalyptic scene in which separation is taken to the extreme. This scene, actually a dream of Raskolnikov, predicts the 'ends' of rational egosim of the late 1860s in Russia. This rational egoism, or the concept that self-interest is rational above all else, may be understood as the opposite of utilitarianism. However, both are founded on rational premises (the greatest good vs. individual survival). This dream occurs following Raskolnikov's conviction for murder. The murder was interestingly utilitarian in that he killed a parasitic pawnbroker that profited from the misery of others so that he could redistribute her hoarded wealth back to the squalid populace. However, he saw this murder as *his right* as a being separated from the normal man. In his dialectic humanity is separated into two groups: Napoleons, a very rare few individuals who are permitted that which is impermissible by sovereign law, and the average human who, due to their

mediocrity, naturally must follow the rules. By envisioning himself as a Napoleon, Raskolnikov grants for himself the ability to be above the law. As such, this is a crime that defends rational egoism through its pursuit of utilitarianism. This dream occurs both after his conviction and directly before his resurrection. This dream therefore reflects the incorrect path he had chosen: that of rational egoism. The dream relates to his premise for murder in that the dream and the murder both reveal that separation lead to destructive ends, even if grounded in utilitarian motives. The analysis of this dream reveals Dostoevsky's admonishment of totality, for he sees in the promotion of individual ego the combined destruction of alterity, and, by extension, pluralism in the Levinasian sense quoted in the introduction. An analysis of this passage reveals Dostoevsky's reticence to adhere to a world in which the individual counts more than the collective. As such, this passage demonstrates how totality as a force penetrates the consciousness of Raskolnikov and causes him to suffer physical and mental harm. The dream occurs as follows:

He had dreamed in his sickness that the whole world was condemned to undergo a horrible, unprecedented and unparalleled plague....Everyone was bound to perish, except for a very few chosen ones. Some kind of trichinae had appeared, microscopic beings which lodged in men's bodies. But these beings were spirits endowed with intelligence and will. The men who had been infected by them immediately became possessed and went mad. But never, never had men considered themselves so wise and implacably right as these infected men. Never had their verdicts, their scientific conclusions or their moral principles been more implacable....Everyone was in a state of alarm and no one understood anyone else. Each one thought that he alone was the sole repository of truth...agriculture also came to an end....Fires broke out and famine began. Everyone and everything was dying. The plague spread and advanced further and further. Out of the whole world only a few people were able to save themselves; these were the pure and chosen, who were destined to found a new race of men, to begin a new life and renew and purify the

earth, but nobody ever saw these people anywhere and nobody ever heard their words or voices. (570-571)

“Intelligence and will” here bear a negative connotation as these traits manifest themselves in the individual as parasites. As such, Dostoevsky suggests that intelligence and will, as marks of separation, lead to conflict between the human and the natural world. Here agriculture symbolizes the connection between the human and the natural world through cultivation, tending, or co-dependence. As “fires” and “famine” suggest, the denial of such a co-dependent relationship between the natural as a provider and the human who respects this sacrifice by such techniques as fallowing and encouraging the perpetual re-growth of crops, can only lead to destruction. These “infected men” therefore represent those who deny interdependence in favor of self-reliance. Yet, as Dostoevsky shrewdly displays, the rational egoist cannot agree or compromise out of an unbending will and thus shows that the will that won’t waver in its self-ratification of truth-knowledge through separation (each individual in this dream *refuses to identify* with another individual) results in a breakdown of *communication*, which renders humans incapable of recognizing alterity (demonstrated in that no one can see those who escape this destructive peril). This breakdown of recognition is countered by those who override their desire to control by sacrificing *themselves* through the labor of “purify[ing] the earth” as a penitent act. Thus, totality in this dream is characterized by a superficial belief in superiority, while the restoration from this “plague” involves taking responsibility for the destructive side of humanity. Dostoevsky thus warns us against the self-righteousness that he sees reflected in totalities.

In order to rectify the destruction caused by this willful self-righteousness,

Dostoevsky advocates personal responsibility. The narrator remarks that this dream stayed with Raskolnikov long after he woke, thus bearing a profound impact on his rational mind. The dream projects a world in which all humans are Raskolnikov's Napoleons. This world is exhaustive in that “everything and everyone was dying.” As such, for Dostoevsky, rationality itself cannot wholly encompass the entity called human, nor can it provide a sense of a mutually hopeful future between humans, or between humans and nature. This apocalyptic dream thus presents the horror of totalizing thought, which harms both the individual and the larger community. For example, in the dream there are those who would be the salvation of humanity; yet they are not seen or heard. Here Dostoevsky suggests *the acquiescence necessary to cure*. It seems that in the face of all-pervasive rational egoism, the only resolution for Dostoevsky involves a sense of self-quietude or reduction of the voice that, as a carrier of human language, subdues otherness through mimesis (signifiers). Hence, through the quelling of the self's desire to compartmentalize otherness one arrives at responsibility—the ability to respond to the other, as opposed to the latent human tendency to render the other intelligible. As such, a keen focus on the self from beyond the reach of the ego, or from an ecocentric perspective, forces responsibility over domination.

Similar to Dostoevsky, Kerouac also warns against the ends of totality through his reaction to imagined apocalypse. Kerouac marks one who rejected individuality as inseparably linked to statically imagined pasts. Always present in Kerouac's writing is a desire to shed the identity imposed on him as a stock character. That character could be described as working-class American football star—a motif that rivals even Irving's

characterization of the stock 'nag' wife. Kerouac writes, "Don't think of me as a simple character...A lecher, a ship-jumper, a loafer, a conner of old women, even of queers, an idiot, nay a drunken baby Indian when drinking....In any case, a wondrous mess of contradictions" (*Desolation Angels* xiii). This amalgamation of identities is for Kerouac directly linked to his sense of escape from the hegemonic forces of postwar society that would like to render him stock and thus easily categorized and controlled. The war was perceived by the beats as proof that totalitarianism results from the rational order of modern society: "Once the order comes, the orders come" remarks Dulouz in regard to fascism and his perception of an impending apocalyptic doom (228). The beat movement confronts totalistic thought through its desire to 'get to know' existence beyond the veil of modern consumer society. Part of this quest involved simultaneous escape and search. Appropriation allowed the beats to escape the identities ascribed to them through religious background, skin color, and social rank. By rejecting consumerism and appropriating from divergent religious philosophies, ethnicities, marginal culture, and to varying degrees even prosperity itself, the beats reveal a desire to write the future anew (as a negation of totality) through both the rejection of static pasts and a keen sensibility of the fluctuation of the universe. Kerouac writes, "It's the beat generation...it's the beat to keep, it's the beat of the heart..." (*Desolation Angels* 137). Here Kerouac suggests that the beat ethos involves the search for and propagation of the 'heartbeat' of existence or, 'the way.' This sense of an original heartbeat of the universe suggests that Kerouac believes in a certain trajectory for existence that is observable in the natural world. As such, the beats dismantle past systems in order to relinquish the future from a trajectory

that they believe disrupts the ‘heartbeat’ through hegemonic totalization. The perception of apocalyptic futures therefore suggests a crisis among Dostoevsky and Kerouac.

Separation, as the essence of totality, thus concerns human identity as always excluding sameness with the other. For the authors then, in a totality, violence, even apocalypse are not only possible, but implicitly condoned.

Spontaneity emerged for the beats as an attempt to confront the rational mind that, through the reduction of variables or identities, would promote a well-ordered but completely narrow and inaccurate future. Spontaneity thus emerges as a means to represent the future in reaction to the perceived crisis of futurity that the totalizing meta-narratives of modernism ultimately evoked. In so doing, authors like Kerouac were able to mitigate such staggering possible futures as nuclear annihilation. In *Dharma Bums* (which is in many ways a precursor to *Desolation Angels*), the protagonist states, “I was all outfitted for the Apocalypse indeed, no joke about that; if an atom bomb should have hit San Francisco that night all I’d have to do is hike on out of there, if possible, and with my dried foods all packed tight and my bedroom and kitchen on my head, no trouble in the world” (107). By rejecting the trajectory of paranoid postwar America through spontaneous wandering, Kerouac presents a possible future that he calls the “rucksack revolution.” By donning one’s meager yet essential possessions in a small pack that allows one unlimited mobility without the need for fossil fuels, maintenance, payments, lending, and all that comes with a consumer society, Americans would be released from the control of the stasis symbolized by organized society. By choosing to “hike on out of there” Americans undermine their own system and simultaneously subvert the hegemonic

power structure while allowing a myriad of personal possible futures to flourish: hence, there would be no more concern for the atom bomb. Kerouac thus has a keen sense of how fragmentation and multiplicity (in terms of identity and spontaneous action) function to develop collective futures beyond the control of any individual. Thus, he, like Dostoevsky, rallies against the perceived trajectory of totality through trepidation toward the distant future.

### Separation Yields Alienation

Since both writers imagine apocalypse, the natural world seems tethered with the force of human totality in their visions of the possible future. Thus, totalities are correlated with the destruction of the natural environment. The relationship between the human and the natural in a totality is therefore a one-way street in which the reflective mirror disrupts our ability to accept a reciprocal relationship with nature. We might call this problem of recognition by way of anthropomorphism—which refers to our desire to proliferate the human sphere outward (exemplified by urban sprawl, for one)—half-brotherhood.

The half-brother is a term employed to wed alienation, which results from the totalistic celebration of separation, to a lack. Specifically, in *Crime and Punishment* and *Desolation Angels* this lack results from a desire to separate humanity from the natural. The city of St. Petersburg, for Dostoevsky, lacks any true sense of natural freshness, or environment untainted by human degradation. Adele Lindenmeyer writes of 1860s St. Petersburg: “The consequences for the population were manifest: disease,

unemployment, crime, prostitution, and drunkenness were widely discussed in the contemporary press of the capital” (100). Likewise, Lardas remarks of Kerouac's postwar America: “Burroughs believed that all was not well with America's 'hygienic facade,' for institutional strictures had become internalized. He wrote of his fellow Americans as having a 'special horror of giving up control, of letting things happen in their own way without interference’” (26). The term half-brother simply refers to a specific case of alienation that, once addressed by the human consciousness, allows for a remedy of the issues brought up in each quote above. That is, to understand the half-brother is to understand alienation as resulting from an alienation from the natural world—from creation, which thereby denotes a link between the natural and the divine. Since alienation has become an overarching concept, the term half-brotherhood specifically focuses on humanity’s relationship to our environment, not simply a sense of isolation, but an isolation resulting from our willed disavowal of co-dependence.

If we perceive ourselves as only half-related to the natural world, we are one step closer to purging ourselves of this condition as opposed to recognizing a full brotherhood, which denotes mutual dependence. Hence, the human population spike in 1860s St. Petersburg marks uniformity in that the natural (in terms of space which allows for fresh air, flowing water which allows for sanitation and refreshment etc.) is rendered powerless to promote a sense of wellness. As such, we see that the overpopulation of humanity in St. Petersburg has a direct result on human mental and physical health. If this is so for Dostoevsky, then this very lack of co-existence with the natural is to blame for the depravity of its inhabitants. In the case of Kerouac, by extension, the “hygienic facade”

refers to the penchant of Americans to present themselves as in control of their destiny. By appearing 'cleanlier than thou' (thou being the natural, or beast) Americans demonstrate their belief that to be separate from nature is to be closer to God. The problem is that in controlling one's destiny, one denies or violates the destinies of others within their sphere. Since we are not alone in the world as we co-exist with the natural, this denotes a relationship akin to that of siblings, who must learn to share. As such, the unwillingness of Americans to "let things happen in their own way" suggests a fear of the other that further entrenches a consciousness *on its own*. If this is so, then we see that the alienation marked by the half-brother condition both implies totality (as is evidenced by Lardas), and denies positive environmental agency (as is evidenced by Lindenmeyer's 1860s St. Petersburg). This positive agency demands respect for nature as a force that makes the "heartbeat" of the universe—or the correct trajectory of biodiversity—perceivable. The term environmental agency shall be explained in detail momentarily. I shall first attempt to briefly trace the history and implications of alienation as half-brotherhood to the natural.

Human alienation may be in part due to our fall from nature. That is, the more humanity dominates the natural, the more will we feel alone. Thus, the fall represents the firmament on which the foundation of totality is built. Levinas writes, "The peace of empires issued from war rests on war. It does not restore the alienated beings their lost identity. For that a primordial and original relation with being is needed" (22). The idea of 'fall' is important to our understanding of the texts because it refers to a shared concern for the traditional role of positioning oneself in an alienating environment on the

part of Raskolnikov and Dulouz. Whereas Raskolnikov initially envisions a world in which humanity is separated into two firm groups—Napoleons and those meant to be led—, Dulouz initially attempts a life on top of ‘Desolation Peak.’ Both of these scenarios reveal that the respective characters wish to *elevate* (ascension) or distance themselves either physically or psychologically from their fellow humans. As such, they attempt to ascend or transcend the mundane world by way of willed separation. This desire for separation is perhaps what enforces the character's initial sense of loneliness. As is demonstrated in both texts, neither character succeeds in resolving their sense of alienation through hierarchical separation. As David Harvey notes in *The Condition of Postmodernity*:

What many now look upon as the first surge of modernist thinking, took the domination of nature as a necessary condition of human emancipation. Since space is a ‘fact’ of nature, this meant that the conquest and rational ordering of space became an integral part of the modernizing project. The difference this time was that space and time had to be organized not to reflect the glory of God, but to celebrate and facilitate the liberation of ‘Man’ as a free and active individual, endowed with consciousness and will. (249)

If Harvey claims that the ordering of space to reflect and celebrate the rational nature of humanity actually separates the human from both the natural (by way of domination) *and* the divine by way of human vanity, then perhaps alienation is the result. As we see in the cases of Raskolnikov and Dulouz, this celebration of separateness may implicitly promote that humanity itself should separate hierarchically. Raskolnikov and Dulouz thus represent—at the outset of the texts—an extension of the desire to separate from the natural into the realm of the human. This division, in which humans themselves become superior to other humans as is contested in areas such as post-colonial theory or

feminism, requires a turning back to the mythological concept of the fall in order to connect the implications of alienation and separation in the modern world. As both Dostoevsky and Kerouac's texts show, willed separation ultimately leads to alienation and, thus, despair for the protagonists.

In returning to the fall, we return to the point where humanity lost its sense of home. In Judeo-Christian mythology this home is represented by Eden. Eden, of course, was a realm of plenty, or diversity. In contrast to the modern world in which resources seem to be increasingly scarce, Eden evokes a sense of failure on the part of humanity. It is easily argued that the reconciliation of this failure involves reconciliation with the natural. If separation does little to provide a sense of home, then perhaps acknowledgment of the natural will help us to understand the value of the other in terms of proximity. Genealogically, we are related to the 'natural' other. As such, to approach nature from the perspective of brotherhood might help humanity to overcome alienation by reading ourselves back into the natural space. That is, we begin to abandon the sort of rationalizing of space that promotes separation, and re-order space to co-exist harmoniously with the natural. We have a practical example of this idea in architecture—this implies an extension of the term 'green-building' to beget that we not only incorporate the natural into our structures, but that we incorporate our structures, with minimal interference, into the natural, so that we no longer 'sprawl' but co-exist in relative harmony in the natural world thus eradicating the margin between the rational human and the bestial natural realm. The term 'half-brother' then refers to the state of humanity as caught between a consciousness that acknowledges the natural as a brother

(genealogically an *older* brother), and humanity as a separate being—one who strikes out on his/her own, leading only to alienation. Hence, the natural as an older brother bears worth beyond mere domination: as a guide. As one learns from an older brother, so too does the natural, provided with an attentive listener, teach us how to be at home in the world. This is what is meant by the term 'environmental agency.' As will be shown in *Crime and Punishment*, Porfiry Porfovich represents such a guide for Raskolnikov. In the case of Dulouz, however, his lack of a mentor in *Desolation Angels*, and rejection of father figures in general, disrupts his ability to be taught.

#### The Half-Brother and Ecocentrism Yields Responsibility

In every tale a protagonist must learn a lesson. The reader must then interpret this lesson and apply it to their journey. However, there is something that lingers in the depths of the human consciousness that seems to revel in regression, not growth. As alluded to in the previous paragraph, the American Dulouz seems to teeter between regression and growth, while Raskolnikov, by far the more guilty character (due to being convicted of murder), overcomes the perversity of regression by accepting his guilt and reconciling with creation.

If we understand the human to be in brotherhood with the natural, then it is obvious that humanity's degradation of the natural reveals a perversity. We delight in self-mutilation. For example, we pollute our planet, which is only to pollute ourselves. By exploitation we destroy diversity and aesthetic quality that should fuel our sense of wellness. This self-mutilation brings forth a void. As half-brothers we tremble in this

emptiness but nonetheless call it forth, screaming into the void in a vain effort to hurt creation, to make it feel the pain we feel daily as beings on the margins between what we perceive to be nature and God: both of them mocking us in our failure to be wholly one or the other. In this sense human language contains a hysterical element: a call for the other who will not come because *we* perversely prevent its coming by way of our own desire to celebrate separation—we therefore experience the other only as a lack—as negativity, and thus torture/delight ourselves by increasing that lack as scratching at a sore.

This concept of perversity or regression is clarified by Dulouz, whose initial separation conflicts with the autonomy of the natural world. While in willed isolation (separation) atop Desolation Peak, Dulouz stands before Mt. Hozomeen thinking, “Hozomeen is the Void—at least Hozomeen means the void to my eyes’—stark naked rock...” (3). This tendency to characterize the natural other as an alienating force reveals that Dulouz does not acknowledge the other's right to autonomy. Totalizing the natural (Hozomeen) as “Void” thus perpetuates the soreness of alienation by demonstrating humanity’s innate fear of alterity; he does not view the mountain objectively, but, rather, perversely reinforces his inner sense of half-brotherhood by projecting the void unto the mountain.

In order to react against this innate totalizing and regressive process, Dulouz and Raskolnikov find hope in fluctuation. Consider Foucault's words which concern the postmodern denial of meta-narrative and totality that urge “flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but

nomadic” (qtd. in Harvey 44). Both Raskolnikov and Kerouac are nomads, able to exist *in transit*. This vacillation marks an ethic of “flows over unities” by highlighting the value of not being pinned down by the subjectivity of others. Hence, in order to confront the anthropomorphic subjectivity of humanity, perhaps one must remain in suspension, so as to not fall into the very trap of categorization and by extension uniformity and ultimately: exhaustion. That is, if we ignore the natural as a muse, we will invariably render our very landscape and environment uniform, full of human faces. In such a world identity cannot survive as the face to face encounter no longer carries any dissonance by which to define otherness. In such a world we are like fish in a tank trying to attack our double unaware that it is only our reflection. As the sage-like Porfiriy Petrovich of *Crime and Punishment* states, “Nature's a mirror, a mirror, yes, absolutely transparent” (355). Hence, by turning to face the natural world, we see ourselves. Thus, Dulongz should not have feared the alterity of nature, but rather his own inability to regard nature objectively. To focus on the natural world in textual environments is therefore a way to look at ourselves more objectively by catching a glimpse through the enlightening eyes of the natural br-other. As such, our treatment of the natural reveals only shame, and from that shame comes the call to responsibility. As Levinas writes, “Freedom then is inhibited, not as countered by a resistance, but as arbitrary, guilty and timid; but in its guilt it rises to responsibility...It is not limitation by the other that constitutes contingency, but egoism, as unjustified of itself” (203). Thus, if celebration of separation marks a certain freedom—the freedom that condones and celebrates domination—that freedom, when undermined by the inclusion of the other’s right to existence

(ecocentrism) reveals only shame, a shame that becomes responsibility through the acknowledgment of and resistance to the subjective ego.

A brief analysis of authorship in each text reveals both how this subjectivity reinforces alienation, and how the reduction of ego (always desiring control) engenders responsibility. While Kerouac maintains a strict level of authorial control by placing himself directly into the text as Jack Dulouz, Dostoevsky removes himself from his texts by allowing Raskolnikov to develop through carnivalesque interactions with diverse characters who engage in the process of coming to be at home with themselves through constant and interactive discourse. That is Dostoevsky “develop[s] action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction” to reiterate Foucault. Consider what Bakhtin has to say concerning the freedom that Dostoevsky the author allows his characters: “...he transferred the author and the narrator, with all their accumulated points of view and with the descriptions, characterizations, and definitions of the hero provided by them, into the field of vision of the hero himself, thus transforming the finalized and integral reality of the hero into the material of the hero's self-consciousness” (49). As such, the author allows the hero to exist of his own accord, to allow textual interactions to shape his being as opposed to forcing the finalized hero to shape the world around him. Hence, Dostoevsky's characters may only develop mutually through co-existence. By contrast, Kerouac as Dulouz remains steadfast in his subjectivity: other characters bounce off of his well-guarded and impenetrable self. He writes, “Nothing can be more dreary than 'coolness' ...postured, actually secretly *rigid* coolness that covers up the fact that the character is unable to convey anything of force or interest....All this was about to sprout

out all over America even down to the high school level and be attributed in part to my doing!” (359). This categorizing of America's youth as directly affected by his own sense of coolness reveals his inability to respect otherness. It also demonstrates that American society is following suit. Therefore, we might conclude that Dostoevsky's time and space allow for receptivity for otherness that postwar America simply did not.

Textual Environments as Setting for Ecocentric Inversions:  
Slum Naturalism and Natural Slumism

The last section set up the history and (dis)function of alienation in the modern consciousness by way of the fall, separation, perversity and resultant totality. Also discussed was a brief explanation of how totality and half-brotherhood require both a willed reduction of the ego and respect for otherness (as ecocentrism) in order to lead one to responsible living with mutual flourishing between the self and the other. But how exactly is this totality arranged in our respective novels, and how do the protagonists develop ecocentric awareness? This section argues that *slum naturalism* and *natural slumism* are two concepts that help differentiate between two textual environments with varying degrees of totality, which clarifies why Dulouz has a more difficult time overcoming the half-brother condition than Raskolnikov. Also, it is argued that of these two concepts slum naturalism, as carnivalistic, functions more readily to breakdown hierarchies and thus allows for inversion and the rise of ecocentrism.

In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* we have an extremely vivid St. Petersburg in which negative environmental agency is omnipresent. Petersburg has no air; everything is in tatters; swarms of people crowd the street; dust and heat dizzy even

the reader throughout the tale. The novel opens, “It was horribly sweltering in the street and the stifling air, the crowds of pushing people, the lime everywhere, the scaffolding, the bricks, the dust, and that special summer stench so familiar to any St. Petersburg who can't afford a cottage in the country—all this together administered an unpleasant shock to the young man's already jangled nerves” (4). Thus, the agency here is negative in that the environment has harmful effects on its inhabitants. Notice how already Dostoevsky points toward refreshment in the natural realm just beyond the city borders. The lack of a varied and healthy physical environment is a direct link to a sick and destitute city, which in turn cues and prolongs the sick mind of Raskolnikov. Although we have a negative physical environment, the social atmosphere is one of variance. St. Petersburg is a city rife with Tugenevian progressive thought. This is a veritable “coming out of the shell” for St. Petersburg in that globalization and modern socio-political thought are permeating the once xenophobic Russia marked by the *narod* (poor tillers of the earth) and the centralized landowners who include the *narod* within their holdings (referred to as *souls*). We see from this Mephistophelian arrangement a latent historico-cultural distrust of the wealthy on the part of the poor. The buisnessman Luzhin remarks to Raskolnikov (the brother of the impoverished Dunya), Dunya and the student Rasumikhin, “I like to meet young people: you find out what's new from them....You see, it's ten years now since I've been in St. Petersburg. All these latest things, these reforms and ideas, all this has touched us in the provinces as well” (155). Within St. Petersburg then is a modern climate in which businessmen and destitute are face to face. Raskolnikov bears an uncanny ability to tread in either sphere.

In contrast to Kerouac's naive acceptance and romanticization of this alienating modern condition, Dostoevsky is extremely wary of this sway towards capitalistic 'progress.' Raskolnikov, as a carrier of Dostoevsky's reticence, is able to cultivate ideas from within this nevertheless barren city in that he exists as a link—a mid-wife as Socrates would say—between the rooted (natural as is marked by the *narod*) and the progressive as is marked by the diffusive cityscape of a now permeable Russia. This ability to engage with the entirety of St. Petersburg life is aided by a dreamlike carnivalistic atmosphere of inversions mirrors and doubles that allow for a Bakhtinian discourse between the two echelons of society. We have mirrored in the poor student Raskolnikov the wealthy landowner by inheritance Svidrigailov. We have the whore Sonya and the fair Dunya. We have the burgeoning remnant of the upper echelon lawyer Luzhin and his counterpart the radical communist Semyonovich. Bakhtin remarks of the carnival:

*Eccentricity* is a special category of the carnival sense of the world, organically connected with the category of familiar human contact; it permits—in concretely sensuous form—the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves...All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid (123).

These eccentric or spontaneous combinations mark a simple erasure of the mask humanity wears for escalation as a separate being or half-brother to reveal the “latent” true nature (full sibling) of the human being. This carnival framework allows for an objective view of reality as opposed to the reality presented in the mask. Hence, these

'decrownings' allow for what Bakhtin calls *slum naturalism* which is defined thusly, “The adventures of truth on earth take place on the high road, in brothels, in the dens of thieves, in taverns, marketplaces, prisons...The idea here fears no slum...The man of the idea—the wise man—collides with worldly evil, depravity, baseness, and vulgarity in their most extreme expression” (115). This term encompasses a link between the two texts; both characters, by way of their ability to transcend echelons through their plural nature—Kerouac as part American, part French Canadian, part Ivy League American football hero, part slacker drop out criminal; Raskolnikov as part published author, brilliant student, and part ex-student debtor—have an aptitude for sway: for vacillation between the center and the margins wherever they are drawn.

The slum naturalism of Bakhtin can be inverted as *natural slumism*, which refers to the state of humanity in an environmentally devastated world. This is a paradoxical label which reveals that our impact on the natural, being so pervasive, renders the natural so irremovable from the human sphere that we can no longer speak of positive environmental agency. John Muir has stated, “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountain is going home; that wilderness is necessity; that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life” (Muir 731). That is, in natural slumism, the ideas of Muir, of setting natural lands aside for the possibility of human retreat and refreshment, will no longer hold.

Oddly then, slum naturalism marks a positive environmental agency born of the decrowned human face to face, whereas natural slumism marks a negative environmental

agency born of a contaminated muse. Both are a matter of lifting symbolic veils. Slum naturalism lifts the veil that represents the hymen: the virginity or innocence of humans in a world we did not chose to inhabit. Natural slumism lifts the veil of self-imposed ignorance, of manifest destiny and of white-man's burden. So removed, we find in our protagonists wanderings a search for truth. As will be shown, Dulouz ultimately marks a natural slumist, and Raskolnikov a slum naturalist.

As carnival demonstrates: there is much to learn where the margins of society are called to the center. Thus, in *Crime and Punishment* we have the acute lens of Dostoevsky focused on that early capitalist margin. And yet, throughout his work is felt an extreme wariness towards such a system. As Bakhtin notes:

Capitalism created the conditions for a special type of inescapably solitary consciousness. Dostoevsky exposes all the falsity of this consciousness, as it moves in its vicious circle. Hence the depiction of the sufferings, humiliations, and *lack of recognition* of man in class society....He has been driven into forced solitude, which the unsubmitive strive to transform into *proud solitude* (to do without recognition, without others).  
(288)

Here Bakhtin notes how capitalism, through its focus on individual accumulation (wealth, property) leads one away from the acknowledgement of alterity: “without others.” The vicious circle of capitalism then might refer to the perversity in which our desire for the arrival of the absolute other (deity) is obscured by our desire to separate and promote self-sufficiency. Dostoevsky finds this self-sufficiency erroneous. The “pride” that results from willed solitude makes “recognition” impossible because in a capitalist society resources are not to be shared (as with siblings or full-brotherhood), but competed for. This desire to separate through accumulation thus engenders a never-ending cycle of

consumption, of filling and refilling. Dulouz' constant desire for alcohol, drugs and American cheeseburgers exemplifies this connection between capitalism and hedonism, regard and disregard. In contrast to Dulouz, Raskolnikov is a youth prepared to reject appetite. As will be shown, he steps-beyond the ever-empty vessel (void) and overflows it. He is therefore satiated and searches for a more metaphysical desire to know true otherness which is unrenderable. His bouts with amorality are never irresponsible (denying alterity): as much as he may deceive himself, he never succeeds in dwelling wholly in the chaotic void. He gives himself up to the other, and in doing so conducts (as a transceiver) a dialog across the void. This is where we find the correlation of the texts; Raskolnikov's ability to act as a transceiver comes about from the very environment in which he dwells. This environment is carnivalistic, not capitalistic in the strict sense, which marks it as ripe for exchange, not competition. By contrast, textually, Dulouz is not forced to confront the margins as is Raskolnikov. Rather, he must seek them out. In so doing, he is not in a position to question himself through forced interaction, but rather is able to view the carnival not as a place of interaction or decrowning, but more akin to a 'freak show,' where one may safely view alterity without self-identification ("recognition") and the resultant questioning and shame. Thus, Kerouac existed in a capitalistic totality that more rigidly upheld hierarchies, making inversion and ecocentrism harder to incubate than in Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg.

HOW ALIENATION FUNCTIONS IN THE NOVELS:  
HIERARCHICAL INVERSION AS THE CORRECT PATH

“...we are two *beings*, and have come together *in infinity*...for the *last time in the world*. Drop your tone, and speak like a *human being*! Speak, if only for once in your life, with the voice of a man” (*The Possessed* 267).

The texts offered for analysis here are treated as cultural artifacts that contain on the one hand, a failure based on a social system that denies the other (natural slumism); and on the other hand a text of responsibility and acquiescence that reveals a society who values poverty over exploitation (slum naturalism). In so doing we not only gain a unique perspective about each time and space and the alienation that lies therein, but through this analysis are shown the ways in which each protagonist guards or confronts this alienation, possibly even overcoming it. By studying this process of possible reunion with creation, or the failure to resolve alienation, we might then question where we are now in terms of the criteria of alienation and home. This section argues that physical environments do indeed have adverse effects on the protagonist’s sense of alienation, and even provide clues for how they might begin to overcome it. In order to do so this chapter reveals the state of half-brotherhood in each text to prove that alienation and the natural world are found to correlate. This shows that alienation is not particular to any time and place, and that the resolution of alienation (as demonstrated by an analysis of ascension and declension in each text) can be achieved through environmental appellation, which may function universally for humanity. However, perhaps more importantly argued is that each character’s *reaction* (in terms of acknowledgment or

confrontation, resolution, acceptance or ambivalence) to half-brotherhood is different, and as such must be related to the social environment in which each character resides. Thus, this chapter also functions as a critique of the human's ability to maintain control of their consciousness amidst varying degrees of hegemony, value systems, and social stratification.

### The Half-Brother in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

One must note that in Dostoevsky's text Raskolnikov is more often than not acted upon by the external environment as opposed to subjectively 'shaping' the external environment through egocentric radiation. That is, as odd as it may seem, there are very few instances of Raskolnikov acting of his own accord, with full resolve; even during the murder he seems to be observing himself from above as in a dream. "This last day, coming so unexpectedly and deciding everything at once had had an almost completely automatic effect on him: as if someone had taken him by the hand and dragged him along behind them—irresistibly, blindly, with unnatural force..." (74). As he begins the journey toward the pawnbroker's house here, he seems to be led by some external agent. This lack of resolve and self-control suggest that Raskolnikov's desire for objectivity (as a rational crime—'the lesser of two evils') requires him to be swayed by outside forces. By making such rational judgments, Raskolnikov recognizes that one must have an objective eye for *worth* in terms of valuing the other. The reduction of observer bias through objective logic reveals a contradiction: by weighing the pros and cons objectively so as to arrive at a fair assessment of the proper course of action, one both respects and denies

alterity. If subjectivity and objectivity are so linked, then they are proportional to each other. Thus, Raskolnikov is both led and leads himself toward the fruition of his plan. Also, Raskolnikov is acted upon from within by vacillating voices in his head “...for a moment he came to his senses. 'What rubbish!' he thought. 'No it's better not to think at all'” (77)! Here he suddenly decides that rationalizing murder is preposterous, and thus warns himself not to trust his mind in such a rational state. Hence, in order to mistrust one's logic, one must have a counter-intuition based in some store of moral or ethical conduct. This is the state of St. Petersburg within Russia in the 1860s: the conflict of whether such 'new ideas' (rational egoism) are part and parcel with development, diffusion, and participation in the modernizing world. As destitution was rampant in the city, certainly anything 'new' would come with great interest. Thus, Raskolnikov is primarily concerned with the benefit of humanity, but due to being lodged between the 'old' (Christian morality, country estates) and the 'new' (diffusive cityscapes, innovation, modernization) he is both wary of and excited about the possibility that these 'new ideas' might provide him a platform to becoming a super-man: a Napoleon. His reluctance therefore stems from the fear that there may be *no turning back*: the entrance into one world might rely on the destruction of the other. The constant contradictory behavior marked in the text thus results from an inner struggle, from almost schizophrenic voices. This marks a unique sort of exterior interiority, in which the St. Petersburg environment with all its sickness, poverty and the tension of clashing ideas about the future of Russia and its people are directly manifested in and control Raskolnikov's psyche.

These states of inner strife in which his mind struggles with itself, leaving the physical Raskolnikov as a sort of nocturnal perambulator marks him as moving beyond the separated or singular being. As the novel opens, the physical Raskolnikov has no appetite and thereby no desire for satiety. Rather, the workings of his mind reveal an already present absolute desire (desire for the unrenderable other) from the onset of the novel. Levinas describes this Desire as, “Desire does not coincide with an unsatisfied need; it is situated beyond satisfaction and nonsatisfaction. The relationship with the Other, or the idea of Infinity, accomplishes it” (179). Thus, Desire refers to a desire beyond the scope of physical tangibility: a desire for the resolution of alienation.

Nevertheless, before Raskolnikov can approach discourse with the other, or across the void, he must first reconcile himself of the half-brother state. As Levinas writes, “Life is a body...a crossroads of physical forces....In its deep-seated fear life attests this ever possible inversion of the body-master into the body slave, of health into sickness. *To be a body* is on the one hand *to stand*..., to be master of one’s self, and on the other hand, to stand on the earth, to be in the *other*, and thus to be encumbered by one’s body” (164). This statement mirrors the physical state of Raskolnikov that often vacillates between Raskolnikov as a “master” where he is subjectively determined, and Raskolnikov as an object, or utensil in the hands of the cosmological other. This inconsistency of being is therefore a condition of half-brotherhood in which the ‘I’ is tormented by the interchange between self-sufficiency and dependence on the natural for inspiration. As Bakhtin notes, “One could say, in fact, that out of every contradiction within a single person Dostoevsky tries to create two persons, in order to dramatize the contradiction and

develop it extensively” (28). This duel structure stems from the carnival atmosphere in which mirrors and inversions allow characters to congeal through the interexchange of ideas between characters. This polyphonic discourse, like the colliding of particles, allows Dostoevsky to remain in suspension over his novel. That is, the mutual characterization that results from textual interaction itself removes the author from the overt puppetmastery of totality and reveals an underlying ethic of interconnectivity for the novel. Therefore, the combination of forces, which are beyond the control of Raskolnikov, reveal that the state of half-brotherhood opens him up to control by outside agency. Although this control causes Raskolnikov to suffer, ultimately it engenders the purging of self that Levinas requires for trading physical desire for metaphysical desire: the resolution of alienation.

The vacillations marked by Raskolnikov in the half-brother state send the physical Raskolnikov as if by rote or unconscious will from one side of St. Petersburg to the other. Nearly all major events occur in the half-light between night and day (murder, confession). As such, time as a function of the novel bears environmental agency (marked by sunsets), and reveals the unsettled composition of Raskolnikov (i.e. a half-brother) as dusk can be considered neither light nor dark, but a mixture, or suspension of both. It becomes evident then, by way of Raskolnikov as a ship without a compass, that he represents more than can be attributed to a single monolithic character. If the intangible mind of Raskolnikov is given preference over a physical body, we have an inverted characterization where it is not the acts but the ideas of a hero that define him. Bakhtin writes, “The idea *lives* not in one person's *isolated* individual consciousness—if

it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of *others*” (88). Hence, the very structure of the novel itself allows for a fraternity of colliding ideas. The structure of characterization submits the hero to receptivity by way of the polyphonic sounding of voice/ideas within himself—that actually construct that self. As an idea then, Raskolnikov is more open to change in that his self is never set in stone, but always a matter of fluctuation or suspension. This aloofness of being allows him to confront his half-brother state by way of vacillation. If one never settles, but remains in suspension, the sediment of alienation that weighs down the half-brother cannot collect. One must accomplish this through both movement, and declension. The following section makes clear how inversion and declension, achieved through environmental cues, realign Raskolnikov with a relationship with the natural world. An analysis of this process clarifies how the natural world may function as a guide to the resolution of alienation or half-brotherhood, which is the focus of the final chapter of this thesis.

#### Bridges as Thresholds/Ascension and Declension

In *Crime and Punishment* bridges, as thresholds, exemplify the textual sway between totalized rationality and natural refreshment. Thus, bridges reveal Raskolnikov’s vacillation as tied to half-brotherhood—or the state of human tension between the natural home and the rationalized artifice. Also, this analysis demonstrates how natural refreshment serves to release a character from mental and physical suffering

within a destitute cityscape. Bakhtin remarks: “The threshold, the foyer, the corridor, the landing, the stairway, the steps, doors opening onto the stairway, gates to the front and back yards, and beyond these, the city: squares, streets, facades, taverns, dens, bridges, gutters. This is the space of the novel. And in fact absolutely nothing here ever loses touch with the threshold” (170). Aside from revealing the tension of half-brotherhood, Dostoevsky arranges space to hint at themes of plural identity and the need for multiplicity in the modern world. Thresholds and corners, the former as a site of interaction and exchange/discourse and the latter as a node of branching and convergence where the interconnectivity of agents or forces is symbolized, show us the degree to which Dostoevsky recognizes the otherness and pluralism within all of us. Bakhtin writes: “for in eternity, according to Dostoevsky, all is simultaneous, everything coexists” (29).

Partially, the existence of thresholds and nexus’ (corners) confront the external St. Petersburg as a totalistic imposition on one's characterization. Raskolnikov quits his lessons because of this realization: the idea that to act within the system is to stymie one's transcendence. Although St. Petersburg symbolizes the negative agency resulting from a lack of a natural muse, there are pockets in the novel when, while on thresholds, positive agency comes to lift the fog of Raskolnikov's troubled mind. Consider the following passage:

His nervous trembling changed to a kind of feverish one; he even felt shivery; in the sweltering heat he felt cold. With an apparent effort he began almost subconsciously, as if satisfying an inner need, to look closely at all the objects in his path, as if desperately trying to distract himself, but he had little success and kept constantly slipping back into reverie...he immediately forgot what he had just been thinking about and

even where he was. Thus he walked across the whole of Vasilievsky Island, came out on the Malaya Neva, crossed the bridge and turned towards the islands. The greenery and the freshness gladdened his tired eyes at first, accustomed as they were to city dust and lime and huge, crowded, overpowering buildings. Here there was neither stifling air, nor stench, nor bars....His legs suddenly grew heavy and he began to feel a strong urge to sleep....he stopped in complete exhaustion, left the road, went in among some bushes, fell down on the grass and instantly fell asleep. (56-7)

Here, the negative environmental agency is apparent and almost post global-warming in essence as “overcrowding” and “dust” suggest a world in which the natural other in terms of freshness and alterity is absent; “overcrowding” refers to a world of human faces in which recognition is impossible through lack of dissonance (this is paralleled in Raskolnikov’s apocalyptic dream in which brotherhood was foregone in exchange for competition, thus revealing Dostoevsky’s wariness of a capitalistic trajectory that leads to environmental destruction). As this correlation between the perceived ends of capitalism for Dostoevsky has been made, let us focus on the positive agency that results from crossing the bridge.

Here again we are faced with the plight of the half-brother. In this excerpt, Raskolnikov steps away from the totality—from the separated sphere of humanity that builds towers toward the perceived realm of God “huge, crowded, overpowering buildings.” The large human structures here hearken back to the upright posture that many believe to be a key trait of mankind. Hence, ascension resembles humanity's desire to reconcile alienation by appealing to an absent creator. We are upright (two legs instead of four) in God's image as biblical texts explain. Therefore, in stepping over the bridge Raskolnikov enters the realm of nature, which resides at the other end of the half-

brother psyche. This step over the threshold clears Raskolnikov's head. For a short time the positive agency marked by “greenery and freshness” pulls the disincorporated Raskolnikov back into his physical self. If the negative St. Petersburg cues Raskolnikov's mental vacillation by way of physical illness, the fresh atmosphere clears up his illness and allows his mind, for a time, to quell. During this time Raskolnikov is resolved to the primordial half of humanity. “He was particularly interested in the flowers; he looked at them longest of all” (56). This passage reveals that the disinterested wanderings that cloud his vision and cause him to stagger aimlessly while his mental strife battles on are dispelled by way of an appellation from the natural. The muse is present in this freshness, and suddenly Raskolnikov is recalled back to himself as is evidenced by the bodily sensations that come rushing to him. “His legs suddenly grew heavy, and he began to feel a strong urge to sleep” (56). Hence, he returns to the sphere of the beast, and heads off to satisfy, as if instinctually, his physical needs. “He started out for home; but having got as far as Petrovsky Island, he stopped in complete exhaustion, left the road...” (56-7). One should note here how it was preferable to sleep in the bushes in a positive environment rather than to sleep in a bed in a negative one. Also, it should be noted that here his vertical form descends to become horizontal, denoting his transition from one end of the half-brother's avenue to the other: a declension into the natural realm. From here Raskolnikov heeds an appellation from the other.

As he falls asleep, Raskolnikov has a telling dream that begins in a fittingly negative environment: “The little town stands exposed, as on the palm of one's hand, not

a shrub in sight....A road runs past the tavern, a country road that is always dusty, and the dust is always very black” (57). Raskolnikov is a child in the dream, and he begins to recall amidst this post-apocalypticly barren setting, a drunken peasant who despite his poverty begins to cruelly torture, humiliate and kill his old horse. Humiliate here is a problematic word not because animals are incapable of feeling humiliation, but because of the root *hum* which denotes a human trait. From this perspective, we have an interesting inversion in which the peasant's actions actually render him beastly while simultaneously elevating the nag to the state of a noble martyr. The peasant shouts, “I'll make 'er gallop, she'll gallop....I'll flog her to death!’ And he flogs away til he no longer knows what to hit her with in his frenzy.... ‘Don'tcha have no conscience, ya heathen?!’ shouts one man from the crowd..... ‘She's my property! I'll do what I want.... Whip 'er nose, get the eyes, you guys, the eyes!’” (59-60). This excerpt reveals that the peasant justifies his ill treatment of the animal by way of ownership. However, an onlooker reveals that one must first be human in order to extend rights of ownership over the animal other by pointing out the peasant's lack of conscience. To be without conscience for Dostoevsky at this point is to be without soul. This would of course delineate no more than a standard threshold between the human and the animal. Notice, however, that the peasant must whip the horse on the eyes. One may argue that this is not simply out of desire to hurt the mare as cruelly as possible; this blinding of the horse marks an attempt on the part of the peasant to rid himself of the shame that he feels by the horse's gaze and tears. Consider a similar experience that Derrida recounts of an encounter with his cat while showering, “It is as if I were ashamed, therefore, naked in front of this cat, but also

ashamed for being ashamed. A reflected shame, the mirror of a shame ashamed of itself...(4). From this confrontation with the animal, as a manifestation of the natural, comes the call to responsibility. We can see in the look of the (natural) other a calling into question of ourselves by way of our nakedness before it, in which our shame is not simply that we have fallen but that we choose to believe we have fallen. Hence, our shame is reflected back to us from the cat eye as enlightenment: a call to responsibility. Therefore, what conscience the peasant has is only evoked by way of the animal gaze. The shame that the peasant feels reveals an ethic upon which conscience is founded. That is: there can be no humanity as we understand it in its most lofty essence without prior presence of and acquiescence to the gaze of the animal other. This is how declension functions to invert the traditional human tendency to separation through ascension: just as one may feel shame before the creator, so too may creation, as the natural world, evoke the shame necessary for responsibility and reconciliation.

Raskolnikov, in witness of this remarkable event, undergoes a transformation that reveals his first cue toward overcoming the state of the half-brother. As the horse begins to fade under the weight of death, Raskolnikov's compassion cues a transformation: "He is running beside the little horse....He weeps. His heart heaves within him, the tears flow, one of the men with whips catches him on the face....The mare stretches out her muzzle, gives a labored sigh and dies....With a cry he pushes his way through the crowd to the sorrel mare, puts his arms around her dead, bloodstained muzzle and kisses her, kisses her eyes, her lips..." (61-62). Notice how Raskolnikov takes up the burden of the mare. It is not the mare that gallops but he! It is he who catches a whip on the face, and he who

approaches the mare face to face and kisses its wounds. One must understand that before Raskolnikov can grieve for the horse, he must first *become* the horse. As Heidegger writes in *Language*, “The primal calling, which bids the intimacy of world and thing to come, is the authentic bidding. This bidding is the nature of speaking (1131). It is as if Heidegger here acknowledges the necessity to heed the call of the original inhabitant (the beasts came before humanity) if we are to achieve anything but an exhaustive future. Perhaps this call from the animal other is the true voice, which we have stifled by way of anthropomorphic terms such as humiliate and humane. We might use inversion to our advantage here to reveal that to posit a diverse future we must come to understand that this bidding is the *speaking of nature*. This Kafkaesque metamorphosis marked by totemic inversion (elevating the animal above the human) demonstrates that Raskolnikov moves away from the half-brother condition by first approaching the animal other on its own ground. He descends to all fours in order to face the beast. As such, this passage marks a step over the half-brother threshold by way of declension which, through the symbolic face-to-face encounter, allows for the recognition of environmental agency through a reduction of the human ego or separation. Unsurprisingly then, Raskolnikov wakes in a fevered state: “‘Thank god it was only a dream!’ he said.... ‘But what’s this? I must be getting a fever’....His whole body seemed to ache; there was darkness and turmoil in his soul” (62). This impending sickness marks a sort of delirium tremen that results from his initial movement toward purging himself of the half-brother condition. Hence, we may understand the vacillation that ensues leading up to and following the

murder of the pawnbroker as Raskolnikov's evolution from a half-brother toward a fully realized human capable of love and fecundity.

Raskolnikov at this point has begun to reconcile himself of the tension between the human and the creature. He then moves to seek an absolution from the alienation of God stating, "‘Oh Lord,’ he prayed, ‘Show me the way and I will renounce this accursed dream of mine’" (63). One must bear in mind, that the word creature implies creation and thus, at least in biblical terms, a God. The fact that Raskolnikov emerges from his animal-aware state to call for God should suggest that God and nature are not separate avenues that must exclude each other. Many people have criticized Dostoevsky for adopting a sort of Christian 'cop out' in the epilogue (this will be renounced in the last chapter) as a close analysis of ascension and its inversion (declension) reveal that Dostoevsky's text is at once an affirmation of both the natural and the supernatural or divine. For instance, the passage that follows Raskolnikov's appellation seems to bring these elements of God, human and nature together as a corner, not a hierarchy.

Here too we are presented with yet another bridge. Dostoevsky writes, "‘Crossing the bridge, he looked quietly and calmly at the Neva and at the bright-red glow of the setting sun. In spite of being weak, he hardly felt his tiredness. It was just as if an abscess that had been swelling on his heart all month had suddenly burst. Freedom, freedom! He was now free of these spells, of sorcery, of enchantment, of his obsession!’" (63). The first thing to note about this passage is that it takes place in the in-between time of night and day. Thus, Dostoevsky is shrewdly evoking the idea that there are no true oppositions, and by extension that Raskolnikov's vacillation and sickness are in part

due to the fact that his rational mind is trying to logically cordon off the conditions of human existence into separate spheres. His published essay in which humanity is separated into two kinds—Napoleons (leaders) and followers—which Porfiry finds so laughable is proof enough of this. Thus, placing Raskolnikov on the bridge as a threshold, and in the gloaming as another threshold, Dostoevsky delineates the corner in which humanity must situate its consciousness if we are to overcome the half-brother state. Furthermore, natural elements appeal to Raskolnikov in this corner. The water and the setting sun become the path for which he appealed to God. Hence, Raskolnikov's appeal to God for a pacification of the torture that is marked by the half-brother condition—the war that is waged between his rational mind and passionate body, between reason and nature, or between faith and proof—results in an evocation toward a quiet existence among the natural. Georg Simmel writes, “Yet the bridge reveals its difference from the work of art, in the fact that despite its synthesis transcending nature, in the end it fits into the image of nature” (67). Dostoevsky, in placing Raskolnikov on bridges that affect his consciousness and outlook, seems to be pointing toward the bridge in St. Petersburg as an island of retreat from the negative agency of the destitute slums. In so doing, as Raskolnikov becomes a more stable being while on these bridges, Dostoevsky suggests reconciliation between the human realm and the realm of the natural. As such, he seems to be evoking (through the natural as a muse) a sense of brotherhood and harmonic co-habitation between the human and the natural. It should come as no wonder then that Raskolnikov finds himself on a train to Siberia in the conclusion of the tale. As will be shown in the final chapter, it is not necessarily a

Christian epilogue, but regard for the natural that ultimately brings about Raskolnikov's ability to be taught how to live in the world. Thus, Dostoevsky, through inversion, undermines the hierarchy presented in the first line of this thesis.

Focusing on the trope of bridges in the novel, we see that this otherness is often characterized as natural agency. Hence, the exterior interiority of Raskolnikov reveals an ebb and flow of his two-part self (subjective rational being versus teachable vessel). This interconnectivity thus aligns with ecocentrism in that the focus of the novel does not surround singular identity formation, but concerns the process of identity formation itself as interconnected—like an ecosystem—and therefore Dostoevsky speaks against totality and rationalization as processes that obscure interrelationships to promote separation. Dostoevsky thus employs natural agency as exemplary of this interdependent state of human being.

Interestingly, an essay on bridges in architecture by Simmel parallels Levinas' sense of separation as a precondition for interconnectivity or co-existence with the other. According to them, one must first know one's self as separate and desiring before one may attempt to move beyond anthropomorphic separation to validate the other within. He writes:

By choosing two items from the undisturbed store of natural things in order to designate them as 'separate', we have already related them to one another in our consciousness...we can only sense those things to be related which we have previously somehow isolated from one another; things must first be separated from one another in order to be together....By overcoming this obstacle, the bridge symbolizes the extension of our volitional sphere over space. Only for us are the banks of a river not just apart but 'separated'; if we did not first connect them in our practical thoughts, in our needs and in our fantasy, then the concept of separation would have no meaning...here the separation seems imposed between the

elements in and of themselves, over which the spirit now prevails, reconciling and uniting. (66)

The first sentence above reveals the underlying ethic of interconnectivity that (perhaps unconsciously) causes Raskolnikov to mistrust his rational mind. Bridges are therefore significant not simply as thresholds from which we may extrapolate discourse and polyphony as central themes, but significant for our understanding of how the human consciousness condones separation as legitimating domination. As Simmel notes, separation depends on presupposed unity. Thus, for Simmel, the bridge marks humanity's attempt to alleviate the alienating sting of separation as an artificial human construct ("here the separation seems imposed"). As such, Raskolnikov, in stopping and dwelling on nearly every bridge that he crosses, suggests this idea of a bridge as a corner, or nexus where separation is overcome by connection. This state of connectivity is thus a site of reconciliation for Raskolnikov as is marked by the fact that while on each bridge he seems to receive some degree of spiritual refreshment as though emerging, epiphanically, from a spell. Hence, while normally lost in the push and pull of rational thought swaying between egoist (monomania) and utilitarian ideals (the murder of the pawnbroker as a necessary evil in the redistribution of wealth), something about the bridges' connection with the natural allows him to step outside of his tortured self for a moment, as if by appellation from the natural world, to resolve his inner strife.

On page one we find the significant trope of bridges. "Early one evening at the beginning of July, during a spell of extremely hot weather, a young man emerged onto the street....and slowly, as if unable to make up his mind, headed toward the Kokushkin Bridge" (1). As was shown in the above analysis, each time Raskolnikov finds himself

on a bridge he peers over the edge, as if transfixed by the moving water. Without delving into the many symbolic interpretations of water, it is enough to say that this act of peering down into the water's reflection is an attempt to gain insight on the part of Raskolnikov (this will be shown in detail in the final chapter). Ergo, peering over the edge marks an appellation to the natural as a muse. Consider the bridge as a nexus between worlds. On the surface lie the St. Petersburg slums where the pawnbroker awaits her demise and Marmeladov and Sonya await their discourse with the hero. This side is also the realm of man, reason and rationality. Beneath the bridge however, we have purity, flux and nature. Above the head of Raskolnikov exists the alienating the realm of God. Or, as Simmel writes, "...the bridge removes us from this firmness in the act of walking on it and, before we have become inured to it through daily habit, it must have provided the wonderful feeling of floating for a moment between heaven and earth" (68). As such, the bridge serves as a model to delineate the site of humanity or the half-brother, which then reveals the role of ascension for the text; Raskolnikov's dilemma is not so much about crossing the bridge, but about understanding the bridge as a nexus or corner through interconnectivity, which undermines the more easily apparent hierarchy of nature, man and God. This in-between state is where Raskolnikov initially resides. All his sway is thereby an attempt to resolve the issue. His vacillation between empathetic, self-sacrificing benefactor and ruthless Napoleon are caused by his inability to resolve his half-brother state from within. As such, he appeals to the water—the natural—for *amusement* or inspiration. The water beneath the bridge marks a Heraclitean flux. That is, Heraclitus' observation that one cannot step in the same river twice reveals here the

fact that Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg is a facade by way of its stagnant nature. Just as Raskolnikov himself is never quite the same from page to page, so to do his interactions in the carnival atmosphere mirror this underlying reality of fluctuation. This is why he is able to respect the dregs of society and even dote on Sonya as an almost biblical heroine. In Bakhtin's analysis of carnival in Dostoevsky, such inversions only become possible when one realizes the ephemeral nature of one's own existence: one day a king, one day a pauper. These inversions allow for a reversal or complication of the hierarchical totem of: nature, humanity, God. This reversal marks the first step toward stepping over or circumscribing the echelons that fix the half-brother in place.

#### The Half-Brother in Kerouac's *Desolation Angels*

Similar to Raskolnikov, Dulouz also vacillates continuously at the onset of the novel. He too spends months on the margins (Skid Rows, Boxcars, jazz clubs) only to return to Ginsbergian New York City Flats and join San Francisco Literati to drink wine and converse with intellectual men and woo bourgeoisie women. Here is a man absolutely walled in by a conformist, consumer and deceptively comfortable (idle) middle-class post-war economy. Yet the same bricks that Raskolnikov abhorred as the facade of totality are romanticized by Dulouz: "...O the sad redbrick and everywhere in America you see it, in the reddening sun, and clouds beyond, and people in their best clothes in all that—We all stand on the sad earth throwing long shadows, breath cut with flesh" (33). This contrast marks Dulouz as easily susceptible to merge the beauty of the natural with society's reflections of it. The brick is a sad reflection of nature as hardened

and utilized earth that actually blocks the sunset. Dulouz, perhaps due to the inseparable merging of the boundaries of American society with the natural realm, is forced to accept a world in which sunsets are replaced with alpenglow on building walls; that is, a world where humanity and nature are at odds due to the celebration of artifice. This postwar society is marked by retreat to the outskirts of the crowded city, the birth of tract housing, commuters spiking fossil fuel use all in an effort to attain the capitalist dream of 'keeping up with the Joneses'. This landscape is the birth of urban sprawl, Wal-Marts and the uniformization of the country. The 'Anytown USA' is certainly a very real danger from this perspective. This landscape is that of environmental degradation, mass species extinction: uniformity over diversity: totality over infinity.

This section advances the argument that while Raskolnikov and Dulouz overlap in their attempts to resolve alienation through ascension or declension, Dulouz, when faced with the totality often prefers to retreat within himself—to childhood—rather than to face the acknowledgment of shame. This self-denial (refusal to 'grow-up'), it is argued, develops out of 1950s postwar society's grasp on the consciousnesses of its inhabitants. Whereas Raskolnikov's city allows for inversion and the ability to regard alterity, Dulouz' America seems by contrast resigned to distract themselves from the horror of postwar reality through the shallow pursuit of material wealth. As such, capitalism in 1950s America promoted both competition and the denial of guilt. By immersing themselves in material distractions, Americans lost their grasp on responsibility toward the other; material accumulation served as a stopper for the void of alienation as opposed to illuminating the path toward shame, responsibility and reconciliation. We might

conclude then that the consumer demand for fast, cheap and easy that characterizes American society (microwaves, 'TV dinners') pervaded the consciousness of Americans to such a degree that a 'quick patch' overshadowed the desire to treat the causes of alienation.

Distraction, characterized for Dulouz as Americana and adolescence, thus emerges as an American coping mechanism for the alienation modern, rationalized society presented amidst a world in which faith in the human trajectory was shaken due to the atrocities of WWII. As such, the beats looked to the natural world in order to confront the hegemonic forces that subsumed reality under simulacra. Unfortunately, the natural environment of postwar America does not function as a simple urban/pastoral dichotomy as it does in Dostoevsky. As William Chaloupka and R. McGreggor Cawley note, "Imagining a point apart would make little sense if that imaginary point had already been colonized....Their "escape" might already have been domesticated..." (*The Great Wild Hope* 16). Thus, while for Dostoevsky the natural other functions as a means of escape and refreshment, by the 1950s postwar America had become so pervasive in its refinement or rationalization that the natural world as a viable other by which we may regard and judge ourselves has itself been "colonized." This complicated Kerouac's ability to resolve half-brotherhood; "escape," by extension, is thus rendered superficial as mere distraction—not freedom from oppression. Whereas Raskolnikov's vacillation involves sway between health and sickness in a destitute city that may be cured through natural retreat, Dulouz' vacillation is triggered by a prison-like environment in that each attempt at escape presents him with another wall. This view of American totality as an

inescapable prison reveals that alienation is more pronounced in postwar America, suggesting that the 'land of the free' at the time was perhaps only a delusion.

. Perhaps Kerouac's reversion to adolescence can be explained as response to this prison of postwar society. Kerouac's autobiographical story reveals a life-long search for existential meaning in the face of modern alienation, and that in the end he comes up short. "I am emptiness, I am not different from emptiness, neither is emptiness different from me; indeed, emptiness is me" (*The Dharma Bums* 138). This section argues that due to the manifestation of the existential void, Dulouz became depressed: locked in a state of despair; yet his approach to existence remained solid. As such, this constant allows us to gain insight into his true religious or moral identity even amidst his extraordinarily variable religious *adaptations* and contradictory emotional and social behaviors. This line of investigation, coupled with a close reading of his text, should delineate that Dulouz remains a half-brother due to his inability to receive any consciousness or belief system that does not end in void. That is, due to appropriation and romanticism of the other, Dulouz's conception of freedom brings torment in the form of the void because of his propensity to render otherness same through false identification: "strange Negro kid who was afraid I would criticize him with my eyes because of the segregation issue down South, I almost do criticize him, for being so square..." (116). In this mere glance Kerouac seems to understand everything about this youth. Hence, his propensity to characterize otherness through romantic ideology "the Negro people will be the salvation of America..." entrenches him within the half-brother

state, as this prevents him from approaching otherness from desire to respect that which is always other (136).

The word *adaptations* here suggests that Kerouac's identity was not created by religion or the culture that he helped to cultivate in the 1950s, but that he appropriated religious and cultural aspects into a collage identity that suited his lifestyle. Lardas states, "As Kerouac became more familiar with the urban lifestyle of New York, his skepticism about the Catholic Church increased. His intense nostalgia for the ideals and perfection of the past ranged from the romantic longings of his youth to the reactionary conservatism of his later years" (62). Recognizing the void within him as a void that was latent in 1950s "square" White America caused him to reach out to other cultures (Black, Chicano) whom he believed to have a deeper connection to the human condition due to their history of subjugation and suffering under White imperialistic hegemony. "Their literature celebrated those who were socially inferior and transposed an aversion to dominant social structures into spiritual insights" (Lardas 30). Thus, Kerouac believes that in reaction to White middle-class America's hegemonic stance over minority groups, we have (perhaps paradoxically), as a result of a historical naivety to the range of the human experience, rendered ourselves superficial. For Kerouac, 1950s materialism and economic prosperity blinded us from the "raw throb of existence" to borrow a quip from Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (22). That pulse is what Kerouac sought both on fresh mountain tops, in smoky jazz clubs, on skid row, in the depths of debauchery with the junkie Burroughs and the pedophile Ginsberg in Mexico City. Whereas Raskolnikov initially suffers alienation from the rational egoism of 1860s Russia, Kerouac suffers

from the romantic egoism of the beat Jeremiads.

If we wish to understand how it was that Kerouac succumbed to depression and alcoholism we must first examine his life on the road initially as a search, and how he justified this lifestyle as well as what he found in his periods of quiet reflection where he attempted to make sense of his existence, which leads us to realize what Lardas notes, “Whether sanguine or paranoid, the Beats understanding of their world was nothing less than extra-ordinary. Like many postwar Americans, they did not so much secularize the sacred as sacralize the secular, turning everyday existence into a drama of ultimate consequences” (6). In other words, religion or morality for Kerouac came ultimately from within: “God must be a personal God...” (*Desolation Angels* 318). As such, the journey gains a perspective of consequence in which he was free to label questionable encounters and situations (in the same vein as Raskolnikov's overt excuse for murder) as philosophically or religiously sanctioned. Hence, Kerouac set up a personal dichotomy in which he was free to apply his own moral justifications and judgments outwardly, and was then freed from any societal pressure to adhere to standardized moral codes. Thus, Kerouac freed himself from blame, a juvenile subversion that allowed him to extend his adolescence and position himself on the margins from whence he hoped to find the full range of existence and as such, fill the void he feels within with profound meaning or discourse.

However, the void that Kerouac recognized was not merely his own. Lhamon writes, “When elite culture weakens from stewing in its own entropy, then vernacular culture surfaces. It judges the collapse of institutional elite culture and fuels the forging

of new cultural forms” (105). As such, Kerouac's vacillation marks an attempt to remain fresh as a writer through experience on the margins. A key difference between Kerouac and Raskolnikov here is that while Raskolnikov was faced with the margins of society in the carnival atmosphere of St. Petersburg, Kerouac actively sought the margins out of fear of his own lack of essence. Since one may certainly apply the term nomad to characterize the trajectory of Kerouac's existence, we can safely project that for him 'the journey *became* the destination'—as his journeying within a 'walled' society made any stop a site of vulnerability to the pervasiveness of postwar society's increasingly superficial values. This individualized constant questing reflects the emerging cultural trope of extended adolescence. Medovoi writes, “The war was seen as rushing youth prematurely into adulthood” (26). Hence, childhood emerges in the affluent postwar society as distraction: a luxury worth indulging. Thus, responsibility, in terms of acknowledging and heeding the other, is ultimately lost on Kerouac.

Nevertheless, *Desolation Angels* provides us with profound insight as to the societal factors that impeded him where Raskolnikov succeeds. In *Desolation Angels* Kerouac states, “I'll have to wash my teeth and spend money until at least that day I'm the last old woman on the earth gnawing at the last bone in the final cave and I cackle my last prayer...” (110). This quote evokes a sense of finality that comes about only from outlasting the rest of the world. Hence, movement or mobility for Kerouac means escape; if he can just stay 'on the road' then nothing can catch him (i.e. old age, maturity, death). As such, mobility was a means of preserving adolescence, and therefore not a means to an end per se, but a means to an extension of impotent youth as opposed to

Raskolnikov's desire for fecundity (as is demonstrated by his utilitarian motivation for the pawnbroker's murder). Thus, through childish distraction Dulouz finds shallow escape from his perceived trajectory of square white America.

### Ascension and Declension in *Desolation Angels*

This section utilizes the concepts of ascension and declension to reveal how Kerouac's existential void appears through empty religious interpretation and appropriation. This empty interpretation aligns with his sense of romanticism. This romanticism, as an extension of adolescent subjectivity, is key for understanding why Dulouz is unable to overcome his existential void: his desire to render alterity intelligible through dissonance totalizes the other, thus causing him to misread natural agency, which, by extension, causes him to misunderstand his own purpose, his sense of home; he thereby remains alienated through romantic isolation even following his declension from the solitary mountain peak. Also, this section traces the role of declension as hierarchical inversion that leads Dulouz to a universal ethic of pluralism as cued by his perception of natural agency. However, what is most important for our understanding of Dulouz is that his knowledge of pluralism as an ethic does not resolve alienation because his desire to remain youthful symbolizes his unwillingness to accept shame and reconciliation in a society where carnal distractions make responsibility seem unnecessary. Thus, this lack of responsibility illuminates how American society, through willful ignorance, has allowed our currently perceived environmental crisis to escalate: we prefer distraction to 'fessing up.'

While enveloped by the natural at the peak of a great mountain, Dulouz envisions himself wandering among the children of postwar America "...give me society, give me the beautiful-faced whores...enough of rocks and trees....I want to go where there's lamps and telephones and rumped couches...I'd rather undo the back straps of redheads dear God and roam the redbrick walls of perfidious samsara than this rugged ridge full of bugs" (69-70). While in solitude Dulouz faces his perception of oblivion. A tension is already present at the outset of the novel in which Dulouz, desperate from boredom, desires to fall from his lofty peak to the realm of carnal delights among society; this quote reveals that facing the void in isolation caused Kerouac such lonely fear that he sought distraction in the pleasures of society. In order to understand this state of half-brotherhood for Dulouz (vacillating between the natural world as a teacher and human domination), we must ask what drove Dulouz up the mountain to begin with, what did he learn atop Mt. Desolation, and to what degree this influenced his ethos following his return to society? Interestingly, *Desolation Angels* picks up where *Dharma Bums* leaves off: atop a mountain. Nearly all of Kerouac's prior wanderings in his novels are horizontal. He jaunts madly from East to West and West to East stopping only briefly to revel in the youthful rebellion of the early beats. However, as *Dharma Bums* is a text that traces a sort of religious evolution marked by Kerouac's appropriation of eastern religion and philosophy, we might interpret Dulouz' journey to the top of Desolation Peak as the apex of his religious philosophy as leading to some resolution of alienation. "When I get to the top of Desolation Peak...I will come face to face with God...and find

out once and for all what is the meaning of all this existence and suffering and going to and fro in vain” (*Desolation Angels* 4).

While Kerouac's horizontal spacial movements have been characterized as escape in contrast to seeking, “going to and fro in vain”, this vertical movement might reveal something of Kerouac's inner quest to resolve alienation. If his horizontal path was an escape from the totalizing tendencies of affluent postwar America through vacillation, then his ascension at the close of *Dharma Bums* marks a more direct path toward personal understanding: “com[ing] face to face with God.” Largely cued by his new religious learning, Dulouz' retreat to the natural as a fire lookout on Mt. Desolation, perhaps inadvertently, reveals a burgeoning ethic of naturalism as stemmed from his recent study of Zen, Shintoism, Taoism and Buddhism. *Dharma Bums* is arguably the most hopeful and inspiring of Kerouac's novels in that it is almost diametrically opposed to the sad romanticism of his other novels in which the road is a lonely place, and the creatures of the world are but sad reminders of alienation (which will be shown is the case with *Desolation Angels*). *Dharma Bums* is rather a tale of increasing brotherhood and jeremiad-like sheparding of those Americans lost to economic and cultural forces of the consumerism. If *Dharma Bums* traces the evolution of Kerouac's religious and philosophical leanings, *Desolation Angels* marks the application of such internal consciousness. For example, while Japhy Ryder outfitted Kerouac “for the apocalypse” in *Dharma Bums*, thereby freeing Kerouac through the loss of weighty commodities, in *Desolation Angels*, after descending the mountain, Dulouz, like Raskolnikov after finding refreshment in nature, prefers to sleep outside in his sleeping bag as opposed to the

supposed comfort of a human dwelling: “It don't make no sense, the world is too magical, I better go back to my rock (122). This quote reveals that Dulouz found some inspiration for simplicity while in isolation, but also that the tension between society and the natural world still causes vacillation for Dulouz as a half-brother. This ethic of simplicity reveals not simply that Dulouz chose to save money and impose on the hospitality of others as minimally as possible, but, like Raskolnikov before his dream, Dulouz finds refreshment in natural surroundings. While in *Dharma Bums* 'ceremonies' of 'Yabyum' (orgies) were condoned under the pretext of Buddhism, which in the beat context symbolized unity and interconnectedness amidst an America that increasingly promoted separation through the retreat to suburban housing and personal transportation, by *Desolation Angels* Dulouz has internalized this interconnectedness of the universe and seeks to uphold this understanding (whether by sleeping outdoors or taking drugs) whenever possible. Hence, *Dharma Bums* is driven by positive forces that climax amidst a solitary natural setting.

In contrast, the ultimate trajectory of *Desolation Angels* is a complete reversion from this path. Instead of ascending toward a home in the infinite, Dulouz becomes obsessed with the “sad” America. Kerouac writes, “Ah Seattle, sad faces of the human bars, and you don't realize you're upsidedown—Your sad heads, people hang down in the unlimited void, you go skipplering around the surface of streets and even in rooms, upsidedown, your furniture is upsidedown and held by gravity, the only thing that prevents it from all flying off is the laws of the mind of the universe, God—Waiting for God” (114-5). Here evoking Beckett, Dulouz reveals his understanding of the modernist

plight of alienation. This feeling of alienation from God is for Dulouz directly related to the removal from the natural that is marked by consumer society settling for mass produced simulacra instead of that which is presented in the natural muse (i.e. inspiration for art that connects rather than removes society from its place in the natural world as co-existence). These thoughts are offered shortly after descending the mountain when Dulouz finds himself, for the first time in months, back within a cityscape. Here we are given a glimpse into the psyche of Dulouz as influenced by insights gained from on the mountain. He sets the tone of the novel in which America is a land of “sullen faces in Pontiacs” (xii). Hence, Dulouz, removed from society, now feels that his unique situation has provided him a unique perspective in which Americans are blissfully ignorant of the terrible void that hangs above them open-mouthed like some apocalyptic beast ready to swallow humanity.

“Desolation Angels” is then a term which romanticizes Americans as divine in their ignorance. The fact that humanity exists and follows the shallow pursuits of postwar society is nothing less than remarkable to Dulouz who believes that Desolation has lifted the veil of secrecy for him. Therefore, in pitying Americans for their acceptance of meaninglessness, Dulouz is able to romanticize society for its noble perseverance in the face of modern alienation. Interestingly, the interconnectedness marked by sleeping outdoors is offset here by the depressing presence the void. It seems that Kerouac would like to place his faith in interconnectivity, but, in near exact comparison to the inner vacillation of Raskolnikov, Dulouz is tormented due to his skewed rationalization of Buddhism in which the void can mean only nothingness as

meaninglessness. His innate Western desire to *know* the void empirically confounds his ability to wholly accept interconnectedness as revealed through natural agency. Hence, he is a half-brother as long as this vacillation continues. Unfortunately, as the novel progresses, Dulouz spends more time indoors, guards his money carefully, and reverts to the more familiar Christian background not as a means of faith, but as a retreat from the torment between rational and faith-based existence. Therefore, instead of following the path toward resolution of the half-brother through the natural path, he begins to give in to the oppressive forces of postwar consumer society.

We see that Dulouz's retreat to the natural was first and foremost an attempt to know God. As such, Dulouz is aware of the false hierarchy embedded in the modern consciousness. Hence, when it is said that one must first descend to face the natural before one may reconcile one's self with creation after the fall, this is mirrored in Dulouz's motivation for seeking the natural. In *A Brief Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wilderness* Samuel Danforth writes:

Such as have sometimes left their pleasant cities and habitations to enjoy the pure worship of God in the wilderness are apt in time to abate and cool in their affectation therunto; but then the Lord calls upon them seriously and thoroughly to examine themselves, what it was that drew them into the wilderness. (qtd. in Lardas 28)

Lardas continues, “On the one hand, the jeremiad contains a centripetal force, shaming and calling a wayward flock back into the fold. On the other hand, there is also a centrifugal force, reassuring people of the legitimacy of their divine status and thereby implicitly sanctioning further transgression...it was a forward-looking strategy in the present designed to precipitate a return to the past” (28). Danforth here expresses that the

natural as a muse serves as a source of inspiration, but also acts as a lens through which to call oneself into question. Hence, like Derrida naked in front of his cat, the natural other being allowed to approach through receptivity functions to thwart the totalizing tendencies of humanity as replaced by responsibility. What Lardas suggests is a “return to the past” falls in line with Jon Panish's accusation of Kerouac's “romantic primitivism” in which he almost ethnocentrically obscured otherness by recognizing only the primitive aspects of minorities. In terms of Lardas' quote, we see that shame in the face of the natural other is a necessary condition for reconciliation with the natural. Raskolnikov, for example, cannot move toward forgiveness before kissing the earth in recognition and shame for his murder of a fellow creature. This shame is the path advocated in this thesis, which is counterposed to the “centrifugal” path of Lardas in which separation from nature sanctions irresponsible treatment of the natural world. It would appear then, that this return is counter-productive and entrenching for humanity, rather than a return inspired by the desire to make amends.

This circling back can be related to the carnivalesque inversions of Bakhtin. For Bakhtin, inversions (decrownings) function to alert the decrowned to the other half of their self. One is never always only a king, but always both king and pauper. He writes:

This transferral of words from one mouth to another, where the content remains the same although the tone and ultimate meaning are changed, is a fundamental device....He forces his heroes to recognize themselves, their idea, their own words, their orientation, their gesture in another person, in whom all these phenomena change their integrated and ultimate meaning and take on a different sound of parody or ridicule. (217)

Originally, this dichotomy as a window into the self was achieved for Kerouac through the counter-pole of Neal Cassidy. However, as Kerouac ages, his attachment to Neal

becomes less and less frequent and powerful. Therefore, Dulouz's migration to Desolation Peak removes him from his buttress, and therefore strips him naked before the reader without the force of Cassidy to validate his gravitation. On Desolation peak, while Dulouz is forced to confront himself by way of the agency of the natural, he finds, despite a lack of carnival, a means of inversion nevertheless. "Hozomeen...that when seen from upsidedown (when I do my headstand in the yard) is just a hanging bubble in the illimitable ocean of space" (4). A few lines down Dulouz finishes the lines cited earlier about coming face to face with God: "but instead I'd come face to face with myself, no liquor, no drugs, no chance of faking it but face to face with ole hateful Dulouz" (4). Thus, by purging himself of that which he utilizes as a crutch to support his sense of self (alcohol and drugs) Dulouz, in a sense, performs his own decrowning. Furthermore, in standing on his head Dulouz reverses his sense of gravitation by revealing that we might all float off into the nothingness of space: this is where the void begins to pester the life of Dulouz. Interestingly, this inversion removed Dulouz from a sense of the natural as *terra firma* in providing a sense of home for humanity. In raising his feet to the sky, Dulouz does not descend to face the natural in brotherhood as does Raskolnikov following the inspiration found on bridges, but instead ascends in that his climbing of the mountain was initially more of an attempt to reach the creator than to reconcile himself with creation.

In the same way that Raskolnikov's consciousness is uniquely revealed through his encounters with the natural, so too does the natural provide us a window into Dulouz. Whereas Raskonikov, by way of his already present desire to allow the other agency is

acted upon by the natural muse, Dulouz in the beginning of *Desolation Angels* is not yet ready to accept the teaching of the other. He writes of a caterpillar on Desolation peak, “He is very sad now as I blow again, puts head in shoulder mourning, I’ll let him free to roam unobserved, playing possum as he wists—there he goes, disappearing, making little jiggles in the jungle, eye level to his world I perceive that he too is overtopped by a few fruits and then infinity, he too’s upsidedown and clinging to his sphere—we’re all mad” (35). Here Dulouz descends to face the natural. Yet he is not able to discern any truth from this caterpillar’s movements except that which he wishes to reinforce, having already conceived of the void and the resultant sadness that arises from the knowledge that above the unknowing heads of humanity exists an immutable vacuum—like a black hole. This reverse gravity as a pull away from our safe home on earth is counter-productive toward a consciousness at home in the world—reconciled with nature—as madness or chaos is the only inspiration that Dulouz takes from this perception of infinity as an alienating void. As such, Dulouz’s caterpillar is personified and thus romanticized as well. The inspiration that Dulouz then takes from this caterpillar’s agency is that perseverance is noble, but in the end a fruitless venture, like a captain going down with his ship. Therefore, if the universe lacks meaning as Dulouz deduces from this encounter, then the natural world as a void cannot provide the human a resolution of alienation. As such, if humanity wishes to resolve this alienation, perhaps we must look to the natural world as already a site of design that does not require the rationalization of humanity. Thus, rationality would obscure natural design, and cause us to obscure any meaning, or sense of home, that the natural might provide.

In contrast to Dulouz's violation of the caterpillar's otherness, more toward the end of his time on Desolation peak he, like Raskolnikov, commits murder. One might argue that both crimes were motivated by rational or utilitarian motives, but as each text shows, neither rationalization nor utilitarianism provide a sufficient excuse for outright annihilation. That is, logic is not a proper counter to conscience: one does not cancel the other, even if one has the greatest possible good in mind. This analysis of Dulouz' murder presented in tandem with Raskolnikov's dream show that, at least in the case of each text, the natural may indeed impart ethical values. Dulouz recounts:

In the mountain shack I murdered a mouse which was—agh—it had little eyes looking at me pleadfully, it was already viciously wounded by my stabbing it with a stick through its protective hiding place of Lipton's Green Pea Soup packages, it was covered with green dust, thrashing, I put the flashlight right on it, removed the packages, it looked at me with “human” fearful eyes (“all things tremble from the fear of punishment”) little angel wings and all I just let her have it, right on the head, a sharp crack, that killed it, eyes popped out... (74)

In comparison to Raskolnikov's dream in which the pleading eyes of the mare were whipped, here too we find the eyes of the mouse are the focus of the murder. This treatment of the eyes in both texts reveals that the gaze of the animal other sparks an internal reaction. Dulouz rationalizes this murder because rodents in close proximity to human dwellings can cause disease. Similarly, Raskolnikov rationalizes the murder of the pawnbroker as ridding the world of a 'parasite.' Despite this reasoning, both parties find themselves unable to adhere to their rational philosophies because conscience steps in. Conscience, one may argue, is not a mere broken cog in rational or utilitarian philosophies, but rather something of a different nature all together. According to Dostoevsky and Kerouac, one does not simply fix the system by excluding conscience; if

that were so, Raskolnikov's theory of Napoleons would have permitted guiltless murder. Rather, there is something essentially wrong about murder for Dulouz and Raskolnikov. Importantly, this knowledge of inherent wrong is cued through interactions with the natural. Dulouz is in no way guiltless in his act of murder. In descending to face this creature, he notices that it has a face, and that from this face protrude meek little eyes. Humanity, it would seem, cannot murder guiltlessly that which we identify with. By illuminating the face of the animal, Dulouz, by way of the other's gaze, steps out of his rational human self and becomes the mouse. While it is obvious that he still romanticizes the creature with its "little angel wings," something occurs here that is beyond mere romantic primitivism. He notices that the mouse is scared of death. This causes him to invent for the mouse "human eyes." As such, through the lens of the other Dulouz sees himself more clearly than rationalization can permit. That is, if rationalization and the ordering of space (i.e. ridding the cabin of evidence of the natural world) cause one to 'ascend' hierarchically toward a the perceived realm of the creator, then one denies the existence of brotherhood with the natural, and as such, one cuts off a part of the human self, which leads to alienation. However, Kerouac here displays that by facing the natural, one calls one's half-brother self into question and through this identification with the natural other is revealed the necessary ethic of co-existence as full brotherhood. Therefore, seeking the creator through identification with all creation appears as a more effective and substantial resolution to alienation over the celebration of separation.

Dulouz recognizes this connection to God through declension to the natural world: "I had somewhat considered myself divine and impeccable—Now I'm just a dirty

murdering human being like everybody else” (76). In other words, Dulouz equates this murder as his personal original sin. As such, he reveals not simply an ethic of 'live and let live' but one of reconciliation: “And I realize we are all of us murderers, in previous lifetimes we murdered and we had to come back to work out our punishment...we must *stop murdering* or be forced to come back” (76). Thus, if we are all sinners, then the ethic of humanity is not simply to not murder, but to make amends for the crimes of the past. Since this ethic was revealed through the guilt of murder that arises from the gaze of the natural other, we may interpret this as an ecocentric objective. However, whereas we shall see in the next section that Raskolnikov approaches infinity through the ability to be taught, Dulouz, unable to externalize his guilt by changing his lifestyle, opts to reassert the presence of the void as a shortcut to nullify his debt: “Because whether you murder or not, that's the trouble, it makes no difference in the maddening void which doesn't care what we do” (77). As opposed to Raskolnikov who moves toward infinity by refusing to ignore his guilt, Dulouz would rather face the torment of nothingness than the guilt of shaming himself before creation.

Perhaps what this reveals is that there is a conflict between reason and the natural flow of the universe whose tension brings about the half-brother condition. Hence, truth cannot be reasoned for Kerouac: it must be felt experientially, which explains his road partly as a search. Lardas writes of the postwar society as being, “Trapped within a mechanistic worldview where both science and philosophy were equally abstract and equally divorced from practical human concerns...” demonstrating that Kerouac's internalized and youthful escape was impeded by reason (46). Thus, Kerouac's conflict

and contradictory behavior can be traced to an inability to reconcile reason and nature (the state of the half-brother). In this half-brother model the White middle-class is placed in the middle of the spectrum: in a state of anomie that was for Kerouac purgatory. As a result of this helplessness or alienation, a numbed middle-class 1950s society finds the pain of perversity in the face of alienation (the aforementioned scratching at a sore) to be better than pure nothingness. Hence, the upper range, that of sublimity, infinity or God may only be reached through a thorough knowledge of the lower range, or the natural other. Being stuck in the middle as a half-brother was his purgatory. Therefore, Kerouac's void was a socio-cultural realization that plagued his existence. Kerouac was pestered by the void, and like a thirst that cannot be quenched, he became a doomed wanderer. "The American road restless runners are terrified of relaxing even a minute" (*Desolation Angels* 288).

### Chapter Conclusion

The void is therefore the absence of meaningful dialogue with an other, and thus marks the exhaustive nature of separation through the reduction of alterity. Rationalization bearing the mark of separation through human celebration comes to condone domination, thereby making co-substantial dialogue impossible. To confront the perversity of domination one must loathe that perversity in order to awaken to reconciliation. Ecocentrism then becomes responsibility by giving one's self up to the other—specifically, the natural. Or, as Levinas states: "Goodness consists in taking up a position in being such that the Other counts more than myself. Goodness thus involves

the possibility for the I that is exposed to the alienation of its powers” (247). Dostoevsky and Kerouac thus provide the reader with two texts that reveal, in the case of Kerouac, a character whose very growth is stymied by his inability to confront his own ego. As such, he is only ever able to conjure a terrifying and exhaustive void. Raskolnikov, on the other hand, represents a character who, through a rigorous questioning of his selfhood leading up to and following the murder is able to overcome the half-brother condition by way of ecocentrism. As Levinas writes, “The movement of separation is not on the same plane as the movement of transcendence” (148). Hence, if transcendence (here characterized as over-reaching the void) resolves alienation, then separation maintains it.

Whereas Dulouz characterizes, Raskolnikov leaves otherness in tact. For example, in his prophetic dream where he alone protects the mare who is being beaten to death by humans, Raskolnikov wishes for the horse to remain in tact as an other and even bears whips on the face if it will unburden the horse. His self-sacrifice, then, amounts to proof of the worthiness of the other if only because the human considers his worth to be less. He thus dispels the void through the acknowledgment of brotherhood. Dulouz, in seeing the mountain as bare and not himself as naked before the knowing gaze of the other, betrays his naivety. However, as we discover in our analysis, Dulouz *wills* this naivety out of a desire to return to the womb rather than face the terror of the void. Thus, his childishness reveals a perverse ethic that forestalls the onset of shame.

Here's Kerouac:

Don't think of me as a simple character...A lecher, a ship-jumper, a loafer, a conner of old women, even of queers, an idiot, nay a drunken baby Indian when drinking....In any case, a wondrous mess of contradictions...but more fit for Holy Russia of 19<sup>th</sup> Century than for this

modern America of crew cuts and sullen faces in Pontiacs. (*Desolation Angels* xii)

Kerouac romanticized the Russia of Dostoevsky, and is here evoking a Raskolnikovian persona in being a “mess of contradictions.” Yet, despite all this Kerouac is indeed a “simple character.” In his insistence on amorality, on chaos, we find him to be merely stock—he craves satiation and yet denies ever being satisfied: he drinks continually, and more often than not finds himself craving the hedonistic delights of a man who rejects morality in response to the terror of the void. Thus, in spite of his denial of “sullen faces in Pontiacs” he nevertheless remains one. His work is ever-more depressing marking a man resigned to the fact that his actions served to maintain void—not transverse it. His rebellion is merely a substitution; instead of garages and picket fences, he craves alcohol and jazz. He is stock in that he remains an empty vessel—a void which he attempts to fill with alcohol—a bottomless pit of carnal desire. This idea of an empty vessel resonates with Marx's alienated worker, who, despite his labor cannot find a meaningful connection with the abstraction of craftsmanship into mass produced simulacra. This change in the worker's environment—the exclusion of seeing a product from start to finish and enjoying direct profit—damages a sense of completion and wellness, which results in alienation. Such was the American environment that Kerouac continually butted up against, causing vacillation as a desperate means to remain free through suspension.

Kerouac's environment is at the heart tiered and exploitative in nature, making communication a matter of mistrust, dogma and rhetoric in which the possibility for discourse breaks down. Hence, Kerouac *stages* carnival in his movements and dwelling, which is really an attempt to return to the womb in response to the terror of the void. His

inability to transcend the walls of rational America thereby situates Kerouac as a natural slumist—marking an environment unyielding to the discursive decrownings of slum naturalism. Capitalism as a Marxist outgrowth of industry in this sense is not a path toward consciousness, toward the confrontation of the ego, but (this should go without saying) a confirmation of the ego. Hence, by studying Raskolnikov and Dulouz, we see that Dulouz is stymied from achieving a resolved ecocentric consciousness by a system, albeit one he overtly rejects, that denies fecundity. “That alto man last night had IT!” Kerouac exclaimed in reaction to a black jazzman’s bop in *On the Road* (195). Kerouac was an expert at pinpointing where and what *IT* was. However, through all his searching he invariably came to realize that he could never attain *IT* for himself, and that marks his downfall. Kerouac seeks the margins and observes the *IT* of infinity, but lacks the fundamental aptitude to internalize the *IT* by way of his very walled-in prior existence within a capitalist and paradoxically conformist system. That is, his failure results from an inability to rise above the insatiability of impulsive desire that is omnipresent in such a capitalist system of the time.

Conversely, Raskolnikov finds himself not in a system per se (although his wanderings between echelons mark a certain social stratification) but in a carnival atmosphere, one in which upper and lower echelons are freely inverted and counterposed—an environment of slum naturalism. Consider Levinas' words concerning anarchy:

There is an anarchy essential to multiplicity. In the absence of a plane common to the totality (which one persists in seeking, so as to relate the multiplicity to it) one will never know which will, in the free play of wills, pulls the strings of the game; one will not know who is playing with

whom. But a principle breaks through all this trembling and vertigo, when the face presents itself and demands justice. (294)

This anarchy that necessarily accompanies multiplicity is imperative for an attempt to protect future possibilities. By focusing on the margins—where rationality breaks down in uncertainty—one disrupts the “plane common to the totality.” Yet, we do not necessarily wallow in anarchy, though the pursuit may be dizzying. Rather, Levinas suggests that the other, be it God, nature or existence itself, demands justice and, as such, order. This order reveals that there is indeed a path we as thinking beings might follow that is obscured by overt rationalization. Ethics of spontaneity (such as Taoism) thus emerge as attempts to represent and pursue this ‘natural’ order, which reveals that there is still to be found in anarchy a conception of the future as what *ought to be*. As such, the breakdown of totalizing systems is an attempt to reclaim for us and the other a mutual future unsullied by the shallow focus of human determination. Dostoevsky presents a St. Petersburg akin to Levinas' anarchy in which one never knows whose will “pulls the strings”. It is precisely from such an open-ended and seemingly chaotic system that promotes the free interplay between consciousnesses where one may attain Kerouac's *IT* because one finds oneself mirrored and manifested in the gaze of the other. Raskolnikov, therefore, is able to step-over (his name meaning just that) the trap of insatiability to absolute desire.

We might conclude from this analysis that we are further than ever from a consciousness that incorporates naturalistic agency and responsibility. By excluding nature we cut off part of ourselves. Degradation is a painful reminder of this, of the self-applied perversity that results from separation. In *Crime and Punishment* we are shown

an atmosphere, dialog/exchange that grows out of a more open system, from carnival, which mocks the subjective 'I' by way of inversion, which reveals the polyphonic nature of the singular 'I'. Bakhtin writes, "The consciousness of a character is given as *someone else's* consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness" (7). Hence, by way of his ability to circumscribe himself as the author, by removing his overt condemnation or affirmation of the hero, Dostoevsky's purging amounts to a gift of the death of the author to the reader who is then freed of the violent totality of overt authorial intent. Hence, the polyphonic nature of the novel is of itself acquiescence to the other, a gift from the author to his characters of a purging of himself: this is the recipe of ecocentrism.

But what does this mean for us as readers? Beyond a mere awareness of the ego's desire for uniformity, beyond our realization that we are always plural beings, through the pursuit of ecocentrism we become aware of the other's ability to teach an attentive and humble student. In short, we learn to pay attention to both the patience of, and the natural tendency toward proliferation and multiplicity in the natural world. From the natural's agency we glimpse the universe's natural fluctuation, and begin to realize that there is nothing to fear about seeming 'anarchy' because there is always already laid within this state a constant: diversity. While mass extinctions, like the one we are now experiencing, have occurred with some regularity throughout earth's history, diversification always follows. Since many of these extinctions have been triggered by effects from beyond the ecosystem (i.e. meteor impacts, human degradation) diversity

may be explained as an attempt to prevent the outright annihilation of life. Hence, we survive through multiplicity. The following chapter bridges the connection between environmental agency and the desire for fecundity.

FROM TOTALITY TO INFINITY AND THE EMERGENCE  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY

“...reality and nature, my lad, are very important things and my goodness, how they sometimes undermine even the best-laid plans!”—Porfiry Petrovich (*Crime and Punishment* 354)

Like the horse overburdened and whipped on the eyes in Raskolnikov's prophetic dream; domination ensures an exhaustive future in the sense that what was once multiple and free become tethered and uniform and like the horse, destined to be extinguished. In contrast to the trajectory of totality, Levinas defines infinity as “...produced in the relationship of the same with the other, and how the particular and the personal, which are unsurpassable, as it were magnetize the very field in which the production of infinity is enacted....Infinity does not first exist, and *then* reveal itself. Its infinity is produced as revelation, as a positing of its idea in *me*” (26). In other words, infinity is produced when the egotistical self overcomes the desire to *know* the other in terms of appropriation. Rather, in respecting the autonomy of the other, and understanding that the other is by its very essence non-essential, the human quells the ego enough to promote an *epiphanic dialogue* in which the other's call may be interpreted as teaching one how to live. This is what is meant by nature as a muse, because it is through inspiration that humanity flourishes, not simply functions. That is, the natural as a muse reveals a renewed sense of aesthetic value. From this value we might overcome the desire for separation, and accept the aesthetic quality of natural otherness as a necessary

condition for the fulfillment of the human condition: the ability to hear this call is itself the responsibility that allows for co-existence.

This tension between reason and nature, logic versus aesthetic, is a central theme of *Crime and Punishment*. Similar to Dulouz, Perry D. Westbrook cites Raskolnikov as, “...a pre-Nietzschean superman, self-appointed...creating a new code of conduct for his sole guidance—and all with the questionable purpose of improving God's arrangement of things” (126). This idea of Dulouz and Raskolnikov as in charge of their own morality suggests a rejection of mainstream ideals. This, in turn, leads to a sanctioned amorality that becomes a lesson in itself for the characters. Both characters, through such moral transgressions as murder and drug use actually emerge with a renewed sense of spirituality that suggests reconciliation with creation through experiential knowledge of what they begin to perceive as moral truths. In this section we shall focus on the murderous Raskolnikov and how this moves him toward infinity. However, it is not the act, but the consequent shame and desire for reconciliation with creation that move Raskolnikov toward infinity. As such, this section reveals how environmental agency may lift the souls of even the most vile products of a separated society.

#### Self-Sacrifice, Inspiration, and Evocation in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

We last left Raskolnikov, following an appellation from nature, appealing to God for resolution of alienation. Obviously, the act of murder is an attempt (however inadvertently) to “improve God's arrangement.” As such, through murder Raskolnikov is not simply testing a new theory of utilitarianism, but probing the abyss for the absent

creator. In murder, Raskolnikov is asking, even taunting the creator for a rebuke. If God exists, then murder is perhaps Raskolnikov's way of calling out from an alienated existence. The murder could then be understood as an act of frustration as well as an act of logical reasoning—'the lesser of two evils.' From this perspective, we may begin to understand Raskolnikov's murdering as sacrifice. Superficially, he sacrifices one soul (the pawnbroker) for the benefit of humanity. As she had intended to donate her hoarded money to a church as a form of indulgence, Raskolnikov murders from the side of realism in which he feels that humanity could use the money more than a greedy church. However, since that money becomes, in a sense, a connection to God as an indulgence, we may interpret the murder as partly cued by 'hard feelings' toward the creator (since through murder and stealing Raskolnikov withholds—the indulgence—from an absent and thus undeserving creator). He states in confession to Sonya, "I decided to *dare* and I killed...I just wanted to dare, Sonya, and that was the whole reason" (435). In daring Raskolnikov dares to challenge creation. As such, his dare was an effort to act subjectively, to confirm his separation. The pseudo-indulgence symbolizes that in murder Raskolnikov is 'stealing' from God or God's plan. As such, Raskolnikov also sacrifices his self in that he is willing to give up salvation for a chance to know God: to know his will on earth, even if it be through punishment. The murder is therefore not a simple rationalization of the greater good, but a desperate attempt to seek ontological understanding. This sacrifice is important if we are to understand how Raskolnikov moves toward infinity; by divining Dostoevsky's recipe for responsible existence we more clearly understand how alienation functions for each novelist by comparison, and

therefore learn whether or not some universal design for the human 'home' may be extrapolated, or whether alienation (specifically half-brotherhood) functions differently across time, space and cultures/societies.

Concerning murder, Raskolnikov relies on both his rational mind, and his 'nocturnal perambulations.' Porfiry states "...reality and nature, my lad, are very important things and my goodness, how they sometimes undermine even the best-laid plans" (354)! For all of Raskolnikov's calculations, the murder is a blunder, and Raskolnikov gets away only by chance when he hides in an empty apartment as men discover something awry in the apartment of the late pawnbroker. "Not for anything in the world would he have gone back to the trunk now, nor even the two rooms. But gradually a kind of absent-mindedness, or perhaps even pensiveness, began to come over him; for minutes at a time he would forget himself (84). Immediately following the murder Raskolnikov realized that his rational egoism, based in utilitarian motives, was nevertheless morally unjustifiable. Faced with the realization of the failure of his rational logic, he resigns himself to revelry and sickness, like Dulouz faced with the void.

There was something epiphanic following the murder in which Raskolnikov *just knows* that his act of murder was an affront to creation; he no longer believes in his theory of Napoleons. The following morning he admits, "Truly my reason must be going" (96). This realization of the error of his logic in providing a recipe for existence falls in line with Dulouz's understanding of the teachings of Buddhism as leading away from the celebration of separation—humans are always already "desolation angels." As such, there is a latent primordial function for each character that undermines the mastery

of human logic. In such a state, Raskolnikov is now tortured not by the alienating perception of an absent creator, but suffers from the shame of the realization that his murder was in fact wrong. He states, “What, has it started already, is the punishment beginning” (97)? Levinas describes this knowledge of evil in relation to the manifestation of infinity stating, “This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial *expression*, is the first word: 'you shall not commit murder' (199). Hence, the infinite as epiphany presents itself in the implanted internal realization that murder is unethical. In contrast to Dulouz who retreats into himself and society through Americana and adolescent sterility instead of subverting shame through the embrace of rational egoism and reversion, Raskolnikov outright rejects human systems that he perceives contradict nature. This transition fittingly occurs on yet another bridge:

On Nikolayevsky Bridge he was forced fully back to his senses....When attending the university he had usually...happened to stop, perhaps a hundred times or so, at this very spot and gaze at this truly magnificent panorama, and to wonder almost every time about this one indistinct and unfathomable impression of his. The magnificent panorama always sent an inexplicable chill through him; this sumptuous picture held for him a mute and muffled spell. He had wondered every time at this gloomy, enigmatic impression of his and, distrusting himself, had postponed its resolution to the future. Now, suddenly, he was sharply reminded of those former questions and perplexities of his, and it seemed no accident that he recollected them now...there was a painful contradiction in his breast. Far, far away, somewhere below...he now had a vision of all his former life, and former thoughts, and former problems, and former themes, and former impressions, and this whole panorama, and he himself, and everything, everything...he suddenly felt the twenty-kopeck coin....He unclenched his hand, gazed at the coin intently, then drew back his hand and hurled it into the water (121).

To be able to view a panorama from within city-limits reveals that Raskolnikov must be

viewing nature, not obstructing artifice, as if on the periphery of the city where the urban and pastoral converge. This site, like the theoretical 'corner,' functions as a nexus between worlds where one may transverse the abyss. Here he receives inspiration from the natural as a muse. During this transformative process Raskolnikov's "impression" involves a sense of truth in the natural way of things—a truth that trumps all human logic. This is to be noted in the "mute and muffled spell," which reveals that the 'call' of the other involves a silencing of the self—the ego. Hence, this epiphany appropriately occurs following the demise of his rational egoist plot. In "distrusting himself" then, Raskolnikov, prior to his acceptance of selflessness, did not yet trust himself to wholly accept this personal and epiphanic truth. It is as if he knew then that he was not yet ready to accept the teaching of the other.

Notice the epiphanic texture of this block paragraph, which rises to climax as though "all his former problems" are slashed one after another, like the removal of veil after veil, at the apex of which he finds "everything" or cosmological nature, all-encompassing, overflowing realm of infinity. That is, once the narrow, rational, categorical, sequential and thus hierarchical tendencies of achieving knowledge are removed, only then does the world open up—present itself—to Raskolnikov. So armed with this new perception of reality, he symbolizes relinquishment from the totalizing tendencies of human nature by ridding himself of the coin—itsself a symbol of human separation. By the coin having fallen into the ever-flowing river Dostoevsky points to the protagonist's desire to allow natural refreshment to wash away the remnants of human celebration of separation. In crossing this threshold Raskolnikov, having purged himself

of the dominating ego, does indeed play cat and mouse with the police inspector, but this occurs out of instinct: not rationality. What vacillations occur throughout the rest of the novel are between the instinctual desire for self-preservation and the desire to confess and reconcile with creation.

In essence, Raskolnikov had to first know evil before he could be awakened to the epiphanic truth. Murder was therefore a threshold in itself through which Raskolnikov was finally able to reject notions of rationality; by murder and his consequent regret, Raskolnikov begins to 'know thyself' as a human like any other: not Napoleon. Thus, by confirming that murder is in fact an evil, and is not permissible through rational ends, Raskolnikov is forced to confront himself as an evildoer: not a utilitarian champion. In distrusting his rational mind, he had to devise a way to utterly stamp out, once and for all, any notion of egoism. Hence, the murder was also self-sacrifice, as an abandonment of persona (Napoleon) as well as the ego that traditionally functions as a confirmation of self-hood through autonomous action. Raskolnikov later remarks during his confession to the meek Sonya of his self-sacrifice, "Did I kill the old woman? I killed myself, not the old woman! I simply went and did away with myself..." (436). Of course, one might read this as displaced blame, which, in part, it is. However, by shifting the focus of the murder from the death of the pawnbroker to the destruction of self, Dostoevsky cleverly depicts interconnectivity; if all existence is co-dependent, then the murder of one creature implies a wounding of the murderer as well. This self-sacrifice parallels the structure of human perversity in terms of environmental degradation as harming the ability of humans to flourish, thus promoting alienation. Therefore, Dostoevsky employs murder, at least

partly, to reveal both the importance of human brotherhood and ecocentrism as an ethic of humanity as a part of a whole: interconnectivity. In order to demonstrate that interconnectivity functions not simply between humans, but between humans and the environment, Dostoevsky employs natural agency, which functions through inspiration.

Just as Dostoevsky's text is evocative for the reader in its open-endedness, polyphonic characterization, and lack of authorial force, Raskolnikov is led to find his own way in the world through the evocative words of Porfiry Petrovich. If we return to Levinas' quote concerning anarchy, we may shed light on how the other demands justice, and how evocation leads Raskolnikov to comply with this justice. In so doing, we see that cosmological nature may well function as an agent for the resolution of human alienation. Levinas' earlier statement refers to a system without bounds, from which we scream at ourselves through the lens of the other toward responsible living. Receptivity for the other is thus at the heart of Levinasian ethics. The justice demanded by the other is for the "I" to have ability to learn. Levinas writes:

The epiphany of exteriority, which exposes the deficiency of the sovereign interiority of the separated being, does not situate interiority, as one part limited by another, in a totality. We here enter the order of Desire and the order of relations irreducible to those governing totality. The contradiction between the free interiority and the exteriority that should limit it is reconciled in the man open to teaching. (180)

In other words, the ability to learn from the irreducible other involves Desire, or prior receptivity that circumvents or subsumes the ego. Exteriority, then, is knowledge of the infinite as implanted by the infinite, a process unachievable by personal freedom or 'free will.' Hence, 'free will' without responsibility leads only to the alienation manifested in Dulongz' desire for personal, carnal satiety.

Nevertheless, the move toward infinity is here revealed as a personal journey, and therefore one must arrive at it through a will for justice, which is free insofar as it becomes an object of Levinasian Desire. Dostoevsky's Porfiry “demands justice” as a police inspector. Porfiry speaks to Raskolnikov from within the system and as such is an extension of the totality. But, like so many of Dostoevsky's carnival inversions, Porfiry actually represents cosmological nature, which over-reaches totalities. He states of the law, “The typical case, you know, for which all the legal rules and regulations are designed and on which they are all based and then written into manual and so on—it does not exist, no, because of the basic fact that any case—any, if you like, crime, for example—the moment it occurs in reality immediately becomes a completely special case, yes...(351). Long before Agamben discusses his conception of the 'example and the exception,' which reveals that law itself is by law not applicable specifically, but only functions for the masses as a performative validation of sovereign power, Dostoevsky had already figured it out<sup>1</sup>. Seeing through the false reality of the totality, Porfiry refers Raskolnikov to the “special case” suggesting that while he may well have to suffer from juridical punishment, the real task is to confront his self, to humble himself before creation—always a personal affair. Thus Porfiry clandestinely points Raskolnikov toward the infinite and the resolution of alienation.

Interestingly, Porfiry is not at all shaken by Raskolnikov's actions, but sees them rather as a product of the negative St. Petersburg environment: “What every man needs is air, air, air...Above all!” he comments to Raskolnikov while accusing him of the crime (459). In his final remarks to Raskolnikov he states, “I take you for the sort of man who,

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<sup>1</sup> See Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*

even if his entrails were being cut out, would stand and smile at his tormentors, so long as he could find a faith or a god. Well, find one and you'll live...It's high time you had a change of air....Go, and suffer...give yourself up to life and don't ask questions” (479). In suggesting that Raskolnikov “give himself up to life” Porfiry suggests a path along the lines of Levinas' infinity where the giving up of one's self to the unknowable other is a necessary step in heeding the other who demands justice. As such, Raskolnikov must suffer not for his loss of physical freedom, but for his crimes against nature. Porfiry thus gestures that Raskolnikov might find peace in confession and by extension time spent in the freshness of the natural. Porfiry, as one who seems to know Raskolnikov's path, very much akin to Father Zosima of *The Brothers Karamazov* who was able to attain his 'holy' status only through a youthful bout with sin, aids Raskolnikov toward the resolution of alienation through responsibility in the form of reconciliation. Through this investigation we find that confession is a key element for reconciling the half-brother condition and finding a home.

#### Teaching Through Evocation and the Ethic of Diversity

If the last section demonstrates how Raskolnikov's self-sacrifice opens him to inspiration, we must ask how this inspiration functions to resolve alienation. Before we can discuss how confession functions as a form of reconciliation between Raskolnikov and humanity, and between him and creation, we must first understand the epiphanic nature of the knowledge gained through natural inspiration. From this we then may classify what exactly environmental agency offers the human who accepts inspiration.

As was shown in the last section, inspiration—a word that evokes breathing in—is thus related to silence. The “mute” spell that Raskolnikov views is therefore this very inspiration. As such, the other takes the symbolic form of a teacher, who must hush the class before they can be heard.

This section makes clear, through overlapping concepts of philosophic thought (Levinas), literary criticism (Bakhtin), political science/philosophy (Foucault) and ecocriticism (Mathews) that an ethic of pluralism or diversity can be found in each, which validates, through quantification (itself a plural derivative,) multiplicity and polyphonic identity as major concerns in modern socio-political thought.

This ability of the other to guide humanity down the 'correct' path is what Levinas calls “teaching” described as “teaching is a way for truth to be produced such that it is not my work, such that I could not derive it from my own interiority” (295). This production of truth, like a seed planted within oneself from without, follows our conception of ecocentrism and exterior interiority. As such, this paradoxical connection between in and out, self and other reveals that states of separation, while allowing for easy classification through dissonance, nevertheless obscure any underlying interconnectivity that might function as an ethic (including the marginal within the standard community as no longer separate beings, but reflections of ourselves, for example). Derrida exemplifies this separation as he seeks the marginal through romanticizing their alterity, rather than undermining this forced separation through identification. Through Levinasian teaching we see that the identification with absolute alterity comes in the form of epiphany. Teaching involves the inspiration of the muse (exterior), who plants the seed of truth

(interior). Hence, evocation teaches only insofar as it leads one to find one's own connection with the natural muse: a connection signified in epiphany. "Dialogue" then refers to epiphany, where the other remains unrendered, manifesting itself only as epiphany in the human, teachable vessel.

If we view alterity here as cosmological nature, we may understand how this connection links to shame, which evokes confession and reconciliation. Bakhtin writes in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

The Underground Man hates his own face, because in it he senses the power of another person over him, the power of that other's evaluations and opinions. He himself looks on his own face with another's eyes, with the eyes of the other. And this alien glance interruptedly merges with his own glance and creates in him a hatred of his own face. (235)

True, Levinas and Bakhtin speak of the non-absolute other as the human. However, here in Bakhtin we might consider the "alien glance" to be the glance of the estranged brother, namely, the natural world. In so doing, we tether the human and the natural to reveal interconnectivity. Hence, if one makes the effort to recognize this glance, one recognizes the human as a half-brother, and consequentially finds this self-loathing to be a cue toward overcoming the half-brother consciousness. Consider what Harvey and Foucault have to say concerning postmodernity, which buffers our definition of infinity through the idea of multiplicity as an end in itself:

Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is. Foucault (1983, xiii) instructs us, for example, to 'develop action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction,' and 'to prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic.'  
(44)

Notice how this quote is pocked with organic leanings (currents, flows). Foucault's words here evoke a sense of the 'natural way' of things. Infinity then is rooted in the fabric of existence. For this reason it seems that infinity is not futuristic or 'out there' but rather late-coming by way of such hegemonic forces as colonization and domination in general. Therefore, the sway toward infinity, through teaching, is organic in essence, thereby revealing the essential inclusion of environmental agency into this project as delivering a message of diversity as perhaps the most rational end for human guidance.

Consider what Freya Mathews writes in conjunction with Foucault and the others:

Selves exhibit an asymmetric will-to-exist. This is their *conatus*, their determination actively to resist destruction and to expand their being. Since the ecocosm is a self, its essential principle is the *conatus*. As vehicles of the *conatus*, selves are anti-entropic, where this must ultimately be as true of the cosmic self as of others. Positive and negative forces do not balance out in a self-realizing world. *Positive forces prevail* [my italics C.B.]. Thus, in attempting to realize our greater Self—the ecocosm—we should attempt to do what it does, that is, we should do our utmost to preserve and enrich, rather than to destroy, our environment.  
(147)

Mathews argues that in a modern world, far removed from our primordial connection with the natural by way of human domination, we must begin to confront first *ourselves* as destroyers by way of receptivity for the natural muse. From this attentiveness to the perceivable function of the natural it follows (in that we follow the natural) that we may adopt this proliferation of positive forces within our sphere. The idea that positive forces prevail comes with a sense of over-flowing the vessel in which each self is contained. This proliferation, which is instinctual in the natural realm, is perhaps in human society triggered as a reaction against the perceivable threats of mass species extinction, uniform suburban tract housing, consumption of non-renewable resources, etc. The push for

alternative energy exhibits that survival depends on multiplicity, which is why such concepts as monocropping and tourist economies have been cited by anthropologists as causing serious vulnerability for humanity. Therefore, the natural world functions as a muse in its very tendency toward diversity, which in turn functions for human survival even as we maintain our separateness. Raskolnikov is a character who ultimately achieves this move toward the infinity characterized by overflows through the evocative inspector Porfiry Petrovich. His confession, then, as suggested by Porfiry, is in fact a breath of fresh air (expiration) that results from Raskolnikov's ability to become receptive toward what the other might have to say. Interestingly, Raskolnikov confesses three times. Let us first discuss his confession to Sonya.

#### Confession as Reconciliation and the Resolution of Alienation

One important element in *Crime and Punishment* involves understanding why Raskolnikov *chooses* to go to Siberia. Certainly Porfiry accuses him of the crime, but he never makes an arrest. Raskolnikov turns himself in, and in doing so he reveals that in going to suffer he is searching for the infinite through reconciliation. That is, Raskolnikov is compelled to confess out of a desire for the absolute other. Whereas one might interpret Raskolnikov's confession as defeat, if one notices that Sonya accompanies him, then his future is revealed as not necessarily shrouded in the shame of defeat, but open-ended through a possible future, and family, with Sonya. By studying confession and reconciliation we see that, despite being sentenced to a long term in prison, Raskolnikov's future still remains bright. Thus, through Sonya as a symbol of

feminine fecundity, Dostoevsky nods to an ethic of multiplicity—a teaching that Raskolnikov accepts through viewing harmonic co-existence between humans and the natural world far removed from the stifling air of St. Petersburg.

Raskolnikov's first confession is symbolic. Raskolnikov renounces his family knowing that he is about to undergo a severe trial that necessitates personal discovery—that of confession and reconciliation. He then immediately goes to the apartment of Sonya, who represents the tie between the freed serfs (who respect and till the soil) and the natural world. Raskolnikov regards her as “like a child...She's good, good” (328)! Being that Sonya is a prostitute but is nevertheless romanticized for her meek self-sacrifice for the survival of her family reveals that, Raskolnikov, in choosing her for his confession, recognizes ‘how to live in the world.’ As Westbrook notes, “The novel, with great psychological subtlety, records Raskolnikov's undermining of his own intellectual stand. Slowly he regains his humanity, confesses his guilt and goes to Siberia with the meek and saintly prostitute Sonya who has guided him along the path to redemption” (127). That is, Sonya's destitution is directly connected to her character as a leader, or means of guidance for humanity. Thus, this carnivalistic inversion results in the moral elevation of the pauper over the king. We may therefore view Dostoevsky's warning against separation (as manifested in capitalism) through a reversion to a more agrarian society driven by sustainable cultivation as opposed to the ravages marked by the rise of consumerism and human celebration.

Dostoevsky writes of Raskolnikov's confession, “Suddenly he bent swiftly, fell to the floor and kissed her foot.... ‘I did not bow down to you, I bowed to the whole of

suffering humanity” (332). In Sonya is personified humanity’s propensity to suffer, but also to endure. Since Raskolnikov’s murder was, in a sense, a means to reject his own suffering through becoming a Napoleon, he seems to have resigned himself to becoming a sufferer. He continues, “For didn’t you do the same as me? You also stepped over...were able to step over. You laid hands on yourself, you destroyed life...*your own*—it’s the same thing!...But you can’t hold out and if you remain alone you will go out of your mind...therefore we must go together, along the same road” (340)! In choosing to walk the path of confession and reconciliation with creation together, Raskolnikov and Sonya reveal that while one must journey toward infinity as a personal realization, reconciliation involves an acceptance of the will of the natural other, which comes in the form of multiplicity (there may be a child in the future for these two sufferers).

Dostoevsky's portrayal of women (especially destitute women) as representations of natural fecundity and suffering for the cause of multiplicity reveals that Sonya (a prostitute and Raskolnikov's final companion) becomes a source of salvation for Raskolnikov. If Sonya embodies the last remnants of the serfs who represent the natural, throughout Russian literature, as humble tillers of the earth as opposed to exploitative and exhaustively greedy landowners, then she is a symbol of Raskolnikov's acceptance of natural fecundity as opposed to selfish totality. As Offord interprets this transformation, “...it is the resurrection of the spiritual side of Raskolnikov's being which offers him his only hope of salvation after he has taken other lives. Furthermore, it is love of *others* [my italics C.B.], as preached and practiced by Sonya, rather than love of self, which makes

possible such regeneration. Raskolnikov is not capable of consistently rational conduct” (43). How might we characterize this “spiritual” side of Raskolnikov? Offord seems to set spirituality in contrast to “rational conduct.” Thus, as we have linked rationality to the pervasive and domineering ego, we might take spirituality here to mean faith through acquiescence or the relinquishment of the desire to dominate. Hence, in returning to the introduction concerning the Chain of Being, this resurrection involves compassion for that which we perceive as hierarchically lower creatures, as well as humility in the face of the larger force of cosmological nature, or creation itself. While Raskolnikov's first confession sets him right with humanity, the second is more difficult, as it involves confronting the shame that Dulouz could not fess up to in the face of his perceived void. Here Raskolnikov sets himself apart by “accepting suffering” through the acknowledgment of, and regret for, his egotistical attempt to “improve God's arrangement.”

Raskolnikov's second confession, suggested by Sonya, occurs slightly before turning himself in. “He knelt in the middle of the square, bowed to the ground and kissed the dirty earth, joyful and happy” (547). If his first confession was a nod to humanity, surely this one is his confession to creation itself. So bowed, his horizontal form symbolizes the declension that symbolizes brotherhood to the natural. In kissing the earth Raskolnikov admits his baseness before creation, thus accepting, at last, the guidance of the natural other.

His last confession occurs when he arrives at the police station and turns himself in. This confession is in fact the least meaningful. He turns himself in only to accept

suffering and in order to go to Siberia, where he and Sonya might find the refreshment that Porfiry suggested in a change of air. As Offord explains of Porfiry, “He believes that everything depends on man's 'surroundings' and 'environment'” (46). Hence, for Dostoevsky, the key to unlocking a consciousness beyond the reach of alienation is imperatively experiential; one must transcend the architecture of rationality by immersing in natural surroundings if one is to free their self from the constraints of life in a totality.

While in Siberian prison Dostoevsky writes of Raskolnikov’s condition, “But it was not the shaven head or his iron chains that made him ashamed; his pride was deeply wounded....Oh, how happy he would have been if he could have considered himself guilty” (566). This desire for guilt resonates with the shame necessary for reconciliation. The human ego in Dostoevsky’s conception is therefore nearly insurmountable. As such, Raskolnikov requires one more push toward the resolution of alienation. Interestingly, this last inspiration is, once again, panoramic:

Raskolnikov walked out of the shed and onto the riverbank, sat down on some logs...and began to look at the broad, deserted river. A wide panorama opened out before the high bank where he was sitting. From the far shore came the faint sound of a song being sung. Over there, on the boundless steppe, which was flooded with sunshine, the tents of nomads appeared as barely perceptible black dots. Over there was freedom, a different kind of people lived there, not at all like the ones where he was; over there it was as though time had stopped....Raskolnikov sat there and looked, without moving or taking his eyes off the scene; his thoughts gave way to daydreams and contemplation; he was not thinking of anything....How it happened he himself did not know, but suddenly something seemed to pick him up and hurl him at her feet. He wept and embraced her knees....They were both pale and thin; but those pale, sickly faces of theirs already reflected a radiant dawn of a renewed future, of resurrection to a new life....They still had seven years to go, and until then how much excruciating pain there would be, and how much infinite happiness!...he hardly could have decided anything consciously at the moment; he could only feel. Life had come to take the place of dialectics

and in his mind something quite different would have to work itself out...But that is the beginning of a new story, the story of a man's gradual renewal...of his gradual transition from one world to another, of his encounter with a new and hitherto completely unsuspected reality. (572-4)

In unpacking this piece of the epilogue we must first note that Dostoevsky's epilogue is consistently considered as a nod to the resurrection of Christ, and as such has not been analyzed from the theory of ecocriticism. In the beginning of this thesis one major goal was to invert and reconcile the 'totem pole' hierarchical structure ranging from the most meager natural creature up to the divine. Through the mode of declension or inversion it was hoped that the totem pole might begin to resemble a circle (as opposed to a ladder) in which the separation between the natural and the divine becomes connected through a fluctuating cyclic representation. As Heidegger states, "The tree roots soundly in the earth. Thus, it is sound and flourishes into a blooming that opens itself to heaven's blessing" (*Language* 1128). Hence, he connects heaven and earth through a natural element: the tree. Without referring to humanity, we see that by removing ourselves from the equation, god and nature are more directly connected than our desire for separation allows. In returning to the opening quote for this text, we see that the hierarchy proposed there is re-ordered by way of declension to face and acknowledge the natural so as to secure a foundation in the earth or in the natural world. From this resolution of alienation do we then open up a possibility for ascension or "heaven's blessing." While Dulong never fully reaches this possibility, Raskolnikov, however, seems to affirm this ascension in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*. In order to complete this unifying endeavor we must therefore understand the epilogue as not simply cued from divine forgiveness, but also from environmental agency. What this reveals is that the divine is reflected in

the natural freshness of Siberia's landscape, thereby demonstrating the inverted hierarchy that is necessary for a consciousness that can co-exist beyond domination and exploitation. From this perspective Dostoevsky's text may be interpreted as foreshadowing the perils of the separated consciousness as reinforced in an urban enclosure. As Westbrook interprets the text:

Yet by meekness Dostoevsky does not mean the supineness that his critics assume him to mean....His meek characters are always active and positive, not mere negations. They struggle without rest to help their fellow men, not to rebel but to achieve the joy of inner harmony, to release the redemptive energies of love within themselves—the most difficult and the most indispensable goal humanity can set itself. (130)

We might interpret this “inner harmony” to mean the resolution of alienation, while “release” refers to an overflowing vessel, cued by the implanted epiphany of infinity. Whereas inner vacillation is symptomatic of alienation in both its manifestation and the attempt to dispel the hegemonic forces of totalities, once removed from such totalities as represented by urban (human face to face) landscapes: only then is a Dostoevskian character is able to resolve their inner turmoil.

Unpacking this final quote from the novel reveals the connection between infinite and the natural realm, which demonstrates how Raskolnikov finally finds a home in the world. As has been discussed, textual thresholds mark spaces of growth or clarity of Raskolnikov. This final threshold belongs to nature as a river itself. “On the far shore” thus delineates something just beyond the grasp of Raskolnikov, and like the powerful panorama of his last realization, this final step over the threshold must therefore be epiphanic as well: “something seemed to pick him up.” The far shore may easily be interpreted as a naturalization of infinity (naturalization here bearing the same meaning as

personification but substituting natural traits over human ones). Notice how “the boundless steppe” and “flooded with sunshine” reveal the sense of “overflows” that characterize Levinasian infinity, which he describes as, “The idea of infinity in me, implying a content overflowing its container, breaks with the prejudice of maieutics without breaking with rationalism, since the idea of infinity, far from violating the mind, conditions nonviolence itself, that is, establishes ethics” (204). Here Levinas’ conception of infinity lines up with the ability of environmental agency to convey ethics for the guidance of humanity. Notice how Dostoevsky correlates the human with the natural: “They were both pale and thin; but those pale, sickly faces of theirs already reflected a radiant dawn of a renewed future, of resurrection to a new life.” The dawn provides nourishing sunlight to the faces paled by a squalid urban environment from which pristine nature is banished. Here their faces reflect the light, as through responsibility involves the celebration of nature, not humanity. By proposing resurrection Dostoevsky suggests that in reflecting the pure co-existence between humanity and the natural environment as opposed to blocking it through architecture that at once celebrates ascension and denies the penetration of natural agency, Raskolnikov and Sonya find a home in each other. Hence, their union marks the will of infinity. As such, we deduce from these increasing instances of epiphany bridging the threshold marked by the river that Raskolnikov is at last being taught how to live in the world through primordial ethical absolutes. That he enters a new world and an “unsuspected reality” marks the ability of infinity to overwrite the narrow scope of totality. Hence, as Dostoevsky separates “life” from rationality he shows us a possible avenue for reconciliation and the

resolution of alienation; the knowledge that the natural realm displays ethics is itself refreshing because the exhausting dialectics of rational thought are replaced by passive inspiration.

Just as epiphany here reveals the agency of the other and ethics, Dostoevsky also uses this scene to mark that the city's hegemony has become transparent to the transplanted Raskolnikov as if the fog of totality has lifted. On the far shore are a people so far removed from Raskolnikov's St. Petersburg with all its destitution that "it was as though time had stopped." Freed from the 'hustle and bustle' of the urban environment in which rationalization pertains not merely to space but also time as 'clock time'—or the exploitation of 'time as money'—Raskolnikov realizes that these nomads are a "different kind of people" because they do not adhere to rational constructs and violences. Hence, Dostoevsky presents his wariness of the emergence of mechanized, regimented, capitalistic society by depicting a society whose very contrast from Raskolnikov's St. Petersburg is enough to dispel alienation. This harmonic scene, in which humanity appears not in dominion over nature, but rather the inverse—as produced by nature, is so sublime that Raskolnikov can no longer carry on rational thought, but may only be inspired. From this state of consciousness Raskolnikov begins to enter a "new and hitherto completely unexpected reality." As was put forth in the introduction, reality is always a socio-cultural construct. Therefore, Dostoevsky's prediction of this new reality as cued by environmental agency in the form of harmonious co-existence between humanity and nature reveals that the study of ecocentrism—as a view within from without—is imperative for an understanding of possible realities beyond that of pervasive

socio-cultural totalities. Hence, the dissonance between the urban and the pastoral is a necessary condition for Dostoevsky's characters to achieve a consciousness that is freed from socio-cultural constraints.

Altered Consciousness and the Knowledge  
of Infinity in *Desolation Angels*

Just as Raskolnikov requires a trip beyond the margins in order to awaken to a consciousness 'resurrected' from the pervasive urban-induced reality marked by rationalization in 1860s St. Petersburg, so too does Dulouz become conscious to the possibility of a higher or more primordial reality through existence beyond the borders of the postwar United States. This section reveals that the path toward infinity becomes clearer through a reduction of the variables that fix the totality in place. Raskolnikov and Dulouz' reactions to the totality are similar through vacillation and inversion. Likewise, both their paths and results, in terms of the awareness of infinity's presence, are similar. By making this connection across time and space we validate Levinasian infinity as something universal, not just manifested by a particular socio-cultural construct. As alienation has already been revealed as omnipresent in contemporary life, we must be sure that infinity lies just beyond the surface of ordained realities, as if waiting to guide those whose alienation sparks the desire to find a better 'way'. For Dulouz, Mexico City is unique in that it presents a reality in which infinity is more readily recognizable (like the contrast between Siberia and St. Petersburg), which reveals that the United States was a source of alienation for Dulouz despite his romantic longing for Americana. By studying how the environment of Mexico City (both natural and socio-cultural) calls into

question American totality, we may reveal how this venture beyond the margin (in terms of physical distance and altered consciousness through drug use) both illuminates infinity and condemns totality.

While the natural freshness of Siberia provided a clear contrast between the urban and pastoral, this starkness is clouded as Capitalism evolved in modernized states. Nevertheless, the following quote connects Mexico City to this important contrast. Dulouz states following his decent from the mountain and consequent revelry in American cityscapes while recovering and refreshing his vitality in Mexico City:

And now, after the experience on top of the mountain where I was alone for two months without being questioned or looked at by any single human being I began a complete turnabout in my feeling about life—I now wanted *a reproduction of that absolute peace in the world of society* [my italics C.B.] but secretly greedy for too for some of the pleasures of society...no such things on a mountain—I knew now that my life was a search for peace as an artist...in the old Tao Chinese sense of “Do Nothing” (Wu Wei). (245)

In seeking “a reproduction of that absolute peace” Dulouz, refers us to a sense of pristine nature’s ability to quell the mind pestered by rational thought. Similar to Raskolnikov who while viewing the panorama cannot think of anything in particular, Dulouz’ sense of peace as environmentally cued reveals that his escape to the mountain maintains the urban/pastoral dichotomy that is so essential for Dostoevsky’s Raskonikov to move toward infinity. However, here in Kerouac the very next line reveals that the tension between “the pleasures of society” and “absolute peace” are, at least in postwar America, at odds with one another. Dulouz’ time in Mexico City therefore represents his desire to reconcile this tension through a release from the oppressively conformist postwar society,

which reveals that while the urban/pastoral lines may be blurred, the desire to resolve alienation remains steadfast.

For Kerouac Mexico represented a unity of society and nature. He writes, "It's only in Mexico, in the sweetness and innocence, birth and death seem at all worthwhile" (248). Mexico here lies in contrast to the United States in that it has maintained "innocence." As Dulouz also refers to the pure cycle of birth and death, there is a sense of temporal flow that is in Mexico natural: but not in the United States. The rational order of the States not only involved space, but time as well. Throughout Kerouac's writing is felt a sense of rapid pace. This pace is not simply that of an adrenaline junky, but becomes much more profound when weighed against the rationalization of time, or 'clock time' in the States. Time itself, as 'time is money' becomes a hegemonic force for the American worker. Kerouac's life on the road was very much characterized by his desire to remain free from the workforce that, through the regimentation of time, would convert his physical existence into profit. This sense of American time as a conformist force explains why "the American restless road runners are terrified of relaxing even a minute" because Dulouz' rejection of adulthood involved, perhaps above all, the escape from time itself. Therefore, Mexico became a place, like the mountain top, where Dulouz could physically rest due to the perception of time as *slowed*. That is, in contrast to the United States, Mexico seems frozen in time, as a sort of perpetual eden. Untethered by rationalized space and time, Mexican society more readily conforms to pristine nature's temporality. Thus, Mexico is a place where Dulouz believes he can achieve his desired "do nothing" co-habitation with the natural world (as pertains to the tenets of Daoism, or

'the way'). Mexico thus seems to resonate with Bakhtinian carnival in that its citizens are unmasked. That is, in opposition to American consumerism in which workers sacrifice natural time and space to compete for status or status *symbols*, Dulouz perceives no such pretension among the Mexicans. *Symbol* thus refers to the mask, which one wears *in place* of identity or to present a virtual identity. Thus, the decrowning necessary for a face to face encounter with alterity is achievable for Dulouz only in Mexico as the postwar United States refused such encounters from a latent Puritanesque prudity, or excess of shame—shame of the 'beast' within, not the shame that occurs as a realization of wronging the 'beast.' For example, Kerouac writes, "All of a sudden we saw an amazing sight. A little young swishy fairy of about 16 hurried past us holding the hand of a ragged barefoot Indian boy of 12. They kept looking over their shoulders....Irwin [Ginsberg] was in ecstasy. 'Did you *see* the older one, just like Charley Chaplin and the kid twinkling down the street hand in hand in love....Let's *talk* to them'" (275). Here Dulouz encounters an altogether different culture symbolizing innocence in youth, and purity in humble bare feet. Kerouac's italics seem to evoke that while in an environment where time runs at the correct speed, and space is less rationalized due to intermingling with and crumbling before the nature that surrounds it, a person may see and talk with more clarity. The boys are completely de-masked, true human beings. Thus, the ability to achieve Bakhtinian discourse is readily available in Mexico. As such, Mexico City represents the perfect balance of the kicks of society offset by close proximity to the natural world for Dulouz. Kerouac writes, "Ikons of the Virgin Mary burning holes in the wall. Trumpets around the corner, the awful smell of

old fried sausages, brick smell, damp brick, mud, banana peels—and over the broken wall you see the stars” (275). Here is evoked a sense of overlapping, of intermingling between the natural world and the urban landscape (brick damp with dew, broken artifice that reveals the stars). If Dulouz could never fully resolve his half-brother vacillation, then Mexico City represents at least a place where both worlds were cosubstantial, so that he could *appear* resolved in an environment that caters to both carnal desire (brothels and the availability of drugs) and communion with the natural. If Porfiry suggests a change of air to resolve inner conflict, then the sweetness of equatorial humidity infuses Mexico City with the natural—it pervades the Cityscape, whereas in St. Petersburg dust, symbolizing sterility, marks the barrier between the fecund and the barren. This contrast reveals Mexico City as realm where the natural and the artifice co-mingle, thus allowing for at least minimal environmental agency.

Oddly, in *Desolation Angels* Dulouz uses ‘mind-altering drugs’ only when outside of the pervasively regimented United States. Alcohol and Marijuana are always present as a means to numb the terror of the void. However, other ‘harder’ drugs seem to act as a key to infinity for the beats at large. Drug use thus relates to a ‘change of air’ as a means to release the consciousness from the weight of rationality. Hence, the cultural stigma against drug use in postwar America functions as an extension of the totality, whereas the relaxed atmosphere of Mexico City allows for escape from hegemony through both physical co-mingling with the natural and cerebral release from rationality. Kerouac writes of Mexico City. “Gaines...popped a sixteenth of a grain in, and in the morning Lazarus jumped up completely well....Which makes you realize the restrictions on drugs

(or, *medicine*) in America comes from doctors who don't want people to heal themselves" (268). Here Dulouz' buddy "Gaines" heals a sick friend with a shot of heroin. Notice that here too the italics seem to provide a window into a possible deeper meaning of Kerouac's text. Co-mingling the terms drug and medicine suggests that drug use was for the beats an attempt to cure the mind of American ailments (i.e the shallow and perverse pursuit of monetary gain and accumulation of status symbols). In essence, drug use was a way of unmasking the self conflicted by capitalist pursuits. Hence, his trips and drug use outside of the United States serve as a sort of decompression from the totalistic weight of postwar society. Through such release the infinite is allowed a window by which to inspire Dulouz.

Just as Raskolnikov had to remove himself from rationality through murder (knowing sin as a precondition of knowing good) in order to gain a perspective of calling into question of his self from without, so too does Dulouz face infinity only through a rigorous confrontation with the self by way of physical and cerebral removal from the hegemony of life in an American totality. That is, just as Mexico resonates with Siberia in physical removal from the totality, drug use resonates with murder as a means to confront the psyche that is influenced by existence within a totality. Lardas writes, "Kerouac confirmed that Benzedrine broached new levels of awareness and recovered aspects of his personality denied by conventional modes of thought: 'Benny has made me see a lot. The process of intensifying awareness naturally leads to an overflow of old notions'" (98). As pertains to Mexico, Kerouac's compatriot Neal Cassidy states, "One good thing about Mexico, you just get high and dig eternity everyday" (98). Cassidy's

conception of Mexico resonates with Dulouz' sense of time as 'in tune' with the universe in Mexico. Hence, Mexico is a better venue from which to form a relationship with infinity. This relationship with infinity is not, however, new. Rather, as the discussion of alienation and the fall suggested earlier, resolving alienation requires reconciliation with creation, and therefore the relationship with infinity is primordial. Lardas' use of the word "recovery" suggests the attainment—the rediscovery—of humanity's original relationship with infinity. Hence, the "overflow of old notions" suggests that for Kerouac drug use quelled the pervasive ego enough to allow the subsumed connection to the infinite to arise. Notice how, like Levinas, Kerouac seems aware that the relationship with infinity involves something greater than the self—characterized by "overflow," which mirrors our relationship to cosmological nature. As such, drug use acts as a means to reveal the signal that allows one to conduct a relationship across the void—to be a transceiver—and accept the possibility of inspiration from without, or: environmental agency.

The other's ability to teach therefore depends on one's ability to learn, which is primarily self-cued and secondarily inspired (as epiphany). Burroughs writes of drug use as a "condition of emergency...sensations sharpen...the addict is aware of his visceral processes to an uncomfortable degree" (qtd. In Lardas 98). As drug use in this sense is not necessarily a pleasurable experience, we can safely conclude that this pursuit of infinity through self-poisoning involves a kind of self-sacrifice, not unlike the 'daring' of Raskolnikov. This reliance on the senses ("sensations sharpen") can thus be related to a retreat to the instinctual, *bestial* half of humanity. Lardas writes, "For them, drugs were

a vehicle for releasing blocked aspects of consciousness and restoring suppressed modes of awareness” (100). Hence, drugs open the channel to infinity through a reversion, or declension to face the origins of humanity. Ginsberg interprets this path as, “a breakthrough onto a new consciousness which is not like the social consciousness inculcated by television or radio or newspapers or politics, it’s another mammal consciousness that’s unified with the world...” (qtd. in Lardas 97). Notice how this “new consciousness” breaks with the tradition of totality as manifested in “inculcated” forces. Here too Ginsberg contrasts this “new consciousness” with the totality through the idea of unification, or co-substantiation, thus connecting the function of drug use to alignment with cosmological nature. This sense of an other “mammal consciousness” recapitulates the idea that to truly gain insight into the human self, we must rigorously focus our attention primarily outward, into the possible consciousness of the natural or animal other, which then reflects us back to ourselves through a more objective lens. Not only does this free the self from a consciousness pervaded by the conflict between reason and nature (half-brotherhood), but it also makes clear the cycle inherent in the Great Chain of Being in which the hierarchy is undermined by the acceptance of a direct link between the natural and the divine.

This trajectory toward infinity was for Kerouac a rupture from the perceived trajectory of America. Largely influenced by Spengler, the Beats sought to envision a world beyond the now, the world as it *ought to be*. In cycling back to the beginning of this thesis we re-approach the apocalyptic visions of Kerouac and Dostoevsky as warnings of the potential ends of rationalization and totalistic tendencies. Lardas writes,

“...each Beat positioned himself in relation to a future, post-apocalyptic America” (26).

As such, this curiosity of what lies beyond the veil of totality marks an already present desire to approach the infinite on the part of the Beats. Thus, in searching for this original relationship, the Beats set up two avenues. Lardas writes of their vision:

The new vision was, in part, an articulation of an experiential ethic....It was simultaneously a pragmatic emphasis on personal experience as the source of universal truth and a means for regeneration the individual self and American culture. Spengler contrasted such a holistic approach to experience with the mechanistic science of the contemporary West, which he believed separated the individual from the world instead of promoting a physical alertness to cosmic flux. Claiming that “Nature-knowledge is a subtle kind of self-knowledge...[a] mirror of man...” (103-104)

This emphasis on personal experience is revealed by Kerouac’s “rucksack revolution.”

This avenue of personal experience as begetting “nature-knowledge” allows for self-questioning, which serves to guide humanity (as environmental agency) when faced with the questionable implications of “mechanistic science” and the possible apocalypse it may well bring. Spengler seems to equate this technological trend of the West with separation and, by extension, alienation. Yet, by the term “regeneration” Lardas evokes a sense of realignment with “cosmic flux.” As such, we do not need to abandon a human trajectory characterized by scientific and technological discovery, but simply be wary of such vehicles as markers of human separation. Thus, while we need not condemn technology and science, we must nevertheless question the ability of such ‘progress’ to achieve a sense of ‘home’ for the human consciousness. Therefore, the two avenues require each other. Science and technology as markers of human celebration and separation thereby require the personal quest for “nature-knowledge”—or direct experience of what natural processes may teach us about *ourselves*—as a constant against

which humanity may evaluate the validity of 'progress' in terms of how it affects our ability to maintain a co-substantial relationship with "cosmic flux."

Confession and Separation in *Desolation Angels*

Raskolnikov's confession marked his acknowledgment of 'wrong' in terms of the failure of his rational plot. As such, his belief in the universal application of rational thinking dies, revealing that confession was not a matter of submitting one's self to systems of human rehabilitation, but rather as a marker of his burgeoning faith in the universal ethics of cosmological nature. Kerouac's autobiographical storytelling displays confession as well. By interpreting the nature and function of this confessional strategy we are able to let Kerouac off the hook for his inability to regard the natural through responsibility. He states, "I'm talking about human helplessness and unbelievable loneliness in the darkness of birth and death" (379). These words betray his vision of birth and death as a natural and thus appropriate cycle while in Mexico City. As such, we see that while Mexico helped Dulouz overcome his alienation, his eventual return to the United States manifests re-kindles his sense of alienation. Since Dulouz continues to find void in his conception of the cosmos, we might pull back and treat the author's confessional strategy as a clandestine apology to cosmological nature for his subjectivity as if to say "As I have judged, now may you judge me in turn." Kerouac writes, "I raise my fist to high Heaven promising that I shall bull whip the first bastard who makes fun of human hopelessness anyway" (378). Taken in conjunction with the previous quote, one may conclude that Kerouac equates the human condition as one of solitude: a bastard

existence. Hence, just as Raskolnikov's murder was in part probing for a rebuke from the creator as proof of human meaning and determination, here Kerouac's raised fist suggests that his text itself functions to probe both humanity and creation for a rebuke, to either justify his words or refute them. Hence, his writing is confessional as by provoking the reader or creator Kerouac hopes to receive a *response*. Thus, his confessional writing functions as a transceiver across the abyss. Also, through the act of cataloging his misadventures, Kerouac creates a text that may teach as a parable. His confessional strategy therefore mimics Levinasian teaching, and thereby reveals a degree of environmental agency, which we may interpret as movement toward infinity and the resolution of alienation. Consider Lardas' words concerning confession:

For Kerouac and Ginsberg, the confessional strategy was a way to realign the self with the cosmos through the drama of introversion—"submissive to everything"—in order to become less aware of oneself as a separate entity. It was a disciplined spontaneity that sought dissolution into the "cosmic beat," thereby replicating and adhering to the divine logos. Confessional honesty would diffuse any obstacles or internal conflicts and allow the writer to attune himself to, and participate in, the rhythms of the universe. (153)

If the structure of confessional writing is, as Lardas notes, "submissive to everything" then we can resolve some of the tension set up in the previous chapter in which Dulouz' subjectivity wins out over any possible discourse with the other. Confessional writing involves a purging similar to 'giving one's self up to the other.' Thus, like Dostoevsky whose polyphonic discourse and carnival characterization also represent acquiescence to the text and reader's autonomy, Kerouac's "disciplined spontaneity" functions as a sort of meta-apology in which the author's text attempts to reconcile—as a decentered calling of the protagonist/self into question—with creation, (which is here mirrored in the creative

act itself). Kerouac's confessional prose thus functions as both contempt for and "submission" to a larger force, which demands justice. In employing a confessional strategy Kerouac faces the shame necessary for the ethical conduct or responsibility required by the other. As such, to a degree, he overcomes his existence as "a separate entity" by acknowledging alterity not through romantic rendering, but through its ability to call him into question.

To illustrate, in *Desolation Angels* Kerouac quotes a conversation with Bull Hubbard (William Burroughs) who states, "I'm shitting out my educated Midwest background for once and for all. It's a matter of catharsis where I say the most horrible thing I can think of....By the time I finish this book I'll be as pure as an angel..." (347). Here Burroughs laments the socio-educational background in the uniform, rationally ordered Midwest. Similar to Porfiry, Burroughs appears throughout Kerouac's work as a teacher: imparting his wisdom on the youth. In this instance Burroughs imparts a sense of mistrust in the totalizing systems that forge American identity like cookie 'cut outs'—a sort of mechanized uniform assemblage. Realizing that this stale formula only leads to incorporation within the totality that refuses discourse with the other, Burroughs stresses the need to shed one's preconceived notions—romantic primitivism in the case of Dulouz—in order to more correctly or more objectively view the cosmological other. This too is a demasking in which our nakedness before the other reconciles the shame of domination with humanity's original purity before and among creation. Kerouac's confession is thus a means of resolving alienation by stressing an original relationship—or home—among creation. Whereas Dulouz does not display any overt resolution of

alienation, by focusing on Kerouac's prose strategy we reveal at least an implicit attempt at reconciliation, which leads us to believe that Kerouac the author and Dulouz the character cannot be treated as one and the same as perhaps Dulouz displays inconsistencies, contradictions, and subjectivity out of Kerouac's conscious or unconscious desire to face the shame of domination and 'fess up' to creation.

The "disciplined spontaneity" of Kerouac thus refers to the rigorous acquiescence before the other that would keep domination and exploitation from creeping back to the responsible consciousness in the form of ego. In other words, just as we must guard against our faith in technology and science as they can undermine our relationship with the natural muse, so too must responsibility take the form of guarding against the subjective force of the ego, which continually threatens to circle back on the individual weakly resolved to cosmological nature. As Levinas states:

This is not a play of mirrors but my responsibility, that is, an existence already obligated. It places the center of gravitation of a being outside of that being. The surpassing of phenomenal or inward existence does not consist in receiving the recognition of the Other, but in offering him one's being. To be in oneself is to express oneself, that is, already to serve the Other. The ground of expression is goodness. (183)

Here Levinas notes that recognizing the other is not enough, one must acquiesce to the other as taking responsibility for prior separation. The "existence already obligated" refers to the omnipresent responsibility toward the other. Thus, one's ego must not radiate outward as subjectivity, but rather a human must consider his/her wellness to be in tandem with the diverse others that surround them; or, "It places the center of gravitation of a being outside of that being." Hence, one may only flourish if all the others that penetrate their being flourish. This involves action: "the ground of expression

is goodness.” Levinas thus connects infinity with goodness, which is achieved through action that curbs egocentric exploitation with ecocentric cultivation. Kerouac writes, “At the time I sincerely believed that the only decent activity in the world was to pray for everyone, in solitude” (355). The comma preceding “in solitude” is unnecessary, but functions to link solitude with separation. Hence, this silent prayer is not really “activity” in the Levinasian sense, which reveals that Dulouz cannot receive reconciliation due to a lack of penance. As we see in the following analysis, Dulouz remains a separate being at the close of *Desolation Angels*. His knowledge of infinity therefore does not resolve his alienation, which reveals that action takes precedence over knowledge in the trajectory of infinity.

Despite his confession and awareness of infinity Dulouz falls short of a continued relationship with alterity. Following his trip to Mexico, Dulouz visits Tangiers with Burroughs. While there he writes of a drug-influenced experience, “Experiencing as I say that ‘Turning-about’ which said ‘Jack, this is the end of your world travel...Make a home in America...The holy little old roof cats of silly old home town are *crying* for you...’ (352). Once again it appears as if the allure of America as a temptress overrides the conception of the natural as a muse. America’s pristine nature exemplified by National parks and Western grandeur are not what call Dulouz home, but, rather, it is romanticized Americana in terms of “home town” and cats on roofs that appeal to his sense of place in the world. By employing terms like *Desolation Angels* Kerouac presents a sense of noble suffering akin to that of Raskolnikov before his resolution of alienation. However, whereas Raskolnikov, through the admission of guilt and suffering

for reconciliation ultimately finds the possibility of existence beyond the void, Dulouz simply romanticizes the void and those who suffer under its pressure in totalities.

Perhaps this notion of noble suffering marks an extension of his romantic primitivism.

That is, Dulouz ‘understands’ minority cultures as noble sufferers through their history as subjugated people who hope for release in the form of the gift of death or eternal reward.

This romantic vision occurs in the following lines, which are included to link

romanticism to prejudice for Dulouz: “(I’d come to Europe in rags expecting to sleep in haystacks with bread and wine, no such haystacks anywhere)” (366). Here Dulouz is disappointed to find that ‘the old world’ does not necessarily mean an agrarian society.

Hence, while Raskolnikov steps over this idea of earthy existence as constant sorrow,

Dulouz, by way of romantic primitivism, is unable to mitigate earthly suffering and thus

resolves to embrace what he perceives is noble about minority culture in stating: “I’m just waiting for Godot, man”—a passivity that reveals inaction as reinforcing totality (362).

This clarifies a seeming contradiction between acquiescence before the other and the

meekness attributed to Sonya: Sonya takes action by accompanying Raskolnikov and

caring for him. Acquiescence in this conception is actually a rigorous quelling of the

ego. To return to Offord, “Yet by meekness Dostoevsky does not mean the supineness

that his critics assume him to mean....His meek characters are always active and

positive...” Hence, reunification with the natural other involves action over mere

knowledge.

We thus see that Dulouz begins to revert back to his youth in returning from the experiential world (travel, carnival) to live with his mother at the expense of a fecund

relationship with his lover. He states, “A few beers, a few lovings, a few whispered words in ear, and off I was to my “new life” promising I’d see her soon” (372). Dulouz does not keep this promise, but moves to California (his lover lives in New York) with his mother, which affirms, as a symbolic return to the womb, the inaction that reinforces alienation. This inaction through separation is also revealed in his sway back from Buddhism to the Catholicism of his youth. He states, “But it *has* been ever since then that I’ve lost my yen for any further outside searching. Like Archbishop of Canterbury says “A constant detachment, a will to go apart and wait upon God in quiet and silence” (354-355). Following two novels of “outside searching” characterized by Taoist and Buddhist pursuits; it is very odd to find *Desolation Angels* concluding with Christian quotations and orientation. This quote differentiates between a life of inactive separation from the natural in order to ascend toward God as opposed to seeking communion with the natural in order to render the ‘Great Chain’ hierarchy cyclic and thereby erasing domination as a viable excuse for aligning ourselves with God. Thus, at the end of *Desolation Angels* we find Dulouz returning to modes of separation and ascension, which tend to condone domination over communion.

This sway toward separation releases Dulouz from ecocentric consciousness as a move away from a co-substantial relationship with the natural other. As Dulouz recounts, “One morning in the fog the waters were calm and glassy and there was the Nantucket Lightship followed a few hours later by floating garbage from New York including one empty carton reading CAMPBELL’S PORK AND BEANS making me almost cry with joy remembering America...” (372). Sadly, here we see that Dulouz’

romanticized Americana takes precedence over the growing postwar concern for environmental stewardship. Lardas concludes his analysis of Kerouac stating: “As he traveled down the road of uncertainty, he seemed to always be looking up, toward heaven perhaps yet always falling further and further away” (249). This quote reveals the underlying premise for this thesis. The act of separation as ascension—“looking up toward heaven”—only serves to reinforce feelings of human alienation—“always falling further and further away”—and manifests the perverse ethic of domination and the resultant self-mutilation characterized by the poisoning of the very environment that we depend on for survival. Therefore, the attempt to separate marks an attempt to disavow any dependence on the natural.

Dulouz’ ultimate failure to regard the natural in brotherhood reveals his sense of helplessness before the ego reinforced in postwar society that forces ‘cultural values’ of competition, accumulation of personal wealth and property, and an economic system that is at its heart exploitative. This helplessness resonates with the alienation and anomie that has come to be associated with the United States today.

### Chapter Conclusion

If one is to be taught, the ego must first be released from carnal desire. Dulouz, wrapped up in his childish desire to remain ever-youthful, violates the natural way of things, and thus remains ignorant that there is anything but a void in his future. This desire is not the lack marked in a totality, of insatiability, but desire for what lies beyond the void presented in interiority, a desire from exterior: multiplicity and love. The human

as a half-brother must confront nature (as rigorous acquiescence) to step out of his egocentrism and be reflected back to himself by way of the animal gaze, to step into himself as no longer half—but all in one—with the power to overflow in harmony with creation. As Jan E. Dizard states, “Nature...might just be the original Rorschach” (“Going Wild: The Contested Terrain of Nature” meaning that nature may teach humanity, and that this mirroring interrupts our sense of separation, revealing an underlying unity (112). In Dostoevsky and Kerouac's texts, humanity must first confront itself, from the natural path, before it can confront the void without screaming into it, but wade in it as a transistor between what is and what is to come.

The perpetual soreness of the perverse manifestation of the void marks an interiority in the singular and anthropocentrism in the plural. Both are alike in that they tend to reduction to the same. As such, multiplicity becomes something to fear and thus promotes the violence so prevalent against both nature and, by extension, humanity. Dulouz exhibits this fear in that he fears to multiply himself. Robert A. Hipkiss remarks of Kerouac's reticence “The analogy to the world of Kerouac's novels is clear. Women use love as a kind of drug, offering lifelong security to the male, while at the same time giving birth rampantly and overpopulating the world to no particular end” (25). In the closing chapters of *Desolation Angels* Dulouz both tours the country and lives with his mother. He does so at the expense of losing a relationship with a lover in New York. This reveals that Dulouz's fear of the void causes him to selfishly revert back toward the womb rather than to donate part of himself to the greater whole of humanity. Fathers are mysteriously absent role models in his work, which suggests that Kerouac's journeying is

an attempt to stave off the eventual and natural condition of human survival through multiplication and the dividing and merging of selves. The fact that Dulouz remains single and that Raskolnikov finds a woman illuminates the degree to which each character values otherness and infinity.

This thesis' search for a resolution of the half-brother condition from within the texts amounts to an argument for multiplicity and pluralism in order to posit a future unmired by human degradation. Dostoevsky, after all, only leads us to believe that Raskolnikov has a possible future beyond alienation. As such, he leaves his text open-ended. In so doing, we might understand that the move toward infinity is a personal experience that may only be taught through evocation, which is reflected in aesthetic inspiration. Also, to close the novel concretely would be to violate the possibility for the infinite to arise. As such, his text is itself a call toward responsibility that denies totality in favor of infinity. Likewise, Kerouac's confessional prose amounts to a cathartic erasure of preordained American identity. This demasking is evocative in itself for readers who might see Kerouac's confessional self-confrontation as a cue to do their own demasking. Infinity then is reflected in the natural's propensity to propagate and multiply itself. In other words, infinity goes hand in hand with fecundity, not war. Each author therefore reveals the importance of corners—sites of branching (as passing on the infinite) and convergence (as confronting the self)—in a world where identity is increasingly prescribed and multiplicity is undervalued.

## CONCLUSION

The Macro View

This thesis has tried to illuminate, through nature as a reflective lens, that human separation causes alienation, a lonely consciousness that renders the human trajectory in terms of scientific and technological progress meaningless as the planet's resources are squandered and its diversity destroyed. Yet, through an attempt to recognize the design of the natural world, we might use such powers of science and technology to write ourselves back into the natural landscape, perhaps correcting this destruction and, as a result, resolving alienation. As Chaloupka and Cawley state, "What is 'out there' is design..." revealing that what lies on and beyond the margins has value in terms of directing our actions and illuminating our trajectory through both unredeemable alterity and reflection (16). This alterity gives us hope through the ideas of infinity and transcendence as providing a future beyond the grasp of totalization while reflection allows an objective view of humanity as just one creature among many possible life forms in this universe who must therefore act responsibly to these possible others. As Chaloupka and Cawley conclude, "When one alters the notion of the constituent individual, the very roots of the state are at issue" (19). Thus, this thesis' close look at Dostoevsky and Kerouac in specific works reveals how they perceive the construction of the individual, and how the author's undermine the idea of a finalized identity. In so doing, we see how the individual may personify the state. As such, through a look at the construction of these characters we reveal how our perception of the state may be

augmented, for better or worse. So, while the move toward infinity is an individual process, we may nevertheless use this process to undermine the state. Hence, through the extrapolated themes of multiplicity and diversity, action versus inaction, we are able to use these cultural artifacts as jumping points to reorient the state-sanctioned trajectory of domination and exploitation. The alterity of the natural world is thus important as an imagined other, outside of ourselves, who has the ability to judge. For example, an otherworldly intelligence may judge humanity by our cultural artifacts and actions, causing us to question our trajectory. In the absence of evidence of such an other—alien or deity—the natural world functions to fill that alienating void (as a singular intelligence) by imagining the natural as itself a cosmological intelligence.

### The Texts Themselves

Dostoevsky and Kerouac set their texts within varying degrees of ordered space. Dulouz finds himself on a mountain peak, then in transit, then in a cityscape. Dostoevsky presents a more linear progression from the slums of St. Petersburg toward the natural freshness of Siberia. In tracing the motivations for the character's sway or vacillation we see that Dostoevsky's cityscape is largely to blame for the inner turmoil of Raskolnikov, while Dulouz' more erratic wandering following his time on Desolation reveals a sense of escape or hiding from the void that for him represents nothingness, not infinity. Dulouz, at the start of the text, often camps under the stars but as he develops notoriety and inhabits populous areas more and more as the novel progresses, we see him seeking accommodations due to his monetary comfort: “plenty of time to re-route the movers to

our new home” (372). Employing movers here suggests that buying a home coincides with material accumulation, marking Dulouz’ increasing vulnerability toward consumerism. From this we can posit that perhaps his romanticized “rucksack revolution” was really nothing more than an affirmation of his poverty. While he never saw his poverty as an evil, he was certainly careful with his money: “I’m mad as hell at Raphael for making me spend all that money and there he is yelling at me again how greedy and nowhere I am” (364). This quote reveals a concern for hoarding, which denies others access: implicitly condoning domination. When money was abundant, Dulouz spent time whooping it up in cities (“So I raced out of New York...with another publisher's installment (\$100)”) rather than touting his Waldenesque revolution of nomadic Americans. As such, Dulouz's conception of the transcendental is marred by his inability to overcome the barriers presented in modern American capitalist society because he romanticizes the superficial products of the nation, not the natural grandeur that allows for such a nation to exist in the first place. In the recent presidential inauguration Barack Obama spoke of a painting of Yosemite National Park that was presented before the inaugural lunch to remind Americans that in times of hardship and uncertainty the foundations of this country emerge to inspire: the very mountains and rivers, pristine nature, which fueled the sense of adventure to move West in search of a hopeful home among the grandeur of creation. Dostoevsky acknowledges this foundation by re-presenting the urban/pastoral dichotomy latent in the Russian consciousness as a 'way out' for Raskolnikov. In choosing to take the road to Siberia he finds the possibility to refresh his soul (i.e. he transcends the superficial St. Petersburg for the freshness of the

natural). In 1860s St. Petersburg there was release for the characters by way of mere spatial movement to a less suffocating landscape. However, once in postwar American society the 'way out' is more complicated because space has been shaped to reflect human society, not natural otherness. As such, we may infer that modern alienation stems from the constant thrust of society's desire to render its space and products as simulacra of itself. This human mimesis further separates humanity from a sense of the 'real' or the natural. Imagining nature as reality capable of undermining signifiers, and seeing ourselves reflected in nature, we see that it functions to alleviate the *mise en abyme* that causes humanity to create identity through material accumulation. When humanity more readily identifies with its products (cars, name brands, furniture), instead of its producer (creation), certainly alienation is reinforced.

This reading of Dostoevsky and Raskolnikov hinges on the textual environments that each character is presented with as though they were puzzles to be solved. Hence, the mitigation of textual environments provides a lens for our understanding of the cerebral plights of our protagonists. If the ordering of space in the texts reveals insights into the ethos of our respective protagonists, then we may safely claim that the environments in which the characters are set bear agency. It is obvious that man takes cues from the natural. However, at what point does this muse lose its presentability? Where is the threshold at which man's structures and systems render the natural so barren, uniform or stock that it no longer has any positive agency? Furthermore, without a muse from whence will humanity's inspiration come? Is ingenuity linked to inspiration or to necessity? Most likely it is both positive and negative that function to inspire man.

However, one should prefer to be a Monet rather than a MacGyver. That is, the invention that comes of necessity seems to be merely for utilization, and thus in line with humanity's sense of domination. The inspiration born of the muse, however, is a cue from without, not an internal survival mechanism, and as such makes a vessel of humanity. That is, it allows for the Levinasian teacher—student relationship. By purging ourselves of anthropomorphic subjectivity, we find a way to accept the guidance of the natural other. In both texts we have examples of positive and negative agency. What is intriguing about them are the ways in which the characters react to such agency and, perhaps more so, how they ultimately fall short or succeed in overcoming alienation.

While upon surface examination both authors suggest a turning back to mitigate their alienation (Dulouz to adolescence, and Raskolnikov to a more pristine landscape), there is a subtle difference that allows humanity to move forward and embrace progress in Dostoevsky that relieves the problem of the romanticism. As Jacques Derrida states in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*:

Pegasus, archetypal horse, son of Poseidon and the Gorgon, is therefore the half-brother of Bellorophon, who, descending from the same god as Pegasus, ends up following and taming a sort of brother, an other self: I am half (following) my brother, it is as if he says finally, I am (following) my other and I have the better of him, I hold him by the bit. What does one do in holding one's other by the bit? (42)

This allegorical passage sums up humanity's relation to the other, in this case, the biosphere, which, or who acts as an agent be it as radical as Gaia, or simply as a muse for human contemplation (i.e. the honeycomb as inspiration for the study of geometry). Derrida notes that we follow the natural other. Hence, he reveals that in “holding one's other by the bit” we begin to lead the other, and thus violate our original relationship,

which has led to mass species extinction in modern times. While he never says it overtly, Derrida seems to be close to suggesting that we should perhaps return to face this other, and through receptivity allow it to lead, or guide humanity. This return is necessary to 'make amends' through replenishment. This is not a mere 'turning back' to a time when the natural and the human co-existed in harmony, but rather an attempt to show that we might curb our alienated consciousness if we pay attention to the positive agents that help humanity feel at home and the negative agents that cause humanity to separate. Once again, we would call this ecocentrism, which cannot function as a simple elevation of naturalism (how would this differ from anthropocentrism?), but in this process allows humanity a window into ourselves as part of the cosmological other.

Dostoevsky, who appears to employ romantic primitivism in his portrayal of the nomads, reveals an ethic for safe progress toward co-existence and replenishment. Consider the following quote from Umberto Eco, "...rebellion against power takes the form of a call to poverty. The rebels against power are those denied any connection with money, and so every call to poverty provokes great tension and argument, and the whole city...considers a personal enemy the one who preaches poverty too much" (*The Name of the Rose* 126). This connection between poverty and resistance to the totality (represented here by the "city") resonates with Kerouac's idealistic 'rucksack revolution' as both suggest that by simply walking away, by refusing to accept the trajectory of domination and exploitation that is furthered through the pursuit of material gain, an individual may use poverty as a powerful means of return. Hence, Dostoevsky uses the nomads to suggest an 'escape valve' from totality. Thus, far from mere romanticism,

Dostoevsky's *narod* are a people that can salvage humanity from alienation by co-existing through sustainability and the cultivation of diversity. He therefore points to greed as the cause of alienation. While Dulong's romanticism often leads him to characterize and violate the autonomy of the marginal, his struggle with attachment (be it monetary gain or Americana) reveals that he was to the very end plagued by the desire to transcend versus the desire to hide from transcendence through immersion in the exploitative American society: once again suggesting an increasing complication of environment and by extension identity in modernizing states.

This complication of identity necessitated a framework from which to study the formation of identity in Dostoevsky and Kerouac. We find such a framework in carnival, which reveals sites in which totalities break down. As carnival marks inversions of hierarchical society, it functions best in the midst of totality. In Dostoevsky, the compression of space due to the collision of the freed serfs with the business community of the city causes an explosion of the carnival atmosphere. Whereas Dulong actively seeks the margins, and thus subjectively creates or misrepresents them, Raskolnikov cannot help but be immersed within the carnival atmosphere of 1860s St. Petersburg. Hence, Dostoevsky's carnival bears more direct agency in that the carnival is not a source of egotistical escape from the affluent postwar society, but a constant and unavoidable site of inversion and mirroring. As a result, the reader may notice the polyphonic construction of the individual, which undermines any sense of singular identity. These nebulous identities therefore align with cosmological conceptions of nature through identification over separation. As Jon Panish claims, "Kerouac's romanticized depictions

of and references to African-Americans (as well as other racial minorities—American Indians and Mexican-Americans) betray his essential lack of understanding of African-American culture and the African-American social experience” (107). Hence, Kerouac's trips to the margins do not allow for mirroring. Rather, by noting Kerouac's “essential lack of understanding” Panish suggests that this romanticism reinforces separation. For Kerouac, the hierarchical inversions of carnival are powerless because he seeks the margins, rather than (as in the case of St. Petersburg) allowing the margins free access to the center. Therefore, positive agency in these novels is promoted through environments that allow for discourse over echelons. As such, the hierarchies marked in a totality dissipate allowing for a window open to infinity.

### The Environmental Approach

While this thesis has tried to assemble a ‘recipe’ to resolve alienation through sustainability and the cultivation of diversity, we must be aware that such a process is itself totalizing. As William Cronon argues, “All of this calls into question the familiar modern habit of appealing to nonhuman nature as the objective measure against which human uses of nature should be judged” (*Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* 25). In other words, the natural world cannot function as an entity capable of leading humanity for the reason that 'nature' may itself be a human construction. Cronon continues: “... 'nature' is not nearly so natural as it seems. Instead, it is a profoundly human construction” (25). If this is so, then the argument *for* nature, must also be an argument *for* humanity, as our conceptions of nature perhaps reflect

ourselves more than our counterpart. Cronon agrees stating, “What we mean when we use the word 'nature' says as much about ourselves as about the things we label with the word” (25). Apparently, there is as much at stake for humanity in our treatment of this evasive word on the intellectual level as there is in the physical level; for misunderstanding on the former level can lead to suffering on the latter. In *The Abolition of Man* C.S. Lewis writes, “Human nature will be the last part of nature to surrender to man” (59). This paradoxical statement suggests that the human condition is pervasive, all that we touch must reflect ourselves. Nature, then, exists as proof of this. This is rather pessimistic as in our cultural imagination nature means escape and refreshment. Yet, for all our pervasiveness we are not to blame; by respecting and valuing (through academic research) the complex and indefinable connection between ourselves and nature, we undermine this 'midas touch' of semiotics. As such, we must be wary not only of our domineering actions, but of our very language, and socio-cultural and ancestral modes of interpretation. If we can take anything from Dostoevsky and Kerouac's texts, it should be that each text marks an apology for humanity as “Desolation Angels” or in Dostoevsky's case, creatures capable of redemption. This redemption must come in the form of a release from the relentless pursuit of monetary gain and material accumulation. In *The Unsettling of America* Wendell Berry suggests that the Amish, a culture set within the confines of Dulouz' American trap, display the sort of discipline it takes to thrive through sustainability and what some wayward consumers might call 'poverty':

Can we, believing in “the effectiveness of power,” see “the disproportionately greater effectiveness of abstaining from its use”? The only people among us that I know of who have answered this question are the Amish. They alone, as a community, have carefully restricted their use

of machine-developed energy, and so have become the true masters of technology. They have escaped the mainstream American life of distraction, haste, aimlessness, violence, and disintegration. Their life is not idly wasteful, or destructive...it cannot be denied that they have mastered one of the fundamental paradoxes of our condition: we can make ourselves whole only by accepting our partiality, by living within our limits, by being human—not by trying to be gods.” (95)

This concluding quote provides a nice contrast to the epigraph that began this investigation. In “the effectiveness of power” we find a sense of hegemony, like the hierarchy expressed in “that it may *serve*.” Notice how the traits Berry lists as characteristic of modern Americans resonate with the characteristics of alienation: “distraction” evokes separation and willed ignorance—traits often exploited for Dulongz' extended adolescence. “Haste” reminds us of Dulongz' mad vacillation, and Raskolnikov's arrogant murder. Notice also how “aimlessness, violence, and disintegration” mirror the structure of how alienation leads to violence through separation and resultant domination, which, if left unchecked, leads to a complete exhaustion of resources, thus condemning humanity to disintegration. While Berry perhaps over-emphasizes a retreat from technology, the Amish represent for Berry a people who exemplify the values that Dostoevsky reveals in the Russian peasantry, which validates ecocritical modes of literary criticism as able to highlight key issues for modern human understanding and conduct. Above all perhaps what this quote suggests is the sheer *dedication* that is required of a human race that, through idleness, threatens to undo itself. Our central characters, while often contradictory, greedy and arrogant, cannot be accurately described as idle. Through this dedication to life, more often than not a struggle, Dostoevsky and

Kerouac define humanity as noble in our perseverance, and from this we can all take heart.

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