

Liberty And Equality: Individual versus Society in the Works of Herman Melville and
Feodor Dostoyevsky.

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Thesis Abstract.

In the field of comparative literary studies, a number of scholars have previously pointed out the lack of substantial side-by-side analyses of Herman Melville and Feodor Dostoyevsky's major novels. This is a significant gap for those studying nineteenth century literature from a comparative viewpoint – especially as these two writers have been noted to hold a number of similarities in the themes they address and the manner in which they present those themes.

This academic thesis seeks to address the previously little-explored connection between Melville and Dostoyevsky's works, following an interdisciplinary approach where I focus on contextualizing a selected number of landmark texts in relation to the broader philosophical and political debates going on at the same time that these texts were published. My argument deals with the notion that by the middle of the nineteenth century, as the Romanticist moods gradually ceded to make way for the new Realist perspectives, the figure of the writer could not remain detached from the major social and political debates and reforms. The writer was expected to act as an involved societal observer, recording and presenting potentially problematic themes for a broader audience, so that their response would eventually effect genuine societal change.

As the first half of the nineteenth century was a time permeated with societal upheaval and revolutionary thought, in this thesis I am looking at Dostoyevsky and Melville through this prism, dealing with the question of how each addresses the balance between individual liberty and the obligations that an individual holds towards society founded upon quasi-nationalistic, "exceptionalist" ideals. I connect my analysis with figures such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Carlyle and Johann-Gottfried Herder, seeking to comprehend the existing intellectual background at the time that Melville and Dostoyevsky wrote, reconciling straightforward literary analysis with broader philosophical and intellectual context.

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Liberty And Equality: Individual versus Society in the Works of Herman Melville and Feodor Dostoyevsky.

The Declaration of Independence (1776), conventionally seen as the document creating and embodying the concept of American statehood, famously contains the following words:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.¹

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, America presented a singular phenomenon on the world stage as a nation-state founded upon the democratic ideals of liberty and equality. It appeared radically different from the largely absolutist governments of the Old World, such as Russia, described by Alexis De Tocqueville as “holding all the authority of society in a single arm,” as the decision-making powers were concentrated in the despotic figure of the monarch.² Yet, as one reads deeper into the Declaration, the gleaming promise appears too complex to be achieved in reality. The statement that apriori “all men are created equal,” seems straightforward enough, providing a welcome change from the meticulously hierarchical societal systems functioning throughout most European states at the time, like

¹ See *Declaration of Independence of the United States: a Transcription*. In Congress, 4 July 1776.

² See Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, for the general analysis of this era. Unlike the earlier attempts at attaining democratic government (for instance as with Haitian Rebellion, or the English Civil War) America represented a singular example of successful introduction of the democracy-based governance. Also De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 656.

the Russian Table of Ranks.³ The same statement further on also implies that presumably all members of this perfectly equal society possess unquestionable rights to “liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Looking at this argument through a purely individualistic lens, all seems well – however, if we consider the previous point that “all men are created equal,” the concepts of “liberty” and “happiness” sit uncomfortably alongside it. To what extent may one enjoy one’s liberty and actively pursue “happiness” so that it does not encroach upon the liberty or happiness of one’s equal fellow-subject? Achieving a viable balance between liberty and equality (that is, between the rights of an individual and the demands of society), creates conflict, due to the oxymoronic nature of the task.

Let us look closer at the historic context. By the middle of the nineteenth century, as the dust has settled after the tumultuous events of the American Revolution, and the French Revolution in Europe, a new age gradually emerged upon the shards of the past.⁴ In the aftermath of the turbulent revolutionary years of the last half of the eighteenth century (echoed later by the unexpected revolutionary resurgence of 1848 throughout Europe by the newly-formed bourgeois circles, demanding recognition for the ordinary citizen and opposing the monarchical state-systems), the need for individual liberty was recognised by figures like John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), yet had to be balanced against the necessity to preserve societal peace.⁵ Joanna Innes and Mark Philp illustrate this state of affairs in *Reimagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions* (2013), highlighting the fact that applying theoretical principles of liberty *and* equality in practice frequently proved to be a complicated matter in the period known as “The Age of Revolutions” spanning roughly 1750-1850 (1-2), which was marked by

³ This system organised individuals within the Russian society according to the position they occupied in the governmental apparatus (which in reality frequently was affected by the individual’s familial background). See David Herman’s comprehensive outline of the system, “Peter the Great’s Table of Ranks” at <http://www.faculty.virginia.edu/herman/tolstoy/tableofranks.htm>.

⁴ See Gordon S. Wood’s discussion of the revolutions of 1848 in *Empire of Liberty*.

⁵ See Mill, *On Liberty*.

a number of historically significant uprisings throughout, such as the French Revolution, the American War of Independence, or the Revolutions of 1848.⁶

Philosophical and literary works emergent at the time frequently asserted the question of recognizing the importance of individual liberty, such as Max Stirner's treatise, *The Ego and His Own* (1844), where the value of the individual personality was discussed and emphasised. Stirner's oeuvre later on influenced the argument in Feodor Dostoyevsky's landmark novel, *Crime and Punishment* (1865-6) which addressed the dangerous attractions of excessive individualism. In France, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) contemplated a society founded upon willing mutual cooperation of all its members rather than depersonalized legalistic codes. In America, Henry David Thoreau preached individual resistance against stringent governmental control in *Civil Disobedience* (1849).

In short, the time of individual "enlightened despots" described by Derek Beales, ruling over the voiceless masses with an iron fist, appeared indeed to be over. Yet what came in its stead?⁷ I argue that it concerned a renewed sense of interest and pride in one's belonging as a subject within a specific nation-state. In the United States, an interest in expansionist and nationalist rhetorics could be observed, seen most typically in the politics of Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) and Andrew Jackson (1767-1845).⁸ Meanwhile in Europe, the first half of the nineteenth century was also associated with the growth of consciously nationalistic tendencies. For instance, Andrei Zorin asserts about Russia in *By Fables Alone* (2012), that the time period starting roughly around 1830 coincided with "a new phase of ideological production" (325), characterised in a broader cultural sense by a transition from vague romantic moods to a consciously nationalistic, communitarian outlook. In short, the middle of the nineteenth century

⁶ Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, *Reimagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions* (2013). Innes and Philp discuss revolutionary uprisings flaring up time and again in Europe, as "many different contenders – from Marx to monarchs – quarrelled over whose cause was the most "democratic" (2).

⁷ See Derek Beales, Hamish Scott, "Philosophical Kingship and Enlightened Despotism" in *Enlightenment and reform in eighteenth century Europe*.

⁸ Reginald Horsman, "The Northwest Ordinance and the Shaping of an Expanding Republic."

was marked by the increased awareness and participation of the individual in the national destiny.⁹ “Everyman” was expected to become part of a glorious community, as a thinking and active participant working towards its improvement.

Nevertheless, such ideals of commonality were frequently resented. The extent of liberty offered by the Declaration of Independence logically had to be curtailed to preserve societal equality: “...[A]s the notion of liberty began to challenge all hierarchies of property and power, nativism was redeployed to establish the proper limit of the liberty’s reach and property’s distribution” (Laura Doyle 29).¹⁰ This came into conflict with the general moods pervading society at the time, described by Gordon S. Wood (331).¹¹ Societal change dawned; yet in reality, some desperately clung onto the old hierarchical foundations offering greater scope of personal power: a sentiment reflected by contemporaneous political figures such as Napoleon III (1808-1873) whose published treatise on Julius Caesar (1866) emphasised the superiority of certain individuals as a “natural” phenomenon, or John Randolph of Roanoke (1773-1833), who famously professed to “hate equality”.¹² In the realm of letters, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in *Representative Men* (1850) expressed disgust at cohesive communal existence devoid of individuality: “[B]ut enormous populations, if they be beggars, are disgusting, like moving cheese, like hills of ants, or of fleas—the more, the worse” (*Representative Men*).¹³

Literature also mirrored the existing conflict, with novels like *Crime and Punishment* (1865-6) addressing the theme of conflict between an individual and wider society. In *Moby-*

⁹ The personality and historical influence of Napoleon I (1769-1821), whose origins were bourgeois rather than aristocratic, are also culturally significant for that particular era.

¹⁰ Laura Doyle, *Toward a Philosophy of Transnationalism*.

¹¹ Gordon S. Wood, *Empire for Liberty*.

¹² See David Johnson, *John Randolph of Roanoke*, for the overview of Randolph’s life and politics, and Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind*. Furthermore, Napoleon III’s *History of Julius Caesar* (1866) caused much debating at the time it was published, being essentially an apologetic of a “superior” individual unconstrained in his actions.

¹³ See Emerson, *Representative Men*. Also see the overview of Emerson’s specific philosophy by Allen Meldenhall.

Dick (1851), the protagonist describes this resentment, metaphorising collaborative existence as humble sailor's work: "And at first, this sort of thing is unpleasant enough. It touches one's sense of honor, particularly if you come of an old established family in the land, like Van Rensselaers, or Randolphs, or the Hardicanutes" (*MD* 3). From a literary perspective, looking at the image of a ship is a classic metaphor for the nation in itself, the sailors being comparable to the population working harmoniously towards the single common goal to keep "the ship of state" afloat – and one resentful aristocrat reluctant to participate.¹⁴ Cooperation, as well as the associated uniformity, was deemed by such figures to be menial, opposed to the essential concept of Jeffersonian liberty.

BACKGROUND OVERVIEW: WRITER AS OBSERVER.

Therefore, the literary world of the middle of the nineteenth century echoed what was happening on a broader societal level.¹⁵ The literary heroes appearing at this same time confronted the conflict between the personal aspirations and social expectations. Two such examples could be the idealistic crisis experienced by Pierre Glendinning in Herman Melville's *Pierre* (1852), or, more sinisterly, the obsessive Napoleonic tendencies of Rodion Raskolnikov, illustrative of the notion that social harmony cannot be attained by individualistic impulses alone without cooperating with others. Rather than remaining completely detached, the literary hero (as well as his real-life emulators), was expected to function amicably within a group. The "pursuit of happiness" could no longer be the sole personal preoccupation. Consequently, I

¹⁴ See broadly C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, as well as Yuri Kovalev, *Herman Melville and the American Romanticism*. The "ship of state" is a metaphor first coined by Plato in *Republic* (360BC), which has become a staple in political parlance ever since. In specifically American, antebellum context, Longfellow's poem, *The Building of the Ship* (1849?) extolling "Union, strong and great," is noteworthy.

¹⁵ On a generally "European" note, this is echoed by Martin Hewitt, who claims that the time period beginning circa 1830 was marked by culturally significant transformations from the individual concerns to societal improvement (see Hewitt 433-4). In regards to America during the same chronological period, the figure of Ralph Waldo Emerson is discussed by Aidan Day in *Romanticism* (2011) as the quintessentially American literary figure who exudes individualism (190-191). Moreover, Day states that "Romanticism gave a special importance to individual experience" (3).

argue that the markedly individualistic romanticist spirit in literature was gradually being overshadowed by texts emphasising concerns for societal justice - contradicting Edward Sapir's claim that ever since the dawning of Romanticism, it was individualism, rather than communitarianism, that has shaped society.¹⁶

Analysing that trajectory closely, the figure of a refined nobleman dabbling in writing for his own pleasure was being replaced in favour of a more socially ambiguous authorial presence frequently raising uncomfortable questions about how society functioned, and acting as an involved commentator. This phenomenon was initially probed in *Commissioned Spirits* by Jonathan Arac in 1973, whose argument proposed that mid-nineteenth century writers sought to put forth a unified vision of society and its problems.¹⁷ An interesting example of the authorial figure acting in this capacity is offered by Aidan Day, who discusses the "beginning of the waning of Romantic interiority" by referring to Herman Melville (1819-1891), who, he claims, illustrated "the failure of Romantic idealism," drawing attention to the oft-imperfect actuality (203-204). Considering Melvillean texts such as "The Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids" (1855), or *White-Jacket, or the World in a Man O'War* (1850), this tendency can be noted, the narrator using personal experience so as to describe actual existing problems (inhumane treatment of factory workers in the former, and corporal punishment in the navy in the latter). To reinforce that point, Andrew Delbanco mentions

¹⁶ See, for example, Jerome McGann, "Hero with a Thousand Faces: the rhetoric of Byronism," *Byron and Romanticism*, 2009. Excessive romanticist individualism had been represented by the likes of George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), described by McGann as the "most personal of poets" (141).

Edward Sapir in "Culture: genuine and spurious" (1924), expresses unease at the overt individualistic tendencies in American society, and generally draws a suggestion that these tendencies first took root in the Romantic, Emersonian era. Richard Handler, in his essay "Anti-Romantic Romanticism" claims that "[Sapir] equated romanticism with the worst excesses of American individualism, which led people to undisciplined quests for self-development and ego gratification" (1).

Concerning the interest in social justice, see an entry on the "social novel" (albeit largely dealing with British literature) by Bethan Carney, "Social-Problem Novel," in *Victorian Literature*, January 2015. The social novel as a concept was meant to attract the public's attention to existing problematic issues in society at the time.

The chief difference from the same concerns exhibited during the years preceding the reign of romanticism was the interest in the concrete problems experienced by actual society, rather than utopian visions of some idealised non-existent order. See Charles M. Andrews's introduction in *Ideal Empires and Republics*.

¹⁷ See Jonathan Arac, *Commissioned Spirits*. Nevertheless, Arac focused almost exclusively on English-language authors.

Melville using his art to “illustrate this or that social pathology” (224) and “writing commentaries in the form of fiction” (225).

The example of Melville illustrates the core argument that I am putting forward in this thesis, that by mid-nineteenth century, rather than documenting their own “pursuit of happiness,” more and more writers frequently fulfilled the role of a watchful critic commenting on how well the equilibrium of social equality and personal liberty is preserved. Sometimes it was intentional; upon other occasions it happened quite independently of the writer’s original aims, as, for instance, occurred with Melville’s *White-Jacket*, where the depictions of life aboard an American warship contributed to the debate on abolition of corporal punishment in the United States navy.¹⁸ As stylistically Realism began to gradually replace the Romantic excesses, so had the actual subject-matter of the novels slowly become more socially relevant.¹⁹

Looking at this hypothesis from a transnational platform, one should note that such a tendency was not limited to America alone, but manifested throughout what we understand as “Western” literature. Whether one opens a novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-1889), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) or Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), underneath the different plot twists and turns, the same tendency appears. The author does not explicitly place themselves as identifying and belonging with either higher (land-owning nobility) or lower (petty bourgeois, or solidly working class) social strata, but stands as a separate, neutral figure providing a broad commentary on the events they depict. As George Sand put it in the preface to her novel *Horace* (1841): “God save me from mocking any real-life person. But my aim this time is to depict satirically a vice

¹⁸ See George Hodak for the detailed discussion of this case. Brook Thomas in “American Literature and Law” also mentions this, although he suggests that Melville’s own influence was “minimal” (Levander and Levine, 416).

¹⁹ See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, for the discussion of the stylistic interest in more realistic subject-matter at the time, particularly in relation to Gustave Flaubert’s works.

prevalent in today's world; and if have not succeeded to do this better than ever, I'll say that this is not the author's fault, but the actual reality's" (*Horace*).²⁰

Describing "truth" first and foremost was seen as the writer's prime moral duty – for instance, Charlotte Bronte states in the preface to *Jane Eyre* (1847): "The world may not like ... to let white-washed walls vouch for clean shrines. It may hate him who dares to scrutinise and expose ... to penetrate the sepulchre, and reveal charnel relics: but hate as it will, it is indebted to him."²¹ The writer is primarily preoccupied not with extreme sentimental experiences or word-play for its own sake, but with drawing attention to the composites of the societal fabric and its flaws.²² Certainly, sentimentalism still remained a major literary trend, particularly in the realm of popular novels (and both Melville and Dostoevsky do depict plenty of emotionally-fraught scenes in their texts).²³ However, I argue that frequently it was employed by writers like Harriet Beecher-Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), for example, to draw attention to important societal issues such as abolitionism, through the means of an emotionally involving story.²⁴

It is true that at that exact time, the main changes occurred regarding the social class system, economical status and the writer's position in society – it was yet a long way to go for the gender dialogue to commence: for example, female writers either had to assume male

²⁰ See George Sand, *Horace*.

²¹ See Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*.

²² In *Melville and Aesthetics*, Samuel Otter discusses the general aesthetic patterns dispersed throughout the Melvillean works, calling Melville "richly suggestive" (5). However, what I want to stress particularly is that Melville (quite like most authors of his day) is not exclusively preoccupied with creating "art for art's sake" as a wordsmith, or recording personal sentimental responses.

See also Raymond Henry Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, for a distinct interpretation of this problem. Williams speaks of "emergent discourse" (123), which concerns the gradual recognition and growing influence of the culture produced by a minority group within a given society.

²³ For a good example of the discussion of sentimentalism used as an instrument to draw attention to pressing debates such as abolitionism, is the analysis of Harriet Beecher Stowe's world in *Engendering Romance* (1994) by Emily M. Budick.

²⁴ Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), was also well-known in Russia at the time, as a popular text highlighting humanitarian, ethical concerns, which many compared to the situation regarding serfdom on home soil. For instance, the educated characters in *What is to be Done?* (1863) by Chernyshevsky are seen referring to Stowe's work in one of the scenes.

pseudonyms (like George Sand or Charlotte Bronte) or deal with presumably “sentimental” themes.²⁵ Yet, compared to the situation in the past, this was a significant breakthrough nonetheless, paving the way for the future. In this respect, Russia (exhibiting the culturally significant phenomenon of *raznochintsy* – i.e. intellectuals stemming from diverse backgrounds, not necessarily materially wealthy yet educated and “self-made” to an extent, who, unlike the European bourgeois, primarily stressed intellectualism and pursuit of academic knowledge rather than economic success as centremost virtues) and America (with its focus on the democratic concept of equality), present an especially interesting comparative case - the described phenomenae juxtaposed to the quasi-feudal vision of society cemented upon rigid hierarchy.²⁶

The fluid origins of the commentator implied the reduction in class-based bias of opinion, as the figure of the writer traversed the conventional societal boundaries. Melville in his correspondence does mention “aristocracy of the brain” – hinting at the intellectual capacities rather than birth or wealth being the new prerequisite for those seeking to shape or influence society.²⁷ These boundaries were not solely limited to the world of class alone. The Seneca Falls Convention (1848) stressed the growing role of women’s voice in influencing societal change as education for women became a prominent issue, and presumed an expectation of an active stance on diverse social issues: “[T]he women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation, by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, not their

²⁵ In the article discussing Mary Wollstonecraft’s legacy, R.M. Janes explicitly complains of the extremely slow progress of female emancipation in the political and cultural field post-1790.

²⁶ *Raznochintsy* as a social group gave rise to nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia, as we know it nowadays. See D.S. Mirsky (445-450) for the outline of the phenomenon, and Robert J. Brym’s article.

²⁷ Herman Melville, letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1? June? 1851, in OUP’s edition of *Moby-Dick*.

ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.”²⁸ Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) and Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), both born into slavery, rose to passionately condemn the harrowing injustices of the slave-holding society, Douglass reiterating yet again the importance of the writer’s observational capability for attaining social justice: “A man must be disposed to judge of emancipation by other tests than whether it has increased the produce of sugar,—and to hate slavery for other reasons than because it starves men and whips women,—before he is ready to lay the first stone of his anti-slavery life” (Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass).²⁹ Now the ability to affect societal change required primarily the ability to be an astute observer, who, as Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) noted, can “...see often the real relation which men bear to their race and age, and observe the facts by which to determine whether such men are great only because of circumstances, or by the irresistible power of their own minds.”³⁰

Literature echoed societal ambiguousness, as education and social consciousness grew in importance over noble origins, expanding from the original notion of “bourgeois” or “middle-class” tied in mainly with economic status.³¹ As Doyle asserts in *Freedom’s Empire: Race and Rise of the Novel in Transatlantic Modernity, 1640-1940* (2008), the wide availability of printed matter rendered the ability to form a concise opinion on the existent issues democratic and accessible (44). The true “aristocrats” in the new society now were those who were observant, attentive, and could express their views well.

Such positioning can be seen particularly well in Melville’s personality. As Andrew Delbanco states, “He (Melville) was born on August 1 1819, into good circumstances. But his

²⁸ Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 was a pivotal event dedicated to the discussion of women’s rights in America. See “Report of Woman’s Rights Convention” (1848), on the NPS website, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/report-of-the-womans-rights-convention.htm>

²⁹ See Frederick Douglass.

³⁰ See Margaret Fuller, *At Home and Abroad*.

³¹ The interest in concepts of social inequality, and the rise of the middle class in Melville’s day is alluded to by Gavin Jones in “Social Inequality in American Literature” (Levander and Levine, 95).

parents lacked the money to stay there” (17). Equally reluctant to pigeonhole himself as an aristocrat, a practical bourgeois or a working-class presence, Melville, whose youth consisted of a series of oscillations between different lowly occupations and attempts to pursue a suitably genteel education (Delbanco 33) was exactly such a writer – well-fitted to be an observer as a representative of the new, more democratic order, who is able to relate to different segments of society and produce an impact on it through the means of his writing.³²

The image of the writer remaining interconnected with the discussions on the major societal issues is prominently presented in the work and personality of Feodor Mikhailovitch Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), quite akin to Melville in terms of fluid family origins and capacities for social observation.³³ Anna Schur stresses the influence of contemporary legal processes and societal reforms on Dostoyevsky’s works, stating that for the writer, “...[T]he boundaries between his fiction and journalism are more porous than we have thought” (6).³⁴ Dostoyevsky’s involvement in most pressing social causes of the day, such as the land reforms and the plight of the peasant population, is factually attested, and has been recorded by biographers (Frank, Leatherbarrow), correlating with my own argument that the writer was not expected to be entirely detached from the world anymore.

MELVILLE AND DOSTOYEVSKY: IMAGINARY REALMS.

I maintain that Melville and Dostoyevsky played a similar role as observers and commentators on the world around them, and thus present a perfect case for comparative analysis. Yet what other uniting traits between the two do we need to bear in mind – apart from

³² Myra Jehlen in “Melville and Class” also stresses the fact that although Melville was conscious of economic, class-based boundaries, he positioned himself as standing outside those.

³³ See Leatherbarrow, and also Frank.

³⁴ Anna Schur, *The Wages of Evil*. Michael Rogin in *Subversive Genealogy* also discusses at length the relevance of Melville’s preoccupation with various social issues, which renders him akin to Dostoevsky in this respect.

the fact, that, as Charles Olson states, both were “great writers” (150)? I propose that there are three significant factors to consider.

The first factor is that Melville and Dostoyevsky can be held as products of the literary (and socio-historic) period which entailed a transitional moment between the stages of Romantic idealism with its particular focus on the power of individual personality, and Realism, where the interest in the nature and improvement of various mechanisms holding a given society together, took over. Typically, Dostoyevsky is seen as a canonical “Realist” writer, notwithstanding some occasional forays into Romanticism.³⁵ Melville has alternatively been described as a Romantic or a Realist by different scholars (although overlooked by his contemporaries and only fully reintegrated into the classical American literary canon after the “Melville Revival” of 1919).³⁶ Considering these two possibilities, I prefer the latter, siding with Aidan Day’s suggestion that Melville is a “foil” to Romantic individualism in that he showcases its failings in works such as *Moby-Dick* (a statement also echoed by Yuri Kovalev), as well as with Michael Rogin’s arguments concerning Melville’s lively engagement with social issues of his day.

The second significant factor addresses the fact that both writers were interested in societal order and reform, and in the course of their career often used their works to comment on relevant issues. Previously, there have been produced scholarly analyses that sought to connect Melville specifically with social issues such as class or political reform: by Dennis Berthold (2015), Myra Jehlen (2005) and Nancy Fredericks (1995).³⁷ Dostoyevsky, as per most

³⁵ See Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism – A Study of Dostoevsky in relation to Balzac, Dickens and Gogol*. Also see Bakhtin and Berdyaev in general.

³⁶ For Melville as a Romanticist, see Morse, *American Romanticism – From Melville to James – the enduring excessive*.

For Melville as a Realist, see Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy – The Politics and Art of Herman Melville*. Rogin goes as far as to label Melville a Realist (thus putting him on a par with Dostoyevsky), because his novels “do not escape society” but penetrate and reflect it.

See Marovitz’s essay, “The Melville Revival” for outline of the resurgent interest in Melville in 1919.

³⁷ Also see Joel Pfister, “The Critical Work of American Literature” (Levander and Levine, 30) mentioning Melville’s significance for the democratic discourse.

scholars, from Mikhail Bakhtin (1972) to Schur, is described as being a vigorous campaigner for various cases such as the improvement of the peasants' plight, dubbing it "a most important question" in *An Announcement Concerning the Subscription to Vremya Magazine for 1861* (1861).³⁸ Taking to view his own words, it is obvious that Dostoyevsky definitely was not solely preoccupied with far-fetched theories. Just like Melville, he fulfils the part of the involved observer, conscious of the actual happenings in his immediate surroundings.

The third factor is the fact that in their landmark texts (such as *Crime and Punishment* (1861) or *Moby-Dick* (1850)), both writers explore at length the opposition between a strong-willed individual (such as Captain Ahab or Rodion Raskolnikov) and the wider hierarchical society or its representatives. This theme permeates both writers' works throughout. In *Crime and Punishment*, the protagonist wonders, "Am I a trembling creature, or do I have a right?" (398), whilst Melville, in personal correspondence, describes an individual "who, like Russia or the British empire, declares himself a sovereign nature".³⁹ Their works thus offer a means to reflect on the conflict between the individual, placed high by virtue of birth and invested by personal power, and the wider society united by common goals and the sense of national identity.

Did Melville and Dostoyevsky ever cross each other's paths in reality? I maintain – no (as no factual proofs to this have been discovered to this day), and this is what makes this project even more interesting in terms of comparativeness. One may recall the term "cross-pollination" coined by George Panichas to indicate an influence that one writer's work may wield over that produced by another.⁴⁰ This term implies the mutual exchange of ideas between two individual writers, rather than permitting to consider how each writer's course of thought developed individually. Comparing the two writers who have not come across

³⁸ Dostoyevsky, *An Announcement Concerning the Subscription to "Vremya" Magazine for 1861*.

³⁹ Herman Melville to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 16 (?) April (?) 1851.

⁴⁰ See George Panichas.

each other, however, may reveal the key developmental moments that each went through independently.

In John Fiske's article on the reception of American literature in the Soviet world, one encounters a direct statement that there is an almost complete certainty that Melville and Dostoyevsky existed on wholly separate planes.⁴¹ According to Fiske, only *Typee* (1846) might have been available in the Russian language before 1953. None of Dostoyevsky's personal correspondence or diaries suggest at any point that the author could have read it. Nor were Dostoyevsky's novels widely available in the English language and on American soil (the only existing translation in Melville's lifetime would have been *Crime and Punishment* translated by Frederick Whishaw in 1885, and again, none of the writer's personal correspondence suggests that Melville had ever come across it).

Considering the existing scholarly evidence, one may say that so far, an explicit point of dialogue between the two writers has not been established. The hypothesis that Melville and Dostoyevsky's works resemble each other was first probed by Franklin D. Reeve in *The White Monk: An Essay on Dostoyevsky and Melville* (1989), yet, as his monograph was ill-received at the time, it has been largely overlooked until recent years. Andrew Delbanco considers Melville "an American Dostoyevsky" (12) in that Melville asserts crucial universalist issues in a quasi-prophetic manner. However, Delbanco does not offer any solid comparative evidence to elaborate on his claim.⁴² The actual academic inquiry carried out to date is far from extensive (the few existent examples include Nancy Ruttenburg's recent analysis, *Dostoyevsky's Democracy*;⁴³ or Reeve's aforementioned monograph).⁴⁴ Charles Olson discusses both

⁴¹ See John Fiske, "Herman Melville and Soviet Criticism." Fiske also points out that until 1953, Melville was virtually unheard of in Russian scholarship on American literature.

⁴² Andrew Delbanco, *Melville, his world and work*.

⁴³ See Nancy Ruttenburg, *Dostoyevsky's Democracy*. Ruttenburg briefly discusses Melville's short story, *Bartleby the Scrivener*, as opposed to the vision of Dostoyevsky, regarding the role of the "little man" oppressed by the existing social order.

⁴⁴ See F.D. Reeve, *The White Monk: an essay on Dostoyevsky and Melville*. The attempt by Reeve to contrast the general themes running through both authors' works was poorly received, with reviewers such as Andrew

Melville and Dostoyevsky in a chapter of *Collective Prose* (1997) titled “On Melville, Dostoyevsky, Lawrence and Pound.”⁴⁵ However, it is notable that he attempts virtually no in-depth comparative analysis of Melville and Dostoyevsky specifically, preferring instead to discuss each as a separate instance. One can thus note that the existing research has been at best sporadic.

Nevertheless, despite those meagre gleanings, there have frequently emerged suggestions that Melville and Dostoyevsky are quite alike. Andrew Delbanco’s opinion has already been mentioned. Ellen Chances, reviewing Anne Lounsbury’s monograph *Thin Culture, High Art*, openly suggests the comparison of the two writers as a potential field for closer analysis.⁴⁶ Lounsbury, for her part, in a comparative case study of Gogol and Hawthorne as two writers who had been unaware of each other’s work or ideas, implies that the cultural climate pervading Russian and American literature at the time, peculiar in its similarity and distinguished by a lack of solid cultural heritage as well as a desire to express the authorial perception of *universal* issues, is an area that needs to be studied more.

Considering a specific point of convergence for the two that I chose for the purposes of this particular project, I am looking at the ways in which both address the problem of maintaining balance between liberty and equality in their respective national communities. Considering Melville’s initial place in the pro-democratisation, reform-supporting Young America movement (documented by most scholars, such as Michael Rogin, Andrew Delbanco or Yuri Kovalev), as well as Dostoyevsky’s biographically attested pro-nationalistic position as “the most important of all the conservative heirs of the Slavophiles” (Abbot Gleason 8), it comes across that both were evidently involved, or at least interested in the philosophical and

Wachtel stating that it contained a number of ungrounded, highly personal viewpoints. Reeve also maintains that Dostoyevsky and Melville did not have any connection or awareness of each other during their lifetime.

⁴⁵ Charles Olson, *Collected Prose*.

⁴⁶ See Anne Lounsbury’s analysis in *Thin Culture, High Art – Gogol, Hawthorne and authorship in nineteenth century Russia and America*, as well as Ellen Chances’s review of the said monograph.

political debates regarding their respective national communities, which duly was reflected in their works.⁴⁷

Can visions of Russia and America, compared against each other, be taken as a starting-point of dialogue between the two writers? Generally, the scholarly consensus regarding Dostoyevsky and America perhaps is best summarised by Abbot Gleason. Although it is biographically ascertained that the writer never physically went to the United States, America reappears throughout his writing as a mythologised, imaginary construct that Dostoyevsky imbues with specific meaning: a soulless, individualistic “otherworld” acting as the opposite of the Russia he deeply cared for. To give but some examples: “[J]ust tell them he went to America” (*C&P*, 486) says the dissipated Svidrigailov in *Crime and Punishment* (1861) – America being a not too subtle metaphor for a hellish otherworld; and in *Devils* (1871), the idealistic nationalist Shatov speaks of the hard time he had as a worker in the United States, bemoaning the pragmatic American spirit that appears particularly unpleasant contrasted with Russian innocence: “We Russians, when compared to Americans, are little children” (*Devils*, 146). The author himself may not have been familiar with real America, but created an imaginary realm reflecting his own views. This phenomenon is described as “fictional forms of nationalism” by Paul Giles in *Virtual Americas* (2002) (1). For the writer-observer, it is easier to notice flaws in a realm different to their own (frequently depicting it as an imaginary construct rather than relying on fact), since the writer is essentially a product of their national background and is likely to be at least somewhat biased in that respect, even if subconsciously.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See, for example, Nina Baym’s article, “Melville’s Quarrel with Fiction”. It is true that Melville’s association with Young America may be seen chiefly as an income-generating venture, however, the fact remains that the writer at a particular chronological period formed part of this movement and his contribution should not be overlooked. Dostoyevsky’s involvement with Slavophile thinkers is well documented biographically (Frank, Gleason).

⁴⁸ In “Globalization” essay, Paul Giles hints that although “national narratives have often attempted to present themselves as purveyors of universal values,” nationalistic bias cannot be separated from them (Levander and Levine, 373).

To illustrate this point, Gleason notes the general juxtaposition between the individual liberty and societal equality in Dostoyevsky's eyes: "Russia, according to nativist canon, was fundamentally Christian and communal; American society was unchristian and took to extremes the general European tendency towards individualism" (4). To a non-American writer, the principles of liberty and equality would unsurprisingly be more unbalanced in the United States.

Meanwhile, Melville mentions Russia only occasionally: "[W]hat are the sinews and souls of Russian serfs and Republican slaves but Fast-Fish, whereof possession is the whole of the law? ... What was Poland to the Czar?" (*MD*, 356). The sentiment is quite clear – the writer attributes to Russia of his imagination the similar rapaciousness that Dostoyevsky endows America with. Whilst both writers lacked real-life points of contact, both still envision the other's country as the perverted opposite of their own; a field for projecting authorial anxieties upon. In this way, there rises a hypothetical juxtaposition between Melville and Dostoyevsky in that each saw his own nation as an ideal society contrasted with an imaginary faraway realm pervaded by injustice and evil.

AMERICA AND RUSSIA: ACTUAL SIMILARITIES.

We cannot commence discussing Dostoyevsky and Melville's opposition over imaginary constructs of Russia and America without considering the actual similarities existing between those two nations at the time, in a more general sense. The points of resemblance between the two were frequently mentioned specifically during the early Republic and antebellum eras in diplomatic rhetorics – the overall tendency leaning towards emphasising the benevolent-spirited competition between the two nations, rather than direct opposition.

One such an example is the speech by Dr Thomas Bond, the president of American Philosophical Society (1782), as recalled by the historian Nikolai Bolkhovitinov, claiming that there rests something in common between Russia and America in what concerns created improvements and unexpected greatness.⁴⁹ Another example mentioned by Bolkhovitinov is the conversation between John Randolph serving as the Ambassador to Russia in 1830, and Prince Lieven:

The new American ambassador recalled that since “the times of renowned Catherine,” Russia and the United States were one in what concerned sea-laws and principles. Their interests are “similar, if not the same.” There is no rivalry between the two, but a friendly competition, which of the two would faster populate and transform its immense expanses of land. (*Russian-American Relations 1815-1832*)⁵⁰

Obsequy of diplomats aside, scholarly evidence to date suggests that specifically in mid-nineteenth century, Russia and America enjoyed a generally benevolent, or at least neutral relationship as “equals,” the actual political situation hardly reflecting the conflict hinted upon in Dostoyevsky or Melville’s writing.⁵¹ The general diplomatic landscape suggested mutual acceptance, born out of the necessity to carry out trade between the two nations.⁵² As Bolkhovitinov argued in *Russian-American Relations 1815-1832* (1975), “The bourgeois-republican American government indeed was a distinct opposite of tsarist Russia, yet it did not preclude the two states from maintaining a wholly neutral and even benevolent relationship” (15).

⁴⁹ See Bolkhovitinov N.N. *Rossiia Otkryvaet Ameriku: 1732-1799*. Also see *Russian-American Dialogue on Cultural Relations, 1776-1914*, pp 4-5.

⁵⁰ See Bolkhovitinov, *Russian-American Relations 1815-1832*. Also see John Randolph, letter to H. A. Lieven, 29 July (10 August) 1830.

⁵¹ See, for example, Norman Saul, *Distant Friends* (1991).

⁵² During John Quincy Adams’ service as the ambassador to Russia (1809-1814), he also frequently referred to the necessity to foster successful trade links between America and Russia. See David W. McFadden’s article, “John Quincy Adams, American Commercial Diplomacy, and Russia.”

A crucial contemporaneous source depicting the resemblances between the two states at the time comes from Alexis De Tocqueville discussing the similarities of Russia and America in *Democracy in America* (1835).⁵³ He concludes that “[E]ach one of them seems called by a secret design of Providence to hold in its hands one day the destinies of half the world” (656). As tempting as it is to dub De Tocqueville a visionary, he manages to pinpoint the similarity between the two seemingly distant and unrelated nation states undergoing somewhat similar developmental patterns, from being relatively young nations who “grew up in obscurity” with no fixed sense of cultural identity to powerful nation-states where this identity was beginning to form “with an easy and rapid stride”, especially if compared to the slowing development in Europe (655).

The most fascinating matter, however, is that De Tocqueville notes the vast potential for influence and “holding the... destinies of half the world” in both nations. This powerful force is concealed within the combined human potential of individual subjects making up the national body, when unified by a common objective or goal and moving towards it. Considering the impact that this power could exert on the world, the idea is frightening, evoking echoes of expansion progressing with “rapid stride.” Yet De Tocqueville’s specific language is more respectfully admiring in tone, and does not manage to convey the frightening totalitarian connotations that emerge at the thought of combining the enormous potential for power with the narrow nationalistic vision.

Concentrated human potential, where the entire nation acts as one individual, is a significant topic linking Russia and America. It is discussed by Wai-Chee Dimock in *Empire for Liberty* (1991), where the analysis of *Moby-Dick* and Ahab’s fixation on the pursuit of the White Whale are tied in with the concepts of Manifest Destiny and the Jeffersonian apologetics for territorial expansion (3) – the rampant “pursuit of happiness” taking on dark tones, and

⁵³ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol.2.

recalling Melville's reflections about the avaricious world of whaling being comparable to the land-grabbing attitude of whole nations (*MD* 356). As per Dimock's argument, even though she tends to see America as standing in the avant-garde of the world (14), and in comparison to this image Russia may be likened to a fly in amber or past solidified, unwilling to rapidly progress towards "modernity" - the concept of vast dormant potential rings true for both.⁵⁴

I maintain that the notion of dormant human potential should be connected with the fact that acting as a national subject is essentially a concept which presumes belonging to a national community made up of many individuals. In this way, realising the inert national potential is only possible when the individual subjects act in unison. Jefferson's metaphoric "pursuit of happiness" actually presumes Americans as a group, seizing upon the potential as yet untapped, forming a glorious national image in the process. Russia was also frequently described in terms of vast expanses of land available for urbanisation and development, supposedly "unoccupied" and holding immense prospective significance for the nation as a whole rather than for just a few select individuals.⁵⁵ Symbolically, unoccupied land explicitly stands for human potential yet to be revealed, that can be theoretically directed towards any, as yet unspecified, purpose. Peter Kolchin (17-19), writing on slavery and the expansionist politics in *Unfree Labour* (1987), implies that human masses, just like empty land, were seen at the time as a fount of group-based potential to be seized, used and directed by a particularly tenacious, "exceptional" individual. Such an image is more reminiscent of Melville's despair at the rapacious avarice on the high seas, than Dostoyevsky's stately Christian ideals. Human potential gathered

⁵⁴ In "The American Scholar" speech, Ralph Waldo Emerson also explicitly refers to the "postponed expectation of the world" as American nation-state has yet to reveal its true power. This shows the fact that some prominent thinkers at the time addressed the same idea.

⁵⁵ Commentaries on this aspect of Russia as a nation, associable first and foremost with empty land-space as yet unused, had become a stereotypical presence in Russian literature by the middle of nineteenth century. Nikolai Gogol is one of the writers who frequently refers to this in his works, creating the image of Russia as a *troika* (a carriage drawn by three horses) hurtling through huge expanses of land. See Strobe Talbott's address referring to the image.

together equated to great power – yet, if this power is being controlled by a figure whose intentions are less than transparent, it also equates to great danger to the entire world.

A relevant, if rather more modern comparative vision of this danger is offered by Russell Kirk in *The Conservative Mind* (1953). Speaking from a Cold War vantage-point, Kirk contrasts America and Russia, evoking vast human masses acting as one and realising the potential contained within them, yet, ominously, being directed by a shadowy manipulator in complete perversion of the theoretical liberty-equality balance:

...[T]he “freedom of uniformity,” Russian style or American style, in which man feels himself content because personal opinion is eradicated and he knows no other condition. Whether educated to “be like Stalin” or to “adjust to the group” after the notion of John Dewey, the tendency of these gigantic states is towards a sheep-population, though achieved in Russia by harsh compulsion, in America by contagion and attraction. (450) ⁵⁶

Kirk comments on the unrealised potential that both nations hold as communities, connecting it precisely with the united existence of the national subjects, who appear to be divested of individual motives exactly so that their communal potential may be realised. There seems to be no wide variety of individual motives – instead, Kirk recalls the Pied Piper-like individual who directs or manipulates the rest of society described disturbingly as “sheep-population”. This dark image obviously has been affected, in Kirk’s case, by echoes of the Second World War and the uneasy Cold War years that came after; and yet, remembering Melville’s Captain Ahab or Raskolnikov’s visions of Napoleon, it is clear that such an image goes back in time much further. I maintain that this is a crucial point at which the previously successful nation-state descends into a totalitarian nightmare where neither liberty or true

⁵⁶ The anti-democracy moods prevalent in America at the time, and the Communist rule in Russia both served as real-life examples of what happened in exactly such a case as described by Kirk.

equality is respected. The image of society acting as a single harmonious unit attains a sinister tinge if one considers it alongside the concept of the unrealised potential (symbolised by expanses of the land) and the shadow figure of the individual manipulator.

The lack of freedom is an essential concept at the heart of the controversial picture I have just described. As an illustration of such collective state of being, where both liberty and equality are practically nullified, there come to mind the debates surrounding slavery as an actual historical common factor linking Russia and America in the middle of nineteenth century, and concerning attempts to reconcile “the pursuit of happiness” economically afforded by slave labour with universal equality.

Peter Kolchin provides historic analysis which shows that the initial circumstances leading to the existence of slavery in Russia and America in the nineteenth century were quite distinct from each other. For starters, with Russia, Kolchin attributes the phenomenon to the gradual erosion of individual rights (1-4) - whilst in America, the slaves were essentially individuals trafficked originally from abroad, who had been denied the rights enjoyed by the free population from the start.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the final picture was somewhat similar for both; a significant part of the population being enslaved by a far less numerous elite.⁵⁸ As Kolchin states, “... [B]y the middle of the eighteenth century they [slavery and serfdom] appeared part of the natural order, as God-given as government or the agriculture itself” (31).

Melville may have been aghast at the injustices in Russia of his imagination, yet the reality was rather similar in America. The chief distinguishing factor between the two was of course the notion of race: if African-American slaves were at the mercy of their masters because of their racial origins, in Russia it was chiefly an economically-founded process and

⁵⁷ Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*.

In *Fragments and Various Thoughts, 1828-1850*, the prominent liberal pro-European thinker, Peter Chaadaev, commented on discrepancies between slavery in Russia and America, claiming that in Russia, the division between the slaves and the free was not as markedly pronounced, and so was a more insidious presence (118-119).

⁵⁸ See Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*. Also David Johnson, 6.

in the majority of cases it were ethnic Russians oppressing one another. However, the distribution of control and power in both societies looked quite similar – a grotesque mockery of the theoretical “liberty and equality” image.

Yet the essential disbalance at the core of both nation-states ran even deeper than this obvious injustice. Both Melville and Dostoyevsky, disturbingly, seemed to metaphorise the enslavement of the individual as the very principle of any given state’s existence. Being a national subject, even in a supposedly democratic state, presumed constraints on one’s freedom, produced by the individual’s obligations towards that nation. “Who ain’t a slave? Tell me that” (*MD* 4) states the narrator of *Moby-Dick*, suggesting that the lack of freedom permeating the contemporaneous American society runs throughout its very fabric, ironically founded upon inequality of its members, where slavery is just one hideous aspect of a general problem.⁵⁹ In *Devils* (1871) Dostoyevsky echoes this in a parody of the supposedly equal socialist society: “Everyone belongs to all the others, and the others belong to each one. They’re all slaves and equal in their slavery” (442). From this viewpoint, Russia, just as well as America, was marred by basic inequality as well as lack of individual freedom – yet, paradoxically, this was the mechanism holding the societal fabric together. “Behold a free man in Russia! There is no visible difference between him and a serf ... In Russia, everything is marked by slavery: customs, aspirations, education, and even freedom itself, if only it can exist in such an environment” (118-119), despaired the thinker Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856), stressing that the ugly influence of serfdom had saturated the entire rigid societal system.⁶⁰

Actual, not metaphoric, slavery was a subject for multitudinous heated abolitionist debates in both nation-states. Yet the final abolition of slavery on Russian soil came as a single decree signed by Tsar Alexander II in 1861, presenting a generally centralised, largely

⁵⁹ See also Jeannine-Marie Delombard, “*White Jacket: Telling who is – and ain’t – a Slave*” for discussion of Melville’s novel in the light of general slavery debates at the time.

⁶⁰ See Chaadaev, *Fragments and Various Thoughts*. A liberal, pro-European thinker, Chaadaev was one of the most significant intellectual figures in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century.

bureaucratic process, which, although flawed in many respects, was not recordedly marked by excessive violence at the exact time of the signing.⁶¹ This was quite illustrative of De Tocqueville's idea that in Russia, the potential for decision-making is concentrated in just one individual – the monarch. In America, meanwhile, the same desired outcome (despite the fact that the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed in 1863) was preceded by five years of Civil War horrors. As an illustration, this historical comparison shows decision-making in Russia as coming from a “collective body” acting as one single individual, represented by the tsar; in America, we meanwhile see a conflict of many individuals whose interests clashed.⁶² How society functioned, different for the two states in reality – just as De Tocqueville states: “Their starting-point is different, and their courses are not the same” (656). This may well be the difference that Dostoyevsky and Melville were subconsciously aware of, each believing that it was their own nation which was correct in its approach.

Presumably, such an assumption would also suggest that in different nations, the general stance concerning how exactly the principles of individual liberty and communal equal existence should be balanced out, would also differ markedly. To uphold this assumption, Kolchin (17), as well as Stephen Sabol in *The Touch of Civilization: comparing American and Russian internal colonization* (2017), link the issue of slavery with another notion that also connects Russia and America, and which forms the backbone of my comparison of the two authors. I am speaking of the exceptionalist rhetoric: that is, a development on De Tocqueville's argument that each nation is unique in its predestined path.

⁶¹ Admittedly, the emancipation process was flawed in many respects – with many former serfs finding themselves in an economically difficult situation which the government failed to address effectively. However, there were virtually no acts of recorded violence surrounding the passing of the Emancipation Declaration (the violence surfaced during the later events, such as the 1917 Revolution, which were attributable, among other things, to a large segment of the population being left economically destitute, and lacking genuine rights, despite the freedom granted on paper).

⁶² See also an interesting development on this topic by Louis Menand in *Metaphysical Club*. In a statement echoing my prior claim concerning the writer's role as the recorder of society's various concrete needs, Menand proposes that differing theoretical ideas reflect primarily the genuine needs or problems people encounter, that are rather unique to each nation or society concerned (xii).

In terms of how the notion of the idealised functioning as a national community developed in America and Russia, by mid-nineteenth century America already followed a formed vision dubbed “The Manifest Destiny.”⁶³ This was associated with the role of the nation as an example to all others because of its radically unique democratic composite not found anywhere else, and which, at the time that Melville was writing, was extolled as a virtue founded upon natural law itself: “[P]olitical institutions, which in other lands seem above all things intensely artificial, with America seem to possess the divine virtue of a natural law...” (*Pierre*, 13).

Russia meanwhile was still searching for its own vision, exemplified primarily by the opposition of the West-supporting liberals (*Zapadniki*) and the Slavophiles (*Slavyanofily*) - an elite small group of thinkers active during 1830-1861 (Gleason 8). It is a proven fact that Dostoyevsky was involved in these discussions, siding with the Slavophiles and advocating for a specifically “Russian” vision of improving society, as Anna Schur implies, which had been rooted in the specific Russian kind of traditional group-based decision making called *sobornost*, described by Hans Kohn in “Dostoyevsky’s Nationalism”.⁶⁴

Sobornost’ is a curious notion, which focuses on traditionalistic collective coexistence, particularly when decision making is concerned. It is a distinctly Russian term, and presumes society acting harmoniously together as a group, united by the quasi-Orthodox ideals of commonality – an ideal that pervades the judicial, the governmental and the interpersonal levels of human interaction. Of course, *sobornost*’ is also reminiscent of the communal realization of human potential that I discussed before.

⁶³ There are some debates surrounding the exact origins of the term, but it is chiefly associated with the controversial figure of John L. Sullivan, journalist, public speaker, and, more ominously, supporter of slavery as an institution, coining the term in 1845 for a journalistic article. See Sampson, 194.

⁶⁴ See Anna Schur, *Wages of Evil*. “Introduced in the course of Great Reforms, trial by jury represented for Dostoyevsky the evils of Western civilization founded on the notion of social contract and the idea of self-interest as the mainspring of all human activity. ... [T]his view of Western civilization represented to Dostoyevsky an antithesis to his own ideal of Orthodox community based on Christian love” (8). For *sobornost*’, see Hans Kohn, in his article “Dostoyevsky’s Nationalism”.

From this, one may assume that whilst the American culture was more preoccupied with individualistic concerns (that is, the “liberty” part of the liberty-equality balance), Russia was more about societal cohesion – at least, theoretically. The real-life public sphere in Russia, as opposed to the imagined ideals, functioned primarily as a nation-state held together by a rigid governmental system where the essentially voiceless individual was allocated a specific place and frequently reacted against this in a bout of impulsive action (the Nihilist movement metaphorised by Dostoyevsky in *Crime and Punishment* and *Devils* being an obvious example).⁶⁵ Meanwhile in America, the importance of the individual as a player, preserver and contributor within the “exceptional” state was recognised – if vaguely defined (Donald Critchlow, 14).

This crucial difference is noted in De Tocqueville’s critique, emphasising the pragmatic American recognition of the individual political subject and the Russian focus on cohesiveness, the power being contained “in one man”:

The American struggles against obstacles that nature opposes to him; the Russian is grappling with men ... To reach his goal the first relies on personal interest, and, without directing them, allows the strength and reason of individuals to operate. The second in a way concentrates all the power of society in one man. The one has as principal means of action liberty; the other, servitude. (655-665)

So far, America, relying on “the strength and reason of individuals” banded together and honouring “personal interest” appears more favourable towards individualistic liberty than Russia. Evidence provided by present-day scholars attests to this celebration of individual enterprise: for instance, Dimock (11) proposes that some aspects of the economic situation in the United States during the antebellum era (urbanisation, territorial expansion and the

⁶⁵ The literary world reflected what was happening on a broader political stage – however, censorship in Dostoyevsky’s Russia was extremely restrictive. See, for example, Irene Zohrab’s chapter on censorship in *Dostoyevsky in Context* (295-302).

breakdown of the typical rural family-clan unit) gave rise to the cultural development of a more individualistic stance subsequently reflected in literature. The intellectual reflections on what it actually meant to be an individual emerged with figures such as Emerson (1803-1882), Thoreau (1817-1862), Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), and so on, focusing on exploring concepts such as developing personal independence (as in case of Emerson) or even withdrawal from society to lead a life of contemplation (as Thoreau proposed in *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854), or Emily Dickinson wondered in her poems).

Nevertheless, in both nation-states the individual could pursue either of the two different paths: becoming “a sovereign nature in himself” as per Melville, opposing the societal rules and laws established to maintain balance, or an integrated human “unit” forsaking individual desires and following the sway of abstract national destiny. At this point, yet another important difference between Russia and America at the time comes forth. Attaining pragmatic Jeffersonian “happiness” does not form part of the Russian vision, unlike the promise held within the Declaration of Independence. Instead, the Russian vision (manifested in literary texts such as *What is to be Done* or *Crime and Punishment*) stresses primarily the effective coexistence as a group. My rationale, then, is since the American national vision, presented by an American writer, affords a greater amount of personal freedom to the individual, “liberty” or individual enterprise associable with the “pursuit of happiness” would be recognised as a cornerstone value in American literary texts (revealed, for example, in the individualistic personality of Ishmael in *Moby-Dick*). With the Russian vision, the balance tips to the opposite side of “equality,” extolling the extreme depersonalizing societal cohesion attained at the expense of individual desires. Hypothetically speaking, the respective texts by Melville and Dostoyevsky should therefore reflect this.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM, RUSSIAN EXCEPTIONALISM – ONE FOR ALL
AND ALL FOR ONE.

The willingness of a national subject to forgo individual needs for the sake of the community, characterised by Melville and Dostoyevsky as essential “enslavement,” upon which society is founded, is intrinsically connected with the concept of exceptionalism.

How does one define “exceptionalism”? It is the belief in a particular nation’s unique and important role in world history (according to Merriam-Webster dictionary, it signifies “the condition of being different from the norm” as well as “a theory expounding the exceptionalism especially of a nation or region”).⁶⁶ This correlates well with the aforementioned overall direction prevalent throughout the mid-nineteenth century intellectual thought, where the search for a specific vision of national destiny, attained by the joint efforts of all national subjects working together, gained significance.

To this definition, I would also add the fact that exceptionalism is primarily a communitarian notion, presuming a particular group’s awareness of its own unique position. In an “exceptionalist” community, therefore, the concept of equality would always presumably override liberty, and the welfare of the community as a whole would be of greater importance than that of the individual. This reconciles my argument with the historic context I previously outlined, where societal preoccupation with individualism was being replaced by the growing significance of the national community.

The importance of the exceptionalist discourse for this specific thesis is that I maintain that the exceptionalist discourse (essentially a concept associated with imaginary constructs of one’s perfect “nation-state,” as per Donald Pease and Paul Giles) binds the individual national subjects together towards a single purpose (such as animosity towards a perceived antagonist of the said nation-state), so as to attain the societal equilibrium necessary for the

⁶⁶ See definition of “exceptionalism” by Merriam-Webster.

idealised vision of a nation's future in the world.⁶⁷ "Exceptionalism" is predominantly an imaginary projection that can be interpreted or understood in many different ways. The projective visions of Melville or Dostoyevsky that I previously described, quintessentially fantastical as they are, can be compared to imaginary "state fantasies" central to the exceptionalist discourse, as depicted by Donald Pease. Pease's definition of "exceptionalism" alludes to a somewhat poeticised image, which he nevertheless wishes to present in an ambiguous manner, as a phenomenon necessary for the formation of the strong state-nation and yet strongly mythologised so as to potentially evoke mistrust.

Pease describes "the dominant structure of desire out of which US citizens imagined their national identity" (1), highlighting the wishful, romantic element constituting a significant part of the entire concept which could consequently grow into a far more ominous notion of rampant nationalism and related concepts, if the fantasy is manipulated by an unscrupulous leader-figure.⁶⁸ "State fantasy" is a term that is more mythic than solidly defined, rife for manipulations, and which strongly evokes the fantastical visions of Russia and America that Melville and Dostoyevsky presented. Entering a dialogue with Pease, Anna Brickhouse in her article "Cabeza de Vaca and American Exceptionalism" evokes the notion of exceptionalism specifically as a discourse that also makes a national subject aware of their own individuality's significance within the national discourse (Levander and Levine, 225). Looking at the juxtaposition of the two writers from this angle, we may also find that the exceptionalist discourse provides the figure of the antagonised doppelganger precisely so as to ensure greater societal cohesion against the supposed common enemy within any given nation.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism*.

⁶⁸ Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism*.

⁶⁹ See also David Foglesong, *Evil Empire*.

Both Melville and Dostoyevsky, I argue, exhibited a marked awareness of the exceptionalist discourse in their respective homelands. The existing critical legacy supports this. In his analysis of Emerson - Melville's contemporary and likely influence, Aidan Day discusses American exceptionalism as a predominant factor pervading American society (187-191). Earlier on, Hans Kohn addressed Dostoyevsky's intent to reject the Western ideals in order to pursue a uniquely Russian path (387).⁷⁰ Turning to Dostoyevsky's own, non-fiction writing, one encounters statements revealing intent engagement with the exceptionalist discourse which places one's nation-community as "most unique":

We've become convinced at last that we are also a distinct nationality, most unique, and that our task is to create for ourselves a new form, our own, special to us, taken from our soil, our spirit and roots. (*An Announcement of Subscription to "Vremya" Magazine*)

One may compare this statement to the passage in *White-Jacket*, which provides a comparative angle on American exceptionalist views:

[T]he laws of the Russian navy ... conform in spirit to the territorial laws of Russia, which is ruled by an autocrat, and whose courts inflict the *knout* upon the subjects of the land. But with us it is different. Our institutions claim to be based upon broad principles of political liberty and equality. (*WJ*)

Whilst being essentially ironic in the context of the entire novel, Melville is well aware of the supposedly democratic framework holding American society together. Just as one may expect from his role as a writer-observer, he is also able to efficiently note the divergence between the exceptionalist ideal and reality. What becomes clear from analysing Melville and Dostoyevsky's statements side by side is that the exceptionalist discourse imposes certain

⁷⁰ See Frank (730) who describes Dostoyevsky as being fiercely nationalistic, and also broadly Leatherbarrow and Schur. Dostoyevsky's nationalistic outlook is generally noted by those biographers.

expectations upon an individual as a member of society; to act or express oneself in a certain definite manner congruent with the direction of a specific nation's exceptionalist rhetoric.

These expectations can be effectively described as "enslavement" to the exceptionalist discourse.

They also bring up another, highly problematic concept: nationalistic chauvinism. Considering Melville's vision, one recalls the controversial image of "American exceptionalism" familiar from present-day media, which focuses on the imposition of the American model of governance in the worldwide setting, frequently associated with an aggressive political stance. Since the times of the Cold War, given the frequently dramatic happenings on the political arena, the term "American exceptionalism" has all but become a term synonymous with America assuming an active role in its foreign policy and imposing certain values upon the rest of the world.⁷¹

Interestingly, the word "exceptionalism" was a term first coined in Russia by a figure as controversial as Joseph Stalin, to describe America in a negative sense, as being supposedly preoccupied with the maintenance of a highly significant and specific role in the world arena and creating a wholly new version of "American" national narrative.⁷² Yet the roots of this phenomenon run much deeper. An obvious example stemming from Melville's day would be the apologetics for the rampant expansionist politics under the aegis of "Manifest Destiny," described by Dimock, Saul or Pease. One trait remained the same, however: the opposition of one's own nation (or essentially, its imaginary vision), seen as exemplary and incorrigible, to all others.

⁷¹ For examples of journalistic writing asserting the notion, see Beinart or Zeitz's articles concerning the current reassessments of exceptionalism as a topic.

Also see Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism*, Dimock, *Empire for Liberty*, and Saul, *Distant Friends: The United States and Russia, 1763-1867*.

⁷² For the account of the exact events surrounding the origins of the term during the expulsion of a group of American communists under the leadership of Jay Lovestone in 1920-30s, who entered into conflict with Joseph Stalin over the claim that in America, the variety of capitalism was highly specific and divergent from the main Marxist theory, and which was subsequently employed by the press in America in earnest, see Uri Friedman's article.

Russia also exhibited “exceptionalist” tendencies, especially concerning Dostoyevsky and Slavophiles in general, who, according to Gleason, “...sought to define their country by opposing it ideologically to others” (3). The name for the Russian “answer” to Manifest Destiny was *Osobyj Put’* (A Special Path), founded on the concept that Russia differs radically from any other nation and should follow a wholly unique historical path.⁷³ Andrei Zorin, Timur Atnashev and Michael Velizhev compare this “Special Path” to the somewhat later German concept, *Sonderweg*, prevalent in the nineteenth century and associated with Johann-Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), sometimes seen as a founding figure for the theories of nationalism and exceptionalism.⁷⁴

However, unlike the American exceptionalist discourse, the Russian version of exceptionalism - at least according to Dostoyevsky, is not as corrective as it is absorptive. The author suggests this vision:

We know, that at this point we won’t shield ourselves with Great Walls of China from the rest of humanity. We foresee in awe that the character of our future actions should be most universal, that perhaps the Russian idea would be a fusion of all the ideas that Europe so deliberately and staunchly is developing in some of its peoples; that perhaps everything controversial contained in those ideas will be reconciled and further developed in the Russian national idea.... (*An Announcement regarding the “Vremya” Subscription*)

As Russia was still finding its identity at the time Dostoyevsky was writing, one cannot fail but wonder if Russian exceptionalism is not just a vague “fusion of all the ideas” produced elsewhere, unlike the defined American vision, founded chiefly upon the Protestant religious

⁷³ See Atnashev, Zorin, Velizhev, *Osobyj Put’ – ot ideologii k metodu*.

⁷⁴ See Arnd Bohm, *Herder and Politics*. Bohm stresses that Herder himself was not an active advocate for nationalism, but many saw him as such a presence (*A Companion to the works of Johann-Gottfried Herder*, 278). Earlier scholarship, such as Barnard’s *Herder’s Social and Political Thought*, speaks of Herder’s thought connecting “Enlightenment and the era of Modern Nationalism.” See Barnard 152.

ideals and expansionist rhetorics. Dostoyevsky's claim that "we won't shield ourselves with Great Walls of China" seems an opposite to the self-contained American exceptionalism; however, there is a certain subversiveness in the claim, suggesting gentle gradual conquering by the Russian national idea using mimicry and adaptation, rather than head-on conflict.

A nation-community may thus assume either a corrective or an absorptive stance in imposing its core exceptionalist ideals upon its members. What stays constant irrespective of these differences, however, is a narrow, nation-specific understanding of what is "correct" – and a belief that a particular nation and its representatives hold an inherent right to influence or assert various universal matters according to this understanding of societal equilibrium, administering rather harsh measures, if necessary. Exceptionalism is essentially an example of group functioning in which one has no choice but to agree to being a "slave" to the established narrative, whether one considers Melville's metaphor of a ship's crew, or echoes of *sobornost* in Dostoyevsky's writings. The national community united by the exceptionalist discourse may be seen as moving in unison towards a purpose common to all its members, and this state of being would then be seen as a "norm" to be preserved, by harsh measures if necessary. The rules holding it together presume equal responsibility for all its subjects, but little scope for individual expression. Such a state of affairs is transnational: as Melville succinctly metaphorises, "Indeed, both the written and unwritten laws of the American Navy are as destitute of individual guarantees to the mass of seamen as the Statute Book of the despotic Empire of Russia" (*WJ*).

From a broader theoretical perspective, Johann-Gottfried Herder, who strongly believed in the development of the national idea as a consequence of the national subjects uniting together to act for the preservation of peace within the national community, described this situation as "unity out of multiplicity", where individuality was being passed over in favour of the "superior maximum of cooperating powers":

As an individual man can subsist of himself but very imperfectly, a superior maximum of cooperating powers is formed with every society. ... In all, however, we see the operation of one principle, namely human reason, which endeavors to produce unity out of multiplicity, order out of disorder... (*Excerpts from Reflections*)⁷⁵

Herder's early reflections, as a founding figure of nationalistic discourse, are linked with the generalised concept of exceptionalism as it was seen by the middle of nineteenth century, not the least in that he proposes that each nation in the course of its development follows a unique trajectory (just as De Tocqueville suggested), and, more importantly, because he envisages the ideal existence as society united and based on the cooperation of its members; "equilibrium and harmony" opposed to "wild confusion" of individualistic existence. His visions of "order out of disorder" correspond with the Melvillean metaphor of the sailing ship, where individual transgression or initiative may prove fatal.

Notably, certain critics drew a parallel between Herder's theory and the utopian vision created by Dostoyevsky (although there is no direct parallel between Melville and Herder, scholarly figures such as C.L.R. James or Yuri Kovalev, speaking from a primarily Socialist perspective, alluded to the image of work and cooperation reemerging in Melville's works time and again). The following citation from a post-Soviet Dostoyevskian scholar, V. Kamnev, which hinges on the metaphor of "an ant colony" as an example of perfect unison, is illustrative:

Both Dostoyevsky and Herder allude to the image of an ant colony, stressing the natural and seemingly necessary essence of connections uniting the humankind. However, if Herder stresses the opposition between the haphazard movements of ants and the historic plan coming from Providence, things are not so obvious with Dostoyevsky. In an atmosphere pervaded by work, activity and constant frenzied

⁷⁵ Herder, *Excerpts from Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-91)

movement for the sake of some remote abstract goal, the human being forgets its individual superfluity, its own mortality and insignificance. (Kamnev, *Russkij Razgovor*)⁷⁶

This unexpected angle on Dostoyevsky's views offers a whole new vision of the "pursuit of happiness" Russian-style. In the writer's world, far from being a happy replaceable unit engaged in "frenzied movement" without a genuine purpose, the individual seems to serve a high purpose by consciously choosing to forsake individual impulses described as "superfluity" for the sake of becoming a part of a united community, an "ant colony" where strength lies in numbers, yet keenly aware of individual "insignificance."

Consciously preserving the sense of one's individuality whilst submitting to the exceptionalist discourse is an essential factor preventing the descent into a completely depersonalized totalitarian dystopia. The danger otherwise lies with the fact that essentially, exceptionalism is fantastical and projective. If to take the definition of the term "exceptionalism" proposed by Donald Pease, the exceptionalist discourse is a uniting bond, bringing individuals together through awareness of national belonging. Yet the problem with such "state-fantasies" is that they can rapidly turn into totalitarian nightmares, if individuality is completely and wilfully overlooked.

Furthermore, exceptionalism as a notion is closely connected with Romanticism and gradually forming self-awareness leading towards the Realist tendencies for social observation and commenting.⁷⁷ Indeed, an analysis of Melville's views expressed in *White-Jacket* suggests that the role of the writer as an observer presumed not only observing individual transgressions, but also revealing the dangers of an over-equalizing, totalitarian approach. Dostoyevsky,

⁷⁶ See V.M. Kamnev, *Russkij Razgovor*.

⁷⁷ Zorin (336-337), discusses the reintegration of the Romanticist ideals into the Russian governmental structures by S.S. Uvarov in 1832, where the Romantic ideal of one's belonging to a nation was reconciled with a highly specific brand of patriotism at the service of Russia, characterised most typically by the motto, "Orthodoxy, Sovereignty, Nation" (*Pravoslavie, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost'*). One cannot help but recollect Dostoyevsky's idealised vision, as described by Schur and Kohn.

meanwhile, recognises the significance of preserving individuality even whilst honouring the communal existence.

In short, complete depersonalized totalitarianism associated with the darker side of exceptionalist societies (such as Soviet Russia) is quite as dangerous as the anarchic situation where egotistical individualities run riot. The difficulty of achieving workable balance between the rule of a few individuals with potentially highly personal agenda over a depersonalized human mass, and the anarchic populist rule is commented on by Herder: "...[T]he tyranny of aristocracy is a severe tyranny, and popular sway is a very leviathan" (251) – an image not unlike Melville's juxtaposition of the leviathanous White Whale and tyrannical Captain Ahab.⁷⁸ The following chapters, particularly the second and the third one, would address this problem in more detail. For now, however, it would suffice to say that logically, in order not to descend into either abyss, a framework or juristic code according to which a given society could exist, had to be devised, or at least, considered.

The reworked vision of the exceptionalist discourse where the role of individuality is recognised, offering each member of a given society an opportunity to see themselves as its valid and integrated member taking pride in their own identity and content with working towards the greater good, could be a valid solution to achieve the equilibrium between individual and societal needs. Yet guidelines were needed to be set to make this vision achievable in reality. Individualistic statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson favoured the notion of commonality of interests and instinctively harmonious existence founded upon a so-called "natural right" which could be equated to a law of nature (Wood, 10-11). However, the Jeffersonian instinctive rhetoric is flawed, as the rampant "pursuit of happiness" may endanger the concept of equality, and there rests the necessity to instil a strong legal code in order for the vision of the perfect balance of liberty and equality to work.

⁷⁸ Herder, *Outlines on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*.

For Russia and America in particular, the quest for their own national identity was being sidelined by more realistic needs and concerns such as the need to format the legal and societal framework in order to efficiently hold together the national community, “newly-fashioned” in the true sense of the word. Vague and alluring “state fantasies” described by Pease were simply not practical enough to be implemented in reality. There prevailed a necessity to address several major issues which, from a historical perspective, appear uncannily similar for both states. Just like America, Russia boasted enormous territorial expanses that at the time were being actively settled and urbanised. Just like in Russia, large parts of America (mainly in the South) were agrarian lands owned by generations of wealthy families. Both countries, as it has already been said, were affected by slavery, which formed a subject of fervent abolitionist rhetorics. It was therefore not enough to rest just with purely philosophical ruminations on the topic of national community-building anymore; rather, the newly-apparent practical concerns for both of those national upstarts on the world arena called for developing a realistic and solid system of societal coexistence. America had the Constitution (and indeed, the Constitution could be regarded as the founding stone for the nation); Russia in the meantime had a defined hierarchical system symbolised by phenomena such as the Table of Ranks.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, essentially these were theoretical constructs first of all.

One of the most interesting stances regarding the implementation of such codes in practice comes from Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. The writer parabolises the stance assumed by an exceptionalist nation (America) as an image from whaling industry:

Perhaps the only formal whaling code authorized by legislative enactment, was that of Holland. It was decreed by the States-General in A. D. 1695 . But though no other nation has ever had any written whaling law, yet the American fishermen have been their own legislators and lawyers in this matter. (*MD* 354)

⁷⁹ For the exact overview of this system of distributing societal honours, see Hassell.

In this way, Melville outlines a key problem with the “American exceptionalism” of the America he knew. The actual rules or laws governing how a nation should position itself in the world are unclear at best, but Melville’s America is rapacious in assuming such a stance as would reflect its own best interests, and then put it forward as the existing actual word of law. “Exceptionalism,” in Melville’s eyes, boils down not to an arcane romanticized notion, but to a shrewd ability of certain individuals to articulately protect their own interests by taking advantage of the vagueness of the situation and twisting the “vast volume” of interpretations: “[B]ut what plays the mischief with this masterly code is admirable brevity of it, which necessitates a vast volume of commentaries to expound it” (*MD* 354).

According to Melville, there supposedly exists a very brief, general set of maxims governing how one should act on the high seas (as a metaphor for the world arena). The trouble is, this “universal law” is subject to misinterpretation. An individual may twist it to their own distinct advantage in their personal “pursuit of happiness.” Therefore, it remains the solid duty of each and every member of the national community to actively strive for the creation and preservation of defined rules and laws common to all – a picture quite harmonious with Dostoyevsky’s stance regarding the *conscious* forsaking of individualism for the communal welfare.

My own hypothesis regarding the difference of attaining the balance of the individual and the communitarian impulses in the United States and Russia is connected with the necessity of installing valid juristic frameworks. In the American exceptionalist vision, personal freedom is recognised, but is expected to be contained within safe limits by legal obligations applicable to everyone within the national community, devised much like Melville’s naval codes to ensure smooth societal functioning. Transgressing these would result in punishment, as a potential threat to national, communal stability. In Russia, however, despite the distinctly hierarchical nature of the social order, the duty of preserving the balance of the individual and the communal

forms, as per Dostoyevsky, remains a personal obligation, which comes as a result of individual reflection and experience rather than following a concrete set of rules. In America, the exceptionalist discourse recognises the importance of individual liberties, yet to protect the societal equilibrium, a solid set of legal rules equalling all out is envisaged. In Russia, meanwhile, the curtailing of personal liberties is expected to be the individual's personal concern and conscious moral duty. The American version of attaining the equilibrium is public and generally comprehensible; the Russian version is private and personal. And the texts which I analyse in this particular project will reflect exactly this.

To summarise the direction of this thesis' argument, my theoretical assumption is that, as per Hamilton's argument as well as the De Tocquevillean notion of the "tyranny of the majority," the "exceptional" nation-state in both America and Russia of "The Age of Revolutions" existed as a complex construct which may be overturned or threatened by a particularly powerful individual intent on the imaginary Jeffersonian "pursuit of happiness," giving rise to a totalitarian or tyrannical order. Henceforth, a system of "checks and balances" must exist so as to prevent or at least contain the emergence of such individuals and the due descent into tyranny. This was the overall ideological mood prevailing at the time, which coincidentally, in terms of specifically literary history, presented a "gap" between the gradually retreating individualistic Romanticism and socially-conscious Realist movements. In that respect, analysing the texts by Melville and Dostoyevsky, who have already been described by scholars as fitting just in-between those two movements, provides a valuable insight for the understanding of that historical epoch in general as well as for strictly literary scholarship, filling in a significant, admittedly blank area in the study of nineteenth-century literature, since the two have not as yet been extensively compared in an in-depth analytical venture.

METHODOLOGY.

The study of literature is crucial for the understanding of deeper general socio- historic context. As Brook Thomas (1987) points out, literature can reflect moral norms governing a society at a given historical time, and I argue that a landmark novel stemming from a particular historic era can be employed quite as effectively for the analysis of the background context as a solid non-fictional monograph. Novels are interconnected with the broader intellectual discussions occurring at the time of their publication, and therefore can be regarded as bona fide ruminations on societal change – albeit presented as narratives of fiction. As Thomas argues in “American Literature and Law” essay, this approach has been rather overlooked during the twentieth century, yet is highly useful (Levander and Levine, 406-407, 409, 417).⁸⁰

My specific method rests upon analysing the selected texts within the historical context against which they had been produced. To do so, I am leaning on the hypothesis put forth by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (1972). Bakhtin suggests that “...Dostoevsky never created his idea-images out of nothing, he never "made them up" ... he was able to hear or divine them in the reality at hand” (77-80). The writer does not “invent” what he depicts, but records hypothetical reality. In this manner, the novel can be regarded as a reflection on the actual intellectual and societal preoccupations at the time, and thus serve as a quasi-historical source. And this is the initial vantage-point I assume with this project.

My analysis of the texts against the backdrop of the exceptionalist discourse respectively in America and Russia would rely on three factors: that exceptionalism is essentially an imaginary construct that can be interpreted in diverse ways by different cultures and epochs; that it presumes group coexistence at the core, and thus would put equality over liberty; and that living as a member of an exceptionalist national community

⁸⁰ Also see Joel Pfister (Levander and Levine, 29, 31).

would entail a degree of curtailing individual freedom and submission to its rules, whichever they may be. Having selected three core texts each to be used as case studies which most fully appear to assert the problem of the opposition between an individual and the exceptionalist society, I separated the main body of the thesis into three chapters, each focusing on the comparative analysis of one Melvillean and one Dostoyevskian text.

The first chapter, focusing on *Pierre* and *Crime and Punishment*, addresses the emergence of the individualistic personality in the “exceptionalist” societies of Russia and America of the mid-nineteenth century. The second chapter subsequently discusses the conflict that arises as the monadic individual assumes the position of the leader within their specific microcosm, and interacts with the rest of the microcosm’s population. The novels I will be looking at are *Moby-Dick* and *Devils* (concentrating on the depersonalizing relationship between the charismatic leader and the led - discussing specifically the characters of Ahab and Stavrogin). The third and final chapter assesses how the conflict of individual and society is responded to within the novels by the exceptionalist society. The themes of societal control and particularly the law as instrument for subjugating the individual who has transgressed the set boundaries are of special interest here. *White-Jacket* and *Brothers Karamazov* have been chosen for depicting a variety of ways (presenting the application of law on board of a warship and in a courtroom trial respectively) in which those are applied.

Overall, this choice of texts and the order in which I decided to analyse them, corresponds with the Hamiltonian notion of “checks and balances” or the argued necessity to curtail and regulate individual freedom in a given nation-state. I seek to show that the need for legislative “checks and balances” necessary for social order is a transnational, universalist notion not limited to just America or Russia – and that both writers, as social observers and commentators, amply reflect this concept in their works.

In what concerns the theoretical background to my argument, I am predominantly interested in looking at the problem from a contextualised historical viewpoint grounded primarily in the intellectual discourses that had developed by mid-nineteenth century with its specific socio-historical climate (as per Innes and Philp (2), and roughly around the same time that both Melville and Dostoyevsky commenced their creative journeys. Therefore I compare and contrast my chosen case-study texts alongside the philosophical ideas in existence at the time that those very texts were produced. My rationale for this approach is that it is useful in allowing one to understand where both writers stand in relation to the general intellectual climate established by the time of their own era (and especially the ideas regarding national belonging and exceptionalist discourse), and whether their views diverge significantly. Therefore, alongside the selected novels, I am addressing thinkers such as Franklin Pierce, Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Carlyle, who discuss at length the concept of individual freedom in society and the role of national identity in regards to this in philosophical treatises that had already emerged by mid-nineteenth century, focusing on what constitutes the concept of individual liberty within the state, and which factors could be viewed as a threat to it.

To reconstruct the intellectual context that formed the backdrop to both writers' work, I incorporate the analysis of treatises relatively contemporary to or preceding (but not following) the "Age of Revolutions" (1750-1850) who focused on the role of the individual subject in a nation-state, such as Alexander Hamilton and specifically, his theory of "balances and checks" or Thomas Hobbes' theory of proportionality.⁸¹ Historically speaking, this epoch was one of significant changes affecting all aspects of existence, from politics to art – and novels produced at the time or in the immediate aftermath reflect the societal preoccupation

⁸¹ The "Age of Revolutions" was an epoch characterised by a worldwide series of drastic changes affecting various aspects of existence, from politics to art. See Historical Association's website for the detailed explanation of the term. For a broad comparative analysis of various nation-specific case studies at the time, see Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, *Reimagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions*.

with these transitions. In order to understand the literature of the era, I maintain that it is vital to look at the philosophical and intellectual undercurrents dominating the background.

In what concerns the more modern intellectual developments, I refer occasionally to works by present-day thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben (whose arguments regarding the treatment of an “outlaw” figure in *Homo Sacer* may be linked with the citation from Hamilton regarding the insurrection as the disorder of the state-body) or Priscilla Wald (whose analogy of an intellectual idea to a biological virus is noteworthy, specifically for the purposes of the first chapter), to illustrate specific points mainly to do with totalitarianism and anarchy as two aspects of disbalance within an exceptionalist society. Overall however, the analysis of the selected literary texts relies on the broader intellectual background formed by the mid-nineteenth century, in order to help comprehend the context within which Melville and Dostoyevsky brought forth their works.

CHAPTER ONE: THE INDIVIDUAL AND EXCEPTIONALIST DISCOURSE: *PIERRE*
AND *CRIME AND PUNISHMENT*.

One of the most important aspects in the juxtaposition of the individual and the so-called exceptionalist society united by the quasi-democratic vision of equality, is the psychological and spiritual state of the individual in question. What exactly is contained within the individualistic personality, that presents an essential threat to the idealised unified community?

Throughout Melville and Dostoyevsky's works, one particular tendency is prevalent. Society in general (which the individualistic protagonist, like captain Ahab or Rodion Raskolnikov, confronts) displays extreme cohesion of its members, just as Herder described; up to the point that it can be seen as a single "body" or organism functioning in a precise, regulated manner. The individual daring to oppose it can therefore be likened to a virus or physical ailment threatening its wholeness.

Contextually speaking, this psychologically effective image frequently occurred in the political discourse of the early Republic era in the United States – for example, in Alexander Hamilton's rhetoric regarding the wholeness of the state-body which is threatened by insurrection in the same manner that a physical organism is threatened by a disease, or in the "Join, or Die" image of a serpent cut into pieces, that since the times of the Revolution has become part of the American political mythology.⁸² Russell Kirk reiterates this notion later on in his treatise, *10 Conservative Principles*, arguing that uncontrolled individualism results in lawless chaos: "[P]ower is the ability to do as one likes, regardless of the wills of one's

⁸² A political cartoon titled "Join, or Die," dated 9 May 1754 and attributed to Benjamin Franklin, represented a snake cut into several pieces. The purpose of the cartoon at the time was to rally the American colonies to unite together against the British rule, yet this image generally was seen as a part of broader vision of union opposed to disunion. See also Berndt Herzogenrath.

fellows. ... When every person claims to be a power unto himself, then society falls into anarchy.”⁸³

In this chapter, I am focusing on the comparative analysis of the protagonists in Herman Melville’s *Pierre* (1852),⁸⁴ as compared to Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866).⁸⁵ Both texts centre around the notion of the threat contained within an individual personality, to the bodily wholeness of a given community (upholding Reeve’s suggestion about the “determining patterns” in both authors’ works being similar).⁸⁶ This chosen angle rests upon previously described theoretical aspects, reflecting both the ecclesiastical rhetoric of the community being “as one body” and the “seditions and insurrections” alluded to by Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804), who describes rebellion upsetting the societal order functioning like a physical disorder needing to be healed. “...[S]editions and insurrections are, unhappily, maladies as inseparable from the body politics, as tumours and eruptions from the natural body” (Hamilton, *Federalist Paper No.28*).

The image of the organism being assaulted by a virus combines the religious and the scientific, thus being quite reflective of the general spirit of the time, and recalling the Herderian image of cohesive unity. In both novels I am looking at, the individual attempts to overturn this unity. Melville’s Pierre Glendinning defies his aristocratic familial background, fleeing for the Bohemian underbelly of New York with his newly-found “sister,” and eventually becomes a murderer, whilst Dostoyevsky’s Raskolnikov toys with the visions of individual superiority posed against the dull “ordinary” world before proceeding to commit an actual crime.

⁸³ Kirk, *Ten Conservative Principles*. Also consider the definition by Michel Foucault, who proposes that power as a concept is intrinsically connected with the individual’s ability or failure to attain a certain set “standard” of acting or being.

⁸⁴ In Melville, *Pierre, or the Ambiguities*.

⁸⁵ In Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, translated by Pevear and Volkhonsky.

⁸⁶ See Reeve, *The White Monk: essays on Dostoyevsky and Melville*. pp 13, 14-16, 87.

THE RELEVANCE OF *PIERRE*.

My analysis of Melville's novel takes root in a broader investigation currently going on in the world of Melvillean criticism. The role of *Pierre* as a key text within the canonical scope of American literature has at last been fully affirmed in the field of Melvillean studies, even though at the time of publishing, the novel was mostly ignored or poorly received by the critics.⁸⁷ However, as time progressed, the importance of this text as being highly relevant for the understanding of nineteenth-century socio-historic tendencies became gradually recognised.

To illustrate precisely how the scholarly interpretations of *Pierre* changed over years, in a brief article listing the main existent critical works, Ahmed Banisalamah draws the outline of major milestones in criticism of the novel, from the initial (scarce and somewhat simplified) views that it reflected Melville's own tumultuous biographical events, through analyses by symbolist or psychoanalytic schools and racial, gender or postmodern theorists, to its present-day recognition "as an important historical and cultural document about nineteenth-century America" (Banisalamah 46).⁸⁸ This relevance of *Pierre* for the study of nineteenth-century context makes the novel a perfect case study to start with.

Yet, as *Pierre* has finally attained recognition as a core text within the Melvillean canon, present-day critics have to answer the question that was overlooked by the previous generations of scholars: why was it so rarely discussed until the recent past, if the text is so laden with significance and subtleties as to out-Kraken *Moby-Dick*?⁸⁹ A straightforward answer could be that outwardly, *Pierre* appears as a sensationalist romance set in a mundane

⁸⁷ An example of one such scathing review (an 1852 review by the New York Day Book publication dubbing Melville "crazy") is proffered by Herschel Parker, in his extensive analysis of *Pierre* (131-132).

⁸⁸ See Banisalamah.

⁸⁹ Factual evidence gleaned from Melville's personal correspondence points towards a possibility that the author himself considered *Pierre* to hold even greater meaning than *Moby-Dick*. "So now, let us add Moby-Dick to our blessing, and step from that. Leviathan is not the biggest fish: I have heard of Krakens" (Correspondence, 212/13), in Higgins and Parker, "Reading Pierre," 25. See also Higgins and Parker 44, and 143.

milieu, and does not explicitly assert more complex concepts such as the national discourse. This renders it akin to *Crime and Punishment*, which at a first glance appears chronicling a particular episode from the realm of criminal law. The seeming ordinariness of *Pierre*'s setting, the plot, and the majority of the characters (save perhaps Isabel) belies a much deeper meaning which might be missed upon initial reading. My own argument is that *Pierre* should be seen as a metaphoric narrative, dealing at its core with the exact problem of the Herderian “anthill” or the exceptionalist community being opposed by one of its members who dares to contradict the laws holding it together – and in that respect, it is comparable to Dostoyevsky’s classic narrative of killing not just a human being, but “a principle” (*C&P* 260).

EVERYDAY HEROES: ROMANTIC OR PRAGMATIC?

The situation in the academic field, particularly during the Cold War era when exceptionalism as a concept was reasserted, attests to the possibility that *Pierre* for a long time seemed a text too complicated to be analysed at length, and especially in relation to the exceptionalist discourse. To illustrate this, Christopher Castiglia recalls the state of affairs during the postwar era, stating that *Pierre* can be seen as a chronicle of quintessential youthful rebellion doomed to failure (comparable to Dostoyevsky’s dark story of the youth who “wanted to become a Napoleon” (*C&P* 394)), and it did not relate to the post-war atmosphere with its brash optimism.⁹⁰ As he argues:

Although the postwar United States was said to be “coming of age” as a world power, national maturity ended up as perpetual adolescence, plagued by narcissistic self-satisfaction and hackneyed ideals. In such a state, American critics naturally ignored “*Pierre*,” “pointing out to us, as it does, the enormous difficulties to be encountered in coming of age... (Castiglia, 227)

⁹⁰ See Castiglia, 227. Also Chase, 140.

The exceptionalist context of the time demanded a cheerful sense of self-importance which Castiglia dubs “narcissistic,” and the seeming ability to set things right – an image completely at odds with the main plot of Melville’s novel, the plot and even the language of which satirise the “hackneyed ideals” that the critic mentions (recalling, for instance, Pierre’s elaboratedly sentimental courtship of Lucy Tartan in the first few chapters, that sets the emotionally exaggerated tone for much of the rest of the novel). Castiglia’s argument presses on the fact that the novel’s subject matter stood at odds just as much with the brashly positive exceptionalist doctrine associated with the postwar era, as with the idealisation of individualistic self-reliance in Melville’s day (evidenced chiefly in popularisation of figures like Benjamin Franklin).⁹¹ A sharp critique summarising the ideals permeating the ideological space in antebellum America at the time that Melville’s novel was being written, is offered by Yuri Kovalev, who offers a holistic view transcending the limitations of Socialist criticism. It is interesting to note that Kovalev indirectly evokes *both* the Romantic desire to be seen as a hero and the Herderian duty to be useful to one’s native community as things that were expected from the ideal American citizen at the time – or the two conflicting ideas expected to be fulfilled simultaneously:

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Americans still worshipped knowledge, and have not yet been disappointed by the capacities of human thought. However, these things were intended to serve solely practical purposes. Ideally, every American, like the hero of [Franklin’s] “Autobiography,” should have strived to “reach the heights of fame and wealth,” bringing maximum benefit to their home country in the realms of trade, industry, seafaring, politics, etc. Any acquired knowledge was intended precisely for this purpose, and all intellectual efforts had to be directed towards

⁹¹ See Kovalev, *Herman Melville and the American Romanticism*.

this specific aim. This also summarised the moral traditions of the American educational system. (27)

Kovalev's argument is significant for this thesis in that it reveals that the ideal citizen was expected to exhibit both the heroic and the mundanely practical traits – which of course would inevitably produce intrinsic conflict, and culminate in actual confrontation. In an exceptionalist society founded upon the principles of national pride and belonging, the individual had to be an ambitious hero – yet only in such a manner that would render one useful to the wider community. However, as Thomas Carlyle, writing amid the revolutionary atmosphere in 1848, would assume, being a hero frequently presumes acting “out of bounds” or transgressing certain norms in order to achieve a suitably heroic result.⁹² At the very least, the hero is expected to surpass all others in appearance or behaviour – for how else would he be recognised as such? Such an expectation contradicts Herder's image of societal cohesion producing an universally harmonious outcome. To attempt combining the two would be an oxymoron.

Therefore, what initially comes across as two tales of youthful rebellion eventually suppressed by society, can be interpreted as the two protagonists' reaction to the impossible societal norms imposed upon them. Dostoyevsky's protagonist is expected to rescue a number of souls (his mother and sister, the Marmeladov family, a random young rape victim he comes across) as his moral duty, but he cannot obtain the means to do so without breaking the law. Pierre is an aristocrat and a gentleman by virtue of birth, and yet he is supposed to exhibit nobleness of character by rescuing his sister, in an act which would not be approved by the milieu he belongs to. Looking at both texts' plots in their entirety, it appears that both characters are presented with a moral task that they are expected to take up, and yet, once

⁹² See Carlyle, *On Heroes*.

they set out to fulfil it, both would be condemned by the very same society that presented them with such an obligation.

In *Pierre*, the conflict between the individualistic and the cohesive philosophies is illustrated in the ruminations of Mary Glendinning, who expects her son to “prove a haughty hero to the world” (*Pierre* 22), yet simultaneously remain a harmonious part of the Saddle Meadows microcosm. Pierre’s mother is aware of the impossibility of the dilemma, but she nevertheless expects Pierre to fulfil these expectations: “Now I almost wish him otherwise than sweet and docile to me, seeing that it must be hard for man to be an uncompromising hero and a commander among his race, and yet never ruffle any domestic brow” (*Pierre* 22). However, Mary Glendinning is somewhat hypocritical. Acting from his position as a scion of the aristocracy, her son would only be fulfilling an expected role within the hierarchical structures of society, thus not really upsetting any order or threatening anyone. The real danger would come if the hero undermines the domestic realm, forgoing his aristocratic status – which duly occurs in the novel.

Pierre cannot at once be the heir to Saddle Meadows standing on “this noble pedestal” (*Pierre* 15) and the rescuer of Isabel. Rodion Raskolnikov’s ideas of benefitting humanity by flouting human laws in order to do good come to a crushing failure, essentially proving to be a practically unviable “plaything” (*C&P* 4). The Napoleonic hero cannot act within the limits of the Herderian “anthill.” I argue that both Melville and Dostoyevsky, although indirectly, have arrived at the same conclusion; an individual cannot ever truly succeed in being an exceptional, heroic individual who is at the same time firmly entrenched in the exceptionalist society.

Thus, as I seek to show, *Pierre* was intended as a critique of the self-sufficient American ideal embodied by Franklin, Jefferson and the like, opening up the way for Melville’s other literary representations of the “heroic failure” such as *Bartleby the Scrivener*

with his passionate, if illogical defiance, or the events in “Cock-a-Doodle-Do!” (1853).⁹³ It addresses concepts far beyond a sensationalistic plot serving just to entertain, although at the time of publication, it may not have attained quite the same recognition as *Crime and Punishment*. My own explanation of that leans towards the possibility that in Russia at the same time, the highly structured society heavily oriented towards the Orthodox religious ideal of humility and submission to the sovereign powers, would have reacted to the tale of the grandiose hero’s failure much more favourably than in America, where individual enterprise was viewed as acceptable and even laudable.

I connect this view with a notion of perceiving one’s individual self as exceptional – i.e. possessing the requisite potential to play a significant part in world history, which I define as “exceptional individuality.” This notion stems from the Franklinian concept of self-reliance where an individual is deemed to be possessed of a power requisite to shape one’s own destiny.⁹⁴ Yet it is not to be confused with it, since self-reliance implied personal independence *within* the established social order and acting according to its rules, rather than viewing one’s self as possessing the power requisite to bring about global change. Self-reliance is essentially neutrality combined with the ability to provide for oneself; but the exceptional individuality is preoccupied with imagining grand outcomes and demonstrating one’s extraordinariness to the world – resemblant of Pierre Glendinning’s visions of himself as a great writer, or Raskolnikov’s desire to repeat Napoleon’s destiny.

In Dostoyevsky’s novel, the difference between self-reliance and exceptional individuality is perhaps spelled out more clearly than in *Pierre*, as the author introduces Razumikhin – the sensible, adaptable friend of the protagonist, who seems to embody the former:

⁹³ See *Bartleby the Scrivener*, *The Story of Wall Street* (1853), “Cock-a-Doodle-Do!” (1853), both by Melville.

⁹⁴ For detailed exploration of self-reliance as a concept, see Hunting Howell, *Against Self-Reliance*.

Razumikhin was also remarkable in that no setbacks ever confounded him, and no bad circumstances seemed to crush him. He could make his lodgings even on a rooftop, suffer hellish hunger and extreme cold. He was very poor, and supported himself decidedly on his own, alone, getting money by work of one sort or another. He knew an endless number of sources to draw from – by means of working, of course. (*C&P*, 49)

Bearing in mind the point outlined in the introductory chapter concerning the rise of the ordinary, largely self-taught and self-supporting individual as opposed to the aristocratic elites, Razumikhin (whose surname in Russian resonates with the word *razum* - “sense,” as a subtle hint from the author) may be a Russian character, yet he brings to mind the Emersonian or Franklinian self-reliance. He can exist independently and provide for himself, by doing work which presumably is of some benefit to society. Although seemingly far less complex than Raskolnikov, Razumikhin presents a figure that serenely exists within the cohesive exceptionalist community. Moreover, he is also a heroic presence, although his heroism concerns no great feats, but rather the ability to cheerfully thrive in the most squalid of circumstances. From the comparative angle, Melville seems to echo this attitude in the chapters describing the life of the penniless Bohemians in New York among whom Pierre settles, metaphorically bringing up the image of a grand converted church, “The Apostles,” harbouring the destitute, and therefore serving a practical, commendable purpose rather than a purely symbolic one. The essential spiritual significance of the church is not diminished by being put to pragmatic use: “Places once set apart to lofty purposes, still retain the name of that loftiness, even when converted to the meanest uses” (*Pierre* 229).

In this manner, both writers seem to give a covert hint about how to survive within an exceptionalist society. Usefulness, humility, adaptability is indeed a subtle answer; the “loftiness” or dignity of spirit, bestowed by the virtue of nature, cannot be tarnished by

humble living or work, remaining an intrinsic part of one's being. Such mundane heroism is a huge contrast to Raskolnikov's cosmic-scale fantasies: "Hundreds, maybe thousands of lives put right; dozens of families saved from destitution, from decay, from ruin, from depravity..." (*C&P* 62). One may conclude that in order to coexist within the Herderian vision, the only variety of heroism that is acceptable is the self-reliant attitude comprised of asceticism and the ability to put oneself to work that may be of use to others.

As Pierre finds himself in the shady world of the Apostles, the image of this everyday heroism is brought up in what can be described as biting parody:

Now and then he fixedly gazes at the curious-looking, rusty old bedstead. It seemed powerfully symbolic to him; and most symbolical it was. For it was the ancient dismemberable and portable bedstead of his grandfather, the defiant defender of the Fort, the valiant captain in many an unsuccumbing campaign. (*Pierre* 231)

This image is indeed "powerfully symbolic" in that it also underlines the transition from the lofty heroic ideal to the humble Herderian one. Surrounded by poverty, Pierre fails to become the self-reliant, adaptable hero like Razumikhin, all the while being presented with the stereotypically "exceptionalist" images of masculinity and prowess like the "the defiant defender of the Fort" that he is expected to live up to, metaphorically filling his grandfather's place. It is true that the bedstead brings forth the memories of the heroic forefathers – nevertheless, what Pierre fails to comprehend is that his grandfather's participation in the military campaigns also formed part of the accepted exceptionalist narrative: the "grand Pierre" in his military capacity acted as a member of the society bringing about a goal that was supposedly desirable. Pierre, meanwhile, is not taking part in an actual military campaign approved by the state-community. Therefore, his heroism is supposed to be of a pedestrian, self-reliant nature – which is something that he fails to realise.

Thus the importance of *Pierre* to both Melvillean and exceptionalist discourses, I argue, stems from the fact that it is a novel that explores the problem of individual awareness of one's "exceptional" self when it transgresses the limits imposed by society, aiming towards frequently incongruous grand goals rather than existence within the preordained limits. It also asserts a number of problems that essentially render the notion of the exceptional individuality unviable, unlike the more moderate concept of self-reliance (which essentially presumes the ability to provide for oneself and others in a practical sense, living in harmony with the mundane reality). Although *Pierre* had not attained at the time of publication the same level of recognition as Dostoyevsky's novel, both essentially assert the same core topic of the difficulty of mixing the communitarian and the individualistic aspects together.

POINT OF CONVERGENCE: COMPARING THE DREAM SEQUENCES.

Yet what can be said of the protagonists' own inner beliefs and reflections? In both novels, one particular point emerges as a perfect opportunity for comparative analysis. It is the "dream sequence" that occurs as a trope in Melville and Dostoyevsky's texts. The usage of the succinct yet evocative dreamscape serves to metaphorically explain the individual's position within a world shaped by a particular version of exceptionalist discourse.

The dream of Enceladus is a relatively short scene, which sits at odds with the overall spirit of Melville's novel. It appears at first to be too grand for a simple metaphor – an ill-fitting Romantic image amid what could be described as the author's attempt at sensationalist genre staged in a supposedly realistic urban environment.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, given my prior argument about the incongruity of grandeur in the exceptionalist world, this seeming disharmony is easily understood.

⁹⁵ See Higgins and Parker broadly.

Strangely, the Enceladus sequence is little-discussed by the critics even nowadays. In “The Flawed Grandeur of Melville’s *Pierre*,” Higgins and Parker imply that it was a later addition, somewhat different from the novel’s main corpus (192)⁹⁶ – and the contemporaneous reviews, for some reason, had utterly neglected to address it (183). I argue that the powerful dream sequence, contrasted with the otherwise true-to-life setting of *Pierre*, may serve to represent a vibrant subconscious awareness connected with the realm of theoretical ideas inspiring and directing the characters’ motives. To the antebellum critic, however, the world of the subconscious and interpreting symbols from that viewpoint was not yet familiar, whilst the elaborate mythological imagery associated with Romanticism was slowly becoming outmoded – which could explain why at the time of publishing, little was said about this particular scene.⁹⁷ The vision of Enceladus was simply too unusual, presenting complex themes of exceptionalism and society in a less straightforward, cryptic manner divergent from the accepted stylistic mode. The reviewers of the time generally dubbed the Melvillean imagination in *Pierre* “diseased” or “crazy” (Delbanco, 179) precisely because they had to deal with radically unfamiliar material.

Concerning my primary focus on individuality threatening the democratic order based on equality, the obvious interpretation of the Enceladus sequence is that it comes as a last warning to Pierre before he is irrevocably doomed. The quasi-homiletic message of the dream (where a Titan rises against the gods and is subsequently cast down and imprisoned in a rock) is that arrogance and positioning oneself at odds with the rest of society is comparable to Titanic rebellion which would inevitably be suppressed. Such mentality is comparable to the

⁹⁶ Higgins and Parker in “Reading Melville’s “*Pierre*, or the Ambiguities”.

⁹⁷ John Engell claims that prominent novelists of the time, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, gradually commenced to move away from piling on the excessive grandiose imagery in their works as a general literary trend, “going easy on exotic spices, exempting the marvellous, hyperbolic, and improbable” (35).

“unknown and unseen pestilence” (*C&P* 518) presented in Raskolnikov’s final dream, which reveals to him the erroneous dangerousness of his previous ideas.

Yet, in respect to the cryptic complexities contained within, the argument about the dream sequence acting as the last warning can be read more deeply. As Melville hints himself in a seemingly Emersonian parody, the text of the novel, like the natural world, is open to broad interpretation depending on which angle one chooses to adopt:

Say what some poets will, Nature is not so much her own ever-sweet interpreter, as the mere supplier of that cunning alphabet, whereby selecting and combining as he pleases, each man reads his own peculiar lesson according to his own peculiar mind and mood. (*Pierre* 293)

What is the exact role of the sequence in regards to the narrative? Among the critics, Bernard Higgins and Herschel Parker state that Pierre identifies himself with Enceladus, and his personal rebellion is summarised symbolically in the vision.⁹⁸ Other scholars go further to allude distinct Promethean echoes to Pierre’s dream.⁹⁹ The common conclusion is that Pierre, crushed by his artistic and amorous failures, metaphorically envisages himself as a Titan who, “in his reckless sky-assaulting mood,” suffers a spectacular defeat upon the “invulnerable steep:”

“Enceladus! it is Enceladus!”—Pierre cried out in his sleep. That moment the phantom faced him; and Pierre saw Enceladus no more; but on the Titan's armless trunk, his own duplicate face and features magnifiedly gleamed upon him with prophetic discomfiture and woe. (*Pierre* 296)

⁹⁸ See Higgins and Parker, *Reading Melville's "Pierre, or the Ambiguities,"* 170-171.

⁹⁹ This parallel is amply explored in Reeve’s *The White Monk* (49), where he compares Pierre with Captain Ahab, who also exhibits Promethean tendencies. Furthermore, see Temira Pachmuss, 28, for direct Promethean analogy drawn between Ahab and Raskolnikov.

Although in the course of the narrative the protagonist has failed to become a self-reliant hero, he overcompensates for this failure with dreams of grandeur, envisioning himself as a “duplicate” of the struggling Titan. This sequence, in terms of its grand scale, is similar to Raskolnikov’s dream which involves no less than a pestilence that “the whole world was doomed to fall victim” to (*C&P* 518).

Yet the ending to Pierre’s dream is terrifyingly abrupt. So far, the argument is simple. Transgression and wilful disobedience of the established rules should and will be efficiently and instantaneously punished. Remarkably, Pierre’s story ends with the transition from “that ideal horror to all his actual grief” (*Pierre* 296). Upon a superficial glance, there arises a straightforward textual interpretation: rebelliousness leads either to inevitable doom, or (considering Raskolnikov’s dream) to eventual salvation through humiliation and suffering. This is admittedly an idea associated strongly with the Russian Orthodox element seen throughout Dostoyevsky’s universe, standing at odds with the Protestant, Franklinian concept of being an independent active presence, in Melville’s world.

It is notable that in Raskolnikov’s story, the dangerous, rebellious mindset metaphorically represented through a dream, occurs at the beginning as well as in the end. Comparatively, referring to an earlier dream sequence in *Crime and Punishment*, one sees an abused horse (as a reference to the “trembling creature” Raskolnikov fears to become) rather than a Titan, killed not in mythical protest, but by being heavily loaded and unable to move, in a curious similarity to images of immobility in Pierre’s dream. Dostoyevsky describes the scene:

The crowd around them is laughing too, and indeed how could they not laugh: such a wretched little mare is going to pull such a heavy load at a gallop! ... To shouts of “Giddap!” the little mare starts pulling with all her might, but she can scarcely

manage a slow walk, much less a gallop; she just shuffles her feet, grunts and cowers under the lashes of three whips showering on her like hail.

Suddenly there is a burst of guffaws that drowns out everything: the mare cannot endure the quick lashing, and, in her impotence, has begun to kick. Even the old man cannot help grinning. Really, such a wretched mare, and still kicking! (*C&P* 53-54)

Although the two subjects of respective sequences are essentially different, the key elements are repeated in Raskolnikov's dream: the immobility under a "heavy load," the "impotence" or inability to retort, the vain efforts to retaliate or "kick." My argument is that both sequences show the dreamer's subconscious fears concerning his essential weakness set against the world in general; or the fear of the individual self to confront the repressive, tyrannical mob. The Titan and the horse (in a bitter parody of a freely-moving troika of the expansionist rhetoric) represent the self, or how the individual protagonist imagines himself to be – and both images are tinged with echoes of the religious tradition that both protagonists are to an extent products of. Being constrained by heavy load (whether stones or a laden cart) can also symbolically signify the inability of the individual to simultaneously carry the burden of being an individualistic hero driven primarily by their own impulses, and a law-abiding citizen. Supporting this hypothesis, the lofty extent of Pierre's aspirations is also commented on by Jehlen in *American Incarnation: The Individual, the Nation and the Continent*, that the Enceladus dream "...does represent the limits he [Pierre] has failed to go beyond, but inextricably his still global extent" (222).

This argument can expand further, in that the images represented by both authors can represent a consciousness of one's self specifically as a social and national subject, as it stands in relation to the exceptionalist society. The extreme difference between the two creates a feeling of physicality and hints at how each author perceives this idea, the physical attributes of each dream-subject being metaphorically representative of the spiritual

undercurrent (weakness and humility in the Russian context, or the dangerous powerfulness in the American one). This enables easier understanding of the dream, as the physical plane is more readily comprehensible than the abstract.

Physicality as a topic extends beyond comparing the attributes of each dream-subject. It is a notion closely interwoven with experiencing one's self as both an independent entity and part of a broader discourse. In this instance, Berndt Herzogenrath's concept of Body/Politics, in which a national or a political unit is likened to a physical organism is useful, showing that "... the story of the individual provides the story of the nation – the biological "evolution" of the individual body has to be read in conjunction with the "democratic evolution" of the Body/Politic" (Herzogenrath 210). Notably, the American vision of Enceladus is permitted to exhibit loftiness that Dostoyevsky's nag lacks. As Higgins and Parker hint in *Reading Melville's "Pierre, or the Ambiguities"*: "Melville makes clear that he approves the "reckless sky-assaulting mood" of both Enceladus and Pierre" (172).¹⁰⁰

If the spirit of exceptionalist individual consciousness powered by the discourses such as the right to "pursuit of happiness" is evident in the image of the doomed Titan, the nag represents a classic example of a "humbled spirit" of Dostoyevsky's Christian Orthodox philosophy.¹⁰¹ This is the first major difference between the two national exceptionalist traditions: the spiritual ability or inability to rise against the established order. The Russian tradition reflected by Dostoyevsky is centred round humility and submission as a natural state. The American tradition that Melville echoes, although constraining the rebellious spirit, nevertheless openly recognises its greatness as a physical fact, presenting a giant rather than a trembling animal.

¹⁰⁰ See Higgins and Parker, *Reading Melville's "Pierre, or the Ambiguities"*.

¹⁰¹ Frank, *Dostoyevsky: the mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881*.

THE VIRUS IN THE FLESH: INDIVIDUALITY AND CONTAGION.

The idea of physicality, proposed by Herzogenrath, is central to both dream sequences. However, it is a highly specific kind of physicality.

Images of physical disability or restriction abound throughout Pierre's dream, echoing the immobile nag of Dostoyevsky. Melville refers to the "armless trunk," and earlier on, poignantly states: "Nature, more truthful, performed an amputation, and left the impotent Titan without one serviceable ball-and-socket above the thigh." There remains a general explanation of this imagery in psychoanalytical terms of castration and impotent rage, as Delbanco implies.¹⁰² Yet, in terms of the exceptionalist discourse the metaphor of disability may be more specific, evoking the notions of enslavement discussed in the introduction. Initially, it may refer to an individual, exceptional genius being suppressed by its environs (although to Dostoyevsky, the horse is rather being forced to move against its will). On a deeper note, one might assume that the natural order, centred around cohesive coexistence, may not tolerate individual excess expressed through rebellion, and curbs it at the root before it is even permitted to take shape, leaving one with the concept of "bare life" as coined by Giorgio Agamben.

This term, as Agamben implies, means what remains behind in an entity once it had been subjected to political, social or natural castigation, and stripped of its previous status.¹⁰³ Whilst it is also quite relevant in regards to overall plot of *Pierre* as the story of an aristocratic youth forsaking his entire life and status to find himself outside the bounds of his background as a social "non-entity," Enceladus specifically is representative of "bare life" in that his rebellion ends in physical mutilation and defilement by the elements as punishment.

¹⁰² On psychoanalytical motives or echoes of Captain Ahab as a reflection of Pierre, see Delbanco 183 (on Freudian school), 199, 203.

¹⁰³ Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected essays in Philosophy*.

Yet his image still maintains a certain vitality that Pierre observes in the dream, which potentially still holds power to influence, regardless of imposed restraints.

Generally speaking, the expansive tendencies represented by Enceladus are conventionally seen as incongruous, unnatural and unviable particularly when regarded within the main canvas of the novel's text, with the majority of critics upholding this argument.¹⁰⁴ I argue that Melville placed the dream sequence in the midst of the novel's mundane setting precisely with an aim to highlight its meaning more vividly. To support my claim, Higgins and Parker argue in *The Faded Grandeur of Melville's Pierre* that "...Pierre's increased stature as "deep-diving author and admirable "sky-assaulting" demigod works against the logic of much of the novel's development" (189-190). Developing their argument, I state that the idea of the exceptional magnitude of an individual personality sits ill with the external world in general and especially must be mocked or brought down in order to be neutralised and reestablish the order founded on submissiveness and cohesive unity. As Dostoyevsky describes such a situation: "Man gets accustomed to everything, the scoundrel! (*C&P* 26). Submission to the seeming injustice, humbling oneself, forgoing rebellion may be repulsive to one's individual self, yet it is the only viable way to survive in an exceptionalist society.

Terms used by Melville such as "the imprisoning earth" or "the defilements of the birds, which for untold ages had cast their foulness on his vanquished crest" are essentially humbling in that respect. An attempt to envisage oneself as a demiurge would end with castigation and mockery. This would take one back to the moderate "self-reliance" of Franklin's emulators and Dostoyevsky's Razumikhin, in comparison to whom extreme individualism (as opposed to individual tendencies contained within the boundaries of social

¹⁰⁴ Brook Thomas reiterates: "Pierre's quest to create a world commensurate with his dream of what the world should be might take him away from his only possibility of realising his dream" (140).

rules), is not viewed favourably. Not only is individual exceptionalism essentially unviable, but it is also presented by Melville as illogical to the point of ludicrousness – as an image of a rebellious mythological being disrespectfully besmirched with bird droppings. The Titan is a product of the imagination; the birds and their droppings are quite real. Perhaps in this metaphor Melville exhibits personal fear of such an experience, but alternatively one could suggest that the crude reality of the natural world quickly brings down the excessive heroicism.

The ideal, meanwhile, is extreme, even affected simplicity, belying extreme actual power. In a rather curious observation elsewhere in the text, incidentally recalling Russia, Melville muses: “It was for petty German princes to sound their prolonged titular flourishes. The Czar of Russia contented himself with putting the simple word “Nicholas” to his loftiest decrees” (215). It is comparable to Raskolnikov’s hat (*C&P* 5), too pathetic and pretentious to sit well with his squalid surroundings. The point made by both writers is evident. An overt exhibition of power subliminally betrays actual powerlessness.

The two separate ideas of rebellion and individualism are intertwined, since Melville depicts an individual exceptionalist spiritual entity, whilst highlighting its opposition to what emerges as a more powerful order of being. Pierre’s personal relationship with Enceladus seems to uphold both equally. It suggests that awareness of oneself as an individual (and perhaps specifically masculine) self, connected subsequently with one’s sense of identity as an exceptional national subject belonging to a particular (American) nation serves as a propelling catalyst for unearthing of the hidden potential of the “bare life” yet dormant, metaphorically presented as Enceladus. Melville allocates to the simple Herderian image of taking pride in belonging to a particular national group a far more sinister meaning.

Looking at the actual historical context pervading the divisive political atmosphere specifically in the United States at the time of Melville’s writing, one reverts to the image of

bodily “wholeness” threatened by a disease.¹⁰⁵ The State of the Union addresses of Franklin Pierce in particular offer a good example in that respect. In a speech dated 5 December 1853, Pierce states that “...[D]isease, assuming at one time the characteristics of a widespread and devastating pestilence, has left its sad traces upon some portions of our country” (State of the Union Speech 1853), presenting political dissent as such.¹⁰⁶ In another speech, dated December 4 1854, Pierce refers to unspecified “disease” yet again, and this image is notable in that it can alternatively be interpreted as either a factual assertion of the dangerousness of dissenting thought, or else as a metaphoric turn of phrase gathering together all possible notions of a threat to national well-being. It goes without saying that Pierce’s rhetoric is echoed by the image of the disease in Raskolnikov’s final dream, which also symbolises individual excesses threatening the political and social unity. With such imagery firmly entrenched in the political culture, it appears likely that Melville’s Enceladus can be viewed as another interpretation of the image of bodily “wholeness” – either a broken-down organism suffering the effects of inner instability, or else, being encased by earth and part of it, as an entity threatening the very environment that engendered it. Whichever of the two interpretations one may prefer, it is nevertheless clear that Pierre’s dream is congruous with the general political rhetoric in Melville’s day.

The image of “unearthing” the Titan by “a strolling company of young collegian pedestrians,” who, “struck with its remarkableness, had brought a score of picks and spades” is not accidental (*Pierre* 295). “Unearthing” is a key term, as it hints at created consciousness, when the individual consciousness is separated from its being as part of a broader, wider environment (Nature), in realising that it is exceptional. Curiously, it is young male students who attempt the “unearthing” – the same social group to which Pierre Glendinning and

¹⁰⁵ In *Federalist Paper* 9, Hamilton discusses political faction as a marked danger to the newly-formed state.

¹⁰⁶ See Franklin Pierce’s collected speeches.

Raskolnikov belong – the potential youthful rebels. Interestingly, they “gave over their enterprise in despair,” without finishing the task of releasing the Titan, and only succeed in “uncovering his shame,” which echoes the imagery of mockery discussed previously, and which can be connected with the eventual failure encountered both by Melville and Dostoyevsky’s protagonists, such as the foolishness of Raskolnikov, seeking to attain the stature of Napoleon yet only gaining a prison-sentence. The result is pathetic rather than terrifying, as the “bare life” is not given a chance to truly develop regardless of its potential capabilities. Melville is likely to hint at the fact that young men enamoured of the Promethean individualism lack the necessary capacities for this; an image echoed later on by Dostoyevsky’s hero: “Am I a trembling creature, or do I have the right?” (*C&P* 398).

It is apparent that the problem with the Titanic rebellion lies not with rebellion per se, but with the perpetrator’s lack of requisite capacities to see the act of rebellion to the end.¹⁰⁷ As Emory Elliott claims, “[R]ebellion can bring disaster, as in the case of Pierre, who lacks the power and imagination to escape the bonds of the established ideology” (348). These capacities are vitality and the capability to assemble and work jointly towards a common goal as a unified organism, explored as the Herzogenrathian “Body/Politic” concept.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, an analysis of the cultural background at the time implies that this particular concern occupied many minds (the famous example being De Tocqueville’s reflection on the individual spirit opposed by “the tyranny of the majority” in American culture or John Randolph’s fear of “King Numbers,” or mob rule).¹⁰⁹ Melville would have been asserting what was already an issue of significance. A good example of his contemporaries exploring the idea can be found in Emerson’s speech, “The American Scholar (1837).”¹¹⁰ Emerson offers a precise summary

¹⁰⁷ See Emory Elliott.

¹⁰⁸ Herzogenrath, *An American Body Politic: A Deleuzian Approach*.

¹⁰⁹ See Kirk, *A Conservative Mind*, citing Randolph’s speech (circa 1829) in Congress: “I would not live under King Numbers. I would not be his steward, nor make him my taskmaster” (154).

¹¹⁰ See Emerson’s speech, “The American Scholar,” An Oration delivered before the Phi Beta Gamma Society, at Cambridge, August 31, 1837.”

of the concept whilst calling for united action towards creating a new intellectual “American” culture: “...[T]here is One Man, — present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man” (*The American Scholar*). This image is reflective, of course, of the combined individual potential realised through cohesiveness that I discussed in the introduction.

The awareness of one’s individuality forming a part of a greater so-called “organism” and yet presenting a potential danger for the same “organism” is central to my understanding of how Melville and Dostoyevsky assess individuality as a topic. Here I bring together several concepts that tie in with Body/Politics theory, which would enable easier comprehension of the dream sequence’s significance in the exceptionalist reading of the text. One key concept that Herzogenrath analyses (101), is the discussion of virulence as a notion that enables the spread or diffusion of ideas – be it exceptionalist discourse, or the toxic assumption of oneself as exceptional (as is the case with the aforementioned group of students). The concept of a spreading virus would be used further in this thesis to assist one’s understanding of how dangerous ideas (such as individual exceptionalism) take hold of an individual rather than a group and then subsequently are diffused throughout the rest of society, affecting more and more human “units.” To illustrate this, Priscilla Wald discusses many issues relevant to the stance I take in this thesis, notably comparing the representation of Communist infiltration of the American society to an epidemic (174).¹¹¹

Another concept that would help us fully grasp the analogy of a dangerous idea to a biological virus, is “bio-power” explored by Foucault.¹¹² This concept describes the spreading of a harmful ideology and the “mechanisms of security” needed to control it. Foucault explicitly compares the spreading of an idea to a spreading of a virus, and “bio-

¹¹¹ For this, and a parallel discussion of epidemiological approach in the field of the Americanist discourse, see Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers and Outbreak Narrative*.

¹¹² Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.

power” is “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, or a general strategy of power” (Foucault 1). The strategy in our case is the diffusion, or popularisation, of the idea of quasi-nihilistic rebellion. Enceladus therefore can be seen as a metaphor for an unearthed biological hazard which causes the virus of rebellion commences to spread – the exact analogue presented in Dostoyevsky’s novel being the mysterious illness in the second dream of Raskolnikov. The possibility that the writer symbolises intellectual ideas by this unknown disease is just too explicit: “Some new trichinae had appeared, microscopic creatures that lodged themselves in men’s bodies. But these creatures were spirits, endowed with reason and will” (C&P 518).

Dostoyevsky’s imaginary virus primarily threatens the social cohesiveness: “Here and there people would band together, agree among themselves to do something, swear never to part – but immediately begin something completely different from what they themselves had suggested, begin accusing one another, fighting, stabbing” (C&P 519).

Extreme free thinking and harmonious coexistence are thus, to Dostoyevsky, hard to reconcile. In the historical context of the two novels it is particularly important, since, as we have already seen, the beginning of the nineteenth century (pre-1870) was marked by a worldwide emergence of several important ideological discourses: such as recognition of the need for liberty, and a growing nationalistic consciousness.¹¹³ Melville and Dostoyevsky’s works were contemporaneous with the emergence of movements such as Young America or Postmillennialism (as explored by Daniel Walker-Howe, Meredith McGill, or Yuri Kovalev), or with the latter emergence of the Slavophiles or the People’s Will in Russia. Looking at the actual background in more detail, what strikes one especially is the curious state of affairs at

¹¹³ See Walker-Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: the transformation of America, 1815-1848*. Walker-Howe pinpoints that the term “nationalism” was coined precisely during 1830s. However, he also refers to the fact that post-Monroe doctrine, there existed many factions and meanings covered by the term “nationalism” that could be perceived as different movements (124). This harmonises with the term “imagined communities” that sought to explain the American idea as being united by various ideas (religion (195), self-improvement (243), etc.).

the time regarding the student and intellectual circles (particularly relevant, given the role of the students and bohemian intellectuals of the “Apostles” respectively in Dostoyevsky’s novel and *Pierre*). These were marked (according to evidence gleaned by cultural historians such as Eliza Tamarkin) by two seemingly incongruous factors: an incessant search for identity (tied in in many cases to the national discourse), since America was seen by many as a clean slate perfectly positioned for experimenting with new forms of social order, and extreme political apathy, which was often satirized.¹¹⁴

Leaning on this evidence, I suggest that the volatile ideas linking the search for national exceptionalist ideal and individual identity remained suspended as topics for intellectual discussion, confined to theoretical hypothesising rather than immediately entering the active political discourse in the antebellum America (this was also somewhat true of Russia at the time). However, even though they were discussed as a merely abstract topic, those ideas spread, as if by diffusion, throughout the educated circles in both America, and, two decades later, in Russia as well.¹¹⁵

Reconciling this with the notion of virulence, the algorithm then becomes clear: a potentially disruptive idea hangs suspended amid the intellectual community, subsequently being spread or diffused by discussion or analysis. By itself it may not be essentially noxious, however, once it takes hold of a personality who exhibits a set of particular characteristics which may render it more viable than others (and which would be discussed later in this chapter), it takes root and mutates, cancer-like, into a psychological state judged toxic or dangerous to society as a whole. As more and more personalities become affected by a similar idea, social movements (ranging from demagoguery of Young Americans parodied in *Pierre*, “whose greatest reproach was efflorescent coats and crack-crowned hats all podding

¹¹⁴ Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: deference, devotion and antebellum America*; Walker-Howe, pp 304-305.

¹¹⁵ Walker-Howe (463) points to the fact that in antebellum America, a course on moral philosophy was a fixed feature of college life.

in the sun” (*Pierre* 230), to the Nihilistic rebels of the People’s Will in Russia) spring up. Those are important, as in those social movements, the individuals affected by the same idea start acting as a single organism. In many cases, these were seen as a threat to the established order (just as per Franklin Pierce’s speeches) which needed to be suppressed regardless of the original idea which prompted them.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, while Andrew Lawson in *Whitman and Class Struggle* (2006) draws a distinct line between an individual and group rebellion, I prefer to uphold the notion that an individual rebellion inevitably mutates into a group one – the only decisive factors being the matter of time and finding other individual rebels sharing the same idea.

Looking back at *Pierre*, both Higgins and Parker (172), and Herzogenrath’s theory of Body/Politic, imply that the dream of Enceladus occurs once Pierre is (at least – metaphorically) “dead,” so the noxious idea has taken root and manifests itself in an already dead entity, in a zombie-like manner: “...[B]ut again the pupils of his eyes rolled away from him in their orbits: and now a general and nameless torpor – some horrible foretaste of death itself – seemed stealing upon him.” (*Pierre* 292)

Connecting this to the concept of diffusion, I propose a concept of an “ideological virus,” arguing that the noxious ideas concealed in the subconscious like Enceladus in the earth, become diffused among those susceptible to them once they are unearthed. Some groups, like the “young male collegians” are more susceptible, possibly due to the nature of a perverted ideal of one’s exceptionalist self, which means one’s identity, destined to partake in the exceptionalist discourse, is corrupted so as to gain a destructive, toxic essence. Then, once

¹¹⁶ See Lawson, *Whitman and the Class Struggle*, xx. Lawson gives a comprehensive listing of various ways in which a social movement could seek to undermine the existing social order (organizing strikes, writing polemic articles, etc).

See Sexton and Tyrrell, *Empire’s Twin: US Imperialism from the Founding Age to the Age of Terrorism*, 4. Sexton and Tyrrell suggest that the culture of social protest in the United States throughout the ages was generally linked with the African-American identity and the struggle for racial equality; however, other forms of protest remained existent, if less studied.

unearthed, those ideas may spread, overturning and destroying the acceptable democratic or national structure, or the “milieu” as Foucault would name it. In Raskolnikov’s final dream of a strange illness this idea can be seen plainly; however, it is in Pierre’s vision that Melville first toys with the possibility.

Interestingly, Raskolnikov’s later dream of the unnamed epidemic occurs at the lowest point of his spiritual descent, as a “crisis” preceding eventual spiritual recovery. It acts as a symptom coming from the inner world, showing the reconciliation of a personality displaying individualistic tendencies with the outside world. In that I seek to balance the two, arguing that the outside influence such as a noxious idea must conjoin with a certain innate state of spiritual being in order to culminate in Enceladean rebellion.

Much of the textual matter in both novels suggests in terms of imagery an underlying theme of a diffusion of a virus taking place starting with the affected individual and subsequently spreading to colonise more and more. The image of “spreading” is notable – if for Dostoyevsky it is a strange disease that spreads, for Melville it is the remarkably-termed “aspiring amaranth,” which in the dream sequence is seen completely covering the large expanses of the Glendinnings’ land. The choice of the term “aspiring” is significant, in that it echoes the earlier-discussed tendencies of rebellion and higher aspirations (tied in with the exceptionalist idea). Yet the amaranth, for all its tenacity, is useless, if not downright harmful:

The aspiring amaranth, every year it climbs and adds new terraces to its sway! The immortal amaranth, it will not die, but last year's flowers survive to this! The terraced pastures grow glittering white, and in warm June still show like banks of snow:—fit token of the sterileness the amaranth begets! (*Pierre* 293)

If Melville’s amaranth is a direct metaphor for the fruitless inner state of mind of an alienated individual confined within his arrogance and narrow-sightedness, it harmonises

with Dostoyevsky's metaphoric microbial-borne disease, which may spread through diffusion once it is uncovered (*C&P* 519). Both are tenacious to an extreme, yet both essentially are useless to humans – bringing to mind the Herderian notion that only those ideas that may benefit humanity should be supported. In this way, such ideas are a huge threat to the ideal symbiotic community that Herder envisaged. Although the way that Melville sets out his novel's general plot suggests that Pierre's death is inescapable at this point, we are presented with the “immortal amaranth,” frightening in its tenacity. Man dies, yet the idea which possessed him, no matter how noxious, lives on in its “sterileness,” passing on from carrier to new carrier, rather like Foucault's idea of a plague virus. Both writers conclude quite univocally, implying that the noxious concept of excessive individuality is sterile at heart.

The masses of amaranth as an image also evoke movement en masse and loss of individual, distinguishing characteristics in pursuit of a noxious idea, the “tyranny of the majority” at its most typical. This would correlate with erasing of conspicuous individual characteristics in order to fit in American society's “melting pot” – in an absolute opposition to Dostoyevsky's “pestilence” where the worst aspect is the fact it renders people unable to come to a mutual understanding or agreement (*C&P* 518). The rhetoric of the Manifest Destiny, described in the introductory chapter, is echoed by the frantic “spreading” of the amaranth, and the blank whiteness of the plant echoes the erasure of the individual in order to fit in better with this perverted version of Herder's harmonious social coexistence.

To support this claim, Wyn Kelley presents the newest interpretation of the Enceladus dream sequence that centres around the subconscious loss of individuality in order for the hero to become an exceptionalist trope, a rebellious and subsequently castigated figure in the cautionary tale within the exceptionalist mythology.¹¹⁷ As she argues:

¹¹⁷ Wyn Kelley, “Pierre, Life History and the Obscure.”

If Pierre's principled pursuit of truth at all costs makes him seem an exceptional hero, the narrator perplexingly suggests at this point that he is nevertheless representative ... Hence even in his dedication to genius, Pierre might be seen as an American type. His character is still in some respects fixed in a national mold.... The demands of biography, that a subject represent a national and ethical ideal, seem here to have been upheld, even as Pierre descends further and further away from the privileged and sanctioned status he held at the beginning of the novel. (Levine 93)

Taking Kelley's argument further, it appears that Melville and Dostoyevsky agree upon the fact that attempts to emulate an external exceptionalist ideal, rather than stay within the bounds of one's individuality, come at a price. The said price is, oddly enough, the loss of one's identity, despite the seemingly fiercely personal nature of the individualistic mindset. The loss of individuality which occurs in pursuit of the said ideal, and subsequent doom is imminent in Melville's text, or narrowly avoided in *Crime and Punishment*. Bearing in mind the socio-political landscape of the time, with rapidly growing dissatisfaction in antebellum ideals of independence and striving towards the common good when contrasted with the actual atrocities caused by slavery and expansion, Melville's stance is quite logical. As a major difference harmonious with the Russian Orthodox ideal of humility, Dostoyevsky emphasises not the tragic loss of individuality, but rather the overt individualism being *the* danger:

But never, never had people considered themselves so intelligent and unshakeable in the truth as did these infected ones. Never had they thought their judgements, their scientific conclusions, their moral convictions and beliefs more unshakeable... Each thought the truth was contained in himself alone, and suffered looking at others, beat his breast, wept, and wrung his hands... (*C&P* 518-519)

Furthermore, it is the awareness of one first as a national and only then as an individual subject that essentially proves the undoing of the Titan – if we read Kelley’s words metaphorically, the “...character... fixed in a national mold” (Levine 93) is disturbingly akin to the Titan trapped in immobile stone. This is the critical explanation of the immobility metaphor: for Dostoyevsky and the murdered horse, is quite different in meaning; it serves as evocation of a docile (*krotkiy*) spirit before the unjust world.

The exceptionalist discourse in itself can therefore be successfully represented by either metaphor: the struggling Enceladus of national exceptional pride that is on its way to demise, or the omnipresent amaranth representing the spreading of an essentially harmful and useless depersonalizing idea. If to follow the example of the critics analysing the novel from the platform of racial discourse (Carolyn L. Karcher, Samuel Otter, Robert S. Levine)¹¹⁸ – also connecting this to De Tocqueville’s stance on the “tyranny of the majority” mentioned earlier, one may assume the whiteness of the amaranth is a metaphorical hint at the spreading of “white,” depersonalizing American exceptionalism.¹¹⁹ It is quintessentially fruitless, yet overbears any incongruent discourses that oppose it, regurgitating them into an impersonal mass.¹²⁰

THE PROBLEM OF THE PRIVATE/PUBLIC.

In short, Melville’s novel is a text laden with socio-political arguments – a point which is most fully explored in an analysis by William Spanos. According to it, *Pierre* surpasses the common definition of the novel as Melville’s unsuccessful attempt at

¹¹⁸ A number of critics explore this topic further: Karcher in “Shadow over the promised land: Slavery, Race and Violence in Melville’s America”; Otter in “The Eden of Saddle Meadows: Landscape and Ideology in *Pierre*”; or Levine in “*Pierre*’s Blackened Hand.”

¹¹⁹ See also Walker-Howe (421), who offers a direct summary of the spreading exceptionalist/imperialist idea justifying expansion in both the United States and tsarist Russia.

¹²⁰ The concept of the “virgin land” colonised in spite of the dispossession of the native population is somewhat relevant here. See Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism*, pp 154-155.

psychological writing. In the critic's own words, "...[W]hat *Moby-Dick* is to the American global imperial project, *Pierre*... is to the American domestic project" (108).¹²¹

Spanos carefully pinpoints the relevance of the exceptionalist motifs in the novel. *Pierre* is the Kraken and equal to *Moby-Dick*, in that it strives to consider the roots of the exceptionalist discourse, before it emerges on the global arena. The novel analyses exceptionalism within a small-scale, private environment, which, I argue, is linked with the individual's psyche (it is not by chance that both Dostoyevsky and Melville spend a significant amount of time presenting dream-sequences as the reflection of the protagonist's inner world). Typically, the concept of exceptionalism is associated with publicity and the relationship between the nation-state and the external world, but the question of how it is manifested in the domestic setting (which may or may not evolve into an anti-exceptionalist, subversive critique) remains highly pressing.¹²²

Here arises a crucial argument, first emergent in the field of queer theory.¹²³ Does *Pierre* represent domesticity as a concept wholly separate from the public sphere (that exceptionalism supposedly permeates), or does it dissolve the boundaries between the two? The critics present two divergent points equally: Caleb Smith in *The Oracle and the Curse* echoes Spanos' argument about the control of the domestic sphere, and describes *Pierre* as "a novel preoccupied with the encroachment of the law into the most intimate quarters of private life" (15), and Brook Thomas suggests that *Pierre* fuses the boundaries between domestic and external: "In *Pierre* there is no purely private realm of the moral domestic family separated by the public" (Thomas 148). I disagree with Thomas: the novel seems to point towards the development of individual, familial tendencies before they commence to influence larger

¹²¹ Spanos, "Pierre's Extraordinary Emergency."

¹²² See Sexton and Tyrrell, 8. The authors refer to the fact that although exceptionalism is still seen by many as an external, "public" issue, there remains a critique of central power being oppressive towards the rights of individuals or groups (the situation regarding the First Nations given as an example).

¹²³ See Warner 26-27 for the discussion of "public" and "private" terms and whether they should be seen as separate, and also Warner 39 for the argument for why the distinction between the two should be demolished.

segments of society beyond family nucleus. In this way, Melville can be described as the predecessor of the general queer theoretical perception of the public and private, who just records how this notion was precisely perceived in his day and age, since the subversiveness of the private sphere is well-explored in the novel's text.¹²⁴

Michael Rogin describes *Pierre* as “a declaration of war against domesticity” (160), which was previously idealised in the antebellum society.¹²⁵ For my part, I maintain that it is not a direct challenge. *Pierre*, as a true product of its era, is a representation of how the individualistic rebellion is manifested in a given family unit forming part of bigger society, rather than an attempt to bring the private into the public sphere, destroying the implied boundaries. This also recalls my point concerning Mary Glendinning's ambitions regarding Pierre's heroic future, where it is viewed as being nowhere as threatening as Pierre's decision to exit the structured familial existence in Saddle Meadows. Through a Herderian lens, it would imply dropping out altogether from the societal framework in order to become a potentially highly dangerous individual free agent.

Therefore, my specific line of inquiry, choosing to dissect *Pierre* before the earlier novels, is logical, as my initial intention was to consider the exceptionalist discourse as related to an individual before proceeding onto two other stages set out in the introduction. It is logical that, given the past tendencies in American literary studies, the critics overlooked the importance of the domestic in their overbearing concern with the global issues personified in *Moby-Dick*. However, in reality the exceptionalist discourse permeating the American culture, as per Priscilla Wald, extends and affects the domestic or intimate sphere, albeit as parody (Wald 107). Wald also highlights the fact that Pierre may not escape the influence of

¹²⁴ The more recent scholarship amply explores Melville's significance for the field of queer theory: particularly, Branka Arsic, Neill Matheson and James Creech, whose analysis of *Pierre* as a text discussing repressed homosexual desire is noteworthy. Also see Christopher Looby's essay, “Sexuality and American Studies” – which notes Melville's important role in the queer literary canon (Levander and Levine, 423), and Michael Snediker, “Melville and Queerness without Character” (Levine 155).

¹²⁵ See also Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity.”

the exceptionalist, nationalistic discourse: “Melville’s *Pierre* is the archetypal American subject ... more apparent his dependence on the national narrative for his sense of himself as a presentable and representable person. *Pierre* literally cannot survive challenge to that narrative” (107). The existence of a character outside of the inescapable exceptionalist national framework is thus unfeasible. The domestic sphere, as Melville’s novel subtly implies, is not isolated from effects of the exceptionalist discourse, and although the separating boundaries between the public and private are known, they are being continuously transgressed – precisely as queer theory maintains. As Amy Kaplan argues in “Manifest Domesticity,” discourses of domesticity are “inseparable from narratives of empire and nation building,” namely in that they represent the continually expanding boundaries of what we see as “domestic” sphere.¹²⁶ Exceptionalism is forming and motioning the picture of life, private as well as public, reaching everywhere. Bearing in mind the earlier analysis of the “spreading amaranth” image, the parallel with the omnipresent, all-pervading exceptionalist discourse is obvious here – shown in a “domestic” setting.

The excessive control extends beyond the public sphere, reaching out to affect all spheres of an individual being. In his analysis of Melville’s novel, Spanos offers a sinister vision of a society held together by institutional framework that may not be doubted or transgressed.¹²⁷ If Dostoyevsky’s mysterious disease organically threatens the natural course of things, with *Pierre*’s dream, we encounter a rigid set of rules, traversing which would result in punishment. This argument harmonises with the fate of Enceladus as shown in the dream, and I maintain that it is one of the central themes in the entire novel.

To further uphold this idea, Myra Jehlen comments on repressive, immutable society at odds with a self-aware individual seeking to bring about change: “*Pierre*’s predicament

¹²⁶ Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity.”

¹²⁷ See also Jehlen, *American Incarnation: The Individual, the Nation and the Continent*.

also has a direct historical reference. His own generation both in fiction and in history, faced the impossible adjuncts of keeping the patriarchal order intact, while yet recreating the world in their own image” (Jehlen 188). The defeat of Enceladus in the dream is a harbinger of Spanos’ “absolute silencing” (Spanos 112) – a concept coined to signify the stifling or destruction of any element falling outside of the normatives upholding the established, exceptionalist society.¹²⁸ This silencing will take place upon Pierre’s physical death. In this case, the dream sequence is a dry reminder of what happens to anyone who dares to fall outside the accepted vision established upon the idea of American exceptionalism. It reverts back to Agamben’s “bare life” which should be controlled by being divested of an opportunity to become harmful.¹²⁹ Melville illustrates it perfectly, giving a picture of grotesque forms struck with immobility, likely due to their potential for action:

...[T]his long acclivity was thickly strewn with enormous rocky masses, grotesque in shape, and with wonderful features on them, which seemed to express that slumbering intelligence visible in some recumbent beasts—beasts whose intelligence seems struck dumb in them by some sorrowful and inexplicable spell. (*Pierre* 294)¹³⁰

There remains a solid bulk of scholarly work supporting the notion that *Pierre* is a core text in the exceptionalist discourse as an exploration of how the concept of exceptionalism fares in the “domestic” arena before being given a chance to be manifested in a public milieu. Brian Connolly, who dedicated his book, *Domestic Intimacies* to the exploration of incest (a key part of the plot in the novel) as related to a broader American national concept, depicts the individual’s particular position within the democratic discourse,

¹²⁸ See also Lauren Berlant, “The Anatomy of National Fantasy.”

¹²⁹ See Pionowska Ziarek for the expanded discussion of the “bare life” concept.

¹³⁰ Agamben’s discussion of another Melvillean text, *Bartleby the Scrivener*, is notable, in that he again assesses the notion of “bare life” as related to the concept of imprisonment, and the remaining potential for dangerousness.

which again draws on a boundary between the private (individual or family) and the public spheres:

...[T]he central figure of both liberalism and the nineteenth-century incest prohibition was the liberal subject, that autonomous, rational individual who acted on his own desires, was endowed with capacity for consent, was not dependent on others, and had his choices and desires ratified in contracts. This subject enjoyed a life in public ... Yet, at the same time, the liberal subject was supposed to find his greatest comforts... in the private life of a bourgeois, sentimental family. (2-3)

Therefore, in *Pierre* remains relevant to the topic of the exceptionalist discourse, although Melville's focus shifts from abstract to concrete, illustrating how exceptionalist tendencies may arise or influence the workings of everyday societal structure.¹³¹ Wai-Chee Dimock discusses this aspect, tying it in with the discourse of Manifest Destiny associated with the era, speaking of the "internalization of Manifest Destiny" in *Pierre*" (Dimock 165). Elaborating on Dimock's argument, I view *Pierre* as a novel which explores an individual response to the exceptionalist discourse, in a domestic setting, by an individual seemingly lacking a concrete political cause to defend. "Exceptionalism" as a concept presumes at the core conflict or opposition. One simply cannot partake of the exceptionalist worldview, and yet not fight. *Pierre*'s place in the exceptionalist interpretation becomes clear; it is the same kind of battle wrought in *Moby-Dick*, but on a lesser, internal level.¹³² In that respect, Melville's chosen subject is relatable to the thoughts of Raskolnikov, who hopes to commence powerful societal improvements by "one tiny little crime," and taking "the money that old woman has doomed to monastery" (*C&P* 62). The deliberately prosaic milieu contrasted with grandiose plans is a factor uniting Melville and Dostoyevsky's texts. Both

¹³¹ See Dimock, *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism*.

¹³² Wald in *Constituting Americans* describes *Pierre* as a text where "Melville examines the fate of the *national subject* within, and without, the law" (108).

protagonists struggle for recognition of themselves as heroes within a markedly everyday setting – be it breakfast-scenes at Glendinnings’ house or the bustling slums of St Petersburg.

It was the Soviet critical school that addressed the concept of the individual opposing a constrictive domestic setting most succinctly, (even though the Soviet scholars failed to produce a solid analysis of *Pierre* as a novel, mainly because it had not been translated into Russian until 2016), whilst at the same time, the American critical school dwelled mainly upon the interpretation of *Pierre* as a mirror reflection of Melville’s own artistic journey.¹³³ I argue that the post-war Soviet scholars touched the closest to the theory of “domestic” exceptionalism. Pierre fights social injustices, just as Raskolnikov muses on “dozens of families saved from destitution, from decay, from ruin, from depravity, from venereal hospitals” (*C&P* 62). V. Dukelskaya (1968) summarises this fact: “In *Pierre*, man is not fighting unconceivable evil or universal fatum anymore, but the troubles spawned by the social order itself.”¹³⁴

The analysis of the dream sequences reveals how the exceptionalist theme has been interwoven with the notion of rebellion. This is only natural, bearing in mind the argument proposed by Jay Sexton and Ian Tyrrell, that rebellion (termed as “anti-imperialism” but covering an extremely broad range of concepts) is a “functional and foundational part of American exceptionalism.”¹³⁵ It is therefore closely connected with the concept – yet what we have seen presented by both writers though, seems to spell things clearly; individualistic rebellion within the domestic, everyday setting, although recognised by the exceptionalist society, will simply not work, however well-intended.

¹³³ In “Why Pierre Went Wrong” Parker argues that Melville’s exploration of Pierre’s interior motives had been sidelined by the metaphorising his own creative and authorial woes.

¹³⁴ See V. Dukelskaya’s thesis. Furthermore, in Fiske’s article offering a surface overview of Soviet reception of Melville, certain relevant points are briefly raised; in particular, that the Soviet critics were correct in pinpointing Pierre’s fate as an attempt to understand society’s workings, or as individualist tragedy at odds with the external world (32, 37).

¹³⁵ See Sexton and Tyrrell, 3.

SELF-INTEREST OR EGOISM?

Before introducing us to Plotinus Plinlimmon's philosophy, which, I argue, is a pivotal passage for understanding of the entire text, Melville presents us with a somewhat sketchy summary of what lies at the core of the accepted American exceptionalist ideal based on the pragmatic Franklinian themes that Pierre comes into conflict with. The American national discourse, the writer seems to imply, is founded upon Jeffersonian ideals of material gain and ownership, inseparable from the national idea:

Sooner or later in this life, the earnest, or enthusiastic youth comes to know, and more or less appreciate this startling solecism ... [B]y all odds the most Mammonish part of this world—Europe and America—are owned by none but professed Christian nations, who glory in the owning, and seem to have some reason therefor. (*Pierre* 178)

Melville's idea of exceptionalism is then echoed by the aforementioned image of the "aspiring amaranth," concerned with owning, or covering as much territory as is fathomable, driven by pragmatic self-interest. This vision evokes the Enlightenment ideal of Franklinian self-reliance which I asserted earlier, and is akin to De Tocqueville's understanding of how the American society functions on the basis of primary self-interest, where individual interests combine in order to work towards a common unified goal.¹³⁶ Of course, this image also resonates with Herder's ideas. However, rather than the utopian image of working in unison that Herder presents, one is struck in this particular passage by yet another juxtaposition of the "enthusiastic youth" and the overtly acquisitive mercantile attitude regnant in the supposed actual society. The term "owning" especially gives a somewhat dark tinge to the passage, recalling the notions of slavery and serfdom, true for both America and

¹³⁶ See Kahan pp 50-51. Also De Tocqueville.

Russia. Yet the passage seems to imply that these images of exploitation and control form part of the seemingly “harmonious” society that the rebellious youth confronts.

Dostoyevsky’s novel (incidentally, published at a later date) reflects the chronological evolution of the aforementioned ideas first sparked off in the Western world as *Pierre* was being written, and which eventually reached Russia and were already firmly implemented in the ideological discourse when *Crime and Punishment* was published. The antipathetic character of Luzhin expands this statement as an expression of supposedly progressive pragmatic, De Tocquevillean views. Their “Westernness” is not referred to explicitly, but is implied:

But science says: Love yourself before all, since everything in the world is based on self-interest ... And economic truth adds that the more properly arranged personal affairs, and, so to speak, whole castans there are in society, the firmer its foundations are, and the better arranged its common cause. A simple thought, which unfortunately has been too long in coming, overshadowed by rapturousness and dreaminess, though it seems it would not take too much wit to realize. (*C&P* 141)

Leaning on concepts such as “science” and “self-interest,” Luzhin represents a perfect scion of the Franklinian mentality. This worldview, antagonised by Pierre and Raskolnikov, presents a triumph of mediocrity and efficiency over far-fetched Titanic grandeur. While Dostoyevsky is quite direct in painting Luzhin as a robotic, unsympathetic personality, I hold that with *Pierre*, Herman Melville might have preferred Plotinus Plinlimmon’s position to Pierre’s. Decidedly it is less artistically arresting, yet far better suited to the confines of the actual world. In the author’s own bitter words concerning Pierre, “He shall now learn, and very bitterly learn, that though the world worship Mediocrity and Common-Place, yet hath it fire and sword for all cotemporary Grandeur; that though it swears that it fiercely assails all Hypocrisy, yet hath it not always an ear for Earnestness” (*Pierre*

226). Melville may not be wholly content with this vision, but he attests to the fact that this is the way the actual world is arranged. After all, the metaphors of anthills and the like, evoked by Herder, suggest mediocrity rather than striking uniqueness.

Both Luzhin's views and Plinlimmon's philosophy are upheld by strong critical evidence. As examples, Jehlen gives an interpretation of Plinlimmon's pamphlet: "...[J]ustice and truth were never meant to exist on earth, they would be personally impractical and socially destructive" (Jehlen 208), whilst Alan S. Kahan underlines the fact that in small doses, individualism, if taking on the shape as "enlightened self-interest," is not just safe for the social structure, but beneficial to it: a "remedy against the threats that democracy poses to freedom" (Kahan 50-51) that helps overcome excessive tendencies.¹³⁷ I then conclude that Luzhin reflects Herder and De Tocqueville's views, where work towards common good under the stimulus of individual, small-scale interest is preferable to true greatness of Titanic proportion.

This exact state of affairs is what eventually destroys Pierre, and nearly does so with Raskolnikov. However, the two characters pose as much of a problem to the described order as it does to them. As Brian Connolly points out, *excessive* individualism poses a likely threat and is interpreted as "egoism."

"Egoism," Tocqueville wrote, "is a passionate and exaggerated love of self which leads a man to think of all things in terms of himself and himself to all." Individualism was something else – although it had the air of egoism, it was more desirable because less passionate and more tempered. (Connolly 7-8)

On a contradictory aside note, Michael Gilmore in *The American Romanticism and the Market-Place* also quotes De Tocqueville as being against commercialization and values represented by the likes of Luzhin, which only too readily morph into "the tyranny of the

¹³⁷ See Alan S. Kahan's analysis of De Tocqueville.

majority” (Gilmore 57), and this attitude is sharply contrasted in a negative light with that of *Pierre*’s author. However, Gilmore’s argument seems to again reinforce my earlier statement that the “tyranny of the majority” or the prevailing opinion, whether seen positively or not, forms the basis of the established social order which proves to be fatal to Enceladus and his emulators.

Subsequently, a sophism forms. If the accepted, “Mammonish” version of exceptionalism is primarily egotistical and concerned with personal profit, why should Pierre and Raskolnikov then be punished for exhibiting individualistic tendencies? The answer is simple: the exceptionalist discourse allows individual interest from the “economical” angle; so far that it does not interfere with the established framework of the man-made laws and regulations governing the exceptionalist cosmos where it is the group rather than one single individual should attain the exceptional status. Individual interest is permitted as long as it does not change the overall picture, and is preoccupied with gaining personal profit rather than changing society. The external form rules over content, precisely as Spanos would have it.¹³⁸

Otherwise, making a display of one’s individuality is quite commonplace and regarded as harmless, if slightly deluded or eccentric. Dostoyevsky ironically states of the Nihilists, “...[W]ho in our Russia nowadays does not consider himself a Napoleon?” (*C&P* 252), whilst Melville depicts the eccentric inhabitants of the Apostles (parodying exaggerated Romanticism of Young America movement), preoccupied with doing absolutely nothing (*Pierre* 228-230). However, this flirtation with individualistic philosophy is permitted to exist as long as it fits in with the established society; genuine individualism and perception of

¹³⁸ Higgins and Parker in “Reading *Pierre*” also comment on the “cloying impression of artifice” and “playacting” (36-37) pervading the social strata which Pierre emerges from, where the form is held to be more important than the essence of things.

oneself as exceptional on a grand scale, followed by independent *active* deeds are, meanwhile, unacceptable.¹³⁹

Pease in *The New American Exceptionalism* discusses precisely why reconciling an individualistic personality with the societal expectations in a milieu like Pierre Glendinning's America, is impossible. The "superego" of the individualist conflates itself with the state, in a deluded vision: "[T]he subject's desire to believe that the authority of the state's laws is identical with his or her will would appear to be impossible because of the obscenely duplicitous relationship to the state's laws enacted by the superego in giving expression to them" (15).

It is evident that individualistic tendencies on a grand scale, symbolised by Enceladus (and Pierre) are seen as a major danger. In *Subversive Genealogy* Rogin discusses in detail the instruments or means that repressive society dominated by exceptionalist discourse uses to subdue individualistic rebellion, considering Melville's text as part of a much broader American picture in general. His analysis of G.W. Peck's scathing review of *Pierre* in *The American Whig Review* (Rogin 162), and his reference to the "political edifice" in Abraham Lincoln's speeches, are noteworthy, as well as somewhat later attempts to reinvigorate the American national ideals by promoting the rule of law and punishment (like prisons) of those who oppose it (Rogin 221-223). Robert S. Levine in *Conspiracy and Romance* offers a further point on Melville's difficulties with grasping the religious-political, accepted yet astoundingly repressive national discourse:

In the 1850s, Melville lacked [Lincoln's] ability to appropriate "divine mystery" and would mock those, like Pierre's Plotinus Plinlimmon, who pretended that they could....

¹³⁹ See also Delbanco speaking out against "empty sentencing" of Luzhin-like Falsgrave whom he calls "Mr Respectability" (191).

He continued to lack [Lincoln's] ability to harness the divine for the political. (Levine 227)

This is all the more relevant, as the political rhetoric of that era was preoccupied with a somewhat Herderian image of cohesive communal existence, viewed as the ideal. For instance, considering Franklin Pierce's 1854 State of the Union speech, there arises an image suggesting the unified national community functioning as a single organism when responding to events elsewhere in the world, focusing on the terms like "our" and "we":

Although our attention has been arrested by painful interest in passing events, yet our country feels no more than the slight vibrations of the convulsions which have shaken Europe. As individuals we cannot repress sympathy with human suffering nor regret for the causes which produce it; as a nation we are reminded that whatever interrupts the peace or checks the prosperity of any part of Christendom tends more or less to involve our own. The condition of States is not unlike that of individuals; they are mutually dependent upon each other. (State of the Union Speech 1854)

The image presented by Pierce can be described effectively as exceptionalist thinking at its finest, preoccupied with uniting the disjointed elements making up society. There are definite Herderian overtones in that "the condition of States is not unlike that of individuals." It also echoes, on a broader level, Dostoyevsky's anxieties about the disunion taking hold of society that he presents in Raskolnikov's dream.

However, what is even more relevant for this particular chapter is that Pierce's speech, at a second glance, seems tinged with practical self-interest rather than pure-hearted altruism. The suggestion that "as a nation we are reminded that whatever interrupts the peace or checks the prosperity of any part of Christendom" may threaten the exceptionalist society itself appears to put at the forefront a somewhat more ignoble notion of self-preservation. The general political climate thus is essentially cynical, in the sense that practicality trumps heroic

outbursts. Moreover, it appears quite repressive. The presumed “hero” capable of such outbursts is likely to present a danger and should be contained by the efficient governmental system which equalizes all citizens out (“no man is so high and none so humble”), as Pierce indirectly implies in another State of the Union speech:

Fortunately, under this system no man is so high and none so humble in the scale of public station as to escape from the scrutiny or to be exempt from the responsibility which all official functions imply. Upon the justice and intelligence of the masses, in a government thus organized, is ... the only security for honest and earnest devotion to its interests against the usurpations and encroachment of power on the one hand and the assaults of personal ambition on the other. (State of the Union Speech 1853)

In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov also comments on the repressiveness of society: “Society is all too well provided with banishments, prisons, court investigators, hard labour camps – why worry?” (*C&P* 251). His vision is much more serious than the superficial suggestion of “bourgeois shame”: “Or maybe you’re afraid of the bourgeois shame of it, or something?” (*C&P* 436).

If we look back at the factual historical evidence offered by Tamarkin (254-267), an interesting point arises that would echo Luzhin’s theory: the rebellious violence, if superficially permitted (as long as it remains within a “mischief” category which means it is manageable and does not pose a genuine danger), it inevitably grows infrequent, and ceases completely (it is notable that the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, as Innes and Philp also point out, did not result in lasting change). In this way, a seemingly liberal gesture in permitting violence as means of expression rather than violently subduing it, may prove to be more effective in terms of controlling. The middle-of-the-road liberalism would be an instrument of maintaining social peace.

It is interesting to observe that Plotinus Plinlimmon and Luzhin, antagonising the main characters, share the imagery of timekeeping and control. In his very first appearance in the novel, Luzhin "...slowly drew his hand up to his waistcoat pocket, took out an enormous, gold-lidded watch, opened it, looked, and as slowly and sluggishly put it back into his pocket" (*C&P* 136). The slowness of his movement, the measured control felt from this description, and the presumed preciousness of the watch all suggest a figure in control of the events, the "master" who gets to decide what happens. The scene with the watch is essentially the demonstration of power in the face of Raskolnikov's wild ambitions. With Plinlimmon, one encounters the name "Chronometrics" and images of the "paternal old Saturn" (*Pierre* 251) both associated with time-keeping and control of the events.¹⁴⁰ The fact that desperate Pierre sees Plinlimmon as "the mild-mystic aspect in the tower window" (*Pierre* 251) right before his own dwelling-place is also a subtly veiled metaphor for the demonstration of who truly is in control. The images of both young men struggling in vain in the face of ruthlessly methodical controlling figures seem to be a uniting moment for both Melville and Dostoyevsky's texts; revealing the futility of the individualistic rebelliousness in the exceptionalist society.

THE ROLE OF THE PAMPHLET: PLINLIMMONIAN PHILOSOPHY.

Whether to mystify us further or to give an explanation of his own stance, Melville includes what could be a detailed organised summary of the ideological beliefs regulating the domestic world. It is probably the most cryptic part of the novel – Plinlimmon's Pamphlet.

If *Moby-Dick* has the unhuman White Whale as one of its central characters on the par with the human protagonists, one may assume that the pamphlet, unanimated as it is, is a character in its own right. Its first appearance is ludicrous and Satanic at once:

¹⁴⁰ In Roman mythology, the god Saturn is associated with time.

It was a thin, tattered, dried-fish-like thing; printed with blurred ink upon mean, sleazy paper. It seemed the opening pages of some ruinous old pamphlet—a pamphlet containing a chapter or so of some very voluminous disquisition. The conclusion was gone. It must have been accidentally left there by some previous traveler, who perhaps in drawing out his handkerchief, had ignorantly extracted his waste paper. (*Pierre* 178)

The pamphlet's appearance, incongruous in the world where appearance is highly important, is particularly at odds with its name. "Chronometricals and Horologicals" suggests Franklinian lucidity, implying that superficially the "ruinous old pamphlet" appears to uphold the societal rules of self-reliance and temperance, holding together the institutionalised world.¹⁴¹ Its triviality belies its demonic role; a similar part is played, for Dostoyevsky's hero, by a fragment of a random conversation:

This coincidence always seemed strange to him. This negligible tavern conversation had an extreme influence on him in further development of the affair; as though there were indeed some predestination, some indication in it.... (*C&P* 63)

The seeming logic governing the universe is then boiled down to pure absolute chance. However, what is more relevant than the pamphlet's bizarre random appearance, is the fact that the conclusion is absent. There is also a certain irony implying the demonic nature of this event: further on, Melville dubs the pamphlet "...a miserable, sleazy paper-rag, which ... they would hardly touch with St Dunstan's long tongs."¹⁴² When Plinlimmon appears himself later on, he displays a more sophisticated demonic trait: vagueness and

¹⁴¹ In *Herman Melville and the American Calling* Spanos speaks of the dominant culture "precipitated by Chronologicals and Horologicals" (30) determining how society should function. Earlier on, Pierre's childhood home of Saddle Meadows is termed as "...a totally monumentalized and charted space – that conceals a primal rupture..." (21).

Melville's envisaging of Franklin was at best uneasy, as can be seen from "The Lighting-Rod Man" (1854) and *Israel Potter* (1855)

¹⁴² The legend of St Dunstan seizing the Devil with a pair of tongs is well-known in medieval folklore: see definition by St Dunstan's Episcopal Church.

elusiveness.¹⁴³ This brings to mind the serpent-tempter of Eden rather than the stereotypical “devil”:

But while the personal look and air of this man were thus winning, there was still something latently visible in him which repelled ... To crown all, a certain floating atmosphere seemed to invest and go along with this man. That atmosphere seems only renderable in words by the term Inscrutableness. (*Pierre* 248)

Jehlen claims that Plinlimmon “is unambiguously evil – he has resolved the problem of ambiguity, effectively by declaring it not a problem, but an advantage” (Jehlen 209). However, in purely spiritual terms (unlike the worldly ones), this philosophy is flawed. Plinlimmon’s sophist nature and ambiguous philosophising are suggestive of the way the Devil is conventionally viewed – and yet, Melville does not make the plot as straightforward. My own perception of Plinlimmon’s role in the novel is that he is essentially a “tempter” rather like Satan in the Book of Job. His aim is not as much to overturn the accepted social order (where he has found for himself a comfortable position), but rather to tempt and weed out those like Pierre Glendinning, who may pose a danger to this order. If the pamphlet is described as “fish-like,” one could say that Plinlimmon is indeed fishing for potentially dangerous souls.

Dostoyevsky’s novel mirrors this plot trope in the figure of Porfiry Petrovich, who subjects Raskolnikov’s visions to “forced and deliberate distortion” (*C&P* 245) calling him out to commence the discussion and reveal the truth about what he had done. Instead of a lively intellectual debate in the direct sense of the word, discussion and exchange of ideas in an exceptionalist society serve to separate the potentially dangerous elements from the rest.

If to consider the role played by Plinlimmon’s pamphlet from a religious viewpoint, the parallel is obvious: Pierre is granted a set of commandments, along with free will to

independently make a conclusion and reach his own choice. Melville himself coyly expresses his awareness of this notion:

For to me it seems more the excellently illustrated re-statement of a problem, than the solution of the problem itself. But as such mere illustrations are almost universally taken for solutions (and perhaps they are the only possible human solutions), therefore it may help to the temporary quiet of some inquiring mind; and so not be wholly without use.

At the worst, each person can now skip, or read and rail for himself. (*Pierre* 181)

Thus the “Non-Benevolence” of Plinlimmon and his philosophy is justified: he is not required to exhibit such quality as would inspire an individual (Pierre) towards behaving in a particular way. Rather, it is the individual who has to read the philosophical treatise, decide what to think of it, and act accordingly or “rail for himself” – the attitude which reflects the Franklinian ideal of self-reliance.¹⁴⁴ However, there is devilish irony in that the commandments are presented in the guise of “waste paper” the appearance speaking first and loudest (the role of appearance was already noted to exceed the essence of a phenomenon in Pierre’s world).¹⁴⁵ Initially we can interpret this moment as a point when the supremely important dogmas of the exceptionalist society (of which Pierre is part) are being subjected to mockery and irony by the intellectual elite.¹⁴⁶ The individual who dares to transgress them remains unaware of the severe retribution that would ensue, “freezing dissent in the United States into a complete silence” as per Spanos.

Was Melville trying to hint at the repressiveness of his own rule-bound world?

Spanos seems to push us towards that direction, hinting at “policing agencies of the dominant culture” (118) pressing down on a rebellious individual. Such agencies are so inseparable

¹⁴⁴ The fluidity of Plinlimmon’s philosophy and its difficulty to be pinpointed is alluded to by Hester Blum in “Melville and Oceanic Studies” (Levine 35).

¹⁴⁵ See also Rogin 11 on the role of appearance.

¹⁴⁶ Melville’s opposition of “intellectual aristocracy” is discussed more deeply through a Socialist lens by Yuri Kovalev in *Herman Melville and the American Romanticism* (63).

from the said culture, that they appear as its part and parcel.¹⁴⁷ The need to control society is evident, even if that may appear to stifle exceptional individual genius. That, unfortunately, is precisely what happens in *Pierre*, despite the possibility that as a relatively “young” nation (as per De Tocqueville), America could have served as a ground for developing a new, more liberal and just societal structure unfettered by excessive regulatory rules.

Returning to Priscilla Wald’s concept regarding the potentially dangerous idea as a virus of sorts, the pamphlet yet again attains an ominous air of being a possible source of intellectual “infection.” In a later scene in the novel, Pierre has a conversation with a deaf bookseller which is at once comical and suggestive of Wald’s idea:

Among other efforts, Pierre in person had accosted a limping half-deaf old bookstall man, not very far from the Apostles’. “Have you the Chronometrics, my friend?” forgetting the exact title.

“Very bad, very bad!” said the old man, rubbing his back. – “has had the chronic-rheumatics ever so long; what’s good for ‘em?”

Perceiving his mistake, Pierre replied that he did not know what was the infallible remedy.

“Whist! Let me tell ye, then, young ‘un,” said the old cripple, limping close up to him, and putting his mouth in Pierre’s ear – “Never catch ‘em! –now’s the time, while you’re young: - never catch ‘em!” (*Pierre* 250)

In this scene, the comparison of the dangerous idea and a physical illness which can be “caught” is explicit, bringing to mind the previously discussed mystery disease in the dream sequence in Dostoyevsky’s novel, or the fact that Raskolnikov’s fevered state of mind after his crime is referred to metaphorically as an “illness” (*C&P* 327). Moreover, in an

¹⁴⁷ For broader discussion of the antebellum American extreme interest in ritualized social customs of the English culture, see Tamarkin xix-xxv.

unexpectedly prophetic moment, Melville's bookseller does suggest that such ideological viruses affect specifically young people, posing a veritable danger and bringing up again the concept of youthful rebellion discussed earlier on. However, considering the authorship of Plotinus Plinlimmon, it also becomes clear that this is not a spontaneous, randomly occurring phenomenon, but a deliberate action caused by a figure who seems to initially represent reason and societal control.

Therefore, Plinlimmon is the serpent-tempter, deliberately diffusing controversial ideas so as to identify the individuals most susceptible to them early on - so that society may duly restrain them before they attain the full potential of a Napoleonic hero (just as it happens with Raskolnikov's article (*C&P* 245-248)). In this manner, Plinlimmon is akin to Porfiry Petrovich the investigator, gently goading Raskolnikov to confess (*C&P* 327) by discussing "psychology" of murder, which "can drive a man to jump out of the window or off a bell-tower, and it's such a tempting sensation, sir" (*C&P* 327).¹⁴⁸

The first two paragraphs of the pamphlet come across to the reader as highly hypocritical. An exceptionalist spirit appears incorrigible in its own righteousness, gliding along its own established boundaries. However, as Plinlimmon comically implies, in the diverse actual world the dogmatic narrowness of exceptionalism loses its meaningfulness to the point of high absurdity and essential uselessness. Standards accepted in one society (however much it wishes to see itself as exceptional) become meaningless when viewed apart from that particular society:

[T]here is a certain most rare order of human souls, which ... will almost always and everywhere give Heaven's own Truth, with some small grains of variance. For peculiarly coming from God, the sole source of that heavenly truth, and the great Greenwich hill and tower from which the universal meridians are far out into infinity

¹⁴⁸ See also Melville's short story, "The Bell Tower" (1855) for similar imagery.

reckoned; such souls seem as London sea-chronometers ... True, in nearly all cases of long, remote voyages—to China, say—chronometers of the best make ... will gradually more or less vary from Greenwich time, without the possibility of the error being corrected by direct comparison with their great standard ... [T]he chronometric soul ... will always, in its so-called intuitions of right and wrong, be contradicting the mere local standards and watch-maker's brains of this earth.” (*Pierre* 181-182)

Bringing up the theme of Franklinian reason, Plinlimmon symbolises exceptionalism as a chronometer; a “great standard” to assess the world around one, even to the point of absurdity.¹⁴⁹ Concerning Melville’s own biography (particularly stressed by Lewis Mumford, and more recently, Andrew Delbanco)¹⁵⁰ - it may be interpreted as a parody on the forceful imposition of white, colonial ideals (held by the American exceptionalist discourse as “Greenwich time” and “heavenly truth”) on anything that may oppose these, represented as hypothetical “China” or an imaginary realm.¹⁵¹ Such exceptionalism (particularly relevant, taking into context the specific ideological atmosphere of post-Revolution, antebellum, Protestant American North), is narrowly-focused and “domestic” - a conflict between “the discourse and practise of the world” (*Pierre* 112) and the individual hero.

However, the narrowness of the exceptionalist viewpoint offers a comforting familiarity to the individual spirit. The “long, remote voyages – to China, say” appear to be perilous for the psyche. Spanos discusses at length *Pierre*’s confrontation with the uncanny, presented as a wild, meaningless chaos, and of “*Pierre*’s later obsessive but futile search for

¹⁴⁹ Parker and Higgins in “Reading *Pierre*” suggest that the pamphlet should be seen as satire: “The satire of the pamphlet is directed at nominal Christians who (like the author of the pamphlet) are unable to respond to the unworldly wisdom of Jesus except in worldly terms, and so resort, at last, to that virtuous expedience, which, according to the pamphlet, is “what the best mortal men do daily practice” (117). “A Janusian difficulty for the readers of *Pierre* is that *Pierre* and Plinlimmon are judged from the stance of absolute Christianity at the same time that elsewhere Christianity is judged in the light of the horrors that follow any attempts to put it into practice” (117).

¹⁵⁰ See Delbanco, *Melville: His World and his Work*.

¹⁵¹ The domineering thought of exceptionalism being seen as not just American, but a European phenomenon is mentioned by Spanos in *Herman Melville and the American Calling*.

the “Talismanic secret” that would recuperate and make his disintegrated universe intelligible again” (Spanos 109). It is tempting to connect this idea again to the idea of narrow-minded masculinity rooted in perception of one’s self as exceptional and incorrigible, in that Pierre, confined within its boundaries, sees anything outside those (personified by the feminine, inexplicable mystique of Isabel, who arrives unexpectedly from an unspecified place, wholly alien to the microcosm of Saddle Meadows) as unsolvable mystery: “So Pierre renounced all thought of ever having Isabel’s dark lantern illuminated to him. Her light was lidded, and the lid was locked” (*Pierre* 123). Pierre Glendinning does not succeed in locating the “talismanic secret” – but we as readers are made aware of the exact reason to why the world outside the limits of the permitted exceptionalist vision was precisely so attractive, and dangerous. As a comparative comment, it strikes one as notable that Raskolnikov is lured out into the “dangerous territory” opposing the law specifically by female characters: Sonya, who needs to be saved from prostitution; Dunya, who needs to be saved from a loveless marriage; or the unnamed seduced girl he encounters in the street: “Poor, meek ones, with meek eyes... Dear ones! Why don’t they weep? Why don’t they moan?” (*C&P* 261). It can be clearly seen, that the writer at that time looked predominantly at the male character: women still are seen as figures assisting the progression of the plot, rather than genuine change-makers and potential “Enceladuses.”¹⁵² The feared individualistic radical is primarily imagined as male.

The above points can be read as the pressing need of a character (specifically a masculine one, driven by perverted visions of the exceptionalist discourse) to logically explain and familiarise everything within his grasp, especially as the expansion of his universe progresses, thus being tied in with concepts of expansionism and Manifest Destiny. An individual is then offered an unfavourable position where he lacks the capability to unearth and explore the full

¹⁵² Alexander Herzen, in his story *The Thieving Magpie* (1848) notes that in Russia, there are not enough renowned female singers – as women are yet to gain their own voice.

potential of his masculinity, but everything outside this concept remains a baffling mystery which he is unable to understand. As we remember, Plinlimmon's pamphlet lacks conclusion and cannot reassure, and this may very well be a deliberate omission on Melville's part, playing up on the concept of free will and individual conscious choice.

What appears to be the case regarding the individual exceptionalism, however, is that it at first denigrates the accepted framework of exceptionalist, "American," acceptable worldview, but then subsequently pushes the individual to seek elsewhere the satisfying psychological feeling that this very exceptionalist discourse gave. The right of an individual to disassemble or destroy, in order to seek something that would help to reassemble the world into a comprehensible place once again, is a powerful topic in *Pierre* which renders it similar to *Crime and Punishment*. Furthermore, Plinlimmon's pamphlet echoes the views expressed by Raskolnikov himself in an article he produced (superficially interpreted as a discussion of the individual's own standing as opposed to society). It suggests that a particular, "extraordinary" category of people (evocative of Plinlimmon's argument) have a specific right of dissembling that otherwise is not permissible societally ("conservative" others would have to be presumably satisfied with De Tocquevillean "enlightened self-interest"):

The whole point is that ... all people are somehow divided into the "ordinary" and "extraordinary" The ordinary must live in obedience and have no right to transgress the law, because they are, after all, ordinary. While the extraordinary have the right to commit all sorts of crimes and in various ways to transgress the law, because in point of fact they are extraordinary ... [T]he masses hardly ever acknowledge this right in them; they punish them and hang them (more or less), thereby quite rightly fulfilling their conservative purpose; yet, for all that, and in subsequent generations these same

masses place the punished ones on a pedestal and worship them (more or less). (*C&P* 245-247)

The presence of the extraordinary in the societal framework is then presented as a natural aspect of human existence, in a rather alarming idea. Raskolnikov's article is directly challenging. In comparison to it, Plinlimmon's arguments are of a far more morally relativistic, elusive nature, harping on the fact that perhaps some phenomena that are unacceptable in certain societies, are perfectly normal in others. He hints that the existence of multitudinous exceptionalist traditions, described as "the mere local standards and watch-maker brains of this earth," typical to diverse states or societies, yet essentially different in spirit from each other, is not just possible, but natural.¹⁵³ Rogin also mentions that Plinlimmon's pamphlet is relativistic and morally ambiguous (96). However, essentially diverse traditions all boil down to the same essence, once the cultural or geographical differences, or "Chinese notions" are stripped:

[T]hough man's Chinese notions of things may answer well enough here, they are by no means universally applicable ... And yet it follows not from this, that God's truth is one thing and man's truth another ... by their very contradictions they are made to correspond ... [H]e who finding in himself a chronometrical soul, seeks practically to force that heavenly time upon the earth; in such an attempt he can never succeed, with an absolute and essential success. And as for himself, if he seek to regulate his own daily conduct by it, he will but array all men's earthly time-keepers against him, and thereby work himself woe and death. (*Pierre* 182)

¹⁵³ Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*.

To summarise what may be finally said of Plinlimmon's philosophy, it appears that Melville himself is subtly satirising the narrowness of societal exceptionalism ruled by "earthly time-keepers" and their standards, threatening "woe and death" to anyone who does not fit in, however, at the same time yielding to the fact that it offers the only possibility to make sense of how the world works and grow reconciled with it. Unlike with the hero of *Crime and Punishment*, where the conscious act of Christian repentance is offered to somewhat sweeten the necessity to submissively follow the pragmatic Luzhin and his ilk, *Pierre* shows that trying to escape the world is impossible and ludicrous, no matter how heroic it may seem.

PIERRE AND RODION: SAME AND DIFFERENT.

The rest of this chapter looks at the specific character traits of the protagonists, and how they are affected by the influence of the exceptionalist discourse in the course of the plot. It is evident that change is a major theme associated with both Pierre and Rodion. In each novel, the protagonist emerges as a completely changed being at the end – Dostoyevsky likens this to the "raising of Lazarus" (*C&P* 522) whilst Melville is being decidedly less optimistic, presenting a downward descent to doom (*Pierre* 307-308).

Both protagonists are male, white, and experiencing what comes across as a deep directional crisis. In the light of the general stance assumed by the modern scholarship on Melville, the said crisis is unsurprising, coming as a straightforward result of the conflict between the young individualistic intellectual and the hierarchical constraints permeating the mid-nineteenth century ideological climate in which both narratives take place.¹⁵⁴ This conflict holds at the core the notion that as a white male coming from a non-working class

¹⁵⁴ See Rogin, and Dimock. Also broadly Parker and Higgins' analyses.

background (one might note Pierre's illustrious family background, or how Raskolnikov is mocked as a "gentleman" by his fellow inmates (*C&P* 517)), the protagonist is torn between two major possibilities. He can either to strive out individually and achieve exceptional greatness, as symbolised by Enceladus for Melville and Napoleon for Dostoyevsky (and which the exceptionalist mythology seems to promote, using concepts such as the Manifest Destiny), or else to adhere to the worldview promoted by Luzhin and Plinlimmon, achieving social respectability and good fortune whilst staying within the frameworks of societal functioning. Both texts make it clear that it is the former rather than the latter path is chosen, the individuality of both characters driving them to assume a radical stance. Pierre and Rodion are shown by authors as radical thinkers of the highest degree, even if society, terrified at this, chooses to shun them.¹⁵⁵ Delbanco notes in *Pierre* a "serious anatomy of the radical imagination that anticipates Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*" (205), and Brook Thomas states, "...[R]adical Pierre becomes one of those excluded from the American covenant" (147). Radicalism, both writers imply, is a direct consequence for the ideologically contaminated masculine psyche affected by identity crisis described above, as well as a bugbear for general public.¹⁵⁶

The manifested radicalism is emphasised by the fact that the characters in question happen to be young men, their youthfulness being a risk factor for ideological radicalisation. Indeed, both are frequently referred within the text or by the critics as youthful - Higgins and Parker refer to Pierre's "youthful obliviousness" (35).¹⁵⁷ Delbanco goes more explicit as to call Pierre a "spoiled man-child" (204). Throughout the first chapter, Pierre is being

¹⁵⁵ Delbanco, *Melville, his World and Work*.

¹⁵⁶ This way, my subsequent analysis of *Devils (The Possessed)* alongside *Moby-Dick* in the next chapter is strategically positioned to reflect what occurs when the radical imagination of the individual comes into contact with the rest of society.

¹⁵⁷ In Higgins and Parker, "Reading Pierre." Also see Matthisen, "American Renaissance: Art and Expressionism in the Age of Emerson and Whitman" 470, and Chase, "Herman Melville: a Critical Study" 113, on the same matter.

continuously referred to (both by Melville and other characters) as a “youth” or “boy” – “a fine, proud, loving, docile, vigorous boy” (*Pierre* 22) says Mrs Glendinning, listing all the virtues commonly associated with the notion. Meanwhile, Raskolnikov is heard ironising about those like himself: “[T]he vain and silly in particular fall for such bait; young men particularly” (*C&P* 250).

Considering Pierre’s failure to follow in the footsteps of his revered grandfather, as well as Raskolnikov’s inability to remain cheerfully practical in the face of daily tribulations like his peers, one may connect this fact with the notion of the Plinlimmonian middle-of-the-road ideal. The conclusion upon which one may subsequently arrive is that in the exceptionalist society, a young man of Pierre or Rodion’s standing is expected to play a very concrete, recognisable role that would help support the frameworks of the said society rather than topple them. In the meantime, any deviation from these set obligations society would punish. Looking at Franklin Pierce’s State of the Union speeches, one comes across a passage subtly illustrating exactly this state of affairs:

Our forefathers were trained to the wisdom which conceived and the courage which achieved independence by the circumstances which surrounded them, and they were thus made capable of the creation of the Republic. It devolved on the next generation to consolidate the work of the Revolution ... To us of this generation remains the not less noble task of maintaining and extending the national power. We have at length reached that stage of our country's career in which the dangers to be encountered and the exertions to be made are the incidents, not of weakness, but of strength. (State of the Union Speech 1856)

In this respect, young men of Pierre’s calibre were expected to be the “maintainers” of the attained social order – and certainly not acting as radical change-bringers that “Young America” or Nihilism idealised. Meanwhile, the title of Dostoyevsky’s novel, *Crime and*

Punishment, also seems to hint at the expectations imposed on the protagonist, as well as what may occur in case these are not met.

An interesting observation is that the characters' youth is accompanied by physical perfection, which notably wanes as the plot progresses, the physical state reflecting the psychological change. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that as their descent advances, both Raskolnikov and Pierre Glendinning grow more haggard in appearance.¹⁵⁸ The progression of the spiritual descent manifested in external appearance is evident both in Pierre, described as "bright-cheeked, chestnut-haired," (*Pierre* 10-11) and Raskolnikov, who is "remarkably good-looking" (*C&P* 4). As the plot continues, Raskolnikov changes: "[E]xternally, he seemed to resemble a wounded man or a man suffering from some acute physical pain: his brows were knitted, his lips compressed, his eyes inflamed" (*C&P* 211) – the metaphor for illness is blatant. Pierre's case is even more poignant: "Ah! Shivering thus day after day in his wrappers and cloaks, is this the warm lad that once sung to the world of the Tropical Summer?" (*Pierre* 262). The suggestion of appearance-altering spiritual or psychological illness encompassing all levels of being is evident. The nature of this illness is connectable with the earlier argument about the ideological virus gradually overcoming the individual. Both protagonists are essentially presented as "sick" and therefore need to be quarantined from society, metaphorically at least.

Another aspect of this argument is the conflict between the material and idealistic notions. Mired in entirely spiritual musings, Pierre and Raskolnikov dangerously ignore the material, imperfect aspect of earthly existence, which proves to be their downfall as their idealism comes into contact with the actual world. This is precisely what both the dream of Enceladus and the warnings of Plinlimmon and Luzhin seek to stress.

¹⁵⁸ See also Delbanco, pp 194-195, although his point is more about the conflict of lofty internal aspirations and pitiful reality.

In regards to the historical context, Peter Onuf suggests that there exist two different visions of exceptionalism, depending on whether one looks from an idealistic or a more material viewpoint, the latter essentially being tied with the pragmatic, commercial matters rather than highbrow patriotism (and an aspect that both protagonists ignore in favour of loftier aspirations).¹⁵⁹ This is harmonious with Melville's concept of Pierre as a character who has been pursuing an exceptionalist ideal from an imaginary, non-material angle, blithely ignoring the impediments brought about by physicality. In the text of the novel, Melville offers a humorous testimony to this early on: "...[W]hen we consider these athletic habitudes of Pierre, and the great fullness of brawn and muscle they built round about him; all of which manly brawn and muscle, three times a day loudly clamoured for attention..." (*Pierre* 19).

Yet again we revert to Plinlimmon's discourse, in that finding a favourable middle-ground between the flesh and the spirit is absolutely necessary. Melville seems to be quite adamant in suggesting that denying flesh altogether in pursuit of the individualistic or exceptionalist dream (which later on would be echoed by Raskolnikov and his kin as a foremost virtue) is precisely what undoes this dream.¹⁶⁰ Both characters have attempted to be fleshless – and they fell. "Pierre" sarcastically underlines this fact early on: "[T]here was one little uncelestial trait, which, in the opinion of some, may mar the romantic merits of gentlemanly Pierre Glendinning. He always had an excellent appetite, and especially for his breakfast" (*Pierre* 19).

The heroic aspirations come into conflict with the actual physicality. Unlike the automaton-like figures of Luzhin and Plinlimmon, Pierre and Raskolnikov (who experiences

¹⁵⁹ See the analysis by Peter Onuf, "Imperialism and Nationalism in the early American Republic" in *Empire's Twin*, pp 22-23.

¹⁶⁰ See J. Wilson's thesis, *Radical Chastity: the politics of abstinence in nineteenth-century Russian literature*. However, Wilson mainly concerns herself with the sexual abstinence rather than general asceticism, which, I believe, is more relevant here.

“deepest revulsion” at the filthy conditions in St Petersburg slums (*C&P* 4)) are essentially human and react physically to the world around them. However, the conflict between the physical and the spiritual is not the only one that relates Pierre to Raskolnikov. The pronounced tension between the earthly and the spiritual becomes more apparent as both characters attempt to emulate a noble ideal imposed by the society, and reveal deep-seated tension between the accepted (and quite artificial) vague ideal and the innate truthful self-consciousness.¹⁶¹

“They’re hard-working, commercial people, concerned with “universal happiness.” ... I don’t want to sit waiting for universal happiness,” claims Raskolnikov of society in general (*C&P* 260). Nor does Pierre Glendinning wish to take the obvious route by offering conventional charity to Isabel. Both protagonists wish to choose their own causes to fight for, as well as the manner in which they would proceed to do so. Both fail. The obsessive search for a cause to champion and prove oneself is also unnatural and at odds with how the world stands: Higgins and Parker explicitly dub it “chivalric artifice” (84).

It is not enough for a masculine character to be a hero in an institutionally rigid, corrective universe: the hero must be careful in selecting a correct cause to champion rather than just following his instinct for justice. The societal boundaries imposed on Pierre as well as his attempts to dutifully obey those are made plain in the very first chapters, as his mother’s thoughts: “Pray heavens he show his heroicness in some smooth way of favouring fortune, not be called out to be a hero of some dark hope forlorn...” (*Pierre* 22).

There exists a widespread allegorical notion, where the individual is seen as the “prodigal son” disappointing the exceptionalist society that spawned him. This can be said in particular of Melville’s novel. Mary Glendinning, “now not very far from her grand

¹⁶¹ Delbanco states, “Pierre in this sense was Melville’s representative American – a quixotic believer who trusts his own righteousness ever as he swings wildly between allegiances” (188).

climacteric” (*Pierre* 19) represents the British imperial ideal, that spawns Pierre, who is viewed as its dazzling descendant, destined to continue the grand imperial tradition (this would also explain the continuous striving for chivalric deeds). As long as Pierre (a representative of young America: not necessarily Duykinck’s, but the entire nation entering its place on the world arena) remains “docile” and within the boundaries imposed by the mother who birthed him, fame and glory remain his by right: as long as the values he chooses to uphold and champion remain harmonious with the mother-figure’s: “[H]is little wife, that is to be, will not estrange him from me; for she too is docile ... How glad I am that Pierre loves her, and not some dark eyed haughtiness, with whom I could never live in peace...” (*Pierre* 22).

The juxtaposition of Lucy and Isabel in the exceptionalist interpretation of the novel symbolises the choice of different causes which a hero could support (it is notable, that in the literary world that was still largely ruled by male writers, the female characters are placed as symbolic representations rather than wholly realistic characters). Blue-eyed Lucy represents a safe and approved set of political beliefs or causes to champion, that offer no threat to the imperial figure of Mrs Glendinning, who explicitly states her desire to “live in peace.” As long as Pierre chooses to court her, he remains within the accepted grounds of the exceptionalist cosmos. However, the “dark-eyed haughtiness” of Isabel represents, in an exceptionalist parable, not so much a straightforward erotic temptation as most critics would insist, but rather a cause or political belief that falls outside the range of acceptable causes within the exceptionalist discourse. She very well may pose actual danger – or she may not. In Dostoyevsky’s world, Raskolnikov’s obsessive need to save souls like Sonia or Dunya from the clutches of prostitution, is much more benevolent, and yet possibly plays on the same subconscious anxieties.

What matters is that “dark” causes represented by Isabel, if championed by American youths such as Pierre, would bring the said youths outside the acceptable discourse. This would then result in their inevitable expulsion from the safe boundaries of the exceptionalist universe, whilst the glory that was theirs by right, would be inherited, as the previous sub-chapter suggests, by the more pragmatic (if less spectacular), Luzhin-style type personified by “the less earnest and now Europeanized” Glendinning Stanley (*Pierre* 188).

Nevertheless, the problem resides with the fact that there are no clear divisions between “right” and “wrong” or explicitly termed guidelines which the characters could rely on (apart from random snatches of thought like Plinlimmon’s pamphlet, presented under the guise of waste-paper), although it appears that their world expects them to do precisely this. The correct way to conduct oneself has to be intuitively deduced. More importantly, both Pierre Glendinning and Dostoyevsky’s hero have been exposed to noxious philosophical concepts such as Plinlimmon’s philosophy or the Napoleonic visions, freely available in their strata of society, which offer a perfect breeding-ground for their dark ideas.¹⁶²

Why are the ideas personified by Plinlimmon’s pamphlet toxic in the first place? Previously we have discussed the awareness that Raskolnikov, unlike Pierre, exhibits in understanding them (even if choosing to wilfully shut his eyes at their true nature). The key problem with any idea is that it is essentially neutral until it arrives in the hands of an individual who may adapt it so, that it might have a potential to cause harm. John Milbank offers a summary of this view: “This liberty is dubious, since it is impossible to choose at all

¹⁶² See Higgins & Parker, *Reading Melville’s “Pierre, or the Ambiguities”*.

Also see M. E. Dichmann, “Absolutism in Melville’s *Pierre*.” The idea that the world is subtly tainted and contains germinating rudiments of dangerous ideologies capable of taking over an individual is touched upon by Dichmann, who offers an examination of the “Chronometricals” passage in particular, claiming that as man attempts to reach the ideal offered to him by the established norms, it is only natural that evil or morally wrong events occur as a result, because of the universe’s tainted nature.

unless one is swayed one way or another by an influence: hence a supposedly “pure” free choice will only be a cover for the operation of hidden and uniform influences” (224).¹⁶³

Taking into account Milbank’s argument, we are presented with yet another reason for the necessity of Plinlimmonian balance between the idealism and reality in pursuit of the ideal exceptionalist vision. If one looks from this viewpoint, it becomes quite clear: an idealistic rebel, no matter how grand or well-intended his plans are, is influenced by an external idea coming from elsewhere – and it is truly a game of Russian roulette whether or not this idea would turn dangerous.

Another factor which explains the radicalism in both characters and renders them similar, is the notion of social class. The plot stresses that both have previously enjoyed what can be described as privileged or cultured upbringing – less evident, perhaps, in case of Raskolnikov.¹⁶⁴ I argue that the characters’ social class is what gives them the opportunity to consider, philosophize, and even put aside the material rather than idealistic concerns, instead of being concerned largely with survival, where toying with a potentially dangerous ideological stance could mean physical death. My reading of this aspect of the texts is that the characters’ identity as representatives of the educated classes the writers associate with perilous carelessness. To reinforce this point, Higgins and Parker in “Reading Melville’s *Pierre, or the Ambiguities*,” suggest that Pierre’s familial background makes him lack discernment in the face of potentially toxic ideas: “...[S]ince Pierre has grown up in the sheltered, rarefied world of Saddle Meadows, however, the ideas in the pamphlet are likely to be wholly new to him” (119). Perhaps this situation is not accidental, but deliberate on the part of the upholders of the social order such as Mary Glendinning, and pointing towards societal control equating to imposition of intellectual ignorance (which of course, bearing in

¹⁶³ See John Milbank.

¹⁶⁴ The cynical idea that punishment and/or prison is “no place for a gentleman” like Raskolnikov is commented on by Ruttenburg in *Dostoyevsky’s Democracy*, 186.

mind the subsequent events, only worsens the outcome contrary to the expectations): “A noble boy, and docile... And he does not grow vain-glorious in sophomore wisdom. I thank heaven I sent him not to college” (*Pierre* 22).

It is a surprising notion, as one commonly would associate a character like Pierre with being carefully educated and intellectually aware. However, Meredith McGill and Michael Collins both present one with an overview of the actual situation within the intellectual circles of Melville’s day, which show the extent to which an idea (often ill-devised or essentially toxic) could be “puffed” up (using McGill’s terminology) in order to attain influence over those exposed to it.¹⁶⁵ According to McGill as well as Collins, the seeming democratisation of intellectual thought in nineteenth-century American setting posed a controversy precisely because of the “puffery” of a toxic idea by the elite intellectual thinkers, and its subsequent influence over the wider public, went to produce new “Enceladuses” as a result. This image is metaphorically echoed by Melville in his description of Pierre, as a juvenile author revelling in his imaginary talent, sitting “smoking, and smoking, mild and self-festooned as a vapory mountain” (*Pierre* 225).

Reverting to the concept of a virus, the metaphor of contagion by air is quite obvious. Emory Elliott, in “Art, Religion and the Problem of Authority in *Pierre*” implies that the lack of directional ideals in the established American society can also be to blame: “...Melville keeps before the reader the question of Pierre’s calling. In his well-established American society of the Eastern seaboard no longer fraught with revolution or Indian wars, an angry young man has few creative outlets for his righteous indignation” (343). This notion is relatable to the idea of futile masculinity explored earlier in relation to the Enceladus sequence.

¹⁶⁵ McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853*; Collins, “The Illimitable Dominion of Charles Dickens: Transatlantic Print culture and the Spring of 1842.”

Pierre and Raskolnikov have also been affected by the exceptionalist discourse to the extent of attempting and failing rebellion against it in order to do hypothetical “good.”¹⁶⁶ However, what interests us is their particular personal susceptibility to toxic ideology. Delbanco provides an idea of the socio-political climate at the time, which can allow us to comprehend better the characters’ psychological makeup: “The sort of questions Pierre asks were being asked everywhere at a time when, as Emerson wrote to Thomas Carlyle, Americans were “all a little wild with numberless projects of social reform.” What was to be done for those excluded from the vaunted bounty and freedom of American life?” (Delbanco 191).¹⁶⁷

Notably, both heroes exhibit a peculiar, strained state of mind when the destructive idea is *first* presented to them. Raskolnikov’s psychological state is meticulously recorded (*C&P* 3-6); as is Pierre’s “dark and wild” mental state immediately before encountering the pamphlet:

His thoughts were very dark and wild; for a space there was rebellion and horrid anarchy and infidelity in his soul ... Just such now was the mood of Pierre; to him the Evil One propounded the possibility of the mere moonshine of all his self-renouncing Enthusiasm. (*Pierre* 176)

The psychological make-up of a character would be of a very specific nature for a dangerous idea to take hold of it. Referring back to the idea of noxious ideology being

¹⁶⁶See also Emerson to Carlyle, October 30, 1840 in *Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*, pp 283-84, and Levine, *Conspiracy and Romance: studies in Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville*, pp 170-171. Levine is focusing mainly on discussion of slavery and rebellion, but also offers a summary of issues pervading the society at the exact time.

¹⁶⁷ See Delbanco: “Pierre is the wrong reader for this type of “middle-of-the-roadism.” After Ahab, he is the strongest exemplar of ... the idea that once “the absolute is introduced into the political realm,” righteousness becomes madness. What begins as a wish to correct some personal or historical wrong becomes fanaticism...” (193). Also Arendt, *On Revolution*, 84. Hannah Arendt suggests that there is a tendency of psychological near-madness which overturns positive intentions contained within essentially neutral philosophical discourses available for analysis (such as Plinlimmon’s pamphlet would be in less radical hands)

comparable to a life cycle of a biological virus, and if to regard Pierre and Rodion as initial victims through whom the idea of an “evil” ideological virus is first manifested, a particular state of psychological vulnerability typical of a character who would be likely to get “infected” first, is defined by the critics. The question of maturation or “germination” of an idea within an individual is explored by Wald in *Constituting Americans* (123). There arises a powerful parallel of likening a developing idea taken root in one’s psyche as a noxious viable growth or entity. Further on, Howard Bruce Franklin in *The Wake of the Gods* suggests that an initially benevolent idea may only mature into a noxious one – “...The thing born in Pierre as a heaven-begotten Christ matures ineluctably into the monstrous stone Enceladus cast down from heaven...” (105).

This image of a diseased organism slowly disintegrating and mutating is echoed by the imagery within the novels. Pierre and Raskolnikov’s descent is marked by the disintegration of the concrete (as personified by their altering physical appearance) and immersion in the uncanny. This point is summarised best of all by Svidrigailov, Dostoyevsky’s anti-hero: “[T]he healthy man is the most earthly of men, and therefore he ought to live according to life here, for the sake of completeness and order. Well, but as soon as a man gets sick, as soon as the normal earthly order of his organism is disrupted, the possibility of another world at once begins to make itself known, and the sicker one is, the greater the contact with this other world, so that when a man dies altogether, he goes to the other world directly” (*C&P* 275). This is remarkable, connected with the near-death, otherworldly psychological state that both Pierre and Raskolnikov experience at the point of the dream sequences discussed above.

There is another factor increasing the said vulnerability to the harmful ideological discourses – both characters’ tendency to view themselves through superhuman lenses and

their desire to acquire semi-divine, exalted status.¹⁶⁸ It is somewhat ridiculous, albeit aspirational.¹⁶⁹ In the imagery of both Pierre's dream of Enceladus with "the turbaned head of igneous rock" and Raskolnikov's envy of the "extraordinary" people, "No: such people seem to be made not of flesh, but of bronze!" (*C&P* 260), the theme of dehumanising one's nature to attain invulnerability in pursuit of an individual heroic ideal can be observed.¹⁷⁰ It harmonises with the earlier point concerning the characters' denial of the physical aspects of being. Delbanco (194-195) also comments on Pierre wishing to be a "rock," as does Howard Bruce Franklin, claiming that "a rock is ambiguously offered as symbol of the divine absolutist" (Howard Bruce Franklin, 125). My interpretation of those observations boils down to a subtly veiled Melvillean dig at a unified, depersonalized ideal society governed by exceptionalist Plinlimmonian ideology that both Tocqueville and Herder uphold.

The conclusion of their tale is also similar for both. Pierre and Raskolnikov mistake the nascent and expanded consciousness for real supreme truth and knowledge (with disastrous results). Both attempt to evade confronting this painful truth face-to-face for as long as possible; and both, as the curtain closes, come to a (belated) discovery that no vicious crime can be justified by claiming that the moral boundaries established by the external world are "unjust." The theme of "horologicals" re-emerges as the conclusion: following the Franklinian ideal established by society, of imitating Christ, is tempting for an individual ego seeking to reaffirm its exceptional nature. Yet it is unviable and problematic when attempted in reality. Raskolnikov comes realise that only after reaching the lowest point in his descent, and it is notable that we do not hear of whether he actually does proceed to amend his behaviour to

¹⁶⁸ See Franklin, *The Wake of Gods; Melville's Mythology*.

¹⁶⁹ See Delbanco: "...there is something stirring about Pierre's outrage, but there is also something utterly ludicrous about his sense about having been appointed to set the world right" (199).

¹⁷⁰ Collins, in his essay on Poe and Dickens also suggests the dehumanisation of the creative thought, the literary process gradually becoming industrialized and dehumanised in much the same vein.

revert to the chronometrical framework.¹⁷¹ Pierre, in the meantime, fails completely, his downfall being explained by the fact that he had initially chosen a wholly wrong cause to defend.¹⁷²

As a final statement for this chapter (regarding, in particular, all that has been said about the conflict of the public and domestic, the role of Mary Glendinning, and the pressing need for a cause to defend), I conclude that *Pierre* is as an exceptionalist fable, summarising (if somewhat bitterly) the impossibility of transgressing the established boundaries of exceptionalist society on purely spiritual rebellion alone – and the utter folly of doing so. This presumes stepping away from Higgins and Parker’s argument that *Pierre* was an attempt to draw psychologically correct characters (Higgins and Parker 57) and argue that each character is endowed with hidden metaphoric meaning in order to make the exceptionalist parable possible, and rather relates to the traditional undercurrent of the homiletic narrative in American literature, which uses meaningful allegorical figures to illustrate a principle. Meanwhile, I also believe that Dostoyevsky, with his basis in the Orthodox tradition, manages to represent this aspect across more successfully from a purely stylistic viewpoint (the name of his novel alone sounding sublimely allegorical). The precariously unbalanced individualistic brilliance is substituted by deft balance which proves more efficient at treading the line between worlds of ideas and the material, or the intellectual “liberty” and universal “equality” or well-being. In short, *Pierre* is quintessentially like *Crime and Punishment* in its role as a ruthless analysis to why any individualistic attempts to go beyond the framework offered by the established “exceptionalist” discourse, are doomed to fail. Spiritual enthusiasm

¹⁷¹ See Ruttenburg, 141.

¹⁷² See Higgins and Parker, “Reading Pierre” 172. Also see Higgins and Parker, “The Flawed Grandeur of Melville’s *Pierre*,” in *New Perspectives on Melville*, pp 189-190.

alone is not sufficient to bring about radical change – which the following chapter will discuss.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LEADER AND THE MOB - *MOBY DICK* AND *DEVILS*.

In the previous chapter, I argued that the notion of an “extraordinary” individuality at odds with its surroundings (as represented by the images of Enceladus the Titan or Raskolnikov’s theoreticising), is essentially unviable in the society that such an individuality nominally belongs to. The extreme excesses associated with individualistic rebellion are seen to be invariably restrained or punished at some point in the texts. However, the first chapter also showed that the ideas that an individualistic personality expounds, present a genuine driving force, theoretically capable of threatening the fabric of societal structures. Bearing in mind the arguments put forth by both writers, I suggested that the awareness of the power contained in one’s individuality spreads, virus-like, from the affected individual to others. This chapter will consider at length what occurs when such an individuality manages to avoid restraint or punishment, assuming a position of leadership within a community united by the exceptionalist vision – and what consequences this may bring.

The concept of a leader endowed with strong individuality frequently emerges alongside the notion of societal upheaval, and the “exceptional individual” encountered in the first chapter seems to fit this role perfectly. Previous critical works (from Mikhail Bakhtin’s study of Dostoyevsky’s politics to C.L.R. James’ and Charles Olson’s analyses of Captain Ahab’s motives) have explored the representation of the figure of the charismatic leader by both writers in some detail – however, a study specifically analysing the commonality of traits in Captain Ahab and Nicholas Stavrogin has not yet been produced. A detailed analysis of the two, and specifically of the techniques and traits that they employ to influence others, is what I focus on in this chapter.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ See M. Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*. Also: C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, and Olson, *Call me Ishmael*.

PLAYING A TYPE: SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS.

I already outlined how the figure of the “exceptional individual” emerges in reaction to constrictive societal codes (that is, a set of expectations determining one’s actions and reactions as a subject belonging to a specific group, usually a national or socio-economic one). As both Melville and Dostoyevsky have showed, the “exceptional” individuality, in a Promethean fashion, subsequently seeks to overturn those: Pierre renounces his family and home, and Rodion flouts the law. The “exceptional” protagonists thus oppose the “exceptionalist” ideology uniting the group or community, which is usually marked by precise, rigid rules explicitly setting apart what is acceptable in a specific given strata of society, from what is not.

In a mid-nineteenth century context, John Stewart Mill held such a situation similar to tyranny exhibited by an absolutist ruler, the general society being effectually oppressive towards the individual – “the tyranny of the majority” (7-8).¹⁷⁴ De Tocqueville also discussed the “tyranny of the majority,” and John Randolph - “King Numbers”.¹⁷⁵ Such rule presumes the suppression of individuality by the society imposing the prevailing mores or expectations, which are supposed to be immediately understood and taken into account.¹⁷⁶

In the more modern context, one could connect this to Foucault’s concept of epistemes – intuitively-understood customs or practices holding society together, which are unwritten, but immediately comprehensible on a subconscious level.¹⁷⁷ Foucault was interested in mechanisms of societal control, and indeed, opposing those practices that he evokes, would

¹⁷⁴ Mill, *On Liberty*.

¹⁷⁵ Kirk, *The Portable Conservative Reader*, 153. “King Numbers” was the rule of the majority vote, the predominant segment of the population imposing its ideas on dissenting individuals. Also see De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, and John Stewart Mill, *On Liberty*.

¹⁷⁶ See Bart Bonikowski et al. in the discussion “Populism and Nationalism in comparative perspective.”

¹⁷⁷ See Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp xxiii-xxxiv. On generally comprehensible and subconsciously recognisable “memes” also see John Bryant, “Wound, Beast, Revision.”

likely result in alienation. Yet there rests a major difference: the episteme is typically seen as a neutral notion of a practice or custom characterizing a given historical era and determining the way that the majority thinks; meanwhile, I maintain that the rigid framework of specific social rules that Dostoevsky and Melville's protagonists oppose (whether formally outlined or unwritten), serves as a controlling mechanism, since it governs the limitations regarding what the member of a given societal segment can or cannot do.¹⁷⁸

The awareness and subsequent rebellion against those rules is what forms the backbone of the conflict between the "exceptional" individual and the "exceptionalist" society. To briefly illustrate this point, I refer to Timothy Marr describing the extreme discomfort that such essentially unwieldy codes produce in the individual.¹⁷⁹ Marr provides a specific example of the "ethnic" code, where people's actions are determined and limited by their ethnic identity – which harmonises with the vision of specifically "American" exceptionalism opposing the imaginary realms of other, "flawed" states, that was discussed in the introduction. As Marr argues, "...Melville found an epistemological escape from such bondage by portraying Americans themselves, including many of his own narrators, as ethnic creatures marked by the codes they have invented to malign others" (Gunn 137). His suggestion is mirrored by Mary Poovey's argument regarding the notion that society is held together by established codes or practices that are immediately recognisable, such as marriage-codes or relationships with figures of authority (both concepts amply explored in *Pierre* as well as in *Crime and Punishment*), and therefore, society is so used to them, that they are seldom questioned or analysed (Poovey 5).¹⁸⁰

Those codes recall the imaginary projections of America and Russia in Melville and Dostoyevsky's novels. The exceptionalist discourse is founded upon such "ethnic" codes

¹⁷⁸ As a side note, John Stuart Mill discusses such codes in the ethnic or national context in *Considerations on Representative Government*.

¹⁷⁹ Marr, "Without the Pale: Melville and Ethnic Cosmopolitanism."

¹⁸⁰ Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864*.

or projections, which form its core concept, imposing certain behavioural expectations on all those subject to it. A beneficial aspect of those codes and practices is that since they are so instantaneously recognisable, they save the average individual from the necessity to think deeply or face a dilemma. Instead, they provide a readymade suggestion concerning what exactly to think or how to react to any given phenomenon. Such practices are subconsciously immediately comprehensible and possess a controlling aspect, working as a coagulant holding the particular societal segment together. In this way, society can be likened to a colony of non-thinking biological units moving together whilst unified by a single instinctive purpose – an image bringing to mind Herder’s metaphor of the ant-hill, as well as the epigraph to Dostoyevsky’s *Devils* concerning the Biblical story of the possessed swine hurtling off a cliff, or Melville’s animalistic descriptions of “extensive herds” and “martial columns” of moving cetaceans (*MD*, 342-344).¹⁸¹

As the first chapter has shown, a strong individuality trying to oppose society normally is killed or silenced upon coming into conflict with the aforementioned framework of rules. However, there remains a question concerning what would happen, if by chance such an individual avoids suppression. The previous set of case studies has uncovered that the subconscious desire driving the “exceptional” individual is a confused wish to move beyond the place originally allocated to them within the societal structure. In this chapter, I argue that the Titanic grandeur combines with certain specific traits to produce the figure of a charismatic leader overthrowing the “invented codes” of society that Marr and Foucault allude to, so as to create a distinct code of their own.

The choice of *Moby-Dick* and *Devils* as case studies for this chapter has been determined by the way that these texts address the concept of charismatic leadership (that is, leadership based not on logical merits and solid propositions, but on instinctive appeal to the

¹⁸¹ For the Biblical story, see Luke 8: 32-5.

subconscious).¹⁸² Both feature a conflict between societal rules and a group of diverse individuals headed by a fascinating figure intent on overturning the old order so as to make space for a radically new one. To an observer, this can be likened to a revolutionary upheaval; the rebellion of Enceladus wreaked on a far larger scale, and much more difficult for the established society to contain.

Dostoyevsky describes this situation succinctly. "...[D]estructive instincts which, alas, lie buried within each and every soul, even that of the meekest and most domestic civil servant..." (*Devils*, 582), are brought out into the open by a dramatic unfolding of the events, such as a fire, or the "unleashing" of a Messiah-like figure, "Ivan the Tsarevich" representing the irresistible force affecting the crowds on an instinctive level (*Devils*, 447), resulting in "mob rule" (596) yet hypothetically proclaiming an intention to "re-educate a whole generation to make it worthy of freedom" whilst bringing down "both the government and its morality" to introduce a radically new order (681).¹⁸³ Pierre and Rodion were solitary actors; at this point, however, we encounter upheaval occurring on a mass scale.

Society may take dire measures in attempting to control such a situation. In *Moby-Dick*, "The Town-Ho's Story" chapter, for its seeming lack of direct concern with Captain Ahab as a character, is pivotal for understanding how Melville sees the theme of leadership in particular. The specific concept of constraint as a by-product of leadership is seen in the interaction between Radney (representative of the codes governing the specific microcosm of the ship, which is described as a very hierarchical place, characterised by "inflexibility of sea-usages and the instinctive love of neatness in seamen" (*MD* 222)) and Steelkilt (an "exceptional" individual and leader-to-be). Melville presents an attempt by Radney to dehumanise Steelkilt's "exceptional" personality before it has a chance to fully develop and

¹⁸² See Poovey and Foucault.

¹⁸³ *Ivan the Tsarevich* (Ivan the Prince) – a stock character in Russian fairytales, the handsome prince-protagonist who typically fulfils the part of a hero, slaying a dragon and rescuing a king's daughter.

overturn the established order. Radney reminds Steelkilt of his low-ranking position in the hierarchy, associable with menial tasks: “Intolerably striding along the deck, the mate commanded him to get a broom and sweep down the planks, and also a shovel, and remove some offensive matters consequent at allowing a pig to run at large” (*MD* 222).

If the individualistic self does not manage to successfully overcome the negative response from society, it consequently perishes. Yet Steelkilt, virtually reduced to the state of “bare life,” which, as Agamben suggested, is life stripped of any political or social meaning, survives, and manages to spark off a rebellion. This poses a potential conflict with what has been unearthed in the previous chapter, where the individual, once reduced to the state of “bare life,” is viewed by society as divested of harmful potential. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben proposes that a being reduced to the state of “bare life” cannot be haphazardly “murdered,” but can be lawfully killed, if seen as transgressing political or social norms. This killing, or rather immobilising, was illustrated explicitly by the dream sequence in *Pierre*, as well as by the fates suffered by both Raskolnikov and Pierre. However, the story of Steelkilt seems to overturn completely Agamben’s argument by his survival and being perceived as a heroic character.

In this way, it can be argued that if an “exceptional” individual managed to avoid imposed constraint and gained the status of a leader able to effect revolutionary change on a particular segment of society, they could become a viable and accepted part of the “exceptionalist” framework, bending and adapting it to their will. Therefore, revolutionary change effected by an “exceptional” individual acting as a leader may be, in certain circumstances, perceived as a positive thing by society (provided that the charismatic leader succeeds in bringing change about). A contextually relevant example of this might be the American Revolution (1765-1783) doing away with the British rule, and the consequent installation of the Constitution.

Dostoyevsky's novel, meanwhile, concerns a violent conspiratorial attempt to overturn the existing order completely, doing away with the old world and its representatives. It is no surprise that Verkhovensky in *Devils* harps on about teaching the youth about true "freedom" (681) – the Nihilists in the novel may initially come across as dissatisfied with the stifling old order, of which it is said, "It's fine for you to talk since you have everything you want, you spoilt creatures!" (*Devils*, 550).¹⁸⁴ And it is easy to see, why for Dostoyevsky's characters, the lure of charismatic leadership is so attractive. It is far more exciting, compared to the joyless exceptionalist nation-state realities founded on military drills and bureaucracy (quite similar to Melville's brutal sea-laws):

Twenty years ago on the eve of war with half of Europe, Russia represented as an ideal in the eyes of all state and privy councillors. Literature was controlled by censorship; military drill was taught in our universities; the army was turned into a ballet and people paid their taxes and kept silent under the yoke of serfdom. Patriotism had come to mean extorting bribes from the living and the dead. Those who didn't take bribes were considered rebels since they threatened the harmony of the existing order.... (*Devils*, 552)

In the American narrative, the revolutionary spirit is discussed rather differently from the Russian one (for instance, Steelkilt's rebellion is seen as an admirable feat, not a thing to be condemned). Moreover, quite unlike in Tsarist Russia, the background of the specifically American exceptionalist discourse actively supported and even encouraged revolution and the subsequent expansion of a completely different order gradually overtaking more and more of society. To illustrate this point, Nancy Fredericks discussed at length a radically new national order in Melville's day, which emphasised the doing away with old

¹⁸⁴ For historical prototype of the rebellion showed by Dostoyevsky, Philip Pomper's article, "Nechaev and Tsaricide: A Conspiracy Within a Conspiracy" discusses the contextual background of the era when *Devils* were published.

mores based on foundation stones such as religion, as the “self” became a pivotal concept instead (Fredericks 45).¹⁸⁵

The radically new order which arises as a consequence of revolution, overtakes, virus-like, more and more of space and society, overcoming any boundaries that the initial framework of social rules may have established. It presents a radically new way of thinking and perceiving the world which was not previously possible; but what is even more important is that the self takes the place of God, and it can be interpreted that more and more individuals, in harmony with the notion of buried instincts described by Dostoyevsky, become aware of themselves as “exceptional” and potential leaders, which would in turn lead to yet another possibility of yet another revolutionary upheaval, in a never-ending process comparable in how it spreads to an epidemic that has no beginning or end, but commences organically. The original unity afforded by the exceptionalist discourse is broken.

Leadership and revolutionary tendencies associated specifically with the Nihilistic movement and the Nechaev Circle (which served as a prototype for figures depicted in *Devils* – particularly Nicholas Stavrogin, who was based on Serge Nechaev, the circle’s leader (1847-1882)) certainly occupied many minds at the time Dostoyevsky was writing his novel.¹⁸⁶ Yet evidence exists that Melville seriously considered the notion of revolutionary change shaping the future – a concept not unthinkable, bearing in mind the historical context of “The Age of Revolutions” described in the introductory chapter. For instance, Robert Milder suggests that Melville was keenly aware of the need to find new forms of societal functioning and organisation that would be radically, revolutionarily different. His argument, moreover, reconciles the role of the writer as observer with the need to welcome the new world order:

¹⁸⁵ Fredericks, *Melville’s Art of Democracy*.

¹⁸⁶ See Laqueur’s article, “Interpretations of Terrorism: Fiction, Fact and Political Science” for the specific mention of Dostoyevsky’s novel in its broader historical context.

[B]y 1850 Melville had come to see America as embodying not simply a new political system, but, potentially ... a new consciousness of which the writer was the avatar and his work a proffered medium of cultural transformation. The success of this enterprise depended on America's sloughing off an old mentality (Gunn 33)¹⁸⁷

Whilst the previous chapter dealt at large with the psychological processes that both protagonists undergo as their awareness of their own self as “exceptional” grows, this chapter will focus on “charismatic leadership” that an “exceptional” individual exercises and how it affects or shapes the reactions and attitudes of a more numerous group of people within the limited confines of a given microcosm. The fact that this particular chapter will look closely at a particular microcosm as opposed to the general world, is central to the nature of my argument, as I am focusing on the changing dynamics of a specific group due to the influence of a charismatic leader.¹⁸⁸ In this chapter, the microcosms are a whaleboat in *Moby-Dick* and a remote provincial town of Skvoreshniki in *Devils*, where the action unfolds almost exclusively. Both are relevant for this analysis, due to their confined nature, symbolically representative of an exceptionalist nation-state existing within its own boundaries.

The concept of “charismatic leadership” must also be explained. Individualism, which in the first chapter has been connected with an individual's sense of possessing qualities or characteristics sufficient to achieve significant change in the wider world, is actually closely related to the idea of a leader being “charismatic” – i.e. coming across as a believable presence that is judged by others as holding the requisite strengths for creating change.

¹⁸⁷ Milder, *Herman Melville: a brief biography*.

¹⁸⁸ See Reeve, *The White Monk: an essay on Dostoyevsky and Melville*. Focusing expressly on the enclosed literary spaces of the whaleboat (in *Moby-Dick*) and an Orthodox monastery (in *Brothers Karamazov*), dubbed “microcosms” or small universes, Reeve suggests that within a small enclosed microcosm, it is easier to follow various interactions between characters and note any specific tendencies.

“Charisma” is a wide-encompassing concept. Essentially I maintain that there rests a clear distinction in that whilst individualistic personality exists primarily as a self-contained subject, “charisma” suggests relating with and exercising a certain influence upon others, as the individualistic protagonist comes into contact with them. This influence, in turn, effects a psychological change upon those others. In support of this argument, Mary Poovey cites Max Weber, who explicitly identified charisma “as one force capable of inaugurating change” (Poovey 99).¹⁸⁹

Bearing in mind the specifically nineteenth-century context, Thomas Carlyle in his treatise *On Heroes* (1848) proposes a rather more feasible explanation of the concept of charisma as society’s “submissive admiration for the truly great,” or an influence that a stronger personality exercises upon others, which is rather reminiscent of the Romanticist imagery as well.¹⁹⁰ In any case, charisma is associable with the sheer potential power for dissembling and change that hypothetically would be spread out evenly across the human “units” making up society, and yet, for some unfathomable reason, is concentrated within one single individual. It has no true reason or purpose, but is rather comparable to sheer vitality of a biological organism. Normally, such a force would be associated with a nation as a whole rather than an individual, as Dostoyevsky’s hapless Shatov points out:

Nations are formed and moved by some other force that commands and dominates them, whose origin is unknown and inexplicable. This force is the force of an insatiable desire to go on until the end, while at the same time denying that there is an end. It is the force of a continuous and indefatigable affirmation of its own being and the denial of death. (*Devils*, 264)

¹⁸⁹ Poovey, *Making a Social Body*.

¹⁹⁰ See Carlyle, *On Heroes*.

Nevertheless, the “charismatic” individual exhibits the force of personality on the par with an entire nation. The image of human activity powered by an unclear yet powerful “force” realising the potential hidden within individual human beings, I have already associated with the exceptionalist discourse in general (considering Pease, Kolchin, or Dimock). At this point, however, we are dealing with the highly volatile situation when the potential for societal change within a nation-state is concentrated in just one its member.

My own position regarding the above argument is that whilst charisma may not be the sole or primary factor in sparking off social change, it acts as an extremely potent catalyst in that respect. “Exceptional,” as we have already seen, implies not being like the rest of the humanity (at least not in a given segment of society, or microcosm), but greater, and destined for greater achievements. It is a term focusing on the individual in question first and foremost, tipping the liberty-equality balance towards unbridled individual liberty. Meanwhile, “charisma” implies possession of characteristics which are attractive or fascinating to other persons who may come into contact with the exceptional individual; an outward aspect that permits the leader to draw his followers in, and unite them as a group. It can be interpreted either psychologically (looking at the manipulative techniques or influence the leader shows), or mystically, as an abstract tendency to fascinate, which may or may not be based purely on visual or emotional influence. “Charisma” in this way becomes an almost tangible physical force that cannot be resisted or avoided. It acts beyond the scope of ordinary human morality or reason, existing irrespectively of moral concepts (quite like the previously-explored image of a biological virus), as an entity that holds no definable meaning or purpose, or is deliberately divested of such meaning or purpose (in terms of plot, Ahab’s pursuit of the Whale seems rather arbitrary, whilst Stavrogin frequently admits to being

indifferent to life), yet simply exists because of its sheer viability and its instinctively-comprehensible presence.¹⁹¹

I propose that there can be a further, illogical quality that attracts attention on a subconscious “animalistic” level, relatable to what Carlyle uncovers in *On Heroes* (1848) and *Sartor Resartus* (1836) where he evokes a driving spiritual (or rather, mental) force underneath the social persona an individual exhibits.¹⁹² Broadly, Carlyle speaks of overpowering the rest of individualities assembled within one same microcosm by the concentrated potential energy or “spirit” that both Melville and Dostoyevsky hint at throughout their narratives as well.¹⁹³ It is also essentially neutral (that is, divested of associations with “good” or “evil” produced by moralistic societal codes) and therefore, affects all within its reach. People’s own motives are diverse, but all react to this force. As Melville’s Captain Ahab, in a rare introspective monologue, states of his crew: “I thought to find one stubborn, at the least; but my one cogged circle fits into all their various wheels, and they revolve. Or, if you will, like so many ant-hills of powder, they all stand before me, and I their match” (*MD* 149). Perhaps Ahab coyly shifts the blame to the crew for choosing to follow him – but it is evident that they cannot resist his greater spiritual and mental influence.

Melville also outlines another, highly important aspect to this phenomenon. Namely, it is the charismatic individual’s ability to bring out and direct the hidden potential concealed within others surrounding him, acting as a veritable agent provocateur, and consequentially creating a situation of change – or violent chaos. It is of course, somewhat ironic that Ahab should refer to an ant-hill as a metaphor, pervertedly refashioning the image used by Herder.

¹⁹¹ See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

¹⁹² Sam Halliday, in *Science and Technology in the Age of Hawthorne, Melville, Twain and James*, associates the charisma of leaders exemplified by Captain Ahab with the concept of magnetism, suggesting that certain personalities are “magnetic” – and due to their particular composites, draw in other individuals, irrespective of whether their actual goals are oriented towards good or evil.

¹⁹³ That Melville was acquainted with Carlyle’s works is a proven biographical fact. See Robert Milder, “A Brief Biography” in *A Historical Guide to Herman Melville*.

In some individuals, this ability can be more pronounced than in others. If we think broadly about personalities such as Steelkilt, Ahab, or Nicholas Stavrogin, this powerful life force comes across as a recognisable uniting characteristic - “wild ocean-born and wild-ocean nurtured” (*MD* 220), as Melville says. In a leader figure, such life force, connectable with nature as a concept, can be compared to “animal magnetism” – a capacity of a stronger psychological specimen to hypnotise the supposedly more pliant one to subject it fully to its will.¹⁹⁴ It bestows upon the submissive subject new powers that in reality were the projection of the hypnotist’s will: the notion which is fully explored by Alison Winter.¹⁹⁵ As Winter states:

...[There were]... several features of mesmeric practice. One was the fact that magnetic influence usually ran from the charismatic French to the susceptible English, and from men to women. The other ingredient was the instability of mesmeric experiments – the fact that the apparently passive subject of the experiment sometimes seemed to seize control. (23)¹⁹⁶

By regarding the notion of charisma in relation to mass hypnotism by an individual who is stronger psychologically, and possibly also physically, if one looks especially at how Steelkilt, “superior in general pride of manhood” (*MD* 221) is portrayed by Melville, as well as Ahab, it can be interwoven with the Carlylean notion of deliberately searching for a hero, in which the representatives of the wider society willingly submit to the mesmeric qualities of

¹⁹⁴ See Kucklick, *Innovative Amateurs, 1829-1867*, in *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720-2000*. As a broader commentary on the contextual background addressed in this thesis, Kucklick addresses the phenomenon of charismatic leadership and its effect on the masses in a specifically American antebellum setting by analysing the figure of a preacher within the varied religious and philosophical movements that emerged in the United States at the time. Kucklick’s analysis of Emerson’s Transcendentalist world view where a human being can draw personal strength from the natural world and attain an almost divine status, is also noteworthy.

¹⁹⁵ Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*.

¹⁹⁶ Notably, it is yet again shown that the power to hypnotise is given by the writers to the male characters rather than any female ones (although *Moby-Dick* essentially is a “novel without a heroine,” in Dostoevsky’s narrative it comes across plainly). This reiterates my point made in the previous chapter that the dangerous individualist is held by both writers to be male, and could be a reflection of the general political situation of the time – where men rather than women predominantly would be seen as holding any political power.

a “charismatic leader” so as to finally vicariously attain through this figure the political or social power that they cannot otherwise lay claim to. In a straightforward exceptionalist narrative, such submission would mean sacrificing one’s life for the interests of the nation as a whole. Yet Dostoyevsky’s antihero, Verkhovensky, reminiscing about the superiority of the Western thought to the Russian humility, grotesquely parodies this image, incidentally and ironically speaking of America (yet again presented as a caricaturesque imaginary realm):

I read the biography of a certain American in the newspapers. He left his enormous fortune to factories and to exact sciences, his skeleton to students in the local academy, and his skin to be made into a drum on which the American national anthem was to be pounded out day and night. Alas, we’re mere pygmies compared to these flights of imagination in the States of North America.... (*Devils*, 280)

This demented picture is an explicit mockery of imaginary “Western” practicality on Dostoyevsky’s part. Verkhovensky, nevertheless, is quick to note that such “patriotism” founded on cynical efficiency, is not feasible on Russian soil: “...[T]hey’d accuse me of liberalism, and my skin would be banned...” (280). This moment is crucial for our understanding: a charismatic leader plays either with the instincts that are not permissible or possible to realise in a regulated, Plinlimmonian society, or with the wish for something large-scale and “heroic,” yet of which Melville wryly notes, “all mortal greatness is but disease” (*MD* 66). The secret of the charismatic leader is that with so much potential concentrated in their single personality, they seem to promise emotional and spiritual fulfilment on a grander scale than the “checks and balances” can assure.

As Verkhovensky grovels before Stavrogin, “You’re the leader, the sun, and I’m your worm” (*Devils*, 444) the same picture can be observed again. Although Verkhovensky is a somewhat hypocritical character, a Mephistopheles to Stavrogin’s brooding Faustus, the Carlylean worship of the concentrated potential power is still present. And, as Dostoyevsky

shows further, and as Ahab also recalls the image of the wheels craving a cog to turn them and put them in motion, such leadership is desirable to all others precisely because it concerns realising their own potential vicariously through the charismatic leader, who makes subconscious wishes into reality, creating a radical and new “exceptionalist” vision: “Without you, I’m nothing. Without you, I am a fly, an idea in a glass bottle, Columbus without America” (*Devils*, 445).

The result of such submission may be revolutionary upheaval. In this capacity, the “exceptional” individual acting as a charismatic leader serves as a uniting force that brings together the disjointed members of society, just as Ahab imagines a functioning mechanism. At a first glance this behaviour appears to be assembling rather than disassembling, and can be reconciled with the prior argument that in some respects, revolutionary change effected by a charismatic leader can be seen as a positive and truly democratic concept that should be encouraged, the people being given an opportunity to vicariously express their democratic volition through the agency of the leader. What its actual effects on society may be, however, remains to be seen.

In short, united thinking of a group under the influence of a newly-emerged leader is an important notion that we need to bear in mind for this chapter. As Winter suggests: “[M]esmerism and similar cultural phenomena are part of a history of agreement. They displayed a cord that bound people together: an influence that coordinated their thoughts or actions, or a sympathetic current that united a population” (306).

The second crucial factor is the role of others, or “the masses” who respond in a particular way to the charismatic leader’s manifestations. Winter describes it as follows:

The role of the masses was actually the rule of demagogues. When people were united into a single body (often by an “electrical” or “magnetic” process), they lost their power of independent judgement. They became insensitive to proper guidance yet vulnerable

to illegitimate political leaders. There was also uncertainty about who really was in charge. (332-333)

The above image evokes images of social unrest commonly associated with revolutionary movements (a theme which runs throughout *Devils* and is amply hinted upon in Melville's novel). As we recall the dream-sequences in the first chapter and Dimock's arguments from the introduction, one can argue that the population as a whole is wielding immense, Titanic potential for effecting change (potentially with disastrous consequences).

Returning to the original argument regarding the balance between liberty and equality, we are left with a horrifying image where there remains no liberty as the population moves in one destructive current, nor true equality, for the potential forces of this movement are directed by one individual. Hence, the system of stringent controlling "checks and balances" proposed by Hamilton would likely prove a life-saver in such a situation. The marriage of mesmeric charisma transmitted by a leader figure to unchained potential contained in society in general is a volatile combination, particularly in the antebellum American context if we think of Hamilton or De Tocqueville discussing societal unrest, or if one recalls the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the violent events surrounding it. Winter comments: "Charisma was indeed dangerous where it was unharnessed, as in America, that unhealthy laboratory of democracy" (333).

Such an argument reconciles this chapter with the previous one by the virtue of the term "unharnessed," sending us back to the Plinlimmonian "horologicals" that disable or destroy the exceptional potential personified by the image of a Titan encased in earth. Yet rather than containing earth, spreading fire becomes the main image. It is notable that Winter employs the term "incendiary" (333), which was also quite a popular image in the political cartoons of

the Russian Revolution of 1917.¹⁹⁷ Generally, the fascination with fire traverses both texts. “We’ll spread fires... We’ll spread legends...” (*Devils* 446) fantasize Stavrogin’s followers. This image is also explicitly echoed in “The Town-Ho’s story, where Steelkilt “perceived the stacks of powder-casks heaped up in him and the slow-match silently burning towards him” (*MD* 223). It is notable that with Ahab (whose leadership at the end of the plot results in a tragic rather than a positive outcome), the image is not as much “incendiary” as “extinguishing.” The “three tall masts ... silently burning in that sulphurous air, like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar” (*MD* 447) suggest the fire that starts of natural causes rather than through the agency of a human being, and Ahab acts as its controller, not a *provocateur* in the true sense of the word:

[S]natching the burning harpoon, Ahab waved it like a torch among them; swearing to transfix with it the first sailor that but cast loose a rope’s end. Petrified by his aspect, and still more shrinking from the fiery dart that he held, the men fell back in dismay, and Ahab again spoke:

“All your oaths to hunt the White Whale are as binding as mine; and heart, soul, and body, lungs and life, old Ahab is bound. And that ye may know to what tune this heart beats: look ye here; thus I blow out the last fear!” And with one blast of his breath he extinguished the flame. (*MD* 451)

The image of the revolutionary “flame” being controlled by the supposed leader figure is central to this chapter’s argument. The subsequent analysis of the two case studies is based on the hypothetical proposition that instead of nourishing or protecting a “live” organic flame-spark of the democratic all-equalling sentiment, the toxic leadership of the

¹⁹⁷ *Podzhigatel*, or incendiary, was a common image in propaganda material dating to the Russian Revolutionary era. A good example would be a cartoon by an anonymous artist, referred to in Alexander Blok’s poem “The Twelve” (1918). It presents a revolutionary standing over a town in flames, which a supposed “bourgeois” is trying to put out with water from a watering-can. The caption reads: “We’ll start a worldwide fire, to the dismay of all the bourgeois.”

“exceptional” individual leads to its extinguishing or destruction, creating an exact opposite of the desired effect that such leadership would typically be expected to cause. Instead of promised boundless liberty and glory, one is left facing depersonalization, becoming nothing more than material for the leader to use. Recalling the argument from the analysis of *Pierre* in particular, the “exceptional” individuality is no longer associable with Enceladus contained in earth or Raskolnikov shuttered in his coffin of a room, but rather, the “exceptional” leader stifling the revolutionary or democratic potential can be compared to the earth or the room because of those constraining qualities. The “charismatic leader” in reality is essentially a vampire-like parasite draining off the energy of the others.¹⁹⁸

PORTRAIT OF A HERO: THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP.

Considering the plot of Melville’s novel, at first, Ahab’s actions appear to be a prime example of uncontrolled toxic leadership blown to caricatured proportions in order to emphasise how “wrong” it is. This viewpoint is voiced by Starbuck, whose practicality and moral rectitude are the essential “human” traits that Melville places as a foil to Ahab’s epic delirium:

But shall this crazed old man be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship’s company down to doom with him? – Yes, it would make him a wilful murderer of thirty men and more, if this ship come to any deadly harm; and come to deadly harm, my soul swears this ship will, if Ahab has his way. (*MD* 455)

In a broader cross-disciplinary context, the portrayal of Captain Ahab in Melville’s text over time has been culturally established as the archetype of a monomaniac leader drawing his followers towards their doom. To an obsessed leader, human potential

¹⁹⁸ An image present in antebellum American literature – see “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” (1845) by Edgar Allan Poe.

represented in all others whom he imperils, is just mere material to be sacrificed to a single, burning idea. Considering this point from a slightly different angle, Emory Elliott describes Ahab as an obsessed religious fanatic: “Ahab is a type of American Christian evangelical fervor gone mad and directed toward a single purpose, even if accomplishing that purpose will cost his own life and the lives of many others” (Gunn 189).

Elliott appears to view Ahab as a zealot for whom the fulfilment of some imaginary commandment eclipses everything else. To an extent, I disagree with such an interpretation of the character, since over-attributing Ahab with apparently religious motives renders the entire reading of the text, as well as the character, rather one-sided. His enmity with the White Whale is not quite religious, but transcends religion in what rather is a case of singular and extremely personal fixation on “a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw” (*MD* 143), to be unpicked by a psychologist rather than a priest. Melville is explicit in naming Ahab’s motives “monomaniac revenge” (*MD* 167) – a heroic, Carlylean quest this is absolutely not.

In considering the balance of liberty-equality and how relevant it can be here, one could argue that Ahab’s case is a case of individual liberty grossly taken to the extreme, coupled with inability to accept the harsh realities of the whaling world, and the unwillingness to see one’s individuality or integrity compromised in any manner. If we look closely at the text, the image that comes across is more that of a Miltonian Lucifer wrapped in his pride than a Grand Inquisitor intending to keep the established order of affairs. “In his fiery eyes of scorn and triumph, you then saw Ahab in all his fatal pride” (459) states Melville. Yet what I agree with Elliott upon, is the fact that in his fanaticism, Ahab is convinced of being essentially right, creating what seems to be a believable, albeit perverted, orthodoxy of sorts – which of course can be reconciled with the notion of projecting imaginary negative characteristics at a

supposedly neutral object, inseparable from the concept of the exceptionalist discourse.¹⁹⁹

Elliot claims:

When examined within the context of the development of Melville's religious thought, *Moby-Dick* does not depict a battle between good and evil with Ahab as the human hero trying to destroy the symbol of evil in the whale. Rather, what we have is a madman who is convinced that he has the right and power to pursue his personal goal as symbolized in *Moby-Dick*, a mere creature in nature that has little or no interest in humans. (Gunn 191)²⁰⁰

So far, the immediate trait that strikes one about Ahab is his obsessive fixation on a specific goal combined with disregard for any other factors that might be involved. This is an image conventionally associated with stereotypical bad leadership in totalitarian society, where individual concerns and even plain logic are sacrificed for the sake of some "great idea." An interesting aspect of this fixation is the fact that the obsession affects or involves more and more individuals as it progresses, although it begins with just one single "exceptional" personality. When Ahab is not immediately present, his influence is still symbolised by the doubloon nailed to the mast, which "all mariners revered... as the white whale's talisman" (*MD* 384) The individual, personal differences or views all become dissolved and merged within the grasp of the leader, who seems to absorb the "souls" or personalities of those under his spell. Melville provides an excellent image to summarise the notion:

As the unsettling polar star, which through the livelong, arctic, six months' night sustains its piercing, steady, central gaze; so Ahab's purpose now fixedly gleamed down

¹⁹⁹ For an overview of Protestant religious fanaticism focused on "self" and contextually relevant to Ahab's New England world, see Philip J. Lee, *Against The Protestant Gnostics*, 74.

²⁰⁰ Elliott, "Wandering to and fro: Melville and Religion."

upon the constant midnight of the gloomy crew. It domineered above them so, that all their bodings, doubts, misgivings, fears, were fain to hide beneath their souls, and not sprout forth a single spear or leaf. (*MD* 473)

The above image I hold as a concise summary of the relationship between the figure of the charismatic leader and the rest of those populating the microcosm. Any individuality, any individual liberty are dissolved within the grasp of the leader, and promised “equality” becomes essentially an indistinct mass devoid of personal “bodings, doubts, misgivings, fears”. Many become one, in a harrowing image. One single illuminating purpose, personified in the leader’s character and actions, and evocative of totalitarian slogans, seemingly “unites” the previously highly diverse body of the “Pequod”’s crew.

It also suggests several other points. Recalling the earlier image of a light or flame, it can be proposed that the crew, or society in general, exists in a state of disengaged entropic darkness until a “charismatic leader” endowed with apparently exceptional traits appears to bestow upon them a fixed purpose (just as Carlyle would have had it). Whether this purpose is actually reasonable or ethical, is a different question.

Another, and no less important point is that the “charismatic leader” acts as a constraining force limiting any initiative, self-expression or even individuated feelings from the masses he leads. This then implies that once an “exceptional” individual successfully escapes the rigid framework of societal constraints to become a “charismatic leader” as its subsequent evolutionary stage of being, they commence to exhibit constraining or repressive qualities typical of a staunch hierarchical order, and not associable with the “exceptional individual” as the first set of case studies set out the concept. Therefore, although in spirit Ahab or Stavrogin may be more akin to Lucifer or Prometheus, the consequence of their actions rather brings to mind the repressive aspect of totalitarian leadership.

Superficially, this particular characteristic of Ahab's can be interpreted as a simple and vocal example of bad leadership, as the exceptionalist idea spirals out of control in pursuit of an unspecified aim, leading to destruction. The sense of self plays an important part in that an "exceptional" individual believes to hold a right to pursue the said goal whatever the consequences may be. Such leadership disregards any established mores or values that it might potentially transgress: "I never yet saw him kneel" (*MD* 206) says Stubb of the captain. Typically associated with the critique of bad statesmanship, the image of Captain Ahab has become a byword for blind political fanaticism of a ruling government, as Elliott suggests:

[Ahab] ...believes that he has the knowledge of good and evil and may act for the rest of society, nation, and world. Often, secular governments recognize the political value of dressing themselves in religious trappings and language to generate such fervor for their own purposes. (Gunn 191)

Such an interpretation, much favoured in the post-Cold War scholarship, previously had been supported by a range of academics from Donald Pease to C.L.R. James, who describes the character as "the most dangerous and destructive social type that has ever appeared in Western civilization" (15). They connected Ahab's obsessive pursuit of the White Whale with the topic of exceptionalism, and, more specifically, with the supposedly typical exceptionalist preoccupation to correct what the discourse sets as "wrong," whatever the incurred costs may be in the long run. The Soviet critical school offers a concise summary of this notion. Yuri Kovalev draws the readers' attention to the final scene as being expressly symbolic of the outcome predestined for the American exceptionalist idea.²⁰¹ As he puts it:

It is necessary to stress that Melville's fondness for abstract symbolism and generalisations absolutely does not distract *Moby-Dick* from the economic, political and social reality of modern America. Nearly every single symbol in the novel ... has at

²⁰¹ See Kovalev, *Posleslovie k romanu G. Melvilla Moby-Dik, ili belyj kit*.

least one [meaning] which directly concerns the life-path and destiny of the United States. The most obvious example would be the aforementioned image of the ship sailing forth under the Stars and Stripes flag; representatives of all races and nationalities assembled on its deck ... [T]he most obvious meaning would be the motley-peopled America, sailing in strange waters of History towards a harbour unknown. Will it make it? Where exactly is it going? Who directs its course? This is precisely how the reader interprets this symbol, and therefore, sees a tragic prophecy in the scene of the “Pequod”’s demise. (600-606)

Kovalev’s observation should not be viewed solely as an ideologically-tinted “prophecy” that the American national idea, far removed from the apparent merits of socialist ideals, is doomed to fail. Melville’s own words, in the last soliloquy of Ahab’s, also wryly echo this notion: “The ship! The hearse – the second hearse!” cried Ahab from the boat; “its wood could only be American!” (*MD* 506). Such details do contribute to the image of *Moby-Dick* as a novel about the dangers of bad exceptionalist leadership.

From the comparative viewpoint, the attempts to summarise and comprehend the direction that the nation is taking are well manifested in nineteenth-century Russian literature and in the critical works analysing it.²⁰² That is so, even despite the fact that those attempts mainly concerned the fate of Russia; a tendency that much later on Kovalev applied to a quintessentially “American” text – echoing the post-war American critical school exemplified by figures such as C.L.R. James. What is most curious, however, is the same image, when compared to the epigraph to *Devils*, coming from a poem by Pushkin:

Strike me dead, but I can’t see the track,
We’ve lost our way, what are we to do?
A devil seems to be leading us into the field,

²⁰² An example of such an analysis would be Berdyaev, *Istoki I smysl russkogo kommunizma (The origins and meaning of Russian communism)*.

And making us go around in circles.

...

So many of them, where are they being driven?

And why are they singing so mournfully?

Are they burying a house-spirit,

Or celebrating a witch's wedding? (*Devils*, 2)²⁰³

Whether a sinking ship or stranded travellers, an image that emerges upon the initial analysis of both texts implies loss of direction, or lack of any clear idea of what the final destination, goal or aim of the characters involved may be. We see movement for movement's sake, chaotic and inexplicable from the logical perspective.

The “reversal” of the timing of the images, which was already observed in the previous chapter, is present once again: Dostoyevsky commences his novel with the epigraph suggesting a feeling of directionless wandering, whilst *Moby-Dick* concludes with an uncontrolled ship slowly sinking. Symbolically, this difference is understandable: if Dostoyevsky discusses the dangers of such aimless wanderings yet offers the possibility of redemption, Melville's tale is a stark parable of what can happen as a consequence.

Arguably, Ishmael at the beginning of *Moby-Dick*, whom one can describe as an “outcast,” nevertheless has a clear purpose in joining a ship's crew on a voyage, and therefore can hardly be described as genuinely and entirely directionless, despite not having a clearly defined social position. As Melville puts it, “[N]o, I never go as a passenger; nor, though I am something of a salt, do I ever go to sea as a Commodore, or a Captain, or a Cook” (*MD* 3). Remaining somewhat amorphous in regards to his hierarchical position on board, Ishmael

²⁰³ See Dostoyevsky, *Devils*. The poem (1825) in its entirety, a popular presence in Russian middle-school curriculum, concerns a group of travellers who become lost on a snowy night in the steppe, and imagine the blizzard as being formed of demonic figures. A house-spirit (*domovoj*) is a folkloric figure in Russian mythology, a kind of a benevolent imp who is responsible for domestic concerns. My personal reading of this image suggests that the death of a kindly house-sprite and him being replaced by more sinister otherworldly creatures is metaphoric of losing one's way and one's sense of “home.”

remains first and foremost an observer, whose role is to comment on what is happening rather than to actively participate. As a result, he does not perish together with the rest of the crew at the end, since he is not genuinely affected by Ahab's sway. It is an interesting digression from the conventions of such imagery, very much in tune with my core argument regarding the writer-observer role, which also renders Ishmael similar to the unnamed, elusive narrator of *Devils*, apparently omnipresent enough to note all the intricacies of the plot, and yet unaffected by the unfolding anarchy.

Both novels end with directionless chaos – a shipwreck, or a fire. This seems to be a parody on the traditional mythological trope of the demiurge, to whom a charismatic leader could be likened, creating world order out of primordial entropy. The leaders in both cases are either dead (as it is with Ahab), or about to die, like Stavrogin. Yet what interests me primarily is the question, who was originally supposed to lead the way in both case studies, and what force actually influences the events, if there is no socially approved and clearly portrayed leader figure. “Who directs its course?” asks Kovalev of America as represented by the microcosm of the “Pequod,” whilst the poetic narrator of Dostoyevsky's epigraph complains that there seems to be some devilish mockery at play, leading him in circles. It would be too easy to answer that it is Captain Ahab and Stavrogin respectively who act as undisputed leaders ill-fitted for the role.²⁰⁴

An obvious subsequent question arises: why do such personalities as these emerge in the first place? In *On Heroes* (1848), that precedes the publication of *Moby-Dick* by only a few years, Thomas Carlyle implies that the innate need and subsequent search for a leader is a quintessential aspect hard-wired naturally deep in human existence, which can be logically pinpointed as being crucial for the smooth running of society at all levels. Further on, he suggests that a figure endowed with heroic characteristics, however vaguely defined, inspires

²⁰⁴ See Kovalev, *Herman Melville and the American Romanticism*.

a free and positive wish to submit to its authority. Moreover, the purpose of a hero is essentially what I argued earlier: to tell the rest of humanity what is to be done, and to give clear directions in order to reassemble and organise the previously entropic state existence, investing it with meaning:

The Commander over Men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of Great Men ... [W]hatsoever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to *command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to *do*. (Carlyle, *On Heroes*)

On the surface, as the following citation shows, such a necessity for leadership, supposedly born of a free, unforced, positive state of thinking, appears to be an exercise of democratic choice, where a society of free humans selects the very best among them to act as the heroic authority invested with societally approved vestiges and symbols of power. This indeed would be the ideal – and could explain the strange lure of Stavrogin as a promised prince-saviour, or why is Starbuck unable to confront the seeming authority of Ahab in “The Musket” chapter (*MD* 455-456); yet what actually happens within the case studies, is quite different.

Carlyle does make an attempt in his treatise to reconcile the “checks and balances” theory of regulating liberty and equality with the admiration for the individual heroic gloriousness. In the light of specific mid-nineteenth century context, this is quite reflective of reconciling the Romantic notion of heroic individuality and the heated debates concerning cooperative societal coexistence and wellbeing, as I already outlined in the introductory chapter:

[B]y much stronger reason, may I say here, that the finding of your *Ableman* and getting him invested with the *symbols of ability*, with dignity, worship (*worth-ship*), royalty, kingdom, or whatever we call it, so that *he* may actually have room to guide according to his faculty of doing it,—is the business, well or ill accomplished, of all social procedure whatsoever in this world! (*On Heroes*)²⁰⁵

Nominally, both texts explored in this chapter as case studies present one with a leader figure: Ahab is a formal leader invested with “the symbols of ability” in his status as the ship’s captain, occupying a position of recognised power in an extremely enclosed microcosm governed by rigid hierarchy (just as Bruce Kucklick places the figure of an enigmatic preacher in relation to the rest of society).²⁰⁶ Stavrogin is rather an “informal” one, attaining his noteworthy position through personal qualities that he exhibits (although his aristocratic background can play a part as well), in a manner which is at a first glance lies more close to the previously discussed idea of exceptional individuality, than is the case with Ahab. In both cases, one is not as much concerned with actual abilities for good and efficient leadership, as with the display of symbols supposedly associated with leadership.²⁰⁷ Yet the question remains: can the two be considered as leaders in the true sense of the word, whose actions are determined by their self-will, so the outcome of both texts can be univocally attributed to their actions, or are there rather different forces at play, such as the disembodied Carlylean “spirit” merely transmitted through the “leader” figure?

If one tries to reconcile these two suggestions, the notion of a Priest-Hero put forth by Carlyle is relevant, as it combines human volition of a leader with the bodiless spiritual force

²⁰⁵ Carlyle, *On Heroes*.

²⁰⁶ A particularly good study of social hierarchy on board of “The Pequod” is offered by Jehlen in “Melville and Class.”

²⁰⁷ See also Tamarkin discussing symbolic displays of political power in English culture noted by antebellum American observers. Those displays concerned primarily a symbolic suggestion of power rather than an actual one (xviii-xix).

expressing itself in the material world through the agency of a “heroic” human being. It is then not surprising that both protagonists exhibit somewhat “priestly” characteristics in their interaction with the world. One particular interesting observation on both characters that seems to support the above argument is the fact that for a considerable period of time, neither Ahab nor Stavrogin actually appear on the stage in person, despite all the speculation and excitement regarding them. One trait that arises before all the others, is, oddly enough, their absence. Captain Ahab is supposedly present on board, yet he does not come into contact with any other character inhabiting the ship’s microcosm, nor is it possible to comprehend what he is like. As Melville puts it:

For several days after leaving Nantucket, nothing above hatches was seen of Captain Ahab. The mates regularly relieved each other at the watches, and for aught that could be seen to the contrary, they seemed to be the only commanders of the ship; only they sometimes issued from the cabin with orders so sudden and peremptory, that after all it was plain they but commanded vicariously. Yes, their supreme lord and dictator was there, hitherto unseen by any eyes not permitted to penetrate into the now sacred retreat of the cabin. (*MD* 107)

It is quite likely that Ahab’s absence is well-calculated and intentional to uphold his intended position as a leader within the confines of the “Pequod.” There is certainly more than a mere touch of precise theatricality concerning his behaviour: a trait which makes him akin to Stavrogin, whose character has been deemed by Frank in particular to exhibit “theatrical” tendencies.²⁰⁸ However, this careful staging extends beyond mere narcissism in case of Melville’s protagonist. If one accepts Kovalev’s suggestion that *Moby-Dick* is almost entirely composed of symbols, what Ahab’s non-appearance on deck signifies is clear enough. As he remains sequestered in the “sacred retreat of the cabin,” his will or intentions

²⁰⁸ See Frank, “The Masks of Stavrogin.”

stay concealed from the crew yet made heard by the intercessions from the privileged group of ship-mates, who otherwise appear to be in charge of the ship and exercising their will (even if somewhat strangely) at a first glance. It is plainly evident that Ahab wishes to imitate God, the ship being his universe and the mates acting as his priests, enshrouded in abstract mystery and experiencing “the uneasy, if not painful, consciousness of being under a troubled master-eye” (*MD* 109). As Ahab finally emerges on deck, his pose is exactly imitative of a sacerdotal rite, and the language used reflects it: “[M]oody stricken Ahab stood before them with a crucifixion in his face; in all the nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe” (*MD* 109).

This corresponds in some aspects with Carlyle’s description of the priestly aspect to the figure of a hero, who acts as an intermediary between the world and the divine, “the Spiritual Captain of the people” as Carlyle ironically dubs him – however, Ahab is not content with maintaining the mere priestly status as the “enlightener of daily life” depicted by Carlyle:

The Priest too ... is a kind of Prophet; in him too there is required to be a light of inspiration... He presides over the worship of the people; is the Uniter of them with the Unseen Holy. He is the spiritual Captain of the people ... he guides them heavenward, by wise guidance through this Earth and its work. The ideal of him is, that he too be what we can call a voice from the unseen Heaven ... He is the Prophet shorn of his more awful splendor; burning with mild equable radiance, as the enlightener of daily life. (*On Heroes*)

Considering the discussion in the preceding chapter regarding how individual exceptionalism develops, it strikes one that on the surface of things, Ahab can be described as behaving exactly like the ferocious individualist we encountered in the previous chapter. An exceptional individual seeks to endow himself with divine status (as was seen in Pierre’s

dream of Enceladus), and to experience his own nature as godly (a trait often connected with Ahab by critics: for instance, by Howard Bruce Franklin).²⁰⁹ Yet, pivotally, if in the first chapter the characters' desire was mainly manifested by haphazard actions or philosophical ruminations, the second case study reveals an active and premeditated way of setting oneself up as a divinity of sorts (perhaps using social position or powers afforded by a specific status), and, what is even more important to this investigation, to convince all others within his reach of the fact. Ahab is obviously an exceptional individuality: and he loses no time in convincing others from the very outset.

Stavrogin is more impassive in that respect. Nevertheless, the notion of carefully calculated concealment of oneself until a perfectly timed moment for appearance is also true with him: he is essentially described as “a handsome man, proud as a god, seeking nothing for yourself, with an aura of sacrifice, who’s “in hiding”” (*Devils* 447). Further on, the developing plotline with the charismatic leader coming into power suggests that he is expected to be viewed as the fulfilment of a Carlylean desire for a hero-divinity: “[W]hat’s needed is one magnificent, despotic will, an idol resting on something solid and standing apart... Then the groups of five would cringe in obedience and be prepared to serve when the occasion arises” (*Devils* 596).

Here the first mystery of an exceptionalist leader is revealed. The initial absence of the leader on stage may evoke either mystical fascination or make one wonder whether the said leader actually exists, and if there might be rather some other force acting in his stead. However, as I already hinted, such reactions are indeed expected and premeditated by an exceptionalist leader, who cannily uses them in order to seemingly confirm his godly, exceptional nature, completely upsetting the democratic balance between liberty and equality. Putting it simply, when the charismatic leader emerges, his figure appeals to the irrational and

²⁰⁹ See Franklin, *The Wake of the Gods*.

instinctive rather than analytical aspect of the psyche, the Dionysiac rather than Apollonian, if to use the terms first coined by Friedrich Nietzsche.²¹⁰ The search for pragmatic good is overturned by thirst for intense emotional experience.

Whilst, as the first chapter shows, an exceptional individual may be personally aware of his own status as a demi-god (as Carlyle would argue), in relation to the other members of society he is first and foremost a sophisticated manipulator who *plays* rather than *acts*.²¹¹ This notion (especially if to connect it with the previous mention of the Dionysian principle in Nietzsche's philosophy) is succinctly summarised by Thoreau in *On The Duty of Civil Disobedience*, focusing with particular poignancy on the effect that such leadership exercises on others involved:

[Y]ou may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences ... Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? ... The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies ... In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones ... (*Civil Disobedience*)²¹²

To Thoreau, the danger of individual human units making up society becoming depersonalized, like “machines” or “stones” in bondage to “some unscrupulous man in

²¹⁰ As well as using the terminology based on the Classical Greek envisaging of heroes and gods, Nietzsche presents the “Dionysian” state (based on emotional subconscious response to the stimulus by the “hero” figure) as superior to the “Apollonian” one (based on logic and understanding). For detailed analysis, see Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1886), outlining how the Dionysian principle works and exercises its effect on individuals.

²¹¹ An interesting summary is also offered by Eric Mottram in an essay “Grown in America: Moby Dick and Melville's Sense of Control.” “The monomaniac is not an artist. He puts his linguistic skills into the art of persuasion and his religiosity into elaborate ritual and the fire-cult of Zoroaster. When man aspires to godhead in the West, he is damned whether he has chosen that course or not” (104).

²¹² See Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*.

power” is obvious. The direction is chosen by the charismatic leader; the “mass of men” serve as a unified organism to bring it about, bringing together their individual potential to act as one. Melville similarly describes the situation on board of the vessel: “...[B]y what evil magic their souls were possessed, that at times his hate seemed almost theirs” (*MD* 167). The hate is originally Ahab’s; the depersonalized crew nevertheless quite earnestly experience it as their own. Furthermore, Melville’s hypothetical case-study of Steelkilt’s rebellion seems to reiterate the notion:

But as he sat still for a moment, and as he steadfastly looked into the mate’s malignant eye and perceived the stacks of powder-casks heaped up in him and the slow-match silently burning towards hem; as he instinctively saw all this, this strange forbearance and unwillingness to stir up the deeper passionateness in any already ireful being ... this nameless phantom feeling, gentlemen, stole over Steelkilt. (*MD* 223)

The charismatic leader is seen as “possessed” by the quasi-divine disembodied idea (or Carlylean “spirit”) which is manifested through him in the material world. It is comparable to an act of religious ecstasy (echoing Kucklick’s radical preachers). Meanwhile, the human masses influenced by the leader are represented as being denigrated to crude and essentially replaceable physical objects, which remain mute until reanimated by the spiritually-possessed leader (a “hero” endowed by spiritual vigour, described by Carlyle) who animates them with his emotions or ideas. Unpleasant as it is, this notion nevertheless throws light on how an “exceptional” individual views himself in relation to the rest of the world. In both case studies, the quasi-divine natures of Ahab and Stavrogin are frequently made to contrast with the rest of society who are seen as mute or inept; an image resembling Raskolnikov’s argument about the “exceptional” and “unexceptional” humans.²¹³

²¹³ The conflict between the inert and the animated by “spirit” had been broadly discussed by mid-nineteenth century, by figures like Hegel and Spinoza, and thus is contextually relevant. See Yurmiachu Yovel and Drew M. Dalton.

ADHERING TO THE SCENARIO: TYPOLOGICAL CONCERNS.

Can one, however, really be assured that the charismatic leader, unlike his followers, does possess true substance? Close observation of the character of Stavrogin (also noted generally by Frank), implies that the readers are never actually shown the inner workings of his psychology, and his true thoughts are never revealed. This correlates with an argument raised by Carlyle in *On Heroes*, that the heroic individuality one admires is essentially a number of layered vestiges housing the disembodied “spirit” underneath. The reader is left with fragments of Stavrogin’s correspondence, consequences of his various actions or recordings of his interactions with other characters, to compose a final verdict on what sort of a being he really is. Comparing this occurrence with what is known of Captain Ahab, I argue that such presentation of both characters is not incidental. Both Ahab and Stavrogin depend primarily on what the rest of the characters might make of them. It is not toxicity or complexity of either personality that the novels are mainly interested in showing, but rather the theatrical effects that they exercise on the rest of their microcosm.

If to take into consideration what Carlyle argues in *On Heroes* about the innate human need to look for a strong leader figure, the explanation is as simple as it is cynical. Both Ahab and Stavrogin understand that their presence is wanted (or even, especially in case of Ahab, anticipated) – and so they appear, playing out the exact role expected of them. Sianne Ngai proposes an interesting theory for such a case.²¹⁴ “Fake feelings” signify an emotional response that has been created by manipulative behaviour. Therefore, an important goal for a charismatic leader would be “creating a fake feeling” in his audience – eliciting an essentially falsely motivated, but emotionally effective response by deftly planned actions calculated to serve a defined, yet undisclosed purpose (Ngai 38). This suggests a sophisticated ability to

²¹⁴ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*.

manipulate others psychologically; not necessarily a trait of a spiritually “strong” character as such, but a remarkable trait nevertheless.

An interesting twist on Ahab’s character in particular is provided by Melville himself, that Ahab can be read as a sociopath of sorts, who is aware of his impaired psyche, yet plays his role to perfection: “Nevertheless, so well did he succeed in that dissembling, that when the ivory leg he stepped ashore at last, no Nantucketer thought him otherwise than but naturally grieved, and that to the quick, with the terrible casualty which had overtaken him” (*MD* 166). This suggests a good measure of self-control, as well as clear understanding of what exactly society wishes to see from Ahab at the immediate moment, and the ability to act “naturally” in a desired manner. Alternatively it can be explained by an innate inability to feel genuine emotion, just as Stavrogin confesses in his final letter found before his suicide (*Devils* 754-755). In any case, there is none of the spontaneous, desperate rebelliousness that stands at odds with society and is duly spotted and suppressed.

However, those manipulative personalities may in turn be manipulated. One other explanation of their careful theatricality can be the characters’ subconscious adherence to the notion of typology (i.e. the characters within a literary microcosm being allocated a specific role to play). This implies that there exists a created canon or tradition (based typically on religious or cultural specifics), and the characters merely fulfil a particular part in this canon, and act accordingly, rather than directed entirely by their own clear motives. There is a strong sense of convention being present, of an accepted, if hypocritical manner of relating to societally-relevant grand ideas, which in reality boils down to little else other than play-acting: “Nationalism, if you like, has never existed among us except as a form of amusement in a gentlemen’s club...” (*Devils* 36). In this canon, ideas are consigned to being a harmless form of societal interaction for supposedly enlightened and educated people, as Dostoyevsky describes Verkhovensky’s father: “[H]e needed someone to drink champagne with and

someone with whom, over a glass of wine, he could exchange pleasant ideas of a certain kind about Russia and “The Russian Spirit” (*Devils* 33). In a society founded upon pragmatic cynicism discussed in the first chapter, grand ideas are taken with a pinch of salt at best. And to succeed, a charismatic leader needs first to adapt to this mundane conventionality.

This implies that although there is an external force at play rather than the volition of the charismatic leader, this force is much less mystical in nature. Considering the notion of typology (that is, that in literature, as well as in life, there are certain scenarios or modes of behaviour that one adheres to, whether consciously or subconsciously), there re-emerges the concept of Plinlimmonian framework of rules governing the “exceptionalist” society that no individual can escape.²¹⁵ The individual’s actions are influenced by it on a subconscious basis. This idea is explored by Nancy Fredericks, who admits that typology is a strong influence, although she prefers to argue that Melville was opposed to typology as a concept (44-48).

If one chooses to dissect both texts from a typological vantage-point, it appears likely that Ahab, as well as Stavrogin, dutifully performs a role that has been assigned to him by the conventions of how the genre should develop (in the Christian typological tradition - based on the Biblical material). Arrogance, manipulateness and capacity for affecting whole groups of people are revealed to be character tropes, which are manifested precisely as the typological narrative should develop (ending with inevitable demise). Ironically, this divests the figure of a Machiavellian leader of its independence and power, although the characters themselves may not be aware of this. Whilst the authors themselves could have very likely viewed typology as constrictive and overwhelming, I argue that as literary characters, both Ahab and Stavrogin have it in common that they subconsciously tend to play

²¹⁵ Typology as a concept is also associable with early American and Puritan literature. See Emory Elliott and Nancy Fredericks.

out a specific role according to pre-set social canons prevalent in their microcosm, which influence their particular course of action (rather than being wholly “realistic” presences). To suggest that it is the typological canon that determines the characters’ actions as leaders rather than self-will, Fredericks offers an amusing dilemma regarding the pre-ordained roles:

Ahab is a biblical type of evil. His act of personifying evil in the whale becomes a projection, an attempt to exorcise evil in himself. Is Ahab, Ahab, he asks. In being named for the evil king of old, is Ahab himself a personification of evil?” (Fredericks 51)

Ahab “plays” the villain according to the pre-set vision; he does not create a new kind of evil, but only personifies the existing idea in flesh. Fusing the concept of typology with all that was previously stated about the bodiless “contagion” of an idea suddenly taking hold of an exceptional individual to make him its mouthpiece and subsequently a charismatic leader, there rests the argument about the incorporeal, free-floating idea, as put forth by Walter Benjamin: “[F]or phenomena are not incorporated in ideas. They are not contained in them. Ideas are, rather, their objective, virtual arrangement, their objective interpretation” (34.)²¹⁶

Ideas are demonstrated to be systems formed of particular objects arranged specifically or at random, with Benjamin stating: “[I]deas are to objects as constellations are to stars” (34). As Benjamin’s argument deals mainly with a theatrical subject-matter, the analogue for this particular thesis is clear: the charismatic leader seizes upon a free-floating idea to manipulate it according to his will, forming a “constellation” supposedly according to the rules prescribed in existing typology.²¹⁷ In this manner, the leader does not leave the typological framework, however, he can use personal will to make idea logically presentable and digestible for the rest of society. At the same time, as an essential object, the leader

²¹⁶ Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.

²¹⁷ Bakhtin (discussing Dostoyevsky) and Schroeder (in his article on Melville) do stress the writers’ penchant for using theatrical effects in their works, such as polyphonic voices (Bakhtin) or using script techniques (Schroeder).

becomes just as much part of a “constellation” – and the standards set by typology determine what exact specifics he would play out. However, my view of the situation is that rather than being a deliberate manipulation by one individual of the emotional sphere or feelings (not yet fully developed into definable and recognisable ideas) of the onlookers to produce a desired effect; it is much more of an opportunistic, chance phenomenon, where a self-imposed charismatic leader latches on, in a leech-like manner, onto a free-floating idea (which is quite developed and recognisable, if unwritten), so as to attain a desired outcome; in a “free ride” of sorts.

Therefore, I would like to propose that the main goal of a “charismatic leader” who arises as a product of individual exceptionalist thinking in reaction with the wider world, is not as much a defined personal goal (no matter whether positive or negative), or even the potential ability to create lasting change, but rather it is influence and the power that comes from it. The leader is attracted to the organic “spreading” of personal influence on more and more souls, which takes us back to the imagery of the amaranth explored in the previous chapter. The importance of the leader is that he can change or influence any other human being that he comes in contact with, and it is the subsequent change that is most important. Henceforth, I suggest that neither Ahab nor Stavrogin are actually required to exhibit any genuine, proven qualities that would vouch for them being exceptional and worthy of the semi-divine status they have conferred on themselves, in the Carlylean view of things. They are essentially “parasites” in the sense that they are not heroic, but merely latch onto an existing disembodied idea so as to increase their influence in their microcosm. Their significance to the narrative boils down to one single ability: to influence, affect and manipulate as many individuals as possible. And in the end, this leadership results in “mob rule” (*Devils* 596) embodying a depersonalized chaos. The charismatic leader may fancy themselves being the captain or director – in reality, they are an instrument.

Therefore, Pierre's artistic and romantic failures or Porfiry's mocking comments regarding Raskolnikov's Napoleonic philosophy, are in reality not as crucial, nor do they serve as solid proof of the fact that the reason for their failure was a lack of "extraordinary" potential. As my theoretical argument above suggests, for an individual to become a leader and gain significance, the main characteristic is the ability to influence others convincingly. The success of the individual enterprise, it seems, depends on other people and whether they respond to an image that the charismatic leader acts out.²¹⁸ Looking more broadly at Melville and Dostoyevsky's text, we see protagonists "playing out" a part – of Napoleon, or romantic poet in *Pierre*, or the promised prince and the fanatical preacher in *Devils* and *Moby-Dick* respectively.

The ingredient of mysterious absence combines with wild speculations and rumours in order to render the leader figure genuinely enigmatic for the rest of society.²¹⁹ If one compares the events preceding Nicholas Stavrogin's first appearance, the parallel with Ahab's initial lengthy absence from the stage until "The Quarter-Deck" chapter is noticeable:

After his promotion, the young man suddenly resigned his commission; once again he did not return to Skvoreshniki, and he stopped writing to his mother altogether. It was learned ... that he'd returned to Petersburg, but he was no longer encountered in the society he'd been frequenting; now he appeared to be hiding somewhere. It was discovered that he was keeping somewhat strange company; he was associating with the dregs of Petersburg's population, penniless civil servants, retired army officers who begged for charity, and drunkards; he was visiting their sordid families and spending

²¹⁸ Melville also explores this theme in "The Lighting-Rod Man" (1854), discussing exaggerated theatricalised scaremongering as means of controlling society (as an example - persuading people to buy lighting-rods).

²¹⁹ Melville and Dostoyevsky also bring up the archetype of the trickster – a literary presence also known for being theatrical and devious. However, I do not envisage either Ahab or Stavrogin as such, since neither is explicitly endowed with comical or fluid traits associable with the trickster.

his days and nights in dismal slums and God knows what kind of low haunts; he'd let himself go, went about in tatters, and apparently liked it that way.... (*Devils* 43)

Like Ahab, Stavrogin feigns disappearance, “hiding” in order to attract attention. However, if Ahab exhibits semi-divine remoteness of a Carlylean priest-hero, Dostoyevsky’s “prince” exhibits what can be described as a histrionic tendency to self-humiliation, traversing boundaries permitted by the societal customs. He deliberately mixes with “dregs” and “drunkards,” and dresses “in tatters” perhaps initially acting as a Bohemian *poseur* in jest. At a first glance, this does not reconcile Stavrogin’s character with the Carlylean individual concerned with his own godly nature. However, looking deeper, two possible explanations arise: one is that Stavrogin has been envisaging himself as a super-human of sorts, a Romantic-spirited egotistical hero testing the limits of his power and holding only disdain for the Plinlimmonian rules governing society. In this case, the character exhibits an acute awareness of his individuality, that is supposedly so flawlessly perfect that it may dispense with any societal regulation whatsoever (it is not surprising that Stavrogin is frequently dubbed “Prince Harry” or “Ivan the Tsarevich” stressing his exalted status). Alternatively, one may wish to reconcile the individual search for the validation of the semi-divine status with the general Christian (not even necessarily Orthodox) tradition. In choosing to commune with those deemed to be outcasts or “dregs” whilst being keenly aware of his exceptional nature, Stavrogin can be described as imitating Christ – at least, outwardly.²²⁰ Certainly, unlike with the Biblical ideal, his motives stem from exhibitionistic pride and the necessity to seem Christ-like to those he comes into contact with in order to exercise the Dionysiac-type leadership discussed previously. Yet again, this trait makes Dostoyevsky’s protagonist akin to Ahab in that the latter (as discussed by C.L.R. James) can also be viewed

²²⁰ Imitating Christ was a widespread notion at the time: notably also upheld by Benjamin Franklin, in *Autobiography*.

as a personality of a higher order who consciously descends to be among the diverse “pack of ragamuffins picked up at random from all parts of the earth” (James 25), like a god choosing to engage with mortals.²²¹

Nevertheless, the decisive factor in maintaining the leader’s charisma is still present: that is, wild rumours enveloping Stavrogin’s persona. As the text satirically tells:

Our ladies were all mad about the new arrival. They were sharply divided into two groups – in one they adored him, in the other they were out for his blood; but both groups were mad about him. Some people were particularly fascinated by the idea that his soul might harbour a fatal secret; others positively relished the notion that he was a murderer. (*Devils* 43)

This observation neatly summarises the general reaction that a charismatic leader typically seeks to evoke: either extreme adoration of the “fatal secret,” or hatred towards a “murderer.” He also divides society into distinct groups, each animated with powerful emotions. This quasi-Dionysiac quality of invoking madness or irrational reaction to the exceptional self that can be explained by its supposedly divine characteristics, is also commented upon by Dostoyevsky. Again, the connotations of murders and fatal secrets are not incidental. Let us compare the above passage with how Ahab is described:

Step and growl; growl and go – that’s the word with Captain Ahab. But nothing about that thing that happened to him off Cape Horn, long ago, when he lay like dead for three days and nights; nothing about that deadly scrimmage with the Spaniard afore the altar in Santa? –heard nothing about that, eh? Nothing about the silver calabash he spat into? (*MD* 83)

In a rather histrionic manner, a charismatic leader seems to thrive against a background of scandal and mythologizing. With Ahab, one sees a direct rumour of

²²¹ C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*.

blasphemy, preceding his actual appearance; the desecration of the “silver calabash,” which is more graphic than the vague ideas of “murder” surrounding Stavrogin. Still, and particularly in case of Melville’s novel, even rumours of such behaviour correspond with the general gist of what a god-like exceptional individual is: he is supposedly entitled to be permitted blasphemous or condemnable actions just because his nature allows that. The scandalous, the salacious seems to be an acceptable part of the character’s inbuilt traits. Once again, we return to Raskolnikov’s argument regarding “exceptional” and “inexceptional” people.

Although the observers cannot dare to consider themselves to be actually on the par with the charismatic leader, there rests yet another aspect to the appeal of this character. Ngai suggests that the strong emotional response to a fascinating figure may be explained by the others’ subconscious wish of identification with the object of desire – namely, the figure who fascinates or exudes charisma (Ngai 144-150), which echoes the earlier argument expressed by Carlyle that the charismatic leader serves as an assembling rather than disassembling force. As Ishmael puts it: “I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs ... A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab’s quenchless feud seemed mine” (*MD* 159). The human individuals making up society, with their different, personal preoccupations (Melville cunningly highlights this aspect in the chapter “Midnight, Forecastle” (*MD* 151), by presenting the voices of many sailors of different nationalities just before Ishmael pronounces the above words) are all unified under the direction cast by the charismatic leader, under his magnetic draw. In what concerns Stavrogin’s allure to society ladies and dandies, it can be explained as fascination with a conventionally Byronic character, but as for others’ response to Ahab (and also for those society members who feel hatred rather than adoration towards the hero, like Shatov does) Ngai offers a psychological explanation: “[E]nvy enables a strategic way of not

identifying which, in facilitating and ensuring this very transition, preserves a critical agency whose loss is threatened by full-blown idealization of the attribute admired” (161).

The plain explanation may be that to a part of society who has not been bewitched by the leader’s charismatic persona, the feeling that unites it is a sense of envy experienced towards the leader-figure, who is permitted to go where others cannot, and the vicarious desire to experience this power – rather than “full-blown idealization.” The psychoanalytical reading, which Ngai leans upon, concerns itself primarily with the typically disadvantaged members of society: women, or the poor (Ngai 21, 126). However, I would like to move away from this perception, focusing on the explanation of both Ahab and Stavrogin’s allure to characters who are not exactly presented by authors as “disadvantaged” (be it respected mariners like Starbuck or small-town intelligentsia of Skvoreshniki). Returning to the previous argument regarding the supposedly “magnetic” personality of the self-imposed charismatic leader, such one can be perceived as being envied by other individuals on the par with him, who nevertheless are too firmly held in place by the Plinlimmonian codes so as to proclaim themselves as leaders.

A perfect example of such a conflict occurs in “The Musket” chapter of *Moby-Dick*, where the leader figure of Ahab is juxtaposed by Starbuck, representative of a “socially acceptable” personality who does not pose a threat to the microcosm’s wholeness. The societal hierarchy prevents Starbuck from killing the established leader to seize power, “Flat obedience to thy own flat commands, this is all thou breathest. ... But is there no other way? No lawful way? – Make him a prisoner to be taken home? What! Hope to wrest this old man’s living power from his own living hands? Only a fool would try it” (*MD* 455). This at first appears to be a straightforward response by a law-abiding character faced with blatant

disregard for the law.²²² And yet there resounds a somewhat symbolic undertone to the scene, which seems to put Starbuck face to face with temptation resulting from envy of Ahab's leadership position:

The loaded muskets in the rack were shiningly revealed, as they stood upright against the forward bulkhead. Starbuck was an upright, honest man; but out of Starbuck's heart, at that instant when he saw the muskets, there strangely evolved an evil thought; but so blent with its neutral or good accompaniments that for the instant he hardly knew it for itself. (*MD* 455)

What occurs at this moment, seems to point towards an unexceptional individual's envy of, and the desire to appropriate the established "exceptional" leader's specifically masculine characteristics in what Melville explicitly describes as "an evil thought." The phallic imagery of the loaded muskets, especially if coupled with the notion of the "spark" is suggestive to say the least. However, as Starbuck says, "all of us are Ahabs," (*MD* 455) the excerpt is reconciled with the argument that the charismatic leader "unites" all under his command. Consciously, Starbuck has no pith to assert his desire to be the leader over Ahab. He is outwardly moved by the desire to save others from a madman's disastrous plan; but subconscious envy is the mechanism that vicariously allows him, for all his "unexceptional" personality, to experience leadership through accepting that he too, can be an Ahab, without resorting to actual physical action to assert his right. The reason to why exactly Starbuck cannot bring himself to this action is evocative of Carlyle's theory, in that the religious, law-abiding Starbuck, "wrestling with an angel" (*MD* 456) is fearful of committing an act of sacrilege by defiling the pre-set, hierarchical boundaries. He cannot be a leader because he is unwilling to envision himself as a part of nature, which exercises its will according to natural

²²² Starbuck is a Quaker, and a religious character whose faith is marked by non-violence and regard for lawfulness. Juxtaposing him with lawless Ahab, Melville also draws attention to the religious aspect of his dilemma.

law: “Is heaven a murderer when its lightning strikes a would-be murderer in his bed, tinding sheets and skin together? And would I be a murderer, then” (*MD* 456). The “charismatic leader,” however, is distinguished by the readiness to assert his right, likening himself to nature, which of course cannot be held wrong or culpable.

I imply that what both case studies show is the desire of those crossing paths with the charismatic leader, to vicariously attain some of his “magnetism” which they dare not openly claim for themselves as individuals. The two decisive factors at play here are the desire for charismatic leader’s powers, and the simultaneous fear of societal punishment. Being disadvantaged, however, is less of a significant factor in those specific case studies, than might be originally thought. The charismatic leader attracts by the force of their personality, and is seen as an object of desire, rather than an opportunity to fill in some spiritual or social void.

Thus it is unsurprising that even the most reasonable of characters fall prey to the influence of a charismatic leader. Whether favourable or negative, some kind of a response to the character nevertheless is elicited – even if so as to criticise him or whisper scandalously about his actions. The “exceptional” being exists in its own right; the “mediocre” ones have a choice of either being for or against him, but they cannot choose to remain indifferent. Speaking of commonality and being unified by the figure of a charismatic leader serving as a uniting force, it is evident that the leader can unite others not necessarily “for” but also “against,” speaking of disgust or repulsion as another means to subsequently unite those opposing the leader, and separate the leader’s supporters and opponents into two distinct social camps (just as we have seen with Stavrogin’s arrival to town) in order for the exceptionalist drama to play out: “...[T]here is a sense in which it seeks to include or draw others into its exclusion of its object, enabling a strange kind of sociability” (Ngai 336).

Verkhovensky's organisational plan where diverse factions would "cringe in obedience" (*Devils* 596) echoes this almost precisely. Such a view is also relatable to the notion of the exceptionalist discourse uniting the national subjects against some imaginary construct of the antagonised "enemy" – the main difference being that the charismatic leader, doing exactly the same, acts as if embodying an entire nation-state in their individual figure.

Another crucial quality of a charismatic leader, that comes to light regarding Stavrogin's association with social outcasts, is the exceptional adaptability in diverse settings or situations. The immediate explanation would be that an individualistic leader, who managed to escape the societal controls laid out for them as described in the previous chapter, possesses such personal grandeur, that it transcends the artificial boundaries of societal structure, affecting all the segments of the existing world and changing them radically. The individual can thus change the existing exceptionalist ideology as it stands, and set new criteria regarding what should be viewed as right or wrong. As Thoreau discusses the relationship between the societal structure and the truly "strong" individual:

This American government—what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. (*Civil Disobedience*)

Thus, an individual can embody the nation-state, and "bend it to his will," by virtue of "vitality and force" associable with living organisms rather than invented social structures. The power of the charismatic leader essentially comes from (often mythologised) vantage-point which encompasses a broader range than the permissible extents of the national discourse may allow. As Ahab is described: "Mark ye, be forewarned; Ahab's above the common; Ahab's been in colleges, as well as 'mong the cannibals; been used to deeper

wonders than the waves; fixed his fiery lance in mightier, stranger foes than whales...” (*MD* 71).

The perception of experience as opposed to innocence stemming from narrow-mindedness and remaining enclosed within a definite microcosm, is what gives an advantage to the charismatic leader. Winter proffers a curious example of the fear of the “march of intellect” and advancing scientific knowledge, popularised in many cartoons during the Victorian era (17-18); whilst Ivan Turgenev in Russia personified those fears in the figure of the nihilistic Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons* (1862), who yet again creates a furore in a sleepy provincial town with his philosophical arguments and scientific experimentation.²²³ This reveals the exceptionalist society’s innermost fear – the exaggerated individual liberty running loose, and threatening the established order. It is noteworthy that the respondents to the exceptionalist leader do not ever require proof of this experience, being seemingly content with a show of supposedly true characteristics, or, as in case of Stavrogin, a deliberate display of seeming intellectual prowess (in comparison to those surrounding him):

It also turned out that he was extremely well educated, even considerably knowledgeable. Of course, it didn’t take much knowledge to impress us; but he could form opinions about current and extremely interesting topics, and, what is even more valuable, he had a great deal of good sense. (*Devils* 44-43)

Therefore, a major trait emerges that defines the specific way in which a successful exceptional individuality, incarnated as a charismatic leader, differs from a case of repressed individual rebellion manifested in characters of Pierre and Raskolnikov. Whilst being perfectly conscious of his own exceptional self, the charismatic leader possesses the

²²³ Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons* (1862) is a landmark novel frequently featuring in Russian high school literature curriculum, addressing topics such as generational conflict, nihilism and individuality.

necessary savoir-faire to navigate the rigid Plinlimmonian framework holding society together – as well as the covert cynicism requisite not to take it in earnest.²²⁴

The idea of theatricality or pretence is therefore relevant – the above passage shows Stavrogin as knowing precisely what “sensible” opinions may be well received in a microcosm composed mainly of figures who believe that they are motivated by logic and reason (whilst in reality, their motivation is determined by the conventions of a typological framework of which they are not likely to be aware). There is, I argue, no marked instance where the stereotypical psychological characteristics of a leader are commented on (such as willpower or fervent faith in one’s ideals). Instead, the successful exceptional leader’s charisma comes from the fact that he understands how to manipulate the “horologicals” that society sets to protect itself against its potentially dangerous elements. In particular, Alison Winter (referring to the Carlylean school of thought) seems to share the opinion that if an “exceptional” individual (in her particular investigation – one endowed with mesmeric talent) is permitted to attain a leadership position thanks to particularly robust psychological capacities, eventually society has no choice but to accept them as such: “[A]s for the charismatic leaders ... vulnerability to them was a fact of life, no matter how destructive this propensity might be. In 1841 Carlyle deplored hero worship but thought the only answer was to choose one’s heroes well” (332).

The textual matter in both novels attests to the notion that the reader should view Captain Ahab as well as Dostoyevsky’s “prince” as masters of manipulative illusion. The image of a mask explicitly appears in *Moby-Dick* as well as in *Devils*. The famous “little lower layer” passage explores this – and the reader sees Ahab himself hint at the mask-like, appearance-based nature of his leadership:

²²⁴ In *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt comments on the concept of juristic frameworks for society’s efficient functioning. See also Walsh in *Arendt Contra Sociology: Theory, Society and its science*: “Arendt asks what must be the case about the deep structures of the social world that are presupposed by our activities – which are varied, patterned, but irreducible to each other” (17).

Hark ye yet again, - the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event – in the living act, the undoubted deed – there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! (*MD* 145)

It is somewhat shocking to hear Ahab speak so openly, as if disclosing the technicalities of a magical trick. However, it appears that the crew, preoccupied with thoughts of the tangible “Nantucket market” possess neither the awareness nor cynicism sufficient to comprehend what Ahab is saying. His comment, “But come closer, Starbuck; thou requires a little lower layer” (*MD* 145) is a sharp affirmation of the fact that no other soul on the “Pequod” can possibly compete with Ahab for the position of a charismatic leader.

The chief difference between the “exceptional” individual who succeeds as a leader and an ordinary individual, is the ability of the former to maintain an external and adaptable mask to present to others. The gimmick explaining this phenomenon is that the mask is usually deceptively simplistic, for all the vested mysteriousness, so that the onlookers immediately recognise and relate to it. The public does not need extreme character complexity, and Ahab is quite aware of it: “Ahab’s larger, darker, deeper part remains unhinted” (*MD* 166). The underestimated “little lower layer” is the driving manipulative force underneath the malleable façade which the leader can adapt accordingly to varied responses from the led. Bearing in mind what was explored in previous chapter, I state that “the little lower layer” is the awareness of the individual as an exceptional being – which has moreover passed the potentially dangerous rebellion phase which neither Raskolnikov nor Pierre Glendinning have managed.

Furthermore, Ahab’s speech brings one to the point raised by Carlyle in *On Heroes*, regarding whether a supposed charismatic leader acts out of his own volition, or is merely a carrier for a non-physical spiritual force using his physical body (described by Melville as

“an unreasoning mask”) as a smokescreen of sorts.²²⁵ Looking at the text, it appears that Melville himself hints at the possibility that Ahab is not a self-governing buffoon, but merely transmits and voices an incorporeal theoretical idea, quite in harmony with Carlyle’s argument. “[T]hat before living agent, now became living instrument” (*MD* 165), is an especially explicit statement, implying that Ahab, robbed to a large extent of self-will, becomes a machine-like medium for disembodied Carlylean “spirit” to thrive in the physical world. “Striking through the mask” could liberate this spirit or at least force it to manifest itself as it is (it is a common Realist and proto-Realist genre trope that the societal framework is essentially “insincere” and must be overturned in order for the “truth” to surface, sparing no shocking or “low” detail – precisely as the mid-nineteenth century writer-observer is expected to do).²²⁶ Yet Ahab can confidently voice it in the presence of the crew (much like a mythological immortal hero prophesying where his death is hidden), because he knows that the ordinary, non-exceptional personalities would not attempt it.

Thus we encounter yet another characteristic of a charismatic leader: he is seemingly invincible, and not because of enchantment of great personal power, but rather because of the ineptitude of those surrounding him (the society who, according to Carlyle, needs a hero in order to function). Logically, his blasphemous or chilling actions then become explainable not just as psychological tricks to gain attention, but as manifestations of his unpunishable power, which the leader may attribute to his divine status. This is why Ahab can say: “Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I’d strike the sun if it insulted me” (*MD* 145).

NATURE AND ARTIFICE.

²²⁵ See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus and On Heroes*.

²²⁶ Also a trope favoured by Marxist school of thought, in particular - Georg Lukasc (1885-1971).

The symbolism of a mask becomes more obvious upon observing the character of Stavrogin. Unlike the maimed and marked Ahab, of whose physicality it is said that one “would find a birth-mark on him from crown to sole” (*MD* 109), Stavrogin’s initial appearance is that of extreme, impossible physical perfection bordering on artifice.

Our dandies regarded him with envy and were eclipsed by him. His face also impressed me: his hair was just a bit too black, his bright eyes a bit too clear and serene, his complexion a bit too fair and delicate, his colour a bit too fresh and pure, his teeth like pearls, his lips like coral – he seemed to be a paragon of beauty, yet at the same time there was something repulsive about him. His face was said to resemble a mask....
(*Devils* 44)

Echoing the first chapter, Ahab upholds the tendency for an exceptional individual to emerge maimed or disabled in some manner, after having confronted society. Yet with Stavrogin, one sees a beautifully crafted mask, where sophisticated workmanship has been painstaking, but the effect is nevertheless highly disturbing. The initial interpretation could be that in his desire to seem exceptional to others, Stavrogin only succeeds in alienating himself further from the rest of society. Yet this might be precisely his aim. The “exceptional” individual’s perfection should be exaggerated to the point of theatrical extreme, so as to immediately mark the character as such. In a uniform, unified exceptionalist society, any physical divergence would mark one as an outcast to be destroyed as endangering the communal existence – or alternatively, set them apart as a potential leader. Leslie Fiedler asserts that being a physical “freak” distinguishable from others may result in either destruction of the said freak, or, if that fails, awe and worship, for it is the unusualness that

makes such a character more akin to the unknown divine: “Freaks are simultaneously understood as symbols of the absolute Other and the essential Self” (Fiedler, 40-42).²²⁷

The charismatic leader in both texts is set apart from the rest of essentially mediocre personalities: in Dostoyevsky’s case, by extreme beauty, in Melville’s case, by apparent disability. If we reconcile Carlyle’s theory with how humanity commonly imagined gods or heroes (distinguished either by physical perfection or by a notable physical trait, such as one-eyed Odin in the Norse tradition), we come to the conclusion that the leader has to be different – whether fair or foul, they should appear distinctive from anyone else.

This distinctiveness can either be physical, or even cultural. An interesting parallel between Ahab and Stavrogin is that although both are nominally products of their culture, one a Nantucketer, another hailing from a respected genteel clan, they can be viewed as essentially foreign, and ill at ease in their supposed home environment. With Ahab, this is manifested in wild rumours surrounding his life at sea. With Stavrogin, there appears an uncomfortable dimension to this notion, quite typical of the Russophile tendencies in Dostoyevsky’s day, that he is a dangerous “foreigner.” Described as “this Russian gentleman who, in spite of his European education, still hadn’t mastered the Russian grammar” (*Devils* 752), Stavrogin is an element which is wholly alien to the body of the microcosm where he would be supposed to feel at home, and in his final confessional note, admits: “I’m not attached to anything in Russia – everything is as alien to me here as elsewhere” (*Devils* 753). This harmonises well with what we have seen with Ahab, remaining sequestered in his cabin apart from the crew. The “charismatic leader” is definitely not one of the people, even though he may eventually become the bringer of the mob rule; he has to stay separated, as a sole freestanding element. He also remains a foreign and potentially life-threatening presence for the social body, and cannot be reconciled with it naturally. And this is where the theme of

²²⁷ Fiedler, *The Tyranny of the Normal*.

physical artifice, often taken to the extreme so as to function within this social body and even subject it to one's will, becomes relevant.

Indeed, the charismatic leader's physical difference from others has more than a hint of artifice or unrealness about it (which could possibly hint at a higher status, rising above ordinary organic nature) – Stavrogin's mask is mirrored by Ahab's ivory leg, which, fused with his body, implies that in the personality of a leader, artifice becomes fused with physicality, and grows to be his second nature, grotesque as it may seem at first. This argument, however, challenges the one put forth by Michael Rogin, who suggests that rather than becoming an integrated part of a charismatic leader's self, the artificial element only contributes to sow further discord within his psyche, and subsequently, the disorder in the outside world ensues.²²⁸ Rogin states: "Ahab imposes a forced unity on the world. Ahab's wound has awakened his anxiety over separation, and therefore has intensified his inner division as well" (117).

Furthermore, Rogin offers an interesting explanation to the significance of the artifice as a concept in regards to Ahab in particular. Artifice, according to him, is a venerated part of societal functioning and structure: and it is Ahab's task, as a charismatic leader, to divest the artificial or material of the awe associated with it:

The Protestant ethic, glorifying visible signs of grace, located saving power in material objects rather than God. This fetishism of commodities replaced pagan idol-worship with a modern form of animism. It endowed material objects with magical, redemptive power ... Ahab ... strikes through the visible signs of grace to destroy the governing, inscrutable power. (126)

²²⁸ Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*.

Rogin indirectly evokes the Jeffersonian rhetoric of cheerfully materialistic “pursuit of happiness” where tangible gain replaces loftier ideals. The spiritual (in specifically Protestant, American discourse) is overridden by the material, and in such a world, the artificially-constructed “false prophet” takes the centremost position. Ahab is a material presence rather than a spiritual one, positioning himself as an automaton of sorts but turning away from anything that can be possibly seen as “organic” and thus liable to fail: “No such green weather stains on Ahab’s head!” (*MD* 500). However, Ahab’s efforts to do away with the organic, the weak, the ordinary, are not destined to work out. Such a stance leads him to perceive other individuals as artificial units fulfilling a particular purpose in his plan, the replaceable human “material” in his mad game. Fredericks summarises this attitude: [T]he crew ... he considers merely the means to his own ends, the “tools” he will use to accomplish his one object... (66).

Such a notion comes into conflict with a different image of leadership that Melville provides in his depiction of Steelkilt’s rebellion. There is a notable difference with Ahab in that Steelkilt is frequently referred to in terms of being very much part of the natural rather than man-made world, “wild ocean-born and wild ocean-nurtured” (*MD* 220); a leader who emerges organically, exactly as per Carlyle’s argument.²²⁹ I maintain that the conflict between nature and artifice is crucial for understanding the central argument put forth in this chapter. Ahab, as it has been stated above, is associated with artifice first and foremost: artifice which duly becomes part of his essential being, yet artifice nevertheless. However, Steelkilt’s chief difference that sets him apart from Ahab is that Steelkilt is seen as naturally endowed with “exceptional” attributes marking him as a genuinely “exceptional” individual and a potential leader. Described as a “tall and noble animal” and “charger” (*MD* 221), Steelkilt represents a personality who is naturally or evolutionally selected to lead,

²²⁹ Contextually, natural order is also a theme emergent with Jefferson, Thoreau and Emerson.

overturning the established norms (especially ones as rigid as on board a whaling ship) to establish his own. Certainly, there is a strong echo of Carlyle's argument regarding the innate human search for a hero figure, and Melville stresses that indeed it is the case: "[A] brain, and a heart, and a soul in him, gentlemen, that made Steelkilt Charlemagne, had he been born son to Charlemagne's father" (*MD* 221).

Steelkilt, in narrator's eyes, is a leader in the manner that is pre-determined and favoured by the natural order - rather unexpectedly foreshadowing the theory of the survival of the fittest (it is not surprising that this observation should come from Ishmael, whose interest in the natural world's dynamics is a recurrent motif throughout the novel). From the above citation, it can be implied that the established codes holding society together (such as genealogy) initially may not be kind to the emerging exceptional individual: however, once those are overturned, there emerges a more instinctive, primeval mode of existence reminiscent of the older times (represented by the image of Steelkilt and his men "seizing a large double war-canoe of the savages" (*MD* 234)) where the most "exceptional" individual took the position of a leader as a logical right. Such a situation challenges man-made laws, but does not go against the natural order: and therefore, Steelkilt (by the end of Ishmael's narrative, at least) survives. Meanwhile Ahab, whose power is associated with artifice and imitation (however brilliantly executed), rather than strictly natural capacities, does not.

As Ahab's personality is essentially "constructed," it is interesting to note that as the ship hurtles towards its eventual doom, it seems to fall apart. The character of "hair-turbaned Fedallah" (*MD* 207) is especially interesting in that respect. Interpreting Fedallah as a demonic tempter of sorts, I maintain, would not be wholly correct. He is a macabre and mysterious figure, but through the course of the novel, can hardly be seen indulging in any particularly malicious activity. His origins or purpose of being onboard are shadowy: "Whence he came in a mannerly world like this, by what sort of accountable tie he soon

evinced himself to be linked with Ahab's peculiar fortunes; nay, so far as to have some sort of a half-hinted influence; Heaven knows..." (*MD* 208). This sets him wholly apart from the other shadowy double, Peter Verkhovensky, who, for his seeming ordinariness, in the text is suggested to be the true "demon" who both tempts the Faustian Stavrogin and orchestrates the chaos, and who "had organized the first attempt at such systematic disorder, the programme for our future action" (*Devils* 749). Fedallah may be more unusual in appearance, yet he lacks Verkhovensky's initiative for sowing the seeds of chaos.

My understanding of the character is that Fedallah, typically mute, is seen as the subconscious, shadow innate aspect of Ahab. Verkhovensky, however, is a fiendish external presence who comes deliberately to tempt and wreck disorder, his hellish nature stressed by adjectives such as "pointed" (*Devils* 189-190) and vivid descriptions: "One began to imagine that the tongue in his mouth had a special shape, unusually long and thin, very red, and with extremely pointed tip, flickering constantly and involuntarily" (190).

Fedallah could be a product of the psychological projections incarnated and set loose, and of Ahab's desire to establish himself as a charismatic leader that led him to break out of the safe pre-determined framework of what can or cannot be done. This would have liberated a grotesque presence that is recognisable by its arcane appearance, connected with Ahab in some mysterious manner, and yet not a wholly independent agent. "He was such a creature as civilized, domestic people in the temperate zone only see in their dreams, and that but dimly," Melville says (*MD* 208). This comment is full of rather racist overtones, yet again juxtaposing the acceptable "exceptionalist" America of Melville's imagination with fantastical imaginary realms of "otherness" supposedly populated by chimeras and freaks in an exceptionalist mind. However, what Melville may actually mean here is that breaking out of the typological constraints would liberate chimeras like Fedallah, who just as well may be a product of Ahab's mind. For all their frightening appearance, these creations merely attest

to the state of mind of the one who produced them. This harmonises with the subject of projected, imaginary notions interconnected with the exceptionalist discourse that I brought up in the introductory chapter; the only difference being that in a standard exceptionalist state, the projected visions are quite definite and typical, whilst in a chaotic situation where the charismatic leader comes to power, they can be wildly diverse, as the products of just one individual's imagination rather than of the "collective conscious" of a nation-state in its entirety.

Fedallah's prophecies, such as "Hemp can only kill thee" (*MD* 442) can just as well be vestiges of the monologue that Ahab holds within his head, as a manifestation of his monomaniac traits. Fedallah thus is no "pet monkey" (*Devils* 598) of Stavrogin's who serves him in a Mephistophelean fashion, but a separate aspect of Ahab's psyche projected into reality, who does not tempt, but echoes what is going on in Ahab's soul. Thus a significant discrepancy between the two writers, I argue, is that for the Russian writer, the toxic "exceptional" leader endowed with inexplicable charisma is viewed as being assisted by supernatural devilish forces; in the American writer's eyes, meanwhile, it is the "exceptional" leader's inner projections, brought to the surface and incarnated, which contribute to how the events turn out.

The individual imaginary projections by the leader have the sufficient power to influence others. In "The Hat" chapter, as Ahab's monomania grows, this quite inhuman, non-corporeal "shadow" aspect of Fedallah becomes more noticeable to the crew, even if they cannot quite define it:

...Ahab's eyes so awed the crew's, the inscrutable Parsee's glance awed his; or somehow, at least, in some wild way, at times affected it. Such an added, gliding strangeness began to invest the thin Fedallah now; such ceaseless shudderings shook him; that the men looked dubious at him; half uncertain, as it seemed, whether indeed

he was a mortal substance, or else a tremulous shadow cast upon the deck by some unseen being's body. (*MD* 473)

The comparison of Fedallah to a separate part of Ahab's psyche, when "in the Parsee Ahab saw his forethrown shadow, in Ahab the Parsee his abandoned substance" (*MD* 474) is clearly enough stressed by Melville. Both cannot function without each other, as they are one, to a large extent, and it was Ahab's desire to establish himself as a leader that birthed Fedallah in the first place. Bringing up what also was previously said about Ahab being a transmitting agent for incorporeal Carlylean "spirit," the notion is cemented by the textual evidence: "Still again both seemed yoked together, and an unseen tyrant driving them; the lean shade siding the solid rib" (*MD* 474). It is notable, furthermore, that in the scene where the final chase takes place, Fedallah perishes prior to Ahab's demise, yet, in a fittingly theatrical fashion, his link with Ahab is preserved: "his sable raiment torn to shreds, his distended eyes turned full upon Ahab" (*MD* 503). One could almost say that the projected part of Ahab's inner world returns back to him and is reabsorbed into his psyche. Fedallah's body is reminiscent of a discarded puppet, or else the abandoned "pasteboard mask" already discussed. I interpret this that in the full view of his demise, Ahab loses the various separated aspects of his person that he developed as a "charismatic leader" to attain the bare life status, essentially whole and neutral, before eventual death. Saying "Thou goest before" (*MD* 503), Ahab acknowledges Fedallah's death, and I interpret this as Ahab's awareness of the gradual shedding of the aspects that made him the leader, in the stark face of reality and mortality. He loses his "exceptional" traits to become a neutral unit, on the par with other human units making up society (or metaphorically, the "Pequod's crew), and just as susceptible to danger and death.

THE LEADER AND THE LED.

The charismatic leader essentially is an almost wholly superficial presence, whose existence is founded upon relationships and interactions with others. His personality is fascinating precisely because in reality he has little, or none. For himself, unless consumed with a monomaniac goal (which is often the result of a virulently transmitted vagabond idea), he does not truly desire or seek anything, exercising his influence on the masses solely for the ever-increasing influence's sake. His appearance may be arresting, but inside there is actually little substance. This differs such a figure from either Melville's ordinary, but solidly personable three ship-mates concerned with their mundane problems (*MD* 167) or zealous souls like Shatov, who are described as "[O]ne of those idealistic Russian personalities who are suddenly struck by some compelling idea and seem overwhelmed by it immediately, sometimes even for ever" and remain faithfully believing this idea until, in an image reminiscent of imagery encountered in the previous chapter, "the stone [that's] fallen on them and already half-crushed them to death" (*Devils* 29). The human units making up an exceptionalist society and that a charismatic leader can use as his "material," to use their hidden innate potential in the pursuit of a monomaniacal idea, can thus be either ordinary souls unconcerned with higher subjects, or earnest idealistic believers - yet the charismatic leader himself is neither. He professes to believe, but nevertheless lacks substance at the core.

Ahab's pursuit of the White Whale is essentially meaningless from the logical viewpoint. Stavrogin does not genuinely wish for a revolution to make life in Russia fairer, or at least different to what it was before: as he says, "I'm not attached to anything in Russia - everything is as alien to me here as elsewhere" (*Devils* 753). The "exceptionalist" leader is essentially hollow, lacking personal goals or genuine purpose, apart from wilfully exercising influence. For this, he would certainly require an audience, since on his own, he would be reduced to the individualistic rebel seen in the first chapter, vulnerable to suppression or

social rejection. Therefore, the presence of a retinue is an obvious and distinguishing trait of a successful charismatic leader.

“The Quarter-Deck” chapter is pivotal in allowing one to understand how the leadership of Captain Ahab is received by the rest of individuals inhabiting the “Pequod”’s microcosm. I maintain that the fact that Melville chose to precede the chapter with what looks like a stage-direction (Enter Ahab: Then, all) (*MD* 141), had a very specific reasoning behind it, beyond stylistic or literary purposes. It is notable that the rest of the chapter is not laid out as a theatrical scene (unlike quite a few others), and indeed, it is not Melville’s purpose to present it as such. Rather, the crucial importance of “The Quarter-Deck” lies with that it sets out, once and for all, the relationship that is to be between Ahab and his crew. Being the nominally formal leader (in his capacity as the ship’s captain) at the beginning of the “Pequod”’s journey, Ahab uses his position at this precise point to openly declare himself as a charismatic leader, thus subverting the previous status quo within the microcosm in order to create a radically new order drawn towards a radically different idea – the revenge upon the White Whale. Certainly, this echoes an all-too-familiar historical image where the “exceptionalist” society held together by its national discourse and laws is suddenly headed by a totalitarian leader spouting controversial ideas in a charismatic manner.

The charismatic leader depends on the response from others and cherishes artifice and theatricality as helpful attributes in attaining and maintaining his status. Thus it is not surprising that Ahab envisages this moment as a theatricalised, carefully constructed performance, which he can use to traverse established boundaries and mark out his own, in his capacity as a leader.²³⁰ This scene is his declaration of a claim to be a charismatic leader.

²³⁰ See Olson in *Call me Ishmael* (68), for an analysis of theatrical tricks employed by Ahab (e.g. nailing the doubloon coin to the mast to create a centre-stage, or using a specifically theatrically effective language). Olson hints, although he does not offer a thorough analysis, that Ahab’s theatrical manipulative techniques direct the course of the novel’s action.

Psychologically speaking, he uses the time and the mysteriousness of the situation to his advantage, to set the scene:

It drew near the close of day. Suddenly he came to a halt by the bulwarks, and inserting his bone leg into the auger-hole there, and with one hand grasping a shroud, he ordered Starbuck to send everybody aft.

“Sir!” said the mate, astonished at an order seldom or never given on ship-board except in some extraordinary case.

“Send everybody aft,” repeated Ahab. “Mast-heads, there! Come down!” (*MD* 142)

Ahab exhibits an astute awareness of traits and tricks that subtly contribute towards positioning himself as an unusual, extraordinary (and thus – exceptional) leader. The usage of his customary authority as the captain of the “Pequod” is also employed by him as a resource working towards establishing himself as an exceptional leader (quite in the same vein as Stavrogin puts to use his noble birth and aristocratic ways). The well-calculated pose, “one hand grasping a shroud” is quite likely intentional (amusingly, it is rather reminiscent of how leaders such as Napoleon or even Stalin used to be portrayed).²³¹ Ahab immediately asserts his claim to that role by feigned disregard for the “commoners” (the rest of the crew) and taking his time, “unmindful of the wondering whispering among the men.” (*MD* 142) As he is “darting his eyes among the crew” (142) one may say that Ahab is acting simultaneously in two aspects of a charismatic leader: an actor and a puppeteer keenly observing the reactions of his intended audience. He perfectly manipulates his timing – the posing “did not last long” (142). In this theatricalised *mise-en-scene*, the supposedly democratic spirit of equality associated with America, and the American navy specifically, is not present – the new hierarchical order is plainly outlined without words.

²³¹ J. Mark Powell offers a summary of the origins and significance of this specific pose, made popular by artists since late eighteenth and throughout nineteenth century.

Further on, Ahab yet again uses a strategy associated with theatrical manipulation, which also hints at his charismatic qualities – the element of surprise. He has sufficiently prepared the assembled crowd, and deftly plays the calculated reaction of “wild approval in his tones; observing the hearty animation into which his unexpected question had so magnetically thrown them” (*MD* 142-143). Much as I like the Melvillean term “magnetic,” I would like to disagree here with Sam Halliday who argues that the nature of Ahab’s leadership is magnetically attractive in some preternatural way.²³² If anything, Ahab comes across in this scene as a genius of mass manipulation, employing such tactics as undoubtedly would only be too familiar to a scholar of political or sociological authoritarian tendencies.²³³ Keeping in perfect harmony with the expected image of a charismatic leader, Ahab is not as much as a mystic, as a gifted psychologist. The figure of an exceptional leader is therefore less mysteriously “magnetic” than might be initially imagined.

Thus “The Quarter-Deck” is a scene which deals with the key transitional point in the development of the individualistic leader – namely, the precise moment at which the individual, rebellious personality of the previous chapter lays claim to the next evolutionary step – the position of a leader who is able to influence groups by the sheer yet calculated force of the exceptional character. It is notable that Ahab has not yet attained the full power as a charismatic leader as such (still remaining within the hierarchical bounds as a captain), but makes himself known as one nevertheless. Stubb, acting as a commentator, summarises it perfectly: “‘D’ye mark him, Flask?’” whispered Stubb; “the chick that’s in him pecks the shell. ‘Twill soon be out’” (*MD* 142).

As well as the more direct reference to the emerging positioning of Ahab as an exceptional leader, Stubb’s words send one back to the more profound notion briefly touched

²³² See Sam Halliday.

²³³ See broadly Arendt, and Foucault.

upon before. The “chick” that Stubb speaks of, may accidentally imply the wandering “germ” of an idea (as per Wald’s hypothesis explored previously) taking over and determining the motives of Ahab. At the beginning of this chapter, the question was – what really moves the charismatic leader, particularly if we know quite plainly that this role is largely superficial and externally-viewed. The question then arises, who or what is really behind the “pasteboard mask.”

Indeed, as Ahab says later (as a private remark), “Something shot from my dilated nostrils, he has inhaled it in his lungs. Starbuck now is mine; cannot oppose me now, without rebellion” (*MD* 146). This reminiscence is central to my argument regarding the disembodied idea spreading as a contagion through a human “agent,” for it reveals two crucial points about the charismatic leader’s influence over his followers. Firstly, Melville succinctly summarises the idea touched upon in the previous paragraph and asserted in detail in the first chapter, concerning the diffusion of the dangerous idea from one individual to others.²³⁴

Secondly, Ahab’s own utterance shows him as a manipulator who is quite aware of the mechanism behind the diffusion of a dangerous idea that is not necessarily produced entirely by his own volition - and of how it can be used in order to influence an audience. It is the idea (which Ahab voices), rather than the human being, that genuinely holds power over the “Pequod”’s crew. The calculated performance, timing, and posing only serve to assist in putting this idea across in an arresting fashion, but Melville makes it clear: as a leader, Ahab is not a powerful personality who can influence others by the magnificent display of personal strengths (or even malice). His figure is that of an agent or transmitter of a particular idea – and what is required of an agent-transmitter is primarily an ability to continue with the specific theatrical performance which helps to convey an idea in a comprehensible and arresting manner.

²³⁴ As per Wald, Foucault and McGill.

Indeed, earlier on, Melville manages to reconcile the diverse aspects of this hypothesis by proposing in the text that what he views as mental “illness” can evolve into a manipulative force of a much more effective and sinister nature: “Human madness is oftentimes a cunning and most feline thing. When you think it fled, it may have but become transfigured into some still subtler form” (*MD* 165). As well as attributing the non-physical force driving Ahab with organic and animalistic traits, Melville underlines its evolving, deftly dissembling essence.

One should not be led astray by the words, “Starbuck is now mine,” thinking that Ahab is just a conscious manipulator. On the contrary, this sentence reinforces my argument. It is true that Ahab is used by the non-corporeal “virus” of a particular idea as a carrier and transmitter in the actual physical world. He himself is quite convinced that he is a leader in his own right; whilst the reality is quite different. From here, it would follow that the pursuit of the White Whale is not even necessarily something that Ahab himself truly wants, as a feat of revenge or of masculine prowess. It is the ideological virus that determines that the next step would be the hunt for Moby-Dick, for reasons known only to itself, and it finds a fertile breeding-ground in the minds of the ship’s crew, already conditioned by the American exceptionalist discourse to readily accept passionate ideological imaginary projections – however ludicrous.

Therefore Ahab is an instrument, rather than a manipulator drunk on boundless individual liberty that his hierarchical position affords him over his subordinates. By arguing that Ahab is a medium for the transmission of the ideological contagion, I separate my argument from the view that places Ahab as a hypnotic figure using the magnetic properties of his “self” for his own mystical purposes. Quite on a par with Stavrogin, who, although “capable of acting with great cunning, [he] was not actually in his right mind or control of his actions” (*Devils* 53), Ahab is essentially all about pretence, and is much less grand and mystical than others may deem him to be. He also is quite respectful, in word, of established

hierarchy and rules, referring to concepts such as “fair play,” and which can be interpreted as exquisite mockery on the par with Stavrogin’s antics: “Avast!” cried Ahab; let’s have fair play here, though we be the weaker side” (*MD* 447).

However, this does not divest Ahab of possessing selfish or explicable motives (albeit these would be on a far lesser scale than the dangerousness of the idea he transmits). As a human being, Ahab certainly enjoys the psychological sensation of exercising what he sees as mystical power over the crew, and indeed, he may think that this power is “his” and he is a bona fide magnetic leader. However, it is the non-corporeal idea who truly determines the run of the events, and not the Captain. He may say that Starbuck is “his,” and superficially readers might think of parallels with Satan taking over human souls in general Protestant (and, specifically, New England) tradition.²³⁵ However, what the exceptionalist discourse would make of his words is that Starbuck has fallen under the influence of the particular vision founded upon the principle of opposing an imaginary projection of the evil “other” (even though the highly theatricalised performance displaying Ahab’s supposedly charismatic self was what largely attracted Starbuck’s attention in the first place). It is the non-corporeal idea that really matters, not the interchangeable physical individual.

While Starbuck is an upholder of pan-human, essentially faceless and abstract virtue, in Ahab it is precisely the masculine, biological, animalistic traits, or rather, the perfect imitation of those, that exercise influence on the non-reasoning, instinctive and emotional psychological aspects of the rest of the crew. This renders him akin to Stavrogin yet again. Recalling Dostoyevsky’s general plot, Stavrogin’s masculinity forms a significant part of the narrative, such as the seductions of Liza and Marya Lebyadkina, or the slavish admiration by Verkhovensky. The reasonable, theoretical virtue has no place or hope of survival in the

²³⁵ See, for instance, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s story, “Young Goodman Brown” (1835), or Washington Irving’s story, “The Devil and Tom Walker (1824), for the role that the Devil plays as a “soul-taker.”

realm ruled by emotional, subconscious responses. Ahab's superiority to Starbuck as an instinctive, Dionysian presence who "feels" sensually instead over over-analyzing, in this particular situation is highlighted by Melville: "Here's food for thought, had Ahab time to think; but Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels; that's tingling enough for mortal man!" (*MD* 498).

Thus, this chapter pinpoints and explains the exact mistakes made by both Pierre and Raskolnikov as described in the preceding case studies. The failed exceptional individuality attempts to influence or affect the turn of events by what they deems to be the exceptional strength or remarkableness of their own self. Society does not readily accept this, and the result is failure (and quite likely, death). The charismatic leader, however, is someone who (normally subconsciously, as is the case with Ahab) has learnt to adjust the movements of the self in order to latch on to a particular ideology or discourse and let it speak through himself, bolstering this with occasional showcases of animalistic, masculine prowess which crosses the boundaries of what is deemed "acceptable." Masses are won over by a well-presented idea appealing to their instincts, not solely by the magnitude of an individual personality alone without at least a semblance of a definable ideological position (what this personality truly believes in, is a rather different question).²³⁶ This tendency was closely adhered to in literature, especially plays, during the Enlightenment, only to be gradually done away with as Romanticism advanced, and then slowly re-emerging with the advent of the Realist genre, right at the time when both Melville and Dostoyevsky produced their texts.

Nevertheless, just as the whalebone leg of Ahab is seen as if fused with his flesh, the wider society cannot generally distinguish in a charismatic leader where personality ends and an ideological attack begins. This in turn leads to the creation of a myth of a charismatic

²³⁶ The exchange of ideas in a "public sphere" space designated for them, and associated problems like demagoguery are also discussed by Jurgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

leader's commanding personality and animal magnetism. However, in reality Ahab is just as much of a manipulated marionette as the crew that he seeks to influence. The fact that Starbuck "cannot oppose me now, without rebellion" would suggest that the real force constraining a would-be rebel is the notion of ideological treachery and unwillingness to take part in open dissent. Furthermore, once the exceptional leader becomes part and parcel of the accepted discourse, it becomes quite as problematic to transgress once-revolutionary new rules laid out by him.

The reactions of the crew to Ahab's assertion of himself as a charismatic leader are interesting. As the performance progresses, Melville openly stresses the transition of human to animal (rather than from the living to non-living that is explored in *Pierre*): "But those wild eyes met his, as the bloodshot eyes of the prairie wolves meet the eye of their leader, ere he rushes on at their head in the trail of bison; but, alas! Only to fall into the hidden snare of the Indian" (*MD* 147).

It is of course a well-known metaphoric tendency to compare a group headed by a powerful leader to the "pack" or "herd" animalistic mentality (which is also echoed in *Devils* by the epigraph concerning the Biblical story of the Gadarene swine possessed by demons and drowned in the sea). "The Candles" chapter offers an alternative view of such mentality as equated either to animalistic state of being, or death:

...[A] number of seamen, arrested by the glare, now cohered together, and hung pendulous, like a knot of numbered wasps from a drooping orchard twig. In various enchanted attitudes, like the standing, or stepping, or running skeletons in Herculaneum, others remained rooted to the deck.... (*MD* 449)

In "The Town-Ho's Story" we also see an animalistic image of following the leader, as the crew, "in obedience to Steelkilt, they preceded him down into their dark den, growlingly disappearing, like bears into a cave" (*MD* 227). Such mentality (as

Dostoyevsky's use of the Biblical tale also implies) commonly leads to perdition, because of the "animal" mentality being presumably unable to reason. Indeed, Dostoyevsky, for his part, does stress the notion of complete and utter loss of judgement in the scene of Liza's murder by a mob: "I declared that everything had occurred entirely by accident, through the actions of people, who, while they might have been incited, were not really aware of what they were doing. They were drunk and not in control of themselves" (*Devils* 609). Although Dostoyevsky does not expand as much on the "animal" theme at this precise moment, he evokes the complete loss of consciousness and humans acting as if hypnotized, or automatons.

The initial suppression of Steelkilt's rebellion is also rife with unpleasant animalistic imagery of the punished crew likened to "dead cattle" or "three quarters of meat" (*MD* 229). Yet the case is not as simple as the shepherd-like leader directing an animalistically-turned group. The "snare of the Indian" mentioned earlier is of a particular meaning. If the crew, and even Ahab, are wolves, may the disembodied idea transmitted by Ahab and hidden underneath external "layers" of his persona, as Carlyle suggests in his treatises, not be metaphorically represented by the human being who sets the trap?

The epigraph to *Devils* is of particular importance here. If one analyses it alongside the wolf-pack metaphor of Melville's, apart from the obvious association of group mentality with animalistic characteristics some distinct differences can be observed. In case of Dostoyevsky's epigraph, it is the demons (who one can interpret as a metaphor for potentially destructive ideas) who leave the man's body in order to go into the animals. However, with Melville we see the idea or Carlylean "spirit" penetrate human psyche in order to render it beast-like. Recalling Kovalev's critique of the novel, this difference can be interpreted easily enough: *Moby-Dick* is a narrative of perdition. Dostoyevsky, however, implies that in spite of destruction described, salvation is theoretically attainable (as personified in the figure of

Dasha, the “nursemaid” who meekly bears her tribulations in a markedly Christian manner and survives, unlike many other characters) – many scholarly analyses propose that it is possible through the embrace of Christianity.²³⁷ More broadly, in a discussion of the intellectual climate at the beginning of nineteenth century, Charles McCann, referring to figures as diverse as Locke or Jean-Jacques Rousseau, hints that societal cohesion stemmed not from imposed rules, but as a natural, instinctive act to gravitate towards what is seen as “good” (McCann 2).²³⁸ Assembling under Ahab or Stavrogin’s eyes is, meanwhile, a Satanic parody of such a vision.

Curiously enough, both writers subtly hint at the existence of an immaterial, unseen, yet potentially dangerous entity dominating the scene. The Biblical demons of *Devils* are somewhat more understandable than the unobserved hunter in the second case – however, this latter parallel can be read more deeply, a disembodied theoretical idea being likened to the “snare” placed by the unknown hand rather than an active agent. This then can be explained by the fact that the ideas, however influential, can exist, virus-like, yet do not occur of themselves. They have to be produced or formed by something or someone, quite likely with a specific aim in mind. Reverting to the discussion of Plinlimmon’s pamphlet in the previous chapter, we have already seen that ideas (essentially disembodied and immaterial) are formed by people of flesh and blood, who do not even necessarily have to exhibit exceptional characteristics (Plotinus Plinlimmon is remarkably unremarkable for an influential philosopher). They can be produced for prosaic purposes: self-promotion, personal interest or even arbitrary malicious playfulness. Yet, whilst the ideas are birthed by living people and cannot engender themselves of their own accord, once formed, they gain a viability similar to that of a non-material demon (or, far more prosaically in Melville’s case, a

²³⁷ See Frank, Schur, Berdyaev.

²³⁸ See McCann, *Individualism and the Social Order*.

solidly material instrumental trap waiting to be sprung). The idea is an entity – albeit one divested of moral sense or compassion. To summarise and deepen the previous analogy with the virus, I argue that an idea has its own life cycle precisely like a virus – and its purpose is (whether the idea is beneficial or noxious) to reproduce as much as possible, taking over more and more territory – not space, but rather individual human minds, forming a radical new discourse based on imaginary constructs, and assumptions on what may be right or wrong. As they take over more and more, quite like the amaranth in *Pierre*, they become more and more axiomatic, as readily-recalled instantaneous memes which are immediately recognised yet seldom questioned.

THE POWER OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS: IMAGINARY PROJECTIONS.

It is not enough to simply comment upon the descent of the crew into animalistic behaviour without exploring deeper the motives that might be affecting their response to the idea transmitted by Ahab, who is essentially a hollow receptor through whose agency the idea spreads. After all, much has already been said about the influential power of the non-material idea, but we have not yet seen why exactly it is influential.

To understand this better, it would be helpful to recollect the theoretical framework put forward by the Myth and Symbol postwar school of thought and also echoed later by scholars like Bruce Kucklick and Mary Poovey, as it affords the best vantage-point to contextualise historic and psychological factors together.²³⁹ The instinctive substrata of the psyche (perhaps reminiscent of the “little lower layer”) extends further and broader than the logical, conscious mind, and operates by recognising given symbols or stimuli, which could be viewed as essentially defining reality rather than logically and sequentially attempting to explain it.

²³⁹ C.G. Jung’s theory of archetypes shares some similarities with the idea above, although it is generally a radically different vision, and will not be asserted in this particular investigation.

They are associable with ready concepts like “right” or “wrong” and the subconscious recognises them before the actual logical mind does. Viewed from this perspective, Ahab’s White Whale can be interpreted as a manifestation of reality in its essence; not easily explainable or fully understandable, often surrounded by all sorts of imaginary aspects, but immediately recognisable, if inspiring a particular emotion, such as fear:

...[T]he outblown rumours of the White Whale did in the end incorporate with themselves all manner of morbid hints, and half-formed foetal suggestions of supernatural agencies, which eventually invested Moby Dick with new terrors unborrowed from anything that visibly appears. So that in many cases such a panic did he finally strike, that few who by those rumors, at least, had heard of the White Whale, few of those hunters were willing to encounter the perils of his jaw. (*MD* 160-161)

As a concept, embodying reality in its most actual yet intangible aspect, the White Whale is seen as being continuously present and not limited by the constraints of space, or time, or physical limitations. “[M]oby Dick was ubiquitous; [that] he had actually been encountered in opposite latitudes at one and the same instant of time” (*MD* 162). The Whale represents timeless and undefinable reality who “revealed his identity, at a long distance, to those who knew him” (*MD* 161) by certain symbolic traits; and in this respect, it proves to be the perfect foil for the “exceptional” leader who despises all earthly constraints or limitations. Inhuman greatness must be overcome with inhuman means.

As he pursues Moby-Dick, Ahab can be described as trying to make logical sense of reality, conquer it, and adapt it to suit a particular mythologised purpose. He either invented this purpose himself (precisely as Donald Pease argues exceptionalist ideals are formed), or else became “infected” with an abstract idea, only to be dumbfounded when the actual reality confronts him. In “The Town-Ho’s Story” chapter, Melville, under the guise of a traditional

Christian image, deftly proposes the notion that the White Whale is representative of reality which rearranges even the best-laid plans by the strongest and most capable individuals, proving that there is an unfathomable force to which even the most audacious leader must submit: “[T]he Town-Ho’s story, which seemed obscurely to involve with the whale a certain wondrous, inverted visitation of one of so called judgements of God which at times are said to overtake some men” (*MD* 218).

However, the true meaning of Moby-Dick as a concept of reality incarnated is not limited solely to Ahab. Ishmael says about Radney’s death in the jaws of Moby-Dick, that “a strange fatality pervades the whole career of those events, as if verily mapped before the world was charted” (*MD* 233). I maintain that this is not simple fatalism, but the fact that reality (in its unfathomable real form) overturns the social codes (whether established by Plinlimmonian hierarchy or by an emerging leader’s audacity) to rearrange the scene according to its own irresistible logic. Social codes may balk upon encountering a particularly forceful personality, but even the strongest personality is overcome by reality which has no regard for individual strength or cunning. Moreover, reality (personified by Moby-Dick), can be described as the only truly democratic phenomenon in that it levels and conquers one and all (since even the ship’s microcosm, in spite of arguments by figures like C.L.R. James or Kovalev, is not entirely divested of hierarchical tendencies).²⁴⁰

Reality is powerful precisely because it touches or affects everyone and anyone involved, and not just a few selected individuals. The term “collective unconscious,” pointing towards a shared field of subconscious instinctive understanding in all mankind, is relevant, if we are speaking about how a particular microcosm (be it a ship or a provincial town) functions. Henry Smith reconciles this notion with the specifically national, exceptionalist

²⁴⁰ Jennifer Greiman in an essay “Democracy and Melville’s aesthetics” comments on the fluidity of democracy as a definition in Melville’s works.

discourse, discussing immediately recognisable symbols that are nevertheless elusive and hard to pinpoint, in his discussion of “varying national consciousness” (3).²⁴¹ In short, the idea, once it is formed, viable, and enters the mind of any given individual, puts forth a particular symbol or notion that corresponds or evokes with a particular notion fixed in the subconscious of the human being. Perhaps this can be the closest definition of the concept of “reality” as it stands, and it has to be laconic yet recognisable and familiar to all – just like the White Whale:

All this while Tashtego, Daggoo and Queequeg had looked on with even more intense interest and surprise than the rest, and at the mention of the wrinkled brow and crooked jaw they had started as if each was separately touched by some specific recollection. (*MD* 143-144)

The White Whale can be defined as a condensed notion of reality, perfectly summarised and easily recognised by its attributes, setting in motion the particular individual psychological triggers that each of the three harpooners may possess. These triggers can be diverse, but each acts “separately” on an instinctual level. Although here he exhibits the stereotypical racial bias of his time, that the three harpooners are “savages” and thus could be viewed as more instinctive beings, than, say, Starbuck, Melville hints that as more instinctive and less formalised characters who can logically be deemed to be less affected by the typological rigid codes dictating an individual’s reactions and actions, the three harpooners are more readily prepared to react at the idea that addresses the instinctive subconscious rather than the overtly logical conscious: “The Pagan leopards – the unrecking and unworshipping things, that live, and seek, and give no reasons for the torrid life they feel!” (*MD* 146).

²⁴¹ See Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as symbol and myth*.

The fact that all three come from extremely diverse cultural backgrounds (Polynesian, Native American and African) reinforces what was said earlier: the shared collective unconscious is extremely broad, yet streamlined and effective so as to speak as if individually to any given human being, regardless of the specific background. Yet it is the same stimulus (that is, the Whale) that speaks to it, in all the three harpooners. One may therefore assume that such is (personified in the figure of the White Whale) reality at its truest: it exists independently of interpretations or perceptions. The language in which the idea is transmitted is therefore highly transnational, individual and adaptable – which precisely is what is required for effective spreading. As the individual differences become unimportant, the personal psychological boundaries are blurred, the group becoming and moving as one. As Melville comments: “The crew, man, the crew! Are they not one and all with Ahab, in this matter of the whale?” (*MD* 146).

After the charismatic leader’s mind becomes engrossed with a particular idea, the said idea is diffused by him to the rest of those who interact with such a leader, uniting them together to form a single “social body,” in an essentially artificial (recalling the earlier discussion of Ahab and Stavrogin’s physicalities), image of perverted unity and wholeness. The seemingly random and separate individuals are susceptible to uniting into a single “social body” under the influence of a particular idea transmitted by a charismatic leader precisely due to inert state of their intellectual and physical being suddenly reacting to a given stimulus.

From here, there follows a neat mechanism defining just how the idea transmitted by a charismatic leader is caught on and regurgitated by the rest of those affected, and made seem as their own conscious decision. “The Quarter-Deck” in particular offers the algorithm of how it is calculated so as to influence the audience (the crew):

...And this is what ye have shipped for, men! To chase that white whale on both sides of land, and over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out. What say ye, men, will ye splice hands on it, now? I think ye do look brave. (*MD* 144)

Apart from the obvious provocative manipulation where such a mechanism is used for pushing the crew to prove their worth and bravery, an important trait emerges that throws more light on how exactly the charismatic leader engages his audience. The leader perversely implies that it was originally the intention of the audience rather than an imposed vision – “this is what ye have shipped for.” Moreover, it offers a contrast with the extreme unusualness of the mission that the crew seemingly have chosen to embark upon – this is no mere whaling expedition. If to agree with Kovalev’s argument that in *Moby-Dick* every image is a symbol, then Ahab’s rousing call parodies rhetorics surrounding Manifest Destiny – promising a unique path that also requires one to exhibit worthiness of pursuing it. Of course, what this pursuit actually comes to, is glaringly obvious in the final chapters, which can be interpreted as a bitter Melvillean mockery of the expansionist speeches: “The ship! The hearse! The second hearse!” cried Ahab from the boat; “its wood could only be American!” (*MD* 506). In Dostoyevsky’s narrative, the demise of the “Pequod” is loosely comparable to the disillusioned aesthete Stepan Trofimovich, departing against the backdrop of burning town and running mobs “in search of Russia” (*Devils* 607) – and in reality, to his death in a peasant’s hut, as a parody of Slavophile beliefs.

Notably, the objective of the hunt in Melville’s novel, seemingly concrete, remains elusive. I maintain that this is a point in the narrative where reality (personified by the White Whale) and imaginary constructs spawned by the exceptionalist environment (personified by Ahab) clash. The hunt for the White Whale is at the core just as futile as Stepan Trofimovich’s search for some imaginary Russia amid violence and disorder, or the vague promises of Stavrogin’s followers: “Russia would welcome any way of escape – just show it

to her” (*Devils* 392). It is movement for movement’s sake, first and foremost. From Ahab’s words, one may glean that there exists a “white whale” that ought to be killed in satisfaction of vengeance, which is of little actual relevance or profit to the Captain’s intended audience. However, in the defence of his stance, Ahab offers an argument that transcends common logic:

If money’s to be the measurer, man, and the accountants have computed their great counting-house, the globe, by girdling it with guineas, one to every three parts an inch; then, let me tell thee, that my vengeance will fetch a great premium *here!* (*MD* 145)

This rhetoric, with its focus on promise of non-tangible and universalist abstract glory, rather than of immediate and definable practical benefits, is uncomfortably evocative of the one employed by the Communist ideologues throughout the life-cycle of the Soviet Union. On the surface of things, the charismatic leader’s audience is invited to put aside any concerns with pragmatic matters, in order to become part of a vast global mythological scenario – evoking De Tocqueville’s visions of affecting the destinies of the entire world. Dostoyevsky echoes this notion, but he suggests that what attracts the followers is not so much the promise of a hypothetical reward, but the “right to dishonour” (*Devils* 393) – that is, to question the unshakeable rules of yore, and thus subsequently join a select group of “clever people” representing a different, more glorious future, despite the fact that the details about what this future exactly entails, are not divulged:

Only we will be left, we who have prepared ourselves to assume power; we’ll attract the clever people to our side, and ride roughshod over the fools. You mustn’t back off from this. We’ll re-educate a whole generation worthy of freedom. (*Devils* 681)

Howard Bruce Franklin argues that as a leader, Ahab invites the crew to become part of an epic myth played out as a mystic ritual upholding the universe's existence.²⁴² This is perfectly on the par with the exceptionalist rhetoric in general. Dostoyevsky is less epic in proportions, although the mythologised role offered by the charismatic leader is outlined – on the contrary, in the scenes during a ruined fete, the morbidly comical debate on the value of laurels in the kitchen rather than on the poet's head reinforces the “mundane” actual preoccupations of the nihilistic rebels, opposed to the higher societal ideals (*Devils* 546).

With Melville's novel, the potential followers are promised an exceptional role in a globally significant narrative (which brings one back to Raskolnikov's obsession with the Napoleonic myth explored in the previous chapter). Yet it is notable that the actual reward or benefit they would supposedly reap again is not described in any detail, even though it is an axiom that they should receive it. Ahab hints at “a great premium,” but what that premium might be, even in terms of feelings (satisfaction, personal greatness, excitement) is never said. As possibly the most pragmatic of characters, Stubb summarises it excellently: “[M]ethinks it rings most vast, but hollow” (*MD* 145).

The vast scale of Ahab's promise is impressive, but there is just as little substance to it, as there is to Ahab's persona as a charismatic leader.²⁴³ This is easily explained by the fact that, as it has already been shown, the idea (which speaks through Ahab) exists and spreads simply for the sake of existing and spreading. As a non-corporeal being divested of material concerns, and not even necessarily benevolent (that is, intending to bring about positive tangible change in the material world to do with the material well-being of others) the idea does not seek to give any physical reward to those it chooses as its “host.” The “great premium” would therefore be the completion and fulfilment of the idea, purely for the

²⁴² See Bruce Franklin, *The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology*.

²⁴³ For Ahab as a hollow soulless presence, see Stephen Ausband's article, “The Whale and the Machine.”

fulfilment's sake. From a human viewpoint, it may strike one as nonsensical; but from the biological perspective of a virus's existence, it is logical, since the virus does not need incentives or justification in order to spread.

Melville hints that the actual concept of Manifest Destiny with its central image of "spreading" or "taking over" although it is not explicitly presented, but allegorical and symbolic. Possibly this could be attributed to the fact that *Moby-Dick* straddled the advent of the Realist genre and the more allegorical literary era preceding it, and this subtlety is homage to the earlier era. The chief difference between this text and *Devils*, therefore is that Dostoyevsky, as an established representative of the Realist genre, chooses to discuss the same subject in much less ambiguous terms, presenting it as the direct conversation between the charismatic leader Stavrogin and the doubting Shatov (who, if to use Frank's terminology, could be perceived as the binary or double to Starbuck, playing the part of the only doubting element in the charismatic leader's retinue).

It should be mentioned that the characters of *Devils* are essentially members of the Russian *intelligentsia*, typically seen as a class formed around the sense of the importance of the idea, the intellectual, the non-material (and therefore different from the simultaneously emergent bourgeoisie, distinguished primarily by their economic "middle-ground" status). Therefore, unlike the almost wholly pragmatic Starbuck preoccupied with barrels of whale oil, or the three harpooners, they unsurprisingly exhibit a stronger awareness and capability of putting into words the counter-arguments for a potentially dangerous idea transmitted by the charismatic leader. In his conversation with Stavrogin, Shatov shows that he is conscious of the fact that behind the national idea, there is no actual pragmatic or even logical explanation (that Melville's Starbuck seeks so eagerly):

...[N]ot one single nation has ever been established on principles of science and reason ... Reason and science have always ... played only a secondary and

subordinate role in the life of the nations ... Nations are formed and moved by some other force that commands and dominates them, whose origin is unknown and inexplicable. This force is the force of an insatiable desire to go on until the end, while at the same time denying that there is an end. It is the force of a continual and indefatigable affirmation of its own being and the denial of death ... I refer to it more simply as "The Search for God." The goal of every national movement, in every nation at every period of its existence, is solely the search for God ... and belief in him as the only true God. (*Devils* 264)

If the heroes of Melville's novel may intuitively suspect the true driving force behind the hunt for the White Whale (the Whale standing for the essence of reality that they fail to grasp, being led astray by ideological demagoguery), in *Devils* Dostoyevsky attempts to summarise what it is. However, quite harmoniously with Dostoyevsky's central belief that salvation can only be attained through a return to one's Christian faith, Shatov equates the immaterial idea not to a biologically-explainable movement for movement's sake, but to a conscious "search for God" and Truth. While this corresponds with the typical understanding of the American exceptionalist discourse, which holds at its core the search for the nation's unique path, it also presumes greater consciousness and ability to distinguish between "good" and "evil." Therefore, Shatov's argument diverges from the virus analogy because it is not wholly neutral or aimless, although his observation that the spreading of the idea is distinguishable by both its illogical nature and its fierce desire to "go on until the end" comes close to it.

Further on, Shatov's speech reveals what can be described as a close parallel with the collective unconscious as well as the exceptionalist framework introduced at the beginning of this chapter, which both affect the crew members during "The Quarter-Deck" scene:

The more powerful a nation, the more individual its God. There's never been a nation without religion, that is, without conception of good and evil. Every nation has its own conception, and its own particular good and evil. When these conceptions become common to many nations, the nations begin to die and the very distinction between good and evil begins to fade away and disappear. (*Devils* 264)

If to substitute the word “nation” for “individual” at first, the concept of the collective subconscious or “groupthink” emerges more clearly. Shatov’s speech suggests that collective subconscious poses a danger – precisely because the loss of clear individual or group boundaries in attempting to mimic or emulate a pre-set example is followed by the gradual loss of being able to distinguish between right and wrong in a perfect example of “herd” mentality. Of course, this argument also brings to mind the “chronometricals” of Plotinus Plinlimmon – however, the chief difference between the philosophies of Plinlimmon and Shatov is that the first advocates an individual’s extreme adaptability to the accepted mores within a given segment of society (at least – superficially), whilst the latter exhibits notable rigidity of mind, in that each individual or an accepted group should exist firmly within the boundaries set by themselves as a separate unit.

AGAINST NATURE: THE OUTCOME OF CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP.

At the end of each text, we have an image of explicit destruction: one is a town aflame and a police investigation going on, another is a ship sinking. At a first glance, the stance of Melville and Dostoyevsky is univocal. “Charismatic leadership” by an “exceptional” personality is a toxic concept, which is bound to result in destruction, and therefore, should not be emulated or sought after. The difference in the national context is of no consequence – in Russia or in America, the outcome is similar.

My argument concluding this chapter is that both cases essentially present the struggle between the artificially engendered idea or projected image that the leader attempts to put forth, and the natural order of things which is impossible to overcome or argue with. If the epistemic rules engendered by society can be scorned, ignored or deliberately broken by the leader and his followers, and they can even escape the expected punishment for such a transgression, opposing or battling the natural order, which is personified by elusive White Whale (or, to Dostoyevsky, the teaching of Christ), and is far less definable than man-made customs, would be quite as useless as attempting to flout the laws of physics.

The final chapter of Melville's novel presents a perfect tableau to illustrate this notion. We see a frantic, tragicomical scene with Tashtego nailing the flag to the mast of the sinking vessel whilst being bothered by a sea-hawk. I interpret the scene as the aftermath of the charismatic leader's demise, where the followers, despite the overall chaos and confusion, are still desperately trying to proclaim the ideological message (represented by the flag) that the leader first attracted them with, whilst the natural order, personified by the hawk, impedes their activity:

But as the last whelmings intermixingly poured themselves over the sunken head of the Indian at the main-mast, leaving a few inches of the erect spar yet visible, together with the long streaming yards of the flag, which calmly undulated, with ironical coincidings, over the destroying billows ... at that instant, a red arm and a hammer hovered backwardly uplifted in the open air, in the act of nailing the flag faster and yet faster to the subsiding spar. A sky-hawk that tauntingly had followed the main-truck downwards from its natural home among the stars, pecking at the flag ... [T]his bird now chanced to intercept its broad fluttering wing between the hammer and the wood; and simultaneously feeling that eternal thrill, the submerged savage beneath, in his death-grasp, kept his hammer frozen there; and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks,

and his imperial beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it. (*MD* 508)

The conflict is laid out as follows: despite the sinking “Pequod,” which can alternatively be interpreted as the entire microcosm’s destruction (according to Kovalev), or the failure of a particular enterprise by a group of individuals following a leader, the “nailing the flag faster and faster” can be likened to the individuals desperately trying to hold on to the idea the leader propagated, the flag “calmly undulated” as it is about to disappear. The hawk, clearly a product of a natural order who comes “from its home among the stars,” is “pecking at the flag” – which may suggest that in the view of the laws of nature, ideological legacy left behind by the leader is useless and ridiculous – just like the flag swirling over “destroying billows.” And yet, as Tashtego nails the bird to the mast, it can be seen as the toxic impact of the “exceptionalist” leadership’s effects upon the natural world; a small part of it would nevertheless be impacted. Reverting to my previous argument about the virulence and the spreading of the noxious idea, one may assume that since the microcosm of the ship is infected, the charismatic leader being the initial virus carrier, and charisma being essentially a harmful ideological virus, and is beyond any healing, in its demise it would attempt to destroy, in perfect harmony with my earlier hypothesis about “spreading,” as much of the natural world as can be grasped. The closing image of the Satan sinking to hell clutching his prey is thus appropriate.

However, the afflicted microcosm has to be cleansed or destroyed. Since it is the laws of nature that prevail over the smartest idea, the dramatic sinking of the “Pequod” eventually is replaced by the restored natural equilibrium, despite all deaths, destruction and debris. If humans cannot attain the balance between equality and liberty, nature would nevertheless take its course. The final image that Melville provides is the great natural order

returning to how it was originally intended: “Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago” (*MD* 508).

The battle between the “exceptional” individual, who evolves to be the leader, and the rules established by human society, is fraught with dramatic juxtaposition and violence, as essentially neither is the stronger. However, as the charismatic leader attains status as such, he graduates from flouting various social conventions to attacking or challenging the unfathomable reality of the unseen and unknown laws governing the world. These are reflected at times in the laws of physics as much as in religious teachings, and cannot be perfectly summarised, being the product of the subconscious “little lower layer.” Yet they exist, and govern reality, so once the individual attempts to challenge them, they efficiently dispatch him and what he stands for. Going even deeper, I could assert that as biological “viruses,” the potentially dangerous ideas affecting the “exceptional” individual serve as viruses or foils in the natural order; yet the natural order is endowed with the capacity to self-regulate and efficiently destroy those viruses to preserve the old equilibrium of “five thousand years.”

With Dostoyevsky’s novel, the suggestion is not as much of wild natural order, as it is of the rule of law triumphing over destruction. The above meaning, nevertheless, is preserved. The leader and his followers attempted to create chaos; this was punished and stopped, but the motives are outlined, and they are similar to what we see in Melville:

In reply to the question, “Why were there so many murders, scandals, and outrages committed?” he replied in ardent haste that it was to “promote the systematic undermining of every foundation, the systematic destruction of society and all its principles; to demoralize everyone and make hodge-podge of everything, and then, when society was on the point of collapse – sick, depressed, cynical, and sceptical, but

still with a perpetual desire for some kind of guiding principle and for self – preservation – suddenly to gain control of it, raising the banner of rebellion.... (*Devils* 749)

At first, Stavrogin’s followers may be seen as trying to destroy mainly human-created Plinlimmonian boundaries to create a new order. And yet, their weakness can be seen from the adjectives “sick, depressed, cynical and sceptical.” The rebels would have liked society and the world to be “sick” so that their virus of an idea could make itself at home, but essentially, in the view of the natural order of affairs, society is not “sick” – and what results is as much of an attempt to fight the natural equilibrium – which of course results in failure. Thus we revert to the self-regulating natural order; tragically, it can be assumed that the final scene of the fire and violence is part of this healing process, where those infected by coming into contact with Stavrogin or rendered by him unviable (Kirillov, Lembke, Shatov) perish. In a wry analogy with the virus image, one could imagine that the fire (*Devils* 584-585) is evocative of the Great Fire of London burning up the infection; although it is essentially the “charismatic leader” and his followers who start it, in the self-regulating manner of reestablishing the natural equilibrium, it serves as the final closing scene of the anarchic bacchanalia on the par with “Pequod”’s sinking before the order is restored.

Therefore, instead of relying on the existing readings of Melville’s novel as a Calvinist parable, or viewing Dostoyevsky as a sermonizing preacher, I propose that the true meaning behind the individualistic leadership, as it is viewed in the two texts is that neither is actually about punishment, or fatal pride, or anything of the sort. The “charismatic leadership” as it is presented, appears to oppose the natural laws (which actually revert to a neutral balance even without human interception), and therefore suffers an expected defeat. Whether in Russia or in America, the laws of physics work in the same way. The ideas or goals pursued by the leaders in their monomania or subconscious need for more influence, are not “bad” or “noble” – they simply create an imbalance in a pre-ordained natural

equilibrium, and this imbalance would be expelled quite as harmful bacteria is expelled by the work of lymphocytes. There is no element of punishment, or wrongness to this phenomenon. It is the human perception, stemming from the breach of made-up frameworks set by humanity that judges an “exceptional” outstanding individual or “charismatic” leadership as undesirable, and seeks to develop mechanisms or attitudes to rectify the imbalance created by them, since it lacks the self-regulating efficiency of natural equilibrium. What those are, and how exactly they work, we will see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE. FLOGGING NOT LAWFUL: CONTROLLING AN EXCEPTIONAL
INDIVIDUAL IN THE EXCEPTIONALIST SOCIETY.

The previous chapters discussed how a rebellious individualistic spirit proves a genuine threat to the presumed balance of liberty-equality running through the core of the exceptionalist society composed of human “units” all working simultaneously to uphold it. This aspect of the problem suggested that Melville, as well as Dostoyevsky, believed that if an exceptional personality emerges prematurely and is not given a chance to develop the characteristics of a charismatic leader (mainly to do with the ability to manipulate), it will be instantaneously destroyed or neutralised, its potential sapped by the sheer rigidity of societal structure. This happens to avoid the apocalyptic outcomes discussed in the second chapter. In this chapter, in the meantime, I focus on the rules, or mechanisms, that prevent chaos from happening - looking at the relationship between an “exceptional” individual, and the law representing and on the behalf of the wider exceptionalist society.

As we have seen with Ahab and Stavrogin’s examples, uncontrolled anarchy leads to tragic consequences. However, would this then mean that the fear of potential “Ahabs” may result in complete suppression of liberty as a notion? In *Federalist Paper 9*, Alexander Hamilton states: “Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.”²⁴⁴ In other words, balance is called for. Unbridled liberty causes a fractured society vulnerable to the wiles of a manipulative tyrant like Ahab; the lack of liberty results in the death of central democratic

²⁴⁴ See *Federalist Paper 9*.

principle. An efficient judicial system, however, would help preserve the natural balance between fire and air; or liberty and equality.

If an exceptional personality is given an opportunity to develop into a “charismatic leader,” who, supported by followers, actively pursues the fulfilment of a particular idea destructive to wider society, it becomes clear that the societal structure, however rigid, has not proven to be sufficient in containing it. Therefore, specific mechanisms would have to be devised by society especially to deal with such individuals. The general collective name for these mechanisms is the rule of law. And, as the actual historical context proves, many thinkers at the time were preoccupied with making these mechanisms as efficient as possible. In what concerns the situation in America, Gordon S. Wood discusses the prevalent post-Revolutionary desire “to create certainty out of uncertainty” (Wood 403) in the newly-formed nation state; whilst Russia of Dostoyevsky’s age was just as strongly preoccupied with balancing out the traditional hierarchical vision and the new liberal tendencies - the writer himself, as biographers (Schur, Ruttenburg, Frank) show, was strongly interested in the notions of law and justice.

Both *Devils* and *Moby-Dick* addressed a highly specific kind of leadership at the core of their respective plots, which proves fatal to those caught up in it. Both the American and the Russian authors appear to reach an unanimous verdict at the end of addressing their hypothetical case studies: as enticing as personal charisma and following the new “extraordinary” hero may seem, such philosophy brings only peril. If the very first duo of case studies I analysed imply a certain degree of sympathy for Pierre Glendinning and Raskolnikov (as their motives are made more or less clear), and in the second chapter the selected novels showed quite explicitly why charismatic leadership by a self-proclaimed “exceptional” individual poses a genuine danger to the rest of the microcosm, this final set of texts will address the necessity for society to curtail such individuals’ influence. I describe

this way of looking at my thesis subject as working “outwards from the core” – having first addressed the motives or causes that make an “exceptional” individual emerge, and then the effect that such an individual may exercise on the rest of his microcosm, finally one arrives at the external perception of the “exceptional” individual by society and the reception he or she may encounter. It also is the reason why I have chosen to work in reverse chronological order (especially with Melville), putting an earlier text, *White-Jacket*, after the writer’s latter and more renowned works in my sequence of case studies. At the beginning of his writing journey, Melville would have noticed the effects of society’s conflict with individuals standing at odds with it (manifested in scenes such as the corporal punishments on board of a man o’war for the breach of the established naval code), before he proceeded onto questioning the motives that prompted such individuals to find themselves at odds with society in the first place. Metaphorically speaking, with both writers I have sought first to address the causes of the virulence before going on to describe the symptoms and prescribed cures.

CHECKS AND BALANCES: THE NECESSITY OF CONTROL.

In current scholarship, there rests one marked major distinction between Melville and Dostoyevsky, which I seek to challenge in this thesis. The general verdict regarding Dostoyevsky’s life and works (voiced by Frank, for example), implies that writer was not in support of revolution, radical societal change or extreme liberalism, his vision being more aligned with a quasi-Christian version of “enlightened monarchy” where the monarchical ruler is held responsible for the well-being of his subjects (who should remain quite content with their status as such), according to the Christian principles. Dostoyevsky preached compassion – but not the complete overhaul of societal structures to remake society into a more liberal one. As Zenkovsky argued, “Dostoyevsky... emphasizes with great acuteness

that to bring harmony into the historical process one must inevitably suppress human freedom” (Wellek 144), whilst Alex De Jonge notes that the writer’s “...mode of resistance to individual self-seeking and the consequent cultural collapse is a reaffirmation of traditional cultural values” (De Jonge 209). From this, it follows that the author sided with the exceptionalist society, rather than the rebellious “exceptional” individual.

In contrast to this, Melville has been viewed by a number of thinkers (notably - Delbanco, Rogin, or C.L.R. James) as championing the plight of individual human beings contrasted with the stifling hierarchical codes holding society together. A good case to illustrate this is the analysis by Yuri Kovalev, which sought (speaking from the platform of Soviet, Socialist context) to portray Melville as a writer striving for fairer and more humane socialist ideals in the world ruled by ruthless pragmatism symbolised by the duo of avaricious ship-owners, Peleg and Bildad, in *Moby-Dick*.

However, the work I have carried out so far in the previous chapters suggests a somewhat different picture, rendering Melville more akin to the Russian vision, than to an image of the champion of unconstrained freedom. Ahab, who flouts the codes of the naval world, goes to his doom. Pierre forgoes his status and installs himself in the chaotic realm of the “Apostles” only to meet his end. The dissection of the two previous case studies shows that although Melville had been concerned with individualism as a major theme in his works, he was too aware of its negative effects to genuinely extol it.

Therefore, Melville has it in common with Dostoyevsky that society should be held together with a framework of codes or rules (moral or legal) to protect itself from the anarchy wreaked by Ahabs and Raskolnikovs.²⁴⁵ This solution may appear less exciting than the glorious images evoked by the notion of the Titanic struggle of an exceptional individual

²⁴⁵ Melville’s later works, especially *Clarel* (1876) also show reconciliation with the Christian ideal of submissiveness.

against the mundane exceptionalist world represented by the far less grandiose characters of Razumikhin or Starbuck, yet it is the only one that does not result in excessive violence. Both writers non-explicitly advocate for the Hamiltonian idea of “checks and balances” to keep society safe from its particularly active scions.

Let us recall what is meant by “checks and balances.” In *The Federalist Papers*, Hamilton outlines a theory that contradicts the classic Jeffersonian ideal of individualistic pursuit of happiness. As all individuals are interconnected within the societal framework, pursuing one’s individual vision regardless of others is quite as unfeasible as it is dangerous. This is particularly true concerning those at the very top of the social hierarchy and holding real power – considering, for instance, Ahab’s actual status as the captain of the vessel, compared against Raskolnikov’s sudden awareness of himself as “exceptional” in spite of his humble background. In a world characterized by individualistic pursuit of personal goals, there must needs arise a system of accountability to society in general, to ensure that this pursuit does not bring about tragic consequences that we have already seen in the previous chapters.

In a general summary of how this might be implemented, Hamilton compares his theory favourably against the disastrous outcomes of the abuse of individual power seen throughout history, which he dubs “disorders that disfigure the annals of those republics.” His vision, meanwhile, is perfectly, mathematically efficient:

... The efficacy of various principles is now well understood ... The regular distribution of power into distinct departments; the introduction of legislative balances and checks; the institution of courts composed of judges holding their offices during good behavior; the representation of the people in the legislature by deputies of their own election ... They are means, and powerful means, by which the excellences of republican

government may be retained and its imperfections lessened or avoided. (Hamilton, *Federalist Paper No.9*)

The Hamiltonian vision is about as far removed from the image associated with the “exceptional” individual as it gets. Hamilton’s ideal of society is a carefully measured and rationalised one, the words like “efficacy” bringing to mind both machine-like efficiency and the maxims about maintaining societal balance spouted by Plotinus Plinlimmon or Luzhin. Even from a purely stylistic viewpoint, the choice of language with terms such as “balances and checks,” “regular distribution” “distinct departments” or “good behaviour” upholds this image. Indeed, this is a kind of an environment that supposedly completely opposes everything that the “exceptional” individual stands for, such as grandeur, irrationality or transgressing set boundaries. However, the rhetoric of the “exceptionalist” society, where the national community is viewed as an example to all other societies or nations, is very much present in Hamilton’s vision: “...[A]merica will be the broad and solid foundation of other edifices, not less magnificent, which will be equally permanent monuments of their errors” (Hamilton, *Federalist Paper No.9*).

The second chapter of this thesis presented one with exactly the same hypothetical vision that Hamilton warns about, of the consequences of excessive libertarianism given free rein, and uncontrolled “exceptional” individuals free to do as they please. Whether on board of the “Pequod” or on the streets of Skvoreshniki, the pendulum oscillates between the tyrannical “charismatic leader” acting as Pied Piper to hypnotised masses, and the anarchical chaos, if all think of themselves as “exceptional” individuals, and act accordingly (as Raskolnikov’s final dream presented). Hamilton notes a similar picture in political history since the days of the antiquity:

A firm Union will be of the utmost moment to the peace and liberty of the States, as a barrier against domestic faction and insurrection. It is impossible to read the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy without feeling sensations of horror and disgust at the distractions with which they were continually agitated, and at the rapid succession of revolutions by which they were kept in a state of perpetual vibration between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy. (Hamilton, *Federalist Paper No. 9*)

Hamilton's idea of the "firm union" protecting the citizens from the "perpetual vibration between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy" sounds uncannily like the Plinlimmonian framework of rules previously described. As we saw in the two preceding chapters, it is essentially mediocrity, in the sense of perfect ordinariness, combined with the clearly defined set of social norms or values, that protects society from exceptional individuals harbouring potentially dangerous designs. In the meantime, focusing on the terminology used by Hamilton, and specifically, "tyranny and anarchy," I maintain that the emergence of an exceptional individual, as both authors seem to suggest, if uncontrolled, may spiral into either.

The analysis of Raskolnikov's final dream alongside Pierre Glendinning's visions of Enceladus addressed the notion of anarchy, which comes as a consequence of each and every individual realising their "exceptional" aspirations, whilst the leadership of both captain Ahab and Nicholas Stavrogin can be described as a perfect example of tyranny. This is of course bolstered up by the actual historical context: as mid-nineteenth century was marked by a series of revolutionary uprisings worldwide, with different degrees of success (Innes and Philp, 8-9). This third and final set of case studies, however, addresses the possibility of remedying the effect of those, protecting society from either of the two extremes Hamilton mentions.

As Hamilton argues, a society like that of the “ancients” of Classical Greece and Rome, did not yet achieve the absolute clarity of principles to ensure that it remained stable and just. The modern, post-Enlightenment world, however, was sufficiently developed as to at least attempt to define such principles, laying them out clearly for each member of society. The balance between liberty and equality could then be achieved by that the laws were the same for all; and they clearly set out the limits beyond which personal liberty could not go.

From the theoretical vantage-point, Hamilton’s proposed model works perfectly. The centremost necessity for the smooth and safe running of society are essentially the “legislative balances and checks.” In the light of my prior argument regarding the emergence of the “exceptional” personality, the image employed by Hamilton is that of quasi-Hellenistic harmony, where a rigid system of rules and concepts serves to ensure that nothing excessive or grotesque threatens the established harmonious order. It is notable that he chooses to use the term “perfection,” associated with ideal and absolute balance. This contrasts with my analysis of depersonalizing “mob mentality” in the second chapter, as well as with the images of constraint discussed in the first chapter.

According to Hamilton, it is the law (rather than religion, or some form of higher conscience, or any psychological trait), that acts as the harmonising and regulating force protecting society from extremes associated with the “exceptional” individuals wreaking havoc or tyrannical “charismatic leaders.” Therefore, I propose that the mysterious yet prosaic “Plinlimmonian rules” that “exceptional” protagonists flout or oppose are actually Hamilton’s “balances and checks.” Essentially, the “Plinlimmonian” rules are the law, or how it is perceived by society. The conflict between Raskolnikov and Luzhin, or Ahab and Starbuck is one between an outlaw and a law-abiding citizen. To consider oneself “exceptional” and thus able to ignore the staid Plinlimmonian framework of maxims upon

which the exceptionalist society with its constructs of the right and wrong is founded, is to place oneself “outside” the law.

Whilst for the purposes of this investigation I do not seek to define all law (it being an extremely broad concept) as a “mechanism” created so as to suppress all active individuality and leadership, I regard the law in this specific chapter as the most efficient control method that preserves society from the effects of potentially toxic leadership just as much as from anarchy wreaked by “King Numbers.” Moreover, it serves as an effective “Apollonian” antidote against the “Dionysiac” charisma of a leader that tempts people to follow the leader regardless of how things actually stand, as well as against the dangerous sway of mass thinking feared by John Stewart Mill, De Tocqueville and John Randolph, and that Hannah Arendt also warns about, in the modern context.²⁴⁶

Considering Arendt’s argument in particular, concerning the “prepolitical state” based upon “the State of Nature” and the fact that “whatever political organization men may have achieved has its origins in crime” (Arendt 20), the law can also be regarded as the cultivating, civilising force that curtails the expansive influence of the “natural” leader based upon brute strength that leads to violence and chaos, as well as the danger contained in uncontrolled mass thinking. Even if the laws are deemed “unjust,” they may be theoretically amended or abolished in a subsequent juristic operation after their flaws are openly brought to light (if one recalls the influence of *White-Jacket* on the naval laws concerning corporal punishment). In short, law is preferable to lawlessness. Bearing in mind both the events of 1917, which, as Lyudmila Saraskina argues, Dostoyevsky foresaw, and the Arendtian perception of “America as a mass society” susceptible to mob rule, asserted by Richard King (117), this problem rang

²⁴⁶ See Arendt, *On Revolution*. Also: Richard King, *Arendt and America*.

just as true for America as it did for Russia, and “checks and balances” were needed to contain it.²⁴⁷

A straightforward stance could be to regard the juxtaposition of an individual and the rule of law as the suppression and even destruction of the individual creative “genius.” Yet, given the findings that have surfaced in the previous chapters, this advocates for a more balanced vision first explored by Brook Thomas in his landmark analysis of the relationship between law and literature.²⁴⁸ Thomas’ approach to the notion of law is preferable, as rather than siding with either the Apollonian principles of law or the individual Dionysian spirit, he considers both impartially in equal measures – precisely as a writer-observer figure that I described in the introductory chapter was expected to do.

It is assumed in this chapter that since the state is represented by its law, the legal system acts as a mouthpiece of sorts that expresses the state’s will and implements it. However, there is an important distinction that needs to be commented on. Whilst both texts I selected as case studies address problematic situations where an individual comes into direct opposition with the forces of the state and the law, *Brothers Karamazov* chooses to look at conflict between the individual (Mitya Karamazov) and the Russian state, represented by the Russian penal system. Meanwhile, in *The White-Jacket* the forces opposing the individual (whom Melville deliberately dresses in a conspicuous manner so as to make him “exceptional” in the eyes of the readers) represent the American state – but on a much smaller, microcosmic scale represented by the naval setting and the adherence of that space specifically and metaphorically to the naval laws.

²⁴⁷ Saraskina, *Besy: Roman-preduprezhdenie..*

²⁴⁸ Thomas, *Cross Examinations of Law and Literature.*

THE VIOLATION OF THE RULES: WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENS BETWEEN
INDIVIDUAL AND STATE?

It is a well-known story that *The White-Jacket* contributed to the abolition of corporeal punishments in the American navy (a fact amply commented upon by Yuri Kovalev, as supposed evidence of Melville's socialist views).²⁴⁹ This, as well as the passages within the novel such as the one below, has led to the establishment of a general perception that *The White-Jacket* should be regarded first and foremost as a call for social reform which addressed the fact that the actual naval law was essentially flawed and unjust:

It is singular that while the Lieutenants of the watch in American men-of-war so long usurped the power of inflicting corporal punishment with the *colt*, few or no similar abuses were known in the English Navy. ... The chivalric Virginian, John Randolph of Roanoke, declared ... that on board of the American man-of-war that carried him out Ambassador to Russia he had witnessed more flogging than had taken place on his own plantation of five hundred African slaves in ten years. Certain it is ... the English officers, as a general thing, seem to be less disliked by their crews than the American officers by theirs ... A coarse, vulgar man, who happens to rise to high naval rank by the exhibition of talents not incompatible with vulgarity, invariably proves a tyrant to his crew. (*WJ*)²⁵⁰

From the above passage it initially seems that Melville offers a stinging factual critique of the state of affairs within the American navy specifically, claiming that it is overrun by "coarse" and "vulgar" individuals abusing their given power. However, there can

²⁴⁹ *The White-Jacket* was viewed by many at the time as a prime example of factual writing exposing the injustices occurring in the American navy. For more on the matter, see Myra C Glenn's article, "The Naval Reform Campaign Against Flogging: A Case Study in Changing Attitudes Towards Corporeal Punishment, 1830-1850".

be a deeper interpretation of the central theme of the novel, particularly if to bear in mind its original full title: *The White-Jacket, or the World in a Man O'War*. It is quite likely (revisiting the argument developed by Reeve in *The White Monk*) that Melville regards the enclosed microcosm of one single naval vessel as a small contained copy of the entire world. The world is reflected in a man o'war, and therefore, the injustices and the cruelty which occur upon it are reflective of the injustices that occur in the world – omnipresent and constant. Existing scholarly evidence may be relied on to support this hypothesis: for example, Brook Thomas combines the metaphor for the ship as a small model of a nation state with the argument that Melville was aware of America's exceptional role, stating: “[A]t the end of *White-Jacket* Melville pleads against strife within the American ship of state, because to him America serves a divine purpose” (152).

A logical question subsequently emerges: why would then Melville incorporate comparisons of the violence within the American Navy to that in the English one? My answer to this is that Melville concerns himself with the imaginarily perfect “American” world governed according to the quasi-exceptionalist mores, as opposed to the projective images of other, “flawed” nation-states. Thomas's central argument harps upon the fact that *White-Jacket* is indeed a work strongly tinged with exceptionalist overtones, since America's unique and supposedly more benevolent role is being constantly referred to: “Actual practices within America do not always live up to the ideal America. Precisely because America represents so much, institutions and laws that are tolerated in other countries should not be tolerated in the United States” (152).

Turning to the text of the novel, Melville provides a summary of what could be effectively seen as his interpretation of why America should be regarded as an “exceptional” nation, whose role is “to make precedents, and not to obey them,” and therefore is bound by obligation to provide an example to all others:

Escaped from the house of bondage, Israel of old did not follow after the ways of the Egyptians ... And we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. ... [G]od has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall yet come and lie down under the shade of our ark ... The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours ... Long enough, have we ... doubted whether, indeed, the political Messiah had come. But he has come in us, if we would but give utterance to his promptings (*WJ*).

From the purely stylistic viewpoint, in this excerpt Melville comes across as a writer yet to develop his distinct style, and therefore, evidently influenced by the evangelical, preaching style widespread at the time – which is apparent from the usage of hackneyed terms like “house of bondage” or “shade of our ark,” alongside the quintessentially American imagery of “the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things.” Of course, to an extent that the plot requires, Melville parodies this exalted rhetoric style, contrasting it with the harrowing realities White-Jacket observes. Yet I believe that Melville’s main aim at this point is not irony for irony’s sake, but the need to expiate or exorcise the ghosts of the exceptionalist rhetoric pervading the political and cultural realms of his time, quite as Rogin suggests in *Subversive Genealogy*, discussing this stage in Melville’s writing career at length (15-77).²⁵¹

It is quite obvious that Melville regurgitates the exceptionalist rhetoric, which, as I already showed in the previous two chapters, was prevalent at that exact time; phrases such as

²⁵¹ See Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy* (in particular, pp 15-77). Rogin offers an in-depth view of various familial and socio-political influences that Melville came in contact with during his formative years as a writer, and generally implies that the impact of those on Melville’s world view should not be overlooked.

“God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race” sound far more like a mediocre political pamphlet than the Melville we encounter in *Moby-Dick* or *Pierre*. The exact ideas that the writer puts forward are also quite unoriginal and faithful to the exceptionalist discourse as it manifested itself. The past is rejected, and somewhat brashly so, whilst the future is embraced:

Let us leave the Past, then, to dictate laws to immovable China; let us abandon it to the Chinese Legitimists of Europe. But for us, we will have another captain to rule over us – that captain who ever marches at the head of his troop and beckons them forward, not lingering us in the rear, and impeding their march with lumbering baggage-wagons of old precedents. This is the Past. (*WJ*)

Although the above passage is strongly reminiscent of pamphlets and sermons widespread at the time Melville was writing (as well as Plinlimmon’s treatise), it is pivotal for explaining the difference between the “exceptional” individual who is suppressed by the Plinlimmonian code of rules, and the “exceptionalist” society.²⁵² The previous textual case studies have shown how an “exceptional” individual is suppressed and why to position oneself as such in society is deemed unacceptable; however, recollecting the “Body Politic” notion concerning society functioning as one single organism, from Melville’s text it becomes apparent that if society in this capacity acts as an “exceptional” individual would, it is not only permissible and acceptable; in fact, it is laudable. At a first glance, this seems to contradict everything that has been previously said in this thesis, as the Plinlimmonian rules that fall upon a rebellious individual so harshly, seem to uphold and support it if a society made up of many individuals behaves in a similar manner. What is forbidden to one, is encouraged for many.

²⁵² For pamphletic language and the role of a preacher delivering sermons crucial to American culture of the time, see Bruce Kucklick and Alison Winter.

It is easy to fall into a trap of assuming that the young Melville, swept away by the relevant discourses of the time such as “Young America” (which is particularly how Rogin or Kovalev view this part of his life), differs from the older and jaded writer describing the earth-encased Enceladus by virtue of life experience yet to be gained. However, I would like to state that there is more to say about Melville’s particular views. Returning to Richard King’s assessment of the Arendtian vision (King 118-119), I envisage the possibility where the masses or society in general in the “exceptionalist” American discourse are invested with the virtue of better comprehension and moral rectitude, than just one (possibly mistaken) individual. This could be the uncomfortable truth that Melville eventually comes to realise.

According to King’s argument, America had developed the mass thinking to a fine degree unconceivable for anywhere else in the world, and certainly not in Europe. King comments upon the inevitable rift or conflict between the individual and society, however, due to the fact that mass thinking and action in America remained on an advanced level unseen elsewhere (due to democratic element in the developed political system), the society was likely to be perceived to be in the right. Therefore, although a particularly vocal emergent individuality might be deemed dangerous and consequently suppressed, an identical action coming from a group is approved, because the virtue of mass thinking renders its decisions more correct and fitting. That is even more true, if it is purely verbal expression of opinion and theoretically proposed change that are concerned, rather than actual enterprise of some drastic action by a single agent. Recalling the image of society acting as one single organism, King’s argument is logical in that group-based opposition (or Hamiltonian “faction”) is deemed to come from society itself, and thus not as dangerous to its goals and well-being.

The imagery used by Melville in the previous passage curiously attests to the vision of society moving as one single individual, as many units unite together to realise their innate

potential jointly. Furthermore, the “captain who ever marches at the head of his troop” or “a teacher to posterity” evokes not just an individual as a unit, but an individual invested with rights to act as a leader and determine the course of the events – an exceptionalist image if ever there was one. The previous texts stressed that for an individual personality, or for a group of people acting to overturn the established societal framework, to assume such a position was not permissible. It was then easy to imagine that challenging the status quo of the exceptionalist state is quite as unacceptable in America as in Russia. However, in the world governed by the idea of “checks and balances” one exception remains: that is, when society acts as one body in accordance to the framework set out by those “checks and balances,” in order to bring about only such events or changes that the “checks and balances” allow.

A consequent question arises as to who exactly determines those said “checks and balances,” if they seem to direct the actions of society? One possible answer is to be found in the concept of the “state of exception” coined by Agamben, and which means the extent to which society, or “state” is prepared to change or contradict the legal framework holding it together, in “exceptional” circumstances.²⁵³ Agamben describes it as “the legal form of what cannot have legal form” and further, speaks about the “state of exception as the original structure in which law encompasses living beings by means of its own suspension.” To him, the state acts as a self-regulating physical organism which intuitively makes a correct choice or “suspension” in a specific situation - so the relationship of state and laws is nowhere as rigid as one might fancy. Agamben touches upon the conflict between the theoretical legal limits and unexpected or exceptional circumstances caused by actual life itself. I maintain that whilst the “checks and balances” are set out by human beings and for human beings, they possess a certain degree of malleability that can be of use when life and the hypothetical

²⁵³ See Agamben, *States of Exception*.

structure of rules collide. Although on the surface the societal rules appear to be the example of rigid Apollonian logic counteracting the Dionysian chaos, in reality they are quite adaptable:

America is a “new nation” and therefore should provide a wholly new and progressive stance concerning any major issues, particularly as it is supposed to be perceived as a bastion of democracy, unmarred by hierarchical or aristocratic discourses preventing everyman’s voice from being heard. Yet “the world in a man o’war” where floggings and brutality occur on a frequent basis, seems to contradict this rather cheerful and hackneyed philosophy. It is next to idle, at the present day, merely to denounce an iniquity. Be ours, then, a different task. If there are any three things opposed to the genius of the American Constitution, they are these: irresponsibility in a judge, unlimited discretionary authority in an executive, and the union of an irresponsible judge and an unlimited executive in one person. Yet by virtue of an enactment of Congress, all the Commodores in the American navy are obnoxious to these three charges, so far as concerns the punishment of the sailor for alleged misdemeanors not particularly set forth in the Articles of War. (*WJ*)

To ever-observant Melville who stresses the word “irresponsibility” several times, the discrepancy between the constitutional ideal and the actual practice is evident, and the main problem remains that the new ways of implementing “checks and balances” that would be harmonious with the popularised exceptionalist vision, “the genius of the American Constitution,” cannot be found or developed rapidly enough to keep pace with the theoretical exceptionalist discourse. The old methods of preserving the legal framework of codes to hold society together remain and are implemented, although their highly unsatisfactory nature and consequent crude brutality does not correspond with the progressive exceptionalist theoretical view.

Envisaging an “exceptional” state, one could imagine that there exist two versions of America: a fictitious ideal cemented in manifestations such as the Constitution or the imagery surrounding concepts like the Manifest Destiny, and the real-life geographical location that nominally bears the “exceptional” status, but never can fully fulfil it. The thread uniting the two, meanwhile, is the Hamiltonian framework of the rules supporting it, the very Plinlimmonian “Horologicals” personified by the legal system. The law, setting out the general outline of the rules according to which the state and society function, constantly evolves and adapts in order to make the way of the nation’s existence more and more like the aforementioned fictitious ideal. Therefore, *White-Jacket* as a plea for reform of the naval law can be seen as the most “exceptionalist” of Melville’s texts.

It is curious to note in particular that in expressing his dismay upon America using the same repressive mechanisms as other, “barbarous” states, Melville should choose Russia of all places, resorting to the projective imagination typical of the exceptionalist cosmos, and yet portraying the utter injustice occurring on Russian soil as a perfectly normal phenomenon characteristic of an imaginary, flawed realm:

Such objections cannot be urged against the laws of the Russian navy (not essentially different from our own), because the laws of that navy, creating the absolute one-man power in the Captain, and vesting in him the authority to scourge, conform in spirit to the territorial laws of Russia, which is ruled by an autocrat, and whose courts inflict the *knout* upon the subjects of the land. (*WJ*)

Brook Thomas comments on this: “For Melville, it is an outrage that the United States Navy uses essentially the same code of discipline found in the Russian navy” (149). His view is supportive of the hypothesis that I propose, that specifically in *White-Jacket*, Melville is incongruously supportive of the exceptionalist discourse, instead of being critical (as in *Moby-Dick*), or plainly analytical (as with *Pierre*). America is juxtaposed to the rest of

the world as “exceptional” society which should use different, supposedly fairer and somehow nobler mechanisms to bind it together, than other, “barbaric” states. In the light of the actual historical context, however, there is a chronological twist to Melville’s perception of exceptionalism that suggests a rather different picture. *White-Jacket* is the earliest dated text assessed in my thesis, and I argue that it represents a younger Melville not as yet disillusioned with the notion of exceptionalism, and not yet fully independent from the major political and public debates prevalent in his day, just as Rogin portrays him at this particular biographical point.²⁵⁴ The subsequent two texts, as the thesis works chronologically backwards, represent a mature Melville who managed to see and reflect on the concept of exceptionalism and what it means for society enough to amend his views and dive deeper to explore the hidden origins of the conflict between the “exceptional” individual and “exceptionalist” society.

Yet *White-Jacket*’s relevance for me lies with the fact that as a young writer not yet disillusioned with exceptionalism albeit keenly aware of injustices taking place before his own eyes, Melville addresses the part of the “exceptionalist” and “exceptional” conflict which is most obvious to the observer, despite being the last stage after the “exceptionalist” individual emerges, and after the said individual becomes a leader and virulently influences others. This stage is when the existing established framework of codes holding society together suppresses or punishes the individual who “stands out” and puts the existing order in peril; using a variety of techniques and arguments to do so. As a romantically-inclined new writer at that particular point in his literary career, Melville presents a view that suggests that as an “exceptionalist,” unique society, America holds a duty to develop better practices that

²⁵⁴ Rogin in *Subversive Genealogy* (especially Chapters 2-6) explores in particular the influence of Melville’s older and politically active brother, Gansevoort, on early Melville’s writing and views. Rogin argues that before Melville became a writer revealing his talent in full, he first had to leave behind Gansevoort’s influence that inspired him to contemplate participating in various social debates such as the struggle for reform to benefit the poor, seen in *Redburn*.

do not crudely destroy the “exceptional” individual, which would otherwise only contradict the maxims upon which the “exceptionalist” society is founded, rendering it just like the tyrannies of yore that Hamilton so deplored.

However, why would Melville mention specifically Russia, and not Brazil, or China, or any other state that at the time was equally impacted by the concept of slavery? I already implied in the introduction that America and Russia at the time presented a particularly interesting duality; essentially similar in their developmental history (according to De Tocqueville in particular) and yet made distinct from one another by one difference in particular – the temporality of national destiny. America was expected to be at the forefront of social progress, setting an example as a “new” nation founded in the progressive, post-Enlightenment times upon the principles of liberty and democracy. In this highly distinct social climate, the role of collective or mass thinking was allocated an important role, and this set the United States apart from Europe (Russia included), which, according to King’s reading of Arendtian vision, was “...less prepared than American society for the emergence of a mass society” (King 118).

Russia was at a first glance a different case, being immersed deeply into what could be described as theocratic and monarchical tenets of centuries-old tradition closely weaving religious obedience and submissiveness of subjects to a sovereign (the rigidity of that particular era being exemplified by the Table of Ranks system determining society’s composition and structure – and most societal advancement was regulated by this system). Yet it was also founded upon the principle of setting an example to the world, and being somewhat apart from the “European” fount of culture. As Dostoyevsky claims in a preface to a collection of essays, *A number of articles on Russian Literature* (1861), highlighting his Slavophile leanings:

If there is one country in the entire world that could have been to other, neighbouring or remote nations, more unfamiliar, more unexplored, more misunderstood and baffling than any other – this country is Russia for its Western neighbours, without any doubt. Neither China nor Japan are veiled with as much mystery against the European curiosity as Russia used to be, is now, and, perhaps would be for a long time. (*A Number of Articles on Russian Literature*)

In short, Russia and America had it in common that they both were essentially marginal communities on the fringes of mainstream European cultural heartland, and henceforth not too comfortable with it. Contradictorily enough, both were supposed to act exemplarily to that same cultural heartland they found themselves at odds with, and yet, both harboured in their midst brutality and injustice that diverged poignantly from their self-imposed expected status as an example to other nations. In this way, I would like to somewhat disagree with Arendt on the fact that since the times of the American Revolution, America was exemplary in that it avoided the trappings of violence that Arendt argues were distinctive of the Old World: whilst on the level of ideas it may have been so, the factual reality that *White-Jacket* grapples with, was quite different.

Melville might not have been closely familiar with Russian culture or problems marring everyday life in Russia, however, the fact that he commented upon Russia and not any other state implies that subconsciously, the young writer might have been edging close to the fact that Russia and America were, using David Foglesong's terminology, each other's "dark double." On the surface, they might have deemed each other barbarous; the truth is that both were essentially similar in the problems they had to face.

CARLYLEAN ECHOES: BUT, WHO ARE THE JUDGES?²⁵⁵

It appears that in an exceptionalist society, a certain degree of repression is permissible for the preservation of the delicate liberty-equality balance. To exercise the ability to punish or suppress an “exceptional” individual threatening the said balance, however, another individual clearly should have received leave from society in some manner to do so.

Recalling my previous argument about the clearly outlined characteristics of the Plinlimmonian rules of society as compared to the organically chaotic nature of “exceptional” individual and its influence, I hold that societal hierarchy is a crucial mechanism that is used against an emerging personality that threatens the established order. The setting in the Melvillean text symbolizes hierarchy condensed to the point of grotesque, that makes for the even more immediate understanding of how this suppression works.

In a hierarchical setting, such as within the microcosm of a man o’war vessel regulated by the naval code, the way that the said hierarchy is determined is comprehensible enough – according to the military ranks. The question is, who exactly occupies the highest position within the ranks that gives the right to dispense judgement on the offending “exceptional” individual, using forceful methods if necessary.

In the immediately preceding set of case studies, I drew out the important distinction between the assumed leadership that the individual considering themselves “exceptional” wilfully seizes, and the leadership pre-determined by the natural order, that reflects the Carlylean argument of human society “looking for a hero” since time immemorial. A unifying characteristic for both these concepts is the fact that initially, the position of a leader is seized in spite of societal rules – rightfully or not. What I will focus upon right now,

²⁵⁵ This is a well-known quotation from a play by Alexander Griboedov, *Woe from Wit*. (1831). It has become a byword in Russian for whether one has a right to judge others.

though, is the way in which the established Plinlimmonian structure appoints one to head it and judge or punish others.²⁵⁶

The hierarchy on board of the “Neversink” is organised to set the officers firmly apart from the rest of the crew - an image that we have already seen in the tale of the White Whale, and which is commented upon in that context specifically by C.L.R. James.²⁵⁷ He notes the extreme rigidity and mechanics-like inner workings of the ship’s little world:

In his next book, *White Jacket* (1850), he [Melville] crosses the bridge from his own time into ours. His greatest discovery is to push individual characteristics aside and see men in terms of the work that they do. A warship is an organization where men perform special functions. This man may be a drunkard, that one a thief, the other one writes poetry, another is a splendid, fine sailor, a born leader of men and charming. But a ship is in reality nothing more than various groups of men who do certain types of work, without which there would be complete chaos. It is this specific type of work which determines their social characteristics. And the ship is only a miniature of the world in which we live. (James 86)

Bringing to mind Shakespearian words that all the world’s a stage, James evokes a microcosm populated by individual human units who each have a specific, pre-ordained role to play – a good example of typology at work. One can imagine that each of those is actually quite “exceptional” in that they have a unique set of responsibilities to fulfil. What interests me, however, is the binding ties of mutual obligations and responsibilities between those individuals that make the man o’war run smoothly as a society (albeit on a smaller scale), and the existing hierarchical structure that organises those in a meaningful manner.

²⁵⁶ The conflict between the heroic expectations imposed by such a position and the ordinary human nature is also explored by Melville in the character of Captain Vere in a later work, *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1924?).

²⁵⁷ See C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*.

The said structure needs to be headed by a leader of some kind. In the previous chapter, it has been shown what occurs if a leader is an “exceptional” individual acting as such, and the tragic consequences that this causes. The role of the leader, therefore, is crucial. However, in *White-Jacket*, it is made more explicit that in *Moby-Dick*. The text attests, in no uncertain terms, to the power over life and death on board that the captain holds as the head of the hierarchical structure:

By this article the Captain is made a legislator, as well as a judge and an executive. So far as it goes, it absolutely leaves to his discretion to decide what things shall be considered crimes, and what shall be the penalty; whether an accused person has been guilty of actions by him declared to be crimes; and how, when, and where the penalty shall be inflicted. (*WJ*)

What can be seen is that the societal framework, exemplified by the “article” of naval legislation, invests the captain as the head of hierarchical order with clear and uncontested power to pass judgement, destroying or neutralising any element that he can hold to be threatening. This harmonises with the Carlylean argument about the priest-hero, who is willingly appointed by the human masses so as to pass supposedly wise judgement, and the rights that the priest-hero may enjoy subsequently. What is true, is that, according to the hierarchical mechanism, such a figure should stand firmly apart from the rest, and hold knowledge and skills that are out of a common person’s reach (a picture quite different from Dostoyevsky’s effete intellectual-liberals intent on talking “without any definite aim,” as per Irving Howe (Wellek 68-69)). Nancy Fredericks also attests to this:

Anyone who wishes to paint a portrait of Melville as a radical egalitarian democrat has got to come to terms with his ambivalent feelings toward the masses. In *White Jacket*, for example, he indulges in an image of the “public” as monstrous in a dialogue between

Lemsford and Jack Chase. Lemsford is complaining about the “addle-pated mob and rabble” who failed to appreciate a volume of poems he had published.... (9)²⁵⁸

I disagree with Fredericks in that Melville necessarily wishes to view the masses, or the “unexceptional” people as grotesque or boorish, and the term “indulges” may be somewhat misdirected. Melville not so much shares the sentiment in earnest, as he wishes to show how hierarchy works, and how its inner cogs and wheels function. In that respect, he is more neutral than biased. Yet what Fredericks is right about is two things. First, she is correct in also underlining that the top figure in the hierarchy essentially stands apart from others filling up the hierarchical steps. Secondly, she comes upon an important notion: that the leader favoured by the hierarchical structure of the established societal rules is distinguished by more refined spiritual life incomprehensible to the general public: the arcane, Druidic knowledge that, in perfect unison with Carlyle’s argument, is the domain of the Priest-Hero chosen to lead. At a first glance, Lemsford lecturing the sailors about his poetic achievements is a ludicrous figure; in terms of how societal hierarchy works according to Carlyle’s argument, this scene makes sense. The hierarchical leader approved by Plinlimmonian rules is not a wilful impostor after Ahab or Stavrogin’s fashion, nor is he a naturally distinctive “alpha” that Steelkilt represents. What he is, however, is someone possessed with knowledge or skill that ordinary everyperson does not possess, and that may be, for its apparent impracticality (of what use may be poems on board a navy vessel?), a trait reconciling the lower strata of society with the higher ones, in a code-like language. As a poet who can appreciate the rhymed word, which as a concept is supposedly treasured by the higher classes in the established order, even if the ordinary sailors do not understand its purpose, the accepted hierarchical leader can be an effective mediator and communicator with the higher

²⁵⁸ Fredericks, *Melville’s Art of Democracy*.

social strata. In this way, Fredericks' argument, "Melville did not hate people or popular culture. He just decided to write for what seemed at the time to be an intellectual minority, an "aristocracy of the brain"" (10) rings true. Reconciling her point with my argument about the head of hierarchical order being invested with knowledge untypical for common person, I propose that Melville was painting a faithful image of the distinctly American "exceptionalist" social order, setting out what exactly determined it. In an environment divested of hereditary aristocracy or implements like The Table of Ranks of nineteenth-century Russia, the factor determining who should head the societal order approved by the Plinlimmonian rules (which have already been shown to oppose the controversial "natural order" philosophy), would be intellectual superiority. Fredericks illustrates this possibility quite well:

This "aristocracy of the brain" (Letters, 126) is based on talent and merit, not the accident of birth into a particular economic class. It is guaranteed by the "great democratic God" (Moby-Dick, 117) who has lifted up persons of such lowly economic status as Bunyon, Cervantes, and Andrew Jackson.... (10)

The protagonist of the novel meanwhile offers an interesting foil to the hierarchical mechanism described above. As I briefly stated previously, White-Jacket, for his distinctive manner of dressing and sharp observational aptitude, can be described essentially as an "exceptional" individual; the chief difference in his particular case being that he is not as much an agent of active change as an observer. Nevertheless, Melville ensures that he stands apart from the rest of the crew sufficiently as to be viewed by the reader as "exceptional." The description that Melville gives is evocative at the same time of the image of the "white raven" (i.e. a misfit in a particular group) and the clear, or "white" conscience, at which the specific word choice hints: "It was not a very white jacket, but white enough, in all conscience, as the sequel will show" (*WJ*).

Further on, the epithets such as “frock” or “Quakerish,” concerning the title character’s unusual choice of costume, present priestly connotations, uniting essential neutrality and superiority and suggesting a different way of understanding the situation. Just as a priest or a judge is distinguished from the rest by the virtue of a wig or a cassock (a theme of monastic dress is brought up as a plot detail in *Brothers Karamazov* as well, where the pious monk Alyosha is distinguished from the rest of the characters by his garb, and frequently acts as a listener to various characters’ monologue confessions, from Dmitry to Liza Khokhlakova and Grushenka), so is White-Jacket instantaneously set apart by his clothing. Given what already has been said about the self-imposed “exceptional” status of an individual, it is interesting that White-Jacket is not given the garment by anyone else, but makes it himself (the process of making being laboriously described). In this way, it can be argued that the White-Jacket, from the very first page, is established as an “exceptional” individual; however, this is more due to a twist of fate than an active and conscious choice (Alyosha in this respect is essentially different, being given the monk’s robes upon entering the monastery, rather than fashioning them himself, so he accepts being given a typological observer-role rather than wilfully seizing it). Yet the lot has been cast. White-Jacket has been set apart from the rest, and now he has to act accordingly.

Therefore, looking at *White-Jacket* from such a perspective, I disagree with the argument proposed by Michael Rogin that the white jacket of the title character makes him more vulnerable or denies him any definite role in the meticulously ordered naval hierarchy. Rogin’s interpretation suggests primary discomfort:

The costumes of Redburn and White-Jacket are instruments of anxious self-dramatization. They announce that their wearers are not at home in the world. Their families have made Redburn and White-Jacket unlike ordinary people, and they hang

on to that painful difference as their identity. Redburn and White-Jacket refuse the normal dress of their stations, for they will not be defined by their roles. (Rogin 89)

Rogin's description brings to mind the same "exceptional" individual acting in an explicitly rebellious manner so as to highlight his supposedly "exceptional" nature that puts White-Jacket on the par with Ahab, Raskolnikov and Pierre. Yet I maintain that whilst Rogin is correct in stating that White-Jacket is not like the rest of the people, his response to this is one of calm acceptance of his lot, and not the "painful difference" of rebellion. Nor can one say for certain that White-Jacket actively "refuses" any other clothing – instead, he seems to accept his unusual garb and position. Unlike other sailors, White-Jacket does not indulge in reckless or violent deeds, and this suggests greater maturity and holistic understanding of the situation, than a typical "exceptional" rebel would express.

Formally, White-Jacket makes up a part of a hierarchy within the man o' war's microcosm, yet he clearly surpasses the limits conventionally permitted to a person of his hierarchical status, notably doing so without creating conflict or antagonising. This leads me to disagree with the vision of the protagonist described by James H. Justus as simply a "responsible mariner whose common sense reliably ratifies his expose of the inequities and vices of the US Navy" (Lee et al., 43)²⁵⁹ Such an interpretation over-simplifies the significance of the White-Jacket as an "exceptional" individual within an "exceptionalist" society, overlooking one major and interesting aspect of the problem. An "exceptional" individual may not be permitted to commit controversial actions in an "exceptionalist" society moving as one organism. In fact, any such activity would be severely curtailed.

However, what such an individual may very well do, is to act as an observer, noting any injustices or imbalances that occur – especially as his education and background invest him with the necessary understanding to do this. It is then left up to the society at large to

²⁵⁹ See James H. Justus, "Redburn and White-Jacket: Society and Sexuality in the Narrators of 1849."

physically right those wrongs or make amends. White-Jacket does not commit the mistake made by Rodion Raskolnikov or Pierre Glendinning, since he does not actively take it on himself to bring about positive change. However, it is his keen observational powers that make society in general aware of what is happening, leading effectively to real-life changes in the American naval law, as commented on by Kovalev, or Myra C. Glenn. Those powers, in turn, could only be acquired if the character took it on himself to consider himself as an “exceptional” individual, and thus psychologically overcome the rigid hierarchical structure so as to see the situation for what it was. This is a deeper image than the one proposed by Justus, of an ordinary sailor who simply comments occasionally on what is before his eyes. Justus notes that White-Jacket as a character is at the same time both keen upon hierarchical structures and yet looking beyond those, however, he does not fully and explicitly state what may be hidden behind this. He stands apart, as Fredericks shows:

The dread of ostracism that dogs every crewman of the microscopic world affects White-Jacket as well, but his fear of exclusion from the group ... is balanced by exclusivity that is almost obsessive. His sense of his proper place among other men and his sensitized feelings for classes of men are transformed into a hard-edged discrimination of innate values and human and social worth beyond the maritime functions for which classes on a frigate necessarily exist. (56)

From this, it follows that at least to Melville, the “exceptional” individual and the “exceptionalist” society were not always conflicting with each other. The true and accepted place of the “exceptional” individual, whose exceptional nature may be attributed to advanced intellectual powers, dubbed by Melville “the aristocracy of the brain,” is to act as an observer, drawing attention to any wrongs occurring, though not attempting to rectify them. This is not quite the same as the service of a spy, or a whistleblower, but rather the concept associated somewhat later with the Russian *intelligentsia*, which was frequently

dubbed *sovest' natsii* (the nation's consciousness), and harmonises with Melville's notion of intellectual aristocracy or elite. Bogdan Kistyakovsky comments on the sceptical perception of the law and legal established frameworks as a characteristic trait of this group: "The Russian intelligentsia consists of people who are neither individually nor socially disciplined. This is related to the fact that the Russian intelligentsia never respected law and never saw any value in it" (*Landmarks*, 112-113). Although Kistyakovsky talks in the negative sense, being able to approach the edifice of law without awe or trepidation is essential for an astute societal observer seeking to pinpoint the existing flaws. In pre-1917 Russia, this role was often expected to be assumed by a writer – Dostoyevsky certainly saw himself as belonging to that strata – and it is quite tempting to consider Melville possibly sharing the same sentiment.

Justus is right to note White-Jacket's "unordinary intelligence" (Lee et al. 43), but he does not mention the actual significance of this character's unusual status. I, however, maintain that White-Jacket as a character presents a meritocratic vision of the "exceptional" individual at the service of the "checks and balances" governing the exceptionalist society. After all, the hypothetical framework of rules possesses no human sense so as to independently note and determine what works and what does not in a given particular environment or situation. The "exceptionalist" society functioning according to pre-set "checks and balances" may appear idyllic on paper, but the divergence between this and actual reality, as I stated previously, is vast, if one relies on the "checks and balances" alone. This is then the role of the "exceptional" individual invested with high intelligence and requisite education, to note wherever changes are needed to be made. White-Jacket may not be a dazzling intellectual, but he receives his white garment, and therefore he needs to act as expected, according to this "vocation" of sorts. He is distinctive, but he is also not occupying any definite hierarchical position; he is with others and yet apart from them.

Such a perception is different from the vision of Melville as a radical, revolutionary thinker actively campaigning for immediate change. However, it goes well with my prior argument that quite like Dostoyevsky, Melville essentially is a somewhat conservative spirit, in that he prefers to effect change gradually, through observational and commentary means, and only where it is needed, rather than insisting on doing away with the old order so as to create a radical new one (unlike Captain Ahab overturning the life on board of the vessel upside down). *White-Jacket* may not have been acclaimed by the critics on the par with Melville's most renowned novels, but it is notable that this text has effectively managed to contribute towards the changing of the naval law to abolish the corporal punishment through doing precisely what an "exceptional" individual acting as an observer would be expected to be doing, and this implies that the theory about the "exceptional" individuals being well positioned (thanks to their superior intellectual abilities) to act as observers rather than change-makers is highly workable. Also, bearing in mind the disastrous consequences seen in the previous novels, it is the only and correct way to bring about societal change in an effective, non-violent manner.

What, meanwhile, can be said of the Russian side of the argument? At a first glance, Dostoyevsky's novel differs cardinally from *White-Jacket*, both in terms of subject-matter and stylistic structure. One may wonder – how does the description of a murder trial taking place in a provincial town relate to the treaty on the punishment and legal codes governing the American navy? Yet *Brothers Karamazov* is rather akin to Melville's narrative, in that both effectively provide an example of how a system of rules, or namely, the law, operates in relation to both the "exceptional" individual, acting as a mechanism of suppression as well as a field for observation and improvement, and to the "exceptionalist" society. Even though there rests a major distinction in that Dostoyevsky discusses an example of criminal justice and Melville specifically chooses as his subject the naval code, both are quintessentially the

same in that they are the “checks and balances” implemented to hold the fabric of society together, and to castigate any individual who attempts to transgress them.

In his text, Dostoyevsky highlights the anxiety about the suitability of those chosen to carry out judicial duties, and whether they may be rightfully placed for this purpose hierarchically. The writer refers to concerns regarding the choice of the jurors:

[T]he twelve jurymen—four were petty officials of the town, two were merchants, and six peasants and artisans of the town. I remember, long before the trial, questions were continually asked ... “Can such a delicate, complex and psychological case be submitted for decision to petty officials and even peasants?” and “What can an official, still more a peasant, understand in such an affair?” All the four officials in the jury were, in fact, men of no consequence and of low rank. Except one who was rather younger, they were gray-headed men, little known in society, who had vegetated on a pitiful salary, and who ... of course, had never read a single book. ... [T]here is no need to speak of the artisans and the peasants ... So that one might well wonder, as I did as soon as I had looked at them, “what men like that could possibly make of such a case?” Yet their faces made a strangely imposing, almost menacing, impression; they were stern and frowning. (*BK* 748)

A course of events that occurs at this point in Dostoyevsky’s novel is rather similar to what we saw in *White-Jacket*. A technically innocent character must face punishment, the extent of which would be determined by the jury made up of ordinary human beings. The men invited to do the jury service may not be intellectual aristocrats by any means, yet they are solid representatives of their particular social class and place in society, whether “petty officials” or “peasants” they all strive to play their typological part well, with dignity. This group is definitely not a depersonalized “mass” of the totalitarian nightmare described in the previous chapter, even though the jurors represent their social sub-group rather than exhibit

overt individuality. Some anxiety may be felt from the worries that the jurors probably “had never read a single book” – thus possibly undermining the meritocratic element requisite for the fulfilment of their task, which is described as “complex” and “delicate.”

One could almost fancy that the entire Table of Ranks is represented by the author on those pages, with a representative from each societal rank making an appearance. This is a good example of the societal liberty-equality balance at work: the opinions about to be expressed by the jurors are of equal weight, but the jurors themselves are not uniform – not at least in terms of social position.²⁶⁰ Their opinions are expected to matter, which again sends us back to the notion that in a “balanced” society, all individuals are seen, to an extent, as “exceptional,” even if humbly dressed and “uninviting-looking.” Yet rebellious youthful Enceladuses they are not, as the detailed description asserts. Moreover, just like White-Jacket after clothing himself in his distinctive outfit, those very ordinary-looking people suddenly attain a different spiritual dimension, “stern and frowning” in reaction to their new position and duty. The post of an “aware observer” may not be permanent, and the individuals called to fulfil it would eventually return to their “unpresentable wives and crowds of children” (*BK* 748) but it is important and therefore causes a certain kind of a personal transformation.

Reverting to the issue of who acts as dispensers of justice and the representatives of the “checks and balances,” in the chapters describing Mitya’s trial, Dostoyevsky provides an interesting portrait of the President of the Court:

As for the President of our Court, I can only say that he was a humane and cultured man, who had a practical knowledge of his work and progressive views. He was rather ambitious, but did not concern himself greatly about his future career. The great aim of his life was to be a man of advanced ideas. He was, too, a man of connections and

²⁶⁰ One may note that nevertheless, the jury is exclusively male: a fact of which Margaret Fuller despairs in *Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions* (1848): “He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners.”

property. He felt, as we learnt afterwards, rather strongly about the Karamazov case, but from a social, not from a personal standpoint. He was interested in it as a social phenomenon, in its classification and its character as a product of our social conditions, as typical of the national character, and so on, and so on. His attitude to the personal aspect of the case, to its tragic significance and the persons involved in it, including the prisoner, was rather indifferent and abstract, as was perhaps fitting, indeed. (*BK* 746)

This snapshot presents the reader with the example of a typical dispenser of justice, one of “advanced ideas” and “progressive views” just as may arise in the system ruled by “checks and balances.” From an emotional perspective, he seems a shallow and cold personality, yet let us read deeper into this character. Following what was stated earlier about Melville’s stance on societal hierarchy being headed by the most culturally progressive individuals, it can be seen that Dostoyevsky’s President fits the similar pattern: he is sufficiently “humane and cultured,” as is expected of him, and, what is far more important, he echoes the quasi-Carlylean ideal of being at the intellectual forefront; as “the great aim of his life was to be a man of advanced ideas.” This statement has more than a touch of somewhat fanatical dedication to the theoretical concept of justice and intellectual understanding, which is strongly reminiscent of Carlyle’s notion of a priest-hero previously discussed. In this instance, the aspect of the priest comes forward to overshadow that of a hero: unlike the “exceptional” leader, the representative of the judicial and moral framework holding society together exhibits more priestly qualities such as dedication to the point of self-denial. Being “indifferent and abstract” as a neutral presence unaffected by emotion is precisely what is required of him in this situation. The President is preoccupied with the case “from a social, not a personal standpoint” suggests a certain degree of impartiality, necessary for successful observation as seen with Melville’s protagonist. As well as this, it suggests the fact that the

President, precisely like White-Jacket, stands somewhat apart from the “masses” swayed by the emotional, affective responses to the case:

In brief, there was a great deal of talk. ... There were numbers of severe, frowning, even vindictive faces. Mitya, indeed, had managed to offend many people during his stay in the town. Some of the visitors were, of course, in excellent spirits and quite unconcerned as to the fate of Mitya personally. But all were interested in the trial, and the majority of the men were certainly hoping for the conviction of the criminal, except perhaps the lawyers, who were more interested in the legal than in the moral aspect of the case. (*BK 745*)

This passage, as well as illustrating a range of varied, personal emotional reactions to the case, highlights one specific aspect that I believe to be crucial for my argument. It is notable that whilst the ordinary spectators exhibit their feelings about the trial in a rather straightforward and animated manner, the lawyers are described by Dostoyevsky as impassive presences, “more interested in the legal than in the moral aspect of the case.” At a first glance, this suggests extreme dispassion, a human being likened to an artificial, faultlessly running mechanism unaffected by emotional sways.

Curiously enough, the artificial automaton is an image that is also encountered in the previous analyses of Captain Ahab and Stavrogin. Yet the mechanistic image of “horologicals” also emerges in the discussion of Plotinus Plinlimmon’s philosophy, acting as another name for the Plinlimmonian rules supposedly vital for the peaceful social existence. I argue that at this point, reconciliation occurs between the two concepts that previously stood juxtaposed to one another: namely, the “exceptional” individual and the “exceptionalist” society run according to the “horological” framework that Plinlimmon describes. The lawyers fulfil the part necessary for this framework to function properly, yet to do so effectively, they must detach themselves from the emotional, irrational responses characterising the rest of the

people – and thus, effectively, setting themselves up as “exceptional.” One is then left with the image of the “exceptional” individual at the service of the “exceptionalist” society – a notion unimaginable at the point that one looked at Pierre or Raskolnikov’s tales.

EMOTIONS AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS? DISPASSIONATE AND EXCEPTIONALIST.

At this point, there arises an inevitable conflict of possibilities. Is an “exceptional” individual acting within the limits permitted to him by the “exceptionalist” society an emotional being, or not? The evidence unearthed above implies that such an individual is likely to be a highly dispassionate presence, which of course recalls the notion of the distant priest-hero, as Carlyle sees it. However, the evidence procured in the preceding two sets of textual case studies addresses a whole range of possibilities. Pierre and Raskolnikov are to an extent highly emotional beings, the latter perhaps less so, given the meticulousness with which he plans the pawnbroker’s murder or explains his philosophical views. Ahab and Stavrogin, in the meantime, are not as much passionate as feigning heightened emotional states in order to attract those to whom such conditions come naturally.

Yet Pierre and Raskolnikov are presented as essential failures – particularly from a viewpoint of the “exceptional” individual / “exceptionalist” society dichotomy. Dostoyevsky’s “Prince Hal” and Ahab, although eventually destined to perish, nevertheless succeed to a significant extent as leaders. Now, as the final set of texts gives us a figure of an “exceptional” individual acting in a manner approved by society as a disengaged observer interested primarily in the greater good, a logical conclusion is that although an “exceptional” individual may or may not be an emotional being as a personality, to survive the punishing effects of the societal regulations and to thrive, they must need distance themselves from the personal, affective reactions. To do so would be a genuine “exceptional” feat, a quasi-act of complete renouncement of the self and devotion to the “exceptionalist” society – an image

that sends one back to Carlyle's argument. Delving even deeper into Carlyle's vision, the meaning becomes quite obvious: to act as a priest-hero at the service of the "exceptionalist" society is to express the divine will vicariously through one's actions, the only difference being that the role of a god is taken by the "exceptionalist" society. In doing so, the priest-heroes become something of a god in themselves; essentially detached and removed from the ordinary human experience. The vision of this perfect detachment for the sake of the societal harmony is at the same time Buddhist and Socialist in spirit.

The horrific scene of the sailors' punishment, that is probably the most well-known episode in Melville's novel, subtly references the possibility that as a representative and executive of the judiciary powers on board the man o'war, the captain acts precisely as a priest acting in the capacity of a god, or enacting the divine will:

The fourth and last was Peter, the mizzen-top lad. He had often boasted that he had never been degraded at the gangway. The day before his cheek had worn its usual red but now no ghost was whiter. As he was being secured to the gratings, and the shudderings and creepings of his dazzlingly white back were revealed, he turned round his head imploringly; but his weeping entreaties and vows of contrition were of no avail. "I would not forgive God Almighty!" cried the Captain. The fourth boatswain's-mate advanced, and at the first blow, the boy, shouting "My God! Oh! my God!" writhed and leaped so as to displace the gratings, and scatter the nine tails of the scourge all over his person. At the next blow he howled, leaped, and raged in unendurable torture.

"What are you stopping for, boatswain's-mate?" cried the Captain. "Lay on!" and the whole dozen was applied.

"I don't care what happens to me now!" wept Peter, going among the crew, with blood-shot eyes, as he put on his shirt. "I have been flogged once, and they may do it again, if they will. Let them look for me now!"

"Pipe down!" cried the Captain, and the crew slowly dispersed.

Let us have the charity to believe them—as we do—when some Captains in the Navy say, that the thing of all others most repulsive to them, in the routine of what they consider their duty, is the administration of corporal punishment upon the crew; for, surely, not to feel scarified to the quick at these scenes would argue a man but a beast.

(WJ)

The abundance of shocking details and emotive language (using expressions such as “shudderings,” “imploringly” or “unendurable torture”) undoubtedly affects the reader; however, the captain remains clearly intent on carrying the punishment through, with mechanistic detachment characteristic of the hypothesis I set out above. Yet what is especially poignant are the words, “I would not forgive God Almighty!” as the sailor pleads, “My God! Oh! My God!” At this instance, the captain is carrying out the duties bestowed on him by the justice (in place of a deity), and the pleadings of Peter may be directed at him, but in his status as a priest fulfilling the role of a god, the captain remains unable to offer the young sailor the forgiveness an ordinary human being might have done.²⁶¹ Justice on board of the “Neversink” equals the fulfilment of a precisely defined religious ritual, to overturn which with an inappropriate show of emotion would be unthinkable.

Interestingly, Melville does mention that in ordinary discussion the captains who had the experience of carrying through such acts of punishment deem it barbaric, “for, surely, not

²⁶¹ Melville explored a similar dilemma more fully in a posthumous work, *Billy Budd* (1924?).

to feel scarified to the quick at these scenes would argue a man but a beast.” Such is undoubtedly the ordinary, everyday response of the captains in their capacity as human beings. However, when acting in their role as dispensers of justice on board of their vessels, they are effectively required to stay in the detached, “exceptional,” dispassionate state – for the sake of preserving judicial order, or metaphorically, the “checks and balances” holding together the microcosm, remaining intact. They may notice the disproportionate cruelty, but cannot stop it, for the fear of annihilating the entire system of codes on which society rests, which would result in the anarchic horrors described by Hamilton. The only hope, then, lies with the “exceptional” individual observers (who can be alternatively dubbed intelligentsia, or elite) such as White-Jacket, who can see and comment on what is wrong, and then hope that their comments have an effect and that the “exceptionalist” society actually agrees to view a particularly harrowing law as “arbitrary.” White-Jacket, in his observer role capable of deeper intellectual reflection than most, may comment or think that the laws are arbitrary, yet he is divested of the power to actively interfere. “You see a human being, stripped like a slave; scourged worse than a hound. And for what? For things not essentially criminal, but only made so by arbitrary laws” (*WJ*). In short, the judges in an exceptionalist society should be emotionless; and the observers are expected to be emotional.

THE LEVIATHAN OF AN ANSWER: A JURISTIC FRAMEWORK?

At this point I come to the issue that reconciles Melville and Dostoyevsky’s visions from the platform of broader judicial context. To this day, scholarship on both Melvillean and Dostoyevskian literary universes often envisioned the two writers as primarily humanistic, highly liberal spirits opposing the rigid societal structure founded upon authoritarianism.²⁶² This view, to some extent, is affected by portrayals of characters such as Ishmael,

²⁶² See Kovalev, C.L.R. James, Delbanco, and Samuel Otter.

Raskolnikov or Pierre Glendinning – highly individualised and standing aside from the world as such.²⁶³

Leaning on my previous findings, I maintain that one unifying trait that Melville and Dostoyevsky have in common, opposes the above argument. Both writers can be seen as effectively championing the established hierarchical societal order. It may be initially shocking to think of Melville as siding with Plotinus Plinlimmon rather than Pierre, or to envisage Dostoyevsky believing that Mitya Karamazov's sentencing can actually be justified. Yet both of them appear to come to the same conclusion in the course of their philosophical searching. Whether Russian or American context, the conclusion is the same for both writers, since they ponder rather universal questions. Although in the previous two sets of case studies it already has been shown that Melville and Dostoyevsky are uncomfortable with the concept of rigid societal structures and punishments they produce upon individuals who dare to strike out as "exceptional," eventually both writers arrive to the same common denominator – namely, that maintaining a sound social order and curtailing the boundless potential of the "exceptional" individuals intent upon attaining leadership is the only practical way to preserve social harmony and peace.

It is notable that some scholars (especially Frank, and also Rowan Williams, who of course speaks from a distinct Christian viewpoint) have commented upon the fact that Dostoyevsky opposed radical revolution, and, for all his humanistic compassionate impulses, believed that the preservation of the theocratic order with a tsar at the helm, where principles of justice are founded upon the traditional Orthodox views of good and evil, would be the only way for Russia to remain stable. Such a vision is staggeringly conservative for a man of supposedly humanistic views, however, it is particularly curious as Dostoyevsky's response to the notion of "Russian exceptionalism." It may not be most revolutionary or radical, yet it

²⁶³ See, in particular, C.L.R. James, Kovalev, Delbanco and Frank.

is strongly “exceptionalist” in that it chooses to uphold a “Russian” way of preserving societal order rather than rely on any models offered by the contemporaneous European schools of thought. Melville, in the main bulk of existing scholarship, has been frequently portrayed as exhibiting non-explicit radical tendencies, experimentally putting himself at the opposite axis to the established social order (particularly, by thinkers such C.L.R. James, and also, notably, by the Soviet critical school, which held a specific objective to draw out Melville’s supposed sympathies for revolutionary change and dissatisfaction with the “capitalist” America). Therefore, one would have deemed Melville as opposing Dostoyevsky’s vision, rather than sharing it. However, upon carrying out a textual analysis of the two writers’ milestone works, it becomes clear that despite their numerous critiques of specific individual aspects of the established social order, both finally arrive at the same hard-won conclusion that the “exceptional” individual unconstrained by any means remains a tangible threat to the world at large, and therefore, preserving the established juristic norms holding society together, imperfect as they are, is the proper thing to expect or do. The “exceptionalist” society should be preserved for the greater good of all forming it, even if it comes at the expense of specific individual lives, and any changes that must be effected for the benefit of society as a whole, should be wrought, as *White-Jacket* reveals and Dostoyevsky’s entire philosophical vision stands, in a gradual, reformist manner. This is a markedly democratic vision, perhaps even more so than the revolutionary or radical ones, as it appears to stress the well-being of all the members of society rather than just individuals deemed “exceptional.” The society is “exceptionalist” precisely because all of its members are “exceptional” and liable to be treated, or protected, in a similar way, by the virtue of the law.

There rests one strain of philosophy, which arose much earlier than either Melville or Dostoyevsky’s era, yet nevertheless appears to reflect and summarise this vision: namely,

Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651).²⁶⁴ There have been previous studies of Hobbesian influence on Melville's works, such as the study by Aloysius Martinich, who notes that Melville referred to Hobbes in his works, albeit fleetingly.²⁶⁵ In addition, I maintain that an important factor uniting the seemingly diverse philosophies of Melville and Dostoyevsky is the fact that both of them, in their reflections upon the conflict between the "exceptional" individual and the "exceptionalist" society, as well as in their thoughts regarding how the said society should be run, are intensely Hobbesian.

Hobbes' philosophy centres around the concept of the "Law of Nature." This is not a reference to the natural order opposing human aspirations (which I described in the previous chapter), but a concept which can be defined as an individual's natural thirst for freedom. In the liberty-equality equation, it can be associated primarily with the concept of individual liberty. As a notion, it harmonises well with the already-familiar Jeffersonian ideal of "the pursuit of happiness" as well as with the specific tendencies of the "exceptional" individual personified by White-Jacket, Ishmael or Raskolnikov, such as the desire to preserve one's own "life" or identity – or, thinking of Agamben's theory, one's individuality or essence, even if it may come into conflict with society in general or its particular aspects. *Leviathan* defines this concept as follows:

The Right of Nature, which Writers commonly call Jus Naturale, is the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which in

²⁶⁴ As a side note on the influence of Hobbes' work on specifically Russian society and culture, we may mention the recently-produced Russian film *Leviathan* (2014). Directed by Alexander Zvyagintsev, the film, presented as a reflection on modern-day problems in Russia, deals with several major Hobbesian themes, such as "natural order" and the necessity for legal positivism.

²⁶⁵ See Aloysius Martinich, "Two Uses of Thomas Hobbes's Philosophy in Melville's *The Confidence-Man*."

his own Judgement, and Reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.
*(Leviathan)*²⁶⁶

At a first glance, Hobbes could be described as putting forth an individualistic manifesto, as if Pierre's dream of Enceladus, or White-Jacket's garment, or Raskolnikov's axe, suddenly were transformed from symbols into words. Of course, the immediate interpretation of what Hobbes may mean as "Nature" or "Life" could be life in the biological sense, the "bare life" remaining after all the social or cultural meanings have been removed, as per Agamben. In my interpretation of Hobbes, I move away from this, connecting "Nature" in Hobbes' manifesto with preserving the exceptional individuality together with its societal significance, which becomes intrinsically linked with biological "life" as such, and its inseparable part.

As White-Jacket puts his distinctive garb on, this is comparable to making a statement about one's social duty that almost becomes part and parcel of one's being; a "skin" of sorts. In "preservation of his own Nature" as per Hobbes, White-Jacket goes to laborious ends to earmark his separate, individual position on board the vessel. Corresponding with Enceladus' wild struggle for freedom that this thesis began with, Hobbes' statement regarding the individual's passionate fight for preserving their "life" or essence meets a solid reflection in the images we have encountered in all the three sets of case studies. Yet what happens when a distinctive yet morally neutral white garment of Melville's hero suddenly becomes Raskolnikov's bloodied axe?

At this point, Hobbes introduces another concept, "the Law of Nature," which could be viewed as the prototype of Hamilton's polished theory of "balances and checks" regulating the political and social spheres. It is defined as follows:

²⁶⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (old orthography).

A Law of Nature, (Lex Naturalis,) is a ... generall (sic) Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same ... For though they that speak of this subject, use to confound Jus, and Lex, Right and Law; yet they ought to be distinguished; because RIGHT, consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear; Whereas LAW, determineth, and bindeth to one of them: so that Law, and Right, differ as much, as Obligation, and Liberty; which in one and the same matter are inconsistent. (*Leviathan*)

The conflict between “Obligation and Liberty” certainly echoes the juxtaposition of liberty and equality which I raised at the very beginning. From the above passage, Hobbes’ philosophy also foresees the Hamiltonian vision in that unbridled human “exceptional” potential needs to be tempered by man-made, logically determined rules “found out by Reason.” The point and purpose for those rules are explicitly set out as offering protection to individuals from the potentially dangerous or “destructive” effects of their own or others’ actions. This, of course, correlates both to the analytical findings from all three sets of case studies within this thesis, and to Hamilton’s theory, as it speaks of the necessity to determine the fine balance between the “Right and Law” or the extent to which an “exceptional” individuality may be allowed to act in an “exceptionalist” society.

If we examine the themes from both *White-Jacket* and *Brothers Karamazov* from this vantage-point, an important aspect uniting Melville and Dostoyevsky’s visions is revealed. From a purely humanistic perspective, the sentencing of Mitya, or the rigid naval discipline seem essentially harsh. In terms of Hobbesian and Hamiltonian philosophies, both are a necessary evil, which, for all its hideousness, ensures that the “law of nature” is honoured and further, greater ills are prevented. The societal fabric or order has been preserved, in that justice has been dispensed, and an individual’s freedom or life has been sacrificed for the greater good of the communitarian, “exceptionalist” society. Thinking of the historical

context, this idea was adapted, in a perverse manner, within the Jeffersonian arguments about the preservation of slavery as an institution as crucial to the state's existence - whilst the abolitionist thinkers used the same argument lines to condemn slaveholding as well (echoing the debates for or against the naval reforms assessed in Melville's novel).²⁶⁷ The main theoretical factor remained overturning the status quo – whatever this entailed. The “exceptional” individual, who upsets the existing order, to Hobbes is seen as a “stubborn” presence, a stone that “takes more room from others, than it selfe fills” or an outlaw, whom he explicitly positions against society:

[C]OMPLEASANCE; that is to say, "That every man strive to accommodate himselfe to the rest." ... [T]here is in mens aptnesse to Society; a diversity of Nature, rising from their diversity of Affections; not unlike to that we see in stones brought together for building of an Aedifice. For as that stone which by the asperity, and irregularity of Figure, takes more room from others, than it selfe fills ... and thereby hindereth the building, is by the builders cast away as unprofitable, and troublesome: so also, a man that ... for the stubbornness of his Passions, cannot be corrected, is to be left, or cast out of Society, as combersome (sic) thereunto. (*Leviathan*)

Hobbes' stance is clear in that he stands with society and not with the individual. His imagery of a stone in the building, “cast away as unprofitable, and troublesome” does recall Herder's imagery of an anthill, and Melville's stone-giant, as well as the broader vision of society made up of near-similar human “units” banded together to realise joint potential in fulfilment of a unifying, exceptionalist goal. The statement, “He that shall oppose himselfe against it, for things superfluous, is guilty of the warre that thereupon is to follow,” is exactly the rational explanation to what happened to various “exceptional” individuals encountered in

²⁶⁷ See Gordon S. Wood broadly on Jefferson's era.

the previous chapters, whose opposition to society brings about “warre, “ as Hobbes would say.

Hobbes’ theory also becomes relevant in the light of the following argument regarding the role of the “exceptional” individual primarily as an observer and social commentator clamouring for necessary change. Yet, reverting to the democratisation of the concept of an “exceptional individual,” where any given individual may deem oneself “exceptional” (which also rings quite true particularly taking to view the nationalistic aspect of the exceptionalist discourse both in Russia and America, where being a member of a given national community presumably set one apart as “exceptional”), a question arises: what happens if each and every member of society believes themselves to be “exceptional” and therefore beyond any control? White-Jacket seems content with observation, whilst Mitya is essentially an “everyman” preoccupied with wishful thinking or his personal problems. However, looking back at the previous sets of case studies, an uncomfortable picture emerges, that can be summarised both by Raskolnikov’s wild theory about the “exceptional” and “unexceptional” people, or by Stubb’s words, “All of us are Ahab.” Hamilton in *Federalist Paper 9* depicts “...a number of citizens ... who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adversed to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”²⁶⁸ Hobbes, meanwhile, maintains that this is actually the main danger of allowing the “Right of Nature” to run unbridled, primarily because a high concentration of “exceptional” individuals enacting their free will in any given microcosm would create an intertwined, volatile web of conflicts descending into chaos:

And because the condition of Man ... is a condition of Warre of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own Reason; and there is

²⁶⁸ See *Federalist Paper 9*.

nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemies; It followeth, that in such a condition, every man has a Right to every thing; even to one anothers body. And therefore, as long as this naturall Right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man, (how strong or wise soever he be,) of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live. (*Leviathan*)

The previous two sets of textual case studies have provided sufficient evidence supporting Hobbes' imagined version of what this "condition of Man" could possibly look like, if given free rein. What could be done to control it, has already been mentioned in the above discussion of Hamilton's theory about the necessity of instilling a comprehensible juristic framework. Hence it suffices to say that the main purpose of the "balances and checks," or Plinlimmonian rules, is the search for "security to any man" that Hobbes speaks about. This brings me to the next part of my argument.

It is clear that the individuals, who, like Mitya Karamazov, or the sailors punished by the captain, are repressed by the established judicial system, are also essentially unstable elements who cause "warre" in their immediate environment. This implies emotional instability as well as actual unstable behaviour. Let us compare the two examples from both texts, illustrating this notion. *White-Jacket* presents us with the following picture:

Among the many... none laughed more heartily than John, Peter, Mark, and Antone—four sailors of the starboard-watch. The same evening these four found themselves prisoners in the "brig," with a sentry standing over them. They were charged with violating a well-known law of the ship—having been engaged in one of those tangled, general fights sometimes occurring among sailors. They had nothing to anticipate but a flogging, at the captain's pleasure. (*WJ*)

At a first glance, the reader may consider this image to depict the outrageous unfairness of a situation where genuine, living, emotional people are being subjected to brutal punishment for daring to reveal their emotions. Yet, looking more closely the notion of “checks and balances” is evoked again, as well as the previously discussed notion of excess. The four sailors can be described as creatures governed by free emotion that they express liberally and uninhibitedly – a trait which is connectable with the figure of a free-ranging “exceptional” individual flouting customary conventions. They may have been expressing emotions, however, these emotions are essentially of a private nature, ill-consistent with the established societal framework.

In referring to the “tangled, general fights sometimes occurring among sailors,” Melville evokes the entropic, chaotic way of existence that brings to mind both the wildly naturalistic imagery encountered in *Pierre*, and the subconsciously-determined, sporadic movements of a hypnotised crowd seen in the second chapter. However, this way of being is completely unacceptable in the light of the Hamiltonian, or Hobbesian ideal of a measured and controlled society, where lawfulness equates to logical, comprehensible unity and order. As mundane and pedestrian as this view may appear if compared to the theatrical excesses wrought by an “exceptional individual,” it is nevertheless logically explicable. The four sailors present a potential danger to the overall harmonious existence within the microcosm – and the real reason is not the fact that they act “exceedingly diverted” at the expense of the higher-status hierarchical figures, but the fact that they behave in an “exceeding” manner. Therefore, what Melville offers at this point is a real-life version of the Enceladus sequence, the four “Enceladuses” finding themselves as “prisoners in a brig with a sentry standing over them” rather than contained by masses of rock. Another noteworthy moment is that the punishment incurred by the sailors is shown to be a logical and expected outcome, which

even the perpetrators themselves are aware of: “They had nothing to anticipate but a flogging.”

The flogging scene in *White-Jacket* thus appears to be a perfect illustration of the ancient juristic principle, or *dura lex, sed lex*. What can one, meanwhile, make of Mitya Karamazov’s plight?

Considering the overall plot of *Brothers Karamazov*, it can be said that at the point of being captured by the representatives of the law, Mitya remains in a highly strung, disturbed emotional state, albeit caused by the reasons that have nothing to do with the actual crime that occurs. Moreover, right from his initial appearance in the text, he gives an impression of an unstable character, mercurial to the point of volatility, emphasised by terms such as “irascible,” “restless” or “violent”:

Even when he was excited and talking irritably, his eyes somehow did not follow his mood, but betrayed something else, sometimes quite incongruous with what was passing. “It’s hard to tell what he’s thinking,” those who talked to him sometimes declared. ... A certain strained look in his face was easy to understand at this moment. Every one knew, or had heard of, the extremely restless and dissipated life which he had been leading of late, as well as of the violent anger to which he had been roused in his quarrels with his father. There were several stories current in the town about it. It is true that he was irascible by nature, “of an unstable and unbalanced mind,” as our justice of the peace, Katchalnikov, happily described him. (*BK* 69)

Interestingly enough, it is the representative of the law within the microcosm who passes a comment on Mitya, declaring him an unstable character and a threat, and of all words he uses the term “unbalanced”.²⁶⁹ Unlike *White-Jacket*, who is distinctive but not

²⁶⁹ The original Russian here says something a bit literally like “incorrect” (*nepravil'nyi*). However, in the light of this thesis’ theme, the choice of the term “unbalanced” appears better suited.

intent on assaulting the established order as it stands, Mitya is a perfect example of a subversive element, marked by specific personal traits to stand out as such, and also seen to contradict the accepted hierarchical familiar order (family being an even smaller version of a social microcosm) by quarrelling with his father.

Yet there is an even more interesting facet to his situation. As he is about to be brought to trial, Dostoyevsky presents a picture of extreme general instability:

I know for a fact that there were several serious family quarrels on Mitya's account in our town. Many ladies quarreled violently with their husbands over differences of opinion about the dreadful case, and it was only natural that the husbands of these ladies, far from being favorably disposed to the prisoner, should enter the court bitterly prejudiced against him. In fact, one may say pretty certainly that the masculine, as distinguished from the feminine, part of the audience were biased against the prisoner. (BK 745)

Mitya may not have done anything at all that can be described as a “crime,” and is even off the stage at this precise moment, however, he serves as a subject of debates and arguments among the general public. Notably, given what was said previously about the dangerous individualist being specifically male and reputedly possessed of ability to exercise psychological influence, one may argue that here, discussing what at first seems an amusing picture of marital strife, Dostoevsky reveals typical anxieties of the time about the town’s citizens being afraid of the influence Mitya can wield over the repressed group – the “ladies,” threatening the familial and domestic foundations of the microcosm by exposing uncomfortable truth (and echoing the argument made by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792): “[T]ruth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice” (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 3)).²⁷⁰ Moreover, referring to the

²⁷⁰ See also Rogin, broadly.

character's progress in the novel as a whole, Dostoyevsky states that Mitya did "offend many people during his stay in town." In regards to how society treats its Enceladuses, the conclusion is horrifyingly harsh, but corresponds with Dostoyevsky's overall philosophy. Even if Mitya did not commit a crime, in the author's eyes he nevertheless presents a disturbance to the microcosm as it stands, by harbouring thoughts of parricide that oppose the Christian mindset that the microcosm is founded upon - and thus has to be contained or removed.

From a humanistic viewpoint, the plight of Mitya (or of the four sailors of the "Neversink") is possibly one of the most distressing imaginable. From a juristic one, however, it is not quite as simply defined. As it has already been shown, the Hobbesian notion of the "right of nature," where any given element deems itself "exceptional" and acts completely unconstrained, puts the survival of society as it stands at danger, and therefore gets curtailed. For society, justice has been dealt in removing an individual that may cause a potential threat, even purely hypothetically (such as Mitya's morbid plans to murder his father). Mitya's emotional state, as he faces his father for the last time (presented as an entirely individual, personal experience) is condemning enough by itself even if he does not technically carry the crime out, as Dostoyevsky shows:

It was a rush of that sudden, furious, revengeful anger of which he had spoken, as though foreseeing it ... when, in answer to Alyosha's question, "How can you say you'll kill our father?" "I don't know, I don't know," he had said then. "Perhaps I shall not kill him, perhaps I shall. I'm afraid he'll suddenly be so loathsome to me at that moment. I hate his double chin, his nose, his eyes, his shameless grin. I feel a personal repulsion. That's what I'm afraid of, that's what may be too much for me." (*BK* 439)

However, Dostoyevsky further on offers a curious perspective on what an individual can do in this instance, that yet again evokes the "right of nature" concept in that it may mean

the individual's struggle to preserve their individuality or essence. Mitya is sentenced to prison, but effectively, this unjust suffering can be perceived as an individual's chance to reawaken spiritually and even develop any "exceptional" characteristics that would eventually place him as a genuinely spiritually superior character. Of course, this is a very typical Dostoyevskian vision, bringing to mind Raskolnikov's cathartic reawakening as well. Yet there is also another hugely important point that divides the rebel who must be restrained from an enlightened exceptional observer proposed in *White-Jacket*, approved and supported by society. Namely, this is psychological awareness, or the triumph of the logic and reason, directed at the improvement and preservation of society, over the subconscious, chaotic movements of the "exceptional" individual, produced by the over-active sense of one's ego. Previously in this chapter, it has been shown how such an enlightened, aware state of mind can be attributed to superior education or knowledge.

As well as this, Dostoyevsky offers another possibility in that this enlightenment can also be attained through a Golgotha-like experience of intense suffering or undergoing punishment that can be quite faithfully described as "ritually just." Strong "criminal" emotions must be purged by equally strong remorse.

In this manner, the theory of "checks and balances" restraining the wild chaos engendered by the "right of nature" serves not just to preserve the general social order intact and protect society from particularly dangerous individuals. It also acts as an evolutionary step for the "exceptional" individual, assisting the transition from the wildly flailing Titan to an intellectually advanced mind; effectively, it is a refinement of sorts.

The following passage from Dostoyevsky's novel suggests that Mitya just begins to understand this principle, although he cannot accept his lot according to this philosophy:

His character was displayed, and it spoke for itself ... [T]he opening statement was read. It was rather short, but circumstantial. It only stated the chief reasons why he

had been arrested, why he must be tried, and so on ... The clerk read it loudly and distinctly. The whole tragedy was suddenly unfolded before us, concentrated, in bold relief, in a fatal and pitiless light ... [T]he President asked Mitya in a loud impressive voice: “Prisoner, do you plead guilty?”

Mitya suddenly rose from his seat.

“I plead guilty to drunkenness and dissipation,” he exclaimed, again in a startling, almost frenzied, voice, “to idleness and debauchery. I meant to become an honest man for good, just at the moment when I was struck down by fate. But I am not guilty of the death of that old man, my enemy and my father. No, no, I am not guilty of robbing him! I could not be. Dmitri Karamazov is a scoundrel, but not a thief.” (*BK* 749)

The main characteristic of the “checks and balances” theory emerges in the description of the opening statement, “short, but circumstantial” and founded strictly upon facts. The language of the legal system is unemotional but clear, quite like the clerk’s voice reading “distinctly.” Intuitive or emotional undercurrents have no place in this framework – else Mitya would have in all likelihood been acquitted. However, bearing in mind what was said about the “exceptional” individual’s punishment as a crucial step of this individual’s evolution, Mitya’s passionate admittance that he is “guilty of drunkenness and dissipation” and that he “meant to become an honest man for good, just at the moment when I was struck down by fate,” is quite timely, and by no means a tragic failure. In fact, it might be assumed that Dostoyevsky offers his hero a chance to transition from a “scoundrel” or an embittered youth beset with potentially harmful thoughts and reminiscent of Pierre Glendinning, Raskolnikov and Steelkilt, to an aware and understanding “watcher” who understands the role of inner cogs and workings of society. Nevertheless, to do so, he must first pass through the purgatory of punishment. From other characters’ point of view, Mitya’s sentencing is his

downfall, as that means descending into the lower strata of the societal hierarchy: his brother Alyosha worries about “how hard it would be for a man like Mitya to pass at once so suddenly into the society of robbers and murderers, and that he must get used to it by degrees” (*BK* 861). Yet even the monk Alyosha cannot fully define what Dostoyevsky hints at – that in the world governed by “checks and balances,” what looks like Mitya’s death-knell is effectively a lead-up to resurrection. His words of comfort are based on the Orthodox Christian doctrine of understanding spiritual advancement through suffering. However, they resonate well with the general, Hobbesian, Hamiltonian theory I outlined in this chapter, as well as with the notion that suffering refines the “exceptional” individual’s potential to make it fully developed:

Alyosha smiled gently. “Listen, brother, once for all,” he said. “This is what I think about it. ... If you had murdered our father, it would grieve me that you should reject your punishment. But you are innocent, and such a cross is too much for you. You wanted to make yourself another man by suffering ... Your refusal of that great cross will only serve to make you feel all your life an even greater duty, and that constant feeling will do more to make you a new man, perhaps, than if you went there. For there you would not endure it and would repine, and perhaps at last would say: ‘I am quits.’ The lawyer was right about that. Such heavy burdens are not for all men. For some they are impossible.” (*BK* 863)

Alyosha’s statement, “Such heavy burdens are not for all men,” in the light of all that has been previously said, means more than mere concern for his brother. Mitya’s lot is horrific, but it also makes him elect, and following a path of destiny reserved only for the

most stalwart or extraordinary.²⁷¹ In the mainstream exceptionalist discourse, he attains the status of a martyr, transcending the physical constraints to attain true transformational glory. The constant reference to imprisonment as a “cross” makes the parallel explicitly clear: in partaking of the suffering inflicted upon one by the operating judicial system, the individual is imitating Christ – who can be described as the absolute ideal of an enlightened “exceptional” observer drawing people’s attention to how life should be lived not by radical violence, but by setting an example and teaching through parable. If we consider this possibility alongside the actual Biblical text, there are many passages in the New Testament specifically to uphold this theory, such as the following passage.²⁷² It describes Jesus’ specific way of teaching, which corresponds with the notion of the “enlightened observer” in the vein of what we encounter in *White-Jacket*:

Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, the one I love, and with whom I am pleased. I will send my Spirit upon him, and he will announce my judgement to the nations. He will not argue or shout, or make loud speeches in the streets. He will not break off a bent reed, or put out a flickering lamp. He will persist until he causes justice to triumph, and in him all peoples will put their hope. (NT Matt.12.18-21)

The similarities previously discussed are all present: the leadership exemplified by Jesus Christ shows the key aspects of persistence and non-violence that may at first glance be confused with inaction. Both we have already seen in the figure of the “exceptional observer” that Melville brings out. As a curious side-note, the Captain’s exclamation, “I would not forgive God Almighty!” gains an unusual dimension if seen from this perspective. Christ is the only societally acceptable example of an “exceptional” individual that can be emulated –

²⁷¹ This is also a trope found in American literature at the time; note the fate of the protagonist in Billy Budd, Hester Prynne in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), or, less tragically, Tom Sawyer’s lies to receive punishment instead of Becky Thatcher in Twain’s *Tom Sawyer* (1876).

²⁷² See New Testament (Good News Bible).

in the opposition to the rebellious, Satanic Enceladus.²⁷³ Yet, given what has already been said, to become on the par with Christ means first to partake in suffering, as a necessary transitional step. The Captain's words, for all their barbaric cruelty, may subconsciously point towards this notion, that Peter is undergoing an evolutionary step changing him from an unaware rebel to an individual of higher awareness. This is a somewhat Dostoyevskian notion (especially if we recollect the writer's own biographical experiences following his imprisonment for the involvement with the anti-monarchic Petrashevsky movement and encounters with other prisoners) – all the more so because it suggests that there is a higher philosophy involved here, and the Captain is acting like a heartless but efficient unthinking mechanism enabling it to occur.

To summarise this idea, it can be said that the vision of smoothly-run society can be divided into distinct aspects. The representatives of authority (such as the Captain, or the court officials at Mitya's trial) are expected to carry out their tasks, preferably in as logical and emotionally detached manner as possible. The enlightened observers after the example of White-Jacket should closely monitor those processes, noting instantaneously any disproportionate cruelty or individual recklessness upsetting the legal balance, and draw society's attention to this through their writing and commenting, so as to bring about necessary amendments.²⁷⁴ Finally, the unhappy individuals like Peter or Mitya Karamazov, who find themselves facing punishment from this system for asserting their "exceptional" nature, may find salvation in the notion of understanding punishment as a painful but necessary stage in the journey towards a higher consciousness.

²⁷³ Imitating Christ was a common idea to Protestant, American mindset at the time. In particular, Benjamin Franklin frequently evoked this notion.

²⁷⁴ In *On Heroes*, Carlyle dubs the press "The Fourth Estate," playing a similar part as observer: "[T]here were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a *Fourth Estate* more important far than they all (392)."

Of course, imitating Christ was not a novel concept by any means in the day of either Melville or Dostoyevsky, or either in Russian or American culture. In fact, it would have been odd to expect a character like Alyosha Karamazov to suggest anything else, whilst White-Jacket can also be described as a solid scion of specifically Protestant cultural tradition. However, this assumption is not quite as simplistically explained. The system of “checks and balances” of judicial control is essentially man-made. There is no notion as such of any openly religious connotations that it originated from, or an intention to implement it so as to please any particular deity. Whether one adores or despises them, the “Plinlimmonian rules” exist primarily so as to enable non-violent and safe human coexistence within any given microcosm. This, of course, resonates closely with Hobbes’ main argument about the true purpose of the law in society, which is to bring justice and attain balance:

Justice And Propriety Begin With The Constitution of Common-wealth. ...

[T]herefore before the names of Just, and Unjust can have place, there must be some coercive Power, to compell (sic) men equally to the performance of their Covenants, by the terrour (sic) of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their Covenant ... [S]o that the nature of Justice, consisteth in keeping of valid Covenants: but the Validity of Covenants begins not but with the Constitution of a Civill (sic) Power, sufficient to compell men to keep them: And then it is also that Propriety begins. (*Leviathan*)

The state of “Propriety” that Hobbes so fondly refers to, means humans living as a society, with a particular goal in mind - namely, peaceful coexistence that assists productivity rather than hinders it. The devising and implementing of man-made legal frameworks, or the “checks and balances” of Hamilton, is an essential aspect for the community’s survival, but it is man-made – “the Constitution of a Civill Power,” rather than divinely inspired or

instinctively carried out. There is nothing particularly mystical or covert about it. The religious cornerstone of the Biblical teaching, however, resonates with Hobbes, despite its objective being somewhat different than just a practical notion of devising a set of rules for humans to exist together. The similarity to what is said in this chapter about both Hamilton's vision and Hobbes' theorising can be seen in the New Testament:

And so I tell all of you: what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven. And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them. (NT Matt.18 18-19)²⁷⁵

Of course, Melville and Dostoyevsky (as well as Hamilton or Hobbes) would have been familiar with the Biblical teaching. Moreover, society that they have been the product of, was founded upon Biblical teaching to a large extent, with Christian values (here I mean the universal teachings from the Bible rather than specifically Orthodox or Protestant visions) shaping it. The above Scriptural passage, at any rate, seems to uphold the theory of "Plinlimmonian rules." Human law is not detachable from the divine law, but absolutely mirrors it. There is no marked discrepancy between the imagined divine justice and man-made legal rules, but one is effectively the other. This goes even further than Hobbes' view of the "Covenants" as agreements assumed solely between humans for mutual benefit. Rather, the law produced by human beings is the manner of managing society approved by the divine. The superiority of the "Common-wealth" to an individual is also evoked in the passage. The rules agreed upon by more than one individuals are the ones to be acted upon. As a conclusion, one may say that the theory of "checks and balances" is an intensely

²⁷⁵ See New Testament (Good News Bible).

Christian one as well. Looking at Hobbes' argument, some religious overtones come across distinctly: "As for the Instance of gaining the secure and perpetuall [sic] felicity of Heaven, by any way; it is frivolous: there being but one way imaginable; and that is not breaking, but keeping of Covenant" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*).

Referring to the "perpetuall felicity of Heaven," Hobbes, I argue, is not being simply ironic. More likely is the possibility that he envisages heavenly bliss attainable by living individuals: but this is made possible strictly by adhering to the rules laid down by humans rather than an abstract and vaguely defined divinity. "Propriety" within a microcosm is an ideal, and moreover, is an achievable ideal, if the balance depicted by Hamilton is carefully preserved. In this manner, we are left with the well-exploited argument pervading the existing scholarship both on Dostoyevsky and on Melville, that the various "exceptional" individuals they depict act as Lucifer-like rebels threatening the "exceptionalist" (in that it can be likened to a heavenly ideal) united society.

In this manner, I propose that Melville and Dostoyevsky are absolutely not to be viewed as radical thinkers lamenting the demise of "exceptional" individuality at the hands of a staid societal structure. In the course of their philosophical searching, both come to a similar conclusion that the said societal structure may not be overturned by heroic outbursts of an "exceptional" individual, but must needs be protected as the only way for *all* the individuals to survive. Change can and should be brought about by acute observation and gradual growing awareness, which often may be the evolutionary by-product of suffering. An "exceptional" individual does have a place in society as the "aristocracy of the brain" – but first, the destructive, Enceladus-like impulses must be exorcised through applying just punishment.

In regards to Dostoyevsky in particular, one argument is frequently cited to debate that he in his views opposed and criticised the established system rather than strove to uphold it. Rowan Williams in *Dostoyevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction* brings up a citation from the writer's personal correspondence: "...[I]f someone were to prove to me that Christ was outside the truth, and it was really the case the truth lay outside Christ, then I should choose to stay with Christ rather than with the truth (Williams 15).

This appears at first to be a typical outburst from an "exceptional" individual: that the system of societal rules, dubbed "truth" by Dostoyevsky, is forsaken for the teaching of mercy and compassion exemplified by Christ. Yet, if we recall the words from the New Testament discussed above, it becomes obvious that Dostoyevsky is fighting a non-existent enemy here. Christ is not outside the truth, because his teaching supposedly runs harmoniously along the same lines as the man-made maxims designed to hold the "Commonwealth" together. Indeed, Williams is quick to note that this statement is made by the writer at his early stage, as he is still to refine his main philosophical vision.

In comparison to the early Dostoyevsky, in *White-Jacket* Melville comes across as much more tempered and suited for the role of the enlightened but neutral observer. The real-life impact of this particular novel on the naval laws in America at the time, passionately discussed by Kovalev, speaks for itself. Meanwhile, Rogin implies that *White-Jacket* is neither a piece of political propaganda with a definite aim in mind, nor a narrative wholly detached from the controversy surrounding the proportionality of punishment in the American navy. What makes it such an effective treatise is the fact that Melville, just as the cultural context of his era expected of the writer, manages to achieve the perfect balance between personal reaction to what he observes, and the need to draw attention to this through using conventional arts of persuasion. In her essay, "White-Jacket: Telling who is – and ain't

– a Slave” Jeannine Delombard tentatively asserts this notion by equating the abolitionist debates of the time with how Melville depicts the treatment of sailors (Levine 53).²⁷⁶ The writer expands his observational powers so far as to draw attention to other, even more problematic questions, such as slavery, taking a seemingly unrelated, yet actually relevant stance in the environment pervaded by heated abolitionist debates, as Rogin claims:

Melville was capitalizing, in part, on a well-advanced political campaign to abolish naval flogging. *White-Jacket*'s attack on flogging did not offend respectable opinion. Flogging matters in the story less as naval reform than as politically significant personal obsession. It was politically provocative, in the middle of a debate over slavery, to identify shipboard with slave masters, and condemn the use of the whip. (Rogin 90)²⁷⁷

From Rogin's words, it becomes clear that Melville manages to achieve the fine balance between the dispassionate addressing of facts and the expressing of a distinct emotional response to those – precisely as an enlightened observer should. If Dostoyevsky still acts quite like a wilful spirit putting himself at odds with the established order, Melville, in *White-Jacket*, is anything but rebellious. It is much more evident that whilst Melville draws a distinct line between the necessity to honour the law as a general concept, he is not blind to the proportion of the punishments dealt out on the “Neversink,” and draws society's attention to those as well as he possibly can. We may say that Melville almost immediately manages to seize what is to be expected of him, whilst Dostoyevsky has yet a long way to go to arrive at the same stage.²⁷⁸ Melville's argument, contrasted with the early Dostoyevsky's emotional style, is concise and based on the virtues of perfect logic and juristic balance. The sailors'

²⁷⁶ See Jeannine Delombard in *The New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*.

²⁷⁷ Melville generally is seen as standing aside from key abolitionist polemics rather than taking an active part, although he was sympathetic to the plight of the slaves. See Delbanco, *Abolitionist Imagination*, viii.

²⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Melville was also son-in-law to Lemuel Shaw (1781-1861), who occupied a judicial post at the time the reform of corporal punishment in the navy took place – so the notion of personal influence is not wholly irrelevant here. See Brook Thomas, “American Literature and the Law” (Levander and Levine, 407).

plight should be seriously considered precisely because it is illogical in the light of the harmonious societal structures and institutions such as the American Constitution, which define the maxims upon which society stands - juxtaposed to imaginary projections of “flaws” pervading all other nations, exemplified by “the territorial laws of Russia” ruled by a despot. Ignoring the sailors’ suffering would therefore make those very maxims a “lie,” and the whole exceptionalist narrative based on “broad principles of political liberty and equality” meaningless:

Certainly the necessities of navies warrant a code for their government more stringent than the law that governs the land; but that code should conform to the spirit of the political institutions of the country that ordains it. It should not convert into slaves some of the citizens of a nation of free-men. Such objections cannot be urged against the laws of the Russian navy ... because the laws of that navy, creating the absolute one-man power in the Captain, and vesting in him the authority to scourge, conform in spirit to the territorial laws of Russia, which is ruled by an autocrat, and whose courts inflict the *knout* upon the subjects of the land. But with us it is different. Our institutions claim to be based upon broad principles of political liberty and equality. Whereas, it would hardly affect ... the condition on shipboard of an American man-of-war's-man, were he transferred to the Russian navy and made a subject of the Czar. As a sailor, he shares none of our civil immunities ... For him our Revolution was in vain; to him our Declaration of Independence is a lie. (WJ)

At this particular point the conflict between the “exceptional” individual and the “exceptionalist” society is highlighted. Hobbes proposes an interesting notion in that “where there is no Common-wealth, there nothing is Unjust.” Applying his proposition to this specific investigation, I would like to suggest that the “exceptional” individual, at the

beginning of his or her emergence, is actually a neutral entity, in that they cannot be described as definitely “good” or “evil.” This assumption brings me to the vision of Enceladus yet again: the Titan is assuredly “exceptional” in his sheer physical grandeur, but just as any other part of nature, he cannot be pigeonholed as “evil” (or good, for that matter). His size may be alarming to the onlooker, but his motives are not known. It is only in its co-operation with the wider exceptionalist society and adherence to “checks and balances,” or in the refusal to do so, that such a grand entity sheds its neutrality.

To conclude, Pierre Glendinning or Raskolnikov meet with punishment. So do Nicholas Stavrogin, Captain Ahab or even Mitya Karamazov. Of course, these characters may not be described as neutral “observers” in any way. They oppose human society, which is bound by specific laid-out rules for smooth co-existence, by their actions, way of living or even thinking (as in the instance of Mitya Karamazov harbouring parricidal thoughts). Following along the lines set by Hobbes, one may imagine that they oppose the concept of commonality, and from this perspective, can be defined with a certain degree of confidence as law-breakers receiving their just deserts. There is, of course, the opportunity to acquire an aware and enlightened state of mind through suffering, but only Mitya *consciously* takes it, and even that unwillingly.

Finally, if we regard Melville and Dostoyevsky’s texts from a Hobbesian vantage-point, the manner in which they assert the theory of “checks and balances” does not contradict any religious notions, but harmoniously interweaves with them. Much already has been said in this thesis as well as throughout the extent of scholarly works available, about the Luciferian rebellions attempted by “exceptional” individuals in the novels by both writers, and their complete failure. In this light, White-Jacket and Mitya present a particularly interesting case study, since, as it already has been shown, they come across different ways to

come to terms with the legal framework holding society together, rather than get completely and utterly destroyed by it. And the reconciliation of the individual and the communal through the means of the law therefore presents the most important theme uniting the imaginary exceptionalist cosmoses envisaged by both writers.

CONCLUSION: MELVILLE, DOSTOYEVSKY, AND A UNIFIED COMMUNITY.

As this thesis draws to a close, what can we say we have gleaned from this analysis? To start with, it is obvious that Dostoyevsky and Melville's worldviews are akin. They champion a gradual, measured reformist approach within their respective national communities. Both are concerned with attaining a balance between individual freedom and societal obligations, leaning slightly towards the latter. In that regard, their works reflect the general intellectual tendencies of their era, treading the line between the affirmation of the individual's significance and the necessity to preserve the social order.

Let us very briefly review the main points that I made throughout the three chapters.

The core texts by these authors share thematic traits, exhibiting an uncanny similarity in the use and arrangement of textual and plot tropes generally typical of the literature of the time (such as the usage of dream-sequences to carry across the metaphoric points).²⁷⁹ This phenomenon is illustrated in my analysis of *Pierre* alongside *Crime and Punishment* in the first chapter.

The same chapter proposed a specific interpretation of the individualised self, which diverged from the stereotypical Romantic vision. For Melville just as much as for Dostoyevsky, the "everyperson" who fits well within society is preferable to the individualistic, larger-than-life hero. Although both authors recognise the essential spiritual poverty of such a figure (Razumikhin, Plotinus Plinlimmon), they nevertheless perceive it as congruent with society founded upon the exceptionalist ideal of coexistence within the national community. Excessive individualism, however, is opposed by the world. As Melville puts it in *Pierre*, "He shall now learn, and very bitterly learn, that though the world worship

²⁷⁹ Dreams as a general concept occupied an important place in mid-nineteenth century literary world, coinciding with the nascent interest in psychoanalysis. See, for instance, Frank Seafield, *The Literature and Curiosities of Dreams*.

Mediocrity and Common Place, yet it hath fire and sword for all contemporary Grandeur” (*Pierre* 226).

The second chapter discussing *Moby-Dick* and *Devils* considered the “charismatic leader” who “will not strike his spars to any gale” (*MD* 455), as a potentially highly dangerous phenomenon associated with the unlimited sway of personal freedom and abuse of hierarchical power. The selected texts reflected my original argument concerning the ambiguous Jeffersonian ideal of “the pursuit of happiness” and the dilemmas associated with it, such as the possible descent into a lawless nightmare. I also revealed that the chief danger in such a situation is the depersonalizing draw of the charismatic leader’s personality that binds together the conscious individual members of a given community to form a homogenous, anarchic mass.

In the third and final chapter, I have arrived at the conclusion that the Hamiltonian vision of attaining societal harmony through curtailing individual freedoms and introducing juristic “checks and balances,” rings true for both Melville and Dostoyevsky. The general impression, gleaned from close reading of the core texts as well as the critical sources, suggests that both authors seem supportive of the cohesive commune-oriented vision, previously described by Herder. Dostoyevsky is being rather more explicit in expressing his sympathies, whilst Melville is playing on the contrast, by showing the essential futility of refusing to accept this ideal.

Also in the third chapter, I determined that whilst both Melville and Dostoyevsky are interested in the achievement of balance between the individual liberties and the social obligations, the proposed potential methods of achieving this balance are rather different. If Melville holds on to the idea that I noted in the introductory chapter, regarding the figure of the writer as a physically uninvolved commentator who invites readers to make their own decisions regarding what may be done, for Dostoyevsky, balance is achieved via juristically-

established punishment imposed upon an individualistic transgressor according to the accepted legal code – and the said individual subsequently undergoing this tribulation to grow spiritually and come into a more harmonious state of existence within the wider exceptionalist society, to which he was a foreign element previously, “as if he and they belonged to different nations” (*C&P*, 517).

In what concerns achieving of the balance between liberty and equality, Melville focuses on the close observation of the adherence to the rule of law by figures of authority such as captain Jack Chase of the “*Neversink*,” and comments on the flaws regarding the law’s implementation, referring to “checks and balances” explicitly (*WJ*). This is illustrated by the image stressing the impersonal, mechanistic nature of this vision: “The whole body of this discipline is emphatically a system of cruel cogs and wheels, systematically grinding up in one common hopper all that might minister to the moral well-being of the crew” (*WJ*).

Meanwhile, Dostoyevsky sees the attainment of the perfect social harmony as an individual, private quest that “everyperson” can and should take part in. Following the Russian vision of *osobyj put’* and adhering to it by honouring the rule of law is a spiritual and moral duty (or even a divinely-inspired vocation) of every individual, whilst transgressing it is primarily associated with moral shame. This comes across in the judge’s words to the jury members in the trial scene, which is ironic (given the plot of the narrative) and yet at the same time, highlights the unifying exceptionalist spirit pervading society:

Remember that you are the champions of our justice, the champions of our holy Russia, of her principles, her family, everything that she holds sacred! Yes, you represent Russia here at this moment, and your verdict will be heard not in this hall only but will re-echo throughout the whole of Russia, and all Russia will hear you, as her champions and her judges, and she will be encouraged or disheartened by your verdict. Do not disappoint Russia and her expectations. (*BK* 818)

In this respect, one may argue that the Melvillean, American vision, stressing the necessity of honouring the law, notwithstanding the personal suffering of the individuals involved, in order to preserve societal order (and avoid greater evils, such as a mutiny on board of the “Neversink”) is rather more realistic: “Checks and balances, blood against blood, that is the cry and the argument” (*WJ*). It is also much more reconcilable with the mainstream exceptionalist discourse, as the writer does not openly oppose the American national vision, but offers suggestions for improvement whilst America proceeds on its spiritual course. Dostoyevsky, though, is quite fatalistic in accepting that there would always remain discontents or innocent victims of the exceptionalist society – but they should be offered the path of individual spiritual development as a possible way of reconciling with it. This reminds one of the somewhat latter non-violent philosophy stressing usefulness to society over individual brilliance, which was frequently discussed at the time in Russian literature, and brought forth most notably by Tolstoy and his followers.²⁸⁰

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: DETAILED OVERVIEW.

In the introductory chapter, the question was posed regarding Melville and Dostoevsky’s similarities, and what they exactly entail. Both the novels analysed and the evidence offered in the critical works to prove the Melville-Dostoyevsky dichotomy tentatively proposed by Delbanco, Chances and Olson, showed a marked and powerful similarity. The first chapter, comparing the tribulations of Pierre Glendinning with those of Rodion Raskolnikov, immediately and explicitly placed the two protagonists as being, in a sense, “mirror” reflections of each other. Harping on Delbanco’s aforementioned statement

²⁸⁰ See, for example, a humorous fairy-tale *Ivan the Fool and His Two Brothers* (1886). Tolstoy presents a fantastical peasant utopia that he believes is the only truly viable mode of existence, based on usefulness and cooperation.

that Melville is an American version of Dostoyevsky, I maintain that if it is so, then Pierre is an American Raskolnikov. Both protagonists exhibit a remarkable similarity in their background and motivation: semi-genteel origins contrasted with the surrounding squalor; the obsessive desire to “rescue” subtly boosted by a sense of their unique predestined purpose; and an underlying capability for violence, which Dostoyevsky’s hero exhibits at the beginning of the novel, and Pierre’s earthly existence concludes with. What is even more interesting, though, is the stylistic similarities found within both texts (like the usage of dream sequences precisely at the same chronological point in both narratives in order to metaphorically present a startlingly similar message (symbolised by the visions of a stone titan or the unnamed “disease”). These passages I interpreted as exceptionalist parables, describing the unviability of the individualistic attitude within an exceptionalist society.

Further on, throughout the remaining core texts, the two authors still echoed each other. My analysis of the volatile “charismatic leader” taking over a given microcosm in *Moby Dick* and *Devils* revealed that the dangers presented by a powerful individualistic personality permitted to run riot, emerge through the texts as a constant, unifying theme. As the sinister Verkhovensky hints, such personalities commonly exhibit malicious traits: “Those with higher abilities can’t help being despots and have always done more harm than good” (*Devils*, 442). Comparing those two texts has also shown the hypothetical outcome of the situation when a supposed hero or “leader” comes to power by divesting the rest of the microcosm of their own individual or spiritual traits, resulting in complete depersonalization and reducing a given segment of society to “one thick cluster” (*MD* 448), or homogenous “mob” laden with potential for destruction.

The metaphorically similar images of the sinking “Pequod” and the fire destroying the town put forward a subliminal image of the likely fate of a nation-state surrendered into the hands of a nihilistic individualist – presented in a strikingly melodramatic and effectively

terrifying vision.²⁸¹ If my first chapter revealed the fact that Dostoyevsky and Melville are similar in terms of the subjects they choose to depict and the techniques they employ to do so, my second chapter seizes onto the fact that they were quite alike in terms of their beliefs as well, fearing the same potential outcome. Recollecting the initial argument outlined in the introductory chapter, I concluded that both Melville and Dostoyevsky dreaded the unfettered individualism of the “charismatic leader” as a driving force behind uniform group movement - seeing it as a prime threat to the very fabric of human existence.

The third chapter attempted to compare Melville’s chronicle of naval day-to-day existence contrasted with what is frequently described as one of Dostoyevsky’s most complex novels. From both the stylistic and the narrative viewpoints, the texts appeared extremely different. My focus remained on the description and analysis of the administration of legal punishment and the juristic rationale surrounding this topic – relying on the previously discussed principle of “checks and balances” envisaged by Alexander Hamilton as a perfect antidote to the unrestricted Jeffersonian “pursuit of happiness.” This yet again supported the original hypothesis that neither Melville nor Dostoyevsky can be regarded as opponents of the establishment, rebels or Promethean figures intent on deliberately subverting the existing order.

Thus I came to a conclusion that both writers should be regarded as subtly advocating for the upholding of the existing judicial system holding society together, and evidently unwilling to sacrifice the fragile balance of group coexistence in favour of individual goals. The depiction of what can be typically seen as examples of extreme cruelty (scenes of corporal punishment described by Melville, or the imprisonment of the technically innocent Mitya Karamazov) both authors view as a hard but necessary aspect of preservation of the liberty-equality balance, as the interests of one are not predominant over the interests of

²⁸¹ See Kovalev, *Herman Melville and American Romanticism*.

many. Neither writer have I found to be ardently clamouring for the instantaneous abolition of the admittedly flawed judicial system produced by the “exceptionalist state.”

Certainly, the solutions proposed to justify or amend the horrific cruelty of the judicial controls differ markedly for both. Melville, in the figure of his anonymous and eccentrically-dressed protagonist acts as a critic highlighting the shortcomings of the existing judicial system, so that they can be looked at and, theoretically, corrected. Dostoyevsky, meanwhile, focuses mainly on spiritual transformation as the main consequence of being subjected to punishment: even though factually he is innocent, Mitya nevertheless harboured and considered in earnest thoughts of parricide, and the writer views his punishment as a cathartic spiritual journey necessary in order to expiate the potentially noxious elements of the hero’s psyche and eventually return him to society as its healed and more harmonious member. Essentially Dostoyevsky is a somewhat unorthodox “spiritual healer” in terms of solutions he proposes; Melville, meanwhile, is more of a dispassionate “observer” that is more reminiscent of the authorial role I discussed in the introductory chapter. Nevertheless, for both, society as a whole matters decidedly more than the single given individual – which is a solid argument in favour of the Herderian ideal of the unified existence discussed in the introduction.

In this manner as seemingly relevant as it may have initially appeared, the vision of a larger-than-life, Carlylean or Emersonian hero who is a law unto himself, is not favoured by either writer, but is held by both as potentially highly dangerous. In terms of genre, I hold both writers to be sceptical of Romanticist or Transcendentalist flights of fancy.

Dostoyevsky, if viewed from a primarily religious, Orthodox platform, can be described as a champion of humility and reconciliation with one’s perhaps unsatisfactory lot – which is quite likely to turn out to be a perfect starting point for a psychological transformation into a more adaptable member of society. In the meantime, Melville can be described as openly

championing ordinariness, making it clear that bouts of extreme individual “cosmic” struggle are unviable – and even comical. In his correspondence with Nathaniel Hawthorne, he explicitly assumes a sceptical stance, saying, “It is but nature to be shy of a mortal who boldly declares that a thief in jail is as honourable a personage as Gen. George Washington. This is ludicrous. But truth is the silliest thing under the sun.” In reality Melville recognised his own subconscious attraction to the individualistic hero – but he was also able to mock it as being unviable and inappropriate in actual life.²⁸²

Therefore, I conclude that Melville’s true heroes are not Pierre Glendinning or Captain Ahab for all their enormous aspirations: rather, it is Plotinus Plinlimmon (as disagreeable as the character is, his philosophy nevertheless is far more practical and sensible than Pierre’s romanticized misfortunes), the observant but not-too-active Ishmael, Starbuck with his preoccupation for barrels of whale oil and profits in the Nantucket market, or the unassuming narrator in *White-Jacket*. The true hero for Melville is essentially the one who strives to uphold the legal “checks and balances”; as pedestrian as their presence may seem. And this subsequently renders Melville’s universe relatable to Dostoyevsky’s ideals of humility and ordinariness.

SOCIETY OR INDIVIDUAL? FINAL THOUGHTS.

At this point, I revert to the general juxtaposition between the two theoretic models: the ruthless pursuit of individual goals, or a somewhat depersonalized state of being as an “equal” unit making society up.

The image proposed by Johann-Gottfried Herder is that of an “ant colony” where individuals are seen as human units making it up, more or less equal and all working collaboratively towards the achievement of goals for the good of the community as a whole.

²⁸² Herman Melville to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1? June ? 1851, in OUP edition of *Moby-Dick*.

My original hypothetical argument implied that Dostoyevsky and Melville both can be described as echoing this image in their works, although each gives a distinct interpretation. Dostoyevsky sees the individual's participation in communal collaborative existence as a conscious individual decision to leave behind one's egotistical motives, rather than a subconscious choice determined by some unfathomable "natural order." Meanwhile, Melville may not be enthusiastically supporting the vision of such unified commonality, yet comes to the conclusion that it is the only possibly viable mode of existence, since his individualistic protagonists, such as the "proud man" (*Pierre* 223) Pierre Glendinning or Captain Ahab, eventually perish. In order to survive, an individual should become a perfectly mediocre presence – like Plotinus Plinlimmon, or, going even further, totally forsake individualism so as to become nearly faceless and fluid in one's identity – like the elusive Ishmael or the anonymous, blank-faced narrator of *White-Jacket*. Pierre and Ahab's demise are certainly a tragedy to Melville, but rather cynically, he has to admit that such characters are not fated to survive.

I contrasted Herder's vision with the theory of "hero-worship" outlined by Thomas Carlyle and similar thinkers such as Emerson, centred around a suggestion that humankind naturally gravitates towards exceptional individuals who magnetically attract others with the sheer force of their personality. My initial assumption was that to Dostoyevsky, the figure of a conceited hero such as Nicholas Stavrogin would have been an abhorrent presence (and which he also denounces in Raskolnikov's case), whilst to Melville (as a representative of a supposedly more individualistic culture founded, among other things, upon Jeffersonian maxims regarding the individual "pursuit of happiness") a protagonist like Pierre Glendinning would at least be offered a chance of redemption in the reader's eyes. However, the subsequent literary analysis has shown that the situation is nowhere as simplistically explicable. It is true that Dostoyevsky regarded with trepidation the rampantly individualistic

characters such as the protagonist of *Crime and Punishment*, openly stating that this worldview is essentially arrogant at the core and repugnant to the traditionally Russian, Orthodox ideal (which is evident, for example, in the scenes where Raskolnikov is shunned by his fellow-prisoners as a “gentleman”). However, reading the texts in their entirety (particularly in regards to the third chapter) has shown that to Dostoyevsky, hero-worship is not a wholly alien topic altogether. The chief difference lies in what exactly constitutes the necessary requisites for achieving heroic status. A “hero” becomes as such not through application of physical force, committing shocking actions or deliberately putting themselves above others. Rather, Dostoyevsky offers a curious twist on the traditionally Christian ideal of humility, that becoming a hero in the true sense of the word means conscious individual spiritual development in order to become a better-integrated member of the human society. The typically Carlylean notion of the hero as a great manipulator or fighter the writer envisions as a spiritual trap on the way to enlightenment that forms part of the soul’s journey. The finale of *Crime and Punishment* summarises this in no uncertain terms:

...He did not even know that a new life would not be given him for nothing, that it still had to be dearly bought, to be paid for with a great future deed... But here begins a new account, the account of man’s gradual renewal, the account of his gradual regeneration, his gradual transition from one world to another, his acquaintance with a new, hitherto unknown reality. (*C&P* 522)

Regarded from this angle, Dostoyevsky’s novel appears quite akin to the homiletic novels of the Protestant tradition, quite popular in the United States at the time that Melville was writing – in that the writer presents a quasi-pilgrimage towards a “new life” and

“transition” into a supposedly better, more soulful world.²⁸³ However, I feel there is a possible twist in the tale that Dostoyevsky preserves, whether knowingly or unwittingly, and which gives the whole novel a somewhat satirical, almost Melvillean spin. By suggesting that attaining the status of a spiritual hero will have to be “paid for with a great future deed,” the writer proffers a worrying suggestion that on his journey, the protagonist may repeat the same mistakes that have brought him to punishment before – in a crazy vision of never-ending déjà vu. The “regeneration” or “renewal” will be possible only if the hero strives towards spiritual improvement consciously, with the full understanding of things – and not instinctively, as Herder would have imagined. In this manner, oddly enough, I arrived at the conclusion that although he can be described on the surface as upholding societal cohesion, Dostoyevsky can be seen as recognising the significance of individualism – and offering a way to reconcile it with societal expectations.

What can one, in the meantime, make of Melville’s perception of “hero-worship?” I maintain that to Melville, excessive heroism is first and foremost ludicrous, perhaps best symbolised by a stone Titan’s vulnerability “to the defilements of the birds, which for untold ages had cast their foulness on his vanquished crest” (*Pierre* 295), or by the final scene of *Moby-Dick*, where the sinking of the “Pequod” is accompanied by Flask’s anxieties about his unreceived pay (*MD* 506) and the “tauntingly” flying sky-hawk (*MD* 508) being nailed to the mast by “submerged savage” Tashtego. The latter is essentially tragicomic in spirit, as this pathetic act of defiance is defeated by the natural forces and “the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago” (*MD* 508).²⁸⁴ To Melville, excessive heroism, particularly if set against the much more powerful adversary such as nature (as in *Moby-Dick*)

²⁸³ The homiletic novel promoting the distinctly Protestant religious ideals formed a significant part of the cultural landscape in Melville’s day. For further information on that era marked by “evangelical surge” (Tharaud 55), see Jerome Tharaud’s article.

²⁸⁴ See broadly Kovalev, and Herschel Parker.

or human society in general (as in *Pierre*) is laughable – precisely because it is doomed to fail from the start. True heroism, as the writer sees it, is quite pedestrian in spirit: the most sympathetic among his characters probably being Starbuck: “[B]rave as he might be, it was that sort of bravery chiefly, visible in some intrepid men, which, while generally abiding firm in the conflict with seas, or winds, or whales, or any of the ordinary irrational horrors of the world, yet cannot withstand those more terrific... more spiritual terrors” (*MD* 102), or Queequeg, whose gallantry is tempered with ignorance of Western manners and exhibited in appropriate actions at appropriate times (such as the rescue of a drowning man in “Wheelbarrow” chapter (*MD* 54)). John Bryant, in *Melville and Repose* (1993), dubs this aspect “tragicomic.” Melville’s idea of true heroism consists of being able to peacefully exist in the united society, not harming one’s fellow-beings. Throwing oneself into the teeth of unnamed “spiritual terrors” in the full imitation of a hero, however, would result in parodic demise.

If being a “hero” is unviable in an exceptionalist state, what do the both writer-observers suggest is the correct way to live out one’s life and purpose in a manner harmonious with the exceptionalist discourse of one’s nation? As the individual’s role in society was metaphorically comparable to a sailor’s work required to keep the nation-vessel afloat, as long as the individual kept within the boundaries of the legislative codes, respecting their extent and putting forth solutions to be implemented communally, rather than attempting individual radical actions, their individuality was not in danger of suppression.

Looking at Melville’s vision in more depth, an even more interesting picture appears. The writer metaphorises the image of a weaver at work, as the individual harmoniously introduces his own path or destiny, “interblending” his own journey into the intermingled general fabric of life whilst still remaining conscious of his “own shuttle”:

There lay the fixed threads of the warp subject to but one single, ever returning, unchanging vibration, and that vibration merely enough to admit of the crosswise interblending of other threads with its own. This warp seemed necessity: and here, thought I, with my own hand I ply my own shuttle and weave my own destiny into these inalterable threads. (*MD*, 192)

Melville views the role of the individual in society as a weaver, merging his own life-path with that of all others. Later in the text, he is even more explicit, evoking what could be described as absolute, Herderian societal cohesiveness, where the human community is united into one biological body:

Oh! My dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness. (*MD* 373)

In that aspect, I maintain that Melville is extremely akin to Dostoyevsky and his notions of forsaking the egotistical self. Just like Dostoyevsky, he is wary of extreme individualism and recognises the lure of complete social cohesion – although Melville is definitely more wistful and even ironic, imagining achieving unison with others coming naturally through trance-like pleasure (as a somewhat far-fetched idea) rather than a conscious effort to put behind one's ego.

If we compare this situation with what we see with the works by Dostoyevsky such as *Crime and Punishment*, one encounters uneasiness about overt liberty, individualisation and its noxious effects on human beings, and the marked isolation of individual self - laid bare (as most notably presented in the character of Rodion Raskolnikov). Just like with Melville, Dostoyevsky's world appears to uphold the concept of the individual interblending with the rest of society: moreover, in Dostoyevsky's Russia, religious awareness, and the conflict of the

individual and society produces a somewhat more turbulent effect. The vague unwritten law of Melville, where individuals “have been their own legislators and lawyers” (*MD* 354) is more expressly replaced by the Orthodox, traditional *sobornost*’-oriented mentality in order to bring about the cohesive harmony, denying concepts such as privacy or individuality in the process. This could practically ensure the survival of human community where the concern for individual is replaced by the community’s interests, and Dostoyevsky is seen as a supporter of this view. This exact difference forms a major distinction between the foundations of American and Russian exceptionalist discourses. To connect the last point with existing scholarly analyses, Andrei Zorin in *Osobyj Put’* suggests that Russian exceptionalist identity is inseparable from “the specific Orthodox path” and the fusion of “private and common”:

[T]he relatively recent formation of the theory of Russian nationalism (including Dostoyevsky’s novels and journalistic articles, and his idea of “universal sin”), proves to be intrinsically connected with the formation of individual consciousness during the early New era. The specific Orthodox path of salvation serves as a base for further ideological construction of national identity, and the logic behind the electedness of the Russian people is nurtured by the categoric lack of distinction between private and common, which stem from the religious practices of the other era, when the boundaries of the concept “Russianness” were set differently from the nineteenth century. (*Osobyj Put’* ?)

According to Zorin, the specific composites of the Russian culture going back in time before the middle of the nineteenth century, have set out a specific outlook where it was the community (not even the nation per se) who was to be deemed “exceptionalist.” In this environment, everyone is inherently “sinful” and therefore, destined to work collaboratively as well as individually as means of atonement for the hypothetical sins (a stance shared by Dostoyevsky). Russian “exceptionalism” was essentially religious and Orthodox at the core,

and submission to authority personified by government or nobility was likely viewed as part of this quasi-penance. “True” equality at the level of almost bodily cohesion, where individuals take it naturally that everything should be communal, is remarkably resented by Dostoyevsky’s characters on a subconscious level. This can be seen, for example, in Shatov’s recollections of his stay in America: “Once when we were travelling, a man put his hand into my pocket, took out my hairbrush, and started brushing his own hair; Kirillov and I exchanged glances and decided it was all right...” (*Devils*, 146). This state of unison is unnatural, yet presents a something to aspire to, by overcoming personal resentment possibly stemming from rigid societal hierarchy – an ascetic feat of sorts. If to Melville the dissolution of the individual within the communal is a subconscious psychological process, which moreover is ironically parodied as not being feasibly achievable in reality, to Dostoyevsky it is not natural – but takes a conscious effort to attain, and the author appears to believe that it is a correct thing to do so, in order for the exceptionalist society to continue existing.²⁸⁵

Therefore, I reiterated the original hypothesis that both Melville and Dostoyevsky held on more or less faithfully onto the older, Herderian ideal of societal coexistence and the necessity to preserve it for harmonious social functioning. The juristic institutions of legal codes and practices (represented respectively by the naval code in *White-Jacket* and in the description of the courtroom realities in *Brothers Karamazov*) are viewed by both writers as a necessary evil, without which human society, as we know it, would simply disintegrate. Dostoyevsky deliberately describes the sentencing and jailing of an innocent character, constructing the evidence in the overall narrative plot so deftly as to render proving Mitya’s innocence nigh impossible. Melville’s unnamed narrator is powerfully shocked by the explicit physical brutality of corporal punishment in the navy. Yet both writers are similar in

²⁸⁵ See also Kohn 398, and Leatherbarrow pp 54-55.

that they do not choose to openly campaign against the abolition of all punishment altogether, just so that potentially, a few blameless souls can be saved. To abolish judicially imposed punishment would be, to both writers, to unfasten the bindings holding together the societal fabric, unleashing chaos as a result, and destroying the fragile balance between the individual and the communal.

Nevertheless, the grandiose vision of a hero who “insists upon treating with all the Powers upon an equal basis” (Melville to Hawthorne, *MD* 510) is not wholly and univocally condemned by the authors. Dostoyevsky offers a more personal, spiritual alternative for an individual to achieve heroic status in a way which would be more harmonious towards all others. Melville clearly sets it that heroism in its over-exaggerated form is unrealistic and doomed to fail – but also exhibits sympathy and pity for a failed hero (such as Pierre). Isabel’s scream upon Pierre’s death, “All’s o’er and ye know him not!” (*Pierre*, 310) is prophetic in this instance, hinting that the human in Pierre has been overshadowed by the grandiose heroic aspirations that of course had to be curbed. Societal order has been preserved, but the individual, who has posed a threat by “stumbling” and his “too moody ways” (*Pierre*, 310), was killed in the process. Melville does not expiate the individualistic rebel; but he pities the human underneath. Both writers do not support the individualistic hero, but they view him with compassion.

In the end, though, one thing is clear: for both, frail and imperfect humanity is infinitely preferable to stalwart heroism of epic proportions: albeit this attitude is reworked by both authors to become more conscious and personal, rather than mechanistic and resembling the instinctive movements of an ant-colony as original Herderian theory goes. I maintain that this aspect, common to both writers, places them in a similar position, hanging somewhere in the middle between the Romanticist and Realist worldview just as I initially proposed. Neither

have yet acquired the Realist cynicism, yet both actively favour a genuine human soul over a spiritually dead grandiose hero.

Having previously discussed the sheer artifice of the charismatic hero's anatomy in my analysis of Stavrogin and Captain Ahab – at this point, I reiterate that just as Herder, Emerson and Thoreau originally favoured nature over artifice and regularity over excess, so did both Dostoyevsky and Melville, amid the fevered discussions at that exact time regarding the reconciliation of equality and liberty and conflicting obligations to one's fellow-humans with the ever-hungry ego. The ordinary was the new heroic for the post-Romantic, pragmatic mid-nineteenth century world. Summing up this view, favouring the ordinary, the simple, the common, I close with a quotation from *Pierre*: “Ah! Easy for a man to think like a hero; but hard for man to act like one” (147).

What, then, can we say of the wider implications of this thesis' proved argument? Melville and Dostoevsky represent a crucial point on the timeline of literary history, which is also significant in regard to the broader comparative developmental patterns of nineteenth-century Russia and America. Russia and America both were “young” nations, yet to catch up with Europe and realise their full political and cultural potential. They therefore could be seen as the representatives of the world to come – which would be based on the more democratic than hierarchical ideals, and avant-garde ideas. This would surface fully during the twentieth century, coming to the head at the time of the Cold War crisis, De Tocqueville's words about the two nations becoming unique players on the world stage due to their marked and distinct stance concerning the need to preserve societal balance, yet constantly teetering on the brink of totalitarian abyss, ringing prophetically true. Meanwhile, this thesis addressed the deep origins of that juxtaposition, looking to the previous era when both America and Russia just commenced to cement their specific stance, and the landmark literary works by their great writers reflected it.

The subject of this thesis signposts the exact transitional phase in literary history, wedged between the “Age of Revolutions” with its Romanticist idealistic visions, and the more pragmatic era characterised by societal concerns, reform, and emergent Realism. Whilst both Melville and Dostoevsky have been dubbed radical and ground-breaking on occasion, they both arrived independently at the conclusion that attempting to wreak revolutionary change would result in tragic consequences. Both dreaded rampant individualism and totalitarian facelessness equally, and both were aware of the fact that their home nation could fall victim to either. Therefore, both used the platform of their works to articulately warn their fellow-humans, yet employing logical paradoxes and well-constructed sophistry rather than overt Sentimentalist techniques to argue their case.

Instead, the writers offered a solution consisting of cooperation of all the members of society, coupled with accessible education and awareness of one’s fellow human beings in the Christian, as well as democratic sense of the word – which would not threaten the established hierarchical patterns. This exact moment marked the dawning of the new era, where social consciousness and obligation to one’s fellow beings took the central stage, as the straightforward legal obligations replace the arcane aristocratic codes of honour. It was early yet, as both writers had still been shaped by the prevailing opinions of the day (particularly, regarding the role of women, serfs or the enslaved), yet it was a genuine start. In the future, this would be discussed further by the Marxist and Socialist critical schools of thought, and by the feminist, racial and queer theory scholars. Literature would be seen not as an elitist pleasure-pursuit, but as an instrument to promote fairness and equality.

Finally, acting essentially as prophets for their own era, both Melville and Dostoyevsky did foresee the rise of totalitarianism and the dangers that it will bring (whether we think of the Russian Revolution or the Cold War), arguing instead the necessity of a carefully

constructed societal framework regulated by smoothly-functioning legal rules.²⁸⁶ Yet rather than mystics or visionaries, these writers were both first and foremost gifted social observers, whose opinions are as valuable for the fields of law or sociology as they are for literature. In the present-day scholarly cosmos, this puts my research alongside the recent contributions reconsidering nineteenth-century authors' place in a wider philosophical, cultural, or historical context, such as the notable *Melville's Philosophies* (2017), edited by Branka Arsic and focusing on Melville being reinterpreted through various philosophical lens. It is hoped that the lessons offered by the whaler and by the *intelligent*, the American and the Russian, would be a source of wisdom not just to literature scholars looking to establish new points of dialogue between the two great but distinct literary traditions, but also to state-workers, politicians and thinkers interested in building a stable yet fair national community.

²⁸⁶ For Melville and Dostoevsky described alternatively as “prophetic,” see E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*.

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