MADNESS AND CULTURE:
A STUDY OF MADNESS IN THE WORKS OF WOOLF, CHEKHOV AND FITZGERALD

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MADNESS AND CULTURE: A STUDY OF MADNESS IN THE WORKS OF WOOLF, CHEKHOV AND FITZGERALD

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ABSTRACT

The tendency in psychiatry is to locate the source of madness within the patient rather than investigate possible cultural causes in the genesis of madness. This tendency deflects critical insight away from the culture and, given psychiatry's exclusive, extra-legal charter in dealing with the mad, becomes another lever for social control. Inadvertently or otherwise, psychiatry's narrowed field of focus supports the dominant cultural ideology. In contrast to psychiatry, presentations of madness in literature invite broader interpretations. In literature the mad are described in a contextual fashion that includes cultural influences. Literature offers a more integrated portrait of madness than the descriptions commonly found in clinical case studies.

This thesis examines the relationship between madness and culture in the work of Virginia Woolf, Anton Chekhov and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Each author has a unique perspective which not only contributes to the understanding of madness, but also provides accurate criticisms of cultural causes. Their novels and stories concerned with madness contain insights into culture's role in defining madness, producing it, shaping its form of expression and determining what constitutes a cure. Though different in style and outlook, they are united by their shared concern for the silent destruction of the misfit and by their criticisms of cultural complicity in causing madness.

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Histories of psychiatry commonly depict modern theories and methods of treatment as the culmination of a process that led from the first rude attempts to cure insanity to the present point of scientific objectivity and precision. An often erring but inevitably progressive line is traced from events such as the discovery of shock therapy by the Romans (administered by electric eels) to our own intricate nosology and sophisticated techniques. The progress made through medicine and science is seemingly self-evident. In Psychopathology and Culture Sarbin and Juhasz argue against the unquestioning acceptance of the medical model of madness as the only repository of understanding:

> The lens through which most historians examine the chronology of madness is the lens of nineteenth and twentieth century science. Such historians do not see the need to justify the use of the "science-on-the-march" lens instead of, for example, a moral, theological, mystical or astrological lens. The idea that science is the road to truth has become so entrenched that the historian is often blinded to the possibility of using other lenses.[1]

The view of madness as a sometimes mystical, metaphorical, revelatory, evil or divine phenomena is out of place in a world that subscribes to the inevitable progressiveness of science. The models of insanity presented by a scientific approach have

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[1]T. Sarbin and J. Juhasz, "The History of Psychiatry," Psychopathology and Culture, ed. Ahsan Al-Issa (Baltimore: Park Press, 1982), p. 53.

dominated not only in questions of origin and treatment, they have also shaped historical interpretation.

The medical approach to madness is not a recent development. Practitioners of trepanning in the Middle Ages opened a sizeable hole in the lunatic's cranium in what they believed to be a rational attempt to release noxious vapours that caused insanity by rising, significantly enough, from the lower regions of the body to the brain. The organic explanation of madness dates back past Hippocrates to the practises of the Egyptians and Mayans. What distinguishes the present scientific model from previous ones is not just sophistication. Its legalized domination over other interpretations and its culture-bound premises raise implications for its role in society. The attitudinal groundwork that eventually raised the scientific models to the position they now occupy can be traced to the Augustan period when treatment became so clearly shaped by ideology.

The mad in Augustan literature are devoid of any capability for truth or insight. In Pope they are objects of disgust and fear, their utterances meaningless rather than revelatory. In his study of madness and literature in the 18th century, Max Byrd joins Michel Foucault in suggesting that society needs madness as a sort of dumping ground for its fear and loathing of the prohibited aspects of human possibility that lay only partially dormant inside each person. In the process of transferring these unwanted sides of themselves to the mad, the

sane ritually cleanse themselves and gain a scapegoat that can be punished. Since the transfer can never be complete, the process is unending. Byrd explains the infamous treatment of the mad in Augustan England as an illustration of his point and argues convincingly that:

> The intensity of the Augustan revulsion [from madness] was too great not to suggest to us as its cause a deep-seated, barely controlled terror . . . in the Augustan age fear of the insane springs from the inescapable conclusion that it is ourselves who cause madness, that human beings possess an unpredictable self-altering, self-destructive potential.[2]

The Augustan hostility to madness signals the existence of buried reasons for opposing sympathetic treatment. The brutal treatment was given ideological justification by the attitudes expressed in emerging capitalist doctrines.

It is not possible here to illustrate the connections existing between the Augustan worship of Reason and its role in early industrialism. Suffice to say that it was a necessary precondition if society was to be geared for a capitalist economy. To restate what is common knowledge, Reason was seen by the Augustans as the faculty which raised man out of the animal state. Any expression of unreason was suspect because it was a possible step downwards into the bestial. Since they once had the potential to be human, the mad were worse than dumb animals. There was a sensed conviction that the mad were responsible for their condition, that a voluntary lapse of the will allowed

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[2]Max Byrd, Visits to Bedlam (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1974), p. 54.

their reason to wander. Addicted to the riot of imagination, the mad were deserving of calumny and harsh punishment. Accordingly, "The Dunciad" contains images that link madness with the bestial, the vice-ridden, the filthy and the deluded.

Swift's public life dispels the argument that madness in Augustan literature is primarily a literary device used for satirical purposes and is therefore not truly representative of deeper attitudes. As one of the governors of Bedlam during that institution's most inhumane period, Swift condoned, by his presence if not his actions, the filthy, crowded cells, the scanty, foul diet, the chains, beatings and the high mortality rate. By laughing at the madman and denying him his humanity and right to humane conditions, the Augustan mind denied those aspects of themselves that the mad take on. Yet there is more to their laughter and mockery than a transference of fears and guilt onto the mad scapegoat. There is a brutishness to the Augustan ridicule of the mad, an arrogant cruelty that seems distinct from, yet attached to the transference procedure.[3]

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[3]Touring Bedlam was one of London's great attractions in the early part of the 18th century. Pain has always been a spectator sport. Ned Ward's pretentious London Life is, unfortunately, one of the best contemporaneous descriptions of a visit to the infamous madhouse. Samuel Richardson's depiction of a Bedlam scene prefigures the later Romantic sympathy for the mad and places the voyeurism of people like Ward in a more revealing light:

> I was much at a loss to account for the behaviour of the generality of people who were looking at these melancholy objects [the mad]. Instead of concern I think unavoidable at such a sight, a sort of mirth appeared on their countenances and the distempered fancies of the miserable patients most unaccountably provoked mirth and loud laughter. . . . Nay, so shamefully inhuman were

The Romantic emphasis on sensibility over reason left its mark on the treatment of the insane. The reform impulse that began in the late 18th century certainly owed part of its fuel to the growing importance of feeling. Different ideological lenses were brought to bear on insanity that softened the Augustan tyranny of Reason. Pinel in France and Tuke in England drew attention to alternative causes for insanity and the need for more humane treatment. Insanity was not the loss of reason, it was a problem between the emotions and the will to control them. Being independent of disease or the lapse of reason, insanity could not be cured by punishment or surgery. It was to be combated by self-vigilant Christianity, by developing within the patient a moral foundation that would shore up excesses of feeling. The moral managers, being good capitalists as well as good Christians, also attempted to promote a productive industriousness within the patient that would contribute to the development of a stable workforce.

The creation of a stable workforce was of particular interest to later moral managers and is an indication of the ideological bias that would eventually find expression in both the doctors and the laws touching upon insanity. The class-consciousness in early psychiatry left an indelible mark on later theories and treatment. The retreats and sanctuaries

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[3](cont'd) some . . . as to endeavor to provoke the patients into rage and make them sport. (Samuel Richardson, Letter CLIII of Familiar Letters, ed. Brian Downs, London, 1928, quoted in Byrd, p. 89.)

for the mad became the exclusive preserve of the wealthy. The poor were kept in state institutions and workhouses. This differential treatment persists to the present. One moral manager unashamedly attests to the class-bias that informed the treatment of insanity. At an inquiry he was asked:

> "What are your objections to chains and fetters as modes of restraint?"
> He replied, "They are fit only for pauper lunatics; if a gentleman was put in irons he would not like it."[4]

In the 19th century the greatest perceived threat to capitalist society was the very real possibility of revolution by what was seen as atheistic, anarchical masses living in poverty. It is not surprising then that it was from the ranks of the poor that the mad were most frequently drawn. By the end of the 19th century a full ninety percent of non-voluntary patients fell under the Poor Law Authority.[5] The label of insanity thus became more than the transferring process that Byrd and Foucault discuss; it also became a method of political suppression of deviance. Doctors could use the term as a device to entrench the status quo and disseminate, by way of warning, acceptable modes of conduct. For the poor, acceptable behaviour meant using the capitalist middle-class as a model. The new "science" of

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[4]Speaker Unknown, quoted in Vieda Skultans, English Madness (London: Routeledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 111. Class biases remain in 20th century psychiatric treatment--i.e. the upper class patients are generally classified as neurotic and given therapy; lower class patients are generally classified as having a psychosis and given less expensive medical treatment such as chemicals.

[5]Ibid., p. 110.

psychiatry clearly had a normative, conservative basis, but could refute any suggestion of this on the grounds that as a science and a branch of medicine it was objective.

The normative strain evident in 19th century theories exists in modern psychiatry. In Cross-Cultural Studies in Mental Health (1961), Soddy announces that "a healthy person's response to life is without strain; his ambitions are within the scope of practical realization. . . ."[6] Like the Augustans before him, and like the prevailing medical model to which he subscribes, Soddy locates the source of unhealthiness within the individual rather than the culture. The "healthy person" that he describes oozes dedication to the status quo and the ideal of normality, glides through life content with his lot, or, if he is discontent, is able to appease his frustration through acceptable methods--turning on the TV, shopping, or aspiring to a higher income bracket. Unencumbered by the strains and tensions so characteristic of the 20th century, he knows no existential confrontations, no religious or moral crisis, no despair or rupture with convention. In short, if he exists at

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[6]K. Soddy, Cross Cultural Studies in Mental Health, quoted in Thomas Szasz, Ideology and Insanity (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), p. 36. Freud makes an important distinction between healthiness and worthiness that Soddy overlooks. In "Fragments of an Analysis with Freud" he reminds his patient that: "Healthiness is a purely conventional, practical concept, and has no real scientific meaning. It simply means that a person gets on well; it doesn't mean that that person is particularly worthy. There are 'healthy' people who are not worth anything, and on the other hand 'unhealthy' neurotic people who are very worthy people indeed." (Joseph Wortis, "Fragments of an Analysis with Freud," quoted in Szasz, Ideology and Insanity, p. 70.)

all he is acquiescent.

The problem that is side-stepped is that if cultural conditions demand an unhealthy response such as stress or strain, then adapting to those conditions is going to entail negative consequences whether one is acquiescent or, as Soddy sees it, "unhealthy." By focusing on the deviant's maladaptive behaviour to the exclusion of the large and little madnesses of the majority, psychiatry gives tacit approval to the conditions which the individual is required to conform to, or at least views them as the best possible situation in an imperfect world. Soddy's medicine for the disenchanted is adaptation, not protest for a change that is beyond "the scope of practical realization." His message is conservative and potentially repressive.[7]

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[7]In Social Amnesia Russell Jacoby broadens the practitioners of essentially conservative norms to include the post- and neo-Freudians who, on the surface, reject the value-bound and repressive sides of psychiatry. Their approach to the mentally ill is less restrictive and promises "to unleash or tap the real self and real emotions: the authentic individual" (p. 47). However the newly discovered authenticity and unchained "native potentials" of the patient have nowhere to go in face of oppressive social realities. Their freedom must remain inward. Without the emphasis on a corresponding development of external freedom in the culture, the post- and neo-Freudians are, as Jacoby notes, not such a radical departure from earlier attitudes:

> The full litany of virtues that the rich once preached to the poor are restored to service. Inward courage, discipline, strength, humility are proffered by those homespun philosophes as a patent medicine for a lethal civilization.
> (Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia, [Boston: Beacon Press, 1975], p. 51.)

This is the awareness reverberating through literature: that the image of normality (the majority) is held up for the mad to imitate in order to become healthy. But the image itself is morally and spiritually impoverished. It lacks the range of extremes in human potential, extremes that are now a sickness whether they be for good or evil.[8] Yet with inexorable persistence the good doctors in both works insist upon adaptation--adaptation or punishment. The culture, the doctor and the patient are involved in a complex mixture of mores and medicine.

In Culture Against Man Jules Henry calls modern psychiatry a "medicine wrung from the very system that inflicts wounds upon us."[9] His use of medicine as a metaphor for psychiatry is

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[8]The notion of mental illness removes the responsibility for doing evil from the individual. Since evil does not exist in psychiatric lexicon, one does not commit an evil act, one commits a sick, unhealthy act. Philip Q. Roche, recipient of the American Psychiatric Association's Isaac Ray Award for his work in bringing psychiatry and law closer together, asserts that:

> . . . criminals differ from the mentally ill only in the manner in which we choose to deal with them. . . . All felons are mental cases . . . crime is . . . a form of mental illness.
> (Philip Q. Roche, The Criminal Mind, quoted in Thomas Szasz, The Manufacture of Madness [New York: Dell Publishing, 1970], p. 17.)

The assertion that crime is an illness postulates the existence of a norm which, in its healthy state, is incapable of evil. The substitution of "sickness" for "evil" attests to the crucial change that has occurred in the hierarchy of knowledge. Science, the lens through which a sickness is viewed, has replaced religion, the lens through which evil is viewed. The change has not resulted in an increase of freedom.

[9]Jules Henry, Culture Against Man (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 16.

well-chosen. The medical model of insanity has conferred the respectability of scientific certification on the psychiatrist's assessment of who needs help and what treatment they should receive. Its association with medical authority and its affinity with the ruling ideology gives psychiatry an exclusive, almost unquestioned charter in the management of the mad. The veil of objective purity that is expounded by medicine and science has deflected close scrutiny away from the ideological justification behind psychiatry's charter. Ideology is not a word usually coupled with medical treatment. However, as Henry points out, the culture that produces the psychic wounds also determines what constitutes a "cure." The definition of insanity and the nature of treatment it receives are more subject to cultural and ideological underpinnings than to medical considerations.

The relationship between the psychiatrist and the deviant is more complex than what can be seen in the doctor-patient paradigm. The unseen influence of cultural history often reduces the psychiatrist and the patient to the role of pawns in an intricate game with stakes far greater than either party realizes. Psychiatry is stamped with those features that made modern capitalist society possible: the ascendancy of a pseudo-scientific, rationalist interpretation of experience and the desire to impose middle-class morality and conventions of conduct on all stratas of society, but most notably the lower echelons. Psychiatrists have been unwittingly or consciously complicit in the attempt to standardize how individuals see and

act. This standardization gives the false impression of universality to prevailing definitions of deviant and acceptable behaviour.

Recent social historians and cultural critics from different disciplines have condemned the uncritical acceptance of Western culture's perspective on madness. Ruth Benedict's research in tribal societies underscores the relativity of definitions of sanity and insanity. In her paper, "Anthropology and the Abnormal," she concludes that the small proportion of deviant individuals in a given society is not a sign that certain societal precepts for behaviour are universally correct, but rather is proof that "the majority of mankind quite readily take to any shape that is presented to them."[10] The deviant's inability to adapt to one society does not render him unfit for any society; it means that adaptation involves a conflict in him that it does not in others. As Benedict notes, we do not broaden our understanding of madness when "we identify our local normalities with universal sanities."[11] To confuse standardization with universality further strengthens psychiatry's extra-legal charter and isolates behaviour that is not culture-bound.

Criticism of psychiatry as a form of cultural enforcement has arisen from within. The maverick psychiatrists Szasz and

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[10]Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal," Journal of General Psychology, 10 (1934), 75.

[11]Ibid., p. 76.

Laing are the two most widely read opponents of the medicalization of madness. Szasz's work is often repetitive and coloured with sweeping generalizations. His pronouncements can be dictatorial at times, but the thrust of his critiques is accurate and perceptive. Szasz discounts the medical model of insanity and claims that it is an arm of social coercion. By investing psychiatric idiom with medical terminology, maladaptive deportment takes on the appearance of an "illness" to be "cured" with medical techniques. The source of dysfunction is located within the patient rather than the culture. Once seen as being the source of the illness the unwilling patient loses any recourse to the courts for protest. His only method of expressing opposition to extra-legal confinement is through devices in his immediate environment. The methods available--smashing chairs, screaming obscenities at the medical staff, withdrawing from contact--are interpreted as proof of the need for continued isolation from society. Szasz views this situation as a self-fulfilling prophecy and argues that a "person who has harmed no one, but is considered a deviant can be locked away; if he resists it is but another sign of his irrationality."[12]

Like Szasz, Laing criticizes the cultural assumptions underlying the prevailing attitudes towards madness and takes exception to the notion that the sources of madness lie solely within the deviant. Though Laing's tendency to mystify madness

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[12]Szasz, Ideology and Insanity, p. 174.

eclipses the value of much of his work, he is successful in drawing attention to the major role that culture plays in the creation of madness. Laing sees in the mad an exaggeration of traits already present in the cultural milieu. Pursuing this line of thought, he comes closer to an incisive understanding of madness than he does in his rhapsodies on schizophrenia as a mystical journey. "In the present state of our society," he writes, "the patient is the truth, not revealing truth, just the raw-edge, the fragmented, dangerous symbol of a deep ulcation within human interaction."[13] While they are widely divergent in temperament, Laing and Szasz agree on two key points: that locating the source of madness within the patient serves to deflect criticism from cultural causes, and that madness is often a symbol of corrosive societal influences.

Benedict, Szasz and Laing are relatively recent critics of psychiatry's untouchable position in Western culture's hierarchy of knowledge, a position that, as stated, derives most of its strength from the medicalization of madness. Prior to them, indeed prior to psychiatry itself, there existed an important source of commentary on cultural attitudes towards madness. Since ancient times literature has spotlighted the connection between oppressive social orders and the condition of madness. Intentionally or unwittingly, writers since the anonymous author of the Gilgamesh epic have directed attention to the

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[13]R.D. Laing, The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 74.

relationship between the mad and the culture which defines them, helps produce them and shapes their form of expression. Viewed historically, portrayals of madness in literature chronicle the shifting place and significance that madness has held. As well as being valuable for contextual presentations of madness, literature is naturally notable for the subjective worth of its portraits. In the 19th and 20th centuries in particular, the tendency towards psychological interpretations has resulted in descriptions of the nuances of emotion and perception that are more vivid in fullness and detail than was previously possible, creating a depiction of madness from the inside, a glimpse through the eyes of the mad. The accuracy of these accounts is attested to by the striking similarities between fictional characters and autobiographical memoirs from those who have been labelled insane. The genius behind Virginia Woolf's Septimus Smith or Chekhov's Ivan Dmitrich lies in the ability of the author to connect the internal state of the character with the stress, the restrictiveness, or the morally poisonous nature of their social realities.

This thesis attempts to show that culture defines madness, determines its treatment and shapes its expression all in accordance with prevailing ideological suppositions, and to show this through one of the most valuable forms of cultural criticism, literature. The immediate difficulty in beginning the task is selection. There is an overwhelming array of writers to choose from, each with his own special merit. Dostoyevsky's

characters reveal moral madness and protest against suffocating bourgeois rationality; the existential madness of Sartre's Rocquentin raises doubts about commonly held notions of man's relation to experience; Gogol's Diary of a Madman illustrates, among other things, how the drive for status can crush the individual with a profound sense of insignificance and failure; and Hemingway's obsession with killing unwittingly spotlights his culture's acceptance of a particular form of madness. Each writer is distinguished by specific criticisms of the interaction between culture and madness. Obviously, in neglecting certain authors I do an injustice to the topic, but just as obvious is the fact that a topic as broad as this demands a severely narrowed selection.

The three authors I discuss have been chosen because their novels and stories contain the themes that are the most germane to a discussion of the association between madness and culture. Hopefully they will be springboards and gathering points for other works from different writers. It is my premise that, if taken as a whole, depictions of madness in literature point an accusing finger at societal responsibility for madness. The authors that this discussion concentrates on indicate just that: responsibility for madness cannot, as the medical model assumes, be located solely within the individual.

Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is the connective tissue of this thesis. Her book draws out the hostility and fear that society has for the mad and offers an unusually sensitive

"internal monologue" from an altered state of consciousness. Like Woolf, Anton Chekhov touches upon the ideological justification underlying treatment, locates the mad within a cultural context and leaves the laws of madness uncertain. Finally, F. Scott Fitzgerald's stories will be examined for their relevance to our own cultural condition. While it may be argued that his characters are not clinically mad, they do exhibit cultural diseases in a way that is both stark and disturbing. The lack of direction, the shifting, indecisive morality, absence of hope and narcissistic self-absorption so frequent in his work are all traits of modernity. Fitzgerald parallels cultural with individual deterioration. In doing so he highlights the personality disorders that are persistent features of contemporary psychiatric case studies.

Before embarking upon the main body of this discussion there are a few terms that must be clarified, the first of which is "culture." By "culture" I do not mean the usage that Matthew Arnold gave to it, the "sweetness and light" that comes from the "study of perfection," from "the moral and social passion for doing good."[14] Rather than the higher, exalted products of the human mind I use the more pedestrian, pejorative application of the term. By "culture" I suggest the use of ideas as levers of social manipulation (ideology) and the physical structures that embody these ideas. In short I mean, as Jacoby suggests, that

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[14]Matthew Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy," Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold, ed. A.D. Cullen (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 410.

culture is "the total way of life of a group of people."[15] My use of the word will be limited to dominant cultural strains and will not include sub-cultures operating against the norm.

Another important clarification that needs to be made at the outset is the way in which the distinction between cultural causes and medical causes of madness have become blurred. Madness resulting from cultural causes is a frequent feature of 19th and 20th century literature. Unlike organic madness, culturally induced and shaped madness is associated with the grotesque and the sublime. The distinction is crucial, but has become blurred by the medicalization of madness. While the distinction is important I do not intend to make it an element of this thesis, only to point at it now in passing. Madness in literature can be a vehicle for social protest, a source of revelation or heightened awareness of alternative states of being. For the Romantics, to choose an example, madness conjures up images of brooding power and creative fecundity. Madness can also be a destructive force dressed up to appear socially acceptable or even admirable. This thesis concerns itself with madness rather than insanity, and will avoid the complexities of detailed nosology by employing the word in a general sense.

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[15]Jacoby, p. 151.

II. Virginia Woolf:

Madness versus Culture in Mrs. Dalloway

Woolf's descriptions of Septimus Smith's inner world were given authenticity and depth by her own experiences. Septimus' perceptual sensitivity, his mercurial oscillations between heaven and hell, and his conceptual intensity are residues from his creator's madness. There are in Mrs. Dalloway passages identical to autobiographical accounts of psychosis.[16] These passages hold, because of this fidelity to actual experience, particular interest for an understanding of what the mad see and how their perception is related to their culture. Fidelity to actual experience is not the only reason why the sections of the novel dealing with Septimus stand out. Coupled with authentic description is an innovative style of narration perfectly suited to presenting the voice of madness. Both the inner monologue and the stream of consciousness techniques that Woolf explored carry the reader along through association. This associative narration complements the fragmented, explosive perceptions and thoughts that Septimus has, allowing the reader to experience a degree of insight not generally possible in fiction or non-fiction.

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[16]The compilation of autobiographical accounts found in Bert Kaplan's The Inner World of Mental Illness (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) is a fascinating source of parallels between madness in literature and in actuality.

This thesis is concerned with examples from literature that point to culture's responsibility in creating, defining, treating and shaping the expression of madness. Woolf's experiences and their transposition into literature shed light on these issues by offering a unique perspective, that of a highly gifted writer who has seen through the eye of madness and who has encountered her society's reaction to it. Two questions regarding Woolf help, when investigated, to understand the relation between madness and society in Mrs. Dalloway and to connect Woolf's style with its formative influences. What in Woolf's way of perceiving isolated her from her culture? and how much of her style is a reflection of an altered state?

An illuminating parallel to how Woolf may have experienced life is found in Bennet Simon's study of madness in ancient Greece. Homeric man, Simon observes, did not see himself in terms of the modern, enclosed, radically separate ego, but rather "as an open force-field, having no structural bounds that would separate it and insulate it from the effects of forces all around it."[17]

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[17]Bennet Simon, Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece (New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 61. Madness in Greek literature brings two models to bear on the abnormal that are significant. Portrayals of madness in the Attic tragedies are notable for their emphasis on either Apollonian or Dionysian traits. Where other divinities initiate madness, as Hera does with Io or Ares with Ajax, the role of madness is confined to a function of the plot. Apollo and Dionysius stamp their own natures on the thematic elements of the play and on the characteristics of the mad. The Apollonian madness visited upon Cassandra in the Oresteian Trilogy is distinguished by its selectivity, quality of mediumship and stress on knowledge. The percipience of Cassandra's ravings marks an early association between madness and dark truths.

Using the lack of psychic self-enclosure as a common attribute, he goes on to suggest that "there is much to be learned from a consideration of the similarities among the Homeric, the thinking of psychotics and the thinking of children."[18] He could have added the thinking of the highly creative as well. Woolf believed that the sensitized impressionability that often co-exists with a lack of structural bounds to selfhood enhanced her powers of perception and feeling. Like Simon's Homeric man, she saw herself as more of "an open force field" than a self-enclosed entity. As a consequence her work avoids the rupture between subject and object that is characteristic of the modern world-view. With Woolf, objects become felt presences rather than things to which one attaches a function; there is an immediacy in them that few writers are able to equal.

For Woolf, giving objects a presence was more than a literary device, it was a reflection of her experience. The porosity of the walls between herself and the world made this

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[17](cont'd) Dionysius, by way of contrast, emphasized release rather than revelation. The madness he causes in The Bacchae is congregational, infectious and aims at the breakdown of self-control through atavistic methods. He unfettered the primitive in man, creating the feared image of the uncivilized, chaotically impressionable and reactive individual. With the breakdown of the normal hierarchy of internalized social precepts of conduct comes a way of seeing that is sensitized to impressions.

In Mrs. Dalloway there are elements of both the Apollonian and the Dionysian in Septimus' madness. The Dionysian in his heightened sensitivity to stimuli and the Apollonian in his new realizations about human nature.

[18]Ibid., p. 62.

sense of presence possible in her fiction and her life. At times the porosity increased to the point where objects flooded in to become a part of her identity, causing an organic unity with her environment. In her diary she writes of seeing flowers in bloom and feeling "as if the flesh were dissolved and through it the flowers burst red and white."[19] The qualification "as if" keeps the sentence metaphorical and the feeling legal; taken away and the sentence becomes an expression of madness. The fact that the impression of incorporating the flowers became one of Septimus' more vivid hallucinations may indicate that it was also one of Woolf's. It does at least indicate a way in which she saw and felt external objects. Connected with this incorporation of objects is intersensory experience. Woolf's perception borders on and sometimes crosses into syncretic expressions. She would understand one madman's claim that a lemon tastes like the high-pitched "vibration of a violin string." This understanding can be seen in her use of one sense modality to describe another. In Mrs. Dalloway, for example, Septimus receives the sound of a car horn as a tactile as well as an auditory sensation.

Madness not only colours the descriptions and incidents in Woolf's work, it also affects the style, both what is said and also how it is said. Hypersensitivity to stimuli naturally gives itself to tapestries rather than structurally tight plots. Her

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[19]Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1953), p. 37.

psychic makeup was inclined towards images and scenes, a fact that she may have had in mind when she wrote that "I can make up situations, but I cannot make plots."[20] Mrs. Dalloway travels along an associative succession of images that melt into each other. Unity is created by a common denominator (Big Ben) rather than a plot. The associative impressionability of Woolf's madness shaped, in part at least, the distinctive style in which she wrote, but while madness and creativity influenced the development of her techniques of expression they were not the only formative forces.

Woolf's disposition to situations rather than plots was reinforced by a historical trend towards inwardness and psychological analysis in literature which, in turn, mirrored cultural conditions. Promethean struggles of man versus the societal or natural conditions have largely vanished from literature, leaving the hero in an isolated struggle with himself, a struggle for authenticity and originality in the midst of mass culture, a struggle for some form of sanity, some sort of resolution to problems amid conditions that defy resolution. This inwardness finds expression in style as well as theme, in the short, broken self-analysis endemic to modern literature. The tendency is towards a description of feelings and frustrations rather than events. What Lukacs writes of the 19th century novel is even more characteristic of 20th century literature. In constrictive societal conditions:

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[20]Ibid., p. 114.

> the soul is larger and wider than the destiny life has to offer it. Here the tendency is towards passivity, a tendency to avoid conflicts and struggles [because of their overwhelming appearance] rather than engage . . . [this] leads to the disintegration of epic symbolization, the disintegration of form in a nebulous and unstructured sequence of moods and reflections about moods, the replacement of a sensuously meaningful story by a psychological analysis.[21]

The "disintegration" and "unstructured sequence" in modern literature are connected with issues beyond style and the internalization of subject matter. Style is inextricably tied to the complexion of its culture. The features of narrative technique and content that Lukacs sees in novels are a consequence of those features existing in the society that the writer lives in, or the one he sees coming. In Woolf, questions on the relationship between style and culture are complicated by her psychic makeup and madness. Taken together, the influences that went into the formation of her style created a constant tension between fragmentation and unification, between her perception of modernity as an unconnected series of transitory experiences and her search for a binding force in this "loose, drifting material of life."

As stated, Woolf's own experiences and style were particularly suited to a faithful description of madness. However, Mrs. Dalloway goes beyond description alone. Through the treatment that Septimus receives Woolf criticizes modern culture and the authority given to medical practitioners in

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[21]Georg Lukacs, Theory of the Novel, quoted in in John Orr, Tragic Realism and Modern Society (London: Macmillan & Co., 1977), p. 5.

dealing with madness. She illustrates the unending antagonism that exists between culture and madness and touches upon the reasons for this antagonism. If not solely responsible for creating Septimus' madness, his culture is at least the trigger for it. After assisting in its creation, Septimus' society, through Holmes and Bradshaw, assures itself that madness is a physiological problem rather than something that could happen to them through their culturally induced experiences, and proceeds to deal with it as an unacceptable weakness. His treatment begins with a diet of rich food and ends in a threat of incarceration for an unspecified amount of time.

Septimus Smith enlists to fight in the war because it is the right thing to do, because he believes that he is defending his fatally circumscribed notions of what culture stands for. To Septimus, culture "consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square."[22] His reading of Shakespeare, like his image of Miss Pole, is antiseptically pleasant. His understanding of culture is similar, lacking in depth and critical insight. He enters the trenches to fight for a society which will destroy him in the end. Sensitive, hopeful and sadly unacquainted with social and political realities, he succumbs to a display of mass lunacy for reasons which his society has dressed up to appear sane and noble. He makes the common mistake of identifying intellectual

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[22]Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 95. All subsequent references will be made to this text.

and creative masterpieces with the march of civilization. The collapse of his naivete brings with it the realization that the messages genius sends down through the ages is critical rather than laudatory. Almost without exception cultural propagandists die with their generation; it is the critics whose value and truth transcend their eras.

At the front, Septimus develops "manliness" and wins the friendship of his officer, Evans. When Evans is killed, Septimus does not react. Despite his delicate nervous system, or rather because of it, he feels neither anger, sorrow nor loss. His culture succeeds in numbing him, in making him a pliable machine able to do its violence without the interference of humane emotions. When in Italy after the Armistice, he is attacked by bouts of panic, by an inability to feel and a bottomless emptiness. In an attempt to escape the sense of emptiness, Septimus seeks out the temporary restorative of human warmth and becomes "engaged one evening when the panic was on him--that he could not feel" (p. 96). The war cripples Septimus, placing his sensibility in a constant state of deadened shock and divesting him of the capacity for faith. His marriage is an act of desperation.

Returning to England with his new bride, Rezia, Septimus makes a superficially smooth transition from the insanity of war to the mundane complacency of routine. He is responsible, dutiful and well-liked by his employer, but his inner world is disjointed from surface appearance. The estrangement between

inner alienation and outer acquiescence that is characteristic of modern culture is in Septimus intensified by the fact that he has been wrenched away from the daily habits of the masses, has been made foreign and unfit for normal life. His grip on conventional reality begins to slip. What Quentin Bell writes of Woolf gains equal application to Septimus:

> To know that you have had cancer in your body and to know that it may return is horrible; but cancer of the mind . . . [is] a Dionysian sword above one's head--this must be almost unendurable.[23]

When the sword falls and Septimus goes mad he reacts in a way antithetical to and protesting against his previous culturally-induced "death of the soul" condition. Emotionally, he travels the line from exaltation to extreme fear and despair in a matter of moments. The world is no longer deadened, it is alive, burgeoning, pressing with stimuli. The psychosis-induced hyper-awareness of stimuli crushes an already tottering sense of self. While sitting on a park bench with Rezia he is transfixed by the beauty available in a common park.[24] The intensity of his perceptions engulf and dissolve his sense of separation. He experiences, not surprisingly, the same feeling of organic unity

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[23]Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1972), p. 44.

[24]Septimus' perceptions are examples of the parallel to be found between madness in literature and in reality. Of her own madness, Norma MacDonald recounts a way of seeing identical to Septimus': "The brilliance of light on the window sill or the color of blue in the sky would be so important it could make me cry." (Norma MacDonald, "Living with Schizophrenia," Kaplan, p. 176.) Beside these perceptions sanity must appear as a lustreless, prosaic thing to the mad.

described earlier in Woolf's diary:

> The earth thrilled beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh; their stiff leaves rustled by his head. . . . To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy. (pp. 76-77)

The human condition can withstand only limited amounts of sensory impact. Septimus must "shut his eyes," must stop the inflow lest, as he puts it with unintentional irony, he be "driven mad."

Septimus' sensual awareness includes revulsion to human touch. In Sartre's "The Room," Pierre, like Septimus, regards the sexual arena of his marriage with aversion. Here the senses are an entrapment rather than a release. His wife's attempted tenderness solicits the revulsion from physicality frequently cited in accounts of madness:

> He smiled at her but held her hand by the ends of her fingers with a sort of revulsion, as though he had picked up a crab by the back and wanted to avoid the claws.[25]

Septimus' distaste for his wife's physical needs not only reflects the repugnance in which hyper-sensitive awareness holds corporeality, it also signals Woolf's own disgust for sex, a feature of her character that may have owed more to her step-brother's alleged molestations than it did to her madness.

Once mad, Septimus transgresses one of his society's holy laws--he is unable to work. Enter the good Dr. Holmes. Holmes owes his origin to Woolf's experiences with Dr. Savage. To

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[25]J.P. Sartre, "The Room," Psychopathology and Literature, ed. Leslie Rabkin (San Francisco: Chandler, 1966), p. 131.

relieve her alternating bouts of emotional intensity and numbing lethargy, Dr. Savage prescribed rich food and complete inactivity, a mode of treatment then in vogue. Leaving aside the simple-minded incomprehension evident in his exclusive focus on the limited benefits to be gained from rich food and being bed-bound, his remedy, no matter how useless or harmful, is sanctified by the unseen but ever-present force of law. If she balked at Savage's clumsy attempts to effect a cure, Woolf would have faced the far greater danger of institutionalization. As Septimus learns, treatment is not optional.

Dr. Savage has been kept alive in the character of Holmes. Like Savage, Holmes sweeps aside complicating thoughts about possible experienced origins behind Septimus' madness and locates the source of the malaise within the patient. It is a medical problem, a case of over-wrought nerves brought on by a poor diet and overwork; something readily cured by a few days off, a game of golf and a full bowl of porridge. Holmes "brushed it all aside--headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams--nerve symptoms and nothing more" (p. 101). Where there is no brain pathology insanity cannot exist and, in Holmes' lexicon, madness is but another word for insanity. He is more than a shallow, facile doctor. He represents the healthy-minded arrogance and bullying that is characteristic of mediocre minds in positions of authority; the short-sighted, self-satisfied comprehension of those who can see only the readily apparent, and then only

through the prevailing ideological lens.[26]

When Septimus refuses to see the good Dr. Holmes, Rezia, now gaining a glimmer of the threat Holmes represents for her husband, tries to block the doorway and keep the doctor out. Smilingly oblivious to his patient's rights, Holmes pushes past Rezia and confronts the patient-become-victim. It is then that Septimus realizes he is lost, that once madness has been scented, the culture's medical representatives would not rest until he is converted or crushed:

> Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. They scour the desert. They fly screaming into the wilderness. The rack and the thumbscrew are applied. (p. 107)

Holmes, "the repulsive brute with the blood-red nostrils" (p. 102), is one of the minions of social control. Sir William Bradshaw is, in contrast, one of those who Szasz refers to as the high priests.

Cultural norms insist that the routine and the incomprehensible be viewed as antagonistic polarities. As a specialist in deviant behaviour, Dr. Bradshaw is specifically chartered to enforce this insistence. Being highly successful in

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[26]The Holmes mentality is not infrequent in literature. Charlotte Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-paper" provides an example that does not differ in essential points from Woolf's characterization. In Gilman's story the doctor is the patient's husband, a man who "scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures" (Rabkin, p. 95). Like Holmes he is insensitive to what he does not understand and is quietly but persistently overbearing. "John," says his wife, "does not know how much I suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer and that satisfies him" (Ibid.).

dealing firmly with those unfortunate enough to be incomprehensible, and being a member of the ruling class, he commands the respect and authority that endows him with extra-legal powers in his interactions with Septimus. Bradshaw's homes down in Surrey keep the social machinery functioning by keeping the madman out of sight. If a patient proves unwilling to accept his invitation to one of his "rest" homes, Sir William has more than the force of ideology behind him:

> . . . [he] had to support him police and the goodwill of society, which, he remarked very quietly would take care, down in Surrey, that these unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by lack of good blood, were held in control. (p. 113)

Modern culture, like previous cultures, uses ideas as social levers, shapes its citizens into forms that mirror those ideas and attempts to sequester or destroy people who deviate. The ideological justification for repression finds voice in its enforcers as well as its propagandists. Woolf astutely connects the psychiatrist's extra-legal power with ideology and the safety of the status quo. Though Septimus' madness and the forms that it takes are far more logical reactions to a destructive, alienating culture than the smiling acceptance that Holmes and Bradshaw approve of, his madness, as Jacoby comments of madness in general, "puts into question . . . the rationality of the whole."[27] For this reason alone, he is doomed and must be isolated like a potentially contagious bacterium.

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[27]Jacoby, p. 50.

From their first encounter, it is clear that Septimus' incarceration is a foregone conclusion in Bradshaw's mind. He jots down his verdict on Septimus' case on one of his endless pink cards, noting that the patient "was attaching meanings to words of a symbolic kind. A serious symptom to be noted on the card" (p. 107). That the word which Septimus attaches symbolic meaning to is "war" is not held to be relevant information. For Bradshaw, even war must be viewed with a correct sense of proportion. His notion of proportion is, not surprisingly, quite different from Woolf's. In Bradshaw the Greek middle way is formed into the modern middle-class. There is neither extreme joy nor extreme sorrow in the doctor's concept of healthiness, only restrained comfort.

Bradshaw's goddess of Proportion expresses his culture's aims:

> Proportion, divine proportion, Sir William's goddess, was acquired by Sir William walking hospitals, catching salmon, begetting one son in Harley Street by Lady Bradshaw. . . . Worshipping proportion Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalized despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion--his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women. (p. 110)

Woolf makes class rule and the ideal of mediocrity intrinsic features of Bradshaw's approach. Were Septimus a member of the upper echelons, Sir William would have undoubtably treated his case more circumspectly, but as it is he is able to deal with Septimus' life in an offhand, cursory manner. Curing Septimus is not as important as converting him; his position in society does

not warrant undue consideration for his rights.

In an authorial aside, Woolf spells out clearly how Bradshaw's profession and beliefs are used as a disguise for social control:

> . . . Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess even now engaged. . . . Conversion is her name and she feasts upon the wills of the weak, loving to impress, to pose, adoring her own features stamped upon the face of the populace . . . offers help, but desires power. . . . This lady too . . . had her dwelling in Sir William's heart, though concealed, as she mostly is, under some plausible disguise. (pp. 110-111)

When Bradshaw walks into Septimus' apartment he has behind him the "goodwill of society," that is, society's unthinking approval of his medical authority, and of the sanctification science has bestowed upon his attempts to cure (convert). The "plausible disguise" that he believes in just as unthinkingly as his fellow participants in this deception is that his attempts are based on science and logic rather than ideology. Converting patients to the cultural sense of proportion politicizes the "dispassionate objectivity" of the Bradshaws.

In Mrs. Dalloway the worst aspect of culture is the visible and invisible strings that it uses to manipulate the individual. Like Bradshaw, the strings "counsel submission." They divide and fragment the internal world with the same economic logic that is applied to the external world: profitable, manageable pieces are developed while the unmanageable is discarded. With people, fragmentation and the discarding of culturally unacceptable parts does not always run as smoothly as it does with unfeeling

objects. The discarded parts often re-surface in another form, in ulcated manners that accuse the irrationality of the culture.

Woolf's portrayal of psychiatry has as its chief concern the use of a pseudo-medical disguise as a tool of coercion. It is, after all, primarily through literature and maverick social critics that psychiatry's role in ideological conformity is indicted. Woolf is sensitive to objects and roles that are used to further submission to cultural norms. It may be something as innocuous-looking as the all-pervasive clock,[28] or it may be someone whose position and authority are misused to stamp upon society the ruling elite's desires.

Woolf doesn't fly in the face of social reality and suggest that if only the masses could be warned, could be made aware of the potentially repressive function of psychiatry, then indignation and protest would lead to a wholesale revision of attitudes towards madness. There is a reciprocity between Bradshaw and the "goodwill of society"; he mirrors society's

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[28]Woolf's treatment of clocks in Mrs. Dalloway is an example of her ability to prod the reader into re-examining the conventional. Not only does Big Ben serve as a common denominator in the structure of the book, it is also a functionary of the same ideological logic that prompts Bradshaw's behaviour. Like Bradshaw it divides the individual into socially useful parts:

> Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion. (p. 113)

As symbols of mechanical and authoritarian forces in society, clocks serve as a subtle complement to Bradshaw and Holmes.

instinct for conformity. The majority of the characters in Mrs. Dalloway do not see themselves as being stifled by the rule of convention. Bradshaw is a defender, not an oppressor. It is much easier to accept cultural dictates as something freely chosen, to acquiesce in the delusion that this acquiesence represents individual choice, than it is to declare onself to be in opposition to the cultural milieu, to be in opposition and feel alone.

Septimus, like the many other mad figures in literature, lacks identification with any social, political, religious or philosophic counter-culture movement. His sense of alienation is fueled by a number of factors, among the most prominent of which is the pressure to be converted, to see the world once again as everyone else does. He must believe that when everyone does the same routine, it means that they are the best things to do, not that this sameness exhibits the human prediliction for conformity. Consumer-bound capitalism encourages the interpretation of superficial freedom (what product to buy, station to watch or which of the media-manufactured politicians to vote for) to be the same as meaningful freedom, as the ability to design one's own beliefs and conduct. As Ruth Benedict notes, little encouragement is required to adapt the plastic nature of man to fit a mold. This plasticity, coupled with an apparent instinct for conformity, makes the majority complicit in the confusion between satisfying created appetites and real social freedom. Attitudinal homogeneity can be demanded

by Bradshaw because it is demanded by the people.

Bradshaw and Holmes are the "will of the people," or at least what culture has shaped the people into. In "The Room" Sartre captures that side of human nature which gives a Bradshaw his mandate. M. Darbedat's daughter is in love with the mad Pierre. To M. Darbedat this is unfathomable and he argues that "you can't love him. You can only feel that way about a healthy, normal person."[29] To be healthy and normal is to be safe. As an antidote for Pierre's madness, he suggests that "we should send out two strong-arm men who'd take the poor imbecile away and stick him under a shower . . ."[30] Darbedat's manner unthinkingly acknowledges what Bradshaw and Holmes believe--that the Pierres and Septimuses are responsible for their madness, locating, as does the prevailing ideological approach, the source of dysfunction within the individual's inherent weakness, rather than in the culture. Culture often enslaves as it teaches, and it has enslaved the collective mind into seeing deviance as a problem in adaptation rather than a problem in the conditions to which the deviant is asked to adapt.

Septimus is not meant to be taken as a doomed hero in a rearguard action against democratic tyranny. He is, however, shown to be a victim of an oppressive attitude that is supported by the majority and enforced by the specialists. No longer blindly acquiescent to authority, Septimus refuses to follow

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[29]Sartre, p. 124.

[30]Ibid., p. 126.

Bradshaw to a rest home, to a place where he believes he will be stripped of his last shreds of dignity. None of the potency of Septimus' protest is lost because the reader is given it through inner monologue. Through inner monologue we acquire a split vision and know what is on the inside while we see what is happening on the outside. Though disjointed and excessive, Septimus' thoughts appear far more truthful alongside the posturing of Holmes and Bradshaw.

In Mrs. Dalloway madness holds significance because of the validity of Septimus' criticisms and, though far more difficult to disentangle, because of the symbolism in the form of expression that his madness takes. Forms of madness can be exaggerated expressions of, or protests against culture. Madness as an individual reaction to cultural influences will be discussed later in the chapter on Fitzgerald. Here the concentration is on the nature of Septimus' criticisms.

With Septimus, intensity of perception is matched by intensity of conception. Coupled with his severe estrangement from others, this combination pushes him to an extreme beyond a criticism of culture as the evil agent in man's sad destiny. It is human nature that is responsible for the brutishness (clutch at your heart Rousseau), and violence in human interaction, not just the culture which shapes man's outer form:

> For the truth is [thought Septimus] . . . that human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the wilderness. They desert the fallen. (p. 99)

Humanity, decency and all the ideals that lift man out of the mud are paid cursory lip-service, but are rarely practised virtues. Far more prevalent is the venality that Septimus sees in the human condition, a venality that lurks everywhere in a London street scene:

> In the street, vans roared past him; brutality blared out on placards; men trapped in mines; women burnt alive; and once a maimed file of lunatics [the retarded] being exercised or displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laughed aloud) ambled and nodded and grinned past him . . . (p. 100)

Harshly awakened to the distasteful, destructive aspects of culture and human nature, Septimus now finds in Shakespeare critical insight and meaning. He goes deeper than the surface beauty of the words to grasp the message which Shakespeare sends down to him:

> How Shakespeare loathed humanity--the putting on of clothes, the getting of children, the sordidity, of the mouth and the belly. This was now revealed to Septimus; the message hidden in the beauty of words. The secret signal that one generation passes, under disguise, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair. Dante the same. Aeschylus (translated) the same. . . . One cannot bring children into a world like this. One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that. (pp. 98-99)

The bleak pessimism of Septimus' thought does not extend to all forms of life. There is a beauty and harmony on earth that the arrogant biped ignores or crushes. Holmes and Bradshaw are the immediate symbols of "human nature" to Septimus and it is against them and their medical disguise that he levels most of his invective.

They demand no less than the shaping of his identity to an appearance that is acceptable. Septimus has nothing but his life to fight back with. Shouting, "I'll give it you [meaning his life]" (p. 165), he jumps from a window and is impaled on the railings below. Not surprisingly Holmes sees his suicide as an act of cowardice rather than defiance. It is only Clarissa Dalloway who feels an affinity with Septimus and understands the nature of his ultimate protest and rejection. A biting summation comes from the mouth of the unwitting Peter Walsh. Seeing an ambulance that, unknown to Walsh, carries Septimus' body to the hospital, he remarks with admiration, "One of the triumphs of civilization" (p. 167). The irony is both cruel and accurate.

Woolf condemned Western culture for shaping a broken, lopsided image of what social man should be, for dichotomizing the individual and estranging him from his humanness. In pitting rationality against irrationality, culture injures both, mutilating the positive features of the irrational and reducing the rational to the service of the status quo. For Woolf, this internal struggle between the two major parts of the psyche is the result of a masculine, marketplace domination of cultural attitudes. Rationality tyrannizes over the more feminine methods of comprehension (i.e. intuitive or felt realizations) and cripples the benefits that these methods hold. Order is worshipped and the ungoverned is feared; an analytical, divisive, compartmentalized perspective is fostered to the detriment of a creative unifying one. Translated into

marketplace ideals, rationality becomes practicality, predictability and prosperity. Whatever augments these shallow ideals is rational. Marketplace rationality is good, successful and correct. The irrational is evil, inefficient and erroneous. The result is either the loss of human capacities vital for reaching one's potential or the sublimation of these capacities into other forms that are frequently harmful.

Woolf points out that being successful in adapting to modern culture takes a heavy toll in the finer sensitivities:

> If people are highly successful in their professions they lose their senses. Sight goes. They have no time to look at pictures. Sound goes. They have no time for music. Speech goes. They have no time for conversation. They lose their sense of proportion.[31]

Septimus' madness is the opposite of this impoverishment of the senses, the other extreme. Western culture objectifies experience into compartments and functions, breaks it down into easily manipulated, deadened pieces. In contrast, Septimus is overwhelmed by experience, is too sensitized to it and perceives it all, except man and his works, as an organic whole. In Mrs. Dalloway the locus of madness is problematic. Does it lie in the attitude which orders the slaughter of millions in the "noble defence of culture," and then requires that everyone return to their half-empty shells and carry on with the business of making society prosper; or does it lie in the individual who is incapable of coping with a lethal civilization?

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[31]Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas (London: Hogarth Press, 1938), pp. 131-132.

III. Chekhov's Inversion of Madness and Sanity

Anton Chekhov's "Ward 6" differs from Mrs. Dalloway in style, narrative perspective and the degree of intimacy that the reader has with the madman. Unlike Woolf, Chekhov's intent is not to give a glimpse through the eye of madness in order to show how the madman sees and thinks. In "Ward 6" the role of the mad Ivan Dmitrich is primarily that of a counterpoint to his doctor's sleepy acceptance of social conditions, a pinprick for swollen self-deceptions disguised as philosophic resignation. True to the tendency of Russian literature, "Ward 6" presents through dialogue a discussion on theories of living; it is more philosophical than Mrs. Dalloway and consequently is less sensuous. The genesis of the stories also differs. Chekhov did not draw from personal experiences in madness, but from a visit to a penal institution in Sakhalin, and turned this experience upon a provincial mental hospital. Chekhov writes as an outraged doctor, not a former patient.

"Ward 6" does join Mrs. Dalloway in leaving the locus of madness uncertain and making cultural victory over deviance a case of oppression rather than cure. The triumph of culture over the individual has been one of the thematic mainstays of literature in the last century. Woolf renders this victory hollow and turns it into a protest against an insidiously oppressive society, one which jealously guards over how its

members see and act. Chekhov uses similar tensions by enlisting the voice of madness to turn the victory of a narrow, blind and brutal provincial society into a defeat for the individual. He pits self-indulgent, cultural lies against a madman's harsh truths.

An unfortunate childhood plagued with misfortune and a predisposition to nervous excitability made Ivan susceptible to the persecution mania he would later develop. However, his mania is prefigured by cultural causes. Working as a court bailiff makes Ivan familiar with the judicial system. One day as he passes by convicts in chains he is "strangely and unaccountably affected" by the fear that, though innocent of any crime and unlikely to commit an offense in the future, he is going to be arrested. Chekhov's own dissatisfaction with the Russian legal system is fused into Ivan's feeling of impotence in the face of an indifferent system of social control. Reminiscent of Joseph K. from Kafka's The Trial, Ivan sees inevitable doom approaching:

> And, legal procedures being what they are today, a miscarriage of justice is not only quite possible but would be nothing to wonder at. People who have an official, professional relation to other men's suffering--judges, physicians, the police, for example--grow so callous in the course of time, simply from force of habit, that even if they wanted to they would be unable to treat their clients in any but a formal way; in this respect they are not unlike the peasant who slaughters sheep and calves in his back yard, oblivious to the blood . . . only one thing is needed to make a judge deprive an innocent man of all his rights and sentence him to hard labour: time. . . . And, indeed, is it not absurd even to think of justice when society regards every act of [legal] violence as both rational and expedient, while every act of

clemency, such as a verdict of acquittal, provokes an outburst of dissatisfaction and feelings of revenge?[32]

Like Woolf, Chekhov accuses officialdom of a cold, inhuman attitude in its treatment of people and uses this attitude as the catalyst for madness. Though predisposed to mental instability, the shape of Ivan's expression finds its origins in cultural causes. Lacking the money to be taken care of at home, Ivan Dmitrich is spirited away to Ward 6 as an incurable.

The titular head of Ward 6 is Dr. Andrei Yefimych Ragin, but the real presiding power is Nikita, a tyrannical watchman who mercilessly beats the patients because of their infractions, or simply because they are helpless. In Chekov and His Russia, W.H. Bruford introduces the Russian word "poshlost" which, though largely untranslatable, evokes images of "everything that is reprehensible, morally, socially or aesthetically, the ignoble, caddish, shabby in every form."[33] Ward 6 is "poshlost." The inmates are passive and supposedly there for their own welfare, but their welfare is the last thing on their collective mind. The entrenched corruption and unsavoury conditions in the ward are tacitly sanctioned by the townspeople, calmly accepted features of an institution where "only peasants and working people went" (p. 18). In the course of the story, Chekhov juxtaposes the hospital culture against the outside culture, not

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[32]Anton Chekhov, "Ward 6," Ward 6 and Other Stories, trans. Ann Dunnigan (New York: New American Library, 1965), pp. 12-13. All subsequent references will be drawn from this text and appear in the body of the thesis.

[33]W.H. Bruford, Chekhov and His Russia (Hamden: Anchor Books, 1971), p. 200.

as good against bad, but rather as bad against worse with great difficulty in ascertaining which is the worst. In physical conditions the hospital is the poorest, but in moral terms it is the culture.

Bruford calls Dr. Ragin the "apostle of culture," but in doing so endows him with a dynamism he does not possess. Ernest Simmons comes closer to the mark in describing him as a "good, kind, gentle" doctor who "has long since surrendered his reforming zeal in the face of local sloth and indifference and taken refuge in philosophy and history, and in vodka and salted cucumbers."[34] Were it not for his culpability in the treatment of patients, Ragin may have been an amiable figure, but his rationalizing away the sordid hospital conditions causes more evil than Nikita's beatings. Ragin believes that suffering breeds strength of character, that his culture's oppressive features cannot be changed and therefore any attempt to alleviate them is useless. The best way to encounter adversity is with quiet resignation. Though he quotes Marcus Aurelius as his mentor, he overlooks the contradictions between Aurelius' philosophy and his duties as an emperor. Falling into a torpid moral lethargy, Ragin nods away the evils in Ward 6 and sees the largest disaster in his life as being the absence of intelligent conversation. Unlike a true "apostle of culture," like Sir William Bradshaw, Ragin does not believe in what he is

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[34]Ernest Simmons, Chekhov (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), p. 300.

doing, but refuses to do anything else.

Ragin is drawn into a series of disputations with his patient, Ivan Dmitrich. In them the reader is shown the poverty of a posture of philosophic resignation; the reader sees this, but not the doctor. Since he does not experience suffering he can afford to maintain a detached attitude towards it. These dialogues begin in earnest when Ivan demands to know why he is forced to remain in the hospital, and Ragin responds that it is because he is ill. Ivan turns this back upon the doctor:

> Yes, I am ill. But there are dozens, hundreds, of madmen walking around at liberty, simply because you, in your ignorance, are incapable of distinguishing them from the sane. Why, then, must I, and these other unfortunates, be shut up here as scapegoats for all of them? Morally, you, the medical assistant, the superintendent, and the rest of your hospital rabble are immeasurably inferior to every one of us--why then should we be here and not you? Where's the logic? (p. 29)

Ivan makes the same distinction between mental health and moral worth that Freud noted and asks the doctor to justify his continued incarceration in light of this distinction.

Mentally, Ragin shuffles away from the question and replies that chance and not morality or logic decide the issue. "So long as prisons and insane asylums exist, someone must be put into them. If not you--me; if not me someone else" (p. 30). He recognizes that there is no justice in the situation, but responds with platitudes about the tyranny of circumstance and the need for a wise man to disdain suffering, to accept things as they are. Ivan upsets Dr. Ragin's arguments, countering that the higher an organism is the more acute is its response to

reality, and with it to pain, to injustice and to the base.[35] Ragin recognizes the validity of Ivan's statements, but resists their implications, choosing instead to maintain a state of social acquiescence.

Increasingly attracted to Ward 6 for Ivan's conversation, Ragin is overheard by an ambitious assistant. "If you knew," complains Ragin, "how sick I am of the general insanity, mediocrity and stupidity, and what a pleasure it is to talk to you" (p. 39). Drawn to a madman and repulsed by the culturally insane, Ragin is classified as mad himself. He too fulfills Ivan's fears that a person can be locked away without committing a crime. There is no triumph in Ragin's fall or in his dawning awareness of the injustice he had allowed. He is made conscious of the need to fight against the hospital system only when he is no longer in a position to do so, and realizes, too late, the truth in Ivan's declaration that the culture is sicker than its madmen.

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[35]In "The Black Monk," the companion story to "Ward 6," Chekhov takes the thrust of Ivan's argument onto another level. Kovrin, the self-deceiving anti-hero of the story, encounters a hallucination in the form of a black monk. The hallucination argues, if hallucinations can be said to have an argument, that having a higher state of consciousness necessarily alienates a person from the warmth of humanity:

> Exaltations, aspirations, excitements, ecstasies--all those things which distinguish poets, prophets, martyrs to ideas from ordinary men are incompatible with the animal life, that is, with physical health. I repeat, if you wish to be healthy go with the herd. (p. 251)

In this instance, the hallucination encourages the mad Kovrin to use thoughts of his own superiority to justify his withdrawal from society and placate an already dulled social consciousness.

Gorky observed a "strange, lonely, motionless, exhausted"[36] atmosphere suffused through Chekhov's work. The critic Suvorin put it another way, arguing that "Ward 6" lacked an "alcoholic kick," the punch of resolution and catharsis. In his response to Suvorin, Chekhov had his finger on the weakened pulse of the Imperial self and its effect in literature.

> Let me remind you that the writers whom we dub immortal or just simply good and who intoxicate us have one trait in common: they are going somewhere and summon you to go with them, and you feel, not with your mind but your whole being, that they have a purpose, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, who did not come and disturb the imagination for nothing. . . . We paint life as it is, but beyond that nothing at all. Flog us but we can do no more. We have neither immediate nor distant aims and in our souls there is a great empty space.[37]

The "great empty space" that Chekhov refers to is one of the distinctive qualities of his characters. In this Ragin is a modern, not the Imperial self of the 19th century. His bankruptcy of will and purpose is closer to us than the determination of Julien Sorel or the "inner greatness" that Kierkegaard saw dying. Ragins are one of the marks of our culture, populating administrative positions, shrugging away injustice as something beyond remedy, interested only in matters

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[36]Gorky, (exact source not given), quoted in Bruford, p. 211.

[37]Chekhov, quoted in Simmons, pp. 301-302.
The critic Chukovsky observed the same tendency in Russian literature in the latter half of the 19th century, noting that "there is none of that . . . will, force, or that mode of life which could unite and bind by an unbroken chain. . . . At the present time literature has nothing to rely upon. When the mode of life was destroyed, we too collapsed."
(Paul Miliukov, quoted in Literature in Russia, Vol. II, trans. Valentine Ughet [New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1942], p. 53.)

that do not challenge their equilibrium while all the time complaining that their life lacks adventure.

Though like his age Ragin lacks purpose, this is not the reason for Chekhov's lack of sympathy towards him. Being without direction does not excuse him from trying to alleviate the suffering and injustice within his sphere of influence. As a doctor he is doubly damned by Chekhov: first for abrogating his independent responsibility, and second for ignoring his professional duties. To Chekhov, among the few things that could be considered sacrosanct were "the human body, health, reason, talent, inspiration, love, and absolute freedom."[38] While sane, Ragin does nothing to advance any of these as values, aware of them only as words without substance. Not until he is locked up as a madman is their meaning understood. Viewed with Chekhov's ideals in mind, Ragin fares more poorly than the mad Ivan who has at least some immediate knowledge of how culture tramples on both the weak and the noble. The order of madness and sanity is inverted. Without setting him upon the altar of higher truth, Chekhov endows Ivan with more rational priorities than Ragin possesses.

It would be misleading to suggest that Chekhov uses madness in his work as a vehicle for sweeping accusations against all aspects of an emerging modernity. He lived at a time in history that still held an almost ecstatic optimism about the potential of technology and science in creating conditions in which all

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[38]Chekhov, (exact source not given), quoted in ibid., p. 52.

men could thrive. "Modern culture," he wrote, "is the beginning of the work to be performed in the name of the great future. . . ."[39] In the end Chekhov kept faith in the possibilities that science held to benefit humanity. This is Chekhov the doctor. Chekhov the writer is a different tale.

In "Ward 6" and elsewhere, he focuses upon the harm being done by his culture, drawing it out with simplicity and directness rather than with outright censure (The Seagull has to be an exception here). Ragin is not a bad man, despite his lack of direction and unwillingness to engage in battle with a culture that he knows is wrong. He is, like Ivan, a product of that culture and has been schooled in the futility of resistance. In many ways he embodies Kierkegaard's summation of emerging modernity: "Our age is essentially one of understanding and reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly relapsing into repose. . . ."[40] Only madness, or at least what is called madness, removes the possibility of repose for Ragin and turns him against his culture.

The fact that Ragin gains awareness when he is locked up with Ivan and is no longer able to use this new comprehension to fight against his culture may be accounted for in different ways. Perhaps Chekhov is bending to the demands of reality. Once

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[39]Ibid., p. 52.

[40]Soren Kierkegaard, The Present Age, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 33.

institutionalized it is unlikely that a person could command enough interest to effect change. Perhaps it is a method of stirring up his readers. If Ragin made some change, then Chekhov's audience would have slept more soundly, something he did not want them to do. Perhaps, bleakest of all, Chekhov is suggesting to us that the treatment given to the mad is so deeply entrenched as a form of cultural expression, that to become aware of it and to fight against it is but another form of madness, a madness that cannot succeed.

IV. Fitzgerald and Narcissism

Modern culture is self-destructive, pathologically obsessed with violence, glutted with fast titillations devoid of spiritual or moral purpose, cynical and cut-off from a feeling of connection with the past. It encourages exploitiveness in human relations, shallowness in the most intimate interactions and a fragmented aimlessness outside of the routines of each working day. It is, in short, shot through with its own distinctive insanities. I choose the word "insanity" to denote a derangement in the very heart of technocratic ideology, a derangement that disfigures this century where so many millennial visions were to be realized. Modern man has lost control over the forces that shape his culture[41] yet persists in accepting culture's "collusive madness" as something normal and therefore sane.

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[41] Jacques Ellul warns that the "belief that the human producer is still master of production is a dangerous illusion." The technocratic culture, he adds, uses "precise psychological and psychoanalytical techniques" to obtain its goal of "bringing to the individual that which is indispensable for his satisfaction in the conditions in which the machine has placed him, of inhibiting in him the sense of revolution, of subjugating him by flattering him."
(Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society, trans. John Wilkinson [New York: Random House, 1964], pp. 95-96.)
Technology and consumerism, once coupled, make a potent and subtle form of suppression. We will be the first culture in history kept in line by our artifically created needs. Why resist when there are faster microwaves and bigger TV screens to be obtained?

The best works of literature in the last century are, by and large, criticisms of the traits that modern society makes normal; no society is celebrated. Forms of psychic disorder in literature are used as protests highlighting the caustic effects that modern ideology has upon the individual and the group. In madness these effects are exaggerated, but they mirror the features of a stamp that culture impresses on all of its citizens.[42] There is a danger in taking this too far, of falling into the Laingian trap of mystifying madness, of seeing it as the exponent of a superior sanity in an insane world. Charles Artaud, Van Gogh's biographer, does just this when he claims that the mad are that way because they would not give up a more noble view of what constitutes correct behaviour in a given situation.[43] While schizophrenia may be the most telling gospel of the modern world, it remains, like the culture that shapes it, a painful experience, not a sign of greater moral vision.

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[42]In The End of Ideology Daniel Bell announces the waning of national features that distinguish one modern society from another. Ellul develops this point in more depth in The Technological Society and suggests that universal similarities in the psychological effects of technological dependence are emerging. Since modernity makes civilizations and peoples uniform, it will be possible to use the term "culture" without referring to a specific nationality. As a consequence of the monistic influence of technocracy, we may expect to see increasing similarity in cross-cultural comparisons of the relationship between culture and the form of expression that madness takes.

[43]Charles Artaud, (exact source not given), quoted in Charles Glicksberg, The Literature of Commitment (London: Associated University Press, 1976), p. 165.

Charles Glicksberg takes a less enchanted approach to madness. He criticizes those who exalt "madness as the Muse of the modern age [and fail to] consider madness as a psychotic affliction."[44] For Glicksberg, madness in modern literature is a symbol of cultural pathology and is caused or inflamed

> in the main by a society that is mechanized, technologically efficient, indifferent to human values, barbarously repressive in its efforts to coerce citizens to conform to its mandates. Viewed in this light, insanity represents a reaction against an intolerable situation; it brings into the open the criminal nature of modern society.[45]

The representational features of madness are indicative of broader implications than can be found when viewing it as either an exalted voice of truth or a medical problem that begins and ends in the individual.

The changes in the personality structure of modern man parallel changing cultural influences. Each age's psychopathologies differ from previous eras. The cataleptic paralysis, the compulsive hand-washing and hysterical neurosis that mirrored Freud's morally repressive age have given way to vague, undefined disorders characterized by psychic numbness. Before turning to Fitzgerald's representations of this psychic numbness, I will cite two examples of the relationship between culture and the form of expression that madness takes in order to illustrate their connection.

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[44] Ibid., p. 165.

[45] Ibid., p. 163.

In "Theses on Technocracy," Joel Kovel focuses on a paired aspect of modern culture: "Production for the sake of production, the economization of reality; these are the trademarks of technocracy."[46] The "economization of reality" refers to the Western world's way of dealing with experience, a way connected with Virginia Woolf's criticism of the lopsided human that capitalist culture is producing. By enshrining the home of truth in the intellect, in the over-rated capacity to reason, the senses are condescendingly dismissed as toys to be played with outside of the marketplace. (In modern consumerism they suffer a worse fate--they are the stuff of the marketplace, are manipulated, exploited and vulgarized in order to occasion more production.) When an inordinate preoccupation with pragmatism and reason is coupled with a Philistine, profit-motivated mentality, an inevitable by-product is the objectification of existence, or, as Kovel put it, the "economization of reality." The world becomes a series of objects to be utilized by logic for self-seeking purposes. A rationality whose perimeters are circumscribed by the narrowness

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[46]Joel Kovel, "Theses on Technocracy," Telos, 51-54 (Winter 82/83), pp. 155-161. In the same article Kovel says of the irreversible damage technocracy and capitalism have caused: "The crisis of technocracy is revealed in the disintegration of society. Not on the surface, where people line up, drive on the same side of the road, dutifully watch the same evening news, and can be periodically roused to spasms of jingoism. In the depths, however, where the individual experiences the collectivity as a living part of the self and one's existence is experienced as part of the whole, where the personal past and the future are woven together with the history of society--here the rupture has been irreversible."

of the profit-motive aids in the alienation of the individual from nature, from his fellow man and, inevitably, from himself. It also deteriorates traditional bonds by locating priorities in marketplace ideals. These priorities demand change regardless of social damage. Marx saw this early, and warned that it leads to the "uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions. . . . All fixed, fast frozen relations with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-found ones become antiquated before they can ossify."[47]

As a side note, it is ironic to observe that those who complained the loudest about the breakdown in societal bonds in the 19th century are usually the ones who contributed the most to that breakdown. The fathers of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the captains of industry in the 19th and their devoted followers all inveighed against the erosion of traditional morality and habits of conduct, but they unwittingly corrupted the stabilizing and unifying features of social life through the attitudinal ruptures that follow in the wake of capitalism.

To return to the first example of the relationship between culture and the form of expression that madness takes, the objectification of reality carries with it a sense of otherness, of being separate and numbed. This is the otherness so frequently mentioned in autobiographical or fictional accounts

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[47]Karl Marx, "The Communist Manifesto," in W. Ebenstein Great Political Thinkers (Hinsdale: Dryden Press, 1965), p. 724.

of madness. In The Garden and the Map, John Vernon touches briefly on the significance that the sensation of Otherness holds for the madman: "For the schizophrenic," he writes, "it is precisely the objectivity of the world, its total Otherness, that causes the world to exist as a threat."[48] The "sane" are buffered from this sense of dissociation by, among other things, the use-function relationship that modern culture has placed upon objects. Once the hierarchy of cultural attitudes has broken down in the individual, the usual association of function is taken away from objects and they become meaningless, unconnected things. Religious or mystical reference points have been largely destroyed as possible ways of understanding.

Marguerite Sechehaye's "Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl" crystallizes the effects of otherness and objectification. She complains that names for objects slips off them, that they have no meaning and writes:

> I saw the room, the furniture, Mama herself, each thing separate, detached from the others, cold implacable, inhuman, by dint of being without life.[49]

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[48]John Vernon, The Garden and the Map (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 22.

[49]Marguerite Sechehaye, "Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl," Kaplan, p. 166. Sechehaye goes on to describe how she tried to press objects back into the comprehensible by repeating their names, but the words were "robbed of sense, an envelope emptied of content" (p. 169). In Nausea Sartre describes a similar state, though with philosophic reverberations not found in Sechehaye's account: "Things are divorced from their names," he writes. "They are there, grotesque, headstrong, gigantic. . . . I am in the midst of nameless things. Alone, without words, defenseless . . ." (p. 125).

When the mad react against the function-potential way of knowing objects, the result is similar to that of reacting against and shedding ideologies that uphold the fabric of the person's personality. A vacuum is created and there is little to fill it with.

The way in which the mad see can be traced to cultural influences. The same is true of what they see. Charlotte Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-paper" provides the second example of how culture stamps the expression of madness, but in a way entirely dissimilar from Sechehaye's account. It is what Gilman's heroine sees that becomes significant. The subject matter of Jane's hallucination is, if read correctly, a protest against her society's dictates on acceptable behaviour. She is an intelligent, creative writer kept at bay by the condescending paternalism of her husband and a male-dominated society that gives his word the force of a rule. He is also, fittingly enough for this thesis, a doctor. In the bedroom of the residence that they are staying in for a few months there is yellow wall-paper whose colour Jane finds "hideous" and whose pattern is "torturing." Behind the "torturing" patterns Jane discerns a figure moving about. She first sees the figure creeping around the room as if looking for an opening. Gradually the figure becomes more insistent and would "shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out."[50]

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[50]Charlotte Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-paper," Rabkin, p. 105.

The patterns on the wall-paper are the invisible bars of restraint placed on Jane's potential. Her husband has suffocated her talents by treating them lightly and by exercising his socially sanctioned prerogative to decide how his wife should act. The "hideous" dreary colour indicates the monotony and frustration of her life. Realizing who the figure is, Jane locks the door, peels off the paper and pronounces to her astonished husband, "I've got out at last . . . in spite of you and Jane [meaning the internalized mechanism of self-repression that her culture has implanted]. And I've pulled off most of the paper so you can't put me back."[51] Jane's madness becomes both a triumph and a defeat. In freeing herself she has qualified for a mental institution.

The examples from Sechehaye and Gilman point to the decisive influence of culture, of which the family is a part, in the form of expression that madness takes. A prominent form of expression consistent with the later 20th century is the narcissistic personality disorder. Of it Kovel notes that "the concept scarcely existed in the early days of analytic practise; whereas now it is a leading category."[52] In The Culture of Narcissism, Christopher Lasch makes perceptive observations on this and its connection with specific changes in culture.

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[51] Ibid., p. 111.

[52] Joel Kovel, "Narcissism and the Family," Telos, 42-54 (Summer 1980), p. 91.

He sets out to

> describe a way of life that is dying--the culture of competitive individualism, which in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, the pursuit to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self.[53]

The distinction between modern narcissism and the self-absorption of the "Imperial self" in the 19th century is the shrinking back of the former, not into an introverted withdrawal, but rather a deadening, protective shallowness that wears a veneer of social adaptability. The narcissistic personality's shallowness and manipulativeness are the "best way of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life,"[54] but the costs are extreme in terms of human potential.

The emphasis that Kovel and Lasch place on narcissistic personality disorders as a sign of the times shows madness to be an accusation against its culture. The narcissistic individual, like his society, "suffers from a kind of emptiness. Experience seems drained and lifeless, without real texture."[55] He faces the void in a way fitting for technocratic consumerism, by an attempt to "cultivate more vivid experiences, seek to beat sluggish flesh to life, attempt to revive jaded appetites."[56] Unable to form long-term attachments, restlessly dissatisfied

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[53]Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York: Warner Books, 1979), p. 21.

[54]Ibid., p. 101.

[55]Kovel, "Narcissism and the Family," p. 91.

[56]Lasch, pp. 39-40.

and distrustful of all, the modern narcissist has a need for genuine emotion, but lacks the psychic make-up to sustain faith, depth or attention. In literature the genesis of clinical narcissism might be traced to the emotional holocaust that followed in the wake of World War I. While the cultural predilection to narcissism may have begun with capitalism it was given its final push following the Armistice.

After the war, the intellectuals realized how disenchanted they had become with the Edwardian world. In view of the massive scale of the slaughter and, more significantly, in view of its senselessness, the great ideals, the passionate dreams and the ethical hopes of the pre-war period simply bled to death. Meaningful change was impossible, a futile effort belonging to a world where there was something to believe in. The combination of cynicism and a sudden release from traditional restraints on public morality created the conditions necessary for the rise of this narcissistic era. The 1920s made the mildly immoral fashionable. The focus was now on the moment and the greatest amount of pleasure that could be wrung from it. Yet beneath the frenzied exploration of new-found freedoms there was an emptiness, a sense of loss and desperation. The bacchants were disenfranchised, were cut-off from the sense of purpose that the past held. While they allowed their appetites to become enlarged, they did not expand essential human freedoms. They were driven into a world as confusing as the one left behind was confining. In place of moral rigidity there was now moral

relativism, a shifting of one's conduct to suit the circumstances.

What distinguishes F. Scott Fitzgerald from other voices of the "Jazz Age" is the revelatory content underlying his descriptions of cultural hedonism, his ability to capture the barrenness beneath the glitter. Though critics have unjustly located his value within the confines of the '20s, no other American novelist has revealed the vacuity of modern life and foreshadowed the emergence of narcissism with Fitzgerald's penetration. His characters search for another jolt of excitement to briefly resurrect collapsed nervous systems, become incapable of feeling deeply and succumb to psychic numbness. Fitzgerald's characters are not anomalies; they exaggerate, though not by much, a widespread attitude. In the closing page of This Side of Paradise he announces the birth of a whole generation that is

> dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.[57]

This generation worshipped success for different reasons than the 19th century middle-class. For them success meant that one was able to afford a rapid barrage of titillations; poverty meant the loss of these titillations. Life was to be approached as a party with the pursuit of pleasure as the rallying point:

> But the restlessness . . . approached hysteria . . . the parties were bigger . . . the pace was faster . . . the

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[57]F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 282.

> buildings were higher, the morals were looser and the liquor was cheaper; but all of these did not minister to much delight. Young people wore out early--they were hard and languid at twenty-one . . . none of them contributed anything new. . . . The city was bloated, glutted, stupid with cake and circuses, and a new expression "Oh yeah?" summed up all the enthusiasm evoked.[58]

The deadened spirit that Fitzgerald returns to in his fiction is not simply an example of a nation-wide hangover. It signifies features endemic to modern culture, features which Fitzgerald felt keenly because, along with his "jaded priest" sensibilities, he stood at a point in history where the rise of modernity could still be compared with what it replaced, with what was lost.

The Great Gatsby states, through Gatsby's quest to recover a part of himself, the need for a transcendent dream, for a new beginning. Gatsby's search is doomed because, as Chekhov saw, there are no grand solutions. Gatsby chooses the romantic route and tries to realize his quest in the form of living substance. Daisy, a member of the rich and bored set, is elevated by him to a Beatrice-like stature who can lead him through the confusion to recover what has been lost:

> He talked a lot about the past and I gathered he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused since then [before the war], but if he could return to a certain starting place and go over it slowly, he could find out what that thing was . . .[59]

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[58]F. Scott Fitzgerald, "My Lost City," The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1956), pp. 30-31.

[59]F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), pp. 111-112.

The need to recover something and to be spiritually starved without it gave a driven quality to more than Gatsby. Something was lost, irrevocably cast away after World War I. It produced an incoherent hunger, a desire to lose a dissatisfied self, to escape from a world where man's deepest needs are left in tatters while his appetites are inflamed. H.L. Mencken observed of the 1920s that Americans had developed a pathological susceptibility to messiahs despite their cynicism. He touched upon a craving for something more than oneself, a craving that became manifested in bigger parties, more sensory thrills and a plethora of faiths to attract the dissatisfied.

In "Winter Dreams" the sense of loss that Gatsby feels coalesces with emotional numbness. Without anything to believe in or search for, Dexter Smith experiences an internal collapse and is pressed by a feeling of emptiness:

> "Long ago," he said, "long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more."[60]

Dexter Smith is more characteristic of the floundering, broken people that populate Fitzgerald's fiction than is Gatsby's capacity for hope and "romantic readiness."

The crushed serve as expressions of desperation and symbols for bleak truths bubbling to the surface of American society. In "May Day" Gordon Sterett's friends party while he, "pitiful and

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[60]F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Winter Dreams," Babylon Revisited and Other Stories (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), p. 135.

wretched, a little drunk and miserably tired"[61] fires a bullet into his temple. In "The Ice Palace" Sally Hopper becomes separated from the rest of the party-goers and is lost in a labyrinth. The vignette of a woman with Sally's distaste for modern culture lost in a labyrinth where "all tears froze" captures the loneliness and alienation of people like her. The aimless bacchants in "The Rich Boy" "waited until an accumulation of nervous boredom"[62] pushed them into another spree. In "Babylon Revisited" Charlie Wales looks back on his past and "suddenly realized the meaning of the word to dissipate--to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something."[63] He sees nothing of worth, no purpose and no plan.

There is an emptiness and internal suffering in Fitzgerald's portraits, a longing for either release or purpose where neither can be found. His characters are torn and confused and, like Edward Munch's portraits, are alienated and lonely in the midst of a crowd.

Narcissism is a pathology that has resisted psychiatric attempts to cure it. Fitzgerald could explain the inability to deal with it effectively in our culture. There is no way of dealing with narcissism because the remedies no longer exist. Here there is a connection between what is pathological and what

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[61]Fitzgerald, "May Day," Babylon Revisited, p. 47.

[62]Fitzgerald, "The Rich Boy," Babylon Revisited, p. 181.

[63]Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited," Babylon Revisited, p. 214.

is normal. Modern culture fabricates pseudo-needs while destroying important human ones, creates citizens who will manipulate, seek out and purchase emotional jolts, who have lost the capacity for faith and fear death as the final statement in a meaningless life.

In "The Crack-up" Fitzgerald recounts his own fall into the numbing disease of his era:

> I had been mortgaging myself physically and spiritually up to the hilt. . . . I had weaned myself from all the things I used to love--that every act of life from the morning tooth-brush to the friend at dinner had become an effort. I saw that for a long time I had not liked people and things, but only followed the rickety old pretence of liking. I saw that even my love for those closest to me was become only an attempt to love.[64]

He lived what he wrote: the excesses, the dissipation, the inability to feel and the sense of loss of what was essential for peace. At the end of his essay, he draws from the Bible to ask a question relevant to a narcissistic age: "Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted."[65]

In Fitzgerald the tension between madness and culture isn't as evident as it is in Woolf or Chekhov. Fitzgerald doesn't describe madness as a protest against culture, but rather as a pervasive societal phenomenon. The narcissism his characters display is so prevalent that it has become incorporated into a

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[64]Fitzgerald, "The Crack-up," The Crack-up, p. 72.

[65]Matt. 5:13.

cultural way of life.[66] The distinction between what is madness and what is culture becomes blurred enough to relax the tension between the two. In this sense, Fitzgerald presents a more disturbing message than Woolf or Chekhov who leave us at least the self-contained protests of Septimus and Ivan. Fitzgerald's characters have lost the inner voice, the individuality that is so necessary for resistance to the "poshlost" of modern culture. Like Dr. Ragin, they acquiesce in the dissolution of their personalities and succumb to a deadening, manipulative, inhuman culture by becoming deadened and empty themselves.

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[66]Fitzgerald would side with Lasch and Kovel in seeing narcissism as a cultural by-product. It is interesting to note how different their emphasis on culture as a causative factor is from Freud, Kernberg and Kohut. For the latter, narcissism is the result of arrested development in the pre-oedipal stage of childhood. This theory, like the medical models, emphasizes the specifics of the individual case to the detriment of cultural influences. Psychoanalysis would benefit from a consideration of the world that Fitzgerald presents.

V. Conclusion

Considered separately, Woolf, Chekhov and Fitzgerald are as dissimilar in styles of writing as they are in personalities and social backgrounds. The tapestry effect of Woolf's prose is as unlike Chekhov's trim descriptions as it is unlike the best of Fitzgerald's tight, clear stories. One can imagine neither Chekhov participating in Fitzgerald's drunken, often rudely unpleasant antics, nor see Fitzgerald as a member of the Bloomsbury circle.

Taken together, what is notable in these three authors is not the obvious differences that divide them, but rather the affinities in theme and social criticism that they share. Though they wrote from contrasting vantage points, all speak of something missing that cannot be recovered, of a lack of worthy purpose in their times, and of a despair at the possibility of finding a sense of direction. In a summation of the dilemma faced by all her fellow inmates, one mental patient puts her finger on the same life problem that these authors faced, of being unable to "cope with life as we find it, nor can we escape or adjust ourselves to it."[67] Their shared frustration partly explains why similarities exist in theme and social criticism, why, for example, some of the enervated characters populating Fitzgerald's stories could, with the necessary

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[67]Lara Jefferson, "These Are My Sisters," Kaplan, p. 18.

cultural remodelling, be transferred, ennui and all, into Chekhov's work.

In their depictions of madness, Woolf, Chekhov and Fitzgerald uncover unpleasant truths about the relationship between culture and madness. These truths indicate how close they are on points of cultural criticism. Though varying in emphasis, they aim at the same general targets: at the complicity of culture in the cause of madness, at the culture-bound prejudices that inform definitions of madness and the relativity of those definitions, at the harmful treatment the mad can receive from psychiatrists and society, and finally, how culture shapes the expression of madness. A very brief summary of their work using these targets as common themes will, hopefully, draw together a cohesive indictment of the relationship between madness and modern culture.

In Mrs. Dalloway culture figures prominently in the cause of madness. While Septimus Smith's predisposition to nervous sensitivity makes him susceptible, the source for his madness lies in the experiences thrust upon him. Septimus is one of the deviants described earlier by Ruth Benedict, one of those for whom adaptation to cultural conditions involves greater stress and conflict than it does in others. In Septimus' case the decisive condition making adaptation impossible is perhaps the most historically consistent feature of all cultures: their predilection for war. Rather than rechanneling human nature's seemingly intransigent thirst for violence, his culture

institutionalized it, dressed it up in uniforms and self-serving deceits about the defense of higher truths. His experiences in the trenches shatter the tenuous hierarchy of his personality structure and nothing takes its place. In Mrs. Dalloway war is mass insanity, but, given the aggressive tendencies of our species and the enduring nature of cultural chauvinism, it also possesses an undeniable logic.

In "Ward 6" Ivan is more high-strung than Septimus and more inclined towards nervous susceptibility. Chekhov cites personal misfortune in the creation of his temperament but again, as in Mrs. Dalloway, it is a feature of culture that provides the deciding push. For Ivan, it is the "administered world" that is the enemy, the "heartless attitude" and blindness of officialdom. He is a nothing to the bureaucracy of justice, an individual both powerless and purposeless. His madness becomes a Kafka-like dream; he fears being incarcerated without having knowingly committed a crime and in the end he is. The irony in the accuracy of Ivan's persecution delusions verifies his accusation against culture as a causative factor in his madness.

While Woolf uses the event of the first world war as a catalyst for madness, and Chekhov uses the social machinery of officialdom, Fitzgerald does not give us a specific cultural reference point in the formation of madness. The cause of disintegration in his characters cannot be so neatly ascribed to a turning point. Fitzgerald introduced modernity to itself, showed its excesses and emptiness. His characters are the

children of their age, and in their malaise represent its effects. There is no turning point; the cause is pervasive rather than specific. Fitzgerald presented symptoms in his work that predated the awareness in the social sciences of the "emergence of new patterns of psychopathology characterized by alienation, aimlessness and apathy which appear to be replacing neurasthenia and other traditional forms of neurosis."[68]

The inference drawn from Woolf, Chekhov, and to a lesser extent Fitzgerald, is that the label of madness is highly suspect. The reader gains a more sympathetic understanding of the validity of the madman's perceptions than do the doctors, the definers in Mrs. Dalloway and "Ward 6." The definitions of madness stem more from the role given to the doctors as guardians of societal precepts than from any medical phenomena. The compromised position of the objective science whose duty it is to select what constitutes madness makes their authority a threat instead of an assistance. In Fitzgerald it is the self-absorbed indifference of the general population that makes the definer's mandate possible; in Woolf it is human nature's hostility towards the deviant and the helpless; in Chekhov it is apathy and ignorance.

The treatment given to the mad characters has no beneficial bearing on the nature and cause of their problems. For Dr. Bradshaw a cure consists of a slavish acceptance of

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[68]James C. Coleman, "Life Stress and Maladaptive Behaviour," The American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 27, No. 4 (1973), 169-180.

authority and cultural dictates, a return to the sluggishly normal. Dr. Ragin views a cure as the ability to acquiesce in obvious venality and societal deceits, to rationalize unpleasant truths out of existence. Nikita makes no pretence of a remedy and simply beats patients into submission. The treatment is meant to help the status quo, not the patient. It focuses on the individual without addressing itself at all to cultural factors.

Madness in Woolf, Chekhov and Fitzgerald is a protest against and expression of cultural conditions. Of the three it is Fitzgerald who concentrates the most upon the parallels between the disintegration of society and the disintegration of the individual. It is the sickness of the culture that shapes the expression of madness in his characters, their desperation and chase for a continual barrage of sensual appeasement, their cardboard emotions and search for some narcotized experience that lifts them out of an unsatisfactory sense of self. They are cultural victims who have no hope, who kill themselves with a bullet, numb themselves with booze, search for an all important answer in romantic love without being capable of sustaining relationships, who find their gods in wealth and fame and become disillusioned with them. Like Gatsby they have lost a sense of a past, of a purpose. What Bruford writes about Chekhov applies equally to Fitzgerald: "This sense of something lacking is surely one source of that hopeless sadness which broods over

almost all of [his] serious work."[69] The "something lacking" reflects a cultural condition and is, in its turn, reflected in the pain of their characters. Their place in history, madness and culture all become embroiled in an intricate configuration of cause and effect. Jacoby calls civilization a "scar tissue from a past of violence and destruction."[70] Fitzgerald, like Woolf and Chekhov, shows madness and the disintegration of personality to be a part of that "scar tissue," to be culture's darker face.

Studying madness in literature in particular reveals the deeper contexts of the writer's awareness that the mad cannot be artificially extracted from their environment and then analyzed out of the social context. They are shown interacting with a psychically lethal set of social priorities that emphasize drives over values. They are "the final outcome of everything that is wrong with a culture."[71] John Orr has literature's contextual awareness in mind when he writes that the novel "has an enduring relationship to history and society. It exposes the academic separation of the arts and the social sciences as a pedagogic myth."[72] In understanding deviance, its causes and inner state, literature is as valuable as any of the social sciences.

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[69]Bruford, p. 210.

[70]Jacoby, p. 31.

[71]Henry, p. 322.

[72]Orr, p. 4.

As stated earlier, viewing the mad as the source of dysfunction deflects criticism from other, non-organic (i.e. cultural) causes and provides psychiatry with specialized authority. Literature broadens the configuration. It indicates what the "cured" patient will be sent back to. Freud's famous remark about curing the neurotic misery in order to introduce the patient to the misery of modern life captures the spirit of this dilemma. Neither Septimus Smith nor Ivan Dmitrich are able to adapt to their culture without loss of personality, and for Fitzgerald's characters, self-inflicted destruction is a form of adapting to culture. There is no hope for any of them in accepting or rejecting the power structure and hierarchy of knowledge in society.[73] The implication here is that it is futile to talk about a cure without also talking about social change. Without a thorough, radical re-evaluation of the relationship between madness and culture, the only improvements to be made are of a strictly medical nature.

Woolf, Chekhov and Fitzgerald indicate the need for social change, but not any specific remedies. Providing blueprints for

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[73]"Only two possibilities are left to the individual: either he remains what he was, in which case he becomes more and more unadapted, neurotic, and inefficient, loses his possibilities of subsistence, and he is at last tossed on the social rubbish heap, whatever his talents may be; or he adapts himself to the new sociological organism, which becomes his world, and he becomes unable to live except in a mass society. (And then he scarcely differs from a cave man.) But to become a mass man entails a tremendous effort of psychic mutation. The purpose of the . . . so-called human techniques, is to assist him in this mutation, to help him find the quickest way, to calm his fears, and reshape his heart and his brain." (Ellul, p. 334.)

social change was not their task as writers. Their purpose was to depict intolerable situations in a way that made them more comprehensible. However, if they were asked to address the problem of restructuring modern culture, they could only point to a few war-weary values to serve as beacons, values that, since they are aimed to promote individualism, run counter to the very concept of modern culture. Like us they were groping in the dark, unable to acquiesce to their culture's moral condition and just as unable to find a new basis for an opposing moral code.

One of the values each author held to was the supremacy of the individual. While lacking in pragmatic direction, this infuses into their work a respect for the right to be different. Pitting the deviant against his culture, their works censure culturally induced madness and the biased treatment of the mad. They grant in literature what the misfit does not have in real life: a sympathetic court of appeal.

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