Michel Foucault, “Madness and Society”

Focus on what Foucault has to say regarding the construction of the concept “madness” in terms of language. What is his main point about that and how does literature figure into that point for Foucault?
Shoshana Felman, “Foucault/Derrida”

On page 41, at the very bottom, Felman asks (following Foucault): “How can we comprehend without objectifying, without excluding?” Focus on this question and on this section of the essay. What does she mean with that question? What is the point she makes about language use in general and how does it relate to the concept of madness?
HONR 2100  
Reading Quiz #3  
Wed, Aug 29

NAME ____________________________________

Shoshana Felman, “Foucault/Derrida”

On page 47, Felman discusses the difference between “logos” and “pathos.” How does she explain the work of “logos,” and how does “pathos” function? How does literature speak to madness in a way that philosophy cannot, according to Felman? Pay particular attention to the point developed on p. 52.
Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*

Introduction (chapter 1), Chapter 2, pp. 1-33

At the beginning of the book, Porter quotes Thomas Szasz, who claims that “there is no such thing as ‘mental illness’” (2). This is an argument that Porter will also follow in the sense presented to us already by Felman—that language always produces its own concepts from a realm that is basically unknowable. On page 4, he tells us that he will not provide a definition of “true madness,” but that he will provide an account of its “history.” Chapter 2 is a portion of that history in which religious discourse defined “madness.” How does Porter begin to present madness as a production of language? Give details, with page numbers.
Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, Chapters 3-5, pp. 34-122

At the end of chapter 5, Porter writes, “The instituting of the asylum set up a cordon sanitaire delineating the ‘normal’ from the ‘mad,’ which underlined the Otherhood of the insane and carved out a managerial milieu in which that alienness could be handled” (122). Consider this statement, and then trace some of the steps in this process of transformation from religion’s definition of madness to psychiatry. How does this process illustrate Felman’s point about Cartesian thinking? Give details, and note page numbers.
Throughout the book, Porter comes back to the point he raises at the very beginning: that “madness” is fundamentally a mystery (see p.1). Towards the end of the book, on page 214, he sarcastically asks whether our contemporary understanding of madness is indeed progress. In the second half of the book, how does Porter argue this point? What changes does he bring up that indicate how the same problems the ancients had still exist?
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, “Preface”

At the time of his death in 1984, Michel Foucault held the most prestigious academic position in France, namely a chair at the Collège de France, one of the world’s most famous universities. Foucault had given that chair the title “History of Systems of Thought.” How does he in the Preface to *Madness and Civilization* focus on “systems of thought?” In your answer, consider Foucault’s thesis that the book will NOT focus on the language of psychiatry but rather on that “silence” that the language of psychiatry has effected.
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 1

On page 35, Foucault writes, “The classical experience of madness is born. The great threat that dawned on the horizon of the fifteenth century subsides, the disturbing powers that inhabit Bosch’s painting have lost their violence.” Foucault speaks here of a epochal shift in the perception and experience of madness. Explain what constitutes this shift and give page numbers to indicate where Foucault distinguishes between one epoch and another.
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 2

At the end of chapter 1, Foucault tells us that there is “an inevitable procession of reason at work” (35) across the ages in Western Culture. How is this procession described in chapter 2? Does Foucault mention any exceptions (like Shakespeare or Cervantes in chapter 1) that defy the main procession of reason?
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 3

In this chapter, Foucault creates an interesting link between madness and animality—what does he say about the manifestation of this link in the Classical age versus the Renaissance? In other words, how was this sense of “animality” as madness different in those two epochs? I wonder, can we see remnants of these views today, in our own culture?

**Bonus question:**
Do you understand Foucault’s point about the figure of Christ, pp. 78-79: “…men would have to wait two centuries—until Dostoievsky and Nietzsche—for Christ to regain the glory of his madness, for scandal to recover its power of revelation, for unreason to cease being merely the public shame of reason.” What’s critical here is that we first understand how Foucault distinguishes between “unreason” and “madness.” Do you understand the difference?
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 4

In this chapter, Foucault tries to define madness by showing that the reasonable definition we usually employ (the Cartesian formula, p. 108) sees madness as void, as night, as nothing. How does Cartesian thinking arrive at that definition, according to this chapter? And, how does Foucault’s notion of “dazzlement” mess with the standard Cartesian definition of madness?

(This chapter is long and difficult. You can just focus on the following sections to get a good grasp of the argument: p. 85 - top of p.86; “The marvelous logic of the mad…, p. 95 – “…delirious language, p. 97; top of p. 107 – bottom of p. 111; “The movement proper to unreason” – end.)
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 5

**Part 1:**
In this chapter, Foucault describes how TWO pairs of “behaviors” came to be identified as madness in the classical period; these two pairs are (1) mania and melancholia, and (2) hysteria and hypochondria. According to Foucault, how did each pair develop in the classical age, and what is distinctive in each development?

**Part 2:**
Foucault ends the chapter by writing, “the ‘scientific psychiatry’ of the nineteenth century became possible” (158) based on the developments of those two pairs of “diseases.” In other words, what is the origin of modern psychiatry, and to what extent can one see that modern psychiatry is not objective, not about empirical Truth?
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 6

The structure of this chapter mirrors to a large degree that structure of chapter 5; that is to say, Foucault examines TWO different, yet simultaneous, approaches to dealing with madness in the classical period. The first approach he terms “physical cures,” and the second he calls “moral or psychological treatments.” He shifts to the second approach on p. 177. Can you describe how these two approaches differ? And, how does the second approach lead to modern psychology and psychiatry, according to Foucault?
NAME ___________________________________

Philippe Pinel, selections from *A Treatise on Insanity*

Pinel is known in the history of psychiatry as the founder of the “Moral School.” Foucault spends much time defining the beginnings of this Moral School in chapters 5 and 6 of *Madness and Civilization*. As you read the selections from Pinel (including the preface, written by a psychiatrist in the 1960s), try to get a sense of the *moral* emphasis in Pinel’s thinking. Underline or highlight sections where that emphasis becomes apparent. Also, in what way can one see in this reading that modern psychiatry is NOT an objective science, but rather an interpretive, speculative approach to the phenomenon of madness?
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 7

I think that this chapter offers a marvelous examination of how when we try to suppress something out of fear, we merely create the opposite effect: a monster that fascinates more than the original thing did. How does Foucault make precisely this point in relation to madness and the attempts of the Classical period to suppress it, yet, paradoxically, to also give it a new reality, as “the world’s contratempo” (212)? In thinking about this question, you might look up Sade, Goya, Nerval, and Hölderlin on Wikipedia.org to get a sense of their “unreason.”
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Chapter 8

In this chapter, called “The New Division,” Foucault argues that in the second half of the 18th century the mad were not at all liberated, but rather confined more insidiously! However, Foucault gets to this point in a round-about way: first, he argues that madness was isolated from other forms of “unreason”; then, he notes a “crisis” about the whole idea of confinement because of how poverty came to be seen; and, thirdly, he shows that madness finally comes to occupy a place of imprisonment shared only with criminals. Can you detect these three sections in the chapter, and can you see how he argues each point?
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Conclusion

Take a look at the next page of this quiz—I include a few some images from Francisco Goya’s graphics, *Los Caprichos*. How does “the life of unreason” manifest itself in Goya’s images? And, what is their positive, irreducible, revolutionary value, according to Foucault’s passionate argument in the conclusion?
Francisco Goya's *Los Caprichos* were published in 1799 at a time of social repression and economic crisis in Spain. They comprise one of the most influential graphic series in the history of Western art. The exhibition includes an early first edition of the complete set of 80 engravings, one of the four sets acquired in 1799 directly from Goya by the Duke and Duchess of Osuna. Francisco Goya (1746--1828) was born in Zaragoza, Spain and became one of the most influential and prolific artists of his time. His career spanned more than 60 years. He is often considered to be the founder of "modern art" because of the way in which he critiqued and examined the social, cultural, religious, and courtly world in which he found himself. Influenced by Enlightenment thinking, the painter set out to analyze the human condition and denounce social abuses and superstitions. *Los Caprichos* was his passionate declaration that the chains of social backwardness had to be broken if humanity was to advance. The series attests to the artist's political liberalism and his revulsion towards ignorance and intellectual oppression; at the same time it mirrors Goya's ambivalence toward authority and the church. *Los Caprichos* includes themes of the Spanish Inquisition, the abuses of the church and the nobility, witchcraft, child rearing, avarice, and the frivolity of young women. The often-subhuman cast of *Los Caprichos* includes goblins, monks, prostitutes, witches, animals acting like human fools, and aristocrats. These personages populate the world on the margins of reason, where no clear boundaries distinguish reality from fantasy.

For a complete reproduction of all 80 images of *Los Caprichos*, see:

http://www.spaightwoodgalleries.com/Pages/Goya.html
In this first section of the book the reader gets introduced to Prince Myshkin and the other main protagonists. How do the other characters react to the Prince when they first meet him, and how and why does their reaction tend to change? And, why is he called “The Idiot”? In your answer, mention specific examples.
This section culminates with the party at Nastasya’s house. In this section, how do the characters show their fundamental commitment to social and material benefits? And, how does this section also reveal, unmistakably, that Dostoevsky deconstructs and critiques those social commitments in a Foucauldian sense? In other words, how does it become apparent that the characters hold on to social constructs that show the fundamental work of power and violence against “misfits”? 