

THE POETRY OF PROSE

Readings in Russian Literature

*Jostein Børtnes*

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## Preface

I HAVE taken advantage of this re-edition of my essays to make a few adjustments in the texts. Most importantly, in order to make them more easily accessible to readers without any Russian, I have deleted all quotations in Russian and replaced them with English equivalents. Besides, I have where possible used Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky's excellent translations of Dostoevsky's novels instead of the older ones by David Magarshack. Apart from these adjustments, the essays reflect the *Stand der Forschung* at the time when they were written. The book uses the Library of Congress transliteration system, with the exception of certain names where other forms are commonly used in English, such as Dostoevsky, Gogol, or Tolstoy.

I am indebted to a number of colleagues and students of Russian literature in the Nordic countries and further afield for their responses to my analyses. I would like, in particular, to extend my gratitude to the participants in the workshops and conferences funded by NorFA (Nordic Academy for Advanced Study) in 1995–2000, and to friends and colleagues in England, Russia and the United States with whom I have had the opportunity over the years to discuss my ideas.

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*Jostein Børtnes · Bergen, 2007*

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## Introduction

THE ESSAYS collected in this volume, written at various times and in various places, range from an account of early East Slavic (Old Russian) literature, through a number of readings of the classic nineteenth-century Russian novel, to an exposition of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of genre. Despite the differences, however, they have at least one basic theme in common. This common theme may be described as "prose poetics," or as "the poetry of prose," as I call it in my discussion of Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons*.

The poetry of prose may seem like a contradiction in terms. We are used to thinking of "prose" and "poetry" as opposite concepts, associating poetry with verse composition, in particular with the short lyric poem, and prose with narrative literature. In contrast to the latter, in which the characters' story develops in a sequence of events, linked together in time and space, by cause and effect, lyrics are composed according to the principle of parallelism. In other words, two or more units are brought together in such a way that they form a series of analogies, in which the units are perceived as similar or equivalent in some respects, retaining their differences in others. Examples of such similarity in difference on the level of sound are: metre, rhyme, alliteration and assonance, and on the level of sense: comparison, allegory, parable and metaphor. Such juxtaposition of different units immediately activates the principle of similarity. Either the units are juxtaposed because they are similar, or they become similar through being juxtaposed. On the level of meaning, the establishment of analogy between different concepts is the source of poetic "imagery," often considered to be the essence of poetic composition.

In the bipolar system of language, equivalence or similarity pertains to the metaphoric pole, whereas combination and contiguity are related to the metonymic pole.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, the basic distinction between metaphoric and metonymic predominance is important for the way we read a text. The foregrounding of similarity or equivalence in lyric verse prompts us to look for a meaningful interplay between sound and meaning, as well as between meanings. Narrative prose, on the other hand, stimulates the readers' curiosity about what happens to the characters in the development of the plot as it unfolds in space and time, and to their interaction with one another and with their social and natural environments. When we read fictional prose, our perception is directed by these two forms of sequencing, the causal and the temporal. It is the principle of contiguity that prevails as we follow the characters in their movements through a fictional time-space that is "natural" enough to allow us to identify our perception of our own life with that of fiction.<sup>2</sup> However, in addition to these "prosaic" structures, based on combination and contiguity, the art of fiction also involves a rich variety of parallelistic patterning. And it is this patterning that gives the "life" material a higher symbolic dimension.<sup>3</sup>

The art of transforming sequential prose narrative into symbolic parallelism is manifest in Russian literature from its very beginning. Already by the eleventh century East Slavic preachers and hagiographers had assimilated the traditional Christian method of juxtaposing their own discourse with biblical quotations in order to bring out the conformity of events and characters from their own recent history with events and characters in the Bible and the Christian tradition. We see it very clearly in Nestor's *Reading on the Life and Slaying of the Blessed Martyrs Boris and Gleb* and his *Life of Saint Feodosii*. In the former, the brothers' acceptance of a violent death without resistance is represented as an imitation of Christ's sufferings, while in the latter the hagiographer deploys his

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- 1 Roman Jakobson, 1956, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," *Fundamentals of Language*, eds. R. Jakobson & M. Halle, The Hague.
  - 2 Krystyna Pomorska, 1985, "Poetics of Prose," Roman Jakobson, *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, eds. K. Pomorska & S. Rudy, Oxford, pp. 169–77, p. 173.
  - 3 See Pomorska, 1985, p. 173. Compare the illuminating analyses of particular texts in Wolf Schmid, 1991, *Puškins Prosa in poetischer Lektüre: Die Erzählungen Belkins*, Munich, and Wolf Schmid, 1998, *Proza kak poezii: Pushkin—Dostoevskii—Chekhov—avangard*, St Petersburg.



rhetoric in order to transform the saint into an image of Christ in both his human and in his divine aspects. Today, the method exemplified by Nestor's hagiographic writings is usually referred to as "figural interpretation," a term introduced into literary studies by Erich Auerbach. According to his definition, figural interpretation

establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first. [...] They are both contained in the flowing stream which is historical life, and only the comprehension, the *intellectus spiritualis*, of their interdependence is a "spiritual act."<sup>4</sup>

From being an intra-biblical method of interpretation, in which events or persons from the Old Testament were understood as prefigurations of events and persons in the New, figural interpretation in the Middle Ages became a wider concept, applied both to juxtapositions of biblical with extra-biblical texts and to non-biblical texts.

Figural interpretation in its Orthodox form is much more than a rhetorical device. It is a literary expression of the idea of Christian self-realisation in imitation of Christ. This Christocentric anthropology is deeply embedded in Orthodox mentality and part of the religious heritage of all Russians brought up in the Orthodox faith. With the arrival of the new, post-Enlightenment anthropology at the end of the eighteenth century, however, the validity of the traditional Orthodox conception of human nature was no longer self-evident. It was challenged by ideas such as those of Rousseau about the inborn goodness of "natural man," hidden by layers of repression caused by socialisation and acculturation. This had far-reaching consequences for Russian literature, especially for the development of the Russian novel, where the conflict between Christian and non-Christian conceptions of self is crucial. In my study of religion in the Russian novel I try to demonstrate how Pushkin and Gogol reinterpreted the optimistic and revolutionary ideologies underlying the philosophical anthropology of the Enlightenment and Romanticism in the light of their own tragic vision of the moral universe. From here I go on to show

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4 Erich Auerbach, 1953, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W.R. Trask, Princeton, p. 73. First German edition: *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, Bern, 1946.

how in the great novels of the 1860s and 70s patterns of archaic rites of passage are “individualised” in the representation of the protagonists. The authors—Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and others—project onto the stories of their protagonists references, allusions and quotations from the life of Christ as represented in the gospels, thus prompting the reader to establish a complex relationship of equivalence and difference between them and the archetype of Christ. As I put it in my examination of the function of hagiography in Dostoevsky’s novels, the author is involved in a poetic activity in which the reader becomes a co-creator.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky, by quoting verbatim the gospel story about the resurrection of Lazarus in his own story about Raskolnikov’s resurrection, brings into play a technique reminiscent of figural interpretation. The spiritual resurrection of the latter is prefigured in the account of the physical resurrection of the former. A similar technique is employed in *The Brothers Karamazov*. In my discussion of polyphony in Dostoevsky’s last novel, I argue that the different subplots of the novel form a series of parallels in which the brothers are transformed into different representations of Christ as generative model and *cantus firmus* underlying the voices of the protagonists.

In trying to define Dostoevsky’s poetics of prose, however, we realise that the concept of figural interpretation is too narrow. It may be applied to the correspondences established between the biblical prototypes and Dostoevsky’s protagonists in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, but it is hardly applicable to the symbolic systems that we are encouraged to construct when reading novels such as *The Idiot* and *Demons*. In *The Idiot*, the two heroines, Nastasia Filippovna and Aglaia, both described as ardent readers, project their literary heroes onto Myshkin in much the same way as Tatiana projects her own onto the figure of Evgenii Onegin in Pushkin’s novel. To Nastasia Filippovna, he is the embodiment of her image of Jesus the Saviour, whereas Aglaia identifies him with the “poor knight” of Pushkin’s ballad, in whom she sees the serious counterpart of Cervantes’ Don Quixote. The analogies between Prince Myshkin and the figure of Christ are not developed into a typological structure, however. On the contrary, towards the end of the story the points of similarity between Christ and the prince are superseded by a marked emphasis on the differences between them.

In *Demons* this combination of story and projection is taken even further. In my essay on the symbolic structure of *Demons* I see it as a novel about idolatry, and the creation of idols. This central theme of the novel is developed in a series of parallel strands, in which the protagonists surrounding Stavrogin, the main hero, try to project onto his figure stories they have invented about him as the disseminator of their ideas, only to discover that he finally decides to turn himself into living evidence of the validity of these ideas by committing suicide.

My last reading, “Seeing the world through genres,” is somewhat different from the others, since my main concern here is not Russian literature, but Russian literary theory, namely Mikhail Bakhtin’s and Iurii Lotman’s theories of genre. According to Bakhtin, genres are treasure troves of potential meaning inherited from the past and projected into the future by the artists’ creative activity, to be liberated from the text by the creative understanding of new generations, whereas to Lotman, the core of creative thinking is found in the juxtaposition of non-juxtaposable elements, between which a relationship of equivalence is established thanks to their shared context. When different genres are juxtaposed in this way, new meanings emerge as a result of their interaction. In order to illustrate the validity of Bakhtin’s and Lotman’s concepts of genre, I try to show how the life and figure of Sebastian Flyte in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* emerges from a complex generic interaction in which hagiographic patterns become predominant towards the end, first in the lay Franciscans’ metaphoric projection of biblical models onto his person—“A real Samaritan,” “like one transfigured”—and then, finally, in his sister Cordelia’s metonymic vision of him spending his last days in a threshold situation at the monastery, “very near and dear to God,” “half in, half out, of the community.”

The conclusion I would like to draw from my readings is that what transforms life material into an art form is the combination of story and projection, the projection of one story onto another, be it the projection of the story about Lazarus onto Raskolnikov’s story, Aglaia’s projection of Pushkin’s story about the poor knight onto Prince Myshkin’s story, or all the other ways in which the texts stimulate their readers to combine story and projection.

The combination of story and projection is not confined to the poetics of prose, however. As Mark Turner has shown,

the projection of one story onto another may seem exotic and literary, and it is—but it is also, like story, a fundamental instrument of the mind. Rational capacities depend upon it. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally [...] The projection of story operates throughout everyday life and throughout the most elite and sacred literature.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that this form of projection of story, or *parable*, as Turner calls it, is basic to everyday thought as well as to literature, means that we as readers have access to the poetry of the Russian novel through our ability to manipulate these two fundamental instruments of thought: story and projection.

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5 Mark Turner, 1996, *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*, Oxford & New York, pp. 5, 6.

## Medieval East Slavic Literature 988–1730

THE HISTORY of Russian literature begins with a date of great significance for Russian political and cultural history: the year 988, when the ruler of Kievan Rus' officially accepted Christianity as the new faith of the principality. At that point there was no written literature in Rus', but by his action Prince Vladimir laid the foundations of what we now call medieval East Slavic literature, even though it would not come into real being—so far as we know from what has reached us after the destruction wrought by the Mongol invasion—for some years thereafter. But the Eastern Slavs received an alphabet designed by Saints Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, and also fell heir to the rich Byzantine cultural heritage that had been and would be translated from the Greek.

When we speak of the “literature” of the Eastern Slavs in the Middle Ages, however, we must understand it as something quite different from our twenty-first-century notions of literature.

In the first place, most Eastern Slavic literature was not what we would consider fictional, or at least it presented itself as dealing with fact and reality. In the earliest period one of the leading literary genres was the chronicle (exemplified by the *Primary Chronicle*), which built upon the achievements of the Byzantine historians. This genre by its very nature claimed to be factual even though it contained some clearly fictional (or at least non-factual) elements. Another leading genre was hagiography, which dealt with biographical accounts of the lives of the Eastern Slavs' holy men and women: if a saint's life contained fantastic elements, they were meant to be taken seriously, and not regarded as fiction. Even works such as the epic *Igor Tale* purported to deal with historical matters, though the author obviously took literary liberties with his materials. To

be sure, there were semi-fictional or fictional works in East Slavic literature from very early on—the *Supplication of Daniil the Exile* is an example—and their importance increased as the medieval period approached its end. But this does not alter the fact that early East Slavic “literature” dealt primarily with the real world as medieval men saw it, and not with fictionalized accounts of it. From the beginning it was closely linked to the church, and indeed in its first few centuries hardly existed outside it. Among the leading literary genres of Kievan Rus’ were prayers and sermons, specifically ecclesiastical in nature, as well as hagiography; and the oldest original manuscript in our possession is the *Ostromir Gospel* of the mid-eleventh century, a selection of texts from the Gospels. Since the church nurtured literature so carefully during the medieval period, it was difficult for more secular works to be copied and to survive. This also meant that originality was suspect. Indeed, originality was even dangerous, for it could easily lead to heresy: the writer’s chief task was to quote skilfully from those who had gone before him, or to express old and well-tested truths in a novel way. He was ill-advised to offer his readers anything startlingly original.

Since the church and the state were closely intertwined in medieval Russia, and since most literature was linked to the church, literature naturally supported the purposes of the state. Far from regarding themselves as antagonists of the state or the ruler, writers for the most part were at one with the objectives of their society and state. There were exceptions to this, of course, as with Prince Kurbskii and his polemic with Ivan the Terrible: but even here the fact that Ivan himself was a leading writer of the sixteenth century points to the closest possible connection between the state and literature. Indeed, in the broad sweep of the history of East Slavic literary history, it is only during the nineteenth century and down to the October revolution of 1917 that writers viewed themselves as fundamentally opposed to the state, or as social critics. Both before and after that interlude they have by and large supported the objectives of their society and the state in which they lived.

To this it can be added that in the medieval period there was little in the way of literary culture. Many works of the earliest period are anonymous—among them the greatest work of that time, the *Igor Tale*—or merely attributed to certain individuals, with greater or lesser certainty, on the basis of internal or external evidence. Most writers evidently

worked in near isolation, deriving intellectual sustenance from the writings that had gone before them but not from any “literary community” in the modern sense of the word. Indeed, there was scarcely anything resembling a professional writer in the medieval period; there were people who wrote, and sometimes very well, but they were really something else, priests or monks or government officials, or even tsars. Towards the end of the seventeenth century this situation began to change, so that we may speak of two or three or four identifiable writers who lived at the same time and place and knew one another. Thus Feofan Prokopovich, one of the best writers of the early eighteenth century though he was in fact a high ecclesiastical functionary, could regard the government official and diplomat Antiokh Kantemir as a literary disciple of his. At this time not only did there begin to appear something resembling a community of literary men, there also emerged literary works in the modern sense. Antiokh Kantemir’s verse satires, for example, began to circulate widely in 1730. Because of this event, the year 1730 is more important in Russian literary history than it is in Russian political history, for it is a key year for the transition from the rich traditions of an ecclesiastically oriented medieval literature to a secular modern literature. Indeed, as a date in literary history proper it may be the most important one in the entire thousand-year sweep of East Slavic literature.

East Slavic literature takes its origins from the work of the two Thessalonian brothers Constantine-Cyril (826–69) and Methodius (815–85), the Greek apostles to the Slavs. During their mission to Great Moravia, where they arrived as envoys of the East Roman Emperor in 863, they created a liturgical language that would enable them to preach the Christian gospel in the vernacular of the Slavs. This language, today known as Old Church Slavonic, was based on the dialect spoken by the Slav population of the brothers’ native Thessaloniki, but it was strongly influenced by Greek models in vocabulary, phraseology, syntax, and style. At the end of the first millennium, linguistic differences among the Slavs were still negligible, and Old Church Slavonic became the common literary idiom of all the Orthodox Slavs. After the death of Methodius, the Moravian church came under Frankish hegemony, and his disciples were exiled. The Cyrillo-Methodian tradition was preserved by Boris of Bulgaria and his son Simeon, whose reign (893–927) is still remembered as the golden age of Bulgarian literature. Ohrid and Preslav emerged as the new centres

of Old Church Slavonic where the work of the two preceptors of the Slavs was conserved and a wide range of early patristic and Byzantine writings were translated or adapted from the Greek. From Bulgaria the corpus of Old Church Slavonic literature spread to Kievan Rus', and when Prince Vladimir in 988 finally decided to accept Byzantine Christianity, the Eastern Slavs soon developed a literature of their own on the foundation of the Cyrillo-Methodian and Bulgarian heritage.

The corpus of Greek texts translated into Old Church Slavonic by the brothers and their disciples was not arbitrarily chosen, but a hierarchically ordered group of writings, the most important being the books required for liturgical purposes. These included the *Leitourgikon* (*Sluzhebnik*) and the *Horologion* (*Chasoslov*), containing the prayers and hymns for the fixed yearly cycle; the *Triod katanyktion* (*Triod postnaia*), the *Pentekostarion* (*Triod tsvetnaia*), and the *Oktoechos* (*Oktoikh*), with prayers and hymns for the moveable cycle; the Lectionaries, drawn from the Gospels, from the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles, and from the Old Testament; the Psalter (*Psaltyr'*); and the *Synaxarion* (*Prolog*), a collection of short exegetical sermons and saints' Lives. The oldest dated manuscript to have come down to us from medieval East Slavic literature, the *Ostromir Gospel* (*Ostromirovo evangelie*), belongs to this set of liturgical texts. It is a Gospel Lectionary copied from a Bulgarian translation for the Novgorod alderman Ostromir in 1056–57.

Second in the hierarchy of translated literature came the extended Lives of the saints and the writings of the Church Fathers, in particular the works of John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, the classics of Greek patristic literature. Their writings were either translated separately, or gathered in miscellanies with excerpts from various authors. From early Kievan literature two such miscellanies (*Izborniki*) have been preserved, copied in 1073 and 1076 for Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev, the former from manuscripts that had belonged to Tsar Simeon of Bulgaria. It also contains the fragment of a treatise on figures of speech by the Greek rhetorician George Choeroboscus, and a list of twenty-five "secret" books on the Church's index, with a commentary that clearly shows that Church Slavonic literature could attract the reader for many reasons, even in Kievan times:



If you want great stories, you may read the Books of Kings. If you crave exciting and edifying reading, you have the Prophets, the Book of Job, or Jesus Sirach. But if, finally, your demand is for song books, you may read the Psalter.

Next to the canon of liturgical, hagiographic, and patristic texts, the Russians received from their western and southern neighbours works belonging to such popular, “lowbrow” genres of Byzantine literature as the apocrypha, stories about the lives of the desert fathers, and chronicles. Among the Old Church Slavonic translations imported from Bulgaria by the beginning of the twelfth century, were the Chronicle of John Malalas, a Syrian rhetorician of the sixth century, and the Chronicle of George the Monk, called the Sinner (Hamartolos), written in the middle of the ninth. Both go from the creation of Adam down to their authors’ own time. They relate the history of the Jewish people, the Oriental empires, Rome, and the Hellenistic world, culminating in an account of the Byzantine Empire and its role in the history of man’s salvation. These chronicles contained a wealth of curious information culled from a variety of sources. Malalas is particularly interesting in this respect: his rambling narrative is interlarded with stories about pagan gods and ancient Greek heroes, sensational miracles and cruel disasters, so that it becomes a kind of Byzantine *Trivialliteratur*, in contrast to the Chronicle of Hamartolos, in which the monastic ideology is more evident. Byzantine chronicles had a decisive influence on the form and ideological content of medieval East Slavic historical writing.

The body of translated literature accumulated in Kievan Rus’ during the first century after Vladimir’s conversion corresponds fairly accurately to the selection of books found in monastic libraries throughout the Orthodox world. In this selection there was no place for the classics of ancient Greek literature, still read and studied by educated “humanists” in Byzantium, or for “high brow” historians like Procopius, Psellus, and Anna Comnena. Even such pseudo-historical works as the *Tale of Troy* (*Skazanie o Troe*) and the *Romance of Alexander* (*Khronograficheskaia Aleksandriia*), which might be seen as belonging, however marginally, to the classical tradition, were received in Rus’ in the context of the chronicles, and interpreted in terms of their Christian world view. Similarly, the sophisticated casuistry of Flavius Josephus’ *History of the Jewish War*,

translated by the beginning of the twelfth century, found no response with the Eastern Slavs in the Middle Ages readers. Their interest focused on its account of events of biblical history, and on the striking imagery of its battle scenes, which provided original East Slavic literature with a whole arsenal of military terms and martial metaphors.

The literary corpus received by the Eastern Slavs in Old Church Slavonic translations included the medieval *artes dictandi*, both in their metrical and in their non-metrical forms. Metrical discourse was first transposed into Old Church Slavonic by Constantine-Cyril, whose verse compositions in the new literary idiom closely follow the patterns of Greek verse. His “Prologue to the Gospels” goes back to the Byzantine dodecasyllable (each verse line consisting of twelve syllables), whereas the meter of his “Eulogy to Gregory of Nazianzus” may have been based on Byzantine hexameters (a verse line consisting of six metrical feet). The writing of verbal poetry seems, however, to have been confined to the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition in Moravia and Bulgaria, while in Russia the musical variant was taken up and developed into a national school of Church Slavonic hymnody. This musical poetry has been sadly neglected by historians of early East Slavic literature, and we are still waiting for the manuscripts to be properly edited and examined.

Apart from the hymns of the liturgy, the forms of discourse found in early East Slavic literature are all versions of the non-metrical *ars dicendi*, ranging from the highly elaborate rhetoric inherited from the Greek *logos epidiktikos* (deliberative speech), regulated by rhythm as well as by rhyme, to the simple, unadorned style, oscillating between artistic prose and ordinary speech.

From Vladimir’s conversion until the Tatar invasions in the first half of the thirteenth century, Kiev was the cultural and political center of Rus’, the capital, and seat of the metropolitan of the new Russian church. Here, Prince Iaroslav Vladimirovich (ruled 1019–54) strove to emulate the splendour of Byzantine art in its manifold manifestations: architecture, icon painting, music, and literature. This imitation of Byzantine models was not mechanical but active. The artists and writers of old Russia showed their creative skills by taking the models apart into single motifs and elements, selecting certain ones, and recombining them into new configurations.

The literary masterpiece of this early Kievan court art is the *Sermon the Law and the Grace* (*Slovo o zakone i blagodati*) a work attributed to Metropolitan Ilarion, the first Russian to hold this office, appointed by Prince Iaroslav in 1051.

The sermon is written in the form of *logos epidiktikos* and addressed, as the author explicitly declares in the proem (preamble), “Not to the ignorant, but to those who have feasted most abundantly on the sweetness of books.” In accordance with encomiastic rhetoric, its prose is regulated by *isocola* (couplings of period-members of equal length) and by *homoioteleuta* (like endings). The compositional theme of the sermon is the triumph of the grace of Christ over the Law of Moses. In the first part, this theme is developed in a series of allegorical antitheses, in which events and characters from the Old Testament are seen as foreshadowings and images of the truth revealed in the Gospels, beginning with the contrast between Hagar and Sarah, borrowed from Saint Paul (Gal 4, 21ff.). The central part of the sermon represents the triumph of divine Grace in a sequence of christological antitheses, seventeen in all (five referring to the birth of Christ, five to his public life, and seven to his Passion). The third and last part, with its final eulogy to Prince Vladimir, celebrates the entry of Rus’ into Christendom. What was prefigured in the first, allegorical part of the sermon has been fulfilled in the third through the Incarnation of Christ, the event around which the whole sermon is centred. Allegory and fulfilment here correspond to each other as *figura veritatis* (figure of the truth) and *veritas* (truth) in the conception of history that underlies the rhetorical framework of the sermon. In this conception, taken from the Church Fathers and from Byzantine theology, the Old Testament was seen as a series of prefigurations of Christ and the salvation of future nations, led into the promised land of the Heavenly Kingdom, not by the Law of Moses, but by the Grace of the Lord. History understood in this way does not seek to discover the causal links between events and characters, but rather to interpret them as images of a timeless, archetypal pattern designed by God before the foundation of the world. This conception of history also underlies the representation of Vladimir as the imitator of Constantine the Great. What the latter achieved among Greeks and Romans in subjecting his empire to God, the former has achieved among the people of Rus’, and their heavenly glory is the same.

Whereas the encomiastic rhetoric of the *Sermon of the Law and the Grace* is a mode of expression typical of the *logos epidiktikos*, its figural interpretation is not confined to the genre of the encomium. Figural interpretation is more than a rhetorical technique. It is a way of thinking characteristic of early Kievan literature as a whole.

The ornate discourse of the encomium was not unanimously accepted in early east Slavic literature. There were those who, like the anonymous author of the twelfth-century *Sermon to a Brother Stylite* (*Slovo k bratu stolpniku*), refused to write “in artfully interwoven words or in a covert style,” preferring the unadorned mode of expression found in the homilies of Abbot Feodosii of the Kiev Caves Monastery and those of Archbishop Luka Zhidiata of Novgorod, written in the same period as the *Sermon on the Law and the Grace*. The only extant work of Kliment Smoliatich, the second eastern Slav to become Metropolitan in Kiev (1147–55), the *Epistle Written to Foma the Presbyter* (*Poslanie napisano Klimentom metropolitom ruskym Fome prozviteru*), is a defence of allegorical exegesis.

The finest examples of the rhetorical sermon in twelfth-century East Slavic literature are the works ascribed to Kirill, Bishop of Turov (according to tradition died about 1182). Kirill wrote epistles, parables, prayers, hymns, and sermons. A number of his sermons were included in the early East Slavic anthologies of Greek homiletics, the *Chrysostom* (*Zlatoust*) and the *Panegyrikon* (*Torzhestvennik*), a sure sign of their popularity. Most widely admired were his eight Easter sermons. Their compilatory character and lack of originality have been heavily criticized by modern scholars, but Kirill’s use of the texts of others does not preclude originality. Kirill would bring together in his own texts quotations from, allusions to, and paraphrases of texts from the Bible and from the homiletic tradition, blending them together into unexpected configurations that prompt for new meaning constructions. Among Kirill’s favourite rhetorical devices are isocolic antitheses and parallelisms, comparisons, and prosopopeia, i.e. fictitious recreations of the speeches and gestures of his personages, as when, for example, in the *Sermon on the Deposition*, the Mother of God bursts into a long lament while gazing upon her crucified Son. Like the *Sermon on the Law and the Grace*, Kirill’s sermons are Christocentric and inspired by an awareness of Christ’s presence. But his allegories are less dogmatic and more intuitive, his rhetoric often verges on poetry.

The *Sermon on the Law and the Grace* and Kirill's Easter homilies follow a common compositional scheme inherited from Greek epideictic oratory. According to this scheme, a *logos*, or speech, may be divided into three main parts: a proem, a "narrative" or exposition of the subject matter, and an epilogue in the form of a eulogy ending in a prayer. In the epideictic oration, the narrative is shortened and concentrated on the elements that enable the author to extol the acts and personal traits of his heroes above their real dimensions by means of rhetorical amplification. But in other variants of the *logos epidiktikos* the narrative is also amplified in the linear dimension, with the result that the eulogy is transformed into an entire account of the life and deeds of the central hero.

Both types of amplification are found in hagiography, the most popular of all the literary forms that prospered in Kievan Rus'. The models were derived from works translated from the Greek, and by saints' Lives and legends written by the disciples of Cyril and Methodius, whose *vitae* are among the earliest examples of original Church Slavonic hagiography.

The first notable hagiographer in early East Slavic literature is Nestor, a monk from the Caves Monastery, the monastic centre of Kievan Rus'. Nestor wrote the *Reading on the Life and Slaying of the Blessed Martyrs Boris and Gleb* (*Chtenie o zhitii i o pogublenii blazhennuiu strastoterptsu Borisa i Gleba*), and the *Life of Our Holy Father Feodosii, Abbot of the Caves Monastery* (*Zhitie prepodobnogo ottsa nashego Feodosiia, igumena pecherskogo*), the former belonging to the abridged type, the latter to the type with expanded narrative. Both works were probably written between 1079 and 1085. In the *Life of Saint Feodosii* Nestor refers to himself as the author of the *Reading*, which he had already completed before embarking upon the larger *vita*.

Nestor's *Reading* is one of three different, but textually inter-related, versions of the same story: the killing of Vladimir's youngest sons by their brother Sviatopolk in the power struggle that ensued upon Vladimir's death in 1015. The throne was first seized by Sviatopolk, but he was later ousted by another brother, Prince Iaroslav Vladimirovich of Novgorod, and died in exile in 1019. The other versions of these events are the chronicle account and the anonymous *Narrative and Passion and Eulogy of the Blessed Martyrs Boris and Gleb* (*Skazanie i strast i pokhvala sviatuiu mucheniku Borisa i Gleba*). The basic story is identical in the various versions, but they differ in the rhetorical treatment of the material. Common

to them all is a combination of two distinct modes of expression, one simple and artless, the other containing the characteristic devices of panegyric oratory. The former mode is used in relating the historical facts, the latter to amplify and interpret the historical narrative. The contrast between the two modes is most pronounced in the chronicle account and in the *Narrative*, whereas Nestor's style is more balanced. In the *Narrative* in particular, the martyrs' fictitious soliloquies are composed in the form of highly emotionalized laments, with strings of anaphoric *isocola*, scriptural quotations, and figural juxtapositions. Nestor views the misdeed within the context of universal history, in much the same way as the conversion is seen in the *Sermon on the Law and the Grace*. Vladimir is the new Constantine, Boris and Gleb are compared to Joseph and Benjamin, Sviatopolk to Cain.

In spite of such divergences, the religious interpretation of the assassinations is fundamentally similar in all three versions. The brothers' acceptance of a violent death without resistance is represented as an *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ), by which they become partakers in the divine nature of Christ, exercising their powers of intercession in the Kingdom of Heaven as the celestial patrons of their brother Iaroslav and the Christian people of Rus'.

This celestial aspect of their sainthood is symbolized in the mystical light that surrounds their earthly remains and their posthumous miracles. The light symbolism, less evident in the *Reading* and in the chronicle account, is a predominant feature of Nestor's miracle stories, in which their exhumed bodies "shone white like snow, and their faces were radiant like those of angels."

The use of light symbolism in order to bring out the *anagogical* dimension of the saints as images of the divine figure of Christ is characteristic of Nestor's hagiographic art, where this anagogical aspect is complementary to the representation of the saints' imitation of Christ's humbled, earthly figure.

This complementarity of the human and the divine in the saint's *imitatio Christi* also determines the structure of Nestor's *Life of Saint Feodosii*. Nestor never knew Feodosii personally: he entered the Caves Monastery only after the saint's death in 1074. The events forming the story line of his *vita* represent a selection from what others had told him about the life of his hero. A characteristic feature of the *Life of Saint Feodosii* is

the strong emphasis on the abasement and sufferings of the saint in his childhood. We are repeatedly told that his mother, who objects to his becoming a monk, torments him, beats him to the ground, puts him in chains, and throws him into a dark dungeon. Although the account of the conduct of the saint's mother may seem strikingly realistic, this effect is only of secondary importance in the *vita*, where the primary function of the saint's humiliations is disclosed in his own interpretation of them in imitation of the suffering of Christ:

Listen mother, I pray you, listen! The Lord Jesus Christ has abased and humbled himself and given us an example, so that we too should humble ourselves for his sake. Also, he was scorned, spat upon and beaten. And all this he suffered for our salvation. Must we not then with even greater cause suffer in patience, so that we shall gain Christ!

In inverse correlation to this imitation of Christ's suffering, the second part of Nestor's narrative is amplified by a series of mystical light visions, transfiguring the life of the saint as abbot of the Caves Monastery into an anagogical prefiguration of his celestial glory, anticipated by his illumination in the light of Christ, the Sun of Justice, in the vision that accompanies Nestor's account of the saint's baptism. Figural interpretation thus provided Nestor with the pattern underlying his rhetorical transformation of Feodosii into an image of Christ in both his human and in his divine aspects.

In his *Life of Saint Feodosii* Nestor recalls that Feodosii in his youth had wanted to join a group of pilgrims to the Holy Land, "where Our Lord had walked in the flesh." But God would not let him leave his own country, according to Nestor, and the pilgrims departed without him.

Russian pilgrimages to the holy places of Palestine began soon after the conversion, but the earliest account extant in early East Slavic literature is the *Life and Pilgrimage of Abbot Daniil from the Land of Rus'* (*Zhitiie i khozhdenie Daniila ruskyia zemli igumena*). We know little about the author, who was probably the abbot of a monastery in the principality of Chernigov. He spent sixteen months in the Holy Land in 1104–06, travelling with a large retinue and employing professional guides everywhere. In Jerusalem he was received by Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem, under whose protection he was able to go to places normally inaccessible to

visitors. During the Easter Service at the Holy Sepulchre, the king placed Daniil next to himself.

The *Pilgrimage* is first and foremost a description of the holy places associated with the life story of Jesus Christ. Daniil sees these places both in their biblical context and in their natural environment, endeavouring to convey to his Russian reader the emotional effect they had on him. He walks along the banks of the river Jordan “with love,” comparing it to the river Snov back in Rus’, kisses the place of Christ’s Transfiguration “with love and tears,” and exclaims at the first sight of Jerusalem that “no one can hold back his tears at the sight of this much longed-for land of these holy places, where Christ Our Lord endured sufferings for the sake of us sinners.” The pilgrimage culminates in the celebration of the Easter Service, when Daniil kindles a light by the sacred fire “on behalf of the whole Russian land.”

From the point of view of genre, *Daniil’s Pilgrimage* represents a rather free, verbal version of the Greek *proskynētaron*, a form that emerged in the tenth century in imitation of the Latin *itinerarium*. As with the Latin variant, Daniil’s itinerary displays a personal tone, in contrast to the *proskynētaria*, which provide impersonal descriptions of various places of worship in and around Jerusalem, meant as guides for pilgrims to the services arranged especially for them.<sup>1</sup>

Whether Nestor the hagiographer also wrote the *Primary Chronicle* (*Povest’ vremennykh let*), we shall probably never know. Arguments have been advanced both for and against this attribution, based on a reference to “Nestor, the monk of Feodosii’s Caves Monastery” in a sixteenth-century copy of the *Primary Chronicle* and on references in the oldest, twelfth-century part of the *Paterikon of the Caves Monastery* (*Kievo-pecherskii paterik*) to Nestor “who wrote the Chronicle.” Current scholarship commonly sees Nestor as the author of the first comprehensive redaction of the *Primary Chronicle*, compiled about 1113 on the basis of at least two earlier texts. This redaction was revised about 1117 by Abbot Sil’vestr of the Kievan Monastery of Saint Michael, while another version

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1 In the Greek tradition, the *proskynētaria* (from Greek *proskynēsis* meaning “oratory” or “place of worship”) are defined as illustrated traveller’s handbooks or guides, which describe the places of pilgrimage in Palestine and were written for the use of the pilgrims. In Russian literature, however, the *proskynetarii* refers more generally to written accounts of pilgrimages to the Holy Land.



was prepared for Prince Mstislav Vladimirovich in the Caves Monastery in 1118. Sil'vestr's redaction is believed to have been preserved in the Laurentian codex of 1377, and the redaction of 1118 in the Hypatian codex, dating from the 1420s. These are the oldest surviving manuscripts of the early East Slavic chronicles. The Laurentian codex contains under 1096 the *Instruction (Pouchenie)* of Prince Vladimir Monomakh on Christian virtues and Christian behaviour, addressed to his children. Modelled on Byzantine sources, the work draws heavily on scripture, and was obviously meant as a practical manual for ruling princes in a newly converted Christian society.

In its basic outline this reconstruction of the development of the *Primary Chronicle* goes back to the investigations of Aleksei Shakhmatov at the beginning of the last century. With slight modifications, his hypothetical reconstruction is generally accepted in current scholarship.

From a literary point of view, the *Primary Chronicle* is an unusual work, an accumulation of very heterogeneous texts strung together according to a simple chronological principle. This form was probably taken over from the Paschal calendars, i.e. tables showing the dates of Easter for a number of years in succession with columns for the recording of important events under each year. This simple cumulative structure still shows through in places where the text is reduced to the mere enumeration of years, with no subsequent entry. However, all the events listed in this way are unique: they stand out against the background of the ordinary, that which is not worth recording. Expanded into narratives, these records retain their anecdotal, legendary form.

This annalistic cumulation of extraordinary events is theoretically unlimited: it has no beginning, and could go on forever. Only by inserting into his own annalistic recordings excerpts from translated Byzantine chronicles can the author of the *Primary Chronicle* provide his own work with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The *Primary Chronicle* opens with a story about the division of the earth among the sons of Noah after the flood, when the northern and western lands, among them the land of Rus', went to Japheth, and of the building of the Tower of Babel, when God scattered His people over the face of the earth and the linguistic and ethnic unity of mankind gave way to a multiplicity of nations and languages. This story, known in Kievan Rus' from works such as the *Chronicle* of George Hamartolos, is further

combined with passages from an unidentified story about the migrations and early history of the Slavs, leading up to the legendary description of the foundation of Kiev and the emergence of Rus'. The technique used by the author of the *Primary Chronicle* is identical with that employed in the *Sermon on the Law and the Grace*. By bringing his domestic records together with passages quoted from other texts, the author of the *Primary Chronicle* likewise integrates the history of Rus' into the context of world history, interpreted teleologically, as an eschatological process, beginning with the fall of Adam and the expulsion from Paradise, and moving towards the final Day of Judgement, when history will come to an end. Furthermore, this linear conception of history is complemented by a typological dimension, in which historical events and characters are transformed into a network of prefigurations and fulfilments centred around the incarnation and expiatory Passion of Christ. In the *Primary Chronicle* this figural interpretation emerges in the "philosopher's speech," inserted into the chronicle under 986 in the form of a didactic dialogue between an anonymous philosopher "sent by the Greeks" and Prince Vladimir, on the eve of the baptism of Rus'. Its sources have not been identified, but there can be no doubt of its Greek origin. The philosopher's speech interprets events in the Old Testament as anticipations of the coming of Christ and the spreading of the Gospel to the "new nations." Similarly, the imminent conversion of Vladimir and his people is seen as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. In his allegorical exegesis of the story of Gideon (Judges vi), the philosopher employs the very terms "prefiguration" (*preobrazhenie*) and "prefigured" (*preobrazi*) in order to bring out its hidden meaning: dew (on the fleece) prefigures the baptism of the new nations.

This figuration enables the chronicler to carry the method over into his own description of the Russians. With the help of biblical quotations he interprets the baptism of his own people as an *imitatio Christi*:

Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved his new people, the kingdom of Rus', and illuminated it with holy baptism [...] Saint Paul says: "Brothers! All of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death." We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

The “philosopher’s speech” and the eulogy to Vladimir that follows belong to a group of texts that together represent the ecclesiastical strain in the early redactions of the *Primary Chronicle*. This group includes episodes such as the baptism and death of Olga, the martyrdom of the first Varangian Christians, the slaying of Boris and Gleb, and the eulogy to Prince Iaroslav under the year 1037. To this group may be added the introduction on the origins and history of the Eastern Slavs. Stylistically, these passages are characterized by a combination of crisp and simple narrative, verging on the vernacular, with rhetorical elements typical of the Church Slavonic encomium.

A very different style prevails in the episodes dealing with the coming of the Varangians and the history of the Varangian rulers in pre-Christian Rus’. Told in the form of short, pointed independent anecdotes, often culminating in dramatic dialogues, the episodes reflect an oral epic tradition, and have been associated with the Varangian element in the retinue of the Kievan princes. Some of them are clearly based on motifs also found in old Norse literature. Well known examples are the combat tale of Mstislav and Rededia under the year 1022, the description of Olga’s (Scand. Helga) murder of her suitors to avenge her dead husband Igor (Scand. Ingvarr) under 945 (which has its counterpart in the story about Sigrid Storrada in the Olaf Tryggvasson Saga), or the death of Oleg (Scand. Helgi), bitten by a snake which suddenly emerges from the skull of his favourite horse. In this part of the chronicle Prince Vladimir is no longer the Christian ruler but a Varangian warrior who ravishes Rogned (Scand. Ragnheidr), the daughter of the Varangian Prince Rogvolod (Scand. Ragnvaldr) of Polotsk. The story of her unsuccessful revenge occurs in another variant in the story of Gudrun, Ironbeard’s daughter, in the Olaf Tryggvasson Saga.

Correspondences such as these have given rise to the theory that the Varangians brought their own oral epic tradition with them from Scandinavia to Rus’. More plausible, however, is the explanation put forward by Adolf Stender-Petersen, who suggests that both the early East Slavic and the Old Norse material reflect a Greek Byzantine tradition passed on to Varangian merchants and mercenaries in Byzantium and carried back to Kiev and Scandinavia. From this perspective, the tales about Gudrun, Rogned and Sigrid appear as echoes of ancient Greek heroic tales.

One of the most enigmatic heroes of the *Primary Chronicle* is Prince Vseslav of Polotsk, whose birth is recorded under the year 1044. Conceived by magic, he was born with a caul which his mother was told by magicians to bind upon the child that he might bear it for the rest of his life. This he did, and so was “merciless in bloodshed,” according to the chronicler. The figure of Vseslav is surrounded by ominous signs: a large star appeared “as if it were made of blood,” the sun was “like the moon,” and these signs “portended bloodshed.” By combining the account of Vseslav given in the *Primary Chronicle* with the description of him in the *Igor Tale* and with the figure of Volkh (from *volkhv*, magician) Vseslavevich of the *byliny*, it is possible to reconstruct an early East Slavic Vseslav epic about the werewolf prince, based on an ancient werewolf myth also reflected in Serbo-Croatian epic poetry and deeply rooted in the Indo-European tradition common to both Slavs and Scandinavians (Roman Jakobson and Marc Szeftel).

Vseslav of Polotsk is the hero of an extensive digression in the *Igor Tale* (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*), in which the description alternates between his diurnal life as prince and warrior, and his nocturnal adventures as a werewolf:

Vseslav the prince sat in judgement over men,  
 as prince he ruled over cities;  
 but at night he coursed as a wolf  
 running from Kiev to the ramparts of Tmutorokan,  
 as a wolf he crossed the path of Great Hors.  
 For him the bells rang early for matins in Polotsk at St. Sophia,  
 but he heard the ringing in Kiev.

The folkloric character of this passage is reinforced by the reference to the Great Hors, an Iranian borrowing designating the radiant sun, another name for Dazhbog (“giver of wealth”), the sun god of the pagan Slavs. In the *Igor Tale* the old pagan deities have lost their cultic value. Like the werewolf myth, they seem to belong to an oral epic tradition exploited by the author of the *Tale* for purely poetic purposes.

When the *Igor Tale* was published in 1800, five years after it had been acquired by Prince Aleksei Musin-Pushkin, it was immediately regarded as an oral epic and even compared to the poems of Ossian. The corre-

spondences between the *Tale* and James Macpherson's forgeries were subsequently used as an argument against the authenticity of the early East Slavic manuscript, which perished in the Moscow fire of 1812, so that the *Tale* only survives in the first edition and in a copy made for Catherine II in 1795–96. The authenticity of the *Tale* has been challenged by a number of scholars, but the philological evidence now seems to tip the scales in favour of its genuineness. It would not have been possible to reconstruct the early East Slavic and Turkic forms found in the *Tale* in Catherine II's Russia, or in the sixteenth century, a date that has also been suggested for its composition. Furthermore, the *Igor Tale* no longer appears as an isolated work in pre-Tatar Rus'. Parallels to its style and imagery have been found in the sermons ascribed to Kirill of Turov and in the *Sermon on the Resurrection of Lazarus* (*Slovo o Lazarevom voskresenii*), an anonymous homily dating from the same period. Words and phrases once regarded as unique in the *Tale* have been identified with expressions found in texts such as the chronicles, Flavius Josephus' *History of the Jewish War*, and the early East Slavic version of the Byzantine-Greek *Digenis Akritas* romance.

The *Igor Tale* must have been composed in the years between 1185, when the events that form its subject matter took place, and 1 October 1187, the death date of Igor's father-in-law, Prince Iaroslav Osmomysl of Galich, referred to as still living in the *Tale*.

The *Igor Tale* describes a campaign against the Polovtsians, Turkic nomads who had appeared in the southeastern steppes in the middle of the eleventh century. The campaign, led by Igor Sviatoslavich, Prince of Novgorod-Seversk, was only an episode in the wars against this people but is recorded both in the Laurentian and in the Hypatian copies of the chronicle. On 23 April 1185 Igor set off with his son Vladimir and his nephew Sviatoslav Olgovich. In spite of a bad omen—a total eclipse of the sun—the Russians decided to cross the Donets river and attack the Polovtsians. At first they were successful, and the enemy fled. But when they decided to spend the night in the abandoned Polovtsian camp instead of retreating with their spoils, they were taken by surprise, and defeated. Igor was taken prisoner and spent about five weeks in Polovtsian captivity, from which he escaped in June 1185.

The basic sequence of events is roughly the same in the Kievan chronicle (the Hypatian codex) and in the *Tale*. The difference between them lies

in the rhetorical treatment of the material. On the one hand, the anonymous author of the *Tale* has condensed his subject matter so greatly as to make it well-nigh incomprehensible to an audience unfamiliar with its historical context. On the other hand, he has amplified his condensed narrative by a series of digressions, creating a network of similarities and contrasts between the princes of his own troubled present, fighting each other in ruinous wars, and the heroes of a legendary, united past, between his own style and the devices of Boian, the “vatic singer” of old. Lyrical exclamations and emotional appeals, laments and eulogies interrupt the story. The poetic imagery transforms men and animals, plants and trees into a complex pattern of metaphoric and metonymic equivalences. The author has translated his troubled premonitions of the ruin of Rus’ into a poetic vision of tragic portent.

The intricate imagery of the *Igor Tale* has been compared to similar instances of enigmatic speech and ornament in other twelfth-century European literature, to scaldic poetry and to Wolfram’s epic. The corresponding early East Slavic mode of expression is the parabolic-figurative style inherited from Byzantine epideictic rhetoric. It is from the Byzantoslav *logos epidiktikos* that the *Tale* derives its encomiastic composition: first a proem in which the author addresses his audience and introduces his theme, followed by the central part of the narrative, with digressions and interruptions characteristic of encomiastic glorification, and concluded by an epilogue in the form of a final hymn of praise celebrating the happy return of Igor, his son, and his brother.

The *Supplication and Address of Daniil the Exile* (*Molenie i Slovo Daniila Zatochnika*) is known in two versions, the *Supplication* and the *Address*, surviving in copies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both going back to an original believed to date from the last decades before the Tatar invasions. Neither the author of the petition, Daniil, nor its addressee, a certain Prince Iaroslav, has been identified, and it may well be that the work is pure fiction. Daniel has for unknown reasons fallen into poverty and been abandoned by his friends and family. He turns to the prince for material support, hoping that his wit will be rewarded. He begins his appeal to the prince with a sycophantic eulogy, which gradually changes into facetious satire centred on the two traditional motifs of evil wives and self-indulgent monks. The text is a patchwork of quotations from biblical and secular sources, aphorisms, and quasi-popular

proverbs, ranging from a description of the prince in words taken from the Song of Solomon—“sweet is thy voice, thy lips drop as the honeycomb, [...] thy cheeks are like a bed of spices [...] thy countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars [...] thy belly is like an heap of wheat [...]”—to misogynous adages (“I should rather take a fiery bull into my house than an evil wife”) and sarcastic ribaldry (“I have never seen a dead man riding on a swine, nor the devil on a woman”). Though he boasts of his own wisdom, Daniel does not flinch from self-mockery: “I am not wise, but have only donned the robes of those who are, and put on their boots.” His pompous onset—“Let us trumpet forth, o brethren, as on a trumpet of gold, on the wisdom of our wit”—sounds like a parody of an epic invocation. The whole petition is, in fact, a kind of parody, and it has been suggested that it belongs to the jocular folklore of the *skomorokhi*, the wandering minstrels of old Russia who were persecuted by the church and could only survive on the fringes of early East Slavic culture. The difficulty with this explanation is that the *Supplication* is not folkloric, but a written composition. Its generic origin is more likely to be found in Byzantine literature, in particular in satires such as the demotic verse supplications of the twelfth-century writer Theodore Prodromos. Addressed to the Emperor and other high-ranking persons, these poems combine coarse realism and a macabre sense of humour with malicious satire, flattery and shameless begging. Recurrent motifs in these supplications include the plight of a husband married to a cantankerous wife, an innocent suffering in jail, the scholar’s wretched existence as opposed to the comfort enjoyed by ignorant artisans, and the contrast between simple monks, living in utter misery, and the meanness of wealthy abbots. Daniil’s *Supplication* appears to be a unique example of this particular genre in Kievan Rus’.

In 1223 a large army suddenly invaded the land of Rus’ from the south and dealt a crushing defeat to a coalition of Russian and Polovtsian armies on the Kalka River, before disappearing as quickly as they had come, leaving the Russians totally bewildered. This was their first reaction to the Mongols, or Tatars, as they were always called in Russia. In 1237–41 they returned to central Russia, ravaging towns and villages, massacring all who dared to resist them, but leaving the country’s political institutions intact. The city of Riazan was devastated in 1237, Vladimir in 1238, and in 1240 Kiev was sacked. The whole of north-

east Russia and Novgorod became tributary lands of the Golden Horde, a branch of the Mongols' vast Asian empire controlled by Khan Batu, a grandson of Chingis Khan. The administrative center of the Horde was the city of Sarai on the lower Volga, where the Russian princes now had to go for their investiture, in order to pledge allegiance to the khan. Some of them even undertook the long journey to the capital of the empire, Karakorum in central Mongolia.

The Tatars established a rule in Russia based on tribute, which the local princes were obliged to pay under the threat of new reprisals, with only the Russian Church granted exemption from Tatar taxation: according to the *Laurentian Chronicle*, "abbots, monks, priests, members of the clergy and those who vow loyalty to the Holy Mother of God and the bishop" went free. Throughout the years of Tatar rule the Russian metropolitanate thus continued to exercise jurisdiction over the whole of Russia, and the Church remained the centre of Russian civilization, the guardian of the religious and cultural values of the country. Metropolitan Kirill, who had first supported Daniil of Galicia's contacts with the papacy and the Catholic kingdoms of central Europe, eventually decided to transfer his allegiance to the khans at Sarai, and in 1250 travelled to Vladimir, where he established close ties with Aleksandr Nevskii, prince of Novgorod (ruled 1240–52) and grand prince of Vladimir (ruled 1252–63). Aleksandr, who in 1240 had defeated the Swedes on the Neva river and in 1242 won the battle against the Teutonic Knights on the ice of Lake Peipus, was confirmed by Khan Batu as a grand prince. In his anti-western, pro-Mongol policy, Aleksandr acted with the support of both the Russian metropolitan and the Byzantine patriarch, who saw in the Mongol ruler a safeguard against western expansionism while, they believed, the religious tolerance of the Tatars would guarantee the independence of the Orthodox Church (as indeed it did). In 1299 the metropolitanate was moved from the southwest to the city of Vladimir, the capital of the northern grand princes.

The result of all this was that Russian civilization now survived and continued to develop in the north and east, in Novgorod and the principalities on the upper Volga, Moscow, Vladimir, Kostroma, Iaroslavl and Tver. Towards the end of the Tatar yoke, Moscow emerged as the new political and cultural centre of Russia.



Hagiography remained a predominant genre in this period of early East Slavic literature, and a number of Lives were written to commemorate the monastery builders of the north, such as Saint Leontii Rostovskii, Saint Nikita of Pereiaslavl-Zalesskii, Saint Varlaam of Khutyn, and others. More interesting from the point of view of literary history, however, is the development of princely Lives and martyr passions in this period.

The cult of the ruler and the martyred prince was a characteristic feature of Kievan Rus'. In the eleventh century this cult had found its literary expression in eulogies to Olga and Vladimir and their descendants, and in passion stories about Boris and Gleb.

In subsequent centuries both forms found their way into the chronicles. The appanage princes of Novgorod and Vladimir, for example, were glorified according to the hagiographic schemes developed in Kievan literature. One of the most moving princely martyr passions is the story of Igor Olgovich, recorded in the *Kievan Chronicle* under the year 1147. The central motif is the prince's *imitatio Christi* through suffering, and like Boris and Gleb, Igor is killed by his brothers in the struggle for power.

With the Tatar invasions, the princely Lives and passions acquired new significance. The *martyrologion* was chosen to represent the steadfastness of Russian princes tortured and killed by the henchmen of the khans, whereas the Life was used to glorify Aleksandr Nevskii, the secular hero embodying the policy of the Orthodox Church.

The new historical context engenders a marked change in the selection of motifs. The *imitatio Christi* motif disappears and the motif of fratricide is often suppressed, as the rivalry of the Russian princes for the khan's favour is played down.

A typical princely passion from this period is the *Narrative of the Murder of Prince Mikhail of Chernigov and his Boyar Feodor in the Horde* (*Skazanie ob ubienii v orde kniazia Mikhaila Chernigovskogo i ego boiarina Feodora*). The murder took place in 1246, when the prince had gone to Sarai, probably in order to receive his decree from the khan, even though the story gives as the reason for his journey his desire to expose the khan's deceit. As in the early martyr passions, the khan—or tsar, as he is called here, and was always officially called in Russia—represents the power of this world, whereas the two Russians stand for a higher, divine authority. In accordance with church teachings, the two Christians are prepared to accept the khan's superiority in secular matters, but they firmly refuse to

take part in a pagan fire-ritual and to bow to the sun and the idols of the Tatars: "I bow to you, O tsar, for God has given you the tsardom and the glory of this world." Rather than betray their Christian faith, they suffer torture and a terrible death at the hands of the khan's people. The story thus has an ideological message, reflecting the Realpolitik of the Russian Church under Tatar rule.

A similar combination of political realism and hagiographic ideals appears in the *Tale of the Life and Valour of the Faithful and Grand Prince Aleksandr (Povest' o zhitii i o khrabrosti blagovernogo i velikogo kniazia Aleksandra)*, written shortly after his death in 1263 by an author who had known him personally. The *Life* makes no attempt to describe Aleksandr Nevskii's biography in detail, but rather concentrates on the main events of his political career, his victories over the Swedes, the Livonians, and the Teutonic Knights. His humiliating relationship with the khan, on the other hand, is glossed over. The style of the *Life* is a mixture of hagiographic and martial rhetoric. Aleksandr is compared to Joseph the Beautiful in appearance, to Samson in strength, to Solomon in wisdom, and in military prowess to the Emperor Vespasian, known from Flavius Josephus. Before the battle against the Swedes, a vision foreshadows the invisible assistance of Boris and Gleb heading a heavenly host of warriors. In the battle on Lake Peipus against the Teutonic Knights, Aleksandr's army is likened to the warriors of King David, and in his prayers the prince remembers the victories of Moses and Iaroslav. Heavenly hosts appear in the sky, and with their help Aleksandr conquers the German invaders.

These hagiographic elements create an otherworldly framework for the battle scenes, described with the precision of the military tales of the chronicles:

And when the sun rose, the enemies met. And there was a cruel fight.  
And a cracking of snapping spears. And a clanging of clashing swords.  
And it was as if the frozen lake was moving. And the ice could not be  
seen, covered as it was with blood.

The combination of two different stylistic registers within it has given rise to the theory that the *Life* was originally written in the form of a secular biography. As long as this notion is not corroborated by textological stud-

ies, however, there is no reason to assume that the hagiographic element is secondary. On the contrary, these elements give the *Life of Aleksandr Nevskii* its deeper significance, transforming its hero into a vehicle of God's will.

The traumatic effect of the Mongol invasions is reflected in the military tales, a group of texts composed in the second half of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth. None of them survives as an individual work: they have been incorporated in larger compilations like the chronicles. The *Tale of the Battle on the River Kalka* (*Povest' o bitve na Kalke*) interprets the first Tatar incursion as God's punishment for the sins of the Russian people, and sees in their sudden departure a sign that the end of the world is near. The style is simple and prosaic, as in so many of the military chronicle tales.

In contrast to the unsophisticated narrative of the battle on the Kalka, the *Tale of Batu's Sacking of Riazan* (*Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batuem*) is a complex epic work of great poetic beauty. Using a lyrical mode of expression, the author recalls how the city was destroyed, and how its princes, the Ingvarevichi, were savagely killed, "all together emptying the same chalice of death." Passages cast in the martial style alternate with hagiographic rhetoric. In their laments, the *dramatis personae* give voice to their despair at the misfortune that has befallen the country. The author bewails the martyrdom of the young and beautiful princes Oleg and Feodor, of Eupraksiia, who jumped from a tower to escape the khan's embraces, and Agrippina with all her daughters and daughters-in-law, killed in the church where they had sought refuge. In the central part, the boyar Evpatii Kolovrat, a true epic hero, gathers around him a small host of men "whom God had preserved" and sets out against the enemy. Echoing the folk epic, the tale describes how Evpatii kills one of the Tatar chiefs in single combat, and how the khan, when the Russians finally bring their dead hero before him, sends for his "mirzas, and his princes, and his snachak-beys, and all were amazed at the courage, fortitude, and bravery of the Riazan warriors." The tale ends with the burial of the dead princes, whose earthly remains have been collected and brought back to Riazan by Prince Ingvar Ingorevich. Order has been restored, and Ingvar's lament for his dead brothers concludes with an invocation of Boris and Gleb for help against the enemy.

On 8 September 1380, a Russian army led by the Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich of Moscow (Donskoi) defeated Khan Mamai and his army on the Kulikovo field on the upper Don, less than 200 miles south of Moscow. This was the first time the Russians had beaten the Mongols, and the victory was undoubtedly of great psychological importance both to the Russians and to the Mongols; though the Tatar yoke would last for another century and more, it showed that the invaders were vulnerable. By 1393, the account of the victory had been turned into an epic composition by Sofoniia of Riazan, of whom nothing is known but his name. His work is today called the *Zadonshchina* (*The Battle Beyond the Don*), a title it received in the earliest of its six extant copies, dating from the 1470s.

Roman Jakobson has suggested that The *Zadonshchina* was composed in conscious imitation of the *Igor Tale*: the epic movement from initial disaster to final success for the Russians on the Don in 1380 mirrors the movement from triumphant victory to total surrender on the Kaiala in 1185. According to his ingenious conjecture, this mirror symmetry is a deliberate device employed by the author in order to bring together in a diptych his own original Lament and Encomium and an old Lament “copied from books,” i.e. the *Igor Tale*. Or, to quote from Sofoniia’s proem: “First I wrote down the Lament of the Russian land and so forth, citing from books. After that I composed the Lament and Praise to Grand Prince Dmitrii [...] let us adjoin Tale to Tale.”

Like the author of the *Igor Tale*, Sofoniia refers back to the “vatic Boian.” But the archaic imagery associated with this legendary figure in the *Tale* is no longer understood by the author of the *Zadonshchina*. He reduces the nature symbolism of the older work to much simpler figures. The wolf-symbolism of the *Tale*, for instance, reappears in the *Zadonshchina* as a negative parallelism: “And the grey wolves [...] want to advance against the Russian land. Those were not grey wolves, but the pagan Tatars [...]” Moreover, Sofoniia’s discourse is multistyled, with elements borrowed from the chronicles and the military tales, such as the contrast between pagans and Christians, the topos “God has punished the Russian land for its sins,” the princes’ prayers before the battle, etc. In spite of all these differences, however, the aesthetic significance of the *Zadonshchina* depends on its relationship to the *Igor Tale*. The tragic vision of the ruin of Rus’ in the *Tale* is counterbalanced in Sofoniia’s work by a new vision of “the glorious town of Moscow.”

The rise of Moscow as the new centre of Russian culture is due most of all to the influence of Metropolitan Kiprian. Little is known about Kiprian's early years. He probably spent some time as a monk on Mount Athos, where he was trained in the hesychast tradition of contemplative prayer. At the beginning of the 1370s, he was taken into the service of the pro-hesychast Patriarch Philotheos, and soon became one of his trusted men. In 1375 he was appointed metropolitan of Kiev and Lithuania, and in 1390 finally moved to Moscow, after a brief and unsuccessful stay there in 1381–82. An accomplished diplomat, theologian and man of letters, Kiprian was a typical representative of “political hesychasm,” advanced by a group of ecclesiastical princes who, in the second half of the fourteenth century, worked together to restore and preserve the unity of the Orthodox Church under the patriarchate of Constantinople. To this group also belonged Patriarch Euthymius of Trnovo and his pupil Gregory Tsamblak, both friends and colleagues of Kiprian's, and in Russia such distinguished church leaders as Sergei of Radonezh and his nephew Feodor, Abbot of the Simonov Monastery and Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi's confessor, later bishop of Rostov. Kiprian contributed actively to the spread of hesychast theology in Russia. He translated texts promoting hesychast doctrine from the Greek into Church Slavonic, among them the *Ladder* of John Climacus and certain writings of Dionysius the Areopagite. Furthermore, he revised the Russian ritual in order to bring it more in accordance with Byzantine practice. In the years before his death in 1406, he was involved in the compilation of the first comprehensive Moscow chronicle, completed in 1408. His major works as a man of letters are his two versions of the *Life of Metropolitan Petr* (*Zhitie metropolita Petra*, ruled 1308–26), based on an earlier *Life of Petr* commissioned by Ivan Kalita in 1327 to commemorate Petr's translation of the metropolitanate from Vladimir to Moscow. Kiprian's first and shorter version may have been written in 1381–82, during his initial incumbency in Moscow, whereas the longer version was written after 1385, probably after Kiprian's return to Moscow in 1390.

In Kiprian's *Life*, Petr is depicted as the incarnation of fourteenth-century hesychasm in both its aspects, the mystical and the political.

During his years of monastic apprenticeship the saint spent his days in meditation, setting up a ladder of ascent in his heart [...] accord-

ing to the instruction and teaching of Saint John Climacus [...] soon he had learnt the painting of Holy Icons [...] and through this all his spirit and mind were carried away from earthly things, and in spirit he was wholly deified [...] lifting his mind from these painted images to their archetypes.

The saint's mystical *theosis*, or divinisation, and the Orthodox theology of the Holy Icons are here described with a precision which itself testifies to Kiprian's hesychast background. By the same token, his account of Petr's career as a church leader is accompanied by a vision of the saint as the servant of the Holy Mother of God and her Son and Lord, the heavenly archetype of the hesychast bishop. This relationship between Christ and his servant is extended to Kiprian himself, who in his concluding eulogy to Petr projects the main events of his own life onto the life story of his protagonist, emphasizing the correspondences between them. The eulogy ends with a depiction of "our glorious Orthodox princes" venerating the saint's relics. Receiving blessings with all the Orthodox, praising the Lifegiving Trinity, the secular princes are represented humbly kneeling before Metropolitan Kiprian, the image of the divine prototype of Christ.

Kiprian's expanded *Life of Petr* is commonly regarded as the first example in early East Slavic hagiography of a new hagiographic style, captivating the audience more by rhetorical embellishment than by reliable and sober narration. Kiprian's style is thus intermediate between the neo-Slavic rhetoric of fourteenth-century Bulgarian and Serbian hagiography, and its Russian counterpart, known as "word-weaving" (*pletenie sloves*), a Greek calque and an indication of the Greek origin of the style. In early Muscovite literature, "word-weaving" is usually associated with the hagiographic writings of Epifanii the Wise and Pakhomii the Serb.

The *Life of Saint Stefan, Bishop of Perm* (*Zhitie svyiatogo Stefana, episkopa Permskogo*) written by the monk Epifanii the Wise soon after Stefan's death in 1396, is known in an early sixteenth-century copy, believed to be identical with Epifanii's original composition.

Saint Stefan brought the Gospel to the Finnish Zyrians (the Permians of the *Life*) and translated the Christian Scriptures into their language. The hagiographic significance of this is brought out in a comparison with the missionary work of the Apostles and with Constantine-Cyril. By these

parallels, the conversion of the Permians is integrated into the history of salvation, seen as a linear progress beginning with the Fall and moving towards the Day of Judgement, a temporal process that has its spatial correlative in the expansion of the Russian Church to the land of Perm. A similar chronotope determines the representation of Stefan's ascent in the hierarchy of the Church in the form of a movement in time and geographical space. From his home town of Ustiug he moves to Rostov, where he is shorn a monk, ordained as deacon, and receives his priesthood, before proceeding to Moscow and to Perm, returning back to Moscow to become bishop. This idea of sanctification as an ascent in the ecclesiastical hierarchy is one of the two ways to divine knowledge described by Dionysius the Areopagite, the other being the way of spiritual ascent in contemplation of the divine mysteries. In the writings of the Areopagite the two ways are equal, one belonging to the personal sphere, the other to the sphere of the Church as a social institution. What is remarkable in the *Life of Saint Stefan* is the one-sided emphasis on social and political themes. Ideologically, the *Life of Saint Stefan* is a document of political hesychasm; its mystical, contemplative aspect has been suppressed.

By his own admission Epifanii wrote the *Life of Saint Stefan* "to praise the preacher of faith, Perm's teacher, and the Apostles' successor." Thus the *Life* was conceived as an encomium. In a series of rhetorical amplifications, culminating in three final laments in commemoration of the saint, Epifanii exploits the whole register of Church Slavonic devices, following the exemplars of Kievan oratory and of the neo-Slavonic *logos epidiktikos* of Serbian hagiography developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This ornamental style of "word-weaving," with its paronomastic repetitions, synonyms, isocola and homoioteleuta, is brought to a flamboyant apex in Epifanii's tirades.

Before his death about 1420, Epifanii wrote the *Life of Saint Sergei of Radonezh* (*Zhitie sviatogo Sergiia Radonezhskogo*, 1314–92), the founder of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity north of Moscow, and one of the leaders of monastic hesychasm in early Muscovite Russia.

This *Life* was rewritten by Pakhomii the Serb soon after his arrival in Russia about 1440, and has only been preserved in this revised version. Pakhomii had received his education on Mount Athos, and was fully familiar with the ornate style of Serbian literature. For the next forty years Pakhomius was active in both Novgorod and Moscow, revising old saints'

Lives and writing new ones. Besides this, Pakhomii composed a number of canons with which he laid the foundations of an original Muscovite hymnography. In the *Life of Saint Sergei*, the devices of “word weaving” are used less conspicuously than in the *Life of Saint Stefan*, and there is more emphasis on narrative. At the same time, Pakhomii introduces into his glorification of the saint a number of light visions, a motif not found in Epifanii’s eulogy to Stefan of Perm. The light visions reflect the inner ascent and mystical illumination of Sergei, creating a link between his figure and the illuminated figure of Nestor’s Saint Feodosii. The correspondences between the two saints are hardly accidental. They are both depicted as *imitatores Christi*, though Feodosii’s *imitatio* takes the form of a mystical reenactment of Christ’s suffering and an anagogical prefiguration of his celestial glory, whereas the prototype of Sergei’s *imitatio Christi* is the Transfigured Christ on Mount Tabor, the central image of mystical hesychasm.

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow emerged as the new centre of the Orthodox Church and heir to the imperial legacy of East Rome. In 1459 the Russian Church was declared autocephalous, and the marriage in 1472 of Ivan III to Princess Zoë, niece of the last Byzantine emperor, seemed to confirm Russia’s new status. During the next century the Russian Church turned inward and developed the ideology of Moscow as the third and last Rome.

The idea that the grand princes of Moscow—the tsars, as they were now called—were the legitimate heirs of the Roman emperors was developed in several pseudo-historical works dating from the reigns of Ivan III (1462–1505) and Vasiliï III (1505–33). One of the most popular was the *Tale of Constantinople (Povest’ o Tsargrade)* included in the *Russian Chronograph (Russkii Khronograf)* of 1512, and ascribed in one copy to a certain Nestor Iskander. In the final part, the *Tale* describes the sultan’s triumphant entry into the fallen city, concluding with a prophecy of Byzantium’s liberation by a “fair people” (*rusyi rod*), soon taken to mean that the Russians (*russkii rod*) had been chosen by Providence to free Constantinople. A related idea is expressed in Spiridon Sava’s *Epistle on the Crown of Monomakh (Poslanie o Monomakhovom ventse)*, which traces the genealogy of the reigning Russian grand princes back to Caesar Augustus. In the *Tale of the Princes of Vladimir (Skazanie o kniaziaikh Vladimirskikh)*, Spiridon’s genealogy, originally designed to glorify the



princes of Tver, has been transferred to Grand Prince Iurii Danilovich of Moscow and his descendants, as part of the new ideology.

From the literature of this period a number of tales have reached us, either in translations or in original Russian versions belonging to the international repertoire of medieval story telling. Among the translated works are the so-called *Serbian Romance of Alexander* (*Serbskaia Aleksandriia*) and Guido de Colomna's *Latin Tales of Troy* (*Troianskie skazaniia*), originally completed in 1287, and translated from a printed late fourteenth-century German edition. Closer to the folkloric tradition are *Stefanit and Ikhnilat*, based on a tale from the Indian *Panchatantra*, and the *Tale of Solomon and Kitovras* (*Skazanie o Solomone i Kitovrase*). The *Dispute between Life and Death* (*Prenie zhivota i smerti*) was translated from Nicholas Mercator's German version, published in Lübeck in 1484, whereas the *Tale of Dracula* (*Povest' o Drakule*) appears to have been written by a Russian familiar with the Dracula legend. These texts signalled a new trend in East Slavic literature. A work apart is the *Journey beyond the Three Seas* (*Khozhdenie za tri moria*) by the Tver merchant Afanasii Nikitin. Hardly intended for publication, these travel impressions of Islamic India recorded by an Orthodox Russian in 1466–72 have more appeal to a modern reader than most of the period's official literature.

The end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth was a period of great religious unrest in Russia, in Novgorod and Moscow in particular. Critics of the official church could be found among both the laity and the clergy. Their most serious complaints had to do with the institutional hierarchy of the church, which they attacked in its foundations through a scrutiny of canon law. One of their most prominent leaders, Ivan Volk Kuritsyn, developed his ideas of "free will" and of the "spiritual church" of the early Christians from reading the official *Nomocanon* (*Kormchaia kniga*).

Ivan's brother Feodor wrote that "the soul has a free will and is defended by faith [...] wholly blessed in knowledge, whereby we arrive at the fear of God, the beginning of virtue." The reform movement reached the court of Ivan III, who initially supported it as part of his plans to confiscate the landed estates owned by the Russian Church and her monasteries. But when the reformers proved too dangerous, the Church launched a counterattack under the leadership of Abbot Iosif of Volokolamsk (1439–1515) a staunch defender of monastic property and head of the Possessors

(*stiazhateli*) in their struggle with the non-Possessors (*nestiazhateli*). The latter were headed by Nil Sorskii (1433–1508), a great mystic who insisted on monastic poverty and withdrew to the remote forests beyond the Volga in order to devote himself to solitary contemplation. However, the two antagonists joined forces in opposition to the reformers, and Iosif's main anti-heretical work, *The Enlightener* (*Prosvetitel'*), was written with Nil's assistance.

The religious unrest in early Muscovite Russia ended with the victory of the Josephites over the “heretics” as well as the non-Possessors. Prince Vassian Patrikeev, a disciple of Nil Sorskii, fought in vain against them, chastising the property-owning monasteries for desecrating the tradition of the saints and describing the acquisition of property as the “new heresy.” In 1531 he was arrested and imprisoned in Iosif's monastery at Volokolamsk, where he died about 1545. A similar fate befell his friend Maksim the Greek. Known in the world as Michael Trivolis, Maksim had in his youth been close to the Italian humanists, but under the influence of Savonarola's antihumanist sermons he became a monk on Mount Athos and later went to Russia. He died in 1556 after spending thirty-one years in prison for his opposition to the church and the secular establishment.

After 1547, when Ivan IV the Terrible proclaimed himself “Tsar,” official Russian literature was characterized by an encyclopaedic activity that paralleled the political centralization and unification of the country under its autocratic ruler. The chronicles were codified and brought up to date, the Church Council of 1551 affirmed the established ritual of the Russian Church and issued its decrees in a *Book of a Hundred Chapters* (*Stoglav*). Under the leadership of Metropolitan Makarii (in office 1542–63), the hagiographic and patristic legacy of old Russia, as well as more recent polemical writings, were collected in a vast compilation entitled the *Great Reading Menaia* (*Velikie chet'i minei*). In *Household Management* (*Domostroi*), the rules of family life and everyday behaviour were laid down once and for all. Among the original tales of this period is the *Tale of Petr and Fevroniia* (*Povest' o Petre i Fevronii*) composed by the monk Ermolai-Erazm in mid-century. The legend is based on international fairy-tale motifs, such as the slaying of a dragon, and the “wise maiden.” These folklore motifs are combined with hagiographic topoi and contemporary political themes in a work expressing the social ethos of the author, a reformer in the tradition of the trans-Volga elders.

The cult of the tsar was codified in the *Book of Ranks of the Tsars' Genealogy* (*Stepennaia kniga tsarskogo rodosloviia*), perpetuating the mythical link between Caesar Augustus and the Russian princes now said to have been "tsars" even in Kievan times, and glorifying the house of Kalita, rulers by divine appointment and support. According to Ivan Peresvetov, an adventurer from Lithuania who became the mouthpiece of the new Russian service nobility, the tsar, in order to exert his "terrible power," should combine "Christian faith" with "Turkish order."

The terrible tsar and his policies are glorified in the *History of Kazan* (*Kazanskaia istoriia*), written in 1564–65, and in the *Tale of Stefan Batorii's Attack on Pskov* (*Povest' o prikhozhdanii Stefana Batoriia na Pskov*), written only after the death of the tsar.

There is little doubt that Ivan the Terrible was a cruel and mentally deranged tyrant. But he was also the author of some of the most original works of sixteenth-century Russian literature. Educated in the stern spirit of Josephite monasticism, Ivan mastered to perfection the rules of Muscovite rhetoric, at the same time demonstrating his despotic omnipotence by bringing into his rhetorical discourse elements of blasphemy and scorn associated with the buffoonery of the *skomorokhi* and court jesters, whose company he cherished, although their pranks had been banned by the *Hundred Chapters*. Ivan's hybrid style was a forceful instrument in his polemics against political opponents, but it proved a double-edged sword once the enemy discovered its unholy combination of apparent Christian piety and personal arrogance, of scriptural quotations and foul-mouthed ribaldry.

The weaknesses of Ivan's style were probed mercilessly by his principal adversary, Prince Andrei Kurbskii (1528–83). A descendant of old princely families of Iaroslavl and Smolensk, Kurbskii had distinguished himself in Ivan's military campaigns as well as in administration, when, in 1564, during a war with Lithuania, he deserted to the enemy. From Lithuania he responded to the tsar's accusatory letters, and in 1573, during the Polish interregnum, compiled the *History of the Grand Prince of Muscovy* (*Istoriia o Velikom kniaze moskovskom*), produced for the explicit purpose of preventing the election of Ivan IV to the Polish throne.

The correspondence between Ivan and Kurbskii has been preserved only in seventeenth-century copies, and its authenticity has been questioned. The ideological positions of the two correspondents, however, co-

incide with views put forward in their other writings. Ivan defends his autocratic idea of tsardom, whereas Kurbskii favours limited princely power and shared governmental responsibility, a position he further developed in his *History*. Kurbskii is the first Russian writer to regard European civilization and secular knowledge as superior to the theological learning of the Orthodox Church and the traditions of old Russia. To Kurbskii Ivan represents cultural barbarism, whereas Ivan uses the same word to characterize Kurbskii's apostasy from Muscovite Christianity.

After the death in 1598 of Fedor Ivanovich, the last tsar of the old dynasty, and of his successor Boris Godunov in 1605, the Muscovite state was thrown into a crisis that lasted until 1613, when Mikhail Fedorovich, the first Romanov tsar, ascended the throne. The interregnum, known as the Time of Troubles, had shaken the foundations of the state. The country had been ravaged by civil unrest and by wars of succession in which Poles and Swedes had intervened in support of their respective candidates.

The Time of Troubles was a turning point in early East Slavic literature. During this period church and state lost control over the written word, Polish verse composition was imitated in Moscow, and oral poetry was transposed into writing. The country was swamped with the "alluring leaflets" of the false pretenders' Catholic supporters, and Church Slavonic rhetoric acquired a new role in the verbal battle with the enemy. Political pamphleteering was no longer the preserve of the tsar, as it had been under Ivan IV. In the ideological struggle of the interregnum, the authority of the written word had ceased to be absolute. It now depended on the individual author's ideological stance.

The new situation is clearly reflected in the memoirs written during or shortly after the Time of Troubles, such as Avraamii Palitsyn's *Narrative* (*Skazanie ob osade Troitsko-Sergieva Lavra*, 1612–20), Ivan Khvorostinin's *Discourses* (*Slovesa dnei i tsarei i sviatitelei moskovskikh*, 1616–24), Ivan Timofeev's *Chronicle* (*Vremennik po sed'moi tysiashchi ot sotvoreniia sveta vo osmoi v pervye leta*, 1616–19), and Semen Shakhovskoi's *True Account in Memory of the Martyred and Faithful Tsarevich Dimitrii, and of His Slaying* (*Povest' izvestnoskazuema na pamiat' velikomuchenika, blagovernogo tsarevicha Dimitriia i o ubienii ego*), probably composed in the 1620s.

In these works the old rhetoric is skilfully employed to express, and at times to camouflage, the authors' personal assessments of the events and characters of the period. In trying to understand the behaviour of Ivan the Terrible and Boris Godunov, these authors went beyond the traditional character-drawing of medieval East Slavic literature, with its clear distinction between sinners and righteous men, between good and evil, and developed a literary technique for the representation of complex, or "strong" characters (Dmitrii Likhachev). Whereas Kurbskii had explained the contradictory nature of Ivan the Terrible's personality diachronically, seeing the death of the Tsarina Anastasia as the watershed between the wise and brave ruler and the cruel tyrant who finally murdered his own son, the chroniclers of the interregnum try to depict the rulers of the period as products of an internalized struggle between good and evil in a contrastive technique where good and bad qualities are no longer mutually exclusive, but form a syndrome, modifying each other and creating a dramatic inner conflict. Boris Godunov's character, which to his contemporaries seemed so enigmatic, is explained as the result of the interaction of many factors: "human nature," "free will," striving after fame, the influence of other men. The original contribution of these authors to Muscovite literature lies in their invention of a rhetoric of complex characterization.

After the accession of Aleksei Mikhailovich in 1645, Moscow became the centre of a spiritual revival, led by Stefan Vonifat'ev, the tsar's teacher and father confessor. Inspired by the *Hundred Chapters* of 1551, Stefan dreamed of a "lay monasticism" of small penitential communities headed by a priest or archpriest. Among the members of Stefan's "circle of zealots" were both Nikon, the future patriarch, and Avvakum, who was to become his most intransigent opponent when, upon his appointment in 1652, Nikon decided to bring "Russian Gallicanism" to an end and work for a closer relationship with the Ukrainian Church. After the union between Russia and Ukraine in 1654 this became a matter of urgent concern, and the zealots' dream of reviving Muscovite religiosity was a lost cause. The schism following Nikon's liturgical reforms of 1653 split the whole Russian Church into two camps: the Old Believers, representing the ideals of the *Hundred Chapters*, and the Graecophiles, who accepted the necessity of putting an end to the cultural isolationism of Muscovite society. At their initiative, Ukrainian bookmen educated at the Kiev

Academy were called to Moscow, bringing with them a culture strongly influenced by the educational system of the Polish Jesuits, on which the Kievan Metropolitan Petro Mohyla had modelled the curriculum of the Academy.

The decisive step toward a westernization of Russian literature was taken with the invitation of Simeon Polotskii (1629–80) to Moscow in 1663. Born in Polotsk in Belarus, Simeon was educated at the Kiev Academy, and he probably also studied at the Jesuit College at Wilno, where he learned Polish and Latin. In 1656 he became a monk and teacher at the Orthodox Brotherhood's School in his home town, where in the same year he twice attracted attention with verses he wrote on the occasion of Tsar Aleksei's visits to the city. On his arrival in Moscow he opened a school for government officials where he taught grammar, Latin, poetics and rhetoric. In 1667 he was appointed tutor to Tsarevich Aleksei, and later to Feodor, Sofia, and Peter I. He was court preacher and one of the organizers of the Council of 1666–67, which officially deposed Nikon and condemned the Old Believers, whom he attacked in his *Scepter of Government* (*Zhezl pravleniia*). His sermons were published posthumously in two volumes: the *Spiritual Midday Meal* (*Obed dushevnyi*, 1681) and the *Spiritual Supper* (*Vecheria dushevnaia*, 1683). He wrote the first plays for the new court theater, *Comedy on the Parable of the Prodigal Son* (*Komedii pritchi o bludnom syne*) and the tragedy *On Nebuchadnezzar the King* (*O Navkhodonosore tsare*), both cast in the style of Jesuit school drama, the tragedy based on an old Byzanto-Russian liturgical play about the "three youths in the fiery furnace." Simeon's large collections of poems, *The Garden of Many Flowers* (*Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi*), and the *Rifmologion* remained unpublished. The former contains satirical, panegyric, narrative and didactic verse, the latter panegyric odes and occasional poems written to the tsar and his family. Simeon's verse translation of the *Psalter* (*Psaltyr'*), printed in Moscow in 1680, was set to music at the end of the century. In his panegyric verse Simeon created an "imperial style" for the glorification of the new absolutist empire and its ruler. This style combines early East Slavic rhetoric and Byzanto-Russian imperial ideology with tropes and figures taken over from ancient and contemporary western European literature in the form of Jesuit school Baroque. With Simeon, a whole museum of ancient gods, muses, heroes, authors and philosophers entered Russian literature. But they had been lifted

from their historical context and given a purely ornamental function in his tirades of syllabic lines.

Verbal poetry—verse composition regulated by meter—was unknown in Kievan and Muscovite literature. Verse composition was known in old Russia only in the musical poetry of the Church Slavonic hymns and in the spoken verse of brief oral genres, proverbs, riddles, incantations, etc. recited by the *skomorokhi*. Examples of *skazovyi stikh* are to be found in Daniil's *Supplication*. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, the musical poetry of the liturgy was imitated outside its liturgical context in compositions known as “penitential verse” (*stikhi pokaiannye*).

Syllabic poetry came to Russia from the west, through Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland. The first *virshi* (from Latin *versus*) were written in Russia in the early seventeenth century. Following Ukrainian and Belarusian patterns, they were either written in the form of isosyllabic couplets, or as couplets of lines with a varying number of syllables (relative isosyllabism). The latter variant—found, for instance, in the writings of Prince Khvorostinin—coincided with the old *skazovyi stikh*, but they were soon differentiated functionally: “relative isosyllabism” was associated with serious poetry, *skazovyi stikh* with popular, “low” rhymes. According to Aleksandr Panchenko, the new art of verse writing was further developed by a group of Moscow government officials whose activity seems to have ended with the schism, when they sided with the Old Believers. Nikon favoured the new art too, and at his patriarchal court hymns were written on the Polish model. But it was Simeon Polotskii who finally transferred the whole system of syllabic poetry to Russia. His work was continued by his favourite pupil, Sil'vestr Medvedev (1641–92), beheaded by Peter I for his support of the tsar's sister, the Tsarina Sofia, and Sil'vestr's friend, Karion Istomin (mid-17th century–after 1720), after 1698 head of the printing office.

From the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth, a number of medieval adventure novels were translated into Russian, not from the originals but from the chapbook versions in which these works survived in German and Polish literature. The *Tale about Prince Bova* (*Povest' o Bove Koroleviche*), which goes back to the Italian romance of *Buovo d'Antona*, *Peter of the Golden Keys* (*Povest' o Petre zlatykh kliuchei*), derived from *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne*, the *Tale of Bruntsvik*, a chapbook version of an old Czech poem, the *Tale*



of the Golden Haired Czech Prince Vasilii (*Povest' o Vasilii Zlatovlasnom, koroleviche Cheshskoi zemli*), and others.

Equally popular were the Russian counterparts of the German Schwänke and French fabliaux, sometimes translated from Polish facetiae, sometimes developed into original Russian versions of well-known international motifs. Among the most popular were the *Tale about Karp Sutulov* (*Povest' o Karpe Sutulove*), the *Story of a Life in Luxury and Fun* (*Skazanie o roskoshnom zhitii i veselii*), the *Tale of Ersh Ershovich* (*Povest' o Ershe Ersheviche*), and *Shemiaka's Trial* (*Shemiakin sud*), which project traditional denunciations of bureaucracy and corrupt judges onto the reality of seventeenth century Russian life. The original *Tale of Frol Skobeev* has been called both a Russian "picaresque novel" and the "masterpiece of Muscovite fabliaux." This rather cynical tale describes the devices by which the roguish hero seduces a nobleman's daughter, clandestinely marries her, is finally reconciled with her parents, and ends "in great fame, and rich." Both its tone and plot suggest that this story already belongs to the Petrine period.

Another group of seventeenth-century satires deals with the clergy and monastic life. In stories like the *Tale about Sava the Priest* (*Povest' o pope Save*) and the *Petition of the Monks from Kaliazin* (*Kaliazinskaia chelobitnaia*), the solemn world of monks and priests is turned upside down and parodied. The particular variant of spoken verse employed in these satires points to their oral origin. The existence of similar forms in Byzantine literature is an indication that this is an old oral tradition fixed in writing in the seventeenth century, the century when Russian folklore took permanent form for the first time.

Somewhat different from the merry, recreational parody of these tales are the satires in which laughter mingles with tears. Among them are such texts as the *Mass of the Tavern* (*Sluzhba kabaku*), and the *Abecedary of the Naked and Poor Man* (*Azbuka o golom i nebogatom cheloveke*), the former a parody of the vespers, concluding with the life story of a drunkard in the form of a mock-vita, the latter of a devotional abecedary, a genre common in Byzanto-Slavonic literature. In both works the comic inversion of official genres is combined with social satire. Like the prodigal son, so popular in Jesuit literature of the period, the heroes, or anti-heroes, of these works are described as social outcasts who act against the will of their parents and waste their patrimony in the company of



the dregs of society. They are set in the inns and taverns of the slums. But there is a characteristic element of redeeming irony in them too. The first-person narrator of the *Abecedary* depicts his own abasement with an element of irony, as if in his humiliation he has broken away from the values of this world.

A central text in this group is the *Tale of Woe-Misfortune* (*Povest' o Gore i Zlochastii*). Composed in the unrhymed lines of the folk epic, with four stressed syllables in each line, the work is clearly a literary transcription of an oral composition close to the genre of the "penitential songs," with a strong admixture of elements from popular apocrypha about the figure of Khmel, or Humulus, as the embodiment of the demon of drunkenness. *The Tale of Woe-Misfortune* is thus a hybrid work in which a nameless youth leaves his parents, strays from the right path, loses his possessions, and is pursued by Woe-Misfortune, his evil spirit and the incarnation of death, until he is saved at the monastery gates, where he is spiritually reborn and becomes a monk.

Underlying the *Tale of Woe-Misfortune* is a vision of life as tragic farce in which demons play tricks on men in a godforsaken world ruled by the forces of evil, by Satan and the Anti-Christ, or their henchmen. As we shall see, the same hilarotragic world vision undergirds the autobiographical *Life (Zhitie) of Archpriest Avvakum*, the greatest hagiographic work in late Muscovite literature.

The Hundred Chapters Council had envisioned a Russian Church encompassing the whole of society, extending church discipline to all spheres of human life. The centre of this "lay monasticism" was to have been the "household church" under the supervision of a priest or archpriest. This idea found expression in the regulation of everyday life prescribed in the *Domostroi*, and it was revived by the circle of religious reformers. One of the few literary expressions of this ideal is the *Life of the Holy and Pious Mother Iuliania Lazarevskaia* (*Povest' o sviatoi i pravednoi materi Iulianii Lazarevskoi*), written about 1625 by her son Druzhina Osorgin. The *Life* is composed on the traditional pattern, but now projected onto a secular life story, with the result that some of the well-known topoi have been distorted, or even turned upside down. Juliana did not go to church regularly, as a traditional saint would have done. She was more concerned with her duties towards the hungry, the poor, and the sick, than with ritual matters. Also, she obeyed her husband when he forbade

her to enter a convent, and spent the rest of her days as a lay ascetic in constant “spiritual prayer.”

The schism of 1653 wrecked hopes for a revival of household religiosity. The leaders of the reformist movement went over into opposition to the tsar and the patriarch, continuing their work as religious dissidents, persecuted by church and state, tortured, and finally burnt at the stake.

The *vitae et passiones* of these martyrs are the most significant seventeenth-century contribution to old Russian hagiography. These works include the anonymous *Life of Boyarina Morozova, Princess Urusova, and Mariia Danilova* (*Zhitie boiariny Morozovoi, kniagini Urusovoi, i Marii Danilovoi*), and the autobiographical *Lives* of Archpriest Avvakum and his fellow sufferer, the monk Epifanii.

Archpriest Avvakum (1621–82) wrote his *Life* at Pustozersk on the White Sea, where he spent his last fifteen years as a prisoner. The *Life* went through several revisions, with the hagiographic element becoming more pronounced in each new version.

Written in the form of an intimate “talk” (*beseda*) addressed to Epifanii, the *Life* has a markedly dialogic structure. The author conducts a dialogue with his own past, trying to discover meaning in his suffering, be it in the patriarchal torture chambers or during the years of his Siberian exile. The memories of his suffering become meaningful only when he regards his own life as a reenactment of Christ’s Passion. Avvakum’s theological thought is permeated by the symbolism of the Areopagite (Konrad Onasch): in his *Life*, people and events, even the flora and fauna of eastern Siberia, are “signs and miracles” of divine prototypes, revealing themselves in the immediate reality of his suffering. The interference of this supernatural world of prototypes transforms his humiliations into a series of symbols of the world to come, of his triumph over the arch-enemy, that Anti-Christ incarnate, Patriarch Nikon.

Avvakum’s combination of ecclesiastical and colloquial language transposed into writing the pathos of his oral rhetoric, and has remained a source of inspiration to modern Russian literature ever since the *Life* was first published in 1861.

Ukrainian influence in Moscow, which had steadily increased during the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich, became all-pervasive during the reign of his son, Peter the Great. The Ukrainian-Orthodox imitation of Polish-Jesuit school Baroque, introduced into Russian literature by

Simeon Polotskii, continued to flourish in the writing of his successors, the Metropolitan Dimitrii of Rostov (1651–1709), Stefan Iavorskii (1658–1722), *locum tenens* of the patriarchal chair, and Feofan Prokopovich (1681–1736). All three were educated at the Kiev Academy, after which Iavorskii and Prokopovich temporarily converted to Catholicism and continued their studies abroad, the former at Polish and Lithuanian universities, the latter in Rome, where he became acquainted with Jesuit scholasticism. This he later rejected, together with the divinity of the Greeks, trying to revitalize Russian theology in confrontation with Protestantism, whose doctrines he also refused to accept. As distinguished men of letters, these ecclesiastics caught the attention of the tsar, whose reforms they regarded with various feelings, from Iavorskii's open resistance and Dimitrii Rostovskii's silent disapproval to the enthusiastic support of Prokopovich, who saw Peter as the embodiment of his own ideal of enlightened despotism.

All three men were professional writers, trained according to the rules of Jesuit school rhetoric, which Iavorskii summarized in his *Rhetorical Handbook* (*Ruka retoricheskaia*), while Prokopovich wrote his own Latin courses in both poetics and rhetoric.

Dimitrii Tuptalo, later canonized as Saint Dimitrii Rostovskii, is known mainly for his *Reading Menaia* (*Minei-Chet'i*, 1689–1705). Written under the influence of the Jesuit Peter Skarga's Polish Lives and the *acta sanctorum* of the Bollandists, the work replaced Makarii's old *Menaia*, and became the hagiographic thesaurus for generations and generations of Russian readers and writers, right up to our own century. The highly ornate discourse of his ecclesiastical oratory shows how well Baroque rhetoric and Byzanto-Slavic "word-weaving" could function together. His plays *A Comedy for the Day of Christ's Birth* (*Komediia na Rozhdenie Khristogo*), *A Comedy for the Dormition of the Virgin* (*Komediia na Uspenie Bogomateri*) and others, are written in the tradition of Jesuit school drama, while his poems, epigraphs and hymns reveal a predilection for Baroque conceptism. In Rostov, Dimitrii established the first Russian theological seminary using Greek and Latin.

To his contemporaries, Stefan Iavorskii was known first and foremost as the author of the anti-Protestant treatises *Vineyard of Christ* (*Vinograd Khristov*, 1698) and *Rock of Faith* (*Kamen' very*, 1718). His sermons, written in the Baroque mannerist style, were aimed at impressing the audi-

ence with exclamations such as “O Noah, glorious admiral!” “O celestial pharmacist, how miraculous is Thine alchemy, how marvellous Thy pharmacy [...]” Stefan’s arguments against the Protestants were borrowed from Catholic works. Like Feofan Prokopovich, Stefan was trilingual, and wrote his poems in Latin, Polish and Church Slavonic. His most accomplished verse composition is a Latin valedictory elegy to his library, written in the tradition of the humanists.

Of all the Ukrainians active in Moscow under Peter the Great, Feofan Prokopovich was the most prominent. He it was who carried out Peter’s church reforms, abolishing the old Byzanto-Russian idea of a diarchy between church and state and subjecting the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the authority of the secular ruler as “high priest” and “supreme shepherd.”

In his literary work Feofan glorified the tsar and the new absolutism in panegyric logoi, such as the *Discourse on the Power and Dignity of the Tsar* (*Slovo o vlasti i chesti tsarskoi*, 1718), and the *Panegyric Discourse on the Russian Fleet* (*Slovo pokhval’noe o flote rossiiskom*, 1720). His tragedy *Vladimir* (1705), written in syllabic verse, is regarded by some historians as an allegorical satire on the opponents of Peter’s reforms though on the surface it deals with Vladimir’s Christianization of Rus’. His *Epinikion* (1709), celebrating Peter’s victory over the Swedes at Poltava, was written in Latin, Polish and Church Slavonic. The Slavonic version is composed according to the traditional scheme of thirteen-syllable lines, with the caesura after the seventh syllable, a fixed stress on the sixth and twelfth, and regular rhyme. After Peter’s death Feofan’s poetry became more experimental and varied, with imitations of the Italian *ottava rima* (a/b a/b a/b c/c), epodic couplets in which a long line is followed by a shorter one, more frequent use of non-grammatical rhymes, and a poetic diction closer to every-day speech. During these years he was surrounded by a “learned retinue,” a circle of intimate friends, among whom were the historian Vasiliï Tatishchev (1686–1750) and the young Prince Antiokh Kantemir, whose first and most famous satire, “Against the Enemies of Education” (“Na khuliashchikh uchenie”) was directed against Feofan’s enemies. In this work, the reign of Peter the Great is already viewed as a “golden age” of the past, nostalgically referred to by one of the harbingers of a new age in Russian literature.

*East Slavic folklore*

According to the *Primary Chronicle*, in 980, only eight years before his official conversion to Christianity, Prince Vladimir set up a group of pagan idols on a hill near his castle at Kiev. The gods represented were Perun, Khors, Dazhbog, Stribog, Simarigl, and Mokosh. Perun is further mentioned in the Graeco-Russian treaties reproduced in the chronicle (907, 945, 971), where it is said that the non-Christian Russians swore by Perun and by Veles, the god of cattle.

Comparative studies have shown that the pagan deities of the Eastern Slavs have their counterparts in the mythology of other Slavs, and that ultimately they are derivations of an Indo-European pantheon. A notable feature of Slav paganism is the strong Iranian influence still to be found in terms like *bog* ("god"), meaning "giver of wealth"; *vera* ("faith"), coinciding with the Iranian word denoting choice between good and evil; and *sviat* ("holy"). The Russian word *mir*, meaning both "peace" and "peaceful community," is connected with the Iranian god Mithra.

With the acceptance of Christianity, the old pagan beliefs were relegated to the periphery of East Slavic culture, and the church began an endless struggle to eradicate the remnants of paganism. In spite of this, the old traditions survived in popular peasant cults, in folklore and decorative folk art, right up to the twentieth century.

In popular tradition, pagan and Christian elements often coalesced in hybrid forms, known by the church as "ditheism" (*dvoeverie*). Perun, for instance, the old thunder-god, whom the Varangians of the princely retinue identified with the old Norse Thor, found a Christian equivalent in Elijah, and Veles, the god of wealth and cattle, was transformed into Saint Blasius. But in the popular juxtaposition of Elijah and Blasius/Veles, modern scholars have detected traces of an archaic antagonism between the Indo-European thunder-god and a dragon-shaped cattle god, hiding from his opponent in trees, cliffs, animals, human beings, etc. Folkloric transformations of this deity are such epic heroes as the Serbian Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk (Dragon Fiery Wolf), Volkh Vseslavevich in the Russian folk epic, and the magician Prince Vseslav of Polotsk in the *Primary Chronicle* and the *Igor Tale*.

In the old Slavic version of the *Romance of Alexander*, Zeus is identified with Perun. Hephaistos and Helios are translated as Svarog and Dazhbog in the *Chronicle* of Malalas, and the two are described in the

*Hypatian Chronicle* under 1114 as father and son. Khors is another name for the sun god, borrowed from the Iranian. Stribog, who comes next to Dazhbog in Vladimir's ensemble of idols, has been translated as "the apportioner of wealth" (Roman Jakobson), and Dazhbog and Stribog form a divine pair corresponding to the Greek Aisa and Poros, "Portion" and "Aliotment," Vedic Amsa and Bhaga, all pointing to a common Indo-European prototype. In the *Igor Tale*, the Russians are called "Dazhbog's grandsons," and the winds are the "grandsons of Stribog," blowing from the sea with arrows against Igor's valiant hosts.

The genuine folkloric tradition of old Russia was transmitted by the *skomorokhi*, the Russian minstrels. Persecuted by the church and finally outlawed by Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich in the middle of the seventeenth century, they receded into the remote regions of northern Russia, where their art was taken over by peasant singers and tellers of tales. It was in the seventeenth century as well that the first Russian folk tales and ballads were recorded, the tales by an Oxford doctor of medicine, Samuel Collins, the ballads by another Oxford man, Richard James, at the beginning of the century chaplain to the English diplomatic mission in Moscow. He returned to England in 1620, bringing with him the first transcriptions of Russian secular folk songs.

An important event in the study of Russian folklore was the publication of Kirsha Danilov's *Old Russian Poems (Drevnie rossiiskie stikhotvoreniia, 1804)*, a collection of epic songs, or *byliny*. The classical collection of Russian folk tales is the one published by Aleksandr Afanas'ev in 1855–64, containing about 600 texts.

In the Middle Ages the *byliny* were sung to the accompaniment of the *gusli*, a harp-like instrument. The line is the compositional unit: each line has a fixed number of stressed syllables, usually three, with the last stress falling on the antepenultimate syllable to give the line a dactylic ending. There is no end rhyme, and the lines are grouped into larger sections by means of repetitions and parallelisms. A single *bylina* usually consists of between 200 and 300 lines.

The *byliny* are divided into a Kievan and a Novgorod cycle. The central hero of the latter is the poor *gusli* player Sadko, who becomes a rich merchant with the help of the tsar of the under water realm of Lake Ilmen. The Kievan cycle is centred around the legendary figure of Prince Vladimir and the banquets he arranges for his retinue; its heroes are the

valiant knights Vladimir sends out to fight foreign invaders and internal foes. The most popular are Ilia Muromets, Dobrynia Nikitich, and Alesha Popovich. They are all *bogatyri*, a Persian word meaning “athlete.” Ilia, a hero of superhuman strength granted him by Jesus and two Apostles, first uses his power to clear the land on his parents’ farm, and later in Vladimir’s service. He destroys the Tatar Kalin Tsar and his army before descending into a Kievan cave, where he is turned into stone. Dobrynia and Alesha Popovich are dragon slayers. The historical prototype of the latter may have been Aleksandr Popovich, mentioned in the chronicle under 1223 as one of the warriors killed by the Tatars. In the *bylina* historical elements are fused with mythological motifs. Thus Alesha kills the dragon Tugarin, a poetic transformation of the Polovtsian chief Tugor Khan.

The heroes of the *byliny* moved easily into the fairy tales, a genre closely related to the epic songs in subject matter, but following different poetic patterns. Whereas the *bylina* glorifies the heroes of a distant historical past, the fairy tales conjure up a social utopia, a vision of the “other world.” The *bylina* heroes belong to a golden age, while the folk-tale hero sets out in search of a “better place,” “three years by a crooked way, or three hours by the straight—only there is no thoroughfare.” When finally he finds it, the other world is very much like the one he has left: “The bed is wide and the pillows are of down.”

Much of the charm of the Russian folk tales is due to their verbal artistry, in particular their use of dialogue and their incorporation of other, smaller folkloric genres: proverbs, riddles, and incantations. According to a traditional narrator, the talk of the tale is the most difficult: “If a single word is wrong, nothing will work out right.”

## Religion and Art in the Russian Novel

SPEAKING of the “Russian novel,” we often refer to the classical canon of highly individual works by the great nineteenth-century Russian authors. It is, however, also possible to define the “Russian novel” somewhat differently, as an open adaptive system in which the individual works are parts of a continuous development. In this system, characters and events are represented according to a set of patterns, or schemata that are subject to recurrent variations when applied to the social world around us and to the processes that take place in people’s minds. These are the two basic aspects of narrative—the “landscape of action” and the “landscape of consciousness”—the two landscapes that according to Jerome Bruner characterise this mode of thought as opposed to the logico-scientific, or “paradigmatic” mode.<sup>1</sup>

The outer landscape of action unfolds according to an action pattern, or plot. But in this landscape of action changes occur because of changes taking place in the inner landscapes of the characters involved. To understand a narrative is therefore to have an understanding of both the changes in the characters’ inner landscape of thought and in the outer landscape of events. The two are aspects of the same, since, as Michael Carrithers puts it, “the metamorphosis of thought entails the metamorphosis of social relations and vice versa.”<sup>2</sup>

In the following, our attention will be centred on the function of art and religion in the “dual landscape” of the Russian novel, understood as an open adaptive system.

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1 Jerome Bruner, 1986, “Two Modes of Thought,” *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 11–43.

2 Michael Carrithers, 1992, *Why Humans Have Cultures*, Oxford, p. 84.



The idea of a “dual landscape”—the interaction between characters and plots—is particularly appropriate in the study of the Russian novel. The characters, the plight into which they have fallen, and what goes on in their minds, are here so closely interwoven that we understand the characters only as they are revealed to us in the sequence of events, in constant interaction with their surroundings and with one another. In this sense, it is the imaginative application of the narrative mode to novel-writing that enables us as readers to move so easily from literature to the extra-literary spheres of self-knowledge, social theory, religion and politics. Each novel is a *possible world*, its protagonists *potential characters* that come to life through the reader’s imaginative understanding.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the problem of selfhood had become acute in Russia. The idea of self in Orthodox anthropology, based on the story of man being created in God’s image and likeness was no longer universally accepted.

In Orthodox anthropology, to be created in the image of God is to have the possibility of restoring the divine likeness that was lost through the Fall. This task assigned to every Christian, was made possible by the Incarnation. In the human figure of Christ, divine likeness is realised to a perfect degree, and all Christians may consciously, by an act of their own free will and to the extent of their possibilities, enter upon the task of creating in themselves the likeness of God in imitation of Christ’s archetype.

The idea of Christian self-realisation in imitation of Christ is deeply embedded in the divine service of the Orthodox Church, and its visual expression is found in the art of the icon. It is part of a religious heritage of all Russians brought up in the Orthodox faith.

Towards the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the validity of Orthodox anthropology was increasingly questioned as Russian intellectuals came under the spell of the Enlightenment and were deeply stirred by Rousseau’s idea of the inborn goodness of “natural man,” his idea of an uncorrupted natural self hidden by layers of repression caused by socialisation and acculturation.

Rousseau’s ideas are at the centre of the Russian debate about society and the nature of man during the 1780s and 1790s, when people like Fonvizin and Radishchev often developed their views of human nature and society in polemical opposition to the Genevan philosopher. Accord-

ing to Iurii Lotman, Fonvizin, in particular, attacked Rousseau's idea of the natural goodness of man, arguing that man is born with the rudiments of vice and inclined towards evil from childhood on. To Fonvizin, therefore, the child acquires a self not by being set free from social constraints, but by integration into the ethical and religious whole of a just society, not to be confounded with the selfish and fragmented Russian society of the day.<sup>3</sup>

A different reaction to Rousseau is found in the writings of the Russian freemasons. In their rejection of Rousseau's anthropology, they come closer to Montesquieu's thesis of an inborn evil from which a person can free himself only through moral rebirth as a precondition of a just organisation of society.<sup>4</sup>

Iurii Lotman locates the beginning of the "great argument with Rousseau" in late eighteenth-century Russian freemasonry, "the essence of which was formulated by Dostoevsky in his drafts for *The Adolescent*, when he says about his hero: 'He hates the Geneva ideas (i.e. philanthropy, i.e. virtue without Christ) and does not recognise anything natural in virtue.'<sup>5</sup>

The dichotomy of "man is evil by nature" and "man is good by nature" became a constant feature in nineteenth-century Russian thought. It is symptomatic of the fate of Rousseau's natural man in Russia that Pushkin in his poem *The Gypsies* (1824) represents the whole idea of innocent nature as a myth and in his hero demonstrates the impossibility of becoming "natural" by casting aside the vestments of civilisation.

The dilemma was deepened with the arrival of the Romantic cult of the genius. In Russia, as in the rest of Europe, this cult found its most striking expression in the adoration of Napoleon, in whose genius Hegel saw an incarnation of the "spirit of history." In his philosophy, history is moved forward through the actions of "world-historical individuals," whose mission sets them apart from the rest of humanity and exempts them from the ethical laws of ordinary people.

There is an early allusion to the Russian cult of Napoleon in *Evgenii Onegin* (1825–32), in stanza XI of the second chapter:

3 Iu.M. Lotman, 1992, "Russo i russkaia kul'tura XVIII—nachala XIX veka," *Izbrannyye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, Tallinn, vol. 2, pp. 40–99, p. 79.

4 Lotman, 1992, p. 71.

5 Lotman, 1992, p. 87.

To us all others are just zeros,  
 And we ourselves the chosen few.  
 We all aim at becoming Napoleons;  
 The many millions of two-legged creatures  
 Are only tools for us, [...] <sup>6</sup>

To Pushkin, in contrast to Hegel, Napoleon more and more stood out as the supreme symbol of individual egoism in post-Enlightenment European philosophy. Iurii Lotman has argued that the “We” of these lines, from whom the poet distances himself through his irony, refers to a whole generation of Russian Romantic egoists, including many of the Decembrists, whose ideas Pushkin did not share and of which he became increasingly critical. To Pushkin, Napoleon’s achievements were a manifestation of political amoralism and readiness to sacrifice everything in order to satisfy his own personal ambitions, qualities that in Pushkin’s view were the ethical equivalents of political despotism.<sup>7</sup>

Ten years later, Pushkin embodied this Napoleonic mentality in the figure of Hermann in *The Queen of Spades* (1833), a hero with “at least three crimes” upon his conscience, whose comrades are repeatedly struck by his resemblance to Napoleon.

But Hermann’s individual egoism manifests itself in the private, not in the public sphere. His amoralism is much more akin to Julien Sorel’s in Stendhal’s novel, *The Red and the Black* (1830), another of Napoleon’s emulators in the nineteenth-century novel, and to Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* (1866), whose admiration for Napoleon has taken complete possession of the “inner landscape” of his mind. Like Raskolnikov, Hermann seeks to rob an old woman of her treasure in order to satisfy his personal ambitions, bringing suffering upon himself by killing her, just as Raskolnikov must suffer when he murders the old pawn-broker and her sister.

It is more difficult to see a Napoleonic hero in Chichikov, the adventurous rogue who dominates the scene in the first part of Gogol’s unfinished novel *Dead Souls* (1842). But when the provincial authorities try to identify this unknown buyer of “dead souls,” “among a number of shrewd

6 My translation, JBø.

7 Iu.M. Lotman, 1980, *Roman A.S. Pushkina “Evgenii Onegin,”* Leningrad, p. 193.

suggestions there was, strange to say, one to the effect that Chichikov might be Napoleon in disguise”:

thinking it over each for himself, they found that Chichikov’s face, if he turned round and stood sideways, was very much like a portrait of Napoleon.<sup>8</sup>

As Lotman has pointed out, however, there is a functional resemblance between the three. All three are tempters, incarnations of evil: Hermann and Raskolnikov as manifestations of Romantic egoism, Chichikov as their comic counterpart.<sup>9</sup>

In Gogol, as well as in Pushkin, the optimistic and revolutionary ideologies underlying the philosophical anthropology of the Enlightenment and Romanticism were reinterpreted in the light of their own tragic vision of the moral universe.

Gogol’s *Dead Souls* was intended as a Christian epic in the form of a novel. In its unfinished Part II, Chichikov should have continued to buy dead souls, but also should have got involved in other illegal activities, been caught, thrown into prison, and deported to Siberia. Here, he should have undergone a spiritual resurrection and begun a new life.

The same fate awaited Tentetnikov, the ne’er-do-well hero of Part II. Deported to Siberia for his participation in subversive political activity, he should have “woken up” and begun a new life together with Ulenka, the general’s daughter, whose decision to follow him into exile foreshadows the destiny of Sonia Marmeladova in *Crime and Punishment*.

But to Gogol and his contemporaries Ulenka’s heroic behaviour would have been associated with the wives of the Decembrists who had chosen a life in Siberian exile together with their husbands.<sup>10</sup>

In the unfinished Part II of *Dead Souls*, Gogol’s narrative imagination has outlined a pattern of events which in the outer “landscape of action” may be divided into the three phases of a transitional rite as summarised by Victor and Edith Turner: first a phase of transgression, culminating

8 N.V. Gogol, 1951, *Mertvye dushi*, (Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, vol. 6), Leningrad, p. 206. My translation, JBø.

9 Iu.M. Lotman, 1993, “Siuzhetnoe prostranstvo russkogo romana XIX stoletia,” *Izbrannye stat’i v trekh tomakh*, Tallinn, vol. 3, pp. 91–106, pp. 99ff.

10 Iu.V. Mann, 1984, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi: “Mertvye dushi”: pisatel’—kritika—chitatel’*, Moscow, pp. 301–323.

in the separation of the hero as a criminal from the rest of society and his spiritual “death.” This phase of *separation* is followed by the *liminal* phase (from *limen* meaning “threshold” in Latin), a highly ambiguous chronotope, and a kind of social limbo. The liminal phase may be broken down into three major events: 1) the communication of *sacra*, i.e. of symbolic things and actions representing society’s religious mysteries, 2) *ludic recombination* (from Latin *ludus*, “play,” “jest,” etc.)—the free and playful rearrangement of traditional cultural factors in new and unexpected configurations, however bizarre and outrageous, and 3) the fostering of *communitas*, defined as “a bond uniting people over and above any formal social bonds.” The Turners compare *communitas* to Martin Buber’s “flowing from I to Thou”: it “does not merge identities; instead it liberates them from conformity to general norms, so that they experience one another concretely and not in terms of social structural [...] abstractions.” The third phase, the phase of *reaggregation*, or *reincorporation*, marks the triumph over death and resurrection to a new life.<sup>11</sup>

In the Russian novel, the patterns of archaic *rites de passage* are “individualised” in the sense that the authors not only experience the traditional liminoid phenomena of Russian culture, but also *create* their own variations on the cultural heritage.<sup>12</sup>

What is missing from the action pattern of Gogol’s novel when seen in the light of this scheme, is the factor by which the reversal of events and the hero’s spiritual metamorphosis are brought about. To judge from Aleksandr Bukharev’s conversations with Gogol, however, it looks as if he had intended Chichikov’s “resurrection” to come as a result of the tsar’s direct intervention. But the idea was never realised, and it is easy to see why. Bringing the tsar into the phase of liminality would have resulted in a carnivalisation of his figure and everything he symbolised.

It is only when we come to the classical novels of the 1860s and 1870s that this problem is solved. And bringing art and religion into play in the process of transforming the hero’s self solves it.

11 Victor & Edith Turner 1982, “Religious Celebrations,” *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, ed. V. Turner, Washington D.C., pp. 201–19, pp. 202ff.

12 On individualisation of liminoid symbolism in “high culture,” see Victor Turner, 1983, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology,” *Play, Games and Sports in Cultural Contexts*, eds. J.C. Harris & R.J. Park, Champaign, Ill., 1983, pp. 123–64.

The first of the great novelists to apply this method is Turgenev in *Fathers and Sons* (1862). Bazarov, the hero of the novel, has been alienated from the world of his parents and the traditional values of Russian society. They have been replaced by a set of ideas acquired through the study of modern Western materialism. The journey back from university to spend the summer holiday with his parents, takes him through an ambiguous chronotope, which from our present point of view we recognise as liminal. It is a time-space in which the *sacra* of the “fathers” are ridiculed and distorted in the most absurd ways when seen with the eyes of the “sons.” But the reversal of traditional values is only one aspect of the action pattern. Bazarov’s savage criticism of contemporary Russian society and the idealism of the older generation demonstrate their inability to live up to their own high standards. At the same time, however, Bazarov in the course of the novel embraces every position he has denounced: defends his honour by fighting a ridiculous duel, falls in love, and when rejected realises that love is much more than the purely physiological phenomenon of his theories, and when, eventually, he returns to his parents and begins to share his father’s practice as a country doctor, he is finally reintegrated into the fabric of daily life and responds to its prosaic needs.

Bazarov’s journey is a process of reintegration. But it is also a communication of the sacred, represented in the words, images, and actions from the Christian sphere that Turgenev has mounted into Bazarov’s story, often in an ironic way that conceals the deeper meaning of the novel’s religious symbolism.

The image of the sacred appears in the fresco of the Resurrection of Christ that Bazarov drives past on his way to Anna Seergeevna, the woman he falls in love with. But it is typical of liminality that the sacred image has been distorted and all attention is drawn to the marginal figure of a dark-complexioned warrior “sprawling in the foreground,” whereas the central motif of the angel of the Lord who, according to St Matthew 28, 2–4, “descended from heaven,” is passed over in silence.<sup>13</sup> The motif of the angel has been detached from the Resurrection image and appears in “ludic recombination” with Anna Sergeevna, the “angel from heaven”

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13 Ivan Turgenev, 1966, *Fathers and Sons*, ed. & trans. R.E. Matlaw, p. 63. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *Fathers and Sons* refer to pages in this translation.

whose arrival at Bazarov's deathbed inspires his father with new hope that his son will be saved (159).

Through an ironic recombination of the sacred and the profane, Anna Sergeevna is transformed into a symbol of love as the cosmic force by which Bazarov is reborn to a new life beyond death. During their last encounter, when he knows that he is already dying, Bazarov points at his powerless body, lying "outstretched" before him, the Russian word, *rasprostertoe*, is the same as the word used in describing the body of the reclining soldier in the fresco painting. The repetition is all the more remarkable since the word is not a common one, and it occurs only twice in the whole novel, establishing a correspondence between Bazarov and the warrior in St Matthew, who, for fear of the angel, "became as dead."

At this point of the story, Bazarov has reached the stage of reaggregation, when he will be reunited with the sacred power of the holy rituals:

Father Alexis performed the last rites of religion over him. When they anointed him, when the holy oil touched his breast, one eye opened, and it seemed as though at the sight of the priest in his vestments, the smoking censers, the light before the icon, something like a shudder of horror passed over the death-stricken face. (162)

The story of Bazarov's new life begins in the epilogue, where he is resurrected in the loving memory of his parents, and the flowers on his grave "tell us not only of eternal peace alone, of that great peace of 'indifferent' nature; they tell us, too, of eternal reconciliation, and of life without end." (166).

Modern readers do not immediately recognise these last lines of *Fathers and Sons* as quotations—the phrase "indifferent nature" is taken from Pushkin's poem, "When I wander along noisy streets," the other, "life without end" from the Orthodox funeral hymn "With the holy, O Lord, give Thy servant peace." To contemporary readers, however, the allusions hidden in the final paragraph were quite clear. Herzen even found it necessary to warn Turgenev in a letter that his "requiem at the end with its distant approach to the immortality of the soul is fine, but dangerous."<sup>14</sup> Today, we have to rediscover this "distant approach to the

14 A.I. Gertsen, 1954–64, *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, Moscow, vol. 27 (1), p. 217.

immortality of the soul” in order to understand the meaning of Bazarov’s death as part of his life story.

In Russian literary criticism of the time, Bazarov was seen as the first literary depiction of the “new man” of the 1860s. Dostoevsky’s Rodion Raskolnikov, the hero of *Crime and Punishment* (1866), is another, and the close affinity between them was immediately recognized. Bazarov and Raskolnikov were both regarded as serious attempts to understand the “nihilist” mentality of the new young people, not as a wild and preposterous aberration, but as a tragic distortion of the mind, leading to severe suffering. From a literary point of view, both are descendants of the Napoleonic hero of Russian romanticism. In Bazarov, this is implicit in his role as an outsider, his scorn for humanity, and his idea of himself as a giant. In Raskolnikov, on the other hand, the idea of becoming like Napoleon has become an obsession.

*Crime and Punishment* begins by representing the hero in the phase of separation. He withdraws from the rest of the world in order to plan the murder of the old pawnbroker, the acid test by which he is going to prove to himself that he is one of the “extraordinary” men, the movers of history, who, like Napoleon, are all natural criminals who never hesitate to shed blood, provided that the blood is shed to their own advantage.

It is not difficult to recognise in Raskolnikov’s theory the same distinction as in *Evgenii Onegin* between the “chosen few” and the “millions of two-legged creatures.” What is new in Raskolnikov’s version is his extension of exceptional people to comprise all *new people*, including himself. By internalising the theory of Romantic egoism, Raskolnikov becomes a “translation from the original,” an expression used about him and his likes by his friend Razumikhin.<sup>15</sup> From the moment he conceives his crime to the moment of his confession, Raskolnikov lives in a kind of social limbo, representing the first stage in the second, central phase in his story, the phase of liminality. In this liminal phase, Raskolnikov enters a chronotope that no longer coincides with the time-space perception of normal experience. When he falls ill and suffers a mental breakdown, time closes in on him in a way that corresponds to the way his disease confines him to his lodgings, which his mother refers to as a “coffin”

15 Feodor Dostoevsky, 1964, *Crime and Punishment*, ed. G. Gibian, trans. J. Coulson, New York, p. 161. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *Crime and Punishment* refer to pages in this translation.



(161). From this liminal state he is to emerge only gradually, in a process that will eventually lead to his reintegration, his return as a resurrected person to the prosaic world of everyday life that opens up as a potential future towards the end of his story.

This process begins when Raskolnikov meets Sonia Marmeladova, the prostitute with whom he, the murderer, develops a relationship based on their common status as social outcasts. Initially, he sees in her a possible ally against society. But her love, sprung from her Christian faith, gives her a sacred power, the power of the weak and powerless, which in their encounters penetrates his consciousness, enabling Raskolnikov to see his plight in the light of the symbolic message of the New Testament. When Sonia, at his "strange request," reads out to him the story from St John about the Raising of Lazarus, the possibility of a spiritual resurrection and new life begins to take form in his mind (312–13).

The whole atmosphere of this scene is one of *ludic recombination*: the sacred message of the Gospel is quoted verbatim in Sonia's words and communicated to the murderer by her, the prostitute. At the same time, the Christian *sacra*, the cross and the New Testament, are displayed in the very room where she receives her clients. And in this room Raskolnikov realises that by killing the old woman he killed his own self: "There and then I murdered myself at one blow, for ever!... But it was the devil who killed the old hag, not I." (402). Yet, it is in this room, too, that Raskolnikov accepts the cypress-wood cross from Sonia, clearly recognising the significance of his act: "This, then, is a symbol that I am taking up my cross." (502).

From this point onwards, the gospel accounts of Lazarus' resurrection, and of Christ's death and resurrection, form a pattern underlying the representation of Raskolnikov's descent into the hell of the Siberian prison, where in his dream about the plague Raskolnikov finally conquers the forces of evil that have transformed his mind into an inferno.

Siberia is above all the landscape of liminality in the Russian novel. From his confinement Raskolnikov views the land of freedom across the river that divides the world of the convicts from the free world outside. And here, on the bank of the river, Raskolnikov's regeneration begins one early morning in the second week after Easter—the feast celebrating Christ's descent into hell, his victory over death, and resurrection—it begins at the moment when for the first time in their life together Sonia

understands that he loves her, and when he knows “with what infinite love he will now expiate all her sufferings.” This is the moment of pure *communitas*, when “love has resurrected them, and the heart of each held endless springs of life for the heart of the other.” (526).

By juxtaposing his own story with the New-Testament narrative about the Resurrection of Lazarus and the Easter celebration of Christ’s Resurrection, Dostoevsky has brought together two different registers, one sacred, the other profane, establishing a complex relationship of equivalence and difference between Christ’s archetype and Raskolnikov’s process of restoring his own self in the image of the archetype. The fundamental pattern underlying this juxtaposition is that of thematic variation, a movement from the theme to the discovery of a new variation, a “slippage,” to use Douglas Hofstadter’s term.<sup>16</sup>

In *Crime and Punishment*, the slippage from archetype to variation, represents Dostoevsky’s radical understanding of the Gospel. Every human being, even a murderer, is a potential image of Christ.

The slippability of archetypal patterns depends on their *underdetermining character*, allowing for both approximate predictability and innovation, for repetition with constant variation. They are not like fixed schemes that can only be reproduced over and over again, but flexible and adaptable to constant contextual change and reinterpretation.

In Dostoevsky’s *œuvre*, the adaptivity of the regeneration pattern is most evident in his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). The theme of death and resurrection is anticipated already in the epigraph to the novel, the words from St John 12, 24 about the corn of wheat that “if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” After the murder of their father, the central characters of the novel—the brothers Ivan and Alesha, their elder half-brother Dmitrii and the bastard Smerdiakov—go through a crisis that in the lives of each of them can be described as a variation of the same theme as that underlying Raskolnikov’s story.

The pattern is most easily recognisable in the novice Alesha’s return to the world after the death of his spiritual father, the elder Zosima. The account of Alesha’s transition reaches a climax when in a state of drowsiness at the elder’s coffin he hears Father Paisii read about the wedding in

16 Douglas R. Hofstadter, 1985, *Metamagical Themas: Questing for the Essence of Mind and Pattern*, London, in particular chapter 12, “Variations on a Theme as the Crux of Creativity,” pp. 232–59.

Cana and the words of the Gospel merge with his own in a vision of the dead Zosima among the wedding guests, inviting him to come into the presence of Christ in the image of “our Sun”: “And you see our sun, do you see him? [...] Do not be afraid of him. Awful is his greatness before us, terrible is his loftiness, yet he is boundlessly merciful, he became like us out of love, and he is rejoicing with us.”<sup>17</sup> With a last glance at his spiritual father, lying in the coffin “with an icon on his chest and the cowl with an eight-pointed cross on his head” (362), Alesha leaves the cell and walks out into the night. “The silence of the earth seemed to merge with the silence of the heavens, the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars...” (362). Overcome, he falls onto the earth, embraces it and kisses it:

Some sort of idea, as it were, was coming to reign in his mind—now for the whole of his life and unto the ages of ages. He fell to the earth a weak youth and rose up a fighter, steadfast for the rest of his life, and he knew it and felt it suddenly, in that very moment of his ecstasy. Never, never in all his life would Alesha forget that moment. “Someone visited my soul in that hour,” he would say afterwards, with firm belief in his words... (363)

Alesha has passed from one stage to another through the internalisation of Zosima, his spiritual father figure, and his ideas. Now he is ready to follow the elder’s last command: “Three days later he left the monastery, which was also in accordance with the words of his late leader, who had bidden him to ‘sojourn in the world’.” (363). And when at the very end of the novel, after Iliushechka’s funeral, he gathers around him a group of boys—about twelve of them—at the stone where Iliushechka’s father had wanted to bury his son, the whole scene suggests the archetypal image of Christ surrounded by his apostles. With his farewell speech in remembrance of the dead boy, Alesha establishes a new community, or *communitas*, in which the dead boy is transfigured into a living presence in each of them. This experience of “eternal memory” of the funeral hymn creates an awareness of immortality that culminates in an enraptured

17 Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2002, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, New York, pp. 361–62. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *The Brothers Karamazov* refer to pages in this translation.

confession of faith in the Resurrection. Alesha has become the founder of a new, alternative Christian community outside the monastery and outside the official Russian Church. From this point of view, Alesha's return to the world is no less radical than Raskolnikov's.

As variations of the same pattern, the process of liminality in the lives of Alesha's brothers is less complete. And the degree of completeness depends on each brother's involvement in the murder of their father. Dmitrii comes next to Alesha in degree of innocence. As the innocent suspect he faces deportation to Siberia if found guilty. In his prison cell, he undergoes a metamorphosis not unlike Alesha's:

a new man has arisen in me! He was shut up inside me, but if it weren't for this thunderbolt, he never would have appeared [...] What do I care if I spend twenty years pounding our iron ore in the mines, I'm not afraid of that at all, but I'm afraid of something else now: that the risen man not depart from me! [...] we'll be in chains, and there will be no freedom, but then, in our great grief, we will rise once more into joy, without which it's not possible for man to live, or for God to be [...] (591–92)

Ivan, Alesha's full brother, is the last manifestation of the romantic rebel in Dostoevsky's world. Ivan rejects the idea of a natural goodness in man, maintaining that there is no virtue if there is no belief in God and immortality, and that without this belief everything is permitted. But he finds himself in a dilemma, unable to decide whether or not he himself believes in the immortality of his own soul.

Like his brothers, Ivan is on the road to rebirth. In his case, the process of liminality takes the form of a personality split and mental derangement. His mind is turned into an intellectual limbo where the universal questions of God's existence and immortality are the same "from the other end" (234). "Ivan is a grave" says Dmitrii. To Alesha "Ivan is a riddle" (229), until, finally, he begins to understand what his brother is going through: "God, in whom he did not believe, and his truth were overcoming his heart, which still did not want to submit." (655).

Ivan's personality split leads to an internalised dialogue in which different voices strive to gain control over his mind in a struggle objectified in his dystopian prose poem, "The Grand Inquisitor," and in his interview

with the devil, in whose words he recognises “Everything in my nature that is stupid, long outlived, mullied over in my mind [...] you are now offering to me as some kind of news.” (648).

Ivan’s dialogue with the devil makes it clear, as Victor Terras has observed, that “behind his Grand Inquisitor’s professed compassion for suffering humanity, there is hidden a deep hatred of human freedom and of the image of God in man.”<sup>18</sup> From a generic point of view, Ivan’s poem is a travesty of the temptation of Jesus in the desert, or, in anthropological terms, a *ludic recombination* of Christian elements into a grotesque and melodramatic encounter between Christ, returned to earth, and his satanised vicar. But not only the Grand Inquisitor is a projection of Ivan’s mind. The silent figure of Christ listening to the Inquisitor’s nocturnal diatribes is another, or, more precisely, the figure symbolises another Ivan, formed in the image of Christ’s divine archetype.

In Ivan’s abstractions, as well as in the reasoning of his Grand Inquisitor, logic has replaced the dynamic indeterminacy of life that we find in Dmitrii and Alesha. In Ivan’s *Legend*, the moral and political totalitarianism of the Roman Church is seen as a product of Western European civilisation and its identification of truth with right reasoning and positive concepts. In contrast, Alesha’s *Life of Father Zosima*—Dostoevsky’s answer to the *Legend*—represents truth as part of the common experience of life, inexhaustible as life itself. In Orthodox theology, this refusal to exhaust knowledge of the truth in rational terms and definitions is called the *apophaticism* of knowledge. “This apophatic attitude leads Christian theology to use the language of poetry and images for the interpretation of dogmas much more than the language of conventional logic and schematic concepts,” according to the Greek philosopher Christos Yannaras, to whom apophaticism is the great contribution of Greek Orthodoxy to modern Christian thought.<sup>19</sup>

In nineteenth-century Russia, the revival of the theology of the Greek Church Fathers led to a revival of Orthodox apophaticism. To lay theologians like Dostoevsky, the apophatic, or negative way of knowing God through “dissimilar similarities” became an important means of breaking away from the petrified dogmas and eternal truths of the official Rus-

18 Victor Terras, 1981, *A Karamazov Companion*, Madison, Wisc., p. 52.

19 Christos Yannaras, 1991, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. K. Schram, Edinburgh, pp. 17ff., 149ff.

sian Church. In the lives of his characters truth is never something given, but something to be found and verified in common experience and in communion with others.

Ivan's road to ethical rebirth begins when he accepts responsibility for the murder of his father. Realising that Smerdiakov has acted as his "double," deciding to take his guilt upon himself and confess to the crime, Ivan is overcome by a feeling of joyful happiness that his mental anguish has come to an end. He has reached a new stage in the process of liminality, symbolised by his rescue of the half-frozen peasant. By this act of compassion Ivan is following the hagiographic pattern of his namesake, St John the Merciful, whose rescue of a frozen beggar he was unable to understand in his dialogue with Alesha earlier in the novel.

The confession is not the end of Ivan's liminality, however. It only marks his transition to a new stage, not to the nether world of the Siberian mines—which is Dmitrii's lot—but to an eclipse of his self in the darkness of the unconscious, an internal hell in the landscape of his mind and the beginning of a rebirth.

Smerdiakov, the perpetrator of the crime, hangs himself. But before this act of self-condemnation, he, too, has gone through a kind of transition rite, symbolised by the long white stocking that so terrifies Ivan at their last meeting. As Richard Peace has pointed out, white had a particular significance for the sect of the Castrates. They referred to themselves as "The White Doves," dressed in white, and referred to the actual act of castration as "whitening." Smerdiakov's Castrate-like features have been underlined earlier in the novel, and a number of details highlighted by Peace seem to indicate that he has gone through the final rite of initiation to the sect.<sup>20</sup>

The relationship between Ivan and Smerdiakov, his double, is a variation of the pattern underlying the relationships between Stavrogin and his satellites in *Demons* (1872). In a process we might call "demonic kenosis," Stavrogin empties his own ideas and ideologies into the minds of his followers, who, in their turn, project his teachings back onto Stavrogin in an attempt to transform him into a living symbol of the ideas they have made their own, only to discover that Stavrogin is but an empty impostor, symbolising nothing but nothingness.

20 Richard Peace, 1971, *Dostoevsky: An Examination of the Major Novels*, Cambridge, pp. 262f.

In Russian literature the problem of idolisation, of men creating their gods in their own image, may be traced back to Gogol. To *Dead Souls*, where the officials project their ideas of Napoleon and even of Antichrist onto Chichikov, but above all to his comedy *The Inspector General* (1836), where the provincial civil servants project their collective fears onto the figure of Khlestakov, transforming him into a living image of their own ideas of what a government inspector must be like.<sup>21</sup>

In Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* (1868), the idolisation theme is combined with the impostor theme in a way that not only anticipates *Demons*, but in a way that turns the impostor comedy into a religious tragedy.

Prince Myshkin, the central character, arrives back after several years in Switzerland, an enigmatic figure, whom his new surroundings try to identify by projecting onto him their own ideals. In mainstream Dostoevsky criticism, Prince Myshkin is seen as a saintly character and a fool in Christ. "The prince is a being of another aeon—before the Fall," according to Konstantin Mochulsky.<sup>22</sup> To Geir Kjetsaa, Myshkin's model is Christ, "or more correctly, the holy Russian 'fool'—the *iuroidivyi*,"<sup>23</sup> whereas Joseph Frank maintains that "Prince Myshkin approximates the extremest incarnation of [...] the Christian ideal of love" that will be totally realised only "at the end of time—only when the nature of man has been radically transformed into that of an asexual, seraphic being."<sup>24</sup>

These constructions of Prince Myskhin as an incarnation of pre-lapsarian man (Mochulsky), of the Russian "fool in Christ" (Kjetsaa), or of the eschatological Christian ideal of man as "an asexual, seraphic being" (Frank) all are, however, contradicted by a number of features in Myshkin's character as well as in the events of the novel. Prince Myshkin's mental deficiency is not feigned but congenital, according to his own words at the beginning of the novel. Moreover, his asexuality is not a symbol of Christian love but a consequence of his illness, again according to his own words, which in both instances are confirmed by the whole story line of the novel. We recall how in the train that damp and foggy November morning when it all begins, the prince tells his fellow passengers that

21 Jostein Børtnes, 1969, "Gogol's Revizor: A Study in the Grotesque," *Scando-Slavica* 15, pp. 47–63.

22 Konstantin Mochulsky, 1967, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, trans. & intro. M.A. Minihan, Princeton, p. 375.

23 Geir Kjetsaa, 1985, *Fjodor Dostojevskij—et dikterliv*, Oslo, p. 233.

24 Joseph Frank, 1995, *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years 1865–1871*, London, p. 317.

“he had been sent abroad because of illness, some strange nervous illness like epilepsy or St Vitus’ dance,” and that because of his illness, he says, “I don’t know women at all.”<sup>25</sup> But like mainstream critics, the people who get to know him in the novel fail to take his own diagnosis into account, instead projecting onto his unfamiliar appearance images created in their imagination.

The debauchee and non-believer Rogozhin regards him as a *iurodivyi*, or “holy fool,” simply because of his sexual inadequacy. To the young girl Aglaia he is an incarnation of her literary hero, the Poor Knight of Pushkin’s ballad, whereas to Nastasia Filippovna, the “fallen woman,” he comes as a potential redeemer. All these different interpretations are made possible by Dostoevsky’s narrative technique in the first part of the novel. As Robin Feuer Miller has observed, the Prince is here characterised through his parables and stories after a model provided by the portrayal of Christ in the Gospels, thereby making his figure even more enigmatic and sphinxlike.<sup>26</sup>

But Myshkin is not the redeemer Nastasia Filippovna and the readers are led to believe. His initial role as a saviour changes in the course of events, until he becomes an agent of perdition, incapable of preventing Rogozhin’s murder of Nastasia Filippovna and the terrible blood wedding at the end of his sojourn in Russia.

To understand this development, we have to study the symbolism underlying the novel’s action and represented in a series of execution stories told by Myshkin and his interlocutors throughout the four books of the novel: Legros’ death by guillotine in Lyons and the firing squad execution (22, 62–63); Du Barry’s beheading (197); Ippolit’s thoughts about his imminent death and possible suicide (394, 411); the impalement of Stepan Glebov under Peter the Great (522); and the beheading of Sir Thomas More (530). These executions are all variations on the archetypal execution of Christ, symbolised in the novel by Hans Holbein’s Basel painting of Jesus in the tomb—*Der Leichnam Christi im Grabe*—that so fascinated Dostoevsky when he saw it in 1867.

25 Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2003, *The Idiot*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, New York, p. 15. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *The Idiot* refer to pages in this translation.

26 Robin Feuer Miller, 1981, *Dostoevsky and the Idiot: Author, Narrator, and Reader*, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 84, 88.



Holbein's painting is referred to in passing by the Prince in one of the opening chapters, and later, when Rogozhin shows him a reproduction of it in his father's house, Myshkin comments that "A man could even lose his faith from that painting." (218).

The symbolic meaning of the painting, however, is only explained towards the end, when the dying Ippolit gives an extended description of the picture. According to Ippolit, there is in Holbein's picture no trace of the extraordinary beauty that painters usually try to preserve even in representations of the crucified Christ. What we see is the dead body of a man who has undergone unbearable suffering, a naturalistic rendering of how any man's corpse would look like after such suffering. Looking at the picture:

Here the notion involuntarily occurs to you that if death is so terrible and the laws of nature so powerful, how can they be overcome? How overcome them if they were not even defeated now, by the one who defeated nature while he lived [...] The painting seems precisely to express this notion of a dark, insolent, and senselessly eternal power, to which everything is subjected, and it is conveyed to you involuntarily. (408)

In Ippolit's interpretation, the Holbein painting becomes a representation of the "demythologised," unresurrected Christ of nineteenth-century radical theology, epitomised in David Friedrich Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu* (1835) and Ernest Renan's *La Vie de Jésus* (1863). Jesus is represented by Renan as a person "in whom was condensed all that is good and elevated in our nature."<sup>27</sup> But to the historian Renan, Jesus is a person whose life "finishes with the last sigh."<sup>28</sup> As for the legends about the Resurrection, their main source is supposed to be the "strong imagination" of Mary Magdalene.<sup>29</sup>

The story of Prince Myshkin demonstrates the impossibility of an *imitatio Christi* based on the particular image of Christ posited by nineteenth-century liberal theology. In the figure of Prince Myshkin, Dostoevsky has created a mock-Christ, not an *Abbild*, but a *Gegenbild* of Christ.

27 Ernest Renan, 1935, *The Life of Jesus*, trans. A.D. Howell Smith, p. 227.

28 Renan, 1935, p. 215.

29 Renan, 1935, p. 215.

Myshkin is more like an Anti-Christ in the Nietzschean sense. In the German philosopher's work, *The Anti-Christ* (1888), Jesus is characterised as an "idiot":

To make Jesus into a *hero*! From a strictly physiological point of view a completely different word would seem more appropriate: the word idiot. (Aus Jesus einen *Helden* machen! [...] Mit der Strenge des Physiologen gesprochen, wäre hier ein ganz andres Wort am Platz: das Wort Idiot.)<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Nietzsche makes an explicit reference to Dostoevsky in this connection:

It is regrettable that there was no Dostoevsky around during the lifetime of this interesting Decadent, by which I mean someone who was capable of feeling the attraction of this particular mixture of the sublime, the sick and the childlike. (Man hätte zu bedauern, daß nicht ein Dostojewskij in der Nähe dieses interessantesten *décadent* gelebt hat, ich meine jemand, der gerade den ergreifenden Reiz einer solchen Mischung von Sublimem, Krankem und Kindlichem zu empfinden wußte.)<sup>31</sup>

In nineteenth-century radical Christology we see a variant of the phenomenon Sergei Bulgakov has described as "Arian monophysitism," by which he has in mind a doctrine maintaining that there is only one, human nature in Christ. As Bulgakov understands it, this "immanentism," as he also calls it, is typical of Protestantism and socialism, in which Bulgakov sees its Western, diurnal manifestations, whereas in Russia this immanentism is represented in its nocturnal aspect by the sectarian Castrates and Flagellants.<sup>32</sup> Applied to *The Idiot*, Bulgakov's distinction would correspond to the contrast between Prince Myshkin and his Swiss ideas on the one hand, and on the other Rogozhin with his close affinity with the Castrates.

30 Friedrich Nietzsche, 1973, *Der Antichrist*, (*Werke in zwei Bänden*), Munich, vol. 2, pp. 485–545, p. 508. My translation, JBØ.

31 Nietzsche, 1973, p. 509.

32 S.V. Bulgakov, 1994, *Svet nevechernii: Sozertsaniia i umozreniia*, Moscow, p. 5.

From this perspective, *The Idiot* may be understood as an experiment in Christology, demonstrating the consequences of a theology in which the risen Christ of the Gospels has been replaced by the all too human Christ of post-Hegelian biblical criticism, as well as by the “christs” the Russian sectarians are known to create among themselves, according to Bulgakov.<sup>33</sup> In this world without Resurrection the dead Christ has become a symbol of the dark, insolent, and senselessly eternal power Ippolit describes in his *ekphrasis*,<sup>34</sup> a power to which everything in the dual landscape of the novel’s central characters is finally subordinated.

*The Idiot* is not the only novel in which Dostoevsky introduces a central symbol in the form of an *ekphrasis*. In *The Adolescent* (1875), we find a similar ekphrastic representation, this time of Claude Lorrain’s “Acis and Galatea,” one of Dostoevsky’s favourite paintings in the Dresden Gallery. The painting had first been used in Stavrogin’s “Confession,” the so-called “banned” chapter of *Demons*, and later it made an anonymous reappearance in *The Dream of the Ridiculous Man*, first published in *The Writer’s Diary* in 1877.

Yet, what attracted Dostoevsky and his characters in Claude’s painting was not his Ovidian subject. In Dostoevsky’s interpretation, the symbolic value of the painting is to be found in the idealised beauty of the antique landscape, transfigured by the slanting rays of the setting sun into a representation of man’s dream of a Golden Age. “Here European mankind remembered its cradle [...] This was the earthly paradise of mankind.” according to Versilov’s melancholy vision in *The Adolescent*.<sup>35</sup> In Versilov’s idea of the painting, however, the sun setting on the first day of European humanity turns into an eschatological vision of the sun setting on its last day, when people have lost their faith in God and immortality, “and all the great abundance of the former love for the one who was himself immortality, would be turned in all of them to nature, to the world, to people, to every blade of grass.” (471).

33 Bulgakov, 1994, p. 5 and p. 366, n. 12.

34 Gr. *ekphrasis*, Latin *descriptio* is a rhetorical term that in its more restricted sense is used about a detailed description of a work of art embedded in a speech, in a novel or other literary texts.

35 Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2003a, *The Adolescent*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, New York, p. 466. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *The Adolescent* refer to pages in this translation.

But Versilov's dream vision has a third stage, in which just as in Heine's poem "Christ on the Baltic Sea" ("Frieden," from the cycle *Die Nordsee*), Christ appears to the people, reaching out his hands to an orphaned humanity, asking "How could you forget Him?" And the scales fall from everyone's eyes as they join in an "the great exultant hymn of the new and last resurrection." (471).

As Malcolm Jones has pointed out, Versilov's vision is the most interesting manifestation of his Romantic idealism, his Schillerism as Jones prefers to call it, using one of Dostoevsky's own terms.<sup>36</sup> But like Heine's verse, Versilov's dithyrambic composition has acquired an additional, post-Romantic dimension. In both works, the figure of Christ has been taken out of its biblical context and brought together with non-Christian elements in a way made possible by the mythological understanding of the Gospel in nineteenth-century liberal theology (Strauss), and of Christianity as a projection of man's deepest desire (Feuerbach).

Versilov's opposite in *The Adolescent* is Makar Dolgorukii. Versilov is the Russian European, a nostalgic wanderer tormented by a split Faustian mind. Makar Dolgorukii, on the other hand, comes forward as a single-hearted Russian pilgrim in whose words we can already perceive the essence of Father Zosima's teachings about the presence of God's mystery in all.

In Makar's exemplary story about the repentant merchant, life's divine meaning is revealed by the words of Christ from the Gospel, and through the symbolic presence of Christ in the transfiguring ray of light descending over the boy about to drown himself in the painting described by Makar, a painting commissioned by the merchant in memory of the boy he has tormented to death.

In *The Adolescent*, the symbolic representation of Christ as the light of the world is not confined to Versilov's and Makar's ekphrasises. It is the central symbol of the whole novel. The slanting rays of the setting sun, is a recurring motif in the raw youth's account of his own life story. They illuminate the classroom when his mother comes to see him at the boarding school, and later, during his illness, they shine into his room at the moment when for the first time he hears Makar praying in the neighbouring room. It is his mother, however, who gives us the key to the novel's light

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36 Malcolm Jones, 1976, *Dostoevsky: The Novel of Discord*, New York, pp. 154–64.

symbolism, when she tells her son that “Christ is our father, Christ needs nothing and will shine even in the deepest darkness...” (263).

Christ is the light of the world. But he is also father. Thus, Sofia Andreevna, the mother, suggests another main theme in the novel: the adolescent’s quest for his father’s identity.

*The Adolescent* is a fictitious autobiography. Its narrator and central character is the young Arkadii Dolgorukii, Versilov’s natural son, whose legitimate father is Makar Dolgorukii, his mother’s much older husband. Arkadii’s autobiography is the story of his transition from adolescence to manhood. In this process, the contrast between biological and social father is first replaced by an ambiguous constellation in which both father and son, Arkadii and Versilov, relate to Makar as their spiritual father. This is a situation that is only resolved after Makar’s death, when Versilov emerges in the role of both husband and father, and the opposition between biological and social father is neutralised. But at this point, Arkadii has freed himself from his father-fixation by internalising the image of Makar as his Christlike spiritual father, whose words and ideas he has made his own. “The old life is totally passed, and the new has barely begun.” (559).

From *Crime and Punishment* to *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky’s novels are experimenting with the possibility of a christocentric anthropology in the modern world. The church as a social institution, and the relationship between church and state are also reduced to anthropology: a just organisation of society depends on the moral rebirth of its individual members.

Dostoevsky’s younger contemporary, Nikolai Leskov, saw this differently. Leskov was not primarily a novelist. His favourite genre is the short story, and religion and art are the main themes of some of his most remarkable works, e.g. *The Sealed Angel* and *The Enchanted Wanderer*, both from 1873, and *At the end of the World*, published in 1875. But since these works are stories and not novels, they fall outside the scope of our present discussion.

However, one of Leskov’s most famous works is a novel, or “romantic chronicle” as he liked to call it. Published in 1872 under the title *Cathedral Folk* it describes the relationship between church and state in contemporary Russia from the point of view of a provincial archpriest, Savely Tuberozov, a representative of those members of the Russian clergy who

in the last century hoped to bring about a reform of the church from within.

Originally, Tuberozov was modelled after Archpriest Avvakum, the martyred leader of the Old Believers who broke with the official church in the middle of the sixteenth century, whose autobiographical *vita* had created a sensation in Russian literature when it was published for the first time a few years earlier, in 1861. But in the final version, the idea of patterning Tuberozov on Avvakum was rejected and Leskov chose instead to relate the religious zeal of his hero directly to Christ's cleansing of the Temple. Tuberozov sees a parallel between the story in St John 2, 12 ff. and his own castigation of the civil servants whose prayer he compares to the trading in the temple, at the sight of which "not only was our Lord, Jesus Christ, troubled in his divine spirit, but also he took a scourge and drove them out of the temple. Following his divine example, I accuse and condemn this trading with conscience that I see before me in the temple."<sup>37</sup>

On the surface, the story about Jesus driving those that sold oxen and sheep and doves out of the temple together with the changers of money has nothing to do with Tuberozov's situation. But deep down in the landscape of his consciousness, Tuberozov makes a connection between the two, so that the one "slips" into the other, transforming his landscape of action into a variation on the theme developed in the gospel story. In his act of defiance, his subsequent arrest and imprisonment, Leskov's hero detects the archetypal pattern of Christ's life and suffering. "Our old life"—he says to his wife—"has come to an end; from now on, life will be a *vita*."<sup>38</sup>

At the time when in his *Cathedral Folk* Leskov openly criticised the official church and its clergy, trying in Tuberozov to represent a true follower of Christ, Tolstoy, too, turned to the Gospels for an answer to the religious questions that had begun to occupy him after the completion of *War and Peace* in 1869.

In order to study the New Testament at first hand he decided to take up ancient Greek, and soon he was passionately trying to read the great classical authors in the original. His religious problems temporarily receded into the background. According to his wife's diary, he now wanted

37 N.S. Leskov, 1957, *Soboriane*, (*Sobranie sochinenii v odinadtsati tomakh*), Moscow, vol. 4, p. 232. My translation, JBø.

38 Leskov, 1957, p. 235.

to write something pure and elegant, like the works of ancient Greek literature and art. This idea took the form of the novel *Anna Karenina* begun in 1873 and finished in 1877.

There is, however, in *Anna Karenina*, a reflection of Tolstoy's religious preoccupations in the 1870s. Travelling in Italy together, Anna and Vronskii are taken to see the Russian artist Mikhailov and his painting, *Christ before Pilate*, by Golenishchev, an old friend of Vronskii's. According to the latter, Mikhailov is "is not without talent, but his tendency is completely false. The same old Ivanov-Strauss-Renan attitude towards Christ and religious painting."<sup>39</sup> The reference is here to Aleksandr Ivanov's famous painting, *Christ Before the People*, completed after the artist had come to understand Christ as an historical person in conformity with David Friedrich Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu*, a book that Ivanov knew almost by heart.<sup>40</sup> To someone like Golenishchev, once known for his "high-minded liberal activity," but now complaining that the Russians "don't want to understand that we are the heirs of Byzantium" (460, 462), Mikhailov's representation of Christ as an historical person with pronounced Jewish features is quite unacceptable. Discussing Mikhailov's painting with the artist, Golenishchev again stresses the ideological links between *Christ Before Pilate* and Ivanov's art:

"you have made Him a man-God and not a God-man [...]"

"I could not paint a Christ whom do not have in my soul," Mikhailov said sullenly.

"[...] With you it's different. The motif itself is different. But let's take Ivanov. I think that if Christ is to be reduced to the level of a historical figure, it would have been better if Ivanov had selected a different historical theme, something fresh, untouched."

"But what if this is the greatest theme available to art?"

"If one seeks, one can find others. But the thing is that art doesn't suffer argument and reasoning. And in front of Ivanov's painting a

39 Leo Tolstoy, 2006, *Anna Karenina*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, preface J. Bayley, London, p. 467. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *Anna Karenina* refer to pages in this translation.

40 M.P. Botkin, ed., 1880, *Aleksandr Andreevich Ivanov: Ego zhizn' i perepiska 1806-1858*, St Petersburg, p. x1x.

question arises both for the believer and for the unbeliever—is he God or not?—and destroys the unity of the impression.”(475)

Golenishchev’s reaction to Ivanov’s art is reminiscent of Prince Myshkin’s response to the Holbein picture in *The Idiot*: “A man could even lose his faith by looking at that picture.” (218). Although Tolstoy clearly sympathises with Mikhailov’s genuine artistic empathy, he reacted not unlike Golenishchev to the Ivanov-Strauss-Renan attitude towards Christ and religious painting. As Hugh McLean has pointed out, Tolstoy made several statements about Ivanov’s art that show that he found it personally unacceptable.<sup>41</sup> One reason for this may be found in his description of the painter Nikolai Ge’s version of *Christ Before Pilate*, the very subject of Mikhailov’s picture in *Anna Karenina*. What Tolstoy finds so praiseworthy in Ge’s painting, is its unambiguous opposition between Christ and the representatives of this world:

Christ and his teaching not only in words, but in words and action in conflict with the teaching of the world, i.e. the motif that now as then forms the central meaning of the manifestation of Christ, a meaning that is unquestionable, which has to be accepted by the representatives of the Church, recognising him as God, by the historians, recognising him as an important figure in history, and by the Christians who recognise as the most important in him his practical teaching.<sup>42</sup>

*Anna Karenina* is Tolstoy’s last great work of fiction before his religious conversion. In the 1880s he formulated his own conception of Christianity, based on his Rousseauesque idea of man’s natural goodness and on what he now saw as the true teachings of Christ in the Gospel, accusing the official church of perverting the message of the Gospel, rejecting everything in Orthodox theology that went beyond his immediate understanding. The church like other social institutions is part of “civilisation,” and like Rousseau Tolstoy believed that all people are born innocent, their natural innocence being ruined by the institutions of civilised society. In order to regain his or her natural goodness and

41 Hugh McLean, 1994: “Tolstoy and Jesus,” *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs*, vol. 2: *Russian Culture in Modern Times*, ed. R.P. Hughes & I. Paperno (California Slavic Studies, 17), Berkeley, pp. 103–23.

42 Tolstoy to P.M. Treťiakov, 30 June 1890, quoted in McLean, 1994, p. 110.



be able to live a true life—not the life of one’s animal instincts—every individual must transcend the barriers between self and other and be reborn through love—love not as an emotional impulse, but as a total submission to what Tolstoy in his treatise *On Life* (1887) calls “reasonable consciousness,” that enjoins men to renounce their individual welfare. This inborn “reasonable consciousness” or natural ethical law is what according to Tolstoy makes up the quintessence of Christ’s teachings. In this sense, Christianity does not occupy a privileged place among the world’s religions. Its basic ethical principle, most clearly expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, is common to all the great faiths. They are different expressions of the same “reasonable consciousness” that is part of the natural setup of every single human being, but which has been obscured and suppressed by modern civilisation and can only be found in children and simple people.

In Tolstoy’s fiction, this natural ethos is already present in the figure of Platon Karataev, the peasant soldier in *War and Peace*, a man without any feeling of an individual selfhood. In him, Pierre Bezukhov sees a possible way out of his own isolation. “Oh, to be a soldier, just an ordinary soldier!” thought Pierre as he nodded off. “To enter into that communal life with your whole being, to be absorbed into whatever it is that makes them what they are. But how can you cast off everything that doesn’t matter, everything sent by the devil, the whole burden of the outer man? [...]”<sup>43</sup>

Pierre’s imprisonment by the French, the execution of his fellow prisoners by the enemy, his friendship with Platon Karataev, and his final rescue after Karataev’s death, are stages in a process of liminality that eventually leads to Pierre’s spiritual regeneration.

Lying next to Karataev in the darkness of the prison shed “he could feel his ruined world rising up again in his soul with a new kind of beauty, and its new foundations were unshakeable.” (1078). And later in life, Platon Karataev “would always stay in his mind as a most vivid and precious memory, the epitome of kind-heartedness and all things rounded and Russian.” (1079).

In *War and Peace*, Pierre’s spiritual death and rebirth is only one of many strains in the novel’s thematic texture. In *Resurrection* on the other

43 Leo Tolstoy, 2006a, *War and Peace*, trans. A. Briggs, afterword O. Figes, London, p. 935. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *War and Peace* refer to pages in this translation.

hand, the theme of spiritual death and rebirth has become the central story line underlying the novel's whole flow of action.

When *Resurrection* was finally published in 1899, Tolstoy had been working at it intermittently for more than ten years. The story begins when as a jury member, Nekhliudov, the novel's central male character, recognises in Katiusha Mazlova, a prostitute tried for theft, the young girl he has seduced in his youth. Convinced of her innocence and overcome by remorse, he abandons his former way of life and after her conviction decides to follow her to Siberia, where they are both spiritually reborn in a process of conquering their animal instincts and rediscovering their natural, uncorrupted moral selves, which had been obliterated by socialisation and acculturation.

This process of change and regeneration in the inner landscape of consciousness in the two protagonists is paralleled in the outer landscape of action by a chain of events that takes them through the life of the Russian gentry, the squalor of the peasants, the courts, the prisons, the deportation of the convicts, and their life in the prison colony. The State and its institutions, the church in particular, are exposed to Tolstoy's ruthless irony and satire, as, for instance, in the chapter describing the prisoners' communion, where we find the following passage:

the priest, having taken the napkin off the saucer, cut the middle piece of bread in four, and put it first into the wine and then into his mouth. He was supposed to have eaten a piece of God's flesh and swallowed a little of His blood.<sup>44</sup>

After distributing "this bread" and "this wine" among the prisoners in front of him,

the priest carried the cup back behind the partition and then drank all the remaining blood and ate up the remaining pieces of Gods flesh, and after having carefully sucked his mustaches and wiped his mouth and the cup, he stepped briskely from behind the partition, the thin soles of his calfskin boots creaking. (147–48)

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44 Leo Tolstoy, 1999, *Resurrection*, trans. L. Maude with, intro. & notes R. F. Gustafson, Oxford, p. 147. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *Resurrection* refer to pages in this translation.

In this chapter, which was one of many banned from publication under the old regime, Tolstoy uses his favourite device of “defamiliarisation,” representing the eucharist from the point of view of someone uninitiated into its symbolism. The prisoner’s mass was the ideal liminal chronotope for such a ludic recombination of the *sacra* of the Orthodox church in order to render them completely meaningless. At the end of the novel, the Christian message is reinterpreted by Nekhlyudov as an extension of his own spiritual resurrection to the whole of human society:

When he had read the Sermon on the Mount, which had always touched him, he saw in it today for the first time not beautiful abstract thoughts, [...] but simple, clear, practical laws, which if carried out in practice (and this is quite possible) would establish perfectly new and surprising conditions of social life, in which the violence that filled Nekhlyudov with such indignation would not only cease of itself, but the greatest blessing attainable by men—the kingdom of heaven on earth—would be reached. (481)

What we have here is the possibility of a new *communitas*, a resacralisation of society according to Tolstoy’s own extreme form of rationalistic, ethical evangelism. In the world outside the novel it found a close parallel in Tolstoyism as a particular form of a millenarian religious movement. The liminal character of such movements as described by Victor Turner “occur during phases of history that are in many respects ‘homologous’ to the liminal periods of important rituals in stable and repetitive societies, when major groups or social categories in those societies are passing from one cultural state to another.”<sup>45</sup>

In his Rousseauesque condemnation of civilisation, Tolstoy in *Resurrection* arrived at a radical Christian anarchism that brought him close to the ethical ideals of the radical intelligentsia, described with such sympathy and understanding in the novel. This Christian anarchism was incompatible with the teachings of the Orthodox church. Its leaders were unable to respond adequately to the call for a social renewal expressed in Tolstoy’s last novel. After its publication the church denounced its author as a false prophet who “led astray by pride has boldly and insolently dared

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45 Victor Turner, 1968, *Ritual Processes: Structure and Anti-Structure*, London, p. 112.

to oppose God, Christ and his holy heirs.” On 22 February 1901 Tolstoy was excommunicated.

Around the turn of the century, Russian intellectual life was charged with millenarian movements and apocalyptic expectations. Sergei Bulgakov spoke of “the apocalypse as the sociology of our time.” It was in this atmosphere Andrei Belyi wrote his novel *Petersburg* (1916) in the years following the revolutionary events of 1905. Belyi brings together characters and plots from nineteenth-century Russian literature—Gogol’s Petersburg stories, Pushkin’s *Bronze Horseman* and *The Queen of Spades*, and Dostoevsky’s *Demons*—in an apocalyptic struggle between the forces of evil, symbolised by the Bronze Horseman—the incarnation of Peter’s city—and his antagonist, the lonely figure of Christ, symbolising life, love and compassion. In this state of extreme liminality, on the threshold between good and evil, old and new, death and new life, Nikolai Appolonovich Ableukhov, the novel’s main hero, first emerges as a representation of evil, dressed in a red domino and hidden behind the mask of a harlequin, in striking contrast to the figure of Christ in his white domino. But in the course of the action Nikolai undergoes a process of change and regeneration that follows the classical pattern of the Russian novel. In the epilogue, the revolutionary hero has shed his Western rationalism and revolutionary ideas. After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he withdraws from the world into the Russian countryside in order to live the life of a hermit, replacing the works of Kant and the neo-Kantians with the writings of the eighteenth-century Greek-Orthodox thinker Hryhory Skovoroda.

Belyi’s *Petersburg* was to become the first in a series of apocalyptic novels in twentieth-century Russian literature. Other masterpieces of the genre are Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Master and Margarita* and Andrei Platonov’s *Chevengur*, both written in the 1920s and ’30s, but only published in the 1960s and ’70s. *Master and Margarita* is a multifarious work. Some critics have tried to define the novel as a Menippean satire in Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of this genre as a carnivalisation of reality, foregrounding its combination of tragedy and farce, philosophy and satire, parody and infernal fantasies, and not least, its juxtaposition of the events in the hero’s, the Master’s life story that take place in Stalin’s Moscow during the Easter week of 1929, with the events in the Passion story of Ieshua-Jesus that took place under Pontius Pilate in Ershalaim-Jerusalem

during the Jewish Passover. This complex *Urbild-Abbild* relationship between Ieshua and the Master is the structural core of the novel.<sup>46</sup>

When the revolution came, it was hailed as a universal regeneration, and a feeling of *communitas* cut right across the traditional divisions of Russian society. But with the Bolsheviks' assumption of power and the beginning of the Civil War in 1918, it is quite clear that Victor Turner's general characterisation of such situations also holds good for communist Russia: the "movement" becomes itself an institution among other institutions, "more fanatical and militant than the rest, for the reason that it feels itself to be the unique bearer of universal-human truths."<sup>47</sup>

The emergence of the victorious communists out of the large-scale liminal process of the Civil War is one of the main themes in Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* (1957). As Russian society is being restructured, the veterans of the revolution are elevated to a new status:

Numbered amongst the gods at whose feet the revolution had laid its gifts and its burnt offerings, they sat silent and grim as idols; they were men in whom everything alive and human had been driven out by political conceit.<sup>48</sup>

In order to understand this description of the new rulers as idols, we have to remember Vedeniapin's opposition between, on the one hand, the "sanguinary mess of cruel, pockmarked Caligulas" of the classical world with its "boastful dead eternity of bronze monuments and marble columns" and, on the other, life after Christ, with whom history as we know it today began. Christ gave us, according to Pasternak's novel, "firstly, the love of one's neighbour," and "secondly, the two concepts which are the main part of the make-up of modern man—without them he is inconceivable—the ideas of free personality and of life regarded as a sacrifice." (19).

Vedeniapin's conception of human life as a life in history founded by Christ and lived according to his example serves as a generative model for

46 See B.V. Sokolov, 2003, "Master i Margarita," *Bulgakov: Entsiklopediia*, Moscow, pp. 319–44, esp. p. 327.

47 Turner, 1969, p. 112.

48 Boris Pasternak, 1958, *Doctor Zhivago*, trans. M. Hayward & M. Harari, London, p. 288. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *Doctor Zhivago* refer to pages in this translation.

the unfolding of Iurii Zhivago's character in a process of liminality that in the end transforms him into a traditional Russian pilgrim, returning to Moscow from Siberia in the spring of 1922 accompanied by a handsome peasant youth:

Dressed in his rags and accompanied everywhere by the boy, the tall, gaunt doctor looked like a peasant "seeker after truth", and his companion like a patient, blindly devoted and obedient disciple. (416–17)

We are reminded here of Father Zosima and the "comely youth, a peasant" in *The Brothers Karamazov* (book VI, chapter 2). In a wider perspective, however, this pair, the old spiritual father and his young disciple are an archetypal pair in the Orthodox tradition, known from both icon painting (St John and Prokhor) and hagiography. In Pasternak's novel, the representation of this archetype brings the hero's life story to its conclusion. It has taken him to the threshold between death and resurrection foreshadowed in his dream before the Siberian exile, where the connection between the sacrificial death of Christ and his own creative work as a poet is already established:

The subject of his poem was neither the entombment nor the resurrection but the days between; the title was "Turmoil." [...] Near him, touching him, were hell, corruption, dissolution, death; yet equally near him were the spring and Mary Magdalene and life.—And it was time to awake. Time to wake and get up. Time to arise, time for resurrection. (188)

In Siberia, Zhivago has experienced the reality of death and dissolution, but he has also been initiated into the mysteries of love, poetic creativity and life, bringing back with him his collection of poems in which the lyrical I discovers his true self by seeing his own life and suffering as a re-enactment of Christ's life and suffering in accordance with Pasternak's own ideas of human history after Christ in his autobiography *Safe Conduct* from 1931, in which he defines the history of our culture as a "chain of symbolic equations" in which the fundamental pattern of the

Bible represents the constant element, while the unknown, the new, is the actual moment in the cultural development.<sup>49</sup>

In the Russian novel, this idea of creativity as a repetition with continuous variations of a single underlying pattern took the form of a continuous dialogue with the words of the Gospel about the true meaning of life. In their struggle against the ossified dogma of the Orthodox Church and the atheist theories of communism, the Russian novelists used their artistic imagination in order to discover new meanings in the already given, opening up the story of Christ in the Gospel to new interpretations and new life.

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49 B. L. Pasternak, 1961, "Okhrannaia gramota," *Sobranie sochinenii*, Ann Arbor, vol. 2, pp. 203-94, 263.

## The Function of Hagiography in Dostoevsky's Novels

Christian art is always action founded on the great idea of redemption. It is an "imitation of Christ" that is endlessly diverse in its manifestations

Osip Mandelstam

The whole of Christ has gone into humankind, and human beings strives to transform himself into the person of Christ, that is into their ideal. When they have reached this, they will see clearly, that all those who have reached the same goal on earth have become part of his final nature, i.e. of Christ. (The synthetic nature of Christ is amazing. For this is the nature of God; consequently, Christ is the reflection of God on earth.) [...] Thus man strives on earth towards an ideal which is the *opposite* of his own nature.<sup>1</sup>

IN THIS PASSAGE from Dostoevsky's notebook, dated 16 April 1864, we are faced with a problem which was to preoccupy the author for the rest of his life: the paradox of the Incarnation—that God became man so that man may become God through participation in the divine nature of Christ and transformation into his image. This paradox lies at the core of Dostoevsky's anthropology and it determines his poetics as well.

In the works of Dostoevsky there are certain recurring elements that are intuitively felt by his readers to constitute the essential, irreplaceable components of his poetic system. To these "invariants" belong the hagi-

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<sup>1</sup> F.M. Dostoevskii, 1972–90, "Zapiski publitsisticheskogo i literaturno-kriticheskogo kharaktera iz zapisnykh knizhek i tetradei 1960–1965 gg.," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, Leningrad, vol. 20, pp. 152–205, p. 174, 175. The translations are my own where nothing else is indicated.



ographic elements and schemes, which underlie his various representations of man's struggle to transform himself into his divine ideal.

Dostoevsky's intimate knowledge of early Eastern Slavic hagiography is well documented. There are numerous references to Orthodox saints, not only in his novels and journalistic writings, but also in his letters and notebooks. In the old lives he found the prototypes of his own heroes.

"I have taken the person and figure from old Russian monks and prelates" Dostoevsky wrote with regard to Father Zosima in August 1879.<sup>2</sup> In the christlike Prince Myshkin, on the other hand, there is a marked influence from the hagiographic type known as the *iurodivyi*, the holy fool in Christ, and we know from his notebooks that Dostoevsky was particularly interested in this type at the time when he was working on *The Idiot*.

It is, however, in the representation of the young Alesha Karamazov that Dostoevsky's use of hagiographic elements is most perceptible.

The old saints' lives are to a great extent made up of traditional clichés or *topoi*, many of which were repeated word for word or with only slight variations from one life to another. With the help of such expressional constants the hagiographers were able to represent their individual heroes in accordance with a universal pattern laid down by tradition.

As has been pointed out by e.g. Børtnes<sup>3</sup> and V.E. Vetlovskaja,<sup>4</sup> Dostoevsky in his account of Alesha's childhood employs a whole set of such expressional constants, usually found in the depiction of a saint's childhood and adolescence. As a boy, Alesha was "chaste and pure"; he "seemed to shun the company of others"; "he liked to retire into some corner and read books"; as a young man "he seemed not to know the value of money at all," and would not hesitate "to give it away for a good deed to the first asker"; "Alexei must be one of those youths like holy fools, as it were," and like the heroes of the lives, he decides to give up all his possessions and follow Christ:

2 F.M. Dostoevskii, 1972-90, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 30 (1), p. 102.

3 Jostein Børtnes, 1968, "To Dostoevskijstudier: 1. Ivan Karamazov og Storinkvistoren. 11. Alēša og det nye liv," *Edda* 68, 1-16.

4 V. E. Vetlovskaja, 1971, "Literaturnye i fol'klornye istoki 'Bračev Karamazovykh' (Zhitie Alekseia cheloveka bozhiiia i dukhovnyi stikh o nem)," *Dostoevskii i russkie pisateli*, ed. V. Ia. Kirpotin, Moscow. pp. 325-54.

To Alyosha it even seemed strange and impossible to go on living as before. It is written: “If thou wilt be perfect, give away all that thou hast to the poor and follow me.” So Alyosha said to himself: “I cannot give two roubles instead of ‘all’ and instead of ‘follow me’ just go to the Sunday liturgy.” (26)<sup>5</sup>

The hagiographic elements in the description of Alesha’s moral nature harmonize with the iconographical representation of his appearance:

He was at that time even quite handsome, slender, of above average height, with dark brown hair, a regular though slightly elongated face, and bright, deep gray, widely set eyes, rather thoughtful and apparently rather serene. (25)

Alesha’s iconlike face in this description was already noticed by A. Volynskii in 1901,<sup>6</sup> and the émigré theologian Paul Evdokimov observes that Dostoevsky “remplace consciemment le principe classique de la description par le principe de *l’expression* iconographique.”<sup>7</sup> Alesha’s appearance is the visible expression of his inner, spiritual beauty. This “eccentric” and “precocious philanthropist”—the Russian *человеколюбец* has strong Christological overtones—“carries within him the substantial essence of the whole”—носит в себе [...] сердцевину целого—to quote an expression from the author’s foreword (3). The words may sound enigmatic, until we compare it to Father Paisii’s use of the word *целое* later on in the novel, where it becomes a synonym for Christ—“the whole stands before their eyes” (171)—a metonymy that corresponds to the remark in Dostoevsky’s notebook that “Christ is the source of all”: источник всего—Христос.<sup>8</sup>

In the figure of the young hero of his last novel, Dostoevsky thus created a character who is both conformable and consubstantial with Christ, the ideal of man that is the opposite of man’s own nature.

5 Quoted from Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2002, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, New York. Numbers in brackets after quotations refer to this edition.

6 A. Volynskii, 1901, *Tsarstvo Karamazovykh*, St Peterburg, p. 148.

7 Paul Evdokimov, 1961, *Gogol et Dostoïevsky ou la descente aux enfers*, Bruges, p. 282.

8 F. M. Dostoevskii, 1972–90, “Zapisnaia tetrad’ 1876–1877 gg.,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, vol. 24, pp. 187–314, p. 256.

The combination of conventional topoi with the variable components of the saint's story cannot be isolated from the whole system of quotations that form the basis of the hagiographic genres. The author of a life would mount into his own narration numerous quotations from previous texts. A life is therefore in some degree pieced together like a collage from fragments derived from other lives, from scripture, the works of the Church Fathers, and from liturgical texts. But as Roman Jakobson has pointed out with reference to the *collage* of the poetry of the old Slavonic hymns:

In order to understand this type of poetry, one must *not only find the key to the verse system*. One must understand and accept an art form that did not exist for our forebears: the *collage*. They are collages, in fact. We have here a system of canons, dogmas, very traditional schemes, but always with scope for variations, owing to the possibility of combining a text with wholly different biblical motifs.<sup>9</sup>

If we wish to determine the structural pattern of a life, we must therefore first of all try to establish the relationships between the author's narration and the quotations.

In Dostoevsky's great novels, quotations from scripture and from monastic literature are used with an intention that is in principle identical with their function in the lives. Vetlovskaja has drawn attention to the author's use of hagiographic elements to create new levels of meaning. The multilevel structure of Dostoevsky's texts is, in her words, "constituted not by introducing new environments, new characters and their interrelations and actions within the events, which makes the impression of the conquest of new spaces—as in Tolstoy—but rather by means of literary and other parallels and their functions within the coordinates of space and time in the novel."<sup>10</sup> Dostoevsky's technique of quotation has been brilliantly described by Leonid Grossman:

The Book of Job, the Revelation of St John, the New Testament texts, St Simeon the New Theologian, and everything that feeds the pages of Dostoevsky's novels and lends the tone to one or another of their chapters is

9 Roman Jakobson, 1976, "Entretien avec Emmanuel Jacquart: autour de la Poétique," *Critique* 32, pp. 461–72.

10 V.E. Vetlovskaja, "Dostoevskii i poeticheskii mir drevnei Rusi," *Sbornik za slavistiku* 3, pp. 921.

combined here in a unique way with the newspaper page, the anecdote, the parody, the street scene, the grotesque, and even the pamphlet.<sup>11</sup>

In Dostoevsky's novels as in the lives these fragments from scripture and from other sacred writings are mounted into a new and different context together with the meaning which surrounds them in their previous contexts. Thus is created a dialogic composition in which both the author's narration and the quotations acquire a new, poetic function in addition to their referential component. The full significance of this new poetic whole is given only by the code of recognized equivalences between the plane of narration and the plane of quotation.

One of the most striking examples of this technique in Dostoevsky is the juxtaposition of Raskolnikov's story and the passage dealing with the raising of Lazarus from the fourth Gospel.

The "Resurrection of Lazarus" has a complex symbolical meaning in the Orthodox tradition. It is understood both as an expression of the divine power of Christ to restore man to his original immortality and as a prefiguration of the imminent death and resurrection of Christ.

The motif is introduced into the dialogue between Raskolnikov and Sonia in the fourth chapter of the fourth book of *Crime and Punishment*, where Sonia at Raskolnikov's "strange request" reads to him from the New Testament. When the reading takes place, Raskolnikov has been seriously ill and "in absolute delirium" for four days, and Sonia in her reading lays special emphasis on the "four days" of the Gospel:

Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead *four* days.

Sonya strongly emphasized on the word four.<sup>12</sup>

This coincidence creates a parallel between Raskolnikov and Lazarus which, by implication, is also a parallel between Raskolnikov and Christ, since the resurrection of Lazarus is traditionally interpreted as a *prefigu-*

<sup>11</sup> L. Grossman, 1925, *Poetika Dostoevskogo*, Moscow, p. 175.

<sup>12</sup> Feodor Dostoyevsky, 1964, *Crime and Punishment*, ed. G. Gibian, trans. J. Coulson, New York, p. 315.

ration of Christ. In this way the "Gospel scene" gives us the clue to the understanding of a whole series of biblical references scattered throughout the novel, allusions to Lazarus, to Golgotha and the Cross, and to the New Jerusalem. These parallels "are to be thought together, as a steady accompaniment to the story of Raskolnikov."<sup>13</sup> In the context of the novel these references are integrated in a system of parallelisms in which Raskolnikov's empirical, phenomenal ego is gradually transformed into a figure in whom the phenomenal and the noumenal interpenetrate in a dialogic process of self-creation in the image of Christ. This transformation continues in the Epilogue to the novel. In his nightmares in hospital during the last week of Lent and Easter week Raskolnikov finally realizes the senselessness of his own ideology. Now begins "the story of the gradual renewal of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his gradual slow process from one world to another, of how he learned to know a hitherto undreamed-of reality."<sup>14</sup>

Our analysis has tried to show that Dostoevsky's representation of Raskolnikov and Alesha Karamazov, these apparently diametrically opposed heroes, are variations of the same invariant pattern in which the function of hagiography is to bring about a gradual transformation into the person of Christ.

It would be interesting to extend the analysis to other heroes of his novels, such as Prince Myshkin and Stavrogin, for example. Here we must confine ourselves to pointing out that in *The Idiot* Dostoevsky has substituted the dead Christ of Holbein's painting for the Son of God of the Scripture, thus juxtaposing the figure of Myshkin with the idea of Christ as the perfect, but mortal human being, that all too human Jesus of David Friedrich Strauss, Belinskii and Renan. The result of this experiment was the mock-Christ, the idiot Myshkin.

The juxtaposition of narration and quotation in the old lives and in Dostoevsky's novels generates a new "third something" which is altogether different from the linear conceptions of form that dominated the aesthetic theory of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> One of the implications of

13 George Gibian, 1955, "Traditional Symbolism in *Crime and Punishment*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 70, pp. 979-99.

14 Dostoyevsky, 1964, p. 527.

15 This problem has been dealt with by Joseph Frank in his perspicacious essay from 1945, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," *The Sewanee Review* 53, reprinted in Joseph Frank, 1968, *The widening Gyre*, London, pp. 3-62.

this aesthetics is that the author no longer so much aims at a monological self as he is involved in a poetic activity in which the reader becomes a co-creator. Another effect of the dialogic form, is the substitution of the dialogic hero for the merely phenomenal hero of the post-Cartesian tradition.<sup>16</sup> In drawing upon the Orthodox tradition, Dostoevsky overcomes what T. S. Eliot has called “the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul,” thus anticipating the representation of the hero’s self as a medium for the process of dialogic becoming, what Eliot has called the “significant self”<sup>17</sup> and Mikhail Bakhtin in his now famous book defines as part of Dostoevsky’s “dialogicality.” This “significant self” is “a hero whose transcendental nature involves him in the paradox of the ‘two natures’—both man and god, human and divine.”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Dostoevsky’s hagiographic parallels between contemporary events and biblical motifs anticipate the technique of montage in novels like Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* and Pasternak’s *Doktor Zhivago*, where the heroes, the composer Adrian Leverkühn and the poet Iurii Zhivago, are transformed into *imitatores Christi* as a result of the subtext of biblical allusions underlying the narrative. In Pasternak this “Christian symbolism” goes back to the experience of the meaning of Christian art as described in *Safe Conduct*:

I came to understand for instance that the Bible is not so much a book with a hard and fast text, as the notebook of humanity, and also what is the nature of everything eternal. That it is vital not when it is obligatory, but when it is amenable to all the comparisons with which the ages receding from it gaze back at it. I understood that the history of culture is the chain of equations in images, binding two by two the next unknown in turn with the known, and in addition this known, constant for the whole series, makes its appearance as legend, folded into the rudiments of tradition, whereas the unknown, new each time—is the actual moment of the stream of culture.<sup>19</sup>

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16 I here follow Anne Bolgan’s penetrating analysis of dialectical form in Anne Bolgan, 1973, *What the Thunder Really Said*, London.

17 T. S. Eliot, 1934, *Selected Essays*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, p. 19.

18 Bolgan, 1973, p. 14.

19 B. L. Pasternak, 1945, “Safe Conduct,” *The Collected Prose Works*, ed. S. Schimanski, trans. B. Scott, London, pp. 45–126, pp. 98–99. Quoted with one alteration.

## **Polyphony in *The Brothers Karamazov*: Variations on a Theme**

EVER SINCE the reappearance of Bakhtin's Dostoevsky study in 1963,<sup>1</sup> his concept of the "polyphonic novel" has been discussed and commented on by other Dostoevsky scholars. By shifting the focus of attention from the ideological content of the novels to the underlying their form, Bakhtin succeeded in turning the traditional co-philosophising with Dostoevsky and his characters into a theoretical problem that could be analysed as an aspect of the dialogical structure of the novels. As Bakhtin sees it, Dostoevsky's novels are marked by a particular relationship between the author and his characters, the latter being regarded as individuals in their own right, free and independent, on a par with their maker. Together, they form a polyphony of equal and autonomous voices and consciousnesses, engaged in an open-ended ideological dialogue with each other, the author and the readers.

Although Bakhtin's theory has received wide acceptance in Dostoevsky criticism, there have always been scholars who have rejected his interpretation of the novels by analogy with musical polyphony. The argument that ideas and ideologies acquire a poetic function and are transformed into images of ideas and ideologies when represented within the poetic universe of the novels, has met with strong opposition both in the Soviet Union and in the West. Like René Wellek, many critics fear that Bakhtin renders Dostoevsky "somewhat harmless, neutralizes his teaching, and makes him a relativist."<sup>2</sup> Wellek's own way of dealing with this

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1 M.M. Bakhtin, 1963, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Moscow.

2 René Wellek, 1980, "Bakhtin's View of Dostoevsky: 'Polyphony' and 'Carnavalesque,'" *Dostoevsky Studies* 1, pp. 31-39.

problem consists in translating Bakhtin's strange and idiosyncratic vocabulary into the familiar idiom of Anglo-American criticism. Using the terminology "common since Percy Lubbock's "Craft of Fiction" (1920)," Wellek maintains that "polyphony" and "counterpoint" merely refer to "the indubitable fact" that Dostoevsky's novels are "scenic" rather than "panoramic."<sup>3</sup> By depriving Bakhtin's ideas of their newness and vigour, Wellek may have hoped to restore the authority of Dostoevsky's teaching; in actual fact he has only succeeded in blurring the issue. Bakhtin's approach to the problem of point of view is essentially different from the theories of Henry James and his followers. Unlike them, Bakhtin showed little interest in the technical niceties of "telling" and "showing." He was primarily concerned with the complex problem of speech interference and with the dynamic interplay of voices and ideological points of view within the polyphonic contexts of Dostoevsky's novels.<sup>4</sup> If Bakhtin's theories are to be further developed, we shall therefore have to stress their originality in relation to Lubbock and Anglo-American point-of-view criticism, trying to test them on their own ground and to extend them to problems in Dostoevsky's poetics that Bakhtin failed to solve in his study. The most important of these are the problems of plot and structural unity in the polyphonic novel, two problems so closely connected that they may be regarded as different aspects of one.<sup>5</sup>

In the first, 1929 edition of his book, Bakhtin simply accepted Leonid Grossman's definition of Dostoevsky's plot as a variant of the adventure novel, with the slight modification that Dostoevsky's novels "are not based on plot, since plot relations are unable to combine fully formed consciousnesses and their worlds into a whole."<sup>6</sup> In the second, 1963 version, he completely revised the chapter on plot in an attempt to outline the generic prototypes of Dostoevsky's novels. This diachronic excursus, interesting as it is in itself, could not replace the analysis of the plot and its function in the individual novels, and in the end Bakhtin had to leave

3 Wellek, 1980, p. 32.

4 See Wendy Steiner, 1976, "Point of View from the Russian Point of View," *Dispositio* 1, pp. 315–26, and Irwin R. Titunik, 1976, "M.M. Bakhtin (The Bakhtin School) and Soviet Semiotics," *Dispositio* 1, pp. 327–38.

5 For a discussion of the problem from an ideological point of view, see Sigurd Fasting, 1978, "Ierarkhiia 'pravd' kak chast' ideino-khudozhestvennoi struktury romana *Brat'ia Karamazovy*," *Scando-Slavica* 24, pp. 35–47.

6 M.M. Bakhtin, 1929, *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, Leningrad.



“this difficult problem” unsolved, together with the closely related problem of structural unity in the polyphonic novel, its “whole.”<sup>7</sup> Bakhtin has thus left us with only the rudiments of a polyphonic plot theory, on which we shall have to base our own, taking into account Bakhtin’s redefinition of the novel as a mimesis of the spoken word and of people involved in a dialogue with each other. Dostoevsky’s characters are expressions of different ideas and ideologies which are reflected and refracted in their speech. Their world view and their view of themselves are determined by the ideas that dominate their minds. These ideas are not Dostoevsky’s inventions. They are representations of ideas found in the writings of others. A great number of them have long ago been identified, and it is common knowledge today that Raskolnikov’s idea of the superman may be traced back to Hegel’s theory of “historic individuals,” to Pushkin’s *Queen of Spades* and *Evgenii Onegin*, to Max Stirner’s *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, and to Napoleon III’s *Histoire de Jules César*. The prototype of Ivan Karamazov’s “rebellion” are the ideas of Belinskii and the Petrashevskii circle of the 1840s.<sup>8</sup> But whereas most scholars have studied the origins of Dostoevsky’s ideas in order to identify the ideas of his characters with their historical prototypes, Bakhtin focused his attention on the poetic function of these ideas within the dialogic structure of the novels. In this context they are transformed into images of their prototypes and are no longer identical with them. They acquire a new, intrinsic meaning within the individual novels. Dostoevsky “brought together ideas and world views that in real life were incompatible and deaf to each other and caused them to dispute.”<sup>9</sup>

The coincidence of divergent ideas in the polyphonic novel is nowhere more striking than in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Its central characters, the brothers Ivan and Alesha, their elder half-brother Dmitrii and the bastard Smerdiakov, all reflect different and opposed ideas and ideologies in their internal and external speech, and in the case of Ivan and Alesha, in the former’s “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor” and the latter’s “Life of Father Zosima.” The brothers come forth as images of the ideologies they represent. But an image is not a copy; it is an interpretation: Ivan does not simply reproduce Belinskii’s ideas, they are refracted in his words. Similarly,

7 Bakhtin, 1963, pp. 4, 56.

8 V. Ia. Kirpotin, 1947, *Molodoi Dostoevskii*, Moscow.

9 Bakhtin, 1963, p. 121.

Dmitrii cannot be defined as a replica of Schiller's idealism, in spite of his numerous quotations from Schiller. Alesha, the representative of Russian monasticism, was regarded as a distortion of its traditional ideal by the fathers of the Optina Pustyn. Smerdiakov's imitation of Ivan's ideas results in a grotesque perversion of them. Dostoevsky not only selected his ideas from the writings of his contemporaries and from tradition. He recombined these ideas into new patterns, in which they took on fresh and unexpected meanings. A close reading of Bakhtin's study shows that his theory of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels is based on the idea of Christ as the dynamic principle underlying this transformation. Not only does he compare Dostoevsky's poetic universe to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He says explicitly that to Dostoevsky "the image of Christ represents the solution of all ideological quests. This image, or this highest of voices must crown the world of voices, organize it, and dominate it."<sup>10</sup> Stretching Bakhtin's musical metaphor, we might describe the voice of Christ, "this highest of voices" as the *cantus firmus*, the voice that provides order and regularity in a polyphonic composition, subjecting the other voices to its restrictions, and yet allowing them to appear as free and independent, ensuring freedom without chaos.

Bakhtin's christotelic definition of Dostoevsky's art demonstrates the absurdity of those who have accused him of turning Dostoevsky into a relativist. Bakhtin's theory implies, on the contrary, that Dostoevsky, unlike a writer like Tolstoy, did not reduce the ideas of others to the subjective authority of his own word, but sought in the dialogue with others for a third word more authoritative than his own: the divine Logos. In this perspective we see how Bakhtin's theory converges with Dostoevsky's own world view, with his idea that "Christ is the source of all things."<sup>11</sup> His representation of human reality springs from a firm belief in life as a process in which "man strives to transform himself into the person of Christ [...] an ideal which is the opposite of his own nature."<sup>12</sup> Dostoevsky's image of Christ is radically different from the depictions of Jesus in nineteenth-century progressive theology as the morally perfect

10 Bakhtin 1963, p. 130.

11 F.M. Dostoevskii, 1972-90, "Zapisnaia tetrad' 1876-1877 gg.," *Polnoe sobranie sochine-nii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 24, pp. 187-314, p. 256.

12 Dostoevskii, 1972-90, "II. Zapisnaia knizhka 1863-1864 gg.," *Polnoe sobranie sochine-nii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 20, pp. 170-79, p. 175.

man, an in carnation of all positive human ideals, but mortal like all others, subject to the laws of nature and stripped of his divine prerogatives. Dostoevsky remained faithful to the Orthodox dogma of “the synthetic nature of Christ,” human and divine, “a reflection of God on earth.”<sup>13</sup> Like icon painting, his christocentric art is founded on the paradox of the Incarnation: that God became man so that man may become God in participation and imitation of Christ, the divine model or prototype. The relations between the model and its various representations in Dostoevsky’s poetics and in the aesthetic of the icon are the same. We may speak of a genuine isomorphism between the two and use our insights into the latter to illuminate the former. As with the icons, the relation between model and imitations in the novels is governed by the principle of analogy, which implies that the two are never identical, the differences between them always being greater than the similarities. The icons are “dissimilar likenesses” of Christ and the saints in their transcendent divinity beyond all direct representation in perceptible images. Equally, in Dostoevsky’s novels the relation between the characters and their divine prototype is one of analogy: from the image of Raskolnikov as a new Lazarus and *figura Christi*, to the tragic image of the dead Son of Man in *The Idiot*, and the demonic representation of the Anti-Christ and his retinue in *Demons*, Dostoevsky’s characters are never identical with, but different from their model, who is reflected and refracted in them in various ways.

On the background of this isomorphism we shall be able to redefine Dostoevsky’s image of Christ as “the generative model” of his polyphonic novel. In this function, it coincides with the function of plot (mythos) as “the first principle,” “soul,” and “end” of the action in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. In order to carry our analysis any further from here, we shall now have to go beyond Bakhtin’s definition of polyphony as a multiplicity of voices, and use the term also with reference to Dostoevsky’s narrative technique, his “polyphonic story.”<sup>14</sup> This term enables us to transfer the study of verbal polyphony from the characters to the action pattern.

13 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 20, pp. 170–79, p. 174.

14 The term is used by C. S. Lewis in his introduction to Spenser in *Major British Writers*, ed. G. B. Harrison, New York, 1954. Although Wellek finds it necessary to refer to Otto Ludwig’s use of the term “polyphony” sometime before 1865, he seems unaware of the fact that it has been applied to literature, quite independently of Bakhtin, by scholars such as C. S. Lewis, Rosemond Tuve, and Eugène Vinaver, and proved highly successful

As every Dostoevsky reader knows, his novels are not based on plot in the conventional sense of a linear sequence of events combined according to the principle of causality. His narrative is different, constantly shifting from one story and one set of characters to another. Judged by the norms of his contemporaries, Dostoevsky's novels seemed to have been written at random, without any definite plan. Their extraordinary complexity concealed their structure. The critics had no adequate terms to describe it. Already de Vogüe, in his book on the Russian novel, tried to convey an idea of Dostoevsky's originality by comparing the form of his novels to musical compositions, thus anticipating the method developed by Bakhtin. Today we know that Dostoevsky's idea of form was, in fact, close to music, and that the structure of his novels has more in common with thematic repetitions and variations than with the principle of causality. To Dostoevsky, "the most important [...] is the parallels to the story," and "stories continuing throughout a novel should be conceived and carried out in methodic parallel to the whole novel."<sup>15</sup> In other words, Dostoevsky's novels are intentionally polyphonic, also on the plot level. Reading them is like following a theme through its different phases, waiting for its return while following other themes, experiencing their simultaneous presence within the structural whole of the individual novels.

This pattern of thematic variations and parallels is nowhere richer and more complex than in *The Brothers Karamazov*. From a conventional point of view, the main theme of the novel is the murder of the old Fedor Pavlovich by one of his sons. The action begins with the return of Dmitrii to the house of his father, their quarrel about money, and their rivalrous courtship of Grusha. It culminates in the murder, and in the trial of Dmitrii. The linear time sequence is extremely compressed: only three days after the family reunion in the monastery, Dmitrii is carried away, accused of the murder of his father. Then follows an interval of two months before the action is resumed with the account of the trial. This takes two days, and after another interval, five days this time, the action is rounded off by the events of the Epilogue: the day of Iliushchka's

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in their analyses of the interwoven narrative of medieval romance. Cf. further Martin Buber's use of the term "polyphony," and the interesting links established between Buber and Bakhtin by Tsvetan Todorov, 1981, *Mikhail Bakhtine*, Paris.

15 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, "Idiot: Podgotovitel'nye materialy," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 9, pp. 140–288, p. 252.

funeral, with Alesha's final speech to the boys. This compression of the action into shorter and shorter time spans—three days, two, and one day, reflects the increasing significance of subjectively experienced time in the novel and of the subjective experience of the events. The revelation of Smerdiakov as the murderer, and the fact that his motives were ideological—Ivan's words that "God does not exist and therefore everything is allowed"—force the reader to restructure the whole course of events and to shift his attention from the pragmatic action pattern to the ideological passages of the novel. What to the uninitiated reader would appear to be independent philosophical digressions, such as Ivan's Legend and Alesha's Life, is foregrounded in its structural function. Smerdiakov's confession to Ivan has uncovered hidden connections between events and characters. On this level of meaning events and characters are no longer connected by causal links into a linear time sequen but combined by associations of contiguity, similarity, and contrast. In order to discover these correspondences we shall have to read the novel in the way we read a poem, forward and backward simultaneously. This will enable us to see how certain elements are repeated in different contexts throughout the text, forming a series of parallels and giving us a clue to the principles and patterns underlying the polyphonic narrative.

One such element, recurring not only in *The Brothers Karamazov* but in the whole of Dostoevsky's *œuvre*, is the image of the setting sun. We remember it from early works like *White Nights*, *The Landlady*, and *A Weak Heart*. It reappears in the first post-Siberian period in for instance *The Humiliated and the Insulted*, and in all the late novels. In *The Brothers Karamazov* the setting sun is first introduced in the fourth chapter of the first book:

He remembered a quiet summer evening, an open window, the slanting rays of the setting sun (the slanting rays he remembered most of all); an icon in the corner of the room, a lighted oil-lamp in front of it, and before the icon, on her knees, his mother, sobbing as if in hysterics, with shrieks and cries, seizing him in her arms, hugging him so tightly that it hurt, and pleading for him to the Mother of God, holding him out from her embrace with both arms towards the icon as if under the protection of the Mother of God...<sup>16</sup>

16 Quoted from Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2002, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. R. Pevear &

The other character directly associated with the symbol of the setting sun in *The Brothers Karamazov* is Zosima, Alesha's spiritual father. The symbol appears twice in Alesha's posthumous account of his life, "From the Life of the Hieromonk and Elder Zosima, Departed in God, Composed from His Own Words by Alexei Fedorovich Karamazov." First, in Zosima's childhood memories of his dying brother, the young atheist who became a Christian during his last Holy Week:

So I remember him: he sits, quiet and meek, he smiles, he is sick but his countenance is glad, joyful. He was utterly changed in spirit—such a wondrous change had suddenly begun in him! Our old nanny would come into his room: "Dear, let me light the lamp in front of your icon." [...] I remember once I came into his room alone, when no one was with him. It was a bright evening, the sun was setting and lit up the whole room with its slanting rays. (288, 290)

Here too, as in Alesha's memory of his mother, the image of the setting sun is combined with the icon and the burning flame of the *lampada*, the icon lamp, surrounding it with an aura of symbolic connotations. In a somewhat different version the image comes back in Zosima's farewell speech to his brethren, also reproduced by Alesha in his "Notes"

I bless the sun's rising each day and my heart sings to it as before, but now I love its setting even more, its long slanting rays, and with them quiet, mild, tender memories, dear images from the whole of a long and blessed life [...] My life is coming to an end, I know and sense it, but I feel with every day that is left me how my earthly life is already touching a new, infinite, unknown, but swift-approaching life [...] (292)

In isolation the motif of the setting sun may be interpreted as a self-contained poetic image. By being repeated in different contexts throughout the novel, however, it is transformed into a symbol, reflecting in its rays another reality.

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L. Volkhonsky, New York, p. 18–19. Numbers in brackets after quotations refer to this edition.

The symbol of the setting sun is highly ambiguous in Dostoevsky: its slanting rays are an image of death, darkness, and despair, but also of resurrection and new life. In his analysis of it, published in 1928, Sergei Durylin concluded that the setting sun “is a symbol of the indestructibility and infinitude of being: the evening sun, quiet and at the end of its course, is also the morning sun: the one and only sun.”<sup>17</sup>

In our last passage from *The Brothers Karamazov* the symbol is charged with a meaning that clearly exceeds Durylin’s “indestructibility and infinitude of being.” Its main function is to transform Zosima’s imminent death into a transitional phase between two different levels of being. Not the ancient idea of eternal return, but the Christian idea of resurrection in death to a new form of existence, is the fundamental meaning of the setting sun in the system of symbols in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Zosima’s farewell speech to the brethren anticipates the representation of his victory in death over the spirits of destruction, and of Alesha’s vision of his resurrection. At this stage the symbol undergoes a transformation, when in the ecstatic speech of the *iurodivyi* Father Ferapont, it is associated with Christ’s victory over death:

he suddenly turned towards the setting sun, raised both arms, and, as if he had been cut down, collapsed on the ground with a great cry:

“My Lord has conquered! Christ has conquered with the setting sun!” he cried out frenziedly, lifting up his hands to the sun, and, falling face down on the ground, he sobbed loudly like a little child, shaking all over with tears and spreading his arms on the ground. (336)

The symbolic meaning of the setting sun has here reached a degree of complexity that makes it difficult to describe. Again it connotes death and resurrection, despair and hope, but the center of the symbol now has become the suffering Christ. Unconscious of the meaning of his own gestures, the childlike figure of Father Ferapont in his cruciform position has been transformed into a symbolic image of Christ, a reflection of his suffering and rebirth.

The symbolic representation of the Passion in the Ferapont scene, which, as we remember, is part of the account of Zosima’s death, has its

17 S.N. Durylin, 1928, “Ob odnom simvole u Dostoevskogo,” *Dostoevskii* (Trudy Gosudarstvennoi akademii khudozhestvennykh nauk: Literaturnaia sektsiia 3), Moscow.

counterpart in Alesha's vision of the risen Zosima in the light of Christ the Pantocrator:

"[...] And do you see our Sun, do you see him?"

"I am afraid... I don't dare to look," whispered Alesha.

"Do not be afraid of him. Awful is his greatness before us, terrible is his loftiness, yet he is boundlessly merciful, he became like us out of love, and he is rejoicing with us [...]" (361)

The sun we perceive with our senses has become a symbol of the intelligible sun. Again we are struck by the similarity between Dostoevsky's symbolism and the symbolic representations of Christ in Orthodox art and literature. Against this background, who can fail to associate Dostoevsky's "slanting rays of the setting sun" in *The Brothers Karamazov* with the *svet vechernyi*, the *phos hesperinōn* of the famous fourth-century Evensong hymn, "Joyful light of holy glory, Jesus Christ."

Looking back at Zosima's life from Alesha's dream vision, we see that his death follows the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection. In a different way, the same pattern was repeated in the figure of Father Ferapont. And now it reappears on a psychological level in Alesha's spiritual rebirth after the vision, when he leaves Zosima's cell and walks into the starlit night, where he suddenly throws himself down on the earth, trembling all over, "in contact with other worlds."

Some sort of idea, as it were, was coming to reign in his mind—now for the whole of his life and unto ages of ages. He fell to the earth a weak youth and he up a fighter, steadfast for the rest of his life, and he knew it and felt it suddenly, in that very moment of his ecstasy. Never, never in all his life would Alesha forget that moment. "Someone visited my soul in that hour," he should say afterwards, with firm belief in his words... (363)

What is described here, is Alesha's initiation into a new life, a new mode of existence. Alesha has passed from one stage to another through the internalisation of the image and ideas of Father Zosima. Now he is ready to follow the last command of his spiritual father. "Three days later he left



the monastery, which was also in accordance with the words of his late elder, who had bidden him to ‘sojourn in the world.’” (363)

Dmitrii undergoes a similar transformation in his prison cell:

[...] a new man has arisen in me! He was shut up inside me, but if it weren't for this thunderbolt, he never would have appeared [...]. I exist, I see the sun, and if I don't see the sun, still I know it *is*. And the whole of life is there—in knowing that the sun *is*. (591, 592)

The different sub-plots of the novel thus form a series of parallels which are all different representations of the same prototype. Their generative model is the symbol of Christ. And as images of the model these representations in their turn are all symbols of Christ: Zosima through his death and resurrection in Alesha's dream, Alesha and Dmitrii in their spiritual rebirth, Ferapont in his *iurodstvo*.

Our analysis clearly calls for a redefinition of the atheist theme and its place in the polyphonic whole of the novel. We can no longer accept the “monologic” readings of Ivan's Legend by critics like D.H. Lawrence. We shall instead have to go back to Dostoevsky's original intention and see the Legend in its dialogic context, as the “negative” side of the novel, to which, according to the author, the Life of Zosima was the answer for whose sake the whole novel was written.<sup>18</sup> As part of the polyphonic narrative, Ivan's Legend represents the basic symbol in its inverted variant. It is a travesty of the temptation of Jesus in the desert, but it is also an example of an internalised dialogue, reflecting the struggle of voices within Ivan's own consciousness. Alesha, his silent interlocutor, defines Ivan's Legend as a “poem in praise of Jesus, not in blame of him,” thus implying that Ivan's “voice,” too, is governed by “the highest of voices,” the voice of Christ. And Ivan himself has called atheism the problem of God's existence “from the other end.” Father Paisii, the intellectual among the brethren in the monastery, says to Alesha about atheists and those who have renounced their Christianity, that in their innermost being they “of the same image of the same Christ” (того же Христового облика суть), that they have been unable so far to create a higher image of man than “the image shown of old by Christ” (образ указанный древле Христом) (171).

18 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, *Pis'ma, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 30 (1), p. 68.

Our description of the image of Christ and its symbolic function in the polyphonic narrative of *The Brothers Karamazov* may appear to some as an inadmissible abstraction. And in order to understand our use of the term “generative model” one must, in fact, abandon the conventional notion of general ideas as abstractions arrived at by extracting common qualities from specific examples. This was the method of those theologians who in the nineteenth century de-christianised Jesus, representing him as the epitome of their own liberal virtues and ideals. In the end they left us with an empty abstraction, an idealised but lifeless figure.

Dostoevsky’s symbolic image of Christ has more in common with the universal concepts of mathematics in that it not only contains all the particulars, but represents the principle of their generation. Like a mathematical function, Dostoevsky’s symbol of Christ may be decomposed into an infinite series of representations. It is in this sense that the image of Christ is the generative model of *The Brothers Karamazov*. This does not contradict Bakhtin’s definition of it as “the solution of all ideological quests in Dostoevsky.” For the model is symbolised by the representations, just as the representations are contained in the model. Bakhtin has approached the problem from a different angle and expressed the same idea in a different way: the generative model has produced the variants, and through the variants we rediscover the model.

## Dostoevskian Fools—Holy and Unholy

DOSTOEVSKY'S "holy fools" have been much in evidence in recent years, as witnessed by *inter alia* the publication in 1992 of Harriet Murav's comprehensive study of the subject.<sup>1</sup> There are, however, certain aspects of "holy foolishness" that remain problematic, even after Murav's book, as new questions crop up in response to her investigations. The first of these is the question of how to translate the Russian concept of *iurodstvo* into English? It is usually rendered by "holy foolishness." It seems to me, however, that the epithet "holy" is not always justified by the word's general meaning in Russian.

If we look up *iurodivyi* in Vladimir Dal's classical *Dictionary* (1863–66, second edition in 1880–82), we shall see that in its general meaning it is defined as "mad" (*bezumnyi*), "stupid" (*bozhevol'nyi*), "idiot" (*durachek*), "congenitally insane" (*otrodu sumasshedshii*). In other words, there is nothing "holy" in the basic concept of the *iurodivyi*. The most neutral modern English equivalent would probably be "mentally handicapped."

In popular usage, however, a *iurodivyi* was, again according to Dal, regarded as one of "God's people," in whose unconscious behaviour ordinary Russians would find a "deeper meaning, even premonition and foreknowledge." In this sense, the word *iurodivyi* is surrounded by an aura of holiness. In Russia as in other peasant societies, idiots were traditionally regarded as sacred to God (cf. *cretin*, "a Christian," originally referring to a group of specially deformed idiots found in certain valleys of the Alps).

The word *iurodivyi* also has a more specialised meaning, however, when used in the expression *iurodivye Khrista radi*, the Russian equiva-

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1 Harriet Murav, 1992, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique*, Stanford.

lent of English “fools for Christ’s sake” in 1 Cor. 4, 10, referring in the Orthodox tradition to a distinct ascetic lifestyle. In Dal’, the fools for Christ’s sake are defined as people “assuming the mask of foolishness.” This definition is also found in Grigorii Diachenko’s *Church-Slavonic Dictionary* (1899):

a person who has chosen a particular way of salvation, following the advice of the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 3, 18), presenting himself as mad according to his outward behaviour, but in actual fact filled with true wisdom.

Moreover, in ecclesiastical usage the term, according to Dal’, may also simply mean “stupid” (*glupyi*), “silly” (*nerazumnyi*), “foolish” (*bezrassudnyi*). An example of this would be the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, five of whom were “wise” (*mudryi*), and five “foolish” (*iurodivyi*). Furthermore, the verb, *iurodit’sia*, *iurodstvovat’*, is defined as “put on foolishness, pretend to be a fool, as the jesters of old used to do” i.e. without the sacred overtones of the noun.

In her study, Murav makes a distinction between “ascetics masquerading as fools and madmen, madmen allegedly venerated as holy men, and madmen treated as madmen,” at the same time emphasising that these categories “do not represent hard and fast distinctions, but, rather, help to map out a continuum.”<sup>2</sup> As we have seen, Dal’ and Diachenko, too, make a distinction between *iurodivyi* in the sense of one “mentally handicapped,” and *iurodivyi* meaning an ascetic voluntarily taking on himself the burden of foolishness for Christ’s sake. In other words, the different contextual values of *iurodivyi* are characterised by a basic dichotomy between its *unmarked*, or *zero* meaning, in which the feature of “holiness” is not necessarily present, and its *marked* meaning of “holy fool,” in which the feature of “holiness” is always present.

In the following I have tried to analyse Dostoevsky’s use of the word *iurodivyi* in order to find out where he uses the term in its *marked* sense of “holy fool” as opposed to its *unmarked* meaning in contexts where the word remains neutral with regard to holiness. This may enable us to differentiate further between the characters referred to as “holy fools” by Murav: “Sonia Marmeladova in *Crime and Punishment*, Prince Myshkin

<sup>2</sup> Murav, 1992, pp. 3–4.

in *The Idiot*, Mar'ia Lebiadkina and Semen Iakovlevich in *Demons*, Alesha Karamazov and Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*.<sup>3</sup>

*Crime and Punishment* is the first of Dostoevsky's novels in which the actions and mental state of the protagonist are paralleled with the Gospel in order to bring out their deeper significance: Raskolnikov asks Sonia to read out to him the story about the raising of Lazarus, and a connection is established between the two that transforms Dostoevsky's murderer into another Lazarus, brought back to life by the prostitute Sonia, whose copy of the New Testament has been given to her by another "fallen woman," Lizaveta, Raskolnikov's innocent victim:

"Lizaveta! How strange!" he thought. Everything about Sonya seemed stranger and more extraordinary with every minute [...].

"In two or three weeks' time they will be welcoming her into the asylum! It looks as though I should be there too, if not worse," he muttered to himself. [...]

"You were friendly with Lizaveta?"

"Yes... She was good... She came here... not often... she couldn't. We used to read together and... talk. She will see God."

The bookish words fell strangely on his ears. And here was again something new: some sort of secret meetings with Lizaveta. And both of them religious maniacs [*iurodivye*].

"I shall become one [*iurodivyi*] myself here! It is catching!" he thought. (311–12)<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that Raskolnikov here uses the word *iurodivyi* in its *unmarked* meaning of a mad person. In his context, the term remains neutral with regard to holiness. The reader, on the other hand, who is able to interpret this passage in the light of the complete action of the novel, will see it differently. Looking back at this passage from the "Epilogue," we see it as a prelude to the scene that immediately follows, in which Sonia on Raskolnikov's request reads to him from the Gospel according to St John about the Raising of Lazarus. In this context, the word *iurodivyi* will connote the idea of foolishness "for Christ's sake." We understand that not only

3 Murav, 1992, p. 7.

4 Feodor Dostoyevsky, 1964, *Crime and Punishment*, ed. G. Gibian, trans. J. Coulson, New York. The numbers in brackets after quotations refer to pages in this edition.

will Lizaveta, the innocent victim of Raskolnikov's idea, "see God," but that Sonia, the prostitute, hides another, truer self under her outward appearance, an inner self inspired by her image of Christ, whereas Raskolnikov, the repentant murderer, is spiritually reborn and brought back to life as a new Lazarus through her mediation.

The representation of "holy fools" in *Crime and Punishment* is a far cry from the traditional *iurodivye* of Russian hagiography. Sonia's and Raskolnikov's *iurodstvo* is more directly related to the message of the Gospel, and is brought about through Dostoevsky's projection onto his own text of the New-Testament story about the raising of Lazarus.

The biblical foundation of Dostoevsky's holy fools is reaffirmed in his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the motif of the *iurodivyi* is defined in Alesha Karamazov's "Life of Father Zosima." Here, as Lena Szilard has pointed out, "the idea characterising 'iurodstvo' as an axiologically marked form of behaviour is expressed with didactic clarity":<sup>5</sup>

Everywhere now the human mind has begun laughably not to understand that a man's true security lies not in his own solitary effort, but in the general wholeness of humanity. But there must needs come a term to this horrible isolation, and everyone will all at once realize how unnaturally they have separated themselves one from another, Such will be the spirit of the time, and they will be astonished that they sat in darkness for so long, and did not see the light. Then the sign of the son of Man will appear in the heavens... But until then we must keep hold of the banner, and every once in a while, if only individually, a man must suddenly set an example, and draw the soul from its isolation for an act of brotherly communion, though it will be with the rank of holy fool [*v chine iurodivogo*]. So that the great thought does not die. (303–304)<sup>6</sup>

From Szilard's subtle analysis we learn that there are two circumstances that give a particular weight to this passage. First of all, it reaches the

5 Lena Szilard, 1982, "Ot 'Besov' k 'Peterburgu': (mezhdru poliusami iurodstva i shutovstva (nabrosok temy)," *Studies in 20th Century Russian Prose*, ed. N.Å. Nilsson, Stockholm, p. 83.

6 Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2002, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volkhonsky, New York. Numbers in parenthesis refer to pages in this edition.

reader in the hagiographic context of Alesha's Life "as a truly undying idea, transmitted by word of mouth from the Mysterious visitor to Zosima, from Zosima to Alesha,"<sup>7</sup> and secondly, the words are first spoken by a repentant sinner, the visitor, converted by Zosima's refusal to fight the duel, when he became a sort a holy fool to all (301) and decided to become a monk. As Szilard points out, Zosima's foolish behaviour for Christ's sake thus acquires a paradigmatic significance in the novel: it not only changes his own life and spurs the visitor to begin his struggle of self-exposure, it also becomes the pattern for Alesha's future struggle in the world, anticipated in his farewell speech to his community of the twelve schoolboys at the end of the novel. Its essence as formulated by Zosima is meekness, the antithesis of pride, and fearlessness in front of self-exposure, self-exposure being the *sine qua non* of all true self-knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

The representation of *iurodstvo* in the three characters, Alesha, Zosima, and the Mysterious visitor, and the definition given in the passage quoted above, show that in his last novel Dostoevsky had deepened his understanding of the *iurodivyi* as "God's secret servant." There is nothing in their conduct that corresponds to the scandalous behaviour of the *saloi* and their Russian equivalents, whose assumed foolishness has been described as a form of theatricality.<sup>9</sup> The fact that all three are laymen at the time when they perform their foolish deeds, implies that Dostoevsky's idea of *iurodstvo* is the same here as in *Crime and Punishment*: Zosima's refusal to fight the duel happens before he becomes a monk, and Alesha's struggle for a community founded on brotherly love begins only after he has left the monastery.

Like the *iurodstvo* of Sonia and Raskolnikov, that of Zosima and his two friends consists in a radical belief in Christ as the true foundation of human freedom. Dostoevsky's anthropology is founded on his Christology, characterised by Berdiaev—in a passage quoted by Szilard—as a dialectic of humiliation and freedom:

Divine truth appeared in the world humiliated, mutilated and crucified by the powers of this world, thereby affirming the freedom of the

7 Szilard, 1982, p. 83.

8 Szilard, 1982, p. 84.

9 A.M. Panchenko, 1984, "Smekh kak zrelishche," *Smekh v drevnei Rusi*, D.S. Likhachev, A.M. Panchenko & N.V. Ponyrko, Leningrad, pp. 72–153.

spirit. A divine truth that conquered by force, triumphing in the world by its force, would not have required freedom in order to be accepted. Therefore, the mystery of Golgotha is the mystery of freedom.<sup>10</sup>

The unusual dialectic of abasement and freedom that we find in Dostoevsky's idea of the *iurodivyi* "is structured in the image and likeness of this dialectic."<sup>11</sup>

Their different approach notwithstanding, Murav in her final discussion of Zosima and Alesha arrives at a definition of their holy foolishness that is not unlike that of Szilard. In a beautiful passage she summarises her insights into Dostoevsky's holy fool:

The holy fool helps us transform the love of the self that animates our misguided quest for uniqueness into a self-sacrificing love of others. He does so by means of the example provided by his own self-surrender and self-humiliation. His example is an imitation of the ultimate self-sacrifice of the cross. This is the role that the holy fool is to play in Dostoevsky's great project of universal reconciliation.<sup>12</sup>

Like Szilard, Murav has here arrived at a definition of Dostoevsky's holy fool that is both new and genuinely Orthodox.

However, the holy fool as represented by Zosima and Alesha in their christlike behaviour is, according to Murav, only one of several realisations of holy foolishness in Dostoevsky. Her list, already quoted, of Dostoevsky's holy fools, also includes a character such as Prince Myshkin, the hero of *The Idiot*, together with Mar'ia Lebiadkina and Semen Iakovlevich in *Demons*, characters that may be fools, but hardly holy.

Before moving on to these characters I should like to go back to *The Brothers Karamazov* in order to have a closer look at two figures from this novel in which the motif of *iurodstvo* is treated in a way that differs from the christomorphic representation of holy foolishness in Zosima and Alesha. These two figures are Fedor Pavlovich Karamazov, the *pater familias*, and Father Ferapont, the old hermit.

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10 Szilard, 1982, p. 85.

11 Szilard, 1982, p. 85.

12 Murav, 1992, p. 160.



In contrast to Alesha's and Zosima's behaviour, the behaviour of the old Karamazov is marked by role-playing. As observed by Victor Terras, buffoon is Fedor Pavlovich's leitmotif. He "has created an image of himself as a buffoon," and the second book's second chapter, "The Old Buffoon," where buffoonery is foregrounded as an aspect of his character, "is also a psychological study of buffoonery as compulsive behaviour."<sup>13</sup> The word *shut* (buffoon) is a generic term in Russian, signifying something very different from the word *iurodivyi* and referring to the profane sphere of court jesters and house fools. It also has a long tradition as a synonym for the devil. What complicates the matter is the fact that Fedor Pavlovich refers to himself both as *shut* and as *iurodivyi*: "I'm a natural-born buffoon, I am, reverend father, just like a holy fool [*iurodivyi*]; I won't deny that there's maybe an unclean spirit living in me, too, not a very high caliber one, by the way [...]" (41).

The context of Fedor Pavlovich's speech shows that he uses *iurodivyi* in the *marked* meaning "holy foolishness," but ambiguously, ironically. In order to understand the difference between genuine foolishness for Christ's sake and the old Karamazov's parody of it, we may again turn to Szilard:

The watershed between the humble struggle of holy foolishness (*iurodstvo*) and the arrogance of pseudo-holy foolishness (*lzheiuurodstvo*) at the same time points to a way of overcoming buffoonery, the ethico-psychological foundation of which is in the last analysis—according to Dostoevsky—the failure to discriminate between good and evil, resulting from wounded pride. In this aspect Dostoevsky's idea wholly coincides with the general conception of Orthodoxy, to which buffoonery, imitating holy foolishness in a number of outward features, at the same time is a manifestation which is not genuinely Christian [...]. To the Orthodox mind the contortions of wounded pride is of the devil, whereas holy foolishness is carried out for Christ's sake.<sup>14</sup>

In letting Fedor Pavlovich use the term *iurodivyi* about himself, Dostoevsky implies the possibility of an inverted "holy foolishness," a foolishness for the sake of the devil, as it were.

13 Victor Terras, 1981, *A Karamazov Companion*, Madison, pp. 82, 144, n. 30, 146, n. 45.

14 Szilard, 1982, p. 84.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Father Ferapont is an example of a similar inversion. An inveterate opponent of Father Zosima and his method of spiritual guidance—*starchestvo*—which he regarded as a “harmful and frivolous innovation,” Father Ferapont is described as a “great faster and keeper of silence,” revered both by monks and visitors as “a great ascetic and a righteous man, even though they regarded him as unquestionably a holy fool [*nesomnennogo iurodivogo*]. Indeed, it was this that fascinated them [*No iurodstvo-to i plenialo*]” (166).

Father Ferapont is a recluse whose idiorrhythmic life and choice of silence as a way of salvation are the characteristic features of the radical hesychast we know from Russian and Greek monasticism. But in *The Brothers Karamazov* the world of this traditional holy fool has been desecralised, inhabited by demons and strange spirits. Father Ferapont’s “label,” according to Terras, is his “obsession with the devil.”<sup>15</sup> He represents the very opposite of Father Zosima’s and Alesha’s idea of an “alternative Church,” founded on brotherly love. It is only when he turns away from the forces of evil and remembers Christ’s victory on the cross that Ferapont becomes a true holy fool in the Dostoevskyan sense. Crying out in ecstasy that “Christ has conquered with the setting sun [*Khristos pobedil zakhodiashchu solntsu*]” (336, cf. Luke 23, 45), sobbing loudly “like a little child,” he falls to the ground, his arms stretched out upon the earth, his cruciform body a living sign of the Son of man.

In order to understand the opposition between the traditional form of *iurodstvo*, which Dostoevsky rejects, and the new, which is his own poetic creation, we may compare it to a similar contrast in Byzantine hagiography between the early type of “God’s secret servant,” who, in the words of Sergei Ivanov, “look like ordinary laymen” and “do not suspect their own sainthood,” and the later, “classical” type of the Greek “holy fool,” or *salós*, whose pretended madness and aggressive behaviour is a form of one-man show performed in the knowledge of being in the possession of the “great gift of perfection,” granting, as Ivanov puts it, that “God’s chosen will remain chosen in spite of everything.”<sup>16</sup>

15 Terras, 1981, p. 193, n. 26

16 S.A. Ivanov, 1995, “From ‘Secret Servants of God’ to ‘Fools for Christ’s Sake’ in Byzantine Hagiography,” *The Holy Fool in Byzantium and Russia*, ed. I. Lunde, Bergen, pp. 5–17, p. 14.

Dostoevsky's critical approach to the hagiographic type of the *salós* and its Old Russian equivalents, which reaches its apex in the representation of Father Ferapont, has a long history in his *œuvre*. Already in *The Friend of the Family* (1859), Foma Fomich, the novel's clown and sanctimonious hypocrite, gradually "achieved a remarkable influence on the feminine half of the general's household, partly similar to the influence of various ivan-iakovleviches and suchlike wizards and soothsayers, whom certain ladies go to see in lunatic asylums."<sup>17</sup> The expression "ivan-iakovleviches" here refers to Ivan Iakovlich Koreisha (1770–1861), a "holy fool" who enjoyed great popularity in Moscow in the 1820s and 1830s. In *Demons*, Koreisha is presented in the figure of the fool Semen Iakovlevich, whom Dostoevsky describes in a way that is "more than satirical," according to Konrad Onasch.<sup>18</sup> As Murav observes, the fact that "Dostoevsky's fictionalized portrait of Koreisha is not flattering [...] is not the point. The holy fool behind the railing is no longer an exemplar, a spectacle in which the image of God is made visible in scandalous form, but only a curiosity."<sup>19</sup>

But there is more to Dostoevsky's satire than mere curiosity. In 1864, the radical ethnographer Ivan Gavrilovich Pryzhov had written an article on holy foolishness, "Twenty-six Muscovite pseudo-prophets, pseudo-holy fools and idiots, male and female," in which the first study is devoted to none other than Ivan Iakovlevich.<sup>20</sup> In his article, Pryzhov draws a distinction between the genuine *iurodivye*, whom he considers to be mentally sick and miserable, and the so-called *lzheiudivye*, or "pseudo-holy fools," hypocrites and swindlers like Ivan Iakovlevich. These pseudo-holy fools had learnt how to play up to their benefactors and benefactresses, especially to those among the merchant class, with whom *iurodstvo* was a favourite form of entertainment. Pryzhov's distinction between genuine, mentally ill *iurodivye* and *lzheiudivye* charlatans leaves no room for holiness.

17 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 3, p. 8. My translation.

18 Onasch, Konrad, 1980, "Der hagiographische Typus des 'Jurodivy' im Werk Dostoevskijs," *Dostoevsky Studies* 1, pp. 111–21, p. 113.

19 Murav, 1992, p. 49.

20 I. G. Pryzhov, 1992, "Dvadsat' šest' moskovskikh lzheprorokov, lzheiudivykh, dur i durakov," *Istoriia kabakov v Rossii*, intro. M. Al'tman, Moscow, pp. 321–79.

Pryzhov's criticism of the institution of *iurodstvo* provoked a sharp reaction, not only from reactionary quarters, but also from people like Apollon Grigor'ev, for whom holy foolishness had an inherent value as something old and ancient—*iurodstvo staroe, iskonnoe*.<sup>21</sup> In his introduction to Pryzhov's works, M. Al'tman also includes Dostoevsky among Pryzhov's reactionary opponents. After all, Tolkachenko, one of Strakhov's killers in *Demons*, was modelled on Pryzhov, who in 1871 was sentenced to hard labour and exiled to Siberia for his participation in the Nechaev affair.

However, Dostoevsky's reaction to Pryzhov was not unequivocal. The evidence suggests that Dostoevsky, too, regarded *iurodstvo* as an institution exploited by charlatans. But in contrast to the radical ethnographer, he could also see the religious potential of *iurodstvo* as a genuine form of Christian asceticism, which in his novels he tried to redefine within the reality of contemporary Russia.

Like Father Ferapont in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Semen Iakovlevich—an “officially accepted,” “professional holy fool”—is “possessed by the devil of pride.”<sup>22</sup> His “*iurodstvo*” represents the very opposite of Dostoevsky's idea of *holy* foolishness as depicted in the figures of Sonia Marmeladova and Alesha Karamazov.

In his description of Semion Iakovlevich and his *lzheiuurodstvo* to use Pryzhov's term, Dostoevsky lays bare the mechanisms of idolisation, one of the novel's main themes. *Demons* is a novel about the creation of idols and their subsequent exposure and the unmasking of the false holy fool is a variation of this theme.<sup>23</sup> The fool's encounter with the motley crowd of frivolous young people is therefore a variation on one of the main themes of *Demons*.

In *Demons* the theme of idolisation is at the very centre of the plot. The relationships between the main characters of the novel are, in fact, modifications of this theme: Stavrogin's mother, Varvara Petrovna, idolises the old Verkhovenskii, Verkhovenskii junior idolises Stavrogin, as does Shatov, in despair asking Stavrogin why he is “condemned” to be-

21 M. Al'tman, 1992, “Ivan Gavrilovich Pryzhov i ego literaturnoe nasledie,” Pryzhov, 1992, pp. 3–28, p. 23.

22 Szilard, 1982, p. 86.

23 See Chapter Eight on Stavrogin in the present volume.

lieve in him “unto ages of ages” (255).<sup>24</sup> A third character who worships Stavrogin, is Mar’ia Timofeevna Lebiadkina, the limping fool whom Stavrogin has secretly married. When she unexpectedly meets him at his mother’s house after five years of separation, the poor woman asks in “an impetuous half-whisper”: “And may I... kneel to you... now?” (183). Mar’ia Timofeevna has projected onto Stavrogin’s figure the “Prince” and “Falcon” of her own imagination, and when in real life he fails to live up to her fantasies, she denounces Stavrogin by identifying him with the negative counterpart of her “Prince,” Grishka Otrep’ev, the prototypical traitor and usurper of Russian popular history.

In the novel, Mar’ia Timofeevna is first referred to as “not only mad, but even lame” (97), later as the *iurodivaia*. In spite of the “blessed fool” (166) of the Pevear-Volkhonsky translation, however, Mar’ia Timofeevna’s “iurodstvo” is never defined as “holy foolishness” in the novel. On the contrary, it is clear from the context that the term *iurodovaia* is used here in its *unmarked* form.

All the same, Mar’ia Timofeevna is treated as a “holy fool” both by Murav and by Szilard, both of whom on this count follow the mainstream of Dostoevsky scholarship. Jacques Catteau comes closer to the truth when he observes that Mar’ia Timofeevna “est une *jurodivaja* mais non pas par choix, sa raison chancelle.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, her foolishness is not holy in the sense of being a voluntary struggle for Christ’s sake. Her eccentric behaviour is an expression of her deranged mind.

But neither is Mar’ia Timofeevna a simple *iurodivaia* in the sense of being a “cretin” (*Bozhii chelovek*) or an “idiot” (*dura*). According to Dostoevsky’s drafts, his idea was to represent a woman “unable to distinguish her fantasies from reality,” but in whom apart from that there should be “no insanity whatsoever.”<sup>26</sup>

As she appears in the novel, Mar’ia Timofeevna’s imagination represents a strange collage of reminiscences from legends and popular ballads, Russian literature and history, and European literature. The parallels to Gretchen in Goethe’s *Faust* have been underlined by, among others, Kon-

24 F.M. Dostoevsky, 1994, *Demons*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, New York. Numbers in brackets after quotations refer to pages in this edition.

25 Jacques Catteau, 1978, *La Création Littéraire chez Dostoïevski*, Paris, p. 30.

26 F.M. Dostoevskii, 1972–90, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 11, p. 255.

rad Onasch.<sup>27</sup> And according to Jacques Catteau, “Mar’ia Timofeevna, la boiteuse épousée en secret et bientôt abandonnée au couteau du bagnard Fed’ka, reprend le délire de Marguerite dans la scène finale au chacot.”<sup>28</sup> Likewise, the connection with Shakespeare’s Ophelia is not only hinted at negatively in Mrs Stavrogin’s description of her son—“Nicholas never had a Horatio or an Ophelia” (189). Ophelia’s presence is felt even in Mar’ia Timofeevna’s speech. Richard Peace notes that “her utterances at times recall those of Ophelia,” that her words are “disjointed and figurative” like the words of “some mad Ophelia.”<sup>29</sup>

In Mar’ia Timofeevna, Dostoevsky has created one of his most moving characters. But she cannot be included in his gallery of holy fools. Her folly has little, if anything at all, in common with the *saloí* and *iurodivye* of the Orthodox tradition. Nor can the figure of Mar’ia Timofeevna be identified as a representation of the biblical model underlying the holy foolishness of Sonia Marmeladova, Father Zosima, and Alesha Karamazov. Her affinity with figures like Ophelia and Gretchen shows that her character is much more akin to the melodramatic *folles* of Romantic and post-Romantic European literature.

Another of Dostoevsky’s characters, whose *holy* foolishness is almost unanimously taken for granted, is that of Prince Myshkin, the meek and innocent hero of *The Idiot*, published in 1868, four years before the completion of *Demons*. To judge from the notebooks to *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky was already exploring the poetic potential of many of the religious and philosophical problems that were to be taken up from a different angle in the *Demons*, notably the problems of idolisation and holy foolishness.

In his drafts for the first, unrealised version of *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky introduces as one of the central characters a figure called the “idiot,” “suffering from epilepsy and nervous fits.” Later, the idiot is identified as a “prince,” and a few times he is referred to as the “fool” (*iurodivyi*), in particular when he appears surrounded by children, e.g. “A fool (he is together with children)?!”<sup>30</sup> But it is clear from the context that the word

27 Konrad Onasch, 1976, *Der verschwiegene Christus*, Berlin, p. 171.

28 Catteau, 1978, p. 74.

29 Richard Peace, 1971, *Dostoevsky: An Examination of the Major Novels*, Cambridge, pp. 170, 195.

30 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, 9, pp. 141, 200.

*iurodivyi* refers to the prince's foolishness as a congenital feature of his character, not to holy foolishness.

In the finished novel, these three factors are easily recognisable in the representation of Prince Myshkin. That his foolishness is congenital is underlined already in the opening chapter, in the Prince's conversation with Rogozhin in the train:

"And are you a great fancier of the female sex, Prince? Tell me beforehand!"

"N-n-no! I'm... Maybe you don't know, but because of my inborn illness, I don't know women at all."

"Well, in that case," Rogozhin exclaimed, "you come out as a holy fool [*iurodivyi*]. Prince, and God loves your kind!" (15)<sup>31</sup>

The fact that the prince is sexually inexperienced because of his inborn handicap is hardly sufficient to make him a *iurodivyi* in the hagiographic meaning of the word. Rogozhin clearly uses the word in its popular *unmarked* meaning of a "God's fool," or "idiot," characterising the complete stranger as a *iurodivyi* on the single ground of his impaired sexuality.

When Prince Myshkin, the exiled idiot, returns to Russia, he presents himself to his new surroundings as an enigma. No one knows who he is. In their attempt to identify him, he is given several roles to play. The two heroines of the novel, Aglaia and Nastasia Filippovna, in particular, see in him an incarnation of their loftiest ideals.

Aglaia recognises in Myshkin her idea of the "poor knight" in Pushkin's ballad, a figure she identifies with Don Quixote, who is, she claims, "that same Don Quixote, only a serious and not a comic one" (249). But Aglaia's attempt at projecting the prototypical features of Pushkin's hero as a serious Don Quixote onto the prince is rejected by the story line of the novel and superseded by a different set of prototypes, less obvious, but at least as important for our understanding of the plot.

We learn from the notebooks that Dostoevsky gradually began to see the relationship between Myshkin and Nastasia Filippovna in analogy to the relationship between Jesus and two of the women associated with him in the Gospels: the woman caught in adultery, and Mary Magdalene, tra-

31 Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2003, *The Idiot*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, intro. R. Pevear. Numbers in brackets after quotations refer to this edition.

ditionally taken to have been a prostitute. In a note from March 1868, on learning that Nastasia Filippovna has run away from both Rogozhin and the prince, Aglaia exclaims that “it is mean to play the Magdalene,”<sup>32</sup> and in another note, also from March 1868, in which Dostoevsky outlines the culminating scene between Myshkin and Nastasia Filippovna, he draws an explicit parallel between his own story and the story of the Gospel: “At last the wedding. A passionate and tender scene with the prince (the gospel absolution of the adulteress in the temple).”<sup>33</sup> According to this vision, Myshkin, the epileptic and idiot, is conceived of in his relationship with Nastasia Filippovna as an *imitator Christi*, an idea that is further corroborated by three references to the prince as Christ in Dostoevsky’s notes from April 1868.<sup>34</sup>

In the novel, it is Nastasia Filippovna who conceives of Myshkin as her christlike saviour and of herself as a modern Mary Magdalene. The analogy is brought out in the description of their encounter at the entrance to the park in Pavlovsk, when Nastasia Filippovna suddenly appears before the Prince: “She went down on her knees before him right there in the street, as if beside herself; he stepped back in fear, but she tried to catch his hand in order to kiss it” (456). The correspondence between this scene and Mary Magdalene’s encounter with the risen Jesus in John 20, 11 is quite transparent, in particular to readers who remember that Myshkin the day before has asked Rogozhin to celebrate with him the beginning of his new life: “I don’t want to meet my new life without you, because my new life has begun! Don’t you know, Parfyon, that my new life begins today?” (367).

The other parallel from the notebooks between Nastasia Filippovna and the adulterous woman in the temple, is brought out by Evgenii Pavlovich in his analysis of Myshkin’s behaviour towards the end of the novel: “a woman was forgiven in the Temple, the same sort of woman, but was she told that she had done well and was worthy of honor and respect?” (580).

What strikes the reader in these juxtapositions, however, is not the similarity but the difference between Myshkin and the prototype; the negative analogy between the two women implying an antithetical rela-

32 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, 9, p. 217.

33 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 9, p. 235.

34 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 9, p. 246, 249, 253.



tionship also between Jesus and the prince. In the words of Peter Stern, what is shown in the novel is the “defective nature of Myshkin’s *imitatio*.” The testing of the hero as an *imitator Christi* brings out the inadequacy of his total personality, “faith and eros and moral will all together”:

To the woes of the world Myshkin knows only one answer: “Compassion,” he argues with himself, “will teach and give understanding even to Rogozhin. Compassion is the chief, perhaps the only, law of life” (230). But it isn’t—not of the life that is here unfolded, and incidentally not of the life we know.<sup>35</sup>

Prince Myshkin’s meekness is part of his weakness, his epilepsy, his sexual inadequacy and simple-mindedness. In his analysis of Myshkin that I have quoted from already, Stern writes that “Myshkin’s meekness is unsupported by an equal spiritual strength: it would have to be the strength required for the acknowledgement of love, for the choices implied in that acknowledgement, and for the responsibility it involves.”<sup>36</sup> Meekness in itself is unable to save the world.

One of the reasons why Myshkin’s *imitatio Christi* is doomed to fail is the particular image of Christ that the prince tries to emulate. The image of Christ that determines Myshkin’s behaviour towards Nastasia Filipovna is not the Saviour of Orthodox theology, fully God and fully man, but the Jesus of last century’s liberal theology, whom Renan in his *Vie de Jésus* placed at “the highest summit of human greatness,” a person whose life, according to the French theologian, “finishes with his last sigh.” This nineteenth-century Jesus “never dreamt of making himself pass for an incarnation of God.”<sup>37</sup> As the *Abbild* of such an *Urbild*, Myshkin was doomed to failure even before his *imitatio* began.

The idea of a mortal Christ, “whose life finishes with his last sigh” is brought into the plot of *The Idiot* through the reproduction of Holbein’s picture of the dead Christ hanging in Rogozhin’s house, in front of which Myshkin’s says that “A man could even lose his faith from that painting” (218). Later on in the novel the theme is further elaborated through

35 J. Peter Stern, 1973, *On Realism*, London, pp. 16–17.

36 Stern, 1973, p. 18.

37 Ernest Renan, 1935, *The Life of Jesus*, trans. A. D. Howell Smith, London, pp. 222, 215, 132.

Ippolit's interpretation of the same picture, in which he focuses on the tragic consequences of a dead saviour for the whole of mankind.

Dostoevsky's representation of Myshkin as an *imitator* of the humanised image of Christ goes a long way to explain the prince's idiocy and epileptic attacks. Whereas the prince compares himself ironically with the "epileptic Mohammed," Murav is certainly right in stressing the connection with Renan's use of epilepsy "to demystify the miracles reported in the Gospel."<sup>38</sup> More explicitly, Renan in his *Vie de Jésus* writes about the emotion which Jesus experienced at the tomb of Lazarus, his friend, whom he believed to be dead, that it "might be taken by those present for the agitation and trembling which accompanied miracles. Popular opinion required that the divine virtue should manifest itself in man as an epileptic and convulsive principle."<sup>39</sup>

With its deconstruction of the *Urbild-Abbild*-aesthetic underlying the representation of the holy fools for Christ's sake in *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, the story of Prince Myshkin demonstrates the impossibility of an *imitatio Christi* based on the particular image of Christ posited by nineteenth-century liberal theology. Instead of a holy fool for Christ's sake, Dostoevsky in the figure of Prince Myshkin has given us a mock-Christ, *lzheiuodivyi*, not an *Abbild*, but a *Gegenbild* of Christ, an Anti-Christ in the Nietzschean sense.<sup>40</sup> When his strange adventures are over and the doctor can only predict a complete breakdown of his mental faculties, Prince Myshkin has again become the "idiot" he was from the very beginning.<sup>41</sup>

In my examination of "holy fools" in Dostoevsky I hope to have shown that in his four major novels, which, according to Charles Moser, one may view "as a single enormous discussion,"<sup>42</sup> the concept of the *iuro-*

38 Murav, 1992, p. 80.

39 Renan, 1935, p. 184.

40 Two quotations from Nietzsche's discussion of Jesus in *The Anti-Christ* (1888) are important here. In §29 Jesus is characterised as an "idiot": "Aus Jesus einen Helden machen! [...] Mit der Strenge des Physiologen gesprochen, wäre hier ein ganz andres Wort am Platz: das Wort Idiot." In §31 there is an explicit reference to Dostoevsky: "Man hätte zu bedauern, daß nicht ein Dostojewskij in der Nähe dieses interessantesten *décadent* gelebt hat, ich meine jemand, der gerade den ergreifenden Reiz einer solchen Mischung von Sublimem, Krankem und Kindlichem zu empfinden wußte." See p. 76 in this volume for an English translation of these passages.

41 See Chapter Six in the present volume.

42 Charles A. Moser, 1986, "The Brothers Karamazov as a Novel of the 1860's," *Dostoevsky*

*divyi* undergoes a radical reassessment. In the context of Dostoevsky's fiction, it is no longer possible to operate with the semantic distinction found in contemporary lexicography between an *unmarked* use of the term—a *iurodivyi* may be holy or not holy—and a *marked* use, in which the person referred to is always holy, as is the case with the *iurodivyi* of Orthodox hagiography.

In Dostoevsky, the term *iurodivyi* is always marked: it refers *either* to persons whose holiness is made clear from the context, *or* to characters whose *unholiness* is made explicit in the course of the action. Moreover, the category of the *unholy iurodivyi* comprises not only the mentally handicapped like Prince Myshkin and Mar'ia Timofeevna, or obvious fakes like Semen Iakovlevich, but even a Russian *salós* like Father Fera-pont before his conversion.

As a result of this redefinition of the “holy fool,” Murav's three categories—“ascetics masquerading as fools and madmen, madmen allegedly venerated as holy men, and madmen treated as madmen”—would all fall into the class of *unholy fools*.

When used in its positive meaning of *holy* foolishness, the concept of the *iurodivyi* is confined to the Christlike characters of the first and the last of Dostoevsky's four great novels, none of whom is represented as either mad or feigning madness in the general, non-figurative meaning of that word. Their behaviour can only be described as mad or foolish in the sense found in the First Letter to the Corinthians. Like their biblical *Urbild* they represent a truth that was, and still is, “a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to Gentiles.”

## Dostoevsky's *Idiot* or the Poetics of Emptiness

“THEY CALL ME a psychologist: untrue, I am only a realist in the highest sense,” Dostoevsky wrote in his notebook towards the end of his life. The purpose of his art was: “With full realism to discover the person in every human being [*naiti v cheloveke cheloveka*].”<sup>1</sup>

What is a “realist in the highest sense,” and what is “the person in every human being”? Dostoevsky scholars have discussed the meaning of these two statements ever since they were first published, in the *Biography, Letters and Notes* that came out two years after the writer's death, in 1883. Dostoevsky himself was well aware of his idiosyncratic use of the term “realism.” In a letter to his friend Apollon Maikov of 11 December 1868 we find the following heartfelt cry in connection with his plan for “a giant novel” called *The Atheist*, in which the hero “in the end finds Christ and the Russian soil, a Russian Christ and a Russian God”:

O, my friend! my conceptions of reality and realism are completely different from our realists and critics. My idealism is more real than theirs. My God! If you only were to relate all that we Russians have experienced in our spiritual development during the last ten years, wouldn't our realists cry that this is all fantasy, whereas in actual fact this is primordial, genuine realism! This is real realism, only deeper, whereas they are sailing in shallow waters [...]. With their realism you can't explain a hundredth part of the facts that have actually occurred, whereas we with our idealism have even predicted facts.<sup>2</sup>

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1 F.M. Dostoevskii, 1972–90, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 27, p. 65.

2 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 28 (2), p. 329.

In the last sentence, Dostoevsky is clearly thinking of the student Danilov, accused of having murdered a Moscow pawnbroker and his maidservant, whose trial coincided with the publication of *Crime and Punishment*.<sup>3</sup>

*Crime and Punishment* is the first of Dostoevsky's novels in which his artistic purpose of finding "the person in every human being" by "full realism" has been developed into a coherent poetic system. The basic device of this system consists in the juxtaposition of the narrative with a text of a higher order: Raskolnikov's story is brought together with the New Testament story about the raising of Lazarus in a way that transforms Dostoevsky's hero into a new Lazarus, a representation of the biblical prototype or *Urbild*, which is Christ himself, whose death and resurrection were prefigured in Lazarus, according to Orthodox tradition.

In literary criticism this device is referred to as *figural interpretation*, a term introduced by Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis* (1946). In theology it is called *biblical typology*.

In broader terms, Dostoevsky's poetic system in *Crime and Punishment* is a kind of symbolism in the sense that the content of the Raskolnikov story acquires an additional meaning of a higher, sacred order, which in its turn serves as a symbol of the *Urbild*, or generative model of Christ.

A symbol in this sense "always has something archaic about it," and every culture "needs a body of texts which serves the function of archaism," according to Iurii Lotman. Symbols like the one activated by Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* belong to our Christian culture's "nucleus of symbols." They are archaic and go back to pre-literate times, "when certain signs functioned as condensed mnemonic programmes for texts and stories preserved in the community's oral memory":

Symbols have preserved this ability to store up extremely long and important texts in condensed form. But even more interesting is another feature, also an archaic one: a symbol, being a finalized text, does not have to be included in a syntagmatic chain, and if it is included in one, it preserves its own semantic and structural independence [...] a symbol never belongs only to one synchronic section of a culture, it always cuts across that section vertically, coming from the past and

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3 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 28 (2), p. 498, n. 18.

passing on into the future. A symbol's memory is always more ancient than the memory of its non-symbolic text-context.<sup>4</sup>

Lotman's emphasis on the archaic character of a symbol could help us to understand Dostoevsky's characterisation of his realism as "primordial." As an artist he had an intuitive grasp of the symbol as defined by Lotman in the passage quoted above, and in *Crime and Punishment* this conception of man as a symbol enabled him to see in the story about the murderer Raskolnikov a variant of the ancient idea of man's ability to die away from his old self and be spiritually reborn as a new person. Through this idea Dostoevsky's realism becomes "realism in the highest sense."

In his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, this archetypal pattern is actualised in a different symbolic representation, again from the Gospel of St John, in the parable of the corn of wheat:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12, 24)

The same archetypal pattern of new life through death and rebirth—symbolised in these lines that serve as epigraph to *The Brothers Karamazov*—determines the structure of the novel, turning its heroes into symbolic representations of the same invariant *Urbild* as the one underlying Raskolnikov's story. That this is so, has now been convincingly demonstrated by Diane Thompson.<sup>5</sup> I should like to have a look at *The Idiot*, in order to see if we can find a similar *Urbild-Abbild*-structure here.

From the moment Dostoevsky's preliminary notes to *The Idiot* were first published by Sakulin and Belchikov in 1931, the study of the novel has drawn heavily on this material. It has often taken the form of a kind of shuttle traffic between notebooks and finished text in an attempt to solve the enigmas of the latter by statements found in the former.

The prevailing idea of Prince Myshkin as an *imitator* of Christ has been well summarised by Theodore Ziolkovski:

4 Yuri M. Lotman, 1990, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, London, p. 103.

5 Diane Oenning Thompson, 1991, *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*, Cambridge.

Prince Myshkin is a truly Christlike man—in his manuscript notes Dostoevsky once refers to him as “Prince Christ”—of great moral beauty. But to make him plausible as a human being Dostoevsky found it necessary to mar his moral beauty with certain flaws [...]. Dostoevsky drew his Christlike man as a severe epileptic who eventually, at the end of the book, is reduced to babbling idiocy—the savior as idiot!<sup>6</sup>

In representing Prince Myshkin in this way, Dostoevsky was, according to Ziolkovski, “exploiting the ancient *topos* that associates divine truth with madness: in the eyes of society the savior or redeemer appears as a fool.”<sup>7</sup>

The only critic to my knowledge who has contested this interpretation of Prince Myshkin, is J.P. Stern. In an acute analysis of Dostoevsky’s hero he observes that “even though neither the novel nor the notebooks contain a single word in affirmation of a divine origin of Myshkin’s *illness*, there can be no doubt that his total *person* is intended as something like an *imitatio Christi*.” Yet, what Dostoevsky shows, “is the defective nature of Myshkin’s *imitatio*”:<sup>8</sup>

in the end the world proves to be too much for him. Its sins and sorrows lie too heavily on it—too heavily for *him* to redeem them. His *imitatio* is defective, not because it is merely human—given the limits of the convention Dostoevsky has chosen, the re-enacting of Christ could not be anything else. The *imitatio* is defective, because at the crucial moment Myshkin’s meekness is unsupported by an equal spiritual strength: it would have been the strength required for the acknowledgement of love, for the choices implied in that acknowledgement, and for the responsibility it involves. And his weakness is all the more terrible in its consequences since they all—the men and women whose life he shares—looked up to him, since for a while he held them all under the spell of his as yet untested strength. For a while: before more was asked of him than forgiveness.<sup>9</sup>

6 Theodore Ziolkovski, 1972, *Fictional transformations of Jesus*, Princeton, p. 104.

7 Ziolkovski, 1972, p. 104.

8 Peter Stern, 1973, *On Realism*, London, pp. 16–17.

9 Stern, 1973, pp. 18–19.

Against the background of Peter Stern's analysis, the idea of Myshkin as a "truly Christlike man" becomes highly questionable.

In the following I shall highlight three examples in trying to show how problematic the relationship between notes and novel really is: the idea of Prince Myshkin as a "holy fool," as a "poor knight," and as an imitator of Christ.

In one of the earliest plans, written down 22 October 1867, the central character, who is here called simply the Idiot, is referred to as a *iurodivyi*, a word often rendered into English as "holy fool": "What a strange fellow he is." The Son: "Yes, but to me he didn't at all look stupid. But strange, that's true. Just like a *iurodivyi*."<sup>10</sup> "We recognize here the meeting of Myshkin with Rogozhin in the train," according to Mochulsky. "The hero's main trait has been found: *he is a holy-fool*."<sup>11</sup>

For Konrad Onasch, too, the hagiographic type of the "fool in Christ" plays a decisive role in the development of the figure of Prince Myshkin. "The significance of this type and its topics for the poetics and the ideology of the novel can hardly be exaggerated."<sup>12</sup> And at exactly the time when he was writing *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky was exploring what Onasch calls the "poetische Nutzbarmachung"—the poetic usability—of this hagiographic genre in connection with three other projects: the novel referred to as *The Emperor*, the unfinished *Story of Captain Kartuzov*, and the sketch called *The Holy Fool*.<sup>13</sup>

Even in the opening chapter of *The Idiot* Rogozhin concludes that Prince Myshkin is a holy fool, the reason being that the prince, according to his own words, has no experience of women:

"And are you a great fancier of the female sex, Prince? Tell me beforehand!"

"N-n-no! I'm... Maybe you don't know, bur because of my inborn illness, I don't know women at all."

10 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 9, p. 163.

11 Konstantin Mochulsky, 1976, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, trans. M.A. Minihan, Princeton, p. 339.

12 Konrad Onasch, *Der verschwiegene Christus*, Berlin, p. 132.

13 Onasch, 1976, p. 133.



“Well, in that case,” Rogozhin exclaimed, “you come out as a holy fool, Prince, and God loves your kind!” (15)<sup>14</sup>

The fact that the prince is sexually inexperienced because of his inborn handicap is hardly sufficient to make him a “holy fool” in the hagiographic meaning of the word. In orthodox hagiography, a “holy fool” or *iurodivyi* is the Russian equivalent of Greek *salós*:

[...] a person who serves God under the guise of foolishness. In principle, the disguise is not discovered until the fool is dead. Then he or she becomes a saint. If the holy fool happens to be recognised earlier, he runs away, or else commits an act that is so foolish that the rent in his disguise is repaired.<sup>15</sup>

It is quite clear that Myshkin is not a “holy fool” in the sense of representing a particular type of saint. Rogozhin uses the word in a more popular sense, which we might translate as an “innocent fool.” To him, the stranger appears to be one of those imbeciles whom the Russians in the last century still deemed to be inspired by God and under divine protection. But it is characteristic of Dostoevsky’s poetics in *The Idiot* that the relationship between the prince and the prototypical *iurodivyi* of popular belief is “made strange” to the extent that Myshkin fails to come out as a symbolic expression even of this *Urbild*, a living symbol of which is the *iurodivyi* of Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov*. In *The Idiot*, the representation of the prince as a *iurodivyi* seems more like a process of de-symbolisation, until at the end of the story he has finally become what he once was, a helpless idiot. This process of de-symbolisation is, as we shall see, typical of the whole structure of the novel.

In his letter to S.A. Ivanova of 1 January 1868, in which Dostoevsky defines the main idea of the novel as representing a positively beautiful man—“the main idea of the novel is to depict a *positively* beautiful person”—Don Quixote is referred to as the most complete beautiful character in Christian literature: “of all the beautiful characters in Christian

14 F.M. Dostoevsky, 2003, *The Idiot*, trans. R. Peavar & L. Volokhonsky, New York. The numbers in brackets after quotations from *The Idiot* refer to pages in this translation.

15 Lennart Rydén, 1981, “The Holy Fool,” *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel, London, pp. 106–13, p. 106.

literature Don Quixote is the most complete.”<sup>16</sup> A few months later, 21 March, he returns to Don Quixote in his notebook, observing that like Mr Pickwick, Don Quixote is successful as a positive character because he is comic, in contrast to the prince, who is not comic, but innocent:

If Don Quixote and Pickwick as virtuous characters are attractive and a success from the readers’ point of view, it is because of their being comic.

The novel’s main character, the Prince, if not comic, has another attractive trait: he is *!innocent!*<sup>17</sup>

In the novel, the comic figure of Don Quixote is brought together with the “poor knight” of Pushkin’s ballad. In him, Aglaia sees the serious counterpart of Cervantes’ hero:—“The ‘poor knight’ is that same Don Quixote, only a serious and not a comic one” (249). And in her agitated reading of Pushkin’s poem, she goes a step further, replacing the A.M.D., the Ave Mater Dei of the “poor knight,” with A.N.B., i.e. with a reference to Nastasia Filippovna—(A)Nastasia Barashkova—idealising Myshkin’s relationship with her rival and seeing in his figure another incarnation of the *Urbild* represented in Pushkin’s hero. To her, the ballad “portrays a man capable of having an ideal and, second, once he has the ideal, of believing in it and, believing in it, of blindly devoting his whole life to it.” The poet wanted, in her words:

to combine in one extraordinary image the whole immense conception of the medieval chivalrous platonic love of some poor and lofty knight; naturally, it’s all an ideal. (248–49)

But as we know, Aglaia’s attempt at turning Prince Myshkin into a symbolic figure is rejected by the story line of the novel. Myshkin’s relationship with Nastasia Filippovna develops into something quite different from the platonic love of medieval chivalry. Once more, the reader is faced with an *Urbild-Abbild*-relationship that is thwarted, deformed.

One of the strongest claims about Prince Myshkin is that his story follows the pattern of Christ’s life story. The claims find ample support in

<sup>16</sup> Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 28 (2), p. 251.

<sup>17</sup> Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 9, p. 239.

the notebooks, where the strongest formulation is to be found in a summary of parts 3 and 4 from April 1868. Here Dostoevsky writes that “THE PRINCE IS CHRIST.”<sup>18</sup>

In the novel, however, the relationship between Prince Myshkin and Christ has become much more complex. But there is one scene, in particular, that seems to me to represent Myshkin’s relationship with Nastasia Filippovna in a way that suggests Christ’s encounters with women in the Gospels. Above all, we think of the appearance of the risen Christ before Mary Magdalene in the garden. Especially if we recall that the prince on the day before has invited Rogozhin to celebrate with him the beginning of his “new life”: “Come on, then. I don’t want to meet my new life without you, because my new life has begun” (367):

He went down the road that skirted the park to his dacha. His heart was pounding, his thoughts were confused, and everything around him seemed like a dream. And suddenly, just as earlier, both times when he was awakened by the same vision, so the same vision again appeared before him. The same woman came out of the park and stood before him, as if she had been waiting for him there. He shuddered and stopped; she seized his hand and pressed it hard. “No, this is not a vision!”

And so she finally stood before him face to face, for the first time since their parting; she was saying something to him, but he looked at her silently; his heart overflowed and was wrung with pain. Oh, never afterwards could he forget this meeting with her, and he always remembered it with the same pain. She went down on her knees before him right there in the street, as if beside herself; he stepped back in fear, but she tried to catch his hand in order to kiss it, and, just as earlier in his dream, tears glistened now on her long lashes.

“Get up, get up!” he said in a frightened whisper, trying to raise her. “Get up quickly!” (456)

To those familiar with the painter A.A. Ivanov’s rendering of the garden scene, painted in the mid-1830s, it is difficult not to see in this passage a verbal variation of the same biblical prototype. But the analogies between the figure of Christ and that of Prince Myshkin are not developed into

18 Dostoevskii, 1972–90, vol. 9, p. 246.

a typological structure in which the former is symbolically expressed through the latter. On the contrary, towards the end of the story the points of similarity between Christ and the prince are superseded by a marked emphasis on the differences between them. In his confrontation with the prince in one of the last chapters, Radomskii explicitly rejects the analogy between Nastasia Filippovna and the woman taken in adultery, thereby also implicitly rejecting the parallel between Jesus and the prince:

What do you think: a woman was forgiven in the Temple, the same sort of woman, but was she told that she had done well and was worthy of all honor and respect? (580)

Instead of being a fulfilment of a biblical pattern, or typos, Myshkin's attempt to save Nastasia Filippovna is here shown to represent the content of the Gospel story in a highly distorted, "deconstructed" fashion. We observe the same process as in the juxtaposition of the prince with Don Quixote and the "poor knight." Neither in his relationship to Nastasia Filippovna nor in his connection with Aglaia does the prince come out as a fully fledged symbol, in which the cultural content of the prototypes finds a new expression. On the contrary, the bringing together of the idiot with the *Urbild* of Christ as well as with the "poor knight" and his comic counterpart, Don Quixote, the "most complete of all the beautiful characters of Christian literature," has a de-symbolising effect in the novel. Aglaia, who, according to her own words, has read a great many books the last year—"all this past year I've been preparing and studying, and I've read a great many books" (429), and Nastasia Filippovna, who, in Radomskii's words as Aglaia quotes them has read too much poetry—"Evgeny Pavlych said of you that you've read too many poems and are 'too educated for your... position'; that you're a bookish woman" (569)—both project their literary reminiscences onto Myshkin in much the same way as Tatiana projects hers into the figure of Evgenii in Pushkin's novel. It is a kind of Bovaryism; like Emma in Flaubert's novel, they both see in the male protagonist an embodiment of their heroic ideals, a role for which he is totally unfit.

This de-symbolising purport of *The Idiot* anticipates the representation of Stavrogin in *The Devils*, where a number of different people

project their ideologies onto Stavrogin, seeing in him, this empty figure, an incarnation of all their dreams.

There is, however, also a symbolising process at work in *The Idiot*, a process originating in the Holbein picture of the dead Saviour when he has just been taken down from the cross. The painting represents one of the leitmotifs of the novel. It is already alluded to when in his first encounter with the Epanchin ladies, Myshkin refers to a picture he once saw at Basel. In Rogozhin's house there is a copy of it that the prince identifies on his first visit there, observing that: "A man could even lose his faith from that painting" (218). Rogozhin, on his part, confesses that he loves to look at the picture. Later, the thought of the painting comes back to Myshkin during his quest for Nastasia Filippovna just before Rogozhin tries to kill him with his knife and he has his first fit of epilepsy. However, the theme of the dead Christ is only fully developed in Ippolit's speech, where it is expanded into a genuine *ekphrasis* and interpreted as an "expression of the idea of a dark, insolent, and senselessly eternal power, to which everything is subordinated, and this idea is suggested to you unconsciously":

Here the notion involuntarily occurs to you that if death is so terrible and the laws of nature are so powerful, how can they be overcome? How overcome them if they were even defeated now, by the one who defeated nature while he lived, whom nature obeyed, who exclaimed "*Talitha cumi*" and the girl arose, "Lazarus, come forth" and the dead man came out? (408)

The dead Christ as he is described and explained by Ippolit, is the central symbol of *The Idiot*. In his interpretation, the painting is turned into a symbol of the new, nineteenth-century idea of a humanised Jesus, not the Christ of the Church, "fully divine and fully human," who rose from the dead, "conquering death by death," but a wholly human figure, perfect but mortal. In *The Idiot*, the dead body in Holbein's painting has become an empty signifier, its very emptiness signifying that the sacrifice of Christ has lost its meaning, thereby depriving the whole of Christian culture of its meaning, too. In this post-Christian world the pre-Christian, archaic idea of human sacrifice is revived. Nastasia Filippovna is put to death by Rogozhin's knife in the alcove of his study that serves as his bedroom. For

the occasion, the alcove has been turned into a bridal chamber by a green damask curtain dividing the study from the alcove. By this arrangement, Rogozhin's study reminds the reader of a church, the curtain having a function similar to the iconostasis by which the chancel is hidden from the rest of the interior.<sup>19</sup> But in contrast to the "terrible liturgy" of the Church, when Christ's sacrificial death on Golgotha is ritually re-enacted in the bloodless sacrifice of the divine service, Nastasia Filippovna's lifeless body gives expression to exactly the feeling of "horrible anguish and confusion" that according to Ippolit overwhelmed those surrounding the dead man depicted in Holbein's picture "on that evening which at once smashed all their hopes and almost their beliefs." (408).

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19 Onasch, 1976, p. 152.

## Male Homosocial Desire in *The Idiot*

Thus a strong innate bisexual disposition [...] must certainly be assumed in Dostoevsky, and it shows itself in a viable form (as latent homosexuality) in the important part played by male friendships in his life, in the strangely tender attitude towards rivals in love and in his remarkable understanding of situations which are explicable only by repressed homosexuality, as many examples from his novels show.

Sigmund Freud

DO YOU remember the two young men who found themselves sitting opposite each other in the Warsaw train as it was approaching Petersburg that damp and foggy November morning in the 1860s:

One of them was of medium height, about twenty-seven years old, with curly, almost black hair, and small but fiery grey eyes. He had a broad, flat nose and high cheekbones; his thin lips were constantly twisting into a sort of impudent, mocking, and even malicious smile; but his forehead was high and well formed and made up for the lack of nobility in the lower part of his face. Especially notable was the deathly pallor of his face. (5)<sup>1</sup>

The other:

also about twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, slightly taller than average, with very blond, thick hair, sunken cheeks, and a sparse, pointed, nearly white little beard. His eyes were big, blue, and intent;

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<sup>1</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2003, *The Idiot*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volkhonsky, intro. R. Pevear, New York. Numbers in brackets after quotations refer to this translation.

their gaze had something quiet but heavy it and was filled with that strange expression by which some are able to guess at the first sight that the subject has the falling sickness. The young man's face, however, was pleasant, fine, and dry, but colourless [...]. (6)

Yes, you have recognized them: Parfen Semenovitch Rogozhin and Lev Nikolaevitch Myshkin, the two male protagonists in Dostoevsky's *Idiot*. And do you also recall their parting words to each other as the train was entering the station? Let me remind you how Rogozhin suddenly turns to Myshkin with the following words:

“Prince, I don't know why I've come to love you [...] Come and see me, Prince.” [...] “I'll come with greatest pleasure, and I thank you very much for loving me. I may even come today, if I have time. Because, I'll tell you frankly, I like you very much [...].” (14–15)

Well, the prince did not manage to go and see his new friend on that particular day. But we will not forget the two young men's expressions of mutual affection. As we follow them—the sons—into the world of the fathers, we shall try to analyse their relationship within the power structures of this patriarchal world, dominated by men's relations with other men. In her now classic study, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick uses “homosocial” in opposition to “homosexual” in order to define various forms of men's relations with other men or “male bonding.”<sup>2</sup> Homosocial relationships are traditionally accompanied by homophobia, or intense fear and hatred of homosexuality. In a male-dominated society, homosexuality is perceived as part of the potential for disorder that threatens its heteronormative discourse.

So far, homoeroticism and homosexuality in Dostoevsky in general, and in *The Idiot* in particular, have been investigated almost exclusively by Freudian psychoanalysts and critics applying psychoanalytic methods to literary studies.<sup>3</sup> In the following, I should like to take an alterna-

2 Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick, 1993, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York.

3 Sigmund Freud, “Dostojewski und die Vätertötung” (1928) has inspired a number of important psychoanalytic studies of homosexuality in Dostoevsky. Among the most



tive stance, and see *The Idiot* as a representation of a world dominated by male homosocial power relations and to show how the novel's three central characters—Nastasia Filippovna, Rogozhin, and Prince Myshkin—transgress the boundaries of this world and become outsiders whose actions are no longer controlled by its laws. Furthermore, I should like to show how in the Nastasia Filippovna-Rogozhin-Myshkin relationship male homosocial bonding goes beyond the “men-promoting-the-interests-of-men” sphere and moves into the “orbit of desire,” and how this activates its erotic potential.<sup>4</sup>

The pivot, or pillar, of *The Idiot*'s homosocial society is General Epanchin, at fifty-six, “the head of a flourishing family,” father of three grown-up daughters:

General Epanchin lived in his own house, off Liteinaya, towards the Cathedral of the Transfiguration. Besides this (excellent) house, five-sixths of which was rented out, General Epanchin owned another enormous house on Sadovaya Street, which also brought him a large income. Besides these two houses, he had a quite profitable and considerable estate just outside Petersburg; and there was also some factory in the Petersburg district. In the old days General Epanchin, as everyone knew, had participated in tax farming. Now he participated and had quite a considerable voice in several important joint-stock companies. He had the reputation of a man with big money, big do-

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derent are Branwen E. W. Pratt, 1977, “The Role of the Unconscious in The Eternal Husband,” *Literature and Psychology* 21, pp. 29–40; John R. Maze, 1981, “Dostoevsky: Epilepsy, Mysticism, and Homosexuality,” *American Imago* 38, pp. 155–83; James Rice, 1985, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art*, Ann Arbor; Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, 1989, “Introduction: Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis,” *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. D. Rancour-Laferriere, Amsterdam, pp. 1–38; Steven J. Rosen, 1993, “Homerothic Body Language in Dostoevsky,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 80, pp. 405–32. On homosexuality in *The Idiot*, see in particular Simon O. Lesser, 1977, “Saint and Sinner: Dostoevsky's *Idiot*,” and “The Role of Unconscious Understanding in Flaubert and Dostoevsky,” *The Whispered Meanings*, eds. R. Sprich & R. W. Noland, Amherst, pp. 54–67, 86–104, 87; and Elisabeth Dalton, 1997, *Unconscious Structure in The Idiot: A Study in Literature and Psychoanalysis*. Recent attempts to break away from the psychoanalytic hegemony are Susanne Fusso, 2000, “Dostoevsky's Comely Boy: Homoerotic Desire and Aesthetic Strategies in A Raw Youth,” *The Russian Review* 59, pp. 577–96, and Michael Katz, 2001, “Dostoevsky's Homophilia/Homophobia,” in P.I. Barta (ed.), *Gender and Sexuality in Russian Civilisation*, London, pp. 239–54. I am grateful to the two authors for having let me read their articles in manuscript.

4 Cf. Sedgwick, 1993, pp. 1–3.

ings, and big connections. He had managed to make himself absolutely necessary in certain quarters, his own department among others. And yet it was also a known that Ivan Fyodorovich Epanchin was a man of no education and the son of a common soldier. (15–16)

The general is one of the *homines novi* of early Russian capitalism as it developed during the first decade of Alexander II's reign. He combines his position as a successful civil servant with that of a prosperous industrialist and investor, who brings his wealth into circulation according to the principles of capitalist economy, and—not to forget—with his duties as the father of three marriageable daughters. As far as their future is concerned, however, the general

had adopted a system of not rushing his daughters into marriage [...] the fact alone, for instance, that their fortune and social significance increased every year in geometrical progression meant that the more time that passed, the more advantageous it was to his daughters, even as brides. (38–39)

But as with all economic speculation, there are imponderables, also in the general's "system." Aleksandra, the eldest, has "suddenly and almost quite unexpectedly (as always happens) turned twenty-five." (39). Moreover, almost at the same time a suitor has come forward that has to be taken most seriously. The suitor is Afanasii Ivanovich Totskii, "a man of about fifty-five"—incidentally the same age as the general—"of elegant character and with extraordinary refinement of taste" (39). Now Totskii, "a man of high society, with high connections and extraordinary wealth, again showed his old desire to marry":

He wanted to marry well; he was an exceeding connoisseur of beauty. Since he had for some time maintained an extraordinary friendship with General Epanchin, especially strengthened by a joint participation in certain financial undertakings, he therefore asked the general—looking for friendly counsel and guidance, so to speak—whether it would or would not be possible to think of him marrying one of his daughters. (39)

The general immediately appreciated the proposal, not least since he knew that Totskii would make no difficulties about the dowry. Having first informed his wife, together the parents “offered only the most remote suggestions for their daughters’ consideration. In response to which they received from them a reassuring, if not very definite, statement that the eldest, Aleksandra, would perhaps not decline” (40).

There is, however, one complex and troublesome “occurrence,” as Totskii expressed it, that “had begun very far back, about eighteen years ago” (40). What Totskii refers to, is his relationship with Nastasia Filippovna, the daughter of an army officer of good noble family—“even better than Totsky” (40)—whom he met at the age of seven, when she had just lost both her parents. At sixteen he raped her and made her his kept mistress. During the first four years of their relationship Nastasia Filippovna remained in the country. But when the rumour reached her that Totskii was going to marry a rich and beautiful society woman in Petersburg, she “suddenly showed an extraordinary resolve and revealed a most unexpected character” (42), went to Petersburg, and arrived before Totskii quite a different woman:

This new woman, it turned out, first of all knew and understood an extraordinary amount—so much, it was a cause of profound wonder where she could have acquired such information, could have developed such precise notions in herself. (Could it have been from her girls’ library?) What’s more, she even understood an exceeding amount about legal matters and had a positive knowledge, if not of the world, at least of how certain things went in the world. (42)

She tells Totskii that after the first shock she has never felt anything but contempt for him, that she does not care the least if he marries, but that she has come to prevent his marriage out of spite. Totskii, who “at first looked with scorn on this untried soul he had obtained for himself so cheaply, more recently had begun to doubt his view” (44). The inexperienced girl he had had so cheaply, has got the better of him. She lets herself be supported by Totskii, at the same time breaking off their intimate relationship.

What makes Nastasia Filippovna so dangerous, is the fact that she has learnt to manipulate sexuality and male power domination from the van-

tage of her own role as a “fallen woman.” She has infringed on the masculine world and acquired a power over men not tolerated of a woman in patriarchal society.

Let’s now go back to the situation when, five years later, Totskii asks General Epanchin for advice in respect of one of his daughters, making at the same time “a full and candid confession.” He will “*stop at nothing* to gain his freedom” (46).

His plan, supported by the general, is to marry Nastasia Filippovna to Gania Ivolgin, the general’s secretary, “a young man of very good name, and living in a most worthy family” (47). As part of his proposal, Totskii offers her seventy-five thousand roubles. She accepts, not as a payment for her loss of virtue, but “as a recompence for her maimed life” (49).

The seventy-five thousand roubles Totskii is willing to pay in order to get rid of the woman he once ruined, is a parodic equivalent of the dowry General Epanchin is prepared to pay in order to marry off his daughters. In both cases, marriage—the quintessential symbol of patriarchal heterosexuality—may best be defined as “the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men.”<sup>5</sup> The parodic character of the scheme is reinforced by rumours about Gania’s reaction to it:

although Ganya had indeed tried passionately to win Nastasya Filippovna over before, now that the two friends had decided to exploit that passion, which had begun to be mutual, for their own advantage, and to buy Ganya by selling him Nastasya Filippovna as a lawful wife, he had begun to hate her like his own nightmare. It was as if passion and hatred strangely came together in his soul. (50)

In contrast to the “male traffic in women” that constitutes a “normal” marriage, Totskii and the general plan to bolster their mutual bonds by a marriage in which both bride and bridegroom are sold and bought. In order to obtain Nastasia Filippovna, the object of his desire, Gania would have to sell himself. In other words, he would have to let himself be “feminised,” to prostitute himself like a woman. But as we know, the price is too high. Gania refuses to be bought, also by Nastasia Filippovna.

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5 Sedgwick, 1993, pp. 25f.

His manhood passes the test when at her birthday party he resists the temptation to retrieve the hundred thousand roubles from the fire.

The Gania story comes as a prelude to the main theme of male homosocial desire in *The Idiot*, as it is developed in the story of Nastasia Filippovna's relationship with Rogozhin and Prince Myshkin. This story, which begins in earnest at Nastasia Filippovna's party in the first part of the novel, almost disappears for long stretches, in particular in part two and three, in order to come back with full force in the novel's fifth and last part. In the meantime, several plot strands or potential plot strands have varied the same pattern. There is the abortive Nastasia Filippovna-General Epanchin-Gania variation, just hinted at in the first part, the Aglaia-Myshkin-Radomskii affair, developed into a longer story, as is also the Aglaia-Myshkin-Gania rivalry, to mention some of the most obvious ones. All of these plot lines describe forms of homosocial or "triangular" desire, i.e., according to René Girard, desire according to the Other.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the common idea of spontaneous desire, the idea that desire is rooted in the subject and written into the nature of things, Girard has shown in his analyses of the European novel how desire and its corollaries, such as jealousy and envy, "imply a third presence: object, subject, and a third person toward whom jealousy and envy is directed."<sup>7</sup>

In his studies, Girard has analysed the power system that is structured by the relation of rivalry between the two active members of an erotic triangle. One of his findings is that in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of "rivalry" and "love," even though they are experienced differently, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent. For instance, Girard finds many examples in which the choice of the beloved is determined in the first place, not by the qualities of the beloved, but by the beloved's already being the choice of the person who has been chosen as a rival. And since Girard restricts his analyses to the mainstream European novel, in which males are rivals for a female, the bond between males becomes his focus of interest. Next to Proust, Dostoevsky is Girard's chief authority on triangular desire. In particular, he finds in Dostoevsky a variant in which the mediator is foregrounded,

6 René Girard, 1965, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, trans. Y. Freccero, Baltimore & London. French original: *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, Paris, 1961.

7 Girard, 1965, p.12.

and the object relegated to the background. This transfer of the centre of gravity is, according to Girard, “best and most spectacularly illustrated by *The Eternal Husband*, in the relationship between Velchaninov, Pavel Pavlovich Trusotskii, and the latter’s wife, Velchaninov’s former mistress. Here, the wife, the object of desire, is dead, but, as Girard points out, the mediator “still exerts an irresistible attraction.”<sup>8</sup> Girard sees “a hint of homosexuality in this affair,” a form of homosexuality, moreover, that he defines as “the eroticizing of mimetic rivalry.”<sup>9</sup>

If we go back to the triangular relationship between Nastasia Filippovna, Prince Myshkin, and Rogozhin, we will see that the erotic value both men from the outset attached to Nastasia Filippovna becomes involved in a process in which it is eventually transferred to themselves as each other’s mediators. This leads to a series of encounters in which the homoerotic potential of the triangle creates an intimacy in their relationship that brings back and reinforces the feeling of mutual affection so strongly expressed at their first meeting in the train:

They addressed each other as familiars. In Moscow they had often happened to spend long hours together, and there had even been several moments during their meetings that had left an all too memorable imprint upon both their hearts. (205)

While in his relationship with the novel’s other characters the prince is continually deconstructed and reconstructed in the image of their ideals—to Nastasia Filippovna he represents her idea of the Saviour, to Aglaia Epanchina Pushkin’s *Poor Knight*—in his relationship with Rogozhin there are those moments of mutual affection when they no longer appear to one another as the rivals they are not, but are able to be themselves with one another as friends. At the same time, however, their involvement with Nastasia Filippovna renders their relationship increasingly ambivalent, oscillating between love and intense hatred, as in the following scene during Myshkin’s first visit to Rogozhin’s house:

“Parfyon, I’m not your enemy and ave no intention of intruding or interfering with you. [...] And you know for yourself whether I

8 Girard, 1965, p. 45.

9 René Girard, 1978, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. S. Bann & M. Meteer, Stanford, p. 346.

was ever your *real* rival, even when she ran away from you to me. You're laughing now—I know at what. Yes, we lived separately there, and in different towns, and you know it all *for certain*. I explained to you before that I love *her* 'not with love, but with pity'. I think I defined it precisely. You told me then that you understood these words of mine; is it true? did you understand? See how hatefully you look at me! I've come to bring you peace, because you, too, are dear to me. I love you very much, Parfyon. And now I'll go and never come again. Farewell!"

The prince got up.

"Stay with me a little," Parfyon said quietly, without getting up from his place and leaning his head on his right hand, "I haven't seen you for a long time."

The prince sat down. They both fell silent again.

"When you're not in front of me, I immediately feel spite for you, Leo Nikolayevich. In these three months that I haven't seen you, I've felt spiteful towards you every minute, by God. [...] Now you haven't sat with me a quarter of an hour, and all my spite is gone, and I love you again like before. Stay with me a little..." (208–209)

It is during this meeting at Rogozhin's house that they exchange crosses and become sworn brothers:

"Lev Nikolaevich!" Parfyon cried from above, when the prince had reached the first landing, "That cross you bought from the soldier, are you wearing it?"

"Yes."

And the prince stopped again.

"Show me."

Again a new oddity! The prince thought a little, went back up, and showed him the cross without taking it from his neck.

"Give it to me," said Rogozhin.

"Why? Or do you..."

The prince seemed unwilling to part with this cross.

"I'll wear it, and you can wear mine. I'll give it to you."

"You want to exchange crosses? Very well, Parfyon, if so, I'm glad; we'll be brothers."

After the exchange of crosses, Rogozhin takes the prince to his mother:

“Mama,” said Rogozhin, kissing her hand, “this is my great friend, Prince Leo Nikolayevich Myshkin; he and I have exchanged crosses; he was like a brother to me in Moscow for a time, and did a lot for me. Bless him, mama, as you would your own son. Wait, old girl, like this, let me put your hand the right way...”

But before Parfyon had time to do anything, the old woman raised her right hand, put three fingers together, and piously crossed the prince three times. [...]

“Well, let’s go, Lev Nikolaevich,” said Parfyon [...]

“But let me at least embrace you before we part, you strange man!” cried the prince, looking at him with tender reproach and trying to embrace him. But Rogozhin no sooner raised his arms than he lowered them again at once. He could not resolve to do it; he turned away so as not to look at the prince. He did not want to embrace him. [...] But suddenly his whole face was transformed: he turned terribly pale, his lips quivered, his eyes lit up. He raised his arms, embraced the prince tightly, and said, breathlessly:

“Take her, then, if it’s fate! She’s yours! I give her up to you!... Remember Rogozhin!” (221–23)

The pledging of brotherhood described here, is a reminiscent of the old, half-ecclesiastical, half-popular rite of *adelphopoiesis*, once a rite celebrated in church throughout the Orthodox world, but gradually forbidden. In *The Idiot*, the blessing of the prince as Rogozhin’s sworn brother is described in direct parallel to the blessing of Nastasia Filippovna as Rogozhin’s wife five days earlier: “I took my mother’s right hand, put her fingers together: ‘Bless us, mother’, I say, ‘this woman is going to marry me.’” (214).

The homoerotic implications of ritual brotherhood have been widely debated over the last few years, in particular since John Boswell’s *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, in which he defines *adelphopoiesis*, or the “making of brothers” as a “gay marriage ceremony.”<sup>10</sup> Boswell’s book has come in for some heavy criticism, much of it justified. Dostoevsky’s treatment of ritual brotherhood in *The Idiot*, however, where the same-sex ceremony is represented as a repetition of the scene where Rogozhin’s

10 John Boswell, 1994, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, New York.



mother blesses Nastasia Filippovna as her son's wife, might indicate that Boswell's theory may have something to it, that there is a homoerotic element in *adelphopoiesis* exploited by Dostoevsky in the novel.

In *The Idiot*, the relationship between Rogozhin and the prince goes through a process in which the erotic potential of their spontaneous affection for each other is activated when they become involved with Nastasia Filippovna. She is the provocative third person, acting as a stimulus to their sexual desire. But the rivalry between the two men creates a love-hate relationship that can only be resolved by breaking the triangle, i.e. by eliminating one of the three persons involved. And when Rogozhin finally sacrifices Nastasia Filippovna and kills her with the knife he at an earlier stage intended for the prince, the homoerotic bonding between the two men finally overrides the heteroerotic force of the triangle. Through the sacrifice of the woman, the rivalry between the two men is neutralised, and they are reunited in a relationship with distinct homoerotic overtones.

Before killing Nastasia Filippovna, Rogozhin first aims his knife at the prince. Rogozhin's attempt at Myshkin's life and the events leading up to it, form a strange interlude in the history of their desire. In our context, it has to be read against the background of their encounter at Rogozhin's house. As we have seen, this encounter begins with the prince surrendering to Rogozhin—"Besides, you know perfectly well: were I ever your real rival?" (240)—and ends by the latter surrendering Nastasia Filippovna, the object of their desire, to the prince: "Take her, then, if it's fate! She's yours! I give her up to you!... Remember Rogozhin!" (223).

In the meantime, we have observed a displacement of the two rivals' desire in the direction of each other, formalised in the same-sex union of the *adelphopoiesis* ceremony. In Prince Myshkin, this homoerotic awakening is initially expressed through his obsession with Rogozhin's eyes and with his new knife. Both these pars-pro-toto representations of Rogozhin continue to persecute him as he leaves Rogozhin. The contours of reality are now so blurred in his mind that he no longer quite knows what he is doing. He begins to walk towards Nastasia Filippovna's Petersburg lodgings, even though he knows almost for certain that she is not there and in spite of the fact that she is no longer the object of his desire.

An extraordinary, irrepressible desire, almost a temptation, suddenly gripped his whole will [...] A new, sudden idea had come into his head [...] It at once became terribly disgusting and almost impossible for him to think further about his “sudden idea.” With tormentingly strained attention, he peered into everything his eyes lighted upon [...]” (227–28).

It is Rogozhin he is looking for, subconsciously knowing that he is being followed. He remembers

Rogozhin’s cross that he was now wearing, and the blessing of his mother, to whom Rogozhin himself had brought him, and that last convulsive embrace, Rogozhin’s last renunciation on the stairs—and after all that to catch himself constantly searching for something around him [...] and... yes, he wished he could meet Rogozhin now, he would take him by the hand, and they would walk together... (229)

And when, finally, he finds out that Nastasia Filippovna has, indeed, left for Pavlovsk that very morning, and he knows that he will not meet her: “his ‘sudden idea’ had suddenly been confirmed and justified, and—again he believed in his demon!” (231):

But had it been confirmed? Had it been justified? Why this trembling again, this cold sweat, this gloom and inner cold? Was it because he had just seen those *eyes* again? [...] A strange and terrible demon had fastened on to him definitively, and would no longer let him go. This demon had whispered to him in the Summer Garden, as he sat oblivious under a linden tree, that if Rogozhin had needed so much to keep watch on him ever since morning and catch him at every step, then [...] Rogozhin would unfailingly go *there*, to that house [...] And now, at the house, he stood on the other side of the street, some fifty steps away, at an angle, on the opposite sidewalk, his arms crossed, and waited. This time he was in full view and it seemed that he deliberately wanted to be in view. He stood like an accuser and a judge, and not like... And not like who? (231–32)

In his reflections, Myshkin now sees himself as the victim, standing before Rogozhin, his “accuser and judge.” Having realized that he never was Rogozhin’s rival, he plays his own role as victim, seeing the other in the role of the infinitely stronger, his “accuser” and “judge,” orienting his desire towards the other’s violence, provoking the brutal treatment from his love partner that follows at the moment when they in the hotel stand in the stairway, “face to face, almost touching”:

Suddenly the prince seized him by the shoulders and turned back to the stairs, closer to the light: he wanted to see the face more clearly.

Rogozhin’s eyes flashed and a furious smile contorted his face. His right hand rose, and something gleamed in it; the prince did not even think of stopping him. He remembered only that he seemed to have cried out:

“Parfyon, I don’t believe it!...”

Then suddenly it was as if something opened up before him: an extraordinary *inner* light illumined his soul. (234)

Rogozhin has responded to the prince’s masochistic desire, and the final stroke is averted only because of the prince’s attack of epilepsy:

this impression of unexpected terror, in conjunction with all the other dreadful impressions of that moment, suddenly made Rogozhin freeze on the spot and thereby saved the prince from the inevitable blow of the knife that was already coming down on him” (235)

Throughout the murder scene and the events that lead up to it, the prince imagines himself in the role of victim in a mimetic confrontation with the most insurmountable of all possible obstacles, his own illness. His illness is the cause of his surrender to Rogozhin—we remember the prince’s words at their encounter in the train “because of my inborn illness, I don’t know women at all” (15)—but at the same time the cause of his salvation. Its orgasmic nature gives it a distinct sexual character, pointing to the homoerotic nature of the prince’s masochistic desire.

It is not insignificant that Rogozhin mentions the possibility of killing Nastasia Filippovna just before the two rivals become ritual brothers.

When they meet again at Rogozhin's house, she has already been murdered and there is no trait of his former fits of hatred towards the prince:

[...] in the crowd someone suddenly touched his elbow and said in a low voice, just at his ear:

"Lev Nikolayevich, come with me, brother, you've got to."

It was Rogozhin. [...]

Going up the stairs, he turned and shook his finger at the prince to step more quietly, quietly opened the door of his room, let the prince in, carefully came in after him, locked the door behind him, and put the key in his pocket.

"Let's go," he said in a whisper. [...]

"Rogozhin! Where is Nastasya Filippovna?" the prince suddenly whispered and stood up, trembling in every limb. Rogozhin got up, too.

"There," he whispered, nodding towards the curtain.

"Asleep?" whispered the prince.

Again Rogozhin looked at him intently, as earlier.

"Okay, let's go!... Only you... Well, let's go!" [...]

The prince took one step closer, then another, and stopped. [...]

"It was you?" he finally managed to say, nodding towards the curtain.

"It was... me..." Rogozhin whispered and looked down. [...]

"Wait, what about now, Parfyon, what do you want now?"

"[...] We'll spend the night here together. There's no other bed here than that one, so I decided to take the pillows from the two sofas, and I'll arrange them next to each other there, by the curtain, for you and me, so we're together. [...] So let her lie here now, next to us, next to me and you..." [...] The bed got made up anyhow; he went over to the prince, took him tenderly and rapturously by the arm, got him to his feet, and led him to his bed (603-608)

The last scene in the Nastasya Filippovna-Rogozhin-Myshkin story quite literally takes place in the closet. The closet door will only be opened when the two friends have both lost their wits:

Now and again Rogozhin sometimes suddenly began to mutter, loudly, abruptly, and incoherently; began to exclaim and laugh; then

the prince would reach out his trembling hand to him and quietly touch his head, his hair, stroke it and stroke his cheeks... there was nothing more he could do. [...] he finally lay down on the pillows, as if quite strengthless now and in despair, and pressed his face to the pale and motionless face of Rogozhin; tears flowed from his eyes onto Rogozhin's cheeks, [...] when, after many hours, the door opened and people came in, they found the murderer totally unconscious and delirious. The prince was sitting motionless on the bed beside him, and each time the sick man had a burst of shouting or raving, he quietly hastened to pass his trembling hand over his hair and cheeks, as if caressing and soothing him. (611)

Rogozhin will recover from his inflammation of the brain. In due course he will be tried and sentenced to fifteen years of hard labour in Siberia. His eloquent and clever lawyer will prove that the crime was the result of a brain fever that had set in a long time before the murder was committed. His vast fortune will go to his brother and thus be returned to the homosocial world of the fathers.

And the "idiot"? He will be sent back to the Swiss clinic from where he came that damp and foggy November morning. There he will be diagnosed with complete, if not definitely incurable breakdown of his mental faculties.

By representing the two men lying together on their makeshift bed as an idiot and an insane murderer, Dostoevsky's imagination has created a version of *muzhelozhstvo*: "the act of men going to bed with men" (from Greek *arsenokoitia*)—the traditional Russian term for homosexuality—that affirms the prejudices of patriarchal society. From the point of view of male homosocial heteronormativity, insanity is probably the only acceptable explanation of the terrible events that bring the Nastasia Filippovna-Rogozhin-Myshkin story to an end.

But there is another possible explanation: that this heteronormativity is the real cause of the tragedy. A queer reading of *The Idiot* reveals the presence of homosexual relations in the novel's universe as well as in the culture that produced it. The novel's tragic ending demonstrates to what extent patriarchal power relations have been structured as heterosexual, and how the schizogenic force of homophobia that sustains the novel's patriarchal order in the end inevitably will cause its disintegration.

## The Last Delusion in an Infinite Series of Delusions: Stavrogin and the Symbolic Structure of *Demons*

ACCORDING to a well-known passage in Anna Dostoevskaia's memoirs, it was her younger brother who provided Dostoevsky with the theme for his novel about the nihilists, when in the autumn of 1869 he came to visit them in Dresden. A student at the Moscow Agricultural College, Dostoevsky's brother-in-law gave a vivid description of student life at the college, where political unrest was expected to break out at any moment. "And it was from this that Fedor Mikhailovich conceived the idea of depicting the political movement of the time in one of his novels, and of taking as one of its main characters the student Ivanov (under the name of Shatov) who was later murdered by Nechaiev."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the doubts expressed by scholars such as A.S. Dolinin and Leonid Grossman about the details of Anna Grigorevna's account, it has been generally accepted that Dostoevsky first conceived of *Demons* as a pamphlet directed against the nihilists, and that the idea of combining this account with a new, psychological subplot centred around the figure of Stavrogin came only at a later stage, when Dostoevsky was unable to proceed with his original conception. The publication of the notebooks for *Demons* in their chronological order, however, gives us a different picture of the novel's *Entstehungsgeschichte*. As the editors point out, Anna Grigorevna's version "is in need of a proper corrective."<sup>2</sup> And so are, we might add, Grossman's and Dolinin's reconstructions.

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1 A.G. Dostoevskaia, 1971, *Vospominaniia*, Moscow, pp. 190–91.

2 F.M. Dostoevskii, 1972–90, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, Moscow, vol. 12, pp. 162–63. In the following, this edition will be referred to in brackets by volume and page number.

From the notebooks we learn that the “Stavrogin story” belongs to the initial phase of Dostoevsky’s work on the novel, preceding, in fact, the development of its political theme. In the very first draft, jotted down at the beginning of 1870, the novel is referred to as *Envy (Zavist’)* (x1, 58–64). Here we are already able to discern in the brilliant but vindictive Prince A.B. and in the Teacher, a somewhat ridiculous character, conceived as an embodiment of ideal beauty, the future figures of Stavrogin and Shatov. Similarly, we recognize in the sketches of the Prince’s mother, of the Beauty (*Krasavitsa*), and of the Ward (*Vospitannitsa*), the outlines of Varvara Petrovna, Stavrogin’s mother, of Liza Tushina, and of Daria Pavlovna, Shatov’s sister. In the first draft, the Beauty is being courted by both the Prince and the Teacher. But like the young heroine of Dostoevsky’s pre-Siberian story, *The Landlady*, and like Nastasia Filippovna in *The Idiot*, finished in January 1869, the Beauty is unable to choose between her two suitors. The two rivals are interlocked in a highly ambivalent relationship, “between them lay envy and hatred,” while at the same time they are drawn towards each other by a feeling of mutual affection, the Prince seeking to have it out with the Teacher, wanting to learn from him, and secretly weeping on his shoulder (x1, 60–61).

The whole setup turns out to be just another variation of one of Dostoevsky’s favourite compositional schemes, the “eternal triangle,” involving two men and a woman, or two women and one man, in a complex relationship of conflicting emotions, where love and attraction coexist with jealousy and hatred. The configuration Dostoevsky played around with in the first drafts for *Demons* seems to go back to an unfinished story, *Spring Love*, from 1859, in which a young girl, a prince, and a budding writer form a similar triangle (111, 443ff.).

The publication of the notebooks gives new support to the theory put forward by René Girard.<sup>3</sup> According to Girard, the structure of *Demons* is based on the principle of what he calls “triangular desire.” Although in many ways still unsurpassed, Girard’s interpretation of *Demons* has never been integrated into the general understanding of the novel. In fact most critics still write as if his study did not exist.

Girard’s starting point is the passage from *Don Quixote* in which the hidalgo explains the essence of chivalry as an imitation of the famous

3 René Girard, 1966, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, trans. Y. Freccero, Baltimore & London. French original: *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, Paris, 1961.

Amadis of Gaul, the most perfect of all the knights errant, in the same way that the life of the Christian saint is an imitation of Christ. From this passage Girard develops his own theory of “triangular desire”:

Don Quixote has surrendered to Amadis the individual’s fundamental prerogative: he no longer chooses the objects of his own desire—Amadis must choose for him, or at least seem to be determined for him, by the model of all chivalry. We shall call the model the mediator of desire.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to “spontaneous desire,” which may be represented by a straight line from subject to object, mediated desire involves a model. Graphically it may be illustrated by a triangle, where the mediator is situated above the straight line between subject and object, related to both. This triangle represents an invariant structure. The object of desire may change, but the relationship between object, subject, and mediator, remains constant. Mediated desire, therefore, may be defined as desire according to Another.<sup>5</sup>

In Cervantes’ novel, the mediator belongs to a world transcending the world of the hero. In the “modern novel,” i.e., the novel as we know it from the works of Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Proust, the distance between the world of the subject and the world of the mediator has been reduced, with the effect that their spheres interpenetrate. When this happens, Girard speaks of internal mediation, in contrast to external mediation, where the distance is sufficient to forestall any contact between the two worlds.

Girard’s model is a radical challenge to Freud’s Oedipal triangle form *The Ego and the Id* (1923), which makes sexual rivalry primary.<sup>6</sup> It has more in common with Freud’s theory of “identification” in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), where he focuses on *imitation* of the parent (e.g. the son desiring to be like the father and to have what he has). Girard applies his theory of mimetic desire in the analysis of the complex relationships existing between the characters of the modern novel, where it enables him to uncover the hidden psychological

4 René Girard, 1966, pp. 1–2.

5 Girard, 1966, p. 4.

6 Cf. Girard, 1966, p. 186, n. 1.



mechanism underlying the emotional ambiguity of these relationships. He shows, for instance, how, in the case of internal mediation, the subject's impulse towards the object, which is at the same time an impulse towards the mediator, is checked by the mediator, who himself desires, or possesses, the object. This creates a love-hate relationship between subject and mediator, which goes a long way in explaining such phenomena as sadomasochism, Hegel's concept of "the unhappy consciousness," and his "dialectic of master and slave."<sup>7</sup>

The subject is convinced that the model considers himself too superior to accept him as a disciple. The subject is torn between two opposite feelings toward his model—the most submissive reverence and the most intense malice.<sup>8</sup>

The heroes of *Notes from the Underground* and *The Eternal Husband* are among Girard's most illuminating examples of this form of internalized triangular desire. It is in *Demons*, however, that Dostoevsky's representation of internal mediation reaches its apogee, according to Girard. Within the framework of his theory, the figure of Nikolai Stavrogin emerges as the mediator of all the other main characters of the novel. "To understand Stavrogin we must look on him as a model and consider his relations with his 'disciples'."<sup>9</sup>

In Girard's reading of *Demons*, Stavrogin emerges as the source from which "the possessed" receive all their ideas and desires. He is their "idol," in whose "satanic grandeur" we should recognize "an image of Antichrist." In the world of the novel, defined as "the reversed image of the Christian universe," the "positive mediation of the saint" is replaced by the "negative mediation of anguish and hate." The "deviated transcendency" of internal mediation takes the form of a "caricature of vertical transcendency," and more clearly than most Dostoevsky scholars, Girard defines the parodic nature of the novel's "distorted mysticism" as an inversion of true worship, an inversion where, in his own words, every single element has its "luminous counterpart in Christian truth."<sup>10</sup>

Girard has no difficulty in supporting his theory by quotations and references to Dostoevsky's own text. He cites the relationships of Kirillov,

7 Girard, 1966, pp. 110–11.

8 Girard, 1966, p. 10.

9 Girard, 1966, pp. 59–60.

10 Girard, 1966, pp. 60–61.

Shatov, Lebiadkin, and Petr Verkhovenski, to Stavrogin, defining these various relationships as different examples of internal mediation, describing how they all regard Stavrogin as their “light,” their “sun” and their “Ivan-Tsarevich.” He is the figure before whom Mar’ia Timofeevna asks to kneel down and worship. But he is also the person whom she un-masks as the impostor. As the centre of the novel, Stavrogin, in Girard’s interpretation, “provides a veritable allegory of internal mediation.”<sup>11</sup>

Girard’s theory of triangular desire has provided us with a new insight into the psychological mechanisms regulating the interrelationships between the other characters and Stavrogin in *Demons*. Their emotional behaviours are interpreted according to the “laws of triangular desire.”

Girard’s analysis of triangular desire in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, has shown, once and for all, its fundamental importance in *Demons*. It does seem to me, however, that there is still more to say about mimetic structures in *Demons*, and in the following I should like to shift the focus from triangular desire to the binary *Urbild-Abbild* relationship between the imitators and their prototypes.

If we go back to Cervantes’ novel, we shall recall that the hero’s imitation of Amadis is compared with the *imitatio Christi* of the Christian saint. The novel is, as it were, a profane counterpart and parody of the *vitae sanctorum*. As a prototype and model, Amadis is a complete and finite hero, taken over from another text and parodied by Cervantes in his story about the life and adventures of the knight of the rueful countenance. But in spite of the parody, Don Quixote and the saintly heroes of medieval hagiography have one basic feature in common: their overriding desire is to transform themselves into an image of the prototype in order to be united, become one with the model regulating their behaviour. Dulcinea or the windmills can only be defined as objects of Don Quixote’s desire as long as they represent the ideal prototypes of chivalry. The irony of *Don Quixote* is due to the illusory nature of the prototypes. They exist only in the mind of the protagonist. Here lies the decisive contrast between Cervantes’ parodic use of the *Urbild-Abbild* structure and the function of this structure in the Lives of the Saints, where the prototypes belong to a divine reality transcending the world of subjective imagination.

In *Madame Bovary*, where the heroine’s similarity to Don Quixote has become a commonplace in literary criticism, Emma imitates the desire

11 Girard, 1966, p. 61.

of the romantic lovers she read about in forbidden novels at the convent school and of their modern equivalents in Parisian high society, as she knows them from journals of fashion. Emma's lovers, Leon and Rodolphe, play a role in her life analogous to that of Dulcinea in the life of Don Quixote. They become objects of her desire only insofar as she recognizes in their figures the features of the ideal prototypes of her imagination.

Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir* presents us with a somewhat different relationship between hero and prototype. The life of Julien Sorel takes the form of a conscious imitation of Napoleon, the exemplar and model regulating his behaviour. But in Stendhal's novel the hero's imitation has been combined with a complex pattern of "eternal triangles," dominated by jealousy and rivalry, in a way that anticipates a characteristic aspect of Dostoevsky's poetics. Nevertheless, the structure of *Demons* is very unlike that of *Le rouge et le noir*. Julien's imitation of Napoleon has more in common with Raskolnikov's, whose act of murder is determined by his desire to transform himself into a new Napoleon. In contrast to Stendhal, however, Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* juxtaposes Raskolnikov's image of Napoleon as the prototype of the princes and powers of this world with the New Testament reading of the Resurrection of Lazarus as an image of Christ's divine power, thus bringing together within the same novel the sublime prototype of the Bible and Napoleon as its diabolic opposite.

This combination and confrontation of the sublime and its diabolic inversion is a fundamental device in Dostoevsky, setting his mature works apart from the novels of Cervantes, Stendhal, and Flaubert, in spite of the many features they have in common. In Dostoevsky's art the binary relationship between prototype and image has an aesthetic value independent of the ternary relationship between subject, mediator, and object desired. Exploiting to the full the poetic potential of triangular desire, Dostoevsky at the same time transcends its psychological sphere, creating a poetic universe where the prototypes acquire a meaning that transcends the subjective fantasies of the individual characters. At this level imitation can no longer be exhaustively analyzed in terms of a subject-object relation. In Dostoevsky there is a point where prototype and imitator are brought together in an equivalence relation based on the principle of similarity and contrast. And it is here that the imitators reveal their true poetic function as incarnations in the poetic world of

the “transreality” of ideas and spiritual prototypes, to use the term introduced by Konrad Onasch.<sup>12</sup> In this perspective, the problem of imitation coincides with the problem of defining the various degrees of likeness that relate an image to its ideal prototype, ranging from near-identity to the greatest possible dissimilarity. Approaching *Demons* from this angle, our task will thus be to work out the relationships between the different characters and their prototypes, trying at the same time to define the nature of the latter.

We first encounter the problem of image and prototype in the narrator’s introductory account of the older generation, focused on the life-long friendship of Varvara Petrovna, Stavrogin’s mother, and his one-time tutor, Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovenskii. Over the years this friendship has developed into a love-hate relationship, and the narrator takes a slightly ironic view of their tribulations:

Indeed, Varvara Petrovna undoubtedly and quite frequently hated him; but there was one thing he failed to notice to the very end, that for her he finally became her son, her creation, even, one might say, her invention, became flesh of her flesh, and that she maintained and sustained him not at all out of “envy of his talents” alone. And how insulted she must have been by such suppositions! Some unbearable love for him lay hidden in her, in the midst of constant hatred, jealousy, and contempt. She protected him from every speck of dust, fussed over him for twenty-two years, would lie awake whole nights from worry if his reputation as a poet, scholar, or civic figure were in question. She invented him, and she was the first to believe in her invention. He was something like a sort of dream of hers... But for that she indeed demanded a lot of him, sometimes even slavery. (15–16).<sup>13</sup>

To Girard, the relationship between the two friends serves as an example of double mediation and the dialectic of master and slave, of what he calls the “ultimate stage of internal mediation.”<sup>14</sup> In our present discussion, we are more interested in another aspect of their relationship; namely Var-

12 Konrad Onasch, 1976, *Der verschwiegene Christus*, Berlin, p. 235.

13 Numbers in brackets after the quotations refer to Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1995, *Demons*, trans. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, New York.

14 Girard, 1966, p. 172.

vara Petrovna's act of giving substance and form to her dreams and fantasies by projecting them onto the figure of Stepan Trofimovich. The narrator informs us that the prototype of these dreams is an engraved portrait of the playwright Kukolnik (cf. Russ. *kukolka*—"doll") reproduced in an edition of his works in the 1830's, which Varvara Petrovna fell in love with as a schoolgirl, and which she still, at the age of fifty, keeps among her most cherished treasures. In her endeavours to recreate in the figure of her friend the features of her schoolgirl ideal, she designs a dress for him which is a copy of the one worn by Kukolnik in the portrait, so that Stepan Trofimovich walks around like a living image of the engraving.

In the passage quoted above, the narrator's ironic stance is revealed in the mock-religious language he has chosen for his description, referring to Stepan Trofimovich as Varvara Petrovna's "son" and "creation"—"flesh of her flesh," the last expression directly alluding to the words with which Adam first greeted the wife God made for him in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2, 23). In *Demons*, however, where, as John Jones has observed, the reader so often finds himself "on the side of the narrative against the narrator,"<sup>15</sup> the irony of the narrator depends on his restricted point of view, and his words hide a meaning that is only revealed in the wider context of the novel. Varvara Petrovna has once, in her youth, perceived the ideal image of the poet in the portrait of Kukolnik, and she wants to turn Stepan Trofimovich into a living embodiment of her ideal. This is the miracle she is waiting for to happen throughout the novel: the moment of identity between the outward, visual appearance of Stepan Trofimovich, dressed up to represent her ideal, and her idea of him as a poet. But this moment of epiphany fails to occur. It is only when Stepan Trofimovich finally sheds the dress that has turned him into a copy of Varvara Petrovna's ideal image of the poet, and when, through his conversion at the end of his life, he is transformed into an image of the possessed healed by Christ in the New Testament, that his appearance becomes an expression of the divine image hidden in his heart. At this stage he has freed himself from the host of ideas that dominate the world of *Demons*. The story of Stepan Trofimovich's life as the living image of his friend's ideal, and his final atonement with his divine prototype, create a framework for the story about Stavrogin and his satellites, a backdrop against which the demons unfold their schemes.

15 John Jones, 1983, *Dostoevsky*, Oxford, p. 227.

One of the distinguishing features of *Demons* is its collective character. It is a novel not about the life and adventures of a central, main hero, but about a multiplicity of heroes all interrelated, and all centred on their “idol,” Stavrogin. It is, as we shall see, a novel about idolatry, i.e., about the creation of idols. This is the central theme of the novel, developed in a series of parallel strands, first in a light, almost jocular mood in the narrator’s recapitulation of the platonic friendship between Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovich, but gradually changing into grotesque farce and tragedy. Through the story about Varvara Petrovna’s act of turning her friend into a copy of her ideal, the reader is given a key to the poetic code of the novel. Its paradigmatic function is reinforced by Varvara Petrovna’s general description of the process in one of the novel’s central scenes, the gathering at her home after mass, when Stavrogin makes his first appearance, and his mother is trying to find out about his relationship to Mar’ia Timofeevna, the limping feeble-minded woman whom he has secretly married in the days when he went slumming in the back streets of St Petersburg. When trying to explain to herself the true nature of this relationship, she provides the reader with another clue to the central theme of the novel:

[...] you will understand the impulse with which, in this blindness of nobility, one suddenly takes a man in all respects even unworthy of one, profoundly lacking in understanding of one, who is ready to torment one at first opportunity, and, contrary to everything, makes such a man into some sort of ideal, one’s dream, concentrates on him all one’s hopes, worships him, loves him all one’s life, absolutely without knowing why, perhaps precisely because he is unworthy of it... (191)

Although Varvara Petrovna may not have understood the full meaning of her own words, they point to a structural isomorphism between her own relationship to Stepan Trofimovich and that of Mar’ia Timofeevna to Stavrogin. When she unexpectedly finds herself face to face with her husband after five years of separation, Mar’ia Timofeevna’s behaviour and attitude towards him look like a perfect example of imitative desire:

Mar'ia Timofeevna, all numb with fear, rose to meet him and clasped her hands before her as if entreating him; and at the same time I also remember there was rapture in her eyes, a sort of insane rapture that almost distorted her features—a rapture hard for people to bear. Perhaps both were there, both fear and rapture [...]. He stood before her in a most reverent attitude [...]. In an impetuous half-whisper the poor woman breathlessly murmured to him: “And may I... kneel to you... now?” (183)

This scene represents Mar'ia Timofeevna's attitude of fear and trembling in front of Stavrogin. Her feelings towards the object of her desire are the very opposite of Vera Petrovna's hatred and demand for total submission, an inversion of the love-hate relationship of the two old friends. But the basic pattern remains the same. Mar'ia Timofeevna, too, has projected the ideal hero of her fantasies onto a figure in her immediate surroundings, who, when he entered her squalid life, appeared to her as the fulfilment of all her dreams. During his absence, she has prepared herself for the final miracle of seeing Stavrogin transformed into the incarnation of her “prince” and “bright falcon,” who “will bow to God if he wishes, and won't if he doesn't,” the fairy tale prince come to save her from her wretched state.

Is this the “deification of the mediator” that Girard writes about? The answer to our question depends on the definition of the term “mediator.” Defined according to the function of the mediator in Girard's triangle, the term cannot be applied to Stavrogin, either in this particular instance or in the context of the novel as a whole. His function, like that of Stepan Verkhovenskii in relation to Varvara Petrovna, is not identical with the function of Amadis as the mediator in the life of Don Quixote or with Napoleon's role as the model of Julien Sorel's imitative desire. Stavrogin's function in the life of Mar'ia Timofeevna corresponds to that of Dulcinea in the life of Cervantes' hero, or, to find a more suitable analogy, to the function of Rodolphe or Leon in the life of Emma Bovary. Like Flaubert's heroine, Mar'ia Timofeevna is projecting an image created by her dreams and fantasies onto a figure resembling her image in an attempt to realise in her own life the melodramatic patterns of the legends and tales of popular literature that she has taken over from her books, very much like Emma. The equivalent of Amadis in the life of Mar'ia Timofeevna is

never explicitly referred to in the novel, but it would be the heroines of the tales from which she has formed her image of the prince.

Applied to Stavrogin and to Stepan Trofimovich, the term “mediator” would therefore carry a meaning different from what it refers to in Girard’s triangle (and there seems to be a certain ambiguity in Girard’s use of the term). In *Demons*, Stavrogin and Stepan Trofimovich both fail in their roles as potential mediators and as perceptible expressions of the two women’s ideals. And when Mar’ia Timofeevna, in a moment of recognition, discovers the discrepancy between Stavrogin and the image of the prince with whom she has identified him, she immediately switches to its negative equivalent, substituting the image of Grishka Otrep’ev, the cursed pretender to the Russian throne, for that of the prince.

The binary structure of the prototype, or *Urbild*, and its perceptible representation, or *Abbild*, is manifest in all the significant relationships formed in *Demons* between Stavrogin and the other characters. It is particularly palpable in the relationships Shatov, Kirillov, and Petr Verkhovenskii have to their “idol.” Shatov, who in the novel is so close to Mar’ia Timofeevna, is also the male character whose relations with Stavrogin most resemble hers.

Like Mar’ia Timofeevna, Shatov meets Stavrogin after a period of separation, and in the meantime he has identified Stavrogin, his “teacher uttering immense words” with the ideas that his teacher two years ago implanted into the heart of his pupil, the “disciple who rose from the dead” (247). Now he expects to find in Stavrogin the embodiment of these ideas, which meanwhile he has internalized and made his own: the idea of the Russian people as the “god-bearing people,” of God as the “synthetic person of the whole nation.” Like Mar’ia Timofeevna, Shatov sees in Stavrogin the incarnation of his mental prototypes, the main difference between them being that her prototypes are literary heroes, whereas his are ideas in the conventional meaning of the word. In Shatov’s imagination, Stavrogin metonymically embodies the ideas which the latter recognizes as his “own state of mind two years ago,” with which he is no longer able to identify. From Stavrogin’s words, Shatov has developed a whole system of ideas, held together by the image of Stavrogin as the standard-bearer and harbinger of the second coming of Christ. However, the teacher refuses to play the role ascribed to him by his pupil, a role reminding him of the function ascribed to him in the ideology of Petr Verkhovenskii,



who also wants to make him his standard-bearer, but in the role of a new Stenka Razin, owing to his “extraordinary capacity for crime” (253). Shatov’s image of Stavrogin is a version of the positive ideal expressed in Mar’ia Timofeevna’s vision of her prince. On the other hand, Petr Verkhovenskii’s Stenka Razin corresponds to the image of Stavrogin as a Grishka Otrep’ev and false pretender in Mar’ia Timofeevna’s fantasies. The four different images of Stavrogin that appear in the narrative, are in actual fact variants, positive and negative, of a single prototype, representing in its positive hypostases life and regeneration, in their negative counterparts death. But in contrast to Shatov and Mar’ia Timofeevna, Petr Verkhovenskii has a cynical attitude to the images he wishes Stavrogin to embody. His main concern is with the propaganda function of the various images he has collected from a number of sources, including both the legends and the tales reflected in Mar’ia Timofeevna’s visions and the religious ideas of Shatov’s utopian dreams. In Verkhovenskii’s system, the *Urbild-Abbild* mechanism is consciously exploited in order to create a quasi-religious superstructure for his totalitarian utopia, the *shigalevshchina*, as the embodiment of his “new truth” and the new “law.” Whereas Mar’ia Timofeevna and Shatov have transformed Stavrogin during his absence into an image of their highest ideals, Petr Verkhovenskii has produced his ideas in Stavrogin’s presence: “I’ve been inventing you since abroad; inventing you as I looked at you. If I hadn’t been looking at you from a corner, nothing would have come into my head!...” (423).

Nevertheless, Verkhovenskii, too, reaches a stage where he is carried away by the idol of his own invention when, in a fit of ecstasy he turns towards Stavrogin with the words “You are my idol... you are the sun, and I am your worm...” a phrase echoing Stavrogin’s reaction to Shatov’s fantasies earlier on in the novel: “you seem to look upon me as some sort of sun, and upon yourself as some sort of bug compared with me” (243). Again we see, as with Varvara Petrovna and Mar’ia Timofeevna, how imitation involves a psychological, or rather psychopathological, relationship between the characters, the relationship Girard has so brilliantly analyzed in his book. At the same time, however, *Demons* is a work of art and not a textbook of psychology. Girard’s definition of Stavrogin as a “veritable allegory of internal mediation” somehow bypasses the aesthetic side of *Demons*, the network of parallelisms, redoublings, and inversions generated by the principle of the *Urbild-Abbild* structure. Stavrogin is

the source of Shatov's ideas, but not his ideological prototype. And as for Verkhovenskiĭ, the sources of his ideas are manifold and obscure. What they both have in common, is the wish to see their ideas embodied in Stavrogin, to see him transformed into their ideophore hero and a palpable expression of their ideas. But once more, the process of image-building ends in frustration. Stavrogin refuses to become an idol and the bearer of their ideas.

It is with Kirillov that the process of incarnation reaches its limit in *Demons*. As Stavrogin's "creation"—Shatov's definition of him—Kirillov has made the ideas of his creator his own to the extent that instead of trying to project them back onto Stavrogin he finally decides to turn himself into an example of their validity by committing suicide. By this act he means to conquer his human fear of death, thereby bringing about his own apotheosis and becoming an avatar of his spiritual prototype, the Man-God. This prototype is, as the name shows, an inversion of the God-Man, of Christ, the Son of God, who through his incarnation and death conquered death and restored man to his original state of integrity. As the negative counterpart of this divine prototype, Kirillov's Man-God, inspired by Stavrogin, is the Antichrist. Kirillov is his likeness, a distorted counterfeit of the icon he keeps in the corner of his room.

The *Urbild-Abbild* relationship between Kirillov and the prototype of the Antichrist lays bare the function of this prototype in *Demons*, where Kirillov is not the only hypostasis of the cosmic usurper, the False Pretender *par excellence*. The House of Philipp on Epiphany Street is the locus of a whole series of manifestations of the Antichrist. Mar'ia Timofeevna's vision of Stavrogin and her idea of Mother Earth as the Theotokos, are generated by the same model. Similarly, Shatov's popular messianism must, in the context of *Demons*, be seen as expressions of the Antichrist. The same applies to the various forms of *shigalevshchina* and Petr Verkhovenskiĭ's evocation of Stavrogin in the role of god and leader, whose image he is conjuring up in parallel to Ivan Filippovich, the God and Sabaoth of messianic sectarianism. There is a hidden connection between the manifestations of the Antichrist in the House of Philipp and the false gods of the flagellants—the *khlystovtsy*—which is significant for the satirical aspect of *Demons*, showing that as an artist, Dostoevsky was able to represent ideas dear to his heart independently of his own subjective feelings about them. Even Shatov's ideas about the god-bearing

Russian people are symbolic representations of the novel's prototype of evil, from which he is saved only just before his death, when the miracle of true life is revealed to him in the birth of the child, a real human being and not a "paper man" such as himself. Like Stepan Trofimovich, Shatov is able to free himself from the evil spirits that have invaded his mind.

In the paradigmatic series of daemonic epiphanies, Stavrogin has a place of his own. He is the disseminator of the others' ideas, but he refuses their attempts at making him the bearer of their ideas, leaving the ideophoria to those whom he has inspired. When unmasked by the others, however, he appears to them in the form of the pretender and the "last squire," a "rotten, lascivious, pretentious little squire," i.e. as the incarnation of the rumours about his depravity which he has put on like another mask. But the image created of Stavrogin by the rumours about him is but another manifestation of the Antichrist as he is presented in the image of the "man of sin" and "son of perdition," who, in 2 Thess. 2, 4 "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." Stavrogin has no substance. Even the rumours about his sinfulness are left unsubstantiated. And one sees how right Dostoevsky was from an aesthetic point of view to leave out from his novel "Stavrogin's confession," once the chapter had been suppressed by the censorship. If the author had reinserted it, the confession would have served as evidence of his depravity and thus given his figure an ethos, however ignoble. As it is, Stavrogin's figure is a symbol of emptiness. The final word about him comes from his own letter to Dasha before he puts an end to his life by suicide in an unheroic imitation of the idea he inseminated into Kirillov's mind: "what poured out of me was only negation... Or not even negation" (676). In his daemonic emptiness Stavrogin reminds us of the devil of the Russian saying: "Goblins don't have an appearance of their own, they go around in masks." The final manifestation of the Antichrist in *Demons*, the dead body of the citizen of Uri, hanging from the rope in the ceiling, represents nothing but nothingness. It is, again in Stavrogin's own words: "another delusion—the last delusion in an infinite series of delusions."<sup>16</sup>

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16 My translation. Cf. Pevear & Volokhonsky in Dostoevsky, 1995, p. 676: "one more deceit—the last deceit in an endless series of deceits."

## The Poetry of Prose: The Art of Parallelism in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*

WHEN on 3 September 1883 Turgenev died at his home in Bougival, near Paris, *The Athenaeum* wrote that Europe had been unanimous in according to the Russian writer the first rank in contemporary literature (8 September 1883). Hippolyte Taine, the arbiter of European literary criticism at the time, described him as “un des artistes des plus parfaits que le monde ait possédés depuis ceux de la Grèce,”<sup>1</sup> and Henry James, a personal friend of Turgenev's, referred to him in one of his essays as “the novelists' novelist.”

In Russia things were somewhat different. After the publication of *Fathers and Sons* in 1862, the aesthetic assessment of his writings had been overshadowed by the ideological controversy provoked by the figure of Bazarov, the central character of the novel. The liberal and radical Left accused Turgenev of having painted a caricature of themselves, whereas from the Right Turgenev was attacked for not having been sufficiently critical of Bazarov and his nihilist ideas. The discussion went on for the rest of Turgenev's life, continued after his death, and was taken over by Soviet scholars, who in their studies of the novel have been more interested in its historical value than in its aesthetic qualities.

In the West, too, critics gradually discovered the topical appeal of Turgenev's novels as a faithful chronicle of the Russian intelligentsia during the reign of Alexander II. According to Isaiah Berlin's Turgenev lecture, given in 1970 and now prefacing Rosemary Edmond's translation of *Fathers and Sons* in the Penguin Classics series, this social and political aspect of Turgenev's writings “speaks more directly to our own

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1 E. M. de Vogüé, 1888, *Le roman russe*, Paris, p. 196.

time,” whereas the aesthetic appreciation of Turgenev as a master of lyrical prose, a poet of nature and of love, is regarded as an anachronism, an old-fashioned approach favoured by readers who mentally still belong to the age of Henry James, George Moore, and Maurice Baring.<sup>2</sup> In this way, the aesthetic and the sociological approaches are defined as successive stages in the development of Turgenev criticism. Turgenev the poet has been superseded by Turgenev the sociologist and the interpretation of his novels instead of being a problem of poetics, has become a matter for historians and social scientists. In fact, one sociologist, writing on the Student Movement in Russia, defined his own work as “a series of footnotes to Ivan Turgenev’s immortal *Fathers and Sons*,” as an attempt “to transcribe into sociological prose what his novelist’s genius perceived at the very beginning of the movement.”<sup>3</sup> At the same time, this topical interest in the “longhaired” Bazarov, the radical hero of the novel, provoked a reaction in Russia, where Bazarov’s nihilism was re-interpreted in the context of the New Left:

The figure of the nihilist Bazarov became an embodiment of the most essential features of world nihilism, which have become particularly evident in contemporary leftism, and has become a kind of poetic formula and expression of this serious social phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

Although we may disagree with the idea that the two approaches to Turgenev may be defined in terms of development and progress, or in terms of changing fashions, we cannot deny the fact that the two aspects, the historical and the poetic, coexist in Turgenev’s novels. On the contrary, we know that this dualism is there, not as an individual peculiarity of Turgenev’s writings, but as a feature inherent in the genre of the novel. We are here faced with one of the features that distinguish the art of prose from poetry in the narrower sense of the word. Being a prosaic genre, the novel combines the artless use of language in ordinary, communicative speech with the art of poetry, and this intermediary position makes it, as Roman

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2 Isaiah Berlin, 1980, “Fathers and Children: Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament,” Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, trans. R. Edmonds, Harmondsworth, pp. 7–61.

3 Lewis S. Feuer, 1969, *The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements*, New York, p. 89.

4 S.E. Shatalov, 1979, *Khudozhestvennyi mir I.S. Turgeneva*, Moscow, p. 7.

Jakobson has observed, much more difficult to analyse than verse, where the poetic function of language may be studied in its pure, extreme form.<sup>5</sup> In a novel, and in particular in a realistic novel like *Fathers and Sons*, the referential and the poetic functions of language are complementary. Consequently, the historical and the aesthetic approaches to Turgenev are not mutually exclusive, but require different orientations: the former is focused on the context, the latter on the text as such. It may therefore be studied as a kind of historical document, referring in various ways to the context of its day, i.e. both to the beginning of the 1860s, when Turgenev wrote it, and to various historical events referred to in the text. If we want to investigate Turgenev's novel in its poetic aspect, however, we shall have to leave aside the question of its historical value and bring into the foreground its fictitiousness, i.e. the system of poetic devices employed by Turgenev in order to transform the events and characters invented by his imagination into a work of art.

In my analysis I shall start from the assumption that the text of the novel is a narrative discourse in the sense given to this term by Gérard Genette: a text produced by an act of telling, in which a narrator recounts the story of the characters involved.<sup>6</sup> With this definition in mind, I will take a closer look at the opening passage of *Fathers and Sons* and see what it can tell us about the narrative structure of the novel:

“Well, Peter, not in sight yet?” was the question asked on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1859, by a gentleman a little over forty, in a dusty coat and checked trousers, who came out hatless to the low porch of the posting station at S---. He was addressing his servant, a chubby young fellow, with whitish down on his chin, and little lack-lustre eyes.

The servant, in whom everything—the turquoise ring in his ear, the pomaded streaky hair, and the civility of his movements—indicated a man of the new, improved generation, glanced condescendingly along the road, and replied:

“No, sir; definitely not in sight.”

“Not in sight?” repeated his master.

“Not in sight,” responded the man a second time.

5 Roman Jakobson & Krystyna Pomorska, 1983, *Dialogues*, trans. C. Hubert, Cambridge, Mass., p. 108.

6 Gérard Genette, 1980, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J.E. Lewin, Oxford, pp. 25ff.

His master sighed and sat down on a little bench. Let us introduce him to the reader while he sits, his feet tucked under him, gazing thoughtfully to the ground.

His name is Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov. He had twelve miles from the posting station, a fine property of two hundred souls, or, as he expressed it—since he had arranged a division of his land with the peasants, and started a “farm”—of nearly five thousand acres.<sup>7</sup>

What here first of all strikes the reader is the change of tense that occurs simultaneously with the transition from the third person to the first person and the reference to the reader in the last part of the passage. The first part consists of a scene with a direct dialogue, a narrative mode that Plato in the third book of *The Republic* calls mimesis, contrasting it with *haple diegesis*, “pure,” or “unmixed narrative,” in Genette’s translation.<sup>8</sup> This is the narrative mode of the last paragraph of the quoted passage. The transition between these two modes is marked by a reference to the narrative situation, in which the narrator, implied in the first person plural of the inclusive imperative—“Let us introduce him”—addresses the reader. The shift from one mode to the other means that whereas the “now” of the narrative remains the same, the “here” is different. It is no longer the “here” of Nikolai Kirsanov and his manservant, but the “here” of the narrator. It would be premature, however, to identify the act of narration with the actual writing of the novel and the narrator with Turgenev himself. We know from Turgenev’s letter to Countess Lambert of 6 August 1860 that he had then only just started work on the novel, and that it was finished about a year later. The act of narration is part of the fiction, and so is the narrating authority, or narrator. This becomes even clearer if we turn to the epilogue, where the fictitious narrator for the last time addresses his readers:

This would seem to be the end. But perhaps some of our readers would care to know what each of the characters we have introduced is doing in the present, the actual present. We are ready to satisfy him [...].

7 The text is quoted with minor modifications from Ivan Turgenev, 1966, *Fathers and Sons*, ed. & trans. R.E. Matlaw, New York, p. 1. The numbers in brackets after the quotations refer to pages in this edition.

8 Genette, 1980, p. 162.

In Dresden, on the Brühl terrace, between two and four o'clock—the most fashionable time for walking—you may meet a man about fifty, quite grey [...] That is Pavel Petrovich. (163–64)

When Pavel Petrovich, the elder of the two Kirsanov brothers, is introduced for the first time, he is supposed to be about forty-five: “He looked about forty-five: his close-cropped, grey hair shone with a dark lustre, like new silver” (11). However approximate these datings are meant to be, they suggest an interval of about five years between the “now” of the first chapter and the epilogue, which, had it been an historical account, would have taken place at some time after the publication of the novel. And again, as in the opening passage, the “now” of the narrator coincides with the “now” of the characters, whereas his “here” remains different and undefined. In the course of the narration the “now” of both narrator and characters, transcending historical time, has been assimilated to the time, or rather timelessness of fiction. As pointed out by Irina Rodnianskaia, time in Turgenev’s novels, however exact their historical datings, invariably represents one and the same temporal symbolism, in a descending movement following the seasons of the year from spring or early summer to the “long autumnal night” in *Rudin*, the “first cold spells” in *A Nest of Gentlefolk*, the “cruel stillness of unclouded frosts” in *Fathers and Sons*, and the snowy winter of Elena’s dream in *On the Eve*. New springs and new summers, indifferent to the past, may be described in the epilogues, where a subjective feeling of shattered hopes and expectations, combined with a keen awareness of social and historical change, creates the image of time (*obraz vremeni*) typical of Turgenev.<sup>9</sup>

Once we have understood the fictitious character of the narrator, or “author,” as he calls himself on one occasion, we see that he serves a purpose similar to the narrators introduced into the *Rahmenerzählungen* of so many of Turgenev’s stories, with the difference that the *Rahmenerzählung* in *Fathers and Sons* has been reduced almost to zero, to a “now” without the ambiance of the “here” of the fully developed narrative situations of stories like *Asia* or *First Love*.

In *Fathers and Sons*, then, the act of telling and the story told, narrator and characters, are part of the narrative fiction. Consequently, we shall

9 Irina B. Rodnianskaia, 1978, “Khudozhestvennoe vremia i chudo prostranstvo,” *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, Moscow, cols. 772–80.



have to abandon our assumption about the narrative as a *discourse* in the meaning of an act of communication between the author-narrator and his addressee, the reader, as being anything more than a narrative device. Furthermore, the distinction between the *haple diegesis* of the narrator and the *mimesis* of the characters' dialogue cannot be upheld. Both the speech of the narrator and the dialogue are forms of *mimesis*, albeit on different textual levels. Moreover, these two levels are not separated by absolute bounds, but connected by a series of transitional forms of narration, where the narrating authority can no longer be clearly identified. Let us return for a moment to the final paragraphs of the opening passage, where the fictive narrator brings his retrospective account of the life of his hero to a close and returns to the initial scene at the posting station:

In 1855 he brought his son to the university; he spent three winters with him in Petersburg, hardly going out anywhere, and trying to make acquaintance with Arkady's young companions. The last winter he had not been able to go, *and here we see him in the May of 1859, already quite grey, stoutish, and rather bent, waiting for his son, who has just taken his degree, as once he had taken it himself.* (3; italics added)

Here, there is a clearly defined borderline between the past tense of the narrator's account and the present of the narrative situation, which, as we have observed already, coincides with the "now" of Nikolai Petrovich at the posting station. The use of the first person plural "and here we see him" implies the "reader" addressed at the beginning of the digression, and this *mimesis* of a narrative situation is emphasised in the repeated use of the first person plural: "The sun was scorching; from the half-dark passage of the posting station came an odor of hot rye-bread. [Our] Nikolai Petrovich fell to dreaming" (*Zamechtalsia nash Nikolai Petrovich*, italics added). But almost imperceptibly there is a shift of mode in the narrative:

*"My son... a graduate... Arkasha..." were the ideas that continually came round again and again in his head; he tried to think of something else, and again the same thoughts returned. He remembered his dead wife... "She did not live to see it!" he murmured sadly. A plump, blue-grey pigeon flew into the road, and hurriedly went to drink from a*

puddle near the well. Nikolai Petrovich began looking at it, but his ear had already caught the sound of approaching wheels.

“It sounds as if they’re coming, sir,” announced the servant, popping in from the gateway. (3; italics added)

In this passage, there are three instances of what graphically looks like a mimesis of the direct speech of the characters: “My son... a graduate... Arkasha...’ were the ideas that continually came round again and again in his head”; “She did not live to see it!’ he murmured sadly”; “It sounds as if they’re coming, sir’, announced the servant.” In actual fact, however, only the last two of these lines represent spoken utterances, and only the very last one, spoken by the manservant, has a communicative function in the sense of being directed towards another person present. The second utterance, whispered by Nikolai Petrovich, has a purely expressive function, being the last, externalised link in a chain of dreamlike thoughts and associations, half conscious, half unconscious, in Nikolai Petrovich’s drowsy mind. Both the lack of syntax—My son... a graduate... Arkasha...—and the use of verbs of inner action like “came round again and again in his head”; “he tried to think of something else”; “again the same thoughts returned”; “He remembered”; demonstrate that this is not a *mimesis* of speech, but of mental processes. If these lines were spoken by the narrator, whose “now,” as we have seen, coincides with that of the characters, he would be performing the metaphysical task of relating what is going on in the mind of the other at the very moment of narration. This paradox, a constant feature of nineteenth-century novel writing, has produced a number of explanations, the best known probably being the “dual voice” theory and the theory of “authorial omniscience.” An alternative and in my view more forceful approach is to be found in Käte Hamburger’s theory of fiction, where narration is defined as a fluctuating narrative function, manipulated by the writer in a way comparable to a painter wielding his colours and brushes.<sup>10</sup> The narrative function has been further explored by Ann Banfield. In a series of analyses she has shown that the *differentia specifica* of modern fiction are its “unspeakable sentences,” and that, consequently, it cannot be defined in terms of discourse and communication theory.<sup>11</sup> According to Banfield, fiction is

10 Käte Hamburger, 1973, *The Logic of Literature*, trans. M.J. Rose, Bloomington.

11 Ann Banfield, 1982, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Lan-*

characterised by two distinct and complementary sentence structures, one being “the sentence of narration per se,” which narrates events, the other representing consciousness: “It is the sentence of narration which lays bare the narrative function, just as the represented E [= expression, JBø) unmask and distances the expressive function and direct speech foregrounds the communicative function.”<sup>12</sup>

Following Ann Banfield’s theory, we could say that the representation of the drowsy musings of Nikolai Petrovich in the passage quoted above is an example of how Turgenev as a writer exploits the expressive function of language in order to create a fictitious Self, or, in Käte Hamburger’s terminology, a fictitious “I-Origo.” We know that the artful representation of consciousness was the great challenge of the nineteenth-century novel and that Turgenev’s close friend Flaubert mastered the technique to perfection. We also know that Turgenev met the challenge and that the representation of the thoughts and feelings of his characters was one of his major concerns as a novelist about 1860. In a letter to Pauline Viardot in 1859, when working at *On the Eve*, he says:

I don’t know if I told you that I am working on a new novel—at the moment I’m composing a fragment from a young girl’s diary. (All young girls keep diaries—did you keep one?) But it’s very difficult. That mixture, on the one hand of lack of logic, and on the other hand of instinct—which is worth all the logic in the world—is difficult to catch. And then, the writer has to be naive—I feel there’s much of the child in me, old duffer that I am, but these are two different things.<sup>13</sup>

One great advantage of Banfield’s and Hamburger’s theories of fiction is that they allow us to analyse the objectivised text as a verbal work of art which must be held together by its poetic structure, not by the voice of the author-narrator. “The author has definitively disappeared from the text and is locatable henceforth only outside it.” The narrative act “is a formative, shaping function, of which one can just as well say that it is set beside

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*guage of Fiction*, Boston.

12 Banfield, 1982, p. 165.

13 Quoted from April FitzLyon, 1972, “A New Turgenev,” *The Listener*, 11 May, pp. 618–21. Cf. Ivan Tourguénev, 1971, *Nouvelle correspondance inédite* 1, ed. & intro. A. Zviguilsky, Paris, p. 99.

other shaping functions such as dialogue, monologue, and *erlebte Rede*, as one can also say—indeed more precisely—that, fluctuating, it assumes now this, now that form.”<sup>14</sup>

An elaborate example of this fluctuation, embracing a number of such “shaping functions,” may be found in *Fathers and Sons* at the beginning of chapter eleven, where Nikolai Petrovich after the heated discussion between his brother and Bazarov in the preceding chapter, ideologically the crucial passage of the novel, finds refuge in the garden:

Half an hour later Nikolai Petrovich went into the garden to his favorite arbor. He was overtaken by melancholy thoughts. For the first time he realized clearly the distance between him and his son; he foresaw that every day it would grow wider and wider. In vain, then, had he spent whole days sometimes in the winters at Petersburg over the newest books; in vain had he listened to the talk of the young men; in vain had he rejoiced when he succeeded in putting his word, too, in their heated discussions. “My brother says we are right,” he thought, “and apart from all vanity, I do think myself that they are further from the truth than we are, though at the same time I feel there is something behind them we have not got, some superiority over us... Is it youth? No, not only youth. Doesn’t their superiority consist in there being fewer traces of the slave owner in them than in us?” (44)

The passage opens with a sentence of pure narration—“Half an hour later Nikolai Petrovich went into the garden”—but already in the prepositional phrase—“to his favourite arbor”—the adjective “favorite” implies a reference to Nikolai Petrovich’s feelings. In the sentence that follows—“He was overtaken by melancholy thoughts”—there is a shift from narration to the description of Nikolai Petrovich’s state of mind. It is not yet a representation of his thoughts, merely the constation of his having them. We might call it a representation of Nikolai Petrovich’s pre-reflective state of mind, or, using Banfield’s term, a representation of his non-reflective consciousness,<sup>15</sup> anticipating his reflections in the next passage: “For the first time he realized clearly the distance between him and his son; he foresaw that [...]”—where the verbs “realized” and “foresaw” together

14 Hamburger, 1973, p. 179.

15 Banfield, 1982, pp. 196ff.

with the third-person pronoun characterise these sentences as representations of the conscious thoughts of Nikolai Petrovich. Furthermore, the syntax of the whole passage shows that this is not a narration of events in their chronological order. In the perspective of Nikolai Petrovich's "here" and "now" the events are seen in the simultaneity of his reflections and arranged in anaphoric parallels typical of expressive speech:

In vain, then, had he spent whole days sometimes in the winters at Petersburg over the newest books;  
 in vain had he listened to the talk of the young men;  
 in vain had he rejoiced when he succeeded in putting his word, too, in their heated discussions.

This is not an objective account of the events in their linear sequence, but a representation of Nikolai Petrovich's re-experience of them in his consciousness and in the context of his emotional state at the moment. At the same time, this example demonstrates how the fictitious use of language in its expressive function no longer communicates the subjective attitude of some speaker outside the text, but becomes the tool by which the author creates fictitious Selves in the text. The representation of consciousness is not dominated by some transcendent point of reference; its point of reference is the thinking subject's "here" and "now," its fictitious "I-Origo." This "I-Origo" once established, the text again assumes a different form:

"My brother says we are right," he thought, "and apart from all vanity, I do think myself that they are further from the truth than we are, though at the same time I feel there is something behind them we have not got, some superiority over us... Is it youth? No, not only youth. Doesn't their superiority consist in there being fewer traces of the slave owner in them than in us?"

With the introduction of the first person of the personal pronoun this ceases to be a representation of Nikolai Petrovich's consciousness. The passage has the form of direct speech. It is an interior monologue and as such "retains the communication form, if not its intent."<sup>16</sup> In the sentence

16 Banfield, 1982, p. 137.

that follows, however, Nikolai Petrovich's soliloquy is interrupted by a shift back to pure narration, leading on to a renewed representation of Nikolai Petrovich's thoughts and the long digression into the setting with which the beginning of the chapter culminates:

Nikolai Petrovich's head sank despondently, and he passed his hand over his face.

"But to renounce poetry?" he thought again; "to have no feeling for art, for nature..."

And he looked around, as though trying to understand how it was possible to have no feeling for nature. Evening was already approaching; the sun was hidden behind a small copse of aspens which lay a quarter of a mile from the garden; its shadow stretched endlessly across the still fields. A peasant on a white nag went at a trot along the dark, narrow path close beside the copse; his whole figure was clearly visible even to the patch on his shoulder, in spite of his being in the shade; the white horse's legs flashed by distinctly and pleasantly. The sun's rays for their part made their way into the copse, and piercing through its thickets, threw such a warm light on the aspen trunks that they looked like pines, and their leaves were almost a dark blue, while above them rose a pale blue sky, faintly tinged by the glow of sunset. The swallows flew high; the wind had quite died away, belated bees buzzed slowly and drowsily among the lilac blossoms; a swarm of midges hung like a cloud over a solitary branch which stood against the sky. "My God, how beautiful!" thought Nikolai Petrovich, and his favorite verses came to his lips; he remembered Arkady's *Stoff und Kraft*—and was silent, but still he sat there, still he gave himself up to the sorrowful and joyful play of solitary thought. (44)

In the first sentence events are narrated in chronological order, the one following the other. The next sentence is different. The quotation marks set it off against the context and link it up with a similar sentence towards the end of our excerpt:

"But to renounce poetry?" he thought again; "to have no feeling for art, for nature..."

and:

“My God, how beautiful!” thought Nikolai Petrovich [...]

The quotation marks these sentences as reported thoughts, depending on the verb “thought.” But since they contain no first person pronouns, the sentences have the characteristics of represented consciousness as long as they are seen out of context. The repetition of the verb and the “again,” referring back to the “he thought” governing the interior monologue, however, point to a connection between the segments inserted between quotation marks: the interior monologue has been broken up into three segments and combined with the description of the evening scene: “And he looked around, as though trying to understand how it was possible to have no feeling for nature. Evening was already approaching [...]” A theory of fiction based on the communication model would have to presuppose a narrator here, someone describing the evening scene from a point of view different from Nikolai Petrovich’s own. But there are no references in the text to a narrating subject. On the other hand there are elements in the text which clearly refer to Nikolai Petrovich as their point of reference. He is the focus from which the digression in a sweeping outward movement embraces the scenery, outlining its spatial and temporal coordinates, before returning by way of describing a few objects which are made to stand out against their common background of the setting sun and the lengthening shadows: the peasant trotting along on his horse in the shade of the grove, the clump of trees, their foliage pierced by the rays of the sun, the swallows in the air, the bees in the flowers of the lilac, and the swarm of midges hovering over a lonely branch. Although Nikolai Petrovich is referred to in the third person, and the evening scene is not represented as an expression of his conscious thoughts, there is, nevertheless, a relationship between his point of view and the emotive overtones of the digression, signified by the use of evaluative modifiers like the “belated,” “slowly,” and “drowsily” in the description of the bees, the “distinctly and pleasantly” referring to the movement of the horse, and the qualification of the light as “such a warm light [...] that,” motivating the only comparison of the passage.

Modern narratology has tried to solve this paradox by introducing a theory of “double vision,” i.e. of the concurrence of an “objective narra-

tor” and a “subjective hero,” and offered a number of explanations of the phenomenon, some very ingenious, but none of them quite convincing.<sup>17</sup> It is only by giving up the idea that all narrated expressions presuppose a narrator that we are able to analyse texts of this kind. Only then can we deal with the digression as a text composed by the author Turgenev and define its function in the context of the novel.

The whole scene is, as we have observed already, reduced to a few objects, perceived in the twilight. Each object, the peasant and his horse, the trees, the swallows, the bees and the midges, has a context of its own. Moreover, the larger objects in the distance are broken down into smaller components—the patch on the shoulder, the hooves of the white horse, the trunks and leaves of the aspen trees—whereas the smaller objects in Nikolai Petrovich’s immediate surroundings—the swallows, the bees, and the midges—are seen as undifferentiated, collective entities. The individual objects are related to each other through their contiguity in space. At the same time, however, light and shade transform the scene into a subtle pattern of similarities and contrasts: the objects are arranged according to size, the larger ones in the distance being decomposed into their separate parts, in opposition to the smaller ones, observed at close quarters, that are not distinguishable in their component parts, so that the relationship between background and foreground forms an antithesis, or inverted parallelism. This opposition is motivated by the distribution of light and shade in the depiction of the various objects as they appear to the observer in their various contexts:

In the background light predominates over darkness: the peasant “was clearly visible even to the patch on his shoulder” and, similarly, the rays of the evening sun, penetrating the clump of trees, “threw such a warm light on the aspen trunks that they looked like pines, and their leaves were almost a dark blue, while above them rose a pale blue sky, faintly tinged by the glow of sunset.” This comparison, based on a similarity association, stresses the transfiguring power of the evening light at this hour of approaching darkness. By describing the objects as they are perceived in the oscillating pattern of lights and shadows, Turgenev transforms the scenery into a structure of parallels, where the relationship between bright and dark colours is almost imperceptibly inverted as the description reaches the foreground, where light has yielded to dark-

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17 Genette, 1980, p. 209.



ness, and only the midges can still be seen hovering in the air. Everything else lies in the shade. Things are not only seen, but heard and felt as well: “the wind had quite died away, belated bees buzzed slowly and drowsily among the lilac blossoms.” At this point, when the evening scene has become monochrome, Turgenev has recourse to the figurative power of the sound side of language, employing such well-known devices as *onomatopoeia*—in the verb *zhuzhzhali*, so familiar from Zhukovskii’s and Pushkin’s nature poetry—and marked repetition of sound groupings: ZApOZdALYE pchOLY LENIVO I soNLIVO ZHuZHZHALI” (belated bees buzzed slowly and drowsily), with its paronomastic confrontation of words similar in sound but unrelated etymologically, in particular the two semantically contiguous epithets *lenivo* (slowly) and *sonlivo* (drowsily), both used figuratively about the humming of the bees, and both so similar in sound. Less pronounced instances of sound imagery are found earlier on in the digression, e.g. “zaPLAty na PLEche” (the patch on his shoulder) and “obLIvALI STVOLY OSIN TAKIM TĖPLYM SVETOM, chTO ONI STANOVILIS’ pokhozhi NA STVOLY SOSEN” (threw such a warm light on the aspen trunks that they looked like pines), where the sound similarity of “OSIN” “SOSEN” are particularly significant for the associative basis of the comparison.

The transformation of this scene, where the objects initially are related to each other by proximity, into a structure dominated by similarity and contrast, clearly depends on Nikolai Petrovich as the perceiving subject. Even though he is referred to in the third person and in spite of the absence of “verbs of inner action” from the description of the scene, it expresses what goes on in the mind of his unspeaking Self as a passive sensibility that observes the objects without actively reflecting about them. One of the means employed by Turgenev in order to represent this state of semi-conscious perception is the sound imagery, the association of words, not according to their cognitive meaning, but to their phonetic similarity. It is a well-known fact that confusion of these two types of association are symptomatic of drowsy, oneiroid states, when a person is almost, but not quite asleep.<sup>18</sup> This is exactly the state of Nikolai Petrovich’s mind: Turgenev has brought out its complexity by juxtaposing fragments from his soliloquy with the passive perceptions of what he sees and hears. The two levels of consciousness are represented in their

18 A.R. Luria, 1982, *Language and Cognition*, ed. J.V. Wertsch, New York, p. 75.

simultaneity, forming a parallelism, in which now the one, now the other is being foregrounded.

The representation of a perceiving Self through the things perceived is a device based on contiguity, by which Nikolai Petrovich's emotional, spiritual state is conveyed by a tangible equivalent. "Following the path of contiguous relationships, the realistic author digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time."<sup>19</sup> This "carrying-over" of a state of consciousness to a "corresponding" external setting does, however, also imply the construction of a similarity relation between the things perceived and their mental equivalents. Similarity is superimposed on contiguity, thereby transforming the twilight scene into a metaphoric representation of the non-verbalised, non-reflective level of Nikolai Petrovich's consciousness.

The process of transforming the contiguous relationship between Self and setting into a metaphorical representation of the former through the latter, is not the only way these two constructions are being manipulated by Turgenev in the portrait of Nikolai Petrovich. In the next stage of his dreamlike musings the order is reversed:

He was fond of reverie; his country life had developed the tendency in him. How short a time ago, he had been dreaming like this, waiting for his son at the posting station, and what changes had already occurred since that day; their relations that were then undefined, were defined now—and how defined! Again his late wife came back to his imagination, but not as he had known her for many years, not as the good domestic housewife, but as a young girl with a slim figure, innocently inquiring eyes, and a tight braid on her childish neck. He remembered how he had seen her for the first time. He was still a student then [...]. Where had it all vanished. She became his wife, he had been happy as few on earth are happy... "But," he mused, "these sweet first moments, why could not one live an eternal, immortal life in them?"

He did not try to make his thought clear to himself; but he felt that he longed to keep that blissful time by something stronger than memory; he longed to feel his Marya near him again, to have the sense

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19 Roman Jakobson, 1971, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," *Selected Writings*, The Hague, vol. 2, pp. 239–59, p. 255.

of her warmth and breathing, and already he could fancy that over him...

“Nikolai Petrovich,” came the sound of Fenechka’s voice close to him; “where are you?” (44–45)

Here, three different moments in Nikolai Petrovich’s life are brought together by similarity associations: his dreamlike fantasies about his wife, “here and now,” are juxtaposed with a similar fantasy at the posting station, and with their first encounter. The thrust of the passage, however, is Nikolai Petrovich’s intense desire to transform the memories of his wife into a presence, in other words, to transform his inner likeness of her into an external, perceptible nearness: “he longed to feel his Marya near him again, to have the sense of her warmth and breathing, and already he could fancy that over him...” But the process is interrupted by Fenechka’s voice, and Nikolai Petrovich is brought back from his dreams to the actual presence of his mistress, soon to become his second wife, and thus connected with his dreams in a complex relationship of contiguity, similarity, and contrast.

The technique of bringing Self and setting together in a parallelism in order to transform the latter into a metaphor of the former, is a device which in *Fathers and Sons* is not restricted to the portrait of Nikolai Kirсанov. The process of superimposing similarity on contiguity, transforming what is perceived into an image of the perceiving mind, serves as the main device in the representation of Arkadii’s emotions on the way back from the coaching inn at the beginning of the novel. The whole passage is composed according to the same pattern as the twilight scene: first an outward movement towards the horizon, followed by the return back to the centre of vision, in this case Arkadii, whose thoughts are paralleled with the sudden change from winter to summer in the fields:

“I am sorry about the forest,” observed Arkady, and he began to look about him.

The country through which they were driving could not be called picturesque. Fields upon fields stretched along to the very horizon [...]. Slowly Arkady’s heart sank. To complete the picture, the peasants they met were all in tatters and on the sorriest little nags; the willows, with their trunks stripped of bark, and broken branches, stood like rag-

ged beggars along the roadside; lean and shaggy cows looking pinched by hunger, were greedily tearing at the grass along the ditches. They looked as though they had just been snatched out of the murderous clutches of some threatening monster; and the piteous state of the weak, starved beasts in the midst of the lovely spring day, called up, like a white phantom, the endless, comfortless winter, with its storms, and frosts, and snows [...]. “No,” thought Arkady, “this is not rich land; it does not impress one by prosperity or industriousness [...].”

Such were Arkady’s reflections;... but even as he reflected, the spring regained its sway. Everything around shone golden green, everything—trees, bushes, grass—glistened and stirred gently in wide waves under the soft breath of the warm wind [...] Arkady gazed and gazed, and his reflections grew slowly fainter and fainter and passed away... He flung off his coat and turned to his father, with a face so bright and boyish, that the latter gave him another hug. (8–9)

The basic pattern is the same here as in the garden scene, the implementation of it, however, is slightly different, slightly more complex. Again, the bringing together of two different units is the elementary device, establishing a contiguity relationship between a character, this time Arkady, and his natural surroundings. The complication comes when the surroundings are represented as perceived by Arkadii, who in his prejudiced observations to begin with only sees the aspects that fit in with his preconceived ideas, in his mind conjuring up in the middle of spring a vision of the white spectre of winter. As a representation of Arkadii’s mental state, spring has been turned into its very opposite. But this inversion is only a transitional stage in the process of creating a state of equivalence between Arkadii’s feelings and his natural environment: “Such were Arkady’s reflections;... but even as he reflected, the spring regained its sway [...]. Arkady gazed and gazed, and his reflections grew slowly fainter and fainter and passed away...” The moment of harmony between the hero and the place where he was born, between the life of nature and the life of the mind, coincides with the moment of maximal nearness between Arkadii and his father during the journey. And at this moment of closeness between father and son, they are also brought together in a spontaneous similarity of feeling which inspires Kirsanov père to quote

his favourite lines from Pushkin, bringing in a new element of contrast, a deeper note of sadness and the ambiguity of love:

To me how sad thy coming is,  
 Spring, spring, the time of love!  
 What...

The motives of youth, spring, joy, love, sorrow, and poetry, combined in this scene, point towards the main themes of the novel. And it is in the creation of complex relationships between these themes in the lives of the main characters that Turgenev shows his art, his poetry of prose. Through their emotional rapport with nature, the equivalence created between their inner lives and their environment, father and son are set off against the other two main characters of the novel, Bazarov and Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov, Arkadii's uncle. In his English suit, surrounded by the greyish wallpaper of his elegant study with its heavy window curtains, Pavel Petrovich isolates himself from his natural surroundings. There is contiguity without contact, he tries to experience nature in the way his brother does, "Pavel Petrovich went to the end of the garden, and he too grew thoughtful, and he too raised his eyes towards the heavens. But nothing was reflected in his beautiful dark eyes except the light of the stars." For Pavel Petrovich "was not born a romantic, and his fastidiously dry and sensuous soul, with its French tinge of misanthropy, was not capable of dreaming..." (46). The poetic logic of this is that his innermost thoughts are never revealed in the representation of his subjectivity, which remains a closed enigma, illuminated only indirectly by Arkadii's story about his passionate love affair with Princess R, after whose death he has led the life of a recluse on his brother's estate. The direction of his thoughts are merely hinted at in the way the light of the stars is reflected in his beautiful eyes, a synecdochic detail taking on a particular significance in the portrait of Pavel Petrovich, whose appearance is marked by an upward striving away from earth—he "had preserved the gracefulness of youth and that air of striving upwards, away from the earth, which for the most part is lost after a man's twenties" (11)—another indication of the direction of his thoughts.

At the other extreme, Bazarov returns to the country anxious to dissect and analyse his natural surroundings with the tools of modern sci-

ence. Once he, too, like Nikolai Petrovich, felt the magical closeness of nature:

“That aspen,” began Bazarov, “reminds me of my childhood; it grows at the edge of the clay-pits where the brickshed used to be, and in those days I believed formly that that clay-pit and aspen possessed a peculiar talismanic power; I never felt bored near them. I did not understand then that I was not bored because I was a child. Well, now I’m grown up, the talisman’s lost its power. (101)

Coming back from the university, Bazarov realises that his childhood experience of nature was based on a confusion of cause and effect and is determined to study the true causality of natural phenomena, cutting up frogs in order to find out what is going on inside human beings, not realising that he has only replaced his childhood’s naive contiguity relationship with nature by an equally naive relationship based on similarity, identifying human beings with frogs:

“I shall cut the frog open and see what is going on in his inside, and then, as you and I are much the same as frogs, only that we walk on legs, I shall know what’s going on inside us, too.” (14)

However, Bazarov fails in his attempt to identify with nature and the experiments lead to an even more profound feeling of loss of contact:

“I think; here I am lying under a haystack... The tiny space I occupy is so infinitely small in comparison with the rest of space, in which I am not, and which has nothing to do with me; and the period of time in which it is my lot to live is so petty beside the eternity in which I have not been, and shall not be... And in this atom, this mathematical point, the blood circulates, the brain works and wants something...” (102)

In this conversation with Arkadii, Bazarov expresses ideas that have little to do with his radical rhetoric, his habit of turning every accepted commonplace into what he calls a “commonplace in reverse”:

“I’ll tell you: to say that education is beneficial, for instance, that’s a commonplace; but to say that education is injurious, that’s a commonplace in reverse, There’s more style about it, so to say, but in reality it is one and the same.” (103)

Bazarov’s idea of man as only a tiny part of an indifferent universe is a sophisticated redefinition, albeit a negative one, of his relationship with nature, and at the same time, as Marina Ledkovsky has pointed out, a reflection of Turgenev’s two favourite thinkers, Pascal and Schopenhauer.<sup>20</sup> We are reminded here of Ralph E. Matlaw’s observation:

The discussions of nihilism and contemporary politics, that phase of the battle between the generations dominates the opening of the novel but is practically concluded when Bazarov and Arkady leave Odintsov in Chapter Nineteen. From this point on an opposite movement assumes primary importance: Bazarov’s and Arkady’s liberation from involvement with theories and the turn toward life itself, that is, toward those people and things in the characters’ immediate existence.<sup>21</sup>

This brings us back to the relationship between the main characters and their setting. We are now able to define this relationship as a binary opposition between Arkady and his father, on the one hand, in whose relationship with nature similarity is superimposed on contiguity, and on the other hand, Bazarov and Pavel Petrovich whose relationship with nature is marked by contiguity and contrast, with the difference, however, that whereas Pavel Petrovich’s relationship with nature is purely external, Bazarov’s is internal, based on the idea of his being a part, however tiny and insignificant, of the whole of nature, a whole from which he has been separated, against which he revolts, and with which he is finally reconciled and united in his death.

Underlying these different relationships between the characters and their natural environment is the basic device of bringing together two separate units in a structure of parallelism, in which the units become

20 Marina Ledkovsky, 1973, *The Other Turgenev: From Romanticism to Symbolism*, Würzburg.

21 Ralph E. Matlaw, “Turgenev’s Novels and *Fathers and Sons*,” Turgenev, 1966, pp. 261–78, p. 278.

equivalent in some respects, remaining different in others. The juxtaposition of each of the characters with their setting, or of the characters with each other, serves the ultimate aim of linking the units thus combined by associations of contiguity, similarity, and contrast. It has long been acknowledged that in verse, in poetry in the narrower sense of the word, parallelism is “the essential principle to which all the basic devices of poetry can be reduced.”<sup>22</sup> In verse, our attention is immediately drawn to the system of recurrent figures of grammar and sound which link the units together in canonic parallelism, where “similarity is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence.”<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, literary prose is, in Roman Jakobson’s definition, primarily a metonymic construction, in contrast to the metaphoric construction of verse. However, this definition has never really been put to the test, and I should like to put forward a different view, maintaining that the principle of parallelism is fundamental to all verbal art, with the difference that in prose it applies to larger units than in poetry, and its implementation is less rigid, much freer than in traditional verse.<sup>24</sup>

So far, our analysis of *Fathers and Sons* has shown that parallelism is the principle by which characters are juxtaposed with their setting in space and time in a structure of mutual correspondences. Let us now take a look at the relationships between the central characters in order to find out how parallelism works on this level of the text. *Fathers and Sons* is, as the title indicates, a family novel. Biologically, members of a family are related to each other by degrees of natural similarity: they resemble each other; and by degrees of natural proximity, ranging from the intimate closeness of parents and their children, to more remote relations, like those between uncles and nephews. From a sociological viewpoint, as a social structure, similarity relations are of little importance. In this context, the family and its members are almost exclusively defined by a system of contiguity relations imposed on it by society. Neither of these systems is aesthetically interesting in itself. As long as it remains a closed, well-functioning unit, there is little a poet can do about the fam-

22 Krystyna Pomorska, 1979, “Roman Jakobson and the New Poetics,” *Roman Jakobson: Echoes of His Scholarship*, ed. D. Armstrong & C.H. Van Schooneveld, Lisse, pp. 363–78.

23 Roman Jakobson, 1981; “The Poetry of Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry,” *Selected Writings*, The Hague, vol. 3, pp. 87–97.

24 Krystyna Pomorska, 1985, “Poetics of Prose,” Roman Jakobson, *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, eds. K. Pomorska & S. Rudy, Oxford, pp. 169–77.



ily. It is only when the normal system of relationships is disturbed and its members begin to behave in unpredictable ways that the family may be exploited aesthetically. A brief glance at the nineteenth-century Russian family novel will confirm this: what would have happened in *Anna Karenina* if Stiva Oblonskii had not deceived his wife with the French governess? And what if Prince Andrei had not lost his first wife in *War and Peace*? And what about *Fathers and Sons* if Bazarov had not been introduced so unexpectedly into the family of the Kirsanov's at the very beginning of the novel?

Bazarov's function is evident from the start. As Arkadii's mentor and spiritual father he is the potential rival of Nikolai Petrovich, Arkadii's father in the flesh. During the journey back from the posting station, the reunion of father and son culminates in their feeling of perfect harmony with each other and with the atmosphere of spring surrounding them. The harmony is broken, however, when Bazarov asks for a match to lighten his pipe with. Soon, Arkadii is smoking one of Bazarov's fat black cigars, diffusing about him such a strong and acid smoke that Nikolai Petrovich is forced to avert his nose. Literally and metaphorically, Arkadii is back in Bazarov's atmosphere.

Bazarov appears with the disruptive force of an extraneous particle thrown into a well-functioning system, dislocating its elements and lying bare their functions and interrelationships. Turgenev uses his angry young man as a "free variable," as it were, who in turn is made to assume the roles of the different members of the family. With his arrival, all of them have a potential double and rival: Arkadii in his relations with his father, his uncle, and the women he falls in love with; Nikolai Petrovich in his relations with Arkadii, with his brother, and with Fenechka; Pavel Petrovich in his relations with his brother, with Arkadii, and with Fenechka. Moreover, Bazarov's relationship with Pavel Petrovich becomes, as we shall see, particularly complex and subtle.

In the same way as a destabilised system will yield more information about itself than one that functions perfectly, the profound changes Bazarov's presence brings about in the mutual relations between the members of the Kirsanov family reveal that under the smooth and civilised surface there lurks a world of subconscious desire and repressed emotions.

With Bazarov's arrival, a new, dynamic system is superimposed on the static system of socially accepted relations between Arkadii, his fa-

ther, and his uncle. Each time Bazarov's function changes, new configurations are created between himself and the three others, each configuration disclosing hidden aspects of their character. The dynamism of the new system is most clearly seen in the relations of the four central characters to the opposite sex.

At the beginning of the novel, there is a marked contrast between the old generation and the young people. Although Pavel Petrovich is a bachelor and his brother a widower, their present is determined by a past love relationship, in the case of Nikolai Petrovich by his happy marriage to Arkadii's mother, in the case of his brother by the unhappy, passionate affair with the Princess R. Both women are now dead. But whereas Pavel has encapsulated the memory of the enigmatic Princess, Arkadii's father has taken Fenechka into the house and she has borne him a son. There is thus an internal difference between the brothers in spite of the common features that they share when related to Arkadii and Bazarov, both of whom are emotionally quite inexperienced in matters of love when the novel begins. In a certain sense one might even say that their initiation into *eros* in the meaning of both love and sexual desire, is what the whole novel is about. At first they are both infatuated by the mature charm of Anna Sergeevna Odintsova and go through a period of mutual rivalry before Arkadii falls in love with Anna Sergeevna's younger sister and the situation is changed. From then on the story of their happy relationship develops concurrently with and in contrast to Bazarov's unrequited passion for Anna Sergeevna, at the same time as Arkadii's father is encouraged to normalise his liaison with Fenechka. This last relationship is threatened only once, when Pavel Petrovich, nourishing a hidden affection for his brother's mistress, seeing in her features the likeness of the woman he once fell so passionately in love with, suspects Bazarov of having an affair with her and challenges him to a duel. Thus Bazarov finds himself in the role of rival in relation to the two brothers Kirsanov. Moreover, he accepts the challenge, thereby implicitly surrendering to the aristocratic code of his antagonist. The parodic overtones of the duel should not detract from its intrinsic significance in the poetic system of the novel. Through it Bazarov has been placed on an equal footing with the members of the old generation, and, more importantly, it creates a new and more complex relationship between him and Pavel Petrovich, the two bachelors of the novel. In the new context of *eros* and sexual desire the young radical *razn-*

*ochinets* and the liberal aristocrat of the 1840s suffer a similar fate and are connected by a network of correspondences which sets them off against the other two central heroes, Arkadii and his father.

The full significance of the duel in the poetic system of the novel, however, is only revealed to us if we read it in the light of Bazarov's death at the end. In this perspective only are we able to fathom the deeper meaning of Bazarov's dream before the event and the description of the wounded Pavel Petrovich at the end of the chapter.

In Bazarov's dream, "Pavel Petrovich took the shape of a big forest with which he had to fight anyway" (124). The same image returns to him on this deathbed, before his final struggle: "There's a forest here..." (161). In the subconscious of Bazarov's dreams Pavel Petrovich has been transformed into a symbol of death, and this symbolic function is reinforced in the portrayal of Pavel Petrovich in the passage rounding off the duel:

Pavel Petrovich moistened his forehead with eau de cologne, and closed his eyes. His handsome, emaciated head, the glaring daylight shining fully upon it, lay on the pillow like the head of a dead man... And indeed he was a dead man. (134)

Between the prefiguration of death in the duel chapter and its fulfilment at the end, there is a proliferation of allusions to death in Bazarov's speech:

"[...] Well, so I set off to the fathers'," Bazarov wound up, "and I've turned in on the way..." (140).

"Anna Sergeevna," Bazarov hastened to say, "before everything else I must set your mind at rest. Before you is a mortal [...]" (141)

"[...] you tell me I am good... It's like laying a wreath of flowers on the head of a corpse." (146)

"Have you ever chanced to see people in my state not set off for the Elysian fields?" asked Bazarov [...] (157)

With the exception of the last line, spoken at a time when Bazarov already knows that he is going to die, these utterances contain a "tragic irony" in that Bazarov is here unwittingly predicting his own death. They may be defined as "Freudian slips" in which his subconscious death wish finds its verbal expression. Turgenev is here probing into a level of the mind that

lies beyond both reflective and non-reflective consciousness. His use of the subconscious and of dreams in the representation of Bazarov's passion reflects his "lifelong obsession with the question of dreams and reality."<sup>25</sup> It may well be that Turgenev is at his most daring as an artist when trying to transcend the frontier between consciousness and the subconscious. As pointed out by April FitzLyon, his letters to Claudie Viardot confirm "what some of us have always felt: that, beneath the façade of the civilised but rather old-fashioned and conventional novelist, there lurks another Turgenev, delving deeply into his own subconsciousness to grapple with problems in a manner more akin to the 20th than the 19th century."<sup>26</sup> *Fathers and Sons* shows that this other Turgenev is at work as early as the late 1850s, and that his preoccupation with Bazarov's character took him a long way away from realism proper. Towards the end of the novel we realise that it has been turned into a genuinely symbolic representation of *eros* in all its ambiguity. There are elements in the text that reveal their aesthetic function only in this symbolic context. One such element is the fresco over the main entrance of the church at Anna Sergeevna's estate, representing the Resurrection of Christ in the "Italian" style:

Sprawling [*rasprostertyi*] in the foreground of the picture was a swarthy warrior in a helmet, specially conspicuous for his rotund contours. (63)

At first sight this looks like a detail of no further significance, and we might ask why the soldier—sprawling in the foreground—is highlighted, whereas the angel and the empty sepulchre are taken for granted. It is only when the relatively rare word "sprawling" is used again, and this time to describe the dying Bazarov, that the detail of the fresco acquires an unexpected significance. Anna Sergeevna has just arrived, greeted by his parents as an angel from heaven:

"Benefactress!" cried Vassily Ivanovich [...] "Still living, my Evgeny is living, and now he will be saved! Wife, wife!... An angel from heaven has come to us..." [...]

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<sup>25</sup> FitzLyon, 1972, p. 620.

<sup>26</sup> FitzLyon, 1972, p. 620.

She looked at Bazarov... and stood still, so greatly was she impressed by the inflamed, and at the same time deathly face [...]

“Father, leave us alone. Anna Sergeevna, you will allow it, I fancy, now?”

With a motion of his head, he indicated his prostrate [*rasprostertoe*] helpless frame. (159–60)

The poetic juxtaposition of the two units from different levels of the text establishes a connection between the Resurrection of Christ and Bazarov's death. The meaning of this connection is symbolic and cannot be reduced to a concept. It may help us in our understanding of this symbol to know that Turgenev saw in Christ the symbol of the sublime love which “enables suffering humanity to truly transcend its relative existence.”<sup>27</sup> In the light of this interpretation of Christ, which owes a lot to Schopenhauer, we would be inclined to see in the image of the Resurrection the symbol of a love that conquers death.

By applying the principle of parallelism to his story, thus transforming its linear development in time into parallel structures, and connecting the units by similarity, contiguity and contrast, Turgenev has completely changed the basic relationships between the main characters in the course of the novel. They are not governed by political differences and the generation gap any longer. Arkadii and his father are both happily married, feeling in perfect harmony with their natural as well as their social environment. Pavel Petrovich on the other hand, has left Russia for the West. He can be seen in Dresden, on the Brühl terrace, an elegant apparition, but inwardly dead, leading a kind of limbo existence. And Bazarov is dead, reunited in death with nature. In spite of all their differences, the liberal dandy and the radical student have suffered a fate that has brought them together. The fanatical defender of civilisation and the nihilist are both seen in contrast to culture as it is represented in the harmony between internal and external life, between thought and feeling, poetry and prose, by Arkadii and his father. The initial opposition between fathers and sons, based on social and political abstractions, has lost its significance and given way to another, more fundamental opposition, that between life and death. At the end of the novel the characters have been transfigured and appear as symbolic representations of Love in its vital, lifegiving aspect, and as a tragic, destructive force.

27 Ledkovsky, 1973, p. 67.

## Seeing the World through Genres

IN THEIR joint programme for a systematic study of language and literature, in the 1960s retrospectively referred to as “proto-structuralist,” Roman Jakobson and Iurii Tynianov wrote, in 1928:

6. The assertion of two differing concepts—*la langue* and *la parole*—and the analysis of the relationship between them (the Geneva school) has been exceedingly fruitful for linguistic science. The principles involved in relating these two categories (the existing norm and individual utterances) as applied to literature must be elaborated. In the latter case, the individual utterance cannot be considered without reference to the existing complex of norms [...]

7. An analysis of the structural laws of language and literature and their evolution inevitably leads to the establishment of a limited series of actually existing structural types (and, correspondingly, of types of structural evolution).

8. A disclosure of the immanent laws of the history of literature (and language) allows us to determine the character of each specific change in literary (and linguistic) systems.<sup>1</sup>

How wonderfully simple it all sounded then. Not surprisingly, the Saussurian dichotomy referred to by the two Russian scholars was taken over by a number of academics in various fields of the humanities during the heydays of structuralism. It reappeared in various sections of communi-

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<sup>1</sup> Iurij Tynjanov & Roman Jakobson, 1971, “Problems in the Study of Literature and Language,” *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. L. Matejka & K. Pomorska, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 79–81, p. 79. First published as “Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka,” *Novyj Lef* 12 (1928), pp. 36–37.

cation theory as *code* versus *message*, *system* versus *text*, *organising pattern* versus *event*, to mention a few of the terms that come to mind.

In genre theory, we have been through a proliferation of modes and types, architexts and hypertexts, hypotexts, paratexts, intertexts, and what have you. But has it led to a deeper understanding of literature? I think not. Instead, we have defined classes of abstract categories that enable literary scholars to turn away from the treasure house of literary art, reiterating the old idea that certain groups of individual works share a stable generic essence, and that by abstracting these essences from the actual texts we are able to define their generic belonging.

At this point, I am involuntarily reminded of Mephistopheles' advise to the young student in Goethe's *Faust 1*:

Who would know and describe a thing  
Seeks first to expel the spirit within. (lines 1936–37)

Today, in a post-poststructuralist world, everything seems so much more complex. In the present situation, it may be worthwhile to take a look at the neighbouring field of social anthropology, where we may discern a distinct tendency away from abstractive classification in favour of a more individual-centred approach.

In social anthropology, one of the most challenging problems of the last two decades has been the problem of history, i.e. "the relationship between the organising patterns of culture and the actions of individuals, between structure and events." In her review of Marshall Sahlins' *Culture in Practice*, Tanya M. Luhrman follows the author, claiming that "there is at best an analytic, and certainly not an actual, distinction between structure and event, because circumstances are always recognised through cultural idioms and those idioms never stand free of specific moments, places and people." Moreover, she argues that "no matter how powerful and constraining the cultural patterns, history is always chaotic—in the now technical sense of the word."<sup>2</sup>

While many literary scholars still think of genres in terms of abstract classes and idealised forms such as "the tragic" and "the epic" in much

2 Tanya M. Luhrman, 2001, "The Culture Club," *The Times Literary Supplement*, 8 June, pp. 7–8, p. 8. (Review of A. Kuper's *Culture: The Anthropologist's Account* and M. Sahlins' *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays*.)

the same way as biology once conceived of “the horse,” we might do worse than to try to see genres not as essences or types, but as specific things in the world, turning our attention to the uniqueness and dynamism of “this work” and “that work” and the interactions between them. This is an approach in modern population biology that has caught the attention of the social anthropologist Lars Rodseth, in an attempt to transpose this method to his own discipline:

Essentialism assumes uniformity and stability within a given class of objects; an essentialist would treat the members of a population in the same way. Beneath their surface variations, then, these members must share a stable essence; otherwise, for the essentialist, they would not belong to the same class, “race,” or species. Yet, a biological population does not consist of identical things, but of unique individuals whose variation is crucial to the process of evolution. Over time, in fact, every population changes, in part because every individual changes.”<sup>3</sup>

What makes Rodseth’s approach so relevant and interesting for the study of literary genres, is that he sees a connection between the treatment of living organisms in biology and the treatment of *meanings* or “semantic forms” as “dynamic, metamorphic, and interactive,” in the genre studies of Mikhail Bakhtin in the 1930. “That words and utterances move in groups resembling living populations was suggested,” according to Rodseth, in the following passage from Bakhtin’s “Discourse in the Novel”:

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some and recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse [...]. The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance [...].<sup>4</sup>

3 Lars Rodseth, 1998, “Distributive Models of Culture: A Sapirian a Alternative to Essentialism,” *American Anthropologist* 100 (1), pp. 55–69, p. 56.

4 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 1981, “Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M.



Following Bakhtin's lead, we shall no longer be able to justify a method by which whole groups of literary works are collapsed into a general generic model like "tragedy" or "belles-lettres." Instead, every single literary work ought to be recognised as a unique aesthetic utterance, carrying its own unique aesthetic meaning.

Does this imply, then, that the concept of genre has to be abandoned altogether? Not according to Bakhtin, whose critique of the humanities already in the 1920s had been directed against the dualism of cognition and life in the humanities:

The detached content of the cognitional act comes to be governed by its own immanent laws, according to which it then develops as if it had a will of its own. Inasmuch as we have entered that content, i.e. performed an act of abstraction, we are now controlled by its autonomous laws or, to be exact, we are no longer present in it as individually and answerably active human beings.<sup>5</sup>

Following Bakhtin, we shall have to conceive of genres not as things or ready-made forms, in which the writer expresses his vision of the world, but as "form-shaping ideologies," to use one of his own terms. The "form-shaping ideology" of any reasonably complex genre is, as emphasised by Morson and Emerson, never reducible to a system, a set of rules, or immanent laws. "Nor can it be wholly transcribed in any other way":

Here as elsewhere, the proper use of transcriptions, as analytic tools, is either to point in the direction where real vision lies or to recoup for abstract analysis as much of the genre's wisdom as can be captured. So long as one does not confuse transcribed propositions for the essence of the genre, they can be helpful. In this sense they are like a set of linguistic rules, which may be quite useful even if language is not ultimately a matter of rules.<sup>6</sup>

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Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Austin, pp. 259–422, p. 276.

5 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 1995, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. & notes V. Liapunov, ed. V. Liapunov & M. Holquist, Austin, p. 7.

6 Gary S. Morson & Caryl Emerson, 1990, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, Stanford, p. 283.

One of the implications of understanding genre as a way of seeing, is that “in choosing a genre, an author adopts a partially alien vision and imposes on himself a difficult set of constraints.” To Bakhtin, it is a sign of Dostoevsky’s artistic genius that he was able not only to overcome his own “monologic” views in his dialogic “principle of seeing” as an artist, but that he “not only *used* but himself *created* the partially alien form-shaping ideology of polyphony.”<sup>7</sup> This dialogic aspect of Bakhtin’s genre theory is connected with his idea of *creative understanding*:

A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings [...].<sup>8</sup>

A similar conceptualisation of the artistic text is found in the work of Iurii Lotman. In his definition, an artistic text must consist of a least two differently organised subtexts. Between these subtexts translation is in principle impossible, but a relationship of equivalence is nevertheless established between them, thanks to the cultural-psychological context common to both texts. This juxtaposition of such non-juxtaposable elements, between which a relationship of equivalence is established thanks to their shared context, constitutes, according to Lotman, the core of creative thinking. One of the implications of Bakhtin’s and Lotman’s analyses would be that a literary work is the result of the author’s dialogic encounter with alien “form-shaping ideologies,” or genres. This is the event that generates the work, its eventness, as it were.

No wonder, then, that genres “are of special significance” in Bakhtin’s literary theory. Genres “throughout the centuries of their life accumulate forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of the world.”<sup>9</sup> For the mediocre writer the genre serves “as an external template,” but the great artist “awakens the semantic possibilities that lie within it.” Such authors, Shakespeare, for example, “took advantage of and included in

7 Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 283.

8 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 1986<sup>a</sup>, “Response to a Question from the *Novyi Mir* Editorial Staff” *Speech Genres and other Essays*, trans. V.W. McGee, ed. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Austin, pp. 1–9, p. 7.

9 Bakhtin, 1986<sup>a</sup>, p. 5.

his works immense treasures of potential meaning that could not be fully revealed or recognized in his epoch.”<sup>10</sup> Genres are treasure-troves of potential meaning inherited from the past and by the artist’s creative activity brought over into the future to be liberated from the text by the creative understanding of new generations who will read the works from their points of view and in different contexts. *Creative understanding* as Bakhtin defines it depends on the *outsidedness* of the interpreter “in time, space, in culture”:

In the realm of culture, outsidedness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that a foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly (but not maximally fully, because there will be cultures that see and understand even more).<sup>11</sup>

Genres as Bakhtin sees them are never closed systems or finite forms. Genres are open and meaningful “form-shaping” principles, subject to historical change and modification. New genres may emerge, and old genres may die and be reborn. His concept of genre is not confined to literature. On the contrary, literary genres form part of a much larger genre category called *speech genres*.

Fundamental to Bakhtin’s concept of genre is his supposition that language “is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity”:

These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of the lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language, but above all through their compositional structure. [...] Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Bakhtin, 1986<sup>a</sup>, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Bakhtin, 1986<sup>a</sup>, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Bakhtin, 1986<sup>b</sup>, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” *Speech Genres and other Essays*, trans. V.W. McGee, ed. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Austin, pp. 60–102, p. 60

The various spheres of human activity develop their own repertoire of such genres “that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex.” This leads to the “extreme *heterogeneity*” of speech genres. They include:

short rejoinders of daily dialogue (and these are extremely varied depending on the subject matter, situation, and participants), everyday narration, writing (in all its various forms), the brief standard military command, the elaborate and detailed order, the fairly variegated repertoire of business documents (for the most part standard), and the diverse world of commentary (in the broad sense of the word: social, political). And we must also include here the diverse forms of scientific statements and all literary genres (from the proverb to the multivolume novel).<sup>13</sup>

Scientific statements and literary genres are examples of “secondary” or “complex” genres, in contradistinction to the “primary” *speech genres*. A feature common to them all, however, in spite of their heterogeneity, is that in the course of history they accumulate experience. As Morson and Emerson put it: “Genres form not by legislation but by accretion.”<sup>14</sup> They are, says Bakhtin, “much more changeable, flexible, and plastic than language forms are.” But they have a normative significance and are not created by the authors of the various utterances, but given to them.<sup>15</sup> The construction of secondary genres necessarily brings about a refunctioning of the primary genres involved. They

lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others. For example, rejoinders of everyday dialogues or letters found in a novel [...] enter into actual reality only via the novel as a whole, that is, as a literary-artistic event and not as everyday life.<sup>16</sup>

In concrete utterances there is a constant and complex interaction of genres. In literary history, for example, we can often observe how oral genres

13 Bakhtin, 1986<sup>b</sup>, pp. 60–61.

14 Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 292.

15 Bakhtin 1986<sup>b</sup>, pp. 80–81.

16 Bakhtin, 1986<sup>b</sup>, p. 62.

penetrate written ones. Such interpenetration may result in a dialogisation of the genres involved, since each genre “remembers” the contexts of which they have emerged and evolved together with *other utterances* from which they have been adapted.

“Genre memory” is one of Bakhtin’s relatively late working metaphors, first formulated in the second, 1963 version of his Dostoevsky book, where there is a new chapter, “Characteristics of genre,” a result of his studies of genre problems after the first appearance the Dostoevsky book in 1929. In one of the key passages of this chapter he discusses the importance of *generic contacts* for an author’s work. In order to attach himself to a genre tradition, a writer “need not know all the links and all the branchings of that tradition”:

A genre possesses its own organic logic which can to a certain extent be understood and creatively be assimilated on the basis on a few generic models, even fragments. *But the logic of genre is not an abstract logic.* Each new variety, each new work of a given genre always enriches it in some way, aids in perfecting the language of the genre. For this reason it is important to know the possible generic sources of a given author, the literary and generic atmosphere in which his creative work was realized. The more complete and concrete our knowledge of an artist’s *generic contacts*, the deeper can we penetrate the peculiar features of his generic form [...].<sup>17</sup>

It is not the writer’s subjective memory, but the objective “memory of the very genre” that preserves and transmits its “congealed forms”:

A genre lives in the present, but always *remembers* its past, its beginning. A genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development.<sup>18</sup>

The genres in which heterogeneity, disharmony, and conflictive interaction are most clearly visible, are, according to Bakhtin, those belonging to the “dialogic” tradition in European literature, first and foremost the

17 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 1984, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. C. Emerson, Manchester, p. 157.

18 Bakhtin, 1984, p. 106.

novel. Let us therefore see how generic interaction shapes the life of one of the main characters in a novel from the mid-twentieth century: Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, originally written during the first half of 1944, i.e. in the middle of the Second World War, and first published in 1945.<sup>19</sup>

As we can already see from the title, the novel is conceived in the form of a memoir, written down by one of its two main characters, Charles Ryder, when as a thirty nine-year old "middle-aged captain of the infantry" (49) he returns to Brideshead during the war, and in retrospect re-experiences his life from the day in 1923 when he met Sebastian Flyte, the Marquis of Marchmain's second son, during their second term at Oxford. In those days, Brideshead was "where my family live," as Sebastian put it, and even then, Charles remembers, "I felt, momentarily, an ominous chill at the words he used—not "that is my home," but "it's where my family live" (43). And now, two decades later, Charles refers to it as "It belongs to friends of mine":

And as I said the words they sounded as odd in my ears as Sebastian's had done, when, instead of saying, "It is my home," he said, "It is where my family live." (379)

I shall not here attempt to give any analysis or description of the whole novel. Instead, I would like to look a little bit more closely at the way Sebastian Flyte's life is represented in the novel. But let me, first of all, remind you of the "Author's note" that precedes the unfolding of the narrative:

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am not I:  
 thou art not he or she:  
 they are not they  
 E.W.

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19 Evelyn Waugh, 1960, *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder: A Novel*, London. Numbers in brackets after the quotations refer to pages in this edition.

In these three condensed sentences Waugh formulates a theory of selfhood that, like Bakhtin's, insists on the self's "non-coincidence" with itself and with every other self. It is this unique, unfinalisable, and unfinalised self Bakhtin found incarnated in the characters created by Dostoevsky in his polyphonic novels, where a person "never coincides" with him- or herself. One cannot apply to his persons the formula "A is A":

In Dostoevsky's artistic thinking, the genuine life of the personality takes place at the point of non-coincidence between a man and himself, at this point of departure beyond the limits of all that he is as a material being, a being that can be spied on, defined, predicted apart from his own will, "at second hand." The genuine life of the personality is made available only through a *dialogic* penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself.<sup>20</sup>

I am not suggesting that Waugh's novel is polyphonic in the sense Bakhtin employs this metaphoric concept in his analysis of Dostoevsky's novels. What I do suggest, however, is that in *Brideshead Revisited* we find the same idea of personhood as unfinalisable and non-coincident as in Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky. In the life story of Sebastian Flyte, the novel's outsider and anti-hero, Waugh sees the world through a genre syndrome that has always been able to see the truth about a person, not other peoples' "second-hand truth" that so easily become degrading and deadening lies, but words dialogically penetrating into a person's "inner self," the "holy of holies," as Bakhtin would have put it.

I am thinking of the hagiographic genres that came into being in connection with representations of holy men and women of the early Christians, whose inner holiness was often hidden to a world that could only see the saint's outer decay and degradation. Sebastian's story begins when the two young men meet and become friends. "He was entrancing, with that epicene beauty which in extreme youth sings aloud for love and withers at the first cold wind" (40). Between themselves they create an Arcadia of their own—"Et in Arcadia ego" is the name of the first part of the novel. Describing their first meeting in Oxford, in Sebastian's rooms at Christ Church, Charles, the narrator, remembers:

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<sup>20</sup> Bakhtin 1984, p. 59.

I was in search of love in those days, and I went full of curiosity and of the faint, unrecognised apprehension that here, at last, I should find that low door in the wall, which others, I knew, had found before me, which opened on an enclosed and enchanted garden, which was somewhere, not overlooked by any window, in the heart of that grey city. (40)

Gradually, however, their friendship begins to fall apart:

I had no mind then for anything except Sebastian, and I saw him already being threatened, though I did not yet know how black was the threat. His constant, despairing prayer was to be let alone. [...]

And since Sebastian counted among the intruders his own conscience and all claims of human affection, his days in Arcadia were numbered. For in this, to me tranquil time, Sebastian took fright. I knew him well in that mood of alertness and suspicion, like a deer suddenly lifting his head at the far notes of the hunt; I had seen him grow wary at the thought of his family or his religion, now I found I, too, was suspect. He did not fail in love, but he lost his joy of it, for I was no longer part of his solitude. As my intimacy with his family grew, I became part of the bonds which held him [...] He was sick at heart somewhere, I did not know how, and I grieved for him, unable to help. (143)

In due course, Charles will fall in love with Sebastian's sister, Julia, and look back at Sebastian as the "forerunner," his "thou" no longer "he," but "she." But long before that, their dialogic relationship is broken when Charles begins to see his friend through the eyes of "they." "Why do you take their side against me? I knew you would if I let you meet them. Why do you spy on me?" (149) As a "material being," Sebastian is now defined as a drunkard, a being that, in Bakhtin's words, quoted already, "can be spied on, defined, predicted apart from his own will, 'at second hand'."

It is at this point that the "form-shaping ideology" of the hagiographic genres begins to interfere with the other generic strands of the novel. For example, in the following conversation between Charles, the atheist, and Sebastian's elder brother, a Roman Catholic like the rest of the family, on the day when Lady Marchmain takes Sebastian away from Oxford:



“[...] My mother believes Sebastian is a confirmed drunkard. Is he?”

“He’s in the danger of becoming one.”

“I believe God prefers drunkards to a lot of respectable people.”

“For God’s sake,” I said, for I was near to tears that morning, “Why bring God into everything?”

“I’m sorry. I forgot. But you know that’s an extremely funny question.” (162–63)

In the first part of *Brideshead Revisited*, “*Et in Arcadia Ego*,” the narrator’s memories of his students days and his friendship with Sebastian are described within the framework of two idyllic *chronotopes*: Oxford and Brideshead:

Oxford, in those days, was still a city of aquatint. In her spacious and quiet streets men walked and spoke as they had done in Newman’s day; her autumnal mists, her grey springtime, and the rare glory of her summer days—such as that day—when the chestnut was in flower and the bells rang out high and clear over her gables and cupolas, exhaled the soft airs of centuries of youth. (29)

The place, the *topos*, is experienced as a spatial world sufficient unto itself, an enchanted garden to generations of young men who have lived their lives here according to the natural rhythm of the changing seasons, their love relationships—like that of Charles and Sebastian—abstracted into the Platonic erotics of romantic friendships. To Charles, the outsider, Brideshead represented a similar chronotopy.

It was an aesthetic education to live within those walls, to wander from room to room, from the Soanesque library to the Chinese drawing room, adazzle with gilt pagodas and nodding mandarins, painted paper and Chippendale fretwork, from the Pompeian parlour to the great tapestry-hung hall which stood unchanged, as it had been designed 250 years before; to sit, hour after hour, in the shade, looking out on the terrace.

This terrace was the final consummation of the house’s plan; it stood on massive stone ramparts above the lakes, so that from the hall

steps it seemed to overhang them, as though, standing by the balustrade, one could have dropped a pebble into the first of them immediately below one's feet. It was embraced by the two arms of the colonnade; beyond the pavilions groves of lime led to the wooded hillsides. (92–93)

In due course, Charles will become famous as a painter specialising in nostalgic representations of English country houses. But this happens only after the door has shut: “the low door in the wall I had sought and found in Oxford; open it now and I should find no enchanted garden” (190).

In the novel's second book, “Brideshead abandoned,” the arcadic idyll unclusters into a multitude of generic chronotopes. What is characteristic of the novel's second book is its multiplicity of biographical and social time-spaces and the dialogic relationships that are created between them. I am not going into the complex interplay between the various chronotopes, but will confine my discussion to the story of Sebastian's life after Brideshead.

After a period of aimless wanderings in the Mediterranean, he finally settles down in Fez, in French Morocco. Here, he takes a house in the native town, together with Kurt, a young German out of the Foreign Legion, “an awful fellow sponging on him,” “a thoroughly bad hat,” according to the British Consul, in whose view this “is no place for a remittance man” like Sebastian (233). Charles, on the contrary, sees it differently, when on his way to the last encounter with his friend he observes the setting:

under the stars, in the walled city, whose streets were gentle, dusty stairways, and whose walls rose windowless on either side, closed overhead, then opened again to the stars; where the dust lay thick among the smooth paving stones and figures passed silently, robed in white, on soft slippers or hard, bare soles; where the air was scented with cloves and incense and wood smoke—now I knew what had drawn Sebastian here and held him so long. (234)

In the Franciscan hospital, where the brothers have taken him because of “the grippe,” there is a strange discrepancy between the doctor's and the brothers' view of him. The doctor, “a layman, clean shaven, dressed

in white, starched overalls,” tells Charles bluntly that Sebastian is an alcoholic:

The doctor spoke dispassionately, almost brutally, with the relish men of science sometimes have for limiting themselves to inessentials, for pruning back their work to the point of sterility; but the bearded, barefooted brother in whose charge he put me, the man of no scientific pretensions who did the dirty jobs of the ward, had a different story.

“He is so patient. Not like a young man at all. He lies there and never complains—and there is much to complain of. [...] And he is so kind. There is a poor German boy with a foot that will not heal and secondary syphilis, who comes here for treatment. Lord Flyte found him starving in Tangier and took him in and gave him a home. A real Samaritan.”

“Poor simple monk,” I thought, “poor booby.” God forgive me!  
(237–38)

In this passage, two different interpretations of Sebastian’s situation are brought together: the doctor’s, from whose modern, scientific outlook Sebastian is seen from outside, as a medical case, and the monk’s, who sees in Sebastian’s relationship to his German friend an analogy to the parable of the Good Samaritan, thus bringing the hagiographic remapping of Sebastian’s story a step further. The doctor, seeing Sebastian through the scientific genres of his profession, reduces the story of his life to a degrading and deadening vision of its inevitable end:

Your friend is drinking again. It is forbidden here. What can I do? This is not a reformatory school. I cannot police the wards. I am here to cure people, not to protect them from viscous habits, or teach them self-control. Cognac will not hurt him now. It will make him weaker for the next time he is ill, and then one day some little trouble will carry him off, pouff. (239)

The lay brother, however, in his *anachronicity* and *anatomicity*, sees Sebastian differently: “Your friend is so much happier today, it is like one transfigured” (239). The Franciscan knows everything about Sebastian’s

naughtiness; how the Arab boys provide him with the forbidden cognac. His dialogic imagination, however, is nevertheless able to see in Sebastian's drunk and happy face a likeness of "one transfigured."

The last parts of Sebastian's story are told by his younger sister, Cordelia, in a dialogue with Charles back at Brideshead, after she has gone to see her brother at the monastery near Carthage where he probably will end his days. She too, like the Franciscan monk, redefines the story of her brother's degradation and sufferings by exploiting the recourses of hagiographic representation. And in her rendering, the hagiographic reaccentuation of Sebastian's life story is no longer involuntarily parodic, as with the Franciscan's syncrises, but full of loving humour and the creative understanding of a compassionate outsider.

There is a remarkable contrast between the lay brother's naïve figuration of Sebastian's saintliness in a "poetic" imagery based on metaphor and similarity, and Cordelia's account of her brother's last days. In her vision, it is the "prosaic" principle of metonymy and contiguity that prevails. She portrays Sebastian in a threshold situation, as one of those who are "very near and dear to God," "half in, half out, of the community," a holy fool and a joke to those who do not understand:

"I heard he was dying," she said. "A journalist in Burgos told me, who'd just arrived from North Africa. A down-and-out called Flyte, who people said was an English lord, whom the fathers had found starving and taken in at a monastery near Carthage. That was how the story reached me. I knew it couldn't be quite true—however little we did for Sebastian, he at least got his money sent him." (334)

"I didn't suggest his coming home. I knew he wouldn't, and he was too weak still to argue it out. He seemed quite happy by the time I left. He'll never be able to go into the bush, of course, or join the order, but the Father Superior is going to take charge of him. They had the idea of making him a sort of under-porter; you know; there are usually a few hangers-on in a religious house, you know; people who can't quite fit in either to the world or the monastic rule. (338)

"Poor Sebastian," I said. "it's too pitiful. How will it end?"

"I think I can tell you exactly, Charles. I've seen others like him, and I believe they are very near and dear to God. He'll live on half in, half out, of the community, a familiar figure pottering round with his

broom and his bunch of keys. He'll be a great favourite with the old fathers, something of a joke to the novices. Everyone will know about his drinking; he'll disappear for two or three days every month or so, and they'll all nod and smile and say in their various accents, 'Old Sebastian is on the spree again,' and then he'll come back dishevelled and shamefaced and more devout for a day or two in the chapel.

Then one morning, after one of his drinking bouts, he'll be picked up at the gate dying, and show by a mere flicker of the eyelid that he is conscious when they give him the last sacrament. It's not such a bad way of getting through one's life."

"It's not what one should have foretold," I said. "I suppose he doesn't suffer?"

"Oh, yes, I think he does. One can have no idea what the suffering may be, to be maimed as he is—no dignity, no power of will. No one is ever holy without suffering. It's taken that form with him. [...] I've seen so much suffering in the last few years; there's so much coming for everybody soon. It's the spring of love [...]" and then in condescension to my paganism, she added: "He's in a very beautiful place, you know, by the sea—white cloisters, a bell tower, rows of green vegetables, and a monk watering them when the sun is low."

I laughed. "You knew I wouldn't understand?" (339–40)