Dostoevsky in the Arts and Beyond

Contemporary Perspectives

Edited by

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Peter Daniels

Translators:

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Foreword *by the Editors*

Fedor Dostoevsky needs no introduction, either in Russia or abroad. Two hundred years after his birth, his works continue to be avidly read, and his insights continue to come true. 'There never was author more Russian in the strictest sense of the word and withal so universally European,'[1] the French writer André Gide wrote about him at the beginning of the twentieth century.

It would not be an exaggeration to consider Dostoevsky as a worldwide tuning fork of sorts, for our perception of his creative heritage is an indicator of our own development.

Thus, more than a quarter of a century ago, the American Slavist Robert L. Jackson, continuing Mikhail Bakhtin's famous statement that Dostoevsky has not yet become Dostoevsky, but is becoming one ('Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book', 1961), wrote that 'it is doubtful whether there is another writer in the past one hundred years who has "grown" more dramatically than did Dostoevsky. […] his becoming is, of course, our own growth; the release of his potential – our own'.[2]

Indeed, more than two centuries since the writer's birth, we still feel him as our contemporary, we feel his absolute relevance, his universality and commensurability to our present day. Without his genius it is no longer possible to imagine either Russian or world culture, or ourselves.

Reading Dostoevsky is multifaceted. He is seen by many both as a writer obsessed with the idea of suffering, and as a preacher of philosophical ideas on a universal scale, a precursor of existentialism, Freudianism and other movements; as a seer and as a messiah; as a psychologist, even a psychotherapist, and at the same time as a tormentor, driving the readers into hopeless dead ends of their own consciousness. The grandiosity of Dostoevsky, his irrepressible desire to reach the final truth (which turns out to be different for each character), to get to the bottom of terrible revelations and the raw, steaming foundation of existence can both fascinate and scare the reader.

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1 André Gide, *Dostoevsky* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 170–171.

2 Robert Louis Jackson, *Dialogues with Dostoevsky: The Overwhelming Questions* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 1.

As the Russian writer Fazil Iskander said about Dostoevsky,

> Basically, he polemicizes with all the world's humanistic thought which asserts that man is essentially good, just rendered bad by bad social conditions. Without God, Dostoevsky argues, man is bad or even horrible. He either submits to God's will, or lives according to his own, normally mean self-will.[3]

Having looked into the abyss, having known the black wells, as well as the great impulses, of human nature, Dostoevsky understood too much not only about individual existence, but also about the paths of humanity as a whole – having known the micro level, he predicted the inexorable movements of the macro level, the fateful course of history. And therefore, he did not succumb to the utopian ideas of the Enlightenment, which sought to eternally separate man from suffering that, as Dostoevsky's underground man exclaimed, is the only cause of consciousness.

Dostoevsky not only guessed too much, he foresaw our future. And the phrase from one humorous song: 'Dostoevsky predicted everything',[4] does not have a jokey sound to it, but rather a completely menacing one.

With his second sight, bestowed on him by the Angel of Death (as Lev Shestov put it),[5] Dostoevsky saw for centuries to come: the Soviet experiment of victorious demons, and the unbearable burden of real freedom (ultimately always rejected), and the horror of a cold reason, and a world without God, lying in evil. And the power of true sacrifice, and the invincibility of Love.

He gave us a magic mirror, a sorcerer's crystal. Our duty is to look intently and comprehend, our obligation is to listen attentively. But in order to read Dostoevsky, one must have courage. And this collection of works is a link

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[3] Fazil Iskander, 'A little about a lot: Random notes' ['Ponemnogu o mnogom. Sluchainye zapiski'], *Novyi Mir*, 2000 (10), p. 119.

[4] Yulii Kim, 'Russian Night-time Conversation' ['Russkii nochnoi razgovor'], from the play 'Moscow kitchens' ['Moskovskie kukhni'], URL: http://www.bards.ru/archives/part.php?id=47770 (accessed 20.02.2024).

[5] See Lev Shestov, 'The conquest of the self-evident: Dostoevsky's Philosophy', in Lev Shestov, *In Job's Balances*, ed. Bernard Martin (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1975). URL: https://www.angelfire.com/nb/shestov/ijb/jb1_1.html (accessed 26.02.2024).

in an unbroken chain of world efforts.

There are countless writers, thinkers, and philosophers who were formed under the influence of Dostoevsky. It is known that Friedrich Nietzsche considered Dostoevsky the only one who taught him something new in human psychology. Franz Kafka noted his spiritual kinship with Dostoevsky. Lev Shestov saw Dostoevsky rather than Kant as the first true critic of pure reason, an unsurpassed philosopher. Freud, who put Dostoevsky on a par with Shakespeare, dedicated his famous work on parricide to him, and in the famous bestseller of the German psychiatrist Karl Leonhard, *Accentuated Personalities*, Dostoevsky's heroes appear in the description of the range of human psycho-types. As the British historian and journalist Edward Carr noted back in 1931: 'Dostoevsky has influenced almost all the leading novelists in England, France and Germany during the last 20 years.'[6] Since then, this influence has only increased, and its geography has expanded to the planetary level.

Many have spoken in a Bakhtinian vein about Dostoevsky's polyphony, noting his ability to take a step back, giving his characters an independent life and a voice. It is the ability to diminish himself, to avoid forcing himself on the reader, the ability to humility and repentance, despite all the deep, heavy contradictions of his nature. That is why, it seems, many years after the writer's death, the Monk Barsanuphius from Optina Pustyn (where Dostoevsky often came to see Ambrose of Optina) said in one of his spiritual sermons: 'We believe that Dostoevsky was saved.'[7]

Nikolai Berdyaev, who dedicated to the writer a very personal, intimate work *Dostoevsky's Worldview*, argued that 'for Dostoevsky, man is above any important business, for man themself is the most important business'.[8]

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[6] See Garth M. Terry, 'Dostoyevsky studies in Great Britain: a bibliographical survey', in Malcolm V. Jones and Garth M. Terry (eds.), *New Essays on Dostoyevsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 215.

[7] See lecture by Archpriest Dimitry Struev, 'The novel *Crime and Punishment* as Dostoevsky's answer to the question "What is Orthodoxy"' ['Roman *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* kak otvet Dostoevskogo na vopros "V chem est pravoslavie"', URL: https://www.pravmir.ru/prestuplenie-i-nakazanie-roman-o-pravoslavii-lektsiya-protoiereya-dimitriya-strueva/, 16 March 2015 (accessed 15.01.2024).

[8] See Nikolai Berdyaev, 'Revelation about man in Dostoevsky's oeuvre' ['Otkrovenie o cheloveke v tvorchestve Dostoevskogo'], *Russkaia mysl*, 1918, vol. III – IV, URL: https://www.vehi.net/berdyaev/otkrov.html (accessed 21.12.2023).

Indeed, in the well-known words of young Dostoevsky addressed to his brother: 'Man is a mystery: if you spend your entire life trying to puzzle it out, then do not say that you have wasted your time. I occupy myself with this mystery, because I want to be a man'.[9] His genius fearlessly plunged into this mystery, into the very centre of human passions, outgrowing the finitude of earthly existence, expanding the horizons of each (insignificant in historical standards) individual personality to the dimensions of eternity. For, as another Russian literary genius later said:

> You are insignificant because you are finite. Yet the more finite a thing is, the more it is charged with life, emotions, joy, fears, compassion. [...] Passion is the privilege of the insignificant. [...] So try to stay passionate, leave your cool to constellations.[10]

Least of all, Dostoevsky is cold-blooded; most of all, he cares for man and for humanity, reaching in this zeal to the point of complete dedication, to the point of an epileptic fit. 'No one [...] like Dostoevsky [...] pulled wings from my shoulder blades',[11] admitted the philosopher Grigory Pomerants.

It is not surprising that Dostoevsky's works have been translated into a great many world languages – for he belongs to humanity and speaks the burning truth about man. But in addition to these ('linguistic') translations, there are also translations of Dostoevsky's works into the languages of other – non-literary – forms of art. Our collection is largely devoted to the study of precisely this – intermedial – perception of Dostoevsky's work in the context of world culture.

The variety and breadth of topics in the chapters of the collection determined its three-part composition. The first part – 'Global Dostoevsky – Philosopher, Prophet, Ideologue' – opens with the chapter '"Everything Dostoevsky said came true": Major lessons of the centenary (1821-1921)' [by Liudmila Saraskina], where the topic of Dostoevsky's anniversaries is con-

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[9] Fedor Dostoevsky. Letter to his brother Mikhail of 1839, quoted in Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), translated by Michael A. Minihan, p. 17.

[10] Joseph Brodsky, 'In Praise of Boredom' in *On Grief and Reason* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 110-111.

[11] Grigory Pomerants, *Openness to Abyss: Etudes on Dostoevsky* (Moscow: Sovetsky pisatel, 1990), pp. 3-4.

sidered for the first time, starting with the first, posthumous ones, which the writer's widow marked by publication of *The Complete Works of F. M. Dostoevsky*. His insights remain the most reliable and most accurate tool for understanding and assessing what happened to Russia after Dostoevsky, and what may happen to it in the future.

The chapter 'The Phenomenon of Dostoevsky in Modern Humanitarian Culture' [authors Natalia Zhivolupova (†) and Alexander Kochetkov] also explores the prophetic ideas of the Russian genius, the origins of Dostoevsky's prophecies during the period of metaphysical crisis. The essence of Dostoevsky's prophetism is analyzed, and the parameters of the evolution of the writer's semantic position in relation to prophetism are determined.

The author of the chapter 'Dostoevsky and the author's theory of creativity: *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*', Tatiana Kasatkina, examines Dostoevsky's view on the interaction of the reader/viewer with art, emphasizing the idea of high responsibility of both the creator and the reader/viewer for adequate transmission and perception meanings.

In the chapter 'Shades' of thought: Literary-aesthetic and sociological analysis of F. M. Dostoevsky's "philosophical artistry"', its author Ilia Deykun raises the question of the problematic nature of understanding Dostoevsky as a philosopher in philosophical and philological disciplines. The reception of Dostoevsky's oeuvre by his contemporaries as well as the subsequent generation of readers is considered from the point of view of the sociology of literature and theoretical poetics.

The author of the chapter 'Dostoevsky and Wittgenstein: "From the foundations of logic to the nature of the world"' Svetlana Klimova analyzes the *Logical-Philosophical Treatise* and *Diaries* of Ludwig Wittgenstein in comparison with the analysis of Dostoevsky's literary texts. By juxtaposing Dostoevsky's ideas with the works of Wittgenstein, the author discovers an undoubted 'Russian trace'.

Olga Tabachnikova in her chapter '"More black sorrow, poet": Lev Shestov and others as ideal readers of Dostoevsky', using the example of the appeal to Dostoevsky by the religious thinker Lev Shestov and other philosophers and writers, raises the question of the nature of readers' love for the Russian writer. The connection between Shestov's 'philosophy of tragedy' and

Dostoevsky's oeuvre is discussed in the light of the existential categories of love, despair, grief and happiness, as well as Shestov's key concepts of reason and faith.

The second part of the collection is called 'Dostoevsky at home and abroad: literary theory, music, and illustration art' and opens with the chapter 'The Other Russian troika: The case of Dostoevsky'. Its author, Liudmil Dimitrov, tries to trace how one hidden archetype of Russian literature of the nineteenth century (namely the 'other Russian troika') functions in Dostoevsky's writings. The chapter complements the theory of character systems in lyrical epic, prose and drama of the nineteenth century and helps to understand and analyze in a new way the processes of plot-formation of a literary work.

Olha Chervinska in the chapter 'What is a "normal person", according to Dostoevsky?', based on the material of the entire body of literary heritage of the writer, explores the notion of the so-called 'normal person' in the writer's interpretation and the ideological coordinates of this paradigm. As she argues, contrary to the generally accepted belief about Dostoevsky's predominant orientation towards the image of the 'small' person – the traditional template of Russian literature of his era – all of Dostoevsky's works are marked by the search for an answer to the question of what a 'normal person' is.

In the chapter 'Comparative analysis of images of Marya Timofeevna Lebyadkina and Rosanna Spearman (in *Demons* by Dostoevsky and *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins),' its author, Ekaterina Salnikova, focuses her attention on the consonances of the two novels, which are not caused by conscious cross-references or quotations from one another by the two authors. Having carried out a comparative analysis of two key characters – Maria Timofeevna Lebyadinka and Rosanna Spearman – the author reflects on the principles of modelling the exposition of two characters, their role in the beginnings and climactic events of the novels, and develops the idea of the significance of the romantic tradition, which goes far beyond the boundaries of one era.

The chapter 'F.M. Dostoyevsky and S.I. Taneev: accords and intersections' [author Galima Lukina] is dedicated to an unexplored topic – parallels

between Sergei Taneev and Fedor Dostoevsky. Lukina conjectures that Dostoevsky, with his famous Pushkin speech at the opening of the memorial to the poet (1880), helped Taneev to realize the special significance of Alexander Pushkin for Russian art, similar to the significance of the composer Mikhail Glinka and to his thoughts on the importance of preserving national roots. The author cites unique archival sources that help to reveal the similarities of the creative searches of both Dostoevsky and Taneev.

Elena Artamonova in the chapter 'Vladimir Rebikov's Opera *Yolka*, and its Reception in Great Britain: Based on Materials in Russian and English-language Publications' traces the fate of the musical-psychological drama *Yolka* ['Christmas Tree'] by Vladimir Rebikov based on Dostoevsky's story 'The Boy at Christ's Christmas Tree', which was undeservedly forgotten in its homeland for a long time. The composer's recently discovered correspondence opens up new dimensions in the interpretation of *Yolka* and takes Rebikov's views to a profound philosophical and religious level, consonant with Dostoevsky's worldview. The author analyzes little-studied publications from British music editions, which significantly enrich the topic of Dostoevsky and music.

In the chapter 'The novel "Crime and Punishment" by F.M. Dostoevsky in the reading of Mikhail Shemyakin', its author Pavel Fokin talks about the nonconformist artist Mikhail Shemyakin, whose spiritual becoming was greatly influenced by his acquaintance with Dostoevsky's work. The author analyzes a series of illustrations by Shemyakin for the novel Crime and Punishment, created in different periods, and explores the aesthetic principles and visual problems of artistic interpretations of Dostoevsky's novelistic world.

Maria Radchenko in the chapter '*An Unpleasant Predicament* by Dostoevsky in a Graphic and Literary Interpretation by Yuri P. Annenkov' claims that the outstanding avant-garde artist Yury Annenkov was 'obsessed' with this Dostoevsky story for many years, and incorporated much of Dostoevsky's poetics into his artistic works. The study demonstrates how skilfully the artist uses the visual potential of the story when creating illustrations.

The third part of the collection 'Dostoevsky in world cinema and theatre' opens with the chapter 'Russian version of the Superman: Philosophical

aspects of Dostoevsky's *Demons* and V. Khotinenko's screen adaptation of the novel'. Its author, Nikolai Khrenov, analyzes the proximity of Dostoevsky's philosophical ideas to Western philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: thus, through the prism of the philosophical ideas of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, the meanings of the novel *Demons* are also comprehended. 'Man-god' as a concept used by Dostoevsky in the novel is a synonym for Nietzsche's 'superman'. The chapter examines the desire of the director Khotinenko to embody the idea of a "superman" visually, without trying to convey it verbally.

The chapter 'Lizanka Khokhlakova, Nastasia Filippovna, and "eternal Sonechka": Dostoevsky's female images in the creative biography of Margarita Terekhova' [author Yulia Anokhina] explains how the relationship between the actress Margarita Terekhova and Dostoevsky's heroines was built. New facts related to the director Andrei Tarkovsky's unrealized plan to film the novel *The Idiot* are introduced into scientific circulation. Using the case study of a specific actor's fate, the history of the development and rethinking of Dostoevsky's heritage by theatre and cinema in Russia is traced.

The chapter 'Sound spaces in auteur screen adaptations of Dostoevsky's short story *A Gentle Creature*' [author Yulia Mikheeva] presents an analysis of several Russian and foreign adaptations of Dostoevsky's story "The Meek One", in the period between 1960 and 2017. The specifics of the director's authorial language is revealed through contextual analysis of the cinematic work. It is shown that the use of in-frame and voice-over music largely determines the stylistic and semantic characteristics of various film adaptations and serves as one of the most important means of the author's (director's) statement.

Anna Henderson, the author of the chapter 'Dostoevsky and world cinema: Screen adaptations of Dostoevsky's Sonia Marmeladova', provides the results of her study of the image of Sonia Marmeladova, based on the material of English-language adaptations of the novel *Crime and Punishment*, creative interpretations of Dostoevsky's heroine by British and Australian actresses, as well as her own film about Sonia, *Transgressing*. This film attempts to cross the boundaries of time and culture in the process of modern adaptation of the international version of Dostoevsky's heroine.

Violetta Evallyo in the chapter '*A Raw Youth*: The image of the city in Dostoevskty's novel and in the screen adaptation by Yevgeny Tashkov' analyzes the image of the city in the novel and its cinematic interpretation of 1983. She argues that the city in Dostoevsky's world reflects the sociocultural environment, acts as a 'transit' zone and a refuge. While Moscow corresponds to the image of the mother, St Petersburg represents the contradictory figure of the father. The image of the city in the film acts as a 'secondary' setting, existing exclusively for the geographical, political, and social context.

The chapter 'Interpretation of Stavrogin's image in Grigory Lifanov's play *Demons: Shards of spurious ideas* at the Lunacharsky Academic Russian Dramatic Theatre in Sevastopol' [author Ekaterina Timchenko] analyzes the theatre performance *Demons: Shards of spurious ideas*, premiered in the spring of 2019. When comparing the image of Stavrogin in the novel with his theatrical image, the points of divergence and similarities are revealed: theatrical Stavrogin 'doubles': his role is shared by two actors.

The collection ends with the chapter the chapter '*The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* in contemporary theatre productions' [by Tatiana Magaril-Iliaeva], which examines three modern one-man performances based on Dostoevsky's fantastic story *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, performed on Italian and Russian stages. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of complex stage decisions, as well as the embodiment of the idea of what is 'funny' or 'ridiculous' on stage. The work uses fragments of interviews conducted with the performers of the role of the 'Ridiculous Man'.

The editors of the volume have sought to preserve the individuality of the authorial position of each chapter, as well as the originality and novelty of the concepts. The publication of this collection would not have been possible without the dedication of many people who invested a lot of effort and creative energy into the successful completion of this project. It is hoped that our work will serve as a significant contribution to Dostoevsky studies and will be in demand by many readers.

The Editors

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Part One

Global Dostoevsky – Philosopher, Poet, Ideologue

Chapter 1

‘Everything Dostoevsky said came true’: Major lessons of the centenary (1821–1921)

by Liudmila Saraskina

Abstract: The paper investigates the matter of Dostoevsky’s anniversaries, beginning with his first, posthumous ones, marked by the publication of a *Complete Works* by his widow A. G. Dostoevskaya. The dramatic history of interpretations of the personality and literary works of the author of the ‘Pentateuch’ was entwined with the attitude of D. S. Merezhkovsky and S. N. Bulgakov towards the 1905 revolution, and their desire to see Dostoevsky as the leader of it. ‘Which side would Dostoevsky take if he were alive, the side of revolution or reaction?’ – This conundrum worried the minds of many thinkers, who presented themselves on the pages of anniversary editions. Lessons of the first public celebration (the 25th anniversary of his death) showed that the era of the first revolution presented the author as a reactionary, causing him to become a vulnerable target of criticism.

At the beginning of the twentieth century a powerful intellectual tradition emerged: to judge the Russia of the past nineteenth century through the prism of Dostoevsky’s creative experience. His centenary was marked by new interpretation, manifested in Pereverzev’s formula: ‘Everything Dostoevsky said came true’. The author’s insights remain the most reliable and precise tool for knowing and assessing what happened to Russia after Dostoevsky, and what may happen to it in future.[1] History ‘after Dostoevsky’ continues to add to his novels, capturing and bringing forward new stories in the future he envisioned.

Keywords: F. M. Dostoevsky, D. S. Merezhkovsky, S. A. Bulgakov, V. F. Pereverzev, anniversary, lessons, revolution, reputation, history, foresight.

Note on the author: Higher Doctor of Philology, Chief researcher at the State Institute for Art Studies, Moscow, Russia

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, whose bicentenary was celebrated in 2021, never had much luck with memorable days and anniversaries. As

[1] ‘Ot Rublevki do Kuschevki’ [From Rublevka to Kuschevka] *Rossiiskaya Gazeta: Federalniy vypusk* [Russian Newspaper: Federal Issue] No. 29 (2011) 5405. URL: https://rg.ru/2011/02/11/dostoevskiy.html (access date: 12.12.2022).

a 12-year-old boy he wrote to his mother: 'Now when I remember you, dear mother, a melancholy seizes me that I can't get rid of; if you knew how much I want to see you, I can't wait for this moment of joy.'[2] But Fyodor was not even 16 when his mother Maria Fyodorovna died. When he reached 20, his father, Mikhail Andreevich, had already died two years before and Fyodor was left an orphan.

At the age of 30, the convict Dostoevsky, deprived of all the rights of his hereditary nobility status, was held in Omsk penitentiary organization and experienced low spirits and hardly remembered his birthdays. There was nobody to congratulate him; over the course of four years of penal servitude he received not a single letter, although other political prisoners received a few every year. 'In my isolated and reclusive state I fell into real despair several times' (vol. 28, bk 1, p.166), he wrote to his brother Mikhail, when their correspondence began anew after his prison release. He described his prison detention as 'buried alive with a coffin lid closed' (vol. 28, bk. 1, p. 166) and his own state as 'like a piece cut off' (ibidem).

And cut pieces were not supposed to have any holidays.

In 1861 he reached 40; his penal servitude had ended four years before; his passionate love drove him to marriage, but it was rather unfortunate; he lived in St Petersburg, worked for the *Russian Herald* and *Russkoye slovo*, *Notes of the Fatherland* and *Russkiy Mir*. He published the story 'Uncle's Dream', began publishing the magazine *Time* with Mikhail Mikhailovich, his older brother. It included *The House of the Dead* and his novel *Humiliated and Insulted*. Most of all, the year 1861 must have been memorable to the author of this novel for the Manifesto of 19 February granting freedom to serfs, but not due to his fortieth birthday; letters (five in total) and publications of the mentioned year provide not a single trace of celebrating his birthday. Moreover, as the author said, faces and events often slipped from his memory. But in the context of the 1867 attempt on the Tsar's life in Paris, A. G. Dostoevskaya recalled:

> He was an ardent admirer of Emperor Alexander II for the libera-

[2] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 t.* [Complete Works in 30 volumes] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–1990), vol. 28, bk 1 (1985), p. 31. All subsequent quotations from Dostoevsky's writings and letters are from this edition; volume and pages are indicated in parentheses in the text.

> tion of the peasants and for his further reforms. In addition, Fyodor Mikhailovich considered the emperor his benefactor: after all, on the occasion of the coronation, my husband was returned to the hereditary nobility, which he treasured so much. The sovereign allowed my husband to return from Siberia to St Petersburg and thus gave him the opportunity to engage in literary work so close to his heart again.[3]

At the end of October 1871, Dostoevsky reached his fiftieth birthday – the first truly good round figure. It was the time of outstanding events: the *Russian Herald* began publishing the novel *Demons*, a game at Wiesbaden became the finale of a ten-year whirlwind of roulette, the *State Bulletin* published 'Catechism of a Revolutionary' by Nechaev, Dostoevsky and his family returned to Russia where the hearings in the case of the Nechaevites were already taking place. These hearings were to enormously contribute to his work on *Demons* but the dramatic story of the chapter 'At Tikhon's' would become an obstacle: Katkov would categorically refuse to publish it, so the novel was eventually to be published 'headless' and the chapter 'At Tikhon's' to become known as the 'cut-out' chapter.

Soon Dostoevsky would trust his old friend, Stepan Yanovsky with his feeling of age:

> I have to confess, age comes, and yet you don't even think about it, you still have the desire to write something new, to create something you would become finally completely satisfied with, you expect your life to give you something more, but perhaps you've already received everything. (Vol. 29, bk 1, p. 228)

I would like to quote another statement by him on the same topic – his entry in the album of Olga Akeksandrovna Kozlova, the wife of the poet and composer Pavel Akekseevich Kozlov, who translated Shakespeare and Byron.

> Despite all losses I love my life passionately; I love life for life's sake, and, seriously, more and more often I think about starting my

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[3] Anna Grigoryevna Dostoevskaya, *Memoirs* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1981), pp. 166–167.

> life. Soon I'll be fifty, yet I haven't managed to discern whether I am about to finish my life or just to begin it. That's the major feature of my character; perhaps of my work, too (Vol. 27, p. 119).

It is important to take into consideration the date when this note was made – 31 January 1873. 'Soon I'll be fifty', writes Dostoevsky, but at the moment of making this record he was already fifty one years and three months old. He simply did not notice that his fiftieth birthday had taken place almost a year ago when he was on the verge of being sentenced to a debtors' prison.

From that moment on only once did he recall his own age – in his letter to his younger brother Andrey Mikhailovich dated 6 September 1876. 'Our time has flown by like a dream. I know by now that my life is to be brief, but in the meantime I don't wish to die and feel I am on the contrary, about to begin my life. I don't feel life-weary and yet I'm already 55, gosh!' (Vol. 29, bk 2 p. 124).

But a round figure of '55' years with his emotional 'gosh' should have come 55 days later: Dostoevsky's attitude to his round or semi-round figures was rather negligent. 'I became astonished', wrote Anna Grygoryevna, 'by the fact that Fyodor Mikhailovich, forgetting recent events, very well remembered the plot and names of characters of the novels […] of the two writers he liked most.[4]

No other round figure ever occurred in his life: he survived only until nine months before his sixtieth. It was time for posthumous commemorations, and the task of preserving the memory of the writer passed to the care of his 35-year-old widow, who never married again, although she would live another 37 years. She had to endure the heavy blows of fate alone; she published collections of his works seven times, the last time in 1906, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the writer's death. She devoted all her years after Dostoevsky to him, his work, his memory.

> My people are the friends of Fyodor Mikhailovich, my society is a circle of departed people close to Dostoevsky. I live with them. Everyone who examines and studies the life or works of Dostoevsky seems like family to me.[5]

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[4] Ibidem, p. 176. The novelists are Balzac and George Sand.

[5] A. G. Dostoevskaya, *Memoirs* (Moscow: State Publishing House, 1925), p. 14.

One of this family was Dmitry Merezhkovsky. In 1880, as a fifteen-year-old high school student, he visited the writer's apartment, listened to his skeptical verdict on his immature poems, and soon, together with a huge crowd of people, attended his funeral, saw everything and everyone. Merezhkovsky's youth was spent under the sign of Dostoevsky: rereading the recently published novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, he could not help but feel like that 'Russian boy'[6] whose future promised suffering and troubles. He experienced the day of 1 March 1881 as a terrible tragedy which Dostoevsky did not live to see by only a month, and which he would hardly have survived. A few years later, Merezhkovsky would write:

> He lived among us, in our sad, cold city; he was not afraid of the complexity of modern life and its unsolvable tasks, did not flee from our torments, from the contagion of the century. He loves us simply, as a friend, as an equal... He is ours, with all his thoughts, with all his sufferings... Dostoevsky is at some moments closer to us than those with whom we live and whom we love – closer than relatives and friends. He is a companion in illness, an accomplice not only in good, but also in evil, and nothing brings people together like common flaws. He knows our innermost thoughts, the most criminal desires of our hearts.[7]

In 1901, his large literary work *Lev Tolstoy and Dostoevsky* was published, with extensive biographical sections, so that A. G. Dostoevskaya, on whom the book made a favorable impression, perceived the author as among her loved ones. She was preparing a commemorative edition of Dostoevsky's *Complete Works* for the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, and hoped to order a biographical sketch from Merezhkovsky for Volume 1. The collection was supposed to be published in 1906, but the events of the first Russian revolution radically changed Merezhkovsky's attitude to his idol. Now, in the eyes of Merezhkovsky, the author of *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov* was seen as a champion of reaction and no less than the herald of Antichrist.

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[6] See: Yu. Zobnin, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky: life and deeds* (Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2008).

[7] Dmitry Merezhkovsky, *'On Crime and Punishment by Dostoevsky', Russian Review vol. 2. no. 3 (1890), pp. 155–186.*

> Until now it seemed that he had two faces – the Grand Inquisitor, the forerunner of the Antichrist, and the elder Zosima, the forerunner of Christ. And no one could decide: sometimes Dostoevsky himself did not know which of these two faces was genuine, where was the face and where was the disguise. We already know. But to see the face, you need to remove the disguise. That is what I want to do.[8].

And he did it by publishing an article 'The Prophet of the Russian Revolution', read first in the form of a public lecture organized by the Literary Fund in the hall of the Tenishev School (St. Petersburg, Mokhovaya St., 33-35). The lecture caused such a violent reaction from the public, almost horror, that Anna Grigoryevna immediately realized that it was impossible to include a denunciation instead of the expected biographical essay.

> When I read the delivered manuscript, I realized that the essay could not be placed in the Complete Works, since the beliefs attributed by D. S. Merezhkovsky to my husband, did not correspond at all to his true beliefs. My opinion was supported by the strong impression that this article made on the admirers of Fyodor Mikhailovich's talent who attended the lecture by D. S. Merezhkovsky in the hall of the Tenishev School. After the lecture, acquaintances and strangers came and wrote to me and begged me not to print this article in the Complete Works, as it was 'the opposite of all the ideas that the deceased writer expressed.[9]

She cancelled the order for the introductory article and turned to Sofya Ivanovna Smirnova, with whom Fyodor Mikhailovich was friendly and whose writing he appreciated. 'Beliefs attributed by D. S. Merezhkovsky to my husband, did not correspond at all to his true beliefs,'[10] wrote the widow to Smirnova. Anna Grigoryevna proposed that Smyrnova should write the introductory article for volume one of the *Complete Works*.

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[8] Dmitry Merezhkovsky, 'The Prophet of the Russian Revolution', *Vesy* no. 2 (1906), pp. 27–28.

[9] 'From the archive of A. G. Dostoevskya: Letters of D. S. Merezhkovsky', ed. A. Garetto, *The Past: Historical anthology 9.* URL: http://az.lib.ru/m/merezhkowskij_d_s/text_1906_pisma_k_dostoevskoy.shtml (accessed: 21.07.2021).

[10] Cited : N. N. Mostovskaya, 'Dostoevsky in the diaries of S. I. Smirnova (Sazonova)', *Dostoevsky: Materials and research* vol. 4 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980), p. 273.

Smirnova refused: now this decision seems to show faintheartedness, even cowardice. 'I was composing a letter for Dostoevskaya. I had to improvise, it is not easy to respond to such a proposal,'[11] she wrote. It is not known exactly how Smirnova explained the refusal, but as soon as it was received, Anna Grigoryevna turned to S. N. Bulgakov with the same request. But he also did not agree to write a biographical essay, mentioning a lack of information, and suggested to do something polemical, resembling in genre the article by Merezhkovsky, instead of the biographical essay.

Let me emphasize that the first posthumous anniversary edition was compiled against the backdrop of such heated debates about Dostoevsky's worldview and work that his widow could only dream of an unimpassioned, neutral essay about the writer.

The first volume of the collection opened with an apologetic letter sent to Anna Grigoryevna by Merezhkovsky from Paris, in the spirit that his views on Dostoevsky now do not strongly coincide with the cherished beliefs of the writer himself:

> Dear Anna Grigoryevna, I offer you my assiduous apology that your new edition of the works of F. M. Dostoevsky should appear without the critical essay I promised. I understand the thoughts and feelings that compelled you to consider my article 'The Prophet of the Russian Revolution', written for this publication and presented to you at the appointed time (it has already appeared as a separate book), as inconvenient for publication. <…> I agreed with you at the same time that maybe such an article has no place in the classic anniversary edition. But I cannot change this view, or even express it in a more moderate form, although I fully understand that my view may not seem objective enough.[12]

The second item at the front was titled 'Biographical Essay about F. M. Dostoevsky: A Quarter of a Century Later (1881–1906), compiled by Professor S. N. Bulgakov.'[13] The essay, however, did not contain a single line from his biogra-

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[11] Ibidem, pp. 273–274.

[12] F. M. Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 t.* [Complete Works in 14 volumes], 6th ed. (St Petersburg: P. Panteleev, 1906), vol. 1 p. i.

[13] Ibidem, pp. iii–xl.

phy – it was an analytical review of Dostoevsky's worldview with a respectful recommendation (in fact, with a prescription) on how to understand Dostoevsky in the era of revolutions. Bulgakov wrote about Dostoevsky's 'extraordinary, almost mysterious perspicacity': therefore, it was with him that it was desired to survive the fateful events, 'to make an attempt to open the lips sealed by death, with all the reverence that our love for him evokes, but also with all the sincerity and truthfulness to which this love obliges.'[14]

In a vigorous essay full of inspired words about the teacher, there was an irresistible desire to still tell his truth – about the religious despair of this 'martyr of God'; about the fact that he was least of all a systematic thinker by his nature; about his too hot poetic and journalistic temperament; about the fact that in his passion he tended to overdo, expressed his emotions stronger than was proper; that he fell into contradictions, became a victim of his own temperament and his ideological radicalism.[15]

In the mind of Bulgakov, Dostoevsky's Achilles heel of political worldview was idealization of autocracy, his belief that the freedom and welfare of the Russian people are surely provided by autocracy rather than Parliament. Shielding Dostoevsky from the extremes of Merezhkovsky's article and his unfair accusations, Bulgakov himself finds a flaw in the teacher's worldview in his attitude to the revolution.

> He imagined the revolution only as the fruit of high-handedness and groundlessness [...]. Of all the demons that have taken possession of the body of Russia who torment and shake it, he knew only some of them, not each one of them, and their name is 'legion' [...]. In his novel *Demons*, written in 1871, long before the first thunder of revolution struck and before the first serious manifestations of it happened, Dostoevsky explained that he understood this movement as essentially nihilistic, against the people and ill-grounded. The novel tacitly denies any truth in the revolution, even if only a personal, political one. *Therefore, if we consider this novel as a comprehensive reflection of it, then it appears quite biased, one-dimensional, and, politically speaking, partisan.*[16]

[14] Ibidem, p. v.

[15] Ibidem. pp. x, xxvii.

[16] Ibidem. pp. xxxiii–xxxiv. Emphasis added by the author.

Not all truth is untruth, Bulgakov argued, applying this fair aphorism primarily to the novel *Demons*, with its *partial*, as Bulgakov said, *truth* about the global demonic power of denial, destruction, nihilism. The ray of Dostoevsky's 'astounding clairvoyance' illuminated, as Bulgakov believed, only the ugliness of the revolution, but not all of it; it had only dark colours and did not see where the true light is. The truth of the revolution, according to Bulgakov, was that 'in the ranks of revolutionaries, Verkhovensky goes hand in hand with Kolya Krasotkin and his fellows'[17].

'The very time the religious truth of the revolution becomes revealed,' Bulgakov wrote, 'the voice of its great preacher and early herald is especially dear to us. In the noise and din of the revolutionary turmoil, the voice of Dostoevsky, the spiritual leader of the Russian people, should be heard.'[18]

Dostoevsky, in whose works his spiritual children saw a disguised recognition of the apocalypse in Russian life, is obliged to place himself at the leadership of the revolutionary column, where Pyotr Verkhovensky, the main demon of the novel, is moving, holding hands of the boys from *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Alexander Blok's lines from the poem 'The Twelve' about Christ with a blood-red flag in front of a column of revolutionaries were not yet written at that time. They would appear only in 1918, and would evoke the same euphoria, the same elemental passion, the world in conflagration, the sound of the revolution.

> And wrapped in wild snow at their head
> Carrying the flag blood-red –
> Soft-footed in the blizzard's swirl,
> Invulnerable where bullets sliced –
> Crowned with a crown of snowflake pearl,
> In a wreath of white rose
> Ahead of them Christ Jesus goes[19].

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[17] Ibidem. p. xxvii.

[18] Ibidem. pp. xxxix–xl.

[19] Aleksandr Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Works] (Moscow–Leningrad: GIHL (State Publishing House of Literature), 1960), vol. 3 p. 359.

Undoubtedly, Bulgakov's essay was written in the same manner the author of 'The Twelve' would speak of himself, i.e. *in accordance with the elemental*. 'Not everyone felt this element, not everyone accepted it'. Nikolay Gumilyov stated that Blok, having accomplished 'The Twelve', served well 'the misdeeds of Anti-Christ' – 'he crucified Christ and executed the Emperor once again'.[20] Anna Akhmatova refused to perform with Blok at joint poetic evenings.[21] Ivan Bunin wrote that the poem's finale was 'consummate blasphemy: some sort of sweet Jesus is dancing (with a bloody flag and at the same time a wreath of white roses) ahead of these brutes, robbers and murderers'.[22] 'Blok's muse was "drugged with a potion" and she, "drunk, began to sing, straining, a vile and indecent ditty",'[23] said Georgy Chulkov, a former friend of the poet.

Both spiritual children of Dostoevsky, Merezhkovsky and Bulgakov succumbed to the *seduction of revolution* which in 1905 was considered a blessing, whereas Dostoevsky was seen as an obstacle to it, almost as a curse. Christ has entered the world like a revolutionary and his Testament is a new word, a word of revolution. This means that Dostoevsky is anti-Christ, the Antichrist.

Dostoevsky and revolution is the cornerstone of the controversy surrounding the author of *Demons*; so it was, and so it remains. 'Whose side would Dostoevsky choose? Would he be a revolutionary or a reactionary? Wouldn't he even now feel the breath of God's mouth in the tempest of freedom? Wouldn't he even now repudiate his great lie for the sake of his great truth?'[24]

Bulgakov's answer to Merezhkovsky's question was: 'It is not a hypothesis, it is known for a fact that Dostoevsky would be among the spiritual leaders

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[20] Vladimir N. Orlov, *Zhizn Bloka* [Life of Blok] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraph, 2001), pp. 533–534.

[21] See: *Final poemy 12: raznye tochki zrenya* [Finale of the Poem 'The Twelve': Different perspectives] URL: https://notimpotent.com/final-poemy-12-raznye-tochki-zreniya/

[22] Ivan A. *Bunin, The Cursed Days*. URL: https://booksonline.com.ua/review.php?-book=75347 (access date: 26.07.2021).

[23] 'The Twelve' in the assessment of contemporaries // URL: https://studbooks.net/572366/literatura/dvenadtsat_otsenke_sovremennikov (access date: 25.07.2021).

[24] Merezhkovsky, 'The prophet of the Russian revolution', p. 28.

of the Russian people, in their struggle for liberation from the bureaucratic vampire, from the new Tatar yoke.'[25]

Such were the lessons of the very first public jubilee which acquired new scale and significance. If Dostoevsky's spiritual children saw truth where he discerned deception, what can we say of other critics? The revolution witnessed the author's reputation suffer from serious backlash, he became a convenient target to aim at, hit and defeat outright.

In truth, I will say that Bulgakov never said anything of that nature about Dostoevsky being bound to stand before the revolutionary movement. On the contrary, the article 'Russian Tragedy', written in 1914 and devoted to an adaption of the novel *Demons* in the Arts Theatre, contained his opinion stating that it would be barbaric to weigh Dostoevsky's oeuvre on the scales of political partisanship and that 'the revolution is not considered and sentenced in a political court appearance.'[26] Bulgakov did not then perceive *Demons* as a novel from the history of Russian revolution, but as a symbolic tragedy.

In reference to ideological struggles of Merezhkovsky in Russia and in exile, where he fled from the revolution of 1917, I will quote Irina Odoevtseva's judgement on him:

> All his life he unceasingly talked about Antichrist. And when that Antichrist, who can be considered to be personified by Hitler, appeared before him – Merezhkovsky did not notice, he overlooked him.[27]

In 1917 and not long before it the answer was becoming more and more apparent: it was not the music of revolution, not its tempting, captivating element that worried Dostoevsky the far seer; it was its dialectics and metaphysics.

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[25] Dostoevsky, *Complete Works*, 6th ed. vol.1. p. xxxiii.

[26] S. N. Bulgakov, 'Russkaya tragediya: O *Besakh* Dostoevskogo v svyazi s instsenirovkoi romana v Moskovskom khudozhestvennom teatre' [Russian tragedy: On the *Demons* of Dostoevsky, in connection with the dramatization of the novel at the Moscow Art Theatre], *Russian Thought* No. 4 (1914), pp. 2–3.

[27] Irina Odoevtseva, *Na Beregakh Seny* [On the banks of the Seine] URL: http://knigosite.org/library/read/83657 (access date: 26.07.2021)

In 1921 the Moscow magazine just established by the State Publishing House, called *Press and Revolution*, published an article by the renowned Marxist critic V. F. Pereverzev dedicated to the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dostoevsky.

'Everything Dostoevsky said came true' – such was the general thrust of the article, which had the provocative title 'Dostoevsky and the Revolution'. 'Dostoevsky's centennial jubilee,' wrote the author,

> we must celebrate at the time of a great revolutionary shift, at the moment of catastrophic collapse of the old world and the beginning of the new one… Dostoevsky is still a modern writer; modern times have not overcome those problems which found a solution in the works of this author. To speak about Dostoevsky is to speak about the most sensitive and vexed questions of our present-day life.[28]

Can we now confirm the truth of words uttered a century ago? Which is the key word? The pronoun 'everything' or the verb 'came true'? It is quite tempting to believe that the verb is the key concept in eschatological discourse: events happened; through these events times were fulfilled and their meaning revealed; what happened and what was revealed – all had been foreseen. Can we conclude that in our times prophecies still come true? Does it make sense today to repeat these words: 'Everything Dostoevsky said came true'?

A contemporary philosopher writes:

> Dostoevsky's negative eschatological scenarios form a clear sequence which, alas, fully coincides with the course of Russian history. First of all, there is 'an enormous rebellion', an unprecedented burst of energy of actions – criminal but also creative and any other. Then there is just 'inspiration from the grave'. And finally – 'Bobok'. And we, astonished by accuracy of the prophecy, chagrined and distressed, continue to repeat the words, said a century ago: Everything Dostoevsky said came true.[29]

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[28] Valerian Fedorovich Pereverzev, 'Dostoevsky i revolutsiya' [Dostoevsky and the Revolution], *Press and Revolution* No. 3 (1921), p. 3.

[29] S. S. Khoruzhii, 'Eskhatologiya Dostoevskogo v prizme sovremennogo renessansa eskhatologii' [Dostoevsky's eschatology in the prism of the contemporary Re-

No less tempting is to assume that the key word is the noun. Then it is reasonable to be puzzled by the question: what else apart from prophecies on the revolution is included in that enigmatic 'everything'? Is it only all contemporary literature, i.e. the literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, that has followed in Dostoevsky's footsteps? I daresay it is not only the literature that has done this.

On second thoughts one understands how many things 'Everything' encompasses. It is the scenario of an empire's decline portrayed in historical characters, and the signature of political murders, and characters of 'unheard-of eminence', and aristocrats who became democrats and their diabolical 'deeds'.

Dostoevsky's ability to set real events in the horizons of the future, see them finished and complete in terms of the final meaning, produced striking results. 'None of them understands me,' ' Dostoevsky said to the writer Lyudmila Khristoforovna Simonova,

> they only understand actions which unfold before them; lack of foresight does not allow them to look any further ahead and, moreover, causes misunderstanding of how the true outcomes of future events can be so clearly visible to others.[30]

Among the future outcomes apart from revolutionary events there were other scenarios, i.e. the tragic sacrificial murder of elder Grigori Rasputin, committed by the wealthiest aristocrat of Russia, Prince Felix Yusupov. How one could not remember the unfinished conversation of 'Prince Harry' (Nikolai Stavrogin) and the 'cursed psychologist' (Elder Tikhon)! Rasputin would become and remain the most popular myth of the twentieth century, a scandalous and enigmatic character of Russian history. 'Blood of conscience' would turn out to be blood devoid of conscience, honour, faith and truth. Does the murder's villainous status change in accordance with

naissance of eschatology], Report at the International Symposium 'Dostoevsky's Anthropology: Man as a problem and an object of image in Dostoevsky's world' (Sofia: Symelprint, 2018), pp. 4–5. URL: https://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/horujy_dost-eshatologia2018.pdf (access date: 26.07.2021).

[30] L. Kh. Simonova-Khokhryakova, *Iz vospominanii o F. M. Dostoevskom* [From memoirs about F. M. Dostoevsky], *Tserkovno-Obshchestvenny Vestnik* [Church-Social Herald] No. 17 (1881) St Petersburg), p. 5.

the status of the murdered – this Dostoevskian (indeed perennial) question would be posed to Russian society on the eve of fateful events.

The story of the murder of Grigori Rasputin (whoever he was and whatever one's attitude towards him may be) committed by Prince Yusupov (whatever motives he had) puts the matter in the context of the great scale of history and morality and asks questions that have no simple answer.

The sixth commandment is 'Thou shalt not kill'. Is it absolute or relative?

What is a murder in absolute terms?

What gives a man a license to kill?

What can justify a murderer?[31]

At the times of the Russian revolution the eschatological scenario of *Demons* happened with stunning accuracy; however, the eschatology of Dostoevsky is not confined to this.

Notorious political scandals, dolorous absurdity, ominous chaos, life as an outlaw, everything that is known as 'dostoyevshchina' [translator: referring to Dostoevsky's world] has become commonplace. That is why Dostoevsky has earned a name of the master of eschatology of the ordinary and mundane.

Dostoevsky foresaw that the catastrophe of state and society would begin with an anthropological catastrophe, collapse of the moral and spiritual foundations of humanity, removal of all laws and rules, norms, bounds, prohibitions, moral restraints. Anti-ethics and anti-morality would triumph. Degradation of ethics, violence that burst its fetters, banishing of the truth – all these symbolic events of the modern days are combined as anthropological catastrophe.[32]

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[31] See: L. I. Saraskina, 'Vsyo sbylos' po Dostoevskomu? Stavrogin kak predchuvstviye' [Everything Dostoevsky said came true? Stavrogin as a premonition], *Dostoevsky and forerunners : the authentic and the seeming in the space of culture* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya, 2021), pp. 210 – 244.

[32] At the time of the anniversary, I repeated these and some other considerations in an interview for the federal media. See: Pavel Basinsky and Lyudmila Saraskina, 'Dostoevsky exorcises demons: What prophecies of the Russian genius are com-