THE GREAT SINNER REDEEMED:
A REINTERPRETATION OF STAVROGIN

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of
The Ohio State University

By

Susan W. Lohwater, B.A., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University

1992

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Irene Masing-Delić
Dr. Mateja Matejic
Dr. George Kalbouss

Approved by

I. Masing-Delić
Adviser
Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures
In memory of my father
Professor A.J. Lohwater
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation grew from a paper written during Father Matejic's course on Dostoevskij. I express sincere appreciation to him for his guidance throughout the research. I especially appreciate Dr. George Kalbouss for the constant kind interest in my academic progress from the beginning of my graduate career until now. I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Irene Masing-Delič, for her support and guidance. She and Dr. Sandra Rosengrant, my first Russian professor at Portland State University, embody all the elusive qualities of the true teacher including encouragement and inspiration.

I express gratitude to my fellow graduate students: M.A. Johnson, for her support both emotional and editorial, and Ludmila Yevsukov, for the hours of debate about Stavrogin. To my husband and typist, Timothy Graham, and to my mother, Marjorie Lohwater, thanks!
VITA

September 30, 1951................................. Born - Ann Arbor, Michigan

1986................................................. B.A., Psychology and Russian,
Portland State University,
Portland, Oregon

1988................................................. M.A., Russian Literature,
The Ohio State University,
Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS

Религиозные аспекты в повести В. Распутина «Прощание с Матерой» (Abstract of
paper delivered at 7th International Маприял Conference), in Русский язык
и литература в общении народов мира. Т.2 Москва : Русский Язык. 1990.
(62).

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures

Studies in: 19th Century Russian Literature Dr. Silbajoris
Old Russian Literature Dr. Matejic
20th Century Village Prose Dr. Masing-Delicić
Polish Literature Dr. Krzyzanowski
PREFACE

Transliteration

I will use System III - The international scholarly system transliteration system with the following exceptions to avoid the use of diacritics in the text:

Ж will be transliterated as zh
Ч will be transliterated as ch
Ш will be transliterated as sh
Щ will be transliterated as shch.

Due to the variation in transliteration, alternative spellings are often encountered, especially in citations. Where confusion might arise I have tried to note alternative spellings in parentheses: for example, Tchizhevsky (Chizhevsky), Yermilov (Ermilov).

Sources

Citations to Dostoevskij's texts in Russian are generally to the Academy edition Polnoe sobranie sochinenij v tridcati tomax. (Leningrad, 1972- ). Thus a reference such as (10:24) refers to the tenth volume, page twenty-four. Full information for other editions and sources not given in footnotes may be found in the bibliography.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ii

VITA iii

PREFACE iv

INTRODUCTION

PREVIOUS CRITICISM 1

PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION -- 10

THE REINTERPRETATION OF STAVROGIN

STRUCTURE - THE EPIGRAPH AS A 12

FRAMING DEVICE

SYNOPSIS OF BESY 17

CHAPTER I

THE THEME OF THE DOUBLE IN BESY 20

INTERNAL DOUBLING 23

EXTERNAL DOUBLING 51

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD 66

BIBLICAL DISCOURSE 69

TIXON'S WORD 70

APOCRYPHAL DISCOURSE 79

APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE 82

STEPAN VERXOVENSKIJ'S WORD AS 86

AUTHORITATIVE DISCOURSE

CHAPTER III

POLYPHONIC DISCOURSE 94

LERMONTOV AND HIS HEROES 95

PUSHKIN'S POEM Жил На Свете 96

Рыцарь Бедный

РЕЧЕРИН'S Торжество Смерти 101

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE'S FAUST 105

THE SONG OF EVDOKIJA LOPUXINA 106

CHERNYSHEVSKIJ'S Что Делать! 107
CHAPTER III - CONTINUED

OGAREV'S STUDENT 109
SHAKESPEARE'S WORD 113
HUGO'S THE MAN WHO LAUGHS 118
SCHILLER'S VOICE IN THE POLYPHONY OF BESY 121
INTRA-TEXTUAL DISCOURSE: DOSTOEVSKIJ'S ЖИТИЕ ВЕЛИКОГО ГРЕШНИКА 125

CHAPTER IV

VARIATIONS ON SUICIDE IN BESY 131
ATTITUDES TOWARD SUICIDE IN RUSSIAN CULTURE 132
SUICIDE IN DOSTOEVSKIJ'S WORKS 136
DISCUSSIONS OF SUICIDE IN BESY 139
LJAMSHIN'S ATTEMPTED SUICIDE 144
VARIATIONS OF SUICIDE: UNKNOWN YOUNG MAN 144
MATRESHA 147
KIRILLOV 151
STAVROGIN'S SUICIDE 153

CHAPTER V

STAVROGIN'S CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT 158
PART 1 - SUBLIME IDEALS 162
THE SUPERFLUOUS MAN 163
REBUTTAL TO RATIONALISM 163
A NEW IDEA 166
PART 2 - NIGHT 169
CRIMINAL ACTIVITY 173
REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES 175
INITIAL MOVE AWAY FROM REVOLUTIONARIES 176
FIRST ATTEMPTS AT REPENTANCE 179
PART 3 180

CONCLUSION

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM IN THE EPILOGUE 185

BIBLIOGRAPHY 195
INTRODUCTION

PREVIOUS CRITICISM

The complexity of F. M. Dostoevskij's oeuvre presents an enduring challenge to critics. His works have been and continue to be scrutinized and debated from many viewpoints, initially mainly from sociological, psychological, political, biographical, philosophical and theological perspectives. Purely literary criticism appeared later. It is interesting that many pre-Baxtinian critical assessments of Dostoevskij's aesthetic capacity denigrate his works as disorganized, or unartistic.¹ Dostoevskij himself offered support for this view because he often lamented the necessity to write for deadlines and that this lack of time prevented him from polishing the formal aspects of his writings. The Russian scholar I. Lapshin, in his 1921 article "Èstetika Dostoevskogo," notes that at the end of the 19th century, the view that Dostoevskij was a good writer would have caused bewilderment:

В настоящее время вопрос об эстетике Достоевского никому не покажется странным, но четверть века тому назад он вызвал бы у многих литераторов недоумение.²

It is now generally accepted that Dostoevskij's poetics form an intricate and aesthetically valid system and that his individual works are tightly integrated

¹ For example, even the radical literary critic N. A. Dobroljubov (1836-1861), who, as is well-known, can hardly be considered an "aesthetic critic," considered Dostoevskij's novel The Insulted and the Injured "below aesthetic criticism" (from Sobranie sochinenij v devjati tomah, 7:240, as quoted in Victor Terras's article "Dostoevsky's Detractors" in Dostoevsky Studies, vol. 6, 1985, 170, n. 3).

and structured. Each individual work forms a poetic system in which each element interconnects and interacts with other elements.

In addition to each text forming a structured micro-system, Dostoevskij's oeuvre as a whole forms a similarly aesthetically integrated macro-system. In the larger system, which includes both his literary and journalistic works such as The Diary of a Writer, Dostoevskij repeatedly addresses similar issues and themes, and employs the same set of symbols. In connection with the larger system Edward Wasiolek in Dostoevsky, The Major Fiction, asserts that although the integrity (cohesiveness) of Dostoevskij's oeuvre began with the appearance of Notes from the Underground (1864), many elements in Dostoevskij's later works are discernable in the earlier stories:

Yet much that was to become recurrent, insistent, and centrifugal in his later work is already in the early work.

---

3 J. M. Meijer, in a discussion of situation rhyme in Dostoevskij's novels, points out that stylistically poor sentences may be due to haste, but may be a part of the effect Dostoevskij intended to create: "It is certainly possible in his works to find stylistically bad sentences, which would be unthinkable with Turgenev or Tolstoj. In most cases they are clearly the result of haste. On the other hand they are conditioned by the nervous character of Dostoevskij's style, which seems to aim at causing a kind of vibration in the mind of the reader as a prerequisite for communication. But haste and nervousness of style do not exclude careful composition. The fact that Dostoevskij gave much thought to the composition of his novels is well-known."(115) (see his "Situation Rhyme in a Novel of Dostoevskij," in Dutch Contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavicists. Mouton, 1958).

4 As concerns the aesthetic integrity of the work under discussion, Maxim Gor’kij, well-known for his negative criticism of Dostoevskij's novels, admitted that Besy was well written: «Роман Достоевского (Бесы) отлично сделан технически...» - писал Горький в «Письме к молодым писателям» от 8-го января 1929 года; и в другом месте: «Роман 'Бесы' написан гораздо более четко и менее неряшливо, чем многие другие книги Достоевского, и, вместе с Карамазовыми, самый удачный роман его.» (М. Горький «Несобранные литературно-критические статьи») as quoted in П. Ржевский. Три темы по Достоевскому. Frankfurt: Possev-Verlag, 1972, 42) Of course, it could also be argued that Gor'kij could not discern between a poorly written novel and a good one.

The continuity of Dostoevskij's works has been considered from a number of different viewpoints; for example, Gary Cox, in *Tyrant and Victim in Dostoevskiy*, discusses the repetition (and transmutability) of relationships between victims and tyrants; Ralph Matlaw takes up the repetition of certain key images, and the Russian philosopher Berdjaev points to the restatement of certain philosophical issues.⁶

Within these two sets of systems, i.e. the individual text and his oeuvre as a whole, Dostoevskij presents his characters both as individuals and types. His characters have been repeatedly and aptly termed the carriers of ideas. Inasmuch as Dostoevskij is concerned with 'eternal problems', his characters reflect various ideological aspects of ever-recurring existential dilemmas. Naturally, the various aspects of an idea are usually represented not by one but by a constellation of characters, each embodying one ideological aspect of a problem; or alternatively, one character may within himself embody conflicting points of view.

In Dostoevskij's work, there are numerous characters who personify multiple or conflicting viewpoints. This type of character appears as early as in Dostoevskij's second published work *The Double* (1846), and develops in complexity as his work matures. The creation of aesthetically valid characters containing conflicting ideals within themselves - in particular the literary representations of the emotional, intellectual oscillations of Raskol'nikov and Stavrogin - has attracted much critical attention. This subject will be more fully discussed in the chapter "The Theme of the Double."

The duality in the character of Stavrogin in *Besy* (translated as *The Devils* or *The Possessed*) continues to present a particularly difficult problem of interpretation. He offers one of the most sophisticated examples of

---

Dostoevskij's well-known polyphony, for within his character the eternal conflict between good and evil, between faith and disbelief is waged and carried to its extreme. The interest in Stavrogin, the main protagonist of Besy, has not diminished in the 120 years following the publication of the novel in 1872: depending upon which critical approach is in vogue, criticism continues to attempt the elucidation of Stavrogin's complex personality. A recent approach is psychoanalytical - Stavrogin's strange actions are presented as the result of his relationship with a dominating mother in Pope and Turner's article, "Toward Understanding Stavrogin." This type of literary criticism removes the character both from the framework of the novel and from the macro-system of Dostoevskij's works, and judges a character as if he were a living being. Moreover, this type of examination overlooks the Dostoevskian character's search for answers to the 'eternal questions'. As will be demonstrated here, the 'eternal questions' of the meaning of suffering and of death, of faith and salvation remain the essential concern of the author and, hence, of his characters.

Despite the variety of approaches, critics tend to agree about one thing - they see Stavrogin as an incarnation of evil and there is a consensus that he is beyond redemption. Even those critics who appreciate Dostoevskij's all-absorbing religious stance and who recognize his attention to the problem of the forgiveness of sinners tend to interpret Stavrogin as spiritually damned. For example, Geir Kjetsaa, the Norwegian scholar, who in his recent work Dostoevsky and his New Testament stresses the parallel realities of spiritual and

---

7 Besy appeared in serial form in the publication Russkij Vestnik in 1871 (Nos. 1, 2, 4, 7, 9-11) and 1872 (Nos. 11, 12) and in book form in 1873 in St. Petersburg. In the comments to Selected Letters of Fyodor Dostoevsky, it is stated that "the first chapters of The Devils were sent to the Russian Messenger in October 1870, though the novel did not begin to appear until more than a year later." (244) The first installment actually appeared in the January issue (less than a year) since Dostoevskij in a March letter to Majkov comments on reactions to the first part. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987, 348).

natural incidents in Dostoevskij's works, nonetheless considers Stavrogin the Antichrist.\(^9\)

The eminent religious philosopher and scholar, Konstantin Mochul'skij is more sympathetic than most when he states: "Stavrogin enters the world of the novel, like a living corpse, hoping for resurrection and not believing in its possibility." (444) Although Mochul'skij grants that Stavrogin overcomes his devil - "He contends with himself, with his demon, and overcomes him, destroying himself," (426) - he does not grant Stavrogin redemption, but rather interprets him as "the coming Antichrist, the prince of this world, the terrible prophecy about the cosmic catastrophe drawing near to mankind."\(^10\)

The Soviet critic, S. Askol'dov also grants that Stavrogin's suicide indicates a movement away from evil, but asserts that there is no evidence of advancement towards good, thus following the trends established by his predecessors.\(^11\) The ambivalent, even 'oxymoronic,' traits manifest in Stavrogin have led some critics to conclude that Stavrogin is, at once, a Christ figure and a "devil," without making any attempt to reconcile these irreconcilables. Richard Peace, for example, in Dostoyevsky, An Examination of the Major Novels, points to the ambiguity in Stavrogin's characterization:

On the one hand - expressions of what appears to be willful self-assertiveness: on the other - parallel but contradictory expressions of seeming self-effacement ... On the one hand he seems almost a Christ-figure; Shatov

\(^9\) In Dostoevsky and his New Testament, Kjetsaa stresses the parallel existence of spiritual and natural occurrences in Dostoevskij's works. (13) This approach which recognizes two levels - the spiritual and the mundane - nonetheless overlooks the symbolism surrounding Stavrogin's demise which indicates his redemption. See Kjetsaa Geir, Dostoevsky and his New Testament, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1984.


exclaims: 'Why am I condemned to believe in you forever?' and Kirillov accuses him of being a man in search of a burden. Indeed the symbol of Christ's burden is hinted at in his very name.\textsuperscript{12}

In the above passage, Peace refers to one possible root of the name Stavrogin: "stavros" means cross in Greek. He also points out that the positive implications of a cross are juxtaposed with the negative image of horns in the root of the Russian word "rog." In addition, Peace mentions three incidents which increase Stavrogin's ambivalence; the marriage to the lame woman Mar'ja, his acceptance of Shatov's slap and the duel with Gaganov in which Stavrogin refuses to aim at his opponent:

... each (act) reveals Stavrogin in a dual and contradictory light. His actions might be Christ-like: they might be interpreted as self-sacrifice for suffering humanity (Marya): as turning the other cheek (Shatov); as the refusal to take life (Gaganov). Alternately all three acts could be mere attempts to prove his strength; empty exercises revealing the supremacy of his will in a challenge to common sense.\textsuperscript{13}

The French critic, Jaques Catteau also recognizes the ambiguities in Stavrogin's character, but Catteau discusses these attributes in terms of the grotesque; a genre in which ambiguity is inherent, in which logic is reversed and in which opposites converge:

Stavrogin, un Christ?... le grotesque joue ici sur l'ambivalence, qu'il ne soit que l'Autre! En effet, tout est possible, les contraires se touchent. Comme Ivan Karamazov, Stavrogin admet que le diable est peut-être lui-même ; le grotesque renverse la logique : ne serait-ce pas Stavrogin qui serait un double de Satan, une hypostase


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 183.
Catteau considers Stavrogin's similarities to Christ as a grotesque parody of the divine prototype. This explanation in terms of genre is not satisfactory. It adequately describes Dostoevskij's use of grotesque devices, but offers no explanation for the reasons why these devices are utilized. The functions of the poetics of the grotesque remain obscure. The Czech scholar Václav Černý, who discusses Stavrogin's death in terms of parody, does offer an explanation. In his view, Stavrogin attempts to replace Christ:

And as such Nikolai Stavrogin meets his end in an act of despair that is a satanic parody of Christ's salvation: a devil of pride who finally sneaked into Golgotha itself, intending, out of ironic and derisive arrogance, to slyly set himself on the cross in the place of the humble Christ.¹⁵

Černý's explanation is disputed in the present study since it suits Kirillov much better than Stavrogin. Certainly the above interpretations of Stavrogin are valid on one or more basic levels of the novel, but they demonstrate serious oversights on the more sophisticated levels. Dostoevskij's oeuvre as a whole incorporates much parody while firmly upholding the positive values parodied. Therefore, such naïve questions as the following, posed by the Soviet critic, V. Ermilov: "Could Dostoevsky thus have parodied an idea he really held sacred?" merely demonstrate a fundamental lack of appreciation of the richness of Dostoevskij's texts.¹⁶ The existence of parody, thus, does not negate the validity of other interpretative levels of the novel.


¹⁶ Ermilov (Yermilov), V. Fyodor Dostoevsky. Moscow: Foreign Language Publishers, no date, 226.
Each element in *Besy* functions on more than one level and therein lies
the complexity, the "polyphony" of this, as well as other, Dostoevskij texts. A
single component may function in a satirical manner on one level, and yet
represent absolute truth on another level of the novel structure. Therefore the
same element may manifest seemingly contradictory functions. The existence
of a wide range of interpretive levels is accepted by most Dostoevskij critics.
The Russian emigre scholar, Sergei Levitsky who discusses the multiplicity of
interpretive levels in Dostoevskij's novels, points to at least three (in his turn
referring to Sergij Gessen).

1) first or outer level - criminal detective
2) inner level - psychological
3) deepest level - metaphysical or mystical level

The deepest level, the metaphysical level includes the religious and
philosophical aspects of Dostoevskij's works, aspects which often are reflected
in the religious searchings of the characters. This metaphysical, or mystical,
level may, of course, overlap with the plot of the novel; for example, the
glimpses into infinity just before Myshkin's epileptic fits in *The Idiot* clearly
affect plot structure. In fact, no Dostoevskij novel makes sense without a
thorough consideration of the metaphysical level. *Besy* is no exception.

Critical approaches which neglect the complex poetics of the higher
levels of a Dostoevskian text are reductionist at best. The renowned
Dostoevskij scholar, Mixail Baxtin, cautions critics not to limit their approaches
to a discussion of individual ideologies in a given text such as someone's

---

17 Levitsky writes: "...Серж Гессен, различает в романах Достоевского три основных плана -
первый - внешний, сюжетный, построенный обычно на запутанной интриге, включая криминально-
dетективные хитросплетения. Далее - второй, более внутренний, психологический план, в
измерении которого Достоевский производит головокружительные экскурсы в область глубин
подсознания. ....В его романах налицо еще один - третий, наименее явный -
метафизический, или, если угодно, мистический план." Levitsky, Sergei. "Fantasticheskij
Realizm Dostoevskogo," in *Zapiski Russkoy Akademicheskoy Gruppy v SSA*. vol. 5, New York:
Association of Russian-American Scholars in USA, 1971, 67-68.
socialism, or another's radicalism, but encourages the "polyphonic" approach which integrates interpretive analyses with a study of aesthetic aspects:

Acknowledgement can begin only when attempts are made at a more objective approach to Dostoevsky's work - not only to the ideas in and of themselves, but also to the works as artistic entities.\(^{18}\)

Baxtin's caution seems so logical as to be superfluous. Yet it is valuable advice considering that the various approaches to Dostoevskij's Besy have hitherto overlooked the symbolic elements of the novel structure which indicate Stavrogin's redemption. It is by such an integrated approach that Stavrogin will be reconsidered here.

---

PURPOSE OF DISSERTATION - THE REINTERPRETATION OF STAVROGIN

It is clear from the above brief survey of criticism pertaining to Stavrogin, that critics do not grant Stavrogin a final redemption. Two attributes are usually cited as the basis for Stavrogin's irredeemability: his pride and his indifference or 'lukewarmness'. In addition, Stavrogin's fear of ridicule - a corollary of pride - is often mentioned. But the conclusion of Stavrogin's damnation, based on his pride and indifference, overlook two significant factors which warrant a thorough re-examination of his character development: 1) - the dynamic structure of the plot, 2) - the positive symbols surrounding Stavrogin's suicide at the end of the novel which indicate his purification. In other words, they overlook the aesthetic aspect of Stavrogin's presentation, that is, the indirect information received about him by aesthetic means, such as symbolism.

Textual evidence demonstrates the validity of a re-interpretation of Stavrogin's character. Thus, the structural ramifications of the epigraph and the preponderance of religious symbolism in the description of Stavrogin's suicide prompted the attempt at revaluation presented here. Also, Stavrogin's characterization in terms of his duality is more dramatically pronounced than is usually perceived. His inner opposition transcends the normal antipodes of good and evil leading to the kind of division which is termed a split personality; this opposition is reminiscent of the two Goljadjkins in the early Dostoevskij work The Double and predates Ivan Karamazov's encounter with his devil. A split personality almost torn asunder by its contradictions is difficult to reconcile with the notion of lukewarmness. Close consideration will be given to the dynamics of Stavrogin's character development. It has hitherto been assumed that Stavrogin's character is static, but many facets of his character development have been overlooked. An examination of his inner development will place Stavrogin among those male characters of Dostoevskij who gain spiritual insights through their suffering.

In addition, this dissertation examines subtextual references to the theme of redemption which support the theory of Stavrogin's expiation. For this
purpose, this work addresses extrinsic but relevant contextual parameters of a religious-cultural nature which shed light on Stavrogin's characterization such as the "Russian attitude" towards suicide and the concept of kenosis. Stavrogin's move towards humility and death are therefore examined in the context of Dostoevskij's religious world outlook. According to Baxtin, death is never a finalizing event in Dostoevskij's world.\textsuperscript{19} Thus Stavrogin's suicide may well mean a transition rather than an end.

The purpose of this work is then essentially twofold: 1) to demonstrate that Stavrogin is not a static character, but one who overcomes his pride, moving towards humility and thus finding salvation, 2) to demonstrate that Stavrogin's character conforms to Dostoevskij's recurring theme of the 'saintliness of the sinner,' thereby placing his character with other major characters of Dostoevskij's world, notably Raskol'nikov and Dmitri Karamazov.

\textsuperscript{19} Baxtin asserts "In Dostoevsky's world death finalizes nothing, because death does not affect the most important thing in this world -- consciousness for its own sake." (Problems, 290).
STRUCTURE - THE EPIGRAPH AS A FRAMING DEVICE

The importance of Christian symbolism in *Besy* is immediately established by the second of the two epigraphs of the novel. The first epigraph, taken from Pushkin's famous poem "Besy" ("Demons" or "Devils," 1830) is followed by the Biblical passage about the Gadarene swine. Whereas the first epigraph from Pushkin's folkloristic poem sets the negative theme of the novel - devils leading people astray - the Biblical citation from Luke (8:32-37) introduces the positive theme of cleansing, of purification from the devils, of exorcism. The two epigraphs are presented here in their entirety:

Хоть убей, следа не видно,
Сбились мы, что делать нам?
В поле бес нас водит, видно,
Да кружит по сторонам.

..............................
Сколько их, куда их гонят,
Что так жалобно поют?
Домового ли хоронят,
Ведьму ль замуж выдают?

А. Пушкин

Тут на горе паслось большое стадо свиней, и они просили Его, чтобы позволил им войти в них. Он позволил им. Беся, вышедшие из человека, вошли в свиней; и бросилось стадо с крутизны в озеро и потонуло. Пастухи, увидя случившееся, побежали и рассказали в городе и по деревням. И вышли жители смотреть случившееся и, пришедшие к Иисусу, нашли человека, из которого вышли бесы, сидящего у ног Иисусовых, одетого и в здравом уме, и ужаснулись. Видевшие же рассказали им, как исцелился бесновавшийся.

Евангелие от Луки. Глава VIII, 32-36.

The motif of an insane man transformed into a sane man manifest in the Biblical epigraph is repeated at the end of the novel. The repetition occurs in the last paragraph of the novel where the medical examiners who performed an autopsy on Stavrogin declare him to have been sane at the time of his suicide. Elsewhere in the novel, whenever the issue of Stavrogin's sanity
arises, the possibility of his insanity is not excluded, but rather is strongly suggested. By the end of the novel, however, his sanity is established beyond a doubt in the following two statements in which the narrator's comment about Stavrogin's preparations for death and about his sanity is reinforced by the statement of the findings of the medical examiners:

Все означало преднамеренность и сознание до последней минуты. Наши медики по вскрытии трупа совершенно и настойчиво отвергли помещательство. (10:516)

The emphasis on sanity in the epigraph at the beginning of the novel and at the end of it indicates a circular structure which serves as a marker of truth. The statement of the epigraph is confirmed by the end, which in its turn leads us back to the prophetic epigraph.

This circular structure is characteristic of many of Dostoevskij's works. Leonid Grossman, in a discussion about the short story "The Gentle Creature," for example, states: "The end, becoming the beginning, determines the circular structure of the narrative; this is a 'spiral story', to use Paul Heyse's well-known expression."20 The concept of the spiral story is not limited to Dostoevskij's short stories but, as already suggested, is applicable to Besy. The mention of sanity links the end of the novel to the epigraph, equating Stavrogin with the man of the Biblical epigraph. In the epigraph, the Gadarene man is purified of the devils which plagued him and is now in full possession of his mental powers, sitting at the feet of Christ.21 The circular structure emphasizes the religious theme of purification established in the second epigraph and lays the foundation for a reinterpretation of Stavrogin's image; for if the end becomes

---


21 The importance of the epigraph is evident in the following passage from a letter to Majkov, in which Dostoevskij affirms that the Biblical passage contains the theme of the novel: «Бесы вышли из русского человека и вошли в стадо свиней, т.е. в Нечаяних, Серно-Соловьевичей и проч. Те потонули или потонут наверное, а исплипшийся человек, из которого вышли бесы, сидет у ног Иисусовых. Так и должно быть». «Ну, если хотите знать, вот это-то описание того, как эти бесы вошли в стадо свиней». (as quoted in Л. Ржевский, Три Темы по Достоевскому, 35).
the beginning, it is Stavrogin himself who is seated at the feet of Jesus. Thus
the repetition of the motif of an insane man transformed into a sane man is a
strong indication that Stavrogin is ultimately redeemed.

The passage from the New Testament about the Gadarene swine is also
repeated in full in the final chapters of the novel, just before Stepan
Verxovenskij's death. The fact that Stepan Verxovenskij discusses this passage
at some length further emphasizes its importance. According to his
interpretation, Russia is the sick man invaded by demons; further, he claims
that he and his son Petr are the very devils who have been plaguing Russia.
Thus, in Besy, the theme of purification from devils extends to include the
cleansing of evil from an individual as well as from society. Russia's
purification of the devils entails the collapse of Petr's revolutionary plans, and
indicates Stepan Verxovenskij's and Stavrogin's personal purifications. As will
be shown below, Stavrogin's and Stepan Verxovenskij's lives parallel each other
on many essential planes. Certainly the old man's purification is duplicated by
his erstwhile disciple Stavrogin who proves, eventually, an obedient pupil.

In addition to Stepan Verxovenskij's interpretation of the Gadarene
passage, the narrator of the novel comments on the passage, asserting that this
passage is the epigraph to his entire chronicle:

... от Луки то самое место, которое я и выставил эпиграфом
к моей хронике. Приведу его здесь опять ...(10:498)

The repetition emphasizes the key role of the Biblical epigraph, and, more
important, extends its significance to include the whole chronicle, i.e. up to and
including the depiction of Stavrogin's death. Furthermore, the concept of
sanity is clearly associated with purification. Thus the epigraph, specifically,
the reference to the man in his right mind who sits at the feet of Christ, signals
to the reader that Stavrogin, who is, at the end of the novel, emphatically
declared to be sane, is redeemed. The fact that this verdict is given by a
medical team which probably understands nothing about either sanity or
insanity, does not invalidate this assertion. The (materialist) medical doctors
are right, even if for the wrong reasons. Stavrogin dies sane, as evidence discussed below strongly suggests.

Furthermore, the fact that the epigraph is employed as a part of the structure makes it an important prefiguring device. Since it is a Gospel quotation it is possible to speak of its "prophetic" function. Nina Perlina in her 1985 work Varieties of Poetic Utterance: Quotation in The Brothers Karamazov addresses the importance of Gospel quotations in The Brothers Karamazov (1880). Her observations are applicable to Besy as well. Perlina notes that the epigraph to The Brothers Karamazov "prefigures and summarizes in advance the whole narration."\(^{22}\) The Biblical epigraph to Besy has a similar function and predicts the transformation of Stavrogin, the insane man possessed by demons, into Stavrogin, the sane man sitting at the feet of Christ. Perlina also rightly asserts that Biblical passages are the authoritative word in The Brothers Karamazov:

Quotations from the Gospels are located on the highest hierarchical level in the novel. In a sense, they stand above the novel's poetic system, yet govern and organize it.\(^{23}\)

The same holds true for Gospel quotations in Besy. Its epigraph elucidates the Christian theme of guilt and redemption in Besy and establishes the theme of purification from evil symbolized by the devils of the title. Steven Cassedy, in connection to Crime and Punishment asserts that the very choice of a Christian theme in a Dostoevskian work implies redemption:

\[\ldots\text{the mere fact of providing a Christian context - any Christian context - for the notion of suffering entails certain assumptions. For Christian suffering or passion (stradanie in Russian means both), in the terms of the Gospel}\]


\(^{23}\) Ibid.
narratives, is not a finality but a prius to a finality: rebirth.\textsuperscript{24}

Stavrogin seeks suffering and eventually finds it, overcoming his superman attitudes. Given the Christian setting of the novel, the epigraph and the assertion of sanity in the last two paragraphs offer strong evidence for Stavrogin's redemption. Before going into the argumentation for my case, I will provide a synopsis of the plot of Besy to facilitate reading.

\textsuperscript{24} Steven Cassedy cites the word \textit{stradanje} - suffering; however it is the word \textit{strast} which includes both suffering and passion. ("The Formal Problem of the Epilogue in Crime and Punishment"; The Logic of Tragic and Christian Structures" in Dostoevsky Studies. vol 3. 1982, 183).
SYNOPSIS OF BESY

The novel opens with the characterization of Stepan Verxovenskij as an idealist of the 40's, a poseur whose progressive liberal expostulations do not coincide with his parasitic position in the household of Varvara Stavrogina. He formerly had been the tutor of Varvara's son Nikolaj, and except for a brief sojourn to Germany, remained in her household after her son was sent away to school to remove him from Stepan's influence. The relationship between Varvara and Stepan includes a brief period of courtship which ended with Stepan's rejection of Varvara, and a period in Petersburg during which Stepan and Varvara associated with the radical elements and even considered establishing a literary journal. Stepan continues his progressive discourse as the leader of a discussion group in the provincial town. Members of the group include the liberal Virginskij, the gossip and Fourierist Liputin and the Slavophile Shatov, the son of one of Varvara's serfs. Another character introduced in Part 1, though not a member of Stepan's group is Kirillov, a man who not only studies suicide as a philosophical issue, but also intends to commit suicide in order to establish a new race of man-gods.

Varvara's son Nikolaj, after graduating from school, enters the military and is demoted for his involvement in a duel. His past includes a dissolute period in Petersburg and a promotion to officer, after which he renounces his commission to associate with the lowest dregs of Petersburg society. In compliance with his mother's wishes he returns to Skvreshniki, where he soon perpetrates three pranks which outrage society; he pulls Gaganov, then governor of the province, by the nose, he passionately kisses Liputin's wife in public and bites the governor on the ear. All these actions are attributed to brain fever. After his recovery, he apologizes to all and departs for a tour of the Holy Land and Europe. In Europe he meets and befriends Petr Verxovenskij, Stepan's son and a radical revolutionary and he also pays court to Liza Drozdova. At the time of his relationship with Liza, Stavrogin is also involved with Dasha, who is both his mother's ward and Shatov's sister.
As all the characters converge on the provincial town, Varvara begins to arrange for Stepan to marry Dasha in order to cover up Stavrogin's relationship with her. Her plans are complicated by the arrival of Captain Lebjadkin and his sister Mar'ja, a lame woman, who is rumored to be Stavrogin's legal wife. Petr Verxovenskij and Stavrogin deny the rumors. In a conclave scene Shatov slaps Stavrogin. Petr activates the revolutionary elements in the province, including the members of Stepan's circle. Petr plans to murder Shatov in an effort to increase the solidarity of the revolutionary elements. Meanwhile the town, with its new governor von Lembke and his wife Julia, organizes a literary benefit for governesses, at which Stepan Verxovenskij and the litterateur Karmazinov will participate. Petr befriends the governor's wife Julia and foments much discord in her circles as well as in the whole province. He incites revolutionary fervor in the lower strata of society and schemes to have Mar'ja and her brother murdered by a former convict Fed'ka, so that Stavrogin may marry Liza. He causes rifts between Varvara and his father Stepan, and between Julia von Lembke and her husband, the governor. He convenes a meeting at which the factions and ideologies of various revolutionary movements are revealed. During the meeting, Petr mysteriously alludes to the existence of groups which consist of five revolutionaries and to the leaders of other movements. He attempts to expose as a traitor Shatov, who wants to withdraw from the revolutionary movement due to his recently acquired Slavophile stance. After the meeting Petr reveals his plan to promote Stavrogin as the leader of the new social order after the revolution, a plan which Stavrogin rejects.

During this period, Stavrogin visits Bishop Tixon and discloses his complicity in the debauche and suicide of a young girl. He also fights a duel with the son of Gaganov, whom he had previously publicly insulted, but further insults the son by refusing to shoot at him. He announces that he is indeed married to Mar'ja Lebjadkina, as is rumored.

At the literary benefit Stepan's defense of culture as well as Karmazinov's literary reading are mocked by the audience which has been infiltrated by agitators. The benefit disintegrates into a farce, a drunken free
for all. Fires break out in the town but do not conceal the murders of Lebjadkin, his sister Mar'ja and their servant. Meanwhile, Liza at Petr's instigation spends the night with Stavrogin. When news of the murders reaches her, she sets out to view the bodies and is killed by the mob.

After his disgrace at the literary fete Stepan Verxovenskij sets out on a pilgrimage "to the people." He meets a Bible-seller who accompanies him. When he falls ill, Varvara comes to his side, where they reconcile before his death.

At another meeting, the revolutionaries plot Shatov's murder. Shatov's wife arrives in the province about to give birth to Stavrogin's child and she is reconciled with Shatov. After his murder, she and the baby die. Kirillov fulfills his own suicidal agenda and writes a confession in which he claims responsibility for Shatov's murder.

Stavrogin writes to Dasha to invite her to accompany him to Switzerland, but before she is able to respond, Stavrogin commits suicide.
CHAPTER I
THE THEME OF THE DOUBLE IN BESY

The theme of the double, as is well-known, is of utmost importance in Dostoevskij's works. It is a reflection of the polyphonic nature of Dostoevskij's aesthetics: conflicting attributes and ideologies, even within one mind, as well as their varying gradations, offer contrapuntal exploration of a subject. Chizhevsky in his article "The Theme of the Double in Dostoevsky," asserts that it is one of his "most characteristic themes" and that it "leads us to the center of his religious and ethical views." ¹

As early as The Double (1846), the theme of a dual consciousness was presented as a means to depict the conflict of good and evil within man.² Two distinct personalities coexist within Goljadkin each aware of the other's existence. In Goljadkin's struggle, the evil consciousness of a usurper, a Pretender, gained power over the meek consciousness of a modest civil servant, leading him to insanity. Baxtin, in "The Dismantled Consciousness: An Analysis of The Double," discusses the 'autonomous consciousness' within Goljadkin.

What results is a peculiar sort of mystery play or, rather, morality play, in which the actors are not whole people but

---

² Baxtin notes that Dostoevskij considered The Double a type of confession (24). This implies yet another link to Stavrogin, whose confession presented in the chapter "At Tixon's", according to the narrator, seems to be written by a madman. Thus both works belong to the Gogolian genre of 'Confessions of a Madman.' Furthermore, the germs of dual consciousness, if it is considered a sophisticated form of interior dialogue, may be seen also in Poor Folk (1846). According to Baxtin, "There were, as well, rudiments of interior dialogue already in Devushkin." ("The Dismantled Consciousness" in Dostoevsky, New Perspectives, ed. Robert L. Jackson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1984, 23, n. 4).
rather the spiritual forces battling within them, a morality play, however, stripped of any formalism or abstract allegorizing.³

Baxtin also considers Ivan Karamazov's 'devil' in *The Brothers Karamazov* as an example of an autonomous consciousness, as the inner double which makes a "full dialogization" possible:

> The other's discourse gradually, stealthily penetrates the consciousness and speech of the hero: now in the form of a pause where one would not be appropriate in monologically confident speech; now in the form of someone else's accent breaking up the sentence; now in the form of an abnormally heightened, exaggerated, or anguished personal tone, and so on.⁴

In *Besy* the theme of the double is particularly complex and winds itself throughout the novel on all its multiple levels, including the political, religious and philosophical levels. Relevant to my re-interpretation of Stavrogin is the manner in which the motif of the double encompasses and elucidates the opposition between good and evil within him. It is my contention that Stavrogin, by committing suicide, ejects the evil double within him.

Not only is Stavrogin split into two, but, as Dmitri Chizhevsky notes, facets of his personality are evident in other characters:

> For in reality he is "split, " he is "split into two," he has no face, or many faces, or even all faces.⁵

³ Ibid., 27.

⁴ Ibid., 33.

Chizhevsky's assertion that Stavrogin has 'no, many or all faces' stresses that elusiveness of his character which has precluded critics from perceiving his ultimate redemption. An examination of the theme of the double, as it functions to create the aura of elusiveness which envelops the central personage of Besy, will aid in the re-evaluation of his character and fate.

In Dostoevskij's works, the theme of the double occurs in two basic forms: internal or external. External doubling occurs when one character's attributes are reflected in one or more other characters, whereas internal doubling refers to the depiction of two (or more) opposing personalities within one character. In Besy both internal and external forms of doubling occur. Aspects of Stavrogin's own ambivalence are evident in other characters who portray certain aspects of Stavrogin's personality. Stavrogin's elusiveness is enhanced by the two forms of duality: internal doubling is represented and, indeed, complicated by the question of insanity, whereas external doubling complements and expands the internal doubling. In connection with the struggle between good and evil, Stavrogin's inner struggle develops parallel with his struggle with external evil, especially in his relationship with Petr Verxovenskij. In other words, Stavrogin is confronted by evil from within and from without.

This chapter will examine the means employed in the novel to create the ambivalent aura associated with Stavrogin in the realm of personal duality.

---

6 Gary Cox establishes the distinction between internal and external doubling and offers the following refinements: "internal doubling may be psychological or supernatural (it is usually both to some extent) while external doubling may be parallel (Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov, Stavrogin and Kirillov) or contrastive (Myshkin and Rogozhin, Velchaninov and Trusotsky)." (Tyrant and Victim in Dostoevsky, Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1983, 46)

7 Wasiolek perceives Stavrogin's inner struggle in relation to Petr's actions, but overlooks Stavrogin's struggle against Petr when he writes the following: "There is a correspondence between the inner drama of Stavrogin, and the outer drama of Peter. As Stavrogin kills spiritual life by controlling it, Peter kills physical life by controlling it. Dramatically, the developing inner chaos of Stavrogin is reflected in the developing outer chaos that Peter moves. At the climactic point of self-destruction, the lines meet, and politics and metaphysic complement each other." (Dostoevsky, 131-132)
and doubling. The theme of insanity will be addressed as a special manifestation of duality and as an expression of Dostoevskij's religious and ideological concerns. This approach coupled with an examination of external doubling will elucidate Stavrogin's struggles with evil.

INTERNAL DOUBLING

The duality inherent in Stavrogin's character is initially established in his name; his family name contains the opposing images of the cross and the horn, thus juxtaposing the divine with the demonic. Stavrogin's patronymic also suggests opposing symbolism: Vsevolodovici means 'all-powerful' or 'power over all men' or, taking into consideration the fact that the name is a patronymic, it also indicates 'son of the all-powerful.' The first possible implication emphasizes the power Stavrogin wields over other men, albeit unsolicited. It is associated with the proud side of Stavrogin's character, perhaps even with the Anti-Christ, whereas the second possibility, by implying Christ, the son of the all-powerful, establishes an indirect but real link between Stavrogin and Christ. This associates Stavrogin with humility and self-sacrifice, echoing and reinforcing the image of the cross in the name 'Stavrogin.'

Similarly, Stavrogin's first name, Nikolaj suggests both positive and negative images. The negative images are connected to the czar, Nikolaj I, and to Nikolaj Speshnev, a member of the Petrashevskij circle. Nikolaj I wielded totalitarian control over his subjects and had initially sentenced members of the Petrashevskij circle, including Dostoevskij, to death, then commuting the sentence to imprisonment. In connection to the czar, the name Nikolaj refers to

---

8 Another negative image which possibly offers insight into the choice of Stavrogin's name is the sect of the Nicolaitans (Nikolaity) mentioned in the Apocalypse (2: 6-15). This sect, according to Biblejskaja Enciklopedija (513), is associated to immorality, idol-worship, uncleanness and to the idol Balaam. There is no direct evidence in the text to link Stavrogin to this group, but considering Dostoevskij's thorough knowledge of the New Testament, critics, such as Leatherbarrow, have mentioned the possibility of a connection.
autocratic power, including the power of dispensing life or death. When Nikolaj sentenced the Petrashevskij members to death and when he pardoned them, he in both instances assumed to be the Divine Judge. Although the Russian autocrat, in Dostoevskij's view, may compare favorably with the Pope and Grand Inquisitors, he too assumes powers beyond his allotted realm. A certain sense of power is also associated with Nikolaj Speshnev who, as many critics have noted, is one of the prototypes for Stavrogin's character. Speshnev, to whom Dostoevskij owed money, might have used coercion to elicit Dostoevskij's participation in his revolutionary plans.

Positive images of the name are primarily associated with Saint Nikolaj the Miracle Worker, Николай чудотворец. The positive imagery associated with Saint Nikolaj overtly stresses forgiveness, that is Grace. That Dostoevskij was not only cognizant of the positive attributes associated with Saint Nikolaj, but was also thinking of him during the writing of Besy is attested to in the following excerpt from a letter written to Majkov in 1870:

You write me a good deal about Nikolai the Miracle Worker. He will not abandon us because Nikolai the Miracle Worker is the Russian spirit and her unifying force.

Because Dostoevskij mentions Nikolaj the Miracle Worker in a letter in which he also asserts that the Biblical passage about the Gadarene swine is directly

---

9 For the classic debate about Speshnev vs. Bakunin as the prototype for Stavrogin's character see Спор о Бакунине и Достоевском, Статьи Л.П. Гроссмана и Вяч. Попонского. Л.: Гос., 1926.

10 Joseph Frank in Dostoevsky, The Seeds of Revolt indicates that Speshnev's secret group was more radical than the Petrashevskij circle and operated independently from it. He also suggests that Dostoevskij was uncomfortable with his role in Speshnev's plans. See chapters 17-19. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

11 It could be argued that the czar also displayed magnanimity by transmuting the sentence of the members of the Petrashevskij circle from execution to imprisonment.

connected to the novel Besy, it is very likely that Saint Nikolaj was one of the possible reasons for the choice of Stavrogin's first name. In the legend of the miracle at Karkov, Nikolaj drove out a demon just as Nikolaj Stavrogin ultimately will drive out his demon:

А вокруг дѣянія, и среди чудесъ изгнаніе демона изъ колодца (Чудо въ Карковѣ)\(^\text{13}\)

Further support for the assertion that Saint Nikolaj offers one source for the choice of Stavrogin's first name is the reference to Saint Nikolaj in the novel; Fed'ka, the convict, discusses a medallion, a chin-piece, dedicated to Saint Nikolaj - Nikolaj-ugodnik. (296)\(^\text{14}\) Other positive connotations associated with the name Nikolaj (Nikolas) which are indirectly reflected in the novel include Nikolas of Antioch, who was one of the seven righteous men in "The Acts of the Apostles":

Therefore, friends, look out seven men of good reputation from your number, men full of the Spirit and of wisdom, and we will appoint them to deal with these matters, while we devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.' This proposal proved acceptable to the whole body. They elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch, a former convert to Judaism. These they presented to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts, 6:2-6)

This possible source has dual relevance to the novel: first, the Biblical pair Stephen and Nicolas of Antioch, who are both chosen to aid widows, recall Stepan Verxovenskij and Nikolaj Stavrogin. We may recall that Stepan

\(^\text{13}\) Образъ Николая Чудотворца, Remizov, 52.

\(^\text{14}\) Remizov distinguishes between three separate Saints named Nikolaj. The distinctions are not necessary to this discussion, since all three are considered positive spiritual images. In the ironic passage in which the medallion is mentioned, Fed'ka complains to Stavrogin that he sold his Saint Nikolaj chin-piece for almost nothing and that this was a form of God's punishment for the murder that Fed'ka had committed.
Verxovenskij in the novel is supposed to be the comfort and support of Varvara Stavrogina. In actual fact, of course, we have a reversal in the novel, since the widow Varvara aids and supports Stepan Verxovenskij. Second, on a more serious note, Besy mentions the seven righteous men necessary for the preservation of a city; a minor character, the general babbles about how many of the seven from their town are at the benefit fete: «Город, говорят, не стоит без семи праведников...семи, кажется, не помню поло-женного числа.» (10:388) Although this mention of the seven men does not directly pertain to Nikolaj Stavrogin, the reference, however parodic, underscores the relevance of the subtext. Nikolaj Stavrogin fails to act as a pillar of society, but as Tixon points out, he does believe in the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{15} Perhaps he believes in Christ also; at any rate the fact that the sacred monogram of Greek capital letters - IC XC NIKA - 'Christ the conqueror' includes 'NIK,' the first three letters of Nikolaj may be relevant.

Other subtexts, for example, the stories from The Kievan Crypt Paterikon, may offer further sources for the choice of the name Nikolaj. For example, the Life, "Prince Svjatosha of Chernigov" demonstrates certain similarities between the monk Nikolaj and Nikolaj Stavrogin, suggesting that this image could offer positive associations inherent in the choice of the name Nikolaj.\textsuperscript{16} Although Prince Svjatosha assumes the name Nikolaj only when he becomes a monk, both men are princes (князь), and each is asked to assume a position of leadership in their society by a man named Petr: Petr Verxovenskij plans to create a new order with Stavrogin as a figurehead, monk Nikolaj's physician Petr wants him to return to rule over his boyars. Monk Nikolaj's actions - especially, his decision to enter the monastery and his severe lifestyle there are

\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, the Nikolaj mentioned in Acts, according to the Biblejskaja Enciklopedija had converted from paganism to Christianity thereby lending credence to assertions that Stavrogin is capable of transformations. 513.

\textsuperscript{16} This story "О предстоящем святоше, князе черниговском" is found in Pamjatniki literatury drevnj Rusi. XII vek. Moskva, 1980, or translated in Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, ed. Serge A. Zenkovsky. N.Y.: Dutton, 1974. Joseph Frank in Dostoevsky, The Seeds of Revolt, discusses Dostoevskij's religious upbringing. (See his Chapter 4). Given this background and Dostoevskij's use of images from the Kievan Paterikon, it is most likely that he was acquainted with the story.
not in keeping with his position in life and many consider him insane: "...и
мнить яко изумьвашся" (500). The monk states that 'strength is gained
through weakness,' recalling the words of Christ, and mentions his struggle
with his flesh which is plagued by temporary passions: "...я и решил не шадить
плоти своей, чтобы снова не поднялась брани на ся, да съткнется многим трудом,
смириться." (501-502) Whereas the monk, Nikolaj, tries to control his passions
by heavy labor, it might be posited that Stavrogin resists evil by his death. The
important similarity between the two is that each is struggling against a part of
himself and both reject and eventually renounce worldly concerns and their
own evil aspect.

The above examples of the ambivalent connotations inherent in the
choice of names demonstrate the manner by which Dostoevskij initially
establishes the contradictory aspects of Stavrogin's character. The contradictory
aspects are broadened by the association of Stavrogin with other figures, be
they fictitious or non--fictitious. For example, the narrator's direct comparison
of Stavrogin with Lermontov's Pechorin and with Lermontov himself, and the
barely veiled reference to the Decembrist Lunin accentuate Stavrogin's evil - or
at least rebellious - qualities. The comparisons offered by the narrator tend to
be extremely negative, as evidenced by the following observations:

В злобе, разумеется, выходил прогресс против Л-на, даже
против Лермонтова. Злобы в Николае Всеволодовиче было,
может быть, больше, чем в тех обоих вместе, но злоба эта
была холодная, спокойная и если можно так выразиться, -
разумная, стало быть, самая отвратительная и самая
страшная, какая может быть. (10:165)

The mention of Lunin is especially interesting, since this Decembrist's actions
were unrestrained, unpredictable and excessive, somewhat like Stavrogin's
pranks in the early part of the novel and his strange behavior in the later parts.
According to Lotman, Lunin valued above all "crossing a line no one has yet
crossed."\footnote{Ju. M. Lotman. "The Decembrist in Daily Life" in The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1985, 127.} Therefore positive actions were as valued as negative actions, as
long as they were excessive and a "transgression" was involved. Stavrogin too easily switches codes. It is significant that the narrator's negative opinions about Stavrogin's cold-blooded viciousness are immediately negated by Stavrogin's positive actions - Stavrogin does not retaliate after being slapped by Shatov. The contradiction between the narrator's evaluation of Stavrogin's nature and motivations and Stavrogin's actual actions marked by the absence of retribution, reinforce the atmosphere of ambivalence surrounding Stavrogin.

In addition to name symbolism and allusions to real and fictitious figures, the motif of duality and the device of internal doubling are further expanded by the theme of insanity and the motif of the Pretender. Both of these are evident throughout Dostoevskij's works. In Besy the motif of the Pretender is linked to Petr Verxovenskij's political plans. Petr desires to create a new ruler for Russia, a Pretender and Иван-царевич. As Petr Verxovenskij reveals his plan, Stavrogin realizes that Petr has chosen him for the role of Pretender (самозванец, 10:325). This reference elicits a complex set of associations, which reinforces the theme of duality and duplicity.  

The theme of the Pretender is an amplification of the theme of the double (the personality split into a valid and a false aspect), and it intertwines the political level of the novel with the religious level. In order to implement his destructive agenda, Petr Verxovenskij intends to create a legendary leader, whom he compares to the leader of one of the sects of the castrates:

Знаете ли вы, что значит это словцо: «Он скрывается»? Но он явится, явится. Мы пустим легенду лучше, чем у

---

18 Billington asserts that the phenomenon of "the Pretender" became a Russian tradition: "There were fourteen serious pretenders in the seventeenth century, and the tradition developed so vigorously in the following century that there were thirteen in the final third of it alone. There were some even in the early nineteenth century - the legends about Constantine Pavlovich as the true tsar rather than Nicholas I providing a kind of uncoordinated popular echo of the aristocratic Decembrist program." (The Icon and the Axe, 199) The theme of the pretender in literature, especially in works about the life of Dmitri Samosvanec, was popular. Perhaps the most famous is Pushkin's Boris Godunov. Other examples include Xomjakov's Dmitri Samosvanec, and it is significant that one of Dostoevskij's first literary endeavors was to write his own Boris Godunov. (See Frank, Dostoevsky, The Seeds of Revolt, 117).
The above quote actually refers not only to Stavrogin's potential position as leader of the "empire of evil," envisioned by Petr Verxovenskij, but also to Stavrogin's actual character - the essence of his character is in hiding, as it were. But his true character, i.e. the sane man, will eventually be revealed. We remind the reader again that Stavrogin was sane at the time of his death according to the medical team which performed the autopsy.

Petr Verxovenskij continues the explanation of his plan to make Stavrogin the ruler of Russia as follows:

Слушайте, я вас никому не покажу, никому: так надо. Он есть, но никто не видал его, он скрывает. А знаете, что можно даже и показать из ста тысяч одному, например. И пойдет по всей земле: «Видели, видели». И Ивана Филипповича бога Савасова видели, как он в колеснице на небо вознесся пред людьми, «собственными» глазами видели. А вы не Иван Филиппович; вы красавец, гордый, как бог, ничего для себя не ищущий, с ореолом жертвы, "скрывающийся". Главное, легенду! Вы их победите, взгляните и победите. (10:326)

This passage intertwines many themes relevant to the reinterpretation of Stavrogin's character undertaken here: sacrifice, emulation of Christ, self-punishment, and pride. The main point is that Stavrogin is torn between the extremes of pride and humility but he will reject Petr's 'Pretender' vision of himself. He will eschew the false deity Petr is foisting upon him and emulate the true deity, Christ, renouncing all claims to divine status for himself. It must be emphasized that it is Petr, not Stavrogin, who wishes to create a false prophet and ruler, that is, a Pretender. In this scene it is Petr, who is repeatedly described as insane, not Stavrogin.19 Here, the creator of a blasphemous

19 It is interesting to note that as Stavrogin thinks that Petr is insane, the door of his house opens. Stavrogin moves away from Petr Verxovenskij and ascends the stairs to his home.
legend, Petr, is associated with insanity. This association, by implying that those political revolutionaries, who have lost God, are insane, recalls the epigraph at the beginning of the novel. They are the demons who enter the swine, whereas Stavrogin, by rejecting their path and by ridding himself of his double, is the same man at Christ's feet.

According to Petr's plan, Stavrogin would be a "proud, young God," with a halo of self-sacrifice. Stavrogin's duality displays a similar tension between pride and self-immolation. His plan to publish the 'confession' of his worst crime appears to be an act of self-sacrifice, but is so only on the surface. In actual fact, it is the act of a "proud, young god" who derives pleasure from both good and evil. His planned publication emerges as an act of pride, as a defiance of the moral rules of conduct, not as an act of repentance. Tixon realizes that Stavrogin is not sufficiently humble and therefore not ready to face the consequences of his confession in a Christian spirit. The fact that Stavrogin eventually does not publish his confession is therefore a positive act, since it means that he abstains from flaunting his crime. Therefore, we are prepared to accept Stavrogin's longing for a burden as genuine. This longing for a burden, established in conversations with Kirillov and Shatov, predicts his eventual genuine emulation of Christ. In contrast, both Petr's and Kirillov's plans for a new order on earth offer variations on the theme of achieving power: Petr intends to create a Pretender, Kirillov to become a Man-god. In contrast, Stavrogin does not aspire to such "heights," and, in fact, rejects the role proposed by Petr. Yet Stavrogin must constantly battle an inner demon, which, as will be demonstrated, at times usurps his personality. Stavrogin's mother, Varvara describes his demon as the demon of irony:

- И если бы всегда подле Nicolas (отчасти пела уже Варвара Петровна) находился тихий, великий в смирении своем Горацио, - другое прекрасное выражение ваше, Степан

(10:326) In view of the importance of the open door (see Conclusion), this detail deserves attention. Seen in symbolic terms, this scene indicates a tentative rejection of evil. It is significant that Stavrogin's visit to Tixon was to have followed this scene, because it represents an attempt, albeit as yet unsuccessful, to move towards God.
Трофимович, - то, может быть, он давно уже был бы спасен от грустного и «внезапного демона иронии», который всю жизнь терзал его. (О демоне иронии опять удивительное выражение ваше, Степан Трофимович.) (10:151)

Stavrogin's alter personality, his own inner Pretender is the most elaborate and the most subtle instance of internal doubling in the novel. Not only are there direct references to a demon inhabiting Stavrogin, but his presence is also marked by changes in Stavrogin's discourse, ranging from tone to grammar, which indicate the alternation between Stavrogin's two personalities. In addition, certain verbs indicate the oscillation between the two personalities. The separateness (autonomy) of the two personalities is obscured by the repeated allusions to Stavrogin's insanity. His illness creates the impression that he is one insane person. But Stavrogin is sane, only "invaded" by evil (insanity). So, in committing suicide, Stavrogin narrows himself in a positive sense by ridding himself of evil.

By means of internal doubling, including the theme of insanity and the motif of the pretender, Stavrogin is presented as a character struggling with the evil within himself. His struggle is developed to such an extent that he appears to be oscillating between two separate personalities - one good, the other evil. In the literary heritage of the church, most notably in the paterikon of the Pechersk monks, representations of evil, i.e. "demons" and "devils," are presented as independent entities, as supernatural creatures. These demons may either remain outside the persons they tempt or invade them. The invading category is capable of taking over a soul, but is, in the religious stories, usually ultimately purged. This type of representation is used by Dostoevskij also but is not a reflection of a medieval world-view in his case. Instead, it is a literary device, used to symbolize the co-existence of good and evil within man (as well as the evil which confronts man from without). This device, fully compatible with modern psychological theories, symbolically

---

20 Dostoevskij was well aware of advances in psychoanalysis. Upon his release from prison, he wrote to his brother and requested Carus's work on the psyche. (See Frank, Dostoevsky, The Years of Ordeal, 169, 171-174).
represents a part of the personality which becomes an autonomous force, thus combining the spiritual heritage of church literature with modern concepts of man, and, for that matter, other literary traditions, such as the Gogolian and Hoffmannesque grotesque. Dostoevskij's subtle use of medieval imagery in *Besy* is clearly used for its rich symbolic value. Thus, in his notes for the novel, Stavrogin, termed 'The Prince' (князь), is envisioned as a demon:

ВООБЩЕ ИМЕТЬ В ВИДУ, что Князь обворожителен, как демон, и ужасные страсти борются с...подвигом. При этом неверие и мука - от веры. Подвиг осиливает, вера берет верх, но и бесы веруют и трепещут. «Поздно», - говорит Князь и бежит в Ури, а потом повесился (11:175)21

There is direct evidence in the text that Stavrogin perceives a separate, autonomous consciousness which exists within himself. In fact, he discusses the presence of his inner demon, which at times controls him, with Tixon and with Dasha. In a conversation with Dasha he remarks that his devil is a small, inconsequential creature:

- О, какой мой демон! Это просто маленький, гаденький, золотушный бесенок с насморком, из неудавшихся. (10:231)

On one level of the novel Stavrogin employs the term 'demon' in reference to Fed'ka: Stavrogin states that one little demon (*besenok*, 309) had offered to kill his wife for him, just as Fed'ka had. It was Petr Verxovenskij, however, who had instigated Fed'ka's proposal. Petr and Fed'ka represent the external forces of evil and destruction, from which Stavrogin must free himself.

Dasha also corroborates the notion of a demonic double in Stavrogin when she exclaims "Oh, let God rescue you from your demon" - "Да, сохранит вас бог от вашего демона ..." (10:231). Her exclamation refers not to Fed'ka, a mere externalization of his inner evil, but to Stavrogin's deeper spiritual

---

21 These notes are found in the third notebook, 35 and were probably written around June 23, 1870.
problems, including his feelings of guilt about the young girl, Matresha, whom he had violated.

In the following scene (which, as Chizhevsky notes did not appear in the book form, but only in the notebooks for the novel) the coexistence of two autonomous personalities is particularly clear:

"I saw him again... at first in the corner, there near the stove and then he sat next to me, all night, and stayed there even after I left the house... Now begins a series of his visitations. Yesterday he was stupid and impudent ...I got angry that my own demon could appear in such a miserable mask...I was silent all the time, on purpose: and not only silent, I did not move. He got furious at that and I was glad that he got furious. I know that it is I myself divided in different ways and that I speak with myself. Still, anyhow, he got very angry: he terribly wanted to be an independent demon and that I would believe in him as a reality."22

Although Stavrogin comments that his demon or second personality is not strong, he still has the power to overcome Stavrogin's primary personality. The demon announces his presence by laughter.23 During the discussion with Dasha, Stavrogin states that he could not sleep the night before, because he felt like laughing:

Знаете, мне со вчерашней ночи ужасно хочется смеяться, все смеяться, беспрерывно, долго, много. Я точно заряжен смехом..." (10:231)

The verb 'зарядать' ('to load,' as in to load ammunition, or 'to charge,' as in charge with electricity) implies that some other force has produced the impulse to laugh. This intimates that laughter controls him, that he is possessed. The


23 The motif of laughter is traditionally used to mark demonic characters.
demon’s laughter is contemptuous and derisive, and is usually accompanied by
eexpressions which clearly indicate contempt, for example "брезгливое презрение
выразилось в лице его." (10:231) The transformations from Stavrogin's true core
personality to his demon and back again are often marked by the smirk; other
indicators are adverbs such as злобно - 'maliciously', or verbs such as
задумываться - 'to be lost in thoughts,' оборотиться - 'to turn towards' and also
'to turn into' (also related verbs поворачивать). The first verb задумываться,
occurs after Stavrogin's first prank and after he breaks the crucifix during his
conversation with Tixon and indicates that his primary personality is not
conscious of the actions of the other, demonic side. Often, this verb indicates
the changing back to his primary personality. The second verb, оборотиться,
physically means 'to turn around' but on a supernatural level this verb
indicates transformation, for example, the change into a vampire or werewolf
(оборотень) and back again. Throughout the novel, this verb indicates the
alternations in Stavrogin's personality. The transformations are evident in the
following passage which describes Stavrogin immediately after he leads
Gaganov by the nose. (The transformations have been marked in bold here for
ease of recognition)

Можно было подумать, что это чистое школьничество,
разумеется непростительнейшее; и, однако же, рассказывали
потом, что он в самое мгновение операции был почти
задумчив, «точно как бы с ума сошел»; но это уже долго
спустя припомнили и сообразили. Сгоряча все сначала
запомнили только второе мгновение, когда он уже наверно
все понимал в настоящем виде и не только не смущался,
но, напротив, улыбалась злобно и весело, «без малейшего
раскаяния». Шум поднялся ужаснейший; его окружили.
Николай Всеволодович повертывался и посматривал
кругом, не отвечая никому и с любопытством приглядываясь
к восклицавшим лицам. Наконец, вдруг как будто
задумался онать, - так по крайней мере передавали,
нахмурился, твердо подошел к оскорбленному Павлу
Павловичу и скороговоркой, с видимою досадой,
пробормотал:
- Вы, конечно, извините...Я, право, не знаю как мне вдруг
захотелось... глупость... (10:39)
The above passage makes it clear that immediately after the prank, Stavrogin turns and looks at the assembled crowd without recognition of what has happened, indeed, with curiosity. Then - suddenly - he falls into a mood of derision and scorn. Similarly, immediately after the second prank, in which Stavrogin publicly kisses Liputin's wife, there is a moment when Stavrogin is confused:

Николай Всеволодович взял шляпу, подошел к оторопевшему среди всеобщего смятения супругу, глядя на него сконфузился и сам и, пробормотав ему наскоро: «Не сердитесь», вышел. (10:41)

Although the motif of confusion is not evident during the third prank, i.e. the biting of the governor's ear, the motif of irritation is present, accompanied by hints of cunning and mockery. Derision is typical of the demonic side of Stavrogin's character.

Nicolas слушал с досадой и с нетерпением. Вдруг как бы что-то хитрое и насмешливое промелькнуло в его взгляде. (10:42)

Interestingly, before the third prank, Nikolaj seems to be going through an inner struggle:

Nicolas смотрел очень нелюбезно, совсем не по-родственному, был бледен, сидел потупившись и слушал сдвинув брови, как будто преодолевая сильную боль. (10:42)

The verb 'to overcome' (преодолевать) indicates Stavrogin's battle with an inner demon who causes his irreverent and contemptuous attitude and actions. Retrospectively, it may be asserted that Stavrogin's period of dissolute actions in Petersburg is the result of the impact of the alter consciousness.
The transformations from primary to secondary personality are most clearly discernable in the chapter "At Tixon's."24 These alterations have been recognized by the Russian critic A. S. Dolinin, who discusses the "equal pull toward good and evil" inherent in Stavrogin's personality. Dolinin terms the evil side, that is, the alter consciousness a "devil." The critic employs the term "devil" in the following passage, which is presented in its entirety to demonstrate that my approach to Stavrogin's duality has a precedent:

Tikhon really did sense some sort of flashes of repentance and great suffering from having sinned in these words, and a longing for penance. Stavrogin was never so close to paradise as he was at that moment. "If you believe that you can forgive yourself and attain such forgiveness in this world of suffering, and if you pose this goal for yourself with faith, then you already believe completely!" Tikhon exclaimed ecstatically. "And a few lines below, "God will forgive you for your lack of faith, for you respect the Holy Spirit without knowing Him...." But this ray of light gleamed only for an instant; victory was to the devil. "Incidentally, will Christ forgive me, too?" Stavrogin asked, smiling wryly and quickly changing his tone; and in his question one could hear a faint hint of irony." After the irony comes unnatural laughter (he "laughed unnaturally" after the long outburst), and then a feeling of disgust (he "interrupted in disgust") in response to Tikhon's suggestion that he study with a monk "as a novice, under his guidance for five or seven years." And here Tikhon sees clearly that the devil is once again taking possession of Stavrogin....25

---

24 The chapter "At Tixon's" was not published with the rest of the text in either the serial or the book form. Katkov, the publisher of the journal probably considered the presentation of the crime against Matresha too offensive to print. Two schools of thought exist about discussing the suppressed chapter as a part of the text: those who reject the insertion of the chapter as a part of the canonical text, although admitting its interest as a variant (for example, Wasiolek and V. Komarovich), and those who consider the chapter as an essential element of the canonical text (for example, Peace and A. S. Dolinin).

A closer examination of the chapter "At Tixon's" will reveal that Stavrogin's two personalities alternate quite rapidly, exposing an oscillating attitude towards Tixon, the representative of faith; from disgust and loathing to reverence, from pride to humility. In this chapter, support for the existence of an autonomous consciousness usurping Stavrogin's inner space - a demon - is offered in the narrator's introduction to Stavrogin's confession. The narrator states that the confession is the work of a madman, a demon:

Документ этот, по-моему, - дело болезненное, дело беса, овладевшего этим господином. Похоже на то, когда страдающий острою болью мечется в постели, желая найти положение, чтобы хотя бы на миг облегчить себя. Даже и не облегчить, а лишь бы только заменить, хотя на минуту, прежнее страдание другим. И тут уже, разумеется, не до красоты или разумности положения. (12:108)  

The narrator, of course, states the issue too narrowly; he does not discern that the confession is the work of two personalities (one exulting in the crime, the other refuting it). But he is right insofar as the "demon's" presence is unmistakable. In fact, the narrator states that Stavrogin's sole wish was to confront some sort of enemy quickly: Тут поскорее бы только встретить какого-нибудь врага...  

The context makes clear that the enemy is within Stavrogin. The narrator's introduction to Stavrogin's confession also mentions Stavrogin's 'need for a cross.' Elsewhere in the novel, Stavrogin is searching for a burden; in the above cited passage the need for a cross is mentioned. The subsequent comment that this need occurs in a man who does not believe in the cross continues the presentation of Stavrogin's ambivalent nature.

---

26 This passage occurs in the variant to the chapter. Two extant texts of the chapter "At Tixon's" exist. Dolinin distinguishes them as the Petersburg and Moscow variants. The Petersburg variant is preserved in the Pushkin House and the Moscow variant, from the galley proofs for Russkij Vestnik is in Moskovskij Glavnyj Arxiv. (A.S. Dolinin "Stavrogin's Confession" in Soviet Studies in Literature, Summer-Fall 1987. v. 23, 114-115, n. 1. Both were rejected for publication by Katkov. The chapter was first published in 1922 in Документы по истории литературы и общественности, вып.1, М.: Центрархива, (3-40) as cited on 12:157.

27 In the variant (12:108).
The spiritual alternations are evident in the incident in which Stavrogin breaks a crucifix during his discussion with Tixon. The proud part of Stavrogin's personality refuses to condescend to an explanation; the repentant part of his personality, however, struggles, perhaps unconsciously, to explain his actions to Tixon:

Он вдруг оборвал, как бы стыдясь продолжать и считая унизительным пускаться в объяснения, но в то же время с видимым страданием, хотя и бессознательно, подчиняясь какой-то необходимости остаться, и именно для объяснений... Меж тем он остановился у письменного стола и, взяв в руки маленькое распятие из слоновой кости, начал вертеть его в пальцах и вдруг сломал пополам. Очнувшись и увидев, что он в недоумении посмотрел на Тихона, и вдруг верхняя губа его задрожала, словно от обиды и как бы горделивым вызовом. (12:114-115)

It is obvious that Stavrogin is surprised by the sudden destruction of the crucifix. The word 'suddenly' twice marks the domination of the evil, blasphemous part of Stavrogin - the being which is proud, the being which breaks the crucifix and refuses that burden of the cross which at other times is so eagerly sought. The verb 'to regain one's consciousness' or 'to come to oneself' (очнуться) indicates the real Stavrogin's momentary reappearance. The broken cross is mentioned in the following passage in which the true (i.e. primary and "good") Stavrogin expresses his humility and his acceptance of forgiveness. Since the mention of the cross and the discussion of humility is more fully developed in the variant to the chapter "At Tixon's," the passage which follows includes excerpts from both the chapter and the variant.

...злобно оборвал он и опять покраснел, как давеча, за против воли высказанное. Он обернулся к столу, спиной к Тихону, и опять захватил в руку кусок сломанного распятия. (12:116)
- Ответьте мне на вопрос, но искренне, мне одному, или как самому себе в темноте ночи, - проникнутым голосом начал Тихон, - если бы кто простили вас за это (12:116)...легче ли бы вам было от этой мысли или все равно?
- Легче, - ответил Ставрогин вполголоса, опуская глаза. Если бы вы меня простили, мне было бы гораздо легче, - прибавил он неожиданно и полупепотом.
- С тем, чтоб и вы меня также, - проникнутым голосом промолвил Тихон. (11:26)
- За что? --- обернулся Ставрогин, - что вы мне сделали? Ах да, это ваш монастырская формула. Дурное смирение. (12:117)

Here the secondary personality reappears, disparages the doctrine of humility (лурное смирение) and tosses the piece of the cross onto the table. But, it is while Stavrogin holds the broken pieces that he admits that Tixon's forgiveness is important to him. This admission (and others which express Stavrogin's yearnings for purification and for reconciliation with God) is unexpected and immediately followed by the reappearance of the demonic consciousness.28

The intimated markers of a separate consciousness and its alternations with the real Stavrogin are explicitly developed in his own statements. Stavrogin confesses that he is tormented by something - hallucinations or an evil being. In addition to causing contemptuous laughter, the evil being's presence makes Stavrogin behave either contemptuously and derisively or angrily and with annoyance:

И вдруг он, впрочем в самых кратких и отрывистых словах, так что иное трудно было и понять, рассказал, что он подвержен, особенно по ночам, некоторого рода галлюцинациям, что он видит иногда или чувствует подле себя какое-то злобное существо, насмешливое и «разумное», «в разных лицах и в разных характерах, но оно одно и то же, а я всегда злюсь'..." (11:9)

This admission during Stavrogin's discussion with Tixon presents his primary personality in its attempts to cope with the evil being. Although the narrator

---

28 Two additional aspects are brought out in the cited passage; 1) The association of unexpectedness with positive spiritual revelations and 2) the motif of silence as a means to express spiritual plenitude. The first association reinforces the positive religious symbolism of Stavrogin's unexpected death by suicide. (See the Conclusion). The motif of silence indicates that sincerity and spiritual revelations need not be expressed by words. This type of inner Epiphany remains unexplained and is inexplicable to others.
comments that this - the positive Stavrogin struggling against evil - is a new side to him, never seen before, this is the real Stavrogin described earlier in the text by the narrator as a 'superior soul with undying, sacred longings.' Stavrogin's statements are obviously sincere - his sophisticated mask has fallen away - and the narrator mistakes this sincerity for the outburst of a madman. At the same time even he is deeply impressed by the change which he describes in terms of a new man replacing the old one. In terms already established here, the primary personality ejects the alternate personality.

Дики и сбивчивы были эти открытия и действительно как бы шли от помешанного. Но при этом Николай Всеволодович говорил с таким странною откровенностью, невиданною в нем никогла, с таким простодушием, совершенно ему несвойственным, что казалось, с ним вдруг и нечаянно исчез прежний человек совершенно. (11:9)

However, the 'real' Stavrogin is immediately overcome by his other being - his demon:

Но все это было мгновенно и так же вдруг исчезло как и явились
- Все это вздор, - быстро и с неловкой досадой проговорил он, спохватившись. - Я схожу к доктору. (11:9)

The transformation here is obvious: the demon irritably (с неловкой досадой проговорил он спохватившись) states that all this, i.e. Stavrogin's statements about the presence of a supernatural being, is nonsense, and that it is only himself in 'various forms':

«И все это вздор, вздор ужасный. Это я сам в разных видах и больше ничего. Так как я прибавил сейчас эту...фразу, то вы, наверно, думаете, что я все еще сомневаюсь и не уверен, что это я, а не в самом деле бес?» (11:9)

29 Note the irony on the part of the narrator, although he states the truth. As is evident by now, ironical statements in the novel often should be taken in their literal sense.
The irritation that accompanies Stavrogin's statements indicates the presence of the "demon," who is trying to discover whether or not Tixon believes in the devil:

Странно, что вы об этом настаиваете, тогда как я уже сказал вам, что вижу, - стал опять раздражаться с каждым словом Ставрогин, - разумеется, вижу, вижу так как вас...а иногда вижу и не уверен, что вижу, хоть и вижу...а иногда не уверен, что я вижу, и не знаю, что правда: я или он...взор все это. А вы разве никак не можете предположить, что это в самом деле бес? - прибавил он, засмеявшись и слишком резко переходя в насмешливый тон, ведь это было бы сообразнее с вашей профессией? (11:9)

After a discussion about devils, atheism and a passage from Laodiceans, the real Stavrogin - the primary personality - emerges again:

- Довольно - оборвал Ставрогин. - это для середки, это для равнодушных, так ли? Знаете, я вас очень люблю.
- И я вас, - отозвался вполголоса Тихон.
Ставрогин замолк и вдруг впал опять в давешнюю задумчивость. Это происходило точно припадками, уже в третий раз. Да и Тихону сказал он «люблю» тоже чуть не в припадке, по крайней мере неожиданно для себя самого. (11:11)

In the above passage it is clear that the alterations occur in 'fits' (paroxysms), and that they have already occurred three times. Stavrogin's confession of love for Tixon, of course, occurred in the positive state. It is interesting to note that 'припадок' in Russian is associated with an attack of nerves, madness, and with epilepsy. In this type of state it is clear that Stavrogin's sincere side emerges, transcending the demon. But the real Stavrogin vanishes again, and the proud alter consciousness surfaces in irritation, angry because Stavrogin had told Tixon that he loves him:

Тот вздрогнул и гневно нахмурил брови.
...
Злобы могло и не быть, будь только другой человек, а не я...Впрочем, дело не с человеке, а обо мне. (11:11)
In the above passage the speaker separates himself from mankind in general, in
typical superman fashion, Stavrogin is speaking of himself as a unique and
superior representative of mankind. Again, his evil alter-personality is
emerging. Beyond doubt then, there is an inner struggle between the two
Stavrogins. The alter personality, or invading consciousness, represents
negativity and pride and beyond that, the vicious evil which progressively
asserts itself to such an extent that it overcomes Stavrogin's "primary
personality."

In spite of the numerous above examples drawn from the chapter "At
Tixon's" testifying to the fact that Stavrogin is a dual personality, critics have
asserted that the duality is less evident in the remaining text. It has also been
stated that since the chapter "At Tixon's" was excluded from the printed text,
Stavrogin's characterization remains incomplete. This, however, is an oversight
on the part of most critics. Stavrogin's duality, i.e. the existence of a demon, is
evident and recognized by at least two other characters in the published text,
Mar'ja Lebjadkina (the holy fool) and Dasha (the angel).

The existence of Stavrogin's 'demon' is discerned by Mar'ja Lebjadkina, a
jurodivaja, who, in that capacity has insights beyond those of "clever" people. She
senses that someone, whom she calls the Pretender, has taken over
Stavrogin's personality. The fact that she asks the Pretender whether he has
killed her Prince (10:219) proves that she considers the Prince and the Pretender
to be two autonomous personalities. Mar'ja, after questioning the Pretender,

---

30 Chizhevskij, after a persuasive argument about Stavrogin's devil in the chapter "At Tixon's" states that "Stavrogin's "devil" was dropped by Dostoevsky in the book-form edition of the novel: possibly because the depiction of the devil seemed to him too bold at that time or because it might simply have changed the tragedy of Stavrogin into a psychic illness." ("The Theme of the Double in Dostoevsky," 121).

31 A holy fool's insights are always trustworthy in Dostoevskij's world, as in Pushkin's. Cf. Pushkin's holy fool in Boris Godunov who exposes Boris's complicity in the death of the real heir. Significantly the jurodivaj in the play is named Nikolka, offering yet another positive image associated with Stavrogin's name.
and receiving the answer that he is not the Prince, and never has been, states that she had felt that some sort of scheming had been taking place. She tells Stavrogin, the Pretender, that he is a poor actor:

-A кто тебя знает, кто ты таков и откуда ты выскочил! Только сердце мое, сердце чуяло, все пять лет, всю интригу! А я-то сижу, дивлюсь: что за сова слепая подъехала? Нет, голубчик, плохой ты актер, хуже даже Лебедкина. (10:219)

According to Mar'ja's intuition, the real Stavrogin is good and the mask, i.e. the momentarily controlling force, the Pretender, is evil. But, many critics consider Stavrogin's nobler aspects to be a mask and claim that when the mask is removed, his real evil character shows itself. For example, Joseph Frank who admits that Mar'ja "pierces through the "mask" of Stavrogin with a clairvoyance similar to that of Prince Myshkin or Father Zossima," does not recognize the significance of the alternations of personality, asserting that the mask disguises "the impious and sacrilegious "imposter" and "false pretender" to the throne of God's Anointed Tsar."32 However, if Mar'ja's words are trustworthy - and the insight of Holy Fools is traditionally authoritative - it is precisely the outer mask, the Pretender, which is the manifestation of evil.

A close examination of the meeting between Stavrogin and Mar'ja is vital to the understanding of Stavrogin's struggle with his demon. His struggle, according to Mar'ja, had by the time of their encounter in the chapter "Night" continued for five years.33 Mar'ja is capable of seeing the Pretender - the

32 "The Masks of Stavrogin," 678-679. Frank considers the many doubles of Stavrogin as the various facets of his personality, his masks as it were. For example, he states that "The action in the first four chapters of Part II, which concentrate on Stavrogin as he makes a round of visits to Kirillov, Shatov, and the Lebyadkins, indirectly illuminates both his historical-symbolic significance and the tragedy of his yearning for an unattainable absolution and humility. The first two figures represent an aspect of himself that he has discarded, but which has now become transformed into one or another ideological "devil" permanently obsessing his spiritual disciples." (672) The notion of discarding masks, i.e. aspects of himself, will be developed in depth in Chapter 5, Stavrogin's Character Development.

33 Although Mar'ja repeats the number five in connection with the term of their relationship, by the end of the novel, Mar'ja and Stavrogin had been married four and one-half years. But it is significant that his struggles had begun before their marriage, about the time of Matresha's
demon in Stavrogin - although most other characters, most notably the narrator, cannot. It is significant that after Stavrogin, the Pretender, states that he is not the Prince, Maria immediately begins to address him by the familiar *ty* form to show her contempt. The Pretender also begins to use the familiar *ty* form with her, likewise indicating contempt. Moreover, it is interesting to note that although Mar'ja does not immediately recognize the Pretender, she still intuits that the man she sees before her is not her Stavrogin. Her initial reaction to the realization that he is watching her is one of terror:

Ни́кола́й Всево́лодович не простоял и минуты, она вдруг проснулась, точно почувствовав его взгляд над собою, открыла глаза и быстро выпрямилась. Но, должно быть, что-то странное произошло и с гостем: он продолжал стоять на том же месте у дверей; неподвижно и пронзительным взглядом, безмолвно и упорно всматривался в ее лицо. Может быть, этот взгляд был излишне суров, может быть, в нем выразилось отвращение, даже злорадное наслаждение ее испугом - если только не померялись так со сна Марьё Тимофеевне; но только вдруг, после минутного почти выжидания, в лице бедной женщины выразился совершеннощий ужас; по нем пробежали судороги, она подняла, сотрясая их, руки и вдруг заплакала, точь-в-точь как испугавшийся ребенок; еще мгновение, и она бы закричала. Но гость опомнился; в одно мг низменилось его лицо, и он подошел к столу с самою приветливою и ласковою улыбкою. (10:215)

She realizes from his stern gaze that he is contemplating her destruction - her murder in fact. But in the last sentence of the passage above Stavrogin's facial expression changes. The verb 'to come to one's senses' (опомниться) underscores this transformation, as does the mention of the 'affectionate smile.'

death, five years ago. The number five may have significance; Tixon suggests a period of apprentice under a monk for five years and at the end of the novel, Stavrogin stays at the fifth railroad station. If the number five is repeated intentionally, then it might be suggested that Stavrogin has completed his term of expiation by the time of his death. Five, an odd number is considered a sacred number in Freemasonry symbolism and is connected to the symbolism of the winding stairs, which carries the same meaning as the symbolism of Stavrogin's ascent. (Ascent symbolism is discussed in the Conclusion).
But here affection is merely a disguise and therefore does not last. The Pretender's scorn again rises to the surface:

- Ну, оставим сны, - нетерпеливо проговорил он, поворачиваясь к ней, несмотря на запрещение, и может быть, опять давешнее выражение мелькнуло в его глазах. (10:216)

Of further importance in the scene between Stavrogin and Mar'ja is her statement that her Prince, if he so desires, will bow down to God, and if he does not so desire, he will not. She notes that it was the Pretender who was slapped by Shatov. (10:219) This statement underscores the existence of two autonomous personalities and, more importantly, predicts that Stavrogin will make a choice - to bow down to God or not to bow down. Here, of course, we find a pre-figuration of Stavrogin's suicide; by hanging himself he bends his proud neck, breaking it together with his pride. The theme of duality is directly connected to the question of faith and freedom of choice, and Stavrogin freely chooses to "bow down" to God in his final act of suicide.

- Похож-то ты очень похож, может, и родственник ему будешь, - хитрый народ! Только мой - ясный сокол и князь, а ты - сын и купчишка! Мой-то и богу, захочет, поклонится, а захочет, и нет, а тебя Шатушка (милый он, родимый, голубчик мой!) по щекам отхлестал, мой Лебядкин рассказывал. И чего ты тогда струсил, вошел-то? Кто тебя тогда напугал? Как увидела я твое низкое лицо, когда упала, а ты меня подхватил, - точно червь ко мне в сердце заполз: не он, думаю, не он! Не постыдишься бы сокол мой меня никогда пред светской барышней! О господи! да я уж тем только была счастлива, все пять лет, что сокол мой где-то там, за горами, живет и летает, на солнце взирает...Говори, самозванец, много ли взял? За большие ли деньги согласился? (10:219)

Mar'ja mentions the incident in which Shatov slapped Stavrogin, which she did not witness herself. This incident is related to her by her brother, who obviously attributed the lack of retaliation on Stavrogin's part to cowardice. Stavrogin's passive acceptance of this insult, which is considered by some critics a parody of Christ's dictum to turn the other cheek, is discussed in more
detail later. Suffice it to say here that this incident furthers the depiction of duality in Stavrogin's character, since the narrator states that it seemed as if Stavrogin was struggling for control of himself and actually achieved it. (10:166) If the words of Mar'ja are considered to be clairvoyant (or otherwise metaphysically insightful as is typical of a holy fool), it is tempting to assert that in the inner struggle following the slap, Stavrogin did not completely vanquish his demon. Later, however, when he fully rejects the temptations of pride, including Petr's temptation of a kingdom in this world, Stavrogin, the Prince, does vanquish his demon -- the Pretender.

As Stavrogin, the Pretender, leaves, Maria shouts after him: "Grishka Otrep'ev-- a-na-the-ma!" (Гришка Отрепь-ев а-на-фе-ма!, 10:219). It is necessary to point out that Mar'ja, who recognizes the two separate consciousness, condemns the pretender, but not Stavrogin's primary personality. And it is the Pretender who responds to her condemnation. At her words, the Pretender wanted to laugh "loudly and madly" (бешено). The laughter and the adverb бешено support the assertion that the Pretender represents demonic forces within Stavrogin and indicate that his alter personality still exists. The final dismissal or cleansing of the inner demon comes only at the very end of the novel. Immediately after the anathema, as Stavrogin leaves Mar'ja, the alter personality disappears and Stavrogin regains control. "He only came to his senses on the bridge," we learn (10:220). The verb "to come to one's senses" (опомниться) indicates the return to the primary personality.

The motif of the Pretender, as Mar'ja envisions the alter personality, is actually an extension of the dual characterization first presented in the novel by the mask motif. It is obvious that the Pretender, the burnt-out gentleman-bon vivant, and the other masks of the prankster represent the evil side of Stavrogin, the one that we have termed the demon. The Russian scholar A.S. Dolinin adds yet another state. Pointing to Stavrogin's physical description "to which scholars usually refer when they depict him as a "dead mask concealing

---

34 See Chapter 5: Stavrogin's Character Development. For a discussion of the incident as a parody, see Peace, Dostoyevsky, 180.
indifference to good and evil" (98), Dolinin suggests that perhaps the mask, having acquired 'symbolic significance,' may represent an evil state of spiritual inertia:

In the psychological sphere, viewed through the prism through which Dostoevsky usually refracts his metaphysics, the deathly immobility of his mask-like face may result from either a fundamental absence of any spiritual force in him - in which case, what we have is spiritless stagnation; or the complete exhaustion of that force: the idea that once formed matter has been extinguished, and the face has turned into a mask; or, finally, this is a force that, inwardly fettered, awaits some sort of shock in order to get out of a state of evil equilibrium and be revealed.\textsuperscript{35}

Dolinin asserts that Stavrogin's "fettered state" eventually ends and that the evil force was overcome. (99) This happens at a point where Stavrogin's face, according to the narrator, no longer resembled a mask:

After the Petersburg period, he had been on the threshold of spiritual death, and with his spirit, his will, too, had faded, so that his actions became automatic. But now that evil equilibrium had been destroyed, his fettered state had ended, and once again his ascent had begun. "Perhaps," continues the narrator, "some sort of new thought now shone in his gaze."\textsuperscript{36}

Dolinin's interpretation of the mask as the evil exhaustion of spiritual strength coincides with textual evidence. Thus the present investigation agrees in many areas with Dolinin's interpretation, differing with him only in maintaining that the 'face' overcomes the 'mask.'\textsuperscript{37}


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 99.

\textsuperscript{37} Dolinin contends that Stavrogin's 'ascendancy' is ultimately negated by Stavrogin's suicide, a contention with which we disagree.
Duality in Dostoevskij's works is often associated with insanity which, in his mature works, is intertwined with questions of faith. In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskol'nikov's crime and resultant spiritual and physical illness are attributed to Western rationalistic thought - a form of madness.38 Also relevant is the example of the "Westerner" Ivan Karamazov, whose insanity is demonstrated by the appearance of a 'devil,' a demonic alter ego.39 Stavrogin too has been corrupted by the insanity of rationalist thought. In fact, the tie between insanity and the lack of faith which is established in the epigraph permeates Besy. In many instances insanity indicates a state of being without faith, and, conversely, sanity marks faith.40 This association is addressed even by Kirillov, 'the rational atheist,' who states that the material world without Christ would be insane:

-Вся планета, со всем, что на ней, без этого человека - одно сумашествие. (10:471)

Kirillov continues to state that the miracle of Christ's existence was overcome by the laws of nature which proves that life on earth and nature are all lies and consequently there is no point in living. In other words he believes in Christ,

38 Joseph Frank points out that the association of mental illness with Western thought is evident in a letter written after Dostoevskij's release from prison to General E.I. Totleben. (*Dostoevsky, The Years of Ordeal*, 206-207) In this letter Dostoevskij attributes his revolutionary activities to a moral sickness caused by Western rationalism: "My long, arduous, and painful experience has sobered me and, in many respects, changed my ideas. But then, then I was blind and I believed in various theories and utopias. ...For two years running prior to that I had been suffering from strange mental ills. I lapsed into hypochondria. There were even moments when I would lose my sanity." (Selected Letters of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, trans. Andrew R. MacAndrew; eds. Joseph Frank and David I. Goldstein. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987 100-101).

39 Ivan's hallucination is directly connected to his lack of faith which results from his inability to reconcile the suffering of innocents with the forgiveness of those who cause the suffering. Ivan's lack of faith elucidates the opposition between Law and Grace.

40 This idea is expressed in *Crime and Punishment*, in Raskolnikov's feverish dreams when he is incarcerated in Siberia. Microbes (ideas) infect men and drive them to madness.
the man, but has no faith in Christ, the God, since he believes that Christ died like all other men and was never resurrected. This is the reason why he thinks he himself should "replace" Christ, committing a suicide which surpasses Christ's death as an act of liberation. Stavrogin, as we shall see, will avoid this trap of insane pride.

The device of internal doubling which results in the existence of a separate and evil consciousness expresses the profound spiritual doubts of Stavrogin, (as well as those of other Dostoevskian characters including the Underground man and Ivan Karamazov). The opposition of "sanity versus insanity" in some instances is virtually synonymous to the opposition "belief versus atheism." James M. Holquist, in "Disease as Dialectic in Crime and Punishment" points out these oppositions in relation to Crime and Punishment:

Disease is a kind of discourse... It has often been said that Crime and Punishment is Dostoevsky's "best made" novel; in the degree to which one basic figure - sickness / health, damnation / salvation, crime / punishment - is at the center of all the patterns of relationship in the novel, this is certainly the case.41

Holquist's observations are relevant to Besy; in this context it should also be noted that throughout Dostoevskij's oeuvre, the opposition between sanity and insanity also parallels the conflict between Western rational thought as opposed to Orthodox intuition or faith (mind vs. heart). The negative role of reason and its concrete manifestations in science are addressed in Besy; according to Shatov, rationality and scientific answers do not sufficiently answer man's 'eternal' questions, as evidenced by the following passage:

Разум и наука в жизни народов всегда, теперь и с начала веков, исполняли лишь должность второстепенную и служебную; так и будут исполнять до конца веков. (10:198)

In this paradigm, which is the inverse of the correlation established in the epigraph (i.e. sanity = salvation), insanity or, rather, irrationality is depicted as positive. In fact, a related idea is expressed in Besy by Shatov, who reiterates Stavrogin's own words:

----Но не вы ли говорили мне, что если бы математически доказали вам, что истина вне Христа, то вы бы согласились лучше оставаться со Христом, нежели с истиною? (10:198)\textsuperscript{42}

The above passage equates faith with irrational, that is, non-scientific thought. In other words belief in God cannot be proven or demonstrated by scientific or rational means. The paradigm established in the epithet, where sanity equals faith, exemplifies 'irrational' thought. Therefore, sanity does not necessarily correspond to rationality, as demonstrated by the above discussion of the authority of the word of the "Holy fool," Mar'ja Lebjadkina. Shatov, in the above passage, reiterates the essence of Stavrogin's previous teachings. It should be noted that Stavrogin had also imparted a similar thought to Lebjadkin when they had been in Petersburg. Lebjadkin recalls this thought during their conversation in the chapter "Night (Continued)" and states that his favorite witticism uttered by Stavrogin is 'that to be a great man, it is necessary to be able to stand against rational thought':

-- Из всех ваших слов, Николай Всеволодович, я запомнил одно по преимуществу, вы еще в Петербурге его высказали: «Нужно быть действительно великим человеком, чтобы суметь устоять даже против здравого смысла». (10:209)

Here it is tempting to view the term 'great man' on a higher plane, in the sense that Christ is considered a great or divine man. When viewed on this level,

\textsuperscript{42} This statement echoes Dostoevskij's own sentiments "In 1854, in a letter to Mme. N. D. Fonvizin, the wife of the exiled Decembrist I. A. Fonvizin, Dostoevsky wrote: "If anyone were to prove to me that Christ is outside of Truth, and if Truth \textit{really did} exclude Christ, I should prefer to remain with Christ rather than with Truth." quoted in Golubov, "Religious Imagery in the Structure of The Brothers Karamazov, in Russian and Slavic Literature, ed. Richard Freeborn, Columbus, Slavica, 1976, 115."
Stavrogin's witticism expresses a profound Christian truth; that faith transcends rational thought. It is ironic that Lebjadkin employs the idiomatic term "common sense" (which literally means "healthy thought"), because the same adjective "healthy" is found in the epithet - 'the sane man, cleansed of demons, sits at the feet of Christ.' Here the adjective "healthy" is used in the sense of rational thought, i.e. common sense. In the epithet the same adjective is used in the sense of sane, i.e. cleansed from demons. Nonetheless, the repetition of this adjective draws attention to Lebjadkin's statement, thus marking Stavrogin as an advocate of irrationality which in turn strengthens his links to Mar'ja Lebjadkina. This tie to Mar'ja, who represents unsophisticated but spiritual Russia, underscores Stavrogin's positive side, a side which is obscured by numerous factors: his propensity for arrogance and the regular re-emergence of his alter ego - the demon. The narrator's intrusive commentary also contributes to the proper evaluation of Stavrogin's character.

As already mentioned, Stavrogin's various ideologies at different stages of his life are echoed by his external doubles: Kirillov, Shatov, Petr Verxovenskij and others. Let us now turn to these in order to demonstrate that Stavrogin discards all of them, as empty shells, in his journey of purification to the goal of redemption.

**EXTERNAL DOUBLING**

In Dostoevskian criticism, discussions of Stavrogin's external doubles abound. For example, Wasiolek asserts that comprehension of Stavrogin may be gained by an examination of the many characters, who exhibit facets of his personality and/or teachings:

> We learn of him by these fragments of himself, which he has thrown off and which continue to live in the persons of others. Of these, Kirillov and Shatov are the most important.43

---

Shatov and Kirillov are most often cited as Stavrogin's doubles, because they exhibit philosophies garnered from his 'teachings.' Their ideologies are antithetical in the sense that Kirillov's beliefs are rational whereas Shatov's are emotional, grounded on a religious vision of Russia as a God-carrying nation which approaches, but does not quite reach faith in God. Significantly, their conflicting ideologies were expounded by Stavrogin at the same time, confirming that his fluctuations were particularly pronounced when he was in Europe. While imbuing Shatov with Orthodox-Populist messianism, Stavrogin infected Kirillov with Western atheistic ideas. Their beliefs are antithetical in the sense that Kirillov's ideology is based on rational - or "insane" - notions of self-deification, whereas Shatov's are emotional and irrational if judged by 'scientific' standards. One element unites them, however, and links them to their mentor: both of these disciples inherit the curse of ambiguity from their teacher.

It is Petr Verxovenskij, the most reprehensible of all Stavrogin's doubles, who realizes that Kirillov is intermingling two belief systems.

---

44 For example, Mochul'skij states "Two opposed states of consciousness, which coexisted in Stavrogin, were embodied in his disciples' personalities, and were experienced by them as personal tragedies." (Dostoevsky, 450)

45 Frank states that "In the case of Kirillov, this "devil" is the temptation to self-deification logically deriving from the atheistic humanism of Feuerbach. "The turning-point of history," Feuerbach had written in The Essence of Christianity, "will be the moment when man becomes aware that the only God of man is man himself."" ("The Masks of Stavrogin," 672)

46 Richard Peace states that "The fact that Stavrogin, at one and the same time, has implanted two entirely different systems of ideas in the minds of his two disciples makes much sense in terms of Russia's cultural history; for it was the figure of the Byronic nobleman, and the ideas behind the Decembrist movement, which ultimately gave birth in the forties to the two opposing factions of the Westernizers, and the Slavophiles." (156-157) Peace further asserts that "Shatov is the last word in Slavophilism; just as Kirillov is the ultimate in Westernism." (Dostoyevsky, 157)

47 Stavrogin's own evolution through these various ideologies will be discussed in Chapter 5; Stavrogin's Character Development.
--Это другой оборот дела. Мне кажется, у вас тут две разные причины смешались; а это очень неблагонадежно. (10:471)

Kirillov, on one hand, wants to create the new 'god-man,' but on the other hand, he refers to Christ's words, quoting him in the following passage:

- Всем узнавать; все узнают. Ничего нет тайного, что бы не сделалось явным. Вот Он сказал.
  И он с лихорадочным восторгом указал на образ Спасителя, пред которым горела лампада.
  - В Hero-то, стало быть, все еще веруете и лампадку зажгли; уж не на «всякий ли случай»?
  Тот промолчал.
  - Значит, по-моему, вы веруете, пожалуй, еще больше попа. (10:471)

Kirillov usurps Christ's words 'I will open the door and save.' Although Kirillov's suicide exhibits the atheistic, Promethian rejection of religion, his apostasy contains remnants of Christian eschatology. Kirillov's ambivalent ideology is actually a reflection of Stavrogin's own doubts and oscillations between belief and atheism. Whereas most critics see Kirillov as embodying the rational, atheistic side of Stavrogin, he, in fact, reflects Stavrogin's fluctuations and doubts about the divinity of Christ. The following passage elucidates not only Kirillov's veneration of Christ, but also the rejection of the possibility of his divinity:

-...Слушай: этот человек был высший на всей земле, составлял то, для чего ей жить. Вся планета, со всем, что на ней, без этого человека -- одно сумасшествие. Не было ни прежде, ни после Ему такого же, и никогда, даже до чуда. В том и чудо, что не было и не будет такого же никогда. А если так, если законы природы не пожалели и Его, даже чудо свое же не пожалели, а заставили и Его жить среди лжи и умереть за ложь, то стало быть, вся планета есть ложь и диаволов водевиль. Для чего же жить, отвечай, если ты человек? (10:471)

48 Notwithstanding Kirillov's demonic attempt to usurp Christ's position, his name, Aleksej Nilich, derives from St. Nilus and Cyril (Cyril's son). Passage, Character Names, 82.
The above passage illustrates Kirillov's ultimate rejection of Christ's divinity, although Christ is referred to as a 'miracle' which has never occurred before or after. Kirillov, however, believes that this 'miracle' of human perfection was wasted on a lie, betrayed by the laws of nature; Christ lived among lies and died for a lie, that of non-existent immortality. Ironically, in the Christian framework of the novel, it is Kirillov himself who dies for a lie in his demonic attempt to replace God.

Kirillov is not merely a disciple, a simple reflection of Stavrogin's ambiguities and vacillations; at times he seems to play the role of Stavrogin's teacher, thus inverting their relationship. In the sense that he assumes Stavrogin's role as teacher, he is displaying a facet of Stavrogin's personality, and, again, is his double. Kirillov, like Stavrogin, preaches conflicting ideologies to his "disciples" - to Stavrogin, rational atheistic tenets, to Fed'ka, the criminal, he preaches from the Apocalypse the transformation of all creatures during the second coming of Christ.

Just as Stavrogin's ambiguity is inherent in his name, so Shatov's name reflects vacillation (шатание). Although it is generally accepted that Shatov embraces a messianic Slavophilism and a movement of the 'men of the soil' (почвенники), his ultimate doubts are obvious. He wants to believe, but as yet, does not, replacing faith in God with nationalistic messianism.

Petr Verxovenskij is usually considered to be yet another of Stavrogin's doubles. In contrast to Kirillov and Shatov, whose ideologies exhibit positive elements, Petr Verxovenskij represents pure negativity and destruction, as well as vulgarity with all the nuances of пошлость. Petr is also distinguished from the other doubles because he does not exhibit any waverin in his convictions or in his plans. However, even Petr, like Kirillov, uses religious images when he outlines his plans. These are linked to unorthodox types of religiosity, for example, the Flagellants and Castrates, as well as to mytho-folklore. Petr uses these images of spiritual life to ensnare the people, not to free them. He
intends to create a mysterious leader out of Stavrogin; a leader with an aura of sacrifice who remains in hiding - a pseudo-god:

- Мы скажем, что он «скрывается», - тихо, каким-то любовным шепотом проговорил Верховенский, в самом деле как будто пьяный. - Знаете ли вы, что значит это слово: «Он скрывается»? Но он явится, явится. Мы пустим легенду получше, чем у скопцов. Он есть, но никто не видел его. О, какую легенду можно пустить! А главное - новая сила идет. (10: 325)

Petr's dreams of a legendary leader are accompanied by his plans for fire and destruction, in other words, revolutionary apocalypse: Мы пустим пожары...Мы пустим легенды...(10:325). The legendary leader which Petr intends to let loose upon society is merely part of a facade which he has erected to conceal his egoistic aspirations for power. His capacity for deceiving individuals and society is evinced by his skill in playing the necessary role in any given situation. In a discussion with Stavrogin, Petr in fact sets forth the advantages of role-playing as opposed to those of revealing one's true personality. In his case, of course, his own face in its total lack of individuality proves to be the best mask - a mask that hides nothing but emptiness:

Самое бы лучше совсем без роли, свое собственное лицо, не так ли? Ничего нет хитрее, как собственное лицо, потому что никто не поверит. Я, признаюсь, хотел было взять луарчак, потому что луарчак легче, чем собственное лицо; но так как луарчак все-таки крайность, а крайность возбуждает любопытство, то я и остановился на собственном лице окончательно. Ну-с, какое же мое собственное лицо? Золотая середина: ни глуп, ни умен, довольно бездарен и с луны соскочил, как говорят здесь благоразумные люди, не так ли? (10:175)

This passage establishes that Petr, like Stavrogin, is capable of presenting a false personality to the world. Petr's role-playing parallels the mask which conceals Stavrogin's inner world with the difference that in Stavrogin's case, duality is struggle, whereas in Petr's, it is duplicity. Petr's 'mask' is, furthermore, self-imposed, whereas Stavrogin's duality is imposed by forces
which almost break him. Thus, the mask-motif repeats the theme of the double and establishes a tie between the two characters, but in Petr's case there is nothing to hide but the void. It could be argued that Petr's baseness is so obvious that Stavrogin easily discards him. As Petr's discourse makes clear, it is he who considers Stavrogin his other half, rather than the other way around:

- Я-то шут, но не хочу, чтобы вы, главная половина моя, были шутом! (10:408).

Yet there is a substantial link in Petr's acceptance of his own lack of dignity, which forms a counterpoint to Stavrogin's fear of ridicule. True humility is neither shameless nor proud.

In addition to Shatov, Kirillov and Petr Verxovenskij, many other characters reflect aspects of Stavrogin's personality. Three characters, Lizaveta, Mavrikij and Stepan Verxovenskij, embody more positive facets of Stavrogin's personality than the doubles just discussed. Lizaveta and Mavrikij are directly linked to Stavrogin by their patronymics -- Nikolaevic, Nikolaevna. In addition, Stepan Verxovenskij was the tutor of all three.49 Stepan was closest to Stavrogin and influenced him most strongly in his youth. Some similarities between Stavrogin and Stepan have been pointed out by Richard Peace, who asserts that both are depicted as the sons of Varvara Stavrogina:

Similar attempts to narrow the gap between these two characters are observable elsewhere in the novel. Thus at the very beginning (Pt. I, Ch. I,3) we are told that Stepan Trofimovich had become the son of Stavrogin's mother ('flesh of her flesh') and at the end she herself pronounces after the death of Stepan Trofimovich that she has no son ('as though prophesying'). On this occasion she is insisting on adopting Stepan Trofimovich's 'woman' - Sofya - just as earlier she had suggested adopting Marya, the 'woman' of her own son. The sense of parity between the two figures is further strengthened by the fact that it is Stepan

49 It should be noted that Stepan was also the tutor of Shatov and Dasha and it may be posited that the tutor and all of those under his influence ultimately return to faith and experience Epiphanies.
Trofimovich who is chosen as a substitute for Stavrogin in the proposed marriage to Dasha; for another man's sins.  

The similarities between Stavrogin and Stepan extend to their roles as mentors of others and to their ideological stances. Early in the novel, Stepan expounds on the existence of God as a mere extension of man - as an entity that is aware of itself only through man (10:33) - and denies that he is a Christian. Stavrogin's teachings, as reflected through Kirillov's statements, exhibit a similar, but even more Promethean tendency. Stepan's "liberal theology" does include elements close to Christian faith. He praises noble self-sacrifice and will eventually practice his teaching in a truly Christian spirit after the Gospel reading and in the short time left to him before dying. Similarly, Stavrogin commends those who suffer and sacrifice all in his confession in the chapter "At Tixon's" and he, too, will eventually practice his theory in the humble spirit of Christianity. Thus early in the novel both Stepan and Stavrogin evince ambivalent beliefs and both eventually resolve their duality in a positive spirit. The following passage establishes a definite parallel between Stavrogin's dual consciousness and Stepan's situation:

Теперь я разбил себя пополам: там - безумец, мечтавший взлететь на небо, vingt deux ans! Здесь - убитый и озябший старик-гувернер ...chez ce marchand, s'il existe pourtant ce marchand...(10:412)  

The motif of cutting oneself in two, (разбить пополам) or more specifically, of separating oneself from one's insanity and false beliefs repeats the notion of Stavrogin's internal doubling and, at the same time, establishes the possibility that one may move away from the 'madman' within one's personality. If

50 Peace, Dostoyevsky, 155.

51 The repetition of the word merchant/marchand recalls Mar'ja's statement that Stavrogin's pretender is a merchant. Fed'ka's mention of the repentant merchant who is forgiven by the Bogorodica anticipates Stavrogin's forgiveness.

52 An interesting echo of the motif of division occurs in Mar'ja Lebjadkina's description of the shadow of a mountain which cuts an island in half, resulting in darkness and fear when the
Stepan is considered an external double of Stavrogin, his fate may be regarded as a commentary on Stavrogin's fate. In fact, all three characters, Lizaveta, Mavrikij and Stepan experience Epiphanies which echo the transformation in the Biblical epigraph; they anticipate Stavrogin's purgation of inner evil. Stepan Verxovenskij's spiritual regeneration is the most clearly defined, manifesting itself in his interpretation of the parable of the Gadarene swine. The close association between Stavrogin and Stepan suggests their parallel fate, thus offering support to my hypothesis of Stavrogin's spiritual transformation.

Lizaveta, like Stavrogin, had been tutored by Stepan Verxovenskij. The lessons included lessons about God, which she still remembers when she meets Stepan upon her return:

> En Dieu? En Dieu, qui est là-haut et qui est si grand et si bon? Видите, я все ваши лекции наизусть помню. Маврикий Николаевич, какую он мне тогда веру преподавал en Dieu, qui est si grand et si bon! (10:87)

At the end of the novel Liza senses that she will die soon and she is depicted as afraid of death. Moreover, she is depicted as half-mad and proud. The motif of the fear of death, of course, is related to Kirillov's thoughts on suicide, and thus to Stavrogin. The references to insanity and pride link Liza directly to Stavrogin. She could even be considered his "anima." Moreover, her feelings of guilt and her request to be killed parallel Stavrogin's readiness to die as evidenced by his statement to Petr to shoot him and his conduct during the duel with Gaganov's son. In the following passage Lizaveta rejects forgiveness,

---

53 It could be argued that Mavrikij, together with Dasha, belongs to a higher plane in the novel. Like her, he is "angelic" in his infinite patience and all-forgiving love. Charles Passage offers an opposing opinion about this character: "No Dostoevskian character named Mavriki / "Maurice" is sympathetic, and this one is in love with Liza." (Character Names, 80).
(as does Stavrogin in his final letter to Dasha), considering herself unworthy of forgiveness:

Маврикий Николаевич, друг мой, не прощайте меня, бесчестную! Зачем меня прощать? Чего вы плачете? Дайте мне пощечину и убейте здесь в поле, как собаку! (10:411)

Certain images in her statement emphasize the ties between herself and Stavrogin: she asks to be slapped, recalling the incident in which Shatov slaps Stavrogin. In fact, their actions, specifically in the undisclosed motivations for their actions, as disparate as they are, offer striking parallels. Both yearn for the sublime, but their actions are not consistent with their aspirations. Liza is described as follows:

В этой натуре, конечно, было много прекрасных стремлений и самых справедливых начинаний; но все в ней как бы вечно искало своего уровня и не находило его, все было в хаосе, в волнении, в беспокойстве. Может быть, она уже со слишком строгими требованиями относилась к себе, никогда не находя в себе силы удовлетворить этим требованиям. (10:89)

Liza, like Stavrogin, is proud but strives for redemption in humility. Significantly, she tortures herself in these endeavors, thus displaying the same redeeming capacity for dissatisfaction with the self that marks Stavrogin:

...она ужасно хотела и мучилась тем, чтобы заставить себя быть несколько доброй. (10:117)

This torturing of oneself, in an effort to improve oneself, 'to become good,' connects the two characters' search for self-torture and goodness. Neither of them is "lukewarm" since both struggle with moral indifference. This connection is also echoed in the phrase in the previous passage "with too strict demands on herself" (со слишком строгими требованиями относилась к себе). Lizaveta's moral aspirations, like Stavrogin's, are complicated by shifts of mood and eccentric actions. An explanation for Lizaveta's behavior is offered by Mavrikij, who states that Liza is actually loving when she hates and vice versa.
Из-под беспрерывной к вам ненависти, искренней и самой полной, каждое мгновение сверкает любовь и ... безумие ... самая искренняя и безмерная любовь и -- безумие! Напротив, из-за любви, которую она ко мне чувствует, тоже искренно, каждое мгновение сверкает ненависть, -- самая великая! Я бы никогда не мог вообразить прежде все эти... метаморфозы. (10:296)

This explanation suggests that Liza's actions function as a mask, hiding her true sentiments. Likewise, Stavrogin's actions do not disclose, but conceal his true motivations. Lizaveta's actions are also described as 'fits of uncontrollable hatred' towards Mavrikij; they are similar to those periods of control by Stavrogin's alter personality that have already been discussed above:

...а от какой-то особенной бессознательной ненависти, с которой она никак не могла справиться минутами. (10:260)

The most striking similarity between Liza and Stavrogin is that they are both accompanied by characters, Mavrikij and Dasha respectively, who represent the forces of Good and are virtually "angels." These two saintly characters are ever-supportive and ever-forgiving. In contrast to other figures in the novel, Dasha and Mavrikij are not ambivalent. Their actions consistently conform to their words. Furthermore, Liza's "angel," Mavrikij Nikolaevic is linked to Nikolaj by his patronymic, but he is a rival for Lizaveta. This detail of plot symbolizes that beyond sexual rivalry there is a struggle between the "demon" Stavrogin and the "angel" Mavrikij for Liza's soul. The situation could well be modelled on Lermontov's work The Demon, where a similar situation occurs. As in this poem, so here the "angel" carries off Liza's soul. On the other hand, the demon Stavrogin, unlike Lermontov's demon, repents. An incident which clearly brings out Mavrikij's angelic nature is the incident involving the holy fool Semen Jakovlevich and Mavrikij. At Liza's command, he kneels in front of the holy fool Semen Jakovlevich, accepting a humiliating position.
Significantly, the controversial Semen Jakovlevich orders Mavrikij to be anointed, perhaps recognizing Mavrikij's acceptance of humiliation (10: 260).\textsuperscript{54}

Because Liza in an earlier scene herself bows down to the ground in front of the desecrated icon, Mavrikij's kneeling offers a variation on her action (10:253) and recalls Mar'ja Lebjadkina's statement that Stavrogin, if he so chooses will bow down to God. It is significant that the two characters who are linked to Stavrogin by their patronymic (Nikolaevich, Nikolaevna) both kneel, which suggests the possibility that Stavrogin will also express his spiritual longings in this way. Although he does not actually kneel in the course of the novel, he bows his proud neck when hanging himself.

In addition to the devices of internal and external doubling, Dostoevskij expands the aura of ambivalence surrounding Stavrogin by means of descriptions of the fluctuating opinions and reactions of other characters to him. Dolinin discusses this form of indirect characterization:

\begin{quote}
Dostoevsky depicts Stavrogin in a particular manner that he apparently never again used with such exclusivity: Stavrogin is presented \textit{indirectly}, not in terms of the emergence of his spirit but of his "emanations," primarily in terms of his effect on others...\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

The 'effect on others' is evident either in the absorption of ideology already discussed or in a spontaneous reaction. Typically, the reactions to Stavrogin are ambivalent or shift abruptly. Even Stavrogin's mother, Varvara, far from displaying constant maternal affection, demonstrates ambivalent emotions towards her son. Early in the novel, her feelings towards him are described as follows:

\textsuperscript{54} It is interesting to note that when Liza ordered Mavrikij to kneel before the holy fool, she was in a 'fit' припадок. The same expression - припадок- is used when Stavrogin expresses his sincere feelings towards Tixon.

\textsuperscript{55} Dolinin, "Stavrogin's Confession' With Reference to the Composition of \textit{The Possessed}," 96.
Страсть ее к сыну началась со времени удачи его в петербургском обществе и особенно усилилась с той минуты, когда получено было известие о разжаловании его в солдаты. А между тем она очевидно боялась его и казалась в нем словно рабой. Заметно было, она боялась чего-то неопределенного, таинственного, чего и сама не могла бы выразить, и много раз неприметно и пристально приглядывалась к Nicolas, что-то соображая и разгадывая... и вот - зверь вдруг выпустил свои когти. (10:38)

Her ambivalent emotions towards Stavrogin - adoration and fear - are mirrored in the reactions of female society the provincial town:

Все наши дамы были без ума от нового гостя. Они резко разделились на две стороны - в одной обожали его, а в другой ненавидели до кровопролития; но без ума были и те и другие. Одних особенно прельщало, что на душе его есть, может быть, какая-нибудь роковая тайна; другим положительно нравилось, что он убийца. (10:37)

The dual (but in this case equally "insane," без ума) reactions of society to the enigmatic Stavrogin fluctuate throughout the novel. After Stavrogin's 'pranks,' there is an outburst of hatred. The narrator suggests that the hatred is occasioned by Stavrogin's pride. (10:40) Later in the novel, after the duel with Gaganov's son, during which Stavrogin refused to aim at his opponent, public opinion towards Stavrogin changes dramatically for the good:

Впечатление, произведенное во всем нашем обществе быстро огласившееся историей поединка, было особенно заметно тем единодушием, с которым все поспешили заявить себя безусловно за Николая Всеволодовича. Многие из бывших врагов его решительно объявили себя его друзьями. (10:231)

This change of opinion was precipitated by Julia von Lembke's statement that no one had understood Stavrogin's motivations during the incident in which Shatov slapped Stavrogin. Because Stavrogin had not responded to this insult, a general feeling of criticism had arisen against Stavrogin, including the implication that he was a coward. Julie von Lembke's comment:
Her statement offers a plausible explanation of the events which society understands. Of course, society never understands Stavrogin's true motivations, his own code of behavior, since it is capable of grasping only the reasoning based on its own stratified structure. Mistaken as it is, society now approves of Stavrogin:

Все скандальное и сплетническое, все мелкое и анекдотическое разом отодвинуто было на задний план; выдвинуло лице новое, в котором все ошиблись, лицо почти с идеально строгостью понял. Оскорблённый насмерть студентом, то есть человеком образованным и уже не крепостным, он презирает обиду, потому что оскорбитель - бывший крепостной его человек. В обществе шум и сплетни; легкомысленное общество с презрением смотрит на человека, битого по лицу; он призирает мнение общества, не дочисшего до настоящих понятий, а между тем о них толкующего. (10:233)

To us, the above passage is important, because it emphasizes the appearance of a new Stavrogin. It recalls the narrator's statement about Stavrogin embodying a 'new idea' when he returned to the town and displayed indifference to public opinion. He had acquired a 'new face,' and his actions seem to correspond to the Christian tenet of turning the other cheek.56 Ironically this possibility fulfills the implication of the above passage - here is a 'new' man misunderstood by a society which interprets all according to its own materialistic and worldly aims. Instead of Christian humility, it discerns only class consciousness.

56 As has been mentioned in the introduction, Stavrogin's actions may also be interpreted as a parody of Christ's.
The narrator often attempts to interpret Stavrogin's motivations, commenting on his actions in detail. Since the narrator is fundamental in establishing the aura of duality and evil which accompanies Stavrogin, it is necessary to pause and examine the range of his knowledge; how much insight has he been given by his creator, Dostoevskij? The chronicler of events is certainly not omniscient. In certain passages of the novel, his omniscience is strictly limited; indeed, his very presence is considerably diminished or even nullified. Many conversations are not overheard, but apparently related to him, but some of the conversations - for example - the conversation between Tixon and Stavrogin reverts to an impartial third person narration. There is no interference by the narrator in their immediate conversation, although the narrator comments directly on the confession which Stavrogin intends to divulge to the public. The narrator, who has no insight into Stavrogin's search for a burden, obscures the religious overtones of the novel. Victor Terras comments that the narrator is limited and is unable to assimilate the spiritual implications inherent in the text:

The loftier and metaphysical meaning of the events that he so vividly describes is beyond him. When the text reaches out toward the metaphysical and the tragic, Dostoevsky relieves his narrator and uses a different voice, a shift that some critics have taken for violation of the artistic integrity of the text.\textsuperscript{57}

The narrator's subjective point of view not only overlooks the spiritual basis for Stavrogin's actions, but perpetuates the idea of the real Stavrogin being evil by statements such as 'the beast unsheathed his claws':

\begin{quote}
Но прошёл несколько месяцев, и вдруг зверь показал свои когти. (10:37)

... - зверь вдруг выпустил свои когти. (10:38)
\end{quote}

It is through the narrator's limitations that the dual nature of Stavrogin's character is emphasized since his bewilderment accentuates the alternate sides.

of Stavrogin's personality. Moreover, Stavrogin's real personality is further obscured by the rumors which the narrator repeats and attempts to explain. The narrator's subjective perception of Stavrogin's personality, especially those aspects associated with his demonic side, are well established before Stavrogin actually appears in the novel. The narrator's initial, ironic presentation of Stavrogin as a superior soul is immediately juxtaposed with the narrator's account of rumors of Stavrogin's unsavory and cruel actions. The narrator deems Stavrogin a *brether*, a rabid duelist. According to the rumors, Stavrogin had been associating with the poorest and most criminal inhabitants of St. Petersburg.

In addition to internal and external doubling, and the interference of the narrator, the device of intertextual comparisons increases the aura of ambiguity associated with Stavrogin. The narrator's subjective perception of Stavrogin is most pronounced in his attempts to explain Stavrogin's actions by means of comparison or allusion to fictional and non-fictional extra-textual persons such as Stenka Razin and Lermontov. The narrator's comments about Stavrogin's similarities to Lermontov (and to his hero Pechorin) and subtextual allusions to *The Demon* amplify the theme of duality. The intertextual allusions enrich the theme of duality in the novel, but as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, they also underscore and predict the themes of self-sacrifice, transformation and resurrection, thereby indicating that Stavrogin's double - his demon - will be overcome. But first we turn to an examination of the authoritative discourse in the novel, a discourse which indisputably stresses the possibility of religious transformation. Stavrogin's spiritual searching must be considered in this context in order to support my hypothesis of his ultimate redemption.
CHAPTER II
THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD

I believe that the main and most fundamental spiritual quest of the Russian people is their craving for suffering-perpetual and unquenchable suffering - everywhere and in everything.¹

Dostoevskij drew inspiration for his creation of Stavrogin from numerous sources, including West European and Russian literature, history, current events, and journalistic polemics, but he successfully synthesized these disparate elements into an aesthetic whole. Numerous critics have addressed the issue of intertextual dialogue in Dostoevskij's works. For example, Nina Perlina's recent monograph Varieties of Poetic Utterance, Quotation in The Brothers Karamazov exhaustively addresses the function of quotation in The Brothers Karamazov from a perspective which is applicable to Dostoevskij's poetics as a whole.² A brief examination of her study will be beneficial to the revaluation of Stavrogin, both in terms of approach and support for my theory of his redemption.

Nina Perlina's approach, which is based on the dialogic theories of Mixail Baxtin and Kiril Taranovsky, asserts that references to other texts carry various levels of authority, according to a hierarchical system of quotation. According to Perlina, the "indisputably authoritative word in The Brothers

¹ The Diary of a Writer, 36

*Karamazov* is the word of the "Holy Writ." (20) The function of Biblical quotation is as follows:

Quotations from the Gospels are located on the highest hierarchical level in the novel. In a sense, they stand above the novel's poetic system, yet govern and organize it. (70)

Perlina distinguishes between accurate citation and mis-quoted references to the Bible; the first characterizes a protagonist as positive, the latter elucidates spiritual bankruptcy or "alienation from the Truth and from Christian brotherhood. (29) The word of other spiritual teachings, for example, apocryphal writings and hagiography, are included in Perlina's definition of the authoritative word, at least in regard to *The Brothers Karamazov*. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, all discourse is subordinated to Zossima's, who represents the authoritative Christian word:

Within Dostoevsky's hierarchy all characters are equalized as protagonists in the sense that the opportunity to assimilate and to accept the highest truth of Zossima's teaching and the truth of Holy Writ is equally open to them. Yet all these characters are located on different slopes and on different levels of Dostoevsky's hierarchical ladder, depending on their proximity to the central idea of Zossima's teaching, which is in its turn an authoritative and righteous interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. (22)

As Perlina explains, the relation of the authoritative word in *The Brothers Karamazov* to other intertextual dialogue is one of either ascension or descent, or both simultaneously. This is consistent with the generally recognized notion that the dialogic function of the intertextual word may have 1) one (or more) positive function, not only as a reinforcement of themes and motifs in the text, but also as a means of positive characterization 2) one (or more) negative function, such as a parody of a theme or motif, or negative characterization, or 3) incorporate positive and negative functions simultaneously. The latter, dual (or even multiple) function occurs when the intertextual word enters into the dialogue on more than one level of a multi-layered text. The multiple
dialogic function is easily discerned in the parodic word. Perlina discusses the inherent ambivalence embodied in the parodic word:

Structurally, parodic distortions are all ambivalent. Bakhtin defines ambivalence as the simultaneous capacity "to deny and to affirm, to destroy and to give birth." Since parody possesses this binary quality it does not necessarily annihilate the initial meaning of a word. Parody always semantically supercharges it, by introducing overtones opposed to the word's original meaning. (28)

Perlina's approach, based as it is on Baxtin's interpretation of the ambiguity inherent in parody, not only acknowledges the detractive aspect of parodic elements, but recognizes that the parodic word recovers the positive meaning of the original word:

Dostoevsky as an author could easily imply a serious notion even when he employed parody. His readers were trained differently and could only see the descent of a serious statement into parody, not the restoration of a full-weighted concept from its parodic shell. (65)

The use of parody in Besy is obvious and has been well documented. Our investigation will draw on the above concept of the polyphonic nature of parody, as well as on the assertion that religious writings are the authoritative word in Besy.

My discussion here concentrates on those intertextual (in the widest sense of the term) dialogues which both anticipate and reinforce the themes of resurrection, renewal and transformation. As will soon become apparent, many of the subtexts of Besy depict death or suicide as an act not to be

\[3\] For example, the parody of Turgenev and his works in the scene of Karmazinov's reading.

\[4\] The texts included in this study, although manifold, by no means are meant as a complete intertextual analysis of The Possessed. The commentary to the Academy edition, especially volume 11, which was useful to this dissertation, affords a myriad of other allusions.
automatically condemned, but rather as one which may have a multiplicity of causes, or as a transition to the beyond or as an act of ultimate self-sacrifice.

**BIBLICAL DISCOURSE**

In By the authoritative religious word from the Gospels is foregrounded since it is already found in the second epigraph to the novel which organizes the whole subsequent text. This epigraph, the Biblical passage about the Gadarene swine offers a possible Christian solution to the situation of the first epigraph. The parable of the swine, as interpreted by Stepan Verxovenskij, links the radicals to insanity, also indicating that their ideas are dangerously infectious. In Dostoevskij's world, loss of faith is, ultimately, loss of reason, of that reason which is open to emotion and compassion. In either case the solution, as suggested by the authoritative word in the second epigraph, is Christian and therefore non-rational or metaphysical, or, if rational, then in a higher sense. The Biblical epigraph clearly lays the foundation for positive transformations in the novel. As already indicated, Stavrogin belongs to those personages who do cleanse themselves of their demon, or even demons.

In addition to the Biblical epigraph, many other subtexts anticipate the symbolic cleansing and transformation surrounding Stavrogin's death. The subtexts also reinforce the imagery of self-sacrifice. Already the Gadarene passage embodies a hint at the theme of self-sacrifice, since the swine request that the devils enter them, thus cleansing the man of the devils and then throwing themselves into the abyss. Self-sacrifice as introduced into the novel by the intertextual word is often presented as a means of atoning for sins, either one's own, or the sins of another. When sacrifice extends to death, for example, in an emulation of Christ's kenosis, death is not a finality, but rather a transition and a positive action, even when it takes the form of suicide.
TIXON'S DISCOURSE

Bishop Tixon is the protagonist who most directly introduces the authoritative word into Besy. His word consists of both his verbal discourse with Stavrogin and his actions. The essence of either type of his discourse is humility and forgiveness. It has been argued that by the expurgation of the chapter "At Tixon's" the monk's authoritative word disappeared from the novel. The essence of his teachings, the kenotic ideal, however, flows throughout the remainder of the text. It will be demonstrated that the humility and forgiveness of his word develop into themes which have been previously overlooked.

Tixon's discourse is a continuation and amplification of the Biblical discourse established by the second epigraph. At first, his word is limited to responses to the word of Stavrogin, which, as demonstrated in chapter 1, is actually two separate discourses. The first part of the chapter "At Tixon's" (that is, the discussion before Stavrogin presents Tixon with his 'confession'), consists of Stavrogin's questions to Tixon about devils, miracles, and degrees of faith. In his responses, Tixon addresses the issue of the existence of devils, a central motif in both epigraphs, on two levels; on the specific level in relation to Stavrogin and on the general level as a manifestation of temptation in the world. On the specific level, Tixon comments that Stavrogin's hallucinations might be an illness. This statement links Stavrogin's insanity to his estrangement from God. Tixon continues by stating that devils do exist but are understood in various ways: «Бесы существуют несомненно, но понимание о них может быть весьма различное». (11:9) On the general level, of course, devils may be considered the temptation to sin or the representatives or symbols of evil.

The discussion about devils is immediately followed by Stavrogin's paraphrase of the Biblical passage about moving mountains by faith alone.5

5 - Ведь сказано, если верешь и прикажешь горе сдвинуться, то она сдвинется...впрочем, вдог. Однако я все-таки хочу полобописывать: сдвинете вы гору или нет? (11:10) Although the editors to the Academy edition cite the pre-text as Mark 2:23, it is Mark 11:23 (12:320).
The issue of miracles actually is a continuation of Stavrogin's previous question about temptation, since miracles were a temptation of the devil which Christ rejected. Out of this topic arises the question of faith, introduced by Stavrogin, who asks whether or not Tixon believes in God. Stavrogin requests Tixon to read the passage from Revelations, the letter to the angel of the church at Laodicea. (Rev., 3:14-17) Stavrogin introduces the topic and indicates his concern with the issue of lukewarmness. (11:11)⁶ Tixon's response is unorthodox; he asserts that the true atheist, or the "cold" man, stands on the next to the highest rung closest to God. He thus seems to count Stavrogin among the "cold." In any case, this answer indicates the difference between the concerns of Stavrogin and those of Tixon: Stavrogin repeatedly introduces Biblical texts which stress chastisement or punishment, whereas Tixon counters with responses, not always based on Biblical discourse, which stress the all-forgiving nature of God and Christ.

To be able to forgive oneself is the sole aim of Stavrogin's quest, including his visit to Tixon.⁷ This is why he brings up every shred of Biblical evidence that may preclude forgiveness in the hope that Tixon may discard the obstacle. And so he does. The pattern is unmistakable: Stavrogin quotes passages from the Bible which deny forgiveness - Tixon reassures him of forgiveness. Invariably it is Stavrogin who introduces the recriminating Biblical passages and equally invariably Tixon responds with the Christian word of forgiveness. In the following interchange Stavrogin admits his search for both forgiveness and immeasurable suffering:

---

⁶ This passage occurs later in the novel, introduced by Stepan Verxovenskij. (10:497)

⁷ Cf. the story about the woman who killed her husband in The Brothers Karamazov. Just as Tixon advises Stavrogin not to publish his confession, Zossima advises the woman not to inform anyone of her crime and to forgive herself. In a discussion of The Brothers Karamazov, Wasiolek comments on the importance of forgiving oneself: "At the first impulse to see oneself as less sinful than anyone, the will and the self spring to birth, bringing with them separation, hardness, and the endless duels of Dostoevsky's world. This is why the hardest thing - and the most beautiful - is not to forgive but to accept forgiveness. To forgive is to imply that one has the right to forgive, but to accept forgiveness is to acknowledge one's need of forgiveness." (Dostoevsky, The Major Fiction, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964, 177).
- Слушайте, отец Тихон: я хочу простить сам себе, и вот моя главная цель, вся моя цель! - сказал вдруг Ставрогин с мрачным восторгом в глазах. Я знаю, что только тогда исчезнет видение. Вот почему я и ищу страдания безмерного, сам ищу его. Не путайте же меня.
- Если веруете, что можете простить сами себе и сего прощения себе в сем мире достигнуть, то вы во все веруете! - восторженно воскликнул Тихон. - Как же сказали вы, что в бога не веруете?
Ставрогин не ответил.
- Вам за неверие бог простит, ибо духа святого чтите, не зная его. (11:27)

Tixon states that if he believes he will be able to forgive himself. When Stavrogin does not answer to the question whether he believes in God, Tixon states that God will forgive his lack of faith because he believes in the Holy Spirit. This pattern reaches its first climactic point in the following passage, a continuation of the exchange between them. Stavrogin refers to the passage in Matthew 18:6, which warns men against harming children (Если соблазните единого от малых сих...11:28). Tixon responds by assuring Stavrogin of forgiveness, whether or not he is capable of forgiving himself:

- Кстати, Христос ведь не простит, - спросил Ставрогин, и в тоне вопроса послышался легкий оттенок иронии, - ведь сказано в книге: «Если соблазните единого от малых сих» - помните? По Евангелию, больше преступления нет и не может [быть]. Вот в этой книге!
Он указал на Евангелие.

8 See also Mark 9:42-45. It is significant that both of these passages continue with the admonition to cut off that part which offends: "If your hand or your foot is your undoing, cut it off and fling it away; it is better for you to enter into life maimed or lame, than to keep two hands or two feet and be thrown into the eternal fire..." (Matthew 18:8) In view of our hypothesis about the existence of Stavrogin's evil double, this type of Biblical exhortation suggests another path to salvation - cut out the evil. On one level this refers to the triumph over one's ego, over pride. An extreme interpretation of this approach, which involves Stavrogin 'cutting off' his body and life so that he could sin no more, is conceivable, yet hardly consistent with Dostoevskij's outlook on the possibility of forgiveness for repentant sinners. This theme of cutting off that part which offends appears in Stepan Verxovenskij's idea of cutting off his past life and starting anew. A variation of this resonance of the authoritative word is introduced by Tixon in his statement that one must conquer oneself.
As is evident in the above passage, Tixon asserts that even if Stavrogin does not believe in Christ’s forgiveness, he will be forgiven for the simple reason that he is fully cognizant of his sin and suffers from it. Tixon explains that this concept of forgiveness, while inexplicable to man, conforms to a Divine system:

...ибо нет ни слов, ни мыслей в языке человеческом для выражения всех путей и поводов Агнца, «донде же пути его въявь не откроются нам». (11:23) 

This assertion of forgiveness for sinners, the act of Divine Grace, introduces into the novel a discourse which transcends the merely human concept of justice. This Biblical discourse recalls Christ’s parable about the workers in the vineyard, in which those workers who worked only a part of the day received the same pay as did those who worked all day. Christ’s parable indicates that divine justice eclipses the system of earthly fairness.

Tixon’s assertion of forgiveness includes even those who deny Christ and is foregrounded in the following passage which parallels Christ’s conversation with Peter (John 21:15). In this exchange (in which, as has been demonstrated in chapter 1, the ‘true’ Stavrogin is speaking), he states that he loves Tixon and Tixon responds that he also loves Stavrogin:

---

9 According to the Academy edition, no identifiable source has been found for this passage (12:321). But the essence of this passage is similar to that of Romans 11:33-34 and to other Biblical passages which emphasize the inscrutable ways of God.

10 Cf. Ivan Karamazov’s refusal to accept the laws of Divine forgiveness for those who inflict suffering on the innocent children.

11 The relationship between the two passages was pointed out to me by Father Matejic.
- Довольно - оборвал Ставрогин. - Это для середки, это для равнодушных, так ли? Знаете, я вас очень люблю.
- И я вас, - отозвался вполголоса Тихон. (11:11)

In the relevant Biblical passage Christ asks Peter three times if he loves him. The passage indicates Christ's forgiveness and reinstatement of Peter after his denial of Christ.

Tixon's religion of forgiveness does not imply exoneration of guilt. It is not easy to be forgiven, the sin is not "cancelled" by the mere readiness to repent. Actual repentance and humility must follow. So, instead, there is acknowledgment of responsibility and acceptance of suffering:

Но христианство признает ответственность даже и при всякой среде. Вас умом господь не обделел, рассудите сами: коль скоро вы в силах умственно поставить вопрос: «ответствен я или не ответствен за дела мои?» -- значит, непременно уж ответственны: «Невозможно не прийти в мир соблазнам, но горе тому, чрез кого соблазн приходит». (12:116)

Here, Tixon repeats the passage earlier introduced by Stavrogin (Luke 17:2) about temptation and Tixon stresses the fact that a Christian must be responsible for his actions. Tixon senses that Stavrogin has recognized the full measure of his guilt and that he is suffering, whereas many who have committed similar crimes live in peace with their conscience, considering their actions merely a normal part of their youth:

Что же до самого преступления, то и многие грешат тем же, но живут со своей совестью в мире и в спокойствии, даже

---

12 The theme of taking on someone else's sins is parodied in a scene between Mar'ja and Shatov, in which Mar'ja reiterates Lebjadkin's statement that he is not guilty - he is paying for someone else's sins: -Как хозяин-то схватил его, как дерет по комнате, а мой-то кричит: «Не виноват, за чужую вину терплю!» Так, веришь ли, все мы как были, так и покатились со смеху... (10:118) Lebjadkin's refusal to accept the guilt for others' sins marks his character as spiritually bankrupt.
Tixon recognizes that Stavrogin’s plans to publish his ‘confession’ are an attempt at performing a feat of self-punishment and self-inflicted disgrace for which he is not yet ready. He concedes that in general this type of self-precipitated punishment is a true Christian impulse, but he discerns that Stavrogin’s attempt is marred by contempt for his readers and by anger, and therefore is not yet a true Christian endeavor. It is important to note that Tixon admits that even by this means Stavrogin will emerge victorious if only he humbles himself:

О, не верьте тому, что не победите! - воскликнул он вдруг почти в восторге, - даже сия форма победит (указал он на листки), если только искренно примете заупрежение и плавание. Всегда кончалось тем, что найпопозорнейший крест становился великою славой и великою силой, если искренно было смирение подвига. Даже, может, при жизни вашей уже будете угтешены! (11:27)

Tixon’s assertion that the most humiliating cross results in the greatest praise and strength empowers the motif of the cross and its related theme of self-sacrifice; imbuing them with authority. Although Stavrogin’s attempt at penance by means of his self-humiliation lacks the necessary humility, Tixon does not discount the possibility that Stavrogin in the future may perform a feat of self-sacrifice in a spirit of sincere humility. In fact he states that even Stavrogin’s confessional endeavor to call disgrace upon himself would be a great Christian feat, if it were motivated by humility:

---

13 As has been mentioned, Tixon understands that Stavrogin’s heart has been mortally wounded by his feelings of guilt: -Документ этот идет прямо из потребности сердца, смертельно уязвленного... (11:24)
Вы моё мнение знаете: подвиг ваш, если от смирения, был бы величайшим христианским подвигом, если бы выдержали. Даже если и не выдержали, все равно вам первоначальную жертву считает господь. Все сомнется: ни одна полумысли не пропадут даром. Но я вам предлагаю взамен сего подвига другой, еще величайший того, нечто уже несомненно великое... (11:29)

The verb выдержать is used here in the meaning "to endure," supporting the notion that Stavrogin is fighting a battle and that if only he can endure to the end he will be victorious. Consistent with his word of forgiveness, Tixon adds that even if he cannot endure the struggle and the humiliation, Stavrogin will nonetheless be forgiven because of his efforts.

In the following passage Tixon recognizes Stavrogin's search for martyrdom and advises him to first discard the impulse to sacrifice himself for the time being. Stavrogin must first battle his pride and his devil: he must 'disgrace' them, and then he will become the victor:

- Вас борет желание мученичества и жертвы собою; покорите и сие желание ваше, отложите листки и намерение ваше - и тогда уже все поборете. Всю гордость свою и беса вашего посрамите! Победителем кончите, свободы достигнете... (11:29)

Here Tixon intimates that if Stavrogin overcomes his pride and his demon, he will be victorious. Tixon does not discount the validity of Stavrogin's wish to sacrifice himself; in fact he is pinpointing the obstacle which would mar such a feat. He foresees a great feat, but he warns that it may occur after yet another sin:

- Нет, не после обнародования, а еще до обнародования листков, за день, за час, может быть, до великого шага, вы броситесь в новое преступление как в исход, чтобы только избежать обнародования листков! (11:30)

Without speculating about to which of Stavrogin's subsequent sins Tixon is referring, we focus on Tixon's prediction of 'a great step,' a feat which it is
tempting to assert will be the fulfillment of Stavrogin's search for humiliation, his suicide.

Another aspect of Tixon's discourse, as already mentioned, is his behavior, his symbolic gestures, which we may regard as a "translation" of the Biblical word into the language of action. An essential aspect of his behavioral code is to recognize every manifestation of humility, however minute. Thus he bows to Stavrogin and humbles himself before him, since he can discern a flickering of sincere humility when Stavrogin admits that if Tixon forgave him, his suffering would be much ameliorated:

- Ответьте на вопрос, но искренно, мне одному, только мне: если б кто простил вас за это (Тихон указал на листки), и не то чтоб из тех, кого вы уважаете или боитесь, а незнакомец, человек, которого вы никогда не узнаете, молча, про себя читая вашу страшную исповедь, легче ли бы вам было от этой мысли или все равно?
  -- Легче, -- ответил Ставрогин влодголоса, опуская глаза. Если бы вы меня простили, мне было бы гораздо легче, - прибавил он неожиданно и полушепотом.
  -- С тем, чтоб и вы меня также, -- проникнутым голосом промолвили Тихон.
  -- За что? что вы мне сделали? Ах, да, это монастырская формула? (11:25-26)

That Tixon's actions are to be seen as the authoritative word of the Bible is also evinced by the second climactic moment in his interview with Stavrogin. When Tixon learns of Stavrogin's heinous sin against Matresha, his immediate human reaction is one of anger and revulsion. But he transcends his impulse and activates his divine discourse of forgiveness in the above passage. Thus, humility is the sine qua non.

Tixon represents the highest level of spirituality in the novel and yet he considers his faith to be incomplete (не совершенно, 11:10). This admission in no way discounts the validity of his discourse but merely elevates to his level those characters who search, doubt and continue to search. Stavrogin terms him an eccentric and a юродивый, and much in his depiction is unorthodox
Indeed. He is not universally revered and, in fact, is even considered heretical by other members of the clergy, for example, by the archimandrite:

Говорили, что отец архимандрит, человек суровый и строгий относительно своих настоятельных обязанностей и, сверх того, известный ученостию, даже питал к нему некоторое будто бы враждебное чувство и осуждал его (не в глаза, а косвенно) в небрежном житии и чуть ли не в ересь. (11:6) 14

Tixon's 'heresy' lies in the fact that he preaches the forgiveness and humility associated with the non-possessors (несяжатели) and the "cult of humility and self-abnegation."15 Furthermore Tixon is one of those few who recognize that there is no impassable borderline even between saint and sinner. Tixon considers himself a sinner, perhaps even more so than Stavrogin:

-- За вольная и невольная. Согрешив, каждый человек уже против всех согрешил и каждый человек хоть чем-нибудь в чужом грехе виноват. Греха единичного нет. Я же грешник великий, и, может быть, более вашего. (11:26)

In the above passage, Tixon formulates the Orthodox tenet that each is responsible for the guilt of all.16 This tenet is the foundation of the Orthodox notion of the collective (соборность) and is the impetus for Tixon's humility.

---

14 It is clear from the description of the archimandrite as stern, strict and judgmental that he belongs to the Josephite trend of Orthodoxy.

15 Billington points out that two spiritual trends existed in Russia: the kenotic cult of humility and self-abnegation, and the militant, judgmental Josephite force. (The Icon and the Axe, 65) These two trends in many ways overlap with the disputes between the possessors and the non-possessors. The non-possessors represent an ascetic movement in monastic life associated in large part with Nil Sorsky.

16 Dostoevskij considered this aspect vital to man's salvation: "There is only one means of salvation, then take yourself and make yourself responsible for all men's sins, that is the truth, you know, friends, for as soon as you sincerely make yourself responsible for everything and for all men, you will see at once that it is really so, and that you are to blame for every one and for all things." (Dostoevsky's Occasional Writings, trans. by David Magarshack, 384)
Through the activation of his language of forgiveness, Tixon underscores his affinity with Stavrogin and with all sinners. 17

The author emphasizes this awareness of his protagonist by establishing parallels between Stavrogin and the monk. For example, many consider Tixon insane (чутъ ли не сумащевшый, 11:6). In addition, he suffers from convulsions (судороги, 11:6) which may be compared to Stavrogin's fits (припадки, 11:11), mentioned in the same chapter. He is described as weak and absent-minded, just as is Stavrogin. Stavrogin remarks to Kirillov that he is weak, and he refers to his absent-mindedness in the chapter "At Tixon's" (Я так рассеян, 11:7). Tixon's possessions demonstrate an incongruous mixture of the spiritual and the mundane, a dichotomy that also characterizes Stavrogin. No wonder both men elicit diametrically opposed reactions as spiritual leaders, evoking either hatred or adoration. These similarities are so marked in the chapter "At Tixon's," that it is possible to see Tixon as one of Stavrogin's doubles, for he has not only negative doubles, but also positive doubles.

In conclusion, Tixon's word of forgiveness embraces the kenotic aspects of suffering, humility, acceptance of one's own sin and of the sins of others, and self-sacrifice. Before addressing the amplification of these aspects in the novel, we turn to the apocryphal word of forgiveness. It is significant that Tixon's authoritative word of forgiveness is echoed in the apocryphal discourse introduced into the text by Fed'ka, a character whose criminal position in the social hierarchy might obscure his word of forgiveness.

**APOCRYPHAL DISCOURSE**

Apocryphal discourse in *Besy*, like the Biblical word, represents the authoritative word and is located on the ascending, or positive slope of the hierarchy of polyphonic discourse. In *Besy* the apocryphal word centers on the

---

17 To underscore the importance of this theme, we point out that Chapter 3 of Part One is entitled "Another's Sins" (Чужие Грешни).
image of the *Bogorodica* and supports the themes of forgiveness and Divine Grace. The image of the *Bogorodica* occurs throughout the text. Liza kneels in front of an icon of the Mother of God (10:253) and Mar'ja states that the Mother of God is the hope of man (*упование рода человеческого*, 10:116). A brief reference to the holiday associated with the Mother of God subtly evokes the theme of intercession. The holiday *Pokrov*, celebrated on October first, (Old Style calendar), is mentioned by Petr in a conversation with Karmazinov. Petr informs Karmazinov that everything (i.e. the revolutionary actions) will be over by *Pokrov*:

--К началу будущего мая начнется, а к Покрову все кончится,  
- вдруг проговорил Петр Степанович. (10:289)\(^{18}\)

Notwithstanding the fact that it was common to mark time by means of religious holidays, it is tempting to assert that the action of the novel will end on *Pokrov*, but on a different note than the one expected by Petr; with the *Bogorodica*’s intercession.

The most explicit reference to her intercession occurs later in the novel.\(^{19}\) Fed’ka, the convict, recounts a story about the Mother of God which introduces the apocryphal word directly into the text. The essence of his story is the *Bogorodica*’s forgiveness of sinners:

- Я, видишь, Петр Степанович, говорю тебе это верно, что обидел; но я только зычуг поснимал, и почем ты знаешь, может, и моя слеза пред горнилом всевышнего в ту самую минуту преобразилась, за некую обиду мою, так как есть точь-в-точь самый сей сирота, не имея насущного даже

\(^{18}\) This reference to the holiday carries other semantic overtones. Because the word *-pokrov*- also means a cover, especially a cover for a grave or a hearse-cloth, the use of this word anticipates the deaths at the end of the novel, especially Shatov’s murder.

\(^{19}\) In view of our examination of the judgmental Biblical passages introduced by Stavrogin, it is important to note that in apocryphal stories, the Mother of God saves man both from the perils of the temporal world and from the cruelty of God in the afterlife: ... люди верили - и верили глубоко, - что Мария может спасти не только от козней дьявола, но и от жестокости самого бога... (*Protiv neba - na zemle*, O. Chajkovskaja. Moscow: Detskaja Literatura, 1966, 80).
Fed’ka’s story of the miraculous intervention of the Mother of God resembles apocryphal legends, but apparently has no such source, perhaps being grounded in the sub-culture of criminal folklore. As in many apocryphal stories, the Mother of God pleads with God for forgiveness on behalf of repentant sinners. The story of intervention just quoted above is significant on many levels of the novel. Since Mar’ja Lebjadkina refers to Stavrogin as a shopkeeper, the above story of forgiveness for a merchant is linked to Stavrogin, anticipating his final repentance and forgiveness. Most importantly, the story about divine intercession reinforces the theme of forgiveness in the novel, a forgiveness that will come after apocalyptic death and destruction. Although Fed’ka’s story may be derived from such "unorthodox" sources as criminal lore, it offers a valid discourse. We may assume that even Fed’ka, this murderer and convict, will be saved by the only spiritual gift he has - his faith in the mother of God.

In addition to introducing the word of forgiveness through the Bogorodica’s intervention, Fed’ka also repeats apocalyptic discourse.

---

20 According to the editorial comments to the 1972- edition of Dostoevskij’s works, the source of this story is unknown. (12:318)

21 It should be noted that along side his faith in the Mother of God Fed’ka believes in a judgmental and punishing God; he considers the low price he received for stolen goods to be evidence of God's punishment for murder.
APOCALYTIC DISCOURSE

Direct allusions to the Apocalypse abound in Besy and are reinforced by the preponderance of apocalyptic imagery. The function of apocalyptic imagery in Besy is multiple; as a device, this imagery forms a backdrop which intensifies the chaos and destruction on the plot level. Apocalyptic imagery also emphasizes the sinful nature of society and of the characters, especially the demonic aspects associated with Stavrogin, the Beast. As an extension of the authoritative word apocalyptic discourse stands above the text and reinforces the themes of a final spiritual transformation and cleansing, themes which are initially established by the Biblical epigraph about the Gadarene swine.

Dostoevskij critics have noted the importance of apocalyptic imagery. For example, W. J. Leatherbarrow acknowledges the preponderance of apocalyptic imagery in Besy. He asserts that this imagery foreshadows the final judgement:

If the dream of the Golden Age looks wistfully back to the dawn of man and his innocence, then Dostoevsky’s apocalyptic vision acknowledges his sinful nature and anticipates the terrible judgement that stalks him. Paradise awaits the chosen, but in the next world, not in this.22

This interpretation of the function of apocalyptic imagery, correct as far as it stands, neglects the fact that the destruction and chaos are the catalyst to the cleansing and ultimate rebirth promised in the conclusion of the book of Revelations. The positive resolution implied by the introduction of this discourse must not be overlooked. One critic, Roger Cox, clearly associates the apocalyptic discourse not only with judgement, but also with forgiveness:

---

But, paradoxically, if a man participates in the sufferings of Christ, in the apocalyptic moment he is not only judged, but forgiven;...23

In one direct reference to the Book of Revelations the future transformation of all of creation is cited. Fed’ka, the convict repeats Kirillov’s teachings of future apocalyptic judgement and transformation:

Алексей Нильич, будучи философом, тебе истинного бога, творца создателя, многократно объяснил о сотворении мира, равно и будущих судеб и преображения всякой твари и всякого зверя из книги Апокалипсиса. (10:428)

It is significant that the apocalyptic word is associated with Kirillov. His teachings, inherited from Stavrogin, must be considered as God-denying, therefore heretical. His statements about the historical periods of man's progress, from the gorilla to man, from man to God, testify to his rebellious Prometheanism.24 The apocalyptic word is misused by Kirillov, who blasphemously intends to become the first Man-God, thereby establishing a new order of man. He employs the concept of transformation (преображение), which also signifies the transfiguration, but without divine Grace. He has succumbed to a heretical temptation, attempting to replace God. His use of the apocalyptic word contrasts with the true spirit of Christianity.

Shatov also articulates apocalyptic discourse, likewise inherited from Stavrogin. His version is, however, opposed to Kirillov's interpretation and is imbued with national fervor:

Это есть сила беспрерывного и неустанныго подтверждения своего бытия и отрицания смерти. Дух жизни, как говорит

23 This “interrelation of judgment and forgiveness” is discussed by Roger L. Cox in connection to The Idiot, but it also is applicable to Besy. (Between Heaven and Earth, N. Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969, 179).

24 In this sense, Kirillov’s apocalyptic word may be compared to that of Ivan, which is interpreted by Perлина to be an apostasy. (Varieties, 90).
Shatov's national Slavophilism is similar to that of N. Ja. Danilevskij (1822-1885), the author of the book *Russia and Europe*, except that Shatov renounces the pseudo-scientific aspect which he terms despotlic:

Polunauka - это деспот, каких еще не приходило до сих пор никогда. Деспот, имеющий своих жрецов и рабов, деспот, пред которым все преклонилось с любовью и с суеверием, до сих пор немыслимым, пред которым трепещет даже сама наука и постыдно потакает ему. (10:199)

Shatov states that all his words are repeated from Stavrogin's discourse with the exception of the words about 'half-science.' Stavrogin asserts that Shatov has distorted his words, 'reduced them to a mere attribute of nationality': «Уж ондно то, что вы бога низводите до простого атрибута народности» (10:199). Shatov disagrees, believing his theory to be the 'new, last and only word of renewal and resurrection': «совершенно новое слово, последнее слово,

---

25 Editor's comments to the Academy edition assert that Danilevskij had been a Fourierist, a member of the Petrashevskij circle and then a Slavophile. (12:233-4) Dostoevskij's letter of march, 1869 to N. N. Straxov praises the first installments of Danilevskij's book, stating that they coincide with his own. (Selected Letters of Fyodor Dostoyevskij, 302-303). Billington notes that the character of Danilevskij's Pan-slavism included the notion of a "violent, irreconcilable conflict" between the Slavic and Roman-Greco worlds. (The Icon and the Axe, 396). Catteau, however, comments that Dostoevskij considered Danilevskij not sufficiently messianic. (Dostoyevsky and the Process of Literary Creation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 84).

26 This could refer to P. A. Bessonov's pseudo-scientific works. Catteau notes that Bessonov's commentaries irritated Dostoevskij. (Dostoevsky and the Process of Literary Creation, 82)
The essence of Shatov's word is not that of the Bible, but of a new movement within the Slavophile camp. The Pan-Slavophilism of Shatov is marred by the lack of faith. His discourse is heretical, although of a more subtle type than Kirillov's. Irving Howe in his article "Dostoevsky: The Politics of Salvation" points out their differences:

Both are appalled by their intellectual isolation, Shatov developing a Christian heresy to overcome his and Kirilov lapsing into a gentle indifference to escape from his. Shatov believes in a God who is a man, Kirilov in a man who will be God. ....Shatov desires a second reformation to cleanse Christianity of its bourgeois defilement, Kirilov yearns to become the Christ of atheism...(63)

The discourse of the New Testament book of Revelations emphasizes the cleansing of sin from society and the final judgement. The final judgement and threats of punishment for unrepentant sinners overshadows the promise of transfiguration and renewal predicted in the final chapters of the last book of the Bible. This judgmental discourse is ameliorated in the novel Besy by the all-forgiving word of Tixon. The discourse of forgiveness is repeated by Shatov when he admonishes Stavrogin to kiss the earth and beg forgiveness: (-Целуйте землю, облейте слезами, просите прощения! 10:202)29

---

27 Shatov differentiates his theory from that of the older generation of Moscow Slavophiles, perhaps reflecting Dostoevskij's own criticism of the Moscow Slavophiles.

28 Joseph Frank, in "The Masks of Stavrogin" asserts that "Shatov's ideas are very largely taken from N. Danilevsky's book Russia and Europe, which had recently expounded a new "scientific" and Pan-Slavic version of Slavophilism. Dostoevsky's enthusiasm for Danilevsky's predictions of the future triumph of an impending, world-wide Slavic civilization did not prevent him from noticing that Danilevsky's ideas lacked a religious foundation. Moreover, Dostoevsky had also come round to considering the overtly religious Old Slavophilism of Kireevsky and Khomiakov, despite its emphasis on Orthodoxy, as an artificial, Western-imported substitute for the genuine simplicity and spontaneity of the people's faith." (675).

29 The action of kissing the earth and drenching it with tears is a symbol of repentance in Dostoevskij's works. The fact that Mar'ja Lebajdina, the cripple, performed this rite, indicates the authority of her discourse. (10:116) For a discussion of this action in terms of its
Shatov's final actions are also linked to the theme of forgiveness. When his wife, Mar'ja, returns to him, pregnant with Stavrogin's child, he is capable of forgiving her all her past:

Не вот это единственно существо, две недели его любившее (он всегда, всегда тому верил!), - существо, которое он всегда считал неизмеримо выше себя, несмотря на совершенно трезвое понимание ее заблуждений; существо, которому он совершенно все, веcе мог простить (о том и вопроса быть не могло, а было даже нечто обратное, так что выходило по его, что он сам перед нею во всем виноват), эта женщина, эта Марья Шатова вдруг опять в его доме, опять пред ним...(10:434-5)

Shatov's apocalyptic discourse ends in his action of total forgiveness, an action devoid of any judgmental sentiments. In his role of Joseph, Shatov readily assumes the parental position, in essence, accepting responsibility for the sins of Stavrogin. In contrast to Shatov's actions, we turn to another character, who at one point refuses to accept the sins of another, yet ultimately emerges as a bearer of the authoritative word.

**STEPAN VERXOVENSKIJ'S WORD AS AUTHORITATIVE DISCOURSE**

Stepan Verxovenskij's discourse offers an intriguing variation on the authoritative word in the novel. His discourse is at first located on the descending slope of the hierarchical system but finally concurs with the authoritative discourse of Tixon. Since his word ultimately coincides with the word of forgiveness, and since it is Stepan who introduces the Biblical passage of the second epigraph into the text, Stepan must be considered as a carrier of the true authoritative word.30 As such, his early discourse must be contrasted

---

30 It is generally recognized that Dostoevskij transferred the exegesis of the Biblical passage to Stepan after he was forced to exclude the chapter "At Tixon's."
to the true authoritative word of forgiveness. Through his words and actions he introduces early in the novel many concerns touched on in the later, and ultimately expurgated, chapter "At Tixon's." The magnitude and pervasiveness of these concerns, including forgiveness and responsibility for one's own sins and for the sins of other's, is, unfortunately, often overlooked because of the comical register in which they are presented.

Initially, Stepan's discourse is comically marked as hypocritical both by his words and by his actions. Although the narrator asserts that he is a man of forgiveness, the example cited to support this assertion in effect negates it. Stepan, offended by the narrator's remark that his literary *poema* was inoffensive and innocuous, was rather cool to the narrator. Eventually after two months Stepan forgave the narrator, a sign which the narrator considers exemplifies the extreme goodness of Stepan's heart:

Тогда же он и со мной примирился, что и свидетельствует о чрезвычайной доброте его тихого и незлопамятного сердца.
(10:10)

Stepan's 'capacity for forgiveness,' which was preceded by two months of coldness towards the narrator, is presented in such an ironical tone that its importance is easily ignored. But since the theme of forgiveness is immediately continued in connection to Varvara Stavrogina in the third part of chapter 1, the theme of forgiveness, notwithstanding its ironical presentation, begins to increase in importance. Varvara is described as having the highest virtues and praise of her by both Stepan and the narrator is excessive. She, the 'purest' being, but unfortunately, she is incapable of forgiveness. The narrator remarks that her intractability was remarkable: Злопамятна же была до невероятности.
(10:16). The narrator then relates two stories, which need not be examined here, about her relationship with Stepan in which she states that she will never forgive him for his actions. Her statements, which are repeated almost verbatim, indicate her unforgiving nature: «Я вам этого никогда не забуду!» (10:17), «Я никогда вам этого не забуду!» (10:18).
Stepan Verxovenskij is directly connected to the issue of responsibility for another's sins. Stepan becomes offended and even hysterical at the thought that his marriage to Dasha is being arranged to cover up the sins and the indiscretions of Stavrogin. He refuses to take responsibility for another's sins. Thus his discourse as translated into his actions reveals his spiritual bankruptcy at this point in the novel.

As concerns the issue of self-sacrifice, Stepan Verxovenskij aligns himself with Belinskij and the men of the forties who were ready to sacrifice all for the people:

«...вот были люди! Сумели же они любить свой народ, сумели же пострадать за него, сумели же пожертвовать для него всем и сумели же в то же время не сходить с ним, когда надо, не повторствовать ему в известных понятиях. Не мог же в самом деле Белинский исказать спасения в постном масле или в редьке с горохом!...» (10:33)

As is true with many impulses to self-immolation, the sentiments are marred by the lack of faith in God, a God who Stepan asserts exists only in his own consciousness (10:33). Shatov refutes the validity of these 'noble' sentiments, as does Stepan's parasitical position (приживающихся, 10:26) in Varvara's household. Thus the language of Stepan's actions exposes the barrenness of his verbal discourse. His discourse, however, effectively introduces and sustains themes such as self-sacrifice and another's sins.

In addition his word reinforces the motif of self-immolation: for example Stepan, after arguments with Varvara was prepared to crucify himself for his ingratitude - Но вот что случилось почти всегда после этих рыданий: назавтра он уже готов был распять самого себя за неблагодарность...(10:13) In such examples the spiritual semantics are erased, yet in light of the narrator's comments about one's ability to be transformed by suffering, the comments in retrospect increase in value because of Stepan's final conversion. Similarly, the image of crucifixion is repeatedly mentioned in various contexts, also forming a background motif. The use of this image occurs in absolutely secular, ironic
and at times in indeed comic contexts. In one mention of crucifixion, Stepan, in an imaginary conversation with his son Petr, asks him if he would sacrifice himself like Christ?

-Помилуй, крива ему, да нужто ты себя такого, как есть, людям взамен Христа предложить желаешь? Ий рит. Ий рит beaucoup, ил рит trop. У него какая-то странная улыбка. У него матери не было такой улыбки. Ий рит toujours. (10:171)

Here the motif of self-sacrifice, the emulation of Christ, is uttered during one of Stepan's hysterical outbursts. The comic effect of such effusions diffuses the spirituality associated with Christ's kenosis, but only on one level of the novel. Since the exclamation is followed by the repeated (actually seven repetitions, if the strange smile is included) mention of laughter, which refers to his son's sarcastic manner, the reader may on another level, begin to associate the mention of laughter with Hugo's The Man Who Laughs.31 Since throughout the novel Stavrogin is also marked by references to smiles - often sarcastic - Stepan's statement functions not only in its direct meaning, but also on other, Aesopian levels. Here the motif of kenosis is directly followed by an allusion to Hugo's laughing man who commits suicide. The subtle juxtaposition of the motif of kenosis with that of suicide indicates that suicide may be a means of self-sacrifice.

The notion of man's need for suffering is mentioned by Stepan Verxovenskij when he describes a conversation with his son Petr. According to Stepan he told his son that unhappiness is necessary to man:

- Но понимаешь ли, крива ему, понимаешь ли ты, что человеку кроме счастья, так же точно и совершенно во столько же, необходимо и несчастье! Ий рит. (10:172)

---

31 The inter-textual impact of this novel will be addressed in the next chapter, Polyphonic Discourse.
The transformative power of suffering is addressed in *The Possessed* in the narrator's ironic comments about Stepan, who was distressed by his son Petr:

Я узнал только одно, что он несомненно и глубоко оскорблен был давней на первой встречей с Петрушей именно давниешими обьявлениями. Это было глубокое и настоящее уже горе, по крайней мере на его глаза, его сердцу. Было у него и другое горе в ту минуту, а именно язвительное собственное сознание в том что он сподличал; в этом он мне сам потом признавался со всей откровенностью. А ведь настоящее, несомненное горе даже феноменально легкомысленного человека способно иногда сделать солидным и стойким, ну хоть на малое время; мало того, от истинного, настоящего горя даже дураки иногда умели, тоже, разумеется, на время; это уж свойство такое горя. А если так, то что же могло произойти с таким человеком, как Степан Трофимович?

Целый переворот - конечно, тоже на время. (10:162-3)

In this instance, of course, Stepan Verxovenskij does not overtly change his life, even for 'a time.' Nonetheless, the image of transfiguration is established and anticipates the later Epiphanies in the novel.

In contrast to his early empty discourse, Stepan's discourse gains authority during his speech at the festival. He states that forgiveness is the final word:

Я пришел с оливкою ветвью. Я принес последнее слово, ибо в этом деле обладаю последним словом, - и мы помирились.
- Долой! - кричали один.
- Тише, дайте сказать, ....вопила другая часть...
- Messieurs, последнее слово этого дела - есть всепрошение.
Я, отживший старики, я объявляю торжественно, что дух жизни ветв по-прежнему и живая сила не иссякла в молодом поколении. Энтузиазм современной юности так же чист и светел, как и наших времен. Произошло лишь одно: перемещение целей, замещение одной красоты другой! (10:372)

Stepan launches into a discussion of the superiority of art over science. This attempt to convert the audience is rudely rejected and ridiculed. Stepan's
attempts to reconcile them and preach forgiveness are ultimately negated by his own reaction to the disrespectful tone of the crowd and he curses them all ("проклинаю," 10:374). At this point his words of forgiveness do not correspond to his emotional reaction - he does not yet embody his ideal.

When Stepan does set out on his 'pilgrimage, his word of forgiveness becomes a refrain. In the following passage Stepan addresses Liza, stating that it is necessary to forgive:

Nous sommes tous malheureux, mais il faut les pardonner tous. Pardonnons, Lise, и будем свободны навеки. Чтобы разделяться с миром и стать свободным вполне -- il faut pardonner, pardonner et pardonner! (10:411)

Here Stepan's discourse is fully imbued with the highest spiritual meaning and his discourse becomes the authoritative word in the text, in spite of its macaronic linguistic form. It is significant that here Stepan associates forgiveness with a break from the world. This association intimates that Stavrogin's break with the world may also reflect forgiveness.

Stepan's discourse includes Biblical passages from Luke and Revelations. The passage from Revelations to the church of the Laodiceans is introduced into the text by Stepan's companion and Stepan intends to demonstrate its validity. It is in this scene that he requests his companion to read the Biblical passage from Luke which is the epigraph to the novel. Not only does he introduce the Biblical passage into the text, he also interprets it and admits his guilt. This act of accepting responsibility for the sins of others elucidates his

---

32 Similarly, in the following passage Stepan's words link the theme of forgiveness to the motif of separation, literally division - razdelat'sq - from the worldly and to ultimate freedom. His statement that he will cut himself in pieces to achieve freedom - Теперь я разрубил себя пополам: там - безумец, мечтавший взлететь на небо, vingt deux ans! Здесь - убитый и озябший старик-губернёр ...(10:412). This statement is significant because the part which Stepan discards is the insane dreamer. The part which is searching for salvation and which is preaching forgiveness is the 'dead' or 'murdered' (убитый) and cold (озябший) part. In other words it is the 'dead' part which will achieve freedom.
Epiphany. Stepan's discourse on forgiveness is paralleled by Mavrikij's statement that no one may judge another:

-Ни кто вам теперь не судья, - твердо произнес Маврикий Николаевич, - прошли вам бог, а я ваш судья меньше всех! (10:411)

Thus, throughout the entire novel, Stepan Verxovenskij is closely connected to the theme of forgiveness. Initially, he epitomizes the hypocritical stance of a man whose actions belie the true spirit of forgiveness. As the novel progresses, his actions and words reflect the spirit of the authoritative discourse. Stepan's discourse and its reflection as evinced in his development offer a vivid commentary on and example of the authoritative voice in the novel.

In conclusion, the theme of forgiveness permeates the novel on so many levels, from the blasphemous to the sublime, that it comes to dominate the novel thematically. This view stands in direct contrast to the prevailing approach, that is that Besy is perhaps the darkest, most depressing novel in Dostoevskij's oeuvre.\(^{33}\) The primacy of the theme of forgiveness transcends the earthly manifestations of death, culminating in a crescendo of personal Epiphanies, all of which exemplify the regenerative powers of absolution.

Dostoevskij's own Christianity, as has been well documented, does not fully conform to the strictures of Eastern Orthodox Christianity.\(^{34}\) Moreover, the most positive religious figures in Dostoevskij's works tend to represent a position outside the main current of organized religion; Zossima, Tixon and

\(^{33}\) For example, Chizhevsky states "This gloomy picture is relieved only by a vague belief in the spirit of the Russian people. Dostoevskij has no positive views to offer in The Possessed: he is negatively didactic." (79) But Chizhevsky also discounts the spiritual aspect of this novel: "All in all, the religious motif in The Possessed is weaker than in any other novel of Dostoevskij." (History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature. vol. 2, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1974, 78).

Alesha Karamazov all endorse and practice an exculpation for the sinner which approaches the theodical position of apocatastasis. Apocatastasis, also termed Universalism, propounds the doctrine that all of mankind will be brought back to and reconciled with God.\textsuperscript{35} This doctrine advances the theory that all men will find salvation, through the merciful forgiving nature of God. The implication is that the mericful nature of Dostoevskij's God will forgive even "the greatest sinner."\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} This doctrine stems from Origen (185-254). Meyendorff discusses the doctrine as follows: "Byzantine theologians seldom devote much explicit attention to speculation about the exact fate of souls after death. The fact that the Logos assumed human nature as such implied the universal validity of redemption, but not the apokatastasis, or universal salvation, a doctrine which in 553 was formally condemned as Origenistic. Freedom must remain an inalienable element of every man, and no one is to be forced into the Kingdom of God against his own free choice; the apokatastasis had to be rejected precisely because it presupposes an ultimate limitation of human freedom--the freedom to remain outside of God." (Byzantine Theology, Meyendorff, New York: Fordham University Press, 1983, 163).

CHAPTER III
POLYPHONIC DISCOURSE

Among the various strata of polyphonic discourse in *Besy*, the discourse of the alien word of other authors belongs to those highly relevant to our topic. Of particular relevance for our purposes is the discourse with the authors of 'noble sentiment' - with the 'beautiful souls' (*Schöne Seelen*) of idealistic humanism. It is a discourse which offers a backdrop that supports the themes of forgiveness, self-sacrifice and transformation. Previously, much attention has been given to other levels of inter-textual discourse, including that discourse which sets the tenor of chaos and destruction in the novel. This type of discourse includes the apocalyptic imagery and the imagery established by the first epigraph, a quote from Pushkin's 1830 poem "Besy," with its imagery of those lost in a whirlwind and led astray by demons. The imagery of the whirlwind does indeed permeate the novel *Besy* and aesthetically symbolizes the political unrest activated by the men of the forties and by the radicals a generation later. But it will not be discussed here in detail since this discourse is well established already. Much polyphonic discourse in the novel functions as a means to enrich individual characterizations. For example, E. Loginovskaja in "Motiv demonizma v Besax Dostoevskogo," writes that these intertextual references serve as signals which offer a means of understanding Stavrogin's complex characterization:

Помимо прямого смысла ряда текстовых координат (биография, образ жизни, портрет), для раскрытия образа Ставрогина очень важно проявление в смысле сигналов, содержащихся в тексте романа, но выводящих за текст, стоящих на грани текста и контекста и активизирующих последний.¹

Again, we will not here expound further on Stavrogin's demonism, but concentrate on discourse which reinforces the themes of cleansing and expiation. There is one exception to our focus - we will briefly touch on the Lermontovian discourse, which reinforces the demonic image of Stavrogin and establishes a parallel between the young Stavrogin and the superfluous man.

Lermontov and his Heroes

Lermontov's word is introduced directly into the novel by the narrator's comment that Stavrogin evinces an anger (гнев) more intense than that of Lermontov. (10:165) Lermontovian imagery, especially the demonic kind, serves to reinforce the discourse established in the Pushkinian epigraph. In addition, the allusions to Lermontovian subtexts serve to expand Stavrogin's characterization. Thus the critic E. Loginovskaja notes that Stavrogin's ambiguous character links him to a succession of demonic figures in literature and especially to Lermontov's Demon (1829-39). In addition, she notes that the intertextual allusions to Lermontov and his heroes introduce into the novel a series of symbols associated with demonism which in their turn are connected to the struggle between good and evil.

Таким образом, двоичность символов и их трансформация - при всем несогласии условий, в которых она происходит (от наблюдений провидящей Хромоножки до полных самобичевания признания самого Ставрогина) - раскрывает самую сущность образа героя: противоречивость его натуры, зло, кроющееся в душе человека, не лишенного иных задатков, явно стремящегося к доброму.2

Loginovskaja considers Stavrogin a new type of hero, the fullest expression of a succession of heroes of the previous era now doomed to extinction. This approach certainly coincides with the viewpoint of the narrator, who suggests the similarities. However, Stavrogin's inner search for a burden, the inner

2 Loginovskaja, 41-42.
torment caused by his conscience, and his inner demon all echo the literary heritage of the lives of the saints and the lives of the fathers. In these spiritual writings, a different perspective on demonism occurs: in place of the romantic demon 'of sadness,' unromantic and nasty demons torment the fathers and lead them astray from their ascetic paths. These demons, which may personify evil in general or a man's specific weaknesses, are traditionally depicted as separate entities, which even take over the will of an innocent man. Stavrogin is depicted on one level in this spiritual tradition, in which evil is separate, and on another level as the Byronic hero, who is incapable of true enthusiasm for either good or evil. In Stavrogin's case it is the spiritual traditional line which ousts the romantic demonic line of Byronism and Lermontovism.

The search for suffering is a manifestation of Stavrogin's higher ideals and noble sentiments. We now turn to those texts which reinforce and support the cluster of themes associated with noble sentiments: suffering, transformations and self-sacrifice.

Pushkin's poem Жил на свете рыцарь белый

In Perlina's system, Pushkin's word is "both an authoritative force and an authoritative aesthetic concept" (20-21). Pushkin's authoritative discourse, which is first introduced into Besy in the epigraph, is expanded through the poem Жил на свете рыцарь белый (1829). This poem, which has an important function in the novel, intertwines with theme of intercession of the Богородица and its correlation - forgiveness. The poem also amplifies the motif of the knight and the theme of 'noble sentiments' and honor.

Pushkin's poem supports the theme of intercession because the Mother of God, the Богородица, rescues her knight. This echoes Fed'ka's apocryphal story of her intervention for a sinner. Pushkin's poem also is inter-connected with the motif of the knight. The first reference to knights in the novel occurs in the narrator's discourse about Stepan Verxovenskij and his unfinished, but published, study of knights:
The attitude of the narrator is ironic, as indicated by the expression 'most profound' for example, but it must be remembered that irony does not negate the original discourse. Irony here serves to emphasize the shallowness of the representation in comparison to the original word. Moreover, the reference has ambivalent functions: it marks Stepan's character, as does his lyrical work, as a romantic idealist, and it underscores the dichotomy between his ideals and his actual life.³

Apparently Stepan's study touches on the causes of 'unusual' or 'extraordinary' feelings of moral nobility in knights of another era. What the causes for their extraordinary spiritual nobility were is not revealed in this passage, but the passage arouses in the reader the expectation of a disclosure of motivations later in the novel. Since the motivations for Stavrogin's actions, including his suicide, are singularly absent in the novel, it is significant that Stavrogin is linked to the image of the knight. The motif of the knight is associated with Stavrogin early in the novel during a discussion about whether Stavrogin, like Prince Harry, will transform himself:

- Петр Степанович рассказал нам одну древнюю петербургскую историю из жизни одного принудника, - восторженно подхватила Варвара Петровна, - одного капризного и сумасшедшего человека, но всегда высокого в своих чувствах, всегда рыцарски благородного...(10:155-156)

³ In the notes to the 1972 edition, it is noted that the subject of Stepan's study is an ironic hint at the article about French knights of the Middle Ages written by T. N. Granovskij "Rycar' Bajard" (12:277-8). This, of course, confirms that Stepan's ideological heritage is that of his prototype Granovskij.
Here, the word 'noble' is linked to Stavrogin by Petr's 'Petersburg story,' which paints Stavrogin in a noble light. The references to a 'capricious and insane man' indicate that the story directly pertains to Stavrogin. Here, the mention of knightly honor does not directly allude to Pushkin's poem, but the Pushkinian pre-text is exposed later in the novel by Stepan when he quotes the following words from "Жил на свете рыцарь бедный":

...полон чистою любовью,
Верен сладостной мечте...(10:266) 4

Stepan quotes these lines while planning to leave Varvara's home and patronage. He does not leave, however. Therefore, the Pushkin poem reinforces Stepan's ridiculous situation. His inability to act upon his noble impulses emphasizes the disparity between his actions and ideals. 5 But, since he eventually will leave Varvara's house, and live up to his noble sentiments, the Pushkinian subtext predicts his transformation and the fulfillment of his noble aspirations. 6 Given the parallels between Stavrogin and Stepan mentioned in Chapter 1, it is pertinent to note that both characters are initially unable to correlate their actions to their ideals. By analogy, Stepan's transformation indicates Stavrogin's ultimate transformation.

The motif of a 'noble transformation' is repeated in a bastardized form by the buffoon Lebjadkin, who announces to Stavrogin that he has transformed

---

4 In Stepan's emotional effusion immediately preceding the quoted passage, the central poetic images of the novel converge: human weakness, misunderstood motivation, the wind, death, atonement for sins. (The image of mist and the action of covering are also connected with Pokrov, the intercession of the Mother of God).

5 As an aside, the governor, von Lembke is also depicted as a "ridiculous knight": "...слабительные звания докладных речей рыцарски деликатного, но ослабленного умением человека" (10:360), who kneels before and sacrifices himself for his wife: выражение сущности, принявшего так и быть, себя в жертву, чтобы только угодить высшим делам своей супруги...(10:361).

6 Peace rightly points to Stepan's adoption of the role of the knight true to his lady, Varvara, and asserts that his association with this knightly motif indicates that he is "about to become the bearer of a great message" (Dostoevsky, 165)
himself. In the following comic scene, Lebjadkin says he is living like an ascetic (like the monk Zosima), and acts as if he had taken the vows of a noble knight because he refrains from drinking or carousing for a few days.

- Вот-с, - указал он кругом, - живу Зосимой. Трезвость, уединение и нищета - обет древних рыцарей.
- Вы полагаете, что древние рыцари давали такие обеты?
- Может быть, сбился? Увы, мне нет развития! Все погубил!
- Верите ли, Николай Всеволодович, здесь впервые очнулся от постылых пристрастий - ни рюмки, ни капли! Имею угол и шесть дней ощущаю благоденствие совести. Даже стены пахнут смолой, напоминая природу. А что я был, чем я был?
- Ночью дую без ночлега,
- Днем же, высунув язык, - (10:207)

Lebjadkin manages to parody two images which are among the most idealized in Dostoevskij's world -- the wise elder and the knight. In addition, Lebjadkin quotes two lines of a poem by Vjazemskij, managing to distort the essence of the poem. Certain images simultaneously increase the absurdity of Lebjadkin's assertion that he has reformed; obviously he does not embody the ideals he mentions. Nevertheless he too -- by his very parody of it -- upholds the ideal of the knight serving a sacred ideal. It could also be argued that his victimization --- his murder along with his sister --- Mar'ja, lends him a certain sacrificial aura. He is almost vindicated as his sister's knight.

The motif of the knight expands in the novel into a theme, associated with duty and moral courage. Karmazinov makes the following statement about honor and the revolutionaries' lack of honor, which he views as a positive trait:

«Сколько я вижу и сколько судить могу, вся суть русской революционной идеи заключается в отрицании чести. Мне нравится, что это так смело и безбоязненно выражено...Русскому человеку честь одно только лишнее бремя. Да и всегда было бременем, во всю его историю. Открытым «правом на бесчестье» его скорее всего увлечь можно. Я поколения старого и, признаюсь, еще стою за честь, но ведь только по привычке. Мне лишь нравится
старые формы, положим по молодущему; нужно же как-нибудь дожить век.» (10: 288)

In addition to marking Karmazinov’s character as a negative panderer to fashionable trends, the above passage has a more general significance. Petr relates Karmazinov’s comments about the right to act dishonorably to Stavrogin, who responds enthusiastically, saying that these are "golden words." Stavrogin's affirmation of Karmazinov's statement is to be seen in terms of scornful irony. Stavrogin finds Karmazinov's words despicable, thus displaying a chivalric attitude. He proves to be a Prince -- an aristocrat of the spirit, who cannot but despise Karmazinov base pandering to the revolutionary lack of principles. Stavrogin is, in fact, related to the knight in Pushkin's poem. The similarities are especially pronounced in the stanza of Pushkin's poem where the evil spirit wants the knight's soul.

Между тем как он кочнулся,
Дух лукавый подоспел,
Душу рыцаря сбился
Бес ташить уж в свой предел:

In the above stanza, a demon (бес) intends to drag the knight's soul to his domain. The demon does not succeed because the Mother of God intercedes on his behalf. We venture the theory that the very same thing happens at the time of Stavrogin's suicide. Other similarities between the knight and Stavrogin are apparent. Both die without taking the sacraments. Neither pray to God; the knight prays to the mother of God, and according to Tixon, Stavrogin believes in the Holy Ghost. In Russian spiritual thought, the Holy Ghost is often given a

7 The statement 'right to dishonor' has its own pre-text: Обыгрывается фраза из первого «Издания Общества Народной расправы»: Мы из народа, со шкурой, прохваченной зубами современного устройства, руководимые ненавистью ко всему ненародному, не имеющим понятия о правственных обязанностях и чести по отношению к тому миру, который ненавишим и от которого ничего не ждем, кроме зла» (from the editor's comments in the Academy edition, 12:304)

8 Ogarev's 1864 poem Новая полурьбина в русской литературе is a pre-text which links Karmazinov's prototype Turgenev to Pushkin's poem Жил на свете рыцарь белый. Ogarev's poem criticizes Turgenev's lack of honor and offers a unifying background for my discussion.
feminine persona. In any case, Stavrogin certainly adores the Eternal Feminine, and is saved by it, both by his angel Dasha and by Mar'ja, the Russian spirit.

Thus the pre-text Жил на свете рыцарь бедный underscores the themes of salvation and Divine Grace, while simultaneously continuing the motif of a struggle against demonic elements. The image of the mother of God is introduced into the novel by the references to knights which occur throughout the novel. These references include the Don Quixotian theme of a man living by his ideals, fighting his own battles which are totally misunderstood by the world. There is something Quixotic about Stavrogin's quest, however perverted initially.

Pecherin's Торжество Смерти - (Celebration of Death, or Triumph of Death)

Vladimir Pecherin (1807-1885) was a minor Russian romantic poet who emigrated to the West and not only adopted Catholicism but even entered a Catholic monastery. His poem Торжество Смерти (1837-1838) was published by Herzen in Русская потаённая литература XIX столетия (1861). The Triumph of Death is an important subtext with multiple functions: it offers one proto-text for Stepan Verkovenskij's allegorical poem cum verse play, which is, in its turn, a symbolic prefiguration of the entire plot of Besy. Both texts (i.e. the pre-text

---

9 The Holy Ghost is often connected with Sophia, who signifies wisdom.

10 It should be noted that Pecherin at times criticized the Catholic church for its expansion of Papal authority, a criticism consistent with Dostoevskij's tirade against the Catholic church.

11 Herzen's volume of poetry, published in London in 1861 included works which were prohibited by censorship. Pecherin's poem is also found in Пoезия 1820-1830-х годов, т.2. Leningradskoe Otdelenie, 1972, (468-486) under the title Pot-pourri, или чего хочешь, того просишь. The date of composition offered in this edition is 1833.

12 In the notes to the thirty volume collection of Dostoevskij's works, other texts are cited as pre-texts: Granovskij's "Scene from the Life of Kaliostro," Timofeev's mystery plays "Last Day" and "Life and Death." (12:279)
and its parodied version in Besy), reinforce the opposition of good vs. evil in cosmic terms and both anticipate the ultimate triumph of good.

Stepan's literary work is described by the narrator as a verse play, typical of the 1830's, thus marking Stepan as a member of the romantic older generation, associated with Herzen, Granovskij and Pecherin. There are numerous similarities between Stepan's play and Pecherin's. Both works include choruses: for example, Pecherin's chorus of people from the past, present and future (326) corresponds to Stepan's chorus of people 'who have not yet lived, but would like to' (11-12). Pecherin's hymn to death finds an echo in Stepan's 'chorus of occult forces,' and both works have choruses of nature spirits; Pecherin - stars and wind, Stepan - insects and minerals. Both works include the apocalyptic image of a beautiful rider on a horse representing death, whom all follow - in Stepan's work, the rider is on a black horse:

Затем вдруг въезжает неописанной красоты юноша на черном коне, и за ним следует ужасное множество всех народов. Юноша изображает собою смерть, а все народы ее жаждут (11)

In Pecherin's work the rider is on a white horse:

Является Смерть - прекрасный юноша, на белом коне. ...Небо и земля и народы земли и прочих планет сопровождают Смерть съ громкими восклицаниями: Vive la mort! vive la mort! vive la mort! (327)

The references to a rider on a horse alludes to the Apocalypse in which the rider on the white horse symbolizes conquest (6:2) and Jesus and victory (19:11), whereas the rider on the black horse symbolizes famine. The apocalyptic imagery is furthered in Pecherin's work by a play which is

---

13 It should be noted that the narrator states Это какая-то аллегория, в лирико-драматической форме и напоминающая вторую часть «Фауста». (10:9) The mention of the second part of Faust lends credence to the assertion that the parallel between Stavrogin and Faust may be extended to include the second part therefore including Faust's positive transformation and salvation.
tered a pagan apocalypse - Языческий Апокалипсис.\textsuperscript{14} In Pecherin's 'play within a poem,' in the song of the dying poet, the poet states that his blood will cleanse the sins of Russia:

\begin{verbatim}
И счастья России
Залогъ вамъ - кровь моя!
И все грехи России
Омоетъ кровь моя
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
Я силою благодатной
Прольюсь на Россию,...
(Russkaja Potaennaja Literatura XIX Stoletija, 331)
\end{verbatim}

This action, an emulation of Christ's crucifixion, intermingled with nationalistic feelings, is not reflected in Stepan's work. But the Promethean concept of atoning for the sins of others is a major theme in Besy, represented mainly by Kirillov. Thus Stepan's verse play, which involuntarily parodies Prometheus, underscores the difference between the pseudo-noble outpourings of a would-be Promethean and the kenotic ideal of humility.

Another instance of a link between the pre-text, Pecherin's "Celebration of Death" and Dostoevskij's Besy is the motif of the knight. This motif, in turn, is connected to Pushkin's "Жил на свете рыцарь бедный" already discussed. In Pecherin's work, as in Pushkin's, there is a knight who is dedicated to preserving the honor of Marija:

\begin{verbatim}
Мой сердечный палть:
Онъ какъ левь, за честь Мари
До конца стоять.
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
На широкомъ поле битвы
Рыцарь мой лежить. (314)
\end{verbatim}

In Pushkin the knight is dedicated to the Mother of God; whereas in Pecherin the name Marija refers to an earthly maiden. Again Pecherin's pre-text

\textsuperscript{14} Pecherin's work has many other ties to the apocalypse, for example, souls crying out for vengeance.
emphasizes the difference between a pseudo-feat and a true feat (подвиг).

In addition to characterizing its author at a deluded state of his biography, Stepan's emulation of Pecherin's "Celebration of Death" prefigures the action of the novel Besy. Joseph Frank, in his article, "The Masks of Stavrogin" states that Stepan Verxovenskij's artistic play anticipates the essence of Besy and Stavrogin's appearance:

For all its humor, this parody contains the basic theme of the book and foreshadows the appearance of Stavrogin.  

Although this is correct, the interpretation of the symbolism in Stepan's play should be reconsidered. Frank states that "...Death in the poem aspires to be the Source of Life," but this notion is evident in Pecherin's, not in Stepan's play. Frank considers that Stavrogin represents death in Stepan's poem:

He too is of an "indescribable beauty"; he too is death and not life; he too is followed, if not by a multitude of all nations, then by the multitude of all those who look to him for inspiration. He too believes that man can replace - not of course the lord of Olympus, who has nothing to do with the Tower of Babel, but the God of the Old Testament and His Son of the New.  

But in Besy, it is not Stavrogin, but Petr Verxovenskij who represents death, for he is the instigator of the murders of Shatov, Mar'ja Lebjadkina and her brother, and the chaos unleashed by him causes the death of Liza. Therefore, it is natural to assume that if Stepan's poem predicts the events of the novel, then Petr personifies Death in the poem. Moreover, it is Kirillov, not Stavrogin, who wishes to replace God, or rather to become a Man-god. Further comparison indicates that Petr, who flees at the end of the novel, is represented by the leader, perhaps of Olympus, who escapes looking ridiculous.

---


16 Ibid.
Stepan's poem in addition to parodying Pecherin's Promethean pre-text, and hence, false noble sentiment, also introduces a more valid noble voice - that of Goethe's *Faust*.

**Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust***

Goethe's *Faust*, written between 1790 and 1831, is a philosophical allegory which addresses the eternal issues of evil and temptation in the world. As such, the introduction of its discourse into *Besy* helps raise Stavrogin's struggle against evil to the philosophical level. The fact that the just quoted reference is to the second part of Goethe's work validates our hypothesis that this pre-text reinforces the theme of triumph of good over evil in *Besy*. In addition, the Faustian discourse has several other functions. Like Pushkin's poems, Stepan's (and Pecherin's) verse plays, it prefigures the death of the hero and his salvation by *das Ewig Weibliche*.

Moreover, the reference to *Faust* enriches the demonic imagery in *Besy*. In *Faust*, evil leads man astray, particularly the man of wavering faith. Faust's moral failures parallel Stavrogin's: both are victims of sensuality, a thirst for knowledge that transcends good and evil, and neither is initially capable of experiencing an emotion to such a depth that they would wish it to continue. Both characters mature, however, Faust finally asks to prolong his active participation in a creative society. Analogously, we may posit that Stavrogin ultimately longs to fulfill his dreams of a self-sacrificial atonement.

The discourse introduced by the pre-text *Faust* foregrounds the possibility of a positive resolution to Stavrogin's struggle with his demon, for in

---

17 In other variations on the Faust theme, for example, in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1588), at the end of the drama Faust is carried off by the forces of evil.

Faust good triumphs over evil. Upon his death Faust, because of his eternal striving, is redeemed and ascends to Heaven. Here, death is envisioned as a passage, a transformation, not as a finality. A woman, Margarete, intercedes on behalf of Faust. Similarly, Stavrogin is associated with women, who, although, like Margarete, wronged by him, intercede on his behalf. Dasha, who is repeatedly referred to as an angel, is ready to go with him to the end of the world. Perhaps even more influential is Stavrogin's actual wife, Mar'ja, who with her spiritual nobility will intercede for him. The intervention of a female figure offers a variation on the apocryphal discourse about the Bogorodica's intercession and reinforces the themes of Divine forgiveness and Grace.

The Song of Evdokija Lopuxina

As mentioned above, Mar'ja Lebjadkina's position in the novel parallels that of Faust's Margarete. Certainly, as the embodiment of the Russian spirit, and as a jurodivaja, her discourse must be considered authoritative. It includes a popular song which indicates her readiness to pray for Stavrogin and her capacity to intercede on his behalf. In the song, she asserts that she will become a savior:

Мне не надобен ноб-высок терем,
Я останусь в этой келейки,
Уж я стану жить-спасатися,
За тебя богу молитися. (10:118)

This song was well known and associated with Evdokija Lopuxina, the first wife of Petr I, who entered a monastery because the czar, who wished to remarry, demanded it. The situations of Evdokija and Mar'ja are parallel; both are living away from their husbands. The pre-text, however, functions on another level of the novel, reinforcing its spiritual aspects. Evdokija, locked away in the monastery by her faithless husband, who proved a "Pretender," an

---

19 See the commentary to the Academy edition, 12:294, 357-358.
Antichrist, nonetheless will pray for her husband. Likewise Mar'ja, the 
jurodivaja with the name of the mother of God, will pray for Stavrogin.20 Thus
the subtext strengthens the motif of Mar'ja's intercession on Stavrogin's behalf.

Many of the above subtexts reinforce spiritual and heroic themes in the
novel. The knight in Pushkin's poem and Mar'ja Lebjadkina represent
legendary and popular spiritual traditions which expand the theme of
intercession for the sinner. Intertextual references to knighthood offer
commentary on the themes of honor and duty, which are inter-related with the
idea of atonement for sins. Other texts which include "sublime ideas" often
reflect a romantic West European literary heritage, which profoundly
influenced Dostoevskij's ideology. Although Dostoevskij came to reject
romantic humanism as naive, the oeuvre of such writers as Hugo and Schiller
indisputably left their impact. Indeed Stepan Verxovenskij is modeled on the
"Schilleresque" man and his notion of Schöne Seele, but as we know, Stepan
becomes a fully valid character only after his Epiphany. The point is, however,
that Stepan is redeemable.21

Cernyshevskij's Что делать? (What's to be Done?)

Nikolaj Gavrilovich Chernyshevskij (1828-1889) was a radical journalist,
revolutionary, writer and martyr. His novel What's to be Done (1863), written
while he was incarcerated, became the new Bible for the younger radical
generations. Dostoevskij's objections to Chernyshevskij's ideological stance is
well-documented, and not surprisingly, his book is mentioned in Besy in a
conversation between the two generations of Verxovenskij men. At present,

20 Mar'ja is linked to the image of an angel in the scene in the church.

21 See Gordon Livermore, for a discussion of Stepan's spiritual advancement. "Stepan
Verkhovensky and the Shaping Dialectic of Dostoevsky's Devils," in Dostoevsky, New
however, our concern is limited to the suicide of Lopuxov, a character in Chernyshevskij's novel caught in a love-triangle.  

The opening pages of *What's to be Done?* describe Lopuxov's suicide. It is revealed later in the novel that the suicide was, in reality, a carefully planned disappearance, orchestrated to allow Lopuxov's wife the freedom to marry the man she loved. Thus the motivation for the pseudo-suicide is self-less; an attempt to help others. Lopuxov himself, following Chernyshevskij's ideology, states that his action is founded on his own self-interest. Self-sacrifice is impermissible in the ideology of the "new men." Nonetheless, the entire action is imbued with an aura of self-sacrifice, not religious or spiritual, but sacrifice for 'the good of society.' Joseph Frank in a discussion about the new type of citizen represented by the characters in *What's to be Done?* notes that "[i]n reality, although ridiculing the ethics of self-sacrifice at every opportunity, they behave in perfect accordance with its precepts." Dostoevskij, increasingly concerned about the lack of spiritual, specifically Orthodox foundations in the varied movements of the sixties, on one hand recognized the 'noble sentiments' expressed, but discounts their fundamental premise since it is not motivated by religious faith. Richard Peace points out that Chernyshevskij's discourse continues the theme of the misinterpretation and misappropriation of the noble sentiments of the men of the forties and he cites a passage from *Besy* which exposes the function of Chernyshevskij's word. Peace writes that:

[Stepan's] conclusions on 'the great idea which has become the plaything of stupid children' are that the young people have taken the ideas of his own generation to an unjustifiable extreme. Later in the novel this theme is

---

22 Dostoevskij mentioned Lopuxov in his March, 1870 letter to Majkov. He wrote that perhaps Tixon is the positive type of character needed in Russian literature as opposed to the Lopuxovs and others. Although this letter was written while Dostoevskij was planning *The Life of a Great Sinner*, nonetheless it demonstrates his knowledge of and reaction to Chernyshevskij's hero.

made more explicit in Stepan Trofimovich’s strictures on Chernyshevskij’s *What is to be Done*:

‘I agree that the author’s basic idea is right...but this makes it all the more terrible; for it is our idea, no one else’s but ours. We were the first to plant it, to raise it, to prepare it. After us, what could they say that was new? But Good Lord! the way all this is expressed, the way it is distorted, the way it is mangled...Was it towards conclusions such as these that we were driving? Who can recognize our original idea in this?’ (Pt II, Ch. IV, 2)²⁴

In view of the usual polemical relations between the words of Chernyshevskij and Dostoevskij, we may draw the following conclusions then: Suicide in Chernyshevskij’s world is not a tragedy but a farce. In his world of rational egoism, in all its dubious nobility, there is no guilt, hence no redemption. There is no evil, hence no purification. Chernyshevskij’s heroes are locked in a world without exit; their deaths mark the ultimate end. Stavrogin’s suicide, therefore, is a break with positivist shallowness. Discarding Petr Verxovenskij’s Chernyshevskian ideas, including his trivial notions of suicide for the sake of the Cause of revolution, Stavrogin makes his suicide a meaningful act. Stavrogin rejects the whole pseudo-world of the Chernyshevskij’s. He rejects their "Bibles" (their novels with titles such as *Who’s to Blame, What’s to be Done*, etc.) for the only true message of the Gospel: sacrifice yourself in order to find yourself. We should also remember that Stavrogin, unlike Lopuxov, does not commit the pseudo-suicide of emigration, but stays on his native soil and dies.

**Ogarev’s Student**

Nikolaj Platonovich Ogarev (1813-1877), a contemporary and close friend of Alexander Herzen, was a poet and political essayist. He belongs to the older generation of emigrés already deemed old-fashioned by the "new

²⁴ Peace, *Dostoevsky*, 143. The translated passage from *Besy*, included in the citation, is found in the Academy edition 10:238.
men."\textsuperscript{25} He, like Dostoevskij, recognized the heritage of the Decembrists and expressed this in the unfinished poem (about 1864) \textit{Исповедь лишнего человека}:

\begin{quote}
.....мы - дети декабристов
И мира нового ученики,
Ученики Фурье и Сен-Симона -
Мы поклялись, что посвятим всю жизнь
Народу и его освобожденью...\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

Eventually Ogarev became more radical. He became actively involved with the revolutionary group called 'Land and Liberty,' which he tried to expand into a "conspiratorial revolutionary organization run by a secret central committee with regional organization."\textsuperscript{27}

The mature Dostoevskij was well aware of how easily noble sentiments developed into fanatical hatred. He had seen the change in Belinskij with whom he had shared sublime moments, but who had turned from humanism to revolutionary fanaticism and atheism. Yet Dostoevskij retained an affection for the sublime sentiments of his socialist youth. Dostoevskij's ambivalent attitude toward those who espoused 'noble sentiments' and his criticism of those who distort and exploit or even reject them outright is evident throughout \textit{Besy}. In any case, he was thoroughly acquainted with the "sublime ideas" of sentimental progressivism and parodied them in an acrimonious tone, while also cherishing some of these sublime ideas. All of these complexities are clustered around the discourse introduced by Ogarev's poem "Student" which

\textsuperscript{25} The split between the generations of revolutionaries is mentioned in the foreword to an edition of Ogarev's poems: «Молодая эмиграция» (A. A. Серно-Сладкевич и др.) вступает в борьбу с Герценом и Огаревым, и победа остается на ее стороне. Новое поколение революционеров рассматривает Герцена и Огарева как дворянских революционеров, отставших от новых задач революционной борьбы. (N. P. Ogarev, L.: Sov. Pisatel', 1956, 11-12).

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 699.

\textsuperscript{27} Billington, \textit{The Icon and the Axe}, 397-398.
is parodied by Dostoevskij in Lebjadkin’s poem "Светлая личность" ("A Noble Heart," better translated as 'a pure soul').

In this parody the 'sublime sentiments' are usurped by progressive social movements espousing 'fraternity, equality and freedom.' In this poem, the sentiments are acceptance of suffering and sacrifice, but they are qualitatively different from those of Pushkin's noble knight. Lebjadkin's silly poem imitates the very metric--rhythmic structure of Pushkin's poem, but vulgarizes its contents:

Он обрек себя страданью,
Казням, пыткам, истязанью
И пошел вещать народу
Братство, равенство, свободу...

Lebjadkin distorts the authoritative word of Russia's national genius, demonstrating the pernicious impact of socialist ideas and their distortion of truly noble sentiment. This appropriation of sublime sentiments by revolutionary elements is juxtaposed with their outright rejection by the extreme radicals and the lowest dregs of society. Interestingly the revolutionaries argue about the merits and even the origin of the poem; Petr defends the work, hinting that Herzen composed it, but Liputin considers it trash, so low that Herzen could not have written it:

---

28 The history of Ogarev’s poem reveals the appropriation of nobler sentiments by and into the revolutionary movement. Ogarev used his earlier poem "Student" for political agitation: Ogarev использует прежние, написанные совсем по другому поводу стихотворения («Студент», «Напутствие»). (33) This poem is interesting from a historical point of view - it had been dedicated to Astrakov, but Ogarev changed the dedication to Nechaev, the historical prototype for Petr Verxovenskij, and the poem was published with this dedication. (It is intriguing that Dostoevskij chose the title 'Светлая личность' for his parody, because it evokes associations to Ogarev's poem "Светлое воскресенье," which depicts the adult who has become bored with religious holidays ). Of course, it was a well-known cliche for the well-meaning progressivist in general, together with мыслина личность.

29 10:273.
Their ridicule of the nobler sentiments marks them as divorced from the positive religious aspects and as unredeemable. Yet, at the same time that Dostoevskij parodies Ogarev's "Student" and the "sublime sentiments" in their socialist garb, the vestiges of the idealism of the 30's and 40's are alive in the pre-text and mark the idealistic, Schilleresque phase of Socialism, as it were.\textsuperscript{31} In the lines cited below the thirst for a communal, higher burden is readily perceived:

В жизни стала год от году  
Крепче преданность народу,  
Жарче жажда общей воли,  
Жажда общей, лучшей доли.

«Отстоять всему народу  
Свою землю и свободу».\textsuperscript{32}

But, as demonstrated again and again in Besy, Schilleresque idealism degenerated into Socialist-materialist radicalism. This parody shows the

\textsuperscript{30} 10:423. The poem is also discussed by the revolutionaries on pages 203, 295 and 303.

\textsuperscript{31} In the works of other writers of the 19th century, the ideal of suffering is combined with the search for persecution and with death as a means of salvation for all. Gorodetzky notes that Nicolas Ogarev's poetry manifests a hope for suffering and blood in his words "Like Jesus, for the sake of men I long to suffer persecution." She writes: "And Ogarev even expressed the hope that his own suffering and blood might save the persecutor by moving him to repentance." Gorodetzky, Nadejda. 1938. The Humiliated Christ in Modern Russian Thought. New York: Macmillan, 21.

\textsuperscript{32} Ogarev, 342.
'sublime sentiments' of suffering for the cause which is denigrated by the revolutionaries themselves, at least by the members of Petr Verxovenskij's cells. These members, like Petr, are divorced from the positive humanistic-religious aspects of socialism and are therefore unredeemable. Stavrogin, of course, was in the risk zone where redemption would be beyond reach as this conversation reveals:

- Должно быть, у того офицера, а? - спросил Петр Степанович.
- А вы и что офицера изволите знать?
- Еще бы. Я там с ними два дня пировал. Ему так и надо было сойти с ума.
- Он, может быть, и не сходил с ума.
- Не потому ли, что кусаться начал? (10:273)

Stavrogin, also an officer, whose sanity is constantly in doubt, and who, in his last prank, bit the governor's ear is clearly alluded to here. In Stavrogin we have what we may term a 'noble heart led astray' by the whirlwind of ideologies and events deluded by pseudo-notions of nobility, which actually appealed to human vanity. This man has enough of a 'pure soul' to shoulder genuine suffering and atone for his sins in the form of a purifying suicide. In the pre-texts to Besy to be discussed below, this type of 'lofty suicide' forms a recurring motif. Stavrogin's suicide, as well as Kirillov's, will now be examined against the undercurrent of pre-texts created by writers such as Shakespeare, Hugo and Schiller.

**Shakespeare's Word**

Shakespeare's word has numerous functions in Besy. Overt and hidden references to Shakespearean heroes help characterize Dostoevskij's
protagonists. In addition, Stepan's defense of the value of art, including Shakespeare and Pushkin not only marks his character as one opposed to the radical critics who espoused the utilitarian purposes of art, but sets the novel squarely into the polemics of Russian literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nina Perlina asserts that Shakespeare's word is very high on Dostoevskij's hierarchical scale of authority, introducing as it does those philosophical questions which are variously termed "eternal," "cursed" or "metaphysical":

As recently published excerpts from letters and diaries of numerous contemporaries indicate, contemporary readers saw in the highly literary nature of Dostoevsky's novels and in the open quotations from Schiller, Goethe, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky's particular ability to communicate with the eternal problems of the world. In reading Dostoevsky's novels they experienced a feeling of profound moral and aesthetic catharsis, that is to say, the work reached them in precisely the manner that Dostoevsky had intended.\(^{34}\)

Previous intertextual research, while correctly recognizing the sources, often fails to consider subtexts in their entirety. For example, it has been noted that among the varied intertextual resonances employed to characterize Stavrogin are the references to Shakespeare's Prince Hal and Hamlet. When Stavrogin's mother hears the rumors of her son's exploits in Petersburg, Stepan Verxovenskij suggests that Stavrogin is merely experiencing a period in his life similar to the dissipated youth of Prince Harry (Hal) in the play Henry IV. The reference to the subtext of Henry IV is overt and provides a discussion: Varvara rejects Stepan's suggestion, noting that Stavrogin does not have a Falstaff. The critic, K. I. Rovda, agrees with her, also denying any similarity:

Stavrogin does not sustain the role of Harry to the end, does not reform. But Hamlet's features also are little apparent in him. In him there is a tragic ambivalence, an ironic relation to his surroundings, linking him to the

---

\(^{34}\) Perlina, Varieties, 70.
Danish prince, but that inward emptiness, self-indulgence, and cruelty that knows no measure are so great in him that they overwhelm these attractive traits.\textsuperscript{35}

Jurij Levin, too, states that the paths of Prince Harry and Stavrogin diverge because Prince Harry has a sense of duty and transforms himself when challenged by the needs of his country, whereas Stavrogin has no sense of duty and does not undergo any transformation:

Он (Принц Гарри) понимает, что он не частное лицо и, вступая на престол, с полным сознанием принимает на себя время обязанности, отрекаясь от былой свободы. Николаю Ставрогину чувство долга совершенно чуждо.\textsuperscript{36}

As has already been pointed out in this study, Stavrogin is, however, searching for a burden. Moreover Stavrogin suffers for his transgressions more strongly than most men. It is therefore argued here that the whole sub-text of Henry IV is applicable to Stavrogin and that he undergoes a transformation similar to that of Prince Hal. Stavrogin's, like Prince Hal's, is a maturation process which rejects previous behavior and accepts a burden, however different the burden may be in each case.

The links between Stavrogin and Prince Hal include Petr's statement that during Stavrogin's Petersburg period, he used to refer to Lebjadkin as his Falstaff:

«Никола́й Всеволодович называл тогда́ этого господина своим Фальста́фом; это, должно быть (повсюду он вдруг), какой-нибудь бывшй характер, burlesque, над которым все смеются и который сам позволяет над собою всем смеяться, лишь бы платили деньги. (10:148-9)

Another Shakespearean sub-text reinforcing the notion of Stavrogin's transformation promoted here is Hamlet. The relationship between Hamlet and

\textsuperscript{35} K. I. Rovda, in M. P. Alekseen's Shekspir i Russkaja kultura, as quoted by Belknap in "Shakespeare and the Possessed" in Dostoevsky Studies, v. 5, 1984, 65.

Stavrogin is explicitly established by Varvara Stavrogina, who suggests that Stavrogin is even closer to Hamlet than to Prince Hal:

- Нет, это было нечто высшее чудачества и, уверяю вас, нечто даже святое! Человек гордый и рано оскорбленный, дошедший до той «насмешливости», о которой вы так метко упомянули, - одним словом, принц Гарри, как великолепно сравнил тогда Степан Трофимович и что было бы совершенно верно, если бы он не походил еще более на Гамлета, по крайней мере по моему взгляду. (10:151)

The relevance of the subtext Hamlet in Besy extends beyond the fact that both are princes (Stavrogin is the Prince in Mar'ja Lebjadkina's discourse, and Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark) and the act of suicide to incorporate numerous resonances of Hamlet's personality and situation. Stavrogin's similarities to Hamlet include moments of madness which perhaps are feigned in both cases and the question of who is responsible for actions committed during the periods of madness:

Give me your pardon,
sir: I've done you wrong;
....
This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,
How I am punish'd with a sore distraction
Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never, Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness; if't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy. (Act V, Scene 2)

Hamlet's madness, like Stavrogin's, is presented not as a physical disease, but as a struggle on the metaphysical level with a separate entity; an enemy. They are also both "mad" in the sense of 'being beside themselves with grief and doubt.'
Another more subtle similarity between the two protagonists is the concept of responsibility for one's actions; if Hamlet is a victim of his madness, then he is not responsible for his actions when he is 'mad.' Stavrogin is in a similar situation, and he, like Hamlet, dies "sane," i.e. renouncing the loophole that sanity offers. The theme of transformation offers another link, for not only do both Hamlet and Stavrogin resolve their inactivity by means of action, but both (contrary to Levin's assertion noted above) accept responsibility for their actions. The acceptance of responsibility for one's actions corresponds to a theme important to Dostoevskij, in whose spiritual world, each is responsible for all.

The word of Hamlet, especially the dilemma -- "To be or not to be" (which translates into Russian as 'to live or not to live') -- and all its philosophical ramifications enter into the text of Besy, not only by the comparison of Stavrogin to Hamlet, but also by Kirillov's Hamletian fascination with suicide. Kirillov's study of the motivation for suicide incorporate Hamlet's assertion that one's conscience prohibits the act of suicide and fear of judgement in the other world and that therefore fear "makes cowards of us all." Most important for our argument, is that Stavrogin, like Hamlet overcomes the 'cowardice' of doubt and vacillation and takes the decisive step to die, finding his salvation in self-immolation, because he dies in a spirit of acceptance. Kirillov, of course, utterly destroys himself. There is, however, one difference in their suicides: Hamlet dies the aristocratic 'noble death' of a Prince, whereas Stavrogin dies a humble, even humiliating, Christian death.

---

37 Kirillov incorporates the phrase "to be or not to be" in his statement about the freedom of the 'new man' (10:93-94).
Victor Hugo's *The Man Who Laughs*

The reference to Hugo's work in *Besy* is seemingly unimportant: Hugo's novel *The Man Who Laughs* (it lies under Stepan's letter to Varvara which she returned unread) (1866-1868) at first glance has no relevance to the passage in which it appears, much less to the novel. But Hugo's novel is relevant on two related levels. On a general level, the action of both novels is set against a background of a chaotic society in which Christian values are denigrated. In *The Man Who Laughs* this chaos is dispelled in the world of art in the play "Chaos Vanquished," apparently written by the hero. By their deaths, both the hero, Gwynplaine and his pure angel, Dea transcend the chaos of this world.

Hugo's novel is relevant to *Besy* on another level, for there are numerous similarities not only between the imagery, but also between the protagonists, Stavrogin and the "laughing man." The tie is not explicitly revealed in *Besy*, but the sentence which follows the allusion to Hugo's novel concerns Varvara's worry about her ironical son, thus establishing a link between Stavrogin and the laughing man. The laughing man's distorted appearance precludes society's understanding of his noble nature. Society and individuals project onto him their own feelings. The laughing man, Gwynplaine, like Stavrogin, has a dual nature - he is accursed and blessed:

---

38 10:73. Passages from *The Man Who Laughs* refer to the following addition: Boston: Estes and Lauriat, n.d.

39 In *The Man Who Laughs*, demonic whirlwinds lead the robbers who have disfigured the laughing man astray. They perish in the calm after the storm. Before their death they repent. The sentence that 'repentance is the only bark that never sinks' (vol. 1, 148) may be relevant to the statements about a bark in *Besy*. The image of the whirlwind or hurricane is associated with demons (vol. 1, 185) The images of spiders and justice, which spin their webs (vol. 2, 91) is expanded to the question of justice vs. mercy (vol. 2, 265) a theme important to Dostoevskij and relevant to *Besy*. As pertains to the repeated mention of the romantic image of a leaky barge, (an image also in Hugo's work) which is symbolic of Stavrogin's incomplete faith on another level the reference to the leaky barge may refer Heinrich Heine's "Night Voyage."
He had on him an anathema and a benediction....
The unfortunate heart, masked and calumniated by the
face, seemed forever condemned to solitude under it, as
under a tombstone. Yet, no! When unknown malice had
done its worst, invisible goodness lent its aid.40

The laughing man is lead astray from goodness by his overpowering desires.
Like Stavrogin, conflicting impulses struggle within Gwynplaine's soul - he is
"Cain and Abel united in the same man!" (2:277):

Two instincts - one the ideal, the other sexual - were
struggling within him. Such contests occur between the
angels of light and darkness on the edge of the abyss....A
struggle between right and wrong - a duel between his
earthly and his heavenly nature - had taken place within
his soul, and at such a depth that he had understood it but
dimly.41

Like Stavrogin Gwynplaine is a sensualist. The laughing man's struggle is thus
as "Dostoevskian" as any struggle between good and evil fought on the
battlefield of the human soul.

For both characters the struggle with evil is a process with innumerable
setbacks. Both contend with evil within themselves and with evil in society.42
Both are connected to the motifs of the mask and of the pretender and both
evince dual personalities. The striking affinity between the two characters is
their demise -- both commit suicide. Both suffer over the "temptation" of

40 Hugo, vol. 1, 308. This is not an isolated quote - Gwynplaine's dual nature is later
described as follows: "Oh, pathetic division of an intellect, of a will, of a brain, between two
brothers who are enemies! ...Cain and Abel united in the same man!" (vol. 2, 277) Gwynplaine
is a prince, offering a further link to Stavrogin.

41 Ibid., vol. 2, 51-52.

42 In The Man Who Laughs a distinction is made between the demonic in general and a man
possessed: "Sunt arreptiti, vexati daemone multo/ Est energumenus, quem daemon possidet
unus, - lines which draw a subtle, delicate distinction between the daemonic and the man
possessed of a devil." (vol. 2, 91).
suicide; before his eventual suicide, the laughing man contemplates suicide but is saved by the dog Homo. (vol. 2, 345) Ursus, the man who cared for Gwynplaine, thinking that Gwynplaine had perished comments:

He has taken flight suddenly. It was natural that it should end thus. The soul flies away like a bird. But the nest of the bird was in the heavenly height where dwells the Great Loadstone, who draws all towards Him.43

The depiction of the soul as a bird is common in world symbolism. The image of the nest may offer some insight into both the name of the Stavrogin estate, Skvoreshniki and for Stavrogin's choice of a place for suicide. Not only did he remain in his homeland but he returned to his nest where he finds God. In any case, Hugo's hero eventually does kill himself to follow his angel, Dea to God.

When Gwynplaine does actually commit suicide, it is depicted as a positive movement toward heaven and toward light (which only was visible to him) and toward love:

As he spoke, he strode across the deck straight towards the side of the vessel, as if beckoned by a vision.

......

His eyes were fixed upon a certain spot in the sky where the shadow was deepest. The smile was still on his face.

The sky was perfectly black; there was no star visible in it, and yet he evidently saw one.

.........the void was before him; he strode into it.44

Gwynplaine's action is part of a process which includes the rejection of his infatuation with the temptations of this world, thereby indicating a transformation to a higher plane. Such transformations also abound in

43 Ibid., vol. 2, 356.

44 Ibid., vol. 2, 373-374.
Schiller's works. Thus we see again that the "noble sentiment" literature had validity for Dostoevskij — at least when it could be Christianized.

**Schiller's Voice in the Polyphony of *Besy***

Overt references to Schiller are prominent in Dostoevskij's early and late works, but not in *Besy*. Schillerian themes, however, are discernable. Two concerns important to both Schiller and Dostoevskij which may elucidate Stavrogin's actions are the repentant criminal and self-sacrifice as a means of atonement for sins. Our interpretation of Stavrogin as a great but reforming sinner is, in fact, strongly reinforced when considered against the backdrop of Schillerian motifs.

A close comparison of *The Robbers* with *Besy* will elucidate the pervasiveness of Schillerian themes, images, and ideology in *Besy*. There are striking similarities between Stavrogin and Karl Moor. Both are the proposed leaders of groups which oppose established society and both ultimately reject their positions of lawless authority. Karl Moor is the leader of a band of robbers. Stavrogin is associated with the revolutionary cells. Both characters are proud, both see that pride must be overcome. In *The Robbers*,

---

45 Interestingly, Schiller is rarely discussed by critics in connection with Dostoevskij's *Besy*. Perhaps, because there are no overt inter-textual references. References to Schiller refer to the following edition *The Works of Frederick Schiller*, N.Y.: Harvard Publishing Company, 1895.

46 There are many other motifs and themes in Schiller's works which are echoed in *Besy*. They will only be mentioned here, but deserve further attention: the golden age, pride, a tear of repentance, one moment representing a harmony of time and eternity, and fear of death. In both works, there is the reading of a biblical passage which pertains to the story: in *The Robbers*, the tale of Jacob and Joseph; in *Besy*, the Gadarene swine.

47 Dostoevskij was well acquainted with the play *The Robbers*. In 1844, Dostoevskij and his brother Mikhail decided to publish a complete translation of Schiller's works. Although the project was not completed, two plays were translated by Mikhail - *The Robbers* and *Don Carlos*. (see Edmund Kostka, *Schiller in Russian Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965, 217-218). Dostoevskij proof-read his brother's translation of *The Robbers*, offering a few criticisms.
pride, in the form of vanity, is depicted as a disease. When Karl states that he will die willingly for the people, the robbers state "It is the great man's disease. He will give his life for vain admiration." (246) Stavrogin's pride manifests itself on innumerable occasions, very clearly in his first confession (in the chapter "At Tixon's"), where a purportedly humble confession is used to serve vanity. The desire to shock people, after all, is also a form of vanity. Certain motifs link the two heroes. Stavrogin is depicted as a beast and Karl Moor refers to himself as a monster. (217) Another similarity between the heroes is that both have dreams of the "golden age days,"48 which contrast with the destruction and chaos depicted in the novels.49 Their ideals do not correspond to their actions, or at least they envision the wrong means for the right ends -- until they come to a deeper understanding of right and wrong.

Neither are cold-blooded killers. For example, Karl Moor disapproves of the murder of innocent women and children and ejects the robber Schufterle from the gang when he boasts of throwing a child into the flames. (209) In contrast to this disapproval, at the end of The Robbers, Karl Moor kills Amelia at her request, helping her to suicide as opposed to murdering her. Stavrogin's physical and spiritual abuse of a child which leads her to suicide is, indisputably a more repulsive crime than Moor's suicide 'help.' Both Stavrogin and Karl Moor feel responsible for these deaths. Stavrogin is tortured by the

48 Robber Moor's visions are connected to his childhood. (217) According to Schiller's philosophy, a man's character is formed in childhood. Both Karl Moor and Stavrogin, when they were young, had higher ideals. Karl Moor prayed when he was young and he had visions of almost a "knight-like" life. Stavrogin, as has been mentioned, also had high ideals in his youth. As an adult, Stavrogin's dreams are still lofty, connected as they are with Greek idyllic scenes. They are, however, interrupted by his feelings of guilt associated with Matresha, feelings which are often represented by the symbol of the spider. Interestingly, Dostoevskij's use of such images parallels Schiller's. Notably, Stavrogin's dreams of Acis and Galatea are subtly linked to the recurring image of being crushed by a stone: Acis was crushed to death under a stone by Polyphemus. Thus though Stavrogin dreams of an ideal life in which people are capable of self-sacrifice, he is drawn back into reality by his feelings of guilt.

49 Interestingly, a major image of symbolic destruction and purification in both The Robbers and Besy is fire. In Besy a fire was set to cover the murders of the Lebjadkins. The destruction caused by the fire (like the destruction in The Robbers) progressed to the point where the incensed crowd killed Liza. Unlike Karl Moor, Stavrogin knew in advance of the plans for their murder, but did nothing to stop it.
memory of the young girl who committed suicide and admits his complicity in the deaths of the Lebjadkins. He resolves to retire to a gloomy valley, a chasm in the canton of Uri.\textsuperscript{50} Similarly, the robber, Moor, decides to give up his plan and "creep into any cleft of the earth where the day may not look upon my shame." (209)

From the above examples it is clear that both authors are concerned not only with the question of the suffering of the innocents of the world, but also with those who resent their sufferings vowing to become their avengers and thus again causing sufferings. Both writers portray noble sinners; the "great sinners" whose first impulses are honorable. Important for a reinterpretation of Stavrogin is the concern for the repentant sinner in both writers. In their work, those sinners who come to understand the spiritual order of the world, have the capacity to change for the better, to accept responsibility and to atone for their sins. This concern is overtly stated by Schiller in his preface to \textit{The Robbers}:

In consequence of the remarkable catastrophe which ends my play, I may justly claim for it a place among books of morality, for crime meets at last with the punishment it deserves; the lost one enters again within the pale of the law, and virtue is triumphant. (137)

Forgiveness and mercy for the repentant sinner are presented in the works of both authors by similar imagery and are connected to sacrifice.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} In the poem "The Longing," the imagery associated with a gloomy valley is similar to the imagery used by Dostoevskij to describe the place where Stavrogin invites both Mar'ja Lebjadkina and Dasha. Similarly, in "The Lay of the Mountain," To the solemn abyss leads the terrible path, The life and the death winding dizzy between; In thy desolate way, grim with menace and wrath, To daunt three the specters of giants are seen; That thou wake not the Wild One, all silently tread - Let thy lip breath no breath in the pathway of Dread! High over the merge of the horrible deep Hangs and hovers a Bridge with its phantom-like span, Not by man was it built, o'er the vastness to sweep; As formidable as this imagery is, it seems to be the pathway to the divine according to the editor's note about the term 'Devil's Bridge': The Land of Delight (called in Tell "a serene valley of joy") to which the dreary portal (in Tell the black rock gate) leads, is the Urse Vale. The image of valley of light may find an echo in Besy in the statement that Stavrogin is a citizen of Uri. Ur means light.

\textsuperscript{51} Another motif appearing in both author's works is that of the tear as a symbol of innocence and forgiveness. Stavrogin in his discussion with Liza, when he approaches humility, cries -
Although the robber Moor does not commit suicide, so as not to disrupt harmony, but rather gives himself up to human justice, he realizes that he will be sentenced to death and he emphasizes that he is dying willingly. (246)52 Thus, when viewed against the background of Schiller's teachings, Stavrogin's suicide may be interpreted as the proper moral action to atone for his most heinous crime; for the death of the young girl Matresha.53 Schiller in "On the Cause of the Pleasure We Derive from Tragic Objects" asserts that sacrifice may be the proper moral action:

Every sacrifice of a life is a contradiction, for life is the condition of all good; but in the light of morality the sacrifice of life is in a high degree proper, because life is not great in itself, but only as a means of accomplishing the moral law. If then the sacrifice of life be the way to do this, life must go. (374-375)

52 This is reminiscent of religious martyrs whose actions cause their own death.

53 In Schiller's ideology exists a dichotomy between the ideal and the actual, which parallels the difference between the higher, moral life and the earthly life. A corollary of this dichotomy concerns the separateness of earthly justice, i.e. law, from a higher moral law. Dostoevskij also distinguished a moral law.
Intra-textual Discourse: Dostoevskij's *Житие великого грешника* (*The Life of a Great Sinner*)

Among the texts whose presence is sensed in *Besy* is Dostoevskij's unfinished plan for a novel to be titled *Житие великого грешника* (*The Life of a Great Sinner*). There is a wide consensus that the themes and motifs evident in the plans for this text were incorporated into Dostoevskij's subsequent works, including *Besy*. For example, according to Edward Wasiolek, Dostoevskij's notes for *The Life of a Great Sinner* anticipate many of the themes and motifs in *Besy*:

Dostoevsky's notes for "The Life of A Great Sinner" became the source materials for *The Possessed, A Raw Youth, and The Brothers Karamazov*. Themes, situations, and types which were later used in each, can be easily distinguished.\(^{54}\)

Stavrogin's character is very similar to that of the great sinner in Dostoevskij's projected novel. The great sinner's confession is in fact one of the pre-texts for Stavrogin's confession. Perhaps the most salient theme presented in the notes for *The Life of a Great Sinner* is that of a gradual process of self-perfection:

*The idea* of gradual self-perfection in the feats of the Saints fascinates him (yet he has no faith). He wants to perfect himself. (He seeks to perform a feat and stumbles immediately.) Self-perfection little by little.\(^{55}\)

The process of self-perfection fraught with reversals and stumbling blocks reappears in the notes for *Besy* in the plans for Stavrogin's character development. In *The Notebooks for The Possessed*, the initial conception of the

\(^{54}\) Wasiolek's comments in *The Notebooks for The Possessed*, 53. Peace states "It is from the unwritten pages of 'The Life of a Great Sinner' that Stavrogin has come to enrich the significance of the pamphlet novel." (Dostoyevsky, 141).

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 41.
character's maturation process is evident early in the plans. The following list is a partial catalogue of projected themes and motifs that Dostoevskij planned to include in the final text:

Accumulation of wealth.
Emerging powerful passions.
Strengthening one's will power and inner strength.
Boundless pride, and his struggle against vanity.
The prose of life and a passionate faith which keeps overcoming it.
So that everybody will bow before me, while I shall forgive.
So as to fear nothing. Sacrifice one's life.
The effect of debauchery, a cold horror. A desire to smear everybody with dirt.
The Poetry of childhood.
Education and first ideals.
Secretly learns everything.
All alone, get ready for everything.56

It is significant that so early in his drafts, Dostoevskij incorporated the motif of sacrifice - "Sacrifice one's life." The seeds of Stavrogin's duality are also present; passionate faith and the noble sentiment of self-sacrifice are juxtaposed with debauchery and impulses to besmear all.57 This type of contradiction is repeated throughout the plans, for example "A great moral feat and terrible crimes. ...Fall and resurrection....He wants to shoot himself...He dies confessing his crime."58 Also evident in the above passage is the idea of preparation - "all alone, get ready for everything." Although the goal of the preparations is not envisioned by the hero in the notes, the emphasis on preparation recalls Tixon's statement that Stavrogin is not yet ready, not sufficiently hardened for a feat.

56 Ibid., 54.

57 In his plans Dostoevskij projects the following proportion of space to themes: "20 childhood/ 20 the monastery/ 40 before the exile/ 20 the Female and Satan/ 40 feats." (Ibid. 59).

58 Ibid. (67).
As is seen in *The Notebooks for the Possessed*, Dostoevskij had originally planned to redeem Stavrogin at the end of the novel. His intentions were thwarted by Katkov, the editor of *Russkii Vestnik*, who refused to publish the chapter "At Tixon's" because it contained the rape of a little girl. The chapter, according to Dostoevskij, was necessary for the full exposition of Stavrogin's conscience and his growing desire for confession. Due to the forced omission of the chapter "At Tixon's," Dostoevskij abandoned his original plans and excluded an overt depiction of Stavrogin's inner struggle and ultimate redemption. My premise is that traces of this early intention actually do remain in the text and that they remain in sufficient quantities to sustain a revaluation.

Although the author's intentions for a work, indeed, even his opinion of the effectiveness and the outcome of the work are irrelevant to the final product, they do offer an insight into the issues of concern to an author. In the notes to the 1957 edition of Dostoevskij's collected works, the editors comment on Dostoevskij's intention to redeem his hero, Stavrogin, as he had envisioned the redemption of the great sinner:

Подобно намечавшемуся герою «Житие великого грешника», Ставрогин должен был преодолеть свои низкие, порочные страсти и «воскреснуть к новой жизни» - благодаря тому, что он «ищет правду; нашел правду в идеале России и христианстве... Христианское смирение и самоосуждение»

It has been suggested that Dostoevskij was forced to abandon his original intentions because of the suppression of the chapter "At Tixon's." Stavrogin's final act of suicide supports this hypothesis. The final act of suicide, however, is not incompatible with a positive resolution. The coupling of the two seemingly disparate notions - suicide and redemption - is found in the plans for "The Life of a Great Sinner" and even in the early notebooks for *Besy*. It is evident that Dostoevskij was concerned with the notion of self-sacrifice for high

59 From Zapisk. tetr., 159, as quoted in *F. M. Dostoevskij, Sobranie Sochinenij*, G.I.X.L., M. 1957. (7: 722)
ideals. In the following passage the death of D. A. Karakozov, the young man who attempted to assassinate Alexandr II, is mentioned. This young revolutionary perished for what he believed to be the truth and Dostoevskij clearly interprets his action as a suicidal type of self-sacrifice:

ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕ
В Кириллове народная идея - сейчас же жертвовать собою для правды. Даже несчастный, слепой самоубийца 4 апреля в то время верил в свою правду (он, говорят, потом раскаялся - слава богу!) и не прятался, как Орсини, а стал лицом к лицу.
Жертвовать собою и всем для правды - вот национальная черта поколения. Благослови его бог и пошли ему понимание правды. Ибо весь вопрос в том и состоит, что считать за правду. Для того и написан роман. (11:303)

Dostoevskij sees this type of self-sacrifice to be a national characteristic, but muses that the whole question hinges on what exactly is 'truth.' The search for and exposition of the truth is precisely the reason why he wrote the novel Besy. The truth alone is worthy of the immolation of a life. For Dostoevskij, the truth must be equated with Christianity. It is in this light that both the hero of The Life of a Great Sinner and Stavrogin must be considered. This approach is validated by Dostoevskij's assertion that the idea of The Life of a Great Sinner is religious, although it is not explicitly revealed:

But the dominating idea of the Life should be seen, - i.e. although the whole dominating idea is not explained and is always left vague, the reader should always realize that the idea is religious, ....(104)

Moreover, it is clear that Dostoevskij was concerned with the possibility of redemption for sinners both when he was planning the novel The Life of a Great Sinner and when working on Besy:

The second part of the novel was evidently written by Dostoevsky with the determination to show the "great sinner" (Stavrogin) converted. Our chapter IX. corresponds to the "serene" Stavrogin who does not appear in the novel, and of whom a few hints are
preserved in the rough draft which no doubt issue from the idea of The Life.\textsuperscript{60}

The critic, Komarovich further emphasizes the similarities between the protagonists and their planned redemptions:

Stavrogin is almost identified with the hero of The Life. And since the crisis of that Life, as it was planned, was the repentance of the sinner and his conversion to God with Tikhon’s help, Dostoevsky had then planned the same conversion for Stavrogin.\textsuperscript{61}

Despite his careful examination of the genesis and development of Stavrogin’s character, V. Komarovich asserts that no traces of Dostoevsky’s intentions to redeem Stavrogin remain in the final version of The Possessed:

Only an echo of his original intention is left - not in the novel even, but on the first page, in the quotation from the Gospels of the promise to the sinner that he shall find salvation at the feet of Christ.\textsuperscript{62}

However, there are not 'only traces' of Dostoevskij's original intention, but such overwhelming symbolic evidence for the redemption of Stavrogin, that this interpretation of the novel becomes highly plausible.

The subtexts discussed above reinforce the vision of Stavrogin as a mournful knight, ultimately faithful to an initial noble ideal, a Faustian hero redeemed by the Feminine spirit of forgiveness, a Prince Hal, and Hamlet, who is transformed into a man shouldering full responsibilities for his actions. It has been demonstrated that the above intertextual dialogue intensifies themes that are connected with divine intercession, duty, and honor. In the pre-texts

\textsuperscript{60} V. Komarovich, "Introduction to The Unpublished Chapter of The Possessed" in F. M. Dostoevsky, Stavrogin’s Confession and The Plan of The Life of a Great Sinner, trans. S. S. Koteliansky and Virginia Woolf. N.Y.: Haskell House, 1972, 142.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid. 141-142.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. 143.
discussed above, self-sacrifice, often in the form of suicide, is a means of atonement and can be envisioned as a positive action inspired by the sublime ideals in sentimental progressivism and in Dostoevskij's case, by Christ's kenotic death. In certain of the pre-texts, suicide also is presented as a transformation to a higher state. Against this undercurrent evoked in the text by polyphonic dialogue, we progress to a more in-depth study of suicide in Besy.
CHAPTER IV
VARIATIONS ON SUICIDE IN BESY

"We have seen and do see people who courageously take their own lives. And in truth, one must be fearless and possess great spiritual strength to behold one's own destruction with a steady eye...Often such a man sees beyond the boundaries of the grave and trusts in his own resurrection." 1

From the point of view of the Orthodox Church, suicide is a mortal sin, and it is even a sin to pray for suicides. 2 Since, at the time of writing Besy, Dostoevskij was an active and devoted member of the Orthodox Church, Stavrogin's suicide would seem to preclude positive connotations. 3 It could easily be perceived as a crime leading straight to hell, befitting his unredeemable character. On the other hand, the church's unforgiving attitude is mitigated by a general sympathy towards suicides in Russian culture, in the social and literary sphere. In Orthodoxy itself, official attitudes are often


2 Rowland Wymer points out that "it was not until St. Augustine condemned it in The City of God, that suicide was inevitably destined to be regarded as a mortal sin..." (Suicide and Despair in the Jacobean Drama, New York: St. Martin's Press. 1986, 14). Wymer notes that the Council of Braga (563) "forbade funeral rites and masses for suicides." He also points out that this Council instituted "penalties for all suicides." (15).

3 Some critics assert that because of his suicide Stavrogin is unredeemable. For example, N. Losskij, in "O prirode satanskoj (po Dostoevskomu)" notes that according to the Grand Inquisitor, self-annihilation is a feature of the devil: "Velikij inkvizitor nazyvaet diavola ne tol'ko duxom nebytija, no i duxom samounichtozhennja (in Dostoevskij, stat'i i materialy, ed. A.S. Dolinin. Petersburg: Mysl', 1922, 267). Thus, from this point of view, Stavrogin is seen as damned forever.
softened - a fact reflected in the numerous religious figures in Dostoevskij’s oeuvre who, despite the ban, pray for suicides.

**Attitudes Toward Suicide in Russian Culture**

According to James Billington in *The Icon and the Axe* suicide was a common phenomenon in Russia in the 18th century especially among the aristocracy:

By the late years of the reign of Alexander I the high incidence of aristocratic suicide was causing the state grave concern and was used as an important argument for tightening censorship...⁴

The high rate of suicide continued to be evident during Dostoevskij's lifetime and became a concern for the writer, as is evident by the numerous discussions of suicide in *The Diary of a Writer*.⁵ In the *Diary*, Dostoevskij even likens the frequency of suicide to an epidemic:

In truth, we do perceive a great number of suicides (their abundance is also a mystery *sui generis*), strange and mysterious, ...and since it is impossible to deny that they have assumed the proportions of an epidemic, they arise in the minds of many people as a disturbing question.⁶

---

⁴ Billington, James H. *The Icon and the Axe*, 355.

⁵ Dostoevskij addresses suicide in *The Diary of a Writer* as early as the 1873 discussion of the woman who hung herself because of the brutality of her husband (18-21) and continues throughout the publication of the *Diary* up to the 1877 examination of Hartung’s suicide (859-866). In his novels, the instances of actual suicide extend from *Crime and Punishment* to *The Brothers Karamazov*. (N. N. Shneidman offers a table of actual, attempted and contemplated suicides in Dostoevskij's works in *Dostoevskij and Suicide*, 103).

⁶ Dostoevskij, *Diary*, 542.
Obviously the motivations for this 'epidemic' of suicide vary greatly. In Russia, suicide often has been connected to political, social and religious questions, as opposed to purely personal issues. Not always a result of despair, suicide may be associated with protest, ultimately indicating a person's desire for freedom from oppression. Suicide may also be connected to existential boredom, the inability to find a meaningful path in life. Billington points out that the phenomenon of suicide during the nineteenth century was linked to the 'Hamlet question' and to the concept of Weltenschmerz (world-weariness, mirovaja skorbi', 355). The disillusioned Byronic hero and his Russian counterpart, the "superfluous man" inundate literature at the time. Stavrogin, of course, on one level belongs to the category of the superfluous man who finds no meaningful outlet for his powers.

Political protest occasioned instances of suicide. For example, Radishchev, the author of A Journey from Petersburg to Moscow (1790), who was exiled by Catherine I for the views expressed in his book, committed suicide. The semiotician, Lotman, in "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture" describes Radishchev's suicide as a political protest:

...Radishčev's suicide was not an act of despair, an acceptance of defeat. It was a deliberate act of struggle he had contemplated for a long time, a lesson in patriotic resolution and in the unyielding love of freedom.7

This view is corroborated by the fact that Radishchev had written about Hamlet and the question - 'to be or not to be,' in On Man, His Mortality and Immortality, which demonstrated his fascination with suicide as a protest. Anticipating Kirillov's Prometheus, Radishchev also serves as a prototype for even more distant descendants:

At the same time, there is in Radishchev a heroic Prometheus that anticipates the ecstatic, secular belief in the future of Lunacharsky and Trotsky. In his last book,

7 Lotman, 91.
*On Man, His Mortality and Immortality*, Radishchev rejects the prosaic materialism of the French Encyclopedists and sees man attaining perfection - even immortality - through heroic effort and a creative evolution that includes a regeneration (*palingenesis*) of the dead.\(^8\)

Radishchev's act is clearly the kind of suicide that does not lead to redemption in Dostoevskij's world. Like Kirillov's suicide in *Besy*, it testifies to pride, aspirations to 'supermanhood' and rejection of God's law. Noble as it is, it is not an act reconcilable with Christian humility. However, the Church too accepts "suicide" in some forms, namely those of martyrdom.\(^9\)

The reverent attitude towards martyrs who have knowingly and willingly faced death (or even incited their torturers to kill them) complicates the question of Orthodoxy and suicide.\(^10\) Russian saints who willingly accepted death include Boris and Gleb and among the martyrs who committed suicide are the Old Believers. Furthermore, the extremely ascetic lifestyle of some may have occasioned their death and may be considered a form of self-destruction.\(^11\) Also, Gogol's death may be considered a type of suicide; a self-

---

\(^8\) Billington, 241-242. Billington notes that the idea of *palingenesis* was revived during Herzen's time, 301.

\(^9\) Princess Eupraxy may be considered a martyr, and despite her suicide she was later canonized. Her death is described in 'The Tale of the Destruction of Riazan.' After being notified of her husband's death at the hand of Emperor Batu, she threw herself from a window with her son in her arms. She was later buried under a cross with her husband and son near the icon of St. Nicholas in Riazan. See Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, 200, 207.

\(^10\) Consider the case of Foma Danilov, a non-commissioned officer who refused to convert to Islam and was tortured and murdered by the Kipchaks. By his refusal to convert, he knowingly occasioned his death. Danilov's case is examined by Dostoevskij in *The Diary of a Writer* (569-574), and is incorporated into the text of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

\(^11\) In *Suicide and Despair in the Jacobean Drama*, Wymer states that "there is little doubt that many of the revered ascetics of the early Church were virtual suicides who hastened their own death through fasting and penances." (62-63) Wymer discusses Donne's position on suicide: "It is an important aspect of Donne's thoroughgoing intentionalist position that there is no real moral difference between acts of omission and acts of commission, between allowing oneself to be killed and actually killing oneself. It all depends on the motivation. Some martyrs may have been undertaken for selfish reasons, some suicides for holy ones. Furthermore, the
inflicted starvation in order to cleanse himself of his passions. Another secular martyr whose actions brought about his own death include Ivan Susanin, both the real man of history and, perhaps more importantly for us, the opera hero. Here we may speak of a 'patriotic suicide' which includes self-sacrifice.

The above-mentioned instances indicate that suicide, in Russian culture, both secular and religious, was regarded as a positive action, whether it be sacrificial or a means of protest. Even when a suicide was personally motivated, expressing nothing but despair, the popular attitude was not one of judgement. In Russian literature there are many instances which sympathetically depict suicides. For example, in Karamzin's Bednaja Liza the people's empathy for Liza, who drowned herself, is evident: even though she is not permitted to be interred in consecrated grounds, she is buried under a cross and it is suggested that she will be forgiven by God.

The theme of suicide abounds in 19th century Russian literature: Billington mentions Leskov's Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District and the many suicides in Turgenev's oeuvre. Leskov's The Enchanted Wanderer conveys a compassionate view of suicide. This work includes a miraculous story presented in the hagiographic style of the lives of the monks. The story tells of Archbishop Filaret who is planning to defrock a village priest for drunkenness. He sees a vision, however, in which Saint Sergius asks for mercy for the priest, because he prays for suicides. As a result of his vision, Filaret abstains from his punitive actions.

From the above discussion of attitudes towards suicide it is evident that the issue is complex, associated as it is with various, not necessarily mutually exclusive, aspects of social, political, religious and cultural life. Most importantly, the act of suicide is not always perceived as negative, but very

---

logic of his approach leads inevitably to one final 'paradox' - that in some circumstances suicide may be morally required, may be a necessary part of moral perfection. Whether or not Christ actually shortened his time on the cross by a deliberate emission of his soul (and Donne believed that he did), there is little doubt that, for Donne, Christ was the great example of a 'pure' suicide, a self-chosen death entirely for the glory of God." (18).
often, in all these contexts, as positive, or even heroic, or at least forgivable. Dostoevskij, as demonstrated in his artistic and in his journalistic works, certainly advocated a humane attitude towards suicides, an attitude which may well have been influenced by popular attitudes, always important for Dostoevskij. At any rate, in 1876 in *The Diary of a Writer* Dostoevskij wrote:

... one should be dealing with these facts (about suicides) more humanely and not so haughtily. (547)

With this compassionate statement as an introduction, we turn to a brief examination of the range of suicides in Dostoevskij's works, before focusing on the suicides in *Besy*.

**Suicide in Dostoevskij's Works**

In Dostoevskij's fiction there are numerous suicides - many of whom are treated with compassion, most notably, the young woman in "Krotkaja". In this short story (usually translated as "A Gentle Creature"), a young girl jumps from a window holding an icon clutched to her breast. The basis for this short story was a newspaper article about a seamstress who jumped to her death "holding a holy image in her hands." (*Diary of a Writer, 470*) Dostoevskij's comments on this suicide attest to his interest in the phenomenon:

This holy image in the hands is a strange, as yet unheard-of trait in a suicide! This was a timid and humble suicide....

There are certain things - much as they may seem *simple* - over which one does not cease to ponder for a long time; they come back in one's dreams, and one even thinks that he is to be blamed for them. (*Diary of a Writer, 470*)

The above passage from Dostoevskij's *Diary of a Writer* indicates Dostoevskij's concern about the issue of suicide and even feelings of guilt for not having done enough to help resolve this problem in society. His portrayal of the incident in "A Gentle Creature" demonstrates an association between a
personally motivated suicide and Orthodox religion which is surprising in light of the Orthodox doctrine against suicide. Presented by Dostoevskij in a such a sympathetic light, suicide becomes compatible with faith. Dostoevskij emphasizes that the motivations for suicide, "much as they may seem simple," are actually very complex. He expresses a deep concern about suicide and its causes throughout The Diary of a Writer and his search for its causes is evident in the following passage about the well-known suicide of Herzen's daughter:

In that suicide everything is a riddle - both from the outside and from within. Of course, conforming to human nature, I sought somehow to unravel the enigma so as to stop at something and "to appease myself." (469)

In his comments on her suicide, Dostoevskij discusses external causes for suicide as opposed to internal ones:

Simply vulgar persons destroy themselves by suicide only owing to a material, visible, external cause, whereas by the tone of the note one may judge that no such cause could have existed in her case. (The Diary of a Writer, 469)

From the above passage it may be inferred that those suicides which are explained by a 'material, visible, external cause' may be differentiated from those which are related to abstract questions, which have no visible explanation. In Dostoevskij's search for the underlying causes of suicides, spiritual ailments are seen as a major factor:

Of course, I am not venturing to explain all these suicides - this I cannot do - but I am firmly convinced that the majority of the suicides, in toto, directly or indirectly, were committed as a result of one and the same spiritual illness - the absence in the souls of these men of the sublime idea of existence. (The Diary of a Writer, 542)

In contrast to those suicides occasioned by the lack of higher ideas, another type of suicide may be directly connected to some particular situation. For
example, Dostoevskij discusses the case of General Hartung, who was convicted of embezzlement. Before his sentence was announced, he shot himself. He left a note written beforehand that he was innocent and that he forgave his enemies. In this instance, suicide is associated with the ideals of honor and gentlemanliness. In fact, Dostoevskij spends much time in his Diary demonstrating how such a man of honor as the general might have unwittingly become enmeshed in a scheme to embezzle funds. This compassionate approach to suicides and interest in the causes extends to the suicide of a lowly woman who was repeatedly beaten by her husband. In her case, naturally, there was no "higher idea" motivating her, but unbearable suffering too is seen as an understandable, if not honorable, cause for suicide.

The same compassionate approach is reflected in Dostoevskij's religious characters who advocate prayer for suicides. Especially notable are the words of Zossima in The Brothers Karamazov:

"But woe to those who have slain themselves on earth, woe to the suicides! I believe that there can be none more miserable than they. They tell us that it is a sin to pray for them and outwardly the Church, as it were, renounces them, but in my secret heart I believe that we may pray even for them. Love can never be an offense to Christ. For such as those I have prayed inwardly all my life, I confess it, fathers and teachers, and even now I pray for them every day."(388)

Makar's statements about praying for suicides in A Raw Youth are similar. This non-judgmental attitude towards an action deemed sinful by the Church is consistent with Dostoevskij's concern about the possibility of redemption for the sinner. Moreover, the enigmatic aura which surrounds many of Dostoevskij's suicides, especially Stavrogin's, underscores the complexity of any suicidal motivation. One mention of suicide in Dostoevskij's Diary has

---

12 Since A Raw Youth was written immediately after Besy and included many of the same concerns, the attitude towards suicide may reflect on Stavrogin's suicide.
particular relevance to Stavrogin's immolation. It is the death of a monk from Pechersk who brought about his own death in his struggle against a demon.\textsuperscript{13} The monk attempted to overcome the demon by burying himself in the ground. Dostoevskij asserts that even though the monk perished, he had overcome his demon:

\ldots that ancient Pechersk martyr who, being also unable to contend with the serpent of passion which tormented him, dug himself into the earth up to his waist and died, and if he did not succeed in casting out his demon, certainly he did conquer him. (950-951)

The monk's struggle with his demon corresponds to Stavrogin's struggle with his demonic inner double. In both cases, suicide is a means of cleansing oneself from a demonic obsession. The motivation is clear - a purgation of sin, even at the expense of life.\textsuperscript{14} As is clear from the above discussion, motivations for suicide remain a long-time concern of Dostoevskij's. The possible motivations undergo an intense polyphonic scrutiny in the novel \textit{Besy}.

\textbf{Discussions of Suicide in \textit{Besy}}

In \textit{Besy} the question of suicide is presented from numerous angles that evince aspects of the author's social, political and religious concerns in this sphere. The most thorough discussion of the phenomenon is introduced into the novel by Kirillov who addresses the issue in detail, especially in his 'study' about the causes of suicide and why not more men commit suicide.\textsuperscript{15} Kirillov

\textsuperscript{13} The story of the monk is mentioned in connection with the poet Nekrasov, who was prone to bouts of remorse at the end of his life.

\textsuperscript{14} Svidrigailov's suicide in \textit{Crime and Punishment} may also be viewed from this perspective although the motivation is not overtly stated in the novel. See F.F. Seeley's article "The Two Faces of Svidrigailov" in \textit{Canadian-American Slavic Studies}, 12, #3, (fall 1978), 413-417.

\textsuperscript{15} Liputin, a minor devil in \textit{Besy}, explains Kirillov's work as follows: \ldots они уже начали изучение и составят любопытнейшую статью о причинах участвующихся случаев самоубийства в России и вообще о причинах, участвующих или задерживающих распространение самоубийства в обществе. (10:77).
asserts that there are two basic reasons: they are afraid either of God or of the pain:

- ...два предрассудка удерживают, две вещи; только две; только две; одна очень маленькая, другая очень большая. Но и маленькая тоже очень большая.
- Какая же маленькая-то?
- Боль.
- Боль? Неужто это так важно...в этом случае?
- Самое первое. Есть два рода: те, которые убивают себя или из большой грусти, или из злости, или сумасшедшие, или там все равно... те вдруг. То мало о боли думают, а вдруг. А которые с рассудка - те много думают. (10:92-93)

The small reason why people do not commit suicide is fear of pain, the large reason is the after-life where God rules. Fear of the next world involves anticipation of divine judgement and subsequent punishment for one's transgressions. Both types of fear stem from one's conscience. Kirillov's ideas are interesting and at least partly valid, but, as is the fate of many 'ideas' in Dostoevskij's novels, another character adopts, misinterprets and corrupts its essence. In this instance, Liputin asserts that Kirillov's concept of suicide has no moral aspects whatsoever:

- Они только наблюдения собирают, а до сущности вопроса или, так сказать, до нравственной его стороны совсем не прикасаются, и даже самую нравственность совсем отвергают, а держатся новейшего принципа всеобщего разрушения для добрых окончательных целей. (10:77)

Kirillov's denial of Liputin's misinterpretation attests to the fact that he himself perceives suicide in terms of liberating mankind, i.e. as a "moral" act. But naturally his morality is not of the Christian kind. It is the absence of religion and the predominance of the rational, scientific explanations of man's behavior which lead to the notion that there is no sin, that all becomes permissible, and that the permissible may be seen as something noble and heroic, à la Schiller:

Some important points of contact with Schiller can be found in The Possessed .... The figure of Kirillov, for
example, bears considerable resemblance to the young Schiller, especially in his philosophical conviction that "man is the only God of man." Very similar ideas had been expressed by Schiller in his poem: Resignation: where the faith in God is called "Wahn, den nur Verjahrung weiht" and where eternity is characterized as "der Riesenschatten unsrer eignen Schrecken / Im hohlen Spiegel Der Gewissensangst."  

Liputin's charge of rationality is vehemently denied by Kirillov, who states that he despises reasoning: «Я терпеть не могу рассуждать. Я никогда не хочу рассуждать...» And Kirillov's study of suicide and, indeed, his own suicide are intimately connected to questions of faith and immortality.

Kirillov wants to create a faith of his own - the faith in the new race of supermen. In a discussion with the narrator of the novel, Kirillov presents suicide as a means for human self-transcendence, as a means of becoming God. Death is a means of overcoming that pain which is the fear of God:

- Жизнь есть боль, жизнь есть страх, и человек несчастен. Теперь все боль и страх. Теперь человек жизнь любит, потому что боль и страх любят. И так сделали. Жизнь дается теперь за боль и страх, и тут весь обман. Теперь человек еще не тот человек. Будет новый человек, счастливый и гордый. Кому будет все равно, жить или не жить, тот будет новый человек. Кто победит боль и страх, тот сам бог будет. А тот бог не будет. (10:93)

Defining God as the fear of death, Kirillov, in essence, reduces the 'metaphysical' question of the existence of God to man's imagination:

---


17 10:77. This predicts Stavrogin's words which Lebjadkin repeats about the difficulty of resisting common sense: Нужно быть действительно великим человеком, чтобы суметь устоять даже против здравого смысла. (10:209) This type of statement underscores the links between Kirillov and Stavrogin.
- Стало быть, тот бог есть же, по-вашему?
- Его нет, но он есть. В камне боли нет, но в страхе от камня есть боль. Бог есть боль страха смерти. Кто победит боль и страх, тот сам станет бог. Тогда новая жизнь, тогда новый человек, все новое...(10:93-94)

Kirillov’s philosophical views about suicide are expanded in a later conversation that he has with Stavrogin. In this conversation, Stavrogin discusses shooting oneself because one has committed a crime so great that it would be remembered with revulsion for a thousand years. Here, suicide is directly associated with guilt, and therefore has a Christian tinge. But the atheist, Kirillov states that when man realizes that all is good - including sin - time will stop. Thus, Kirillov’s response negates the notion of guilt and, in fact, the existence of death itself:

-- Стало быть, и жизнь любите?
-- Да, люблю и жизнь, а что?
-- Если решились застрелиться.
-- Вы стали веровать в будущую вечную. Есть минуты, вы доходите до минут, и время вдруг останавливается и будет вечно. 10:188

The moment at which time stops and becomes eternal, in turn, is mentioned in the Apocalypse, as Stavrogin points out. So here death becomes associated with yet another Biblical image, - the time of the seventh angel (Rev. 10:6). This association returns the subject again to the basic notion of guilt and conscience, affirmed by some, rejected by others. Kirillov certainly rejects it, but not, as Liputin asserts, in order to deny morality, but rather to affirm a purportedly higher morality, created by himself.

The issue of motivations for suicide is also addressed in the final conversation between Kirillov and Petr Verxovenskij after which Kirillov shoots himself. In this scene, Petr exposes the ambiguity of Kirillov’s motivations for suicide. Petr, whose orientation is completely materialistic, exposes Kirillov’s inconsistent impulses. Their conversation includes a number
of motivations for suicide, all proposed by Kirillov. First, suicide is necessary because one cannot believe in the comfort of God at the same time that one disbelieves in God:

- Нет, ты хорошо сказал; пусть комфорта. Бог необходим, а потому должен быть.
- Ну, и прекрасно.
- Но я знаю, что его нет и не может быть.
- Это вернее.
- Неужели ты не понимаешь, что человеку с такими двумя мыслями нельзя оставаться в живых? (10:469)

Second, suicide is necessary to prove God does not exist and to assert one’s own self-will:

- Я обязан себя застрелить, потому что самый полный пункт моего своееволия - то убить себя самому. (10:470)

Third, Kirillov states that he has no concrete, i.e. worldly motivation. When Petr states that there are many suicides, Kirillov responds as follows:

- Да ведь не один же вы себя убиваете; много самоубийц.
- С причиной. Но безо всякой причины, а только для своееволия - один я. (10:470)

Kirillov’s death blasphemes the spiritual images associated with Christ’s passion. Kirillov’s act is an attempt to raise himself to God. Although Kirillov seriously ponders over the act of suicide, his action is consistent with Dostoevskij’s pronouncement that the phenomenon of suicide is the result of a spiritual ailment. His action is prompted by infernal pride and proves ultimately to be a demonic lie.

Before moving to a discussion of the actual suicides, (Matresha, a young man, Kirillov, Stavrogin) the motivations and imagery connected with Ljamshin’s attempted suicide will be examined.18

---

18 In the notebooks for Besy, there is mention of another death which Dostoevskij terms a suicide: даже несчастный, слепой самоубийца 4 апреля .. (11:303). According to the editors'
Ljamshin's attempted suicide

Ljamshin's attempt at suicide occurs at the end of the novel and is followed by a full confession of his activities to the authorities. At first glance, the attempted suicide and the confession appear to be connected to panic and fear. Remorse is absent, moreover. Although Ljamshin falls to the floor and kisses it. This action is but a false variation of the humble kissing of the earth. It should be noted that Ljamshin kisses the floor, not the earth. Moreover Ljamshin does not accept guilt for his participation in the murder - indicating an incomplete repentance. In this case the coincident symbolism diminishes the positive aspects of Ljamshin's actions. Ljamshin's suicide attempt, which seems at first an act of repentance, when considered in conjunction with the symbolism becomes a false attempt, even a farce, a parody.

Symbolism colors, reinforces or even reverses the significance of an action. The symbolism surrounding Stavrogin's death will be discussed in detail in the conclusion. Suffice it to say here that his action is a type of ritual cleansing, an atonement for sin and a transition. There are symbolic and thematic similarities between the four actual suicides in the novel, but the following examination the suicides in Besy will illuminate the fundamental differences between them.

Variations of Suicide: Unknown Young Man

The first suicide in the book is the young man who shoots himself at an inn after he dissipates four hundred rubles. The young man is not a major character in the novel, appearing in only one chapter, where a group of townspeople make an expedition to see the holy fool Semen Jakovlevich. On their way to him, they chance to hear about the suicide and stop to view the corpse. The relevance of the young man's action to the novel, and to the

comments this refers to D.A. Karakozov (1840-1866), who perished after an attempt to assassinate the emperor.
discussion of suicide, is three-fold: the action itself, including the symbolism associated with it, show that his suicide is a waste of life, a misguided and excessive attempt at atonement for sins; his action, as a variation on other suicides in the novel, offers a commentary on them; and his action evokes the reaction of other characters.\textsuperscript{19}

The description of the events preceding the young man's suicide is brief, and thus we do not learn its sordid details. His face in death is said to be beautiful, however, and its expression peaceful. In searching for a motive, we may assume that the young man shot himself on an impulse, to avoid facing up to the consequences of his foolishness. It is a childish evasion of responsibility, a childish form of self-punishment. The consequences of his action certainly were not clear to the young man. Hence the lack of anguish.:

Смерть, должно быть, произошла мгновенно; никакого смертного мучения не замечалось в лице; выражение было спокойное, почти счастливое, только бы жить. (10:255)

This suicide, the result of self-initiated punishment, demonstrates if not repentance, then at least a payment of sorts for his actions. The boy is at peace with himself because he has atoned for his prank and is unaware of the full significance of his suicide. He had never contemplated the finality of his action, and, therefore, his death belongs to that category which, according to Dostoevskij, is a tragic waste of life.

The young boy had written a suicide note stating that no one be blamed for his death, that he had killed himself because he had 'squandered' the money.\textsuperscript{20} This indicates an attempt on the young man's part to atone for guilt,
yet, in actuality he evades his punishment by death. Ultimately, the blame for his suicide falls on a society which upholds a false code of honor.

According to N. N. Shneidman, the function of the incident is to expose the true nature of the characters who stopped to view someone else's misfortune:

The writer uses this little episode in the life of the ill-fated boy in order to expose the corrupted and Philistine nature of all the "petty demons" who come to view the dead body of the unfortunate youth. For them the misfortune of others is a happy diversion. Liza, Mavrikii Nikolaevich, Petr Verkhovensky, Nikolai Stavrogin and those accompanying them, are on their way to visit the saint and prophet, Semen Iakovlevich. When they stop to view the suicide they do not show feeling, compassion or concern for the fate of the dead boy or his family.21

The comments of those who view the corpse are interesting: one says that suicide was the best end: ...это наилучший исход и умнее малышки и не мог ничего выдумать. (10:255-6) The noun исход signifies both an end and a way out of a difficult situation.22 Another comment addresses the phenomenon of suicide in general:23

... почему у нас так часто стали вешаться и застреливаться, точно с корней соскочили, точно под из-под ног у всех выскользнул? (10:256)

---

21 N. N. Shneidman, Dostoevsky and Suicide, 69.

22 The word also has religious connotations - exodus.

23 This is similar to the questions addressed to Dostoevskij by readers of The Diary of a Writer: Dostoevskij states "I am receiving a great many letters giving the facts pertaining to suicides, with questions: how and what do I think about these suicides, and how do I explain them?" (542)
The above quote reiterates Dostoevskij's own concern about the epidemic of suicide. Moreover, the phrase 'to tear one's self away from one's roots' subtly alludes to society's move away from its religious and moral values. The unidentified commentator sees the boy as a victim of society's moral degradation.

In contrast to the suicide of young man, whose own actions resulted in a futile type of self-punishment, Matresha's suicide is a reaction to Stavrogin's mistreatment of her.

**Matresha**

Matresha, the young daughter of a poor landlady from whom Stavrogin rented a room in order to carry on an affair with the maid of his mistress, appears in the novel only in Stavrogin's confession in the chapter "At Tixon's". She is falsely accused of stealing Stavrogin's penknife by her mother and beaten, after which she falls into delirium. She commits suicide after Stavrogin rapes her. In her case, the motivation is clearly one of despair.

Before her death Matresha enters a period of delirium during which she states that she killed God, not by her suicide, but by her forced transgression of the laws of morality: «Я дескать Бога убила». (11:18) The victim of a heinous crime, of Stavrogin's (or someone else's) perverted sensuality, she senses that the universal moral order has been destroyed. And, indeed, Stavrogin from whom she expected love and protection, abuses her trust. Nonetheless, her

---

24 The publisher, Majkov refused to publish the chapter "At Tixon's" because of the scene which mentions the rape by Stavrogin of the young girl, Matresha. Critics are divided on whether to consider the chapter a valid part of the text.

25 The rape itself is not actually presented and its actual occurrence is not fully established. The incident is denied by Stavrogin in the conversation with Tixon (when he states that it was imaginary) and in a later conversation with Kirillov (when he states that it was not he who abused the girl).
innocent statement about killing God inversely relates her death to the abstract, 'philosophical' death of Kirillov, who intends to kill God by his suicide. Whereas Kirillov in his pride intends to kill God to replace him, the opposite is true in Matresha's case. In her humility she absorbs the guilt for the crime perpetrated against her, believing that by her actions she killed God.

Matresha embodies characteristics which are idealized in the kenotic ideal of the people: she is meek, accepts suffering, (she accepts unjust punishments without complaint or accusations), and she accepts guilt although she is guiltless. These attributes are noticed by Stavrogin, who states that he felt no resentment from her although she was beaten by her mother because of his false accusation about the missing penknife:

Девочка, поплакав, стала еще молчающее; на меня же, я убежден, не имела злобного чувства. Впрочем, наверно, был некоторый стыд за то, что ее наказали в таком виде при мне...
Но и в стыде этом она, как ребенок, винила, наверно, одну себя. (11:14-15)

The place where Matresha dies reinforces her meek and helpless position - she dies in a room described as a chicken coop (она вошла в крошечный чулан, вроде курятника, 11:18). The fate of the chicken is certain death, slaughter, and Matresha is resigned (покорный) to her fate.

The description of her suicide includes numerous references to time. It seems to the "voyeur" of her death, Stavrogin, that it passes quite slowly. (This parallels Petr Verxovenskij's perception of time while waiting for Kirillov's shot). The mention of time passing contrasts with idea of the 'end of time' -- the ecstatic moment which transcends this life. The slow passage of time reinforces the notion that the child's suicide is a crime committed against her.

Наконец, тихо отворил дверь, запер ее моим ключом и пошел к чуланчику. Он был прикрыт, но не заперт; я знал, что он не запирался, но я отворить не хотел, а поднялся на цыпочки и стал глядеть в щель. В это самое мгновение, подымаясь на цыпочки, я припомнил, что когда сидел у окна
и смотрел на красного паука и забылся, то думал о том, как я приподнимусь на цыпочки и достану глазом до этой щелки. Вставляя здесь эту мелочь, хочу непременно доказать, до какой степени ясственно я владел моими умственными способностями, [а, стало быть, не сумасшедший и за все отвечая.] 26 Я долго глядел в щель, там было темно, но не совершенно. Наконец я разглядел, что было надо... (11:19)

This passage evinces a plethora of images and themes which permeate the novel, including darkness, death, insanity, responsibility for actions. The little cubicle in which Matresha commits suicide is dark - her suicide is not a movement towards light. Stavrogin, however, is capable of seeing into the darkness. Symbolically, this passage indicates Stavrogin's unreadiness to face his murder of a child whom he drives to suicide. He looks through the chinks of the door, but does not open the door although it is unlocked. This emphasis on the closed door increases the significance of the image of the door in Stavrogin's suicide. At the time of Matresha's death, Stavrogin is not ready to open the door, he is not ready to renounce his pride nor is he ready to transfer his detached super-human attitude to the humane impulse to rescue her. The concept of not being ready is expanded in this chapter in Tixon's comment that Stavrogin isn't ready for a sacrifice, he hasn't been hardened enough. It is significant that at the time of Matresha's suicide, Stavrogin asserts his willpower, holding himself back for a certain length of time just to prove the strength of his will, clearly mistakes the very notion of genuine strength. Only afterwards, when he asserts that he was not insane at the time of her death and that he was responsible for his actions, does he begin to understand what the true phrase "I answer for all" -- за всё отвечай -- indicates. This acceptance of guilt profoundly changes Stavrogin's life; Matresha's death mortally wounds him (смертельно уязвленного) and saves him. Tixon states that Stavrogin's suffering on account of the young girl's death leads him to the option of redemption:

26 The passage in brackets is from the variant, 12:113.
Matresha's death causes Stavrogin to understand that a man like himself -- a man who violated and 'killed' a child has no way out, but to kill himself. His suffering and his guilt lead him to Hamlet's question -- "to be or not to be" -- and he decides "not to be". As Stavrogin himself points out, a crime against an innocent is unforgivable, according to the Bible. Tixon gives Stavrogin hope, however, stating that it is to his credit that he senses the full depth of his sin.²⁷

The sordidness of Stavrogin's crime, a crime against a child, is emphasized by the description of Matresha's death. While Stavrogin is waiting, spiders and flies capture his attention. The lowliness (помпция), reminiscent of the Natural School, of the scene illustrates the low ebb of Stavrogin's moral state. The spider symbolizes above all Stavrogin himself, who caught the innocent in his net, sucked her life out of her and then watched her die.

The image of the spider, which here is associated with Matresha's death, reappears later in the novel in Kirillov's comment that 'all is good including the spider and death.'²⁸ The repetition of the spider-motif and similar sordidness of description link Matresha's death to that of Kirillov, demonstrating from a new angle the insubstantiality of his theories.

²⁷ Writers from Radishchev to Tolstoi (Resurrection) have addressed this situation, indicating its pervasiveness in Russian society. This concern is explicitly addressed in The Notebooks for the Possessed in the following passage: "In the Prince's note on the rape there is this spot: ..."I did all this as a gentleman would, as an idle man, uprooted from the soil. Even though I can see that most of the fault lay with my own evil will, and not with the environment alone,... Of course,...nobody commits crimes such as mine; yet all of them (those uprooted from the soil) are doing the same, though on a smaller scale, and not quite as strong. Many of them don't even notice their own dirty game and consider themselves to be honest men"... etc." (trans. by Victor Terras, 367)

Kirillov

Kirillov's suicide has received almost as much attention from critics as has Stavrogin's. He is planning to usurp God's place, and by an emulation of Christ's death, he plans to transform the world. Given these goals, it is natural that his speech is imbued with Luciferian images of regeneration and immortality, as evidenced by the following passage:

"...Будет новый человек, счастливый и гордый. Кому будет все равно, жить или не жить, тот будет новый человек. Кто победит боль и страх, тот сам бог будет. А тот бог не будет.
-- Стало быть, тот бог есть же, по-вашему?
-- Его нет, но он есть.... Тогда историю будут делить на две части: от гориллы до уничтожения бога и от уничтожения бога до...
-- До гориллы?
-- ...До перемены земли и человека физически. Будет богом человек и переменится физически. И мир переменится, и дела переменятся, и все чувства.(10:93-94)

But Kirillov's discourse stems from the scientific approach to creation and is blasphemous.

Actually the division of history made in the above quote corresponds to the two phases of the novel: the chaos and the aftermath. After the chaos and the multitude of deaths in the novel, many characters are transformed. The transformation of man and the earth parallels the apocalyptic transformation. Kirillov's theories are connected to apocalyptic imagery by the numerous references in the novel about time becoming eternity. Kirillov is also linked to apocalyptic imagery by Fed'ka's statement that he lectures to him about the apocalypse:

"...Алексей Нильич, будучи философом, тебе истинного бога, творца создателя, многократно объяснял и о сотворении мира, равно и будущих судеб и преображения всякой твари и всякого зверя из книги Апокалипсиса. (10:428)
This religious symbolism parallels and reinforces the imagery of transformation established in the epigraph in a counterpoint technique. The ultimate goal of true transformations is universal harmony, but as Alexandra Lyngstad demonstrates -- Kirillov's suicide is more than a simple assertion of freedom, such as often occurs in Schiller's works. Instead it is a denial of the creation, reduced to an "infernal system" as it is.

Kirillov unites certain qualities of Myshkin and Ippolit: like the former he experiences moments of "eternal harmony" (VII, 614), like the latter he is in rebellion against the laws of nature. He even uses the same examples as Ippolit. Thus he calls Christ "that for which ..[the earth] was created" and, he says, if "the laws of nature did not spare Him, did not even spare their own miracle..., the very laws of the planet are a lie and a farce of the devil" (VII, 643). Once more nature is seen as an infernal system, and suicide is the vehicle of liberation.29 (46-47)

Kirillov's plans, based as they are on the premise that God does not exist, are erroneous and sacrilegious and cannot lead to universal harmony. Kirillov's last moments before death, notably his biting of Petr's hand, are those of a rabid animal. The would-be God dies in a state of animal terror.

Kirillov's discourse (as distinct from his contemptible actions in the final moments) nonetheless adds to the accumulation of images of duty, humility and acceptance of sins as introduced by the previous suicides, both in the text and the subtexts. His intentions, however blasphemous they may be, associate the question of suicide with the idea of self-sacrifice for the transformation of mankind. The only pure form of self-sacrifice, however, is the humble emulation of Christ's kenosis.

Stavrogin's Suicide

The symbolic implications associated with Stavrogin's suicide will be analyzed in depth in the conclusion. Here Stavrogin's statements about suicide will be examined in order to demonstrate that his action is the result of a positive development. Stavrogin's comments about suicide encompass a wide range of possible motivations - from boredom and shame, to forgiveness and magnanimity. Despite the obvious vacillation, there is a certain progression - from the lower, more egoistical causes to the higher, more sublime issues.

The first intimations that Stavrogin has considered the issue of suicide occur in a conversation with Kirillov. Stavrogin states that he understands committing suicide if one has committed a heinous crime, as he has done:

- Я, конечно, понимаю застрелиться, - начал опять, несколько нахмурившись, Николай Всеволодович, после долгого, трехминутного задумчивого молчания, - я иногда сам представлял, и тут всегда какая-то новая мысль: если бы сделать злодейство или, главное, стыд, то есть позор, только очень подлый и ...смешной, так что запомнят люди на тысячу лет и плавать будут тысячу лет, и вдруг мысль «Один удар в висок, и ничего не будет». Какое дело тогда до людей и что они будут плевать тысячу лет, не так ли? (10:187)

This statement links suicide to the avoidance of contempt and ridicule - there is no intimation of duty, much less of expiation.

Numerous comments on suicide appear in his written 'confession' in the chapter "At Tixon's." Here, suicide is linked to boredom, furthering the subtextual links to the Byronic or Lermontovian hero.

Я до того скучал, что, думаю, мог бы повеситься, и если не повесился, то потому, что все еще чего-то надеялся, так же как и всю жизнь. (12:110)
In the above passage, suicide is averted because of hope, implying that without hope there is no reason to live.\textsuperscript{30} The next allusion to suicide, also in the variant to the chapter "At Tixon's" centers on man’s petty self-satisfaction \textit{пощлясть}:

\begin{quote}
А впрочем, если бы люди не были излишне собой довольны, то никто бы не захотел жить. (12:110)
\end{quote}

This remark is made in a flippant tone in response to a joke, and only obliquely addresses the question of suicide, but it subtly suggests that when dissatisfaction with oneself begins, suicide is one way out. Stavrogin has developed at least this far; he is capable of feeling dissatisfaction with himself, although the concept of self-judgement has not yet matured. The next reference to suicide overtly addresses the reasons for not killing oneself - unworthiness and fear:

\begin{quote}
Если бы можно, я бы убил себя; но я чувствовал себя недостойным смерти. Впрочем, я не потому не убил себя, а из страха же. Из страха убивают себя, но из страха же и остаются в жизни: человек начинает не смей убить себя, и самое дело становится немыслимым. (12:111)
\end{quote}

Although Stavrogin rejects the notion of unworthiness, the mere fact it is mentioned, intimates his growing awareness of not being worthy of death. His feelings of unworthiness evolve into suffering brought upon by the realization of the gravity of his sin. His feelings of unworthiness are also the result of a moral self-judgement. This self-judgement demonstrates a more elevated level of self-awareness. His spiritual boredom has been replaced by self-reproach. Stavrogin also mentions fear both as a reason to kill oneself and to refrain from killing oneself. The reference to the fear which prevents death, i.e. the fear of the afterlife, recalls Kirillov's statement that there are 'two reasons why people refrain from suicide' - fear and pain. Stavrogin's fear also

\textsuperscript{30} It should be noted that hope is connected at the end of the novel with Liza - his last hope. This leads to the interpretation that Stavrogin died because his hope in this world no longer existed in this world.
is the result of his moral self-judgement, thus affirming his original notion that he was unworthy of death.

Apparently Stavrogin had considered suicide for at least a year before he married Lebjadkina, as demonstrated by the following passage, from Stavrogin's confession in the chapter "At Tixon's".

В это же время, но вовсе не почему-нибудь, пришла мне идея искалечить как-нибудь жизнь, но только как можно противнее. Я уже с год назад помышлял застрелиться; представилось нечто получше. (11:20)

From the above statement, one may infer that Stavrogin had considered suicide even before Matresha's suicide, but at that stage for a less worthy reason. Then Stavrogin was not repentant, but merely wanted to vent his spite on others. He decided to marry the crippled Mar'ja Lebjadkina in order to cripple (искалечить) his life. In contrast to the base emotions expressed in the above passage, Stavrogin evinces noble ideals in his dream about "The Golden Age":

Мечта, самая невероятная из всех, какие были, которой всё человечество, всю свою жизнь отдавало все свои силы, для которой всем жертвовало, для которой умирали на крестах и убивались пророки, без которой народы не хотят жить и не могут даже и умереть. (11:21)

The above passage demonstrates that in Stavrogin has retained the humanistic idealistic striving towards the sublime imbibed under Stepan Verxovenskij's tutelage. The ideals expressed in the dream about "The Golden Age" are reminiscent of the knightly ideals of honor and duty, and more importantly, evoke images of Christ's crucifixion. In this passage suicide is equated with self-sacrifice and although it is the most improbable ideal, this ideal exists for Stavrogin. (Although at this point Stavrogin is not carried away by his ideals, at a later point in the novel Kirillow states that Stavrogin was carried away by an idea.) Kirillow's actions are governed by a different type of ideal. Stavrogin, in his letter to Dasha, mentions Kirillow and suicide in the following passage which reveals Kirillow's insanity:
Великодушный Кириллов не вынес идееи и -- застрелился; но ведь я вижу, что он был великодушен потому, что не в здравом рассудке. (10:514)

In the above passage, suicide is directly associated to generosity. The association of suicide with magnanimity in the final letter has been correctly noted by the critic E. Loginovskaja, who asserts that Stavrogin's suicide is proof that he himself is capable of magnanimity (although he does not realize it):

Ставрогин раскрывается здесь до конца, как новый тип, как полное выражение героя предыдущей эпохи, ведущее к разложению и к гибели - к самоубийству. Но то же самоубийство - доказательство, что он все же способен (несмотря на все его сомнения) «показать величайшие». Это «спасает» героя, оставляя ему противоречивость и, значит, сложность натуры.31

The association between magnanimity and suicide is not accidental. An examination of Stavrogin's development in the notebooks for the novel offers evidence that Dostoevskij repeatedly associated the regeneration of his character both with a heroic act and with suicide, as he had in his conception of the character in his notes for The Life of a Great Sinner. Wasiolek correctly notes and comments on the repeated correlation between Stavrogin's salvation and suicide:

More than once, he (Dostoevskij) speaks of the Prince as a "new man," but after every attempt at the regeneration of the Prince - whether by religious penance or love for the Ward - Dostoevsky adds: "Immediately thereafter he shoot(s) himself."32

31 Loginovskaja, Мотив демонизма в Бесах Достоевского, 49.

32 The Notebooks for The Possessed, 170. In an entry dated March 11, 1870, Stavrogin's regeneration is also associated with insanity: "He...has come to town to make amends for his past errors, injustices, etc. Absolutely. He makes peace with those whom he had insulted, endures a slap in the face. He defends blasphemy, locates the murderers....henceforth he will be a true Russian, and that one must believe even in what he once said at Golubov's (that
It is evident that Stavrogin's suicide, although an anomaly in Dostoevskij's oeuvre, is an act of "generosity." Although the motivation for his suicide is never fully revealed, it transcends temporal concerns. Stavrogin's suicide is differentiated from the other suicides in the novel because it suggests a spiritual feat which will expiate his sins. This conclusion is supported by the symbolic differences in the depictions of the suicides in the novel. In the description of all four suicides, the chronotope of the door - be it open or closed - carries significance. In Kirillov's postulations, it will be Kirillov, himself, who opens the door and saves the world. But his pride and his reversion to an animal-like level expose his pseudo-sublime intentions: he is in a closed room and acts like a rabid dog, biting Verxovenskij's hand. The unknown young boy, similarly, is in a closed room of an inn; in fact, after his death, the door had to be broken down. Matresha hangs herself in little room next to the lavatory. As has been mentioned, the door is not locked but merely closed, and Stavrogin does not open the door. The chronotope of the open door is associated only with Stavrogin's suicide, indicating that only his action indicates a move towards Christ who said "I am the door; anyone who comes into the fold through me shall be safe." (John 10:9) Stavrogin is the only suicide who makes a genuine atonement for his sins.

In conclusion, the four suicides of the novel offer four variations on the theme of self-destruction. The boy's suicide is a rash impulse, made possible because of the false societal values imbibed by him. Matresha's suicide is that of a victim driven to despair. Kirillov's suicide is a mad attempt to achieve equality with God. Only Stavrogin's is an acceptable act of expiation for sins fully acknowledged.

---

Russia and the Russian idea will save mankind). He prays before icons, etc....He tells the Ward that...they will be resurrected together, if only she would share his convictions. And then he suddenly shoots himself. (A mysterious personage, declared insane.)' (The Notebooks for The Possessed, 179).
CHAPTER VI
STAVROGIN'S CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The question of Stavrogin's character development within the novel has generally been neglected. The majority of critics assert that Stavrogin's character is stagnant: neither hot nor cold, i.e. that he does not advance from a 'lukewarm' position. In addition, Stavrogin is considered a proud soul, whose challenge to the readers of his confession in the chapter "At Tixon's" is repeated and augmented by his suicide. This chapter will dispel assertions of the type that George Panichas makes in The Burden of Vision:

...there is no sense of aspiration at all, no ascent of the "living soul" (Genesis 2:7) ...His character shows a complete lack of positive development... Stavrogin can travel in only one direction, out of a primordial past into a primordial chaos, evincing the total denial of the possibility of new life.

Askol'dov, in his article "Religiozno-ëticheskoe znachenie Dostoevskogo," touches on the contradictory attributes of his character - a man without passion or inclination, but full of strength:

1 For example, Geir Kjetsaa asserts that "From this "lukewarm" man who has completely lost contact with the people and his native earth, nothing new can ever come. Judgement on this gloomy candidate for suicide is passed by the author when he quotes from the Revelation (X, 497; XI, 11)..." (Dostoevsky and His New Testament, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1984, 14). Polonskij discusses Stavrogin's development only in terms of his pre-history, i.e. before the timeframe of the novel. See "Nikolaj Stavrogin i roman "Besy"" in Grossman and V. Polonskij, Spor o Bakunine i Dostoevskom. L.: Gos. Izd, 1926.

Askol'dov asserts that Stavrogin makes a turn away from evil, but questions whether Stavrogin turns towards good. He reaches the conclusion that Stavrogin's change is ultimately a nullification of life and reflects neither the triumph of good nor of evil:

Но относительно Ставрогина именно и приходится констатировать явный поворот от зла. Конечно, в этом повороте не видно и никакой направленности к доброму. Это именно та нулевая точка безразличия, на которой человек делается нежизнеспособным. Если это не победа добра, то и не победа зла, какая-то игра в ничью в эмпирическом плане жизни. (23)

A close examination of Stavrogin's actions will reveal that there is character development, but that it is not smooth and linear, instead progressing in fits and starts or, even, simultaneously in two opposite directions. In a sense Stavrogin's progression recalls many of the steps envisioned in the plans for Dostoevskij's unfinished work The Life of a Great Sinner:

Dostoevsky planned to take his hero [of The Life of a Great Sinner] in the thirties and forties through the suffering of childhood, boarding school, flight and complicity in murder, life in a monastery and the beneficent influence of Tikhon Zadonsky, exposure to the world and interest in various contemporary political and philosophical movements such as Atheism and Positivism and finally, after much sin, cruelty, suffering, and ambivalent feeling, to a religious crisis and regeneration in love, humility, faith, and Christ.4


4 Wasiolek, ed. The Notebooks for the Possessed, 52.
This chapter will examine Stavrogin's actions more or less in the order in which they are presented in the novel and will include the positive as well as the negative, since any attempt at revaluation must incorporate all facets. This order of presentation will demonstrate that Stavrogin's movement away from evil towards good is not steady, yet leads to the ultimate redemption; positive actions are followed by seemingly complete reversals. These 'reversals' reflect Stavrogin's intense struggles both with his inner 'demon' and with Petr Verxovenskij's destructive influence. In addition, Stavrogin's 'reversals' and alternations indicate his evolution through all the 'typical' phases through which the Russian intelligent went since the forties: the idealist-humanist, the Byronic-Lermontovian hero, the Westernizer, the radical extremist, the Socialist Christian.\(^5\) Dostoevskij depicts these types in their extreme forms in order to elucidate possible dangers of each ideology. In other words, whereas Turgenev typified the progression of the Russian aristocrat and intelligentsia in society in a linear manner novel by novel, Dostoevskij embodies the entire development in just one novel, in just one character, namely Stavrogin.\(^6\) As will be seen, Stavrogin's final stage is the answer to all of the disillusionment which has troubled 'the superfluous man'; his kenotic attitude is the answer to the intelligentsia's problems, just as the Christo-centric world-view of Dostoevskij advocates a return to the ideal of Christ.\(^7\)

---

\(^5\) This progression recalls Dostoevskij's plans for a novel titled "The Atheist" which was never written in which the hero successively moves through various spiritual ideologies. Billington relates this progression as follows: "From atheism his hero is to move on to become a Slavophile, Westernizer, Catholic, flagellant sectarian, and "finds at last salvation in the Russian soil, the Russian Savior, and the Russian God."(The Icon and the Axe, 418) See our discussion in chapter 3 on Atheism and The Life of a Great Sinner as pre-texts of Besy. Significantly, Dostoevskij in his letter to A. N. Majkov of May, 1869 terms his novel Atheism an allegory.

\(^6\) Frank, in his article "The Masks of Stavrogin" notes that cultural evolution from the 30's to the beginning of the 70's form the background for the action: "Stepan Trofimovich is here portrayed against the background of a brilliantly parodistic evocation of Russian culture from the 1830's to the point at which the novel begins in 1869-1870." (664).

\(^7\) The progression of the Russian spirit throughout history concerned Dostoevskij in the years before he began to write Besy. In his letter to A. N. Majkov of May 1869 he discusses two ideas for epics, the second of which may be reflected in Besy. "...въ другой уже балладѣ, перейдя къ изображению конца цыганскаго и начала 16-го столѣтія въ Европѣ, Италіи, Панета, искусства храмовъ, Рафаэля, поклоненія Аполлону Бельведерскому, первыхъ слуховъ о Реформѣ,
This vision of Stavrogin as returning to Christ is consistent with the theme of the double discussed in Chapter 1. The new ideas which permeate society and are successively illustrated or expounded by Stavrogin may be construed as successive masks which he discards. Stavrogin and his contemporaries based their ideologies on the supposedly original 'new ideas' espoused by Stepan Trofimovich, who, in his turn, picked from ideas "floating about":

Доходили разные слухи. Факты были вообще известны более или менее, но очевидно было, что кроме фактов явились и какие-то сопровождавшие их идеи, и, главное, в чрезмерном количестве. А это-то и смущало: никак невозможно было примениться и в точности узнать, что именно означали эти идеи? (10:20)

Disillusionment soon sets in however. Stepan Verxovenskij, in the following statement, discerns the falsity in even the best of the Socialist-Romantic ideas "floating about":

И, знаете, все от той же неодиссениности, сентиментальности! Их пленяет не реализм, а чувствительная, идеальная сторона социализма, так сказать, религиозный оттенок его, поэзия его... с чужого голоса, разумеется. (10:63)

Stepan further states that romanticism in many socialists is combined with materialism -- not in the philosophical, but in the purely everyday or commonplace (бытовой), sense:

о Лютере, об Америке, об золоте, объ Испании и Англии, - пьэя, горячая картина, въ параллель со всѣмъ предыдущими русскими картинами; - во съ намеками о будущности этой картины, о будущей науки, объ атеизмѣ, о правахъ человѣчества, созидаемыхъ по Западному, а не по нашему, что и послужило источникомъ всего, что есть и что будетъ." (In Dostoevskij, stat’i i materialy, ed. A.S. Dolinin, 423). Dostoevskij by stating that this epic would parallel the first epic, implies the same Pan-Slavic resolution with which he would end the first: "...и полагается первый камень о будущемъ главенствѣ на Востокѣ, расширяется кругъ Русской будущности, полагается мысль не только великаго государства, но и пѣлаго новаго мѣра, которому суждено обновить христианство всеславянской православной идеей и вмѣстѣ въ человѣчество новую мысль. (423).
It is ironic that Stepan's comments apply as well to his own behavioral patterns. He speaks from experience, having just squandered his son's estate.

The aura of mystery surrounding the political ideas of socialist theory corresponds to that mystery which shrouds Stavrogin's motivations. On the purely artistic plane, the spiritual level of the novel parallels the political level. This correspondence is one indication of the integrity, the aesthetic cohesiveness, of the text. Stavrogin's development is set against the background of the political plot line of the novel. His quest closely follows various revolutionary ideologies. "Seduced" by Stepan's romantic liberalism, he is momentarily attracted to radicalism, but the very naive idealism of early socialism also saves him from wholeheartedly joining the radicals who succeeded the liberals.

Part 1 - Sublime Ideals

Stavrogin in his youth is close to Stepan Trofimovich, who is the living embodiment of the idealistic humanism so typical of the forties. In the very first descriptions Stavrogin imbibes all the highest and noblest ideals under Stepan's tutelage:

Степан Трофимович сумел дотронуться в сердце своего друга до глубочайших струн и вызвать в нем первое, еще неопределенное ощущение той вековечной, священной тоски, которую иная избранная душа, раз вкусив и познав, уже не променяет потом никогда на дешевое удовлетворение. (Есть и такие любители, которые тоской этой дорожат более самого радикального удовлетворения, если бы даже таковое и было возможно.) (10:35)
This initial influence reflects the ideological heritage of the men of the forties; Granovskij, Herzen and others of the "older generation." Stavrogin will never abandon these ideals and misguided as they are, they will also sustain his noble impulses. It will take him a long time to discard these pseudo-ideals for the genuine kenotic vision.

**The Superfluous Man**

The dubious nature of Stavrogin's 'sacred longings' is immediately brought out by the rumors of his wild and dissipated actions in Petersburg. These actions conform to those of the Lermontovian hero. Stavrogin, like Pechorin, duels and kills without compunction. Like Pechorin, he seduces women with no regret. The Petersburg setting also links Stavrogin to the tradition of Gogol's demonic city. Petersburg is the setting for Stavrogin's heinous crime against the young girl Matresha and in Petersburg he marries Mar'ja, the cripple. All of these actions serve to place the young Stavrogin into the tradition of the aristocratic, superfluous man.

**Rebuttal to Rationalism**

The rumors of Stavrogin's actions in Petersburg are followed by the delineation of his actions upon his return to the 'family nest' (родное гнездо). The time frame of this action is four year previous to the action of Parts 2 and 3. Stavrogin appears as an elegant young man who conforms to the strictures of society yet he suddenly breaks out of the rules set by polite society. He performs three pranks (дерзости), which shock and outrage polite society:

Наш принц вдруг, ни с того ни с сего, сделал две-три невозможные дерзости разным лицам, то есть главное именно в том состояло, что дерзости эти совсем незначительные, совершенно ни на что не похожие, совсем не

---

8 Here, I concur with Richard Peace, who states that all the references to Lermontov, Lunin and Pushkin function "to connect Stavrogin with a general social phenomenon rather than with any particular person ..." (Dostoyevsky, 152).
These pranks are petty actions and display a disregard for social conventions, and in this sense they illustrate a continuation of the Lermontovian tone. But they also demonstrate an impact of Western ideas, indicating an attempt to free oneself from conformity, to affirm individualism. This display of freedom which incurs the wrath of society is reminiscent of the underground man's vile actions inspired by the desire to be original at any cost. In this sense, Stavrogin's pranks are a response to those, like Chernyshevskij, who espoused a rational motivation for human behavior. Interestingly, Stavrogin's pranks also illustrate one fundamental aspect of Fourier's teachings. Fourier upheld that society restricts passions and that this restriction causes misery and vice. Stavrogin refers to Fourier in his discussion with Liputin when he is making the rounds apologizing to those whom he offended:

- Ба, ба! что я вижу! - вскричал Nicolas, вдруг заметив на самом видном месте, на столе, том Консидерана. - Да уж не фурьерист ли вы? Ведь чего доброго! (10:44)

Needless to say, Fourier's word is fairly low on the hierarchical scale of the authoritative word. Ironically, Stavrogin's pranks, the free expression of his impulses against convention, results in the destruction of social harmony, thereby refuting Fourier's premise. Similarly, Liputin's passions, his miserliness, would undermine the very social harmony of the future Utopia of which he dreams. Stavrogin is aware of the futility of any universal harmony in the phalansteries because man's petty nature, vividly illustrated in Besy by the character of Liputin, precludes such harmony:

О господине Ставрогине вся главная речь впереди; но теперь отмечу, ради курьеза, что из всех впечатлений его, за все время, проведенное им в нашем городе, всего речь отпечаталась в его памяти невзрачая и чуть не подленькая фигурка губернского чиновничичка, ревнивая и семейного грубого деспота, скряги и процентщика, запиравшего остатки от обеда и отарки на ключ, и в то же время яростного сектатора бог знает какой будущей «социальной гармонии», упивавшегося по ночам восторгами пред фантастическими картинами будущей фаланстеры, ближайшее осуществление которой в России и в нашей губернии он верил как в свое собственное существование. И это там, где сам же он скопил себе «домишко», где во второй раз женился и взял за женой девоначки, где, может быть, на сто верст кругом не было ни одного человека, начиная с него первого, хоть бы с виду только похожего на будущего члена «всемирно-общечеловеческой социальной республики и гармонии».

(10:45)

This passage is a rebuttal to the social plans not only of Fourier, but also of Chernyshevskij, repeating the arguments of the Underground Man. Stavrogin is beginning to free himself from Socialist utopianism.

Although the concept of freedom for self-expression offers one motivation for Stavrogin's pranks, brain fever is offered as another plausible reason. After his recovery Stavrogin travels throughout Europe and to Egypt and Jerusalem. He accompanies a scientific expedition to Iceland and studies in a German university. Then he spends time in Paris and Switzerland. Reports from Liza's mother, Praskov'ja Ivanovna Drozdova, indicate that Liza tries to make Stavrogin jealous by encouraging the attentions of another man, Petr Verxovenskij. Stavrogin, however, does not become jealous but rather befriends him, which in turn infuriates Liza. This indifference to the feminine wiles is reminiscent of Lermontov's hero Pechorin, who also befriends his rival as long as it suits him. This resolution to the rivalry situation also evokes the 'proper, rational' mode of behavior for a man whose beloved prefers another as prescribed by Chernyshevskij in his work What's To Be Done? which became
the sacred writ of the radicals. 10 Actually Dostoevskij’s depiction parodies Chernyshevskij’s ideal resolution to love relationships since Liza does not behave in an ‘enlightened’ manner. The parody continues throughout the chapter "Another’s Sins." Varvara Stavrogina proposes that Stepan Verxovenskij marry Dasha in order to cover up her supposed relationship with Stavrogin.

There is a great deal of speculation about Stavrogin’s secrets. In particular Liputin continues to cast aspersions on Stavrogin’s character, mentioning his Petersburg period:

- Алексей Нильич слишком хорошо знают Николая Всеволодовича, - раздражительно продолжал он, - но только скрывают-с. А что вы спрашиваете про капитана Лебядкина, то тот раньше всех нас с ним познакомился, в Петербурге, лет пять или шесть тому, в ту малоизвестную, если можно так выразиться, эпоху жизни Николая Всеволодовича, когда еще он и не думал нас здесь привезти своим осчастливить. Наш принц, надо заключить, довольно странный тогда выбор знакомства в Петербурге около себя завел. Тогда вот и с Алексеем Нильичем, кажется, познакомились. (10:83-84)

The rumors about Stavrogin include his marriage to Mar’ja and hint about the seduction of Dasha.

A New Idea

Stavrogin’s first physical appearance within the actual time-frame of the novel occurs in the chapter "The Wise Serpent" at the end of Part One. Before Stavrogin’s actual appearance, his mother discusses to her friend a letter she had received six days earlier about Nikolaj. In the anonymous letter Stavrogin is said to have gone mad and that a lame woman will play an important role in

10 This aspect of Chernyshevskij’s novel is also parodied in the relationship between Lebjadkin and the Virginskij couple.
her life. Even more important, Varvara mentions the existence of Stavrogin's enemies:

В нем какой-то негодяй уверяет меня, что Николай Всеволодович сошел с ума и что мне надо бояться какой-то хромой женщину, которая «будет играть в судьбе моей чрезвычайную роль», я запомнила выражение. Сообразив и зная, что у Николая Всеволодовича чрезвычайно много врагов, я тотчас же послала за одним здесь человеком, за одним тайным и самым мстительным и презренным из всех врагов его, и из разговоров с ним мигом убедилась в презренном происхождении анонимы. (10:135)

Thus Stavrogin's insanity is again brought up. The mention of a secret and vindictive enemy is a theme that is not fully developed throughout the novel, but will be pointed out as we progress. The anonymous writer of the letter is most likely Petr Verxovenskij.

Stavrogin appears after Petr's unexpected arrival during the conclave scene in which all the household as well as Liza, Lebjadkin, his sister the lame woman, Shatov and Dasha are present. Petr's entrance functions as a delaying device and, in fact, overshadows Stavrogin's quiet entrance. The narrator mentions that four years before, Stavrogin's face had been like a mask, but now was truly beautiful perhaps because of a new thought. The narrator does not suggest what the new idea might be, but his comments suggest that Stavrogin has shed his previous mask under the influence of a new idea:

Но одно поразило меня: прежде хоть и считали его красавцем, но лице его действительно «походило на маску», как выражались некоторые из злорезных дам нашего общества. Теперь же, - теперь же, не знаю почему, он с первого же взгляда показался мне решительным, неоспоримым красавцем, так что уже никак нельзя было сказать, что лицо его походит на маску. Не оттого ли, что он стал чуть-чуть бледнее, чем прежде, и, кажется, несколько похудел? Или, может быть, какая-нибудь новая мысль светилась теперь в его взгляде? (10:145)
The first question Varvara asks her son is whether Mar'ja is his legal wife. Stavrogin proffers no answer and addresses Mar'ja, who wants to kneel at his feet: - А мне можно...сейчас...стать пред вами на колени? (10:146) The fact that Mar'ja, the holy *juridivaja*, the symbol of the Mother of God, innocence and the quintessential Russian spirit wants to kneel in front of him has great significance. This scene foregrounds the notion that Stavrogin will become the savior of the Russian spirit by means of his emulation of Christ. At this point, however, Stavrogin is still an outsider (посторонний человек):

-Подумайте о том, что вы девушка, а я хоть и самый преданный друг ваш, но все же вам посторонний человек, не муж, не отец, не женех. (10:146)

The word - посторонний - means an outsider, but another meaning is 'not genuine, true or proper.' The implication that this is not the true Stavrogin repeats the theme of duality and the motif of the mask. It also indicates that he is under the influence of Western thoughts as alien to the Russian as the посторонний человек. Under Mar'ja's influence, however, after he escorts her home, he returns in a seemingly happy and peaceful spirit. Here the contact with the true spirit of Russia embodied in Mar'ja exerts a positive influence on Stavrogin:

Он был весел и спокоен. Может, что-нибудь с ним случилось сейчас очень хорошее, еще нам неизвестное; но он, казалось, был даже чем-то особенно довolen. (10:155)

Nonetheless, his refusal to reveal publicly his earlier marriage to Mar'ja Lebjadkina symbolically indicates his estrangement from the Russian spirit. During his absence, Petr Verxovenskij discusses Stavrogin's relationship to the Lebjadkins. Petr describes Stavrogin's past in terms of eccentricity.

- Нет, это было нечто выше чудачества и, уверяю вас, нечто даже святое! (10:151)

In this scene Petr prevents Stavrogin from talking with Dasha, an action which signifies Petr's attempt to separate Stavrogin from his guardian 'angel.'
It is at this point that Shatov slaps Stavrogin (10:164) and the narrator's comments about Stavrogin (cold-blooded, would kill in a duel, with a coldness and cruelty greater than Lunin's and Lermontov's), emphasize the affinity between him and the 'superfluous' man, the Lermontovian/Byronic hero.\textsuperscript{11} He seems to be testing his strength, struggling to overcome his urge to retaliate:

Он молчал, смотрел на Шатова и бледтел как рубашка. Но странно, взор его как бы погасал. Через десять секунд глаза его смотрел холодно и - я убежден, что не лгу, - спокойно. Только бледен он был ужасно. Разумеется, я не знаю, что было внутри человека, я видел снаружи. Мне кажется, если бы был такой человек, который схватил бы, например, раскаленную докрасна железную полосу и зажал в руке, с целью измерить свою твердость, и затем, в продолжение десяти секунд, побеждал бы нестерпимую боль и кончил тем, что ее победил, то человек этот, кажется мне, вынес бы нечто похожее на то, что испытал теперь, в эти десять секунд, Николай Всеволодович. (10:166)

In the struggle to overcome his passions, his impulse to retaliate, Stavrogin overcomes his indecision. This action has been construed in various manners; as an attempt to display strength and as a Christian turning of the cheek. Both interpretations of this incident recognize Stavrogin's inner struggle.

**Part Two - Night**

Part Two of Besy depicts Stavrogin's descent into the murky activities of the revolutionaries and into the torturing memories of his past. Whereas the finale of Part 1 ends in the refusal to disclose his ties to Mar'ja, the spirit of Russia, Part 2 will end with this revelation. Other unveilings expose Stavrogin's complicity with the conspirators.

\textsuperscript{11} В злобе, разумеется, выходил прогресс против П-на, даже против Лермонтова. Злобы в Николае Всеволодовиче было, может быть, больше, чем в тех обоих вместе, но злоба эта была холодная, спокойная и, если можно так выразиться, разумная, стало быть, самая отвратительная и самая страшная, какая может быть (10:165).
Stavrogin reappears in part 2, where he has a conversation with Petr. Stavrogin remarks that he does not want to face anything squarely: - Я ничего и не хочу прямо ставить. (10:174) Although Petr Verxovenskij speaks of revolutionary business, Stavrogin's statement also reflects his emotional and marital status. In the same discussion, Stavrogin admits that he had promised his mother to propose to Liza. This indicates his intention to continue the deception, furthering the disparity between his actions and his words.

During the discussion between Petr and Stavrogin, the religious sect Castrates (Скотры) is mentioned. The Castrates live in the district and some are atheists, connected to Petr in revolutionary matters. The reference to this sect anticipates Petr's plan to establish a new order with Stavrogin as the leader, the Ivan Filippovich (the Christ). The reference hints at Stavrogin's involvement with this sect, a connection which is furthered by Liza's insinuations that Stavrogin is impotent. It is possible that Stavrogin passes through a phase during which he is associated with the Castrates.

Fed'ka represents another layer of society connected to the revolutionaries, the lower, criminal layer. Interestingly, despite his base actions, he has religious convictions. These two topics have in common the misuse of religion for subversive or revolutionary purposes.

During their discussion Petr endeavors to irritate Stavrogin to no avail. Stavrogin remains calm, so calm that when his mother enters after Petr's departure, as he sleeps he resembles a waxen figure, a corpse (...Он походил на бездушную восковую фигуру. 10:182). The adjective 'soul-less' (бездушный) has implications extending beyond that of death-like stillness. It represents the

---

12 Peace comments on the association of revolutionary movements with dissident sects and on the undercurrent of religious dissidence. He writes: "The identification of Stavrogin with the sects is not just a whim of Petr Verxovensky. In a letter of 1870 Dostoevsky himself explained that the hero of his projected novel, 'The Life of a Great Sinner' was, at one stage of his life to have become a member of the sects." (Dostoevsky, 171).

13 If we place this reference of the statue into the context of Russian Orthodoxy, it becomes imbued with negative, demonic and pagan connotations, since Orthodoxy forbids statues.
absence of a soul with all its metaphysical ramifications. This atheistic stage of Stavrogin's development is expanded in the comments of his servant, Aleksej Egorovich, as Stavrogin sets out on his night-time хождение. Aleksej blesses him, with the restriction that his activities are good:

- Благослови вас бог, сударь, но при начинании лишь добрых дел. (10:184)

This intimation that Stavrogin's activities may be nefarious is underscored by the remoteness of his destination, Epiphany Street (...но Богоявленская улица была все еще далеко. 10:184). Symbolically, Stavrogin's own Epiphany is also still distant.

Stavrogin's first destination is Kirillov, whose help he needs in the duel against Gaganov. Stavrogin here is responding to Gaganov's insulting letters, disproving the notion that he is ready to 'turn the other cheek.' In face of the possibility of being shot by Gaganov, Stavrogin comments on his own thoughts of suicide. He feels a new idea; if he had committed a repulsive crime which would be remembered for a thousand years, one shot could end it all. Stavrogin's musings confirm that his guilt still torments him. In the ensuing discussion, topics include moments of metaphysical understanding alluding to apocalyptic cessation of time when man will understand that all is good. In this conversation Kirillov asserts that he who teaches that all men are good, will end the world. Stavrogin responds that the one who taught that was crucified:


14 Peace points out that the name of the street literally means "Appearance of God," thereby combining "the hint of concealment with the hope of manifestation" (Dostoyevsky, 172).

15 In their discussion about the duel, there is mention of Pushkin who wrote an insulting letter to Hekkern. -Вы сказали, письма никто не получал; заметил Кириллов, - в бешенстве можно; пишут не раз. Пушкин Геккерну написал. (10:186) This may indicate, on one hand, a search for death, and on another, the playing of a role.
- Кто научит, что все хороши, тот мир закончит.
- Кто учили, того распяли. (10:189)

This cynical attitude toward Christ's passion emphasizes Stavrogin's continuing spiritual bankruptcy and his estrangement from the authoritative word of forgiveness.

From the lower floor of Kirillov's residence, Stavrogin ascends to Shatov's room, which is termed a светелка, i.e. a place of light. Here Shatov's explains why he slapped Stavrogin; it was for the lie (- Я за ваше падение...за ложь. 10:191) This is a serious rebuke since Shatov's word is fairly authoritative. In the symbolically higher, both physically and spiritually, space, a room on an upper floor, Stavrogin warns Shatov of impending danger. This warning is a positive action since by this action, Stavrogin disassociates himself from the revolutionaries.

During this conversation Shatov asks Stavrogin whether he understands why he married Мар'ja and why he is accepting punishment now:

- Знаете ли, знаете ли вы по крайней мере, - прокричал он, - для чего вы все это наделали и для чего решаетесь на такую кару теперь?
- Ваш вопрос умен и язвителен, но я вас тоже намерен удивить: да, я почти знаю, для чего я тогда женился и для чего решаю на такую «кару» теперь, как вы выразились. (10:194-195)

Shatov's question exposes Stavrogin's intention to castigate himself. In addition, Stavrogin requests Shatov to protect Мар'ja. But these actions are marred by a lack of love, the absence of which demonstrates Stavrogin alienation from the true faith. In fact, he apologizes for the fact that he cannot love Shatov. Nonetheless, his search for punishment, devoid of faith though it is, symbolizes the gradual illumination of his character. The motivation for this search may still be misguided, but it is evidence of his continuing feelings of guilt.
Criminal Activity

Upon leaving Shatov's, Stavrogin meets Fed'ka, the convict, who insinuates that Stavrogin needs his help. At this time, Stavrogin still has enough moral strength to refuse his offer to murder Mar'ja:

...не дам тебе не копейки, вперед мне ни на мосту и нигде не встречайся, нужны в тебе не имеву и не буду иметь...(10:205)

But Stavrogin in the following chapter not only gives Fed'ka money, but also advises him to continue robbing and murdering.

When Stavrogin meets Fedka the second time, he gives him 50 rubles, thus precipitating the Lebjadkins' murders. Stavrogin asks Fed'ka about the theft from the church, and whether he had killed the guard. When Fed'ka answers in the affirmative, Stavrogin tells him to go on stealing and murdering:

- Сторожа зарезал?
- То есть мы вместе и прибирали-с с тем сторожом, да уж потом, под утро, у речки, у нас взаймный спор вышел, кому мешок нести. Согрешил, облегчил его маненеко.
- Режь еще, обокради еще. (10:221)\(^\text{17}\)

---

\(^{16}\) The demonic imagery in this scene is expanded by Fed'ka's comment that all was confused, as if a devil had put the city in his basket and had shaken it up: (...) я бы мог руководствовать, потому здешний город - это все равно, что черт в корзине нес, да растрес. (10:206) This is of course reminiscent of Gogolian imagery and indicates the disarray of Stavrogin's spiritual state. This imagery continues when Stavrogin reaches Lebjadkin's dwelling and informs him that he will announce his legal marriage. This announcement of course is a reflection of the town turned upside down; the high fraternizes with the low. In this sense the announcement assumes the dimensions of a grotesque device. And indeed the announcement does disrupt the mores of society.

\(^{17}\) The use of the verb 'облегчить' - 'to make easier' illustrates Fed'ka's misguided rationalization for murder. As an aside, for an inter-textual study of the motif of the knife in Besy see L. Szilard, "Ot 'Besov' Dostoevskogo k 'Peterburgu' Andreja Belogo Struktura povestovovaniya" in Studia Russica. Budapest: vol. 4, 1981.
By his actions he illustrates the extreme positions of the radical Nihilists. This position surpasses the advocacy of the destruction of the church, the family and all social structures, and evinces a complete disregard for human life.

The next incident in which Stavrogin participates is the duel with Gaganov. Here Stavrogin insists on the customary gestures of reconciliation, which are rejected by his opponent. During the duel he refuses to kill him and does not aim at his opponent. This action may be seen in terms of charity, although this is doubted by some critics.\textsuperscript{18} However, the act of charity is false, since by sparing Gaganov's life, he incurs the receiver's hatred. The 'gift of life' is not welcomed as such but is seen as a fresh insult. In the discussion with Kirillov which follows, Stavrogin asks what he ought to have done rather than shoot in the air so not as to kill. Kirillov answers that Stavrogin should not have challenged him to a duel at all, implying that he should accept humiliation, rather than the display of noble behavior.

This type of humiliation may be considered a type of sacrifice, especially sacrifice of one's pride. In this sense the ensuing discussion about sacrifice increases in importance. Kirillov recognizes Stavrogin's searching for a burden, but Stavrogin insists that people expect too much from him:

- Я начинаю ничего понимать! - злобно проговорил Ставрогин. - Почему все ждут от меня чего-то, чего от других не ждут? К чему мне переносить то, чего никто не переносит, и напрашиваться на бремена, которых никто не может снести?
- Я думал, вы сами ищете бремени.
- Я ищу бремени?
- Да.
- Вы... это видели?...(10:227)

\textsuperscript{18} Peace states "Thus Stavrogin's behavior in his duel with Gaganov is seen as consonant with the mores of the guards officers of the 1820's..."\\textit{(Dostoyevsky, 152)}. This action may also be viewed as Stavrogin's attempt to assert his will or as a parody on the Christian tenet "Thou shalt not kill."
As evinced by the adverb -- "spitefully" злобно -- this is not the sincere Stavrogin responding, but rather his alter-consciousness. Further indications of the presence of the alter consciousness are that Stavrogin "spits on" the merit of the burden which Kirillov suggests he carry:

- Несите бремя. А то нет заслуги.
- Наплевать на вашу заслугу, я ни у кого не ищу ее! (10:228)

This action is countered by Kirillov's statement that sacrifice is hard for Stavrogin and Stavrogin's admission that he is weak:

Если мне легко бремя, потому что от природы, то, может быть, вам труднее бремя, потому что такая природа. Очень нечего стыдиться, а только немного.
-- Я знаю, что я ничтожный характер, но я не лезу и в сильные.
-- И не лезьте; вы не сильный человек. (10:228)

This admission of weakness is a positive impulse and is reflected in Stavrogin's feelings of shame and confusion as he heads home (Никола́й Всеволо́дович вшел к себе сильно смущенный. 10:228).

**Revolutionary Activity**

Stavrogin's ties to the revolutionary society are, like all aspects of his life, murky. Earlier Stavrogin asserts that he had never actually joined the society, and had become associated with them only out of boredom:

Видите, в строгом смысле я к этому обществу совсем не принадлежу, не принадлежал и прежде и гораздо более вас имею права их оставить, потому что и не поступал. Напротив, с самого начала я занимал, что я им не товариш, а если и помогал случайно, то только так, как праздный человек. Я отчасти участвовал в переорганизации общества по новому плану, и только. (10:193)
Notwithstanding Stavrogin's assertion that he is not a member of the revolutionary society, it is revealed that Stavrogin had written their *ustav*, the charter for the group. (10:298) Furthermore Stavrogin suggests a method of cementing the revolutionary cells; he proposes members' complicity in the death of the fifth member of the cell:19

...но есть одна штука еще лучше: подговорите четырех членов кружка укокошить пятого, под видом того, что тот донесет, и тотчас же вы их всех пролить кровью, как одним узлом, связать. Рабами вашими станут, не посмеют бунтовать и отчетов спрашивать. Ха, ха, ха! (10:299)

During the revolutionary meeting the tenet that there is nothing moral or immoral (Ничего нет ни нравственного, ни безнравственного! 10:308) is verbalized. Stavrogin is present when these ideas are uttered, but his passivity indicates his contempt. He does not drink with them nor does he want to speak. (10:310) This symbolizes the beginning of his rejection of the revolutionary phase of his life - he refuses to partake in the sacraments of the devils.

**Initial Move away from Revolutionaries**

At the end of the meeting, Stavrogin refuses to answer the question about informing, responding that it does not matter to him if the others have compromised themselves. (10:318) Stavrogin's rejection of Petr is evident in the following passage, in which Petr insists that Stavrogin be at Kirillov's. Stavrogin asserts his independence:

---Что вы со мной делаете? - пропелегал он, схватив Ставрогона за руку и изо всей силы стиснув ее в своей. Тот молча вырвал руку.

---

19 This type of blackmail must have been in Petr's arsenal before Stavrogin suggested it, for the same night Stavrogin reproaches and exposes Petr's motives in connection with his own situation with his wife. (10:320).
- Будьте сейчас у Кириллова, я приду... Мне необходимо, необходимо!
- Мне нет необходимости, - отрезал Ставрогин.
- Ставрогин будет, - покончили Кириллов. Ставрогин, вам есть необходимость. Я вам покажу. (10:319)

In their discussion, Stavrogin refuses to give Petr money and they struggle over Shatov's life:

- Я вам Шатова не уступлю....
-- Я вам давно сказал, что чего вам Шатова кровь нужна, - засверкал глазами Ставрогин. (10:320)

Stavrogin asks Petr why he wants power over him, and demands that he leave him alone:


The phrase 'for what devil am I necessary to you,' loosely translated as 'what the hell am I to you?' - На кой черт я вам надобился? intensifies the demonic image of the revolutionaries and further elicits Stavrogin's ability to distinguish between good and evil. Stavrogin repeats the request to leave him in peace twice:

-- Возьмите Шигалева, а меня бросьте в покое... (10:321)
Отстаньте от меня, пьяный человек! (10:323)

---

20 Rzhemskij points out the frequency of use of phrases such as "go to the devil" in Besy: «...чертыхаются в романе почти все - Ставрогин 6 раз, Шатов - 4, Кириллов, Федька, Ляпынин, Виргицкий - по разу. Петр Верховенский, которому Достоевский придал и внешне бессовские черты, произносит слово 'черт' одиночно и в сочетаниях типа 'к черту!', 'Черт знает', 'черт бы драл' - 41 раз.» (Л. Ржевский, Три Темы по Достоевскому, 54).
Stavrogin's refusal to hand over money, his jerking away from Petr's clasp, his exposing of Petr's motivations in connection with the money and most importantly his command to Petr to leave him alone - all signify his attempts to break from evil. Petr agrees to yield Shatov to Stavrogin, if Stavrogin will be reconciled with him. This tacit agreement, unconfirmed on Stavrogin's side, is not honored since Petr does kill Shatov. This implicitly indicates that Stavrogin also does not keep his part of this 'bargain' - that is, he does not become reconciled with Petr. His rejection is explicit in the following passage when he throws Petr to the ground:

Верховенский нагнал его у ворот почти в сумасшествии.
-- Стой! Ни шагу! -- крикнул он, хватая его за локоть.
Ставрогин рванул руку, но не вырвал. Бешенство овладело им: схватив Верховенского за волосы левой рукой, он бросил его изо всей силы объять и вышел в ворота. Но он не прошел еще тридцати шагов, как тот опять нагнал его. (10:321)

Petr repeats the plea to reconcile with him five times - помиритесь - and is described as almost insane a man who had lost his most precious possession when the reconciliation does not ensue:

Ставрогин взглянул на него наконец и был поражен. Это был не тот взгляд, не тот голос, как всегда или как сейчас там в комнате; он видел почти другое лицо. Интонация голоса была не та: Верховенский молил, упрашивал. Это был еще не опомнившийся человек, у которого отнимают или уже отняли самую драгоценную вещь. (10:321)

Here the narrator implies that Petr has lost Stavrogin, indicating that an irreparable break between the two has occurred. Petr states that Stavrogin does not offend anyone, and that he treats all equally and that he thinks nothing of sacrificing his or other's lives:

Вам ничего не значит пожертвовать жизнью, и своими и чужою. (10:323-324)

But he is wrong and when he kisses Stavrogin, the latter is repelled and he jerks away his hand. (10:324) Petr then proposes his plans for a new society,
including Stavrogin's position as the mysterious leader, the Pretender (10:325). Petr states that Stavrogin is a god, proud, searching for sacrifice:

А вы не Иван Филиппович; вы красавец, гордый, как бог, ничего для себя не ищущий, с ореолом жертвы, «скрывающийся». (10:326) Ну что в социализме: старые силы разрушил, а новых не внес. (10:325)

Stavrogin adamantly refuses this temptation, the temptation of a earthly kingdom. It is after this rejection of temptation that Stavrogin visits the monk Tixon in the original order of the novel. This chapter, extensively discussing in chapter 3, affirms Stavrogin's break with the forces of evil and predicts him attempts at cleansing himself by atonement.

First Attempts at Repentance

Stavrogin's attempts at repentance form a series of trials and errors. Each attempt ascends the scale and ultimately reaches the highest pinnacle. His attempt at penance by means of his confession in the chapter "At Tixon's" is a pinnacle but still marred by his lack of humility. His effort to announce his legal marriage to Mar'ja is similarly marred; he makes the announcement with anger:

Во-первых, уже то было странно, что он вовсе не удивился и выслушал Лизу с самым спокойным вниманием. Ни смущения, ни гнева не отразилось в лице его. Просто, твердо, даже с видом полной готовности ответил он на роковой вопрос: (10:352)

Although he seems to have prepared himself for this decisive moment, recalling Tixon's admonition about being hardened, he suddenly smiles haughtily, revealing the presence of his alter-consciousness:

Николай Всеволодович посмотрел на нее, на Лизу, на зрителей, и вдруг улыбнулся с беспредельным высокомерием; не торопясь вышел он из комнаты. (10:353)
Thus Stavrogin's disclosure of his marriage to Mar'ja, like his intention to publish his confession, must be seen both as an aggression and as a step toward the Russian spirituality so closely associated with Mar'ja and Tixon. This action is positive in the sense that he reveals the truth. More important he openly acknowledges his connection to the Russian spirit represented by Mar'ja. Nonetheless, the action lacks compassion and love and, in fact, anticipates the shocked and outraged reaction of society.

Part 3

Part 3 of Besy depicts a steadier ascendancy of Stavrogin's development. His past has been revealed, and he has begun his rejection of Petr and all that he represents. The encounter between Liza and Stavrogin in the chapter "End of a Romance" marks the final stage of Stavrogin's development. In the conversation with Liza, Stavrogin calls her his last hope:

-- Мучь меня, казни меня, срывай на мне злобу, -- вскричал он в отчаянии. - Ты имеешь полное право! Я знал, что я не люблю тебя, и погубил тебя. Да, «я оставил мгновение за собой»; я имел надежду...давно уже...последнюю...Я не могу устоять против света, озарившего мое сердце, когда ты вчера вошла ко мне, сама, одна, первая. Я вдруг поверил...Я, может быть, верную еще и теперь. (10:401-402)

This passage represents the culmination of Stavrogin's longings. It denotes Stavrogin's willingness to accept Liza's scorn. More important, Stavrogin accepts the guilt for Liza's fall caused by the fact that she spent the night with him although, 'technically,' it was she who came to him. His acceptance of the guilt stands in direct contrast to his question why she had ruined herself by coming to him:

21 Peace states: "If Stavrogin is, after all, a cripple in need of a nurse (and he has such a person in Dasha) then his marriage to Mar'ja assumes a new light: it is not only an act of self-knowledge - it is an act of self-identification; through it the subject is revealing an essential identity with the object." (Dostoyevsky, 199).
Most important, Stavrogin's acceptance of guilt extends to include all the dark events of the novel. In other words, he recognizes that he is guilty for all. When Petr arrives and Liza becomes aware of the deaths of Stavrogin's wife and brother-in-law, Stavrogin accepts the guilt for their deaths, although Petr claims that Stavrogin is innocent. He says to Liza that if she hears something, he is guilty: "Если сейчас что-нибудь услышит, Лиза, то я виновен." (10:402) Stavrogin states that he did nothing to stop the murders: "Я не убивал и был против, но я знал, что они будут убиты, и не остановил убийц." (10:407)

Stavrogin's admission of guilt parallels Stepan Verxovenskij's confession of guilt and indicates his ascent toward the spiritual summit of Christian responsibility espoused by Tixon. This kenotic ascent is accompanied by a definitive break with Petr. After Liza leaves he and Petr argue. Nikolaj wants to save Liza from death, but Petr pulls out a revolver and threatens to shoot Stavrogin. Stavrogin tells him to shoot: "А что ж, убейте, проговорил он тихо, почти примирительно." (10:408) This passive acceptance of death represents another step towards the Russian kenotic ideal. Stavrogin's final break with Petr occurs when he tells him to go to hell three times:

---

22 There is a hint that Stavrogin sheds a tear during his conversation with Liza. She asks him whether he is crying: "Уже не плачет ли вы?" (10:401) This is a positive signal of Stavrogin's development towards repentance. Anderson discusses the importance of tears in the spiritual world of Zossima and that of the Hesychasts: "[Zosima] sees tears as a sign of celebration and joy; the Hesychasts emphasized tears as acknowledgment of grief and sin in this life. ...Tears for [Zosima] join temporal life to heaven through ecstasy; on the other hand, even Nil Sorski considered that tears were penance for sin and that renunciation of this life was a necessary burden." (Roger B. Anderson, "Mythical Implications of Father Zosima's Religious Teachings" in Slavic Review. 38:2, June, 1979, 277).

23 The passive acceptance of a violent death occurs once in Dostoevskij's novel Besy. The holy fool, Mar'ja Lebjadkina foresees her own death and accepts it without resistance. See Fedotov The Russian Religious Mind for a discussion of this and all aspects of the kenotic ideal.
-- Ступайте от меня теперь к черту, а к завтраму я что-нибудь выдавлю из себя. Приходите завтра.
-- Да? Дав?
-- Почем я знаю!...К черту, к черту! (10:408)

In the above passage, Stavrogin states that he will think up something by tomorrow (к завтраму я что-нибудь выдавлю из себя). Literally this phrase means that he will squeeze something out of himself, indicating that he will reject his demon. Thus he will cleanse himself or cast aside yet another mask.

Stavrogin's final letter to Dasha indicates a frank appraisal of himself and his weaknesses. It may be considered a true confession. When compared with his confession in the chapter "At Tixon's," it is evident that Stavrogin's letter is sincere and written without any anger. The tone is serene and there is no attempt to shock anyone. Stavrogin presents and accepts his faults and accepts responsibility for his sins without trying to justify himself. He has finally recognized that he is not a superman but a servant of God (раб божий).

If his attitude is compared to the Biblical passage which continues the letter to the church at Laodicea, it is evident that Stavrogin has moved away from the position of egoism and recognizes his lowly stature:

But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'How rich I am! And how well I have done! I have everything I want.' In fact though you do not know it, you are the most pitiful wretch, poor, blind, and naked. (Rev. 15-18)

The final indication of Stavrogin's move to humility is of course his suicide, by which he bows his head to God, lest he succumb to his own weaknesses in the

24 Robin Feuer Miller addresses the genre of the confession in Dostoevskij's works and states that the genre carries negative implications associated with Rousseau: "In Dostoevsky's canon, then, the literary-bookish-written confession most often tends to lie, to seek self-justification, or to aim at shocking the audience." ("Dostoevsky and Rousseau: The Morality of Confession Reconsidered" in Dostoevsky New Perspectives, ed. Robert Lewis Jackson. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984, 98).
future. and the pervasiveness of the themes of self-sacrifice and forgiveness in the novel, Stavrogin's death is revealed to be a kenotic act, reminiscent of Christ's passion, a humble and humiliating feat which succeeds in bringing onto himself the contempt of the world. In this sense his suicide qualitatively differs from Kirillov's.

In conclusion, the evolving ideological climate in Russian society parallels the character development of Stavrogin. Stavrogin illustrates the whole spectrum of Russian thought from the earliest impulses of civic thought through the various reactionary and revolutionary movements. He belongs to the superfluous men, but realizes that this position is fruitless. Faith is the only alternative, but he doubts grace. Tixon assures him of forgiveness, fully cognizant both of the crime Stavrogin has committed and will commit. There is a miracle of conversion when he decides not to go to Uri, but to go to God.

His final turn towards the humility of Christ represents Dostoevskij's response to the chaotic nature of society. Just as on the political level Petr Verxovenskij disappears and the members of the cell, with the exception of Tol'chenko, experience a renewal of hope and a return to a social harmony, so on the personal level, Stavrogin cleanses himself of Western ideas and enacts his own version of the kenotic idea. This parallel development reveals the unity of the various levels of the text. The social level corresponds to the personal. Just as Stavrogin recognizes his personal guilt for his sin against the innocent girl, Matresha, he accepts the guilt for the chaos and the resultant deaths which resulted from his fascination with various Western social plans. Similarly, Stepan Verxovenskij admits his guilt, proclaiming that the final word is forgiveness.

---

25 This recalls the Biblical passage "Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape, he humbled himself, and in obedience accepted even death - death on a cross. Therefore God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names..." (Phil. 2:8-10).

26 Forgiveness is clearly on Stavrogin's mind when he writes to Dasha and the word magnanimity is perceived as forgiveness: Я знаю, что мне надо бы убить себя, смети себя с земли как подлое насекомое; но я боюсь самоубийства, ибо боюсь показать величествие. Я знаю,
Thus on the personal and social levels, guilt is acknowledged, atoned for and cleansed. Society is reborn after the cleansing destruction of the political apocalypse. The positive symbolism associated with Stavrogin's suicide will be examined in the next chapter, our conclusion.
CONCLUSION

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM IN THE EPILOGUE

Indications that Stavrogin's suicide is indeed the crowning act of a process of redemption are found not only in the epigraph and the last lines of the novel, but also in the sections preceding the concluding statements. The use of symbols which traditionally represent purification, i.e. light, ascent and cleansing, are abundant in the description of Stavrogin's suicide and point to his movement towards salvation. In addition, Stavrogin's careful preparations for suicide indicate that the action is not a gesture of despair, but rather a kind of ritual. Part of these preparations is his use of soap. To be sure, the mention of soap in the last paragraphs pertains to the preparation of the rope for hanging, but the repetition of the word soap signifies its importance as a symbol of cleansing. Soap is mentioned twice; 'a piece of soap' (кускок мыла) and 'the cord was greasily soaped' (снурок...был жирно намылен).¹

Cleansing symbolism is accompanied by light symbolism. Stavrogin dies in the morning in an attic room referred to as светлка. Dawn is significant in apocalyptic imagery - "Christ is the bright morning star." (Rev. 22:16)² Furthermore, in the Biblical exhortations of the Apostle Peter, Christ's

¹ Stavrogin uses a silk cord - телковый снурок. In Pushkin's folk tale about the Tsar Saltan, the phrase "silk cord" is associated with the cross - Со креста снурок телковый, Натянул на лук дубовый... Saltan's son uses the cord his cross hung on to make a bow and with its help he saves a swan from a kite (a warlock). In Pushkin, the cord is used by the forces of good against evil and it is not excluded that some reference to this Pushkin poem is involved here.

² Satan and Lucifer are also associated with the morning star. Lucifer, light-bringer in Latin, is associated with Venus, and later became associated with the King of Babylon "who proudly boasted that he would ascend to the heavens and make himself equal to God, but who was fated to be cast down to the uttermost recesses of the pit." (Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, 689). Stavrogin, a Luciferean character, has already renounced his Satanic pride when he enters the светлка where he hangs himself.
followers are urged to reverence "until the day breaks and the morning star rises to illuminate your minds." 3

И притом мы имеем вернейшее пророческое слово; и вы хорошо делаете что обращаетесь к нему, как к свечильнику, сияющему в темном месте, доколе не начнет рассветать день и не взойдет утренняя звезда в сердцах ваших. (2 Pet., 1:19)

As is evident in the above citation, the Russian Bible replaces hearts for minds and it is noteworthy that the word for lamp, свечильник, also has the same root as the word for attic, светелка, namely light, свет.4

Light symbolism occurs at least twice in the last paragraphs of the novel, in the words 'Uri' and 'svetelka.' The Hebrew name 'Uri' means the "light of God."5 Stavrogin is termed a citizen of the canton of Uri.6 Therefore, the implication is that Stavrogin is in God's light, just as the man in the epigraph who is sitting at the feet of the Lord. Although the expression "Citizen of the

---

3 Dolinin states that the sun, especially the midday sun of summer has "enormous significance in [Dostoevskij's] works. It is at this hour that the most important events take place. Nature is perceived mystically not so much by the light of the moon and stars as at that blindingly bright instant when the earth rejoices." ("Stavrogin's Confession," fn., 115).

4 It should be noted that the word for attic in Besy differs significantly from the word describing Raskolnikov's attic room, комната, which indicates a closet. Raskolnikov's room is referred to as a "tomb" - гроб. It is significant that Shatov, the carrier of Slavophile ideas, lives in an attic room also referred to as a светелка: when Shatov visits Marija Lebjadkina, she asks him whether he's bored walking alone in his attic room (- Соскучалось, что ли, ошому по светелке шагать? 10:114).

5 In Библейская энциклопедия the positive significance of the names with the root 'Ur' is evident: Урий - святый, освященный; Уринь - Божь-мой свет: Урия - Господь-мой свет. (717).

6 Some critics stress the ironic aspect of the use of the reference to Herzen who had established citizenship in Switzerland, although not in the Canton of Uri, but in the Canton of Freiburg. Neither the concept of "citizen" nor "foreign soil" are positive in Dostoevskij's worldview. Yet in spite of the irony, Stavrogin emerges as a figure seeking citizenship in the realm of Light, i.e. God's Kingdom.
canton of Uri" has an ironic tinge, Stavrogin does become a "citizen of light" in the most elevated sense.

Light symbolism is associated with the autopsy which determines Stavrogin's sanity. The autopsy is mentioned in the last sentence of the novel:

Наши медики по вскрытии трупа совершенно и настоячиво отвергли помещательство. (10:516)

The term "autopsy," in Masonic symbolism, refers to the movement towards illumination, since autopsy means the "uncovering" of secrets; it indicates the revelation and understanding of the highest truth.7

The mention of the autopsy itself is a symbol of resurrection in Freemasonry symbolism: "Light, on the other hand, is the symbol of the autopsy, the sight of the mysteries, the intrusting, the full fruition of Masonic truth and knowledge."8

The Masonic symbolism is embedded in the Russian word for autopsy; in fact the word вскрытие in Russian means both 'autopsy' and 'revelation.'

As already indicated, Stavrogin hangs himself in the attic. It is necessary to ascend to an attic; thus his ascending the stairs in the house may be seen as an upwards movement towards the light. In addition, the stairs are narrow, reminding one of Christ's statement, "Enter by the narrow gate. The gate is wide that leads to perdition, there is plenty of room on the road, and

---

7 Although his upbringing was Orthodox, Dostoevskij would have been acquainted with Masonic ideology which had infused the higher levels of society in Russia in the early 19th century (i.e. Karamzin), and were associated with French Revolutionary thought. Speshnev, one of the prototypes for Stavrogin, was also acquainted with freemasonry (Frank, Dostoevsky, The Seeds of Revolt, 260), as was Apollon Grigor'ev, a major contributor to Vremja, the journal of Mixail and Feodor Dostoevskij (1861-3). (Frank, The Stir of Liberation, 43).

many go that way; but the gate that leads to life is small and the road is narrow." (Matt. 7:13-14) Furthermore, the door to the stairway is not only open, but it is described as previously always closed.9 The fact that Stavrogin left the door open behind him, allowing those who search for him a clear path, thus indicates his liberation.

В самом деле, всегда закрытая дверь в светелку была теперь отпerta и стояла настежь. (10:515)

The mention of doors - either locked or unlocked - occurs with remarkable frequency at the end of the novel, in fact, no less than 4 times (5, if the mention of Stavrogin hanging behind the door is counted). Stavrogin's servant, worried about Stavrogin, informs Varvara that Stavrogin had locked himself in his own quarters. When Varvara and Dasha arrive, the doors to Stavrogin's quarters are open, however Stavrogin is no longer there. Moreover the door to the attic is open. These open doors create the impression of a series of break-throughs. The references to doors given above are accompanied by the mention of Stavrogin's "own quarters" (svoya polovina). These "quarters," so emphatically Stavrogin's "own," assume symbolic significance in the context. Given Stavrogin's double nature, they seem to symbolize his material half, his "evil double" as opposed to his spiritual half. indicating that by discarding the evil half, he has discarded his demon. Although on the realistic plane of action in the novel, the open door merely indicates to the Skvoreshniki household that something terrible has taken place, on the religious level of the novel, the open door functions differently: it becomes a symbol of a movement towards God; an opening of the heart to God's grace.10

---

9 Livermore briefly discusses the use of the verb открить and the noun открытые (in contrast to тайны) as connected with ultimate mysteries and revelation in Besy. (185) Livermore associates the words "to discover," "revelation," with the concept of truth (as opposed to "secret") in connection to the secrets of the novel; the political conspiracy and Stavrogin's secret marriage. His comments may be extended to include the motif of the open door -- religious truth is revealed. ("Stepan Verkhoensky and the Shaping Dialectic of Dostoevsky's Devils").

10 During this episode, the servants accompany Varvara and Dasha in their search for Stavrogin, an act which would not be tolerated in less extraordinary circumstances. This act functions on two levels, just as the symbol of the door. On one hand, it indicates the anxiety of
The emphasis placed on the open door to the attic supports the notion of purification. In Christian symbolism an open door metaphorically indicates salvation: for example, Christ says "I am the door, by me if any man shall enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). The open door also symbolizes the mercy and grace of God, and through his mercy, salvation. In Besy salvation is directly linked to imagery of the open door by Kirillov, who states that by his death he will open the door and thus save mankind:

Я начну, и кончу, и дверь открою, И спасу. ТОЛЬКО ЭТО ОДНО спасет всех людей. (10:472)

Of course, Kirillov's position is false because he assumes a right which only Christ can claim. Merely a man, he takes a divine task upon himself. The imagery employed by Kirillov is right, but only Christ is entitled to say "I will save." It is pertinent to note that Kirillov's death takes place in the darkness of night, whereas Stavrogin's, as already mentioned, takes place in the light of day. Not only is it night when Kirillov commits suicide, but he also knocks the candle from Petr Verxovenskij's hand with his head, and the candle goes out (10:476). The image of the head putting out the light indicates that rational egoistic thought will not illuminate or save man.

Nonetheless, Kirillov's statement - "I will open the door and I will save" - associates the open door and death with redemption. More importantly, since

the moment; on another level, it symbolizes the equality between the classes both in the face of death and in the Orthodox teaching. As the two women return to Skvoreshniki, they cross themselves, an action which is significant in Dostoevskij's works. This act, on one level, indicates their anxiety and their return to traditional gestures or faith in the face of crisis, but, on a more symbolic level, their act subtly recalls Jesus' crucifixion, thus implying Stavrogin's emulation of Christ.

11 It is pertinent that in The Notebooks for the Possessed the mention of Kirillov's death is accompanied by the words 'only without God' только без бога. Szilard offers an interesting discussion about the 'contrapuntal' tie between the suicides of Stavrogin and Kirillov. She concludes that Stavrogin's suicide is a negative act. ("Своеобразие motivnoj struktury 'Besov'", in Dostoevsky Studies. vol. 4, 1983). But since Stavrogin's suicide is not an act of defiance, it compares favorably with Kirillov's suicide.
Kirillov commits suicide, his statement establishes a direct relationship between suicide and redemption, if the "open door" symbolism is transferred to Christ. The nature of associations intimates, however, that the action of suicide may be a means of attaining salvation by self-sacrifice, thereby alleviating the 'sinful' connotations of the act. Stavrogin's suicide, by means of its ties to the symbol of the open door, thus becomes an act of transformation. Naturally Dostoevskij does not advocate suicide, but points to its justification in extraordinary circumstances by means of positive symbolism.

According to Baxtin in The Dialogic Imagination, the 'chronotope' or image of the threshold in Dostoevskij's world indicates transformation. Such transformations may be positive, for example, resurrection or renewal:

In literature, the chronotope of the threshold is always metaphorical and symbolic, sometimes openly but more often implicitly. In Dostoevsky, for example, the threshold and related chronotopes - those of the staircase, the front hall and corridor, as well as the chronotopes of the street and square that extend those spaces into the open air - are the main places of action in his works, places where crisis events occur, the falls, resurrections, renewals, Epiphanies, decisions that determine the whole life of a man. (248)\textsuperscript{12}

In view of the preponderance of religious symbols discussed above - ascent, cleansing, etc. - Stavrogin's acts of unlocking the door to the attic, mounting the narrow stairs, crossing the threshold of the attic (and the threshold of life), indicate a positive transformation, that is, a movement towards God and resurrection.

The symbolic indications of the positive nature of Stavrogin's death are reinforced by the mention of the hammer and an extra nail, which Stavrogin brings along to prepare his own execution. The reference to the hammer and nail is significant for two reasons. First, in Christian symbolism, the hammer

and nail are considered "Instruments of the Passion" and refer to Jesus' trials and crucifixion. In connection to Christ's death, the hammer and nail reinforce the positive transformational attributes associated with death, since death is a necessary step to achieve eternal life. The mention of the hammer and nails underscores the theme of searching for a burden, (metaphorically, a cross to bear), which is repeatedly associated with Stavrogin. Thus, the symbols of the hammer and the nail disclose that Stavrogin enacts his own 'passion.'

Second, the emphasis on the preparations for the suicide recall Tixon's admonition that Stavrogin at the time of their conversation was not prepared to accept his burden. In the chapter "At Tixon's," Tixon stated that Stavrogin was not, at that time, sufficiently prepared or tempered - не приготовлены, не закалены (80) - thereby implying that Stavrogin must prepare himself before he attempts his feat. The careful preparations, as evidenced by the hammer and the extra nail, demonstrate that Stavrogin at his death was spiritually prepared to accept humiliation and suffering.

In this context, it is interesting to note that in the description of the suicide preparations, the word root 'pas' occurs three times:

...очевидно припасенный про запас.
...очевидно заранее припасенный и выбранный...(10:516)

The verb 'to prepare' (припасить) and 'to save' (спасти) are etymologically related, and the repetition of this root, in its semantic implications further strengthens the case that Stavrogin is saved. Additional support for this

---


14 This concept is evident in the following Biblical passage, which Dostoevsky employed as an epigraph for The Brothers Karamazov: "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).

15 Hanging was considered an ignominious method of suicide (as was crucifixion during Christ's era), as opposed to the more 'aristocratic' use of a gun.
interpretation is found in the earlier repetition of the name "Спасов," which again contains the word root. Just before Stepan's death, he and the gospel woman, Sofija, were trying to travel to Spasov (Salvation Town) and the name Спасов is repeatedly mentioned. Stepan also states "il me semble que tout le monde va à Spassof..." (10:487) And, of course, the monastery where Stavrogin met with Tixon is Spaso-Efim'evskij Bogorodskij monastyr.' In this monastery, under Tixon's influence, Stavrogin's spiritual development took a decisive turn toward salvation. In view of the numerous religious symbols of purification and salvation, it is clear that the repetition of words containing the root 'пас' is not accidental and, by reinforcing the theme of salvation which permeates the entire novel, indicate the possibility of redemption for Stavrogin. Like his mentor Stepan Vertxovskij, the disciple Stavrogin, as a part of 'tout le monde,' 'va à Spasov.'

Further indications that Stavrogin's self-immolation is a positive act, or at least an act leading to a positive result, are implied by the fact that his death takes place on Russian soil. Although he is said to be a citizen of the Canton of Uri, Stavrogin does not realize his plans to go to Uri, at least not to the canton of Switzerland, preferring the 'Uri' of realioria realms, the realm of Divine Light. He does not leave Russia, except, of course, on a metaphysical level, for his journey to God's realm. Considering the importance of maintaining ties to the Russian soil, of being rooted in the soil, as per Shatov's comments, the fact that Stavrogin did not leave Russia is an important decision on his part. Kirillov, too, felt compelled to commit suicide on Russian soil (10:420), thus indicating that even he, a rootless atheist, felt the need to die on Russian soil.

Moreover, the name of Stavrogin's place of death carries positive semantic connotations. Stavrogin commits suicide at his mother's estate,

---

16 It is significant that the root 'light' appears in the name of the woman - Nadezhda Egorovna Svetlicyna - who was supposed to take the gospel vendor (Sofija Matveevna Ulitin) to Spasov. The name 'Nadezhda' means hope. Thus the entire passage conveys the impression of the 'light of hope.' Here, light symbolism accompanies Stepan's Epiphany as well as Stavrogin's. The name 'Sofija,' of course, symbolizes the feminine persona of wisdom and is often associated with the Holy Ghost.
Skvoreshniki. The name 'Skvoreshniki,' suggesting a nest for starlings, is semantically close to a home, a refuge to which the starlings return after their migrations. There are additional positive images connected to the starling; according to legends, it is the starling who pulls out the thorns from Jesus' crown of thorns in an attempt to alleviate his pain. In addition, in a poem by Pushkin: "Bradatij starosta Avdej," 1828, it is the starling who announces "Christ is risen" - Христос востре! This poem presents an "unorthodox" vision of redemption in folkloristic terms. Dostoevskij's orthodoxy does not preclude the apocryphal. Furthermore, it would seem likely that Dostoevskij with his reverence for Pushkin's authoritative word, would not only know this poem, but also allude to it by means of the name 'Skvoreshniki.'

The type of symbolism just outlined is characteristic of Dostoevskij's multi-leveled works, which are realist novels, but only, as Dostoevskij put it himself, realistic in a "higher sense." Dostoevskij's Besy is a work typical of this writer's "realism in the higher sense." It creates a symbolic cosmos where the personal, social and national levels intersect. On all these levels, above all other words of the polyphonic discourse, is the word of forgiveness and Grace.

17 W. J. Leatherbarrow in a discussion of apocalyptic imagery in Besy and The Idiot, asserts that the name carries negative symbolism: "The frequency of proper names derived from birds, which in "The Idiot" pointed to the biblical description of Babylon as "the habitation of devils and a cage for every unclean and hateful bird" and suggested that Russia was doomed to a similar fate, is met again in "The Devils." ("Apocalyptic Imagery in "The Idiot" and "The Devils"), in Dostoevsky Studies, vol. 3, 1982. 50). But the fact that starlings are NOT listed as unclean birds in the Bible undermines his interpretation, as does the positive resolution of the Apocalypse. See Leviticus 11:13-19.

18 Cf. the poem "Уступи мне скорпия, утюг," by Nikolaj Zabolotskij (1903-58), which exemplifies the traditional association of the starling as the first singer in spring, which, in turn, symbolically represents rebirth and renewal.

19 Dostoevskij's thorough knowledge of Pushkin's works is attested to by D.V. Grigorovic; see Joseph Frank, Dostoevsky, The Seeds of Revolt, 66.

Dostoevskij's Christian outlook, although not strictly Orthodox, is nonetheless the framework within which his later novels must be considered. His religious outlook emphasizes the possibility of transformation. Miracles of transformation are linked to those spiritual Epiphanies which truly illuminate man, making him aware of his sinful state and of his need for redemption. In tragedy, the ultimate fate of the hero is independent of his will. The protagonist is locked into a pattern of "crime and atonement." He must perish in order to expiate his crime, as, for example, Othello does, thus atoning for his murder of Desdemona. In the Christian tragedy Grace replaces punishment. The genre of tragedy presupposes a conflict which ensnares the hero and leads to his defeat. Inherent in the Christina tragedy is a tragic choice of good or evil. The Christian tragedy in which the hero freely chooses good, does therefore not lead to the defeat of the hero, but demonstrates the triumph of good, God and Christ. The triumph may entail the hero's death, but then in the Christian framework, death is not a finality, but the transition to another state.

Stavrogin's quest, marked by continuous doubt, negation and suffering, puts him squarely into the tradition of the tortured Dostoevskian hero who ultimately rejects Western ideas and returns to Orthodoxy. Like Raskol'nikov and Dmitri Karamazov, he is one of those broad Russian natures, who Dostoevskij notes have a propensity to become either a Stenka Razin or a Danilo Filippov, but will finally come to rest in Christ:

This is simply a primitive type, subconsciously agitated by his own primitive strength, a strength which is completely spontaneous and ignorant of any basis of support. Such primitive types are frequently either Stenka Razin's or Danilo Filippovich's, or they become full-fledged Khlysts or Skoptsy. ...He finally comes to rest in Christ, but his whole life is storm and disorder.21

---

21 The Notebooks for the Possessed, 67-68.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by Dostoevskij, F. M.:


195


Other Sources:


"Roman Besy v svete pochvennichestva Dostoevskogo" in Dostoevsky Studies. vol. 5.


"Mythical Implications of Father Zosima's Religious Teachings" in Slavic Review. 38:2, June.


"Stixija vozbuszdennogo xaosa i zhazhda blagoobrazija u Dostoevskogo" in Vozrozhdenie. no.233, June.


Cherbonnier, Edmond LaB. "Biblical Faith and the Idea of Tragedy" in The Tragic Vision and the


Ermilov (see Yermilov)


________. 1984 "Principy poèticheskoy motivacii v pomane Besy" in Dostoevsky Studies. vol. 5.


Steiner, George. 1980. Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. London: Faber and Faber.


Thorn, George W. 1915. "Dostoevsky as a Religious Teacher" in *Contemporary Review*. CVIII.


