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“Don’t Get Angry, Just Pray”: The Ghost of Gogol in Dostoevsky’s Diary¹

Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek.

Romans 2:9 (ASV)

Словом, книга может послужить только доказательством великой истины слов апостола Павла, сказавшего, что весь человек есть ложь.

Nikolai Gogol, *Авторская исповедь*²

It may be hard to believe, but there is actually more to be said about Gogol’s influence on Dostoevsky. This was already an established critical question by the time Yuri Tynyanov used the two writers as material for his theory of parody a century ago,³ but one of Dostoevsky’s most explicit parodies⁴ of

1 I am grateful to Professor Ilya Vinitsky for his comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this article. I would also like to thank *Dostoevsky Studies*’s anonymous reviewers for their comments. I am entirely responsible, however, for the content of this discussion in its current form.

2 Николай В. ГОГОЛЬ, *Полное собрание сочинений в 14 тт.* (Москва: Изд-во АН СССР, 1937-1952), т. 8, с. 433.

3 Юрий Н. ТЫНЯНОВ, *Достоевский и Гоголь (К теории пародии)* (Петроград: ОПОЯЗ, 1921). Tynyanov’s study lists a number of literary techniques that Dostoevsky developed from Gogol’s writing, proves that Dostoevsky used Gogol’s style and persona for comic effect throughout his career, and makes the point that Dostoevsky himself saw Gogol as a great wall that he had to surmount as a writer. I will draw on Tynyanov’s work later in this paper. See also Василий В. РОЗАНОВ, *Легенда о Великом инквизиторе Ф.М. Достоевского* (Москва: Республика, 1996) and Donald FANGER, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens and Gogol* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), both of which analyze the artistic relationship between the two writers in ways that complement Tynyanov’s work.

4 I am using Tynyanov’s definition of the term, which requires a “shift” from one literary

Gogol remains totally undiscussed. I have in mind the January 1876 section of *The Diary of a Writer* (1873, 1876-7, 1881), which contains a posthumous ‘quote’ from the earlier author: “Не дразните чертей, не якшайтесь, грех дразнить чертей... Если ночью тебя начнет мучить нервическая бессонница, не злись, а молись, это черти; крести рубашку, твори молитву” (*ИСС* 22; 32).⁵

These words appear at the beginning of an article called “Spiritualism. A Little Bit About Devils. The Extraordinary Cleverness of these Devils, If Only These Are Devils,” a title that suggests ironic playfulness on the author’s part. The essay itself bears this out, as Dostoevsky interweaves an argument about devils being the source of spiritualist phenomena like table-turning with a series of reminders that devils are not real and that this whole line of thinking is not serious. This tension reaches its peak at the conclusion, where Dostoevsky explicitly states that he is joking; he also writes that insofar as spiritualism can be considered a new religion, it should be taken seriously; having already gone into detail about the reasons why Dmitri Mendeleev’s anti-spiritualist commission cannot succeed, he then expresses hope that the commission’s investigation will be productive (*ИСС* 22; 37).⁶

‘Gogol’ is quoted at the essay’s very beginning. This establishes a sarcastic attitude towards spiritualism, but the pseudo-quote also deserves serious critical attention for what it reveals about the mature Dostoevsky’s use of Gogol. By using established approaches to reading Dostoevsky and Gogol, namely those of Tynyanov and Boris Eikhenbaum, I plan to show that the *Diary* parody reveals Dostoevsky’s profound knowledge of Gogol’s actual artistic devices. His attention to the details of Gogol’s style both critiques the general practice of ghost writing and transforms the quotation into an unusual kind of mystification. In this context, moreover, the shape of the article’s general critique of spiritualism reveals that Gogol’s art is one source of the ambiguity inherent in Dostoevsky’s late rhetoric of religious belief,

structure to another, both of which are visible to the reader: ТЫНЯНОВ, *Достоевский и Гоголь...*, с. 7, 31, 48. In the present case, the clear use of Gogol’s literary devices within the new context of Dostoevsky’s journalism satisfies both requirements, as will be discussed in detail later.

5 “Don’t bother the devils, don’t hang around them, it’s a sin to bother the devils... If nervous insomnia begins to plague you at night, don’t get angry, just pray, it’s the devils; cross your shirt, say a prayer”. All translations are mine.

6 See also William LEATHERBARROW, *A Devil’s Vaudeville: The Demonic in Dostoevsky’s Major Fiction* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 178-181 for a general overview of the article’s argument about devils.

which is essential for both his writings on spiritualism and *The Brothers Karamazov*.⁷

Before turning to the text itself, though, we should understand the context that produced it. Michael Gordin has already discussed spiritualism's general significance for Dostoevsky and for the contemporary Russian intelligentsia: it was a modish trend in many elite Petersburg circles of the 1870s, thanks mostly to the efforts of Nikolai Vagner (1829-1907) and Aleksandr Aksakov (1832-1903),⁸ so Dostoevsky is correct when he sarcastically writes in the *Diary* that spiritualism is currently in fashion (*ИСС* 22: 32). For Russians, it was also a broadly Western phenomenon. Spiritualism originated in America, and, by the time it reached Petersburg, it had already become a hot topic in England and continental Europe.⁹

Dostoevsky underscores this Westernness in his article, mockingly claiming that one Russian woman's house now contains twice as many devils as "Uncle Eddy's cabin" (*ИСС* 22; 32), a reference to both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the well-known American spiritualists Horatio and William Eddy.¹⁰ This is already a critique, since Dostoevsky frequently used America, which he associated with nihilism and godless death, as an ideological foil for Russia.¹¹ "Nihilist" is also an epithet that Dostoevsky applied to Aksakov in his letters, reflecting his sense that spiritualism was harmful from a religious perspective, and therefore

7 Rozanov connects Dostoevsky's mockery of spiritualism to his later "Grand Inquisitor" passage. РОЗАНОВ, с. 83. Michael GORDIN also discusses the connection in his article "Loose and Baggy Spirits: Reading Dostoevskii and Mendeleev", *Slavic Review*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2001, p. 770.

8 GORDIN, pp. 757-760. Gordin mentions the relevant section of the *Diary* as a part of his larger argument, but he does not discuss the parody of Gogol at length.

9 *Ibidem*, pp. 759-761.

10 ВАДИМ Д. РАК, "Примечания", in *ИСС* 22; 335. The same page of Rak's commentary also details the concrete points of contact that Dostoevsky had with spiritualism, which include a number of works on the matter, translated by Aksakov, in Dostoevsky's library; his acquaintance and correspondence with Vagner; and his attendance at a seance, which only took place after the publication of the January 1876 chapter of the *Diary*.

11 Notes from *Underground* references America's contemporaneous civil war as an example of an "advanced" civilization growing bloodthirstier as it progresses (*ИСС* 5; 112). Svidrigailov's suicide in *Crime and Punishment* is metaphorically termed a journey to America (*ИСС* 6; 394-5), and serves as the inverse of Raskolnikov's confession, which is instead a journey toward Jerusalem (*ИСС* 6; 405). An even more telling and contemporary instance of this critical attitude towards the United States appears in *Demons*, where Kirillov and Shatov praise American culture, which includes its spiritualism, while in their nihilist phase (*ИСС* 10; 112).

disturbing in its contemporary growth.¹² Dostoevsky's polemic against spiritualism, then, is on one level a new development of a familiar theme in his work, that of Westernization's perceived role in fomenting nihilism and thereby impeding Russia's spiritual rejuvenation.

Biographical facts slightly complicate this picture, though. Dostoevsky was preparing his first critique of spiritualism and actively seeking to attend seances, both at Aksakov's house¹³ and at Vagner's,¹⁴ at the same time. After one of Vagner's seances, Dostoevsky felt it necessary to briefly record in a notebook that he did not participate, but this sequence of events suggests ambivalence rather than sheer horror or contempt. Consequently, Dostoevsky's use of spiritualism as a motif in his writing and his biographical attitude towards it should be considered as separate phenomena, albeit connected ones.

Spiritualism's popularity and the discourse surrounding it also triggered Dostoevsky's choice to make Gogol the subject of this specific parody. A few weeks before the January *Diary's* publication, the Petersburg newspaper *Golos* reported that a Muscovite spiritualist had apparently summoned Gogol's spirit, which had then dictated the lost second part of *Dead Souls* to a medium.¹⁵ People who read the resulting manuscript alleged that its style was quite similar to Gogol's. *Golos's* feuilletonist finds the idea of Russian intellectuals engaging with spiritualism, which is referred to in one moment as "самого бесшабашного суеверия",¹⁶ contemptible. The way in which the episode with Gogol is introduced is unambiguous: "Представьте себе, один из представителей московского интеллекта, человек серьезный, состоящий при литературе, даже 'руководитель', вдруг обратился в медиума".¹⁷ The dichotomy in which progressive Russian liberals should be opposed to spiritualism and other such superstitious nonsense is already clear.¹⁸ This orientation

12 GORDIN, p. 760.

13 *Ibidem*, pp. 761-762.

14 РАК, с. 335.

15 *Ibidem*, с. 336. The article itself, "Московские заметки: новый год и новые желания", can be found in *Голос*, № 6, 6 (18) января 1876, с. 1-2.

16 "The most mindless superstition" (*Голос*, с. 2).

17 "Imagine, one of the representatives of Moscow intellect, a serious person who works in literature, a 'leader,' even, suddenly went to a medium". *Ibidem*, с. 2.

18 Another representative quote, which concludes the feuilleton's mediation on "desire": «Следует ли отсюда, что надо перестать «желать»? Отнюдь нет, потому что «желания» в нравственном мире человека то же, что движение в физическом: без него нет жизни». "Does it follow from all this, that one must cease 'desiring'? Far from it, because 'desires' in man's moral world are the same as movement in the physical one: there is no life

is unsurprising, but it goes on to inform Dostoevsky's treatment of the topic, since, as Gordin has already detailed, the *Diary* targets both the spiritualists and their more rational critics. In our specific case, the Gogol parody and the January article as a whole obviously do not seriously defend spiritualism, but they also avoid the scathing tone of the *Golos* feuilleton. The ironic, playful approach Dostoevsky chooses, in other words, is not indebted to contemporary journalistic discourse.

Tone aside, it is not a surprise that this news item would have caught Dostoevsky's attention. At the time, he was advancing his own theory of Gogol's artistic value. In the 1873 *Diary*, for example, he refers to Gogol as a purely Russian author, one who cannot be productively translated: the merits of his art 'literally disappear' in French (*ИСС* 21; 69).¹⁹ In April 1876, Dostoevsky defends Gogol against contemporary criticism by arguing that the earlier author's masterpieces are valuable because of their 'inner content', by which he meant that Gogol's portrayal of certain character 'types'²⁰ provokes the reader to reflect on life's most profound questions. Here, he even cites the controversial *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* as a weak yet 'characteristic' example of Gogol's artistry that pays attention to both style and this inner content (*ИСС* 21; 106). At this point, then, Dostoevsky was publicly celebrating Gogol as a writer who epitomized the ideal of expressing ideological content within stylized artistic forms.²¹ This 'Gogolian' sensibility also deeply informs Dostoevsky's work on spiritualism in the *Diary*.²²

without it" (*Голос*, с. 2). This equation of desire and physical movement reflects a modish, implicitly positivist perspective.

- 19 There would have been a tension in Dostoevsky's mind between the Russian word (and accompanying practice) спиритизм, which comes from the French, and the untranslatable Gogol. Moreover, Dostoevsky references this same French translation of Gogol in his drafts for the *Diary* in the final months of 1875 (*ИСС* 24; 73), meaning that this question of Gogol's Russian value was still on his mind, and actually overlapped with the development of his parody.
- 20 This is in line with Tynyanov's observation that Gogol's typology of characters was of paramount importance for Dostoevsky. ТЫНЯНОВ, *Достоевский и Гоголь*, с. 10.
- 21 That is, as opposed to communicating through direct, and possibly artless, polemics. In this sense, Dostoevsky's writing on Gogol in the early 1870s grows out of his earlier dispute with Dobroliubov and Chernyshevsky about aesthetics and art's political significance. See his article "Mr. -bov and the Question of Art", in *ИСС* 18; 70-103.
- 22 Gordin similarly writes that Dostoevsky argues against his opponents on a "suprational, emotional level" in the *Diary*. GORDIN, p. 770. For a broader treatment of Dostoevsky's work in the *Diary* as fiction in the guise of nonfiction, see Gary Saul MORSON, *The Bound-*

Dostoevsky's evaluations of Gogol's art had their analogue among the spiritualists. Ilya Vinitsky has shown that the practice of ghost writing is itself a kind of critical reevaluation. An author's posthumous thoughts on any given subject would inevitably reflect contemporary attitudes, since the mediums would write what their audiences wanted to hear. Dead writers could even didactically comment on their own artistic output in order to realize 'metaphorical views' that the living held about the significance of their work.²³ Given ghost writing's interpretive potential, one might suspect that the aforementioned spiritualist version of *Dead Souls*' second volume, which has not survived, was in some sense a critical reevaluation of Gogol. It likely advanced a certain interpretation of his art and, perhaps, of his biography.²⁴ Since the question of how to properly read and understand Gogol was clearly on Dostoevsky's mind at the moment, the emergence of a new spiritualist, 'Western' interpretation of Gogol would have been significant for him.

To sum up, two aspects of this spiritualist text's existence would have piqued Dostoevsky's interest and motivated the parody. He was already suspicious of spiritualism as a general phenomenon because of its links to the West and its idolatrous, fetishistic mysticism.²⁵ This is why he goes on to associate it with anti-religious 'nihilism' in some of his letters and in his fiction. This ghostwritten manuscript, moreover, would have been a new literary fact within a discourse about Gogol's importance and Russianness that Dostoevsky took very seriously. Another way to put this is that Dostoevsky's public writing about spiritualism, which more or less begins in the January *Diary*, grows out of his contemporary work on Gogol.²⁶

aries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 58-68.

23 Vinitsky develops this argument by analyzing spiritualist poems attributed to Pushkin's ghost, which prove to be commentaries on Pushkin's figure and legacy. See his book *Paradoxes: Modern Spiritualism and Russian Culture in the Age of Realism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 59-69.

24 We unfortunately do not know the identity of the spiritualist or the medium who summoned Gogol, a fact that could have enabled a more concrete hypothesis about the work's content.

25 GORDIN, pp. 763, 767.

26 In one sense, the "devils" that Dostoevsky describes in the article, which are paradoxically clever because of their evident foolishness, inherit qualities from some of the writer's earlier descriptions of Gogol. His notebooks from the early 1860s contain the line «Гоголь – гений исполнинский, но ведь он и туп, как гений» (*ИСС* 20; 153). "Gogol is a tremendous genius, but for that he is also dull, like a genius". A more contemporary note that express-

The parody is extremely brief, but it reveals itself to be a rich text. The way in which Dostoevsky introduces 'Gogol's' message from beyond is already mysterious: as he writes, «Гоголь пишет с того света утвердительно, что это черти. Я читал письмо, слог его» (*ПСС* 22; 32).²⁷ Perhaps Dostoevsky is simply claiming to have read 'Gogol's' manuscript. However, circumstantial evidence undermines this interpretation. There is no mention of any firsthand encounter with a ghostwritten text in his letters from the end of 1875 or from January 1876, which is when Dostoevsky would have learned about the Gogol summoning. He was in contact with Vagner at the time, though, and explicitly writing to him about seances. Surely Dostoevsky would have at least briefly mentioned a fake Gogol text to his spiritualist acquaintance, if he had actually read such a thing. Gogol and ghost writing are also nowhere to be found in a January letter to Vsevolod Solovyov, another contact of Dostoevsky's with an interest in spiritualism (*ПСС* 29; 64-73).²⁸

The parodic quotation itself makes it harder still to believe that Dostoevsky is referring to an actual piece of ghost writing. As he knew, the posthumous 'Gogol' work was purported to be *Dead Souls*' second volume, which is a fictional novel with a narrative and characters, for surviving drafts of the work

es the same contours can be found in his plans for the novel *Adolescent* from 1875, where he describes Gogol's behavior in *Selected Passages* as a manifestation of the "underground": «Это то самое подполье, которое заставило Гоголя в торжественном завещании говорить о последней повести, которая выпелась из души его и которой совсем и не оказалось в действительности. Ведь, может быть, начиная свое завещание, он и не знал, что напишет про последнюю повесть. Что ж это за сила, которая заставляет даже честного и серьезного человека так врать и паясничать, да еще в своем завещании (Сила эта русская, в Европе люди более цельные, у нас мечтатели и подлецы)» (*ПСС* 16; 330). "It is that very underground that made Gogol, in a solemn will, talk about a final tale that sang out from his soul and which turned out to not exist at all in reality. Well, maybe, beginning his will, he didn't know that he would write about his final story. What kind of force is it that makes even an honest and serious man lie and play the fool thus, and in his will moreover? (This force is Russian, in Europe people are more whole, we have dreamers and scoundrels)". Here, Dostoevsky again chooses Gogol as an emblem of both Russianness and a baffling oscillation between poles of behavior, although here they are moral. This same cluster of attributes emerges in the course of the January article on spiritualism. Certainly this latter text is much more ironic, but this ironization is in accord with Tynyanov's theory of parodic evolution.

27 "Gogol writes from that world positively confirming that these are devils. I read the letter, the style is his".

28 It is worth mentioning, however, that Vsevolod Solovyov was the source for the final Diary article's brief mention of a young Petersburg student's experience at a seance. ПАК, с. 335.

had been published as early as 1855. Dostoevsky's parody is instead presented as being 'Gogol's' own voice, rather than that of a narrator. This was common for ghost writing, but it would have been inappropriate as a reference to the specific manuscript that *Golos* describes.

So, it seems like Dostoevsky has created a short Gogolian work of his own, and that the actual spiritualist work is just a pretext for creative parody. From a formal perspective, though, the claim that Dostoevsky has seen a 'real' manuscript is still important. By referencing a text that ostensibly exists outside of the *Diary*, Dostoevsky creates a certain expectation on the part of his audience, which is at least superficially familiar with both Gogol and the spiritualists. This will be important for the dialogical, mystificatory effect. As Tynyanov writes, moreover, parody is not always directed towards specific works: a genre, author, or entire literary movement can be parodied. Dostoevsky's reference to a letter should be understood in this sense. It gestures toward ghost writing as a genre, the assumptions and conventions of which he can parody without necessarily engaging with a specific piece of spiritualist writing.²⁹

The parody's lack of a single target does not mean that it is completely *sui generis*, however. Dostoevsky draws heavily on Gogol's actual writings, combining images and techniques from different periods of his literary activity. The basic 'plot' of the parody is not in keeping with *Dead Souls* or Gogol's Peters-

29 Юрий Н. ТЫНЯНОВ, "О пародии", in Ю.Н. ТЫНЯНОВ, *Поэтика. История литературы. Кино* (Москва: АН СССР, 1977), с. 288. It is even possible that Dostoevsky had this parody in mind some time before he read the *Golos* article. His notebooks for the *Diary* include a short note from November 1875 that reads «Из письма Гоголя с того света о спиритизме и чертях, ссылка на Послание к Римлянам, глава II, стих 9» (*ПСС* 24; 68). "From Gogol's letter from the other world about spiritualism and devils, a reference to the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 2, verse 9". It is impossible to determine whether Dostoevsky had already heard about a seance involving Gogol, or whether the letter is purely his invention at this stage; similarly, it is unclear whether the reference to Paul's Epistle to the Romans was Dostoevsky's own idea for a future letter or not. Either way, the idea of Gogol writing from the grave about devils was on Dostoevsky's mind independently of *Golos's* reporting. A rough draft of the anti-spiritualist argument appears later in the notebooks (*ПСС* 24; 93-96), and the idea of Gogol writing a posthumous letter appears at this point, too, although Dostoevsky doesn't attempt a literal parodic quotation in the sketch. The idea of Gogol's quoting Paul is no longer explicitly present. As will be discussed below, however, the final parody strongly draws on Gogol's letter "Advice", which appeared in *Selected Passages* and opens with a reference to another line from the same chapter of *Romans*. See Игорь А. ВИНОГРАДОВ, "Комментарий", in Николай В. ГОГОЛЬ, *Духовная проза* (Москва: Русская книга, 1992), с. 479.

burg stories, where demonic presences are either fantastic, in Tzvetan Todorov's sense of the term,³⁰ or only implied by means of symbolism.³¹ The devils' image in the parody has much more in common with some of his Ukrainian stories, like *Christmas Eve* and *St. John's Eve in Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* or *Mirgorod's "Vii"*, where devils are unambiguously real creatures that one could consort with. This also resonates with biographical attestations about a famous episode from the end of Gogol's life, in which he blamed his ultimate destruction of the second volume of *Dead Souls* on the devil, or "sly one".³²

The implied relationship between 'Gogol' and the audience adds another layer to the parody. Gogol's mature fictional works do sometimes contain apostrophes to the reader, such as the ones at the end of *Nevsky Prospekt* and in the final chapter of *Dead Souls*. But those addresses are highly poetic in their language and tone.³³ Dostoevsky's parody, in contrast, is primarily composed of relatively conversational commands to the reader regarding devils and insomnia. This style is not wholly alien to Gogol's oeuvre, but it is more consistent with his voice in *Selected Passages* than with the narrative style of

30 It is impossible to confidently say that the demonic forces portrayed in stories like *Portrait*, for example, are either real or completely hallucinated: the tension between these two possibilities is part of the effect. Tzvetan TODOROV, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, 1975).

31 Dmitri Chizhevsky identifies a paradigmatic case of this tendency in his analysis of *Overcoat*, where he shows that Gogol implies the presence of a demonic force in the story via the twice-mentioned picture of a faceless general on a snuffbox: Chizhevsky links this image to a folkloric tradition of the devil having no face. See Dmitri CHIZHEVSKY, "About 'The Overcoat'" in Robert MAGUIRE (Ed.), *Gogol from the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 319-321. There is a long tradition of identifying the demonic in the seemingly decorative layer of Gogol's prose, although some of these interpretations are less formalist than Chizhevsky's close reading: see approaches like MEREZH-KOVSKY's "Gogol and the Devil" and BRIUSOV's "Burnt to Ashes" in *Gogol from the Twentieth Century*. Nabokov's interpretations of *Overcoat* and *Dead Souls* are explicitly indebted to the Symbolists, and follow a similar line of thought. See Nikolai GOGOL (New York: New Directions, 1961).

32 As recounted by Aleksei Tarasenkov in a memoir first published in 1856. See Алексей Т. ТАРАСЕНКОВ, "Последние дни Н. В. Гоголя", in Н. БРОДСКИЙ, Ф. ГЛАДКОВ, Ф. М. ГОЛОВЕНЧЕНКО и др. (под ред.), *Н.В. Гоголь в воспоминаниях современников* (Москва: Гослитиздат, 1952), с. 516, 672.

33 For a more detailed discussion of Gogol's high style, see Victor TERRAS's article "Nabokov and Gogol: The Metaphysics of Nonbeing", in J. DOUGLAS CLAYTON and Gunter SCHAARSCHMIDT (Ed.), *Poetica Slavica: Studies in Honour of Zbigniew Folejewski* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1981).

Dead Souls.³⁴ As mentioned earlier, Dostoevsky considered *Selected Passages* to be a legitimate work of Gogol's,³⁵ so the prevalence of the imperative voice here serves to defend Dostoevsky's reading of Gogol by presenting a device from *Selected Passages* as both properly Gogolian and independent of *Dead Souls*.

Dostoevsky's attention to the minutiae of Gogol's writing emerges in the sound of the parody, as well. Reading the lines aloud makes it clear that they have an almost metrical syllabic regularity, and that Dostoevsky has paid close attention to assonance in the parody's vowels.³⁶ This is especially visible towards the end, in the phrase "не злись, а молись: крести рубашку, твори молитву". The one major exception is the phrase "нервическая бессоница," which disrupts the entire sentence's rhythm. This is another of Gogol's techniques. Eikhenbaum makes much of a passage with a strikingly similar conceit at the beginning of *Overcoat*, where Gogol establishes phonetic regularity through the consistent sounds of word endings and an obvious syllabic rhythm, only to introduce a word that violates these patterns. Eikhenbaum calls this a "comic sound gesture", serving as an example of what he calls the "grotesque" in Gogol, which is an effect created by unexpected shifts in the tone and sound of his writing.³⁷

34 For one particularly representative example, take the the letter "Advice", which ends like this: «Позаботься прежде о себе, а потом о других; стань прежде сам почище душою, а потом уже старайся, чтобы другие были чище». ГОГОЛЬ, *ПСС*, т. 8, с. 283. "First take care about yourself, and then about others; first become purer of soul yourself, and then at that point make effort, so that others would be purer". *Selected Passages* is famously full of such commands, as in the chapters "Woman in Society", or "The Russian Landowner", among others. This didacticism even became a subject of discussion and critique among his friends, as is reflected in Sergei Aksakov's correspondence with Gogol from the period. See Сергей Т. АКСАКОВ, "9 декабря, 1846" in Николай В. ГОГОЛЬ, *Переписка Гоголя в 2-х томах* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1988), т. 2, с. 74.

35 Besides the mention in the *Diary* itself, Тунянов has collected Dostoevsky's pronouncements on the work from throughout his career, all of which show that Dostoevsky considered it second-rate, but did not agree with Belinsky's claim that the work was a complete betrayal of Gogol's talent and of his earlier works. Тунянов's article also goes on to demonstrate that Dostoevsky's single most prolonged parody of Gogol, in *The Village of Stepanchikovo*, was directed precisely at the Gogol of *Selected Passages*. ТУНЯНОВ, *Достоевский и Гоголь*, с. 28-29, 32-34. All of this is to say that Dostoevsky's imitation of Gogol's didactic tone in the *Diary* is not meant to undercut the sense that he is channeling Gogol. It instead strengthens the parodic effect of the fake quotation.

36 Тунянов has already noted that Dostoevsky underscores the melodiousness of Gogol's writing in his parody in *The Village of Stepanchikovo*. *Ibidem*, с. 40.

37 The original is «комический звуковой жест». Борис М. ЭЙХЕНБАУМ, "Как сделана

Eikhenbaum argues on this basis that Gogol's specific word choice is often based on sound, rather than on meaning. This is also true at points in Dostoevsky's parody. The bizarre phrase "крести рубашку" depends on its pairing with твори молитву, since this can be justified by the phrases' syllabic regularity. "Трех дразнить чертей" is an absurd phrase on the semantic level, but it also scans rhythmically. In short, Dostoevsky's choice to let sound be a motivating factor in the parody reflects serious attention to the stylistic level of Gogol's writing, or what Eikhenbaum calls *skaz*.³⁸ The parody therefore also serves as encouragement for treating this style as essential to Gogol's art.

The text's vocabulary deserves discussion as well. Almost all of the words attributed to 'Gogol' appear quite regularly in the author's actual writing, with the exception of the verb "якшаться". The exact phrase "нервическая бессонница", which is the most crucial for the parodic effect, is also nowhere to be found. The individual word «бессонница» does appear infrequently in his fiction, plaguing characters in *Nevsky Prospekt*, *Portrait*, and *Dead Souls*.³⁹ Gogol also explicitly complains of his own insomnia in a series of letters from 1847, some of which had been published long before Dostoevsky's parody.⁴⁰ *Нервический* is also common in these letters, but it never specifically describes his insomnia.⁴¹ Dostoevsky's specific phrase can be justified on the phonetic level, as mentioned above. This means, however, that the parody's "comic sound gesture" is both one of the more distinctive aspects of Gogol's writing and in

«Шинель» Гоголя" in Борис М. ЭЙХЕНБАУМ, *О прозе* (Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1969), с. 314-15. The passage Eikhenbaum analyzes is longer and undoubtedly more complex than Dostoevsky's short parody, but the basic principle is applicable to both works.

38 An imitation of *skaz* is not necessarily at odds with Dostoevsky's interest in parodying Selected Passages. As Aleksandr ZHOLKOVSKY has discussed, the latter work preserves the essential traits of Gogol's earlier *skaz*, albeit without being explicitly comic. See his essay "Re-reading Gogol's Miswritten Book: Notes on Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends", in Susanne FUSO and Priscilla MEYER (Ed.), *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), pp. 172-184.

39 ГОГОЛЬ, *Полное собрание сочинений*, т. 3, с. 28-29, 132; т. 6, с. 49, 176.

40 See ГОГОЛЬ, *Полное собрание сочинений*, т. 13, с. 199, 203, 205, 207, 211; т. 14, с. 91, for his usage of the term in correspondence.

41 The idea that Gogol's nerves were diseased was one that he often mentioned in letters during the last decade of his life. Some examples that were published well before 1876 can be found in ГОГОЛЬ, *Полное собрание сочинений*, т. 12, с. 336, 453, 458, 506; т. 13, с. 208; т. 14, с. 125, 143. This is far from an exhaustive list. Dostoevsky would certainly have been aware of this tic of Gogol's, but incorporates it into his parody in an original manner.

another sense foreign to Gogol's work. We will return to this problem of simultaneous presence and absence, which has important interpretive consequences.

This central phrase thus 'proves' to us that Gogol himself has not written the lines under consideration here. Such proof is in no way necessary, but it is still worth considering the implications of the playful suggestion that, if Gogol isn't writing to the spiritualists from the other world, then the message really comes from the very devils who are asking to be left alone in the parody. "Нервическая бессонница" functions within this context as a detail that betrays the fact that this text is demonic in nature. This conceit, in which an ornamental detail functions as a key to perceiving a gap between representation and reality, is itself a fundamental trait of Gogol's art.⁴²

Summing up, Dostoevsky almost succeeds in satisfying the expectation produced by his initial claim that he has seen a manuscript written by Gogol's ghost, since the two sentences that he writes are extremely reminiscent of the dead author. This perceptive accuracy reflects Dostoevsky's interest in critical revaluations of Gogol, as do the intertextual references to less popular works of his, like *Selected Passages*. Even the moments where Dostoevsky diverges from Gogol's lexicon evince a close reading of Gogol, since the words in the parody that Gogol himself did not use are also the ones that serve as Dostoevsky's versions of Gogol's symbolism. The parody thus produces an uncanny effect, since its 'voice' is so close to Gogol's.

Following Tynyanov, we have noted that Dostoevsky's mock quotation stylizes Gogol's work and scoffs at the entire genre of ghost writing. Such spiritualist texts are unique as a form of spurious literature⁴³ in that they do not attempt to make readers believe in the existence of an unreal but plausible author, as a more conventional hoax would. Instead, ghost writing turns real, dead writers into masks for the true author.⁴⁴ This does not resolve the question of how Dostoevsky's parody should be considered from the standpoint of genre, though. It is in dialogue with standard ghost writing, but clearly distinct. The essential ambiguity of Dostoevsky's parody makes it difficult to categorize,

42 As mentioned earlier, Chizhevsky and the Symbolists make use of this gnostic approach.

Tynyanov does not subscribe to the mystical attitude of these readings, but he does call Gogol's characters and images "masks", arguing that they underscore the difference between what reality is and what it seems to be. ТЫНЯНОВ, *Достоевский и Гоголь*, с. 12-17.

43 I take the term from K. K. RUTHVEN's book *Faking Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), which deals with ontological questions of the distinctions between "real" and "fake" texts, and examines the various functions that spurious genres can perform.

44 VINITSKY, p. 62.

which ultimately strengthens the effect of his parody and his entire ideological polemic against spiritualism.

It is difficult to imagine that any reader would believe that Dostoevsky is really quoting Gogol. The opposite is true: Dostoevsky's entire joke is based on Gogol's obvious and fundamental absence from the text. The parody is therefore closer to the genre of mystification, which should somehow point a reader towards its own deception. This has a productive function: ideally, recognizing a mystification should motivate the audience to engage with other texts more critically, so as to be sure that they are not also misleading or false in some regard. In other words, the mystification is meant to re-center the importance of truth in literature by blurring the lines between real and 'fake' texts.⁴⁵ This framework seems appropriate for Dostoevsky's parody. By producing a strikingly effective copy of Gogol without any spiritualist performance, Dostoevsky confronts the reader with an unmasking of the spiritualists' literary output. The newly critical reader can subsequently recognize 'authentic' ghost writing as simple parody, rather than proof of the supernatural.

Mystifications can be quite well written, however, and therefore not immediately recognizable as imitations. The surrounding context is often what undermines a mystification's authenticity. Abramson observes all this in her case study of Prosper Mérimée's *La Guzla*, which is a collection of original works alleged to be authentic Yugoslavian folk poetry. Mérimée does successfully imitate many real conventions of the region's verse, but his invention of a Yugoslavian bard, who is mostly characterized in the book's paratext, ultimately gives away the truth of his mystification and serves as a critique of the idealized Romantic notion of 'pure' folk art. This demystification is an essential part of the overall project, in that it becomes a secular version of religious revelation. This is appropriate for a genre that originated and gained popularity in Enlightenment Europe.⁴⁶

45 I have drawn extensively from Julia ABRAMSON's work on the mystification as a genre, *Learning From Lying: Paradoxes of the Literary Mystification* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), pp. 13-17, 28, 145-146.

46 ABRAMSON, pp. 37, 107-108. Mérimée's mystification had consequences for Russian literature in that he successfully fooled Alexandr Pushkin, who would later go on to produce his own mystifications. See Александр А. ДОЛИНИН, "Как понимать мистификацию Пушкина *Последний из свойственников Иоанны Д'Арк*" in Рональд ВРООН и др. (под ред.), *И время и место: Историко-филологический сборник к шестидесятилетию Александра Львовича Осювата* (Москва: Новое издательство, 2007), с. 198-216. Dolinin shows that Pushkin's motivations and strategies in his mystification were similar to those discussed above, and the text invited careful decoding.

There is no such revelatory demystification in Dostoevsky. Thanks to his sarcastic tone, the ‘summoning’ of Gogol is obviously fake from the start, meaning there is no catharsis to be had in recognizing this. Moreover, there is no clear demystificatory move anywhere in the larger section about spiritualism, which is instead primarily characterized by irony and ambiguity. The predominant conceit, as mentioned earlier, is that spiritualism is the work of devils, but Dostoevsky also denies the existence of devils throughout, and the serious and comical aspects of this treatment of spiritualism do not resolve.⁴⁷ He mocks ghost writing with the Gogol parody, but intentionally withholds an explicit description or critique of what ghost writing and spiritualism really are. Dostoevsky has thus produced a parody that is similar to a mystification, since it is polemical and self-consciously false, but remains distinct from the genre by refusing to cultivate an epiphany for its readers.

Given Dostoevsky’s ideological commitment to Orthodoxy, this treatment of mystification is appropriate, given that he would have resisted writing something that aimed to effect a secular equivalent to revelation. Gordin observes another form of this resistance in Dostoevsky’s polemic against Mendeleev, who was trying to discredit spiritualism by positively disproving it. Dostoevsky believed that this was an ineffective strategy, as belief is independent of empirical proof, and it would therefore be impossible to discover evidence that would effectively undermine the spiritualists’ fundamentally illogical convictions.⁴⁸

This suspicion of empiricism is at the heart of Dostoevsky’s ambiguous quasi-mystification.⁴⁹ As mentioned above, he stresses that ghost writing is a conventionally literary genre, but the section as a whole suggests that a given reader’s attitude toward the parody’s persuasive potential, like one’s attitude toward seances, will be decided by pre-existing questions of faith and belief, preventing a proper demystification. Dostoevsky’s open mystification that does not resolve thus rejects the grounds of the highly positivist debate between the spiritualists and critics such as Mendeleev, which revolved around whether or

47 In this sense, the overall section’s structure ironically reiterates the aforementioned tension between supernatural and natural causes that defines Todorov’s fantastic.

48 See GORDIN, pp. 764-767. The primary focus here is on articles that Dostoevsky wrote after January 1876, but in the January Diary Dostoevsky does refer to a spirit photographer who was exposed as a fraud: however, even his own confession to this effect could not convince his clients, since they had independently chosen to believe otherwise (*IICC* 22; 35-36).

49 Gordin broadly observes that Dostoevsky’s strategies of persuasion are generally rhetorical, rather than rational. He never tries to affirmatively prove that spiritualism is wrong, but instead mocks it or associates it with unsavory ideas and images (e.g., the aforementioned link between spiritualism and America in *Demons*). GORDIN, pp. 770-772.

not the supernatural could be scientifically proved to exist. He instead invites the reader to consider a more traditional, non-positivist religious perspective, which privileges the mystery of faith.

In short, the parody and the article as a whole only point to what spiritualism is not, without any positive assessment of what it really is. The way in which a reader engages with the parody thus becomes question of faith, not rational persuasion. This reveals another aspect of Gogol's importance within the article, in his strategy of implying the positive by representing its negative inverse.⁵⁰ As noted above, the earliest iteration of Dostoevsky's posthumous Gogol letter had something to do with a line from Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek."⁵¹ The explicit reference is ultimately left out, but it is not difficult to see this quotation as a subtext to the final article, which criticizes both spiritualism and its detractors. However, the fact that this condensed, affirmative, Biblical version of Dostoevsky's argument ultimately exists only on the subtextual level powerfully resonates with Gogol's technique of subsuming an essential moral message underneath caricature.⁵² Dostoevsky's aforementioned evocation of the 'inner content' that one could uncover beneath Gogol's types, moreover, reflects his own awareness of this sensibility in Gogol.

Gogol's caricatures are also relevant because Dostoevsky's choice of this rhetorical form for his ideological polemic against both Mendeleev and the spiritualists returns us to the topic of the grotesque. The central device of Dostoevsky's piece, as has been mentioned, is the aggressive oscillation between criticizing the demonism of spiritualism and his insistence that it's all a joke. This technique is also another part of how Eikhenbaum understands Gogol's grotesque. It is the aesthetic effect of Gogol's unexpected alternations, which can be phonetic or rhetorical, as in the examples noted above. Eikhenbaum also sees it at the end of *Overcoat*, analyzing the story's conclusion as the result of Gogol's constant alternation between comic and tragic modes of writing. This

50 Fanger discusses this tendency, and its connection with Dostoevsky, when discussing Gogol's representation of Petersburg. FANGER, pp. 102, 109; for a broader set of perspectives on Gogol's strategy of implication see GOGOL, *Exploring Absence* (Bloomington: Slavica, 1999), a collection of essays exploring different ways in which Gogol's art attempts to express the unexpressable.

51 Rom. 2:9 (ASV).

52 The symbolic readings of *Overcoat* and *Dead Souls* mentioned earlier are relevant here, as is Gogol's own re-interpretation of *Inspector General* as an allegory for the Russian soul. ГОГОЛЬ, *Полное собрание сочинений*, т. 4, с. 130-133.

ultimately produces a “trick”⁵³ whereby the expected melodramatic ending becomes comical and does not resolve, an effect which Eikhnenbaum observes in Khlestakov’s exit in *Inspector General*, as well. Gogol’s *Nose*, where the narrator both dismisses the content of his story as complete nonsense and affirms that such things really do happen, is another antecedent for Dostoevsky’s decision to end⁵⁴ his essay by presenting overlapping but irreconcilable ideas.

In other words, Dostoevsky consciously makes use of Gogol’s grotesque model here. It is visible in the parody itself, where he disrupts the expected rhythm of his own writing. The unexpected complexity of his parody is a reversal on another level as well, since it turns what is ostensibly a quick joke at ghost writing’s expense into a serious close reading. Even more broadly, the rhetorical reversals that Dostoevsky employs throughout the article for the sake of his fundamental religious critique of spiritualism can themselves be understood also as a development of Gogol’s grotesque style.⁵⁵

Tynyanov’s classic study of the two writers only focuses on Gogol’s importance as a source of comic phrases and characters in Dostoevsky. By 1876, however, we can see that Gogol’s style had also become a model that Dostoevsky could use in his journalistic polemics, which were playful and serious⁵⁶ at the same time. In other words, Gogol’s influence on Dostoevsky continued to develop and take on new forms up until the zenith of the latter writer’s career. Most importantly, this mystification suggests that Gogol’s influence on the late Dostoevsky should be understood as both stylistic and seriously ideological.

Furthermore, this reading of the January *Diary* article invites a reevaluation of the specific contours of Dostoevsky’s dialogue with Gogol in *The Brothers Karamazov*.⁵⁷ The Grand Inquisitor passage has already been mentioned, and Ivan Karamazov’s argument with the devil and Father Ferapont’s visions of pet-

53 *Обман* in the original. For the entire section cited here, see ЭЙХЕНБАУМ, с. 319-326.

54 Strictly speaking, this is not the end of the text: the third chapter of the *Diary* contains two short sections following the discussion of spiritualism, but they are not explicitly connected to his polemic, and Dostoevsky treats the end of this article as the end of a train of thought.

55 Tynyanov observes that Dostoevsky’s general use of Gogol’s techniques, which he calls masks, often leads to a moment in which Dostoevsky reveals some idea or character trait that contradicts the original ‘Gogolian’ expectation. ТЫНЯНОВ, *Достоевский и Гоголь*, с. 19-22. This can be understood as a specific instance of that general theory.

56 This also serves as a specific instance of Rozanov’s observation that Dostoevsky’s work was both religious and blasphemous. РОЗАНОВ, с. 27-28.

57 The *Diary*’s general connection to Dostoevsky’s final novel is well-discussed. See Andrew WACHTEL’s lucid discussion of the two works in his book *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past* (1994) for one overview.

ty demons are two other instances that seem more or less to continue the imagery and essential religious ambiguity evinced by the Gogol parody under discussion here. Given the sources of Dostoevsky's parody, moreover, it is worth considering how less canonical works of Gogol's, especially *Selected Passages*, inform Dostoevsky's many-layered adaptation and development of Gogol's style. Doing so will shed new light on yet another element of Dostoevsky's final masterpiece.

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