

= The Landlady (Fyodor Dostoyevsky) =

The Landlady (Russian : ??????? , Khozayka) is a novella by Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky , written in 1847 . Set in Saint Petersburg , it tells of an abstracted young man , Vasily Mikhailovich Ordynov , and his obsessive love for Katerina , the wife of a dismal husband whom Ordynov perceives as a malignant fortune @-@ teller or mystic . The story has echoes of Russian folklore and may contain autobiographical references . In its time The Landlady had a mixed reception , more recently being seen as perhaps unique in Dostoyevsky 's oeuvre . The first part of the novella was published in October 1847 in Notes of the Fatherland , the second part in November that year .

= = Plot = =

After the reclusive and bookish scholar Vasily Ordynov is compelled to leave his apartment he wanders aimlessly through Saint Petersburg , contemplating his despair over a loveless life , his childhood and his future . Through this distraction he finds himself within a church , where he notices an old man , Ilia Murin , with his young wife , Katerina . His fascination for the couple , particularly Katerina , causes him to contrive further encounters , with the intention of securing a lodging at their home . He becomes their house guest . The gloomy Murin is a perceived Old Believer , with powers of clairvoyance that have perturbed his neighbours and the local police , and which appear to control his wife . Katerina implies that Murin was her mother 's lover , that she might be Murin 's biological daughter , and that the pair ran @-@ off together after he killed her father . There is an unresolved suggestion that Murin caused the death of Katerina 's fiancé during their escape .

Ordynov develops a passion for Katerina , which she reciprocates after nursing him through delirium . While in delirium Ordynov , in dream or reality , spies on Murin who has taken to his bed through illness and is recounting tales to Katerina ? he rushes into Murin 's room ; Murin 's attempt to shoot Ordynov with a gun , misses . Ordynov tries to convince Katerina of her need to detach herself from Murin physically and psychologically , and believes he has overcome her reluctance to do so when he hears her sing a song of love and freedom . Katerina offers wine to Ordynov and Murin as she considers her choice . Murin uses the language of prediction and psychology to show any choice as futile , as Katerina is predestined by her sex to be a captive of a master and her own grief . Ordynov now fully believes that Murin is a sorcerer and that Katerina is his slave , as she herself believes . Using Murin 's argument , he offers to buy Katerina , to effect her liberation . Murin indicates a veiled threat that the price would be bloodshed for both buyer and goods . Fearing a lost cause , Ordynov intends to kill Murin , but fails as a knife falls from his hand and as Katerina falls at her husband 's feet .

Murin afterwards explains to the police that both Katerina and Ordynov are weak and would hand back freedom if it were given ; that she needs the control of a master , and he couldn 't kill a stronger man even with the means to do so .

= = Background = =

In October 1846 Dostoyevsky wrote to his brother Mikhail that his short story Mr. Prokharchin was well @-@ received , and that he was continuing to work on Saved Sidewhiskers for Vissarion Belinsky . The idea for The Landlady already existed at that point , and three days later he again wrote to Mikhail saying that the proposed Saved Sidewhiskers would be shelved as he wanted to introduce a new style , and that " more original , lively and bright thoughts were asking to be put on paper " . He later pointed out the favourable similarities between the progress of the The Landlady and that of his first novel , Poor Folk .

On 26 November 1846 Dostoyevsky announced that he had ended his affiliation with Nekrasov and Panaev 's journal The Contemporary , to join Andrey Kravetsky 's Notes of the Fatherland . He also ended his association with Belinsky 's literary circle after a dispute in early 1846 ? subsequently Belinsky left Notes of the Fatherland to write for The Contemporary . Kravetsky published most of Dostoyevsky 's pre @-@ prison stories in 1846 , except A Novel in Nine Letters , issued in The

Contemporary , and Polzunkov , printed in The Illustrated Almanach . In early 1847 Dostoyevsky noted in a letter to his brother that work on The Landlady had begun ? on 9 September 1847 it was finalized . According to Dostoyevsky 's wishes the first part was published in October ? second part was issued the following month .

= = Themes and style = =

The Landlady in its length lies between a long short story and a short novel . According to Neuhäuser , the story incorporates themes found in artistic fairy tales , which , unlike typical folk tales , are written by a particular person , and not collected from hearsay . According to Professor S. Gibian , The Landlady is a " recreation of folktale diction and imagery " and " its plot is based on the three folklore motifs , man ? woman dominance , the incestuous father ? daughter relationship , and Volga outlaw tales . "

The abstracted chief protagonist , Ordynov , is a prototype of future characters that would appear in " White Nights " and Netochka Nezvanova . C. E. Passage felt that the work was influenced by Gogol 's Taras Bulba and A Terrible Vengeance , Odoevsky 's Improvizator , Hoffmann 's Die Elixiere des Teufels , Der Magnetiseur , Der unheimliche Gast , Der Sandmann and Der Artushof . In Dostoevsky : The Adapter , Passage argues that the " truth of the matter is that Dostoevsky was again compounding story elements as in the case of The Double . "

Alfred Bem postulates in Dramatizatsiia breda that The Landlady incorporates autobiographical elements . Influenced by Freud 's psychoanalysis , he argued that Ordynov 's familial relationship with Katerina and Murin was similar to Dostoyevsky 's own , and found reflections of the writer 's affair with Avdotya Panayeva , whom he met within her husband 's political circle . Bem states that tiring quarrels between circle members Nikolay Nekrasov and Ivan Turgenev worsened Dostoyevsky 's health , although he had stress problems prior to working on The Landlady . Elements of Gothic literature were also detected in the story 's dark atmosphere , and the strange character of the relationship between Katerina and Ordynov . Valery Kirpotin believes that the novella discusses good and evil . The critic Stanisław Mackiewicz stated that he found " the key to understand its symbolic content and Belinsky 's fierce rejection . I am of the belief that the young person represents the Russian intelligence , and the woman with the expressive name ' The Landlady ' the Russian folk , while the haunted fortuneteller echoes the religious beliefs of that folk and especially the schismatic Old Believers . "

Sophie Ollivier says that the novella tries to " penetrate into the essence of the historical consciousness of the Russian people , of the Russian faith " . Robert Mann believes that Murin is based on the Prophet Elijah , and that Ordynov has a similar religiosity to several literary characters in the 1860s and 1870s . Murin could also be a precursor of The Grand Inquisitor from The Brothers Karamazov .

= = Reception = =

The Landlady received mixed reception . Dostoyevsky was criticized for plagiarizing other works , specifically E.T.A. Hoffmann 's Erscheinungen . Vissarion Belinsky called the novella " terrible rubbish " and further commented that he " had tried to reconcile Marlinsky to Hoffmann , adding a bit of humour after the latest fashion , and covering the whole with a thick veneer of " narodnost " [Russian cultural tradition] . " Belinsky saw the work as resembling the stories of Tit Kosmokratov (Vladimir Titov) and that the book has " not a single simple and lively word or phrase " and that " everything is affected , strained , on stilts , artificial and false . " Recent reception has been more positive than the contemporary . Kenneth A. Lantz stated that it is " unique among Dostoyevsky 's works in its extreme melodrama , eeriness and general obscurity . "