Smerdiakov and Ivan: Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov

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"My friend," said Stepan Trofimovich in great excitement “savez-vous... That’s exactly like our Russia, these devils that come out of the sick man and enter into the swine. They are all the sores... all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia.... Oui, cette Russie que j'aimais toujours. But a great idea and a great Will will encompass it from on high ... and all those devils will come forth ... and they will beg of themselves to enter into swine; and indeed maybe they have entered into them already! They are we, we and those ... and Petrusha and les autres avec lui... and I perhaps at the head of them, and we shall cast ourselves down, possessed and raving from the rock into the sea, and we shall all be drowned—and a good thing too, for that is all we are fit for."

The Devils

In The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky portrays a positivist and Westemizer, Ivan, interacting with the devil in the narrative reality of the novel.' This interaction pervades various levels of the narrative, including the temptations of Ivan by Smerdiakov, as well as Ivan’s conversations with his chert. Numerous philosophers and literary scholars have investigated the religious, ethical, and political aspects of Dostoevsky’s endeavor to connect Ivan with the devil. Special attention has also been dedicated to Smerdiakov as the embodiment of absolute evil in the novel. Several noteworthy studies examine the possibilities of interpreting Smerdiakov as Ivan’s ideological double.2 Building on these results, I will

T. M. Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. David McDuff (London, 1993). All further English-language translations in the text, with modifications where needed, refer to this edition. The parenthetical Russian-language prompts follow the text of F. M. Dostoevskii. Bratia Karamazovy, in his Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30-ti tomakh (PSS) (Leningrad. 1972-88), vols. 14 and 15.

–See for example, Sergei Gessen, “Tragediia Dobra v Brat’iakh Karamazovykh Dostoevskogo," in O Dostoevskom: Stat'i, cd. Donald Fanger (Providence, RI, 1966), 197–229; Nikolai Berdiaev, "Velikii Inkvizitor.” in O russkikh klassikakh (Moscow, 1993). 23–46; Michael Holquist, Dostoevsky and the Novel (Princeton, 1977), 188; Richard Peace, “Justice and Punishment." in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s "The Brothers Karamazov. ” ed. Harold Bloom (New
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I will argue that Dostoevsky challenges this “moral blindness” of his readers, and of society at large, by paradoxically revealing and at the same time concealing who murdered Fedor Pavlovich Karamazov, the father, almost to the very end of the novel (to be exact, till the chapter, “The Third and the Last Conversation with Smerdiakov"). Indeed, neither the events that followed the murder nor the subsequent investigation provide an accurate explanation of the mystery but rather lead to erroneous conclusions. The factual truth about this crime emerges exclusively in the conversations between Ivan and Smerdiakov. Smerdiakov shows his awareness of this by mocking Ivan that no one would believe him if he chose to reveal the truth about the murder in the court: “Well, and who will believe you, and what single piece of proof have you got?” (p. 729).
The foreshadowing of Smerdiakov’s eventual revelation, however, informs the narrative. For example, in the course of his first interrogation Dmitry repeatedly experiences a premonition that it is Smerdiakov who has committed the crime, although every time he himself reasons against this possibility:
Listen: right from the start ... that thought flickered through my mind: “It was Smerdiakov’” Here I have sat al the table, shouting my innocence of this blood, yet all the while I have been thinking: “It was Smerdiakov!” And Smerdiakov would not leave my soul alone. Now, a moment ago, I suddenly thought the same thing again: “Il was Smerdiakov!” but only for a second: my instant, my very next thought was: "No, it was not Smerdiakov?” This is not his work, gentlemen!... I don’t know anyone it could be, whether it’s the hand of Heaven or of Satan, but... not Smerdiakov!... Because I am convinced. Because that is my impression. Because Smerdiakov is a man of the basest nature, and a coward. He’s not a coward, he's the epitome of all the cowardice in the world walking on two legs. He was bom of a hen.... He’s a sickly hen with the falling sickness and a weak mind.... It’s not Smerdiakov, gentlemen.... Well, in that case it was the Devil who killed my father! (pp. 547–49)
Similarly, Alesha on several occasions, most openly during the trial, expresses his conviction that Smerdiakov is the murderer. As it transpires from the following exchange, Alesha's intuition also tells him that the truth about the murderer’s identity bears threatening significance for his brother Ivan:
"Who is the murderer then, according to you?” [Ivan| asked.... “You know who,” Alesha pronounced in a low, penetrating voice. "Who? You mean the myth about that crazy idiot, the epileptic, Smerdiakov?” Alesha suddenly felt himself trembling all over. “You know who,” broke helplessly from him.... — “Who? Who?”
York. 1988), 23–37; Malcolm V. Jones. Dostoevsky after Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoevsky's Fantastic Realism (Cambridge. England. 1990), 78, 169–70; and Vladimir Kantor. V poiskakh lichnosti: Opyt russkoi klassiki (Moscow. 1994). 152. I express gratitude to Caryl Emerson for pointing out the latter study and letting me use her translation of the excerpts.

Ivan cried almost fiercely.... “I only know one thing... Whoever murdered father, it was not you." — “‘Not you!’ What do you mean by ‘not you’?’’ Ivan was thunderstruck. “It was not you who killed father, not you!’’ Alesha repeated firmly. “I know I didn't. Are you raving?” said Ivan, with a pale, distorted smile.... “No, Ivan. You've told yourself several times that you are the murderer.” — “When did I say so? I was in Moscow. ... When have I said so?” Ivan faltered helplessly. “You’ve said so to yourself many times, when you’ve been alone during these two dreadful months,” Alesha ... was speaking now, as it were, not of himself, not of his own will, but obeying some irresistible command. “You have accused yourself and have confessed to yourself that you are the murderer and no one else. But you didn't do it; you are mistaken: you are not the murderer. Do you hear? It was not you! God has sent me to tell you this.” (p. 693)

After the murder of his father, Ivan—despite his accusations of Dmitry—repeatedly visits Smerdiakov, driven by his innermost conviction that sooner or later the lackey would confess that he killed Fedor Pavlovich. This realization comes to Ivan with considerably greater difficulty than to his brothers or Grushen’ka because it requires that he understand and accept Smerdiakov's accusing him of being the main culprit in the crime: “If it was not Dmitry but Smerdiakov who committed the murder, then I, of course, am an accomplice, for I put him up to it. Whether I did put him up to it, I do not yet know. But if he, and not Dmitry, committed the murder then, of course, I, too, am a murderer" (p. 712).

The extent of Ivan’s guilt in this crime is one of the essential and most complex questions of the novel—and the text does not provide a definitive answer. I agree with Sergei Gessen’s opinion that Ivan may be blamed only in the universal sense, as in Zosima’s belief that everyone is ultimately guilty of everything. According to this point of view, Ivan, despite what he himself thinks about the matter, cannot truly be considered the mastermind behind this crime, as Smerdiakov insists. Ivan’s vulnerability to this accusation (his pangs of conscience) stems from his hatred for his father and wish for his father’s death, as well as his general disgust with his family: Ivan tells Alesha “in a whisper, twisting his features in malice, ‘One vile reptile may consume the other, and good riddance of [jic] them both’” (p. 161). These ignoble feelings are powerful enough to prompt him to flee his patemal home despite his awareness of the brewing dangers and his sense of familial responsibility.

As Gessen points out, however, there is a crucial difference between Ivan’s moral failures and actual murder.' Mocking Ivan's moral qualms as a weakness, Smerdiakov fulfills Ivan’s dark wish and blurs the moral problem with the criminal one, claiming that he cannot see the difference between the two. After having established that Ivan indeed wished his father dead, he implicates Ivan: “You did the murder. You are the principal murderer, and I was only your minion, your faithful servant Licharda, and fulfilled that task in compliance with your instructions" (pp. 718–19). Smerdiakov uses this insidious logic to accuse Ivan of not merely consenting to the murder but also having inspired it.

'Gessen, "Tragediia Dobra,” 210–11. On this subject Holquist states, "It goes without saying that it is he (Smerdiakov] who actually accomplished the act of which all the other sons merely dream when he murders the old man" (Dostoevsky and the Novel, 180). Robin Feuer Miller writes that "Smerdiakov ... is the first to raise the philosophical question that each of the brothers must eventually face: Where is the ethic boundary between thought and deed? At what point does thought become deed?" (“The Brothers Karamazov”: Worlds of the Novel (New York, 1992], 45).

Smerdiakov himself introduces this idea by insisting that Ivan taught him that, if there is no God, everything is permitted—an idea which Ivan indeed expresses at Zosima's and in a conversation with Alesha. However, during the dinner at the Karamazovs, Ivan refuses—despite his father's persistent nagging—to repeat this in front of Smerdiakov. The text tells us directly about Ivan's "schooling" of Smerdiakov only on one occasion:

At the outset, when Ivan Fedorovich had first come to live among us ... [he] had suddenly begun to take an especial interest in Smerdiakov, even finding him rather original. He had himself schooled him to talk to him, always, however, marveling at a certain incoherence or, rather, a certain disturbance of his mind, and was unable to think what it might be that could so constantly and persistently disturb it. They would talk about philosophical questions and even about how there could have been light on the first day when the sun, moon and stars had only been brought into being on the fourth, and how this should be interpreted, (p. 306)

This passage contains a rather vague reference to certain philosophical conversations that Ivan used to have with Smerdiakov at the beginning of Ivan's visit, but the text makes it clear that

Ivan Fedorovich soon grew convinced that the important point here had nothing whatever to do with the sun, moon and stars, that even though these were of interest to Smerdiakov they were entirely insignificant and what he was after was something altogether different. This may or may not have been the case, but whatever the truth of the matter, he had begun to display and manifest a boundless vanity that was, moreover, a wounded one. This had not appealed to Ivan Fedorovich at all. It was from this that his sense of revulsion had sprung, (p. 306, emphasis added)

Thus, the questions arise: what is Smerdiakov's objective in these discussions and why does he subsequently strive to pass on to Ivan the responsibility for the murder that he has committed? Concerning the latter, his motive is not to avoid punishment, since by the moment of his confession he has already made the decision to take his own life. Smerdiakov

4Edward Wasiolek maintains that Ivan "makes Smerdiakov, for Smerdiakov's views are formed largely by the long conversations he has with Ivan" (Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction [Cambridge. MA, 1964], 172). See also Victor Terras, A Karamazov Companion: Commentary on the Genesis. Language, and Style of Dostoevsky's Novel (Madison, 1981), 91. Holquist insists that Smerdiakov perceives a leader in Ivan and murders Fedor Pavlovich "less out of a desire for his own revenge than as a desire to be the good servant of another master, his half brother" (Dostoevsky and the Novel, 182). Other scholars, however, maintain a more flexible point of view on this relation∗ ship. See, for example. I. Kubikov. "Obraz Smerdiakova i ego obobshchaiushchii smysl,'' in Dostoevskii: Sbomik statei (Moscow, 1928), 202–3,208. Miller explains the ambivalence in Smerdiakov–Ivan relationship: "Although it is customary and accurate to regard Ivan as Smerdiakov's teacher and Smerdiakov as Ivan's lackey. Smerdiakov is also, in his role as a tempter and devil. Ivan's teacher." To prove this point. Miller traces Smerdiakov's ideas in Ivan's poem on Grand Inquisitor ("The Brothers Karamazov," 46). Vladimir Kantor suggests an ambivalent, dialogical explanation to this problem proposing that Smerdiakov is Ivan's double that is in no sense subordinate to the hero. On the contrary, this double gradually gains the upper hand and. according to Bakhtin, gains control over Ivan's voice (Vpoiskakh lichnosti, 152).

not so much informs Ivan about his impending suicide as he lets him interpret his hints, gestures, and glances. Ivan exclaims:

"Listen, you miserable, contemptible creature! Don't you understand that if I haven't killed you, it's simply because I am keeping you to answer tomorrow at the

trial... we'll go together. That's how it shall be!" ... Smerdiakov paused as though pondering. "That will not be, sir" (Nichego etogo ne budet-s)... he resolved at last, in a categorical manner that allowed of no appeal, (pp. 728–29)

After his usual fashion, Smerdiakov leaves his words open to various interpretations. Thus, his refusal to believe in Ivan's resolution to go to court may be explained by Ivan's being a skeptic, sybarite, and ultimately, a coward. In the same way he deals with the question of the money:

"You will take that money away with you,'' Smerdiakov sighed. "Of course, I shall take it. But why do you give it to me, if you committed the murder for the sake of it?" Ivan looked at him with great surprise. "I have no need of it whatever, sir" (Ne nado mne ikh vovse-s), Smerdiakov pronounced in a shaking voice, with a wave of his hand.... "Then why are you giving it back?" "Never mind," Smerdiakov waved his hand again.... "I repeat" [Ivan] said, "The only reason I haven't killed you is that I need you for tomorrow, remember that, don't forget it!" "Well, kill me. Kill me now." Smerdiakov said, all at once looking strangely at Ivan.... "Till tomorrow," cried Ivan, and moved to go out. "Stay a moment.... Show me those notes again." Ivan took out the money and showed it to him. Smerdiakov looked at it for ten seconds. "Well, you can go," he said, with a wave of his hand. "Ivan Fedorovich!" he called after him again. "What is it?" Ivan turned without stopping. "Farewell, sir!" (Proshchaite-s). (pp. 729–30)

The possible explanation of why Smerdiakov is returning the money could reside in his disappointment in Ivan's teaching. Smerdiakov's choice of words, however, reveals that the returning of the money is triggered by his decision to commit suicide: "Something inward and concealed was firing [Smerdiakov], and he plainly had some ultimate resolve. Ivan could sense this" (p. 724).

Though the questions of why Smerdiakov first tempts Ivan and then accuses him of the murder cannot be answered definitively, some insights may be derived from an analysis of the symbolic meaning of Smerdiakov.

It is my belief that Smerdiakov serves as a foreshadowing of the devil which appears later to Ivan. This foreshadowing does not so much cause the object to materialize, but rather transports its presence from the future into the narrative present.5 Thus, Zosima's bow

5G. S. Morson sets forward his definition and concept of ••foreshadowing" in Narrative and Freedom: The Shadow of Time (New Haven. 1994); however. Morson denies the presence of foreshadowing in Dostoevsky's novels. In "The Brothers Karamazov" and the Poetics of Memory (Cambridge. England. 1991), 213–15. Diane Oenning Thompson suggests the term of "foretelling" or ••prefiguration" for the narrative device, which denotes "the general category of all those words in The Brothers Karamazov which relate to the future, as well as those poetic structures which evoke the things to come." Thompson also refers to Gerard Genette's definition of foreshadowing as a narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later. On various techniques of "foretelling." "false foretelling." "contradictory foretelling." and "retardation by means of foretelling" in Dostoevsky's novels see M. G. Davidovich. "Problema zanimatel'nosti v romanakh Dostoevskogo," in Tvorcheskii put' Dostoevskogo, ed. N. L. Brodskii (Leningrad. 1924).

to Dmitry is a singularly striking instance of foreshadowing (of the later crime and judicial mistake). However, there are numerous subtler signs and less obvious premonitions in the novel. The significance of Zosima's blessing of Ivan often slips past readers, even though it happens in the same scene and similarly foreshadows Ivan's future torments. Zosima has sensed Ivan's troubled conscience, and when he offers him his blessing, Ivan acknowledges the justice of the Elder's insight by going up to him and kissing his hand. Later, on the eve of his death,

Zosima explains to Alesha that bowing in front of Dmitry was a bow to his future sufferings. However, the prophetic blessing of Ivan in effect points in the same direction for Ivan would also be subjected to the torture and punishment of insanity for a crime that he has not committed. Zosima's explanation of his premonition points not only to the external unjust punishment of Dmitry but also to the self-accusation of both brothers for being deficient as brothers, in the broader Christian meaning of the word, to other human beings. Both Dmitry and Ivan suffer their own spiritual punishment for a guilt of which they suddenly became acutely aware, not only the guilt of wishing their father dead but also the guilt of being arrogant and violent toward the people around them. Dmitry's revelation comes to him through the dream about a hungry and cold peasant child. Ivan's realization of guilt finds expression in his outburst: "If [Smerdiakov]... committed the murder then, of course, I, too, am a murderer'' (p. 712), which leads to his decision to go to court and expose Smerdiakov at the cost of ruining his own reputation. Thus, Zosima bows down to their final realization that everyone in the world is guilty before everyone.

Foreshadowing is the sign of "essential surplus" in the narrative future which is "known to the author [and] directed by the demands of a structure of which the character is entirely unaware but which readers keep in mind."6 Dostoevsky utilizes this "essential surplus," as his characters sometimes articulate the truth which is yet hidden from them and the reader. Their utterance, however, is often obscured by the alternative meanings of the expressions they use. Thus, Dmitry's exclamation during the preliminary investigation that it was the devil that murdered his father would colloquially mean merely that "only the devil knows who killed him." In the narrative structure, however, Dmitry's exclamation becomes the insight into the essential truth and the foretelling of future revelations. In exactly the same stylistically ambiguous manner, Ivan comments on Smerdiakov's report of the murder: "The devil himself must have helped you!" (p. 728)

On the day before the murder, not only does the sensitive Alesha feel the foreboding of the moment, but the clever Rakitin also slates that the Karamazov family reeks of impending crime. Even the normally crude Fedor Pavlovich suddenly asks Alesha whether they will see each other again—after what seems to him an unusually warm farewell from his son. Foreshadowing transforms the future into not just inevitability but a substantial actuality. In The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky portrays the general inability to comprehend the malice foreshadowed in Smerdiakov's image as the moral tragedy of evil hidden in plain view.

6Morson. Narrative and Freedom, 43. Mikhail Bakhtin maintained, however, that Dostoevsky retains "only an indispensable minimum of pragmatic information" and never "an essential surplus" of meaning which would transform the open dialogue in his novels into "a dialogue rhetorically performed." Sec Bakhtin. Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, 1984), 73.

Thus, as I will explain below. Smerdiakov's connection with the devil becomes real as the facts and rumors about his birth, childhood, and death disclose his demonic symbolism.7

'"After al), he may possibly be [Fedor Pavlovich's] son. his natural son, do you know that?* — 'We have heard that legend'" (p. 548). This is the only instance in the novel when Smerdiakov's story is mentioned within the utterance of a character, in this case Dmitry. Right away, his interlocutor, the investigator, labels it a "legend." Shrouded in mystery, Smerdiakov's birth has indeed an almost legendary feel to it. There is a strong sense of the symbolic and the blasphemous in the story of his birth that may be compared with a story of the evil-doer in a traditional Russian saint's life, or vita* According to rumors. Smerdiakov was bom as the result of the rape of a village idiot. Lizaveta Smerdiashchaia, by Fedor

Pavlovich Karamazov.
Although physically repulsive, Lizaveta had been well loved in the city “as a holy fool and a woman of God" (p. 109). Her honesty and charity contributed to her reputation as a sacred being, and her gifts were cherished as signs of blessing. The coupling with this holy fool evokes the image of the mock-marriage between two fools, which constitutes a stock performance in medieval carnival. In the novel, just before this coupling took place, a group of drunken gentlemen indulges in a discussion of Lizaveta’s sexual qualities “with every imaginable absence of censorship" (p. 110), that is, in a profane camivalesque exchange. The situation, however, is complicated by the fact that while Lizaveta is the real holy fool, Fedor Pavlovich is "pushing his role of buffoon" (p. 111). Typically for Dostoevsky, this antinomy is bolstered by the appearance of doubles, both for the real holy fool and for the aggressive pretender: Alesha’s mother and Alesha himself are called holy fools (klikusha and iurodivyi), while Father Ferapont pretends to be a holy fool in his attack on Zosima’s authority.9
Fedor Pavlovich’s deceit shifts the meaning of this mock-marriage from one of ambivalent camivalesque profanity to a cynical and individualistic violation of the carnival as a whole—the carnival stands here for the public opinion and mores of the city. By raping Lizaveta, Fedor Pavlovich in effect spits on the beliefs of his neighbors, and Smerdiakov is

’In "Obraz Smerdiakova i ego obobshchaiushchii smysl," 199-201, I. Kubikov cannot help observing that Smerdiakov has a mysterious side, which resists a realistic approach. W. J. Leatherbarrow, Fedor Dostoevsky: "The Brothers Karamazov" (Cambridge. England, 1992), 37-38, proposes that Smerdiakov's "highly diabolical figure" enlarges the meaning of The Brothers Karamazov "by leading us from the world of... realistic novel into that of a myth."

•For example, Smerdiakov's story parallels the story of Svaitopolk "the accursed" in the "Legend of Boris and Gleb": "Volodimir had twelve sons, not by one wife, but by their several mothers.... Their (son) was Sviatopolk. who conceived this evil murder. His mother, a Greek, was formerly a nun. and Jaropolk. Vblodimir's brother, took her. and ... he unfrocked her and begot of her this accursed Sviatopolk. But Volodimir. who was still a pagan, killed Jaropolk and took his wife who was pregnant; and of her was bom this accursed Sviatopolk. And he was of two fathers who were brothers, and for this reason Vblodimir loved him not for he was not of him." See "The Narrative and Passion and Encomium of the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb." trans. Marvin Kantor, in An Anthology of Russian Literature from Earliest Writings to Modem Fiction: Introduction to a Culture, ed. N. Rzhevsky (Armonk. NY. 1996), 21. The sinister motif of being begotten by two men echoes in the rumor that a criminal Karp could also be Smerdiakov’s father.

‘'Bakhtin pointed out that "almost all of Dostoevsky’s major heroes... have their partial double in another person or even in several other people" (Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 217). N. A. Berdiaev expresses a similar concept in "Stavrogin." O russkikh klassikakh, 48-51. On the notion of double see also Miller. "The Brothers Karamazov," 43.

bom as a result of this violation of public morals, or as Grigory puts it: “The offspring of a devil’s son and a woman righteous” (p. 112).
The symbolic motifs of the story of Smerdiakov's birth reappear in key moments of the narrative. Thus, a thick yellow book, “orations and sermons of the Godbearing Father St. Isaac of Nineveh,” which Grigory reads after the death of his six-fingered son right before Smerdiakov has been found, reappears on Smerdiakov’s desk on the day of his suicide. Also, on the night of the murder, Dmitry climbs over the fence of his father's house exactly at the spot where Lizaveta climbed this same fence to give birth to Smerdiakov, and the wounded Grigory's moans remind his wife

of the moans of Lizaveta on the night when her son was bom. The themes of fetid smell (tletvomyi dukh = smerdenie) as well as holy foolimposter reappear in the context of Zosima's death and Alesha's temptation. In this respect, Smerdiakov's direct connection with the insidious demonic force is prefigured in his name and the story of his birth.

The father contemptuously names his illegitimate son "Pavel Fedorovich"—an inverted form of his own name, "Fedor Pavlovich." Smerdiakov's last name is of even greater significance: It is clear that his last name derives from his mother's nickname. "Smerdiashchaia," however, means only "smelly," while "Smerdiakov" has two meanings: "smelly" and "slave" (smerd). In using this name—as a biblical joke of sorts—father Karamazov repeats Noah's curse by making one of his sons a servant to himself and to his brothers.10 In the Karamazov household we see a relationship that is the very antithesis of Zosima's revelation that his former servant Afanasy is his brother. At the very beginning of his life, Smerdiakov is placed within the biblical discourse of the responsibility of brother for brother. This biblical motif of responsibility among brothers is repeated in the novel a number of times. Besides the allusion to Noah and his sons, there also appear parallels with Cain and Abel, as well as with the selling of Joseph into slavery by his brothers. Dmitry. Ivan, Alesha, and Smerdiakov witness their father's (spiritual) nakedness and drunkenness, as did Noah's sons. Similar to Cain, Smerdiakov declares to Alesha and later to Ivan that he will not watch over his brother Dmitry. And Smerdiakov accuses Ivan of profiting from Dmitry's imprisonment, which would increase his own share of the inheritance, as Joseph's brothers gained from selling him to slavery. , The description of Smerdiakov's childhood is also informed by camivalesque symbolism: "In his childhood he had been very fond of stringing up cats and then giving them ceremonial burials. He would on such occasions drape around himself a sheet, which acted as a kind of surplice, chanting and waving something over the dead cat as though he were censing it" (p. 141). This pastime of hanging cals and then performing a mock funeral for them resembles acts in the carnivals of early modem Europe.11 His ludicrous "atheistic"

,0Holquist maintains that Smerdiakov actually dramatizes the effect of their father's tyranny over his sons by being "quite literally his father's servant, a bastard and an epileptic'' (Dostoevsky and the Novel, 180). Scholars also noticed that on its symbolical plane The Brothers Karamazov focuses on parricide as the central myth of the novel. See Jones. Dostoevsky after Bakhtin, 169–70. 185; Holquist. Dostoevsky and the Novel, 165–92; idem. "Gaps in Christology: The Idiot," in Dostoevsky: New Perspectives, ed. R. L. Jackson (Englewood Cliffs. 1984), 142–44; and Leatherbarrow. Fedor Dostoevsky, 38.

"Robert Damton. The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History (New York. 1984), 78–101, gives a detailed analysis of cats' tenure and execution as a ritualistic element of medieval carnival.

observations and attempts to engage Grigory in religious squabbles resemble the mock- theological disputes of the carnival; and the slap in the face that Grigory gives Smerdiakov in response to his irreverence falls within the same category of buffoonery. Even the trivialities of his life, including his daily descents to the cellar, his meaningless songs, his obsessive fastidiousness, and so on, are described in ways that evoke the ominous and fantastic, and which lead to Grigory's observation that he is "not human'' (p. 141).

Scholars have noted that Smerdiakov's "inhumanness" lies in his being the Karamazovs' sin incarnate. I would argue, however, that the Christian concept of sin is inapplicable to Smerdiakov altogether, and that Gessen is correct in maintaining that Smerdiakov's consciousness and morals lie beyond the categories of good, evil, or sin.12 He has no carnal desires; he does not normally steal (an

honesty inherited from his mother); and, as Fedor Pavlovich notes, he never gossips about his master, although he hates him (pp. 143–44, 151). He “steals" three thousand rubles from Fedor Pavlovich only to hand them to Ivan— proving either an inability to use this money or some motive other than greed. Supposing that Smerdiakov is an unrecognized son of Fedor Pavlovich and considering Dmitry’s claim that these three thousand belong to him as a part of his inheritance, Smerdiakov’s theft might be also interpreted as his own claim for a part of an inheritance which he knows he will never be bequeathed—although he never overtly refers to his right to be acknowledged as a member of the Karamazov family. Smerdiakov explains to Ivan: “(Dmitry Fedorovich | is a gentleman, sir, and if he’d now dared to steal something, he’d see it not as stealing, but as just coming to take back ... what was rightfully his."1 ’ His explanation of Ivan’s financial gain in case of Dmitry's imprisonment shows both his profound interest in the brothers’ mutual feelings as well as his knowledge of their financial situation. Having proven to Ivan that he was able to take the money and not get caught, he loses interest in it and hands it over. In short, Smerdiakov’s murder and theft belong more to a class of ideological than criminal offenses.

As Fedor Pavlovich observes, it is precisely Smerdiakov’s almost paradoxical innocence that makes his personality so eerie. Unlike the rest of the Karamazovs, Smerdiakov is presented as sexless, “resembling a castrate" and free of sins—thus resembling an angel (p. 143). However, the link between these pseudo-angelic qualities and the demonic is suggested when Ivan’s devil sarcastically remarks that “he is believed to be a fallen angel" (p. 736). The theme of “innocence" together with the theme of epilepsy juxtapose Smerdiakov with Prince Myshkin in Dostoevsky's The Idiot, who is also afflicted with epilepsy, underscoring their contrariety as an angel and fallen angel, or the devil. For Myshkin, the torment of epileptic seizures connects him with every suffering creature in the world. With Smerdiakov, however, his condition isolates him from everyone, inducing fear even in those who have witnessed his spells since childhood. Moreover, while Myshkin, according to Michael Holquist, “strives to connect his health and illness into coherent existence,” and the main

Specifically, he interprets the “Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin" as "an oblique attack" of the oppressed against their masters.

l2Gessen, "Tragediia Dobra," 226–27.

’’Dostoevsky. The Brothers Karamazov, 727–28. Holquist suggests that in Dostoevsky’s novels the failure of the fathers to leave inheritance to their sons always symbolizes "collapse of bridges between generations" ("Gaps in Christology," 142–44).

tragedy of his life is his inability to fulfill this task, Smerdiakov seems comfortable with his epilepsy and proves that he can use it to his own ends.14 His performance as an epilepticimposter evokes again the theme of the camivalesque sacrilege.15

Smerdiakov's satanic nature incites the disdain that all three Karamazov brothers feel toward him. While this contempt is to be expected from the haughty Dmitry or aloof Ivan, it is surprising coming from Alesha—and therefore profoundly meaningful. Neither his teacher Zosima nor Alesha himself think about Smerdiakov as his brother. “Be close to your brothers,” Zosima instructs Alesha, “and close not to one, but to them both” (p. 85). While Zosima clearly signals his premonition of both Dmitry’s and Ivan's suffering, he fails to discern Smerdiakov's role in the impending catastrophe because even Zosima excludes him from the brotherhood of the people and. in effect, excuses Alesha from watching over him.

Alesha demonstrates this same attitude when he asks Smerdiakov, “Will brother Dmitry return soon?” The very use of the redundant “brother” suggests that he does

not consider Smerdiakov as his brother and that the word “brother”—which presupposes concern and love—cannot apply to him. thus excluding Smerdiakov from the people for whom Alesha is willing to assume responsibility. Smerdiakov’s understanding of these nuances reveals itself in his answer, a rephrased version of “I am not my brother's keeper”: “Why do you suppose that I should know where Dmitry Fedorovich are? It would be another matter were I employed as his keeper" (pp. 159–60, emphasis added).

Alesha's temptation after Zosima's death is also related to Smerdiakov, although on a more symbolic level, and is connected with his expectation of a miracle. Alesha’s adoration of Zosima reveals its weak side when, after his Elder's death, instead of the miraculous happening that everyone expected, there takes place merely an unpleasant natural phenomenon—the decomposition of a dead body which emits a scandalously “fetid smell” (one of the meanings of “Smerdiakov”). Alesha is shaken by this event not because he himself expects a miracle but because, from his point of view, something unjust has taken place. The holy fool–pretender Fcrapont challenges Zosima’s authority precisely at the moment when his body has begun to emit the smell of decay, and it is this challenge, as well as the disrespect by the monks and the public toward the Elder’s memory, that offends Alesha so deeply. After being thus insulted, Alesha's temptation is prolonged by the seminarist-atheist Rakitin, whom Dmitry calls “lackey” during his trial (p. 772). Despite other meanings for “lackey” in Dostoevsky’s vocabulary, this signals a link to the lackey Smerdiakov.16 Ivan’s devil, in

“Holquist, "Gaps in Christology,” 137.

1 'For example. Smerdiakov’s plan to stage a fall into the cellar as the outbreak of his epileptic fit may be viewed as mockery of the second temptation of Christ to throw himself into the abyss from the pinnacle of the Temple mentioned in Ivan’s "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor."

l6In his "Notes for Crime and Punishment" Dostoevsky wrote: "NB. Nihilism is the servility (lakeistvo) of thought" (PSS 7:202). In The Possessed. Shatov refers to atheists as “the lackeys of the thought" (PSS 10:110). Dostoevsky often used the word lakeistvo to typify the subordination of a "European Russian" to the European way of thinking and European way of life (sec "Notes for The Possessed." PSS 11:71, 157, and 12:334). Dostoevsky considered all the Westemizers to be "lackeys.” For example, he wrote that the editor-in-chief of the European Herald and his colleagues “were bom as lackeys," "like all of our liberals they are lackeys before everything else,” "lackeys’ journalism and the lackeys’ periodicals, they are always quick to confirm that Russia has no originality compared to Europe" (PSS II: 169. and 12:348; see also "Russian or French Language?" in his Diary of a Writer for the Year 1876, PSS 23:78–79). See also Berdiaev’s comment that Dostoevsky considered positivism to be the

his turn, openly acknowledges his role in Alesha's trial: “I bear the guilt before [Alesha] for the Elder Zosima.” Ivan furiously retorts to it: “Be silent about Alesha! How dare you, lackey!” (p. 736). Thus, in the temptations of Alesha. Smerdiakov’s symbolic theme is revisited twice, through the meaning of smerdet' and through the “lackey" Rakilin.17 Smerdiakov exacts his revenge on Alesha by making him a helpless witness to the suffering of his brothers: “Alesha went outside [of the jail] completely in tears. ... [A]ll of that suddenly uncovered before Alesha an abyss of hopeless misery and despair within the soul of his unhappy brother [Dmitry] ... His stabbed heart ached horribly. ‘Love Ivan!’ — he suddenly remembered the words Mitia has uttered just then. ... Ivan had tormented him" (p. 689).

Smerdiakov’s salanic characteristics become most prominent in his interactions with Ivan, since, among the brothers, Ivan is the most distant from God and therefore

the most vulnerable to the devil's temptation. Ivan's rebellion against God is best expressed in his "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." Sensing this spirit of denial in Ivan, Smerdiakov constantly provokes him to declare it—but it is significant that no conversations are ever depicted in which Ivan is instructing him in these ideas. As was pointed out, the notion that Ivan shaped Smerdiakov's worldview is suggested by Smerdiakov himself and therefore must be treated with suspicion: "'That was the dream I had, sir [about using the stolen money] all the more so because I thought that "everything is permitted." It was true what you taught me, sir, for you told me a lot about that then: for if there is no infinite God, then there is no virtue, either, and there is no need of it whatever. That was true, what you said. And that was how I thought, too.* — 'You came to it with your own mind?9 Ivan said with a crooked smile. 'With your guidance, sir" (p. 729, emphasis added).
By the lime of his departure for Moscow, Ivan feels increasingly disgusted with the necessity to discuss trivial matters with Smerdiakov, although at the same time he realizes a hidden link between himself and this sinister half-brother. Ivan recognizes that Smerdiakov constantly creates situations in which Ivan displays his darkest desires and thoughts, and he is terrified of his own helplessness vis-^-vis these advances:
The main thing that annoyed [Ivan] about [his] anguish, and the main reason that it irritated him, was that it possessed a sort of accidental, wholly external aspect.... Some being or object stood constantly present somewhere ... one fails to notice it yet for all the while grows visibly irritated, almost tormented. ... At last Ivan Fedorovich, in a most foul and irritated condition of spirit, attained his parental home and suddenly, some fifteen paces from the ... gate, as he glanced al the
culmination of servility in "The Grand Inquisitor." Berdiaev also pointed out that Dostoevsky invariably revealed the subservient, or "lackey's" essence of his "demonic" personalities (O russkikh klassikakh, 39,41).
1 Thompson explains that "since Alesha is designed as a messianic hero, any intention undermining his spiritual integration take on demonic meaning" ("The Brothers Karamazov, " 227). Likewise, Alesha's other seducer, Rakitin is directly associated with the devil and indirectly with Smerdiakov. In Varieties of Poetic Utterance: Quotation in "The Brothers Karamazov" (Lanham. MD, 1985), 139-40, Nina Perlina arrives at the conclusion that Rakitin and the Devil "form a synonymous pair in the novel." See also Nadine Natova, "Troekratnost' kak simvol diavolova iskusheniia grekhom u Dostoevskogo." Transactions of the Association of Russian American Scholars in the U.S.A. (TARAS) 28 (1996): 223-30. On the vita motif in the novel applied to Alesha see V. E. Vetlovskaia, "Literatumye i fol'klomye istochniki Brat'ev Karamazovykh: Zhitie Alekseia. cheloveka bozhiia i dukhovnyi stikh o nem." in Dostoevskii i russkie pisateli: Traditsii, novatorstvo, masterstvo. ed. V. la. Kirpotin (Moscow, 1971).

entrance way, realized in a flash what it was that had so tormented and disturbed him. On the bench by the entrance sat the lackey Smerdiakov, and from first glance at him Ivan Fedorovich understood that the lackey Smerdiakov also sat in his soul and that it was precisely this person it was unable to endure.... [SJomething dark and repulsive suddenly penetrated his heart, instantly evoking in him a reciprocal malice.... "Can it really be true that this good-for-nothing scoundrel is able to upset me to such a degree?*' he wondered with intolerable malice.18
Smerdiakov quite calculatingly waits for Ivan (before his departure) and then in the most brazen and at the same time confusing form relates to him the plan to murder Fedor Pavlovich, steal his money, and set up Dmitry to be accused of the crime. Smerdiakov has two important motives here. On the one hand, he wants Ivan out of the house and out of his way for at least one night; on the other, he aims

to destroy Ivan psychologically by later implying that Ivan's hearing of the criminal plan was, in essence, consenting to it. At that moment, the usual imbecilic expression leaves Smerdiakov's face: "But something appeared to have happened to him. All his familiarity and casualness of manner had leaped from him in a trice; the whole of his face displayed extreme attention and expectation'' (p. 315). Using the technique of hiding in plain view, Smerdiakov reveals his cynical and daring plan with such savage simplicity and tranquility that Ivan considers him to be deranged and making no sense, and dismisses his project as almost impossible. It is his awareness of this "almost" or the tiny shred of possibility, however, that pains Ivan unbearably after his father's death. On his last night at his father's home he spies on Fedor Pavlovich with mixed feelings— hatred of his father, and shame at his own cowardice: "This 'action' he dubbed all his life thereafter a 'loathsome' one and all his life considered it. deep within himself, in his soul of souls, as the basest action of his entire existence" (p. 317). Smerdiakov has correctly calculated that Ivan's disgust with the situation at his parent's home will drive him to leave rather than become involved in another scandal between his lecherous father and brother.19

Neither during that encounter nor the next morning is there any overt discussion of the idea that, "if there is no God, everything is permitted." However, Smerdiakov is already paving the way for his implication of Ivan in the murder by remarking that "it is always a pleasure to speak with a clever man" (p. 321). Ironically, Ivan is called "a clever man" at those moments when he is most confused and far from being sure of his actions. It is also important that the three demonic characters utter these words: first Smerdiakov (who does so twice), then Fedor Pavlovich, and. finally, the devil himself. On the morning of Ivan's departure, Smerdiakov believes that Ivan will ignore this insolent though seemingly

'^Dostoevsky. The Brothers Karamazov, 305–6. P. S. Popov comments on this passage that anxiety torments Ivan because he feels that Smerdiakov knows his darkest thoughts and even incites them. At the same time. Ivan is unable to contain these thoughts and repeatedly reveals them to Smerdiakov ("'la' i 'ono' v tvorchestve Dostoevskogo," in Dostoevskii: Sbomik statei, 230–31).

"Dostoevsky explained his intentions in a letter of 8 November 1879 to his reader E. N. Lebedeva: "The servant Smerdiakov murdered old Karamazov ... Ivan Fedorovich participated in the murder only indirectly and at a distance, solely by the fact that he refrained (intentionally) from bringing Smerdiakov to reason during a conversation with him before departing to Moscow, he refrained from expressing to him clearly and categorically his disgust at the evil deed being planned by him (which Ivan Fedorovich saw and clearly had premonitions of) and thus, as it were, permitted Smerdiakov to commit the crime. Such permission was indispensable for Smerdiakov'' (PSS 30:1:129). See also discussion of Ivan's guilt in Kantor, Vpoiskakh lichnosti, 149–74.

insignificant remark, but also that he will not forget it—and thus it will serve later as a link between the disclosure of his plan to Ivan and Ivan's implied complicity in the crime. Only after Smerdiakov's confession does Ivan realize completely how much has been orchestrated and executed by Smerdiakov's seemingly feeble mind and hand: Smerdiakov's feigning of an epileptic fit, Grigory's sickness, Fedor Pavlovich's and Dmitry's certainty that Grushen'ka would visit the old man precisely that night, and various other actions, including the murder itself.

Smerdiakov strives to destroy the Karamazovs by tempting and provoking their individual vices and even virtues. "Smerdiakov has no independent substance and no idea," Gessen has remarked. "He has nothing creative in him.... Without doubt, he was the only empirical murderer and did not have accomplices, although without

Dmitry and Ivan he would never dare to kill. However, on a metaphysical plane, he served as a simple tool of his brothers' collective guilt."20 In order to exist, evil has to sponge on good. It is in this sense, Gessen believes, that Ivan calls his devil prizhival'shchik. Similarly, Fedor Pavlovich lives a life of sponging on others, or to be precise, on others' evil sides. It is not surprising, then, that such sinister characters as Fedor Pavlovich, Rakilin, Smerdiakov, and Ivan's devil call themselves or receive the labels prizhival'shchik or “lackey."

Gessen’s idea is that without the sinfulness of Ivan, Dmitry, and the others, the very existence of Smerdiakov would be inconceivable. One could further argue that Smerdiakov acts as a catalyst: constantly provoking the display of human vices and never missing the chance to amplify their impact. Never does he merely reflect these dark desires exactly, but always intensifies them to the proportions of a sinister caricature; he is a distorting mirror not only of Ivan, but also of Dmitry and even Alesha. In this sense, he presents an exact parallel of what Ivan accuses his devil of: “You are the embodiment of my thoughts and emotions, though only those that are most loathsome and stupid" (p. 735). Smerdiakov uses the temptation of jealousy, greed, and voluptuous desire to destroy the father and Dmitry. He uses the temptation of pride to destroy Ivan. He is initially powerless to affect Alesha, but as noted above, he eventually succeeds in using Alesha's moral fastidiousness to make Alesha ignore him and thus fail to avert the impending tragedy.

While Smerdiakov is the architect of the Karamazovs' destruction, the whole city in effect aids him in fulfilling his plan. The narrator reinforces the aura of doom over Dmitry by repeating the epithet “fateful” numerous times, especially in the chapter, “The Fateful Day” (“fateful brass pestle," “faces produced almost menacing and fateful impression," “the tragedy... appeared illuminated by a fateful... light,” and Dmitry’s letter to Katerina Ivanovna, which sealed his fate, begins with the words. “Fateful Katia!" (pp. 760–62,713). The narrator makes it clear that from the start everyone—including Dmitry's own attorney Fetiukovich—condemns Dmitry as the murderer. Ironically, in his “Treatise on Smerdiakov," prosecutor Ippolit Kirillovich inadvertently reveals the mechanism of Smerdiakov’s design, only to complete it by rejecting its plausibility (pp. 814–25). As Victor Terras observes, “Ippolit Kirillovich, who feels so superior to the ‘poor imbecile,' is actually Smerdiakov’s dupe.”21 Smerdiakov demonstrates his full awareness of this situation: “I told this idea of

lessen, ‚Tragediia Dobra,” 227.

’'Terras, A Karamazov Companion. 419; see also pp. 420–21.428–29.

mine (about Dmitry being a thief] to the public procurator... only not so clearly but rather sort of as a hint... as though the public procurator had thought of it himself, and not me put it into his head, sir—oh, the public procurator fairly began to drool at the mouth when I gave him that hint” (pp. 727–28).

The vast influence of Smerdiakov’s power reinforces his satanic role. Although the characters and readers encounter aspects of it, these manifestations are so mundane that they are seen as neither ominous nor symbolic. Even those who observe Smerdiakov closely conclude that he is merely odious (Fedor Pavlovich) or inhuman (Grigory)—as opposed to demonic.

Some scholars believe that Smerdiakov represents the trivialized version of the “the terrible and clever Spirit, the Spirit of self destruction and non-being.”22 From this perspective, his crime mocks and challenges Ivan and his brothers, as well as those involved in the investigation. Foreshadowing of Smerdiakov’s evil culminates in and is confirmed at the moment of his confession. Looking back from this point, it becomes clear from certain fateful signs and symbols that the future was already present in the narrative reality. However, the full depth of

Smerdiakov's demonic symbolism is realized in the following series of contiguous events: the third conversation between Ivan and Smerdiakov, the conversation between Ivan and the devil, and the appearance of Alesha, who brings the news that Smerdiakov has committed suicide. In the first of these scenes, both Ivan and the reader discover that Smerdiakov was the murderer; while in the second and third, the full extent of Smerdiakov's satanic essence is revealed.
The impact of Smerdiakov's evil unfolds on two levels. On the psychological level, Ivan becomes completely certain about his own guilt and loses his sanity, which satisfies Smerdiakov's design. By their third encounter. Smerdiakov increasingly resembles a phantom; "His features became thinner and sallower. His eyes were sunken, and their lower lids were blue" (p. 717). This binds together Ivan's impression of both Smerdiakov and his devilish visitor as a delirium, a nightmare. "'I fear that you are a dream, a ghost that sits before me!' [Ivan] murmured. 'There are no ghosts here, sir, apart from the two of us and a certain third party as well. Without doubt he is here, that third party, he is present between the two of us.' — 'Who is he? Who is present? Who is the third party?' Ivan Fedorovich said in fear" (p. 719). Ivan's fear results from his understanding that the the third party, according to Smerdiakov, is the devil. Smerdiakov's mocking tone when he answers that it is actually God who is present at the moment confirms that he is using this word in a blasphemous apophatic sense in order not to pronounce the word "devil"23; besides, as he
"Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, 289. Vetlovskaia. who believes that Smerdiakov is in part Ivan's double, points out that Smerdiakov personifies Dostoevsky's rejection of the Romantic elevated portrayal of the devil. Dostoevsky discredits Ivan by means of creating the travestied version of his ideology embodied in Smerdiakov as well as in his shabby chert. See her "Ob odnom iz istochnikov Brat'ev Karamazovykh," Izvestiia Akademii nauk. seriia literatury i iazyka 40 (1981): 436–45. In The Genesis of The Brothers Karamazov: The Aesthetics, Ideology, and Psychology of Making a Text (Evanston, 1990), 60. 132–37, Robert L. Belknap comments on a number of demonic characters in the novel such as Fedor Pavlovich. Rakitin. Smerdiakov, the devil of Ivan's nightmares, etc. drawn by means of "technique of desophistication.∗' that is, in a trivialized manner. See also Peace. "Justice and Punishment." 19–21; and Leatherbarrow, Fedor Dostoevsky, 38.
25Olga Meerson, Dostoevsky's Taboos (Dresden, 1998), 109–48. gives most illuminating explanations of Dostoevsky's taboos on the usage of the words "God" and "devil." In Holy Foolishness, Dostoevsky 's Novels and

confirms himself, he does not believe in God (p. 729). Ivan senses the mockery in Smerdiakov's answer: "'You are lying!'... Ivan howled in rabid frenzy. 'You are either a madman or you are teasing me!"' (p. 719). This exchange recurs in the later scene when Ivan tells his devil, "You are a ghost... a hallucination." The devil responds by making fun of Ivan's proclaimed brave atheism: "'It is one thing to prove the existence of the devil, but surely the existence of God demands another proof entirely?... I am a realist... not a materialist, heh-heh!' — 'So you don't believe in God either?" (pp. 734–35, emphasis added). It is deliberately unclear whether "either" refers to Ivan himself or to Smerdiakov. On the symbolic level, Smerdiakov's body, voice, and utterance—as well as elements of his surroundings—gradually merge with the attributes of Ivan's devil. It is this transfiguration of Smerdiakov into the devil that prompted Edward Wasiolek to conclude that "there is even some evidence that Smerdiakov and the Devil are one; as Smerdiakov withdraws from life—he strikes Ivan as a phantom in his last talk with him—the Devil appears."
Wasiolek and Terras both note that "the Devil appears for his third meeting with Ivan— the only one that is dramatized—at precisely the moment that Smerdiakov

dies.” Roughly two hours after Ivan's encounter with Smerdiakov, we learn from Alesha that Smerdiakov has committed suicide. During this short interval, before his conversation with the devil, Ivan attends to a drunken man whom he had knocked down on his way to Smerdiakov’s and left to freeze in the snow. The description of the muzhik’s immobile body on the ground corresponds with Smerdiakov’s account of how Fedor Pavlovich collapsed after his blow. Ivan’s rescuing of the freezing man has both psychological and symbolic undertones. Convinced by Smerdiakov that he was the main culprit in the murder of his father, Ivan stumbles over the prostrate body and undertakes to save the man. The key to the symbolic meaning lies in the song that the drunken muzhik is singing when Ivan knocks him down: “Van'ka left to Petersburg, I won't wait for him.” Although Ivan does not consciously grasp their significance, these words foreshadow Smerdiakov’s accusation just minutes later: after Ivan (Van'ka) left for the city, the murderer did not wait for him and went along with his plan. This is why the song resounds in his memory at the moment of Smerdiakov’s confession (p. 719). Ivan initially deals with this subconsciously disturbing message in his usual violent way—striking the man down. After his moral devastation al Smerdiakov’s, however, Ivan attempts to undo the murder of his father by undoing his near-murder of the muzhik, and by doing so, erase his own part in his father’s death.

Despite his success in saving the man, Ivan’s attempt to rid himself of his own guilt proves to be futile, since upon returning home he encounters his demonic visitor. A detailed analysis of the parallels between the settings and the utterances in the scenes between Ivan and Smerdiakov, and Ivan and the devil, confirms the connection between them and, therefore, supports the argument that Smerdiakov himself foreshadows the appearance of the devil.
Situated in a different context, numerous details and striking features of Ivan’s conversation with Smerdiakov reappear in his dialogue with the devil. This creates a doubled picture, or as Terras observes, “the last interview with Smerdiakov and that with the devil are beginning to merge in Ivan's mind.’’28 Ivan arrives at both meetings suffering from an excruciating headache, feverish, “feeling ill and powerless,” and at the same time in the state of “terrible irritation” and hostility to his interlocutors (pp. 716, 717, 731. 734). Both meetings take place in an overheated, dimly lit room. The most prominent object in both settings is a sofa with the sinister figure sitting on it. Ivan strives to free himself from the nightmarish presence of both of them. He attempts to pace around Smerdiakov's room, which proves impossible for lack of space. At his own more spacious quarters, this urge comes back to him: “I want to pace about the room,” Ivan says feverishly (pp. 728 and 735). Mundane but disturbing details, which Ivan noticed at Smerdiakov’s reappear in the second scene, including Smerdiakov’s long white stocking, which had frightened Ivan. To be precise, Ivan is startled when Smerdiakov rolls up the leg of his trousers, which hints for a moment that he might produce the devil’s hoof from under his slocking: “Suddenly drawing his left leg out from under the table [Smerdiakov] began to turn up the trouser on it. The leg proved to be clad in a long white stocking.... Ivan Fedorovich stared al him and suddenly began to shake with convulsive fear. ‘Madman!’ he howled and, quickly springing up from his seat, staggered back, knocking his back against the wall and seeming to adhere to it, the whole of him stiffened up into a straight line. In insane horror he stared at Smerdiakov” (p. 720). In the scene with the devil, this long white stocking is replaced by the white towel, which Ivan wraps around his head (p. 735).
Both Smerdiakov and the devil treat with contempt Ivan's singular loving connection with another human being, his tie with Alesha. Smerdiakov repeals Alesha’s words, was not you who killed him"—only to turn them into something completely opposite: “‘Well, if that is how it is, then it were you who killed him,’ he whispered in fury” (p. 718). The devil also refers to Alesha, as was shown above, in his sarcastic apology for the scandalous incident after Zosima’s death, in response to

which Ivan angrily admonishes him to be silent and calls him “lackey.” Here again, the word “lackey” ties together the devil, Smerdiakov, and Rakitin.
Besides these important parallels, Smerdiakov’s and the devil's gloating at Ivan’s growing insanity binds both conversations into one extended ordeal for Ivan. “‘You are ill, sir, look how pinched your face is, you look terrible.... And why have your eyes gone yellow? The whites are completely yellow! Are you suffering very badly then?’ [Smerdiakov] smiled contemptuously, then suddenly burst into outright laughter” (p. 717). In the scene with the devil, Ivan strives to overpower his insanity, although for him the situation is obscured by
2*Terras, A Karamazov Companion. 398.

the dilemma of whether the devil is an independent being whose existence Ivan has to recognize, or a hallucination, which would force Ivan to admit that he himself has gone mad. Defending his sanity, integrity, and his very existence, Ivan shouts in despair to both of his tormentors: “I am not afraid of you!” (pp. 728 and 735). The main issue in both conversations is Ivan’s idea that, “if there is no God, everything is permitted.” Both Smerdiakov and the devil mock Ivan's inability to live up to his proclaimed skepticism: “You were ever the bold one. sir, ‘everything is permitted,' you used to say, and now look how a-feared you are!’ Smerdiakov mouthed in wonder” (p. 720). The devil is more eloquent on this subject. He reminds Ivan that his idea initially consisted in “destroying in mankind the idea of God.... But since, in view of men’s deep-rooted stupidity, this may not happen for another thousand years, it is permitted that everyone who now recognizes the truth should establish himself exactly as he pleases, on the new principles. It is in this sense that ‘everything is permitted' to him” (p. 749).
The devil echoes Smerdiakov in that he is not as stupid and trivial as Ivan thinks, and reveals to him the mechanism they both use to torment him: “Vacillation, anxiety, the struggle between belief and disbelief—after all, those are sometimes such a torment to a man of conscience like yourself that he would rather hang himself. ... I have been leading you between belief and disbelief alternately, and in so doing I have had my own purpose” (p. 745, emphasis added).
It seems that the devil not only discloses to Ivan the way Smerdiakov has killed himself but also pushes Ivan to follow him in committing suicide. Probably, it is the devil's words about the suicide that Ivan has in mind when, in response to Alesha's news, he says: “He told me. He told me just now" (p. 751). On the symbolic level, Ivan’s instantaneous and uncanny awareness that the devil actually knew about the suicide reinforces the direct connection between Smerdiakov and the devil —possibly signifying that they are even the same figure.
This connection adds further significance to Smerdiakov’s suicide. Thus, Smerdiakov’s suicide note directly contests Zosima's leaching: “Each single one of us is indubitably guilty in respect of all creatures and all things upon the earth, not only with regard to general guilt, the guilt of the world, but also individually—each for all people and for each person on this earth.”29 Smerdiakov’s note reads: “I exterminate my life by my own will and inclination, in order that no one should be blamed" (p. 751). The breach of the logical connection between the clauses in this sentence suggests some particular interpretations. A typical suicide note might read: “I am taking my own life and, therefore, no one should be blamed for my death." However, Smerdiakov’s cryptic “in order that no one should be blamed” implies the larger contention that no one should be blamed for anything because, in a world where no one is his brother's keeper, every criminal has a “rational” argument for his crime. The question of whether a man is responsible for his neighbor, or a brother is responsible for his brother, underlies the thoughts and actions of all the characters in The Brothers Karamazov.
^Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, 186. In Dostoevsky’s notes to the novel,

Zosima returns to this statement several times: “Everyone is guilty for all and everything.... Everyone is guilty before everyone," and so on. Also, “Remember particularly that you cannot be a judge of any one. For no one can judge a criminal until he recognizes that he is just such criminal as the man standing before him. and that he perhaps is more than all men to blame for that crime.” See Edward Wasiolek. ed. and trans.. The Notes to The Brothers Karamazov (Chicago, 1971), 92–94; see alsopp. 99, 103, 106. 117, 150–51. passim.

Smerdiakov’s suicide is also pointed against Ivan and may be viewed as a travesty of Ivan's bold request of justice: “I want retribution, otherwise I shall exterminate myself. And retribution not at some place and some time in infinity, but here upon earth, and in such a way that I see it for myself' (p. 280, emphasis added). In Russian, an unusual expression, istrebit' sebia, is used in both instances. Smerdiakov “destroys himself' to prevent justice from being accomplished.
As the embodiment of the devil, Smerdiakov has absorbed the Karamazovs’ darkest and most suppressed desires. This concerns not only parricide but suicide as well since both Ivan and Dmitry contemplate suicide at different moments. It is significant that Smerdiakov also fulfills this desire to its ugly end. Gessen expresses certainly that “Smerdiakov could end his life only through the suicide ... like a mechanism which was abandoned by its moving force. In this sense, the absolute evil truly represents the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence.”30
Smerdiakov’s self-annihilation has no psychological motivation: even after confessing to Ivan, Smerdiakov does not fear prosecution, asserting correctly that no one would believe that he could commit this murder. The conviction that Smerdiakov is the culprit remains but an intuitive guess for Dmitry, Alesha, and Grushen ka. Critics who believe in a strong teacherdisciple connection between Ivan and Smerdiakov have maintained that Smerdiakov gives the stolen money to Ivan and commits suicide out of despair. They argue that Ivan’s display of remorse and expressed refusal to take upon himself the responsibility for this crime proves to Smerdiakov that, ultimately, Ivan does not believe that “everything is permitted.” Thus, the betrayal of his ideological instructor pushes Smerdiakov over the edge and prompts his suicide.'1 This explanation, however, presupposes a much more established and meaningful ideological connection between Ivan and Smerdiakov than the novel vouches for.
Smerdiakov’s suicide finds its explanation in the symbolism of the novel rather than in its psychology. All the circumstances of his suicide—its timing on the eve of the trial, the suicide note which stands in stark contradiction to the main message of the novel, and, finally, the signs of his reappearance in the image of Ivan’s devil—create the impression of Smerdiakov drawing a curtain on his earthly performance. He has reproduced Cain's crime not so much through destroying his brothers physically but through proving that no one is a
'“Gessen, "Tragediia Dobra," 227.
“See, for example, Holquist’s explanations: "When he discovers that Ivan is unwilling to grant his approval to the deed, Smerdiakov... commits suicide not out of fear of capture, but from the despair of a twice-abandoned orphan" (Dostoevsky

and the Novel. 182).

“keeper” to anyone. He fulfills his satanic role by annihilating the Karamazovs as a family and then leaving the scene with a bang.

The novel, however, reaches even further in its ethical message. Through the overt and hidden signs and symbols that from very early on foreshadow the tragedy to come, the narrative theoretically allows the readers to foretell this tragedy. In effect, Dostoevsky places the readers on the same level with the characters, implicating them as sinners who are blind to the evil embodied in Smerdiakov. The symbolic significance of this implication goes far beyond the specific image of Smerdiakov and rises to an accusation of society at large for its general insensitivity to evil.

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate that the ideological agenda of The Brothers Karamazov cannot be reduced to proving that Smerdiakov is the devil and that his main task consists in the destruction of the Karamazovs. The ideological magnitude of the novel resists the conclusion that such an odious and sick character as Smerdiakov can function in it as Dostoevsky’s main opponent worthy of denunciation on this scale. Dostoevsky's adversary, after all, is none other than Ivan. It is Ivan whom Dostoevsky punishes with insanity for his arrogance and skepticism. A petty devil, Smerdiakov, in effect, embodies Dostoevsky's damnation of the socialists, Westemizers, and other “proud" intellectuals.’2 In Smerdiakov, the metaphor of The Devils finds its concretization, exposing Dostoevsky's ideological enemies as literally “possessed by the devil.”

‘–'Noticeably, it is Smerdiakov who calls Ivan a “proud” man during their crucial last encounter: “You are very proud. ... It was your pride that made you think 1 was stupid" (Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov. 730). Dostoevsky’s concept of the “proud” intellectual found its fullest expression in his 1880 "Pushkin Speech" the work on which coincided with the publication of the final chapters of The Brothers Karamazov. Dostoevsky claimed that Pushkin, in the line in The Gypsies, “Leave us. O proud man!" (Ostav'nas. gordyi chelovek'), had suggested that the Russian intelligentsia should humble itself before the people’s “faith, truth, and reason": “Humble thyself, O proud man; first curb thy pride," and so on (PSS 26:139). For further explanations see my N. K Mikhailovsky's Criticism of Dostoevsky: The Cruel Critic (Lewiston, NY, 2000), 108–18.