

Title: Griboedov and Dostoevsky

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My paper explores the influence Aleksandr Griboedov and his play *Woe from Wit* had on Fyodor Dostoevsky and his novel *Demons*. I look at this influence specifically from the point of view of the *свой/чужой* opposition. I show how the opposition, by this point both extremely powerful yet very limited in its sphere of influence, proves disastrous for almost every member of the fragile society depicted in Dostoevsky's novel, but especially for the nationalist and former peasant Ivan Shatov.

The ambush of Shatov towards the end of the novel will prove pivotal in my discussion. The planning and execution of the murder begs for a new reading and I will demonstrate that Dostoevsky is attempting to show the Russian reader that the words *свой* and *чужой* need not be mutually exclusive; that there existed a time when a more fluid interpretation of the opposition could be used in evaluating a person. In order to make his point about this more fluid interpretation of the *свой/чужой* opposition to the Russian reader, however, Dostoevsky was forced to employ more recent and, in his mind, superficial, manifestations of the opposition to get his attention.

These manifestations include direct and indirect references to *Woe from Wit*, and they lead the reader to the devastatingly vivid pages describing Shatov's execution, deep in an ancient forest on the Skvoreshniki estate, where a buried treasure is waiting to be unearthed. I will show that this murder represents more than the elimination of merely one person: it represents the elimination of a forgotten manifestation of the *свой/чужой* opposition as well, in which a person could exhibit both poles of the opposition at the same time without fear of retribution.