

Title: The Wandering Peasant Holds the Key: The *Strannichestvo* of Makar Dolgoruky in Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent*

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Dostoevsky's glorification of the common Russian people is well-known; however, peasants rarely appear in his major works. Joseph Frank insists in his book *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet* that Makar Ivanovich Dolgoruky of *The Adolescent* represents "the only peasant character of any importance in Dostoevsky's novels (excluding the peasant convicts in the semidocumentary *House of the Dead*)" (185). Makar's identification with the *narod*, however, is made not through his humble social station per se, but rather through his penchant for *strannichestvo* (perhaps best translated as "spiritual wandering"), which connects him both to the peasants' folksy orthodoxy (with its pseudo-pagan reverence for the land), as well as with certain characteristics of the people themselves.

The association here extends beyond the sociological and cultural, existing concurrently on a semiotic plane, where spiritual wandering represents a way toward wholeness, peace, and wisdom (the attributes Makar acquires on his journeys), and is contrasted with the trips to Europe of Makar's former owner Versilov (from which the latter returns to his home country even more divided and internally-conflicted than he was before he left).

This study will focus on the semiotic meaning of wandering in the novel, while also discussing relevant details concerning historical and literary antecedents for Makar's character, in which is found an admixture of an itinerant alms collector for the church with theological beliefs and behavioral traits derived from a highly-educated traveling monk, an Orthodox saint, along with subtle references to the Old Believers.

Works cited:

Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet: 1871-1881*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002.