

**Title:** Ippolit Terent'ev as Forerunner: Contextualizing Fries' "The Beheading of John the Baptist" in *The Idiot*

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Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* has emerged as a central text in discussions of ekphrasis and visuality in the Russian novel. Scholarship typically addresses Holbein's "Dead Christ" painting, which assumes a central thematic role in the text. This paper considers a marginal reference to Hans Fries' "The Beheading of John the Baptist" as a potential key to interpreting Ippolit, and particularly his relationship to Myshkin, whereby the figural relationship of John to Christ effectively maps onto the ambivalent connection established between Ippolit and Myshkin in the novel. In particular, the difficulty of Ippolit's position and his ensuing philosophy focalize a problem of faith that reverberates throughout the novel, figured in the Fries' painting, and other visual references in Dostoevsky's text.