

Elizabeth Blake, Saint Louis University

Fedor Dostoevsky's Authoring and Editing of Notes from House of the Dead: An Ongoing Dialogue with Fellow Former Political Exiles

Fedor Dostoevsky's complaint regarding the destruction of his productive ideas owing to a need to write "constantly" for financial reasons as well as his envy of the financial success of his fellow writers Ivan Turgenev and Lev Tolstoy are well known to Dostoevsky scholars (Pss, 28.2:151, 160). Yet, in the conception and writing of his famous collection of prison stories known as Notes from House of the Dead (*Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*), he spent a decade gathering quotations from his fellow inmates (see his *Sibirskaiia tetrad'*, or *Siberian Notebook*), drafting various narratives in Semipalatinsk, Tver, and St. Petersburg, sharing them with friends, and finally editing them in stages for publication in journals over the span of approximately two years in the early 1860s. This study will focus primarily on the late stages of Dostoevsky's writing of House of the Dead in Tver and St. Petersburg (1859-62), when issues of imperial conquest,

Russianness (especially in relation to the Polish and Ukrainian Questions), and class struggle were debated widely in St. Petersburg's intellectual circles and journals with the input of former political exiles (including fellow Petrashevtsy) who had been liberated by Alexander II's general amnesty in 1856. It will consider the public reception of the professional activities of former Siberian exiles in an analysis of the progressively hostile attitude of Dostoevsky's narrator, Alexander Petrovich Gorianchikov, toward his Polish comrades as well as Dostoevsky's selection of scenes with these political prisoners as a means of discussing the impact of the debates over the status of Ukrainians and Poles within the empire. Ultimately, the analysis will demonstrate that House of the Dead, like the Dostoevsky brothers' journal *Time (Vremia)*, in which the novel appeared, consciously focused on Russian identity to the exclusion of the empire's other ethnic groups.