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Title: Still Dreaming: Spatiotemporal Practice in Dostoevskii's Belye Nochi

Abstract:

Dostoevsky's 1847 novella *Belye noch* is the author's first fictional treatment of his *mechtatel'* or "dreamer" character, a type he defined in his 1847 feuilletons, "Peterburgskaia letopis," and which scholars have traced to his mature works (*Krinitsyn*). Since its publication, critical and scholarly debates have focused around the work's romantic origins and its position on its protagonist's fate. Recent studies cast "*mechtatel'nost'*" in a darker and more complicated light by tying *Belye noch*'s dreamer to his feuilleton predecessor, a type described as a "Petersburg nightmare" and a consequence of a Russian inability to take direct action (*Dostoevskii* 32). While many such studies provide correctives for the dreamer as a type, few have provided in-depth analysis of the character's momentary foray into reality and action through his relationship with *Nasten'ka*.

In this paper, I present *Belye noch* as a dual text composed of two complementary but distinct temporal modes, traditional sequential narration, or "real time" embodied in *Nasten'ka*'s story and an alternate "dream time" that characterizes the speech and worldview of the dreamer himself. Mirroring the relationship between the two protagonists of the story and between dreams and reality themselves, these modes operate in a complex dialectic that shifts and develops as the novella's plot unfolds. Through close readings on grammatical, stylistic, and structural levels, I will trace the development of this narrative dialectic and show how understanding the relationship between the two modes offers new insight on the development of the dreamer and on implications for the novella's ambiguous resolution.

Bibliography

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Krinitsyn, A. B. *Ispoved' podpol'nogo cheloveka: K antropologii F. M. Dostoevskogo*. Moscow: MAKS Press, 2001.