

Title: The Miser Redone: The Transformation of Pushkin's *The Covetous Knight* in Dostoevsky's "Mr. Prokharchin"

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The major influence of Pushkin on Dostoevsky's writings is a commonplace of both Pushkin and Dostoevsky criticism. But although the general relationship of the writers has been noted, and many specific allusions of Dostoevsky to Pushkin cited (Blagoi and Bem), few scholarly studies have examined in detail Dostoevsky's transformation of, and more important, his confrontation with, Pushkin in individual works. This confrontational attitude is nowhere better represented than in "Mr. Prokharchin" (1847), an early short story that Dostoevsky wrote after *The Double*, in which he invites the reader to compare, as it were, his hero with Baron Philip, the protagonist of Pushkin's *The Covetous Knight*.

The present paper attempts to show how Dostoevsky transforms Pushkin's miser Baron, and how this transformation is used to shape a new vision of Petersburg through the representation of the little man (chinovnik), much as Pushkin himself did with Evgeny in *The Bronze Horseman*. To accomplish this I would like first to place Dostoevsky's literary agon with Pushkin in "Mr. Prokharchin" in the context of his earlier works, *Poor Folk* and *The Double*, in which Pushkin also plays an important, albeit different, role. I then will examine the aspects of *The Covetous Knight* that Dostoevsky singled out for comparison and contrast in the creation of his miser. Finally, I will suggest how by radically de-emphasizing the romantic aspects of Pushkin's miser and underlining the prosaic aspects of his own, Dostoevsky was able first to expand his theme to the Russian mission of Peter the Great in general, embodied in the Russian bureaucracy, and then provide a glimpse of his apocalyptic vision not only of Petersburg but of the existential condition of man in the modern world.