

Title: False Notes and *Faux Pas*: The Embarrassment of Ambition in Dostoevsky's *Dvoynik*  
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According to Brooks, ambition is a primary motor of plot in nineteenth-century novels. Treating Balzac and Stendhal's novels as paradigmatic examples, Brooks argues that the heroes' ambitions propel narrative movement and excite readers' desire for the end. But as Goldstein shows in *Console and Classify*, ambition was a historically conditioned concept in post-Revolutionary France, where the loosening of social structures and the example of Napoleon's rise to power inspired thousands to dream of personal advancement. What happens when post-Revolutionary French ambition is imported to post-Decembrist Russian literature?

This paper will examine Dostoevsky's *Dvoynik* (1846) as a case-study in Russian literary ambition. The plot of *Dvoynik* is one of ambition blocked from the start. Unlike his French counterparts, the hero Golyadkin has no possibility for social advancement. Indeed, his ambitions are revealed to be unfounded pretensions. One of Golyadkin's chief pretensions is his striving to achieve the behavioral "tone" (ton) of high society, and his lack of such "tone" is what blocks his movement up the social ladder. The blockage of Golyadkin's ambition produces a halting, multidirectional narrative movement that never reaches an end. Furthermore, Golyadkin's desperate pretensions to good "tone" produce the peculiarly embarrassing tone of the text. By examining Dostoevsky's complication—and *tonalization*—of the Balzacian plot of ambition, this paper will expand Brooks's model of plot to account for Dostoevsky's uniquely Russian engagement with French literary paradigms.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.