

ELEVEN

How Bodies Read and Write

Dostoevsky's Demons and Coetzee's Master of Petersburg

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Dostoevsky's Political Thought

Edited by Richard Avramenko
and Lee Trepanier

To the memory of Ginat Podrozansky (1978–2011), demon muse.

WHY WRITERS—AND NON-WRITERS—WRITE

Contemporary readers of Dostoevsky's *Demons* tend to take their bearings not from what is in the finished novel, but what was excluded from it, the suppressed chapter "At Tikhon's."¹ In this chapter, the aristocratic antihero Nikolai Stavrogin journeys to a monastery to confess his sins before the holy man Tikhon. Stavrogin confesses to having seduced a young girl, Matryona, and then stood by while she hanged herself in confusion and shame. He confesses to Tikhon by giving him a printed pamphlet resembling a political tract printed by some Russian exile press.² Stavrogin asks Tikhon to read the pamphlet to himself, while he sits beside the holy man "silent and motionless."³

The narrator, Anton Lavrentievich G___v,⁴ prefaces the text of Stavrogin's confession with the following apology:

I introduce this document into my chronicle verbatim. One may suppose it is now known to many. I have allowed myself only to correct the spelling errors, rather numerous, which even surprised me somewhat, since the author was after all an educated man, and even a well-read one (judging relatively, of course). In the style I have made no

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changes, despite the errors and even obscurities. In any case, it is apparent that the author is above all not a writer.⁵

A number of things are going on in this apologia. Most fundamentally, Dostoevsky—or G__v—is signaling a shift in style, and distancing himself from whatever infelicities the fictional author of the confession has committed. Even Tikhon the holy man cannot quite stomach some of the pamphlet's stylistic monstrosities. Yet there is more to it than style. There is something about the confession, "in the essence," that impels "writers" to put distance between it and them. Stavrogin is the (fictional) author of the confession, but he is not a writer.⁶ Dostoevsky, unlike his fictional author Stavrogin, is a writer. Dostoevsky is sufficiently confident in his claim to be a writer that he would publish, subsequent to *Demons*, a one-man journal under the title *Diary of a Writer*.⁷

Stavrogin does not write as a writer, claims G__v.⁸ At the heart of the issue here are the motives and purposes of writing. Does Stavrogin write for the same reason a writer would? Out of the same motives as Dostoevsky, or out of the same motives as Dostoevsky's narrator G__v? Out of the same motives as Coetzee, who writes a novel that fictionalizes how Dostoevsky came to write *Demons*? Stavrogin confesses, the reader is to believe, out of a tangle of psychological motives that it takes the entire novel *Demons*, in either its planned or its actual form, to explicate.⁹ Tikhon, for his part, takes a shot at explaining Stavrogin's motives in confessing, and is accurate enough that Stavrogin called him a "cursed psychologist."¹⁰ *Demons* attempts to be psychologically realistic—we readers are supposed to find Stavrogin's motives not only explanatory of his confession within the plot, but also motives we could plausibly ascribe to a human being, all the more human, perhaps, because he not a writer.

We need to hold open the possibility that the criteria for being a writer, the motives for writing as a writer, are orthogonal to the motives a reader, if he or she is a non-writer, would find explanatory or compelling. G__v's preface to Stavrogin's confession indicates, but does not answer, the questions: how do writers write, what motives move them to write, and to what end do they write? How and why, in particular, did Dostoevsky write Stavrogin's confession? These are, of course, questions for few readers and none: questions only for those readers who are writers or who wish to understand the phenomenology of writing as an activity of writers. "A crowd isn't interested in fine points of authorship," as Coetzee's Nechaev says to Coetzee's Dostoevsky.¹¹ Not that this should dissuade from pursuing the question: real writers, it may be said, write for no one, for eternity, or for the dead.¹² For us non-writer readers, it would take a miracle to read either Dostoevsky or Coetzee as a writer would—but to read *Demons* one must in any case hold open the possibility of miracles, of the miracle of repentance and of the resurrection of the body.

One wonders if a writer's life "will bear much scrutiny" as Coetzee's Dostoevsky ponders regarding himself. A writer's life, Coetzee's Dostoevsky claims, is "a life without honor, confession without limit, treachery without end." Why did Dostoevsky write this "book of evil," *Demons*?—"To what end?—To liberate himself from evil or to cut himself off from good?"¹³ This is the untamed, wild, or, to use Professor Avramenko's term, "spooky," version of Dominic Head's tame academic-critical question: "What kind of ethical stance can be claimed for the novel?"¹⁴ J. M. Coetzee's *Master of Petersburg* shows non-writer readers why and how writers write. Coetzee's guiding example is Dostoevsky's composition of Stavrogin's confession, and the novel *Demons* of which it was intended to form a part.

In Coetzee's fiction, *Master of Petersburg*, the novelist Dostoevsky, having fled abroad to escape his creditors, returns to St. Petersburg under an assumed name to inquire into the mysterious death of his stepson Pavel Isaev. Dostoevsky moves into Pavel's furnished room, puts on Pavel's white suit, and commences an affair with Pavel's landlady Anna—at the same time playing—at least in his head—with seducing the landlady's young daughter, Matryona.

The bodies of Anna and Matryona, however, are not the only ones to move the writer. Pavel's death, Dostoevsky discovers, is somehow the consequence of his having become entangled with the (historical) nihilist terrorist Sergei Nechaev. Matryona herself is entangled with Nechaev and his followers as well. Indeed, it appears that Nechaev arranged Pavel's death solely in order to lure the writer back to Russia. Nechaev takes Dostoevsky on a tour of the poverty and squalor of underground St. Petersburg.

In Coetzee's novel, it is from this personal encounter with Nechaev, from the writer's fantasies about Matryona, and from his attempts to bring back the dead Pavel in memory that Dostoevsky is moved to compose his great novel, *Demons*. Coetzee goes so far as to have Dostoevsky assert that one can have a hunger for words about the dead: "I have a hunger to talk about my son . . . but even more of a hunger to hear others talk about him."¹⁵ One is tempted to say that "hunger" is a metaphor, but what is being compared to hunger in the usual sense? The passion for words about the dead is felt no less corporeally than hunger is felt for food or thirst is felt for drink. Hunger for words, for disembodied words, is a passion of a body.

The trouble with evoking the dead is that they stay dead even after being evoked. Evoking them out of longing for the dead, the evoker retains the knowledge that the dead are dead. Dostoevsky has only pen and paper, but could do no better with Harry Potter's resurrection stone. In any case, Coetzee's Dostoevsky will be unable to bring back Pavel: "Ultimately it will not be given to him to bring the dead boy back to life. Ultimately if he wants to meet him he will have to meet him in death."¹⁶

The evocation of the dead will not bring the body back to life. To meet the dead, the writer's body will also have to suffer death. To evoke the dead is to encounter them, in imagination, in writing.

Master of Petersburg is thus not a historical novel. "A historical novel, by definition, is set in a real historical past," as Coetzee says apropos of Philip Roth's *The Plot against America*, also a novel set in a past that never happened.¹⁷ The work of fiction called *Master of Petersburg* offers a less-than-trustworthy phenomenology of how the body writes—and reads—not least since its reconstruction of authorship is emancipated from any fidelity to mere biographical fact—Dostoevsky never met the nihilist terrorist Nechaev. Moreover, Dostoevsky's stepson Pavel, murdered in *Master of Petersburg*, outlived the great novelist in actuality. Coetzee, however, as a writer, takes these liberties with Dostoevsky's real life as a writer to simplify his task of presenting the phenomenology of writing to non-writer readers. We non-writers assume that a writer gets his ideas from what he sees, smells, tastes, or touches. The writer who reads, however, feels what he reads at least as vividly as what he experiences. The historical Dostoevsky made his nihilists live using principally what he read in the newspaper—as he wrote to his editor, M. N. Katkov, "I know nothing at all about Nechaev . . . except from the newspapers."¹⁸ Coetzee assumes that this aspect of a writer's power, to write out of what he reads, is too much for us non-writers to understand, at least until we have thought through how the writer can write out of what he experiences in the flesh, in his own body, when he reads and writes. Of course, Coetzee's fictional phenomenology of writing and reading is simply another fiction, and therefore belongs to the class of writings whose production and reception it is the task of a materialist philosophy of literature to explain.

READING STAVROGIN

Let us put on the virtual dissecting table some preliminary answers to the question of Dostoevsky's motivation in composing Stavrogin's confession. First, Stavrogin's confession is, as Coetzee brings out, an erotic fantasy.¹⁹ Stavrogin is a Byronesque hero, and writer and reader get vicarious sexual pleasure out of contemplating his sexual exploits. Coetzee's Dostoevsky is an aroused observer, aware of the budding breasts of the young Matryona.²⁰ Indeed, Coetzee's Dostoevsky thinks to himself: "He cannot fail to notice the budding breasts." Either he would be untrue to his vocation as a writer if he did not note those budding breasts and put that observation to work, or he *cannot fail* to notice them: simply put, as a writer and a man, he is constitutionally incapable of not making note of them—presumably in an actual or mental notebook. Coetzee's Dostoevsky "has no difficulty in imagining this child in her ecstasy. His imagination seems to have no bounds."²¹ The writer imagines writing a book

about his seduction of Matryona, whom in this putative book he seduces by reading to her the tale of her own seduction. Coetzee's Dostoevsky subsequently claims to have written "nothing that could offend a child," but hints that this may not remain the case.²²

Tales like Stavrogin's confession bring the reader transgressive pleasure. "Reading," says Coetzee's Dostoevsky to the political policeman Maximov, "is being the arm and being the axe *and* being the skull, reading is giving yourself up, not holding yourself at a distance and jeering."²³ Here, in the tale of the seduction of a child by book, there is at least something new, and we readers always want something new, as Plato complains of us. One might compare, from *Demons*, the motive of the party of fools and decadents, including G___v, in going out to enjoy the transgressive pleasure of seeing a suicide—complete with corpse:

At once the idea was voiced of seeing the suicide. The idea met with support: our ladies had never seen a suicide. I remember one of them saying aloud that "everything has become so boring that there's no need to be punctilious about entertainment, as long as it's diverting."²⁴

Dostoevsky's reader, of course, participates in the diversion of contemplating the suicide. This is the same kind of pleasure we get from reading about the machinations of Dostoevsky's fictionalized Nechaev, Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky. In feeding this transgressive pleasure, Dostoevsky is contributing to the very destruction of values aimed at by Nechaev, and by Dostoevsky's Nechaev figure Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky.

Second, Stavrogin's confession might be presented to us as part of a psychological inquiry. As Coetzee shows, a psychologically skilled writer has much to teach even the police about psychopathology and criminal psychology. Coetzee shows us the police official Maximov requesting Dostoevsky's aid as critic of his stepson Pavel's revolutionary *Nachlass*.²⁵ The police, Coetzee's Dostoevsky tells them, do not know how to read, something of which the police themselves are perfectly well aware. Yet the writer will not do their reading for them—unless they buy his books to learn how to read! Coetzee's Dostoevsky is never on the side of the police: he refuses to reveal his encounters with Nechaev to the police. Moreover, Coetzee's Dostoevsky betrays the police spy Ivanov to the Nechaevists.²⁶

Dostoevsky's efforts in understanding the tortured soul of the aristocratic criminal Stavrogin, or any criminal, have in fact made it impossible for sophisticated readers to collaborate in punishing criminals. Dostoevsky's wrestles with this problem in *Diary of a Writer*: "We must call evil evil . . . we must take on ourselves the burden of the sentence."²⁷ Educated by Dostoevsky's novels of the criminal psyche, we readers understand the environment in which such damaged souls develop and so cannot bear to condemn them.²⁸ Yet "jurors who acquit right and left are ours," says Pyotr/Nechaev.²⁹ Coetzee's Dostoevsky makes the appropriate self-

diagnosis: "First in his writing and then in his life, shame seems to have lost its power, its place taken by a blank and amoral passivity that shrinks from no extreme."³⁰ From the point of view of moral seriousness, of Aristotle's serious man (*spoudaios*), Stavrogin's antics are unserious and squalid. A serious man would never read or write a novel like *Demons*, lest he, like Matryona, be seduced to transgressive pleasures—lest he too risk losing his soul to demonic possession.³¹

WRITING STAVROGIN

The writer must give up his soul in order to write.³² He must give up his soul to become the body writing. While we sometimes still pretend that we understand what the Romantics meant when they spoke of literary works as achievements of the human spirit, we no longer find their dualism of matter and spirit persuasive. What changes for our understanding of the processes of literature when we recognize that it is the body that writes? Roland Barthes and Gilles Deleuze, among others, have sought to develop such a materialist philosophy of literature, but in this line of research it has proven extraordinarily difficult to go beyond gnomic statements such as Barthes's observation that "writing proceeds through the body."³³

J. M. Coetzee's fiction is rich in the struggles of authors with their bodies in the embodied act of writing.³⁴ In *Master of Petersburg*, we see Dostoevsky swap his passions for the questionable currency of words on paper; out of grieving for his stepson (and by exploring the fetid basements of St. Petersburg for clues to his murder) Dostoevsky somehow produces the novel *Demons*. Dostoevsky, the cracked bell, is also the Master of Petersburg—for Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg will remain vivid in the imagination of readers after Dostoevsky, Nechaev and Pavel are all dust.³⁵

To understand how the body writes we have to separate the question of how the body writes from the tradition of writing about the body. In particular, we need to put aside the whole tradition of writing about the body known as vitalism, which aims to bring the functions of the body into literature. One might think of Rabelais, of Swift, of Kafka, of D. H. Lawrence. What I want to put on the table is not the functions of the body that were once unmentionable in polite company when there was such a thing as polite company, or polite literature when there was such a thing as polite literature. The goal of my physiology is to show the body writing.

Bruno Latour taught us to understand how science produces results, scientific papers or technological devices, by following scientists around as they produce these results in the laboratory.³⁶ Coetzee suggests that we understand how writers produce writing by following the written

product as it is excreted from the writers' body. One could begin with the body not writing:

Following old habit, [Dostoevsky] spends the morning at the little desk in his room. When the maid comes to clean, he waves her away. But he does not write a word. It is not that he is paralysed. His heart pumps steadily, his mind is clear. At any moment he is capable of picking up the pen and forming letters on the paper. But the writing, he fears, would be that of a madman—vileness, obscenity, page after page of it, untamable. He thinks of the madness as running down through the artery of his right arm down to the fingertips and the pen and so to the page. It runs in a stream; he need not dip the pen, not once. What flows on to the paper is neither blood nor ink, but an acid, black, with an unpleasant green sheen when the light glances off it. On the page it does not dry: if one were to pass a finger over it, one would experience a sensation both liquid and electric. A writing that even the blind could read.³⁷

There is a crude vitalism here, where writing is portrayed as a letting of blood-spirit. The activity described in this passage is not writing, but mad scribbling. To preserve himself as a writer, Coetzee's fictional Dostoevsky refuses to open his artery and scribble.³⁸ To become a writer, we shall see, it is not enough to give up your life's blood.

Of course, both *Master of Petersburg* and *Demons* are about a very peculiar state of the body, demonic possession, which at least Coetzee's Dostoevsky thinks is not the same as being possessed by an idea. "Nechaevism is not an idea. Nechaevism," says Coetzee's Dostoevsky, "is a spirit, and Nechaev himself is not its embodiment but its host, or rather, he is under possession by it."³⁹ At that moment, Coetzee's Dostoevsky gives that spirit the wrong name: he calls it Baal. Nechaev's spirit's true name, according to the historical Dostoevsky's novel *Demons*, is "Legion." One cannot cast out demons unless one can name each and every one of them correctly.⁴⁰

How does a story, "a private matter, an utterly private matter, until it is given to the world"—how does a story make this transition to the world through the body of the writer?⁴¹ How does the writer write the possessed Stavrogin for us to read? Mike Marais notes that in *Master of Petersburg*, "Like sex, and, indeed, death and epileptic seizures, writing is a falling that ecstatically divests [the writer] of a controlling subjectivity."⁴² Yet the writer's loss of subjectivity is ultimately, like the writer's subjectivity, of secondary interest compared to the work: how does the work become an object, a public matter, part of the world because successfully "given to the world"? Insurance executive Wallace Stevens once wrote, "The truth is that the most conspicuous element from the point of view of human interest in the handling of claims is the claim man himself."⁴³ The dry joke is that, as Stevens explains with a poet's precision, just as for the claim man the most interesting thing in claims work is the

claims themselves and their proper disposal, for the reader and the writer the most interesting thing in literature is not the writer but the writing. By *modus tollens*, this implies that the very goal of materialist poetics, of trying to understand how the body writes, is to get outside the “point of view of human interest” on literature.

Thus, to think about how bodies write we must think about how they read.⁴⁴ In *Demons*, the exemplary reader is Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky, liberal aristocrat and failed historian and father of Pyotr Stepanovich, the Nechaev-like nihilist terrorist. Stepan Trofimovich, like us, is a reader and not a writer. That is to say, he is an indolent or incompetent reader, because he does not put his reading to work as a writer. The most active reader must be a writer, and not just a critic. As Dostoevsky himself once wrote, one needs an artist’s vision and capacity in order to read.⁴⁵ Likewise, one needs to be a writer to find in the facts of a real incident “a depth that you won’t find even in Shakespeare.”⁴⁶ The fabled inadequacy of art to life is the inadequacy of art—as judged by the artist—to life—as observed by the artist. There is a similar inadequacy of writing to reading by a writer. Coetzee presents what he can of the fullness of his own readings in pastiche or retellings, of which *Master of Petersburg* is the most accomplished.

Stepan Trofimovich is widely read enough to be a great writer and has a sensitive critical palate, even if his tastes are low (the French pulp novelist de Kock instead of the French political scientist de Tocqueville)—but then, as Nabokov liked to point out, so are Dostoevsky’s.⁴⁷ Stepan Trofimovich is a liberal reader; he loudly and firmly proclaimed that boots are lower than Pushkin, much less Shakespeare.⁴⁸ Davison wonders whether Stepan Trofimovich succeeds in moving from the aesthetic to the ethical.⁴⁹ Yet the superiority of the ethical to the aesthetic is one of the things we put in question by trying to read *Demons* with J. M. Coetzee, as a writer would.

Stepan Trofimovich’s literary judgments as a reader, not a writer, seem excellent. Dostoevsky, a better reader, wrote, “I love my Stepan Trofimovich, after all, and deeply respect him.”⁵⁰ Stepan is familiar with the major radical works, such as Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?*, and criticizes them acutely. More astonishingly, he, unlike the writer Karmazinov, sees through the radical chic of the former liberals.⁵¹ Such miraculous power is not given to the non-writing provincial governor’s wife Yulia Mikhailovna, or to the retired reader, Stepan’s patroness Varvara Petrovna, when she is under the possession of radical chic.⁵² Even the writerly narrator of *Demons*, Mr. G___v, is only willing to name names already known to the authorities.⁵³ Dostoevsky will write later, “The possibility of considering oneself—and sometimes even being, in fact—an honorable person while committing obvious and undeniable villainy—that is our whole affliction today.”⁵⁴ From that affliction, Stepan Trofimovich is miraculously immune.

Stepan sees through the radicals, but also sees how the radicals have sprung from the liberals, how they are their legitimate children, one could say. Stepan pronounces a father’s curse upon the Nechaev figure, his son Pyotr.⁵⁵ Yet, if Stepan has the acute vision of the writer, he has a kind of physical indolence that keeps him from writing. This indolence prevents him from giving up his soul, either to radical chic, to writing, or any other kind of possession. Stepan Trofimovich does not *stand* a reproach to the repressive government of Russia—standing for so long is difficult, so instead Stepan Trofimovitch *reclines*. By the time the novel opens, Stepan’s indolence has deepened to the point that he hardly even reads.⁵⁶

Stepan Trofimovich is thus an alternative to the radical readers of a later generation—the radicals get everything out of books, unlike Stepan Trofimovich, who brings to books an orientation toward reading acquired from his privileged background and European university education.⁵⁷ Yet Stepan the critic cannot compete with the books; he has not been able to transmit his liberalism to his pupils: both the ruined young aristocrats Stavrogin and Liza were his pupils, but neither succeed in crafting a life for themselves, either out of reading or out of any of the choices available to the wealthy, intelligent, young, and beautiful.⁵⁸ Stavrogin, the non-writer, is possessed. Like Matryona, the radicals are seduced to transgression by their reading. It is only Stepan Trofimovich, the reader who does not write, who keeps himself together.

THE WRITER’S POSSESSIONS

To write Stavrogin, then, the writer must be open to possession; he must be willing to be seduced by the loss of personality necessary to produce writing that is of other than personal value. The moral danger for the writer—for the writer writing with the body—is this possession. Stavrogin, after all, is not a writer, but he *is* a rapist. Pyotr/Nechaev is not a writer, but he *is* a murderer. To write the possessed, the writer himself must allow his body to be possessed by their demons. He cannot appease these demons with mere blood—as we have seen, the writer must “give up his soul.”⁵⁹

Both novels show us this close relation between literature and the extreme mistreatment of bodies at the hands of governments, terrorists, criminals, the self, and demons. Coetzee’s Nechaev recognizes this, saying to Dostoevsky in a dripping cellar with two hungry children feeding on a loaf of bread earned by their streetwalker mother: “I suppose you want to hurry home and get this cellar and these children down in a notebook before the memory fades.”⁶⁰ The suffering of children, he recognizes, is precisely the sort of thing that motivates the writer. Suffering children, like the budding breasts of the young girl Matryona, inspire the

writer, that is, both suffering and erotic passion open the writer to possession by demonic spirits. Suffering offers the writer the occasion for indulging the transgressive pleasure of possession. Suffering, or its Latin equivalent, passion, licenses the writer to divest himself of the controlling subjectivity of his non-writer self.

The possession invoked by the spectacle of suffering can motivate the writer and the reader to suffer with the suffering—it can instill compassion. Yet the spectacle of suffering can also move the writer and the reader to revel in the delight in his own power felt by the deliberate perpetrator of suffering. Indeed, the writer thus can present us with the torturer as clearly as he or she can present us with the tortured.⁶¹ Coetzee's Dostoevsky knows well and puts to work in writing Stavrogin's confession that there is generally more "real life" in fictional rapists than in fictional victims.⁶² The question that remains is whether the writing itself is conducive to the alleviation of this suffering, or whether it merely affords the reader a view of the spectacle of that suffering from a safe aesthetic distance. Faced with a choice between vitality and morals, every writer will choose vitality—and every serious man will choose morality. One would like to believe that the writer suffers with his victims, and thus his art encourages the serious reader to get out of his easy chair and act to alleviate human suffering. But the real Dostoevsky wrote Stavrogin's confession, and the real J. M. Coetzee wrote *The Master of Petersburg*.

NOTES

For my previous studies of the body writing see Michael S. Kochin, "Literature and Salvation in *Elizabeth Costello*, or How to Refuse to Be an Author in Eight or Nine Lessons," *English in Africa* 34 (2007), 90, 127; Michael Kochin, "Life as Literature: Wright Morris's *Love Among the Cannibals*" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Auguste Association, 2005).

An earlier version of this paper was presented at a panel on "Dostoevsky and the Problem of Western Rights" at the 2011 meeting of the American Political Science Association. I would like to thank my respondent, Dan Mahoney, Donna Orwin, and Anna Kochin for their comments and suggestions.

1. Dostoevsky's editor M. N. Katkov refused to publish "At Tikhon's" when the novel was coming out as a serial, forcing Dostoevsky to rewrite and rethink his plot. In consequence, the suppressed chapter cannot be slotted into the novel as Dostoevsky eventually completed it—indeed the chapter was not published in his lifetime. For details, see Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 431–434.

2. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons* (New York: Everyman, 1994), 690.

3. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 690, 705.

4. For the narrator's name, see Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 90, 127.

5. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 690–691.

6. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 705 and 710.

7. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

8. Early in the book Stavrogin makes an editorial comment on the cliché "I won't be led by the nose" (Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 45) but he acts out that comment rather than write it down.

9. Coetzee explores the paradoxes of confession, with discussions of (*inter alia*) "At Tikhon's" as well as *Notes from Underground*, in J. M. Coetzee, "Confessions and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky," *Comparative Literature* 37 (1985), 193–232, reprinted in J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 251–294.

10. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 706–714.

11. J. M. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg 1994), 200.

12. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 245. Cf. the subtitle of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "A Book for All and None."

13. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 134, 221, 222.

14. Richard Avramenko, "Bedeviled by Boredom: A Voegelinian Reading of Dostoevsky's *Possessed*," *Humanitas* XVII (2004), 113–138; Dominick Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ix.

15. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 25. *The Master of Petersburg* was published in 1994. Coetzee's son Nicholas died from an accidental fall in 1989, age 23.

16. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 238–239.

17. J. M. Coetzee, "Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*" in *Inner Workings: Literary Essays 2000–2005* (New York: Viking, 2007), 228–243, 241.

18. Quoted in Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871*, 400.

19. Hayes writes of "the monologic pornography of Stavrogin's confession"; Patrick Hayes, *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel: Writing and Politics after Beckett* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193. Yet Stavrogin's confession does not merely stir the prurient imagination with his description of his rape of a child. In the suppressed chapter "At Tikhon's" the written confession is but a move in dialogue with the comments of G____v and Tikhon himself, as I noted above.

20. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 28.

21. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 76.

22. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 134, 144–145.

23. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 47.

24. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 326.

25. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 34–38.

26. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 46–47, 92, 147–148.

27. Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, 1:135.

28. One is here reminded of the education Nietzsche received from reading Dostoevsky's criminals. We know Nietzsche admits his debt to Dostoevsky (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols with the Antichrist and Ecce Homo* (London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2007), 77), but much less has been made about the kinship between Raskolnikov and the pale criminal in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in a chapter called "The Pale Criminal."

29. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 420.

30. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 24.

31. As Derek Attridge writes: "The Master of Petersburg . . . presents a vision of the writing process, and more generally of creativity, of inventiveness, of the achievement of the new, as having nothing to do with traditional understandings of ethics, or with human responsibility—only responsibility to and for the new, unanticipatable, thing that is coming into being"; Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 132–133. For more on the serious man, see Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1098a, 1099a, 1113a, 1166a, 1169a–1170b, 1176b; Francis Edward Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously: a Study of the Argument of the Nicomachean Ethics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Richard Avramenko, "The Gnostic and the Spoudaios: Aristotle, Voegelin and the Drama of Being," *Political Science Reviewer* Forthcoming (2013).

32. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 250.
33. Roland Barthes, *Barthes on Barthes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 80.
34. See Kochin, "Literature and Salvation in *Elizabeth Costello*, or How to Refuse to be an Author in Eight or Nine Lessons."
35. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 140–141. Of course, the title *Master of Petersburg* is also a gesture toward the demon-infested Moscow of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*.
36. See Michael S. Kochin, "What Political Science Needs to Learn from Science Studies" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Toronto, August 2009)); Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).
37. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 18.
38. Contrast Nietzsche in "Of Reading and Writing" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of all that is written, I love only that which is written with one's own blood. Write with blood, and you'll discover that blood is spirit"; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35. This chapter, incidentally, follows directly on "The Pale Criminal."
39. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 44.
40. See Luke 8:30; two verses before the beginning of the epigraph to *Demons*; cf. Mark 5:9, Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 111b; and see Mike Marais, "Death and the Space of the Response to the Other" in *J. M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public*, ed. Jane Poyner (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 83–99, 87–88. Coetzee disagrees with Avramenko, "Bedeviled by Boredom," about whether Dostoevsky or his creations can be understood without "spooks." As Joseph Frank says, the talk of demons in *Demons* "is meant much more literally than has usually been assumed"; Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871*, 412. Pyotr Stepanovich is Satan, "the wise serpent," as he is called in the title of the chapter (part 1, chapter 5) in which he introduced; W. J. Leatherbarrow, "The Devils in the Context of Dostoevsky's Life and Work" in *Dostoevsky's The Devils: A Critical Companion*, ed. W. J. Leatherbarrow (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 37–38; Gary Adelman, "Stalking Stavogrin: J. M. Coetzee's *The Master of Petersburg* and the Writing of *The Possessed*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 23 (2000).
41. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 40.
42. Sue Kossew, "The Anxiety of Authorship: J. M. Coetzee's *Master of Petersburg* and André Brink's *On the Contrary*," *English in Africa* 20 (1996); Marais, "Death and the Space of the Response to the Other," 93.
43. Wallace Stevens, "Surety and Fidelity Claims" in *Collected Prose and Poetry*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1997), 796–799, 799.
44. See also Kochin, "Life as Literature: Wright Morris's Love Among the Cannibals."
45. Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, 1:23.
46. Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, 1:651.
47. Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), ed. F. Bowers.
48. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 25, 485.
49. R. M. Davison, "Dostoevsky's *The Devils*: The Role of Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky" in *Dostoevsky's The Devils: A Critical Companion*, ed. W. J. Leatherbarrow (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 126.
50. Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, 1:550.
51. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 303–304, 213, 215, 336.
52. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 300–301, 316–317, 338–339.
53. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 391.

54. Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, 1:287.
55. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 122, 304, 307.
56. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 12–13, 20, 60.
57. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 31.
58. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 40.
59. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 250.
60. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 186.
61. J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 2003), 204.
62. See Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg*, 194.