THE IMAGE OF THE CITY IN THE NOVELS OF GOGOL, DOSTOEVSKY AND BELY

A dissertation

submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and

Research in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

© Catherine Anne Spitzer

Department of Russian and Slavic Studies

McGill University

1981

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An Abstract

Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely are three Russian novelists, most of whose writings are set in the city of St. Petersburg, and whose feelings for their city were a bizarre mixture of love and hatred.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, the first of which is a survey of the attitudes held by the literary predecessors and contemporaries of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely toward St. Petersburg, and a discussion of the influence of the French feuilletons on the nineteenth-century Russian urban novel. The second chapter is an investigation of the overall image of the city as presented to the reader by the three writers. The predominantly tragic fate of the novelists' heroes is discussed in the third chapter. The final chapter is a study of six major recurrent themes which link the urban novels of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely.

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Le thème de la ville dans les romans de Gogol, Dostoevsky et Bely

par

Catherine Anne Spitzer

Thèse présentée pour l'obtention du grade de Docteur en Philosophie

Résumé

Gogol, Dostoevsky et Bely sont trois romanciers russes dont les oeuvres ont, comme toile de fond, la ville de Saint-Pétersbourg, et qui éprouvent pour cette ville un sentiment étrange, curieux mélange d'amour et de haine.

Cette thèse comprend quatre chapitres. Le premier offre un survol des attitudes entretenues par les prédécesseurs et les contemporains de Gogol, Dostoevsky et Bely face à Saint-Pétersbourg, et discute de l'influence des feuilletons français sur le roman urbain russe du dix-neuvième siècle. Le deuxième chapitre examine en profondeur la représentation globale de la ville telle que proposée au lecteur par les trois écrivains. Le troisième chapitre traite du destin foncièrement tragique que les romanciers réservent à leurs héros, et le dernier, enfin, se veut une étude des six principaux thèmes constants qui lient entre eux les romans urbains de Gogol, Dostoevsky et Bely.

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PREFACE

The term St. Petersburg, widely used in English with reference to the pre-Revolutionary Russian capital, is used throughout the text of this dissertation and in the bibliographical entries. In Russian, the city's name was changed from Sankt-Peterburg to Peterburg during the first decade of the twentieth century, then during the First World War to Petrograd, and in 1924 to Leningrad.

Two systems of transliteration of Russian are used in this dissertation (cf., J. Thomas Shaw, The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications, University of Wisconsin Press, 1967). Thus System I is used for all personal names in the text proper and for place names where not accompanied by an English translation. System III, the international scholarly system, is used for all quotations where an English translation of the literary work is unavailable, for the bibliographical material, and for transliteration of Russian titles and place names where an English version is also supplied.

* * * * * * * * *

I would like to express my gratitude to Professors John Greer Nicholson and Rostislav Pletnev, both formerly of McGill University, and to Professor Victor Terras of Brown University, for their encouragement and support at the time that this project

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INTRODUCTION

The pre-Revolutionary capital of Russia—St. Petersburg—played two distinct roles in Russian literature. It provided an urban setting for many stories and novels, lending to them the universal qualities of the city. In this respect it is different from other great European cities as far as descriptions are concerned. However, the Russian capital's second role is the persistent preoccupation of the authors with its unusual foundation and gradual development which gave rise to a certain literary myth or theme. The Revolution of 1917 brought an abrupt end to the city's function as national capital: it continued to exist, but lost its previous vitality and importance. Thus we are speaking of a span of two hundred years during which Russia's men of letters were actively engaged in an exploitation of the urban theme.[1]

Attitudes towards the European city underwent several changes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The initial view, which saw the city as a culmination of man's rational ability, was prevalent in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. This feeling of pride gradually developed into the converse notion of the city as an expression of human corruption. Literature reflected this progression of changing attitudes. Only when the notion of the city as a civilizing force was questioned did the desperate situation

of the urban poor emerge. As descriptions of the city were compared or contrasted with the lives of its inhabitants, the whole picture became more compelling as general impressions became supplemented by specific statements. To a certain extent, this development was dictated by external realities. Any attempt to describe in fiction the complexity of urban life requires considerable use of the symbolic. In his choice of a relevant detail, the author evokes the "urban personality" as he understands it. When the author concentrates upon a compilation rather than a selection of details, such a reproduction of the complex pattern of urban life for its own sake becomes not fiction but documentation. These descriptive presentations were important to the pioneers of the urban novel. Through such "physiological" studies, the potential of the city as a background for fiction became evident. A new attitude which began to assert itself in the middle of the nineteenth century altered the significance of the city in fiction. In accordance with the general tendency of the novel, the interest in motive and action was overshadowed by a concern for the city-dweller. External urban detail could still be found, but usually not as an independent element. Instead, it became a reflection of character and an indicator of emotional state.[2]

It is frequently asserted that St. Petersburg itself is the hero in much of the literature embodying the myth of the capital:

> Held des Romans Petersburg ist aber keiner der dort handelnden Menschen, sondern die Stadt selbst, die vom Autor aus der ihr drohenden Zukunft phantomhaft rückgeblendet wird.[3]

This judgement may be accepted to the extent that the city is an active force exerting an influence upon the lives of its inhabitants. But as in other literatures, the urban fiction set in Russia's capital was most successful when the city made a direct contribution to the human drama of the work. How the narrator or hero perceives the city's effect upon himself and others becomes increasingly important:

> Literature could and did mirror reality. It could also propagate images distorted by suspicion. Clearly, images were often coloured as much by perceived qualities or deficiencies, personal deficiencies, personal philosophies and so on as they were by the realities themselves.[4]

Plan of This Dissertation

The first chapter provides a survey and evaluation of the treatment of the city of St. Petersburg in Russian literature by the predecessors and contemporaries of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely.

St. Petersburg was literally created "on command" by the ambitious emperor Peter the Great in 1703. The city rose out of swamps and mists and almost immediately took its majestic, finished form. The proximity of the wastelands and the Arctic Ocean

could be felt in the city, the threat of a flood by the river Neva was always present.

At first, poems appeared in celebration of Peter's accomplishment, but later on a deep disillusionment with the capital could be revealed.

A very special place among the predecessors of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely is occupied by Pushkin with his poem The Bronze Horseman. This poem is a juxtaposition of the positive and negative elements of the city.

The theme of the galloping statue of the Horseman pursuing his victim, who finally loses his mind, and the threat of a flood, these are themes too important to be dismissed. Pushkin is the first to show the unreal, deceptive side of St. Petersburg.

The influence of Western European trends, mainly the French urban "physiologies" will be discussed as well.

Finally, it can be stated that Bely's novel Petersburg is the last homage paid to the city in Russian literature. After the Revolution, new demands were placed on literature, the artist's concern for the human self became socially unacceptable and any celebration of the tsar's capital unwise.

The attitude of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely toward the city of St. Petersburg is investigated in the second chapter.

Gogol's stories Nevsky Prospekt, Diary of a Madman, The Nose, The Portrait, The Overcoat, were all set in the Russian

capital, and are known as the "Petersburg Stories."

Most of Dostoevsky's works are set in St. Petersburg. Poor Folk and The Double were considerably influenced by Gogol. Dostoevsky's other urban novels bear less of this influence, though it can occasionally be detected.

Bely's novel Petersburg is considered to be the synthesis of all previous works in Russian literature on the theme of the national capital. The novel's publication coincided with the pre-Revolutionary era and thus provides a culminating statement on the myth of St. Petersburg.

In the second chapter, an attempt will also be made to show similarities as well as differences in the three authors' perceptions of the capital during the era in which they lived. The city, as described by all three novelists, possesses real and unreal qualities, it is seen differently during the day than at night. There are more negative than positive descriptions, the city's architecture is majestic, the boulevards long and straight, but there is something threatening in all this superficial splendour. The capital's unique geographic location and its sudden pre-planned creation made it the most unpleasant place to live.

The character of the city is determined not only by the geographic location and architecture but also by its inhabitants. The predominantly unfortunate fate of these city-dwellers is dis-

cussed in the third chapter of the dissertation.

Characters, like the environment, assume fantastic qualities in St. Petersburg. Everything is possible in this deceptive city.

Gogol gives us tragicomic accounts of the lonely lives of government clerks. One of them loses his own nose and luckily finds it again towards the end of the story (The Nose), another clerk's tragedy is the loss of a new overcoat, never to be found and the sorrow that destroys him (The Overcoat). The artist Chartkov (The Portrait) perishes in the pursuit of money and fame, the clerk Poprishchin (Diary of a Madman) and the artist Piskaryov (Nevsky Prospekt) perish from love for a woman. The effect of the surroundings may be extended to all of Gogol's characters who ultimately succumb to madness or death in the capital.

Dostoevsky goes further in relating his characters to the urban environment, he portrays St. Petersburg directly through the consciousness of a city-dweller. In contrast to Gogol, he is aiming to convey a sense of compatibility between fictional characters and particular aspects of the environment. He describes the human tragedy with a hint of grotesque only in his first two novels, but the isolation, poverty and a sense of despair, are felt even more deeply than in Gogol's stories. Devushkin (Poor Folk), a lonely clerk, experiences a brief moment of happiness while corresponding with a young girl. Golyadkin (The Double), a copy clerk, loses

his mind when he is haunted in the streets of St. Petersburg by his own double. Another government clerk, Prokharchin (Mr. Prokharchin), lives in extreme poverty, constantly fearing that he will lose all the money he is hiding under his mattress. Ordynov (The Landlady) leads a lonely, isolated life, goes through a delirium-like experience, after which his life is never the same again, and he loses faith in himself. Vasya Shumkov (A Weak Heart), a poor clerk, engaged to be married, goes out of his mind because of a seemingly trivial matter—he imagines that he cannot meet a deadline at his office transcribing a document. The hero of White Nights meets a fate similar to Devushkin's: a loner, he falls suddenly in love, only to lose his dear one in the end. Dostoevsky's greatest urban novel, Crime and Punishment, is a synthesis of all his writings on the city and its people. The different tragic fates of Raskolnikov, the Marmeladov family and Svidrigailov will be discussed in detail.

In Bely's novel Petersburg, the character whose mental processes are most important, is Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov. Since his own existence is problematic, his vision of the city is two steps removed from reality. Senator Ableukhov embodies law and order in a decaying society. The extreme opposite to the old Ableukhov is the revolutionary Dudkin. The conflict of their ideologies is enhanced by the contrasting features of city-scape in

which the characters reside. Dudkin with his hallucinations can be traced back to Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, and the fact that he is haunted through the streets of St. Petersburg by the galloping statue of Peter the Great goes back to Pushkin's Eugene of The Bronze Horseman. The young Ableukhov—Nikolai Apollonovich—stands between his father and Dudkin. The Senator represents an old order, and his son wants to kill him, but at the end he tries to prevent the catastrophe and suffers a nervous breakdown.

Bely's novel is a typical expression of helplessness on the verge of doom. None of the characters in the novel provides a meaningful solution to the problem of conflicting ideologies.

The final chapter of the thesis deals with a number of themes which characterize the urban novels of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely and emphasize their special literary bond.

a) Of the natural elements which preoccupied the three writers most, two distinct themes stand out in their works:

1) Climate—the city is mainly shown at its worst—either in autumn or winter. The bad St. Petersburg weather has a destructive influence on both the physical and mental health of the capital's inhabitants.

2) Water element—the river Neva and her canals present a constant threat of flooding. The fact that the city was built on marshes is never forgotten. The river can also serve as a means

to a contemplated suicide; thus Raskolnikov (Crime and Punishment), Nastenka (White Nights), Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov (Petersburg), are all found to be standing on a bridge gazing into the water in a moment of personal anguish. For Bely, the river is also a source of disease in the city: he mentions several times the Neva's green, foul-smelling waters and speaks of frequent outbreaks of cholera in the capital.

3) Time of day plays an important role in city descriptions—nighttime, sundown or very early morning are preferred because the surroundings lose their fantastic quality under full and direct light.

b) In descriptions of the interiors of the St. Petersburg houses, two features predominate:

1) The small, drab rooms, usually with old yellowed wallpaper, or corners behind partitions, where most inhabitants live. These quarters reflect their mental state and the hopelessness of their existence.

2) Dark, narrow, winding staircases—most often described by Dostoevsky. These staircases are the only connection with the outside world. One has to go up and down the symbolic dirty stairs which often serve as a prelude to, or setting for, some strange or even dangerous happening (Prince Myshkin is assaulted with a knife by Rogozhin on such a staircase in The Idiot). Steps on the stairs

can be heard clearly, and one may also hide there and listen to a conversation in any room of the house.

c) The theme of the Bronze Horseman reveals the fantastic side of St. Petersburg which is embodied in the Falconet statue of the founder of the Russian capital, Peter the Great. The statue is not only a landmark of the city but it may also become alive and haunt its victims in the streets of the capital. Bely goes as far as naming Peter I the Flying Dutchman, suggesting that the Tsar has brought an eternal curse upon his creation.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1]Pierre Hart, "Andrej Belyj's 'Petersburg' and the Myth of the City" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969), p. 1.

[2]Ibid., p. 6.

[3]Fedor Stepun, Mystische Weltschau (Munich, 1964), p. 318.

[4]James H. Bater, St. Petersburg, Industrialization and Change (Montreal, 1976), p. 6.

CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF ST. PETERSBURG IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

St. Petersburg was the best known and most mysterious, the most singular yet most generally revealing of all Russian cities. Unlike other capitals of western Europe, which had evolved organically with the nations themselves, St. Petersburg was planted arbitrarily in a swamp by its creator Peter the Great at the beginning of the eighteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century it became the administrative centre and most populous city of the Russian Empire, the gateway for Western travellers, culture and ideas, the major port and largest manufacturing and trading city in the country.

Before any official literary attitude toward the rising Russian capital can be assessed, it is worth mentioning that another view of the city, showing the growing dissatisfaction of many groups with Peter's reforms, was being transmitted orally. This oral tradition cannot be fully considered as a literary source, for it tended to contain fanciful rumours and superstitions. Nevertheless, it does occupy a place in the total myth of St. Petersburg from which subsequent poets and novelists would take their inspiration.

The inhospitable environment which made construction of the city such a demanding task contributed to the shaping of the oral

legend. Peter's personal responsibility for the establishment of the city assumed supernatural qualities among the natives of the region. It was said that initial efforts to construct the capital failed when house after house was swallowed by the swamps. Only the Tsar's personal intervention permitted the successful foundation of the city; he caused it to arise as a completed whole.[1] Peter the Great was so closely identified with the existence of the city that people believed the city would not be able to survive after his death.

The threat of periodic flooding bothered the city's inhabitants from the very beginnings of the capital's existence. In 1720, a prophet appeared in St. Petersburg, predicting that the city would be flooded to a dangerous depth, he even claimed that water would rise to the height of a particular branch of a certain tree. This created such a panic that the Tsar had to destroy the tree in question and the prophet with it, in full view of the public.[2]

In 1722, the rumour of some mysterious happening in the Troitskaya district spread around the city. It was believed to be the devil, predicting the complete destruction of the capital. After this, even Peter's sister Maria prophesied that "Saint Petersburg will be deserted."[3]

Contrary to the oral legend, the first efforts of Russia's men of letters were to describe this new city in a positive manner, celebrating Peter the Great and his accomplishment. There is a

significant lack of any detail which might detract from the glorification of the Tsar. Despite the ever-present threat of floods, the readers were convinced of the permanency of the new capital, and its construction was viewed as an important step in the creation of the new Russia.

The most noted and influential figure of the reign of Peter the Great was his ardent admirer and supporter, Feofan Prokopovich. Prokopovich also became the emperor's chief ideologist and adviser. His sermons reflect the total support of Peter's policies and reforms. The Sermon on the Interment of Peter the Great was published as a separate brochure on March 14, 1725 and was translated shortly thereafter into several foreign languages—thus its significance at that time was great:

> Russia will be as he made it. He has made it beloved to the good, and it will be beloved; he has made it fearful to its enemies, and fearful it will be; he has made it glorious throughout the world, and glorious it will never cease to be. He has left us spiritual, civil, and military reforms. Although leaving us by the destruction of his body, he has left us his spirit.[4]

Feofan Prokopovich was a friend of the poet Prince Antiokh Kantemir, and helped him in his literary career.

Kantemir, like Prokopovich did, wrote a final homage to Peter the Great, the unfinished poem Petrida. Kantemir's satires, however, are his best known creations. The first poem in the

cycle of nine satires is entitled To My Mind (K umu svoemu), (1729). In it he attacks the conservatism in the teachings of the Church hierarchy and praises the progress brought about by Peter's reforms.

In the period 1725-1762 three other writers dominate Russian literature along with Kantemir: Trediakovsky, Lomonosov and Sumarokov.

In an ode written by Trediakovsky in 1752, the poet expresses great optimism concerning the present and future of Peter's city:

Preslavnyj grad čto Petr naš osnoval
I na krase postroil tol' polezno,
Už drevnim vsem on nyne raven stal,
I obitat' v nem vsjakomu ljubezno.

Čto ž by togda, kak projdet už sto let
O, vy, po nas iduščie potomki,
Vam slyšat' to, semu kol' gradu svet
V vostorg prišed, xvaly pet' budet gromki.[5]

Mikhail Lomonosov wrote in 1751 a poem entitled Inscription for the Monument of Peter the Great. The bronze monument in question was designed by Rastrelli with the full consent of Peter himself. The monument still stands today in front of the Engineering Institute—the former Mikhailovsky Castle, where Dostoevsky went to school. This inanimate bronze statue was supposed to evoke fear among nations conquered in wars by Peter the Great:

No obrazom ego krasuetsja sej grad.
Vziraja na nego, pers, turok, got, sarmat.
Veličestvu lica gerojskogo čuditsja
I mertvogo v medi besčuvstvennoj strašitsja.[6]

Lomonosov, known for his high praise of Peter's achievements, feels that there is a sort of mystic force in the bronze statue of the Tsar. This feeling of "respectful" awe grows gradually with time into an alienation, and finally into hatred as the next generations of poets and novelists open their eyes to the grim reality.

Alexander Sumarokov has an important place in the development of Russian literature. His early poetry shows a marked influence by Trediakovsky and Lomonosov, but later he adopted a more individual style. Sumarokov's contribution to the literary movement in Russia is his publication in 1759 of the first major literary journal, the Industrious Bee (Trudoljubivaja pčela). His is also the simple inscription (To Peter I Catherine II) on the Falconet statue of Peter the Great. In the poem of 1774 entitled Letter to a Friend in Moscow Sumarokov writes about the Senator Olsufev (1721-1784) whose main interests were music, theatre and literature. The poet sees the Senator as a follower of Peter's ideas:

Spasaja i Petra, i nas, i svoj narod,
Čtob byli iskry zly, ne vspyxnuv, utolenny.
K zaboru ètogo dvora k Fontanke dvor,
S saborom o zabor,
V kotorom žitel'stvo imeet senator,
Nauki koemu, xudožestva ljubezny;
on vedaet, oni dlja obščestva polezny.[7]

In another poem of the same year, A Letter to Two Girls (Pis'mo k devicam g. Neligovoj i g. Barščovoj), Sumarokov praises Peter for bringing scientific progress to Russia:

> Vosxitilsja b, to zrja v Rossii, mudryj Petr,
> Vozdel by na nebo svoi on togda ruki,
> Vo soveršenstve zrja xitrejšij vkus nauki,
> Vozvysil by geroj so radostiju glas:
> 'V Rossii Gelikon, na severe Parnas.[8]

The great Russian poet Gavril Derzhavin is known for his odes, one of which, entitled Felitsa (1783), was dedicated to Catherine the Great and won him the post of provincial governor (1784), and in 1791 he became her secretary. Being in government service, Derzhavin understandably admired the Russian capital city. Derzhavin's poetry was greatly admired by Pushkin, who saw in him an example, with his beautiful descriptions of nature so untypical of Classicism. The majesty of St. Petersburg is shown in two of Derzhavin's poems (1783-84), Videnie Murzy and Šestvie po Volxovu Rossijskoj Amfitrity:

> Petropol' s bašnjami dremal,
> Neva iz urny čut' mel'kala,
> Čut' Bel't v bregax svoix sverkal;
> Priroda, v tišinu gluboku
> I v krepkom pogružena sne,
> Mertva kazalas' sluxu, oku
> Na vysote i glubine.[9]

> Vižu, Severa stolica
> Kak cvetnik mež rek cvetet,—
> V svete vsex gradov carica,
> I ee prekrasnej net![10]

Alexander Radishchev, whose views are known from his main work, Journey from Petersburg to Moscow (1790), which was banned during his lifetime, wrote in 1782 and published anonymously in 1790 the Letter to a Friend Living in Tobolsk. This was written on the occasion of the unveiling of the Falconet statue of Peter the Great in St. Petersburg. The beginning of the letter expresses feelings of admiration for the emperor shared by Radishchev's contemporaries:

> O Petr! Kogda gromkie dela tvoi vozbuždali udivlenie i počtenie k tebe, iz tysjači udivlivšixsja velikosti tvoego duxa i razuma byl li xotja edin, kto ot čistoty serdca tebja voznosil. . . .[11]

Radishchev, who was known for his sharp criticism of Russian society nevertheless gives evidence at the end of his letter of a clear understanding of Peter's personality:

> Da ne uničižusja v mysli tvoej, ljubeznyj drug, prevoznosja xvalami stol' vlastnogo samoderžavca, kotoryj istrebil poslednie priznaki dikoj vol'nosti svoego otečestva.[12]

The satirist Denis Fonvizin wrote in 1763 and published in 1769 a philosophical verse called Letter to My Servants Shumilov, Vanka and Petrushka (Poslanie k slugam moim Šumilovu, Van'ke i Petruške). Fonvizin criticizes big city society in both principal Russian cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg. His attention is mainly focussed on the national capital where he spent most of his lifetime. Human relations and corruption are Fonvizin's main

targets:

> Moskva i Peterburg dovol'no mne znakomy,
> Ja znaju v nix počti vse ulicy i domy.
> Šatajas' po svetu i vdol' i poperek,
> Čto mog uvidet' ja, togo ne prostereg.
> Vidal i trusov ja, vidal ja naxalov,
> Vidal prostyx gospod, vidal i generalov,
> A čtob ne zavesti naprasnyj s vami spor,
> Tak znajte, čto ves' svet sčitaju ja za vzdor . . .
>
> I vsjakij čtob nabit' potuže svoj karman,
> za blago rassudil prinjat'sja za obman.[13]

Another well known Russian satirist, Ivan Krylov, published in 1789 a collection of satirical letters entitled The Post of the Spirits (Počta duxov). It is full of keen observations of St. Petersburg society during the reign of Catherine the Great, and has the form of a journal containing a correspondence between the Arabic philosopher "Malikul'mul'k" (invented by Krylov) and the "spirits." From Krylov's observations it seems that not all St. Petersburg theatre-goers went to see the play:

> Meždu teatrom i parterami na dovol'no prostrannoj ploščadke stojala tolpa mužčin, iz kotoryx očen' nemnogie, podvinuvšis' bliže k teatru, zanimalis' zreniem p'esy, a bol'šaja čast', raskaživaja vzad i vpered, zagljadyvali v glaza ženščinam, sidjaščim v parterax, i razgovarivali meždu soboju tak krepko, čto ot ix razgovorov sovsem ne slyšno bylo rečej akterov, predstavljajuščix na teatre.[14]

In 1814 Konstantin Batyushkov wrote a short sketch called Walks to the Academy of Fine Arts, which contains a number of passages devoted to the city of St. Petersburg. The poet is genuinely enchanted by the city, not even a trace of negative tone

can be felt:

> Tak, moj drug,—voskliknul ja,—skol'ko čudes my vidim pered soboju, i čudes sozdannyx v stol' korotkoe vremja, v stoletie—v odno stoletie! Xvala i čest' ego preemnikam, kotorye doveršili edva načatoe im sredi vojn, vnutrennix i vnešnix razdorov![15]

After praising the creator of the Russian capital, Batyushkov gives a very positive appreciation of the city's architecture:

> Vzgljanite teper' na naberežnuju, na sii ogromnye dvorcy—odin drugogo veličestvennee! Na sii domy—odin drugogo krasivee! Posmotrite na Vasil'evskij ostrov, obrazujuščij treugol'nik, ukrašennyj biržeju, rostral'nymi kolonnami i granitnoju naberežnoju, s prekrasnymi spuskami i lestnicami k vode. Kak veličestvenna i krasiva èta čast' goroda![16]

It is worth noting that Batyushkov ignores the poor, unattractive sections of the city, describing only the parts which are more appealing to the eye.

In the poem Petersburg, written by Prince Pyotr Vyazemsky in 1818, all the credit for the capital's greatness goes to its creator Peter the Great. Yet the poet not only fears the Emperor's statue per se, but stresses the magic power it holds over the city and its inhabitants:

> Ja vižu grad Petrov čudesnyj, veličavyj,
> Po maniju Petra vozdvigšijsja iz blat,
> Naslednyj pamjatnik ego moguščej slavy,
> Potomkami ego ukrašennyj stokrat! . . .
> . . . Se Petr ešče živyj v medi krasnorečivoj!
> Pod nim poltavskij kon', predteča gordelivyj . . .
> . . . On carstvuet ešče nad sozdannym im gradom,
> Priosenja ego deržavnoju rukoj,
> Narodnoj česti straž i zlobe strax nemoj.[17]

Vyazemsky's poem To the Countess E. M. Zavadovsky (subtitled "Conversation of April 7, 1832") directly influenced Pushkin's passage in the Introduction to The Bronze Horseman, beginning with the famous words: "I love thee, city of Peter's making. . . ." Pushkin added a footnote to this passage, mentioning Prince Vyazemsky's poem and probably referring to this fragment:

> Ja Peterburg ljublju, s ego krasoju strojnoj,
> S blestjaščim pojasom roskošnyx ostrovov,
> S prozračnoj noč'ju—dnja sopernicej bezznojnoj,
> I s svežej zelen'ju mladyx ego sadov.[18]

The poet Nikolai Gnedich wrote in 1821 a beautiful idyll called The Fishermen. Gnedich's description of the St. Petersburg night influenced the first part of Pushkin's poem Eugene Onegin. The St. Petersburg sunset is described by Gnedich with a spectrum of colours, and the pride which the poet felt for the Russian capital is evident from these words:

> S pylajuščim nebom slijas', zagorelos'ja more,
> I purpur i zoloto zalili rošči i domy.
> Špic tverdi Petrovoj, vozvyšennyj vspyxnul nad gradom,
> Kak ognennyj stolp, na lazuri nebesnoj igraja.[19]

Attitudes toward St. Petersburg underwent great changes during a very short span of years. The exaltation of the eighteenth-century poets of Classicism gradually developed into not only dislike but hatred for the city. This change of attitude, which was already evident in a milder form, could especially be felt after the 1825 Decembrist uprising when a majority of poets and novelists

started to describe St. Petersburg in a negative way. Under the despotic reign of Nikolai I, the capital changed from a centre of Western cultures into a colourless place, where poverty and disease disposed of most of its inhabitants.

The comparison between St. Petersburg and Moscow preoccupied these writers. One of them was Alexander Herzen with his feuilleton Moscow and Petersburg written in 1842. In this article Herzen criticizes both cities but St. Petersburg receives especially harsh treatment. Not one negative aspect of the city is forgotten by the highly critical Herzen. To him, St. Petersburg is a city without history, there is nothing interesting to remember except the reign of Peter the Great; the capital is a riddle, something unbelievable; it is impossible to love this city and its unscrupulous inhabitants. St. Petersburg, in comparison to sleepy Moscow, is very busy: "activity there is a habit," says Herzen. All literary activity and publishing of books take place in St. Petersburg.

The unpleasant climate and the threat of floods do not escape the attention of the author of the feuilleton:

> V sud'be Peterburga est' čto-to tragičeskoe, mračnoe i veličestvennoe. Èto ljubimoe ditja severnogo velikana, giganta, v kotorom sosredotočena byla èenergija i žestokost'. . . . Nebo Peterburga večno sero; solnce svetjaščee na dobryx i zlyx, ne svetit na odin Peterburg, bolotistaja počva isparjaet vlagu i syroj veter

> primorskij svišč̌et po ulicam. Povtorjaju, kaž̌duju osen' on možet ž̌dat' škvala, kotoryj ego zatopit.[20]

This climate and these surroundings influence the capital's inhabitant in a negative way: not only do they affect his physical health, but his mental health as well. No happiness is to be seen in the face of a St. Petersburg dweller:

> Č̌elovek, drožaščij ot stuži i syrosti, č̌elovek, živuščij v večnom tumane i inee, inač̌e smotrit na mir; èto dokazyvaet pravitel'stvo, sosredotočennoe v ètom inee i prinjavšee ot nego svoj neprijaznennyj i ugrjumyj xarakter.[21]

Mikhail Lermontov's last known prose work dates from February 1841, and is an unfinished fantasy, set in St. Petersburg and entitled simply Shtoss. Shtoss is described as a card game played for money. The hero of the story, Lugin, strikes the reader as a combination of Pushkin's Hermann of The Queen of Spades and Gogol's Chartkov of The Portrait. Lugin is visited at night by a ghost-like creature who plays the card game with him for gold coins. However, Lugin always loses. He suffers the typical malaise of all St. Petersburg characters who are obsessed by an idée fixe: ". . . he had fits of fever and chills, his head ached, and there was ringing in his ears."[22] Lugin's state clearly shows that he is on the way to lose his mind. His eyes are fixed on a portrait hanging in the apartment into which he moves and where all the mysterious happenings take place. The painting is

of an oriental man, and is not unlike Chartkov's portrait:

> At that moment he noticed on the wall of the last room a half length portrait depicting a man of about forty, in a Bohara robe, with regular features and large grey eyes. . . . The portrait seemed to have been painted by a timid student's brush . . . there breathed such a tremendous feeling of life in the facial expression—especially the lips—that it was impossible to tear one's eyes away from the portrait; in the line of the mouth there was a subtle, imperceptible curve . . . an expression which was alternately sarcastic, sad, evil, and tender.[23]

Lugin's adventure is set in the worst time in St. Petersburg, the unpleasant month of November. Even though the weather is the same all over the city, Lermontov points out that certain depressing scenes accompanying this foggy day can only occur in the less fashionable working-class outskirts of the Russian capital:

> A damp November morning lay over Petersburg. Wet snowflakes were falling; houses seemed dirty and dark; and the faces of passers-by were green; . . . sometimes noise and laughter rang out from an underground beer tavern when a drunk in a green, fleecy overcoat and oilcloth cap would be thrown out. It goes without saying that you would encounter these scenes only in the out of the way parts of the city, for instance . . . near the Kokushkin Bridge.[24]

Nikolai Nekrasov, who spent most of his life in St. Petersburg, found the city fascinating enough to write a series of feuilletons in 1844 entitled Petersburg Summer Houses and Suburbs (Peterburgskie dači i okrestnosti). In the manner of the French physiologists, Nekrasov gives an accurate account of life in the

Russian capital, praising it as well as describing in realistic colours the city's many faults, one of them the ever-present unhealthy climate:

> Est' u nas na Rusi vsjakie klimaty; no čto kasaetsja do menja lično, to ja охotnee soglasilsja by žit' v Peterburge daže togda, kogda by v nem kruglyj god carstvovala osen', čem, naprimer, v Saratove. Itak, odno i drugoe, —v Peterburge bedna i surova priroda, zato žiteljam ego otkryto vse, čto est' v iskusstve prekrasnogo, obajatel'nogo. . . .[25]

In 1844 Fyodor Tyutchev wrote a short poem without a title about the "frozen" image of St. Petersburg and the longing of the poet to leave this uninviting place for a warmer spot in the South. But at the same time he seemed to be under some mysterious spell, unable to part with the city:

> Gljadja ja, stoja nad Nevoj,
> Kak Isaaka—velikana
> Vo mgle moroznogo tumana
> Svetilsja kupol zolotoj. . . .
> . . . O sever, Sever čarodej,
> Il' ja toboju okoldovan?
> Il' v samom dele ja prikovan
> K granitnoj polose tvoej?[26]

Konstantin Aksakov expresses his hatred of Peter the Great, who founded the isolated Russian capital, in two poems written in 1845 entitled To Peter and To Moscow. The poet accuses the emperor of taking away from Moscow the natural right to be the national capital. Peter's actions have brought a curse upon his city and suffering to all Russians. Aksakov goes as far as predicting

a complete destruction of St. Petersburg, for only in this way will Moscow be the capital again:

> I na tvoem velikom dele
> Pečat' prokljatija legla.
> Otkinul ty Moskvu žestoko
> I, ot naroda ty vdali,
> Postroil gorod odinokoj. . . .
> . . . Gnezdo i pamjatnik nasilija—
> Tvoj grad rassypletsja vo prax!
> Vosstanet snova posle boja
> Opjat' opravdannyj narod
> S osvoboždennoju Moskvoju—[27]

Yakov Polonsky wrote in 1868 a very gloomy piece entitled Miasma. The threat of terrible revenge, to be taken by those whose bodies and blood became the foundations of the city during the building of the Russian capital:

> Ved' tvoe žiliščе
> Na moix kostjax,
> Novyj dom tvoj davit staroe kladbiščе—
> Naš otpetyj prax.
> Vyzvany my byli pri Petre Velikom. . . .
> Kak prišel ukaz.[28]

This poem supports the historic fact that labourers from all parts of Russia were called to the site of the future city, many of them never to return to their homes and families. St. Petersburg was indeed literally built on their bones.

The well-known Russian satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin wrote a series of works set in St. Petersburg. The choice of the Russian capital is a logical one in this writer's case, since he spent most of his life there.

The title The Gentlemen of Tashkent (Gospoda Taškentcy), (1869) does not suggest that the city of St. Petersburg plays any role in that particular story. But Tashkent represents the whole of Russia, including St. Petersburg, in his satire on the emerging class of Russian bourgeoisie. Another story by Saltykov, entitled The Diary of a Provincial in Petersburg (Dnevnik provinciala v Peterburge), (1872), is set entirely in St. Petersburg. Everyone tries to come to the capital, but the author is puzzled why:

> V Peterburg!—ètim vse skazano. Kak budto Peterburg sam soboju, odnim svoim imenem, svoimi ulicami, tumanom i sljakot'ju dolžen čto-to razrešit', na čto-to prolit' svet?[29]

In 1881 Saltykov's Letters to an Auntie (Pis'ma k teten'ke) are published. They are a series of letters—feuilletons about life in St. Petersburg in the vein of Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer. Saltykov invites his "aunt" (the reader) to St. Petersburg, but warns that the first-time visitor may be lost in the city:

> Predstav'te sebe, čto vy v pervyj raz očutilis' v Peterburge i želaete znat', kakim obrazom projti, naprimer v Goroxovuju ulicu. I vot pervyj lžec posylaet vas na Odvodnyj kanal, a po pribytii tuda vas prinimaet vtoroj lžec i govorit: nado idti na Vyborgskuju storonu . . . vy v izumlenii spraševaete sebja: začem ponadobilas' èta mistifikacija?[30]

Dmitri Merezhkovsky's novel Peter and Alexis (1905) is part of his trilogy entitled Christ and Antichrist. It is the author's attempt to fictionalize the struggle between Peter the Great and the Old Muscovite theocratic tradition represented by Peter's son Alexis,

whom Peter was forced to put to death as a traitor to his reform cause. The city of St. Petersburg described in this novel is taken out of the historical context of Peter's era, and becomes the phantom-like city of Merezhkovsky's time:

> Kuran ty za Nevoju probili odinnadcat'. No svet utra poxož byl na vzgljad umirajuščego. Kazalos', dnja sovsem ne budet. Šel sneg s doždem. Lošadinye kopyta šlepali po lužam. Kolesa bryzgali grjaz'ju. Serye tuči, medlenno-polzuščie, puxlye, kak pauč'i brjuxa, takie nizkie, čto zastilali špic Petropavlovskoj kreposti, serye vody, serye doma, derev'ja, ljudi—vse rasplyvajas' v tumane, podobno bylo prizrakam.[31]

In 1909 the poetess Zinaida Hippius, the wife of Dmitri Merezhkovsky, wrote a poem entitled Petersburg. The poem starts characteristically with an epigraph from Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman— "I love thee, city of Peter's making." Nevertheless, Hippius did not write a poem praising the city, but expresses all her contempt and foresees a terrible doom for the capital, which will be destroyed by a flood, the same flood which Pushkin feared. And the bronze statue of Peter the Great on his horse holds the same powerful force for Hippius as it did for Pushkin:

> Kak prežde, v'etsja zmej tvoj mednyj,
> Nad zmeem stynet mednyj kon' . . .
> I ne sožret tebja pobednyj
> Vseočiščajuščij ogon', —
>
> Net! Ty utoneš' v tine černoj
> Prokljatyj gorod, Božij vrag.
> I červ' bolotnyj, červ' upornyj,
> Iz"est tvoj kamennyj kostjak.[32]

In 1910 Innokenty Annensky also wrote a poem called Petersburg, describing the negative characteristics of the Russian capital. Annensky is convinced that the city is suffering from a curse which is embodied in the life-like statue of the Bronze Horseman. The city seems to be a mistake made in the past and the poet regrets that, instead of Peter's victory, the Swedes did not bring a flood upon the city. This did not happen, however, and now a metropolis built of stones, with large, empty squares, dominates the Russian North:

Sočinil li nas carskij ukaz?
Potopit' li nas švedy zabyli?
Vmesto skazki v prošedšem u nas
Tol'ko kamni da strašnye byli.

Tol'ko kamni nam dal čarodej,
Da Nevu buro-želtogo cveta.
Da pustyni celyx ploščadej,
Gde kaznili ljudej do rassveta.

A čto bylo u nas na zemle
Čem voznessja orel naš dvuglavyj.
V temnyx lavrax gigant na skale, —
Zavtra stanet rebjačej zabavoj.

Už na čto byl on grozen i smel,
Da skakun ego bešenyj vydal,
Car' zmei razdavit' ne sumel,
I prižataja stala naš idol.[33]

The well-known Russian Symbolist poet, Alexander Blok, wrote in 1910 a work entitled Retribution (Vozmezdie). This long poem is divided into a prologue, three chapters and an epilogue. In the second chapter the poet describes that turbulent period in

Russian history—the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The story takes place in St. Petersburg, the city where any change in Russian society was most radical and visible. Blok notices that the city is even more terrible at such times:

V te nezapamjatnye gody
Byl Peterburg ešče groznej,
Xot' ne tjažele, ne serej
Pod krepost'ju katila vody
Neobozrimaja reka. . . .[34]

Blok's poem contains many questions familiar to those who lived through that turning point in history. Was it a good or a bad idea to build the city in the middle of nowhere? What is the destiny of Russia?

No pered majskimi nočami
Ves' gorod pogružalsja v son,
I rassširjalsja nebosklon;
Ogromnyj mesjac za plečami
Tainstvenno rumjanil lik
Pered zarej neobozrimoj. . .
O, gorod moj neulovimyj
Začem nad bezdnoj ty voznik? . . .
Kakie ž sny tebe, Rossija,
Kakie buri suždeny?[35]

In 1904 Blok wrote a poem dedicated to Peter the Great entitled simply Peter. The poet predicts that on the eve of the 1905 Revolution the snake at the feet of Peter's horse in the Falconet statue will come to life, spread over the city, to be conquered by the angry horseman galloping through the city, carrying a burning torch in the hand of his outstretched arm:

Sojdut gluxie večera,
Zmej rasklubitsja nad domami.
V ruke protjanutoj Petra
Zapljašet fakel'noe plamja.

Zažgutsja niti fonarej,
Blesnut vitriny i trotuary.
V mercanii tusklyx ploščadej
Potjanutsja rjadami pary.[36]

Blok's predictions of 1904 finally came true during the turbulent days of the 1917 Revolution which spelt the end of St. Petersburg as a national capital.

In a poem called To Cassandra (1918) Osip Mandelshtam expresses the feelings of the nation, knowing that the glory of the northern city is gone:

Prozračnaja vesna nad černoju Nevoj
Slomalas', vosk bessmert'ja taet,
O esli ty, zvezda—Petropol', gorod tvoj,
Tvoj brat, Petropol', umiraet.[37]

The leading Symbolist poet, Valery Bryusov, wrote in 1923 a poem dedicated to Pushkin, Variations on the Theme of 'The Bronze Horseman.' Almost a century had passed since the publication of The Bronze Horseman, Pushkin's St. Petersburg had become Petrograd in Bryusov's time, but the first lines of the poem are a timeless description of a typical foggy autumn day and the ever-present bronze statue reigning over the city:

Over darkened Petrograd
November breathed with autumn chill;
A fine rain drizzled down; a fog
Covered all with a tattered cloak.

The same bronze giant trampling the snake
Still galloped over the abyss.[38]

The poem continues with an account of historic moments in Russian life since Pushkin's death. Bryusov comes to the conclusion that Pushkin's dream of freedom and democracy did not come true. Russia and the northern city still live in fear that one day the Bronze Horseman will descend from his pedestal and gallop through the streets, leaving destruction behind him. The only one who tries to stop the galloping statue is the hero of Pushkin's poem, "poor Eugene":

Already there galloped along the stony streets,
Over the gloomily plashing Neva,
With his outstretched hand the Bronze Horseman...
Whither directed he his blind impulse?
And, blocking the giant's way,
In the rays of the dawn, pale white,
Stood through the ages poor Eugene.[39]

A contemporary of Andrei Bely, Alexei Tolstoy started to write in 1929 an historical novel Peter the First, which was to remain unfinished. The novel, set at the time of the Europeanization of Russia, is based on detailed research on the subject. Peter is the focus of the story, and, despite the fact that Tolstoy was striving for an objective depiction of the Tsar, the political climate of the 1930s led the author to over-idealize the central character of his work:

Today Peter Alexeyevich felt pleased for a number of reasons:... and what particularly gladdened his

> heart was the fact that here, where far-reaching plans and difficult undertakings were concentrated, everything he had entered in an illegible hand in a fat notebook—carried in his pocket, together with a gnawed pencil-stub, a pipe and a tobacco-pouch—had taken visible shape. The wind fluttered the flag on the bastion of the fortress, piles rose out of the marshy banks, everywhere people went about preoccupied with their work, and a town, a real town, was already in existence, not large perhaps, but with all a town's usual features.[40]

The Bronze Horseman

Pushkin's "Petersburg Story" as he called his poem of 1833, The Bronze Horseman, is an important landmark in Russian literature in its treatment of dream and reality within a description of events in St. Petersburg. Pushkin's work is a synthesis of his literary predecessors' descriptions of the Russian capital. The events depicted in the poem are based on historic facts, the details of the flood are taken from contemporary magazines, and St. Petersburg is shown at a specific time—November 1824. The surroundings of "poor Eugene's" dramatic flight from the gallop of the Bronze Horseman through the streets and over the embankments is described realistically. The picture is true to life and consistent with the hero's state of mind. At the same time, the poet's brilliant imagination gives an air of mystery and fantasy to the "Petersburg Poem."

The Introduction to the poem is written in a true Classical form, and the poet expresses his admiration and love for the city

of Peter's creation:

> A century and that city young,
> Gem of the Northern world, amazing,
> From gloomy wood and swamp upsprung,
> Had risen, in pride and splendor blazing.[41]

Part One of the poem is written in a gloomy mood, giving an account of the dreadful flood of November 1824 and introducing the reader to "poor Eugene." Eugene is indeed a poor government clerk, a dreamer living in St. Petersburg. He is the predecessor of all the similar characters described by Gogol, developed by Dostoevsky and synthesized by Bely:

> Sleepless upon his bed, was lost
> In sundry meditations—thinking
> Of what?—How poor he was; how pain
> and toil might some day hope to gain
> An honoured, free, assured position.[42]

Eugene, who becomes a victim of his own dreams, is the prototype of Dostoevsky's urban dreamer. During the rainy, stormy night, when the river Neva floods the entire city, he gradually loses his sanity, being no longer able to distinguish between dream and reality:

> His dream—or was it but a vision,
> All that he saw? Was life also
> An idle dream which in derision
> Fate sends to mock us here below?[43]

Part Two deals with Eugene's encounter with the angry statue of Peter the Great who sets off in pursuit of his poor victim through the streets of the city. The sensitive Eugene is deeply affected

by the destructive powers of the flood. The house of his girl-friend Parasha completely disappears from the face of the earth, taking her with it. He starts to wander aimlessly around the city, never coming home after the flood:

> But my Yevgeny, poor, sick fellow!—
> Alas the tumult in his brain
> Had left him powerless to sustain
> Those shocks of terror. For the bellow
> Of riotous winds and Neva near
> Resounded always in his ear;
> A host of hideous thoughts attacked him,
> And on he wandered silently;[44]

Eugene spends his nights on the Neva wharf, the summer goes by, and one autumn night, a year later, he is awakened by a heavy rain bringing back the terrible memories of the flood. He is driven by some mysterious force in front of the Falconet statue of Peter the Great. Blaming the Emperor for building this city on such a dangerous site, he turns to the statue and challenges it, subsequently to die from exhaustion after a desperate flight from the galloping Bronze Horseman:

> 'Ay, architect, with thy creation
> Of marvels. . . . Ah, beware of me!'
> And then, in wild precipitation
> He fled.
> For now he seemed to see
> The awful Emperor, quietly,
> With momentary anger burning,
> His visage to Yevgeny turning!
> And rushing through the empty square,
> He hears behind him as it were
> Thunders that rattle in a chorus,
> A gallop ponderous, sonorous,

That shakes the pavement. At full height,
Illumined by the pale moonlight,
With arm outflung, behind him riding
See, the bronze horseman comes, bestriding
The charger, clanging in his flight. [45]

During the next century St. Petersburg's remarkable climate would continue to play an active role in the literature about the capital. Pushkin's importance lies in the fact that he is the first writer to attribute specific superhuman qualities to the natural elements. Consequently, the fantastic quality of the capital is heightened. Eugene's confrontation with the statue and the subsequent flight illustrate the intermeshing of the real and the imaginary. The statue's predominant feature, its imperiously extended arm, is shown in a realistic manner. But we are convinced of Eugene's madness as the statue comes to life. Pushkin provides one of the first instances of subjective urban vision by selecting this concrete detail and having it transformed by his character. What is important is not the mere physical presence of the statue of Peter the Great, but the manner in which Eugene reacts to it. [46]

The sense of unreality created by the gloom and fog so frequent in St. Petersburg was expressed by Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely. In all their works fantastic happenings play an important part, and in each instance one can sense that the Russian capital itself is responsible.

Pushkin in general tended to use St. Petersburg scenery as a background to his "fantastic" dramas. This can be found in The Queen of Spades, the story The Little House on Vasilevsky Island written by V. V. Titov as he heard it from Pushkin, —and, finally in The Bronze Horseman. Gogol's "Petersburg Stories" were being written almost at the same time, and some of them were published before The Bronze Horseman in 1835 and 1836, while the first edition of The Bronze Horseman belongs to 1837. The Overcoat, written in 1839 and published in 1842, shows an obvious dependence on The Bronze Horseman.

At the end of the second and beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century, Russian literature, particularly prose, was expressing a surge of interest in city life. Also journalism concentrated more and more on the city in the "Feuilleton de moeurs" which was directly influenced by the Parisian feuilleton writer V. J. Jouy. His "Tableaux de moeurs" in France served as an example to the Russian feuilleton writers of that time (mainly N. Polevoy and F. Bulgarin). Soon St. Petersburg was named by Bulgarin "The Northern Palmyra." Jouy's feuilletons, published in the "Gazette de France" in five parts under the title "L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin," gained so much popularity that they were published in a Russian translation as "Antenskij pustynnik" (1825-26). Accordingly, the Russian novelists of the thirties followed Jouy's

techniques: descriptions of the changes of the times of the day and year and in the life of the lower classes in the city.

After 1830, apart from literary influences from Germany and England (E. T. A. Hoffmann, L. Tieck, Byron, W. Scott, L. Sterne), come even stronger influences from France (Balzac, V. Hugo, J. Janin, E. Sue), where the theme of the city grew out of the feuilleton form. Among the first works of Balzac that appeared in Russian journals are his Scènes de la vie parisienne. These descriptions of Paris give the reader a good opportunity to compare them with Gogol's "Petersburg Stories." Gogol himself was familiar with Balzac's writings. In his article "On the Movement of Journalistic Literature in the Years 1834 and 1835" (O dviženii žurnal'noj literatury v 1834 i 1835 godax) Gogol mentions numerous French writers, including Hugo, Sue and Janin, and of course, Balzac. Gogol's Nevsky Prospekt is written under the direct influence of Balzac. The Portrait also carries a certain analogy with Balzac's novel, La Peau de Chagrin. This novel was translated into Russian in 1832 and published in the periodical The Northern Archive (Severnyj arxiv). This lends support to the theory that Gogol had an opportunity to read this novel at the very moment that his "Petersburg Stories" were achieving great success in Russia. The history of a talisman which becomes demonic and fatal in the hands of its proprietor is almost identical. Raphaël,

like Chartkov, obtains his talisman from an antique dealer, but in Gogol's story this is combined with a scene typical of Romanticism—the mystical portrait.

Nils Åke Nilsson supports the theory that Balzac's influence on Gogol's "Petersburg Stories," particularly on the style of Nevsky Prospekt, is more profound than that of Janin or Hoffmann:

> Mais en tout cas il est évident que les scènes parisiennes de Balzac, traduites en russe en 1832-33, ont joué un rôle important, en premier lieu pour la Perspective Nevski, dont le style et le contenu sont influencés par les récits balzaciens. Et l'éclairage fantastique, tel qu'il l'a connu chez le jeune Balzac. L'influence antérieure de Jules Janin et de Hoffmann a dû céder à cette nouvelle influence.[47]

According to the critic Belinsky, the "physiological sketches" of Paris Les Français peints par eux-mêmes (1840-42) and Le Diable à Paris (1845) influenced Nekrasov's collection Fiziologija Peterburga (Parts I and II, 1845). The city provides a setting for social contrasts and becomes a spectrum of the Russian character, attracting the attention of the so-called "Natural School," which developed a strong liking for the city. The writers of the "Natural School" borrowed from the "Feuilleton de moeurs" a number of themes, such as for example, the view from a window, street corners, stairways, shops, garrets, gateways, while the characters of their novels are products of late Romanticism and they live their own fantasy lives.

Stories are written in the portrait genre, with plots constructed on the "biographical" basis, and a comic lyric. These are portraits of one character or a group of figures in a certain part of St. Petersburg, for example on Nevsky Prospekt. Such is Ivan Panaev's "Mornings on Nevsky Prospekt" which appeared in The Literary Gazette in 1844.

The theme of the petty clerk and the emphasis on the contrast between his external insignificance and the "greatness" of the idea with which he is obsessed became a new device in the urban literature of the mid-forties. Yakov Butkov was a follower of Gogol; in Petersburg Heights (1845), he describes the fate of a clerk who, consumed by his ambitious idée fixe, ultimately falls victim of his own actions.

Romantic literature adopted the type of the observer flâneur of the feuilleton, but Gogol, and Dostoevsky even more so, gave this character a different face: he became less of a hunter of the latest novelties, and more of a "promeneur solitaire et pensif" as depicted by Baudelaire in his poem in prose Les Foules. Already in Gogol's "Petersburg Stories," the city becomes a place of loneliness where the hero is isolated from his fellow city dwellers. The influence of the large mass of people is paradoxical: it makes the individual even more lonely, and because of this isolation, whims and fixed ideas take over the hero's senses, as can be seen in

The Nose, The Portrait and The Overcoat. The hero of The Overcoat, Akaky Akakievich, loses his coat and is literally thrown into the streets of the wintery St. Petersburg night. He is tormented by the strong, cold wind coming at him from all sides, and barely makes it to his lodgings, catching a fatal cold on the way. Gogol's description of the St. Petersburg climate is not a mere device to attract the attention of the reader. The St. Petersburg climate became in the works of Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoevsky a first-rate literary symbol, which was subsequently brought to its fullest potential by the Symbolists Blok and Bely, who employed this symbol as one of the central themes in their works.

St. Petersburg, with its endless boulevards and its unpleasant weather, is the symbol of a mysterious restlessness that is the moving force not only in Gogol's The Overcoat, but also in Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman and Dostoevsky's The Double. The fantasy-like atmosphere of the Russian capital is emphasized by the presence of the statue of Peter the Great which comes to life in The Bronze Horseman and in Bely's Petersburg; by the disappearance of a nose in Gogol's story, The Nose; by Golyadkin's nightmare in Dostoevsky's The Double; by the appearance of the devil himself, who steps out of a painting in Gogol's The Portrait; or by the blazing eyes on the fateful card, intently watching its

beholder in Pushkin's The Queen of Spades, in which the hero, Hermann, sacrifices love and sanity to greed.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]N. P. Anciferov, Duša Peterburga (St. Petersburg, 1923), p. 50.

[2]M. I. Pylaev, Staryj Peterburg (St. Petersburg, 1903), pp. 88-89.

[3]S. Knjazykov, Očerki iz istorii Petra Velikogo i ego vremeni (St. Petersburg, 1914), p. 614.

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CHAPTER II

THE CITY AS DESCRIBED BY GOGOL, DOSTOEVSKY AND BELY

Gogol

In comparison with Pushkin, whose poem, The Bronze Horseman, retains something of both of the traditional attitudes toward the Russian capital, his contemporary Gogol abandons any attempt to portray this duality of traditions. Contemplation of the capital's merits in the manner of neo-Classicism was quite foreign to Gogol. He could not find anything in the Russian capital worthy of his admiration and his "Petersburg Stories" give a consistently negative appraisal of the city.[1] Thus, the author was unable to arrive at a synthesis of St. Petersburg's negative as well as positive qualities. In comparison with the neo-Classicists who emphasized the harmonious aspects of the city's architecture and human relationships, Gogol, under the strong influence of the French physiological studies of the European city,[2] described only separate societies, each occupying its own place. Under his observation, even physical objects were deprived of a meaningful relationship to one another. While attempting to create a city scene merely from separate components, such as signs, shop

windows, lanterns, streets full of bowlers, moustaches, and noses, Gogol arrived at a fantastic picture which preceded surrealistic art by a century.[3]

The use of the demonic force which enhances the fantastic qualities of St. Petersburg is not completely restricted to the Gogolian city,[4] but it is very important in the author's city descriptions. Gogol gives us no logical explanation of fantastic happenings as Pushkin tried to do in his description of Eugene's pursuit in The Bronze Horseman. In Gogol's stories, the devil can be found anywhere, even lighting a streetlamp, and no one is greatly surprised by his appearance in Nevsky Prospekt. At the end of this tale, the city is shown at its worst, a deceitful place, completely transformed as the night falls:

> Oh, do not trust that Nevsky Prospekt! I always wrap myself more closely in my cloak when I pass along it and try not to look at the objects which meet me. Everything is a cheat, everything is a dream, everything is other than it seems!... It deceives at all hours, the Nevsky Prospekt does, but most of all when night falls in masses of shadow on it, throwing into relief the white and duncolored walls of the houses, when all the town is transformed into noise and brilliance, when myriads of carriages roll over bridges, postilions shout and jolt up and down on their horses, and when the devil himself lights the street lamps to show everything in false colors.[5]

The notion of deception is central to Gogol's fictional attitude to St. Petersburg in Nevsky Prospekt, the first of the "Petersburg

Stories." This theme is expressed through the parallel adventures of two young men who are at first enchanted by two women they meet in the streets of the capital, and who, as the story progresses, find out that they are completely mistaken in their appraisal of the women and hence deceived. Urban descriptions are selected in this story to support this personal drama. The opening lines are written in the manner of neo-Classicist odes, heralding the city's majestic appearance, depicting it with a feeling of pride and elation:

> There is nothing finer than the Nevsky Prospekt, not in Petersburg anyway: it is the making of the city. What splendor does it lack, the fairest of our city thoroughfares. . . . As soon as you step into Nevsky Prospekt you are in an atmosphere of gaiety. . . . All-powerful Nevsky Prospekt! Sole place of entertainment for the poor man in Petersburg![6]

The fact that underneath the city's beautiful façade there are thousands of poor people never escapes Gogol and this, of course, makes him different from the neo-Classicists in his perception of the capital. The span of the story of Nevsky Prospekt is 24 hours, during which many changes occur. We are forewarned from the beginning, even before the actual story starts to take shape: "What changes pass over it in a single day! What transformations it goes through between one dawn and the next!"[7] The changes the Nevsky Prospekt goes through are described in detail by the observant

writer after the true fashion of the French physiologists' accounts of their metropolis. From early morning to dusk we become familiar, with Gogol's help, with St. Petersburg's main artery. We find out that from the early morning till noon the boulevard is almost empty:

> Sometimes a drowsy government clerk trudges along with a portfolio under his arm, if the way to his department lies through Nevsky Prospekt. It may be confidently stated that at this period, that is up to twelve o'clock, Nevsky Prospekt is not the goal of any man. . . .[8]

At noon the boulevard is full of English and French governesses and their pupils. It seems that the street only starts to live after two o'clock in the afternoon, when the parents of these pupils first go out for a walk and are joined later on, as Gogol sarcastically points out, by all

> . . . who have finished their rather important domestic duties, such as talking to the doctor about the weather and the pimple that has come out on their nose, inquiring after reading in the newspaper a leading article and the announcements of the arrivals and departures, and finally drinking a cup of tea or coffee.[9]

At four o'clock the boulevard is almost empty again and later, as it grows darker, a policeman lights the streetlamps, a task that is performed by the devil at the end of the story.

The urban detail loses its real quality when observed by a deranged mind. This happens to one of the characters of Nevsky Prospekt—Piskaryov. The surroundings assume fantastic character-

istics to the point of becoming a threatening force in Piskaryov's subconscious:

> . . . the pavement seemed to be moving under his feet, carriages drawn by trotting horses seemed to stand still, the bridge stretched out and seemed broken in the center, the houses were upside down, a sentry box seemed to be reeling toward him, and the sentry's halberd, and the gilt letters of the signboard and the scissors painted on it, all seemed to be flashing across his very eyelash.[10]

In Gogol's "Petersburg Stories" fantasy tends to win over reality. The first story, Nevsky Prospekt, in which an atmosphere characteristic of Gogol's St. Petersburg is created, sets the tone for the following stories. And more and more, the fantastic, unreal forces dominate the situation. Piskaryov's suffering in Nevsky Prospekt leads him to a contemplation of his situation and a precise definition of his state of mind and position in St. Petersburg society. His exclamation on the verge of his personal defeat could be adopted by any St. Petersburg character in Gogol's stories: "Is a madman's life a source of joy to his friends and family who once loved him? My God! what is our life! An eternal battle between dream and reality!"[11]

The Diary of a Madman is an account of the mental degeneration of a poor government clerk who imagines hearing two dogs talking to each other, later reads what he takes to be letters written

between them, and finally is convinced that he is the king of Spain. This confused state of mind, however, does not stop the hero from observing his surroundings in a realistic light. We find out that the story takes place in St. Petersburg in a district around Meshchanskaya Street and we are acquainted with a typical St. Petersburg house:

> They passed into Gorokhovaya Street, turned into Meshchanskaya and from there into Stolyarnaya Street; at last they reached Kokushkin Bridge and stopped in front of a big house. . . . That's Zverkov's Building. What a huge place! All sorts of people live in it: so many cooks, so many visitors from all parts! and our friends the clerks, one on the top of another, with a third trying to squeeze in, like dogs.[12]

The revulsion with which the narrator of the story passes Meshchanskaya Street is so strong that he has to hold his nose and try to walk as quickly as possible in order to leave this unpleasant place. Poprishchin, whose name is mentioned only at the end of the story, is deeply dissatisfied with his surroundings in comparison with Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov who clearly finds a sort of masochistic enjoyment in walking through the dirty streets of the Russian capital. Poprishchin, even on the verge of madness, does not lose the instinct of survival in the big city:

> I can't endure cabbage, the smell of which floats from all the little shops in Meshchanskaya Street; moreover, such a hellish reek rises from under every gate that I raced

> along at full speed holding my nose. And the nasty workmen let off such a lot of soot and smoke from their workshops that a gentleman cannot stroll there.[13]

The Diary of a Madman is a very accurate portrayal of the schizophrenia of a man who, during a frantic search for his identity, succumbs to madness. This is one of Gogol's "Petersburg Stories" in which the fantastic plays no part. The reality of life is questioned from the madman's point of view; the story is an examination of the inner self, narrated in the first person, as the title suggests. With the exception of The Diary of a Madman, all Gogol's "Petersburg Stories" depend upon an omniscient narrator for the total impression of the capital. A great emphasis is placed on conveying urban life through the consciousness of the fictional character. External scenes from everyday life are employed as a means of registering a variety of mental conditions. This is a big step forward made by Gogol since Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman. The theme of the city-dweller's consciousness is, however, not developed to its full potential by Gogol, purely because he is more preoccupied by the fantastic side of the Russian capital than is his literary follower Dostoevsky.

Thus Gogol's next St. Petersburg tale The Nose is entirely built around a fantastic event—the temporary loss of a nose. One morning the barber Ivan Yakovlevich finds in the middle of a freshly baked loaf of bread the nose of the collegiate assessor

Kovalyov, whose beard he shaved every Wednesday and Sunday. The motif of bewilderment and puzzlement runs through the whole story. The barber decides to get rid of the nose by throwing it into the Neva from the Isakievsky Bridge. We are told that the barber is confronted by a policeman, who asks what he is throwing into the water. Gogol holds the reader in suspense by not saying how this incident between the barber and the policeman is solved:

> Ivan Yakovlevich turned pale . . . but the incident is completely veiled in obscurity, and absolutely nothing is known of what happened next.[14]

The centre of attraction in this story is again the main artery of St. Petersburg, the Nevsky Boulevard. Kovalyov considers it to be necessary to walk every day along the avenue for the sake of appearances:

> Major Kovalyov was in the habit of walking every day up and down the Nevsky Prospekt. The collar of his shirt front was always extremely clean and well starched.[15]

The sudden loss of his nose puts Kovalyov out of touch with reality. The barber does not want to have anything to do with it, he does not admit his guilt. The newspaper refuses to print an advertisement about a lost nose, the police inspector is slightly interested only because Kovalyov catches him in a good mood and the policeman returns the lost nose at the end, seeing nothing unusual in it. Kovalyov is the only one experiencing the eerie event of meeting his own nose on the street dressed in the uniform of a civil

councillor, which is three ranks above his own. This puts Kovalyov into a state of confusion and the world around him seems to reflect his feelings:

> . . . such numbers of carriages were driving backwards and forwards and at such a speed that it was difficult even to distinguish them; and if he had distinguished them he would have had no means of stopping it. It was a lovely, sunny day. There were masses of people on Nevsky Prospekt; ladies were scattered like a perfect cataract of flowers all over the pavement from Politseisky to the Anichkin Bridge.[16]

At the end of the story, the nose, having posed as a councillor in the streets of St. Petersburg, shrinks back to its original pocket size. The nose does not want to be stuck back onto Kovalyov's face at first, but the doctor advises that nature will take its course in this matter, and indeed it does. Kovalyov wakes up one morning with his nose back as if nothing had happened. The story ends on a meditative note, the reader is left perplexed with the thought that absurd things do happen in the world and there is no better setting for them than St. Petersburg:

> So this is the strange event that occurred in the northern capital of our spacious empire! Only now, on thinking it all over, we perceive that there is a great deal that is improbable in it . . . but there, are there not absurd things everywhere?—and yet, when you think it over, there really is something in it. Despite what anyone may say, such things do happen—not often, but they do happen.[17]

Thus we are told by Gogol that anything can happen in St. Petersburg, that it is a city full of deception. The unreal, fantastic experience of The Nose is remarkable in the fact that no one except Kovalyov considers the event of a lost nose to be a "fantastic" happening. No one asks—nor does the author of the story indicate—how it was possible for the nose to become a city councillor, nor how it shrank to become an ordinary nose again. The Nose is considered to be one of Gogol's most successful stories, his trademark is fully evident here that of drawing a thin line between the real and the unreal. The author clearly intended it to be a comedy by giving it a happy end. It is the only St. Petersburg story in which a problem is resolved in a positive way.

The Portrait, a story which can be labelled as fantastic, gives an account of an artist's life, in which the real and the imagined are closely intermeshed. This is not a satire like The Nose but a romantic fantastic story in the vein of Pushkin's The Queen of Spades. It is the story of a young artist Chartkov who is gradually driven to madness and finally to suicide by an insatiable greed for money and recognition of his artistic talents. The tale opens with the description of a shop selling pictures in St. Petersburg and the different reactions of passers-by of various walks of life who stop to look at the artistic works. The shop is mainly a meeting place of the Russian capital's lower classes:

> Some dissipated footman would usually be gaping at them with dishes from the restaurant in his hand for the dinner of his master, whose soup would certainly not be too hot. A soldier in a greatcoat, a cavalier of the flea market, with two penknives to sell, and a peddler woman from Okhta with a box filled with slippers would be sure to be standing before them. Each one would show his enthusiasm in his own way: the peasants usually point with their fingers; the soldiers examine them seriously; the footboys and the apprentices laugh and tease each other over the colored caricatures; old footmen in frieze coats stare at them simply because they offer somewhere to stop and gape; and the peddler women, young women from the villages, hasten there by instinct, eager to hear what people are gossiping about and to see what people are looking at.[18]

Gogol gives various views of the city in his "Petersburg Stories." Some are a more physiological account, like the description above, others are the writer's subjective observations expressed through the character of the story and its mood changes according to the situation in which the hero finds himself at the moment. One such description follows Chartkov's discovery of the fatal portrait. One morning he is one of the passers-by who stop in front of the picture shop and is immediately drawn to an old dusty unfinished portrait of a man with Asiatic features and piercing eyes, glaring penetratingly at everyone who looks at the painting. For some inexplicable reason Chartkov decides to buy it for twenty kopeks—the very last money he has on him. While carrying the unusually

heavy portrait to the Vasilevsky Island, Chartkov is impressed by the magic of the St. Petersburg sunset:

> The red glow of sunset still lingered over half the sky; the houses which faced the sunset were faintly illuminated by its warm light, while the cloud blue light of the moon grew more powerful. Light, half-transparent shadows were cast by houses and people, fell like long bars on the earth. More and more the artist began to glance at the sky, which was shimmering in a faint, translucent, uncertain light. . . .[19]

But this beautiful sight, perhaps even more appreciated by an artist than anyone else, is interrupted by the reality of Chartkov's fate:

> Exhausted, bathed in perspiration, he dragged himself to his home on the fifteenth line of Vasilevsky Island. He climbed the stairs, which were soaked with wash water and decorated with the footprints of dogs and cats.[20]

After bringing the portrait home, fantastic events begin to occur. Chartkov experiences a restless night, being haunted by the eyes of the man in the painting, and the horror culminates when the man steps out from the frame of the portrait, walks about the room, sits down, pulls out of his robe a large amount of money and starts to count it. All this time, in Gogolian fashion, the fear-stricken artist is not sure whether he is dreaming or not. But this fear is overcome by the sight of money. From this moment on, in the true romantic tradition, Chartkov's fate is sealed. He finds himself in the grip of the devil, who nurtures his greed for money.

Like Nevsky Prospekt, this story is also divided into two parts, but here the division between the two parts is distinct, and if chronological order were followed, the second part would come first. In this part we finally learn the history of the painting and are acquainted with the poor suburb of St. Petersburg called Kolomna. It is a stark contrast to the description of the fashionable Nevsky Avenue:

> You all know that part of the city which is called Kolomna. Everything there is different from any other part of Petersburg. There we have neither capital nor provinces. It seems, indeed, that when you walk through the streets of Kolomna, all the youthful desires and passions are drained from you. There the future never comes; all is still and desolate.[21]

Kolomna is not the part of the city where well-to-do people live. It is a district of retired officials who have moved there, widows of government clerks living on a pension, poor actors and artists, whose lives revolve around a rented room in which there is nothing but a bed and a bottle of pure Russian vodka:

> These people are quite without passions. Nothing matters to them; they go about without taking the slightest notice of anything, and remain quite silent thinking of nothing at all. . . . Life in Kolomna is dull: rarely does a carriage rumble through its quiet streets, unless it be one full of actors, which disturbs the general stillness with its bells, its creaking and rattling.[22]

The Portrait ends on a note of bewilderment and puzzlement, very similar to the uncertainty in the finale of Nevsky Prospekt. The theme of the inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy is prevalent in Gogol's "Petersburg Stories":

> And for a long time those who were present were bewildered, wondering whether they had really seen those remarkable eyes or whether it was merely a dream which had flashed before their eyes, strained from long examination of old pictures.[23]

Gogol's next story The Overcoat is again built on a sense of bewilderment. From the opening lines, the author of the story gives the reader the impression that he cannot remember any facts about the hero with a comical name—Akaky Akakievich: "In the department of . . . but I had better not mention which department."[24] And further on he is unsure again: ". . . I have been told that very lately a complaint was lodged by a police inspector of which town I don't remember. . . ."[25] And the confusion continues: "Akaky Akakievich was born toward nightfall, if my memory does not deceive me, on the twenty-third of March."[26] Akaky's surname is Bashmachkin and Gogol points out that the name has been derived from a shoe (bashmak), and again we have no idea how or why Akaky acquired such a strange surname: ". . . but when and under what circumstances it was derived from a shoe, it is impossible to say."[27]

Akaky Akakievich is as obsessed with the idea of obtaining a new overcoat as Kovalyov was keen on finding his nose. After enormous privation, the clerk finally gets his desired object—the overcoat. Everything suddenly turns brighter around him. He is invited to a party given by his co-workers in the department to celebrate the newly acquired overcoat. Again, we are given a description of a better part of St. Petersburg. Akaky Akakievich leaves the poor section of the city and the sudden transformation puts the normally withdrawn Akaky into a celebrating mood:

> . . . passers-by began to be more frequent, ladies began to appear, here and there beautifully dressed, and beaver collars were to be seen on the men. Cabmen with wooden, railed sledges, studded with brass-topped nails, were less frequently seen; on the other hand, jaunty drivers in raspberry-colored velvet caps, with lacquered sledges and bearskin rugs, appeared and carriages with decorated boxes dashed along the streets, their wheels crunching through the snow.[28]

Akaky's happiness does not last long. Overwhelmed by the recent acquisition of a new overcoat and finding himself suddenly in luxurious surroundings to which he is not accustomed, he drinks and eats more than he ever did before in his whole life. He leaves at midnight—a time at which sinister events often take place. While walking home he apparently loses his way and comes to an unfamiliar part of the city. This gloomy description of a deserted poor section of St. Petersburg precedes with its mood the most

horrible moment of Akaky's life—the loss of his precious overcoat:

> Soon the deserted streets, which are not particularly cheerful by day and even less so in the evening, stretched before him. Now they were still more dead and deserted; the light of street lamps was scantier, the oil evidently running low; then came wooden houses and fences; not a soul anywhere; only the snow gleamed on the streets and the low-pitched slumbering hovels looked black and gloomy with their closed shutters. He approached the spot where the street was intersected by an endless square, which looked like a fearful desert with houses scarcely visible on the far side.[29]

The loss of a warm overcoat brings a quick end to Akaky's life, by causing him to catch cold in the windy streets of the Russian capital. Once again, in this St. Petersburg story, seemingly realistic until the surprising finale, the fantastic side of the city takes over. The ghost of Akaky appears at night in the streets of St. Petersburg, terrifying everyone and trying to take overcoats from the backs of the passers-by. The writer could not let Akaky simply disappear from the scene, the poor clerk's ghost is making up for his insignificant, unnoticed existence.

Dostoevsky

Of the thirty-five novels, stories, and sketches listed in the index of the 1956 Soviet edition of Dostoevsky's Collected Works, twenty-four are set in St. Petersburg: Poor Folk, White Nights, Bobok, The Eternal Husband, Mr. Prokharchin, The Double, A

Christmas Tree and a Wedding, Notes from Underground, The Idiot, The Crocodile, A Gentle Creature, Netochka Nezvanova, A Raw Youth, Polzunkov, Crime and Punishment, A Novel in Nine Letters, An Unpleasant Predicament, A Weak Heart, The Dream of a Ridiculous Man, A Centenarian, The Insulted and Injured, The Landlady, An Honest Thief, The Wife of Another and the Husband Under the Bed. In addition to these, St. Petersburg plays some part in The Possessed.[30]

By the late forties, when the rising novelist Dostoevsky began using St. Petersburg as a setting, there was more and more scope each year for casting the urban environment in a negative light. Perhaps the best depiction of the squalor and depravity among the city's poor comes in Crime and Punishment. At the time of its publication in 1866, industrialization and its attendant ills had plainly arrived. Dostoevsky's description of an urban environment was not out of tune with the substance of reports issued by beleaguered sanitary doctors who were charged with the responsibility of keeping the lid on disease and death.[31]

Dostoevsky's approach to the Russian capital in his fiction differs from that of Gogol. He does not supply the reader with a general view of the city, but concentrates on certain areas which were compatible with the character of the novel. Dostoevsky himself was known to roam through the streets of St. Petersburg

in his lifetime, observing everything and perhaps choosing the locales, working out the plots of his works in his mind during his walks. His characters move in middle-class and low-class surroundings; the rich, glittering main avenues like the Nevsky did not attract his attention, nor would his heroes have blended in very well with the better parts of the capital. They feel at home near the canals, in the Fontanka, for instance, the area around Voznesensky Boulevard, and the well known Haymarket Square (Sennaja ploščad') where Raskolnikov's tragedy is played out. The view of St. Isaac's Cathedral from any bridge crossing the Neva fascinated the author.

Dostoevsky's first work is a novel built on a correspondence between a poor older St. Petersburg clerk and a newly arrived young girl. The work is appropriately entitled Poor Folk (1846). This novel is as much a continuation of as a polemic against Gogol's The Overcoat. The similarities are evident in the fact that Dostoevsky's clerk is called Devushkin (from devushka—a young girl), while Gogol's character was named Bashmachkin, whose heart's desire was a new overcoat which became a symbol of female companionship to him. However, Dostoevsky supplies Devushkin with an actual female by the name Varvara (Varenka) Dobroselova. Devushkin suffers the St. Petersburg malaise—poverty and social isolation—and even though he and Varenka live

almost next door to one another, they write each other a series of letters. Devushkin and Varenka have not seen each other's quarters, and so in his opening letter, Devushkin describes at some length the "hole" he has landed in—noisy, dark, dirty, where each room is rented separately and houses two or even three people. Devushkin himself lives in the kitchen; he has a "little corner" behind a partition. It is a way station on his downward journey:

> Here it is all noise, shouting, uproar! But of course you don't know how it is all arranged here. Imagine a long passage, absolutely dark and very dirty. On the right hand there is a blank wall, and on the left, doors and doors, like the rooms in a hotel, in a long row. Well, these are lodgings and there is one room in each; there are people living by twos and by threes in one room.[32]

Outdoors, the city does not look any more inviting than the building with its rooms, each of them containing some kind of human misery. Devushkin goes for a walk along the Fontanka Canal on a typically foggy, wet evening. It is a busy place, full of people, a contrast to Gogol's equally busy Nevsky Boulevard:

> It was not raining but there was mist equal to a good rain. There were broad, long stretches of storm-cloud across the sky. There were masses of people walking along the canal bank, and, as ill-luck would have it, the people had such horrible depressing faces, drunken peasants, snub-nosed Finnish women, in high boots with nothing on their heads, workmen, cab-drivers, people like me out on some errand, boys, a carpenter's

> apprentice in a striped dressing gown, thin and wasted looking, with his face bathed in smutty oil, and a lock in his hand; a discharged soldier seven feet high waiting for somebody to buy a penknife or a bronze ring from him. . . . Fontanka is a canal for traffic! Such a mass of barges that one wonders how there can be room for them all! On the bridges there are women sitting with wet gingerbread and rotten apples, and they all of them looked so muddy, so drenched. It's dreary walking along Fontanka! The wet granite under one's feet, with tall, black, sooty houses on both sides. Fog underfoot and fog overhead. How dark and melancholy it was this evening![33]

Through Devushkin's wanderings, Dostoevsky gives the reader a very clear picture of the life of St. Petersburg's streets with a whole spectrum of city dwellers. The picture here is gloomy as a result of an intentionally realistic description of the poorest parts of the Russian capital. For Devushkin it is very difficult to come to terms with his own low social status as well as Varenka's hopeless existence. We are told where Varenka comes from and how she became Devushkin's neighbour. She has always lived in the poor sections of the city. First she lived with her parents in a small wooden house in a suburb of the city called Petersburg Side. After her father's death she moved with her mother to the Vasilevsky Island on the Sixth Line, and finally, after losing her mother as well, she has come to a boarding house near Fontanka. The friendship between Devushkin and Varenka is short-lived because

they have no power over their own destinies. And Devushkin realizes that St. Petersburg is a major moving force in his own life as well as in the existence of those around him. Thus the description of the early city morning as seen by Devushkin is permeated with a mixed feeling of fear and hatred for the monstrous metropolis:

> . . . I sometimes look at the town, how it wakes, gets up, begins smoking, hurrying with life, resounding, sometimes you feel so small before such a sight, that it is as though some one had given you a flip on your intrusive nose and you creep along your way noiseless as water, and humble as grass, and hold your peace! Now just look into it and see what is going on in those great, black, smutty buildings. Get to the bottom of that and then judge whether one was right to abuse oneself for no reason and to be reduced to undignified mortification. . . .[34]

Dostoevsky was already working on his next St. Petersburg novel even before Poor Folk was published. This story, entitled The Double, came out only two weeks after the first one. The origins of the novel are manifold. The St. Petersburg clerk Golyadkin follows Devushkin in his limited possibilities in life. Golyadkin's courtship of Klara Olsufevna is a reflection of a similar situation in the Diary of a Madman where Gogol's Poprishchin is also infatuated with his boss's daughter. In both cases the young ladies pay no attention to their awkward admirers. In another of Gogol's "Petersburg Stories," The Nose, the motif of

madness and the Doppelgänger device are combined with themes of social ambition. The Double is also set in St. Petersburg, in this atmosphere, where only the unusual can happen. The story also takes place in Dostoevsky's favourite setting—around the Fontanka Canal. We are told that Golyadkin has to cross the Semyonovsky Bridge on his way from work to his little apartment in a building on the Shestilavochnaya Street. The view from Golyadkin's window does not inspire thoughts of optimism:

> At last the damp autumn day, muggy and dirty, peeped into the room through the dingy window pane with such a hostile, sour grimace that Mr. Golyadkin could not possibly doubt that he was not in the land of Nod, but in the city of Petersburg, in his own flat on the fourth storey of a huge block of buildings in Shestilavochnaya Street.[35]

The Double is again saturated with the destructive atmosphere of St. Petersburg, and Golyadkin himself "is a creature of the putrid, damp fog of Petersburg, a phantom living in a phantasmal city."[36]

The first chapters of The Double describe the "adventures" of Mr. Golyadkin, trying to assert himself in the real world. The remainder of the story depicts his unsuccessful struggle to keep from being replaced by his own double everywhere he goes; finally, he sinks into madness. The novel ends on a fantastic note: Golyadkin's mental condition deteriorates to such an extent that he has to be taken away in a carriage by his doctor. There is a

sudden twist when the doctor becomes a demonic figure in the eyes of Golyadkin. In true Gogolian manner the real is intermeshed with the unreal, and the reader is left with a feeling of uncertainty about Golyadkin's experience:

> When he came to himself, he saw the horses were taking him along an unfamiliar road. There were dark patches of copse on each side of it; it was desolate and deserted. Suddenly he almost swooned; two fiery eyes were staring at him in the darkness, and those two eyes were glittering with malignant hellish glee. . . . Our hero shrieked and clutched his head in his hands. Alas! For a long while he had been haunted by a presentiment of this.[37]

Golyadkin's last words show clearly that he is conscious of his insane state of mind. The fantastic aspect of The Double is the uncertain oscillation between the psychic and the supernatural. It is easily acceptable for the reader that the double is a result of Golyadkin's imagination, but at the same time it is somewhat disturbing and mysterious to see the double as an exact mirror-image of Golyadkin, even bearing his name. The double is in fact the other side of Golyadkin's personality, the one which he does not like to see. He struggles with this other side of his character, and loses the fight, surrendering passively to the pressure of his environment—the city of St. Petersburg.

The Landlady (1846) is one of Dostoevsky's more successful St. Petersburg novels. The hero, Ordynov, like most of Dostoev-

sky's heroes, goes through a traumatic experience. Through Ordynov's observing eyes, however, the reader is given a realistic description of the streets of St. Petersburg. The story opens at the moment when the young scholar Ordynov ends his two year self-imposed isolation. He has to walk the streets of St. Petersburg to find a place to live. He wanders through the city observing the life around him "with the instinct of an artist." The world he sees is completely new to him:

> The crowd and bustle of the street, the noise, the movement, the novelty of objects, and the novelty of his position, all the paltry, everyday triviality of town life so wearisome to a busy Petersburger spending his whole life in the fruitless effort to gain by toil, by sweat and by various other means, a snug little home, in which to rest in peace and quiet,—all this vulgar prose and dreariness aroused in Ordynov, on the contrary, a sensation of gentle gladness and serenity.[38]

The city provides a contrast to Ordynov's isolation. The major part of the story takes place in an uninviting industrial suburb of St. Petersburg:

> Again he passed through many streets and squares. After them stretched long fences, grey and yellow; he began to come across quite dilapidated little cottages, instead of wealthy houses, and mingled with them colossal factories, monstrous, soot-begrimed, red buildings, with long chimneys. All around it was deserted and desolate, everything looked grim and forbidding, so at least it seemed to Ordynov.[39]

It is in this part of the city that Ordynov meets a beautiful "half-mad" girl, controlled by an epileptic husband—who is perhaps her father as well. There is no doubt that Gogol's folk tale, A Terrible Vengeance, inspired Dostoevsky in his story. The girl's name, Katerina, the fact that she speaks in the idioms of folk poetry, and the old man's (her father's) mysterious power over her—these are remarkable coincidences. After renting a room in the old man's apartment, Ordynov's life takes a different turn, and not for the better. Much of what happens is so unbelievable that Ordynov himself wonders if he is not living through some fantasy. It is never clear to the reader whether Katerina is really mad and suffering from hallucinations, or whether the story she is telling Ordynov is actually true. The old man's past is confusing, he was either a merchant whose possessions have been destroyed by fire, or a Volga robber chieftain with mysterious occult powers. Finally, Ordynov is shattered by the negative influence of both the old man and the beautiful Katerina. He is defeated by their psychic powers and realizing that he cannot return to his old life, he loses faith in himself.

White Nights (1848) is another of Dostoevsky's "dreamer" stories and is appropriately subtitled A Sentimental Story from a Diary of a Dreamer. It is a direct spin-off from the writer's Petersburg Chronicle, taking from it the St. Petersburg summer

setting, the poetic comparison of the city spring with a young girl and a passage on the characteristics of a St. Petersburg dreamer. The narrator of the story is lonely, knows no one in the city and passes his time in walking the streets, observing the people around him. He is the type of flâneur described by the French physiologist Jouy. He looks with friendly curiosity at his fellow-Petersburgers and relates to many buildings as if they were alive; out of desperation at not being able to make some human contact, he strikes up an acquaintance with the houses which he passes every day. The city is personified and substitutes for a friend that the dreamer is in need of:

> I know the houses too. As I walk along they seem to run forward in the streets to look out at me from every window, and almost to say: 'Good morning! How do you do? I am quite well, thank God, and I am to have a new storey in May,' or 'How are you? I am being re-decorated tomorrow'; or, 'I was almost burnt down and had such a fright,' and so on. I have my favorites among them, some are dear friends; one of them intends to be treated by the architect this summer. I shall go every day on purpose to see that the operation is not a failure. . . . So now you understand, reader, in what sense I am acquainted with all Petersburg.[40]

As soon as the narrator passes out through the city gates and finds himself in the spring fields, he becomes a completely transformed human being, and the contrast between the stifling city heat and a

walk through the meadows is startling:

> Instantly I felt lighthearted, and I passed the barrier and waltzed between cultivated fields only all over as though a burden were falling off my soul. . . . It was as though I had suddenly found myself in Italy—so strong was the effect of nature upon a half-sick townsman like me, almost stifling between city walls.[41]

The dreamer comes in contact with reality when he meets a girl named Nastenka. This happens during the St. Petersburg spring-time—white nights, when Nastenka is seen by the narrator leaning pensively over the railing of a bridge, looking into the waters of the river Neva. They experience a brief friendship, lasting only a few white nights. The dreamer, like Devushkin in Poor Folk, loses his dear friend to another.

Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment (1866) is the culmination of the nineteenth-century Russian urban novel as it is a complete synthesis of the author's various perceptions of St. Petersburg and the human beings living in it. In this novel the city is no longer in the background of the narration but steps into the foreground, acquiring almost as important position as the main characters of the work. The reader is led through the streets by the principal character—Raskolnikov, whose observations can be easily identified as those of the author himself. Morose St. Petersburg with its dark streets, black alleys, canals, channels, and bridges, many storied houses in which poverty dwells, saloons, taverns below

street level, police stations, embankments and islands—this is the landscape of Crime and Punishment. The reader does not encounter a single "artistic description" or "beauty of nature." Rather he is presented with a formal statement as to the "setting of the action" and the businesslike directions of a stage producer. And yet despite this, the whole novel is diffused with the air of St. Petersburg and illumined by its light. The soul of the city is embodied in Raskolnikov. It resounds in him like the melancholy strain of the street organ.[42] In the novel we are acquainted with the poor section of St. Petersburg—the Haymarket, where Raskolnikov lives. As a typical Dostoevskian city dweller, he suffers from isolation, rootlessness, acute poverty, and dreams, all of which is heightened by the summer heat of St. Petersburg. The account of the city given to us by Dostoevsky in Crime and Punishment differs from his earlier city descriptions by its remarkable precision. All places are named and we can easily trace Raskolnikov's movements in the city from a map of St. Petersburg of the 1860s. The novel opens with a precise geographical description of Raskolnikov's wanderings:

> Towards the end of a sultry afternoon early in July a young man came out of his little room in Stolyarny Lane and turned slowly and somewhat irresolutely in the direction of Kamenny Bridge.[43]

While Raskolnikov is on his way to the house of the old pawnbroker Alyona Ivanovna, his walk is described in great detail and even the distance from his room to the old woman's apartment is given, exactly 730 paces. The buildings actually exist to this day and the distance matches Raskolnikov's own count. The house where the pawnbroker lives is typical of nineteenth-century St. Petersburg with box-like accommodations for all kinds of people:

> With a fainting heart and shuddering nerves he approached an enormous building which fronted the canal on one side, and Sadovaya Street on the other. The building was split up into small tenements, which housed all kinds of tradespeople—tailors, locksmiths, cooks, various German craftsmen, prostitutes, clerks, and so on. . . .[44]

Similarly to Ordynov in The Landlady, Raskolnikov decides to come out of his self-imposed isolation and the first place he can think of is a dirty St. Petersburg tavern. He seems to enjoy this unpleasantly smelling place and this is the first of several examples of masochistic tendencies in his mind that we come across in this novel. This is the love-hate relationship with the city which Dostoevsky himself experienced. The description of the tavern clearly shows to the reader that one has to have a deranged mind to be able to like such a place. We are given a realistic description of the owner who blends easily with his repulsive establishment:

> The master of the establishment was in another room, but he often came into the

> main room by way of a flight of steps, so that the first parts of him to appear were his smart well-greased boots with their wide red tops. He wore a long Russian tunic, a black satin waistcoat horribly smeared with grease, and no neck-cloth; his face looked as if it had been smeared all over with grease, like an iron lock. . . . On the bar were sliced cucumbers, rusks of black bread, and fish cut into small pieces, all very evil-smelling. The atmosphere was unbearably stuffy and so saturated with alcohol that it almost seemed that five minutes in it would be enough to make one drunk.[45]

The moment Raskolnikov leaves the heat and stench of the city and finds himself on the Islands full of greenery and picturesque dachas, he experiences a transformation similar to that of the hero of White Nights, who also leaves the summer city for its suburbs. This is a device used intentionally by Dostoevsky to show the contrast between the unhealthy summer atmosphere of the city and nature's soothing influence on the human soul:

> . . . he walked across Vasilevsky Island, came out on the Little Neva, crossed the bridge, and turned on to the Islands. At first the greenery and freshness pleased his tired eyes, accustomed to the dust and lime of the town, and its tall buildings crowding oppressively together. Here there was no stuffiness, no evil smells, no public houses. . . . Occasionally he would stop before some picturesque dacha in its green setting, look through the fence and see in the distance gaily dressed ladies on balconies or terraces, and children run-

> ning about the gardens. He took a particular interest in the flowers and looked at them longest of all.[46]

However, the suburbs of St. Petersburg do not calm Raskolnikov's nerves; on the contrary, he feels even more irritated by the contrast with the city. And as a result of his mental state, he becomes obsessed with the idea of killing the old pawnbroker. His thoughts on the way to her house are unusual. He does not have the planned murder on his mind, but instead, he is preoccupied with the urban planning of St. Petersburg. The reorganization which enters his mind while passing the Yusupov Gardens is similar to that of Napoleon and his ideas about Paris.[47] It is clear that Dostoevsky uses his hero Raskolnikov to express his own ideas about the architectural planning of the city:

> Passing the Yusupov Gardens, he began to consider the construction of tall fountains in all the squares, and how they would freshen the air. Following this train of thought he came to the conclusion that if the Summer Gardens could be extended right across the Champ de Mars and joined to those of the Mikhailovsky Palace, it would add greatly to the beauty and amenities of the city. Then he suddenly began to wonder why, in big towns, people chose of their own free will to live where there were neither parks nor gardens, but only filth and squalor and evil smells.[48]

The view of the river Neva and the dome of St. Isaac's Cathedral on a clear day always attract Raskolnikov's attention; he is overwhelmed by the panorama and its beauty, but at the same time it

produces a strange feeling, knowing as he does, perhaps subconsciously, that this is not the real St. Petersburg that he is familiar with, but only a beautiful passing image.

> There was not a cloud in the sky and the water, unusually for the Neva, looked almost blue. The dome of the cathedral, which is seen at its best from this point, not more than twenty paces towards the chapel from the centre of the bridge, shone through the clear air, and every detail of its ornament was distinct. . . . A hundred times, while he was at the university, had he stopped at this very place, usually on his way home, to fix his eyes on the truly magnificent view and wonder each time at the confused and indescribable sensation it woke [sic] in him. An inexplicable chill always breathed on him from that superb panorama, for him a deaf and voiceless spirit filled the splendid picture. . . .[49]

This description can be compared with Arkady's vision of the Neva in the novel A Weak Heart. Before both Arkady and Raskolnikov lies the view of the river with the clear, blue sky above it, and both of them experience a strange, mystical sensation at that moment. For Arkady, however, this is also a moment when he discovers the soul of the city, which is full of deception; and he is consequently left with a feeling of gloom and depression. Raskolnikov, on the contrary, had not reached the same stage yet, but the chill and mistrust he experiences indicate that he is well on the way to his own self-discovery.

Even though Dostoevsky's next novel The Idiot (1868) is played out mainly in St. Petersburg, it contains few references to the city itself. Compared with the significantly greater role played by the city in Crime and Punishment, The Idiot is a novel built not only on the internal struggle of its hero but also on many interpersonal relationships, and it can be assumed that Dostoevsky wanted to put emphasis on human attitudes and interrelationships while the surroundings were of lesser significance in this particular novel. The strong influence of the physiognomy of St. Petersburg houses is described in detail in The Idiot. Prince Myshkin is on his way to visit Rogozhin, who lives in a house on Gorokhovaya Street. From Poor Folk we know that this is one of the most fashionable streets of St. Petersburg. Myshkin approaches the house, not even knowing that he is in fact facing the right one. The place reflects Rogozhin's character like a mirror of his soul:

> The house was a large gloomy-looking structure, without the slightest claim to architectural beauty, in colour a dirty green. There are a few of these old houses, built towards the end of the last century, still standing in that part of St. Petersburg, and showing little change from their original form and colour. They are solidly built and are remarkable for the thickness of their walls and for the fewness of their windows, many of which are covered by gratings. On the ground-floor there is usually a money changer's shop, and the owner lives over it. Without as well as

> within, the houses seem inhospitable and mysterious—an impression which is difficult to explain, unless it has something to do with the actual architectural style. These houses are almost exclusively inhabited by the merchant class.[50]

The Insulted and Injured (1861) was first published as a "roman-feuilleton," as the author himself called it, in the journal Vremya. The novel is narrated in the first person and is considered to be a synthesis of the author's journalistic and literary styles. On the first pages of the novel, the narrator tells us that he has to look for a new place to live in St. Petersburg (as Ordynov did in The Landlady) and mentions that one of the reasons is that his old place is so small that it has a bad effect on his thinking, and confines him, not giving him enough space to "spread his ideas"—to develop himself:

> All that day I had been walking about the town to find a lodging. My old one was very damp, and I had begun to have an ominous cough. . . . In the first place I wanted a separate tenement, not a room in other peoples' lodgings; secondly, though I could do with one room, it must be a large one, and, of course, it had at the same time to be as cheap as possible. I have observed that in a confined space even thought is cramped.[51]

The mood of the city changes instantly for the better when the sun is out and the last glimmer of the sunset gives the city a shining, bright face. Our narrator is, of course, impressed by this sight and feels as if the light is penetrating his soul:

> Towards the evening, just before it got dark, I was walking along the Voznesensky Prospect. I love the March sun in Petersburg, especially at sunset, in clear frosty weather, of course. The whole street suddenly glitters, bathed in brilliant light. All the houses seem suddenly, as it were, to sparkle. Their grey, yellow, and dirty-green hues for an instant lose all their gloominess, it is as though there were a sudden clearness in one's soul. . . .[52]

However, the gloom continues to prevail throughout the story. At one point, the narrator is shown the panorama of St. Petersburg by another character in the novel, the old Ikhmenev. Ikhmenev lives in despair and the view he shows is accordingly depressing. The reader of Dostoevsky is already familiar with this view, as seen by Arkady in A Weak Heart and Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment, and in both cases this happens on a clear, beautiful day. This view is on the contrary dark, so dark that the cathedral is barely seen on the horizon. This is one of the more typical days in St. Petersburg:

> And with a rapid, unconscious movement of his hand he pointed to the foggy vista of the street, lighted up by the street-lamps dimly twinkling in the damp mist, to the dirty houses, to the wet and shining flags of the pavement, to the cross, sullen, drenched figures that passed by, to all this picture, hemmed in by the dome of Petersburg sky, black as though smudged with Indian ink. We had by now come out into the square; before us in the darkness stood the monument, lighted up below by jets of gas, and further away

> rose the huge dark mass of St. Isaac's, hardly distinguishable against the gloomy sky.[53]

In The Insulted and Injured Dostoevsky again precisely names all locations—St. Isaac's Square, Voznesensky Boulevard, the Fontanka Canal, Vasilevsky Island. He describes in detail a St. Petersburg landmark on the Voznesensky Boulevard, the Müller's Café where the narrator meets the old man Smith with his dog. Smith gives him the address of his daughter on the Sixth Line of Vasilevsky Island. On the Thirteenth Line of Vasilevsky Island lived the old Ikhmenevs. Prince Alyosha Valkovsky lived in his father's house on Malaya Morskaya —a street in St. Petersburg where aristocrats lived. And Alyosha visits another character of the novel, Natasha, on Fontanka near the Semyonovsky Bridge in a large, dirty boarding house owned by the merchant Kolotushkin.

A Raw Youth (1875) is another novel where the author chooses to narrate the story in the first person. The hero is a young man who dreams that one day he will become as rich as Rothschild. His mother has been living for twenty years with Versilov, who is not the youth's father. Arkady Makarovich Dolgoruky, the central character in the novel, is convinced that St. Petersburg is the place where he will be able to make a fortune. His favorite time in the city is the morning, "the soberest and most serious hour of the day."[54] But the St. Petersburg morning not only has a sobering

effect on the narrator, it has a certain mystery, and it is not for the first time that Dostoevsky considers the Russian capital to be the most fantastic city in the world:

> . . . I consider a Petersburg morning—which might be thought the most prosaic on the terrestrial globe—almost the most fantastic city in the world. . . . What if this fog should part and float away, would not all this rotten and slimy town go with it, rise up with the fog, and vanish like a smoke. . . .[55]

The tendency to like unpleasant places, which can occasionally be seen in the case of Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment, is described in A Raw Youth as well. The typical filthy St. Petersburg basement tavern is certainly offensive to most passers-by. Dostoevsky uses this masochistic trait in his heroes who feel at home in such establishments, to indicate that their mental condition is on a decline; as in Versilov's case:

> He took me to a little restaurant on the canal side, in the basement. The customers were few. A loud barrel-organ was playing out of tune, there was a smell of dirty linen napkins; we sat down in a corner. 'Perhaps you don't know. I am sometimes so bored . . . so horribly bored in my soul . . . that I like coming to all sorts of stinking holes like this. These surroundings, the halting tune from 'Lucia,' the waiters in their unseemly Russian get up, the fumes of cheap tobacco, the shouts from the billiard room, it's all so vulgar and prosaic that it almost borders on the fantastic. . . .'[56]

The foul-smelling Haymarket, near which Raskolnikov lived and through which he used to pass, makes an appearance in A Raw Youth. The narrator finds himself at that moment in such a good mood that the market appears to him to be an enjoyable place. Dostoevsky here again remains faithful to the exact geographic layout of St. Petersburg:

> When I passed the sentry at the Haymarket I felt inclined to go up and kiss him. There was a thaw, the market-place was dingy and evil-smelling, but I was delighted even with the market-place.
>
> 'I am in the Obukhovsky Prospekt,' I thought, 'and afterwards I shall turn to the left and come out in the Semyonovsky Polk. I shall take a short cut, that's delightful, it's all delightful.'[57]

It is evident, that Dostoevsky, even in his late works, was unable to shake off completely Gogol's influence on his writings. He was always reading, one could constantly see a book by Gogol in his hands.[58] Not only did Dostoevsky parody the names of characters from Gogol's stories (i.e., Bashmachkin-Devushkin), he even "adopted" some Gogolian characters. For example, the German woman Karolina Ivanovna from The Overcoat, moved into Dostoevsky's The Double; and from Gogol's early collection of stories Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka, the Basavryuk family appeared in the final pages of The Double as a good and noble family, recently arrived from the Ukraine. The name of Gogol is

mentioned twice in Dostoevsky's novel The Idiot. In both instances the author refers to the choice of characters:

> Podkoleosin was perhaps an exaggeration, but he was by no means a non-existent character; on the contrary, how many intelligent people, after hearing of this Podkoleosin from Gogol, immediately began to find that scores of their friends were exactly like him.[59]

Or:

> This confidence of a stupid man in his own talents has been wonderfully depicted by Gogol in the amazing character of Pirogov.[60]

Although Gogol is not named directly, there is a passage in A Raw Youth where the narrator's preoccupation with the possible loss of his overcoat, while walking in low class parts of St. Petersburg, reminds us of Gogol's story The Overcoat: "My coat is unbuttoned, how is it no one snatches it off, where are the thieves? They say there are thieves in the Haymarket. . . ."[61] Dostoevsky, following quite closely in Gogol's footsteps, gradually developed his own literary perception of the Russian capital. Contrary to Gogol, he concentrated closely on certain parts of the city, describing every detail meticulously. In this way Dostoevsky tried to portray a feeling of accord between the fictional character and particular aspects of the city. Dostoevsky's heroes, Raskolnikov, for example, have a tendency to revel in their unpleasant surroundings, the very

parts of St. Petersburg that Gogol's narrator would find repelling. On the other hand, the panorama of St. Petersburg is appreciated fully neither by Arkady (White Nights) nor by Raskolnikov. The Gogolian device of a "fantastic," unreal city where the devil lights the lamps on Nevsky Avenue, is expanded by Dostoevsky, whose "fantastic" city is more abstract, and is found in the minds of his emotionally disturbed characters. Starting with Gogol, whose description of St. Petersburg was not a mere physiological sketch, but rather a unification with the natural flow of events within the plot, Dostoevsky went further and gradually succeeded in assimilating the city into the experience of his characters.

Bely

Andrei Bely's novel Petersburg is considered to be the greatest of all the Symbolist writer's works. The novel started to take shape in Bely's mind in 1909, it was printed in the Sirin Anthology of 1913, and was published as a separate book in 1916. This was a pre-Revolutionary edition of Petersburg, in which Bely correctly senses a coming upheaval in Russia, the centre of which will be St. Petersburg itself, the city of Peter the Great, of progress and of constant change. But Bely does not welcome the revolutionary movement: he speaks with great irony of the revolutionaries and their meetings, and views the coming revolution as

"icy." The 1917 Revolution, however, seems to have changed Bely's mind, and his novel is published in 1922 in a changed form. Its volume is cut by about one quarter, all unfavourable comments concerning the revolutionary upheaval in Russia are gone, many unnecessary repetitions are edited, and from being internal, the problem becomes international. The main struggle is between the East and the West: for Bely, Russia is the West and is being threatened by a mysterious horde of Mongolian forces coming from the East. The city, as the title of the novel suggests, plays an important role in this struggle.

It is a known fact that Bely owes a great deal to his literary predecessors Gogol and Dostoevsky (and Pushkin as well), the fact that he was their literary critic and admirer influenced his own concept of the Russian capital and its place in a literary work. Therefore Donald Fanger's definition of Petersburg as a "literary pastiche" is justified:

> The cast of pseudonymous characters includes double agents, terrorists and secret policemen, bohemians and society people; the tempo is Dostoevskian, as are many of the squalid indoor settings. But the street scenes are Gogolian, one of the sub-plots is Tolstoyan, and a series of ubiquitous Pushkinian motifs condenses into a central scene which is a reprise of the tragic crux of The Bronze Horseman, staged in terms that recall the confrontation of Ivan Karamazov with his devil. The element of literary pastiche is thus strong.[62]

In the course of his literary career, Bely wrote a number of articles and several books on the works of Gogol, Pushkin and Dostoevsky in which among other features he also analysed the theme of St. Petersburg. The greater part of Bely's literary criticism is devoted to Gogol. His last work on Gogol, Masterstvo Gogolja (1934) is a culmination of his efforts to bring Gogol closer to his own and the reader's understanding. In this book he analyses in great detail Gogol's "Petersburg Stories" as well as his other fiction. The type of stylistic analysis used in Bely's study of Gogol represents an important contribution to formalistic criticism in Russia, in that it paved the way to the formalistic analysis of poetic forms. According to Bely, Gogol's St. Petersburg possesses three main characteristics: 1. The life of the city's low classes; 2. The external features of the city; 3. Subjective stylization of Gogol's perception of St. Petersburg. Bely paid particular attention to the last two characteristics, admitting that his own perception of the Russian capital was influenced by these last two categories, mainly in the usage of colour. Thus, in an article about Gogol's influence on his own writing, Bely wrote:

> Bely's prose, in sound, form, use of color, and narrative moments—is the summation of the work of Gogolian linguistic description. This prose renews, in the twentieth century, the school of Gogol.[63]

Bely cites Gogol's Nevsky Prospekt as an influence on his external description of the city.

Bely was more reserved about Dostoevsky, however, whom he considered to be under the direct influence of Gogol. Bely perhaps erroneously concluded that Dostoevsky was unable to create his own perception of the capital and instead of going further in his literary view, which Bely thought to be different from his personal vision, Dostoevsky "had removed the best pages which Gogol had dedicated to it."[64] Bely states that Dostoevsky took the themes from The Nevsky Prospekt, The Nose and The Overcoat, but made his own novels more gloomy, the lives of his heroes more hopeless and less grotesque. Finally, Bely is not completely unjust in his treatment of Dostoevsky, for he admits that his predecessor's concept has somewhat complicated his Petersburg,[65] and he also gives some credit to Dostoevsky for expanding and deepening the St. Petersburg character.

The Prologue of Bely's novel serves as an introduction to the city, and the author's perception does contain some ironic overtones. The passage about the Nevsky Prospekt recalls the tone of Gogol's first St. Petersburg story by the same name. Here too, the boulevard is described as the main artery of the city, busy during the day as well as at night. It is the intention of the author to bring to the reader's attention the fact that St. Petersburg is

indeed an unusual city, unique in all of Russia:

> Let us expatiate at greater length on Petersburg: there is a Petersburg, or Saint Petersburg, or Pieter (which are the same). On the basis of these same judgments, Nevsky Prospect is a Petersburg prospect.
>
> Nevsky Prospect possesses a striking attribute: it consists of a space for the circulation of the public. It is delimited by numbered houses. The numeration proceeds house by house, which considerably facilitates the finding of the house one needs. Nevsky Prospect, like any prospect, that is: a prospect for the circulation of the public (not of air, for instance) . . . Nevsky Prospect in the evening is illuminated by electricity. But during the day Nevsky Prospect requires no illumination. Nevsky Prospect is a prospect of no small importance in this un-Russian—but nonetheless—capital city. Other Russian cities are a wooden heap of hovels.
>
> And strikingly different from them all is Petersburg.[66]

Bely revives the long controversy, started by the critic Belinsky and continued by Gogol, over the competition between the two principal cities in Russia—Moscow and St. Petersburg. For Bely there is no doubt that St. Petersburg is the capital, with its international atmosphere. But if its position as Russia's capital were denied to it, the city would become a point on a map, an illusory, "fantastic" place. Thus Bely continues the literary tradition of stressing the unreal side of St. Petersburg: "But if Petersburg is not the capital, then there is no Petersburg. It only appears to

exist."[67] The city's existence is in doubt. However, it is not only the city which appears to be unreal, the principal characters of the novel and their own perceptions of the Russian capital also help to create this sense of mystery.

The novel is built around a conflict between father and son, a conflict between East and West, set in the geometrically planned city of St. Petersburg. The first chapter of the novel introduces the father and his interesting-sounding name—Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov whose great-great-grandfather apparently came from the East. This fact plays an important role in the novel in that it helps explain the split personality of the Russian character and the strange dual behaviour of Apollon Apollonovich himself. Repeatedly reading his name, one cannot but think of Gogol's Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, from The Overcoat. As Bashmachkin's surname is created from the Russian bashmak—a slipper, Ableukhov's name has three parts. The first comes from Ab-Lai—his Eastern predecessor, the second from ukho—ear. The choice of Ableukhov's name is appropriate, for his ears are "green all over and enlarged to immense size."[68] Like Gogol's hero, Ableukhov is also in government service, holding the distinguished position of Senator. The panorama of the city seen by Ableukhov is described in such a manner as to convey a feeling of anticipation of bad things to come. The island in the distance is personified, looking like a

frightened human being, a mirror image of Ableukhov's own inner turmoil:

> Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov cast a momentary, perplexed glance at the police officer, the carriage, the coachman, the great black bridge, the expanse of the Neva, where the foggy, many-chimneyed distances were so wanly etched, and whence Vasilievsky Island looked back at him in fright.[69]

The landmark of St. Petersburg, St. Isaac's Cathedral, dominates the panorama of St. Petersburg in Bely's novel, as it did in Dostoevsky's A Weak Heart and Crime and Punishment, in which novels the day was glorious, the sky crystal clear. Bely's panorama has more in common with a similar picture painted by Dostoevsky in A Raw Youth. The colours are gray and bleak, the greatness of the city cannot be denied but the mood is pessimistic. The sudden appearance of the dome of the cathedral in the foggy distance reminds the reader of the building of the city literally out of the marshes according to the plan and command of Peter the Great:

> There, where nothing but a foggy damp hung suspended, at first appeared the dull outline then descended from heaven to earth the dingy, blackish gray St. Isaac's Cathedral: at first it appeared the outline and then the full shape of the equestrian monument of Emperor Nicholas I. At its base the shaggy hat of a Nicholas grenadier thrust out of the fog.[70]

Bely repeatedly stresses that St. Petersburg is not an ordinary city, it did not grow as other cities, gradually, their winding streets unplanned. Many people died while building the new Russian capital, and rumours abounded that the site and the city itself were cursed. Therefore Bely chooses to identify Peter the Great with the hero of Wagner's opera, The Flying Dutchman. The monarch appears later on in the novel again in the guise of a Dutch sailor or sea captain. The city was founded by the Flying Dutchman and it must share the curse he bears. In this way Bely finds a new means to link St. Petersburg with the Russian oral tradition of the city as an accursed place:

> And what was there were lines: the Neva and the islands. Probably in those distant days, when out of the marshes rose high roofs and masks and spires, piercing the dark greenish fog in jags—on his shadowy sails the Flying Dutchman winged his way toward Petersburg from there, from the leaden expanses of the Baltic and German Seas, in order here to erect, by delusion, his misty lands and to give the name of islands to the wave of onrushing clouds.[71]

Bely's city has two faces. There is a great difference between the centre and the suburbs of St. Petersburg, and this difference is continually stressed by the author. The centre has a cubistic character, it conveys a feeling of planned order. And it reflects, in a sense, the thinking process and character of Apollon

Apollonovich. Contrary to Gogol's and Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg characters who felt threatened by the impersonal surroundings, the Senator likes the symmetry of the city which has a calming effect on his shattered nerves: "After a line, the figure which soothed him more than all other symmetries was the square."[72] The symmetric sameness of the St. Petersburg streets, which makes them totally undistinguishable from one another, reminds the reader of a modern American metropolis such as New York:

> The wet slippery prospect was intersected by another wet prospect at a ninety-degree right angle. . . . And exactly the same kind of houses rose up, and the same kind of gray human streams passed by there. . . . But parallel with the rushing prospect was another rushing prospect with the same row of boxes, with the same numeration, with the same clouds.[73]

As a final statement to this passage depicting the almost unreal, inhuman atmosphere of the city centre, Bely uses words which remind us of Dostoevsky's contemplation that there is no other place like the Russian capital: "Beyond Petersburg, there is nothing."[74]

Bely also shares with Dostoevsky a keen interest in architecture and its various styles. Four major architectural styles contributed to the final shape of the St. Petersburg of Bely's time: the simple North European baroque of Peter's reign, the picturesque

rococo of the time of Elizabeth, the elegant neo-Classical style of Catherine the Great and her grandson, Alexander I:

> The parallel lines were once laid out by Peter. And some of them came to be enclosed with granite, others with low fences of stone, still others with fences of wood. Peter's line turned into the line of a later age: the rounded one of Catherine, the regular ranks of colonnades.[75]

The suburbs have a different appearance, the houses are not built of the same massive stone used in the centre of the city. They are simple frame houses whose appearance suggests the earliest phase of the Russian capital's history. Bely nostalgically recalls these structures of the first years of St. Petersburg as "small Petrine houses." By Bely's time, almost every trace of this earliest urban architecture had gradually disappeared. They were small dwellings, constructed of wood and brick, plastered and painted in imitation of stone. Various classes of citizens lived in them. Bely describes a restaurant with a typically St. Petersburg aura:

> Left among the colossi were small Petrine houses: here a timbered one, there a green one, there a blue, single-storied one, with the bright red sign 'Dinners Served.' Sundry odors hit you right in the nose: the smell of sea salt, of herring, of hawsers, of leather jacket and of pipe, and of nautical tarpaulin.[76]

Bely succeeds in showing the duality of St. Petersburg by constantly switching back and forth between the fashionable centre and the Vasilevsky Island. The Moika Canal appears frequently in Dostoevsky's city novels and his descriptions are of the poor section of this river emptying into the Neva. Bely describes the section which lies north of the Nevsky Prospekt, where it is lined by fashionable houses and government buildings. Much of the novel's action takes place in this section of St. Petersburg. Bely gives a very accurate and detailed description of the outer appearance of the impressive buildings lining the Moika:

> . . . alternating with rows of windows on a yellow government building, were rows of lion faces, each over a coat of arms entwined with a garland.
>
> There is the Moika, and that same light-colored, three storied, five-columned building; and the narrow strips of ornamented moulding above the third story: ring after ring; inside each ring was a Roman helmet on two crossed swords.[77]

Bely's interest in the city's architecture and the changes it went through before the writer's lifetime is again evident in the paragraph entitled "Petersburg Vanished into the Night," which begins with the description of a sunset and the changes of colour in the city at this time of the day. There is also reference to Count Rastrelli, the chief architect of the Empress Elizabeth (1741-1762). In the eighteenth century the Rastrelli palace was painted

turquoise blue, as it is again now. During Bely's time, the palace was painted brownish red. The palace faces the river Neva on its North side and the Palace Square on the South side:

> . . . The windowpanes sent off cutting flame-gold reflections, and from the tall spires flashed rubies. . . . The rust red Palace bled. It had been built by Rastrelli. At that time the old palace had been an azure wall amidst a white flock of columns. . . . Under Alexander Pavlovich the palace had been repainted yellow. Under Emperor Alexander the Second the palace had been repainted a second time: it became rust red.[78]

Bely was fascinated by both the architecture and history of the Russian capital. The descriptions of the city's historical landmarks remind the reader that despite all kinds of fantastic happenings, the city is real. The author attempts to tell us that Peter the Great is not the only great character of St. Petersburg's history. There have been others whose lives and actions must be remembered as an important part of the city's past.

As the Senator's son Nikolai is contemplating a fatal attack on his father, Bely uses the historical parallel of the occurrence at the Mikhailovsky Castle during the reign of Paul I between 1797-1800. The monarch was afraid of an assassination and therefore the castle had to be built like a fortress. Since he was a child he had possessed an unstable and cruel character. And indeed on a fateful night in March 1801 he was attacked in his bedroom by a group of

assassins and killed. His eldest son Alexander I who inherited the throne was rumoured to have had a hand in this terrible murder. Although it was not proven, the suspicion cast a cloud on his life and reign, and Russia never discovered whether the Tsar was a parricide. In 1822 the Mikhailovsky Castle became the Engineering Academy, also called the Engineer's Castle, in which the young Dostoevsky lived and studied. Bely considers it to be a beautiful landmark of St. Petersburg and in his appreciation he distinguishes himself from his indifferent countrymen:

> That place was crowned by a magnificent palace. The upper part, with its tower stretching into the sky, resembled a fanciful castle: of rosy red, heavy stone!... And an equestrian statue stood out black and indistinct against the square. Visitors to Petersburg pay no attention to this statue. A magnificent statue![79]

This is a statue of Peter the Great, the great-grandfather of Paul I. The inscription on the marble pedestal says: "To the Great-Grandfather by the Great-Grandson 1800." It was a little-known monument and easily passed by visitors to St. Petersburg who were eager to see the famous Falconet statue of the Bronze Horseman.

One of the principal characters in Bely's Petersburg is the revolutionary and university student Alexander Ivanovich Dudkin, who lives in an inner turmoil and has a vision that Russia will be destroyed by a Mongol invasion. He can clearly see that all Russia

including St. Petersburg will be devastated. He sees the panorama of the city in a strange fluorescent light preceding the attack from the East. This is a result of one of Dudkin's frequent hallucinations, he stands shaken and everything becomes clear to him, even his own destiny:

> Everything flared up the waters, chimneys, granite, the two goddesses above the arch, the roof of the four-story house; and for an instant the cupola of St. Isaac's appeared illumined; and the bronze laurel wreath flared; and the lights on the islands went out one by one.[80]

Dudkin sees the Nevsky Prospekt as a place where individual human beings are transformed into a flowing mass of bodies—a myriapod. This word appears in Bely's novel often, he likes to use it when describing the busy life of city streets. The bodies not only walk on the pavement of the St. Petersburg artery, they are literally "sucked" into it like caviar spread on a piece of bread:

> There the body of each individual that streams onto the pavement becomes the organ of a general body, an individual grain of caviar, and the sidewalks of the Nevsky are the surface of an open-faced sandwich. Individual thought was sucked into the cerebration of the myriapod being that moved along the Nevsky.[81]

The feeling that one literally loses his individuality in a big metropolis and becomes a small grain in the moving masses is conveyed here by Bely in an almost frightening manner.

Bely's interest in architecture manifests itself even in the revolutionary Dudkin. He lives in a garret on the Vasilevsky Island and the view from his window is the untypical perception of an ardent revolutionary with serious mental problems:

> The sky was clearing. A blinding silver stream washed the roof of the Island building beneath him. And the Neva seethed. And it cried out there mournfully in the whistle of a small late-passing steamboat, on which could be seen the receding eye of a lantern. The Embankment stretched on. Above the boxes of yellow, gray, brownish red houses, above the columns of gray, brownish red palaces—rococo and barocco—rose the dark walls of an enormous temple, its gold cupola, its colonnade thrust sharply up into the world of the moon: St. Isaac's.[82]

The last chapter brings the reader back to reality and to the normalcy of all the characters' lives. The Senator is not killed by the bomb planted by his son Nikolai. As he drives with his wife in a carriage from the "first-class hotel," which at that time was the fashionable Hôtel de l'Europe (Evropejskaja) on the corner of Nevsky Boulevard and Mikhailovskaya Street, the familiar views of the city are again opened to the Senator, but he sees them in a different light, a new life is opening ahead of him:

> But Apollon Apollonovich was not looking at his favorite figure: the square. He did not lapse into an unthinking contemplation of the stone parallelepipeds and cubes. . . .[83]

The explosion of a time bomb in the Senator's house, while not even injuring its intended victim, brings the Senator to a realization that there is no permanence, no eternal peace in the cube-like city that he used to enjoy so much. In the final chapter, the city seen by Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov is the city of Gogol and Dostoevsky, a foggy cold place grown out of the marshes, in the middle of nowhere:

> There were nothing but pale grey misty haze hung suspended, at first appeared the dull outline and then the full shape of the dingy blackish gray St. Isaac's Cathedral. . . . And it retreated back into the fog. And an expanse opened: the depths, the greenish murk, into which a black bridge stretched away, where fog draped the cold, many-chimneyed distances and whence rushed a wave of onrushing clouds.[84]

Bely's St. Petersburg is real after all, even though at the beginning of the novel we are told that it is a dream, a bad dream, it only seems to us that the city exists. During the course of the story the author reveals that the city becomes unreal through the eyes of Senator Ableukhov, who sees the city as he wishes it to be in reality. But his last observation of his surroundings after an accident which almost caused his death brings him back to the grim reality of St. Petersburg.

The conflict between father and son is a symbolic description of Bely's prophecy of a revolutionary upheaval in the Russian

capital. There is, however, a third force, more threatening than a conflict amongst the Russians. This force comes from the East, cruel and barbaric, and may wipe the great city of St. Petersburg off the face of the Earth.

Peter the Great, according to the Slavophile movement, introduced Western ideas and in so doing destroyed the order of the organic development of Russia. This is why St. Petersburg is shown by Bely as an unlawfully, artificially created city. The author not only explains the presence of the city by returning to the historic past, but he also tries to foresee the future. There will be an end to the "Petersburg period" of Russian history, there will be wars between nations, St. Petersburg will cease to be the capital. A similar prophecy can be traced back to Dostoevsky and his passage about the fate of the city in A Raw Youth. The reader of Bely's novel Petersburg and of the novels of the Symbolist's predecessors Gogol and Dostoevsky, cannot help noticing how profound their knowledge and subsequently their prophecies about the Russian capital were.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]Donald Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism (Chicago and London, 1967), p. 113.

[2]Nils Åke Nilsson, Gogol et Pétersbourg (Stockholm, 1954), p. 28.

[3]Leonid Grossman, "Gogol'—urbanist," in N. V. Gogol', Povesti (Moscow, 1935), p. 31.

[4]Vasilij Gippius, Gogol' (Leningrad, 1924), p. 49, the demonic force is a major theme in Gogol's Ukrainian stories.

[5]The Collected Tales and Plays of Nikolai Gogol, edited, with an Introduction and Notes by Leonard J. Kent (New York, 1969), p. 452.

[6]Ibid., pp. 420-422.

[7]Ibid., p. 422.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 423.

[10]Ibid., p. 429.

[11]Ibid., pp. 438-439.

[12]Ibid., p. 455.

[13]Ibid., p. 460.

[14]Ibid., p. 477.

[15]Ibid., p. 478.

[16]Ibid., p. 482.

[17]Ibid., p. 497.

[18]Ibid., p. 511.

[19]Ibid., p. 514.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 545.

[22]Ibid., p. 546.

[23]Ibid., p. 561.

[24]Ibid., p. 562.

[25]Ibid., p. 563.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 578.

[29]Ibid., p. 580.

[30]Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism, p. 291.

[31]James H. Bater, St. Petersburg, Industrialization and Change (Montreal, 1976), p. 6.

[32]The Gambler and Other Stories by Fyodor Dostoevsky, translated from Russian by Constance Garnett (London, 1923), p. 134.

[33]Ibid., p. 217.

[34]Ibid., p. 221.

[35]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, translated by C. Garnett (New York, 1958), p. 477.

[36]K. Mochulsky, Dostoevsky, His Life and Work (Princeton, 1967), p. 48.

[37]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, pp. 614-615.

[38]The Short Stories of Dostoevsky, translated by C. Garnett, edited by W. Phillips (New York, 1946), p. 59.

[39]Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[40]Ibid., p. 302.

[41]Ibid., pp. 304-305.

[42]Mochulsky, Dostoevsky, p. 294.

[43]F. Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, translated by Jessie Coulson, edited by George Gibian (New York, 1975), p. 1.

[44]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[45]Ibid., p. 8.

[46]Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[47]A. Lindenmeyr, "Raskolnikov's City and the Napoleonic Plan," Slavic Review, Vol. 35, No. 1, March 1976.

[48]Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 62.

[49]Ibid., p. 96.

[50]The Short Stories of Dostoevsky, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1923), p. 194.

[51]F. Dostoevsky, The Insulted and Injured, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1920), p. 1.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., p. 54.

[54]The Novels of F. Dostoevsky, Vol. VII, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1917), p. 131.

[55]Ibid., p. 132.

[56]Ibid., p. 268.

[57]Ibid., p. 445.

[58]E. Saruxanjan, Dostoevskij v Peterburge (Leningrad, 1972), p. 91.

[59]The Short Stories of Dostoevsky, p. 448.

[60]Ibid., p. 450.

[61]The Novels of F. Dostoevsky, p. 445.

[62]Donald Fanger, "The City of Russian Modernist Fiction," Modernism 1890-1930 (Middlesex, 1976), p. 470.

[63]Andrej Belyj, Masterstvo Gogolja (Moscow, 1934), p. 309.

[64]Ibid., p. 284.

[65]Pierre Hart, "Andrej Belyj's 'Petersburg' and the Myth of the City" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969), p. 60.

[66]Andrei Bely, Petersburg, translated, annotated, and introduced by Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington, 1978), pp. 1-2.

[67]Ibid., p. 2.

[68]Ibid., p. 5.

[69]Ibid., p. 9.

[70]Ibid., p. 10.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., p. 11.

[73]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[74]Ibid., p. 12.

[75]Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[76]Ibid., p. 13.

[77]Ibid., p. 30.

[78]Ibid., p. 101.

[79]Ibid., p. 242.

[80]Ibid., p. 65.

[81] Ibid., p. 179.

[82] Ibid., p. 209.

[83] Ibid., pp. 272-273.

[84] Ibid., p. 273.

CHAPTER III

HUMAN TRAGEDY IN THE RUSSIAN CAPITAL

Blanche Housman Gelfant, in her book The American City Novel, defined very clearly the universal phenomenon of human survival in an unfriendly environment, that of the large, impersonal city:

> The comprehensive theme of city fiction is personal dissociation: the prototype for the hero is the self-divided man. Dissociation is a pathological symptom which results from, and reflects, a larger social disorder. The dissociated person has not found a way to integrate motive and act and so to organize his life's activities towards a continuous and progressive fulfillment of his desires. . . . Dissociation is distinguishable from frustration. One experiences frustration when he is prevented from attaining his goal; but one is dissociated when he cannot even clearly define what his goal is.[1]

The theme of personal dissociation is a common one in the St. Petersburg novels of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely. The principal urban characters experience to a greater or lesser degree a sense of alienation which can lead them to comical experiences (The Nose) or even tragic acts (Crime and Punishment). But even Gogol's seemingly funny descriptions of his government clerks' sufferings are in reality pointing to the hopelessness of their daily existence in the Russian capital.

In Gogol's story Nevsky Prospekt the reader is introduced to two young men—Lieutenant Pirogov and his friend, the artist Piskaryov. Each goes off to pursue a young woman he has seen on the avenue—the artist finds out that his beauty is a prostitute and kills himself out of despair, while the lieutenant, anticipating an easy conquest of the wife of a German artisan, is rejected by her. One story is a tragedy, the other a comedy. Piskaryov's is the tragedy of a dreamer, on whose soul and artistic talent the city leaves its imprint. Confronted with the overwhelming impression of the capital, Gogol was the first to suggest an alternative to this way of life. As a contrast, he presents in detail a different environment, more beneficial to an artist like Piskaryov:

> A Petersburg artist. An artist in the land of snows. An artist in the land of the Finns where everything is wet, flat, pale, gray, foggy. These artists are not at all like the Italian artists, proud and fiery, like Italy and her skies. . . . They are often endowed with real talent, and if only they were breathing the fresh air of Italy, they would no doubt develop as freely, broadly and brilliantly as a plant at last brought from indoors into the open air. . . .[2]

The nighttime St. Petersburg fantasy turns into painful reality when Piskaryov is forced to wake up from his dream and finds out that he was cruelly deceived. His mental and physical condition deteriorates when he starts to have beautiful dreams at night and

spends his days simply waiting for sundown, hoping that another dream will come to him. These dreams do not help him to bear the sad reality of everyday life; on the contrary, he is more aware of the hopelessness of his situation. Finally Piskaryov, in an attempt to get out of this impossible situation, tries to convince the lady of his dreams that she should leave her profession and marry him. He is laughed at, runs out, completely loses his senses, and a week passes before he is found in his room, with his throat cut by a razor blade. Piskaryov's fate is that of a typical St. Petersburg dreamer, isolated from his surroundings to such an extent that even his friend Pirogov does not come to his funeral which takes place in Okhta—a poor suburb of St. Petersburg:

> So perished the victim of a frantic passion, poor Piskaryov, the gentle, timid, modest, childishly simple-hearted artist whose spark of talent might with time have glowed into the full bright flame of genius. No one wept for him; no one was seen beside his dead body except the police inspector and the indifferent face of the town doctor.[3]

Pirogov's story, which runs parallel to Piskaryov's misfortune, is intentionally shown by Gogol as a sharp contrast. Pirogov is no dreamer, he displays indifference to Piskaryov's suicide and only minor irritation when his pursuit of the blond German girl ends unsuccessfully. As the narrator of the story finds himself two days later on the artery of St. Petersburg, the

Nevsky Prospekt where all the events started, he contemplates the destiny of a human life:

> Marvelously is our world arranged, . . .
> How strangely, how unaccountably Fate
> plays with us! Do we ever get what
> we desire?[4]

Hallucination and madness play a prominent role in Gogol's Diary of a Madman. The hero is one of St. Petersburg's government clerks. In his isolation, poverty and low self-esteem, he loses his mind and starts to live in a completely different sphere: he understands the conversation of two dogs, and follows their correspondence. His life is monotonous, without any excitement or challenge, and it is therefore not surprising that he gradually becomes a "madman," as Gogol calls him. He is an insignificant clerk in an office where no one even notices his comings and goings:

> At eight o'clock I went to the department.
> The head of our section put on a look as
> though he did not see me come in. I, too,
> behaved as though nothing had passed be-
> tween us. I looked through and checked
> some papers. I went out at four o'clock.
> I walked by the director's house, but no
> one was to be seen. After dinner, for
> the most part, I lay in bed.[5]

Finally, after imagining himself, and claiming, to be the Spanish king, the clerk is taken to a mental asylum. He suffers when they pour cold water on his head—an equivalent to today's electric shock treatment. The patient's only wish is not to get better and

continue his ordinary life in St. Petersburg but rather to get away from it all permanently:

> It's too much for me, I can't endure these agonies, my head is burning and everything is going around. Save me, take me away! Give me a troika and horses swift as a whirlwind! Take your seat, my driver, ring out, my bells, fly upward, my steeds, and bear me away from this world![6]

In Gogol's next story, The Nose, we meet another totally confused St. Petersburg character by the name of Kovalyov. He suffers a brief personal tragedy, of which amazingly only he is aware: he loses his own nose. Kovalyov is not described in such a way as to evoke a feeling of sympathy toward him. He is a rather shallow man, preoccupied mainly with his social status and physical appearance:

> Kovalyov was a collegiate assessor from the Caucasus. He had only been of that rank for the last two years, and so could not forget it for a moment; and to give himself a greater weight and dignity he did not call himself simply collegiate assessor but always spoke of himself as major.[7]

The loss of his nose is indeed a tragedy for Kovalyov, since, along with his whiskers, this was his best physical attribute, and without it his dignity could suffer:

> His whiskers were such as one may see nowadays on provincial and district surveyors, on architects and army doctors,

> also on those employed on special commissions, and in general on all such men as have full ruddy cheeks . . . these whiskers start from the middle of the cheek and go straight up to the nose.[8]

Kovalyov's mental state gradually deteriorates, and he makes two unsuccessful visits, one to a newspaper where he wants to place an advertisement about his missing nose. He is laughed at and is told that they cannot advertise for a missing nose as if it were a dog. Another visit is to the police inspector, who is unmoved by Kovalyov's misfortune. Kovalyov sees no end to his hopeless situation, and his mood leads him to an unpleasant episode with his ignorant valet Ivan:

> Going into his hall he saw his valet, Ivan, lying on his dirty leather sofa, he was spitting on the ceiling and rather successfully aiming at the same spot. The nonchalance of his servant enraged him; he hit him. . . .[9]

At the end of the story the missing nose is found. At first it does not want to stick to Kovalyov's face, but this problem is solved, and Kovalyov becomes his old self again. Even though this tale ends on a happy note, the incident does not change Kovalyov's character as one might expect. On the contrary, life goes on for this government clerk as if nothing had happened, and he goes back to his daily routine, thinking of himself even more than before his "tragic" experience.

Chartkov's fate in Gogol's story The Portrait is not as fortunate as Kovalyov's. Chartkov is a poor St. Petersburg artist who loses his mind on account of a portrait bought in a small St. Petersburg shop. The man in the portrait embodies the evil force which introduces the artist all of a sudden to large sums of money and artistic fame. But this is too much for the young man to bear on his shoulders, and his new lifestyle completely changes his personality. He leads a carefree luxurious life, paints portraits of St. Petersburg high society, but this frenzy, which cannot even be defined by him as happiness, does not last very long. A terrible moment comes when he realizes that his artistic talent has vanished with his past way of life. This punishment comes in the form of a torturing mental illness:

> Fits of frenzy and madness began to be frequent, and at last it ended in a terrible illness. Acute fever, combined with galloping consumption, took such a violent hold on him that in three days he was only a shadow of his former self. And to this was added all the symptoms of hopeless insanity. [10]

Chartkov never regains his former self, and in his madness he is constantly haunted by the terrible glaring eyes of the man on the long-forgotten portrait which brings him death:

> At last he died in a final paroxysm of speechless agony. His corpse was dreadful to behold. Nor could they find any trace of his vast wealth, but seeing

> the torn-up shreds of the great masterpieces of art, the price of which reached millions, they understood the terrible uses to which it had been put.[11]

Even the appearance of the hero of Gogol's story The Overcoat, Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, indicates that there is nothing really positive about the unsuccessful clerk:

> . . . he was short, somewhat pock-marked, with rather reddish hair and rather dim, bleary eyes, with a small bald patch on the top of his head, with wrinkles on both sides of his cheeks. . . .[12]

Akaky Akakievich lives a lonely existence, mechanically copying all sorts of government documents. He became something of an oddity at the office, was not respected, and was treated by his superiors "with a sort of despotic aloofness" and the young clerks would make fun of him. His work was his life, even at home he often continued copying papers from his office, and when there was nothing to copy, he made a copy just for his own pleasure. Akaky's life goes on uneventfully until the moment when he is overcome by his idée fixe of obtaining a new overcoat. A new, warm overcoat is not only a necessity in the cold of St. Petersburg, it is also a status symbol for the clerk:

> There is in Petersburg a mighty foe of all who receive a salary of about four hundred rubles. That foe is none other than our northern frost, although it is said to be very good for the health.[13]

Upon finding out that he needs a new coat, because the old one is in such a poor condition that it cannot be repaired, Akaky decides to alter his lifestyle, even going hungry to be able to afford a new coat. He is so obsessed with this new direction in his otherwise boring life that he gives the coat its own personality, anticipating that it will give his life a new meaning and great satisfaction:

> His whole existence had in a sense become fuller, as though he had married, as though some other person were present with him, as though he were no longer alone but an agreeable companion had consented to walk the path of life hand in hand with him, and that companion was none other than the new overcoat with its thick padding and its strong, durable lining.[14]

When Akaky Akakievich finally receives his new coat, it completely changes the old routine of his life. He is proud of himself, the expression of uncertainty disappears from his face, he is in a festive mood. His co-workers immediately notice the new coat and invite him to a party, the stage is set for the tragic moment—the loss of his new coat. This is a final blow to his ego, from which he is never to recover. As in Gogol's The Nose, here too the clerk starts to approach the bureaucratic authorities of St. Petersburg in a vain search for help. When they learn of his social status, he not only does not receive any help but even suffers great humiliation:

> Don't you know the way to proceed? To whom are you addressing yourself? Don't you know how things are done? You ought first to have handed in a petition to the office; it would have gone to the head clerk of the room, and to the head clerk of the section; then it would have been handed to the secretary and the secretary would have brought it to me.[15]

Akaky Akakievich is shouted at, and being always of a rather submissive, subservient nature, he has no strength left in him to deal with such a situation. The insensitive treatment by the city's bureaucratic machine has a terrible effect on him: he is petrified, he starts to tremble and almost faints. The disappointment takes a toll on his nerves, he no longer knows what is happening to him. Similarly, as the artist Chartkov in The Portrait, Akaky becomes very ill—he first catches a cold, but the high fever consumes him. He dies, andlike Piskaryov, his death goes unnoticed. Only his landlady and the doctor are aware of his illness, a messenger from the office is sent to inquire when Akaky Akakievich will be coming back to work. The clerk leaves nothing of value, and no one close to him, and at the end of this gruesome story, Gogol reminds us how insignificant his hero's life was: "Petersburg carried on without Akaky Akakievich, as though, indeed, he had never been in the city."[16]

Dostoevsky, with his first St. Petersburg novel Poor Folk, expands the idea contained in Gogol's The Overcoat. However,

Dostoevsky's story is much closer to real life in the Russian capital. It is a city of extremes, and every character in Poor Folk is either well-to-do or poor, either a victimizer or a victim. The themes are characteristic of St. Petersburg. It is a story of the desperate loneliness of a clerk named Devushkin, who lives in poverty, and of his low self-esteem which results from this. He does not consider himself to be worthy of a young village girl, a newcomer to St. Petersburg. Their only contact is through letters, which they write each other even though they are almost next-door neighbours. Devushkin's financial situation, like that of any St. Petersburg clerk, is not enviable, but while living in the cheapest lodgings, he soothes himself with the thought that he still has some money left for extra expenses:

> Think, too, of pocket money—one must have a certain amount—then some sort of boots and clothes—is there much left? My salary is all I have. I am content and don't repine. It is sufficient. It has been sufficient for several years; there are extras too.[17]

However, Devushkin is not solely concerned with himself. He watches all the time what is going on around him in the building where he lives. He informs his friend Varenka in one of his letters about his neighbour Gorshkov who is in a much worse situation than Devushkin. We do not know why poor Gorshkov has lost his job, for Devushkin only hints that his neighbour is involved in

some lawsuit, which Gorshkov wins in the end, even receiving a substantial sum of money. Gorshkov, who is already in very bad physical and mental shape, is unable to bear his short-lived happiness, and dies. The fate of an unemployed clerk in St. Petersburg is described in realistic colours by Dostoevsky who himself often suffered from lack of money:

> His name is Gorshkov—such a gray little man; he goes about in such greasy, such threadbare clothes that it is sad to see him; ever so much worse than mine. He is a pitiful, decrepit figure . . . his knees shake, his hands shake, his head shakes, from some illness I suppose, poor fellow. He is timid, afraid of everyone and sidles along edgeways; I am shy at times, but he is a great deal worse.[18]

Gorshkov's fate is perhaps the most tragic of all Dostoevsky's characters. It is not only poverty that brings Gorshkov to his knees, but the arrival of money at the end which not only fails to save him, but actually overwhelms him. It is the St. Petersburg atmosphere as a whole which kills its victim. It is the lack of respect and consideration which cause Gorshkov the greatest suffering. Poverty and its effects come again to Devushkin's attention when he walks the streets of St. Petersburg and sees a ten-year-old beggar boy—suddenly Devushkin becomes painfully aware of his own hopeless situation:

> . . . one literally annihilates oneself, makes oneself of no account, and not worth a straw. And perhaps that is why it happens that I am panic-stricken and persecuted like that poor boy who asked me for alms.[19]

It is therefore no wonder that Belinsky called Poor Folk "the first Russian social novel." As Mochulsky points out in his study of Dostoevsky, "poverty is not only described here, it is analyzed as a special spiritual state."

In one of his letters to Varenka, Devushkin describes a "terrible" incident which interrupts his monotonous existence. Like the hero of The Overcoat, Devushkin is an outsider at the office, not communicating with anyone, and just doing his work. But one day his routine is upset—he is given a document which has to be copied quickly and carefully, and, for some inexplicable reason, Devushkin leaves out a whole line. Because of this, Devushkin anticipates a catastrophe and his peculiar behaviour only provokes laughter from his co-workers:

> I must observe, that of late I have been more abashed and ill at ease than ever. Of late I have given up looking at anyone. If I hear so much as a chair creak I feel more dead than alive.[20]

The tragicomic moment arrives when Devushkin is called into the office of "His Excellency." The incident becomes even more upsetting when Devushkin loses all the dignity still left in him—a

button falls off his uniform in the office of his dreaded superior! At this moment, according to Devushkin, not only his career at the office is finished, but his whole life is over:

> I flew to catch the button—it twirled and rolled, I couldn't pick it up—in fact, I distinguished myself by my agility. Then I felt that my last faculties were deserting me, that everything, everything was lost, my whole reputation was lost, my dignity as a man was lost. . . .[21]

Devushkin experiences a brief feeling of happiness and a short-lived return of human dignity when the superior takes pity on his absent-minded clerk by giving him a hundred-rouble note, and to his greatest surprise, shakes hands with him. This leaves Devushkin in a delirious state of mind:

> I don't know what happened to me, I tried to seize his hand to kiss it, but he flushed crimson . . . he took my unworthy hand and shook it . . . as though I had been his equal. . . . I am dreadfully upset, dreadfully excited now, my heart is beating as though it would burst out of my breast, and I feel, as it were, weak all over.[22]

Here again, as in the case of Gorshkov, it is not only money which the little man of St. Petersburg needs desperately in order to improve his social standing, it is rather the attitude of his surroundings toward him which can destroy him or boost his morale. Thus in Devushkin's case, the greatest calamity is yet to come.

His grief is unshakable when he finds out that it is being arranged for his beloved Varenka to marry a rich suitor. The clerk realizes his poverty more than ever before, and is lost in loneliness and despair. The story ends on a note of sadness and resignation, there being no way out for either Devushkin or Varenka.

The gray moral and social atmosphere of St. Petersburg life dominates the novel, and human isolation can easily lead to madness. This is the fate of Golyadkin in another story by Dostoevsky—The Double. It is a story of psychopathology and of a man's place in society. Golyadkin is certainly more complex than Kovalyov in Gogol's The Nose and the narrator of the same author's Diary of a Madman. A clerk, very much like the government clerks of Gogol and Dostoevsky, a victim of society as they also are, as grotesque as any of them, he is yet very different: he is insane from the moment the reader is introduced to him. Paranoid, running from imaginary enemies, he is the first of Dostoevsky's line of self-torturing characters. Golyadkin succeeds in destroying himself from within before the surroundings are given their own part in crushing his soul.

Golyadkin is better off than Akaky Akakievich or Devushkin who live on the edge of destitution. He is not poor at all, lives in his own quarters with his own servant (rather than in a "corner" behind a partition), and has even saved some money.

Golyadkin is not just a copy clerk, but an assistant to the chief clerk of his office. He suffers not from poverty, but from fierce ambition. His efforts to climb higher on the social ladder are always futile. For example, as the story opens, he has just hired a carriage, outfitted his servant with a livery and is nervously making preparations to attend the birthday party of the daughter of his boss to which he has not even been invited. In addition to his lowly social status, Golyadkin's appearance cannot in any way help him to win the heart of a lady:

> Though the sleepy, short-sighted countenance and rather bald head reflected in the looking-glass were of such an insignificant type that at first sight they would certainly not have attracted particular attention in anyone, yet the owner of the countenance was satisfied with all that he saw in the looking-glass.[23]

Golyadkin forces his way into the house where the birthday party is taking place and causes an unpleasant scandal there. He realizes what he has done and that this is not the way to get respect from his surroundings. His mental illness reaches its highest peak when he encounters his own double in the streets of St. Petersburg. There is no happy end for Golyadkin as there was for his literary predecessor Kovalyov of The Nose. Golyadkin never recovers from his state of schizophrenia and at the end of the story he has to be taken away to a mental institution. Thus Dostoevsky successfully shows his reader how one may become ill and subsequently de-

stroyed if one is unable to resist that vice of nineteenth-century St. Petersburg: ambition to succeed at any cost. Golyadkin is only one victim from among the huge army of government clerks of his time: he is the socially oppressed individual who suffers from hallucinatory images of the external forces that threaten his existence and is not strong enough to withstand this pressure.

Mr. Prokharchin (1846) is the story of a low level government clerk of the same name who lives in St. Petersburg and suffers from destructive feelings of insecurity and guilt. This is again a story written in the tradition of Gogol, a story of isolation and fear of reality. Money plays a significant role here. Mr. Prokharchin is an elderly clerk whose life has passed uneventfully. He had either attended to his insignificant work in the office, or lain on his bare, filthy mattress behind screens "in the darkest and humblest corner" of his landlady's apartment, half-starving himself, avoiding the company of his neighbours. Gogol's influence is also evident in Dostoevsky's choice of names for the characters of this story. The Russian name Prokharchin ironically describes someone who spends a large amount of money on food. The names of Prokharchin's fellow lodgers are grotesque as well—Oplevanev, Prepolovenko, Okeanov, Sudbin, Kantarev, Zimoveikin, Remnev. Prokharchin's everyday routine suffers a drastic change when an unexpected shock—similar to that of Gogol's Akaky and his

overcoat—suddenly intrudes on his life. His landlady, in order to make more money, decides to move to a larger place, and takes on more lodgers. They are none other than the young noisy fellow-workers of Prokharchin who start to tease him and jokingly tell him that his department is to be abolished. This produces in him a state of panic which ends—typically for a St. Petersburg clerk—in madness and finally in death. Prokharchin's case, like Golyadkin's, is pathological, his suffering is totally self-imposed and he does not even make an effort to find out whether the story he is told is really true. He is secretly hoarding a large amount of money inside his mattress under the pretext of saving it for a non-existent sister-in-law. This is Dostoevsky's first attempt to portray the psychology of avarice—a motif he will later develop in such works as The Gambler, The Idiot, and, especially, in A Raw Youth. But Prokharchin needs to have money at hand, not in order to have a sense of power, but rather for an inward security from the real or imaginary threats of everyday St. Petersburg life. This explains why Prokharchin clings to his money desperately, living in constant poverty till the last day of his pitiful life.

The narration of the story ends on a grotesque tone, reminiscent of Gogol. This scandalous scene may be traced in Dostoevsky back to Devushkin's embarrassing visit to the office of his superior and Golyadkin's two unsuccessful attempts to enter the

party of his office chief's daughter. In all these cases, the effect is grotesque, theatrical, the context permits no laughter; on the contrary, the scenes evolve into pathos and sometimes tragedy. The narration of Mr. Prokharchin ultimately reaches the point of obscurity and confusion. During Prokharchin's delirium, two of his fellow lodgers are keeping a vigil. The household is asleep, when "a shout that would have roused the dead" wakes everyone, followed by "yelling, cursing and fighting." The lodgers are quarrelling, they begin to slit Prokharchin's mattress open, and are stopped as he gives a desperate shriek and rolls under the bed. They stretch him out on his greasy mattress while he goes through his last convulsions and the scene has a theatrical effect, as if the reader is watching a play on the stage:

> Meanwhile, the guttering candle lighted up a scene that would have been extremely curious to a spectator. About a dozen lodgers were grouped round the bed in the most picturesque costumes, all unbrushed, unshaven, unwashed, sleepy-looking, just as they had gone to bed.[24]

This group of people finally attacks the mattress with scissors, jostling the corpse, until it "suddenly and quite unexpectedly plunged head downward, leaving in view only two bony, thin, blue legs, which stuck upwards like two branches of a charred tree."[25] This scene gives the impression that Prokharchin is continuing to protect his treasure from beyond the grave, and two lodgers bump

their heads, in a low-comedy routine, when they crawl under the bed, thinking that the corpse may symbolically be pointing out some new treasure to them. And so ends the story of a life without purpose, the life of a St. Petersburg clerk Semyon Ivanovich Prokharchin.

The story Polzunkov (1848) is written in a first-person narrative highly coloured by the speech style and personality of the narrator. It is a penetrating analysis of an ex-clerk who lives by playing the buffoon for his fellows. Polzunkov, whose name evokes someone crawling or creeping, does not or cannot accept his degrading status, and could never emotionally come to terms with his social position. However, he is different in one sense from his predecessors Devushkin and Golyadkin. The story of Polzunkov's downfall is told so as to amuse the reader. He too has an ambition to court and eventually marry his office superior's daughter. This scheme proves to be unsuccessful, which makes him so angry that he is ready to blackmail the family and report to the authorities her father's wrongdoings at the office. In the end, he is so desperate that he accepts a bribe to be silent. Polzunkov tries to get his dignity back and returns the money, but his fight is lost, and the money and the job too. The story is raised above an average anecdote with the description of the destructive effect of Polzunkov's experience on his self-esteem,

which convinces him that he is predestined to be socially inferior for the rest of his life. In this story, Polzunkov not only humiliates himself, but also confronts his listeners with an unfavourable image of themselves. He tells them unmistakably that they all share in the world of corruption and bribery: "Even the smoke of our mother land is sweet to us. She is our Mother, gentlemen, our Mother Russia; we are her babes, and so we suck her!"[26]

An Unpleasant Predicament (1862) is a story in which Dostoevsky gives a full picture of the mentality of different levels of St. Petersburg government clerks. Here we are given the characteristics of three levels of the clerk apparatus. In typical Gogolian manner, the names of the characters, as well as the whole story, are farcical. The clerk with the highest title is named Ivan Ilich Pralinsky. He is very conscious and proud of his position, but all of a sudden has an urge to mingle with his subordinates to acquire a reputation as a humanitarian. His dream is almost realized, when he attends uninvited the wedding of a subordinate clerk with the name—Pseldonimov. As in the case of Gogol's Akaky Akakievich, Pseldonimov's original name is explained to the reader in inconclusive terms. We are told by Dostoevsky that the clerk's name must have been Pseudonimov, but when his father went into the service, they made a mistake in his papers. This

poor clerk is getting married only because he is promised a small wooden house and a sum of 400 roubles from the tyrannical father of the bride. The wedding is also attended by another clerk with the name Akim Petrovich Zubikov, who represents the middle level of the clerk hierarchy. He is described as a typical example of his sort:

> He was a man of the old school, as meek as a hen, reared from infancy to obsequious servility, and at the same time a good-natured and even honourable man. He was a Petersburg Russian; that is, his father and his father's father were born, grew up and served in Petersburg and had never once left Petersburg. That is quite a special type of Russian. They have hardly any idea of Russia, though that does not trouble them at all. Their whole interest is confined to Petersburg and chiefly the place in which they serve.[27]

Here Dostoevsky gives us a perfect definition of the phenomenon of the St. Petersburg clerk, the St. Petersburg Russian, living in the capital city, but totally removed from the rest of the country not only physically (not setting his foot beyond the suburbs of the city) but also psychologically, for St. Petersburg could never claim to be a typical Russian city, as it did not reflect the Russian mentality and way of life, and was always accused of adopting Western ideas. For Dostoevsky, who was a fervent supporter of everything Russian, this city was more of a hell than a place of progress.

Unfortunately, the highest official's surprise attendance at the wedding does not produce the anticipated results. A tragi-comic situation arises instead, when the esteemed official Pralinsky is verbally attacked by a drunken guest—a journalist. The groom is terrified and leads his superior, who is also quite under the influence of alcohol, away. This incident has a devastating effect on his ego, and for a week he does not dare to show up at the office, for fear that he has lost all the respect of his subordinates. When he finally comes back to the office, everyone pretends that nothing has happened, but Pralinsky knows deep inside that he lost this battle with his clerks as well as with himself. Even his high position in the government service does not prevent him from feeling worthless. This story shows that Dostoevsky is gradually widening the circle of his characters, no longer limiting his themes to the poorest inhabitants of St. Petersburg. The reader is able to acquaint himself with a cross-section of St. Petersburg society, of which the government clerk is an integral part.

In Dostoevsky's story The Landlady, the reader is introduced to a new St. Petersburg character—the dreamer. The dreamer here is a young scholar Ordynov who is in many ways a direct predecessor of one of Dostoevsky's greatest characters—Raskolnikov from Crime and Punishment. Ordynov is a sensitive young man who

has undergone a two-year long self-imposed seclusion. He comes back to live in St. Petersburg, but the reality of life in the city begins to weigh upon him; he is no longer the aloof flâneur, but someone without a place in the society. He also realizes for the first time how painfully lonely he really is:

> A thought suddenly occurred to him that all his life he had been solitary and no one had loved him—and, indeed, he had succeeded in loving no one either. Some of the passers-by, with whom he had chanced to enter into conversation at the beginning of his walk, had looked at him rudely and strangely. He saw that they took him for a madman or a very original, eccentric fellow, which was indeed, perfectly correct.[28]

Ordynov gets involved with two people who cannot help, pulling him even deeper into despair. The centre of the story is Ordynov's hallucinatory experience and strange love for a girl with a mysterious background. Ordynov is not strong enough to deal with this situation and finds himself again helplessly isolated. Murin, the father of the girl, is a symbol of despotism, demanding unconditional subordination. Thus the theme of "freedom" is important in this story, which is linked by the theme with the fates of Devushkin, Golyadkin and other oppressed characters in Dostoevsky's novels. However, the subject of the psychological crippling of a human being by his surroundings is explained in The Landlady in a different manner. Freedom is a luxury for the chosen few, and is certainly

not for everybody, as Murin explains to Ordynov:

> . . . a weak man cannot stand alone. Give him everything, he will come of himself and give it all back; give him half the kingdoms of the world to possess, try it and what do you think? . . . Give a weak man his freedom—he will bind it himself and give it back to you. To a foolish heart freedom is no use![29]

For Dostoevsky, The Landlady was meant as a symbolic critique of the prevailing conditions of Russian society of his time. Ordynov falls victim to Murin's mental strength and loses the fight, never to recover again. The definition of freedom clearly applies to Ordynov, who as a weak man will always stay weak.

A Faint Heart (1848) is Constance Garnett's translation of the title of Dostoevsky's story, also known in English as A Weak Heart. It is again a "Petersburg dreamer" story and the dreamer this time comes from the ranks of the army of government clerks. This poor clerk loses his mind because of a seemingly trivial matter. His name is Vasya Shumkov, he is a young man engaged to be married and completely overwhelmed by his new-found happiness. His fate is similar to that of Akaky Akakievich, Golyadkin and Prokharchin who are all obsessed with a fixed idea which at the end destroys them. As with Gorshkov in Poor Folk, Shumkov's happiness is not to be enjoyed, but is a killing force for the man who has never known it before. Thus Shumkov's happiness makes

the clerk feel guilty, and there is no way for him to shake off his low self-esteem. He seems unable to cope with the idea that he has the opportunity to live a full, happy life. His job is a simple one, consisting of copying documents (like Devushkin) and when an important deadline is to be met, Shumkov is beset by panic, fearing that this time he will not be able to finish his assignment. This fear, instead of pushing him ahead, causes a mental paralysis, and Shumkov slowly slips into madness. He is a dreamer, convinced that everyone should be able to have a happy, harmonious life, and he feels guilty at accepting even a fraction of happiness while he sees only misery around him. He is a gentle person but too weak to survive in the harried, impersonal big city atmosphere. Shumkov's friend Arkady observes Vasya, tries to help him but to no avail. In a conversation with Arkady, Vasya justifies his actions:

> I am not worthy of such happiness. I feel that, I am conscious of it. Why has it come to me?... What have I done to deserve it? Tell me. Look what lots of people, what lots of tears, what sorrow, what work-a-day life without a holiday, while I, I am loved by a girl like that, I....[30]

Arkady is alarmed by his friend's growing mental agitation and tries to explain to him that he understands and knows the cause of Vasya's suffering, realizing that being weak and a dreamer is a fatal combination:

> You are such a kind, soft-hearted fellow, but weak, unpardonably weak. . . . And you are a dreamer, and that's a bad thing, too; you may go from bad to worse, brother. . . . Because you are happy, you want everyone, absolutely everyone to become happy at once. It hurts you and troubles you to be happy alone.[31]

As Vasya's condition worsens, Arkady sees that his friend cannot be helped, his "weak heart" loses the battle, like Ordynov in The Landlady, and another St. Petersburg clerk falls victim to his milieu.

The critic Belinsky summarized in his article "Peterburg i Moskva" the message which Dostoevsky was trying to convey in his next story White Nights. Belinsky's characterization of St. Petersburg shows that the critic was aware of the city's negative influence on a certain group of its inhabitants:

> Petersburg is a touchstone of a man: whoever, living in it, has not been carried away by the whirlpool of phantom life, has managed to keep both heart and soul but not at the expense of common sense, to preserve his human dignity without falling into quixotism—to him can you boldly extend your hand as to a man.[32]

The hero-narrator of White Nights fits the above description completely. His time is spent (like Ordynov's in The Landlady) aimlessly walking the streets of St. Petersburg, not knowing a soul in the big city. He is thus totally withdrawn and leads the existence of a "dreamer." He is suddenly brought back to reality by a young

girl Nastenka, whom he chances to meet during his wanderings. At this point he desperately needs a friend and is ready to do anything for her, even to sacrifice his feelings towards her. He promises Nastenka that he will not fall in love with her because she is faithfully waiting for a young man who was already supposed to come back to St. Petersburg after a year in Moscow. The dreamer realizes that through Nastenka, he has a chance to experience at least a semblance of reality, if only for a short while. To Nastenka, for whom it is difficult to understand her new-found friend's mentality, he tries to explain his way of life:

> I tell you what, I can't help coming here tomorrow, I am a dreamer; I have so little real life that I look upon such moments as this now, as so rare, that I cannot help going over such moments again in my dreams.[33]

And he also tells Nastenka that St. Petersburg contains all kinds of lives, the city is a microcosm of every possible existence, one of which is his own life of dreams and fantasy and anything resembling reality is for him unacceptable and "vulgar":

> There are, Nastenka, though you may not know it, strange nooks in Petersburg. . . . In these corners, dear Nastenka, quite a different life is lived, quite unlike the life that is surging round us, but such as perhaps exists in some unknown realm, not among us in our serious, overserious time. Well, that life is a mixture of something purely fantastic,

> fervently ideal, with something dingily prosaic and ordinary, not to say incredibly vulgar.[34]

For the dreamer there is no way out of his situation. He passively accepts his fate and does nothing to change his life; for him, the reality is difficult to accept. In the end, even though he loves Nastenka, he does not attempt to win her; like Devushkin of Poor Folk, he writes a sad farewell note which does not contain even a hint of jealousy:

> May your sky be clear, may your sweet smile be bright and untroubled, and may you be blessed for that moment of blissful happiness which you gave to another, lonely and grateful heart![35]

Dostoevsky's three dreamer stories, The Landlady, A Faint Heart and White Nights, appeared within the span of one year, 1847-1848, and represent a marked shift in the author's writings. The dreamer is a new type of a St. Petersburg inhabitant and he is not necessarily a government clerk. The only thing he does have in common with his predecessors, is his low social status resulting from a lack of money. The creation of a dreamer in Dostoevsky's works, however, cannot be seen in narrowly biographical terms as his clerks were. It must be pointed out that at the same time (1847) that Dostoevsky's first dreamer story saw the light, a general campaign in Russian society was being launched against the dangers of mečtatel'nost' (dreaming, reverie) which

affected a great number of the Russian intelligentsia (centered mainly in St. Petersburg) at that time. Thus Dostoevsky, being also a journalist, does not view the dreamer malaise compassionately. His three dreamer stories and his feuilletons contributed in 1847 to the Petersburg News criticize the new social phenomenon, asking his readers at the end of his essay of June 15: "Is not such a life a tragedy? Is it not a sin, a horror? Is it not a caricature? And are we not all more or less dreamers?. . ."[36]

The principal character of Dostoevsky's greatest urban novel Crime and Punishment is Raskolnikov, who is a victim of his surroundings, as his literary predecessors were. He is not a government clerk, however, but a student and his desperate mind leads him into committing the act of murder. This crime stands in the centre of the novel as its title suggests. But the novel is also full of descriptions and thoughts concerning the problem of drunkenness. It is known that before Dostoevsky's novel Crime and Punishment even started to take shape, he had contemplated writing a novel entitled The Drunks. The Marmeladov family was to be the centre of the work. However, Dostoevsky was at the same time studying the theme of crime and confession, following a murder. Evidently, the second theme prevailed and the sad story of the Marmeladovs was included in the novel that became Crime and Punishment. This explains the numerous descriptions of taverns and drunken people

in the novel. Dostoevsky wanted to draw the reader's attention to this social problem and its destructive influence on the people living in the garrets of St. Petersburg. These descriptions also help the author to bring out and to emphasize the grim reality of life of a large number of Petersburgers.

Raskolnikov, not a drunk himself, but a poor student, living in a poor neighbourhood, where most people are drunks, blends easily with his environment as far as his outer appearance is concerned, but deeply resents this kind of life:

> He was so wretchedly dressed that anybody else, however used to them, might have hesitated to go out in daylight in such rags. It is true that it would have been difficult to attract attention by one's dress in this part of central St. Petersburg. In these streets and alleys near the Haymarket, with their numerous houses of ill fame and their swarming population of artisans and labourers, such queer figures sometimes appeared on the scene that even the oddest of them could hardly arouse any surprise.[37]

In one of the dirty, smelling St. Petersburg taverns Raskolnikov meets for the first time the hopeless drunk Marmeladov, who introduces himself as a Titular Councillor—the rank of a St. Petersburg government clerk. From this moment on, Raskolnikov's fate is closely tied to the whole Marmeladov family. Symbolically, Marmeladov's life and that of his wife are both ended on the streets of the Russian capital. Being drunk and consequently not paying

any attention, he is driven over by a carriage and suffers fatal injuries. His wife has tuberculosis—a wide-spread disease, caused by constant undernourishment, and ends her life on the pavement of a St. Petersburg street. Their daughter Sonya, who helps the family financially, is a streetwalker. Wherever the sensitive Raskolnikov looks, he sees only injustice. Even his own sister Dunya intends to sacrifice herself by marrying a rich man in order to be able to pay for her brother's studies. Raskolnikov becomes so desperate that he decides to kill an old pawnbroker.

However, it is not the crime itself but the suffering caused by this act which occupies the largest part of the work. The novel consists of six parts and two epilogues, of which the preparation and the actual crime occupy only the first part. The remaining five parts consist of the aftereffects of the murder on Raskolnikov; the reader is also acquainted more closely with other characters of the novel.

Killing and robbing the pawnbroker does not bring any solution to Raskolnikov's situation: after this horrible act his suffering merely begins and escalates with every moment. Raskolnikov enters a delirium-like existence, very like that of Ordynov in The Landlady. He lies in his bed not knowing what time of the day or night it is, and all the symptoms seem to point to some kind of brain fever induced by the murder he has committed. When Raskolnikov

finally gets up and walks out of his small room, his appearance shows the ordeal he is going through: "His head began to feel ever so slightly dizzy; a wild kind of energy flared up in his sunken eyes and pallid wasted face."[38] The pale colour of a face is a St. Petersburg trademark often mentioned by Dostoevsky. One can tell just by looking at someone whether he or she has lived in St. Petersburg for a long time. So, for example, both Raskolnikov and Sonya Marmeladova have very pale faces, but the elegant gentleman following Sonya on the street is evidently not from St. Petersburg. We meet Svidrigailov, one of the principal characters of the novel:

> He carried an elegant cane, with which he tapped the pavement at every step, and his gloves were newly cleaned. His broad face, with its high cheekbones, was pleasant enough, and his complexion had a fresh colour that did not belong to St. Petersburg.[39]

Svidrigailov is the true protagonist, the psychological double to Raskolnikov. Svidrigailov also has hands smeared with blood. There is an unproven rumour that he killed his wife. As the novel develops, we learn that this act weighs heavily on his conscience, and only he knows what really happened. Raskolnikov's reactions to guilt feelings are very different from Svidrigailov's. Svidrigailov has a very strong influence on Raskolnikov, who constantly seeks his protagonist, entering into heated discussions with

him. Svidrigailov does not show his inner suffering, and appears to be an untroubled cynic who considers the inhabitants of St. Petersburg to be mentally ill:

> I am sure lots of people in St. Petersburg talk to themselves as they walk about. It's a town of half-crazy people. If we had any science in this country, the doctors, lawyers, and philosophers could conduct very valuable researches in St. Petersburg, each in his own special sphere. . . . Besides, this is the administrative centre of all Russia and that character must be reflected in everything.[40]

Raskolnikov, already affected by his crime, is disturbed by Svidrigailov's words, not knowing that Svidrigailov is approaching the end. Unlike Raskolnikov, admitting to his own crime is no solution: he would not be able to endure pious suffering, and death is the only way out for him. Symbolically, he pulls the trigger of a gun early one rainy morning in an uninviting St. Petersburg suburb. To heighten the drama of the novel, Dostoevsky chooses the day of Svidrigailov's suicide for the day of Raskolnikov's confession of his crime to the authorities. This is to show to the reader that for a criminal there are only two ways out: suicide or full confession. Anything in between results in such a disturbed state of mind, that it can only lead to madness and slow self-destruction of the criminal himself as well as the people around him.

The tragic fate of Katerina Marmeladova, the mother of Sonya, is in a sense very similar to that of Vasya Shumkov in A Weak Heart. Both live by the principle (which ultimately destroys them) that everyone around them should live in peace, harmony and eternal happiness even though they themselves do not fit this ideal. Unfortunately for Katerina Marmeladova, the reality is different from her ideals, and this fact has a devastating effect on her:

> She was by nature of a humorous, cheerful, and peaceable disposition, but constant failure and unhappiness had brought her to the point of so furiously desiring and demanding that everybody should live in joy and harmony, and should not dare to live otherwise, that the slightest discord, the smallest setback, drove her at once almost to madness, and in an instant, from indulging the brightest hopes and fancies, she would fall to cursing fate, smashing and destroying anything that came to hand, and banging her head against the wall.[41]

The city plays an important role in this and every other tragedy; and in every situation in the novel, it either completely controls and overwhelms the narration, or it serves as a background when necessary. The huge, impressive panorama of St. Petersburg moves constantly as if it were on a projection screen, and the lives of the principal characters are presented as on a stage in front of the screen. The crushing impact of the bustling and grow-

ing nineteenth-century St. Petersburg is felt on every page of Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment.

The hero of a story entitled A Raw Youth comes to St. Petersburg, obsessed by the thought of becoming a very rich man in the Russian capital that was full of promise for many unknowing outsiders. However, after his arrival in the capital, his dreams fade. Yet, despite his sober attitude toward the city and its unpleasant outward appearance on a cold early morning, the place still captivates him:

> I don't know why, but I always like the early workaday morning in Petersburg in spite of its squalid air; and the self-centered people always absorbed in thought, and hurrying on their affairs, have a special attraction for me. . . .[42]

This young man, who still sees his surroundings and the life around him with naïve eyes, is slowly brought to reality by a man named Versilov, who lives with the youth's mother. Versilov's mentality is a product of a life spent in St. Petersburg. His illusions (if he ever had any) are gone; he knows that his existence is hopeless, and he takes the young man with him to a dirty tavern (such as the one where Raskolnikov met Marmeladov) to show him what the real life in the city is like: "Perhaps you don't know, I am sometimes so bored . . . so horribly bored in my soul . . . that I like coming to all sorts of stinking holes like this."[43]

As the title of Dostoevsky's novel The Insulted and Injured suggests, it is a story of poverty and human suffering, and it takes place in St. Petersburg. The story is narrated in the first person and the narrator (typically for Dostoevsky) experiences a number of coincidental, strange happenings that could take place perhaps only in the Russian capital. The narrator is a loner, living in a small, cramped room, and is considering a move into larger, less confining lodgings. On one of his numerous lonely evening walks through the city an event takes place which has a profound influence on his life (similar to Ordynov in The Landlady or the narrator of White Nights). The St. Petersburg streets are full of unexpected happenings. The reader makes the acquaintance of a St. Petersburg landmark of Dostoevsky's time—Müller's Café. Among the German well-to-do visitors, a shabby old man with a dog in a pitiful condition stands out. The old man is in the habit of coming to Müller's with his dog, sitting there for about three hours, not ordering anything, and staring at anyone (his thoughts somewhere else) who happens to be sitting across his table. One evening, unfortunately, the person opposite lost his temper, and the old man had to leave. The experience is shocking, even for his dog, which dies shortly afterwards, and the old man himself, being followed out of the café by the narrator, suffering from grief and humiliation, soon follows his dog. The narrator discovers only that the man's

name was Smith and that he lived a completely isolated life. Knowing nothing of the old man's past, he decides to move into his lodgings, as if some force within himself compels him to do so:

> Five days after Smith's death, I moved into his lodging. All that day I felt insufferably sad. . . . I had begun to regret having moved here. . . . I thought then that I should certainly ruin what health I had left in that room.[44]

Old Smith's room holds a mysterious power over the narrator, who senses that something unpleasant is going to happen to him. And like Ordynov and Raskolnikov, he starts to have nightmares, seeing the dead man in the corner of the room or sitting in the café. Finally, he is brought out of his delirious condition by old Smith's granddaughter, who used to come to visit the old man secretly, against the wishes of her mother. This story is unique in the sense that the narrator is an observer of other peoples' lives, and we are not acquainted with the narrator himself and his own tragedy. There is only a glimpse of some unfortunate love affair in his past, but his actions and feelings are influenced by external events. At first, when he gets deeply involved in the past of old Smith, his daughter and granddaughter, he becomes part of the whole picture and suffers accordingly. Towards the end of the story he succeeds in taking a strong grasp on his own actions and aspirations and subsequently develops a more optimistic outlook on life. Symboli-

cally, the narrator's situation changes for the better as a hot, unpleasant St. Petersburg day is refreshed by a long-awaited rainstorm:

> It was the beginning of June. The day was hot and stifling; it was impossible to remain in town, where all was dust, plaster, scaffolding, burning pavements, and tainted atmosphere. . . . But now—oh joy!—there was the rumble of thunder in the distance . . . and then the whole sky seemed to open and torrents of water streamed upon the town. When, half an hour later, the sun came out again I opened my garret window and greedily drew the fresh air into my exhausted lungs.[45]

Both Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg novels, Crime and Punishment and The Insulted and Injured, contain a rare glimpse of optimism, a hope that there is a better life ahead even for someone like Raskolnikov who has murder on his conscience, and for the narrator of The Insulted and Injured, who, unlike Ordynov of The Landlady, does not find himself resigned to continue a hopeless existence in the Russian capital.

Notes from Underground (1864), another story from Dostoevsky's post-exile period, has at first glance all the characteristics of the author's first St. Petersburg dreamer and clerk novels of the 1840s. However, the narrator of this story is a man of the 1860s, who still suffers under the very same conditions as his predecessors did, but who also realizes that something can be done

to ameliorate these conditions prevailing in the city. The hero of the novel is typically a Dostoevskian St. Petersburg dreamer and a government clerk, physically and mentally isolated from the reality of every-day life. His dreams bring him into an ever-deepening solitude, and he discovers that this solitude may be at the same time an unavoidable way of life. His rank is identical to his literary predecessor Kovalyov in Gogol's The Nose—a collegiate assessor. He is in government service to make his living, and after a distant relative leaves him six thousand roubles in his will, he retires from the service and continues to live in the same room in St. Petersburg. The clerk accepts his fate passively, without trying to change his way of life, but it seems that the surroundings are:

> I swear gentlemen, that to be too conscious is an illness—a real thorough-going illness. For man's every-day needs, it would have been quite enough to have the ordinary human consciousness, that is, half or a quarter of the amount which falls to the lot of a cultivated man of our unhappy nineteenth century, especially one who has the fatal ill-luck to inhabit Petersburg, the most theoretical and intentional town on the whole terrestrial globe.[46]

The hero of the story gradually adopts a certain fatalistic attitude toward his surroundings and himself and remains in St. Petersburg despite the city's destructive influence on him: "I am

not going away from Petersburg. . . . Why, it is absolutely no matter whether I am going away or not going away."[47] The clerk can clearly see what is happening to him, but gets so accustomed to his way of life that he even starts to enjoy it. This novel is a purely social work, like Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg novels of the forties. It is a story of a pathological state of mind, a mind that enjoys suffering and no longer knows (or perhaps never knew) the real pleasures of a human existence:

> I got to the point of feeling a sort of secret abnormal, despicable enjoyment in returning home to my corner on some disgusting Petersburg night, acutely conscious that that day I had committed a loathsome action again, that what was done could never be undone, and secretly, inwardly gnawing, gnawing at myself for it, tearing and consuming myself till at last the bitterness turned into a sort of shameful accursed sweetness, and at last—into positive real enjoyment.[48]

The novel is divided into two parts. The first part serves as an introduction to the hero of the story, the second part contains a number of incidents that have happened to the hero and have had a profound effect on his life. He is forty years old as he tells us the sad story of his life, and he looks back at his younger years, concluding that he has not changed for the worse or better in all these years:

> At that time I was only twenty-four. My life was even then gloomy, ill-regulated, and as solitary as that of a savage. I made friends with no one and positively avoided talking, and buried myself more and more in my hole.[49]

In a desperate attempt to be noticed by someone, the narrator tries to provoke an officer into a duel, but the officer just looks at him and ignores him completely. This incident gives a terrible blow to the already bruised ego of the narrator. In order to be noticed by the officer, he knows that he has to change his appearance for the better and thereby gain the respect even of the passers-by on Nevsky Boulevard. His shabby appearance made his low social status too obvious, and during his strolls along the Nevsky he was always forced to move aside to make way for generals, officers of the Guards and the Hussars. He becomes obsessed with the idea that his appearance will change his life dramatically and has to suffer privations like his predecessor in a very similar situation—Akaky Akakievich in Gogol's The Overcoat:

> I asked for some of my salary in advance, and bought at Tchurkin's a pair of black gloves and a decent hat. Black gloves seemed to me both more dignified and bon ton than the lemon-coloured ones which I had contemplated at first. I had got ready long beforehand a good shirt, with white bone studs; my overcoat was the only thing that held me back.[50]

A new overcoat is a big investment and the only way to spruce up an old one is to add to it a new beaver collar. There is, however,

no money left from the advance the clerk received to buy the gloves and shirt, and he knows that he would have to ask for a loan to buy the necessary beaver collar. This idea torments him and the first signs of a mental illness start to show:

> I was horribly worried. To borrow from Anton Antonich seemed to me monstrous and shameful. I did not sleep for two or three nights. Indeed, I did not sleep well at that time, I was in a fever; I had a vague sinking at my heart or else a sudden throbbing, throbbing, throbbing![51]

Since the narrator cannot handle reality, he enters a world of dreams, which become a way of life, a means to endure the grim reality. He is able to remove himself totally from his surroundings for a period of three months: "I could never stand more than three months of dreaming at a time without feeling an irresistible desire to plunge into society."[52] However, his "plunge into society" is never successful, and the dreams come to play a major role in his life. During one of his "sober" moments, he ventures into the streets of St. Petersburg and meets a prostitute named Liza. Their conversation is quite strange, beginning with a story about a coffin found in a basement in the Haymarket. The clerk, who needs a friend at that moment, sympathetically listens to the story of Liza's life, but later insults her with harsh words, criticizing her existence, telling her that she will end up in a garret, old, sick and lonely. Always living alone, he does not know how

to handle people, and Liza cannot endure this strange man, and runs away from him. He is Dostoevsky's underground man. In the Russian language, the word underground is podpol'e, which suggests the space under the floorboards of a house, a sense the narrator plays upon when he compares himself to a mouse, thus losing any self-respect he may have had as a human being:

> There in its nasty, stinking, underground home our insulted, crushed and ridiculed mouse promptly becomes absorbed in cold, malignant and, above all, everlasting spite. For forty years together it will remember its injury down to the smallest, most ignominious details, and every time will add, of itself, details still more ignominious, spitefully teasing and tormenting itself with its own imagination.[53]

Human physical and psychological suffering is carried to an extreme by Dostoevsky in Notes from Underground, where St. Petersburg, "the most abstract and intentional city in the whole world" has so reduced the dignity of the narrator that he becomes a mouse in a hole. However, he is still capable of criticizing his fellow-Petersburgers of similar fate, telling them that he at least tried to speak out and not completely succumb to a daydreamer's existence:

> . . . I have only in my life carried to an extreme what you have not dared to carry half-way, and what's more, you have taken your cowardice for good sense, and have found comfort in deceiving yourselves.[54]

The three principal characters of Bely's novel Petersburg, Apollon Apollonovich, his son Nikolai Apollonovich and the revolutionary Dudkin, embody all the trends of the generation which, in the early part of this century, sensed the fate awaiting the Russian capital. In the tradition of Gogol and Dostoevsky, Bely wrote about the heroes who are direct descendants of the clerks and intellectuals of nineteenth-century St. Petersburg. Bely, even more than his literary predecessors, stressed the importance of physical environment as a means of suggesting the mental process of a character. Thus each sector of St. Petersburg is represented by one principal character. Apollon Apollonovich embodies all that is ordered, pompous and impersonal and therefore he represents the centre of the city. His son Nikolai starts in the centre and as his opinions and convictions change, he gradually gravitates toward the working class suburbs where the third character Dudkin lives.

However, the most thorough involvement of a character with his environment is seen in the case of Apollon Apollonovich. He holds the position of Senator in the government service, a position significantly better than that of his predecessors described in the novels of Gogol and Dostoevsky, but his physical appearance is as unimpressive as the other St. Petersburg clerks':

> My senator had just turned sixty-eight.
> And his pallid face recalled a grey paper-
> weight (in a moment of triumph), and

> papier-mâché (in an hour of leisure). The stony senatorial eyes, surrounded by blackish green hollows, looked more blue and more immense in moments of fatigue.
>
> On our part let us add: Apollon Apollonovich was not in the least agitated when he contemplated his ears, green all over and enlarged to immense size, against the bloody background of a Russia in flames.[55]

The Senator has a wife, who runs away with a younger man. It has already been noted by literary critics[56] that Bely used in his novel the motifs from Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. Senator Ableukhov is described as having large ears—like Karenin, he is an established man in the society and consequently supports the preservation of the social order, his wife goes off with a younger, attractive man, and her given name and patronymic are identical to Karenina's —Anna Petrovna. Bely does not explain his reason for choosing this literary parallel, but he probably used this idea as history repeating itself in the same setting but at a different time, and he used it in a parody-like manner.

The "stony eyes" are repeatedly cited as the Senator's distinguishing features. Throughout the entire novel, there is a tendency to oppose the drab colours of the stony city to the red of the revolution. Thus the grey-green ears of the Senator, who embodies the city, are set against the background of the red flames of the revolution. The tones of grey and black predominate in the

depiction of Apollon Apollonovich. The colour of his face is often compared to a grey paperweight sitting on his study desk. This comparison not only suggests the total colourlessness of the Senator's character, but it also points to his function as a bureaucrat. Apollon Apollonovich is the representative and in description the embodiment of pre-Revolutionary official St. Petersburg. Ultimately, as his retirement nears, his efforts are limited merely to a futile exercise in paper work. He sees everything around him with his brain rather than his "stony eyes"—which are the reflection of the granite official buildings of the city centre. A daily passage along the main artery of the Russian capital, Nevsky Avenue, gives him a sense of contentment and security. The order of the Nevsky appeals to a man whose main task is to oppose disorder and who completely ignores the world outside the imperial centre of the city. For him and the crowds on the Nevsky, as for Gogol's heroes, the Boulevard is "everything." As disorder and upheaval threatens this orderly life, the Senator withdraws completely from the social scene, to live in isolation. Russia, outside the centre of its capital, is alien territory for Apollon Apollonovich: "Beyond Petersburg, there is nothing."[57] He travels through rural Russia by train to Japan, never once leaving the train, thus avoiding contact with the dreaded unknown. Similarly, he travels the streets of St. Petersburg in the confines of a carriage which separates him

from the masses and gives him the recognition of an important government official. Even at his job, he prefers not to have direct contact with his co-workers, and communicates with them by telephone or telegraph. When confronted in person, he finds it difficult to express his ideas effectively to others. The same problem occurs when he attempts to discuss any important topic with his son; as a result of this, the tension between them heightens considerably. Apollon Apollonovich is a symbol of the old order, an old government bureaucrat afraid of any change which might affect in any way the order he is used to. Consequently he assumes that the other side of St. Petersburg, the working class Vasilevsky Island, is frightened as well:

> From far, far away, as though farther off than they should have been, the islands sank and cowered; it seemed that the waters would sink and that at that instant the depths, the greenish murk would surge over them. . . . Vasilevsky Island looked back at him in fright.[58]

The Vasilevsky Island represents a chaos threatening his life and the beloved geometric forms of the city centre. It is also hinted that the Senator's Asiatic Kirghiz origins are the cause of some "Asiatic illness" from which he seems to suffer. Although he never discovers the nature of his "illness," he is very sensitive to the indications of imminent change in the capital. The Revolution reaches the centre of St. Petersburg: at first, unrest is felt in

the factories located on the outskirts of the city, and then, as he always predicted, it gradually reaches the centre of the city. The city's inhabitants are no longer individual beings, but a fast-moving mass—a "human myriapod." This "myriapod" is not always composed of the same bodies, but changes with the social upheavals of revolution-stricken St. Petersburg:

> The agitation that ringed Petersburg then began penetrating even to the very centers of Petersburg. It first seized the Islands, then crossed the Liteiny and Nikolaevsky Bridges. On Nevsky Prospect circulated a human myriapod. However, the composition of the myriapod kept changing; and an observer could now note the appearance of a shaggy black fur hat from the fields of blood-stained Manchuria. There was a sharp drop in the percentage of passing top hats.[59]

When Apollon Apollonovich retires from his official position, his attitude towards the city changes. He is no longer fascinated by the visual order around him. At the same time his wife comes back to him after her escapade with a young Spaniard. In the Senator's life a human relationship, which was completely lacking before, is re-established, and the city no longer provides him with the refuge that it once used to. At the same time there occurs a change in his attitude toward his own appearance and official position, which were once the main focus of his life. The façade of an important position no longer appeals to him. And since Apollon

Apollonovich embodies his city, the city's decline is closely associated with his own fate:

> Apollon Apollonovich did not like the perspectives of the Neva. The clouds scudded by in greenish swarms, and condensed into smoke that clung to the seashore. There the Neva depths beat steel-like against the granite. A spire fled into the greenish fog. Apollon Apollonovich started looking around uneasily. Here it was—walls, the domestic hearth. His career had come to an end.[60]

Of the three major characters of Bely's Petersburg, Apollon Apollonovich is the least closely identified with the particular ideological concerns of the Russian Symbolists. His total commitment to rational thought makes him a representative of Russia's past and therefore his character is closely interwoven with the qualities of the fading Russian capital itself. The Senator thus becomes a personified expression of his city. As an urban dweller, he is as confused and isolated as Gogol's and Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg characters, and at the end of his life he is a non-person in the huge bureaucratic apparatus of the Russian capital.

Nikolai Apollonovich, the Senator's son, suffers from the duality of personality so typical of Dostoevsky's urban characters. As their problems arose from the destructive atmosphere of St. Petersburg, so Nikolai's dilemma is caused by the pre-Revolutionary chaos of the Russian capital which translates into a chaos in his

own brain. Nikolai constantly moves between the centre and the poor suburbs of the city, and his personality becomes affected by the conflict of traditions which find their physical expression in various parts of the city. He is torn between the rigid, rationalistic tradition represented by his father and the chaotic unknown of the coming Revolution. Throughout the novel, Nikolai appears to be quite indecisive, and it is apparent that he is not certain which direction he should take. He abandons his previous orderly life as a brilliant student and becomes a political activist, involved in intrigues which threaten to destroy the establishment. He accepts an assignment to kill his own father and at the same time to destroy the house of his childhood which he gradually comes to hate. Nikolai also suffers from memories of a disastrous romance with an older, married woman, and this heightens his mental turmoil. And just like Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, Nikolai stops in the middle of a St. Petersburg bridge remembering that he had once contemplated a suicide to solve his troubled love affair by jumping into the water:

> And against this glooming background of hanging soot tailing above the damp stones of the embankment railing, eyes staring into the turbid germ-infested waters of the Neva, there stood in sharp outline, the silhouette of Nikolai Apollonovich. . . . Describing a funereal arc in the sky, a dark ribbon, a ribbon of soot, rose from the chimneys; and it tailed off onto the waters.[61]

The house of Nikolai's childhood, which he now hates so much, is an opulent structure on the Gagarin Embankment. It is constantly haunted by the shadow of a woman named Liza. This appears to be a reference to the heroine of Tchaikovsky's opera The Queen of Spades (1890), which was based on Pushkin's novel (1834) of the same title. The opera ends more tragically than Pushkin's story—in despair, Liza runs to the Palace Embankment and throws herself into the Neva. Hermann, after losing everything on his third and final card, kills himself. These surroundings which Nikolai Apollonovich sees on a foggy, damp night, reflect his own state of mind:

> No one, nothing. Only the Canal streaming its waters. Was that shadow of a woman darting onto the little bridge to throw itself off? Was it Liza? No, just the shadow of a woman of Petersburg. And having traversed the Canal, it was still running away from the yellow house on the Gagarin Embankment, beneath which it stood every evening and looked long at the window. . . . Beyond the Neva rose an immense mass—the outlines of islands and houses. And it cast its amber eyes into the fog, and it seemed to be weeping.[62]

Nikolai tries to regain his mental stability by contemplating the physical world around him, but, as close inspection of the urban façade makes the world seem even more empty, revolutionary madness ultimately overwhelms Nikolai's character. At a masquer-

ade ball he symbolically appears in the costume of a Red Domino. The contrasting colours are red and green, red is the "color of the chaos destroying Russia," according to his father, who observes his son with fear. Green is the colour of his father's "immense" ears and of the Neva waters infested with germs, suggesting decay and corruption. The two colours also symbolize the unpredictable behaviour of the deranged Nikolai. Nikolai obeys the orders of the revolutionary forces and plants a bomb in his father's study; he is still confused about the purpose of this act, yet he does not oppose it. This indecision places Nikolai between his father and the ardent revolutionary Dudkin.

The Sixth Chapter of Bely's Petersburg deals in detail with the life of the revolutionary Alexander Ivanovich Dudkin. Pushkin's Eugene of The Bronze Horseman is the literary prototype of Bely's Dudkin and he is on numerous occasions throughout the novel referred to as Eugene. Dudkin is indeed a modern day Eugene, finding himself in the same surroundings as his literary predecessor. However, Dudkin's way of life, the inner turmoil which leads him to commit a murder, his life in a small unpleasant room remind us strongly of another literary predecessor—Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov. Dudkin, like Raskolnikov suffers from a self-induced mental torture mainly caused by his isolation, which results in a negative feeling for the official centre of the city:

> Alexander Ivanovich translated that nightmare into the language of his feelings. The staircase, the wretched little room, and the garret were the body. The frenzied inhabitant of the spaces, whom they were attacking, who was fleeing from them, was the self-knowing 'I' which was lugging the organs that had fallen away.[63]

Dudkin suffers from an acute claustrophobia, which gradually destroys his mind. His imagination runs wild:

> Lippanchenko [the double agent whom Dudkin will go to kill after the visit of the Horseman] would fly to pieces under the blows. The garret [where Dudkin lives] would crash down. Petersburg would collapse in ruins. The caryatid would collapse too. And the bare head of Ableukhov would crack in two.[64]

Dudkin's nightmare is reminiscent of Chartkov's in Gogol's The Portrait. The fantastic and the real are too closely interwoven to enable the heroes ever to find out whether their experiences are real or not. Dudkin is also followed by a shadow called Shishnarfne who is nothing but a creation of his internal chaos. Dudkin's creation is an Oriental from the historical city of Shemakha in Azerbaidzhan and carries on conversations with Dudkin on trivial matters like the climate. However, the other person pursuing Dudkin is real; his name is Lippanchenko and his Mongol features and colour confirm that he comes from the East and seems to be associated with the revolutionary movement. When Dudkin finds out that Lippanchenko is in fact a member of the establishment like

Apollon Apollonovich, his rage turns from the Senator to Lippanchenko, and he succeeds in killing him. Like Raskolnikov, who commits his crime with an axe, Dudkin plunges a pair of scissors into the body of his victim. The murder scene is bloody, and Dudkin is found standing over the victim with an outstretched arm and a clenched fist—the symbolic pose of the Bronze Horseman:

> There was a pool of blood; there was a corpse; and a small figure, with a laughing white face. It had a small mustache, with bristling ends. How strange: the man had mounted the dead body. In his hand he was clutching a pair of scissors. He had extended an arm, and over his face—over his nose, over his lips—crawled the blot of a cockroach.[65]

The three major characters in Bely's Petersburg, Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov, his son Nikolai, and Dudkin, represent the three main attitudes toward the Russian capital not only in Bely's time but as far back as the Classicism of the eighteenth century. Of the three, Dudkin is the most profoundly associated with the fiction of the nineteenth century, with his predecessors described by Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoevsky. However, Dudkin's perception of the capital and its founder is in a way different than that of his predecessors. He is treated by Bely more with compassion than with irony. Dudkin does not oppose the Horseman, but seems to be willing to accept his authority.[66] But Dudkin loses his mind and commits a senseless murder. His imitation of the Bronze

Horseman's pose shows that in the end it was the founder and his city that claimed Dudkin as their victim, as they did with most of his predecessors described by Gogol and Dostoevsky.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]Blanche Housman Gelfant, The American City Novel (University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), pp. 21-22.

[2]The Collected Tales and Plays of Nikolai Gogol, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Leonard J. Kent (New York, 1969), pp. 427-428.

[3]Ibid., p. 441.

[4]Ibid., p. 451

[5]Ibid., p. 458.

[6]Ibid., p. 472.

[7]Ibid., p. 478.

[8]Ibid., p. 482.

[9]Ibid., p. 488.

[10]Ibid., p. 542.

[11]Ibid., p. 543.

[12]Ibid., p. 563.

[13]Ibid., pp. 567-568.

[14]Ibid., pp. 574-575.

[15]Ibid., p. 585.

[16]Ibid., p. 587.

[17]The Gambler and Other Stories by Fyodor Dostoevsky, translated by Constance Garnett (London, 1923), p. 135.

[18]Ibid., pp. 143-144.

[19]Ibid., p. 221.

[20]Ibid., p. 225.

[21]Ibid., p. 226.

[22]Ibid., p. 227.

[23]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, translated by Constance Garnett (New York, 1958), p. 477.

[24]Ibid., p. 34.

[25]Ibid., p. 35.

[26]Ibid., p. 152.

[27]Ibid., p. 433.

[28]Ibid., p. 63.

[29]Ibid., p. 137.

[30]Ibid., p. 180.

[31]Ibid., pp. 199-200.

[32]V. G. Belinsky, "Peterburg i Moskva," Sobranie sočinenij v trex tomax, Vol. II (Moscow, 1948), pp. 787-788, passage translated by Donald Fanger.

[33]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, p. 310.

[34]Ibid., p. 315.

[35]Ibid., p. 356.

[36]Dostoevsky's Occasional Writings, selected, translated, introduced by David Magarshack (London, 1963), p. 37.

[37]F. Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, translated by Jessie Coulson; edited by George Gibian (New York, 1975), pp. 2-3.

[38]Ibid., p. 132.

[39]Ibid., p. 206.

[40]Ibid., p. 394.

[41]Ibid., p. 320.

[42]The Novels of F. Dostoevsky, Vol. VII, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1917), p. 131.

[43]Ibid., p. 268.

[44]F. Dostoevsky, The Insulted and Injured, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1920), p. 48.

[45]Ibid., p. 321.

[46]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, p. 132.

[47]Ibid., p. 131.

[48]Ibid., p. 133.

[49]Ibid., p. 157.

[50]Ibid., p. 165.

[51]Ibid., p. 166.

[52]Ibid., p. 169.

[53]Ibid., p. 135.

[54]Ibid., pp. 221-222.

[55]A. Bely, Petersburg, translated, annotated, and introduced by A. Maguire and J.E. Malmstad (Bloomington, 1978), p. 5.

[56]R. I. Ivanov-Razumnik, Veršiny (Munich, 1972), p. 74.

[57]Bely, Petersburg, p. 12.

[58]Ibid., p. 9.

[59]Ibid., p. 52.

[60]Ibid., p. 247.

[61]Ibid., p. 29.

[62]Ibid., p. 34.

[63]Ibid., p. 212.

[64]Ibid., p. 213.

[65]Ibid., p. 264.

[66]Pierre Hart, "Andrej Belyj's 'Petersburg' and the Myth of the City" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969), p. 156.

CHAPTER IV

RECURRENT THEMES IN THE URBAN NOVELS

Six themes are common to the three Russian novelists, each of whom represents a different literary trend. These major recurrent themes or symbols act as a uniting force in the descriptions of St. Petersburg by Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely. The Symbolist Bely, whose Petersburg is the culmination of the St. Petersburg heritage in Russian literature, as well as a sort of tribute to Gogol and Dostoevsky, expressed it concisely: ". . . to emphasize an idea through an image is to transform the image into a symbol."[1] The correlation between image and idea is a difficult one, which can be understood and developed by an observer of the city and its life who is able to extract certain images from the general physical picture and turn them into subjective notions or ideas. This process was successfully accomplished not only by Bely, who defined it in theory as well as using it in practice in his urban novel, but also by his predecessors Gogol and Dostoevsky. The six main themes which serve as a trademark to their novels are: climate, water element, time of day, small rooms, dark stairs and the statue of the Bronze Horseman.

Climate

The preoccupation with the St. Petersburg climate results from the city's construction in the most inhospitable environment imaginable. At the time of the Russian capital's foundation, its creator Peter the Great was not concerned about the climate, being interested only in the strategic position of his western outpost in the middle of marshes. Thus the bad climate became an inevitable fact in the lives of St. Petersburg's growing number of inhabitants.

In a literary work, the climate becomes a symbol. It sets the mood of the description and it also influences the mood of a character, while playing a part in the architectonics of a novel as in the case of Poor Folk and White Nights by Dostoevsky. And the climate becomes a killer in Gogol's The Overcoat. Gogol, who, knowing that the weather in St. Petersburg was not conducive to artistic creation, wrote most of his important works in warm Italy, speaks of the terrible fate of the St. Petersburg artist Piskaryov in Nevsky Prospekt: "A strange phenomenon, is it not? A Petersburg artist. An artist in the land of snows. An artist in the land of the Finns where everything is wet, pale, gray, foggy."[2] And from his own personal experience Gogol states that the St. Petersburg artists "are often endowed with real talent, and if only they were breathing the fresh air of Italy, they would no doubt develop

as freely, broadly and brilliantly as a plant at last brought from indoors into the open air. . . ."[3]

The unattractive appearance of the hero of Gogol's The Overcoat, Akaky Akakievich, is attributed to the climate in the Russian capital: ". . . and the sort of complexion which is usually described as hemorrhoidal . . . nothing can be done about that it is the Petersburg climate."[4] Akaky's idée fixe is to obtain a new overcoat, which is not only the status symbol of a well-to-do government clerk but also a necessity during the icy cold St. Petersburg winters. The climate becomes a real enemy to anyone who cannot afford a warm coat:

> There is in Petersburg a mighty foe of all who receive a salary of about four hundred roubles. That foe is none other than our northern frost, although it is said to be very good for the health . . . precisely at the hour when the streets are filled with clerks going to their departments, the frost begins indiscriminately giving such sharp and stinging nips at all their noses that the poor fellows don't know what to do with them.[5]

After poor Akaky Akakievich suffers the biggest tragedy of his life—the loss of his newly acquired overcoat, and is treated without respect by the authorities when he reports his loss, his mental torture is heightened by a physical blow caused by a snowstorm into which he runs and which literally takes his life:

> He went out into the snowstorm that was whistling through the streets, with his

> mouth open, and as he went he stumbled off the pavement; the wind, as its way is in Petersburg, blew upon him from all points of the compass and from every side street. In an instant it had blown a quinsy into his throat, and when he got home he was not able to utter a word; he went to bed with a swollen face and throat. That's how violent the effects of an appropriate reprimand can be![6]

The changes of climate are important in the structure of Dostoevsky's Poor Folk. In Devushkin's letters to Varenka, the references to weather give the reader an indication of the writer's inner feelings at the moment the letter was written. The climate in Poor Folk gives the letter an emotional colouring without going into long, detailed descriptions. Devushkin is full of high hopes caused by spring—"I was so delighted with the spring, like a fool, that I went out in a thin greatcoat"[7] (April 8th). In his letter of April 12th, Devushkin tells Varenka that the St. Petersburg spring is not that beautiful after all: "Ah! these Petersburg springs, these winds and rain mixed with snow—they'll be the death of me, Varenka!"[8] The summer is rainy and muddy—"There was such a rain, such a sleet falling this morning!..."[9] (August 5th). And then, during a typical rainy, foggy St. Petersburg autumn, the weather changes temporarily for the better as a result of Devushkin's fortunate visit to his superior at the office: "And the weather is so wonderful today, Varenka, so fine"[10] (September 11th). However, on the

same day, the tragic break between Devushkin and Varenka occurs and the day consequently ends in autumn rain.

Golyadkin of The Double goes through the horrifying experience of meeting his own double in the streets of St. Petersburg. He suffers from an acute case of schizophrenia, and the morning to which he wakes up is not going to ameliorate his mental condition:

> At last the damp autumn day, muggy and dirty, peeped into the room through the dingy window pane with such a hostile, sour grimace that Mr. Golyadkin could not possibly doubt that he was not in the land of Nod, but in the city of Petersburg. . . .[11]

In the pivotal fifth chapter of the story, Golyadkin is fleeing from a scandal he has caused at the birthday party of his chief's daughter, and, like Akaky Akakievich, he rushes out into a stormy night, "beside himself," to meet his double just as midnight is striking from all the clock towers in St. Petersburg. The scene could not have been set at a worse time in the Russian capital than on a windy November night, which is not only depressing for the St. Petersburg inhabitants, but is also the time when all kinds of diseases take over in the city:

> It was an awful November night—wet, foggy, rainy, snowy, teeming with colds in the head, fevers, swollen faces, quinsies, inflammations of all kinds and descriptions—teeming, in fact, with

> all the gifts of a Petersburg November. The wind howled in the deserted streets, lifting up the black water of the canal above the rings on the bank, and irritably brushing against the lean lamp-posts which chimed in with its howling in a thin, shrill creak, keeping up the endless squeaky, jangling concert with which every inhabitant of Petersburg is so familiar.[12]

Toward the finale of the story, when Golyadkin feels that he is approaching the end of his suffering, the weather seems to change accordingly:

> It seemed as though the weather meant to change for the better. The snow, which had till then been coming down in regular clouds, began growing less and less and at last almost ceased. The sky became visible and here and there tiny stars sparkled in it.[13]

The hero of White Nights imagines himself to be in warm, fragrant Italy when he finds himself in the middle of meadows behind the city gates. It seems that these surroundings cause an instant, though only a temporary, change in his outlook on life.

> Instantly I felt light-hearted, and I passed the barrier and walked between cultivated fields and meadows, unconscious of fatigue, and feeling only all over as though a burden were falling off my soul. . . . It was as though I had suddenly found myself in Italy—so strong was the effect of nature upon a half-sick townsman like me, almost stifling between city walls.[14]

The story, as the title suggests, takes place during the white nights, a natural phenomenon which prevents people from sleeping.

One of those thus affected is the narrator-dreamer of the novel whose happiness lasts for only a few of those magic white nights. He meets a girl but knows that his happiness is short-lived. On the third night he does not meet Nastenka as he did on the two previous nights. The weather influences the dreamer's mood, and even gives him an inkling of sad news to come. He knows that he will lose the girl:

> Today was a gloomy, rainy day without a glimmer of sunlight, like the old age before me. . . . Today we shall not meet. Yesterday, when we said good-bye, the clouds began gathering over the sky and a mist rose. I said that tomorrow it would be a bad day.[15]

He indeed loses Nastenka, and when he wakes up the next day, the weather outside is appropriately tuned to his feeling of despair:

> It was a wet day. The rain was falling and beating disconsolately upon my window pane; it was dark in the room and grey outside. My head ached and I was giddy; fever was stealing over my limbs.[16]

Dostoevsky's fast-paced major novel Crime and Punishment is full of suspense and action spread over two weeks: the important Part I covers only three of the hottest July days in St. Petersburg. Dostoevsky not only strove for geographic accuracy, but he described the weather as it really was. Newspapers of that time confirm that it was particularly hot in St. Petersburg in July of 1865, the stench in the streets in the poorer parts of the city un-

bearable. The hero of the novel, Raskolnikov, lives in one such part of St. Petersburg, near the Haymarket Square:

> The heat in the streets was stifling. The stuffiness, the jostling crowds, the bricks and mortar, scaffolding and dust everywhere, and that peculiar summer stench so familiar to everyone who cannot get away from St. Petersburg into the country, all combined to aggravate the disturbance of the young man's nerves. The intolerable reek from the public houses, so numerous in that part of the city, and the sight of the drunken men encountered at every turn, even though this was not a holiday, completed the mournfully repellent picture.[17]

As Raskolnikov leaves the oppressive city atmosphere for a brief moment for the green suburbs of St. Petersburg, he seems to find himself in a different world. Although he only crosses a bridge leading to the Islands, the hot July day is more bearable (even enjoyable) in the suburbs than in the core of the city. His interest shifts from his unpleasant surroundings of the Haymarket to the flowers growing in the outskirts of St. Petersburg:

> At first the greenery and freshness pleased his tired eyes, accustomed to the dust and lime of the town, and its tall buildings crowding oppressively together. Here there was no stuffiness, no evil smells, no public houses. . . . He took a particular interest in the flowers and looked at them longest of all.[18]

This may be just a brief moment of happiness experienced in the midst of summer greenery. However, Raskolnikov's mental state

deteriorates as the moment of his horrible act approaches, and his unusual attitude toward the ever unpleasant surroundings and atmosphere shows the change which he goes through:

> It was about eight o'clock and the sun was going down. The heat was still as oppressive as before, but he greedily breathed the dusty, foul-smelling, contaminated air of the town. His head began to feel ever so slightly dizzy; a wild kind of energy flared up in his sunken eyes and pallid wasted face.[19]

Raskolnikov's approach to the city is no longer rational, but becomes somehow masochistic, for he is convinced that the best time in St. Petersburg is the wet, foggy autumn when the faces of the city's inhabitants take on an unhealthy colour:

> I like to hear singing to a barrel-organ on a cold, dark, damp autumn evening—it must be damp—when the faces of all the passers-by look greenish and sickly, or, even better, when wet snow is falling, straight down, without any wind, you know, and the gas-lamps shine through it. . . .[20]

Raskolnikov himself and Sonya Marmeladova have pale faces, the trademark of St. Petersburg inhabitants. But Svidrigailov who comes to the city from the countryside is easily recognizable in the streets of the city as a visitor: "His broad face, with its high cheekbones, was pleasant enough, and his complexion had a fresh colour that did not belong to St. Petersburg."[21] Svidrigailov becomes an observer of life in St. Petersburg and during one of

his conversations with Raskolnikov makes an exclamatory statement about the major destructive force—the climate: "There are few places which exercise such strange, harsh, and sombre influences on the human spirit as St. Petersburg. What can be accomplished by climate alone!"[22]

The opening lines of Dostoevsky's The Idiot describe Prince Myshkin's arrival in St. Petersburg on a damp, foggy November morning. The unwelcoming weather and the faces of passers-by blending with the grayness of the fog symbolize the unhealthy atmosphere in the Russian capital which also claims Prince Myshkin as its victim at the end of the novel:

> The morning was so damp and misty that it was impossible to distinguish anything more than a few yards away from carriage windows. . . . All of them seemed weary, and most of them had sleepy eyes and a shivering expression, while their complexions generally appeared to have taken on the colour of the fog outside.[23]

The beginning of June is as unpleasant for the narrator of The Insulted and Injured, as Raskolnikov's walks on the hot July pavements of St. Petersburg in Crime and Punishment. The description of the June weather is used in the introduction to the Epilogue of the novel. The story has a happy end, and the spring rainstorm which interrupts the unbearable city heat serves as a symbol for better times to come:

> It was the beginning of June. The day was hot and stifling; it was impossible to remain in town, where all was dust, plaster, scaffolding, burning pavements, and tainted atmosphere. . . . But now—oh joy!—there was the rumble of thunder in the distance; there came a breath of wind driving clouds of town dust before it. A few big raindrops fell on the ground, and then the whole sky seemed to open and torrents of water streamed upon the town. When, half an hour later, the sun came out again I opened my garret window and greedily drew the fresh air into my exhausted lungs.[24]

The hero of A Raw Youth is possessed with greed, and wants to become a rich and powerful man. Like Raskolnikov, he enjoys the cold, unpleasant St. Petersburg morning and watches with a certain admiration the self-centered people hurrying to work:

> It was a cold morning and a damp, milky mist hovered over everything. I don't know why, but I always like the early workaday morning in Petersburg in spite of its squalid air; and the self-centered people, always absorbed in thought, and hurrying on their affairs, have a special attraction for me at eight o'clock in the morning.[25]

Notes from Underground is the story of the uneventful life of a retired government clerk who is so disgusted with his own lot that he compares himself to "a mouse in its hole." His existence is so hopeless that it does not seem to make any difference to him where he lives:

> I am told that the Petersburg climate is bad for me, and that with my small means it is very expensive to live in Petersburg. . . . But I am remaining in Petersburg; I am not going away from Petersburg! . . . it is absolutely no matter whether I am going away or not going away.[26]

The second part of the novel, which is entitled "Apropos of the Wet Snow," contains an account of incidents from the hero's past life. These are not happy memories, and the theme of wet snow is chosen appropriately for this part of the narration:

> Snow is falling today, yellow and dingy. It fell yesterday, too, and a few days ago. I fancy it is the wet snow that has reminded me of that incident which I cannot shake off now. And so let it be a story apropos of the falling snow.[27]

The symbol of the falling snow is used in the course of the hero's narration of his incident and the snow slowly melting on the night city streets underlines the underground man's lonely, desperate situation: ". . . I walked all the way home, in spite of the fact that the melting snow was still falling in heavy flakes. I was exhausted, shattered, in bewilderment."[28] When the prostitute Liza runs away from him after hearing honest words which sound to her more like insults, the weather outside again reflects the internal emptiness of the hero's soul after the unsuccessful encounter. Thus it becomes only natural to him to live in complete solitude, for he cannot endure any human contact,

let alone friendship:

> It was still night and the snow was coming down in masses and falling almost perpendicularly, covering the pavement and the empty street as though with a pillow. There was no one in the street, no sound was to be heard. The street lamps gave disconsolate and useless glimmer.[29]

Dostoevsky's attitude toward St. Petersburg is reflected in his descriptions of the city's climate. The city is always shown at its worst; it seems that there are only two kinds of weather in St. Petersburg: it is either unbearably hot, dusty, the air contaminated with the inevitable smells, or it is cold, damp, foggy, windy, weather to chill one right to the bone.

The same intention to show St. Petersburg in gloomy colours runs through Bely's Petersburg. Bely does not dispute the greatness of the Russian capital of his time but he feels its coming decline which he expresses throughout the novel with a pervading bleak, gray mood: "There where nothing but a foggy damp hung suspended, at first appeared the dull outline, then descended from heaven to earth the dingy, blackish gray St. Isaac's Cathedral."[30] Autumn in the city is so unpleasant and the cold air so penetrating that even inside a warm room one does not seem to be sheltered from its effects: "A Petersburg street in autumn is piercing; it both chills you to the marrow, and tickles. As soon as you leave it and go indoors, the street flows in your veins like a fever."[31]

A new element in city descriptions since Gogol and Dostoevsky is the quantity of dust blowing through the streets in Bely's novel. This dust imagery, prominent throughout the novel, is a symbol of the impending apocalypse. It is indeed a strange phenomenon to find so much dust on a foggy and therefore damp day:

> Those were foggy days, strange days. Noxious October marched on. Dust whirled through the city in dun brown vortexes, and the rustling crimson fell submissively at the feet, and wish, plaiting yellow-red scatterings of words from leaves.[32]

The apocalypse is announced by the sudden revival of the statue of Peter the Great. This is a horrifying experience for anyone who happens to witness his noisy gallop through the streets of St. Petersburg. The stage is set with the help of the foggy weather when objects become unclear and one cannot be sure of the reality of this occurrence: "The sky had become a solid mass of dirty slush. The fog had come down to the ground, and was now gloom through which glowed the rusty blots of street lamps."[33]

Like the hero of Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground, who admits to himself that the St. Petersburg climate is bad for him, Bely's character with the mysterious name, Shishnarfne, who is supposed to be an Oriental from the Southern province of Azerbaidzhan, also finds the Northern capital's climate detrimental to

his health:

> . . . I come from Shemakha. The climate here is especially bad for me.
> 'Yes,' Alexander Ivanovich replied, 'Petersburg is built on a swamp.'[34]

Dudkin's answer to his imaginary Oriental friend is correct. The numerous canals in St. Petersburg are a result of partial drainage of the swamp into which piles had to be driven to support the weight of the buildings. It was a huge project and courageous of Peter the Great to have undertaken it at a time when technology was lacking and manpower from all over Russia had to be called to the building site. At times it seemed that they would not succeed in building the city, and thousands of people died during the construction in the harsh climate. The river Neva appropriately takes its name from the Finnish newa or newo, meaning swamp.

Water Element

From the very first days of Peter's city, it was accepted that, if hostile armies could not succeed in conquering the nation's capital, its only major enemy was the water. Before any literature was written about St. Petersburg, the prophets were already concerned with the destruction of the city by a flood. The disastrous flood of November 1824 is the central theme of Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman, and in the urban novels of Gogol, Dostoev-

sky and Bely the water element and the fear of impending floods play an important role. The existence of this threat makes the city vulnerable, its permanency questioned. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, a time when the city finally achieved the might and splendour planned by its creator, the outward solidity is vulnerable from within in Bely's Petersburg, and one of the destructive forces is the ever-threatening water surrounding the Russian capital. It is the location of the Russian city on the Neva which to this day makes it vulnerable:

> A less auspicious place for a large number of people to live is difficult to imagine: the delta of the Neva River offered little solid ground; the environs were desolate, the climate dreary; the high latitude was unsettling to those not used to the prolonged darkness of the winter months and the extended daylight of the short summer; and, if that were not enough, whatever man might labour months to build could succumb in a matter of hours to tempestuous autumn flood waters.[35]

St. Petersburg was from the start periodically flooded in the month of November. It is therefore on a November night in Dostoevsky's The Double, the worst night for Golyadkin, that he meets his own double for the first time. The sound of rain and the raised waters of the Neva and the canals is distressing, even though the word "flood" is not used by Dostoevsky in his description. But the reader knows that when the water starts to reach

above the metal rings on the quays, the St. Petersburg inhabitant already has a reason to worry:

> The wind howled in the deserted streets, lifting up the black water of the canal above the rings on the bank . . . the streams of rain-water spurted almost horizontally, as though from a fireman's hose . . . there was the dismal sound of the splash and gurgle of water, rushing from every roof, every porch, every pipe and every cornice, on the granite of the pavement.[36]

Not even the dead of St. Petersburg can escape the presence of water. The strange character of Dostoevsky's story Bobok is gradually losing his mind, and his "much needed diversion" is to go to a St. Petersburg cemetery to watch funerals. With horror, he realizes that no matter how expensive a tomb is, all the graves eventually become full of water, an inevitable phenomenon since the city is built on marshes: "I looked into the graves—and it was horrible: water and such water! Absolutely green, and . . . but there, why talk of it! The gravedigger was bailing it out every minute."[37]

Water is the negative image which accompanies the last days of Svidrigailov in Crime and Punishment. Unlike Raskolnikov's world of midday summer heat and stench, Svidrigailov's world is a world of darkness and water. The events leading to his suicide are introduced by water which gradually takes on a fright-

ening role:

> Towards ten o'clock heavy clouds began to pile up overhead, there was a clap of thunder, and rain swept down in a deluge. It fell not in drops but in streams that beat upon the ground like a waterfall. The lightning flashed incessantly, and the flashes lasted while one might count five.[38]

The weather becomes progressively worse as Svidrigailov reaches the decision to leave the core of the city for a shabby hotel in the suburbs:

> Meanwhile, just at midnight, Svidrigaylov [sic] crossed the Tuchkov Bridge towards Peterburgsky Island. The rain had ceased, but a blustering wind had risen. He was beginning to shiver. For a minute he gazed with peculiar interest, and even with a questioning look, at the black water of the Little Neva, but he soon found it very cold standing near the water. . . .[39]

Svidrigailov spends a horrible night in the hotel he finds in a suburb of St. Petersburg; the night is restless, full of dreams, including one of water and flood, both of which are associated with his impending death. The floods were announced in St. Petersburg by cannon shots and this is exactly what Svidrigailov hears in his dream:

> Through the gloom of the night sounded a cannon shot, then another.
>
> 'Ah, the signal! The water is rising,' he thought; 'towards morning, in the lower parts of the town, it will

> swirl through the streets and flood the basements and cellars, the sewer-rats will come up to the surface, and amid the rain and the wind people will begin, dripping wet and cursing, to drag rubbish to the upper floors. . . .'[40]

The awakening from the nightmares is unpleasant as well. It is five o'clock in the morning, cold, damp and foggy. Svidrigailov knows that his life is finished, his suffering is at an end. He walks through the empty streets of early morning, looking for the best place to pull the trigger of the revolver against himself. And again, the surroundings reflect his state of mind. The water is the main ingredient of the setting for his act:

> A thick milky mist covered the city. Svidrigailov walked along slippery, greasy, wooden pavements toward the Little Neva. His mind still held the illusory vision of its waters rising in flood during the night, and pictured Petrovsky Island, the wet paths, the soaking grass, the dripping trees and bushes and at last that one bush. . . . The cold and damp were penetrating his whole body and making him shiver.[41]

While Raskolnikov's fate takes a different turn in the end than Svidrigailov's, Raskolnikov finds himself on several occasions standing on a bridge and looking down into the Neva. These are his moments of weakness and despair, when the water seems to have a hypnotic effect on him and it is difficult to resist its mysterious powers:

> Raskolnikov went straight to the Voznesensky Bridge, stopped in the middle of it, leaned both elbows on the parapet, and gazed along the canal. . . . Into the water he peered attentively, until the last red circles began to resolve before his eyes, the houses spun round, the passers-by, the carriages, the embankments, all reeled and swung dizzily.[42]

Raskolnikov's gazing into the river is always preceded by a disturbing discussion with someone. On the previous occasion he had a talk with Razumikhin. Subsequently, Raskolnikov is drawn to the water after meeting Svidrigailov, whose depressing monologue he has to listen to: "In his usual way, once he was alone, he fell into deep thought before he had gone twenty yards. Coming up on to the bridge, he stopped by the parapet and gazed down at the water."[43] It is only when Raskolnikov finds himself in a state of despair that the river becomes a menacing force. Contrary to Svidrigailov, however, in Raskolnikov's dreams the Neva is seen in a positive light; his subconscious reaction to the water shows that the forces of life are still strong in him and that there is hope at the end of his difficult road. After a terrible dream, in which an old horse is mercilessly killed when Raskolnikov is a boy of seven, he wakes up in horror, convinced for a short while that he is unable to carry out the killing of the pawnbroker. Thus the Neva takes on a different face:

> As he crossed the bridge he gazed with quiet tranquillity at the river

> Neva and the clear red sunset. Although he was so weak, he was not conscious even of being tired. It was as though the sore that had festered in his heart for a month had burst at last. Freedom! He was free now from the evil spells, from the sorcery and fascination, from the temptation.[44]

As the day of his crime approaches, Raskolnikov lies in his room daydreaming. One of the dreams is of an oasis through which runs a clear blue stream of water. Water is the source of life in the desert and the recurring dream about the life-giving water proves that Raskolnikov still hopes to be saved from performing the criminal act:

> . . . he was in Africa, in Egypt, at some oasis. A caravan was resting, the camels lying peacefully and the men eating their evening meal; all around, the palms stood in a great circle. He was drinking the water from a stream which flowed babbling beside him, clear and cool, running marvellously bright and blue over the coloured stones and the clean sand with its gleams of gold. . . .[45]

In Notes from Underground the narrator's mind is filled with the same concern about the fate of the dead of St. Petersburg as was the case in Bobok. It is part of a strange conversation he carries on with the prostitute Liza which begins with a story about a coffin found in a basement in the Haymarket. It seems that no one in St. Petersburg can avoid being buried in a grave full of

water:

> 'Why, there must have been water at the bottom a foot deep. You can't dig a dry grave in Volkovo Cemetery.' 'Why? Why, the place is waterlogged. It's a regular marsh. So they bury them in water. I've seen it myself . . . many times.'[46]

Bely, who uses excerpts from Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman as epigraphs throughout his novel Petersburg, shares Pushkin's fear of a flood which would cover the beautiful and at the same time hateful city. The flood depicted by Bely is not by water itself but by the green mass on the bottom; the marsh is going to swallow St. Petersburg:

> From far, far away, as though farther off than they should have been, the islands sank and cowered; it seemed that the waters would sink and that at that instant the depths, the greenish murk would surge over them. And over this greenish murk the Nikolaevsky Bridge thundered and trembled in the fog.[47]

Nikolai Ableukhov, who shares many characteristics with Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, can also be found staring into the dirty waters of the Neva when he is overcome by memories of a past attempt to commit suicide by jumping into the water. When speaking of the Neva, Bely never forgets to stress the river's green colour and the germs with which it is infested:

> And against this glooming background of hanging soot tailing above the damp stones of the embankment railing, eyes staring into the turbid germ-infested waters of the Neva, there stood in sharp outline, the silhouette of Nikolai Apollonovich.[48]

The river was the main sewer of the city, described by Gogol and Dostoevsky as black, while in Bely it is always green and teeming with germs. On another occasion, Nikolai is found in a confused state of mind, and his thoughts of a suicide by drowning in the Neva are seen to be caused by the terrible city:

> Petersburg, Petersburg!... Cruel hearted tormentor! Restless specter! For years you have attacked me. I have run along the horrible Prospects, to land with a flying leap on this very same gleaming bridge.... Above the damp, damp railing, above the greenish water teeming with germs, he was gripped by nothing but wailing gusts of wind.[49]

The same river was also the source of drinking water in St. Petersburg. The Oriental visitor to the city (Shishnarfne) complains about the notoriously bad quality of St. Petersburg's drinking water, attributing to it hallucinations so many people suffer from in the city:

> But with water you swallow germs, and I am no germ. Look here: from the very first day of your stay in Petersburg your stomach hasn't been digesting properly. Cholerin's been a constant menace, and the consequences are symptoms which you can't rid yourself of by

> lodging complaints with the local police. Your anguish, hallucinations and depression are all the consequences of cholerine.[50]

This is the first time that a St. Petersburg character experiences mental turmoil not from observing his surroundings and living in dreary rented rooms, but merely from drinking the water. The Oriental's statements are built on historical facts, as the St. Petersburg newspapers, Novoe vremya and Birzhevye vedomosti, frequently reported outbreaks of cholera in European Russia in October of 1905. At that time St. Petersburg was considered to be the most unhealthy capital city of Europe.

It is Bely's predecessor Dostoevsky who, in one of his essays contributed in the Spring of 1847 to Petersburg News, gives an accurate personified description of St. Petersburg:

> I don't know why it reminds me of an unhealthy-looking ailing girl whom you sometimes regard with pity, with a kind of compassionate love, and sometimes even do not notice at all. . . .[51]

Day and Night in St. Petersburg

Since Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely belong to different literary schools, their concept of the time of day differs accordingly. In Gogol's "Petersburg Stories," the line between events occurring during the day and night is marked: the night is reserved for unreal, fantastic happenings typical of the age of Romanticism.

Dostoevsky's early works bear the same characteristics, but in his later works, notably Crime and Punishment, a gruesome crime takes place in the middle of a sunny day. For Bely, the Symbolist, the time of day is not of any great importance; it is not a theme but rather a device to express the mood of a situation at a given moment.

In Gogol's Nevsky Prospekt the reader is introduced to the two heroes of the story, Pirogov and Piskaryov, as darkness is falling over the empty main artery of St. Petersburg. At the beginning of the story, a policeman lights up the street lamps. At the end, when the reader is being told that this seemingly beautiful city has a dark, dangerous side, the street lamps are lit by the devil. Piskaryov, the dreamer, is only able to experience his beautiful dreams at night; for him, daytime represents the cruel reality of his hopeless existence:

> So he had been asleep! My God, what a splendid dream! And why had he awakened? Why had it not lasted one minute longer?... The unwelcome dawn was peeping in at his window with its unpleasant, dingy light... Oh, how revolting was reality![52]

It is in The Portrait that in true Romantic fashion the artist Chartkov's suffering comes with the night. As he buys a strange portrait of a man for his last twenty kopeks, and carries the unusually heavy painting home, the artist is drawn to the scene of

the setting sun in St. Petersburg:

> Light, half-transparent shadows were cast by houses and people, fell like long bars on the earth. More and more the artist began to glance at the sky, which was shimmering in a faint, translucent, uncertain light. . . .[53]

This scene is followed by a terrible, restless night as Chartkov dreams of the man on the painting. From this night on, he never ceases to be haunted by the blazing eyes of the man from the portrait which gradually brings him insanity and death.

The worst tragedy in the life of the hero of The Overcoat, Akaky Akakievich, takes place at night, after he leaves a party thrown by his fellow office workers. He is robbed of his prized possession—an overcoat, at night, in the middle of a deserted square. The description of a poor St. Petersburg suburb at night sets the mood for Akaky's loss of his new overcoat:

> . . . the light of street lamps was scantier, the oil evidently running low; then came wooden houses and fences; not a soul anywhere; only the snow gleamed on the streets and the low-pitched slumbering hovels looked black and gloomy with their closed shutters.[54]

Akaky Akakievich is unable to withstand his terrible experience and at the end of the story succumbs to death. However, after a while, the whole of St. Petersburg is full of rumours that near the Kalinkin Bridge a ghost haunts passers-by and tries to steal their

overcoats. This strange happening takes place at no other time than at night.

In Dostoevsky's Poor Folk the evening walk along one of the poor parts of St. Petersburg, the Fontanka, reflects the inner feelings of the hero of the story, Devushkin. In his letter to Varenka dated September 5, Devushkin complains about the shortening days as early as the beginning of September:

> It was such a damp, dark evening. By six o'clock it was getting dusk—that is what we are coming to now. . . . It's dreary walking along Fontanka! . . . How dark and melancholy it was this evening![55]

The conclusion of The Double is written in the tradition of Romanticism. The hero of the story with his mind gone, finds himself at night in a carriage, being driven by his doctor to a mental asylum. The doctor becomes a demonic figure with blazing, piercing eyes like the man tormenting Chartkov in Gogol's story The Portrait, and the night becomes the most appropriate setting for a fantastic event:

> When he came to himself, he saw the horses were taking him along an unfamiliar road. There were dark patches of copse on each side of it; it was desolate and deserted. Suddenly he almost swooned; two fiery eyes were staring at him in the darkness, and those two eyes were glittering with malignant, hellish glee. . . .[56]

In A Weak Heart, the panorama of St. Petersburg is seen through the eyes of Arkady during a magic moment—the twilight hour, when the day is not yet completely gone, but the night is already fast approaching. In this famous description of the city's panorama nothing can be taken for granted, and everything becomes unreal, vanishing into the darkness:

> It seemed as if all that world, with all its inhabitants, strong and weak, with all their habitations, the refuges of the poor, or the gilded palaces for the comfort of the powerful of this world was at that twilight hour like a fantastic vision of fairy-land, like a dream which in its turn would vanish and pass away like vapour into the dark blue sky.[57]

The title of Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg story White Nights is chosen appropriately for a story which takes place during the white nights of Spring-time St. Petersburg, a time when the sun never completely leaves the horizon at night. The story lasts five consecutive nights during which the hero experiences a brief glimpse of reality and hope. But his days are reserved for walking aimlessly in the flâneur manner around the city and daydreaming. The white nights are a magic time and as they pass, so does the brief experience of happiness for the hero of the story.

Crime and Punishment is a novel of daylight rather than darkness. Its central character, Raskolnikov, experiences his

mental turmoil before and after his crime in the hot, sunny, summer streets of St. Petersburg. The crime itself takes place during the day. As Mochulsky observes, this is a novel in which the day predominates: ". . . the whole novel is diffused with the air of Petersburg, is illumined by its light."[58] The light is traditionally linked with life whereas the night can symbolize death. As a result of his tormented mind, however, Raskolnikov experiences a switch in his perception of light and darkness. The panorama of St. Petersburg on a clear, sunny day does not cheer him up; on the contrary, it has a chilling effect on him:

> The dome of the cathedral, which is seen at its best from this point, not more than twenty paces towards the chapel from the centre of the bridge, shone through the clear air, and every detail of its ornament was distinct. . . . An inexplicable chill always breathed on him from that superb panorama. . . .[59]

The sunlight becomes increasingly unbearable for the feverish Raskolnikov and he welcomes the evening: "It was about eight o'clock and the sun was going down . . . a wild kind of energy flared up in his sunken eyes and pallid wasted face."[60] Even the last glimpses of the red sunset make Raskolnikov feel dizzy until he almost loses consciousness:

> Leaning over the water he looked mechanically at the last pink reflections of the sunset. . . . Into the water he peered attentively, until the

> last red circles began to revolve before his eyes, the houses spun round, the passers-by, the carriages, the embankments, all reeled and swung dizzily.[61]

Raskolnikov is so disturbed by the strong sunlight of July Petersburg that he starts to dream of a different time in the city and the stranger whom he stops on the street, looks perplexed at the mumbling feverish Raskolnikov: "I like to hear singing to a barrel-organ on a cold, dark, damp autumn evening. . . ."[62] The light is symbolically connected with Raskolnikov who commits a horrible crime, suffers for it, but at the end comes out alive and full of hope for the future.

However, the darkness of the St. Petersburg night constantly follows Svidrigailov, also a murderer, but who has a cynical outlook on life and finds no salvation, finally ending his hopeless existence by suicide. Although both Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov find themselves in the St. Petersburg of July, their worlds differ as sharply as their souls. Svidrigailov's world is one of a cloudy, stormy night: "The evening had been sultry and overcast. Towards ten o'clock heavy clouds began to pile up overhead, there was a clap of thunder. . . ."[63] For Svidrigailov there is no light at the end of the dark road which symbolizes his whole life. The night before his suicide is the most terrible of all. He crosses the bridge and at the end of a long lane spends a restless night in an

old dingy hotel:

> Meanwhile, just at midnight, Svidrigailov crossed the Tuchkov Bridge towards Peterburgsky Island. The rain had ceased but a blustering wind had risen. He was beginning to shiver.... He walked steadily down the endless avenue for almost half an hour, stumbling sometimes in the darkness on the wooden pavement....[64]

Ironically, Svidrigailov gets the last available room in the hotel, as if it were waiting for him. The reader shares the horror with Svidrigailov who dreams of rats crawling all over him and of the waters of the Neva flooding the city. At five o'clock in the morning, the sun barely having risen, Svidrigailov leaves the hotel and walks the empty foggy streets in search of the most convenient place to pull the trigger.

The hero of The Insulted and Injured finds the St. Petersburg evening much more bearable than the reality of the day. The lights on a frosty day in March have a special clear brilliance which almost penetrates one's soul. This is the magic evening in the Russian capital captured by Gogol in his Introduction to the Nevsky Prospekt and experienced by Dostoevsky's Devushkin who walks along Gorokhovaya Street in Poor Folk:

> Towards the evening; just before it got dark, I was walking along the Voznesensky Prospect. I love the March sun in Petersburg, especially

> at sunset, in clear frosty weather, of course. The whole street suddenly glitters, bathed in brilliant light. All the houses seem suddenly, as it were, to sparkle. Their grey, yellow, and dirty-green hues for an instant lose all their gloominess. . . .[65]

The evening, described by Bely in his Petersburg on the Nevsky Prospekt, creates a beautiful sight. The avenue is lit by a row of lights that bring out different colours. It is a magic place. For Gogol, after sundown, only unreal things happen on the Nevsky, and the devil himself lights the lamps in his first St. Petersburg story. Bely sees the same scene as a "fiery obfuscation." The word obfuscation was chosen by the translator of Petersburg because it comes nearest to one of Bely's favourite words morok, which means darkness and gloom, but it can also connote anything that darkens the mind, including phantoms. Whether or not this was Bely's intention in his description of the night side of the Nevsky, his perception of the main artery of St. Petersburg is not any different than Gogol's:

> . . . the Prospect is flooded with fiery obfuscation. Down the middle, at regular intervals, hang the apples of electric lights. While along the sides plays the changeable glitter of shop signs. Here the sudden flare of ruby lights, there the flare of emeralds. A moment later the rubies are there, and the emeralds are here.[66]

Bely's night is either full of the flickering commercial lights as in the above description of the Nevsky or its darkness is interrupted by a "phosphorescent" flash of lightning which transforms the city into an unreal, fantastic place, awaiting the apocalypse. The revolutionary Dudkin experiences one of his hallucinations:

> A turquoise gap swept across the sky, while a blot of burning phosphorous flew to meet it through storm clouds and was unexpectedly transformed into a brightly shining crescent moon. Everything flared up: the waters, chimneys, granite, the two goddesses above the arch, the roof of the four-story house; and for an instant the cupola of St. Isaac's appeared illumined; and the bronze laurel wreath flared; and the lights on the islands went out one by one.[67]

Later on, in the course of the novel, Nikolai Apollonovich is found standing at his window, sharing the mood of his revolutionary colleague Dudkin feeling the impending turmoil symbolized by the lightning racing across the St. Petersburg sky:

> A phosphorescent blot raced across the sky, misty and mad. The far stretch of the Neva gradually misted over, and soundlessly flying surfaces began glimmering green. A tiny red light flashed on and off, blinked and moved on into the spread of murk. Beyond the Neva rose the immense buildings of the islands, darkening, and they cast shining eyes into the mists—soundlessly, tormentingly.[68]

Bely's overall image of the city as a mass of grey is systematically interrupted, in a rhythmic repetition, by colourful moments at sunrise or sunset. If Bely's capital is compared with that of any of his nineteenth-century predecessors, one of the most striking distinctions is seen to be the abundance of colour-oriented descriptions.[69] True to the Symbolist tradition, the use of colours in Bely's Petersburg serves as a means to convey a certain message: in this case the sun, which rises in the East, from where the Mongolian peril is supposed to come, illumines the city giving it bright red tones—the colour of Revolution. At the end of the day, as the sun sets in the West, green tones start to predominate—the colour of reaction. The dawning of a day is a mystical event, the drama of the moment heightened by the use of the word "flame" instead of the sun:

> In the sky, somewhere off the side, there was a spurt of flame. Everything was illuminated: a rosy pink ripple of tiny clouds, like a mother-of-pearl web, floated into the flames. . . . The rust red palace was bedawned.[70]

Not only do the colours serve as symbols, they also suggest a personal experience and reflect the mind of the character in question. Thus the revolutionaries Dudkin and Nikolai Apollonovich see the city lit up by lightning and the sun, whereas their adversary, the conservative Apollonovich sees the city in the green shades:

"The clouds scudded by in greenish swarms, and condensed into smoke that clung to the seashore. There the Neva depths beat steel-like against the granite. A spire fled into the greenish fog."[71]

As the Fifth Chapter of Bely's novel opens, some of Apollon Apollonovich's worries are resolved: his estranged wife comes back, he leaves the government service and the bomb, placed by his son does not kill him. The chaos in his life seems to be over (at least for a while) and the chapter characteristically starts with a Pushkin epigraph from Eugene Onegin which reflects the mood at that moment:

> Tomorrow morn the day will dawn
> And dazzle us with all its light,
> And I by then may well be gone
> Down to the secret realms of night.[72]

St. Petersburg Interiors (Rooms and Stairways)

It is Dostoevsky, and to some extent Bely, who are preoccupied with the descriptions of the living quarters of their St. Petersburg characters. Their predecessor Gogol, in whose stories the city theme is in the developing stages, prefers the exteriors to the dark and dingy interiors of St. Petersburg houses. However, even he does not leave the interior stairways unnoticed. In every St. Petersburg house one had to climb a narrow, dark, dirty staircase to a small room or a space behind a partition on the fourth or even fifth floor of the house where the cheapest lodgings could

be found. These stairs are the only connection between the room and the exterior.

Thus the artist Chartkov in Gogol's The Portrait carries the newly acquired painting into his room on the Fifteenth Line of the Vasilevsky Island: "He climbed the stairs, which were soaked with wash water and decorated with the footprints of dogs and cats."[73]

When Akaky Akakievich takes his old coat to the tailor, Grigory Petrovich, to see if it could be repaired, he is confronted with freshly washed stairs and the unpleasant mixed smell of ammonia and fried fish:

> As he climbed the stairs leading to Petrovich's—which, to do them justice, were all soaked with water and slops and saturated through and through with the smell of ammonia which makes the eyes smart, and is, as we all know, inseparable from the backstairs of Petersburg houses. . . . The door was open, because Petrovich's wife was frying some fish and had so filled the kitchen with smoke that you could not even see the cockroaches.[74]

In Dostoevsky's novels the interiors of the Russian capital are dealt with extensively: as a result of the detailed description of a character's experience, his surroundings acquire a great significance in the process of achieving an overall picture of a given situation. The hero's physical environment is not merely used as

a device to give a concrete dimension to the plot of the story, but becomes a reflection or commentary of his state of mind. Thus Mochulsky appropriately calls the St. Petersburg interiors "landscapes of the soul."[75] This device is developed to its fullest potential by Dostoevsky in his urban novel Crime and Punishment. Each of the major characters of this novel inhabits a place which becomes a "landscape of the soul." The size and location of Raskolnikov's room tells us that he is very poor: "His little room, more like a cupboard than a place to live in, was tucked away under the roof of the high five-storied building."[76] The old pawnbroker's room is, as Raskolnikov notices, typical for a widow who keeps everything scrupulously clean; nevertheless, it is not inviting. Raskolnikov memorizes the details of the apartment in which he kills the old woman:

> The old furniture, all of painted yellow wood, consisted of a sofa with a high curved wooden back, an oval table in front of it, a toilet-table with a small mirror between the windows, some chairs against the wall, and two or three cheap pictures in yellow frames. . . .[77]

Raskolnikov's new friends, the Marmeladovs, are so destitute that they can only rent a corner in a big apartment on the top floor of a typical St. Petersburg building:

> A candle-end lighted up a poverty-stricken room about ten paces long;

> all of it could be seen from the landing. It was disordered and untidily strewn with various tattered children's garments. A torn sheet was stretched across the corner at the back of the room. . . . There was nothing in the room but two chairs and a sofa covered with ragged oilcloth, with an old deal kitchen table, unpainted and uncovered, standing before it. . . . The room was stuffy . . . a foul smell came from the stairs, but the door to the landing was not shut; clouds of tobacco-smoke blew in from the other rooms through the half-open door. . . .[78]

Sonya Marmeladova's room is very irregular, barn-like, low and poor. However, it expresses the soul of its inhabitant. The room, compared with the typical dwellings of the St. Petersburg poor, is large and even has three windows facing the canal. It symbolizes its inhabitants openness and willingness to help other people: "Sonya's room, like its mistress, is oriented towards austerity, but outward—toward life."[79]

> Sonya's room was rather like a barn; the irregularity of its angles made it look misshapen. One wall, with three windows which gave on to the canal, was set obliquely, so that one corner, forming a terribly acute angle, seemed to run off into obscurity, and when the light was poor the whole of it could not even be seen properly; the other angle was monstrously obtuse. There was hardly any furniture in this large room. . . . The yellowish, dirty, rubbed wallpaper was darkened in the corners; the room

> must have been damp and full of charcoal fumes in winter. Its poverty was evident; the bed had not even curtains.[80]

Raskolnikov's room is the complete opposite of Sonya's. It is tiny, like a hole, hated by its inhabitant who sees himself as a spider hiding in this hole, lying in his tiny room for hours, even days, not wanting to face the outside world. The reader is led to believe that these horrid living conditions are partly responsible for turning Raskolnikov into a murderer:

> Yes, I turned nasty—that's the right word! Then I lurked in a corner like a spider. You've been in my wretched little hole, of course, you've seen it. . . . But do you know, Sonya, that low ceilings and cramped rooms crush the mind and the spirit?[81]

Raskolnikov's masochistic tendencies become evident as he explains to Sonya the mental anguish he was undergoing before killing the old pawnbroker:

> Oh, how I hated that hole. But all the same I would not leave it. I deliberately stayed in it! For days on end I didn't go out; I wouldn't work, I wouldn't even eat; I just lay there. . . . And all the time I had such dreams, all sorts of strange dreams; no need to tell you what they were![81]

All the St. Petersburg rooms in Crime and Punishment have a common denominator—the old, yellow wallpaper. Sonya's room has "yellowish, dirty, rubbed wallpaper. . . ."[82] Raskolnikov's

little room, which was about six paces long with a ceiling so low that he was always afraid that he might bump his head against it, had "yellowish dusty wall-paper peeling off the walls."[83] Svidrigailov's last night is spent in an isolated hotel on the Peterburgsky Island. His hotel room is similar in size to Raskolnikov's "hole" and again the yellow wallpaper is present:

> It was a tiny hutch of a place, hardly big enough to hold him, with one window; a filthy bed, a stained deal table, and a chair occupied almost all the floor-space. The walls looked as though they had been roughly knocked together from boards, and the wall-paper was dirty and faded, and so dusty and torn that, although its original colour (yellow) could still be guessed at, it was quite impossible to make out its pattern.[84]

Yellow is also the colour predominating in the old pawnbroker's apartment, its furniture and the wooden picture frames all being painted yellow. The yellow colour of old paper is present in all the rooms of Crime and Punishment, in the poor rooms of Raskolnikov, Sonya and Svidrigailov, as well as in the not so poor apartment of the old woman-pawnbroker, and the physical decay of the paper in all the rooms serves as a symbol of the moral decay of those who occupy these lodgings. The negative impact of a cheap and therefore small living space on its occupant is expressed in one sentence by the narrator of Dostoevsky's The Insulted and Injured: "I have observed that in a confined space even thought is

cramped."[85]

Another urban detail, which preoccupied Dostoevsky no less than the small dingy St. Petersburg rooms, are the dark, narrow and often dirty stairways leading to his heroes' lodgings. The stairs have a dramatic effect on the reader, since they are presented through the characters' impressions:

> Staircases are (despite the confusion of directions) a kind of entrance to the underworld, linking the public with the private. They are, as it were, the tendrils of the city, half-public, half-private, uniting into great and artificial groups the various closed worlds of rented rooms and apartments. Already enclosed, they inspire a kind of claustrophobia. . . .[86]

A typical St. Petersburg house has two staircases, one in the front which is not always dark and narrow, and one in the back, never clean, always strewn with all kinds of garbage. In one of his letters to Varenka, Devushkin of Poor Folk describes his front and backstairs in detail, stating that the condition of the backstairs in his building affects the quality of his life to a great extent:

> . . . but don't ask about the backstairs: winding like a screw, damp, dirty with steps broken and the walls so greasy that your hand sticks when you lean against them. On every landing there are boxes, broken chairs and cupboards, rags hung out, windows broken, tubs stand about full of all sorts of dirt and litter, eggshells and the refuse

> of fish; there is a horrid smell . . . in fact, it is not nice.[87]

In The Insulted and Injured the staircase is not merely an unpleasant link between the street and the poor lodging, it serves as a device to heighten the mystery of the situation. A surprising encounter takes place when someone hides on the dark staircase:

> I went hurriedly downstairs. The staircase went from my flat in a spiral from the fifth storey down to the fourth, from the fourth it went straight. It was a black, dirty staircase, always dark, such as one commonly finds in huge blocks let out in tiny flats. At that moment it was quite dark. Feeling my way down to the fourth storey I stood still, and suddenly had a feeling that there was someone in the passage here, hiding from me.[88]

The dark hotel stairway in The Idiot provides a melodramatic climax to a series of events which take place following Prince Myshkin's first confrontation with his enemy, Rogozhin. Myshkin is followed by the "strange, burning gaze" of Rogozhin's eyes first seen at the railroad station. The stairway and the dim light help to build the tension of another event, this time fatal for Myshkin, who is struck by the same gaze of burning eyes directed at him from a dark crevice in the winding stairs:

> The staircase led to the first and second corridors of the hotel, along which lay the guests' bedrooms. As is often the case in St. Petersburg houses, it was

> narrow and very dark, and turned around a massive stone column. On the first landing, which was as small as the necessary turn of the stairs allowed, there was a niche in the column, about half a yard wide, and in this niche the prince felt convinced that a man stood concealed. He thought he could distinguish a figure standing there. He would pass by quickly and not look. He took a step forward, but could bear the uncertainty no longer and turned his head. The eyes—the same two eyes—met his![89]

This scene, filled with suspense, ends on a sad note—the encounter with Rogozhin triggers an epileptic attack in Myshkin, who falls down the stairs and is found lying at the bottom in a pool of blood. He never fully recovers from this shattering experience and, symbolically, life is a steady downhill from this moment on.

Bely's descriptions of interiors in his novel Petersburg closely follow Dostoevsky's method of organically uniting the character with his dwelling. The home of Senator Apollon Apollonovich is unlike any dwelling previously described by either Gogol or Dostoevsky. The opulence is stressed here, along with its impersonal cold impression on the reader. Bely maintains that the Senator's home is a physiological extension of his brain. The Senator's love of order and cleanliness is expressed in this dwelling, and the official well-to-do part of the city as he likes to see it is reflected in the three main qualities of his home—varnish,

lustre, and glitter—the three Russian words which become Bely's favourite musical play (lak, losk, blesk):

> The hall itself was a corridor of vastly wide dimensions. From the garlanded ceiling, out of a circular molding of fruit hung a chandelier of tiny glass pendants, draped with a muslin dust-cover. And its tiny crystal quivered. And the parquet was like a mirror. Placed everywhere along the walls—not walls but snow—were long-legged chairs fluted in gold and upholstered in pale yellow velours. Everywhere rose slender alabaster columns.[90]

The lodgings of the revolutionary university student Alexander Ivanovich Dudkin, who was quite consciously modelled by Bely on Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, can be found in the workers' district of St. Petersburg, the Vasilevsky Island. He pays twelve and a half roubles for his room, which he calls "that space" and where, like Raskolnikov, he experiences strange dreams and hallucinations. Dudkin's house has all the necessary characteristics, stressed by Bely, the dark, dirty staircase, the walls of his room covered with old yellow wallpaper—all identical to Raskolnikov's quarters:

> On Vasilievsky [sic] Island, in the depth of Seventeenth Line, a house enormous and gray looked out of the fog. A dingy staircase led to the floors. . . . The staircase was black, strewn with cucumber peels and a cabbage leaf crushed under foot.[91]

Like Raskolnikov, Dudkin tries to get out of his confining room and walks aimlessly, only to be confronted in the streets by the same sickly green faces of the passers-by:

> All the furnishings of this habitation paled before the color of the wallpaper, unpleasant and insolent—somewhere between dark yellow and darkish brown, with damp spots. . . . He had an urge to get out of the room—into the dingy fog, there to merge with shoulders, backs, greenish faces on a Petersburg prospect. . . . He had to pace from prospect to prospect, from street to street, until the brain was numbed. . . . The staircase! . . . On a gray day it is prosaic. Here dull thumps and thuds: that's someone chopping cabbage. Over the railing is draped a tattered rug, smelling of cats. . . .[92]

Dudkin, who suffers from an inner turmoil like his predecessor Raskolnikov, experiences the same changes of moods, but he does not always feel the need to walk the streets of St. Petersburg, preferring to stay inside his depressing room which, of course, cannot improve his deteriorating mental condition: "He had no desire to leave the garret. He walked amidst drawers, towels and sheets."[93]

The Bronze Horseman

The impressive Falconet statue of Peter the Great, with his outstretched right arm pointing into the distance, sitting on a horse

which appears to be ready to crush the charging snake with its front hooves, has become in Russian literature more of a negative than a positive symbol. Whenever the future of the city of St. Petersburg or Russia as a whole is contemplated, the theme of the Bronze Horseman comes into the foreground. The statue is perceived with fear and a notion that one day it may come to life and take an active part in the destruction of the city that was created on command by the man who is immortalized in this statue. Thus a full circle will be completed, and it seems that only Peter the Great, and, after his death, the image of him, has the right to decide the destiny of his creation on the delta of the river Neva.

The theme of the Bronze Horseman, however, does not appear in Gogol's "Petersburg Stories," which are the second phase in the author's literary career. The future of the Russian capital was not Gogol's preoccupation and in the true manner of the French urban feuilletons and novels of the time, he was more concerned with the day-to-day existence of his characters in the growing city.

Dostoevsky, being a follower of Gogol, paints the city on a much larger scale, and while one may search for the theme of the Bronze Horseman in all his St. Petersburg novels, it appears only once in the author's famous passage in the novel A Raw Youth. The description of a foggy morning makes the city appear as "the most fantastic in the world," its future uncertain in the mind of

Dostoevsky who sees the Russian capital as a fleeting image with the Horseman suddenly coming to life:

> What if this fog should part and float away, would not all this rotten and slimy town go with it, rise up with the fog, and vanish like smoke, and the old Finnish marsh be left as before, and in the midst of it, perhaps, to complete the picture, the bronze horseman on a panting, overdriven steed. . . .[94]

In Bely's novel Petersburg, written during the uncertain times preceding the Russian Revolution of 1917, the question about the future of the capital city of a country in turmoil is presented to the reader. And Bely found it natural to make the galloping Bronze Horseman an integral part of his work.

A character named Sofia Petrovna Likhutina is the first victim to be pursued, as she is leaving a masquerade ball, by the metal statue of Peter the Great through the night streets of St. Petersburg. Noise from the horse's hooves hitting the cobblestones can be heard, fire comes out of its nostrils, everything behind it is on fire. Sofia Petrovna's carriage driver, who does not see the galloping Horseman, explains that "the islands are on fire." This is the beginning of the apocalypse predicted by Bely; the revolution will start in the poor, industrial sections surrounding the city. The islands around the core of St. Petersburg on fire had significance in the novels of two of Bely's predecessors. In Dostoevsky's The

Devils, a fire breaks out in the suburb across the river after a governor's ball, and the same thing happens in Fyodor Sologub's novel The Petty Demon (1907), where a masked ball turns into a riot and is ended when the building in which the ball takes place is set alight with a torch by the mad hero, Peredonov. The description of the Horseman in pursuit of Sofia Petrovna contains different sounds, and the reader can almost visualize this strange, terrifying occurrence:

> There echoed metallic crash after crash, shattering the cobblestones. . . . There was the pounding of a metallic steed, with a ringing clatter against stone. Behind her he was trampling everything that he had flown off. There, behind her back, the metallic Horseman had started up in pursuit.
>
> She turned around and saw an extraordinary sight: a Mighty Horseman. Two flaming nostrils pierced the fog there like a white hot pillar. . . . A heavy bronze helmet flashed past, and behind it, rumbling and spewing sparks, flew a fire brigade.[95]

One of the principal characters of Bely's novel, Nikolai Apollonovich, finds himself in such a confused mental state that when he looks up at the famous statue of Peter the Great, he imagines that the Horseman's lips and arm are moving, giving him a sign that he is irrevocably doomed. This is what Nikolai Apollonovich subconsciously believes and what he prefers to see at

that moment:

> Not long before it had seemed that there was no Horseman (a shadow had covered him); but now the metal lips were parted in an enigmatic smile. . . . And a many-tonned arm extended imperiously. It seemed that the arm was about to move, and that metallic hooves at any moment would come crashing down upon the crag. . . .[96]

The Sixth Chapter of Petersburg characteristically begins with an epigraph taken from the Second Part of Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman:

> Behind him e'er the Horseman Bronze
> With heavy tread came riding on.[97]

This chapter is devoted to Alexander Ivanovich Dudkin, the revolutionary colleague of Nikolai Apollonovich. The Pushkin epigraph, and the numerous times that Dudkin is given the name Eugene, suggest a conscious attempt on the part of Bely to revive the myth of the Bronze Horseman during the times of revolutionary upheaval in Russia. Dudkin is pursued by the galloping Bronze Horseman through the streets of St. Petersburg: in this description Bely uses words taken from Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman, the Russian double adjective tjažélo-zvonkoe, translated as "weightily sonorous":

> A weightily sonorous clatter swept across the bridge to the Islands. The Bronze Horseman flew on. The muscles of his metallic arms flexed. The horse's hooves fell on the cobble-stones. The horse's laughter rang

> out, reminiscent of the whistling of a locomotive. The steam from its nostrils scalded the street with luminous boiling water.[98]

Dudkin is hidden in his garret on the Vasilevsky Island, hallucinating that the metal statue of Peter the Great is coming with a crashing noise up the staircase to his room. Bely calls Dudkin the "new Eugene," underlining the way he re-enacts the fate of Pushkin's hero. Thus the galloping Bronze Horseman has completed a cycle, and this is his last appearance before the apocalypse:

> The bronze-headed giant had been galloping through periods of time right up to this very instant, coming full circle . . . and Alexander Ivanovich, a shadow, had been tirelessly overcoming the periods of time, racing through the days, through the years, through the damp Petersburg prospects, in his dreams and when awake. And in pursuit of him, in pursuit of all thundered the crash of metal, shattering lives. . . .[99]

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]A. Belyj, Simvolizm (Moscow, 1910), p. 29.

[2]The Collected Tales and Plays of Nikolai Gogol, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Leonard J. Kent (New York, 1969), pp. 427-428.

[3]Ibid., p. 428.

[4]Ibid., p. 563.

[5]Ibid., pp. 567-568.

[6]Ibid., p. 586.

[7]The Gambler and Other Stories by Fyodor Dostoevsky, translated by Constance Garnett (London, 1923), p. 138.

[8]Ibid., p. 144.

[9]Ibid., p. 206.

[10]Ibid., p. 229.

[11]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, translated by C. Garnett (New York, 1958), p. 477.

[12]Ibid., p. 509.

[13]Ibid., p. 603.

[14]The Short Stories of Dostoevsky, translated by C. Garnett (New York, 1946), pp. 304-305.

[15]Ibid., p. 337.

[16]Ibid., p. 354.

[17]F. Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, translated by Jessie Coulson (New York, 1975), p. 2.

[18]Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[19]Ibid., p. 132.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 206.

[22]Ibid., p. 394.

[23]The Short Stories of Dostoevsky, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1923), p. 1.

[24]F. Dostoevsky, The Insulted and Injured, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1920), p. 321.

[25]The Novels of F. Dostoevsky, Vol. VII, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1917), p. 131.

[26]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, p. 131.

[27]Ibid., p. 156.

[28]Ibid., p. 204.

[29]Ibid., p. 220.

[30]A. Bely, Petersburg (Bloomington, 1978), p. 10.

[31]Ibid., p. 17.

[32]Ibid., p. 52.

[33]Ibid., p. 119.

[34]Ibid., p. 205.

[35]J. H. Bater, St. Petersburg, Industrialization and Change (Montreal, 1976), p. 17.

[36]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, p. 509.

[37]The Short Stories of Dostoevsky (New York, 1946), p. 510.

[38]Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 422.

[39]Ibid., p. 425.

[40]Ibid., pp. 429-430.

[41]Ibid., p. 432.

[42]Ibid., p. 144.

[43]Ibid., p. 411.

[44]Ibid., p. 51.

[45]Ibid., p. 58.

[46]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, p. 191.

[47]Bely, Petersburg, p. 9.

[48]Ibid., p. 29.

[49]Ibid., pp. 148-149.

[50]Ibid., pp. 206-207.

[51]Dostoevsky's Occasional Writings, selected, translated, introduced by David Magarshack (London, 1963), pp. 29-30.

[52]The Collected Tales and Plays of Nikolai Gogol, p. 436.

[53]Ibid., p. 514.

[54]Ibid., p. 580.

[55]The Gambler and Other Stories by F. Dostoevsky, p. 217.

[56]The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, pp. 614-615.

[57]Ibid., p. 215.

[58]K. Mochulsky, Dostoevsky, His Life and Work (Princeton, 1967), p. 294.

[59]Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 96.

[60]Ibid., p. 132.

[61]Ibid., p. 144.

[62]Ibid., p. 132.

[63]Ibid., p. 422.

[64]Ibid., p. 425.

[65]Dostoevsky, The Insulted and Injured, p. 1.

[66]Bely, Petersburg, p. 31.

[67]Ibid., p. 65.

[68]Ibid., p. 82.

[69]A. Hönig, Andrej Belyj's Romane (Munich, 1965), p. 36.

[70]Bely, Petersburg, p. 140.

[71]Ibid., p. 247.

[72]Ibid., p. 141.

[73]The Collected Tales and Plays of N. Gogol, p. 514.

[74]Ibid., p. 569.

[75]Mochulsky, Dostoevsky, p. 292.

[76]Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 1.

[77]Ibid., p. 5.

[78]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[79]D. Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism (Chicago and London, 1965), p. 198.

[80]Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 266.

[81]Ibid., p. 352.

[82]Ibid., p. 266.

[83]Ibid., p. 23.

[84]Ibid., p. 426.

[85]Dostoevsky, The Insulted and Injured, p. 1.

[86]Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism, p. 196.

[87]The Gambler and Other Stories by F. Dostoevsky, p. 142.

[88]Dostoevsky, The Insulted and Injured, p. 51.

[89]The Short Stories of Dostoevsky (London, 1923), p. 223.

[90]Bely, Petersburg, pp. 57-58.

[91]Ibid., p. 12.

[92]Ibid., pp. 170-171.

[93]Ibid., pp. 208-209.

[94]The Novels of F. Dostoevsky, p. 132.

[95]Bely, Petersburg, pp. 120-121.

[96]Ibid., p. 149.

[97]Ibid., p. 169.

[98]Ibid., p. 210.

[99]Ibid., p. 213.

CONCLUSION

At the same time that Bely was writing Petersburg, Blok was working on his poem Retribution. In this poem, Blok shows us the same city as Bely, that terrible city which will one day disappear from the face of the Earth; and he presents a vision of the founder of the city, Peter the Great, who appears in the poem as the Bronze Horseman. Blok's motifs go back to those of Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman and Dostoevsky's A Raw Youth. In Pushkin's poem there is a conflict between two heroes—Peter the Great and a petty government official, Eugene. Pushkin understands that the Petrine reforms were often introduced in such a way as to cause suffering to the lower classes of Russian society. Eugene represents this segment of society. Along with the forces of nature, which cause a flooding of the city, Eugene rises against the creator himself, and his ultimate defeat serves as an example to anyone bold enough to question the absolute power of the creator's hold over his city.

In the urban novels of Gogol, St. Petersburg is seen through the eyes of a poor, humiliated inhabitant of the city. The glitter and unattainable wealth are alien to the ordinary man who lives in a rented room. Gogol speaks about the disappearance of humane thinking in the Russian capital, about the destructive forces which

choke the heroes of his novels.

Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg is not the majestic city of beautiful buildings and long, wide avenues, but a city of dirty basements, cramped rooms, dark, narrow staircases, where the surroundings are always unpleasant. All this creates a poisoned atmosphere for its inhabitants.

Bely's Petersburg follows the tradition of Gogol and Dostoevsky. The future of the Russian capital, the role of Peter the Great, the problem of historic justice or injustice were all part of Bely's preoccupation with the ever-present question of the East and the West. In 1934, the contemporary of Bely, Yevgeny Zamyatin, who was not only a writer but also an influential critic, wrote about Bely's Petersburg:

> . . . Bely shows the tsarist Petersburg as a city already doomed but still beautiful with dying, spectral loveliness. . . . In this book, Bely's best work, Petersburg finds its true portrayer for the first time since Gogol and Dostoyevsky [sic].[1]

* * * * * * * * *

To this day, there is only a small number of critical works investigating to some degree the role of the city of St. Petersburg in the novels of Gogol, Dostoevsky and Bely. In Bely's case particularly, stylistic analysis of his Petersburg prevails.

In Russia in the 1920s, N. P. Antsiferov wrote a number of studies devoted to the image of St. Petersburg in Russian literature, one of them being entitled Peterburg Dostoevskogo. In 1923, Ivanov-Razumnik published in his Veršiny a study of Bely's Petersburg, the main preoccupation of which is the rhythm of Bely's prose and a comparison of the 1916 and 1922 editions of Bely's novel.

In the West, Donald Fanger's Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism (1965) discusses at some length the theme of the city in the novels of Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky and Gogol. There is also a short study written by the Swedish scholar, Nils Åke Nilsson, and published in French under the title Gogol et Pétersbourg (1954). In this, emphasis is put on the influence of other European literatures on Gogol while he was writing his "Petersburg Stories."

As Gerald Janecek states in his Introduction to a book of articles on Bely, the writer "is not well known in the West in spite of his being one of the most important innovators in prose and literary theory of the twentieth century."[2] This book is an anthology of papers read at the International Symposium on Andrei Bely held at the University of Kentucky in March, 1975. This first gathering ever dedicated to Bely is proof of a recent surge of interest in the West in this writer, the neglect of whom is partly due to the difficulty of translating the Symbolist into English

and other languages. There is also evidence that Bely is enjoying a long overdue recognition in his own country, where a new edition of Petersburg was published in 1978.

The author of this dissertation has therefore attempted to make an original contribution to knowledge by uniting in one study three writers whose common denominator is the image of the city of St. Petersburg in their novels, and thereby shedding more light on this phenomenon of Russian literature.

FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1] A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin, edited and translated by Mirra Ginsburg (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 243-244.

[2] Andrey Bely, A Critical Review, edited by Gerald Janeçek (The University Press of Kentucky, 1978), p. 1.

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