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## Ontological Motives of Home-Antihome in the Novel *Demons* by F.M. Dostoevsky

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**Abstract.** Dostoevsky realizes the motive of home in an inseparable antinomical connection with the motive of homelessness, which is opposite to it, artistically embodied in the idea of familylessness, wandering, Chaos, and Entropy. The relevance of the study of the motives of home and homelessness lies in the gradual reconstruction of the author's concept of the “saving future”. In this article, the motives of home and homelessness are considered in several aspects, including toponymic, functional, archetypal and ontological. We tried to demonstrate the implementation of the stated motives at the level of such categories as faith-unbelief, Heaven and Hell, brotherhood and isolation. In the novel *Demons*, the idea of national soil and separation from it, the possible salvation of a person and the consequences that await society in the event of the dominance of “demons” and the loss of the primordial “brotherhood” – the intimate connection between people, is consistently developed. From this point of view, the motives of home and homelessness become significant for the novel space. The archetype of home contains the idea of a saving “own” circle, which is opposed to the outside world with its hostility, spontaneity, and disaster. Everything that is located outside this circle are elements belonging to the anti-world, and therefore their effect on the microcosm of home is destructive. Analysis of the text confirms that the archetype of Dostoevsky's home is destabilized. Its tightness is broken; the boundaries protecting the interior are permeable. The motive of the home is typically supplanted by the motive of homelessness, and therefore it is natural to consider this motive couple in its antinomical continuity. In the above study, the motives of home and homelessness are considered as ontological: they are associated with the existential level of the work, due to which it is possible to establish the ontological status of the actants and determine the relationship with the so-called initial idea.

**Keywords:** ontology, motive, antinomy, archetype, motives of home and homelessness, *Demons*, Dostoevsky

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## Онтологические мотивы дома и бездомья в романе Ф.М. Достоевского «Бесы»

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**Аннотация.** Настоящая статья посвящена осмыслению мотивной пары «дом-бездомье» в романе Ф.М. Достоевского «Бесы». Достоевский реализует мотив дома в неразрывной антиномической связи с полярным ему мотивом бездомья, художественно воплощенном в идее бессемейности, бездомности, скитальничества, Хаоса, Энтропии. Актуальность исследования мотивов дома и бездомья состоит в том, чтобы поэтапно реконструировать авторскую концепцию «спасительного будущего» и приложить ее к современности. В настоящей статье мотивы дома-бездомья рассмотрены в нескольких аспектах, включая собственно топонимический, функциональный, архетипический и онтологический. Мы попытались продемонстрировать реализацию заявленных мотивов на уровне таких категорий, как вера-безверие, Рай и Ад, братство и обособленность. В романе «Бесы» последовательно развита идея о национальной почве и отрыве от нее, о возможном спасении человека и тех последствиях, которые ожидают общество в случае засилья «бесов» и утраты исконного «братства» – сокровенной связи между людьми. С этой точки зрения, мотивы дома и бездомья становятся для романного пространства ключевыми. В архетипике дома заложена идея о спасительном «своем» круге, которому противопоставлен внешний мир с его враждебностью, стихийностью, гибельностью. Все, что расположено за пределами этого круга, – элементы, принадлежащие антимиру, а потому их воздействие на микрокосмос дома губительно. Анализ текста подтверждает, что архетип дома у Достоевского дестабилизирован. Нарушается его герметичность; границы, защищающие внутреннее, оказываются проницаемыми. Мотив дома зачастую вытеснен мотивом бездомья, а потому закономерно рассматривать эту мотивную пару в ее антиномической неразрывности. В приведенном исследовании мотивы дома и бездомья рассматриваются как онтологические: они связаны с бытийным уровнем произведения, благодаря чему возможно установить онтологический статус актантов и определить соотношение с так называемой исходной идеей.

**Ключевые слова:** онтология, мотив, антиномия, архетип, мотив дома-бездомья, «Бесы», Достоевский

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## **Introduction**

The humanities differ in their specifics from the natural and technical sciences. If the former are aimed at cognizing some external object for the purpose of certain procedural manipulations with it, the latter presuppose the transformation of the figure, who immerses himself in humanitarian knowledge, i.e. a philologist and a philosopher. Philology is initially devoted to the transformation of the personality, it is aimed at studying the object in an attempt to restructure the subject in an external way.

The idea of personality transformation should be returned to the area of humanitarian knowledge, but not so much in the “educational process” as in the act of meeting with the Demiurge of the artistic universe, who imprinted his way of finding himself in the fabric of the work and left the “Ariadne thread” in the text for those who follow behind him deliberately.

### **Setting preconditions for working with Dostoevsky’s texts**

#### ***Installation 1***

The first and most important condition for working with text (and with Dostoevsky's texts, in particular) is a condition for not only slow but also repeated reading. The first reading of a work is always a “hasty” reading. The flow of the plot that captivates the reader is perceived more or less holistically if the mechanism of identifying oneself with one of the heroes is triggered. This is a natural process: the main task of art is to provide a person with experience without having this experience in reality. Art deals not with knowledge, but with experience as sensually perceived: we can feel what falling in love is, having read a book and never being in love; to experience the bitterness of loss (freedom, family, life) without knowing it in practice.

Over the millennia, art has been created as a mediator between the world given to us in experience and the world that is empirically “absent”. It was intended to speak about things that are inaccessible to us, in the language of analogies and in all possible ways. Hence comes the irreducibility of the myths centered around a certain hero to a single plot. The first reading is necessary as a stage of acquaintance with the text, but not as a stage of understanding it: in its process, we choose from the gist of the work what we need directly, which can satisfy our needs, mirror ourselves. Repeated reading allows us to see the text not as our subjective projection, but as an objective reality. The teacher at this stage is faced with a methodological difficulty: he must induce the student to read the work repeatedly, while the first acquaintance with the text is not always fully realized. The only way to interact with the audience in this case is explanatory. Students need to be explained that reading a work just once means not understanding it.

When reading a text, mutual transformation is inevitable – we influence the text, the text affects us. When we reread, we learn to pay attention to details and make sense of them. In a truly fictional work, there is not a single detail that could

be extracted without the risk of changing the meaning of the whole. Each element of the text is linked to other elements; realizing its significance, we delve into the understanding of the complex of units correlated with it.

Thus, in the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* a stone appears in a stable way that works at all levels of the work (including that at the level of onomasticon: Peter, Petrovich, Pierrot). By omitting this segment, we will get a lacuna and will perceive this concept differently than the author intended for us. It should be especially noted that Dostoevsky insisted on “honest reading”, in which the intentions that are laid down in the work by the writer are actualized.

Dostoevsky constructs the artistic world in such a way that the reader cannot avoid his “cornerstones”. This task of conveying meaning is achieved through multiple repetitions of key elements. And this, in turn, is already the level of the motivational structure of the work.

When we talk about repetitions, we mean that everything significant is objectified in a work several times, when it is impossible to ignore a certain element. This connection of episodes is often scattered in the architectonics of the whole, not “welded” by the plot sequence.

## ***Installation 2***

The movement of research interpretation can be either considered as a movement “outward,” that is, towards a wide intertextual field, for which, within the framework of poststructuralist discourse, “the author is dead,” or as a movement “inward,” towards an eisegetic reading. In the second case, we are not interested in those “super-meanings” that can be communicated to the text additionally, but those that are present in the text in accordance with the author’s position.

The direction of such reading should be chosen in advance.

## ***Discussion***

**Analysis of the motives of home and homelessness in Dostoevsky’s novel *Demons*: a procedural stage.** Having established the ontological status of a motive as an element that is persistently repeated in a work, repeatedly, forming its bearing axis, we will invite students to analyze those fragments of texts in which the house is materially objectified. We made a text selection of those parts of the narrative where the house is directly present. The analysis of these fragments requires the ability to navigate freely in the space of novels, the ability to establish a connection between elements and the artistic whole. Students should not only “see” the concept, but also attribute it with additional information:

– how is the motive of the house related to the actant structure of the work? Who is the person acting in relation to the space of the house?

– what is the predictiveness of the episode? What actions are performed by the actant in relation to the investigated space?

- what is the consequential nature of these actions?
- can we talk about the isomorphism of the house (as a locus) and its inhabitant? What conclusions follow from this?
- what does home (or homelessness) tell us about the character and his functions?
- what is the ontological content of the motives of home and homelessness, predetermined by the text? What generalizations can these motives lead to in their “development”?

At the procedural stage, students are invited to compose a commentary for each of the fragments containing answers to the questions we posed.

The core of the novel *Demons* was “The Beheading”, which was not included in its lifetime edition. Initially, *Demons* were published in the “Russian Bulletin”, where they received unfavorable reviews from critics: “mystical delirium”, “Augean cattle yard”, “hospital for the insane”. Half a century later, the novel was considered prophetic. S.N. Bulgakov wrote an article “Russian Tragedy” in 1914, in which he recognized it as a religious drama. The critic noted that the issue of religious understanding has become a key issue for this work. At the beginning of the XXth century, *Demons* was viewed as an anti-political text that denigrated the idea of revolution. Subsequently, as L. Saraskina convincingly proves [1], this opinion changed. Each country, each culture went through the stage of “devilry” in its history: over time, the novel had multiple literary “doubles” in India, Japan, Latin America.

In 1869 Dostoevsky embarked on the realization of his idea. The writer at that time is forty-five years old; he works in the “system of everlasting duty”. He takes an advance from the publisher and gets to work. By this time, the ideas of the novels *Atheism* and *The Life of the Great Sinner* had already been formed. The writer is interested in the reasons for a person's loss of his moral principles.

Dostoevsky reads many Russian newspapers every day; in the Dresden reading room, he receives a variety of information about Russian life. One of the articles that attracted his attention told about the terrible murder of the young I.I. Ivanov, student of the Petrovskaya Academy. The reason for his murder was believed to be his “disorder” in the circle in which he occupied a certain place (“People's Repression”). The members of the circle saw him as a threat to themselves. He became the prototype of Shatov. The members of this circle were bound by blood and a common “political paste”. This situation amazed Dostoevsky. In an underground circle, he saw a “monster” that could grow to unprecedented proportions.

In the same period, S.G. Nechaev with his mandate signed by Bakunin arrived in Moscow. This mandate was nothing more than a bluff. Nechaev wrote about the program of the people's revolution, designed to get rid of false teachers, informers, embezzlers. The program was set forth in the “Catechism of a Revolutionary”. A revolutionary, according to Nechaev, despises public opinion and lives only for an idea. He lives in the world with the aim of its complete and speedy destruction. The presence of family and friendships is unacceptable. “Our

business is terrible, complete, widespread destruction”. In Moscow, Nechaev managed to organize a circle of like-minded people. Dostoevsky’s imagination allowed the writer to see the terrible consequences of the emergence of such circles. The writer tried to understand where those “monsters of terror” came from. Anatomizing the soul of the Russian underground, Dostoevsky managed to get to such secret places where even the revolutionary leaders themselves did not want to investigate.

In the spring of 1870, the work began. Dostoevsky called it a pamphlet on the nihilists. The start was not specified; the writer had to start all over again. The image of a resolutely new hero was being formed – Nikolai Vsevolodovich Stavrogin. “Nihilists”, according to the writer, “are not worth literature”.

Stavrogin for Dostoevsky is a “strange character”. This is an aristocrat of thirty years old with vicious inclinations. He is gifted with the talent to attract people, the talent of “enslavement”. The people enslaved by him become his “spiritual slaves”. The very principle of its existence evokes “mystical delight” in others. He’s as charming as a demon; “with the most beautiful face”; “sarcastic like Mephistopheles”. The image of Stavrogin expanded the framework of the anti-nihilistic novel.

A son comes to Verkhovensky Sr.; and Stavrogin comes to Varvara Petrovna. The former intends to put together an underground group and create riots; the latter pursues other goals.

The world of the novel *Demons* is a “sick” city. Rumors, gossips, secret thoughts have their inside out. The ball ends in fire, the wedding ends in a funeral. People exist in a fictitious reality. Characters are inhabitants of an unrealistic life. They are phantoms who prevent others from building their homes, families, and future. The motive of destruction becomes pervasive. In the world of *Demons* there are no happy marriages, happy families. Children die in infancy. A person does not know his limits – the limits of his family, home, faith. It exists in infinity. An unspoken struggle for power begins between Verkhovensky and Stavrogin.

Stavrogin is Dostoevsky’s “great sinner”. He arrives in the city with the aim of printing a confession of his atrocities: how he married (as part of a bet) to Khromonozhka, how he corrupted a twelve-year-old girl. But he wants to confess not for the purpose of repentance, but for the sake of shocking: he seeks to shake society.

Dostoevsky hopes that his heroes will “be resurrected”. But these hopes are not being justified.

The novel *Demons* is usually regarded as a work-pamphlet on the revolutionary movement through the artistic mode, in which “unintentionally” a satirical interpretation is given. Nevertheless, it is in this work that eschatology is most fully developed, in the power of which a society affected by the disease of immorality turned out to be. The title of the novel is an essential hermeneutic message, indicating the struggle unfolding in the souls of people between the world of harmony and chaos, good and evil. And if Cosmos is Russian soil and Orthodoxy, then Chaos is a dead Western world in which living life is opposed by

the desire for egoistic comfort. Russia is the only place (and this is most fully embodied in *The Brothers Karamazov*), in which the connection with the national soil, accumulating the idea of the victory of harmony over entropy, has been preserved. The hero is torn away from this soil, and therefore death awaits him. The opposition of Orthodoxy to Catholicism in the novel is of fundamental importance. The contrast of the primordially “own” space to someone else’s (the world of the West) acquires ethical meaning.

It is no coincidence that the epigraph to the novel is preceded by Pushkin’s poem “Demons”, which echoes the central ideas of the novel. Let us recall the pretext, replete with symbols. Rushing clouds, the motive of a raging blizzard hints not only at a natural cataclysm, but also at the loss of any landmarks (in Pushkin’s discourse, the motive of a blizzard is associated with the idea of a popular uprising, transformations in society or, as in *Belkin’s Tales*, with providential theme: the element becomes a force that redirects the lives of heroes in a new direction). The moon symbol is associated with the motive of turbidity, poor visibility; another motive, this time psychological, is the motive of fear of an uncontrollable element. The road is lost. “We got lost! What should we do!” In the revelry of the blizzard, the poetic persona sees the whirling of demons, which lead him astray. There are many demons. Howling, knocking off the trail, they prevent the hero from seeing the path through the plains. The anti-Christian subtext is strengthened: images of a boggart and a witch appear in the poem. The demons are manifested as a “legion”: swarm after swarm they circle in the heights and tear the heart of the poetic persona. Before us is a picture of absolute loss, loss of direction, uncertainty of the outcome. In a raging blizzard, it is impossible to discern the path to the house of salvation.

Pushkin’s pretext was fully assimilated by Dostoevsky. Working on the image of nihilists, the writer endows it with the features of Pushkin’s “blizzard”: it is a destructive force that knows no end and no calculus, which makes all landmarks – historical, ethical, ontological – difficult to distinguish, “muddy”. It is no coincidence that “demons” tear the heart not only of Pushkin’s hero, but also of Dostoevsky himself, who is fully aware of what the unbridled demonic element can lead to. It is symptomatic that in Pushkin’s poem there is a motive of the road (dangerous, disastrous space), while the motive of the house remains desirable, but “invisible”: the hero seeks to get home, but this is impossible for him. Home is a saving space, but it is inaccessible, just as cleansing and salvation are inaccessible for the heroes of *Demons*. Moreover, homelessness is the path they have chosen once and for all: they do not need a material house and a spiritual house (“faith”).

Movement in *Demons* goes from the cosmic to the chaotic. The “Golden Age”, which Stavrogin dreams of under the impression of the picture “Assis and Galatea” he has seen, is left far behind. This blissful archipelago of tranquility, framed by wonderful landscapes, concentrates the idea of human well-being and paradise on earth. It is significant that Stavrogin’s thoughts in this episode were interrupted by the appearance of the “red spider” – an inhabitant of Dostoevsky’s

so beloved corners, and then – by the “feverish” (that is, also red) Matryoshka, whose life was so cruelly and immorally ruined.

Stavrogin’s soul is a repository of evil, local chaos, the core of which is the revolutionary activity of Verkhovensky’s criminal circle. Moral chaos also reigns among “demons”, underground people. Free love, debauchery, mutual denunciations, betrayal, sacrifice of the innocent and bloody “bonds” between members of the community have been elevated into a cult. The whole essence of the revolutionary idea is reduced to the “denial of honor”. Karmazinov’s words about the “right to dishonor” delight Verkhovensky. According to another member of the circle, Shigalev, personal freedom is granted to only one tenth of humanity; all others must be turned into a “herd”. When Lyamshin concludes that the rest can be blown up into the air, Shigalev agrees, as if expecting the speedy destruction of the world. Verkhovensky’s ideological idea is that everything should collapse – both the state and its morality. The motive of chaos is intertwined with the motive of general death. A “time of troubles” is coming in the city, constructing general chaos. The apogee of this becomes a holiday arranged by the governor and having the features of an ominous carnival. Demonic buffoonery takes the place of the usual “gaiety”. Pranks become intolerable. They are based on a symbolic substitution of values (pornography is placed on the saleswoman of the Gospel, they go to look at blessed Semyon Yakovlevich out of boredom and for the sake of ridicule).

The “crappiest” people begin to criticize “all that is sacred”. A “fire in the minds” naturally leads to a “fire on the roofs”, a series of deaths and suicides. This is a catastrophe, comparable to the approach of the end of times, presented in famous mythological subjects (such as “Velva’s Prophecy”). Against the background of these events, the development of the antihero – the great sinner Nikolai Stavrogin is given. It was on it, as N.N. Dostoevsky wrote to Strakhov, the whole pathos of the novel is concentrated.

Stavrogin is a man within whom monstrous extremes are in conflict. He is noble and “dirty”. Its tainted nature is superimposed on the great impulses of the mind and heart, and the result is just disorder. Outwardly, Stavrogin is an amazingly handsome young man, capable of charming:

“He was a very handsome young man, about twenty-five years old, and, I confess, impressed me. I was expecting to meet some dirty ragamuffin, drunk from debauchery and giving off vodka. On the contrary, he was the most graceful gentleman I have ever seen, extremely well-dressed, behaving as only a gentleman accustomed to the most exquisite goodness could behave. I was not the only one who was surprised: the whole city was also surprised, which, of course, already knew the entire biography of Mr. Stavrogin, and even with such details that it was impossible to imagine where they could have come from, and, what is more surprising, half of which turned out to be true <...> Varvara Petrovna looked at him with pride, but constantly with concern. He lived with us for half a year – sluggish, quiet, rather sullen; appeared in society and with unswerving attention performed all our provincial etiquette. The governor, on his father’s side, he was



akin, and, in his house, he was accepted as a close relative. But several months passed, and suddenly the beast showed its claws” [1. P. 46].

Already in this fragment, the motive of the mask appears, and the direct nomination of Stavrogin is also named: “the beast”, which directly hints at his essence of antichrist.

The demonic nature of Stavrogin finds a way out in truly terrible passions that fight in him with heroism. From tormented by faith, in response to which unbelief is born. Undoubtedly, Stavrogin is one of the “superfluous people” in Russian literature.

This is an egoist and an idle person, for whom even caring for another (Khromonozhka – Gimpy) is nothing more than self-indulgence. Intertextual calls bring him closer to Hamlet and Shakespeare’s Prince Harry. However, Dostoevsky debunks the Byronic hero in Stavrogin, as well as the hero in general. He is not a fabulous “Tsarevich Ivan” and not a “Prince”: Khromonozhka pronounces an anathema on him, calling him Grishka Otrepiev. It is no coincidence that the words about imposture belong to Khromonozhka, who symbolizes the national soil in the novel. Detachment from the soil is the realization of the motive of homelessness both at a deep psychological and social level. As Vyacheslav Ivanov noted, Stavrogin is a traitor, incapable of being faithful to either Christ, Satan, or the revolution, or Khromonozhka [2]. Therefore, the end of Judas awaits him:

“A citizen of the canton of Uri was hanging right outside the door. On the table was a piece of paper with the words in pencil: ‘Don’t blame anyone, but myself’. Right there on the table lay a hammer, a bar of soap, and a large nail, apparently in reserve. A strong silk cord, obviously pre-arranged and chosen, on which Nikolai Vsevolodovich hanged himself, was greasy with soap. Everything meant premeditation and consciousness until the last minute” [1. P. 646].

Paradoxical as it may seem, a man of a broad mind, Stavrogin is devoid of ideas. And it is not the demon that is the essence of his personality, but the “ugly little imp” of the “failed” ones. The hero’s double is the “swindler” Pyotr Verhovensky, a trickster.

In the novel *Demons*, the motives of home and homelessness can be considered in the following aspects: 1) house-dwelling; 2) family home; 3) home-spiritual space; 4) antihome [3]. The novel presents a vast number of external characteristics of the dwellings – “the estate of Stepan Trofimovich”, “the magnificent suburban estate of the Stavrogins”, the “wooden house” of Virginsky. Some heroes are deprived of their own home and live like parasites. This is a detail of the general disorder in the world of heroes. Such are Verkhovensky, Virginsky. Most of the heroes just “lodge”. Interesting in this respect is the house of Filippov, housing Kirillov, Shatov, Liputin, Lebyadkins. This is a kind of “antihome”, neglected and unsightly, where it is “wet, dirty”. Its lower floor is “completely empty, with boarded up windows”. This space is inhabited by people who are characterized by anti-behavior: Ignat and Maria Lebyadkin. The space of Filippov’s house is a hostile space that cannot protect the heroes from the demonic

invasion of the anti-world. “Demons” invade the lives of its inhabitants. Nikolai Stavrogin destroys Shatov’s family and seduces him with the idea of the divinity of the people. Kirillov, on the contrary, tries to seduce with the idea of divinity of “every individual person”. Stavrogin deceives each of the heroes, disrupting the flow of their lives. Another “demon” – Peter Verkhovensky – in his desire to enslave the minds and hearts of people, kills Shatov and becomes involved in Kirillov’s suicide.

The heroes’ lack of “their own” home is a hallmark of their disorder in the world.

Despite the fact that the novel contains the terms of kinship (mother, father, brother, sister), the heroes of the novel still fail to find a family. Many of them are deprived of parental care (Verkhovensky, Katorjny, Stavrogin). Some heroes (Stavrogin, Verkhovensky) have their own home, but do not need it. They live in constant motion (it is symptomatic that the author uses the words “loitering”, “traveled” in relation to both heroes). Their way of life can be defined as wandering. The house, which provides protection, the intimate space of “their”, is not familiar to the heroes. Since childhood, the heroes are brought up in incomplete families, “with aunts, somewhere in the wilderness”.

Thus, Peter Verkhovensky, revealed in the novel as a political ambitious and murderer, experiences more than one shock in his prehistory. This is an unfortunate orphan who since childhood knows neither father nor mother, is brought up by aunts in a remote province; he was sent by his father “by mail” out of sight and was robbed by him. Having raised Stavrogin, Liza, Dasha, Verkhovensky Sr. does not take any part in the development of his own son and saw him only twice in his life.

“His first wife was a frivolous girl from our province, whom he married in his very first and still reckless youth, and it seems, for other, partly already delicate reasons. She died in Paris, having been apart from him for the last three years and leaving him with a five-year-old son, ‘the fruit of the first, joyful and not yet darkened love,’ as once escaped in my presence from the sad Stepan Trofimovich. The chick was sent from the very beginning to Russia, where he was brought up all the time in the arms of some distant aunts, somewhere in the wilderness” [1. P. 23].

Old man Verkhovensky didn’t just send his son away; he did his best to “rob him”.

The narrator tells the following about the relationship between Varvara Petrovna and her son, Nikolai Stavrogin:

“There was another person on earth to whom Varvara Petrovna was attached no less than to Stepan Trofimovich – her only son, Nikolai Vsevolodovich Stavrogin” [1. P. 43]. Stavrogin is incapable of genuine feelings for his mother. Their relationship is the inability to show their love on the part of the mother and the inability to love on the part of the son.

The disintegration of the family entails the collapse of the house as a value, leaves an imprint on the further life of the heroes, forever transforming their

worldview. Knowing that his mother loves him, Stavrogin does not respond to her with mutual affection. Verkhovensky openly scoffs at his father, now and then calling him a sponger and a “sentimental buffoon”. In response, the father curses his son, describing him as a “monster”. The house as a place of existence and rooting becomes unnecessary for the heroes. They embark on a journey in search of a better life:

“Our prince traveled for more than three years, so he was almost forgotten in the city. But we knew through Stepan Trofimovich that he had traveled all over Europe, had even been to Egypt and visited Jerusalem; then got attached somewhere to some kind of scientific expedition to Iceland and really visited Iceland” [1. P. 63].

They are looking for “their business” in life, being completely cut off from the national soil and from the people. According to Nichiporov [4], the wandering of heroes is a metaphysical wandering. Wanderers are in a state of inescapable spiritual crisis. They are, in a sense, sufferers, trying to justify their own existence on earth by searching for new ideas (including socialist ones), but realizing that they are nothing more than a blade of grass in the stream of history. World harmony, which, according to Verkhovensky Jr., consists in universal equality and impersonality, is achievable only through great turmoil, capable of sweeping away all the foundations of the established world order. The hero intends to follow the path of complete destruction of harmony: “to strangle every genius in infancy”, to arrange denunciation, drunkenness, general debauchery. Having chosen the demonic, the heroes invade the innermost space of others – their homes – and destroy them. Stavrogin, who is out of his home for most of his romance time, indulges in debauchery and intends to eradicate the very idea of marriage and family by marrying Khromonozhka. This is an act of his self-punishment – and at the same time, an act of sin in its essence, since it destroys the life of not only an orphan, but also a holy fool. With the advent of Stavrogin, the Lebyadkin family disintegrates from the inside. Maddened by love, Khromonozhka finally loses her mind, Ignat becomes a drunkard, begins to beat her sister and starve her to death. Both heroes will face not only physical, but also moral death. The new house, into which the brother and sister move after two “disgusting rooms”, has not yet been sheathed with planks and is located “across the river” – in the mythopoetic reading it is the otherworldly space of death, the transition to another world.

The family of Governor von Lebke is also based on self-interest and calculation. The space of Dostoevsky’s home and anti-home is dynamic; it expands to the scale of an entire city, and then to the whole of Russia. The city, like the house, becomes the epicenter of Chaos, turmoil, fire, and murder. The notion of a house is substituted for the heroes with an “anti-home”. Verkhovensky and his demonic five seek to shake society to its foundations, turning each of its members into “disgusting scum”. The homelessness of the heroes is realized not only in the motive of inner loneliness, but also in their understanding of the house as an alien space. Whereas in *The Brothers Karamazov* there were forces of

different polarity – Harmony and Chaos, the entropic idea of the Demons reached its apogee in the novel.

The home accumulates in *Demons* mortal motives, which are actualized by the appearance of demons, embodying the idea of world evil. This evil, as N. Lossky wrote [5], eats through human souls. Dostoevsky's home always expresses the position of the hero in his relationship with the world. At the archetypal level, the image of the home is intended to develop the idea of stability, nepotism and well-being. This is a purely intimate space of "one's own", which is opposed to an external hostile world. However, in *Demons* the tightness of the house is broken. Nothing can protect the heroes from the invasion of an ominous chaotic force, because the inhabitants of a dysfunctional house themselves are endowed with it. The elder Verkhovensky does not have his own home, he lives as a rookie with General Stavrogin, occupying a small outbuilding standing in the garden. The position of this hero is "attachment", he does not have his own living space. Filippov's house is a former tavern (the motive of a common place with its characteristic smells). It consists of two "nasty rooms" with "smoky windows" (the motive of impaired vision, inability to see as such), with "dirty" hanging scraps of wallpaper. The gates of this house are locked, and the house itself is dark and old.

"The door to the Lebyadkins was only closed, not locked, and we entered freely. Their entire room consisted of two disgusting small rooms, with smoky walls, on which dirty wallpaper literally hung in tatters. Once there was a tavern for several years, until the owner Filippov moved it to a new house. The rest of the rooms, which had been under the tavern, were now locked, and these two went to Lebyadkin. The furniture consisted of simple benches and board tables, except for one old armchair without a handle. In the second room, in the corner, there was a bed under a chintz blanket, which belonged to Mademoiselle Lebyadkina, while the captain himself, lying down for the night, fell to the floor every time, often in what he was. Everywhere it was crumbled, dirty, soaked; a large, thick, wet rag lay in the first room in the middle of the floor, and right there, in the same puddle, an old worn-out shoe. It was evident that no one was doing anything here; stoves are not heated, food is not cooked; they didn't even have a samovar, as Shatov told in more detail. The captain and his sister arrived completely beggar and, as Liputin said, at first, he really went to other houses to beg; but, unexpectedly receiving money, he immediately started drinking and was completely crazy with the wine, so that he was no longer up to the economy" [1. P. 148]. In the above fragment, everything points to homelessness, untidiness, and general ill-being. Nobody does anything; even the samovar, the symbol of the home, is emphatically absent here.

After the Lebyadkin family moved to the District (which we can consider as a different world), the windows of the first floor were boarded up. The new Lebyadkin house is a newly built structure, small and secluded.

"The house, that Nikolai Vsevolodovich came to, stood in a deserted corner between fences with vegetable gardens behind it, literally on the very edge of the

city. It was a completely secluded small wooden house, just rebuilt and not yet sheathed with boards. In one of the windows the shutters were deliberately not locked and there was a candle on the windowsill – apparently, with the aim of serving as a beacon for the late guest expected for today <...>. Nikolai Vsevolodovich looked around; the room was tiny, low; the most necessary furniture, wooden chairs and a sofa, also of a completely new craft, without upholstery and without pillows, two linden tables, one by the sofa, and the other in the corner, covered with a tablecloth, something all overwhelmed and covered with a clean napkin on top. And the whole room was apparently kept very clean. Captain Lebyadkin had not been drunk for eight days; his face was somehow swollen and yellow, his gaze was restless, curious and obviously perplexed: it was too noticeable that he himself did not yet know what tone he could use to speak, and which one would be more profitable to hit directly” [1. P. 260].

Housewarming in Russian ritual poetry was often equated with death. The detail is also important – on the other side of the river, that is, beyond the border of life, which dooms the heroes to a quick death.

Another hero of the novel, Virginsky, does not have his own home. He lives in his wife’s house on Muravyinaya Street (the motive of the anthill as a common place), which is described as one-story and wooden.

“Virginsky lived in his own house, that is, in the house of his wife, in Muravyinaya Street. The house was wooden, one-story, and there were no strangers in it. Under the guise of the host’s birthday there were up to fifteen guests; but the party was not at all like an ordinary provincial birthday party. From the very beginning of their cohabitation, the Virginsky spouses mutually, once and for all, that it is absolutely stupid to gather guests on the name day, and ‘there is nothing to be happy about at all’. In a few years, they somehow managed to completely alienate themselves from society. He, although a man with abilities and not at all ‘some poor’, seemed to everyone for some reason an eccentric, who fell in love with solitude and, moreover, spoke ‘haughtily’. Madame Virginskaya herself, who was engaged in the midwife profession, was already the one who stood below everyone else on the social ladder; even lower than the priest, despite the officer’s rank of her husband. The humility corresponding to her title was not noticed at all in her” [1. P. 387].

Dostoevsky’s anthill house is a significant image. It is opposed to how a person can and should live.

An anthill is a house “for a thousand years”, in which people are invited to exist like ants. Dostoevsky believes that socialism is trying to organize the human community in the image of the ant, which has a complex structure, where each performs a specific task for the benefit of the “common cause”. In a sense, an anthill is a single organism, but this does not suit Dostoevsky. Why (proceeding from his own idea of the ultimate goal of human existence in total unity)? An ant is a part, an element of a multifunctional machine, with the help of which a certain work is performed. Denying the anthill, Dostoevsky protests against the use of man as an exclusively functional unit, that is, as a slave performing the same

operation throughout his life. This image is a projection on the use of human resources in the mechanical production of the XIXth century. And this is nothing but Hell. Focusing on Dante, Dostoevsky recognizes the infinite repetition of “fanaticism” perpetrated on the sinner for hellish torments. Any mechanistic repetition, according to the writer, belongs to the hellish spheres of life. The motive of homelessness, in turn, indicates the lack of a fundamental basis for life.

The subject system of the novel emphasizes the annihilation of the theme of the family as a full-fledged unit of society. The heroes live in single-parent families, where either parents or children are absent. We know about Stavrogin’s mother that she loves her son very much, but she is also afraid of him, looks “like a slave” with him. Ignat Lebyadkin whips his beautiful sister. Peter Verkhovensky feels nothing for his father except contempt and calculation. He intends to drive the old man to despair for the sake of goals known to him alone.

“Demons” intend to eradicate the current way of life not only at the level of family values: the dwellings of people themselves, the repositories of their inner life, are being destroyed. During a fire in the District, an entire street was destroyed: all the buildings, all wooden, are on fire.

Fire begins to devour the roofs – that part of the architectonics of the house, which in the view of the ancient Slavs was associated with the Cosmos, the idea of shelter, protection, orderliness. It is no coincidence that Dostoevsky emphasizes that fire is in the “minds of people”: the roof is symbolically connected with the “head”, and demons are ruled by nothing more than a cold calculation to shake the ideas of society.

The destruction of someone else’s house does not pass without a trace for the destroyer. So, Stavrogin, who destroyed more than one life, turns out to be completely devastated. According to I.A. Ilyin [6. P. 321], this beautiful outwardly and dead inside hero has no choice but to leave: he has no place among the living.

It is significant that the characters of *Demons* often look out the window. The window is the eye of the house, a metonymic correlate with the outside world. The motive of the window signifies doubts in the souls of the heroes, their search for answers to life circumstances, however, the resolution of mental conflicts does not occur. So, Liza Tushina stands at the window, looking at the glow, and decides to tear Stavrogin away from herself, feeling evil in herself and not wanting to bring even greater confusion into her soul. Poor mocked Matryoshka is standing at the window on the eve of her death. The heroes who are inside the house do not belong to this space: their gaze is focused on “other worlds”, they have already made a transition to another being. Kirillov’s corpse is found at the window. Once again, the tightness of the house turns out to be broken by the motive of the permeability of “one’s own space” to the outer space. Chaos invades the space of privacy, turning the house into an anti-home.

Another important motive associated with the semantics of the house in Dostoevsky is the motive of the border. Heroes of *Demons* now and then cross the threshold and enter the door. M. The symbolism of the threshold not only an upcoming meeting for the heroes, but also a crisis, a turning point in life. On the

threshold, the debunking of “Prince” Stavrogin takes place, his dark nature is established (the essence of an owl, not a clear falcon) – Khromonozhka does not recognize him and calls him an imposter. The motive of the border is in the actualization of the image of Khromonozhka twice: she crosses the border of life, moving to the District, and is subjected to a violent death “at the door”:

“I was immediately told that the captain was found with his throat cut, dressed on a bench, and that they had stabbed him, probably dead drunk, so that he did not hear, but the blood came out of him ‘like from a bull’; that his sister Maria Timofeevna was all ‘stabbed’ with a knife, but was lying on the floor in the doorway, so that, it is true, she fought and fought with the murderer in reality. The maid, who had probably also woken up, had a completely pierced head. According to the owner’s stories, the captain had visited him drunk the day before, boasted and showed him a lot of money, up to two hundred rubles. An old tattered green captain’s wallet was found empty on the floor; but the chest of Maria Timofeevna was not touched, and the silver robe on the icon was not touched either; the captain’s dress, too, turned out to be intact. It was evident that the thief was in a hurry and there was a man who knew the captain’s business, he came for the same money and knew where it was. If the owner had not come running at that very moment, the firewood, having burst into flames, would probably have burned down the house, ‘and it would have been difficult to find out the truth from the burnt corpses’” [1. P. 498].

Crossing the threshold of the house of the governor von Lembke, Peter Verkhovensky brings disorder to the family. Having violated the sacred boundary of the house, the “demons” feel to be the masters of the new space. Verkhovensky, finding himself in the governor’s house, “lay down on the sofa”.

Dostoevsky’s threshold is a symbol that is directly related to the motive of the house. What is the threshold? This is the point of cohesion of space, which marks both entry into and exit from it. As a motive, the threshold actualizes the idea of crossing, meeting; it is the junction of the external and the internal. It prompts the actant to perform a specific action – the over-step. Crossing the threshold contains various possibilities: continuing the movement or stopping. In Chapter 8, Part 3 of *Demons*, the narrator leaves Kirillov, and a new meeting takes place at the gate. Chapter 9 marks the appearance of Lebyadkin, when the narrator lifts his leg over the high threshold of the gate. The threshold serves as a change of place in accordance with the transition to a new chapter.

The threshold is often used by Dostoevsky as a frame for setting the character and his further characterization. In a similar way, the first appearance of Nikolai Stavrogin is given, who stops at the door and looks around the meeting. However, this motive has much more connotations.

When Varvara Petrovna runs into Maria Timofeevna on the doorstep to the church, the border topos becomes the only place where the heroines can meet. The threshold of the church is the intersection of rationality and insanity, the border between the sacred and the secular. This is also the place where the mystery of the marriage between Stavrogin and Maria Timofeevna is exposed.

As the place of the gap, the threshold appears in the scene of Stavrogin's parting with Shatov. The scene of Lebyadkin's arrival at Shatov acquires the significance of the taboo topos of the border. Lebyadkin is forced to descend the stairs without saying what he wanted.

Symbolizing movement, crossing the border, Dostoevsky's threshold is often associated with the idea of immobility and stopping the moment. To cross a threshold means to commit an act of transition, which may be easy or impossible. This impossibility is connected with the motive of the fear of what can be expected on the other side of space or of what transformations this can lead to the overstepping.

Another metonymic representative of the house in the novel is the corner, the place of intersection of the horizontal and vertical, a kind of dead end, which also marks the dead end of the position occupied by the heroes. It is no coincidence that Shatov now and then "walks from corner to corner". Kirillov seeks inner solitude and "rests his eyes in the corner". Being at a dead end, the heroes are looking for a way out of this dead end, but they die.

"Gritting his teeth, he somehow lit the candlestick, put it back into the candlestick and looked around: at the window with the open window, with his feet in the right corner of the room, lay the corpse of Kirillov. The shot was fired at the right temple, and the bullet went up from the left side, piercing the skull. There was a splash of blood and brain. The revolver remained in the suicide's hand, which had dropped to the floor. Death had to happen instantly" [1. P. 597].

So, the destruction of the house, the locatives associated with the symbolism of the window, threshold, corner indicate that the actions of "demons" entail the onset of "times of troubles", the triumph of entropy over harmony. The heroes are cut off from the soil of the people, they are spiritually and morally homeless, and therefore doomed to death. But many innocent people are also involved in this death. The idea of homelessness lies in the fundamental for Dostoevsky thought of the disunity of all living things, the result of which is a local (at the level of the family) and global (at the level of a city, country, humanity) catastrophe.

One of the important ideas of the novel is the responsibility of each person for what happens in the world. It is no coincidence that Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky, in the end of the novel, laments that he is guilty about Stavrogin, that he ignored his own son Peter, that he pushed Pet'ka Katorjny into revenge with the insult inflicted on him. According to the opinion of Verkhovensky Sr., "everyone and everybody is to blame before the other".

What is our perception of the world of *Demons*? When speaking about the world, we include in this perception the landscape – the way the author speaks about nature [8]. In the context of world literature, we usually distinguish two types of landscape: nature as a decoration and nature as a person co-acting with characters, deepening the psychological parallelism between the external and the internal. It is worth noting that Dostoevsky rarely depicts nature, although his descriptions are still found. The fact is that they are not read by us precisely as descriptions of nature. When we see in *Demons* a sketch of a dark day, as if the



sun did not rise (after the murder of the Lebyadkins), we inevitably perceive the state of nature as a state of man. We see the same gloomy description in the image of the old Stavrogin park: a gloomy, dismal forest; the pines appear as muddy spots from the darkness; a gray rain is falling, transforming the surrounding space into an impersonal mass (before the murder of Shatov). This world is hostile and disastrous; the absence of light hints that darkness and fog dominate in the souls of the heroes (the motive of invisibility).

## Conclusion

The world in the novel *Demons* needs a transformation. The model of such a world was foreseen by Dostoevsky in his “Answer to the Russian Bulletin”, in which the writer refers to Pushkin’s “Egyptian Nights” and insists on the thesis that life must be filled with the essentials. The future has nothing; one must demand everything from the present. For the model of such a world, the motive of redemption becomes especially important. The novel presents the model of Peter Verkhovensky as an anti-world. Dostoevsky is convinced that one can come to true being only through non-being. The divine in a person can be restored through spiritual resistance to evil. Dostoevsky believes that the Russian people are led by the “spirit of life”. It is the force that prompts a person to go to the end and at the same time denies the end. It has a tireless confirmation of human existence and a denial of death; these are “rivers of living water” that can dry up with the onset of the apocalypse. But the writer who created his warning novel still believes in man.

The novel *Demons* is a story about a fatal disease that has engulfed more than one stratum of society, but all the people and their various representatives, whether they are holy fools (Khromonozhka and Semyon Yakovlevich), the robber Fedka Katorjny, “Russian boys”, guests at the ball, the crowd that tore Lisa to pieces. No one can be insured against misfortune, no one can count on safety. People of the social “bottom” are an indicator of the processes that are taking place in society, they concentrate both the vices and virtues of the time, the very spirit of the era. The lady’s dress is worn by the maid, the manners of the master are copied by the footman; Ignat Lebyadkin can live only in “servile service” to the owners, parasitizing on his sister. The people involved in the “whirling of demons” are spiritually sick and need healing, although they do not always see their sickness. This is the bitter and courageous truth that Dostoevsky told about the Russia of his day.

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