Father and Son: Legacy of Shame

And I couldn’t restrain myself... (14:38:41)
— FEDOR PAVLOVICH KARAMAZOV

In their third meeting, Smerdiakov tells Ivan: “You won’t want to ruin your life forever by taking such shame upon yourself in court. You’re like Fedor Pavlovich, most of all, sir; of all his children you came out resembling him most of all, having the same soul as him, sir” (15:68;632). However puzzling this statement seems at first, Ivan’s response is more so: “‘You’re not stupid,’ Ivan said as if struck; blood rushed to his face.” This enigmatic interchange begs for elucidation, but the implied solution, comparing the souls of father and son, poses further problems: while Fedor Pavlovich wears his soul on his sleeve, Ivan, in Mitya’s words, “is a grave” (14:101;110). In Book Eleven, however, Ivan’s creator plunges into Ivan’s soul and reveals a devil, a shabby sponger who shares much with Ivan’s father. Around fifty years old, punsters who specialize in dirty tricks (pakosti), Ivan’s devil and Fedor Pavlovich Karamazov are both exhibitionist liars who wield shame’s rhetoric to expose shame’s content. By examining these two liars and two punning anecdotes, I will expose the family connection, reveal how contrasting responses to shame shape the novel’s action, and show how Dostoevsky’s metaliterary play arouses a sense of pleasure that offsets but does not erase the shame affect he uses as a narrative strategy to implicate readers in the text’s ethical action.

In fashioning Ivan’s devil, Dostoevsky exuberantly plays with embodied shame. His devil is, in Ivan’s words, “the embodiment of myself, but only one side of me... of my thoughts and feelings, but only the most loathsome and stupid of them” (15:72;637). Although he represents those parts of himself that Ivan is ashamed to acknowledge, Ivan’s devil paradoxically provides Ivan with the occasion for self-knowledge and self-acceptance. By reflecting Ivan’s worst side to him, thus causing him to confront his shame, Ivan’s devil may, in fact, bring out the best in Ivan. As Robin Feuer Miller argues, Ivan’s devil may operate as a homeopathic dose. Shame positively applied may cure shame.
Ivan's devil appears suddenly, thus reflecting the experience of shame. By exposing Ivan to himself, the devil expresses and embodies Ivan's self-consciousness. Ivan desires to rid himself of his devil, thereby disowning painful aspects of himself. Yet Ivan's devil also tries to plant the seeds of belief in Ivan, thereby reconnecting him with others in a way that reorients him, healing his pain. The devil as Ivan's self-consciousness thus epitomizes shame's paradox. Ivan's devil represents Ivan's physical and metaphysical alienation. Yet, while his job entails division, Ivan's devil longs to join in the general “Hosanna.” Ivan's devil thus reflects Ivan's divided self: his sense of alienation as well as his desire for belief and community.2

Dostoevsky's narrator emphasizes Ivan's shame with his lengthy description of the devil's imaginatively embodied form, including his shabby dress. He does not have a watch, a hint of his relation to another possible world where chronometric earthly time is irrelevant.3 He does, however, have “a tortoise-shell lorgnette on a black ribbon,” a sign of his role as voyeur, a role that he shares with Ivan, who adopts “The Observer” as his journalistic nom de plume.

The devil reflects Ivan back to himself: “Indeed, you're angry at me because I did not present myself to you in some sort of red glow, ‘thundering and shining,’ with scorched wings, but appeared in such modest form. You're insulted, first, in your aesthetic feelings, and, second, in your pride: how, you ask, could such a banal \[poshlyi\] devil enter such a great man?” (15:81;647). The creator of the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan feels ashamed at having such a banal devil.

Ivan experiences equal shame at having such a banal father. Though the scenes that feature Ivan's devil (“The Devil. Ivan Fedorovich's Nightmare”) and his father (“The Old Buffoon”) are separated by nine books and five hundred pages, Dostoevsky keeps their similarities alive to readers. Most strikingly, the two are both called “buffoon” (shut), an epithet that is marked as the devil's in Russian folklore but as Fedor's in The Brothers Karamazov. When Ivan calls his devil “a buffoon,” he thus evokes the memory of his father. Ivan also refers to his devil as a “lie” (lozh'), thus recalling the memorable scene in which Fedor Pavlovich calls himself first a father, then a son, of lies (otets izhilsyn izhî). Fedor Pavlovich and the devil are both accused of exhibitionistic lying (vran'yo). The devil even refers to himself as an aged Khlestakov, the archetypal liar (vrun) of Russian literature, thereby accentuating the novel's metaliterary play. The devil's age (pushing fifty) makes him the same generation as Fedor Pavlovich (fifty-five). Fedor Pavlovich and Ivan's devil have both lived as spongers (Ivan also spent his childhood as a dependent, a shameful memory for him). The narrator further links them by associative grouping. He notes that Ivan's devil belongs to a type that encompasses bachelors or widowers; furthermore, when widowers have children, others raise them and the widowers gradually forget them—an apt description of
Fedor Pavlovich. Both Ivan’s devil and Fedor Pavlovich act as divisive spirits. Finally, both tell a number of stories that resonate thematically, further linking these figurative and literal embodiments of Ivan’s shame.

Dostoevsky uses the devil’s mimetic dimension to reflect Ivan’s shame, his thematic dimension to express Ivan’s internal divisions, and his synthetic dimension to entertain his readers and enhance their aesthetic pleasure. For instance, in elaborating the devil’s difficulties with incarnation, Dostoevsky evokes Gogol’s story “The Nose.” The devil’s mimetic attempt to thank the doctor who cured his cold by placing an appreciative announcement in the newspaper metaliterarily evokes Major Kovalev’s efforts to place an inquiry regarding his missing nose in the newspaper. Both stories take covert mimetic jabs at Russian censorship. Dostoevsky also thematically caricatures Ivan’s Russian liberalism: Ivan’s devil is rebuffed because believing in the devil is not progressive. By foregrounding the question of the devil’s objective existence, this incident mimetically reflects Ivan’s metaphysical doubts. The devil comically reduces the metaphysical issue to a social one by complaining about his shame: “And would you believe that incident still weighs on my heart. My best feelings, gratitude for instance, are formally forbidden solely because of my social position” (15:76;641). As a comic rhyme, this incident also reflects Ivan’s own painful experience with Katerina Ivanovna: his feelings of love are forbidden because he is her fiancé’s brother. Ivan’s devil reveals his soul. Dostoevsky’s devil reveals his art.

Dostoevsky further exposes his own poetics by having Ivan produce a devil who discusses incarnation, an issue that evokes the image of Christ and thus reflects the battle between the devil and Christ in Ivan’s heart. Early in the scene, the devil complains to Ivan that he caught cold when he took on human form and was exposed to the elements. Adapting a line from Terence, the devil notes, “I become incarnate, so I accept the consequences. Satanum sum et nihil humanum a me alienum puto” (I am Satan and nothing human is alien to me) (15:74;639). Even as he identifies himself as Satan, Ivan’s devil plagiarizes, thus signaling that he is a liar. The devil comically debases incarnation by connecting it to a cold, but he also emphasizes its relationship to exposure. Being human means having a body and thus being exposed. Even though the devil (Ivan’s unconscious creation) overtly reminds Ivan of the divine Logos later in their conversation, Dostoevsky (the devil’s conscious creator) plays with the incarnation to evoke the image of Christ. Dostoevsky thus links this scene with the Pro and Contra scene of Book Five by deploying, and thus highlighting, the rhetorical strategy used in each. For example, before introducing the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan raises the issues of injustice and forgiveness, thereby pushing Alesha to mention Christ. In this strategy, the character narrator draws to conscious awareness an image latent in his audience’s
unconscious. What Ivan consciously does to Alesha, his devil (his uncon-
scious) does to him; the devil’s talk of incarnation first evokes thoughts of the
incarnate God, then the devil speaks overtly of Christ as *Logos*. Dostoevsky,
who stages this scene, does the same with his readers. He thereby uses a *mise
en abyme* to reveal his authorial hand.

Moreover, Dostoevsky entertains his readers with thematically charged
metaliterary play. He sets up a series of implicit comparisons between Christ’s
incarnation and the devil’s. Whereas Christ takes on human form to redeem
the sins of the world, Ivan’s devil takes on human form to attend a cocktail
party. Whereas Christ suffers mockery and humiliation, Ivan’s devil suffers
the air’s iciness. Whereas Christ is put to death, Ivan’s devil catches cold and
suffers from rheumatism. These comic contrasts emphasize Christ’s transcen-
dence and the devil’s worldliness, thereby reflecting the struggle in Ivan’s soul
between ethical action and earthly desire.

While Ivan’s devil and Ivan’s father both tell a number of anecdotes, I will
compare two. Dostoevsky flags both anecdotes as exhibitionist lying by their
ostensible motive: hospitality. Both are salacious and confessional; both relate
to honor and thus to identity. They function very differently, however, as the
two anecdotes represent antithetical responses to shame. While most charac-
ters in the novel engage in the standard, generally acceptable responses to
shame—concealment, denial, flight, and paralysis—Fedor Pavlovich chooses
the socially unacceptable response of sharing his shame. Ivan’s devil represents
yet another response: the confrontation of shame. As Lynd points out, con-
fronting one’s shame may be positive and revelatory. Early in the novel,
Zosima advises Fedor Pavlovich not to be so ashamed of himself, “for that is
the cause of everything” (14:40:43); late in the novel, Ivan unconsciously
enacts this advice. Ivan’s devil tells a story that posits suicide as an escape from
shame. He thus implicitly presents Ivan with two alternatives: to commit sui-
cide or to face his shame publicly. Ivan chooses the latter: he resolves to expose
Smerdiakov and himself at the trial.

Both the devil’s and Fedor Pavlovich’s anecdotes partake of Dostoevsky’s
metaliterary project: both are meta-confessions, that is, stories that expose
shame while thematizing shame’s exposure. In keeping with their metaliterary
nature, both anecdotes thematize audience response as well. Fedor Karamazov
tells his Aesopian anecdote in Zosima’s cell in response to Miusov’s taunting.
Casting himself as a social inferior (as Ivan’s devil will do later), he signals his
subversive intentions. To illustrate his assertion that his desire to please harms
him, Fedor Pavlovich declaims:

> And that’s how I am. I’m always like that. Without fail I damage myself with
> my own courtesy [*liubeznost’*]! Once, many years ago now, I said to one influ-
ential person, “Your wife, sir, is a ticklish woman [shchekotlivaiia zhenshchina-]
],” meaning her honor, her moral qualities, so to speak. And he suddenly
replied to me, “Did you tickle her? [A vy ee shchekotali?].” I could not restrain
myself; suddenly, go ahead, I thought, I’ll be courteous [dai, dumaiu, po-
lubeznichaiu]. “Yes,” I said, “I did tickle her, sir [Da, govoriu, shchekotal-s].”
Well, right then he gave me quite a tickling . . . ! [nu tut on menia i poishcheko-
tal]. But that happened long ago, so it’s already not shameful to tell about it.
I’m forever damaging myself like that! (14:38;41)

In this anecdote, Fedor Pavlovich consciously provokes the man he con-
structs as his interlocutor, who then takes his revenge by beating him. By
telling this anecdote, Fedor Pavlovich gleefully parodies his relationship with
Miusov and predicts what happens next: he offends Miusov (his interlocu-
tor) who then revenges himself by publicly shaming Fedor Pavlovich (a
moral beating).

Fedor Pavlovich’s iterated assertion “And that’s how I am, I’m always like
that” (I vse-to ia tak, vsegda-to ia tak) emphasizes his anecdote’s confessional
nature, thereby signaling an authorial polemic with Rousseau. As Knapp
points out, in contrast to Augustinian-style confessions that describe a per-
son’s struggle to leave past ways behind and become a new person, Rousseauist
confessions display the person in all his inertial glory.7 Belknap characterizes
the Augustinian or repentant confession as a statement that can take the form
“I did (or do, or am) this, and it is wrong.” He notes that Rousseauist largely
engages in apologia, which takes the form “I did (or do, or am) this, and it is
right.” As Belknap argues, Fedor Pavlovich indulges in another kind of con-
fession, an unrepentant confession that takes the form “I did it, it’s wrong, but
that’s the way I am.”8 In this anecdote, Fedor Pavlovich flaunts his willingness
to besmirch a woman’s honor for the pun of it. As Fedor Pavlovich knows, the
most effective way to provoke those who uphold the status quo—people like
Miusov at whom he directs his story—is to act or speak inappropriately or
shamelessly, thereby implicating his interlocutor in a breach of decorum. In
thus disrupting the status quo, Fedor Pavlovich acts like a devil, whose job is
to divide.

Puns are the perfect vehicle for Fedor Pavlovich. Like jokes, puns create
an intimacy between speaker and audience as they assume a shared body of
knowledge or beliefs. To understand a pun or a joke means that one un-
derstands the speaker’s field of reference.9 By exploiting shared references, puns
can provide the cognitive pleasure of understanding; by exploiting multiple
meaning and economy of expression, they can provide aesthetic pleasure.
Both kinds of pleasure depend on a sharing that creates intimacy but a dis-
tance that allows for appreciation. On the other hand, depending on their
content and the relationship between speaker and audience, puns can also engender pain. The puns I will discuss, for instance, provide pleasure for Dostoevsky’s readers while causing pain for their fictional audiences. Fedor Pavlovich deliberately offends reluctant interlocutors with puns that assume a shared understanding. By collapsing the intersubjective boundaries between himself and his interlocutors with his story’s shameful content, he removes its humor, which requires a comfortable, not a threatening intimacy. In telling this story, Fedor Pavlovich not only forces his interlocutors to witness his shame, thereby evoking feelings of shame, he also subjects them to shame by association. They feel shame at sharing cultural and linguistic ground with such a shameless buffoon. Fedor Pavlovich thus uses puns rhetorically to assault his audience. Ivan’s devil, on the other hand, does not pun to cause pain, yet he causes pain by reflecting Ivan back to himself. Ivan’s devil thus uses shame much the same way as Dostoevsky does: by giving Ivan a chance to confront his shame, he aims to save him.

As Fedor Pavlovich self-consciously tells the story of his own shame, his synthetic function, to reveal the constructed nature of Dostoevsky’s text, rivals his mimetic function. Dostoevsky’s readers are thus positioned to witness this scene of shame and respond viscerally, but also to appreciate and thus enjoy its metaliterary play. Ivan’s devil has a doubly mimetic and synthetic function: first, he is the product of Ivan’s unconscious as well as of Dostoevsky’s pen; and second, he self-consciously tells the story of someone else’s shame, thereby reflecting Ivan back to himself. The devil’s anecdote reflects Ivan’s semiconscious understanding of the choices facing him:

“My friend,” the visitor observed sententiously, “it’s still better to have your nose put out of joint, than sometimes to have no nose at all [s nosom vse zhe luchshe otoiti, chem inogda sovsem bez nosa], as one afflicted marquis . . . uttered not long ago in confession to his Jesuit spiritual father. I was present—it was a delight. ‘Give me back my nose!’ he said. And he beat his breast. ‘My son,’ the priest hedged, ‘through the inscrutable decrees of Providence everything has its recompense, and a visible calamity sometimes brings with it an extraordinary, if invisible, advantage. If harsh fate has deprived you of your nose, then your advantage is that now for the rest of your life no one will dare tell you that you have had your nose put out of joint’ [chto vy ostal’si s nosom]. ‘Holy father, that’s no consolation!’ the desperate man exclaimed. ‘On the contrary, I’d be delighted to have my nose put out of joint [ostavat’sia s nosom] every day of my life, if only it were in the place it belongs!’ ‘My son,’ the priest sighed, ‘one cannot demand all blessings at once. That is already a grumble against Providence, which even here has not forgotten you; for if you cry out, as you have just cried out, that you would gladly have your nose put
out of joint [оставаться с носом] for the rest of your life, in this your desire has already been fulfilled indirectly; for, having lost your nose, you have thereby, as it were, had your nose put out of joint all the same [в этом самом все это же как бы остаться с носом] . . . "

"Pah, how stupid!" cried Ivan.

"My friend, I merely wanted to make you laugh, but I swear that is real Jesuit casuistry, and I swear it all happened word for word as I've told it to you. That was a recent incident, and it gave me a lot of trouble. Upon returning home, the unfortunate young man shot himself that very same night; I was with him constantly up to the last moment. . . ." (15:80–1:646)¹⁰

Like Fedor Pavlovich’s, this anecdote involves wordplay; it also takes decorum and identity as its subject. As author of both anecdotes, Dostoevsky displays his metaliterary wit as well as his deep understanding of shame dynamics.

Both liars play with the literal/figurative meanings of words. Fedor Pavlovich, for instance, activates the potential sexual connotations of the verb shchekotat’, “to tickle,” as well as those of the verb poliubeznichat’, which can mean “be courteous to” or “pay court to.” He thereby hints at his sexual misconduct with the influential person’s wife, as well as his indecorous behavior with the man himself. As Fedor Pavlovich notes, he could not restrain himself (не удержался). While Fedor Pavlovich’s anecdote is not obscene in the same patent way as his farcical blessing of “the paps” that Zosima sucked as a child, it is nonetheless obscene, that is, a deliberate violation of the sense of shame.¹¹ His verbal play violates social decorum, earning him the same kind of reward, that is, a beating, that the legendary Aesop regularly received from his master for his verbal one-upmanship. He thus perpetuates the cycle that he describes. In telling an indecorous anecdote in a monastery, that is, in telling a story out of place, Fedor Pavlovich succeeds in shaming his interlocutors. But his triumph over his humiliators is short-lived, for his story elicits a vengeful response that once again humiliates him, thereby metaphorically returning him to his place.¹²

The devil’s anecdote plays on the literal and figurative meanings of expressions using the word “nose,” which not only designates the openly visible olfactory organ but also suggests the hidden sexual organ, an eighteenth-century commonplace that Gogol exploited in his well-known story, “The Nose,” an intertext for Dostoevsky’s anecdote. The standard expression “to be made a fool of” is остаться с носом. Dostoevsky introduces the concept by having Ivan, then his devil, use the verb отходить, which literally means “to depart, to walk away” but is used figuratively to denote the process of dying. The imperfective verb stresses process rather than result. The expression
otkhodit’ s nosom links shame with the general process of dying as well as with the marquis’s specific case of syphilis.¹³

The devil’s anecdote also plays with the concept of place. The nose is out of place, misplaced, displaced, no place. Its out-of-placeness identifies the nose as a source of disgrace-shame, that is, shame felt after exposure. The nose reveals that the marquis has not heeded the urgings of discretion-shame, that is, shame felt before exposure, a shame that deters a person from inappropriate action and thus preserves dignity and integrity. Having exposed himself to disgrace-shame, the marquis faces personal disintegration. Dostoevsky, here as elsewhere, links ethics and aesthetics.¹⁴

The marquis tries to regain a sense of self by exhibiting a sense of discretion-shame. The devil’s anecdote locates the marquis’s confession in a confession booth—a private, appropriate place. Fedor Pavlovich confesses his shame in a monk’s cell, an ostensibly appropriate place, but one inappropriate for his behavior. First, he engages in an unrepentant, self-vaunting confession that violates the spirit of the place. Second, he confesses in front of a mixed audience that has assembled for an entirely different purpose. Fedor Pavlovich thereby engages in the very behavior he incoherently denounces later: “Is it permitted to confess out loud? The Holy Fathers instituted whispered confession, only then will your confession be a secret [tainstvom], and that has been so from of old. Otherwise how am I to explain to him in front of everyone that I, for instance, did this and that . . . well, this and that, you understand? Sometimes it’s even indecent to say it [Inogda ved’ i skazat’ neprilichno]. Like that it’s a scandal!” (14:82;88).

Though both anecdotes form part of Dostoevsky’s long-standing attack on Rousseau’s Confessions, their differences reflect the characters of their tellers. Fedor Pavlovich flaunts his shame publicly. The marquis of Ivan’s devil, on the other hand, proves as shame-filled as Ivan himself; he confesses his shame privately.¹⁵

Fedor Dostoevsky uses Fedor Karamazov’s commentary on confession to stress its sacramental nature. Old Fedor uses the word tainstvo to characterize whispered confession. He thus uses the word in its archaic sense as “a secret,” something that is kept private. Dostoevsky, however, activates tainstvo’s religious meanings—“sacrament” and “mystery,” thus prefiguring the Grand Inquisitor’s use of “miracle, mystery and authority” (chudo, taina i autoritet) as “the three powers on earth that can forever conquer and capture the conscience of these weak rebels, for their own happiness” (14:232;255). Dostoevsky also reminds readers of confession’s sacramental status. As a sacrament, confession allows a person to own, acknowledge, or avow unworthy or sinful thoughts or deeds. While the focus is frequently on guilt, that is, a person’s actions, confession also establishes a place where shame can be acknowledged,
accepted, and thereby healed. Fedor Karamazov’s declamation thus antici-
pates the devil’s anecdote.

Like Fedor Pavlovich’s anecdote, the devil’s takes audience response as its 
subject, a metaliterary move that signals Dostoevsky’s authorial hand. The 
Jesuit in the devil’s anecdote recalls Fedor Pavlovich by creating a pun that 
distances him from his interlocutor and thus diminishes his effectiveness. 
The Jesuit approaches the marquis’s problem intellectually, not compassion-
ately, thereby proving himself an inadequate spiritual counselor; the marquis 
kills himself. The devil thus reminds Ivan that mind is not everything. 
Furthermore, in a novel of situational rhymes, the Jesuit’s uncompassionate 
response contrasts with Zosima’s compassionate response to Fedor Pavlovich, 
a response that identifies shame as the immediate cause of Fedor Pavlovich’s 
aggressive exhibitionism. These contrasting responses to shame express a fun-
damental thematic opposition between unbelievers and believers, sowers of 
discord and sowers of love. Dostoevsky displays his narrative virtuosity as 
shamed characters telling stories about shame dramatize the author’s social, 
political, and metaphysical thematics regarding Roman Catholicism and 
Russian Orthodoxy, materialism and spirituality, belief and unbelief, unity 
and separation, God and the devil in the human heart. Dostoevsky also uses 
the literal/figurative play in these anecdotes to promote his message: heaven 
is associated with figurative understanding, acceptance, and community; hell 
is associated with literal understanding, rejection, and isolation. The Jesuit 
priest thus imitates the devil (who watches over him) while Zosima imitates 
Christ.

The devil’s Jesuit confessor recalls the Grand Inquisitor, thereby remind-
ning readers of Ivan’s authorial status. The confessor also signals Dostoevsky’s 
authorial hand—for Dostoevsky embeds the devil’s story in a novel that the-
matizes fictionalizing and, under mimetic cover, reveals its storytelling 
devices. The devil tells a story in which the Jesuit confessor fails because he 
does not appreciate the pain of the marquis’s shame. The Jesuit thus proves 
himself a poor listener and a poor imitator of Christ. He lacks Christ’s com-
passion—Christ’s experiential understanding of the shame inherent in the 
human condition. Furthermore, by reinforcing the marquis’s shame, the Jesuit 
acts like Miusov, the westernized Russian who serves as a negative model of 
audience response, rather than like Zosima, who serves as a positive model. 
The Jesuit’s lack of compassion works paradoxically like shame. In making 
shamed persons acutely aware of loss, shame can also arouse a longing for 
what is lost. The Jesuit’s lack of compassion arouses readers’ sense that his 
response is flawed, thus evoking the missing response—compassion. The 
devil’s story thus illustrates Ivan’s unconscious and Dostoevsky’s conscious 
rhetorical strategy: by modeling a negative response, they educe a positive
response. Dostoevsky goes even further: he models both negative and positive responses and lets readers choose.

Following Dostoevsky’s lead and moving by association, I return to exhibitionist lying—the rhetoric of shame. The Diary writer identifies shame as the second source of lying. The first is the fear that truth (istina) is insufficiently poetic: “In this way, we’ve completely lost the axiom that truth, especially in its purest form, is more poetic than anything that exists in the world” (21:119). In the context of Dostoevsky’s Christological poetics, in which Christ is the ultimate truth, an incarnate God is, in fact, literally prosaic and quintessentially poetic. As the Word made flesh, Christ literalizes the figurative. In the context of the novel, imitation of Christ translates into the concept of active love—which, as Saul Morson has noted, involves not miracles, the unusual, or the poetic, but many prosaic acts. Yet, however prosaic these acts may be, they are infused with love, a higher principle, thus making them poetic in the same way that Christ is, for as flesh that embodies Word, Christ is pure poetry. This returns us to Robin Feuer Miller’s observation that The Brothers Karamazov is a novel in which so much cuts both ways.

In telling their anecdotes, Fedor Pavlovich and Ivan’s devil employ the comic literary strategy of literalizing figurative expressions. Dostoevsky embeds these anecdotes in a novel whose epigraph is a parable, a literary genre that works by figuralizing the literal. By choosing a strategy that inverts Christ’s rhetoric, Fedor Pavlovich and Ivan’s devil parody Christ. Dostoevsky thus shows readers how it is possible to coopt antithetical narrative strategies to serve a higher truth.

In the novel’s progression, shame passes from father to son. But whereas Fedor Pavlovich is mired in an inertial cycle of shame and punishment that he perpetuates with his own discourse, Ivan proves to have a soul that is a true battleground for God and the devil. Though Ivan has a liar, a spiritual sponger in his soul, he also, as his devil reminds him, authors “The Grand Inquisitor” and thus has a compassionate, forgiving Christ in his soul.

Dostoevsky thus shows readers how to heal the paternal legacy of shame and pain. While Fedor Pavlovich passes his on, Ivan confronts his. The Brothers Karamazov closes with Ivan still unconscious. We understand that the battle within him still rages. Yet in generating a progression from father to son, Dostoevsky gives us hope. Ivan’s devil may be an exhibitionistic liar, but Ivan is not. Like Dostoevsky, Ivan creates fictions that have the power to change, even to redeem, their readers. In short, Dostoevsky gives Ivan the power to redeem himself.