

**Following the Paths of Bakhtin... / Следуя путями Бахтина... /  
Seguindo os caminhos de Bakhtin...**

*Andrei Kofman\**

**ABSTRACT**

The article is intended to demonstrate how some of the ideas of Bakhtin's book about Dostoevsky tend to self-development, opening up space for additional interpretations. The article analyzes two pairs of basic oppositions in Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*. Along with the model of "threshold" space, brilliantly revealed by Bakhtin, the novel contains the opposition of the closed space model to the open space model. The first is associated with death, with hell, where there is no way out, with blindness of consciousness; the second - with resurrection, repentance, insight and spiritual transformation. In terms of meaning, this opposition corresponds to the second one, expressed by the symbolic leitmotifs "heat," "stink," "stuffiness" in contrast to the leitmotifs "air," "water," "rain." Deciphering these oppositions leads the author to the conclusion that in the novel the gospel story of the resurrection of Lazarus is metaphorically recreated, and the novel itself can be attributed to a genre of an artistic paraphrase.

**KEYWORDS:** Threshold space; Closed space; Open space; Resurrection of Lazarus; Artistic paraphrase

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

*Статья призвана продемонстрировать, как некоторые положения книги Бахтина о Достоевском просятся к саморазвитию, открывая простор для дополнительных интерпретаций. В статье анализируются две пары базовых оппозиций, пронизывающих роман Достоевского "Преступление и наказание". Наряду с "пороговым" пространством, блестяще раскрытым Бахтиным, в романе наблюдается противопоставление модели замкнутого пространства модели открытого пространства. Первое ассоциировано со смертью, с адом, откуда нет выхода, со слепотой сознания; второе - с воскресением, раскаянием, прозрением и духовным преображением. Этой оппозиции по смыслу соответствует вторая, выраженная символическими лейтмотивами "жара", "вонь", "духота" в противопоставлении к лейтмотивам "воздух", "вода", "дождь". Дешифровка этих оппозиций приводит автора к выводу о том, что в романе метафорически воссоздана евангельская история воскрешения Лазаря, а сам роман в жанровом отношении являет собой художественный парафраз.*

**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:** Пороговое пространство; Замкнутое пространство; Открытое пространство; Воскрешение Лазаря; Художественный парафраз

---

\* Институт мировой литературы имени А.М.Горького Российской академии наук, Москва, Российская Федерация [World Literature Institute Maksim Gorky, Moscow, Russian Federation]; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3799-9343>; [andrey.kofman@gmail.com](mailto:andrey.kofman@gmail.com)

## RESUMO

O artigo dedica-se a demonstrar como algumas teses do livro de Bakhtin sobre Dostoiévski permitem um autodesenvolvimento, ao darem espaço para interpretações complementares. No artigo, são analisados dois pares de oposições básicas que perpassam o romance de Dostoiévski *Crime e castigo*. Juntamente com o espaço “limiar”, uma descoberta brilhante de Bakhtin, observa-se no romance a oposição entre o modelo do espaço fechado e o modelo do espaço aberto. O primeiro está associado à morte, ao inferno, de onde não há saída, à consciência cega; o segundo, à ressurreição, ao arrependimento, à clarividência e à transfiguração espiritual. Em termos de sentido, essa segunda oposição corresponde à expressa pelos leitmotivs simbólicos do “calor”, do “fedor”, do “sufocamento”, em oposição aos leitmotivs do “ar”, da “água”, da “chuva”. A decifração dessas oposições leva-nos a concluir que no romance está reconstituída a história evangélica da ressurreição de Lázaro, e o próprio romance é, quanto ao gênero, uma paráfrase artística.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Espaço “limiar”; Espaço fechado; Espaço aberto; Ressurreição de Lázaro; Paráfrase artística

## Introduction

Bakhtin’s book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*<sup>1</sup> brilliantly revealed the specific traits of the great philologist’s creative thinking. The main feature of his ideas could be defined this way: his thinking is always very precise and at the same time open to be completed and developed. It is curious to notice in this particular book how the open nature of Bakhtin’s ideas corresponds to the characters of Dostoevsky about whom Bakhtin (1999, p.59) himself wrote: “They all acutely sense their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them.” Antidogmatism is a basic principle in Bakhtin; he does not proclaim truth ultimately, but points out and clears the ways in which it is possible and necessary to continue exploring his discoveries. That’s why he’s been so in demand by language researchers since his works have been known around the world, and that’s also why he has so many followers and not imitators.

I want to demonstrate how some remarks from Bakhtin’s book about Dostoevsky aspire to self-development, how they can be worked out and led to interpretation. The article genre requires conscious limitation of the material, therefore I will only deal with some aspects of the interpretation of Dostoevsky’s only novel – *Crime and Punishment*.

---

<sup>1</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Introduction by Wayne Booth. 8<sup>th</sup> printing. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1999. (In this and in subsequent citations, this translation will be used for direct quotations from the text.)

To begin with, we will analyze the particularities of artistic space and time as a whole in the novel *Crime and Punishment* which are solidly related to other recurrent and constant motifs and oppositions that “work” only in connection with them. In the second edition of *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Work* (1929),<sup>2</sup> Bakhtin revealed with precision the specificity of the chronotope in Dostoevsky’s work, determining it from the notions of “crisis time” and “threshold time.” Ever since, the terms “threshold time” and “threshold space” have been widely used in literary theory and applied to the works of the most diverse writers from the most diverse moments in time.

Once Bakhtin had developed the aforementioned concepts, it became impossible not to consider and quote the reflections he had outlined in the fourth chapter (Characteristics of genre and plot composition in Dostoevsky’s works [pp.101-180]) of the referred book. The researcher states:

Everything in this novel—the fates of people, their experiences and ideas—is pushed to its boundaries, everything is prepared, as it were, to pass over into its opposite (but not, of course, in the abstractly dialectical sense), everything is taken to the extreme, to its outermost limit. There is nothing in the novel that could become stabilized, nothing that could justifiably relax within itself, enter the ordinary flow of biographical time and develop in it [...] Everything requires change and rebirth. Everything is shown in a moment of unfinalized transition (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.167).

In fact, Dostoevsky’s characters do not lead the usually cohesive biographical life, from early childhood to old age; that is why the writer does not provide information on the earlier years of their lives, or, when introducing previous events, it is done in little detail. They live in a state of radical transformation, experiencing the most extreme emotional tension, and in such conditions artistic time can be extended disproportionately. This, in Bakhtin’s words, is “crisis time, in which a moment is equal to years, decades.” (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.169). And indeed, reading the novel *Crime and*

---

<sup>2</sup> In Russia, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1963) is the second publication with significant additions of *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Creative Art* (1929). In this article, we are using BAKHTIN, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Introduction by Wayne Booth. 8<sup>th</sup> printing. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1999.

*Punishment*, it is hard to believe that its main action, extraordinarily full and saturated with various events, takes place in a few days.

At this time of “crisis”, “limited” corresponds to a specific space also “limited.” According to Bakhtin, “*Up, down, the stairway, the threshold, the foyer, the landing* take on the meaning of a ‘point’ where crisis, radical change, an unexpected turn of fate takes place, where decisions are made, where the forbidden line is overstepped, where one is renewed or perishes” (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.169; emphasis in original). It is precisely at these points that action takes place in Dostoevsky’s works, including the novel *Crime and Punishment*. As for the inner space of the drawing room, the theoretician points out it is used by Dostoevsky only as a stage for scandals and dethronements, when this space becomes a substitute for the square. “Dostoevsky skips all that is comfortably habitable, well-arranged and stable, all that is far from the threshold, because the life that he portrays does not take place in that sort of space. Dostoevsky was least of all an estate-home-room-apartment-family writer” (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.169).

And Bakhtin goes on to demonstrate that the basic knots of the plot of the novel are precisely on the threshold:

First of all, Raskolnikov lives, in essence, on a threshold: his narrow room, a “coffin” (a carnival symbol here) opens directly onto the landing of the staircase, and he never locks his door, even when he goes out (that is, his room is unenclosed interior space). In this “coffin” it is impossible to live a biographical life—here one can experience only crisis, make ultimate decisions, die or be reborn (as in the coffins of *Bobok* or the coffin of the Ridiculous Man). Marmeladov’s family lives on the threshold as well, in a walk-through room leading directly onto a staircase (here, on the threshold, while bringing home the drunken Marmeladov, Raskolnikov meets the members of the family for the first time). Raskolnikov experiences terrible moments at the threshold of the murdered pawnbroker’s when, on the other side of the door, on the stairway landing, her visitors stand and tug at the bell. It is to this place that he returns and himself rings the bell, in order to relive those moments. The scene of his half-confession to Razumikhin takes place on the threshold in the corridor by a lamp, without words, only in glances. On the threshold, near the doors leading to a neighboring apartment, his conversations with Sonya occur (with Svidrigailov eavesdropping on the other side of the door). There is certainly no need to enumerate further all the “acts” that take place on the threshold, near the threshold, or that are permeated with the living sensation of threshold in this novel (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.170).

Bakhtin's careful chronotopic analysis allows us to have a closer look at the spatial models represented in the novel. And then, it turns out that the temporal and, mainly, spatial structures of the novel, as presented, are far from being exhausted in the "threshold" models.

## 2

The "threshold" space is a general trait of the artistic space of the novel related to the construction of the plot in the first place: in Bakhtin's words, "the threshold and its immediate substitutes are the fundamental 'points' of the action." At the same time, the artistic models of the enclosed space and the open space are accurately represented in the novel, even in some different types (to avoid free quotations, we will not resort to examples here).

We will initially deal with the image of Petersburg. The latter was built according to a previously elaborated plan, and is glorious, first of all for its wonderful and extensive landscapes. But in its panoramic architectural quality, the "creation of Peter" is presented in Dostoevsky's novel only once and in the following interpretation:

He clutched the twenty kopecks in his hand, walked about ten steps, and turned his face to the Neva, in the direction of the palace.<sup>8</sup> There was not the least cloud in the sky, and the water was almost blue, which rarely happens with the Neva. The dome of the cathedral, which is not outlined so well from any other spot as when looked at from here, on the bridge, about twenty paces from the chapel, was simply shining, and through the clear air one could even make out each of its ornaments distinctly.<sup>9</sup> The pain from the whip subsided, and Raskolnikov forgot about the blow; one troublesome and not entirely clear thought now occupied him exclusively. He stood and looked long and intently into the distance; this place was especially familiar to him. While he was attending the university, he often used to stop, mostly on his way home, at precisely this spot (he had done it perhaps a hundred times), and gaze intently at the indeed splendid panorama, and to be surprised almost every time by a certain unclear and unresolved impression. An inexplicable chill always breathed on him from this splendid panorama; for him the magnificent picture was filled with a mute and deaf spirit... He marveled each time at this gloomy and mysterious

impression, and, mistrusting himself, put off the unriddling of it to some future time (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.114).<sup>3</sup>

For then we, like Raskolnikov, will leave to unriddle the impression in the future, and now we will only point out that this image is foreign to the protagonist's consciousness and also to that of other characters: this Petersburg is something completely apart from real life and, therefore, it is cold, fantastic and almost non-existent. And even the fact that the image of the panoramic Petersburg is given only once highlights a kind of absence in the consciousness and real life of the characters in the novel. This variant of the open space presents itself as a symbol of alienation, of disconnection from life.

The real Petersburg, the one in which the action of the novel takes place, is presented with a completely different qualification. It is chaos, the elements of proteism, here everything is in movement, in constant transformation and everything is penetrated by sin and suffering - a truly hellish space. But what is then the model portrayed by this space?

It is not difficult to observe that the action of the novel takes place within the boundaries of a very limited urban space: the Siénnaia square and the adjacent blocks. The constant, occasional and unpredictable encounters of the characters and the crossing of destinations underline the limited character of this space: it is as if the characters live in a house-city similar to a university lodge, where it is not possible to move without being seen, where everyone knows each other. In his book Bakhtin refers to the ancient genre of Menippean satire as one of the important sources of Dostoevsky's creation, and one of the recurring plots of this genre is a journey into the world beyond. This plot clearly stands out in the novel *Crime and Punishment* in which the city presents itself as the image of hell. The space of hell cannot have an exit door; in the novel, this theme is clearly addressed in the words of Marmieládov: "And what if there is no one else, if there is nowhere else to go! It is necessary that every man have at least somewhere to go. For there are times when one absolutely must go at least somewhere!" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.14). Raskolnikov also recalls these words more than once regarding himself. It is

---

<sup>3</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *Crime and Punishment*: a novel in six parts with epilogue by Fyodor Dostoevsky. Translated and annotated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Vintage Books: New York, 1993. (In this and in subsequent citations, this translation will be used for direct quotations from the text.)

understood that the idea “there is nowhere else to go” expresses in the first place the lack of a spiritual perspective, of life, the limit of the fall and of moral suffering; at the same time, however, it also functions latently in the spatial dimension, creating the image of the depths of hell, from where there is no way out. Thus the real Petersburg, as opposed to the “non-existent”, “fantastic one”, presents itself as a model of closed space.

But also this closed space, like the combs of a hive, multiplies in the small alveolar rooms inhabited by the characters. On the one hand, these alveoli present themselves as the threshold space, and in this respect Bakhtin is undoubtedly right. However, at the same time this is also the model of the closed space; in any case, Raskolnikov’s dwelling is precisely like that. Although his room has an exit to the staircase, although Raskolnikov does not close the door, the room is in any case separated from the world, self-enclosed, something that Dostoevsky emphasizes many times and with great insistence: “His closet was more like a cupboard than a room.” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.3); “it was there, in that corner, in that terrible cupboard, that for more than a month now all that had been ripening.” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.53). Raskolnikov’s apartment is taken as an image of the closed space not only by the author, but also by the protagonist’s mother: “‘What an awful apartment you have, Rodya; like a coffin,’ Pulcheria Alexandrovna said.” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.231); Raskolnikov himself considers it this way: “Then I hid in my corner like a spider. You were in my kennel, you saw it... And do you know, Sonya, low ceilings and cramped rooms cramp the soul and mind! Oh, how I hated that kennel! And yet I didn’t want to leave it.” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.417). “Closet”, “coffin”, “spider’s corner”, “kennel”, all these images, of strong emotional color, leave no doubt that Raskolnikov’s kennel consists of a closed space model, and as we will show later on, its deep meaning lies in it. For the moment, it is evident that this space, not only closed, but extremely compressed, “tight”, is associated with the closing and tightening of the soul and consciousness, and, therefore, when Raskolnikov says he doesn’t want to leave his kennel, his words acquire a special meaning. “Leaving” means tearing down the space and boundaries of one’s own consciousness. But he has to leave.

Precisely in opposition to this cage and, first of all, to Raskolnikov’s room, the image of the open space is shaped, not that of Petersburg, impersonal and fantastic, but another, a completely different one. This model of open space occurs in the novel only twice, which in no way devalues its meaning. The first time, in the imagination, when

Sonya says to Raskolnikov: “Go now, this minute, stand in the crossroads, bow down, and first kiss the earth you’ve defiled, then bow to the whole world, on all four sides, and say aloud to everyone: ‘I have killed!’” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.420). The crossroads is the symbol of the cross, but it is also an indication of the open space, the four corners of the world, to which the murderer must bow and thus broaden the boundaries of his own consciousness.

The second time, the open space model now occurs in reality, in the epilogue, in the scene of Raskolnikov’s definitive transfiguration. It’s worth going deeper into the scene:

Raskolnikov walked out of the shed and right to the bank, sat down on some logs piled near the shed, and began looking at the wide, desolate river. From the high bank a wide view of the surrounding countryside opened out. A barely audible song came from the far bank opposite. There, on the boundless, sun-bathed steppe, nomadic yurts could be seen, like barely visible black specks. There was freedom, there different people lived, quite unlike those here, there time itself seemed to stop, as if the centuries of Abraham and his flocks had not passed. Raskolnikov sat and stared fixedly, not tearing his eyes away; his thought turned to reverie, to contemplation; he was not thinking of anything, but some anguish troubled and tormented him. Suddenly Sonya was beside him. She came up almost inaudibly and sat down next to him. [...]  
How it happened he himself did not know, but suddenly it was as if something lifted him and flung him down at her feet. He wept and embraced her knees (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, pp.548-549).

It makes sense to contrast this landscape with that of Petersburg, described before. They have a certain similarity: in both cases, there is the image of the river, whose surface is observed by Raskolnikov. But, as it seems, this similarity is deliberate, it aims to cover up the profound differences between the two landscapes. In Petersburg’s scenery, there is an image of architecture (the cathedral), but, besides it, there is no mention of human presence – that’s why a “mute and deaf spirit”, a “cold”, blows from this landscape; that’s why such a scenery awakens only the feeling of deep alienation. As opposed to it, in the Siberian landscape, within the space of pure nature, the character uses his gaze to distinguish the people who lead a “free” life. In the contrast of the two landscapes, the oppositions “artificial” / “natural”, “city” / “nature”, “inhumane” / “human” and finally “prison” / “freedom” clearly stand out. Moreover, the two perspectives are portrayed in different time models: while Petersburg’s is displayed in the model of objective historical

time, Siberia's is presented in a model of still and mythological time, which takes the character back to the dawn of the ages: "as if the century of Abraham and his flock had not yet passed." This way, the function of the Siberian landscape is to withdraw the character from the flow of history and put him back in a primitive, natural, original state; in these conditions this renewal, his transfiguration take place.

In the novel *Crime and Punishment*, the counterpoint of the closed and open space models is closely linked to another system of oppositions and, only in interaction with it, reveals its complete meaning.

### 3

According to Bakhtin (1999, p.115): "A very important characteristic of the menippea is the organic combination within it of the free fantastic, the symbolic, at times even a mystical-religious element with an extreme and (from our point of view) crude slum naturalism." In fact, there is a striking symbolism in the novel *Crime and Punishment*. Here we do not set ourselves the task of investigating and deciphering the numerous symbols of the novel (such as the "stone", the "cross", the "doorbell"); we will turn our attention only to those related to the space models.

Symbolic motifs are "intense heat", "bad smell", "muffling", as opposed to the motifs of "air" and "water." Numerous examples leave no doubt that these are not occasional, and that the writer has included them in a very conscious way. Moreover, the development of these motifs will show that overall they organize a certain hidden inner plot that goes along with the novel's external series of events. The highlighted oppositions correspond to yet another characteristic of the menippea genre defined by Bakhtin (1999, p.118) as follows: "The menippea is full of sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations." It is impossible not to notice that the action of the first four parts of the novel takes place directly in a suffocating atmosphere: the city suffers from the heat, the muffling, the disgusting smells. Such atmosphere is reproduced in the first pages of the novel, similar to a symphony, in which in the first bars the *leitmotiv* is given: "It was terribly hot out... The intolerable stench from the taverns, especially numerous in that part of the city, and the drunkards he kept running into even though it was a weekday, completed the loathsome and melancholy coloring of the picture." (DOSTOEVSKY,

1993, p.4). Further on, the indicated motifs are repeated several times and, additionally, with the same acute tone, in order to constantly draw the reader's attention. It makes sense to present a series of examples so that it is possible to perceive the emotional intensity of these fragments. Raskolnikov leaves home: "Again it was unbearably hot out; not a drop of rain had fallen for all those days. Again dust, brick, lime; again the stench from the shops and taverns; again drunks all the time, Finnish peddlers, half-dilapidated cabbies." (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.94). Raskolnikov stops by the police station:

The stairway was narrow, steep, and all covered with swill. The doors to the kitchens of all the apartments, on all four floors, opened onto the stairs and stood open most of the day. This made it terribly stifling. [...]. He went in and stopped in the anteroom. Here a number of peasants were standing and waiting. And here, too, it was extremely stifling; moreover, from the newly painted rooms a nauseating odor of fresh, not quite cured paint, made with rancid oil, assailed his nostrils (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, pp.94-95).

A little further on: "Hm ... too bad it's so airless here," he added, "stifling ... My head is spinning even more ... my mind, too..." (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.95). The next day, Raskolnikov leaves the house again: It was about eight o'clock; the sun was going down. It was as stifling as before, yet he greedily inhaled the stinking, dusty, city-infected air. (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.154). Finally, the very significant words of Pulcheria Alieksandrovna about her son's apartment, that urban "alveolus": "[...] let him go out for a walk, get some air ... his room is awfully stuffy ... but where can one get any air here? It's the same outside as in a closed room. Lord, what a city!" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, pp.240-241).

The motifs of heat, muffling and stench are obviously metaphorical and have all been introduced in fully determined associative series. Heat is the passion that ignites the intellect and the spirit; it is the lifeless desert; the muffling is a sign of impoverishment, of spiritual exhaustion; the stench is depravity, the spiritual fedentine. Together these motifs are designed to convey the human and social atmosphere of violence, sin, misfortune. However, on the other hand, they also function as an image of hellish space, the city of the depths. In fact, as it will be described ahead, these motifs still have another semantic content.

In the aforementioned fragments, that inner plot that receives meaningful development at the end of the novel is still unclear. The muffling generates a thirst for fresh air; in the trail of Pulcheria Alieksandrovna, Porfiri Pietrovitch, in the second meeting with Raskolnikov, also sustains this motif: “To let in some air, some fresh air! And do drink some water, my dear; this is a fit, sir!” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.343). We will immediately point out that, alongside the motif of fresh air, the motif of water is highlighted here - that is the second “participant” in the inner plot. In the third meeting with Raskolnikov, the same Porfiri Pietrovitch says: “First of all, you’ve needed a change of air for a long time.” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.460), and he insistently repeats: “what every man of us needs is air, air, air, sir...” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.440). This last statement sounds like an incantation, by the typical repetition of a word or expression in this kind of magical practice. In addition, it is not unusual for a repetition to have the supplementary objective of revealing and activating the original or associative semantics of the word, hidden in its usual sense. For here, suddenly, the double hidden content of the word “*vózdukh*” [air] comes up. The prefix “*voz*”, as evidenced in the Uchakov dictionary, has four meanings: movement upwards (“*vozvychiénie*” [elevation], “*vozneciénie*” [ascension] etc.); action which implies something new (“*voztrojdenie*” [rebirth]); action which consists of a response to something (“*voznagrajdat*” [reward]); beginning, the appearance of an action (“*vozmetchtat*” [begin to dream]). All these senses, in this case, are combined with the root “*dukh*” (spirit). To raise, to give new birth to the spirit, to begin a spiritual effort in response to what has been accomplished - this is what is necessary to Raskolnikov. And this elevation, this rebirth and, at the same time, this purification gradually take place, first of all, thanks to Sonya: “And he thought of Sonya. There came a breath of fresh air from the window.” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.426). In the light of what has been said, would it be possible to consider the close position of these two short sentences as occasional? Of course not. Nor can we see the following fragment as a meaningless detail: “Svidrigailov came to his senses, got up from the bed, and stepped to the window. He fumbled for the latch and opened it. Wind swept furiously into his small closet and coated as if with hoarfrost his face and chest, covered only by a shirt” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.507).

The motif of the fresh wind is directly connected to the motif of the water. Before focusing on its analysis, let us remember that the image of water refers to a universal

mythological image. As such, the image of water has inherited a series of invariable senses from mythology; among them we will only indicate the most important ones. The universal mythological motif of “mother-water”, sometimes expressed exactly in this combination of words, represents water as the generating principle, the essence that generates life - in this context, it is closely related to the images of the “mother-earth” and the tree. The connection between the mythological image of water and the theme of happiness in love is also evident: there is no point in introducing here the numerous scenes of amorous encounters and declarations of love by river banks or other water areas, scenes of joint ablutions or of the reasons for the lovers’ journey by the sea, the river, etc.

In Christianity, the symbol of water gathers a whole sum of complementary senses related to the baptism ceremony.

In Dostoevsky’s novel, water is presented not only as a symbol, but also as a sort of participant in the action. In the referred novel, the image of water is presented in certain hypostasis.

The development of the motif begins at the scene of Raskolnikov’s second meeting with the examining magistrate, when the latter suggests that the killer drink some water:

“Drink, my dear,” he whispered, rushing to him with the carafe, “maybe it will help ...” Porfiry Petrovich’s alarm and his sympathy itself were so natural that Raskolnikov fell silent and began to stare at him with wild curiosity. He did not accept the water, however.  
“Rodion Romanovich, my dear! but you’ll drive yourself out of your mind this way, I assure you, a-ah! Do drink! A little sip, at least!”  
He succeeded after all in making him take the glass of water in his hands. Raskolnikov mechanically brought it to his lips, but then, recollecting himself, set it on the table with loathing (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, pp.343-344).

This scene is full of deep symbolism. Behind the usual external words and actions, a deep and tense psychological conflict arises. Water is the symbol of purity, of repentance, and it happens that by offering water, Porfiri Petróvitch proposes the criminal to voluntarily repent. This idea hadn’t yet occurred to Raskolnikov’s mind - that’s why he stares at the examining magistrate “with wild curiosity.” Raskolnikov was not yet ready for repentance, so he refused the water “with loathing.” At the police station, before

Raskolnikov's confession, they offered him water again, and again he didn't accept, because he hadn't confessed yet, hadn't undergone transfiguration.

But the purifying force of water does not prevent murder by being personified in the image of rain. In mythological interpretation, the main function of rain is related to fecundity: it makes earth fertile, which provides humanity's food and thus generates life. For Dostoevsky, the fertilizing role of the universal mythological image is not as important as the one of life generation, though in a specific metaphorical interpretation. Rain can interrupt the intense heat (i.e. relieve the infernal social atmosphere) and bring with it air and freshness - hence the overwhelming longing for rain: "not a drop of rain had fallen for all those days" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.94). However, for Dostoevsky, the primary importance lies in another role of the rain - the ablation, the purification.

Let us observe how the motif of the rain develops in the novel. Taken initially as a torment and a dream, it only comes true in the end, in the middle of the sixth part: "Meanwhile the evening was close and lowering. By ten o'clock terrible clouds had approached from all sides; thunder rolled, and rain poured down like a waterfall. It did not come in drops, but lashed the ground in steady streams" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.498). Because of the rain and the wind, the river level rises - another hypostasis of the water image - and the water cleans the city above and below.

"Ah, the signal! The water's rising," he thought. "Towards morning it will flood all the lower places, the streets; it will pour into the basements and cellars, the cellar rats will float up, and amid rain and wind people, cursing and drenched, will begin transferring their stuff to the upper floors..." (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, pp.507-508).

It is not occasional that the two characters, the double, the killers, Svidrigáilov and Raskolnikov, both end up in the rain and get wet. Svidrigáilov: "Drenched to the skin, he arrived home" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.499). Raskolnikov: "I was out in the rain yesterday, mama..." (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.512). The two characters undergo a purification, the consequence of which is their deep repentance. One of them is led by his repentance to recognize his own guilt and to be reborn. The other is led to suicide. It is worth mentioning that Svidrigáilov's own act of suicide is related to the rain: "What? To go off to America and be afraid of rain? Heh, heh! Farewell, my good Sofya Semyonovna! [...] And further on: What's the use of waiting? I'll leave now, go straight to the

Petrovsky: somewhere there I'll choose a big bush doused all over with rain, so that if you barely touch it with your shoulder, millions of drops will shower down on your head..." (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, pp.500-508).

Tears are yet another embodiment of the essence of water, a symbol of suffering, compassion and repentance, of extraordinary significance particularly for Dostoevsky. It is pointless to enlist the numerous examples in which the female characters in the novel cry, as this is a feature of their constitution; one might think, however, that Raskolnikov was deprived of the capacity to cry. Shortly before his confession, he visits Sonya and recognizes himself: "No—I wanted her tears, I wanted to see her frightened, to look at her heartache and torment!" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.524). But this need for tears, for suffering becomes a step towards transfiguration, and then the miracle happens: "Everything softened in him all at once, and the tears flowed" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.525). Raskolnikov's final spiritual rebirth takes place already in Siberia, and again he cries, embracing Sonya's knees. Together with the rain, the river and the tears also "participate" in overcoming that exhausted spiritual atmosphere.

#### 4

In which ways are the highlighted oppositions and motifs related to the spatial models of the novel?

Before answering that question, let us focus on some curious facts. The old woman murdered by Raskolnikov lives on the fourth floor; Marmeladov's family also lives on the fourth floor; the police station is in a four-story building; finally, from the day of the murder to the key scenario of the novel, when Sonya reads the Gospel to Raskolnikov, four days elapse; and this scene is described in Chapter IV of Part IV of the novel. Is all this a mere coincidence? It seems that Dostoevsky gives some special meaning to number four. And so it really is - that meaning is clearly revealed in the aforementioned scene. In it every sentence, every word contains a special meaning, but its detailed analysis would take up a lot of space here, so we will pay attention only to the most relevant moment.

It is not on her own initiative that Sonya begins to read the Gospel. For some reason Raskolnikov insists with her: "'Read! I want you to!' he insisted. 'You read to Lizaveta!'" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.325). He himself demands that she read the

episode of Lazarus' resurrection, which, by the way, is found in the Fourth Gospel. Why does Raskolnikov insist on this reading? Dostoevsky explains the movement of his soul: on the one hand, "He understood only too well how hard it was for her now to betray and expose all that was *hers*. He understood that these feelings might indeed constitute her *secret*" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.326; emphasis in original); on the other hand, "he now knew, and knew for certain, that even though she was anguished and terribly afraid of something as she was starting out to read, she also had a tormenting desire to read, in spite of all her anguish and apprehension, and precisely *for him*, so that he would hear it, and precisely *now*—whatever might come of it afterwards!" (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.326). In the Russian original, the writer himself highlights in italics the key words for understanding what is happening: "hers" "secret," "now." Some mystery takes place, a special kind of initiation ceremony: Sonya shares her secret knowledge with the one who needs it the most exactly at that moment. She foretells the miracle that is meant to happen to him: the miracle of renewal.

She was approaching the word about the greatest, the unheard-of miracle, and a feeling of great triumph took hold of her. There was an iron ring to her voice; joy and triumph sounded in it and strengthened it. [...]

"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead *four* days."

She strongly emphasized the word *four* (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, pp.327-328).

As one can see, Dostoevsky himself, once again highlighting the keyword in italics, deciphers the symbolism of number four. At the same time, however, he reveals to the reader the abyssal foundation of the novel's plot: the biblical passage of Lazarus' resurrection. It is not by chance that Raskolnikov demands the reading of precisely this passage; it is as if he perceived, in his inner self, that the episode referred to himself. Once again, it is not a coincidence that the name of the Gospel character appears earlier in Raskolnikov's conversation with Porfiri Pietrovitch:

"And ... and ... and do you also believe in God? Excuse me for being so curious." "I believe," Raskolnikov repeated, looking up at Porfiry. "And ... and do you believe in the raising of Lazarus?"

“I be-believe. What do you need all this for?”  
“You believe literally?”  
“Literally” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.261).

At first, this dialogue seems strange: if one believes in God, then why ask about Lazarus and even emphasize it “literally”? Only after the scene with Sonya, “after a while,” the meaning of this dialogue comes to be understood: the perceptive Pofiri Petrovitch guesses what happened right away and predicts what will happen to Raskolnikov, who repeats Lazarus’ fate not “literally,” but metaphorically.

It is exactly within the Gospel plot that the previously mentioned oppositions come together and acquire a complete meaning: on the one hand, the closed space, the heat, the muffling, the stench; on the other, the open space, the air, the humidity. The late Lazarus remained in the enclosed space of the cave and, as the sacred scripture says, he was already beginning to smell; Jesus “cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. *And he that was dead came forth ...*” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.328; emphasis in original). The risen one came out, he came out of the cave into the open space, full of air and light.

The same happens in a metaphorical sense to Raskolnikov. Curiously, however, Dostoevsky endowed this metaphorically revalued plot with motifs and spatial solutions personified almost literally. Bakhtin thus described an element of carnivalization in comparing Raskolnikov’s kennel to a tomb. As Bakhtin (1999, pp.124-126, emphasis in original) wrote, “the very core of the carnival sense of the world — *the pathos of shifts and changes, of death and renewal*. [...] All the images of carnival are dualistic; they unite within themselves both poles of change and crisis: birth and death...” The Carnival ambivalence assumes the presence of the image of death and, of course, this is why the comparison of Raskolnikov’s kennel with a coffin is born. The closed space, in which the character is placed, reproduces the space of the cave obstructed by a stone, where the body of the deceased Lazarus was. Perhaps there was a mention of this stone when Dostoevsky had Raskolnikov bury the stolen objects exactly under “a big, unhewn stone” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.108). In precisely the same way, the motifs of heat, muffling and stench are brought to bear that atmosphere in which Lazarus’ putrefying body was. That Raskolnikov is metaphorically a dead man, even he himself understands: “Was it the old crone I killed? I killed myself, not the old crone! Whopped myself right then and there, forever! ...” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.420). In fact, he “killed” himself before,

when he would stay permanently in his “corner”, pondering his own ideas, writing the article about “the elected,” to whom “everything is permitted.”

And yet another detail: After planning the crime, Raskolnikov placed himself in a condition of physical and spiritual isolation that recalls the isolation of the deceased man. Once he had committed murder, this feeling of alienation from society constantly increased:

One new, insurmountable sensation was gaining possession of him almost minute by minute: it was a certain boundless, almost physical loathing for everything he met or saw around him, an obstinate, spiteful, hate-filled loathing. All the people he met were repulsive to him—their faces, their walk, their movements were repulsive. If anyone had spoken to him, he would probably just have spat at him, bitten him... (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.110).

This perception already lies on a kind of qualitative boundary between the “dead” and the living, it is the inner sensation of a vampire.

But the suffering and the compassion help Raskolnikov to resurrect and to leave the “tomb”: the rain and the tears purify him, and in the open space, full of air and light, on the river bank, his transfiguration happens. This is the fulfilment of what is written in the Holy Scripture: “*He that was dead came forth*” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.328; emphasis in original). And a final detail, right in the epilogue, after the resurrection of the character - another confirmation of the Scripture: “Under his pillow lay the Gospels. He took the book out mechanically. It belonged to her, it was the same one from which she had read to him about the raising of Lazarus” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1993, p.550).

## 5

Chapter 4 of Bakhtin’s book is dedicated to the peculiarities of the genre, plot and composition of Dostoevsky’s works. The researcher masterfully shows the many facets of the genres in the works of the Russian writer. What has been said makes it possible to add yet another genre hypostasis to the novel *Crime and Punishment*, which is hidden and quite unique: it presents itself as an artistic paraphrase of Lazarus’ biblical plot.

It makes sense to write a few words about this genre. Initially, the term “paraphrase” meant to retell or convey a text in other words, sometimes to convey a poetic

text in prose or the reverse, prose in verse. In the 20th century, the notion of artistic paraphrase was significantly expanded and deepened. On the path of the modernist movement in literature, this was related to the emergence of a series of works with singular orientation, with new approaches to the mythological material. For example, differently from the classical tragedy, which used the plots and mythological characters directly even though it could provide them with new interpretations, in modernism, in the genre of the artistic paraphrase, the “eternal” mythological or classical plot is so deeply “hidden” and “masked” that considerable analytical efforts are needed to identify it at the heart of the work; yet it exists, it can be perceived, and to a great extent it can determine the fictional world and the work’s plot.

It is important to remark: what we are talking about here is not a spontaneous, thoughtless mythological aspect, which can even manifest itself among naturalist writers. The main defining aspect of the artistic paraphrase genre lies precisely in the fact that the writer consciously resorts to the mythological or classical plot and, with it, establishes the foundation of the work. Another mark is the fact that this plot presents itself as obscure, hidden, modified, not to mention the characters, who bring other names, live in other places and in other times, find themselves in different situations. As the best known model of such genre, whose blossoming takes place in the 20th century, we can mention Joyce’s novel, *Ulysses*. The foundations of the genre, however, were set in the previous century and in Russian literature, by the way, which was far ahead of its time.

In artistic paraphrase, two basic strategies of writers are observed in relation to the “starting” plot. One is the parody, the “turning inside out.” This strategy is brilliantly used in Gógol’s novel, *Ancient Land Owners*, which consists of an artistic paraphrase of the ancient Greek myth of Philemon and Baucis. The other strategy does not contain the element of parody or bitter mockery: in it, the writer metaphorically reproduces the plot or some of its basic elements. This is Dostoevsky’s case in the novel *Crime and Punishment*. It makes no sense here to point out the essential differences between Lazarus’ biblical plot and the plot of the novel, for they are many and all quite evident, starting with the fact that Raskolnikov is a murderer, while Lazarus is not a sinner. But this is precisely the essence of the genre: the more impressive the differences, the more impressive the inner similarities, which confirm the unshakeable character of secular truths. The basic element of the Gospel plot, the almightiness of the Lord, or in other

words, of the good, capable of raising from the dead. Building the plot of the novel itself on this foundation, Dostoevsky confirmed the possibility of a spiritual rebirth of the human being, never definitively lost.

Both Bakhtin's book, which was published 90 years ago, and his subsequent works have a provocative character. They make the reader reflect deeply on the artistic text, which I tried to clearly demonstrate in my presentation.

## REFERENCES

БАХТИН, М. М. *Проблемы творчества Достоевского*. [BAKHTIN, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creation*]. Москва: Прибой, 1929.

БАХТИН, М. М. *Проблемы поэтики Достоевского*. [BAKHTIN, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*]. Москва: "Советская Россия", 1979.

БАХТИН, М. М. *М. М. Бахтин. Собрание сочинений*. Т. 2. [BAKHTIN, M. M. *M. M. Bakhtin. Selected Works*. Vol. 2]. Москва: Русские Словари, 2000. [Редакторы тома С. Г. Бочаров, Л. С. Мелихова]

ДОСТОЕВСКИЙ, Ф. М. *Собрание сочинений*. Том 5. Преступление и наказание. [DOSTOEVSKY, F. M. *Selected Works*. Vol. 5. *Crime and punishment*]. Москва: Государственное издательство художественной литературы, 1957.

УШАКОВ, Д. Н. *Большой толковый словарь русского языка*. [USHAKOV, D. N. *Great Monolingual Dictionary of the Russian Language*]. Moscow: АСТ: Astrel, 2009.

Translated by Yuri Andrei Batista Santos – [batista.yuriandrei@gmail.com](mailto:batista.yuriandrei@gmail.com)  
and Caio Andrei Batista Santos – [caioandrei11@gmail.com](mailto:caioandrei11@gmail.com)

*Received April 16, 2020*

*Accepted March 22, 2021*