## Dostoevsky's Orphan Text: Netochka Nezvanova

Flizabeth Cheresh Allen

As every student of Dostoevsky knows well, he portrays orphans and near-orphans throughout his literary career, from the early "A Christmas Tree and a Wedding" ["Елка и свадьба," 1848], to *The Insulted and Injured* [*Униженные и искорбленные*, 1861], to *The Brothers Karamazov* [*Братья Карамазовы*, 1880]. Yet it seems particularly fitting to dub Dostoevsky's unfinished novel of 1849, *Netochka Nezvanova* [*Hemoчка Незванова*], his distinctively orphan text for several reasons. The most obvious is that it—or what we have of it—centers on the first phases in the life of an orphan, the eponymous Netochka, whose father had died when she was two years old, before the narrative begins, and whose mother and stepfather die when she is ten, leaving her to be sent from one new home to another.¹ But not only does Netochka lose her parents as a child, Dostoevsky abandoned her too, albeit not entirely by choice, leaving her story an orphan.

Dostoevsky's arrest in St. Petersburg for political subversion in late 1849, followed by his imprisonment in Siberia, interrupted work on the novel, which he had begun in 1846. And although he did correct proofs of the second installment of the novel while still incarcerated in St. Petersburg—it was being published serially in *Notes of the Fatherland* [Отечественные записки]

during 1848 and 1849—and he did revise what he had written of the novel in 1860 for inclusion in a collection of his works, he did not add anything substantive to it then, or ever. Instead he left it unfinished, breaking off abruptly with the promise of an encounter between Netochka and a minor character "tomorrow," despite his original plan to carry the narrative on through to Netochka's success as a performing artist.

Netochka Nezvanova qualifies as Dostoevsky's orphan novel in several formal ways as well. For one, Dostoevsky never again used a character's name as a title; for another, he never again wrote a Bildungsroman [novel of education], the subgenre to which this novel arguably belongs; and for yet another, he never again employed a female character as a narrator—Netochka Nezvanova is couched in the first person as a memoir.<sup>2</sup> Thus in these ways too Netochka Nezvanova stands alone among Dostoevsky's works, an orphan in form as well as content.

One additional reason for viewing *Netochka Nezvanova* as Dostoevsky's orphan text is the sparse attention the work has received from literary historians and critics. With a few exceptions, most notably an essay by Elena Krasnostchekova in a study of violence in Russian literature, the novel has garnered only passing critical interest.<sup>3</sup> Even in a study that takes Dostoevsky's depiction of children as its subject, *Dostoevsky: Child and Man in His Works*, William Rowe devotes only a few pages to this novel, and Andrew Wachtel does not mention it at all in his literary historical study *The Battle for Childhood: Creation of a Russian Myth*, maintaining that "the advent of a specifically Russian conception of childhood can be dated to September 1852, when Tolstoy's *Childhood* appeared anonymously in the journal *The Contemporary*." For most historians and critics, *Netochka Nezvanova* has significance only as a harbinger of what was to come. As Konstantin Mochulsky puts it, the novel was "the laboratory in which the ideology and technique of the great novels were worked out."

The few commentators who explore the novel's substance have tended to focus on specific themes. Robert Louis Jackson and Thomas Marullo, for instance, have concentrated on the fatal self-aggrandizing delusions of musical genius held by Netochka's violinist stepfather. Joe Andrew and Victor Terras, among others, have dwelt on the sexual precocity and, at times, perversity of various characters, including Netochka herself. Leonid Grossman and Konstantin Mochulsky have highlighted the types of female characters

represented or, more broadly, the novel's relation to the "woman question" in Russia at the time, as does Nina Pelikan Straus.

As intriguing as these subjects are, I would like to illuminate an aspect of *Netochka Nezvanova* that has not been sufficiently examined and yet that fundamentally marks the novel and reflects Dostoevsky's aesthetic and ethical vision early in his career. This is the role of stories. Although a number of critics have remarked Netochka's tendency to fantasize for its own sake—William Rowe, for one, notes Netochka's frequent "precarious journeys across the borderland between illusion and reality"<sup>7</sup>—I will consider that tendency differently. For I see stories and the fantasies they fuel shaping Netochka's imagination and much of her behavior.

In what follows, I will define "imagination" as the mental capacity to evoke sensations without immediate sensory stimuli. To be sure, sensory stimuli—a taste, a smell, a touch, a sound, or a sight, alone or in combination—may be re-created by the imagination from pieces of the past, or they may be newly created from a notion of what the present or future might hold. Derived from the Latin word "*imaginatio*"—imag(e) + in + noun suffix [the Russian воображение is rooted in the same segments, B(o)/in + ofpa3(x)/image + ehue/noun suffix]—the etymology makes clear that, of all the senses, vision provides the core of the imagination. It is the "mind's eye," as Hamlet famously puts it, which conjures up images that may stimulate an individual's thoughts, emotions, and even actions, often powerfully.

In his entry on "imagination" in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Roger Scruton stresses "the voluntary nature of imaginative acts," arguing that images produced by the imagination belong to "the domain of the will." He explains:

When I stand before a horse it involves no act of creative imagination to entertain the image of a horse—for this image is implanted in me by my experience, and is *no doing of mine*. . . . When, however, I summon the image of a horse in the absence of a real horse, or invent the description of a battle which I have heard about from no other source, my image and my thought go *beyond* what is given to me, and lie within the province of my will. Such inventive acts are paradigm cases of imagination.<sup>11</sup>

Calling up images by the imagination requires an act of will; exercising the imagination is a conscious, deliberate activity, Scruton affirms. Otherwise, if involuntary, the images that the mind engenders constitute false beliefs or illusions.

Imagination is, to quote William Hazlitt, "that faculty which represents objects not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations," even if those "shapes and combinations" may not exist in reality and may inspire bad—hostile, vicious, harmful—thoughts or actions. Such a sense of the imagination, for example, led Joseph Warren in 1753 to extol Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* as "the most striking instance of his creative power," adding, "[Shakespeare] has there given the reins to his boundless imagination, and has carried the romantic, the wonderful, and the wild to the most pleasing extravagance." Warren prizes the limitless potential of artistic creativity; he does not take any moral implications of *The Tempest* into consideration. <sup>15</sup>

Ethicist John Kekes identifies four particularly significant functions of the imagination: 1) re-creative (e.g., recalling "the face of an absent friend"); 2) inventive (e.g., "non-linear thinking"); 3) falsely creative (e.g., fantasizing "the facts [as] other than they are"); and 4) moral (e.g., envisioning "possibilities" as "good or evil"). <sup>16</sup> In this essay, I will focus on the "creative" and "moral" functions of the imagination, following the convention of referring to them as distinct types of imagination—the "creative imagination" and the "moral imagination." I will also adapt Kekes's definition of the imagination's creative function in a specific way. I will use the term "creative imagination" to refer to any image or idea invented by the mind without regard for the moral consequences of that invention.

The goal of exercising the creative imagination is creation, whether with the intention to escape, to entertain, or to produce high art, regardless of the moral effects that this creation will have. I will thus contrast the "creative imagination" to the "moral imagination." By "moral imagination" I mean the capacity to envision the potential for good or ill not only of an imaginative invention itself, but of a real action, emotion, or idea. In its capacity to gauge such potential, the moral imagination is, in the words of Lionel Trilling, the "essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty." Kekes amplifies his understanding of this concept by asserting that it has "both an exploratory and a corrective function" through which "agents are trying to envisage and evaluate their own possibilities by asking whether it would be morally good or evil to live and act according to them." Or, as Martin Price more succinctly defines it, the moral imagination is

the quality of "a mind that has stretch and reach, an unconstricted consciousness that can make significant choices" regarding right and wrong.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, to most philosophers, intellectuals, and artists of the Romantic era in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the creative imagination and the moral imagination are one and the same. To William Wordsworth, for example, the creative imagination, particularly the imagination that creates poetry, arises from a fusion of ideas and emotions into what he terms in The Prelude a "feeling intellect." 20 As he describes this kind of intellect in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1799), it yields an imagination that can give form to "truth, not individual and local, but general." This truth consists of what is "the most important" to human beings, the truth "that binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time."21 This is a moral truth, the product of unified creative and moral imaginations. And to Percy Bysshe Shelley, "the great instrument of moral good is the imagination," because "to be greatly good," an individual "must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own."22 Such imaginative empathy enables moral value judgments and actions.

However, as cultural historian James Sloan Allen observes, "a long tradition from Plato (whose idealism Shelley much admired) to many contemporary moralists has accused the imagination and its artistic inventions of warring with morality."23 Plato attributed that war chiefly to the persuasive deceptions that artists create. Prior to the Romantic era in Western culture, philosophers and artists generally conceived of the imagination, to use M.H. Abrams's terms, as a "mirror" re-creating or imitating, with varying degree of fidelity, images from the external world, whereas the Romantics viewed the imagination as a "lamp," radiating a light of visionary invention.<sup>24</sup> In *The Republic* Plato condemns the imitative imagination he deems most artists to possess because they "have no grasp of the truth," and merely reproduce "appearances," which are themselves only imperfect representations of pure ideal forms that exist in their own abstract realm.<sup>25</sup> These imitations are "easy to produce without any knowledge of the truth," and some artists are so skilled that they "can persuade people who are as ignorant as [they are]" that the imitations of appearances are real, when, in fact, imitations [mimesis] are at "a third remove" from reality and truth.<sup>26</sup>

Plato bans most artists and craftsmen from his ideal republic not only because their works are "quite untrue" but because these works can deceive their audience.<sup>27</sup> And to Plato, as Allen remarks, "this is the Great Lie of Art," for "when art deceptively imitates life, people gullibly imitate art."<sup>28</sup>

The deception becomes all the more insidious through art's appeal to what Plato judges the basest part of human beings, the part given over to instinctive desires that render us "irrational and lazy and inclined to cowardice." When art "gratifies and indulges the instinctive desires," he says, "it waters [those desires] when they ought to be left to wither, and makes them control us when we ought . . . to control them." Art thereby "strengthens the lower elements in the mind to the detriment of reason, which is like giving political control to the worst elements in a state and ruining the better elements." Then "pleasure and pain become your rulers instead of law and the rational principles commonly accepted as best," thus allowing "disorder" to undermine "morals and manners."

Plato singles out storytellers—he names Homer and Hesiod—because of their appeal to the lower instincts of impressionable young people with portrayals of gods and heroes alike as driven by emotions and lacking restraint. No good can come of this. Instead, he says, given the influential power of art, storytellers should depict gods and heroes as moral models of virtue and goodness, thereby encouraging "the highest excellence of character."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Plato recommends that the state would do well "to supervise the production of stories," and to "compel our poets" to compose only "suitable" stories to tell to both children and adults.<sup>34</sup> Harmful as art can be, Plato recognizes its capacity for good as well.

In *Netochka Nezvanova* Dostoevsky suggests that he holds much the same divided view of the imagination, art, and stories as Plato.<sup>35</sup> I am not arguing that Dostoevsky was directly influenced by Plato—we have no evidence showing that Dostoevsky read Plato in his early days—but I am arguing that the similarity of their views of stories, art, and imagination is striking, and that this similarity betokens Dostoevsky's youthful Platonic idealism, or, in Jackson's words, the "Platonist character" of his thought.<sup>36</sup> For Dostoevsky shows Netochka's imagination being distinctively shaped by stories that she either encounters or invents as she goes through the phases of her early life. In her childhood and girlhood, Netochka acquires largely a creative imagination,

displaying only glimmers of any moral sensibilities. And she is corrupted first by tendentious stories she is told and then by stories she tells herself, deceptively satisfied by their seductive images of self-gratification while remaining indifferent to their moral consequences. Only as an adolescent encountering the stories of heroes and heroines that she reads in novels does she grow to couple that creative imagination with a moral imagination sensitive to the moral world. We see this growth occurring as Netochka passes from childhood narcissism through girlish romanticism to adolescent altruism. This passage reveals Dostoevsky's own early creative and moral imaginations at work as he contemplates both the dangers and benefits of stories, a subject that recurs throughout his works.

Netochka's love of stories and her creative imagination appear in different ways, with different moral consequences, at each of the three stages of her life recounted in the seven chapters we have of Netochka Nezvanova. Dostoevsky originally subtitled the three chapters devoted to the first stage of her life "Childhood," and, anticipating Tolstoy's early published works, the novellas Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth [Детство, 1851; Отрочество, 1854; Юность, 1857], he could have called the two chapters covering the next stage "Girlhood," since they treat Netochka at the ages of ten or eleven, and he might have labeled the last two chapters dealing with the third stage "Youth," since they depict Netochka as an adolescent.<sup>37</sup> But her young life follows a very different course from that of the main protagonist Nikolenka in Tolstoy's novellas. Nikolenka was born into rural comfort and a supportive family (although his mother dies), and he winds up secure in his role as a university student. Dostoevsky's Netochka begins her life in urban squalor and familial strife, which she escapes only when her parents both die and she becomes an insecure orphan dependent on the whims of unreliable if wealthy strangers.

She remembers the sixth-floor, "dirty grey," impoverished one-room attic where she lived amidst "a disordered mess" of "brushes, rags, wooden bowls, a broken bottle, and God knows what else," furnished only with "an oilcloth sofa with the stuffing coming out covered in dust, a simple white table, two chairs, my mother's bed, a little corner cupboard with something in it, a chest of drawers that always tilted to the side, and a torn paper screen." And Netochka hates her poverty: "I loathed our miserable lodgings and the rags I had to wear." <sup>39</sup>

What is more, her earliest memories brim with terrible arguments between her mother and the man whom Netochka takes to be her father but who, she learns later, is actually her stepfather, Efimov.<sup>40</sup> "Watching [my parents] together," she says, "I realized that there was a vague but permanent antagonism between them, which produced an atmosphere of grief and disorder that permeated our life"<sup>41</sup>—an atmosphere that Krasnostchekova maintains "verg[es] on physical abuse" of Netochka<sup>42</sup>—and that often engendered explosive quarrels, presumably over Efimov's conviction that he is a musical genius unwilling to accept a menial job and thereby contribute to the family upkeep. One evening, for instance, Netochka recalls, Efimov "made some sarcastic remark that enraged [my mother] more than ever, and then the brushes and bowls began to fly."<sup>43</sup> And when her parents were not arguing, Netochka reports, "sometimes there was a death-like silence in our attic weeks on end," instilling an "everlasting, unbearable sorrow in our attic room."<sup>44</sup>

These squalid and sad beginnings render Netochka no sheltered innocent, but prompt her to grow up fast, if not altogether well. Identifying herself around the age of eight-and-a-half as "someone who, already at an early age, had experienced so much good and evil," she explains: "My development began with incomprehensible and exhausting rapidity . . . I began to think, to reason, to observe. But these faculties were put to use at such an unnaturally early age that my mind could not really interpret things properly and I found myself living in a world of my own" ["В КАКОМ-ТО ОСОБЕННОМ МИРЕ"]<sup>45</sup>—a world invented by her creative imagination.

Netochka stresses how active that imagination was during childhood, repeatedly remarking her games, fantasies, and other imaginative inventions. She recollects that "for a whole year I lived an interior life, always thinking, daydreaming, and secretly tormented by unintelligible and obscure impulses that were developing inside me." And she says that everything "became twisted and refashioned in my mind," so that "in my inflamed imagination [в моем пораженном воображении] were born the most incredible thoughts and suppositions," and that, when she did not understand something, "fantasy [фантазия] came to my assistance." This is her creative imagination at work, unconstrained by moral judgments.

Her "fantasy" fixates on a handsome house with crimson red curtains across the street from her apartment to which Efimov has drawn her attention.

Through her attic window she had long watched with fascination the "sumptuous carriages, drawn by handsome proud horses, [that] were continually driving up to the door" and the resultant "clamor and commotion at the entrance, the different-colored lamps of the carriages, and the lavishly dressed women who drove up in them. In my child's imagination [в моем детстком воображении]," Netochka remembers, "all this assumed an image of regal magnificence and fairy-tale enchantment." And not only that—this house becomes her idea of heaven: "I soon conjectured everything in terms of moving to that house and enjoying uninterrupted peace and comfort . . . I imagined the harmonious strains of music drifting through the windows and I watched the shadows flitting across the curtains, always trying to guess what was going on there and always convinced that this was the realm of paradise and eternal joy." Her creative imagination soars into infinity.

We learn that Netochka's creative imagination has actually been stirred by her stepfather, on whom it comes to focus: "I got it into my head that my father was a martyr and the unhappiest man in the world." In fact, she declares that she loves him with a "boundless," "strange sort of love, not a childlike feeling." Indeed, Netochka asserts that her stepfather always seemed "so pitiful, so unbearably tormented, such a crushed creature, and so horribly full of suffering," it would have been "horribly unnatural for me not to have loved him passionately."49 Although Netochka at one point describes this love for her stepfather as something "more like a compassionate motherly [материнское] feeling," she later confesses, "I had only one true pleasure, which was dreaming and thinking about him. I had only one true desire, which was to do anything that might please him."50 She recalls, "I used to become almost delirious with joy whenever he offered me the slightest caress." Over time, she concedes, "my love, or perhaps I should say my passion (for I do not know a word strong enough to express fully my overwhelming, anguished feelings for my father), reached a kind of morbid anxiety."51

As several critics have remarked, Netochka's intense attachment to her stepfather bespeaks an almost textbook Freudian Electra complex, according to which Netochka develops a love for her stepfather and an antagonism toward her mother, eventually to the point of implicitly wishing for her death. But, in addition to her psychosexuality, this love for her father likely has several other causes. For one, she gets the first "parental caress" she can remember from

Efimov, recalling one evening when "he called me to him, kissed me, stroked my hair, put me on his knee and let me nestle close to him." In line with his psychoanalytic interpretation of *Netochka Nezvanova*, Joe Andrew asserts that this scene marks the beginning of Efimov's "seduction of his step-daughter," and even alleges that scenes like this one "teeter on the brink of child pornography." But, starved as she was for the comfort of physical contact, his caresses alone would probably have won Netochka's allegiance. Another cause of her attraction is that he speaks with her at length, something no one else does: "Sometimes," she reports, "we talked for hours, never growing weary," even though she admits that "I frequently failed to understand a word of what he said to me." At that time, understanding was unimportant to Netochka—human communication was all that mattered.

However, the main reason that Netochka is so drawn to her stepfather, I would argue, is that he fuels her creative imagination with stories. It is Efimov who teaches Netochka to read, and then one day after a lesson, she says, "he told me a fairy tale. It was the first tale I had ever heard. I sat spellbound. I followed the story with great excitement and found myself drifting off into another world. . . . I was quite ecstatic." Although we do not know the name of this fairy tale, it was likely in the vein of those portraying children in peril who are rescued as good triumphs over evil, a storyline that would strongly appeal to the needy Netochka and her creative imagination, while possibly planting the seeds of a moral imagination.

But fairy tales are not the only stories Efimov tells Netochka. He also tells her a beguiling story about his own future. "The time will come," he affirms, "when I shall no longer live in poverty, when I shall be a gentleman. When your mother dies, I shall be born again." This is his Life Lie, as playwright Henrik Ibsen would label the notion in *The Wild Duck* [Vildanden, 1884]—the story of his eventual financial success and professional renown—that he tells himself and Netochka in order to imagine escaping from his present poverty and ignominy, for which he irrationally holds his wife responsible. His creative imagination has been taken over by illusions, untempered by any moral considerations.

Netochka comes close to that condition, too. Although initially upset by the reference to her mother's death, she quickly and creatively turns Efimov's fantasy into a captivating daydream of her own: "I fastened onto the idea that when my mother died my father would leave this miserable attic room and go away somewhere, taking me with him.... It seemed to me that we would soon be rich.... I resolved, daydreaming, that my father would immediately dress himself well and we would move into a magnificent house"58—the house with crimson red curtains, in fact. She then conflates this tale of future riches with a story he is reading to her, as a result of which "somehow my father appeared as a character in the story (goodness knows how, since he was reading it), and my mother was there too, doing something or other in order to prevent my father and me going off together; and I too was participating, with my brain brimming with the wildest and most impossible phantoms." 59 She persuades herself that "at any moment my father might give a furtive wink . . . and then we would run away together and never see mother again." 60 Enthralled by the stories Efimov tells her and the fantasies of luxury and love they inspire, Netochka almost succumbs to her father's illusion, finding herself increasingly alienated from her mother until Netochka all but wishes her dead. This cold-bloodedness betrays Netochka's unleashed creative imagination, as she narcissistically fantasizes about a virtual elopement with her stepfather. At this moment, Netochka displays no signs of a moral imagination that could constrain her creative fantasies.

Indeed, Netochka's lack of moral imagination is displayed most fully in her antagonism toward her mother. Even as an adult narrator looking back on her childhood, she expresses surprise and remorse over—but total incomprehension of—her own lack of sympathy for her mother. "I blamed my mother and I saw her as my father's evil genius," she grants early on, but, she adds naively, "I have no idea how such a monstrous image developed."61 Later, she wonders, "How did I develop such cruel feelings towards a creature who suffered so eternally as my mother? . . . For some reason," she observes, "we were estranged from one another and I cannot remember feeling affectionate toward her."62 As Joe Andrew points out, Netochka's memories favor her stepfather by devoting the entire first chapter to his history and only one page to her mother's life. Therefore, Andrew concludes, "Netochka's mother remains a shadowy, dull figure, completely overshadowed (in the narrator's presentation of the 'facts') by her sadistic husband."63 I would suggest that the difference in length between the treatments of these two characters reflects how lopsided were the impressions made by Netochka's stepfather on her memories, and how little her mother ignited Netochka's creative imagination.

For her mother does not lead her creative imagination into the fantasy-rich world of stories as Efimov does. She has no time for stories—she is consumed by the demands of reality. Her mother loves Netochka but is beleaguered by illness and the burden of supporting the household. Although seriously ill herself, she has to worry about feeding and sheltering her family; she assigns Netochka chores and other responsibilities and scolds Netochka when she fails to do as she is told. Netochka's mother is therefore the voice of misery, sacrifice, and constraint—the voice of an unappealing reality.<sup>64</sup>

So tight are those constraints that on the few occasions when her mother has the time and strength to display her genuine affection for Netochka, she cannot formulate sentences, much less stories. On one such occasion, for instance, Netochka reports: "The poor woman continued to stroke my hair almost mechanically, hardly knowing what she was doing and repeating: 'My child, Annetta, Netochka.'"<sup>65</sup> The burdens of reality weigh on Netochka's mother too heavily to allow her to narrate or even to imagine a tale in which she and Netochka might live happily ever after.

Netochka does acknowledge some emotional conflict over her divided feelings. "Pangs of conscience and self-reproach rose up within me," she admits, "and I was deeply distressed that I was so obstinately cold towards my poor mother, and at moments I was torn to shreds with pity and misery as I looked at her." And these feelings suggest the beginnings of a moral imagination. But, "tainted by my fantastic, exclusive love for my father," she goes on, "I had to side with one or the other [of my parents]." And so, "I took the side of [Efimov] because he seemed to me so pitiful, so humiliated, and because he aroused my fantasy [моею фантазию]." Just so—Efimov is the source of stories that gratify Netochka's creative fantasies of a love enabling escape from a life of deprivation and despair, leaving the seeds of her moral imagination on fallow ground.

Thus Netochka's first phase of life is filled with her creative imagination feeding her childish narcissism. Her moral imagination barely awakens. But a new jolt of harsh reality thrusts her into an uncertain future that would change her thereafter. Her childhood ends when her mother finally does die and, instead of living out her fantasies of love and security with Efimov, she finds herself abandoned by him on the street. He too dies shortly thereafter.

Had Dostoevsky ended *Netochka Nezvanova* at this point, implicitly blaming stories for Netochka's cold-hearted rejection of her mother in favor of

the delusional Efimov, we would have to conclude that he attributed solely pernicious moral value to stories. But Dostoevsky did not end *Netochka Nezvanova* there. He described two more phases of Netochka's life, in which Netochka again embraces stories and exercises her creative imagination, but also shows signs of a developing moral imagination as well, along with her growing maturity.

In the next phase of her life, Netochka transforms her creative imagination from childish narcissism and fantasies of paternal love to a girlish romance with another girl, again nurtured by stories. After her mother and stepfather have both died, leaving her a full-fledged orphan, Netochka is taken into the home of a wealthy prince who had been acquainted with Efimov and who had learned of Netochka's plight. In his home she meets a girl her own age, the prince's daughter Katya, with whom Netochka becomes enamored.

Before she meets Katya, though, in the version of 1849, Dostoevsky introduced the figure of another orphan, the sentimentally pathetic eleven-year-old boy, Laria—an additional reason to dub this work Dostoevsky's "orphan text"—who appeals to Netochka's creative imagination, albeit in unhealthy ways. First encountering Laria hiding in a corner of a room in the prince's house, Netochka asks him, "Who are you?" to which he replies, "I'm an unhappy boy," which proves to be something of an understatement.70 She later remembers him well: "I see Laria before me as if it were now—a poor little boy trembling at the least sound, at every voice, with a tear running down from his little red eyelashes."<sup>71</sup> He was unhappy and cried so much, Netochka learns, because his father, a poor clerk, had recently died from a stroke, and his mother had succumbed to "despair" a week later. 72 Added to that, a distant relative of Laria who took the boy in after his parents' deaths had repeatedly psychologically tortured him, telling him that "he was unfeeling, that he was a tyrant, that he was depriving [the relative's] children of food, that he and no one else had driven his feckless parents to their grave."73

Unlike Netochka, for whom stories of escape and happiness had fired a wayward creative imagination, Laria suffers from a wayward moral imagination, which is manipulated by his relative's distorted stories of Laria's life that turn loss into guilt. "He imagined to himself [вообразил себе] that he was partially responsible for his parents' death!" Netochka exclaims, adding, "according to some strange idea, some unfortunate conviction, Laria imagined [вообразил]

that, aside from bitterness, they died due to the fact that he did not love them." Thus, from the time they died, Netochka reports, "the poor little orphan tortured himself . . . with remorse, reproaches," and "worst of all was that he kept this conviction secret and that there was no one to disabuse him of it for a whole year." Instead of using his moral imagination to envision a moral life for himself in the present and the future, Laria finds this imagination turned against him over invented events in the past.

Not surprisingly, Netochka tries to cheer Laria up by stimulating an escapist creative imagination with "one of those magical fairy tales that I had heard from my father." $^{75}$  But, when she interrupts this story to talk about her parents, Laria turns their conversation back to his imaginary crime against his parents and its consequences. He complains that everyone is always looking at him because he is an orphan—a condition he believes he has brought upon himself. And when Netochka asks him what he means by the term "orphan," noting that "this word was somehow familiar to me . . . but until that time, I hadn't completely understood what it meant," he replies, "It's a person . . . who doesn't have a father or a mother, Netochka, who has been left utterly alone and lives in someone else's house, where everyone gets angry at him and scolds him."<sup>76</sup> Projecting his self-contempt onto the people who have taken him in, Laria perceives hostility everywhere. Netochka realizes that, "from everything that Laria told me, I understood that the heart of a child who was mature not in years, but abnormally mature, mature emotionally, had been deeply pierced, at the same time as his mind was more and more darkened by daydreams [and] fantasies, and that some sort of fatalism loomed over his head."<sup>77</sup> His perverted moral imagination overwhelms his creative imagination and becomes a curse, dooming Laria to misery.

We never learn whether his fatalism was justified—the prince sends Laria away to school a week after Netochka meets him. But we do see the damage that a "darkened mind" can do, in Dostoevsky's view, not only to the hapless Laria but to Netochka herself as she falls under the shadow of Laria's darkness and makes it her own. As she recalls: I completely assimilated [Laria's] mode of thought has assimilated his woes as her own: It was Laria's fate to explain to me my misery with his story. That story and others about Laria's past affect Netochka as deeply as Efimov's stories had, but with the opposite effect.

Whereas Efimov entranced her creative imagination, Laria oppresses it. She recollects:

Of course, at that time, I couldn't understand Laria precisely, but, listening to him, I reconsidered my entire past. I myself was in some sort of frenzy from grief, from horror, from everything that so suddenly arose in my heart but that had already been accumulating for so long. I finally began to understand my poor mother and my conscience rose up against me! I reproached myself, I was tormented by remorse, I felt I had been inhumanly unjust, when I recalled that not one drop of love had poured forth from my heart—which had desired, had thirsted after justice and love in its turn—into her wounded heart.... I myself was under the same impression as the one that had ruined the poor boy, and some sort of burst of enthusiastic sympathy filled my soul.<sup>81</sup>

To be sure, Netochka had not bestowed much sympathy on her mother. But her identification with Laria is based on the false "impression," fostered by a "burst of enthusiastic sympathy" and a nascent moral imagination infected by his, that she bears some responsibility for her mother's death. The adults in the prince's household sense Laria's negative influence on Netochka, and "they tried to separate us." Then "one morning, he disappeared from the house"—and, ultimately, from the revised text of *Netochka Nezvanova*.

We do not know why Dostoevsky first included, then excluded, this second orphan from his first attempt at a novel, but we can detect the effects of his inclusion and then his removal. By including Laria and the influence of his dark moral imagination on Netochka, Dostoevsky shifted the focus away from Netochka's own maturation. By removing Laria, Dostoevsky kept the focus strictly on Netochka as she enters a stage of life when she begins to truly develop a moral imagination. Retaining Laria would have diluted Netochka's story, rendering her a more generic orphan than Dostoevsky perhaps intended.

Setting aside the episode of Laria, Dostoevsky shows Netochka in her girlhood falling in love with the prince's proud, capricious daughter, Katya, and he depicts that love's consequences. Netochka proclaims, "It was love, real love with all its ups and downs, real passionate love" that she felt for Katya. And it was love at first sight: "From the moment I saw her, a feeling of happiness filled my soul. Try to imagine [представьте себе] a face of idyllic charm and stunning, dazzling beauty, one of those before which you stop, transfixed in sweet confusion, trembling with delight, a face that makes you grateful for its

existence, for allowing your eyes to fall upon it, for passing you by."84 Katya captures Netochka's heart by appealing to her incipient aesthetic and erotic sensibilities. And, as had happened with her previous, more childlike, illusory attraction to Efimov, she feeds her feelings with her imagination, dreaming of attachment. "While she was with me I could not take my eyes off her," Netochka confesses, and

after she left, I would continue to gaze, spellbound, at the spot where she had been standing. I started to dream of her and, when I was awake, invented lengthy conversations with her in her absence: I would be her friend, playing all sorts of pranks with her and weeping with her when we were scolded. In short, I dreamt of her like someone in love.<sup>85</sup>

Katya gives Netochka much happier and more substantial material for her creative imagination to build on than Efimov—or Laria—ever had.

In striking contrast to Efimov, and after some initial resistance, which Frank attributes to "the unwillingness of [Katya's] prideful ego to surrender its own autonomy to the infringement represented by the temptation of love," Katya comes to fully reciprocate Netochka's affections, and the two girls develop a prepubescent but dramatically open homoerotic relationship. §6 Once Katya admits to an equal passion—"She sprang up from the sofa... [and] began kissing me wildly: my face, eyes, lips, neck, and hands" The two begin to share a bed at night. Then, "crying and laughing," Netochka recalls, "we kissed each other until our lips were swollen."

Terras detects here all the characteristics of "an adult love story." Yet the girls are still young. And they enhance the pleasure of this precocious physical intimacy with what else but stories, which they tell each other. These revolve around fantasies of their future life together, colored by a tinge of sadomasochistic role-playing. Netochka reports:

We talked about what we might do the next day, and the day after, and all in all we settled everything for the next twenty years. Katya decided how we should live: one day she would give the orders for me to obey, and the next day I would give them to her and she would obey me unquestioningly. After this, we would take turns giving the orders, and if it happened that one of us refused to obey, we would argue about it just for the sake of appearance, and then quickly make it up. In short, we looked forward to eternal happiness. <sup>90</sup>

By contrast to Laria, to whom the future had seemed so bleak, Netochka and Katya can imagine only a future of endless shared bliss.

The bliss of this storied future—another version of the "eternal joy" that Netochka had imagined for the inhabitants of the house with crimson red curtains of her childhood—is short-lived, however. Suspecting what she deems an inappropriate intimacy between them, Katya's mother decides to separate the girls, and Netochka is sent to live with Katya's grown half-sister, Aleksandra Mikhailovna, and her husband, Petr Alexandrovich. Despite the pain caused by this separation, Netochka nevertheless treasures her connection to Katya: "Our stories are inseparable," she affirms. <sup>91</sup> The stories they tell to one another, as well as the stories of their lives, continue the development of Netochka's creative and moral imaginations. Those stories have become more complex as Netochka enfolds first Laria's nightmares and then Katya's and her daydreams into visions of her past and future. Both visions may have been unrealistic, but both expand her emotional compass, and thus help to prepare her for the creative and moral actions that she will undertake in the reality of the next phase of her life.

The final chapters of *Netochka Nezvanova* portray Netochka's adolescent years at the home of Aleksandra Mikhailovna and Petr Aleksandrovich. During these years, Netochka becomes engrossed anew in stories and her creative imagination takes flight again. At the same time, she comes to display for the first time a mature moral imagination. This is the moral imagination of altruism, courage, and action.

The emotionally needy Netochka quickly forms a new attachment to the kindly Aleksandra Mikhailovna, whom she comes to regard as a surrogate mother. Aleksandra Mikhailovna treats her, Netochka recalls, "as if I had been her own daughter," as a result of which, "I threw myself eagerly into the maternal embrace of my benefactress." This benefactress also becomes Netochka's favorite teacher, eclipsing Netochka's hired tutors, "from whom I would have learned nothing," and securing her devotion by doing what Netochka's own mother could not do—telling Netochka stories. Hut these are not fictional stories, whose potentially wayward effects Aleksandra Mikhailovna and her husband try to guard Netochka against. The stories Aleksandra Mikhailovna tells, or rather reads, to Netochka are rooted in the realities of geography and history. And yet they captivate Netochka's imagination. "We set off on such voyages," Netochka recollects, mentally "visiting such countries, seeing so

many marvelous sights and experiencing so many magical and fantastic hours," that she was utterly enthralled. Aleksandra Mikhailovna would read from historical works "deep into the night," Netochka says, noting, "I have never felt as enthusiastic as after those readings." But Aleksandra Mikhailovna does not move Netochka's imagination with reading alone. She shares in this experience. The two become companions in the imaginative evocation of narratives about the past and its heroes. "We were both excited," Netochka exults, "as if we ourselves were the heroes." Identifying with the heroic actors of history and their noble, self-sacrificing, and courageous deeds, Netochka encounters a new type of human being and a new realm of human activity as her creative imagination fosters her moral sensibilities.

So aroused is Netochka's creative imagination, along with her developing moral imagination, by these readings that she decides to read on her own. But she wants to read fiction, as well as the facts of history, despite the household prohibition against her doing so. Stealing the key to Petr Aleksandrovich's library, Netochka goes in one night, and there she discovers novels, which she "began reading avidly," wholly losing herself in the rich fantasy world they provide her. "Soon my heart and my mind were so enchanted and my imagination [моя фантазия] was developing so wildly," Netochka confides, "that I seemed to forget the whole world that had surrounded me until then." These novels—also unidentified, but probably historical novels, particularly those of Walter Scott—heighten Netochka's imaginative sense of the past and her identification with its heroes and heroines. "Almost every page I read," she exclaims, "seemed already familiar, as if I had lived this all long ago: the passions, the enchanting pictures, life portrayed in such unfamiliar forms, was already familiar to me."

But these novels do not just take her into the past. They also give her new fantasies of the future. "Every day," Netochka says, "hope grew stronger in my heart, and my yearnings, too, grew greater; yearnings for that future, for that sort of life about which I read every day, and which struck me with such artistic force and poetic fascination." These fantasies of the future are not those of her childhood, when she imagined being transported from hardship to happiness by her stepfather. Nor are they the fantasies of her girlhood, when she imagined a life of joy with her beloved Katya. These new fantasies, born of both historical fact and fiction, are fantasies of noble heroics. Krasnostchekova detects a

conscious moral goal inspiring Netochka's reading, remarking that Netochka "searched in books for 'the correct path."<sup>99</sup> I would argue that it is her creative imagination, rather than her moral imagination, that first inspired her in this search. "I imagined myself the heroine of every novel I read," she confesses, although she also concedes that "it was only in daydreams that I was so bold, while in reality I was instinctively nervous of the future." Such nervousness is natural, given Netochka's dependence on the good will of others for her sustenance. After three years of daydreaming—of living a "life of the imagination" ["жизнь фантазии"]—however, her nervousness notwithstanding, her fantasies of heroism become reality.<sup>100</sup>

This happens when she courageously risks the security of that sustenance in order to protect Aleksandra Mikhailovna from Petr Aleksandrovich's emotional abuse. For Petr Aleksandrovich has long been an unloving husband, treating his wife with disdain and an air of icy, if subtle, moral superiority. As Netochka learns, this superiority arises from Petr Aleksandrovich's knowledge that Aleksandra Mikhailovna had once fallen in love with another man, albeit chastely. These circumstances set the stage for Netochka's heroic actions.

While leafing through Walter Scott's St. Ronan's Well (1824)—the only novel of his, she says, she has not previously read101—Netochka discovers an impassioned and embittered letter from Aleksandra Mikhailovna's erstwhile lover folded into its pages. Netochka happens to be furtively re-reading it one day when Petr Aleksandrovich observes her and demands to see the letter. Netochka refuses and flees to Aleksandra Mikhailovna. When Petr Aleksandrovich follows Netochka and angrily accuses her of having a secret lover, Aleksandra Mikhailovna defends Netochka but becomes overwhelmed with the guilty memory of her own lover. Acting to spare Aleksandra Mikhailovna more abuse and suffering, Netochka herself creates—a story. This one is an outright lie, albeit one with a moral purpose. She fabricates the claim that the letter is actually from a lover with whom she herself is having "an affair." Although Netochka confides to the reader that she acted "hardly knowing what I was doing," she is clearly attempting to shield Aleksandra Mikhailovna, who not only fears her husband's wrath but is in an "agony" of guilt and shame over her emotional betrayal of her husband. 102

In fact, this is not the first time that Netochka has fabricated a lie to defend someone. In each of her previous phases of life, she invented and told lies, but those lies clearly arose more from self-interest than selflessness. 103 In her childhood, she lied to her mother in order to ingratiate herself with her stepfather: Netochka gave the change from a shopping errand to Efimov at his request and then lied about it, telling her mother she had lost the money in the snow. That lie took some courage to utter, because Netochka "expected at least a beating" from her mother.<sup>104</sup> Yet, knowing "the thing that most frequently vexed [Efimov] was not having any money and therefore being unable to get a drink," Netochka persevered. 105 Although her mother "was genuinely beside herself with grief," Netochka recalls, and "started to shout at me," then, unexpectedly "she stopped scolding me and started telling me what a careless and clumsy girl I was and that obviously I did not love her much if I could be so negligent with her money." This reaction "hurt me more than any beating would have done," 106 Netochka states, adding "I had never before suffered such excruciating torment and heartbreak." 107 Nonetheless, Netochka refused to confess that the lie, as a result of which, she recalls, Efimov "kissed me until I reached a kind of hysterical ecstasy, laughing and crying at the same time." <sup>108</sup> Her lie won her stepfather's momentary affection, even at the expense of her relationship with her mother. Her creative imagination in childhood clearly trumped her moral imagination.

The same pattern appears during Netochka's girlhood—before she and Katya have become intimate. Then she invents a lie to protect Katya, whom she already loves, accepting the punishment Katya should have undergone for misbehavior in order to win her affections. Intensely disliking a curmudgeonly old aunt who resides in rooms on the second floor of the prince's house, Katya allowed the huge family bulldog, Falstaff, through a door leading to those rooms, although she was forbidden to do that, because her aunt hated and feared the dog. Upon being questioned about the incident, Katya was "prepared to tell the whole truth" when, Netochka recalls, "seeing Katya's deathly pallor, I stepped forward and firmly declared to Katya's mother: 'I let Falstaff go up." This was another absolute fabrication—Netochka had had no inkling of Katya's scheme. Although she immediately qualified her confession, adding that she did it "by accident," she never sets the record straight. And she received the punishment—four hours locked alone in an empty room—gladly. Indeed, "I went into my dungeon dizzy with joy," she exults, "I knew that I had scored a victory" in quest of Katya's love. 109 She was right, too—her intimate relationship with Katya commenced the following evening. Netochka's moral

imagination could not stand on its own at this time. Self-interest and her creative imagination conquered all. $^{110}$ 

In striking contrast to these earlier incidents, by creating a lie to tell to save Aleksandra Mikhailovna from Petr Aleksandrovich, Netochka potentially sacrifices her self-interest in order to act on the moral principle of helping someone else for their sake alone. Hence when Petr Aleksandrovich contemptuously alludes to his wife's earlier betrayal, causing Aleksandra Mikhailovna to collapse in hysteria and eventual unconsciousness—an early Dostoevskian scandal scene—Netochka further ratchets up her courage and changes her moral strategy. She tells Petr Aleksandrovich the truth about the letter, and then she lashes out at him for his consistent mistreatment of Aleksandra Mikhailovna. Accusing him of imperiously seeking to prove to her that she has erred and that he is "more sinless than she," Netochka proclaims with moral indignation: "Your vanity and your jealous egocentricity have been merciless." Next she threatens him, "I can see through you, don't forget that!" Though utterly dependent on Petr Aleksandrovich, Netochka here boldly and selflessly rises to defend the emotionally fragile woman who has been so good to her. In so doing, Netochka exerts her moral imagination and will, proving her superiority over Petr Aleksandrovich. Leaving her threatening words echoing, Netochka storms out of the room, where she encounters Petr Aleksandrovich's secretary, who asks "to have a word" with her. Exhausted, she promises to meet him "tomorrow." And there Dostoevsky lets her story end. He wrote no more of it.

Netochka's final acts of moral courage were not intended by Dostoevsky to be the concluding and climatic acts of the book—he had planned to end it with Netochka's triumph some years later as an opera singer. 113 But I think these final acts give us grounds for drawing some suggestive conclusions about the literary import of this orphan novel, in which we see Dostoevsky's early creative and moral imaginations engaged in explorations of story-telling. For I would say that Netochka's ultimate act of selfless courage came from the moral imagination she developed out of her creative imagination through the historical stories of noble heroics, fact and fiction, that she had absorbed during the preceding years. Whatever these stories were—we know that she values the stories told by Walter Scott—they had a different effect on her than did Efimov's stories, which had previously fed her narcissistic childish daydreams, or did Katya's and her shared stories, which had aroused her precociously erotic girlish fantasies.

They also had a markedly different effect on her than, say, the works of sentimental and Romantic literature had on Pushkin's Tatiana in Eugene Onegin [Евгений Онегин, 1824-31] and on Flaubert's Emma Bovary [Madame Bovary, 1857], both of whom let themselves be led astray by these works into fantasies of romance—from which Tatiana later saved herself by rejecting fantasy for reality, as Emma never could.

By contrast, the histories that Aleksandra Mikhailovna introduced to Netochka and the novels that Netochka read to herself not only induced her to imagine a heroic life, they eventually inspired her—as nothing else in her often sad, sometimes sordid, past could have done—to act imaginatively and heroically, with moral courage and altruistic selflessness, on her own.

My interpretation of Netochka's selflessness and burgeoning capacity to love might be seen to jibe with Joseph Frank's claim that Netochka's heroic behavior arises from "the emotive-experiential basis of Christianity" with her "free self-sacrifice of love" (360). This interpretation might also seem to support James Scanlan's broader claim that Dostoevsky never finds "altruism in man's purely material makeup" because he believed that "love of others is a spiritual ability that enters human nature only through its participation in the divine."114 But, however selfless and loving Netochka's courageous defense of Aleksandra Mikhailovna may be, it derives not from Christianity or any "participation in the divine"—virtually no trace of religion or spirituality can be found in Netochka Nezvanova. Her self-sacrificing love of Aleksandra Mikhailovna derives from her identification with the heroes of history and fiction. She identifies with and emulates those heroes imaginatively, without weighing the rational consequences or moral implications of her actions. Dostoevsky thus largely dissociates morality from rationality—by contrast to Plato—and makes morality more the province of the imagination. Indeed, throughout his works, Dostoevsky harbored deep suspicions about rationality, perhaps most explicitly expressed in Notes from Underground [Записки из подполья, 1864].

Yet, like Plato, Dostoevsky at once condemns stories promoting self-indulgence and escapism—the sort that at first seduce Netochka—and he lauds stories commending the virtues and valor of heroes—the kind that later inspire Netochka's emulation. In *Netochka Nezvanova*, Dostoevsky shows stories educating Netochka, ushering her from identification to identity, from a creative to a moral imagination, as she grows to maturity. Once she reached that

maturity, perhaps Dostoevsky lost interest in developing the character of his eponymous orphan, and in continuing the novel that portrayed her.

But whatever his reasons for abandoning this novel, Dostoevsky never abandoned his belief in the power of stories, and of stories within stories, to reveal the exigencies, ambiguities, and conflicts of the moral imagination. That belief should offer sufficient reason for students of Dostoevsky to adopt the orphan text *Netochka Nezvanova* and give it a suitable home among Dostoevsky's other works as a pivotal foray into his vision of story-telling and the vexed relationship between creativity and morality.

## **Endnotes**

- 1 Leonid Grossman succinctly summarizes the standard critical view of Dostoevsky's intention in writing *Netochka Nezvanova*: "The principle idea that Dostoevsky was trying to express in the novel was apparently that of the emancipatory mission of a great artist in the corrupt society of the day which is unexpectedly regenerated by the radiant power of the heroine's art" (126). Joseph Frank similarly asserts that Dostoevsky wanted "to portray a character who unites a dedication to art with an equally firm commitment to the highest moral-social ideals," thereby "endeavoring to steer a middle way between the discredited Romantic glorification of art on the one hand, and the temptation to discard the values of art entirely in favor of the utilitarian and the practical on the other" (350). Such views might therefore lead us to consider the extant portion of the novel *Netochka Nezvanova* as Dostoevsky's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*.
- 2 Varvara Pavlovna in *Poor Folk* [Бедные люди, 1846] constitutes an obvious forerunner, but Dostoevsky does not formally make her the narrator, except for the pages from her journal that she incorporates into her letter of June 1. In Dostoevsky's experimental use of a female narrator, many commentators detect the influence of a number of European novels, most notably, the novels of George Sand, Eugène Sue's *Mathilde. Memoirs of a Young Woman* [Mathilde. Memoires d'une jeune femme, 1841] and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), which Dostoevsky was reportedly reading in prison.
- 3 Those critics who do address *Netochka Nezvanova* vary in their assessments of its merits. Contemporaneous criticism was decidedly mixed.

Nikolai Chernyshevsky, for example, writes that "although I did not like the contents . . . this [novel] was written by a person with talent." Another critic, L.B. Brant, complained that Dostoevsky had offered too many "monological digressions, boring summaries, monotony, [and] oppressive analysis of inner sensations." However, Brant also finds "a dramatic and even tragic effect" on some pages bespeaking "the originality and independence of the author's talent." And A. V. Druzhinin finds that Dostoevsky "visibly tries to astonish, to mystify his reader with the depth of his observations. . . . This, together with the lack of restraint . . . makes an unpleasant impression. It is as if Mr. Dostoevsky does not know that it is better to say too little than to say too much, as if he is afraid that he will not be understood." Yet he concludes that, "if you consider the whole novel as a series of separate scenes, you read it with pleasure" (all quotations from Fridlender, 66).

Critics in the twentieth century followed suit. Mochulsky criticizes it on the grounds that "the author failed in his desire to achieve either compositional or stylistic unity," and that "Netochka is too pale a figure, too much the narrator and not the heroine" to hold the novel together (101, 108); in other words, he deems this first attempt at a novel an artistic failure. Terras maintains that Dostoevsky unoriginally "followed the example of George Sand, imitated her stylistic mannerisms, even adopted some of her patterns of thought." Nonetheless, "the image of the little girl who emerges from the narrative . . . is drawn as boldly and surehandedly as that of any of the countless girls whose confessions fill the French, English, and Russian journals of the 1840s" (102, 103). Grossman likewise perceives the influence of George Sand, but specifies that it is the influence wielded "not by the George Sand who was a socialist and a herald of future phalansteries, but by the George Sand of her first [i.e., Romantic] period, with its . . . graphic expression of the omnipotence of love . . . [and] the beauty of creative art, songs and poetry" (130). However, little of adult love or beautiful art is explicitly described in Netochka Nezvanova. Grossman nonetheless concludes that Dostoevsky "combined profound psychological insight with nobility of theme" (132) in this novel, unfinished as it is.

4 Wachtel, *Battle for Childhood*, 2. Of course, Wachtel may not consider Netochka "specifically Russian," but he could at least have acknowledged

- her. More notable critical attention does await Netochka in the future. Liza Knapp, for instance, devotes a chapter to *Netochka Nezvanova* in her forthcoming book *Dostoevsky and the Novel of the Accidental Family*, and Thomas Marullo has written an entire book on the novel.
- 5 Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky*, 113. This assertion is, of course, true, as far as it goes. For example, in her essay "Dostoevskii and the Family," Susanne Fusso notes that by the 1870s Dostoevsky had produced "a grim kaleidoscope of family disintegration: a boy sits in a juvenile penal colony and dreams of being rescued by his relatives (whom he imagines as princes and counts); a man kills his wife in front of his nine-year-old son, who helps him hide the body under the floor; a father, who has learned after his wife's death that their son is not biologically his, abandons the boy on the street in the freezing cold" (175-76). Variations on all these images can be found, thirty years earlier, in *Netochka Nezvanova*.
- 6 In a review of Ann Dunnigan's translation of *Netochka Nezvanova*, Jackson claims that "the work is a crystal in which may be viewed in shifting focus the elements of his art in the first period of his work and many of the elements of his later postexile period" and that he finds the novel "a particularly engaging work" (657). Unfortunately, aside from the few pages on Efimov (see especially *Quest*, 162-63, 181-82), Jackson has not engaged with it extensively in print—as yet.
- 7 Rowe, Dostoevsky, 62.
- 8 Like many other authors, Dostoevsky also interchangeably uses the term "fantasy" [фантазия in Russian; *phantasia* in Greek and Latin] for "imagination." In doing so, he is following a well-established tradition. As Penelope Murray points out, that tradition traces back to Augustine,

who used both the transliterated word *phantasia* and the translated word *imaginatio*. This dual usage continued in all the vernaculars of Europe. And already before Augustine there was a tendency to distinguish two aspects or uses of imagination. Images can correspond to truth or falsity; they can be seriously or lightly entertained. As time went on, this duality of meaning tended to correspond to Augustine's dual vocabulary . . . imagination became the important activity, and fancy the light, airy, playful activity of the mind in its freedom.

But this distinction was never fixed, and rarely observed in the language of philosophy . . . (quoted in Murray, xiii)

9 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 937 (Act I, scene ii, line 85). Hamlet, whose father has died before the play begins, utters this phrase to his friend Horatio, lamenting what he takes to be his mother's precipitous re-marriage:

Hamlet: My father—methinks I see my father—

Horatio: Where, my lord?

Hamlet: In my mind's eye, Horatio. (937)

- 10 Scruton, "Imagination," 213.
- 11 Ibid., 214 (italics Scruton's).
- 12 Hazlitt, Complete Works, 5: 4-5.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Quoted in Abrams, Mirror and the Lamp, 275.
- 15 For provocative contemporary discussions of the concept of imagination, see e.g., Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Alan White, *The Language of Imagination* (Oxford and New York: B. Blackwell, 1990); Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (New York and London: Twayne Publishers, 1997); Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagination: Modern and Postmodern* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998).
- 16 Kekes, "Moral Imagination," 101.
- 17 Trilling, Liberal Imagination, xii.
- 18 Kekes, "Moral Imagination," 101.
- 19 Price, Forms of Life, 70.
- 20 Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book. XIV, line 226 (1850).
- 21 Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," 420, 423, 422.
- 22 Shelley, "Defense of Poetry," 425.
- 23 Allen, "Morality and Immorality of Art," 442. Another tradition, of course, ignores or dismisses any relationship between imagination and morality—J. Hillis Miller and other so-called deconstructionists are renowned for this (see, most recently, his *Reading for Our Time*: Adam Bede *and* Middlemarch *Revisited*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), but even the thoroughgoing Scruton does not raise any moral considerations in regard to the imagination.

- 24 See Abrams, especially 57-69, for discussion of these metaphors for the mind and imagination. Abrams credits Plato as "the main source of the philosophical archetype of the reflector," and Plotinus as "the chief begetter of the archetype of the projector" (59).
- 25 Plato, Republic, 429, 427.
- 26 Ibid., 427, 429, 425.
- 27 Ibid., 132.
- 28 Allen, "Morality and Immorality of Art," 349.
- 29 Plato, Republic, 435.
- 30 Ibid., 436, 437.
- 31 Ibid., 435.
- 32 Ibid., 437, 192.
- 33 Ibid., 133. In his magisterial history of the idea of the Western imagination, J.M. Cocking claims: "For art [Plato] can be made to provide some support; for imagination none" (1). This claim is somewhat contradicted by Plato's call for artists to depict gods and heroes as ideal role models, which would seem to entail the exercise of something like imagination. Cocking more plausibly maintains that, in regard to art, Plato's attitude "is perhaps not so much ambiguous as ambivalent" (2).
- 34 Plato, Republic, 131, 133.
- 35 Jackson, for one, offers general support for this assertion with his suggestion, "If it is the romantics of D's higher aesthetic that one seeks, one can point to Plato" (*Quest*, 187). And Jackson reminds us that in Russia of the 1840s, "one did not have to read [particular authors] in the original or even in translation to be imbued with their ideas," that Dostoevsky "drew freely and unsystematically from all sources," and that "the [critics'] quest" must be "not for 'influences,' for the direct or devious paths of acquaintance with [Western] philosophers, but for correspondences" (186).
- 36 Jackson, *Quest*, 187. As J. M. Cocking has observed, "Plato has been . . . an inspiration for those idealists in a less philosophical sense who, seeing certain things as good, dream dreams of those same things as even better, projecting images toward some notion of perfection" (1). Jackson has affirmed that, despite his eclecticism, Dostoevsky was fundamentally one of those idealists: "The notion of beauty and the ideal—as it has migrated from Plato through medieval Christian aesthetics down to the romantic

- aesthetics of Schiller and Chateaubriand, Schelling and Hegel—structures and dominates Dostoevsky's entire world outlook; it is the controlling center of his views about art" (*Quest*, xv). In its treatment of stories, art, and imagination, *Netochka Nezvanova* may be placed at the core of that center.
- 37 In fact, Dostoevsky did initially divide the extant chapters into three parts: Chapters One through Three he called "Childhood," Chapters Four and Five he named "A New Life," and Chapters Six and Seven he dubbed "A Secret." He deleted these part titles, as well as the subtitle for the work as a whole—"The History of a Certain Woman" ["История одной женщины"]—when he revised the parts for inclusion in his collected works in 1860-61.
- 38 Dostoevsky, ПСС, 2:169; 30, 31. The first citation comes from Dostoevsky, Complete Collected Works [Полное собрание сочинений] (hereafter ПСС), cited by volume and page number. The second citation, for the convenience of readers who do not know Russian, is from the translation of Netochka Nezvanova by Jane Kentish. When necessary, I have amended the translation.
- 39 Ibid., 2:163; 36.
- 40 Andrew astutely points out that Netochka's real father is mentioned at the beginning—indeed, "father" is the first word of the narrative ["Отца моего я не помню," (translated literally as "Father my I don't remember")]—and thus he "is the first person to be spoken of, but then [he] disappears" and is never mentioned again. Nonetheless, Andrew observes, the real father's "death is of significance, in that this event has led to Netochka becoming fatherless and this in turn led to the initiation of the action" involving her stepfather [отчим], Efimov (218).
- 41 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:164; 38.
- 42 Krasnostchekova, "Wounded Young Heart," 73.
- 43 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:159; 31.
- 44 Ibid., 2:164, 161; 37, 33. Dostoevsky will pick up this motif of silence decades later in "The Gentle Creature" ["Кроткая," 1876], suggesting that long-maintained periods of silence between spouses can have fatal effects.
- 45 Ibid., 2:179, 160; 57, 32.
- 46 Ibid., 2:165; 38.

- 47 Ibid., 2:160,162; 32, 34, 35. Rowe emphasizes how greatly Netochka's imagination affects her perceptions, rendering her, in his view, "adult-like" (62).
- 48 Ibid., 2:162, 163; 34, 35-36.
- 49 Ibid., 2:160; 32.
- 50 Ibid., 2:160, 172; 32, 48. Terras goes so far as to claim that "the story of this strange romance bears most of the features of Dostoevsky's subsequent treatments of the love theme"—I would not go that far—and, more plausibly, that "Netochka's love, like any great Dostoevskian love, is really inexplicable and very complex" (103).
- 51 Ibid., 2:172; 48.
- 52 Ibid., 2:159-60; 31.
- 53 Andrew, "Law of the Father," 221.
- 54 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:165; 38-39. Admissions like this one render dubious Terras's assertion that "Dostoevsky de-emphasizes the daughter-father relationship and lets Efimov and Netochka meet as two PERSONS" (105; emphasis Terras's), that is, as equals. The relationship appears to be much more of a power struggle, in which Efimov mostly holds the upper hand.
- 55 Ibid., 2:165; 39.
- 56 Ibid., 2:162; 35.
- 57 Netochka never understands precisely why he views his wife as an obstacle that must be overcome in order to make his "story" come true, only that "there was a vague but permanent antagonism between them" (2:164; 38).
- 58 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:162-63; 35.
- 59 Ibid., 2:165; 39.
- 60 Ibid., 2:166; 39-40.
- 61 Ibid., 2:161; 33.
- 62 Ibid., 2:163; 36. Frank provocatively suggests that Netochka's antipathy towards her mother "can well be seen as a barely disguised transposition of Dostoevsky's own resentment against his father for having insisted that he become a military engineer and for having forbidden any thought of a career as a writer" and that "Netochka's terrible sense of guilt for having hated her poor, long-suffering and hard-working mother . . . can also be interpreted as a reflection of Dostoevsky's own guilt-feelings connected

- with his father's murder." If these autobiographical elements are valid, then, Frank concludes, "*Netochka Nezvanova* would be truly a 'confession'—and perhaps to a greater extent than even Dostoevsky himself was fully aware" (351).
- 63 Andrew, "Law of the Father," 220. Here Andrew resorts to a psychoanalytic interpretation: "In this way the text is structured in classically Oedipal terms in that the girl identifies with and privileges the phallus, at the expense of the mother's body" (220). This interpretation seems to me stretched.
- 64 Andrew attributes Netochka's narrative neglect of her mother to "the power of the paternal seduction, and the consequent repression" of memories of her (223).
- 65 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:164; 37.
- 66 Ibid., 2:163, 172; 36, 48.
- 67 In retrospect, the adult Netochka insists, "I do not believe that this kind of cruelty was natural to me, or that her severity could have turned me against her," but I would argue that Dostoevsky suggests otherwise, on both counts (2:164; 37).
- 68 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:164, 172; 37, 48.
- 69 Ibid., 2:172-73; 48.
- 70 All translations of the excised passage treating Laria in *Netochka Nezva-nova* are mine. The original maybe found online in Fridlender's Commentary on the novel at: http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij\_f\_m/text 0240.shtml, 60-63.
- 71 Dostoevsky, Lib.ru, 60.
- 72 Ibid., 61.
- 73 Ibid., 62.
- 74 Ibid., 61.
- 75 Ibid., 60.
- 76 Ibid., 61. In the revised version of the novel, the task of emphasizing Netochka's status as an orphan falls to the prince:

"'Poor little orphan,' he said, patting me on the head.

'No, no, not an orphan, no!' I said .... 'No, no, not an orphan, no!'" Netochka here resists the thought that her mother is dead, imploring the prince to take her to her "darling mother" (2:194; 77). Days later, though, Netochka replies to Katya's questioning why Netochka has come to live with Katya's family by saying, "Because I'm an orphan" (2:203; 90), so Netochka does finally acknowledge both her mother's and Efimov's deaths.

- 77 Ibid., 63.
- 78 Although Netochka dubs Laria "the future hero of my story" (60), he does not reappear in the existing text.
- 79 Ibid., 63.
- 80 Ibid., 61.
- 81 Ibid., 63.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:207; 94.
- 84 Ibid., 2:197; 81.
- 85 Ibid., 2:197; 82. Citing the same passage, Rowe argues that Netochka's "world of fancy is both factually resourceful and emotionally self-sufficient" (64), and thus declares, "Of equal or even greater import than sexual feeling is the imagination" (61) in this relationship. I agree that the imagination is more important here, but I consider Netochka's "world of fancy" more emotionally dependent on external resources than Rowe does.
- 86 Frank, *Dostoevsky*, 360. Grossman detects "an early study of the 'meek' and the 'proud'" character types in the portrayal of their relationship, concluding that, in consequence, "this part of the book is one of the finest in Dostoevsky's early work" (128). Similarly, Mochulsky views the differences between Netochka and Katya the reflection of "a psychological format to which [Dostoevsky] would forever remain faithful," "meek" female characters versus "proud" ones (109). Note that, despite their temperamental differences, their creative imaginations run in identical veins.
- 87 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:217; 108.
- 88 Ibid., 2:220; 112.
- 89 Terras, Young Dostoevsky, 105.
- 90 Dostoevsky, 2:221; 112-13. Compare this scene to the one in *Jane Eyre* at the orphanage where the prepubescent Jane has been sent, when she gets in bed with her one true friend, Helen Burns. Knowing only that Helen is seriously ill, Jane makes her way to the room of a beloved teacher, Miss

Temple, where Helen has been taken. Their subsequent conversation addresses the future, as do Netochka and Katya, but from a very different perspective. Helen invites Jane into her bed, saying, "Jane, your little feet are bare; lie down and cover yourself with my quilt." Helen tells Jane she is going to her "last home"—Helen knows that she is dying—and Jane poses a series of metaphysical questions to which Helen provides answers that would never occur to Netochka and Katya:

"But where are you going to, Helen? Can you see? Do you know?

"I believe; I have faith: I am going to God."

"Where is God? What is God?"

"My Maker and yours, who will never destroy what he has created...."

"You are sure, then, Helen, that there is such a place as heaven; and that our souls can get to it when we die?"

"I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good . . . I love him; I believe he loves me."

"And shall I see you again, Helen, when I die?"

"You will come to the same region of happiness . . . no doubt, dear Jane."

The narrator then shifts the narrative to a more sentimental vein as the girls prepare to sleep and Jane promises, "I'll stay with you, *dear* Helen: no one shall take me away."

The adult Jane who narrates recalls the near-Gothic denouement: "When I awoke it was day . . . the nurse held me; she was carrying me . . . back to the dormitory. . . . A day or two afterward I learned that Miss Temple, on returning to her own room at dawn, had found me laid in a little crib, my face against Helen Burns's shoulder, my arms round her neck. I was asleep, and Helen was—dead" (69-70). This image of innocent amicability, however morbid, only highlights by contrast the passionate affection displayed by Netochka and Katya.

- 91 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:223; 116.
- 92 Mochulsky finds this third section the weakest, arguing that "Netochka's new friend and benefactress is, like herself, a 'meek' type. The end result is a duplication of one and the same psychological tonality" that imparts only "monotony" to this segment of the narrative, until the end (111).

- 93 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:225; 118.
- 94 Ibid., 2:231; 126.
- 95 Ibid., 2 231; 126-27.
- 96 Ibid., 2: 231; 127.
- 97 Ibid., 2: 233-34; 130.
- 98 Ibid., 2:234; 131.
- 99 Krasnostchekova, "Wounded Young Heart," 78.
- 100 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2: 234; 131.
- 101 St. Ronan's Well is an apt choice, given that its plot revolves around a young woman, Clara Mowbray, who is falsely accused of infidelity. And the physical resemblance between Clara and Aleksandra Mikhailovna is striking, although Clara's description is presented by a female acquaintance of hers in much more dramatic—even melodramatic—terms than Aleksandra Mikhailovna's. Clara is said to have "eyes something hollowed—care has dug caves for them, but they are caves of the most beautiful marble, etched with jet—a straight nose, and absolutely the Grecian mouth and chin—a profusion of long straight black hair, with the whitest skin you ever saw as white as the whitest parchment—and not a trace of colour in her cheek—none whatever" (89). Compare this image to Netochka's recollection of Aleksandra Mikhailovna's appearance: "Her features have never faded from my memory. They were symmetrical, and their thinness and pallor only accentuated the austere charm of her beauty. Her thick black hair, combed smoothly down, framed her cheeks in sharp, severe outline. Her large, childishly clear blue eyes at times . . . seemed defenseless, as if fearful of every sensation, every outburst of emotion, every momentary joy and frequent quiet sorrow" (2:229; 123-24).
- 102 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:264; 163.
- 103 Dostoevsky devoted the equivalent of at least three printed pages to each of these incidents, thus, I think, signaling their significance.
- 104 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:170; 45.
- 105 Ibid., 2:169; 44.
- 106 Ibid., 2: 170; 45.
- 107 Ibid., 2;171; 47.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Ibid., 2: 215;105.

- 110 These lies at the very least call into question the view expressed by S. Iu. Nikolaeva that Netochka, among other female protagonists of Dostoevsky's early works, "approach[es] the image of an ideal person," because "purity of thought, whole-hearted devotion, the absence of egoism, sincerity, and trust, which the author so valued in his positive heroes, are characteristic of the heroines in the highest degree" (200).
- 111 Dostoevsky, ΠCC, 2:66; 173
- 112 Ibid.
- 113 Krastnostchekova stands virtually alone in declaring that "the novel *Netochka Nezvanova* may be considered to be complete in its revised version of 1860," because, "in keeping with the tradition of the bildungsroman, this version of Dostoevsky's novel . . . ends on the brink of adult life" (80).
- 114 Scanlan, Dostoevsky the Thinker, 84.

## **Works Cited**

- Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Allen, James Sloan. "The Morality and Immorality of Art." In *Worldly Wisdom: Great Books and the Meanings of Life*, 345-70. Savannah: Frederic C. Beil Publishers, Ltd., 2008.
- Andrew, Joe. "The Law of the Father and *Netochka Nezvanova*." In *Narrative and Desire in Russian Literature, 1822-49: the Feminine and the Masculine,* 214-226. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Brontë, Charlotte. Jane Eyre. Garden City: Literary Guild of America, 1954.
- Cocking, J. M. *Imagination: A Study in the History of Ideas.* London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Полное собрание сочинений в тридцати томах*. 30 vols. Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-90.
- \_\_\_\_. *Netochka Nezvanova*. Translated by Jane Kentish. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1985.
- Fridlender, Georgii. "Комментарии: Неточка Незванова." http://az.lib. ru/d/dostoewskij f m/text 0240.shtml. 59-67. 2012.
- Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.

- Fusso, Susanne. "Dostoevskii and the family." In *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*, edited by William J. Leatherbarrow, 175-192. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Grossman, Leonid. *Dostoevsky: A Biography*. Translated by Mary Mackley. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1975.
- Hazlitt, William. *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*. 21 vols. London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1930.
- Jackson, Robert Louis. *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of his Philosophy of Art.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_. Review of *Netochka Nezvanova* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Translated by Ann Dunnigan. *Slavic Review* 32, no. 3 (Spring, 1973): 657-58.
- Kekes, John. "Moral Imagination, Freedom, and the Humanities." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April 1991): 101-11.
- Krasnostchekova, Elena. "The Wounded Young Heart: Dostoevsky's *Netochka Nezvanova* as Bildungsroman." In *Times of Trouble: Violence in Russian Literature*, edited by Marcus C. Leavitt and Tatyana Novikov, 70-91. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.
- Marullo, Thomas. "Pointing to the Man-God: Efimov as Artist-Hero in Dosto-evkij's 'Netocka Nezvanova." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 30, no. 2 (1991): 231-52.
- Mochulsky, Konstantin. *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*. Translated by Michael A. Minihan. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967.
- Murray, Penelope. Editor's Introduction to *Imagination: A Study in the History of Ideas*, by J. M. Cocking, vii-xvi. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Nikolaeva, S. Iu. "Проявление нравственного идеала в ранных произведениях Ф. М. Достоевского." *Мир романтизма* 7 no. 31 (2002): 193-200.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Desmond Lee. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1955.
- Price, Martin. Forms of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Rowe, William W. *Dostoevsky: Child and Man in his Works*. New York: New York University Press, 1968.
- Scanlan, James P. *Dostoevsky the Thinker*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.

- Scott, Walter. St. Ronan's Well. N.p.: BiblioBazaar, 2007.
- Scruton, Roger. "Imagination." In *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by David E. Cooper, 212-17, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.
- Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. In William Shakespeare: Complete Collected Works, edited by Andrew Harbage, 933-974. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "A Defense of Poetry." In *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, edited by Harold Bloom, 415-448. New York: Signet Classics, 1966.
- Straus, Nina Pelikan. "Introduction: Dostoevsky and 'the Feminine." In *Dostoevsky and the Woman Question: Rereadings at the End of a Century*, 1-18. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Terras, Victor. *The Young Dostoevsky (1846-1849): A Critical Study*. The Hague: Mouton, 1969.
- Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination*. Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1953.
- Wachtel, Andrew. *The Battle for Childhood: Creation of a Russian Myth.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Wasiolek, Edward. *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1964.
- Wordsworth, William. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads." In The Selected Poetry and Prose Of William Wordsworth, edited by Geoffrey H. Hartman, 410-424. New York: Signet Classics, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_. The Prelude: The Four Texts: 1798, 1799, 1805, 1850, edited by Jonathan Wordsworth. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1995.