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Autobiography of a ‘Living Plagiary’: Vasilii Rozanov’s Secret Dostoevskian Genealogy

This article examines Vasilii Rozanov’s autobiographical practices by analyzing previously unnoticed aspects of his engagement with Fedor Dostoevsky’s works. Rozanov’s fascination with Dostoevsky is hardly a secret, and his contemporaries found his tendency to embody characters, such as Fedor Karamazov or Smerdiakov so striking that he was even called a ‘living plagiary’ of Dostoevsky’s novels. And yet, a major aspect of this literary performance has yet to be explored. The author posits that Rozanov’s excessive intertextuality and his creative embodiment of certain Dostoevskian characters contribute to his creation of a hybrid autobiography, whose uniqueness emerges from its fundamental dependence on others’ texts and its thematization of relationality. Ultimately, this article argues that Rozanov wrote himself into a Dostoevskian genealogy of his own making, while also developing an original authorial persona that combined autobiographical referentiality with a subjectivity enacted primarily through interaction with others’ texts.

Розанов брал отовсюду, вводит воровские даже слова.
(Shklovskii 1921: 45)¹

To call Vasilii Rozanov’s Dostoevskian genealogy a ‘secret’ may raise a few eyebrows, although certainly fewer than Rozanov’s own literary performance. He created a unique autobiographical persona via auto-projection onto a number of Fedor Dostoevsky’s unsavory characters, such as the Underground Man, Smerdiakov and Fedor Karamazov, in addition to other unpleasant types drawn from con-

temporary novels like Fedor Sologub’s *Petty Demon*. Readers regularly took note of his exhibitionist imitativeness and Rozanov made sure to acknowledge it and to reinforce the associations. For instance, referencing the reviews of *Solitaria*, his 1911 collection of autobiographical fragments, Rozanov writes, “Со времени «Уед.» окончательно утвердилась мысль в печати, что я – Передонов, или – Смердяков. Merci” (Rozanov 1990: 279)².

While Rozanov’s self-exposure as a “a pup out of the Dostoev-

¹ “Rozanov borrowed from everyone; he even used thieves’ jargon”. All translations in the article are by the author.

² “From the time of ‘Sol.’ the press has become completely convinced that I am Peredonov, or – Smerdiakov. Merci”.

skian kennel”, as D. H. Lawrence pithily calls him (Lawrence 1965: 100), may be the most readily observed aspect of his autobiographical performance, his philosophic and literary concerns actually emerge from an alternative interaction with the famous writer. Smerdiakov’s illegitimacy, which is so central to his storyline, hints at Rozanov’s ‘secret’ Dostoevskian lineage – this is what will be explored in this article. This will require us to look past the autobiographical ‘trilogy’ of *Solitaria* and *Fallen Leaves Basketful I* and *Basketful II* to the less often studied works of the early 1900’s, such as the 1903 *The Family Question in Russia*, which is explicitly centered on the plight of illegitimate children. This was a very personal subject for Rozanov, since his inability to obtain a divorce after his short-lived marriage to Dostoevsky’s former lover Apollinaria Suslova meant that the children he would later have with Varvara Butiagina were considered illegitimate by law. Out of this personal turmoil, Rozanov emerges as the passionate philosopher of procreation, intimacy and sexuality. He does this in part by exposing the hidden seams in Dostoevsky’s texts by uncovering their sexual, bodily subtext and by inserting his autobiographical per-

sona into a Dostoevskian genealogy he ultimately fashions for himself.

Furthermore, Rozanov’s performance of the autobiographer as a ‘living plagiarist’ exposes the autobiographical tradition’s poorly hidden secret – its uneasy negotiation between claims of originality and its heavy dependence on convention and intertextual modeling. Thus, Jean Jacques Rousseau protests a bit too much when he opens the *Confessions* with the words, “I am resolved on an undertaking that has no model and will have no imitator” (Rousseau 2000: 5). For all of his claims to autonomy and originality, Rousseau has a clear model in Augustine’s *Confessions*, and also engenders plenty of imitators himself. In utilizing the first person confessional mode, the autobiographer joins a family tree whose roots stretch back to Augustine and Rousseau. In contrast, Rozanov’s autobiographical project combines his philosophic interest in relationships and private family life with a challenge to the confessional autobiographical tradition, represented by figures, such as Rousseau, who relate their private affairs for different narrative ends. “Совершенно не заметили, что есть нового в «У.». Сравнили с «Испов.» Р., тогда как я прежде всего не

исповедаюсь”, explains Rozanov in *Fallen Leaves I* (Rozanov 1990: 249)³.

Twentieth century literary criticism has been very interested both in the philological search for intertextual references and in theorizing the uses of intertext in literary fiction. It has, however, been somewhat dismayed to discover the level of intertextuality in autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical texts. The following excerpt from an article on St. Augustine's *Confessions*, which is generally considered to be the *urtext* of western autobiography, effectively conveys this critical anxiety:

At every point in a narrative, which we would like to believe is as unique as the individual who produces it, we discover other narratives lurking, like children in a nearby house. Augustine's individuality turns out to be no more than a variation of a collection of textual patterns. (Rothfield 1981: 210)

While it may be anachronistic to expect Augustine to place as high a value on individual ex-

pression as writers have done since the Romantic period, Rothfield brings up an important issue. How do we account for excessive incidences of textual patterning in works that purport to be the stories of a unique individual's life?

The central concern of Rozanov's experimental autobiographical texts lies in the theoretical issue of translating the self into text, and the performative question of living, authoring the self that is already constituted by texts. Rather than conceal his intertextuality, Rozanov playfully indulges in it. His self-conscious excess presents a challenge to autobiographical theory, as it leads Rozanov to develop a hybrid autobiographical genre, whose uniqueness emerges from its fundamental dependence on others' texts and its thematization of relationality. His texts combine essayistic fragments, records of his life and thoughts, responses to other thinkers and critics, and even letters from his friends and readers reproduced in their entirety. Rozanov's textual practices led Viktor Shklovskii to theorize the development of a new type of modernist 'plot' based on the interrelationship and contrast between textual fragments, rather than causal or temporal continuity. Shklovskii would ul-

³ “They completely missed what was new in ‘S’. They compared it to ‘Conf.’ of R. while I am first of all not confessing”.

timately credit Rozanov with founding a new literary genealogy with his fragmentary autobiographical genre that would come to prominence in the 1910s-1920s. But in positing this development of what he calls the “writer’s notebook” genre (Shklovskii 1926: 35), Shklovskii surprisingly ignores its most direct provenance in Fedor Dostoevsky’s *Diary of a Writer*. Thus, Rozanov’s innovation turns out to be not strictly generic. Rather, I would argue that he theorizes textual interaction by materializing strategies of literary descent and filiation through self-inscription rather than the mere appropriation of another’s text or the creative overcoming of an authoritative rival. In fact, Rozanov emphatically lacks any ‘anxiety of influence’. He effectively wrote himself into a Dostoevskian genealogy, while also developing a unique authorial persona that combines autobiographical referentiality with a subjectivity enacted primarily through interaction with others’ texts, and especially with those of Dostoevsky.

Shklovskii counts that there were as many as 123 writers mentioned in Rozanov’s famous *Solitaria* and *Fallen Leaves* trilogy (Shklovskii 1921: 42). Many of these names were lesser known authors, or even complete un-

knowns, whose words were gathered up in Rozanov’s ample *Basketfuls* in an act of collection and preservation. Rozanov even went so far as to insert private letters from his childhood schoolmate into *Fallen Leaves Basketful II*. This had been a regular practice for him for a number of years, even before the publication of *Fallen Leaves II* (1915). Rozanov’s earlier publicistic and philosophical works were also stitched together from his own essays, extended quotations from others texts, reviews and letters, all of them copiously footnoted with Rozanov’s dialogic commentary to the texts. Rozanov was so infamous for publishing private letters that many correspondents who wished to reveal personal information (and often it was quite personal, since Rozanov’s most prominent philosophical theme was that of sexuality and procreative marriage) stopped identifying themselves when writing to him. One reader’s letter begins with the words: “не решаюсь же подписываться, зная вашу почти болезненную склонность печатать даже интимные письма” (Rozanov 1995: 333)⁴. Rozanov, of course, published

⁴ “I am unable to sign my name, knowing full well of your almost unhealthy tendency to publish even the most intimate of letters”.

the entirety of this letter, together with many others, in his 1901 *In the Land of the Unclear and Undecided*.

Rozanov's contemporaries were even more shocked by another one of his intertextual tendencies. Contemporary readers interpreted Rozanov's self-presentation as an impersonation of every unpleasant literary character they could think of. The list included Peredonov from Sologub's *Petty Demon*⁵, Iudushka Golovlev from Saltykov-Schedrin's *The Golovlev Family*, as well as an impressive array of Dostoevsky's deplorables. His readers were so struck by this aspect of his self-presentation that he was able to boast the questionable privilege of having been called "a living plagiarist" of Dostoevsky. The following excerpt from a 1915 article entitled *Bobok* (after Dostoevsky's eponymous short story) portrays an even higher level of critical anxiety and incredulity than Rothfield's assessment of the textual patterning in Augustine's *Confessions*:

⁵ There was a history of personal enmity between Rozanov and Sologub, and it was widely believed that Rozanov actually served as one of the prototypes for Sologub's nasty schoolteacher Peredonov in *Petty Demon*. For more on this, see Danilevskii 2006.

Байрон создал целую армию Чайлд-Гаролдов, Гете – Вертеров, Пушкин – Онегиных, Лермонтов – Печориных. Но не было примера, чтобы писатель до такой степени полно воплотил черты героев из творений другого писателя. В этом смысле Розанов, действительно, вполне оригинален. *По странной ошибке его сочли вообще оригинальным, между тем, как его оригинальность только в том, что порою рабски воспроизвел черту героев Достоевского.* Если разобраться в этом подробнее с необходимыми выписками и сопоставлениями – это будет поразительно. *Известный большой писатель окажется каким-то живым плагиатом.* Окажется, что Розанова нет, а есть обыкновенный русский человек, циничный, неряшливый и талантливый, в сущности простой и «добрый малый», который так сжился с фантастическими репертуарами Достоевского, что сам стал какой-то фантазмагорией. Розанова нет, а есть тень,

падающая от тайной
стороны Достоевского.
(RGALla: 81)⁶

The article's pseudonymous author locates Rozanov's originality precisely in how incredibly unoriginal he seems when read through the prism of Dostoevsky's characters. This opinion was not limited to anonymous reviews and reader comments. Nikolai Berdiaev writes in his reminiscences that: "Мне всегда казалось, что он зародился в воображении Достоевского и что в нем было что-то похожее на Федора Павловича Карама-

зова, ставшего гениальным писателем". And yet, in the same breath, Berdiaev confesses: "В. В. Розанов один из самых необыкновенных, самых оригинальных людей" that he had ever met (Berdiaev 2003: 394)⁷. And Berdiaev was not alone in this opinion. As much as he baffled some of his contemporaries by his autobiographical performance, Rozanov was considered by many others to be a fascinating thinker and possibly even "the greatest writer of his generation" (Mirsky 1926: 171-2).

Rozanov's unique achievement lay in the way he activated the interstitial spaces between texts and within his own pages as sites for creative dialogue by positioning his authorial persona as a sort of incarnated imitation, a breathing, whispering citation⁸. In contemporary reviews

⁶ "Byron created an entire army of Childe Harolds, Goethe – Werthers, Pushkin – Onegin, Lermontov – Pechorins. But there has never been an example of a writer, who to such an extent incarnated the characteristics of the heroes from the works of another writer. In this sense, Rozanov is indeed quite original. By some sort of strange mistake he has been considered an original writer, whereas, in reality, all his originality consists in the fact that he has, often slavishly, imitated the traits of some of Dostoevsky's heroes. But if we took a close look at this and compared excerpts to each other, we would be amazed. This famous, important writer would turn out to be some sort of living plagiarist. It will turn out that there is no such thing as Rozanov, but there is only this ordinary Russian man, cynical, careless and talented, in essence a simple and 'a good sort', who managed to intertwine himself so closely with Dostoevsky's fantastical repertoire that he in effect became some sort of phantasm. There is no Rozanov; there is only the shadow that falls from the dark side of Dostoevsky". Emphasis added.

⁷ "It always seemed that [Rozanov] was conceived in Dostoevsky's imagination and that in him there was something resembling Fedor Pavlovich Karamazov, who had become a brilliant writer (...) V.V. Rozanov was one of the most fascinating and original people".

⁸ Zinaida Gippius is one of many memoirists, who describe Rozanov's performative intimacy and his emphasis on the whisper and the *tête-à-tête*. This is how she describes the first impression Rozanov made: "Говорил быстро, скользяще, не громко, с особенной манерой, которая всему, чего бы он ни касался, придавала *интимность*. Делала каким-то... шепотным" ("He spoke quickly, in a slippery way, quietly and with this particular man-

the Dostoevsky cord was primarily struck by Rozanov's performative self-exposure of an autobiographical self that was not just explicitly imitative, but also always in flux – shifting themes, addressees, and seeming to change his opinion with every page, if not with every line. The style of this over-exposure, combined with Rozanov's penchant for contextualizing his fragments in the material details of his everyday life, contributed to the motif of the incarnated Dostoevskian text. “С хитренькой смердяковской улыбкой на лице”, moans a reviewer, “он высыпает весь свой семейный сор на голову читателю и при этом старательно отмечает, где, при каких обстоятельствах и по какому поводу пришла ему в голову та или другая мысль и где он её записал” (RGALib: 28)⁹.

Rozanov cultivates an embodied poetics that seeks to let the reader into the scene of the text's composition and the author's sensations. His fragments

ner that gave everything he touched on in conversation a feeling of *intimacy*. It made everything somehow... whispy”. Gippius 1995: 145).

⁹ “With a sly Smerdiakovian smile on his face he pours all of his private rubbish onto the reader's head, and each time makes sure to carefully note where, in what circumstances, and from what cause one or another of his thoughts came into his head, and on what material he wrote it down”.

are often accompanied by a notation indicating the location where they had been written (train, W.C., funeral procession), his activity at the time (numismatics, dusting his bookshelves), or even the material on which they had been written (“на подошве туфли” (Rozanov 1990: 106))¹⁰. The contextualization of Rozanov's fragments illuminates the text's constructedness rather than its confessional authenticity¹¹. According to Shklovskii, the context that prompts each fragment serves as an additional level of contrast to the differences between the contradictory sentiments expressed within the span of a page. The thoughts that struck Rozanov in the W.C. very often tended to be of a profounder nature than those he documented at his editor's office. And the long excursion on prostitution, which occurred to him at a stately funeral (or the hilarious description of his own imaginary funeral, which features Rozanov in the carnival guise of the unruly undead, who refuses to lie still and begs his pallbearers for a cigarette), seems to be more of a

¹⁰ “On the sole of my slipper”.

¹¹ Anna Lisa Crone approaches this issue of Rozanov's ‘inauthenticity’ or constructedness differently by focusing on his performative fictions, which break with what Lejeune has famously termed the autobiographical ‘pact’ (Crone 1990: 36-51).

provocative homage to Dostoevsky's *Bobok* than a sincere chronicle of his shifting sensations. Indeed, Dostoevsky was such a major reference point for Rozanov that "upon reading *Diary of a Writer*" should have been the most commonly occurring contextual marker in the fragments.

Rozanov's friend Erikh Gollerbakh reports:

Много раз в печати и в беседе с друзьями В. В. Розанов говорил о своей тесной, интимной, психологической связи с творчеством Ф. М. Достоевского. Помню, однажды, любовно поглаживая том *Дневника Писателя*, В. В. сказал: «научитесь ценить эту книгу. Я с ней никогда не расстаюсь». Достоевский всегда лежал у него на столе. (Gollerbakh 1922: 56)¹²

Although the intertextual relationship between Rozanov's works and the *Diary of a Writer*

¹² "Many times both in print as well as in conversation with friends, V.V. Rozanov spoke of his close, intimate, psychological connection with F. M. Dostoevsky's art. I remember once V.V. said, 'learn to appreciate this book. I never part with it', while lovingly patting the volume of *Diary of a Writer*. Dostoevsky never left his desk".

is regularly mentioned, there have been remarkably few in-depth examinations of the parallels¹³. In particular, readers have missed perhaps the most direct mediator, who helps Rozanov inscribe himself into an unending dialogue with Dostoevsky, and whose entry serves as a model for Rozanov's penchant for paradox and insistence on recording ever altering, and often contradictory opinions within the space of a single page. Even Andrei Siniavskii, who posits the model of the Underground Man and of the "iurodivyi" or 'holy fool' as the touchstones for Rozanov's paradoxicalism, misses the character that strolls into the *Diary of a Writer* in April of 1876 and appears again in the July-August issue of the same year. Dostoevsky calls this man the Paradoxicalist. He appears in the *Diary* solely in the context of a dialogue with the author. The readers are presented with a series of fascinating conversations, one of which in particular supports his reviewer's charge that Rozanov was 'a living plagiarist' of Dostoevsky.

In the July-August 1876 issue, which is entirely taken up by their conversation, the Paradoxicalist espouses views on marriage and procreation, which are

¹³ The only extended comparison I have seen so far has been Fokin 2000: 191-202.

quite reminiscent of the only argument that Rozanov never fundamentally altered. In Chapter 4 of the July-August issue, in a section entitled *Children's Secrets*, the Paradoxicalist argues that endless childbirth should be woman's primary task in life and only in its pursuit will she really know true happiness and connect "с живою жизнью" (Dostoevsky 1972: XXIII: 92)¹⁴. Although Rozanov is rarely so unoriginally misogynist, he shares the 'Paradoxicalist's' emphasis on physical reproduction. It is not, however, an argument that Dostoevsky himself would make elsewhere. In point of fact, his private diary reveals that he may have occasionally leaned toward the exactly opposite opinion¹⁵. He did, however, impart some similar statements on another memorable character who rejects asceticism and favors bawdy, grotesque self-presentation. Fedor Karamazov is another regular point of comparison for Rozanov. In fact, Danilevskii has suggested that Rozanov's philosophy of 'reli-

¹⁴ "With living life".

¹⁵ See, for example, his moving entry as he sits up with the dead body of his first wife. In this entry, Dostoevsky sounds almost Augustinian in his ascetic rejection of the value of marriage and sexuality in favor of the heavenly, desire-free bodies that are to be granted to men at the Resurrection (Proffer 1973: 39-41).

gion and sex' is really just a sort of upside-down, 'theorized' Karamazovschina. He also puts forth the idea that Rozanov's attacks against ascetic monasticism are modeled directly – both in style and in content – on Fedor Karamazov's outbursts (Danilevskii 2006).

Paul de Man has pointed out that autobiography tends to look a bit "self-indulgent" and "disreputable" when placed side by side with more established genres, such as the novel (de Man 1979: 919). And yet, Rozanov emphatically lowers, or debases his autobiographical persona, precisely by constructing it out of traits borrowed from famous novelistic characters. Rozanov goes even further than Dostoevsky in *Diary of a Writer* in fragmenting the 19th century text and probing its fertile secrets. For instance, he exposes the issue of illegitimacy as a major driver of the 19th century plot. In doing so, he prefaces fascinating scholarly examinations into Dostoevsky's works, such as Fusso's *Discovering Sexuality in Dostoevsky* and Apollonio's *Dostoevsky's Secrets*, which find a rich dynamic of "secrecy and sexuality" at play in Dostoevsky's novels (Apollonio 2009: 79).

In his autobiographical performance, Rozanov frequently figures as both the disgraceful fa-

ther and the illegitimate child – Fedor Karamazov and Pavel Smerdiakov in one. One of his pseudonyms, Elizaveta Sladkaia, even references Smerdiakov’s mother, Elizaveta Smerdiaschaia. The physical descriptions he offers of himself are grotesque and clearly recall the emphasis on Fedor’s semi-contrived coarseness and semi-spontaneous lewdness. In Rozanov’s autobiographical texts, the aged nudity of an unattractive gentleman in his late fifties is frequently alternated with embryonic and infantile self-descriptions¹⁶. For instance, *Fallen Leaves Basketful II* begins with the provocative declaration: “С выпученными глазами и облизывающийся – вот я. Некрасиво? Что делать” (Rozanov 1990: 332)¹⁷. The book concludes with an extended image of “маленькой Розанов” (“little Rozanov”), embracing the entire world as if it were a mother’s breast and suckling on its nipple. “И люблю я этот со-

сок мира”, he adds, “/смуглый и благовонный, с чуть-чуть волосами вокруг” (Rozanov 1990: 576)¹⁸. *Fallen Leaves II* thus reverses the autobiographical order and instead of beginning with the words “I was born...” concludes with the image of the author as a newborn.

Rozanov’s self-presentation as simultaneously paterfamilias and child, together with his thematization (and spirited rejection of 19th century views) of illegitimacy underscores his concern with patrimony in the form of literary inheritance. But while Fedor Karamazov and Smerdiakov are perhaps the most commonly identified points of origin for Rozanov, he averred the closest kinship with a very different – and rather surprising – Dostoevskian character. When he was asked to name the literary character for whom he felt the greatest affinity, Rozanov replied, “конечно – Шатов” (“Shatov, of course”) without a moment’s pause (Gollerbach 1922: 57). Needless to say this led to a rather puzzled reaction, for how indeed can one explain the gulf between the perverse paterfamilias, or the parricide, and the student sacrificed at the end of *The Dev-*

¹⁶ In fact, his early experimental fragments, which would pave the way for *Solitaria* and *Fallen Leaves*, was called *Embryos*. Some of these were published in «Grazhdanin» in 1900 under the pseudonym Orion. There is evidence he intended the sketches to comprise a longer, fragmentary work. Several *Embryos* can be seen in Rozanov 2009.

¹⁷ “With bulging eyes and licking my lips – here I am. Not too pretty, eh? What is to be done?”.

¹⁸ “And I love this nipple of the world [...] so tawny and aromatic, with just a little bit of hair around it”.

ils? Rozanov's problematic answer was thus interpreted as either one of his characteristic paradoxes, or as a statement of an ideological affinity to Shatov's messianic nationalism. This confusion persisted due to the fact that from Rozanov's death in 1919 until quite recently, the experimental trilogy of *Solitaria* and *Fallen Leaves I and II* has been almost exclusively privileged by scholars over the earlier philosophic and publicistic texts. In fact, Rozanov enacts one of his most fascinating intertextual performances in *The Family Question in Russia*, which was published in 1903, a full ten years before the first *Basketful of Fallen Leaves*. In *The Family Question*, Rozanov expresses his personal anguish over the status of his illegitimate family with Butiagina and proposes to make the family as such the subject of religious-philosophical investigation. He passionately argues against the ascetic strivings of the church fathers, who marginalized the sanctity of marriage and procreative sexuality. In this context, we will remember that in *The Confessions*, Augustine models more than a conversion to Christianity. He ultimately seeks the most stringent form of the profession of faith: complete abstinence and withdrawal from social bonds, particularly that of

marriage. To illustrate his argument against this ascetic model of conversion, Rozanov presents an extended five-page quotation from Dostoevsky's *The Devils*. The scene is that of the birth of Stavrogin's child to Shatov's estranged wife Marie, and Shatov's subsequent rebirth through the sacred experience of fatherhood. Rozanov's reading of Shatov's simultaneous fatherhood and rebirth conflates the distinction between father and child and recalls Oedipus' scrambled genealogy, as well as his own altered autobiographical chronology. Rozanov rewrites the tragic parody (for in the novel the child, the mother, and Shatov all die soon thereafter) of the scene in Bethlehem into a prophetic apotheosis of the sanctity of reproduction. Rozanov writes:

Читатель да простит нас за длинную цитату. Мы все *рассуждали* (о браке и о его духе), но ведь нужен и матерьял, к которому конкретно мы могли бы относить свои рассуждения. Мы от себя высказали, что *рождение и все около рождения* – религиозно; и теперь приводим иллюстрацию, что оно *воскрешает*, и даже *воскрешает* из такой пустынности отри-

цания как наш нигилизм. (Rozanov 2004: 59)¹⁹

I hope I may also be forgiven for this long quotation, but I think it is essential to reproduce at least a part of this performance. The text below is a part of the excerpt from Dostoevsky's *Devils* as it was printed by Rozanov; the italics are all Rozanov's, as is the explanatory footnote he plants on the bottom of the page:

... Marie лежала как без чувств, но через минуту открыла глаза и странно, странно поглядела на Шатова: *совсем какой-то новый был этот взгляд, какой именно он еще понять был не в силах, но никогда прежде он не знал и не помнил у ней такого взгляда.*

- Мальчик? Мальчик? – болезненным голосом спросила она Арину Прохоровну.

¹⁹ “The reader will have to forgive us for this long quotation. We were reasoning (about marriage and about its spirit), but we also need material to which we could concretely direct our thoughts. We put forward the idea that birth and everything around birth is religious; and now we give you this illustration, which demonstrates that it resurrects, and resurrects even from such a desert of negation that is our nihilism”.

- Мальчишка! – крикнула та в ответ, увертывая ребенка.

[...]

- Веселитесь, Арина Прохоровна... *Это великая радость...* - с идиотски-блаженным видом пролепетал Шатов, просявшийся после двух слов Marie о ребенке.

- Какая такая у вас там великая радость? – *веселилась Арина Прохоровна, суетясь, прибирая и работая как каторжница.*

- *Тайна появления нового существа, великая тайна и необъяснимая,* - Арина Прохоровна, и как жаль, что вы этого не понимаете!

Шатов бормотал бесвязно, глупо и восторженно. Как будто что-то колебалось в его голове и само собою без воли его выливалось из души.

- *Было двое и вдруг – третий человек, новый дух, цельный, законченный, как не бывает от рук человеческих; новая мысль и новая любовь, даже страшно... И нет выше на свете!*

- Эх напорол! Просто дальнейшее развитие организма, и ничего тут нет, никакой тайны, -

искренно и весело хохотала Арина Прохорова,
- *этакая вякая муха тайна*.*

*Вот он, просвет к древним религиям, к Фивам египетским, Вавилону халдейскому, к обрезанию – Авраама. Если *рождение* и в основе *обюдополость* – мистикорелигиозны, то «Бог всяческая и во всем», и в травке, и в звездочке; в человеке как в мухе. Тогда храм наполнится травами, и звездами, и ликами животного-поклоняемыми. Тут же разрешается и вопрос, есть ли и возможны ли «*лишние дети*», «*незаконнорожденные*». Это место следует иметь в виду при излагаемой дальше полемике о незаконнорожденных. (Rozanov 2004: 58)²⁰

²⁰ "...Marie lay as if unconscious, but in another minute she opened her eyes, and strangely, strangely looked at Shatov: this look was something entirely new, in what way – he couldn't yet understand, but he could not remember seeing such a look from her ever before.

- A boy? A boy? – with a sickly voice she asked Arina Prokhorovna.

- Yep, a boy! – she yelled back, swaddling the child.

[...]

- Be happy, Arina Prokhorovna... This is a great happiness... - babbled Shatov with an idiotically blissful look, beaming after Marie's two words about the child.

- What are you talking about, great happiness? – laughed Arina Prokhorovna,

This passage demonstrates a number of Rozanov's favorite textual practices. For instance, he locates his central philosophic concern – the recuperation of the sanctity of procreation and the body – in his favorite spot at the bottom of the page. This

as she bustled about, working like a convict.

- The mystery of the appearance of a new being, a great mystery, unexplainable, Arina Prokhorovna, and it's too bad that you don't understand this!

Shatov babbled incoherently, stupidly and ecstatically. As if something was tottering in his head and came pouring out of his soul against his will.

- There were two and suddenly – a third person, a new spirit, whole, complete, in a way that's not possible from men's hands alone; a new idea and a new love; it's almost frightening... And there is nothing more lofty in the world!

- Hah, what a bunch of nonsense! It's just the further development of the organism, and there is nothing more here, no mystery, - sincerely and joyously laughed Arina Prokhorovna, - according to you every fly would be a mystery.*

[Footnote:]

*Here it is, the window to the ancient religions: to Egyptian Phoebes, Chaldean Babylon, Abraham's - circumcision. If both birth and the sphere of sexual relations are fundamentally mystical-religious phenomena, then 'God is everything and in everything', in the grass, and in the little star; in man same as in the fly. Then the temple will fill up with grass, and stars, and with venerated images of animals. The question as to whether there are 'superfluous children' or 'illegitimate', and whether they are even possible, is also resolved here. This excerpt should be kept in mind for the following polemic about illegitimate children".

marginal space of the footnote is also where we find Rozanov's incredibly personal, anguished rejection of the legal concept of illegitimate children. This subjective interpretation overflows into the quoted passage in the form of Rozanov's italicized highlights that fragment Dostoevsky's text and generate new synaptic interactions between its parts. This move parallels Rozanov's deconstruction of the interiority of the self in *Fallen Leaves* through his unique 'internalization' of others' texts. He materializes the metaphor of his textual consumption: "...иногда кажется, что во мне происходит разложение литературы" (Rozanov 1990: 332)²¹. And yet the inside is the outside, since his commentary originates from the marginal space at the edges of the page and moves inward. Thus, his citational interiority is re-performed in the page's layout itself. This excessive marginalia attempts to stage the encounter with the other's text as a self-inscription between its lines, rather than merely its appropriation or rewriting. The motif of Shatov's resurrection (or religious conversion) through his participation in this accidental family calls to mind

Rozanov's frequent claims that his union with Varvara Butiagina fundamentally transformed him and gave birth to his philosophic project. In this context, I have no doubt that Rozanov's surprising assertion that out of all of Dostoevsky's heroes he feels the greatest affinity for Shatov refers his readers back to this particular scene of spiritual rebirth through the miracle of childbirth²². Thus, by claiming to uncover a sacralized procreative structure deep in the heart of Dostoevsky's text, Rozanov does not merely excerpt an authoritative reference to support his argument. He generates his own literary genealogy by performatively inscribing his rebirth in the form of a footnote to one of his 'originary' texts.

Dmitry Khanin has argued that "Rozanov's trilogy imitates the great Russian moralistic novel in which a troubled male protagonist experiences rebirth at the hands of a simple-minded beauty with a flawless moral instinct" (Khanin 1998: 86). But, in Rozanov's case, morality tends to have very little to do with it, especially when we consider his avowal that he is "не такой еще подлец, чтобы думать о

²¹ "...sometimes it seems that the decomposition of literature is taking place inside me".

²² Rozanov also claimed that he had also been awakened from a youthful infatuation with positivism and materialism by his encounter with Dostoevsky's works.

морали” (Rozanov 1990: 86)²³. In analyzing his inscribed rebirth, we need to consider what Rozanov had to be saved from and, to echo the title of a famous 19th century novel, who is to blame? The answer to the question is once again rather surprising – for it is Dostoevsky. Or rather, it is Rozanov’s youthful attempt to materialize a kind of relationship with his predecessor that could have been conceived on the pages of Dostoevsky’s novels (for instance, we can note Fedor and Dmitry Karamazov’s competition for Grushen’ka in the *Brothers Karamazov*). We hardly need a reminder that Rozanov married Apollinaria Suslova in 1880, a year before Dostoevsky’s death. Rozanov’s marriage to the significantly older Suslova materialized his desire for a Dostoevskian genealogy by literally enacting Sedgwick’s theory of literary descent and homosocial desire via a female mediator (Sedgwick 1985). However, as this attempt to ‘marry into’ Dostoevsky’s ‘family’ disintegrated in spectacular fashion, Rozanov found himself theorizing other modes of literary interrelations, while also, interestingly enough, declaring himself the philosopher of the body and procreative

marriage. He ultimately converts this troubled bodily exchange into an embodied citation of Dostoevsky’s characters, rejecting models of textual appropriation in favor of intertextual self-inscription into his literary family tree. In combination with his philosophic thematization of birth and family life, Rozanov’s self-conscious intertextual modeling anticipates theories that describe literary exchange as filiation, patrimony and generational change. However, Rozanov’s performance rejects the kind of adversarial structure that Bloom depicts in *Anxiety of Influence* and also foregrounds autobiography’s secret affinities. In the end, Rozanov forgoes killing the father in favor of writing the scene of his own literary birth.

²³ “Not such a scoundrel as to think about morality”.

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