

ОТЛИЧИТЕЛЬНЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО РОМАНА: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯ Ф. М. ДОСТОЕВСКОГО «ПОДРОСТОК»

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются характерные особенности психологического романа и анализируется их проявление в произведении Ф. М. Достоевского «Подросток». Особое внимание уделено психологической динамике между двумя центральными типами персонажей — отцом и сыном, представленными как «хищник» и «искатель истины». В работе подчеркиваются методы писателя по раскрытию внутренних конфликтов, мотивов и духовных поисков героев, акцентируется взаимосвязь психологии и литературы, демонстрируя глубокое понимание Достоевским человеческой психики.

Ключевые слова: Достоевский; «Подросток»; психологический роман; психология персонажа; конфликт отца и сына; внутренний конфликт; стремление к истине; индивидуальное сознание.

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL: A STUDY OF F.M. DOSTOEVSKY'S "THE ADOLESCENT"

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Abstract: The article explores the distinctive characteristics of the psychological novel and examines how this literary form is manifested in F. M. Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent*. Special attention is given to the psychological dynamics between two central character types—the father and the son—portrayed as a “predator” and a “seeker of truth.” The study highlights Dostoevsky's methods of revealing inner conflicts, motives, and spiritual quests, emphasizing the interconnection between psychology and literature and demonstrating the author's deep insight into the human psyche.

Keywords. Dostoevsky; *The Adolescent*; psychological novel; character psychology; father–son conflict; inner conflict; truth-seeking; individual consciousness.

Introduction. The author's worldview in a literary work is primarily expressed through the system of characters and the nature of their narrative interactions. Literature, functioning as an imaginative study of human beings, aspires to grasp the individual as a unified whole, combining outer behavior with inner spiritual experience. The ability to penetrate psychological depth and artistically convey the inner life of a person is one of the fundamental qualities of genuine creative talent. N. G. Chernyshevsky emphasized this when he observed that “psychological analysis is perhaps the most essential quality that grants creative power to talent” [1].

The methods, techniques, and principles used to depict the spiritual and emotional world of characters form the core of an author's artistic system. The psychological novel—particularly in its Russian form as realized in the works of F. M. Dostoevsky—represents the peak of literary analysis of the human psyche. Dostoevsky's creative efforts were directed toward constructing a multidimensional character capable of embodying the essential socio-psychological conflicts of the era and conveying the writer's philosophical perspective on life. In Dostoevsky's view, the central purpose of the novel lies in crafting an original personality and unfolding the



complexities of that individual's inner world. The writer himself noted that if the character of the adolescent fails, the entire novel fails [7].

One of Dostoevsky's final works vividly illustrates the distinctive qualities of the Russian psychological novel, tracing a person's entrance into adulthood and presenting the story of their spiritual search, aspirations and disillusionments, moral downfall, and subsequent renewal [8].

The present article aims to examine the distinctive features of the Russian psychological novel and to analyze the formation of personality and its narrative function through the example of F. M. Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent*. The theme of the psychological novel has attracted the attention of numerous scholars. To date, a considerable body of research has been devoted to Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent*, including studies by E. I. Semyonov, O. N. Osmolovsky, G. M. Frindler, S. M. Solovyov, among others.

The problem of psychological depiction becomes particularly significant in a novel focused, as Belinsky noted, on portraying emotions, passions, and events of private and inner life [2]. Psychological analysis in the classical novel plays a decisive role in shaping literary characters, which explains the growing scholarly interest in this aspect. Psychological prose tends to flourish most actively during transitional historical periods, when a new type of personality emerges under the influence of diverse social and ideological forces, resulting in a complex and multifaceted inner world.

Defining the typological boundaries of the psychological novel is challenging, as any novel, to some degree, strives to represent the human being as a holistic figure-united in the interplay of external actions and internal experiences. The challenge in defining the typological boundaries of the psychological novel lies in the fact that virtually any novel presents a comprehensive depiction of a human being-combining external actions with inner experiences. However, in a true psychological narrative, the primary focus is placed on the inner world of the protagonist, on the gradual unfolding of motives, emotional states, and contradictions that determine the development of the character.

In this genre, external events do not dominate; rather, they serve as a backdrop against which spiritual crises, moral dilemmas, and inner transformations occur. Thus, the psychological novel prioritizes the internal evolution of personality over the traditional plot-driven narrative structure. Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent* exemplifies this approach, offering a profound exploration of an individual's path toward self-awareness and moral self-definition amid the complexities of society and personal experience.

Within such a framework, the reader is invited not merely to observe events, but to follow the internal logic of consciousness, where thought, doubt, and spiritual searching form the core of the artistic narrative. As a result, the psychological novel becomes a means of revealing the structure of human consciousness and the dramatic nature of inner life.

In the psychological novel, a central motif is the "dual nature" of personality: the discrepancy between a character's convictions and their actions, depending on the emotional and situational context. Writers working in this genre sought to uncover the mechanisms of social behavior through a deep examination of human nature, attempting to trace how individual conduct is shaped by the structure of the psyche. The key question concerns the essence of the human being and the scope of their inner potential. As already noted, human nature is portrayed as inherently dual, balancing biological instincts and social influences. Artistic analysis in this context focuses on the interplay between natural impulses and societal forces, as well as the psychological complexes and processes that arise from this interaction [10].

According to M. M. Bakhtin, the novel engages with a "fluid and unfinished contemporary reality" [1]. Characters inhabit a state of searching, self-definition, and internal hesitation, which generates tension and variability in their inner life. The psychological novel, therefore, seeks to



represent the state of the human soul in conjunction with the external course of events. True insight into a character's inner world can only be achieved through psychological analysis. Writers place their characters in circumstances that expose latent traits and emotional processes, subjecting them to artistic examination. This analytical approach is crucial for shaping literary characters, as it reveals the moral and psychological effects of social forces on the individual and enables the author to evaluate them.

Ethical ideas in the psychological novel are likewise conveyed primarily through an in-depth study of the human psyche, demonstrating the unity of the individual with the world and their dependence on universal laws of existence. The key link between the protagonist and reality is formed by the character's psychological reactions. A typical narrative scheme is the "collapse of illusions," manifested through the evolving character arcs. Knowledge gained through confronting reality provides new experience, which frequently overturns earlier assumptions. Unlike the epic tradition, the novel concentrates on personal psychology.

At the center of the narrative stands the individual fate and inner life of the protagonist. As Bakhtin notes, the human being "cannot be fully embodied in the fixed socio-historical form," remaining open, unfinished, and capable of further development both spiritually and psychologically.

The central theme of the psychological novel is the personal fate of the individual and the inner, spiritual transformations that shape it. The continuous tension "between the poetry of the heart and the opposing prose of social relations" in an antagonistic society determines the dynamic portrayal of human psychology. Thus, the concepts of "personality," "psychology," and "literature" together form the essence of what we call the psychological novel. The aesthetic foundations of the Russian psychological novel were laid by Belinsky and later developed by Maikov, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, and, above all, by Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky — the genius of psychological prose whose name has long become an enduring part of Russian cultural heritage.

Dostoevsky was deeply interested in embodying in his new novel a "predatory type" that had captivated him for many years. In his vision, this figure represented the evolution of the character introduced in *Notes from Underground*: a personality driven by extreme willfulness as the highest principle. Dostoevsky sketched the nature of this type as follows: "Passion and immense spaciousness. The basest crude instinct combined with the most refined nobility. And yet this character's strength lies precisely in the fact that he can bear this limitless breadth with ease, eventually seeking a burden and never finding it. He is both enchanting and repulsive" [8].

Thus, the "predatory type" is internally divided: he longs for both faith and disbelief, simultaneously affirming belief in a lofty idea while being convinced "of the futility and absurdity of all ideals and of the damnation of moral stagnation." This duality manifests not only in thought, but also in action. In Dostoevsky's notes for *The Adolescent*, he wrote: "It is fashionable to have two modes of activity at the same time: in one (with some people) he is a great righteous man, sincerely noble, exalted in spirit, rejoicing in his work with endless tenderness. In another sphere, he is a terrifying criminal, liar, and libertine (with others)."

Versilov, a candidate for this "predatory type," remarks about himself: "I can experience two opposite feelings at the same moment — and certainly not by choice. It is disgraceful — precisely because at times it hints at an extraordinary degree of prudence" [8].

The psychological type Dostoevsky most frequently examines and portrays is the antinomic personality — one in whom independent and often contradictory emotions, ideas, and convictions coexist simultaneously. Dostoevsky termed this trait "spaciousness," though it would be incorrect to assume he approved of it. Rather, he desired to free his characters from this "breadth," striving to make them whole, morally healthy individuals.



“You cannot destroy me, erase me, or astonish me with anything,” Versilov claims. “I am as tenacious as a yard dog” [8]. Yet the “predatory type” did not become the central figure of the narrative, for Versilov yields narrative focus to his illegitimate son, Arkady Dolgoruky. Arkady is still immature, almost a child, fragile and defenseless at the outset of the story. His spiritual uncertainty, his wandering path and search for an ideal form the axis of the novel.

The instability of the Adolescent’s inner world prevents him from possessing the moral gravity that belongs to Makar Ivanovich in the novel. Dostoevsky feared that, if the story were told in a conventional ethical manner, the other characters might overshadow the young protagonist. His solution was artistically striking: he made the Adolescent himself the narrator. In his notebook entry dated August 12, 1874, Dostoevsky wrote: “Narrate in the first person. Begin with the word ‘I’. A confession of a great sinner for his own sake.” In his drafts he further notes: “In general, this is a poem about how a youth steps into the world. It is the story of his search, his hopes, disappointments, corruption, resurrection, learning — the story of a most charming, sympathetic being” [7].

In *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky appears as a remarkably perceptive master of human psychology, linking the inner world with external reality. “One cannot describe feelings without facts,” he explains. Indeed, however intense and dizzying the psychological and intellectual struggles of his characters may be, he always grounds them in “facts, facts.”

He meticulously records every objective, “external” detail of Versilov’s biography — compiling what he himself called a complete personal dossier. “I listened intently. A conviction emerged, the direction of his entire life. I sensed that his emotional expansiveness toward me arose from some external shock” [8]. “Facts” and “psychology” give material density and deep individuality to the characters and circumstances, yet, as always in Dostoevsky, they organically and dialectically grow out of the boundlessness of human existence.

Dostoevsky is especially penetrating when dealing with what he terms an “idea-feeling,” or an idea that has transformed into a passion dominating a person’s entire nature. “My idea is to become a Rothschild. I repeat: my idea is to become a Rothschild, to be as wealthy as Rothschild — not merely rich, but like Rothschild” [8], declares the Adolescent in the fifth chapter, referring to James Rothschild, the youngest of the famous brothers and head of the entire banking house. James Rothschild died in 1868, six years before the events of the novel, leaving behind an immense fortune.

Conclusions. Thus, the personality of the Adolescent emerges as complex and internally varied; he is distinguished by intellectual independence, the assertion of personal will, and the gradual awakening of self-awareness. By the conclusion of the novel, his genuine moral impulses — his yearning for goodness and justice — ultimately overshadow his earlier obsessive idea. The concept fades, while ethical reflection comes to the foreground. Arkadij Dolgoruky, therefore, represents an illustrative example of the psychological-novel protagonist.

In Dostoevsky’s prose, landscape functions on two levels: as an external, descriptive setting and as a reflection of psychological states. At times, he almost eliminates purely visual detail, retaining instead only the emotional-psychological resonance. In *The Adolescent*, for instance, the weather is evoked not through visual precision but through its emotional effect: a dull, damp thaw with a warm wind powerful enough “to unsettle even an elephant.”

The depiction of Petersburg is particularly expressive. A humid, mist-saturated morning becomes the catalyst for heightened fantasy - a mood reminiscent of German from *The Queen of Spades*. Amid the fog, the narrator imagines the city itself dissolving with the vapor, as if the decaying urban world might rise and vanish like smoke. Here, nature and setting are woven into the inner condition of the protagonist, mirroring his unease and spiritual searching.



Had Dostoevsky confined himself solely to such “essential moments,” his characters would become fixed, one-dimensional figures. Yet human nature, in his view, is fluid and paradoxical. For this reason, he avoids rigid portraiture of his central figures. Arkadij is not described in concrete physical terms because his multidimensional personality resists reduction to an external image. The reader must encounter him through inner experience, not surface qualities.

Dostoevsky’s artistic practice confirms that there is no single moment that can fully reveal a human being; hence, visual portraiture becomes secondary or even unnecessary [11]. The Adolescent astonishes with its psychological depth. The narrative foregrounds two contrasting psychological types — the father, marked by predatory ambition, and the son, driven by a search for truth: Andrey Petrovich Versilov and Arkadij Makarovich Dolgoruky. Through them, Dostoevsky demonstrates his mastery of psychological analysis, unfolding the intricate “dialectics of the soul” in each character.

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