Lost in a Lie: Examining the Language of Storytelling, Lying and Untruths in Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Idiot, Demons and The Brothers Karamazov

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LOST IN A LIE: EXAMINING THE LANGUAGE OF STORYTELLING, LYING AND UNTRUTHS IN FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY'S *THE IDIOT, DEMONS* AND *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will focus on the liars in three of Dostoevsky’s major novels: The Brothers Karamazov, The Idiot and Demons. It will consist of three chapters devoted to one character (liar) from each novel. I will focus on several definitions of lying by examining the concepts of untruth and misfire, which will help to differentiate the characteristics of each character’s motivations, as well as the consequences that their words have on the discourse within the novels. This project’s primary focus will be in exploring the rhetoric of lying by studying the style of each liar’s verbal delivery.

The degrees and severity of lying vary, as do the motivations of these three particular characters. While TBK’s Fyodor Karamazov is a cunning, malicious, and shameless “buffoon,” who is drawn to the theatrical aspect of lying, The Idiot’s General Ivolgin is less manipulative and is viewed as an unsuccessful storyteller. Both of these “elder liars” are presented as performers, which complicates the few moments of truth that arise during their public confessions. The truth becomes a very unstable and, at times, indefinable element in all three novels. The third character, who will serve as the exception to the stereotypical “old liar,” is Demons’ young Pyotr Verkhovensky. He is able to cause the most destruction with his well-crafted lies by playing a role and manipulating the inner workings of high society. The final chapter of this thesis will argue that Pyotr’s shameless approach of obtaining control through verbal manipulation sets him apart from Ivolgin and Karamazov. He is the only character who is able transform the somewhat traditional pattern of both the lie and the liar.
The liars are vital characters in the novel, despite the fact that they are often viewed as outsiders. Their main goal is to be heard, and Dostoevsky utilizes performative language as well as theatrical gestures and actions to highlight the fact that their failure is based mainly on lack of self-control and poor judgment. As I mentioned earlier, Pyotr will act as the exception, since he is more of an “underground man” who is able to maintain control of himself and over others.

These three characters provide momentum to the action of each novel, and represent a Dostoevskian definition of realism. They serve as a template for the author in his critique on society and our inability to be truthful. In studying the structures of language and philosophy, which are woven into each character, the complexities surrounding seemingly straightforward concepts such as truth and lie are complicated, and require further study.
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INTRODUCTION

In his essay *Something on Lying*, Dostoevsky writes, “in Russia the most honest people can lie for no reason whatsoever and with the most honorable intentions” (269) (Ну а у нас могут лгать совершенно даром самые почтенные люди и с самыми почтенным целями). He goes on to say: “truth almost always has an entirely fantastical character. In fact, people have finally reached the point where all those things the human mind is forever and ever lying to itself about are much more understandable than the truth itself” (271) (истина почти всегда имеет характер вполне фантастический. В самом деле, люди сделали наконец то, что всё, что нажет и перелжет себе ум человеческий, им уже гораздо понятнее истины, и это сплошь на свете). In believing that the truth is not a sought after principle, Dostoevsky models his novels’ characters as “honest” people who lie, innocently or otherwise, for the sake of entertainment and self-preservation. Lying becomes somewhat more acceptable than the uninteresting truth. Dostoevsky believes, “the vast majority of lies are told for the sake of sociability” (в огромном большинстве, лгут изгостеприимства) in which the speaker and listener become engaged in “feelings of mutual gratitude” (269-73) (чувство благодарности) (“чего о вранье”). Therefore, liars serve as a crucial element in the discourse of the novel because they promote the desired “mutual gratitude” between the entertainer and the entertained. As a journalist, Dostoevsky criticizes Russians for acknowledging and accepting lying as a form of entertainment, and so he often uses scandal scenes in his fiction to disparage the propagators of embellished storytelling. Lying becomes even more complex in his fiction as will be seen in analyzing the
three characters of Fyodor Karamazov, General Ivolgin and Pyotr Verkhovensky. In the case of all three, lying serves the immediate purpose of promoting scandal, which in turn puts into question the readiness of an audience (in this case, the reader) to willingly accept an elaborate story, with its fictionalized details and sophisticated nuances over one that is authentic and less appealing.

As outsiders, the liars appeal to their audience by rendering over-exaggerated stories, which grants them the attention of listeners, if only temporarily. His three novels, *The Idiot*, *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov* introduce three very distinct characters—all adept at the art of lying—who manipulate performance, gesture and language to achieve scandal. In the process, through their inability or unwillingness to be truthful, all attempts at public confession fail, and the scandal scenes they initiate serve as an opportunity to publicize the dishonesty of others. The lies of the outsider (liar) perpetuate the action of the novel, which subsequently leads to the execution of scandal scenes where “truth” is exposed and distorted, yet rarely, if ever attained.

Each novel depends on these performances to promote scandals—scenes that encourage ambivalence and the destabilization of truth and that act as the critical central action or turning point in the novels. Creating scandal is a means of exposure for these characters, who prefer to perform, making a mockery of themselves and others, rather than remain “unknown” and insignificant. Above all, the “fools” are able to achieve a certain degree of acknowledgment that can only be obtained during these moments of scandal, which creates what Mikhail Bakhtin calls “carnivalized literature” (145), where logic, propriety and social status are inverted, distorted and mocked. In *Problems With Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin explains how scandal
scenes work as a vital element of Dostoevsky’s works because they combine elements of laughter, parody, and bring about hierarchal shifts in the public or “carnival” square. Bakhtin believes Dostoevsky’s scandals share a link with the carnival found in literature from the Middle Ages, and which was viewed as “the people’s second life, organized on the basis of laughter” (Rabelais, 8). This humor sought to openly mock the conventional hierarchy (church officials, members of the established community, etc.), during festivals that preceded the start of lent. This folk humor which focused on how “clowns and fools mimicked serious rituals” (Bakhtin, Rabelais, 5) initiated the literary parody of carnival rituals. The laughter these carinalized scenes produce “is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives” (Rabelais, 12-13), binaries which are also presented in the scathing yet purposeful humor of Dostoevsky’s liars. Parody makes performance possible because a speaker’s gestures and verbal presentation during these scenes are meant to mock and denote truth and the inherent “goodness” that other characters lack. One of the reasons why Bakhtin believes Dostoevsky creates these scenes is to produce ambivalence while the fool infiltrates the hierarchy established in the novel. While many of the liars’ performances provide episodes of humor, they also work to reveal the weaknesses in Russia’s political and social structures.

While Bakhtin’s criticism focuses on the literary importance of the fool in creating laughter and parody in scenes of scandal, Deborah A. Martinsen in Surprised by Shame introduces a psychological explanation as to why Dostoevsky’s liars discredit themselves in public. Martinsen’s main argument is centered on the liars’
emotional reactions to their own performances, which she believes induce feelings of shame. A commendable aspect of Martinsen’s argument is in her interpretation of the liars as narcissists. She explains that their “self-indulgence” gets in the way of their performances (50). Such narcissism helps explain the self-assurance and outspokenness that provides them with the desire to ignite scandal. Their objective to remain central to the novel through performance provides the liars with the rights to satirize everyone around them. While Martinsen’s research contributes noteworthy exposure to the virtually unexplored topic of lying and its significance in Dostoevsky’s novels, much of her analysis and conclusions pertaining to the liars’ ongoing crisis of identity relies heavily on psychoanalysis, often with insufficient attention to evidence from the text. She suggests that lying is directly linked to the liars’ shame, a result of absence of identity, and that all of Dostoevsky’s liars are “shamed, shameless, or both” (11). Yet while the majority of the liars are occasionally regarded as being ashamed or shameless by Dostoevsky himself, there is little evidence to support Martinsen’s claim that “for Dostoevsky scandal is the exposing of shame” (2). The liars do not openly reveal their own genuine feelings of shame, nor are the scandal scenes meant to serve as moral explorations into these characters’ psyches. And while shame is often transferred onto their family members, and other witnesses to their scandals, the purpose of these scenes is to expose and destabilize truth, which has more weight on the novel than underlying feelings of shame that the liars may or may not be experiencing. Martinsen continues to outline certain feelings indicative of shame: “The states of feeling ridiculous, embarrassed, chagrined, mortified, humiliated, and dishonored are all variant shame states, all of
which abound in Dostoevsky’s work” (Martinsen, 20). In the novels themselves, however, the subtext of these feelings is often unclear or inconsistent, at best. Martinsen defines Dostoevsky’s liars by designating them with emotions she believes they should be experiencing, rather than supporting her findings with textual evidence.

Questions of psychology aside, Dostoevsky’s liars can be fruitfully analyzed in terms of the structure of their performances. Performance is most often used in conjunction with performative language, another strategy employed to achieve chaos and scandal. In How to Do Things with Words, J. L. Austin says performative language revolves around speech “contracts,” which are important when striving to achieve accurate and precise communication. Austin explains that a performative sentence “indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action” (6). For example, when Fyodor Karamazov declares that he fully intends to play the role of the fool, and actually fulfills that promise by performing, it is considered a successful utterance that upholds the performative contract because his intent is acknowledged by the action.

In order for a performative utterance to work successfully, “it is always necessary that the circumstances in which the words are uttered should in some way, or ways, appropriate, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should also perform certain other actions, whether ‘physical’ or ‘mental’ actions or even acts of uttering further words” (Austin, 8). Yet the reason why many of the liars are unsuccessful is because they do not perform the action or utterances that correspond with their promises to do so. Although there is always the
intention to perform, that intention can result in an unanticipated and contrary action. The failure in communication, as with a "misstatement" or a promise "given in bad faith" is still a promise, according to Austin, since the "person uttering the promise should have a certain intention...to keep his word" (11). Austin further explains that a failure to complete a certain utterance is not necessarily a lie but a "misfire" (Austin, 60). Misfires contribute to the unreliability of a character, and often the liars will extensively misfire, thus sacrificing their authority as a speaker.

Dostoevsky's liars are considered untrustworthy mainly because they make promises that they do not complete, failing to uphold the obligatory verbal contact of satisfying a promise. Crucially, in many cases they intentionally misfire in order to ignite scandal. Here lying serves as the paradox of communication because the scandals succeed despite the fact that repeated misfires discredit the speaker's authority. This allows for the true nature of a character to remain concealed under the disguise of the misfiring fool. Misfiring is paradoxical in Dostoevsky's literature mainly because the "revealers" of truth are the novels' most elaborate and unabashed liars. Moreover, they transform the very act of lying into a paradox, exposing the notion that not every lie is entirely untrue.

Their performances usually act as a disguise for a larger issue, such as exposing others' indiscretions and spurious public images. In accordance with the rules of Austin's misfire, I have incorporated what I term paradoxical misfires in order to expand the analysis of the aforementioned three liars. Paradoxical misfires occur when a scandal is intentionally executed and succeeds, because someone else's truth is exposed, despite the liar's unreliability as a speaker. Although the liars
disguise themselves as fools in order to perform, their success is not based on whether or not they are reliable, but whether they are able to succeed in purposely delivering misfires in order to achieve a more important disclosure. They are able to "speak the truth" by sacrificing themselves to the listener, while simultaneously exposing others' lies and creating chaos with their use of language.

Gesture is another element of the liars' performance that correlates with Austin's concept of misfire. Although gestures do not indicate intent or include the ability to make outright promises, they are indicative of a speaker's state of mind and intention, and can often reveal a great deal of information despite the absence of verbal exchange. In *TBK*, a scene in Zosima's cell reveals—through gesture—how Fyodor Karamazov tries to demonstrate his remorse over his ruined relationship with his sons by shedding a tear. However, this misfired display of emotions does not register with the audience because his intention to appear regretful backfires as soon as he begins to speak. The intention of the tear misfires only because his subsequent utterance belies his repentance. In his essay on *Gesture*, Adam Kendon states: "with gestures, speakers use a mode of expression that renders in visible form part of what is meant by the utterance" (112), yet the gesture can also mislead the audience just as easily as an utterance. Pyotr Verkhovensky of *Demons* is a good example of an intentional liar who manipulates gesture to his advantage, because his ability to control his performances supersedes that of Karamazov.

Chapter 1 will examine *The Brothers Karamazov*’s Fyodor Karamazov, a character driven by his desire to perform as the fool and promote his reputation as "the greatest violator of social norms and decorum" (Martinsen xvi). He is also the
only character written with stream of consciousness, which supports the fact that his lies have a strategy—though flawed in their delivery—and an intentional function. It is in the elocution and execution of lying in the performative that Fyodor Pavlovich’s character is able to ignite scandal, corrupting the novel’s purest verbal device of confession. Karamazov is aware of his audience, and knows when his lies fail, yet his purpose—to create scandal—succeeds. Above all, he is a character who exhibits no shame. His constant mockery of the church and of his own family forfeits his reliability as a speaker. Karamazov’s lies are so successful in promoting scandal that they retain their power even after his death.

Chapter 2 examines *The Idiot’s* General Ivolgin, who is believed to be one of Dostoevsky’s most unsuccessful storytellers, as opposed to the manipulative and purposeful lying strategist Fyodor Karamazov and, later, Pyotr Verkhovensky. The general, a fallen hero, is desperate to regain his position in society, yet diminishes his character’s reputation by telling unsophisticated and contrived stories. His audience, like Fyodor’s, is aware of his unreliability as a speaker, as well as his tendency to embellish the details surrounding his past “experiences” and “acquaintances” in war. With his unrestrained performances, and unrelenting hyperbolic speech, the general lands himself in prison and transitions into something of a vagabond. Like Fyodor, the general shames his family due to his lack of self control and unrelenting desire for an audience. Though Ivolgin is regarded as a secondary character, his impact on the novel is sufficient enough to ignite scandal and alter the direction of the novel’s subsequent events.
Chapter 3 explores *Demons*’ Pyotr Verkhovensky, the cunning young promoter of scandal, who serves as the exception to Dostoevsky’s two elder liars. Unlike Karamazov and Ivolgin, Pyotr’s motivations and thoughts are not included in the text; he is more of a secretive rogue character, who is able to control his performances. The fact that Verkhovensky enters the novel as an “unknown” provides him with an opportunity to construct his own public image. He successfully appeals to his audience by satisfying their desire for gossip and scandal, which renders him as a reliable confidante and informant among the novel’s elite. What differentiates his lying strategy from the others is his attention to detail, specifically to words and gestures, and his ability to relate to his audience, while simultaneously manipulating them. Verkhovensky’s speeches are eloquent and rehearsed and his performances are almost always controlled. He is presented as a calculated and selfish liar, whose lack of moral boundaries enables him to infiltrate every aspect of society to further his personal agenda and start an underground revolution. Verkhovensky is the only one who does not sacrifice himself for his audience through performance by playing an extreme version of the fool. The only character aware of Verkhovensky’s intentions is Nikolai Stavrogin, the reformed double of this successful liar.

The author positions his three liars Ivolgin, Karamazov and Verkhovensky in a constant state of crisis, ambivalence and desperation. Each liar is a variation of his predecessor, and the “foundation” for the construction of these characters used by the author spans beyond these three novels. Similar versions of *The Idiot*’s General Ivolgin can be found in *Crime and Punishment*’s fallen hero Marmeladov as well as *Demon*’s retired philosopher/writer Stepan Verkhovensky. *Crime and Punishment*’s
Raskolnikov can be viewed as the original Pyotr Verkhovensky; both men commit murder for a higher and rather selfish purpose, which they view as a benefit to society. Raskolnikov’s lying is less controlled, which is evident with the inclusion of his subconscious by the author, yet similar to Verkhovensky, he is careful in planning his performances, and does not, for the most part, perform haphazardly. *The Underground Man* resembles General Ivolgin in the sense that they both share a fear of the outside world, and criticisms are generally reserved for the private sphere. Yet through storytelling, the underground man purposely lies, and admits his failure to remain truly honest, which aligns him with Karamazov, who exposes his indiscretions. While the characters are revisited from one novel to the next, their basic structure as failed speechmakers, embellished performers and initiators of scandal remain closely related. The three liars examined in this thesis are arguably the extreme representation of a culmination of former and less prominent versions of liars and storytellers in Dostoevsky’s literature. Through the manipulation of speech, Karamazov, Ivolgin and Verkhovensky determine the direction of the novels and subsequently achieve notoriety as the most scandalous and shameless of all of Dostoevsky’s characters.
Chapter 1

Fyodor Karamazov: The Conscious Liar

Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov of The Brothers Karamazov (Братья Карамазовы) is one of Dostoevsky’s scandalous and malicious “old liars” whose use of flamboyant language and exaggerated gesture operate as valuable elements to his performances. With the knowledge of the effect clever use of language and artful speechmaking has on a novel, the author constructs his character in such a way that he serves as a discursive tool for a larger issue that he believes exists within Russian society—the willingness to accept (and occasionally even appreciate) the obvious manipulation of the truth. In his essay “Something on Lying,” Dostoevsky says, Russian people “constantly feel that the truth is something far too dull and prosaic...and much too ordinary” (271) (постоянно считаем истину чем-то слишком уж для нас скучным и прозаичным, недостаточно поэтичным, слишком обыкновенным) (“чего-то о вранье”). As a liar, Fyodor Pavlovich serves as a template for Dostoevsky’s critique on the impurity of confession and the ability lies have to manifest into truth. While Fyodor Pavlovich’s self-proclaimed “buffoonery” posits him in the realm of the unappealing and untrustworthy villain within the novel, readers are intrigued by his baseness because as the main outsider, he adapts to his role as the “fool,” whose purpose satisfies the reader’s desire for scandal. Fyodor’s lies are problematic because of the lasting effect they maintain throughout the novel, and continue to even after his death.

Communication acts as a paradox within The Brothers Karamazov; while speech is often regarded as a tool that relies on the truth for unification and compromise, it has an adverse result in this novel by acting as a barrier for the Karamazov men. What contributes to the destruction of the family unit is Fyodor’s persistent manipulation and
lying—creating a rift between the brothers and adding to their inability to connect with one another—preventing any resolution because the relationships are devoid of the most solid foundation for communication: truth. Fyodor dictates the direction of the conversations, and subsequently the action of the novel creating uncertainty within the act of confession and forcing the reader to doubt the stability of truth.

One element of the liar’s success is dependent on his ability to create uncertainty, instability and chaos through his use of language and gesture. J.L. Austin, author of How to do things with Words, discusses the affect language has on the way we perceive the world. Austin presents the idea that an unexecuted utterance (promise) is not considered a lie but a misfire, and that “even utterances that are misleading, deceitful and wrong are not lies.” (Austin, 27). In order to illustrate his idea further, Austin uses the example of a promise, which as a “performativce utterance [is] part of an action” (60); the action of saying or promising is not always connected to or reinforced by the action required to fulfill that promise, and the result is a misfire.

Fyodor Pavlovich derives pleasure from performing and would rather be seen and heard than stay silent and be ignored, and this includes purposely delivering misfires. As a character who indulges in his own utterances, it is impossible to shame him into silence (contrary to Martinsen’s argument, which I will discuss later in this chapter, Fyodor does not appear to be swayed by feelings of shame). Fyodor promises to behave when Pyotr Alexandrovich Miusov, Fyodor’s brother-in-law begs him not to make a fool of himself and his family in front of Zosima. As they are about to enter the elder’s cell, Fyodor says, “we’ve all given our word to behave properly here” (BK, 37) (мы все дали слово вести себя здесь порядочно) (2:1), yet Miusov feels obligated to remind Fyodor of his
“Out of the crooked timber of humanity, nothing entirely straight can be built.”
-Immanuel Kant, Akademische Ausgabe

“contract” in the presence of one of the monks before entering: “Fyodor Pavlovich, you yourself were just pleased to mention that we’ve given our word to behave properly, remember? I’m telling you—control yourself. If you start any buffoonery, I have no intention of being out on the same level with you here” (BK, 37). Федор Павлович, вы сами сейчас изволили упомянуть, что мы дали слово вести себя прилично, помните. Говорю вам, удерживайтесь. А начните шута из себя строить, так я не намерен, чтобы меня с вами на одну доску здесь поставили... (2:1). In essence, both men are performing here; Fyodor’s promise is not fulfilled and he has no intention of behaving during the meeting, while Miusov makes an effort to protect his reputation by sounding respectable in front of the monk in order to avoid any consequences that may befall him in the event of Fyodor’s inevitable outbursts. Miusov uses an imperative statement to command Fyodor to control himself, yet Miusov’s utterance is a performance done solely for and in the presence of the monk. To himself, Miusov irritatingly says, “Oh the devil take the lot of them, it’s just a front, cultivated for centuries, and underneath nothing but charlatanism and nonsense!” (BK, 37). (О, чорт их всех дерь, веками лишь выработанная наружность, а в сущности шарлатанство и вздор!” пронеслось у него в голове) (2:1). Austin believes promises to be an “inward and spiritual act,” but Fyodor does not reflect on his actions, and does not respect the contract of a promise because the person uttering the promise must intend to complete it. The very act of uttering a word is an indicator that the speaker will perform or deliver what is promised—it becomes an obligation—but just as importantly, Fyodor’s promises are never accepted by others. In Austin’s terms, Fyodor’s initial promise to behave in Zosima’s cell is a performative utterance, and because he fails to
have his promise acknowledged (he simply indulges in the act of “performing” the words) the promise misfires.

In addition, Austin introduces two important aspects of the performative:

“Prelocutionary acts [are] what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading”(108). Although Fyodor does not convince Miusov with his promise to behave, his utterance achieves a response from Miusov. The second variation of the performative is known as “illocutionary acts such as informing, ordering, warning,” which have no direct impact on the consequences following an utterance (Austin 108). Miusov does not believe in Fyodor’s illocutionary utterance because he is already familiar with Fyodor’s pattern of behavior in public places as well as his desire to ignite scandal. However, Miusov’s order can also be considered an illocutionary utterance. Since the order will not be enforced, nor does it have any impact on Fyodor’s behavior, both men fail to uphold the performative contract. There are moments when Fyodor acknowledges his buffoonery and admits to playing a part. If he is in fact conscious of what he is saying, and his performances are “rehearsed,” then he is capable of realizing that he has the power to misfire the execution of an action (completion of a promise) on purpose.

PARADOXICAL MISFIRES

Austin explains how the performative aspect of language can very often assist in determining mood, intentions, and so forth, but these statements do not necessarily represent truth or fact and can even mislead the reader or listener who anticipates a completion of the spoken utterance. The effect that a performance of language can have on an audience’s mood is something Fyodor is aware of and uses to his advantage when
purposely misfiring. These misfires contribute to Karamazov’s intention of being perceived as the “buffoon,” and he is often conscious that his words have no lasting effect on the listener, but they succeed in the promotion of scandal, which is the underlying purpose of his performances. And it is with these intentionally executed scandals that Fyodor is able to deliver what I term “paradoxical misfires.”

Fyodor’s impulsiveness and lack of self-control lead to a rejection of his ostensible conscience. He is convinced that by being the subject of ridicule by acting out the part of the “buffoon” and promoting scandal, his actions will yield more advantageous results than the alternative of being silent and ignored. In Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that scandal scenes are “carnivalistic”: “behind almost all scenes and events of real life, most of which are portrayed in a naturalistic manner, there are glimmers more or less distinctly the carnival square with its…disguises and mystifications, contrasting paired images, scandals, crownings/decrownings” (Bakhtin, 133). Fyodor’s performances act as a disguise, since he purposely calls himself a buffoon, and makes calculated efforts to live up to the fool’s role. The binaries of reality (truth) and fiction (lie) that Bakhtin distinguishes between are represented in characters like Fyodor Pavlovich, who experiences real pain and lucidity, but translates that experience into a ridiculous situation. The applicable deviation or distortion of Bakhtin’s binaries is demonstrated in the idea of power of relations (“crownings/decrownings”) with Zosima and Fyodor and even between Fyodor and his sons. By mocking religion in particular, Fyodor is trying to dismantle the hierarchy of the participants in the meeting, by focusing on exposing the “truths” of everyone in the cell, which prevents any resolution from taking place.
In an effort to expose Miusov, whom he knows to be a non-believer, Fyodor puts on an eccentric and personally “damaging” performance in front of everyone in the cell by telling a story about “how Diderot the philosopher came to see Metropolitan Platon…he walks in and says right off: ‘There is no God’” (BK, 41). However knowing Miusov’s attitude (as does the reader since he internally scoffed at the monk earlier) towards religion, his reaction of being insulted by the story remains unclear, until of course, Fyodor Pavlovich exposes him. After Zosima confirms the story to be false, he asks Fyodor which saint the story was based on, and in response, Fyodor says, “I don’t know, I have no idea. I was led to believe, I was told. I heard it, and do you know who I heard it from? This same Pyotr Alexandrovich Miusov who just got so angry about Diderot, he told me.” (Сам не знаю про какого. Не знаю и не ведаю. Введен в обман, говорили. Слышила и, знаете, кто рассказал? А вот Петр Александрович Миусов, вот что за Дидерота сейчас рассердился, вот он-то и рассказал) (2:2). After Miusov denies the allegation, Fyodor corrects himself by saying, “True, you didn’t tell it to me; but you told it in company when I was present…I mention it because you, Pyotr Alexandrovich, shook my faith with this funny story” (BK, 45) (Правда, вы не мне рассказывали; но вы рассказывали в компании, где и я находился, четвертого года это дело было. Я потому и упомянул
Out of the crooked timber of humanity, nothing entirely straight can be built.

-Immanuel Kant, Akademische Ausgabe

Miusov is shamed and is forced to admit that he did in fact tell such a story, but his noble position is destabilized in front of Fyodor’s audience. This paradoxical misfire succeeds because Fyodor’s perlocutionary misfire is determined to surprise his audience, above all Miusov, by misleading them with the story of Diderot, parodying both the historic figure and the Orthodox faith. While Fyodor’s intentions in Zosima’s cell are not by any means pure, Fyodor proves that Miusov is just as much a performer as he is. The inversion of these opposites creates an ambiguous situation and provides ample room for a scandal—as is the case with the confession scene that follows in “Scandal,” the last chapter in Zosima’s cell.

SCANDAL AND PARODY

Bakhtin observes that “scenes of scandal...usually take place in drawing rooms”; yet in The Brothers Karamazov, he notes, the “extraordinarily vivid carnivalistic-menippean coloration of the scandal scene [is] in Father Zosima’s cell” (Bakhtin, 146). This would appear the most unlikely place for a scandal to occur, though, which makes it all the more problematic. Zosima’s cell becomes the setting for Karamazov’s first performance as well as the novel’s first scandal. When they enter the monastery, Fyodor “started crossing himself energetically before the saints painted above and on the sides of the gates. ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do,’ he remarked” (BK, 37). (Н он пустился клать большие кресты пред святыми, написанными надвратами и сбоку врат) (2:1). Fyodor turns Zosima’s cell, a private sanctuary, into a dirty and sinful place where another binary of good/bad is tested, and order is undermined. Later, when Fyodor repeats “malicious” (not to mention false) gossip he hears about the church (BK,
88), he implicitly denies his own desire to be connected to the church, and will succumb to wild gossip in order to promote shame in a holy place that holds the highest regard for the truth. Fyodor lies to the elders by pretending to play the role of victim to his son Dmitry’s supposed thievery, even as they are aware of his reputation and disregard his plea and his sensationalized confessions. Fyodor pretends to be religious and to respect the customs and rules of Zosima’s cell but he is unable to maintain his façade as a “holy fool,” which he at one point calls himself, and regresses to his clownish, and utterly profane, self.

Bakhtin explains the “characteristic accessories of a carnival complex; guffaw and tragedy, a clown, comical street farces, a crowd of masqueraders” (161) as the typical or most common elements ordinarily associated with farcical plays and even theatre. However, Fyodor is not the only character playing a part in the presence of Zosima and the hieromonks. Miusov has no intention of receiving a blessing when they first enter the cell, but “seeing all this bowing and kissing of the hieromonks, he instantly changed his mind: gravely and with dignity he made a rather deep bow...Fyodor Pavlovich did exactly the same, this time, like an ape, mimicking Miusov perfectly” (BK, 39). (увидя теперь все эти поклоны и лобызания иеромонахов, он в одну секунду переменил решение...Точно так же поступил и Федор Павлович, на этот раз как обезьяна совершенно передразнив Миусова) (2:2). For Miusov, receiving the blessing is simply a courtesy that he performs in order to demonstrate his respect for the company he is in. Fyodor mocks both Miusov and the church simultaneously by over performing, and by parodying the “act” of both the bow and the blessing. The fact that Fyodor is acting consistently with his first reference to the adage “do as the Romans do” is indicative of
his insincerity and cynicism towards the church, but more importantly, his behavior
demonstrates his uncontrollable desire to constantly play the part of a buffoon, with “no
respect for the place he was in” (BK, 42) (непочитительное к месту, в котором он
находился) (2:2). Bakhtin claims that parody “is the creation of a decrowning double; it
is that same ‘world turned inside out.’ For this reason parody is ambivalent” (Bakhtin,
127). It is clear from the moment Fyodor promises to behave in front of Miusov, that he
has no intention of entering the cell to resolve his issues with Dimitry, but rather to
promote scandal by exercising his theatrical skills. Indeed, the promise itself is already a
parody. In adapting the role of the fool, Fyodor acts as the “decrowning double” to
Zosima, and even to Miusov.

Parody (and occasionally misfire) is represented in Fyodor’s gestures and facial
expressions. Very often, Fyodor’s movements are animated and theatrically inspired
especially when he expresses desire to speak. In the chapter “Scandal,” Fyodor delivers a
sinister performance by mocking Zosima as well as every holy ritual associated with the
church, i.e., “crossing himself energetically” before entering the monastery (BK, 37). In
Zosima’s cell, after he exposes Pyotr Alexandrovich Miusov for being the original teller
of the Diderot story, Fyodor says, “Great elder, speak and tell me whether I offended you
with my liveliness or not?’ Fyodor suddenly cried, gripping the arms of his chair as if he
were about to leap out of it, depending on the answer” (43) (Великий старец, изреките,
оскорблю я вас мою живостью или нет? вскричал вдруг Федор Павлович,
схватившись обеими руками за ручки кресел и как бы готовясь из них выпрыгнуть
сообразно с ответом) (2:2). His behavior is unrestrained and exaggerated, suggesting
that he has no intention of acting modest in the elder’s cell. The fact that he is ready to
"Out of the crooked timber of humanity, nothing entirely straight can be built."
-Immanuel Kant, Akademische Ausgabe

“leap” out of his chair reinforces his inability to halt the performance, and he uses these impulsive and erratic movements to remain central to the action of the scene. When Fyodor initiates an inappropriate conversation about money, he “jumped from his chair” (вскочил со стула) and “shouted in his turn” (ВК, 71) (вскричал он вдруг) (2:6) in order to obtain the right to speak while mocking the act of confession and truth in the holy sanctuary.

MOCKERY

On multiple occasions Fyodor makes deep bows in front of Zosima and even “rushed up to the elder and quickly gave him a smack on his thin hand” (44) (подскочил...быстро чмокнул старца в худенькую его руку) (2:2), gestures that indicate not only that is he disregarding the importance of Zosima’s position, but he is mocking the reception of a blessing. Fyodor’s performance in Zosima’s cell achieves carnivalized status because by mocking the bow, it becomes a parody of a bow in front of the hieromonks following Miusov’s example. He likewise parodically acknowledges his son Mitya with a bow. In respect to language and how it is dependent on gesture, Austin’s performative should be recalled and applied to the analysis of Fyodor’s physical performance. The performative depends largely on performance, which could not have been achieved without Fyodor’s ability to manipulate the structures of both language and gesture. According to Austin, both the speaker and the listener have to perform actions; events or words from the speaker further the completion or continuation of the utterance: “in response to Dmitry’s bow [to his father, signifying respect and acknowledgment of his presence], he [Fyodor] jumped up from his chair and responded to his son with exactly as deep a bow. His face suddenly became solemn and imposing, which gave him,
however, a decidedly wicked look” (BK, 68). (в ответ на поклон Дмитрия Федоровича, он вскошил с кресел и ответил сыну точно таким же глубоким поклоном. Лицо его сделалось вдруг важно и внушительно, что придало ему однако решительно злой вид) (2:6). Fyodor’s bow is animated, erratic and it reinforces the notion of Austin’s performative because the bow is being mocked instead of representing a sign of respect and acknowledgment. Fyodor’s facial expression, one of a “wicked” nature, reinforces the illegitimate action. Although the scene with Dmitri lacks an exchange of a verbal utterance and response from the listener, the bow becomes a perlocutionary gesture, which acts by the same rules as a perlocutionary utterance, because the bow has a consequence—Dmitry is aware of its misfire and knows that his father is mocking him. Instead of responding to Dmitry’s sign of respect, Fyodor ridicules this exchange while simultaneously scorning Dmitry. The purpose of the performative in respect to language is to achieve a certain order and commitment between what we say and what we do. Fyodor is acknowledged through his performances even though as both a speaker and performer he is unreliable.

Even in moments of what seem to be genuine attempts at confession, Karamazov is not entirely honest. He tells Zosima, “if I sometimes tell lies inappropriately, I do it even on purpose, on purpose to be pleasant and make people laugh” (40) (А что не кстати иногда вру, так это даже с намерением, с намерением рассмешить и приятным быть) (2:2). Yet his “jokes” never garner a positive response—the others are not the least bit amused—on the contrary, while he does lie on purpose, his sole reason is to promote scandal and destabilize the value of a true confession. He repeats that he lies “on purpose” in order to convey his cunningness in that he knows when to lie and for
what purpose. In addition, in order to convince Zosima and the elders that he is a devoted father, hurt by the estranged relationship between him and his son, he delivers an unconvincing performance that only reinforces his lying ways. In yelling, "Mitya! Mitya!" Fyodor Pavlovich cried tremendously, trying to squeeze out a tear (BK, 72) (Митя! Митя! - слабонервно и выдавлия из себя слезы вскричал Федор Павлович) (2:6), he is mocking his son by acting as a devoted father in order to avoid judgment and blame. He ostensibly fails here as a performer; despite his enthusiastic and exclamatory tone, Fyodor has already established an untrustworthy role for himself. The only one impressed by the performance is Fyodor Pavlovich himself. Yet he becomes so excited by his web of lies that he continues to lose control of his behavior by over performing. Paradoxically, even utterly failed performances help him attain scandal.

**LYING IN CONFESSION**

Lies keep the novel in a constant state of motion because the necessary but temporary misdirection of the characters largely depends on a lack of resolution and uncertainty. In the case of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor’s truth spinning results in the ruin of Mitya’s reputation and the novel continues to revolve around the uncertainty of his innocence because of the speculation implanted by Fyodor’s “confessions” both public and private. Fyodor’s gossip does not die with him and this is a testament to the lasting effect of the power of speech and its accompanying performance. The lies in this novel end up being more powerful than the truth, and Mitya’s public shame and guilt later at his trial, is an indirect result of Fyodor’s public confessions in which he badmouths his son. By having an innocent man go to prison with no regard for evidence and fact, and in the name of speculation or fiction, verifies the idea that the public reveres
an exciting story over a real one. Dostoevsky is even careful in leading the reader to believe that Mitya is in fact guilty in order to show how he too is capable of manipulating his audience by leaving out certain crucial details of the story, including a key ellipsis on the night of the murder, and rearranging the details of factual evidence. The truth becomes convoluted to the point at which it complicates the decipherment between reality and fiction. If the novels are a critique on society, then when the lies are exposed, it demonstrates how weak the entire structure of society really is. Even though the knowledge of truth exists, it is safer to avoid the "ugliness" of truth than run the risk of disrupting the "beauty" associated with the "unreality" these lies have helped to construct.

According to Dostoevsky’s essay “Something about Lying,” the performative aspect of speech is more “pleasing to the listener” and lying “provides instant gratification” for both the speaker and the listener, which works as a form of “mutual gratitude” (Dostoevsky 269). He argues that the truth is too “dull” and ordinary, which is the main reason why people—Russians in particular—avoid it. While the speaker’s reason for lying is an attempt to entertain others and avoid the truth by sensationalizing a topic, he sacrifices the very essence of his “Russianness,” and rejects the morality and goodness of a character, which has “no limit to arrogance, contempt, and mockery” (Dostoevsky “Lying” 273) (нет предела ее высокомерию, презрению, насмешке) (“нечто о вранье”).

In Father Zosima’s cell, Fyodor’s so-called public “confession” to Zosima and the elders backfires when Mitya, enraged by his father’s fictionalized story, is forced to deliver the “true” version of the story—although at this point in the novel it is difficult for
the reader to know which story is the “real” version. Fyodor Pavlovich’s erratic behavior and disregard for accuracy makes him the untrustworthy character, yet Fyodor’s confessions have instilled just as much doubt about Mitya. The story told by the narrator is that the financially corrupt Fyodor Pavlovich is denying his son monetary assistance, which has strained their relationship and prompted Fyodor to, at all costs, portray the victim. While Mitya exhibits moments of weakness and lack of restraint—he too jumps out of his seat and raises his voice—and subsequently defiles Zosima’s cell along with his father, his actions are in response to Fyodor’s perlocutionary gestures. Fyodor addresses Zosima and asks him to “judge and save us! It’s not just your prayers we need but your prophesies” (71) (рассудите и спасите! Нуждаемся не только в молитвах, но и в пророчествах ваших) (2:6). He mocks the idea of confession and Zosima’s position by referring to him as a prophet. Above all, Zosima is consistently reminding Fyodor that his duty to himself is to be honest, which is the only way he will learn to love himself. Zosima’s position does not enable him to “judge” or “save” Fyodor and his family, but to provide them with the opportunity to be honest with one another. Mitya admits he “anticipated...[the] untrustworthy comedy” (Недостойная комедия, которую я предчувствовал еще иди суда!) of his father’s and makes an apology to Zosima for being “an uneducated man...you have been deceived, and were too kind in letting us come here. Papa is only looking for a scandal—who knows for what reason” (BK, 71) (Я человек необразованный...но вас обманули, а вы слишком были добры... Батюшке нужен лишь скандал, для чего - это уже его расчет. У него всегда свой расчет...) (2:6). Though Mitya is the one providing an opportunity to save his father from
continuing the scandal, Fyodor continues to shame his son by mocking, and subsequently negating his confession.

In “Lying,” Dostoevsky argues that all liars share similar characteristics, one of which is “intellect, the desire to appear more clever than he is...not to be stupider than anyone else” (Dostoevsky “Lying” 273) (ум, желание показаться умнее, чем есть...не глупее никого) (“нечто о вранье”). This characteristic is evident in Fyodor Pavlovich who is constantly shaming others in order to maintain a sense of control. When addressing Zosima and the elders, Fyodor says, “it always seems to me, when I go somewhere, that I am lower than everyone else and that they all take me for a buffoon—so let me indeed play the buffoon, because all of you, to a man, are lower and stupider than I am” (BK, 86) (Мне все так и кажется, когда я вхожу куда-нибудь, что я подлеевсех и что меня все за шута принимают, - так вот давай же я и в самом деле сыграю шута, потому что вы все до единого глупее и подлеев меня)(2:8). Fyodor repeats almost the exact same speech in an earlier chapter while defending his ignoble position amongst people whom he knows are of a higher and purer caliber than him. According to Dostoevsky’s essay, the only way to gain advantage over a crowd of listeners is to be more intelligent than the speaker—someone who can question the details of the lie. Fyodor remarks on how “old liars who have been play-acting all their lives...[they] have moments when they get so carried away by their posing that they indeed tremble and weep from excitement” (BK, 73) (Есть у старых лгунов, всю жизнь свою проактерствовавших, минуты, когда они до того зарисуются, что уже воистину дрожат и плачут от волнения) (2:6). Fyodor is the epitome of an old liar who, by manipulating the truth and confessions, becomes unable to decipher truth.
from reality; he begins to believe his own lies more than the truth. The personal
gratification that the liar derives from his successful performance enables him to become
more confident in his storytelling. This “excitement” also yields uncontrollable behavior,
because the liar is compelled, by all his enthusiasm, to push the boundaries of his
listeners with more extravagant lies.

The fact that Mitya is sent to prison for allegedly killing his father justifies
Dostoevsky’s claim that lying can easily manipulate people’s judgment (within the
novel—even Alyosha suspects Mitya at one point), and how much more susceptible we
are to the fabrication of a story as opposed to its “dull” but truthful counterpart.
Dostoevsky states, “the truth can lie on the table right in front of people for a hundred
years but they won’t pick it up; they go chasing after fabrications precisely because they
consider truth to be fantastic and utopian” (Dostoevsky, “Lying,” 271) (Истина лежит
перед людьми по сто лет на столе, и ее они не берут, а гоняются за придуманным,
именно потому, что ее-то и считают фантастичным и утопическим).

Since Dostoevsky believes people need other people in order to lie, the speaker
always needs an audience, which is why Fyodor Pavlovich is generally “himself” when in
the company of others. In “Lying,” Dostoevsky claims, “Russian lying suggests we are
all ashamed of ourselves” (271) (наше вообще русское лгание намекает, это то,
что мы все стыдимся самих себя) (“чего о вранье”), yet Fyodor’ shame may not be
genuine. After he embarrasses himself in front of Zosima, Fyodor tells Miusov that he is
leaving and cannot stay for dinner because he is so “ashamed,” but Miusov tellingly asks,
“Is that another lie?” (BK, 75) (Не лжете ли вы?) (2:6). Realizing that he has not yet
made a significant impact on his listeners, Fyodor drives off but then returns in order to
continue his performance. The fact that Pyotr Alexandrovich is not convinced by Fyodor’s shame is an indication that he may be devoid of such a feeling. Perhaps the fact that no one believes in his sincerity (if he is sincere) is the very reason why Fyodor is compelled to return. Since he is so used to playing the buffoon, and admits that that is the role expected of him, any emergence of truth or genuineness would be dismissed as a lie, regardless of whether or not he is telling the truth.

Deborah Martinsen, author of *Surprised by Shame*, “examine[s] the content of lying as shame content made manifest” and focuses on the Dostoevskian liars who feel shame and occasionally remorse for their crass behavior (lying) in society, where lying is tolerated and usually exposed in its fullest form. Martinsen argues that *The Brothers Karamazov* concentrates on shame especially in the case of Fyodor Karamazov. Her claim is that “shame lies on the boundary between self and other and is thus intimately linked to the question of identity” (Martinsen xiv). As soon as Fyodor enters “society” (the monastery) he pretends to be a defenseless and abused father. He consciously tries to sway Zosima and the elders in believing that Mitya is an ungrateful son whose goal is to rob him of all his money. Only after he unmasks himself (due to lack of self-control) the real Fyodor resumes his part the “buffoon” because this is what others consider him to be and he constantly acknowledges his awareness of the reputation that he constructed for himself. However, whether he is ashamed of this requires some more consideration. It would seem that since Fyodor is so eager to constantly remind his audience, proudly, of his buffoonery, he excites himself with his own theatrics to the point where he is almost unstoppable.
Martinsen argues that “Dostoevsky scandalizes readers by suggesting that we are all the same as Fyodor Karamazov. The idea disrupts our questioning sense of self; it disorients us; it makes us self-conscious. This…is Dostoevsky’s goal: to surprise readers with shame, to expose shame as the post-lapsarian heritage we share with Fyodor Pavlovich” (Martinsen, 11). While the reader experiences shame on behalf of Fyodor, whose lack of self control encourages his erratic behavior in Zosima’s cell, Fyodor does not appear to reflect on his actions long enough to experience shame for himself.

The following passage is Martinsen’s attempt to dismantle Fyodor’s communicative power by examining the weaknesses in his pun about the police commissioner, and her analysis ties in Dostoevsky’s reason for including such an unsuccessful joke. Martinsen says:

Fedor Pavlovich puns on the police commissioner’s identity as well as his title [and] asks him to be a “director,” rather than a “corrector,” to harmonize people rather than isolate them…Fedor’s pun also plays with the shared root prav, which denotes “justice and “truth,” other thematic issues in the novel…[but] Fedor Karamazov’s wit backfires. His story fails both because the police commissioner is humorless and because Fedor nonetheless persists in inappropriate wordplay (178-90).

Martinsen ignores the fact that Fyodor Pavlovich is denoting justice and truth because of the effect that his pun has in respect to the root word prav, and that is the main reason why he says it. Fyodor’s wit does not backfire, rather Fyodor mocks the idea of truth in front of the people who hold truth in the highest esteem and are likely to give him the
reaction he anticipates and for which he perhaps even hopes. Fyodor is punning on the word pravda because he is always right and never right. Rather than pointing to the idea that Fyodor Pavlovich purposely and consciously does this, Martinsen focuses on the idea that he is unaware of his audience and misfires. But Fyodor must know that he will not get a positive reaction out of his listeners with a joke that “denotes justice and truth” but that gives him more of a reason to tell the joke. He is playing into the role of buffoon and liar and he wants to both shock his listeners and reaffirm their belief in his incapacity for honesty and truth telling.

Since there is usually a strong presence of moral reaction to the immoral act of lying, the liars are unable to simply lie and get away with it. The moral positions of Zosima and Fyodor are unbalanced; the odds are not in favor of Fyodor because he attempts to appeal to an audience that finds neither his anecdotes not his stories amusing; his lies fail but the scandal succeeds. In this case, purity and truth outweigh the lie and Zosima’s straightforward revelation concerning Fyodor’s behavior abruptly ends Fyodor’s performance, if only temporarily. Even after Zosima exposes Fyodor’s motivations for lying, the “actor” continues to perform but this time he plays the part of the “offended” (BK, 44). Regardless of how ashamed Fyodor may claim to be, he reverts to his expected form of behavior, an outcome that is anticipated at this point by the reader. The fact is that Fyodor is not only incapable of being honest but has no desire to repent, at least not in the traditional sense (private confession), and in his public confessions he is unable to be truthful. The crux of Martinsen’s argument depends on the connection and overlap between lying and shame, since “Dostoevsky’s liars...are shamed, shameless, or both.” While her analysis of Fyodor’s storytelling (specifically
referencing Fyodor’s misfired speech about Diderot) reaffirms this idea, specific trademarks of Fyodor’s behavior (through gestures and language) that negate the fact that he feels any shame for his actions or his speech, as is the case in “The Old Buffoon,” are unaddressed.

Fyodor’s murder is the turning point and instigation of lies, gossip, rumor, and suspicion. His earlier exaggerations in front of Zosima, and lies concerning his money, specifically in terms of Mitya’s debt (which according to Fyodor, runs in the thousands) proves Dostoevsky’s argument about the corruptive nature of lies, how they are able to infiltrate our “truthful” or honest perceptions. The Brothers Karamazov is Dostoevsky’s tool for commenting on society and its susceptibility and inclination to believe in lies, even if they are not very good lies. Although he does maintain a balance between “good” and “bad” characters, the book does not solely attempt in moralizing goodness and truth, but rather it exposes the lies that infiltrate and even destroy the character’s lives and defiles the idea that truth can still persevere in society. Dostoevsky tests the reader’s “goodness” by omitting the truth. He demonstrates in two ways how easy it is to tell a story—with the use of words—to distract the listener (in this case, the reader) from the truth and to leave out crucial elements that would otherwise “give away” the truth. In reference to Dostoevsky’s writing style, Bakhtin says, “In Dostoevsky’s novels, everything is directed toward that unspoken and as yet unpredetermined ‘new word,’ everything waits tensely on that word, and the author does not block its path” (166). As the author often demonstrates, the line between truth and lie is occasionally undistinguishable, and the novel exists without a simple or fixed moral or lesson. Often, Dostoevsky constructs the hero and the villain as doubles, a technique that allows the
"Out of the crooked timber of humanity, nothing entirely straight can be built."
-Immanuel Kant, Akademische Ausgabe

reader to relate and even believe in both of these opposites. Thus the novel ultimately serves as a means of self-reflection for the reader, who is forced to evaluate the absence of truth within themselves.
Chapter 2

General Ivolgin: The Storyteller

In *Surprised by Shame*, Deobrah Martinsen describes *The Idiot* (Ivoi) General Ivolgin as a “storyteller” (62), which is in a sense a less sophisticated breed of liar. What differentiates the general’s storytelling from Fyodor Karamazov’s outright lies is his naivety. Like Fyodor in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivolgin is *The Idiot*’s primary outsider and verbal manipulator. But his methods and motives for lying differ from Fyodor’s. While the latter’s talent for making a spectacle is based on intentional lying—evident by his thoughtfully constructed public performances—the general’s lying is more accidental and clearly not premeditated, demonstrating how forgetful and absent minded he really is. Although the general does crave a considerable amount of attention, his lies resonate in a less garish way than Fyodor’s. The general’s naivety is evident by his absence of malevolence and the lack of preparedness in his speeches. He often stutters or loses train of thought, and his stories are frequently devoid of critical details he claims to have temporarily “forgotten”. Ivolgin is a less careful and unaware liar, making his actions and words more spontaneous and thus, less effective. And while Karamazov’s character knows exactly what he is doing with his words, Ivolgin does not. He is not so much a liar as he is *untruthful*, and as a result, a much less successful performer as well.

This chapter will explore Ivolgin’s scandalous theatrical performances and the connection they share with the notion of Austin’s linguistic performative. By focusing on certain elements of verbal performance such as lapses and inconsistencies in the general’s speech, gesticulation, and intonation, this chapter will explain how these communicative and rhetorical devices affect performance and delivery as well as the audience’s
perception of General Ivolgin’s unsuccessful lies. Arguably, the most important component of each liar’s speech is what he fails to do with words, a constant error resulting in misfired attempts to successfully manipulate both language and audience.

Dostoevsky instills in his anti-heroes a fear that they will be forgotten, hence Fyodor and Ivolgin’s desperation for notoriety. This fear places Ivolgin into a category consisting of Dostoevsky’s most scandalized characters, which resort to lying and storytelling in order to salvage a sense of self-worth and belonging. For the purpose of clarification, in this particular chapter, lying and storytelling will be used interchangeably up to a certain point; because of his incessant storytelling Ivolgin is, for the most part, considered a liar by scholars. Later on in this chapter the difference between lying and untruths—in reference to the general’s dialogue—will be discussed in further detail. The ambiguous nature surrounding both truth and lies in these novels contributes to the multi-dimensional characteristics of the targeted liars, challenging the idea of whether truth is represented more justly in their characters than in the protagonists. The liars’ confessions—the most sacred form of truth-telling—are never entirely true, which begs the question of whether or not they are in fact capable of being honest in public.

When we first meet General Ardalion Alexandrovich Ivolgin, or rather hear of the self-proclaimed “retired from service and unfortunate” general (Idiot 87) (отставной и несчастный) (1:8) through the detailed description of the Ivolgin family living conditions, it becomes clear that the general is not an active head of his family or the community, and his house is being run by his wife Nina Alexandrovna and eldest son Ganya. General Ivolgin, initially portrayed as distracted and indifferent to the matters of the house, does not appear to notice the rearrangement of the family hierarchy, at least
not until he makes a confession to the new boarder Prince Myshkin, in which he says, "I’ve done all a father can do, a mild and indulgent father, that is" (117) (я сделал все, что мог сделать отец, - но отец кроткий и снисходительный) (1:12). The image of himself that the general confesses to have tried to uphold is contrary to the character being presented to the reader. But the biggest mystery surrounding Ivolgin’s confessions is that we do not really know whether this statement is true, because the majority of the general’s past—aside from his war tales or self-proclaimed heroism—is missing from the novel. In “Paradoxical Dostoevsky,” Gary Saul Morson argues that “Dostoevsky works with a special view of open time, in which many possible actions inhere in any given moment, especially one of crisis. He does not allow us to focus on one as certain because he wants to reveal the entire field of possibilities, to let us see that what did not happen might have happened” (Morson 481). Despite the general’s unreliable reputation as a public confessor and storyteller, the fact that he claims to have “done all a father can do” places the reader in a state of doubt, especially in this opening scene where it appears that the general’s status is in fact in a state of crisis. As an unstable member in his home and within society, there is great deal of speculation as to whether or not the general’s storytelling tendencies are a habit of late, and if so, are they justifiable and is there truth in anything he says?

Dostoevsky describes in detail the general’s room in order to relay the instability of his current status. Of all the rooms in the house, “the fourth room, smaller than the rest…was occupied by the father of the family…and [he] was obliged to go in and out of the flat through the kitchen by the back staircase” (Idiot, 82) (у кухни, находилась четвертая комнатка, потеснее всех прочих, в которой помещался сам отставной...
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genерал Иволгин, отец семьейства... а ходить и выходить из квартиры обязан был через кухню и по черной лестнице) (1:8). In this description lies an important social paradox; if the father is restricted to the smallest room in the house, then it is necessary to question the stability of the family hierarchy. With this description, Dostoevsky is also able to introduce the family's shame into the novel by noting General Ivolgin's obligation to exit “through the kitchen by the back staircase.” Being improbable that the general is the one who insists on entering and exiting that way, the only conclusion is that his family has insisted on it, and there is no evidence to prove that the general makes an effort to resist their request. By the family’s insistence, the general ultimately becomes an outsider in his own home, unable to make decisions concerning his own accommodations or having control over his independence. In addition, Kolya, the youngest son is “packed away” in there with the general in order to “wait on his father and to keep an eye on him,” which, as we are told, “was becoming more and more necessary” (Idiot 82) (ему тоже предназначалось здесь тесниться... и смотреть за отцом который все более и более не мог без этого обойтись) (1:8). The fact that it is “becoming more and more necessary” to monitor and “wait” on the general indicates that these cautionary measures taken by the rest of the Ivolgin family are to ensure that he will not only remain unheard and unseen by the other boarders—which would make him an imposition and a liability on account that his wife Nina Alexandrovna is now responsible for supporting the family by renting out rooms— but that they will be able to control him. The general is in somewhat of a paradoxical state, being that he is dependent on Kolya, which illustrates the general's loss of independence not only within his household, but as a member of society.
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Dostoevsky continues to describe the general’s wardrobe and the initial impression he makes on the new boarder, Prince Myshkin, who serves as another (Kolya being the first) of the general’s doubles/opposites in the novel: “his [the general’s] appearance would have been rather impressive, if it had not been for something neglected, slovenly, even unclean about him. He was wearing shabby indoor clothes, an old frock-coat with elbows almost in holes and dirty linen. At close quarters he smelt a little of vodka” (Idiot 87) (Фигура была бы довольно осаннистая, если бы не было в ней чего-то опустившегося, износившегося, даже запачканного. Одет он был в старенький сюртучек, чуть не с продрашившимся локтями; белье тоже было засаленное.-по-домашнему. Вблизи от него немного пахло водкой) (1:8). The general’s disinterest in his own appearance further satisfies the idea that his patriarchal position has been relinquished or is in jeopardy. Similar to Fyodor Karamazov, Ivolgin’s susceptibility for erratic behavior while under the influence of alcohol aids in the theatrical tendencies of his character. Caught between his self-declared misfortunes and a supposed desire to regain leverage in his own home, the general appears to lack stability in his convictions. Alcohol promotes the general’s lack of self-control and the patterns of his speech become erratic and unstructured, making the appearance of truth less discernable in the context of his speeches. The inescapable tendencies of telling stories for the purposes of entertainment is fueled by his desire to be accepted, but his lack of self-control produces a multitude of misfires that turn out to be more memorable than any instance of truth.
SCANDAL

The general’s speech is different from that of the other characters, and it is purposely written in such a way that the author is able to accomplish a successful characterization of a storyteller—an outlandish and controversial “fool” who will forsake the truth and his reputation for an audience. While Ivolgin haphazardly incites the creation of scandal, lies and storytelling develops into the novel’s art form, which is an opinion upheld by the author who believes art to be a foundation for fiction. In *A Writer's Diary* in an essay entitled “Something about Lying,” Dostoevsky writes: “The vast majority of our lies are told for the sake of sociability. One wants to produce an aesthetic impression on the listener, to make him feel good, and so people lie, even sacrificing themselves to the listener” (“Lying,” 269) (У нас, в огромном большинстве, лгут из гостеприимства. Хочется произвести эстетическое впечатление в слушателе, доставить удовольствие, пу и лгут, даже, так сказать, жертвуя собою слушателю) (“нечто о вранье”). This idea of sacrificing one's self for the sake of entertainment or “aesthetics” is the basis for the general’s performances, which he views a way to reconnect with society. With the liar playing such a necessary role in the novel as the instigator of scandal, there is really no possibility for the general to experience a transformation. Although he wrongfully believes his stories will somehow garner respect and admiration, his “self aggrandizement” (Martinsen, 64) is concentrated inadvertently on constructing an inaccurate representation of the person he wishes to be perceived as. According to Dostoevsky’s statement about liars, it would appear that the general is merely seeking an audience and any attention is worth forfeiting a reinvention of his reputation, and so, he adapts to his role as the “sacrificed” outsider somewhat willingly.
Mikhail Bakhtin writes about Dostoevsky’s most scandalous characters and the purpose they serve within the novel. Every novel, he claims, must have a scandal scene, and it is the role of the appointed jester or clown to contribute to the “carnival” square. As the “clown” or fool, Ivolgin is meant to provide comic relief as the subject of mockery and inspiration for humor. It is the purpose of the clown to incite scandal through his misdirected speeches and over embellished storytelling, or lies. As discussed in the previous chapter, the scenes of scandal are reserved for public places, where the possibility of fusing elements required for the scandal scene are more appropriate and accessible. In order for the scandal to occur, the provocateur must provide the basis for what Dostoevsky calls a “mutual relationship” between the speaker and his audience: “The genteel mutual relationship that lying involves is virtually the prime prerequisite of Russian society—of all Russian meetings, gatherings, clubs, learned societies, and so on” (“Lying,” 271) (Деликатная взаимность вранья есть почти первое условие русского общества - всех русских собраний, вечеров, клубов, ученых обществ и проч) (“чего о вранье”). And although Ivolgin is an outsider to the “learned society” in The Idiot, he is still a necessary element for the implementation of scandal, even if the drawing rooms of his house and others required for it is accidental. When meeting Nastassya Filipovna, his son Ganya’s prospective wife, the general puts on a show (painting his moustache and donning clean clothes) in front of her, and a gang of other characters who show up at the Ivolgin home unannounced. With such extensive preparation displayed by the general, it is clear he is insistent on not only taking part, but being in the center of every public scene.
Bakhtin provides “the characteristic accessories of a carnival complex: guffaw and tragedy, a clown, comical street farces, a crowd of masqueraders” (161), and all of these elements are often executed in the company of others, in “a place in which mockery and triumph, praise and abuse are inseparably fused” (Bakhtin, 164). In order for the carnival to be successful there has to be a shift in hierarchy, a point that was mentioned earlier with respect to Ganya and Ivolgin’s battle for authority. With Ivolgin’s inevitable loss of power, he becomes desperate, hence his early attachment to Prince Myshkin, the new boarder. The novel requires a character so aware of the immobility of his outsider status that he is willing to take the risks that threaten the survival of his character. Ultimately, the “sinner” Ivolgin is written out of the novel with a somewhat anticipated death. It is not uncommon for Dostoevsky to rid the novel of the fool, who whose main purpose is inciting scandal and promoting social instability for the other characters. And Bakhtin believes that these deaths solve nothing; in the case of Fyodor Karamazov, his lies succeeded in creating scandal after his death. The following is Bakhtin’s explanation of the shift in hierarchy that promotes the common ritualistic “decrowning” of the clown in the following passage:

Crowning/decrowning is a dualistic ambivalent ritual, expressing the inevitability and at the same time the creative power of the shift-and-renewal, the joyful relativity of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position. Crowning already contains the idea of immanent decrowning: it is ambivalent from the very start. And he who is crowned is the antipode of a real king, a slave or a jester; this act as it were, opens and sanctifies the inside out world of carnival (124).
Ivolgin is never “officially” crowned “king,” although his words carry enough power to interfere in the action of the novel. As the “antipode” or exact opposite of a real king, the fool Ivolgin is continually granted permission by the author, to speak and interject in sensitive matters, both publicly and privately. Since scandals arise as a direct result of his storytelling, he achieves a temporary “crowning” when his stories are believed, encouraged, and subsequently bring about a result. The purpose of the clown is to satirize the other characters and the world within the novel. Eventually the general’s “decrowning” results in the sacrificial death of his character midway through the novel.

Another element to Bakhtin’s carnival theory revolves around the idea that the type of language spoken by the most scandalous characters is the reason why the satire is so effective, because of the reliance on “carnivalized language” (Bakhtin, 145), which is the only form of language that can achieve a kind of harmony or unification that merges art with reality. This transposition of carnivalization into literature is what Bakhtin believes to be “the portrayal of everyday life; everyday life is drawn into the carnivalized action of the plot; the ordinary and constant is combined with the extraordinary and changeable” (158). Bakhtin’s theory supports the claim that the novel is dependent on the outsider in order to represent the crises that mimic the theatrical aspects of reality. His sensationalistic stories, over embellished for rhetorical effect, merge these two ideas of everyday life and carnival that as Bakhtin says, unite in the carnival square, which the general is not only involved in but instigates. His presentation, theatrical and over exaggerated lies transforms his personal experience—or what we believe to be a story that may have some truth to it—into a farce.
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STORYTELLING

When a new boarder, Prince Myshkin moves into a spare room in the Ivolgin home, he is drawn into a wild story in which the general claims to have known his parents, and without reservations, the elder goes so far as to takes credit for their marriage. In his initial exchange with Myshkin, the general tries to learn more about the prince, while at the same time making an attempt to win his confidence by claiming to have known him when Myshkin was a young boy:

"Yes, yes! Son of my friend, the companion of my childhood, I may say, Nikolay Petrovich?"

"My father’s name was Nikolay Lvovich."

"Lvovich," the general corrected himself, but without haste and with complete assurance, as though he had not in the least forgotten it, but had uttered the wrong name by accident. He sat down, and taking Myshkin’s hand he too made him sit down beside him. "I used to carry you in my arms" (Idiot 87).

"Так, так! Сын моего друга, можно сказать, товарища детства, Николая Петровича?"

"Моего отца звали Николаем Львовичем."

"Львович, - поправился генерал, но не спеша, а с совершенною уверенностью, как будто он нисколько и не забывал, а только нежно словно оговорился. Он сел, и, тоже взяв князя за руку, посадил подле себя. - Я вас на руках носил-с" (1:8).
Confidence is often the storyteller’s most important asset. The “I used to carry you in my arms” story seems endearing, and his performance, which is initiated by sitting next to Myshkin and taking him by the hand, makes it appear more genuine. However, the rapid and unexpected transition between the general’s mistake (of Myshkin’s father’s name) and the holding of the hand are somewhat non sequential. It seems that the general uses a performative gesture to avoid having to explain or revisit the mistake, as well as to convey the legitimacy of his claim to have known Myshkin as a boy. But despite the general’s efforts, Myshkin “began to listen with certain skepticism” (87) and although the prince is referred to as the idiot throughout the entire novel, he realizes that the general is merely using this story as a tactic to start a conversation and find a way to connect with him. Prior to this incident, Myshkin had recognized the odor of alcohol on the general’s breath, which in turn heightens the prince’s, as well as the reader’s skepticism of the story. The “I carried you in my arms” story is a technique the general uses every time he meets a character younger than himself, almost as if it were part of a reflex. This guessing game the general often plays when attempting to gain information is reminiscent of a fortune teller’s performance—he guesses a common name, and then pretends to have “uttered the wrong name” accidentally.

The general goes insofar as to correct Myshkin on some of the misconceptions regarding the details of his father’s death as well as a scandal that nearly damaged his father’s reputation. Above all, the general’s confidence, evident in his tone and surprisingly eloquent “recollections” of certain “memories” and details, makes him almost believable. This exchange provides Ivolgin with the opportunity to connect to
Myshkin under the pretense of a noble and honest friend, hoping that his words might grant him passage back into the community. But he is artful at pretending to know private information, and in haste, he completely overrides all the details Myshkin provides about his family. Ivolgin makes the mistake of being overly confident in his storytelling, and his tendency of pretending to know too much usually causes his failure as a speaker before he reaches the end of his stories. By trying to obtain the rights of Myshkin’s story, Ivolgin presents one of his most successful performances. Although he gets carried away, he acts as if his fumbles are nothing more than a slip of the tongue, or the fault of an old man’s memory, and he regains a certain amount of leverage because of his temporarily accessible quick wit.

LITERARY DEVICES

Repetition is an essential element of General Ivolgin’s speech, since it often reveals hesitation and forgetfulness. What makes the general’s dialogue so unique are the rhetorical qualities that confirm his unreliability as a storyteller. As with other Dostoevskian liars, his speech is purposely constructed in such a way that it reveals various linguistic nuances that add speculation to the validity of his stories. Inconsistencies in the speaker’s thought primarily signify loss of memory, whether it is genuine or constructed. This reveals the speaker’s uncertainty to the audience, which is why he is labeled as an untrustworthy and an unsuccessful liar.

The general continuously attempts to build a public partnership with Myshkin, exclaiming, multiple times, “General Ivolgin and Prince Myshkin!” (Idiot, 117-19) (Генерал Иволгин и князь Мышкин!) (1:12) in order convey to anyone who will listen, that he is part of a brotherhood, and is now somehow linked to another character of
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“noble blood.” Also, by publicly proclaiming this new comradeship he uses Myshkin’s title to reassure himself that he is due to experience a revival of his old reputation, and the respect he feels he so highly deserves. In the following passage, Ivolgin is attempting to justify to Myshkin that he has an impressive reputation and that by his account, his history as a general is as historically significant as some of the men he mentions in his story.

My old comrades live all about here [Nevsky Prospect], and I-I who have seen more service and faced more hardships than any of them, I trudge on foot to the lodgings of a woman of doubtful reputation! I, a man who has thirteen bullets in his breast!...You don’t believe it? And yet it was solely on my account Dr. Pirogov telegraphed to Paris and for a while abandoned Sevastopol at the time of the siege, and Nelaton, the Paris court doctor, succeeded in obtaining free pass in the name of science and got into the besieged city on purpose to examine me. The highest authorities are cognizant of the fact. ‘Ah, that’s the Ivolgin who has thirteen bullets in him?’ ...That’s how they speak of me. (118)
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являться меня осматривать. Об этом самому высшему начальству известно: "А, это тот Иволгин, у которого тринадцать пуль!.." Вот как говорят-с! (1:12)

The general’s hyperbolic speech begins with the idea that he knows the men who live on Nevsky Prospect, a very wealthy and prominent street in St. Petersburg, yet he is walking to Nastassya Filipovna’s, a woman of “questionable” reputation, and who he considers to be below him. The exclamation marks provide a rhetoric effect, and suggest that the speech is being delivered theatrically, not humbly. In Intonation and Gesture, Dwight Bolinger suggests that “the fluctuations of pitch are to be counted among those bodily movements which are more or less automatic concomitants of our states and feelings and from which we can deduce the states and feelings of others” (157). In the delivery of the general’s speech, the exclamatory statements indicate a rise in tone, as well as excitement. Ivolgin’s passionate telling of his story indicates that he could quite possibly be entertained by his own rendition of these invented events. The initial non sequitur transition in the first two sentences—walking to Nastasya Filipovna’s has little to do with where his “comrades” live, or how many bullets he has lodged in his chest—indicates the general’s scattered thought process, which is characteristic of a speaker during moments where he is aiming to impress his listeners. The repetition of “I” and “me” is excessive, and the purpose is to keep reminding the listener that the subject, Ivolgin, was important enough to receive assistance from Napoleon III’s private physician (Nelaton). While both Nelaton and Dr. Pirogov did in fact exist, the episode Ivolgin claims to have happened is, of course, untrue. By making himself sound more important, the general will achieve, in his mind, the sort of respect and audience he has
long since pined for. Ivolgin’s apparent fear that his story may be failing becomes clear when he asks if Myshkin believes him, yet there is no interjection from the latter to suggest doubt. The fact that Ivolgin is considered to be a conscious liar suggests that there is no justification for his question in response to Myshkin’s lack of reaction (omitted by the author), which he quite possibly anticipates because of the falseness of his account. The presence of the question is also a technique used by the general right before he launches into the most sensational part of a story, perhaps suggesting that the general is himself doubtful of the facts of his own narrative. By asking if the listener believes him, he is trying to justify that his story is worth listening to and believing, not only to his speaker, but to himself. The incorporation of paralipsis, a hesitation in his speech, is a method the general uses to bide his time before coming up with the remainder of his story. This rhetorical effect is commonly used by the speaker right before he enters into the most extravagant details, and reinforces the fact that even he is not always in control of the particulars infused in his stories. In an essay “On Liars,” Montaigne writes that “old liars” are most often the ones who repeat stories and will make a point to forge ahead through even the most inaccurate accounts. They will “crowd it with so many impertinent circumstances” in order to be heard, and that “it is a hard thing to close up a discourse, and to cut it short, when you have once started” (31).

Montaigne’s argument is relevant in the general’s case for two reasons. Not only is Ivolgin an “old liar”, but it is, as Montaigne describes, impossible to stop or interrupt him once he has gotten caught up in the momentum of one of his stories. The fact that an “old liar” never gives up is also pertinent in this case, since the general would first defend himself unyieldingly before succumbing to defeat and admitting his stories to be false.
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During a later conversation with Myshkin, the general arbitrarily says, “Do you know, my dear boy, I am something of a poet in soul. Have you noticed that? But...but I do believe we may have called at the wrong flat,” he concluded suddenly and quite unexpectedly” (Idiot, 120) (Знайте, мой милый, я несколько поэт в душе, - заметили вы это? А впрочем...впрочем, кажется, мы не совсем туда заходили, - заключил он вдруг совершенно неожиданно) (1:12). Again, there is an example of a non-sequitur transition by the general, from him being a poet to arriving at the wrong apartment. The fact that he does not achieve an answer to the question aimed at Myshkin forces him to change the subject. In addition, the general’s repeated use of anacoluthon—a break in grammatical series that specifies changes in mood or tone—is also a useful device in changing the subject, and dictates away from the original topic, which garners no response from his listener.

Attempting to gain the confidence of the prince, Ivolgin uses the opportunity to redeem himself by attempting to introduce Myshkin to some of his “old friends.” Despite the detours on which Myshkin is forced to accompany Ivolgin, the prince notices early on that “the general turned out to be thoroughly drunk; he was overwhelmingly eloquent and talked without ceasing, with feeling and on the verge of tears. He insisted continually that the misbehavior of all the members of his family had brought about their ruin, and that it was high time to put a stop to it” (Idiot, 118) (генерал оказался решительно пьян, в сильнейшем красноречии, и говорил без умолку, с чувством, со слезой в душе. Делало беспрерывно о том, что чрез дурное поведение всех членов его семейства все рухнуло, и что этому пора наконец положить предел) (1:12). Ivolgin’s decision to call on his “old comrades” promotes yet another scandal because it results in a
shameful exchange with Marfa Borissovna, a widow of one of his old general friends and
to whom Ivolgin owes an exorbitant amount of money. Upon arriving in her apartment,
unannounced, Marfa’s first words to Myshkin are criticisms about the general: “Would
you believe that this shameless man has not spared my orphan children! He’s robbed us
of everything, carried off everything, sold and pawned everything and left us with
nothing!...you deceiver...devouring monster!” (Idiot, 121) (верите ли вы, что этот
бесстыдный человек не пощадил моих сиротских детей! все ограбил, все
перетаскал, все продал и заложил, ничего не оставил...хитреч... ненасытное
сердце). In this scene, Ivolgin’s storytelling backfires, when Marfa accuses him of
stealing all of her possessions, and keeping the money for himself. The general responds
to her accusations by “bowing in all directions. ‘I am weak, forgive me,’” (122)
(рассказиваясь во все стороны; ’я слаб, извините’) (1:12) he says, before lying
down on the couch and falling asleep. In order to avoid his blunder, Ivolgin acts as
though he has suddenly become disoriented and performs his way out of the situation. By
bowing as a courtesy, Ivolgin is actually mocking the bow because his performance is not
driven by genuine feelings of remorse, or respect towards the people he is bowing. The
repercussions of Ivolgin’s excessive storytelling and appetite for theatrics finally surface
in this first scandal scene of the novel. The incident with Marfa illustrates just how
powerful and detrimental language can be to an invariably aloof character such as
Ivolgin. Myshkin attempts to end his aimless efforts of following the general to the flats
of people who evidently want nothing to do with the infamous storyteller: “I’m afraid it
was awfully stupid to have troubled you this evening’ murmured Myshkin. ‘Besides,
you’re...Good-bye!” (Idiot, 120) (Мне кажется, я и без того сделал ужасную
There would be no way to learn what truth is if it were not known naturally... when one tries to define these things, one obscures them and confuses oneself..." - Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method

glupost', - probrormotay knyaz', - chto davet vaas potrevozhil. K tomu же вы теперь... Прощайте! (1:12). This example of anacoluthon is different than the general’s in that its sole purpose is to cut the conversation short and avoid what could potentially present the possibility for the general to once again interject, which he ends up doing anyway. When Myshkin suggests it might be best if he goes off and “gives up on counting” on the general and sets off to find Nastasya Filippovna’s flat by himself, the general responds with, “Give up? Counting? Alone? But whatever for...?” (Idiot, 120) (Перестать? Рассчитывать? Одному? Но с какой же стать?) (1:12). This use of aporia, expressing doubt in response to Myshkin’s comment about giving up emphasizes the general’s disbelief over the fact that he, who was supposedly known by his squadron as “a rock” could somehow be viewed to an unreliable man. Within this conversation it becomes clear that Myshkin has his doubts about the general, and responds to his dialogue with an air of skepticism. This of course in turn translates to how the reader views the general, and how little his storytelling is actually based on fact.

Despite the fact that the general is aware of the truth of what is happening to his family, his eloquence is attributed to his drunken state, and therefore we are meant to believe that the general will most likely not take any measures, while sober, to remedy the situation. And while the rest of the family struggles to maintain a sober general, it is Kolya, who seems “unaware of the general’s condition”, and is supplying the substance that has most likely aided in the declining memory and health of the general. Ivolgin’s alcohol-induced “eloquence” is mentioned more than once in the course of the novel. His storytelling abilities are at their most uninhibited state when he is less cautious with his words and is prone to over exaggeration. Eventually, due to a scandal involving his
borrowing a large sum of money from the wife of an "old fiend" Ivolgin lands in a debtor's prison:

He was put in the debtors' prison. This was the doing of his friend, the captain's widow, on account of various bills he had given her to the value of two thousand roubles. It was a complete surprise to him, and the poor general was 'undoubtedly the victim of his unfounded faith in the generosity of the human heart, speaking generally.' Having adopted the soothing habit of singing promises to pay IOUs, he has never conceived that they could ever lead to anything; he had always supposed that it was all right. 'How can one put faith in mankind after that? How is one to show generous confidence?' he used to exclaim bitterly, sitting with his new friends in prison over a bottle of wine, and telling them anecdotes of the siege of Kars and the soldier who rose from the dead. It suited him capitally, however. (Idiot, 172)

Его посадили в долговое отделение. Препровожден он был туда приятельницей своей, капитаншей, по выданным ей в разное время документам, ценой тысячи на две. все это произошло для него совершенным сюрпризом, и бедный генерал был "решительно жертвой своей неумеренной веры в благородство сердца человеческого, говоря вообще". Взяв успокоятельную привычку подписывать заемные письма и векселя, он и возможности не предполагал их воздействия, хотя бы когда-нибудь, все думал, что это так. Оказалось не так. "Доверяйся после этого людям,
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выказывай благодарную доверчивость!" - ворчал он в горести, сидя с новыми друзьями, в доме Тарасова, за бутылкой вина и рассказывая им анекдоты про осаду Карса и про воскресшего солдата. Зажил он, впрочем, отлично. (2:1)

The general refuses to claim responsibility for his mistake and likewise with many of the stories that are later revealed to be untrue. Whether it is pride or fear of his reputation slipping further into oblivion, Ivolgin never admits defeat, and at no time does he stop performing. The humor in the general’s “misfortune” is that he finds “new friends” in prison to whom he is able to continue telling stories. His naivety is revealed by the narrator’s inclusion of the general’s reaction of “surprise.” His “habit of singing promises” is what made him so unreliable, because he never acknowledged them or intended on honoring his word. Ivolgin’s indifference towards the value of truth and verbal contracts is the result of his disorganized and unreliable status as a speaker.

PERFORMATIVE LANGUAGE

Aside from the rhetorical literary devices that add to Ivolgin’s unsuccess as a storyteller, his disregard towards the adherence to verbal contracts stymies his ability to be taken as anything but the novel’s fool. The general’s speech is riddled with what J. L. Austin calls misfires, “because the procedure [utterance] invoked is not accepted, it is presumably persons other than the speaker who do not accept it (at least not if the speaker is speaking seriously)” (27). Misfires or otherwise loosely defined as promises (statements, commands, threats, etc.) that do not yield an action on behalf of the speaker are similar to a lie, but there are certain exceptions in the delivery of a misfire that exclude it from upholding the same characteristics associated with lies. Austin focuses on
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the meanings created by a the normative acceptance of the delivery of certain words and phrases in How To Do Things With Words, and Ivolgin’s speech provides a surplus of examples of how not to do things with words. His repetitive misfires are what aid in the destruction of his validity as a speaker, since his performative mishaps are devoid of an end result or action.

Austin focuses on the components that contribute to the breakdown of speech communication. One of his arguments revolves around the complexities we are faced with when considering the variations of performative utterances, specifically within the uses of illocutionary or “conventional acts” and “perlocutionary acts [which] are not conventional”. Austen states “both kinds of acts can be performed... the illocutionary act which has a certain force in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is the achieving of certain effects by saying something” (Austin, 120). Most of the general’s speeches are a performance, and so he does achieve a certain force—the audience listens; however, the general’s utterances are devoid of the necessary “effect” that would make them perlocutionary, and so he causes his own misfires. Misfires become more apparent to the listeners of his orations, resulting in a failed advancement from his outsider status.

By the time the following exchange occurs between Ganya and his father, the balance of the family hierarchy is already threatened and the general’s role as storyteller is in its final chapter. After an argument with one of the other characters, the general, feeling abandoned without the support of his family, storms out of his own house. The following is an exchange between Ivolgin and Ganya, during which the latter mocks his father’s attempt to gain recognition from the rest of the family. The argument that ensues is as follows:
"There would be no way to learn what truth is if it were not known naturally... when one tries to define these things, one obscures them and confuses oneself..." - Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method

"Why these heroics? Where can you go?" Ganya shouted from the window. "You've nowhere to go!"

"Come back, father!" cried Varya, "the neighbors will hear." The general stopped, turned around, stretched out his hand, and exclaimed:

"My curse on this house!"

"He must take that theatrical tone!" muttered Ganya, closing the window with a slam. (Idiot, 442)

"Что куражитесь-то, куда пойдете-то!" - закричал Ганя из окна:
- "и идти-то вам некуда!"

"Воротитесь, папаша!" крикнула Варя. "Соседи слышат. Генерал остановился, обернулся, простер свою руку и воскликнул:

"Проклятие мое дому сему!"

"И непременно на театральный тон!" пробормотал Ганя, со стуком затыкая окно. (4:2)

This exchange is an example of the speaker-listener relationship Austin discusses in his work. Without a response, the speaker is devoid of a listener and because there is no reciprocation from the opposite and vital other/partner, and because no action is being performed by any of the speakers, a misfire occurs in all three instances. These utterances are performative and they misfire because none of them takes affect. Varya essentially commands Ivolgin to come back, adding a declaratory emphasis with the exclamation mark, but he ignores her, so the command is not reciprocated, therefore incomplete. Her performative command is known as what Austin would consider an illocutionary act, since the speaker's (Varya's) remarks have no direct impact on the consequence. The
general’s “act” of putting a curse on the house is similar in the sense that it too is illocutionary since the curse will never take affect. In his essay *Gesture* concerning gesticulation and its purpose and effect on speech, Adam Kendon addresses the reason for hand movements—in this case the general throwing his arms up previous to “cursing” the house—and the importance they hold for the speaker, and not the listener. Kendon states, “gesture [can] indicate the type of talk a speaker will engage in once a turn is granted ...they can also be used on their own so that, by simply using one of these ‘illocutionary marker’ gestures, a person can indicate that it is a plea or a critical question that is being expressed...” (113). The physical movement of throwing up his hands adds a theatrical tone to the exchange the general has with his children, perhaps in an effort to display to them that he is figuratively cursing his house and the people in it. But his gesture also misfires, because there is no result for the action. Kendon further argues that “the apparently nonstandardized ‘spontaneous’ gestures that speakers produce while talking convey little or no information to recipients” and that “some gestures function primarily for the speaker” (114). This too supports the claim that the general’s actions have more meaning for him than for others. Ganya’s decision to slam the window, especially after criticizing his father for being “theatrical” makes his action an “illocutionary marker” as well. Kendon attributes speaker’s “spontaneous gestures” to two possible motives: “they are thought to aid verbal formulation, perhaps because they help the speaker to keep complex concepts in mind while seeking to talk about them or perhaps because they play a role in lexical retrieval” (114). Especially in the case of a performer, this argument explains the necessary role gestures play in helping the speaker create a story. Therefore, the liars, who are in essence performers, use gesture to buy time
and distract their listeners (who now become viewers as well) while struggling to maintain momentum in the lie or story.

SHAME

Dostoevsky incorporates a variety of literary techniques into General Ivolgin’s speech which allow for more accessibility and understanding of his character through language. The principal outsider’s constant struggle with words, especially during moments of crisis or uncertainty—and drunkenness—encourage lying and over embellished stories. Ivolgin does not realize, as the reader does, that his use of language and tone is incriminating, because of his unfocused delivery. A great deal of Deborah Martinsen’s argument deals with the idea that “Ivolgin attempts to return to his social position by talking his way back in” (Martinsen, 62), but his efforts are always compromised because those attempts are executed in desperation; instead of deferring to the truth, Ivolgin is compelled to tell stories in order to entertain his audience, and unknowingly play the role of the fool. Yet his lies are not artful or well-crafted despite their theatrical presentation, nor are they persuasive, and so he fails as a storyteller. The general is constantly implicating himself by delivering false promises, ultimately misfiring, whether it is done intentionally or involuntarily. His spontaneity and lack of self control prevents him from realizing the larger issues that result from his actions.

Shame is experienced by Nina Alexandrovna who is aware of where her husband’s lapdog story (omitted from this chapter) is headed, and by Ganya who is mortified at the idea that his father has ruined any chance of a prospective relationship with Nastasya. Since Ganya too is a narcissistic character, even secondary in the novel compared to his father, his shame actually transforms into hatred when he experiences a
momentary lapse in judgment with Nastasya’s unexpected visit. Suddenly, “at that moment...he [Ganya] forgot the possibility of Ardalion Alexandrovich’s appearance on the scene and had taken no steps to prevent it” (Idiot, 98) (в эту самую минуту...совершенно забыл о возможности появления на сцене Ардалиона). Ganya, furious over the possibility of his father foiling his potential marriage plan, reveals the honest impression of a member of the general’s family. However, different from the shame felt by Nina Alexandrovna, Ganya’s shame is motivated by selfishness in that he only cares about money and pride, not the honor or well-being of his family. Though the general’s efforts are failing, his intentions are purer than his son’s. While his embarrassment of his father is somewhat understandable, the two share the same motivation for acceptance. Clearly, Ivolgin is a source of ridicule, damaging the appearance of the entire family, and thus the family becomes self-conscious, and so does the reader, since the interactions between them reveal a crisis. Dostoevsky positions the liars to reflect our own feelings of shame, or what we as a reader experience through their misfires and moments of weakness. As Zosima states in TBK, we are responsible for others, but the liars are too narcissistic to recognize the consequences of their words and performances.

Nina Alexandrovna makes numerous attempts to control her husband by attempting to remove him from the situation with Nastasya Filippovna. Nastasya’s positive response as the key listener is important to the general who craves an audience. She is the only character who laughs at the general’s jokes and encourages him to keep going. Myshkin is also a patient listener, but he makes no effort to encourage Ivolgin’s storytelling. His excitement while retelling the story, originally published in the
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Independence Belge, verifies Montaigne’s conclusion about the tendency for old liars to find it “a hard thing” to forfeit their audience by putting an end to a story they know is not true. In the eyes of the general, when his wife repeatedly interferes in his dialogue, she threatens what is left of her husband’s freedom to vocalize his ideas. Up until this point it is clear that everyone feels responsible for the general because his misfires have a direct effect on the entire Ivolgin family, but his desire to reenter society is stronger than their persistence to silence him. In front of their guests, the general appears with a freshly dyed moustache, wearing clean linen, and exuding a momentary state of control, dressed and ready to perform. Martinsen argues that the general’s main motivation for storytelling/lying is to gain acceptance, and the only way to convince the audience would be to appear the part.

Martinsen regards this scene as having a shameful ending, more so for the general than his family, but they suffer equally as a result of this embarrassing experience. Martinsen states, “Dostoevsky uses Ivolgin to dramatize a story of shame,” (62) yet the general is not ashamed until the next day, and even then his shame is somewhat displaced. Instead of lamenting over his failed performance and the embarrassment it has caused his family, the general decides to drink to conceal his personal shame. While he experiences a brief moment of embarrassment at being caught in his own lie, he does not come to the full realization of his fumble until Myshkin finds Ivolgin reading about the lapdog story in the Independence Belge, yet Ivolgin pretends not to be embarrassed for the scene with Nastasya Filippovna the night before. Instead he paints a portrait of himself as an “indulgent father,” and he confessed that he “[does not] mind being laughed at, if only I [the general] can get in” (Idiot 117) (Я, впрочем, готов перескочить через.
"There would be no way to learn what truth is if it were not known naturally... when one tries to define these things, one obscures them and confuses oneself..." -Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method

некоторые приливы, и пусть даже смеются надо мной, только бы войти как-нибудь (1:12) referring to the society that has long since abandoned the idea of reaccepting him. However a drunken confession is anything but a genuine one, and true to form, beyond a few lines of emotion and authenticity, Ivolgin cannot resist telling stories of his own war time heroism. The confessions, possible lapses of in his ordinarily narcissistic tendencies, should not be dismissed as false, and the more the general drinks, the more inclined he is to reveal a truth amongst lies.

LIES AND UNTRUTHS

The purpose of Ivolgin’s character within the novel is to provide an example of a “common liar” someone who is driven by an emotional reaction to social depravation, and compensates for his own insignificance by lying. One of the reasons why he is relatable to readers is because of his failures and stymied efforts provide comic relief, but only because his failures are so theatrical and in a sense, tragic. The most engaging aspect of this character is his proneness to error of speech, which we usually see during episodes in which Ivolgin is trying to impress his listener by fabricating certain details of a past memory or experience, and which the audience knows is purely improvisational. In his essay “Something about Lying,” Dostoevsky says that the liar often begins to believe his own story because he allows himself to get caught up in the sensationalism and excitement which both parties—the listener and speaker—find alluring. Addressing the outcome of a liar who is overly engaged in his own lies, Dostoevsky states:

The Russian liar very often lies without ever noticing it himself so that one may not even be aware he is lying... no sooner will a person tell a lie and pass it off successfully, that he’ll take such a liking to it that he’ll include
the story among the authentic facts of his personal life; and he acts utterly in good conscience because he believes it fully himself; indeed, it would sometimes be unnatural not to believe it. (270-71)

Я знаю, что русский легун сплошь да рядом лжет совсем для себя неприметно, так что просто можно было совсем не приметить...чуть только солжет человек, ж удачно, то так слюбится, что и включает анекдот в число несомненных фактов своей собственной жизни; и действует совершенно совестливо, потому что сам вполне тому верит; да и неестественно было бы иногда не поверить. ("нечто о вранье")

Yet General Ivolgin is not always successful; only certain listeners provide him with the "mutual gratification" (273), as Dostoevsky discusses in his essay. But when that gratification is achieved by both parties, the lying becomes acceptable, an "innocent" habit that diminishes the possibility for recognition of truth.

Truth is something of an ambiguous concept that is grappled with by both the characters within the novel as well as the reader. In many of Dostoevsky's novels, the author challenges the reader to decide, but not without complicating the notion of truth. In addition, Dostoevsky is an author who constantly positions his characters at the mercy of the audience. In Confessions, Rousseau incorporates a similar strategy, situating himself at the mercy of his audience, but not without a constant reminder that he is, at all times, striving to provide them with a truthful rendition of events in his life. But despite the certainty with which he approaches his autobiographical work, Rousseau states, "truth
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is dangerous" (534), and this is most certainly the same attitude Dostoevsky has about truth in all of his works, namely The Idiot.

While Dostoevsky holds a high regard for truth, he does not believe its integrity is upheld in the form of public confession, and for this very reason, he criticizes Rousseau’s written professions. In Notes from the Underground, the underground man states that “every man has within his own reminiscences certain things he doesn’t reveal to anyone...confessions such as the one I plan to set forth here aren’t published and given to other people to read (Notes, 28) (Есть в воспоминаниях всякого человека такие вещи, которые он открывает не всем... Таких признаний, какие я намерен написать излагать, не печатают и другим читать не дают) (1:11). However, the very fact that he has written his confessions, and even address his audience (“gentlemen”) ("господами") means that his work is just as public as Rousseau’s. He continues to give his impression on the validity of confession:

Heine maintains that faithful autobiographies are almost impossible, and that a man is sure to lie about himself. In Heine’s opinion, Rousseau, for example, undoubtedly told untruths about himself in his confessions and even lied intentionally, out of vanity. I am convinced that Heine is correct... [he] was making judgments about a person who confessed to the public. (28)

Гейне утверждает, что верные автобиографии почти невозможны, и человек сам об себе наверно нажлет. По его мнению, Руссо, например, непременно налег на себя в своей исповеди, и даже
There would be no way to learn what truth is if it were not known naturally... when one tries to define these things, one obscures them and confuses oneself...

-Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method

The underground man claims to write only for himself, yet he is publicly addressing an audience through his manuscript, which is being written with the intention that someone will read it. In fact, he even admits, prior to delivering his opinion on lying in autobiography, that he has been lying for years, because there was nothing else to invent (69) from underground. The purpose of his confession is to “try an experiment... to be absolutely honest even with one’s own self and not to fear the whole truth” (Notes, 28) (теперь я именно хочу испытать: можно ли хоть с самим собой совершенно быть откровенным и не бояться всей правды?) (1:12), yet he fails by incriminating himself by adhering to the very faults of autobiography he initially criticizes, specifically in reference to writing about one’s own truths without fearing the risk of elaborating and lying.

The truth and autobiography, or even publicly spoken confessions, are problematic in these novels, and The Idiot is no exception. This is why, in Ivolgin’s case, he cannot be trusted as a speaker, to deliver his own confessions. While in public, he resorts to performance, and is unable to deliver a message of value, therefore Kolya, arguably the “purest” and more virtuous son speaks for his father, which can also be problematic. In the first half of the novel, in defense of his father’s “misunderstood” intentions, Kolya Ivolgin makes a poignant statement about the status of truth within Russia, which corresponds with Rousseau’s ideas regarding the danger of truth, and like the underground man, Ivolgin is separated from society, inventing stories as a way of connecting to the outside world. Kolya says:
Honest people are terribly scarce here, so that there’s really nobody one can respect. One can’t help looking down on people, and they all insist on respect... just look at my general; what has he come to? And yet you know, it seems to me that my general is an honest man. By god, I really think so! It’s nothing but disorder and wine; by God it is so. I feel sorry for him, in fact, only I am afraid to say so, because everyone laughs. But by God, I feel sorry for him” (Idiot, 123).

Kolya’s speech serves as a critique on the society within the novel that praises “money-grubbers” (Idiot, 123), while denouncing honesty and virtue. In recognizing the scarcity of “honest people” Kolya delivers a similar analysis to Dostoevsky in his essay “Something on Lying.” And although he is regarded as a secondary character in the novel, Kolya is the only one who trusts in the goodness of his father, despite the reputation he has established for himself amongst the dishonest masses who “insist on respect.” The use of anaphora in Kolya’s statement “By God”, and “it is so!” has a very different rhetorical effect than if it had been part of the general’s dialogue. Kolya is not a
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storyteller; in fact, this is one of the few public statements he makes about his father. Since he is not prone to volunteering public confessions, his speech to Myshkin is meant to represent one of the few truthful professions in the novel. The presence of repetition used in his speech is meant to display honest emotions and the despair he feels for his father, who he claims is an honest man. However, Morson’s essay “Paradoxical Dostoevsky,” which was mentioned earlier in this chapter, questions how much the reader actually knows considering the lapses in space and time; we only know what we experience on the page in the present. Rousseau speaks of virtue, reason, and justice as necessary elements that must be practiced together to uphold the “real” and “good” notion of what truth is, yet there is little virtue in contriving what is designated in the unknown.

In his essay on liars, Montaigne discusses the fundamental difference between an untruth and a lie. The author states the phrase “that he who has not a good memory should never take upon him the trade of lying” (32), which addresses the dilemma the general is faced with, or is seemingly unconscious of. There is no evidence to prove that he consciously seeks out to lie, but he is also unaware of the failings of his memory. Retelling old stories of war-time (for example, the story of the soldier in Kars who rose from the dead) serve as his way for him to portray himself as a hero, however the fact that most of his stories are purely fiction, suggests that he is not actually able to remember the war at all. If he cannot recall having essentially stolen a large sum of money from Marfa Borissovna, or the real origin of the lapdog story, then perhaps he is unable to remember his days as a soldier as well.
Any attempts at communication, regardless of the degree of honesty associated with his speeches are dismissed and forgotten. The problem with these misunderstanding deals with what Montaigne says differentiates a lie from an untruth: “to tell an untruth is to tell a thing that is false, but that we ourselves believe is true; and that the definition of the word to lie in Latin...is to tell a thing which we know in our conscience to be untrue” (Montaigne, 32). So which of these two categories does the general fall under? To say that the lapdog story is a premeditated lie is not entirely accurate, especially since the general is not seen reading a copy of the Independence Belge by Myshkin until the following day. It is more likely that the general had in fact read the story, but by retelling it as his own experience, it becomes a lie. As Montaigne says is often the case with old liars, they have trouble differentiating between their truth and someone else’s. And while the general is most certainly guilty of telling lies, for example his supposed knowledge of Myshkin’s father, there is not enough evidence to support either claim to be a certainty.

CONCLUSION

Austin’s performative revolves around misfired utterances, and how they ultimately contribute to the breakdown of speech communication. These utterances are responsible for interrupting the speaker-listener relationship in that they are executed without any consideration for the action or consequence that is required to follow the utterance. In that same vein, a number of literary devices contribute to both the performative aspect of language, and verbal misfires. Hesitation, shifts in logic, and repetition are a few devices incorporated in the general’s speeches. The author purposely constructs the general’s language in such a way that the audience is made aware of why
he fails as a storyteller, and why he is one the novel’s only characters designated as the inciter of scandal.

The more of a nuisance the general becomes the less frequent and dramatic his appearances are within the novel. After the general’s outburst in public (in the street, after he puts a curse on his house), he is again taken out of the public eye; during the later alleged arguments, the audience is not present. This ambiguity associated with these ideas of truth and lie is problematic due to the complexities surrounding the characterization of the liar himself.

Towards the end of the novel, the narrator shares his opinions as to why there is no definable answer to the general’s motivations for storytelling. He says:

Don’t let us forget that the cause of human actions are usually immeasurably more complex and varied that our subsequent explanations of them. And these can rarely be distinctly defined. The best course for a story-teller at times is to confine himself to a simple narrative of events. *(Idiot, 443-44)*

He забудем, что причины действий человеческих обыкновенно бесчисленно сложнее и разнообразнее, чем мы их всегда потом объясняем, и редко определенно очерчиваются. Всего лучше иногда рассказчику ограничиваться простым изложением событий. (4:3)

And he concludes by referring to the general as a “person of secondary importance in our story” *(Idiot, 444)* (второстепенному лицу нашего рассказа) (4:3). The “simple narrative of events” represents the truth which is essentially the foundation for any storyteller. Does this mean there is some truth to the general’s stories? Quite possibly yes,
There would be no way to learn what truth is if it were not known naturally...when one tries to define these things, one obscures them and confuses oneself...  

-Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method

but with so many elements working to refute his authority as a storyteller, it is difficult to say for sure. General Ivolgin is described, even at the end of the novel, as having been an “impulsive character” (Idiot, 442) ("порывчатый") (4:3). And like The Brothers Karamazov’s Fyodor Pavlovich, Ivolgin attempts to gaining leverage—and an audience—with theatrical outbursts and long, drawn out speeches and feelings of disenfranchisement and failure. While Ivolgin appears as a much milder version of the malicious character of Fyodor Pavlovich, it is impossible to ignore the similarities between both elders, especially with their constant desire for exhibitionism.

There is always an element of extremism associated with Dostoevsky’s elder liars, and all attempts to reenter society are foiled by their hastily executed verbal performances, which results from a lack of self-control. The society that General Ivolgin once belonged to does not exist anymore; the “old soldier of misfortune” (Idiot 99) (старый, несчастный солдат) (1:9) often finds himself surrounded by a young crowd of uninterested listeners, and the ones who are somewhat intrigued by his stories know far too much of his reputation to humor him by reciprocating. Like Stepan Verkhovensky of Demons, the general lives in the past and with the nostalgia of when his status as general actually meant something. However, in his efforts to communicate with those around him, he is met with skepticism and is seen less as an honorable elder, and more as a member of a seemingly outdated and uninteresting history. Storytelling is the only way he knows how to communicate, but his verbal misfires are not responded to favorably by a society that claims to hold the highest esteem for truth. But with this novel, as with TBK, Dostoevsky does not favor the members of high society, but rather the fallen and lower class of which Bakhtin finds to be the most “real” aspects of the “carnivalized
"There would be no way to learn what truth is if it were not known naturally... when one tries to define these things, one obscures them and confuses oneself..." -Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method

novel.” The realistic portrayal is almost truthful enough to override the untruths spoken by the characters, thus making them more admirable and relatable.
Chapter 3

Pyotr Verkhovensky: The Exception

From his quick and powerful entrance into the novel, and subsequently into every scandal scene that he provokes, *Demons* (Бесы) Pyotr Verkhovensky is considered to be a skilled performer because of his prepared speeches and meticulous attention to details. Similar to Fyodor Karamazov, he is a character who lies in order to promote scandal, a technique that allows him to command a high level of authority through the art of speech. However, while Karamazov’s theatrics revolve around impulsive lying, Pyotr extends his rhetorical talents to artfully manipulating the truth. Karamazov, moreover, is a pariah figure, while Pyotr, despite being an outsider, is able to maneuver his way into society by constructing a persona that appeals to everyone’s interests. To Varvara Peterovna Stavrogin, he is a friend and confidant who has her son Nikolai’s best interest in mind; the governor’s wife, Yulia Mikhailovna sees him as a “representative” of the younger generation that she wishes to connect with; the male characters—Pyotr’s fivesome—value his straightforward intellectualism and motivation to revolutionize Russia. But while he attains an admirable status among the novel’s socialites, the reader is shown more sinister elements of his character, including his desire to weaken society’s political structure.

The foundation for the novel as well as Pyotr Verkhovensky’s menacing character is based on the real-life murder of a young student Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov at the Petrine Agricultural Academy in Moscow. The murderer, Russian revolutionary Sergei G. Nechayev, led his group of student followers to commit the crime. This story, “which inspired Dostoevsky to write a novel-pamphlet” (Mochulsky, 406), and subsequently, the novel *Demons*, helped to produce “the image of Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they’ve all lost their minds over you"-Karamazinov, Demons

[which] is directly related to the personality of the revolutionary S.G. Nechayev, the founder of the society “The People’s Retribution” (Mochulsky, 417). In Dostoevsky: His Life and Work Konstantin Mochulsky explains how the novelist uses this combined character of Nechayev-Verkhovensky to convey the political situation in Russia by writing about what he believed to be a “contemporary theme” (407) involving the state of Russia’s political and religious turmoil, which subsequently established Dostoevsky as a prophetic novelist, since this novel is considered by him to be “the accomplished fact” (409) or social outcome of the murder of Ivanov. Although his knowledge of the facts surrounding the details of Ivanov’s murder were based on what he read in the newspapers, Dostoevsky wrote that his “fantasy can in the highest degree differ from the reality that took place, and my Pyotr Verkhovensky may in no way resemble Nechayev, but it seems to me that in my astonished mind imagination has created that character, that type, which corresponds to this crime” (quoted in Mochulsky, 409). Originally the central “hero” of the novel, Dostoevsky decided to rewrite the manuscript with the fictionalized character of Nikolai Stavrogin, who serves as Verkhovensky’s double, as its “enigmatic hero” (422). Mochulsky explains the character of “Pyotr Verkhovensky fulfills with literal exactness all Nechayev’s rules in the novel...[his] ‘five’ was founded on complicity in crime, espionage, slander and despotism. In the same way, Pyotr Verkhovensky organizes his five” (421). In the novel, Verkhovensky acts as the devilish instigator of scandal, who derives pleasure through calculated and contrived performances that produce the same destruction in the world of the novel that the real Nechayev was aiming to establish in Russia.
Mochulsky acknowledges that the character of “Pyotr Verkhovensky was conceived by the author as the philosopher of anarchism” and in constructing the character, the author consciously chose to “conceal and disclose him only gradually, by strong artistic features (for example by the difference between his intellect and craftiness and through ignorance of reality)” (422). Pyotr’s intellect is demonstrated in his first scene in the novel, but the full extent of his craftiness is only revealed during a private meeting with Stavrogin, later in the novel. The first-person narrator describes his first impression of Pyotr after he makes a very unexpected but impressionable entrance at Varvara Petrovna’s house. He was “dressed in clean and even fashionable clothes… a bit hunched and slack at first sight, and yet not hunched at all, even easygoing… everyone later found his manners quite decent and his conversations always to the point… no one would call him bad-looking, but no one likes his face” (Demons, 179) (Одетьый чисто и даже по моде, но не щегольски; как будто с первого взгляда сутиволятый и мешковатый, но однако же совсем не сутиволятый и даже развязный. Как будто какой-то чудак, и однако же все у нас находили потом его манеры весьма приличными, а разговор всегда идущим к делу. Никто не скажет, что он дурен собой, но лицо его никому не нравится) (1:5:4). What is immediately noticed by the narrator is Verkhovensky’s style of dress; he is clean, stylish and though not particularly attractive, he is able to make an impression that is far better than the ones made by Ivolgin and Karamazov, who appear disheveled, dressed in dirty old linen, and smelling of alcohol. But Verkhovensky’s appearance is already deceitful, since the narrator cannot tell if he is hunched, or not at all. The paradox in this description leads the reader to question whether the narrator is untrustworthy, or if Pyotr is cunning enough to appear to
be both. This difficulty in the narrator’s ability to categorize him is what enables Verkhovensky to play two different characters. In front of people who know him—like Stavrogin and his father, Stepan—Pyotr reveals his true nature, but is careful to display his false naivety and fabricated “ignorance of reality” while in public.

The narrator continues to describes Pyotr, who, as soon as he enters the room, walks over to Varvara Petrovna and begins a conversation with her regarding her son, Nikolai Stavrogin: “And imagine, Varvara Petrovna, the beads spilled out of him, ‘I came in thinking to find he’d already been here for a quarter of an hour…” (180) (..Представьте же, Варвара Петровна, - сыпал он как бисером, - я вхожу и думаю застать его здесь уже с четверть часа) (1:5:4). Varvara is stunned to find Pyotr, a man she has never met standing before her speaking so casually about her personal matters, yet his confidence is reassuring. The absence of hesitation, or even modesty, acts to Pyotr’s advantage as a speaker, because the initial effect he has on his audience sets the tone for his future receptions in the novel. Moreover, the “beads” as the narrator so often refers to Pyotr’s uninterrupted manner of speech, is a way to categorize his overzealous dialogue. As a people pleaser, his purpose is to appear as though he is tailoring compliments to their liking. This sense of entitlement is what supports the narrator’s observation that Pyotr is confident and self-aware. Pyotr’s attention grabbing strategy of walking in already in conversation provides control for him as a speaker, since he begins and ends every performance on his own terms, and on top of which, everyone is usually too surprised by his curious entrances to interrupt. Because the performances begin and end with Pyotr speaking, his precise and preplanned orations remain controlled.
and consistent. Despite the "flashiness" of his entrances, he conveys his reliability as a speaker by pretending to be genuinely concerned with everyone's private problems.

In his essay "Something about Lying", Dostoevsky asserts, "one can state positively that every windbag with relatively decent manners...can gain the upper hand and convince his listeners of whatever he pleases, earning their gratitude and departing with deep respect for himself" ("Lying," 275-76) (Положительно можно сказать, что всякий говорун с несколько порядочными манерами...может одержать верх и убедить слушателей своих в чем угодно, получить благодарность и уйти, глубоко уважая себя) ("често о вранье"). As both a critic and an author, Dostoevsky respects the liar for his art, but reprimands the listener for playing the fool and blindly entertaining someone who, like Pyotr, has "relatively decent manners". What works to Pyotr's advantage is his pride in his own performances, and when he sabotages someone by spinning the truth (as he does with Shatov when he blames him for writing tracts) in his favor, Pyotr foresees the consequences that his lies will bring about. The fact that he can lie without hesitation is a unique characteristic that only his character embodies in this novel.

By controlling every situation through language, Pyotr maintains the status as primary speaker and so, the action of the novel is furthered by his attempts to reconstruct the truth. As a character who is motivated by greed, and egotism, Verkhovensky is able to influence his audience through language and performance by inciting scandal through verbal manipulation, which is often achieves through the performance. In his essay on the performatrice Jonathan D. Culler writes: "a literary work performatively brings into being what it purports to describe...[and] creates character and situation"
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you."—Karamazinov, Demons

(“Concepts,”144). By implementing the performative in Pyotr’s speech, Dostoevsky constructs a character who, through a well-timed and misleading use of intention of language, becomes responsible for scandal. By constantly saying things that are not truthful, which in turn creates conflict by his use of language, Pyotr is successful in bringing into being uncertainty, confusion, and chaos into the world of the novel.

The narrator makes a point to mention, twice, that Pyotr made a very rapid transition into society’s highest inner circle, and how enthusiastically everyone received his words and ideas, almost as though his skillful use of language induced a form of hypnosis over his listeners. The narrator describes his observation and impression of Pyotr’s speech:

He speaks rapidly, hurriedly, but at the same time self-confidently, and is never at a loss for words. His thoughts are calm, despite his hurried look, distinct and final—and that is especially noticeable. His enunciation is remarkably clear; his words spill out like big, uniform grains, always choice and always ready to be at your service. You like it at first, but later it will become repulsive, and precisely because of this all too clear enunciation, this string of ever ready words. (Demons, 180)
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you" - Karamazinov, *Demons*

противно, и именно от этого слишком ясного выговора, от того бисера вечно готовых лов. (Бесы, 1:5:4)

Everything about the narrator’s observation of Pyotr’s speech indicates that through language, he is capable of achieving a certain artful and distinct impression that both Ivolgin and Karamazov fail to accomplish. In his essay “Of Liars” Montaigne states “to tell an *untruth* is to tell a thing that is false, but that we ourselves believe to be true; and that the definition of the word *to lie*...is to tell a thing which we know in our conscience to be untrue” (32). Unlike Ivolgin, who is more of a teller of untruths, Verkhovensky, who is well aware of the fact that his stories are untrue, belongs to the category of conscious liar. While the “old liars” are more inclined to deliver theatrical and exaggerated performances, Verkhovensky’s are more refined, coordinated and purposeful. What sets the old liars apart from Pyotr is that they approached their audience with uncertainty, hesitation, and unrehearsed speeches. The fact that his thoughts are “calm...distinct and final” suggests that he anticipates no opposition from the audience. In the final sentence of the passage, the narrator foreshadows the possibility that Pyotr is not who he seems to be at first, or that his “ever ready” words are all part of a performance that will later reveal his ulterior motives that will not become apparent until later on in the novel. This is an important inconsistency in Pyotr’s first impression; the narrator appears to be aware of his oratory talents and knows not to put too much faith in what he says. One of the reasons why Pyotr succeeds in his lying is because he does not carry the burden of a ruined reputation like his predecessors. Pyotr is confident in himself, and in the lies he produces is enough to assure the lasting confidence of his audience.
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you."—Karamzinov, Demons

CONFESSIONS

Though at times he appears to lack self-control as words “spill out of him” when his stories gain momentum, his rhetorical technique does not suffer, but rather adds a genuine quality to his public “confessions.” Therefore, his audience does not doubt what he says, because they have no rhetorical reason to doubt him. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, Dostoevsky viewed the idea of public confession—and generally any spoken or written confession—as unreliable and inherently untruthful. The fact that Pyotr successfully fuses and simultaneously distorts both of these ideas of confession and lie, differentiates him from the elder liars who are only preoccupied with entertaining their audiences and lie unsuccessfully. Above all, Pyotr Verkhovensky’s art of speech-making is in his knowledge of certain details, which, as a performer and speaker, provides him with a level of security and acceptance.

Pyotr, having a strained relationship with his father, has no qualms about exposing a secret of Stepan’s that will create an uncomfortable situation between him (Stepan) and Varvara Petrovna. In reading aloud the contents of a letter that his father sent regarding personal details of a potential marriage to a young woman, Pyotr takes ownership for Stepan’s personal written confession. Although Pyotr is well aware of the consequences and public uproar that will ensue after exposing the letter, he pretends to have naively misunderstood the meaning and potential repercussions of the letter’s contents. After embarrassing his father, Pyotr, as if unaware of what he has just said, adds “Forgive me for my foolish confession...I babble too much” (200) (Ты меня прости...за мое глупое признание... я слишком болтлив) (1:5:7). Pyotr takes away the rights to his father’s confession—“my confession”—by speaking for him, which results in an
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you." - Karamazinov, Demons

inaccurate translation of the contents of the letter. Varvara believes Pyotr when he plays the role of the fool here, because as Dostoevsky states in his essay, “people are too easily satisfied, and sometimes in the most unexpected manner; they believe everything; they are very poorly prepared and equipped” (Lying, 275) (Замечательно то, что, при всей этой чрезвычайно любопытной и далеко намекающей жажде общественных советников и руководителей, при всем этом благородном стремлении, удовлетворяются слишком легко, самым иногда неожиданным образом, верят всему, подготовлены и вооружены весьма слабо) ("нечто о вранье"). Having already established himself as a reputable speaker in front of Varvara, Pyotr knows she will believe his naïve performance. Not once does she question the motives of Pyotr’s decision to expose his father’s secrets, and her emotions of discontent with Stepan (who is a habitual liar and excessive storyteller—very similar to General Ivolgin) govern her reaction as she puts all her faith in Pyotr’s rendition of the story behind the letter. Varvara is “too easily satisfied” with the details provided by Pyotr, and his success is based solely on her enthusiasm to except his every word. As Bakhtin argues in Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, the fool is the essential variable in a scandal scene, and so Pyotr adopts this role, knowing that by acting plainly, he will circumvent any criticism from Varvara for exposing his father’s secrets and thus creating a scandal. After Pyotr’s “confessions,” a “hubbub ensued; suddenly an incident broke out which no one could have expected” (202) (Поднялся шум; но тут разразилось вдруг такое приключение, которого уже никто не мог ожидал) (1:5:7) except, of course, Pyotr, who purposely instigated the scandalous situation in order to further his own agenda.
VERKHOVENSKY’S MISFIRES

While Pyotr’s craftiness is evident in his interactions with most of the characters in the novel, Nikolai Stavrogin is the one exception; not only does he dismiss Pyotr’s theatrics by being non-responsive, but his disinterest in Pyotr’s “confessions” create instability in the liar’s otherwise controlled performances. As the only character who knows the details of Pyotr’s past, Stavrogin is immune to the cunning nature of his character, as well as his ability to appeal to his audiences through speech. The first interaction between Pyotr and his double is a mysterious one, and it reveals tension, which is apparent by their distinct and telling uses of intonation, gesture, and strained verbal exchange.

Arguably, the most interesting and revealing interaction in the novel happens during Verkhovensky’s unsuccessful overperformance in Stavrogin’s study. By repeatedly misfiring in front of Stavrogin, who is referred to as Pyotr’s “master” (Demons, 219), Verkhovensky’s motives are exposed to the reader. As discussed in previous chapters, a misfire, as a type of performative utterance in Austin’s sense, results from the unsuccessful completion of an action that is anticipated by (the use of) a certain utterance. In addition, Culler clarifies Austin’s concept by stating, performative utterances “do not describe but perform—successfully or unsuccessfully—the action they designate” (142). The chapter entitled “Night” which takes place at Stavrogin’s, reveals that the liar fears losing his “master’s” camaraderie as well as his potential involvement in the fivesome. In a rhetorical sense, though, Pyotr loses his footing when he realizes that his promises have no effect on the listener. In an effort to appeal to Stavorgin, Pytor says, “I’ve come so as always to be frank from now on… I was cunning a lot of the time”
“I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they’ve all lost their minds over you.”—Karamazinov, Demons

(Demons, 220) Я пришел, чтобы быть с этих пор всегда откровенным...Я хитрил много раз) (2:1:3), and further claims that the incident involving the exposé of his father’s “sins” at Varvara Petrovna’s was also true. His promise to be “frank” misfires, as every attempted “confession” that follows, fails. This confession is similar to the one Pyotr gives to Varvara, in which he gives his word to be honest, and yet admits that his words “always come out wrong” (221). Stavrogin does not believe in his guest’s promises, and while Pytor promises to be truthful, there are inconsistencies in the truths he divulges to his listener. Stavrogin’s response to Pyotr’s ramblings indicates that he is the only person who seems to know the difference between the public and private Pyotr, as well as his motivations for lying.

In his “confession” Pyotr says, “When I set out to come here...to this town, ten days ago, I decided, of course, to adopt a role” (Demons, 220) (Отправляясь сюда, то-есть вообще сюда, в этот город, десять дней назад, я конечно решил взять роль) (2:1:3). He goes on to say that the fool was not a character he would have been able to play well, since it is an “extreme thing” (220). Pyotr’s “truthful” explanation of the role he has chosen to adopt is both puzzling and contradictory, especially with regards to his explanation of which role he has decided to play. He promises to act as his “own person” as he finds it to be the more accurate “golden mean” between the fool and his “rather giftless” self (220); however, while his claim of adopting “a role” as conscious decision is certain, the contradiction in Pyotr’s confession lies rather in the “un-choice” words he uses when referring of himself as a “giftless” or untalented speaker. Since he ardently performs with the utmost care in front of his public audiences, his confession is ironic; his intention is to convince Stavrogin that he is a talentless speaker, despite having
faired well with his public audiences, is misleading, and indicative of yet another of his performances. In addition, in juxtaposing these two ideas of playing the fool while at the same time being inherently giftless, he reveals how deceiving his character really is.

Since the fool has so far been considered by his audiences as verbally ineffective, Pyotr attempts to devalue his skills in front of Stavrogin as part of his performance. Pyotr has no intention of playing the fool's role for its own sake, and his decision to employ such a role in controlled public circumstances has a pragmatic purpose rather than a haphazard one. In Fyodor Karamazov's case, he is a liar who is eager and willing to play the fool to its most extreme vantage. Like Pyotr, Karamazov's fool is purposeful and his profane speech and satirical behavior achieves a certain advantage for him as speaker, since he is able to promote scandal. But while Karamazov views any attention—even the negative—as good attention, he sacrifices himself for his performance. Although Karamazov does not directly refer to himself as giftless, his speeches reveal numerous misfires, which in turn dispels the trust of the listener. Although Pyotr has more of a utilitarian view of the fool's role, and is less theatrical in public, he reverts to a more "Karamazovian" rendition of the fool while in Stavrogin's company.

While Stavrogin knows that Pyotr's speeches have a tenancy to promote scandal, Pyotr pretends that he does not "know how to speak. Those who know how to speak well, speak briefly" (221) Потому что говорить не умею. Те, которые умеют хорошо говорить, те коротко говорят (2:1:3). However, Pyotr is aware of the effect his long speeches have on an audience, and therefore continues to speak, at length, to Stavrogin of his "inadequacies." And though Pyotr claims to have an inability to speak clearly: "I always speak a lot, I mean, a lot of words, and I rush, and it always comes out
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you"—Karamzinov, Demons

wrong" (220-21) (я всегда говорю много, то-есть много слов, и тороплюсь, и у меня всегда не выходит) (2:1:3), this is the only scene in which he displays an inconsistency in his otherwise precise speaking ability. He then questions aloud whether or not this tendency of talking too much is his giftlessness or a gift, yet his attempt to "annoy his host with the insolence of his crude naiveties" (220) (желание гостя раздражить хозяина нахальностью своих заранее неготовленных и с намерением грубых наивностей) (2:1:3) is unsuccessful, because he is not able to extract any kind of response from Stavrogin. This false insecurity of Pyotr's is revealed at Varvara Petrovna's when he apologizes for not being able to speak well in public, yet she praises him, which is the positive response and verification he needs in order to continue. This "craftiness" as Mochulsky puts it, is all part of Pyotr's fool/naïve role playing, but it seemingly has no effect on Stavrogin.

Pyotr's behavior in this particular chapter is very different than in the rest of the novel, in that he is said to have "rattled on" (221-22) incessantly in order to achieve a reaction from Stavrogin by agitating him. The narrator uses "rattled" (заряял) in order to convey the rapidity with which he spoke. This is distinct from the nonsensical "babble" (работал) (2:1:3) Pyotr admits to have produced for his listeners earlier. This shift in power, from the speaker to the listener, forces Pyotr to speak irritably and therefore his sentences are uncharacteristically unstructured and his inner thoughts are overexposed. The one reaction Pyotr is not accustomed to as a performer is silence. He uses confession and imperative statements to convince Stavrogin that he is inclined to be a more honest person. Twice, when Stavrogin's reaction to Pyotr's "confessions" concerning his admired public image is emotionless and silent, Pyotr frantically asks,
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you" - Karamazinov, Demons

“Eh? What? Did I hear you say ‘Who cares?’ Pyotr Stepanovich rattled on (Nikolai Vsevolodovich has not said anything at all)” (А? Что? Вы, кажется, сказали: "все равно"? - затрещал Петр Степанович (Николай Всеволодович вовсе ничего не говорил)) (2:1:3), and the second time, almost verbatim he repeats the same questions, but adds, “I see, I see, it seems I’ve blundered again” (Вижу, вижу, что я опять, кажется, сморозил). The uses of aporetical questions are misleading, as they represent not genuine doubt but a rhetorical technique used to further conversation. Repetition, which happens quite often during their meeting, is also an indicator (as seen with the previous liars) that the liar is unsure of the direction his lie is going. By hesitating, he desperately asks questions, and then answers them in order to retain control as the sole speaker. Pyotr also resorts to asking questions in order to change the subject. It is clear here, in his interaction with Stavrogin, that Pyotr’s speech is not as fluid and concise when he must perform impromptu. He repeatedly fails as a speaker, because his misfires, which prevent him from establishing trust with Stavrogin, are overused. By speaking of the truth, he draws attention to his habit of lying, making it a double misfire.

Pyotr’s utterances can be considered perlocutionary performatives, which means they have a direct impact in determining the sequence of events in the novel. As a strategist, he develops different lies to suit his various public personas. By fusing lies with truth into every aspect of his speeches, confessions, declarations and promises, he creates his own chaotic reality, and turns the world of the novel upside down. His first encounter with Varvara results in her mistrust in Stepan Verkhovensky and the ultimate dissolution of their friendship. When Pyotr wants Kirillov (one of the men not involved in Pyotr’s fivesome) to commit suicide so that he will take the blame for Pyotr’s
involvement in writing the tracts, Pyotr manipulates him into believing that his suicide is for a greater cause. When Kirillov begins to have doubts about his forced suicide, Verkhovensky says, “I won’t leave before I’ve blown your brains out with this revolver, like that scoundrel Shatov’s, if you turn coward and put off your intention, devil take you!” (Demons, 613) (Я не уйду, не раскрою вам черепа из этого револьвера, как подлецу Шатову, если вы сами стругите и намерение отложите, черт вас дерн!) (3:6:2). Not only did Pyotr not kill Shatov—he directed the men in his fivesome to fulfill the task—but he has no intention of killing Kirillov either. Pyotr fears the risk involved if he cannot convince Kirillov to take the blame for Shatov’s murder, and in the scene that follows, Verkhovensky does eventually talk Kirillov into shooting himself, but he makes no effort to threaten him seriously. His words are powerful enough that he is able to orchestrate not one, but two murders without physically taking action, despite his intention for these killings to succeed. Verkhovensky’s increase in power disrupts the established hierarchy and creates the “carnival” that Bakhtin believes to be a phenomenon that appears in Dostoevsky’s literature. The importance of the unsuccessful confession in Stavrogin’s study is to expose the discursive breakdown of an otherwise successful conspirator.

Realizing that his misfires have failed with Stavrogin, Pyotr reverts back to performing by sharing his feelings on his rising admiration with the other characters in the novel. Pyotr says, “… release me!’ he was gesticulating frantically, with a jocular and agreeable air. ‘If you knew the babble I’ve had to produce for them. But, then, you know” (Demons, 219) (Разрешите их наконец, разрешите меня! - неистово зажестикалировал он с шутливым и приятным видом. - Если б вы знали, что я
I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you.”-Karamazinov, Demons

должен был им наволтать. А впрочем вы знаете. - Он засмеялся) (2:1:3). His inability to remain serious negates the possibility of truth in his plea. Pyotr also inadvertently admits that his so-called confessions up until this point have been fabricated, since he now refers to his publicly spoken “truths” as “babble.” His complaint about not wanting to perform is also untrue; Pyotr is a prepared speaker who enjoys the act of performing, and is even doing so with his excited hand gestures in front of Stavrogin. His public speeches are usually enthusiastic and spoken passionately, however it is also difficult to tell whether Pyotr is in control of his shifts in tone. With regards to changes in intonation, Adam Kenton states “excitement is found in emotional speech in general; but that too has extensions in the form of higher pitch for greater cordiality and lower pitch for greater politeness, for showing that we are in control of our feelings” (161). It would seem Verkhovensky is also able manipulate his tone, especially in situations where he appears to be out in control, when in fact he is not. Manipulation of intonation is something that contributes to his performance making it all the more affective to the listener. Pyotr expresses his intolerance of having to perform for everyone, yet this impression is fleeting because of the “delight” he feels at “his master’s irritability” over the rumors and problems he has started for Stavrogin (160). In ruining his reputation, Pyotr will again elevate himself even more in the ranks of society.

GESTURES

Scandals are achieved through Pyotr’s constant wordplay and excessive involvement in the lives of everyone in the novel. Through performance he is able to create situations that escalate into scandal, which in turn alters the direction of the novel’s action. One of the methods he uses to engage his audience and the reader is with his use
of gesture and intonation. According to Adam Kendon, author of *Gesture*, gestures “provide meanings beyond those expressed linguistically” (111). When Pyotr uses body language to convey a certain attitude or impression, it is yet another performance technique to gain attention and control, even in instances when he is not speaking.

As discussed earlier, Pyotr is at a temporary loss of control when he is in the company of Stavrogin. When he is impatient or annoyed at his own verbal failings, Pyotr throws up his hands—similar to Ivolgin—indicating his frustration over loss of authority. In trying to convince Stavrogin that he is determined to play a more “truthful” role in public, the lack of response from Stavrogin causes the misfiring Pyotr to become impatient. In *Intonation and Gesture* Dwight Bolinger states “up-down gestures can be carried by the eyebrows, the corners of the mouth, the arms and hands, and the shoulders. Motion in parallel with pitch is... the rule” (160). Since Stavrogin indicates through gesture—by yawning or not responding to Pyotr’s questions—that he does not believe him, the liar knows he is losing the connection with his audience and flails his hands to show his irritation over the fact that he is delivering an unsuccessful performance. A hand gesture which is inconsistent or unrelated to the phrase or command being spoken is what Adam Kendon would refer to as an “illocutionary marker” (113). An illocutionary marker is similar to Austin’s illocutionary peformative; neither has any consequence or direct result to the utterance that is being spoken. Since Stavrogin knows when Pyotr is lying, many of his wild gestures fail to initiate any kind of emotion from the listener. Sometimes gesture can be used separately without any corresponding relationship to what the speaker is saying, but rather it acts as an indicator of some feeling the speaker cannot relay verbally. Pyotr also throws his hands up when Stavrogin asks questions that Pyotr
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you" - Karamazinov, Demons

does not have the answer to. This type of gesture is a distraction for the audience, and is usually a cue for the speaker to change the direction or strategy of his failing topic. Pyotr, who makes a habit of sitting in armchairs with his legs crossed, will stand up when he becomes flustered over being treated as unimportant or secondary. Quite often his pitch changes in conjunction with his body movements. Most exclamatory statements precede wild hand gestures, and his intonation is erratic and uncontrolled when he is uncertain of what to say or when he begins to repeat himself. An examples of this is when Pyotr "smiled a crooked smile" (Улыбнулся искривленной улыбкой) when Stavrogin questions Pyotr's by saying, "I've heard you’re playing the gallant around here" (Demons, 227) (Я слышал, что вы здесь, говорят, джентльменничаете?) (2:1:3). Clearly, Pyotr is satisfied with his newfound acceptance, and realizes through Stavrogin’s acknowledgment and disapproval of his publicly effective role playing, that he is succeeding in his larger performances.

Verkhovensky always makes a grand entrance by rushing into a room, which gains him the audience’s attention. While he occasionally pretends to be uninterested or distant from certain topics being discussed by others, he is in fact a very active participant in the scandal scenes, even if he is not doing the talking. One of his tactics in learning the secrets and speculations of others is to “inadvertently” involve himself, by being present at every important gathering that takes place in the novel. When the governor, Von Lembke finds tracts supporting socialism, Pyotr is one of the first to hear of it, and without hesitation places blame on another character, Shatov, for writing the tract. Upon entering Lembke’s office, “Pyotr Stepanovich flew into the study unannounced, like a friend and familiar...” (347) (Пётр Степанович влетел в кабинет не доложившись,
"I assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they've all lost their minds over you" -Karamazinov, Demons

как добрый друг и свой человек) (2:6:2). While his presence is not wanted or initially accepted, Pyotr establishes himself by providing misleading information that eliminates him from taking the blame for involvement in the writing of the tracts. Pyotr also continues to employ his tendency of "flying" into a crowded room and begin speaking in order to gain attention from everyone. Upon his first appearance in the novel, the narrator describes Pyotr as "the young man who had just flown into the drawing room...even now it seems to me that he started talking in the next room and came in that way, already talking" (180) (кажется что он заговорил еще из соседней залы и так и вошел говоря) (1:5:4). Pyotr's "flying" into the room is somewhat of his trademark. Not once does he knock on a door, or walk in and introduce himself to the company, but rather walks in quickly, finds an "armchair, his legs crossed" (193) (сидел в креслах, заложив ногу на ногу) (1:5:6) (he almost never stands and talks at the same time) and begins a conversation almost immediately. By entering this way, he is able to command the attention that a successful performer requires in order to be heard or acknowledged. As the narrator says in response to Pyotr's first interaction with Varvara, it seemed like he "began talking in the other room", which proves to be a successful method. By beginning the conversation, Pyotr is able to complete his speech without being interrupted. Ordinarily, the people in the room are so baffled by his strong and unexpected presence that their only choice is to wait until he is finished talking. The success of Pyotr's orations lies in the fact that no one interrupts him because he does not give them the opportunity to do so. These techniques, among others, are tools that the successful performer uses to acquire consideration before he even begins speaking.
In the chapter entitled “With Our People” a group gathers to hear what the character Shigalyov has written to propose his idea of what the “new Russia” should look like politically. What he outlines is a society very similar in concept to what Pyotr Verkhovensky wants to achieve with his fivesome. The main argument or idea imbedded in Shigalyov’s proposition is summarized by the speaker in the following statement:

“What I propose is not vileness but paradise, earthly paradise, and there can be no other on earth, Shigalyov concluded imperiously” (404) (Я предлагаю не подлость, а рай, земной рай, и другого на земле быть не может, -властно заключил Шигалев) (2:7:2). The utopian idea is precisely what Pyotr is aiming to achieve by attracting followers who believe in this possible new “Russia.” However, during the meeting, Pyotr does not speak until the very end; instead, he sits and listens to what everyone else says in response to Shigalyov’s theory, in order to weigh the possibility of whether or not bringing up his idea would be wise.

In order to avoid having to incriminate himself by sabotaging the meeting with one of his usual performances, Pyotr acts as an uninterested listener, coming up with various odd requests from the hostess that indicate his indifference to the company: “You wouldn’t happen to have a deck of cards?” Verkhovensky, with a gaping yawn, addressed the hostess” (398) (А не будет ли у вас карт? - зевнул во весь рот Верховенский, обращаясь к хозяйке) (2:7:2). By yawning, Pyotr is using gesture to indicate his boredom; however, he is purposely doing this to draw attention to himself. The request for a deck of cards which will help him pass the time shows the audience that he seemingly has no interest in their ideas. When asked by the hostess if he had anything to contribute to the conversation, Pyotr says, “Precisely nothing,” he stretched himself,
assured them all, as soon as I arrived, that you are a great mind, and now it seems they’ve all lost their minds over you” - Karamazinov, *Demons*

yawning, on his chair. ‘I would like a glass of cognac, though” (401) (Повно ничего, - потянулся он зевая на стуле. - Я, впрочем, желал бы рюмку коньяку) (2:7:2). In response to how we read gestures, body language and its importance and presence within the novel, Bolinger says,

We READ intonation the same way we read gesture...when we know how we feel when we are angry, and when we see an angry expression we infer that the person wearing it is angry. We know how we feel when we are tense and we have already associated the high pitch of our own voice with that feeling; when we hear a high pitch from someone else, we infer tension. The fluctuations of pitch are to be counted among those bodily movements which are more or less automatic concomitants of our states and feelings and from which we can deduce the states and feelings of others. (157)

According to Bolinger, the reader/audience is attuned to the speaker’s emotions, because of the instant reactions we have to certain moments of tension, excitement, and so forth. While the reader deduces the state of mind of the speaker through style, punctuation and other rhetorical devices that imitate variations of speech derived from different emotions, we react in the same way the audience in the novel does to the fluctuations in intonation. The reason why Pyotr is successful as a performer in this particular instance is because he has control over his speech and therefore dictates the appearance of these indicators of emotion. Pyotr’s constant yawning is related to Kendon’s idea that “gestures also provide meanings beyond those expressed linguistically” (Kendon 111). So the physical acts, though technically misleading, because they do not represent the way Pyotr really feels,
are representative of his appeared state of mind, and his gestures succeed in relaying the message that he wants to convey. This behavior is also a strategy for gaining attention. While he does not want to seem too eager to join in on the conversation, he still wants everyone in the room to know that he is still very much a presence.

While the others continue discussing their ideas, Verkhovensky again concentrates on his cognac, and while “the interrupted orator paused with dignity” as Verkhovensky pours his drink, Pyotr says, “Never mind, go on, I’m not listening” (401) (Ничего, продолжайте, я не слушаю, - крикнул Верховенский, наливая себе рюмку) (2:7:2). The fact that the speaker pauses while Pyotr pours his drink, shows that his presence is felt by the speaker, and that his distracting actions merit the same attention as if he had in fact spoken. Pyotr is also aware of the fact that his actions are not unnoticed, and this is why he tells the speaker, “never mind, go on.” The main reason for Pyotr’s silence is to evaluate everyone’s stance on Shigalyov’s idea before he proposes a more extreme and proactive solution.

To draw even more attention to the fact that he is not listening, Pyotr asks, “Arina Prokhorovna, have you any scissors?...I forgot to cut my nails, it’s three days now I’ve been meaning to cut them,’ he uttered, serenely studying his long and none-too-clean nails.” (402) (Арина Прохоровна, нет у вас ножницы?... Забыл ногти обстричь, три дня собираюсь, - промолвил он, безмятежно рассматривая свои длинные и нечистые ногти). The fact that he purposely keeps his voice low—a gesture of politeness—and serene is so that his intonation does not provide the wrong message; he wants to sound disinterested, therefore his gestures, tone, and speech are all coordinated purposefully to achieve unity. This action and seemingly odd request confuses the
audience in the room, except for Arina, who “realized that this was actually a method, and was ashamed for her touchiness” (402) (поняла что это реальный прием, и устыдилась своей обидчивости) (2:7:2) when Pyotr asked about the scissors. Although this role is not consistent with Pyotr’s typical performances, the fact that he pays attention to the details of the role he is playing at this gathering is indicative of how good a performer he really is. Pyotr’s desire to be the only performer in the room is evident since he is constantly interrupting Arina and the other guests for arbitrary things that will help him pass the time. By interjecting in the conversation, he is able to remind everyone of his presence. Eventually Pyotr does speak up and offers his opinion on Shigalyov’s “plan” and proposes the men (and women) take a more active stance. He says:

I fully agree that babbling liberally and eloquently is extremely pleasant, while acting is a but rough... Well anyhow, I’m not a good speaker; I came here with communications, and therefore I ask the while honorable company not even to vote but to declare directly and simply which is more fun for you: a snail’s pace through the swamp, or full steam across it?

(408)

Я согласен совершенно, что либерально и красноречиво болтать чрезвычайно приятно, а действовать немного кусается... Ну да впрочем я говорить не умею; я прибыл сюда с сообщениями, а потому прошу всю почтенную компанию не то что вотировать, а прямо и просто заявить, что вам веселее: черепаший ли ход в болоте, или на всех парах через болото? (2:7:2)
Pyotr’s talent for speech-making is finally revealed once again, and it is apparent by the above statement that his behavior during the meeting was part of a larger performance. Had he been as vocal as Shigalyov or volunteered more information earlier, this address would not be so provocative and effective. Continuously claiming he is “not a good speaker” is Pyotr’s attempt to remain humble in front of his audience. Although his speech is nearly flawless, he cannot portray a man without flaws; admitting his imperfections is what allows him to connect to the others.

Unlike Ivolgin and Karamazov, Verkhovensky’s orations are detailed, planned and effective, which results in the near flawlessness of their delivery. Pyotr’s effective use of language enables him to influence his audience successfully while maintaining command as a reliable source of information to the public. Although Stavrogin acts as the one exception to the otherwise very effective performer, he does not expose Pyotr as a liar and manipulator. The fact that Pyotr’s consciousness is concealed from the reader allows for an initial vagueness surrounding the notions of both truth and lie, making them virtually indistinguishable. Despite the character’s connection and influence from the real life revolutionary, S.G. Nechayev, Verkhovensky is the only liar who completely eradicates the truth with regards to his own past, which is part of the reason why both he and his words are received with such enthusiasm. And while he claims his ideas are for the betterment of Russia, he is in fact a selfish liar, whose sole purpose was to eradicate stability and goodness in a weakened, directionless society.
CONCLUSION

Within the figure of the liar and outsider there is a great deal of helplessness and struggle for identity. Dostoevsky nevertheless empowers his liars to ignite scandal through their performances. Despite being outcasts, their desire to be heard facilitates the progression of Dostoevsky's novels into the realm of the "carnival." The liars' derisive words and actions overturn the social hierarchies within the text, placing the fool at the forefront of the action, and subsequently, supplying him full command over the many scandal scenes.

What makes Ivolgin, Karamazov, and Verkhovensky so appealing, despite being perceived as "villainous" characters, is their ability to transform the action and direction of Dostoevsky's works with their use of language. In the case of Fyodor Karamazov, his lies are what perpetuates the action in *TBK*, and their significance arguably grows even after his death. Only in his public performances, as he rejects both truth and confession, is Fyodor able to shame his family, without exposing his own vulnerability. Ivolgin's lies are less malicious than Karamazov's only because naivety rounds out his character. He is prepared to say anything that will grant him acceptance, an ultimately detrimental habit. While his admiration for high society contrasts with Fyodor's blatant disregard for the structures of the upper class and their often contradictory ideologies, the general's aggressive spontaneity and lack of self-censorship deems him an inappropriate candidate for reinstatement into a more refined social network. While Fyodor is able to obtain passage into the holiest of places—Father Zosima's cell—and defile it with scandal, Ivolgin provokes tension with his unexpected and undesired public appearances.
Of the three, Pyotr Verkhovensky is the only truly “successful” liar because he is deliberate with his use of words and gestures, making it easier for him to adapt into society through a manufactured use of language. In this sense, Fyodor and Ivolgin represent variations of the definitive liar Pyotr Verkhovensky. The latter’s success is based on his ability to manipulate his audience through speech by igniting gossip and tailoring his words in order to appeal to his audiences. In the case of the “old liars” Fyodor and Ivolgin, they often fumble or hesitate when they realize they are no longer in control of their stories and therefore, are in jeopardy of losing the listener’s attention. Although he is not the last liar in the sequence, Verkhovensky is the most extreme version.

While the “old liars” serve as foils during crucial moments within the novel, overcomplicating and redirecting during episodes of tension or action, they also have moments of clarity and vulnerability during which they speak the truth; the truth is generally an unreliable element of speech and is reserved for use by few of Dostoevsky’s main characters, and the liars are only rarely privy to that category. They do, however, often expose the indiscretions of others. Their use of performative language coincides with a desire to perform; Austin’s performative is thus a relevant resource for studying the speech (both words and context) of Dostoevsky’s liars. The notion of misfire complicates the way we view a lie, as does the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary utterances, the latter of which determines the consequences of a given utterance. Yet the continuous misfires of Dostoevsky’s liars denote their reliability as speakers, and by delivering promises “in bad faith” they compromise themselves, which leads to the eventual sacrifice of the “fool”.
The fool, according to Bakhtin’s carnival theory, is always paradoxical. Since his purpose is to create “carnival laughter,” which is an essential element of scandal scenes in the novel, his character must incorporate parody and irony into his speech. The liars’ use of language is likewise paradoxical because as fools they are able to simultaneously conceal and reveal what other characters cannot. Dostoevsky shows his readers the complexities of lying, storytelling and what Montaigne calls, “untruth telling,” by enabling the liars with the power to expose others’ truths despite their inability to be honest with themselves as well as with others. Discourse in the novel becomes an unreliable element of the texts because the notions of both truth and lie overcomplicate the liars’ dialogue, and language creates ambiguities that allow for the creation of scandal.

Lying in Dostoevsky’s literature is somewhat of a neglected topic (this study having examined only three of his many liars) and is essential when studying the language of his work. Arguably, the most compelling aspect of the liars’ dialogue is their ability to create chaos through speech. The language of the liars is not only provocative, but its aesthetic and literary purpose remains constant from one novel to the next, without running the risk of being repetitive. By promoting ambiguities and uncertainties through the language of the liar, Dostoevsky’s literature parodies lying while exploring the distortion of truth by employing aspects of the “carnival”. For Dostoevsky, lying is ultimately related to problems of the truth, and whether or not it is actually possible for truth to exist in a society that accepts and even encourages lying as a normative behavior.
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