

# **The Image of the Jesuit in Russian Literary Culture of the Nineteenth Century**

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## **The Society of Jesus and the Jesuits in Russia**

In the sixteenth century, St Ignatius of Loyola had a dramatic conversion experience, which he later wrote about in his autobiography. He was a Spanish knight who had led a secular life until, whilst recovering from a major injury suffered in battle, he took up spiritual reading, including the lives of saints, and chose Christ as his hero. His most famous work is *The Spiritual Exercises* (1522–1524). This is one of the most important mystical texts in modern Christianity. Ignatius thereby founded a school of contemplative spirituality which remains popular in contemporary society. In 1539 he gathered a group of followers around him and founded the Society of Jesus. After the death of St Ignatius the Jesuit order continued to expand. In the first centuries of the Society, they were especially well known for their counter-Reformation activities. For example, many of the Jesuits were sent from seminaries on the continent to England to preach and were later imprisoned or martyred.

The Jesuits were and are a missionary order, sending members of the Society to India, the New World and Asia. Of all religious orders, they are also known for their vow of personal loyalty to the Pope. However, in a twist of fate, Pope Clement XIV decided to disband the Order in 1773. In this period the only place where the Jesuits survived as a group was within the Russian Empire. The Order was officially re-formed in 1814 and survives to the present day. Although Jesuits are now better known for their historical role as missionaries and counter-Reformation spies, in the twenty-first century they are more involved in social and pastoral work, especially in teaching and academia. In the last few years, a Jesuit Pope has brought his order to even greater prominence and to public interest.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Jesuits in Russia began in 1582, when Antonio Possevino visited Muscovy, and held discussions with Ivan IV about church unity. These

seemed to have antagonised the Tsar. During the Time of Troubles, several Polish Jesuits were involved in the affair surrounding False Dmitrii's taking of the Russian throne. As we will observe from Russian literature, this served to stoke anti-Catholic prejudice, combining as it did with existing tensions between Russia and neighbouring Poland. In 1773, when the Society of Jesus was disbanded in Europe, Catherine II decided not to publish the Papal Bull, not out of any sense of compassion towards the Jesuits but because she found them useful in education. Between 1773 and 1820, therefore, many members of the upper classes were taught by Jesuits, especially prior to the foundation of the Imperial Lycée in St Petersburg.

In 1820, Alexander I expelled the Society of Jesus from Russia. Several factors influenced this decision but it was partly due to fears that they were converting Russians, specifically members of the upper classes, to Catholicism (Flynn 249–65). There were some grains of truth in this idea, although the fear was greater than the actual threat. In 1843, Prince Ivan Gagarin (a cousin of the Slavophile Iurii Samarin and friend of the poet Fedor Tiutchev) converted to Catholicism and became the first Russian Jesuit. He was followed by a string of others. Gagarin is a prominent figure, not least because he was well known in Russian society. He wrote a pamphlet entitled *La Russie sera-t-elle catholique?* (1856) in which he argued that Russia should become Catholic. He and his Jesuit colleague Ivan Martynov took part in several polemics. Understandably, the Jesuits came under attack for supposedly attempting to convert Russians to Catholicism. However, at times this anti-Jesuit feeling reached a ridiculous pitch, as Ivan Gagarin was accused of being implicated in the conspiracy leading to Pushkin's duel, of which Gagarin was not guilty.<sup>2</sup>

### **1830s: The Jesuit as Political Conspirator**

The image of the Jesuit as political conspirator seems to occur throughout the world, and evidence of this can be found in Russian culture too, especially in the 1830s. Literary depictions of the Time of Troubles in the 1820s and 1830s are doubtless connected to the nationalist policies of Nicholas I and a heightened interest in popular dissent and insurrection after the Decembrist Uprising in 1825. Likewise, the intrigue and conspiracies around the Time of Troubles would have useful dramatic potential against the background of the stance of the Russian state towards the Poles (also the aggressor in the early sixteenth century). Moreover, the Warsaw Uprising occurred in 1830.

Evidence for Aleksandr Pushkin's knowledge of the image of the Jesuit as political schemer can be found in his 'Table Talk'. He writes:

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Езуит Посвин [...] был один из самых ревностных гонителей памяти макиавелевой. [...] Посвин не читал Макиавеля, а толковал о нём по наслышке.

The Jesuit Possevino [...] was one of the most ardent followers of Machiavelli's memory. [It turned out that] Possevino hadn't read Machiavelli, but rather expounded upon him from hearsay. (Pushkin XII: 156, my translation)

Pushkin therefore knew of the image of the Jesuit as Machiavellian schemer and, when the opportunity arose to represent Jesuits in his work, one might have expected him to make the most of its dramatic potential.

This opportunity to write about the Jesuits and Catholicism arose when Pushkin chose to write about the Time of Troubles. It is also one of the important examples of Pushkin writing on national themes. Yet Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (1831), which takes the audience up to the end of Boris Godunov's reign, generally underplays the role of Catholicism in the conflict between Russia and Poland in the period. There is, however, some reference to the Jesuits' conspiratorial activities:

Самозванец

Нет – легче мне сражаться с Годуновым,

Или хитрить с придворным езуитом,

Чем с женщиной – чорт с ними: мочи нет. (Pushkin VII: 65)

Pretender

No: Easier to fight with Godunov,

Or to outwit a Jesuit courtier,

Than deal with women, damn them: they're beyond me. (*Boris Godunov* 121)

Pushkin here utilises the idea that the Jesuits are inclined to court intrigue, cunning or conspiracies but at the same time undermines this by making a joke out of it and suggesting that in fact women are *more* dangerous. The injection of humour can disrupt the point being made. Moreover, it is not clear whether we should take the Pretender's word seriously. Pushkin's Dmitrii is a chimerical figure who adapts to circumstances, and as such cannot be deemed a good source of factual information.

In the lines that follow, Dmitrii then compares Marina to a slippery serpent. Women have been associated with serpents before, through the figure of Eve in *Genesis*, who is tempted by the serpent to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. She tempts Adam with the same fruit and thus leads to their being ejected from Eden. Equally, the serpent in this Biblical text was associated with the Devil. In Judaeo-Christian culture the figure of the serpent, Satan and Eve (women) are therefore cooperating to corrupt Adam. The focus of this passage from *Boris Godunov* is therefore more of an indictment of women, their morals and relationship with men, than a criticism

of the Jesuits. The trope of the Machiavellian schemer and the serpent-like scheming woman compete for the audience's attention.

Pushkin's references to the Jesuits seem fairly understated in comparison to Aleksei Khomiakov's *Dmitrii Samozvanets* (*The False Dmitrii*, 1833), which was also written for the stage. It is interesting to compare this text with that of Pushkin. It was written in roughly the same period but from a different perspective. Khomiakov was a Slavophile whose writing (primarily in essay form, although he was also a poet) contains many passages defining Russian nationhood through its Orthodox heritage and denigrating the influence of Catholicism on European culture. It is therefore not surprising that his play contains numerous anti-Catholic and anti-Jesuit references, but these are much more marked and pivotal to the plot. For example, Dmitrii states:

Я знаю иезуитов.  
Их хитрый ум наклонен к мятежам,  
Их радуют кровавые волненья,  
Им мирная противна тишина, [...]   
И оттого им снятся заговоры...

I know the Jesuits.  
Their cunning minds are inclined to insurrections.  
They rejoice in bloody disturbances.  
They hate peaceful silence [...]  
and therefore they dream of conspiracies. (Khomiakov 394, my translation)

The author is careful to define and describe the Jesuits in the drama by putting these definitions in the mouths of the characters and thereby explaining to the audience what makes a Jesuit. This leaves it in no doubt and there is no use of humour which might inject some ambiguity. Khomiakov's play is weak precisely for this reason: to show rather than to tell of Jesuit intrigues would make a better drama. The play is more didactic than artistic.

Khomiakov uses his poetic powers to emphasise the dark side of the Jesuits, again repeating the notions that they are involved in political intrigues:

О! (будьте яко змии) - глубоко  
Начертано в уставе иезуитов,  
И твердо, Квицкий, помнишь ты его.

O! 'Be like the serpent' is written deep  
in the rule of the Jesuits,  
and Kvitskii, you should remember it well. (Khomiakov 295)

He implies that the desire to create intrigue is part of their very essence and is the rule of their Order. The reference to the serpent seems to allude to the serpent in Genesis, and therefore links the Jesuits to the Satan. This

image incidentally connects the Jesuits with Eve and therefore with women, although they are not explicitly referred to here. For Khomiakov, at least in this text, Catholicism is an enemy to be feared more than women. Later, Dmitrii directly compares the Jesuit to Satan:

О иезуит! И ты не призрак ада?

Не сатана?

Oh Jesuit! Are you not a shade of hell?

Not Satan? (Khomiakov 403)

Pushkin's use of the image of the Jesuit is subtler than Khomiakov's, but this is not because he was more sympathetic towards them. Pushkin's focus is different. He underplays the role of the Jesuits because his drama takes on bigger themes – the fate of Godunov and the fate of the people collectively sharing the tragedy of the Time of Troubles. Simplistic nationalism is not the most important theme in Pushkin's drama. He does not seek a scapegoat. In Khomiakov's Slavophile play, by contrast, Dmitrii becomes a self-confessed Russian patriot who tries to stand up against the Jesuit's 'sweet speech' and intrigues (Khomiakov 295). For Khomiakov, the worst fate Russia could experience is to be ruled by Catholics; he sees the Jesuits as the instigators of such an occurrence. Polish Catholics and Jesuits have to become the obviously villainous enemies of his drama, because in the unsubtle portrait that Khomiakov draws in this play, the enemy can only come from without. Catholicism is a hidden character in the play and Jesuits are the human, or not-so-human face, of this threat.

### **1850 and 1860s: The Jesuit as Polemicist**

This article highlights the image of the Jesuit in artistic texts but an equally interesting study can be made of their appearance in essays, polemics and articles in the mid-nineteenth century (Harrison 81–103). For example, the Jesuits constitute a focus of attack in Fedor Tiutchev's important anti-Catholic essay 'La Question Romaine' ('The Roman Question', 1849) (Tiutchev III: 66–67). Tiutchev's political essays are part of his nationalist, pro-Orthodox, Pan-Slavist phase after his return to Russia in 1844. He also wrote several anti-Catholic poems in the 1860s and 1870s, although the Jesuits do not feature in these. In 'La Question Romaine', like other Russian writers, Tiutchev lists the positive traits of the Jesuits, including their passion for that faith and their heroism which he claims they use for the wrong ends (Tiutchev III: 66–67). The tendency to refer to the enemy's strengths can be read as a sign of the threat that some writers perceived in the Jesuits' activities. Tiutchev's essay was an

important trigger for Gagarin's pamphlet of 1856, mentioned above. Gagarin had posited a kind of Catholic Slavophilism, an unusual Catholic version of Russian nationalism which, while not derived from the ideas Chaadaev had expressed in the 1830s, developed along similar lines. Like Chaadaev, Gagarin wanted unity with Catholic Europe. He was also in favour of the Russian monarchy; his brochure was even addressed to the Tsar.

It is an irony of fate that Gagarin and Tiutchev, who had formerly been friends and shared an interest in Europe, should have ended up in opposing camps in political and religious terms. After the Crimean War, Catholics, including the Jesuit Gagarin, took part in polemics with Aleksei Khomiakov on religious themes such as *sobornost'* and universalism. These allowed Khomiakov, one of the most important Russian religious thinkers in this period, to define Russian Orthodoxy as he saw it. Without these opponents, it is doubtful that Khomiakov would have written much of the work for which he has become well known.

Another polemic appeared in the 1860s. This took the form of a series of letters published in the journal *Den'* (*Day*). Unlike the Khomiakov–Gagarin polemics, it focused on the Jesuits. The polemic comprised Iurii Samarin's replies to a letter which Ivan Martynov had written in response to an editorial by Sergei Aksakov, who was concerned about rumours that the Jesuits were being invited into an alliance with the Tsarist regime in order to prevent them agitating for Polish independence. However, Samarin's polemics went far beyond meeting Aksakov's concerns; he delved into the global history of the Society of Jesus as well as its involvement in Russia. Samarin's writing considers the Jesuits' historical iniquities and draws upon anti-Jesuit writing from Western Europe. In his work the Jesuits are not on the margins of history but frequently take centre stage in a range of conspiracies, some of them for financial ends.

All the polemics of this period, which ran to hundreds of pages, served to air questions previously situated on the margins of Russian literary culture and, therefore, in a sense, promoted dialogue, but equally, they emphasized the tensions between the opposing camps of pro-Catholics and the Russian Slavophiles. Perhaps partly as result of this work in polemics and pamphlets, Jesuits were depicted as proselytizers in the years that followed. This added an extra layer of threat to their reputation as schemers.

### **1860s: The Jesuit as Proselytizer**

Given the quantity of references to Jesuits and essays written by them in the polemical genre and the pitch which these polemics reached, it is not

surprising that the figure of the Jesuit concurrently crops up in literature in the 1860s. Tolstoi's novel *Voyna i mir* (*War and Peace*, 1869) makes an interesting case study since it relates to Russia's relationship with Europe and the strengthening of Russian national identity around the time of the Napoleonic Wars. The author refers to the conversions of the early nineteenth century (Tolstoi XI: 279–83). The Jesuit presence in Russia was relatively short-lived, but during their time they had apparently contributed to a sudden rise in the number of conversions to Catholicism (Flynn 249, Tsimbaeva 186–88.).

As most readers will note, Tolstoi's *Voyna i mir* has a vast array of characters who play various roles during the novel, sometimes fading in and out as and when they are required. One such character is H       who, with her brother Anatole Kuragin, helps represent Francophile Petersburg society at the turn of century and, with it, the type of social and sexual mores that Tolstoi's later work, such as *Kreitzerova sonata* (*The Kreutzer Sonata*, 1890), lambasted (Moller). The question of Tolstoi's opinion on Western European society and its influence on Russian culture is a complex one; we cannot do justice to it here. Suffice to say that the Jesuits function within Tolstoi's wider scheme rather than being the focus of attack in themselves.

In *War and Peace*, H       wants to marry one of her lovers. The lover decides to ask the Jesuits about the legal situation of the potential marriage and introduces H       to one of them:

... ей был представлен немолодой, с белыми как снег волосами и черными блестящими глазами, обворожительный m-r de Jobert, un j          robe courte, который долго в саду, при свете иллюминации и при звуках музыки, беседовал с Элен о любви к богу, к Христу, к сердцу Божьей матери и об утешениях, доставляемых в этой и в будущей жизни единою истинною католическою религией. Элен была тронута, и несколько раз у нее и у m-r Jobert в глазах стояли слезы и дрожал голос. (Tolstoi XI: 281)

... the charming Monsieur de Jobert, a man no longer young, with snow-white hair and brilliant black eyes, a Jesuit   -robe-courte, was presented to her, and in the garden by the light of the illuminations and to the sound of music talked to her for a long time of the love of God, of Christ, of the Sacred Heart and of the consolations the one true Catholic religion affords in this world and the next. Helene was touched, and more than once tears rose to her eyes and to those of Monsieur de Jobert and their voices trembled. (Tolstoy 393)

This extract paints a picture of the Jesuit as beguiling and highly persuasive. (The reference to the Sacred Heart is interesting, insofar as the Jesuit order is particularly responsible for encouraging devotion to it.) After this meeting, H       converts. Her conversion story mirrors the commonly-held view of the Jesuits as Machiavellian schemers, at which Pushkin hinted; the Jesuits

expect, as the narrator explains, that Hélène will give them money. Secondly, Hélène expects that she will be permitted to receive a divorce in return for this money. This reveals that Hélène is herself immoral and also suggests that something akin to a business contract has taken place. If such a reading is correct, then her tears can be seen as insincere and superficial. If that is the case, then the Jesuit's guile becomes a less important feature of the story; Hélène also has her own guile. Continuing this episode, the narrator presents the Jesuit with whom Hélène speaks as well-fed and lascivious towards his new protégée:

Аббат, хорошо откормленный, а пухлой, гладко бритой бородой, приятным крепким ртом и белыми руками, сложенными кротко на коленях, сидел близко к Элен и с тонкой улыбкой на губах, мирно — восхищенным ее красотой взглядом смотрел изредка на ее лицо и излагал свой взгляд на занимавший их вопрос. Элен беспокойно улыбалась, глядела на его вьющиеся волосы, гладко выбритые чернеющие полные щеки и всякую минуту ждала нового оборота разговора. Но аббат, хотя, очевидно, и наслаждаясь красотой и близостью своей собеседницы, был увлечен мастерством своего дела. (Tolstoi XI: 282)

The abbé, a well-fed man with a plump, clean-shaven chin, a pleasant firm mouth, and white hands meekly folded on his knees, sat close to Helene and with a subtle smile on his lips and a peaceful look of delight at her beauty, occasionally glanced at her face as he explained his opinion on the subject. Helene, with an uneasy smile, looked at his curly hair and his plump clean-shaven blackish cheeks, and every moment expected the conversation to take a fresh turn. But the abbé, though he evidently enjoyed the beauty of his companion, was absorbed in his mastery of the matter. (Tolstoy 393)

Hélène apparently expects some sort of carnal values in the Abbé's attitude towards her, which serves to emphasize her distinguishing characteristic of sexuality, as well as the Jesuit's hypocrisy. Both are acting from distinctly unholy motives.

Tolstoi fits numerous different ideas and references into this brief episode. The trope of Russia being 'invaded' by France, which is one of the main themes of the novel, is repeated. It is strengthened further by the threat that Russia could be not simply invaded but 'converted' to European ways. Tolstoi is echoing the historical fact of conversions to Catholicism at the beginning of the century and, at the same time, the story of conversions by Jesuits tallies neatly with the anti-Jesuitism prevalent in the 1860s revealed in the polemics of that period. The connection between France and Jesuits was still relevant, since the Russian Jesuits lived in France and carried out their polemicizing and publishing from there. By the 1860s, no Jesuit was even permitted on Russian soil, making it impossible for a conversion to occur in the way depicted by Tolstoi. Evidently, however, the threat continued to be felt, as the polemics

show. The Jesuits might be physically at a distance but their presence was still felt in Russia. The introduction of the Jesuit episode aids Tolstoi's exploration of ideas on morality, the role of women, society and the influence of Catholicism and Europe much more broadly. The Jesuits are, therefore, principally used as a starting-point for exploring much larger ideas.

Many of those who converted in the early nineteenth century were aristocratic women. Some were not only intelligent and well educated but also influential society hostesses; for example, Sofia Svechina and Zinaida Volkonskaia. Tsimbaeva, who has researched Russian converts to Catholicism, gives several reasons for these conversions: the propaganda of the Jesuits and the fact that some Russians disliked the connection between the Orthodox Church and the State. She suggests that women were attracted to Catholicism for its potential to provide them with a distinctive independent interest and pursuits. In other words it was connected in their minds with emancipation (46, 75, 78–79).

Tolstoi was unlikely to have personally known any converts of this generation, but as a member of aristocratic circles and as someone who had taken an interest in his family history, he must surely have been acquainted with the conversions from this class. This episode in the novel therefore underlines the idea that Jesuits had directly 'threatened' the religious identity of the Russian upper class. Hélène, despite perhaps being wily, is certainly not representative of the 'emancipated' type of Russian Catholic woman, because she is not described as intelligent or well educated. She could be viewed as a parody of a female convert. Perhaps Tolstoi was making a deliberate dig here at the likes of Volkonskaia. In any case, Hélène's blithe agreement to conversion implies either that she has been tricked or, more likely, that she is acting from cynical motives. The eloquence of the Jesuit is underlined but equally so too is Hélène's disregard for the consequences of her decision, which she appears to take very superficially. Hélène is highly dependent on men and especially on her sexual relationships with them for her power, as Tolstoi reminds us. Women, like Jesuits, can also bend a man's will, as Hélène does with Pierre. Hélène is described in ways that suggest that she is at least as guileful as the Jesuit, is a temptress and an Eve-figure in the worst sense. One of the main purposes of this Jesuit episode in *Voyna i mir* is not to attack the Jesuits or even Catholicism as such but to use their association with Hélène, the female villain of the novel, to attack her and her lack of moral values. Tolstoi's depiction of women in his novels is more complex than can be fully examined here. It is worth mentioning, however, that his treatment of women can at times be more pejorative than his view of Catholics. Certainly, the morality of people is a much more dominant theme in Tolstoi's work as a whole than attitudes towards religion. In this case 'Eve' may figure for the

evil within human nature.

Parts of *Voina i mir* suggest that Russia's destruction can come from within, from the lack of morality or virtue represented by certain characters (many of them female). In other places, Tolstoi's work suggests that Europe itself presents a threat, and that the enemy is without. In this passage, the Jesuits symbolize the threat from without, Hélène the threat from within. The case study of the Jesuits serves to underline this tension. In the 1860s Russia was still trying to answer the question of its relationship with Europe, and Europe could still threaten Russia through its revolutionary movements, militarily (as the Crimean War of the 1850s had shown), or even through its ideas, such as socialism. At the same time, Russia also had its own problems, for example, the need for reform (which is shown in Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina*). It is not clear who is to blame, the Jesuit for tempting or Hélène for agreeing. The same can be said for Russia and the path it takes.

Fedor Dostoevskii was also looking to Europe in the 1860s and 1870s. Many of his works reveal the author's suspicion of Europe. Dostoevskii's views on Catholicism are better known than those of Tolstoi; it is not surprising that if Tolstoi referred to the Jesuits then Dostoevskii also alluded to them in his novels.<sup>3</sup> In *Idiot* (1869), the narrator describes how Prince Myshkin recalls his benefactor Pavlishchev and is horrified to discover that Pavlishchev has been converted by a Jesuit. Dostoevskii later referred to Gagarin in his *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* (*Writer's Diary*) of 1876.<sup>4</sup> This is surely then direct attack in fictional mask on the Russian Jesuit:

— Не сэтим ли Павлищевым история вышла какая-то... странная... саббатом... с аббатом... забыл с каким аббатом, только все тогда что-то рассказывали, — произнес, как бы припоминая, “сановник”.

— Саббатом Гуро, иезуитом, — напомнил Иван Петрович, — да-с, вот-с превосходнейшие-то люди наши и достойнейшие-то! Потому что всё-таки человек был родовой, с состоянием, камергер и если бы... продолжал служить... И вот бросает вдруг службу и всё, чтобы перейти в католицизм и стать иезуитом, да еще чуть не открыто, с восторгом каким-то. Право, кстати умер... да; тогда все говорили...

Князь был вне себя.

Павлищев... Павлищев перешел в католицизм? Быть этого не может! — вскричал он в ужасе. (Dostoevskii VIII: 450-51)

‘Wasn’t it the same Pavlishchev involved in that ... odd business .... With the abbé ... the abbé ... I’ve forgotten which one, everybody was talking about it at the time,’ said the dignitary, as if striving to recall.

‘The abbé Goureau, the Jesuit,’ Ivan Petrovich reminded him. ‘Yes indeed, there are our most excellent and worthy people for you! After all he was a man of birth and fortune, a Court Chamberlain, and if he’d ... gone on

being a public servant ... But there he goes and throws it all up to join the Catholics and become a Jesuit, and made very little secret of it either, practically gloried in it. Of course he died just in time... yes, everybody said so at the time.'

The Prince was beside himself.

'Pavlishchev.... Pavlishchev converted to Catholicism? That can't be possible!' he exclaimed in horror.

[...] 'imagine,' he [Ivan Petrovich] addressed the old man suddenly, 'they even wanted to make a claim under the provisions of the will, [...] because they're past masters at this sort of thing! They're a-mazing!' (Dostoevsky 572–73)

What follows from the Prince is a lengthy tirade of anti-Catholicism. The response to Myshkin's comment by Ivan Petrovich is perhaps more interesting than the Prince's horror:

— Это всё от нашей, я думаю... усталости, — авторитетно промямлил старичок; — ну, и манера у них проповедывать... изящная, своя... и напугать умеют. Меня тоже в тридцать втором году, в Вене, напугали, уверяю вас; только я не поддался и убежал от них, ха-ха! Право от них убежал...

— Я слышала, что ты тогда, батюшка, с красавицей графиней Ливицкой из Вены в Париж убежал, свой пост бросил, а не от иезуита, — вставила вдруг Белоконская. (Dostoevskii VIII: 450)

'I think it all stems from our ... weariness,' mumbled the old fellow with an air of authority. 'The way they preach as well ... it's elegant, all their own ... and they know how to put the fear of God into people. They tried to scare me too, in Vienna back in thirty-two, believe you me; only I didn't succumb, I ran away from them, ha-ha!'

'I heard tell, my dear sir, that you gave up your post that time and ran away from Vienna to Paris with the beautiful Countess Levitskaya, not to escape from the Jesuits,' put in Belokonskaya suddenly. (Dostoevsky 573)

It is interesting that the fear of the Jesuits implied by the old man's comments is, as in other texts, linked to a prevailing fear of women. In this case, as in Pushkin, it slightly undermines the fear relating to Jesuits and injects some humour into this passage. In explaining the Jesuit influence, as though to apologize for Pavlishchev, the old man points out that there is some fault on the side of Russian Orthodoxy ('усталости'/'weariness'), and secondly, that these Jesuits have a magnificent manner and ability to proselytize. The complex mixture between fear and admiration is indicative of the many sources about Jesuits in the nineteenth century. Importantly, praise of an enemy does not necessarily emerge from admiration alone, but from a desire to make their attack seem more of a threat. However, this passage also reminds the reader of the question of who to blame, Orthodoxy or Catholicism? The criticism of

Orthodoxy in this passage is buried in the dialogue and tirade that follows it. Nevertheless, overall the threat of Catholicism, here represented by the Jesuits (whether real or not), did help bring some Russian thinkers to consider and re-evaluate what Orthodoxy should be like. By the end of the Tsarist period, the Orthodox Church was witnessing renewal movements where the need for stronger preaching and pastoral energy was expressed (Dixon, Valliere).

Continuing with this extract from *Idiot*, Dostoevskii's novel depicts the Jesuits as the epitome of all that can be disliked in Catholicism. Triggered by the story of the conversion, Myshkin continues by saying that Catholicism is not even Christian:

— Павлищев был светлый ум и христианин, истинный христианин, — произнес вдруг князь, — как же мог он подчиниться вере... нехристианской?.. Католичество — всё равно что вера нехристианская! — прибавил он вдруг, засверкав глазами и смотря пред собой, как-то вообще обводя глазами всех вместе.

— Ну, это слишком, — пробормотал старичок и с удивлением поглядел на Ивана Федоровича.

— Как так это католичество вера нехристианская? — повернулся на стуле Иван Петрович; — а какая же?

— Нехристианская вера, во-первых! — в чрезвычайном волнении и не в меру резко заговорил опять князь: — это во-первых, а во-вторых, католичество римское даже хуже самого атеизма, таково мое мнение. [...] Он антихриста проповедует, клянусь вам, уверяю вас!' (Dostoevskii VIII: 450-51)

'Pavlishchev was a man of unclouded intellect and a Christian, a true Christian,' the Prince brought out abruptly. 'How on earth could he have submitted to a faith that is ... unchristian? ... Catholicism is the same as an unchristian religion!' he added suddenly eyes flashing as he stared straight ahead, seeming to include them all in his gaze.

'Well, that is going too far,' muttered the old man, glancing at General Yepanshin in surprise.

'How can Catholicism be an unchristian religion?' enquired Ivan Petrovich, swiveling on his chair. 'What sort is it then?'

'First of all, it is an unchristian religion!' the Prince began again, very much agitated and speaking with undue harshness. 'That's the first thing, and the second thing is that Catholicism is worse than out-and-out atheism, that's how I see it ... [Catholicism] preaches the Anti-Christ, I swear it ...' (Dostoevsky 573)

Much of this tirade is similar to several other of Dostoevskii's texts, including passages in *Besy* (*The Devils*), *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* (*The Writer's Diary*) and *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (*The Brothers Karamazov*), a fact that leads some scholars to conclude that Myshkin's views may be identified with the author's (Copleston 160; Walicki 126). However, during Myshkin's tirade, the narrator repeatedly notes that the Prince is behaving unusually and the other characters react badly

to his comments (Dostoevskii VIII: 449–53) This may suggest some narrative distance from the views expressed (Young 128). Sarah Hudspith, on the other hand, has argued that Myshkin's role as a *iurodivyi* (holy fool) means that his markedly strange behaviour at this time, and 'the perplexity, disapproval and ridicule it invites from the listeners, including the narrator, paradoxically affirm it as a message of truth' (Hudspith 156). Certainly, the position of Myshkin in the text is far from straightforward and moreover, Dostoevskii's relationship to Catholicism is sufficiently complex to deserve further study.<sup>5</sup> Whilst the question of whether Myshkin's views represent Dostoevskii's is not to be dismissed, we might as well ask if the views of Ivan Petrovich represent Dostoevskii's views. Dostoevskii, here as so often, represents the debate itself on a question, not simply one clear answer.

The Jesuits, too, had provoked debate within Russia, even whilst being absent from Russian soil. Samarin had written about Gagarin as though he had died – exile, to a great extent, was treated as death.<sup>6</sup> Despite their absence from Russia, the Jesuits had laid down a challenge to representatives of Russian Orthodoxy and had 'disrupted' the activities of the Slavophiles. (After all, Khomiakov's main theological contributions were constructed as a reply to Western clergy.) Likewise, a Jesuit provokes a tirade and debate in the novel, even though he is absent from Russia and the novel, because he is in fact dead. In this novel, Russian Orthodox Christianity ought perhaps to be represented by Myshkin, but his response does not properly meet that challenge as he does little to explain the positive attributes of Orthodoxy.

This passage in *Idiot* can be differentiated both from the *Dnevnik pisatelia* and 'Legenda' from *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, not only because of its content and its genre but also because of how it is framed within the novel, especially by means of the use of 'comment'. Narration and framing constitute a very important feature of Dostoevskii's novels, which so often contain stories, parables and readings narrated by his characters (Young). It is very important to note that Jesuit activities, proselytism and the ability to convert others, are inextricably linked to the broader problem of Catholicism in Dostoevskii's novels – essentially connecting Catholics and the Jesuits to the Devil. Lastly, Once again, the figure of the woman is an important trope in connection with the theme of temptation and conversion. This is not because Dostoevskii believed that women were responsible for corrupting Russian society (virtuous, kenotic female characters are not hard to find in his novels). The influence of women appears as a metaphor. It is as though Catholicism is seen as seductive, a femme fatale and the Jesuits the chief representatives of it.

## **Conclusion**

It is apparent that Russian writers in the nineteenth century repeatedly choose to define who the Jesuits are in their work and attribute similar traits to them. They are seen as agents in political plots, who are involved in Machiavellian scheming. They treat moral actions as a means to an end, use casuistry, the art of eloquence, persuasion and, importantly, proselytizing to meet their ends. These attributes are also present in polemical texts and essays. As demonstrated, these traits in different circumstances might be positive, but are nearly always contextualized so that the Jesuit can only be understood negatively. Secondly, if these extracts from Pushkin, Tolstoi and Dostoevskii are anything to go by, then the Jesuit is connected to the trope of the woman, who is linked in turn with the serpent and Satan – a temptation that can be fatal if succumbed to, and which men must be cautious of.

Jesuits may be minor characters but they are perfect archenemies: they are so much to be feared precisely because they are so good at what they do. In all the texts analyzed here, Jesuits symbolize the threat to Russia of Catholicism and Western European values and ideas. When linked with conversion and with the ‘temptation’ trope with which women are also connected, the Jesuits also remind the reader or audience of the tension between an enemy coming from without and the enemy from within. As such, the Jesuit can emphasize the weaknesses within human nature and the need to stand up to temptation. Considering this function, readers may be forced to ask whether there is a weakness in a person, or more broadly in Russian society, which needed to be addressed.

Like the image of Catholicism as a whole, the Jesuits are very useful to Russian writers. The figure of the Jesuit is a part of the bigger picture in which writers depicted European society, Western morals and their infringement on Russian society. The Jesuit can be molded to represent whatever the author wishes to oppose, to his idea of what Russian society and culture should be. This is made easier by the fact that, from the 1820s, Jesuits were exclusively outsiders to Russian society. In this way they could be used as shadowy figures to be defined in whatever manner the writer wished.

As a postscript, it is worth noting that the image of the Jesuit in Silver Age poetry is substantially different, accompanying a turn towards an interest in Catholic mysticism in a period when writers were trying to find new ways to describe the Russian idea. Lastly, as a point of curiosity, in 2013 the Jesuit Pope Francis made an interesting aside whilst talking to journalists:

When one reads Dostoyevsky – I believe that for us all he must be an author to read and reread, because he has wisdom – one perceives what the Russian spirit is, the Eastern spirit. It is something that will do us so much good.

We are in need of this renewal, of this fresh air of the East, of this light of the East.<sup>7</sup>

This alludes to Dostoevskii's line from *Brat'ia Karamazovy* 'От Востока звезда сия воссияет.' (This star will shine from the East.) (Dostoevskii XIV: 61–62). This quotation is from the part of the novel which contains a complex debate on Catholicism, especially in relation to a debate on theocracy and caesaropapism. However, it is a pertinent reminder that Russian writers and Jesuits could learn much from each other, to their mutual enrichment, if they could get beyond initial prejudices.

### Notes

- 1 For a general historical overview of the Jesuits, see Wright.
- 2 See Ammosov. Gagarin's refutation in 1865 was published in *Russkii arkhiv*; see Beshoner (12–17). On Pushkin's duel, see Vitale; on Gagarin's alleged involvement, see pp. 143, 161.
- 3 The anti-Catholicism in Dostoevskii's work has been noted for some time. As early as 1894, Vasilii Rozanov (1856–1919) drew attention to the Catholic theme in Dostoevskii's work in his book *Legenda o velikom inkvizitore F. M. Dostoevskogo*. He concentrated on the anti-Catholicism of Dostoevskii's 'Legenda', as he termed it, and made reference to *Idiot* and *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* (Rozanov 65, 70, 71, 86, 105–11, n. 126, 127, 129). Much of subsequent Dostoevskii scholarship has touched on the writer's attitudes to Catholicism, although comparatively few scholars have chosen to focus on this aspect of his oeuvre (Lednicki 133–179; Dirscherl; Walicki 120–50).
- 4 F. Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik pisatel'ia*, June 1876 (Dostoevskii XXIII: 43).
- 5 For a recent re-examination of this theme, see Harrison (116–136).
- 6 Hence Vladimir Pecherin's title for his *Apologia pro vita mea* – 'Zamogil'nye zapiski.'
- 7 Transcript and translation of an interview with journalists. 4 August. 2013. Web. 8 August. 2013. <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=23070>.

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