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"The Stone Guest" as Subtext in "The Brothers Karamazov"

In his recitation of "The Grand Inquisitor," Ivan refers to Pushkin's "Stone Guest," describing the air of Seville during Christ's visit as "fragrant with laurel and lemon." Although he is quoting Laura's admonition to Don Carlos to put aside his gloomy thoughts and embrace sensual pleasures, critics have interpreted it – like other Pushkin references in the novel – as emblematic of larger themes. I argue that Dostoevsky's quote from Pushkin's little tragedy in fact points to a structural parallel between the two works, which allows him to underscore the common ground that exists between Ivan and Alyosha, and the Grand Inquisitor and Christ, despite their obvious differences of ideology and temperament. I would suggest that Dostoevsky uses this and other Pushkin references in "The Brothers Karamazov" not, as Nina Perlina claims, as a representation of "authoritative truth" (165), but as a means of destabilizing ostensible binary oppositions involving ideology and behavior. The allusions to "The Stone Guest" thus function as one of the means Dostoevsky uses to leave the destinies of both Ivan and Alyosha open for his proposed sequel: Ivan is poised between life and death at the end of "The Brothers Karamazov," and Alyosha's Christlike behavior, according to Dostoevsky's possible plans for the second volume and as explicated by Igor Volgin in great detail, may have been transformed into revolutionary activity and an attempted assassination of the tsar if the second novel had been written.