



M. Churakova, "Brothers Karamazov"

# Brothers and the Family Plot: A Comparative Approach to the Nineteenth-Century Russian and English Novel

Anna Berman, Assistant Professor of Languages Literatures and Cultures, McGill University

**Thursday, April 13, 4:00 p.m., New Cabell 309**

Family concerns drive the plot of most nineteenth-century English and Russian novels, yet the family plots in the two traditions differ greatly. Why are there virtually no English novels that focus on a pair of brothers, while brothers are common in the Russian novel? Russian authors were keen readers of the English, regarding them as a model for writing about family, so this paper explores the way the historical conditions in the two nations shaped their family plots. The English, who honored primogeniture, viewed brothers as a source of rivalry that did not fit their family ideal. By contrast, the Russians split estates among their children, opening up a space for multiple brothers. I will argue that this has implications for the structure of the novel, as the English created vertical, generationally focused plots, while the Russians created a new kind of lateral family plot.

Sponsored by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies