"It is impossible for me to do without this first novel, because much in the second novel would then be incomprehensible."

- F. M. Dostoevsky, "From the Author," The Brothers Karamazov

In Dostoevsky’s preface to The Brothers Karamazov, the author promises two novels for the saga of his main hero, Alesha. In the first – the book that has become a classic of world literature – Alesha at twenty (in 1866) is “a strange person, even an eccentric . . . a singular exception [obosoblenie],” but also “a social activist still undefined” who “possibly indeed bears within him the essence of the whole [serdcevina tselogo].”

In a private conversation with his close friend Suvorin (February 20, 1880), when Book Ten of the serialized novel was still in progress, Dostoevsky unequivocally spelled out the destiny of Alesha Karamazov: “He would commit a political crime. He would be executed.” A few months later an Odessa newspaper reported a rumor in Petersburg literary circles: Alesha “by some sort of special psychological processes at work in his soul actually arrives at the idea of assassinating the tsar [do idei o tsareubistve].” Other secondary sources have come to light, enabling further conjecture about the design of the Karamazov sequel. In the light of those sources and Dostoevsky’s creative predilections, some observations are here offered on the sequel’s prefiguring in the text of The Brothers Karamazov.

The allegorical name Karamazov (“black punishment besmirched”) echoes the surname of Dmitri Karakozov, whose point-blank shot missed Alexander II on April 4, 1866, heralding the epoch of major political terrorism in Russia (and bringing to a halt, incidentally, serialization of Crime and Punishment). The setting of The Brothers Karamazov in 1866 of course has called attention to this