With great gratitude for their patience and support,
I dedicate this book to my husband Randall Butler and our son Rory Butler.

Contents

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Introduction

Crime and Punishment is a psychological detective novel whose mystery lies not in the *whodunit* but in the *whydunit*—a question that perplexes protagonist and readers alike. The central character is a young man, who has succumbed to "certain strange 'unfinished' ideas floating in the air" (September 1865, letter to Katkov, 28/2:136).[1] His last name—Raskolnikov—signifies "schism" and marks him as a modern, divided self. He belongs to a generation of young people coming of age in a rapidly expanding media environment, where social justice issues such as extreme income inequality, court reforms, and the plight of women and children were discussed obsessively. Like other aspiring students-turned-journalists, Raskolnikov is seeking his own "new word." The discussion of his article "On Crime" shows that, like other reformers of his time, Raskolnikov is attracted to nihilism—a term designating an ideological amalgam of atheism, materialism, utilitarianism, feminism, and scientism that challenged existing beliefs, norms, and social institutions. After committing two murders—one ideological, one accidental—his punishment begins. As Dostoevsky wrote to Mikhail Katkov, the editor of *Russian Herald*, "Unresolved questions confront the murderer, unforeseen and unexpected feelings torment his heart" (September 1865, letter to Katkov, 28/2:136). Suffering from both intellectual doubts and feelings of alienation, he vacillates between the desires to confess and to escape.

This study of *Crime and Punishment* offers a reading of the novel that considers narrative strategy, psychology, and ideology. While written for the general reader of all levels, it also provides some suggestions for teaching. The focus on narrative strategy demonstrates how Dostoevsky first plunges readers into Raskolnikov's fevered brain, creating reader sympathy for him and explaining

1 All citations from Dostoevsky's works come from Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, 30 vols. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–90). Because there are so many excellent translations of the novel, citations are noted by part and chapter (for example, part 1, chapter 2). Citations from his correspondence are noted by date, volume, and page number from the collected works (ex.: 28/2:136). All translations are mine, except when noted otherwise.

why most readers root for him to get away from the scene of the crime. By subsequently providing outsider perspectives on Raskolnikov's thinking, Dostoevsky effects a conversion in reader sympathy. The focus on psychology encourages readers to consider the difference between Raskolnikov's unconscious dreams (*sny*) and his conscious daydreams (*mechty*), thereby showing the deep conflict between his heart and his intellect. By examining the multiple justifications for murder Raskolnikov gives as he confesses to Sonya, this study highlights ideology and the novel's debunking of rationality-based theories. Finally, by considering the question of why Raskolnikov and most of the novel's male characters focus on the deliberate murder of the pawnbroker and forget the unintended murder of her half-sister Lizaveta, this study reveals a narrative strategy that focuses on shame and guilt. Because Raskolnikov has committed murder, readers expect him to feel guilt, which follows a defined script—remorse, repentance, expiation. Yet the novel portrays a man suffering from shame because he is not the extraordinary man he hoped to be. The novel thus keeps readers off-balance until the last pages of the Epilogue when it finally offers the guilt script and the resolution readers have been expecting all along.

While set in 1860s Russia, Dostoevsky's novel tackles many issues that resonate with contemporary audiences, including the alienation of modern man and the perils of ideology. *Crime and Punishment* demonstrates how individuals who are isolated tend to live inside their own heads, making them particularly vulnerable to the dangers of radical ideology. By espousing radical ideologies with absolute certainty, their adherents divide people. Moreover, such ideologies can blind us to facts and consequences, thereby blunting our essential human capacity to choose good over evil. The novel finally demonstrates both that love can close the gap between alienated individuals and that everyone is connected—concepts that may reverberate with today's internet-connected readers. Ultimately, as *Crime and Punishment* polemicizes with radical ideologies, it illustrates what can happen when ideas "floating in the air" lead an individual to commit and justify murderous acts—an issue as alive in today's world as it was in 1860s Russia. This study shows how ideology that promotes egoism can lead to crime, self-destruction, and misery. The study's five chapters thereby explain the enduring power of Dostoevsky's great novel.

CHAPTER 1

Historical Introduction: Dostoevsky and Russia

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky's eventful life reflected his times. Born in Moscow in 1821 shortly before the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55), Dostoevsky died in Petersburg in 1881, six weeks before Alexander II was assassinated. Under Nicholas I, whose repressive regime controlled political thought and crushed dissent with restrictive policies on all facets of life, Dostoevsky was arrested, incarcerated, and exiled to Siberia. Under Alexander II, whose more liberal government initiated the Great Reforms needed to modernize Russia, Dostoevsky was allowed to return to Petersburg, participate in the era's lively journalistic debates, and write the novels that made him famous.

The second son of seven children, Fyodor Dostoevsky was raised on the grounds of the Mariinsky Hospital for the Poor, where his father, a former army surgeon, worked as a doctor. After his mother died when he was sixteen, Fyodor's father sent him and his older brother Mikhail to St. Petersburg, where Fyodor attended the St. Petersburg Academy of Engineers. There he excelled at drawing and spent much time reading. Although of medium size, Dostoevsky did his best to protect younger classmates from hazing.[1] He graduated in 1843 as a lieutenant, served briefly as a military engineer, and quickly resigned his commission to devote himself to writing.

After Dostoevsky finished writing his epistolary novella *Poor Folk* in the spring of 1845, he gained overnight fame and enjoyed a brief season of celebrity. Yet when his novella *The Double* was published in January 1846,

1 Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821–1849*, vol. 1 of *Dostoevsky*, 5 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 78.

Dostoevsky was criticized for his wordiness. In 1847, he met the utopian socialist Mikhail Butashevich-Petrashevsky and joined his circle. In 1848, as revolutions erupted throughout Europe, Dostoevsky joined a secret society within the Petrashevsky circle led by the charismatic Nikolai Speshnev. In 1849, Dostoevsky was arrested for reading a banned letter at a Petrashevsky circle meeting, incarcerated in the Peter-Paul military fortress for nine months, and condemned to death by firing squad. Awaiting execution in Semenovsky Square, Dostoevsky, shrouded, stood with the second group of three scheduled for death. He turned to his companion Speshnev and said, "*Nous serons avec le Christ*" (We'll be with Christ). To which Speshnev replied, "We shall be dust." A moment later, following Nicholas I's script, a drumroll resounded, and the firing squad lowered their rifles, ending the sadistic mock execution and inspiring the end-of-life motif that runs through much of Dostoevsky's subsequent writing.

Dostoevsky's sentence was commuted to four years of hard labor (1850–54) and exile in Siberia. As a political convict, he lived and worked in leg-irons in a Siberian prison, sharing close quarters with a multiethnic, largely illiterate group of peasant criminals from all reaches of the Russian empire. Dostoevsky was shocked by the cruelty of corporal punishment and the social divide between the educated and the peasants, who considered men like him part of the oppressing class. On top of the crowding and stench, Dostoevsky suffered intellectual privation: he had constant access to only one book—the New Testament.[2] Once released, he served five years as a military engineer in Omsk, where he married the widow Maria Isaeva. Although first diagnosed and treated in the 1840s for epilepsy, an illness that figures in both *The Idiot* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky petitioned to return to Petersburg by claiming his seizures began during his incarceration.

In 1859, Dostoevsky returned to St. Petersburg and resumed his literary career. Arriving just before the serfs were liberated, he witnessed the end of the social evil that had prompted him to join the Petrashevsky circle and its radical wing. For the rest of his life Dostoevsky sympathized with radicals' aspirations for social harmony, but saw revolutionaries as truth-seekers and self-sacrificers gone astray. Post-Siberia, he wrote novels criticizing the ideas that drove revolutionaries' actions—*Crime and Punishment* is one of these. In this era of reform, Dostoevsky could travel extensively abroad, enjoy relaxed censorship, and,

2 In his memoirs, Petr Martyanov notes that Dostoevsky had occasional access to Dickens's *David Copperfield* and *The Pickwick Papers* while he was in the prison hospital.

most importantly, participate in the exciting public debates raging in Russia's proliferating print media.

Fyodor and his brother Mikhail eagerly joined the fray, launching two journals: *Time* (1861–63) and *Epoch* (1864–65). Although Dostoevsky's name was not displayed on the masthead because he was a former political prisoner, he served as the managing editor for both. He also provided editorials, ideological direction, and major works of fiction for them (including his semi-autobiographical novel *Notes from the House of the Dead* in 1861 and *Notes from Underground* in 1864). The 1864 deaths of Dostoevsky's first wife Maria and his brother Mikhail left Dostoevsky struggling to carry on the new journal *Epoch*, which closed in March 1865. Burdened by the journal's debts, as well as the care of his brother's family and his wife's son, Dostoevsky went on an unsuccessful gambling spree in Europe. In September 1865, a desperate Dostoevsky turned to Mikhail Katkov, the editor of the journal *Russian Herald* and his former ideological rival, to pitch his idea for *Crime and Punishment*.

> The idea of the story … is the psychological account of a certain crime.
>
> The action is contemporary, set in the present year. A young man, expelled from the university … living in extreme poverty … having succumbed to certain strange "unfinished" ideas floating in the air, has resolved to get out of his nasty situation all at once … to kill a certain old woman … who lends money at interest. The old woman is stupid, deaf, ill, greedy, charges yidlike interest, is evil and eats up others' lives, torturing her young sister who works as her maid. "She is good for nothing," "why is she alive?" … These questions confuse the young man. He resolves to kill and rob her; to bring happiness to his mother living in the provinces; to save his sister, living as a companion in the home of some landowners, from the lascivious advances of the head of this landowning family—advances that threaten her with ruin; to finish his studies, go abroad, and then all his life to be honest, firm, steadfast in performing "his humane duty to humankind," by which he will certainly "expiate his crime" …
>
> Although such crimes are terribly difficult to carry out … completely by chance he succeeds in accomplishing his undertaking quickly and successfully.
>
> He spends almost a month after this until the final catastrophe. There is no suspicion of him, and there cannot be. Here's where the whole psychological process of the crime unfolds. Unresolved questions confront the murderer, unforeseen and unexpected feelings torment his heart. God's

> truth and earthly law take their toll, and he ends up *forced* by himself to turn himself in. Forced, even if he perishes in prison, at least to be reunited with people. The feeling of disconnection and dissociation from humankind, which he feels immediately upon committing the crime, have tormented him. The law of truth and human nature have taken their toll [text unclear]. The criminal himself decides to accept suffering in order to expiate his deed. (28/2:136)

Although Dostoevsky was anxious about approaching him, Katkov was a practical editor and his journal needed good writers. He sent Dostoevsky an advance. When *Crime and Punishment* began serialization in 1866, it was an instant success. Dostoevsky subsequently published *The Idiot* (1868), *Demons* (1871–72), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879–80) in the *Russian Herald*.

In October 1866, while serializing *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky had to take a month's break to meet a strict deadline required to retain the rights to his published work, including *Crime and Punishment*. To write *The Gambler*, an extraordinary novella about gambling addiction written while Dostoevsky was still a gambling addict,[3] Dostoevsky took a different gamble and hired a young stenographer, Anna Grigorievna Snitkina. Shortly after meeting his deadline, Dostoevsky proposed to Anna, after which they married and moved to Europe to escape his creditors.

During the next four years (1867–71), the Dostoevskys moved often. In 1867, they spent several months in Baden-Baden, the gambling resort where Dostoevsky famously quarrelled with Ivan Turgenev (1818–83), before moving to Geneva, where their first daughter Sophia was born and, after three short months, died (1868). The heartbroken pair moved to Vevey and then to Florence, where Dostoevsky finished *The Idiot*. They next moved to Dresden, where their daughter Lyubov was born in 1869. That year, after reading about a student murdered by the revolutionary Sergei Nechaev and his co-conspirators, Dostoevsky began work on *Demons*, which began serialization in 1871, the year the Dostoevskys returned to Petersburg and their son Fyodor was born.

In 1873, Dostoevsky plunged back into the journalistic world as editor of *The Citizen*, a weekly periodical published by the conservative Prince Vladimir Meshchersky. There Dostoevsky began his "Diary of a Writer" as a column. In 1874, he quit the paper to write *The Adolescent*, which began serialization in

3 Richard J. Rosenthal, "Gambling," in *Dostoevsky in Context*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen and Olga Maiorova (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 148–56.

the liberal journal *Fatherland Notes* in 1875, the year their son Alexei was born. Dostoevsky then returned to journalism as sole writer, editor, and publisher of the monthly *Diary of a Writer* (1876–77, 1880, 1881), which enjoyed wide popularity with readers across the political spectrum. In May 1878, Alexei (age three) died suddenly of epilepsy, and Dostoevsky, grief-stricken, visited the Optina Pustyn monastery, along with the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, where he met twice with the Elder Amvrosy, who became a prototype for the Elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879–81). Dostoevsky's final novel cemented his national reputation and later secured his international fame. From the depths of prison under Nicholas I, Dostoevsky thus rose to the heights of fame under Alexander II. His funeral in February 1881 was a major public event, with thousands attending.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT AS A PRODUCT OF ITS TIME

Like most major nineteenth-century Russian novels, *Crime and Punishment* was first printed serially in a "thick" journal, that is, a compendium of literary, philosophical, economic, political, scientific, and journalistic content published monthly. Since Russia's government provided few outlets for public engagement, and since Russia's bureaucratic censorship drove much political thinking into literature and criticism, journals became sites of education and cultural formation as well as ideological partisanship and contention.

In the 1840s–50s, the major journalistic battles were fought between Slavophiles and Westernizers. Slavophiles pursued national renewal in Russian institutions (especially the peasant commune) and held that Russia's cultural uniqueness derived from the Christian faith preserved by the Russian people. Westernizers criticized Russia's backwardness and urged Russia to emulate Western Europe's civic institutions and rule of law. Despite ideological differences, the two groups supported freedom of speech and abolition of serfdom.

After Nicholas I's death in 1855, censorship loosened, a new era of *glasnost'* (openness) emerged, and "thick" journals proliferated. Before ideological battle lines were drawn, some journals, including the Dostoevsky brothers' *Time* and *Epoch*, offered synthetic, intermediary positions. The Dostoevskys' journals articulated and promoted *pochvennichestvo*, an ideology of Russianness rooted in the soil that advocated closing the gap between the largely Western-educated classes, most of whom had become alienated from the Russian soil, and the uneducated but Christ-bearing Russian people. Such a union occurs in *Crime*

and Punishment, when Raskolnikov, who suffers from Western ideas, returns to Christian values through his love for Sonya.

By the mid-1860s, the issues had changed, positions had polarized, all middle ground had disappeared, and censorship regulations changed regularly. The journals on the far left, the *Contemporary* (1812–62) and the *Russian Word* (1859–66), became the organs of radical critics, who articulated an ideology of positivism, scientism, socialism, and feminism, combined with the rejection of autocracy, religion, and tradition—an ideology then called "nihilism."[4] The term "nihilism" was first used by Ivan Turgenev in his 1862 novel *Fathers and Sons*, whose protagonist Bazarov declares that his generation would demolish the present in order to build the future on more solid foundations. Thereafter the term "nihilism" designated both rebellious behavior and ideologies that ran counter to prevailing social norms, institutions, and beliefs. As the historian Derek Offord points out, the designation "nihilism" was a misnomer, as radical youth were far from believing in nothing: they placed great hope in the power of natural science to improve human life and were driven by a concern for those less privileged.[5] Although critical of nihilist ideology, Dostoevsky believed that most young radicals had altruistic motives.

Crime and Punishment was conceived and written in the mid-1860s, a period when journals not only proliferated, but also vied for the same readers and authors as their competitors, the daily newspapers, which printed more copies and addressed a broader spectrum of readers.[6] Both Dostoevsky's novel and Raskolnikov's article are products of this thriving print culture. Dostoevsky's novel was published in the successful, somewhat conservative "thick" journal *Russian Herald*; Raskolnikov's article, which draws much of its language from nihilist journals, appeared in the fictional *Periodical Discourse*, probably a minor newspaper, as they tended "to publish especially daring articles by novice authors like Raskolnikov."[7]

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, print media thrived and avidly reported on the judicial reforms. Dostoevsky had been tried and sentenced under the

4 Robert L. Belknap, "Survey of Russian Journals, 1840–1880," in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 106.

5 Derek Offord, "Nihilism and Terrorism," in Martinsen and Maiorova, *Dostoevsky in Context*, 49.

6 Konstantine Klioutchkine, "Modern Print Culture," in Martinsen and Maiorova, *Dostoevsky in Context*, 221–28.

7 Konstantine Klioutchkine, "The Rise of *Crime and Punishment* from the Air of the Media," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 107.

pre-reform judicial system, which was largely inquisitorial, based on statutes dictated from above and implemented behind closed doors. The court reform (1864) introduced a more European system with an independent judiciary and adversarial procedures that allowed a plaintiff and defendant (for civil suits) or a prosecutor and defense lawyer (for criminal suits) to present their cases before a judge and jury. Trials were open to the public, proceedings were published in the press, and a professional legal class came into being.[8] In 1860, the new position of judicial investigator, held by Porfiry Petrovich in *Crime and Punishment*, was introduced. Judicial investigators enjoyed considerable independence and authority: they could interrogate victims, suspects, and witnesses; collect material evidence; search premises; and arrest suspects. Dostoevsky's Porfiry Petrovich, like many other fictional judicial investigators of this time, is portrayed as a figure of authority, intelligence, professionalism, and humanity.[9] In Dostoevsky's novel, Porfiry works for the salvation of Raskolnikov's soul as well as for the reduction of his sentence.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT AS A PETERSBURG TEXT

Dostoevsky sets his novel in St. Petersburg, Peter the Great's "window on the West." With autocratic power and iron will, Peter constructed his planned city on inhospitable marshland at great human cost. Peter's defenders praised him as a world builder; his opponents called him the Antichrist. Thus was born a myth of duality that encompassed both city and tsar. By the time Dostoevsky began his writing career, Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol had already immortalized St. Petersburg's duality in verse and prose. Pushkin's narrative poem, "The Bronze Horseman" (1833), transformed the original myth of the city's founding as a cosmic battle between order and chaos into a historic flood, which pitted nature (the elements) against culture (the granite city). The poem dramatizes the revolt of a humble clerk against the imperial, impersonal state, symbolized by Falconet's statue of Peter the Great. Pushkin portrays Peter not as creator or destroyer, but as both, thereby establishing the tradition of the Petersburg text, which holds antithetic elements in tension. Gogol's

8 Richard Wortman, "The Great Reforms and the New Courts," in Martinsen and Maiorova, *Dostoevsky in Context*, 13–21.

9 Claire Whitehead, *The Poetics of Early Russian Crime Fiction, 1860–1917: Deciphering Stories of Detection* (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2018), 5, 55.

Petersburg stories focus more on the city as Russia's administrative and social capital, highlighting the division between punctilious officialdom and the uncanny. Dostoevsky evokes his predecessors' contributions, adding psychological and philosophical depth, first with his novella *The Double* (1846), then with *Crime and Punishment*. Like Dickens and Balzac before him, Dostoevsky makes his city emblematic of Western urban civilization. As the site of Russia's self-consciousness vis-à-vis the West, Petersburg is also an apt setting for Raskolnikov's divided self.

SOME NOTES ON NAMES

Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. The root "**rod**," which denotes family and kinship, embeds the idea of relatedness into his first name. His patronymic **Romanovich** (son of Roman) evokes both the Romanov dynasty (1613–1917) and the novel/**roman** (making him son of the novel). **Raskolnikov** derives from the verb ***raskolot'*** (to cleave, split) and evokes the ***raskolniki*** (schismatics), a group of religious dissenters who left the Russian Orthodox Church in 1666, an event known as the Schism (***Raskol***). In his journalism, Dostoevsky characterized ideological divisions among young 1860s radicals as a ***raskol*** (schism). The name marks Dostoevsky's protagonist as a modern, divided self.

The Raskolnikovs are all remarkably good-looking; Raskolnikov's mother is **Pulcheria**, from the Latin word *pulcher* (beautiful, morally excellent). His sister is **Avdotya**, known by the diminutive form of her name, Dunya, from the Greek *eudokia* (well-seeming, good opinion).

Semyon Zakharovich Marmeladov. Marmelad, a flat, sugar-coated jelly candy, suggests saccharine spinelessness.

Sonya, Marmeladov's daughter from his first marriage, is the diminutive for Sophia, from the Greek word meaning "holy wisdom," revered in Eastern Orthodoxy as an intermediary between the divine and humankind.

Svidrigailov, not a Russian name, was based on a historical figure called Svidrigailo, whose character and deeds were similarly debauched.

Porfiry Petrovich. ***Porfira*** (purple) is the color both of royal garments and of Sunday or Easter vestments, perhaps suggesting Porfiry's dual roles as civil servant and secular priest. References to **Peter**, including the patronymics **Petrovich** and **Petrovna**, evoke not only Peter the Great, who set Russia on a westernizing, modernizing path that divided the educated classes from the Russian people, but also Peter the apostle.

Luzhin's name derives from *luzha* or "puddle." It is also suggestive of the German verb *lügen* (to lie) and the Russian equivalent *lgat'* (*lgu*, *lzhesh'*).[10] His name and patronymic, **Petr Petrovich**, imply a double dose of unhealthy Western influences.

Razumikhin's last name derives from the noun ***razum*** or "reason" (similar to German *Vernunft*), often connoting common sense, and the verb *vrazumit'*, "to bring someone to his senses." The noun *rassudok* (similar to German *Verstand*) is also translated "reason," but *rassudok* signifies a more limited, calculating kind of thinking. In Dostoevsky's work, *razum* has positive connotations, and *rassudok*, negative ones. Razumikhin's first name, **Dmitry** (from Demeter, "earth"), hints at his healthy connection with earthly life.

10 Carol Apollonio, *Dostoevsky's Secrets: Reading Against the Grain* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 87.

CHAPTER 2

Overview

Crime and Punishment gains much of its power by dramatizing Raskolnikov's alienation and search for identity. On leave from university, Raskolnikov commits a murder that nearly defies explanation, but, ultimately, is motivated by ideas prevailing in the intellectual climate. These ideas inexorably clash with Raskolnikov's inmost heart, his conscience. To engage readers both cognitively and emotionally, Dostoevsky devises an innovative narrative strategy that stages the collision between Raskolnikov's reason and feeling, his rationality and moral emotion. We know Raskolnikov is a murderer, but we still want him to get away—at least initially.

NARRATIVE STRATEGY

Dostoevsky implicates readers in his novel's ethical action by employing a narrative strategy that manipulates our perspective and exploits our emotions. Dostoevsky began *Crime and Punishment* as a first-person narrative but changed it to third-person, retaining the advantages of each. Dostoevsky's narrator both creates sympathy for his murderer-protagonist by revealing his thoughts and feelings from the inside (first-person advantage) and distances readers from him by offering outsider commentary and perspective (third-person advantage).

Dostoevsky exploits readers' emotions by creating the expectation of a guilt script—crime, repentance, punishment, expiation—yet offering us a shame scenario, which has no fixed script. Shame relates broadly to human identity and entails negative evaluation of a person's whole self, arising from feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, or exclusion. Guilt pertains more narrowly to human action and entails transgression against personal, moral, social, or legal norms. While guilt involves temporary, voluntary actions that one can expiate,