

## Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment (1866)

### 1. Power

The moment where it became understood that it was more efficient and profitable in terms of economy of power to place people under surveillance....corresponds to the formation, gradual in some respects and rapid in others, of a new mode of exercise of power in eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Michel Foucault, 'Discipline and Punish')

Shift the object and change the scale. Define new tactics in order to reach a target that is now more subtle but also more widely spread in the social body. Find new techniques for adjusting punishment to it and for adapting its effects. Lay down new principles for regularizing, refining, universalizing the art of punishing...Reduce its economic and political cost by increasing its effectiveness and by multiplying its circuits. In short, constitute a new economy and a new technology of the power to punish. (Michel Foucault, 'Discipline and Punish')

"Science, however, says: love yourself first of all, for everything in the world is based on personal interest [...] general economic advancement. (Part ii., Chapter v)

While the Novel censures police power, it has already reinvented it, in the very practice of novelistic representation (D.A.Miller, 1988)

The Novel is in origin an oppositional, even parodic form....the central and defining feature of the Crime novel is that in itself and the world, guilt and innocence are problematic (A.C.Hilfer, 1990)

What is running away? ----- it's merely formal; the point isn't that he won't run away because he has nowhere to run to, but that psychologically he won't escape [...] Freedom will no longer be a boon to him; he will begin to brood, he will get himself into a muddle [...] and worry himself to death. (Part iv., Chapter v)

Dostoevsky is the creator of the polyphonic novel [...] In his works there appears a hero whose voice is constructed in the same way that the voice of the author is constructed in the usual novel. The hero's word about himself and about the world is every bit as valid as the usual authorial world; it is not subordinated to the objectivised image of the hero as one of the characteristics, nor does it serve as mouthpiece for the author's voice. It possesses an exceptional independence in the structure of the work, standing as if *alongside* the author's word and in a peculiar way combining with it and with the full-valued voices of the other heroes. (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*)

### 2. Punishment

'It's the blood [...] It's your blood that makes a noise. It's when it hasn't got any outlet, and it begins to get all clotted. (Part ii., Chapter 2)

'What if there is nothing there but spiders or something like that?' (Part iv., Chapter 1)

In Svidrigaylov's soul there was an instant of terrible, silent struggle [...] He still gazed fixedly out of the window. (Part vi, Chapter v)

You won't run away [...] The fugitive's life is hard and hateful, and your first need is for a definite position and existence, and a suitable atmosphere, and what sort of atmosphere would you have? If you ran away, you would come back of yourself. *You can't get on without us.* (Part vi, Chapter 2)

This is an obscure and fantastic case, a contemporary case, something that could only happen in our day [...] he murdered, and murdered two people, for a theory. (Part vi, Chapter 2)

Take this cypress-wood one. I have another, of brass, that was Lizaveta's. Lizaveta and I made an exchange: she gave me her cross and I gave her my ikon. Now I shall begin to wear Lizaveta's, and give this one to you. Take it ... it is mine ... We are going to suffer together, we will bear the cross together! (Part v, Chapter 4)

### 3. Redemption

But the common people of Crime and Punishment do more than round out the picture of social reality: they have an important voice of their own. Unobtrusive allusions to folklore and popular belief, which are embedded in the speech and thoughts of major personages and mini-stories that we can patch together from street-scenes, convey the ethical values of the *narod*. The voice of the people runs counter to the rationalistic theories that Raskolnikov uses to justify the murder, and it is the voice that he must heed in order to be reintegrated into the human community. (Linda Ivantis, 'The Other Lazarus')

My dear fellow, I've ferreted out all your secrets now [...] You understand, my dear fellow, I vouched for you. Chebarov was summoned and paid ten roubles on the nail, and we got the paper back; I have the honour to present it to you [...] Now it has no force. (Part ii., Chapter 3)

From that it follows that if society is properly organized, all crimes will instantly disappear [...] they have no use for the living soul. The living soul demands life. (Part iii., Chapter iv)

Raskolnikov went straight to the Voznesensky Bridge, stopped in the middle of it, leaned both elbows on the parapet, and gazed along the canal [...] She speedily recovered consciousness and sat up, sneezing and sniffing and senselessly trying to dry her hands on her wet clothes. She said nothing. (Part ii., Chapter 6)

Out of similar paternalistic motives [...] Dostoevsky creates a youthful and quasi-educated heroine, Sonya Marmeladova, who must endure many tribulations from the men in *Crime and Punishment* before abandoning her futile self-sacrifice. She, like the novel's protagonist Rodion Raskolnikov, transgresses a Christian moral precept in the belief that she is acting in the name of a higher justice [...] In reacting to this test of faith, Sonya affirms a renewed belief in divine providence, for which she is rewarded (in accordance with the structure of a Christian resurrection tale) with a new life, provided for financially by Svidrigailov and spiritually by Raskolnikov. (Elizabeth Blake, 'Sonya, Silent No More')

Out of the crowd, noiselessly and timidly, appeared a young girl, and her sudden appearance was strange in that room [...] At length the whispering among the crowd, or some of the words said, seemed to reach her ears; She cast down her eyes, took a step across the threshold and stood inside the room, but still very near the door. (Part ii., Chapter vii)

He looked at Sonya, and thought how much love she had for him, and suddenly it seemed strangely burdensome to be so loved [...] he had thought he could lay down a part of his suffering, at last, but now, when her whole heart turned towards him, he was suddenly conscious that his unhappiness was immeasurably greater than before. (Part v, Chapter iv)

'Could not her beliefs become my beliefs now [...] But that is the beginning of a new story, the story of the gradual renewal of a man, of his gradual regeneration, of his slow progress from one world to another. (Part vi., Chapter ii)

### Selected Reading

Peter Ackroyd, *Charles Dickens* (London, 1990)

Elizabeth Blake, 'Sonya, Silent No More: A response to the Woman Question in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 50.2 (2006), 252-271

Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt 1821-1849* (London, 1977)

Dostoevsky: *The Years of Ordeal 1850-1859* (London,

Dostoevsky: *The Stir of Liberation 1860-1865* (London, 1986)

Dostoevsky: *The Miraculous Years 1865-1871* (London,

Dostoevsky: *the Mantle of the Prophet 1871-1881* (London, 2002)

'Dostoevsky's Discovery of "Fantastic Realism"', *Russian Review* 27.3. (1968), 286-295

Linda Ivantis, 'The Other Lazarus in *Crime and Punishment*', *Russian Review* 61.3., (2002), 341-357

Ilya Kliger, 'Shapes of History and the Enigmatic Hero in Dostoevsky: The Case of Crime and Punishment', *Comparative Literature*, 62.3 (2010), 228-245

Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Works* (Princeton, N.J., 1967) trans. Michael A. Minihan

Alexandra F. Rudicina, 'Crime and Myth: the Archetypal Pattern of Rebirth in Three Novels of Dostoevsky', *PMLA* 87.5, (1972), 1065-1074

Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (Oxford, 2007)

Lois M Welch, 'Luzhin's Crime and the Advantages of Melodrama in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 18.1 (1976), 135-146