PENGUIN CLASSICS

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

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FYODOR MIKHAILOVICH DOSTOYEVSKY was born in Moscow in 1821, the second of a physician's seven children. When he left his private boarding school in Moscow he studied from 1838 to 1843 at the Military Engineering College in St Petersburg, graduating with officer's rank. His first story to be published, 'Poor Folk' (1846), was a great success. In 1849 he was arrested and sentenced to death for participating in the 'Petrashevsky circle'; he was reprieved at the last moment but sentenced to penal servitude, and until 1854 he lived in a convict prison at Omsk, Siberia. Out of this experience he wrote *The House of the Dead* (1860). In 1861 he began the review *Vremya* (*Time*) with his brother; in 1862 and 1863 he went abroad, where he strengthened his anti-European outlook, met Mlle Suslova, who was the model for many of his heroines, and gave way to his passion for gambling. In the following years he fell deeply in debt, but in 1867 he married Anna Grigoryevna Snitkina (his second wife), who helped to rescue him from his financial morass. They lived abroad for four years, then in 1873 he was invited to edit *Grazhdanin* (*The Citizen*), to which he contributed his *Diary of a Writer*. From 1876 the latter was issued separately and had a large circulation. In 1880 he delivered his famous address at the unveiling of Pushkin's memorial in Moscow; he died six months later in 1881. Most of his important works were written after 1864: *Notes from Underground* (1864), *Crime and Punishment* (1865–6), *The Gambler* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), *The Devils* (1871) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880).

DAVID MCDUFF was born in 1945 and was educated at the University of Edinburgh. His publications comprise a large number of translations of foreign verse and prose, including poems by Joseph Brodsky and Tomas Venclova, as well as contemporary Scandinavian work; *Selected Poems* of Osip Mandelstam; *Complete Poems* of Edith Södergran; and *No I'm Not Afraid* by Irina Ratushinskaya. His first book of verse, *Words in Nature*, appeared in 1972. He has translated a number of nineteenth-century Russian prose works for Penguin Classics. These include Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The House of the Dead*, *Poor Folk and Other Stories* and *Uncle's Dream and Other Stories*, Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories* and *The Sebastopol Sketches*, and Nikolai Leskov's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. He has also translated Babel's *Collected Stories* and Bely's *Petersburg* for Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics.

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TRANSLATED WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
DAVID McDUFF

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The text used for the present translation is that contained in Volume 6 of F. M. Dostoyevsky: *Polnoye sobranie sochineniy v tridtsati tomakh,* Leningrad, 1973. Use has also been made of the draft material and notes contained in Volume 7.

A NOTE ON MONEY

In 1865, the year in which the action of Dostoyevsky's novel takes place, the most commonly used items of currency were as follows:

the half-copeck piece (*grosh*)
the one-copeck piece (*kopeyka*)
the five-copeck piece (*pyatak*)
the ten-copeck piece (*grivennik*)
the twenty-copeck piece (*dvugrivennyy*)
the fifty-copeck piece (*poltinnik*)
the rouble, usually a yellow banknote (*zholtyy bilet*)

There is some play with this last expression in the novel – in Russian, it also means 'the yellow card' (*la carte jaune*) or 'the yellow ticket', which was a euphemism for the special passport carried by prostitutes. The old woman pawnbroker uses the term *biletiki* (literally, 'little tickets') as slang for 'roubles', something that serves to increase Raskolnikov's irritation.

Mention is also made in the text of paper 'credit bills' (*kreditki*) or banknotes worth five roubles (*sinie bilety*, or 'bluebacks') and ten roubles (*krasnye bilety*, or 'redbacks').

The hundred-rouble note was known as a *raduzhnyy bilet*, or 'rainbow note', from its rainbow colouring.

IOU's ('promissory notes'), Government bonds and lottery tickets were also in circulation, together with regular currency.

Silver roubles had a fluctuating and inconstant value; following the recent devaluation of silver, they were actually worth less than paper roubles.

INTRODUCTION

When in 1866 the first part of *Crime and Punishment* was published in the January and February issues of Mikhail Katkov's journal the *Russian Messenger*, it met with instant public success. The remaining parts of the novel had still to be written, its author was struggling through poverty and debt to meet deadlines that loomed ever closer, yet both he and his readers sensed that this was a work that possessed an inner momentum of its own, one that was linked both to the inexorable processes of outer, social change and to those of an inner, spiritual awakening. 'The novel promises to be one of the most important works of the author of *The House of the Dead*,' an anonymous reviewer wrote.

> The terrible crime that forms the basis of this tale is described with such staggering veracity, in such subtle detail, that one finds oneself involuntarily experiencing the peripeteias of this drama with all its psychic springs and devices, traversing the heart's maze from the first inception within it of the criminal idea to its final development . . . Even the author's subjectivity, from which the characterization of his heroes has on occasion suffered, in this instance produces no harm whatsoever, as it is focused on a single character and is permeated by a typological clarity, artistic in nature.

As the subsequent parts of the novel began to appear it acquired the status of a social and public event. In his memoirs, the critic N. N. Strakhov recalled that in Russia *Crime and Punishment* was the literary sensation of the year, 'the only book the addicts of reading talked about. And when they talked about it they generally complained of its overmastering power and of its having such a distressing effect upon readers that those with strong nerves almost grew ill, while those with weak nerves had to put it aside.' The 'distressing' features of the novel were many. Quite apart from the analysis of social wretchedness and psychological disease, shocking even to readers of Victor Hugo's recently published *Les Misérables*, on which Dostoyevsky had drawn for some of his structural and panoramic inspiration,[1] there was the fact that the book appeared to constitute

[1] All his life Dostoyevsky showed a considerable interest in Victor Hugo's prose

yet another attack on the Russian student body, smearing it with the taint of being allied to the young radicals and nihilists who had placed themselves in violent opposition to the established social and political order. In early reviews, liberal and left-wing critics, who sensed the parallel between the murder of the old woman and the talk of political assassination that was in the air, saw the novel as a particularly virulent contribution to the flood of 'anti-nihilist' literature that had begun to appear in the 1860s, and sprang to the defence of 'the Russian student corporations': 'Has there ever been a case of a student committing murder for the sake of robbery?' asked the critic G. Z. Yeliseyev, writing in the *Contemporary*.

> And even if there had been such a case, what would it prove regarding the general mood of the student corporations? . . . Was it not Belinsky who once drew Dostoyevsky's attention to the fact that the fantastic belonged 'in the madhouse, not in literature'? . . . What would Belinsky have had to say about this new fantasticism of Mr Dostoyevsky, a fantasticism in consequence of which the entire corporation of young men stands accused of a wholesale attempt at robbery with murder?

This cry was taken up by an anonymous reviewer in the newspaper the *Week* (normally reflecting a liberal–conservative viewpoint), who wrote:

> . . . while taking full account of Mr Dostoyevsky's talent, we cannot pass over in silence those melancholy symptoms which in his latest novel manifest themselves with particular force . . . Mr Dostoyevsky is at present displeased with the younger generation. In itself that is not worthy of comment. The generation in question does

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fiction, and in 1862, during his first visit to western Europe, he read the newly published *Les Misérables* with excitement. *Crime and Punishment* shows the influence of Hugo's novel in respect of plot (a criminal trying to evade a police agent who is shadowing him), background (the sewers of Paris have their counterpart in the canals of St Petersburg) and character (it is possible to draw parallels between Jean Valjean and Raskolnikov, Cosette and Dunya, Marius and Razumikhin, and Thénardier and Svidrigailov, among others). The subject of the many points of coincidence between the two novels has been thoroughly investigated by Nathalie Babel Brown in her valuable study *Hugo and Dostoevsky*, Ardis/Ann Arbor, 1978.

indeed possess defects that merit criticism, and to expose them is most praiseworthy, as long, of course, as it is done in an honourable fashion, without casting stones from round corners. That is the way it was done, for example, by Turgenev when he depicted (rather unsuccessfully, it should be said) the faults of the younger generation in his novel *Father and Sons*; Mr Turgenev, however, conducted the matter cleanly, without having recourse to sordid insinuations . . . That is not the way it has been done by Mr Dostoyevsky in his new novel. While not openly declaring that liberal ideas and the natural sciences lead young men to murder and young women to prostitution, in an oblique fashion he makes us feel that this is so.

The nihilist critic D. I. Pisarev, aware with others of the work's artistic vitality and absolute, undismissible topicality, tried another approach. Basing his critique on a 'social' interpretation of the novel, he argued that Raskolnikov was a product of his environment, and that the radical transformation of society Dostoyevsky seemed to be calling for could be achieved, not by the kind of Christianity Sonya had to offer, but by revolutionary action, the building of a new society. Almost alone, Strakhov attempted to draw his readers' attention to the novel's universal, tragic dimension as a parable of how, after terrible personal sufferings largely caused by society, a gifted young man is ruined by 'nihilistic' ideas, and has to undergo a process of atonement and redemption. Strakhov pointed to Dostoyevsky's compassionate treatment of his hero, and commented: 'This is not mockery of the younger generation, neither a reproach nor an accusation – it is a lament over it.'

Dostoyevsky's well-known response to Strakhov's article – 'You alone have understood me' – has continued to echo down the years; for *Crime and Punishment* has not ceased to present difficulties of interpretation. Even in the second half of the twentieth century critical studies of the novel have been written in which its central, underpinning ideas are either ignored as expressions of ideology which the writer's imaginative art 'overcame', or are distorted into unrecognizable caricatures of themselves. Thus, for example, the American critic Philip Rahv, in an essay that otherwise throws a good deal of light on the sources and background material associated with the novel, maintains that 'Sonya's faith is not one that has been attained through

struggle,' and that 'it offers no solution to Raskolnikov, whose spiritual existence is incommensurable with hers,' describing the book's epilogue as 'implausible and out of key with the work as a whole'.[2] While it is true that a *definitive* comprehension of any work of art is impossible, as so much depends upon the possibilities of interpretation, which may be infinite, it is hard in the case of Dostoyevsky not to suspect that in many of the critical analyses of his work the operative factors are of an ideological rather than a purely aesthetic nature. This is hardly surprising, as in the work of Dostoyevsky's maturity thought and image, idea and form are always intertwined. For all this, it may still be useful to recapitulate the original 'idea' of *Crime and Punishment* as it was conceived by its author.

Possibly the clearest explanation of Dostoyevsky's intentions in writing the novel was given by the philosopher Vladimir S. Solovyov (1853–1900), who knew Dostoyevsky as a friend and in the summer of 1878 accompanied him on a pilgrimage to the monastery of Optina Pustyn. In the first of his three commemorative speeches (1881–3, published in 1884), Solovyov states the matter with utter simplicity. In a discussion of *Crime and Punishment* and *The Devils* he writes:

> The meaning of the first of these novels, for all its depth of detail, is very clear and simple, though many have not understood it. Its principal character is a representative of that view of things according to which every strong man is his own master, and all is permitted to him. In the name of his personal superiority, in the name of his belief that he is a *force*, he considers himself entitled to commit murder and does in fact do so. But then suddenly the deed he thought was merely a violation of a senseless outer law and a bold challenge to the prejudice of society turns out, for his own conscience, to be something much more than this – it turns out to be a sin, a violation of inner moral justice. His violation of the outer law meets its lawful retribution from without in exile and penal servitude, but his inward sin of pride that has separated the strong man from humanity and has led him to commit murder – that inward sin of self-idolatry can only be redeemed by an inner moral

[2] Philip Rahv: 'Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*', *Partisan Review*, XXVII (1960).

act of self-renunciation. His boundless self-confidence must disappear in the face of that which is greater than *himself*, and his self-fabricated justification must humble itself before the higher justice of God that lives in those very same simple, weak folk whom the strong man viewed as paltry insects.

Solovyov sees the central meaning of Dostoyevsky's early work, which is preoccupied above all with those 'simple, weak folk', as a perception of 'the ancient and eternally new truth that in the established order of things the *best* people (morally) are at the same time the *worst* in the view of society, that they are condemned to be poor folk, the insulted and the injured'. Yet if Dostoyevsky had remained content merely to treat this problem as the subject of fiction, Solovyov maintains, he would have been no more than a glorified journalist. The important point is that Dostoyevsky saw the problem as part of his own life, as an existential question that demanded a satisfactory answer. The answer was an unambiguous one: 'The best people, observing in others and feeling in themselves a social injustice, must unite together, rise up against it and recreate society in their own way.' It was in pursuit of this goal that Dostoyevsky had joined the Petrashevists in their social conspiracy; his first, naïve attempt at a solution to the problem of social injustice led Dostoyevsky to the scaffold and to penal servitude. It was amidst the horrors of the 'House of the Dead' that he began to revise his notions concerning an uprising that was needed, not by the Russian people as a whole, but only by himself and his fellow conspirators.

In penal servitude, Solovyov asserts, Dostoyevsky came consciously face to face for the first time with representatives of true Russian national-popular feeling, in the light of which 'he clearly saw the falsehood of his revolutionary strivings':

> Dostoyevsky's companions in the labour camp were, the vast majority of them, members of the common Russian people and were all, with a few striking exceptions, the worst members of that people. But even the worst members of the common people generally retain what members of the intelligentsia usually lose: a faith in God and a consciousness of their sinfulness. Simple criminals, marked out from the popular mass by their evil deeds, are in no way marked out from it in terms of their views and feelings, of their religious world-outlook. In the House of the Dead

> Dostoyevsky found the real 'poor (or, in the popular expression, "unlucky") folk'. Those earlier ones, whom he had left behind, had still been able to take refuge from social injustice in a sense of their own dignity . . . This was denied to the convicts, but instead they had something more than this. The worst members of the House of the Dead restored to Dostoyevsky what the best members of the intelligentsia had taken from him. If there, among the representatives of enlightenment, a vestige of religious feeling had made him grow pale before the blasphemy of a leading *littérateur*, here, in the House of the Dead, that feeling was bound to revive and be renewed under the influence of the convicts' humble and devout faith.

Solovyov's analysis is doubtless coloured by his theories concerning the Russian Church and people, but even so, in its simplicity and straightforwardness, based on a personal knowledge of Dostoyevsky, it is hard to refute. Far from moving towards a religious dogmatism or alignment with reactionary political views, in the period that followed his incarceration Dostoyevsky began to discover a 'true socialism' – the *sobornost'* ('communion') of the human spirit as it expressed itself in the shared identity of the Russian people and their self-effacing acceptance of God.

The concluding chapters of *The House of the Dead* describe the reawakening of the central character's personality. This personality is not the same as the one that predominates in Dostoyevsky's earlier fiction – its experience of real physical and mental suffering, shared hardship and religious enlightenment lends it a universal dimension. For all its cramped, sardonic wretchedness, the 'I' of *Notes from Underground* inhabits a very different universe from that of Makar Devushkin or Ordynov. In its liberation from a half-asleep, romantic–sentimental vision of the world, in its consciousness of its own consciousness and of the depths of weakness and subterfuge that lie concealed within it, it acquires the status of a 'we': 'As for myself,' the Underground Man declares to his readers, 'all I have really done in my life is to take to an extreme that which you would not dare to take even halfway, interpreting your own cowardice as "good sense" and taking comfort in it, deceiving yourselves.' The first person narrative, far from dividing the narrator from his readers, as it does in some of Dostoyevsky's earlier works (*White Nights*, for example),

actually draws him closer to them; by provoking them with a confession that goes to the root of each individual's ultimate helplessness and spiritual bankruptcy – a 'poverty' that can only be surmounted through an acceptance of God's grace – the Underground Man acts as a unifying voice of repentance. 'At any rate,' he writes, 'I have felt ashamed all the time I have been writing this "tale": it is probably not literature at all, but rather a corrective punishment.'

From the drafts and notebooks for *Crime and Punishment* we know that Dostoyevsky originally planned the novel as a confessional work in the same vein as *Notes from Underground*, which was published in 1864. The basis of the novel had already been laid in the *Notes*, where towards the end of Part Two, following the narrator's humiliation at the hotel dinner, his visit to the brothel and cynical manipulation of the prostitute Liza, we come across the following passage:

> Towards evening I went out for a walk. My head was still aching and spinning from the previous night. But the further the evening wore on and the thicker the twilight became, the more my impressions, too, grew altered and confused, and after them my thoughts. Something within me, within my heart and my conscience, refused to die away, and burned there with a searing anguish. I loitered my way for the most part through the busiest, most crowded streets, through the Meshchanskayas, Sadovaya, the area near Yusupov Park. I was particularly fond of walking through these streets at dusk, at the very time when the crowd of passers-by of all kinds is at its densest, as industrial workers and craftsmen, their faces preoccupied to the point of hatred, return home from their daily employments . . . On the present occasion all this busy street life made me even more irritable. No matter how hard I tried, I could not get a grip on myself, put two and two together. Something was rising, rising within me without cease, causing me pain, and would not quieten down. In a state of complete frustration I returned to my rooms. It was as though some crime lay on my soul.

This could come straight from one of the first drafts of the early chapters of *Crime and Punishment*. Indeed, the two works are in many ways interdependent, the *Notes* constituting a philosophical prologue to the novel. The twenty-three-year-old ex-student who emerges on to the Petersburg street on an evening in early July is a spiritual

relative of the Underground Man – we are meant to assume that the weeks of isolation and 'hypochondria' he has spent indoors have been accompanied by the kind of deliberations that fill the pages of the *Notes*. In the early drafts of the novel, the narrative is in the first person, and has the same obsessive, confessional quality familiar from the earlier work. The principal difference is that while the crime of the Underground Man is of an exclusively moral and personal nature, a sin against another human being and against himself, that of Raskolnikov is in the first instance an outright challenge to the fabric of society, though it also involves the moral and personal dimension.

The 'stone wall' that so irks the Underground Man is also present in *Crime and Punishment*. Yet now it stands not only for 'the laws of nature, the conclusions of the natural sciences and mathematics' – it is also a symbol of the laws of society. The walls that surround Raskolnikov and hold him within his coffinlike room are not simply the bounds of 'possibility': they are also society's protection against its own members. In Dostoyevsky's view there is something profoundly wrong with a social order that needs to imprison, impoverish and torture the best people in it. Yet this does not excuse Raskolnikov's crime (the Russian word *prestuplenie* is much more graphic, suggesting the 'stepping across' or 'transgression' that he so desires to make). It is *people* who are responsible for the society in which they live, and whether they are in the grip of 'radical', atheistic ideas like those of Raskolnikov, or 'bourgeois', utilitarian, but also atheistic ideas, like those of Pyotr Petrovich Luzhin, they will abdicate their responsibility to their fellow creatures and destroy them in one way or another. Just as the Underground Man expresses his contempt for the 'antheap', the 'Crystal Palace' of modern 'civilization' which gives rise mostly to 'rivers of blood', so Raskolnikov *acts* out of the same convictions. He also intends, however, to enter the arena of history. It is in this respect above all that *Crime and Punishment* marks a significant development in Dostoyevsky's creative thinking.

The philosopher and literary critic Vasily Rozanov (1856–1919) – another Russian thinker with a close and intuitive understanding of Dostoyevsky – was one of the first to point to this aspect of the writer's art. At the beginning of a 'critical–biographical profile' written in 1893 as an introduction to the publication of Dostoyevsky's complete works in the journal *Niva*, he discusses the function of literature,