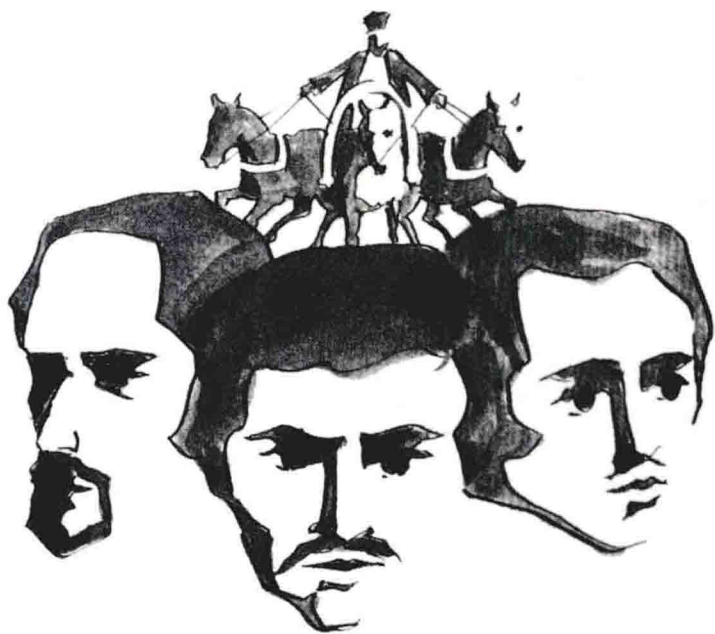


THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY



EDITED BY RALPH E. MATLAW

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION



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THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

THE CONSTANCE GARNETT TRANSLATION
REVISED BY RALPH E. MATLAW
BACKGROUNDS AND SOURCES
ESSAYS IN CRITICISM



Edited by

RALPH E. MATLAW

LATE OF
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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Preface

The Brothers Karamazov was written almost a hundred years ago. Some of its details are necessarily those of a different age, a different society, and a different culture. Nevertheless, it becomes accessible to the reader almost immediately if it can be presented in an accurate and readable version. The *Afterword* to the text discusses the revision of Mrs. Garnett's translation which performs this function and seeks to resolve many formidable problems that the complexity of the novel and the multiplicity of its styles ultimately make insurmountable.

The *Background* materials present some of the impulses toward the writing of the novel, in Dostoevsky's own experiences, in current events, and in reflections on the transformations of life and society at a particular epoch. Letters dealing with the novel are quoted extensively: they reflect the evolution of the novel, the development of its structure during the process of composition, and Dostoevsky's concern with projecting his vision adequately both in its main lines and in the minutest details of the text. They present a fascinating picture of an artist's involvement with his work, apart from their importance to a study of the novel itself. They also call attention to the extraordinary importance of purely literary problems in a novel that has all too frequently been used only as the basis for apocalyptic generalizations on existence, Dostoevsky, man, religion, and so on.

The *Essays in Criticism* run the gamut from such generalizations to concern with specific words. The first essay, one of the best chapters in Mochulsky's book on Dostoevsky—probably the best single volume of all the many that have dealt with Dostoevsky—is a splendid introduction to the novel. It is followed by a seminal essay on Dostoevsky's art and thought by Professor Tschizewskij, parts of which, concerned too extensively with Schiller for the purposes of this volume, have had to be omitted. They would have further emphasized Dostoevsky's extraordinary concern with the use of literature, the possibilities of characterization and deepening of portraits by the citation of other literary works, a technical innovation of Dostoevsky's which has not yet been sufficiently investigated, but which is at least in part suggested by the footnotes to the text itself. I have attempted to arrange the rest of the essays, regardless of approach, so that they might correspond to the progression of the novel, but this has not always been possible. Many

approaches to the work are suggested: structural, thematic, theological, stylistic, mythological, psychoanalytic. Several views are given of the "Grand Inquisitor" episode, including one that quite properly seeks to reintegrate it into the novel rather than treat it as an independent text or basis for a sermon, as has been done by all too many commentators. It is, indeed, an advantage to have most of the interpretations urge a closer, more extensive, and more integrated look at the text. For by force of argument and literary skill Dostoevsky has made all too inviting the discussion of what Ivan Karamazov calls "the eternal questions" without reference to their novelistic context.

RALPH E. MATLAW

Post-script:

Since the publication of this volume in 1976, a detailed introduction and an extensive running commentary on the style, implications, and shades of meaning, keyed to the Norton edition, was written by Victor Terras, *A Karamazov Companion: Commentary on the Genesis, Language, and Style of Dostoevsky's Novel*, Madison, the University of Wisconsin Press, 1981. I have incorporated several of his emendations and corrections, and further identifications made possible by the appearance of the long awaited Russian Academy of Sciences edition and commentary of this novel in the *Complete Works* of Dostoevsky.

I would like to express my thanks and admiration for Professor Terras's excellent volume and to urge the reader to consult it for specific elaborations of problems (some of which are discussed in my *Afterword* [p. 736]), especially those of biblical overtones, slang, stylistic levels, and Dostoevsky's repetition of key words and concepts, particularly "devil" and "beauty," which I felt could not always be rendered in English by the same word. "Damnation!," "Damn it!" and "Hell!" involve the "devil," at least by implication. And that is the lot of the translator.

RALPH E. MATLAW

Thanksgiving, 1981

Pronunciation of the Main Characters' Names

(Note: the second name is a patronymic—"son of" or "daughter of." In almost all patronymics Russians drop the syllable "ov" or "ev" in all but the most formal occasions. "Fyodorovich" would therefore normally sound "Fyodorich"; "Ivanovna," "Ivanna.")

Karamazov, Fyodor Pavlovich

Ivan Fyodorovich (Vanechka, Vanka)

Dmitri Fyodorovich (Mitya, Mitenka)

Alexey Fyodorovich (Alyosha)

Smerdyakov, Pavel Fyodorovich

Katerina Ivanovna Verkhovtsev (Katya)

Grushenka (Grusha, Agrafena Alexandrovna Svetlov)

Khokhlakov, Lisa (Lise—when given French pronunciation)

Rakitin, Mikhail, (Misha)

Zosima

Fetyukovich

Snegiryov, Ilyusha, (Ilyushechka)

Krasotkin, Kolya

Kalganov, Pyotr Fomich

Miusov, Pyotr Alexandrovich

Perkhotin, Pyotr Ilich

Skotoprigonevsk—the locale

Mokroe—location of the inn where Mitya carouses

Chermashnya—the town where Fyodor Pavlovich has land and a forest

Dedicated to
*Anna Grigorievna Dostoevsky**

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

John 12:24

* Dostoevsky's wife.

From the Author

In beginning the life story of my hero, Alexey Fyodorovich Karamazov, I find myself in somewhat of a quandary. Namely, although I call Alexey Fyodorovich my hero, I myself know that he is by no means a great man, and hence I foresee such unavoidable questions as these: "What is so remarkable about your Alexey Fyodorovich, that you have chosen him as your hero? What has he accomplished? What is he known for, and by whom? Why should I, the reader, waste time learning the facts of his life?"

The last question is the most fateful, for to it I can only answer: "Perhaps you will see for yourself from the novel." Well, suppose you read the novel, and fail to see, and so do not agree that my Alexey Fyodorovich is remarkable? I say this because unhappily I anticipate it. For me he is remarkable, but I doubt strongly whether I shall succeed in proving this to the reader. The fact is, if you please, that he is a protagonist, but a vague and undefined protagonist. And, in truth, in times such as ours it would be strange to require clarity of people. One thing, I dare say, is fairly certain: this man is odd, even eccentric. But oddness and eccentricity interfere rather than help, especially when everyone is trying to put the particulars together and to find some sort of common meaning in the general confusion. In most cases the eccentric is a particularity, a separate element. Isn't that so?

Now, if you do not agree with this last thesis, and answer, "It isn't so," or "It isn't always so," then I, if you please, might become encouraged about the significance of my hero, Alexey Fyodorovich. For not only is an eccentric "not always" a particularity and a separate element, but, on the contrary, it happens sometimes that such a person, I dare say, carries within himself the very heart of the whole, and the rest of the men of his epoch have for some reason been temporarily torn from it, as if by a gust of wind . . .

Still, I should not have plunged into these quite uninteresting and confused explanations and should have begun quite simply, without introduction: "If they like it, they will read it"; but the trouble is that I have two novels and only one life story.¹ The main novel is the second—it is the action of my hero in our day, at the very present time. The first novel takes place thirteen years ago, and it is hardly even a novel, but only one moment in my hero's early youth. I cannot do without this first novel, because much in the second novel would be unintelligible without it. But in this way my original difficulty is rendered still more complicated: if I, that is, the biographer himself, find that even one novel might perhaps be

1. According to Dostoevsky's wife, he had planned to start writing the second part in 1882. It was to take place in the

1880s. Dmitri returns from prison, and Alyosha has lived through a complex drama with Lisa.

superfluous for such a modest and undefined hero, how ever can I appear with two, and how from my point of view can I justify such presumption?

Finding myself lost in the solution of these questions, I decide to bypass them with no solution at all. Of course, the astute reader has long since guessed that from the very first I was leading up to this, and was vexed with me for wasting fruitless words and precious time. To this, I shall answer explicitly: I was spending fruitless words and precious time, first, out of courtesy, and second, out of shrewdness: "Still," the reader might say, "he has forewarned us of something." Indeed, I am actually glad that my novel has of itself split into two narratives, "with essential unity of the whole": having become acquainted with the first tale, the reader will then decide for himself whether it is worth his while to attempt the second. Of course, one is not bound by anything—the book can be abandoned at the second page of the first tale, never to be opened again. But then, you know, there are those considerate readers who absolutely must read to the end, so as not to be mistaken in their impartial judgment; such, for example, are all the Russian critics. It is before this type of person that my heart somehow becomes lighter: despite all their careful exactness and conscientiousness, I nevertheless give them a perfectly legitimate pretext to abandon the tale at the novel's first episode. Well, there is the whole foreword. I completely agree that it is superfluous, but since it has already been written, let it stand.

And now to the matter at hand.

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