PENGUIN CLASSICS

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

PENGUIN
CLASSICS

PENGUIN CLASSICS

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

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. Hisfirst novel tobepublished, *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 1860 he began the review *Vremya* (*Time*) with his brother; in 1862 and 1863 he went abroad, where he strengthened his anti-European outlook, met Apollinaria Suslova, who was the model for many of his heroines, and gave wayto 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* (1868), *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 So¨dergran; and*No I'm Not Afraid*by Irina Ratush-inskaya. His first book of verse, *Words in Nature*,

appeared in 1972. He has translated a number of nineteenth-century Russian prose works for the Penguin Classics series. These include Dostoy-evsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The House of the Dead*, *Poor Folk and Other Stories* and *The Idiot* (2003), 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.

F Y O D O R D O S T O Y E V S K Y

The Brothers Karamazov

A NOVEL IN FOUR PARTS AND AN EPILOGUE

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by
DAVID McDUFF

PENGUIN BOOKS

PENGUIN BOOKS

Published by the Penguin Group
Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2
Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, 11, Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110 017, India
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, Cnr Rosedale and Airborne Roads, Albany, Auckland, New Zealand
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

www.penguin.com

First published 1880
This translation first published 1993
Reissued with revisions 2003

ISBN: 9780141915685

Contents

Chronology

1821 Born Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, inMoscow, the son of Mikhail Andreyevich, head physician at Marlinsky Hospital for the Poor, and Marya Fyodorovna, daughter of a merchant family.

1823 Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

1825 Decembrist uprising.

1830 Revolt in the Polish provinces.

1831–6 Attends boarding schools in Moscow together with his brother Mikhail (b. 1820).

1837 Pushkin is killed in a duel.
Their mother dies and the brothers are sent to a preparatory school in St Petersburg.

1838 Enters the St Petersburg Academy of Military Engineers as an army cadet (Mikhail is not admitted to the Academy).

1839 Father dies, apparently murdered by his serfs on his estate.

1840 Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*.

1841 Obtains a commission. Early works, now lost, include two historical plays, 'Mary Stuart' and 'Boris Godunov'.

1842 Gogol's *Dead Souls*.
Promoted to second lieutenant.

1843 Graduates from the Academy. Attached to St Petersburg Army Engineering Corps. Translates Balzac's *Euge´nie Grandet*.

1844 Resigns his commission. Translates George Sand's *La Derni-ère Aldini*. Works on *Poor Folk*, his first novel.

1845 Establishes a friendship with Russia's most prominent and influential literary critic, the liberal Vissarion Belinsky, who praises *Poor Folk* and acclaims its author as Gogol's successor.

1846 *Poor Folk* and *The Double* published. While *Poor Folk* is widely praised, *The Double* is much less successful. 'Mr Prokharchin' also published.Utopian socialist M.V.Butashevich-Petrashevsky becomes an acquaintance.

1847 Nervous ailments and the onset of epilepsy. *A Novel in Nine Letters* published, with a number of short stories including 'The Landlady', 'Polzunkov', 'White Nights' and 'A Weak Heart'.

1848 Several short stories published, including 'AJealous Husband' and 'A Christmas Tree Party and a Wedding'.

1849 *Netochka Nezvanova* published. Arrested and convicted of political offences against the Russian state. Sentenced to death, and taken out to Semyonovsky Square to be shot by firing squad, but reprieved moments before execution. Instead, sentenced to an indefinite period of exile in Siberia, to begin with eight years of penal servitude, later reduced to four years by Tsar Nicholas I.

1850 Prison and hard labour in Omsk, western Siberia.

1853 Outbreak of Crimean War.
Beginning of periodic epileptic seizures.

1854 Released from prison, but immediately sent to do compulsory military service as a private in the Seventh Line infantry battalion at Semipalatinsk, south-western Siberia. Friendship with Baron Wrangel, as a result of which he meets his future wife, Marya Dmitriyevna Isayeva.

1855 Alexander II succeeds Nicholas I as Tsar: some relaxation of state censorship.

Promoted to non-commissioned officer.

1856 Promoted to lieutenant. Still forbidden to leave Siberia.

1857 Marries the widowed Marya Dmitriyevna.

1858 Works on *The Village of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants* and 'Uncle's Dream'.

1859 Allowed to return to live in European Russia; in December, the Dostoyevskys return to St Petersburg. First chapters of *The Village of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants* (the serialized novella is released between 1859 and 1861) and 'Uncle's Dream' published.

1860 Vladivostok is founded.

Mikhail starts a new literary journal, *Vremya* (*Time*). Dostoy-evsky is not officially an editor, because of his convict status. First two chapters of *The House of the Dead* published.

1861 Emancipation of serfs. Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*.
Vremya begins publication. *The Insulted and the Injured* and *A Silly Story* published in *Vremya*. First part of *The House of the Dead* published.

1862 Second part of *The House of the Dead* and *A Nasty Tale* published in *Vremya*. Makes first trip abroad, to Europe, including England, France and Switzerland. Meets Alexander Herzen in London.

1863 *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* published in *Vremya*. After Marya Dmitriyevna is taken seriously ill, travels abroad again. Begins liaison with Apollinaria Suslova.

1864 First part of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

In March with Mikhail founds the journal *Epokha* (*Epoch*) as successor to *Vremya*, now banned by the Russian authorities. *Notes from Underground* published in *Epokha*. In April death of Marya Dmitriyevna. In July death of Mikhail.

1865 *Epokha* ceases publication because of lack of funds. *An Unusual Happening* published. Suslova rejects his proposal of marriage. Gambles in Wiesbaden. Works on *Crime and Punishment*.

1866 Dmitry Karakozov attempts to assassinate Tsar Alex ander II.
The Gambler and *Crime and Punishment* published.

1867 Alaska is sold by Russia to the United States for $7,200,000. Marries his nineteen-year-old stenographer, Anna Grigory-evna Snitkina, and they settle in Dresden.

1868 Birth of daughter, Sofia, who dies only five months old. *The Idiot* published.

1869 Birth of daughter, Lyubov.

1870 V. I. Lenin is born in the town of Simbirsk, on the banks of the Volga.
The Eternal Husband published.

1871 Moves back to St Petersburg with his wife and family. Birth of son, Fyodor.

1871–2 Serial publication of *The Devils*.

1873 First *khozdenie v narod* ('To the People' movement). Becomes contributing editor of conservative weekly journal *Grazhdanin* (*The Citizen*), where his *Diary of a Writer* is published as a regular column. 'Bobok' published.

1874 Arrested and imprisoned again, for offences against the political censorship regulations.

1875 *A Raw Youth* published. Birth of son, Aleksey.

1877 'The Gentle Creature' and 'The Dream of a Ridiculous Man' published in *Grazhdanin*.

1878 Death of Aleksey. Works on *The Brothers Karamazov*.

1879 Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili (later known as Stalin) born in Gori, Georgia.
First part of *The Brothers Karamazov* published.

1880 *The Brothers Karamazov* published (in complete form). Anna starts a book service, where her husband's works may be ordered by mail. Speech in Moscow at the unveiling of a monument to Pushkin is greeted with wild enthusiasm.

1881 Assassination of Tsar Alexander II (1 March).
Dostoyevsky dies in St Petersburg (28 January). Buried in the cemetery of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery.

Introduction

The Brothers Karamazov was originally planned as a novel about children and childhood. On 16 March 1878 Dostoyevsky wrote in a letter to the writer and pedagogue V. V. Mikhailov:

> I have conceived and will soon begin a large novel in which, *inter alia*, a major role will be played by children – minors, aged from about seven to fifteen. There will be much portrayal of children. I am studying them, I have been studying them all my life, and love them very much, I have some of my own. But the observations of a man such as yourself will be precious to me (I understand this). Therefore, write to me *of children* what you yourself know.

On 16 May of the same year, Dostoyevsky's son, Alyosha, died of epilepsy at the age of two years and nine months. For a long time the writer was unable to work. 'In order to bring Fyodor Mikhailovich at least a little calm and to draw his mind away from melancholy thoughts,' A. G. Dostoyevskaya, the writer's widow, wrote in her memoirs, 'I prevailed upon Vladimir S. Solovyov, who was visiting us in those days of our grief, to persuade Fyodor Mikhailovich to travel with him to the Optina Hermitage, where Solovyov was preparing to go that summer. A visit to the Optina Hermitage had long been a dream of Fyodor Mikhailovich's.'

Dostoyevsky left Moscow with the philosopher and theologian Vladimir Solovyov on 18 June 1878. The journey to the Optina Hermitage took seven days, which were to prove of major significance to the way in which the project of the novel developed. In the course of the journey Dostoyevsky discussed with Solovyov his plans for the work he had begun, and Solovyov later asserted that 'the Church as a positive social ideal was to constitute the

central idea of the new novel or new series of novels, of which only the first – *The Brothers Karamazov* – has been written'.

These twin themes, of childhood and the Church, were at the forefront of Dostoyevsky's mind when, returning from the Optina Hermitage at the beginning of July – the actual stay at the hermitage had been, perhaps significantly, of only two days' duration – he began the opening chapters of the new novel. Yet as the work developed it came increasingly to embrace nearly all the concerns and preoccupations that had stayed with the writer throughout his long and often agonizingly tormented career, so that in its final form the novel represents a kind of sum-total of Dostoyevsky's creative, philosophical and ideological thinking. For example, one of the central themes of *The Brothers Karamazov* – that of the problem of freedom, dealt with at length in the chapter entitled 'The Grand Inquisitor' – is derived from a passage in the tale 'The Landlady' (to be found in *Poor Folk and Other Stories*), published some forty years earlier, where the old man Murin says:

> You know, master, a weak man cannot control himself on his own.
>
> Give him everything, and he'll come of his own accord and give it back to you; give him half the world, just try it, and what do you think he'll do? He'll hide himself in your shoe immediately, that small will he make himself. Give a weak man freedom and he'll fetter it himself and give it back to you. A foolish heart has no use for freedom!

Similarly, the theme of 'the double', first elaborated by Dostoyevsky in 1846 in the famous 'St Petersburg Poem' of that name, is clearly reinvoked and referred to by the chapter in *The Brothers Karamazov* entitled 'The Devil'. And the all-pervasive theme of parricide has its origins in a passage in the first chapter of *The House of the Dead*:

> One man who had murdered his father stays particularly in my memory. He was of noble origin, had worked in government service and had been something of a prodigal son to his sixty-year-old father. His behaviour had been thoroughly dissipated, he had become embroiled in debt. His father had tried to exert a restraining influence on him, had tried to make him see reason; but the father had a house and a farm, it was suspected he had money, and – his son murdered him in order to get his hands on the inheritance … He had made no confession; had been stripped of his nobility and government service rank, and had been sentenced to twenty years' deportation and

penal servitude … He was an unbalanced, flippant man, unreasoning in the extreme, though by no means stupid. I never observed any particular signs of cruelty in him. The prisoners despised him, not for his crime, of which no mention was ever made, but for his silliness, for his not knowing how to behave.

Thus, the original plan of a novel about children and childhood gradually became supplanted by a much larger and more complex project, a work in which the writer's entire life and career were put at stake and re-examined by himself in a kind of personal 'last judgement'.

The 'novel about children' survived into the final version of *The Brothers Karamazov* in several forms. Perhaps the least important of these is the story of the schoolboy Kolya Krasotkin and his friend Ilyusha, a tale which, taken on its own, is frequently reminiscent of the pages of a children's journal, though it has a tender humour and a deep insight into the interrelation between children and animals, and its conclusion raises it to a higher level. Far more significant is the story of the 'Russian boys', the 'brothers Karamazov' themselves – overgrown children, representative of their generation, who are in search of a spiritual goal and a true father, but who cannot find either. This story is made all the more painfully immediate by a fragmentary sociological sub-plot that focuses on the sufferings of children in nineteenth-century Russian society, sometimes in cruel and sickening detail. This is the soil, the social and spiritual climate, from which the 'Russian boys' must grow.

The sense of personal and generational suffering that is so much a feature of the novel's tone and timbre makes itself felt in a certain emotional distancing, as though the pain of the events described, both inner and outer, were too great to bear in an unmediated form. Dostoyevsky had used the device of an amateur literary 'chronicler' to such an end before, most particularly in *The House of the Dead*, where the voice of Goryanchikov, the narrator, has a curiously deadened, dispassionate quality. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, we are confronted with an 'author' who, from a lonely corner of a remote, provincial town (somewhat resembling Staraya Russa, the town of Dostoyevsky's childhood), in a crabbed and eccentric style that suggests the oddity of some column in anobscure local newspaper, succeeds in chronicling not only a parricide of Shakespearean dramatic force and vividness, but also the moral and spiritual collapse of an entire

world. In order that the novel may be read in the sense in which it was intended, Dostoyevsky's narrator must first be taken account of. He is not Dostoyevsky himself, but a grotesque and even slightly Hoffmannesque *Phantasiegebilde* – a solitary, retired bachelor of partial, old-fashioned education and reactionary political and social views, his hobbies 'philology' and local history, set in his ways, with a resentment against women (one senses an unhappy love in his past) and a dislike of both social radicals and religious fanatics, in particular monks and the monkhood. It is the narrow, prejudiced but none the less curiously perceptive eye of this contemporary observer, who is in his way a somewhat jaded connoisseur and classifier of human nature, that is brought to bear on the story of the 'Russian boys'; and the brain of the same observer, ruminating on events that took place some thirteen years earlier, composes from it both a 'life-chronicle' (the Russian word, *zhizneopisanie*, is an alternative, though rather more workaday, to the word *biografiya*, 'biography') and a 'novel' (like the French *roman*, the Russian word, *roman*, also has the meaning of 'romance', sometimes used in a disparaging way). The matter is complicated further by the fact that in having recourse to the device of a narrator, Dostoyevsky in this instance wishes to imitate the ancient Russian *zhitiya*, or 'Lives' of the saints. The irony of this – for none of the brothers can be considered to be particularly saintly – casts a curious light over the entire narrative, filling it in many places with ambivalence and an ironic, capricious humour that at times verges on the sarcastic. Although Dostoyevsky's voice interweaves with that of his narrator, the latter is very much in charge of things, to an extent that some readers may find puzzling.

From the very outset of the novel's action the ambivalence and irony make themselves evident. Neither the 'little family' (the narrator purposely uses the deprecatory form *semeyka*) which has assembled for a gathering, nor the 'Elder' whom they have come to visit appear in a very flattering light. The Elder Zosima, apparently modelled by Dostoyevsky on Father Amvrosy of the Optina Hermitage, and adored by Alyosha as a saint, is described in slightly unpleasant terms as someone one might rather not meet:

> Indeed, there was about the Elder's person something to which many people, and not only Miusov, might have taken a dislike. He was a short, hunched-up little man with

very frail legs, only sixty-five years of age but whom illness made appear much older, at least by some ten years. The whole of his face, a very gaunt one, was peppered with little wrinkles, of which there were particularly many around his eyes. These eyes were small, of the clear variety, swift and brilliant, like two brilliant points of light. Grey wisps of hair remained only at his temples, he had a little, straggling, wedge-shaped beard, and his lips, which often bore an ironic smile, were as thin as two pieces of string. His nose could not have been described as long, but was rather sharp and watchful, like the beak of a bird.

The whole atmosphere of the monastery, with its rather sour and secretive monks and *hieroschemonachs* (a Slavonic version of the Greek *schemahieromonachos*, or priests who wear the robes of monks), its collection of fine wines and its smugly modest banquets, is hardly calculated to inspire the reader with respect, and makes Alyosha's devotion to it all the more absurd – the infatuation of a 'raw youth'. Alyosha's far from innocent involvement with Liza Khokhlakova is not what one might expect in a 'man of God', and establishes an affinity between him and the Elder, with his 'Mount Athos tricks' and 'dances'. Disconcerting details about the Elder's decidedly murky past are served up before us by Alyosha himself at the end of Part Two in the 'biographical information' contained in 'From the Life of the Departed in God the Hieroschemonach the Elder Zosima'. In the light of all this the 'scandalous' behaviour of the 'monster', Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, seems less shocking than it might otherwise do. There is a sense of a universal moral failure, where neither sinners nor saved have any valid context in which to perceive themselves as such, and where the whole social– religious edifice threatens to break down amidst sinister and mocking laughter.

Clearly, the death of his son and the two-day visit to the Optina Hermitage had influenced the course of Dostoyevsky's work on the 'novel about children' in such a way as to turn it far from the direction he had intended it to take. An important point to consider here is that the picture of the Optina Hermitage that emerges from the novel is not at all in consonance with the reality of the place, as documented by others at the time. Dostoyevsky's narrator distorts to the point of unrecognizability – the question must be: why? Some have seen the answer in a conflict between Dostoyevsky the artist and Dostoyevsky the publicist and aspirant religious adviser, who associated and corresponded with Konstantin Pobedonostsev

and wished for acceptance by the Tsarist political establishment. Pobedonostsev's misgivings about the novel are well known and have been described in detail elsewhere. Pobedonostsev was not alone in finding Dostoyevsky's 'theodicy' and his portrayal of the monks problematical. Dostoyevsky himself, in a letter to Pobedonostsev of 24 August 1879, made no secret of his doubts:

> Your opinion of what you have read of *Karamazov* flattered me greatly (regarding the strength and energy of what has been written), but at the same time you raise a most necessary question: that there has as yet occurred to me no reply to all these atheistic theses, and they need one. Indeed so, and it is in that that now lie all my concern and all my unease. For this sixth book, 'The Russian Monk', which is to appear on 31 August, I have proposed as a reply to this whole *negative aspect*. And therefore I also tremble for it in the sense – will it be a *sufficient* reply? All the more so as this reply is, after all, not direct, not point by point to the theses that were enunciated earlier (in 'the G. Inquisitor' and before), but is only indirect. Here there is presented something that is directly opposed to the world-outlook expressed above, but again it is presented not point by point, but, so to speak, in an artistic tableau. This it is that causes me unease, that is to say, will I be understood and will I attain even one small drop of my aim? And here in addition there are further obligations of artistry: it was required that I present a modest and majestic figure, whereas life is full of the comic and is majestic only in its inner sense, so that in the biography of my monk I was involuntarily compelled by artistic demands to touch upon even the most vulgar aspects so as not to infringe artistic realism. Then, too, there are several teachings of the monk against which people will simply cry out that they are absurd, for they are all too ecstatic; of course, they are absurd in an everyday sense, but in another, inward sense, I think they are true.

The prosaist, literary critic and Orthodox convert Konstantin Leontiev also found much to object to in this aspect of the novel. Whatever one's opinion of Leontiev's personal and political convictions, the fact remains that he was a man of intensely perceptive literary judgement, with, in addition, an almost unerring sense for the truth about life and human affairs, and an instinctive eye for falsehood. It may therefore be instructive to examine Leontiev's reaction to Dostoyevsky's 'Orthodoxy'.

In his article 'About Universal Love' (1880), Leontiev criticizes Dostoyevsky's doctrine of universal brotherly love as it is put into the mouth of Father Zosima, considering it to be a distortion of true Christian

love, a modified and altered form of socialist humanitarianism. Leontiev perceives the essence of Dostoyevsky's novel to be a revelation of the 'intolerable tragism of life', and considers the chapters concerning the monks and the monastery to be an unsuccessful attempt to present a 'positive' counterpart to it, a striving for cosmic 'harmony' that is really no more than an artist's desire to paint in shades of light and dark:

On the one hand, sorrows, injuries, the storm of the passions, crimes, jealousy, envy, acts of oppression, mistakes, and on the other – unexpected consolations, kindness, forgiveness, the heart's repose, impulses and deeds of selflessness, simplicity and gaiety of heart! Here is *life*, here is the only possible *harmony* on this earth and under this heaven. *The harmonic law of compensation – and nothing more*. The poetic, living concordance of bright colours with dark ones – *and nothing more*. And in the highest degree integral semi-tragic, semi-serene opera, in which menacing and melancholy sounds alternate with tender and touching ones – and *nothing more*!

Leontiev believes that Dostoyevsky's attitude to the monks, who 'play a most important role' in the novel, isone of 'deep veneration', and sees in this an advance on the writer's path towards true Orthodoxy. Yet he is compelled to acknowledge that 'the monks do not quite, or, to be more precise, *do not at all* say the things that *very good* monks say both in Russia and on Mount Athos … To be sure, here there is rather little mention of worship, of monastic vows of obedience …' Later, after Dostoyevsky's death, Leontiev went even further. Attempting to dissuade his friend Vasily Rozanov from swallowing Dostoyevsky's 'Orthodoxy' whole, he wrote in a letter:

… I zealously pray to God that you will soon *outgrow Dostoyevsky* and his 'harmonies', which will never be, and indeed are, unneeded. His monks are an invention. Even the teachings of Father Zosima are erroneous; and the whole style of his discourses is false … Though your article about the 'Grand Inquisitor' contains a great number of things that are beautiful and true, and in itself the 'Legend', too, is a beautiful fantasy, none the less the inflections of Dostoyevsky himself in his views on Catholicism and on Christianity in general are mistaken, false and obscure; and pray God that you will soon free yourself from his*unhealthy and overpowering* influence! Too complex, obscure and inapplicable to life. At Optina *The Brothers Karamazov*is*not considered to be a correct Orthodox work, and the Elder Zosima does not in any way either in his teaching or in his character resemble Father Amvrosy*…

In his memoirs, Leontiev wrote: '*The Brothers Karamazov* can be considered an Orthodox novel only by those who are little acquainted with true Orthodoxy, with the Christianity of the Holy Fathers and the Elders of Athos and Optina.' In Leontiev's view (he himself became an Orthodox monk and lived at Optina for the last six months of his life), the work of Zola (in *La Faute de l'abbe´ Mouret*) is 'far closer to the spirit of true personal monkhood than the superficial and sentimental inventions of Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*'.

In giving Dostoyevsky the benefit of the doubt, and considering the novelist to be guilty of mere 'humanitarian idealization' in his treatment of Optina and its monks, Leontiev tends to evade the question of whether Dostoyevsky may not, either consciously or semi-subconsciously, have been indulging in his familiar habit of irony at their expense. There is a level at which one may, in associating the character of the youngest Karamazov with the world of the sick and dying Elder Zosima and his retinue of shadowy intellectual priests, religious fanatics and female admirer– supplicants, wonder whether Dostoyevsky is not asking: is this perhaps only the best Alyosha can hope for in a world that has 'gone on to another track'? Again, as earlier, one wonders why, if the monastery is supposed to represent a centre of health and wisdom in an otherwise corrupt world, so many of the features of the Alyosha–Zosima story bear such a morbid hue: Zosima owes his religious career to a common criminal and murderer, and after his death his body emits a 'putrid smell', calling to mind the novel's theme of 'stinking', and the lackey Smerdyakov. Alyosha is characterized by the narrator as 'a pretty strange fellow', and Dostoyevsky originally styled him on the 'idiot' Prince Myshkin from the novel of that name. Perhaps at least a part of the answer to the question of this ambivalence maybeobtained from a glance at Dostoyevsky's notes and jottings for *The Brothers Karamazov*, in particular those relating to the sayings and character of the Elder Zosima. These indicate that in trying to portray a religious life and a body of spiritual belief that was adequate to the times in which he lived, Dostoyevsky – influenced, no doubt, by questions of censorship – originally went considerably further than he did in the final version of the novel. For example, in the section of the notebooks headed 'The Elder's Confession', one entry reads: 'Love human beings in

their sins. *Love even their sins*.' And later: 'Love sins! Verily, life is paradise. Is given once in a myriad of ages.'

This 'love of sin' advocated by the Elder Zosima – and presumably also by Dostoyevsky – is what gives *The Brothers Karamazov* its strange and troubling quality of ambivalence, that passes through its entire plot, characterization and structure, making them impossible to define and determine with any degree of positive certainty. This becomes quite evident when we consider the story of the murder that forms the principal building-block of the novel's development.

According to the formal plot-scheme of the novel, the murder of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov is carried out by the lackey Smerdyakov at the instigation of Ivan. Mitya is found guilty of the murder only in consequence of 'a judicial error' committed by the jury at his trial. Some critics have insisted that Mitya's character is at bottom essentially innocent, that although he is a self-admitted 'scoundrel' he could never have murdered his father. This argument is lent support by the fact that Dostoyevsky appears to have modelled Mitya's character to some extent on that of the nobleman D. N. Ilyinsky, a supposed 'parricide' who was sent into penal servitude for someone else's crime, whom the author met in Siberia, and whom he describes in *The House of the Dead*. The 'publisher's note' that precedes Chapter 7 of Part II of that work seems to express a genuine and wholehearted indignation that an innocent man should have been punished unjustly:

> The other day the publisher of *Notes from the House of the Dead* received notification from Siberia that this criminal really had been in the right all along, and had suffered ten years of penal servitude for no reason. His innocence had been established officially, according to the processes of the law. The true perpetrators of the crime had apparently been found and had confessed, and the unfortunate man had been released from prison … There is no need to add any more. No need to expatiate on the tragic profundity of this case, on the young life ruined by such a dreadful accusation … We are of the opinion, too, that if a case such as this is possible, this very possibility adds a new and glaring facet to the overall picture of the House of the Dead…

Yet in the overall context of Dostoyevsky's life and work the theme of crime and punishment has a rather different perspective, one that is essentially subjective, moral and inward, and bears only a token relation to

the external, social criteria of guilt and innocence. Thus, for example, in the novel *Crime and Punishment* what matters first and foremost is not Raskolnikov's guilt of the crime he has committed, but his own willingness to admit that he has committed a crime, and is inwardly guilty in terms that are absolute, not judicial – it is in that willingness, that admission, that the seeds of his future resurrection lie. Or, to return to *The House of the Dead* for a moment: its narrator, Goryanchikov, who murdered his wife, is only a cover for Dostoyevsky himself, who believed that his own political crime bore an inner significance that involved the whole of his fate, personality and soul. Like the axe-murderer Raskolnikov, Goryanchikov exists in a metaphysical region where the reality of suffering and the ability to accept it are the primary determining factors, the condition of a true humanity, and the only pointers to salvation. When we come to the case of Mitya in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky already presupposes that the reader will not read the story, the *roman*, in literal terms, but rather in the Dantesque, Gogolian tradition of a tale concerning the 'contiguity with other worlds'. The character of Mitya is drawn with an intensity, passion and love that are almost unparalleled in the rest of Dostoyevsky's writing. This Promethean, ecstatic, drunken 'ardent heart' and fiery soul is a portrait of the universal man, unredeemed and possibly doomed for eternity.

Mitya's crime involves the 'murder of the fathers' in the sense in which it was defined by Dostoyevsky's contemporary, the nineteenth-century Russian thinker N. F. Fyodorov, who believed in a literal, real and personal resurrection that would take place on the earth, and would be brought about by the efforts of living sons to resurrect their dead fathers. In the world of late nineteenth-century Russia Fyodorov perceived one of the principal social sicknesses to be the hatred with which the educated youth viewed the concepts of 'father' and 'son', rejecting these with contempt in their frenzied aspiration towards social 'progress' and revolution. Fyodorov considered that the true revolution would be brought about by science and technology in a universal project involving the transformation of nature into the Kingdom of God by the resurrected brotherhood of man, the God–man. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky charts, in Mitya's story, the beginning of that process of resurrection out of a state of fall and shame. Mitya is not innocent, nor is he a mere 'scoundrel' – from the early pages of

the novel it is made clear that his ultimate intent is the criminal one of killing his father, and the sadistic, bloody and murderous attack described in Chapter 9 of Book III leaves us in no doubt of this. Mitya's vow in Chapter 5 of Book VIII – 'I punish myself for the whole of my life, the whole of my life I punish!' – indicates his overwhelming sense of guilt at being alive at all, at having received life from his father, and also his desire to punish his father for having given it to him. There is in all this, of course, an element of grand, Schillerean theatricality, the heroism of 'one against all'. In an outburst to the public procurator during 'The Third Torment' (Book IX, Chapter 5), Mitya states in existential terms his conviction that the murderer could not have been Smerdyakov, and it is based on the latter's deficiency in heroism and ardent emotion:

'But why do you so firmly and with such insistence assert that it is not he?'

'Because I am convinced. Because that is my impression. Because Smerdyakov is a man of the basest nature, and a coward. Or rather, not a coward but a combination of all the manifestations of cowardliness in the world taken together, walking on two legs. He was born of a hen. When he spoke to me, on each occasion he trembled lest I kill him, while I never even raised a finger against him. He fell at my feet and wept, he kissed these very boots, literally, begging me not to "frighten him" – what kind of a remark is that? And I even tried to give him money. He is a sickly hen with the falling sickness and a weak mind, a fellow whom an eight-year-old schoolboy could flatten to the ground. Is that a human being?…'

A few lines further on, confronted by the revelation that Smerdyakov had apparently been unconscious in a fit of epilepsy at the time of the murder, Mitya utters the revealing statement: 'Well, in that case it was the Devil who killed my father!'

And indeed, this is the conclusion that Dostoyevsky appears to be working towards in the novel. By the agency of the 'infernaless' Grushenka, whose cold, cruel and animal nature takes hold of Mitya and drives him on to excess, the Devil enters Mitya's soul and brings about the death of his father. Yet Mitya is aware that in practical terms it is *not he* who has killed. To the eyes of the world, however, he is the murderer, and inwardly he feels himself to be such, and is perceived as such by Dostoyevsky. This may help to account for the vastly elaborate, persuasive and lengthy manner in which the assertion and 'proof of Mitya's guilt are

made by the public procurator at the novel's conclusion, spanning four chapters, for the comparatively perfunctory and unpersuasive speech of the defence counsel Fetyukovich (whose very name inspires a Gogolian shiver of revulsion, with its initial 'F or Theta' suggesting an obscenity), and for the resolute and final way in which Dostoyevsky makes the jury of 'muzhiks' find Mitya guilty. In one sense, of course, the entire account of the trial is a satirical attack on provincial justice, in particular as it manifested itself under the influence of the newly introduced 'public courts' with their trial by jury. Neither prosecution nor defence emerge from the narrator's reminiscences with any degree of dignity: the proceedings are an elaborate sham, a cold-blooded attempt by the State to deny the spiritual, living content of a crime - the 'murder of the fathers' - and its consequences. Indeed, the world of the public procurator and the state investigator, with its *'soirees'* and 'legal experts', its games of cards and glasses of tea, is every bit as dubious from a moral point of view as the world of the monks and the monastery. It is not for nothing that Dostoyevsky names the 'little town' in which the action of his novel takes place Skotoprigonyevsk - which roughly translates as 'Brutesville'.

Amidst all the ambivalence and moral uncertainty, the sense of a world and a society in a state of break-up and disintegration, in which *The Brothers Karamazov* abounds, the injunction to 'love sins' is one of the few notes that rings out clearly and unequivocally. We are enjoined to love Alyosha, Mitya and Ivan in the extremity of their despair and their inability to transcend their own weakness and sinfulness, and to realize that behind their helplessness, their tormented humanity, lie forces that are darker and greater. It is the Devil, not Mitya or Ivan, nor even the lackey Smerdyakov, who kills Fyodor Pavlovich, just as it is the Devil, not Ivan, who dreams up the Byronic, God-denying fantasy of the Grand Inquisitor, the Devil, not Alyosha, who is the true 'novice' in the monasteries of Russia. We are to love these three brothers because in the sincerity of their passion, the warmth of their natures, the desperation of their souls they have confronted the great and sinister reality from which the rest of the world is hiding: the reality which the poet Lermontov called 'the spirit of banishment' and which Goethe made a protagonist of his most important drama.

The Devil is the central character in *The Brothers Karamazov*. For the most part concealed, he emerges from time to time throughout the novel in flashes and allusions, throwing light – or shadow – on the thoughts and actions of the brothers and those whom they encounter. Thus, for example, the title of an early chapter in Book II, 'The Old Buffoon', where 'buffoon' translates the Russian word *shut*, could also be conceived as meaning 'The Old Devil', for *shut* also carries that meaning in colloquial Russian – thus Fyodor Pavlovich emerges early on in a 'Satanic' light, appropriately enough, in the circumstances. The Devil appears again in the many invocations of his name that crop up in the text – 'the devil', and 'devil take it' (*chort, chort voz'mi*), are common enough Russian expletives, but Dostoyevsky uses them in his dialogue like a symphonic motif. Whereas in his earlier novels this diabolism has a somewhat arbitrary character, merely hinting at something that is never fully revealed or realized, in *The Brothers Karamazov* it is a studied and conscious theme and technique, leading inexorably to the actual appearance of the Devil himself.

It is to Ivan Karamazov, in formal plot terms the 'Murderer' (this is the name he bears in the early rough drafts of the novel), that the Devil at last makes his appearance. The fact that this is so adds yet another twist of irony to the narrative, for of the three brothers, the atheistic, sceptical and rationalist Ivan would seem the least likely to suffer from visions of a religious kind. One of the points Dostoyevsky is making here is that for all his efforts to 'improve' himself by means of Western education and 'Enlightenment' Ivan, too, is a Karamazov, with the Karamazovian weaknesses. 'You are like Fyodor Pavlovich, more than any of them, sir, more than any of his other children you have turned out like him, with the same soul as his honour had, sir,' Smerdyakov tells Ivan at their third 'meeting', and the blood 'leaps toIvan's face'inshocked recognition of the lackey's perceptiveness. The nature of Ivan's illness, though admittedly problematical, is none the less in linguistic terms a further pointer to his Karamazovian 'baseness'. The Russian term employed by Dostoyevsky, *belaya goryachka* (literally 'white fever'), is traditionally used to referto the alcohol-related hallucinatory disorder known to medicine as delirium tremens, and this definition is given even in nineteenth-century Russian dictionaries and encyclopaedias, such as those of Dal' and Brockhaus-

Efron. It is curious that a physician such as A. F. Blagonravov was able to write to Dostoyevsky, following the novel's appearance in 1880, praising him for his skill in describing 'a form of mental illness, well-known to science under the name of hallucinations, so naturally and also so artistically', without ever mentioning the alcoholic root of the disorder. Yet it is surely doubtful that Dostoyevsky intended any other interpretation to be put on the 'illness' – the implications raised during Alyosha's talk with Ivan at the inn (Book V, Chapters 3, 4 and 5), with reference to 'dashing the cup to the floor', seem too obvious. So does the way in which Ivan's secret vice is mocked and shadowed in the paralytic drunkenness of the peasant in the snow near the house where Smerdyakov lives (Book XI, Chapter 8). Dostoyevsky himself intended to explain the illness in a special article for *Diary of a Writer*, but died before he was able to do so. Whatever the truth of the matter, the very formulation *belaya goryachka* suggests 'depravity' of some kind, and is an important element in establishing the author's ambivalence towards the character of Ivan, which might otherwise assume too lordly a profile. In 'loving sin', Dostoyevsky constantly deflates the protagonists of his drama, as though there were a danger that their mythic grandeur might obscure their weakness and humanity. Even the 'Legend of the Grand Inquisitor' is only the terrifyingly elaborate delirium of a man in despair.

The Devil himself, who is responsible for all this confusion and diminution, is subject to his own laws and limits. It is of the utmost importance to him that he be perceived as having concrete reality, equivalent to that of Christ, or the brothers. This is why Dostoyevsky lavishes such detailed attention on the Devil's outward appearance, portraying him as some kind of '*gospodin*, or rather, a certain kind of Russian "gentleman", no longer young in years, "*qui frisait la cinquantaine*", as the French say, with a not so very noticeable trace of grey in his hair that still was long and thick, and in his short and wedge-shaped beard', and paying studious heed to the Devil's mode of speech, with its Gallicisms and phrases of somewhat dated radical jargon. Critics have speculated that Dostoyevsky based his portrayal on the character of the radical publicist and writer Alexander Herzen. Much of the 'Devil' chapter is taken up with arguments about reality and non-reality:

‘Not for one moment do I take you for a truth that is real,’ Ivan exclaimed in what even amounted to fury. ‘You are a falsehood, you are my illness, you are a ghost. Only I do not know how to destroy you, and perceive that for a certain time I must suffer you. You are a hallucination I am having. You are the embodiment of myself, but only of one side of me … of my thoughts and emotions, though only those that are most loathsome and stupid. In that regard you might even be of interest to me, if only I had time to throw away on you.’

‘With your permission, with your permission, I shall demonstrate to you that you are wrong: back there by the lamp-post, when you turned on Alyosha and shouted at him: “You discovered it from *him*! How did you know that *he* comes to visit me?” I mean, that was me you were referring to, was it not? So you see, for just one teensy little moment you believed, believed that I really existed,’ the gentleman laughed mildly.

‘Yes, that was due to a weakness of nature … but it is out of the question that I believed in your existence. I am unsure whether I was asleep or on my feet last time. It is possible that I dreamed of you then, but I certainly did not see you when I was awake…’

Yet in the end, the Devil loses – for *le diable n’existe point* – and, subject to his own law of negation, in spite of all his yearning ‘to take fleshly form in the person of a seven-pood merchant’s wife and set up candles to God in church’, he disappears into the snowstorm leaving nothing but a pair of burned-out candles and an empty tea-glass.

The Devil’s function is to make man suffer, and perhaps unwittingly to drive him in the direction of free choice and love. That second part of the function is only a ‘perhaps’, however. What we see in *The Brothers Karamazov* – in itself only the first part of a much larger projected novel that was never written – is a complex depiction of suffering – the suffering of a world in which the good that lies concealed in the children cannot manifest itself because of the sins of the fathers, and where the fathers cannot be resurrected because of those sins. Ivan goes mad, but may recover; Mitya chooses twenty years of suffering; and Alyosha, the ‘idiot’, is left, for want of any other audience, proclaiming the gospel of universal brotherhood to a flock of Russian schoolchildren.

Early reactions to the novel in Russian were mixed, but numerous and animated. ‘The novel is read everywhere, people send me letters, the youth reads it, it is read in high society, in literature it is abused or praised, and

never yet, to judge by the impression it has made all round, have I experienced such success,' Dostoyevsky wrote on 8 December 1879. Yet all the time up to the work's publication, the author was in a state of anxiety about how it would be received: ' … I am in a fever,' he wrote to Pobedonostsev on 16 August 1880:

> It is not that I do not believe what I myself have written, but I am always tormented by the question: how will it be received, will people be willing to comprehend the essence of the matter, and may bad, not good, result from my having *published* my intimate convictions? All the more so because I am always compelled to express certain ideas only in their basic form, a form that is highly in need of greater development and conclusivity.

While many of Dostoyevsky's contemporaries were enthusiastic about *The Brothers Karamazov* – a typical reaction was to see it as a gallery of Russian 'types' *à la* Gogol – some reviewers took exception to what they felt to be the writer's excessive 'psychologism' and preoccupation with human iniquity. In 1879, before the whole novel had yet appeared, one commentator remarked:

> … the author does not leave in the sinful Karamazovs one single small wrinkle untouched by his psychological analysis. What the author will develop in future and create on the soil he has prepared, we do not know, but from several circumstances it is possible to draw the conclusion that he is preparing for his readers a terrible drama, in which one of the principal roles will be played by Grushenka.

Others felt that the only positive characters in the novel were the monks, andthat this wastaking condemnation of human nature too far. Perhaps the most famous 'review' of*The Brothers Karamazov*is that by the writer and publicist N. K. Mikhailovsky, who coined the phrase 'a cruel talent' to characterize Dostoyevsky, making it the title of his critical article. 'Having selected a suitable victim,' Mikhailovsky wrote,

> Dostoyevsky removes God from him and does this as simply and mechanically … as though he were taking the lid off a soup tureen. He removes God and looks: how will the victim behave inthis situation?It goes without saying that the examinee immediately begins to commit a series of more or less infamous crimes. But this is no matter: for crimes there is redeeming suffering, followed by all-forgiving love. Not for everyone, however, and in this lies the nub of the matter. If the examinee, left without

God, begins to writhe in convulsions of pricked conscience, Dostoyevsky acts with comparative mercy towards him: having dragged the victim through a whole series of infamies, he sends him into penal servitude or to a 'monk-counsellor' and there, self-abased and humble, spreads over him the wing of all-forgiving love … If the victim is stubborn and to the end creates 'mutiny', as one characteristic chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov* is entitled, mutiny against God, the order of things and the obligatoriness of suffering … Dostoyevsky makes him hang himself, shoot himself, drown himself, first having once again made him run the gauntlet of villainy and crimes…

Turgenev's judgement of the novel is well known, and was even more extreme–he considered Dostoyevskyto have revealed himself in it as a Russian de Sade. We have already considered the more sympathetic but critical reactions of Konstantin Leontiev. But perhaps the most sensitive nineteenth-century interpretation of all came some ten years after the novel's publication from Leontiev's Dostoyevskian acquaintance, the enigmatic philosopher Vasily Rozanov. In his *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* (1890), Rozanov reconstructs the novel in terms of one of its chapters, the one in which Ivan relates his '*poema*' to Alyosha. Rozanov sees this as the heart of the work, from which it derives all its meaning and creative energy: 'the "Legend",' he writes, 'constitutes as it were the soul of the entire work, which merely groups itself around it, like variations around their theme, in it is concealed the writer's intimate thought, without which not only this novel, but also many other works of his would never have been written …' The long essay, which contains a masterly analysis of the '*poema*', seeing in the despair of its messagean ultimate and paradoxical push towards moral regeneration through a recognition that, after all, man's nature as originally constituted must be regarded as benevolent and good, concludes with the words:

The Legend itself is his bitter lament, when, having lost his innocence and been abandoned by God, he suddenly realizes that now he is completely alone, with his weakness, with his sin, with the struggle of light and darkness within his soul. To overcome this darkness, to help this light – that is all that man can do on his earthly wandering, and what he must do, in order to calm his distressed conscience, so burdened, so sick, so incapable of enduring its sufferings any longer. The clear perception of whence this light proceeds and whence this darkness, may more than anything strengthen him with the hope that he is not doomed to remain eternally the arena of their struggle.

Rozanov sounds a note of distant optimism. Yet Dostoyevsky himself, for all the boisterous pathos of the finale with which he provided the novel, was less sanguine. In his notebook for 1880–81 we come across the following passage:

The Devil. (Psychological and *detailed* critical explanation of Ivan Fyodorovich and the appearance of the Devil.) Ivan Fyodorovich is deep, this is not the contemporary atheists, who demonstrate by their unbelief only the narrowness of their world-outlook and the dimness of their dim-witted abilities … Nihilism appeared among us because we are *all nihilists*. We were merely frightened by the new, original form of its manifestation. (All to a man Fyodor Pavloviches.) … Conscience without God is a horror, it may lose its way to the point of utter immorality … The Inquisitor is only immoral because in his heart, in his conscience there has managed to accommodate itself the idea of the necessity of burning human beings … The Inquisitor and the chapter about children. In view of these chapters you could take a scholarly, yet not so haughty approach to me where philosophy is concerned, though philosophy is not my speciality. Not even in Europe is there such a power of atheistic *expressions, nor has there been*. So it is not as a boy, then, that I believe in Christ and confess Him, but through the great *crucible of doubt* has my *hosannah* passed, as I have him say, in that same novel of mine, the Devil.