
From the Editor:

Crime and Punishment and The Idiot: Research, Perception, and Transformations in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Esteemed Colleagues, Dear Readers,

In this issue, we are glad to congratulate the members of our Editorial Board and International Editorial Council on their significant anniversaries: Academic Alexander B. Kudelin, Research Director of IWL RAS, who has entered the age of Moses, capable of leading his people out of the captivity of everyday life and false attitudes, even if they have to walk along the bottom of the Red Sea; and Professor Valentina V. Borisova, Doctor of Philology, who is able to cope with academic everyday life like Martha, and see and discern the deepest things in the text like Maria. Our Editorial Board is eternally grateful to Alexander Borisovich and Valentina Vasilievna for their attentive attitude toward our journal and for their unwavering and unflinching help.

We are also pleased to announce that Olga Yu. Yurieva, Doctor of Philology and Head of the Department of Philology and Methodology at Irkutsk State University, our longtime friend and collaborator, has joined the Editorial Board of the journal.

The second issue of this year is largely devoted to how *Crime and Punishment* has been perceived and reinterpreted during the 20th and 21st century, and to the themes that come to the fore in the interaction of readers and researchers with the novel. This focus comes as we approach the final stage of the project led by the Research Centre “Dostoevsky and World Culture” on the book *Crime and Punishment* for the series *Dostoevsky’s Novels: Current State of Research*.

Nonetheless, *Crime and Punishment* is not the only subject of our interest. On April 18–20, together with the Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Staraya Russa Museums (Novgorod Museum–Reserve), we held the 26th International Readings “Dostoevsky’s Works in the Perception of 21st-Century Readers” in Staraya Russa. This educational conference is open to both experienced and novice researchers of all ages, starting from school, without any formal restrictions, but with a strict selection of speakers based on the quality of the report. Participation without presenting a report is also possible. Each year, we

gather around a single work by Dostoevsky, with the analytical and synthetic reading of that work being the focus of the first day's papers and roundtable. This year, we focused on the novel *The Idiot*.

Audio recordings are available at the following links:

— 18 Apr. 2024. Morning session. Part 1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUFdGb0_ntM&t=19s

— 18 Apr. 2024. Morning session. Part 2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJd5QAh7Ae8>

— 18 Apr. 2024. Evening session. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUqT49auCTE&t=2298s>

— 18 Apr. 2024. Roundtable <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBvmP0tmyUc>

— 19 Apr. 2024. Morning session. Part 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lhYJY3DvAI>

— 19 Apr. 2024. Morning session. Part 2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcbejpINraU>

— 19 Apr. 2024. Evening session. Part 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W0llWmB1gA>

— 19 Apr. 2024. Evening session. Part 2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6P0rpM5bjHU>

— 20 Apr. 2024. Seminar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDh4ReAeg0I>

The third conference of this year is scheduled for October 1–3, 2024: the International Online Conference “A Book in the Book,” first held in 2023. The conference is dedicated to the theoretical problem of the presence of books as *explicitly mentioned texts* and *material objects involved in the story* in works of world literature and culture. We ask those who wish to participate in the conference to pay attention to the words in bold italics. At this conference we are not engaged in comparative studies; we are interested in the books that the author introduces into his text, assigning them a certain role and function to help the readers understand the author's intent. Clearly, at least in the case of a *reader* like Dostoevsky, the role of the book in his authorial intent will stem from a deep understanding of the authorial intentions of the other person's work introduced into his text. This means that one can begin to talk about the role of “a book in the book” only after a deep analysis of the book the author introduced into his text.

I would like to remind you that for all our conferences, especially for the annual International Readings “Dostoevsky's Works in the Perception of 21st-Century Readers,” as it is an educational conference, you can apply to participate as a listener and join the discussion. We include such participants

in the program and greatly appreciate their contribution to the research work during the conference.

The years 2021–2024 have witnessed the release of a significant number of publications dedicated to Dostoevsky and his works. However, they are still far from being fully assimilated by the academic community and are relatively underrepresented in academic contexts. We would be delighted to offer our pages for the publication of comprehensive and substantive reviews, including critical and polemical ones, of books and miscellanies released during this period. Furthermore, we are always open to publishing in-depth overviews of past conferences.

This time, the section *Reviews, Summaries* features my detailed review (and sometimes analysis) of the presentations made at the 3rd International Online Conference “*Crime and Punishment: Current State of Research*,” held on February 28, 29 – March 1, 2024. This event marked the culmination of a series of conferences devoted to *Crime and Punishment* organized by the Research Centre “Dostoevsky and World Culture” of the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Commission for the Study of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Creative Heritage of the Scientific Council “History of World Culture” of the Russian Academy of Sciences for the preparation of the volume devoted to *Crime and Punishment* in the series *Dostoevsky’s Novels: Current State of Research*. I would like to emphasize that the review presents the conference as an integral and consistent event: the presentations are grouped around common problems, sometimes not explicitly stated, but outlined by the specific issues addressed in each report. For example, the question about the hero, or even heroes, whom time brings to the forefront (surprisingly, it is not Raskolnikov or even Sonya, but Razumikhin who garners attention for today’s young readers and researchers sensitive to the signs of the times); the challenge of assimilating the novel in different cultures through translations and adaptations (one could even say cultural appropriations, if this term had not acquired a negative connotation); and the issue of teaching in the age of AI, where the very concept of deep reading must be introduced through specialized methods, and as a consequence the description of deep reading methods used for research and optimally suited to engage students in reading.

The second review in this section was written by Nikolay Podosokorsky and focuses on the outcomes and future prospects of the 1st International Online Conference “A Book in the Book,” held on October 2–4, 2023. As this conference is dedicated to the memory of the great Russian philologist, philosopher, and cultural historian Alexander V. Mikhailov, it calls for a theory developed through a deep analysis of extremely concrete phenomena — a

theory rooted in history. According to Mikhailov, this approach is essential to discover and formulate a meaningful theory. Only by examining closely the specific purposes and methods of the incorporating books within books in different cultures, spaces, and eras, can we understand something about the meaning of this phenomenon in literature and culture.

In the section *Hermeneutics. Slow Reading*, we present a compelling work by Caterina Corbella on the role and functions of the novel *Don Quixote* within *The Idiot*. Most notably, the article makes the reader realize the importance of the character through whom a book is introduced into the text, suggesting that the book and its protagonist may, in some cases, be more closely associated with the character who introduced it into the text rather than the character with whom it was associated in the story by the character who introduced it. In this instance, it becomes evident that *Don Quixote* is more reflected in Aglaya's character than in Myshkin's (especially when considering that Aglaya's perceptions of Myshkin reveal more about her than about him).

It seems that this principle must always be kept in mind when we think about the presence of books in the novel. For example, Solovyev's *History*, which came to Rogozhin through Nastasya Filippovna. However, here we can try to make a classification on another basis: distinguishing those who mention the book (or in connection with whom the book is mentioned) from those who hold it in their hands. *Don Quixote* is mentioned in connection with Myshkin, but it is Aglaya who holds it in her hands. Solovyev's *History* firstly appears as mentioned by Nastasya Filippovna, but it is Rogozhin who holds it in his hands and keeps it in his study. In her previous article on the subject, Caterina Corbella noticed that this character, like Aglaya, uses the book as a repository, not for a letter, but for a knife [Corbella, 2023, p. 37]). *Madame Bovary* was read by Nastasya Filippovna, but we see it in the hands and then in Myshkin's pocket. Karamzin's *History*, mentioned by Lebedev in relation to Myshkin, apparently is connected to Lebedev himself, and Rogozhin, in whose presence and to impress whom it is mentioned. *The Lady with the Camellias* is only mentioned by the characters, but in different ways: Totsky mentions the novel exclusively as a work of art, emphasizing his aesthetic perception of it, while Nastasya Filippovna connects the book with life. She is called "camellia" by the members of the Ivolgin family and Lebedev, and she calls Totsky "Mr. Camellias". It is extremely interesting how the Apocalypse appears in the novel. Lebedev mentions it when telling Myshkin about Nastasya Filippovna, and the characters seem to gather evenly around it, as if the book is there, but no one touches it visibly. The book itself appears only in connection with Nil Alekseevich, who invited Lebedev to his office through Pyotr Zakharovich. This detail is expressed in a very interesting manner: "[...] and he asked me,

when we were alone: ‘Is it true that you a professor of the Antichrist?’ I did not conceal it: ‘I am,’ I said, and I told, and explained, and did not downplay the fear, but in my mind, I opened the allegorical scroll, amplified it, and showed the numbers. At first, he smiled, but when we reached the numerical computations and correspondences, he trembled, and turned pale, and he begged me to close the book, and sent me away, promising to give me a reward after Easter, and on the second week after Easter, his soul returned to God.” [Dostoevskii, 1972–1990, vol. 8, p. 168]. Lebedev unfolds only an “allegorical scroll,” while Nil Alekseevich asks to close *the book*: here we learn for the first time that someone *sees* it (and also that the one who saw it is dead). Whereas “our Pushkin” (if we proceed from the linguistic characteristics of the phrase, more a person than a book) appears in the hands (one might say, in the arms, since she has to grab several volumes) of Vera Lebedeva. I write these comments here, among other reasons, to show the possible aspects of studying a book within a book, not only as a text within a text.

I should also note that even the most subtle and attentive researchers sometimes mistake superficial similarity for definitive similarity. This happens, for example, too often to those who write about *The Lady with the Camellias* in *The Idiot*. In literary research in general, too often studies, especially comparative ones, have been guided by the thought that “similar means the same,” without taking into account that in the vast majority of cases, at least with Dostoevsky, superficial similarity is created to show the underlying difference. Caterina Corbella points out the similarity of two situations: Myshkin writes to Aglaya (who initially appears to him as one of three): “How many times have all three of you been of great need to me, but of all three I have seen only you alone” [Dostoevskii, 1972–1990, vol. 8, p. 157], while Don Quixote, wishing to meet Dulcinea, sees three peasant women. In fact, here it is quite clear that it is not the similarity but the *opposition* of the situations that matters: Don Quixote needs one Dulcinea, but instead he sees three peasant women, while Myshkin needs all three, but sees only one Aglaya in his memory. This contrast is obviously significant: perhaps Dulcinea (none of the peasant girls is Dulcinea) can only be seen in a plurality/triplicity of faces, whereas for Myshkin, Aglaya overshadows the other necessary ones. Already at this level, we are faced with very different stories, even if only a comparison with *Don Quixote* allows us to see clearly the meaning of what happens in *The Idiot* (the origin of the prince’s exclusive, not “inclusive,” love).

The second article in this section belongs to Ludmila Saraskina and closely examines the first of Dostoevsky’s heroes who is *capable of being second*. According to Dostoevsky and the Gospel, being second is the only way to become truly first. Christ explicitly spoke of the fulfillment of the

mission of being second as the purpose of his coming: “I did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20:28). Moreover, “The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:47). The second one, the Lord, comes to minister salvation to the first. The place of the *second* (among many *firsts*) as the protagonist will be asserted by Dostoevsky in a special preface to his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, but even then, most readers will not really believe him. Should we be surprised that they did not notice this characteristic in Razumikhin? Rather, one should be surprised and pleased that in the minds of today’s very young readers, Razumikhin is increasingly coming to the fore. Liudmila Saraskina’s energetic article, attentive to the “side” plots of the novel and tenaciously picking out and presenting important details that have long been overlooked, provides analytical justification for this.

In the section *Poetics. Context*, you can find a bright and heuristic article by Jasmina Vojvodić dedicated to the relationship of Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky, undoubtedly the main character of *Demons*, with his costume, in connection with the general theatricality of the novel. The author of the article rightly noticed not just a touch of theatricality, but the serious presence of it in the meaning of the word “costume” in the descriptions of what the hero wears: the costume in the theater creates the hero, and the hero becomes what his costume indicates. This is how Varvara Petrovna tries to create a hero for herself, choosing a costume for Stepan Trofimovich.

It is worth noting that the researcher rightly and in accordance with Dostoevsky’s text writes that the narrator’s words, stating that Stepan Trofimovich “finally became for her a son, her creation, even, one might say, her invention, became flesh of her flesh” [Dostoevskii, 1972–1989, vol. 10, p. 16] indicate the heroine’s attitude to the hero as to a doll (the author calls him Buratino) or a child. However, Dostoevsky constructs the text in a much more complex way, as there is also a rather obvious reference to the very first appearance of the words “flesh of flesh” in the Bible: “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man” (Gen. 2:23). This reference, on the surface, creates an ironic situation: here it is not the woman who is taken from her man, but, on the contrary, the man is taken from his woman, and the words “her creation” refer to the situation of the creation of man, giving Varvara Petrovna the position of the Creator. Having taken this position, Varvara Petrovna turns out to be the first of humankind to banish God and take over His place, as it is subtly hinted at the end of Stepan Trofimovich’s poem in the first pages of the novel: she turns out to be the first of the heroines of his poem. Thus, in the absence of God, humans try to create their own creation. On an emotional level, this burlesque

confusion (which is resolved only at the end, in the presence of the Gospel, which puts everything in its place) serves in Dostoevsky's novel as one of the proofs of God's existence.

In the first article of the section *Dostoevsky: His Readings*, Tatyana Kovalevskaya thoughtfully and deeply describes the context of English literature, which, in fact, the young Dostoevsky grew up with (we often lose sight of the fact that for Dostoevsky, this was modern, contemporary literature), and creates a map of his philosophical relationship with it. The author of the article analyzes Gothic horror novels in English literature as the origin of a number of Dostoevsky's poetic devices connected with the feeling of going beyond the "visible in its flowing immediacy," pushing the boundaries of what is perceived as real. A very interesting aspect of the article is the comparison of Raskolnikov with his aspiration to superhumanity and Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, where, according to Kovalevskaya, Mary Shelley shows for the first time that the hero loses the competition with the Creator not because he does not have the same power as the Creator, but because he lacks love for his creation. It is love for neighbors, according to Mary Shelley, that can save humanity from "great ideas" and their bearers, who allow blood according to conscience exactly to the extent that they think not about the embodiment of the idea, but about their own greatness.

In the second article of the section, Valentina Borisova talks about the role of the Bible and the Quran in Dostoevsky's life and work, noting the presence of allusions and hidden quotations from the Quran in Dostoevsky's texts. Perhaps the article would have benefited if the researcher had not sought to draw too far-reaching conclusions. She writes: "It is concluded that, following Pushkin, Dostoevsky, based on the understanding of the root connection between the Bible and the Quran as equivalent 'eternal books' of mankind, came to their conjugation in artistic terms." Not agreeing for one minute with the word "equivalent" (not even mentioning the simple statement that a believer, respecting the holy books of other religions, cannot *equate* them with the holy book of the religion he professes, it is clear that no one stood next to Christ for Dostoevsky), I would like to point out that Dostoevsky did turn to the story of Mohammed, including at moments when he did not feel it possible to express his spiritual insights in a way that would not cause problems with spiritual censorship, i.e. in some key moments of his novels. Thus, it is through an appeal to the story of Mohammed in *The Idiot* that his hero interprets the great words of the Apocalypse that "there should be time no longer" [Dostoevskii, 1972–1990, vol. 8, p. 189].

The article under the heading *Dostoevsky: Theory of Creativity* is devoted to what I consider to be a problem of great importance, which, following

the author Elena Stepanian, can be tentatively called “the physiology of reading.” This problem is related directly to the question of how art can put at the reader’s/viewer’s disposal not knowledge, but experience: something that has been lived and mastered emotionally and sensually, while nothing of the kind has ever happened in the reader’s life. The author shows how the reader “connects” with what is happening to the hero, gets involved in his action and experience, how the pulse, breathing, blood flow rate of the seated reader and the floundering, shuddering, jumping hero come closer together. How, in the end, readers in internet responses say (albeit in different words): “It happened to me.”

The section *Dostoevsky in the 20th and 21st Century* publishes the second, extensive, and fascinatingly interesting article by Gennady Karpenko¹ devoted to the consideration of the ideas of the division of people into different classes in the characters of Dostoevsky and Bunin in the cultural context of their time and biblical history. It is important that the author elevates the discussion of Dostoevsky’s and Bunin’s works beyond mere “literary polemics” or “literary response,” or “literary history,” and instead displays the anthropological problem they address, showing that the writer responds to life and to the understanding of life by his contemporaries and ancestors, and participate in the solution of life, not merely addressing “literary” questions.

In the section *Teaching Dostoevsky*, we published the second article (“Punishment”) of the diptych by Olga Yuryeva², in which she considers the title of the novel *Crime and Punishment* as the key to its holistic analysis. If the crime, according to the author’s analysis, was committed outside the novel, before it began (since the crime was the acceptance of the idea, the creation of the theory, and all actions are only consequences of this crime), then the punishment does not occur in the novel: it is taken outside of it, it is only referred to in the epilogue as having taken place. What happens to the hero in the novel itself is revealed in the article.

The journal is on Vkontakte and Telegram (with already 9 900 followers). You can subscribe to our pages to follow news from both the Journal and Research Centre “Dostoevsky and World Culture.” Among other things, all the recordings from seminars and conferences organized by the Centre are published here. Books and articles dedicated to Dostoevsky are also available for download.

Vkontakte: <https://vk.com/dostmirkult>

Telegram: <https://t.me/dostmirkult>

¹ First article: [Karpenko, 2024]

² First article: [Iureva, 2024].

The journal is published in cooperation with the Commission for the Study of Fyodor Dostoevsky's Artistic Heritage at the Academic Council "History of World Culture" RAS. Our work is carried out in contact with the Russian and International Dostoevsky Society.

As before, all quotations from Fyodor Dostoevsky's works, if not specified otherwise, are cited according to the Complete Works in 30 vols. (Leningrad, Nauka Publ., 1972–1990) with the references formatted according to the rules of the Russian Science Citation Index. Capital letters in the names of God, the Virgin, as in other holy names and concepts, that were lowered in this edition because of Soviet censorship are here restored in accordance with the editions published during Dostoevsky's life. The author's original emphasis in quotations (where not specified otherwise) is indicated by italics; the emphasis of the author of the article is indicated by bold font.

Our email address is fedor@dostmirkult.ru. The journal accepts articles in Russian and English. We accept submissions related to the subject of the journal from Russia and abroad. The authors will be notified about acceptance or refusal within a month.

Tatiana Kasatkina

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