

Raskolnikov's Transformation in *Crime and Punishment*

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**LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS INGLÉS – FRANCÉS
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Monograph directed by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

1. Acknowledgements.....	1
2. Introduction.....	2
3. Biography of Fyodor Dostoevsky.....	4
4. Antecedents	6
5. Theoretical Framework	10
6. Raskolnikov's Transformation in <i>Crime and Punishment</i>	14
7. Conclusion.....	38
8. Works Cited.....	39

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German David Valdez

INTRODUCTION

Crime and Punishment (1886), one of the most outstanding novels of the nineteenth century, depicts the moral dilemma and the state of confusion the main character, Raskolnikov Romanovitch, falls into after killing his pawnbroker in order to prove his theory of the superman and release others from her yoke of exploitation and dependency. In a rather confused state caused partly by his extreme poverty, he combines his theory with need for money, his desire to do good and his superstitious beliefs to devise a plan to kill the greedy moneylender and become an extraordinary man.

The story is fascinating not only for the murder itself but for the deep and vivid descriptions the author provides, not only of the character himself but of his state of excitement and delusion and his constant introspective struggle to determine whether his actions are led by a superior force and his decision to finally confess his crime and rejoin humanity. Thus Fyodor Dostoevsky becomes the pioneer of the psychological novel and opens the possibility of plunging into deepest darkest side of the humans' soul.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the novel is the metamorphosis of Raskolnikov Romanovitch, undergone before achieving or finding his state of

redemption. From this perspective, the goal of this analysis is to provide the reader an understanding of his transformation, which is achieved in his love for Sonia, Thus, this analysis explains his transformation through Sonia, a figure of empowerment, his use of duality as a strategy to avoid guilt, and his confession as a means of acquiring redemption and freedom.

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY BIOGRAPHY

Fyodor Dostoevsky was born in Moscow on November 11, 1821. The second of seven children, he was enthusiastic and passionate for literature from an early age. At four, his mother used the Bible to teach him to read and write.

Keen on reading, he devoted himself to sagas, legends and fairy tales told by his nanny, Alenna Frolovna, an influential figure in his childhood. His parents represented the duality he portrayed in most of his works. His father was a stern and self-righteous man, while his mother was a tender and caring woman who represented protection and love in its maximum expression. These two opposing features often appear in the characters of his fiction.

At the age of nine, he witnessed the rape of a girl by a drunk. He fetched his father in an attempt to help her, but it was too late. This episode haunted him for the rest of his life and most of his literary works depict the desire of a mature man for young girls such as mentioned in '*The devils*' and '*The brothers Karamazov*'; the act of rape and the incapability of doing something to prevent it.

At the age of fifteen, soon after his mother died of tuberculosis, he was forced to abandon his academic studies and was sent to the engineering school. However, the dullness and lack of creativity of science, math and military engineering made his stay in the academy unenjoyable. He was only interested in

drawing and architecture. In 1844, at the age of 23, he graduated as military engineer. However, his real passion, writing, made a call of duty and he resigned his military career. Two years after dedicating himself to writing, at the age of 25, he published his first novel, *Poor Folk*, which eventually became a hit.

Meanwhile, in the world of literature and philosophical discussions, his life reached a turning point. In 1846, he ended up seduced by socialist ideas and his convictions about how wrongly Russian politics were decaying became much more solid. His participation in these literary gatherings not only transformed his lifestyle, but he was accused of plotting against the regime: reading, writing and circulating copies that criticized Russian politics and religion.

He was initially sentenced to death; however, the day of the execution, his sentence was commuted to four years of exile with hard labor in Siberia, followed by a term of compulsory military service. All of these his personal experiences became the cornerstone of his masterpieces. Fyodor Dostoevsky, considered the major writer from the czar epoch, explored human psychology in the intricate Russian society of the nineteenth century.

ANTECEDENTS

After publishing his first short novel, *Poor Folk*, in 1846, Fyodor Dostoevsky gained the respect of most of the well-known critics of the time. As a result, he got involved in numerous meetings of leftist Hegelians, those who interpreted Hegel's philosophy as advocating atheism and liberal democracy in politics. However, his approximation to leftists, under the precepts of Hegel, the encouragement to adopt anti-Christian sentiments, far from derailing Fyodor's faith, convinced him that he was following the wrong path.

Dostoevsky's life was spelt by the fascination for delving into the human's deepest, darkest secrets, their minds, religion and the influence of circumstantial factors such as poverty or wealth in their decisions or in their ways of acting. His mom's night reading took him much closer to the fascinating world of the literature to which he succumbed to when stepping down the engineering school at the age of seventeen.

One of the authors that had such an impact on Dostoevsky literary path was the Russian poet and novelist Alexander Pushkin, Russian poet (1799) whose works (poems) a 'Prisoner in the Caucasus' (1820) and 'Fountain of Bakhchisaray' (1821) had a high charge of strong criticism and irony; an undeniable and hazardous critic to the government. His poems denounced how the Russian

society was the result of an unfair political system that oppressed people and burdened them with an unavoidable halo of sadness, anguish, dissatisfaction and misery, ideas adopted and perpetrated by Dostoevsky in his works Notes from underground (1864), Crime and punishment (1866) and the Brothers Karamazov (1880), where he vehemently, but keenly brought out how the miserable living conditions under which common Russian society was living affected them, not only physically, but emotionally or the impact of these conditions in their psyche, on their will, as Pushkin does in the poem the Fountain of Bakhchisaray (1821):

“The lips of all had silence sealed, Whilst, bent on him, each look observant, Saw grief's deep trace and passion fervent Upon his gloomy brow revealed. But the proud Khan his dark eye raising, and on the courtiers fiercely gazing, gave signal to them to begone! The chief, unwitnessed and alone....”
(Pushkin, 1821).

As a result of the influence exerted by Pushkin and the style adopted by Fyodor, at the beginning of his literary work, he was accused of plagiarism and several critics compared his style to that one of Pushkin.

Another writer who influenced Dostoevsky's literary career was the also Russian Nicolay Karamzin, writer poet and critic, remembered for his history of the Russian state (1826) where he boosted and portrayed a patriotic and chauvinist

spirit regarding the aftermath of the French Revolution (1789). He was mainly known to be the major short story writer for whom Dostoevsky felt a great admiration for his works which constantly evidenced the profound sense of commitment, loyalty, and gratitude toward his nation. In that epiphany of love, he wrote that the only possible way for Russia to go through a real change was not by changing the decaying institutions, but rather changing the individuals, their morality corrupted by famine, unfairness, and inequity. These were the precepts or the philosophy of life Fyodor Dostoevsky adopted as his, as the legacy he would take and would be in charge of.

Despite being little known by non-specialists outside Russia, Karamzin is considered to be the true founder of the Russian psychological prose. In the setting up of his writing style, Fyodor had the support and the sympathy from Vissarion Velynsky (1811) one of the most respected critics and editors in the Russian society of the epoch with whom Fyodor had the privilege of attending the literary circles, and the endless speeches about happiness, love, nation, and soul. However, there was a concept which represented the disruption or the clash between these unconditional friends: Religion.

For Fyodor, his own ideas on religion were crystal clear and there was no space for him to test his love of God; and the radical position Velynsky held about God was sour and unpleasant, his atheism as well as his dislike of religion clashed with Dostoevsky's Russian orthodox beliefs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis will draw on the approaches of New Criticism and Psychological Criticism. New Criticism was pioneered by John Crowe Ramson, who opposed the older schools of philological and literary history and as response published his book *THE NEW CRITICISM* in 1941. New Criticism advocates a close reading of the text, which means studying its individual elements such as theme, setting, plot, and structure. The usage of each word, image, place or person is neither a casuistic fact nor the product of the author's inaccuracy.

New Criticism calls for the analysis of every word, image, setting, and character as a key component in the process of condensation, a process in which each element contributes to a central unifying theme (Hickman, 2012). It is a holistic literary analysis. The whole is a sum of the parts. Hence, the success of a work is determined by the perfection and accuracy in the mixture of intentions, situations, and conjugations as a whole unit rather than a focus merely on biographical or historical data.

The psychological approach, embraced by the major schools (Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian), focuses on the author's and the characters' psyche and unconscious as methods to better decipher all of the roots or the branches a character might possess as intended in the theory of the mirror proposed by

Jacques Lacan, secondary characters that nurture and contrast bunch of emotions, situations and arguments that end up shaping the real essence of the main character. The game of opposites where the bad ones are possible to be judged when confronted to the good ones. The secondary characters as the path to understand the main one.

The psychoanalytic reading comprises the understanding of a latent content that the literary work implies behind the notorious content. Under this precept it is feasible to analyze the underlying processes of the characters such as denial, repression, sadness, isolation, loneliness, and sublimation through the materialization of thoughts as manifested in words, dreams, comments, jokes, etc.

The character is then if not the most important, one of the most important elements presented in a literary work because of the endless shades he is charged with. The character is endowed with a series of features that makes the work unique as classified by M.C. Gee (2001) a flat character, a one-dimensional character and a round character, acting the first one in a stereotyped or expected way. While the second one comprises much more of his experiences, sentiments. Not foreseeable at all as in the case of Rodion Raskolnikov who is a difficult to understand character, which moves the reader abruptly from one sentiment to another. From these perspectives, this monograph aims at tracing Rodion's

appearances, his thoughts feasible through his speeches, his behaviors with those who were close to him as a way to understand his slow, but steady transformational process in addition, by considering it will be considered the characterization of his acts, and his surrounding as a strategy used consciously by the author, (Fyodor Dostoevsky) to understand, not only the character himself, but the political and religious struggles or deficiencies in the Russian society the author wanted to convey as in a way to denounce how inefficient as well as ineffective the Russian government was.

Fyodor inspires himself in the Hegelian cold and radical ideas stated in his work Philosophy of History where the idea of murder seems to be a noble action and thus a justifiable one if committed in the name of a collective welfare. From this perspective, a crime is not simply a crime, but a must.

The component of characterization converges then as a key in the maze, where the author through the character's acts and speeches expresses an intention, a motive. However, the reader is the one who must infer and combine those hints provided by the author in order to figure out the set of reasons behind scene (Abrams, 2011, p. 47).

The sudden changes of behavior, the mood swings, the spaces, the environment, and the clothes the characters wear are transcendental as to

understand the set of motives or machinations the literary work involves rather than analyzing the simplistic and plain fact of syntactical and historical issues.

Rodion and the description made by the author about him as a gloomy, filthy and confused man whose lack of money withdraws him from his academic life speaks out more about the society, the point of view of the author regarding the decaying society of the epoch rather than the consolidation of the misery of man.

The New criticism and Nietzsche both agree on the idea that it is neither worthy nor realistic to conceive a character from a single perspective or angle due to the fact that the law of opposites permits to understand the world as it is. The concept of life would not be plausible if the concept of death did not exist, as well as good and bad, day and night and so on. There is then a sort of dependency, a sort of mutualism where one depends on the other and vice versa. Nietzsche argues the theory of identity as a misconception, a fallacy, an impossible, and an irrational. In few, non-existing. Intrinsically duality defies and certainly denies the concept of identity which attaches itself to understand the individuals from a plain, predetermined and steady perspective. Thus, Nietzsche argues that the higher emerges from the lower: altruism emerges out of egoism, truth emerges error and identity emerges out of difference.

Raskolnikov's Transformation in *Crime and Punishment*

In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (2008) Rodion Romanovich

Raskolnikov savagely and without the slightest sign of compassion murders the pawnbroker with the deep conviction that he is doing the right thing. His hands hold the hatchet that he firmly descends into her head dividing it in two independent and bloody elements. Afterwards, a series of events takes place which makes his life miserable, not only because he kills a human being, but for what lies beneath the crime itself: a constant struggle with himself. He must follow an undefined and obscure pathway which reaches light and peace when his transformation results in repentance.

Convinced that he is doing is the right thing, Raskolnikov decides to put into action his obscure plan, but while on his pathway, the strength of his conviction diminishes. Raskolnikov then becomes compulsive and doubtful, ambivalent and unpredictable. He becomes an undecipherable man with an enormous capacity to adapt his mind and behavior to circumstances and oscillate between the roles of victim and victimizer as he leaps from fantasy to reality.

In this world of ambivalence Raskolnikov lives in, a sudden combination of emotions and feelings swirl inside him. After walking aimlessly for hours, he enters

a tavern and overhears a conversation between two students in which one says, “She is useful to all of us because we need money from time to time, but her interest rates are unfair and she sells people’s precious things if they are one day late with the money they owe her.” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P.13).

In his superstitious mind, Raskolnikov reaches the conclusion that nothing happens by coincidence, but rather by a predetermined purpose. This idea is shared by Hegel, who asserts that “fate controls us and there is nothing we can do to change that” (Hegel, 1992, P. 103) Raskolnikov commits his crime since he believes there is nothing else he can do. He feels he is preordained to do so and whatever path he takes will lead him to the same destiny.

Raskolnikov believes that Alena Ivanovna is the cancer that corrupts society and that it is his responsibility to get rid of her, that such an important mission demands such an uncommon man. He thinks of himself as chosen by destiny to accomplish this mission. So his theory of the extraordinary man becomes clear. There are some people who are born to be different from others; they are capable of defying the established order of things, uttering new words, and transgressing laws. They are not born to live in submission.

The existence of such an evil creature as the moneylender makes him think life is unfair since she exploits people's needs. She takes advantage of those who do not have the determination or the money to speak out and resist her abuse.

Though Raskolnikov knows nothing about her, he suddenly feels a "violent aversion to her, and to be consistent with his emerging feelings, he proceeds with the idea of killing her. He goes to her house, knowing that she is alone and her sister, Elizabeth, will not be there to interfere with his plan. He knocks on the door and deceives her, pretending to pawn a silver case. Without uttering a word "Raskolnikov raises the hatchet with both hands and lets it descend without force, almost mechanically, on the old woman's head (...) one heavy blow splits her skull in two" (Dostoevsky, 2008, P.16).

Hegel, in his work *Philosophy of History*, asserts: "A crime, no matter how violent, can be justified if it brings about a noble end . . . Any harmful segment of society should be removed." (Hegel, 1992, P. 72). Despite the fact that Dostoevsky does not give any evidence of his fascination for Hegel in the novel, Raskolnikov's thoughts and actions demonstrate a clear connection to Hegel's idea of the superman, the Hegelian superman exists for noble purposes. If the ends are noble, then the means can be justified. The emphasis is always on the end instead of the means. Any harmful segment of society should be removed. God is

dead. Raskolnikov tells Sonia, “I wanted to become a Napoleon. That is why I killed her... Do you understand now?” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 386).

Inspired by the theory of the superman, Dostoevsky carries out Hegel’s theory which states that “supermen or extraordinary men are those who were able to transgress laws, men who gave themselves the right to overstep obstacles in order to fulfill their ideas under the precept of the destruction of the present for the sake of the better: All great men or even men a little out of the ordinary, that is to say capable of creating a new world, must from their very nature be criminals—more or less, of course. Otherwise it’s hard for them to get out of the common rut and to remain in the common rut is what they can’t submit to” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 231).

According to Hegel, An extraordinary man, a superman has the right... not an official right, but an inner right, to decide in his own conscience to overstep (...) certain obstacles, and only in case it is essential for the practical fulfillment of his idea (sometimes, perhaps, of benefit to the whole of humanity)” (Hegel, 1998,P. 73).

This theory was explained by Hegel forty years before: “The superman exists for noble purposes. If the ends are noble, then the means can be justified. The emphasis is always on the end instead of the means)” (Hegel, 1998, P. 60).

Raskolnikov states: “Her money could save his sister as well as dozens of families from poverty, crime and ruin. Wouldn’t the murder of one worthless old woman be excused, even approved?” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 102).

An extraordinary man, a superman has the responsibility, the moral duty, to set right that which is not as it should be. Alena Ivanovna represents the decay of society, the cancer that consumes them, but to which the weak and servile ones remain attached regardless of the abhorrence they feel for her. They go to her house and pawn their possessions, expecting her to give them a fragment of the real price their possessions are worth. “How disgusting!” Raskolnikov thinks. “That woman is a nasty creature, like an animal living in her dark hole, counting her gold... no, it’s ridiculous, horrible! I’m not capable of this deed.”

One of the most remarkable traits in Raskolnikov’s character is his selfishness, regarded as the main motive to commit the crime. He accepts that he kills the pawnbroker with the very slight idea of stealing. However, in the depths of his heart he knows that the real motive to kill is not that one of stealing, but rather of proving that he is not a common man, a louse who depends on others to survive. “I longed to kill without casuistry, to kill for my own benefit, and for that alone! I would not lie about it even to myself! I did not commit murder to help my mother – that is rubbish! I did not commit murder in order to use the profit and

power I gained to make myself a benefactor to humanity. Rubbish! I simply murdered; I murdered for myself, for myself alone” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 354).

In addition to his egocentrism and arrogance, his mind indistinctively swings and pushes him to surrender his will as well as his judgment. “What I needed to find out then, and find out as soon as possible, was whether I was a louse like everybody else or a man, whether I was capable of stepping over the barriers or not” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 386). After Killing Alena Ivanovna, Raskolnikov does not feel remorse since the pawnbroker represents what he hates the most: The greed that consigns common people to the well and oblivion. She is the leech that society wants to get rid of and by doing so he will receive their praise. Her death represents the path to a life of hope, understanding and compassion. That is why he shows no compassion for her.

The death of Alena Ivanovna is the road to freedom, to being free of the leech that sucks their kopecks as well as their desire to live. The death of Alena comes to be the gate of salvation for those who owe her money, for those who pawn their lives knowing they will be forced to knock on her door to ask for her mercy and money, overlooking the idea of giving their will as well as their pride. Every time she opens the door, she gets more from them. She thrives. The sense of dependence on her makes her stronger.

Every time she opens the door, they give her a piece of them. Raskolnikov knows this and is willing to do something to help others, but more than helping others, he wants to help himself, knowing that the final stage will be the acknowledgement for what he has done. He does not take a step without considering the consequences. He always ambles in a mixture of sentiments that makes his life complex. He sees himself as a martyr, a victim, a victimizer, a judge, with cold judgment and warm compassion.

Some men disguise their real thoughts with actions that make people perceive them as compassionate, humble and interested in helping others, but Raskolnikov's actions cover a dark and twisted mind capable of carrying out the most dreadful acts. The dualistic mind of Raskolnikov is difficult to figure out.

Though Raskolnikov's acts show him as a warm, compassionate man willing to help others; his real personality is better described as despotic since his image as well as his actions express the idea of extraordinary pride, arrogance, and contempt for society. He constantly belittles society, considering others as not capable of realizing what he has done. He thinks their intellect is not high enough for them to trap him: "On the way downstairs he remembered that he had left all the things behind the wallpaper, and thought that perhaps he was being got out of the way on purpose for a search to be made, and he stopped. But overwhelming

despair and what might perhaps be called a cynical view of a disaster made him shrug his shoulders and walk on” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 79).

Raskolnikov knows that the real transformation of a man is not based on what he does, but on what he gets with what he does, which means the result of what is done is much higher and worthier than the act itself. Considering this interpretation, Raskolnikov defends himself stating, “A man must not dare himself to feel sorrow, pity, shame or guilt when it comes to achieving his goals. Any justification is worthy if it saves a man’s belief. I suppose I am guilty of spilling blood!! I suppose I am, but look at history before you judge me. Men who have spilt blood, who have taken lives, often become the rulers of a country because they benefitted mankind. I wanted to do that too. I wanted to help society by ridding them of that terrible witch. And I wanted to become independent and powerful and compensate with good deeds so that my own life could begin” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 223).

Raskolnikov is trapped in his theory and he does not know whether to conduct himself based on rational convictions or for irrational actions, but what is clear for him is that one must be and, indeed, is higher than the other one. His convictions give him the sort of freedom that makes him feel at peace with himself,

a feeling of being helpful to others, a feeling of being necessary to society. This shows the dualistic mind of Raskolnikov.

Elizabeth, tall, awkward, shy, and a "slave" to her pawnbroker sister, represents the other part of society, the side that remains meek. Those who do not dare to defy their own fears and rid themselves of that which traps them or belittles them. They are conservative in temperament and law-abiding; they live under the control of others and the acceptance of being controlled. Considering this, Raskolnikov feels it is his moral duty to free them from their yoke since, in their condition of "ordinary people," they will never do so. He sees himself as the responsible for bringing good to mankind.

Raskolnikov's theory asserts that he should not experience the slightest doubt or remorse. However, after he leaves the pawnbroker's lodgings, his doubts suggest that he is not the extraordinary man he thinks he is; rather, he is a common man whose frustrations and lack of self-control lead him to commit the act of a common criminal. This also contradicts his theory since "the extraordinary man" is not supposed to experience any sort of regret but rather joy for achieving his goal. This conceptualization works as a sort of sedative that releases him from guilt or remorse because remorse causes men to cease being great.

Raskolnikov's action should have emboldened his soul and enlightened his mind, but as minutes pass his doubts grow. He flees from that which he has turned out to be, a murderer.

Despite having committed a real and moral crime, Raskolnikov's soul and mind, dark and confused, shield themselves against guilt until the very end as explained by Alfred I. Bem "Even after being sentenced to compulsory labor Raskolnikov is still under the spell of the idea which justified the murder. Yet his whole being, his moral structure, is shaken by the moral aspect of the murder." (Bem, 1975, P. 622).

The transformation of Raskolnikov comes as a result of a deep and laborious process that leads him to form his own perception of the world. Pride and hunger for power are the demons that bolster his struggle against repentance or regret.

Raskolnikov's life fluctuates between a ceaseless struggle between what he does and what he wants, reflecting the ambiguity of a man trapped in his own convictions, knowing what is bad and the consequences that come with it. His dualistic personality baffles him and he does not know how to define himself. Some of his proud thoughts make him perceive himself as an intellectual who has the right to prove all that he thinks, a unique and brave man whose ideas are above those of the masses. But at the same time he thinks of himself as a coward, a

simple, miserable and lousy man whose lack of strength interferes with the achievement of his goal. "I would not kill Alena Ivanovna myself. It would require a stronger man than I am to rid society of this wicked creature" (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 352).

Raskolnikov's lack of courage as well as his emotional burden has pushed him to the limits of his own loss of self-control, dominancy and lucidity. All that he has hated the most has come to dwell in him. He kills Alena Ivanovna with the idea of killing a louse who lives off from people's blood, but ironically he has fallen into the same category; he has turned to be that which he has hated the most, a louse; a despicable louse that depends on others to carry out his plan. The achievement of his personal goal justifies any type of action, even if it implies death.

The clash or duality in Raskolnikov's character is evidenced by the fact that he denies the existence of God. However, he appeals to Him in those moments when he feels feeble and insecure. "And you believe in God? Forgive me for being so inquisitive," says Porfiry, the magistrate. "Yes, I do. I do believe," Raskolnikov responds (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 221).

Later, when Sonia says, "God will protect her," Raskolnikov replies, "with malicious enjoyment, 'Perhaps god does not exist.' He looked at her and laughed." (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 271). Deep inside, Raskolnikov feels there is a greater

power or force than himself, but his egocentrism, pride and arrogance do not allow him to accept it. He continues to play God, distorting his ideas, until he finds himself in a world of oblivion, loneliness, fear, distrust and madness.

Raskolnikov's theory, which is derived from egocentrism, tells him a man who depends upon the help of someone else, either God or whomever, is someone who is not worth being considered as a superior being, but rather a common, a simple being because a true superior man is one who has been endowed with the ability to face life without anyone else's help. He says, "I stopped eating, stopped going out, stopped seeing any one, and then I started thinking and came to the conclusion that the man who dares much is a man who will gain respect and power"(Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 343).

Accepting the idea of God helping him is denying the fact that he is a superior man and for a superior man, happiness is only purchased by suffering. Karen Horney contends that "Raskolnikov's self-destructive should affirms that "the shoulds are not determined as much by self-hate as by pride, and the furies of self-hate are unleashed when they are not fulfilled. They can be compared to a holdup in which a gunman points a revolver at a person, saying, 'Either you give me all you have, or else I'll shoot you.' The holdup is likely to be more humane of the two" (Horney, 1975, P. 610).

Raskolnikov's mind is tormented by a tangle of contradictions, ambiguities and doubts. He wants to do good, but the act itself of doing good implies doing bad. Raskolnikov is self-centered, cruel and prone to intellectualizing. He loses control of his life as he decides to ascend to a level where a combination of madness and egocentrism is the formula to self-destruction. In fact, "he knew before the murder that he would be shaken and horrified by it" (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 69).

Perhaps the greatest evidence of egocentrism in the novel is Raskolnikov's first motive to kill, the desire to play God: "His wish to rob and murder the old pawnbroker so that he may administer justice by distributing her ill-gotten riches to the more deserving poor or, more probably, that he may finance the education that is to make him a "benefactor of mankind" reveals his perception of himself as a savior, the one chosen to rescue the wrong and unfair world. But instead of being noble and worthy, his intentions are only the portrait of his sense of vengeance. Raskolnikov embraces all the people who suffer not with the purpose of helping them but as a reminder of how miserable his life is for him, in order to not lose strength in achieving his objective.

Raskolnikov had to give up his studies because of lack of money which triggers his stifled anger. The money has become a pretext for his actions to

release himself from guilt. His egocentrism is doubtless his greatest weakness. But worst of all is that it is too late for him to realize that only through humility and acceptance of their feebleness can human beings achieve a worthy honorable life.

Raskolnikov intends to prove his theory of being a superior man by daring himself to act cut off the hand of God, but he only proves how fragile, vulnerable and dependent his interior is as when he finds himself unsure of whether to pray or not before answering the summons to the local police headquarters for not having paid his rent: “The thought tormented him with indecision. Oh lord, at least let it be over soon! He could almost have knelt down and prayed, but he laughed at his own impulse; he must put his trust in himself not in prayer” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 79).

Raskolnikov feels deep inside there is a greater power or force than himself but his egocentrism, pride, and arrogance do not let him accept it. Karen Horney affirms that “the shoulds are as much determined by self-hate as by pride, and the furies of self-hate are unleashed when they are not fulfilled (Horney, 1975, P. 610).

The real metamorphosis Raskolnikov undergoes starts right after committing his crime. In an effort to avoid guilt, Raskolnikov resorts to several strategies. He

targets Sonia as a figure of empowerment, relies on duality to avoid responsibility and finally adopts suffering as a matter of redemption and freedom.

The meeting with Marmeladof is of great importance in Raskolnikov's life because through him he hears of Sonia and her ability to deny herself for the welfare of others. He is impressed by her and his ego tells him that he is comparable to that decent, pure and stainless soul. He feels identified with Sonia and her enormous act of love. He now knows how much she suffers. He desires to know her since her suffering will help him shape his character. Despite representing externally the act of sin, she is a prostitute, she is the embodiment of incomparable love. She gives up her reputation, her dignity, her name and even her right to life in defense of her family and their well-being. A figure born to suffer, Sonia plays the role of Jesus Christ. Her mission is to incarnate suffering, humiliation and pain to redeem and give freedom to those whom she loves.

Marmeladof and the society in general define her as a registered prostitute since she carries the ticket the government imposed at the time as a strategy to combat some venereal diseases, especially syphilis, exposing her publically and branding her as target of rejection, discrimination and scorn. For example, "Alexandrovna and Dounia did not greet Sonia because they knew her by reputation" (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 181)

After Raskolnikov finds out Sonia unwillingly accepted the path of prostitution as the only possible way to support her family, he feels sympathy and admiration for her, but also envy. Sonia is the warm human, compassionate, charitable aspect of Raskolnikov's character. He wants to prove that she is not the only one capable of sacrifice. He also made a sacrifice when he gave up his university studies in order to support his mother and sister. Yet, he knows that a purer soul than his exists.

Although each act of love Sonia performs moves Raskolnikov to think he is walking in the right direction, he definitely is not. Sonia is the inspiration that pushes Raskolnikov to the act of murder. Raskolnikov's state of confusion causes him to amble constantly on a path of indecisiveness. He does not know whether he wants to do good or bad, but he definitely knows he wants to play someone else.

Sonia unconsciously plays the other character of his Yin Yan, the two seemingly contrary yet interconnected and interdependent forces within him. Part of him wants to be as good and compassionate as she is, yet the other part wants recognition for his acts of compassion.

The novel narrates how Sonia advises Raskolnikov to confess his crime to society, kneeling and holding a cross and kissing the ground he had stained with blood. However, Raskolnikov does not do it. It is not yet the moment.

In a similar episode, Raskolnikov and his group of fellows were captured and sentenced to death. They were given a cross to kiss, the chance to confess to a priest; the soldiers took aim, and held their positions. At that moment, a messenger arrived, saying the tsar had granted a pardon. It was not his time yet either.

To understand Sonia's decisive impact in Raskolnikov's transformation, it is necessary to unwrap the theory of the mirror proposed by Jacques Lacan. This theory considers others as indispensable in the construction of the self since the flaws as well as the merits of others come to be visible to those who unconsciously share the same qualities. A character can detect in others and blame others for the shameful traits he may possess but deny in himself.

The traits which Raskolnikov unconsciously admires in Sonia reflect the traits he himself lacks and desires to possess, such as his disproportionate desire to be accepted and loved. Sonia does not struggle to fit into society or to gain others' consent or approval. She only cares about the well-being of others. She overlooks others' flaws and belittles herself in an attempt to achieve the happiness and completeness of those around her. Her harmless and pure acts spearhead Raskolnikov to unconsciously commit a despicable act, one which he justifies as being done for the good of society, but consequently to seek the solemn peace provided by forgiveness and love, the peace of redemption.

The second step in the process of Raskolnikov's transformation is the way Raskolnikov splits his personality as a way to counterattack his emerging foreboding since his interior voice trembles and tells him to come up with a plan for him not to be trapped, not in the physical matter of freedom or physical punishment, but by the callous trap of guilt. So, duality is the answer to soften or free him from guilt.

To decipher Raskolnikov's personality or his psychological core demands the understanding of his major principles, his understanding of concepts such as morality, freedom and justice, it is useful to keep in mind his name: in Russian, *raskol* means "split." After committing the crime, Raskolnikov begins a struggle to overcome his guilt and self-loathing. He tries to love people, but at the same time he wants to be free from them and alone. He is the representation of love and hatred at the same time. He loves humanity, but he is capable of murder.

The concept of duality is not only a trait of Raskolnikov, but also a motif throughout the novel. At the beginning of the story, Raskolnikov has not eaten in *two days*. At the pawnbroker's house, there are *two gates* and *two courtyards*. He last wrote his mom *two months* before. He meets the abused drunk girl in the park at *two* in the afternoon. The pawnbroker is wearing *two crosses*. Raskolnikov is more than just two characters. He is a combination of light and obscurity, love and

hate. His name itself means “split,” which gives a clear hint of his essence. There are then, two selves in him: the first one is the rational, self-willed man capable of murdering for the defense of his convictions, even when it transgresses the laws of traditional morality and sentiments. The second Raskolnikov is compassionate, charitable man capable of helping others, a Raskolnikov capable of loving.

His dualistic mind and personality puzzles him as well as those who are close to him. He goes backward and forward, oscillating between good and bad, hatred and love. He loves Sonia’s suffering, her life of martyrdom; however, he does not want his sister to follow the same path. “I wanted to help my sister,” he says. “I wanted to save her from sacrificing herself for my sake, wanted to protect my own future and go back to university, get a job one day, marry and have children” (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 39).

The duality, the oscillation between good and bad, in Raskolnikov’s character constitutes his most outstanding and intriguing trait. Thus, he is the perfect example that every good quality has its bad side, and nothing that is good can come into the world directly without producing a corresponding evil.

The Battle of Waterloo was a moment of total humiliation for Napoleon, yet a moment of glory for the British. Napoleon’s empire had come to an end. The disgrace of some meant the triumph of others. Raskolnikov shifts between periods

of euphoria or to periods of depression. He fights to do good, but a stronger voice leads him to do bad or react indifferently, which comes to the same end, as depicted when he comes upon a drunk girl: "I saw he was watching her and following her, only I hindered him, and now he is waiting until I go away. How can we keep him from her?" Then he thinks:

"Why should I interfere? Is it for me to help? Have I any right to help?"

(Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 270).

Raskolnikov's dualistic mind is a kind of strategy to escape guilt.

He avoids it by assuming the character of someone else. What could be more humiliating for a superman than accepting the failure of his theory, and his existence? So Raskolnikov helps others not to be benevolent, but to try to escape his guilt. Hence the explanation that his criminal actions reflect an inner generosity and decency. He explains them to Sonia by asserting, "I only killed a miserable creature, a louse to society that no one would miss," (Dostoevsky, 2008, P. 13).

Wanting to sound like a benevolent philanthropist concerned about society's welfare, ready to sacrifice himself for the benefit of others, eager to be a hero.

Nevertheless, his plan is not an act of solidarity at all, but rather an egocentric plan aimed at giving him respect and power.

Finally, the third step in the Raskolnikov's transformational process is his acceptance of confession and humiliation as a Christian necessity to achieve a real state of forgiveness, redemption and salvation. The will to suffer finally leads him to the stage of repentance and humility when he realizes he is not an extraordinary man but a common one. After a nihilist view of life which led him to rejection of religious beliefs and a God-centered life, Raskolnikov finds that human beings must depend on the figure of God, in whatever the interpretation be. God is the link in the essential chain dependency of life. And this is the turning point, the saving grace for Raskolnikov in his life of sorrow, self-pity, loneliness, and guilt. Humiliation is the only possible way to achieve a worthy life. Sonia offers a model of hope and truth in Raskolnikov's life.

Now that Raskolnikov has accepted and endured humiliation in the eyes of society, he is honest enough to judge himself and understand that real humiliation, complete humiliation, comes from redefining and understanding in depth the origin of his most sinful acts and beliefs.

So there is only one means of salvation: make yourself responsible for your actions, just as when Marmeladov accepts his disgraceful appearance as a means of keeping his shame visible and endure suffering and punishment. He seeks only

the punishment and pity of a wife who beats him and belittles him, and he ends up throwing himself under the feet of an aristocrat's horses.

Raskolnikov finally understands, not through his own reasoning but because of Sonia's endless act of love, that true life is only possible and worthy when a real acceptance of and redemption from sins and pride is made.

Sonia has not thought of changing his mind because she really loves him and even though she knows he is not right, she stays loyal to him. She does not deter him directly, but her profound, pure and worthy acts of love awaken Raskolnikov from that state of numbness in which he was immersed. Thus, Raskolnikov is finally able to escape from his false self-image and from the deadly example of Svidrigalov, who had offered himself as a false messiah, and following the much more arduous path of Sonia's name, which translates to "wisdom."

Raskolnikov has then accepted the cup of true penitence, which is the beginning of the path to grace. Which means not a stage but a condition which must continue permanently, the constant attitude of those who truly aspire to union with God.

After he is sentenced to eight years of hard labor, Sonia tells him she will move to Siberia to be close to him. Inspired by Sonia's self-abnegation, he experiences an epiphany: repentance and true love are revealed to him. He has

found the key to unlock the chains of hatred and inconformity that have him trapped in a meaningless life and Raskolnikov finally achieves his transformation. However, for a short time, Raskolnikov remains proud of crime and alienated from humanity as he was before his confession, but he eventually realizes he loves Sonia and expresses remorse for his crime.

Siberia, the place where Raskolnikov redeems himself and finds a sense of self-worth, plays an important role in the construction of the association between Raskolnikov and his new life. On his long and tortuous journey to Omsk, Siberia, Raskolnikov follows a path of agony, suffering and torment which is not distant to the torment he went through in his state of madness and denial and confusion after committing the crime. His exile, his punishment, which was supposed to torture him and make him experience the worst sort of suffering, becomes nothing compared with the state of agony he endured after committing the crime.

Omsk becomes the new representation of the dualistic feature in Raskolnikov. It seems to represent his end, his death; however, it turns out to represent his rebirth, through the fascinating and pure figure of love through Sonia.

Sonia is the representation of God, the salvation, the gateway of grace in Raskolnikov's life. Alfred L. Bem states in the problem of guilt in Dostoevsky's fiction "every human being, though he may be stuck in dirt up to his neck, is really

living only when he suffers and consequently needs Christ". - "God exists because he is necessary, because he who is truly alive, that is who lives in the world of suffering, cannot live without his faith in God" (Bem, 1975, P. 628).

Raskolnikov finally achieves rebirth, the beginning of a real and re-awakened life by accepting the premise stated by St Mark, the monk: "Unless a man gives himself entirely to the cross, in a spirit of humility and self-abasement; unless he casts himself down to be trampled underfoot by all and despised, accepting injustice, contempt and mockery he cannot become a true Christian." (Russel, 2003, P. 231). Raskolnikov is finally able to escape from his self-image of being the messiah, the redeemer. By acknowledging a force higher than himself, he has rejoined the community of humanity. He has recognized himself as a fellow sufferer who is a wanderer in the hands of God.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Crime and Punishment* explores the character of Raskolnikov, a complicated man who incarnates both good and evil. A confused and idealist man, he holds firm precepts of equality, peace, and love, while at the same time incarnates the act of vengeance, hatred and murder.

The duality of the characters comprises the cornerstone of the novel. While Sonia is a prostitute, she is depicted as humble, meek, and unworthy of hatred, but rather victim of the circumstances.

Despite dealing with the act of murder, *Crime and Punishment* does not focus on the murder itself, but on the consequences brought about by the crime: the matter of guilt, the existential crisis, and the torment the life of Raskolnikov comes to be, his hesitation to confess his crime and his ideas of a super or extraordinary man as an attempt to justify or lessen his deed.

The transformation of Raskolnikov is from an isolated, confused and hideous man to a humble, righteous and kind man, saved from the path of evil by Sonia's pure acts of love during his exile in Siberia.

The novel is a warning to the shocking and drowning Russian communist society that attached to the egocentrism of reasoning, defied God's existence and succumbed into the craving for power.

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