FROM REVOLUTIONARY OUTCAST
TO A MAN OF GOD

Dostoevsky at 200

August 16 - December 17, 2021
University of Iowa Main Library Gallery
I love Dostoevsky. Deeply, profoundly, and crushing. It was not a love at first sight. In my teens and twenties, I was infatuated with Pushkin and Lermontov and Turgenev and Tolstoy and Dumas and Stendhal and Hugo and Goethe. Dostoevsky came later, in my thirties, when the heart learned grief and the mind became weary of doubt. If I could sum up Dostoevsky in one statement, it would be through the words of one of my favorite Dostoevsky characters, Grushenka in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “The world is a good place. We may be bad, but the world is a good place. We are bad and good, both bad and good...” Needless to say, Grushenka makes these weighty pronouncements in a state of profound inebriation in a chapter entitled “Delirium.” So Dostoevsky!!!

I see myself in countless Dostoevsky characters - absurd, flawed, and miserable humans stumbling about the pages of these sprawling tomes seeking understanding, forgiveness, and love. I am Versilov from *The Adolescent* with my boundless arch-Russian love for Europe; I am Grushenka and Katerina from *The Brothers Karamazov* with my stubborn and destructive pride; I am Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment* with my mind’s ability to superimpose rational solutions where the human heart would be a better judge; I am Aglaya from *The Idiot* with my anachronistic faith in chivalry and romance; and I am Sonya from *Crime and Punishment* with my hysterical belief that all will be well in the end. But first and foremost, I am Stepan Verkhovensky from *Demons*, a bumbling intellectual clinging to the shadow of the cross.

My students find these novels eerily relatable precisely because Dostoevsky, with uncanny and unflinching insight, managed to depict the totality of humanity, never shying away from the horror concealed in the human soul, but always keeping faith in the light. Paraphrasing the gritty wisdom of Grushenka who exclaimed, “Tomorrow the convent, but today we’ll dance,” I declare—“Tomorrow eternity, but today—Dostoevsky!!!”

**FROM THE CURATOR**

**DR. ANNA BARKER** is an adjunct assistant professor in the Asian and Slavic Languages and Literature department at the University of Iowa. She received her Ph.D. in comparative literature and translation studies from the University of Iowa in 2002. Dr. Barker has taught several courses on campus, including Russian Literature in Translation: 1860-1917, Introduction to Russian Culture: 1613-1917, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Pact with the Devil, and Wonder Woman Unleashed: A Hero for Our Times. She is also an instructor for UI First Year Seminars and UI Senior College, and gives annual lectures dedicated to Metropolitan Opera Live in HD broadcasts for the University of Iowa Opera Studies Forum.

Many community cultural events have been organized by Dr. Barker over the years. These have included public readings of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, and *Crime and Punishment*; screenings of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky film adaptations at local cinema FilmScene; and contributions to WorldCanvass, a discussion series produced by University of Iowa International Programs. Dr. Barker leads free online literature courses in her spare time, the most recent of which is 100 Days of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Participants from all over the world have enjoyed reading such classics as *The Decameron*, *Paradise Lost*, *Gilgamesh*, and *War and Peace* with her through these courses.

Dr. Barker has served on the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art Members’ Council (2011-17), the Riverside Theatre Board of Directors (2016-19), and is currently serving on the Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature board.


   Note from the curator: Commissioned by the Russian Empress Catherine II, French sculptor Etienne Maurice Falconet’s equestrian statue of Peter I is one of the greatest symbols of Saint Petersburg. It was named The Bronze Horseman after the 1833 poem by Alexander Pushkin. In his 20s, after his graduation from the Military Engineering School, Dostoevsky lived within minutes of walking from the statue.


Note from the curator: This map shows the cities associated with Dostoevsky’s years in Siberia: Omsk, Semipalatinsk, and Tobolsk.

**CONVICT** Каторжник

Dostoevsky served his four-year sentence in a labor camp in the Siberian city of Omsk, which he later described as follows:

“In summer, intolerable closeness; in winter, unendurable cold. All the floors were rotten. Filth on the floors an inch thick; one could slip and fall... We were packed like herrings in a barrel... There was no room to turn around. From dusk to dawn it was impossible not to behave like pigs... Fleas, lice, and black beetles by the bushel...”


28. Icon of Saint Nicholas. 19th century. A family heirloom from the private collection of Dr. Anna Barker.


33. Icon of Saint George and the Dragon. 19th century. A family heirloom from the collection of Dr. Anna Barker.


   Note from the curator: *Demons* is sometimes translated as *The Possessed* or *The Devils*.


38. Icon of the Holy Mother of God. 19th century. A family heirloom from the private collection of Dr. Anna Barker.


**INSPIRED BY DOSTOEVSKY**


**FAMILY Семья**


52. Ibid.


**FURTHER READING**

All books in the square case are from the private collection of Dr. Anna Barker and are meant to encourage additional reading. Some books are about Dostoevsky, and others draw inspiration from his life or literary works. These editions are on display in the exhibition:


**SACRED SOUNDS**

Curator-suggested listening:


