

The Fevered Body as a Narrative: Psychosomatic Distress and Criminality in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

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Abstract

Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* not only present Raskolnikov as a typical murderer but also explores how the act of murder gets inscribed in the body and the psyche of the murderer as well. It is interesting to note that he commits the crime in his conscious state thinking himself as "The extraordinary Man". Yet somehow the ripples of this act manifests involuntarily. Though the crime has been rationalized by Raskolnikov yet the body refuses to abide by this rationality. The argument is structured on the somatic response that has been caused by his psychological distress. The series of fever, seizures and illness can be understood as a somatic manifestation that was caused by the heinous crime that he had committed. Here, the argument deviates from the character analysis of Raskolnikov but rather observes how the body enters into an automated mode sending signals of delirium, hallucinations and alerted consciousness. These symptoms are however connected to the psychosomatic responses. In my paper, I have tried to entail how the fevered body itself becomes a mode of narration. I have also incorporated the Italian criminologist's Cesare Lombroso "Theory of Criminology", who talks about criminality in terms of the inherent biological and physical nature of the criminals which contradictorily has been challenged by Dostoevsky. While Lombroso locates criminality on the basis of morphology of the criminal body, Dostoevsky's relocates it the body's involuntary responses. However, the main argument is based on the connection of criminality, psychological distress and psychosomatic responses. A close reading of the novel, gives an insight on an incident when Doctor Zossimov attends to the condition of Raskolnikov, apparently he finds no organic explanation to connect to his severe condition. The recurring hallucinations of Raskolnikov represent the involuntary psychosomatic responses reacting to the stress and guilt of murdering someone. This state of psychosomatic automation or over activation now becomes an involuntary site of confession. The fevered body takes the role of narration of the crime he had committed while simultaneously his consciousness tries to suppress the entirety of his action trying to rationalize and justify the act.

Keywords

Crime, psychosomatic, fever, body, criminals, murder, narration.