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## Dostoevsky and the Family Novel

In 1876 Dostoevsky announced in his *Writer's Diary*: "For a long time now I have had the goal of writing a novel about children in Russia today, and about their fathers too, of course, in their mutual relationship of today [...] I will take fathers and children from every level of Russian society I can and will follow the children from their earliest childhood" (22:7). Family is undeniably at the heart of both Dostoevsky's final novels, *The Adolescent* (1875) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), but could either of these works be considered a "family novel"? This paper will explore Dostoevsky's novelization of the family in relation to the genre of family novel as it was understood in the late nineteenth century. The "family novel" as a genre originated in England and the English used it to probe issues of particular concern to English society: lineage, inheritance, gender roles, and the patriarchal order. It was commonly authored by women writers who focused on the "marriage plot." Despite Dostoevsky's shared focus on family relations, his final novels (and Russian literature in general) would seem to have little in common with these English family plots. Indeed, according to some scholars, there are no Russian family novels aside from *Anna Karenina*. Beginning from English definitions of "family novel" in the nineteenth century, this paper will explore how Dostoevsky built on existing English models, while expanding the genre's scope to make it address the moral, social and spiritual questions of deepest concern to him. Rather than a Darwinian focus on lineage, he explored the moral duties that bind the generations; rather than siblings aiding each other in courtship matters, he exposed the "active love" needed for brothers and sisters to unite in the face of the decline of the traditional Russian family.