



**Dostoevsky's Secrets: Reading Against the Grain  
(Studies in Russian Literature and Theory  
(Hardcover))**

*Carol Apollonio*

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When Fyodor Dostoevsky proclaims that he is a "realist in a higher sense," it is because the facts are irrelevant to his truth. And it is in this spirit that Apollonio approaches Dostoevsky's work, reading through the facts--the text--of his canonical novels for the deeper truth that they distort, mask, and, ultimately, disclose. This sort of reading against the grain is, Apollonio suggests, precisely what these works, with their emphasis on the hidden and the private and their narrative reliance on secrecy and slander, demand.

In each work Apollonio focuses on one character or theme caught in the compromising, self-serving, or distorting narrative lens. Who, she asks, really exploits whom in *Poor Folk*? Does "White Nights" ever escape the dream state? What is actually lost--and what is won--in *The Gambler*? Is Svidrigailov, of such ill repute in *Crime and Punishment*, in fact an exemplar of generosity and truth? Who, in *Demons*, is truly demonic? Here we see how Dostoevsky has crafted his novels to help us see these distorting filters and develop the critical skills to resist their anaesthetic effect. Apollonio's readings show how Dostoevsky's paradoxes counter and usurp our comfortable assumptions about the way the world is and offer access to a deeper, immanent essence. His works gain power when we read beyond the primitive logic of external appearances and recognize the deeper life of the text.

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