Introduction: Filming Russian Classics—Challenges and Opportunities

Alexander Burry

Russian literature has occupied a special position as an object of cinematic adaptation in the hundred-year-plus history of film. The invention and development of the medium closely followed a period of robust literary and cultural achievements rare for any nation. Early in the 1800s, Aleksandr Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, and Mikhail Lermontov launched the so-called Golden Age of poetry and prose. In the latter part of the century, Ivan Turgenev, Fedor Dostoevskii, and Lev Tolstoi established the international dominance of the Russian novel through compulsively readable narratives that featured bold generic experimentation and a nearly obsessive focus on what the critic Mikhail Mikhailov called the "accursed questions": the meaning of life, the existence or non-existence of God, and the potential impact of revolutionary transformation of society, among others. Anton Chekhov, toward the end of the century, adapted these concerns to the short story and the play. By the modernist period, beginning after the assassination of Tsar Aleksandr II in 1881, Russian literature was recognized as ascendant in the West and elsewhere, with Turgenev (the most popular Russian writer in Europe, with ties to Gustave Flaubert and the Goncourt Brothers), Dostoevskii, Tolstoi, Chekhov, and other writers translated into all European languages and, in the case of Dostoevskii in particular, attaining cult-like status throughout the continent. The early interest in Russian literature beyond its borders established it as a leading world literature. This international recognition grew in the course of the twentieth century and continues to the present day, as writers such as Mikhail Bulgakov, Boris Pasternak, Vladimir Nabokov, and Viktor Pelevin produced narratives that achieved massive appeal far beyond Russia.

At the same time, nineteenth-century Russian writers brought an unusual degree of contemporaneity to problems of modernity that followed decades after their publication. The 1860s radical movement, both created and praised by writers such as Nikolai Chernyshevskii and critiqued by such figures as

Dostoevskii, a half-century later would eventually help inspire the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 that transformed twentieth-century history and politics. Tolstoyanism, as a philosophical and religious expression of the universal brotherhood, love of one's enemies, and passive resistance to evil that in some way shape all of his greatest fictional works, was enormously influential on Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent rebellion against British colonial rule of India, and through him, on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s peaceful marches for civil rights in the United States. Chekhov's drama helped contribute to the establishment of a school of acting, developed by Konstantin Stanislavskii and the Moscow Art Theater, that continues to impact the training of some of the most prominent actors worldwide. Vsevolod Meierkhol'd and Michael Chekhov (nephew of the writer), disciples who departed from Stanislavskii's brand of theater and whose careers were shaped by adaptations of classic Russian literature, also left their mark on American and European theater and film. In other ways, too many to be listed here, Russian literature and culture have influenced world culture, and this universality suggests one of the reasons for the recurring migration of Russian literary narratives into world cinema.

The broad range of social, political, and religious questions posed by Russian writers, combined with their ongoing contemporary relevance, accounts in part for the wide variety of directors—many of them discussed in this book—who produced films based on Russian literary works. These filmmakers include such luminaries as Sergei Eisenstein, Akira Kurosawa, Robert Bresson, Louis Malle, Luchino Visconti, Bernardo Bertolucci, Nikita Mikhalkov, Sergei Bondarchuk, and many others. In some of these cases, Russian literature has so influenced the careers of directors as to affect permanently their style and thematic emphasis. Thus film adaptation of Russian literature has played a central role in extending the latter's influence on world culture, as well as the continuing development of Russia's own culture and politics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is particularly the case in the era of Vladimir Putin, which has seen a renewed call for filmed versions of the classics, usually in the form of televised serials. Directors such as Vladimir Bortko, who produced highly popular serials of Dostoevskii's *The Idiot* (2003) and Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (2005), followed by a feature film of Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba* (2009), have attempted to enhance Russia's national prestige through maximally "faithful" settings of its classic works. As the last of these films shows, adaptation can have political consequences far beyond reminding Russians of their literary heritage and rallying their national pride: Bortko's decision to have the Ukrainian Cossacks speak Russian, the anti-Polish elements of the story, and the director's own vociferous support of Putin have led to accusations that the film is mere pro-regime propaganda.

Particularly for Russian writers and filmmakers, then, adaptation should be seen in part as a political act, never simply an insulated aesthetic exercise,

since these artists have so often striven to make their works politically relevant; at different times in their history, they have felt a greater imperative to do so than artists in other nations, who worked under less strict censorship laws. As an autocratic nation, Imperial Russia notably lacked opportunities for political participation even by the highest stratum of society, in contrast to the constitutional monarchies of the time in Britain, France, and other West European nations. In the absence of outlets for political participation, writers sensed an urgent need to convey political ideas through literature, even if great skill and tact were required to circumnavigate the onerous, ever-present demands of imperial censorship, and to avoid arrest and exile. In the Soviet period, particularly at its darkest point under Stalin, a different politicization of literature took place, as writers and filmmakers (as well as all other artists) were required to support and promote both the larger goal—the path to a Communist society—and the particular means of achieving this goal at any given time, from agricultural collectivization to five-year plans to victory over the Nazis in World War II. As several essays in this volume show, adaptation has often been dictated by such political necessities, especially during the Soviet period.

Despite the far-reaching reverberations of these literary works and the films based on them, scholarship on the transposition of Russian texts into film is relatively meager. The major exception is the publications stemming from a May 2002 conference at the University of Surrey, organized by Stephen Hutchings and Anat Vernitski. Ten papers from this conference became articles in the spring and summer 2004 special issues of *Russian Studies in Literature*, introduced by John Givens. Others were published in Hutchings and Vernitski's 2005 volume, which covers Russian-language films ranging from reworkings of Soviet-era fiction such as Dmitrii Furmanov's *Chapaev* and Vasilii Grossman's "In the Town of Berdichev" to adaptations of classic novels such as *The Idiot* and Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*. Other than these collections, however, most studies of filmed Russian literary texts have been confined to separate, individual articles.

The present volume attempts to address this lacuna as well as extend the scholarly conversation through essays on a broad selection of film adaptations of Russian texts. Moreover, in contrast to the aforementioned Hutchings/Vernitski collection and *Russian Studies in Literature* issues, our contributors analyze films by non-Russian as well as Russian directors, in order to explore the worldwide impact of Russian literature. In taking this approach, the study also seeks new directions in understanding the phenomenon of adaptation itself, particularly in light of the criticism flourishing in this field during the past two decades. *Border Crossing: Russian Literature into Film* derives from a conference titled *Adaptation: Russian Text into Film*, which took place at The Ohio State University in May 2013. This event explored a variety of the multiple possible interactions between Russian writers and filmmakers within and outside of

Russia; all of the present contributions first appeared as papers at this conference, with the exceptions of Yuri Leving's and Alastair Renfrew's republished articles, respectively, on *Anna Karenina* and *Lieutenant Kizhe*. The conference aimed not at an exhaustive survey of film adaptation of Russian literature, but a discussion of films organized around the theme of border crossing, on which more later in this introduction. For that reason, the present collection of essays derived from the conference papers presents what may seem to be a curious cross-section of adaptations. The oddities include both the actual chapters (three on films of Bresson, for example, and two on *Pickpocket*) and seeming omissions of key texts and authors (there is no extended discussion of adaptations of Tolstoi's *War and Peace* and Dostoevskii's *The Brothers Karamazov*, for example, or the many films based on Chekhov's plays). The collection coheres, we hope, as a sample of the many ways Russian literary texts have been transported to different nations, time periods, and social and historical contexts, and in the process of doing so acquired radically new semantic values as they entered new cultural sign systems.

Maybe this goes without saying, but scholarly opinion is not at a point in the academic exploration of how culture influences film adaptations that we can establish hierarchies or even make definitive claims until more research has been done, especially on the impact of Russian literature in world cinema. It is for this reason that we have made these chapters accessible to the widest range of scholars and students in more than one field. We believe that Slavic and film scholars, graduate students, and undergraduates will find different purposes for the chapters in this book, but, most importantly, that they all will be spurred to further exploration. In particular, the concluding chapter is not your typical summary of theory and the preceding arguments, providing a final summation. In an attempt to overcome the fact that this or that text and/or movie was not included in the preceding chapters; to give a nod to the fact that the essays only cover literature from 1844 to 1961 (although the real focus is the various cinematic adaptations up to the present day), the conclusion attempts to expand the conversation and to invite students and scholars to explore all of the other research possibilities.

ADAPTATION STUDIES TODAY

Although adaptation studies is by now firmly entrenched as a subgenre of film studies, its path toward scholarly respectability has been rocky, and in many ways remains a work in progress. Indeed, criticism of films based on literature has lagged far behind other artistic and intellectual areas that have considered multiple versions of the same narrative or theme. In literary studies, for instance, deconstructionist critics, beginning nearly half a century

ago, undermined the very notion of an "original" text that should be given priority over subsequent versions. Although deconstruction as a philosophy and approach to literary interpretation, of course, experienced a strong backlash, our sense of the stability of forms, rhetoric, and language has been permanently affected. This has direct consequences for our understanding of adaptations, which by nature involve at least two instantiations of the same basic narrative. Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and other poststructuralists, in their undermining of the idea of a stable original of which copies are made, at the very least force us to view the idea of an "original" work skeptically, and to question hierarchical relations of authority between such a work and its successors.

As Robert Stam and other critics have pointed out, such theories should have challenged the tendency to view adaptations negatively in relation to their source texts; however, until relatively recently, they have not done so. The binary opposition of "original" and "adaptation," and the illusion of a hierarchical order between a source text and films (or operas, or other literary works) based on it, has been notoriously slow to recede. Perhaps because of the very fact that—despite their obvious medium-based differences—film can "tell a story" in a way recognizably similar to a novel on a superficial level, reviewers and audiences, if not academic writers, continue to some degree to measure the success of the film by its success in capturing the letter or spirit (whatever that may entail) of the source text.[1]

In the past two or three decades, however, critics in this field have made tremendous strides in undoing the persistent but limited approach known as "fidelity criticism."[2] These attempts to substitute more productive ways of looking at such films have included various approaches. In different ways, such theorists as Geoffrey Wagner, Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, and Dudley Andrew each proposed categories that could be used to distinguish different relations between a source text (what the French structuralist Gérard Genette called the "hypotext") and its cinematic reworking (the "hypertext"). These categories can be very useful in measuring the distance filmmakers travel from their source text in adapting it for the screen. However, in their very focus on this distance, these critics reinforce—albeit in opposition to their stated aims—the basic premise of fidelity criticism: that films should be evaluated in terms of how closely they hew to their literary sources. Moreover, the very premise that films can be expected to replicate their hypotexts in any complete way is faulty, as George Bluestone pointed out in his seminal 1957 study of adaptation. In his 1996 volume on British films of novels, Brian McFarlane revisits this question, proposing that adaptation be viewed as convergence and intertextuality, and borrowing Roland Barthes's distinction between narrative functions proper and indices to differentiate between transferrable and non-transferrable elements of a source text.

This notion of adaptation as intertextuality proved especially fruitful for critics of the following decade. Robert Stam, using Bakhtinian dialogue and deconstructionist theory, argues against the rigid, seemingly automatic favoring of hypotext over hypertext. "In a Derridean perspective," he notes, "the auratic prestige of the original does not run counter to the copy; rather, the prestige of the original is *created* by the copies, without which the very idea of originality has no meaning."[3] Instead, Stam analyzes adaptation as "dialogic intertextuality." He also emphasizes that such adaptations trigger a plethora of associations, rather than being restricted to the ostensible source text indicated by the title or basic narrative. As David Kranz points out, the idea of infinite intertextual connections, taken to an extreme, can obscure the central role of the source text. According to Kranz, "we need to find a satisfactory mean or range between the essentialistic extreme of fidelity criticism as depicted by its detractors and the relativistic extremes of post-structuralist theory."[4] Nevertheless, Stam's proposal to view adaptation as a dialogue of numerous intertexts—not simply an original/adaptation relationship that almost invariably asserts the source text's primacy—proves crucial to understanding such films, as demonstrated in all the essays in the present volume.

Another recent critic, Linda Hutcheon, similarly seeks to define adaptations in terms of their intertextual engagement. She defines such a work as "an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art."[5] By including a variety of types of adaptation in her study in addition to film—opera, visual art, book covers, comic books, etc.—and noting the sheer numbers of these works, she is able to inquire into the undeniable appeal of adaptations, despite the frequent harsh judgments against them. Claiming that the omnipresence of adaptation reveals a pleasure based on "the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise," Hutcheon affirms that such works need to be evaluated in terms of the adapter's skill and creativity, rather than his or her fidelity to the given source text.[6]

Other critics similarly call upon adaptation studies to address broader cultural questions. Thomas Leitch argues that the study of adaptation is an ideal approach to literacy in the sense of active engagement with literature and film, or "illustrations of the incessant process of rewriting as critical reading."[7] He investigates the process of adaptation and the various economic, political, technological, and cultural questions it raises, rather than evaluating their fidelity to source texts. And in a 2012 study of Italian films based on American novels, Cristina Della Coletta defines adaptation as encounters across not only media, but also cultures and traditions. Applying Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, she views adaptation as an act of estrangement that tests our prejudices and challenges our habitual interpretations. Adaptations, she remarks, involve "a conjuncture of production and consumption that can be defined only by

the plurality of its voices, the expandability of its borders, and the complex interplay of cultural forces and ideological constructs that operate within its changing boundaries."[8] We take such critics' attention to these processes as a starting point for our volume.

ADAPTATION AS CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Our approach in this volume differs in two major ways from those of most other film adaptation scholars. First, rather than focusing on the inevitable loss and gain that takes place when works are transposed from one medium into another, which almost inevitably leads to fruitless discussions of "fidelity," we take a culturological approach, using the films to describe how cultural texts become adaptable through semantic shifts as they enter different temporal, spatial, social, and historical contexts. More specifically, the focus of this collection of essays is the transportation of Russian texts across borders into new cinematic territories. As mentioned, the literary theorist Gérard Genette first suggested the term "hypertextuality" for when a text B (hypertext) originates from a text A (hypotext). Genette refers to this process as a "transformation."[9] Stam builds on Genette's theoretical language by suggesting that film adaptations of literary texts are involved in this dialogical process in which the hypotext (the original text) generates hypertexts (elaborations of the original).[10] This assertion frees one from a line-by-line comparison of text and film, emphasizing each presentation as only a *reading* of the hypotext, not as a successful or unsuccessful copy. Both hypotexts and their cinematic hypertexts, in this sense, "participate in an ever-renewed and estranging dialogue *across* temporal distances, signifying systems, and cultural domains."[11]

This approach allows for the fact that when a Russian literary text, with all of its embedded cultural meanings, is transported to another country or time or both, these meanings are foreign and must be redefined to correspond with the new spatial and temporal territories. In this process of redefinition, new cultural realities will transform those original semantic meanings. Significantly, in order to get from the hypotext to the final cinematic version, there might be several hypertexts building upon each other, each hypertext making subtle cultural distinctions. For example, the hypotext is translated into French or English. Will the French and English translations be exactly the same? Obviously not, as the cultures are very different and the way of perceiving the world is not exactly the same. In this instance, the translation is the first hypertext—when Constance Garnett refused to translate Dostoevskii's vulgarities, already cultural and social norms were forced upon the original. From possibly two different translations of the hypotext, the scriptwriter will create a new, third hypertext. Tom Stoppard is a well-known playwright and

has written many successful movie scripts including, most recently, *Anna Karenina* (2012). What does a British playwright bring to Tolstoi's novel that explored Russia's "woman question" at the end of the nineteenth century? The rights of women have evolved significantly between Tolstoi's hypotext of the 1870s and Joe Wright's cinematic hypertext (derived from Stoppard's script) of 2012. Audiences probably did not go to the theater to watch how Tolstoi wished to punish Anna for her indiscretions as much as to see an epic romance about a woman trapped by her social and aristocratic status. In this instance, Tolstoi's hypotext generated many hypertexts (translations, scripts, and nearly a dozen cinematic versions), all of these hypertexts struggling with elements of the original in order to say something unique about British, American, or Soviet society; their own taboos; their own cultural understandings of fidelity, love, and passion in 1935, 1948, 1967, 1997, and 2012.

Moreover, we do not confine ourselves to one national tradition, or even a straightforward comparison of Russian texts with films in another culture. Rather, each of our contributors examines the multiple cross-cultural connections inherent in all of these literature/film dialogues. A discussion of Russian–French or Russian–American "collaborations," for instance, may also involve attention to other influential literary or cinematic traditions (the influence of Albert Camus on Bresson in his reworking of *Crime and Punishment*, for instance, or the impact of Nazism and even the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch on Rainer Werner Fassbinder's adaptation of Nabokov's *Despair*). Cinematic transpositions of Russian literature, in this light, can be analyzed not just as a two-way border crossing between two nations (or two periods of Russian history), but also as a kind of crossroads in which multiple semantic fields intersect, exchanging and shifting meanings in the process.

The study of culture often concentrates on the semiotics or sign systems of a particular culture's understanding of itself. Each country has its own concept of *freedom*, for example. Is the concept of freedom the same in France as it is in the United States? What about the concept of *democracy*? Russian democracy is not the same as American democracy, for historical, political, and social reasons. In Putin's Russia, democracy has the remaining stain from the transition from a one-party political system to a free-wheeling democracy of the 1990s that also included a lurch toward a free-market economy, banditry, corruption, and the rise of the oligarchs. Russian democracy has been transformed into an autocratic authoritarianism under Putin who brought *law and order* to the nation in the twenty-first century. Although most Russians would argue that Putin was democratically elected, they would not say that this was the same system of political representation as that found in the United States. Therefore, is an American scriptwriter or filmmaker presenting concepts of

freedom and democracy, with his or her own semantic understandings of these concepts, able to depict the Russian version accurately? Will the American filmmaker portray it in the same way that a Russian filmmaker might? In fact, there is no *right* way to depict democracy just as there is no right way to depict the contents of a novel by Tolstoi. All filmmakers reflect their own semantic understandings of freedom, love, betrayal, democracy, and a whole host of other concepts in a way that makes sense to their own sign systems. The scholarly discussion in this collection begins to untangle some of these issues and asserts that whereas the fidelity question is unproductive, the question of cultural semantics offers fruitful avenues for exploration.

By shifting approaches from a mechanistic evaluation of the film director's degree of fidelity in transferring literary texts to the screen to a broader exploration of the cross-cultural complexity this process entails, we aim to point to broader implications of the genre. As scholars of adaptation, we view our essential task as clarifying the complex cultural semantic language that takes place in the intersection between Russian and world cultures. We use the term "border crossing" in this introduction and throughout the volume to refer to these points of intersection. In focusing on what happens to Russian literary works when they enter new national, temporal, and cultural contexts, we investigate how they are "policed," that is, regulated (sometimes forcibly) by the ideological demands of their new environment. We emphasize the role of ideological, political, and other cultural pressures in the process of recreating literary narratives in another medium. These pressures, we would argue, always take place, whether a Russian literary work is adapted within its own society (such as the films based on works of Chekhov, Iurii Tynianov, and Vasilii Aksenov that will be examined) or in a radically different cultural context, such as the "Hollywoodizations" of *Anna Karenina*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and other classic Russian novels. We hope to illuminate some of the many ways in which Russian literature has found new homes in cinema, and in the process, regenerated itself through fresh meanings that were unforeseen at its conception.

BORDER CROSSINGS

Thomas Leitch's discussion of Hollywood's appropriation of Russia sets the tone for this exploration of border crossing in film adaptation. Citing Della Coletta's discussion of this phenomenon, he examines different ways in which Hollywood films treating not only Russian literature but also the political entity of the Soviet Union involve various patterns of border crossing. As US–Soviet relations changed from the 1940s through the end of the Soviet Union, Hollywood adaptations of both classic Russian literature and Russian

characters and themes reflected these ideological adjustments in various ways. By putting adaptations of literature in the same category as films that make use of US–Soviet political conflicts, cultural imports, etc., Leitch demonstrates that the term does not even have to apply only to straightforward adaptations of literary texts. Indeed, several of the other chapters—especially the two on Bresson's *Pickpocket*—demonstrate that the concept of adaptation can apply to a variety of works, including highly unorthodox films, source texts, and relationships between them.

The chapters that follow Leitch's broad-based discussion concentrate more on particular settings of literary texts, although the contributors address anywhere from one film to many based on a given hypotext. In the chapters by Frederick H. White and Robert Mulcahy, other border crossings from Russia into Hollywood are explored. White analyzes Leonid Andreev's *He Who Gets Slapped*, a 1915 "panpsyche" drama about a failed intellectual who joins the circus; the dramatic action in this particular genre was focused on internal experiences rather than external events. This play turned out to be astonishingly generative for American audiences in different periods, starting in 1924, when filmmaker Victor Sjöström emphasized the play's revenge motif in dramatic fashion, as the hero's betrayers are devoured by a lion at the end of the film. As White points out, the circus served as a particularly apt vehicle for a border crossing, since it offered a great deal of semantic material for exploring the destabilization of social norms. In the 1970 film *The Twelve Chairs*, as Mulcahy shows, a different type of border crossing takes place. Mel Brooks, a Jewish-American director with ancestry from the Pale of Settlement, personalizes the plot of Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov's picaresque novel by adding Jewish motifs and in a sense recreating the imagined Russia of his own heritage. Brooks's combination of "Borscht Belt" humor with numerous Russian and Soviet stereotypes and cultural references attempts, with mixed success, to transport Il'f and Petrov's New Economic Policy-era satire, with its critique of greed and pettiness, to an American audience.

The term "border crossing," however, is hardly restricted to the traversing of geographical boundaries. As the chapters on the films of Aleksandr Faintsimmer, Aleksandr Zarkhi, and Karen Shakhnazarov show, the concept can apply just as easily to Russian settings of Russian works. Border crossings can be temporal as well as geographical. Karen Shakhnazarov's 2009 *Ward no. 6*, in Alexander Burry's analysis, reinterprets Chekhov's story as an exploration not only of the problems of mental illness and imprisonment, but also of degeneration, questioning whether—in the course of over a century—patterns of devolution from generation to generation have ever really ceased. Does Putin's Russia still suffer from the same or a similar hereditary (and national) taint that plagued Chekhov's understanding of his country on the eve of the twentieth century? Significantly, in the Soviet period, even a few

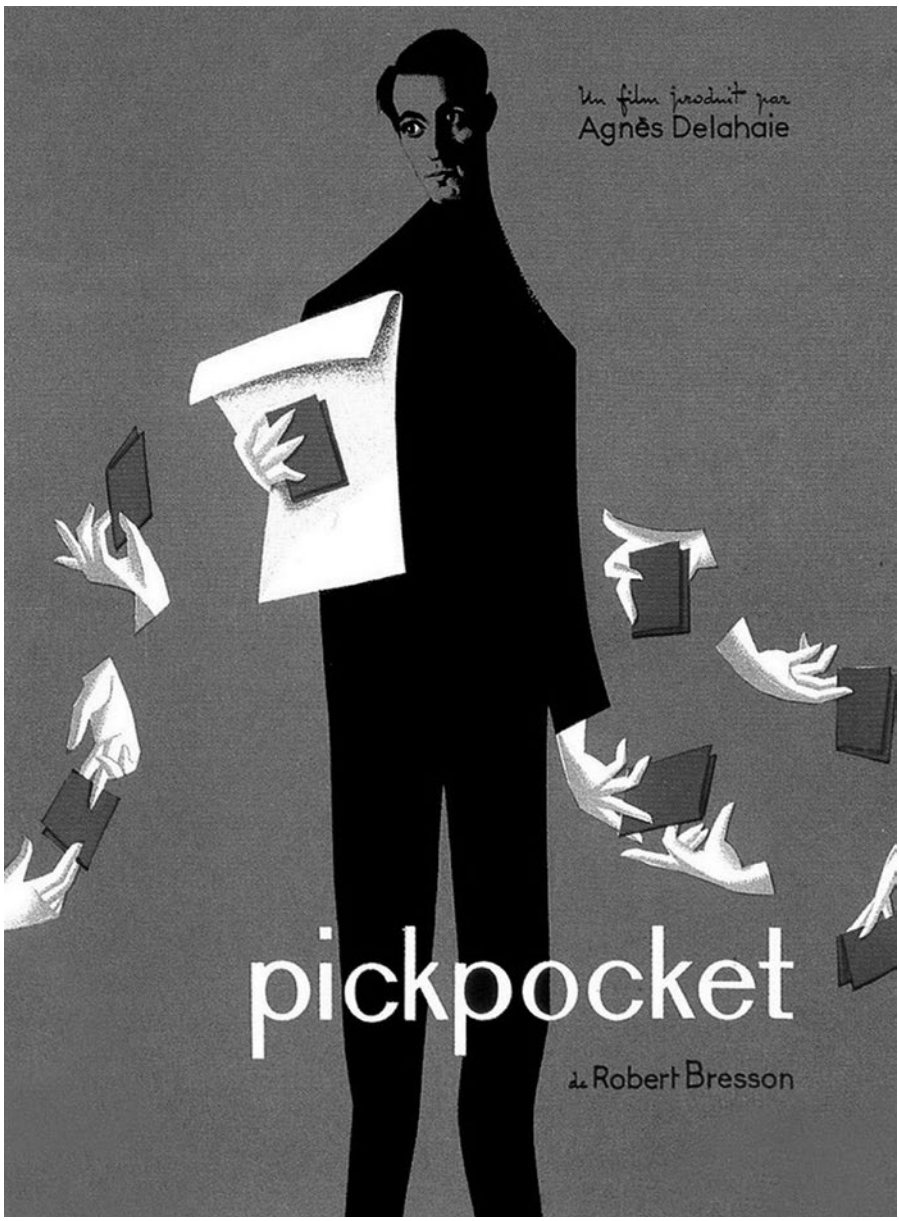

Figure I.1 A movie poster for Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959).

years could necessitate an ideological overhaul of a hypotext. Otto Boele, in his chapter on Zarkhi's *My Younger Brother* (1962), shows that significant changes were required to allow Aksenov's *A Starry Ticket*, a youth novel written the previous year, to attain an ideologically successful transportation to the screen.

Alastair Renfrew explores an even more unusual non-geographical border crossing in his chapter on Tynianov's screenplay of his own novella *Lieutenant Kizhe* in Faintsimmer's 1934 film. As Renfrew points out, the usual chronology of film adaptation is reversed, as Tynianov's screenplay preceded his novella, which then underwent considerable changes on the road to becoming a film in 1934. Unfortunately, he argues, Faintsimmer failed to find successful devices for meeting the challenges proffered by Tynianov's novella of a hero whose existence is confined solely to official documents, with its challenge to literary realism through the presentation of different planes of reality.

If the term "adaptation" can encompass a variety of source texts and films, then surely the genre is especially challenged by Robert Bresson's 1959 film *Pickpocket*. Although many films that clearly function as adaptations do not share a title with their hypotext (for instance, the aforementioned film based on *A Starry Ticket*), the difficulty of categorizing Bresson's film far exceeds its title. Despite the obvious parallels between Bresson's narrative and Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment*, the director took great pains to discourage the viewer from interpreting this novel as a straightforward hypotext, in the process achieving a kind of "anti-adaptation" that has long mystified critics. As Olga Peters Hasty argues, this process involves a dissolution of the borders between Dostoevskii's Russia and Bresson's France, and a suppression of Dostoevskii's plot and psychological realism in order to recuperate the particular possibilities of the cinematic medium to depict interiority. However, in doing so, Hasty shows, Bresson finds a way to draw closer to Dostoevskii's essential moral and philosophical statement on the dangers of alienation from others. S. Ceilidh Orr, in her chapter on the same film, claims that Bresson, rather than adapting Dostoevskii, is actually taking part in a common generic tradition: the confession (along with Albert Camus, the influence of whose *The Stranger* also can also be felt in *Pickpocket*). By disrupting expectations of cause and effect, Bresson turns the very act of pickpocketing that he substitutes for Raskolnikov's murder into an act of confession. In focusing on Bresson's use of cinematic devices to disrupt both narrative expectations and viewers' anticipation of how a cinematic reworking of Dostoevskii's novel should look, both Hasty and Orr demonstrate the estrangement of the viewer that Della Coletta discusses, thus illustrating the degree to which adaptation involves a hermeneutic border crossing.

In the case of the émigré writer and translator Vladimir Nabokov, whose life and career consisted of several border crossings, the theme acquires numerous nuances. As Dennis Ioffe discusses, Fassbinder's 1978 film of Nabokov's 1936 novel *Despair* focuses specifically on the writer's own Russian–German border crossing, as the director draws out the implications of the novel's German setting. By focusing on the homosexual and Jewish themes in light

of Fassbinder's own homosexuality and experience as a citizen of a nation that had carried out the Holocaust just before his birth in 1945, the director creates a highly complex cultural exchange.

The chapters by Yuri Leving and Ronald Meyer, respectively, demonstrate the extensive intertextual history of transporting Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* and Dostoevskii's "White Nights" into film in a variety of languages, cultures, and time periods. Leving traces the development of the scene of Anna's suicide in several film adaptations, showing that the semantic language of *Anna Karenina* changes substantially under the influence of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), and its linking of woman, film camera, and train as a traumatic image. Analyzing adaptations by Bernard Rose, Sergei Solov'ev, Joe Wright, and other directors, Leving points to symbols such as the eye, the color red, and the image of Anna's dead body as evidence of a new visual language, images not found in the hypotext, that is used by directors to interpret the novel's depiction of violence and self-destruction. Similarly in the case of cinematic versions of "White Nights," as Meyer shows, the film adaptations become influential cinematic hypertexts, along with Dostoevskii's original hypotext, in the course of its adaptation. The films of Luchino Visconti (1957) and Robert Bresson (1971) threaten to supplant Dostoevskii's hypotext in subsequent adaptations in 2007 by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and José Luis Guerín, as the directors include episodes, motifs, setting, and characters, respectively, from Visconti and Bresson as they transport Dostoevskii's basic story across the borders of India and Strasbourg.

Importantly, both Leving's and Meyer's chapters also engage gender readings of film, and in doing so point out their potential application to adaptation studies. Laura Mulvey's ground-breaking 1975 essay, drawing on feminist and psychoanalytic theory, argues that cinema offers distinct pleasures to the male viewer that reinforce stereotypical gender roles: It allows him to satisfy voyeuristic drives by objectifying on-screen women, and by projecting his gaze onto the male actor with whom he identifies, in order to possess the heroine indirectly and thus create a more powerful ego ideal.[12] As Meyer notes, directors of *White Nights* often reverse this voyeurism by putting the male body on display, and thus creating a female gaze. Depending on the director's choice, then, Dostoevskii's hypotext can yield gender associations that go far beyond what the novelist envisioned. Leving, citing Mulvey's essay in his discussion of how Anna Karenina's suicide is filmed, notes Gayle Studlar's observation that spectators can derive not only sadistic but also masochistic pleasure from the voyeurism involved in viewing a heroine's death. In the case of Anna in particular, directors often play with the simultaneous fear and thrill the viewer receives from observing such gestures as her suicide, and the famous scene on the train in which she brushes the knife she uses for cutting pages in her book against her face.

Figure I.2 A movie poster for Luchino Visconti's 1957 film based on a Fedor Dostoevskii's hypotext.

Thus, all of the studies in this volume, in one way or another, emphasize the notion that adaptation has a great deal to tell us about the unexpected cultural journeys that take place when Russian literature interacts with film. As the various contributors show, adaptation involves a series of complex cultural,

economic, political, and technical processes that go far beyond simply comparing literary text with film. As such, we hope that this volume can introduce new territories to explore for the field of adaptation studies, adding new insights not only into the specific writers and directors discussed, but also the possibilities for envisioning the very process of adaptation.

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In conclusion, a brief note on terminology may be useful. Although the term "adaptation" is most commonly used to describe the phenomenon of films derived from literary works, it is far from universally agreed upon as ideal. For many theorists, the term "adaptation" has highly desirable connotations. Stam makes a biological comparison, describing such films as "mutations" that ensure the survival of the source text.[13] Hutcheon, continuing the metaphor, cites Richard Dawkins's analogy between cultural and genetic transmission to suggest that stories "adapt to new environments *by virtue of* mutation—in their 'offspring' or their adaptations."[14] Persuasive though this argument may be, other critics find the term less satisfactory, because "adaptation" also has hierarchical connotations that can hinder a fair-minded comparison of literary and cinematic works that bear an intertextual relation to each other, regardless of which text (or medium) came first. The term "adapt," for some, implies an act of adjustment, an effort to suit the literary work to another medium: This has the danger of working against the type of dialogic, lateral relationship that would allow both works to be appreciated on their own terms. Perhaps this is why, although Hutcheon points out that "the word ['adaptation'] has stuck for a reason,"[15] it causes a great deal of dissatisfaction among theorists who use different terms.

Our contributors reflect this lack of unanimity, as part of an ongoing search for new ways of describing this process. While some are content to use the term "adaptation," others prefer to characterize the source text and film via Genette's aforementioned concepts of "hypotext" and "hypertext," respectively. These terms, as we suggest above, offer the advantage of covering additional literary intertexts as well as the primary source text. Still other contributors employ terms such as "transportation" and "transposition," demonstrating the diverse language that can be applied to the process this volume describes.[16] Ultimately, we hope that our use of the term "border crossing" is flexible enough not only to encompass all of these variations, but also to open up the discussion to broader ways of thinking about the impact of filmed literature, and its interconnections with crucial social, political, and historical issues of Russia and other nations that continually rework its literature.

The metaphor of crossing from one temporal or spatial territory into another in which language, customs, cultural identity, social attitudes, and political systems are often different captures this exploration into new

cinematic environments. Arguably, each time a border is crossed there are cultural, political, and social issues to be considered. *Border Crossing: Russian Literature into Film* examines how political and economic circumstances play a crucial role in dictating how filmmakers transport their cinematic hypertext into this new cultural environment. A shifting Soviet political landscape or the perceived demands of the European and American commercial markets must be accounted for as the Russian literary text is relocated into a different space and time. Film adaptations of literature are involved in a dialogical process in which the original hypotext generates hypertexts; this collection explores the role of ideological, political, and other cultural pressures in the task of transforming literary narratives into cinematic offerings.

NOTES

1. Dudley Andrew, noting the natural propensity for audiences to make these comparisons, calls it "the umbilical cord that nourishes the judgments of ordinary viewers." MacCabe, *True to the Spirit*, 27.
2. Not all critics, by any means, have abandoned this approach. Colin MacCabe introduces his 2013 co-edited volume on film adaptation by arguing that complete disregard for the question of fidelity is symptomatic of an academic tendency in recent years to dismiss important questions of value in relation to both the traditional canon and the newer field of cultural studies. He argues that the phrase "true to the spirit" restores this emphasis, as it "avoids in its very formulation any notion of a literal fidelity and demonstrates a much greater sophistication in the general culture than adaptation studies allow." MacCabe, *True to the Spirit*, 7.
3. Stam, *Literature through Film*, 8.
4. Kranz, "Trying Harder," 98.
5. Hutcheon with O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 170.
6. Ibid., 4, 20.
7. Leitch, *Film Adaptation and its Discontents*, 16.
8. Della Coletta, *When Stories Travel*, 2.
9. Genette, *Palimpsests*, 4–6.
10. Stam, *Literature through Film*, 5.
11. Della Coletta, *When Stories Travel*, 21 (original italics).
12. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."
13. Stam and Raengo, *Literature and Film*, 2–3.
14. Hutcheon with O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 32.
15. Ibid., 15 (original italics).
16. It should be noted that the Russian language does not have a term for "adaptation" in the sense that Anglo-American critics use it. Russians typically use the word *ekranizatsiia* (most accurately translated as "screening") to describe films that recast literary works.