A Semiotic Analysis of Russian Literature in Modern Russian Film Adaptations

(Case Studies of Boris Godunov and The Captain’s Daughter)

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree doctor of philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2015

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Abstract

The current study analyzes signs and signifiers that constitute the structural composition of Pushkin’s historical works *Boris Godunov* and *Captain’s Daughter* and compare them with their Soviet and post-Soviet screen adaptations. I argue that the popularity of these literary works with filmmakers is based on their inexhaustible topicality for Russian society of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, and therefore reassessment of their film adaptations guides us towards developing a better understanding of the sociopolitical complexities in modern Russia. The analysis employs methods of semiotics of film, which is a relatively young science, but has already become one of the most promising fields in the theory of cinema. The research is based on the scholarship of such eminent theorists and semioticians as Metz, Bluestone, Barthes, Lotman, Bakhtin, and others. By performing semiotic analysis of Russian intermedial transpositions and Pushkin’s source texts, the study demonstrates the parallels between the historical periods and contemporary Russia.
Dedication

To my mother and my son
Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to whatever academic growth I have achieved. My favorite literature teacher at Oziorsk High School, Nadezhda Nikolaevna Zhirnova, instilled in me a love for literature in general, and especially for the Russian classics of the nineteenth century. Later, I met many great professors at Kalinin State University and The Ohio State University, each of which added to the developing of my interest in scholarly studies and writing. Multiple discussions of language, literature and film with friends, and sometimes strangers, also helped me more clearly shape my focus. Some people had especially strong impact on my decision to return to graduate school by expressing their support and believing in me. Others were at my side while I spent countless hours reading and writing. Among them are Bill Myers, Randall Mulligan, Mr. and Mrs. Peterson, Mrs. White, Mindy Landeck and many others. The work could not be completed without help of my graduate committee, whose expertise and knowledge guided me from start to finish. I appreciate Dr. Joseph for being responsive to my attempts to combine linguistics, literature and cinema in one study and directing me towards the interdisciplinary project. Dr. Burry’s excellent comments and suggestions led me in my attempts to put this project together. Dr. Hashamova had always found time in her busy schedule when I had
questions or needed some directions. Lastly, I turn to those to whom this work is 
dedicated: they are my major inspiration in everything I do.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

“The history of Russian cinema is inseparable from that of the film adaptation. From its inception, Russian film engaged in a dialogue with literature, first modeling itself upon theatre and classical fiction in order to consolidate its own cultural status, then attempting to establish itself as ‘high art’ in its own right. … Whilst most of these films paid homage to their originals, … Russian cinema was always capable of challenging its sources.”

(Hutchings and Vernitski 2005, 12)

1.1 Russian cinema’s interest in Russian classics of the nineteenth century

Classical literature, despite being branded once by Russian Cubo-Futurists as outdated, irrelevant, and an artifact of a bourgeois culture, nonetheless remains timeless and relevant to the modern world. This is especially true regarding Russia’s numerous literary classics, which have proven especially adaptable. They continue to draw the interest of Russian and foreign filmmakers, which has resulted in a myriad of semiotically and aesthetically distinct pictures.

And it is no accident that many of the most acclaimed Soviet and post-Soviet films are based on literary works created during the Golden and Silver Ages of Russian literature. Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Nikolai
Leskov, Ivan Bunin, and Mikhail Bulgakov are just some classic Russian authors whose works are often filmed. But even more interesting is that the majority of recently produced adaptations of Russian literary classics represent remakes of Soviet films often much-admired by critics and viewers. The number of such newly released remakes of Russian classics is staggering. Out of twenty-six Russian and Soviet adaptations of Gogol’s works, four were made before the October Revolution during the silent era, fourteen by Soviet cinema, and seven during the last two and a half decades after the fall of Communism in Russia. Out of those seven new adaptations, remarkably, five are remakes of Soviet films: Ведьма (Witch, 2006), Вий (Viy, 2014), Дело о мертвых душах (The Case of Dead Souls, 2005), Ревизор (The Government Inspector, 1996), and Счастливый конец (Happy End, 2010). Similar situations can be observed with adaptations of other prominent Russian authors. In light of new political and cultural concerns, post-Soviet filmmakers seek to reinterpret not just the literary texts but also previous films based on them.

Classic Russian prose has been an inspiration for Russian cinema throughout the entire Soviet era and continues to inspire filmmakers two decades after the Soviet Union’s collapse. Scholars of Russian cinema have noted that traditionally ekranizatsii (screen adaptations) of Russian classics have been notable for their fidelity to their literary sources. There is a number of reasons for this. In Soviet Russia, an irreligious society, classical literature was canonized and Soviet citizens were taught to revere it while still at school. Russian classics took the place of sacred texts and were honored not only as a source of literary entertainment, but also of general life wisdom. When the last
USSR president, Mikhail Gorbachev, speaking to students at Colorado State University, was asked who he considered his most important teacher in life, he said that in life’s difficult moments he always sought support in Russian classical literature. Such an attitude would certainly be shared by the several generations of Soviet people who were brought up on its ideals.

This homogeneous perception was promoted by the government as a form of a control over citizens’ political consciousness. Stalin himself wrote many critical articles on the classics. Even though his knowledge of literature was far from profound, he nonetheless set the direction of Soviet literary criticism for decades to come. More so, Stalin presided over censorship committees that evaluated and decided the fates of scenarios and newly made films.

Deviations from original texts were strictly impermissible in most cases. Any changes could divert the audience from the state’s official interpretations, which always reflected in some ways the ideals of the Socialist Revolution. Thus, when transposing classics into screen adaptations, any arbitrariness by the directors or screenwriters was fraught with negative consequences including preventing finished films from public screening or even with repressions against filmmakers. Only making changes that strengthened the ideological orientation of the work in accordance with principles of communist party was allowed. As Stephen Hutchings argues, “the use of literary sources was desirable as long as both ‘fidelity’ to the original and socialist realist principles were observed” (2005, 10)

But when it was not possible to make the literary sources match the strict standards of socialist realism, cinematic transpositions “were seen as a way to correct ideological
flaws in their literary originals” (Hutchings, 10). Georgii and Sergei Vasilievs’ *Chapaev* (1934) is one of the earliest and, perhaps, most famous examples of this powerful trend in Soviet cinema to reinterpret the originary source into a legend of Socialist Realism with the blurred dividing line between myth and reality. This is also exactly what Kaplunovsky did in his 1958 adaptation of *The Captain’s Daughter* by transforming Pugachev into a national hero and a freedom fighter for the oppressed people of Siberia, which will be analysed in Chapter 5 of this study.

The profound changes that have taken place in Russia’s political and economic systems over the last twenty-five years have engendered the formation of a new mentality entirely different from that of socialism. However, recent changes in Russian society did not alter the population’s perception of Russian classics as “high culture” despite the fact that contemporary Russian literature is experiencing a period of genuine revival. The Perestroika and glasnost’ trends of the 1980s paved the way for many new talented writers and opened up new possibilities for those who previously published in Soviet times but were unable to fully realize their creative potential under the limiting conditions of socialist realism. Today, novels by Boris Akunin, Vladimir Pelevin, Zakhar Prilepin, Liudmila Ulitskaia, Vladimir Voinovich and many other contemporary authors are highly popular among Russian readers and many of their books have been already transposed into film adaptations. New literature attracts readers by its novelty, relevance of material and diversity of genres and content. However, the Russian people continue to maintain a venerable attitude towards literary icons of the past. It is ironic that even in the current situation of self-regulating supply and demand on the market of entertainment, the
Russian government continues to use literary classics as a means of instilling “proper” values in collective consciousness and thus as the mechanism of its subordination. As Alexander Burry notes, “transposition of literary texts [in Russia] has taken on special political importance, both during and after the Soviet Union” (20).

This can be demonstrated by a number of relatively new TV series commissioned by Russian government to better acquaint audiences with national classical literature, which should provide positive educational examples. Recent television adaptations include series based on Dostoevsky’s The Idiot (dir. Bortko, 2003), Demons (dir. Khotinenko, 2014) and Crime and Punishment (dir. Svetozarov, 2007); Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita (dir. Bortko, 2005), Gogol’ Dead Souls (dir. Lungin, 2005), Pasternak’s Doctor Zhivago (dir. Proshkin, 2005), Lermontov’s A Hero of Our Time (dir. Kott, 2006) and many others. Since 1999, the Moscow government Committee on Telecommunications and Mass Media has been working on the implementation of targeted programs to create domestic television series at Moscow studios. The regulation issued by the Moscow government in 2007 explains the need for such targeted programs to regulate Russian cinema by the fact that since the 1990s “[Russian] television was dominated by second-rate foreign and domestic film productions, which promote the cult of violence and lack of spirituality.”¹ The regulation also notes that such programs, launched in 1999 to support the Moscow film industry and “to save [its] creative and production staff” during the crisis, have already brought significant improvements, e.g.,

they stimulated the domestic film industry. The document particularly stressed the importance of classical literature and other literary works that offer spiritual guidance as fertile material for filming in an era of social crisis:

Принципиальным является обращение к экранизации литературной классики, судьбам выдающихся личностей русской истории и культуры и выражению тех духовных идеалов, которые определяли их творческий и жизненный путь.

The 2007 resolution specifically allocated funds from the Moscow city budget for various categories of films and stipulated that film adaptations of Russian and foreign classics for the next three years, 2008-2010, should make up no less than 30% of all television films. The only other category so generously financed is films dedicated to contemporary life and problems.

In part, the Moscow government’s intervention in Russian film industry was a response to the dominance of Russian and foreign criminal series on gang violence on Russian TV in the 1990s such as *Bandit Petersburg* (Russia), *The Sopranos* (USA), *Crime Story* (USA) and many others. The abandonment of Soviet ideals after the fall of the communist regime created a void that led to the development of a semi-anarchist society where people openly questioned the correctness of anything chosen by the government. Thus, a return to the classics with their time-tested universal values was a timely reminder to Russian society about the inviolability of its national identity and unity as a people.

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2 “It is a matter of principal to appeal to film adaptations of literary classics, to the biographies of prominent figures in Russian history and culture and spiritual ideals that defined their creative and life paths.” – ibid.
Besides television series, many directors responded by screening filming classics as feature films. As expected, the majority of these films and television series attempted fidelity to their literary originals. Many of them had been produced by famous masters such as Pavel Lungin, Alexander Proshkin, Vladimir Bortko, Vladimir Khotinenko, while others were shot by novice directors. Viewers reacted to the new wave of film adaptations of Russian classics ambiguously. If some were happy to revisit classical literature and admitted that films helped them better understand it, others wondered why Russian TV so strongly promoted adaptations of literary works, which have rather annoyed the Russian audience.

This debate has become widespread in Russian society and even film directors themselves have spoken on the latest influx of readapted Russian classics. Many of them recognize that the multiple series format simplifies the directors’ task, as it provides them with sufficient time to transcode an entire novel (Vladimir Valutskiy, Alexander Rogozhkin). Nikita Mikhalkov explains directors’ aspiration to film classics as "the crisis of narratives and deficit of ideas." Others directly label cinema’s recurrent appeal to literary classics "a yesterday of Russian television" that is harmful to the process of self-identification because it takes Russian society away from the current problems (Dmitry Lesnevsky, CEO of the channel “REN TV”, CEO of the company “REN-film”).

But to say that no recent adaptations offer new perspectives on familiar literary works and that none are highly artistic and unique would be misleading. Recent adaptations of

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Pushkin’s historical works *Boris Godunov* by Vladimir Mirzoev and *The Captain’s Daughter* by Alexander Proshkin, which will be analyzed later in this research, are both examples of independent creative rethinking of literary sources from the point of view of the modern viewer.

The historical theme occupies an especially important niche in contemporary Russian film in general and among cinematic remakes of literary classics. What is it that draws viewers to historic adaptations? Some of it is certainly tied to a fascination with the controversies that still surround past events. Recent reassessment of Soviet values has generated increased interest in the October Revolution as being the starting point of a movement that not only led to the eventual collapse of Russia’s political and economic systems but also degraded the population through wars, repressions and famines. This interest has made Mikhalkov’s *Sunstroke* (*Солнечный удар*, 2014), a film remotely based on Bunin’s short story *Sunstroke* and the book *Cursed Days*, long awaited by Russian audience. The plot of the film is set in Crimea in 1920 and based on real events, when a few dozen thousands of White Army officers fell into the hands of communist Red Army commanders and were expecting their fate in a filtration camp. These elite, highly educated people were ready to die defending their motherland and could not understand why they themselves were declared enemies and how could it happen that Russian empire collapsed irrevocably. Mikhalkov shows how the Reds ruthlessly destroyed an entire social class of Russian people who were at the top of pre-revolutionary society. Unsuspecting officers were loaded onto an old barge and drowned in the Black Sea. Among them were famous Russian military leaders and young officers eager to serve
their country who became some of the first victims of the building of a “new” society. And while critics question the artistic merits of the film, Mikhalkov’s use of real historical events that are still painful for the memory of Russians leaves no one indifferent.

Post-Soviet cinema is redefining not only the topic of Bolshevik revolution, which succeeded and changed Russia forever, but also Russia’s earlier suppressed revolutionary movements. This explains Proshkin’s choice in adapting Pushkin’s *The Captain’s Daughter* in honor of the 200th anniversary of Pushkin's birth. Besides the novel itself, Proshkin largely incorporates factual material about the Pugachev uprising that Pushkin compiled while working in the tsarist archives and published as a separate historical treatise, *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*. The filmmaker’s appeal to historical research, which uncovers the violent side of the Pugachev rebellion and its leader, indicates that Proshkin disclaims the idealization of both Pugachev and his revolt that was so common in Soviet times, and replaces it with the original stance prevalent during pre-revolutionary times and supported by Pushkin himself.

The themes of revolution and the civil war of the 1920s are among several historical themes in Russian film industry that have undergone profound revaluation in recent decades. If during Soviet times this topic was somewhat simplified, unambiguously presenting the White Army and other opponents of the October revolution as an unavoidable evil to be vanquished, in post-Soviet films the opposite trend can be observed where White Army officers are portrayed as martyrs, almost holy figures. Among many films about the Bolshevik revolution, there are several notable
transpositions of well-known literary works including *The White Guard* (Snezhkin, 2012) based on the homonymous novel by Bulgakov and the previously mentioned films *Sunstroke* and *Doctor Zhivago*. The theme of Pugachev’s rebellion in Proshkin’s *Russian Revolt* logically extends the theme of Russian revolution, as Proshkin is trying to establish the starting point of Russian social disobedience and fratricidal wars. Proshkin’s findings will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

Other historical themes that have also been lately the focus of film directors are the themes of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and the Time of Troubles of the early seventeenth century, both periods crucial to the development of the Russian state. Among the latest adaptations about WWII are *Stalingrad* (dir. Bondarchuk, 2014), based on Vasilii Grossman’s novel *Life and Fate*, once banned by the Soviet government; *Live and Remember* (dir. Proshkin, 2008) on the novel by Valentin Rasputin; *The Dawns Are Quiet Here* (dir. Davlet’iarov, 2015) on Boris Vasil’ev’s novel, and others. These directors, unlike their Soviet counterparts, focus on individual people’s personal tragedies and the unbearable choices that war often leads them to make, like choices between love and duty, and not on heroic pathos, which was always the core of Soviet war films.

The Time of Troubles, despite being the distant past, has become relevant to Russian modernity in many ways. Historians and the general public have repeatedly pointed at many similarities between Boris Godunov and the first president of post-Soviet Russia, Boris Yeltsin. Both came to power in similarly mysterious circumstances supported by certain groups of individuals close to them. Each “tsar” played dramatic roles in Russia’s history and, in a way, almost led to its disintegration. Indeed, Pushkin’s tragedy *Boris*
Godunov inspired several filmic interpretations of this historical period, and it is interesting to see how these films revaluate not only Pushkin’s text but the historical events as well (see Chapter 4).

1.2 Why the historical genre has been traditionally popular in different cultures

The historical genre in literature and cinema remains consistently popular in different cultures. Many researchers have comprehensively studied the reasons behind the extensive representation of historical events in artistic works, and often they notice that this interest is characterized by an aspiration to reassess the present. Hence, historical themes usually become more prevalent in times of profound societal changes. Until now, scholars have primarily undertaken research on the relationship between history and literature, but their findings are equally applicable to cinema as well.

In striving to portray true facts of the past, history differs from literature and cinema, which reflect only artistic ideas of the events that exist in humans’ memory. However, all three media are connected in having in common events of human existence as the primary object of their narratives. Narratives transmitted by historians are traditionally considered the most truthful and informative, as they are usually obtained from archival documents or eyewitness accounts. However, it is important to remember that historical sources can be just as biased in reflecting the point of view of their authors or those who commission such studies. The well-known dictum, "history is written by the winners", summarizes this point. In contrast to historical science, literature and cinema are artistic media where historical events often function as background for characters’ relationships.
Nonetheless, being narratives in their nature, both literature and cinema share a common goal with history, i.e., an “attempt to portray and understand human experience” (Hamnett, 48). By telling stories about humans’ lives, literature and cinema parallel history. The connecting factor for all the three media is their ability to convey events in relation to time reference points. They all seek to analyze human society “through the course of time, regardless of whether the one derives its nature from imagination and the other from a study of facts” (Hamnett, 48).

Despite historical material often making up much of the fabric of historical novels, their authors do not claim to be chroniclers. Stendhal wrote in the early nineteenth century: “…one should not look in a historical novel for a documentary contribution to historical knowledge…It is not the novelist’s function to provide information for the social historian…”

Thus, a common mistake made by critics and audiences is to expect historical accuracy from literary and cinematic works.

Scholars continue to debate the reasons why authors choose to write or shoot films about the past and often infer that the time that passed since the events’ occurrence allows one to better analyze them and apply their lessons to the present. Some scholars also note the cyclicality of historical events, which means that it is possible to avoid repeating mistakes of the past through their careful analysis. “…One function of history (and indeed the historical novel) is not merely to explain the past but also to make it

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possible to rethink the present." Historical novelists and film directors often use historical situations to comment on their contemporary issues. The value of past human experience was recognized by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, who claimed that human progress is tied to history, which unfolds as a process of human understanding of truth. Hegel, too, argued that an appeal to history does not necessarily mean receding into the past, but often means attempting to solve the problems of the present. Adam Smith (1723-90) noted that studying history carries moral purpose, meaning that historians present moral lessons of the past to their own contemporary society in order to help avoid their recurrence. It should be added that this is also one of the major tasks performed by historical novels and films.

However, even in serving similar goals, literature and cinema share an ability to reach and influence much larger audiences than historical science, which is relegated mainly to the realm of scholars and a handful of history fans. But the distant past has always remained a mystery waiting for its embodiment by imaginative minds. In recent decades, cinema has even surpassed literature in the extent of its reach. Historical literature and cinema are particularly popular because they have the ability either visually or verbally to shape puzzling events of the past into concrete representational models, to make them modern and tangible. This also means an extraordinary responsibility falls on directors’

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and writers’ shoulders when they offer the public their own artistic version of the past. Alessandro Manzoni, an Italian novelist and poet of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, cautioned that there is always a danger that fictional accounts of history may mislead readers despite operating with real historical characters and actions, that there is always a chance of corrupting history, especially when the reader is led to believe the fiction. Manzoni argued, “History encourages doubt, because it questions falsehoods and is founded in criticism, whereas the historical novel encourages belief, while at the same time removing what is necessary to sustain belief.” Encouraging belief is what makes the fictional historical genre so powerful. The content of historical works is not limited to actions of cruel tyrants, national heroes or romantic lovers who have long gone. Through the artistic imagination of directors and writers, characters and plots of historical films and novels acquire a physical form and pull readers and viewers in, causing them to empathize and to draw parallels with the present. Thus, “un-invented” stories of the past give literary or cinematic works palpability and special meaning.

1.3 Formation of the Russian historical novel in the first half of the nineteenth century

In its development, the Russian historical novel lagged behind its European predecessors by nearly a decade. The 1820s were marked in European and American literature by the widespread publications of works written in this genre by such authors as Sir Walter Scott, Honoré de Balzac, James Fenimore Cooper and others, while in Russia

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the first historical novel came out only in 1829 and, in general, historical fiction did not become commonly published until 1831. Still, starting at the end of the 1820s through the beginning of the 1830s Russian authors showed enough interest in historical themes that a real boom in the development of historical literature soon followed. Zagoskin, Pogorelsky, Bulgarin, Lazhechnikov, and other writers well known at the time contributed to this evolution. Some of the most notable novels published at that time were *The Double* by Pogorel’sky (Двойник, 1828), *Chapters from a Historical Novel* by Pushkin (Главы из исторического романа, 1828), *Jury Miloslavsky* by Zagoskin (Юрий Милославский, 1829), *Dimitri the Pretender* (Дмитрий Самозванец, 1830) and Мазера (Мазепа, 1834) by Bulgarin, *A Vow at the Sepulchre* by Polevoi (Клятва при гробе господнем, 1832), and *The Last Novik* by Lazhechnikov (Последний Новик, 1833). In the 1830s, historical novels comprised more than half of all published fiction. Historical literature came to compete in popularity with poetic genres, which at that time prevailed in Russian literature. The writer and critic Bestuzhev-Marlinsky joked in 1833 about this sudden influx of historical novels:

Стихотворцы, правда, не переставали стрекотать во всех углах, но стихов никто не стал слушать, когда все стали их писать. Наконец, рассеянный ропот слился в общий крик: Прозы! Прозы!-Воды, простой воды!11

(Eichenbaum 1922, 70)

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10 Zagoskin M.N. Yury Miloslavsky. 1829
11 "The poets, however, did not cease chirping in all the corners, but no one [wanted] to listen poems when everyone started to write them. Finally, the scattered murmur merged into a common cry: Prose! Prose! - Water, Plain water!" (Eichenbaum 1922, 70)
With the emergence of the historical genre, domestic fiction for the first time in the history of Russian literature outnumbered translated foreign literature. However, in their content, historical novels of the nineteenth century were often imitative and were mostly built on models pioneered in European historical novels, especially on those by Walter Scott. The nineteenth century Russian historical novelists also adopted Europeans’ attitude towards the historical genre in general and history as an object of art. The most common approach assumed that a writer should choose to represent historical material that is the most dramatic and entertaining for a reader and meets his or her romantic expectations. In most of these novels the major storyline is represented by the main characters’ love affair staged against the backdrop of dramatic historical events.

Belinsky, Bulgarin and other critics were opposed to putting love intrigue in the center of the narration, arguing that it deprives the novel of verisimilitude and Russian spirit, which they considered obligatory elements for any Russian novel (Rebecchini, 419). To get around this and to emphasize “Russianness” many authors gave their characters unmistakably Russian names, such as Miloslavsky, Roslavlev, etc., and often placed lengthy footnotes and notes at the end of novels, explicating peculiar details that were only vaguely mentioned in the text.

Overall however, these novels’ plots were largely predictable and unsophisticated and usually had a young hero caught between two conflicting loyalties. The protagonist was always a chance witness of historical actions, which would make him an unbiased narrator. Shklovsky’s apt definition of the historical genre could not be more fitting to describe the Russian historical novel of the early nineteenth century:
“Техника исторического романа – произведения, очень связанного с материалом, такова: неисторический герой оказывает помощь или связан родством с историческим героем; и так становится посторонним свидетелем действия исторических событий. В зависимости от эпохи, отношения зрителя к действию изменяются от полной традиционности (так написаны романы Вальтера Скотта) до остранения “Отечественной войны”, которая так характерна для Толстого. Но выбор героя, случайность участия его в событии важны авторам исторических романов, потому что это дает возможность пропусков, они не должны все показывать.”

The majority of Russian historical novels were constructed in precisely this way, including the most popular ones such as Yuri Miloslavskii by Zagorsky, Ice House by Lazhechnikov and the most acknowledged novel Taras Bul’ba by Gogol. Pushkin’s The Captain’s Daughter also largely follows this plot.

Besides foreign influences, Russian historical fiction was deeply implanted in rich national roots and historiographical traditions established by Karamzin. New interest in national history activated its study which, in turn, greatly contributed to a rise of a sense of national identity. Hamnett points out that the sources of Russia’s consciousness are spread among European, Asiatic and Byzantine powers. Russia first considered itself a significant part of the European family during Catherine the Great’s reign (1762–96), which only increased with the Russian victory over Napoleon in 1812. At the same time the country’s vast eastward expansion through Siberia gave it a rather Asiatic dimension. Orthodoxy aligned Russian culture with Byzantium, “providing it with a religious

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12 Shklovsky 1965, 88
identity, different from the Latin west and the Islamic south-east. French and then Russian translations of Scott novels in the 1820s threw into question the relationship of Russian history to the rest of Europe” (Hamnett, 245). Periods promoting growth of national consciousness found the widest reflection in the historical literature. The era of the Patriotic War of 1812 (15 titles) and the Time of Troubles with the Romanovs’ ascent to the throne (10 titles) were represented most often, which demonstrates the importance of the historical novel in bolstering Russian national feeling (Rebecchini, 420).

Karamzin and Pushkin played an especially important role in the rise of historicism in Russia. If Karamzin founded Russian historiography, Pushkin undoubtedly contributed to the reformation of Russian fictional historical literature. In the first stages of his work, Pushkin’s historical writing represents his transposition of Karamzin’s documentaries into a fictional medium. This applies to Pushkin’s tragedy Boris Godunov, which became his major dramaturgical experiment based on an episode from Karamzin’s History of the Russian State. However, later in his career Pushkin assumed the role of a historian to prepare the factual basis for his historical novel The Captain’s Daughter. Thus, in many ways Pushkin continued the dialogic tradition between fiction and history started by Karamzin and even borrowed some elements of Karamzin’s style. Karamzin often decorated his historical narratives by inserting anecdotes, sentimental details and inspirational elements that was characteristic of his style as a writer. He believed that the task of a historian is “to depict the monumental and inexorable forward motion of the Russian state” even if it means to identify Russia with Christ “torn and bleeding, only to rise later in a blaze” (Wachtel 1994, 51). Pushkin often followed in Karamzin’s footsteps.
Watchel points out the many similarities in Pushkin’s *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* and Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State*: both writers pay attention to extensive geographical and ethnographical detail, incorporate witnesses’ accounts, analyze the causes of events, specifics of military strategies, etc. However, Pushkin avoids the sentimentalist approach so common for Karamzin’s historical narration. In his historical treatise, Pushkin stays away from supporting or condemning sides. He portrays both tsarist army and rebels objectively, using factual material to prove his point. Even though his sympathies are obviously on the side of the tsarist commanders, he openly criticizes them for unjustified delays and strategic errors. He also refuses to paint Pugachev solely in negative tones, showing him as a capable strategist and, in a way, himself a victim of his ambitious associates. According to Pushkin, romanticizing or simplifying the past not only leads to the distortion of history, but also to its incorrect assessment, to the shift of boundaries between fiction and reality. Pushkin advocated for a careful and truthful depiction of historical reality, in which the author's evaluation of the described events is utterly minimized (Pushkin 1990, 343). He carried this approach into his historical fiction as well. In 1830, Pushkin wrote the following about the historical novel as a genre: "In our time, the word ‘novel’ means a historical era, developed as fictional narrative" (Makogonenko, 453).

Wachtel labels Pushkin’s dualistic approach to the Pugachev revolt from both the perspectives of an historian and a novelist as “intergeneric dialogue” that allows him to concentrate on different aspects of the historical material. Also, *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* is Pushkin’s attempt to educate his contemporaries on the quite
recent Cossacks’ uprising, the records of which at the time were concealed in state archives on Catherine’s orders, to bring to light its mechanics and ramifications for all of society. Meanwhile, *The Captain’s Daughter* offers a glimpse at the revolt from the inside, showing its influence on people’s individual lives. Such writing about history in different genres was common for Russian authors of the 1830s and can also be seen in the writing of Kondratii Ryleev and Gogol. Konstantin Masal’sky thus summarized the distinction in perspectives of historians and novelists as expected by society at that time:

The history discovers the truth in the past, the eternal laws governing the world, and contemplates events like a philosopher, concerning himself not so much with the pleasure of his readers as with their enlightenment. The historical novelist tries to present the past in an intriguing and attractive fashion, concerning himself principally with the readers’ pleasure, without too strongly exhibiting the philosophical or educational purpose, which must be present in any novel. 13

For Pushkin, however, the portrayal of the Pugachev uprising is not so much about entertainment as about presenting his own understanding of the revolt’s nature that he came to realize during the time he spent on research and interviewing witnesses. The historical novel allowed Pushkin to erase the distance between the narrator and the rebellion, to look at it without the veil of an official document, but through the eyes of an ordinary man whose life and happiness, by a sheer accident, became dependent on the rebels’ will. And the love affair itself, which is certainly in the center of Pushkin’s story, only reinforces the author’s idea of the fragility of human happiness and its reliance on external circumstances.

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However, the fact that Pushkin assigns such a significant place to a love relationship between the main characters indicates the novel’s direct connection with the novels of Walter Scott. Other elements in Pushkin’s novel are also common for historical novels of the time. For example, the idea of the hero’s rescue by a grateful robber had been frequently used by Russian and foreign novelists such as Scott, Henryk Sienkiewicz and others. Yet, Grinev’s rescue by a thankful Pugachev helps Pushkin further demonstrate the multidimensionality of Pugachev’s humanity and capability for noble deeds.

Despite Pushkin’s continuity with the tradition of the European historical novel, by virtue of his peculiar spirit of a reformer, he goes beyond the conventional limits of the genre and offers innovative solutions in the portrayal of historical events in both drama and prose. Leo Tolstoy will later draw on Pushkin's intergeneric dialogical tradition and will achieve “a truly successful intermingling of historical and literary genres in one magisterial whole” in his novel War and Peace (Wachtel 1994, 87).

1.4 Available scholarship on Russian historical adaptations

Thus, the cinematic medium allows directors to reevaluate classics in a particularly visual and compelling way and presents vast opportunities for researchers. But while interest among scholars is growing, Russian screen adaptations overall have been under-researched both in Russia and in the West (Hutchings and Vernitski 2005, 8). A few high-quality publications dedicated to various theoretical and aesthetic aspects of film adaptations in Russian cinema have appeared recently (Dobrenko 1993 and 2001;
Hutchings and Vernitski 2002 and 2005; Tsiv’ian). Also, a large body of scholarly research has been written on specific themes and individual adaptations such as films *Chapaev* (1934), *Strogii Yunosha* (*Strict Youth*, 1934), *Chuchelo* (*Scarecrow*, 1984), *Kavkazskii Plennik* (*The Captive of Caucasus*, 1996), *Oblomov* (1979), and others. Of these, Hutchings and Vernitsky (2005) present the most concise account of the development of Russian adaptation (*ekranizatsiia*) from the early twentieth century to the present day.

Simply put, the evolution of Russian adaptation reflects the fate of Russian cinema in general, which from the outset was assigned a subordinate role as a mouthpiece of the Soviet government’s propagandistic ideas. From the beginning, the Bolsheviks recognized cinema’s unlimited opportunities to influence the ideological education of the masses, its affordability, and its aesthetic appeal, and were determined to put cinema to service. In his famous conversation with Lunacharsky in February 1922, Lenin described cinema as being most important for the proletariat revolutionary art, which gave the impetus to the rapid development of Soviet cinema for decades to come. However, Lenin also formulated other attitudinal objectives that for a long time restricted Russian cinema’s development, namely the need for censorship and limiting cinematic content to articulating communist ideas and the portrayal of Soviet reality. These principles subsequently became the cornerstone of socialist realism, but out of all Soviet arts the cinema was hit most harshly.

It should be unsurprising then that the Communist government also pressured cinematographic adaptations like the rest of the film industry. Given Russian directors’
proclivity for pre-revolutionary Russian classics that were traditionally considered bourgeois, the adaptation process from literary sources to film was particularly long. Not many literary works of classics were considered ideologically reliable, so their “flaws” had to be “corrected” (Hutchings and Vernitski 2005, 10) at the script level in order to be admitted for shooting. That is how Soviet adaptations, based on works by the nineteenth-century writers from the Russian landed gentry, often ended gaining revolutionary pathos and proclaiming verdicts to oppressors.

This precedence of screenwriting over actual shooting during Stalin’s time has been analyzed in a number of scholarly studies that recently came out with the increase of transparency in Russian society and the opening of the Communist Party archives. The volume on Stalinist cinema edited by Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (1993) contains a few notable studies dedicated to the issue of the relationship between the screenwriter and the director in Soviet cinema. Kenez (1993), in his encompassing study of Soviet cinematic history, illustrates specifics of the process from script to film under Stalin’s watchful eye and describes the entire control mechanism applied to Soviet cinema. As it was easier to control screenplays than final films, screenwriters were assigned a major responsibility for the finished product and were made more important than film directors. Before scripts would even reach film directors, they had to undergo a long, thorny path from scriptwriters to Cinema Committees where they were evaluated on the subject of their political correctness and artistic worthiness. At this very stage, most scripts were often rejected or, in the best-case scenario, returned for modifications. Only when a Cinema Committee approved of all corrections was the script handed over to the director.
This process of sensory evaluation of scripts was so exhaustive, prohibitory, and even dangerous thanks to possible persecutions that it discouraged many authors from writing screenplays. The scripts that would eventually be given to directors to film were not works of individual artists, but products of collective consciousness, conforming to template requirements of socialist realism. These scripts had to be followed exactly, and even the slightest frivolities on the director’s part could jeopardize the completion of the entire project.

After Stalin’s death, directors were empowered with certain freedoms. However, socialist realist principles remained prioritized over individual creativity for the remainder of the Soviet period. A recent study of semiotic anthropology in Soviet film culture of the 1960-90s by Lilia Avrutin (1998) compiles a comprehensive list of devices used by film directors to get around the ceremonial mode of the official culture directed towards producing Soviet mythology. While the procedure of the scripts approval described earlier remained in effect during the entire Soviet period, the Thaw (1956-1968) and Stagnation (1968-1985) periods allowed directors more flexibility. Directors still had to use Aesopian language and ritual symbolism in order to change a text from totalitarian into anti-totalitarian, but they were nonetheless sometimes able to pass hidden ideological messages through the censorship. Among other forms of implicit communication employed by filmmakers during post-Stalin times, Avrutin mentions “ideological allusions”, “dialogues with ‘accidental’ political hints”, “metaphorical imagery, visual cinematography and the film structure itself”, and “allegorical and coded languages, cinematic metalanguages.”
The still-recent collapse of the communist regime somewhat freed Russia’s cinema from the functions of propaganda and let directors finally make authoritative decisions regarding information transfer and ideological and aesthetic emphases in their films. For the first time, Russian directors were able to freely choose objects and ideological content for their narratives. But these directors had to tackle an entirely new dilemma, when the free market suddenly required the production of entertaining and commercially successful blockbusters, often commissioned by rich benefactors. Goscilo, Hashamova, Strukov, Lipevetsky, Larsen, Norris, and many other scholars have, at great length, analyzed these challenges faced by and the thematic scope of post-Soviet cinema.

1.5 Objective and Method of Research

To analyze literary classics and their repeated adaptations, the current research uses a semiotic method of analysis. Although semiotics of film is a relatively young discipline, it has already become one of the most promising fields in the theory of cinema. Interpretation of film as a complex sign system enables critics to more comprehensively classify cinema and its expressive elements. Lotman, Metz, Mitry, Barthes, Peters, and other researchers who stood at the origins of film semiotics have built a solid theoretical and conceptual framework that has served as the starting point for many subsequent studies in this area. In fact, “film semiotics has become acknowledged as a major branch of film theory” (Nöth 1990, 463).
As “semiotics is concerned with meaning and modes of cognition (the codes that we need to understand a text),”\textsuperscript{14} it is particularly applicable to transmedial studies involving literature and its screen transpositions. Analysis of adaptations is impossible without comparing them to their literary models. However, attempts to compare such distinct expressive media as verbal, in the case of literature, and visual, in the case of cinema, encounter inevitable obstacles. Semiotics allows us to transcode both literary and cinematic texts into a system of signifiers, which creates an intermediary agency that puts the artistic means of literature and cinema on the same tier and makes them comparable.

Semiotic study of cinema is deeply rooted in Russian avant-garde and early formalist tradition. Formalists not only contributed to the perception of literary and cinematic artistic forms as media functioning in accordance with similar syntagmatic and paradigmatic rules, but also laid out a rich theoretical foundation in the study of early Russian cinema. The compilation of articles by Shklovsky, Tynyanov, Eichenbaum, Jacobson and others published in 1927 as \textit{The Poetics of Cinema} was the first attempt of a transmedial analysis of Russian cinema with the application of the semiotic method to explain literary and cinematic texts in terms of their code systems\textsuperscript{15}. Eventually, the semiotic tradition started by Formalists was picked up and carried forward by such prominent Russian semioticians as Lotman, Bakhtin, Uspensky, Ginsburg, and others. Among the most recent studies on the topic of film semiotics is the above-mentioned research \textit{The Semiotic Anthropology of Soviet Film Culture} by Avrutin, which


\textsuperscript{15} See more on it in Hutchings and Vernitski (2005, 9)
specifically focuses on “hidden ritual symbols and processes as revealed on both the conscious and subconscious levels of Soviet/post-Soviet film culture” (1998, 3).

Nonetheless, despite semiotic analysis having struck deep roots in theoretical studies of Russian cinema in general, the research dedicated to transcoding Russian literary classics in the language of cinema is scarce in both Russia and the West. A notable contribution to this field is Benjamin Rifkin’s study *Semiotics of Narration in Film and Prose Fiction* (1994), which performs a comparative examination of the types of narration in two Soviet screen adaptations, *My Friend Ivan Lapshin* and *Scarecrow*, against their literary sources, the novels *Lapshin* by Yuri German and *Scarecrow* by Zheleznikov. The intention of Rifkin’s analysis is to investigate the signification process of narration in secondary filmic texts and the means used by their directors to specify indeterminacies of primary literary models.

The objective of my current research is to investigate the signs and signifiers that constitute the structural composition of Pushkin’s historical works *Boris Godunov* (1831) and *The Captain’s Daughter* (1836) and compare them with their Soviet and post-Soviet screen adaptations. I argue that the popularity of these literary works with filmmakers is based on the novels’ inexhaustible topicality for Russian society of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, and therefore a reassessment of their film adaptations guides us towards developing a better understanding of the sociopolitical complexities in modern Russia. Each of these literary works has been filmed in Russia more than once: during the domination of Socialist Realism (*Boris Godunov*, 1954, dir. Vera Stroeva; *Boris Godunov*, 1986, dir. Sergey Bondarchuk; and *Kapitanskaya Dochka*, 1958, dir. Vladimir
Kaplunovsky) and after the collapse of Socialist system (*Boris Godunov*, 2011, dir. Vladimir Mirzoev; and *Russky Bunt (Russian Revolt)*, 2000, dir. Alexander Proshkin).

Each new adaptation offers a unique multilayered conception that reassesses not only the classics, but also the historical events that form their foundation. Interestingly, Pushkin first had the idea of the author being a mediator who forms the people's attitude to their history: “The history of a people belongs to the poet” (quoted in Emerson, 1986, 141). Indeed, the director of each historical adaptation is the spokesperson of a particular social group, and therefore his or her film presents a vivid picture of their contemporary social consciousness.

The primary literary texts analyzed in the current study, Pushkin’s historical prose *Boris Godunov*, *The Captain’s Daughter* (*Капитанская Дочка*), and *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* (*История Пугачева*), have all been extensively analyzed by Russian and foreign literary critics. However, to my knowledge, there is no prior research that performs a comparative semiotic analysis of these texts along with their Soviet and post-Soviet screen adaptations.

This study uses the comparative analysis laid out by Hoegl in “Information Transfer in Transmedial and Multimedral Art” (1984) to perform side-by-side comparisons of the literary sources and their cinematic interpretations. Hoegl developed this method specifically to compare works of art based on the same plot but in different

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media. Based on this system, the factors to be considered in the process of information transfer from one system to another are:

1. The structure of the original literary text by the author,
2. The film director’s perception of this literary text,
3. The process of transfer by the filmmaker of the primary text into another medium.

All directors must evaluate the work they are adapting and decide which parts of the literary text will be used to convey their cinematic narrative. This process is key in translating a literary work into the language of film. But this type of translation a literary text into a work of cinema is not the same as linguistic translation. To denote the process of converting words into images, Lotman used the term *transcoding* (перекодировка). As Rifkin defines it, transcoding is “the recoding of one type of communication act, issued by an addresser according to certain codes and systems of expression, into a second type of communication act with its own unique codes and systems” (9).

Regardless of what material the filmmaker chooses from the original text, inevitably both a loss and a gain of information occurs. Thus, the meaning of the literary work is not simply shifted into its adaptation but, in the words of Rifkin, it is instead “transcoded in the process of the projection of elements from one system into the other; it is not the absolute meaning of any given element in either system – film or literature – which needs to be determined, but rather the relative positions these elements occupy in each of the different systems” (47). And so the amount and the content of the information chosen to be left out or added to the secondary text determines whose perspective the adaptation was intended to express more closely, the writer’s or the director’s.
Essentially, in juxtaposing literary works with their screen adaptations, I demonstrate which meaningful elements within the signification systems of each specific adaptation play a decisive role in transmitting the film director’s point of view. Moreover, changes in narrational patterns in the adaptations are therefore indicative of alternative meanings added by each film’s director.

1.6 Short synopsis of the dissertation chapters

The study consists of five chapters and the following is the brief synopsis of each. Having outlined the theoretical framework and textual focus of the dissertation in the introductory chapter, in the second chapter, “What is Adaptation,” I will define varying systems of classification of screen adaptations, which usually depend on the amount and quality of information chosen by the filmmaker for transfer from the literary work into a cinematic narrative. Earlier classificatory systems mainly focused on the degree of the adaptations’ adherence to the content and spirit of their literary models, critiquing films when they failed to capture the fundamental narrative and aesthetic features of the literary works they adapted. However, in recent years this so-called “fidelity criticism” has been denounced by many critics. Instead, scholars argue for a dialogical connection between film and novel, or “intertextual dialogism” that helps transcend the constraints of fidelity (Stam 2005, 4). Chapter 2 also provides detailed information about existing theories of film adaptations and analyzes their interlacing and conflicting points. It also gives the most endorsed definitions of film adaptations based on their relevance to literary sources.
In the next chapter, “Pushkin’s historical works: Boris Godunov, The Captain’s Daughter, and A History of the Pugachev Rebellion”, I will discuss the creative tasks that Pushkin set for himself while writing Boris Godunov (written 1825, published 1831) and The Captain’s Daughter (Капитанская Дочка, 1836), two of his most significant fictional historical works, and the nonfictional historical treatise A History of the Pugachev Rebellion (1834), based on the archival material that Pushkin compiled while writing The Captain’s Daughter. Boris Godunov is Pushkin’s first mature historical work and The Captain’s Daughter is one of his latest and the most accomplished works. A History of the Pugachev Rebellion is sine qua non for any researcher who attempts to better understand Pushkin’s attitude towards Pugachev’s rebellion. In this chapter, I examine the nature of Pushkin’s interest in two of the most controversial periods in Russian history: the Times of Troubles and the Pugachev revolt, and the themes of regicide and imposture on the Russian throne associated with them.

In Chapter 4, “Adaptations of Boris Godunov”, I will analyse what attracted Soviet director Bondarchuk and post-Soviet director Mirzoev to Pushkin’s tragedy and how they approached the problem of transmitting Pushkin’s tragedy once considered unfit for the stage into their adaptations. The last chapter, “Adaptations of The Captain’s Daughter”, analyzes the conceptualizing of the narrative elements of Pushkin’s The Captain’s Daughter and A History of the Pugachev Rebellion in the Soviet adaptation The Captain’s Daughter by Kaplunovsky (1958) and in the post-Soviet adaptation Russian Revolt by Proshkin (2000). The major difference between the two transpositions arises from the Proshkin’s refusal to let the point of view of the protagonist, the young
officer Grinev, be the only source of the interpretation of the Pugachev rebellion, as it is in the novel and in an earlier adaptation by Kaplunovsky. Instead, Proshkin takes on a much broader task and also includes the rebellion’s gory details and its violent and unmanageable spirit. As noted by Anat Vernitski (2005), such a shift in the point of view was to emphasize a rethinking of the concept of revolution, which in modern Russian society is largely refuted.
Chapter 2. What is Adaptation?

2.1 Approaches to Analyzing Adaptations

Over decades, screen adaptations have attracted an ever-increasing attention from film critics. The crux of this discussion has been occupied by the attempts to classify the relationship between adaptations and their literary sources in terms of their ability to manifest meaning through the agency of their narrative languages.

The rapid development of cinema, its genres and narrative features has long convinced everyone of its capacity to tell compelling stories, and has disproved the theory of non-comparability of film and literature as forms of art that use dramatically distinct means of expression. Rifkin argues that narrative horizons of cinema exploded with “the gradual introduction of a variety of film techniques,” when “the camera, together with the film audience, was freed to move in space and time” (Rifkin, 2). The discovery of different methods of editing, movements, lighting, and various kinds of shots and angles allowed cinema to represent reality so that its narrative capabilities have become evident. If at the advent of cinema in 1895 there was no clear vision of what cinematic goals should be and by the consensus of the majority there was “no thought that [film] would become a narrative art form” (Metz, 93), nowadays even those who still
prefer a good old book to “moving pictures” would not deny cinema its ability to narrate, which was previously considered strictly a prerogative of literature. And of course, with the recent surge in the development of digital image processing cinema has even further convinced audiences and critics alike of its unmatched capacity to create multidimensional accounts of reality that far exceeded any previous expectations.

Comparing film to literature and analyzing their relationship, modern critics remind us that the former is not an extension of the latter, but is rather an entirely different system. As a “full-fledged art form, [cinema] must relinquish the narrative disciplines it has borrowed from literature and its timid imitation of the causal logic of narrative plots, … it must develop the vocabulary of filmic images and evolve the syntax of filmic techniques which relate those” (Deren, 227).

And even though few could predict the deeply intertwined relationship that literature and film have today, this entanglement dates back to the very beginning of cinema. Filmmakers standing at the origins of cinema commonly turned to fiction for inspiration and screenplays. This applies to world cinema in general and to Russian cinema in particular. For example, the majority of silent films made in Russia before the October Revolution are based on the works of classics by authors such as Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Alexander Ostrovsky. It is obvious that the relationship that has established between literature and cinema is solid and long lasting, and the attempts of scholars to analyze the screen adaptations alongside their source materials no longer provoke objections. However, researchers are still far from being unanimous on what methods of analysis are most effective and some even claim that
“written stories and filmed stories are but two forms of a single art: the art of narrative literature” (Beja, quoted in Giddings, 1).

In the words of James Naremore, many discussions of adaptations can be summarized by a New Yorker cartoon that Alfred Hitchcock once described to Francois Truffaut: two goats are eating a pile of film cans, and one goat says to the other, “Personally, I liked the book better” (2002, 387). Even today such a comical generalization would not be totally unreasonable, though it would be considered rather philistine. So-called ‘fidelity criticism’ has not only deeply penetrated the psyche of general public, but has also had predetermined the direction of film criticism for a long time. The derivative nature of adaptations in relation to novels and the lack of a classificatory system that allows comparison of the expressive means of cinema and literature have formed a persisting view of film being simply an appendage to literature that is expected to preserve its likeness to the original. As noted by Linda Hutcheon, “for some, literature will always be superior over any adaptation because of its seniority as an art form” (Hutcheon, 4). Fidelity to the literary source has been often used to measure the aesthetic success or failure of the films. Hulsberg suggests that on some level being faithful to the novel is regarded almost as a moral obligation on the part of the film director, and “anything less constitutes a kind of vulgar cultural cannibalism, an abuse of the high art of fiction” (Hulsberg 1978, 58).

However, despite being consistently used by both viewers and film theorists as the most universal principle in assessing adaptations for a long time, the criteria of fidelity encounters harsh criticism. The requirement of fidelity reinforces the notion of
the novel as being the standard and the film as being a secondary text, and therefore any deviation from the source by filmmakers is considered “a modification and criticism of the original” (Hulsberg, 58). But this notion is built on a shaky ground of a vaguely stated framework and as a result lacks systematic character and consistency. Demands of fidelity to literary texts are expressed by various critics in different ways. Some require that screen adaptations are not merely recognizable, but also reproduce the main elements of the plot, characters, and the spatial and temporal settings of the source text’s events. Others point out that it is more important to convey the spirit of the source novel in the movie. Both approaches have been rightly criticized17, as they do not propose a mechanism of translating the elements of the source text into the elements of the filmic text, which would allow their direct and objective comparison. And due to the lack of such a system of classification, prioritizing components of the artistic work and defining its spirit is largely dependent on the subjective interpretation of a viewer. Thus, there is no definite recognition of what kind of transposition can be considered faithful.

Perhaps the criticism related to the issue of fidelity in cinema stems from the young age of film as an art form. Many researchers point out that literature has also dealt with the issues of transpositions and fidelity since ancient times. From the very beginning of fiction, writers of different cultures created their works often relying either on folk stories, or the works of other authors. Homer, Shakespeare and many others created literary ремакes with various degree of allegiance to their sources but nobody today questions the value and originality of their work. Similarly, as stated by Burry, the “very

17 See a more detailed review of the fidelity criticism in “Transposition as Criticism” (Burry 2014, 16-36).
process of selecting elements from a text and transferring them into a new form sometimes allows [filmmakers] to arrive at insights just as original and provocative as those of their critical counterparts” (2011, 29), which makes their work authentic in its own right.

George Bluestone was one of the first to point out that film critics should focus on the differences between novel and film without expecting too many similarities between them, and therefore “there is no necessary correspondence between the excellence of a novel and the quality of the film in which the novel is recorded” (1957, 62). He was also one of the first to point out the contrast between “a perceptual and presentational form” of the film and “a conceptual and discursive form” of the novel (1957, VII) and emphasized the necessity of appraising film as a unique and independent structure. Meanwhile, he too was not free from the bias of fidelity in his own comparative analyses of different films and the novels on which they are based. The inevitable difference between film and novel Bluestone attributes to the crucial differences between the two media. “An art whose limits depend on a moving image, mass audience, and industrial production is bound to differ from an art whose limits depend on language, a limited audience and individual creation” (64).

Other scholars have supported the argument that film and literature cannot be converted into each other without dramatically changing their content due to the different artistic means available to them. Balázs, another forefather of the film theory, recognized that transferring the major elements of the story such as “the subject, the story, [and] the plot of a novel” into a different form like a play or a film makes it possible to produce a
perfect work of art with the identical “subject, or story”, but it inevitably changes the content of the transposed work. “It is this different content that is adequately expressed in the changed form resulting from the adaptation” (1953, 260). He compares the relationship between an adaptation and its source novel to the one between an objective reality that provides an artist with raw material and the finished artistic work that may end up only obscurely resembling its initial model. Balázs is convinced that “Art and its forms are not a priori inherent in reality but are methods of human approach to it” (261) and that an artist is free to fashion the original material into many different art forms.

The study of contextual elements that make up the basis of the narrative work of art, their hierarchy and significance in the process of transferring the content from one medium to another is of key concern to narratologists and the subject of the field they developed that became known as la narratologie. The very important contribution of narratology to the adaptation studies is the observation that “narrative itself is a deep structure quite independent of its medium” (Chatman 1999, 435) which leads to the premise that narrative can easily be transferred to different media. Narrative, as a type of an independent structure, can be equally actualized in different art forms so long as that fundamental narrative components are preserved. This implies a versatility of narrative segments and their transferability from one medium to another.

Roland Barthes, who represents a French structuralist approach to narratology, in his magnum opus “The Structural Analysis of Narratives” proposes to use the structure of narrative as a ground for comparing works based on the same story but created in different media. He maintains that “narrative is international, transhistorical,
transnational,” it is simply “there like life itself” (Barthes 1975, 237) and therefore can be perfectly translated from one art form to another without undergoing detrimental losses in its narrative composition. He formulated the ordering principle that establishes hierarchy according to which narrative elements of the literary text are being transferred to the screen adaptation. He divided narrative components into distributional (functional) and integrational (indices) units, where the former are the elements of the story itself (actions, characters, etc.) and the latter represent, among others, psychological ideas, descriptions, point of view, focalization, and motivations. Barthes further branched distributional elements into cardinal functions (nuclei) and catalyzers, where cardinal functions represent the flow of the narrative and cannot be omitted, while catalyzers consist of the connecting narrative elements and can be omitted without making major damage to the narrative plot. “A nucleus cannot be deleted without altering the story,” while a catalyzer “accelerates, delays, gives fresh impetus to the discourse, it summarizes, anticipates, and sometimes even leads astray” (Barthes 1975, 249).

Brian McFarlane (1996) builds on Barthes’s theory, arguing that due to the differences in expressive systems certain elements of the novel have to undergo inevitable changes in the process of screening. Thus, cardinal elements that denote the “story” content and can be depicted audio-visually and verbally can be transferred to a certain degree, while indices have to be almost inevitably adapted as their audiovisual and verbal depiction requires different means. And some indices such as character information, location and atmosphere descriptions can be successfully conveyed by various editing techniques and camera work. This reflects the very nature of film as an art
with spatial conceptualization of narrative. Other integrational units are not so easily transferable. Among them scholars usually name time (Balázs, Bluestone), point of view (Chatman, Whelehan), and other discreet fluxes of the human consciousness such as dreams, memories, and thoughts.

The difficulty of conceptualization of time is one of the major distinctions between cinematography and literature. For example, certain limitations in transferring the development of action in time lie in cinema’s inability to express any other time but the present. And although filmmakers can use dialogue, changes in music and lighting, mise-en-scènes, cutting, flashbacks, and other techniques to indicate shifts in time, Bluestone argues that while “the novel has three times; the film has only one” (Bluestone, 48). Balázs goes further and insists, “Pictures have no tenses” (Balazs, 33). And if literary action via the power of language unfolds in time, cinema as a visual art can communicate the concept of time only in spatial terms. This artistic feature, dubbed “filmic time and filmic space” by Pudovkin, “dynamization of space” and “spatialization of time” by Panofsky (in Bluestone, 52), transmits the essence of cinematic reality.

Cinema takes a similar approach toward formalizing other invisible stratum, i.e., anything dealing with the sphere of the subconscious. Despite developing more and more perfected cinematic technologies that allow film directors to reveal psychological notions of their characters on screen, these notions can be only expressed by assigning them visual characteristics. Dissolves, impositions of shots, reaction shots and other techniques are simply physical devices that give viewers a signal to expect a shift from one reality to
Another. It is all a part of cinematic code that is coherent only within the context of the specific film.

Another cognitive approach to the process of transposing literary texts into cinema regards it as translation of the primary sources from one medium to another. This concept has been delineated by Russian Formalists Jakobson, Eikhenbaum, Tynianov, and others and to a certain extent made the way into the works by some contemporary semioticians of film such as Eco, Torop and Lotman. According to this model, the filmmaker serves as an interpreter of the novel who faces a choice of the expressive means in the target language to transmit the meaning of the literary source. However, the very concept of translation implies only limited freedom in the interpretation of the source text and unavoidably brings us back to the demands of fidelity. As good translation is the one that closely resembles the original, then a significant amount of lost or inserted material lowers the quality of the translation. This assumption certainly places the focus on the analysis of the information transfer from the novel to the film. While this approach allows for a detailed comparative examination of the specific elements of meaning in both the primary and the secondary texts, it does not authorize a researcher to consider a transposition as an independent work of a film director but only as a skillful or disappointing translation. Besides, considering that in the case of adaptations we do not deal with two linguistic systems, the direct transmediation is not possible. In order to be able to transcode meaning from novel to film, the filmmaker has to decode the primary (literary) text by using linguistic communication patterns and then encode it into a secondary (filmic) text by using the expressive vocabulary of cinema (Rifkin, 10). Since
there are no corresponding paradigms of meaning between linguistic and visual art forms, such recoding is only possible if we regard novel and film as signification systems and their elements of meaning as signs, which is within the scope of semiotics.

2.2 Advantages of the Semiotic Model of Analysis

Although film semiotics is a relatively young science, it has already become one of the most promising fields in the theory of cinema. Lotman’s conceptualization of the language of cinema in semiotic terms became, for many researchers, a revolutionary breakthrough which they compared to “the shift from Newtonian to relativistic physics.” Interpretation of film as a complex multidimensional communication sign system with its own semantic and syntactic regulations endorses more comprehensive analysis of cinema and its expressive constituents.

This semiotic approach to the analysis of cinema had evolved from the Saussurean theory of semiology and the works of his followers in literary criticism, which included Mikhail Bakhtin, George Vernadsky, and others. Researchers who stood at the origins of film semiotics such as Yuri Lotman, Christian Metz, Jean Mitry, Roland Barthes, and others have created a solid theoretical and conceptual framework that has served as a starting point for many subsequent studies in this area. By now, “film semiotics has become acknowledged as a major branch of film theory” (Nöth, 463). The idea to interpret film as language goes back to Shklovsky, a poet and a film director

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himself, who reacted to the writings of the Ukrainian linguist Alexander Potebnia (1836-1891) who thought of poetry as “thinking in images.”

With regard to such a particular area of film studies as screen adaptations, semiotics seems to offer one of the most effective platforms for their classification. Analysis of adaptations is impossible without comparing them to their literary models. However, attempts to compare such distinct expressive media as verbal in the case of literature and visual in the case of cinema encounter inevitable obstacles. Semiotics allows us to transcode both literary and cinematic texts into systems of signs and signifiers, which creates an intermediary agency that puts artistic means of each medium on the same tier and makes them comparable. Lotman calls this process “recoding”, which implies translation of one type of communication system into another in accordance with their unique codes of expressions. When comparing two different media, one must compare “the different kinds of signs used by each and the rules governing their combination within each medium before proceeding to a consideration of equivalences between the signs and rules of each system as well as the paradigmatic structures built into each system” (Rifkin, 14). Semiotic analysis implies comparing not just texts, but “the models of texts, models of models” (Lotman 1992, 127).

While many of Lotman’s ideas about the language of film may recall of formalist ideas, ultimately his concepts have taken an entirely new direction in the semiotics of cinema. Kristeva (1994) emphasizes Lotman’s post-Formalist and post-Structuralist views; his notion of the general text as the place where cultural movements and

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traditions, history and society come together and create meaning of language, i.e.,
semitic activity. Kristeva proceeds to stress Lotman’s anti-dogmatic and anti-Formalist
idea that culture can only be studied by taking into account the “transformative essence of
meaning” (376) that comes as a result of “intercommunication and reprocessing…of
information and of structures.” This idea became the basis of the concept of
intertextuality, according to which texts exist in relation to others and that “texts owe
more to other texts than to their own makers.” Lotman argued that each text - linguistic,
cinematic, etc. - has transparent boundaries that permeate boundaries of other texts and
create a so-called semiosphere, configured from the center to the periphery, where it
borders with semiospheres of other texts or with the semiospheres of the same text
translated into other languages (2005). Mutual penetration of texts takes place not only
within the same media, but also intermedially, making use of multiple codes and
constantly creating new ones. Codes “are not... added to one another, or juxtaposed in
just any manner; they are organized, articulated in terms of one another in accordance
with a certain order, they contract unilateral hierarchies... Thus a veritable system of
intercodical relations is generated which is itself, in some sort, another code” (Metz,
242). Viewing any kind of a text as a system of codes, or signs, is particularly beneficial
in analysis of crossmedial transpositions, where transcoding (перекодировка, Lotman) of
one art form into another makes these art forms comparable.

Despite differences in the nature of signs used by literature and cinema, both are
communication systems and their comparison is possible on the grounds of establishing

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20 Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics for Beginners*. [http://visual-
equivalencies at the level of meaning of signs and not of the signs themselves. As Dudley points out:

Narrative codes always function at the level of implication or connotation. Hence they are potentially comparable in a novel and a film. The story can be the same if the narrative units (characters, events, motivations, consequences, context, viewpoint, imagery and so on) are produced equally in two works. Now this production is, by definition, a process of connotation and implication. The analysis of adaptation, then, must point to the achievement of equivalent narrative units in the absolutely different semiotic systems of film language. (Andrew 1984, 103)

Literature operates with a more homogeneous system of signs than cinema, i.e. verbal conventional signs, that are regulated with semantic and syntactic rules and can be more easier syntagmatized, or connected to each other into larger narrative structures. At the same time, cinematic language is more diversified and includes besides verbal and other types of conventional signs, as well as iconic signs that are based on the similarity with an object and therefore carry only one possible meaning and can be easily understood. Comparing the sign systems of cinema and literature, some scholars draw many parallels between them and conclude that a number of cinematic elements has been brought about by written texts. For example, Eisenstein describes how D.W.Griffith based many of his innovations of montage, dissolve, superimposed shots, close-ups, etc., on the novels of Charles Dickens (Giddings, 7). Cohen insists that looking at films and novels from “a certain level of abstraction” allows us to recognize that “the same codes [perceptual, referential, symbolic] re-appear in more than one system” which indicates close relationship between these systems and allows examination of their relationship (4). Identifying the same codes in both media is the first step in comparative analysis of
novels and their screen versions. Rifkin argues: “In the comparison of texts created within different expressive media, it is necessary to investigate the systems common to both media and the system unique to each medium in order to understand the meaning of signs in each text. This kind of investigation is the stuff of semiotics” (14, Rifkin’s italics).

Cinematic signs in combination with each other make a limitless number of codes that may carry different meaning depending on their specific contexts. Each shot has the capacity to become a conventional sign when it transmits information beyond what is directly depicted by the shot. The infinity of meanings that an individual shot can express prompts Metz to compare the shot not to the word, the most basic unit of literature, but to a statement that can also yield indefinite information. A similar thought was expressed by Lotman, who argued that images on the screen have a primary meaning, i.e., to reproduce objects of the real world, and a secondary meaning, which can only be fully understood by analyzing elements of cinematic language, e.g., technical components, camerawork, spatial arrangements, etc. “The images on the screen may be augmented by some additional, often totally unexpected meanings. Lighting, montage, interplay of depth levels, change of speed, etc., may impart to the objects additional meanings – symbolic, metaphorical, metonymical, etc. The first types of meanings are present in an individual frame or shot, while the second require a series of shots – a sequence. Only in a series of shots appearing one after the other can we discover the mechanisms of differences and similarities, thanks to which the secondary sign units emerge” (Lotman 1973, 31). It
should be added that by analyzing sequences of shots we can also conceptualize the rules according to which a signifying system of a certain adaptation functions.

Considering an adaptation as an independent creation of the film’s director, it is inevitable to expect gain, loss, or changes of certain information during the process of transcoding a novel into a film. “On the one hand, elements present in the primary text may fail to appear in the secondary text; on the other hand, elements appearing in the secondary text may have no basis in the primary text” (Rifkin, 11). Such changes in the amount of information transferred from the primary to the secondary text should not be considered as necessarily decreasing or enhancing the aesthetic value of the latter. The choice of information transferred, omitted, or changed is indicative of its topicality to the director’s artistic goals and therefore is especially important for the comparative analysis of an adaptation with its originary text. Changes of information in the process of its transfer from one medium to another may also indicate a change in the socio-political content that occurred in the period since the novel was written or the previous adaptation was filmed.

2.3 Why adaptation?

Naturally, some principal questions that film critics try to answer are why the genre of adaptation and especially the adaptation of classics, is so popular among filmmakers and what kind of novels are the most adaptable. Eric Rentschler has formulated the latter question in regard to German literature and film, but it can be addressed to the entire field of cinema studies: “Why do artists adapt certain material at
certain times?... The major impetus linking the articles has been to expand the field of adaptation study so as to include sociological, theoretical, and historical dimensions, and to bring a livelier regard for intertextuality to the study of German film and literature” (2012, 5).

There are different reasons that explain the adherence of film directors to classical literature, but one of the most commonly mentioned by film theorists is that an appeal to literary sources has proven to produce an immediate commercial value by driving an audience’s interest based on the expectation of visual representations of texts they are familiar with. The use of popular literary works as the basis for screenplays and capitalizing on their public acclaim has remained invariably common. Even nineteenth-century Italian composers relied on previously popular and successful stage plays and novels in order to avoid financial risks (Hutcheon, 5). Cartmell points out that out of the world’s top twenty highest-earning films, fourteen are adaptations (Cartmell, 24). Others scholars (Beja, Hutcheon) indicate that 85% of all Oscar-winning Best Pictures are adaptations. As Luhr and Lehman put it: “The reputation of a classic novel often led film makers to assume they could reconstruct the major events of the narrative and that the novel’s ‘greatness’ would carry the rest” (Luhr and Lehman, 297). Seger compares the adaptation industry to “making money while avoiding risk.” (5) Such reliability makes adaptations “safe bets” and guarantees easier financial success.

Some critics explain the popularity of adaptations by their capacity to educate viewers and to build up their cultural literacy (Whelehan). This argument seems to be plausible to an extent. Being such a large part in the life of contemporary society, cinema
definitely contributes to shaping the intellect of its audience and creating its cultural models. However, Whelehan herself argues against this assumption. She claims: “as mass culture is increasingly becoming the subject of the same critical scrutiny as ‘high culture’, what constitutes ‘culture’ becomes increasingly problematic” (Whelehan 1999, 26). Shakespeare can illustrate this point well. As alluded to by Cartmell, Shakespeare’s dramas were “considered ideal material for cinema” in the early twentieth century because they “raised the contemporary estimation of film as a low-culture medium… given the belief that ‘Shakespeare’ carried some guarantee of worth” (Cartmell, 30).

However, overall, countless cinematic translations of Shakespeare are heterogeneous and range from those that reflect a “punk, disrespectful attitude” to his works in the 1970-1980s to “an evangelical reverence” prior to that time and after. Screen transpositions based on Shakespeare’s works were mobilized to promote disparate values depending on the specific social context. In the time of war, Olivier’s version (1944) was raising national morale and endorsing cultural traditions,\(^{21}\) while some more modern adaptations distort Shakespeare to such magnitude that it becomes almost unrecognizable and even blasphemous to some, e.g., Jarman’s adaptation of The Tempest (1979).\(^{22}\) Besides, an adaptation is often a version of the classic text stripped of its complexities such as outdated information and unpleasant scenes. Imelda Whehelan suggests that what we see on the screen is often a simplified version of the old times that satisfies our “nostalgic yearning for a sanitized version of the past, and [is] thus escapist in [its] overall appeal” (ibid).

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\(^{21}\) Example is taken from Cartmell 1990, 30.

\(^{22}\) ibid
J.O. Thompson suggests that a screen version of a classic text concretizes the book in the viewer’s eyes, making it real through the use of cinematic language (13). Perhaps this assertion is reasonable in cases when adaptations move viewers to read the source text, even though it can be assumed that the majority will not read the novel and instead settle for having their opinion of the novel be formed by the visual representation.

Indeed, there are many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation, either based on the personal bias of the filmmaker, social needs, or a combination of both. As Hutcheon states, motivation to create an adaptation can be based on “the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question,” or “the desire to pay tribute by copying” (7). In any of these situations the literary text provides a film director with a more or less clear-cut blueprint that becomes a building ground for a new piece of art, which is in no way a copy or even an offspring of the novel.

The question about the type of novels that more often attract filmmakers and transfer more successfully is still also up for dispute. It has been traditionally noted that only certain kinds of novels seem to be best suited for cinematic transpositions. Hulsberg suggests that the adaptability of a novel is determined “by the degree to which the basic substance of the novel is more or less accessible through film” (61). He divides all novels into two categories. The first is represented by the works in which novelists focus on the psychological development of characters and implement the narrative structure internalized by the processes of individual consciousness. The second group is constituted by more of the “public novels,” with more diaphanous story lines, which use language “as a relatively transparent means of telling a story” (Hulsberg, 61). Hulsberg
observes that novels in the second group are easier to adapt and make more noteworthy films. Other critics assume that the most accomplished novels produce menial adaptations, while “brilliant adaptations are nearly always of fiction of the second or third class” (Anthony Burgess, quoted in Giddings, 21). Such claims can be found in interviews with both writers and film directors, but they are most likely rooted in the disappointment of frustrated writers who are not satisfied with the quality of adaptations of their novels.

Another type of novel often considered unsuitable for adapting on the screen is the so-called “radical” novels: “Linear realist novels are more easily adapted than experimental ones. Pictorial descriptions and potential for scenes of spectacle make them readily adaptable or at least ‘adaptogenic’” (Hutcheon, 15). However, with the ever-expanding capacity of computer-generated imagery, even literary experimentation has become much better translatable to the screen.

2.4 Classifying adaptation

Since adaptations are primarily works of cinematography, they are often classified in terms of specifics of their medium, i.e., genre, ideology, cinematic techniques, narrative structure, etc. There is also a considerable number of studies that attempt to label adaptations by taking into account their relationships with originary texts and according to the amount of information transferred from these texts. Morris Beja discerns two approaches to the categorization of adaptations: “The first asks that the integrity of the original work – the novel, say – be preserved, and therefore that it should not be
tampered with and should in fact be uppermost in the adapter’s mind. The second approach feels it proper and in fact necessary to adapt the original work freely, in order to create – in the different medium that is now being employed – a new, different work of art with its own integrity.” (Beja, 82). Although existing classifications of literary transpositions are often referenced by the scholars of cinema, no theoretical approach developed so far has been recognized as being thoroughly consistent, comprehensive and devoid of contradictions.

Based on the classification by G. Wagner, all screen adaptations can be divided into three categories – transpositions, commentary and analogies (1975). Transpositions are films that resemble literary text as accurately as possible. Wagner calls them “the least satisfactory” of all adaptations. “The film was envisaged as a book illustration, an effect frequently heightened by an opening in which the pages of the original are turned over” (Wagner; quoted in Giddings, 11). Films in which the original is altered, either “purposely or inadvertently,” represent the second category that Wagner defines as “commentary”, in the process that Wagner calls “re-emphasis or re-structure.” The third group of adaptations, “analogies”, consists of screen versions in which the original text is used as a point of departure. In discussing analogy, Wagner comments that “the skill of [the filmmaker] in striking analogous attitudes and in finding analogous rhetorical techniques” makes the adaptation a success and “a fairly considerable departure… cannot be indicated as a violation of a literary original” since the director’s purpose was to produce another work of art (11-12).
Dudley Andrew (1984) classifies adaptations as “borrowings”, “intersections” and “transformations”. He defines adaptations as “borrowings” when they make no claim to fidelity and only remotely recall the originary text. “Intersections” are works that attempt to recreate the distinctness of the sources through the combination of literary aesthetic forms and cinematic techniques. “Transformations” are defined as films that are most loyal to the “essential” text and its narrative “skeleton.”

M.Klein and G.Parker’s classification of adaptations is based on similar principles to those proposed by Wagner and Andrew. They discern three categories of adaptations depending on their relationship to novels. The first category is represented by the most faithful transpositions which Klein and Parker call “literal translations”. The second category is made up of the transpositions that “retain the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly re-interpreting, or in some cases de-constructing the source text” (Klein and Parker 1981; quoted in Giddings, 11). Adaptations in the third category bear only distant resemblance with their sources that provide only “raw” material for the film directors.

In regards to the process of remediation of a literary text into a cinematic one, Bluestone and other scholars introduce the idea of the paraphrase, which emphasizes the possibility of a more or less free interpretation of the novel by filmmakers. John Dryden defines paraphrase as “translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view… but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified” (in Hutcheon, 17).
From a semiotic perspective, adaptations are remediations, which represent the end product of a translation of the novel into a different medium. As such, they are translations resulting from the transfer of information between two different modeling systems, from the language of literature into the language of cinema. In the words of Hutcheon, “This is translation but in a very specific sense: as transmutation or transcoding, that is, as necessarily a recoding into a new set of conventions as well as signs.” (16) The notion of intersemiotic translation has become commonly accepted to define the process of adapting a novel to screen and to classify the type of adaptation. This concept is used by Rifkin who argues that the essence of transcoding from novel to cinema can be most adequately conveyed by terms “translation” and “adaptation,” where “translation” is the work “that contains the very same or very similar information, expresses similar meanings, or has similar effects on the addressee” as the novel. At the same time the term “adaptation of a literary text” is applicable to a film that “contains some or many fabula or sujet components similar to those found in the literary text, but in the context of the film these components interact in such a way as to convey different information, express different meanings, or have different effects on the addressee” (20). “Adaptation” in Rifkin’s classification has been narrowed down from a general term referring to the entire class of transposed into cinema novels to the filmic texts “whose meaning and addresser’s world view may be quite different from those established by the literary text on which the film is based” (20).

As has been illustrated, categorization of cinematic remediations has been traditionally based on their relationship with primary texts in terms of emulating novels’
events and tone. Such an approach clearly has its merits as it manifests that directors have a choice of making the adapted text more immediate and available, or making it deeper and more complex than its literary source. However, this approach also seems to be restrictive and imprecise. As Whelehan puts it, “the more we study adaptations, the more it becomes apparent that the categories are limitless” (24). The extent to which screen transmediations follow literary sources, used as a sole criterion in their classification, leaves out other comparable features of literary and cinematic texts, e.g., elements of their language, structural systems, audiences’ response, and so on.

In the current study, the terms ‘adaptation’, ‘transposition’, ‘intermedial translation’ and ‘transformation of literary texts’ have been used interchangeably, as the issue of fidelity of films to literary sources has not been considered.

2.5 Language of adaptations

Narration is the core not only of an adaptation, but of any film and more generally, of any artistic text that has the capacity to articulate temporality. As Labov defines it: “narrative [is] one method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (2002, 225). Narrative is a feature of the artistic text and not of reality because it recounts events that have ended before the narration started and possibly in a different space from the one where they are retold. Christian Metz in his Film Language made an important contribution to the theoretical substantiation of narrative in the artistic text. He claims that stories are told by memory, not by reality, and therefore their account is
‘entirely imaginative’ (23). “Reality assumes presence, which has a privileged position along two parameters, space and time; only the here and now are completely real. By its very existence, the narrative suppresses the now (accounts of current life) or the here (live television coverage), and most frequently the two together (newsreels, historical accounts, etc.)” (22). The temporal sequence of the narrative is invariably limited by the beginning and end of the events. But more importantly, narrative includes the time of the events’ occurrence and the time of the narration. Metz argues that this phenomenon, which he calls “a doubly temporal sequence”, makes possible not only distortions of time in narratives but also allows one “to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme” (18). Analogically to Metz’s definition of time in the narrative, space can also be defined as “doubly spatial sequence”, as commonly the space where the narration is told is not the same as the space where the events took place. However, a spatial arrangement of objects becomes an element of the narrative structure only if it is preceded and followed by the transformation of these arrangements. Taken in isolation from the temporal development, spatial design constitutes simply static descriptions.

To express the interconnectedness of time and space in cinema scholars commonly use the concept of the chronotope, invented by Bakhtin in his 1937 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel". Bakhtin wrote:

We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)…
In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, movements of time, plot and history. (Bakhtin, 84)

Bakhtin delineated the types of chronotope depending on the genre of literary works and the artistic purposes of the author. By Bakhtin’s definition, chronotope in the novel is the element that forms the plot that gives the novel visual and sensory overtones. Literary chronotopes intersect throughout the course of the story and therefore are in dialogical relations to each other. While Bakhtin defines ‘chronotope’ as “a formally constitutive category of literature” and refuses to discuss its relevance to other areas of culture, in recent decades this concept has become more versatile and appears in studies in the arts, history, anthropology, etc. Given the tight connection between cinema and literature, the applicability of the notion of chronotope in cinema studies does not seem disputable.

In his definition of chronotope, Bakhtin emphasizes the indivisibility and interdependence of its components, time and space. However, he also stresses that in literature time is “the primary category in [its] chronotope” (1981, 85). Accordingly, as film expresses time through space, we can argue that space is the primary category of chronotope in cinema. Through the prism of space-time relationships in the film, the director shows the interconnectedness of all other structural elements.

Different scholars include different components into the narrative structure of the text. While structuralists argued that all human narratives have universal elements in common, their precursors and poststructuralist successors energetically objected. However, these theories often overlap in key areas. Labov’s definition reflects the classic view of the linear narration with the components arranged in chronological order. He
suggests that narrative structure may potentially consist of seven essential components: narrative clauses (basic narrative element), abstract (summary of the entire story, usually in the beginning of a narrative), orientation (identifies the time, place, persons, and their activity or the situation), complicating action, evaluation (indicates the point of the narrative, why it was told and what the narrator is getting at), result or resolution, and coda (signals that the narrative is finished). While Labov’s study does not specifically address cinema, his conceptualization of narrative structure is applicable to cinematic texts as well as to written texts. The difference lies only in the nature of the signifying systems: literary text conveys narrative in words, while cinematic text does it visually, by the means of images juxtaposed to each other in a certain way. As Shklovsky noted, “Film begins with a photograph. There is no artistic event in it” (1927, 7). Only sequences of individual “moving pictures” create artistic events that are communicated through the use of complex cinematic imagery, metaphor and allegory. In the enthusiastic words of Metz, “Going from one image to two images, is to go from image to language” (46).

Narrative in film serves as a foundation of the plot. However, despite the essential role of the plot, the director’s prowess first of all reveals itself in his ability to select, or to create the artistic means that are able to convey the story and carry out the intended point of view. Luhr and Lehman point out that “the narrative in a novel or a film provides only one of many elements that cohere into the work. Abstracted from its place in the work, the narrative remains simply an element – it carries none of the work’s value with it” (Luhr and Lehman 1977; in Giddings, 2).
Although story and plot both serve as the basis of narrative, they are not synonymous concepts. Giddings argues that “story is a pre-text for plot; story is logical and chronological, whereas plot is organized by the artist into a sequence to suit his own purposes” (2). Plot usually centers on the life of a character, or on a certain period from his life.

Rifkin suggests that despite the importance of the content, in some cases it is inferior to the value of artistic design of the film. His examples include the comedies of the Commedia dell’arte, and works of prose fiction of the “high socialist realist style” (16) that were limited by a restricted variety of themes and therefore were often concerned with the artistic representations of these themes. Formalist films should be also put on this list, even when they are made in the social conditions that do not impose any censorship restrictions on their creators. Shklovsky has also emphasized that qualitative distinctions among different films lie not in the themes themselves. To prove his view, Shklovsky uses the example of Jackie Coogan, who had never played other roles except for a child separated from his parents, but every time it resulted in the entirely different character (Shklovsky 1927, 7).

The idea that theme cannot be used to measure distinctness of artistic texts either within the same medium or intermedially is equally applicable to both written and cinematic texts. Aesthetic and psychological perceptions of a text commonly rest not on a theme but on its basic components of expression and their combinations. In the case of literature, such components are words; in the case of cinema – images, sounds, movements, colors, etc. Regardless of the difference in the means of expression, cinema
uses the same pool of information as literature; it depicts people, landscapes, events, etc. However, every image does not simply replicate reality. In words of Shklovsky, “A shot signifies more than it depicts. It is a sign”. (1927, 18)

All elements in the artistic text represent a code that carries meaning. The choice of artistic elements can be conditioned either by general conventions such as genre, artistic movement, school and other determinants, or by personal choices of the author based on his artistic style and dexterity. In order for a viewer to be able to decipher cinematic language, he has to be familiar with the nature of its conventionality. Phenomena unknown to a viewer in his reality do not cause an emotional response. However, sometimes using foreign material helps filmmakers achieve their artistic goals. This is especially evident in the cinematography of socialist realism when filming foreign literature helped directors release their work of social dependence that placed heavy restraints on their creativity. Audiences traditionally favor films made in their own culture as they resonate with viewers’ personal lives and issues. Shklovsky argues that cinematic literacy is needed so that audience can follow and interpret the film code. He gives an example of Russians not seeing depth in the pictures of Chinese masters while most Chinese can easily see it because it is a part of their traditional perception (1927, 19). Familiarity with cultural conventionality of cinematic signs allows viewers to easily connect with the slice of simulated reality that they see on the screen. In fact, as Shklovsky metaphorically puts it, “we expand the picture of the screen” (Мы дорисовываем экран).
Repetition and reusability often make even the most non-traditional conventions acceptable and even classic. Eccentricity of forms can be justified by different factors such as tolerance by a genre as in surrealism or magic realism, or by the creative style of a director. Shklovsky calls such experiments of creating new codes «collecting conventionalities that allow [cinematography] more and more easily to pull viewers into further associations» (1927, 22). Such individual experimentations enrich the database of cinematic vocabulary with new patterns that become available for re-use by the subsequent filmmakers. And while there are no films that entirely duplicate other films’ imagery, in words of Metz “the great majority of narrative films resemble each other in their principal syntagmatic figures. Filmic narrativity by becoming stable through convention and repetition over innumerable films, has gradually shaped itself into forms that are more or less fixed, but certainly not immutable.” (101)

Attempts to define cinematic vocabulary inevitably run into a necessity to define the minimal unit in a filmic text which is an ongoing discussion that still awaits its final resolution. Definitions of the minimal unit in the film range from “shot” (Ivanov, Lotman), “image” (Mitry), “subject and its position in space” (Tsiv’ian), to “sequence” - an uninterrupted shot of significant duration. Metz also favored the idea of an individual shot/image being a minimal unit of the “cinematographic language”, but he likened it to a statement or a sentence rather than to an individual word. He reasoned: “The shot, through its semantic content is closer, all things considered, to a sentence than to a word. An image shows a man walking down a street: It is equivalent to the sentence “A man is walking down the street.” The equivalence is rough, to be sure, and there would be much
to say about it; however, the same filmic image corresponds even less to the word “man,” or the word “walk”, or the word “street,” and less still to the article “the” or to the zero-degree morpheme of the verb “walks” (Metz 1974, 67).

The disagreement stems from the way different scholars define cinematic language and how closely they parallel it with natural languages. Rifkin argues that while being greatly influenced by natural languages and their regulations, filmic and written texts need to be viewed as secondary modeling system. “In comparing a given pair of texts, one a film and the other a work of literature, one compares the “languages” – the secondary modeling systems – of film and literature, as well as the secondary modeling systems of the particular film and the particular work of literature, each a product of genre, movement, style, author’s world views, and the norms and expectations of the period in which each text was created” (Rifkin 1994, 24). In order to be able to appreciate a single artistic work, a reader or a viewer has to possess knowledge of the language in which such a work is created. As Scholes states, each work of art represents only “a sketch or outline that must be completed by the active participation of a reader equipped with the right sort of information.” (37). In cases of comparative analyses of the texts created in different media, a viewer must be sufficiently equipped with knowledge of the cinematic and literary codes, both general and peripheral, culturally defined, based on the locally developed referents.
Chapter 3. Pushkin’s historical works: *Boris Godunov, The Captain’s Daughter*, and *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*

3.1. The Troubled Times of *Boris Godunov*

Pushkin manifested a strong interest in Russian history from the very beginning of his poetic career. A 15-year old Alexander wrote “Recollections in Tsarskoye Selo” (1814) for his public examination in Tsarskoselsky Lyceum. This poem in addition to capturing the imagination of his examination committee, which included the famous poet and statesman Gavrila Derzhavin, was dedicated to the glorification of the exploits of Russian commanders in the Turkish and Napoleonic wars. Pushkin’s first historical tragedy *Vadim*, on which he worked from 1821 to 1822 but eventually abandoned unfinished, was also focused on the semi-legendary medieval heroic narrative about Novgorodian Prince Vadim who supposedly led the uprising against the Ruriks in 864. Pushkin repeatedly returned to the theme of the courage of Russian people and their military leaders and their loyalty to the Fatherland, which he explored in such works as “Poltava” (1829), “Anniversary of Borodino” (1831), “Bronze Horseman” (1833), *The Arap of Peter the Great* (1828) and many others. In his historical works Pushkin addressed different celebrated periods of the Russian past but he was particularly keen on...
the grand personality of Peter the Great, whose magnitude he sought to convey in some of his works.

However, Pushkin was not only interested in old heroes and their legendary victories. His historical works drew inspiration from some of Russia’s most momentous and controversial events, and by the personalities who found themselves in the epicenter of these fateful times either by choice or chance. The play Boris Godunov, which Pushkin initially titled *A Comedy about Tsar Boris and Gregory Otrepyev* (1825), and the novel *The Captain’s Daughter* (1836) fall into this latter category.

The Time of Troubles, the 15-year period of interregnum between the end of the reign of the Rurik dynasty and the descendants’ of Prince Vladimir, and the beginning of the Romanovs, was one such event. But this being one of the most cataclysmic and debated periods in Russian history, Pushkin was not the only one writing about it. Sumarokov (1771), Bulgarin (1831), Fedorov (1830), and even Westerners showed great interest in the figures of Boris Godunov and False Dimitry. The period was analyzed and discussed in different media, like the comedy by Spanish baroque playwright and poet Lope de Vega “El Gran Duque de Moscovia y Emperador Perseguido” (1606), the opera by German baroque composer Mattheson “Boris Goudenow, or The Throne Attained Through Cunning, or Honor Joined Happily With Affection” (1710), and the unfinished romantic drama by German romantic playwright Schiller *Demetrius* (1805).

However, while the majority of authors used the historical material of the Time of Troubles as a foundation for an entertaining intrigue, Pushkin was the first who precisely on this material delivered the issues fundamentally important for Russian
society and offered his own interpretation of these issues therein. Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* not only captured the national spirit of the Time of Troubles, but also bridged with it the internal contradictions of Post-Napoleonic Russia. His choice of the historical events for the tragedy in the light of the upcoming Decembrist uprising in Russia had been profoundly symbolic. In this and other works, an appeal to history allows Pushkin to express his civic stance towards modern times. “A common mode of talking about the present has been by talking about the past.” (Emerson 1986, 10) Incorporating history into artistic works, Pushkin adhered to the rule that subjectivity has no place in historical literature and that a writer, similarly to a chronicler, must be faithful to the principles of truth. “It is not his [the author’s] task to justify or accuse, [or] to prompt speeches. His task is to resurrect a past age in all its truth.” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XI, 178)

Nonetheless, despite the fact that Pushkin insisted on a detached position of the author in relation to the represented material, his contemporaries could not but discern in *Boris Godunov* the author’s commentary on the reality of his day. Regardless of his friends’ exhortations to move away from the political controversy and to devote his work to “high poetry” in order to earn the forgiveness of the tsar and obtain an exemption from exile, Pushkin could not abandon the idea of drawing parallels with contemporary Russia. He wrote Viazemskii: ”Zhukovsky said that the tsar will forgive me for the tragedy - not likely, my dear. Although it is written in the good spirit, [I] could not hide all my ears under the cap of a holy fool, [they] stick out!” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XIII, 240)

The plot of the tragedy revolves around the story of Boris Godunov who, by the popular legend, arranged the murder of the young tsarevich Dimitry after the death of the
mentally ill Tsar Fyodor, a son of Ivan the Terrible, so as to get his hands on the Russian throne. The death of tsar Fyodor ended the lineage of the Rurikids, the first royal dynasty that ruled over Russia since Kievan Rus’, and left Russia without a legitimate heir. Boris Godunov, who served as a de facto regent of Russia from 1585 to 1598 at the time of the reign by mentally incapable Fyodor, despite his humble non-Rurikid origins, was the first in line to succession. After Boris humbly accepts the honor of tsardom, he aspires to be a wise and fair ruler. Boris rules over Russia for the next six years, but cannot fail to notice that his subjects do not love him and blame him for every catastrophe and natural disaster that were abundant during his reign such as famines, fires and extremely cold and long winters. Because of his troubled conscience, Boris cannot find peace and solace within himself. Nothing brings him joy; he spends his time grieving alone over lost unanimity and contemplating the seeming ungratefulness of his people.

Meanwhile, two monks in the Chudov monastery in Moscow, the chronicler Pimen and his disciple Grigory, discuss the bloody sin committed by Godunov. Pimen openly proclaims him a regicide and announces that Russia angered God by electing such a ruler. The story of Pimen about the anxieties and excitements of worldly life awakens Grigory’s interest and desire to experience the contradictions of life for himself. He decides to take on the mission of avenging the death of the young prince and mentally threatens Boris with divine and worldly judgment. Grigory secretly leaves the monastery and is headed toward the Lithuanian border to cross to Poland to seek for support. Backed by the Poles and Lithuanians, Grigory represents a real threat to Boris’s power, owing to the Tsar’s unpopularity with both the People and the nobility.
In Poland, the impostor falls in love with a young beauty named Marina Mnishek and confides in her about his origins and intentions. However, Grigory’s sincerity only angers Marina, as her interest in him is only based on her ambition to become a tsarina of the distant and mysterious country. Marina is imperious with Grigory and frankly tells him that his past is not important to her and that only victory over Moscow will give him the right to love her.

In Moscow, both Boris and boyars have already realized that False Dimitry is a real threat, and serious action is needed, especially in a situation when the distrust of Boris has been exacerbated and the suspicion that prince Dimitri is truly alive has been growing. Near Moscow battles erupt between the pretender’s troops and Boris’, and the pretender’s army wins a series of victories. Many Muscovites believe the pretender to be the real Dimitry and support him even though it may cost them their lives, as Boris ordered the execution of anyone who shows such support. The unexpected death of Boris and the betrayal of a new army commander Basmanov who defected to Grigory decided the outcome of events in favor of the pretender. Boyars, feeling that "treason is brewing everywhere" and satisfied with the end of Godunov’s rule, without hesitation betray the oath given to Boris’ young heir, Fyodor and kill him and his mother.

The last scenes highlight the importance of the support of The People, which in the end guarantees a victory to those on whose side this support is provided. When the boyarin Pushkin goes to the people gathered at the public square to announce that the rightful heir of Ivan the Terrible has returned, they glorify the pretender and rush to the Kremlin full of hatred for Boris’ clan, ready to kill his heir. At this time in the house of
Boris a heinous murder of Fyodor and his mother is being committed by boyars. When it is announced to the People that Fyodor and his mother poisoned themselves, the people are "silent with horror". When encouraged by Mosalsky to greet the impostor, the people remain “speechless”. This last stage remark: “The People are speechless” until now has prompted a pleiad of Pushkin scholars to exercise countless interpretations.

Pushkin himself was extremely pleased with the way his play turned out. He wrote Viazemskii almost right after finishing it, around November 7, 1825: “I congratulate you, my dear, with a romantic tragedy; the first persona in it is Boris - Godunov! My tragedy is over; I re-read it aloud, alone, and clapped my hands and cried: ah yes, Pushkin, ah, yes, son of a bitch!” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XIII, 239) The reaction of Pushkin’s friends, who were the first to read the tragedy, was also enthusiastic. Here is how Pogodin\(^{23}\) describes the evening at Viazemski's house where *Boris Godunov* was read by Pushkin on September 29, 1825: “Until now, and it has been almost forty years, blood begins to move at the mere reminiscence. At first, we listened quietly and calmly, or rather, in some perplexity. But the further the reading went, the more the feeling intensified. The scene of the chronicler with Gregory stunned everyone. It seemed to me that my kindred and my dear Nestor rose from the grave and speaks through Pimen. I thought I heard the live voice of the ancient Russian chronicler. When Pushkin came to the Pimen’s story about Ivan the Terrible visiting Kirillov Monastery, a prayer of the monks "May God grant peace to his soul, suffering and turbulent," it was as if we all went mad. As if some of us were thrown in the heat, and some – into a fever. Hair rose on

\(^{23}\) Pogodin, Mikhail Petrovich (1800-1875) – acclaimed Russian historian, journalist, professor of Moscow State University, writer.
end. We were not able to contain ourselves. Some suddenly would jump up, some would scream. The silence alternated with the explosion of exclamations. Then the reading ended. We were looking at each other for a long time, and then rushed to Pushkin. Hugs and uproar began, then there were laughter, tears, congratulations.“ (Vinokur, 202)

Another friend and contemporary of Pushkin, Venevitinov, wrote after Pushkin’s death that reading Boris Godunov made him realize that the independence of Pushkin’s talent was a guarantee of its maturity that puts the author among the best playwrights such as Shakespeare and Goethe (203). Among others who expressed similar opinions were Kireevsky, the future leader of the Russian Slavophiles; the literary critic Shevyrev, renowned poets Viazemsky and Baratynsky, the Decembrist Kiukhelbeker, the playwright Griboedov and many others. Even secret agent colonel Bibikov wrote Benkendorf, the head of the Secret Police in Russia, that Boris Godunov was a poetic perfection (205).

However, Pushkin’s apprehensions about the unfortunate fate of his tragedy were justified. His personal censor, Tsar Nicholas I, refused even to read the manuscript and handed it over to another censor, most likely Bulgarin, whose connection with the secret police had been already known. After reading the tragedy, the censor presented to the tsar "Remarks on the Comedy of Tsar Boris and Grishka Otrepiev", in which he expressed his assessment of Pushkin’s work. First of all, the censor denied the tragedy’s innovativeness, considering it simply an imitation of Karamzin’s History of the Russian State and Scott’s novels. He also accused the author in violating the traditions of classical tragedy and Russian literature and saw it simply as a collection of disconnected
fragments and dialogues. Some parts of the tragedy he found simply “vulgar and inappropriate”. (in Vinokur, 215) The censor accompanied his Remarks with a list of specific places in the text that he believed had to be changed or even removed altogether in order to make the tragedy publishable. His final verdict was that while the tragedy could be made publishable upon the completion of the proposed changes, it certainly could not be staged. The censor pointed out only six places in Pushkin’s text that were unacceptable from his point of view, but his comments alarmed Nicholas, who ordered Pushkin to rework Boris Godunov into a historical novel like those of Walter Scott. Pushkin fiercely defended his work and wrote to Benckendorff24: “I regret that I cannot alter whatever I have already written.” (quoted in Vinokur, 217)

The censor was not the only one unable to appreciate the importance of Pushkin’s work and its innovative character. Despite the full text of Boris Godunov remaining unknown to the general public for six years after its completion, individual chapters spread in manuscripts or were read in private salons and got caught in the crossfire of critics even before the publication of the entire play. Many readers, usually educated in the spirit of French neo-classicism, were critical of Pushkin’s neglect of classical unities, iambic pentameter, introduction into scenes of depraved monks and informal language, and many other features previously unheard of in Russian drama. Literary journals, for whose support Pushkin was so hopeful, also refrained from any kind of positive feedback. Mixed reviews about the tragedy and the uncertainty of its position regarding its publication fueled interest among the public, which was eagerly waiting for it.

24 Benckendorff – the head of the Secret Police in Imperial Russia under Nicolas I.
Meanwhile, the theme of Boris Godunov and False Dimitry became fashionable in Russian literary circles: Bulgarin published the novel *Dmitry the Pretender* in 1830, and Fedorov - the eponymous play in 1831. Pushkin and some of his contemporaries accused these writers of plagiarism in relation to his tragedy.

When finally, after some concessions from Pushkin, *Boris Godunov* was published in December 1830, the public, heated by the six-year long wait, bought a record number of copies on the first morning of it being available in St. Petersburg. Despite this eager response, Pushkin was certain that readers were not ready for his work. This proved to be prescient because the response was even worse than he feared. Most critics, journals, and individuals spoke very negatively about the play. Journals dazzled with openly hostile reviews, sarcastic jokes against Pushkin, and with some even suggesting that Pushkin burn his *Godunov*. Readers’ disappointment can be summed by this quote from the St. Petersburg French-language newspaper "Le Furet de St.-Petersbourg”, signed “W.B.”: “We expected to see an enormous-sized new drama by the author of "Ruslan and Lyudmila" but found only an ordinary statue”. If there were a few who tried to defend the merits of the tragedy, they immediately found themselves under the attacks of those who denied these merits. Critics focused on the lack of unity of action, character development uncharacteristic for the Russian drama, the gaps between artistic descriptions of details and historical facts, the dissociations in the plot, and even the difficulty of defining the genre of the play. Positive reviews were few and went unnoticed. Pushkin considered the situation unworthy of his involvement in the unfolding

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debate. He wrote his friend Nashchokin, who called upon Pushkin to protect the tragedy: “If you read our magazines, you would see that all that we call criticism is equally silly and funny. For my part, I retreated; to object seriously is not possible; as to clowning around in front of the audience, I am not going to. And besides, both critics and the public are unworthy of proper objections”. (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XIV, 196) While his readers were unprepared to recognize in Boris Godunov the beginning of a new Russian drama, the 26-year-old Pushkin was confident that his play represented a momentous period in his work, and wrote his friend Raevsky: “I feel that my spiritual forces have reached their full development, I can create”. (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XIII, 198)

3.2. Major Influences

“The controversy surrounding the personality and role of Boris Godunov, who dominated Russia from 1584 to 1605, became one of the first historical stories to capture the imagination of Russia’s nineteenth-century reading public. This, then, would be Pushkin’s first attempt to examine a period of national turbulence in fictional form, albeit in poetic drama” (Hamnett 2011, 249). The selected genre, though it promised difficulties in staging, should not have been either unexpected or eccentric. Russian romanticism, of which Pushkin was a pioneer, had grown on the fruitful soil developed by Western Romanticists. By the time he wrote Boris Godunov, Pushkin’s youthful enthusiasm for the poetic images of Byron gave way to the growing influence of German Romantics and Shakespeare, whose works Pushkin read in French translation with an introductory article
by Guizot\textsuperscript{26} dedicated to Shakespeare’s biography and his poetic innovations. Following in the footsteps of the Weimar Romantics, Pushkin experienced the strong influence of Shakespeare’s historical theater and drew from it “whatever ammunition he could use” (247). Especially characteristic of him was to use Shakespeare “as the model for rule-breaking and the mixing of styles” (248). “What a man this Shakespeare! I cannot get over it! Byron as a tragedian is shallow compared to him!” – wrote Pushkin, infatuated. (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XIII, 197)

Shakespearean tragedies indicated to Pushkin a route of escape from the French classicism that dominated Russian drama during the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Following his literary mentor, in \textit{Boris Godunov} Pushkin abandoned the three classical unities, replaced the traditional Alexandrine verse with iambic blank verse, introduced into his tragedy a few prosaic scenes, and diversified language with forms of vernacular speech. Pushkin understood that the dominance of French neo-classical traditions hindered the development of Russian national literature and therefore rejected the court literary forms developed by French dramatist Racine.

Most frequently, attacks on Pushkin were based on the allegations that his play almost completely replicates the legend of Boris Godunov narrated by Karamzin in volumes X and XI of the then recently published \textit{History of the Russian State}. To a large extent, such public opinion was formed under the influence of the statements made by Belinsky\textsuperscript{27} and Polevoy\textsuperscript{28}. The anonymous censor also pointed at the close similarity

\textsuperscript{26} Guizot (1787-1874) – French historian, orator, politician.
\textsuperscript{27} Belinsky, Vissarion. Boris Godunov. 1835. [http://az.lib.ru/b/belinskij_w_g/text_1540.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/b/belinskij_w_g/text_1540.shtml)
between Pushkin’s tragedy and Karamzin’s *History*. Later Pushkin’s supporters argued that he also used other historical sources, namely Russian chronicles and *History of Russia* by Shcherbatov (Vinokur G.O. 1924, 284). However, Pushkin himself never denied that Karamzin’s *History* was his major inspiration and model. This is reflected in the dedication of the tragedy to the great historiographer, and in how the archetypal portrait of the monk Pimen is largely drawn from the image of Karamzin. Pushkin certainly adopted Karamzin’s central idea that Godunov was in fact a regicide, although even at that time there was no unanimity on this idea. Textological analysis reveals several differences in these works and a plurality of similar items. In a letter to Raevsky, which Pushkin enclosed with a copy of his tragedy, he recommended first reading the last volume Karamzin’s *History* which in his opinion was a necessary prerequisite for the proper understanding of his own work. (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XIV, 46) However, despite the many points of convergence, Pushkin’s play differs from Karamzin’s historical treatise in the depth of the author's interpretation, which goes far beyond the events portrayed. Perhaps not coincidentally, Pushkin chose Boris as his hero and not Pugachev or Sten’ka Razin, whom he also initially considered. Some researchers have repeatedly stressed that by making the usurper tsar the protagonist of his work, Pushkin got the opportunity to speak about the essence of the monarchy in Russia in general. In Pushkin’s days the topic of tsarecides was highly relevant not only because of Shakespeare's tragedies, but also through the involvement of famous contemporaries,

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such as Napoleon and Alexander I. Having shown the crime of Godunov as a starting point for all subsequent misfortunes for him and his family, both Karamzin and Pushkin nevertheless emphasize the causal relationships in the life of the character. However, the difference is in the final resolution of the cause-and-effect relationship. Karamzin portrayed Boris as suffering from a heavenly punishment for his actions while Pushkin is more interested in the psychological impact of the crime on Godunov’s consciousness. Pushkin’s Boris is deeply unhappy and lonely on the throne despite his noble intentions towards his subjects; he questions the expediency of the committed crime. He realizes that his stained conscience is his main weakness, which prevents him from fighting for the assertion of his power and confronting the impostor. This deep psychology of Boris foreshadows the suffering of Raskolnikov, eaten up by guilt for the spilled blood of the old moneylender and her sister.

Other than Karamzin, other influences that have been noted by researchers as having impacted *Boris Godunov*, include the theory of Shakespeare’s tragedies, written by German philosopher F. Schlegel, which Pushkin read in Mikhailovskoe during his 1824 exile. Especially kindred to Pushkin should have been Schlegel’s conceptualization of romantic art as a platform for converging opposite genres and experimenting with existing forms.

3.3. The Innovative Character of *Boris Godunov*

Nineteenth-century Russian society was not prepared to accept a literary endeavor as innovative as *Boris Godunov* (Vinokur), which resulted in its failure. By the time it
was published, six years had passed since it was written. And since Pushkin was already well known, the long wait created both an aura of mystery and significant expectation around the work, which quickly gave way to overwhelming disappointment and displeasure once it was published. Overnight, Pushkin’s tragedy caused sharp polemics among its readers. Much of the ire focused on the unexpected innovative character of the tragedy, which ultimately earned it the status of being unstageable. It is assumed that Pushkin inherited this innovative approach to his work from Shakespeare, whose mastery he came to appreciate. However, Pushkin’s use of Shakespearean techniques was not purely mechanical or imitative. Pushkin sought to reform Russian national drama and for this grandiose task it was not enough to simply transfer Shakespearean methods to Russian literature. For Pushkin it was necessary to create a new Russian theater based not just on Russian themes but also on the modern principles of theatrical action. Thus, the fact that Pushkin’s innovation had no counterpart in Russian literature perplexed both readers and critics. According to the Soviet literary critic Slonimskii, “Shakespeare was already known and comprehensible. But Boris Godunov was incomprehensible.”

In creating Godunov Pushkin was sure that he contributed to the transformation of Russian theater. “Firmly convinced that the antiquated forms of our theater need to be converted, I arranged my tragedy according to the system of our father Shakespeare.”

And while Pushkin used Shakespeare’s experience of free approach to literary material as a lesson of creative liberation, among the main distinctions between Godunov and

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32 From the draft of the Introduction to “Boris Godunov”. XI, 141. – In Vinokur 1999, 314.
Shakespearean tragedies noted by researchers include Pushkin’s introduction of the people as one of the decisive forces of history, his psychological development of the characters, the use of prose for the transmission of serious thematic context; and an introduction of the image of the chronicler Pimen - an idealized narrator and a guarantor of the narrative’s objectivity.

One of the most controversial innovations in the tragedy not accepted by a majority of his contemporaries is the interspersing of the poetic text with prose. This could also be attributed to the influence of Shakespeare, but such an explanation cannot be considered certain. Already a few years before writing Godunov, Pushkin began to think about the evolution of art forms in world literature and concluded that due to the popularity of European languages among educated elites, the Russian literary language did not have the opportunity to advance its own resources necessary for the narrative genre. Starting from 1823, in his critical articles and correspondence with friends Pushkin often raised the issue of the need of Russian prose. In the article "On the introduction of Mr. Lemont" (1825), Pushkin wrote: "Let us suppose that Russian poetry has already reached a high degree of style; but scientists, politicians and philosophers have not yet expressed themselves in Russian; a metaphysical language does not exist at all. Our prose is so little processed yet that even in a simple correspondence we are forced to create phrases to express the most common concepts, so that our laziness more willingly uses a language of others, whose mechanical forms have long been prepared and are known to all." (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XI, 34) Pushkin gravitating to prose in his tragedy expresses his reformist perspective on Russian literary language and the beginning of his gradual
transition to narrative forms. Pushkin already expressed his cooling toward lyric poetry in

*Eugene Onegin* (1824). In the novel’s third chapter, he wrote:

> My friends, what means this odd digression?
> May be that I by heaven's decrees
> Shall abdicate the bard's profession,
> And shall adopt some new caprice.
> Thus having braved Apollo's rage
> With humble prose I'll fill my page
> And a romance in ancient style
> Shall my declining years beguile.  

Pushkin’s innovative approach to drama, unrecognized in his times, nevertheless pointed the way of development to Russian theater. As noted by Gozenpud (341), “Having directly impacted Russian historical drama (A.K. Tolstoy, Ostrovsky), *Boris Godunov*, even after the play was admitted on the stage, did not become part of the repertory. Pushkin’s innovations were not understood and accepted by his contemporaries, and in essence, even the theater of our day has not found the key to the tragedy.” Perhaps, the increased interest of cinematography in Pushkin’s tragedy means that not only is it still relevant, but that directors are trying to find a key to unlocking its meaning by means of a new medium - cinema.

**3.4. The Captain’s Daughter and A History of the Pugachev Rebellion**

When Tsar Nicholas I allowed Pushkin to return after his second exile to the capital, he also granted him access to the State archives to fulfill Pushkin’s dream of

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33 Pushkin. *Eugene Onegin*. Chapter three, XIII.  
researching about Peter the Great. However, Pushkin’s focus suddenly switched to
Pugachev and the uprising he led in 1773-1775 that presented a serious threat to the
Russian official dynasty. Pushkin’s interest in Pugachev formed long before he had
begun his research in the State archives. In October 1824, Pushkin asked his brother Lev
to send him a biography of Pugachev. This attests to the seriousness and depth of
Pushkin’s interest in the themes of pretendership and the history of forceful government
replacement in Russia.

Emelian Pugachev was a Cossack, a pretender to Russian throne who claimed to
be Tsar Peter III, murdered in the court coup organized by his wife Catherine the Great in
1762. Pushkin analyzed archival materials about the uprising and traveled to the regions
of Kazan’ and Orenburg, to interview the surviving witnesses and to search the local
archives. He approached the work with great enthusiasm, and within eight months the
historical treatise was finished and prepared for publication. The research was financed
by the government and was published in 1834 with the permission of the tsar on the
condition that Pushkin renamed the work from A History of Pugachev into A History of
the Pugachev’s Rebellion. Pushkin aimed to study the history of Pugachev as a historian,
and then to represent it as an artist in The Captain’s Daughter. Two years later, a novel
based on the archival findings followed, depicting Pugachev’s uprising fictitiously. The
novel was published in the journal Sovremennik on December 22, 1936, just 38 days
before Pushkin’s tragic death, thus becoming his last and perhaps most major work in
prose.
Both the historical treatise and the novel are brief in length and written without embellishments. Despite the fact that each of these works is in itself complete and independent from another in terms of genre and contextually, their parallel study helps better understand the author's intention.

*A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* is based on authentic archival documents and on the accounts of eyewitnesses with whom Pushkin met during the trip to Orenburg and Kazan’. However, some critics are inclined to believe that Pushkin had no access to the main content of the Pugachev case and therefore his research cannot be considered thorough nor complete. Moreover, some say that the brief time that Pushkin spent on the study of such a massive phenomenon was not enough for a deeper historical analysis. Thus, *History’s* publication was not considered by many a literary event and the work was perceived negatively by most critics. Pushkin’s contemporaries called *History* a ”historical article” (Bronevsky), or ”well-written memo, appointed for a quick introduction to the subject” (Annenkov). In the preface, Pushkin himself called his work ”a historical passage,” ”a work hardly perfect, but honest,” perhaps one that can be continued and built upon by future historians. After Pushkin’s death, Belinsky was the first to appreciate *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*. In 1846 he wrote: “This historical exploration is the exemplary work in terms of historic and linguistic merit. In the latter respect, Pushkin quite reached what Karamzin only sought.” He was echoed by the nineteenth-century researcher Cherniaeva, who argued that ”the appearance of Pushkin’s *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion Rebellion* was a major event in Russian historical

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literature. *History of the Pugachev Rebellion* was the first historical work in Russia, that satisfies the requirements imposed on the modern historian with respect to language, artistry and simplicity, impartiality, factual accuracy, pragmatism and open-mindedness.” (Cherniaieva, 55)

Since the idea of *The Captain’s Daughter* had emerged on the basis of the factual material collected by Pushkin for the history of the uprising, these two works have much in common. First, the description of the fictional Belogorskaia fortress reflects the actual state of fortresses that so easily fell to Pugachev and that Pushkin described in detail in *History*. "Fortresses, built in that region, were nothing more than villages, surrounded by wattle and wooden fences. Several old soldiers and Cossacks under the protection of two or three cannons were safe there from the arrows and spears of the savage tribes scattered across the steppes of the Orenburg Provinces and its borders.” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, IX, 17) Many characters in the novel were also inspired by the actual participants of the uprising events. For example, the prototypes of the captain Mironov and his fellow serviceman Ivan Ignatievich who refused to serve Pugachev and paid for it with their lives, were in fact modeled after captain Kameshkov and the first officer Voronov who refused to recognize Pugachev as their monarch and called him a thief and an impostor, a transgression for which they were immediately hanged (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, IX, 35-36). There were numerous examples of heroism displayed by the defenders of different fortresses described by Pushkin in *History*.

Some characters’ names in the novel were also borrowed from the historical material. Pushkin initially wanted to make Basharin who was pardoned by the impostor at
the request of his soldiers, the protagonist. The surname Grinev had also been mentioned in the fifth chapter of History. It belonged to the colonel Grinev, who served under the command of prince Golitsyn near the fortress Tatishcheva. However, Cherniaeva argues that it was not this Grinev who became the prototype of Pushkin’s protagonist, but the second lieutenant Grinev, whose story was told in the annex to History. After the suppression of the uprising, the second lieutenant Grinev was arrested among the others who were suspect of plotting with the villains (zlodei), but was subsequently found not guilty and released. The document does not specify the reason why Grinev was arrested, but Cherniaeva assumes that perhaps there were similarities between the fate of the real Grinev and the fictional character conceived by Pushkin, which gave him the idea of using this name in the novel.

The description of Pugachev in the novel is also largely aligned with his equivalent in History. Pushkin retained in the novel not only features of Pugachev’s appearance but also his character, behavior, and many of the circumstances associated with him. It is noticeable that Pushkin's attitude to Pugachev had not changed from History to the novel. In both works Pushkin depicted Pugachev as a person who, despite being violent, was resolute, a good strategist, and capable of generosity. The famous episode with the cleft sheepskin, which later saved the life of young Grinev, is fictional but resembles a real episode, when Pugachev pardoned and favored the pastor who served him alms, when he was led in chains through the streets of Kazan before the uprising (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, IX, 68). Some of Pugachev’s sayings in the novel also resonate with his sayings in History. This particularly applies to Pugachev’s favorite trick of expressing himself
allegorically. For example, when Pugachev characterizes his relationship with his associates he says to Grinev: “My street is narrow. There is not enough freedom for me. My guys are deceiving, they are thieves” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, VIII, 352). This nearly identical to the phrase, uttered by Pugachev in History to his Cossack friend Denis Pyanov, at whose wedding he was a godfather: “My street is too narrow”.

Another important detail which links these works is the description of the military council in Orenburg, which conveys Pushkin’s attitude toward the prolonged defeat of the tsarist troops as one caused by the unpreparedness of their commanders. Pushkin wrote in History that the Orenburg governor Reynsdorp had enough soldiers and guns to suppress the rebellion of Pugachev at the very beginning, but there was no agreement among the military commanders and there was no one who would be able to lead an army in such a case. Reynsdorp wasted time, all the while Pugachev fortified his army, thus becoming inaccessible.

At the military council, described in The Captain’s Daughter, military leaders were uncourageous and voted against sending out troops against Pugachev. Instead, they decided to wait for more troops from the capital inside the city.

Despite the novel having a deep historical background, it is nevertheless a work of art in which invention plays a very important role. Of all the characters in the novel only five are historical figures - Pugachev, Catherine II, Beloborodov, Khlopusha, and Reynsdorp – while other characters are rather typical representatives of the time. Private episodes of personal lives of the characters are also fictional.
Scholars point out the traces of Walter Scott’s novels *Waverley* and *Heart of Midlothian* in Pushkin’s novel (Hamnett 2011, 254). Pushkin was genuinely fascinated by Scott and appreciated his contribution to the development of the historical novel. In 1825, Pushkin wrote: “The main charm of W. Scott novels is that we are introduced to the past not with the pompousness of French tragedy, not with the stiffness of sentimental novels, not with tribute to history, but in a modern and homely way. They [characters of Walter Scott] are not like (like the French characters) serfs, who mimic dignity and nobility. They are simple in everyday life situations, there is nothing elevated, theatrical in their speeches, even in solemn circumstances, as they are accustomed to the great events.”

Pushkin admired Scott’s ability to depict historical events with the simplicity and refinement of everyday life, but he did not try to imitate him. The style of *The Captain’s Daughter*, though inspired by the influence of this great Scotsman, is deeply original in the laconism of its narrative, in which every detail is rich and purposeful.

The fate of *The Captain’s Daughter* in many ways resembles the fate of *Boris Godunov*. It caused in readers neither “enthusiasm nor amazement” (Cherniaieva 1897, 5). On the contrary, its publication passed quietly, almost unnoticed, while the novel by Zagoskin *Yuri Miloslavsky*, long forgotten in our days, aroused widespread enthusiasm among the aristocracy and literate peasants. Very few of Pushkin’s contemporaries were able to appreciate the novel at its true value. Prince Odoevsky in a letter to Pushkin expressed admiration of the characters Savelich and Pugachev. Belinsky mostly talked about the novel with restraint and only in one of the articles written in 1838 did he speak

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about it as a pioneering work, which, in his opinion, nonetheless yields to Gogol’s prose (9). Gogol himself was the first who was able to understand and appreciate the "true Russian characters" in Pushkin's novel, its "purity and lack of artifice," and called *The Captain’s Daughter* "definitely the best work of the narrative style." (11) Only in the second half of the 19th century critical articles appeared, written by Annenkov, Apollon Grigoriev, Strakhov and other critics in which the historical prose of Pushkin was actually analyzed and its innovation for the first time noticed and appreciated. Grigoriev saw *The Captain’s Daughter* as the implementation of Pushkin’s program outlined in *Eugene Onegin*, and Annenkov called it "an exemplary novel, having the warmth and charm of historical notes (12)."

Pushkin was interested in the nature of Russian rebellion, in the principles of conduct in it of all parties involved. He sympathized with the violent repression of the uprisings in Russian provinces by the Russian monarchy, but he did not hide his conviction that rebels themselves were capable of unprecedented cruelty to their commanders and their families. Grinev’s famous phrase "God forbid that we see a Russian revolt, senseless and merciless", expresses the attitude of Pushkin himself. More specifically, Pushkin’s outlook about the ways to improve social structure is transmitted in the article "Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg," which he wrote while working on *The Captain’s Daughter*: “The best and lasting changes are those that come only from the improvement of morals, without violent political turmoil, which are terrible for humanity” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XI, 258).
Pushkin was determined to use as much historical material in his novel as was fitting to his artistic goals. However, apart from a few historical figures and a few characters that only vaguely resemble typical participants in the actual events, most of the characters are the product of the author’s poetic invention. The longest Pushkin contemplated the identity of the protagonist of the novel. Before Pushkin decided to write about Grinev, a young officer in the tsarist army, who did not betray anyone or make a secret of his disagreement with the impostor, Pushkin was considering other options. Other options for the protagonist included an officer, who betrayed the royal oath and became an active ally of Pugachev; Pugachev’s prisoner, completely dependent on his mercy; an officer, who arrived to serve at the fortress and became captivated by the charms of the commander’s daughter Mary. The position of Grinev, who by fate had witnessed both positive and negative sides of Pugachev, allowed Pushkin to move away from the narrow thematic focus and make the novel more multidimensional in terms of moral and ethical issues. Pushkin undoubtedly sympathized with Pugachev and so revealed his nature as capable of generosity and gratitude. Having recognized Grinev after the capture of Belogorsky fortress, Pugachev forgave him when Grinev refused to kiss his hand and to swear allegiance to the new "tsar". Subsequently, Pugachev continues to be a guardian angel to Grinev and Masha Mironova saving not only their love from the infringement of Shvabrin, but also their lives among brutal rebels.

However, despite Pugachev and Grinev occupying a central place in *The Captain’s Daughter*, the character of Masha Mironova is no less important. Her integrity and purity neutralize the cruelty of Pugachev, the bias of Grinev’s father, and the villainy of
Shvabrin (Kuleshov 1997). No wonder she was dealt with bountifully by both Pugachev and the empress and accepted into the groom's house. In calling the novel "The Captain’s Daughter", Pushkin stressed Masha’s role in the novel.

3.5. Major Themes in Boris Godunov and The Captain’s Daughter

By the time historical fiction made its way to Russia, its traditions were already firmly established in European literature. However, if the content of the dramas written by Shakespeare and German Romanticists often drew from medieval classical narratives that prompted readers to interpret philosophical ideas of Christianity or the concepts of neo-classicism, Pushkin’s use of the native historical material was intended to explore the theme of Russian national identity (Hamnett 2011, 249). This primarily applies to his tragedy Boris Godunov.

No other choice of historical period could serve the creative objectives of Pushkin better: it was precisely in the Times of Troubles that the Russian national character underwent one of its greatest tests of strength. It was against this background of tragic events on a national scale that Boris Godunov’s personality is subjected to scrutiny by his own conscience, one in which he fails. In a clash with tarnished conscience his remaining merits lose their significance and defeat human spirit. The theme of guilt for the committed crime, not even disclosed, runs from Shakespeare to Pushkin and further to Dostoevsky. Thus, history does not only present Pushkin with the opportunity to address social dynamics of the past to remedy the present. Through the mental anguish of Boris,
Pushkin also explores the theme of the personal psychological tragedy of a ruler who crossed the boundaries of what is allowed on his way to power. The downfall of Boris is caused by the irreconcilable contradiction between his guilty conscience and the inability to give up the power he amassed at such a high cost. His noble intentions to do good to his people do not justify his crime even in his own eyes. This position brings Boris close to Shakespeare’s King Claudius, who prays for forgiveness for the murder of his brother, King Hamlet, but is not willing to part with the “rewards” of his crime.

O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? ‘Forgive my foul murder?’
That cannot be; since I am still possess’d
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.36

Another major difference between Pushkin and Shakespeare is Pushkin’s interest in the subject of the People (narod), their role in historical processes, and the relationship between an individual and the people. Are the people just a victim of circumstance, or is it the people who make history? And is a historical figure capable of great victories only when they express the People’s will and have their loyalty at their side (Makogonenko, 441)? These are just a few questions that Pushkin explores while analyzing the historical past.

The people in Boris Godunov are a powerful force, and without its involvement the governing classes cannot achieve their goals. Makogonenko argues that Pushkin in his tragedy judges Russian monarchy not from the position of a loner-libertarian, but from the position of the common people (441). Boris, the nobles, and an impostor at the

crucial moments arduously try to enlist support of the common people. Throughout the 
play, Godunov, the nobles, and the impostor all try to enlist support of the commoners at 
crucial moments. This support is necessary to the boyars in order to persuade Boris to 
take the throne. But the people are used to distrusting authorities, and securing their trust 
is not easy. Boris suffers from the lack of people’s love, in spite of all his measures to 
appease them during a poor harvest. To gain the people’s love False Dmitry plays to 
their religious feelings. In the end, an impostor wins not because of his military might, 
but by the people’s support and popular opinion. Even the last allies of Boris, Pushkin 
and Basmanov, finally understand this and side with False Dmitry (Emerson 1986, 135). 
However, despite having all this power that all but guarantees victory to those whose side 
it takes, the people are a mostly passive\footnote{Vinokur 1999, 312} force, which only serves to reinforce the 
interests of those who seek power. As stated by Emerson: “however generously one 
approaches the narod in this play, it is simply not heroic” (136). Thus, the interests of the 
people remain expressed neither by themselves nor by the members of the upper classes. 

Very often critics disagree about the last stage direction, ending the tragedy: "The 
people are speechless," when the nobles called people to welcome the impostor. As 
Vinokur suggests, this phrase was written under the influence of Karamzin, who used it 
to describe the scene of the trial over Vasilii Shuisky by the pretender: “The people were 
speechless in sadness, because they were loving the Shuiskiy’s from the Old Times.” 
(Vinokur, 307) It is noteworthy that the final phrase of the tragedy was changed by 
Pushkin himself for the play’s first publication in 1831. In the 1825 manuscript version
people welcomed the impostor following the command of Mosalskiy: “Long live Tsar Dimitry Ivanovich!” This replacement was first noticed only by Annenkov at the time of his publication of the full collection of Pushkin’s works in 1855. Since then scholars have made different assumptions about the motives of this alteration. Does this mean that the people express through silence their rejection of False Dimitry? Or does it mean that the narod simply does not understand what is happening at the top (Emerson 1986, 137)?

Since Pushkin gave no explanation what reasons led him to make this change, it gave rise to many conflicting interpretations from critics. One of the earliest and most common interpretations was that Pushkin changed the text to please his censor. However, there is nothing in the censor’s review of the tragedy that indicates a request to make this specific alteration. The censor’s only phrase that may have instigated Pushkin to take a safer approach to the narod’s reaction is this: “Only one place [in the tragedy] is reprehensible politically: the people become attached to the pretender precisely because they consider him an heir of the old royal dynasty.”

Following the logic of those critics who believe that this last phrase was written under the pressure of censorship, Pushkin tried to convey an image of the people as an obedient but disoriented force, without political inclinations. To other critics this scene seems deeply symbolic in implying that the people possess the potential for revolutionary activity, which also does not find confirmation in the text.

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38 Rassadin, Dramaturg Pushkin, 55. Quoted in Emerson 1986, 136.
39 Morozov P.O. in his preface for the publication of Boris Godunov in the Pushkin’s collection (1887) wrote: «В рукописи пьеса оканчивалась иначе:
“Народ: Да здравствует царь Димитрий Иванович!..”
Пушкин должен был изменить это окончание, потому что оно было найдено „предосудительным в политическом отношении“” - In Alekseev 1972, 216.
idea of the people’s defiance, allegedly expressed by Pushkin in the final scene, was supported not only by the Bolsheviks, as some critics suggest (Emerson). One of the first and most cited authors, who interpreted this scene as a scene of the awakening of revolutionary consciousness was Belinsky. "This - the last word in the tragedy, contains a deep line worthy of Shakespeare ... In this silence of the people the terrible, tragic voice of a new Nemesis is heard, who pronounces her sentence over a new victim - over those who killed the kin of Godunov..."41 Despite the attractiveness of these two explicit interpretations, a more likely explanation may be that Pushkin was neither trying to depict the people as more passive, nor as more conscious. The most fitting interpretation may be by those critics who see “the ending [as] simply open, unknown” (Emerson 1986, 137). As noted by Emerson: “In a formal sense this could be Pushkin’s parodic comment on endings. But it is also a sign of the paralysis and contradiction at the center of the Boris plot, and perhaps also in the popular consciousness as Pushkin portrayed it”(137).

The theme of the people is central in the novel The Captain’s Daughter as well. Just as in Boris Godunov, the people's support ensures victory to those representing authority. The strength of Pugachev is quickly growing as more and more peasants are taking his side, while the tsarist troops concede, giving up one fortress after another. Just as in Boris Godunov, pretender Pugachev is strong by the popular opinion (mneniem narodnym). But at the same time he is perceived as a “people’s tsar”, as he knows their life, their worries, and he acts and talks just as they do. Pugachev himself is a part of narod (the people), and therefore they forgive his brutality, as they believe he does it to

restore justice. It's obvious that people were waiting for his arrival days before his attack on Belogorskaia fortress, and when Pugachev enters the fortress: “The inhabitants came out of their houses, offering bread and salt. The bells were rung. All at once shouts announced that the tsar was in the square waiting to receive the oaths of the prisoners. All the crowd diverged in that direction.” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, VIII, 324) When Vasilisa Egorovna came out and began to lament upon seeing her husband hung, Pugachev casually ordered the rebels to “pacify an old witch.” In a senseless fit of brutality, they killed an innocent woman right before the crowd. Pushkin does not describe the reaction of the people to this act, he only states “all the people followed him [Pugachev]”. Just like in Boris Godunov, where the people did not express any reaction to the killing of Maria, Feodor and Ksenia Godunov, the narod in The Captain’s Daughter is a rather politically passive force. The people don’t impose their judgment on the events; they just take a part in the historical processes without questioning their expediency.

Pushkin, in the tone of an objective eyewitness, notes the merits of ordinary people in the preparation for and conducting of the uprising. He pays tribute to the right tactical decisions of the rebels: “While we analyze the strategies used by Pugachev and his accomplices, we should admit that the rebels elected the means that were the most reliable and valid for their goal. The government on its part acted weakly, slowly and erroneously.”42 But Pushkin knows what embittered peasants are capable of. In August 3, 1831 he wrote Viazemskii: "You surely have heard of the perturbations in Novgorod and Staraya Rus’. Horror. More than a hundred people - generals, colonels and officers - are

42 Pushkin, Zamechaniia o Bunte. (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, IX, 375-376)
cut in the Novgorod settlements with malicious finesse. Rebels flogged them, beat on the cheeks, mocked them, ransacked the houses, raped wives; 15 doctors are killed; only one escaped with the help of patients lying in the hospital; after killing all of their superiors, the rebels chose others - from engineers and communication. The tsar came to them after Orlov. He acted boldly, even brazenly; quarreled with killers, declared bluntly that he cannot forgive them, and demanded the issuance of ringleaders. They promised and resigned. But the rebellion in Staraia Russa is not over yet. Military officials do not dare to even appear on the street. Four generals were quartered, some buried alive, and so on.

– It is poor, Your Excellency! When there is such a tragedy in the eyes, there is no time to think about the dog’s comedy in our literature. "(Pushkin, vol. 14, p. 204-205)

While Pushkin singles out Pugachev for his exceptional strategic abilities and the expression of human qualities amidst the ultimate evil, Pushkin's general attitude towards the peasant revolt, uncontrolled and unrestrained cruelty of the peasant revolt, is clearly negative. However, Pushkin does not affirm that cruelty is the nature of the peasants. In the "Remarks About the Revolt" he also openly describes the brutality of the government troops against the rebels: "The executions carried out in Bashkiria by General Prince Urusov are unbelievable. Around 130 people were killed in the midst of all kinds of suffering." (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, IX, 373) As Lotman put it: "Pushkin ran into a phenomenon that struck him: extreme violence from both sides often stemmed not from the bloodlust of certain persons, but from the collision of irreconcilable social concepts". (Lotman 1992, 422) Pushkin did not see any possibility of reconciliation of the parties divided by deep social contradictions, and did not see the point of defending their
interests on the basis of the principle of humanism. But in real life, these systems do not exist by themselves; they are intertwined and mutually influence each other. A representative of the lower class, the servant Savelich, loves young Grinev as his own son and is ready, without hesitation, to give his life for him. The nobles Grinev and his bride Masha find themselves in the hands of the impostor and his gang and only Pugachev’s humanity saves them both from destruction. Pushkin shows that if the points of contact between the classes still exist, they have to go through a human factor. That is why in describing Catherine and Pugachev Pushkin focuses on highlighting their humanity. The theme of the people in Pushkin’s works is inextricably linked with the theme of power and historical figures, invested with the authority to decide the fate of the people. Only the rulers who earned people’s trust and enlisted their support, whoever they are - legitimate heirs or impostors, can count on the successful rule.

However, the other side of the question is also important: what factors shape the relationship between the people and their rulers, to what extent does the well-being of the people depend on what ruler they have, and do the people have at least some control over the levers of historical processes? In both Boris Godunov and The Captain’s Daughter Pushkin creates two sets of rulers, where one is endowed with formal authority (Boris Godunov and Catherine), and the second only claims the right to this authority by trying to convince the people of his legitimacy and personal dignity (Grishka Otrepiev and Pugachev). An intermediate link, which carries out the will of the tsar over the people, i.e., boyars in Boris Godunov and nobles in The Captain’s Daughter, represent more of a background and are concerned with weaving intrigues and acquiring personal gains out of
a particular historical moment. In both works the legitimate rulers at first underestimate the power of their adversaries and the idea of martyrdom they carry. However, the aura of unfair suffering with which these impostors surround themselves, along with the promise of a better life, inspire in the fervently religious Orthodox populace an overwhelming sympathy and desire of revenge. Thus, by arising out of nowhere, the impostors rapidly gain power benefiting from the gullibility of the people.

Another prominent theme featured in *Boris Godunov* and *The Captain’s Daughter*, which is also referenced in other Pushkin’s works such as *The Tales of Belkin*, *The Queen of Spades*, and others, is the theme of fateful accident which influences historical development not only of individuals, but also of the state as a whole. As noted by Evdokimova, in Russia, a country with absolute monarchy, “much in history depended on the individuals in power” and “by implication on chance” (Evdokimova 1999, 50-51), which is only possible if initiated at the top.

The distribution of roles between the government and the people in the process of social development interested Pushkin for many years. He wrote that the government in Russia is “always ahead in the field of education and enlightenment” and that “the people follow the government always lazily, and sometimes unwillingly” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XI, 223). Evdokimova rightfully interprets Pushkin’s statement not as praising a government that he often openly criticized\(^43\) but as an observation that in Russian society

\(^43\) Pushkin himself warns a reader against such interpretation: “I started my notes not with the intention to flatter the government” (“Я начал записки свои не для того, чтоб льстить властям...”) - (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XI, 223)
no other force can play a more significant role in promoting progressive views except autocracy (Evdokimova 1999, 51). However, Pushkin was also deeply interested in the connection between absolutism and the role of the accidental and unexplainable in history, the concept of which was commonly discussed among French historiographers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and that became known in Russia through the writings of Voltaire, Barante, and Pierre-Édouard Lémontey. Pushkin was convinced that accident has a special role in the development of historical events, and that the development of history following a particular path is not predetermined fatalistically (Dolinin 1999, 296-297). Pushkin criticized French historian Guizot who belonged to the school of “providential” historiography, supported by many in Pushkin’s Russia for omitting “all that is distant, alien or accidental” from his analysis of the events of European Enlightenment and insisted that in Russian history, unlike in Europe, chance plays a great role 44.

Thus, Pushkin’s characters often tempt fate and rely on chance. In both Boris Godunov and The Captain’s Daughter, this especially applies to the Pretenders who are not guaranteed support of the official system of the law that is designed to suppress any unexpected development. The relation to chance is one of the main distinctions between

44 In his comments to the second volume of Polevoi’s “History of the Russian People”, Pushkin expressed his disagreement with Guizot who, in his opinion, underestimated the significance of chance for the historical processes: “You understand the great merit of the French historian. You should understand too that Russia never had anything in common with the rest of Europe; its history demands a different thought, a different formula than the thoughts and formulas deduced by Guizot from the history of the Christian West. Do not say: It could not have been otherwise. If that were true then the historian would be an astronomer, and the events of the life of mankind would be predicted in calendars like solar eclipses. But Providence is not algebra. The human mind, according to a common expression, is not a prophet but a conjecturer, it sees the general course of things and can deduce from it profound suppositions, often justified by time, but it cannot foresee chance – that powerful and instantaneous instrument of Providence”. – (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, XI, 127).
the Pretenders and their opposites. If Godunov carefully plans his tactics while on the throne, False Dimitry is completely reliant on the people’s opinion of him, which is unpredictable. He also relied too much on the inherent habit of Russians to blindly follow the orders of the tsar when he alleged in the house of Vishnevetsky that they would trade for him their Christianity for Catholicism.

“Nay, father, there will be no trouble. I know
The spirit of my people; piety
Does not run wild in them, their tsar's example
To them is sacred.”

When he claims to know his people, it turns out that his confidence is not warranted and he is just as far from the people as Godunov is. Unless it is a part of the canny strategy to ensure the support of the Poles, this shows his inability to recognize the Russian people’s deep religious attachment to their Orthodox beliefs, which ultimately leads the Pretender to his demise.

Indeed, chance is about all the Pretender can count on, and he realizes that. In the garden scene he admits to Marina:

“Now I leave thee—ruin,
Or else a crown, awaits my head in Russia;
Whether I meet with death as fits a soldier
In honorable fight, or as a miscreant
Upon the public scaffold, thou shalt not
Be my companion”

On the other hand, the power of Boris Godunov, strengthened by his legitimacy and in itself the source of law, does not need to be favored by chance. Its strength and a guarantee of success lie in the subjugation of others and in maintaining its subjects’ fear

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45 Boris Godunov. [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5089/5089-h/5089-h.htm#link2H_4_0013](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5089/5089-h/5089-h.htm#link2H_4_0013)
46 Boris Godunov, [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5089/5089-h/5089-h.htm#link2H_4_0013](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5089/5089-h/5089-h.htm#link2H_4_0013)
and worship. No wonder then that Godunov over-confidently prophesizes the future of Russia for decades to come while bending over a map created by his son. Secure in his position, he believes that the wise strategic instructions he gives to Feodor before dying will ensure his son’s success on the throne. For Godunov, there is no room for an accident, as any disruption can only be destructive to his power.

Chance also plays an important role in the development of the events described in *The Captain’s Daughter*. But if in *Boris Godunov* chance, through the interference in the life of rulers and those claiming the throne, administers the fate of Russia; in *The Captain’s Daughter* Pushkin is primarily interested in how chance disposes of the lives of people who are far from the political games and only by the will of fate caught up in it. In this regard, the fate of Grinev who undergoes numerous tests from which he comes out with spotless conscience, having saved his own life and the life of his beloved, is particularly revealing. Abram Tertz (1992) argues, “The whole trick is that Grinev’s life and his bride are saved not by strength, courage, shrewdness or money, but by a flimsy hareskin coat”47. Pugachev, just like False Dimitry, is also at the mercy of the wheel of fortune. But both of these characters are players by nature, and they have deliberately chosen paths of risk and uncertainty. Pushing their luck vitalizes them, becomes a purpose of its own even more than the outcome that this luck can bring to their lives. Sprouts of unsuppressed ambition manifest themselves in Gregory’s genuine envy of monk Pimen, who reminisces about the thrill of secular life that is inaccessible to Gregory in a monastery cell. From Pugachev’s metaphorical tale about the eagle and the

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raven in *The Captain's Daughter*, we learn about his unbridled nature, as he prefers death to a long measured life. In a way, this allegory of a free-spirited eagle foreshadows the freedom-loving Falcon in the *Song of the Falcon* by young romanticist Maxim Gorky (1894).

However, while Pugachev and Grishka Otrepiev, by certain circumstances ascend to the crest of the important historical events, they are still pawns in a game, the rules of which are not arbitrary. Pushkin’s perception of history as a logical process caused by the laws of cause and effect is especially evident in the novel *The Captain’s Daughter*. The state of the troops and fortresses, truthfully described by Pushkin, does not give the reader any hope for quick suppression of Pugachev’s uprising. From the first sketch of Grinev, it was easy to predict what would happen to the Belogorskaya in case of an enemy attack. Approaching the fortress, instead of expected “high bastions, a wall, and a ditch”, Grinev saw ”a small village, surrounded by a wooden palisade”, “three or four haystacks, half covered with snow”, and “a tumble-down windmill, whose sails, made of coarse limetree bark, hung idly down”. Comic descriptions of army life in the fortress, soldiers’ training, and then the military council in Orenburg and the general state of the tsarist army, which was to resist Pugachev, would only further convince the reader of the inevitability of defeat. In *Boris Godunov* too, the appearance of False Dimitry with his agenda to rise to the throne and to restore justice to the Russian people by overthrowing a tsareviche Boris is instigated by a series of specific historical events rather than by chance. He is motivated not only by his adventurous spirit but also by noble intentions to correct
wrongdoing by the Russian throne. He recognizes that circumstances are right and his bold risk may turn rewarding at the end:

Boris, Boris, before thee
All tremble; none dares even to remind thee
Of what befell the hapless child; meanwhile
Here in dark cell a hermit doth incite
Thy stern denunciation. Thou wilt not
Escape the judgment even of this world,
As thou wilt not escape the doom of God.\(^\text{48}\)

The phenomena of Pugachev and Grigory Otrepiev become possible only due to concrete historical circumstances, specifically the tsars’ mysterious and, in the eyes of society, unfair deaths and the tsars’ near-sanctimonious role in Russian society. No wonder then that Pushkin’s Pugachev twice refers to Otrepiev, emphasizing the similarity of their positions. "No," said he, "the day of repentance is past and gone; they will not give me grace. I must go on as I have begun. Who knows? It may be. Grishka Otrepiev certainly became the tsar in Moscow."\(^\text{49}\) Both Pugachev and False Dimitry are restricted in their actions and are aware that at any time they may become hostages of their own allies if their luck betrays them. Both realize that they are simply a “pretext for feud and warfare.” False Dimitry bitterly points to this in a conversation with Marina; Pugachev also talks about it with Grinev. In *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* Pushkin quotes Bibikov’s letter to Fonvizin, which he calls "deciphering the Pugachev Rebellion":

“Pugachev is nothing else but a scarecrow with which thieves, the Yaik Cossacks, play. Pugachev is not important, general indignation is important." (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, IX,

\(^{48}\) Pushkin, Alexander. *Boris Godunov*. [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5089/5089-h/5089-h.htm#link2H_4_0004](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5089/5089-h/5089-h.htm#link2H_4_0004)

45) However, neither, Pugachev nor Grishka Otrepiev, can refuse to tempt the fate when it is favorable to them. As Evdokimova argues, “Pushkin focuses not so much on the power and arbitrariness of accidental events, but on chance as part of historical necessity within a specific historical situation” (A. Pushkin 1937-1959, 83).
Chapter 4. Adaptations of Boris Godunov by Bondarchuk (1986) and Mirzoev (2011)

4.1 Chapter objectives

In this chapter, I will focus on the semiotic analysis of common and idiosyncratic features of Pushkin’s play Boris Godunov and its filmic remediations during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras by two prominent Russian directors, Bondarchuk (1986) and Mirzoev (2011). I will investigate how the content of the originary literary work has been reexamined by these two filmmakers and transferred into cinematic transpositions through the use of filmic devices such as angles, shots, mise-en-scènes, and patterns of light and sounds, etc. Since Bondarchuk and Mirzoev approach the theme of The Time of Troubles and Boris Godunov’s rule very differently, I will especially focus on this contrast and its effect on the process of transmediating the literary work.

The tragedy Boris Godunov, like many other Russian classics, has been reassessed several times by critics and readers based on their socio-political worldviews. This reassessment directly applies to each of its cinematic adaptations, as each director expresses not just his own evaluation of the play, but also the perception of his contemporaries. Particularly striking is the contrast between Bondarchuk’s Soviet and
Mirzoev’s post-Soviet adaptations. Each director employs different approaches in their transpositions and Mirzoev’s specifically reflects a recent reconstruction of contemporary Russia’s entire ideological system. And if in filming Boris Godunov Bondarchuk paid tribute to the Russian classic and mainly focused on the psychological ramifications of Boris’ crime on his own conscience, Mirzoev instead chose this particular literary work to illustrate the political issues of contemporary Russia and its leadership and therefore fundamentally reassessed the Soviet interpretation of the play. If Bondarchuk’s adaptation is made in the genre of psychological historical cinema that reproduces Russian autocracy as something concrete but long gone into oblivion, Mirzoev’s film is more political satire on the current situation in Russia, which he openly calls in his interviews a modern form of absolutism. Mirzoev achieves this by moving the chronotope of the play into the present, complete with officials in modern suits driving limousines while reciting Pushkin’s dialogues. Thus, Mirzoev points to Russia’s disastrous history and the inextricable link to historic events. Mirzoev shows that the history of Godunov’s time has reappeared in today’s socio-political alignment and therefore the tragic outcome described in the play is not at all an implausible outcome for Russian contemporary society. To prove his point, Mirzoev uses many signifiers that indicate the connection of different historical periods, including a parallel between the murders of two Russian tsareviches - Dimitrii and Alexei. Mirzoev’s entire signification structure in his Boris Godunov points to current processes in Russia’s contemporary political system, which will be analyzed in this chapter.
4.2 Background

The theme of The Time of Troubles, or Smuta, has been popular in Russian cinema since the early days of silent film, and has only become even more popular in recent decades. It has been rendered in such films as Minin and Pozharsky (dir. Pudovkin, 1939), the comedy Ivan Vasilievich: Back to the Future (Иван Васильевич Меняет Профессию, dir. Gaidai, 1973), 1612 (dir. Khotinenko, 2012), and Tsar (dir. Lungin, 2009) among others. It has also been the setting for TV series and numerous documentaries. The analysis of The Time of Troubles is not possible without taking into account the controversial figure of the Russian tsar Boris Godunov, whose role in the fateful events of seventeenth-century Russia still has not been fully investigated.

Until now, the main sources of factual and artistic material on Boris Godunov have been Karamzin’s History of the Russian State, Pushkin’s drama Boris Godunov and an homonymous opera by Modest Musorgsky. While Karamzin’s History was guided by ideological considerations along with a desire for historical accuracy, Pushkin’s and especially Musorgsky’s works were first and foremost artistic rather than historical. The first Russian screen adaptation of Pushkin’s play was attempted at the studio of the photographer Alexander Drankov in 1907. The project was not finished and has not survived. The second adaptation, directed by Vera Stroeva in 1954 and made as a musical based on the Musorgsky’s opera, is not analyzed in the current study, as my objective is only the examination of the two completed cinematic transpositions of Boris Godunov based directly on Pushkin’s play and produced by Sergei Bondarchuk (1986) and Vladimir Mirzoev (2011).
Bondarchuk is one of the most prolific Soviet directors and is the author of many films including *Destiny of a Man* (1959) and *War and Peace* (1968), which are widely accepted as classics of world cinema. However, Bondarchuk is also a dismal example of an artist whose talent was indulged by the Soviet elite in exchange for his glorification of the days of national trials in his pictures. And since he made a habit of starring in his own films, playing Taras Shevchenko (in *Taras Shevchenko*, 1951), Andrei Sokolov (in *Destiny of a Man*, 1959), Pierre Bezukhov (*War and Peace*, 1968), Boris Godunov (*Boris Godunov*, 1986) and other characters, he was very familiar to most Russians. Consequently, he was among the first to be thrown down off of his pedestal by new forces paving the road to post-Soviet art, free from the demands of the country’s political elite.

His path to the position of preeminent Russian film director was long but direct. A native of Ukraine, he was born in a peasant family in 1920, and studied theater and acting at the Rostov-on-Don theatrical school (1938-1941) and at the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), one of the oldest film schools in the world, where he graduated in 1948. He started his acting career at the Taganrog drama theater in 1938. For two years during World War II, in 1941-1942, Bondarchuk served as an actor in the Grozny Theater of the Red Army, before he was sent to the frontlines where he fought for the rest of the war. After graduation from the VGIK in 1948, Bondarchuk worked as an actor at the Mosfilm studio. His “big break” came with the leading role in the film *Taras Shevchenko*, a film highly praised by Stalin himself, for which the thirty-two-year-old Bondarchuk
was given the top award of People’s Artist of USSR, the youngest USSR actor ever to receive this honor.

His directorial debut took place in 1959 with the film *Destiny of a Man* based on the homonymous novel by Sholokhov. This film, which focuses on the personal tragedy of a simple Soviet man has been a notable cinematographic accomplishment of the Thaw era – a period of the de-Stalinization of Soviet society, the revision of Socialist Realism as an artistic movement and a reexamination of World War II in Soviet art. In the West Bondarchuk is most known for his adaptation of the Tolstoy’s novel *War and Peace* (1968), a seven-hour epic which won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and brought worldwide fame to its director.

Besides Stalin, Bondarchuk was also favored by Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Brezhnev and enjoyed special privileges under their leadership. He was among the few who were allowed by the Soviet government to act and shoot abroad. For years, Bondarchuk was also very active in the administration of the Union of Cinematographers of the USSR, where he was its leader starting in 1971. However, by the time of perestroika Bondarchuk’s luck ran out. The delegates of the historic Fifth Congress of the Cinematographers of the USSR in 1986 blackballed the candidacy of Bondarchuk and other prominent figures of Soviet cinematography. After that, Bondarchuk saw constant attacks over his supposed nepotism and overly officious approach. He began to lose his authority and influence, and his productivity started rapidly declining.

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The 1986 adaptation *Boris Godunov* was the last feature Bondarchuk released before his death in 1994. According to the memoirs of his daughter Natalia, Bondarchuk had always been a great admirer of Pushkin, and filming *Boris Godunov* was his life-long dream (in Palatnikova 2003, 425). The task he set to himself while making this film was “to convey by means of cinematography the mystery of Pushkin's genius, his thoughts and ideas” (ibid). Bondarchuk explained his reverent attitude to Pushkin’s work by saying: “I did not write the script of *Boris Godunov* - Pushkin did; I only aspire to match it at least a little.” (427) Thus, Bondarchuk’s desire to convey Pushkin’s play in its entirety with minimal changes determined the content of his film.

Bondarchuk’s *Boris Godunov* is a co-production of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and West Germany, and was shot on a budget of 4.2 mln rubles, which made it one of the most expensive films in the history of Soviet cinema. For Russians, it almost represents a standard of what historical film should be, as Bondarchuk for the first time in Soviet cinema fully recreates the atmosphere of the physical and spiritual climate of Godunov’s time. Thus, many of the scenes were filmed at their actual historical settings, including Red Square, Lobnoye Mesto, where executions were once held, and in the Assumption Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin, which in itself is unique, because to get permission for filming in these places was not easy at all times due to their particular significance to Russian history.

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52 7 Храмов и Монастырей, Попавших в Киношедевры. http://russian7.ru/2012/06/7-xramov-i-monastyrej-popavshix-v-kinoshedevry/
The reception of the film was mainly positive and praised it as “great”, “terrific”, “tremendous success”. Nonetheless, among the many rave reviews were also those that called the film "pathetic”, “boring”, “cold”, and even “unemotional”. Such a radical division in the evaluation of a work by an undeniable connoisseur of Soviet cinema heralded the coming of a new period in Soviet society that demanded new forms of artistic expression.

Vladimir Mirzoev (b. 1957), the author of the fourth and latest Russian adaptation of Boris Godunov (2011), belongs to a new generation of Russian filmmakers, whose worldview was shaped by the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it the domination of socialist realism in Soviet cinema. The social position of Mirzoev could not be more different from that of Bondarchuk. Mirzoev has not only never been a political conformist, but he is known as an active supporter of Russian opposition to the current leadership and is a member of the Russian Opposition Coordination Council\(^{53}\). In March 2010 Mirzoev signed a petition “Putin has to go”; and in 2014, a letter in support of Ukraine’s sovereignty, “We are with you!” In a 2013 interview for The New Times, Mirzoev expressed support for gay teens, which today is illegal in Russia due to Putin’s law banning the “promotion of homosexuality”.

Mirzoev started his career after graduating from the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (ГИТИС) in 1981 with a degree in directing, and since then divides his time

\(^{53}\) Russian Opposition Coordination Council (Координационный Совет Российской Оппозиции) is a council created in 2012 to coordinate and direct organizations in Russia. Some of its members are Aleksei Navalnyi, Ksenia Sobchak, Garry Kasparov and other. The total number of registered members is over 170,000. - [http://cvk2012.org/](http://cvk2012.org/)
between working in theatre and cinema. The majority of his theatrical performances are based on classics of Russian and world literature by Shakespeare, Moliere, Shaw, Turgenev, Gogol, and others. His cinematic projects are mainly made in the format of TV shows. *Boris Godunov* is his only completed film that employs the use of classical 19th-century literature. It was shot in digital format, in a record short time - only 23 days and on a very limited budget of about $500,000\textsuperscript{54}. The project was mainly financed by Mirzoev’s friends and family, with no financing from the Russian government.\textsuperscript{55} The actors even almost completely sacrificed their honoraria just so the film could be finished. The lack of funding prevented Mirzoev and his team from setting up a broad advertising campaign of the film, which left it outside of the mainstream screening process. After a premiere at the Film Festival in Riga in June 2011, it was shown only at closed invite-only viewings in Moscow clubs and bar-cafes, and at the movie theater “Boulevard” in Moscow’s residential district Severnoe Butovo. Another problem was that while the filmmakers negotiated box office terms, the film was pirated and illegally posted on the internet where it quickly spread. And while the pirating quickly brought the film to a wide audience, at the same time, cinemas, especially in large cities, lost interest in it. Thus, the film remained in demand mainly in provincial cinemas.


4.3 Correspondences between Bondarchuk’s and Mirzoev’s adaptations and Pushkin’s text

Pushkin’s tragedy Boris Godunov is one of the few dramas in Russian classical literature that suffered the woeful fate of being considered unfit for stage. Despite being written nearly two centuries ago, there have been only a few serious attempts to stage the tragedy, and none of them is recognized as thoroughly successful. The textual and compositional difficulties that have stood in the way of theater directors were discussed in detail in Chapter 3. So far, no solution has been found for a successful theatrical incarnation of Boris Godunov and therefore the play is not commonly staged in Russia’s theaters. Even the performances staged by such great Russian theater directors as Meyerhold and Dikii failed and were not completed. Theater does not have the methods that would allow the staging of a play where scenes are rather disjoined and a significant portion of information has to be reconstructed by the readers’ imagination from their knowledge of the historical material. In Pushkin’s tragedy, where the individual parts are rendered as “self-enclosed masterpieces which tend if anything to vie with each other, like excellently contrasted miniatures competing for attention, rather than to coalesce into a well-formed drama” (Emerson 1986, 97), the continuity between them is maintained mainly due to the integrity of historical events and not because of textual flow. The settings change in every scene and each of them is so short that it may create an impression of being sketchy and unfinished. However, what theater considers a limitation, or even an insurmountable obstacle, is easily solveable by the methods of cinematic editing. Thus, the play has become a lucky find for cinema. The same innovative features of Boris Godunov that made it unfit for theater found brilliant
embodiment in the works of a few Russian filmmakers during both Soviet and post-Soviet times. For his ability to ‘think in film images’, or in the apt definition of Eisenstein, his _kinomyshlenie_ (1968), Pushkin has been credited by Russian directors with discovering in dramaturgy the principle of cinematic montage (Frolov 1977) and foreseeing the arrival of cinema. Pushkin has been traditionally considered a forerunner of modern times, and his _kinomyshlenie_, has been referred by many to as one of the manifestations of the genius’ foresight.

As seen from interviews with Bondarchuk and Mirzoev, they clearly recognized the cinematic potential of Pushkin’s text. Both directors credited Pushkin with the merit of screenwriting and humbly denied their own contribution to their films’ scenarios. Sergei Bondarchuk, discussing his forthcoming television production of Pushkin’s _Godunov_, in 1984 claimed that “Pushkin’s genius had foreseen… the art of film” (in Emerson 1986, 98). Almost thirty years later, Mirzoev echoed Bondarchuk in his interview to RIA Novosti56: “Pushkin’s [text] is a wonderful script, this is great in terms of screenwriting work. Twenty-six short episodes, changing exterior and interior. It is quite a living language, live dialogues, despite the fact that this is rhythmical speech. Pushkin is our contemporary”.

Both filmmakers used the literary source with the utmost respect and reproduced it almost in its entirety, each having made only a few modifications. Both films have undoubtedly pleased admirers of Pushkin's poetry by their inspired performances. Thus,

all development of action in both transpositions is completely built on the play. In quantitative terms, Mirzoev used slightly more of Pushkin’s text than Bondarchuk but in general, both directors relied almost equally on the literary work. However, despite the fact that changes almost did not affect the linguistic system of the tragedy, each movie is a unique artistic project, which is far from a repeat of Pushkin’s play. Using the tools of cinematic language, filmmakers were able to convey not only their own interpretation of Pushkin's work, but also their own vision of the historical period.

As can be expected, much unites all three texts, like the set of characters and the main locations where action takes place - Moscow, Poland and the Lithuanian border. Following Pushkin’s play, both adaptations feature the royal family of Boris Godunov: his wife and his children Feodor and Ksenia, Grigory Otrepiev the Pretender; boyars, among whom the most important figures are Vorotynsky, Shuisky and Pushkin; the monk Pimen and the vagabond monks Misail and Varlaam; Marina Mnishek, Grigory’s love; and many other characters, mainly those who represent Grigory’s supporters, including Polish and Russian aristocrats and common people. A special place in all three texts is assigned to the Russian People, a collective image of common men and women whose social position has an invisible but forceful impact on the play’s historical events.

Being true to historical reality and Pushkin’s design, both directors preserved the historical settings of the events portrayed. Bondarchuk’s adaptation is especially abundant with exterior and interior views of Moscow Kremlin, Red Square and other historical places of Muscovite Russia’s capital. Mirzoev, too, indicates that the main action is set in Moscow by fleetingly showing magnificent views of the Kremlin and
modern-day skyscrapers. The rest of the locations, such as Poland, Lithuania and Uglich are not always marked visually but made clear by the context itself.

Also, while the chronotope in Mirzoev’s adaptation dramatically contrasts with the chronotopes in the literary source and Bondarchuk’s model, Pushkin’s storyline is preserved in both cinematic transpositions. The sequence of scenes and events of the play is also maintained in both adaptations. There is not a single scene that is completely omitted in either adaptation. Both directors were true to their word when they defined the tragedy as a scenario, which they consistently followed. Several scenes were reproduced by both directors almost verbatim. These include: “Red Square”, “The House of the patriarch”, “Palace of the Tsar”, “Castle of the governor”, “A Plain near Novgorod Seversk”, “Open Space in front of the Cathedral in Moscow”, “A Tent”, and “The Kremlin. House of Boris”.

There are also a few scenes that had undergone more significant changes in one adaptation or another in terms of alteration of Pushkin’s text. These scenes include: “Night. Cell in the Monastery in Chudov”, “Cracow. House of Vishnevetsky”, “Night. The Garden. The Fountain”, and “The Council of the Tsar”. Analysis of information omitted by filmmakers from the primary text in the process of its transcoding into a cinematic medium helps reveal the creative design of the film director. Pushkin’s episodes that were dropped from either screen version include mainly those that describe characters’ appearance or their emotional state, or communicate characters’ memories or reactions. Exclusion of these parts of the original text does not necessarily mean a dramatic modification of the source material. Often a replacement of the verbal text with
the visual text is simply a part of the process of transmediation. However, via visual images the directors frequently add values that significantly alter the meaning of the literary source in the process of transcoding.

Even with most of Pushkin’s text being included in both adaptations, there are a few notable elements that are idiosyncratic to the play. The scene “Night. Cell in the Monastery in Chudov” has undergone some of the most significant changes done by both filmmakers. This particular scene is traditionally recognized by scholars as pivotal in Pushkin’s text, as it lays the groundwork for the main conflict of the tragedy and, in a way, serves as a starting point for the main action. It is precisely in this scene that the motivation for Grigory Otrepiev’s confrontation with Boris is formed. However, this scene has another very important function in the tragedy: it gives the narrative its annalistic coloring. Pimen, by passing the baton of the chronicler to his disciple Grigory, makes him the creator of the subsequent historical events and their protagonist. Despite the fact that the official protagonist of the tragedy is Boris Godunov, as indicated by the title, it is Grishka Otrepiev who stirred up the Time of Troubles that disrupted Russia’s long-standing historical order. The fact that the impostor emerges from the monastic environment is symbolic, because he appears to pass judgment on Boris not only on behalf of the people, but also in the name of God. From his cell he throws a challenge to Boris:

И не уйдешь ты от суда мирского,
Как не уйдешь от божьего суда.57

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57 Thou wilt not
Escape the judgment even of this world,
The justice-seeker Grigory Otrepiev is fully a product of Boris’ crimes and later of his tormented conscience. The pretender is a materialized phantom of the murdered tsarevich, whose image haunts Boris and coexists with him as if it were his own double. By coming out of the shadow of the monastic cell and confronting Boris, Grigory puts a stake in Boris’ most vulnerable spot - an open wound on his conscience. It is in the dialogue with his spiritual mentor Pimen that Grigory is transformed from an unknown humble monk into an assertive player who decides not only Godunov’s destiny, but also the subsequent development of Russia. But even when Grigory decides to take a part in a big political game, he is only a pawn among the interests of other players such as Russian boyars and Polish and Lithuanian nobility, who also make their bids – this time on Grigory.

“Night. Cell in the Monastery in Chudov”, is also one of the most heavily philosophically loaded passages in the tragedy, and it is therefore very important to investigate the treatment of Pushkin’s text by both directors. The changes that each filmmaker makes to this scene in the process of its signification into the cinematic version are particularly characteristic of their artistic intent and their creative style. These changes include not only omission of the large part of Pushkin's text, but also a shift in the focus by both directors.

As thou wilt not escape the doom of God. - (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)
The first significant part of Pushkin’s text that is either partially or completely omitted by both Bondarchuk and Mirzoev is the very important monologue by Pimen in which he contemplates his role as a chronicler of bygone events:

Недаром многих лет
Свидетелем господь меня поставил
И книжному искусству вразумил;
Когда-нибудь монах трудолюбивый
Найдет мой труд усердный, безымянный,
Засветит он, как я, свою лампаду —
И, пыль веков от хартий отряхнув,
Правдивые сказанья перепишет,
Да ведают потомки православных
Земли родной минувшую судьбу,
Своих царей великих поминают
За их труды, за славу, за добро —
А за грехи, за темные деяния
Спасителя смиренно умоляют.

На старости я сызнова живу,
Минувшее проходит предо мною —
Давно оно неслося, событий полно,
Волнуясь, как море - окиян?

Теперь оно безмолвно и спокойно,
Не много лиц мне память сохранила,
Не много слов доходит до меня,
А прочее погибло невозвратно...
Но близок день, лампада догорает —
Еще одно, последнее сказанье.58

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58 Not in vain  Hath God appointed me for many years  A witness, teaching me the art of letters;  A day will come when some laborious monk  Will bring to light my zealous, nameless toil,  Kindle, as I, his lamp, and from the parchment  Shaking the dust of ages will transcribe  My true narrations, that posterity  The bygone fortunes of the orthodox  Of their own land may learn, will mention make  Of their great tsars, their labours, glory, goodness—  And humbly for their sins, their evil deeds,  Implore the Saviour’s mercy.—In old age  I live anew; the past unrolls before me.—  Did it in years long vanished sweep along,  Full of events, and troubled like the deep?  Now it is hushed and tranquil. Few the faces Which memory hath saved for me, and few  The words which have come down to me;—the rest  Have perished, never to return.—But day  Draws near, the lamp burns low, one record more,  The last.- (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)
In this monologue Pimen emphasizes his role as a witness of history and not as its creator or a participant. He only serves as a channel of knowledge that bridges the past with the future, and none of the past events can excite him anymore. He found peace within the monastic walls, far away from intrigues of worldly life. He is pleased with the results of his work and is sure that his records will be accepted with gratitude by future generations. Pimen’s monologue speaks to the humble entries of unknown monks, the scribes of historical manuscripts who traditionally added brief information about themselves and, sometimes, short messages at the end of their work. Pushkin models this part after Russian chronicles and indirectly identifies himself with Pimen, a modest scribe of historical events. The omission of this part from the films makes cinematic action more modern, dynamic and hero driven.

The only part of this well-known monologue used by Bondarchuk is its first sentence:

Еще одно, последнее сказанье —
И летопись окончена моя,
Исполнен долг, завещанный от бога
Мне, грешному.  

In fact, Bondarchuk begins his film with this famous phrase of Pushkin’s chronicler, thus making it an epigraph to his entire cinematic reinterpretation, which reinforces the annalistic character of the film and its historicism. The film opens with a deep-focused shot of a monastic cell, in the depths of which an elderly monk is bent over a manuscript

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59 One more, the final record, and my annals
   Are ended, and fulfilled the duty laid
   By God on me a sinner. – (ibid)
dimly lit by a candle. Voiceover that obviously belongs to the monk begins the narrative. By beginning his adaptation with this notorious phrase that has become almost a phraseologism in Russian culture, Bondarchuk, just like Pushkin, identifies himself with Pimen and suggests that he is just an ordinary chronicler doing his duty. The epithet "Sinful" (грешный) had traditionally been used by scribes to diminish their own merits and transfer readers’ attention to the events described. The use of such expressions would free scribes from the responsibility for the written text, as they only served as tools in the hands of God, true to their task, which they performed to the best of their ability. In Bondarchuk’s film this phrase also expresses the director’s assurance that he invested all his skill and diligence into his work. Ironically, the tale of Boris Godunov became the last work for both Bondarchuk and Pimen.

Mirzoev, however, completely excludes the monologue from his transposition. Such an artistic solution logically follows from the peculiarities of the film’s chronotope transferred to present-day Russia. By doing so, Mirzoev emphasizes the universality of the events taking place in the tragedy and their translatability into future societies where similar sociopolitical conditions exist. Thus, the partial, in the case of Bondarchuk, or complete, in the case of Mirzoev, omission of Pimen’s monologue is one of the most important changes made by the film directors to Pushkin’s play as it dramatically modernizes and alters the play in accordance with the filmmakers’ artistic design.

Another part of the same scene dropped by both directors is Pimen’s reflections about the vanity of worldly life and his reminiscences of Ivan the Terrible’s and his son Fyodor’s attempts to find solace among the monks. Pimen is trying to forewarn Grigory...
that worldly pursuits and accomplishments are vanities that cannot give one happiness and peace, which Grigory has to eventually realize himself after he attains everything that he finds so irresistible. The sad fate of Grigory Otrepiev, who became known in Russia as False Dimitry I, has been left out by Pushkin and the transposers of his play. But it is worth noting that the impostor, after ruling over Russia for merely ten months, was plotted against by boyars, unsuccessfully tried to escape, was shot, and had his body displayed to Muscovites. Later his ashes were shot from a cannon toward Poland.

Pimen’s warning to Grigory to refrain from worldly temptations because they lead only to suffering foreshadows the fact that Grigory ultimately will not be able to escape the tragic consequences of his ambitious aspirations. However, none of the directors has touched on this topic. Evidently, an inclusion of the theme of worldly life as sinful, leading to redemption by suffering, does not directly relate to the storyline of either adaptation. Besides, in the case of Bondarchuk’s film, this can be explained by the fact that in the socialist era raising religious topics in official artworks and especially showing any preference to a monastic way of life was forbidden.

Another scene that has also undergone significant modifications in both films in terms of cutting the original text and transfiguration of the chronotope is the scene of Grigory and Marina’s date in the garden by the fountain. Pushkin’s Grigory appears as an ardent lover ready to sacrifice his true purpose for the sake of happiness with his beloved. His new feeling for Marina confuses him, he does not yet understand its nature, but he feels that it is stronger than anything else experienced by him before. Grigory is
startled that his love for Marina instills in him fear of her, which is even stronger than the fear of death experienced in battles.

Вот и фонтан; она сюда придет.
Я, кажется, рожден не боязливым;
Перед собой вблизи видел я смерть,
Пред смертию душа не содрогалась.
Мне вечная неволя угрожала,
За мной гнались — я духом не смутился
И дерзостью неволи избежал.
Но что ж теперь теснит мое дыханье?
Что значит сей неодолимый трепет?
Иль это дрожь желаний напряженных?60

This is how Grigory describes his state in anticipation of Marina, "all the blood in me stopped" («вся кровь во мне остановилась») and her voice as "magical, sweet." (“волшебный, сладкий”). Only by the purity of his love for Marina does he explain his sudden impulse to tell her his innermost secret:

Нет, я не мог обманывать тебя.
Ты мне была единственной святой,
Пред ней же я притворствовать не смел.
Любовь, любовь ревнивая, слепая,
Одна любовь принудила меня
Все высказать.61

He wants to believe that Marina’s love is just as pure and selfless as his love for her:

60 Here is the fountain; hither will she come. I was not born a coward; I have seen Death near at hand, and face to face with death My spirit hath not blenched. A life-long dungeon Hath threatened me, I have been close pursued, And yet my spirit quailed not, and by boldness I have escaped captivity. But what Is this which now constricts my breath? What means This overpowering tremor, or this quivering Of tense desire? - (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)

61 No, I could not deceive thee. Thou to me Wast the one sacred being, before thee I dared not to dissemble; love alone, Love, jealous, blind, constrained me to tell all. - (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)
In his sincerity and openness to Marina Grigory comes across as a vulnerable and reckless romantic who puts his feelings above his duty and assumed responsibilities. In a burst of excitation Grigory turns from a daunting pursuer of Godunov into an inexperienced and defenseless youth, ingratiating himself with a cold and indifferent beauty. He throws himself to his knees and begs her to love him, an unknown and humble monk, and not the deceased tsarevich Dimitri. And despite being able to completely restore his “royal” posture by the end of their conversation, Grigory’s ability to selflessly surrender to his beloved makes him more tangible and multidimensional character.

Neither of the film directors choose to verbalize to such an extent Grigory’s romantic side in their adaptations. In Bondarchuk’s transposition, the scene of Grigory and Marina’s conversation is shot in a beautiful setting near fountains and a pond during a full moon, accompanied by the sharp cries of unknown exotic birds and soft non-diegetic orchestra music dominated by strings. The extraordinary beauty of nature in itself calls for a lyrical mood. However, this ends the romantic spirit of the scene. When Grigory appears, his face shows the signs of excitation and his eyes are glowing. He looks around very nervously, as to expecting someone to spy on him, which eventually

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62 *Forget 'tis the tsarevich whom thou seest Before thee. O, behold in me, Marina, A lover, by thee chosen, happy only In thy regard. O, listen to the prayers Of love! Grant me to utter all wherewith My heart is full.* - (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)
turns out to be true. When Grigory and Marina leave the scene, a dark figure steps out of the dark bushes and follows them with his eyes. Marina in a whisper calls Grigory out and he rushes to her call. The beginning of their date is shown in a long shot on the opposite side of the pond. Then the camera swiftly shifts toward Marina and Grigory and records their conversation in a sequence of over-the-shoulder shots with the background moving around the characters in a circular motion. Low-key lighting points at their faces, shifting from Marina to Grigory, but Marina’s face is highlighted more often. In the first half of the scene she speaks expressionlessly but authoritatively, and thwarts Grigory’s attempts to surrender to his feelings. She reprimands him sharply for his procrastination with the campaign against Boris - she expects a decisive action from him. This alarms Grigory and makes him jealous of the deceased tsarevich who Marina sees in him, and, to test Marina’s feelings, he reveals the secret of his origin. At this point, Grigory’s look hardens; his eyes are peering into Marina with a strained expression. She briefly covers her face in shame and contempt for the impostor. Grigory, having received confirmation of his guess about Marina’s pragmatic intentions, somehow takes control of himself, renounces his words of confession and begins to leave. Marina, realizing that she is losing him, rapidly changes her tactics and stops Grigory. Instantly her voice lowers and almost turns into whisper; the tone of it changes from distant and powerful into soft and insinuating. Marina’s facial expression also becomes gentle, almost fawning. The musical accompaniment swiftly changes from classical into a playful bravura reminiscent of a Polish folk dance, which quickly turns into a victory march. Marina takes Grigory’s hand and leads him into a court dance. While dancing, she continues commanding him not to
delay anymore and march forth with a campaign as soon as possible, and not to send a messenger with the marriage proposal to her until he sets up on the Moscow throne. Left alone, Grigory angrily utters after her:

Змея! змея! — Недаром я дрожал.  
Она меня чуть-чуть не погубила.  
Но решено: заутра двину рать.63

Grigory in Bondarchuk’s interpretation appears devoid of the lyrical halo of Pushkin’s romanticism. He does not tremble in anticipation of a meeting with Marina, and when he sees her in front of him, he only mentions in passing that her love would replace him a victory over Boris. The stiffness of his face, him looking nervously around, and his abrupt movements all point to his anxiety and self-doubt. Marina’s requirement that he ascend the Russian throne before he can count on her love supports Grigory’s hunch that others see him only as a means of achieving their own ambitious goals. The scene is mainly shot in a dark blue color signifying night with patches of moonlight highlighting characters’ faces and figures. While the natural setting is sensational and mysterious preparing the viewer to expect a lyrical scene of love, the date itself runs more like a business meeting of two partners, where Marina articulates the conditions that make their relationship possible. The artificiality of their meeting is emphasized by their dance at the end of the scene, formal and cold, with Marina leading it, which indicates a complete subordination of Grigory to Marina. From now on they are two accomplices in a

63 Serpent! ’Twas not for nothing that I trembled.  
She well-nigh ruined me; but I’m resolved;  
At daybreak I will put my troops in motion. - (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)
dangerous game, where only two outcomes are possible – to win, or to lose, and they will have to share either.

Mirzoev presents Grigory in this scene in a very different light. In his film, Marina and Grigory’s date takes place near a nondescript modern swimming pool, without further implications of a more specific location. The viewer starts hearing Marina’s voice when she is still offstage, which indicates the approaching of the couple. She demands that Grigory open "his soul’s secret hopes, intentions, and even fears." When they enter the scene, Marina acts decisively and does not intend to waste any time. However, Grigory behaves playfully and carelessly: sips wine from the bottle, flirts with Marina, unsuccessfully trying to kiss and hug her. Before opening his secret to Marina, he quickly undresses and jumps into the pool. In the pool, he pauses and for a minute floats on the surface of the water with arms outstretched, forming a cross with his body (picture 1). A high angle view of his almost naked figure, surrounded by clear blue water, makes Grigory look open and vulnerable. It symbolizes crucifixion and refers to the untimely death of the martyred tsarevich and Grigory’s own impending demise. By assuming the identity of the tsarevich Dimitry, Grigory voluntarily but subconsciously undertakes his tragic destiny. Such is the fate of most impostors.

In Mirzoev’s adaptation, the pretender does not rush to his knees in front of Marina as he does in the original text and in Borndarchuk’s transposition. He does not beg Marina to decide his fate. Mirzoev’s Grigory is more decisive and self-assured. He knows his own worth and emphasizes it with confident gestures and a serene look. He has
no regrets about making a confession and therefore his aside from the play, in which he
blames himself for possibly destroying his happiness, is omitted in this cinematic version:

Куда завлек меня порыв досады!
С таким трудом устроенное счастье
Я, может быть, навеки погубил.
Что сделал я, безумец?64

To express Grigory’s dependence on Marina’s choice, Mirzoev makes his character talk
to her, while he is still in the water, standing far below her, which signifies his
subordination (see picture 2). Water plays an especially expressive role in this scene.
Since it is safe only for those who are skilled in swimming, it represents an unsteady and
nonconstant surface. Marina, standing on the concrete floor when Grigory is floating in
the water, is undoubtedly in a much more stable situation than he is. But as soon as he
abruptly pulls her to the pool, she loses her balance and - for a moment - control over
herself. Mirzoev’s Grigory, not only in words but also in action, demonstrates his power
and will to win to Marina. In addition, Marina herself in this cinematic version is not as
condescending and static as in Bondarchuk’s movie. She does not elevate herself above
Grigory with the tirade about her past successes over the noble suitors, as she does in the
other texts. She seems to be more approachable and interested in him. Therefore, the
ending of this episode, so different from Pushkin’s and Bondarchuk’s, where Grigory and
Marina exchange a passionate kiss before parting, seems only logical.

64 O whither hath a fit of anger led me?
The happiness devised with so much labour
I have, per chance, destroyed for ever. Idiot,
What have I done? - (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)
4.4 Idiosyncratic elements of Bondarchuk’s *Boris Godunov* (1986)

4.4.1 *Boris Godunov*

Even though both screen adaptations reproduce the text of Pushkin’s tragedy very closely, each of the cinematic recreations contains a number of unique semiotic characteristics, which should be carefully examined. First of all, it is necessary to analyze the cinematic image of the eponymous protagonist, Boris Godunov, and to highlight the differences of his personification by each director. Boris Godunov is undoubtedly the focus of both directors, who especially emphasize his mental suffering over the death of the young tsarevich on his orders. This theme is major in Pushkin’s tragedy as well. However, if Bondarchuk holds the idea that Boris’ death is primarily due to his overpowering sense of guilt, Mirzoev alleges that Boris is killed by the power to which he aspired and for which he overstepped his conscience. Having almost completely reproduced Pushkin's text related to Boris’ persona, the directors find different semiotic solutions for the realization of their individual artistic visions. Both Bondarchuk and Mirzoev create a dramatic image of Boris Godunov through mise-en-scènes, lighting, sound patterns and filmic editing. The actors playing Boris - Bondarchuk and Sukhanov – were also able to successfully convey his extraordinary personality and inner struggle,
hesitation, and his crushing insecurity and fear of fate. However, the cinematic versions of Boris in these two adaptations significantly differ from each other.

Perhaps the main feature of Pushkin’s Godunov is the extent of his character’s psychological development, approaching the psychological realism of Dostoevsky’s characters. In order to appreciate the depth of Godunov’s ontogeny, one should follow the dynamics of changes in his internal state from the accession to the throne to his dealing with the impostor, who for Boris personifies the revival of the murdered tsarevich Dimitry. As pointed out in Chapter 2, picturing psychological movements is one of the most difficult aspects for cinema, so it is especially important to investigate the scenic findings of the directors in this area.

The first time the name of Boris appears in the tragedy and in both films is in the dialogue between Shuisky and Vorotynsky, who discuss the unsuccessful attempts of boyars to persuade Boris to accept crown after the death of the tsar Fyodor. From this dialogue the audience learns of a circulating but unproven rumor that Boris is a regicide. The reader and the viewer also find out about Boris’ humble origin, which is the source of the boyars’ contemptuous attitude towards him. This foreshadows Boris’ fate, because from the outset it is clear that he has no support in the government.

This dialogue between Shuisky and Vorotynsky, both prominent members of the Russian court and therefore knowledgeable about court intrigues, is very important in both films as it prepares viewers for the upcoming events and establishes the central themes of power achieved by means of crime and the conscience, burdened but unrepentant. However, Bondarchuk places more emphasis than Mirzoev on Shuisky’s
and Vorotynsky’s discussion of the rumors about Boris being a regicide. It prepares the viewer to decode the signs of Boris’ nervousness when he first appears on the screen, in the scene of the inauguration, as his suffering over pangs of guilty conscience.

As in the rest of the film, Bondarchuk shot the scene of inauguration reproducing true historic ceremonial traditions of the Russian court. The scene begins in Godunov’s royal chamber where he is getting dressed in ceremonial clothes. The ceremony of dressing the tsar takes place in complete silence except for the joyful sounds of the cathedral bells, which quickly increases into a jubilant crescendo. Meanwhile, the streets of the Kremlin are filled with people who are waiting for a glimpse of the new tsar as he comes out from the cathedral. Inside the cathedral the patriarch of all Russia blesses Boris to tsardom, hands him the regalia of Russian royalty - the scepter and the orb - and puts the crown on his head. Boris promises to rule justly and appeals to the boyars for their support, which they promise him.

During the ceremony, Boris seems to be nervous and scared. He suddenly shudders when he hears the unexpected opening of a door. When Boris walks outside, followed by the patriarch and boyars, who throw money into the crowd, people silently meet him there (picture 3). The celebration continues in the Kremlin chambers, where Boris receives foreign ambassadors with gifts. His wife and daughter are watching the ceremony through the window. The celebratory peal continues which is gradually replaced with an increasing melody that sounds portentous and threatening.

This scene of Boris’ accession is nearly an exact translation of the literary source. Bondarchuk accurately reproduces the solemnity of the moment, the characters’
costumes, the interior of the cathedral and the tradition of the coronation of Russian monarchs. Boris in this scene, though he sometimes seems nervous, is in general calm and confident. Vowing to be a just ruler, he looks forward to the reign and it seems that nothing yet portends a looming tragedy.

The next time Boris appears on the screen is six years later when he is steeped in royal power and knows of the distrust of his subjects. It is the scene where Boris meets with magicians who try to guess his future and healers who pray for his protection from all illnesses - physical and mental. This scene is profoundly idiosyncratic in both adaptations and has been assigned much weight by each director. While in the play the reader learns about Godunov’s infatuation with magicians only from a brief conversation of his guards, each director has greatly expanded this scene. In this sequence, Bondarchuk emphasizes the dramatic change in Boris’ internal state and his physical condition since he took the throne. Godunov here is pale and sickly-looking; his eyes are anxiously and suspiciously moving from one object to the next, and his hands are shaking. He is deeply in thought and it is evident that something is bothering him. Fortunetellers are brewing herbs to prepare a healing bath for his feet. In an open door he sees the ghost of himself. Dark frames of the windows are suddenly lit by the flash storm, and thunder breaks the silence. The camera cuts to the streets of Moscow, filled with corpses and coffins. Moscow is going through hard times - an epidemic has killed thousands. At the cemetery, the coffins are placed in a row in a long common grave. Apparently, Boris’ rule has not made people’s lives happier. The camera returns to Boris, who is praying in the cathedral before the altar, and follows him while he rides in a
carriage through the deserted streets of Moscow to get away from the court concerns. All this time Boris is focused and gloomy. While standing before the altar, Boris begins to recite his famous soliloquy "I reached the highest power" which he continues until he returns to his palace. In this soliloquy Boris complains about the unfair attitude of the Muscovites for whom he sought to be a just ruler. After a fire destroyed their homes, he built them new ones; he opened granaries during a famine. But instead of being grateful, people accused him of causing the hunger, the fire, and all the other misfortunes. And when the groom of his daughter Xenia suddenly died, people accused Boris in his death as well. Boris has achieved everything he wanted, but he is deeply unhappy and cannot find reassurance in anything, neither in power nor in the family. The only thing that would calm him – his conscience - is also contaminated, and Boris is pitiable in his position. To convey a monologue as the development of his thought, Bondarchuk gives the text as a voice-over, except for the last line: “Pitiful he whose conscience is unclean”, which Boris utters aloud. Bondarchuk’s Boris is pitiful in his profound isolation from everyone, which he himself created by being unable to silence the memory of his grievous sin with everyday concerns.

In subsequent scenes of the play Boris is already aware of the existence of the impostor and is forced to respond to his threats. Even though Boris realizes that he faces only an impostor and not the real tsarevich Dimitri, he is unable to cope with his fears and to focus on the fight against a real person and not against his own conscience.

Но кто же он, мой грозный супостат?
Кто на меня? Пустое имя, тень —
Ужели тень сорвет с меня порфиру,
Иль звук лишит детей моих наследства?
Boris sees enemies everywhere, even in his immediate vicinity. He does not trust anyone and assumes a traitor in everyone. His initial victory over the army of the impostor does not make him happy, because Boris realizes that the struggle will continue. At this point, he makes a fatal mistake and appoints as the leader of the army the capable Basmanov, believing that a man of low birth will remain faithful to him at least out of gratitude. It is Basmanov’s betrayal that becomes a decisive factor in the victory of Otrepyev and the death of the Godunov clan.

Boris’ second mistake at the council, which completely ruins him, is his refusal to follow the patriarch’s advice to bring Dimitri’s relics to Moscow and put them on display in the Kremlin Cathedral to convince Muscovites of his real death. Boris fears to face the relics of the murdered tsarevich which over the years acquired saintly properties. Instead, Godunov sends Shuisky to talk to the crowd and to convince the people in the pretender’s illegitimacy. The patriarch’s story about a poor blind shepherd, healed by the miraculous power of Dimitri’s saintly relics, produces a terrifying impression on Boris, which manifests itself in his distraught look and the drops of sweat on his forehead. The horrible...

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65 But who is he, My terrible antagonist? Who is it Opposest me? An empty name, a shadow. Can it be a shade shall tear from me the purple, A sound deprive my children of succession? Fool that I was! Of what was I afraid? Blow on this phantom—and it is no more. So, I am fast resolved; I’ll show no sign Of fear, but nothing must be held in scorn. Ah! Heavy art thou, crown of Monomakh! - (A. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 2013)
picture of the murder passes before his eyes after which he sees a defenseless child figure sprawled on the lawn.

Boris’ death scene is also filmed by each director in his individual style. In Bondarchuk’s transposition, Boris dies in the luxurious surroundings of his royal chambers. In this scene Boris is often shot in close-ups, which emphasizes his physical and emotional suffering. Several times Boris, spread-eagled on the floor with his son Fyodor leaning over him, is filmed in crane shots, showing the insignificance of this once-powerful ruler. Bondarchuk shows Boris in this scene completely crushed by the load of his guilty but unrepentant conscience, by his loneliness, where no one could share his pain.

4.4.2 Grigory Otrepiev

The storyline of Grigory Otrepiev, the pretender, is developing parallel to the storyline of Boris Godunov. Each of the texts analyzed in this study presents a unique interpretation of this controversial historical personage. Some idiosyncratic features of this character were already discussed in 4.2. Several other characteristics of Grigory, interpreted differently by Bondarchuk and Mirzoev, should also be noted.

The first time Grigory appears in the tragedy and in both films is in the scene “Night. Cell in the Monastery of Chudov,” when Pimen tells him about Boris being a regicide. The last time when we see Grigory in the play is the scene “Forest” when he is mourning the death of his horse after a major defeat of his army. But despite the fact that the fates of Godunov and Otrepiev develop in parallel and are so fatally intertwined,
these characters never meet. Boris’ life in the beginning of the story is in its apogee and it starts descending from there: at first, slowly and only under the corrupting influence of his guilt-ridden conscience, and then more and more, quickly picking up speed under the pressure of external circumstances. At the same time, Grigory in the beginning of the story experiences what can only be called the inception of his adulthood, when he is full of hopes and plans, and from there on he moves upward, reaching the climax by the end of the story. The dynamics of Boris’ and Grigory’s lives, while interdependent, are directly opposite: the death of Boris causes Grigory’s ascension to the throne and Grigory’s rise quickens Boris’ demise. Those who are knowledgeable about Russian history know that Otrepiev’s ascension, just like Boris’, will become the beginning of his end, which Pushkin left out. The fates of Godunov and Otrepiev, repeating each other, confirm the postulate of the cyclicality of history, which the director Mirzoev stresses in his cinematic remediation. Both filmmakers attempt to expand Pushkin’s text by showing a glimpse into the pretender’s life beyond the boundaries of Pushkin’s play. Both directors do so by adding onto Grigory’s dream before his dialogue with Pimen.

In Pushkin’s version, Grigory sees a recurring dream in which he climbs a steep staircase that leads to a tower, and from that height he sees Moscow and a crowd, which is laughing and pointing at him. Grigory falls down headlong and wakes up terrified. While describing his dream to Pimen, Grigory condemns it as damned and demonic. With brevity typical for Pushkin the dream takes only ten lines in the tragedy, in which Pushkin manages to describe the turbulent internal state of a young monk and to prepare the reader for the rise and fall of Grigory.
Bondarchuk almost completely translates Pushkin’s version of Grigory’s dream into cinematic language. However, he significantly expands it, adding important semiotic details. In Bondarchuk’s interpretation, Grigory also climbs a very steep, almost vertical ladder, which leads straight into the sky, clothed with dense clouds. The scene begins with an eye-level reaction shot of Grigory, whose facial expression is one of terror and almost despair. The golden domes of the Kremlin cathedrals are behind him, and in the bottom, on the Kremlin Square, the crowd of people laugh and point fingers at him. The camera swiftly cuts from the medium close-up of Grigory to a crane shot of the crowd, and back to Grigory, this time in a medium shot; and then again back to the crowd this time in an aerial shot, which articulates the rapid ascent of Grigory on the ladder. The next shot is of the dark cloudy sky with a small window of light in the middle where a tiny circle of the sun is seen. The camera cuts again to display the ladder, which goes steeply upwards against the stormy and dark clouds where its end is lost. The sequence of the pull-down tracking shots make the ladder look even longer than it was shown before and shows Grigory’s disappearing in the clouds. A low-angle view of him conveys his inaccessibility by others. Here ends the similarity of Grigory’s dream in the film with its version in the play. In the next frame, Grigory in the royal robe and with the Crown of Monomakh on his head is in the royal chamber, when suddenly the angry mob of men rushes to him, shouting and threatening with axes. Grigory quickly takes off his crown and jumps out the window. This ending of the dream reflects the harsh reality of Otrepiev’s end when on the morning of May 17, 1606, the boyars stormed False Dimitri’s
chamber, the pretender also jumped out of the window but landed badly, broke his leg and was shot on the spot.

4.5 Signs and signifiers in Bondarchuk’s *Boris Godunov*

Bondarchuk’s major intent in the process of transposing Pushkin’s work into a cinematic version was primarily to convey the historical and political details of Godunov’s time. This explains his interest in creating a historical atmosphere of early seventeenth-century Russia, complete with palace rituals, traditional costume and interior design. This also explains Bondarchuk’s predominant use of iconic signs that straightforwardly represent the historical reality of the Time of Troubles. His mise-en-scenes are carefully staged against easily recognizable architectural landmarks of medieval Russia or Poland that are emphasized by characters’ manners and clothing. Bondarchuk’s representational model can be labeled as classical, as he skillfully balances elements of realism and formalism.

Besides the idiosyncratic components described previously in this chapter, Bondarchuk also introduces an abundant system of signifiers that penetrate the entire signification structure of his film. Especially noticeable is his use of color and sound to set the film’s tone and to express meaning. The color red, for example, is often used in the film and carries with it distinctive meanings depending on how it is combined with other colors. Starting with the title shot, Bondarchuk establishes the tragic mode by placing a bright red title on the pitch-black background. This combination of red and
black remains on the screen for a few seconds, after which the red color disappears leaving the screen completely black until small dots of flickering candlelight gradually appear. In Soviet culture, red and black had traditionally been associated with coffins’ design that were most often covered with black cloth and decorated with red ribbons and ruches. Hence, Bondarchuk immediately lets the viewer know symbolically that death will be a cornerstone of the unfolding story. Red is then repeatedly emphasized throughout the film in scenes that contain symbolic references to Boris’ presumably criminal past, or in scenes of simulated torture. Bondarchuk also uses color to convey the division of Russian people along social lines. If Boris, clergy and nobility wear clothes of different colors, most often light, with golden embroidery; commoners are always dressed in shades of grey and black which makes their faces and figures nearly indistinguishable in crowds. This helps him intensify the collective image of The People, narod, which expresses itself in the tragedy and in the adaptation as one indivisible entity.

However, the film’s most intense use of red takes place in the sequence that precludes Boris’ “I reached the highest power” soliloquy. The scene begins with a frame that is entirely occupied with dazzling red. As the camera shoots up, the viewer realizes that the color comes from the middle part of the carpet in Boris’ chamber. Boris, walking away from the audience, is shot from a medium high angle and looks very insignificant and vulnerable, as if he was being gradually absorbed by this frightening color a bright as fresh blood. Bondarchuk eventually develops this motif of a bloody stain rapidly spreading around Boris in one of his dream sequences, which will be analyzed below.
Along with employing color, Bondarchuk often employs sound patterns to signify changes in the film’s tone or the characters’ emotional state. An example is the non-diegetic music in the scene of Grigory and Marina’s romantic date (described in 4.3). The musical score in this sequence reflects the characters’ changing perceptions of each other and develops from a classical orchestral arrangement to a rhythmic Polish dance that ends in a triumphant march. Another semiotically compelling example of the use of sound is Bondarchuk’s consistent incorporation of ringing bells, a traditional element of Orthodoxy. The ringing of bells is included in many scenes of the film, often diegetically when it expresses certain religious rites. In such cases, bells’ ringing is accompanied by visual images of churches or of church interiors. The bells’ tone always reflects the mood of the moment and therefore varies throughout the film. During the celebration of Boris’ accession to the throne the bells’ peal is joyful and harmonious with small, high-pitched bells setting the tone. But most often throughout the adaptation the bells ring at a low pitch, with a heavy, almost frightening peal that warns the viewer of the inevitably tragic end. Ringing bells begin and end the film as if framing the narrative. In the opening shot the bells sound alarming, almost threatening, intensified by the black background and the film’s bloody-red title card. And in the film’s final shot, only one very loud and almost desperate bell sounds, after which it breaks from the tower and falls to the ground, breaking its ringing forever and raising a cloud of dust that covers the crowd of people standing behind it. Thus, Bondarchuk draws a parallel between the silenced bell and The People, which is also speechless in confusion during a crucial moment of Russian history. In this way, bells express the position of the people throughout the film and their
collective social voice. Therefore, the falling of the bell is an especially tragic
denouement. Many critics believe that this foreboding ending expresses Bondarchuk’s
foresight of the end of the Soviet Union and the Soviet social order, a concept that
certainly disturbed him with its indefiniteness and unpredictability.

Bondarchuk also uses the visual sign of a violently interrupted sound that conveys
an unwelcome outcome when the pretender’s troops are defeated after clashing with
Godunov’s army. At the end of the battle, the viewer sees a battlefield strewn with the
corpses of hundreds of soldiers in the middle of which lies an enormous military drum,
turned upside down and torn. The drum, despite just recently calling soldiers into battle,
now towers over the mayhem strewn about it. Around it also lay dead bodies of
drummers whose voices also broke with the breaking of their instrument. Thus, the
silenced drum is an ominous harbinger of the imminent doom of the pretender who
pushed the Russian people into battle against each other.

Other ominous symbols also abound in Bondarchuk’s adaptation. They portend an
apocalyptic future of both society in general and the main characters specifically. These
signs signify the impending gloomy change for seventeenth-century Russian society and
include recurring images of flocks of crows shown flying against church domes, an
overcast sky, the sound of howling blizzards, and the full moon, which in Russian culture
is considered an omen of misfortune, among others. And so as to foreshadow to the
audience the protagonists’ tragic futures, Bondarchuk turned to the symbolism of dreams.
Bondarchuk’s transcoding of Grigory’s dream expanded it with scenes showing the
pretender’s dreadful demise; it is analyzed in part 4.4.2.
One of the film’s most symbolic moments is Boris’ dream. The dream is Bondarchuk’s invention and is also a portentous signifier of future events. In the dream Boris sees himself in his royal chamber, where all sides are engulfed in flames. Wearing his nightgown, Boris rushes from one window to another trying to escape but he sees Moscow on fire through the windows. He is terrified and desperate. The non-diegetic music becomes louder and more menacing. In the next shot he sees an ax lying on the snow, under which a puddle of bright red blood is quickly spreading. Then, Boris is submerged up to his neck in an underground hatch with his head tilted to one side, his face is pale, with a thin spray of blood flowing down his neck and mouth. It seems as if he is dead and the blood that saturated the snow was probably his. The camera cuts to the door, which slowly opens, revealing behind it the young tsarevich Dimitry - alive and unhurt. Someone throws an ax at him, but the ax instead hits the door. Boris wakes up in horror and anxiously looks around. All is quiet and his guards are peacefully sleeping next to his bed. The entire sequence is shot in high angles to emphasize Boris’ imminent doom. A predominance of red foreshadows Boris’ tragic denouement and the image of the live tsarevich points at the tsarevich’s triumph over Godunov. The ax, thrown at the tsarevich, leaves him unhurt but leaves no chances for Boris to live. By inserting this prophetic dream Bondarchuk is not just expanding the compressed text of the play, but making it less cryptic and more adaptable to the cinematic language. It also connects Bondarchuk’s film to Musorgsky’s operatic version of the tragedy, which also relied on the insertion of specific details to increase the play’s narrativity.
4.6 Idiosyncratic elements of Mirzoev’s *Boris Godunov*

4.6.1 Boris Godunov

Mirzoev’s Boris is strikingly different from both Pushkin’s and Bondarchuk’s. Boris’ character in Mirzoev’s interpretation is also filled with psychological traits, but the conflict at the forefront is not with his conscience, but with the power to which he aspired so much. By his monologue “I reached the highest power”, addressed to a silent ghost of the murdered tsarevich, and his withdrawal from political actions Boris emphasizes his fatigue from unbearable responsibilities and his alienation from boyars and their intrigues. Mirzoev’s Boris has already realized the immorality of the government and its indifference to human life, and so he prefers to spend time in the company of a ghostly child, pure and innocent. Mirzoev’s Boris, authorized with unlimited power, is unmistakably a ruler of contemporary Russia and his personality traits are easily recognizable in its latest presidents. Godunov’s association with modern Russian politics in Mirzoev’s adaptation becomes evident from the very first scene in the film with Boris’s participation – the scene of his accession to the throne.

If Bondarchuk makes this scene into a long magnificent show, reproducing bounteous details of the ceremony, Boris’ nervousness and the tension of the people around him, Mirzoev is not at all interested in ceremonial details. All he chose to depict is the tsar’s address to The People and boyars. The action takes place in a modern office, with very large windows with a view of skyscrapers of a modern metropolis. Boris is
sitting at the head of a long table, boyars - on the both sides of it. Everyone, except for the patriarch, is dressed in a modern suit and has a laptop in front of him. When a minute later we see Boris’ speech televised, he speaks against the background of the flag of modern Russia, which emphasizes the political importance of the event and its contemporaneity.

Boris in this scene looks casual and comfortable in his role. During the speech, he occasionally glances at the sheet of paper laid before him to remember lines of the text he had forgotten. He speaks calmly, sometimes ironically, uttering monologue without special solemnity. The mise-en-scène recalls a typical business meeting. However, when the camera pulls back to zoom out from the medium close-up of Boris to a long shot of all the people sitting at the long desk, the viewer sees at the end of it the unharmed tsarevich Dimitry who is quietly playing with the knife given to him by his assassins. The camera pans to the left and takes a seventeen-second close-up of a boy. He is dressed in a children’s sailor suit, a costume often worn by boys in early nineteenth-century Russia. However, this suit brings to mind one particular boy well-known in Russia – the tsarevich Alexei Romanov who was the last heir to the Russian throne, shot with the rest of his family by the Bolsheviks in the Ipatiev house near Tobolsk, Siberia. Neither Boris nor the people around him are aware of the boy; Dimitri is invisible to them. But by making reference to the murdered tsarevich Aleksey, Mirzoev is pointing out at the cyclicity of historical events and the repetition of the Times of Troubles in Russian history that followed the murder of another legitimate heir by the Bolsheviks in 1918.
During his next appearance in the film, Boris recites his soliloquy “I reached the highest power”, which in Mirzoev’s version, just as in Bondarchuk’s, starts as a voice-over monologue. While in both the play and the Soviet adaptation this soliloquy follows Boris’ meeting with healers and magicians, Mirzoev’s Boris utters this monologue while undergoing a comprehensive medical examination: acupuncture, CAT scan, eye test, etc., in a modern medical facility. He looks tired, unwell, and indifferent to everything that is happening to him. He is completely absorbed in his thoughts. After the medical tests, the monologue continues as a conversation between Boris and his permanent young companion – tsarevich Dimitri. They are sitting at a small table; Boris is drinking a beverage reminiscent of cognac. The boy in the sailor suit is sitting in front of him, playing first with a ladybug, a symbol of innocence in Russian culture, and later with the glass figures on the table. The boy is silent, but from time to time he looks at Boris allegedly in response to Boris’s remarks addressed to him. Dimitri is shown only in close-ups, which clearly indicates that he is seen only by Boris, who is sitting at the opposite side of the table and at a close distance from the boy. In a series of two-shots taken over Dimitri’s shoulder, Boris’s eyes are fixed on the boy. When camera cuts to a long shot of Boris speaking about his tormented conscience, no one is seen in the chair anymore where Dimitri was supposedly sitting. It becomes clear that Dimitri’s presence in this scene is only the result of Boris’ sick imagination and is symbolic of the unbreakable bond they share.

Mirzoev significantly reduces the scene of the council, where Boris appears next, comparing to the original scene in the play. He completely cuts out the patriarch’s story
about the old man’s healing by the holy relics of the murdered tsarevich. The council of the tsar takes place at the same long table where the scene of the inauguration was shot. While the patriarch and Shuisky discuss the measures that should be taken to appease Muscovites’ growing unrest and their increasing support of the pretender, Boris again is playing with the boy in the sailor suit. This time, Boris lifts the boy on his lap and they together sharpen pencils with the knife given to the boy by his assassins. Boris is engaged in their interaction, he is playful, laughs at the boy’s drawings and seems not to pay attention to the boyars’ council (picture 3). A few times the camera cuts to an eyeline match shots from the boyars’ faces to Boris to show the boyars’ puzzlement with the tsar’s unexplainable behavior. They do not see Dimitri and therefore Boris’ playfulness and unmotivated laugh alarm them as signs of his insanity.

The scene of Boris’ death is staged in a dark dungeon with bonfires burning between the white columns. When the apparition of tsarevich Dimitri appears in the depths of this gloomy place, he waves his hand calling Boris to follow him. The boy is holding a wooden doll Petrushka, a traditional character of Russian folklore, which previously has repeatedly appeared in the film. Boris is restless and looks mad; he rushes after the boy trying to catch up with him when the boy starts playing hide-and-seek. After having lost Dimitri from sight for a moment, Boris looks lost and scared. He searches under the bed trying to find his mysterious companion and horrifying his son Fyodor, who, of course, does not see anyone but his father in the room. At the end of the episode, it is clear that the dungeon itself is the result of Boris’ hallucinations, because, when the boyars enter the room, everything - the dark corridors, columns, fires, and Dimitri -
disappear. This scene is the apotheosis of Boris’s total defeat; he finally succumbs to persistent entreaties of the boy. The murdered tsarevich came to take Boris away with him, and he succeeded this time. They ceased to be doubles; they became one.

In his ghostly companion, Mirzoev’s Boris finds his refuge from the destructive forces of power and he dies happy and peaceful. His death seems like a liberation from the burden of power, which was a torture not only for his subjects but also for himself.

4.6.2 Grigory Otrepiev

Some of the ways in which Mirzoev’s Grigory Otrepiev differs from this character in the play and Bondarchuk’s adaptation have been analyzed in 4.2. Grigory in Mirzoev’s adaptation is not as romantic and youthfully bold, less spontaneous and a more tragic figure. It has been already discussed how Mirzoev depicts Grigory’s symbolic crucifixion in the scene of Grigory and Marina’s date, thus emphasizing the tragedy of his life and his historical role. This feeling is further enhanced in the sequence of Grigory’s dream, which is one of most marked episodes in the film.

Grigory’s dream is one of the longest and the most significant sequences in the entire Mirzoev transposition. It lasts 2 minutes and 50 seconds and is much longer than in the 1986 adaptation where it is only 50 seconds. This scene is also one of the most modified in the film, compared to the corresponding scene in the tragedy. Grigory’s climbing on the ladder is not presented in the adaptation visually but conveyed by
Grigory only verbally when he recounts his recurring dream to Pimen. The imagetrack of
the dream features a dark, damp and desolate cave, which Grigory is passing, holding a torch in his hand. Ahead of him there are two strange figures of a man and a woman who invite him to move forward by waving their hands. These people were among the witnesses to the tsarevich’s murder in the beginning of the film. Grigory follows them slowly, cautiously looking around. In front of him he sees Boris, who washes blood off the chest of a naked boy standing in a small basin. Grigory approaches them and gazes out to Boris. Their eyes meet. Grigory’s guides call him to move on. In one of the niches of this dungeon, framed with a fire garland, Grigory sees himself allegedly pleading for something from a woman who is cutting her hair, and who later in the film turns out to be Marina Mnishek. Farther on his way he meets a young nun who looks like Xenia Godunova. She sorrowfully gazes at him. At the end of the maze on the bench lies a mutilated body of a young man, all covered in wounds and bruises, with a mask on his face. Grigory approaches the body and removes the mask. He recognizes himself and at that moment wakes up in horror.

The entire dream sequence is shot in low-key lighting. The close-up shots of Grigory, his guides and the other people he meets on his way alternate with long shots of the terrifying labyrinth lit only by Grigory’s torch. The dream does not show his ascent to the throne and fame, but it outlines his other major steps on his path in their chronological order. Boris and Dimitri symbolize Grigory’s motivation. Him kneeling before Marina signifies Grigory’s succumbing to her will under the spell of her beauty. The image of Xenia Godunova in the monastic clothing foreshadows the real fate of
Godunov’s daughter who not only lost her family by an order of False Dimitry I, but also was made his concubine and eventually was forced to take monastic vows under the name “Olga”. And finally, Grigory sees his own ultimate faith, his own death. Instead of showing the ladder of ascension, Mirzoev chooses to take Grigory through the stages of his downfall, which inevitably bring him to his unavoidable destruction. His dream-journey recalls Dante’s circles of hell from the *Divine Comedy*, except that it does not take him to ultimate salvation. The entire dream sequence in Mirzoev’s remediation is idiosyncratic to his film only and is one of its most expressive episodes. Grigory himself is presented in the dream differently than in the rest of the film. Mirzoev’s Grigory is a determined and pragmatic character and a bold adventurer, who does not have qualms about the fact that he carries out revenge on Boris through deception. His dream of justice is drowning in the blood the Russian people wastefully shed for his ambitions.

4.7 Signs and signifiers in Mirzoev’s *Boris Godunov*

Mirzoev’s entire system of signification is linked to an idea that certain socio-political preconditions cause the recurrence of events. Mirzoev also employs this idea to pacify critics and viewers who would question his decision to set the film in the present. By utilizing a mythological character, a tail-devouring snake Ouroboros as an example, Mirzoev illustrates the endless process of cyclicality of times and the recurrence of social processes. Using Pushkin’s literary text as a starting point, Mirzoev does not focus on the specifics of seventeenth-century Russia. Instead, he creates a visual-verbal grid, which
forms the template of a society transitioning from one form of government to another. Therefore, Mirzoev’s decision to juxtapose events of the Time of Troubles, the October Revolution and the present seems logical and leads the viewer to an obvious conclusion that whatever has already happened twice is likely to be repeated again. Mirzoev sets the theme of this linkage of history from the film’s first sequence that is Dimitri’s murder, which is the most marked in the entire adaptation and the one where elements of all three historical epochs intertwine in an intricate amalgamation.

Nothing in this sequence directly indicates the seventeenth century setting either visually or verbally. Only the very fact of the tsarevich’s murder by three assassins with a penknife refers to Karamzin’s portrayal of Dimitri’s murder. There are not many signs in this scene that link it to the present, either. Only Dimitri’s killers’ and his nanny’s clothes and a couple of electric lamps are clearly of contemporary design. But the military uniforms of Dimitri’s guards, the clothes of those who witness the murder, and many other details are undeniably reminiscent of early twentieth-century tsarist Russia. Engaging signifiers from different eras in this sequence helps Mirzoev convey the concept of an archetypal multilayered historical cycle that, in his opinion, is typical for Russian history. Since the murder is the beginning of such a cycle, the event is placed in the most distant of the times – the seventeenth century. The tsarevich and his mother represent almost neutral figures that are not actively involved in the event, but are nonetheless drawn in as its victims. Their detachment from the emerging conflict is highlighted with the symbolist poem by Zinaida Gippius (1893) read by Dimitri and his
mother. These poetic lines are the only words uttered by the tsarevich in the whole film and therefore they sound particularly personal:

Я вижу только небо с вечерней зарею, -
С вечерней зарею.
И небо кажется пустым и бледным,
Таким пустым и бледным…
Оно не сжалится над сердцем бедным,
Над моим сердцем бедным.  

The poem’s meaning is removed from earthly worries and is turned towards the sky, indifferent to human suffering, and foreshadows the imminent tragedy. And to emphasize the intimate, loving moment of Dimitri and his mother reading the poem, Mirzoev made this scene particularly colorful. The mother is wearing a bright blue dress that amplifies the image of the sky created in the viewer’s imagination by the poem. A Petrushkia marionette doll held by Dimitri is painted red and yellow, and the bed on which the mother is reclining, is painted white and gold. This is one of the most colorful scenes in the entire adaptation, which in general is shot mostly in muted or dark colors.  

A hue of blue, white, yellow and a little bit of red sets this scene apart from the rest of the action by creating an association with love, joy, innocence and purity. The scene stands out in the film on many other levels as well. It is the only pre-murder scene, the only genuinely

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66 I can only see the sky with the evening dawn -
With the evening dawn.
And the sky seems empty and pale,
So empty and pale...
It does not take pity over a poor heart,
Over my poor heart. – Zinaida Gippius. 1893

67 The only other comparable in its colorfulness scene in the film is the pretender’s date with Marina Mnishek later on, where Mirzoev employs the palette of blue (water in the pool) and red (Marina’s dress). The intense blue color, present in both scenes, connects them, while red stands out as foreign and invasive which is supported by Marina’s foreign origin and her undeniable opportunistic intentions towards Dimitri. In contrast, blue is associated with Dimitri and refers to his martyrous role in history.
happy episode in the transposition, and the only scene that features only characters with
an unburdened conscience and with no contriving intentions. However, the blue color
dominates here and insinuates the characters’ vulnerability and their imminent fatality.
Later on in the adaptation, blue is used again in association with Grigory Otrepyev, to
emphasize the pretender’s openness and dependence on other people’s decisions about
him during his date with Marina (see 4.6).

The rest of the characters of this sequence represent archetypal opposites: Dimitri’s
killers and his defenders. These categories are also marked semiotically. If Dimitri’s
defenders and sympathizers are dressed as representatives of tsarist Russia of early
twentieth century, his killers and the nurse, who is suspected to be connected with the
assassins, are clearly our contemporaries. The fact that representatives of evil in the
sequence belong to the present serves as Mirzoev’s indication that some forces in today's
society can impassively sweep any obstacles from their way, even if it is an innocent
child who has no relation to the political concerns of adults. Passive guards and a few
commoners nearby who are also victimized by the forceful intrusion, represent the
opposition to Dimitri’s killers.

The sequence is almost entirely silent, filled only with monotonous and disturbing
sounds of non-diegetic music that builds up the suspense. The only place where
characters speak in this sequence is the brief episode when the tsarevich and his mother
read the poem aloud in the beginning and the increasing ringing of church bells at the
end. Mirzoev depicts communication in this scene as acts of conspiracy - the nurse comes
in to the mother’s bedroom and whispers something into Dimitri’s ear after which he
nods and quietly leaves the bedroom. Later on, the same nurse talks to the assassins on the background and nods in the direction of the tsarevich. Dimitri talks to his potential murderers who just presented him the penknife, but the reader sees only his moving lips. This absence of sounds throughout the sequence makes the episode seem surreal. This impression is intensified by the slow motion of the murderers running away from Dimitri’s body straight towards the viewer, which is perceived as utterly threatening, while the rest of the people in the scene look extremely confused and helpless, which projects the final scene of the play, where the “speechless people” are confused about what is going on. The following title shot, which contains the reference to Pushkin as the author, serves as a divider between the opening sequence and the rest of the film.

Thus, in the spatiotemporal coordinates of Mirzoev’s model only time is a meaningful and variable measure, where events represent iterations of the historical cycle. The place is kept unchanged - the action takes place in Russia just as in Pushkin’s play, but, in fact, it is mostly unspecified by the director, and is given as a value general for any society undergoing similar developments. The spatial setting is identified only in the beginning of the film, during Shuisky and Vorotynsky’s dialogue, which takes place with the Kremlin, Moscow’s most recognizable landmark, as the backdrop. There are no other places in the film where the place would be so clearly specified. The reader learns about the location where events occur mainly from the characters’ remarks. But whether the action takes place in Poland, in Russia, or on the Lithuanian border, there are no visual signs offered by the director. Instead, the place is treated as a constant abstract value that does not change the result of the equation.
Nonetheless, Mirzoev unmistakably points out at a series of conditions in contemporary Russian society that resemble Russian politics of the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries, namely the alienation of the people from the government, the people’s fear of remaining without a ruler, the concentration of power in the hands of one person, and the cult of personality of that sole ruler. Pushkin's text points at all these components of traditional Russian government. By moving the film into present day Russia, Mirzoev shows that the tradition of a strong ruler, the sole decision maker, has not become obsolete in the country either before or after Pushkin, and that this model of power in Russia has remained. At the same time, the Russian people remain estranged from power just like Pushkin’s narod, which had no say in their government’s decisions. Just like Pushkin’s narod, which sends ambassadors to beg Boris to accept the throne, contemporary Russians were in a panic when Putin’s first allowed presidential term ended and many proposed to change the Constitution, which would let him remain in power. In his interview to the TV channel Rain (Дождь) in 2011 Mirzoev defines this as indicative of Russia still being a traditional society that has not modernized.

Expanding the theme of power, Mirzoev is less interested in the pangs of Boris’ conscience than in examining what compromises a ruler obsessed with power has to make to hold onto that power. The extent of Boris’ compromise and its corrosive effect on his life and psyche is shown through the recurrent appearance of Dimitri’s apparition, which follows Boris at his most decisive moments. Throughout the film, the boy accompanies Boris as his double until they merge at Boris’ death, when the boy takes him
away. Thus, Mirzoev exposes the destructive power of one-man rule that destroyed Godunov and potentially destroys everyone in his position.

4.8 Signifying strategies of the major themes in Pushkin’s works and Bondarchuk’s and Mirzoev’s adaptations

Despite the fact that Pushkin shines through every shot in each adaptation, both films are unique works of art created by the directors and the actors. Loyalty to the story and Pushkin's text unites these cinematic works. However, the similarity of their transcoding strategies ends there. By Bondarchuk’s own admission, his goal was to reproduce the spirit of Pushkin and his ingenious idea, and he approached this task based on his own understanding of the play and its interpretation prescribed by the rules of socialist realism. His film, no doubt, pays tribute to the great writer, and the adaptation, released just six months before the 150th anniversary of Pushkin’s death, is a grandiose monument to his creation. In his film, Bondarchuk remains true to the original setting and to historic details. Meanwhile, for Mirzoev it was more important to convey the tragedy’s enduring topicality for our times, and accordingly, it was not his primary goal to transmit the zeitgeist of the seventeenth-century Russia but its modernity and universality. Among Bondarchuk’s many successes are magnificent and realistic battle scenes, a recreation of the seventeenth-century Moscow that is unmatched in Soviet cinema, and court ceremonies that are truthfully reproduced in the film. However, the most striking differences between the two adaptations lie precisely in these areas. Mirzoev’s battle
scenes are much simpler short episodes featuring a few modern tanks; Moscow is represented mainly by its modern skyscrapers, and the court ceremonies are non-existent. Moving the film’s chronotope into present-day Moscow is one of its most controversial features. When asked why he did it, Mirzoev’s usual reply is that he set the action in modern times because Pushkin’s work applies to any time and any place. “It addresses the theme of absolutism, which characterizes any time where the power belongs to one person” says the director, evidently hinting at the current form of Russian political autocracy (Mirzoev 2012).

As has been previously noted in this study, Bondarchuk’s feature, though set in the past, also became intrinsically prophetic in foretelling cataclysmic changes in the political system of modern Russia. Critics are still amazed at how the film became a forerunner of the emerging change of power in Russia. After all, the picture came into circulation in just five days before the 5th Congress of Russian Cinematographers where all leadership was replaced, including Bondarchuk who was its chairman for many years. The beginning of political reform is foreshadowed in one of the most marked scenes in the film, its final episode, when a bell falls from its belfry and shatters into pieces when it hits the ground.

Thus, the main theme of both adaptations that connects them to the literary source is that of power and the price that must be paid by those who strive to achieve it. This theme is expressed through the image of Boris and the evolution of his feelings upon reaching the throne. Bondarchuk’s Boris is a deeply suffering lone ruler, trapped in his inner world of sin and repentance. Perhaps, the closest relationship he has is with his son,
whom Boris tries to prepare for intrigues of political power. He is always suspicious and neurotically looks around as if awaiting persecution. He suffers from pangs of conscience because of his crime and the image of tsarevich Dimitri lodged in his memory gives him constant fear. Several times the picture of the murdered boy flashes before the eyes of Boris, but only as a distant memory. Boris’ loneliness and isolation is emphasized by a frequent use of long shots and high angles, which show that Boris, while sitting on his throne, is always on the opposite side from his associates. Only his son, his daughter and Shuisky are ever shown to approach Boris very closely. Bondarchuk emphasizes that achieving power not only did not bring happiness to Boris, but instead hardened his heart. Despite vowing to be a just ruler, he instead orders tortures and executions. He is hated by everyone for his cruelty and despised by boyars for his low origin.

Mirzoev’s Boris is also lonely and suffers deeply from the enormous sense of guilt. But Mirzoev explores this via an ever-growing connection with the apparition of tsarevich Dimitri who accompanies Boris in the most significant periods of his life. And there is a clear progression in their relationship. The first time the tsarevich is just sitting at the end of a long table, playing with a penknife given to him by his killers, and is not seen by Boris; the second time, during the council, he silently emerges from behind and closes Boris’ eyes with his hands. Boris seats the boy on his lap and they start to interact excitedly. Boris plays with the child as if it were his own son. When the boy comes to Boris shortly before his death, Boris seems to be happy to see him and enthusiastically welcomes Dimitri. The pure soul of the child redeems Boris’s sin, and therefore playing with him, Boris transforms from a cold ruler into a caring father and guardian of the boy.
Another central theme of the tragedy – that of the People (narod) and its role in historical processes – is also strongly represented in both adaptations. In Bondarchuk’s cinematic version, this theme is expressed in numerous crowd scenes, which are astonishing in their grandeur and scrupulous arrangement. The director very thoroughly planned these scenes: he carefully selected actors, assigned roles, and rehearsed. Although most of the crowd scenes are filmed in long shots, Bondarchuk often gives close-ups of individuals in the crowd, and their faces are always very expressive and fit perfectly into the story. The People in Bondarchuk’s transcoding, even more than in Pushkin’s drama, are a mighty and active force whose support is decisive to the seekers of power. It was the people's backing that was the crucial force in the impostor’s victory over Boris. Quantitatively, the people’s scenes in the film exceed scenes with Boris or the impostor. It is especially important to examine the cinematic signification of the tragedy’s most controversial final scene, when the people are made aware of the murders of Boris’ family – his son, Fyodor, and his mother. In the drama, the people silently accept this news: “The people are speechless” and Bondarchuk recreated this scene in his film. In a long take the camera shows a long shot of the silent people in uniformly gray robes with looks of either horror or bewilderment on their faces. Despite the call of boyars to greet the False Dimitri, the people instead remain frozen in silence (picture 5).

However, as has been described in Chapter 3, the final stage direction “The people are speechless” replaced the original ending from Pushkin’s 1825 manuscript. In that version, the people welcome the impostor following the command of boyarin Mosalski: “Long live Tsar Dimitri Ivanovich!” To accommodate both endings, Mirzoev
finds an elegant solution. In his interpretation, The People is represented by two families of different social status, one of the middle class and the second – from the intelligentsia. Both families learn of the occurring political events via the television. There are no scenes in the film where the people actively participate in these events. Instead, they appear as passive witnesses, watching TV either while having dinner at their kitchen table, or in their living rooms while having tea. In Mirzoev’s film there are no points of contact between the world of rulers and the world of ordinary citizens and a further separation takes place between people of different classes. If the middle class family supports the arrival of impostor and shouts: “Long live Dimitri”, the intelligentsia family responds to the news of the death of the Godunov family with silence and just turns the TV off. In this episode, Mirzoyev draws the audience's attention to the people’s indifference, to their removal from political affairs, and their utter lack of interest in everything that rulers do. As Mirzoev said, indifference is fatal and can only presage tragic consequences for the state and for the people themselves. Thus, he shows this indifference is a vice of modern Russian society, which is even more devastating than the acceptance of the new tsar and the order.

The theme of fateful development of countries and the people in the film is enhanced by Mirzoev’s referencing the recurrence of historical events. His adaptation includes several allusions to the tragic fate of the last Russian royal family. At the beginning of the film, in the murder scene of the young tsarevich, the actors are dressed in clothing from the early 20th century, which clearly links the scene to the murder of the Romanovs in 1918. The mystical image of tsarevich Dimitry that accompanies tsar Boris
is certainly reminiscent of tsarevich Alexei - the last heir to the Russian throne - in his clothes and facial features. By adding to his interpretation of the Pushkin’s tragedy the story of the murder of the last prince Romanov, Mirzoyev makes the film more multilayered and draws the trajectory along which modern Russian society has come to its present state.

In most scenes related to the tsarevich Dimitri, i.e. his assassination and his mystical appearance next to Godunov during Boris’ most decisive moments, the viewer sees Petrushka, a traditional character of Russian folk puppetry. In the people's farcical tradition, Petrushka is a cultural hero and a symbolic mediator between the earthly world and that of the otherworld (Pogodina 2012). In Mirzoev’s remediation, Petrushka’s association with the murdered tsarevich and the visions of Boris, who lives on the verge of a hallucinatory world, also represents continuity between the worldly and beyond, historically caused and fatalistically appointed.

The adaptations of Pushkin’s tragedy Boris Godunov by Bondarchuk and Mirzoev are fine examples of great achievement in Russian cinema. As a result of their creative search for an effective means of transferring information from a literary work into cinematic language, the filmmakers discovered new models of recoding a literary text into another artistic medium. Bondarchuk’s realistic translation of Pushkin’s text by Bondarchuk makes his film a beautiful tribute to Pushkin’s play and to the psychological issues raised by it. Mirzoev validates Pushkin’s ideas by including the historical events that took place between Pushkin’s time and the present day. So Mirzoev’s cinematic version, though based entirely on Pushkin's text, has much more pronounced extra hues,
with which the director encourages his viewers to apply the lessons of the past to modern society. But based on the Rifkin’s classification (see Chapter 2), Mirzoev’s transmediation cannot be defined as a translation of Pushkin's tragedy, but rather as an adaptation in the true sense of the word.
Picture 1. Grigory in the pool before confessing to Marina about his origins (Mirzoev 2011)

Picture 2. High angle view of Grigory in the pool when he confesses to Marina (Mirzoev 2011)
Picture 3. The crowd silently greets Boris after the inauguration in the Kremlin Cathedral (Bondarchuk 1986)

Picture 4. Boris Godunov is playing with the murdered tsarevich Dmitry during the council with boyars (Mirzoev 2011)
Picture 5. “The People are speechless”
Chapter 5. Adaptations of The Captain’s Daughter

5.1 Chapter Objectives

The objective of this chapter is to analyze signification of meaningful elements in the Soviet and post-Soviet adaptations of Pushkin’s historical novel The Captain’s Daughter (Капитанская дочка) made by the film directors Vladimir Kaplunovsky (The Captain’s Daughter, 1958) and Alexander Proshkin (Russian Revolt, 2000). I will examine how signified information from the literary source is transcoded into a system of signifiers that articulates the artistic intentions of both filmmakers. The focus in this analysis is placed on investigating the major themes in each of the filmic texts.

Kaplunovsky, the Soviet director, sourced his script solely from the text of the novel and made only a few changes and omissions. He shot the film as a romantic drama with the love relationship of Grinev and Masha as its focal point. But depicting Pugachev as a sympathetic national hero is a secondary and just as important theme of the film. This sympathy forms the film’s ideological content and unfolds in the film gradually, but unmistakably. Pugachev is shown as a father-like figure not just to the young lovers, but also to the entire Russian people, who at the end of the film suffer immeasurably upon
seeing the execution of their hero. Overall, in selecting material for the film, Kaplunovsky focused on Pugachev’s acts of kindness to Grinev, on the nobility of his personality, and his capacity for gratitude.

Proshkin pursued absolutely different purposes while working on his adaptation, *Russian Revolt* (2000). In Proshkin’s spotlight, Pugachev is cast as a historic villain, an instigator of a fratricidal war, a sower of discord and evil, and a corrupter of minds. Proshkin based his script not only on the text of Pushkin’s novel, from which he borrowed key components for the story, but also on the material of Pushkin’s historical treatise *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*, which provided him with details of the Pugachev rebellion’s cruelty and senselessness. The main idea that Proshkin tried to convey in his film is the danger and devastation that Pugachev’s revolt brought upon nineteenth-century Russian society and the lasting detrimental legacy it left for modern Russia. The film also insinuates that both the Pretender and the movement that he initiated in Russia, which is known as Pugachevshchina were the products of palace intrigue that led to the murder of Peter III and the strengthening of the policy of favoritism during the reign of Catherine II. Just as Grishka Otrepiev dared to name himself tsarevich Dmitry in the Times of Troubles after the power seizure by the boyar Boris Godunov, so Emelian Pugachev decided to claim royal privileges after the rumors about the strange death of the Russian emperor reached the people of Siberia. The filmmaker alludes to present day Russia and remind its people and current rulers to heed the lessons of the past. They remind how citizens’ blood spilled on orders from above generate forces that threaten only more bloodshed.
5.2 Background

Vladimir Kaplunovsky (1906-1969) is not very well known in Russia as a film director because for most of his career he worked as an illustrator. Nonetheless, his contributions have been highly recognized by the Russian leadership and he was twice awarded the Stalin Prize. He received one prize for designing the film-biography *Glinka* (1946), and the other for *The Fall of Berlin* (1949) - one of the most striking examples of Soviet propaganda that was created with the singular purpose of glorifying Stalin's role in the victory over Nazis in the World War II. In fact, Kaplunovsky directed only three films: *Mexican* (1955) based on the homonymous story by Jack London, the drama *Liubushka* (1961), and the historical adaptation *The Captain’s Daughter* (1958).

Alexander Proshkin (b.1940), on the other hand, has so far directed eighteen films and continues working on new features. He is also known as an actor and a screenwriter. Many of Proshkin’s pictures were awarded prizes at prestigious film festivals and he himself was awarded the titles of People's Artist of Russia and the USSR State Prize Laureate. Half of Proshkin’s creative biography took place during socialism, but his most significant creations have come after the collapse of the USSR: these include *Live and Remember* (2008) and *Doctor Zhivago* (2006).

Proshkin refers in his work to a variety of topics, but he has a particularly strong interest in how severe historical conditions affect individuals’ decisions. Proshkin finds material for his films in the literary texts of Russian classics by writers such as Pushkin,
Pasternak, Rasputin, and others. His *Russian Revolt* was intended to commemorate Pushkin’s 200th anniversary and its release was planned for 1998, but for various reasons work on the film was completed only at the beginning of 2000. The feature was commissioned by a banking company, Most, headed by the Russian oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky and made by its subsidiary, Most-Media. In the two years that the film’s release was delayed, Russia saw the beginning of a new political era with the resignation of Russian president Boris Yeltsin in 1999 and the appointment to the presidency of Yeltsin’s deputy, Vladimir Putin.

These political changes significantly affected the realization of the film’s original vision. Originally, the film meant to warn the "modern tsar Boris" from carrying out possibly erroneous actions against those who brought him to power. But by the time of its release before Russia’s 2000 presidential elections *Russian Revolt* became imbued with concern for the future of the country where the ruler voluntarily abdicated, passing temporary powers to a new favorite.68

5.3 Correspondences between Kaplunovsky’s and Proshkin’s adaptations and Pushkin’s text

The first corresponding scene in all three texts is the part in the beginning of the story in which Grinev meets Pugachev for the first time. Grinev’s path runs through a seemingly endless steppe, “a wild and dreary desert, intersected by little hills and deep

ravines,” all of which are covered with deep snow, when suddenly a blizzard begins. Grinev does not heed the warnings of his coachman about the dangers of traveling during a blizzard and insists on continuing. When visibility deteriorates to the point that it’s impossible to make out the road, Grinev and his companions lose their way. That’s when they meet Pugachev who leads them to the nearest inn. This scene is the rising action in the narrative as it is in this episode that the main conflict is formed and the symbolism of subsequent events is outlined. However, the artistic interpretation of this scene by each filmmaker differs dramatically in the codes that establish major points of divergence between the two adaptations right from the beginning. The crux of this part in each text is the serendipitous incident, in which the grateful Grinev gives Pugachev his rabbit coat. This scene is transposed into the cinematic language of both adaptations virtually unchanged.

Both films convey the atmosphere of Grinev and Masha’s romance by transcoding many details from the literary source into the cinematic texts. These details include Grinev’s clumsy and touching attempts at versification in honor of his beloved, Shvabrin’s jealousy and envy, the duel, and Grinev’s wounding. However, in Kaplunovsky’s adaptation much more attention is given to the love storyline than in Proshkin’s film.

Many details of Pugachev’s rebellion are also played out in both films. This applies particularly to the sequence of the capture of the Belogorskaia fortress. Using a

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variety of visual signs, both directors reproduce details of the fortress’ assault by Pugachev’s band, the execution of the commandant and his deputy, the murder of Vasilisa Egorovna by the Cossacks, Shvabrin’s betrayal, and Grinev’s pardon by Pugachev. Nonetheless, Proshkin’s transposition creates a more complete and profound account of the uprising by portraying it as a senseless fratricidal war.

The details of Pugachev’s patronage towards Grinev are also preserved in both films. In gratitude for Grinev’s mercy and the rabbit sheepskin given to him in difficult times, Pugachev helps Grinev to the very end, saving his life and the life of Grinev’s bride. He does this despite the fact that Grinev refused to follow him and despite the displeasure of Pugachev’s associates with letting Grinev go free. It is obvious, however, that the directors represent Pugachev differently even in this charitable role. If Kaplunovsky emphasizes the nobility of Pugachev’s personality, Proshkin highlights the details of his disgusting lifestyle and cruelty to everyone, except for Grinev.

The rest of the scenes from the novel are either not included in one or both adaptations, or have been significantly altered to reflect the filmmakers’ artistic design.

5.4 Idiosyncratic elements of Kaplunovsky’s film *The Captain’s Daughter*

While working on *The Captain’s Daughter*, Kaplunovsky significantly transformed the source material. He considerably altered the compositional structure of the novel, which resulted in a significant shift of the film’s focal point towards the romantic relationship between Grinev and Masha Mironova. The second major theme in
the film is the glorification of Pugachev, who is presented as an extraordinary and admirable character. To accomplish this, Kaplunovsky omits Grinev’s memories of his childhood and his upbringing by the serf Savelich, a loyal huntsman, who taught Petrusha to read and to write and to make judgments “about the points of a greyhound”\(^7\). The comical story about the reckless Frenchman Beaupre, another of Grinev’s teachers, who was a hairdresser in his France and a soldier in Prussia, who was imported from Moscow along with “the annual provision of wine and Provence oil”, is also omitted.

The film begins directly with the unfolding of the main conflict, when Grinev, lost in a fierce snowstorm on his way to Belogorskaia fortress, the place of his forthcoming service, is rescued by a mysterious man, who eventually turns out to be Pugachev. The opening sequence features an almost pastoral wintry Siberian landscape and it would seem that nothing could disrupt its peace. Grinev’s wagon is harnessed to two horses of contrasting colors, white and black. This color contrast will subsequently be frequently featured in the film. The bell under the harness’ shaft bow is ringing joyfully and a non-diegetic Russian folk song sung by a male tenor accompanies the sequence. But then the weather changes unexpectedly and swiftly. As if out of nowhere clouds obscure the sky, the wind begins to howl loudly and huge masses of snow whirl in the air. Variations of a winter landscape like this will be repeated several times throughout the film, every time symbolically representing characters’ emotional state. The establishing sequence prepares the viewer to anticipate the development of tragic

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\(^7\) This and all further quotes from Pushkin’s text in English are given from: Pushkin, Alexander. The Daughter of the Commandant. Trans. Home, Milne.  
http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/13511/pg13511.html, 02/06/13
events and Pugachev’s fateful role in Grinev’s life. ‘Good’ Pugachev, showing a road to those who have gone astray is the distinctive leitmotif of Kaplunovsky’s adaptation. This explains the omission of Grinev’s prophetic dream about Pugachev as his proxy father, where, in Pushkin’s version, Pugachev threatens everyone with an ax and inspires only horror and aversion, being surrounded by blood and dead bodies.

Many other parts from the novel are also abridged substantially in Kaplunovsky’s cinematic transposition. This applies to almost all the scenes that are not dedicated to the development of Grinev and Masha’s relationship, e.g., “The Siege”, “The Rebel Camp”, “The Orphan”, “The Arrest”, and “The Trial”. “The Assault” is the only part from the novel that Kaplunovsky almost fully recreates in the film, in order to show Pugachev’s troops in action, the pretender’s governing style and his communication with the people. Everywhere else Pugachev is shown only in association with Grinev as a kind goblin paving the road to happiness for his accidental benefactor. The fact that Pugachev almost nowhere in the film is portrayed surrounded by his associates reinforces the impression of his isolation, loneliness, and fatality. For example, from the “Unexpected guest” scene Kaplunovsky completely omitted the description of Pugachev’s celebrating the capture of Belogorskaia fortress with his comrades in the priest’s house. Unlike in the novel, in the film, Pugachev does not summon Grinev and therefore Grinev does not witness Pugachev’s companionship with his associates, where all of them behave as equals with their ruler. In the filmic transposition, Griven comes to the priest’s house on his own to secretly visit his bride. Pugachev, having noticed Grinev in the hallway, leaves his friends and takes Grinev into another room, where he offers Grinev an opportunity to join his
army. For the plotline of Kaplunovsky’s film, such manifestations of Pugachev’s personal characteristics, as revealed through his relationship with Grinev, are much more important than his talent as a military commander. Accordingly, information loss and gain associated with Pugachev’s character consistently signifies Kaplunovsky’s predominant interest in the personal relationships of main characters, rather than in the underlying historical base of the novel. In contrast to the war episodes, the scene “Orphan,” in which Pugachev helps Grinev free Masha from Shvabrin’s captivity, is transcoded from the novel into the film in full length to emphasize Pugachev’s fatherly role for the young couple. Given Kaplunovsky’s great interest in highlighting Grinev and Masha’s romance, it is unsurprising that the film’s most significant part is comprised of scenes showing the dynamics of their relationship. Such scenes are not only transferred from the novel into the film almost completely, but are also often expanded with additional details.

The scenes showing the actions of the tsarist army and Orenburg military commanders are also reduced to a minimum. For example, from the scene where the Orenburg Council decides to assume a waiting strategy towards Pugachev rather than an offensive one, Kaplunovsky excluded the officials’ discussion almost entirely and left only a few phrases spoken by one commander, who opposed Grinev’s motion to confront Pugachev’s troops in open battle.

Other modifications of the literary text are also important but their meaning is not always easily interpretable in terms of their syntagmatic relationship with other structural components of the film. The character of Andrey Karlovich P., a German Orenburg
governor-general and a military friend of Grinev’s father, is depicted in the novel with irony characteristic for Pushkin. In the film he is completely devoid of comic coloring and is turned into an ordinary, undistinguishable personage who is on the top of it all Russian, possibly because of the complexities in Russian-German relations due to the recent World War II.

5.5 Signs and signifiers in Kaplunovsky’s The Captain’s Daughter

The film’s entire signification system is directed towards highlighting the dominant motif of the film: Grinev and Masha’s love. Kaplunovsky draws attention to this theme by carefully selecting information for transfer from the literary source to the adaptation and by using specific visual codes in the representational model of Grinev and Masha’s characters. As in the movie in general, in romantic scenes the director often resorts to the use of color to highlight the story’s most important elements. Because it is a black and white film, at the director’s disposal are only shades of light and dark tones. Masha and Grinev are mostly associated with light colors (picture 6): they are the only ones in the movie who have blonde hair, they mostly wear light clothes and mainly meet outside, where lighting is natural and bright. In scenes shot inside buildings in low-key lighting, the light always falls on their faces, making them the viewer’s focal point. Grinev and Masha are almost always positioned in the center of the frame, which reinforces their major role in the narrative. They are either situated next to each other or at very close distance from each other, which is a proxemic pattern that emphasizes the intimacy of
their relationship. Their faces are usually open to the camera either in the quarter turn or in profile, thus exposing their emotional state and the vulnerability of their feelings.

Color coding is also used by Kaplunovsky to underscore the contrast between good and evil - the theme mainly represented in the film by Shvabrin’s attempts to ruin the lovers’ happiness. Shvabrin’s evil nature and his vile intentions towards Masha are highlighted by a dense black color, with which he is invariably associated: he has black hair, wears a black shirt and pants, a black coat, and black boots. When Shvabrin defects to Pugachev, he grows a black beard, which not only makes him look more like a Cossack, but also intensifies the perception of him as a wicked character. The color contrast between Shvabrin and Grinev is especially pronounced at the scene of the duel, which Grinev fights to protect the pure name of his beloved. Here Shvabrin’s black clothes emphasize his evilness, which eventually manifests itself even more when he injures Grinev with his rapier when Grinev turns away, being called by Savelich.

Throughout the film, Kaplunovsky frequently adds small sentimental strokes that are not in Pushkin’s text and that convey the young people’s purity of love. For example, Masha draws Grinev’s initials on a frosted window and dreamily repeats his diminutive name: “Petrusha. Petrusha”. Grinev spends much of his time making entries in his diary, represented in the film by pages from Pushkin’s manuscript with Pushkin’s drawings on the margins, where he sketches Masha’s profile and writes about his growing love for her. Grinev consistently communicates his innermost feelings for The Captain’s Daughter via continuous voice-over monologues, which presumably reflect entries from his memoirs. Every time he resumes his monologue, the camera shifts from long takes to
medium and close-up shots to highlight Grinev’s face and his concentration on his thoughts and concerns.

Musical accompaniment also expresses nuances of characters’ relationships. During Masha and Grinev’s walks, the film features classical orchestral music with violins leading the score, which are joined by a harp that adds smoothness and lyricism.

5.6 Idiosyncratic elements of Proshkin’s _Russian Revolt_

In the words of Proshkin, while working on an adaptation of a classical literary work any director films not so much a source text as his own relationship with this text, which varies depending on personal and sociopolitical conditions. It is evident that Proshkin perceives the fictional fabric of the novel _The Captain’s Daughter_ through the prism of factual material in Pushkin’s historical research _A History of the Pugachev Rebellion_. This relationship is reflected in the choice of _Russian Revolt_ as the film’s title and in the source information selected for transfer into the filmic text. This relationship is also conveyed by the connotative meaning of “new” narrative events inserted by the filmmaker into this adaptation.

Proshkin’s major insertions portray details of the life of the Russian empress, Catherine II, and her court. These scenes open and end the film, thus presenting a kind of framing story for the major plotlines of Pugachev’s rebellion and Grinev and Masha’s

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71 From the interview to Russian TV, Channel Kultura. 08/31/2009
love. The film begins with a sequence showing Catherine dining with her entourage and favorites when she receives a note from a messenger about the passing of her husband Peter III. The camera cuts to show the act of Peter III’s assassination by Catherine’s supporters. Back at dinner, a large crow flies into an open window making loud screeching and flying a few laps around the room. All those present in the hall wave their hands and hush the bird, trying to expel it as an annoying interference. Catherine reads the note and declares to all that the tsar Peter died of hemorrhoidal colic. Everyone gets up and crosses himself. The camera then shifts to a scene somewhere below the royal feast upstairs, where many servants are slaving near huge fire stoves, preparing the elaborate dinner and delivering it to the upper floor. This scene is packed with symbolic information, which not only prepares the viewer for Pugachëv’s emergence, and him acting ostensibly on behalf of the murdered tsar, but also points at Catherine as a primary though indirect source of evil generated by Pugachëv uprising. The image of the crow becomes a recurring sign, invariably associated with Pugachëv and his deeds.

Catherine also appears at the very end of the film, where she fulfills Masha’s request to pardon Grinev in accordance with Pushkin’s ending. However, this scene had also been subjected to substantial changes that produced a dramatic shift in point of view from the source to its transposition. Masha is waiting for Catherine in the park of her country residence. Catherine appears in a luxurious winter sleigh, surrounded by a crowd of jolly court ladies and gentlemen. They laugh, drink wine and entertain the tsarina. An escort of the court guards accompanies Catherine’s sleigh. Masha suddenly falls under the horse of one of the guards. When she is lifted and brought to the empress, Catherine
inquires who this girl is. When Masha introduces herself as the daughter of Captain Mironov, the defender of Belogorskaia fortress, Catherine laughs and her laughter sounds unmotivated. The rest of this scene in the film almost corresponds to Pushkin's original: Masha persuades Catherine to take her letter and the tsarina promises to read it and review Grinev’s case. Later, when Masha came to the empress’ chambers, she was greeted by Catherine’s young lover dressed in a cozy embroidered robe. Catherine, an aging woman, also came out to meet Masha and to announce Grinev’s pardon. Catherine explained her motivation: "love is the only wealth in life, and perhaps its only goal." At this moment, the camera cuts to a close-up shot of Catherine’s young lover, who looks at her with a contemptuously-cold expression that makes a strong contrast with Masha’s face, shining with sincere love and happiness, and turns away.

Throughout the entire film Proshkin highlights the contrast between authenticity and artificiality in feelings and actions in order to emphasize the real value of true love and devotion to duty and oath. This contrast is presented especially vividly in such pairs of characters as Catherine and Pugachev, and Grinev and Shvabrin. To enhance the sense of contrast between Pugachev and Catherine, Proshkin adds several signifiers to Pugachev’s personality that are important in their semantic measure.

Perhaps, the most significant expansion of Pugachev’s character compared to his literary prototype is his tendency to keep his subordinates in fear and obedience by inflicting bloody wounds on himself. Pugachev injures himself every time he notices that his associates doubt the correctness of his decisions. And almost always Pugachev achieves the intended effect. The first time, Pugachev cut his arm above the wrist with a
dagger when he tried to persuade Cossacks that he is the tsar Peter III. When his arm began bleeding and a purple stain spread on the snow, the Cossacks fell to their knees and swore to him. The next time, Pugachev cut his hand with a knife right after he let Grinev and his bride go despite his companions’ objections. After wounding himself, he struck up a howling Cossack song and began dancing wildly, touching those surrounding him with his bleeding hand and leaving on their faces bloody spots which they did not dare to wipe off, thus reminding them that their lives are in his hands. But the last time when Pugachev tried to play this frightening trick, not only did it not work on his associates, but on the contrary, it irritated them even more and destroyed Pugachev. At the very end of the film, when Pugachev tries to convince his comrades to go to the Caspian Sea, he again threatened to cut himself if they disagree. However, their confidence in Pugachev’s credibility was exhausted by then, and they instead bound him and handed him over to the authorities.

Numerous war scenes, which are filmed in great detail, also deepen the contrast between Pugachev and Catherine. The director’s main goal in bringing forward the war material was to depict the Russian rebellion and its leader as unbridled in its cruel spirit. Proshkin transmits the military spirit of Pugachev’s rebellion in accordance with the descriptions of battles given by Pushkin in his *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*. War sequences are usually filmed as long shots with wide-angle lenses giving a broad perspective of Pugachev’s army and his military tactics. Pugachev himself is rendered as fearless and almost indifferent to the possibility of losing his life on the battlefield. When his subordinates ask him to take better care of his safety and to move to a more secure
position, he does not heed. Just a moment later, right next to him a projectile explodes, killing his comrade and only miraculously not hitting Pugachev. But Pugachev cares even less about the lives of others, be they enemies or his own supporters. The same attitude towards other lives is practiced in his wild army. When horses trample one of the Cossacks who fell off his horse, not one of Pugachev’s soldiers stopped to help their comrade get up and save him. Another scene shows how Pugachev’s troops drag men tied to their horses on the ground, without giving a reason for such brutal executions. To intimidate his enemies, Pugachev has the body of the officer Kharlov, murdered during the assault of another fortress, sent to Belogorskaia as a warning of his impending attack.

In another scene, one of Belogorskaia fortress’ soldiers is kidnapped by the uriadnik Maksimych and other Cossacks for his refusal to join Pugachev and recognize him as a true Russian tsar. When he was brought before the pretender, he was humiliated in different ways and beheaded. His head, wrapped in a white cloth, was then sent back to Belogorskaia to further intimidate its defenders.

In Proshkin’s transposition, Pugachev and his army are depicted as wild, uncivilized animals without any kind of system of spiritual values. When Grinev arrives to Pugachev to ask for protection from Shvabrin, he sees drunken Cossacks roast animal carcasses on fires and chase young naked women, who run away from them with desperate screams. In another episode, after interrogating an astronomer whose telescope illiterate and ignorant Cossacks confused for a cannon and thought him to be an officer from Catherine’s army, Pugachev orders him hung closer to the stars that he studies. This scene is based on a real fact described by Pushkin in this historical treatise about the
astronomer Lovitz who suffered the same fate as the unnamed astronomer in Proshkin’s film.72

Another episode of violence in the film deals with the beautiful noblewoman Katerina Kharlova, who became Pugachev’s concubine for the sake of saving her young son Petrusha after Pugachev killed her husband. When Pugachev ordered the hanging of the elderly astronomer, the Cossacks in their frenzy pounced on Petrusha Kharlov and killed him along with his mother, who rushed to defend him. Pugachev did not stand up for them. Kharlova’s character is reminiscent of one in Pushkin's A History of the Pugachev Rebellion. Pushkin describes a young woman with the same name, to whom Pugachev became attached and who even had some influence on him. However, Pugachev later succumbed to his associates’ requests and gave them his mistress, whom they killed together with her seven-years-old brother.

Shvabrin’s personality, which is in contrast with Grinev’s, is also expanded with new information to emphasize his incapacity for true love and devotion to civic duty. The viewer’s first acquaintance with Shvabrin occurs when he runs towards the newly arrived Grinev and welcomes him in good French, thereby demonstrating his aristocratic origins and education. Several times he characterizes Masha as an absolute fool and when he proposes her, he does so in passing, as if jokingly, at the moment when she is trying on earrings in a small shop. When Masha was left in his care at Belogorskaia fortress occupied by Pugachev, he treated her roughly and tried to rape her. Masha was saved

72 Пушкин, Александр. История Пугачева. Стр. 96 - http://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/08history/01pugatchev/1063.htm
only when a maid ran into the room with loud cries and poured a pitcher of milk on him.

One can only guess about his further cruelty to Masha from the state in which Grinev found her, when he arrived with Pugachev to save his bride. Masha was almost insane, screaming all the time and not recognizing anyone.

Shvabrin’s betrayal of the oath also distinguishes him from Grinev. Shvabrin switched to Pugachev not because he believed in his royal descent or his ideas, but only out of a sense of self-preservation. His role in Pugachev's army is pitiful; he is neither respected nor trusted by Pugachev or his associates. On the contrary, he is often humiliated and laughed at. Shvabrin’s failed attempt to commit suicide, when it became clear that the uprising was lost, also added by Proshkin, enhances the perception of Shvabrin’s nullity. His last appearance in the film is also based on information added by the director. In that scene, Shvabrin, standing on the scaffold and waiting for a verdict, witnesses Grinev’s release and return to his beloved, who is waiting for him on the other side of the gate. Shvabrin’s last act is powerless hysterical laughter, as though he recognized his total defeat in life.

**5.7 Signs and signifiers in Proshkin’s Russian Revolt**

The main visual sign, passing through the entire movie and linking its parts together, is the image of a raven. The first time the raven appears in the film is in the opening scene, during Catherine’s dinner with her court. A large black bird flies through the open window into the hall and breaks the usual course of the royal meal with its loud screeching. This moment precedes the appearance of a messenger with news of the
murder of the tsar Peter III. Thus, from the very beginning of the narrative, using a signifier of a crow the director foreshadows the appearance of Pugachev, his dark personality and tragic influence on Russian history. Proshkin shows here Pugachev’s continuity with the bloody traditions of the Russian court and a direct connection between his emergence and the murder of the Russian tsar.

The source of this image is a tale about an eagle and a raven told by Pugachev to Grinev on their way to Belogorskaia. In Proshkin’s film Pugachev does not recount this tale as in Kaplunovsky’s adaptation or in Pushkin's novel, but only reminds Grinev of it with the words: "Do you remember the fairy tale about an eagle and a raven? No, brother, it is better once to drink live blood than to eat carrion for a hundred years!" At that, Grinev noted that living by robberies and murders is the same as eating carrion. Grinev’s answer allegorically compares Pugachev to a raven-scavenger and expresses the main idea of the film and the point of view of the director himself, who portrays Pugachev as one of the main initiators of the destructive tradition of fratricidal wars in Russia.

Subsequently, the image of a raven appears in almost every scene involving Pugachev and his companions, always implying an associative link between them and the bird. A raven is flying above Pugachev’s army on its way to Belogorskaia. Immediately after the murder of Vasilisa Egorovna the harsh croak of a raven is heard behind the scene and Pugachev raises his eyes up to it. In his look the viewer sees infinite weariness and yearning. The camera cuts to the lone raven circling in the sky, which flew to taste human corpses. Another episode with this signifier is a scene in which Grinev is being taken by guards through the prison yard, where Pugachev’s captive Cossacks are brutally
flogged. Above them, there was a vast flock of crows flying around in the sky, smelling the human flesh and blood. The last time when a visual representation of a raven appears is when the imprisoned Grinev learns about the execution of Pugachev and thinks of him with sincere pity. At this point, a large crow appears in a shot superimposed over another shot of fierce fire, representing Grinev’s mental image of Pugachev. The crow makes several rounds in the air and disappears in the sky.

However, the very last time this sign is used not in visual but in verbal allegorical form is by Pugachev himself at the very end of the film. When General Panin asks the chained Pugachev: "How did you dare to do such a thing, you thief?" Pugachev metaphorically responds by playing with the words ‘вор’ – ‘ворон’ – ‘вороненок’ (thief/raven/baby raven): "Я не ворон, я вороненок, я ворон-то еще летает." This scene is based on Pushkin’s historical research *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*, but in the context of the film it has much deeper meaning than Pugachev’s actual reply to Catherine’s General. Proshkin clearly holds the idea that despite the destruction of Pugachev, the evil sown by him continues to live in Russian society to this day. Proshkin shows that Pugachev set the Russian people against each other; he created a precedent of fratricidal war in Russian society that is topical even now. This internecine struggle resumed with the Civil War initiated by the Bolsheviks in the 1920s; it continued through the many years of Stalin’s repressions; and it also came back in the 1990s, during the redivision of the former Soviet Union.

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73 I am not a raven; I am only a baby raven. A raven is still flying.
To intensify the idea of the dangerous legacy that Pugachev left to Russia, Proshkin incorporates numerous war sequences, mainly filmed in long shots on wintry landscapes. The director prefers to use high angle views, which make Pugachev’s army look vulnerable and doomed. However, bird’s-eye views also help Proshkin convey the multiplicity and irrepressibility of Pugachev’s army. His victories were not based on his knowledge of military affairs, but on his popularity among Cossacks, on the great size of his army and on the cruelty and devotion of his soldiers. To earn such popularity, Pugachev plays with Cossacks’ love for freedom and “grants” them Yaik River, fields and herbs. He also promises them liberty, even though historically the Cossacks already enjoyed many freedoms during Catherine’s rule. War scenes in the film show how Cossacks rush into battles trying to please their commander, and how they hang on every word he utters. The longest war sequence in the film is Pugachev’s attack on Belogorskaia fortress, which coincides with the peak of his power. Proshkin films how Pugachev’s soldiers rapidly take the valley, appearing from behind the hill. They quickly grow in number, until their dark figures cover the entire white of the snowy steppe, thus creating an impression of their invincibility.

The scenes of action almost always alternate with shots of nature, which are frequent in the film and used by the filmmakers as signifiers of the emotional state of characters and events. If Grinev’s first days at Belogorskaia are usually sunny and bright, the mood of nature gradually changes with Grinev and Shvabrin’s duel, Grinev parents’ refusal to bless Petrusha’s marriage, and especially with Pugachev’s assault of the fortress. Grinev’s father’s letter is read in Grinev’s voice-over against the background of
a gloomy foggy day, thus emphasizing the character’s sadness. On the eve of Pugachev’s attack on Belogorskaia nature looks as if it froze awaiting the impending tragedy: the sky is cloudy and gloomy, the clouds are torn and fill most of the sky.

5.8 Signifying strategies of the major themes in Pushkin’s works and Kaplunovsky’s and Proshkin’s adaptations

5.8.1 The Captain’s Daughter (Kaplunovsky, 1958)

Thematically, Kaplunovsky’s adaptation differs profoundly from its literary original. From all the variety of Pushkin’s themes, the director chose and consistently followed only one - the story of a personal relationship developing against a background of tragic historical events that shook the East of Russia during Pugachev rebellion. Thus, Kaplunovsky’s transposition can be defined as a romantic historical drama rather than a historical production. This is the film’s main difference from its literary source. In fact, historical events associated with the Pugachev uprising are almost not shown in the film, nor is the uprising given any evaluation or consideration of its consequences. The only scene in the film that conveys the atmosphere of war is the scene of Pugachev’s troops taking Belogorskaia fortress followed by the execution of Ivan Kuzmich and his assistant Nikolai Gavrilovich, and the senseless murder of the captain’s wife Vasilisa Egorovna. But even these scenes are substantially reduced, and the viewer has to make assumptions based on the general context. The details of other events of the Pugachev war that are included in the novel are omitted from the film such as the part in which Pugachev’s
closest associates, Khlopusha and Beloborodov, interrogate Grinev about the situation in Orenburg and suggest that Pugachev subject Grinev to torture because they suspect him of deception. The episode when Grinev becomes an unwitting witness to Pugachev and his companions’ drinking party, where it was decided to attack Orenburg, is also omitted entirely. Another scene that is for the most part discarded by the director is one with the Orenburg council, which showed the strategic incompetency of Catherine’s commanders. Kaplunovsky’s omission of the initial chapter of the novel with Grinev’s memories of his parents, childhood, the French teacher Beaupre, and his youthful dreams of a cheerful life in the capital shifts the focus towards the adaptation’s central plotline - the love story of the main characters.

The specifics of the representational model of Grinev and Masha are also arranged in a way that makes the plot revolve around their unfolding relationship. Using color visual codes, lighting and mise en scenes, empowered by the soundtrack, emphasizes Grinev and Masha’s dominance in the film. The characters’ invariable association with light colors, their positioning in the center of the frame and the eye-level facing the camera in the frontal, quarter, or profile angles, makes their emotional state more accessible to the viewer and creates a strong contrast with the rest of the characters in the adaptation.

Another device that Kaplunovsky uses to transmit Grinev and Masha’s feelings is the use of Grinev as a narrator. His frequent voice-over appears to describe his first days in Belogorskaia fortress, his impressions of his new life there, his growing attachment for Masha, his despair when she is in the hands of the traitor Shvabrin, and his adamant and
risky decision to seek the assistance of Pugachev. This first-person narrative is in line with Pushkin's novel, but Grinev as narrator in the film is very different from his counterpart in the literary source. This difference is particularly noticeable in the code of Grinev’s non-verbal communication, i.e., facial expressions, gestures, and especially reactions to the surrounding people and events. In Pushkin's novel Grinev’s behavior is more frivolous, playful, romantic, and in general more appropriate to a young man of his age – sixteen, later seventeen, years old - than in the film. Pushkin’s Grinev often laughs, especially in the first half of the novel, e.g., in response to Shvabrin’s story about the lifestyle of the inhabitants of the fortress and when Savelich gives Pugachev a petition to compensate the value of the items looted by his men. In the novel, Pugachev’s attack and the severe trials that fell to Grinev’s lot greatly contribute to the formation of his personality and the reader witnesses his rapid maturation. Grinev in the film is not like this - he never laughs. From the very beginning he is always serious beyond his age, his reaction to the events and people is always that of an adult wise man. Even a smile appears on Grinev’s face infrequently, and is mainly addressed to his beloved. His look is always insightful and open and is often directed towards the camera. His actions are determined and confirm his honesty and faithfulness to his duty, though at times his actions, such as his hasty decision to challenge Shvabrin to a duel, are youthful and short-tempered. The use of Grinev as a narrator gives the film a particularly lyrical and confidential tone.

All other events are also described in the novel and the film through Grinev’s perception, so it is only natural that his point of view expresses the ideology of the
authors. The discrepancy between the ideological positions of Pushkin and Kaplunovsky is a very significant difference between the novel and its transposition. As has already been discussed in Chapter 3, Pushkin's attitude to Pugachev’s personality and his rebellion in general was quite ambiguous. Pushkin recognized Pugachev’s natural intelligence and his dignity as a military strategist, but he also condemned the unbridled brutality of the rebels and the goals they pursued.

Kaplunovsky conveys quite a different attitude towards the Pugachev revolt and its leader through his narrator, Grinev. Many times Grinev expresses his sincere sympathy to Pugachev and regrets his tragic fate. Through Grinev’s eyes, the film also highlights Pugachev’s warm relationship with the People and Catherine’s treatment of the rebels is portrayed as cruel and unfair. The theme of sympathy to Pugachev comes to the fore at the end of the film, when Grinev and Masha’s love affair has developed happily and Masha is already saved. Close to the end of the film, Grinev briefly retells the story of Pugachev’s victories and defeats and his retelling contains significant revisions of Pushkin’s text that clearly indicate the shift in his ideological point of view in the transposition.

The following is the passage from the novel that describes the last days of the Pugachev war and the last days of Grinev before his arrest:

Весна осадила нас в татарской деревушке. Речки разились, и дороги стали непроходимы. Мы утешались в нашем бездействии мыслью о скором прекращении скучной и мелочной войны с разбойниками и дикарями. Но Пугачев не был пойман. Он являлся на сибирских заводах, собрал там новые шайки и опять начал злодействовать. Слух о его успехах снова распространился. Мы узнали о разорении сибирских крепостей. Вскоре весть о взятии Казани и о походе самозванца на Москву встревожила начальников войск, беспечно дремавших в надежде на бессилие презренного бунтовщика… Не стану описывать нашего похода и окончания войны. Скажу коротко, что бедствие доходило до крайности. Мы
This is how Kaplunovsky decodes the same part into his transposition:

Пугачева разбили, но поймать его не удалось. Он ушел и вновь явился на сибирских заводах. И опять люди стали стекаться к нему. Под Казанью его снова разбили, а он опять ушел. Он бежал, но бегство его казалось нашествием. Весь черный народ был за Пугачева, вся Волга восстала и предалась ему. А императрица со всех концов страны бросала войска против самозванца. И хоть мятежники дрались отчаянно, но принуждены были уступить силе огромной армии и правильного оружия.75

Comparative analysis of the verbal code in both passages shows ideological differences in the literary source and its screen adaptation and the ways this difference is expressed.

74 Pushkin, Alexander. The Captain's Daughter. http://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/06prose/01prose/0869.htm – “Spring, which caused the rivers to overflow, and thus block the roads, surprised us in a little Tartar village, when we consoled ourselves for our forced inaction by the thought that this insignificant war of skirmishers with robbers would soon come to an end. But Pugatchéf had not been taken; he reappeared very soon in the mining country of the Ural, on the Siberian frontier. He reassembled new bands, and again began his robberies. We soon learnt the destruction of Siberian forts, then the fall of Kasan, and the audacious march of the usurper on Moscow...I shall not stay to relate the events of the war. I shall only say that misery reached its height. The gentry hid in the woods; the authorities had no longer any power anywhere; the leaders of solitary detachments punished or pardoned without giving account of their conduct. All this extensive and beautiful country-side was laid waste with fire and sword. May God grant we never see again so senseless and pitiless a revolt. At last Pugatchéf was beaten by Michelson, and was obliged to fly again”. - http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/13511/pg13511.html

75 “Pugachev was defeated, but catching him failed. He was gone and appeared again at the Siberian plants. And again, people began to flock to him. Near Kazan he was defeated again, and again he went out. He escaped, but his escape seemed like an invasion. All black people sided with Pugachev, the entire Volga rose giving herself to him. From all over the country the empress threw troops against the pretender. And though the rebels fought fiercely, they were forced to cede to the power of the huge army and proper arms.”
The above passage most accurately articulates Pushkin’s attitude to the Pugachev uprising. The use of lexicon marked with such negative meaning as an “insignificant war of skirmishers with robbers” (скучная и мелочная война с разбойниками и дикарями), “bands” (шайки), “began his robberies” (начал злодействовать), “the destruction of Siberian forts” (разорение сибирский крепостей), “usurper” (презренный бунтовщик) leaves no doubt that Pushkin strongly condemns the violence committed by the rebels and denies the effectiveness of any uprising as a form of political protest. This is confirmed by a well-known phrase from the literary original: ”May God grant we never see again so senseless and pitiless a revolt.”

In the process of transmediating this episode in the language of cinema, Kaplunovsky omits all cited above marked words used by Pushkin to define the Russian revolt as a destructive force. Moreover, the last days of Pugachev’s struggle in the film are described as heroic and enjoying popular support. The focus in the film is precisely placed on the people’s support of Pugachev uprising, because Pugachev is a defender of the people’s interests, oppressed by the Russian autocracy. This coloring is clearly given to the film in accordance with the requirements of socialist realism. The people in the novel also perceive Pugachev as a people’s tsar and join him, but mainly at the earlier stage, e.g., after his capturing Belogorskaia fortress. By the end of the novel, Pushkin shows The People as a force suffering devastation from both armies, Pugachev’s and Catherine’s.

Grinev’s voice-over, narrating the glorious and tragic story of Pugachev’s last battles and his final defeat, is accompanied in the film by one of the longest visual
sequences - the spring movement of ice floes on a wide swollen river, presumably the Volga. On one of the floes is a gallows with two rebels hanging on it. A lonely dog floats on another ice floe, right in the middle of the river, howling hopelessly. A disturbing soundtrack in a staccato rhythm accompanies these scenes dominated by strings. Grinev’s voice is sad but solemn and poignantly sympathetic to Pugachev’s bravery and the people’s support of him. The doomed dog signifies the tragic fate of Pugachev himself, his loneliness and fatality. A view of the rapidly flowing river with ice floes violently sliding over each other is gradually replaced with a view of a calm river, nearly free of ice, which makes reference to the pacifying of rebels and the reestablishment of social order. The camera cuts to a sad procession of prisoners, sullen rebels linked to each other with ropes and slowly moving towards their poor fate. The musical score keeps building up with wind and percussion instruments coming to the forefront, causing the viewer to feel empathy for prisoners.

A feeling of pity and compassion for Pugachev continues to be escalated by the filmmakers in subsequent scenes as well. When Masha and Savelich travel to the capital, their wagon is forced to yield to another procession of prisoners and to a captive Pugachev himself, who is now transported to Moscow locked in a hefty cage. Savelich, who had never sympathized with Pugachev before and only called him a villain, is now completely confused and overwhelmed with compassion. When Masha asks what is going on, he replies: “The villain… (and after a pause) father (батьюшка) is being taken to Moscow”. This change in Savelich’s perception of Pugachev is especially meaningful because he is the only man from the lower class who in the story had a negative attitude
toward Pugachev. This scene is entirely Kaplunovsky’s invention and is used to enhance the positive coloring of Pugachev’s image.

However, the most intensely marked sequence in the whole film is that of Pugachev’s execution. Pushkin dedicated to this episode only two lines:

“он [Grinev] присутствовал при казни Пугачева, который узнал его в толпе и кивнул ему головою, которая через минуту, мертвая и окровавленная, показана была народу”76.

In Kaplunovsky’s transposition this is the longest sequence, lasting for almost seven minutes. This part consists of three components, each of which is supposed to represent the ideological position of the authorities, the commoners and Peter Grinev. It begins with officers of the tsarist army triumphantly prancing as they enter Red Square, where everything is prepared for Pugachev’s execution. Lobnoe Mesto, the place of execution, is surrounded by soldiers, who are lined up everywhere in order not to let people approach Pugachev. The whole of Red Square and the space outside it are filled with people. The Kremlin cathedrals’ bells are ringing incessantly. A cart drawn by six horses, in which sits chained Pugachev, enters Red Square. Pugachev holds a candle in each hand. His face is calm and sublime. When his chains are removed, he is taken to the scaffold. As he climbs the steps, he notices Grinev who somehow appears at the place of execution. Their eyes meet and they nod slightly to each other. Accompanied by the

76 http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/13511/pg13511.html
- “he was present at the execution of Pugatchéf, and that the latter, recognizing him in the crowd, made him a farewell sign with the head which, a few moments later, was held up to the people, lifeless and bleeding.”
increasing diegetic beat of the drums, a boyarin reads the verdict. Pugachev bows to the gathered people on three sides and asks them to forgive any wrongs he might have done to them. The camera cuts to multiple close-ups of ordinary people, soldiers and officers. Each face expresses horror and many - compassion. A tear is coming down the cheek of one of Catherine’s soldiers. Immediately after the blow of the executioner’s ax, a holy fool screams heartbreakingly, and all the people in the large crowd fall to their knees, bowing and crossing themselves without ceasing. Grinev hides his face in the collar of his fur coat, and when his emotions subside and he looks up, his voice-over utters the most poignant monologue in the film: “Народ до последней минуты надеялся и верил, что Пугачева не посмеют казнить. И у меня в душе теплилась та же надежда. Счастьем и жизнью я обязан этому человеку.”77 During this internal monologue Grinev is shot in close-up, but he is not looking straight at the camera. There are tears in his eyes. Grinev is flooded with emotions and is lost in deep thought. Grinev’s look is light and directed above the viewer, as if he were looking towards his future happiness, which he owes to Pugachev (picture 8). It is obvious that such a passionate ending was dictated by the demands of socialist realism, which required the inclusion of a positive hero who rose from the people’s environment. Pugachev in this scene is shown as a true national hero, and his execution leaves no one indifferent, even government officials - soldiers and officers. Since the film does not provide any background information about Pugachev’s atrocities, the execution itself is presented as an act of social reprisal of a popular leader threatening the legitimate government of Catherine the Great and calls

77 “People until the last minute hoped and believed that [authorities] will not dare to execute Pugachev. And I cherished the same hope in my soul. I owe to this man my happiness and life”. 191
only for sympathy for Pugachev. This scene is the apotheosis of praising the heroic personality of Pugachev and is explicitly ideological.

Another semiotic system unique for the film that also organically stems from the socialist ideology is associated with the theme of religion. The attitude towards religion during socialism was formed under the influence of German economist Karl Marx, who called it the opium of the people in the introduction of his unfinished work *A contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*. Later this phrase was taken up by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and became the guiding principle for justification of ousting religion from social life. It is precisely this attitude towards religion that is conveyed by Kaplunovsky’s film. There are two episodes in the film that transmit the condemnation of religion.

In the first episode, based on the chapter “Assault” from the novel, Captain Mironov, parting with his daughter Masha before the battle with Pugachev, does not bless her by crossing her, as in the novel and as has always been customary in Russia in such cases, but only wishes her happiness. The difference with Pushkin's text is particularly noticeable here if we consider that the rest of the scene is almost entirely reproduced in accordance with the chapter from the novel.

The semiotic subtext of the second episode is even more expressive because the condemnation of religion is expressed here by the means of visual codes of non-verbal communication. When Pugachev and Grinev met in the house of the priest, Pugachev talks about the hardships of the common people, while standing in front of an icon of Christ as if addressing it reproachfully: “Двенадцать лет я странствовал, был голоден,
холоден. Не время было мне являться, но не мог я смотреть на великие обиды и разорения моего народа”.

Pugachev then comes to the table with an open Bible on it, looks at it for a few moments and abruptly closes it. His decisive and angry gesture symbolizes a harsh denunciation of religion that silently witnesses the suffering of the people.

However, there is another episode in the film that contains an indexical sign, the interpretation of which does not entirely fit into the above-described scheme of semiotic transcoding of the theme of religion. This is the scene of the quarrel between Grinev and Shvabrin and especially that moment when Grinev challenges Shvabrin to a duel. The mise en scene is built in such a way that the characters, who face each other, are located on the edges of the frame, and in the center of it is an icon of the saint, which immediately attracts the viewer's attention (picture 7). Grinev’s face is turned one-quarter to the right from the camera and makes the dominant contrast in the shot, where Shvabrin’s face is lit in a more subdued manner. By placing an icon right between the characters in the center of the frame, Kaplunovsky assigns it a role of a judge in the opposition between Shvabrin and Grinev. Since both Grinev’s gaze and the look of the saint are ostensibly directed towards Shvabrin as though testing his motives, it is obvious that the truth is on the side of Grinev, while Shvabrin, all dressed in black, turned away from the audience and located in the penumbra signifies a gloomy figure with dark interests.

78 “Twelve years I wandered, was hungry and cold. It was not the right time for me to appear, but I could not see great resentments and destruction done to my people”.

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5.8.2 Russian Revolt (Proshkin, 2000)

Unlike Kaplunovsky, Proshkin left out the theme of Grinev and Masha’s personal relationship and the benevolent aspect of Pugachev’s personality. Instead, Proshkin is much more interested in showing the devastating impact of Pugachev’s rebellion on the fate of Russia and its people. The title itself, Russian Revolt, sets this expectation for the viewer. Proshkin is concerned with the long-standing Russian historical tradition of fratricidal wars, which over centuries brought upon Russia high casualties and tremendous destruction.

In fact, the tradition of internecine wars began long before Pugachev’s rebellion, in Kievan Rus when Kiev’s feudal princes raised armies to fight their own brothers so as to consolidate their power. And since then, civil wars in Russia have not been uncommon. However, the tradition of expressing discontent by uprising became especially entrenched in Russian society during the times of impostors claiming the Russian throne such as numerous False Dimitries and Pugachev. False tsars, who declared themselves legitimate rulers resurrected from violent deaths, used the peoples’ dissatisfaction with their living conditions, their religious awe for passion-bearers and naïve trust in a “kind tsar-father” to pursue their own ambitions. As Riasanovsky explained it: “the repeated readiness of the Russian people to rise in the name of the ‘true’ tsar against the usurper on the throne resulted from the continuous poverty and oppression of the masses as well as the hope that the new and just ruler will improve their condition.” (in Szvak 2000, viii)
Proshkin points out at a direct link between the events of the past and post-Soviet modernity. This faith in a violent overthrow of the previous government was very much alive among the Russian people during the rise of socialism and later its collapse. For the people, it was a mechanism to ensure their well-being. The Bolsheviks won the 1920s civil war by using the hostility of one part of Russia’s population towards another. Later, the people's faith in the nobility of Stalin’s intentions fueled their ruler’s repressions. And during the 1990s, while Proshkin was working on the film, two antagonistic groups had emerged. On the one hand are the poverty-stricken masses of Russian society and, on another, the so-called New Russians, the small but very powerful group who had appropriated much of the country’s wealth and gained total control of Russia’s political system at the expense of the Russian populace. Proshkin warns that such a situation is fraught with the danger of new bloodshed, if the social ills that so vastly separate Russia’s people are not resolved. Proshkin suggests that only a sensible state policy can extinguish the fratricidal “gene” that, in the opinion of the director, is present in Russia’s people.

Proshkin addresses this topic by focusing specially on the odious figure of Pugachev, the sources of his nomination and his role in the uprising itself. To accomplish his ideological goal, the director had to turn to the text of Pushkin’s historical study. Therefore, the film provides not only abundant authentic details of the uprising, but also conveys the spirit of its cruelty and senselessness, the main feature that brings together the adaptation and Pushkin’s work.
Proshkin makes it clear that Pugachev’s many crimes were rooted in the crimes of the government. He begins his film with a scene of the suffocation of tsar Peter III, whose name Pugachev later takes up. Proshkin does not analyze the reasons for the murder of the tsar, nor its consequences for Russia besides those associated with the rebellion, but he clearly alludes to the fact that Pugachev’s appearance was due to the villainous act committed at the empress’ court.

Proshkin also does not signify Catherine’s involvement in the murder of Peter III. In Catherine, Proshkin chose to focus on her human qualities and personal relationships with people, not on her merits or faults as a politician. In fact, Catherine is shown in the film as detached from the political life of the state she rules. Through the addition of a few semiotic components, i.e., Catherine’s dinner with her retinue, her riding in a sleigh in the park with the court, and her young lover’s participation in the meeting with Masha Mironova in Catherine’s private chamber, Proshkin portrays Catherine as a person of a loving nature with plenty of propensity for entertainment. The choice of these signifiers reinforces Proshkin’s intention to create an image of Catherine as a warm-hearted person capable of love and valuing the ability to love in other people. Her remark to Masha that love is the only meaning in life makes it clear that her decision to pardon Grinev was based on her recognition of their love.

If the essence of Catherine’s personality manifests itself in her ability to love, Pugachev is shown in the film in a very contrasting light. The essence of his personality is revealed in his inability to love. There is no love for anyone in his heart and life, and therefore, his life has no meaning. Proshkin himself repeatedly reinforces this idea in his
interviews⁷⁹. To give meaning to his life, Pugachev needs the love of the people, which he seeks by pretending to be a caring tsar, by promising people freedoms and justice which he is unable to fulfill, or by simply throwing coins into the crowd and causing people to push each other away trying to pick up the money. Pugachev uses people only for achieving his own treacherous ambitions despite the fact that he himself is one of them. In this sense, Proshkin’s Pugachev is a trickster, who by Bakhtin’s definition plays the role of the tsar at the carnival of death. Pugachev is a man in a mask and the royal honors are lavished on him until he ceases to be fit for this carnival arranged by others. Pugachev’s dependence on his companions was noted by Pushkin in *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* and is especially emphasized in Proshkin’s adaptation. When at the end of the film Pugachev told his comrades to follow their tsar to the Caspian Sea, one of them directly told him: "What kind of tsar are you to us, Yemelian? We made you tsar! When we needed a tsar, you were a tsar, but today we have others needs."

The only person in the film with whom Pugachev is sincere is Grinev. The reason for this is that Grinev does not participate in the carnival that has been unfolding around Pugachev. Grinev is the only person who does not pretend to believe in Pugachev’s royal origin and speaks openly about it. Grinev appreciates Pugachev for his human qualities and especially his ability to return good for good. He is genuinely concerned about Pugachev’s fate when he offers him a chance to repent and ask Catherine for mercy and forgiveness. Grinev and Pugachev’s relationship is open and unambiguous, and this is what binds two such different characters.

⁷⁹ Линия Жизни. Александр Прошкин. Interview to channel Kultura, Russian TV. 11/21/2008
Pugachev also understands his own doom and the fact that nothing can be changed. Proshkin emphasizes this more than Pushkin and Kaplunovsky. Pugachev behaves like a hunted animal and keeps his subordinates in obedience by scaring them with reprisals. But as soon as they realize his doom, they betray their leader without regret.

The theme of fear and its impact on a person's choice is also very important in Proshkin’s adaptation. This is mostly revealed through the character of Shvabrin. Prior to Pugachev capturing the fortress, Shvabrin played with the lives of others without thinking about the value of life. He was exiled to serve in the remote Siberian Belogorskaia fortress for the murder of an officer in a duel. He also cowardly injured Grinev when he turned to the call of his servant Savelich. Shvabrin slandered Grinev by claiming he was spying for Pugachev when he himself was arrested for treason. However, Shvabrin wants to save his own life, even at the cost of betrayal and does not hesitate to switch to Pugachev’s side. This fear of death directs Shvabrin’s actions when he humiliates himself in front of Pugachev and his associates by serving their petty needs. Pugachev understands Shvabrin’s inability for loyalty and love and distrusts him. When Shvabrin announces to Pugachev that he loves Masha, Pugachev only looks at him with contempt and orders him to bring some wine as if Shvabrin were his slave.

This utter inability for loyalty and love contrasts Shvabrin with Grinev, his counterpart. Shvabrin treats Masha Mironova without respect, calls her a fool and ridicules her before Grinev, despite claiming to love her. When he woos Masha, he does not even tell her about his love and does not wonder whether she loves him, but simply offers her the right to be his wife, as if making a deal. He is incapable of pure feelings to
his beloved, and therefore is envious of Grinev and his relationship with Masha.

Proshkin’s Shvabrin is a very tough and cruel man to those who depend on him. So he has no mercy for orphaned Masha when she has to stay in the besieged fortress under his government. However, Shvabrin behaves cowardly and ingratiatingly with those who have power over him, as with Pugachev and his comrades.

Grinev and Shvabrin’s attitudes towards Masha Mironova in the film are an indicator of the human dignity of both contenders for her heart. Unlike Shvabrin, Grinev recognized Masha’s true purity and deep capacity for love. According to Proshkin, Grinev lives for the sake of love, so he is able to appreciate Masha’s sincerity and dedication. Despite the love relationship between Grinev and Masha not being dominant in the film, Proshkin definitely takes all the main characters through the test of love, and only those who assume love as the leading principle of life come out winners: Grinev, Masha and Catherine II.

By shifting the emphasis towards historical material based on *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*, Proshkin resolves the issue of the narrator differently than Pushkin or Kaplunovsky did. He still uses Grinev as an autodiegetic narrator to transmit the events in which he participates, but at the same time his voice-over sounds indirectly and impersonally, without the youthful pathos so inherent in Kaplunovsky’s Grinev. Since the motif of Grinev’s relations with other characters in the film is secondary, his voice-over appears in the film very rarely and only to convey the story of his and Masha’s love and his brief encounter with Pugachev. However, most of the episodes in the film are based on events in which Grinev could not participate. These include scenes describing details
of Pugachev rebellion, Pugachev’s relations with his associates, and his imprisonment and treatment by the tsarist generals. To convey these scenes Proshkin uses an omniscient narration represented mainly by visual sequences of events. As noted by Vernitski (2004, 196), the amalgamation of two literary sources written in different genres and Proskin’s use of different types of narrators leads to the lack of “a consistent sense of time and location” and to “a collapse of meanings”.

However, this approach is justified by Proshkin’s departure from the idealization of Pugachev’s rebellion so traditional in Russian society and of any revolutionary movement in general. Even having preserved the original chronotope of Pushkin’s works, Proshkin’s film clearly addresses Russian contemporary post-Soviet reality and proposes a renewed ideological perspective on the past events. If Socialist Realism regarded Pugachev as a national hero and his revolt as a justified indignation of the oppressed people against their oppressors, Proshkin’s transposition returns to Pushkin’s original message about Pugachev’s revolt as a violent and senseless fratricidal war. Thus, Proshkin’s adaptation completely inverts the socialist glorification of revolution as a positive process of social reconstruction, and reveals the sides of revolt destructive for the people involved in the struggle and society in general.
Picture 6. Masha and Grinev after Grinev’s first duel with Shvabrin

![Image](image1.jpg)

Picture 7. Grinev is challenging Shvabrin to a duel

![Image](image2.jpg)
Picture 8. Grinev after Pugachev’s execution
Conclusions

This dissertation was not intended to constitute a comprehensive analysis of representation of the entire Russian nineteenth-century literature in the Soviet and post-Soviet cinema. For the examination, two major historical works by Alexander Pushkin - the tragedy *Boris Godunov* and the novel *Captain’s Daughter* – have been chosen along with their Soviet and post-Soviet screen adaptations. Each of them is based on historical events that had particular significance for Russian history, i.e., Boris Godunov’s rule in the beginning of the seventeenth century and the Pugachev rebellion at the end of the eighteenth century. Pushkin’s literary texts have proven to be inexhaustible sources of inspiration for Russian and foreign artists who work in cinema as well as other media, such as opera. The objective of this study was to investigate textual and thematic correspondences and idiosyncratic features of the signification systems of Pushkin’s historical works and their successive filmic versions - the adaptations of *Boris Godunov* by Bondarchuk (1986) and Mirzoev (2011), and the adaptations of *The Captain’s Daughter* by Kaplunovsky (1958) and Proshkin (2000). The focus of the analysis was on the semiotic expression of the directors’ unique artistic interpretations of the originary texts.
Comparative analysis of signs and signifiers in the examined works leads to the following conclusions. Out of the four films, the Soviet adaptations predictably follow guiding principles of Socialist realism and through their system of cinematic devices adapt literary sources to socialist ideology. This is especially evident in Kaplunovsky’s adaptation, in which Pugachev is made into a national hero, a supporter of the oppressed, and overall, a noble and admirable character. Socialist ideology is less explicit in Bondarchuk’s film, as it had been made at the end of the Socialist period. In fact, this film in many ways was prophetic in predicting the end of the Soviet Union. Bondarchuk seemingly avoids explicit ideology in his film and turns his focus towards psychological issues of a ruler who attains his power through criminal ways.

The theme of the destructive force of power is also central in Mirzoev’s adaptation. However, by transferring the chronotope of the play into the present, Mirzoev explicitly refers to the contemporary Russian political situation and demonstrates that historical events have a tendency to reappear when certain sociopolitical conditions are met. Mirzoev supports and promotes the theory of the cyclicality of history and uses the legend of the murder of the tsarevich Dimitry by Boris Godunov only as a starting point and Pushkin’s text only as a frame which helps him convey his point. To demonstrate repetition of events, Mirzoev also employs signifiers of Russia’s violent revolutionary times of the beginning of the twentieth century, which was also characterized by a struggle for power and ended in a regicide and fratricidal war. By showing two distant historical periods that developed in similar ways, Mirzoev warns the contemporary Russian government and society about the possible outcome of a situation where all
power is accumulated by one person and all decisions are made by that person. In the film, he does not openly call the contemporary Russian government authoritarian, but the signs he uses in the film definitely express this idea.

Proshkin’s adaptation of Pushkin’s last novel, *The Captain’s Daughter*, also expands Pushkin’s text and addresses the violent tradition of Russian fratricidal wars. He implies that the Pugachev rebellion established a precedent that continued in the October Revolution and the subsequent organized violence towards Russian people, which resulted in their mass killings throughout the twentieth century. Proshkin does not idealize Pugachev as Kaplunovsky does. On the contrary, his Pugachev is a manipulative and bloodthirsty person, without moral values, obsessed with power. But Proshkin looks deeper into the nature of the revolt in general, and the emergence of Pugachev to him is only an indicator of underlying problems in Russian government. The director emphasizes the fact that Pugachev himself is an outgrowth of Catherine’s court’s intrigues, which resulted in the assassination of the legitimate tsar Peter III in the 1762 coup d’état. Similarly to Mirzoev, Proshkin refers to modern Russia and warns its authorities that political intrigues can produce a Pugachev-like figure who is not only capable of turning the Russian people against each other, but who would inevitably defy the government itself. To incorporate the theme of the brutality of Russian revolt Proshkin employs *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion*, which Pushkin wrote alongside the novel *The Captain’s Daughter*, and in which Pushkin reflected the findings of his own archival research and eyewitness accounts of the rebellion.
The current study demonstrates that cinematic versions of Pushkin’s texts, created in different periods and different political and cultural situations, in their own ways illustrate the major concerns of Russian society. Indeed, it is anticipated that the oldest Soviet adaptation of *The Captain’s Daughter* would be the most predictable in its ideological content and the choice of the themes. Therefore there should be no surprise that Kaplunovsky focused mainly on the romantic relationship between Grinev and Masha Mironova. Bondarchuk’s adaptation of *Boris Godunov*, being still a work of the Soviet period, already includes distinct signifiers of the upcoming changes and in general evokes the feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. The post-Soviet adaptations, however, demonstrate more freedom and creativity in the ways in which the film directors interpret Pushkin’s texts. Nonetheless, they are still aimed towards expressing certain political ideas and contemporary issues of Russian society.

Despite the dedication of the filmmakers to Pushkin’s texts, which are closely reproduced in all adaptations, none of the films can be considered replicas of their literary sources. Each cinematic version is a complete independent signifying system, connected to the literary original only at the level chosen by its director to convey his own artistic vision.

The semiotic approach used in the dissertation proved to be a very effective method of analyzing the screen adaptations and their literary sources. Interpretation of film and literature as complex sign systems enables scholars to more comprehensively classify expressive constituents of verbal and visual media. Although semiotics of film is a relatively young science, it has great potential for researchers in the field of the theory
of cinema. The semiotic method is especially potent in the analysis of film adaptations, as it allows us to transcode both literary and cinematic texts into systems of signifiers, which creates an intermediary agency of codes that puts the artistic means of literature and cinema on the same tier and makes them comparable.
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