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Reframing the Overlooked Woman: Sonia Marmeladova in English-language Screen Adaptations of Dostoevsky's Novel *Crime and Punishment*

by

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ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary PhD thesis explores the depiction of the central female character, Sonia Marmeladova, in several English-language film adaptations of Fyodor Dostoevsky's classic novel *Crime and Punishment*. The research incorporates adaptation studies, film studies, Russian studies, and creative writing.

The theoretical section of the study closely examines Sonia's complex character in both the novel and on screen. The practical section involves creating a short film, *Transgressing,* that transfers the action of the novel to modern-day Britain and makes Sonia the main protagonist. The creative process of adapting Sonia's character undertaken in the process of this research is critically analysed in the last chapter.

The study aims to illuminate the intercultural adaptation process, highlighting the importance of a dialogic approach to creating complex characters and challenging fidelity criticism. The study's practical implications emphasise the importance of collaboration and creativity in the adaptation process and the ongoing evolution of female characters in screen adaptations.

This thesis provides valuable insights into the process of adapting *Crime and Punishment* for English-language readers and viewers. The thesis suggests further research to broaden the implications of this study and highlights the potential of adaptation to push boundaries, challenge stereotypes, and create unique and nuanced works of art through collaborative and dialogic approaches.

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Incorporated within this text document is an audio-visual element accessible through a password-protected link. This element features the research short film titled *Transgressing* (2023).

PREFACE

Focusing on the practical nature of my research in this practice-led PhD thesis in Film, I have prioritised practical filmmaking as the cornerstone of my investigation, employing it as a catalyst for non-practice outcomes. Through the production of the short film *Transgressing*, I was able to gather supplementary data to support my research questions. My research is presented in written and filmed forms, with the film constituting half of this thesis. This practical approach has facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the research questions, resulting in a multidimensional exploration of the topic.

The creation of *Transgressing* holds significant importance within this research. The screenplay, provided in Appendix A, is optional for reading and primarily serves as a reference for the examiner. I highly recommend watching the short film before delving into chapter four to fully grasp the research findings.

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The completion of this project would not have been possible without the hundreds of people who participated in or supported the production of the case-study short film, *Transgressing*, in myriad ways. I am grateful to the hundreds of backers of several crowdfunding campaigns and to the dozens of test screenplay readers and rough-cut viewers for their feedback. I am deeply indebted to the cast and crew of *Transgressing* for their artistic support, technical expertise, creative collaboration, and passion. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Hannah Saxby for her flawless portrayal of Sonia, to Alessandro Repetti for challenging my visions, and to Dostoevsky and his characters for being limitless sources of inspiration.

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Last but not least is my mother, who has always been my biggest supporter. Her enduring love, financial support, and many sacrifices have been the foundation of any success I have attained throughout my PhD journey. She has always believed in me and pushed me to be the best version of myself. I owe her more than I can ever articulate or repay. I want to dedicate this thesis to her.

INTRODUCTION

> There are too many ideas and things and people, too many directions to go. I was starting to believe the reason it matters to care passionately about something is that it whittles the world down to a more manageable size.
>
> From the script *Adaptation* (Kaufman 70)

My fascination with Dostoevsky began with a love for his female characters, and I argue that Dostoevsky can be called a true feminist based on his depiction of women in his novels in general and in *Crime and Punishment* in particular. According to Roman Kruglov,[1] there are more than 250 adaptations of Dostoevsky's works, which makes him one of the most adapted Russian writers worldwide (Mihal'chenko et al). However, even after the "cult of Dostoevsky" arose in Great Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century (Grishhenko 34), the number of academic works on Dostoevsky's screen adaptations surprisingly did not increase. This thesis addresses the gap in research by examining a rare case study in Britain.

It felt logical to narrow down research on Dostoevsky's adaptations to one novel that has always received special interest among British academics and readers (Grishhenko) and is "arguably Dostoevsky's most well-known novel in the West or at least the one most frequently adapted to the screen" (Storchevoy 59). *Crime and Punishment* is the first novel of his so-called "Great Pentateuch"[2] where the writer deeply scrutinises the leitmotif of his anthropocentric novels: "*What is human nature*?". This universal story has been adapted for the screen more than 50 times in more than 25 countries around the world, not including dozens of loosely based adaptations. However, *Crime and Punishment* adaptations have not appeared on the list of best films on IMDB, the Greatest Films of All Time polls by *Sight and Sound,*[3] or any other top film ratings. This may lead to an assumption that, although Dostoevsky's novel has been recognised as great worldwide, it is difficult to adapt.

Dostoevsky was an excellent psychologist and created characters that, in some cases, are even more compelling than his stories. As such, I theorised that, when adapting his literary works,

[1] Roman Kruglov has PhD in art history, and he is an associate professor at the St. Petersburg Film and Television Institute.
[2] This term refers to the five last novels written by Dostoevsky: *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), *Demons* (1872), *The Adolescent* (1875), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880).
[3] To be fair, Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket* (France 1959) ranked 63rd on *Sight and Sound*'s 2012 poll. However, the film is only loosely based on the novel (*Sight and Sound*).

it makes sense to create films focused on individual characters. To narrow my thesis further, I chose to examine the complexity of adapting Dostoevsky for the screen through *Crime and Punishment*'s heroine, Sonia Marmeladova. Sonia is one of the most complex characters I have encountered, and I could not stop thinking about her for many years after I first read the novel. While studying for a Master's degree in screenwriting in Edinburgh, I created the feature-length screenplay *The Punishment,* where I worked on a screen version of a modern Sonia. It felt natural to continue my research into Sonia's screen representation during my PhD. I wanted to highlight how important it is to pay tribute to Dostoevsky's female heroines.

This thesis is an attempt to leave "fidelity criticism", which examines how closely a film adaptation stays true to its source material, behind as an approach to adaptation. The following chapters explore the relationship between adaptation as a process and adaptation as a result while bridging the gaps of practical research in the field of adaptation. Being a film practitioner as well as a scholar in film studies, I am concerned with bringing together two seemingly different research directions in this thesis.

My research primarily focuses on screen adaptations of a nineteenth-century novel's female character for audiences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Considering the example of how on-screen representation of Dostoevsky's Sonia changes with time, I question how cultural, spatial, and temporal transitions have impacted the relationship between the source novel's character and her screen versions. I also want to answer the question of whether aspects such as the strength and multifaceted nature of the character, when transferred from page to screen, are impacted by the way women are generally perceived at the time of a screen-adaptation's production.

My secondary area of interest is film practitioners who create adaptations. This thesis examines how the multi-authorship process of adaptation impacts the results of an adaptation. My secondary research question is as follows: In what ways might the integration of literary techniques, such as *intertextuality* and *dialogism*, within the craft of adaptation expand its creative potential for filmmakers? My study involves both theory and practice to further recognise overlooked practitioners' accounts and consider the filmmakers and conditions under which they create different screen versions of a novel.

My approach to researching these questions is comprised of both written and practical components. The written component includes a review of critical literature in both adaptation studies and Dostoevsky studies, which helps to build a theoretical framework for the practical section consisting of making a short film about Sonia. Writing the screenplay and producing the subsequent film enables me, as a filmmaker and researcher, to create unique data that would not be possible in a written thesis alone. In addition, the film helps to answer my research questions by implementing intertextuality and dialogism into the practice of adaptation.

The thesis is divided into four chapters that move between completely different fields: adaptation studies, literary studies, film studies, and film practice. My research combines multiple disciplines, each of which has its own sources and scholars while mostly not intersecting.

In the first chapter, I provide an overview of adaptation studies using the secondary research method of a literature review. I initiate my research and thesis by navigating, alongside other scholars, the complex landscape of fidelity in adaptation studies.[4] This encapsulates the intricate challenge of preserving the essence and integrity of source material when translated across different media. I raise questions about the balance between loyalty to the source material and the transformative potential of reinterpretation, challenging fidelity criticism through an exploration of the infinite interpretations of source texts. Shifting from fidelity discourse to a dialogic approach method, I argue that the intricate "dance" between writers, adapters, and the surrounding world not only encourages a dialogue with the original creators but also reveals the alchemy and synergy between texts. This chapter places particular emphasis on film practitioners, explores the question of authorship in adaptation, considers adaptations as cinematic art, and aims to evaluate historical trends in the research topic, positioning my work within them.

The second chapter is devoted to a deeper analysis of the central female character of *Crime and Punishment*, Sonia Marmeladova, whose complexity has, in many ways, been overlooked or underrated by many filmmakers representing her on screen. To investigate possible

[4] The decision to delve into a deeper exploration of the history and theory of fidelity criticism was prompted by my realisation of unconsciously employing fidelity as a method for critical analysis of *Crime and Punishment*. Examining the origins of fidelity criticism and understanding why it is challenging to overcome in comparative analysis proved instrumental in gaining a better appreciation for the dialogic approach as an alternative method for both the creation and analysis of adaptations.

transnational "novel-to-screen" transformations of Sonia, and ignite further thoughts for the fourth chapter, I examine the allegorical meaning of this character allegedly intended by Dostoevsky. While using the analytical research method, this chapter includes a literature review of different fields, specifically literary studies and Dostoevsky studies. I justify choosing Sonia as a case study for my research and establish the basis for the next two chapters.

In the third chapter, I study the process of the cultural and temporal screen adaptation of the novel, exploring case studies with multiple versions of Dostoevsky's Sonia from the perspective of cross-cultural and historical transitions. Employing qualitative research as a methodology, I use methods such as case studies and primary interviews while focusing on Sonia and her cinematic representation. Considering the specific socio-temporal context of each film production and using the outcomes of the first and second chapters, I explore what occurs to Dostoevsky's Sonia when she enters new cultural, historical, and national environments. By conducting several interviews with writers, directors, and actresses of the researched films, I pay attention to adaptation as a process and address the gaps and limitations of the field. The aims of the interviews are as follows: to gain an understanding of the practitioners' approach to the process of intercultural adaptation and to consider film industry collaborators and their impact on the fitting of screen versions into new historical, cultural, political, and other environments while "helping their source novel 'survive'" (Stam "Introduction" 3) and, more importantly, "flourish" (Hutcheon 32).

The fourth chapter includes a creative examination of the practical component of this research, which consisted of writing a screenplay and producing a short film, *Transgressing*. As a screenwriter and filmmaker, I analyse my approach to adapting the heroine and reflect on the process of creating a complex female character. While creating Sonia as the protagonist, I reworked and modernised the source novel for a better understanding of an audience of another cinematic territory in a different historical period. Moreover, I tested intercultural dialogue as a methodology for Dostoevsky's story adaptation, and my film *Transgressing* became an experiment for investigating this approach.

My PhD research aims to address some gaps in the study of adaptation as practice. A nuanced comprehension of the intricate processes that filmmakers undergo during the adaptation process can challenge literary scholars to abandon the notion that an adapted film is merely a substandard copy of a written work or an illustrative rendering with moving images. By

embracing this shift in perspective, filmmakers may gain greater artistic freedom to deliberately deviate from the source material, engaging in a creative dialogue with the author as well as wider spheres of history, society, the arts, philosophy, and other individuals, both living and deceased, to craft an evocative and multi-layered cinematic interpretation.

CHAPTER 1

Lost in Adaptation Studies

> Every adaptation is an expression of love, however selfish or perverted that love may seem.
> *Thomas Leitch* ("Vampire Adaptation" 20)

1.1 The Pleasure and the Suffering of Adaptation

Following Broadway and the West End, the film and television industries are overflowing with films and shows transformed from novels, true-life stories, articles, and other sources. Does this mean that creative people have exhausted their wells of original thinking and are searching for ideas in other places? Or does it mean that the audiences want to hear the same stories, again and again, being reworked, re-told, or re-framed "to reflect changing values, changing self-perceptions, and a changing understanding of the world" (Collington 176)? Or maybe, as McFarlane describes, filmmakers are "[lured by] a pre-sold title" and view adaptation as a business strategy that allows them to capitalise on the success of a book (*Novel into Film: Introduction* 7).

Knowing a certain film is being adapted from a familiar source, filmgoers are tempted to compare the screen version with the original. Most of the time, this comparison (especially when made by book lovers or fans) will not bring them peace of mind as they will discover that "there is little resemblance to anything treasured and expected" (Hutcheon 122). In defence of the critique based on comparisons between a book and a film, some well-known filmmakers equivocally compare their audiences with goats. As James Naremore observes, "most discussions of adaptation in film 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'." (2).

This power of judgement remains with the audience, which seems to feel intimidating for both novel writers[5] and filmmakers.[6] Nevertheless, the film/television industry is producing new adaptations of popular literary sources more than ever, showing its masochism towards expected "severe and unfavourable judgments" from audiences for their unfaithfulness (Marciniak 61). Linda Hutcheon, answering the question of "why anyone would agree to adapt a work, knowing their efforts would likely be scorned as secondary and inferior to the adapted text" (XVII), compared the desire to make/view an adaptation with "a child's delight in hearing the same nursery rhymes or reading the same books over and over" (114). Bruce Kawin agrees that "repetition is fundamental to human experience" (5). John Ellis argues that adaptation is "prolonging the pleasure of the original" (4). This is also supported by Julie Sanders, who connects the "experiences of pleasure" with the "interplay of expectation and surprise" that "lies at the heart of the experience of adaptation" (34).

When the term *adaptation* is mentioned in the fields of literature or film studies, it is generally understood to be connected with the creative transposition of an existing literary work into another medium (e.g., film, theatre, opera, ballet, or video games). Although Hutcheon defines adaptations as "intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images)" (16), she admits that any definition of adaptation is complex for the simple reason that people use the same word for the process of adapting and for the product or result of this process. When scholars, theorists, critics, and film viewers mention adaptation, most of the time they mean the result of the process. Hutcheon proposes to examine adaptation and its definitions from three different angles: 1. *a formal entity or product*; 2. *a process of creation*, and 3. *a process of reception* (7–8). This thesis is not broad enough to consider the process of reception in-depth, and I do not attempt to review all relevant literature in the adaptation field. Being aware of how vast the field is, I limit the scope of this study by focusing on the act of adaptation as a process of creation, as proposed by Hutcheon, which helps me analyse case study films in the third chapter.

[5] I refer to Margaret Mitchell and Umberto Eco. Mitchell, who, "repeatedly prodded by Selznick to participate in the adaptation [*of *Gone With the Wind*], declined on the grounds that 'if news got out that I was in even the slightest way responsible for any deviations from the book, then my life wouldn't be worth living'" (qtd. in Leitch *Film Adaptation* 128). Umberto Eco called adaptation "a collective cultural hallucination". He claims that his book *The Name of the Rose* and Jean-Jacques Annaud's film "simply happen to share the same name" despite the director and the audience perceiving it as an adaptation (qtd. in Elliott *Novel/Film Debate* 134).

[6] Here I refer to Christopher Columbus, director of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), who said the following: "People would have crucified me if I hadn't been faithful to the books" (qtd. in Hutcheon, 123).

1.2 Problems in the Adaptation Field

> Until the question of cinema's relationship with literature is reconsidered, even the best type of screenplay will be in the gap between a broken novel and an unfinished play.
> *Soviet literary critic, scholar, and screenwriter Iurii Tynianov* (324)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, screen adaptations and the field behind them faced various forms of discrimination, with many people dismissing their legitimacy as a form of artistic expression. Adaptations were seen as "parasitical on literature" (Stam "Introduction" 7), "inartistic" (Balázs 258), "disastrous and unnatural" (Woolf 3), and a "theoretical impossibility" (Wellek and Warren 126). Although, while being developed, the field was enriched by a great number of theoretical academic inputs, this did not solve the next significant problem: finding its place. Adaptation studies were caught in a "no man's land" (Boyum 17) between literary and film studies. While some scholars attempted to attach adaptation to film studies as a "subgenre" (Burry and White *Border Crossing* 4) or a "narrow and provincial area" (D. Andrew 96), others saw it as distinct because of its "attachment to print culture" (Murray 4) and coming "directly from literary studies" (Leitch *Film Adaptation* 2–3). For many years, both fields either rejected adaptation studies as something that does not belong to them or perceived it as a marginal secondary area, a sort of "bastard offspring" (Murray 4). Many literary scholars view the primary goal of a screen adaptation as visually illustrating the book's story through moving images. Film scholars often see adaptations as subordinate rather than original and creative. Despite years of existence, adaptation studies' place in connection with other fields is still a "work in progress", although many academics in the field undoubtedly help this progression. I do not aim to, or claim that my research will, develop even a fraction of the "grand theory" which Dennis Cutchins argues adaptation studies lack (42). However, I do hope that the outcomes and findings of my study will provide additional materials not only to adaptation scholars but also to literary and film scholars who work to bring adaptation studies from the "no man's land" to a respectable field in its own right.

While reviewing the history of adaptation scholarship, I found the never-ending loop of *fidelity criticism* and the criticism of fidelity criticism to be the veins in the body of the adaptation field. It was astounding to discover that it is "surprisingly difficult to overcome"

fidelity criticism in adaptation studies (Burry *Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 22–23). Thomas Leitch notices that even those scholars who criticise fidelity discourse are later, in the same works, "turning around and doing it themselves" ("Fidelity Discourse" 205). Brian McFarlane calls fidelity "rarely the most exciting" aspect of film/literature relations (*Novel into Film: Introduction* 11) and an "inappropriate and unhelpful criterion" (*Reading Film and Literature* 15). Dudley Andrew describes it as the "most tiresome discussion of adaptation" (Andrew 100). Simone Murray points at limitless comparative case studies bringing "unilluminating findings that there are similarities between the two mediums, but also differences" (Murray 4). Finally, Colin MacCabe compares adaptation studies with Don Quixote, as they "continue to fight the day before yesterday's battles" (7). When contemplating fidelity discourse, it is difficult to disagree with these insights.

First addressed in 1912 by Lewis Melville (qtd. in Oey 21), the notion of *fidelity* gave birth to fidelity criticism discourse. While such discourse was the key debate in the field for decades, it did not bring any distinct methodology to the studies as no one could clearly define fidelity in the adaptation context. Fidelity critics follow the assumption that, to succeed, an adaptation should have a certain level of faithfulness to the source text. Scholars and critics fundamentally agree that it is impossible to be faithful to the plot of a novel in every detail. However, they continued to reflect on what brings people (be that scholars, critics, or viewers) a feeling of disappointment when they consider a film *unfaithful*. Among the answers to the question "faithful to what?" one finds "fundamental narrative, thematic, and aesthetic features of its literary source" (Stam "Beyond Fidelity" 54) and "something essential about an original text", which is often called the *spirit* of the original (Andrew 100). This discourse has added even more separation between literary and film scholars and made a successful adaptation less possible. While literary scholars shamed unfaithful films for a "betrayal of the original", film scholars reproached faithful films for being "uncreative" (Stam "Introduction" 8).

Many recent theorists (e.g., Leitch, Cartmell and Whelehan, Hutcheon, and Sanders) have shown a certain scepticism towards the prevalence of fidelity criticism, questioning, interrogating, and challenging it while calling it a "bad object of adaptation studies" (Leitch "Adaptation and Intertextuality" 103) and moving beyond it in their works. Thanks to them, the critique of such criticism is gaining popularity and more works are "advocating, even celebrating, perspectives which favour infidelity" (Kranz and Mellerski 3) and perceiving

literary and cinematic texts as being of "equal merit" (Jameson 218). However, Kamilla Elliott highlights that the notion of fidelity has been "challenged on intertextual, dialogical and post-structuralist grounds from at least the late 1970s" ("Adapting Theories" 24). Nonetheless, Naremore and Robert Stam recognise fidelity's "continued domination of the discourse of adaptation" (Hurst 173); Jorgen Bruhn et al. claim that "the issue of similarities and differences is still very much present in contemporary research" (5); and Leitch declares that "the field is still haunted by the notion that adaptations ought to be faithful to their ostensible source texts" ("Crossroads" 64). This may give the impression that, despite the apparent progress and positive endeavours I have mentioned, the field has been stagnant for decades.

The 1957 seminal work of George Bluestone espouses that literature and film are two media that cannot be translated without destruction (62) and comparing fiction and film is the same as comparing ballet and architecture (5). Some scholars have echoed Bluestone's statement: Robert Ray notes that cinema has much more in common with architecture than with literature (42), and Andrew challenges those who are pro-fidelity "to reproduce the meaning of the *Mona Lisa* in a poem" (101). Following Mikhail Bakhtin, I want to "understand how something like a film could be utterly and completely different from something like a novel, and yet be perceived by an audience or readers as somehow the same" (qtd. in Cutchins 37). Not only do adaptation scholars (e.g., Stam *Literature through Film* 4 and Andrew 100–102) write about fundamental differences between two media, but so do screenwriting theorists (e.g., Seger 16). If it is accepted that a book and a film are media with two "different languages", it would be easier to give credence to the fact that, as with any translation between languages, adaptation involves change. Many scholars generally agree that this process of change involves "rethinking, reconceptualizing" (Seger 2), and reformatting, leading to both "losses and gains" (Stam "Beyond Fidelity" 62).

One of the contemporary approaches in adaptation studies involves comparing the process and product of transforming novels into films with the process and product of translating from one language to another. As Linda Costanzo Cahir aptly puts it, "The filmmakers are moving the language of literature, comprised of words, into the language of film" (198). In 2000, Robert Stam suggested viewing translation as an "appropriate trope" in the field, contrasting it with "inadequate" fidelity (62). Since then, scholars in both adaptation and translation have not only explored the joint exploration of issues in both fields but have also

utilised the older field of translation theory to address problems in the younger adaptation theory (Venuti). While some scholars merely mention the analogy between adaptation and translation as one of multiple approaches in their works (Hutcheon 16), the book *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*, edited by Katja Krebs, caught my attention due to its specific focus on this approach. Krebs' collection of essays aims to "enrich our critical vocabularies and approaches by opening up a dialogue" between the two compared fields (3). I believe that considering adaptation and translation as sister studies can aid in developing new theoretical approaches in adaptation theory by borrowing methods from translation theory.

There are several arguments in favour of the adaptation-translation analogy. One of these, emphasised by Patrick Cattrysse, highlights the fact that both translation and adaptation are "one-directional and irreversible processes" (42). This implies that if they were purely literal, the reversed translation or novelisation would be identical (or nearly identical) to the literary source they originated from. The impossibility of this scenario demonstrates that both processes involve elements of creative freedom and interpretation rather than a strict pursuit of equivalence. Hutcheon asserts that there is "no such thing as a literal translation" (16). Therefore, if the process of word-to-word translation, expected to be faithful to the source, cannot remain completely faithful, what kind of faithfulness should we expect from word-to-image translation? Regardless of expectations for adaptation and translation, it is evident that both processes require "decontextualizing". When Lawrence Venuti draws our attention to the "structural differences between languages" that "require the translator variously to dismantle, rearrange, and finally displace the chain of signifiers that make up the source text" (29), he is discussing translation. However, this observation can easily be applied to adaptation. As Cutchins argues, the transformative act in both processes "creates the content", rather than simply moving it from one container to another (37).

Arguably, fidelity criticism has dominated the adaptation field for so many years because of an assumption that Leitch includes in his 12 fallacies of adaptation studies. This belief – "novels are better than films" ("Twelve Fallacies" 154) – is bolstered by the antagonism between disciplines, as Elliott also acknowledges (*Novel/Film Debate* 13). This trend can, perhaps, be attributed to the fact that literature predates film by approximately 4,500 years, which places a film adaptation in a detrimental position from the beginning of any potential analysis. If fidelity is seen as the main "criterion of value" (Leitch *Film Adaptation* 6), it can

rationally lead to hostile judgments of the changes films make in the process of adaptation. Stam has observed the selection of allegations that support the "the book was better" tendency: "infidelity", "betrayal", "deformation", "violation", "vulgarization", "bastardization", and "desecration" (*Literature through Film* 3). Similarly, Naremore has noted that film adaptations are often insulted by both journalists and academics as "belated, middlebrow, or culturally inferior" (6). Some scholars like to mention Virginia Woolf concerning her support of the supreme position of literature, which she calls "prey" for the cinema that "subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim" (3). This analogy, made in the 1920s, did the productive development of the relationship between film and literature a great disservice for decades and made scholars like Leitch dream of "the silver bullet that will free adaptation studies from the dead hand of literature" ("Crossroads" 65). James Collins suggests that, if this field wants to be seen as a serious study and is committed to winning the "battle of legitimation", it should finally renounce studies "premised on films having a parasitical relationship to other more legitimate art forms" (240).

A decade ago, Timothy Corrigan asserted that the "serious/simple" dichotomy of adaptation had long been questioned ("Introduction" 2). However, the assumption that the viewers of a film adaptation are just being spoon-fed by filmmakers who provide them with a more "digestible" form of a book (Bazin 26) is still prevalent. When confronting the misconception that "source texts are more original than adaptations", Leitch points to the works of Shakespeare, most of whose plays were adapted from earlier existing sources:

> The originality of Shakespeare [...] depends precisely on his seeing the artistic potential of inert source materials; he is an alchemist, not an adapter, as one can see by comparing any of his plays with its base original.
> ("Twelve Fallacies" 62–63)

If one follows the logic of renaming an *adapter* a creative *alchemist* and transfers this to a filmmaker, one might conclude that adaptation depends not on fidelity, supremacy, or simplicity but on the creativity of the result and the talent of the adapter. A useful analogy for this can be found in the films of Hitchcock, many of which are adaptations of novels. Hitchcock can be viewed as the same sort of alchemist for his films as Shakespeare was for his plays.

Adaptation, when acknowledged, will always show the relative connection between two texts. Therefore, I doubt that adaptation studies will ever stop being "comparative studies" (Hutcheon 6). An approach that could lead to effective development involves questioning old-fashioned fidelity criticism, relinquishing the idea of equivalence, and discovering fresh criteria to evaluate adaptations. What interests me in the research of adaptation is the "alchemy", not the "parasitical relationship". I see this alchemy as connected with infidelity and support Mikhail Bakhtin's views: "Infidelity [is] both inevitable and productive" and should not be perceived as "the potential for damage, destruction or deformation of an original, but rather the possibility of creation of new art" (qtd. in Cutchins 52). I also agree with Robert McKee, who chose to concentrate on the uniqueness of each medium to see the powers and strengths of both cinema and novels (365–366) instead of supporting their rivalry.

1.3 Adaptation as a Dialogue

Notwithstanding the number of critical works and studies on adaptation, no unity (neither in approach nor in methodology) has been attained to date within the field. From the plentiful approaches to adaptation – many of which seek alternatives to fidelity discourse and attempt to explore the various alternative connections between literary sources and films – I choose to highlight two: appropriation and dialogue. Not only will I examine their theoretical justifications in this chapter, but I will also test those approaches later in my practical project.

In 1975, Geoffrey Wagner distinguished *analogy* as a subcategory of adaptation (226–228), which became the foundation for Sanders' *appropriation theory*. Appropriation can not only be used by filmmakers while adapting books for screen but also applied to the analysis of adaptations by critics and scholars in a different light from fidelity. According to Sanders, "free" appropriation accomplishes many things that "conservative" adaptation does not do or cannot afford to do under the eye of fidelity criticism proponents. The journey appropriation undergoes from the source text to the final product becomes so significant that, as opposed to adaptation, it creates "a wholly new cultural product and domain" (Sanders 35). During this journey, adapters not only use a new medium for the new text but also travel across genres, update settings, freely criticise the source text and reinterpret it "according to the social, cultural, and artistic parameters of the contemporary historical consciousness" (Collington 177–178). This creates another dimension for examining

adaptations using appropriation as an approach. Whereas the relationship between a book and its screen version has always been seen as a cornerstone for the fidelity criticism approach, appropriation can help one see another no less important relationship: the relationship of the filmmaker of a particular adaptation with their own society, culture, politics, and historical period.

In 1996, McFarlane disagreed with the adaptation's ability to offer a critique of a literary text by calling such a thought an "extreme" (*Novel into Film: Introduction* 11). Ten years later, Sanders disagreed with this, noting that adaptation is repeatedly engaged in "offering commentary on a source text" (23). Alexander Burry provides a good example of art as a "continual process of criticism in itself", pointing to artists that were reflecting "upon each other's creations":

> Novels such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, which indicate source texts in their very titles, function not only as rewritings of *The Odyssey* and *Faust*, respectively, but also as critiques that illuminate their relevance for future ages and cultural contexts.
> (*Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 16)

Both adaptation and appropriation are modes of creativity that involve "collaboration and cooperation" (Sanders 6). However, one can hardly imagine any productive collaboration when fidelity to a canonical text continues to restrict various creative endeavours or opinions from filmmakers. When one text is allowed to criticise and comment on the other text, is that not a more open approach? The historical development can not only bring out "a revised point of view from the 'original', adding hypothetical motivation or voicing what the text silences or marginalizes" as Sanders claims, but it can also help filmmakers "make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating" (23). From a "process similar to adaptation", a "method of adaptation", or a "subcategory of adaptation", appropriation can become "a form of criticism" (Hudelet 48) and an effective strategy for filmmakers. This strategy will arguably create a more "complicated, intricate and sometimes embedded relationship" between such creators and the literary texts they use to adapt (Sanders 36) while leaving fidelity criticism in the past.

The "adaptation as a dialogue" approach grows in many productive ways from both *appropriation* and *intertextuality* while supporting the idea of adaptation as a commentary. This

approach relates to the works of Mikhail Bakhtin,[7] who ironically never wrote about film adaptations. I assert that dialogism as an approach is universal and can be applied widely, which is why Bakhtin's theory has a wide resonance in many disciplines. Bakhtin argues that all existing texts form an infinite system where all earlier texts are in dialogue with all subsequent texts (*Dialogic Imagination* 280). Paying special attention to Bakhtin's work, which had been overlooked in the field, Julia Kristeva developed the idea of *intertextuality* in her works in the 1980s. She confronted the idea of any text being complete by arguing that "all texts invoke and rework other texts in a rich and ever-evolving cultural mosaic" (qtd. in Sanders 21). Stam calls this process "the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation" ("Beyond Fidelity" 66). Leitch suggests that "all texts quote or embed fragments of earlier texts", most of the time "without explicit acknowledgment" or "conscious intention" ("Twelve Fallacies" 165). Burry supports scholars who perceive "adaptation as a dialogue of numerous intertexts" (*Border Crossing* 6). If writers are in dialogue with each other, agreeing with or criticising each other's ideas when writing their novels, then filmmakers can be imagined as in dialogue with writers and audiences of adaptations as in dialogue with filmmakers. All of these dialogic processes are constantly creating new texts. Hutcheon argues that "stories adapt just as they are adapted" (31).

Leitch summarises the Bakhtinian approach by suggesting that it can "recast adaptation studies as intertextual studies" and will give equal "aesthetic or ontological privilege" to any text regardless of it being an original or an adaptation ("Where Are We Going" 332). Burry supports this by suggesting that "seeking new ways of understanding the process of reworking literature into other forms" should be based on "a lateral rather than hierarchical relationship" and "dialogue between the two works" (*Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 15). Following this, I argue that Bakhtin's approach is especially relevant to adaptation studies.

Developing a new adaptation methodology based on dialogue may offer productive ways to grow the field. A new relationship between a novel and a film can develop if one changes the angle of adaptation studies, as Tara Collington proposes, by shifting the object of study to the synergy between texts (173). This could come from Stam's spotlight on the interaction between literature and film in the "process of mutual illumination" and "learning from one another" (*Literature through Film* 365). If adaptation studies give film texts more freedom of

[7] Bakhtin is a Russian philosopher, literary critic, and scholar. He is considered the precursor of intertextuality theory, and his study is a foundation for academic works on the dialogic approach in the adaptation field.

interaction with the source text, this can inspire new methodologies and more artistic adaptations to occur without fear of being blamed, shamed, or criticised. This may eventually help film studies accept adaptations as individual artworks.

Dialogues in adaptation occur frequently, sometimes going unnoticed and being confused with infidelity. Cristina Della Coletta, Burry, Andrew, Stam, Hutcheon, and other scholars pay attention to how different stories travel around the world. One can almost imagine a story as a real person while reading the terms they use for intercultural adaptations: "border crossing", "travel", "transportation" to "cinematic territories", and "encounters" (Della Coletta, Burry and White). Such linguistic descriptions can encourage the feeling that "stories" are free from the ownership of their creator, as well as being free to travel around the world and live forever. Encounters between "cultures and traditions" (*Border Crossing* 6), "eras, styles, nations, and subjects" (Andrew 106), and "gender, racial, and sexual boundaries" (Murray 6), with the help of "transformative hermeneutical power" (Della Coletta 3), can entirely transform the understanding and the impact of the source text and "register the dialogue that takes place between societies as a result" (Sanders 30).

Here, the dialogic approach shows similarities with translation as an approach to adaptation. These similarities exist not only because international stories need to be translated into other languages but also because cultural, moral, political, and other values of the culture where the journey began need to be developed according to the values of the destination culture. In many cases, such a transition can help revive an outdated story and create a new ground for its development in a different culture. The cross-cultural dialogic approach is also connected with adaptation and appropriation. As Swagat Patel has noted, Sanders often uses the term appropriation while discussing "adaptations which transpose the source culture to a different culture" while supporting "the same universality of theme and have the task of creating verbal, visual, and/or aural analogies that link two cultures" (21). It is hard to blame the adapter for "chang[ing] this and that" when one thinks outside the box and agrees with Hutcheon's argument that "an adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context – a time and a place, a society, and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum" and that adapters should strive "to find contemporary resonance for their audiences" (142). Corrigan ("Adaptations, Refractions, and Obstructions") and Leitch ("Adaptation, the Genre") also bring attention to the contexts of adaptations.

The notion of dialogue has almost limitless connotations. While applying his concept of dialogism to novels, Bakhtin meant not only the dialogue between the author and the reader or the author and translator. His concept also included a wider range of possible dialogues and an array of multiple voices incorporated into the canvas of creative work (he was writing about books, and I apply it to films). In Bakhtin's view, those dialogues occur not only between the specific text and other texts but also between the writer and their characters (*Dialogic Imagination* 320) as well as between different characters. Collington argues that Bakhtin's concept is "more crucial than even Bakhtin imagined". She proposes adding other voices to dialogues with creators of an adaptation: "the studios, theatres, boards of directors, sponsors, and other concerned stakeholders in the mounting of a play, opera or film". She also suggests that adaptation as a process might be "the most dialogic of all possible art forms" (169). Roland Barthes' thoughts can be added here. He assumes that the meaning of creative work (text) is generated not only by authors and "the texts of the previous and surrounding culture" but also by readers who devise their own connotations "even if the author of the text has not foreseen them" ("Theory" 37–39). Hutcheon goes even further by adding the dialogue between creative works, "the adapted text and adaptation", and "the society in which [they] are produced and that in which they are received" (149). Each of these potential dialogues brings limitless possibilities for different angles and criteria for the critical analysis of screen adaptations.

1.4 Collaboration and Authorship in the Adaptation Process

In addition to all polyphonic voices surrounding a work of art, Bakhtin's dialogic methodology also includes "the listener (reader, viewer)" (*Late Essays* 165). As the process of reading is personal to each specific reader, many interpretations can be produced. Stam calls these interpretations "an infinity of readings" and adds that "any novel can generate any number of adaptations" ("Beyond Fidelity" 63) all of which will be, unsurprisingly, different. MacCabe also highlights that "the number of variables involved in any adaptation […] approach infinity" (8). Similarly, French filmmaker and theorist Jean-Luc Godard mentions "an infinite number of ways of readings of any one work". For him, as Cahir notes, "originality invariably enters the moment someone begins reading the literature; and the unavoidably original way in which one reads a text affects how one translates the work into film and affects one's notions of faithfulness" (199).

I argue that *hermeneutics* – which famously deals with interpretation – should be included as a vital part of adaptation studies. However, it is rarely mentioned in this discipline, which so heavily relies upon interpretative approaches by filmmakers. In his book, *The Act of Reading*, Wolfgang Iser places readers in the process of generating meaning instead of perceiving them as passive receivers of the writer's message. Iser's theory opposes "spirit", "core", or "static meaning" being incorporated into a book. On the contrary, he sees meaning as "the product of an interaction between the textual signals and the reader's acts of comprehension" (9). When a literary text travels between centuries, cultures, or both, the reader might receive the story differently. Certain transcultural elements would travel successfully across borders as some aspects of a text will be grasped in broadly the same way by readers separated by place and time. Nevertheless, different backgrounds can affect the way filmmakers, readers, and performers reinterpret a text created by a writer (Hutcheon 142, Sanders 3). With so many factors impacting an individual via their social, political, economic, gender, cultural, and other backgrounds, it is no wonder that unique interpretations are brought to the screen by different filmmakers. This can be seen in the comparative studies of those literary works that have been adapted repeatedly over the years. Filmmakers who are blamed for infidelity to a book can, in fact, be quite faithful to the experience they had as readers and to their interpretation of the book according to "their own semantic understandings of freedom, love, betrayal, democracy, and a whole host of other concepts" (Burry and White *Border Crossing* 9).

I see the "infinity of readings" as a key element in adaptation studies. Let us consider a hypothetical book with a potentially (as some do believe) hidden spirit/core/meaning/message. This book has multiple readers: Filmmaker, Critic, Literary Scholar, Film Scholar, and Film Viewer. They all start reading the book "with a varied set of experiences, memories, competencies, biases, emotional as well as conceptual presuppositions" (Della Coletta 14), and they will have a certain, what Hutcheon calls, "horizon of expectation" (121). By the end of the reading, they will all interpret the book and find its spirit/core/meaning/message for themselves. Inspired by the book, the Filmmaker makes a screen adaptation based on their own interpretation during their reading experience. Our Critic, Literary Scholar, Film Scholar, and Film Viewer will come to watch the film adaptation, interested in how the book has been represented. Their expectations of the film change in the process of reception as now they interpret not only the book they read but also the film as a new text. There is a significant chance that the Critic, Literary Scholar,

Film Scholar, and Film Viewer will leave the cinema somehow dissatisfied with the adaptation. It is unlikely that any of them will see on the screen the same film they saw in their heads while reading the book. What they will see is "somebody else's phantasy", as Christian Metz called it (112), that "comes from the director's imagination rather their own", in Hutcheon's words (29). They will come home, open their blogs, research papers, IMDB accounts, forums, and book drafts and will splash their discontent onto blank pages, blaming the Filmmaker for infidelity to the great book the Writer created: end of story. It could be called "Phantasy Being Disappointed" (Metz 112). A sorry tale, is it not?

The research on how adaptation (both as a process and a result) depends on individual interpretation of the novel is remarkably limited, and I suggest that the field would massively benefit from more practical research projects examining this matter. David Bordwell was the first to propose an experiment in 2006 connected with adaptation as interpretation. His idea was to give four directors the same script and see how different their films would be ("Who the Devil Wrote It?"). Jennifer Oey, a PhD researcher from the University of East Anglia, undertook this experiment and shared the results in her 2016 thesis, *Practising Adaptation: One Screenplay, Five Films*. Although her research was very illuminating, more research in this area is needed with different variables as a criterion. Whereas Oey's research investigated the difference between films created from the same screenplay, my research will look at different films adapted from the same novel. It would be interesting to see research on different screenplays based on the same literary source or the same book adapted by the same director 10 or 20 years after their first version. This could help to explain the interdependence between filmmakers' views of the world and their artistic choices, although other factors, such as production and financial constraints, can impinge upon or mediate a director's choices and finished works in certain ways.

Following Hutcheon's proposal to pay more attention to adaptation as a "process of creation" (18), I will consider the aspects of the film form that make it so different from the literary form and inevitably impact the process of adaptation. Metz offers a reminder that cinema is known as the "synthesis of all the arts" (43). Other researchers (Venuti; Elliott; Stam "Beyond Fidelity") also reflect on this, mentioning a great number of film's features – "the semiotic richness of moving images, music, props, architecture, costumes, audible dialogue" (Elliott "Form/Content Dilemma" 227) – that are dependent on many different forms of artistic expression as well as "distinct styles of acting, directing and studio

production", "trajectory of a particular actor's, director's or screenwriter's career" (Venuti 30), and so forth. Whereas the nature of the novel is dependent primarily on the "written word", the film's nature hinges on all the aforementioned aspects and, therefore, requires "a shift from a solo model of creation to a collaborative one" (Hutcheon, 80). Cinema is the most collaborative of all arts, and the list of those involved in creating one film can at times include hundreds of people. Some of them will be technical crews, impacting only the quality of the result, while others will bring their individuality to executing the story. This certainly occurs for an original film, but what about an adaptation? How does collaboration work in those cases?

Leitch asks an interesting question: "Is adaptation similarly collaborative, or is it the work of a single agent – the screenwriter or director – with the cast and crew behaving the same way as if their film were based on an original screenplay?" ("Twelve Fallacies" 150). This question may lead to a whole new field of independent research. It made me believe that a screenplay, although missing from the majority of adaptation books and papers, could be seen as one of the major phases of adaptation as a creative process. Jack Boozer argues that the basis of a film adaptation is the script, not a literary source, as many structural changes (e.g., what to include and exclude) are made at this stage (1). I observed that the screenplay was a crucial stage of adaptation and was missing from the scholarship from the earliest stages of my research. If the screenplay is seen as an adaptation of a book, the film can be seen as an adaptation of the screenplay, which may also include several phases as postproduction (especially editing) can completely change what was shot on set, let alone what was written in the screenplay. From the development and pre-production stages to the production and post-production stages, someone always brings their own vision of the story. Additionally, since cinema is the only art that is also a business – "not everything in a film represents an interpretive artistic choice" (Swicord 12) – a studio or a producer can impose their constraints.

Commonly underrated as film creators, screenwriters are the first readers and interpreters of a novel who adapt it for the screen before the film goes into production (Snyder). However, how much does the final result depend on them? Oscar-nominated screenwriter Robin Swicord, who is well-known for literary adaptations, acknowledged that "the process of what is euphemistically called 'collaboration' can skew" the adaptations written by screenwriters (14). Although such "skewing" may or may not occur in different productions, the

production process can massively change what was written in the script. A good example is the 2012 adaptation of *Anna Karenina*, which was heavily blamed in Russia for its infidelity to the novel because of its artistic form: most of the story was transferred to a theatre.[8] While adapting Tolstoy, Tom Stoppard, the writer of the screenplay who specialises in adaptations, did not have in his screenplay what we know as "Joe Wright's *Anna Karenina*". Although the dialogue and action come from the script, the idea of a symbolic theatre location (utilised by Wright because of production issues) completely changes the audiences' perception of the film. After reading the screenplay, I can confidently say that the same script, if shot conventionally, would have had a different resonance. As such, who is the author of the film? Is it the screenwriter who adapted the novel to script or the director and production designer who adapted the screenplay to their production needs and artistic visions? The borders are not obvious.

It is common to view the director of an adaptation as "in charge" of the adaptation result. This can be explained by the fact that the marketing of adaptations usually works in such a way that it places the names of the director and the writer of the book at the forefront. This arguably creates a psychological confrontation between two *auteurs*: "Let's see what this Director made from what this Writer wrote". Hutcheon brings attention to the fact that none of the other artists that surely impact the result of the film production are "usually considered the primary adapter" (82). Della Coletta suggests that, although all the crew members "in varying roles and degrees of involvement, participate in the interpretive and creative production", they do so under "the director's leadership" (11). Whatever anyone brings to the table, it will be considered only if the director agrees that it does not go against their vision. Simultaneously, whatever the director's vision is, their choices need to be approved by a studio or an independent producer, for whom all creative endeavours are tightly connected with money.

Considering these factors, it is necessary to return to the question: Who is the adapter? In the intricate collaborative process of creating screen adaptations, I cannot find a better answer than William Goldman's argument concerning what a finished film adaptation is:

> …the studio's adaptation of the editor's adaptation of the director's adaptation of the actors' adaptation of the

[8] Renowned Russian biographer and poet Dmitry Bykov strongly condemned and vehemently criticised the film, stating that it "could only be bought and released in Russia in a state of complete moral collapse" and accusing it of "making a mockery" of the novel (qtd. in Parfitt).

> screenwriter's adaptation of a novel that might itself be an adaptation of narrative or generic conventions.
> (qtd. in Hutcheon 83)

Discussions on the authorship of adaptation bring to mind Michel Foucault's essay "What Is an Author?" and his questioning of authorship in general (101–120). If the field of adaptation is to find new angles for adaptation analysis, it might be helpful to agree on the massive impact of the collaborative nature of film adaptation productions and consider, as Katja Krebs proposes, to "destabilise notions of single authorship" (20). Murray acknowledges that adaptation scholars are exclusively interested in "*what* adaptations have been made and almost never *how* these adaptations came to be available for painstaking scholarly comparison" (Murray 5). Oey notes the same gap in the field, which is fixated on textual analyses and, while comparing "the literary 'source' to the film 'copy'", does not consider practitioners (100). Goldman indicates that "most people who write about movies don't know much about the actual problems of making one" (Goldman 102). Elliott argues that the struggles of adaptation studies occur because "the practices and processes of adaptation are at odds with those of mainstream humanities theorization" (*Theorizing Adaptation* 6). Mary H. Snyder, who aimed to "bridge the gap" between adaptation practitioners and adaptation scholars, nominated fidelity criticism as the main restriction in their relationship (106).

Ultimately, these scholars are observing the same problem: a lack of research investigating the practical aspects of adaptation as a creative and collaborative process. Although McFarlane argues that one cannot do more than "speculate on the relative contributions of various 'authors'" to a screen adaptation (*Thesis* 9), I choose to consider interviews with different authors of adaptations of one novel later in this thesis. However, I realise that, due to the small scope of my study, this will only begin to address the further research that is needed in this field.

1.5. The Art of Adaptation

> The text is dead; long live the text.
> *Thomas Leitch* (*Film Adaptation* 21)

Some adaptations choose to conform to "the letter of the book" and aspire to be faithful to their source text as much as the medium allows; Jean Mitry calls them "illustrations" (4). Humbly hiding behind the writer, such adaptations might not even have the ambition of

becoming a work of art in their own right. Arguably, what might drive them forward is the tendency for book sales to increase after a screen version has been released. Some of the books – Andre Bazin gives Dostoevsky's *Idiot* as an example – can be rather difficult to read and understand, and such illustrative adaptations can perfectly follow the function of providing "easier access" to complicated novels for a wider range of people. This "simplification" and bringing ideas of a classical book to a common denominator can be "despicable in the eyes of devotees" of a source text. However, as Bazin fairly remarks, those devotees "have hardly anything to lose by this process, and neither does Dostoyevsky" (or classical writers), but this "illustration process" can be highly beneficial for those who need an accessible introduction to the book (22).

As such, should an adaptation be a faithful illustration of a book or an unfaithful work of art that is in dialogue with the book to be called successful? Although I believe that both poles have the right to exist and to be researched according to their goals, what primarily interests me in this thesis are film texts that are in dialogue with a literary source. I am interested in filmmakers who choose to use a book as inspiration or a starting point for the creation of their own work of art, wherein their adaptation is an expression of love or hate or a commentary on the writer's ideas.

Cartmell sees adaptation as "the art of democratization, a 'freeing' of a text from the confined territory of its author and of its readers" (8). She acknowledges the 10 "secrets" of becoming a successful adapter pinpointed by Andrew Davies as "liberating" and regulated by "democratic values". One finds "don't be afraid to change things", "write scenes that aren't in the book" and "break your own rules when it feels like the right thing to do" (32) among other secrets, and I see it as an invitation for the filmmakers to become *alchemists* in their films rather than *illustrators*. According to his interview with Truffaut, this is what Hitchcock did when he adapted literary sources while "freely refashioning" them, producing a new "creation" in his "own manner" and renouncing any fidelity to the literary source (Truffaut 56).

Some would argue that the poetics of a literary work will be lost when translated to another medium and that masterpieces such as *War and Peace* and *The Brothers Karamazov* can only make "rubbishy movies" (Patterson). However, I would argue that such translation can create novel poetics and aesthetics in a new form. Elliott would have agreed with this when

saying that, "while film adaptations typically do cut and condense novels, they also add the semiotic richness of moving images, music, props, architecture, costumes, audible dialogue, and more" (*Novel/Film Debate* 144). While McFarlane reflects on "the idea of the original novel as a 'resource'" (*Novel into Film: Introduction* 10), Seger compares the process of work with this "resource" to sculpting and quotes Michelangelo regarding adaptation: "The angel is caught inside the stone. I simply carve out everything that isn't the angel" (2). All of this makes me agree with Hutcheon, who suggests basing critical evaluation of screen adaptations not on fidelity to the source text but on the adapter's "creativity and skill to make the text one's own and thus autonomous" (21).

In this chapter, I have considered fidelity criticism and ways to overcome this approach. It is my wish that future adaptation scholars have the freedom to view fidelity criticism as something that is no longer an issue and focus on developing new strategies. Corrigan argues that "fidelity has become a fully archaic aesthetic measure, except as one can be faithful to one's own self, desire, tastes, imagination, and inclinations" ("Which Shakespeare to Love" 167). In agreement with his vision, I want to concentrate on the practitioners who create screen versions of novels and their ways of having dialogues with writers. Disregarding Dostoevsky's "fetishization", I will concentrate on a dialogic relationship between writers and their adapters to identify how screen works can be "enriched by dialogue with the literary work" (Vernitskaia).

As the main focus of this thesis is the adaptation of a specific character created by Dostoevsky in his novel *Crime and Punishment*, I would like, at this point, to leave many of the adaptation field debates behind. Instead, I will concentrate on the principles and approaches mentioned in this chapter which, I believe, are productive for my research of screen versions of Sonia Marmeladova. Consequently, in the third chapter, I will investigate several incarnations of this heroine, who came into being over the last 90 years or so in several English-speaking countries. However, before I do so, I will need to explain why I chose Dostoevsky's Sonia as my case study.

CHAPTER 2

The Complexity of Dostoevsky's Sonia

> The fictional character of Sonya represents the pain of oppressed and despised women in every culture, who are treated as if they were, in themselves, "nothing". Through Sonya, such women find a voice.
>
> *Katherine Mansfield* (qtd. in Briggs 76)

2.1 Getting Acquainted with Sonia Marmeladova

Crime and Punishment was written more than 150 years ago and has produced an immense amount of research, both in Russia and abroad. Traditionally, the focus of the research has been on the novel's protagonist, Raskolnikov, because he is perceived by scholars as the main character of the novel. The research on the main female character, Sonia Marmeladova,[9] is still developing. Sonia's significance in *Crime and Punishment* has been overlooked and arguably misunderstood by many Western critics (Panichas 39). The amount of academic texts examining her is substantially small. Most Dostoevsky scholars of the last century gave Sonia the same (if not less) credit as other secondary characters of the novel. This could be seen as quite reasonable since the novel is focused on Raskolnikov. Nevertheless, in the last two decades, Sonia has begun to receive more research attention. If the reason for academics scrutinising Sonia more deeply related to the rise of fourth-wave feminism and more attention to women in general, I would anticipate the screen depiction to also become more complex and nuanced. However, many filmmakers see Sonia as part of a secondary romantic storyline (King 104) and portray her as a submissive and weak heroine. I believe that many mid-century screen approaches to Sonia reduce the significance of this multidimensional character, who is "degraded, humiliated, and triumphant, passive and active, fragile and strong, victim and free personality" (Filová 99). This chapter will create the basis for subsequent chapters through the profound analysis of Sonia and new literary research on her. Additionally, I believe that, through clues that Dostoevsky hid in his novel, it is possible to distinguish some deeper meanings buried under seemingly simple surfaces.

[9] There are three different versions of the name of the heroine in Dostoevsky's novel: *Sofia Semyonovna* (the formal name), *Sonechka* (a diminutive version of the name), and *Sonia* (*Sonya* in some translations). For the sake of consistency, I will use the name *Sonia* to refer to this character. In citations, I will respect the spelling used by the authors of the quotes.

The novel is built around the protagonist, Raskolnikov, who is a former student living in poverty. After committing the premeditated murder of an old pawnbroker based on his ideology, Raskolnikov grapples with his conscience throughout the book. At the beginning of the novel, Raskolnikov meets a drunkard named Semyon Marmeladov in a tavern. This jobless alcoholic tells Raskolnikov the story of his 18-year-old daughter Sonia, who has been forced by his wife into prostitution as the only option to provide for their family of five: himself, his terminally ill wife Katherine, and three of Sonia's stepsiblings. While living in humiliation, disgrace, and injustice because of her unwilled profession, selfless Sonia never complains; she understands that she is the only source of financial support for her mendicant family. What helps her remain sane is her strong belief in God and her reading of the *Bible*. After her father dies upon being hit by a carriage, mentally unbalanced Raskolnikov repeatedly visits Sonia, frightening her with his strange behaviour. After Sonia reads him the story of Lazarus, who was miraculously raised from the dead, from the Gospel, Raskolnikov finally confesses his murder to her. His confession to the police follows. When Raskolnikov is sentenced to eight years of hard labour in Siberia, Sonia chooses to follow him. After transforming his life, she becomes the source of the protagonist's spiritual resurrection at the end of the novel.

The initial novel idea, created a year before the plot of Raskolnikov's journey formed, had the title *The Drunkards*. Having researched Dostoevsky's letters to publishers, Boris Tikhomirov believes that Dostoevsky primarily planned to write a novel focused on the family of the Marmeladovs (Sonia, her father, her stepmother, and siblings) and their misfortunes. The murder storyline was added by the writer later (12), which shows the interest of the writer in the Marmeladov plotline as a standalone story. This chapter investigates an argument that Sonia was conceived by Dostoevsky as an important figure with a "powerful role in the novel" (V. O'Neill 45).

Mikhail Bakhtin calls Dostoevsky's approach to character creation "polyphonic" (*Poetics*). He outlines this approach as something new, which was not attempted by any writers before. This theory of polyphonism allows several protagonists in one novel as all the characters have independent voices not "limited to the author's horizon" (Gibson 64). Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia", or the multiple voices in Dostoevsky's novels, poses both a challenge and an opportunity for interpretation (Burry *Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 6) as it

emphasises the agency that orchestrates the diverse and sometimes opposing voices within the text (Stam *Literature through Film* 194–195). Not only Sonia's dependence on Raskolnikov but also the characters' *interdependence* was noticed by Tikhomirov, who calls them "two 'poles' of the semantic structure of *Crime and Punishment*" (29–30). They both are the *transgressors*,[10] make sacrifices for good reasons, struggle, and attain salvation and resurrection. The only difference is hidden at the beginning of their spiritual journey: Sonia sacrifices *herself* for others whereas Raskolnikov sacrifices *someone else*. Following this, I propose viewing Sonia's character as equal, not secondary, to Raskolnikov, agreeing with Maia Stepenberg that Raskolnikov and Sonia are "two principal protagonists" of the novel (1162).

While attempting to trace how academics and literary critics have approached Sonia as a character in the last seventy years, following the second wave of feminism and the development of post-feminism, I have noticed no general agreement on this character among them. Similarly, as readers respond to Dostoevsky's heroine in various and frequently ambivalent ways, scholars cannot compromise in their approaches.

Some critics blame the writer and argue that Sonia is Dostoevsky's failure. They call her "weakly presented" (Leatherbarrow XXIII) and "not Dostoyevsky's most successful creation" (Jones, *Novel of Discord* 82), claiming that, "as a figure, Sonia is not successful" (Curle 28). Other scholars negatively express their vision of Sonia, referring to her as an "unfortunate, unschooled, and unknowledgeable girl" (Shestov 224–225), an "uneducated or simple woman" full of the "passionate passivity of holy foolishness without ambivalence" (Straus 145), and an "inconsequential speck of dust" (De Macedo 81). Richard Peace, four times on two pages, uses the word "submissiveness" to describe Sonia (52–53). Some of the researchers' descriptions of Sonia lack any interest in or compassion for her. Sonia was ranked as a type of "eternal victim" (Rosen 266) and called a "fantasy of the perfect therapist" (qtd. in Straus 20) or a "figure of the therapist who treats trauma" (De Macedo 44). It is interesting to note that most of these definitions are coming from male scholars and were written in the middle and end of the twentieth century.

Conversely, Sonia receives the same amount of positive comment, even praise, from other scholars. Romano Guardini calls her "the most appealing of Dostoyevsky's feminine figures"

[10] This refers to the equivocal title of the novel in Russian (crime and transgression) which will be analysed in the fourth chapter.

(qtd. in Seeley 294); Valerii Kirpotin observes Sonia's complex depth, "seemingly timid and submissive, in fact, undaunted and unbending" (167); and Eurialo De Michelis praises Dostoevsky for his mastery as Sonia is "saved from appearing a mere plaster saint or stage martyr by the delicacy with which her image – slight, vibrant, shadow-like, yet stark and vivid – is drawn" (qtd. in Seeley 294). Katherine Briggs successfully confronts Sonia's critics, calling the heroine "one of Dostoevsky's strongest characters in terms of her steadfastness, self-sacrifice, and influence on others" (77). Simona Filová believes that Sonia is "one of the most impressive characters of Dostoevsky's work of art, and of world literature in general" (104).

It might seem difficult not to be lost while comparing antipodal views wherein scholars seem to be describing different characters. This became a challenge and the primary reason for my attraction to Sonia as a case study: she appears challenging as a character to be represented on screen. That is why, before proceeding to analyse screen representations of her, I will consider Sonia Marmeladova in-depth and attempt to bring together her human, saintly, and symbolic features. Looking deeper into her personal story, identifying her main traits, and analysing possible meanings of her actions, I aim to open some new avenues for potential representations of her on screen. Through several subchapters, I will provide an overview of Sonia as a person, show the duality and paradox of her simultaneously being a *prostitute* and a *saint*, and examine the archetypical nature and allegorical meanings of this heroine.

2.2 Sonia's Human Nature

Working on Sonia as his heroine, Dostoevsky planned the creation of someone "positively beautiful" and "infinitely good" (Frank 562) who could be a role model and expression of his vision of goodness. After investigating the main traits connected with Sonia, I distinguished four leading areas: humility, forgiveness and compassion, suffering, and self-sacrifice. This list can be perceived as including not only the qualities of one character but also the main motives and themes of the novel, arguably suggesting Sonia be perceived as its central element.

An established preconception often supports the perception of humility as a trait of weakness or a synonym for passivity, submissiveness, and obedience, and it is seen by some as "not a virtue" (Spinoza et al.). Because of this trait, Sonia as a character and Dostoevsky as her

creator have frequently been criticised by feminist scholars. Her strength as a female character has largely been questioned because she is humble and meek. However, the writer's intention to create a humble character who is also active and powerful has been noted by Temira Pachmuss and Pavel Fokin. Pachmuss draws attention to the importance of "the moral force of meekness" for Dostoevsky (139). Fokin also speaks about "the power of meekness" and the way it was declared in the very structure of Sonia's image. Sonia is an example of humility being a great strength (Fokin). In his article "Dostoevsky and Christianity" Professor Alexei Osipov calls humility "the salt of all virtues" and "evidence of the great courage of a man who was not afraid to meet the most formidable and inexorable rival – his conscience" (Osipov). In the notebooks to *Crime and Punishment*, Sonia addressed Raskolnikov:

> And you be meek, and you be humble – then you'll defeat the whole world, as there is no stronger sword than this.
> (Dostoevsky *The Notebooks for Crime and Punishment* 7:188)

These words were cut away in the published version, arguably because of ongoing debates with the book's editors (Fusso 149–153) and the writer's wish to make Sonia less preachy. He wanted her actions, not just her words, to be meaningful. This echoes a common principle known to every contemporary screenwriter: "Show, don't tell". Consequently, Sonia is very cinematic and, in fact, one of the most active characters in the novel. While other characters spend their days in agonising thought, philosophical conversation, and analysis of what should or should not be done, Sonia simply "goes out and does what has to be done", "responding to the needs of others" with her actions (Briggs 81). For example, she helps her intellectually disabled friend Lizaveta, enters the sex industry when her destitute family is desperate for money, and follows convicted Raskolnikov to Siberia.

Concepts of *forgiveness* and *compassion* have deep bonds with Dostoevsky's works in general (Kristeva), and this is true of *Crime and Punishment* with Sonia in particular. Forgiveness is usually described by psychologists "as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you" ("Forgiveness"). Compassion is usually connected with "the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering" ("Compassion"). Historically, forgiveness and compassion were associated with femininity and, as Kathryn Norlock suggests, were always expected more of women than of men (7–8). Forgiveness is a virtue that often becomes another problem in the perception of Sonia's character from a feminist

perspective. To confront this, I propose to explore forgiveness from theological and psychological angles. Theological views on forgiveness were undoubtedly crucial to Dostoevsky. The fact that Sonia "understands the concept of human forgiveness as a channel for the grace of God" (Briggs 94) only adds another layer to the character. Without considering biblical and theological views of the unconditional nature of forgiveness (Tombs 588), without which we "have no future" (Tutu), in *Crime and Punishment* one sees an unlikable picture of a girl who meekly forgives any terrible things done to her by other people. Moreover, Richard Fitzgibbons identifies forgiveness as "a powerful therapeutic intervention which frees people from their anger" (630).[11] Thus, I assert that forgiveness, in Sonia's case, has nothing to do with submissiveness or victimhood.

Another angle that provides a deeper understanding of Sonia's forgiveness is cultural. The novel intertwines forgiveness and compassion in Sonia's character in a manner that suggests the fusion of these two concepts into *compassionate forgiveness*. This can be seen as an aspect of Russian femininity as such a notion can be applied not only to Sonia but also to other Russian fictional female characters as well as famous Russian female historical figures.[12] While discussing compassion and forgiveness in her article on Russian women and self-censorship, Nadia Kakurina sees great power in Russian women's cultural ability to be "a spiritual guide to the man" and be proud to "protect their men from themselves and from life". Kakurina mentions the traditional Victorian "angel in the house" image – commonly negatively perceived by feminist scholars – and argues that nineteenth-century Russian fictional heroines, including Sonia, are not of the same essence. The only thing they have in common is their compassionate "attitude to their menfolk" (28).

The union of the two aforementioned concepts can explain Sonia's behaviour and, in many ways, provides answers to those who cannot understand her absolute forgiveness. Raskolnikov humiliates Sonia and questions her faith, bringing her to tears in many scenes. Her alcoholic father, Marmeladov, allows his daughter into prostitution and uses her income to feed his addiction. Katerina, the stepmother, literally pushes Sonia to sell herself and then lives with her children on Sonia's income. Wrongdoers, they all exploit Sonia's kind-heartedness and bring suffering into her life. One might ask how she was able to forgive

[11] Additionally, in her book, Norlock discusses a woman from Bosnia whose real-life experience shows that she was able to stop hating and experience forgiveness towards people who were torturing her. She described hatred as an "exhausting" feeling. She was able to find comfort and peace because of her forgiveness (85).
[12] Here, I mean Dostoyevsky's, Tolstoy's, and Turgenev's fictional female characters and Decembrist wives.

them. Sonia's ability to feel compassion makes her understand that the people abusing her are suffering themselves. Feeling their pain, Sonia can easily forgive them and not let anger or hatred into her soul. This makes her purer than the people around her, and I argue that this also places her in a position of moral superiority over other characters.

Compassion can be also defined as "suffering together", which leads me to the next characteristic of Sonia. The preeminent significance of a concept such as *suffering* for Dostoevsky is undeniable. His belief in the interdependence between suffering and happiness passed through most of his literary works. In his notebooks to *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky states the following:

> Man is not born for happiness. Man earns his happiness, and always by suffering. There's no injustice here…
> (Dostoevsky *The Notebooks for Crime and Punishment* 188)

In a letter to his niece Sofia Ivanova, he wrote that

> Man, without suffering, cannot even understand happiness, for one's ideal passes through suffering like gold passes through fire. The Kingdom of Heaven can be attained only through and with an effort.
> (qtd. in Pachmuss 123)

In the core of Sonia's personal story, one can see the concept of *suffering* as something inseparable from her. If one examines the themes and topics throughout the novel, it is evident that what is represented in Sonia's life is significant for the whole text. In one way or another, all the characters of the novel are suffering, including those who abuse and damage Sonia. However, concentrating on Sonia, it is easy to fall under the impression that her suffering is meaningless. Predicting such a reasonable reaction to her story, Dostoevsky places this exact belief into Raskolnikov's head. In one of his visits to Sonia, the character states that she executed and betrayed herself "in vain" because she is in fact "not helping anyone with this" and "not saving anyone from anything" (*Crime and Punishment* 4:4).[13] Although Raskolnikov "universalises Sonya into a symbol of unjust suffering" (qtd. in Blake 255) and kneels before her for this, he does not accept her suffering and sees it as a pointless act. Here, Dostoevsky identifies the problem in his protagonist's judgemental position: Raskolnikov does not believe in God, and therefore he does not consider Sonia's suffering

[13] From here onwards, when directly quoting the novel I will use the original novel in my own translation from Russian into English. The place in the novel will be stated as follows: (*Crime and Punishment* Part: Chapter).

through the prism of Christianity. It takes time for Raskolnikov to undergo a transformation and to notice that Sonia's suffering is "made meaningful by faith in God and exemplified by Sonya's loving commitment to fellow sufferers" (Desmond 65).

Katalin Gaal notes that the concept of suffering is especially "prominent in Russian Orthodox religious and cultural practice" (228). Elena Volkova supports this and explains that "Russian Christians believe that the more one suffers the closer one is to Christ" (33). Considering the different views of Raskolnikov and Sonia on God and the Christian faith, it is not surprising that they perceive suffering differently. While Raskolnikov feels one should avoid it, Sonia believes that suffering can make someone a better person. She gives Raskolnikov advice he is not yet ready to follow: "To accept the suffering and to redeem yourself by this, that's what you need" (*Crime and Punishment* 5:4). As such, Sonia is ready to undergo misery and humiliation as she believes in redemption through suffering and knows that the sufferer will ultimately be rewarded by God. Sonia owns her suffering as a result of her free will and free choice, which I consider a sign of her strength and resilience. Eventually, it turns out that she was right: while it is too late for her parents, it is not too late for her siblings to have their happy endings. Fokin raises the heroine to the powerful epic level of existence while simultaneously taking into consideration Raskolnikov's points regarding the meaningless of her suffering: "She cannot save the world, but without her, the world has no chance of salvation" (Fokin).

The last significant concept I would like to bring attention to is *self-sacrifice*. Divergent views on Sonia as a self-sacrificing personality type are found in the works of both Dostoevsky and feminist scholars. The heroic nature of her actions and her martyrdom were emphasised by the comparison of Sonia saving her family from starvation with Joan of Arc saving France from conquerors (Kirpotin 152) and Sonia following Raskolnikov to Siberia with selfless Decembrist wives following their husbands into exile (J. Tucker, *Profane Challenge* 210). Self-sacrifice is the main concept upon which *The New Testament* is built, and Jesus Christ is one of the most famous examples of a self-sacrificing personality. While an example of goodness to many Christians, the idea of Christ as a role model of self-sacrifice has not always been supported by feminist scholars. Mary Daly suggests that self-sacrifice can "reinforce the scapegoat syndrome for women" and thus considers it as a negative virtue that females in modern sexist society should not "be encouraged to have" (77). Conversely, feminist ethicist Ruth Groenhout went deeper in her analysis of the nature of self-sacrifice and distinguished

two types of such action that depend on its aims. Whereas one type, which leads to "worsening of oppression or a complicity with abuse", she acknowledges as inappropriate, she also identifies another and argues it is "consonant with feminist objectives". The "proper self-sacrifice", according to Groenhout, would aim to "eliminate or limit the destruction of others or healthy social relations" and, more crucially, provide an "opportunity to oppressors to be healed of their own brokenness" (qtd. in Green 573). The last argument can be perfectly linked to Sonia and her sacrifice.

I must mention that the prefix "*self*" plays a crucial role in the notion of "*sacrifice*". As indicated earlier, the principal difference between Raskolnikov's murder and Sonia's prostitution lies in this prefix. They both "transgress" for a good reason: to help other people. Raskolnikov's act of offering by killing another human being, albeit evil, differs significantly from Sonia's act of offering from her own body. Significantly, in *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky states his position on the importance of self-sacrifice by showing how the world gradually collapses around Raskolnikov after his act and how the world gradually comes to peace around Sonia after her act of sacrifice. In his notebooks, Dostoevsky writes that the whole Earth's existence would be senseless without so-called "earthly equilibrium", which is based on "the law of striving for the ideal". He formulates this law as "sacrificing *through love* your *own self* […] to another human being" (*Unpublished* 175). The writer's devotion to self-sacrifice is far from the misogynistic desire to show a woman sacrificing herself to a man, becoming his victim, and being praised for this by a patriarchal sexist society. Sonia is an example of the writer's belief that Christians, irrespective of their gender, should be able to sacrifice themselves for other people. Discussing the female ability for such self-sacrifice, Dostoevsky sincerely admired women – Decembrist wives, great martyrs, and the heroines of Russian literature – because in his belief they were closer to God and better followed the precepts of Christ. He believed that self-sacrifice as a voluntary act is a "sign of the highest development of personality, its highest power, the highest self-control, the highest freedom of own will" (*Complete Works* 5:79). By applying the concept of self-sacrifice to Sonia, Dostoevsky acknowledges her power and the highest development of her personality.

While examining Sonia's traits, I questioned the purpose of Sonia as a character in the novel. As Tatyana Kasatkina notes, one of the fundamental thoughts of Dostoevsky is not that a person depends on society, but that society depends upon a person. Therefore, any environment or society can be transformed by its people ("3rd Lecture" 32:17). Hence, I

concluded that all the concepts that form a great part of Sonia's personality can be linked to *transformation*. Many women scholars, such as Briggs, Straus, Gaal, and Filová, observe this fundamental ability of Sonia's. Kasatkina states that Sonia is the most effective character in the novel because of how her actions cause transformations in others ("4th Lecture" 28:07). Sonia's humility, compassionate forgiveness, suffering, and self-sacrifice foster the transformation of the people around her. Sonia's role in Raskolnikov's transformation is significant in understanding the whole novel, not just one character: Raskolnikov finds God through the help of a woman. Nina Pelikan Straus summarises this by linking all female characters of Dostoevsky with their "potential to transform men" (145). I agree that this argument is controversial, and whereas some scholars see Sonia's power in her ability to transform the protagonist, others dispute that this is Sonia's only purpose in the novel, which makes her limited and weak as a personality. For example, Victoria O'Neill compares Sonia with a midwife who helps Raskolnikov's "re-birth as a strong, whole masculine hero"(46). I believe this denies her independent existence. I do not agree with this as Sonia's story in the novel starts long before she first meets Raskolnikov. From the beginning of her story, she is shown as an active person who lives a life based on her own beliefs. Moreover, in the epilogue of the novel, Sonia's development and her relationship with other convicts have no connection with Raskolnikov and his transformative quest.

2.3 Sonia's Paradoxical Nature

Sonia's life philosophy can be better understood by exploring it from the perspective of Christian values. This context supports seeing sense in her actions and noticing the outcomes of her deeds both in the short- and long-term. However, some Christian scholars struggle to accept Sonia because of the paradoxical structure of her character. While creating his heroine, Dostoevsky himself was uncertain whether he would be able to succeed. He wrote in his notebooks that Sonia is "the most unrealisable" (qtd. in Panichas 39). In *Crime and Punishment*, Sonia serves as an example of an "extremely paradoxically constructed character" (Filová 104). She is often referred to as a "holy sinner" because of her duality as both a prostitute and a saint. Dostoevsky brought together two opposing and conflicting features – actions and beliefs – by combining them into one person, which has created ongoing debates around his heroine.

Briggs notes that, in numerous works, Sonia is mentioned by critics solely in terms of her occupation as a prostitute: she is described as a "pure-hearted prostitute", "good-hearted prostitute", "sentimental prostitute", "humble, self-sacrificing prostitute", and "meek prostitute" as if being a prostitute was the defining aspect of her character (qtd. in Briggs 76–78). By making this profession definitive for Sonia, critics and filmmakers consciously or unconsciously supplement her image with all the prejudices that have been typical in the perception of prostitutes both in the nineteenth century and the present. Maggie O'Neill, in her book *Prostitution and Feminism*, highlights that for centuries prostitution was a stigmatised and marginalised profession. The image of a prostitute as a "social junk" has always summoned images of drug- or alcohol-addicted women from a lower class who actively transmit diseases and who are "seedy, immoral and lazy" (M. O'Neill 190, 184, 147, 130). Clare Carroll believes that, in his novel, Dostoevsky consciously reversed the conventional Russian viewpoint on prostitution in the nineteenth century. She considers the writer sympathetic to Sonia while critical of the Russian legal system that "protect[ed]" prostitution as a "necessary evil" (2). Sydney Schultze describes this system as follows:

> A certain percentage of women have to be prostitutes to satisfy men's desire for sex, so that other women can remain virgins until marriage and stay faithful to their husbands. (80)

As an outcome of Dostoevsky's general disagreement with such an approach to women, he portrays prostitution not as a seductive profession but as a result of the socio-economic hardships of his time when "hunger and poverty [were] among the chief causes of prostitution" (Fanger *Romantic Realism* 185). Agreeing with O'Neill's argument that prostitution cannot be understood in isolation from broader societal factors (37), I believe that reducing Sonia to her profession can become a barrier to capturing the complexity and depth of her character.

Although Sonia is constantly called a prostitute, Dostoevsky never shows her performing her job. The closest he comes to representing her profession is a description of her inappropriate street outfit when she visits her dying father:

> Her outfit was penniless, but decorated in a street style, to the taste and rules prevailing in this special world, with a bright and shamefully outstanding purpose.
> (*Crime and Punishment* 2:7)

Even in this scene, where Sonia is dressed as a prostitute, it looks more like a carnival outfit than a part of Sonia's personality. The outfit exists as if separate from Sonia (Mayer, 74). Janet Tucker notes that, while being a prostitute, Sonia transforms "*eros* into *agape"* (*Profane Challenge* 89). This is why her clothes, which are meant to emphasise the sexual purpose of her wearing them, do not change the innocence of her appearance.

Kasatkina argues that Dostoevsky's understanding of *sin* as a concept in *Crime and Punishment* does not coincide with its mundane meaning ("5th Lecture" 01:30). When Sonia says to Raskolnikov, "I am a great, great sinner!" (*Crime and Punishment* 4:4), the readers may think that Sonia refers to her profession. However, the notebooks for the novel indicate that the dialogue was supposed to develop differently:

> When he thinks that she is speaking about prostitution and says so, Sonia […] says to him: I am not speaking of that, but I have been ungrateful; I have sinned against love many times.
> (*The Notebooks* 68)

Following the writer's logic, a crime against love is a greater sin for Dostoevsky than selling one's body as a prostitute. Dostoevsky's initial revolutionary idea was censored because it contradicted the canonical understanding of Christian sin. As such, it could not have been published in nineteenth-century Orthodox Russian society. However, even with censorship cuts, in the writer's unacceptable "non-institutional Christianity" one finds people searching for salvation in the Gospels, not in the church, and a woman bringing the word of God and taking the confession, not a priest (Bercken 27). This made Dostoevsky's contemporaries perceive Sonia not only as fallen woman, which would have been easier, but also almost a heretic. I view this as a significant addition to the understanding of Sonia as a character.

The characteristic that should define Sonia is her *faith*, which is the pivot on which everything else rests. I agree with the claims of Sarah Young that Sonia "makes a lot more sense as a character with faith in God than the rather fantastical holy sinner we are accustomed to thinking about" (Young). Filová also believes that it is not possible to interpret this character outside "the context of her belief" and Christian ethics in general (101). Faith is Sonia's only support in life, and this makes her strong. She says to Raskolnikov, "What would I be without God?" (*Crime and Punishment* 4:4). When she reads the Gospel to him, she is described in a way that shows the contrast between her external physical weakness and her internal strength.

Instead of a crushed passive victim, Raskolnikov unexpectedly witnesses a stern warrior breathing with "indignation and anger", and he cannot stop himself from being moved by it (*Crime and Punishment* 4:4). Faith makes this fragile girl, who is often intimidated by other people, extraordinarily strong. It is interesting to note that faith is also an important point in the perception of this heroine by readers. In his research, Marcin Borowski discovered a connection between the respondents' religious views and their opinions about Sonia as a character. Borowski's data showed that the participants who most strongly declared their faith in God tended to feel more positive about Sonia's beliefs (34).

Scholars who remain sympathetic to Sonia remark that, although her physical purity is sacrificed to sin, her soul is miraculously untouched by her profession and remains pure and chaste (J. Tucker, "Symbolism of Clothing" 261; Kasatkina, *The Sacred* 196; Morris 11). Some scholars have gone even further. When discussing the purity of the character, not only have they commented on Sonia's "iconic beauty", but they have also referred to her as an icon, even "a miraculous icon" (Kasatkina, *The Sacred* 93), as she has a transforming effect on people around her (Gaal 225).

Power and strength can be seen in Sonia when she is perceived from a Christian perspective. Janet Tucker notes this "impressively growing strength" and how, throughout the novel, the initially "economically downtrodden" heroine "emerges as powerful" (*Profane Challenge* 194). The title of the article by Filová – "Sonya Marmeladova – Paradox of Female Power?" – also draws attention to the way the paradoxical structure of the character supports her female power. Whereas some scholars struggle with accepting the paradoxical nature of the heroine, I see it as an incredible opportunity for a challenging representation on screen.

2.4 Sonia's Symbolic Nature

Some Dostoevsky scholars discuss Sonia's symbolic meaning more than her human life story. I encountered opinions that Sonia is "so 'godlike', supernatural, that she is no longer human" (Filová 104), that "she is an angel, but she is not human" (Curle 62), that she "follows in the illustrious literary footsteps of Beatrice in Dante's *Divine Comedy*" (Stepenberg 1166), and that she is "a symbol of ideal humanity" (Gaal 226). Dostoevsky's contemporary Søren Kierkegaard was sure that "everything essentially Christian bears a double meaning, one of which is hidden" (qtd. in Green 569). After exploring this heroine as a paradoxical fictional

human being, I proceeded with the study of Sonia as an archetype, a symbol, and an allegory, all of which helped to illuminate some deeper dimensions of this complex character.

Another compelling paradox in the construction of Sonia as a character is that she incorporates different archetypes into one image. For example, she combines both a maternal and child archetype, representing "mother nature" (qtd. in V. O'Neill 44) and "the innocence" (Jones, *Novel of Discord* 80–83) with the "depth of wisdom that is rare for her years" (Stepenberg 1163). I want to bring attention to some other archetypes that scholars (and likewise filmmakers) traditionally apply to Sonia and argue that they are based on misconceptions or false etymologies.

One of the most popular archetypes connected with heroine-prostitutes is the "tart with a heart" or "hooker with a heart of gold".[14] While common among other famous cinematic characters, I argue that this archetype does not apply to Sonia. As I previously highlighted, when she is defined by her profession, Sonia loses her complexity. This archetype leads to another prominent idea: comparing Sonia with the biblical figure of Mary Magdalene in connection with her profession. However, the belief that Mary was a prostitute is a centuries-old speculation that has no direct confirmation in the biblical texts. After scrutiny of all four Gospels texts, I did not find a single allusion to this "fact" which is perceived by all as a truth. Mass culture has widely replicated this idea, including certain Hollywood films.[15] I have found the same approach among several Dostoevsky scholars who make links between Sonia and Mary, referring to the profession.[16] Although I do not agree with using Mary Magdalene as a false archetypal fallen woman for comparison, I can nonetheless draw parallels between the two women. These parallels are not connected with profession but with the ability of both women to understand Christ's teachings through their hearts. Mary was the first witness of the resurrection of Christ in the *Bible*, and, likewise, Sonia witnessed the resurrection of the soul of Raskolnikov at the end of the novel.[17]

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[14] This archetype usually highlights the ironic vision of a woman who breaks stereotypes of her profession. Against the perception of being immoral due to their job, these archetypical characters demonstrate kindness, virtue, and moral purity. In films, such characters often become love interests for the main character. Good examples here are *Nights of Cabiria* (1957), *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), and *Pretty Woman* (1990).

[15] Some examples include the rock opera *Jesus Christ – Superstar* and films such as *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Passion of the Christ*. On the other hand, I must mention the film *Mary Magdalene* (2018), which challenges and questions the common view of Mary's profession.

[16] Some examples of this can be found in the following: J. Tucker "Symbolism of Clothing" 260; Buchanan 52; Johnson 116; J. Tucker *Profane Challenge* 87; and Mayer 5–6.

[17] My thinking was supported by Tony Marchant (screenwriter of the 2002 BBC version of the novel) during our interview. He also mentions that Mary "was both witness to Jesus's crucifixion and His resurrection", and

All archetypes behind Sonia's character can be seen as stimulating starting points for creative dialogues between the novel and its screen versions. However, what interested me the most in my investigation into the symbolism of *Crime and Punishment* was the allegorical meaning of Sonia. Russian philosopher and Christian existentialist Nikolai Berdyaev acknowledges "metaphysical realism" as the genre of Dostoevsky's late novels where, "through an external plot reminiscent of implausible criminal novels, shines a different reality" which cannot be read or understood as an elementary one (21–22). Another famous Russian literary critic and Dostoevsky scholar, Konstantin Mochulsky, also advises reflecting on Dostoevsky's works in two layers: empirical and metaphysical (Mochulsky). These visions crucially impacted my approach to adapting Sonia's story.

Many scholars who have investigated Sonia's interpretations mention the symbolism of her name. Undoubtedly, Dostoevsky's choice of name for his character was not random. Dostoevsky was working on onomastics, and all the names of his characters are either meaningful or symbolic. The Russian name Sonia is derived from the Greek name *Sophia*, which is the personification of *Divine Wisdom* and plays an influential role in Orthodox theology (Jones, *Religious Experience* 53). The validity of this intended connection is indicated in certain parts of the novel, where Dostoevsky, describing Sonia's clothes, draws parallels with the orthodox iconography of *Sophia.*[18] In 1861, the book *Historical Essays of Russian Folk Literature and Art* by Feodor Buslaev was published in Saint Petersburg. This was before *Crime and Punishment*, so it is possible that Dostoevsky was familiar with this book while working on his novel. After analysing the iconography of St. Sophia in both Russian and Western traditions, Buslaev observed that, in some icons dating from the twelfth century onwards, the name of Christ was written as St. Sophia. Throughout the years, there appeared another interpretation of the image of St. Sophia as the Mother of Christ. The second interpretation was more popular in Dostoevsky's times (296–297). The founder of sophiological doctrine, Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (close friend and confidant of Dostoevsky), defined the concept of *Sophia* as "the ideal and perfect humanity" which is "eternally encompassed within the integral divine being, or Christ" (171). The aforementioned can potentially indicate

he could see that reflected in Sonia. Marchant calls Sonia "the instigator of [Raskolnikov's] resurrection and a party to his crucifixion for the sake of his own salvation" (Marchant).

[18] For example, Janet Tucker notes that Sonia's "hat with a flaming-red feather recalls the fire associated with St. Sophia" (*Profane Challenge* 72).

that, in his novel, Dostoevsky could encrypt Sonia as an allegory of Christ, the Mother of Christ, or both.[19]

Dostoevsky's knowledge of biblical texts was profound. The Gospel of John is distinct among other Gospels: its context is unique and it was written to inspire belief. After analysing the marginal notes in *The New Testament* possessed by Dostoevsky, Irina Kirillova indicated that the writer took a special interest in Johannine texts. She counted 58 markings in the Gospel of John, compared to 12 in Matthew, 7 in Luke, and 2 in Mark (qtd. in Jones, *Religious Experience* 55). It is unsurprising that, with such detailed knowledge of Biblical texts and the use of "metaphysical realism" as a genre, Dostoevsky placed a substantial number of Biblical quotes in his novel. Reading *Crime and Punishment* without knowledge of these texts reduces the empirical and metaphysical meanings of the novel to merely the former. Many such quotes are connected with Sonia. The most obvious ones are as follows:

1. The instance when Sonia leaves home and returns to sell herself as a prostitute for the first time is six to nine. At the same time, Christ was crucified on Golgotha (Luke 23:44).
2. The money Sonia brings home from this experience is 30 silver coins. For the same price, Judas betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:15).
3. Sonia lives in a room rented from the tailor Kapernaumov. The city Capharnaum is popularly called "The Town of Jesus" because Christ is believed to have taught there.[20]

Western Dostoevsky scholars mention that Sonia is "like Christ" (Pachmuss 141) and is "synonymous with the beauty of Christ"; they call her "the living embodiment of Christ" (Gaal 227, 235) and note that "her actions mirror the acts of the Jesus" (Cato 8). The deepest Christological analysis of the novel and the heroine was undertaken by Russian scholars Tikhomirov and Kasatkina. They studied in-depth the parallels of the novel with the Gospel and the allegorical image of Sonia. These analyses help to explore the heroine from a different angle, not only as a *Christ figure* (self-sacrificing personality) but also as *Christ* Himself incarnated by Dostoevsky in his character. This interpretation became the basis of my short

[19] Kasatkina has conducted a profound analysis of Sonia's clothing, its symbolical meaning, and connections with Virgin Mary iconography in "The Epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*".
[20] The town is mentioned in *The New Testament* multiple times: Matthew 4:13, 8:5, 11:23, 17:24; Mark 1:21, 2:1, 9:33; Luke 4:23, 4:31, 7:1, 10:15; John 2:12, 4:46, 6:17, 6:24, 6:59.

research film, *Transgressing,* and I will reflect on the allegorical meaning of Sonia more in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

2.5 Sonia as an Adaptation Case Study

I see Sonia Marmeladova as a multidimensional and complex character who develops through the course of the novel and helps others to grow as a result of facing her unique characteristics. However, each of her dimensions and traits have proven to produce contrasting reactions. Her humility and meekness are perceived both as a weakness and a strength. Her forgiveness is regarded both as a feminine trait connected with Christianity and Orthodoxy and, simultaneously, a sign of victimhood. Her self-sacrifice is recognised by some feminist scholars as harmful whereas other feminist scholars claim it can be beneficial depending on the intended outcome. This chapter showed that the visions, understandings, and interpretations of Dostoevsky's heroine are different and often diametrically opposed. This is why I saw this character as an unusual and fascinating one to become a case study.

Returning to the ideas of the first chapter, considering the example of Sonia as a character case study, it is clear the fidelity approach is impossible when adapting this heroine for the screen. Whatever filmmakers believe Dostoevsky felt, thought, or intended would be their interpretation. Nevertheless, I argue that disagreements and controversies between studies surrounding this character, and the fact that everyone sees Sonia so differently, is a perfect invitation to engage in dialogue. One either agrees with one camp or another or disagrees with both. I see a dialogic approach for this character as the perfect way to represent her on screen. In the following chapters, I will examine different interpretations of Sonia on screen through the history of English-language adaptations of *Crime and Punishment* and experiment with my own modern intertextual interpretation of this heroine.

CHAPTER 3

Russian Sonia Becomes English

3.1 Adapting Dostoevsky

Traditionally, a significant amount of literature in adaptation studies has concentrated on individual case studies, primarily from classic literature, and focused on the screen versions of works by Shakespeare, Austen, and Dickens. Although there is a wide-ranging area of literary studies on Dostoevsky,[21] very limited research is being conducted on screen adaptations of his novels, and even fewer on adaptations of *Crime and Punishment*. The only book chapter that studied more than 10 adaptations of the novel was written by a prominent Russian Dostoevsky scholar, Lyudmila Saraskina. However, it mostly focuses on the transposition of the idea of the novel and the male protagonist Raskolnikov, paying limited attention to Sonia's representation ("The Phantom"). Studies of Dostoevsky's Sonia on screen are almost non-existent.

Another problem I encountered was the general trend of academics regarding adaptations of *Crime and Punishment* unfavourably, often considering Dostoevsky's novels, including this one, to be ill-suited for film. Gerald Peary and Roger Shatzkin argue that "all the directorial Scheherazades of the world cannot add up to one Dostoevsky" (qtd. in Hutcheon 3). Cynthia Marsh found *Crime and Punishment* "unfitted for any medium but the novel" (249), and Walter Gordon indicates that the novel adaptation easily "turns into artificiality" (17). Russian scholars have some explanations as to the problem with Dostoevsky's adaptations. Art historian Roman Kruglov suggests that screen versions "simplify the philosophical content" of the writer's works while concentrating on psychological conflicts (qtd. in Mihal'chenko). Saraskina argues that "the flaw in many film adaptations is that they are designed for the mass – that is, according to current concepts, *non-reading* viewers – and use actors who know only the text of their role in the script" (""Serial' Dostoevsky" 464). The research director of the Institute of Russian Literature, Vsevolod Bagno, initiated a survey that studied the

[21] The book *Dostoevskii's Overcoat: Influence, Comparison, and Transposition*, edited by Joe Andrew and Robert Reid, includes chapters on Bresson's *Pickpocket* as well as a comic book adaptation of *Crime and Punishment*. Nikita Lary, in his book *Dostoevskii and Soviet Film: Visions of Demonic Realism*, is focused on Soviet adaptations of Dostoevsky. *Multi-mediated Dostoevsky: Transposing Novels into Opera, Film and Drama* by Alexander Burry explores various works of the writer that were adapted to the screen and other media; however, not a single chapter addresses *Crime and Punishment*.

opinions of prominent cultural figures from 15 countries regarding the quality of the transfer of Dostoevsky's artistic world into the language of cinema. The respondents (writers, artists, directors, etc.) appeared to be quite sceptical in general about Dostoevsky adaptations and recommended reading the writer's novels instead of watching them (Mihal'chenko).

My research focuses on a specific topic related to *Crime and Punishment* rather than exploring Dostoevsky's body of work as a whole or even the novel itself. Although there are no studies on Sonia's adaptations for the screen, I found a curious perspective from Dickens scholar George Gissing. In his study of Dickens' characters and their comparison to some of Dostoevsky's, he suggests that it would be culturally impossible for Sonia as a character to appear in English culture. Gissing speculates on the fact that "Sonia could not have been used by the Englishman as a heroine at all", and if she was to appear in a novel by Dickens, then "instead of a most exceptional girl (by no means, [he thinks], impossible), she would have become a glaring unreality, giving neither pleasure nor solace to any rational reader". He never properly explains his argument, however (73). This opinion of a cultural impossibility posed a significant challenge for me as a researcher and filmmaker who went on to create an "English Sonia" within the short film for this study.

Not only does academia have an opinion of Dostoevsky adaptations, but renowned filmmakers also feel differently about *Crime and Punishment* on screen. Alfred Hitchcock is known as an adapter of many books into films. However, when François Truffaut suggested[22] that his fans would be interested to see him adapting Dostoevsky's novel, the director admitted that he would "never do that, precisely because *Crime and Punishment* is somebody else's achievement", so his screen version "probably wouldn't be any good". Truffaut agreed that "a masterpiece is something that has already found its perfection of form" (56–57). Another outstanding filmmaker did not agree with Hitchcock on the adaptability of *Crime and Punishment*, although he never accomplished such an adaptation himself. In 1973, Andrei Tarkovsky, according to his diary, considered this novel to be "the most integral, slender, harmonious and closest to a film script work by Dostoevsky" (85). However, Tarkovsky's opinion on adapting Dostoevsky changed through the years. In 1970, Tarkovsky was certain that it would not make sense to adapt Dostoevsky's works and that a film should be made about Dostoevsky himself (17). In 1974, before the director immigrated to Europe, he received a proposal to direct the adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Demons* (1872) in Britain. Even

[22] This conversation occurred during the famous interview of Hitchcock by Truffaut in 1962.

before reading the screenplay, the director was sure it was bad. In his diary, he wrote about the impossibility of making Dostoevsky "in England with English actors" and rejected the proposal (117). However, in 1978 he wrote in his diary seven ideas of potential films he would like to make abroad, and number five was *Crime and Punishment* (180).

In support of my position on not only the possibility of film adaptations of Dostoevsky but also the need for them, I considered the most authoritative person to have an opinion on this matter: the author himself. Before adaptation studies became a field, Dostoevsky expressed his attitude toward adaptation, which was progressive for his time and, in a way, foreshadowed some disputes that were to occur in the field for years to come. In 1872, Princess Varvara Obolenskaya addressed Dostoevsky in a letter, asking his permission to adapt *Crime and Punishment* for the stage. The writer agreed but warned that this attempt was likely to fail. Referring to his "adaptation theory", prominent Dostoevsky scholar Tatiana Kasatkina suggests that "any director who is going to adapt Dostoevsky [for stage or screen], should have this hanging in a frame on the wall" ("How to adapt"):

> There is some secret of art, according to which the epic form will never find a counterpart in the dramatic. I even believe that for different forms of art, there are also corresponding sets of poetic thoughts, so that one thought can never be expressed in another form that does not correspond to it. Another thing is if you remake and change the novel as much as possible, keeping only one episode from it for processing into a drama, or, taking the initial idea, completely changing the plot.
> (Dostoevsky *Complete Works* Vol.29(1) 225)

Although Dostoevsky was writing about a stage play, his thoughts can be easily applied to film. The writer claimed that his novel will fail to succeed and will lose its deep content in a different form if an adapter strives for automatic fidelity. What he recommended was, as Burry suggests, a "maximally free transposition methodology" (*Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 3).

Like Dickens, Dostoevsky adapted what he saw around him, unconsciously using the method later called *intertextuality*. Although he often found inspiration in articles or life events, he did not simply illustrate them in his books by expanding upon them but used them as a starting point for creating his own literary work. The same methodology, I suggest, can be used while creating films deriving from Dostoevsky's works: using them as a point of departure and as inspiration. Burry argues that "artists who rework Dostoevsky's novels into other media,

then, participate in a pre-existing transpositional project begun by the writer" and calls Dostoevsky "the artist with blatantly pre-transposed material that invites further reworking" (*Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 11). This could inspire filmmakers to use not only the adapted text of a novel by Dostoevsky but also other texts that could add to or even change the meaning of the source.

I argue that Dostoevsky's novels, perhaps due to their "polyphonism" (Bakhtin), evoke a stronger inclination for dialogue compared to many other classic literary works. Burry suggests that even "seemingly small changes nonetheless generate radically different works and new dialogues with his texts" (*Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 4). This especially applies to intercultural adaptations, where cultural changes are not only inevitable but necessary. When filmmakers consider cultural differences and the different mentalities of the writer and their target audience, critics and scholars must allow them to do so. Finding "mirroring" ideas, characters, and events in the country of production and implementing them into the Russian story can become a productive method for creating an intercultural dialogue.

Most of Dostoevsky's ideas were so deep and complex that his readers could comprehend only parts of them and interpret the rest accordingly. That is why academic scholars investigate and scrutinise what Dostoevsky meant in his works. In contrast, filmmakers rely on their vision, understanding, and interpretation of the novel. Thus, concepts such as intertextuality and dialogism can provide valuable assistance in interpreting and analysing adaptations. If one assumes that a film adaptation is not an endeavour to faithfully illustrate a literary text but is a dialogue between a filmmaker and writer with elements of intertextuality, then the analysis of a film text in connection with only the literary source ceases to make sense. Moreover, if all film texts adapt other works (e.g., articles, conversations, poems, television, and news) to some extent, one may not always be conscious of the fact that certain film texts are adaptations. The same applies to many films that are loosely based on novels without openly stating this in the credits or films that purport to be factual while being fictional.

It is impossible to completely disregard the concept of fidelity and choose not to make any comparisons between a film and its source material, as adaptations only exist when some elements of the original text are retained in the film. Therefore, anyone analysing a film may find it difficult to avoid using a comparison method in their analysis. Nevertheless, by

breaking away from the constraints of fidelity, one can better appreciate the unique qualities and creative choices of the film as a standalone work of art rather than simply judging it based on its faithfulness to the source material.

3.2 Methodology and Choosing Case Studies

> Adaptation studies appear deeply internally conflicted: the right discipline at the right time, lumbered with an obsolete methodology.
> (Murray 366)

As I mentioned earlier, there is no singular adaptation studies methodology. However, several methods for approaching my research crystallised in my mind from the beginning. Whereas the process and results of my main method, a practical project, will be analysed in the next chapter, various versions of Sonia crafted by other filmmakers are examined here. Ariane Hudelet suggests that the traditional "compare and contrast technique" applied to a "single book to single film" adaptation restricts potential approaches to adaptation research (42). As such, I have chosen multiple case studies in the form of films from different countries and periods.

More than 60 screen versions of *Crime and Punishment* have been made in more than 15 countries over the last century. For multiple reasons, I have excluded many from my close analysis. Silent films were eliminated because language, translation, and the barriers connected with them are among the important characteristics that could influence intercultural adaptation. I have excluded Russian-language productions, as their creators had an advantage over foreign productions in not having language or cultural barriers while reading the original novel. Non-English productions were ultimately not included in this thesis, primarily because most of those films were impossible to find either in online libraries, archives, or on DVD. Even those films which are accessible and famous (e.g., French and Finnish adaptations)[23] were non-accessible for me in terms of a language barrier, an inability to view the films in their production language, and the necessity to rely on film translators.

I did not explore screen versions from multiple countries "inspired by" or "loosely based on" the novel, including a large number of famous and critically acclaimed films, such as three films directed by Woody Allen (*Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1990), *Match Point* (2006), and

[23] *Crime et châtiment* by Georges Lampin (1956) and *Rikos ja rangaistus* by Aki Kaurismäki (1983).

Irrational Man (2015)), American/Spanish *The Machinist* (2005), French *Pickpocket* (1959), Brazilian *Nina* (2004) and Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976). Most of the audiences of these films will not know of them as "loose adaptations" of Dostoevsky's novel as the writer's name is not in the credits in most of the cases.[24] The majority of those films adapted Raskolnikov, his murder, or the ideology behind it as the centre of their story. Some of the female characters are vaguely reminiscent of Sonia, who is the focus of my research (e.g., Iris in *Taxi Driver*, Stevie in *The Machinist*, and Eileen/Cathy Stevens in *Fear* (1947)). However, most of the female secondary characters seen alongside the male versions of Raskolnikov are so far from Dostoevsky's Sonia that I decided not to choose such films as my case studies.[25]

After excluding other adaptations from my research, I proceeded to analyse the seven English-language screen versions of *Crime and Punishment* produced between 1935 and 2015 in three countries: the USA, the UK, and Australia. One of the arguments against my choice of case studies in this thesis could be the different forms of media I analyse and compare. There is no doubt that screen productions intended for cinema differ from those intended for television. Among my case studies, there are completely different types of productions: a Hollywood studio film (1935 by Columbia Pictures), three independent films (1959, 2002 US, and 2015), two TV movies (2002 by BBC and 1998 by NBC Studios), and a TV mini-series (1979 by BBC). Their differences undoubtedly influenced the way the original novel was represented on screen.[26] I have chosen a mix of screen forms for my analysis with an understanding of their differences, advantages, and disadvantages. My primary objective is to examine how a particular character is portrayed on the screen rather than focusing on a comparison of various differences related to medium specificity. Therefore, I decided that formal differences would not be the major focus of my research.

The data I used for sample analysis came from several sources. First, I considered the film texts. To avoid being distracted by the main plot of each film, I edited each case study film

[24] After examining the credits of the aforementioned loosely adapted works, I noticed that the name Dostoevsky only appeared in the Brazilian film *Nina*, which stated that it was "inspired by the novel".

[25] Scarlett Johansson's Nola in *Match Point* has no resemblance to Sonia and in many ways is the opposite of Dostoevsky's heroine. Jill in *Irrational Man* may technically evoke a modern version of Sonia in her passionate desire for the character to confess his crime and with the director making her the true second protagonist compared to other *Crime and Punishment* adaptations. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to perceive that Jill is adapted from Sonia.

[26] For example, the privilege series have over films when adapting Dostoevsky is that their form feels "organic and natural" for the transposition of Dostoevsky's novels. The writer was publishing his novels not as single books but in parts/chapters released in periodicals, so his style of writing shares similarities with the approach taken by modern television writers in terms of their thought processes (Razlogov 133–134).

by cutting out scenes that did not contain the character of Sonia or mentions of her by other characters. Consequently, the data used for my analysis, apart from some general impressions, comprised of clips ranging from 15–40 minutes rather than the entire films. In analysing this data, my focus was on exploring the various visual representations of Sonia. I examined how filmmakers emphasised or overlooked the character, paid attention to framing and composition, and observed Sonia's costumes. My primary interest was to compare the level of complexity of Dostoevsky's character in the novel to the level of her complexity in the case study films.

To address the problem of industry professionals often being excluded from adaptation studies research, I undertook five interviews with the creators of Sonia in three of my *Crime and Punishment* case studies. The hard-to-answer question, which I do not attempt to answer in this thesis, is the authorship of a film. As I mentioned earlier, a film/television production is a highly collaborative process. For the sake of this thesis, I abandoned the common assumption that a director is the sole author of a film. My interviewees agreed with Linda Hutcheon, who considers actors to be adapters (81). Actress Anna Samson gave herself 80% credit for her input into Sonia's creation in the Australian version of *Crime and Punishment* (Samson). She was provided with a lot of freedom in interpreting the character and changing the dialogue. Lara Belmont, who created BBC's Sonia in 2001, gave "the scriptwriter 40%, [herself] 55%, and the director 5%" of the impact on Sonia's creation. She noted that she "and the director had very little interaction" and that she only "had the script" and "created Sonia" (Belmont). This brings me to another principal creator of a film adaptation who is very commonly overlooked. The screenwriter is the person who begins the adaptation process and gives it its main future direction. Both writers I interviewed for this study (Marchant and O'Keefe) had an almost identical approach to the process of adaptation. They both read and re-read the book searching for "something personal and specific" or something that would "speak" to them. The process they described made me imagine a very intimate dialogue with Dostoevsky even before they wrote the first pages of their screenplays. Although the question of film authorship remains elusive in this thesis, my study acknowledges the significant contributions of various creatives, including actors, screenwriters, and directors, to shed light on the multifaceted nature of a film's creation. The interviews I undertook helped me explore possible motives behind the filmmakers' decisions and their methods for creatively interpreting Sonia. Although the scope of my interviews was

not very broad and was limited by the number of authors I was able to access, I nonetheless collected insightful materials.

During my research for this chapter, I encountered a certain limitation that demanded my attention. The process of novel adaptation into a foreign language film undergoes three stages of translation, each bringing new changes to the original text:

1. Translating the novel into a different language (making a text available to those who would not otherwise have access to it).
2. Writing the screenplay based on the translation (translating the text for the second time and for a different medium).
3. Shooting the film based on the screenplay (translating words into images).

The writers and directors of non-Russian screen adaptations thus translate already-translated material. As Burry notes, French and English translations will not be the same "as the cultures are very different and the way of perceiving the world is not exactly the same" (*Border Crossing* 7). I argue that deeper research into *novel translation* as a stage of *intercultural adaptation* is crucially missing from modern adaptation studies. Several examples of such research I identified showed the stimulating potential of such a study.[27] However, they are not connected with Dostoevsky's works on screen. There have been 14 English translations of *Crime and Punishment* from 1885 to 2022.[28] It is worth considering that the choice of translation used by non-Russian speakers may impact the screen adaptation, although the extent of this influence on the interpretation of ideas will remain uncertain in this research. The scope of this thesis does not permit an in-depth exploration of different translations and their impact on adaptation. However, I wanted to acknowledge this intriguing opportunity for future research.

[27] For instance, Márta Minier writes about a stage drama, *The Persians*, using "close reading of 23 translations, made across three centuries" (21).

[28] Fourteen translations were made by the following: Frederick Whishaw (1885), Constance Garnett (1914), David Magarshack (1951), Princess Alexandra Kropotkin (1953), Jessie Coulson (1953), Michael Scammell (1963), Sidney Monas (1968), Julius Katzer (1985), David McDuff (1991), Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (1992), Oliver Ready (2014), Nicolas Pasternak Slater (2017), Michael R. Katz (2018), and Roger Cockrell (2022).

3.3 Sonia's Screen Representation

Crime and Punishment (USA, 1935)

The first screen version of *Crime and Punishment* after the silent era was produced in the USA by Columbia Pictures in 1935. Directed by Josef von Sternberg and written by Joseph Anthony and S.K. Lauren, the film features Marian Marsh as "Sonya". The story is modernised, and the epigraph of the film states that the events could have happened anywhere. Like many others, the 1935 version changes the setting of the novel to bring the Russian story closer to its target American audience of the 1930s. The film was potentially an answer to the American economic crisis in the early 1930s, which allows for connecting this production with the dialogic approach I discussed in the first chapter. However, according to his autobiography, the director of the film was working on it only due to contractual obligations and openly disliked his film, which he called "no more related to the true text of the novel than the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Gower is related to the Russian environment" (qtd. in Robinson 33). The diluted psychologism of the novel in this version makes Saraskina call it "a crime drama with religious pathos in the finale". She agrees with Sternberg, saying that this adaptation "takes us far from Dostoevsky" ("The Phantom" 420).

Many of the story changes are related to Sonia's character. The creators of the film chose to concentrate on the moral struggles of Raskolnikov, cutting away parts of the novel not connected with him. This adaptation is a great example of the significance of context in the process of adaptation analysis. From the "fidelity criticism" perspective, there is a significant change connected with Sonia: she is never called a prostitute and her occupation remains covert. The paradox of Sonia's character, who was created by Dostoevsky as a sinner and a saint, is lost. The character becomes simpler. However, blaming the film creators for infidelity here would be a common mistake without understanding the context of this film production. Hutcheon focuses on the influence of adaptations' fidelity in the USA during the period spanning from the 1930s to the 1960s. This was a time when the Hollywood Production Code,[29] imposed stringent rules that restricted filmmakers' freedom of interpretation. Hutcheon offers a reminder that, at that time, any famous classic novel "would have been suspect under the code's regulations because of its sexual content:

[29] Also known as Hays' Motion Picture Production Code.

seduction, corruption, and illicit love" (92). After inspecting the 1935 adaptation, Production Code officials raised concerns about the storyline: "Serious thematic difficulties will be encountered because of the characterization of the heroine as a prostitute" (*American Film Institute*). This became the reason why Sonia's profession was never named in the film. If the creators remained faithful to the novel, the film most probably would never have made it to the screen. Simultaneously, the filmmakers attempted to circumvent the Code: the heroine's costumes hint at the possibility of her being of a certain profession. In most scenes, she wears frivolous tops and hats. In addition, some promotional materials attempt to hint at Sonia's profession by sexualising her position and giving her a cigarette. Interestingly, in the film, she never smokes or stands on the streets waiting for a client as she does on the posters (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Although this version mostly disregards religious and theological connotations from the novel,[30] some scenes with Sonia can be interpreted as symbolic. Following Dostoevsky's love for the symbolism of *stairs*, in several scenes, Sonia is either shown on a staircase or walking downstairs (Figures 2 and 3). In Christianity, stairs are a symbol of the connection between heaven and earth as well as between God and humans.[31] Traversing the stairs, Sonia, intentionally or not, is shown as a spiritual guide for the protagonist. Another location used in many scenes with Sonia is a door, which is opening, closing, or closed (Figures 2–5). The doors have a dual symbolism as both an opportunity and imprisonment. Sonia is again the guide to either salvation or damnation.

[30] Here, I mean the concept of "self-sacrifice", the paradox of "sinner and saint", the allegory of Sonia as a "Christ figure" or "Virgin Mary figure", or even a common interpretation of a "Mary Magdalene figure".
[31] The most famous filmic example of this symbolic reference is the film *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946).

FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

FIGURE 5

The visual representation of the actress in the film was, in many ways, shaped not by Dostoevsky's novel but by the aesthetic norms of contemporary Hollywood productions as well as the personal preferences of the director.[32] Marsh was about 20 years old during filming, which makes her older than Sonia from the book but one of the youngest actresses in my seven case studies. She epitomises the archetypal Hollywood romantic heroine, showcasing the familiar beauty that resonated with 1930s American audiences. Her close-ups, camera angles, and stylised lighting accentuate her Dietrich-like allure, whether she smiles, cries, or exudes shyness (Figures 6–11). One can almost feel the admiration of the director and cinematographer for her glowing angelic face and feminine appeal.

[32] Sternberg was deeply in love with Marlene Dietrich for his entire life. The film he made the year before *Crime and Punishment* was his last collaboration with her.

FIGURE 6

FIGURE 7

FIGURE 8

FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10

FIGURE 11

Apart from concentrating on Sonia's beauty, the director was more interested in Raskolnikov's story, and Sonia is undoubtedly only a supporting character. In scenes featuring Raskolnikov, the camera seldom captures her in isolation. There are scenes and shots where the high-contrast lighting does not allow one to see her at all: she remains in shadow and, on many occasions, we do not see her face (Figures 2-4). Sonia's submissiveness to the main character is visually highlighted on the posters and promotional materials for the film. Wherever they are together, she hides behind him, leans on him, and hugs him as if he is her saviour, even kneeling before him (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12

The same submissiveness is evident in the actress' performance in the film through her body language. When with Raskolnikov, the way she holds him and leans on him creates an image of a submissive and dependent woman (Figures 5, 13, and 14). With 20 minutes of screen time and 12 scenes, this adaptation gives attention to Sonia in 23% of the story (Table 1). While concentrated on Raskolnikov and less focused on Sonia, this adaptation does not leave space either for reflecting on the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's novel or for the idea of Sonia being the second protagonist. The plot does not give the heroine a personal story, independent scenes, or a voice. Her character is dependent on the lead male and exists only for and because of him.

FIGURE 13

FIGURE 14

The 1935 Sonia can hardly be compared with Dostoevsky's creation of someone "positively beautiful" and "infinitely good" (Frank 562) at her core. What she proposes to Raskolnikov is not to confess but quite the opposite: to run away. This goes against Dostoevsky's Sonia's core values and beliefs, so Marsh's Sonia seems not to care for his soul and redemption. Her moral vector is easily influenced by her passion for a stranger whom she has only known for several days. In the previous chapter, I linked Dostoevsky Sonia's humility and meekness with her being active and powerful. These characteristics, I argue, make her complex and multi-layered, which would be interesting to see in a female character on screen regardless of how close her representation was to the source novel in terms of scenes and dialogues. Sternberg's Sonia is a typical "damsel in distress".[33] She falls in love with Raskolnikov after he twice helps her and her family with money. Without substantial encounters with him, she is ready to call him "the finest man [she's] ever met". Far from what her name means – wisdom – Sonia feels quite the opposite: a very naïve and simple girl.[34] Even if Sternberg's Sonia is viewed as a standalone character, one feels a lack of complexity, dimension, and agency as well as complete submissiveness to the lead male protagonist as a side love interest.

[33] "Damsel in distress" is a term used to describe a young and beautiful female character who is in a dangerous situation and requires rescuing by a male character.

[34] For example, Sonia unintentionally reveals that Raskolnikov was at a pawnbroker to the investigator and, overall, often first says something and then thinks about what she said.

Crime & Punishment, USA (USA, 1959)

My second case study was also released in the USA. Directed by Denis Sanders and written by Walter Newman, the film features Mary Murphy as Sally (the character based on Sonia). This film can be seen as a traditional American story of its time with a complex male character and a beautiful female by his side. The updated title of the novel emphasises both the modern time (ampersand) and the change of location (USA). In this version, dark and gloomy nineteenth-century Saint Petersburg is transformed into sunny Los Angeles in the mid-twentieth century. It is one of three films that modernised the novel and chose to set the story in the same time period as the production itself (Table 1). This case study heroine is depicted as a typical "love interest" character with crucial changes from the novel, making Sally the furthest from Dostoevsky's Sonia across my case studies.

Mary Murphy was about 26 years old when she portrayed Dostoevsky's 18-year-old Sonia. She has a short modern haircut and is extremely slim, which echoes Dostoevsky's vision of Sonia being very skinny due to poverty. Between her first and second scenes, the character undergoes a monumental transformation through her costumes: the baggy tomboyish clothes she was wearing when living with her father become stylish hats, elegant outfits, and high heels (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15

Renaming Sonia to Sally, which is closer to American perceptions, was not the only significant change. There is no traditional Christian theme in the film. Sally's profession as a prostitute lacks the depth portrayed by Dostoevsky, and it is not a sacrifice for her family.

She does not have younger siblings in need or a dying stepmother to support. Her alcoholic father conveniently passes away early in the film, and her role as a daughter is scarcely depicted. It remains unclear why she chooses to engage in prostitution, aside from enjoying a comfortable life and fashionable attire. Her decision to pursue sex work and a luxurious lifestyle appears to be a deliberate choice, placing the heroine in this version within the famous American archetype of "a prostitute with a heart of gold" or the "tart with a heart". The function of Sally's character is obvious with a visual focus on her sexuality: she appears in bed, kissing the protagonist, and spending a night with him after he confesses the murder to her. She does not influence the protagonist or change him in any way. Moreover, without hesitation, she agrees to run away with him, hiding from the police. These choices reduce the importance of the philosophical dialogue between characters to Sally being just a device in the film, a simple side love interest.

Surprisingly, the amount of time Sally-Sonia is seen in the film is the longest among all case studies. Her character has 29% of the overall film's screen time (Table 1). In addition, the creators of this adaptation implemented some forms of symbolism in the film that relate to Sally. Although this film is black and white, these colours were used to symbolise the good-evil juxtaposition in the characters. There are several scenes where Sally is visually juxtaposed to the protagonist while wearing all white clothes in opposition to his black outfit (Figures 16–17). Like in the 1935 version, there are many stairs and doors in the film (Figure 17), showing Sally as a spiritual guide to the protagonist. To come to her place, he must go upstairs. These elements could have indicated that she is important in the story. However, the "character as a function" approach the filmmakers chose for Sally leaves no way to either hear her voice in the film (as one would in a polyphonic narrative) or perceive her as a second lead. Moreover, I argue that this character is completely unimportant to the storyline. If she were to be taken away, the story would not change as all events in the protagonist's journey occur without Sally's impact.

FIGURE 16

FIGURE 17

While the religious aspect of Dostoevsky's character changed in the film, it is paramount to factor in the historical context. The film aligns with the prevailing trends of the 1950s, reflecting a contemporary emphasis on "popular faith and underground forms of […] religiosity" (C. Tucker). There is a scene that hints at Sally's spirituality and beliefs as well as her artistic nature: she is a dancer and writer, and she possesses some art and poetry. This scene curiously derives from the first visit of Raskolnikov to Sonia in the novel, which ends with a famous Gospel reading. Echoing Sonia's Christian faith, Sally is shown as a modern believer practising non-traditional spirituality. Instead of the *Gospel*, she is reading *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. Here, one sees how contextualising and modernising work in the film. Nonetheless, despite being a modern believer and potentially having feminist views, Sally's Christian attributes of forgiveness and humility, instead of adding depth to her character, seem to verge on submissiveness. Sally forgives the male protagonist very quickly for both his wrongdoing toward her and the murder he confesses soon after.

To some extent, the film's creators used the dialogic approach in this adaptation, making the story modern and more understandable to American audiences. By examining the character through a feminist lens and contrasting Sally from the 1959 film with Marsh's Sonia from the 1935 version, it becomes evident that the character transforms from a helpless "damsel in distress" to a self-sufficient woman who can fend for herself and will survive on her own after the protagonist goes to prison. The portrayal of Sally as an emancipated American woman in the late 1950s, surpassing the traditional image of a housewife, could be seen as a social commentary by the film's creators.

Crime and Punishment **(UK, 1979)**

The first British version of the novel was made for television by the BBC in 1979. It consists of three episodes, was directed by Michael Darlow and written by Jack Pulman, and features Yolande Palfrey as Sonia in the second and third episodes. Unlike the previous two American versions, this one is set at the same time and location as Dostoevsky's story (Table 1). Saint Petersburg, however, was recreated in England. With the longest screen time among my case studies – almost four hours – this adaptation has enough space to be reasonably faithful to the book's plot. I call this movie "adaptation-illustration" as the "success" of this adaptation was measured by the creators via its closeness to the book. The writer captured "the essence of the book" (or his interpretation of it) while following Dostoevsky's storyline, even though

he decreased "the book's length and complexities". The director stated that "not all classic screen adaptations manage to do this successfully" (Darlow).

Sonia is presented as a typical secondary character in this production. The first appearance of the character occurs 98 minutes into the narration when the audience is already deep into Raskolnikov's story. Sonia appears in 19% of the scenes, the focus of which is Raskolnikov (Table 1). The director was not concerned with the polyphonic nature of the novel, and he confirmed that Sonia's role in the film was "not the most rewarding". He chose to "focus on Raskolnikov" to be fair to the book (Darlow).

Palfrey was one of the youngest actresses to portray Sonia on screen, and she appears even younger with a perfectly innocent Sonia look. Darlow's Sonia possesses kindness, goodness, and faith but loses the power and strength Dostoevsky places in her. A pure victim of circumstances, she is afraid of everything. She is humble without power. There are several scenes with her family where either her father or stepmother humiliate themselves in front of other people. Darlow's Sonia passively stands and watches without attempting to help them. Dostoevsky's Sonia would aim to protect her loved ones, even if she failed. Darlow's Sonia also massively relies on Raskolnikov. She faces humiliation at her father's funeral as attendees taunt and belittle her for her occupation, accusing her of dishonouring her father's memory. The first thing she does in this moment of the film is turn to Raskolnikov for help and protection. These elements make her close to the typical "damsel in distress".

The way Sonia's character is framed and blocked on screen also indicates that she is secondary and submissive to the protagonist's character. She is often shown in the background, not acting or even moving. Standing frozen, she seems to be providing time and space for Raskolnikov to deliver his monologues (Figures 18–21). I noticed that the number of close-up shots of Sonia increased compared to the 1935 and 1959 productions (Graph 1). However, this is not an indication of a deeper interest in the character's inner world as almost half of the close-up shots are typical for television reverse shots in the conversation with Raskolnikov where only the back of Sonia's head is seen. The audience, through the camera's eye, is guided to focus on Raskolnikov. Sonia, shown from the back, is simply someone with whom he is talking. Another common shot in the film is Sonia looking up at Raskolnikov with admiration and obedience. The high angle of the camera again supports the importance of Raskolnikov (Figures 22–23).

FIGURE 18

FIGURE 19

FIGURE 20

FIGURE 21

FIGURE 22

FIGURE 23

Sonia's occupation defines her in this film: most of the time she is in her prostitute outfit (Figure 24). Her costumes do not highlight her transformation from a shy girl to a prostitute and back. Only at the end of the film, before and after the main character confesses, is the costume changed to a more modest one, as if his redemption becomes hers as well (Figure 25). Notwithstanding the outfit change, I could not identify attention to character development in this version. With almost no changes to the character throughout the film

and without any noticeable personal arc, Sonia suddenly becomes more confident close to the end and begins teaching the protagonist what he should do after he confesses.

FIGURE 24

FIGURE 25

In the interview, the director stated he understood that "suffering in the Christian tradition is a large part of the virtue", although he was "very firmly not" a religious person himself as an agnostic. This arguably points to the fact that Dostoevsky's theology of the novel, in many ways crucially connected with Sonia, was perceived by the director only from an intellectual point of view. In the novel, Dostoevsky juxtaposes Raskolnikov, with his intellectual perception of religion, and Sonia, with her heartfelt one. Therefore, Darlow might have related more to the male protagonist and could have missed important moments for Sonia as a character. For example, Sonia is never seen wearing the cross, so when she gives the cross to Raskolnikov after his confession, this act does not feel nearly as significant. Additionally, after eliminating the Gospel reading moment, it was challenging for Darlow's Sonia to sound convincing as she guided Raskolnikov towards a confession. This scene serves as a pivotal moment where Sonia's spiritual guidance influences Raskolnikov's decision to confess his crime and seek redemption. Without it, Sonia's impact on Raskolnikov's transformation may feel compromised.

The director called Sonia "a feminist icon" but also contradicted himself, saying that "she's not a feminist in the modern context because she doesn't assert her power and her rights". He expected modern audiences to perceive her as "admirable" but not as "a role model". When Darlow noted that "she isn't prepared to assert herself on behalf of other women" and "[give] them any power" (Darlow), I remembered Katherine Mansfield arguing with her husband over a similar comment. As quoted in the previous chapter, she observed that "Sonya represents the pain of oppressed and despised women in every culture" and that,

through this character, "such women find a voice" (Briggs 76). Such a view of the character can be connected either with the different understanding of female rights at the time of the adaptation's production or with the predominance of the male gaze in this adaptation.

Crime and Punishment **(USA, 1998)**

This American version of the novel was produced in 1998 by Hallmark Entertainment and NBC Studios. This TV movie was directed by Joseph Sargent, written by David Stevens, and features Julie Delpy as Sonia. Although shot in Budapest, Hungary, it is the first American version to be set at the same time as the novel and in the same city (Table 1). This melodramatic version is quite schematic and full of historical and cultural inaccuracies and crude clichés about the reality of nineteenth-century Russia. Among the notable changes from the novel related to Sonia's character is the reduction of Sonia's family storyline. In this adaptation, her stepmother does not die, and Sonia easily leaves her and the siblings alone in their poverty to follow Raskolnikov to Siberia. A captivating aspect, for me specifically, was the visual depiction of the stepmother's forceful actions, compelling Sonia to enter the world of prostitution for the first time. This scene does not exist in the novel. It is a part of the infamous drunken speech of Sonia's father, Marmeladov. This is the only version that visualises this story, and it became an inspiration for my practical project, *Transgressing*, on which I will reflect in the fourth chapter.

Julie Delpy was about 27 during filming, which places her in the range of older Sonias. The actress presents the typical character image: pale skin and blond "angelic" hair. Delpy's Sonia, probably to highlight her poverty, wears the same dress for the duration of the film (Figure 26). Thus, there is almost no visual difference between the prostitute Sonia and the modest Sonia. The only outfit change occurs at the very end of the film when Sonia visits Raskolnikov in prison (Figure 27). Although the 1979 BBC production and the 1998 American production are both set in Saint Petersburg in the same historical time period, Sonia's costumes appear as though they are from different epochs.

FIGURE 26

FIGURE 27

In this production, the camera moves closer to Sonia compared to the three previous case studies, with most shots being medium close-ups (Graph 1). This could be connected, though, with the general shift toward tighter and more frequent close-ups in international mainstream cinema after the 1960s rather than with greater interest of the film creators in Sonia or Delpy's acting. The style of acting here is dictated by the genre. Delpy fits the genre by playing what is expected in this melodramatic interpretation. From the beginning of the film, when Sonia meets Raskolnikov, her acting is built around him. What often creates the feeling of melodrama is the way she looks at the protagonist with very long "meaningful" glances full of admiration, understanding, and insight (Figures 28–31). This suggests that the characters speak with their eyes and without words. Although not unique to the genre, this is a common method in melodramas to indicate the deep connection between two characters in love. Eye contact is known for escalating affection between two people. I argue that unspoken love is the most insistently visualised in this version of the novel.

FIGURE 28

FIGURE 29

FIGURE 30

FIGURE 31

This adaptation neither supports the theory of Sonia being the second protagonist nor posits itself as being polyphonic: it is clearly about Raskolnikov. The amount of Sonia's screen presence is one of the shortest among my case studies with only 15% of the screen time (Table 1). Sonia's character in this version can be seen as a solid supporting love interest who, on a deeply intimate level, influences the protagonist and his actions but mostly exists to assuage his inner struggles.

In terms of archetypes, this version was not oriented to portray Sonia as a "Christ allegory" but instead created another "prostitute with a heart of gold". In the film, Sonia comes to terms with her profession and, as Saraskina notes, easily calls herself "a tart", drinks vodka, and is ready to undress as soon as the protagonist comes to her flat for a talk ("The Phantom" 442). Nonetheless, there is a visual support for Sonia's faith in the film. This, however, is more superficial. The creators attempted to be faithful to the book's plot without a deep connection to Dostoevsky's Sonia's profound Christian faith. One sees Sonia's family praying at the bedside of the dying father, priests at the funeral of Marmeladov, and Sonia speaking about God to Raskolnikov. However, the crucial scene from the novel where Sonia reads the Gospel to Raskolnikov is condensed to a reading of the first sentence, followed by the heroine's "traditional" intense gaze into Raskolnikov's eyes before the scene abruptly cuts.

When considering the film as a standalone work rather than just an adaptation, it becomes evident that Hallmark Entertainment has successfully produced a commendable output within its familiar genre of romantic movies. However, this melodrama mixed with crime did not address any feminist ideas or issues apart from the obvious historical women's mistreatment in nineteenth-century lower-class society. Additionally, viewers anticipating

profound psychological depth and theologically profound dialogues may find the film to be overly sentimental or clichéd.

Crime and Punishment (USA/Poland/Russia, 2002)

The first four of my case studies were produced with roughly 20 years between them (1935, 1959, 1979, and 1998), as if each new generation of English-speaking people needed a new screen version of Dostoevsky's novel. It is even more interesting that the late 1990s and early 2000s saw three versions created in four years, two of them in 2002 in the USA and the UK. The current case study was co-produced by America, Poland, and Russia. It was written and directed by Menahem Golan and stars Avital Dicker as Sonia.

This unconventional adaptation differs significantly from both traditional and modern versions as it is close to *psychotronic films*[35] in its visuals and acting style. Being one of four modern-day retellings of the story, set in the cold winter of 90s Moscow (Table 1), the film effectively captures a glimpse of post-Soviet Perestroika times in production design and costumes while making all characters, including Sonia, caricatures of post-Soviet people. Being aware of the historical context of the genre of "exploitation films" that director Menahem Golan is known for may make the perception of this adaptation if not more enjoyable then at least more reasonable. Everything is exaggerated in this film, from performance and costumes to the way the story is altered.[36] The performance by Avital Dicker – overacting most of the time and declamation in dialogues – works only if one accepts the logic of the film's overall style.

Despite the film's unconventional style, the creators surprisingly chose to portray Sonia's story faithfully to the original novel, maintaining the integrity of its content. Eleven out of 15 scenes with her are derived from the novel (Table 1). However, in this version, Sonia's screen presence is the shortest among my case studies at only 14% of the film's length (Table 1). The camera and director do not seem truly interested in her story and her voice, leaving her in the secondary role of a common "love interest". Like all American productions of *Crime and Punishment*, this version represents another "tart with a heart".

[35] Also known as *exploitation films*, these are a subgenre of movies characterised by their unconventional, often low-budget, and sometimes eccentric nature. Psychotronic films tend to have a dedicated fan base and are celebrated for their distinctive offbeat qualities as opposed to mainstream appeal. While exploiting niche genres and generally being of low quality, such films occasionally appeal to critical recognition.
[36] For example, Sonia has five siblings of the same age compared to three in the novel.

Avital Dicker is the oldest actress to portray Sonia and was about 36 during the filming. As in most previous case studies, Sonia is seen by the filmmakers as a skinny pretty girl with curly blonde hair. Golam's Sonia tries to "tick all the boxes" of Dostoevsky's character. She is portrayed as a prostitute and a faithful believer, and her costumes present her as both sexual and innocent. As a prostitute, she is not burdened with her occupation and "job meetings" with rich businessmen in luxurious hotels. It was not need or desperation that forced her to sell herself. This Sonia sees prostitution from a modern perspective: it is just a job. Her high boots, ripped shorts, and red and zebra coat indicate both Perestroika-era fashion and her occupation (Figures 32–33). The innocent version of Sonia wears white, highlighting her angelic appearance (Figures 34–35, 37). Religious symbolism is abundant in the production design. Sonia's room is covered in religious symbols, specifically a cross and icons (Figure 35). Additionally, in many scenes, the lighting highlights the cross that Sonia almost always wears over her clothing (Figures 36–37).

FIGURE 32

FIGURE 33

FIGURE 34

FIGURE 35

FIGURE 36

FIGURE 37

Golan's Sonia is a very simple character without a noticeable developmental arc throughout the film. We do not see an impoverished, suffering, or self-sacrificing young woman devoted to her family. "It's survival, you know", she says. Nonetheless, "the level of her 'survival', judging by the chic costume and habits, is very enviable", as Saraskina suggests ("The Phantom" 446). Although Sonia is compassionate towards her father and siblings, humility is not her virtue. When the viewer first meets Sonia, she is assaulting doctors, then a moment later her co-worker and stepmother. This Sonia can stand up for herself with no need for humility or meekness. Her story is about a post-Soviet sex worker who quits her job after suddenly falling in love. She easily forgets her responsibilities towards the siblings she was providing for to follow a man she barely knows.

The setting of the film – transferred to post-Soviet Russia – prompts questions regarding potential dialogism and interculturality as well as critiques of the production. Some American productions transfer Dostoevsky's story and characters to an American setting (1935 and 1959), supporting the interculturality of the adaptation and making it modern. It is not clear why the creators of this version chose to make the film a political comment on a foreign country. What did Sonia, a mature post-Soviet prostitute who outwardly professes faith in God, have to say to American audiences in 2002? Could she become some sort of feminist icon? This remained unclear to me.

Crime and Punishment **(UK, 2002)**

The second of the two British versions of the novel consisted of two episodes and was produced by the BBC in 2002. Although it was made for television, the director Julian Jarrold

highlights the "cinematic quality"[37] of the movie (Abeel). The script was written by Tony Marchant and the film features Lara Belmont as "Sonya". The creators again had plenty of screen time to choose to be faithful to the novel, as noted by Saraskina who praises this particular adaptation ("The Phantom" 444). However, they considerably reduced Sonia's storyline: her father, stepmother, and siblings, who are portrayed as one-dimensional background characters in Sonia's life, barely appear. Nevertheless, I argue that the reductions of some scenes allowed the creators to concentrate more deeply on Sonia rather than just illustrate the Dostoevsky plot.

This is the third version that changed neither the time nor the location of the novel. Notwithstanding the criticisms of the film by some Russian scholars and audiences (e.g., "this is not Russia",[38] "this is very good but it's not Dostoevsky" (Marchant)), I see this version as one of the strongest adaptations of the novel for audiences of a different culture. This might not be Russia as Russian people see it, but it was Russia as British people saw it. Before their work on the film, both the writer and the actress went to Russia to understand the novel better. They "wanted to do it in Saint Petersburg, not in some sort of found locations that were pretending to be Saint Petersburg", said Marchant. As "a British person [he was] trying to divine a Russian spirit" and was "soaking up the atmosphere" of the city (Marchant). Meanwhile, Belmont "spent a lot of time in religious spaces in churches to try and understand what [Sonia] would see, and what she would feel when she walked into these spaces" (Belmont). They both thought that the production would not have been the same without that experience and that location.

The character of Sonia in this version fits into the Dostoevsky image of a morally and spiritually strong young woman in terrible life circumstances. Belmont was another young 21-year-old actress portraying Sonia. She created a complex multidimensional character, showing both sides of Dostoevsky's heroine: a prostitute with bright makeup on the streets (Figures 38–39 and 42) and a modest, quiet, pious girl with luminous eyes at home (Figures 40–41). The costumes, make-up, and hair fundamentally differ between the two Sonia personas. Even when shown as a prostitute, Sonia is not sexualised by the director or the camera. The costume does not sit well on her and resembles a mask more than a sexy outfit.

[37] I am aware of the ambiguity around the term "cinematic", a contested concept within film theory and philosophy. I assume that, in this quote, Jarrold used the term to mean the visual quality of films made for cinema release rather than for television.
[38] Such opinions were expressed during conversations at Dostoevsky conferences.

This is the first movie where the camera comes so close to the actress. With most shots portraying Sonia being close-ups, followed by medium close-ups, one assumes that her character is compelling, and her inner life is meaningful for the story (Graph 1). Close-ups and medium close-ups played a significant role in revealing different sides of Sonia: her suffering over Raskolnikov's actions (Figure 40), her innocence when the protagonist visits her (Figure 41), the shame of being seen as a prostitute (Figure 42), and even anger while defending God (Figure 43).

FIGURE 38

FIGURE 39

FIGURE 40

FIGURE 41

FIGURE 42

FIGURE 43

Belmont admitted that the director did not spend a great deal of time developing Sonia's character with her. The young actress was left alone with the script and the novel (Belmont). I suggest that her portrayal of Sonia might have been partially impacted by the actress' personal life. Belmont recalls moments when her "body closed down", hindering her physicality and preventing her from moving as asked by the director. In some scenes, the

actress felt that "what Sonia needed was real expression and fire" whereas the actress's "fire had been really dampened" (Belmont). As a result, Sonia appears in many closed defensive poses across the film (Figures 44–46). The way the actress' traumas are reflected in Sonia's traumas can be considered a creative dialogue between her and Dostoevsky. Nevertheless, the complexity of the character is reflected well in her acting compared with most Sonias before her.

FIGURE 44

FIGURE 45

FIGURE 46

When discussing his approach to adapting the characters of the novel, screenwriter Tony Marchant highlighted the common problem of approaching "all the other characters in the novel as just projections of Raskolnikov's state of mind". His attitude towards all the characters, including Sonia, was to create their own "emotional journeys that were independent of his" (qtd. in J. Davies 78), which I see as corresponding with Dostoevsky's concept of "polyphonism". As a result, Sonia's character exhibited a noticeable increase in on-screen interest, showcasing her inner life and complexity more prominently. Compared with the previous versions, she is not just a love interest and is not sexualised; instead, she stands out because one hears her rightful voice. Belmont disagreed with seeing Sonia as a supporting character. Despite the imbalance in their screen time presence,[39] she draws a

[39] Scenes with Sonia comprise 17% of the film's screen time (Table 1).

parallel between Raskolnikov and Sonia who are "two people with their own stories who happen to meet" and "find a sort of co-dependency within each other" (Belmont).

Many concepts and traits of Dostoevsky's heroine are reflected in Belmont's Sonia. Her strength is felt in the way she addresses problems. Wisdom beyond her years comes through in her dialogue with the protagonist. One sees her compassion for her family and Raskolnikov as well as her ability to forgive their weaknesses. The concept of self-sacrifice makes more sense in this version compared to the American 1959 and 2002 adaptations: Belmont's Sonia obviously dislikes her profession. Far from a "damsel in distress", she answers back to Raskolnikov when he accuses her of being a prostitute without enjoying it. She does it with honour, humbleness, and strength. Her short monologue explains the depth of her self-sacrifice:

> – Polly's face when I come back with sweets – that's what I enjoy! Katerina's relief when I place the cash on the mantlepiece – that's nice. I am going there now, and they're gonna be so pleased to see me. 'Cause they know where I've been for 'em!

The creators of the film also explore the concept of redemption through suffering. On one of his visits, Raskolnikov suggests that Sonia is waiting for a miracle. She agrees with his thoughts later, saying, "Yes, maybe I am waiting for a miracle. Maybe I have to go find one", explaining why she decided to follow him to Siberia. This supports her active position towards her beliefs, whereas most of the other versions explain Sonia following the protagonist only because of her romantic feelings for him.

I argue that Sonia's traits, created by Dostoevsky and transferred from his pages to the screen, helped the creators make a multidimensional character. A prostitute who dislikes her profession, a "sinner" helping others, a deeply religious and humble girl, a family breadwinner, a loving daughter, a young woman in love, and a psychologist are all convincing and well-rounded dimensions. When Marchant began working on the screenplay, his first impression of Sonia was that she is "just an archetype" "with no agency" and her only goal is to suffer. It took him time to notice Sonia's layers and complexity. His Sonia was driven by "a growing devotional sense of duty" which simultaneously "enthrals" and "traps" her but also "liberates" and "redeems" her (Marchant).

The visible importance of the religious context of this version might have related to the belief systems of the two principal creators of Sonia: the writer and the actress. Being "brought up as a Catholic", Marchant admitted that the moral themes of Christianity felt "compelling" to him (Marchant). Belmont understood from the beginning that religion was "really important" for the character she was creating. Hence, she conducted her research by visiting Russian Orthodox churches in Saint Petersburg. Although she believes in God now, this was not the case at the time of production when she was in a spiritual search. From the present perspective, the actress thought that her current understanding of the Bible and the Gospels was deeper and if she were to play Sonia again, she "would have just honoured her by knowing her belief system better" (Belmont).

Although Marchant discussed the concept of Sonia as a "Christ allegory" as reasonably believable (in the sense of "forgiveness and thinking about your fellow man" and "broadcasting his beliefs" to people), this was not his intent when creating Sonia (Marchant). Belmont did not have such an allegory on her agenda either. However, the film did not escape certain religious symbolism, which brings deeper levels of understanding to the story of Sonia. The cross and the cross exchange (Figures 47–48) are common symbols of the Christian faith and the act of sacrifice. The presence of stairs and bridges (Figures 49–50), which are recurrent motifs in Dostoevsky's work, could symbolise Sonia's life journey and the challenges she must overcome. Sonia's red and white dresses (Figures 39 and 44) are likely to be interpreted as a juxtaposition between her purity and innocence and the "stains" sin left on her through her profession.

FIGURE 47

FIGURE 48

FIGURE 49

FIGURE 50

The conversation with Belmont and Marchant about Sonia's female strength and agency as well as how her character can be seen from a feminist perspective was controversial. Initially, Belmont "would never have said this was a feminist piece". However, throughout the interview, the actress kept returning to the question of her heroine's strength and finally admitted that she has "found [Sonia] to be one of the strongest characters that [she has] been offered […] to create" (Belmont). This comes through on screen, and I argue that Belmont created one of the strongest Sonias among the English-language versions I have analysed. As opposed to many other versions, her character experiences psychological development. The viewer witnesses her grow from a frightened girl with glowing eyes at the beginning of the film to a young woman who is portrayed as an equal next to the man she freely chose to follow to Siberia. It was the vector of the character's development that helped Marchant to create Sonia's agency in the adaptation. His initial reading of the character can even be called "antifeminist" because he believes her to be "enthralled by Raskolnikov", which made her "not the most enlightened of women" in his eyes. In the final film, Sonia has clear goals, makes choices, and acts accordingly. Even if one ignores the Christian self-sacrifice concept, Marchant believes that Sonia does for her family what "non-believing secular women, sex workers would also do […] – sell themselves for the sake of their children or their stepchildren, or their mothers, or their fathers". Sonia's agency is in her answer "to abject poverty" and in adopting "familial responsibilities". Marchant claimed that, even when Sonia follows a murderer to Siberia, it reveals her agency: the character's choice is active not submissively passive (Marchant).

Bakhtinian dialogism comes through in this adaptation, which presents an intercultural connection between the British social realist tradition and Russian period drama. Poverty and social injustice in run-down areas and seasoned with alcoholism, crime, prostitution, and political and religious views, as seen in *Crime and Punishment*, are what audiences of British social realist dramas are familiar with. A TV movie that was created in the same year as *Sweet*

Sixteen by Ken Loach, *Morvern Callar* by Lynne Ramsay, and *All or Nothing* by Mike Leigh made an old Russian story close and compelling to British viewers.

Crime & Punishment **(Australia, 2015)**

The latest novel adaptation was produced in Australia in 2015. It was written and directed by Andrew O'Keefe and stars Anna Samson as "Sonya Marmelad". With the ampersand in the title indicating another modern retelling, this version changes the setting to a fictional dystopian society and represents Raskolnikov and Sonia as students. The story unfolds in an "unnamed, non-descript city in an uncertain time" (Burry "Envisioning"). Saraskina highlights that this adaptation is strong evidence that Dostoevsky's story "is absolutely international and can happen anywhere and at any time" ("The Phantom" 466).

Despite the completely different setting, most of the scenes of the film unfold according to the canvas of the novel, and almost none of the important plot twists are missed. The changes are either connected with shortening the novel to fit the film's screen time or the director's choice to highlight morality instead of religion (O'Keefe). Sonia's family presence on screen is cut to a minimum. Her alcoholic father, who dies behind the scenes, never appears, and her stepmother and siblings are quite one-dimensional characters, not more than devices to explain Sonia's kind heart. At the same time, the filmmakers added some new scenes, and many of them are connected to Sonia. This version has the greatest number of scenes with Sonia compared with other case studies (26), with almost half of them (12) coming not from the novel but from the writer/director (Table 1).

Coming from a theatrical background, Samson is one of the strongest actors in the film. She was 25 when she portrayed Sonia, which places her among the more mature Sonias in my research. This is another version where the creators chose inner wisdom and strength over visual innocence and youthfulness. Visually, Sonia is presented without such a drastic change in her appearance and performance between the two states, as seen with the 2002 British Sonia. Her everyday clothes are not puritanically modest and do not greatly contrast her work ones. Although Sonia here has a wide range of costumes – from modest ones in dark tones to more sexual and bright work outfits (Figures 51–52) – she also wears a range of white open-shoulder tops both in her student life (Figure 53) and at work (Figure 54). Samson

seems to feel similarly comfortable in both of Sonia's "shapes", whereas Belmont was attempting to fit her prostitute costume/mask.

FIGURE 51

FIGURE 52

FIGURE 53

FIGURE 54

In this version, the camera again moves away from Sonia, with mostly medium and medium-long shots portraying her. However, this might have nothing to do with minimal interest in the character. The low budget and high speed of production could have hugely impacted the overall choice of cinematography in this film. Many scenes with Sonia consist of just one long take with in-shot editing achieved by changing blocking, framing, and composition. During production, such a technique helps reduce the number of camera and light setups. This technique added many moments in the film where Sonia is in the background, out of focus, or both (Figures 55–60). In those moments, one can hardly see her in the distance, and the audience's focus is placed on either Raskolnikov or other male characters. One interpretation of this could be that Sonia as a character is less important than other male characters. Another reading might suggest that, although the filmmakers announce who the main protagonist is, they admit that, while being in the background, Sonia is nonetheless important in their stories, which is why she remains in the shot even when out of focus. Although the second reading feels more sympathetic to me, it still does not allow the audience to see Sonia as an important character in this male story. She is clearly secondary and supportive.

FIGURE 55

FIGURE 56

FIGURE 57

FIGURE 58

FIGURE 59

FIGURE 60

In the Australian adaptation, Sonia has quite a long screen time (26% of the whole film); however, in two-thirds of these scenes, she is a silent character (Table 1). The director hardly believed that the heroine had such a strong screen presence in his film as he always regretted that she was "left off the screen". During our interview, I noticed that he had an inner instinct, which he was fighting, that Sonia sometimes "threaten[ed] to take over the story in some way" and this was the reason for cutting her from some scenes and giving her less dialogue. At one point, he called Sonia and Raskolnikov "two main characters" (O'Keefe). The actress, on the contrary, suggested that Sonia is "not an entire character until actresses have to make her so" as she is just "serving the male story far more than she has one of her own", and Raskolnikov "is far more interesting a character to play". Samson's reading of Dostoevsky's heroine shows Sonia merely as "a symbol of forgiveness and salvation", which supports many of the male critics' views I invoked in the second chapter as well as O'Keefe's position of her functioning solely "as a guiding moral principle" to all other characters

(Samson; O'Keefe). At the same time, the actress believed that seeing "a female version of this story, the one through [Sonia's] eyes, would be fascinating".

Samson's Sonia is complex. The viewers are acquainted with her as a student activist who, however, hesitates to judge an obvious sexual abuser with other female students. Apart from this behaviour, Sonia is shown as a family breadwinner, sex worker, and psychologist. The self-effacing heroine is also active and powerful. Although Dostoevsky's concept of suffering is not much explored in this version, the character certainly expresses compassionate forgiveness. She understands her drinking and ill stepmother, murderer Raskolnikov, and even the professor who is sexually assaulting students. The protagonist relies on Sonia's wisdom as he comes to her repeatedly, not knowing what to do but ultimately believing she knows the answers. In line with the 2002 BBC adaptation, this version reinforces my argument that when Sonia's various traits from the novel are depicted on screen, they contribute to the creation of a more intricate character, even without adhering strictly to the source text.

The concept of self-sacrifice is controversial in this film. On the one hand, Sonia chooses sex work because her family needs support. On the other hand, this modern version of Sonia is not ashamed of selling herself. Thus, the answer remains unclear: is it her sacrifice or just free choice? Here, one sees support for the modern view of prostitution. What in Dostoevsky's time was stigmatised and shameful by default, people today fight for the right to be free from stigma. In the twenty-first century, sex work is considered by some to be a free choice and a job like any other. Although Sonia feels embarrassed when Raskolnikov first sees her at work (Figure 54), she quickly accepts his knowledge. When he comes later to talk with her at the brothel at a very inopportune moment and sees her with the client, Sonia behaves as usual (Figures 61–62). As I mentioned before, although Dostoevsky made Sonia a prostitute, he never showed her at work. The furthest the reader is allowed to glimpse into her profession in the novel is her awkwardly frivolous costume. The 1979 version was the first to break this boundary. When Raskolnikov comes to see Sonia, he meets her client leaving and Sonia buttoning up her underwear (Episode 2). Darlow's Sonia shows no shame in front of her unexpected guest. The 2002 BBC version went further: Raskolnikov sees Jarrold's Sonia with the client on the street during the sexual act, although without nudity. The 2015 version goes all the way, showing both Sonia's nudity and the sexual act, even letting Raskolnikov witness it through the door. I would argue that by making Sonia's job a

free choice and "nothing-to-be-ashamed-of", the creators of this appropriation reduce the importance and Christian connotation of Sonia's "sacrifice". However, was it even important for them?

FIGURE 61

FIGURE 62

O'Keefe admits that he "tried to keep the religious elements out" of the film and handled the "religious side of it as the moral good". Being an agnostic, he did not feel he had the right to touch on the deep theology Dostoevsky placed into the novel. As such, he chose "the intellectual approach to the book" and concentrated on "the moral battle between Raskolnikov and Sonia" (O'Keefe). Sonia's religiosity is shown through the cross she always wears. Multiple times, the camera focuses on her fingers fiddling with the cross. Although not religious as well, Samson admitted being "fascinated by religion" and even "envious of people who have faith". She knew her character had "a more easily accessible set of guidelines" than herself. This did not, however, make Sonia more relatable and understandable as a person for her: she was still "more an idea than a character, archetype". The actress mentions both the "Jesus Christ archetype" and "prostitute with a heart of gold" as her references (Samson). When asked about the "Sonia as a Christ" idea, the director noted that the novel is so complex and "full of metaphors" that one can attach almost anything symbolic to the story as well as "turn Sonia into anything" (O'Keefe).

Australian Sonia is one of the two strongest heroines in my seven case studies. While creating her, the writer/director aimed to portray "a modern strong woman" (O'Keefe). The actress had a similar approach. Samson explained that her understanding of the character changed as she worked on the role. Although initially she thought Sonia was "quite meek and mild", as she started to play her she realised that the heroine was actually "the strongest character in the story". She addressed her "misconception" of Sonia as a weak woman and explained this by the fact that "a modern woman is not used to seeing quiet strength". That is why the

first instinct of understanding the character labels her as "downtrodden", and the subsequent acting work brings an understanding of Sonia as "fierce" and "a survivor" (Samson).

I consider this film to have a polyphonic Bakhtinian approach, if not in full then at least as an attempt. For short moments, the director allows the voices of several secondary characters – including Sonia – to be heard. Dialogism and interculturality were addressed in this appropriation, maybe even more than in other versions. From the beginning of his work on the screenplay, O'Keefe never wanted "to exactly represent" the novel but to depict "its heart" for a "modern Australian audience who may not read it anymore". Coming "from a very privileged family", the director was making "a statement about education", specifically that it "should be free for everybody in order to help them achieve their dreams and their growth". Sonia was a part of this statement. Through her, he was, in a way, representing Australian student sex workers whom he met in his 13 years of teaching (O'Keefe). The film thus, as Burry asserts, "directs the viewer to consider the novel within a contemporary context" (Burry "Envisioning").

3.4. Sonia's Adaptation: Exploring Fidelity, Complexity, and Evolution on Screen

For the sake of experiment, I decided to attempt the "fidelity criticism" route of adaptation analysis to determine where it might bring me. I compared all the scenes with Sonia in the novel with those in all seven case studies (Table 2). The main outcomes of this comparison were as follows:

1. There are no scenes with Sonia in the novel that were not transferred to the screen in at least one adaptation.

2. The scenes of Sonia's father's and stepmother's funerals, as well as her scenes with Luzhin (who falsely accuses her of stealing his money) and Svidrigailov (who sponsors Sonia and her siblings before his suicide), were cut from most of the versions or partially transferred to the screen in one or two case study films. In the novel, these scenes are built around Sonia and her family with minimal to zero activity from Raskolnikov.

3. The first visit of Raskolnikov with Sonia (Gospel reading), his second visit (confession), and the third (cross exchange before going to the police) are present in all seven case studies. The changes in these scenes were mostly connected with religious connotations: some films avoided the Gospel reading and the cross exchange but showed other content of the scenes.

4. The most faithful to Sonia's storyline from the novel were the two BBC adaptations.

The reduced scenes are easily explained by the focalisation of all productions on Raskolnikov as the protagonist rather than Sonia as well as the necessity to trim the long novel. The three scenes with Sonia used by everyone are crucial to the character journey of the male protagonist. The adaptations that chose to illustrate the novel close to the text are both TV series. Being two-to-three times longer than the other versions, they could afford to be more faithful. All these and other changes connected with the text of the novel felt not just easily explained but also unimportant. All seven versions attempt to make Dostoevsky's story more relatable for the intended audiences by implementing cultural and temporal changes, modernising the story, or transferring it to the country of production.

While approaching the case studies, more engaging than fidelity analysis for me was the comparison of Dostoevsky's heroine's complexity with that of her screen versions. Attempting to summarise my findings here, I paid attention to multiple Sonia-related suggestions:

1. The more of Dostoevsky's Sonia's traits I was able to identify in a screen Sonia, the more complex that version appeared to be. The deeper those traits were scrutinised by principal character creators, the more multidimensional their character was.

2. There is an obvious evolution of the heroine through the years, from 1935 to 2015, as Sonia changes across various intertexts and through time. The closer the film was to present day, the more legitimacy it had from a feminist perspective. Starting from a stereotypical female "love interest" or archetypical "tart-with-a-heart" and moving through the stages of unnecessary sexualisation or the diminishing "damsel-in-distress" trope, Sonia's complex voice began to be heard. The heroine became deeper and gained some strength and agency, yet she has space for further development on screen.

3. It was difficult to cast Sonia in terms of her appearance. Dostoevsky's character was supposed to look very childlike and innocent but simultaneously have inner strength and power. I assume it was challenging for the directors to search for an actress who possessed both. An actress who appears childlike and innocent lacks strength and power (e.g., the 1935 and 1979 versions) while an actress who looks empowering lacks innocence and youthfulness (e.g., 1959, 1998, 2002 US, and 2015 versions). I would argue that the only one of the seven actresses who matched these difficult criteria was Lara Belmont.

Three of the interviewees I spoke to observed a striking fact. Andrew O'Keefe confessed that he could not finish the "too heavy" novel either at 16 or 24. He managed to read and fall in love with the book only when he was over 40 years old (O'Keefe). The interviews with actresses also revealed that a modern person of the same age as Sonia cannot completely relate to her or fully understand her complexity. Anna Samson read the novel again five years after filming and "realised a whole bunch of things that [she] missed and got wrong" (Samson). Lara Belmont also "saw Sonia in a very different light" as she grew up and matured. She admitted that "it is very hard to give that role to a young woman who hasn't grasped the complexity of growing up as a woman yet" (Belmont). This highlights the fact that Dostoevsky's Sonia is not just complex as a character but also more mature in her spiritual age than she appears, which also makes the task of believably recreating her on screen complex.

Reflecting on their work on *Crime and Punishment* versions for the screen, the creators of several adaptations imagined what they would have done differently with Sonia if they were to adapt the novel again. Michael Darlow suggested that now, 44 years after his adaptation, he "might be forced to make her not quite so self-abnegating, self-denying, for the audience to have respect for her" (Darlow). Tony Marchant responded that he would "be more mindful of the representation of her occupation". He would explore more "what it was like to be a prostitute in the Haymarket in 1862" and "the nature of that profession" for Sonia (Marchant). Andrew O'Keefe would reduce "the sexually explicit nature" of some scenes and "do things much more evocatively". If he did the adaptation again, he would give "more screen time [to] Sonia and her family" because they are "an essential element" (O'Keefe).

Lara Belmont confessed that Sonia is "the one character that has stayed with [her], in many different ways" through the years. Although I consider her Sonia to be one of the strongest and most complex versions among my case studies, the actress was sure that she did not give Dostoevsky's heroine the credit she deserved:

> When it comes to me and Sonia, it's the one role where there's so much that she is as a person that I did not have a grasp of. She is actually much more of a complex character than I had ever taken on board, so if I was to do it again, I would like to have given her a lot more strength. She had so much more than I portrayed. I didn't get the complexities of her. […] It's been in my awareness that I never portrayed Sonia in the depths that she deserved (Belmont).

CHAPTER 4

Transgressing: Sonia as a Protagonist

4.1. Behind the Scenes of *Transgressing*

My short film, *Transgressing,* could have been an anthropological case study. Motivated by theological questions and transcultural connections, this film could say much about its creators and characters. As a case study, it could impact the understanding of how the idea of God guides people's choices, behaviours, and motives as well as provide some insights into what makes us human. The transition of a Russian story to British society and the results of this passage could interest sociocultural anthropologists. As one of the creators of *Transgressing,* I could also have been the subject of such a study. Yet, as the author of this thesis, I focus on delving into the character of Sonia. However, I will also acknowledge the importance of my creative input into *Transgressing*'s production. By doing so, I aim to illuminate insider knowledge of the film production process, a facet often overlooked in adaptation analysis.

The idea of writing and producing a short adaptation of *Crime and Punishment* was on my agenda from the beginning of this research. Paralleling my study of adaptation methodology for this thesis, I have explored fields such as feminist theory, theology, and sociology, which have had a significant impact on the processes of creative screenplay writing and filmmaking. Independent investigations into prostitution and modern feminism, Christ figures in culture and films, underprivileged British students, and sex work had nothing to do with adaptation studies. However, without the knowledge of other fields, I would not have been able to create my practical case study film.

Besides moving away from fidelity to Dostoevsky's novel and choosing the dialogic approach as a method of my adaptation, I wanted to implement the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's fiction highlighted by Mikhail Bakhtin. As I mentioned earlier, he argued that Dostoevsky's secondary characters are, at their core, different from any other classic novel characters. Not defined solely by their usefulness to the main characters, they have individuality and complexity that goes beyond their relationship to the protagonists. Bakhtin's idea of Dostoevskian "multi-voicedness" and the "plurality of independent and unmerged voices

and consciousnesses" (*Poetics* 3) profoundly resonated with my reading of *Crime and Punishment*. "The tendency to monologize Dostoevsky's novel", which Bakhtin highlights (*Poetics* 160), is seen in most of the screen adaptations I analysed in the previous chapter. The filmmakers hear just one voice, and it is always Raskolnikov's. What would be interesting to see on screen is the adaptation of *Crime and Punishment*'s polyphonic nature. This could either create multiple protagonists in the film or create a film where one of the secondary characters becomes a protagonist. Andrew O'Keefe suggests that "there are a hundred films" in the novel as "there's a whole film sometimes in ten pages" (O'Keefe). With *Transgressing*, I set out to consider Sonia as a heroine in her own right with her own story, not "unrealistic", a "pure symbol", or simply a side character who is important as long as she supports the male protagonist. To prove this, I excluded Raskolnikov from my adaptation and placed Sonia in the centre of *Transgressing* as the protagonist.[40] Inspired by the circumstances that brought Sonia to sell her body to save her family and the aftermath of her actions, I decided to not adapt the whole of Sonia's story from the novel but to concentrate on adapting one chapter. I admit that this idea was partially influenced by the 1998 USA adaptation of the novel. This adaptation is the only one of my case studies that shows a scene where Sonia goes to sell herself, influenced by her stepmother's words and her family's poverty.

In Chapter Two of *Crime and Punishment*, the degraded drunkard Marmeladov begins a conversation with Raskolnikov, whom he just met in a pub. He tells Raskolnikov the story of his family being pushed into extreme poverty due to their financial struggles, leading his eldest daughter, Sonia, to resort to sacrificing her innocence to save her relatives from starvation. Raskolnikov accompanies Marmeladov to his flat, where he meets his sick and anxious wife, Katerina Ivanovna, along with her young children. In my version of the adaptation of this chapter, I have visually interpreted Marmeladov's story. This follows Dostoevsky's advice regarding adapting his works for other media. I was "keeping only one episode" from the novel while adhering to the writer's idea and changing the plot (*Complete Works* Vol.29(1) 225). Although I concentrated the plot of the film on Sonia, I also retained one of the main themes of *Crime and Punishment*, as Vadim Kozhinov suggests, and created the narrative theme around "insoluble situations and fateful decisions that have tragic consequences" (18). Dostoevsky scholar Tatiana Kasatkina and her works provided me with

[40] There are similar examples of adaptations that shift the narrative perspective from the original. For example, the film *Longbourn* (*Pride and Prejudice* retold from the servant's perspective) adapted from Jo Baker's novel or the film *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (the story of two minor characters from *Hamlet*) adapted from Tom Stoppard's play. However, such a comparison goes against the theory of Dostoevsky's polyphonism and the multivoicedness of his source novel when compared to Shakespeare's or Austen's works.

another suggestion that utterly impacted *Transgressing* and justified most of my creative choices: Sonia as a Christ figure.

The concept of the screenplay *Transgressing* was created in October 2018. In December 2019, I began adapting one chapter of the novel as a screenwriter. We shot the film in June and October 2021, and the post-production was completed in August 2022. I recommend reading the following chapter after watching the short film *Transgressing*, the practical part of this thesis.

4.2. Development and Pre-Production: Sonia's Story Travels from Page to Screen

My Impact on the Adaptation as a Screenwriter

The adaptation of the second chapter of *Crime and Punishment* had two initial goals that determined my creative research in the process of writing the screenplay.

1. Recontextualising Dostoevsky's story.

This process included the *modernisation* and *internationalisation* of the source text as well as an examination of the correlations between this text and my modern interpretation of it. Guided by findings in Alexander Burry's research, I "extend[ed]" the text "by exploring [its] potential relevance for the succeeding century" and added the space for "present indirect criticism" (*Multi-Mediated Dostoevsky* 12–13) by remaining in dialogue with Dostoevsky.

2. Construction of a complex contemporary female character who will translate Dostoevsky's ideas into the language of the modern world.

One might call my second goal dubious. I want to clarify here that by no means do I claim to know Dostoevsky's intentions regarding Sonia. However, this did not stop me from having my own interpretation of his potential intentions as well as opinions regarding other interpretations Dostoevsky scholars have presented in their studies of the novel and the character.

In the process of my adaptation, both "recontextualising the story" and "construction of a complex character" quickly took the form of a dialogic as well as an intertextual approach, confirming my theoretical intentions from the first chapter of this thesis. The analysis of the creative process behind the screenplay of *Transgressing* showed that, although the second chapter of *Crime and Punishment* served as a solid foundation for my adaptation, it was not the only text I was adapting. Furthermore, Dostoevsky was not the only author I was in dialogue with. The sources of my adaptation that I could acknowledge were:

1. Chapter Two of *Crime and Punishment*,
2. Different Sonias I have seen in other *Crime and Punishment* adaptations,
3. Social realist movies by British director Ken Loach,[41]
4. Research about British student sex workers and BBC 3's *Student sex workers* series,
5. The concept of Sonia as a Christ figure in the studies of Russian Dostoevsky scholars Tatiana Kasatkina and Boris Tikhomirov, and
6. The last days of Christ in *The New Testament.*

Another factor that influenced my adaptation on subconscious and conscious levels was my gender identity. Actress Anna Samson, who played Sonia in the Australian version, observed the predominance of the male perspective on the character: "The novel written by a man, the screenplay written by a man, the film directed by a man, opposite leading actor, a man". She highlighted that she found it exhilarating and challenging to create a female perspective for the character and develop her interpretation of who Sonia was as an individual (Samson). After examining most of the adaptations of *Crime and Punishment* known to me, I discovered that there were no female screenwriters or directors among the creators of those versions. As the first female writer of Sonia as a character, I was creating the heroine from the position of the "female gaze".[42]

Connected with the "Christian gaze", as I would call it, the works of Kasatkina and Tikhomirov were also influential in the process of my adaptation. Most Dostoevsky scholars agree that *Crime and Punishment* is a profoundly Christian novel that inspires many theological discussions about its hidden symbolism. Christopher Deacy indicates that a film can

[41] I was especially influenced by Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake* (2016), which also explores insoluble situations, families in poverty, and a young woman who is forced into prostitution to provide for her children.
[42] The term "female gaze" is commonly used today to describe the unique viewpoint that a female filmmaker, such as a screenwriter, director, or producer, may bring to a movie that might differ from the way a man would approach the same subject.

> …stimulate serious theological reflection. *Groundhog Day, The Apartment, Nobody's Fool,* and *The Crossing Guard* may not contain any explicitly religious subject matter, but they do act as an agency through which audiences can come to a fuller understanding of how to address and engage with some of the fundamental issues and dilemmas that lie at the heart of human experience, and in particular with the universal human experience of sin, alienation, and suffering. Accordingly, irrespective of whether a filmmaker is Christian or not, different audiences may choose to interpret a given film through a Christian lens. (137–138)

Notwithstanding several books written about the relationship between films and religion, the scholarship on the interconnection between disciplines such as theological studies and film studies is still developing. The research I undertook while working on the screenplay revealed the limited number of studies connected with the "Christ figure" on screen.[43] Although *Transgressing* was never intended to be a religious film, it implements symbolism open to theological and Christological interpretations by future audiences. In a time of religious decline in modern Britain, the short film *Transgressing* tells the story of the spiritual odyssey of a modern female Christ.

One of the advantages I had, compared with other creators of *Crime and Punishment* adaptations, relates to the process of translation. In the previous chapter, I reflected on other filmmakers "translating the translation" and highlighted the limitations of my research regarding their films. As a bilingual filmmaker, I had the advantage of adapting the original novel without a separate stage of translation. Nonetheless, my adaptation process began with some other inevitable "translations" I needed to undertake before I started writing the screenplay. Those translations covered genre, title, names, setting, and time.

Although most *Crime and Punishment* adaptations have chosen crime drama or thriller as a genre, literary scholars define the genre of Dostoevsky's novel as realism, social realism, or romantic realism. Arnold Hauser notes that Dostoevsky is "one of the few genuine writers on poverty" (qtd. in Fanger *Romantic Realism* 206). Similarly, Katherine Briggs reads *Crime and Punishment* as a "polemic against poverty, cruelty and oppression" (9). These definitions may relate to the social realist tradition of films, which became my obvious choice of genre for *Transgressing*. However, Nikolai Berdyaev argues that the novel is far from realism: it is *mystical* (23). Bakhtin similarly reflects on the *fantastic* nature of Dostoevsky's realism (*Poetics* 81).

[43] Most academic literature is devoted to the so-called "Jesus-story films", which differ, according to Tatum Barnes, from "Christ-figure films".

Richard Peace mentions "elements of the fantastic" and how in *Crime and Punishment* "dream passes into reality, reality into dream" (38). The translation of a genre thus added another dimension to *Transgressing,* including a *mystical/fantastic* layer with some outlandish unreal elements.

The next important translation was the title, where I noticed some deficiencies. *Transgressing* was not a random word for the title but an intercultural adaptation of Dostoevsky's title for the novel. The double meaning the writer placed into his title is not reflected in English translations. The traditional title *Crime and Punishment* captures only one meaning of the Russian word "*prestuplenie*". Malcolm Jones notes that *transgression,* or *stepping over,* is the second meaning of the word translated as "*crime*" (*Novel of Discord* 68). Edward Wasiolek addresses the Biblical connotations of *prestuplenie* and reflects on the meanings of *overstepping* and *transgression* (83). Kozhinov considers the principal difference between the two meanings and highlights the importance of having both in one title. While one is "primarily *legal* in meaning", another "conveys in full the idea of moral violation of human or divine law" (21). When examining Raskolnikov's story, both meanings of the word *presuplenie* are relatable in his storyline as he both overstepped human and divine laws. With Sonia, however, the legal meaning of the word is not accurate as she is not committing a crime by selling herself. In creating the title for my short film, I wanted to highlight the Biblical concept of *transgression* over divine rules and simultaneously evoke certain thoughts in the future film's audience. Can one see a moral crime in Sonia's actions or not? Is the title linked to Sonia's actions or the actions of other characters surrounding her?

Another cultural change I needed to make was translating the names of the characters. On the one hand, they needed to sound natural for the new setting of the story. On the other hand, I could not ignore Dostoevsky's love for "proper names"[44] and wanted to include another layer of intercultural translation. Olga Shcherbatenko calls the process of translating proper names into another language specifically complex regarding Dostoevsky's novel as "almost all the names in it are 'speaking', and their meanings represent the very depths of the work's symbolism" (879). She argues that if those names are just "transcribed or transliterated" it takes away their potential "emotional impact on the reader" (880). Although in her study Shcherbatenko discusses the literary translation of Dostoevsky novels into other

[44] The writer often gave additional meanings to the seemingly ordinary names of his characters.

languages, I found her arguments relatable to the process of intercultural translation from page to screen.

As I mentioned earlier, Sonia's name has an essential and symbolic meaning in the novel, so I decided to keep it unchanged. Although in British tradition the form of the name would probably be "Sophia" rather than Sonia, I decided to leave the name untouched, potentially hinting that Sonia's late mother was Greek. The same applies to Sonia's Orthodox cross, which I will mention later in this chapter. Both the name and the Orthodox cross make Sonia stand out from her family and British culture.

The first names of Sonia's family members were easy to adapt: Semeon became Simon, Katerina Ivanovna transformed into Katherine, and Polechka converted to Polly. However, I invented the name of the youngest of Sonia's sisters following Dostoevsky's love for meaningful names. Having a new child in the family could potentially trigger many family problems. To increase the importance of this seeming background character, the least involved in family problems, I named her Ariel. Apart from the meaning of the name, "Lion of God" (from Biblical Hebrew אריאל), Ariel was also a symbolic name for the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 29:1–4 MSG). Moreover, in *The Old Testament*, Ariel means "an altar covered with blood" (Isaiah 29:2 NLT). All these meanings play a supporting role in the general symbolical layer of the film, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Sonia's father's last name, Marmeladov, has an additional meaning in the novel. It is associated with marmalade's soft sweetness. This is undoubtedly an evocative surname because the same description can be given to its owner, who lacks the strength of character to stop drinking, improve his life, and support his family. Searching for a similar meaning among British second names, I came across "Jellyman" which became the family's surname.

One of the major characters of the film, Professor Claudia Blake, was mostly invented for the film, so I needed to give her a name. Playing with symbolism, I chose to name her after two people: Claudia Procula (the supposed name of Pontius Pilate's wife) and English poet and painter William Blake. Both names add additional layers to the understanding of the character. Pilate was the one who ordered the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; similarly, our professor caused Sonia to sacrifice herself. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience,* a collection of poems by Blake, explores the two contrary states of the human soul, depicting the nature of

innocence and experience. Similarly, our professor presents herself from the position of experience to Sonia, who represents innocence.[45]

The somewhat larger translation I had to undertake was changing the spatio-temporal setting of the story. Called a "cultural border crossing" by Frederick White, this process involves the transposition of a text "from one temporal or spatial territory into another in which language, customs, cultural identity, social attitudes, and political systems are often different" to "suit new cinematic environments" (239). This transposition involved changing the story's setting from nineteenth-century Russia to modern-day Britain. Translating the time in the process of adaptation is far from being an original technique in film. Many classic novels and plays were transposed to different centuries in screen versions because the universal topics raised by classic writers continue to be relatable in modern life.[46] The themes Dostoevsky raised in his novels in general and *Crime and Punishment*, in particular, are not exclusionary. Joe Andrew notes that "the issues he covered remain tragically relevant. Alcohol abuse, crime, terrorism, the abuse of children and women" (Briggs IX). Briggs echoes this, stating that Dostoevsky "examines fears and problems which are still relevant" (7), and "the world news media today offer evidence that human nature does not change" (22). Samson acknowledged that the novel "transcends time and place", which is why "trying to replicate it" without recognition of "timeless nature" is hardly possible (Samson).

My adaptation began similarly to the process described by Andrea Hacker regarding Akira Kurosawa's adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel *The Idiot* (*Hakuchi,* 1951). Likewise, instead of "blindly photographing the novel", I "kept only the most rudimentary plot points intact" (303): teenage girl, blended family, young siblings, alcoholic father, terminally ill stepmother, poverty, and being forced into prostitution to support the family. While preserving the main plot points, I converted "cultural references, character experiences and locations" from the Russian "semiosphere" into British (311). Finding the process of changing the temporal and cultural setting of Dostoevsky's masterplot completely justified, I needed additional research to find relatable connections between the time and space of the novel and the time and space of my film.

[45] One can also find part of Blake's *Ancient of Days* (1794) on the wall behind Professor Blake in her office.
[46] For example, Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* became *Pretty Woman* (1990); Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* turned into *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001); and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* shifted into *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999).

Creating the Characters

It is a widely held belief that creating characters was more important for Dostoevsky than creating the plots of his books. All the situations in his stories are reminiscent of experiments to see how characters would react and where their moral principles and values would lead them. Being interested in this approach, I chose to follow it in my work as a screenwriter. The dominant part of my work on the screenplay for *Transgressing* involved the process of creating Sonia.

One of the reasons for choosing Sonia as the protagonist of *Transgressing* was to test Bakhtin's polyphonic theory in adaptation practice. Sonia's story would not be possible in a standalone film if she were not an internally independent character. Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky not only attempted "to develop [his characters'] views into finished systems" but also regarded them "as ideologically authoritative and independent" and "fully valid, autonomous carrier[s] of [their] own individual word" (*Poetics* 3). In my work, I did not reveal the impossibility of the character's existence without being "attached" by the plot to Raskolnikov. Moreover, Sonia's complexity, multilayeredness, and plausibility became evident in the process of adapting her image for the screen. Briggs lists six layers of Dostoevsky's character present in the novel. All of them help in Sonia's spiritual development:

1. a child who lost her mother at an early age;
2. a daughter brought up and sketchily educated by her weak but loving father;
3. a teenager trying to come to terms with a sick and unbalanced stepmother;
4. a loving sister trying to protect a younger step-brother and sisters;
5. a young adult, trying to hold the family together, in the face of desperate poverty, while her father fails to fulfil his family responsibilities;
6. a young woman, attempting to support the man she loves. (79–80)

Only the sixth (excluded from *Transgressing*) relates to Raskolnikov. Other layers made Sonia relatable for modern audiences, as such types existed both in nineteenth-century Russia and in modern Britain. These fundamentals of character made it easy to cross the borders between times and cultures.

In addition to working on the independence and complexity of Sonia, I chose to follow one of the theories around Dostoevsky's heroine and create a supplementary layer to an otherwise realistic character. Although *Transgressing* was never meant to be a religious film, it was created as a film about faith. *The New Testament* on her bedside table and the cross she

inherited from her late mother are the only objects in the story that can point to Sonia being a Christian. She never speaks about her faith with other characters or the audience. Nonetheless, the metaphorical and symbolic layer of the "Sonia-as-a-Christ-figure" concept took a special place in my work on the screenplay.

The topic of a "Christ figure" on screen is not new for either filmmakers or film scholars. However, as Tatum argues, it has always been much easier to define the films that tell the life story of Jesus Christ (adapting *The New Testament*) than those that "tell stories in which characters, events, or details substantially recall, or resemble, the story of Jesus" (209). The problem with revealing "Christ-figure films" is that they might not have been intended as such by filmmakers and may not even deliver any theological messages. In such cases, the definition comes from the audience's reception and interpretation rather than film production. Tatum defines two types of "Christ figure films": explicit and implicit. In the explicit, the intention of the filmmakers to resemble the story of Jesus is clear. In the implicit, "the central characters do not understand themselves to be acting out the Jesus story, but rather the filmmaker uses images that lead the viewer to make the identification" (210–212). This second type defined my approach to creating Sonia's story.

Lloyd Baugh brings attention to films that "portray women as Christ-figures" (219). *Transgressing* is intended to continue the tradition of female protagonists metaphorically representing the evangelical mission of Christ. Among great examples of implicit Christ-figure films with female protagonists are Federico Fellini's *La Strada* (1954) and *Nights of Cabiria* (1957) and Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (1996), *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), and *Dogville* (2003). In some ways, Sonia as a character was inspired by these heroines and shares Christ-like qualities with them. In the dark world of injustice, inequality, and abuse, Sonia is an optimist, believing in people and treating them with compassionate forgiveness and unconditional love. She is ready for the "salvific mission" of self-sacrifice, however scary it feels. In Sonia's case, this act of sacrifice takes the form of a sexual act, which could be seen as impossible for Christians due to a common perception of sex work as a sin. However, in adapting this idea, I followed not only Dostoevsky's heroine's paradoxical nature (sinner and saint) but also the concept of chastity according to Dostoevsky, which is highlighted by Kasatkina: the loss of physical chastity (prostitution) is done in the name of maintaining spiritual chastity ("Philosophy of Sin" 18:05). This could be the reason for never showing

Sonia at work in the novel. It is not the act of prostitution that defines her but the reasoning behind the act.

In the second chapter, I addressed the problematic nature of the Christian self-sacrifice concept presented by feminist scholars. I knew I would need to contend with this issue later in my film. To portray Sonia as more than a pure victim of her family and society and ensure her sacrifice was not shown as a "worsening of oppression or a complicity with abuse", I chose to follow Ruth Groenhout's other type of self-sacrifice. By sacrificing herself, Sonia "eliminates and limits the destruction of others" and gives the "opportunity to oppressors to be healed of their own brokenness" (qtd. in Green 573). To depict this, I needed to develop supporting characters in a certain way.

The whole of Sonia's family (excluding one eliminated sibling) was adapted from the characters that were supposed to be at the centre of the novel *The Drunkards*, which originally focused on the Marmeladovs family and their misfortunes (Tikhomirov 12). Donald Fanger observes that, in Dostoevsky's fiction, families usually "tend to be shown in process of dissolution" with society "largely responsible for this" (*Romantic Realism* 220). Katherine and Simon – adults in the family – are indirectly in charge of teenage Sonia's decision to sell her virginity. While working on their creation, I wanted to introduce them first as abusers and antagonists and gradually develop the understanding that the abusers themselves could be abused and broken.

Alex De Jonge explains Sonia's father's turning to drinking as a result of his overwhelming despair and hopelessness about his situation. Although his alcoholism caused him to destroy his family and force his daughter into prostitution, Sonia's father feels a sense of control and responsibility by choosing to drink (173). While leaving the character mostly in the background, I chose to avoid the common vision of alcoholic men in families: Simon is far from being aggressive, physically abusive, or violent. Like Dostoevsky's character, he is kind-hearted and loving but also weak, useless to his family, and mentally abusive.

Sonia's stepmother Katherine stepped into the forefront of my adaptation much more than Dostoevsky's character and became the second lead with a transfixing character arc in the story. Several aspects of her storyline impacted Katherine's complex personality and her relationship with Sonia. There are numerous hints in the screenplay (and later the film) that

Katherine originally comes from a different social class than Simon and Sonia. She has a stylish dress "from [a] previous life", listens to classical music, and calls Sonia a "young lady" in front of her professor. It is revealed later in the story that Katherine's illness partially explains her emotional behaviour at the beginning of the film.[47] Being mentally abused by her alcoholic husband, Katherine lives in never-ending anxiety about an unknown future. Attempting to be the head of the family, she forgets how to be a mother until she is reminded of this by Sonia. Katherine's tears when Sonia returns home in the last scene show that she is emotionally ready to take responsibility for pushing her stepdaughter toward the sacrifice.

Another female character who played a crucial part in Sonia's story was Professor Blake. This character is a suitable example of the intertextual approach to adaptation. Not existing as such in the novel, Blake is a collective image of several characters: Lebeziatnikov and Darya Frantsovna from *Crime and Punishment* and Pontius Pilate and Judas from *The New Testament*. Like Darya Frantsovna, Blake enlists Sonia in the sex business, and like Lebeziatnikov, Blake educates and develops Sonia, bringing books to her while thinking of taking advantage of her. Similar to Judas, who brought Jesus 30 pieces of silver before betraying Him, Blake redeems Sonia's pawned cross for £300. As with Pilate, the professor ultimately leads Sonia to the "crucifixion".

Baugh notes one of the "typical motifs" of "Christ-figure films" is "commitment to justice" when the protagonist "enters a community or a situation in which injustices are being perpetrated against the people" with a "mission to free those people" (206). Following this, I aimed to show how Sonia's sacrifice influences other characters, all of whom are broken in some way. The most crucial influence occurs during the aftermath of the hotel scene when Sonia comes home a different person. She is ready to stand up for her family when the professor humiliates them. By asking the question "Does it get easier?" Sonia suggests that Blake is not being honest with Sonia or herself to hide her past trauma.[48] Empowered, Sonia is ready to become the head of the family in place of her lost, broken, and ill stepmother. This cannot but influence Katherine. Her tears and her presence in the bathroom show how much Sonia's actions impacted their present and future relationship.

[47] In the screenplay, Katherine has brain cancer. In the film, following the director's idea of subtlety, it became an unnamed illness.

[48] The film has an unambiguous allusion to the professor's backstory of having taken the same path as Sonia to facilitate her own career in the past. Different feelings about the same action are shown between Blake and Sonia in a crucial scene in the car when the ideologies of the two women clash. Blake's approach is practical, logical, and materialistic.

The character development on the page was a result of an adaptation process and strategies chosen by one person: the screenwriter. As I claimed in the previous chapter, there are two more principal creators of an adapted character. After the screenplay draft was finished, my collaboration with the director and the actress was about to begin.

Collaboration with Other Film Creators

The process of working with two more principal creators of the character and the changes they brought to my script supported the idea of the collaborative nature of the adaptation. My theoretical thoughts from the first chapter found practical responses in my work with the director and actress of *Transgressing*: Alessandro Repetti and Hannah Saxby. Knowing the importance of finding compatible collaborators to create Sonia and their influence on the result made the process of searching for a director and a lead actress long and complex for me as the creative producer of the film. After seven long interviews with potential directors interested in creating the story, Repetti's vision of Sonia and his artistic interpretation of the story won my attention. It was much harder to find an actress for Sonia. Apart from obvious experience, talent, and ability to deliver a strong performance, we were looking for an actress that visually matched our image of Sonia. As I mentioned in the third chapter, casting Sonia has never been an easy task. Along with "childlike features – her sincerity, innocence, and asexuality" (Filová 103), Dostoevsky's character was supposed to have inner strength and wisdom. In many cases of Sonia's casting, the filmmakers chose either one or another. From a total of 656 applicants and four rounds of auditions over four months, the director and I chose nineteen-year-old Hannah Saxby. After the film's release, we both agreed that she "was a perfect match" (Repetti).

Reflecting on my previous thoughts that many filmmakers adapt not a novel but a screenplay (already an adaptation), I gave the director and actress of *Transgressing* the freedom to choose if they wanted to read the novel before we started work. It was interesting that they both chose to rely on the screenplay rather than the original text. Having heard about *Crime and Punishment*, neither had read it nor were familiar with the storyline. After beginning to read the novel, Repetti chose not to continue as it "was pulling [him] in a different direction to what a British 2022 film needed to be". Therefore, he "learned as much as [he] could from that chapter […] about the characters and their way of being" and put the novel away to

avoid further "influence" (Repetti). Saxby mentioned that she only "read a summary of the novel online" to learn more about Sonia's overall storyline (Saxby).

The first impressions of Sonia from my collaborators were slightly different from mine. After reading the novel's chapter, Repetti called Sonia a "reaction-driven character" and "slightly passive". However, he "felt she was important, had a really strong presence and a strong vibe" and thought it "was a good element to bring to the film" (Repetti). At her first audition, Saxby portrayed Sonia as "a typical teenager" without realising "she was as good and selfless". Only after reading the whole script and discussing Sonia's backstory in depth did she find "a reason for her to be all giving to people who treat her really badly". She admitted that Sonia's complexity, braveness, and determination were not "initially apparent". At first impression, she felt more like a "people pleaser" (Saxby).

Months of collaborative work on character development and seven further drafts of the screenplay brought Sonia closer to what would be seen on screen. While working on "the modern translation of what Sonia was" regarding her costumes, hair, makeup, colours, and dialogue, the director admitted that it is much easier to create a character from a blank page compared with adapting an existing character and that Sonia was "one of the most difficult characters [he has] worked with" (Repetti). During this process, he gave a lot of freedom to the actress: Saxby not only considered the believability and relatability of the character as a modern girl of the same age but also helped with the intercultural translation of the character. A middle-aged Russian writer and Italian male director could not authentically create Sonia without the help of a British teenage girl. The director remembers that, during rehearsals, Saxby sometimes "didn't relate, or agree or understand certain behaviours or choices that Sonia had," (Repetti) and this resulted in more script changes.

The long collaborative process brought me, the director, the actress, and Dostoevsky's Sonia together. Ultimately, all three of us felt Sonia was real and referred to her as a "friend". However, I was surprised to notice that the view of the film as an adaptation differed between myself and the director. Whereas I saw most of Dostoevsky's ideas regarding his heroine being fulfilled in the film, Repetti did not "think *Transgressing*'s Sonia [was] Dostoevsky's". He considered her to be "ours", a result of our creative collaboration (Repetti).

4.3 The Dimensions and Layers of *Transgressing*

Feminism and Christianity

While collaborating on the film, we discussed questions of where the film sits in terms of two poles brought together by the paradoxicality of the character of Sonia: feminism and Christianity. As I mentioned previously in this thesis, the shift in balance between these elements could crucially change the understanding of the character for both filmmakers and audiences. Neither showing an empowered sinner from the perspective of Christianity nor representing a powerless victim from the perspective of feminism was on our agenda. What all three of us wanted to achieve was to provoke discussions in both directions and highlight the complexity of a modern young woman searching for her way in life.

Some might argue that no features of a recognisable modern strong female character can be seen in our Sonia. Here, I returned to Samson's claim that "a modern woman is not used to seeing quiet strength" (Samson). Sonia does not possess a tough demeanour or engage in empowering speeches, lacks fierceness in fighting her enemies, does not reclaim her sexuality, and is not outspoken or confident. However, Saxby observed that Sonia's "actions are pretty aligned with principles of modern feminism". The evidence of Sonia's strength is that "she's taking her education, her income into her own hands" and that "she's passionate about her faith, her family and her education" (Saxby). Repetti agreed that "there are a lot of elements in the film that can be read in a feminist way". He also saw Sonia as an active character and appreciated that she is "able to recognise the issue and to take action towards dealing with it" (Repetti). Although quiet, Sonia exudes inner strength through her active, responsible, and passionate nature. I argue that this type of strong female character is underrepresented on the modern screen.

The religious aspect of the film was one of the central topics in our discussions from the script stage through pre-production, production, and post-production. While acknowledging Sonia's profound religious beliefs, we were challenged to find a subtle way to represent their importance on screen. In the second chapter, I cited Borowski's research showing that the respondents who more strongly declared their faith in God tended to feel more positive about Sonia's beliefs (Borowski 34). In the third chapter, I felt this connection when non-religious filmmakers showed less understanding of Sonia. Although Baugh questions the necessity of the filmmaker "to be a believing Christian" to create an "authentic" Christ-figure

film with "valid metaphors" (111), I believe my Christian upbringing influenced my interpretation of the character, and it was intriguing for me to observe my co-creators and their understanding of Sonia depending on their personal religious beliefs. Saxby was raised in a Christian family. Being interested in spirituality, she easily accepted the proposed allegory of Sonia as a "saviour" or a Christ figure, calling this "a universal story" "embedded in everyday life". Sonia's faith also helped Saxby to understand the heroine's logic, explaining why she is "so kind and forgiving", "so relentlessly giving", and having "strength to go through the day" whatever happens (Saxby). Conversely, Repetti "struggled a lot with the religious side of Sonia" in the film, although he admitted to being a Christian who "treasures his faith". He believes that "religion is often too personal to be generalised". Starting from the script development, Repetti was actively against "forcing religion upon the audiences". While I was working on Christian allegories and symbols in the film and giving Christian audiences "extra layers" to interpret, the director was making sure that "the story works and the character makes sense, even for people who have zero faith or a completely different one" (Repetti).

Creating an unconventionally strong female Christ-figure is inevitably connected with future audience interpretation. Deacy highlights that film analysis is primarily centred around the film text while underestimating "the vital sense the film audience contributes to a 'religious' reading of a film" (5), as well as a feminist reading in our case. Therefore, it is difficult to finalise my assumptions about whether our collaborative effort worked in the intended direction without a subsequent audience study. Due to many constraints and limitations, it was not feasible to undertake such a study within the scope of my PhD research.

Social Realism and Social Commentary

As Fanger notes, Dostoevsky is not only a "humanitarian novelist" and "fighter for social justice" but also a creator of characters who "revolt" against poverty (*Romantic Realism* 206–207). I found this thought fascinating in the process of adapting his work. The chapter I adapted is about a family from the lowest class of society, with Sonia, as an active character, honestly dealing with topics of social inequality and sex work. It might seem that *Transgressing* could not avoid becoming a successor to traditions of gritty British "kitchen-sink dramas". However, an Italian director, a Russian writer, and an actress from an affluent family were not the best choices of authors for such a task. Thus, our social realist drama was seasoned

with poetry and conversations about issues of choice, morality, duty, and love, which are universal for all nations and classes.

Choosing a small English town as a filming location for the modernised story helped to discover authentic areas that reflected Sonia's world. The change from Dostoevsky's location feels striking. Whereas Russian Sonia lives in a rough and densely populated area, modern English Sonia lives in a rough but much less condensed area. An emblematic shot of her walking home from the shop shows a shabby patchwork-like space where she is a tiny person alone with her problems (Figure 63). The voices of people are heard – there is life around – but everyone lives in their own tiny space, and everyone is lonely with their problems.

FIGURE 63

The modernisation of location brought to the screen some elements that Dostoevsky would not have had in his time: mobile phones. Using her old mobile, Sonia pawns her valued cross (Figure 64) and later uploads her photo on the virginity auction website. In this way, modern reality mirrors Dostoevsky's world with the old pawnbroker and selling one's body on the street. Time passes, new technologies arrive, but processes remain the same. One of the technological modern nuances, a pre-paid electricity meter known to many British low-income families, helped to bring additional symbolism to the story. After selling herself, Sonia "brings the light" to her house and her family (Figure 65).

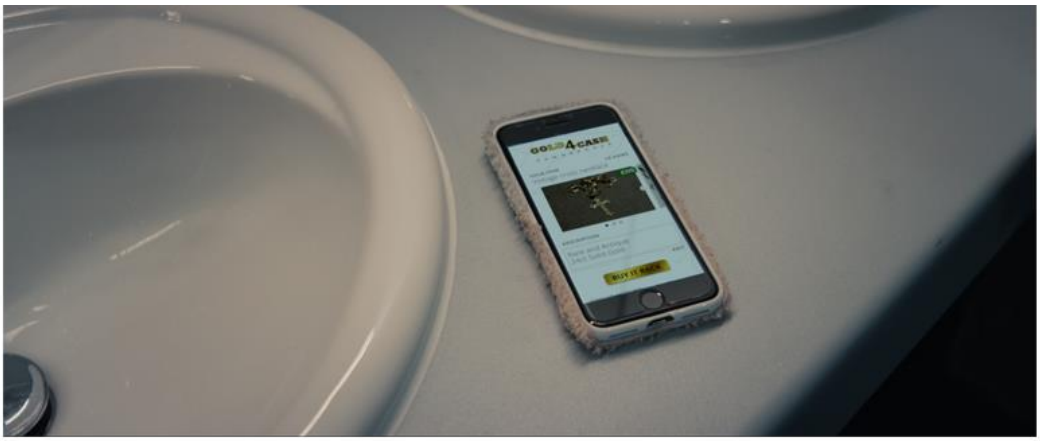

FIGURE 64

FIGURE 65

Not only the town but also Sonia's flat were important parts of modernising the location. In many of his works, Dostoevsky describes his characters' flats as very cramped and located somewhere in the attics or basements. The flat where Sonia lives with her blended family, created by production designer Dan Lysenko, featured among other things the flat's dilapidated walls (Figure 66) and a tiny bedroom shared by three sisters (Figure 67). Research into the living conditions of modern British prototypes of Sonia's family (Figures 68–69) highlights the authenticity of this Dostoevsky-like gritty British location.

FIGURE 66

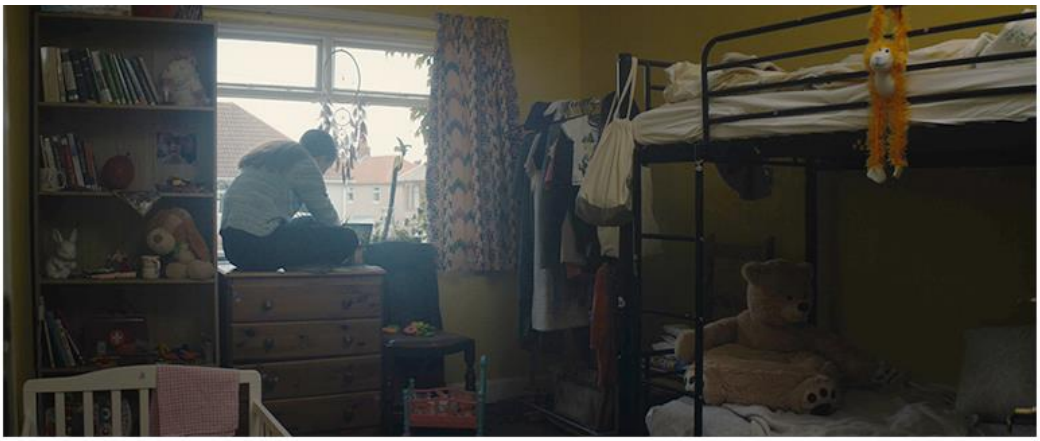

FIGURE 67

FIGURE 68

FIGURE 69

Like the town, the flat highlights Sonia's isolation and solitude. Despite living in a one-bedroom flat with four other people, Sonia is often shown in isolation. Similar to Christ, who "had no place to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20 NIV; Luke 9:58 NIV), Sonia does not have her own space. The only places in the flat she has privacy can hardly be called private: the cabinet in the bedroom where she often sits (Figure 67), the communal stairs where she remembers her late mother (Figure 70), and the family bathroom where she studies at night (Figure 71).

FIGURE 70

FIGURE 71

It was important for *Transgressing* to show the modernisation of the theme of prostitution, which is both integral to Dostoevsky's character and common in on-screen social realism. Dostoevsky's position on prostitution in many of his works was clearly sympathetic. Without judgement but with understanding, the writer describes prostitutes as those "who have nothing to eat, who are withered by need, pierced by a needle that delivers a miserable penny for painstaking work" (Grossman 24–25). Just as Dostoevsky's Sonia was trying to work as a seamstress, our Sonia works as a waitress. The efforts of both did not help to provide financially for their families. The moral choices of both could be questioned by those who have not known what they are going through. This matter was highlighted in an anonymous article that Dostoevsky published in his journal:

> In one evening, you can meet a hundred prostitutes on some magnificent, brightly lit street and yet have not the slightest idea of the state of their morality. To get this idea, you need to be transported into their inner world and then look at their actions from this new angle. Every fallen

> woman has a sad story, and that is what the moralist should be looking at.
> (qtd. in Grossman 25–26)

Much like Dostoevsky, *Transgressing* "exploit[s] an issue of immediate public concern" (Fanger "Apogee" 19) rather than judging commonly marginalised so-called "fallen women".

A significant change in the modernised Sonia was her education. Contrary to Dostoevsky's heroine, who was poorly educated by her drunk father and read some dubious books given to her by a neighbour, our modern version is a university student. Environmental studies suit her personality and nurturing nature. Although she follows her heart, Sonia is condemned for this choice by her desperate stepmother: "Ecology! What are you actually gonna do with it anyway, Sonia? How is it gonna help us? You need to start living in the real world!" The "real world" gives Sonia other choices. Briggs notes that in Dostoevsky's time "impoverished women [were] unable to earn their living by honest work" and often were "forced to choose between prostitution, marriage to an unsuitable man, or death" (278). In modern times, economically disadvantaged women often have similar choices. Whereas Dostoevsky was researching his heroines in newspapers, today television news and the internet report some hard-to-believe cases. Sonia is a character based on many real stories of twenty-first century student sex workers.

The National Student Money Survey project, running since 2013, "[has] been asking UK university students about their honest experiences of managing money during their degrees". Although throughout the years there were students "who talk[ed] positively about doing sex work", they also heard from others "who [didn't] enjoy sex work, but [did] it out of desperation for money". In 2022, "8% of students in the survey said they would consider sex work in a cash emergency, indicating they see it as a last resort" (Brown "Survey 2022"). This is a massive rise from 2018, when only 4% of students would do sex work in such circumstances (Bishi). Jake Butler, the money expert from the *Save the Student* site, disclosed that "every year [their] survey reveals students are involved in sex work, whether by choice or because they've run out of options" (qtd. in Petter). It is clear that students' financial hardship in modern British reality mirrors Dostoevsky's times.

One of the most prominent reasons for choosing sex work over other jobs is higher income over fewer working hours, which gives students more time to devote to their studies (Roberts et al. "UK Students and Sex Work" 142). Moreover, most universities recommend limiting

time spent working during terms. This is addressed in *Transgressing* in the car scene with Professor Blake, who attempts to defend this job as a good option for Sonia: "How much do you earn in a week?... you can earn more in half a day... and you'll be able to continue with your studies…". *Transgressing* shows that, instead of judging marginalised individuals for their choices without knowing their circumstances, society should consider the core of the problem. Students must get more support from universities and the government to stop being forced into "potential mental and physical risks involved in sex work" solely "out of desperation for money" (Brown "Survey 2021").

FIGURE 72

Another reality portrayed in *Transgressing* is online virginity auctions (Figure 72). This is another "hard-to-believe" reality that gained popularity around the world in the 2000s. Apart from Dostoevsky's novel, Sonia's story was based on those of two British students of her age who sold their virginity to finance their studies. In 2007, according to *Slate* magazine, "18-year-old Carys Copestake from Manchester managed to make $23,000 to finance her physics degree" (C. Gordon). In 2004, according to *BBC News*, an 18-year-old Bristol University social policy student named Rosie Reid auctioned her virginity on the internet and received £8,400 for sex to pay for her studies (*BBC News*). Sonia sells her virginity to help her desperate family after being given the leaflet by the professor. Blake is far from a one-dimensional screen villain; she genuinely believes she is helping Sonia, her brilliant and talented student, to solve her financial hardship.

Without providing any answers, *Transgressing* raises awareness and asks its audience what they think of this reality and their society. While mixing social realism, romanticism, and fantastical realism in his writing, Dostoevsky had a vision of solving the problems society

faces. Kasatkina believes one of his fundamental thoughts was the following: "Not a person depends on society, but society depends on people". Therefore, any environment or society can be transformed by the people of which it is composed ("3rd Lecture" 31:47). The goal of his (and our) Sonia was to transform people around her with her actions. Whether she achieved this goal and how high the price of her actions was, *Transgressing* leaves open for the audience to decide.

Metaphors and Allegories

Interpretation in adaptation can be seen as an opportunity for dialogue between a writer, filmmaker, and viewer. This is supported by poststructuralist thought that "the meaning of a 'text' [is] transitive rather than inherent" (Deacy 5–6), and the process of perceiving a film text, as claimed by Roland Barthes, should be called "disentanglement" rather than "decipherment" ("The Death Of The Author" 147). *Transgressing* creates a compelling case study for such processes while having "coded messages" both inherited from Dostoevsky and developed in their own right.

Most *Crime and Punishment* readers will remember Raskolnikov's dreams, which create a poetic pattern in the novel, revealing the unconscious inner world, psyche, and latent thoughts of the character. For scholars researching those dreams, it is clear they play an important role in the structure of the novel and have counterparts in the real life of the character. It is less noticeable that Sonia also has significant dreams. Although *Transgressing* does not follow the content of Sonia's dreams from the novel (they occur outside of the adapted second chapter), the film chose to use Dostoevsky's idea of a dream as a leitmotiv. Sonia's dreams in *Transgressing* help to establish two distinct worlds: the gritty reality and the poetic subconscious. The dream sequences of the film not only serve as a door into Sonia's psyche and visually express the Christ allegory but also create many significant visual metaphors mirrored in the real-life sequences.

Here, I must mention that the problem of translating literary metaphors into visual language relates to interpretation. It is commonly believed that Dostoevsky's novels have "coded messages" – metaphors and allegories – that could be deciphered by perceptive readers. According to Tatiana Boborykina, a "visual metaphor" should hold the primary significance in constructing a film text based on Dostoevsky's works. Nevertheless, it is not solely the

responsibility of the filmmaker to possess the imagination and talent necessary to create this metaphor: the viewer also requires the same qualities (6).

From the perspective of the film's creators, most of the on-screen symbolism in *Transgressing* is related to Christianity, specifically the image and story of Christ, the Gospels, and Biblical art. This is linked with a great number of the Gospels' allegories and metaphorical quotations that can be found in the original novel. Kasatkina, who studied Dostoevsky's Biblical visual metaphors, explains the writer's desire to embed quotes from the Gospels into his works as a second layer of interpretation, helping his readers to see connections between their lives and Christ's life ("3rd Lecture" 01:45:19). Like Dostoevsky, I saw such connections with the twenty-first century. Kasatkina highlights another of Dostoevsky's ideas: if every person in society becomes Christ-like inside, then many social problems will be solved. All people were created with Christ inside and during their life they *kill* Christ, *forget* Christ, or *find* Christ in themselves ("2nd Lecture" 01:00:15). This links *Transgressing*'s concerns about poverty and social injustice with the Christ story. In *Transgressing*, Sonia "kills Christ in herself" when she goes to sell her body. At the same time, she "finds Christ", because she sacrifices herself for the sake of others. Kasatkina sees the expression of this idea in *Crime and Punishment* before it was worded in the drafts for *Demons* (1871): "If all are Christs, will there be poor?". She emphasises that "the highest development of a personality that has passed and outgrown its egoistic state" was a fundamental thought for Dostoevsky ("Eight Questions"). The development of this thought finds expression in *Transgressing* in the form of the filmmakers' dialogue with the writer.

Like the processes described by Baugh, *Transgressing* has "two levels or registers of interpretation [–] the literal and the figurative" (109), the second allowing a Christological reading. Partially inspired by the cinematic works of Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, whose films are "dense with Christian and Christological themes", *Transgressing* creates "multiple allusions to the Christ-events" in its narrative (230). However, the director called it "unfair" to force our interpretation of the film onto anybody (Repetti). Therefore, the following analysis of the metaphorical layers of *Transgressing* can be applied only to the process of dialogue between the filmmakers, Dostoevsky, and the Gospels. The dialogic process between the creators of this cinematic text and its audiences is something worth further study.

The *cross*, the *stairs,* and *time* are among the major metaphors in *Transgressing* that were developed from the original novel. The symbolism of the cross was addressed frequently in *Crime and Punishment* and other Dostoevsky novels. In Christianity, the cross has a sacred meaning: it is a symbol of faith, hope, and the resurrection of the soul. In *Transgressing*, the cross's appearances support the development arc in Sonia's story. It is first shown in the opening dream sequence of the film on top of a mountain (Figure 73). This foreshadows the first appearance of the cross in real life when the audience learns that Sonia is somehow interested in the advertisement for a golden cross in an online pawn shop (Figure 74). Later, it becomes clear that this is her cross, which she pawns but feels anxious about: the cross is important to her. Its significance and Sonia's financial hardship allow Professor Blake to gain the audience's and Sonia's trust by redeeming the cross and returning it to the girl. This does not, however, solve Sonia's avalanche of problems. While Sonia cannot find solutions to her family's problems, her subconscious self cannot determine how to open a mystery box she carries around. The cross is always seen on Sonia's chest, even after she goes to the hotel and cries out in the bathroom. In the closing dream sequence, the cross, now familiar to the audience, transforms into the key for the box (Figure 75), reaching the culmination of its symbolic journey. Although no one knows what was inside the box, it is clear that the mystery content brought some peace to Sonia. Whatever she found there, whether hope for the future, her family, the resurrection of her soul, or her new self, the key to this was always with her from the beginning of the film.

FIGURE 73

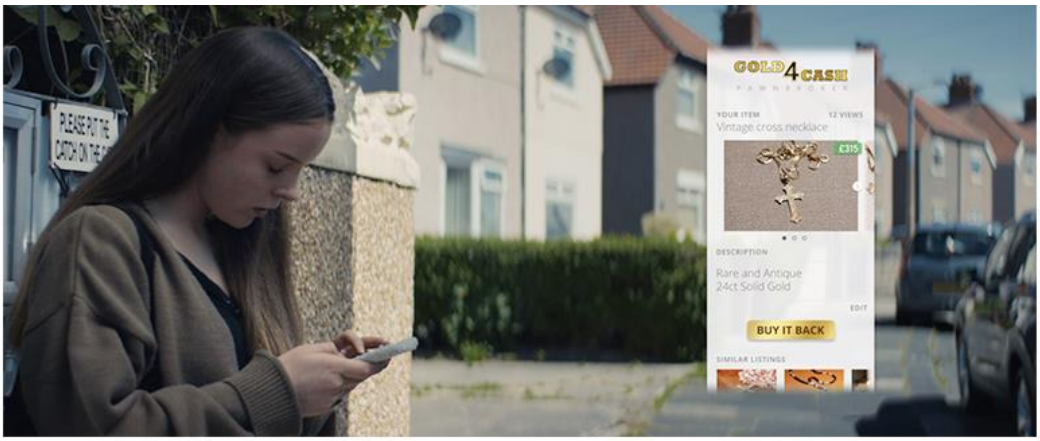

FIGURE 74

FIGURE 75

Stairs are another Christological metaphor in *Transgressing* that comes from *Crime and Punishment*. This metaphor is extensively used in the novel regarding Raskolnikov: he climbs stairs or runs downstairs more than 40 times. In the third chapter, I observed that several adaptations of the novel (1935, 1959, and 2002 UK), intentionally or not, have stairs as one of their main locations. Discussing the spatial organisation of the novel, Olga Kadushina suggests that "going downstairs" is "a sign of spiritual fall", and "going upstairs" signifies "the possibility of escape and salvation" ("Spatial Organisation" 478). In *Transgressing,* Sonia is the character who is most often seen on stairs. Three times she appears going upstairs (Figures 76–79), and one time she sits on the stairs, remembering her late mother (Figure 70). The film never shows Sonia going downstairs, visually referring to "the possibility of escape and salvation" for the heroine. Sonia's walk upstairs on her way to the hotel mirrors the shot from the first dream when Sonia goes uphill (Figure 80). This visual metaphor is

not only connected with salvation but also with Christ going uphill to Golgotha, the site of His crucifixion, thus acting as an allusion to Sonia as a Christ figure.

FIGURE 76

FIGURE 77

FIGURE 78

FIGURE 79

FIGURE 80

A direct quote from the novel provides another allusion to Sonia as a Christ figure and selling virginity as crucifixion. As observed by Dostoevsky scholars Kasatkina and Tikhomirov, and as I mentioned earlier, Dostoevsky was clear about the time when Sonia leaves her family house to sell herself for the first time:

> …at about *six o'clock*, Sonia got up, put on a shawl, put on a bournous coat and left the apartment, and at *nine o'clock* she came back. (*Crime and Punishment* 1:2)

This small clarification could seem irrelevant without a parallel quote from *The New Testament*:

> And it was about the *sixth hour*, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the *ninth hour*. (Luke 23:44 KJV)[49]

[49] Emphasis in both quotations is added by me.

The comparison of Sonia selling herself with Christ being crucified can hardly be called accidental as Dostoevsky is known both for his love of small details in his works and for his excellent knowledge of *The New Testament*. *Transgressing* follows Dostoevsky's allusion by being precise about the time when Sonia approaches the hotel and the time when she returns home (Figures 81–82).

FIGURE 81

FIGURE 82

Another metaphorical area to explore was colour. Sergei Solovyov highlights the significance of Dostoevsky's "polysemantic use of colour", mentioning known comparisons of the writer's use of colour with Rembrandt's (231). All three of the most important colours of *Crime and Punishment* – yellow, green, and red – relate to Sonia and thus found their place in *Transgressing*. Solovyov refers to them as "inverted" colours "characterized by the dual nature of their impact". Depending on the situation, they can perform as "positive [and] life-affirming" (the colour of joy, the sun, birds, grass, jewellery, etc.) or "negative [and] life-destroying" ("the colour of fever, treason, betrayal, madness") (229–230). It was fascinating to implement these dual meanings into the case study film of this thesis.

Tikhomirov considers the colour yellow to be a leitmotif of the novel (56).[50] What primarily interested me in the novel's abundance of yellow was its connection with Sonia. Sonia, who lives in the "yellow room"[51] also lives "by the yellow ticket".[52] Tikhomirov connects the yellow colour with "semantics of ageing, illness, decay, [and] death (including suicide)" (57). Alternatively, Kadushina sees a "motive of wreckage" and "a sign of anguish, morbidness, [or] madness" in this colour ("Yellow Colour" 81). Kozhinov shows that "yellow" in the novel is "an all-penetrating element" that "not only surrounds the heroes, not only imprints on their painful, exhausted faces but expresses their inner state of mind" (qtd. in Tikhomirov 56). Following the path of these interpretations of the colour's psychology, *Transgressing* recreates the yellow space in the flat where Sonia lives with her family. All rooms have walls of different yellow hues: a lemon-yellow bedroom (Figure 83), light-yellow kitchen and corridor walls (Figure 84), and dirty-yellow living room (Figure 85). Moreover, all the adults in the family – Katherine, Simon, and Sonia – mostly wear yellowish clothes. Adhering to Solovyov's ideas of the "dual nature" of the colour's impact, the house where Sonia lives transforms the positive colour of the sun into a negative that soon becomes "life-destroying".

FIGURE 83

[50] Robert Louis Jackson also highlights a great amount of yellow appearing in the novel: "yellow wallpaper", furniture of "yellow wood", paintings in "yellow frames", a "yellowish jacket", a "yellow sofa", "filthy yellow" wallpaper, "a yellow glass filled with yellow water", a "pale yellow" face, a "yellow face", "yellowish" wallpaper in Sonia's room, "yellow wood", a "dark yellow" face, "bright yellow" houses, and a "yellow ticket", to name just a few (19–20).

[51] Dostoevsky describes her room as follows: "The yellowish, shabby and worn wallpaper turned black in all corners; it must have been damp and sultry in the winter. Poverty was visible" (*Crime and Punishment* 4:4).

[52] In Dostoevsky's times, in Saint Petersburg, as part of a fight against the invasion of venereal diseases, prostitutes had to register and receive a "yellow ticket". Sarah Young highlights that it was not just an "identification paper". For a registered prostitute, a "yellow ticket" meant hopelessness and a choice with no return. The women could not "turn back or just use prostitution as a temporary remedy, resuming a 'normal' life when life improves" as the ticket forced them "to continue down this path" (Young).

FIGURE 84

FIGURE 85

Although green is used less abundantly than yellow in the novel, it nonetheless draws attention to itself. Kadushina mentions "well-placed spots" of green and counts 12 of them in the novel. Deciphering "the symbolism of the green colour", she notes its connection with the motif of "protection" and being the colour of "hope and rebirth", which is associated with spring, the time of "awakening and 'resurrection' of nature". She also reminds us that "in the Christian culture of the Middle Ages, the main symbolic meaning of green [was] its connection with the colour of the Garden of Eden" ("Green Shawl" 126–128). Two of the occasions for "green spots" in the novel relate to Sonia: she lives in a house painted green (*Crime and Punishment* 4:4) and wears a family green *dradedam* shawl on multiple occasions (including the moment when she returns home after selling herself). Following the agreement between Dostoevsky scholars on the importance of this green shawl, Kasatkina defends a theory that connects the Russian title of the shawl material – *dradedam* – with French *drap de dames* (lady's cloth) and further with the Shawl of the Virgin Mary. Kasatkina claims that the fresco *Madonna Della Misericordia* (*Madonna of Mercy and Lamentation*) by Domenico Ghirlandaio (Figure 86) was seen by Dostoevsky in the Vespucci Chapel during his trip to Florence and

could have inspired the creation of a "green dradedam shawl" for Sonia to make her the symbol of mercy and protection for others ("3rd Lecture").

FIGURE 86

The colour green in *Transgressing* is also rarely but meaningfully used. Choosing the symbolic meaning of "hope" and "protection", the film does not use colour outside of these connotations. The green park scene of the university field trip lesson with trees and grass (Figure 87) creates a feeling of happiness and hope for Sonia's future. She feels confident and happy with the plants on the windowsill in her bedroom (Figure 88). The bright green jacket of Professor Blake appears at a moment of new hope when she redeems Sonia's cross (Figure 89). Katherine's green dress (Figure 90) appears later in another moment of hope when Simon acquires a job. Green appears again in the closing bathroom scene when Katherine brings a green towel to Sonia (Figure 91). This towel references the symbolism of the "green dradedam shawl" from the novel, suggesting mercy and protection.

FIGURE 87

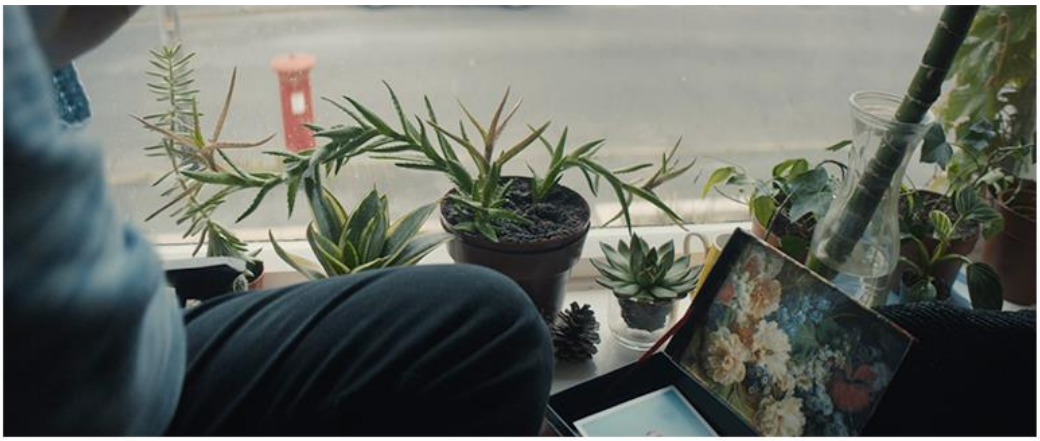

FIGURE 88

FIGURE 89

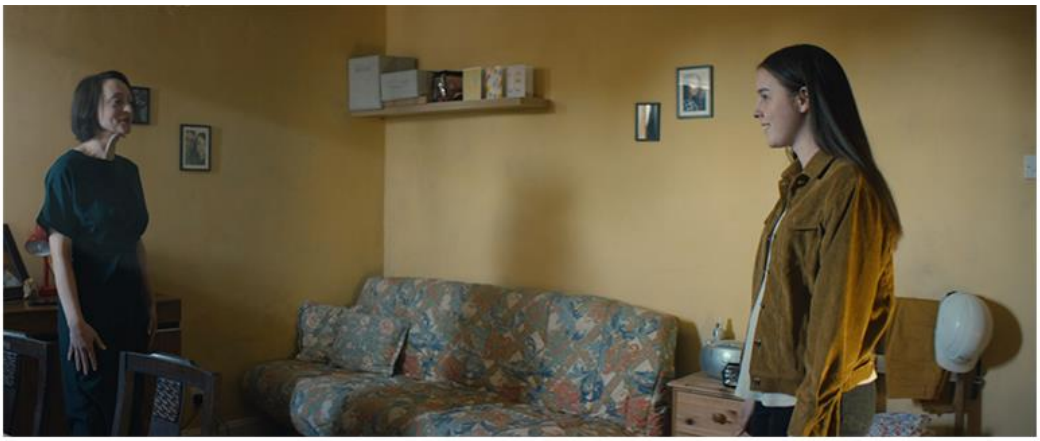

FIGURE 90

FIGURE 91

Red is the third significant colour used both in the novel and the film. Although it appears sparingly, it stands out at key moments. Where possible, the production design team made sure not to use red in the film until the scene where Sonia walks to the hotel to sell herself while wearing a red skirt (Figure 92). Apart from implying traditional connotations loved and used by many filmmakers – danger, forbiddenness, sexuality, and blood – and hoping to attract viewers' attention to what is going to occur next, the colour red has two other connections. The first quotes the novel, where Sonia's first appearance is accompanied by a description of her outfit including a "round straw hat with a bright flame-coloured feather" (*Crime and Punishment* 2:7), which Janet Tucker associates with St. Sophia (*Profane Challenge* 72). The second links Sonia with Christ, who was dressed in a "scarlet robe" before the crucifixion (Matthew 27:28 KJV). *Transgressing* uses the act of selling one's body for others as an allegory of crucifixion, therefore the red skirt perfectly mirrors the "scarlet robe".

FIGURE 92

There is more symbolism in *Transgressing*, with many metaphors not derived from Dostoevsky's novel but added during the screenwriting and pre-production stages by me or my collaborators. Most of this symbolism was created in support of the "Sonia as Christ" allegory. *Transgressing* pays specific attention to the details of Christ's crucifixion while adapting *The New Testament* and linking it with Sonia's story both in the scenes of the real world and in the dream sequences.

Baugh highlights that the Stations of the Cross, representing "the suffering Jesus carrying His cross to Calvary", are commonly shown "in a metaphorical way in the Christ-figure film" (209).[53] Several of them are audio-visually portrayed in the dream sequences in *Transgressing*. In the opening dream, Sonia carries a wooden box (her "cross") while going uphill (Figure 80). The sounds of a whip cracking and the shouts of people are heard around her. She stumbles and falls several times. She meets her mother in a Virgin Mary outfit. In the second dream, Sonia is on the rocky hill, under a tree, and the weeping of women is heard while huge iron nails are hammered into the wood, which bleeds (Figure 93). In the final dream, during an earthquake, Sonia gives a desperate shout surrounded by falling stones and trembling earth (Figure 94). This links with the death of Jesus, described by Matthew as follows: "Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His spirit" and "the earth shook, the rocks split" (Matthew 27:50–51). Sonia is desperate before finding peace in

[53] The Stations of the Cross include the following: (1) Jesus is condemned to death; (2) He is made to bear His cross; (3) He falls the first time; (4) He meets His mother; (5) Simon of Cyrene is made to bear the cross; (6) Veronica wipes Jesus' face; (7) He falls the second time; (8) the women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus; (9) He falls the third time; (10) He is stripped of His garments; (11) He is nailed to the cross; (12) He dies on the cross; (13) He is taken down from the cross; and (14) He is placed in the sepulchre (*Britannica*).

sudden silence after opening the box. The dream sequences, in a poetic way, subtly adapt and interpret the Stations of the Cross.

FIGURE 93

FIGURE 94

Similar connections can be seen in the real-life scenes as well. The electricity being cut in the flat initiates Sonia's mental journey to the decision to sell her virginity. This links with darkness coming over the world when Jesus was set to crucifixion (Mathew 27:45; Luke 23:44). In the next scene, Sonia's whispering prayer, "If it's possible, please, let this pass from us", mirrors Jesus' words of "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26:39 KJV). After the long walk upstairs to the hotel (an allusion to Calvary), Sonia finally arrives and enters the hotel called "King's Arms" (Figure 95). It has the Star of David

on its stained-glass windows, which links with the written notice on Jesus' cross: "The King of The Jews" (John 19:19; Mark 15:26). In the aftermath of what happens in the hotel, Sonia is shown in the bathtub crying in a painfully desperate state that audio-visually transforms into the earthquake in the last dream. These links create an additional layer of narrative that could be deciphered by viewers familiar with the Gospels' texts, but which does not impact the understanding of the narrative for viewers lacking knowledge of Christological symbolism. The hotel can still be just a hotel; the nails can symbolise the character's pain and the earthquake can be a metaphor for Sonia's trauma.

FIGURE 95

The *Transgressing* production design team worked with Biblical art references in support of the "Sonia-as-Christ" image. In the opening dream of the film, there is a figure of a woman dressed in blue and red, common colours for the Virgin Mary in Orthodox icons, hinting at Sonia seeing her late mother. Additionally, when Sonia is going through her childhood photos, in one her mother is positioned like some icons of the Virgin Mary holding Christ (Figure 96). Another metaphorical allusion to a Biblical painting is in the dinner scene that happens right before Sonia makes her irreversible decision (Figure 97). Although, due to a limited budget, we were not able to closely replicate Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (Figure 98), the scene nevertheless creates an allusion to this specific event in the *Bible*.

FIGURE 96

FIGURE 97

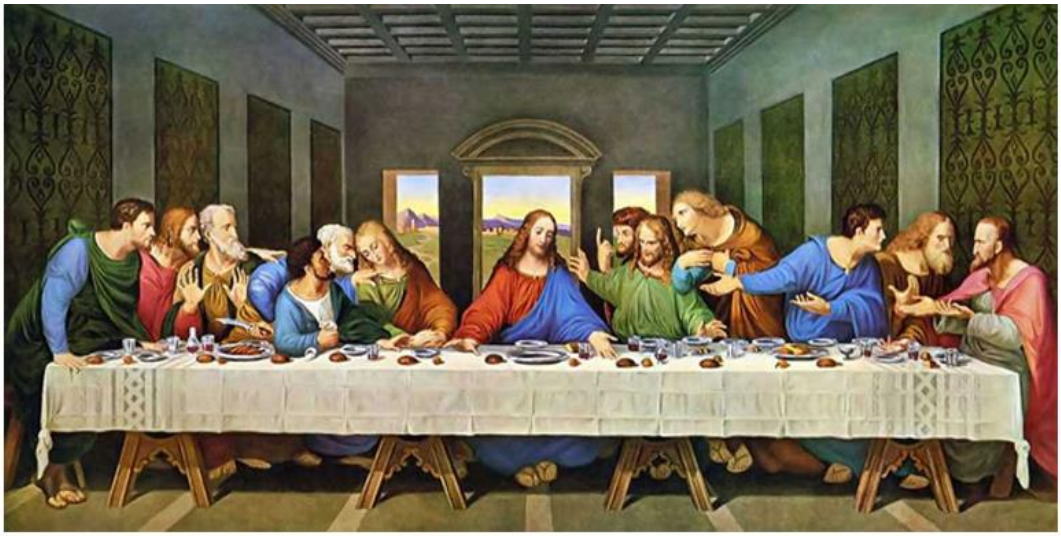

FIGURE 98

Other symbols and metaphors can be found in the visual images of the film. The eggs in the scene where Sonia argues with her stepmother about ecology were meant as a metaphor for Easter, resurrection, and salvation. The tree under which Sonia and the professor first meet

in the film (Figure 99) hints at the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" with Blake soon becoming the "serpent" to the innocent Sonia. The scene where Sonia sees that someone bought her cross (we later discover it was Blake) starts from a shot reminiscent of a web of wires (Figure 100), preparing for the situation when Sonia will be "caught in this web". The cracks on the walls in the flat symbolise the "wrecked family", as Katherine calls them. Sonia's facial abrasions in dreams (Figure 101) and bodily bruises in reality (Figure 102) indicate that her soul has been wounded by abuse and family problems, which have caused emotional scars.

FIGURE 99

FIGURE 100

FIGURE 101

FIGURE 102

Although the numerous metaphors were precisely planned and, in most cases, executed to plan during the production, there is a certain freedom of interpretation left for the audience. At the end of the film, dream Sonia opens the mystery box, and the viewers are never shown what is inside. They can only interpret what they see on Sonia's face when she discovers what is inside the box. The viewers for whom the Christological references of the whole film were clear could see the motif of Resurrection in this open ending. However, if all Christian symbolism is omitted, new metaphors may appear in the place of the intended ones.[54] The viewers will fill the gaps with their interpretations of visual images. Whatever Sonia finds in the box brings peace and hope to her. Her journey of salvation finishes not with desperation

[54] Multiple non-religious interpretations from audience members suggested the box to be either the "Pandora's Box" or a reference to Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), which was not the intention of any of the creators.

in the bathroom and not with cries and quakes. Rather, it ends with silence, peace, and a faint smile.

4.4 The Transformative Power of Collaboration

As already mentioned in the first chapter, adaptation studies usually do not include practitioners and production limitations when considering the results. I argue that such an approach limits the potential of the critical literature on screen adaptations. Additional studies of a film's different stages of production could provide grounds for critical ideas and help develop intertextual and intercultural interpretations of adapted film texts.

Transgressing is the result of a complex adaptation process that passed through multiple stages. It began with a chapter in *Crime and Punishment*, which was, in a way, an adaptation of newspapers Dostoevsky had read, paintings he had seen, and *The New Testament* he studied. It went through the stage of screenplay creation, which was my interpretation of the novel, the character, and other texts of the old and modern age. The actress, director, production designer, and composer[55] brought certain changes to the screenplay during the pre-production and production stages. They questioned some of my creative decisions and argued about interpretations. As a writer and initial adapter, I lost some "battles" and won others. Some of the ideas simply could not be executed because of certain limitations of the production, including tight scheduling and budget.[56]

During post-production, even more changes occurred with a new collaborator coming on board. Linda Hutcheon notes that an editor is "another rarely considered candidate for the role of adapter" (82). Michael Ondaatje claims that the editor's craft in films is "overlooked" (qtd. in Hutcheon 82). *Transgressing* editor Kamil Dobrosielski can be called another author of the film. However, he was not adapting Dostoevsky's novel, and neither was he adapting my screenplay. Rather, he was adapting Repetti's visual story about Sonia, making sure the footage placed on the timeline made the correct impact according to the director's vision.

[55] Composer Yoann Mylonakis worked on music from the very beginning of the first screenplay draft. His impact on the story and Sonia (both as a creator and a Christian) should not be underrated.

[56] For example, the initial idea for filming was to set the story in London. Location scouting was completed with the production designer long before we began pre-production. However, due to economic constraints and logistical considerations related to the cast and crew, we first shifted the story to Manchester and then made the decision to set the entire story in a small, unnamed English town (Morecambe). This significantly altered the initial intention to remain faithful to Dostoevsky's story, which is set in a large city.

The editing stage showed that many scenes included unneeded exposition. This was addressed through multiple cuts, and whole scenes were made redundant at times. Many moments from the screenplay were left to interpretation. For example, the content of the NHS letter to Katherine was never revealed, like the contents of the mystery box. The goal of the collaboration between the director and editor at this stage was to let the story flow in such a way that the audience could gradually become acquainted with Sonia's world and work out the rules of it.[57]

The production of *Transgressing* became a good case study for two important outcomes relevant to adaptation studies. First, the film shows how dialogic and intertextual approaches to adaptation can create a more complex and creative process, as opposed to a literal illustration of the original text. In such an approach, the original text stops being the Holy Grail for the adapter and becomes a source of inspiration and the foundation for new ideas. Second, the production shows that the authorship of a film is a complex collaboration where interpretations of an original text by multiple creators with different backgrounds can crucially influence the final result.

[57] Sometimes, however, it was challenging for me as a writer not to be involved in the decision-making process. Towards the end of the editing process, I had a two-week argument with both the director and the editor regarding one of the final scenes in the film, which took place in the bathroom. In the initial cut of the film, the scene concluded with Katherine hugging her crying stepdaughter. As a writer, this scene seemed logical to me primarily due to its depiction of female behaviour (displaying compassion towards another woman) and secondly, as a fitting conclusion to Katherine's character arc (highlighting how Sonia changed her stepmother through her actions). However, the director believed that the hug at the end of the scene diverted attention from Sonia, something he could not allow. The editor, on the other hand, felt that the hug created two endings in the film (since the bathroom scene was followed by the last dream sequence), disrupting the pace and structure he was aiming to achieve.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to provide valuable insights into the process and results of a *Crime and Punishment* adaptation for English-language readers and viewers. By analysing a variety of adaptations, including my own version, the study sought to contribute to the fields of adaptation studies, Dostoevsky studies, and film studies. After examining the character of Sonia both in the adapted text of the novel and in screen adaptations as autonomous texts, I argued that the best way to create a complex adapted character is to engage in dialogue with the writer. A similar approach could be used in adaptation studies if the scholars concentrated not only on the writer's voice but also the voices of film practitioners.

The first chapter argued that fidelity criticism should no longer be an issue in the critical evaluation of screen adaptations. The adapter's ability to use their creativity and expertise to personalise the text in order to transform it into something unique, may be a better focus of analysis. While emphasising the importance of a dialogic relationship between writers, adapters, and the world around them, I discussed how this process can enrich the adapted screen work and allow for a more nuanced and complex representation of characters that can challenge stereotypical or one-dimensional portrayals.

In the second chapter, this thesis focused on the literary analysis of the case study character. I have argued that Dostoevsky's Sonia is complex and compelling as a case study as each of her traits produces contrasting reactions from readers. I suggested that the controversies surrounding Sonia make a dialogic approach the perfect way to represent her on screen.

While comparing different interpretations of Sonia in English-language adaptations of *Crime and Punishment*, the third chapter further emphasised the importance of a dialogic approach to making Sonia's character complex and multidimensional. The title of my thesis – the "overlooked woman" – is not connected with infidelity to the original text. Over the years, the image of Sonia has often been secondary and not as complex as that of her male screen partners. The filmmakers, who were also men, superficially understood the heroine because they were primarily interested in Raskolnikov as the protagonist. Most of them did not consider the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's novel structure, which allowed the author to have several protagonists with different views in dialogue with each other. In addition, I identified how Sonia's character has evolved from a stereotypical female "love interest" to a

character with strength, agency, and complexity. This evolution of Sonia's character highlights the importance of continued dialogue and the potential for adaptations to push boundaries and challenge conventional stereotypes.

The fourth chapter, devoted to my case study practical project – the short film *Transgressing* – highlights again the importance of collaboration and a dialogic and intertextual approach to adaptation. By adopting these approaches, the creators of the film were able to create a character that was both faithful, in a certain way, to the original heroine[58] and a unique character in her own right. This case study reinforces my argument that the adaptation process should be seen as a collaborative and creative endeavour that can result in unique and nuanced works of art. As the writer and creative producer of *Transgressing*, my engagement played a significant critical role in the project. By creating my adaptation of a Dostoevsky character, I offered my perspective on the process of adaptation and the challenges involved in turning a screenplay into a film.

I can identify several implications and practical applications of this study:

1. The importance of engaging in a dialogic relationship between writers and filmmakers to create complex and multidimensional characters in screen adaptations
2. A re-evaluation of fidelity criticism as the focus of the critical assessment of screen adaptations
3. The necessity of the ongoing evolution of female characters in screen adaptations and the importance of continued dialogue to push boundaries and challenge conventional stereotypes
4. Reinforcing the idea that collaborative and creative endeavours in the adaptation process should be included in adaptation studies criticism.

These outcomes are relevant to both scholars and practitioners in the field of adaptation studies and may inspire further research in the field.

During the research process, I encountered various limitations that prevented me from including certain aspects in the final thesis. These were connected either with

[58] Although the "faithfulness" here is irrelevant in my view, viewers will not stop comparing the film with the book. Thus, this aspect might be relevant for some viewers who expect at least partial fidelity.

inadequate data, lack of time, budget, or the length of this thesis and limited in some ways the scope of this study. I would like to highlight these limitations:

1. Only seven film adaptations were analysed for the reasons explained in the third chapter. This excluded a great number of films from my research (which I either could not find or was unable to understand due to language barriers) that could create a better understanding of Sonia as a character and the way she has been adapted not only for different times but also for different cultures. A broader scope of case studies could broaden my implications.

2. Although planned initially, I could not undertake the study of page-to-page adaptation by comparing the original novel with the screenplays of the case study films. This occurred due to thesis length, limited screenplay availability, and COVID-19 travel restrictions. Supporting my original idea, Jennifer Oey partially addresses the importance of the screenplay stage in adaptation analysis in her practice-based PhD thesis. My research could have provided more insight into distinguishing different stages of film adaptation. The "neglect of screenplays" in adaptation studies was also highlighted by Kamilla Elliott (*Novel/Film Debate* 6–7) and Jack Boozer, who assert "the need for a closer look at the [screenwriter and director] collaboration in the genesis of adaptation" and "comparing the completed film with the last script draft prior to shooting" (3–4).

3. It would be interesting to see how a filmmaker's reading of a particular translation of a novel influences their understanding of the story and the adaptation decisions they make. Although several filmmakers reflected on the translation they used while working on their version of the novel, I was unable to develop this study further within the scope of this thesis.

4. All the case study adaptations, including *Transgressing*, were directed by men. Although there were more female perspectives in my version (screenwriter and cinematographer), it would be interesting to see future adaptations of the novel and the character of Sonia created by a female director. My original plan was to work with a female director on *Transgressing,* but I could not find anyone suitable. If the budget and the timescale of this thesis allowed, I would have made two films – one directed by a woman and another by a man – and compared the results.

In this thesis, I considered the example of how representations of Dostoevsky's Sonia on screen have changed with time and questioned how cultural, spatial, and temporal transitions have impacted the relationship between the source novel's character and her screen versions. I saw how the values and norms of the cultures in which the adaptations were made significantly shaped the portrayal of Sonia. Similarly, the spatial and temporal context of each case study adaptation had a profound impact on how the character was depicted. Furthermore, the historical context of the adaptation's production also influenced the heroine's presentation. As a result, I established that the relationship between the source novel's character and her screen versions is constantly evolving and changing as a result of these cultural, spatial, and temporal transitions.

I also investigated whether the perception of women during the time of adaptation production influences how certain aspects of character, such as strength and complexity, are translated from page to screen. I have noticed the interdependence between the strength and complexity of Sonia in film adaptations and the prevailing cultural norms, attitudes, and values of the time in which the film is being made. With the historical development of women's rights and opportunities celebrated and advanced, Sonia began to be portrayed as a more strong, independent, and multi-layered character. Her 1935 US version certainly cannot be compared, without the context of production, with her 2015 Australian version.

In addition, this research was concerned with film practitioners who create adaptations and the impact of multiple authors on the result of this process. I found that the multi-author nature of adaptation can be both positive and negative. On the one hand, collaboration can bring fresh perspectives and ideas, leading to a more creative and nuanced portrayal of the source material. On the other hand, multi-authorship can also lead to conflicts and disagreements over the interpretation of the source novel. This makes the transition from page to screen not as straightforward and more complex, depending on the specific individuals involved, their creative vision, and the degree of collaboration and communication among the production team. Ultimately, I view multiple authorship as a strength because it generates a "dialogic" text, which aligns with the focus of this research.

Focusing on the implementation of approaches such as *intertextuality* and *dialogism* in adaptation practises, I have demonstrated that these methods can contribute to creating more

intricate and nuanced adaptations that incorporate a broader range of cultural references and explore multiple perspectives and voices. This can lead to adaptations being more engaging and thought-provoking for audiences as well as more rewarding for the filmmakers themselves.

Being passionate about the topic and unsettled by the limitations I have faced, I am inclined to continue my research journey beyond the current PhD programme. I see my PhD as a steppingstone toward further research, and I am excited about opportunities to explore some of the untouched aspects in greater depth. First, *Transgressing* can be seen as primary data for a follow-up research project. It could provide a foundation for empirical research on the international audience's perception of the adapted character. It would be interesting to observe differences in the character and story interpretations depending on factors such as the recipient's cultural and socio-economic background, gender, and knowledge of the sourcebook and character. Second, I would also like to continue to explore how the adapted texts and their screen versions conform to or challenge current gender norms, how this is connected with the development of feminism, and how the female or male gaze impacts adaptations of the female or male characters.

Interest in the adaptation of *Crime and Punishment* for international audiences has remained clear in recent years. I identified three short film adaptations (France, 2018; Canada, 2019; Russia, 2021) as well as two American productions and a Russian VR film, which are currently in post-production or development. By keeping track of the release of new films, I could add new insights into the development of the character in future works.

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APPENDIX A

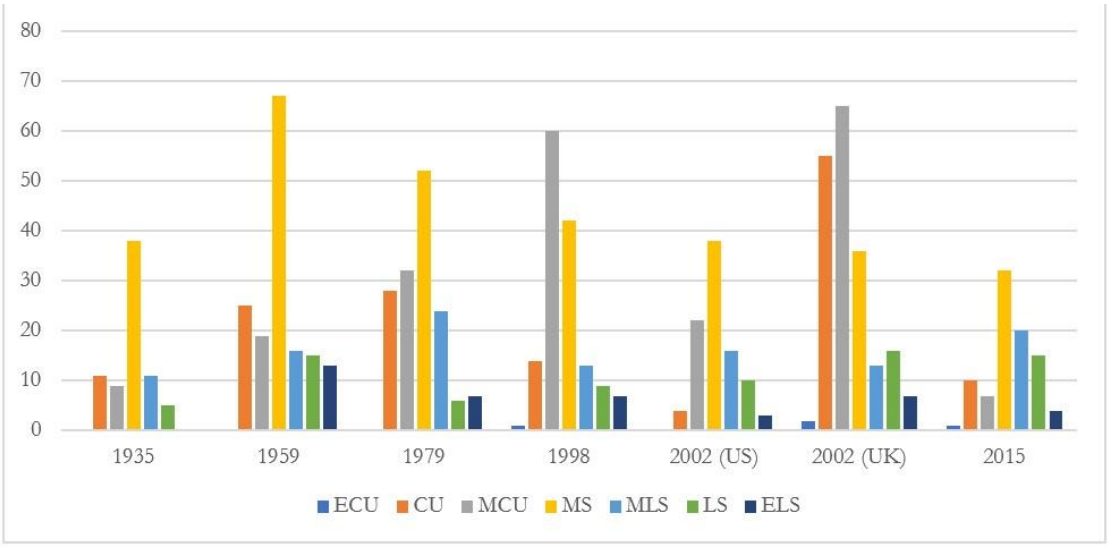
Table 1: The comparison between Sonia's scenes in case study films

TITLE	Crime & Punishment	Crime and Punishment	Crime and Punishment	Crime and Punishment	Crime and Punishment	Crime & Punishment, USA	Crime and Punishment
PRODUCTION	2015/Australia	2002/Poland | Russia | USA	2002/UK	1998/USA	1979/UK	1959/USA	1935/USA
SETTING: TIME	Our days	Winter, 1990s	Mid-19th century	1856	Mid-19th century	Mid 20 century	Mid 20 century
SETTING: LOCATION	No name (Australia? Russia?)	Moscow	Saint-Petersburg	Saint-Petersburg	Saint-Petersburg	Los Angeles	No name (USA?)
FILM'S LENGTH	110min	126min	200min	120min	225min	96min	88min
SONIA'S TIME (minutes)	00:29	00:17	00:35	00:18	00:43	00:28	00:20
SONIA'S TIME (percentage)	26%	14%	17%	15%	19%	29%	23%
FIRST APPEARANCE	09:06	04:18	06:19	04:24	01:38:06	09:16	06:54
NUMBER OF SCENES	26	16	19	15	14	9	12
SCENES LENGTH	8s - 4m28s	3s - 7m9s	6s - 7m4s	14s - 3m48s	12s - 12m10s	40s - 7m51s	19s - 3m57s
SCENES WITH/WITHOUT DIALOGUE	8/18	7/8	10/9	11/4	9/5	9/0	11/1
NUMBER OF SCENES FROM THE NOVEL	5	3	7	1	8	0	1
NUMBER OF SCENES SUBSTANTIALLY CHANGED	9	8	7	9	5	4	5
NUMBER OF SCENES ADDED	12	5	5	5	1	5	6
SCENES WITH RELIGIOUS CONNECTIONS	4	1	8	3	7	1	5
NUMBER OF SHOTS	77	84	175	139	131	138	69

Table 2: The comparison between Sonia's scenes in the novel and the films

	CHAPTER	CONTENT	1935	1959	1979	1998	2002 (US)	2002 (UK)	2016	#
1.	Part 1 Chapter 2	Marmeladov tells Sonia's story to Raskolnikov	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	*5*
2.	Part 2 Chapter 7	Death of Marmeladov. Sonia's first appearance.	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	*5*
3.	Part 3 Chapter 4	Sonia visits Raskolnikov and meets his family.	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	*5*
4.	Part 4 Chapter 4	The first visit of Raskolnikov to Sonia. Bible reading.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	*7*
5.	Part 5 Chapter 1	Luzhin gives money to Sonia at the funeral.	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	*1*
6.	Part 5 Chapter 2	Sonia at her father's funeral.	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	*1*
7.	Part 5 Chapter 3	Luzhin lies that Sonia stole his money.	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	*1*
8.	Part 5 Chapter 4	The second visit of Raskolnikov to Sonia. Confession.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	*7*
9.	Part 5 Chapter 5	Katerina Ivanovna on the street. Her death at Sonia's.	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	*3*
10.	Part 6 Chapter 1	The funeral of Katerina Ivanovna.	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	*2*
11.	Part 6 Chapter 4	Svidrigailov gives Sonia and the kids the money for life.	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	*2*
12.	Part 6 Chapter 8	The third visit of Raskolnikov to Sonia. Cross exchange.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	*7*
13.	Epilogue Chapters 1/2	Sonia goes to Siberia after Raskolnikov. Sonia visits Raskolnikov in jail. He falls in love.	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	*4*

Graph 1: The Comparison of shot usage in *Crime and Punishment* adaptations



APPENDIX B

The following screenplay for the film *Transgressing* is a shooting script for the film. Some scenes of the film changed during the shooting and post-production.

TRANSGRESSING

A short film
Written by Enni Red

Inspired by a chapter from "Crime and Punishment"
by F.Dostoevsky

2022

EXT. ROCKY HILLS [DREAM SEQUENCE] - DAY

A girl in a white dress (SONIA, 19) runs from someone up the hill. Her feet and her dress are covered with dirt and blood. The screams of the crowd around her. She carries a wooden ancient box.

She falls. The box falls from her hands. She picks it up. Curses. Blows. A loud whip crack. It's so close - Sonia flinches and turns to the sound. She is alone. With the last effort, Sonia gets up.

Sonia climbs up the rocks. She holds the ancient box. She sees a big wooden cross "growing" from the rocks. She climbs up towards it when the wind brings a whisper to her.

VOICE (O.S.)
Sonia…

Sonia turns to see a WOMAN in the distance, in the clothes of the Virgin Mary. A whip cracks again.

INT. FLAT. BEDROOM - MORNING

POLLY (11) quietly wakes up Sonia.

POLLY
(whispers)
Sonia…

SONIA
Alright… I'm up now…

Sonia is on the lower deck of a bunk bed in a messy closet-like bedroom. Sonia gets out of bed and helps Polly down from the top bunk. She opens the curtains. New day.

EXT. HOUSE ENTRANCE - MORNING

Outside the house, Sonia stops for a moment and leans against the gates. She breathes out.

She checks her mobile. A gold cross is on the page of an online pawn shop. The price for it is 300 pounds. Relief.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. PARK - DAY

Two groups of ecology STUDENTS conduct a biodiversity survey at a site that looks very "run-of-the-mill". A confident and reliable woman - PROFESSOR BLAKE (50s) - is with the first group, checking their work.

Sonia is with another group. She blossoms - this is her place to be. She looks closely at some lichen on the big tree in the middle of the field.

STUDENT
Shall we scrap this moss…

SONIA
Wait… This is not moss.

Sonia leans down closer to the tree with a magnifying glass and studies it intently. Professor Blake watches Sonia from afar, then approaches the group.

SONIA
This is a tree lungwort and seems to be growing here against all odds. Such a survivor…

PROFESSOR BLAKE
Are you sure?

Professor Blake comes closer and observes the tree through a magnifier.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
That's correct. Tree lungwort, lobaria pulmonaria, are slowly disappearing due to pollution. This one is stronger. Well done.

The Professor smiles at Sonia. Sonia smiles back and blushes.

INT. UNIVERSITY. STUDENT FINANCE OFFICE - DAY

Sonia sits next to a FINANCE ADVISOR who searches for something on the computer. Sonia is distracted by the hairy plant on the desk.

FINANCE ADVISOR
Here’s your tuition loan, that’s all fine. Erm… hmm, I’m sorry there’s no maintenance loan here.

SONIA
I sent two applications…

FINANCE ADVISOR
There’s definitely only one in the system. Did you receive a confirmation email?

SONIA
I'm not sure…

FINANCE ADVISOR
Did you have any help from your parents? It can be quite tricky for the first-year students.

SONIA
Can I reapply?

FINANCE ADVISOR
You'll need to wait until next term.

INT. UNIVERSITY. CAMPUS CAFÉ - DAY

A busy hour in a student café. Breathing heavily, Sonia manoeuvres between the tables with her tray. SIMON (45), a miserable man, with a face swollen from drunkenness catches her hand.

SONIA
(whispers)
What are you doing here?

SIMON
I just need…

STUDENT
Could you clear this table for us?

SONIA
(to Simon)
I'll be back in a minute.

While Sonia cleans the table, Simon stays aside, swinging from foot to foot, out of place. Almost inappropriate in his shabby clothes. He dares to approach Sonia again.

SONIA
Dad, I'm really very busy.

SIMON
Sonia… I need to buy a new white shirt for a job interview. Can I ask you for--

SONIA
--I'll buy you one after work, don't worry. Go home.

Sonia notices a group of students leaving a table. She gives her father a quick smile and hurries to that table with an almost full tray. She can hardly find a place for the last dirty dish when someone takes it from her hands and perfectly places it to fit the messy tray. Sonia turns her head to meet the smiling Professor Blake who sits at the table.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
Sonia, a pleasant surprise…

A group of trendy STUDENTS enters the café. They exaggerate avoiding Simon and snigger. Sonia notices embarrassed Simon.

SONIA
(to Blake)
Would you excuse me…

Watched by the Professor, Sonia approaches Simon.

SIMON
Hun, please… The interview is this afternoon. Just a tenner?

BARISTA
Sonia! I need more mugs!

Sonia hurries to open her wallet. Two £20 notes are there. After a moment of hesitation, she hands one of them to Simon. His trembling hand reaches out for the banknote.

INT. UNIVERSITY. CAMPUS CAFÉ. TOILET - DAY

A cold blue toilet cubicle. Sonia sits on the closed lid. She stares at the pawn shop page with the cross. Panic attack.

INT. UNIVERSITY. CAMPUS CAFÉ. TOILET - DAY

Sonia exits the cubicle and walks to wash her hands. Her mobile is on the sink when Blake comes to the toilet. Professor approaches Sonia and oversees her mobile screen.

On the screen, there is still the pawn shop ad. Blake notices the cross before the screen goes black.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
You used to wear it, didn't you?

Sonia takes her mobile and hides it.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
You know that if there're any personal problems you can always share with me, right?

Embarrassed Sonia nods. She hides her smile.

EXT. ROUGH STREET - EVENING

With two full bags of groceries, Sonia walks down the street. She gets a mobile notification and stops for a moment to check the phone.

On the pawn shop page, near Sonia's cross, there is a new mark "SOLD". Pain.

INT. FLAT. ENTRANCE HALL/STAIRS - EVENING

Sonia enters the house with bags. While she goes upstairs, she overhears a loud conversation in the flat.

POLLY (O.S.)
Why are we still stuck here? You said we were going to move to a proper house when Ariel was born… All my friends have their own bedrooms…

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Maybe your friends have fathers with proper jobs?

INT. FLAT. CORRIDOR/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

POLLY (O.S.)
--He's not my dad…

Sonia opens the door to the flat to meet Polly storming off the kitchen.

Sonia enters the kitchen and unloads shopping onto the worktop. Thin pale KATHERINE (35) washes the dishes. She notices the box of organic eggs.

KATHERINE
There're cheaper eggs! Why on earth did you…? Oh my goodness!

SONIA
The cheaper ones had a plastic box…

KATHERINE
You’re putting this before family? Ecology! What can you do with it anyway? How will it help us? You need to live in the real world!
(pause)
Any news on your loan money?

SONIA
There was a mistake and…
(pause)
Soon… it'll come soon…

INT. FLAT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING/LATER

Poor-looking room. Shabby furniture. Some kind of order and cleanliness. It serves as a bedroom, living and dining room.

Katherine hoovers the floor. Polly studies at the table. Sonia sorts toys from the floor. ARIEL (3) runs through the corridor back and forth.

The front door opens with a clatter. Katherine turns off the hoover. Ariel runs to Sonia and hides behind her.

Drunk Simon staggers through the corridor muttering indistinctly.

Simon enters the room. A carrier bag in hand, a flower, as miserable as himself, in the other. With trembling hands, he gives a toy rattle to Ariel and puts a bag of cheap sweets in front of Polly who scans him with bitterness.

POLLY
Why? Why again?

Simon hides his eyes. Ariel runs away from him.

SIMON
Katherine… forgive me… You know how much I love you and the girls…

KATHERINE
Where did you get the money?
Stealing from my savings again?!

With tears in her eyes, Katherine desperately beats Simon. Sonia tries to stop her.

SONIA
Stop it! It's my fault… I gave him…

Katherine turns to Sonia and slaps her.

KATHERINE
Are you stupid? He's a drunk!

Katherine rushes out. Simon stands up and hurries to Sonia who rubs her face.

SONIA
It's okay. She doesn't mean it.
She's just tired.

The bathroom door slams. Simon remembers something and rummages in his bag. He hands Sonia a cheap new photo album.

SIMON
You can put her photos in here…

The sound of vomiting is heard from the bathroom. Barely standing on his feet Simon staggers to the bathroom.

SIMON (O.S.)
Kathy? Are you all right?

KATHERINE (O.S.)
(to Simon)
Go away!

POLLY
Why do you always forgive him?

SONIA
Because he needs me…

INT. FLAT. BEDROOM - EVENING/LATER

A buzz at the entrance door. Sonia sits on a cabinet near the window surrounded by plants. An old biscuit box, full of photos, is opened in front of her.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
(to Simon)
Don’t breathe on me, you're disgusting! You're nothing! Zero, just like that contract of yours!

Polly opens the door.

POLLY
Someone's here for you.

Sonia stops rooted to the spot. Shocked. Embarrassed. Professor Blake is in front of her.

INT. FLAT. CORRIDOR/LIVING ROOM - EVENING/CONTINUOUS

In confusion and disbelief, Sonia stares at Blake who gives her the cross from the pawn shop page. Blake notices a pack of bills on the drawer, with a "Final Notice" red stamp on one of them.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
This is your cross, isn’t it? I felt I should have got it back for you.

SONIA
Yes… Why did you buy it?

PROFESSOR BLAKE
You're such a talented student. I don't want you to be burdened by… money issues.

Katherine enters. As she catches the sight of Blake, she hurriedly takes off her apron and straightens her hair.

SONIA
This is Professor Blake from my University…

Katherine transforms instantly. She smiles, holds out her hand to Blake and shakes her hand with feeling.

KATHERINE
Good evening Professor Blake.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
It's Claudia.

KATHERINE
A pleasure to have you here. I'm Katherine, Sonia's step-mother… Can I make you some tea? Or do you prefer coffee? We do have coffee!

While talking, Katherine fusses around: hides things, sets a tablecloth, takes china from a box. Her posture and mannerisms change, as if she doesn't belong in this setting. She speaks non-stop.

KATHERINE
We should all be so proud of Sonia's studies. Higher education for a young woman is so important, isn't it? I also have a degree…

SONIA
(whispers to Blake)
I'll give you the money back…

PROFESSOR BLAKE
(to Sonia, quietly)
When you can afford to.
(to Katherine)
I’m so sorry. I have a rather tight schedule I’m afraid.

KATHERINE
Yes, yes of course! We’d love to have you visit again, I could bake a cake!

PROFESSOR BLAKE
(to Katherine)
Thank you for your hospitality.

Blake exits and Katherine turns away. She suppresses the urge to burst into tears. Sonia puts on the cross pendant.

INT. FLAT. ENTRANCE HALL/STAIRS - EVENING

Sonia sits on the stairs. She opens the biscuit box and looks through the photos inside. In one of the photos SONIA'S MOTHER (20s), a beautiful woman, holds YOUNG SONIA (5). Sonia opens the photo album Simon gave her and puts the photos inside.

EXT. ROCKY HILLS [DREAM SEQUENCE] - DAY

Sonia sits under the tree surrounded by rocks. Exhausted, thirsty, with sunburned skin. Desperate, she tries to open the ancient box. Blood covers her hands. No success.

The sound of nails being hammered into wood stops her. It comes from above. Sonia looks up and sees three nails being hammered into the trunk of the tree. The hummer sound changes into…

INT. FLAT. BATHROOM - MORNING

…knock at the door. Sonia abruptly wakes up and drops a book. She sits on the floor of the bathroom. Books with bookmarks and an opened notepad are around.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Are you done?

As Katherine opens the door and peeks in, Sonia jumps up, dropping her notepad. Katherine notices the books and that Sonia has just woken up.

KATHERINE
Again? This is ridiculous…

Katherine goes to the sink, stepping over Sonia’s notes.

KATHERINE
No sign of your father. I'm off to work. You’ve got Ariel.

SONIA
But I have to… Okay…

Sonia gathers the books and her notepad. Katherine squeezes toothpaste onto her toothbrush.

KATHERINE
Did your Uni loan come?

SONIA
I'm getting paid at work next week. I'll sort those bills…

KATHERINE
Good. But bills keep on coming. The girls need new shoes. I agreed to your studies because of that loan.
(beat)
And since your father is… what he is, maybe you can do something?

Katherine brushes her teeth. Sonia hugs the books and for a moment stares at the exhausted step-mum from the doorway.

INT. UNIVERSITY. BLAKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sonia stands in front of Blake. She is with Ariel.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
Are you serious? What are you going to do? What about your project?

SONIA
Sorry… I have to work full-time.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
It's me who should be sorry that the University cannot support students in need, especially someone with your potential.

Blake goes on her computer and prints out an email. She grabs a copy of her own book on the shelf ("Hearing the Call: A More-than-human Perspective on the Climate Crisis"), folds the printed paper and puts it inside.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
Keep reading and don't give up. I'm sure there's a solution.

Blake hands the book to Sonia.

SONIA
Thank you for your support…

INT. UNIVERSITY. PLANTS HALL - DAY

Sonia walks along the faculty hall. She looks around with admiration. Passing by a big plant, she touches its leaves and closes her eyes for a moment.

Sonia sits on the couch with Ariel near her. She opens Blake's book and sees a printout inside. A look of dread.

Ariel drops her rattle and starts crying. Sonia doesn't notice that, staring at the leaflet in disbelief.

INT. FLAT. ENTRANCE HALL/STAIRS - DAY

Sonia, Polly and Ariel enter the house. The music is heard from the living room. Sonia goes upstairs while Polly helps Ariel.

INT. FLAT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine, in a beautiful green silk dress with loose hair, is near the window. She softly hums a melody played by an old record player.

SONIA
I haven't seen this dress before.

Serene Katherine turns to her with a smile.

KATHERINE
It's from my previous life.

SONIA
What's going on?

KATHERINE
He got the call! They're starting a new construction project tomorrow… He's at their office now!

Katherine comes closer to Sonia and hugs her.

KATHERINE
We’re going to be fine. They promised to pay him well. Everything is going to be fine.

SONIA
Katherine, I need to tell you about the loan--

KATHERINE
--It doesn't matter now.

Katherine smiles at Sonia.

KATHERINE
(to the bedroom)
Who would like a nice fancy dinner?

POLLY AND ARIEL (O.S.)
Yay!

INT. FLAT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING/LATER

The family sits around the beautifully laid table with untouched food.

POLLY
Can I eat something?

A drunk voice from the street interrupts the hanging silence.

SIMON (O.S.)
Kathy! Kathy! It’s not my fault!

Katherine rushes to the window and looks out.

SIMON (O.S.)
They let me go! It’s not fair… They said I’ve been drinking, they could smell… I wasn’t! I swear! I'll get another job, you'll see… be the provider… you won't clean toilets anymore… not my wife!

Katherine shuts the window with anger and sits back.

SONIA
I’ll bring him in…

KATHERINE
No! He's not having this dinner.

Sonia, Polly and Ariel sit silently at the table. Anxious. Katherine is the only one who starts to eat.

SIMON (O.S.)
Our girls will get those new shoes! I promise… I was trying to make things right for us… for you… I need you, Kathy! I’m scared! I can’t do it on my own…

Annoyed Katherine throws the cutlery onto the table.

KATHERINE
Oh, for fuck’s sake!
(to Polly)
Take Ariel to your room!

POLLY
Here we go again…

KATHERINE
Right now!

As Polly and Ariel leave, Katherine storms off the door through the corridor. On her way, she accidentally knocks her bag onto the floor. Sonia follows to the corridor but Katherine stops her.

KATHERINE
I don't need your help with him! Sharing the responsibility for this wrecked family - that would help!

Sonia stays in the living room. She picks up Katherine's bag and notices some papers fallen off. She picks them up and stops. She stares at the leaflets – "Cancer well-being group", "Living with the brain tumour". She scans an NHS-headed letter with the words "Katherine Maria Jelliman" and "treatment plan". The sound of opening entrance door.

KATHERINE (O.S)
I'd have been better off struggling on my own rather than marrying you! Move!

Katherine violently pulls Simon in and notices Sonia with the letter. The heavy silence is only interrupted by Simon's pathetic moan. Katherine and Sonia stare at each other for a moment. Katherine pulls the papers out of Sonia's hand.

KATHERINE
It's none of your business!…

Sonia goes to hug Katherine. She is angrily pushed away.

KATHERINE
Don't tell anyone!

The power cuts off. Their hard stare continues in the darkness.

INT. FLAT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lit by two candles, Sonia sits on the bunk bed. Two books are in front of her - Blake's book and the Gospels. Shouts from the kitchen are heard muted.

SONIA
(almost inaudible)
If it's possible… let this pass from us…

POLLY
What are you on about?

Sonia turns and forces a smile on her sisters. Polly covers Ariel in her cot.

SONIA
Nothing.

Sonia opens Blake's book and takes the crumpled printout. She opens her old laptop to face no internet. On her mobile, she finds the website from the printout. Reads. The sound of a plate thrown against the wall makes Polly shudder.

POLLY
Are they ever going to be… normal parents again?

SONIA
They will… One day…

Sonia stands up and takes off her baggy cardigan. Skinny figure in a dress. Sonia digs through old clothes to find a more revealing vest top. She takes some selfies with her mobile. Polly watches her ineffective attempts and reaches out to Sonia's mobile.

POLLY
I can take it.

Sonia stares at Polly for a moment.

SONIA
It's… for a job application…

Sonia poses. Awkward smile. Polly takes a photo.

Sonia grabs the mobile. She hesitates before sending a photo somewhere.

Sonia quickly changes out of the clothes she'd put on for the photo, and rushes into her bed hiding under the duvet.

POLLY
You okay?

Silence. Sonia's mobile beeps. Another notification. Sonia doesn't move.

EXT. ROUGH STREET - EVENING

Sonia's determined gait. Lonely figure. Her face is not seen.

EXT. TOWN CENTRE STREET. STONE STEPS - EVENING

No one pays attention to Sonia. Heavily breathing she walks up the steps. Sonia fails to catch the eye of a woman hurrying down the steps. Sonia stops. She sits on the steps.

SONIA
(whispers)
Why… Why have you abandoned me?

A glance at the huge clock in Town Hall. Five minutes to six.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - EVENING

Step by step Sonia gets closer to an expensive hotel entrance. In front of the door, she breathes heavily. She enters.

INT. FLAT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Exhausted, pale Katherine sits on the bed. Drunk Simon sleeps behind her. Snoring punctuates the silence. Polly approaches her mother.

POLLY
Mum…

KATHERINE
What?

POLLY
Sonia lost this…

Katherine takes the leaflet from Polly. Reads it. Frowns. Polly hands her mobile to Katherine.

KATHERINE
What's this?

POLLY
I googled this website.

Katherine scans the website page and covers her mouth.

Sonia's picture, which Polly took earlier, is on the website. It is unclear what the website is.

Katherine jumps up. A few steps to the door. Back. A glance at the wall clock. She grabs her mobile.

VOICE (O.S)
(from the mobile)
The person you are calling is not available right now. Please try…

POLLY
Mum, what's going on?

KATHERINE
Go to your room--

POLLY
--No! I’m always going to my room! I spend all my life in there! I want to know what's going on!

Ariel's cry is heard from the bedroom. It wakes up Simon. He stares around with wild drunk eyes.

KATHERINE
(to Simon)
Don't!
(to Polly)
Please, go to your sister…

Simon hides under the blanket in his corner. Polly leaves after a pause. Katherine stares at the window. Raining.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Sonia exits the hotel into the rain, tightly clutching her bag. Something is wrong with her hair, with the way she looks, the way she is dressed and the way she walks. She doesn't pay any attention to the rain that pours on her.

A car approaches the hotel from the street. The window rolls down opens. Blake is inside.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
Sonia?

EXT/INT. RESIDENTIAL STREET/BLAKE'S CAR - NIGHT

The car drives through the city at night. Blake awkwardly stares at the windscreen wipers.

INT/EXT. BLAKE'S CAR/HOUSE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Blake parks near Sonia's house. They sit for a moment in silence.

PROFESSOR BLAKE
It gets easier. How much do you earn a week? You can have more for half a day. And you'll be able to continue your studies. I hope you aren't going to give them all of your money? You deserve better, you don't want to end up like them.

SONIA
You don't know what I want, Professor.
(beat)
Does it, Claudia… get easier?

A long powerful look into Blake's eyes. In silence, Sonia leaves the car.

INT. FLAT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. On the bed, Katherine silently weeps in dissonance with Simon's carefree snoring. The light switches on. 9 pm.

INT. FLAT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Soaking wet Sonia has just inserted the prepaid card into the electricity meter.

INT. FLAT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sonia approaches the table. On it, a leaflet is clearly visible: "Virginity auction! Bids start from £10000". Sonia puts her bag over it.

Sonia turns to face Katherine. They stare at each other. Before Katherine has a chance to say a word, Sonia opens her bag and shows her the contents. There are several stacks of £50 banknotes.

KATHERINE
Sonia, I--

SONIA
Please put this somewhere safe. It's for our family. All of us.

Simon wakes up. Sonia casually gives the bag to Katherine and helps father to get to his feet.

SONIA
(to Simon)
--Dad, c'mon, stand up. Go clean yourself up. Get the girls.
(to Katherine)
Can we have dinner now?

Katherine stands at a loss holding the bag. She forces back her tears staring at Simon and Sonia fussing.

KATHERINE
Sonia…

SONIA
Please, let's have dinner.

KATHERINE
Okay…

Simon drags himself to the bathroom.

Sonia catches Katherine's hand.

SONIA
Tomorrow we're going to the hospital. Me and you. And then after, you sit with Dad and help him find a new job. Patiently.

In tears, Katherine shudders. Sonia hugs her, calming her down. Katherine squeezes her tight.

INT. FLAT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Clothes on the floor. Water in the bathtub rises covering the naked pale Sonia. She breathes out with relief. Light smile…

The smile fades. Sonia hugs her bruised knees and starts to shake. Tears. Pain.

Katherine comes to the bathroom. Two women understand each other without words. Mother and daughter for the first time.

EXT. ROCKY HILLS [DREAM SEQUENCE] - DAY

Earthquake. Sonia sits cowering against the rocks. Dust and small stones fall around and on her. She is exhausted. Breathing hard. Another attempt to open the box. Angry, Sonia throws the box to the rocks.

Suddenly, Sonia notices that there is a tiny key on her chain instead of the cross. She rushes to the box and opens the lock. The earthquake stops. Sonia looks inside. A faint smile in her eyes.