

DOSTOEVSKY'S DIALOGIC EXPERIMENT IN THE CINEMA: BETWEEN POLYPHONY AND POLYMORPHISM

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- **ABSTRACT:** The present essay investigates the possibility of translating Dostoevsky's works intersemiotically to the audiovisual language of cinema, considering the dialogic principle created by that writer as well as the notion of polymorphism of filmic recreations. To that end, the article challenges the adaptations based on the thematic content, which reduces the author's works to monologism, inherited from the transposition of Dostoevsky's work to the theater in the 19th century and relied on the method of decoupage, thus eliminating the psychic conflict and the dialogic-discursive complexity of the novel. Hence, the essay approximates *lubok* films, a style of Russian cinema from the beginning of the 20th century that aimed to take Dostoevsky's works to larger spheres of the population by working language with a focus on dialogues. The analysis follows the theoretical principles of intersemiotic translation in addition to the dialogic principle to investigate two filmic versions of *The Idiot* and one version of *Crime and Punishment*, in a trajectory that begins in the early Russian cinema, through the Soviet Union, and reaches the end of the 20th century. As a result, the procedures of audiovisual language are equated to the creative processes that, in cinema, approximate the conquests of the polyphonic experiment and the discursive dialogism of novels.
- **KEYWORDS:** Dostoevsky; novel; dialogic principle; polyphonic experiment; polymorphism; intersemiotic translation; cinema.

Introduction

What is the right way to execute Bach's works? The Polish harpsichordist Wanda Landowska (1879-1959) answered accurately: "You play Bach your way, and I'll play him 'his' way". By this, she believed she was faithful to the composer and left betrayal to others. Although far from new, the issue brings forth contradictory points of view as these daring treacheries multiply. Hence, the musical critic Arthur Dapieve (2021) stars his radio show dedicated to what he called *polymorph Bach*. In the attempt to argue in this endless debate, Dapieve poses his not less troubling questions.

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According to his reasoning, if faithfulness is taken literally some of the instruments from Bach's time could be taken into account; no other string instrument, not even the piano, would be a match for Bach's well-tempered clavier. Nonetheless, such belief would prove unfamiliarity with the fact that Bach himself would revise themes in his compositions and adapt works of other composers. Furthermore: where would Glenn Gould's interpretations stand since he not only performed Bach's pieces on the piano but also immortalized his interpretations through recordings that are necessary to the musical repertoire of every classic musical enthusiast? How should Villa Lobos' transcriptions of Bach's preludes and fugues for voices be conceived? In the show, Dapieve plays the pieces for listeners to appreciate and to compare the interpretations that characterize the polymorphism of Bach's works.

Clearly, Bach's recreations for unconventional "instruments" were missing. Opening our imaginary program with more daring treachery, we recall the one performed by the composer Bob McFerrin, who dared to translate the harpsichord notes to his vocal cords following his jazz-like style. On the extreme opposite, Walt Disney transformed the *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor BWV 565*, into a cartoon – the film *Fantasia* (1940), a production for the entertainment business. Performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski with memorable gestures, which choreographed through his body the rhythmic intonation of movements, thus anticipating what the choreographer Rodrigo Pederneiras and the multi-instrument musician Marco Antonio Guimarães, both from Minas Gerais, Brazil, created for the *Grupo Corpo's* routine in the performance *Bach* (1995). For the profane movement of dancers, Guimarães rearranged several fragments of Bach's plays, which were performed with different string instruments he built with PVC tubes and other construction materials. Evidently these daring works would be considered out of bounds with their execrable heresies.

The different re-creations that consecrated and respected musicians in their mastery have performed of Bach's work have risen from the need that composer's felt to establish an intimate contact with an insurmountable but not untamable work. A work that is, in our understanding, dialogic, inclusive, likened to interactions in which there are string instruments (including vocal cords) willing to perform it, thus proving it can live in the "great time of culture" (BAKHTIN, 2003, p. 362) and interacting with it. None of the side effects has managed, this far, to interrupt and to extinguish the flame with which Bach's music lightens human creation, preserving its polyphonic and polymorphic nature.

Bach is not alone in the gallery of artists of various sensorial expressions, including the ones dedicated to the symbol of excellence of dialogue: the poets of the word. Although artists of verse and prose often resist seeing their work in musical compositions, in dramatic works on the stage and on the screen, the fact is that dialogue is the blood vessel that feeds polyphonies and polymorphisms following the irreversible vector of time. The dialogue did not end when Socrates' voice ceased to echo his discourses, on the contrary, it has grown, multiplied and transformed into possibilities unimaginable

for the philosopher. The dialogic power of the poetic work and its *poiesis* is greater than the life of their creators, despite their resistance to accept it. Such is the case of the artist of words who created, in the art of novels, dialogic forms capable of turning into voice the hardest forms of interlocution and interaction that the most precious faculty of human beings has developed as language. All that we have said about Bach was just an introduction to the understanding of the dialogic-polyphonic and polymorphic experiment created by Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, which keeps prompting re-creations of his work for the stage and the screens – for theater and cinema, which were the motivation for this study.

Despite the artist, Dostoevsky's novellas and novels have always troubled the human soul and the need to, each in its own way, give it voice. Even when the Russian language faced difficulties in making itself understood, moving poorly beyond the national borders, Dostoevsky's works (as well as Gogol's, Gorki's, Turgenev's, Tolstoy's and many others) never stopped opening dialogues with speakers of other languages. Thanks to translations, his work moved beyond borders, even political ones, the case of prohibitions imposed by the soviet regime. Contrary to the writer himself, novellas and novels have given rise to generations of playwrights who, fearlessly, stage the dialogic word.

It is no wonder that screenwriters find in the Russian writer a perennial source of challenging possibilities in the transposition of his works to the screens, as they dared recreating them with the polymorphism of audiovisual devices. These re-creations, in the Russian context, flourished in the spirit of playwrights. Recovering some of that trajectory is the main goal of the present essay, which proposes to examine not the mere transposition of the narrative of Dostoevsky's works to the cinema, monologizing the aesthetic procedure created by the writer. In fact, we aim to examine the boldness of directors in different works given their ability to translate in sound, visual and kinesthetic polymorphic images the dialogic-polyphonic experiment. To analyze such a delicate and challenging operation, this work is guided by the dialogic principle of Mikhail Bakhtin (2008) on the grounds of the intersemiotic translation formulated by Roman Jakobson (1971). Therefore, we deem possible to overcome the mere adaptation, which, trapped to fabulations, is unable to reach the iconic dimension of the bivocality of the dialogic discourse in the audiovisual polymorphism, which has justified the transformation of the dialogic-polyphonic experiment into a monologic script.

When the Russian linguist-semiotician conceived the notion of intersemiotic translation as a possibility for different expressive forms to operate a "transmutation", in which the verbal signs can be interpreted by non-verbal signs, he was aiming at the semiotic mechanism of recoding, inherent to every process of interpretation (JAKOBSON, 1971). In tune with the aesthetic practices, such as the experiences with Bach's works, that were not intimidated and moved beyond limits to expand the dialogic potential of artists and their creations, we hope to explore the works that gradually overcame obstacles and faced challenges, getting things right and wrong,

steadfast in their purpose of reaching that dialogicity that changed the understanding of the resonance of voice in the representations of human communication.

After all, if there are no limits to the interpretation of Bach's work, why should there be any for Dostoevsky's work?

Dostoevsky's poetics between the author's resistance and the work's persistence

When ideas on the intersemiotic translations of the Fyodor M. Dostoevsky's works were guiding a part of the investigation, motivated by permanent adaptations to the cinema, for over a century, we wondered: is it possible to build dialogic-polyphonic experiments with filmic language? We suspected that it was indeed possible to translate into audiovisual codes the complexity of the dialogic relations created by the Russian writer. Dostoevsky's strong conviction against theatrical representations of his works had great influence on our reasoning. The analysis of films based on his work, however, not only betrayed the writer's irreducible attitude but also forced us to review the criticism on audiovisual translations of literary works to the cinema. This article, then, follows the trajectory of such change.

Although he could not prevent characters in his great novels from coming to life on stage, in the skin of famous actors and actresses of the Russian theater in the second half of the 19th century, Dostoevsky did not appreciate these performances. Facing the legacy of Russian tradition of interaction among the arts, the writer defended specificity according to an explicit manifestation of his reasoning:

There is a sort of mystery in art: the epic form finds no equivalent in the dramatic form. I even think that for each artistic form there is a correspondent series of particular poetic thoughts, in such a way that not one thought can be expressed in a way that it is not its own. (DOSTOÏEVSKI, 1872 *apud* JACQ, 2017, p. 50, author's translation)¹.

What is this form referred to by Dostoevsky in his claim that the poetic thought can only be expressed in one particular form uniquely its own? If, on the one hand, the writer seems to preserve the literary purity of its artistic prose, on the other hand, he is wary of the theater or the opera transposing the poeticism in his novels as well as the internal complexity of his characters. Notwithstanding his beliefs, the facts contradict the writer's wishes, since novels have never been ignored by either stage or screen directors. Not even the alleged estrangement of Dostoevsky's texts toward the theater and the audiovisual transformation was enough to prevent

¹ Original: "*Il existe une sorte de mystère en art, voulant que la forme épique ne trouve jamais sa correspondance dans la forme dramatique. Je pense même qu'à chaque forme artistique correspond une série de pensées poétiques particulières, de sorte qu'aucune pensée ne peut être exprimée dans une forme qui ne serait pas la sienne.*" (DOSTOÏEVSKI, 1872 *apud* JACQ, 2017, p. 50).

theatrical and film versions of his works, which, to this day, collect over a hundred films in many film cultures.² As recognized by Arlete Cavaliere (2016, p. 18, author's translation), "Dostoevsky's work has constructed an artistic narrative about itself, a sort of metalanguage, combining different voices and discourses in the expression and in the creative processes of other creators"³.

If neither the complexity of the dramas and discourses of Dostoevsky's characters have prevented the transpositions to other artistic forms, we are left to understand how these makers have overcome the obstacles proposed by Dostoevsky's texts. A first contact with the titles in this film culture, since its first attempts, has shown that the greatest challenges and obstacles to the transposition of literature to the cinema are, paradoxically, the creative potentialities of artistic possibilities that Dostoevsky could have never imagined.

We know that Dostoevsky revolutionized the discursive model of the novel by liberating different points of views that, in the case of the novel, gravitated around the character's and the narrator's discourses. Nonetheless, translating the dialogic-polyphonic experiment into audiovisual language is not an easy task, since it demands the iconic articulation of the dialogic procedures for the most troubled scenarios of the internal world and of the human soul.

Given our argument, it would be necessary to follow works of intersemiotic translation that acknowledged the distinction between literature and cinema, as well as the literary and filmic languages in their respective verbal and audiovisual codes. In Deleuzian terms, it would be necessary to operate the disjunction between "saying" (or speaking) and "seeing" to reach the specificity of the cinematographic idea. In other words, it would be necessary to understand that "[...] a voice speaks of something at the same time that it makes us see something else, hence, that of which it speaks is beneath what it makes us see. This third point is very important." (DELEUZE, 2012, p. 11, author's translation)⁴. In other words, by operating with iconic codes, the audiovisual language dimensions visualities and spatialities that project sensorial universals of a different nature like the sonorous-acoustic settings – something that extrapolates the performance of verbal signs. Therefore, the underlying issue of this essay: *how* did the cinema explore the semiotic universe of audiovisual language to recreate on screen the discursive forms mobilized by the dialogic conflict of ideas – the center of Dostoevsky's artistic revolution and his "polyphonic experiment" (PONZIO, 2010).

The writer placed the creative potential of different points of views in the dialogic fabric of ideas, thus transforming the aesthetic procedures of the novel in principles for

² According to *Dostoiévski à l'écran* (ESTÈVE; LABARRÈRE, 2017, p. 171-178) there are 155 audiovisual productions between feature and short films, including television series, established from various sources and guided by information on the IMDb website.

³ Original: "*A obra de Dostoiévski vem tecendo uma narrativa artística sobre si mesma, uma forma de metalinguagem, a combinar diferentes vozes e discursos na expressão e no processo criativo de outros criadores.*" (CAVALIERE, 2016, p. 18).

⁴ Original: "*[...] una voz habla de algo, al mismo tiempo, se nos hace ver otra cosa y en fin lo que se nos dice está debajo de lo que se nos hace ver. Esto es muy importante, este tercer punto.*" (DELEUZE, 2012, p. 11).

the artistic composition. It is as a discourse of ideas that the complexity of the internal world – with its anguish, suffering, love, hatred, vengeance, disbelief of punishment, – is woven into a no less complex fabric, target of many interpretative approaches of philosophical, religious, political nature. This fabric, well-woven by ideas in conflict, led Mikhail Bakhtin to conceive dialogism as an elementary process of the composition of ideas in discursive battle responsible for the tense ideological arena creator of ideas (BAKHTIN, 2008) – those forms that Dostoevsky deemed specific to the verbal art of novelistic prose, thus different from the theater and the cinema, which, in this essay, we dare to submit to critical review.

Critical limits: resistance against the monologic simplification

If Dostoevsky did not approve of conversions of his work to representations on the stage, he certainly would not approve the popularization⁵ of his art on the screens with actors talking in the rhythm of camera shots, reporting only the immediate facts of a simplified plot without the tense debate of ideas.

However, in the beginning of the 20th century, when the cinema started its activities in Russia by worshipping the literary tradition, the great works of A. Pushkin, A. Chekov, L. Tolstoy, N. Gogol, and F. Dostoevsky were part of the national patrimony, thus impossible to escape the tradition of intertextual synthesis in the history of Russian arts (JACQ, 2017, p. 2017). Not even the writer's religiosity, attachment to the West and open criticism of socialist ideas were able to distance his works from theater, cinema and music adaptations, either in the Russian era, during the soviet regime or after the perestroika.

It would be naïve and, to a point, superficial, believing that the attitude of film directors with different aesthetic interests filtered Dostoevsky's ideological contradictions in the name of the greatness of his literary work. As a matter of fact, the adaptations made in the name of faithfulness, in the Russian and the soviet cinema as well as in distinct film cultures, result mostly in simplifications far from the field lines of creation, even if they approach contradictory philosophical stances. In the Russian era, prior to the experimentations of the constructivist avant-garde from the first half of the 20th century, Dostoevsky's work were noteworthy due to the dramatic situations that the theater had already learned to decouple into frames, which greatly favored the first transpositions to cinema.

According to critical-historical studies conducted by Bakhtin (2008), the Russian-soviet criticism only concentrated on that which in Dostoevsky's works would prove coherent with a theme-content based analysis focused on and justified by the author's life

⁵ Dostoevsky's fear is founded on premises that are recognized theoretically nowadays. According to André Bazin (2018, p.135), "the drama of adaptation is the drama of popularization", which is understandable given the cuts and recontextualizations operated in transposing the literary narrative to the screen as well as the very iconic character of audiovisual language which places actors in scenes, talking and living the drama of the represented characters.

and his interests. In these analyses, characters were nothing but types, thus corresponding to the interests of a sort of methodology capable of operating synthesis separate from Dostoevsky's artistic revolution, which changed the novelistic genre forever. The application of such critical-theoretical premises to the writer's work were (and still are) present in filmic production, perpetuating what Bakhtin called the monologization of Dostoevsky's art.

We can only guess that, if Dostoevsky was alive, his refusal in giving the rights of adaptation of his work to the cinema would be legitimate and permanent, justified as the only plausible attitude to preserve the great creative processes of his aesthetic invention.

Because he lived and died in the 19th century, Dostoevsky (1821-1881) never came to know the filmic adaptations of his work in the context of Russian cinema in the early 20th century. Learning the language of cinema in order to make films was mandatory for film directors from that generation, which resulted in experiences that rehearsed audiovisual possibilities to express the main conflict of ideas in the very filmic form so that characters could impose themselves as ideologists⁶ of human conflicts with the whole drama of the incompleteness of human existence. If the monologic synthesis was not defeated as the predominant practice, at least there were attempts of creative experiences, coherent with the principles of Dostoevsky's art, which we examine in the following.

Adaptations of Dostoevsky: from the *lubok* films to the *agit*-melodrama

The first adaptation of Dostoevsky on film was made in 1909 when Vassili Goncharov translated *Crime and Punishment*⁷ into images. This being a hard-to-access film, it fell upon Piotr Tcharidine's adaptation to take the official place of the first adaptation of Dostoevsky's novels. The novel he chose to adapt was nothing less than the dense *The idiot*,⁸ a short film of 21 minutes made in 1910 that condensed the lengthy novel in illustrated frames according to the *lubok*⁹ film tradition, familiar to the Russian audience. The *lubik* are illustrated works engraved on wood or copper that, since the 18th century, have been used to produce popular graphic narratives. Verbal texts were engraved on the surface of the prints without a linear order, following the episodic nature of narrative compositions and with many shortcuts to an ambivalent semantic field, as read in the print below.

⁶ An ideologist is the man whose ideas battle around the conflicts and the worldviews elaborated by his mind, living his internal experiences and interactions in ordinary life. Each character is an ideologist by moving in relation to others according to the principles of their ideas, confronted in living with the other (BAKHTIN, 2008).

⁷ *Преступление и наказание (Prestupléníye i nakazániye)*, 1866.

⁸ *Идуом (Idiot)*, 1867-1869.

⁹ *Lubok* films follow the composition principle of *lubki* (plural of *lubok*): illustrated works engraved on wood or copper that, since the 18th century, have been used to produce popular graphic narratives (MIGUEL, 2008). In the cinema it was the base of simplified narratives that appealed to the public.

Figure 1 – The Mice Are Burying the Cat – 1760s *lubok* print.



Source: Wikipedia10.

Approaching different themes, the *lubok* put together opposite contexts, in a parody of themes and characters from the elevated official culture, which were lowered as in the example. In Figure 1, the subtitle “The Cat of Kazan, the Mind of Astrakhan, the Wisdom of Siberia” is a parody of the title of Russian tsars.

According to Géry (2017, p. 110, our translation), the fundamental aspect of the *lubok* prints is the semantic power of the episode and, in the case of Tcharnine,

This is about presenting, in an elementary way, action and psychological content in a series composed of “key” scenes, more or less arbitrary, chosen among the most spectacular ones. The succession of animated prints reconfigures the original work to a *digest* that takes into account only its main narrative line, completely ignoring multiple secondary lines [...].¹¹

The novel of almost a thousand pages is turned into a few episodic lines, as shown in the decoupage below.

1 – Train travel: prince Myshkin meets the merchant Rogozhin, who confesses his love for Nastasya, lover of the businessman Totsky. Rogozhin shows him the picture of that woman.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lubok&oldid=1052492485>. Access on: Sept. 22, 2002.

¹¹ Original: “Il s’agit pour lui de rendre sous une forme élémentaire des contenus actanciels et psychologiques à l’intérieur d’une série constituée de scènes “clefs” plus ou moins arbitrairement choisies parmi le plus spectaculaires. La succession de tableaux animés ramène l’oeuvre originelle à une digest qui ne prend ne compte que sa ligne narrative principale et ignore totalement ses multiplex lignes secondaires. [...]” (GÉRY, 2017, p. 110).

2 – Visit to General Epanchin, his wife and daughters. A meeting between Gavril (Ganya), secretary and Nastasya's suitor, who also shows him her picture.

3 – Myshkin goes to Ganya's house: the family discusses the wedding. Rogozhin pays them a visit, willing to pay a hundred thousand rubles for Ganya to withdraw his proposal.

4 – Party at Nastasya's house; the prince tries to prevent the marriage of convenience and confesses his love for the lass in whose eyes he reads much suffering. In the dispute, Nastasya, feeling humiliated, decides to throw the package with a hundred thousand rubles into the fire, challenging Ganya to save it. Scared, the lad faints; she collects the money and drops it next to his inert body. She runs away with Rogozhin.

5 – Myshkin inherits some money and, not giving Nastasya up, approaches Aglaia, Epanchin's daughter. After much dispute and exchange of aggressions, Nastasya runs away with Rogozhin again, who eventually murders her and invites Myshkin to her wake in a dreary night. The prince goes mad.

The concentration of the action in five distinct spaces was pivotal for this synthesis: the train; the general's home; Ganya's family house; Nastasya Filippovna and Rogozhin's house, private spaces that shelter the personal arguments publicly.

Given the difficulty in turning the complexity of the internal world into visual images, the film operates in two fronts: the episodic synthesis of frames resembling the articulation of *tableaux vivants* and the transformation of conflicts into dramatic cores loaded with tension, monologizing the dialogic relationships of the novel without reaching the deep meaning of the issues posed by the writer, as claimed by Andrei Tarkovsky (1994). Hence, the *lubok* film only accomplished the introduction of the writer in the "circuit of mass performances and images", thus contributing to highlight the aspect of "great dialogue of arts assumed in every adaptation" (GÉRY, 2017, p. 114) in the best tradition of Russian art.

A rather different experience takes place in the heat of the Cold War when Ivan Pyryev – a film director aligned with the regime, strong man of Mosfilm (*Мосфильм*), which he presided for almost a decade (1957-1965), several times awarded the Stalin Prize and director of musicals on the great soviet epic (BO, 2019) – produced a controversial adaptation of *The Idiot*, in 1958.

Pyryev's project aimed to shoot the entire narrative in four series, but only the first was completed. Counting on a team of different workers – comedy, Stanislavsky theater and cinema – the film is the result of different narrative forms: melodrama and burlesque comedy; oneiric situations and realistic ones (HELLER, 2017, p. 118). All of this to turn the actors with their eccentric gazes the building principle of the *mise en scène* (HELLER, 2017, p. 118) captured through photography, without, however, turning the performance into a psychological category as desired by Tarkovsky (1994, p. 87). Pyryev, then, explores the audiovisual dramaturgy through by combining the actors' *mise en scène* with the point of view of the camera. The actors' gazes set in the rooms under the effect of lighting and framing intensify the dramatic effects of the scenes (Figs. 2 and 3)

Figures 2 and 3 – Actor Yuriy Yakovlev in the role of Myshkin in a close up shot.



Source: THE IDIOT (1958).

Focused on the performances of exemplary heroes, the photography explores tonalities, textures and intensity, translating them into temper that rearticulates the dramatic line of what would be an exemplary melodrama. By intensifying the tragicomic tone, it consequently accentuates contrasts, thus disturbing what was mere entertainment.

Although Jay Leyda considers it difficult to take a work that is no more than a *agit-melodrama* seriously (LEYDA, 1973, p. 336), Pyryev's adaptation is worthy of attention. Both the constructivist *agitprop*¹² and the *agit-melodrama* are procedures capable of interfering with behavior. Rather than leading viewers to action through the awareness of problems and conflicts – like the *agitprop* – the *agit-melodrama* promotes the catharses of exemplary actions in the climax of conflicts, accelerating the emotional involvement, like Myshkin's acts. If, on the one hand, the prince behaves only like an idiot and epileptic, on the other hand, he behaves like a being who knows how to read the depth of the soul in the eyes of people whose suffering rebounds in his own eyes, which happened when he saw and felt in Nastasya's photograph the suffering of her life story. This is the internal struggle of a prince in disagreement with his double. The prince, then, gets involved in the dispute for Nastasya with three different men: Rogozhin, his travel companion in the train to Petersburg on the way back from Switzerland; Totsky, a businessman that sheltered the young orphaned girl, making her one of his properties and; Ganya, a secretary whose mother lived off lodgings.

The first scene of that dispute takes place in the evening of Nastasya's birthday, when she is to decide who she will marry. Charmed by the purity of the prince in his near devotion, Nastasya is aware that she cannot escape fate and casts her wrath upon her suitors who negotiate her life in a perverse game: Rogozhin had paid Ganya 100 thousand rubles to win. Shaken by the dispute, Nastasya rebels. For this state of mind, the camera follows the violence of gestures: a low-angle take comprehends, in a single

¹² *Agit-prop*: kind of art activism – or simply attraction – produced by poets, artists of theatre, cinema, and street arts to promote the action and reaction of people in spectacles, concerts, art events. Reaction towards awareness of conflicts of political-economic interest games. The procedure was explored by Mayakovsky in his poetry and propaganda posters (Rosta windows – a kind of constructivist *lubok*) and also by Sergei Eisenstein in his Proletcult theatrical montages.

frame, the depth of the rooms and the medium close up shot of the character, so her face has better lighting and is distinguished from the whole. The woman walks to throw a hundred thousand rubles into the fire, dominated by the wrath in her gaze (Fig. 4).

Figure 4 – Film frame of Nastasya to communicate her decision on her fate.



Source: THE IDIOT (1958).

Nastasya's low-angle shot and another frontal shot on the setting that reaches the reflection on the mirror play with the dimming of the lights, defining the contrast that places the character's image in the close-up shot. The two shots conflict within the frame. Eisenstein would understand this type of shot as a counterpoint plane – a procedure that eventually became an important resource for the cinema: at the same time that it unifies, it disintegrates (TORTAJADA, 2017). The plane, then, assumes the intonation of discourses and the camera's perspective becomes the visual form of the enunciation. The different angles establish a dialogue with all the scenic elements in their different dialogic battles, just like the close shots frame clear conflicts in the scenes. As Eisenstein observed when he analyzed the *mise en scène*, the interior motivation that organizes the scene game (*mise en jeu*) creates the visual form for the behavior of an interior discourse due to the *mise en gest* (TORTAJADA, 2017, p. 44).

In a way, the organization of different situations, as well as the discursive points of view that enunciate them, show that Pyryev's version moved toward the investigation of events overcoming the "chronic of *faits divers*" – as it was called by the film director Sergei Eisenstein in his comment on the ties between Dostoevsky, the religious mystery theater and morality plays to trigger emotional reactions (TORTAJADA, 2017, p. 47). In recovering the cinematicity of the *agit*-melodrama, working in the realm of a likely "impure cinema" (BAZIN, 2018, p. 135), Pyryev takes an important step for the experience of the audiovisual language in terms of dialogic experience.

Intercultural translation and the explosion of conflicts in images of their doubles

Albeit important, Pyryev did not operate a dialogic filmic translation. He lacked the knowledge on the *mise en scène* as a scenic space of the interior discourse with

its conflicts and ambivalences. Actually, the leap in that direction had already been taken when, in 1951, Akira Kurosawa released his *Hakuchi*,¹³ dislocating the setting of the narrative in *The Idiot* to spaces on the island of Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost prefecture, a region devastated by World War II (1939-1945) on the border with Russia. The warm colors of the palaces with velvety offices of the Russian monarchy are replaced with the almost empty spaces of Japanese dwellings. Except for the snow, nothing reminds Dostoevsky's Petersburg.

The setting in a hostile space, suffocated by war, poverty and isolated by snow, composes Kurosawa's filmic plasticity. If not a box-office and critical success, Kurosawa's translation showed without a doubt his powerful skill in taking to the last consequences that which translates the border space between the soul and the internal space: the gaze. Unlike Pyryev, who focused on the gaze that moved around the external space, Kurosawa's framing focused on the characters, Myshkin and Nastasya mostly, as if it was possible to capture what was inside – which was, in fact, one of Myshkin's characteristics. Therefore, the gaze conducted the movement of the film's dialogic orientations.

In the place of a prince trapped in his psyche, the Japanese film director develops in *Hakuchi* one of the most profound premises of Dostoevsky's dialogism: the encounter of the “man in the man” – made the existential category of the “man of ideas” that seeks to understand his own self in the battle with the other. Kurosawa's idiot, then, rehearses the role of the ideologist: a character whose ideas support the process of humanization of the “man in the man”. If not “rebuilding in the image of God”, as posed by Vladimir Zakharov, at least, this man expresses himself like a being given the “possible fullness of creator and creation” (ZAKHÁTOV, 2015, p. 7). Myshkin is the most complete expression of that man whose life is dedicated to the purification of the soul.

Notwithstanding, *Hakuchi*'s main character is not a prince returning to Russia after treatment in Switzerland, who becomes the heir of a distant relative and new-found member of Petersburg society. By bringing the plot to Japan, Kurosawa leads the narrative in a different chronotope: another geographic space and another historical time. Myshkin is Kameda; Nastasya is Taeko; Rogozhin is Akama; Aglaya is Ayako; Ganya is Kayama: all of whom communicate in Japanese and live through post-war problems. These are the main characters of the black and white film which, in almost four hours, rebuilds the two parts of the novel, preserving the intertitles: “Love and agony” and “Love and hate”.

In the first scene, a train crosses the landscape covered by dense snow while the camera moves inside the vehicle showing, from a low angle, the passengers sleeping huddled together in a wagon without any seats. A scream breaks the silence and, combined with the horn of the train, the sequence plays with inside and outside

¹³ Although *Hakuchi* is the Japanese word for idiot., throughout the film, the word *baka* is also used, especially by Rogozhin, both offensively and affectionately (SOBRINHO, 2006).

settings. The camera looks for the origin of the sound and finds Kameda's terrified face. Akama, the passenger sleeping next to him, asks if he had had a nightmare because his screaming resembled an act of despair and terror. Kameda confirms it: he was dreaming he was about to be executed, a trauma he carried from surviving the war. Hence, he justifies the illness that turned him into a victim of post-traumatic disorder (POIRSON-DECHONNE, 2017). He had been treated in Okinawa, a southern island in Japan, where an American military base had settled during the war. The war trauma defines the emotional tonality through psychologic colors of someone sentenced to death, thus organizing the structural intonation of the film – like Tarkovsky (1994) claimed.

Kurosawa combines three episodes in the novel in a single scene: Dostoevsky's bibliographic episode, who, indeed, had been sentenced to death but pardoned minutes before the execution; the episode in the novel, when Myshkin narrates the scene of a public execution he had witnessed in Lyon, and the episode lived by Kameda in the Second World War. These reverberations announce the constitution of doubles.

When Kurosawa translates Kameda's scream as an effect of a traumatic episode that reconfigured his subconscious, his entire internal world emerges in a single sign – which turns the fact into a powerful element in the audiovisual dramaturgy. On the one hand, if his epileptic dementia revives feelings of guilt, on the other hand, it leads him to reunite with his double (POIRSON-DECHONNE, 2017), who relives the trauma of the flood of sensations and feelings in the face of death. This experience is plastically translated in the pain and suffering relieved by Kameda in different contexts, when his own eyes feel the other's pain like something that comprehends his whole body and spirit. In a flash, he relives the state of deep suffering that leads him into thinking: if he was not executed, he would be extremely good to all creatures (MENDOZA, 2003). The ability to look the other's suffering and live it as his own builds in his consciousness the clairvoyance that, for some, is just the revelation of a stupid naïve on the edge of insanity.

In *Hakuchi*, Kameda's clairvoyance manifests itself as a trance that leads him to another world, a type of *satori* (SOBRINHO, 2006) that struggles to understand the states of mind of awe and terror. By talking to Akama, and getting off the train with him, such a state is insinuated in the confused feelings that the new acquaintance awakens in him, a mix of contradictory affection oscillating between love and hate. When Akama shows him the photograph of Taeko, the woman with whom he is crazy in love, Kameda realizes that something has struck him. As they walk down a street, they see the same photograph Akama had only on the outside of a store window. A strange sensation of commotion and fascination takes over Kameda. Both men approximate the store and the take focuses on their two faces reflected on the glass protecting the photograph that takes the entire frame (Figs. 5 and 6).

Figures 5 and 6 – Game of takes between gazes from different angles.



Source: HAKUCHI (1951).

When the camera turns to the outside again, we see tears in Kameda's eyes; upon questioning, he states to see deep suffering in Taeko's eyes. He does not reveal that he felt the woman's pain in his own eyes, in the core of his being, but Akama noticed an unusual disturbance in his friend.

The argument was then defined: not only the dispute for a beautiful woman between Akama and Kameda, but the involvement through the gaze and the internal conflict for seeing himself refracted in the other, his double. Seeing himself as the refracted extension of the other creates a reversal translation between characters, dislocating the narrative axis from the outside actions to the internal conflicts, and conditioning the design of sequential scenes connected by counterpoint modulations loaded with tension. Counterpoint is here conceived in the Bakhtinian sense: the modulation from a tonality of some harmony to another loaded with tension (BAKHTIN, 2008). Hence, the field lines of the dialogic experience of Kurosawa's cinema are established.

This is explicitly shown in the transition from the first to the second part of the film. Thus far, we already know that Akama is offering Kayama a thousand yen for Taeko, although Kayama had insinuated himself to Ayako, Mr. Ono's daughter, a man who had enjoyed Kameda's wealth while he was fighting in the war. Upon meeting Kameda, Ayako sees a pure man in him and witnesses the rise of deep affection in herself. However, Kameda feels attracted to Taeko, who is at the summit of the love triangle involving the three men.

The events in such a triangle include Kameda's two visits to Akama's house. In the last sequence of the first part, after Taeko's birthday party, when they both leave Sapporo for Tokyo, Kameda visits Akama in the house he shared with his mother. Suspecting he was followed by his friends, they talk, argue, and Kameda is scared by the sight of a paper knife on his desk. They argue but realize their friendship, and establish a sincere friendship by exchanging amulets. A very upset Akama confesses to his friend that Taeko loved him and implies that he was quitting his love for the woman.

Next, there is a sequence of actions that amplify Kameda's internal conflict in a singular audiovisual dramaturgy. While he is taking a walk, two enormous eyes take the whole side of the street. A carriage moves next to him in the same direction. The

horses throttle to the sound of captivating music at the same time that intense noise rings from their bells. Feeling disturbed, Kameda staggers without destiny. Trembling, he enters a tea house with circus music in the background. His disturbance is such that he is unable to lift the coffee cup, which spills all over the table. Reflections on the window glass suggest someone had been following him. He leaves the teahouse and crosses an overpass over the railway. He looks back and sees Akama, who disappears in the smoke and snow. As he walks, he wonders about his visions when he sees a shop window with knives similar to Akama's. Running a dark and empty corridor of snow, he suddenly meets Akama, who is about to attack him with that very knife: he screams, roars and twists as if he had been attacked and wounded, which frightens Akama and prevents him from committing the actual assault (Figures 7 and 8).

Figures 7 and 8 – Playing with imagination and facts



Source: HAKUCHI (1951).

Once again, the scene scrambles the game of affections that threatens the fraternal promise: Akama had not given up on Taeko, turning upside down the controversial internal world of his doubles. Kameda is admitted and comes back, in the second part, even more introspective. Eventually, he takes an interest in Ayako.

In the tension at the end of the first part, the sequence that defines the change in the power game of the love triangles is a parody iconized by the ice figure and the giant dolls doing acrobatics at the snow festival (*Yuki Matsuri*), a scene introduced by Kurosawa that amplifies the internal conflict in the audiovisual dramaturgy. The doubles face one another in love triangles: Ayako is looking for Kameda and meets Kayama; Kameda meets Akama but his eyes are looking for Taeko, who never shows up, but is as present as the colossal ice sculpture. It all happens amidst performances of snow men and their fire torches.

The inversions leading to plot twists increase in the final sequence of our analysis, when paroxysm shapes the counterpoint planes. Ayako becomes the lead character of the sequence, acting in the space that reverberates the absence of Taeko. She prompts Kameda's involvement and becomes the center of yet another dispute. During a family meal, Ayako brings together Kayama, her suitor, and Kameda, who announces his wishes to marry her, taking the family by surprise. Ayako requests a meeting with Taeko and,

at Akama's house, the two couples face one another. Taeko fears a meeting with Ayako, as she saw in the girl the double that life had prevented her from living. Nonetheless, the conversation between the two women makes Taeko see in her opponent not a sweet naïve girl, but a pretentious enemy willing to win the fight for the pure and kind man they both desire. Slowly, Taeko realizes the girl's affection and moves on to attack by proposing a challenge: she extends her hand and asks Kameda which of the two he prefers. If he took her hand, Ayako would lose the fight. Under stress, Kameda hesitates but cannot deny Taeko, thus confirming Ayako's defeat. Taeko, however, continues her relationship with Akama, and they grow apart.

In the last section of the film, Akama invites Kameda over, where Taeko would supposedly be. Upon his arrival, he finds out she was called to watch over the body of that woman, who had been cruelly murdered by Akama's fury. In trance and completely shaken, he stands by the murderer, and together they watch the inert body on the bed in the darkness of the room and of the night (Fig. 9).

Figure 9 – Akama and Kameda watch over Taeko's body in a dark room.



Source: HAKUCHI (1951).

Relying on these few scenes, we can claim that Kurosawa's version moves beyond the limits of adaptation and the visual plot gives the articulation of scenes, planes and frames the bivocality of the characters' internal drama and their double's. This bivocality opens to many inversions, including the great thematic inversion between love and hate; dementia and lucidity; kindness and brutality; deals and treason. The doubles reflect and refract, at once, their counterparts and their demons. There is nothing more Dostoevskian than the configuration of doubles through the insertion of death in life, which is in the scream at the beginning of the film, in the chases in its development and in the final trance, when the two rivals mourn the beloved deceased. Although Taeko's body is not on camera, it is insinuated through the shadow that covers the setting, projected by the light of a few candles, and the men's imagination reaching out to her from a different angle. Kurosawa never loses sight of the ambivalent dimension of refractions and the doubles that ideas build in each character. As concluded by Marion Poirson-Dechonne (2017, p. 128, our translation):

Translation rather than adaptation, Kurosawa's film, far from betraying Dostoevsky's universe and style, offers a powerful rewriting of great plastic beauty. The emotion rising from the lead character and the constellation of characters constitutes a tribute to the complexity of the novel. [...] The decoration of a Japanese island hit by winds and buried in the snow offers the Dostoevsky passion their rightful structure, underscoring the tragic dimension¹⁴.

Resonances of the dialogic-polyphonic cinematographic experience

Despite not having lived enough to film Dostoevsky – one of his favorite writers – Andrei Tarkovsky commented on that intention in one of his journals:

I have an idea I would like to realize on screen: it is a film about Dostoevsky, a sort of essay where not only the issues of the writer's personality, his time and artistic creation would intervene but also his own characters and ideas. This film wouldn't be a biography nor a critical analysis. I want to talk about Dostoevsky as I see him, that is, as a part of nature and as an experience. I would be very happy to make this film because I could not talk about Dostoevsky if not by showing what I want to show in the film. (TARKÓVSKI, 1994, p. 89, our translation).¹⁵

This film was never made, but many ideas sketched by Tarkovsky for the transposition of *Crime and Punishment* (1866)¹⁶ to the screens can be investigated in the version Alexander Sokurov made for that novel. According to Tarkovsky,

No less important than the story of the crime, in this book, is the story of punishment, redemption of guilt or, rather, the dialectic antithesis of the crime itself, antithesis without which the novel would not exist in its ethical purpose and for which, in the strict sense, the novel was written. (TARKÓVSKI, 1994, p. 88, our translation).¹⁷

¹⁴ Original: "Traduction plutôt qu'adaptation, le film de Kurosawa, loin de trahir l'univers et le style de Dostoïevski, en offre une réécriture puissante, d'une grande beauté plastique. L'émotion qui se dégage du protagoniste et de la constellation des personnages constitue un hommage à la complexité du roman. [...] Le décor d'une île japonaise battue par les vents et ensevelie sous la neige offre aux passions dostoïevskiennes un cadre à leur mesure, en exaltant leur dimension tragique". (POIRSON-DECHONNE, 2017, p. 128).

¹⁵ Original: "J'ai une idée, que j'aimerais incarner à l'écran: c'est un film sur Dostoïevski, une sorte d'essai où interviendraient non seulement les problèmes de la personnalité de l'écrivain, de l'époque, de la création artistique, mais aussi les personnages eux-mêmes de Dostoïevski, et ses idées. Ce film ne serait ni une biographie ni une analyse critique. Je voudrais parler de Dostoïevski tel que je le perçois, c'est-à-dire comme une partie de la nature et comme une expérience. Ce serait un grand bonheur pour moi de faire ce film, car je ne saurais pas parler de Dostoïevski autrement qu'en montrant ce que je veux montrer dans ce film". (TARKÓVSKI, 1994, p. 89).

¹⁶ Преступление и наказание (Prestuplénie i nakazánie).

¹⁷ Original: "Non moins importante que l'histoire du crime est, dans cette oeuvre, l'histoire du châtimeut, du rachat de la faute, autrement dit l'antithèse dialectique du crime lui-même, antithèse sans laquelle le roman n'existerait pas dans sa finalité éthique, et pour laquelle, à proprement parler, le roman a été écrit". (TARKÓVSKI, 1994, p. 88).

The film Sokurov made focuses on the tension of the character living the punishment and the atonement of his guilt. The title could not be more suggestive: *Whispering pages* (1994),¹⁸ a black and white featurette of little more than an hour. Lulled by the sound of water, the first images of the film follow the turning of pages in a book showing the film credits and an epigraph: this work is based on works of Russian writers from the 19th century.

In the first scene, the camera moves showing a cloudy landscape, supposedly the ruins of a building, and unconnected background noise. Slowly, the camera starts moving downward to focus on the surface of a river; it follows the waters to the left side of the screen. The increasingly dimmed image contrasts with the plasticity of the sonorous-acoustic space, marked by muffled noises and loud birds flying over the liquid landscape, which is crossed by “shouting and muttering, bugs humming, wind blowing, demolition noises, musical fragments (distorted or not) etc.” (MACHADO, 2002, p. 31, our translation)¹⁹.

The volume increases with the chatter, shouting and laughter of excited women, dragging themselves on the floor or jumping from higher floors inside the ruins of a house. This is the opposite of a postcard from Petersburg, a city built on the moors, where the lives in Sokurov’s film move. The camera continues to move through the phantasmagoric fog passing by a set of stairs where a man sits alone. Moving into a dark hallway, the camera reaches a silent man who is now walking amidst the other starving people, who attack one another to the sound of lyric singing intertwined with the shouting of women, their chatter and muffled conversations gradually amplify and become clear in the first plane of the acoustic scene. The man walks without purpose (Figure 10).

Figure 10 – Raskolnikov walks through the ruins of the construction.



Source: WHISPERING PAGES (1994).

¹⁸ Скрытые страницы (Skrytyye stranitsy). The English translations follows the Russian text as *Whispering Pages*. However, in Brazil, the title *Páginas ocultas* followed the French translation *Pages Cachées*, which in Russian is Тихие страницы (Tikhiye stranitsy).

¹⁹ Original: “gritos e murmúrios, zumbidos de inseto, vento, ruídos de demolição, fragmentos musicais (distorcidos ou não) etc.” (MACHADO, 2002, p. 31).

This is how Raskolnikov, the main character in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is introduced in the film *Whispering Pages*. Moving through the outskirts of the notorious Petersburg, he merges with the agonic space of abandoned flooded buildings that confuse people with rats in the fight for food. A city where the alleys and ruins of its different islands are not visible from Nevsky Avenue mostly because with each flooding of its imposing river, the population is devastated and left to fend for itself. The audiovisual plasticity of the film depicts the part of the city where Dostoevsky follows his characters' wondering and atonement, as stated in the following report:

Petersburg is shown in his work through shadows and mirages, under the intoxicating sensation that nothing is seen clearly: whether it is the future of the city, created against nature by the Emperor's imposition, or the characters' and Russia's own fate. The main characters are threatened by the weird phantasmagoric and tragic world of the city, their thoughts are troubled. On the one hand, Petersburg is the social background for the development of the action, on the other hand, it is an actor that witnesses the barbaric acts committed by Raskolnikov and the regret that follows. (AMÉRICO, 2016, p. 50, our translation)²⁰.

The report translates into words the troubled frames that Sokurov's cinematography aims to recompose iconically through the fragmented, discontinuous sequences of unwonted movements in a city shaped by the indefinite landscape of the lives that resist and morrow. The city shows minimalist features that favor the emergence of a dialogic-polyphonic image, as claimed by Américo (2016, p. 59, our translation): "The Petersburg text is a powerful polyphonic space of resonance, in the vibrations of which the alarming failures of Russian history and the 'evil' sounds of time that freeze one's soul have been heard for a while"²¹.

Raskolnikov is one of these phantasmagoric lives that emerges as one of the crawling beasts from the flooding waters of the Neva River living his self-punishment. He is one of those people who live like zombies, averse to society. Despite moving like a silent ghost, the soundtrack of noises form a resonant acoustic space of an agitated, hostile place, screaming his atonement, while he silently wonders, taken by his delusions.

²⁰ Original: "*Petersburgo é mostrada em sua obra por meio de sombras e miragens, em uma sensação embriagante onde nada pode ser visto com clareza: seja o futuro da própria cidade, criada por imposição do Imperador, contra a vontade da natureza, seja o destino dos personagens e da Rússia. Os protagonistas são acudados pelo estranho mundo fantasmagórico e trágico da cidade, seus pensamentos são atormentados. Por um lado, Petersburgo é um fundo social no qual se desenrolam os acontecimentos, por outro é um ator que testemunha atos bárbaros como o cometido por Raskolnikov e seu posterior arrependimento*" (AMÉRICO, 2016, p. 50).

²¹ Original: "*O texto de Petersburgo é um poderoso espaço polifônico de ressonância, nas vibrações do qual já há tempo são ouvidas as alarmantes sínopes da história russa e os "maus" sons do tempo que congelam a alma.*" (AMÉRICO, 2016, p. 59).

If, in the novel, Raskolnikov's mind is invaded by hypothetical delusions loaded with existential, religious and moral conflicts, in the film, there is a strong nihilism followed by an equally strong skepticism. Sokurov frames just one moment of Raskolnikov's suffering, when he feels the impulse of confessing, which the film takes as its argument. When Raskolnikov (re)lives the guilt for his actions, his consciousness becomes denser, which is translated in the film into experience – like Tarkovsky desired. Notwithstanding, the internal conflict of Raskolnikov's disbelief in the act of confession is not mitigated, leading to his estrangement. It would be pointless to reconstitute the line between vigil and sleep; dream and nightmare; external and internal space; the streets and the room; lucidity and illusion. They all reverberate in the volume of polyphonic dissonances of counterpoint modulations, in which the character lives the tension of all boundaries (Fig. 11).

Figure 11 – Raskolnikov in the phantasmagoria of his mind alienated from outer space.



Source: WHISPERING PAGES (1994).

The counterpoint modulations that define the dialogic-polyphonic construction are translated, on the one hand, by the erratic movement of the camera focusing on places of struggle, loudness, aggressiveness and mental disorder – indicatives of Raskolnikov's atonement – and, on the other hand, by the long planes whose shots are nearly imperceptible, confused with textures. Converging with these modulations, Sokurov elaborates the discursive tone of the montage that translates the character's suffering like an elegy: a discourse that expects to be "felt" not only "seen". Plastically, it is the elegy that eventually organizes the diversity of filmic elements in the production of meaning – the page collects all whispers floating inside the mind.

It is known that the elegy is a literary genre which, in the Russian world, marked both Mayakovsky's poetry and the cinema of many generations of film directors. In Sokurov's perspective, it concerns the intonation, as stated in his comment collected by E. Hill (MACHADO, 2002, p. 25, our translation):

The elegy is a form that helps build a system of induction around me. It provides the angle for the director's perspective. Therefore, it was

quickly decided that I would not have all that freedom. The elegy, a sad remembrance of what happened and will never happen again, is a European tradition. It is about expressing an intonation, and intonation is the most important thing in art. If we remove intonation, it is all for naught, since it is that which is inherent to man.²²

Intonation is the creative key of excellence for montage in the cinema, for the generating ideology of dialogic forms and for the creative energy in poetry. In all its artistic manifestations, intonation is a concept that highlights transitions and counterpoints. In the discursive fabric, there is one single moment when intonation enunciates Raskolnikov's ideas that struggle against moral and religion. We are referring to the scene in which a dialogue with Sonia presents two radically opposed and clashing points of view: belief and skepticism – both presenting internal counterpoints. Despite working as a prostitute, Sonia is a devout Christian. In addition to self-punishment, Raskolnikov is led to confess his crime to her – but not without purging his pain in a scene of great sensorial involvement. Walking through giant tree trunks, smoke and the discontinuous flow of agitated waters, his atonement is materialized in the diaphanous plastic of the landscape. Next, he goes to the commissar to declare having pawned his belongings and meets with Sonia to confess his crime. She listens and asks him to kneel and pray, which he refuses to do (Figure 12). According to Raskolnikov, confessing does not imply either forgiveness or damnation since he does not grant law, religion or moral the power to rule over his actions.

Figure 12 – Sonia asks Raskolnikov to kneel and ask forgiveness for his crime.



Source: WHISPERING PAGES (1994).

The dialogue with Sonia is the moment when the conflict of two consciousnesses reaches a paroxysm. Taken by her belief in God, the young woman begs Raskolnikov

²² Original: “A elegia é uma forma que ajuda a construir um sistema de indução a meu redor. Ela fornece um ângulo de visão para o olhar do cineasta. Com isso, resolve-se de saída que não terei toda a liberdade. A elegia, triste recordação daquilo que passou e não voltará jamais, marca uma tradição europeia. Trata-se de exprimir uma entonação, e a entonação é a coisa mais importante na arte. Se excluirmos a entonação, todo o resto será nada, pois ela é aquilo que é próprio do homem.” (MACHADO, 2002, p. 25).

to ask for forgiveness, whereas he voices his skepticism, taking the tone of an agnostic discourse and claiming in almost a whisper that God does not exist. Sonia answers with horror in her eyes, insisting that God would help her out of prostitution, to which Raskolnikov says: “God doesn’t even know of your existence because you are too poor and too insignificant for him”.

In the final minutes of the film, Raskolnikov cuddles in the belly of a statue of a lioness and, in a symbolic gesture, suckles her breast to the sound of the fountain. The sound of water is interrupted, then, by the singing of contralto²³ Lena Mkrtychyan in her version of Gustav Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder*, one of the pieces that compose the five songs of Friedrich Rückert’s poem dedicated to the death of his children. If, in the beginning, dissonant noises placed people in the sewage living among mice, in the end, the grave voice singing the song reverberates in a type of sonorous-acoustic humanity in which human conflicts can rest with their misfortunes.

Audiovisual dramaturgy as a liberating exercise of intersemiotic translation

Investigating the filmic transpositions of Dostoevsky’s work had two underlying motivations: the suspicion that such work was impossible to translate to cinema based on the writer’s irreducible stances; and the question whether a dialogic-polyphonic experiment, such as the one created verbally, would find expression in the codes of audiovisual language. It seemed impossible to recreate dissonant discourses on the grounds of those concepts, as Tarkovsky and Eisenstein agreed: “Dostoevsky built a world without destiny where characters are led to punish themselves” (TORTAJADA, 2017, p. 44, our translation)²⁴.

We have followed the experience of three film directors: Pyryev, who designed the *mise en scène* for audiovisual dramatic situations; Kurosawa, who transformed internal conflicts into refractions of doubles who struggled with themselves and with one another, making room for the reverberation of polyphonic images; and Sokurov, who overlapped the shifts in the visual landscape with reverberations of a dissonant acoustic space, as disturbing as the conflicts of a wondering consciousness. We verified that it is possible for the audiovisual dramaturgy to translate the counterpoints of ideas that seek to express something about the changes in the human world. Our doubts regarding that alleged impossibility were dissipated and, now, we are left with the challenge of understanding *how* different film traditions could set Dostoevsky’s work free from its temporal limits and from the specificity of its sign.

We dared to submit to critical analysis the writer’s attitude and to question to what extent Dostoevsky’s irreducible stance was the main responsible for the monologic

²³ Although counter tenor is a masculine noun, the female voice qualified as such performs a low-pitched, low-range sound with an intense timbre.

²⁴ Original: “*Dostoiévski construiu um mundo sem destino onde os personagens são levados a punir a si próprios.*” (TORTAJADA, 2017, p. 44).

adaptations, incapable of moving toward intersemiotic translation and the audiovisual of the most radical artistic procedures, simply because they could not escape the ties that connect Dostoevsky's work and his own life?

If Dostoevsky himself released the novelistic discourse from the shackles of the omniscient author, would it not be a retrogression to link the creative freedom of the dialogic discourse to a monologic and finished perspective? If we accept the arguments of scholars from the Bakhtin Circle regarding the diversity of discursive relations as dialogic maturity and emancipating form, it is time to face the dialogism in those versions, releasing them from plots limited to episodes in the writer's life that trap the characters' psyche to the limits of monologism.

MACHADO, I. Experimento dialógico de Dostoiévski no cinema: entre a polifonia e a polimorfia. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.66, 2022.

- *RESUMO: O presente ensaio indaga sobre as possibilidades de as obras de Dostoiévski serem traduzidas intersemioticamente pela linguagem audiovisual do cinema, respeitando-se o princípio dialógico criado pelo escritor e a noção de polimorfismo das recriações fílmicas. Para isso contesta as adaptações baseadas no conteúdo temático que reduz a composição ao monologismo e que, herdado das transposições das obras dostoiévskianas para o teatro desde o século XIX, basearam-se no método da decupagem, eliminando os conflitos psíquicos e a complexidade dialógico-discursiva do texto romanesco. Aproxima-se assim do cine-lubok, uma vertente do cinema russo do início do século XX que procurou levar a obra de Dostoiévski para grandes esferas da população por meio de um trabalho de linguagem concentrado no diálogo. A análise segue os fundamentos teóricos da tradução intersemiótica e do princípio dialógico para examinar duas versões fílmicas do romance O idiota e uma versão de Crime e castigo acompanhando uma trajetória que se inicia no primeiro cinema russo, atravessa o período soviético e chega ao final do século XX. Como resultado, equaciona os procedimentos da linguagem audiovisual com os processos criativos que, no cinema, se aproximam das conquistas do experimento polifônico e da dialogia discursiva dos romances.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Dostoiévski; romance; princípio dialógico; experimento polifônico; polimorfia; tradução intersemiótica; cinema.*

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