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Transmediation or Media Representation? Media Transformation in Recent Eastern European Films

Abstract. As scholars have shown lately, the trope of the *tableau vivant* is surprisingly recurrent in recent Eastern European cinema. However, there is a classification uncertainty which leads to terminological confusion. I argue for instance that the *tableau vivant* should be seen as a subclass of intermediality, in other words, as one of the specific cases of possible intermedial relations. Such a classification can be useful as a common toolkit for intermedial scholars, helping them to keep track in adequate and fruitful ways of the plethora of concepts that are now being used. For instance, is it helpful to see the *tableau vivant* as a form of transmediation, which in its turn can be seen as a subclass of intermediality? Or is it rather a form of media quotation, or media paraphrase? And to go even further, when does a paraphrase become an adaptation?

In this essay, I will have a closer look at the intermedial subclasses of transmediation and media representation, according to Lars Elleström's typology. I will analyse a number of interesting manifestations of these phenomena in recent Eastern European films, and hope to show the usefulness of the typology.

Keywords: transmediation, intermediality, tableau vivant.

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In an enlightening article from 2014, Ágnes Pethő observes an almost obsessive tendency to use painterly images in recent Eastern European film, a tendency that becomes “most palpable in the manifold revitalization of the trope of the *tableau vivant*” (52). She then proceeds to a thorough investigation of occurrences of *tableaux vivants* in some of these films, and to an interpretation of their functions. The results are remarkable, both as regards the surprisingly high frequency of what can be considered as an intellectual, almost mannerist trope, its versatility and its many possible functions.

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The trope of the *tableau vivant* can be seen as a very good example of the phenomenon of intermediality. Indeed, Pethő's conclusions about the *tableau vivant* could be extended to intermediality in general, given the recurrence of this phenomenon in recent Eastern European cinema. However, intermediality and *tableau vivant* should not be seen as synonymous concepts. As a matter of fact, the terminology used in intermedial studies seems to need a more stringent classification, in order to avoid the risk of conflating hyponyms (*tableau vivant* in this case) with their hyperonyms (intermediality). The *tableau vivant* should, for instance, be seen as a subclass of intermediality, in other words, as one of the specific cases of possible intermedial relations. Such a classification, even if it can appear as technical, can be useful as a common toolkit for intermedial scholars, helping them to keep track in adequate and fruitful ways of the plethora of concepts that are now being used. For instance, what is the difference between quotation and paraphrase in film? When does a paraphrase become an adaptation? And, most importantly in the perspective of this essay, what is the difference between the representation and the transmediation of a work from one medium to another one?

This last question is one of the main grounds for theorist Lars Elleström's classification of intermedial relations. Starting with intermediality as the umbrella concept, or as the hyperonym, Elleström sees media transformation as one of the two possible underclasses, or hyponyms. Media transformation is characterized by diachronicity, meaning that what counts is the transfer between temporally distinct media products, while the other class, that Elleström does not name in any way, considers the medium in a synchronic perspective and studies how "different types of media [are to] be understood, analysed and compared in terms of combination and integration of fundamental media traits" (Elleström 3). This classification corresponds roughly to Werner Wolf's division into extracompositional (relations between different works), and intracompositional (relations within one single work) (21). Elleström's class of media transformation can be further divided in the subclasses of media representation and transmediation. These are the two concepts that this essay will try to elucidate. All possible specific cases of transfer between two different media can belong either to the subclass of media representation or to the other subclass of transmediation.

Media representation can be defined as "one medium that represents another type of medium," whereas transmediation is defined as "repeated mediation by another type of medium" (Elleström 11). In Peircean terms, in media representation "the representamen of the target medium conjures up in the mind of the perceiver both the representamen and the object of the source medium" (Elleström 17), and what Elleström calls "pure media representation" conjures up only the representamen of the source medium in the mind of the perceiver. A good example would be filming a theatre play and the stage that frames it. On the other hand, in transmediation, what is conjured up in the mind of the perceiver is mainly the object of the source medium – its content – and actually only the content in the case of pure transmediation. A

good example of pure transmediation would be filming a theatre play without showing the stage, which gives the perceiver the impression that the target medium does not even show another medium. In adaptation, which is one of the most representative cases of transmediation, the target medium doesn't usually contain any signs of a source medium being transformed, more than in the paratexts.

Admittedly, such a classification can often seem academic and too technical, and detractors could find that it has little to contribute to the interpretative aim that can be seen as the traditional characteristic of literature and film studies. Besides, as we can see below, it is often very difficult to decide whether a certain quotation, paraphrase, adaptation, ekphrasis, *tableau vivant*, etc. is a form of media transformation or a form of transmediation. However, as the analyses in this essay show, the discussions around the possible classifications can actually lead to interesting insights, since they concentrate on detailed formal aspects and might make us reconsider aspects which seem unimportant or evident at first glance. Consequently, it is not my aim to provide unambiguous final answers to the questions of classification of certain features in the analysed films, but to bring new light to the analysis of these categories. The final aim is thus to contribute to the interpretations of the functions of intermediality in recent Eastern European films.

A number of the films that are analysed below have been studied by other scholars, even from an intermedial point of view. However, the distinction between media representation and transmediation has not been used in these studies, and can arguably be applied in fruitful ways. I have chosen the following films to illustrate the variety of the phenomena. For example, I will look at Andrej Zvyagintsev's *The Return* (*Vozvrashcheniye*, 2003), *The Banishment* (*Izgnanie*, 2007) and *Leviathan* (2014), Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (*Moartea domnului Lăzărescu*, 2004) and *Aurora* (2010), Christian Petzold's *Barbara* (2012), György Pálfi's *Final Cut – Ladies and Gentlemen* (*Final Cut – Hölgyeim és uraim*, 2012), Andrei Ujică's *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu* (*Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 2010) and Radu Jude's *The Happiest Girl in the World* (*Cea mai fericită fată din lume*, 2009). I will focus on the motifs used in these films without giving exhaustive interpretations, and test the applicability of the classifications introduced earlier.

The ultimate goal of the essay is not principally to show the applicability of Elleström's intermediality model in the analyses of recent Eastern European films, but to highlight the innovativeness of the cinematic language of these films. From a media transformational point of view the cases that I choose to study also bring into relief the limits of the theoretical models appear quite clearly, and their concepts can be put to a useful test.

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I will start with a feature that I have already mentioned above, and that Pethő finds to be a "surprisingly recurring motif in contemporary East European and Russian cinema," namely the references to religious paintings, best illustrated by the "para-

phrases of Andrea Mantegna's and Hans Holbein's dead Christ" (The *Tableau vivant* 57) [see Figs. 1 and 2]. In her analyses of the use of this religious motif in a number of Hungarian and Russian films (Kornél Mundruczó's films *Johanna* from 2005 and *Delta* from 2008, Béla Tarr's *The Turin Horse* [*A torinói ló*, 2011] from, Benedek Fliegau's *Dealer* (2004), and especially two films by Andrei Zvyagintsev: *The Return* (2003) and *The Banishment* (2007), Pethő gives several possible explanations for its use. It could, for instance, be a way of "offering Western audiences tales told in the manner they expect from these cinemas" which "have become 'associated with high cultural film art,' and in which, therefore, universal themes, references to art history and Christian imagery can be expected signs of sophistication" (The *Tableau vivant* 64). It could also be a way of returning to order, to control, to coherence, to the "recognizable patterns" (The *Tableau vivant* 64) of Western art or to "reintegration into something universal and lasting" (The *Tableau vivant* 69) and thus a way "to open up these small, local, often minimalist narratives through the insertion of the 'grand image' towards equally grand (biblical, archetypal, mythical) narratives" (The *Tableau vivant* 67).

I completely agree with Pethő's conclusions and find her observations and comparisons between the films and the paintings convincing. My aim is to have a closer



Figure 1. Mantegna's *Dead Christ*.



Figure 2. Holbein's *Dead Christ*.

look at cases of references to religious motifs, especially the motif of the dead Christ, both in two of the films analysed by Pethő (Andrei Zvyagintsev's *The Return* and *The Banishment*) and in some other Eastern European films, and to analyse them from the perspective of Elleström's classifications of media transformations.

Starting with Zvyagintsev's *The Return*, it should be noted that Pethő finds it "the most complex use of the reproduction of Mantegna's painting" (The *Tableau vivant* 59). Indeed, especially the first scene showing the returning father after an absence of several years undoubtedly resembles Mantegna's painting of the foreshortened Christ from 1480 [see Fig. 3]. Pethő argues for this being a case of *tableau vivant*, that is the reproduction of a painting using real bodies.



Figure 3. Sleeping father in Zvyagintsev's *The Return*.

This is a case of a representation or a transmediation of Mantegna's painting. And a follow-up question would be how specific the resemblance must be in order to decide on the classification.

The *tableaux vivants* can be considered as "paraphrases." She does not say so in relation to the scene in *The Return*, but in relation to the scenes that she classifies as paraphrases of Mantegna's and Holbein's dead Christ in Kornél Mundruczó's and Béla Tarr's above mentioned films, and that are very similar to the one in Zvyagintsev's film. A paraphrase is close to, but not synonymous to, a quotation. Indeed, when analyzing Zvyagintsev's following film, *The Banishment*, she takes up a central scene in the film, in which a group of children are working on a jigsaw puzzle reproducing Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation*. "The quotation is explicit," argues Pethő, adding that although the children seem to be visually incorporated in the painting, "it is not a cinematic *tableau vivant* reproduction" (The *Tableau vivant* 62).

In her model from 2005, Irina O. Rajewsky considers intermedial reference as a basic class of intermedial relations. She distinguishes three types of intermedial relations: intermedial references, medial transposition (adaptations) and media combination (multimedia products such as films and operas), and describes them as cases when "the given media-product thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium" (53). Clearly, this definition is not

sufficient to distinguish between the *tableau vivant* from *The Return* (which imitates a painting) and the quotation from *The Banishment* (where the painting is explicitly quoted). Werner Wolf's model of possible intermedial relations is better suited to explain this difference. In the subclass of intermedial reference, Wolf distinguishes between implicit reference (imitation) and explicit reference (thematization). Implicit reference (or intermedial imitation) is the case when "the signifiers of the work and/or its structure are affected by the non-dominant medium, since they appear to imitate its quality or structure" (25) while explicit reference (or intermedial thematization), that is whenever a media product is represented, thematized or mentioned in another media product (24). Consequently, the *tableau vivant* from *The Return* would be a case of implicit reference, whereas the jigsaw puzzle from *The Banishment* would be an explicit reference.

A comparison between Wolf and Elleström's models helps us understand Elleström's concepts of media representation and transmediation. Indeed, in Elleström's model, Wolf's explicit reference would roughly correspond to the subclass of media representation, while implicit reference would correspond to transmediation. Simple references to other media products are considered by Elleström as "pure media representation," since in such cases "only the representamen, the empty shell of the source medium, so to speak, is transferred to the target medium" (17). When the content of the source medium is transferred, it is rather a case of transmediation.

The analogy between Elleström's simple reference and Wolf's explicit reference is actually not perfect. The concept of *quotation*, used by Pethő for da Vinci's *Annunciation* in *The Banishment*, is well suited to illustrate this problematic aspect. Indeed, a quotation can undoubtedly be seen as a case of explicit reference, and thus as a media representation. But in the case of de Vinci's painting, it can hardly be concluded that only the "empty shell" of the medium is transferred. Consequently, an "explicit reference" can only be seen as corresponding to Elleström's "simple reference" if the content is not transferred, for instance, when only the title of the painting is quoted.

Pethő's reflections on intermedial references can complicate this issue even further. She considers the cases when a whole work is referred to by one word as "ekphrastic metaphors." In such cases, claims Pethő, "we have one word acting as a metaphor that refers to a whole literary text. It does not suggest one particular image, but points to something too complex to be captured within a single image, therefore ultimately unimaginable (we may either not know the texts referred to or we may know them and then the meanings generated are virtually infinite)" (*Cinema and Intermediality* 304). This reflection also shows how difficult it is to consider even cases of simple quotations as pure media representation. Indeed, even if the content is not explicitly represented in such cases, it can actually be recreated in the mind of the receiver by the use of a word. However, the most important conclusion that is to be drawn from this reflection is that representation is a complex phenomenon, and even

in the cases when it seems at its simplest, as in the title of a work of art, it has far-going implications. Elleström is aware of this, and highlights that there is a process of meaning making even in the simplest cases of pure media representation: "To say that a media product represents something," claims Elleström, "is to say that it triggers a certain kind of interpretation" (12).

Coming back to the quotation of da Vinci's *Annunciation* in *The Banishment*, it is quite clear that a potentiality is opened for interpretation by the simple fact that another media product is quoted. The viewer is invited to interpret the scene, and previous knowledge about da Vinci's painting can affect the interpretational process. General knowledge about his other films, or attention to details in Zvyagintsev's film, could trigger an interpretative process in the viewer's mind, through the association of this intermedial use of religious motifs to other similar features. And the differences in the ways the original paintings are referred to can both enhance the aesthetic enjoyment and contribute to meaning making.

Beyond the question of the complexity of the classification, the fact remains that there is a difference between the quotation of da Vinci's *Annunciation* in *The Banishment* and the imitation of Mantegna's painting of the dead Christ in *The Return*. As Pethő rightfully notices, the Mantegna painting is imitated by way of a *tableau vivant*. In Elleström's model, this would be more or less unarguably considered as a case of pure transmediation, since what is transferred is the content of the painting, not its shell. An inadvertent viewer might not even notice the reference, since it occurs only through visual resemblance. In Wolf's model, this would undoubtedly be a case of implicit reference (or intermedial imitation) since the target medium imitates the "quality or structure" of the source medium (25). Indeed, the scene is a long take, as if Zvyagintsev wanted to stress its painterly aspect. The light and the colours are also painterly like because of their artificiality and stylization, as is the framing of the image.

The functions of the use of this religious motif in a film like *The Return*, which can hardly be considered religious, are manifold. As Pethő notices, some possible functions are allegorical, seemingly confirming Frederic Jameson's highly controversial assertion about the connection between the allegorical way of expression and the third-world cultures and societies (Jameson 69). It could, for example, be "an incarnation of the myth of the Father as the embodiment of virility and of Russia itself" (Pethő, *The Tableau Vivant* 60). It could also be, Pethő suggests, "about our indissoluble, intimate relationship to images, accordingly, about the relationship between image, body and differences in medium (painting, film, and photography), as it is about oedipal rites of passage standing in for contemporary traumas in a post-communist society" (*The Tableau Vivant* 62). It could also be, as already mentioned, a way of elevating the story to mythical levels, and to supply Western audiences with what they expect of intellectually demanding Eastern European films. But beyond these highly relevant and interesting interpretations, I argue that there could even be simpler functions to consider. The associations to Christ can, for instance, have a narrative

function, giving already from the start a hint of the father's death at the end of the film. The circularity of the film, established through the resemblance between the image of the sleeping father early on and the image of the dead father at the end (a resemblance noticed by Pethő too [The *Tableau Vivant* 61]), also creates an uncertainty as to whether the whole story ever took place in reality, or whether it is only the creation of the imagination of the children, an imaginary initiation rite, since the father might have been dead from the beginning. But beyond such interpretations, these intermedial techniques, be they transmediations or media representations, put the viewer's observational and cultural abilities to a test, leading, when discovered, to a certain aesthetic experience, or rather intellectual satisfaction. And the viewer's admittedly subconscious cognitive process of assigning the scenes to one of the classes can contribute to the aesthetic effect.

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Another case to consider is an intermedial imitation (and thus a transmediation) of Hans Holbein's dead Christ from 1521 that appears in one of the best-known films of the Romanian New Wave, as it has been called, for instance, by Doru Pop: Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (2004). The film's plot is minimalistic and straightforward: a dying old man, by the name of Dante Remus Lăzărescu, is driven around to different hospitals in Bucharest by Mioara, a nurse, who seems to be the only person in the world who cares about him. The final scene, in which the main character is being prepared for a probably meaningless operation, calls to mind Hans Holbein's painting from 1521, not only because of the position of the old man, seemingly lifeless and covered with a white sheet [see Fig. 4], but also because the cinematic medium imitates "another, conventionally distinct medium," as Rajewsky would put it for the definition of intermedial references (53). Indeed, as in the case of the imitation of Mantegna's dead Christ in Zvyagintsev's *The Return*, the scene is a long take, with practically no sounds and no motion. And as in Zvyagintsev's film, the religious reference, together with other references to mythology, elevate the story to a higher level of signification. Allegory is at hand here too, as Doru Pop rightfully observes: "the ordeal of the main



Figure 4. Before the surgery: Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*

character [...] is a metaphoric translation of the ordeal of the Romanian society as a whole" (106). In Pop's view, Mr. Lăzărescu is "metonymically replacing an entire past; he is a manifestation of a moment in recent history which is slowly and painfully passing away" (106). So the death of Mr. Lăzărescu could symbolize the disappearance of a more humane past, be it even the Communist one, and the transition to a dehumanized form of Capitalism, which harbors no place for the old, the weak and the crippled.

As in Zvyagintsev's case, religious references appear in other films by Cristi Puiu. In *Aurora*, a film from 2010 about an everyday Romanian, by the name of Viorel, who murders four people (his ex-wife's notary, the notary's girlfriend, and his ex-in-laws) before giving himself up to the police, there is one possible intermedial imitation which associates Viorel with Jesus. As in *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*, this association is expressed through Viorel's resemblance in certain moments with a painting: in this case one of the most famous icons considered "non-painted by a human hand" (*acheiropoietos*). As Pop claims (146), Viorel's and Christ's facial expressions are similar. This brings me back to the question raised in relation to the image of the father lying in the bed in *The Return*, namely how specific the resemblance must be in order to decide on the classification. Indeed, only the resemblance between the facial expressions seems to be a rather weak criterion for jumping to far reaching conclusions. In such a case, the classifications and their criteria can be useful. Because indeed, there is more in support of the resemblance than only Viorel's stoic mouth (he never smiles throughout the film) and expressionless eyes. There is also a relative motionlessness and silence in the scene, and a white background which seems to frame the picture, something that can give the viewer a first clue to seeing this as an intermedial imitation of painting in general, as in the case of the last scene in *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*. Another clue appears in a seemingly banal scene, when Viorel is talking to his ex-mother-in-law, a couple of minutes before murdering her. Here too, the long take is used, and Viorel is framed by two icons drawn by his daughters. So, several clues are actually given to help the viewer notice an intermedial imitation, and the fact that the resemblance is not that obvious enhances the intellectual satisfaction of those who do notice it. Noticing the resemblance arguably triggers an interpretative process, especially in a case like this when the association between Viorel, a serial killer, and Christ is unexpected. As Pop suggests, Viorel is a reversed figure of Christ – that is, an Anti-Christ –, since what he brings is death and destruction, thus pointing to his spiritual void. Consequently, the notion that Viorel's dehumanization is "the reversed function of the humanity of Christ" (Pop 142) is reinforced through this implicit intermedial juxtaposition between an iconic image of Christ and Viorel.

Arguably, the more difficult a media transfer is to discover and the more unexpected it is, the more likely it is to trigger interpretative processes in the viewer. A viewer who discovers potential implicit references to another artifact wonders why the references aren't explicit, which can lead to a more analytic view on the film. Another example can illustrate this hypothesis, without really proving its validity.

It is another case of the use of a reference to a painting, this time in an explicit way. It is a scene from *Barbara*, a film from 2012 directed by Christian Petzold, in which a poster of Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* from 1632 is shown from different angles and from different distances, sometimes filling the whole screen, and sometimes even without the frame. Admittedly, the motif is not religious, but the way in which the corpse of the dead thief is painted resembles Hans Holbein's already mentioned painting of the dead Christ [see Fig. 5].



Figure 5. Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*.

In Elleström's terminology, this is a case of media representation. It is not pure media representation, since the content of the artifact is also shown, not only its "empty shell," but it is by no means a case of transmediation, not even when the frame disappears in the cases of the close-ups. The viewer is always aware of the object being a painting, especially since the two characters discuss it too. The two persons in the scene are actually the main characters. They are physicians, which explains the presence of this poster, and they are in East Germany during the Communist years. André, the male character, is ordered by Stasi to gain intelligence on Barbara, the female character, who has fallen into the establishment's disgrace since she applied for a visa to move to West Germany.

My point is that in this case, when the reference to Rembrandt's painting is explicit, the interpretative possibilities are also reduced. The more the two characters talk about the painting, the clearer its role in the movie becomes. Especially André's comments on the doctors in the painting not really looking at the patient but the anatomy atlas instead can be seen as a way to invite Barbara not to act like the doctors in the painting: the doctors choose to look at the anatomy atlas, even though a human body

is lying in front of them, a situation that can be interpreted as an allegory of the dictatorial ideology in East Germany, where a system of rules neglected and repressed the individuals.

Mentioning explicitly a possible interpretation, as does André when discussing Rembrandt's painting, reduces, obviously, the possibilities of other interpretations. And most certainly, an interpretation of the role of the referenced painting is easier to make in the cases where the painting is explicitly represented. On the other hand, the intellectual satisfaction of the viewer is reduced in this way, where the clue is served explicitly. These examples show, I argue, the importance of distinguishing between media representation and transmediation in such cases.

Another case in which such a distinction, or at least reflections about it, can be helpful is another film directed by Zvyagintsev: *Leviathan* from 2014. It also gives us the opportunity to move to another medium than painting being referenced, namely the written medium. Indeed, the film is well suited to highlight the importance of the distinction between transmediation and media representation, since it actually uses both. The Bible's *Book of Job* is actually structuring the whole film. Critics as, for instance, Manohla Dargis in *The New York Times*, have noted rightfully that the main character, a middle-aged car mechanic by the name of Kolia, is a "modern-day Job who endures trials and tribulations in an Arctic town in northern Russia" (Dargis). However, continues Dargis, Kolia is not an exact copy of Job. "Some of his miseries are self-inflicted – he's a boozier, not the pious soul of the Bible story – but many of his agonies originate with corrupt authorities, including the local mayor, a Hobbesian brute who sits at his desk under a photograph of Vladimir V. Putin" (Dargis). His story does not end happily either, as does Job's. On the contrary, as critic Peter Bradshaw from *The Guardian* notices, "Kolia has become not Job, but the beached whale, with all the burdensome size but none of the power: massive, inert, waiting only for death to put his trial to an end" (Bradshaw). So, as in Viorel's case in Puiu's *Aurora*, the referenced work is distorted, Kolia appearing rather as a reversed figure of Job. The effect is all the more powerful, since the viewer who knows the narrative of the Book of Job experiences a surprising twist at the end. Indeed, it is actually Kolia who is to be seen as Leviathan, the whale from the biblical story.

An attempt to describe the intermediality of *Leviathan* on the basis of Elleström's distinction between transmediation and media representation would most certainly lean towards the first of the two classes. Indeed, the content and the structure of Job's story are imitated, and not even in a faithful way. The film could arguably be considered as a case of loose adaptation of the Biblical story. Religious motifs abound in the film, both explicitly and implicitly. And more importantly, in a key scene in the film, the story is represented too, a "Dostoyevskian-looking priest" (Bradshaw) quotes it in passing when suggesting to the drunken Kolia that he should accept his fate, and "like Job live to be 140." This can be seen, certainly in a much less obvious way than in *Barbara*, but all the same, as a clue to discovering the intermedial reference. The ex-

explicit reference, although no longer than Job's name and two of his characteristics (accepting his fate and living 140 years) works as an "ekphrastic metaphor" that, as Pethő claims, refers to the whole literary text. As such, it functions as what Lucien Dällenbach calls a *mise en abyme de l'énoncé* or possibly as a *mise en abyme du code*,¹ giving the viewers a key of interpretation for the film's story. So media representation and transmediation can both be used in intertwined ways in order to suggest new layers of meaning.

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It is important to mention that intermediality is used also to address more colloquial and secular motifs in recent Eastern European films. This does not mean that such cases are less interesting, but shows that the aim of using intermedial techniques is not necessarily to open these narratives towards "grand (biblical, archetypal, mythical) narratives," as Pethő concluded in her examination of the uses of the *tableau vivant* (*The Tableau Vivant* 67). On the contrary, there are cases in which we see less intellectual, more playful instances of intermediality occurring.

One such case is the insertion of another media product in the filmic flow. Certainly, this cannot be done with all medium types, since the inserted medium must share some media characteristics with the target medium. Film has, however, a privileged position from this point of view, since it is a very flexible medium, which embraces characteristics from many other media. Just for the sake of the argument, it can be mentioned that in film, one can insert written texts, music pieces, photographs, theatre plays, etc.

The insertion of another media product in film poses the question of the distinction between media representation and transmediation in a way which must be studied separately for each individual case. Moreover, it also poses the question of the distinctions between different media types in an acute way. This last point can be illustrated with Hungarian György Pálfi's *Final Cut – Ladies and Gentlemen* (2012), a collage film in which excerpts from earlier films of different genres are embedded in the final product in order to tell the eternal love story between a man and a woman. The fact that the two protagonists change their appearance, names, age and all other individual traits from one scene to another is confusing at the beginning, but the viewer gets used during the film's 84 minutes, and establishes a coherence despite the obstacles.

Interestingly enough, such a technique has been seen as a form of remediation (Pieldner 50–51). The problem is that this is a case of recycling images from earlier films, so there is arguably only one medium involved: film. I agree though with Pieldner's choice to consider this as an interplay of different media types, at least in some of the specific cases, since the new digital film can hardly be seen as exactly the same medium as the animated sequences or silent film sequences that are inserted.

Beyond the aspect of media differences, the most interesting question in the perspective of this essay is whether this is an example of media representation or trans-

mediation. The excerpts inserted can be seen as media representations: paintings just being filmed. At the same time, there is a decontextualization taking place, which makes the viewer partially forget the original films and concentrate on the plot of the new film assembled from the scenes extracted from all the other films. If the original context is forgotten completely, this would be a case of pure transmediation. However, the point of this film is that the original context and the new context merge, so this is a case of media representation and transmediation at the same time.

Similarly to Pálfi's film, in Andrei Ujică's *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu* (2010), there is a decontextualization of earlier film excerpts which are put together in a collage film, in order to create a new film belonging to another genre. However, the issue of media difference is less problematic here. The excerpts from earlier films are undoubtedly from another medium, since they are either TV news, TV documentaries, home films and home videos, inserted in the cinematic medium. An impressive editing work has been made in order to give the impression that the different scenes have been made for the big screen from the start, with the aim to document the Romanian dictator's life in the form of a biography. However, as in Pálfi's film, the ambiguity of the scenes is maintained throughout the film, and the transmediation is not complete at any time. The viewers are always aware that they are watching archival footage that has been recycled.

There is a case of a reverse process in another Romanian film. In Radu Jude's *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009), what we see on the screen are not images coming from another medium, but images intended to become a part of another medium. The main character, Delia, a young Romanian girl, is supposed to act in a TV commercial promoting a juice, in order to receive a prize that she has won in a competition. There is an amusing play with the rendering of the commercial, which sometimes is represented – as when the whole framing, the stage and the TV camera filming the commercial, are shown – and sometimes transmediated – as when the commercial is presented without its framing, and the viewers have the feeling that they see the actual TV commercial. Obviously, the second alternative is not possible, since the TV commercial is fictitious, and was created only within the diegesis of the film. But the issue raised by this procedure is interesting, since it highlights that what counts is not the actual intermedial relation as much as the viewer's perception of a supposed intermedial relation.

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What can be concluded after this short overview of some cases of transmediations and media representations? First of all, that applying the typologies does not contradict Pethő's interesting interpretations of the use of a sophisticated intermedial device as the *tableau vivant*. On the contrary, the use of the criteria of the typologies offers a solid ground which confirms Pethő's observations. What a reflection on the classification criteria can add is, among other things, an enhanced attention to formal details, which can lead to the discovery of features that otherwise could pass by unobserved, either

because they are too obvious or because they are too concealed. Simpler interpretations can be suggested, as the narrative functions I suggest in the case of Zvyagintsev's *The Return*. The same goes for Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* and *Aurora*, where the reflection on the classification criteria confirmed Pop's interesting observations and conclusions about the intermedial imitations, at the same time as it highlighted a simpler aspect, namely the importance of the viewer's aesthetic experience even in watching minimalistic films. In comparing these cases of transmediation with the more explicit case of media representation in Christian Petzold's *Barbara*, a connection between the grade of explicitness and the viewer's aesthetic experience has been suggested. Zvyagintsev's film *Leviathan* was a good example of intermedial relations to literature, the Bible, but also of a case when transmediation and media representation are intertwined in a way which does not diminish the viewer's aesthetic experience. Finally, the three cases in which the referenced media products were more secular, György Pálfi's *Final Cut – Ladies and Gentlemen*, Andrei Ujică's *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu* and Radu Jude's *The Happiest Girl in the World*, have shown how difficult it can be to classify an intermedial technique according to these typologies. However, even if the conclusion in these cases is that there can be transmediation and media representation at the same time, the reflections around the issue have led to other interesting questions, such as the importance of the viewer's cognitive processes in the act of perception. So, all in all, my conclusion is that especially Elleström's typology of possible media transformations can be used in fruitful ways, and in the cases it does not provide conclusive answers, it is because the studied object is complex and innovative. Which is what can be said about recent Eastern European film, as this essay has hopefully shown.

Notes:

1. According to Lucien Dällenbach, the *mise en abyme de l'énoncé* is a device through which the "utterance" of a narrative (énoncé in French, that is the text itself and the content) is reflected. The *mise en abyme du code* reflects the code, or the text structure, while lastly, the *mise en abyme de l'énonciation* reflects the enunciation of the narrative, that is the production of the text, its reception and the context in which both occur. Admittedly, Dällenbach's concepts were created in the context of literary studies, but there is no reason not to extend them to other media and to relations between different media.

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