

UNVEILING EKPHRASIS ON THE SCREEN

Desvendando éfrase na tela

Dominika Bugno-Narecka¹
Miriam de Paiva Vieira²

Abstract: Both adaptation and ekphrasis are considered as transmedial tools by proposed models (Rajewsky, 2005; Elleström, 2010, 2014, 2021) for the study of (inter)medial transformation. The two processes share some common aspects concerning the transfer of medial properties, putting emphasis on the respective audiences' recognition. The aim of this paper is to understand how the process of media transformation from novel to film takes meaningful ekphrastic excerpts and turns them into something narratively and materially different. In order to investigate the issue, the authors of the paper will illustrate the transfer of ekphrastic excerpts from novel to film in the movie *Doktor Judym* directed by Polish Włodzimierz Haupe (1975) and the film *Reaching for the Moon* (2013) directed by Brazilian Bruno Barreto, using the notions of adaptation by Hutcheon (2006), and ekphrasis by Clüver (2019), Bugno-Narecka (2017, 2019) and Vieira (2017, 2020).

Keywords: Literature. Film. Ekphrasis. Adaptation. Intermediality.

Resumo: Adaptação e éfrase são consideradas ferramentas midiáticas por modelos propostos (RAJEWSKY, 2005; ELLESTRÖM, 2010, 2014, 2021) para o estudo de transformação entre diferentes mídias. Os dois processos compartilham aspectos relativos à transferência de propriedades de mídias no diz respeito ao reconhecimento do leitor/audiência. O objetivo deste artigo é compreender como o processo de transformação entre mídias, no caso de romance para filme, se apropria de trechos efrásticos significativos e os transforma em uma nova narrativa materialmente diferente. Para tal, a partir das noções de adaptação, Hutcheon (2006), e éfrase, de Clüver (2019), Bugno-Narecka (2017, 2019) e Vieira (2017, 2020), a transferência de trechos efrásticos do romance para o cinema será ilustrada pelos filmes *Doktor Judym*, dirigido pelo polonês Włodzimierz Haupe (1975), e *Flores raras* (2013), dirigido pelo brasileiro Bruno Barreto.

Palavras-chave: Literatura. Cinema. Éfrase. Adaptação. Intermedialidade.

¹ John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. E-mail: dominika.bugno-narecka@kul.pl

² Universidade Federal de São João del Rei. E-mail: miriamvieira@ufsj.edu.br

Both adaptation and ekphrasis are considered as transmedial tools by proposed models (Rajewsky, 2005; Elleström, 2010, 2014, 2021) for the study of (inter)medial transformation. The two processes share some common aspects concerning the transfer of medial properties, putting emphasis on the respective audiences' recognition. Adaptation may be understood as the product and/or the process of an "extended, deliberate, announced revisit of a particular work of art" (HUTCHEON, 2006: 170) that willingly seeks for "repetition with variation" (HUTCHEON, 2006: 4). In other words, the process of adaptation is an openly stated extensive reworking of a particular text, which results in an "intersemiotic transposition from one system of signs to another" (HUTCHEON, 2006: 16). Hence, adaptation can be considered as a complex notion consisting in three elements: (1) "an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works" (HUTCHEON, 2006: 8), which is nothing other than adaptation viewed as a product; (2) "a creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 8), which is the process of creation; and (3) "an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (HUTCHEON, 2006: 8), which amounts to the process of reception.

Ekphrasis, in turn, is an ancient rhetorical tool which has been adopted by literature as a device that makes an absent object present. A skillful description of a non-verbal text can evoke the verbalized image in one's imagination. There is an ongoing debate about the scope and the definition of ekphrasis among the scholars interested in this field of literary studies. One of the most commonly quoted definitions, James Heffernan's "verbal representation of visual representation" (HEFFERNAN, 1993: 3), is applicable when describing mimetic art, preferably a painting or a statue. Heffernan's definition, however, excludes non-mimetic artworks, that is, works of abstract art and architecture. A definition that includes these omitted forms of art is one provided by Claus Clüver: "the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system" (CLÜVER, 1997: 26). In order to reflect upon ekphrasis as a medial tool, and also to avoid the inclusion of film as a potential source of inspiration for ekphrasis,³ the author has reviewed his proposed definition to "representation of real or fictive configurations composed in a non-

³ While some scholars acknowledge and widely discuss the fact that ekphrastic passages might be inspired by film and refer to the phenomenon as cinematic ekphrasis, a term coined by Ágnes Pethő (2010, 2011), or filmic ekphrasis, discussed, in turn, by James Heffernan (2015); this type of ekphrasis remains beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the material, i.e. what happens when cinematic/filmic ekphrasis is adapted, definitely has academic potential and can be developed in a separate study.

kinetic visual medium” (CLÜVER, 2017: 462). For the purposes of this paper, ekphrasis will be explored on the basis of being “the result of an encounter, of a viewer’s engagement with the object of an intensive gaze” (CLÜVER, 2019: 247) as suggested by Clüver in his most recent publication.

Ekphrasis, hence, might be viewed as a product (verbal representation) resulting from and stimulating the interaction with an artwork. As such, ekphrasis is a parallel procedure to adaptation in the sense that both can be understood as a product and a process. But what happens when an ekphrastic passage becomes a part of the transformation process from a literary work to a film adaptation? Does the process of adaptation entirely rework the source text by substituting the verbal account with its visual counterpart? Does it omit or replace ekphrastic passages due to the film’s affordances? Or perhaps adapted ekphrasis retains its properties and remains verbal?

The aim of this paper is to understand how the process of media transformation from novel to film takes meaningful ekphrastic excerpts and turns them into something narratively and materially different. For doing so, based on the notions of adaptation by Hutcheon (2006), and ekphrasis by Clüver (2019), Bugno-Narecka (2017, 2019) and Vieira (2017, 2020), the paper will illustrate the transfer of ekphrastic excerpts from novel to film in the movies *Doktor Judym* (1975) directed by Polish Włodzimierz Haupe and adapted from *Ludzie bezdomni [Homeless People]*, written by Polish author Stefan Żeromski (1900)⁴; and *Reaching for the Moon* (2013) directed by Brazilian Bruno Barreto and adapted from *Rare and Commonplace Flowers: the story of Elizabeth Bishop and Lota de Macedo Soares*, written by Brazilian author Carmen Oliveira (1995) and translated into English by Neil K. Besner (2003).

Before delving into the cases, it should be pointed out that this paper is a result of a non-funded, long-lasting collaboration between two researchers with rather different academic backgrounds, but who share one very peculiar interest, namely ekphrastic studies. Therefore, the two following sections are likely to present striking differences in style, use of language and analytical methods. Still, the two investigated cases were consciously chosen to show that despite clear thematic, historical, geopolitical and cultural discrepancies between *Ludzie bezdomni* and *Rare*

⁴To our knowledge, neither the novel, nor the film is available in English at present, although the novel was translated into German, Czech and several other languages in the first half of the 20th century. All quotations in this text are our own unofficial translations.

and *Commonplace Flowers*, ekphrases play a crucial role in the analyses of the two selected novels. Both narratives gain a deeper symbolic meaning thanks to the encounter with the artworld they offer. The two films in question seem to somehow reject the status of film adaptations of the aforementioned novels, though even a most general analysis will prove them to be excellent examples of adaptations in the sense proposed by Linda Hutcheon (2006). What is more, by choosing visibly different and unrelated texts we want to emphasise and illustrate the universality of the discussed problem.

In addition to the materiality of the two media involved – literature and film - we claim that ekphrasis operates at different diegetic levels as it fills functional gaps within the narrative, and echoes the themes and structures present elsewhere in the fictional plot. Besides, as mentioned before, ekphrasis is central to the composition of both investigated novels. The transfer of medial traits from non-verbal texts to words holds significance at both diegetic and extradiegetic levels. There is an intuition that the same principle is likely to hold true in this new procedure, i.e. the transformation from words into moving images. Henceforth, to reiterate our research goal, this paper will investigate the following issue: what happens when a significant ekphrastic passage is adapted to film?

Doktor Judym

Art plays an important role in the interpretation of Stefan Żeromski's novel *Ludzie bezdomni*. The two artworks evoked by the narrator at the beginning of the novel – the ancient sculpture of Venus de Milo and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes' painting "The Poor Fisherman" (1881) – symbolise the two realities the main character, doctor Tomasz Judym, is torn between: one beautiful, good and affluent, and the other ugly, bad and destitute. Throughout the novel, the main character oscillates between these two realities. The rich and the poor are present everywhere he goes, be that Warsaw, Cisy or Sosnowiec. Magdalena Popiel indicates three meanings of Venus de Milo in the ekphrastic passage concerning the statue: (1) secret knowledge of everything – sort of Apollonian wisdom, (2) the goddess of love who binds together the two characters, Tomasz and Joanna, contemplating her statue and (3) the symbol and the vision of a good life, all of which are contrasted by pain and Christ-like suffering represented by "The Poor Fisherman" (POPIEL, 1998: 83-85). The symbolic meaning of the works of art is reflected in the tragic life of the main protagonist. Coming from a very poor family, Tomasz Judym becomes a

physician thanks to his aunt's financial help and, thus, significantly improves his status in the Polish society of the last decade of the 19th century. He spends a year in Paris where he gains valuable experience, and then he returns to Poland (under partitions at the time) with the intention to find his place and fulfill his mission. Due to his radical opinions and uncompromising enthusiasm to change the hygienic conditions of the poor, he is, however, considered by his new environment as an outsider and a lunatic. Judym himself thinks that he does not belong to the wealthier part of society and is unable to conform to their standards and behaviour. Although comfortable wealthy family life attracts him, he feels that he has a debt to pay and an obligation to help everyone, in particular to improve the terrible health conditions of the poorest.

The film *Doktor Judym*, made for the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Żeromski's death, reflects the heroic struggles of the main character, adapting the complex novel to the requirements of a single film and using the technology available in the 1970s. Włodzimierz Haupe, the director of the film, claimed that *Doktor Judym* was not an adaptation of Żeromski's novel, but a film based only on some elements of the plot, namely on the story of the main character, Tomasz Judym⁵. Stories of other characters, though important for the novel, like the struggles of Judym's brother and his family, or Joanna's perspective outlined in her diary, were consciously omitted. As a result, Haupe presented his own vision of Tomasz Judym, one that he remembered from school and one he hoped would become a property of others, i.e. viewers: "My Judym is a hero, not a castaway at odds with society" (*Doktor Judym* review: s.p). Still, the procedure undertaken by Haupe fits into the notion of adaptation outlined by Linda Hutcheon, for whom fidelity or proximity to the source text is not an adequate "criterion of judgment or the focus of analysis" (HUTCHEON, 2006: 6). Thus understood adaptation is a re-interpretation and re-creation of the original narrative, which is precisely what Haupe did in *Doktor Judym* with Żeromski's *Ludzie bezdomni*.

⁵ Originally, Haupe said: "Jest to nie tyle ekranizacja "Ludzi bezdomnych", co film oparty na wątkach powieści, dokładniej na wątku Judyma. Zrezygnowaliśmy z innych postaci, które w powieści wcale nie są mniej ważne. [...] Został Judym, moja własna wizja tej powieści zapamiętana z lektur szkolnych, wizja która być może stanie się własnością innych. Pozwalam sobie dołączyć mój głos do dyskusji o reprezentowanej przez Judyma postawie życiowej – samotnego, bezkompromisowego społecznika. Staje po jego stronie przeciw wszystkim, którzy go potępiają. Mój Judym jest bohaterem, a nie przegranym życiowo rozbitkiem skłóconym z otoczeniem" (*Doktor Judym* review: s.p).

Despite the fact that the two works of art, Venus de Milo and “The Poor Fisherman,” have significant symbolic meaning and problematise the conflict within the world presented in the novel, the movie adaptation seems to neglect the two ekphrastic passages. Judym’s stay in Paris, his visit to the Louvre and the contemplation of Venus de Milo are replaced with the glimpses of him against the major Paris landmarks: Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower and Sacre Coeur Basilica. The same sequence includes highlights from his trip to the Versailles in the company of female acquaintances.



Figure 1 – Frame from *Doktor Judym* opening sequence – a walk in the Versailles gardens

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ql_EbFrKkFo

In the novel, Judym first met the ladies in the Louvre, then visited the Versailles, while in the film the order of events is presented in the reversed order: the four characters are shown walking outside the Louvre after their visit to the Versailles. The Paris sequence, which similarly to the novel opens the film, lacks the verbal element in the adaptation. We see the characters talking but their dialogues are inaudible, muffled by music with the dominant piano tune.



Figure 2 – Frame from Doktor Judym opening sequence - a walk outside the Louvre
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI_EbFrKkFo

All the shots of the opening sequence, which lasts 2 minutes and 55 seconds, were taken on location outside the buildings in Paris. It is highly probable that it was impossible for the Polish film crew to film inside these buildings at the time, but it might as well have been a conscious choice of the filmmakers to show a carefree life of the wealthy and introduce the main characters against the background of famous Paris monuments. Camera eye catches sight of the statues in the gardens of Versailles and closes in on the face of Natalia, one of the female protagonists, as if to make a reference to the scene involving ekphrasis in the novel. However, while the atmosphere of the passage in the novel in which Judym contemplates the statue of Venus de Milo is rather serious and tense for the main character, the general mood of the opening scene in the film is flirtatious and cheerful. In the novel, Judym, who until his visit to the Louvre on a hot summer day has been ignorant of any forms of art, admires the beauty of the statue but also observes the faces of Joanna and Natalia looking at Venus de Milo. The process of adaptation transforms Judym's contemplation of the ideal beauty represented by the ancient statue and captured in the faces of the two women, into a carefree scene of a pleasant trip to Paris made by a gentleman and the ladies of the upper class. Although the close-ups of Joanna's, Natalia's and Tomasz's face at different points of the opening sequence might correspond with Judym's observation of the two women in the novel (in particular, their faces), their function is to introduce the three main characters of the film and indicate

the future tensions between the male and the two females, rather than trigger reflection on ideal beauty. Throughout the film there is no mention of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes' painting, which is consistent with the omission of the Louvre scene from the novel.

Venus de Milo, however, is not entirely forgotten in the movie, for a verbal reference to the contemplation of the statue appears unexpectedly later in the film in a scene which is an extended counterpart of a similar, briefly reported event in the novel⁶. When Judym finds employment in a health institute (sanatorium) for the wealthy people in Cisy, one of his duties is to attend social events. During one of such events, while he is dancing with one of the women he met in Paris, he reminisces about their examination of Venus de Milo. Upon Judym's description of the statue's shape and beauty, Natalia responds: "Did you notice how her back was cracked? As if she had been beaten for three days with a steward's whip" (25'50"-26'05"). This verbal exchange folds the symbolism of the two artworks described in the novel into a single trope with a complex meaning⁷. The reference to the work of art remains verbal as the characters talk about the statue, but the artwork's meaning is modified: scratches on a perfect body are a symbol of scratches on the ideal, i.e. wealthy, healthy, beautiful and good society. The cracks indicate the poor, unhealthy and ugly side of the society and their suffering. Thus, the symbolic meaning of the two artworks described in the novel is merged into a single verbal account of a statue in the film adaptation. What is more, the fact that the scratches are located on the statue's back, away from her sight might indicate the members of the upper class minding only their own business, being conservative and against any change – looking away from the problem of the poor, and turning their back to it. Natalia's harsh response also emphasises the unbridgeable social gap between the two characters: she would never consider him a suitable candidate for a husband as they belong to two completely different worlds.

⁶ The relevant fragment in the novel provides the reader with information that Judym danced with Natalia a lot that evening and, encouraged by her attitude, talked about himself and others. She flirted with him until the moment Judym started talking about Karbowski, Natalia's future husband, and presented his competition in a rather negative light (ŻEROMSKI, 2011: 96-97). No dialogues appear in the novel, the whole event is summarized in one short paragraph describing the whole event, while the scene with the social event in question spans for almost 7 minutes in the film (24'54" - 31'36") and includes elements adapted from other parts of the novel.

⁷ For more on the motion of folding and ekphrasis as a fold, see: BUGNO-NARECKA, D. "Blurring the boundaries – ekphrasis as a fold" (2017) and *(Neo)baroque Ekphrasis in Contemporary Fiction* (2019).

While the majority of the discussions on ekphrastic passages in *Ludzie bezdomni* focus on Venus de Milo and “The Poor Fisherman”, there are two more ekphrases which are transformed from verbal representation in the novel into visual images in the film adaptation. The first fragment concerns the description of Krzywosąd Chobrzański’s flat.



Figure 3 – Frame from *Doktor Judym* - Krzywosąd’s apartment
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ql_EbFrKkFo

In the novel, the account of the administrator’s dwelling encompasses an extensive cabinet of curiosities, which stems from the administrator’s interest in the world, his travels and passion for collecting as well as making things. To provide a short fragment describing his collection, it “contained so many pointed things [...], so: iron decorations of railings, keys, door fittings, peasant candlesticks [...], belt buckles, frames, etc., not to mention significant Gothic remnants” (ŻEROMSKI, 2011: 58), as well as paintings and weapons he boasted about to anyone new in Cisy. His works, including clocks and items of furniture such as tables and cupboards, can be found in various rooms of the sanatorium. The character of this apartment is reflected in the interiors represented on screen in *Doktor Judym*, when the main protagonist visits Krzysowsąd to retrieve a bed which belongs to the local hospital.



Figure 4 – frame from *Doktor Judym* - Judym in Krzywosąd's apartment
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ql_EbFrKkFo

Although the circumstances of Judym's visit are different in the film than in the novel, the viewer gets a glimpse of a room filled with various objects on the walls, shelves and other items of furniture. The obsession with pointed, ogive shapes is visible in the decorative clocks, lamps, animal horns and antlers hanging on the walls. However, the image of Krzywosąd's house combined with his looks give the impression of a huntsman's lifestyle and den rather than those of someone obsessed with Gothic, handiwork and collecting art.

The other adapted ekphrastic passage worth attention concerns the description of anatomical atlas indicating Korzecki's careful study of human head in order to end his life with a suicide. The engineer drew a red arrow pointing to the direction from which the bullet would enter and exit the skull upon being fired: "There was a huge anatomical atlas on the table. It was open on the chart showing the head. From the back of the skull to the front there was a thick red pencil line drawn towards the left eye. Next to the line there were some numbers and letters written" (ŻEROMSKI, 2011: 164).

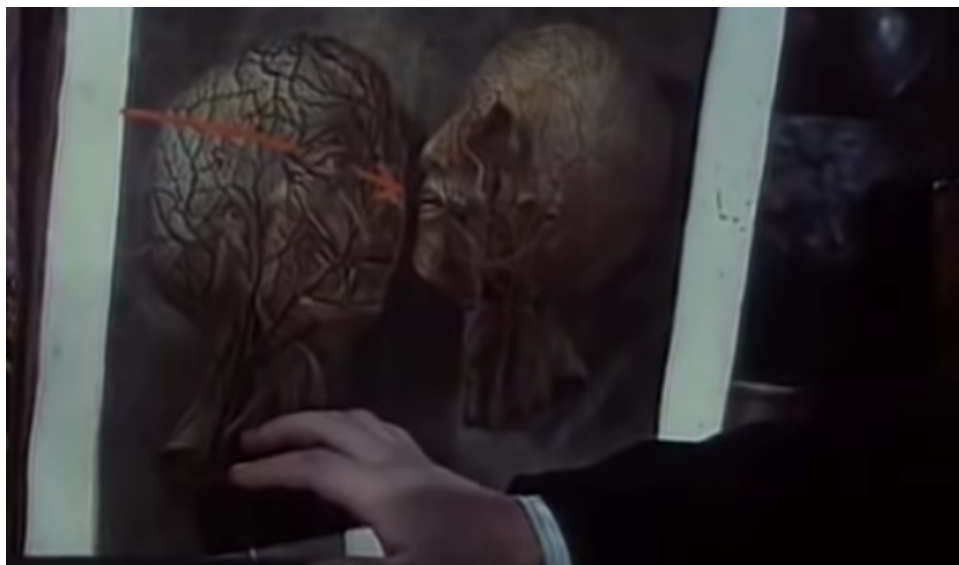


Figure 5 – Frame from *Doktor Judym* - anatomical atlas
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ql_EbFrKkFo

The scene in which Judym finds Korzecki dead faithfully repeats the literary description – the room is a mess, the wardrobe is open, there are various items scattered on the floor. The atlas is open on the desk, we get a glimpse of it as Judym sits down trying to take in the suicide scene. However, he does not approach Korzecki’s body, which is placed on the bed in a pose that bears strong resemblance to David’s “The Death of Marat” (1793) or Baudry’s “Charlotte Corday” (1860). Neither work is mentioned in the novel.

As can be seen in the examples provided above, two meaningful ekphrastic passages from *Ludzie bezdomni* – descriptions of Krzywosąd’s flat and Korzecki’s anatomical atlas – are replaced with relevant visual counterparts in film. In other words, verbal representations from the novel become visual representations in the adaptation. As far as the main ekphrastic encounter in *Ludzie bezdomni* is concerned, although the scene of the contemplation of Venus de Milo in the Louvre museum is not shown in *Doktor Judym*, ekphrasis maintains its verbal character as the statue is the subject of one of the conversations between two characters in the film. At the same time, the symbolic meaning of the artwork changes in the process of adaptation.

Reaching for the moon

Art also plays a central role in *Reaching for the moon* (2013), but now in the form of architecture. The opening scene states that the film is based on a true story, but it does not proclaim itself as an adaptation of Carmen Oliveiras's novel, *Rare and commonplace flowers* (1995). This fact happens to be highlighted on the DVD cover though. As in the novel, the opening and closing scenes focus on Bishop's focalization, as she recites the poem "One art" to her friend Cal, in New York's Central Park, both before and after her long stay in Brazil⁸. Although this framing device indicates that, throughout the film, the poet's standpoint will be favored over the self-made architect's, the central role of architecture in the different moments of the characters' relationship is maintained. In the novel, architecture seems to function as the third main character that first pushes the protagonists closer together to later draw them apart. As in the film, architecture is still relevant to the plot development, but it does not have the same agency of a character.

Before delving into the ekphrastic passages, we should mention one significant change from novel to film which concerns the question of authorship: the film adaptation emphasizes Lota as being responsible not only for the construction and the initial concept of her iconic house known as *Samambaia*, but also for its entire architectural project. This choice, made by the producers and/or screenwriters, generated a considerable amount of controversy among architects when the film was released. Silvio Colin questioned these imprecisions in detail in his online article "Rio de Janeiro's architecture goes to the movies" (2013). Further controversy was created by the fact that the film was not shot at *Samambaia*, but at another house - *Edmundo Canavellas* - designed by the renowned Brazilian architect, Oscar Niemeyer, and the acclaimed landscape designer, Roberto Burle-Marx. João Masao Kamita, however, proposes that "from a strictly architectural standpoint", this shift "is not completely unfounded" because, after all, beyond the "formal and constructional kinship between the two houses [...], it is known that young Sérgio Bernardes was very close to Oscar Niemeyer at the time, having indeed worked at his office in the

⁸ Just for the record, partially set in New York and partially set in different parts of Brazil, the film produced by Brazilians Lucy and Paula Barreto is bilingual. That is, the characters interact in both English and Portuguese languages. Please note that we will refer to the historical figures by their full names: the poet, Elizabeth Bishop, and the self-made architect, Lota de Macedo Soares. But, as in the novel and the film, we will refer to the fictional characters simply as Bishop and Lota.

beginning of his career”⁹ (KAMITA, 2013: s.p.). That is, faced with the impossibility of using the *Samambaia* house as a set for the film, the choice to shoot the scenes at an analogous one is pertinent to the technical, historical and cultural context of the narrative.

There are several architectural ekphrases which are not only indispensable, but inseparable from the plot of *Rare and Commonplace Flowers*¹⁰. In this paper, however, we will focus only on the procedures chosen to reveal in the film (from 7’00” till 11’34”) the long ekphrastic passage (from p.6 till p.9) in which the protagonists take a tour of *Samambaia*’s construction site.

In the novel, Lota picks Bishop up in Rio de Janeiro to drive her to Petropolis, a town nearby where *Samambaia* is located. The driver pulled “away and they were in flight” towards the “mountain, in the midst of dazzling scenery” (OLIVEIRA, 2003: 7). By means of periegesis¹¹, the reader learns how the poet “wanted to stop and jump out of the car” (p. 7). The narrator emphasizes the exotic unexpectedness of the route by using several deictics such as “suddenly” as they drove along “a narrow and potholed road” that lead to “enchanted little towns” with “streets lined by solemn mansions, with well-kept gardens adorned with hydrangeas” (p. 7). While deftly [maneuvering] around rocks and holes, Lota [keeps] on talking casually:

‘this stretch will get better.’ – “ **Zoom** – ‘I inherited the grounds of Samambaia from my mother ten years ago. First came the partition, after long delays; I had to divide everything with my sister into sections equal to the millimeter. Then I decided to divide it up to first-class lots. This process is also never ending; it involves a mountain of paperwork. I’ve only just been able to begin building the house. Later I’m going to take care of this road.’ – **Zoom**. (OLIVEIRA, 2003: 7)

⁹ Original text: “do ponto de vista estritamente arquitetônico [...], sabe-se que o jovem Sérgio Bernardes à época estava muito próximo de Oscar Niemeyer, tendo inclusive trabalhado no escritório deste no início da carreira”.

¹⁰ For more on architectural ekphrasis see: VIEIRA, Miriam. “Out of space: the complexity of contemplative and performative architectural ekphrasis” (in press).

¹¹ According to Ruth Webb, periegesis is an “elaborate form of telling” in which the speaker guides the listener “around [into and about] the sight” or “through space” (WEBB, 2009: 54).

Lota's lines established how comfortable her economic situation is to the foreigner, who is not really listening as her eyes are mesmerized by the exuberant vegetation. The onomatopoeia "zoom" stresses the high speed used to go up the curvy mountain.

In the film, the corresponding scene spans only 35 seconds (07'00"-07'35"). Differently from the novel, the driver picks the visitor up directly at the harbor, as Bishop arrives in Brazil by ship. As can be seen in Fig. 6, there is an addition of a third character to the scene: American Mary Morse¹², who happened to be the one who encouraged the poet to visit Brazil. The presence of Mary during the car journey hinders the awkward physical contact elicited by the mentioned passage in the novel.

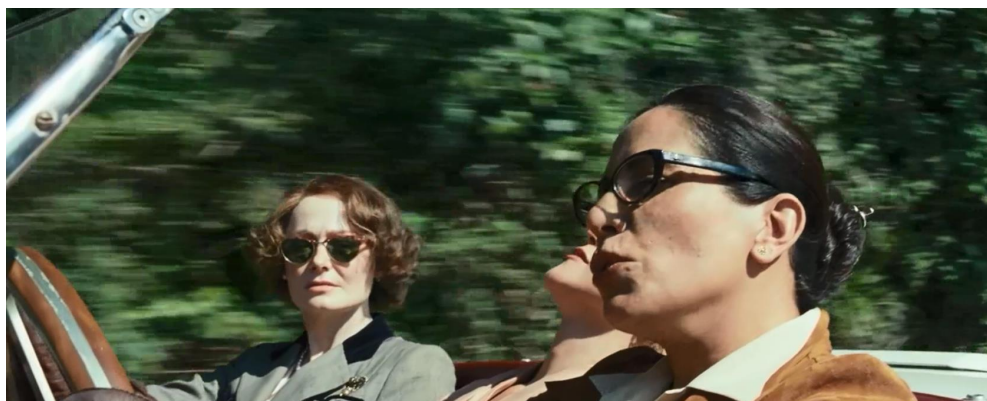


Figure 6 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 1.

Another shift in the film is that it is Bishop that first shows interest by staring at the driver, who, in turn, sings along with the refrain coming from the radio. The song's *persona* suggests that someone's green eyes should be drifted away¹³, implying that Lota has already noticed Bishop's interest in her.

¹² The ballet dancer Mary Morse was the historical figure who actually introduced Elizabeth Bishop to Lota de Macedo Soares. She moved to Brazil in 1943 and was Soares' partner until the arrival of Elizabeth Bishop. Mary adopted Mônica Morse. In Soares' testament, *Samambaia* was left to the Morse family, and not to Bishop, who actually lived there.

¹³ In the original: "tira o verde desses olhos de riba deu". The song is titled "Kalu" (1952), composed by Humberto Teixeira for the memorable Brazilian singer, Dalva de Oliveira.



Figure 7 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*

Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 1.

Bishop's feelings can be summarized by her facial expression (Fig. 7). The heat, the speed of the car, the wind on her face, and the song on the radio – to which Lota whistles along – all together clearly bother the poet.

As they arrive at their destiny, *Samambaia's* construction site, the narrator in the novel informs the reader how Bishop forgets all about the distressing car ride as she sees: “[i]n the distance, the bluish mountains. All around, the forest. In front, powerful, an enormous slab of granite” (OLIVEIRA, 2003: 8). Whereas, in the film, once they arrive at the destiny, a close-up of Bishop's expression (Fig. 8) again condenses her emotions expressed by the ekphrastic passage.



Figure 8 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*

Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 1.

Bishop's "close up" then cuts away to an "extreme long shot" (Fig. 9) evidencing the opulent scenery that envelops the house which lasts only five seconds. In spite of being condensed, the very brief scene captures the sense of beauty and isolation, highlighting the rugged nature of the construction site's surrounding environment. In this sense, although the mentioned change of houses for the film setting certainly alters the edification as an object, it does not alter architecture as a meaningful symbol in this double process of (trans)mediation, from the house to the ekphrasis in the novel, and from the ekphrasis to the scene sequence in the film. Thus, while in the novel the passage depicting the drive from Rio de Janeiro to Petrópolis serves to build a mental image of the breathtaking scenery in which the house is inserted, in the film the viewer is offered with merely a glimpse of the setting.



Figure 9 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 1.

In the novel, the aim of the car journey is to visit the construction site. Lota then takes Bishop on a tour as they traversed the site from top to bottom, stepping on cement that had been abundantly decorated by dog prints. This will be here, that will be there, Lota pointed out enthusiastically. A gentle touch on the arm indicated that it was time for Bishop to keep moving. Lota explained how she had planned the house, with someone whose name Bishop did not grasp. In a daze, the American woman dimly understood that a house without walls was to be erected there; or else it was a corridor, around which there was to be a house. (OLIVEIRA, 2003: 9)

In the ekphrastic passage, with the aid of periegesis, the narrator evidences how, instead of paying attention to the edification Lota is so proud of, Bishop keeps her attention on the surroundings that will later inspire her to write the poem “Song for a Rainy Season.” As noted elsewhere¹⁴, Bishop’s focalization enhances the ekphrasis that is framed by the verb “to watch” (in bold):

That morning, Bishop **watched** Lota moving from one side to another, directing the placement of trellises on the roof. To the despair of the two masons, this roof didn’t have slats or clay tiles, like any usual roof. It was a mad contraption made of aluminum plates supported by steel girders. Because the work was very expensive, Lota had decided to build the most audacious architectural elements last, after finishing a basic nucleus with a bedroom, living room, bath room, and kitchen. The walls were already standing. Now they had to be covered, which she would accomplish as soon as she could convert her two unwilling helpers. Bishop didn’t tire of **watching** her. It was good for a person to dream, and then build her own house. (OLIVEIRA, 2003: 12, emphasis added)

In the film, by claiming how she “designed this all [her]self, every inch of it” (10’ 25”), Lota seems to have a metonymic relationship with the house.



Figure 10 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 2.

¹⁴ The passage from the novel about the inspiration for the poem has been thoroughly discussed in VIEIRA, Miriam. “Architectural ekphrasis: Unveiling a Brazilian Wall-less House in Contemporary Fiction”, 2020.

Mary interrupts Lota's bragging to remark upon the transparency of the house, which blends the edification to its surroundings. The feeling of being outside, even when remaining inside the building, is emphasized by the shifts in camera focus between the two protagonists, who are never together in the same shot: while the large wall of moss-covered stones frames Lota, the glass wall reveals the exuberant nature behind Bishop.



Figure 11 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 2.

The Atlantic Forest biome seems to penetrate the building through the large glass panels. Up to this point in the film, Mary is recurrently positioned by Lota and Bishop in all the frames.

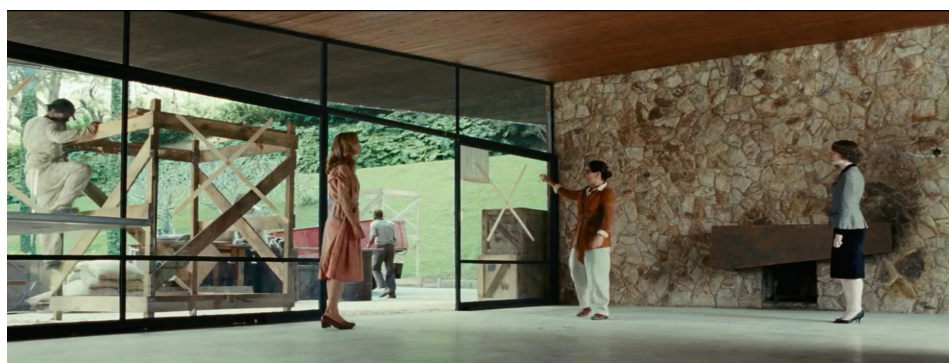


Figure 12 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 2.

During the tour, similarly to the relevant passage in the novel, the poet becomes distracted, though not by the workers, but by a stray cat, evidencing her interest in living entities. Annoyed, Lota complains about the poet's behavior with Mary and calls Bishop back to show her some innovative constructive details. Despite the apparent disinterest in that unusual construction, the poet follows her guide. Once they are outside, Bishop becomes enraptured by the roof's structure, which reflects the sunlight.



Figure13 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 2.



Figure 14 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 2.

For the first time in the film, Bishop engages with the architectural environment and compares the beams to a modern sculpture. Impatient, Lota replies that this has always been the intention. Lota exits the scene, leaving Mary and Bishop behind, as the camera pans upwards, showing the architectural site from a new angle.



Figure 15 – Frame from *Reaching from the moon*
Source: DVD, 2013, chapter 2.

Remaining in the scene, Mary acts ultimately as a destabilizing agent. In other words, while in the novel the house known as *Samambaia* is the agent responsible for uniting Lota and Bishop, in the filmic adaptation, it is Mary who unintentionally brings them together. As a literary device, ekphrasis seems to be replaced by filmic devices, such as shifts from close-ups to long shots, and vice-versa. Meanwhile, lengthy passages are condensed either by intense facial expressions or by visual glimpses of what had been verbalized in the novel.

Final considerations

To sum up, it ought to be said that, on the one hand, the change in the setting does not necessarily harm adaptation understood as both a process and a product, as evidenced by the way the shift from Paris interiors to the exteriors in *Doktor Judym* resulted in a more carefree tone of the opening scene, and by the fact that exchanging *Samambaia* with *Edmundo Canavellas* maintained the technical, historical and cultural contextualization. On the other hand, ekphrastic passages might be unveiled on the screen not only by means of oral verbalization, as demonstrated by a conversation on Venus de Milo in *Doktor Judym* or when Lota elicits the construction details to Bishop in *Reaching for the Moon*.

Long and detailed passages might be also summed up in just a glimpse, as could be observed in the scene in which Judym finds Korzecki's body and catches sight of anatomical atlas on the desk, or when Bishop sees the construction site for the first time. Moreover, in some instances, the verbal actually becomes visual once again, which could be found in the scene at Krzywośąd's apartment (where the description of the flat became the decorative setting for the scene) or the inside-outside relation between the architectural site and the Atlantic Forest biome. In short, by means of creative encounters, the herein dissimilar investigated cases, without exhausting all possibilities, were able to unveil ekphrasis on screen.

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