

Markers of Interculturality in the Film *Mario, Maria, Marinel* (2025) and in the Television Format *Identitate Basarabia* (Both Directed by Violeta Gorgos)

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Abstract

The scientific challenge proposed by the 3rd edition of the International Conference *Across Cultures. Intercultural Communication in a Borderless World* (Chișinău, 13–15 November 2025) has stimulated predominantly interdisciplinary research through its thematic sections; in this case, “Intercultural Communication” and “Cultural Memory and Identity” intersect with “Media Discourses.” *Markers of Interculturality in the Film Mario, Maria, Marinel (2025) and in the Television Format Identitate Basarabia (both directed by Violeta Gorgos)* aims to analyze—through the method of documentary research—the main recognizable markers of the cultures of two spaces with Romanian roots, as reflected in contemporary media productions: a film and a regional television format with international reach. Shared elements such as language, traditions, religion, and mentality, shaped over millennia, come to life cinematically and televisually under the directorial vision of Violeta Gorgos.

Keywords: identity; interculturality; communication; cultural memory; television

Introduction

In an era profoundly shaped by the culture of the image (D. Kellner)¹, within a society of the spectacle (E. Goffman)², where the advantage of "seeing" surpasses the cautions voiced two or three decades ago by G. Sartori—alarmed by the bleak prospect of the superficiality inherent in “looking” at ready-made things, at *pre-digested* media products designed merely to be viewed³—, the hermeneutic labor of an individual formed within the tradition of serious, profound, “old-school” culture offers directorial and televisual perspectives worthy of attention, to be followed with both mind and soul. A feature film (*Mario, Maria,*

¹Douglas Kellner, *Cultura media*, Institutul European Publishing House, Iași, 2001, 29.

² Lazăr Vlăsceanu, “Erving Goffman și dramaturgia socială”, in Erving Goffman, *Viața cotidiană ca spectacol, comunicare.ro* Publishing House, București, 2003, 17–19.

³ Giovanni Sartori, *Homo videns. Imbecilizarea prin televiziune și postgîndirea*, Humanitas, București, 2006.

Marinel/ MMM) and a long series of episodes of *Identitate Basarabia* can together construct a faithful and ever-relevant tableau of the sensibilities, attitudes, and behaviors of our brothers across the Prut—whether living at home or building their professional paths anywhere in the world—, mirroring the experiences of Romanians on the right bank of the Prut, in a genuine intercultural exercise⁴.

Materials and methods

A) The first feature film signed by Violeta Gorgos (*Mario, Maria, Marinel*), produced by OWH Studio, Republic of Moldova, and premiered at **The Romanian Film Evenings** (Iași, 4 August 2025), is regarded by several filmmakers as “a Moldovan masterpiece.” The film brings multiple debuts to the screen (Diana Decuseară – “M. Eminescu” Theatre, Chișinău; Valentina Năforniță – soprano, Vienna; the child actor Gabriel Lițcan), and represents a true “family premiere”: filming took place in the village of Fundurii Vechi, in the Mărgineanu family home (the place of Violeta’s childhood); the cinematography is by Radu Gorgos, the director’s son; the music is composed by her other son, Florin Gorgos; and the producer is Virgil Mărgineanu, the director’s brother from Chișinău. The cast also includes established actors such as Radu Ghilaș and Leo Rudenco.

For cinephiles who have not yet seen *MMM*—neither in Iași, nor in Chișinău, nor in the village where it was filmed, nor at the Village Museum in Bucharest, nor in Canada (where it received the award for “**Best Feature Film**” at the prestigious **Festival du cinéma plan d’ensemble 2025**), nor in Bordeaux, nor in Vienna—, the narrative unfolds in a village in the Republic of Moldova (Fundurii Vechi, Glodeni District), where a mother (Maria) and her son (Marinel) live in constant expectation of the husband/father who has left to work in the West. Meanwhile, Felicia (Maria’s childhood friend, now a successful soprano in Vienna) returns to the village to commemorate her parents and to settle inheritance documents. It is as if no differences in education, success, social visibility, or Western comfort had ever come between the two young women. Notably, Maria had become francophone thanks to a teacher (Felicia’s mother) who frequently encouraged her to read in the language of Voltaire; yet Felicia “caught the train” of professional fulfillment abroad, while Maria remained in the village, married, and became a mother—embracing all the ordinary aspects of a modest life, devoid of applause and glitter. Still, one senses the nostalgia of unrealized personal aspirations (“I wanted to go to Paris one day...”), doubled by the deeply familiar consciousness of maternal sacrifice.

From this perspective, *MMM* could be viewed as a feminist film (“All the women of Moldova will recognize themselves in this film, and I would like as many people as possible to see it” – V. Gorgos), or, on the contrary, as something else entirely (“A film made by a woman director who does not necessarily aim to produce a feminist manifesto, but naturally conveys her personal perception of a woman’s life”⁵). Certainly, Tania Turtureanu’s testimony “reconciles” the two viewpoints, as the actress describes the film

⁴ Simion Roșca, *Interculturalitatea – element important al educației*, https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/MR_2020_pp47-59.

⁵<https://vimeo.com/955100817?share=copy>.

as “The power of women. This is how we support our people back home, because if we don’t do it, no one will”; “Believe me, it will stir you deeply...”

MMM may be interpreted as a film about a destiny (Maria’s); about honor (hers, Felicia’s, and Mario’s—the latter being Felicia’s husband), and the absence of honor (in Dumitru, Maria’s husband); about prejudice (rural conservatism, “the village’s gossip”); about “a woman’s place” in society and in the family (a woman subjected to her husband, devoted to raising and educating children, naturally sacrificing her own dreams); about a genuine ritual of time (which “is always the same”); about cowardice (Dumitru, the adulterer and liar); ultimately, a film about the power to understand and accept that every person has their own path, and that this path is held within the love and care of a mother.

What does this film reveal to its viewers

a) The Romanian **village** appears exactly as we know it—inhabited by ordinary people, with houses and gardens, with the dust of the road, with “the village’s loose tongue,” with sunrises and sunsets that do not ask permission from any party, with birds unaware of what censors are, with traditional food and local drink, with customs and traditions preserved with reverence. “From Fundurii Vechi straight to the big screens”—**the story of the film *MMM***—is not merely a simple fiction, but “a genuine open window onto the life of the Moldovan village, with all its longings, hopes, and inner struggles,” presenting **a place where emotional wounds** (Mario’s depression) and even physical ones (his broken arm, for instance) **find healing**⁶. The village becomes **a kind of crucible of reunion** (“People felt it, they talked about it, they recognized themselves”)⁷. After the screening in Fundurii Vechi, many spectators spoke with emotion in their voices: because they recognized in the film their native places, the image of their childhood, and because they felt pride that the film was made by people of the village—the Mărgineanu-Gorgos family. Following the same thread, Florin Gorgos’s testimony is compelling: “Fortunately, I had some recordings made with folk musicians from Chişinău. They played some beautiful *doine* that I reworked. For evoking a rural world, this helped enormously.”

b) **Mothers** appear in their well-known archetypal form: caring for children and households, submitting to the authority of the husband, fearing that “public opinion” might shake the child’s trust in people, wrestling with the mental restlessness provoked by various trials, carrying within them a seed of emancipation, and preserving traditions with devotion.

c) **Migration** and its consequences: contemporary forms of paternal deprivation; marital relationships weakened or destroyed through adultery and abandonment of the family⁸; the psychological vulnerability of the child left in the village without the father’s masculine presence; the emotional void of the wife who is scorned. The allure of leaving the village for a more respectable job and a life built on money “feeds the mill” of rural cruelty and puts the fundamental mother–son relationship to the test (“Just wait, I’ll tell Daddy what you’re doing with the Frenchman!”).

⁶<https://briciul.com/2025/09/mmm-recenzie>.

⁷facebook.com/reel/1287915889792306.

⁸imdb.com/title/tt38876313/.

d) Fundurii Vechi seems to be a village defined by **waiting** for something: Dumitru hopes that Felicia's arrival will make him the owner of the house he lives in; Mario longs for peace and perhaps for clarity regarding his relationship with his celebrity wife—or for the arrival of a true love; Maria and Marinel are constantly waiting for Dumitru, hoping he might still become a role model for the adolescent son; Maria is the only one who does not “allow herself” hopes meant solely for her own sake, appearing instead resigned to her fate.

The directorial strategy involved dividing the identity-focused “story” into three parts, entrusted to Florin Lăzărescu (writer), Violeta Gorgos, and Ioan Antoci. Although the narrative centers on a single reality, the three constitutive segments are written, filmed, and edited differently, precisely to outline the personal perspective of each protagonist.

The section dedicated to the character **Marinel** reveals a smooth, predictable writing style, as it presents the story “reflected” through the eyes of a child—like any rural child. The storytelling⁹ is filmed in sequence shots, “cutouts” from the everyday life of a village boy, “scenes” in which the action unfolds naturally, almost by itself¹⁰.

Maria is the literary “creation” of Violeta Gorgos: a chain of emotions and feelings forming the delicate yet resilient “fabric” of the traditional maternal educational model; a “rediscovery of the self beautifully mirrored in the eyes of one's own child”¹¹; the budding of an impossible idyll (Maria–Mario), masterfully contained by the rationality of a balanced mother; and a clear, painful distance between the character's intellectual capacities and her living conditions. The filming and editing follow classical conventions, with varied framings, shot–reverse-shot sequences, over-the-shoulder shots, and details that trace the harmonious evolution of relationships¹².

Mario, written by Ioan Antoci, comes to “disrupt the order” of a place where “nothing ever happens” (to borrow the title of M. Sadoveanu's novella), in the spectacular sense of the term. The pseudo-calm of the village is unsettled by this cultivated outsider, who experiences the revelation of an ancestral tranquility, a rediscovered natural calm, and a filial purity (Maria–Marinel) capable of restoring one's inner balance.

To highlight the ruptures in calm and order (the neighbors' suspicions, the children's accusations, the aunts' disapproving looks, their admonishing discourse, etc.), the scenes are filmed with a handheld camera; shots are cut abruptly, in motion; actions are suddenly interrupted or resumed within the same frame. All these technical procedures serve to support, at the directorial level, Mario's state of bewilderment and the tension among him, Maria, and Marinel¹³.

⁹ Christian Salmon, *Storytelling, la machine à fabriquer des histoires et à formater les esprits*, La Découverte, Paris, 2007, 11–13.

¹⁰ <https://vimeo.com/955100817?share=copy>.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

B) Identitate Basarabia¹⁴—(concept and production by Violeta Gorgos, TVR Iași)—offers Romanian viewers a series of portrait-interviews¹⁵ with personalities whose origins lie on the left bank of the Prut: writers, musicians, directors, visual artists, journalists, and others, brought together within a media-discursive framework through shared cultural markers such as language, mentality, traditions and customs, roots, and moral values.

Given the extremely rich corpus of interviews available as documentary material, we note as a limitation of the present study the difficulty of selecting examples that would fit within the editorial space provided by the organizers of the International Conference *Across Cultures. Intercultural Communication in a Borderless World* (Chișinău, 13–15 November 2025).

Our approach will illustrate several fields of training—professions and contemporary occupations—while reserving for future analyses other names equally representative of Bessarabian culture. The selection follows as its principal criterion the traits and elements shared by all interviewees.

1. Among the **writers**, two remarkable female figures stand out: Tatiana Țîbuleac and Anda Vahnovan.

Tatiana Țîbuleac¹⁶, a Romanian-language writer, represents a compelling example of the complexity of cultural identity in Bessarabia. Although she has never lived in Romania, her works deeply reflect the influences and traditions that define this cultural space. Now based in Paris, she returned to Iași as a guest of the International Festival of Literature and Translation (FILIT), where she wore, for the first time, the badge labeled “writer.” This symbolic return to Iași illustrates a **reconnection with her roots—an essential dimension of identity**.

Țîbuleac’s writings explore themes such as **nostalgia, collective memory, and identity conflicts**. Literature becomes, for her, an instrument of identity exploration, each word contributing to the intricate story of Bessarabia (e.g., *Grădina de sticlă / The Glass Garden*, *Vara în care mama a avut ochii verzi / The Summer When My Mother Had Green Eyes*, *Când ești fericit, lovește primul / When You Are Happy, Strike First*—a work in which happiness is viewed as a form of power).

Anda Vahnovan (a Romanian-language teacher in London) displays in her writings (*Sărme / Wires*, *Povestiri londoneze/ London Stories*) a strong commitment to exploring Bessarabian identity. Positioned at the boundary between prose poem, essay, and confessional memoir, her discourse is constructed around memory. In the interview¹⁷ she gave on the occasion of FILIT, she emphasizes the significance of cultural roots, stating that every written word has the power to unite and to inspire. In her literary texts, she blends tradition with modernity to offer a new vision of Bessarabian identity and to redefine the connections between one’s native places and individual identity.

¹⁴ http://iasi.tvr.ro/emisiuni/identitate-basarabia_4952.

¹⁵ Yves Agnès, *Introduce în jurnalism*, Polirom, Iași, 2011, 255–269.

¹⁶ Interview broadcast on TVR Iași, December 20, 2024; iasi.tvr.ro/identitate-basarabia-tatiana-ibuleac-video_49555.html.

¹⁷ Interview broadcast on TVR Iași, November 26, 2024; youtube.com/watch?v=64jloRvQqMw.

2. The **journalists** we refer to are university graduates from Romania, currently working in television in Bucharest and Chişinău; active on social media and uncompromising in their commitment to truth: Tatiana Slivca and Vitalie Cojocari.

Tatiana Slivca (journalist, director-producer at the TVR “Moldova” studio in Chişinău¹⁸), initiator of the author-project *Zestrea Neamului*, explains that she conceived this format “at a time when broadcasts about instrumentalists were rarely produced,” that she loves television content in which protagonists “speak from the depths of their soul,” and that she has a professional credo: “Coming to work out of obligation is not who I am!” A graduate of Law and Journalism at “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iaşi, discovered by Vanda Condurache, Tatiana Slivca returned to Chişinău and, for ten years, “opened chests of dowry and discovered the life stories of artists from both banks of the Prut. Folklore nurtures a sense of belonging, sincerity, authenticity, and good taste in everything...”¹⁹

Vitalie Cojocari²⁰ (television journalist and highly active on social media, posting about current and deeply serious topics) is known as the creator of the program *Lumea lui Vitali* (Euronews) and as an advocate of freedom of thought for each reader or follower—whether in his Facebook posts or in the conversations on his podcast *Umbra vorba*²¹. His guiding principle is clear: “These are the facts, and the opinions are yours!”

3. Radu Ghilaş (**actor**) and Lina Vdovii (**director**) embody two distinct yet complementary artistic paths, each shaped by personal history and a deep commitment to storytelling. Their work—whether on stage, behind the camera, or within documentary narratives—reveals how individual experience can transform into shared cultural meaning. Together, they illustrate the power of performance and authorship to navigate memory, identity, and the emotional landscapes of contemporary Eastern Europe.

Radu Ghilaş (an actor since the age of ten, graduate of the “George Enescu” National University of Arts in Iaşi) is a fulfilled Romanian artist: “Since I was 30, I have been working in one of the most beautiful theatres in the world. At 40, I decided I also had something to say as a director.”²² Interpreter of the negative character “Dumitru” in the drama *Mario, Maria, Marinel*, Ghilaş has directed *Metoda G / The G Method* and *Cerere în căsătorie / Cerere în căsătorie* at the Tătăraşi Athenaeum, as well as *Sindromul Quijote / The Quixote Syndrome* and *Când fericirea se află în trecut / When Happiness Lies in the Past* at the National Theatre of Iaşi. In an interview for *Timpul* magazine²³, the actor (“the first violin”)—and director (“the one who works with the entire orchestra”)—confessed: “When I am in Chişinău, I miss Iaşi (my wife, children, theatre); when I am in Iaşi, I miss Chişinău (my mother, father, friends). When I am in Chişinău and say the word *home*, I mean Iaşi, and vice versa.”

Lina Vdovii²⁴ is a journalist (investigative, narrative, new media), co-director of the film *Tata / Pa* (2024) and award-winning screenwriter (*Acasă, My Home*). After six years of

¹⁸ tvr.ro/tatiana-slivca-sa-purtam-romania-in-suflet_33259.html.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Interview broadcast on TVR Iaşi, October 20, 2020.

²¹ youtube.com/watch?v=ryL9anSB-IE.

²² Interview broadcast on TVR Iaşi, October, 2020.

²³ portal.revistatimpul.ro/timpul-alecsandrist/interviu-radu-ghilas/.

²⁴ Interview broadcast on TVR Iaşi, 2025.

filming, the premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival—“because we wanted to reach the Romanian and Bessarabian communities who emigrated to Canada”²⁵—presents, in cinematic-documentary form, Lina’s own life story, “about a traumatic past whose echoes still turn your life upside down,” because “I knew it was important to talk about violence from the perspective of all the spaces it dominates in relation to our family—professional, familial, individual.”²⁶ Part of a social campaign, a “healing project” designed to include Bessarabian immigrants from Italy and other Western countries, *Tata* has evolved into a broader tableau of relationships marked by violence in countries on the periphery of the former Soviet empire. Its role becomes one of *catharsis* in the family relations of the 21st century, as a result of self-disclosure, emotional release, and the verbalization of toxic relationships from the recent past. The recognition of the pains that burden memory and the dialogue about what must be “thrown overboard” from the traditional parental educational model in Eastern Europe gain meaning and contemporary relevance through Lina Vdovii’s work.

We will reserve a special place, in a future text, for the visual artists and musicians of Bessarabia. We preface this forthcoming endeavor with the words of **Dumitru Verdianu** (sculptor, member of the Austrian Union of Visual Artists): “Sculpture breaks the wall that separates us.”

Results and discussion

The attempt to analyze recent cinematographic achievements and television portrait-interviews—all signed by the Bessarabian director established in Romania, Violeta Gorgos—serves the theme proposed by the scientific event *Across Cultures. Intercultural Communication in a Borderless World* (3rd edition, Chişinău, 13–15 November 2025). Both cinematic fiction and the television interview reveal characteristics of the world and culture on the left bank of the Prut, expressed through words and images, through emotions and feelings belonging to a constellation of personalities who fully deserve their notoriety and reputation.

In the drama *Mario, Maria, Marinel* (2025), we note the depth of the subject, the poetic atmosphere, and the authentic stories **about migration, identity, and the fragility of human relationships**. The film combines documentary-style shooting with a more fictional aesthetic, relying on natural light and natural mise-en-scène (Radu Gorgos, director of photography). In less than 90 minutes, it offers a portrait of “rural life” today in the Republic of Moldova. Only three weeks of filming, extras from the Bessarabian village—“who bring naturalness and freshness to the story”—and a script developed over several years, with the necessary revisions and refinements, contribute to the exemplary story from Fundurii Vechi, which in fact mirrors the lives of people everywhere who are burdened by the pressures of consumer society.

From *Identitate Basarabia*—an impressive collection of interviews (**TVR Iaşi**)—we “extract,” whether from the testimonies of writers, directors, actors, journalists, or from their biographies, the same themes of pressing relevance and enduring validity: **individual**

²⁵ culturaladuba.ro/lina-vdovii-co-regizoarea-filmului-tata-inainte-de-film-ma-raportam-la-tata-ca-la-parintele-care-m-a-ranit-in-loc-sa-ma-iubeasca/.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

and collective identity, relationships with oneself and with others, the various consequences of migration, the desire for professional fulfillment, the role of memory in shaping the personality of the contemporary individual. The Romanian language, longing, the place called *home*, family and kinship ties, traditions and customs—all function as a “safety net” in a world full of challenges.

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