

Emma MOCAN

APPROACHES OF THE 1989 ROMANIAN REVOLUTION IN TERMS OF THE NEW WAVE CINEMA

Abstract. The theoretical hypothesis of this article is the questioning of the existence of a Romanian New Wave. From this main hypothesis, the study is focusing on the cinematographic productions of pre Communist (Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Daneliuc or Dan Pița) and post Communist (Cristi Puiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cătălin Mitulescu, Cristian Mungiu) directors. This is an interpretation of the recent movies in Romanian cinema, analyzing the narrative resources, like black humor, minimalism, the relationships with authorities, and the inheritance of the Communist era, with their correspondences in the language of this new wave of directors.

The present study focuses on the context in which Romanian cinematography seems to have given rise to a New Wave in the last few years. I'm interested in understanding the context in which more and more Romanian productions are appreciated and awarded at important international festivals, and I am trying to understand whether this phenomenon is coherent and uniform, or if it is the result of a series of lucky coincidences. Regarding the existence of a New Wave, opinions are of course divided. Some, such as the Romanian film critic Alex Leo Șerban, thinks that this happening is a random result of chance, as he declared at the launching of The New Wave of Romanian cinematography volume, in 2007¹.

1 *Alex.Leo Șerban: Nu există un nou val de regizori români*, www.realitatea.net. 8 March 2007. Realitatea TV. 21 Dec. 2009. <http://www.realitatea.net/alex--leo-serban--nu-exista-un-nou-val-de-regizori-romani_47385.html>.

At the same event, the director of the documentary *The Great Communist robbery*, Alexandru Solomon, said that if there really is a wave of young filmmakers, it is definitely not a homogeneous one. Laurențiu Brătan expressed the same opinion in a text written for Alex Leo Șerban's collage entitled *The movie seen through 42 eyes*: "Even through a less profound analysis of the films mentioned above, we can see that they have no consistent aesthetic to relate them, nor a political ideology. From Mitulescu's refined work to Porumboiu's sarcastic minimalism; from Tudor Giurgiu's gay themes to the themes of "December 1989" of Porumboiu, Mitulescu and Muntean; from the solemn approach of Cristi Puiu to the ease/distancing of Giurgiu, there are big distances. All these differences define the renewal we are witnessing today as more of a new generation rather than a new wave."²

However, outside its borders, Romanian film seem to be catching wings. "In three years, then, four major prizes at the world's pre-eminent film festival went to movies from a country whose place in the history of 20th-century cinema might charitably be called marginal. The post-

Cannes triumphal march of "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days" (it opens in New York on Friday) to the tops of English-language critics' polls and year-end lists, as well as to a Golden Globe nomination, offers belated confirmation of last spring's news flash from the Côte d'Azur. But perhaps you are hearing it here first: the Romanian new wave has arrived."³

Another appreciative article on Romanian contemporary cinematography is Nick Roddick's text *Eastern Promises*⁴, an article that is trying to answer the question: *What has inspired Romanian cinema's new wave?* by talking to Romanian directors and trying to understand the source of their black humor.

Examples may continue on both sides of the argument, but the present research aims in a different direction, towards a comparative analysis of two specific aspects regarding three Romanian movie productions that revolve around the events of the 1989. The main research methods used are direct observation and content analysis (conceptual analysis and relational analysis). The objective of this comparative analysis is to find similarities as well as differences in content and form between the three productions. Given the

2 Brătan, Laurențiu, coord. Alex. Leo Șerban, *Filmul văzut de 42 de ochi*. www.atelier.liternet.ro, 4 June 2007. 21 Dec. 2009. <http://media.library.ku.edu.tr/refpgs/sociology/style_mla.htm>

3 Scott, A.O. *New Wave on the Black Sea*. www.nytimes.com. 20 Jan. 2009. 17 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/>

[01/20/magazine/20Romanian-t.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&ref=magazine&adxnlnx=1201557656-Na10Dv5l77wEQ9XpTwuUUA](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/magazine/20Romanian-t.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&ref=magazine&adxnlnx=1201557656-Na10Dv5l77wEQ9XpTwuUUA)>

4 Roddick, Nick. *Eastern Promise*. www.bfi.org.uk. Oct. 2007. 17 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/49399>>

context in which the Romanian cinema began to be appreciated internationally and examining the three films, the purpose of this paper is to try to show that it is much too early to give a final answer to the question: *is there a real Romanian New Wave in cinema?*

Introduction: a context

Romanian cinema stood well hidden in the Eastern corner of Europe, until very recently. Local productions were unknown internationally and unappreciated internally. The next part of this paper is a short review of the history of Romanian cinematography, so a better understanding of the present phenomenon would be possible. Because the New Wave is a result of an important number of international awards, this part will as well emphasize the prizes Romanian cinematography received before this flux.

1948-1989:

the communist propaganda film

In the communist period (1948-1989), Romania was inexistent in the international film industry. But on a local, internal level, the cinema received a lot of support from the government. This positive attitude had nothing to do with the artistic side of film making, but rather was used as an ideological manipulation tool. The period of socialist film – also called propaganda film – continued Lenin's ideology. The ideologist of the proletarian class believed that movie was an imperative in an era in which

handling the masses was a political necessity. Socialist propaganda film was used in order to reflect the realities of the new society and to show the struggle of the new man against the old, backward society. These film productions uplifted the great achievements of the working class united with the peasantry for a great, glorious future. Even choosing the actors who will interpret these typological figures was conditioned by the utopian image that the political system wanted to create. For the wealthy, for example, the fat actors were chosen, for the poor peasant, only the weak ones that had a sharp look, as for the activists, the muscular performers with an intelligent spark were chosen. Selecting the right actors was radically important in building the character he or she was supposed to bring to life. With Gheorghiu-Dej's regime not investing in this "new art" and with Ceaușescu trying to raise a new (non-) culture, the state decided to build in 1950 the "Alexander Sahia" studio, prepared with the best equipment of its time. Its purpose was to produce documentaries, current affair journals and, after 1954, popularized science film. After 1948, the production of animated films had known an unprecedented boom, reaching fifteen productions in 1955. The success of animated film let to the establishment of the Romanian animation studio "Animafilm" in 1964, where filmstrips, slides for educational use and advertising spots were produced. Ion Popescu-Gopo, the artist who created the "little Gopo man" became the best known and

the most beloved animated character producer of his time. The author won the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival in 1957, with the short film called "Short History". But coming back to the institutions mentioned above, we must punctuate the fact that most employees were men with no culture whatsoever, and no artistic impulse, but very often they were simply former activists whose work for the party was no longer needed. Although not all the films had a highly political and ideological content, the main themes of the local productions were framed around the objectives of successful socialism. In the second half of the '70s, the local production of movies was so poor that all the screened and broadcasted movies were produced by the soviet bloc.

It is easy to understand in this context why the participation of Romanian movies in international film festivals was actually impossible. For the first twenty years from the debut of Cannes Film Festival in 1946, Romania has only won three awards. They went to Liviu Ciulei (in 1965 for "Forest of the Hanged"), Mircea Mureșan (Best Director in 1966) and Mirel Ilieșu (for the short film "The songs of the Renaissance", in 1969). After this, thirty-eight years of silence from Cannes festival followed Romania.

Some other awards worth mentioning are: director Paul Călinescu receiving first prize at Paris Industrial Exhibition in 1937 for "Corners of Romania" (a documentary promoting domestic tourism) and another two prizes for documentary

film at Venice Film Festival in 1939, 1941. Liviu Ciulei's film - "The Waves of the Danube" - received the Crystal Globe at Karlovy Vary, in 1969, Cornel Diaconu took the Grand Prize for "The Old Age" at Bilbao Festival, and in 1985 Dan Pița won a prize at the Berlin Film Festival. All these awards along with other few ones sum a total of fourteen nominations for Romanian productions that have been internationally appreciated, in almost fifty years.

1990-2003: The first moving lights

After the fall of the Soviet bloc, the Romanian cinematography was freed from censorship and socio-political restrictions, unconstrained and independent. Between 1990 and 2003 Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Daneliuc or Dan Pița created some of the most outstanding Romanian productions in history. "Luxury Hotel", "Next Stop Paradise", "An Unforgettable Summer" are just some of the titles that have slowly emerged Romania in the international movie market.

2004-2009: A New Wave is rising?

After 2001 the Romanian cinematography has seen an unpredicted explosion of fine productions that were very well received by critics around the globe. In only eight years, seventeen Romanian movies received international prizes or were nominated in different festivals. This phenomenon immediately raised the questions and dilemma around the controversial concept of the New

Wave of Romanian cinematography, creating rumors between national and international film critiques. While some are very positive about this exciting tumult, others remain skeptical and believe it is only a passing fever.

Some of these important movies created by the (non)existent New Wave are: "Traffic" (Cătălin Mitulescu, 2004), "The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu" (Cristi Puiu, 2005), "12:08 East of Bucharest" (Corneliu Porumboiu), "The Paper Will Be Blue" (Radu Muntean, 2006), "The Way I Spent the End of the World" (Cătălin Mitulescu, 2006), "4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days" (Cristian Mungiu, 2007), "California Dreamin'" (Cristian Nemescu, 2007), "Boogie" (Radu Muntean, 2008), "Silent Wedding" (Horațiu Mălăele, 2008), "Police, Adjective" (Corneliu Porumboiu, 2009), "Tales from the Golden Age" (Cristian Mungiu, 2009), "Francesca" (Bobby Păunescu, 2009) and many more.

Along with this sudden as well as unexpectedly fruitful manifestation of the young Romanian directors and the very important number of international awards, the current discussions are focusing on the renewal of the Romanian cinema. Between 2001-2005, the changes in Romanian film were already debated, but it was in 2007 when Cristian Mungiu's film about an illegal abortion in communist Romania received the Palme d'or at Cannes, when Romania really came out of the den. His movie "4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days" was awarded with 21 prizes and 16 other nominations.

The question many critics still ask is: can we really talk about a New Wave in



cinema, a coherent and structured one, or is this phenomenon just a flame about to be extinguished, a blend of happy coincidences that have brought Romanian in the light? How can we define and identify a real New Wave and what is the minimum temporal distance between two successful production in order to be able to take a valid conclusion? Can we talk about synchronism, or is this haphazard luck?

In order to provide a possible answer to these questions, a very close look through some of the products of this (possible) New Wave is needed. A detailed analysis should identify the intentions of the directors as well as their aesthetic methodology, the questions they address, the answers they offer and the way they choose to display their beliefs to their audience.

Analysis

The three movies selected for this paper were chosen after the following two criteria: the release year (2006) and the subject / theme (the Revolution of 1989).

The first one is Corneliu Porumboiu's "12:08 East of Bucharest", awarded with nine prizes and seven nominations. The movie questions the historical truth in opposition with its personal, subjective variables. In this sense, the film has a very simple construction. Jderescu is the moderator of a television show in Vaslui, the small town where the action takes place. He is trying to find out the truth about the existence of the revolution in his city. 12:08 is the exact time when the Ceaușescu couple has been taken out of the Presidential Palace and were no longer a threat, therefore if the people started coming out in the streets after this precise hour, there was no real-time revolution in this city. Still, if there were people that did dare to come out, then the town can be called "revolutionary" and can be considered part of the Romanian Revolution in 1989. Jderescu's guests are named Pișcoci and Mr. Mănescu. The first one is a lonely, grumpy obnoxious old man, but whose sincerity is almost striking. He tells the story with no fireworks and no heroism, just the way he had spent the day of the revolution when he and his wife had a quarrel. In opposition, Mănescu is the history professor buried in debt due to alcohol dependence. He is trying to manipulate reality so as to appear that he and his colleagues had the courage to

protest in the public square even before Ceaușescu's departure. The truth finally comes out: all of them have spent the night drinking.

Sixteen years after the revolution, the three men must face history and clarify this mystery of the revolution. "12:08" is a movie about historical truth.

Cătălin Mitulescu's film "The Way I Spent the End of the World" tells the story of a family from the suburbs of Bucharest, in the last year of Ceaușescu's dictatorship. The film raises questions about relations of power and influence, emphasizing the consequences that came with the overthrow of power and the way this event changed everyday life and the social status of Romanians. After Eva and her boyfriend Alexandru accidentally brake Ceaușescu's bust in the school hall, she must decide if she will confess, or she will be transferred to another school. The boy's father worked for the Department of State Security, therefore consequences were not so severe for him. In the new school where she is transferred, Eva meets Andrew, and together they plan to run out the country. Her brother, Lalalilu (about seven years old), is convinced that his sister left because of Ceaușescu, and together with his two best friends, he decides to kill the dictator. The very same day, the Romanian Revolution wins and Ceaușescu is sentenced to death, so Lalalilu's friends believe he is the one who changed the history.

"The Way I Spent the End of the World" is a film about power, influence and fail.

Radu Muntean's film "The Paper Will Be Blue" (rewarded with five prizes and three nominations) is a reconstruction of the events that took place during the night of 22 to 23 December, 1989. Costi is one of the soldiers in Lt. Neagu's subordination. He is determined to fight against the communist regime. After a short quarrel with his superior, he finds the perfect moment to leave the post and run at the television station to fight together with the population that went out in the streets. Because of a misunderstanding, the soldier is taken for terrorist and is locked in one of the villas that were defended by a group of soldiers and civilians. In the mean while, his colleagues – led by the lieutenant – begin searching for him, at first at the national television headquarters, and then at his home. The film is an illustration of the general atmosphere full with confusion and suspicion, a common feeling that led to the death of many innocent citizens and which was ultimately be fatal to the main character.

"The Paper Will Be Blue" is a film about solidarity.

Approaches of the celebration of Christmas in the three movies

The events of the Romanian Revolution take place in December 1989, close to Christmas Day. On the 24th of December, the Romanian people proclaimed victory over the communist regime and one day later, on Christmas Day, the Ceaușescu couple were sentenced to death and executed in the same day.

Of course, each of the three films addresses the Revolution in its own subjective and artistic way. Historically speaking, the events of 1989 took place at a very distinct place in space and time, therefore playing with this reality and moulding history is quite a risky adventure. These three films are feature films and (as opposed to documentaries) are free to choose their own reality, so the nature of film allows the mutilation and distortion of the historical context.

For example, Cătălin Mitulescu, although talking about the events of December 1989, chooses to relocate the events in time. The movie offers no clues whatsoever about the action of "The Way I Spent the End of the World" taking place around Christmas time, or even during winter time. The movie obviously begins in spring and continues over the summer, but signs of winter are only marked by the warmer clothing of the characters. The coming Christmas or New Year's Eve is not mentioned in any dialogue. The director does not emphasis the time of the year, therefore the event of the Revolution could have taken place any day.

"The Way I Spent the End of the World" does not want to tell the story of a revolution, and does not rebuilt the historical moment, but it concentrates around a family, focusing on its problems, needs and joys. The scene that is the most relevant and which best supports this statement is the one that marks the moment of revolution. The director overlooks the events that take place in Bucharest choosing to only use few TV

scenes, but gives great importance to the family reunion and the common joy that are manifested. There is no Christmas tree and no carols, and no other hint makes the public believe that the Revolution took place near Christmas.

On the contrary, “The Paper Will Be Blue” immerses in the fire of the events in Bucharest, rebuilding the emotional and eventful night between the 22nd and the 23rd of December 1989. The members of the intervention platoon under Lt. Neagu’s command often discuss about Christmas furlough, not so frequently about Christmas, but mostly about going home for New Year’s Eve. After the scene in Andronescu’s apartment, the lieutenant assures Costi’s worried mother that she will have her son home for New year. In this political and domestic context, the public authority (the lieutenant) is the only one that can make the family reunion possible.

Another mention of winter celebrations in Romania and its tradition is made by Bogdan. While calling his parents in the countryside to assure them of his safety, he asks if they have slaughtered the pig yet. Again, in the discussion about Christmas, the reunion of the family is mentioned, as the son will be going back home after military training.

In this debate around Christmas and feature film, the character Crăciun⁵ is worth a special attention. Costi meets him outside the villa on his way to the

TV station. The character played by Ion Săpădaru is the link between the inside (the ones defending the villa) and outside world (the attackers). Crăciun first appears on screen when he stops the truck full of revolutionaries and asks the driver to carry a wounded man to the closest hospital. He is a man with some authority, but his attitude is servile towards his superiors. Crăciun is the character with whom Costi’s stop at the villa can be associated with. The events that take place there will completely change the hero’s journey and will finally make him return home, defeated. In searching the meaning of Christmas in Radu Munteanu’s movie and assuming that an artistic product is an organic and compact produce – therefore excluding the possibility of name coincidences – we can consider the presence of Crăciun in the movie as being a symbolic, initiating one. He first takes Costi in the villa and gives him power by giving him the gun and authority by letting him fire, he then humiliates him by treating him as a terrorist and locking him in basement, but finally he gives him the chance to rescue himself. Yet, this liberation is only possible through a phone call that would validate his association with Dr. Andronescu (his father) and that he would confirm that Costi is not a terrorist, but his son. All through the movie, Costi is being impertinent and disobedient toward all authorities, but after leaving the villa and arriving home, the first thing he does is to apologies to Lt. Neagu. This

5 *Crăciun* is the Romanian word for Christmas.

complete change of attitude indicates the fact that the events at Crăciun's villa have made him a new man. Has Crăciun (Christmas) changed his life forever?

"12:08 East of Bucharest" has a very realistic approach. Starting with the first scenes, the public knows that the action is placed near Christmas time, sixteen years after the Romanian Revolution of 1989. The Christmas tree is a recurrent symbol in Munteanu's film. This symbol is first noticed in the first ten minutes of the film when professor Mănescu, still sleepy and hangover, asks his wife about the monstrosity in the kitchen – referring to the tree he had bought the night before, but no longer remembered about. Pișcoci brings in the story the character of Santa Claus, another important symbol of Christmas celebration in Romania. The entire neighbourhood remembers him as being the man who embodied Santa for the past few generations.

However, the tree that Mănescu brought home to represent the joy of Christmas has a broken top, the Santa costume is too old, worn and faded, and the celebrative music is perverted – in the television studio, the fanfare that is invited to play in the show repeated a latino song instead of a traditional Romanian one. Finally, so these local traditions would be compromised all the way, the shop that supplies the neighbourhood with Santa Claus suits, firecrackers, Christmas decorations etc. is owned by a Chinese. Even the new Santa suit which Pișcoci wants to acquire is

made out of cheap and weak fabrics, and the beard is made out of plastic threads that unravel. New Year's Eve television show will as well be improvised because Vali, the young journalist that was hired to do the interviews on the street, the news etc, suddenly decides to go to Bucharest to visit her sister. Her exact words are: "Well, I will do the material on traditions before" (I leave, ed.), letting the public understand that local traditions are of no longer interest.

Another scene that well underlines the lack of enthusiasm around the celebrations is the one that happens in front of Mănescu's bloc. A former student of his approaches carrying a Christmas tree and says: "I had to" (buy a tree, ed.), as if buying a Christmas tree would make no sense. Also, Vasile Rebegea, a character that has a live intervention in Jderescu's show, refers to the custom of having a Christmas tree as being a Christmas one: "I bought a tree before Christmas, like a good Christian would do."

The Romanian custom of going to the countryside before Christmas and slaughtering a pig is mentioned by Costăchescu, another character that intervenes in the show. He talks about going to the countryside the day of the Revolution, and about the events that took place when he got back.

After all these Christmas symbols and customs, the phone call that ends Jderescu's show comes to bring light over the essence of the celebration. The lady on the other side of the receiver is

probably the only character in the movie that has the legitimate right to talk about the events of December 1989, as she was the mother of one of the victims of the revolution. "I just called to tell you that outside it is snowing. Gentleman, enjoy the snow! Tomorrow it will all be muddy again. Merry Christmas to all of you!" she said. After this emotional intervention the show ends and Jderescu tells his two guests, on a cold, distant voice: "Come, I'll give you the trees".

Porumboiu's Christmas is MADE IN CHINA, a second-hand celebration defined by shabby Christmas trees, cheap suits and tones of firecracker explosions. Christmas is present but empty, just like the apparently meaningless revolution.

The three films which address the events of 1989 relate to the celebration of Christmas in three various ways. For Cătălin Mitulescu, the historical context is quite irrelevant. His story focuses on Matei family and does not try to be a reconstruction of the circumstances of the Romanian revolution. Radu Munteanu refers to winter celebrations as to the moment when the family can finally be together again, and the boys that are serving their country can go back home. Corneliu Porumboiu reflects the events of 1989 in the light of modern 2005 when everybody seems to be worried about money, firecrackers, Santa costumes, but have no real values. The effervescence of winter holidays is more or less important to the three directors. In "12:08 East of Bucharest" Christmas is an important

issue, while for "The Paper Will Be Blue" it is a secondary theme, as for "The Way I Spent the End of the World, "Christmas and New Year are practically nonexistent, the action taking place *once upon a time...*

The Female Characters

In 1884 Engels wrote in *The Origin of Family, Private Property and State*: "The emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree."⁶

The iconographic construction of the female gender identity under socialism is based on the creation of The New Women. This utopian image of a woman equal with man is based on the socialist status of the individual. *Romania ensures equal rights to men and women in all areas of activity, in their active participation in state matters and in all political and*

6 Engels, Friedrich. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Resistance Books. 2004. [www.books.google.com](http://books.google.com/books?id=wQsJTDxmeHwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Origin+of+the+Family,+Private+Property+and+the+State&ei=ONNVs4KiG0jMzgSqu_j0Ag&cd=1-v=onepage&q=&f=false). 17 Dec. 2009. <http://books.google.com/books?id=wQsJTDxmeHwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Origin+of+the+Family,+Private+Property+and+the+State&ei=ONNVs4KiG0jMzgSqu_j0Ag&cd=1-v=onepage&q=&f=false>.

*social life of the country*⁷. Ceaușescu did not believe so much in gender equality, as he was trying to create a strong workforce in order to fulfill his five-year plan. In order to do this, he gave women the status of “socialist equal workers” and promoted the image of ladies driving the tractor or working on the lathe.

Under Gheorghiu-Dej’s governance, the woman’s public services led to an alarming decline of the population, so Ceaușescu also tried to re-evaluate the reproductive role of women. “The highest honor for a woman to give birth, he said, to give life and to raise children. Nothing can be more precious for a woman than to be a mother!”⁸

Through 770/1966 decree, Ceaușescu allowed abortion only in the first three months of pregnancy, and only on medical considerations. After the 26th of December 1985, he only permitted abortion to women over 42 years of age, or if they already have given birth to at least five children. These mothers had (theoretically) some special privileges. The mothers of over ten children were

considered “heroines” and were entitled to an ARO car, free train rides and an annual vacation in a spa resort. While forcing the increase of child birth was a priority for Ceaușescu, the number of abandoned children grew alarmingly in orphanages, and Romania had reached the highest infant mortality rate in Europe. The state encouraged the mothers to leave their children in the care of public institutions that would deal with their education and teach them the basics of a prosperous communist state and the obligations of the individual.

To draw a conclusion, in the socialist era women had both a productive and a reproductive role. While the governance showed a special interest in creating equality between women and men, the woman were living under a constant psychical terror, sometimes impossible to handle. Enforcing a biannual (or monthly for the employees of some institutions) gynaecological control, forcing woman to keep the foetus if a case of a pregnancy and in the same time encouraging women’s involvement in the public sphere, are just some factors that have led to a woman that was overwhelmed by problems and constant stress.

This figure of a burdened, tired mother, absent from her own family life and overwhelmed in her personal existence is very well outlined by director C. Mitulescu in “The Way I Spent the End of the World”. Maria Matei, Eva and Lalalilu’s mother, has very few interventions in the film, creating a distant, absent and cold character. The

7 As quoted in 1977 (by Ceaușescu) from art. 23 of RSR. Kligman, Gail. *The Politics of Duplicity: Reproductive Policies in Ceausescu’s România*. Berkeley, University of California, 1997. p. 27. 20 Dec. 2009. <<http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/istorie/ciupala/anonimatulfemeii.htm>>.

8 Nicolae Ceaușescu’s speech at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. June 1973. 20 Dec. 2009. <<http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/istorie/ciupala/anonimatulfemeii.htm>>.

two female characters (mother and daughter) have very distinct and quite opposite roles. A very representative scene is the one in the morning: Eva is the one who gets her brother ready for school and prepares his breakfast while laughing and joking with him. In the mean time, their mother takes out of her bag a piece of cheese (quite a rarity under Ceaușescu) and hands it to Lalalilu. He gives it to his sister and asks her to divide it into three. The mother wants to go back to bed because she is tired, but Lalalilu jumps into her arms and insists that she would stay longer. Although she probably worked a night shift, she has a nice conversation with her son, but as soon as he pronounces Ceausescu's name, she gets angry. Clearly irritated, she demands her son never to speak about Ceaușescu and neither about God.

This mother-daughter hierarchy is constant throughout the film: Eva takes her mother's role, closely carrying for her brother's needs, and her mother, permanently preoccupied with the well going of the family, is always trying to do what is best for their common interest.

In Cătălin Mitulescu's film, the feminine parental model is almost nonexistent. In almost all the families that are involved in the story, it is the fathers that are in charge of the education of their child. Vomică is the son of a violent Securitate (Department of State Security) agent that constantly aggresses him psychically and verbally. Andrei, Eva's new neighbour, is also raised by his father. Instead of presenting the woman as

a carrying mother, Mitulescu constantly shows her as a worker in public services: at the post office, at school etc. Still, in the very important positions (such as the school principle), he always places men.

In opposition with the image of her submissive mother, Eva is a stubborn, emancipated, and courageous young girl that does not seem to be affected by the socialist depersonalization of subdued women. She wants to work for Uncle Florică (that had a small workshop where he built whistles) in two different departments, but only if it paid well. When she is asked by the school principle about Ceaușescu's bust being broken, she refused to answer, although this will have severe consequences. Also, she refuses Alexandru when he asks her to sleep with him. By the end of the movie, she will be the one offering herself. As shown, Eva is a character that does only what she wants, when she wants, and only because she decides to. But her emancipation is probably most obvious when she decides to illegally cross the border with Andrei.

Coming back to the two female characters (mother and daughter), the relationship the two have can probably be best defined as "a friendship between two strangers who know each other very well". They have few, short conversations during the entire movie. One of the most significant ones takes place at the baptism party in the neighbourhood when Eva's mother, concerned with the families interests, asks her to dance with Alexandru (the son of the Secret Service agent), because he helps them. Her mother

wants her daughter to have a relationship with him, but she asks her husband to talk to their daughter and does not approach her personally. Grigore Matei is much closer to his children than his wife is, as he spends more time with them while she works night shifts. It is no wonder why in this family Eva and Lalalilu become so close, creating their own universe bounded with self-defense and built on friendship. When Eva finally leaves the country after Ceaușescu's downfall as a gesture of supreme liberation from the system she was never really corrupted by, Lalalilu is, of course, the most affected one.

Much more implicated in their family lives are the feminine characters of "12:08 East Of Bucharest". This is very clearly accentuated in the first part of the film when Mănescu family, Jderescu family and Pișcoci are presented in parallel scenes. The actions take place in the same morning.

The history professors' wife (Mrs. Mănescu) can no longer stand his drinking and threatens him she will not let him back in the house if he won't bring all his salary. She is the victim of an alcoholic, led by self-preservation and survival instincts. In Jderescu family, Mr. Jderescu is in a semi-dependent relationship with his wife, but not on an emotional level as on a basic, physical one. She is the one getting him ready for work, irons his suit, prepares his underwear and socks, makes him tea and butter and jam sandwiches for breakfast. He can't even manage to find a book in his

own library, and needs Rodica, his wife, to get it for him. But even more important, in Jderescu's family dynamics she plays a very important part: she is a mediator between her husband and her daughter that lives in Bucharest. Although Liliana never appears on screen, she is very often mentioned in her parent's dialogues. She is permanently asking them for money, so her mother has to find different ways to handle the situation with her father. She plays the role of a protective mother and wife, never talking about her own needs, but always dealing with her daughters' and her husbands'. The only character that has no female companionship is the old man Pișcoci. Although he is an independent man that seems to be comfortable with his status and able to take care of himself, the story he says by the end of the movie is quite emotional. When referring to his wife, Pișcoci seems to be missing her a lot, and regrets every moment of misunderstanding they have had. He even fills guilty about her death, and motivates his courage in December 1989 as being an attempt to try to impress her. The two have had a fight on the morning of the 22nd, and he had to go to work, but in his heart he wasn't happy about having to leave home, so he stole a flower from the botanical garden and went home. What was Maria doing? She was vacuuming and cleaning the apartment. Again, the female attributions are closely related to housekeeping.

If Eva was the emancipated female character in "The Way I Spent the End of the World", in "12:08 East of Bucharest"

its equivalent is Vali, the TV presenter. She is not married and has no children, and she is Jderescu's mistress. With an independent personality that pushes all possible limits with her superior and lover. Her attitude culminates with her decision to go to Bucharest despite her bosses' interdiction. "I will go to Bucharest because I want to", she breaks out.

Corneliu Porumboiu's movie has three important male characters that have personal ambitions and a defined social status. However, the female characters are pale and have no impressive personality. They are colorless and pale. Jderescu's guests are only men, as if he would consider that in 1989 women were living their own history, or as if they were the only ones entitled to clarify historical events.

A man's world is also presented in "The Paper Will Be Blue". The movie's general atmosphere is dark and harsh, a world of war and pride, a violent game. The only "homey" scene is the one at Andronescu's apartment where the universe is suddenly ruled by the two worried women. Without these moments, Radu Munteanu's film would be a local short-version of Saving Private Ryan.

The two female characters in "The Paper Will Be Blue" are Costi's mother and his girlfriend. Without them, the search would have had no purposefulness. From the moment the lieutenant enters the apartment, the public understands that he is entering female territory. This transition is marked by a physical action:

the lieutenant and his subordinate are being asked to take off their shoes. Mrs. Andronescu is protective and careful with her guests. She invites Costi's colleague to call home, she sends sandwiches to the platoon downstairs and looks after his son's friend. Angela is executing her boyfriend's mother's orders: she warms the tea, makes the coffee, and sets the table. The two make a complete artistic couple that perfectly balances the harsh world of men. Although they are obviously worried, they are quite in control of the situation and they don't behave over dramatic. With a quiet voice, Mrs. Andronescu phones her husband at work: "How can I be calm when I'm alone and I don't know where the boy is?" After another few seconds, Mr. Andronescu asks to talk to the lieutenant, for a men-to-men talk. This scene gives a good illustration of the primary functions of men and women: "men are hunters, women are nesters", men are rational and resolve problems usually involving other men, while women are overwhelmed by their emotions. In this wonderful movie dominated by male presence, the two female characters perfectly counterbalance the violent atmosphere of the revolution, and in some way manage to give it a much more profound meaning. The platoon doesn't give up the search not only because Costi disobeyed the rules and Lt. Neagu would have problems when he gets back to the unit if he returns without the boy, but mostly because he is a son and he is a boyfriend, he is a man, not only a soldier, he is loved and

looked after. In the final scene when we understand that Costi was a victim of the open fire attack, the two women are the first thing that come to the spectator's mind because their feelings and love are the ultimate thing that make sense in a young man's life.

To draw a conclusion, the women presented in the three movies are built in accordance to the socialist woman of Ceausescu's regime. Most of the director chose to underline their "nester" role, as mothers and wives. Yet, two feminine characters (Eva and Vali) broke the typology and offered a sneak preview of what the modern women would look like, after Ceausescu's overthrow: independent, careerist, with no obligations, but most of all, free!

Conclusion and further research directions:

The two analysis directions proposed in this paper are only a tiny drop in the plethora of ideological elements that build the New Wave films / New Generation, deserving a much ampler study. I suggest an analysis of the artistic genres: "The Way I Spent the End of the World" is the drama of a family, "12:08 East Of Bucharest" – a comedy, and "The Paper Will Be Blue" is predominantly a documentary story. Why did the director choose to use this approach and how does it support the main thread of the story?

The three different approaches in style provide a good starting point in the problem of the historical truth, as opposed to subjective truth and the

distortion of the memory. Who writes the history? How much objectivity is there in history? How important are the historical details in the construction of a feature film?

It's quite of the ordinary to have a wide range of language and expression differences in a creative work, but the aesthetic differences provide a relevant reason to demolish the "New Wave" myth. "I do not know if there is a new wave, but we are on the wave"⁹, says Alex Leo Șerban, before concluding that this phenomenon *is a coincidence*. "It just happens that a few directors of the same age have emerged at the same time."¹⁰ Magda Mihăilescu shares a different view: "The phrase ("New wave", ed.) means the birth of a new generation. It is important for the movie making art to have filmmakers as it important to have a generation. We have (here, ed.) *a new generation (...)*. In the end, we need a formula, at least to help us in terms of methodology."¹¹

Nowadays, with the West honoring so many Romanian productions that mostly talk about the communist era, I can't help but remember the similar

9 "Noul val" în cinematografie, lansat editorial printr-un volum de interviuri. www.telegrafonline.ro. 9 March 2007. 21 Dec. 2009. <http://www.telegrafonline.ro/1173391200/articol/22446/noul_val_in_cinematografie_lansat_editorial_printrun_volum_de_interviuri.html>

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

phenomena that was happening in the '80, when a great number of cinema productions with stories about the Second World War came out and received loads of appreciations. Just like those days, the Romanian directors return back in time to their own and painful history to try to better understand their previous generation, their decisions, their mentalities, and the way they affected the present times. This could be a healing process, a therapeutical action that is beneficial to both Romanians as it is to the international public. Twenty years after the Revolution, young courageous Romanian directors dared to look back, just like twenty years after the Second World War, other directors faced history in their own ways of expression. Was that a New Wave? A New Wave in Eastern film industry or a New Wave of directors and actors? But most of all, could they have decided themselves that they are witnessing a New Wave or was time the best judge?

In my opinion, I believe that is impossible to draw a definitive conclusion regarding the existence of a New Wave in the actual context, only a few years

away from the wave of international accomplishments. New productions of the same generation continue to emerge on the market and important awards continue to honor the work of these young directors. Only time can come with an answer and give a final verdict.

But I also believe that the biggest achievement of this age in the Romanian cinema is not the international acknowledgment as it is the abatement of skepticism regarding the home grown film products. Although Romanian cinema productions attract ten times less spectators than Hollywood blockbusters in Romania, there is a general increase in the confidence and the positive attitude of the Romanian film fans, as well as filmmakers. My satisfaction, pride and joy as a film consumer is increasing, no matter how, for how long and how far this stage will take the Romanian cinematography. I hope for this Wave or this New Generation to be more than a tide splattered on the bank, thus leaving Romania in another fifty years of shade, but instead to continue and be prolific for a very long time.

Bibliography

- Press release, *Noul val cinematografic, elogiat in New York Times Magazine*. www.liternet.ro. Jan. 2008. 17 Dec. 2009. <<http://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/6276/Comunicat-de-presa/Noul-val-cinematografic-elogiat-in-New-York-Times-Magazine.html>>.
- Scott, A.O. *New Wave on the Black Sea*. www.newyorktimes.com. 20 Jan. 2008, 17 Dec. 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/magazine/20Romanian-t.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&ref=magazine&adxnlnx=1201557656-Na10Dv5l77wEQ9XpTwuUUA>.
- Mijojlic, Vera. *ROMANIAN NEW WAVE*, International Spotlight – Romania at LAFF'07. www.cinemawithoutborders.com. 2007. 17 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.cinemawithoutborders.com/news/125/ARTICLE/1303/2007-06-19.html>>.

- Roddick, Nick. *Eastern Promise*. www.bfi.org.uk. Oct. 2007. 18 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/49399>>.
- Kaceanov, Marina. *On the New Romanian Cinema*. <http://www.pov.imv.au.dk>. 18 Dec. 2009. <http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_25/section_3/artc6A.html>.
- Șerban, Alex Leo. *Filmul văzut de 42 de ochi*. www.liternet.ro. 4 June 2007. 17 Dec. 2009. <<http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/4626/Alex-Leo-Serban/Filmul-vazut-de-42-de-ochi.html>>.
- Calen, Ioana. *Cinematografia românească în perioada comunistă: multe săli, puține filme*. www.capital.ro. 30 Nov. 2009. 19 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.capital.ro/articol/cinematografia-romaneasca-in-perioada-comunista-multe-sali-putine-filme-128684.html>>.
- Filmul românesc după 1948*. <http://www.wikipedia.org>. 12 Aug. 2009. 19 Dec. 2009. <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filmul_rom%C3%A2nesc_dup%C3%A1_1948>.
- Nicolae Ceaușescu. www.wikipedia.org. 17 Nov 2009. 21 Dec. 2009. <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolae_Ceaușescu, accesat la 21 decembrie 2009>.
- Filme românești cu distincții internaționale*. www.wikipedia.org. 28 Nov. 2009. 19 Dec. 2009. http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filme_rom%C3%A2ne%C5%9Fti_cu_distinc%C5%A3ii_interna%C5%A3ionale.
- Fulger, Mihai. *Filmul românesc ca produs de export*. Cuvântul, Nr. 8 (338) / August 2005. 19 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=7489>>.
- Burlacu, Ciufu, "Hârtia va fi albastră", *parola teroristilor*. Jurnalul Național. 19 Dec. 2009. 20 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.jurnalul.ro/stire-decembrie-89/hartia-va-fi-albastra-parola-teroristilor-530896.html>>.
- Gal, Gail. *The politics of gender after socialism: a comparative-historical essay*. Princetown University Press. 2000. www.books.google.com. 20 Dec. 2009. <http://books.google.com/books?id=mgUJJRIZDssC&pg=PA55&dq=women+romania+socialism&ei=KKAoS_HCJ6K0zASknsHIBA&cd=8v=onepage&q=women+romania+socialism&f=false>.
- Neagoe, Adriana. *Femeia Româncă în contextul comunismului. Perioada de studiu: 1965-1989*. www.tesionline.com. 20 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.tesionline.com/intl/preview.jsp?id=18150>>.
- Massino, Jill. *Anonimatul femeii în estetica României Ceaușiste. Despre femei și istoria lor în România*. Universitatea din București, 2004. www.ebooks.unibuc.ro. 21 Dec. 2009. <<http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/istorie/ciupala/index.htm>>.
- Alex. Leo Șerban: *Nu există un nou val de regizori români*, www.realitatea.net. 8 March 2007. Realitatea TV. 21 Dec. 2009. <http://www.realitatea.net/alex--leo-serban--nu-exista-un-nou-val-de-regizori-romani_47385.html>.
- Gheorghe, Blaga. *România reinventează filmul european de artă*. Gândul, 21 Jan. 2008, România liberă din 21 Jan. 2008. 21 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=9360>>.