INTRODUCTION

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The New Romanian cinema exploded onto the international film festival scene in the mid-2000s, catching audiences and critics completely by surprise. And if the 'Un Certain Regard' Best Film at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival for *The Death of Mr Lăzărescu* could be ignored as a happenstance, the numerous awards that followed in quick succession for *The Paper Will Be Blue*, *Ryna* and *How I Spent the End of the World* suggested a tendency. The Camera D'Or at the 2006 Cannes for *12:08 East of Bucharest* and especially the dual success at Cannes 2007 – Un Certain Regard Award for Cristian Nemescu's *California Dreamin'* and especially the Palm D'Or for Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* – sealed the rise to prominence of this hitherto obscure national cinema. It took however another couple of years for critics to finally agree that a 'new wave has finally arrived at the Black Sea' (Scott 2008), and to admit that 'Romanian filmmaking is now perceived as the hotbed of a fresh, expressive, and pertinent cinematic renewal' (Kaceanov 2008). A few years later, such sentiments would become a common media occurrence, corroborated by a blogger, who wrote that Romanian cinema 'never ceases to surprise and impress with the rigour of its execution, its intelligence and moral dimensions' (Père: 2012). Almost fifteen years later, with more than two hundred prestigious awards for forty or so notable films by world-renowned directors like Cristi Puiu, Cristian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cristian Nemescu, Radu Jude, Radu Muntean, Tudor Giurgiu, Călin Peter Netzer, Cătălin Mitulescu, Nae Caranfil and others,

Romanian cinema remains securely in the limelight of the international film festival circuit.

In the mid-2000s, however, there was not much indication that New Romanian cinema would last much longer than the Czech cinema of the 'Velvet Generation' from the 1990s, whose crown achievement was the Oscar for Jan Sverák's *Kolya* (1996). All the more so, as this 'New Czech Miracle' was built on the 'old miracle' of its internationally celebrated predecessor, the 1960s Czechoslovak New Wave, while the New Romanian Cinema sprang from a literal *terra incognita*. To be sure, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, East European[1] (or communist)[2] cinema had been associated mostly with the cinemas of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. In the immediate post-1989 aftermath, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and post-Yugoslavia were lumped together under the geopolitical term 'the Balkans', whose negative connotations have been examined by Maria Todorova in her seminal 1997 book *Imagining the Balkans*. Yet in the heavily politicised cultural context of the Yugoslav wars, the term 'Balkan cinema' gained quick currency among film historians and critics.[3] This was surprising, bearing in mind that the substitution of Eastern European with Balkan cinema had already proven its impracticality with the publication of Michael Jon Stoil's *Balkan Cinema: Evolution after the Revolution* (1982).[4] By conceptualising these four cinemas as a post-Second World War Eastern European transnational entity, modelled after Soviet cinema both structurally and ideologically, Stoil makes a rather unconvincing case for the Balkan-ness of his corpus. Therefore his laudable, though inconsistent – and at times paradoxical – attempt at a comparative approach to 'Balkan' cinema, has unfortunately remained on the margins of a scholarly field dominated by Daniel J. Goulding and Ronald Holloway, who were primarily interested in the Yugoslav, much less in Bulgarian, and not at all in Romanian or Albanian cinemas.

Mira and Antonin Liehm's 1977 thorough English-language history of East European cinema, *The Most Important Art: Soviet and Eastern European Film After 1945*, whose three chapters remain the backbone of any serious study of Romanian film history – was followed almost three decades later by Dina Iordanova's 2006 anthology *The Cinema of the Balkans*, featuring four essays on major Romanian films from the communist period. After yet another ten years, briefly interrupted by a few Special Issues on the emergent New Romanian cinema[5] and several chapters in anthologies,[6] a cluster of books appeared, obviously inspired by the growing international prestige of New Romanian cinema. Published in English by authors of Romanian origin, these works were helped by Dominique Nasta's 2013 *Contemporary Romanian Cinema: The History of Unexpected Miracle*, followed by Doru Pop's *Romanian New Wave Cinema: An Introduction* (2014), and most

recently, by Monica Filimon's monograph on Cristi Puiu and László Strausz's *Hesitant Histories on the Romanian Screen*.

A Movement, a School, a Wave…?

It is well known that naming a phenomenon conceptualises it to a large extent, therefore throughout this volume the moniker New Romanian Cinema (or NRC) is used, following the original suggestion by the late Romanian film critic Alex Leo Şerban and further popularised by the 2007 *Kinokultura* Special Issue on Romanian cinema (edited by C. Stojanova and D. Duma), and by Andrei Gorzo in 2012. A concurrent term, 'Romanian New Wave', was initially proposed by Mihai Fulger in 2006,[7] and posited by Doru Pop, while some authors, like Dominique Nasta, eschew the issue altogether. All the more that American film critic Bert Cardullo calls it just a 'film surge', brought about by a 'capricious occurrence of talent' and 'good luck in distribution', which in his view is the *raison d'être* of all recent 'waves' including the Iranian, the Chinese, and the South Korean (2012: 327). Conversely, Puiu's joke that the NRC consists of 'a bunch of desperate directors' captures the stubborn resistance of NRC directors to being fitted upon the procrustean bed of a school, a movement or a wave. Scriptwriter and filmmaker Ioana Uricaru underscores the main traits that bring these directors together: a preoccupation with 'complete creative freedom' and 'control of the product' (2012: 429).

To be sure, most significant artistic movements have been theorised post factum, and even then with mixed results, as the 'fragile notion of [German] Expressionism demonstrates' if the list of its alleged common traits is applied to more than two films from the historic movement (Marie 2003: 28). Yet 'expressionism' – like the concept of New Romanian Cinema– 'continues to return through the windows of critical discourse' (ibid.), as Filimon's and Strausz's recent books[8] and the current anthology demonstrate.[9] Whatever the case may be, at the time of writing the movement has dominated the Romanian film scene since its accepted early beginnings with Puiu's 2001 film *Stuff and Dough*.

The taxonomy of a film school characterisations, proposed by Michel Marie on the basis of the French New Wave experience, features six parameters, out of which New Romanian Cinema meets only two upfront. The filmmakers have clearly coalesced on all levels of the creative process as an 'ensemble of artists' and 'collaborators', who define themselves against their predecessors and adversaries and, despite the absence of 'a basic critical doctrine, artistic program, [or] manifesto', have been producing a 'group of works' whose common aesthetic criteria have been identified independently by a number of critics and theorists (2003: 28).[10]

The place of a leader –whom Marie calls the 'pope' or 'mentor' of the group,

and who could do for the New Romanian Cinema what producer Erich Pommer did for German Expressionism, film critic and theorist André Bazin for the French New Wave, or film critics Antonin and Mira Liehm and writer Milan Kundera for the Czechoslovak New Wave – has never been claimed. Yet it could be said that Puiu has amply fulfilled that role, a fact recognised by Alex Leo Şerban back in 2009 when he anecdotally divided the history of Romanian cinema into BC and AC: 'before and after Cristi [Puiu]' (qtd in Filimon 2017: 58). As Pop rightfully notes, by virtue of his 'prolific activity as director, writer and producer, and even actor in his own movies', Puiu 'reinvented the entire Romanian cinema', thus becoming 'a true Master, a leader of his generation' (2014: 43). In his numerous and generous interviews – including the one he gave in March 2017 for this introduction – Puiu appears also as an eloquent spokesperson of the movement. Indeed, *The Death of Mr Lăzărescu* – whose eponymous hero dies after a nightmarish journey through the crowded Bucharest hospitals – has been acknowledged time and again as paradigmatic film of the movement and Puiu – as its aesthetic and philosophical trend-setter (Stojanova and Duma 2012).

The extant popular and specialised academic publications in Romania have been demonstrating a benevolent engagement with the movement since the early 2000s, thus meeting the need, identified by Marie, of 'vehicles for diffusing . . . namely press and broadcast media' (ibid.). And although it is difficult to discern any specific 'promotional strategy' comparable to that practised by *Cahiers du Cinema* in the 1950s and early 1960s, the sheer volume of articles and in-depth interviews published in both Romanian and English by the three foremost Romanian English-language academic journals – *Close Up*,[11] *Ekphrasis*[12] and *Film and Media Studies*[13] – speaks for itself. Through its nineteen branches worldwide, the Romanian Cultural Institute (Institutul Cultural Român) – modelled after UniFrance[14] and directly subordinate to the President of Romania – has been playing an indispensable role in the NRC's promotion and distribution. Moreover, the Transylvanian International Film Festival (Cluj-Napoca) with its famous Romanian Days, is part of the long line of prestigious international film festivals which, helmed by Cannes, have bestowed worldwide recognition on New Romanian Cinema.

The New Romanian Cinema as Ensemble of Artists

The violent rupture with the communist past has made the experience of New Romanian Cinema directors comparable to that of Soviet Montage filmmakers, or that of German Expressionists and Italian Neorealists, as they have all 'emerged from societies that have undergone drastic socio-cultural trauma', and have consequently contributed to a 'major aesthetic break with existing tradition' (Tudor qtd in Hames 2005: 4). As Peter Hames suggests, the '1960s movements such as the Czechoslovak, French and British new waves, were

more limited in their significance and cannot be related to social disorders of such magnitude', which apropos speaks in favour of considering the New Romanian Cinema as a movement rather than an aesthetic style, all the more so as NRC directors, like the Italian neorealists, have remained deliberately vague with regard to a 'basic critical doctrine' understood in both aesthetic and broader ideological terms (Hames 2005: 4).

The fifteen or so NRC directors, born between 1967 and mid-1980s,[15] belong to the 'decree generation', bookended by the strict ban on abortions introduced by Nicolae Ceauşescu's government in 1966, and its consequent repeal after the fall of the regime in 1989. Paradoxically, as reflected in Florin Iepan's documentary *Children of the Decree* (2005), the generation, which experienced the 1989 revolution in their teens or early twenties, were, so to speak, a side effect of the abortion ban. Yet along with producing most of the ardent participants in Ceauşescu's deposition as well as its numerous victims, this unique generation, as Pop has it, was also destined to become the 'demographic engine' of Romania's post-1989 transformation (2014: 25). Indeed, the biographies of the NRC filmmakers are marked by their urban[16] middle-class upbringing,[17] and by the drastic changes triggered by the revolution, but mainly by the opportunities for unhindered personal expression offered by this time.[18] Among the reasons Nasta nominates Mungiu's Palme d'Or winner *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* as the movement's second major achievement after *Mr Lăzărescu*, is the way the film recreates 'the atmosphere reigning among family and friends in relation to the abortion ban . . . silenced for years by the terror of the regime' (2013: 189).

The New Romanian Cinema and the Generational Divide

Summarising the history of post-Second World War European cinema, both in the capitalist West and the communist East, Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell emphasise *auteurship* as its major feature (2002: 357). Due to the peculiarities of the historical evolution of Eastern European intelligentsia over the previous two centuries, the best known pre-1989 Romanian directors have seen themselves overwhelmingly as auteurs, and therefore equally resentful of commercial and propagandist 'cinema for the masses'.[19]

The prestigious auteur status of their predecessors however elicited little respect from the NRC directors despite their shared disdain for commercial and propagandist cinema. Even Lucian Pintilie, one of the few dissident and internationally recognised Romanian directors prior to 1989, whose influence on New Romanian Cinema is undeniable, has not remained unscathed. Mihai Chirilov, one of Romania's foremost critics, in his criticism of Pintilie's 'obsessive reassessment of the past', points out that *The Oak* (1992) – the highly awarded film he made upon his return to Romania after two decades of forced

exile – should have been 'enough to exorcize [the director's] ghosts of the past', yet with *The Afternoon of a Torturer* (2001) and *Niki and Flo* (2003), Pintilie 'went back to where he had started' (2007). Clearly, for the NRC generation, the veterans were too weary to precipitate the radical changes, needed to bring Romanian cinema into the twenty-first century.

Uricaru takes a similar stand with regard to the squabbles over the constrained state funding, lumping renowned pre-1989 auteurs like Dan Piţa and Mircea Daneliuc together with the 'ubiquitous' Sergiu Nicolaescu,[20] declaring them as 'obsolete dinosaurs' after 2001 (2012: 433–5). The most unceremonious expression of this generational stand-off belongs to Puiu, who said in a 2004 interview that '[historically] good [Romanian] movies . . . are nothing but accidents. In Romania there isn't really a film school or a cinema, but only a forced effort' (qtd in Pop 2014: 120).[21]

In their turn, veteran directors – with the notable exception of Pintilie, who in addition to helming the Ministry of Culture-funded Film Studio, was instrumental in 'financing a few landmark works from the 1990s' (Uricaru 2012: 436)[22] and also collaborated with Puiu and Răzvan Rădulescu on the script of *Niki and Flo* – did little to remedy this generational discord. More shocking than Nicolaescu's post-1989 demarches – reproached by both Uricaru and Filimon,[23] but understandable within the context of his decades-long ideological and commercial opportunism – was the brash commercialisation and speculative cinematic exhibitionism (also known as miserabilism),[24] exemplified by the 'surprisingly low quality, didactic message and unconvincing scripts' of Piţa's works from the late 1990s and early 2000s (Nasta 2013: 56) and by the failure of Daneliuc's films to 'measure up to the outstanding quality of his earlier productions' (71). As Puiu has sarcastically put it, the miserabilist tendencies in postcommunist cinema, with their uncensored language, graphic violence, misogynistic sexuality, and scenes of abject poverty, are but 'survival tactics', or 'special effects', meant for the Western gaze, and a cheap surrogate for 'Hollywood CGIs' (Puiu interview, 2017).

Then again, this generational rift has been unjustifiably exacerbated by the wholesale rejection of the communist legacy, resulting in aesthetic and historic decontextualisation of the pre-1989 cinema. Thus the metaphoric-allegorical trend from the 1980s and its Aesopian language, associated with peak achievements of Eastern European art cinema[25] and based on the great interwar Romanian literature, tend to be seen in abstract isolation rather than as oblique criticism of the regime. True, due to heavy censorship, from today's vantage point, these films yield a 'codespeak' (Uricaru 2012: 430) that is burdened with connotations that are increasingly difficult to decipher (Chirilov 2007). Yet this hardly justifies disparaging them as suffering from 'symbolitis', or from the 'sickness of the metaphor' (Popescu qtd in Pop 2014: 95), and accusing them of reinforcing the communist ideology.

The complex rapport of the New Romanian directors with their *papas kino*[26] and its perceived 'certain' tendencies[27] thus make the rupture look like a fundamentally existential one, more akin to the fateful confrontation between Cronos and Zeus than to the conventional Freudian stand-off between fathers and sons, whose phenomenology on and off camera Pop scrutinises in detail.[28] Still, we are reminded that, along with Pintilie, 'among the most quoted as favourites by then teen-age Puiu, Mungiu and Muntean' are Daneliuc and Piţa, members of the short-lived first, or 'old', Romanian New Wave from the 1970s and early 1980s (Filimon 2017: 16). In our interview, Puiu reconfirmed the importance of that daring 'old' wave by citing four of its prominent works – Daneliuc's *The Cruise* 1981), *Sequences* (1982) by Alexandru Tatos, Stere Gulea's *The Moromete Family* (1987), and *A Girl's Tear* (1980) by Iosif Demian – 'an undeservingly ignored masterpiece' – considering them as 'important for Romanian cinema' as Pintilie's *Reconstruction* (1970).[29]

Auteurship of Austerity and Personal Responsibility

New Romanian directors have secured their artistic freedom by moving towards a type of film that would ensure maximum artistic control within constrained budgets, since, 'from a business point of view', it is easier to 'assemble the funds by using financing mechanisms, designed to encourage auteur rather than commercial initiatives' (Uricaru 2012: 429).

The NRC funding is doled out in three major ways: through the National Film Fund (via the Romanian Film Centre: Centrul Naţional al Cinematografiei, or CNC);[30] through 'small private sponsorships'; and through 'European grants[31] as well as co-production funds'.[32] While the tradition of state funding is often associated with what Stephen Croft calls '*maximal*, *centrally controlled economy*' of communism[33] (original emphasis, 1998: 389), it actually dates back to the first half of the twentieth century, when it was designed in tune with pervasively protectionist European policies in the sphere of arts and culture.[34] Similarly, thanks to the traditionally close cultural and linguistic relations with France, the post-1989 reform of the Romanian film industry was fashioned after the model of French Cultural Exception – that is, the exclusive right to treat culture and cultural products differently from other commercial products, reconfirmed by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations in 1993 (Martel 2001: 8). Therefore CNC, the current hub of Romanian national cinema – created by virtue of Decree 80 on 8 February 1990, which also put an end to pre-1989 Romanian centralised cinema industry – is a replica of its French counterpart, including its identical acronym. Moreover, by introducing a number of young NRC filmmakers to the world, the Cannes film festival also played a decisive part in the continuous French support for the New Romanian cinema.

Moreover, the NRC directors, as Pop argues, share a common view regarding 'the role of cinema and preferred filmmaking practices', comparable to the French New Wave's *politique des copains* by 'not only supporting each other conceptually', but also being 'involved directly in each other's projects' (2014: 26).[35] This *politique* includes the group of versatile cinematographers and actors, whose creative vision is inextricable from the success of the movement and is yet so often ignored.[36] And although thus far it may appear that the NRC is funded by a steady flow of state funding and foreign grants, it actually owes its success to the ingenuity of the directors themselves, who have become 'prominent voices of European and global cinema' (Uricaru 2012: 435). With the creation of their own production companies, they secured creative independence and found additional 'merit as entrepreneurs as well as artists': Mungiu with Mobra Films, Puiu – and Bobby Păunescu – with Mandragora, Porumboiu with Km 42 Film; Mitulescu with Strada Film, and Giurgiu with Libra Film (Uricaru 2012: 438).

Towards a Definition of the Existentialist Realism of New Romanian Cinema

The major disruption of Romanian cinema in the aftermath of 1989 put an end to the official production of propaganda, but also to the prestige of literary adaptations, especially from the metaphoric-allegorical trend, and their 'deeply political narratives' about 'the effects of history on the individual' (Elsaesser qtd in Pop 2014: 16). This preoccupation with the pre-eminence of history[37] over the individual – typical of the doctrinal intertext of Eastern European communist cinema – was in fact deeply entrenched in the *engagé* slant of pre-Second World War Eastern European artistic and intellectual output.[38]

The New Romanian Cinema categorically rejected this politicised legacy and its strong predilection for construing characters as victims of socio-historical circumstance, thus securing their immunity from personal moral responsibility and yet denying them moral agency. By focusing on the crucial importance of personal choices, the NRC has circumvented the traditional role of Eastern European cinema as a form of potentially propagandistic public service and education – and 'high' and intricate form of artistic expression – but also placed itself in direct opposition to the role of cinema as pure entertainment. The qualitatively new approach of New Romanian directors, predicated on the existentialist necessity of integrity and individualism, has resulted in a veraciously consistent 'group of works' that encodes the existential metaphysics of the ethical experience into the ironic ambiguity of its aesthetic representation.

This new kind of *auteurship* displays formative – stylistic and ethical – features that amount to what could be called the existentialist realism of New Romanian cinema, a notion which grasps its specificity, yet is flexible

enough to accommodate further evolution. Predicated on Puiu's influence, this Existentialist Realism – as pointed out in his interview – was groomed under Eastern as well as Western influence. While studying abroad, [39] he found inspiration in directors like John Casavettes, whereas at the Bucharest Film School UNATC,[40] the NRC *alma mater*, his colleagues developed 'under the influence of Andrey Tarkovsky or Czech New Wave master Milos Forman', which '*Occident* or *Furia* [the first films by Mungiu and Muntean, made in 2002] clearly demonstrate' (Puiu interview, 2017). For his own debut *Stuff and Dough*, premiered almost concurrently, Puiu came up with a radically different style which – after *Mr Lăzărescu* – would 'profoundly affect' the aesthetics of NRC, bringing it abreast with current tendencies of world cinema. 'You could tell', Puiu says, 'that maybe because of the prize it won [*Prix un Certain Regard*] at Cannes, Mungiu's and Muntean's second films [*4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, 2007 and *The Paper Will Be Blue*, 2006], as well as other films from that time, were made in the stylistics of *Mr Lăzărescu*' (Puiu interview, 2017).[41]

Puiu describes his films as 'testimonies' or 'witnesses', perhaps not of the 'loud whistleblower kind, shouting from the rooftops as the kid from Andersen's story', but rather as 'happening naturally, and by their very existence exposing the truth that the emperor has no clothes' (Puiu interview, 2017). Building on the ethical–aesthetic congruity of his works, he insists that '"realism" is an overrated term', and he tends to agree with solipsist philosophers that there is no such thing as a physical reality beyond one's own self, and that therefore 'all artists are realists, although some focus on the reality within their minds, while others on the reality without' (ibid.). It is then hardly surprising that a sense of personal responsibility has become the most salient feature of New Romanian Cinema. With its insistence on subjectivity and authenticity, on choice and commitment and on the inevitably ensuing anxiety in the face of nothingness (as Jean Paul Sartre had it) – the existentialist realism of New Romanian cinema is presented as a way of life best captured in the words of Søren Kierkegaard, as 'a truth that is true for me . . . the idea for which I can live or die' (qtd in Kosciejew 2014: 143). Moreover, Puiu's contention chimes with Bordwell's description of Western European modernist cinema, born under the post-war influence of existentialism. In his view, while the 'objective' and 'subjective' verisimilitude of modernist cinema are of equal standing, their inevitable frictions are resolved through expressionist 'authorial commentary' through 'the device of ambiguity', since, 'ideally, the film hesitates,[42] suggesting character's [sic] subjectivity, life's [objective] untidiness and author's vision' (Bordwell 1985: 721). In New Romanian cinema, the frictions between the subjective and the objective are resolved through the ambiguity of irony and ironic modes – tragic or comic – as preferred forms of authorial commentary. According to the celebrated Canadian critic Northrop Frye, ironic

narratives are populated by characters, whose knowledge of their situation and their 'ability to change it' are either 'inferior' or 'equal to ours' (1990: 34).[43] Moreover, our 'sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity' is enhanced by the author's propensity for 'detached objectivity and suppression of all explicit moral judgements', suggesting little in a direct way, but 'meaning as much as possible' (1990: 40). Such an author is the quintessential Aristotelian *eiron*, the 'ironic artist . . . [who] deprecates himself and, like Socrates, pretends to know nothing, even that he is ironic' (ibid.). Therefore Puiu's reference to his own films as 'testimonies' or 'witnesses', and even 'natural occurrences', reminds one of the Kierkegaardian ironist who, by self-effacing, prevents 'the addressee from merely emulating the speaker without attempting self-knowledge' (Mulaem 2017: 222).

The testimonial ethos of New Romanian Cinema is enhanced by the terse narrative formats that follow an Aristotelian, tripartite dramatic structure of a single plot-line, supporting the complete action of one main character, and is 'confined within one revolution of the sun' (Aristotle 1961: 40). Intended to stimulate the aesthetic as well as the ethical experience in the perceptive viewer, this narrative format – known as the 24-hour story – can be found in about one-third of the movement's features,[44] as well as in most of its numerous shorts.[45] These curt stories thus 'begin in realism and dispassionate observation . . . and move steadily towards myth', or the archetypal dimensions of human existence (Frye 1990: 42). That is, they move towards 'conventionalized or stylized' biblical, classical or local anecdotal motifs, which – being 'not fully adapted to plausibility of "realism"' – are used to facilitate the perception of film as a 'testimony' (366). And they serve as what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls 'outward criteria' for the inexpressible, of 'things' that could only '"show themselves"', like 'ethics, religion, the meaning of life, logic and philosophy' and certainly love and death (Wittgenstein qtd in Monk 2005: 17–21).

Thus the tragic-ironic mode, favoured by Puiu, Mungiu and Muntean among others, 'merely' objectifies the 'human, all too human' facts of life as 'outward criteria' for the inexpressible depths of human existence. The mythical intertext of the Christ-like plight of Mr Lăzărescu, Costi (*The Paper Will Be Blue*), Ryna (*Ryna*), Silviu (*If I Want to Whistle, I Whistle*), and Alina (*Beyond the Hills*) construes them as *pharmakoi* (victims or scapegoats), whose ability to cope with exclusion from an uncaring society is much lower than ours.[46] This type of ironic austerity is consistent with the NRC audio-visual minimalism, complemented by carefully designed camera positions and movements,[47] reminiscent of the observational style of direct cinema.[48] What these aesthetics accomplish is to '"draw your attention to a thing, to place things side by side", and to make another person "see what you see"' (Wittgenstein qtd in Szabados and Stojanova 2011: 112).

A different kind of irony is championed by Porumboiu, whose films Puiu

describes as standing apart from the NRC *œuvre* for they 'belong to a tradition, which cultivates a macabre smile, a destructive lucidity, a tragic absurdity and a refined misanthropy' (Riding 2007: AR8). Yet again, while Puiu refers to the 'dryness and minimalism' of Jarmusch's *Stranger than Paradise* (1984)[49] as a major influence, Porumbiou admits to drawing inspiration for *12:08* from *Down by Law* (1986).[50] Indeed, if the first part of *12:08* is stylistically closer to the objectified ironic mode, the second discloses Porumboiu's authorial presence from the subjective point of view of the amateur cameraman, and makes us literally 'see what he sees' and does behind the scenes. Actually, Porumboiu has claimed to have 'aligned himself with the much-derided cameraman of the show' not only because of his 'faulty camerawork', but also because of his 'failure to find the truth in all the different versions of the story he is given' (qtd in Bardan 2012: 141).

The comic-ironic mode in the works of Nemescu, Jude, Gabriel Achim, Netzer and Giurgiu could broadly be defined as subjective realism in the sense of externalising characters' mental states with ironic authorial commentary, marked by 'heightened affective charges of irony' (Hutcheon 1994: 47). It ranges from simple estrangement to aggressive forms of ludic, contentious, bellicose satire that justifies the affinity for avant-garde stylistics augmented by absurd incongruities and intermedial layering of meanings.

In these films, the comic-ironic points to personal and collective delusions of individuals who, like Don Quixote, are victims of the excessive idealisation of their own role, or that of the society they manically strive to integrate into, or of both, and therefore could be defined as *alazons* (or imposters). The three TV interlocutors (*12:08*) and the hapless workplace safety instructor (*Adalbert's Dream*) come to mind, since their intelligence (which is 'lower than ours') exposes not only self-delusion but also the duplicitous nature of film and TV as social institutions (Frye 1990: 39–42). Furthermore, the humiliation suffered by the protagonists of *Medal of Honor*, *Of Snails and Men* and *Everybody in Our Family* is also a 'testimony' to the hypocrisy of a conservative environment that likes to see itself as progressive. Unsavoury revelations about incompatibilities between humanism and the law are brought to bear in *Aferim!*, which is designed as a folkloric picaresque about the adventures of a shrewd policeman and his sickly apprentice of a son throughout southeastern Europe in the early nineteenth century. By exposing an array of contradictory, mostly bigoted attitudes to a fugitive Gypsy slave they are hunting for, the film becomes a satirical fable about the perennial state of affairs in that part of the world. Conversely, the seemingly naïve present-day rendition of the Robin Hood legend in *The Treasure*, whose idealistic protagonist turns out to be much smarter and nobler than his environment, is actually a sardonic comment on Romanian consumer society.

In the final analysis, the austere aesthetics of New Romanian Cinema,

reinforced by its archetypal narrative structures, brings together content, form and ethics into a compact philosophical entity, not unlike Wittgenstein's propositions, which he considered to be a "picture of reality" (Proposition 4.01, Wittgenstein 2015: 32). As A. O. Scott has famously suggested, the inspiration for the New Romanian cinematic realism 'seems to be as much ethical as aesthetic, and less a matter of verisimilitude than of honesty' (2008). Not surprisingly, then, Puiu strongly agrees that Wittgenstein's proposition that 'ethics and aesthetics are one' captures the fundamental essence of the movement (Puiu interview, 2017).[51]

Book Overview: Issues, Formal Devices, and Critical Approaches

The current anthology brings together fifteen prominent specialists whose chapters foreground the aesthetic, philosophical and ethical aspects of what has been defined as the existentialist realism of New Romanian cinema. Primarily, the authors explore the way in which filmmakers – as well as their characters– act as moral and rational agents under their immediate circumstances, which Sartre has famously summed up as the 'hand one has been dealt'. Therefore the focus of **the first two parts** is on (self-)reflexivity, minimalism and irony, seen in their (post-)modernist, intermedial and intertextual context since, as argued above, these aesthetics devices underwrite the extraordinary success of New Romanian Cinema. **Part III** examines the ethical–aesthetic congruity of New Romanian cinema, which is defined as its fundamental feature. By exploring the idiosyncratic handling of time as a diegetic, personal, historical and philosophical category, this part elucidates ethical issues in the light of discourses ranging from Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian psychoanalysis to existentialism and neo-liberalism. **Part IV** tackles authenticity within the discursive confines of gender and genre, foregrounding the cosmopolitan and transnational nature of New Romanian Cinema. By the same token, the conclusive **Part V** scrutinises ways of grafting individual and national space onto the private and public places, deployed in New Romanian films; and, after positioning them within the discursive context of the marginal and the peripheral, puts the most recent developments of New Romanian Cinema on the transnational cinematic map.

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Part I, *Modernism/Minimalism*, comprises three chapters, which contextualise the reflexivity and minimalism of New Romanian Cinema within European and global cinema. In Chapter 1, Dominique Nasta – author of *Contemporary Romanian Cinema: The History of an Unexpected Miracle*, a frequently quoted source in this anthology – places the movement firmly within European modernism of the 1960s and 1970s. In her view, '[t]he achievements of the New Romanian cinema are the result of a subtractive principle that has its roots in

Modern cinema's attempt to shift from goal-oriented narratives to classical filmmaking alternatives'. Nasta then turns to the specificities of sound design (and soundscape), whose complexity, she argues, is often more powerful than the visuals in supporting the most salient (post-)modernist features of New Romanian films – their minimalism, their handling of time, and certainly the deployment of irony, whose crucial role in the NRC *œuvre*, discussed above, is recognised by most contributors to the volume.

Whereas Nasta operates within the contextual framework of European modernism in Bálint Kovács' understanding, the other two authors discuss various aspects of minimalism both as modernist aesthetic trope and theoretical concept. Thus Irina Trocan – as implied by the title of her chapter 'Minimalism in the New Romanian Cinema: Absent, Omnipresent or Misjudged?' – focuses first on the modernist etymology of the term. She then moves to describing its potential as a means of eliciting critical awareness, and a tool for analysing reception and perception. '[T]he art-house ambitions of recent Romanian productions', she writes, 'their aim to perturb the habits of entrenched spectators, can be proven by association with, and in comparison to, established minimalist works of art since the 1960s, whether pertaining to cinema, sculpture or music'.

In Chapter 3, Ioana Uricaru argues that minimalism – manifested as exclusion of non-essential elements like diegetic music, which, along with Nasta, she also identifies as an 'exemplary trait' of NRC– actually results from a 'worldview that rejects the myth of melodrama'. Moreover, building on Pop's term 'purposeful minimalism', she argues that the aesthetics of New Romanian Cinema is the end product of 'risky decisions and sophisticated strategies'. And, as the only practising filmmaker among the contributors to this volume, she illuminates the complexities of 'industrial, extradiegetic and intradiegetic employment of music' from an economic, historical, traditional and ideological perspective.

Part II, *Intermediality/Intertextuality*, features four chapters, which scrutinise New Romanian cinema in the light of a theoretical investigation in this fairly new academic field. Fittingly, the cluster is helmed by "'Exhibited Space" and Intermediality in the films of Corneliu Porumboiu' by Ágnes Pethő, the author of *Cinema and Intermediality: The Passion for the In-Between* (2011). Focusing on the *tableau* shots in the first four feature films by Corneliu Porumboiu and their intermedial associations to other art forms – painting, theatre and installation art – Pethő succinctly concludes that 'in each of these films, the *tableau* appears not only as a liminal space conceived in-between the visible and the invisible, the grand theatre of politics and the private world of everyday people, it also reveals in different ways the shifting demarcation between the "public" and the "domestic"'.

Then again, through the prism of intermediality and remediation, the other three authors also focus on reflexivity, irony and minimalism. In Chapter 5

Katalin Sándor sees Pintilie's works as 'aesthetic and conceptual antecedent[s]' of the 'perception of the real as a medially layered, heterogeneous experience', which she argues is characteristic of New Romanian Cinema. In Chapter 6, Melinda Blos-Jáni focuses on the works of a versatile director, Nae Caranfil, whose passion for remediation and intermedial devices, borrowed from theatre, sets him apart from the NRC cohort. Yet, she writes, Caranfil's intermedial 'self-reflexive aesthetics and his ironic, narcissistic narratives' constitute a specific 'notion of cinema(tic realism), considered to be the "other" of the minimalist realism of the New Romanian cinema'. This nearly axiomatic status of minimalism in New Romanian Cinema is however contested by Liviu Lutas in Chapter 7, where he points to a number of moments in Puiu's films, whose 'suggestive power' – rooted in other forms of media such as posters, paintings and music, and enhanced by 'the complex transference of remediation and stylisation' – call into question the very notion of minimalism.

The chapters of **Part III,** *Ethics/New Aesthetics*, are brought together by ethical issues, reflected in their representation of time in its various hypostases. In Chapter 8, Christina Stojanova, following Wittgenstein and Heidegger, sees the handling of time as a manifestation of existentialist authenticity that identifies temporal confusion with moral confusion both socially and personally. In her discussion of the representability of good and evil in terms of analytical psychology, existentialism and philosophy of religion, she emphasises – following Wittgenstein – the particular sensitivity of NRC directors to values 'whereof one cannot speak' that could only be found in the works of 'great artists, musicians, and novelists', who, Wittgenstein believed, 'could teach people a lot more than scientists'.

Ioana Uricaru's Chapter 9 examines the cinematic representation of the turbulent period between the 1989 Romanian revolution and its 1990 aftermath as an ethical corrective to their representation by the media. In light of Lacanian concepts of the Real and the Symbolic, she demonstrates how the 'discursive tools' of the NRC films 're-create and reassert the authenticity of experience', since 'the only basis for ethics can be found in individual solidarity, in truly empathising with another even if this empathy comes at an extraordinary price'.

In Chapter 10, Kalling Heck foregrounds the ethical tensions between the political economy of liberalism proper and current neo-liberal practices. In his view, the drama of the two female leads is the result of the 'cruelty of austerity', which – being imposed by the EU – affects Romanian society at all levels, including New Romanian Cinema. Therefore the author believes that the tragic outcome in Mungiu's film would generate – not unlike Italian neorealism and the films of the Dardenne brothers – an ethical impulse in affluent EU nations, which have the power to alleviate the austerity that they have imposed on postcommunist countries.

The first chapter of **Part IV**, *Gender/Genre* constitutes an attempt to rectify the overall impression that women in New Romanian Cinema are underrepresented, especially behind the camera. Yet the successes of Ruxandra Zenide and Melissa de Raaf, crowned by the triumph of Adina Pintile's *Touch Me Not* at the 2018 Berlinale – let alone that of versatile producers like Ada Solomon, Anca Puiu and Oana Giurgiu, responsible for producing more than half of the NRC films – call this argument into question. Dana Duma's Chapter 11 is bookmarked by a brief discussions of works by two female Romanian directors, Zenide's *Ryna* and Ana Lungu's *The Self Portrait of a Dutiful Daughter*. Through the prism of European feminist theory, Duma demonstrates that 'female issues and gender inequality' remain endemic in a society that she calls 'neo'-patriarchal. In her view, screen representations of women fall into three major periods. The first is associated with propagandist 'images of "women in leadership roles"', propounded during communism 'to justify the ascent of Elena Ceauşescu' to absolute power. The second – synonymous with the rampant 'commercialisation of sex and the media' in the 1990s – points to the plight of women 'as losers in the transition to capitalism'. The current moment is associated with the 'decisive [female] role in the narrative structures' of New Romanian Cinema, which – judging by the 'sheer number of female names and pronouns in its titles' – unequivocally supports 'female characters and issues'.

In Chapter 12, Andrea Virginás discusses the potential of the 'objectively descriptive notion of small (national) cinemas' like those of Hungary and Romania, to successfully supplant the loaded 'geopolitical angle of the term "postcommunist Eastern European cinema"'. She argues that although in a heated global market, 'small cinema' auteurs from New Romanian Cinema tend to 'integrate certain genre elements' borrowed from mainstream Hollywood films, they nonetheless remain firmly 'within the confines of the arthouse discourse'.

The conclusive **Part V**, *National/Place and Transnational/Space*, opens with Mircea Deaca's chapter 13, which looks into representations of 'gatherings around the kitchen table', where 'members of the family show their "true" face and abandon [the usual] role playing'. The author argues that the kitchen transcends its diegetic role and, thanks to the NRC affinity for *huis clos* shots and long alienating takes, becomes an instrument for converting the topographical into psychological, the physical into metaphysical, and – not unlike the previously mentioned 'traces of genre' – the national into transnational.

Chapter 14, by Marian Ţuţui and Raluca Iacob, links the perceived marginality of New Romanian Cinema within the European context to the centre–periphery tensions between the capital Bucharest and the Romanian provinces as filming locations and featured diegetic space. As the authors argue, although the NRC films 'offer multiple examples' of either 'ascribed or internalized' geographical, cultural and psychological marginality, they also bring into high

relief the universality of such micro and macro identity issues, invariably predicated on one's space and place within society.

In Chapter 15, Doru Pop – the author of *Romanian New Wave Cinema: An Introduction*, another frequently referenced source in this anthology – forcefully argues that 'contemporary Romanian cinema is changing from a national to a transnational film industry'. Building on recent domestic admission figures, Pop contends that – although the international success of New Romanian Cinema is largely unrecognised domestically – commercial genre films, both Romanian and American, account for the lion's share of box office revenues in Romania. As a result of this continuing trend, 'aesthetically accomplished' NRC works like Muntean's *Tuesday, After Christmas*, Netzer's *Child's Pose* and Porumboiu's *When Evening Falls on Bucharest, or Metabolism* move increasingly towards the '"transnationalisation" of New Romanian cinema'.

Indeed, if the latest successes of Romanian cinema with Constantin Popescu's *Pororoca* (2017), Adina Pintilie's *Touch Me Not* (2018), and Radu Jude's *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* (2018) – made within and outside the confines of New Romanian Cinema aesthetics – are a good indicator, Pop's claim that 'directors are increasingly agglutinated into a cosmopolitan identity . . . transnational lifestyle' could indeed be considered prophetic for the future of Romanian cinema.

The **Historical Overview**, included as **Part VI** at the end of the volume, offers a comprehensive look at the political and ideological, as well as the cultural, industrial and artistic aspects of Romanian national cinema from its beginnings in the early 1900s to the arrival of New Romanian Cinema in the 2000s. Part and parcel of the idiosyncratic evolution of Eastern European culture and society over the last couple of centuries, Stojanova sees Romanian cinema as a form of displaced negotiation between the state and the intelligentsia, resulting in the latter's crisis of self-knowledge about its place in society. The 'sustained and diverse tradition' of Romanian interwar cinema is therefore discussed in light of its fluctuating loyalties of public service, propaganda and high art – but rarely entertainment – while the post-war period is seen as negotiating aesthetic and ideological templates, enforced ubiquitously throughout the region after the communist takeover. The author emphasises the importance of the *totalitarian genre paradigm*, and highlights its peak moments during the subsequent four decades, focusing on its challenges. Among those, she singles out the mythopoetic and metaphoric-allegorical trends, along with the 'old' wave, and pays particular attention to auteurs like Pintilie, Daneliuc and Piţa, of whom NRC directors turned out to be ardent devotees.

In Stojanova's view, the 'abdication of the state' in the immediate post-communist aftermath 'exacerbated the filmmakers' crisis of self-knowledge,

and – under the pressure of reinforced delusions about 'salvation from the omnipotent West' – they reverted to the traditionally auteurist slant of what she calls 'realistic-descriptive' and 'naturalistic-nihilistic' trends.

The New Romanian Cinema, as Stojanova concludes – while clearly breaking away from the legacy of interwar, communist and early postcommunist Romanian national cinema – is also an inspired successor of their best traditions: the penchant for visual and psychological verism, and, for existentialism, is rooted in nativist literary and philosophical sources. In their capacity of 'free-floating (*freischwiebende*) intelligentsia', the NRC directors have emerged as 'moral and rational agents', courageous enough to contrast 'ideas and free minds to ideological mentalities' and capable of advancing 'a higher, more real, more objective kind of (self) knowledge', thus bestowing 'a unique voice to the frustrated denizens of our postmodern times'.

Notes

1. On the basis of a profound academic research (Stojanova 1999), it is assumed that over the last two-and-a-half centuries the similarities in the economic, political and social structures of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Poland, Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia (now Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro) – including most recent social and cultural processes and products – justify the usage of the term Eastern Europe.
2. The term 'communist' and 'communism' fits the needs of this introduction as it connotes both the regime and its ideology, and works semantically well with 'post-communism'.
3. *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998), *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture, and the Media* (2001), *Once Upon a Time There Was a Country – National and Cynicism in the Post-1990s Balkan Cinema* (2008).
4. The second part of *Cinema beyond the Danube: The Camera and Politics* (Stoil 1974).
5. Special Double Issue on New Romanian Cinema in *Film Criticism* (2010), 2: 3, Winter/Spring; Special Issue on Romanian New Wave in *Film International* (2012), 10: 1, pp. 7–50, and Special Issue on Cristian Mungiu, coordinated by Mircea Deaca (*Images, Imagini, Images: Journal of Visual and Cultural Studies*), University of Bucharest (2014), Issue 4). Most recently, Special Issue on New Romanian Cinema in *Film Criticism*, 41: 2, October 2017, edited by Alina Haliliuc and Jesse Schlotterbeck.
6. Most notably, *The Eastern European Cinemas* (2005) and *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas* (2012), both edited by Anikó Imre.
7. *Noul val în cinematografia românească/New Wave In Romanian Cinema* (2006), Bucureşti: Grupul Editorial Art.
8. Strausz privileges New Romanian Cinema or contemporary Romanian cinema over 'the historically weighted label "new wave"' (2017: 9).
9. The current volume retains its title from an earlier project by Stojanova and Duma, unrelated to the historical legacy of *New Cinema* (Noul Cinema) magazine (see Pop 2014: 19).
10. A school:

> requires a body of [shared] basic critical doctrine; an aesthetic program; publication of a manifesto, announcing the doctrine; a group of works, responding to these criteria; an ensemble of artists (directors, but also collaborators in creation, including writers, technicians, and actors); a promotional strategy and hence vehicles for diffusing that strategy, namely press and broadcast media; a leader (such as the strongest personality or spokesperson of the group and/or theoretician (the so-called 'pope' of the group), to represent the movement; finally, adversaries are needed, since every school defines itself at least partially in opposition to those who precede it. (Marie 2003: 28)

11. Published by the Universitatea Națională de Artă Teatrală și Cinematografică (National University for Theatre and Film) 'I. L. Caragiale', Bucharest, Romania, ISSN 2286-4466.
12. Published by Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, ISSN 2067-631X.
13. Published by Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania ISSN 2066-7779 (online version); ISSN 2065-5924 (printed version).
14. The promotional arm of CNC (Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée), founded in 1949.
15. The NRC directors arrived at the scene in clusters of three to five. First were the pioneers Cristi Puiu (b. 1967), Mungiu (b. 1968), Rădulescu (b. 1969), Muntean (b. 1971), Netzer (b. 1975), and Ruxandra Zenide (b. 1975), who made their breakthrough films between 2001 and 2003. Then, in 2006 and 2007, came Giurgiu (b. 1972), Mitulescu (b. 1972), Porumboiu (b. 1975), and Nemescu (b. 1979–d. 2006), followed between 2009 and 2011 by Adrian Sitaru (b 1971), Bogdán Apetri (b. 1978), Constantin Popescu (b. 1973), Marian Crișan (b. 1976), and Jude (b. 1977). Bogdán Mirică (b. 1978), Iulia Rugină (b. 1982) and the youngest so far, Tudor Cristian Jurgiu (b. 1984) came to the fore between 2013 and 2015. Andrei Gruzsniczki (b. 1962) is an isolated latecomer.
16. Puiu, Muntean, Mitulescu, Nemescu and Jude all grew up in Bucharest; Mungiu and Porumboiu come from small Moldovan towns; and Crișan, Florin Șerban, Giurgiu, Sitaru, Jurgiu and Netzer were all born in Transylvanian towns (Iacob 2015).
17. Puiu's father was a hospital administrator in Bucharest, and Mungiu's was a pharmacy studies professor, while their mothers worked in education. Porumboiu's father was an internationally certified soccer referee who, after his retirement in the mid-1990s, went into business. Muntean's father worked for the national television station in Bucharest and Constantin Popescu's father was a film production manager and head of the production company Filmex after 1990 (Iacob 2015).
18. A number of NRC directors came to filmmaking in their thirties, after trying different professions. Thus, being barely twenty years old, Mitulescu immigrated to Italy, where he worked in restaurants, before returning to Romania three years later to pursue his studies. Prior to enrolling in UNTAC, Porumboiu studied management, Mungiu pursued literary studies and worked as a teacher, journalist, radio and TV entertainer, and Crișan studied international relations. Puiu wanted to be a painter, but failed the High Art School admission exam and was then drafted into the military, where the Revolution found him (Iacob 2015).
19. For discussion of the role of Romanian intelligentsia, see the Historical Overview in this volume.
20. As Uricaru writes, 'all [Nicolaescu] needs to do is enter a project . . . and . . . funding is guaranteed' (2012: 433).
21. Puiu, as Pop has it, was simply rephrasing Șerban's 1993 contention that 'Romanian filmmaking after 1989 was "non-existent"' (2014: 28).

22. In addition to his own films from the 1990s, Pintilie helped produce such landmark films as the documentary *University Square* (1991), *Sundays on Leave* (1993), *The Snails' Senator* (1995), and – prior to *Stuff and Dough* (2001) – the medium-length *The Firemen's Choir* (2000).
23. According to Filimon, in one of the 'most infamous' of the 'televised public debates regarding the new law for cinematography' with the participation of 'the future NRC directors' in the early 2000, Nicolaescu, 'MP for the Social Democrat party in power, confronted Puiu and Mungiu with the condescension of a father bothered by two children's insubordination' (2017: 51).
24. Eddie Cockrell sanctioned the term officially by defining György Pálfy's *Taxidermia* as an 'exercise in Central European ultra-miserabilism'. See <https://variety.com/2006/film/markets-festivals/taxidermia-1200518771/> (last accessed March 2017).
25. For discussion of the metaphoric-allegorical trend, see the Historical Overview in this volume.
26. Famous quote from Oberhausen Manifesto (1962), the foundational text of New German Cinema.
27. Francois Truffaut's 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français/A certain tendency of the French cinema' is the French New Wave cinema quasi-manifesto, published in *Cahiers du Cinema*, 31, 1954.
28. See Pop, 'Killing of Old Romanian Cinema' (2014: 119–20).
29. For discussion of the 'old' wave, see the Historical Overview in this volume.
30. Uricaru cites Romanian National Television as a third source of funding that – although 'functioning as a for-profit commercial enterprise' – is 'state/public property', and has (co-)produced most post-1989 Romanian films (2012: 448).
31. The most significant European grants are provided by MEDIA (Measures to Encourage the Development of the Audio Visual Industries) and *Eurimages* funds (a European Council programme for supporting audiovisual industries).
32. While the largest share of international investment, public and private, comes from France (Uricaru 2012: 442), contributions from European agencies and other national companies have resulted in 57 co-productions out of total 174 Romanian films, produced between 2006 and 2015 (Raluca Iacob, personal correspondence, 2017).
33. Croft introduces 'four modes of production' on the basis of state participation – *minimal* (market economy), *mixed economy*, *maximal* (centrally planned, totalitarian economy), and *other* (outside state provision) (1998: 389).
34. Postcommunist cinemas owe their survival to France, as 'in 1990 the French government stepped up to help the rapidly disappearing film industries of Eastern and Central Europe with the setting up of a special co-production Fund . . . known as Fonds ECO' (Jäckel qtd in Uricaru 2012: 441).
35. Mitulescu scripted for Şerban, Rădulescu for Puiu, and Muntean and Puiu – for Păunescu. Also part of NRC strategy is producing each other's films and encouraging newcomers: Libra Film produced T-C. Jurgiu's *The Japanese Dog* (2013), Mandragora produced Păunescu's *Francesca* (2009), Crişan's *Morgen* (2010) and *Horizon* (2015), while Km 42 Film produced the promising debut of another NRC newcomer – Mirică's *Dogs* (2016). Păunescu is the producer of nine NRC films!
36. It is enough to mention internationally well-known DOPs like Oleg Mutu (who works with Mungiu, Puiu and Crişan), Andrei Butică (with Puiu, Jude, Netzer), Marius Panduru (Jude, Porumboiu, Giurgiu, Caranfil, Mitulescu), Tudor Lucaciu (Muntean's preferred DOP), and newcomers like Achim's cameraman George Chiper. Equally important are the NRC fetish actors like Luminiţa Gheorghiu and Victor Rebengiuc, Vlad Ivanov, Dragoş Bucur, Anamaria Marinca, Şerban Pavlu,

Mihaela Sîrbu, Teodor Corban, Doru Ana, Bogdán Dumitrache – to name indeed but a few.

37. Significantly, Graham Petrie's 1981 history of Hungarian cinema is called *History Must Answer to Man*.
38. For discussion of Romanian national cinema, see the Historical Overview in this volume.
39. At the école Supérieure d'Arts Visuels in Geneva.
40. Universitatea Naţională de Artă Teatrală şi Cinematografică (National University for Theatre and Film) 'I. L.Caragiale', Bucharest.
41. The impact of *Mr Lăzărescu* on both Mungiu's and Muntean's second features has been acknowledged by both Şerban and Gorzo (Filimon 2017: 58).
42. While Strausz builds his main theoretical argument on hesitation, he acknowledges the NRC's 'hesitant, ambiguous, representational mode', but also sees it as a 'specific mode of production of history and social reality' that is prompted by a general 'uncertainty about the status of the profilmic', and is typical of works from 'the state socialist era and the media event of the December 1989 television broadcasts' (2017: 1–2).
43. In myth and romance, this power is higher than that of other men in both kind and degree; in high mimetic mode, it is superior to other men but not to nature; in low mimesis it is similar to that of other men and not superior to environment; and in irony, is inferior to both that of ordinary men and to environment (Frye 1990: 33–4).
44. *Stuff and Dough, The Death of Mr Lăzărescu*, *12:08 East of Bucharest*, *The Paper Will be Blue,4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, *Hooked*, *The Happiest Girl in the World*, *First of All*, *Felicia*, *Aurora*, *Principles of Life*, *Adalbert's Dream*, *Everybody in Our Family*, *Sieranevada*.
45. Among others, Puiu's *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2004), Mitulescu's *Traffic* (2004), Jude's *The Tube with a Hat* (2006) and *It Can Pass through the Wall* (2014).
46. According to Frye, the relationship of the protagonist to society could be either tragic – he dies, fails, and is isolated – or comic, when he is integrated into society. If he is rejected (in comedy), the result is tragic-comic (1990: 33).
47. Strausz describes those as entailing 'lengthy takes, verisimilar mise-en-scène, and complex in-depth staging', whose 'central component [is] the constantly hovering mobile frame' (2017: 1–2).
48. For discussion of the antecedents of NRC realism see Pop (2014: 42–73).
49. With his short *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2004), Puiu pays tribute to Jarmusch's series of four vignettes, *Cigarettes and Coffee* (Filimon 2017: 129).
50. Interestingly enough, other postcommunist 'new cinemas' – the Czech 'Velvet Generation' whose Petr Zelenka also claims Jarmusch as an influence, along with Gogol, Beckett and Ionesco; the Polish 'black series', the Slovenian New Wave and the Hungarian 'succession of young talents' from the 2000s (Hames 2008) – have all demonstrated an emphatic predilection for the incongruous, the absurd and the surreal, which, in the words of Jan Švankmajer, are 'not just an artistic style, but a means of investigating and exploring reality' (Hames 2001: 28).
51. 'It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed. Ethics are transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one)' (Proposition 6.421, Wittgenstein 1922: 108).