

Constantin Parvulescu

## Opening Titles and Authorship in Romanian Socialist Film

The opening credits of Romanian films illustrate the changing values film industries and audiovisual culture under State-socialism assigned to cinema, authorship, and marketing. This essay examines the opening credits of Romanian serious dramas which were intended to question or raise awareness of historical, moral, political, and social issues. I trace the transformation of these sequences across the socialist era, dividing it into three periods: Early Socialism (1947–1957), Mid Socialism (1957–1977), and Late Socialism (1977–1989). These periods are distinguished by significant transformations in Romanian socialist discourse and the nation's cinematic output. I argue that title sequences bare the traces of organizational, aesthetical, economic, and political discourses, in particular the elevation of the director to the status of author.

Following the Soviet example, the opening titles of the early socialist film *MITREA COCOR* (1952) read: the film company, screenwriter, director, cinematographer, composer, editor, and some staff — the names of the actors appear only later. To account for this format, we need only recognize that *MITREA COCOR* was made at a time when the Soviet Union exerted its strongest control over Romania. In 1950, the Romanian film industry was nationalized, and reorganized according to the Soviet model. *MITREA COCOR* thematized the collectivization of agriculture — a process which started in 1949 and which itself was modeled on a Soviet precedent. The film combined elements of pre-socialist cinema with aspects of socialist realism (again imported from the Soviet Union). This hybrid style was also a product of the film having been helmed by two directors — one schooled on, and active in, the theater of the interwar period, the other an innovative filmmaker who had learned his craft in Moscow.

The Soviet approach to opening credits differed from those used at the time in western film industries, including Hollywood. The Soviet model derived from a distinct cinematic tradition, a distinct understanding of art's social functions, a distinct organization of industries under State-socialism, and a pan-European postwar effort to offer alternatives to American imports. Hollywood's influence on the cinema of the continent was substantial. It had generated seventy-five percent of its income in the 1930s from its European ex-

ports.<sup>1)</sup> After the war, however, European film industries and governments retaliated by implementing protectionist measures.<sup>2)</sup> The traces of such conduct were noticeable in the opening titles of their films, partly as a means of showcasing difference from the Hollywood products being framed as culturally imperialistic and economically piratical.

Hollywood and the Soviet film industry were not just major influences on Romanian cinema, they were also its most prominent Others. As Thomas Elsaesser has suggested, they were significant Others not only because they were widely seen as colonizing forces, but also because they were reminders of the aesthetic interdependency of film industries, including those across the Iron Curtain.<sup>3)</sup> When considering the early-socialist period, I place an emphasis on the influence of these two superpowers. The differences between Romanian opening credits and their Hollywood counterparts are of particular importance at this time, because they emblemize distinct modes of production: one capitalist, the other socialist. However, during the mid- and especially the late-socialist period — eras of détente and continental integration — a consideration of European film culture becomes pertinent on account of its growing influence on Romanian cinema.

As the early socialist period was unfolding in Eastern Europe, Hollywood's opening credits were ordered thus: lead actors and actresses came first (the above-the-title cast), followed by the rest of the cast and the crew. Hollywood also foregrounded producers, overlooked writers, and, some exceptions notwithstanding, named the director at the end of the sequence.<sup>4)</sup> Only a handful of directors, including Frank Capra, Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock, were granted the honor of having their names featured before the title of the film (or of having their names featured on posters above that of the picture).<sup>5)</sup> Hollywood's order of billing therefore followed a specific marketing logic.

The development of title sequences used in the Romanian film industry was shaped by a negotiation of ideological and commercial imperatives, of Soviet and western influences, of popular and high cultural values, and of nationalism and transnationalism. They were also influenced by institutional developments such as the creation of Romanian Bufta Film Studios (Studioul Cinematografic București), historical shifts such as de-Sovietization and the cultural liberalization of the 1950s, and the post-1968 internationalization of Romanian society. Economics also played a part, especially the pursuit of autonomy from Moscow, and the austerity of the 1980s.

During a period of de-Stalinization that began in 1956 the order of billing that had been used on MITREA COCOR gave way to a new approach. Consequently, THE ERUPTION

- 
- 1) Thomas Schatz, 'Hollywood and the Triumph of the Studio System', in Steve Neale (ed.), *The Classical Hollywood Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 167–178, 175.
  - 2) Steve Neale, 'Arties and Imports, Exports and Runaways, Adult Film and Exploitation', in *The Classical Hollywood Reader* pp. 399–411, 401.
  - 3) Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 40–41.
  - 4) Western opening credits are ordered in the following way: production and distribution companies, above-the-line actors, titles, other actors, composer, editor, art director, director of photography, producers, writers, director. See Dominic Case, *Film Technology in Post Production* (New York: Focal Press, 2001), p. 233.
  - 5) The opening credits of REAR WINDOW (1954) are ordered thus: company, featured actors "starring in", and title. However, the title screen reads "Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*", with Hitchcock's name appearing above the title in a smaller font.

(Romanian Title: ERUPȚIA, 1957) featured credits ordered thus: the production company, full cast, title, screenwriter, music, director of photography, and finally the director. This approach approximated Hollywood's credits in terms of its order, its placing of on-screen talent up front, and the pre-title billing of an ensemble cast. Widely considered a landmark film due to its topicality and social relevance,<sup>6)</sup> *THE ERUPTION* is representative of a period of experimentation in Romanian cinema.

The early billing of actors does not ape Hollywood's prioritization of marketability but instead conveys an artistic logic. It reads: the production company (Studioul Cinematografic București) presents (prezintă pe) a cast of thirty men and (some) women in a film called *THE ERUPTION*, which has been written, produced, recorded, filmed, and directed by the credited people. The duration of the credits also sets them apart from their Hollywood counterparts. By the 1950s, Hollywood credits had been reduced to about ninety seconds, with those of *REAR WINDOW* (1954) for example lasting less than a minute. By contrast, *THE ERUPTION*'s credits ran in the absence of any background action for about two and a half minutes, giving late-running moviegoers the opportunity to seat themselves. They also evinced a more democratic approach to billing, using an identically sized font and providing equal amounts of screen-time to all contributors.

The order of *THE ERUPTION*'s opening credits influenced those of other Romanian dramas of the mid-socialist period. However, subsequent releases used shorter sequences and echoed Hollywood's lead by dropping the names of below-the-line talent. During this period, one important shift did take place however. The title of the film was generally featured before the cast. This change led to the inclusion of the term "with" ("cu", in Romanian) between the two; Hollywood had used this technique to distinguish a film's leads from its supporting cast. *THE ERUPTION*'s title sequence thus suggested that a company had made this film with the assistance of various performers, in much the same way as Hollywood credits indicated that a production company was presenting a group of actors. It is likely that these similarities to Hollywood minimized the influence of such features; after all, socialism emphasized the film itself over the talent behind it.<sup>7)</sup>

There were variations, of course. For instance, where *THE RECONSTITUTION* (Romanian Title: RECONSTITUIREA, 1968) used a cold open (opening in media res; to plot events rather than credits), and *100 LEI* (1973) billed actors before the title of the film. Arguably more significant, was the addition in the early 1970s of the production unit and the manager of the unit (head producer). Previously, the first image seen in Romanian films was a title card reading "Studioul Cinematografic București" (see Fig. 1). The inclusion of the producing unit reflected the reorganization of the Romanian production sector. Patterned after the Polish model, the production company was broken into five smaller creative teams or units, characterized by relatively high degrees of autonomy and internal cooper-

6) Călin Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc* (Bucharest: Contemporanul, 2011), p. 225.

7) The billing sequence emphasizes the director, Liviu Ciulei, by presenting his name in a large font, on screen alone, and for a longer period of time than his collaborators. *THE ERUPTION* is also unusual because of the gendered billing of its cast. The first shot bills the actresses, and then a separate shot bills the male performers. War films such as *THE BLUE GATES OF THE CITY* (Romanian Title: PORȚILE ALBASTRE ALE ORĂȘULUI, 1975), which featured mainly male casts, also tended to bill female performers separately.

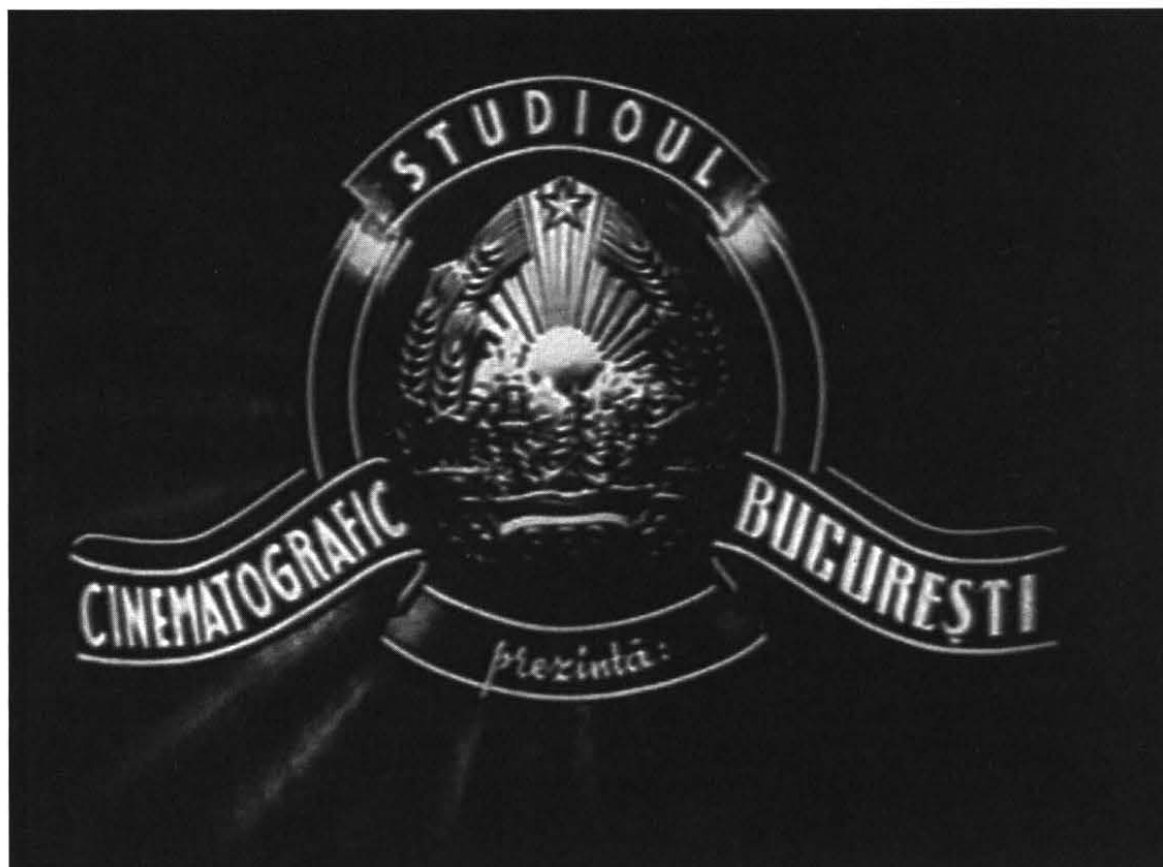


Fig. 1 The logo of the Bufta Film Studios from opening the title sequence of MITREA COCOR

ation.<sup>8)</sup> A head producer was placed in charge of each unit, suggesting a vertical organization of labor, thus concentrating authorial power in the hands of one individual per unit. As the general manager of Bufta Studios, Constantin Pivnicieriu, recalls:

As time passes, the output of a film unit comes to reflect the personality of the head producer, in the same way as the editor-in-chief influences the content of the publication he is in charge of. [...] It's mostly about the thematic concerns of the films; their audiences, genres, directors, the boldness of the projects, the cinematic mode and, in general, the atmosphere [in the unit].<sup>9)</sup>

At first glance, the billing of the unit might seem to be an endorsement of collective authorship reminiscent of socialism's promotion of collective labor. Yet, the very notion of collective authorship and cooperation is undermined by the hierarchical nature of a title

8) This model was in operation in Poland from the start of the socialist era. As Dorota Ostrowska suggests "[w]ithin them filmmakers were able to exercise some degree of not just creative but also political freedom. The production units were thus semi-autonomous teams of film practitioners, funded by the state, and operating within the state-owned and state-run film industry". See Dorota Ostrowska, 'An Alternative Model of Film Production: Film Units in Poland after World War Two', in Aniko Imre (Ed.), *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas* (Malden: Blackwell-Wiley, 2013), pp. 453–465, 453.

9) Constantin Pivnicieriu, *Cinema at Bufta: The Cinematic Studio "Bucharest" 1950–1989* (Cinema la Bufta: Studioul Cinematografic "București" 1950–1989) (Bucharest: Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2011), pp. 52–53.

sequence that boasts different sized fonts and allocates more screen time to some contributors than others.

The title sequences of late-socialist dramas increasingly emphasized the hierarchical organization of the producing unit, and the talent behind the film. For example, *A GIRL'S TEAR* (Romanian Title: *O LACRIMĂ DE FATĂ*, 1980) lists the studio, the unit, the title of the film, the screenwriter, principal cast, music, make-up artists, set designers, costumers, sound engineers, editor, producer, director of photography, and director; other below-the-line talent are excluded. *SEQUENCES* (Romanian Title: *SECVENȚE*, 1982), an homage to the French New Wave, is bolder still. It opens to the names of the production company and the unit, before switching to a two-minute long cold opening, before finally displaying the film's title in a small font. The most significant change here concerns the introduction of the phrase "a film by" between the title and the principal cast. This reference to the director makes a clear statement of authorship and of the hierarchization of talent.

The phrase "a film by" — a hallmark of auteur cinema — became increasingly common in the opening credits of Romanian films of the 1980s. For example, *TWO STEP* (Romanian Title: *PAS ÎN DOI*, 1985) takes the totems of auteur cinema to a new level. Its opening credits foreground individual artistic consciousness over collective work, by naming the director of the film immediately after the production company and before the unit. To this, the opening credits of *IACOB* (1988) added the name of the director and the male lead after a four-minute cold open.

The title sequences of Romanian genre films developed in a similar manner. Thus, much like art cinema of the day, the gangster movie *CLEAN HANDS* (Romanian Title: *CU MÂINILE CURATE*, 1972) challenged the conventional Romanian approach to billing talent. Its title sequence begins five minutes into the film when a card reading "a film realized by" reveals the director as Sergiu Nicolaescu.<sup>10)</sup> Comedies also featured various formats. For instance, the opening credits of *I, YOU AND OVID* (Romanian Title: *EU, TU ȘI OVIDIU*, 1977), a musical, starts nine minutes into the film, and herald its generic credentials by listing its cast of well-known comedians.

### Early Socialism, 1947–1957

The changes detailed above were products of negotiations related to the aesthetic, industrial, and political functions of cinema. They remind us that under socialism the notion of cinema was not constructed in exclusively ideological terms. They also testify to the transnational and trans-ideological dimensions of Romanian film production, thereby bringing into question the extent to which a national cinema approach can help us understand the challenges faced by this industry.

The opening credits of *MITREA COCOR* reflected the Romanian film industry's adoption of Soviet production practices and socialist-realist content, and that the radical cine-

10) "Realized" is a telling word choice. First of all, its Romanian translation, "realizat de," was used in television for crediting producers. Second, it maintained the preeminence of the director while avoiding the auteurist underpinnings of the phrase "a film by".

ma of the Stalinist period challenged the very idea of film as art. Hollywood also showed indifference to bourgeois preoccupations with sophistication and style, as both socialist realism and Hollywood targeted a mass audience at a time when television had yet to damage film's cross-class appeal. Recognizing that it was the medium of choice for the proletariat, Communist Party elites hoped to use cinema to promote the socialist way of life. By contrast, Hollywood typically aspired to the production of politically neutral entertainment. Yet, in spite of these differences, in the 1940s and 1950s, both downplayed the artistic input of the director, by rejecting a model of authorship derived from a "bourgeois institution of art" comprising literature, the visual arts, and theater.<sup>11)</sup> The opening credits of Hollywood and of socialist films therefore expressed an industrial conception of cinematic production, even if the industries that produced them organized labor and ownership differently. Nevertheless, in both cases, style was considered secondary to more pertinent goals; entertainment in the case of the former, shaping citizens' worldviews, in the case of the latter.

Where Hollywood credits highlighted contributors who earned the most money, socialist realist films foregrounded personnel according to the political sway they were assumed to carry. It needs stressing that aesthetic theories of the 1950s drew a line between art produced under capitalism and that produced under socialism, positing distinct conceptions of its social functions in eastern and western nations. As a workers' art and the heir to the interwar avant-garde, socialist realism was envisaged as a cinema without authors. Authorship was dismissed as product of bourgeois concerns with form and commercial branding; it was derided as an explanatory framework of creative practice. Socialist-realist art was framed not as a product of individuals imposing a personal vision onto a work, but of people who served as conduits for the interests of the proletariat.

As much as the credits for *MITREA COCOR* embody a rejection of bourgeois conceptions of art, they also express antagonism toward the entertainment of Hollywood. Nowhere is this more apparent than in their refusal to maintain the Hollywood marketing practice of listing the cast before the title of the picture. The stars of 1950s socialism were not film actors as such, but Stakhanovite workers and communist party leaders. For this reason, in a film about collectivization like *MITREA COCOR*, performers' names appear at the end of the opening credits.<sup>12)</sup> One should also not misread the positioning of the director three shots after the production company and the writer. This film's credits were designed to contrast Hollywood practices, which billed the director at the end of the sequence. Although the Romanian film industry saw the director as a producer, it needs to be made clear that the term "producer" was rarely used before the 1970s and did not mean the same thing as it did in the West. Thus, what *MITREA COCOR* credits as the work of the director also refers to the contribution of the producer, i.e. supervising project development. A key semantic nuance also characterizes the Romanian phrase for "directing", which is used instead of the western standard "directed by", thus undermining the sense of directorial ownership; emphasizing the role of the director rather than his or her influence over the final product.

11) See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003).

12) The tradition of Soviet Montage also devalued the contribution of the actor and the scriptwriter. See Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 448.

The early billing of the directors also reminds us of the relationships between socialist art and the theatre. Most creative personnel working in the Romanian film industry — including the co-director of MITREA COCOR, Marietta Sadova — either came from the theater or continued to work there.<sup>13)</sup> As a relatively new institution, the Romanian film industry was unable to develop a pool of politically “on-message” personnel, and was thus heavily reliant on individuals schooled by, what were seen at the time as, the reactionary institutions of the past. A onetime acting luminary of bourgeois theater, Sadova had either truly embraced socialist values or repeatedly affected them. In addition to adapting classic Romanian novels, she staged plays rooted in socialist doctrine such as *The Miners* (1949).<sup>14)</sup> Ultimately, the Romanian film industry would cultivate socialist personnel, allowing it to unburden itself of individuals like Sadova, who was imprisoned in 1959.

The manner in which the cast of MITREA COCOR is listed is also reminiscent of theater inasmuch as it reads like the cast page of a program for a stage-play. It is organized in top-down fashion, based on each character’s importance to the story. A dotted line connects the name of the character on the left of the screen with that of the actor on the right. The character — the product of the actor’s labor — is thus listed first, with the talent who made this possible coming only second. Another trace of the Romanian film industry’s relationships to theater, and by extension its failure fully to develop the cinema as a distinct institution, can be seen in the inclusion of writer Mihail Sadoveanu as the first credit after the production company. Like Sadova, Sadoveanu also changed his political colors, at least publically. By becoming a member of the socialist parliament and receiving several prestigious political accolades, he occupied a lofty position in socialist cultural hierarchies. His prominent crediting on MITREA COCOR is also indicative of the moving image being widely seen in Romania as secondary in cultural terms to the written word. Moreover, the emphasis placed on the script serves as a reminder that this aspect of the production process was seen to offer the greatest opportunity to police a film’s political stance.

The Soviet-inspired elements of MITREA COCOR’s opening credits also exemplify a significant way Soviet Bloc film industries were differentiated from American culture. As David Caute has argued, “Soviet ideologists, critics, and film-makers tended to depict America as uncultured, as a land of capitalist entrepreneurs selling low-level entertainment, ephemeral, narcotic trash, and Disneyland fantasies to a bemused populace.”<sup>15)</sup> Although the Soviet Union was a largely proletarian country, its elites aimed to market the nation as educated and well-versed in high art: not only as the land of Lenin and Stalin, but of Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Russian Ballet, Dostoyevsky, Stanislavsky, Chekhov, and the Bolshoi Theater.

13) With few exceptions, well-liked Romanian film actors (socialism’s stars) made their living from theater.

14) Vera Molea, ‘Marietta Sadova from Legionarism to Proletcultism’ (Marietta Sadova de la legionarism la proletcultism’, *Historia.ro*. <[http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/general/articol/marietta-sadova-legionarism-proletcultism](http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/marietta-sadova-legionarism-proletcultism)> [accessed 23 September 2014].

15) David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 8.

For the Soviet population the vital term “cultured” — kul’turnyi — carried, paradoxically, values normally associated with the bourgeoisie, not least “correct” and “respectable” comportment in public.<sup>16)</sup>

Romanian cultural elites replicated this paradoxical mixture of elitism and proletarianism, laying the groundwork for the notion of the film director as the sole source of artistic input. Nevertheless, it needs stressing that the emphasis placed on the writer is not only a symptom of socialist cinema’s relationships to theater and high culture, but also a demonstration that the order of billing during early socialism mirrored the temporality of the film production process. In a country undergoing radical industrialization in line with the Soviet model such practice reflected a productionist understanding of filmmaking, which stood in contrast to Hollywood’s ordering of talent based on marketability.

As a writer, Sadoveanu was named early in the credits because his novel and script initiated the development of *MITREA COCOR*. As such, his contributions are the most spatially and temporally distant from the audience. From an industrial-productionist perspective, *MITREA COCOR*’s opening credits convey the notion of a Romanian studio having started production of a film based on a novel and a script by Mihail Sadoveanu, a film that was then adapted for the screen by two producers/directors, who in turn employed a composer to write the music. The music and script were then realized by three directors of photography, three art directors, a costume artist, an editor, makeup artists, an orchestra, and a troupe of actors.

### **Mid Socialism, 1957–1977**

Romania’s period of socialist-realist filmmaking ended around 1956. That year, in countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Romania, the denunciation of Stalinism precipitated periods of political liberalization, which incentivized alternatives to socialist realism and the promotion of “European values”. The film industries of Eastern Europe consequently sought to open up a dialogue with their counterparts in the West. The opening credits of 1957’s *THE ERUPTION* exemplify this shift, and project the message that Romanian cinema was responding to change. Austere sequences reflective of working-class unpretentiousness gave way to credits that boasted names located in sophisticated-looking frames. These listings were paired with an eerie musical score and images of bubbling oil and sliding mud reminiscent of American and European films noir.

The cold open of *THE RECONSTITUTION* also exemplified the general recalibration of opening credit sequences. A common practice in the 1970s, this feature gestured toward film’s emerging status as a distinct art form, and to the notion that individual authorship generated unique motion pictures. In this sense, the cold open conveyed the idea that the conventions of cinematic storytelling could be comprehended and accepted in the absence of the framing provided by the title sequence. An updating of this sort was bound up with notions of de-politicization; and with its direct and wholly diegetic character suggested

---

16) Ibid., p. 9.

a matter-of-factness, which countered the prescriptive nature of socialist realism. A case in point is also provided by genre films. For example, *I, YOU AND OVID* begins with a ten-minute cold open that suggests the growing influence of television on Romanian audiences. Instead of featuring the film's title, its highly self-reflexive opening shows a protagonist turning on a television set as a well-known anchor announces that the film about to be broadcast is "the Romanian production *I, YOU AND OVID*".

The opening of *I, YOU AND OVID* is indicative of the Romanian Communist Party's changing views of filmmaking. Party leaders were increasingly preoccupied with the commercial potential of cinema. By the 1960s, the ratio of entertainment to propaganda films in this country already stood at 60–40.<sup>17)</sup> It was also clear that television was overtaking film as a popular medium, if only for short periods of time given that programming was broadcast for few hours a day in the 1980s.<sup>18)</sup> The Romanian Communist Party's interest in the commerciality of cinema is encapsulated by a meeting among top brass that took place in 1968 prior to the drafting of new legislation on the country's film industry. The powerbrokers present felt that increased entertainment value would help bring ticket sales for Romanian films close to those of well-liked American and Indian imports. The question of how entertainment, which was seen as a capitalist appropriation of art, was to be negotiated alongside the political function of film under socialism was never answered fully. The Party's position remained contradictory. For example, it condemned sex and violence, at the same time as it condoned soft versions of this material. In addition to maximizing ticket sales, entertainment was seen to have an important public relations function. It promised to improve the image of the Party, giving the impression that it was not just interested in ideology but shared citizens' desires for recreation. Although The Party ultimately struggled to balance entertainment and socialism, its 1968 meeting made some recommendations to this effect. One recommendation concerned the production of historical epics. The potential of such an approach is illustrated by the fact that eighteen of the twenty most viewed films of the period fell into this genre. A second recommendation involved turning to films examining contemporary social issues from a socialist perspective. Topical cinema grew in importance, not least because it allowed Romanian filmmakers to fulfill Party elites' calls for socially- and politically engaged pictures while allowing for artistic expression and even criticism of the regime. This shift would become more pronounced and lay the ideological foundation for the kinds of formal experimentation associated with the New Waves of other European nations.<sup>19)</sup> At the forefront of this movement, *100 LEI* concerned the nature and problems of the "contemporary man", as socialist discourse would have it.

The establishment of the role of the producer in the Romanian film industry was envisaged as a means of balancing ideological acceptability, artistic quality, and commercial

17) Cristian Tudor Popescu, *Filmul surd în România mută. Politică și propagandă în filmul românesc de ficțiune* (Iași: Polirom, 2011), p. 116.

18) Since both television and cinema were state-owned, one cannot talk of their competition in the same terms as we could of western European nations or the United States, especially in relation to how this competition might have affected style.

19) Even the makers of a formally innovative historical film such as *STONE WEDDING* (Romanian Title: *NUNTĂ DE PIETRĂ*, 1972) felt the need to explain its setting in a prologue which drew parallels between the past and the present.

success on the domestic market and overseas. Constantin Pivniceriu has suggested that producers complicate notions of authorship, arguing they operate as mediators of incompatible interests who are "responsible, and made responsible, for the quality of films and their commercial viability."<sup>20</sup> The emergence of the producer in the Romanian film industry was bound up with the reorganization of the national studio (Studioul Cinematografic București), especially its division into units. Within each unit the director was but one member of a team whose multidirectional cooperation suggested greater levels of collective authorship than the previously centralized studio. These developments were expected to challenge the notion of director as film author while blurring distinctions between the institution and the artist. They were also expected to elevate other staff and the supporting cast above their previous status as inconsequential parts of a complex machine that at once enabled and obstructed a director's vision. As Pivniceriu details, it was anticipated that the units would provide myriad creative personnel with the opportunity to express themselves through film albeit via exchanges of ideas.<sup>21</sup>

These institutional transformations notwithstanding, the director continued to hold a preeminent position during Mid Socialism. Consequently, *THE ERUPTION* highlights its director Liviu Ciulei by lingering on his name — presented in a larger font than his collaborators — at the end of the opening credits (see Fig. 2). Moreover, *THE RECONSTITUTION* underscores directorial authority in a manner reminiscent of the self-reflexive *I, YOU AND OVID*, by including voiceover of him instructing an actor. The director tells the actor to throw his face into mud, to lift it slowly, to let blood flow from his mouth, then to look up and ask another character why he hit him, before repeating these actions. Thus, the sequence emphasizes the director's power over the actors and the crew in general, and his right to be recognized by the spectator for his authority over the film.

Although *THE RECONSTITUTION* represented a major step toward a Romanian auteur cinema, the film remained something of an anomaly, and its influence was minimized when it was banned. *THE RECONSTRUCTION*'s title sequence is long, austere, and evokes collectivism, by listing the entire cast and crew. Even the film's director, Lucian Pintilie, is not afforded the privileged position his successors would receive. Rather, alongside, the self-reflexive strategy noted above, Pintilie's contributions are elevated indirectly by listing him as a co-writer. This emphasis on the director as contributor to preproduction anticipated the framing of the writer-director as an auteur by way of the phrase "a film by", which would become commonplace by the 1980s.

*THE RECONSTITUTION* exemplifies another aspect of authorship under Mid Socialism. At this time, authorship was seen also to be produced through the artist's conflicts with state censors. Indeed, film historians have argued that similar positions contributed to understandings of other Eastern European cinemas of the period, including the Polish cinema of moral distrust. In this discourse, the auteur is envisaged as taking a critical stance against the state, a practice that required him or her to mislead the state into playing the film theatrically. Andrzej Wajda is, for example, credited with executing this tactic suc-

20) Pivniceriu, *Cinema at Buftea*, p. 52.

21) *Ibid.*, p. 53.



Fig. 2 Stylized crediting in *THE ERUPTION*

cessfully when he secured releases for the stridently anti-establishment *MAN OF MARBLE* (1977) and *MAN OF IRON* (1981).

From this perspective, the strong ticket sales generated by *THE RECONSTITUTION* during its eight week engagement at a single Bucharest theater indicate not only the appeal of the film but also that of director-centered authorship. Moreover, in the event that a purportedly subversive film was banned, it tended to be the director rather than the producer or star who was seen as the principal casualty of censorship. The director was thus credited not only for the artistic success of a film, but also for its moral, intellectual, or political message. Such was the reception of Yugoslav director Dušan Makavejev and several Czechoslovak New Wave filmmakers such as Miloš Forman, who left their homelands following firestorms over their films *W.R.: MYSTERIES OF THE ORGANISM* (1971) and *THE FIREMEN'S BALL* (1967).

### **Late Socialism, 1977–1989**

The themes of political dissent which had partly driven the success of *THE RECONSTRUCTION* at the domestic box office also made the picture marketable on the international art house and film festival circuit. This development would facilitate the rise to prominence of auteurism in the Romanian film industry of the late-socialist period. At their aforemen-

tioned 1968 meeting, the Romanian Communist Party leadership had identified the international distribution of indigenous films as commercially and politically attractive. These decision-makers had spoken at length about how such fare could draw overseas movie- and festival-goers. Their discussions were underpinned by the notion that this international cultural bourgeoisie was enamored with stylized cinema, as evinced by an award *THE FOREST OF THE HANGED* (Romanian Title: *PĂDUREA SPÂNZURAȚILOR*, 1965) had received at the Cannes Film Festival. A structuring absence at this meeting was the belief — left unspoken for political reasons — that elite audiences gravitated to films that delivered social and political critiques of Soviet Bloc countries. Rather than openly admitting as much, those in attendance concluded that international success rested on violent and titillating content, the “undressing of the actress,” as Party Prime Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu described the latter.<sup>22)</sup> Ceaușescu put a positive spin on this issue, stressing it was inevitable that both national and international audiences would be interested in the transformations taking place in Romania. Crucially, The Party’s desire to export Romanian films increased the prestige of the director on account of the auteurist turn sweeping international festivals in the 1960s and 1970s. Art cinema, auteurism and international distribution became ever more intertwined with the “(...) international reception of art cinema becoming proof of its national importance”.<sup>23)</sup>

In the late 1970s, Romanian cinema was visibly westernized, not least because of the European détente and growing East-West exchanges taking place after the Helsinki conference of 1975. This too would catalyze the rise to prominence of the Romanian auteur — and those of other Eastern European countries — in the following decade and a half. We need to acknowledge that sending Eastern European films to western festivals was nothing new, as the presence at Cannes of numerous films including the Hungarian drama *STRANGE MARRIAGE* (Hungarian Title: *KÜLÖNÖS HÁZASSÁG*, 1951) demonstrates. However, what set apart the exports of the 1970s from their predecessors are the grounds upon which they were shipped overseas. The early films were sent to promote both the strength of the film industry behind them and the socialist way of life, and, in so doing, antagonize western audiences. In short, they were exported on political grounds; as part of the political and cultural battles of the early Cold War. Consequently, they were not used to showcase the talent of the director helming the picture.

The 1975 Helsinki conference, which gradually precipitated socialist reform, was intended to advocate shared European traditions and values over East-West differences. This event served to imbue participation in subsequent festivals with an altogether new significance: belonging to a common European artistic community. Eastern European film industries were content to be seen as staunch supporters of a cultural pan-Europeanism undergirded by the European-born concept of the Auteur. The Romanian film industry in particular was more than happy to present itself as an urbane European filmmaking nation whose exports would now not just testify to the success of State-socialism, but also to its belonging to the continent. The importance of winning an award at a western festival

22) Popescu, *Filmul surd în România mută*, p. 131.

23) See Gait Rosalind and Karl Schoonover, “Introduction: the Impurity of Art Cinema,” in *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 4, 7.



Fig. 3. The celebration of the director as author in the 1980s: *TWO STEP*, “a film by Dan Pița”

also increased as it was seen to pave the way for international distribution and ultimately much-needed hard currency.

The phrase “A film by” became the standard introduction of directors of Romanian films in the 1980s (Fig. 3). This trend was prominent among, although not restricted to, the nation’s art films. Also specific to this time were credit sequences which spotlighted long-standing director-star relationships, with IACOB even highlighting this type of collaboration before the title of the film appears on screen. In much the same way as western directors had consistently worked with a preferred star — Godard with Karina, Fellini with Mastroianni, Antonioni with Vitti — the Romanian Dan Pița had collaborated with Claudiu Bleonț on four films: *CONTEST* (Romanian Title: *CONCURS*, 1982) *CHAINED JUSTICE* (Romanian Title: *DREPTATE ÎN LANȚURI*, 1983), *TWO STEP* (Romanian Title: *PAS ÎN DOI*, 1985), and *WHITE LACE DRESS* (Romanian Title: *ROCHIE ALBĂ DE DANTELĂ*, 1988). Somewhat paradoxically, such partnerships served to underscore the creative authority of the director. Where Hollywood marketing emphasized the importance of the star, these collaborations positioned the actor as a conduit through which the director could articulate his or her vision. These actors were the directors’ actor in the literal genitive sense of the term.

The opening credits of *TWO STEP*, a recipient of a Silver Bear award at the 1985 Berlin International Film Festival, shows the development of Romanian socialist cinema, including its drift toward notions of director-centered authorship. This film’s title sequence

conveys the division of the studio into units, bills the manager of the producing unit, names the producer, and indicates directorial authority with the phrase "a film by". At the same time, these credits evince the growing influence of another player: RomaniaFilm (hereafter RADEF). The inclusion of RADEF is significant because it reflects the decentralization of the Romanian film industry and the adoption of another western billing practice. Perhaps most importantly, however, it is evidence of Romania's active involvement in film exportation. After all, adding this institution to the credits was redundant in the domestic market due to RADEF's monopolization of distribution and exhibition in the country. The phrase "RomaniaFilm presents" was therefore primarily intended to mark a film as a serious drama for overseas eyes, both in Romania's traditional export markets of Eastern Europe but now also those in the West.

### Conclusion: Post-Socialism

Since the fall of Communism, Romanian cinema has gradually lost its socialist character. It has become an increasingly director-centered cinema, albeit stripped of the socialist underpinnings of yesteryear. Economic and political changes facilitated the (western) Europeanization of Romanian films, even if they still differ to some extent from their western counterparts. The title sequences of the 1980s evince both stasis and change under socialism. Partly as a result of international cinematic trends, Romanian credits shifted stylistically and structurally towards western practices, irrespective of whether the film in question was light-hearted escapism or a serious drama addressing socialist issues.

Film criticism and historiography — books, newspaper articles, and Romania's leading film magazine, *Cinema* — contributed to the shift toward auteurism in serious drama. Thus, a 1982 publication designed to promote the Romanian film industry abroad framed the nation's cinema as wholly director-centered. Printed in the English language, this volume devoted an entire chapter to the auteur cinema of "the 1970s generation"; a generation that included Dan Pița and Mircea Daneliuc.<sup>24</sup>) Predictably, auteurism grew in significance after 1989, when the fall of the Ceaușescu regime permitted filmmakers to indulge in greater degrees of self-expression without fear of political censure or censorship. Regime change also transformed the dynamics of this field of production, by, for example, allowing filmmakers greater control over budgets. Pița would even become the head of the state body responsible for underwriting the Romanian film industry, and, for a short time, Pintilie the Minister of Culture.

In spite of such developments, the title sequences of the early 1990s do not reflect the radical political changes Romania underwent at this time. In fact, they are remarkably similar in format, order, and style to those of the 1980s, testifying to relations with the West that predated 1989. The order of billing and the exceptions to it remained the same. The only notable change was the inclusion of the new names of production companies and distributors. Thus, the opening credits to *SENATOR OF THE SNAILS* (Romanian Title: SEN-

24) See Manuela Cernat, *A Concise History of the Romanian Film*, trans. Andrei Bantaș (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1982).

ATORUL MELCILOR, 1995) inform audiences that this state-supported film is distributed by a company with a non-Romanian name that includes the word “international”; following the dissolution of the units, The Studio of Cinematic Creation of the Ministry of Culture (previously known as Cinematic Studio Bucharest — Bufta) became the principal financier of Romanian films. Another change involved a rise in co-productions with western nations compared to the sporadic success the Communist regime enjoyed in arranging such ventures. Accordingly, in addition to listing various overseas production partners, *THE OAK* (Romanian Title: *BALANȚA*, 1992) went as far as to feature a title sequence entirely in the French language. Quite how all these international production companies made it in to the opening credits of (partially) Romanian films is another story however.

#### Films Cited:

*The Blue Gates of the City* (*Porțile albastre ale orașului*; Mircea Mureșan, 1975), *Chained Justice* (*Dreptate în lanțuri*; Dan Pița, 1983), *Clean Hands* (*Cu mâinile curate*; Sergiu Nicolaescu, 1972), *Contest* (*Concurs*; Dan Pița, 1982), *The Eruption* (*Eruptia*; Liviu Ciulei, 1957), *The Firemen's Ball* (*Hoří, má panenko*; Miloš Forman, 1967), *The Forest of the Hanged* (*Pădurea spânzuraților*; Liviu Ciulei, 1965), *A Girl's Tear* (*O lacrimă de fată*; Iosif Demian, 1980), *I, You and Ovid* (*Eu, tu și Ovidiu*; Geo Saizescu, 1977), *Iacob* (Mircea Daneliuc, 1988), *Man of Iron* (*Człowiek z żelaza*; Andrzej Wajda, 1981), *Man of Marble* (*Człowiek z marmuru*; Andrzej Wajda, 1977), *Mitrea Cocor* (Victor Iliu and Marietta Sadova, 1952), *The Oak* (*Balanța*; Lucian Pintilie, 1992), *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), *The Reconstitution* (*Reconstituirea*; Lucian Pintilie, 1971), *Senator of the Snails* (*Senato-rul melcilor*; Mircea Daneliuc, 1995), *Sequences* (*Secvențe*; Alexandru Tatos, 1982), *Stone Wedding* (*Nuntă de piatră*; Dan Pița and Mircea Veroiu, 1972), *Strange Marriage* (*Különös házasság*; Márton Keleti, 1951), *Two Step* (*Pas în doi*; Dan Pița, 1985), *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (*W.R. - Misteri-je organizma*; Dušan Makavejev, 1971), *White Lace Dress* (*Rochie albă de dantelă*; Dan Pița, 1988), *100 Lei* (Mircea Saucan, 1973).

**Constantin Parvulescu** holds a tenured Lecturer position at West University of Timisoara, Romania, specialising in Eastern European and European film and media. His work has been or is in the process of being published by academic presses, such as Blackwell-Wiley, Oxford University Press and Indiana University Press, and in journals of history, political sciences, and film and cultural studies such as *Rethinking History*, *Central Europe*, *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, *Camera Obscura*, *Jump Cut*, and *Italian Studies*.

(Address: ctparvulescu@gmail.com)

## SUMMARY

### **Opening Titles and Authorship in Romanian Socialist Film**

**Constantin Parvulescu**

This article analyzes the opening titles of Romanian socialist films. It reveals how their credits reflected changes in how the Romanian film industry and film culture perceived the social functions of cinema, authorship, and, marketing. The form, structure, and content of these sequences testify to the director's elevation to the position of author. Romanian film culture did not simply follow official Communist positions on the role of the arts in society however. While the Romanian Communist Party promoted socialism and nationalism, international capitalist production and distribution trends increasingly shaped cinema in this country. Whereas the late-socialist regime expressed an anti-western stance, Romanian title sequences indicated cinema was heading in an altogether different direction: it was becoming ever more auteur-driven and aspiring to marketability on an international art cinema circuit that traversed western markets and festivals.