Enclosed spatial formations: space and place in the socialist and post-socialist Romanian and Hungarian cinema

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A családomnak.

A föld érzéséért. És mert mindig hazavágyom.

Abstract

This thesis proposes a comparative textual research on Hungarian and Romanian cinema by setting up a model that informs the implicit cinematic reflection on socialism in film. By establishing two aesthetic categories – horizontal and vertical enclosure –, the thesis argues that the spatial structure of the narratives reveals and alludes to the oppressive policy of the Hungarian and Romanian socialist regimes.

The first part of the research scrutinises the space in Romanian cinema, and investigates the birth of the vertical enclosure. The analysis focuses on the spatial representation of Bucharest, that is the claustrophobic illustration of the urban landscape and its space depicted by the tools of notorious surveillance on screen. As argued in the thesis, the architectural forms and their film representations build up a spatial constellation identical to Bentham's Panopticon discussed by Michel Foucault.

The second part of the investigation concentrates on Hungarian cinema and the evolution of horizontal enclosure in film. Through textual analysis of the selected films that are set on the Great Hungarian Plain, the thesis discusses the allegorical use of space during and after socialism. Therefore, while concentrating on the circularity of the location and *the mise-en-scène* of the films – that refer to the isolation and indefiniteness of space – the author argues that the directors recall the parabolic language of the cinematic corpus of the socialist epoch.

As concluded by the work, the contemporary art cinema of Romania and Hungary both reference socialism by using space as the main device for the implicit textual reflections. In this way, horizontal and vertical enclosure also emphasise the revival of the forms of the socialist aesthetics.

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Author's declaration

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

> 'In the context of post-1989 European cinema, it becomes crucial to interrogate the geographical, historical, and ideological stakes of any claim to visualize national landscapes. These images tap into a powerful nexus of ideas about European identities and cannot be simply dismissed as postmodern eye candy. (…) Landscape images in film are uniquely able to investigate this relationship of politics, representation, and history because landscape as a mode of spectacle provokes questions of national identity, the material space of the profilmic, and the historicity of the image.' (Galt, 2006:27)

1.1. What is Eastern Europe?

In his study on twenty-first century European cinema, Thomas Elsaesser (2015) identifies three contemporary traumas that all 'served as a resource for European cinema' (Elsaesser, 2015:25) and, as exploitative topics, created various tendencies within European filmmaking. These three pillars are the trauma of the Holocaust, the confrontation with Islam, and finally, Europe's bio- and body-politics, that is, 'ageing, (…) lack of reproduction, the obsession with wellness and health-care' (Elsaesser, 2015:23) on screen. Interestingly, while scrutinising these categories and matching them with various European national cinemas, Elsaesser does not negotiate the politico-historical trauma of Soviet colonialism[1] and its representation in Eastern European[2] and/or international screen

[1] Nevertheless, there are several differences between the great colonies of the British or French imperial powers and Russian colonialism (see Skrodzka, 2012: 9-11 and Mazierska, Kristensen and Näripea, 2014: 6-18), it can be argued that the 'Soviet colonial rhetoric was (…) similar to a traditional, Western-style colonial discourse' (Mazierska, Kristensen and Näripea, 2014: 3), thus having a great effect on the colonised countries' culture, politics and economy. In this way, the Soviet power can be regarded as coloniser, while we consider the Eastern states as post-colonial territories that were conquered in a process of 'reverse-cultural colonisation' (Moore, 2001). This approach not only contributes to map out and comprehend the growing nationalism in the region but, by examining and comparing the pre- and post-socialist national essentialism in the de-colonised states, it establishes a theoretical context for identifying the strategies of resistance and the critic of the centre (Piotrowski, 2012:37) that are useful for our investigations on space (see Batori, 2015).

– though the topic itself has been central to the national cinemas of the region (Imre, 2012). Correspondingly, the question arises, whether we consider the region as part of the collective European identity and Eurocentric ideas or, are the post-socialist[3] states to be treated as parts of a semi-independent unit that, albeit part of the European Union and the Schengen states, does not fit into the homogenous discourse with/on the West. Where does Eastern Europe stand and what does it stand for?

In the contemporary socio-critical discourse, the Eastern region has often been referred to as 'Western Europe's Other' (Gott and Herzog, 2014; Mazaj, 2011), which stands for an underrepresented, peripheral, uncanny territory (Skrodzka, 2012) that evokes misconceived ideas, pejorative signals and false images of the southern countries (Iordanova, 2001). As stated by Dina Iordanova (2013), despite the fall of the Berlin Wall, the information and acquaintance with the peripheral post-socialist era still seems to be defective:

> 'Still less of the culture of the Eastern Bloc was known in the West and a high proportion of the features that were known had been highlighted selectively for ideological considerations. (...) What is more worrying, however, is that after the West won the propaganda battle over the hearts and minds of the people of Eastern Bloc, the culture of the East remains as little known in the West as before. The resulting situation is that more than a decade into the post- 1989 transition, many of the Cold War-era clichés about East Central European culture and cinema remain unchallenged (...).' (Iordanova, 2003:16)

The lack of information not only refers to the cultural positioning of the area but its geographical confines as well. Eastern Europe is often negotiated as the unprotected side of the limes (Kiss, 2013), a territory of 'lands in-between', a frontier region 'between Russia and Germany, Europe and Asia, East and West' (Batt, 2003:7) that, lacking natural borders, cannot be defined accurately (Imre, 2005). This position of the middle is that crucial feature that makes up the core of the very character of Eastern Europe. The region seems to get stuck between two histories, two ideologies, two generations and two

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[2] Within the thesis, 'Eastern Europe' covers the post-socialist countries in Europe that, during socialism, had a similar politico-economic structure based on the Marxist-Leninist dogma of egalitarianism, and later went through the transition to democracy.

[3] This work adheres to the historian Ioan Scurtu's (2009), conception on the Eastern European 'socialist-totalitarian' regimes, that is, instead of categorising the USSR and the satellite states as communist systems, they will be described as socialist-totalitarian regimes: 'Socialist, because all the official documents of the time said so' (Scurtu, 2009:32); and because none of the Eastern bloc-countries achieved the Karl Marx-stated economic and material health-stage of communism (Scurtu, 2009: 24-27). Additionally, the system was totalitarian, 'as individuals had to unconditionally follow the guidelines pretending they were representing the whole, that is the people' (ibid, p.32).

landscapes that define its very identity. Accordingly, the socialist past and the capitalist present live simultaneously in the cityscapes of the region, while people commute between past and present, and East and West.

The massive migration to the wealthy European states after and since the political change in the system only sharpened the in-between situation of the region and its people. Although the end of the socialist regimes, and the abolishment of the Iron Curtain united Europe in one ideology and economic model, the socio-cultural fusion of the countries has irrevocably fallen through. Yet, several post-socialist countries have joined the European Union, Eastern Europe is still more evocative of appalling images than an alluring place to know more about. The media's negative portrayal of eastern migrants living and working abroad only strengthens the stereotype of a corrupt and larcenous aggregation, whereby the gap between the western and eastern part of Europe gets more and more broad (Outhwaite and Ray, 2005).

1.2. What is Eastern European cinema?

An additional obstacle in having an up-to-date picture on Eastern Europe is the lack of the post-socialist era's deep socio-historical analysis that would subdue the above mentioned lack of knowledge and misinformation. Nevertheless, there are several studies written on the politico-historical and social aspects of the socialist institution of Eastern Europe, one has to point out that, as Kürti (2002) emphasises, the region 'has rarely been theorised from within (…) [and] the concept [of] postsocialism may be seen as an imposition from the West in the postcommunist world' (Kürti, 2002:6). This is to say that, except for some precise and detailed Eastern European politico-historical investigation[4], the region's scholarship is less engaged with its own position in the post-socialist European context. What is more, most investigations focus on the periphery's historical-political analysis and only a few[5] have attempted to examine the area from a historical-cultural context, with special emphasis on filmic representation.

Moreover, the region's analysis of cinematic texts has been missing, especially those ones focusing on the area's post-socialist filmmaking practises and representational methods. Nevertheless, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars have started examining the Eastern European corpus, many of the analyses avoided touching upon the

[4] See for instance Crampton (1994), Priestland (2009) or Neampu (2010)
[5] See for instance Piotrowski (2012) or Pejic (2010)

post-socialist actualities. Instead, turning their attention to the socialist past; film studies have mainly focused on the movies' connotative language, whereby cinematographers expressed themselves on screen. That is, the indirect innuendo about socialism has been negotiated in several Eastern European narratives[6]. Yet, there are numerous analyses to be found on the connotative significance of the narratives, the examination essentially included works focusing on the classical socialist period (1960-1989) with few academics touching upon films made during, or after the system change[7].

1.3. The lack of spatial studies in Eastern European cinema

One of the main shortcomings of the studies on Eastern European cinema is that, as Ewa Mazierska (2014) notes, many of them approach the cinema of the region from a literary point of view. This overlooks cinema as a visual medium, whereby little or no attention is 'devoted to questions such as the representation of specific cities or the city-countryside dialectic or even the problems of *mise-en-scène* and camerawork: framing, point of view, set design' (Mazierska, 2014: 12). For this reason, Mazierska emphasises the need for spatial research in Eastern European cinema that, instead of focusing on thematic concern, would reflect on the representation of space in film. As she argues, this approach has been neglected for three main reasons in the academic discourse on Eastern European cinema. On the one hand, the Soviet cultural discourse considered space as dead and static (Mazierska, 2004:12). While, on the other hand, the directors' focus on national history – be that the tool of criticism or socialist propaganda – overshadowed the contemporary narratives and spatial approach to cinema[8]. Another reason is that, in the pre-1989 cinema, space was used as to subvert the dogmatic ideology of the socialist

[6] See for instance Hames (1985), Liehm (1977), Zalán (1990), Nemes (1985), Rinke (2006), Gervai (2004), Bahun and Haynes (eds. 2014)

[7] This is not to say that there are no academic books and anthologies dedicated to the post-1989 cinema of the region. For exceptions see Iordanova (2001; 2003); Imre (2005, 2012), Galt (2006), Mazierska (2007), Gaschütz (2009), Skrodzka (2012), Pop (2014), Nasta (2013), Portuges and Hames (eds. 2013), Mazierska, Kristensen and Näripea (eds. 2014), Kristensen (ed.2012), Vidan and Crnković, (eds. 2012), Gott and Herzog (eds. 2015), Murtic (2015). However, the studies examining the post-socialist cinema of Eastern Europe are still dwarfed by the number of works scrutinising the socialist epoch (see above).
We also have to note that, thanks to the growing interest in Eastern European cinemas and the number of scholars working in the field, the contemporary national cinemas of the region get more and more attention. The birth of new forums – such as the academic journal *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* and the two main platforms of Eastern European film journalism, *East European Film Bulletin* and *Kinokultura*– provide a broad field of discussion for scholars working on the cinema of the region. The annual *GoEast!* Film Festival in Wiesbaden and the South East European Film Festival in Los Angeles – just to mention the two largest events specialised on screening films from the region – also contribute to reaching wider audiences.

[8] History and space, of course, are not mutually exclusive, as we can see in the films of Miklós Jancsó who highlights the absurdity of the system by parabolic meta-narratives set in the past.

political context that questioned the social, political and cultural homogeneity of the satellite states. The censorship's main focus on the script enabled filmmakers to use space as a tool for political criticism, as many well-known examples illustrate from the Czech[9] and the Hungarian New Wave[10]. Certainly, a spatial discourse that would investigate the location, visual patterns and compositional arrangement that refer to the tyrannical structure of state socialism, could not evolve in the socialist scholarship on Eastern European cinema. In the new, post-1989 context, however, these limits no longer exist. Hence, researching space in the films of the socialist era can be 'a way to find gaps, fissures and contradictions in the official history of Eastern Europe and its cinematic representation and produce an alternative history of this cinema' (Mazierska, 2014:13). Moreover, the investigation that concerns the representation of space in the post-socialist cinematic corpus could contribute to a better understanding of how space has transformed in the films, that is, what differences one can observe when it comes to the contemporary cinema of the region. Has state socialism left its mark on the spatial structure of the films? Is there a continuity between the socialist and post-socialist aesthetics when it comes to the representation of space? Furthermore, how and when did the spatial allegories and parabolic narratives disappear, or, if the connotative language is still present in the cinema of the region, how is it embedded in the textual form of the films? There are several questions that the scholarship on Eastern European cinema must take into account and investigate, for what spatial studies provides is a fruitful, refreshing base.

1.4. Landscapes of power

In the age of mass migration, (illegal) border crossings and globalisation, the investigation of space[11] in film can also expose the process of how the Eastern European (colonial) societies re-articulate themselves after the fall of socialism, and react upon their very role and identity in the post-colonial age. In this regard, film serves as a tool for collective (Halbwachs, 1992) and cultural remembrance (Assman, 2011) that, through a variety of spatial forms in the narratives, implicitly or explicitly reacts upon (the socialist) past and present. Implicit remembrance, as used within this thesis, applies to the repetition

[9] See Hames (1985; 2006), Owen (2013) and Iordanova (2003)
[10] See Gelencsér (2002)
[11] First of all, when dealing with spatial relations, a distinction between space and place must be made: the latter one refers to inner territories such as rooms and accommodations while space is a broader range that incorporates landscapes, countries and nature.

of certain codes and motifs prevalent in the socialist films[12] and covers the indirect referencing of socialism. Explicit remembrance, on the other hand, bears with an open discourse on the previous socio-historical period that consists of a narrative set in the past, or a point of direct reference that recalls it. In our case, special emphasis will be given to films with the thematic of implicit remembrance whose patterns, as will be argued in the following, rely on the location and the *mise-en-scène* of the selected films. Consequently, as it is stated, the investigation of the natural, as well as the cultural landscapes[13] of Eastern Europe on screen play a key role in defining the forms of social remembrance and so the collective identity of a given nation.

Because it stands as a space that incorporates the fusion of history (space) and temporality (time), the landscapes of a nation function as an assemblage of various power-structures that illustrate the powers that have formed it (Zukin, 1991). As Jones, Jones and Woods (2004) argue, as a political device, landscapes of power always demonstrate the ruling authority, dominant ideologies and economic interests. Accordingly, they 'engender a sense of loyalty to a place, an elite or a dominant creed' by erecting monumental spaces that reproduce national identity (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004:117). Therefore, for ruling regimes and ideologies, the re-ordering of space becomes a crucial task: the grandiose statues, nation-specific street-names, and memorials show who is in power, while the monumental dwellings stand as symbols of the ruling class and/or ideology (O'Neill, 2009; Petcu, 1999).

In Eastern Europe, the manipulation of landscapes served a twofold aim. First of all, the thousand statues of national leaders, the re-naming of streets, and the red stars on the façade of the buildings signalled the reckoning with the previous political epoch. On the other hand, the housing policy of the new regimes, which was based on prefabricated blocks that would accommodate thousands, established equality among the socialist citizens – even though the egalitarian politics has practically never worked off (Enyedi, 1996). The new, socialist-realist monuments of the regimes, thus served not only as symbols of the socialist power, but, as political, social and cultural objects, influenced and structured the everyday movements of the inhabitants. In this way, the spatial control

[12] See Piotrowski (2012): 'Contrary to what one would expect, the post-communist condition does not require a rejection of communism and a return to the 'former' state. In fact, it can signal a certain type of continuity if not of symbols, then certainly of the modes of thought, customs and habits (…)' (2012:44)

[13] Within this thesis, landscape will be used as cultural expression, not a genre of painting or fine art (see Mitchel, 2003)

became one of the main signifiers of the collective identity and memory of the Eastern nations.

After the system change, the communist markers of space had been destroyed, thus signalling the beginning of another socio-historical epoch (Verdery, 1999; Light and Young, 2015). Still, to this very day, the remnants of the socialist planning forms a remarkable, socialist landscape that unites the post-socialist countries in one physical (landscape) and abstract space (film). While constantly mirroring the past, the landscapes of Eastern Europe become reminders of the previous establishment and as so, form a certain place identity among citizens. Therefore, the socialist monuments play a significant part in the definition of the contemporary, collective identity of a nation.

The Eastern European landscape on film, as Bíró (1990) accentuates, acts as 'a dramatis personae' that reflects 'choices and idiosyncrasies (…), tastes and mood', while representing 'a space fraught with conflict' that is 'replete with tension (…) and opposing forces' (Bíró, 1990:164). Bíró's words shed light on the subjective, identity-forming role of the landscape that thus functions as an emblematic visual background, whose textual reading brings closer to the understanding of the identity of a nation. Constituted by the tragic national histories, this identity gets reflected in a 'vision of metaphoric greyness' (Iordanova, 2003:93) that creates a gloomy, colourless, monotonous, post-apocalyptic image on screen (Stojanova, 2005), which, according to Bíró (1990), mirrors the evanescent high hopes of Eastern Europe. The ghettoization of the space of Eastern Europe, as Lisiak (2010) calls this phenomenon, opens up certain questions. For instance, what further connotations do these post-apocalyptic places and spaces have on screen? What connection can we establish between the Eastern European natural and urban landscapes, and memory? More importantly, what symbolic role does the (post-)socialist physical space play in filmic representation?

1.5. The reason for a (comparative) study

The lack of canonisation in the existing number of works on contemporary Eastern European cinema, and the neglected approach of spatial studies in the scholarship of the cinema of the region, made the present work to fill up the gap, and contribute to film studies by mapping out the lesser-known, (post-)socialist cinematic corpus of Eastern Europe. Since the examination of the whole region would go beyond the limit of this work,

I primarily concentrate on the two faces of socialism in Hungary and Romania[14]. The reason to have opted for these eastern states is to be found in their very disparate policy within the confines of totalitarian institution. That is, whereas Romania – opposite to other socialist states – never underwent the de-Stalinization process (Tismăneanu, 1991), and experienced a hard dictatorship and terror practiced by Nicolae Ceaușescu, the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party; Hungary got labelled 'the happiest barrack' (Gough, 2006) among the satellite countries as, thanks to the political easening that followed the revolutionary events of 1956, the country got more freedom from its governing than any other Eastern European state.

Certainly, as far as the socialist apparatus of control goes, Hungary and Romania shared many common features. First of all, both states focused on controlling the private space of citizens by working with a great network of agents that monitored and eavesdropped upon people. Following the oppressive coercive policy of his predecessors, Ceaușescu set up an apparatus of restrictive terror,[15] which kept the 'population in check through the manipulation of diverse forms of symbolic, of which fear was a favoured form' (Kligman, 1998: 14). The new, virtually more human method of keeping people under control, was built on the populace's vulnerability towards the state and the supervision of their spatial-temporal trajectory.

The governance involved the penetration into the very private realms of people through a multi-lateral surveillance system supervised by the Romanian Secret Service, the Securitate[16] that worked with an elaborated network of informers (Tontsch, 1985; Deletant, 1995a). Although the institution had several objectives – such as keeping close eyes on suspicious elements, eavesdropping foreign bodies and obviate any anti-establishment movements (Pacepa, 1987) – the main preoccupation of it was to monitor the populace and record any suspicious activity. As Serbulescu, a Romanian political prisoner presents in his memoirs;

[14] We also have to note that, regarding the Eastern Bloc, one cannot talk about a single practice of socialism, but, as Todorova argues, 'similar trajectories', for 'the communist experience was extremely diverse, not only geographically and diachronically, but it was pluralised across national, ethnic, social, professional, gender and generational borders' (Todorova et al., 2014:5).

[15] When analysing Romania's retributive institution of terror, Kligman (1998) establishes two categories of state-oppression: the prescriptive coercion, he argues, was the common form of punishment before Ceaușescu's restrictive terror apparatus and worked as an institution of open torture. In contrast to it, the restrictive terror aimed at controlling citizens by making them to be apprehensive of a possible persecution in case they do not obey the authorities.

[16] According to Hall (1997), 'per capita, the size of the Securitate's network of societal collaborators may have been as large as two-and-a-half times that of the infamous and ubiquitous East German Stasi' (1997:105), thus having about 700,000 collaborators out of 23 million people (Hall, 1997:121).

> 'The first great socialist industry was that of the production of workers: the informers. It works with ultramodern electronic equipment (microphones, tape recorders, etc.), plus an army of typists with their typewriters. Without all this, socialism could not have survived. In the socialist bloc, people and things exist only through their files. All our existence is in the hands of him who possesses files and is constituted by him who constructs them. Real people are but the reflection of their files' (Serbulescu, quoted by Verdery, 1966: 24).

As the quote highlights, the network of Securitate informers and state-officers (*Securiştis*) had a great part in the symbolic terror for they established a paranoid atmosphere that eventually resulted in the birth of a mistrustful climate where 'no one knew whom to trust' (Kligman, 1998:29). With spying after citizens, the state expropriated the private sphere unto itself, and created 'political subjects and subject positions useful to the regime' (Verdery, 1996: 24) that stood under notorious, multi-lateral surveillance and ever-present threat.

Similar to Romania, in the Hungarian Kádár-system, 'the political policemen still followed old habits and looked for enemies, not least among those released in the amnesty' (Gough, 2006:154). As Takács (2013) underlines, the Hungarian Interior Ministry considered the information service as a 'basic (1955), most basic (1956), most important (1958) and [later] the main (1972) operative tool' (Takács, 2013:7). Therefore, the leading figures of the country's cultural life were handled cautiously and those who were opposed to the socialist structure, were threatened and/or eliminated from public life. In the name of the consolidation, Kádár re-directed the State Protection Authority (AVH) – the Hungarian secret police responsible for incarcerations, surveillance and investigations – that now operated within the Ministry of Interior's Third Main Directorate (III/3) and was mainly concerned with internal reaction. The main task of the III/3 group was to investigate suspicious elements and keep them under notorious surveillance, to obviate – rather than cure – any problem they could cause (Tabajdi, 2013).

Similar to Ceausescu's Romania, agents played a crucial role in the functioning of the Hungarian state security system (Rainer, 2007). The spying apparatus[17] and the informers themselves, became more and more unrecognizable and transparent in the society. As Rainer emphasises, 'at the end of the 1980s, the system of latent compromise solutions

[17] According to Gervai (2011), until 1956 the ÁVH monitored some 1,2 million people which, after the Kadarist consolidation, got reduced to 240,000. Between 1950 and 1990 the directorate had about 200,000 informator (see Gervai, 2011: 9).

operating throughout the society made it increasingly difficult to identify the demons' (Rainer, 2007:5). The faceless spies caused permanent uncertainty among the members of the society as, similar to Romania, people did not know whom to trust (Gervai, 2011).

To sum up, both Romania and Hungary focused on controlling the private space of citizens by working with a great network of agents that monitored and eavesdropped upon people. The Securitate and the AVH supervised the spatial-temporal trajectory of citizens by using various electronic devices as well as central, socio-political measures that aimed at controlling people. This restrictive apparatus of monitoring thus kept people in constant uncertainty, fear and silence.

1.6. Objectives

The comparative analysis of these two extremes can help us to establish a model of post-socialist reflection of cinema, which would illustrate the kinds of implicit and explicit forms post-socialist collective remembrance takes within the Eastern bloc. How does a nation that underwent one of the most oppressive totalitarian dictatorships in Europe re-articulate itself and how does a society, that enjoyed a quasi-liberal life, respond to the changes? Is there an open discourse on the socialist past in these societies, or, as some academics suggest,[18] is it still dominated by collective amnesia? And finally, what imprints are there in artistic productions that directly, or indirectly, recall the totalitarian regime? Can we set up a typology of cultural remembrance based on two extreme types of socialism?

Explicit remembering of the socialist past in film has been negotiated by several scholars that not only categorized the waves of cinematic reflections but scrutinised their impact on social criticism and national consciousness as well.[19] Also, because of the contemporary character of the phenomenon, the investigation of the Ceaușescuian past on screen has become topical in recent years.[20] Despite the growing number of studies however, academic scholarship has omitted any analysis of the implicit, textual forms of remembrance and historic reflection. This is to state that, thematic concerns aside, we find

[18] In case of Romania, Vladimir Tismăneanu (2010) talks of a 'state-sponsored amnesia' (2010:18), while Péter György (2000; 2005) emphasises the legacy of collective amnesia that defines the present-day, socio-historic discourse of Hungary.
[19] See Petrie (1986), Gervai (2004); Murai (2008), Portuges (1991;2003), Bisztray (2000); Marsha (2012)
[20] See Ioniță, (2009), Andreescu (2011;2013); Nasta (2003), and Littmann (2014)

several similarities in the representation of space between the socialist and post-socialist filmic epoch that shall be closely investigated. Therefore, by focusing on the textual analysis of the pre- and post-socialist Hungarian and Romanian corpus of art cinema, this thesis discusses the implicit forms of filmic reflections on socialism by arguing that there is an aesthetic continuity in the treatment of space between the socialist and post-socialist productions. Accordingly, the main hypothesis of this thesis is that, even though the examined works do not apply to the explicit remembrance of the socialist institution, the spatial representation in these films refers to the enclosure and segmented space of state socialism. Moreover, as will be stated, the tyrannised spatial relations depicted in the analysed films are evocative of a disciplinary, claustrophobic space constructed around a panoptic scheme that recalls the oppressive apparatus of the socialist state.

1.7. Methodology. Horizontal and vertical enclosure

The intention of this work is to synthesise and to advance the disparate theoretical approaches that inform the study of space in film, for the purpose of producing a coherent model of the post-socialist cinema as a unique discourse, through which the enclosure of the socialist system is expressed. This is not to say of course that all films function as a tool of historical-political investigation and/or continuity, but that there is a remarkable intertextual coherence among Eastern European art films that is tied to the socialist history of the region and which calls for canonisation.

For this purpose, the thesis establishes two categories that cover two forms of enclosed spatial structures on screen. The first, *vertical enclosure*, refers to the stratified visual graphics of screen space and the claustrophobic constellation of the physical space that give the images a suffocating atmosphere. The vertical compositional arrangement will be investigated as the main characteristic of contemporary Romanian cinema that utilises the narrow, inner places of prefabricated tower blocks and their claustrophobic, labyrinth-like interior structures. To accentuate the enclosed position of the individuals in these places, Romanian directors have accentuated the absolute presence of the camera, and structure the space into a panoptic, disciplinary constellation that builds a textual form based on surveillance.

The tendency in Hungarian cinema, on the other hand, steps out of the socialist physical structures and depicts wide, horizontal spaces that demonstrate the tyrannised spatial characteristic of the socialist epoch. In the case of *horizontal enclosure*, the

claustrophobic set-up consists of metaphoric camera movements that, by means of circulating, long takes, close up upon the physical space. In addition, besides the composition of the shots, the location of the films gets special emphasis, for the setting of Hungarian directors is strongly connected to the national landscape of the country.

The connectedness to open and labyrinth-like spaces and places is a testimony of the continuity of certain aesthetical forms between the socialist and post-socialist texts. That is, vertical enclosure is based on the spatial patterns of socialist filmmaking, while horizontal enclosure dwells on the parabolic narrative forms of the Hungarian pre-revolutionary era. This is not to say that certain visual patterns, such as the choreography of the camera and the visual composition itself, did not change since socialism, but that the treatment of space creates a sense of coherence among contemporary art films.

We have to note that these two categories are not intended to fit all the Romanian and Hungarian productions into these two groups. Certainly, the claustrophobic constellation of prefabricated flats has been negotiated in Hungarian films, similarly to the New Romanian Cinema that often uses the open space of the seaside and large meadows to emphasise enclosure[21]. One has to emphasise however, that while we find exceptions, the art films that stand outside the two types of spatial enclosure are marginal and/or, as is the case in Hungary, do not form a coherent tendency.

By establishing the categories of horizontal and vertical enclosure, this thesis aims to demonstrate how the enclosed spatial structures relive the post-socialist era and produce an implicit and collective form of remembrance. Paradoxically, these spatial forms signal an ambivalent approach to remembering the past, that is, as they follow the aesthetic forms of their predecessors, they demonstrate a certain longing towards the pre-capitalist era. On the other hand, they also reflect upon the present-day, debt-ridden, anomic situation of the region. In this way, the spatial referencing to the gloomy socialist past and the anomic capitalist present, occur in the same visual unit and builds a spatial structure that makes up the suffocating atmosphere characteristics of Eastern European cinema.

[21] The prefabricated buildings' narrow structure and the problems resulting from it was at the heart of several Hungarian films, especially in the end of the 1970s, after the fulfilment of the panel program. See for instance Szilveszter Siklósi's *Moral Stories about Sex* (Tanmesék a szexről, 1988), Gábor Oláh's *Catch and Carry* (Fogjuk meg és vigyétek! 1978), Kézdi-Kovács's *When Joseph Returns (*Ha megjön József, 1976) or Böszörményi's *Now It's My Turn, Now It's Yours* (Egy kicsit én, egy kicsit te, 1983).
Similarly, there are Romanian exceptions in shooting horizontal landscapes for the propose of expressing enclosure, such as Mungiu's *Beyond the Hills* (După dealuri, 2012) or Cristian Nemescu's *California Dreamin'* (Nesfarsit, 2007).

1.8. Structure of the study

The present study is structured around three main parts. Part 1 intends to foster a comprehensive understanding of socialist spaces. By building upon the ideas of various spatial theorists, it examines Romanian and Hungarian housing specificity, in order to depict the system's oppression over public and private spaces. Therefore, in chapter 2 I trace a path through the critical literature with respect to the socialist production of space. Based on Foucault's (1975) ideas on cellular space, this part of the thesis makes explicit the connection between disciplinary space and the socialist housing program in Romania and Hungary. Chapter 2 also analyses the transformation of physical space into a disciplinary structure in Romania, and the evacuation of scattered homesteads of the Hungarian Plain that, as argued below, serve as pillars of the very national identity of the country. The main focus in this part of the work lies in the manner that socialist policy was intended to dominate over space by implementing changes to the housing system. During the investigation, the natural as well as urban landscape of Romania and Hungary is deciphered as a textual system (De Certeau, 1984; Outhwaite and Ray, 2005; Mitchell, 2002).

I believe that, as Rosen (2008) suggests, the study of a national cinema has to be based on the conceptualisation of textuality that 'describes how a large number of superficially differentiated texts can be associated in a regularised, relatively limited intertextuality in order to form a coherence, a national cinema' (Rosen, 2008:18). Therefore, the following parts (Part 2 and 3) of the thesis enumerates a great number of productions that encompass – yet not completely covers – a large section of the socialist and post-socialist art cinema of Romania and Hungary. My analysis of the national cinemas is based on socio-historical periods and follows the contours of the socialist, and post-socialist corpus, while also devoting discrete chapters to the films of the transition period. In this way, the investigation of the Romanian and Hungarian cinema will be divided into two large sections while, within each section, three chapters dissect the cinematic-historic periods of the countries.

Part 2 is devoted to Romanian cinema. Chapter 3 investigates the socialist cinema of Romania, with a special emphasis on the directors' treatment of space. This section examines the birth of the enclosed, disciplinary space that is dissected in *Reenactment*,

Sequences, *Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică*? and *Microphone Test*. The following chapter (chapter 4) scrutinises the films of the transition and illustrates the birth of the double-framing technique and ruined prefabricated spaces as setting through the textual reading of *The Oak* and *Look Forward in Anger*.

Chapter 5 calls for the canonisation of contemporary films and groups them according to their implicit and explicit approach to the socialist past. Because the post-socialist, Hungarian part of the thesis works with lesser (or not) known examples, in this case, the investigation focuses on internationally recognised Romanian productions. Accordingly, in chapter 6, the implicit remembrance demonstrated by vertical enclosure will be analysed in Cristi Puiu's *Aurora*, *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* and Corneliu Porumboiu's *12:08: East of Bucharest* and *Police, adjective*.

Part 3 is devoted to Hungarian cinema solely. Following the structure of the Romanian part of the thesis, chapter 7 examines the parabolic narratives of the socialist cinema of Hungary, with a special emphasis on spatial parables. While this section provides an insight into the closed and open parables of the socialist epoch through which the authoritarian regime would be criticised, the chapter mainly dissects the disciplinary, colonized space of the Hungarian Plain (*Alföld*) and the power-structures on this land through Miklós Jancsó's *My Way Home*, and *The Round-Up*.

Chapter 8 examines the de-colonized national spaces of Hungary and the circular aesthetics that have been inherited to the post-socialist cinema of the country. With special focus given to Béla Tarr's *Satantango*, the analysis concerns the films of the so-called Black Series[22]. Again, because of the limited space of the thesis, not all of the films of Black Series could be touched upon. However, by mainly focusing on *Satantango*, attempts were made to provide a comprehensive reading of the post-1989, pre-2000 Hungarian cinema. Similarly, through the close textual reading of *Delta* and *Father's Acre*, the last chapter (chapter 9) references to several other works from the post-2000 epoch, thus to examine how the directors of the new generation slowly reckon with the *Alföld*-parables, and turn the land into the symbol of decay.

[22] Black Series – a tendency within the post-transition cinema of Hungary (1987-1995) – used black and white images and displayed deserted environments to illustrate the economic, social and psychological crisis caused by the system change (Nagy, 2010; Györffy, 2001).

PART 1.

THE SPACE OF EASTERN EUROPE

CHAPTER 2.

THE SOCIALIST PRODUCTION OF SPACE

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the main preoccupation of the totalitarian regimes of Hungary and Romania was to have absolute spatial and temporal control over the population, in order to extract compliance from citizens and obviate a possible uprising against the regime. The following part of the thesis examines the way these socialist regimes re-ordered space by means of architecture. After a short introduction into space as social(ist) product, the chapter analyses the physical and psychological context of Romania's prefabricated constructs and Hungary's scattered homesteads and cube houses. In the latter case, the dwellings will be examined as national constructs that are situated in the very national space of the *Alföld*. In contrast to this, the apartment blocks will be studied in the urban context of Bucharest as manifestations of the omnipresent power of the Ceaușescu-regime. As will be argued, in cinema, the scattered homesteads form a microcosm and are representatives of a rebellious, anti-socialist, national rhetoric, whereas the blocks signal the omniscient power of the totalitarian edifice.

By providing a spatial reading of the cityscape of Bucharest and the rural landscape of Hungary, this part of the examination intends to establish a cultural and political base for the vertical and horizontal categories on screen that will be discussed later in the thesis. In both cases, the spatial reading of the physical places aims to illustrate the disciplinary constellation of the architectural forms, and the deindividualized power that gets dissolved in them.

2.1. Towards a genealogy of (socialist) space

In his essay on European cinematic spaces, David Forgacs (2000), distinguishes two kinds of spaces that interact with each other on screen. He argues that, on the one hand, there is the so-called pro-filmic space that lies before the camera, which is completed by the two-dimensional filmic image bounded by the frame, that the director cuts out of the three-dimensional world. These two kinds of spaces play with each other by camera

movements, reframing and diverse transitions from shot to shot. Forgács pinpoints that the profilmic space has a crucial role in filmmaking since, as it is produced by particular societies, it creates social milieu. This social space is complemented by the mathematical space that is between the filled spaces and objects that is to say, the sphere of geometry. What provides articulation between the social space and the latter one, are the architectures and buildings that act as the social life's structures, materialised in estates and dwellings.

Similar to Forgács, Henri Lefebvre (1974, 1991) negotiates space as a social product that incorporates the social-productive functions and actions of subjects, as well as the representation of their capitalist social life. For him, space becomes fundamental in understanding the world and the function that people have within it (Watkins, 2005). Thus, his spatial triad – representation of space, spatial practice and representational space (Lefebvre, 1991: 38) – aims to explain how a society embraces these spatial sets in order to illustrate social relations and spatial practices.

Lefebvre's first category, representation of space – conceived space – is an abstract, mental space occupied by urbanists, scientists and social engineers, 'all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived' (38). For Lefebvre, this space combines ideology and knowledge, thus playing a crucial part in the discourse on and production of space (1991: 41-42). This space is 'the manifest representation of our mental constructs of the spaces of our rational, abstract understandings' (Watkins, 212) – one that produces projects 'embedded in a spatial context and a texture' (42), such as architecture, maps, models, symbols and designs.

In contrast to the representations of space, Lefebvre's second category has no material but a symbolic product only. Representational space is a subjective space experienced through images and non-verbal symbols that overlay physical space (39). For Lefebvre, this space – that 'need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness' (41) is endowed with the inhabitant's symbolic attachment to the location.

Lefebvre's third category – the spatial practice of the society – is a perceived space that structures people's daily reality and the way they use space, thus embracing production and reproduction peculiar of a given social formation. This is to say that, as every society creates a physical trajectory distinctive of a given culture that structured and framed it, the spatial practice – that, for instance, determines one's daily spatial network – produces the very space of a society. Consequently, in the case of spatial practice, this production registers an urban reality where people's everyday activities are embedded in.

As Watkins (2005) puts it, for Lefebvre, space is an empirical and physical product that 'becomes re-described not as a dead, inert thing or object, but as organic and fluid and alive; it has a pulse, it palpitates, it flows and collides with other spaces' (2005:211). In this way, spatial practice (perceived space), representational space (lived space) and representations of space (conceived space) create spatial practice and 'spatial competence' (Lefebvre, 1991:37) that incorporate both abstract and lived formations for they enable production, knowledge and aesthetics to exist within the same register. However, as Merrifield (1993) emphasises, Lefebvre's elements are never stable and there is a risk that the triad 'loses its political and analytical resonance if its gets treated merely in the abstract' (Merrifield, 2000:175). For this reason, he argues that 'it needs to be *embodied* with actual flesh and blood and culture, with real life relationships and events' (ibid) whereby social practice and the concrete spatial practice get connected.

Nevertheless, whilst Lefebvre himself and the academic debate on the spatial triad negotiates the elements of his model as components of capitalist space production, and so associate the triad with spaces of globalist-capitalist culture, labour and capital, my intention is to use the triadic model to illustrate the socialist production of space.

Despite his preoccupation with Marxist spatial analysis, in *Production of Space,* Lefebvre does not negotiate the role or importance of socialist architecture, and, instead of a detailed analysis on socialist space, he remains concerned with the question whether state socialism has produced his own space or not:

> '(…) there is no easy or quick answer to the question of socialism's space; much careful thought is called for here. It may be the revolutionary period, the period of intense change, merely establishes the preconditions of a new space, and that the realization of that space calls for a rather longer period – for a period of calm. (…) Where can an architectural production be found today that might be described as socialist – or even a new when contrasted with the corresponding efforts of capitalist planning? In the former Stalinallee (…) Cuba, Moscow or Peking? (…) How is the total space of a socialist society to be conceived of? (…) In short, what do we find when we apply the yardstick of space – or (…) the yardstick of spatial practice – to societies with a socialist mode of production? (1991:54)

While these questions clearly interest Lefebvre, instead of setting up the genealogy of socialist space, his analysis focuses on capitalist apartment buildings and urban monumentality that, as he suggests, are peculiar of the capitalist-globalist production of

space. One has to note that, although he omits investigating the socialist dwellings or their urban contexts, his arguments on capitalist constructions can be applied to socialist constructions as well. For instance, he states that capitalist cities and their homologous, repetitious spaces were ‘made with the visible in mind: the visibility of people and things, of spaces and of whatever is contained by them’ (1991:75). This gives people a certain kind of touristic gaze while wondering among the analogue structures. In this way, the capitalist individual is subjected to the surrounding architecture that swallows his attention and, instead of analysing the environment, makes the person admire the skyscrapers that, according to Lefebvre, function as phallocentric elements that mirror state power (1991:98). Transparency has been a key tendency during socialism as well, but, instead of the individual and his liberated, wondering gaze, the looking object *itself* was the target and not the observer of the urban space. Therefore, as will be argued below, the high-rise, prefabricated buildings closed the individual into a circle whereby, similar to the capitalist skyscrapers, the dwellings functioned as symbols of power that encompassed the looking person who, instead of being the looking one (subject), remained of the position of looked at (object).

Also, while scrutinising capitalist spatialisation, Lefebvre argues for a spatial logic according to which capitalist living quarters are organised. He states that its twofold strategy aims at structuring people, both their senses and their bodies, into ‘boxes for living in’ (1991:98). Because of the narrow box, the tenant realises his connection to the block’s other subjects, while recognising his position in accordance with the other boxes in the building (1991:98). In this way, he becomes aware of his spatial, as well as social position within the same dwelling. Later on, Lefebvre pinpoints that this relationship ‘serves to compensate for the pathetically small size of each set of living-quarters; it posits, presupposes and imposes homogeneity in the subdivision of space; and (…) takes on the aspect of pure logic (…): space contains space, the visible contains visible (…) and boxes fit into boxes’ (ibid). As will be argued, the socialist, prefabricated blocks were built around the same logic and, the capitalist assembling-form alike, followed the box/structure that accommodated a larger number of people under the same roof. Consequently, similar to the capitalist city, the socialist city is a representational space and the space of representation, the work and product of socialism that determined the visual character of the socialist social space.

In addition, space also functions as a means of control and power (Soja, 1989), that is, it constrains power relations in the form of buildings, monuments and works of art

(Massey, 2006). In this way, the representation of space becomes the representation of the socialist power whose centre and urban landscape, the city, is transformed according to the socialist needs and plans. Therefore, as Merrifield (2000) notes, the lived and perceived space can be overwritten and/or terminated by the conceived space that thus re-structures the experienced, daily spatial trajectories.

As the following chapter intends to illustrate, the socialist prefabricated blocks in Romania and Kádár's cube houses in Hungary, are examples of the transitional process between the social and mathematical space whereby the political power, as abstract space (1991:51), changes the spatial practice and the representational spaces. Furthermore, it will be argued that socialist ideology rendered housing to serve the central surveillance-system, and contributed to a spatial practice that strictly followed the prescribed formula of the socialist leaderships. The spatial unity that was born this way, shows striking resemblance with the Foucauldian disciplinary space illustrated by Bentham's panopticon, where everything can be seen without seeing the omniscient watching apparatus. By paralleling Foucault's apparatus with the surveillance of the socialist regime, it will be stated that the latter's profilmic – social space – acts as a theatre, where, through the manipulation of the special relations, participants became actors and spectators at the same time.

2.2. Socialist spaces

Whether it is about filmic representation and perception, or the townships of our civilization, the role of centrality has always played a surpassing role. From the structure of cities of ancient Egypt, Greek and Roman culture until the very present's metropolises, the core of territories has always been the centre of crucial happenings of socio-political discourse, and has served as a place where the vast majority of the population live (Mumford, 1961).

In his post-structuralist approach to space, Michel Foucault (1975; 1991) emphasises this centrality by connecting the creation of space to discipline. As he pinpoints, in order to control individuals, disciplines require enclosure that is 'the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself' (Foucault, 1975:141). This protected place shall be divided into pieces where each person has their own space/place in this cellular unity. In this way, the monastic practice of partitioning leads to the total control and supervision over the individuals who are inserted in a fixed place (Foucault, 1975:143). Thus, disciplines create their own complex, architectural, functional and

hierarchical spaces such as buildings, cells or rooms (1975:148). As Foucault emphasises, these spaces then 'provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links, and (…) guarantee the obedience of individuals' (ibid). They contribute to the constitution of a *tableaux vivant*, thus ordering people into obedient multiplicities.

Besides the control of activity and time, a key element in the disciplinary space is surveillance that permits control in the spatial hierarchy, whereby the hidden gaze becomes the tool of the overall functioning, omniscient power. In his well-known analysis of Bentham's panopticon (1975:195-228), Foucault examines the architectural figure of the dwelling's composition as the perfect example of a supervising apparatus. The main principle of operation of Bentham is the separation of individuals and the central, invisible gaze that sees everything but is not seen by anybody. As Foucault pinpoints, the distribution of this gaze, and other elements of power such as surfaces, bodies and light, set up the discipline mechanism that is able to function without violent acts. The prison thus becomes a sort of microcosm of the society, an isolated place where surveillance and observation unite in order to create a disciplinary space:

> 'This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, (…) all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism' (Foucault, 1975:197).

As emphasised by Foucault, the main principle of the disciplinary space is the invisible power that, without being revealed, supervises the inhabitants of the place: the subject knows that he is under surveillance, but cannot identify the person that monitors him. In this way, power gets deindividualized and dissolves in space: it 'sees everything without ever being seen', and gets distributed in 'bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in arrangement, whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up' (Foucault, 1975:202). Accordingly, the enclosed institution and its panopticism make up the very space of a disciplinary society, where the political power acts as a

faceless gaze that transforms ‘the whole social body into a field of perception’ (Foucault, 1975:214).

Nevertheless, it is the police that Foucault’s attention is given to most when demonstrating how discipline dictates social order, his ideas can be associated with the socialist society. This is to say that, as will be argued, it is the Foucauldian total control over space that characterises the socialist apparatus.

2.3. The hallmark of Eastern Europe: the block

In his book on post-socialist cultural landscapes, Czepczynski (2008) accentuates the crucial role buildings play in understanding and re-forming landscape. As he argues, dwellings embody social, cultural and economic practices, thus synthesising history, space and memory. The post-socialist cultural landscape of Central Europe ‘shares a number of common characteristics relevant to the management of its heritage’ (Czepczynski, 2008:4) for it embraces iconic landscapes, and the features of communist structures and powers. In this way, a complex discourse can evolve on the post-socialist countryscape of the region that enhances the iconographic features dominant in the pre-socialist, socialist and post-socialist epoch. These characteristics can then explain the whole phenomena of social differentiation and economic, political and cultural changes. This discourse, as Czepczynski adds, is composed of ‘architectural dispositifs’ that can be seen as ‘spatial units or arrangements composed of several buildings, places and cultural connotations, and become equivalent to cultural landscapes’ (Czepczynski, 2008:433).

In the socialist era, Eastern Europe’s architectural dispositif, the system-built, high rise housing blocks took on a political role to construct perfect order in the social space (Crowley-Reid, 2002). Nikita Khrushchev, the first secretary of the Communist Part of the Soviet Union (1953-1964), announced the panel-programme to beat capitalism by creating greater urban concentrations than the Western societies. The massive, ornate buildings that structured the socialist cities’ landscapes, offered a different and unusual housing alternative to families living in the cities of the Eastern bloc (Sosnovy, 1954). The arrangement of these accommodations was somewhat similar to Bentham’s Panopticon, with a cellular layout and labyrinth-like, narrow, dark corridors and exiguous rooms. The flats were extremely small, usually with a kitchen in the centre, and one or maximum two surrounding rooms. During the Khrushchev-era, more than 38 million families were moved into these kinds of apartments that they would share with their relatives. In this way,

grandparents, parents and grandchildren lived under the same roof and same territory of 30-50 m^2. As Gerasimova (1998) notes in her essay on block houses, each citizen had an equal living space of 8,25 m^2, while, according to Ditchev (2005), the space for sleeping was around 4-5 m^2 per head.

By comparing the so-called disurbanist and urbanist utopias, Ditchev (2005) explains how urban-socialist space controlled people by creating its own area around them:

> 'The basic idea was that architecture should promote the dissolution of the family into the collective body. Housing plants were conceived for 1000-10000 (...) persons, where all activities such as eating, reading, sports, etc. were supposed to be carried out in the communal rooms situated on the first or on the middle floor.' (Ditchev, 2005:342)

As a result of the panel programme, there were several concrete-districts built in the socialist cities, each providing homes for 5,000-15,000 people. These cellular micro-towns not only contained blocks of flats, but linked restaurants, kindergartens, cinemas, educational and cultural services together, thus creating a whole socialist mini-establishment. As Smith (1996) adds, 'the level of provision was supposed to be on a per capita basis, involving specific forms for the number of restaurant seats, square meters of shopping space' (1996: 75) thus the control referred to the pedestrian's whole range of life. The lack of any personal, free space resulted in the environment's total supervision.

2.4. Cellular spaces

In order to see the impact that the lack of private spaces had on the Romanian society, we first have to specify what one understands under the term of intimate sphere, and how it is distinguished from other types of spaces. In my investigation, private space varies from the public one not only judicially, thus owning a territory through possession; but by having an area where, being far from the gaze of the society, pedestrians can act freely. Ali Madanipour (2003) argues in her book on cities' public spaces that

> 'Private space (...) is a part of life that is under the control of the individual in a personal capacity, outside public observation and knowledge and outside official or state control. It follows that private space is a part of space that belongs to, or is controlled by, an individual, for that individual's exclusive use, keeping the public out.' (Madanipour, 2003: 40-41)

Similar to Madanipour, Thomas Nagel (1995) distinguishes private space from public by involving the state's control and people's human rights. He argues that private space refers to free choices of individuals, while the former one is equated with scrutiny and control. In his opinion, private space is part of the individuals' human rights and must not be controlled by anyone but the inhabitants themselves. In contrast to this, the prefabricated, socialist dwellings have terminated privacy in two ways. First of all, the choice of moving, thus possessing and using a flat was not the decision of the individual, but the outcome of the party's suggestible members. Great workers with peasant-roots, and members of the party were first in the queue of the waiting lists, thereby getting apartments faster than others. The second method of abolishing privacy was the spatial arrangement of the flats: the 'sardines-in-the-tin-effect' – as Crowley (2005) calls the structure of narrow corridors and the incredibly small rooms where whole generations would live – enhanced claustrophobic feelings. The overgrown concrete-monuments of socialist cities and the prefabricated apartment-blocs only strengthened the inhabitants' subjected position. The high, massive buildings presided over the dwellers, while arriving home they would face the lack of any familiarity[23]. Crowley describes the situation thus:

> 'Although the home was conceded as private, in the narrow sense of being the domain of an individual and her family, it bore no traces of what might be described as personality. (...) Populated by generic social types, rather than named or identified individuals, these interiors inhibited any reflection on the part of the reader on the individual idiosyncrasies, personal needs and interests of their inhabitants. These new homes were not private.' (Crowley, 2005: 190)

The prefabricated dwellings also had a theatrical structure (Crowley, 2005; Sezneva, 2005) that made the bloc a perfect place for surveillance inn. The massive apartment buildings were built in a circle-form that had a spacious, concrete-centre in the middle. In this way, the dwellings formed a ring with a great glade at its core from which point all apartments would be seen. In addition, one block covered the other's quarter so that the neighbours in the opposite apartment could easily monitor each other. With the omniscient gaze of the inspector reaching every corner of the private space of the inhabitants, the socialist state created a surveillance structure similar to Foucault's disciplinary machine.

[23] As Crowley describes, the flats 'were relatively alike when considered to terms of space. In fact, most housing schemes throughout the period viewed inhabitation within narrow, functional limits. Space was a resource to be apportioned like the flat in a high-rise tower on the outskirts.' (Crowley, 2005: 203)

2.5. The urban landscape of Romania: restructuring Bucharest

By 1970-1971, socialist concrete-districts, so-called microraions[24] ruled over the socialist city-landscape in the region (Dimaio, 1974). In this regard, Romania and Hungary were no exceptions for the cityscapes of both countries underwent the centralised, socialist re-planning. We have to highlight, however, that the extent to which the state interfered in the housing policies, shows great differences between the two countries. In Hungary, the state was projected to build the 60% of the new housing stock, while the rest was to be constructed by private means. The country had the lowest percentage in state housing and at the same time, the highest amount of private construction among the eastern states (Molnár, 2010). In contrast to this, Romania was the leader of state-building constructions by having more than 92% of the dwellings under governmental control (Pásztor-Péter, 2007).

In the Ceaușescu-era, the panel-programme was implemented in two waves. In the first phase of the Romanian housing estate project (1965-80), the former detached housing system was replaced by four-storey high prefabricated blocks in the city outskirts, with the purpose of creating 'impressive entryways into the city [as] visual manifestation of the emerging revolutionary ethic' (Danta, 1993:173). In 1966, Ceaușescu officially announced a restructuring program that intended to re-plan 'rural and urban areas according to socialist principles' (Scurtu, 2009: 59). The socialist monopolisation of space payed no regard to historical monuments[25], churches or national heritages, however, in the first phase, the re-structuring of space mainly focused on the outskirts of Bucharest (Lowe, 1992). The main districts of Titan-Balta Albă, Berceni and Drumul Taberei were established in this phase.

By the 1970s, the failing socio-economic plans compelled Ceaușescu to find new ways to stabilise his position and exert his influence in Romania. After finishing with the living districts in the neighbourhoods of Bucharest, his attention in the second phase of

[24]According to Dimaio, 'the microraions (also called microboroughs or microdistrincts) are small communities of several thousand inhabitants within a larger urban setting. Schools, nurseries, stores catering daily needs, sports, and recreational facilities, cinemas (…), all elements of cultural and public service are to be fully integrated in the microraion plan. And the satisfaction of man's many and growing everyday and cultural needs will more and more assume a communalized character and will cross the boundaries of the individual apartment. As a basic city planning rile, all new housing should be located in these large complexes' (Dimaio, 1974:55).

[25] According to Scurtu (2009), by 1989 there were 29 old town centres destroyed while another 37% went through massive demolitions (Scurtu, 2009: 61).

monopolisation (1980-89), turned towards the complete transformation of the city centre (Danta, 1993). A major earthquake in 1977 in Bucharest advanced his plans and supported him in eradicating the churches and monasteries of the city. As Danta emphasises, the objective of this action was threefold:

> 'The first stemmed from socialist ideology, specifically the concept of monumentality. In this case, monumentality in architecture and art was used to anchor collective cultural aspects of the landscape as an expression of liberation (…). The second aim was to rewrite the history of the country in Ceausescu's image by destroying the visual past in the center (sic!) of Bucharest. The third aim was to replicate in Bucharest the symmetrical, artificial landscape he had seen in Pyongyang' (Danta, 1993:175).

After bulldozing the 25% of the central districts and evacuating some 40,000 people, the Ceaușescus had started the re-configuration of the entire cityscape (Danta, 1993). Soon, the construction of the House of the Republic had started, together with erecting massive, eclectic, prefabricated blocks along the Victory of Socialism Boulevard that united the socialist aesthetics of the outskirts with the monumentality of the city centre.

2.5.1. Inside the bloc(k)

The grandiose blocks built in Bucharest slowly re-formed the cityscape, and stood as representatives of the stability of the Ceaușescu-regime that seemed unassailable. Together with their role of illustrating the power of the establishment, the main idea behind the re-configuration of the housing system was to ensure the fulfilment of the Party's homogenisation-policy that would merge private and public spaces, thus creating the new, socialist man whose life was solely devoted to the socialist cause (Lowe, 1992). Because of the restricted geographic mobility of citizens, and the circular structure of the blocks, the apartments enabled the Romanian authorities to have a close eye on citizens. A private surveillance network was also soon set-up to filter out suspicious elements and monitor people in their newly-erected homes. Hence, every apartment building would have a superintendent, whose main task was to keep a dossier that contained all the personal data about the apartment building's inhabitants, checking if 'how many resided there and what their current status was' (Kligman, 1998:29), and what their hobbies or daily activities were. The accommodation of foreign citizens was forbidden and any suspicious visitors

had to be reported to the superintendent (Scurtu, 2009). As O'Neill observes, the new cityscape of the socialist Bucharest' produced exposure and visibility':

> '(…) The improved optics of the streetscape, the unfamiliarity of one's neighbourhood and neighbours, and the awareness that one's home was built by the state all played into Romanians' paranoia of the Department of State Security, or the *Securitate*. (…) This new urban space produced very real fears of observation, turning the cityscape into a disciplining mechanism. (O'Neill, 2009:104-105)

Besides the scopic control of the state, citizens had to contend with the low quality of their private space that was often inadequate for living. The rooms were small, with inefficient infrastructure and very low comfort (Lowe, 1992). In addition, the deprivation of hot water, electricity, and heat embittered the lives of millions. As Pavel Câmpeanu, a well-known anti-Ceaușescuian underground activist describes, these austerities had great effects on both private and public spaces:

> 'Romania has a longstanding tradition of urban landscaping and Romanians have always taken pride in their public spaces. On winter nights, however, under the cover of darkness, people have taken to attacking the large trees that line the cities' streets, cutting off huge branches, and dragging them back to their icy homes on their children's sleds. Such behaviour suggests they actually have some means for burning the wood—a store or furnace—which is more than most people have.' (Câmpeanu, 1986)

The sardines-in-the-tin-effect, the thin walls, the omnipresent control of the authorities and the neighbours and the shortages in water and gas supply resulted in the great apartment complexes turning into living graveyards. The disciplinary constellation of the buildings that enabled one to have a good view on the apartments and their inner spaces through the windows that encompassed the dwellings, contributed to the sense of being under constant surveillance. The monitoring was further carried out by the superintendents of the blocks who had absolute say into the lifestyle of the inhabitants and would report on the neighbours. In this way, Ceaușescu's prefabricated apartment complexes became the representatives of his restrictive, psychological terror and formed a grid of tyrannised spatial relations that incorporated the deindividualized power in space.

2.6. Rural landscapes: Hungary

In contrast to Romania's microraions that prevailed over the socialist physical space of the country, Hungary had succeeded to maintain the pastoral village-character peculiar to its cultural landscape and national image (Szelényi, 1988). This rural heritage is strongly connected to the *Alföld*, the Great Hungarian Plain, the largest flat surface in South-East Europe that occupies 52,000 from the country's overall 93,028 km^2, thus comprising four-ninth of it (Somogyi, 1971:35). This lowland functions as the physical, national and economic heart of the country (Wallis, 1917), the epitome of its spatial practice that has always been the territory of pastoralism and agriculture, characterised by animal husbandry, plant production and a strong peasant culture that defines it (Wanklyn, 1941; Mieke, 2004). Originally a 'true grass steppe' (Wallis, 1917), a treeless semi-desert – which is why the territory is often referred to as '*Puszta*' meaning 'barren' and 'wasteland' in Hungarian[26] – the flooded parts of the *Alföld* have slowly been converted to arable lands, fertile grasslands, pastures and vineyards, thereby establishing a strong, self-sufficient, export-oriented agricultural sector. To this very day, the *Alföld* is the 'most typically Magyar [Hungarian] region of the Carpathian basin' (Bodolai, 1978) that gives home to endless corn, wheat, rye and maize fields; herds of sheep, cattle and horses.

Prior to the system change, agriculture produced 17% of the country's GDP and employed about the same percentage of the labour force (Burger, 2009). Although after the introduction of market economy in 1989, the agricultural production fell by about 25% and was by 2007 31% lower than in the socialist period (Burger, 2009); it remained the pillar of the Hungarian economy (Becsei, 2002), which explains the citizens' strong connection to the lowland, the 'national mother-earth' (ibid, 7). This rural nationalism, as Burger (2009) further explains, was born after the agrarian reforms in the 19th century and gave the land a symbolic meaning that, because of its role of feeding the nation, has to be protected from any foreign invasion and exploitation.

Besides its key role in agricultural production, the southern lowland gave place to some of the most important historic events regarding the independence of the nation which converted it into a national symbol and metaphor of the right for self-determination[27].

[26] As White points out, the term "*Puszta*" is often used in conjunction with the *Alföld*, although the latter refers to an exact geographic territory that stretches from the Danube in the west to the city of Miskolc in the north and the Bihor mountains in the east (see White, 2000: 88). Opposite to this, *Puszta* refers to the nature of the land, that is, its alkaline grassland and dreary, open character.

[27] On the significant historical-cultural turning points connected to the area see Szerb (1934), Bodolai (1978) and Romsics (1999)

Accordingly, as the *Alföld* has always been the historio-cultural nest of Hungary and the symbol of the nation's autonomy, it acts as the pillar of the very Hungarian collective identity that relies on the Magyars' nomadic roots; the lowland's wild horizon and soil and its special characteristics of architecture. As White adds,

> 'The Great Alföld (…) probably illustrates modern Hungarian national identity more than any other region in Historic Hungary (…). Hungarians see themselves as the descendants of a nomadic people who originated in the plains of Central Eurasia, and they continue to emphasize their nomadic past and identity today. The ancestors of the Hungarians were obviously attracted to the natural landscapes of the Great Alföld because it would allow them to continue their way of life, and thus preserve their sense of identity. Today, the Great Alföld represents the connection that modern Hungarians have with their ancestors and traditional way of life. Many modern Hungarians have strong emotional bonds to this place which has shaped and continues to shape their sense of national identity. In short, the Hungarian nation would not be what it is without the natural landscapes of the Great Alföld' (White, 2000: 88-89)

2.6.1. Hungary's representational space: The *Puszta* and the *tanya*-world

Besides its wide, inhabited horizons, the cultural-architectural landscape of the *Alföld* is defined by the so called *tanya*-phenomenon,[28] meaning scattered homestead in Hungarian. With their white stucco walls, V-shaped straw-roof, small windows and T-shaped sweep wells on their yards, these settlements slowly became the main motifs for the *Alföld* and the symbol of individual freedom and autonomy[29] (Becsei, 2002).

Originally, these self-contained, island-like settlements were pastoral buildings that provided shelter for the herdsmen in the *Puszta* and later transformed into micro-farms where more generations of peasant families lived together (Erdei, 1976). The traditional way of relying on the *Puszta*-given resources was characteristic of the whole *Alföld*, and made these settlements a unique type of living place that, in contrast to the main European

[28] As Erdei (1976) puts it, the expression '*tanya*' is used for isolated settlements; remote agricultural units outside the town and the accommodation of the farmer that works on the land. Nevertheless, we find several forms of scattered homesteads, the world '*tanya*' only refers to a settlement with human occupation. Hungary's most peculiar *tanyas* are the Alföld's isolated settlements that are home to the farmer-family that seasonally or constantly lives there (Erdei, 1976: 16-37).

[29] These small islands were fully autonomous 'units of production and consumption, without any connection with larger nuclear settlements' (Hann, 1980:1), and so the families living and farming on these lands had absolute independence. One has to point out however, that the homesteads have never been autonomous estates but belonged to the closest larger settlement town (see Erdei, 1976).

trends that used stones and brick for constructions, were built from the mixture of mud, and reed and were roofed with tiles or shingles (Györffy, 1987). A *tanya* usually consisted of 2-4 large, oblong one-storey buildings that gave home to the peasant family, the livestock, the herd and the crop. These edifices were erected around a larger central yard that functioned as the centre of the homestead, while providing the family with a certain level of privacy as the inner circle gave place to the main events and annual celebrations. In short, in the Hungarian context, the *tanya* has a strong emotional and identity-defining role that demonstrates the nation's pastoral, nomadic roots, while explaining the origins of the country's peculiar rural-character in architecture (Hann, 1980).

2.6.2. The end of the *tanya*-world

The decline of the *tanya*-world started with the introduction of the socialist economic model and collectivisation in 1949. Because these territories were out of sight, that is, they could not be closely monitored by the state, and stood outside the confines of collective agricultural production; their evacuation and transformation into hamlet-centres had started early[30] (Enyedi, 1971, Valuch, 2004). Still, despite the immense outmigration from these settlements, the *tanya* could never be fully integrated into the socialist farm (Hann, 1980), similar to its descendant, the cube-house (Tóth, 2010), that went against the socialist synthetisation of living space.

On the one hand, despite the de-population of the scattered homesteads, Hungarians kept on maintaining the age-old traditions in housing conditions and independent forms of living, thus preserving the architectural formula of the *tanya*-dwellings and moving these structures into the community. The *tanya*-characteristics of the white walls, the rectangular form, the three-sectioned inner space, the wooden fence and the vegetable garden that illustrates the family's quasi-independence, have been thus inherited by the villages-structures and their family houses. Accordingly, instead of a massive invasion into the cities and their prefabricated blocks, citizens followed the so called 'self-help family house building system' (*kaláka*) that enabled them to remain in the rural areas and erect their own dwellings in the villages. The *kaláka*-system, that dominated over the concrete

[30] As Enyedi points out in 1971, 'during the approximately one decade that had passed since the collectivization, the network of scattered elements has lost about 15 to 17% of its population' (Enyedi, 1971:28). However, the decrease in population was not much faster than it was in the other forms of rural settlements: Hungary has recognized the importance of household plot farming, and even today the 40% of the peasant families' income derives from this (Enyedi, 1971: 28).

prefabricated buildings in the suburbs and towns (Molnár, 2010: 69-71), slowly transformed the face of socialist towns and villages into a cube-prototyped reality (Tóth, 2010).

2.6.3. The (r)evolution of the *tanya*

The private housing construction that enabled the owners to erect a house on their own in the rural, while establishing a self-sufficient, domestic economy that provided the family with agricultural products, was opposed to the ideological stand-point of the socialist government that referred to the cube houses as petit-bourgeois apartments (Molnár, 2010). However, because of the cube-house prototype that had slowly conquered the villages, the party eventually reckoned these buildings as examples for socialist mass production that could fit the socialist utopia (Simló, 2010). The cube house thus became a paradox site that, on one hand, demonstrated self-determinism, independence and free space, that went against the very socialist idea of the epoch. On the other hand, however, it was negotiated as a socialist production and symbolised the new era of socialist architecture, yet the cube houses were reminders of the rural heritage of the nation.

Beyond doubt, the attachment to the rural and the *tanya*-structure during socialism is rooted in the *tanya*'s association with self-determination and autonomy. Since the homestead has always been the symbolic space of the nation and its independence, the newly built *tanya*-like structures referred to individual freedom which was further underscored by the wide horizon of the landscape that contributed to one's quasi-sovereign feeling during the authoritarian decades. For instance, Molnár (2010) explains this insistence to family housing with its tool as political resistance:

> 'The state had to count on citizen's private means and initiative in improving housing conditions. It was (...) implied, that the family house was a necessary evil; it was considered a transitory phenomenon that had to be tolerated and moderately supported, in the interest of long-term social progress. Architects in particular urged the state to closely monitor family house construction: they suggested that the right to design family houses be administratively restricted to experts and architects be commissioned to draft prototype designs to convenient, cheap, efficient and tasteful family houses. (Molnár, 2010:64)

In addition, the domination of the village-landscape in Hungary was due to the closed eyes of the party that were less concerned with the rural areas. As Valuch puts it, 'in theory everyone had equal access to decent housing, but in practice the government subsidized construction only in urban areas' (Valuch, 2004:636) that gave relatively free hand to villagers[31].

2.7. Conclusion. Toward the socialist reproduction of space

Although the central idea of systematisation and the monopolisation of space have been the main preoccupations of both regimes, the housing policy of Hungary and Romania show remarkable differences. In Hungary, the number of cube houses built per year[32] exceeded the amount of the new, socialist blocks, and by the 1970s, became the dominant building type (Molnar, 2010). This is to say that, while socialism had succeeded in transforming an immense part of the capital, Budapest, it fell through stabilising its power through housing in the rural areas. Nevertheless, in the second period of the leadership's settlement policies (1959-1971), cities absorbed a large number of labour from agriculture, and the party announced to build around 100,000 prefabricated apartments a year, the one-storey, *tanya*-like dwellings remained the most commonly raised estates (Valuch, 2004): in 1970, the 43% of the population sill lived in these kinds of dwellings (Valuch, 2004). Thanks to this, as Valuch underlines, in towns 'it is [still] rare to find a building with more than four floors, even at the centre' (2004: 639), while high apartment buildings are more typical – yet still not prevailing – in the city architecture.

Thanks to the forced industrialisation in Romania between 1948 and 1989, the proportion of urban estates increased from 23.4% to 53%. This resulted in the immense growth of 'urban jungles of block of flats' in the cities (Pásztor-Péter, 2007). According to Pásztor-Péter (2007), while in 1966 only 17.4% of the urban population lived in blocks of

[31] Similar to Molnár, Roters (2014) also points out the role of the cube houses as devices of rebellion against the socialist, standardised norms. According to her, the ornamental patterns on the façade of the cube houses that were chosen by the family living in them, serve as an expression of individuality, while rejecting the uniformity of socialism. This is to say that, nevertheless the cube house became a prototype, the colours of the front wall, the form of the windows and the painting around them was the personal decision of the inhabitants, which is why these dwellings were often labelled kitschy and architecture-wise shameful (Tóth, 2010; Molnár, 2010). However, because of their unique frontal patterns, the houses elaborated a peculiar language that illustrated the personality of the dweller and which thus eradicated the socialist requirement of uniformity.

[32] There were about 30,000 cube houses built every year, which meant the 60-65% of the home production in Hungary (Smiló, 2010).

flats, by 1977 this number exceeded 42% and has further increased to 71.4% by the beginning of the 1990s. Between 1966 and 1980, the number of state property-dwellings increased too. In 1966, there were around 300,000 estates owned by the state. Ten years later, this number was tripled, while the proportion of private properties was trivial with less than 20,000. (Pásztor-Péter, 2007:8).

Due to the specific urbanisation and modernisation process that took place in the socialist era and the rapid privatisation of the housing stock after the system change, Romania is one of those countries that still faces an extraordinary situation. Currently, more than 70% of the urban population lives in blocks of flats, in large and sometimes overcrowded neighbourhoods.[33] As Pásztor (2003) notes, 95% of these blocks of flats are privately owned[34], while, because of the high prices, the possibility to acquire one is low. In these circumstances, the housing issue remains one of the most disturbing structural and functional social problems in Romania (Pásztor, 2003).

2.7.1. Towards the (post-)socialist production of film space

Both the prefabricated flats of Bucharest and the wide, open horizon of the *Alföld* and its settlements, the *tanya,* provided filmmakers with excellent locations for illustrating the suppressed role of the nation. In the Hungarian context, as will be argued, this architectural dispositif functions as a heterotopic space (Foucault, 1984) for it stands outside of the Hungarian society that produced it, while, at the same time, it is connected with several ties to the external spaces. As the ethnographer Tibor Szenti (1979) adds, the *tanya* rejects any concrete spatial-temporal boundaries that would connect it to any social-material, and historical-political reality. Because of this, as he states, the Hungarian *tanya* 'is more of a frame of mind (...), a complex, simple world, (...) an island that does not want to rush with time (...), [where] nothing measures time. Here, time stands still' (1979: 49).

Correspondingly, as Foucault describes, heterotopias are:

[33]A U.N. Report in 2001 concluded that, because of the poor quality and building material used on the constructions, by 2020 only the 17% of the country's housing stock will assure safety and proper living conditions (Pásztor, 2003).

[34] One of the main reasons of fast privatisation in the Eastern European countries was, as Douglas (1997) stresses, the promotion of the Western, dualist, free market housing policy that supported 'the ideology that private ownership is the best alternative for these transformational housing systems' (Douglas, 1997:16). Therefore, the flats were sold to former renters during the 1990s. In this way, the state had no responsibility towards these housing blocks anymore.

> ‘real and effective spaces that are outlined in the very institutions of society, but which constitute a sort of counter-arrangement of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned – a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable’ (Foucault, 1968:332).

Drawing on Foucault and Lefebvre, the *tanya* is less seen as a lived space but an abstract territory, the conceived space of the Hungarian nation, that characterises a mental and a physical trajectory at the same time. Consequently, this representation of space encompasses several other sites of the country’s physical space, which is to say, it functions as a parallel space that juxtaposes different spaces, while standing in a concrete, material place.

In the socialist and post-socialist Hungarian cinematography, the *tanya* and the cube-house play a significant role on screen. On the one hand, the scattered homestead symbolises the independence of the nation, an agricultural unit that provides the inhabitants with the fruits of the land. On the other hand, in the socialist era, it was often represented as an oppressed, colonised territory, conquered by a foreign power. During and after the system-change, the representation of the *tanya*-world had changed and, together with the cube houses, they received the representative role of the post-socialist, decaying, universe, thus signifying the socio-economic and political changes and the anomic decade of the society. In contemporary cinema, in films such as Szabolcs Hajdu’s *Mirage* (Délibáb, 2014) or Ádám Császi’s *Land of Storms* (Viharsarok, 2014), these estates still demonstrate a lost, dead space that emphasises the post-socialist, capitalist condition of the country. The representation of the cube-houses in the post-socialist cinema of Hungary thus signals the fading role of independence, where these quasi-independent dwellings got demolished by the powers of nature and time. In this case, the horizontal enclosure on screen derives from the very symbolic role of the pro-filmic space (*tanya*, *Alföld*, cube house), and the metaphoric trajectory of the circular, slow camera movements that encompasses the settlement, and emphasises the endless, albeit enclosed, horizon of the *Puszta*.

Whereas, the architectural dispositif of Hungary is to totalise the space of the whole nation by creating a microcosm that refers to all the socio-political sites of the homeland, Romanian cinema has emphasised the claustrophobic constellation of the pro-filmic space by choosing the ideologically impregnated prefabricated dwellings for location. The dusty, narrow interiors of the blocks first appear in the cinema of the 1970s, and get a dominant

role in the Romanian New Cinema. Through the oscillating camera work that is characteristic of the post-socialist cinema of the country, the films recall the surveillance apparatus of the Ceaușescu-regime, while illustrating the physical confines within which a Romanian citizen would live in the socialist era. Thus, the vertical enclosure peculiar of the country's cinema is based on a disciplinary space that, by shooting in labyrinth-like apartments and using the spatial set-ups of the socialist era, implicitly recalls the tyrannised spatial structures of the previous epoch.

PART 2.

THE CINEMA OF VERTICAL ENCLOSURE: ROMANIA

CHAPTER 3.

THE SOCIALIST CINEMA OF ROMANIA

Regarding Romania's film history, there are two turning points to be distinguished according to their impact on the film industry and the process of aesthetic creation. Both milestones are declared as zero points: they signify the end of filmmaking in the country by accusing productions of lack of originality, aesthetic quality and/or political awareness. The first zero level (Nasta, 2013) of 1950 marks the start of the inauguration of socialist-realist aesthetics in cinema that put the primary emphasis on producing propaganda films (Cernat, 1982) and productions that furthered the socialist advancement. The term 'year zero' thus implies the installation of patriotic schematism and socialist-realist representation in cinema that corresponded to the aesthetic extenuation of cinematic productions. In contrast to this, the second zero point – that dates back to 2000 (Goracz, 2010) – refers to the concrete end of the national cinema where no filmic production was made in the country. What is common in these dates is that they are both indicative of the annihilation of Romanian film, yet they also signify the beginning of a new cinematic epoch: after the death of Stalin in 1953, Romania's cultural life picked up, resulting in a short-lived thaw in cinema that contributed to the birth of some of the finest Romanian films. Similarly, following the zero year of 2000, a new cinema was born that brought about an aesthetic reform with young, talented filmmakers that opened the most successful epoch in Romania's film history and have been conquering festivals all around the globe since.

This chapter reviews the period between the two zero years and examines the space of the socialist cinema of Romania (1945-1989) and the transition period (1989-2000). Since the analysis of all the remarkable productions would go beyond the limit of this thesis, the chapter focuses on examples that, through their spatial construction, directly and/or implicitly criticised the socialist leadership. Consequently, when examining the socialist corpus, the chapter focuses on the short-lived Romanian thaw (1956-1971) that brought about an ideological easing in cultural life and resulted in some individual art pieces that

rejected following the path of socialist conformism and the use of cinema as a tool of political instrumentality.

Following the thaw, the chapter also examines the auteurist corpus of the 70s and 80s, with emphasis on the films of Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Daneliuc, Alexandru Tatos that had a great impact on the contemporary New Wave. The analysis concerns the representation of (pro-filmic) space and the hidden critique these films form of the actual regime by the spatial structure of the productions and the use of a *mise-en-abyme* – structure. The last part of the chapter examines the films of the transition period and, besides the films' narrative set-up – that reflects the economic and social hardships of the post-revolutionary years – it explores the way these productions' *mise-en-scène* operates with pro-filmic reality and screen-space to reflect upon the socialist present. In this sense, the chapter explores the filmic evolution of space in Romanian productions and its significance as a metaphorical trajectory.

3.1. Romania's short-lived thaw

Notwithstanding that with Ceaușescu's seize to power in 1965, a brief period of cultural-political easing had begun, it only lasted for three years when the leadership reintroduced pre- and post-production censorship and placed the nationalist-patriotic discourse at the forefront of filmmaking (Ștefănescu and Foamete, 2013). Even though the thaw was short, between 1965 and 1971, the Bucharest Film Studios placed one hundred feature films on the market (Filimon, 2014), including several remarkable films that had a great impact on the contemporary Romanian New Wave.

Beyond all doubt, the thaw's most prominent filmmaker was Lucian Pintilie. His film, *Reenactment* (*Reconstituirea,* 1968) openly criticised the regime for its paternalistic and oppressive attitudes. *Reenactment* is based on real events and unfolds the story of two friends who, being accused by the militiamen for having been drunk and undisciplined one night – thus wounding a waiter from the tavern – have to re-act the scene to educate the public about the danger of consuming alcohol. Under the brutal pressure of the prosecutor who insists on capturing the events as realistically as possible, the two young men are forced to fight in front of the camera that ends with a lethal act when one of the boys hits the other with a stone.

Pintilie's film bears several motifs that allude to the omniscient power of the regime that interrogates, tortures and spies on the people. Moreover, the prosecutor's coercing figure corresponds to that of a Securitate officer who, given his superior position, implements his will at an easy pace. In his immaculate white suit, he barely stands up from his chair at the bar's balcony where he gives his insensate orders out, and only witnesses the events from a distant spot. In this way, his central position – both geographically and in the literal sense – where he controls the events from, bears a striking resemblance with the magistrates of the totalitarian regime where one would have to yield to the command of the leadership, or count with the possible punishment otherwise.

The film portrays the vulnerability of people living under the Communist dictatorship that supervises one's deeds from a central position. Although the film unfolds at several locations, the happenings are managed from the pub's stage-like balcony, that is, every action finishes at this spot. Furthermore, Pintilie often monitors the re-enacted scenes from high-angle and long, circular shots that give the events a theatrical structure as if the actions were observed by a central eye. This outsider position is further emphasised by the character of the sunbathing girl who witnesses the re-enacting process from different perspectives, usually climbing up the tavern's rooftop or hiding behind fences. The actions are often portrayed from her point-of-view, thus accentuating the presence of a hidden observer that, similar to the films of the Romanian New Wave, hides behind certain objects as if being on the watch for the protagonists. This subjective position thus alludes to the omniscient eye of the Securitate, the omnipresent watching apparatus that observes the happenings from a furtive spot.

Another monitoring equipment and reference on the current political framework is the television that broadcasts the ambulance's arrival in the neighbouring stadium: while watching the program on the tavern's box, the happenings on screen turn into reality and the ambulance car is seen driving on the road adjacent to the bar. This switch between illusion and reality adds to the uncertainty of questioning the truth that is a reference to the two students re-acting their deeds. So, while Pintilie's *Reenactment* is an artificially created art work, the political framework that the actions are embedded in is real, and stresses and highlights the regime's oppressive features. Accordingly, when negotiating the film as Romania's 'cinematographic revolution', Căliman argues that *Reenactment* has anticipated the political atmosphere of the country's next thirty years (Căliman, 2000:221) and so it can be considered as a milestone in visual arts that, while acting as 'the freest Romanian film of all time' (Nasta, 2013:89), describes an enclosed, authoritarian regime,

thus foreseeing the Ceaușescus' totalitarian edifice. In light of this, it is less surprising that in 1969, the film was banned from screening and remained on the shelves of the National Archives until the system change[35].

3.2. Romania's cinema after the thaw

Thanks to the relentless censorship that was introduced by the July Thesis, Romania's cinematography got stuck for decades (Nasta, 2013). As a result, it missed out on the neo-realist wave as well as the European Nouvelle Vague with the filmic corpus of the 1970s and 1980s being labelled as the follow-up cinema of the ancestors, featuring adaptations, melodramas, socialist thrillers and a very few aesthetically remarkable films (Serban, 2010).

However, there were some productions that, by unfolding the regime's criticism in metaphors and parabolas, were able to escape the omnipresent censorship. The shift came about with the 1980s and framed a new generation that, having graduated from the I. L. Caragiale Institute of Theatrical and Cinematographic Art, were familiar with diverse storytelling formulas and film language in general, and embarked upon experimenting with various visual methods of how to mediate their messages on a secondary level.

3.3. Clandestine spaces: *Sequences*

With regards to the New Wave in Romanian cinema, one of the most influential and inspirational works for contemporary directors was Alexandru Tatos' *Sequences* (*Secvente*, 1982). The film is often negotiated as a sketch film (Căliman, 2000: 352), that joins three stories together by following the work and leisure time of a film crew. Similar to Pintilie's *Reenactment*, Tatos' work unfolds a film-in-the-film structure: in the first episode (*The Phone Call*), people are waiting to make a call at the public telephone on New Year's Eve,

[35] As a nonconformist, rebellious filmmaker, it is surprising – and still unclear – how Pintilie would avoid the pre-production censorship and finish the film. As Filimon (2014) concludes, 'it is possible that the censors who authorized the film were more liberal in their views and closed their eyes to the film's criticism of the regime, probably because they [had] their permission shortly before Ceaușescu's intervention. The fact that the film was set in 1961, during a period that Ceaușescu himself had criticized, may also have been favourable to the project. It is equally possible, therefore, that the sensors were duped and realized it too late, when the only measure they could take was to withdraw the film from the cinema network' (Filimon, 2014:110).

but it is occupied by a man talking to his friend that reveals how lonely he feels. As the image opens up, it turns out that the whole scene is part of a film set: suddenly, with the technicians and actors moving in the room, the gloomy atmosphere changes into a bustling shooting place. The next sequence (*The Restaurant*) portrays the same crew's stopover in a rural restaurant and its owner's miserable personal life. The owner has been cheated on and betrayed by his wife, and is even more humiliated by the visit of the group. Finally, the last episode (*Four Slaps*) unfolds with a studio shooting scene and reveals the mutual history of two stand-ins in the background. One of the old men realises that he is sitting in front of his ex-torturer from the prison where he was sentenced to for his involvement with the partisans in 1943.

In Tatos' film, all the sequences refer to both the actual happenings in the country that is the economic hardship and the shortage in food supply, and the ideological absurdity of the Ceaușescu-policy. The first scene portrays people queueing for services[36] thus losing time from celebrating with their families. In the next episode, the crew enters an empty, neglected room that serves as the actual place of the restaurant: this sombre, dark, cold zone only has a dusty, empty fridge in the corner and bears no features of a dining room. People here are dressed in thick winter jackets, with scarfs around their necks and gloves on their hands, similarly to the owner who wears a hat and a shawl during the whole scene.

"If they send food, I have it, if they don't, I don't" – answers the restaurant-owner to the crew's questions as to why the place has no meal to offer, thus alluding to Ceaușescu's policy of meal-distribution across the country. When the director lies about one of the crew's personnel, thus presenting the producer as prosecutor in order to get served, the owner brings them in another room, very different from the previous, neglected place. The real, hidden restaurant functions as a counter-space, with western music, heating, meat and even beer on the menu. Although this area could work as a rebellious, underground space, by featuring other guests having dinner in this room, the film describes the real hierarchy of the society and so it gives no hope for any dissident movement. This is to say that, while the crew is consuming their food, disturbing, loud, western music is repeatedly played by the mayor's son and, fearing the consequences of having a conflict with him, the owner refuses the request of the crew to discipline the boy for having the radio on maximum volume. In this way, he loses control over this clandestine space that is further exacerbated by him believing that he is serving a prosecutor. The vulnerability and the subjected position of the owner thus refers to the oppressive, corrupt authoritarian regime whose

[36] See etatization and arrhythmia (Verdery, 1996)

representatives act freely and control people by keeping them in constant fear, as well as humiliating them.

Beyond doubt, the *Sequence*'s last episode (*Four Slaps*) has the most palpable reference to the socialist framework of the country. The two old men sitting in the background of the set start to fight on the basis of how many slaps the torturer had given to the victim. Papasha (Geo Barton), the torturer tries to defend himself by arguing that he only followed orders and did not slap anyone more than four times, consequently, he could not torture Marin Iosif (Ion Vîlcu), his companion at the table. Their verbal fight does not lead anywhere until Papasha sheds light upon the betrayal of the other man against his communist fellow, who he had given up to the anti-communist authorities. In this way, as far as their moral reputation is concerned, they are both traitors, and accordingly, they cannot judge over each other's past activities or culpability. Their fight thus ends at this point and they become merely extras, mimicking to speak silently in the background of the stage. Tatos not only represents the communist Marin Josif as an old, burnt-out man, but, by disclosing his betrayal against his own friend during World War II, he breaks off with the schematic portrayal of the righteous and loyal socialist comrade.

Sequences has been praised not solely for its courage of representing/documenting reality but for its novelties regarding its self-reflexive *mise-en-scène*. Tatos plays with the contrast of interior-exterior spaces, as well as with the fragmentation of the very same pro-filmic territory. For instance, in the second episode, the crew find themselves in a clandestine space that is separated from actual reality, and similarly, while being in the same area with the actors, the two old extras in the third sequence remain in the strictly limited, enclosed place that they are not allowed to leave without the permission of the director. This space becomes as clandestine as that of the restaurant: both lie in the background of the actual, living space, and are less affected by the outer world that seemingly controls them. Working with enclosed and controlled spaces whose structure have a concrete, incarcerating effect on the people's existing/living in that area, the contemporary filmmakers of the Romanian New Wave evolve their narratives along the same patterns. In this respect, *Sequences* had a great impact on the next filmmaking generation that went on to create a very detailed spatial structure and follow the path of Alexandru Tatos, who 'builds his cinematic space with the care of a craftsman [whereby] objects with a marked quotidian function get a revealing quality; the depth of field reveals plans with intertwining symbolism, and interiors open onto a precisely constructed exterior' (Ilieșiu, 2013: 57).

3.4. A tripartite classification of failure: *Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică?*

Similar to Tatos' narrative set-up and *mise-en-abyme* technique, the epoch's other critically acclaimed film plays along metaphors and allegories. Lucian Pintilie's *Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică?* (*De ce trag clopotele, Mitică?,* Pintilie, 1981) is based on the writings of Ion Luca Caragiale and tells the story of a bourgeois love affair, with the local barber in the centre. The Casanova of the town, Nae (Gheorghe Dinică) has several affairs in the village that he tries to manage with his assistant's providing him with an alibi. One day, one of his lovers' husbands finds out that his wife is cheating on him and decides to hunt down and avenge the trespasser. During the quest – while the cuckolded husband accuses someone else for adultery – the village people chase and run after each other. This ends in a carnivalesque scene, with the locals wearing masques and singing and dancing in the bar of the town. Following the festivity – after that all the accused had succeeded in fooling the other(s) and so cleared themselves of adultery – it is revealed that during the celebration, Mitică (Stefan Iordache), the town's most distinguished person, has been killed in a senseless accident that he himself induced in order to play a trick on his friend. His joke was to catch his colleague Mișu at having an affair with his mistress – who would pretend to be attracted to him. However, when Mitică opens the door on them, Mișu – reacting by instinct – hits the man on the forehead who thus dies. In the end, in honour of the dead, the carnival-crew takes off to Mitică's favourite restaurant.

Like Tatos, Pintilie unfolds a strong political criticism along the film's spatial universe which is why the film was banned for ten years. *Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică?* is set on a muddy, sinking village where, in order not to paddle, the dwellers reach the various locations through tracks that arch over the marshy ground. Pintilie's visual world thus portrays a decaying universe whose days are already outnumbered and which, similar to its concrete, physical reality, plunges into chaos. The film's three main locations – that are connected by the bridges – represent three historical periods, and launch a discourse on political freedom, equality and fair jurisdiction with clear cross-reference to the failures of the Ceaușescu-regime.

Correspondingly, Nae's barbershop stands for the Ceaușescu-epoch and serves as the central, culminating location of the conflicts, thus alluding to the vulnerability and foolishness of Romanians obeying a system that misleads and deceives them. In carnivalesque scenes, husbands and wives, lovers and mistresses chase each other, running

down the circular corridors in the house without reaching the other, while Nae, as a monitoring authority positioned in the middle of the room, supervises the happenings. Later, this cat-and-muse-game materialises in a cock-fight, presented by Nae on the rear stage of this barber shop, where he invites all the guests from the carnival. When one of the guests expresses his concerns about the bird escaping, Nae adds that he should not worry as 'they are not some aristocratic birds, they are Romanian, they will come back to their cages'. This reference[37] to the actual policy of the 1970s and 1980s and the personnel of Ceaușescu himself as a guarding, dictatorial power that makes the cocks fight that eventually die after the action, is wrapped in a precise metaphor that alludes to the blindness and obedience of people who, instead of making steps towards an equal system with the power vested in citizens, blindly follow the orders of their superior.

Regarding democracy, the town's central bath serves as another reference to Romania's missing framework of equality and freedom. As if travelling back in time, Pintilie recalls the Roman bathhouses as centres of social and political activities and, by setting a chase-scene here, he utilises this place to mediate people's dissatisfaction with the regime. Thus, while the cuckolded men run after each other, a group of others lead a discussion on politics in the background, stating that the country is going in the wrong direction and that the death penalty should be inaugurated, so that all the thieves and corrupt politicians will be caught. Furthermore, they also state that the French Revolution was in favour of the current situation and, instead of acting according to the Penal Code, one should bring the practice of impaling back, this way to impose order upon those who steal from the country. The lost ideas of the French Revolution are then recalled at the third location as well, in the hall that accommodates the grandiose carnival which seems to be built around the concept of liberty-equality-fraternity. At the peak of the event, the participants start to sing La Marseillaise with a standing ovation, albeit without the lyrics, substituting it by simple humming, thus converting the action into a farce. The villagers know the tune of the French national song, but are unfamiliar with the meaning of the tripartite motto, and so the significance of it. In this way, as Pintilie suggests, Romanians are not conscious of the

[37] To analyse all the references to the Ceaușescu-regime in this film and others is beyond the limits of this thesis. It must be emphasised however, that the megalomaniac nature of the regime, the electric shortages, the socialist propaganda, as well as the passivity and the lack of support from Europe are all touched upon and criticised in the narrative. For instance, as the unidentified source of voice emphasises in the film: 'On the place of the desert field where slums kids are used to play, a modern district was erected, truly European-looking that it is sure to stir the admiration of all foreign visitors. (…) We can see splendid buildings like the Palace of Arts, the old Royal Court, the Roman Arenas, and other edifices that will astonish us in the future. (…) Europe has set her eyes on us and she does not blink. At all! And she will not blink unless she understands what is going on'.

very message of liberty-equality-fraternity as they blindly abide to the rules of the leadership, without questioning its relevance or whether it is right or not.

Supporting this blindness, in one of the last scenes of the film, the director uses a self-reflexive gesture to reveal the illusion the images have been providing and creates a film-in-the-film – sequence where he instructs one of the actors not to open his eyes. 'Close your eyes. Let them die stupid', shouts Pintilie, thus referring to the dream-like state of the protagonists as well as the spectators of the movie, that have all obeyed Ceaușescu's authoritarian regime, without making a (French) revolution of their own[38].

3.5. What's in the box? *Microphone Test*

Regarding the hidden criticism of the Ceaușescu-leadership, the last remarkable film of the epoch is Mircea Daneliuc's *Microphone Test* (*Proba de Microfon*, 1980) that, both in its thematic content and aesthetic form, contains several elements that pass judgement on the socialist authority. The film recounts the story of Nelu (Mircea Daneliuc), a cameraman who, with his reporter colleague Luiza (Gina Patrichi) together, works on a programme at the National Television that aims at the moral education of people. The show, for instance, documents and praises the production of a factory and its workers, while on the other hand, it punishes those who do not contribute to the socialist production and lifestyle. Accordingly, Nelu and the crew follow and question travellers without valid train tickets, and interrogate them in front of the camera, thus shaming these individuals, even though many of them are innocent. One of these 'illegal' travellers is Ani (Tora Vasilescu), a worker from the countryside, that Nelu soon falls in love with. Yielding to the wish of Ani, he destroys the material that contains the embarrassing interview and starts a secret relationship with her. However, Nelu's colleague – and former lover – Luiza insist on re-shooting the footage and for this reason, brings the crew to the town that Ani supposedly resides in. Even though it soon turns out that the woman is not as innocent as she seemed at first sight, Nelu stands by and supports her, thus spending all his savings on the woman. Later, while the cameraman is drafted and spends his eighteen months in the army, he revisits Ani on his short leave who, however, is already pregnant from another man and rejects the soldier's marriage proposal.

[38]The film's three main locations can be negotiated as evolving around the concept of the French Revolution as well: The carnival illustrates liberty, the bath equality, while Nae's barber shop stands for fraternity. As all the dwellers leave these places in the end of the film, the territories, similar to the idea they stand for, become empty and so meaningless.

Daneliuc's film joins three narrative layers together (Bradeanu, 2006) that all provide a certain kind of criticism of the regime. On its first level, *Microphone Test* depicts the love of Nelu and Ani that evolves around several social and financial problems. Because of her bad work references, Ani cannot get a job, instead, she smuggles goods from the West and gets into suspicious businesses with foreigners. She also has to take care of her alcoholic brother but without a fixed employment, she is unable to support him. Her situation thus exemplifies the failure of the paternalist system that, albeit stressing the importance of ensuring citizens' social wellbeing, deserts the woman and her brother as well. In this way, Ani becomes an outsider and a rebel that copes with foreigners to earn some money and uses Nelu for the same purpose.

Besides the obvious difficulties in the social sphere, the first level of the story has several references to media manipulation and thus the National Television's controlling role. Luiza stalks after citizens that break the socialist rules and embarks upon an investigation that would blacken Ani, in this way representing journalism as a tool without credibility, which, instead of providing an objective point-of-view on the events, focuses on terrorising people. The editor-in-chief decides upon whom and why to interrogate, thus functioning as the informer-mediator of the oppressive regime which puts surveillance as the core of its restrictive political framework. The fast speed of her voice, her aggressive way of questioning the subjects, and the emphasis she puts upon punishing people who are not socially integrated, all bear resemblance to and characterise a Securitate-officer. Supposedly, this is the reason why people look at the crew as a forbidden, malignant organisation and try to stay far away, or escape the interrogating establishment. This is the case when the crew's car breaks down and no one picks them up. What is more, when they learn that the crew work at the National Television, people speed off and leave the spot. Similarly, Ani's secret lover, the dolphin trainer at the Black Sea, escapes the team as soon as he realises that he is being filmed. It is most probably due to the pressure from his manager that he later agrees to cooperate with Luiza and meets Ani. The two are secretly being captured from the top of the aquarium. The hidden camera and the crew's earphones through which they eavesdrop on the couple, brings to mind the omnipresent monitoring-technique of the regime, that, in this case, turns into a parodic scene, with Ani noticing and laughing about the hiding Luiza and her technicians.

Further references to the surveillance-network of the regime can be found on the two other levels of the narrative that both emphasise the omniscient gaze of the camera. Using

a film-in-the-film technique, Daneliuc shows the happenings from various perspectives, that is, through the lens of Nelu's camera, as well as from another point of view that unfolds the whole spot. As far as the oscillating, mobilised camera is concerned, this intermedial structure alludes to the permanent, central observation, and functions as a tool that breaks the socialist illusion, thus revealing the actual reality. By switching between what is seen through the lens of Daneliuc and through the camera of Nelu – the latter played by the director himself – these gazes merge into one, thus revealing the manipulative role of the Romanian media.

Correspondingly, in order to capture the socialist reality, Daneliuc uses a cinema *vérité*-technique to monitor and catch real-life situations from the street, shopping centre or train station. These ethnographic sequences are captured from high-angle, often hidden camera positions that, similar to the previous two levels of the narrative, emphasise the omniscient, observing eye of the central leadership. By combining the fictional level of the narrative with documentary-like footage, Daneliuc reveals the image of a country in serious economic shortage that struggles with the lack of food supplies and serious housing problems (Nasta, 2013).

Together with the decisive-manipulative role of the media, *Microphone Test* contributes to the sense of a totalitarian framework that spies on and punishes its citizens by using the camera as an instrument, while, at the same time, it also attempts to mask reality. This self-reflexive narrative set-up is deployed by all of the above mentioned films that criticise the socialist regime. As so, it seems to have been the prevailing technique for forming a hidden critique on the Ceaușescu-regime. By revealing the filmic set, Daneliuc, Tatos and Pintilie draw attention to the media's manipulative and falsifying role, a device of the dictatorship through which the Ceaușescus communicated to people. While the television broadcasts prosperity, social stability and stable economic development, in reality Romanian citizens faced a low standard of living and numerous problems regarding electricity and food supply. Also, along with highlighting the camera's role as a tool of modifying reality, the device develops a metaphorical trajectory through which the regime succeeds in intruding into the most intimate realm of social relations, such as the sexual life of Ani and Nelu *in Microphone Test*, Nae's affairs in *Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică?*, the friendship of the two young boys in *Reenactment* and the waiter's relationship with his wife in *Sequences*. Thus, although the self-reflexive gesture can be the result of the influence of the European modernist tendency and realist turn after 1968, and can be

associated with a ‘short-lived period of synchronisation with the forms of art cinema’ and the adaptation of the idea ‘that transparency is suspect (...) and self-reflexity is beneficial’ (Gorzo, 2013:6); a much deeper idea resides within the composition of a *mise-en-abyme*-structure that is a hidden criticism of the socialist regime through the pro-filmic unvarnished reality (cinema *vérité*) and its reflection as fiction.

CHAPTER 4.

ROMANIA: FILMS OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD

4.1. System Change and the New Type of Censorship

Although there was no lack in enthusiasm for artistic creation after 1989 and filmmakers were free to create without the menace of omniscient censorship, the long-expected breakthrough in cinema has been adjourned to the next century. First of all, as Ţuţui outlines, 'in the late 90's with less governmental participation in film production and during a time when the local currency was continuously depreciating, it was almost impossible to make a long feature in Romania' (Ţuţui, 2011: 59) and without state-support, directors were obliged to look for foreign investors (coproductions) and/or join private companies (Ştefănescu&Foamete, 2013). Nevertheless, in theory the Romanian National Film Centre (CNC) gave priority to films that represented national interests and/or dealt with topical concepts, in reality 'funding was (…) allotted based on private prestige and political influence of film directors, rather than their appeal to the general public and the film critics or on professional evaluation of the projects' (Ştefănescu&Foamete, 2013:169). As a result, for most filmmakers the new system based on the market economy seemed to be frustrating, and, together with the sudden creative freedom – that was perceived as a shock (Jäckel, 2000:99) – they experienced the transition period as a difficult, challenging and often disappointing epoch. Mircea Daneliuc, Lucian Pintilie or Dan Pita, the most prominent filmmakers of pre-revolutionary Romania – now leaders of film studios – were, for instance, heavily criticised for being 'damaging to the image of Romania' (Jäckel, 2000: 99) as their films pictured the bitter realities of the transition period.

Along with the harsh economic conditions, filmmaking and distribution facilities, a further difficulty seemed to be the press' harsh criticism of Romanian art cinema, as well as the audience's preference for western productions. The reason for people's lack of interest might be found in the films' thematic content that is their attachment to the socialist past and the disappointing present of the transition, since more than half of the

productions made between 1990 and 1996 were set in the socialist past or portrayed the system change (Jäckel, 2000). It seems that Romanians were less engaged with facing and analysing the socialist past and more concerned about the everyday hardship that they experienced during the transition period and since. Therefore, instead of getting engaged with the depressing, bitter Romanian narratives, people chose entertaining, American movies to go to – which also lagged behind the real breakthrough of a collective form of remembrance.

4.2. Post-Socialist Cinema: Explicit and Implicit Remembrance

When negotiating the post-socialist cinematic corpus, Nasta (2013) establishes four categories that unfold in the productions of the epoch: she argues that certain films still use a metaphoric cinematic language[39] while, as mentioned above, others deal with the realities of the post-1989 Romania[40]. Her third category includes films that reveal 'long-forbidden periods and facts from recent Romanian history' (2013:77), such as the secret story of gulags and forced collectivisation[41], whereas the last group encompasses productions that comment on the December-revolution and its aftermath[42]. What is common in these categories established by Nasta is that each group contains productions that reflect upon/scrutinise the socialist past. Romania has thus delved into the past *right after* the system change and embarked upon producing narratives that openly criticised the Ceaușescu-era and/or shed light on the political abuses of the Dej- and Groza-period. One has to note however that, although there were several productions focusing on the lost history of Romania, as Preda has it, 'the first democratic regimes of Romania after 1990 did not consolidate a policy of remembrance of the communist past. No important monuments or museums were dedicated to the topic, [and] it is rather in relation to the December 1989 moment that attention was scarcely directed to' (Preda, 2010:136). Besides the productions of explicit remembrance, there are numerous films that reflect upon the realities of the system change and the bitter nature of everyday life that followed the revolution. The thematic content of these examples revolves around the difficulties that the switch to the market system caused, along with the lost beliefs of people that had high

[39] *Where the Sun is Cold* (*Unde la soare e frig*, dir. Bodgan Dumitrescu, 1991)
[40] *Look Forward in Anger* (*Priveste înainte cu mânie*, dir. Nicolae Margineanu, 1993) and *State of Things* (*Stare de fapt*, Stere Gulea, 1996), *Conjugal Bed* (*Patul Conjugal*, dir. Mircea Daneliuc, 1993)
[41] See for instance Nicolae Margineanu's *Somewhere in the East (Undeva în Est*, 1991)
[42] See Stere Gulea's *University Square, Romania* (*Piața Universității* – România, 1991)

hopes in the capitalist change but faced a decline in living standards, high levels of corruption, inflation and growing unemployment instead. Accordingly, the films of the transition period narrate the lack of financial, moral and social stabilisation and – together with portraying the psychological burdens inherited by the previous regime – demonstrate the disappointment and trauma of Romanian people, in this way illustrating the destruction of social order on screen. These productions

> '(…) show the worker struggling to maintain his or her existence in a system that is radically changing. In contrast with the worker hero during communism who was predominantly young and lacking vices, we find now an older male who suffers from alcoholism, whose actions are less than heroic, and who is not portrayed as triumphant but instead defeated, imprisoned, or even killed.' (Andreescu, 2013:92)

What is more, as far as the depiction of characters and the films' content goes, the effect of the system change and the new, capitalist structure led to the dismissal of the socialist father figure (Andreescu, 2011) and the dislocation of the state whose role got taken over by the market (Andreescu, 2013), that transformed the socialist image of the worker hero into a 'middle-aged, cynical, and insecure character fighting to survive in a rapidly changing world' (ibid, 91). Furthermore, the films centre around the concept of suffering, with workplaces being abolished, families falling apart, and women being raped and abused. The moral decay is portrayed through the demeanour of the characters, as well as through the visual environment they reside in. This is to say that the vertical enclosure pivotal to the New Wave already appears in the post-revolutionary *mise-en-scène*: the labyrinth-like, narrow and dark corridors, dilapidated, crammed interiors dominate the visual composition of the films. The productions' post-socialist landscape reveals the economic situation of the country by capturing closed, desolate industrial territories that once symbolised the wealth and socialist pride of the nation.

To summarise, most films of the post-revolutionary, transition period are balanced between depicting the dusty interiors of Bucharest's prefabricated blocks and the abandoned, grey landscape of the rural, thus using pro-filmic space to illustrate the anomy of the post-socialist era. Furthermore, besides the visually bare images, a new, double-framing technique emerges that will be later associated with the New Wave, where the door or wall closes upon the frame of the action, so that the camera functions as a hidden gaze, a secret observer of the events.

4.3. The film space of the transition

The juxtaposition of the post-socialist, industrial landscape and crumbling, prefabricated interiors feature prominently in Lucian Pintilie's *The Oak* (*Balanţa*, 1992), the director's first post-revolutionary feature film. The plot is set in 1988 and centres around Nela (Maia Morgenstern), a young schoolteacher whose adored father – a high-ranking Securitate officer – dies, leading to a series of surreal happenings in the woman's life. After burying the colonel, Nela travels to the countryside where she has been appointed to teach, and where she meets Mitica (Răzvan Vasilescu), a urologist at the hospital that she soon falls in love with. They both rebel against the establishment: Nela is opposed to the education system and is on a mission to find talented kids in the school, while Mitica disobeys the hospital's director who forbids him to operate on Titi (Ionel Mihailescu), an old patient. He also declines to hand over Titi's secret notebook to the authorities and, after he hits one of the prosecutors working on the case, gets imprisoned. Nela tries to protest against the decision in front of the police, but is physically tortured for her act and, even though she later bribes one of the socialist officers to set Mitica free, her fight against the system ends unavailingly. Later, as it turns out that the urologist has successfully operated on the First Secretary's wife, he is released and, together with Nela, decides to bring Titi's body home. In the end, Nela learns that her beloved father was less of a hero. In a metaphoric scene, she comes into terms with the reality of the country's socialist politics when she faces the massacre of young children who were kidnapped by 'terrorists'. Disappointed and horrified by what she has seen, Nela escapes to the oak tree where her father is buried and, after Mitica calms her down, decides to start a new life with the man together.

While being set in the socialist Romania, *The Oak* is 'undoubtedly (…) a post-Ceaușescu film' (Caufman-Blumenfeld, 2007:267) that describes the countrywide as well as Bucharest as a utopian, almost surreal place to reside in, while mirroring the pre- and post-revolutionary reality as desperate and hopeless as possible. Pintilie follows Nela throughout the country but, wherever she visits, she enters disordered spaces, be those the dreary industrial landscape of the rural, her claustrophobic flat in the city or Mitica's murky home. Thus, similar to the way that Antonioni's films illustrated the wreckage of consumer capitalism through the barrenness and dinginess of landscape (Gandy, 2003), Pintilie uses the rural setting to picture the existential emptiness of the epoch and its people but, in contrast with the Italian director whose interior design is highly stylised and

'represent the acme of modernist minimalism' (Gandy, 2003: 222), Pintilie's desolate landscape corresponds to the prefabricated flats' interior design that is as derelict as nature itself. In the beginning of *The Oak*, the camera pans through a microraion, thus describing the environment that surrounds the flat where Nela and her father live. During the opening credits, this long, low-angle, vertical tracking shot captures a dead landscape, filled with garbage and remnants of toys, such as the head of a doll, and other objects that now lie in the high grass that the camera pans through. When capturing certain objects of waste that lie hidden in the meadow, Pintilie envelops the spectator in a disordered environment that, thanks to the oscillating, handheld camera, underscores the insecure atmosphere that prevails over this space.

In terms of the damaged, ramshackle environment of the building, Nela's one-room flat bears strong resemblance to the space surrounding the microraion. Her home is as neglected as the external environment: the kitchen and the bathroom attached to it serve more as storage rooms than a liveable place, filled with empty glasses, garbage and a long-time used cooking stove and a musty shower. Similarly, the dim living room – which functions as a bedroom as well – only contains a double bed that her father and Nelu share, and a projector that she uses to re-watch her childhood memories. In this sense, in the case of *The Oak*, one can observe an aesthetic continuity between outer and inner space with both enveloping the spectator in a disordered, futureless environment that refers to the hopeless present of the post-system change reality. Whether it is the city or the rural, the landscape always portrays a decaying, crumbling space, with empty, large, dark industrial quarters, captured from a wide, high-angle shot. Also, in this disordered, Romanian, post-socialist space, the protagonists are always endangered and stand under surveillance: in the interior places, Nela and Mitica fight the bureaucratic barriers of the system (Securitate), while in the exterior areas they are imperilled by the Romanian army that stages drills in the countryside and bombs and fires at them.

The post-revolutionary Romanian space is not only disordered but dangerous as well: Nela is raped by some workers, then attacked by the army and punished for her protest by the Securitate, while Mitica gets incarcerated for his behaviour. The poverty, insecurity and the aftermath of everyday shortages are communicated not only on the film's visual, but narrative level as well: the hospitals have no medicine and not enough beds for the patients, along with the dead corpses that are accumulated naked in a rear room. The bureaucratic system and police also embitter the people's everyday lives and makes reaching justice impossible: the local priest would sell sick children for hard currency in

exchange, while the other pastor from the train flirts with Nela, thus questioning the credibility of the clergy as a stanch and faithful organisation. The protecting forces of the country put the politicians' interests ahead of the citizens, which thus contributes to the depiction of post-socialist Romania as a corrupt, insecure and depraved place to live in. In this regard, Pintilie's film expressively captures the realities of the transition period and through its cinematic iconography, it also encapsulates the psychology of the people experiencing the change. In the end, Nela buries her father and thus the socialist past[43] but, along with the ashes, she also inters the Polaroid pictures she has taken about talented children in the school. This being said, together with the past, her symbolic gesture terminates hope for a prospective future and thus the possibility of revolutionising the present. The futility of the future is further illustrated by the last sequence that captures the death of young children that, following the order of the First Secretary – Ceaușescu himself – are shot by the gendarmerie. Thus, in Pintilie's decaying, post-socialist universe there is no hope for a better life and without the next generation, a slow, steady decay follows the revolution.

4.3.1. *Look Forward in Anger*

Similar to *Too Late,* Nicolae Mărgineanu's *Look Forward in Anger* (*Priveste înainte cu mânie,* 1993) exposes the reality of the transition period and reflects upon its moral and economic drawbacks. *Look Forward in Anger* follows the story of a family that slowly falls apart: the head of the household – who was once a rebellious figure in the Ceaușescu-regime and organised protests against the establishment – gets fired from the local factory after the revolution. Realising that nothing has changed in the political leadership, the father tries to survive by taking a job as a flayer, chasing dogs on the street. Because his attempts to find a living constantly fail, he drinks more and more which jeopardises the survival of the family. For this reason, his high-school daughter starts to work as a prostitute, while his siblings join a group of teenagers who break into parked cars and steal electrical devices they find there. The crane-driver middle child seems to have the only fixed job in the family, but when he finds out his sister's hidden activity, he destroys the ship that she works on and gets imprisoned, while his sister and younger brother escape the city. By the end, the family falls apart. Their final decay is further exacerbated by the death

[43] As Andreescu (2011) argues, Nela symbolically buries the father of the nation, thus Ceaușescu himself.

of the father who, while trying to convince the harbour workers to distrust the new regime, falls down from the top of a building.

Look Forward in Anger openly scrutinises and criticises the revolution and the change that, according to the film, not only failed to lead to any alternation in politics, but only brought hardship and austerity to the country. Despite the newly implemented capitalist structure and democratic ideas, the father gets fired because of his rebellious past; people still queue for bread and attack the corn-truck for food; there is no water supply, and alcoholism is growing – all this while the boss of the factory drinks Coke and gets any goods that he wants. In this regard, as Mărgineanu's film demonstrates, the revolution has failed, along with the capitalist structure that keeps people on a short leash.

In one of the film's metaphorical scenes, the father catches dogs from the street but, after they take a short nap with his colleagues, he opens the door of the cage and the animals run away. Mărgineanu identifies the dogs with the workers of the factory – and so the Romanian people in general – that, after the imprisonment of the socialist years, want to leave their metaphorical cage. In other words, he signals that the workers need a new father-figure, who not only lets them free – as he did with the dogs – but supervises them, which, due to their leader's death, becomes impossible. *Look Forward in Anger* thus joins *Too Late* and *The Oak* by highlighting the hopeless present and futureless Romanian society.

4.4. Conclusion. Romanian cinema before the millennium

Similar to other Eastern European countries, the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and the central reforms following it brought about a cultural thaw in Romania that, in contrast to the new waves in Hungary, Poland or the Czech Republic, remained a short-lived and less liberal movement. Other than this brief period, the country's filmmaking was characterised by socialist propaganda, with the nationalist-paternalist patterns in the Ceaușescu-epoch. Romania thus bypassed the neo-realist wave, as well as the European Nouvelle Vague as the socialist dogma put the creation of individualistic art pieces on hold. Nevertheless, Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Daneliuc or Alexandru Tatos managed to circumvent the ever-present censorship even though their films were physically banned and could only be screened after the system change. These filmmakers created under the grip of totalitarian control which they often criticised through a self-reflexive gesture, using the questioning

gaze of the camera (*Microphone Test, Reenactment*), and film-in-the-film – structure (*Sequences, Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică?*) in order to look behind the regime-provided illusion, and to draw attention to the media's manipulative role. By doing so, the camera also developed a metaphorical trajectory, thus functioning as the eye of the Securitate that intrudes into the most intimate realms of life, be that the private sphere of the interviewees in *Microphone Test*, the waiter's clandestine space in *Sequences*, or the omniscient gaze of the inspector in *Reenactment* that forces the two students to act according to the will of the central power.

While in the pre-revolutionary films it is the exposure of the filmmaking apparatus that contributes to the sense of the enclosed structure of the regime, the films of the transition operate with the narratives' spatial trajectory to make the everyday hardship visible. In this regard, they show remarkable resemblance to the visual composition of the New Wave-films as far as they already utilise the so-called vertical enclosure associated with the post-2000 Romanian art cinema, thus setting the plot in a crammed, narrow, prefabricated space. However, in contrast to the New Wave's productions, they do not position the camera as the indicator of a hidden gaze. In the films of the transition period, it is the physical space that is given attention, thus the emphasis lies on the profilmic space that corresponds to the characters' emotional agency as well as the political, social and economic reality of the system change. For instance, in *Look Forward in Anger*, Mărgineanu portrays the family living in a small, tumble-down, time-worn prefabricated flat whose walls are covered by mould and dirt and – similar to Nela's home in *The Oak*, or Alina's flat in *Too Late* – is inadequate for living: the exiguous rooms create a claustrophobic, enclosed space, in this way referring to the anomic situation of the present. However, in contrast to the New Wave-films, these productions step out of the prefabricated-place and discover the streets of the city, as well as the industrial rural of the country, thus using landscape, as well as the interior places to provide a full description of the post-revolutionary poverty and emptiness.

Despite the pro-filmic, claustrophobic space – that is one of the components that creates the composition of vertical enclosure being present in these films, the *mise-en-scène* of the productions nonetheless shows remarkable differences with the art cinema of the New Wave. In this sense, the directors use several tracking shots, two-shot sequences (shot/reverse shot) and traditional editing techniques for continuity that all signify classical storytelling and a sutured structure (Oudart, 1977). Thus, in contrast to the New Wave-films' modernist attitude – that encompasses fixed camera positions, long shots, and a

persistent double framing technique whereby the camera gets covered by the wall – the films of the transition cooperate with the schemes of the classical, linear narrative cinema.

Despite these differences, however, as far as the camera's omniscient-hidden gaze and the prefabricated buildings' prefabricated space go, the New Wave shows an aesthetic continuity with the pre-revolutionary and transition productions. This is to say that, as the next chapter will argue, they use the visible gaze-technique peculiar to the films of the 70s-80s, while building upon the ancestors' way of utilising the pro-filmic space as a metaphorical tool through which enclosure can be expressed. But, instead of criticising the regime, the New Wave uses this metaphorical trajectory as a tool for implicit remembrance, whereby the regime's omniscient gaze and the prefabricated places join together to re-make the gaze of the socialist past (Securitate) and present.

CHAPTER 5.

THE ROMANIAN NEW CINEMA

‘Ceaușescu Hasn’t Died
He watches over us relentlessly
Ceaușescu is a school
Ceaușescu is a disease
` He is in me, he is in you
He is in apartment buildings and in factories
Each of us carries him within today
Ceaușescu will never die (…)
Ceaușescu Hasn’t Died
History has lied to us’

Ada Milea: Ceaușescu Hasn’t Died[44]

5.1. New Wave = Romanian cinema?

The second year zero of the Romanian cinematic corpus signifies the beginning of a new chapter in the filmmaking practices of the country that, besides bringing up a new generation of filmmakers; stylistically and thematically reformed the national cinema and delivered an immense international success that made Romanian film one of the most well-known art cinemas in the world.

First of all, the re-birth of Romanian cinema was accomplished by the financial reorganisation of the film industry that introduced new funding opportunities for filmmakers. The Cinema Fund was established in 1999 and provided interest-free reimbursable financial loans and grants to private production companies that contributed to the newly set-up corporations to get direct and indirect state support[45]. At the same time,

[44] Ada Milea’s song (*Ceaușescu nu a morit!*), translated by Dina Georgescu (see Georgescu, 2010:165-166).
[45] Also, the National Film Fund practices a protectionist policy which supports the country’s national cinema: at least 5% of the programme of film theatres has to play Romanian films, while it is 2% in television (Uricaru, 2012a).

the state-administering institution, the National Film Office was re-named the National Centre of Cinematography (CNC) that, dependent on the Ministry of Culture, subsidised state funding among filmmakers, thus building a bridge between private and state companies (Bogdan, 2013). A further step towards the success was the adaptation of the French financing system in 2003, which enabled the CNC to grant funds and cover the 50% of a production which resulted in a greater independence of the Cinema Fund as the rest of the cost would be collected via budgetary and extra budgetary contributions (Uricaru, 2012a). Additionally, in 1998, Romania joined Eurimages that has been supporting Romanian art cinemas as well as co-productions; furthermore, private and state television channels occasionally funded feature films which all contributed to the birth of the 'New Wave' cinema as young directors had a wider range of financial options and could thus complete their unfinished productions (Filimon, 2010).

As Uricaru (2012a) states, the financing mechanisms of the contemporary Romanian cinema works well to support a low-budget, artistically important, auteur-driven cinema that eventually brought international recognition to the country. The 'Cannes moviemakers', as Doru Pop (2014) names this generation, have launched a 'new wave of prizes' (Pop, 2010:23) that started with the success of short films. As argued by several scholars,[46] the New Wave debuted with Cristi Puiu's *Stuff and Dough* (*Marfa si bani*, 2001) that was selected for the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs in Cannes and won the FIPRESCI prize in Thessaloniki. Two years later, Puiu's other short film, *Cigarettes and Coffee* (*Un cartuş de Kent şi un pachet de cafea*, 2004) brought about a real breakthrough when it won the Golden Bear in Berlin. The international success of Romanian shorts was then followed by several further examples, such as Cătălin Mitulescu's *Traffic* (*Trafic*, 2004) that was awarded the Palme d'Or for Best Short in Cannes in 2004; Constantin Popescu's *The Apartment* (*Apartamentul*, 2003) that won the Great Prize at the Venice Festival Short Film contest in 2004; Radu Jude's *The Tube with a Hat* (*Lampa cu caciulă*, 2006) which, among other international prizes, won the Short Filmmaking Award at the Sundance Film Festival and Marian Crișan's *Megatron* (2008) that also won the Palme d'Or for the Best Short Film in Cannes. The series of awards continued with feature films: in 2005, Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (*Moartea domnului Lăzărescu*, 2005), was awarded at Cannes Film Festival's 'Un Certain Regard' section, and the success was soon followed by Corneliu Porumboiu's *12:08 East of Bucharest* (*A fost sau n-a fost?*, 2006) that got Camera d'Or in Cannes (2006), while his second film, *Police, adjective* (*Poliţist,*

[46] See Pop (2010; 2014), Șerban (2010), Tutui (2012), Caliman (2007)

adjectiv, 2008) won the FIPRESCI Prize and was awarded the Jury 'Un Certain Regard' in Cannes. In the same year, Radu Muntean's *The Paper Will be Blue* (*Hîrtia va fi albastrã*, 2006) won at Cottbus and obtained the Jury Special Prize of the Namur Film Festival in Belgium. In 2007, Cristian Nemescu's *California Dreaming'* (*Nesfârşit*, 2007) was also awarded the 'Un Certain Regard' prize in Cannes while in the same year, Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (*4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile*, 2007) obtained the Great Prize of the European Film Academy in 2007, and Palme d'Or and FIPRESCI at Cannes which eventually brought worldwide acclaim to Romanian cinema. His other film *Beyond the Hills* (*După dealuri*, 2012) was awarded the Best Screenplay at Cannes in 2012 which was followed by the success of Calin Peter Netzer's *Child Pose* (*Pozitia copilului*, 2013) that won the Golden Bear in Berlin and finally closed the Romanian New Wave (Fulger, 2015)[47].

Nevertheless, the 'New Wave' label has been challenged by many critics, scholars and the filmmakers themselves[48], the festival successes, the limited financial resources, the minimalist/realist tendency the filmmakers follow; the 'demonising discourse on communism' (Popa, 2011) and the system change (Chirilov, 2007); and the similar character-depiction of the average Romanian citizen all seem to create coherence among the filmmakers (Pusca, 2011). Furthermore, the films are linked by a shared ideology, the 'quest for the truth' (Şerban, 2010:3) that, besides not being apprehensive of evoking the socialist past, works with a controversial, slow-cinema style, thus building on character-centred narratives while using limited places and dialogues. In addition, the generational connection and the rejection of the miserabilist cinema of the predecessors; the directors' experimenting with cinematic language; the films' neorealist style and kitchen-sink atmosphere (Nasta, 2013), and the filmmakers' intention to evoke the taboos from the past all call for canonisation and unite the directors as members of a shared artistic movement (Popan, 2014). Thus, although the Romanian New Wave has no manifesto or theoretical patronage[49], as was the case with the French Nouvelle Vague; the common ideology and

[47] One has to note that, although Netzler's film is regarded to be the last 'New Wave' production, the Romanian film's presence in Cannes and other high-quality festivals is still strong. In 2015 for instance, Radu Jude was awarded the Silver Bear in Berlin for his film *Aferim!* (2015) and Porumboiu won the Un Certain Regard - A Certain Talent Prize at Cannes with *The Treasure* (*Comoara*, 2015). Radu Muntean's *One Floor Below* (*Un etaj mai jos*, 2015) was also nominated for Un Certain Regard Award in 2015.

[48] See Fulger (2006), Scott (2008), Pop (2010, 2014), Filimon (2010), Pusca (2011)

[49] Some theoreticians disagree with the statement that the movement has no father figure. For instance, Popan (2014) argues that Lucian Pintilie can be negotiated as role model since he helped the New Wave-directors both financially and practically – especially with inviting the younger generation to assist in his films. Also, the New Wave's leading screenwriter, Răzvan Rădulescu acknowledges the influence of Pintilie: 'As the beginning of the nineties myself and several friends of my generation were unable to name five valuable

the films' characteristics make them an auteur-centred[50], coherent movement that has broken ties with the mainstream clichés (Pop, 2010, Veres, 2013) and miserabilist cinema of the predecessors, and contributed towards establishing a new national self-image[51] which, while reckoning with the past, mirrors the everyday social struggles caused by the socialist era.

Besides the political connection, the 'New new wave'[52] (Pop, 2010:22) epitomises the common aesthetical patterns these films have, such as the usage of the fixed and hand-held camera, the preference for long takes (Littman, 2014) and tableau-like positions, the refusal of non-diegetic music (Nasta, 2007; Duma, 2013), the deep, documentary observational techniques (Nasta, 2014; Munteanu-Teodorescu, 2010; Pop, 1010; Tutui, 2012), the jittering of the camera (Nasta, 2014; Munteanu-Teodorescu, 2010; Serban, 2010); the Dogma 95 style of lighting, the preference for urban settings (Popan, 2014), the unity of time and location (Nasta, 2014), the usage of irony (Georgescu, 2010), black humour (Duma, 2007) and melodramatic elements (Giukin, 2010).

According to Pop (2010) and Tutui (2012), this common grammar originates from low-budget filmmaking and a small group of technical crew with whom these directors collaborate with, who thus follow the same aesthetic patterns in the productions' *mise-en-scène*. Although I embrace this statement, the explanation is highly disputable as it reduces the wave's stylistic similarities to the films' poor technical background, without questioning the aesthetic purpose behind the minimalist shooting method. Correspondingly, Alex Leo Șerban (2010) argues that the 'New Romanian Cinema'

Romanian films. The rest was 'crap' to us. Watching a film like *Reconstruction* twenty years later meant for us witnessing the purest perfection, because there is still a dynamite effect provoked even nowadays in this movie. We decided to look for a master, a green light, a film-maker who made good choices in terms of acting, editing, sounds, (…) Pintilie was extremely daring, he didn't care about consequences, he wanted to shock and interest the audience in completely different ways' (Nasta, 2012: 36). According to Nasta (2012), the filmmakers inherited from Pintilie the 'refusal to produce large-scale spectacular movies' and their 'strong belief in the virtues of textual and visual messages' that correspond to the Romanians' (2012:44) absurdist approach to reality and interests the international audition at the same time.

[50] As Leo Șerban has put it, the existence of the new Romanian cinema owes to 'Puiu [who] planted the seed, Porumboiu [who] watered it and Mungiu [who] picked the fruits' (2010:15). Since this thesis considers the New Wave as a stylistic movement within the new Romanian cinema and not a film school, it does not specify or label any director as being executive member of the Wave. Still, we find several directors that make 'New Wave' films, such as Radu Muntean, Cristi Mungiu, Cristi Puiu, Radu Jude, Florian Șerban or Corneliu Porumboiu, however, the list contains numerous other names. Accordingly, we find directors that have only produced one film that can fit into the category, while other filmmakers that are labelled as New Wave-directors, such as Cristi Mungiu, made films that do not belong to the movement at all (*Beyond the Hills*).

[51] It can be argued that, similar to the New Danish Cinema (Hjort, 2005), the Romanian New Wave is a small nation's response to globalisation, thus '(…) a dense and complicated site for the emergence of alternatives to neoliberal conceptions of globalization or cinematic globalization on a Hollywood model' (Hjort, 2005:8-9). Consequently, the Romanian national cinema challenges the Hollywood-formula by producing low-budget, cross-border movies that then travel across European and American festivals.

[52] Pop proposes this term in order to distinguish the first new wave of the 1960s from the contemporary one.

(Şerban, 2009) is a return to the ontology of film and for this reason it has to be named a neorealist movement that derives from the directors' intention to capture the palpable reality that lies in front of the camera. Rodica Ieta (2010) also emphasises the realist tendency of the Wave that she calls 'realism-without-borders' whereby 'everything [becomes] worthy of being the subject of a film (…) and everything can be represented as is, in its momentary occurrence, without concern for consequences' (2010:25). Furthermore, besides its preoccupation with transparency, Ieta argues that the directors of the artistic movement share an impressionist aesthetics, whose objective is to capture personal momentary scenes from daily situations, in this way to portray the alienated, alienating world. Likewise, Elena Roxana Popan (2014), states that there is a 'neo-neorealist' (2014:217) tendency that prevails over the New Wave as, akin to the Italian neorealism, the films reveal contemporary social conditions and work with a neorealist narrative form based on documentary-style filmmaking that relies on location-shooting, natural lightning, limited plots and the refusal of artificial editing. Thus, besides the low-budget filmmaking, the minimalist attitude derives from the neorealist aesthetics the directors follow that aims to reckon with the propaganda style of the socialist Romanian cinema (Prop, 2010; Şerban, 2007) and capture the everyday reality that lies in the physical space.

5.2. Defining contemporary Romanian cinema

Whether they negotiate the new cinematic tendency as a neorealist or a minimalist filmmaking school, academic debate seems to see the productions' visual authenticity and social realist thematic as central features and unique to the movement termed Romanian New Wave (Pop, 2014; Nasta, 2013, Popa 2011) – also called New Romanian Realism (Gorzo, 2013), New Romanian Cinema (Serban, 2010; Stojanova-Duma, 2011) or Romanian *Indies* (Popa, 2013). However, none of the studies on the phenomenon has negotiated the 'New Wave' as part of a complex cinematic movement that, besides the New Wave-paradigm, contains several productions that do not share the wave's minimalist-realist aesthetics and/or objective to depict everyday situations. Thus, the thesis argues that the New Romanian Cinema acts as an umbrella term that incorporates the New Wave-movement, as well as other productions that cannot be discussed under the same paradigm. These films are united by the above mentioned ideology, that is the aim to

depict the truth, which has several formulas: with regards to the New Wave-films, the truth is an aesthetic dogma that follows a neorealist, minimalist tendency, while explicitly or implicitly evoking the past. In the case of other productions that reject the minimalist form and modernist tendency, the reckoning with the lies is signified by the films' thematic content that is the explicit remembrance of the socialist past[53]. One has to note however, that the cinema of explicit remembrance, and the 'New Wave' often share similar aesthetical patterns and thematic resemblance.

For instance, Radu Muntean's *The Paper Will Be Blue* (*Hârtia va fi albastră,* 2006) and Mungiu's *4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days* all work on the level of explicit remembrance, while following the minimalist aesthetics of the New Wave films. Mungiu depicts the regime's oppressive apparatus through the story of an illegal abortion set in 1980s Romania, while Mungiu's and Muntean's film recall the final days of the Ceaușescu regime. The films focus on individual histories and use a modernist-minimalist narrative style, with few settings, a limited number of locations and dialogues. In addition, the productions follow a neorealist aesthetic, with preference to a documentary-observatory technique that is the usage of hand-held, jittering camera that follows the protagonists through long, uninterrupted shots. Another common characteristic is that, while recalling the last days of the Ceaușescu-period, both films use enclosed spaces as their main settings: in *The Paper Will Be Blue*, the men of the Miliția are locked in a tank which is the only safe place for the night patrol. Although the soldiers leave the vehicle when examining the papers of a passerby or when they search for their colleague Costi (Paul Ipate), who abandons the platoon to fight for the revolution; the others remains in the narrow, dark space of the tank. The claustrophobic atmosphere exacerbates the situation and Costi later gets imprisoned in a cell where he is thought to be an Arabian terrorist, and remains in the unheated basement of a villa, where the revolutionaries fire from. Later, even though he gets free after clarifying his identity as a soldier, Costi immediately gets united with his platoon in his own home where, thanks to the always moving camera and natural lightning, the space is structured as cramped as it was in the cell or the tank. After

[53]When analysing the thematic similarities between the New Wave films, other theorists call for canonisation too: for instance, Lucian Georgescu (2015) sees the kinship in the productions' escapist narratives: as he argues, the New Romanian Cinema has 'a unifying scheme, escape – personal, of a group, of an entire nation – as a common conclusion, its failure' (2015:148), that manifests, inter alia, in topics of transnational migration and marginalised youngsters. Pop (2014) also argues that these productions are concerned with marginal characters, but emphasises the 'anti-heroic figures' in the narratives that share 'dark humour as a key motif', are interested in 'the troubled relationship between fathers and sons, and are aware of feminine issues and questions' (2014:4). Since most of these characteristics are valid for any European art film, I argue that the main thematic connection lies in recalling the Ceaușescuian past.

he has re-taken his shift, Costi is again pictured enclosed in the narrow interior of the tank that he, because of the airless room, leaves for a cigarette and gets eventually shot some seconds after. Ultimately, *The Paper Will Be Blue* operates with claustrophobic, cramped interiors in order to depict the oppressive, gloomy atmosphere of the revolutionary days, similar to *4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days* that uses old, dilapidated prefabricated buildings to illustrate the depressive climate of the Ceaușescu-era. In Mungiu's film, the ordeal of the two college friends, the pregnant Găbița (Laura Vasiliu) and her friend, Otilia (Anamaria Marinca) is set in a decaying hotel in Bucharest where Găbița's abortion takes place, and which serves as central location for the film where Otilia's journeys start from. Also, besides the hotel and the run-down, dark streets that the girl crosses, the narrative only uses two other locations in the story that both strengthen the decaying atmosphere of the film. With its narrow corridors and grey interiors, the student dorm is reminiscent of a prison, while the cramped home of Otilia's boyfriend makes the girl captive of a birthday party where she is surrounded with the socialist elite that, both verbally and visually, oppress her (Batori, 2016). Otilia's trapped, aquarium-like position (Nasta, 2013) comes back several times throughout the narrative that is further supported by the constantly jittering camera work that, corresponding to the pro-filmic space that utilises the prefabricated, enclosed architecture, contributes to a surveillance-like structure whereby the girls' every step is closely monitored by an invisible gaze that follows Otilia throughout the city's lost spaces (Batori, 2016). Similarly, the camera – as a hidden gaze – chases Costi in *The Paper Will Be Blue*, constantly capturing him in an enclosed, double-framed composition while he wanders in the claustrophobic, worn places of Bucharest. Thus, as seen in *The Paper Will Be Blue* and *4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days*, while working with neorealist aesthetics and the resuscitating of the past, the limited – dilapidated – pro-filmic space and the two-dimensional image that scrutinises it from a hidden position, both give a claustrophobic installation to the images and contribute to the composition of vertical enclosure.

5.2.1. The cinema of explicit remembrance: Romanian Past-films

One has to note, nonetheless, that there are several other productions[54] that, while recapturing the socialist past, omit the minimalist tendency of the new wave cinema. For instance, when revealing the Ceaușescuian oppression's personal and psychological side through the investigation of the infamous Securitate, and the way it had poisoned personal relations, Andrei Gruzsniczki's *Quod erat demonstrandum* (*The Escape*, 2013) works with a well-photographed, elaborate cinematic iconography and a classically structured narrative that goes against the basic, neorealist dogma of the Wave. The story of the film revolves around a gifted mathematician and doctoral candidate Sorin Parvu (Sorin Leoveanu), who, by avoiding the Romanian authorities, smuggles a paper abroad and publishes it in an American journal. His deed has serious consequences as the socialist authorities, led by Alecu Voican (Florin Piersic Jr.), start an investigation against him. Also, Sorin is in platonic love with the wife of a dissident-colleague, Elena (Ofelia Popii) which makes his situation even more complicated. The woman tries to leave to France to join her husband and is asked by Sorin to carry his publication abroad.

Both the mathematician and Elena become enemies of the Romanian state, and get closely investigated by being eavesdropped and constantly monitored. Voican also persuades the couple's old friend, the well-known academic Lucian (Dorian Boguta) to reconnect with Sorin and get information regarding his new publication and future plans. The informer Lucian does his best to track down his colleague and soon realises Sorin's attraction towards Elena that he reports to Voican. The Securitate officer thus decides to blackmail the woman to give up Sorin to the authorities, for which she would get passport in exchange. Elena finally accepts the deal but, as Sorin finds out about the conspiracy, he leaves the publication behind and gives an empty case to the woman, who eventually departs the country.

Gruzsniczki's film portrays the Ceaușescu-era's espionage-culture by depicting the psychological side of the socialist information culture, illustrated by the friendship of three people that each have a different position and commitment towards the regime. While Sorin acts as the absolute outsider, Lucian stands for the other pole as being part of the surveillance-apparatus, while Elena tries to remain neutral. Besides friendship, their common point is the Securitate that treats them as tools to stabilise the regime, and which

[54] See for instance Cristian Mungiu's *Tales from the Golden Age* (Amintiri din epoca de aur, 2009); Gabriel Achim's *Adalbert's Dream* (Visul lui Adalbert, 2011) and productions like *Somewhere in Palilula* (Undeva la Palilula, dir. Silviu Purcarete 2012), *Beyond America* (Dincolo de America, dir. Marius Barna, 2008)

starts the series of betrayals in the story. In the end, Sorin gives up his academic career for Elena's freedom, and remains in the outsider position, whereas the woman leaves the tryptich.

Similar to *4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days; Quod erat demonstrandum* depicts the Zeitgeist of the era by illustrating the fear and paranoia that permeated the Romanian society during socialism and emphasises the oppression's psychological side. Nonetheless, while resuscitating the era, these films use different visual approaches to depict the restrictive terror and political oppression. The past films of Mungiu and Mitulescu follow the minimalist-neorealist, low-budget paradigm peculiar of the New Wave, consisting of natural Dogma 95 style lightning, jittering camera work, and the perpendicular screen space that all strengthen the observational aesthetics of the narratives and the incarceration of the protagonists. In contrast, Gruzsniczki's film rejects the neorealist patterns and operates along well-choreographed camera movements, and finely photographed black and white images, while, similar to *4,3,2* and *The Paper Will Be Blue*, it works with enclosed spaces. The narrow room of the office of Sorin, the work place and home of Elena all strengthen the airtight atmosphere of the film that is further accentuated by the vertical stratification of the screen image. However, although *Quod erat demonstrandum* utilises the observational aesthetics and perpendicular framing that are among the main representative features of the New Wave style; Gruzsniczki's film cannot be negotiated as part of the movement, as it is not oriented towards the neorealist portrayal of the pro-filmic space. Furthermore, opposite to the new wave films, where the camera develops a metaphorical trajectory and thus functions as a tool for implicit remembrance, Gruzsniczki's device aims at documenting the events, rather than being part of the story.

5.2.2. Retrospective films

Because of its thematic concern with the Ceaușescuian past, one can argue that the birth of the 'New Wave' and so the New Romanian Cinema was a reaction to communism (Popan, 2014) that invited to reflect on Romania's recent past (Duma, 2007) by resuscitating the Ceaușescu-era and/or referencing on it through the films' spatial structure and narratives on everydayness. Thus, be that an implicit or an explicit way of remembering, the films work as historical referencing points to the socialist era that illustrate the past and the survival of communist legacies.

Other than the above mentioned examples, that set their stories in the Ceaușescu-era, there is another form of explicit remembrance present in the Romanian cinema that reflects upon the previous regime from a contemporary perspective. The story of these films is set in capitalist surroundings while they verbally and/or visually resuscitate the Ceaușescu-era. In contrast to the New Wave-films, and similar to the cinema of explicit remembrance, these productions work along conventional, unified narratives and analytical editing, that is, they follow the classical storytelling patterns and use professional techniques. An example is Stere Gula's *I am an Old Communist Hag* (*Sunt o baba comunista*, 2013) that provides an insight into the socialist everyday through the memories of the main protagonist, who has a nostalgic longing towards that period. After long years of waiting, the retired couple, Emilia (Luminița Gheorghiu) and her husband finally see their daughter, who got married abroad and expects her first child with an American man. When they arrive, it soon turns out that the couple are struggling with serious financial problems that causes several conflicts in their relationship. For this reason, Emilia decides to help her daughter by resuscitating the old socialist factory she once worked in, and which stands neglected in the city suburbs. Although she gets all the personal support from her ex-colleagues, her dream to re-start the factory falls short and, instead of recapturing her past, she decides to take a short-term loan from a bank and gives the money to her daughter, who eventually flies back to the States. In the end, however, as the bank forecloses the mortgage, Emilia and her husband are compelled to move out from their home, thus starting a new life in the countryside.

Gulea's film confronts the socialist past and the capitalist present by confronting two generations: Emilia tries to recapture her socialist life that, albeit she had to queue for everything, provided her with 'a flat, a fix job and a full fridge'. Although her daughter and husband make her aware of the shortcomings of the previous regime, Emilia thinks of the past with nostalgia, that she relives through flashbacks, as she is waiting for the factory visit of the Ceaușescus who – despite the cross-checking, preparations and quarantine – eventually call off the visit. This flashback is contrasted with actual shooting scenes portraying Emilia and her husband working as extras for a new Romanian production that recalls the Ceaușescu-period and so Emilia's happy memories from the past. This self-reflexive gesture provides a sharp contrast between the socialist past and the present that, as Gulea's film illustrates, commercialises the memories of the Ceaușescu-period. Emilia is an absolute outsider in this new world that she is not familiar with, while her daughter cannot understand her mother's nostalgia for the period where they had 'no heating and

food'. The two women thus stand for two ideologies that ironically do not differ much from each other: Emilia's debt is paid from the money her parents earned in the Ceaușescu-era, that is, the capitalist debt is compensated with socialist money, whereby past and present touch upon each other[55].

5.2.3. New Wave: towards a cinema of implicit remembrance

Whereas, *I am an Old Communist Hag* and *Quod erat demonstrandum* stand as examples of explicit remembrance, there is a third, implicit way of socialist remembrance. As mentioned above, this way is peculiar to the 'New Wave' films that reveal the socialist oppression and the survival of it through the film's *mise-en-scéne*. The core of this tendency resides in the spatial representation of prefabricated block houses: cinematographers prefer to shoot in concrete apartments and compose images in extremely narrow compositions to present a claustrophobic atmosphere that dominates over these films. In this spatial representation enclosure plays a crucial role that is further emphasised by the locations' frames – doors, windows – in the filmic image, whereby the cinematic form of vertical enclosure comes into existence. In this way, the jittering, hand-held camera that hides behind various objects, develops a metaphorical trajectory that reflects upon the Securitate's hidden, omniscient gaze which penetrated and disturbed the domesticity and intimacy of the socialist homes. As a result, the microraions' (post-) socialist social space becomes subordinated to the camera's gaze that constantly monitors the protagonists' actions, and becomes a mnemonic device through which the previous regime's oppression is expressed. Therefore, in the case of the movement, *everydayness* bears with a political dimension that refers to the encroachment of the socialist past, that is

[55] There are several other productions that centre on the nostalgia of the characters who face the shortcoming and exploitative structure of the capitalist everydays and thus get disappointed in the new establishment. For instance, *Of Snails and Men* (*Despre oameni si melci*, dir.Tudor Giorgiu, 2012) illustrates how the Western capital has exploited the Romanian industry, while other productions concentrate on the contemporary damage socialism has caused, such as prostitution [*Ryna (dir. Ruxandra Zenide, 2005), If the Seed doesn't die* (*Daca bobul nu moare*, dir. Sinisa Dragin, 2010); *Outbound* (*Periferic*, dir. Bogdan George Apetri, 2005) *Maria* (dir. Calin Peter Netzer, 2003)], migration [(*Morgen*, dir. Marian Crisan, 2010)*; The Phantom Father* (*Tatal fantoma*, dir. Lucian Georgescu, 2011*), The Other Irina (Cealalta Irina*, dir. Andrei Gruzsniczki, 2009), *Francesca* (dir. Bobby Păunescu, *2009); First of all, Felicia (Felicia Inainte de Toate*, dir. Radulescu-Raaf, 2010*); If I want to whistle, I whistle (Eu când vreau să fluier, fluier*, dir. Florin Serban, 2010)], corruption (*Treasure, Stuff and Dough*), drugs (*Rocker*, dir. Marian Crisan, 2012) and poverty (*Chasing Rainbows/Si caii sunt verzi pe pereti*, dir. Dan Chisu, 2012). These films mirror no difference between the socialist regime and the contemporary establishment and portray the latter as miserable as the totalitarian regime.

the state's penetration into the most confidential, sovereign realms of one's life. As Mihali puts it, during the Ceaușescu years;

> 'The political (…) has been subverted, avoided, misled into forms of pseudo-resistance, of total implication in the anonymous micro-gestures and rituals of daily life, the more anonymous the more imperceptible, the more insignificant from the viewpoint of the panoptical power. Everydayness was the place where communism has left the deepest traces also because it was the last refuge for the unprotected in his public, political and professional life. And the fall of communism hasn't led to the disappearance of these traces but to their keeping as routines and inertia to protect individuals and communities from daily convulsions (…)' (Mihali, 2007:2).

Thus, nevertheless the 'New Wave' films do not evoke the socialist past on the first, explicit level of representation, the attachment to the socialist interiors and capturing the post-socialist everydayness creates continuity between the previous and the current establishment. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the pro-filmic, social space and the spatial construction of the screen space contributes to a filmic form that, similar to Bentham's panopticon, builds upon a cellular, disciplinary space and a central perspective from which the happenings are recorded.

Beyond doubt, the main characteristic of the 'New Wave' films lies in the realist[56] treatment of social space that is the preoccupation with the (post-)socialist urban suburb that is portrayed as an abandoned, grey and tumble-down trajectory where the characters are locked in. The endless labyrinths of prefabricated blocks of flats and their monochrome context represent the inconvenient heritage of the previous regime that prevails over the capitalist space of the cities, and mirrors a burden inherited to the very present. The protagonists of the films are urban proletarians (Pop, 2010:33) who live in the space of the past that is in small, narrow boxes built in the Ceaușescu-era, that they attempt to refit according to the contemporary, modern style, however, remain enclosed in the claustrophobic constellation of the (post-)socialist space. For some scholars, like Stojanova

[56]As Puiu emphasises the importance of reality: 'Your condition as a human being imposes certain restriction on what can be understood. We don't have two-way vision like a chicken does! There's that statement from Arnheim in his *Film as Art* that a filmmaker is obliged to choose things from reality and if you choose one thing you don't choose something else. If you point the camera in this direction, you are going to lose what' happening behind the camera. This is the condition of the filmmaker. (…) Cinema allows you [to not to expose everything to camera], to vary elements in order to build up the cinematographic sentence. I don't know if I succeeded in this but the statement I want to make is that life is more important than cinema. I think that life is more important than cinema' (Puiu, quoted by White, 2010)

and Duma, the urban outings represent the internal turmoil of the characters (2012:12), thus following the modernist tendency of Antonioni's 'interior psychological landscapes' (Gandy, 2003: 224) with the environment mirroring the psychological state of the character. Even though this statement can be valid for the films, one can also argue that besides this inner emotional projection, the attachment to prefabricated spatial unities and location shooting remains a political tool that projects both the past and present into the same spatial context. As Czepczynski alludes, 'architecture is one of the main representing languages of modern society that signifies (…) economic, social and cultural processes' (2008:2). Consequently, 'the aesthetic form is never neutral – the power is written into the landscape through the medium of design' (ibid). In the case of Romania, the juxtaposition of two main power structures that is the socialist past and the depressive present, represent the former and the current colonizer (Lisiak, 2010) and the tension between the two that characterises the physical and psychological space of the cities. Post-colonial Bucharest thus remains a colonized space, built by the socialist regime, and re-structured by Western values where the massive, autonomic buildings function as constant reminders of the Ceaușescu-regime. Although Western globalisation penetrates this space in forms of modern dwellings, neon lights, billboards and advertising sheets – that Lisiak describes as the 'violation of space' (2010:199) – the modification of the homogenic façades could not change the basic socialist texture of the city, which is determined by high-rise, ornamental concrete blocks. In this city-text, the prefabricated centres bear with special importance for they act as cultural landscapes of the past (Czepczynski, 2008), thus representing a person's relation to the (living) spaces of a historical period, while recalling the collective memory of a nation that occupies them. Thus, the 'New Wave's' preoccupation with the socialist dwellings is rather a symbolic gesture where space functions as a site of memory, a 'lieu de mémoire'[57] (Nora, 1989) that implicitly recalls the past through the pro-filmic space[58] as well as the vertical stratification of the diegetic space.

The following chapter scrutinises examples from the New Wave which foreground the perpendicular treatment and stratification of the diegetic space, while utilising (post-

[57] According to Nora (1989), 'lieux de mémoire' are sites of remembrance 'where memory crystallizes and secretes itself' (7). These spaces – that include places, objects and practices – help us to recall the past.

[58] With regards to this physical space, the New Wave films bear striking resemblance with the Romanian miserabilist cinema of the 1990s, as they concentrate on the prefabricated blocks' interior, dilapidated, narrow world. Furthermore, because of utilising the questioning camera-technique, it can be argued that there is an aesthetic continuity between the films of Daneliuc, Tatos and Pintilie and the directors of the Wave as, similar to the elder generation, the 'New Wave' films pay preeminent attention to the presence of the camera. As argued by Mihaies (2013), because of the films' self-reflexivity and hidden camera technique, the current new wave came out of Mircea Daneliuc's *Microphone Test* (Mircea Mihaies, quoted by Gorzo, 2013:7).

)socialist physical spaces for central location. By mainly concentrating on the films of Cristi Puiu and Corneliu Porumboiu, the chapter examines how the camera as a metaphoric trajectory develops a scopic control over the protagonists who thus get enclosed in the diegetic space. As will be argued, the concept of vertical enclosure that is born this way creates a claustrophobic constellation that, by carrying the memories of the socialist past, implicitly evoke the Ceaușescu-epoch. Besides the spatial registers, the chapter also touches upon the generational conflicts, bureaucratic misuses and the superior-inferior relations in the films that serve as the main thematic core of the new wave productions.

CHAPTER 6.

THE CINEMA OF IMPLICIT REMEBRANCE

6.1. The cinema of Cristi Puiu

With his first feature film, *Stuff and Dough* (*Marfa si banii*, 2001), Cristi Puiu established a new visual grammar that became the representative style of the 'New Wave' and identified him as the leading figure of the movement (Pop, 2014; Şerban, 2011)[59]. Puiu's style has been negotiated as that which follows the 'aesthetics of observational documentary' (Pop, 2014:63), thus practising a certain kind of documentary filmmaking where the unrestricted, moving camera, freed from the tripod, enables the director to gain access to the inner world of the characters and the reality of life (Pop, 2014). Consequently, the hand-held camera and the deep observational technique refer to Puiu's preoccupation with reality[60] that is to depict everyday happenings in their absolute duration and spatial coherence. The minimalist techniques[61] – the recurrent use of long shots, the scrutiny of everyday and often non-spectacular details[62] and the refusal of non-diegetic

[59] For this reason, the film critic Florin Şerban classifies the Romanian neorealist tendency as 'Puiuism' (2011:12) and states that '(…) In terms of material, his obsession with the personal and the intimate has been adopted by everybody from Corneliu Porumboiu and Radu Muntean to Radu Jude and Adrian Sitaru. All, of course, do things differently (they have their own stories to tell), but you can spot the "Puiuism" that pervade their movies.' (2011:12)

[60]Puiu studied in Switzerland (Geneva University of Art and Design), where he became obsessed with 'dissolving the frontier between documentary and fiction, with reconciling the role of the observer as creator' (Gorzo, 2013: 4). In his graduation paper, he discussed realism in film, entitled 'Notes on the Realist film'.

[61] According to Nasta (2012), Puiu inherited the minimalist techniques from Lucian Pintilie with whom he worked on *Niki and Flo* (*Niki Ardelean, colonel în rezerva,* dir. Lucian Pintilie, 2003) as assistant. Gorzo (2013) also examines the impact of the predecessors when examining the realist cinematic traditions of Romania in the works of Pintilie and Daneliuc and the level the aesthetics, allegorical stylisation of these films influenced the art of Christi Puiu. He argues that, although these films had a great impact on the New Romanian Cinema as a whole, because of their modernist narrative the contemporary films highly differ from the Romanian traditions. He states that, while in the cinema of Pintilie or Daneliuc 'the logic behind many stylistic decisions is still narrative logic of a classical type' (10), Puiu goes back 'to the venerable question "What is cinema?", to the history of the ways of thinking and seeing film' (10).

[62] As Puiu has put it in an interview, '(…) what is really interesting is not the story. The truth comes from details. If the things I observe are *being*, if the actors are *being*, then I look at the film without knowing why it's interesting. I don't film stories, I film people' (Kuzma and Pfeifer, 2011)

music (Nasta, 2012) – thus all serve the spatial-temporal unity and the realist concept of the narratives that picture the socio-political situation of contemporary Romania.

While in *Stuff and Dough*, Puiu scrutinises the corrupt atmosphere of the country, in his later productions he turns towards an inner, psychological analysis of interpersonal encounters that he has already touched upon in his short film *Cigarettes and Coffee* (*Un cartus de kent si un pachet de cafea*, 2004). Additionally, besides the thematic analogy, Puiu's first short already shows similarities with his feature films in the way it composes the pro-filmic and screen space in order to create a claustrophobic atmosphere.

6.2. *Cigarettes and Coffee*

Cigarettes and Coffee narrates the encounter of a father and son who spend twelve minutes sitting in a café. During the session, the elder man talks about his misery of having been fired after thirty years of work, and how he now needs a two-year job to claim his retirement pension. During their conversation, the son sits and eats calmly. Later, he offers his father the option to work as a night guard, which surprises the elder man as he was a truck driver for decades. Still, he accepts the son's proposition and promises him to wait for his call at home. In the end, after paying for the bill, the young man gives some cash to the father and they both leave the place.

Similar to Gulea's *I'm an Old Communist Hag, Cigarettes and Coffee* portrays the generational gap between those who grew up and socialised in the Ceaușescu-regime, and the contemporary younger generation who were born after the system change, and lived within the confines of capitalist ideology. The contrast in Puiu's film is illustrated both on the visual, as well as the thematic level of the narrative: the son is dressed elegantly and behaves confidently and contemptuously towards his father, whose appearance bears all the visual markers of the socialist regime: he is dressed in a grey sweater, has old-fashioned glasses and wears dark trousers while carrying an old shopping bag when hesitantly entering the place.

Clearly, the father does not understand the sudden political change, the presence of foreign capital in the country and the reason he had to lose this job, whereas his son does not even comment upon the loss. The old man is aware of his subordinated social position as a failed father figure, who cannot provide the needed financial assistance for his family. In this way, similar to the socialist regime where he was oppressed by the authoritarian

decrees, he is suppressed by the new rules of capitalism whose representative is his own son[63].

6.2.1. Enclosed in the past

The conflict between the father and son is emphasised through the spatial structure of the room: with its open windows and large curtains, the café is depicted as a stage where the generation battle is taking place. Accordingly, the two men are positioned between the window and the camera, which gives the space an enclosed aquarium-like atmosphere, whereby the protagonists' personal conflict gets highlighted (figure 6).

Figure 6. *Cigarettes and Coffee*. The enclosed, aquarium-like atmosphere.

In addition, Puiu draws attention on the heightened visibility of the characters as both men can be observed from the street as well as the room, thus creating a 360-degree observatory space whose centre is occupied by the couple. The curtains that frame the image only strengthen the stage-like positioning and, together with the fixed camera position that laterally captures the two men, contributes to stressing their position as being under constant surveillance. This gives the scene an added tension where the characters' every movement is being watched, be that done by the camera, or the walking people on the street, who see the two men through the window.

Thanks to the over-the-shoulder shots and the vertical lines in the image, the diegetic space gets divided: from the son's position, the frame of the window separates the space between him and the father which mirrors their personal conflict and differences and gives the image a prison-like feeling as the black line in the centre of the screen space does not

[63] Furthermore, the generational conflict depicted in *Cigarettes and Coffee* confronts the socialist colonial and the capitalist post-colonial world within the same sequence, thus referencing the socialist system, while shooting in the capitalist present.

let the two people unite within the same personal space (figure 6). Consequently, although the jittering camera is not yet present in Puiu's short film, the observational technique that can be regarded as the idiosyncrasy of his films is apparent, although not in the form of the permanently hidden camera position. The scene's claustrophobic constellation and the open referencing of the socialist system opens a new chapter in Puiu's art, which has been already present in his first feature film, *Stuff and Dough*, but will be dominating his later films *Aurora* and *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu.*

6.2.2. *Stuff and Dough*

The camera's omnipresence, its oscillating form and the prefabricated flat as the main shooting location is introduced in *Stuff and Dough*. Puiu's film follows three youngsters to Bucharest where they are sent to handle a suspicious bag over.

The establishing shot already draws attention to the camera and its personification in the narrative, however, in this case, the hand-held, twitching apparatus mainly supports the documentary technique and so the realistic depiction of the action. Furthermore, instead of its fixed position that is peculiar to his next films, in *Stuff and Dough* the camera accompanies the characters, thus following their voices and movements in the social space. Because of this, the role of the author behind the camera gets highlighted as an interviewer that moves with the protagonists across the space. This controlled gaze behind the apparatus creates uncontrolled images, that is to say, instead of classic two-shot settings, it decides to use pan sequences and long takes, thus to depict the characters' environment and acts. Accordingly, when Marcel Ivanov (Razvan Vasilescu), the man who pays Ovidiu (Alexandru Papadopol) to bring the case to Bucharest, appears in the boy's flat, his every gesture is followed by camera movements: first, as he puts the bag on a chair that Puiu captures in a long pan sequence and then, when he impatiently looks at his watch. Later, his conversation with Ovidiu's father is depicted similarly as, following a *cinema verité* style, the hand-held camera steps to Mr. Marcel and records his words in a close-up while, through a plan sequence, switches to the father who answers him. This documentary filming style that employs a jittering, mobile and exploratory camera, permeates the whole movie, whereby the off-screen space and tableaux-like compositions get less or no emphasis at all.

Nevertheless, the play with the diegetic and non-diegetic space will be more dominant in Puiu's next films, the double framing technique that is peculiar of *Aurora* and *Lăzărescu*

has a strong presence in the first part of the narrative. This is to depict the enclosed world and psychological situation of the characters who live under the same roof that hardly provides them with sufficient living space. Before breakfast, Puiu shows Ovidiu's mother as she is feeding the grandmother in a double-framed composition, and positions the women in the depth of it. This still image gets suddenly disturbed by Ovidiu's question about not finding his clean shirts. The boy eventually enters the frame which seemingly confuses the camera operator, that first moves in the other direction with the device, thus looking for the source where Ovidiu's voice is coming from, but, by the time he turns back, the boy has already entered the kitchen. The hesitating camera thus develops a subjective trajectory that returns in several other shots where it moves with the protagonist together. This technique supports the suspense of the film as the youngsters are followed by a group of unknown gangsters who are being watched by Marcel through the window of Ovidiu's room. The subjective images thus strengthen the atmosphere of fear and forecast the possible danger the three friends have to face on the road.

Besides these shots, Puiu focuses on the small space of the kitchen where, after the friends of Ovidiu arrive, one can hardly move. Because of the crowd and the cacophony in the room, the camera seems to get lost about whom to capture, which results in a carnivalesque sequence. Thus, in contrast to Puiu's later productions where the camera remains still and distant, in *Stuff and Dough* it penetrates the private space of the characters and attempts to capture their close-ups while they communicate. However, because of the fast rhythm of the conversation, it is unable to do so. Instead, it succeeds in illustrating the flat's claustrophobic structure and the enclosure that will be of special importance in *Aurora*.

In both *Cigarettes and Coffee* and *Stuff and Dough,* Puiu introduces his special observational, minimalist style that have made him a respected auteur of the Romanian New Wave. Both films introduce his play with panoptic techniques, albeit do not fulfil the requirements of vertical enclosure. Although *Cigarettes and Coffee* organises its narrative into a tableaux-like, disciplinary structure and deals with the conflict of the socialist and post-socialist generation, the gaze of the camera does not develop a metaphorical trajectory; instead, it functions as a mirror that depicts what Romania has become after the revolution. *Stuff and Dough* also utilises the claustrophobic constellation of prefabricated dwellings, the camera tracks down the characters, which creates double-framed images and

draws attention to the gaze of the camera that, in the later films, becomes a metaphorical tool of the (post)socialist power.

6.3. *Aurora*

Cristi Puiu's third feature film, *Aurora* (2010) recounts the day of Viorel (Cristi Puiu) who decides to reckon with his potential enemies, and murders four people throughout the movie. The carefully structured narrative first introduces Viorel as an average, middle-aged divorced man who, similar to other citizens, is occupied with fixing his everyday problems, be that the renovation of his flat, or the neighbour's busted pipe that causes damage in his bathroom wall. Besides these conflicts, he is captured whilst eating, having a shower, organising his tools in his room, or driving through Bucharest with his car. His everyday gestures are illustrated in micro-realistic details, which further strengthens the everydayness of his character, and portrays him as any ordinary citizen from the Romanian crowd. What makes Viorel different is that all of his acts lead to a series of carefully planned killings. Because of the anger and disappointment he feels about his divorce that, according to him, happened against the will of him or his ex-wife, he first murders the notary and later the parents of his ex-partner that he thinks have contributed to the break-up. Ultimately, Viorel's vengeance ends with giving himself up to the police.

With its hesitant documentary-like images and long takes, the narration of the film assists Viorel's psychological state, whose insecure gestures and sudden sallies form the turning-points of the story. The camera, as a distant, still observer records his unsure movements for long minutes before the first killing occurs. This is followed by a similarly long period of stillness during which Puiu provides an insight into Viorel's everyday activities. The slow narration, as well as Viorel's relaxed nature, changes when the man murders the victims. These are the only occasions when he seemingly leaves his calm role behind. Still, although he appears to be determined and self-confident about what he is doing, Viorel remains as unsure during the killings as he is in his everyday life.

As an antisocial person, Viorel stands outside of society. Along with the narrative level of the film that depicts his outcast position, his isolation is emphasised through the film's visual structure as well, that is, he is constantly put in enclosed positions, be that physical locations or the two-dimensional image itself. Accordingly, Puiu only uses few places throughout the story that mainly centre around his flat and car. Thanks to the architectural

design of these locations and the positioning of the camera, the space gets further stratified, thus strengthening the disciplinary structure of it.

6.3.1. Prefabricated realities

Having just divorced, Viorel is currently renovating his prefabricated flat in Fetesti street[64], situated in Titan-Balta Alba (figure 6.1-6.2), the main socialist urban district of Bucharest (Danta, 1993). In the Ceaușescu-era, this area was an exclusive neighbourhood that hosted the educated class of Bucharest, as well as the core of the Securitate personnel. In a documentary film on the artistic qualities of the district (*Balta Alba*, dir. Silviu Munteanu, 2014), musician Sorin Danescu talks about their underground activities in the suburbs and states that, 'a peculiarity thing about Balta Alba at the time, and as far as I know, it only happened here (…), it was a fact that in each apartment building (*scare de bloc*) there was a person dubbed the man of Securitate'. As the film accentuates, in the district each staircase had a Securitate officer that eavesdropped and monitored the citizens, and sent monthly reports about their activities to the authorities. Also, together with their musician fellows, Danescu emphasises the stressful atmosphere of the district where no one knew whom to trust and when to be caught for making rock music. Consequently, Munteanu's film depicts Titan Balta-Alba as the epicentre of the illegal music industry during the 1980s and one of the most closely watched areas of Bucharest.

[64] Fetesti Street lies in the heart of Titan Balta-Alba, that, besides Berceni and Drumul Taberei, forms the largest socialist district of contemporary Bucharest. Its construction started in the 1950s through the demolition of the neighbouring areas, but the main period of building operations was between 1965 and 1984. Thanks to the metallurgical and heavy industrial areas nearby (hence the name), Titan provided work for thousands. By 1970, Titan Balta-Alba contained more than 48,000 apartments, with the population of 144,000 people in an area of 700 hectares (Tudock, 1974:346). Today, Titan Balta-Alba is the only neighbourhood that contains no visible features of the natural landscape (Stoiceluscu, Huzui and Chicos, 2013:67) and, because of the large, socialist concrete blocks that prevail over its environment, it is often called the 'communist bedroom' (*dormitor communist*) as the area has less to offer but prefabricated homes to families that, with their low number of rooms and narrow constellation, can be best used for sleeping only.

Figure 6.1 Titan-Balta Alba, Bucharest
(Source: *Calator prin Bucuresti*)

Figure 6.2 Balta-Alba, Bucharest. Scopic control
(Source: *Ziare pe net*)

Puiu's choice of Titan Balta-Alba as the main location is both a reference to the socialist past and its surveillance apparatus, which is reflected both on the level of pro-filmic, as well as filmic space, and the positioning of the camera. As for its physical space, Viorel's home is as dilapidated as its environment, so that the apartment functions as a smaller part of a larger enclosed, tumble-down edifice (figure 6.3). This matryoshka-structure not only mirrors the psychological state of Viorel but, extending beyond the first connotative meaning of the building, it functions as 'the site of an open wound', for it recalls 'the history of his past relationships and the unborn time of his future life' (Filimon, 2014:175), and, through its architectural design, also illustrates the legacy of the previous regime.

Figure 6.3 *Aurora.* Viorel's flat

Moreover, with its grey walls and small, barred windows and doors, the façade of the prefabricated building reminds of a fortress that contains enclosed boxes, one of which serves as the home of Viorel. The man's flat recalls the images of a prison whose

unpainted concrete walls, plastic-sheet wrapped furniture and lightless interior contribute to the claustrophobic atmosphere of the place (figure 6.3.1). Viorel's apartment lacks any kind of homeliness which is further exacerbated by the intruding guests who freely enter and walk in this space.

First, Viorel's mother and stepfather surprise him with their visit and open the apartment's main door with their own keys, thus disturbing him as he is getting dressed. Whereas his mother stops in the kitchen, his stepfather goes on exploring the failures of the flat, while blaming Viorel for not having finished the painting, and pesters him to go to Bricostore, a home improvement store to buy a good spatula and so to have 'a good finish'. Viorel obviously does not care about his stepfather's advice and does not answer his remarks, instead, he walks around surprised, and seemingly annoyed by the pompous lecture. For most of the time, he attempts not to be in the same room with his stepfather, however, he is constantly followed by his voice and then by his presence itself. Later on, his mother takes over the role of the commanding man and, as they have just arrived from the cemetery, calls Viorel to blow out the tea candle, thus remembering on the dead. This is the first time during the whole scene when Viorel says a word, albeit on the pressure from his mother, who commands him to say 'may his soul rest in heaven', thus alluding to the death of his husband and Viorel's father. This sentence is thus Viorel's first pronouncement that is followed by another one, when he asks the already leaving couple to go away.

Figure 6.3.1 *Aurora*. Viorel's fortress-flat

Viorel's taciturnity is in absolute contrast with the garrulity of his stepfather, whose presence and voice fills up the space of the whole flat. Whether he is outside the frame, his voice and constant gabble follows Viorel everywhere, who eventually loses his symbolic position as the owner of the flat. His hesitant gestures and movements all illustrate his

inferior position as he loses control over his own private space that, thanks to the intruders, becomes a public one. Additionally, the arrival of the workers, who, similarly to the mother and stepfather, enter the flat without Viorel's permission, strengthens his role as a homeless person who has no power over/in his apartment. This is further emphasised when, at the time the workers arrive, Viorel is not residing in the flat and consequently, the men intrude his private space without his physical presence. They start to empty his flat without consulting him first and Viorel only witnesses the end of the process as he comes round the truck on the street that contains his personal belongings. Later, when he enters his flat, he finds his living room almost empty, yet, he remains emotionless and only gets upset when he sees his Bakelite collection being brought to the car. Only after he orders the man to turn back, does he instruct the workers what to leave in the flat, however, he does not monitor the action so that they bring out whatever their boss, Viorel's ex-father-in-law tells them to.

Figure 6.3.2. Intruding intimate territories

Viorel remains in the kitchen while the men come and go in the corridor. This transfers the whole flat into a passageway, emphasising its public domain and Viorel's outsider position in this space.

Furthermore, while his furniture is being carried to the car, similar to the above mentioned persons, his neighbours enter the flat without the permission of Viorel who resides in another room, when the man and his child arrive. The father wants to check the bathroom and see the damage the broken pipe and/or his son has caused by flooding the flat. During their conversation, the men still occupy the corridor, thus putting Viorel in an in-between-position whereby he loses the very last signs of control over the place. He tries to follow both happenings, to concentrate on the working men, as well as the father. However, the latter requires his whole attention, especially after the arrival of the mother of the child who starts a fight with her husband. Thanks to their visit, the people

accumulate in the corridor so that Viorel gets excluded from the screen image (figure 6.3.2). After the mother and child leave, the father asks him whether he can see the kitchen, but goes on without waiting for the answer, and gets into the heart of the flat. Only when everybody leaves can Viorel be on his own; however, in his empty flat he behaves more like a guest than the owner itself. As if being afraid of another intrusion into his personal space, he hesitantly walks around, stops at the thresholds of the rooms, stares at the ringing phone and then at the main door.

It becomes clear that Viorel does not feel safe in his flat, nor is he taken in by the film's additional places, whereby he becomes excluded from the private spheres. Similar to his flat that thus turns into a public space, he gets stuck in transitional spaces of the film, such as staircases and lobbies or enters places with which he cannot identify himself with anymore. Accordingly, in the flat of his mother where he has his childhood-room, he again cannot occupy his room as his stepfather constantly follows him everywhere. Similarly, in his lover's apartment he remains an outsider as he may only enter that place when the husband is not home. Finally, in the house of his mother-in-law he is not welcome and is treated as a nuisance that impedes the woman in cooking dinner and finishing housework. Other than these places where he is only tolerated, in most of the cases he is shut in inbetween-locations.

6.3.2. In-between and disciplinary places

As already mentioned, Viorel often remains in the staircase of prefabricated blocks, for instance when he visits his lover Gina (Clara Voda) whose husband invites him in but decides not to enter the flat. Later, even though he steps into the private space of the apartment, he stops in the anteroom, and waits for Gina to have a talk with him in the staircase. His outsider position is further stressed by the composition of the image as he talks to the woman: the camera stands behind Aurel, thus capturing his back while Gina is talking to him sideward (figure 6.3.3). The man's silhouette fades into the dark background while the women's position is highlighted by the white wall that she is standing against. The contrast of the black and white colours and the vertical line in the middle of the image separates them, and emphasises Viorel's shadow-like physical figure and outsider position that accompanies him throughout the whole story.

Figure 6.3.3. Viorel's compositional arrangement

Furthermore, wherever he goes, he wears his big, black winter jacket, be that the flat of his mother, Gina's apartment, or the school of her daughter. The huge coat isolates and alienates him from the occupiers of these places, and strengthens his visitor-position.

To summarise, the places of Bucharest eject Viorel from the very space of the city: he continuously meets obstacles when trying to enter the interiors of the locations of the film. For instance, he cannot open the entrance door of his mother's apartment and Mrs Mioara, the neighbour of Viorel's mother hesitates as to whether to let him and his daughter in the flat or not. Similarly, he is not let in to the boutique where he is looking for Andrea, an unknown character in the story. In addition, even if he enters these other locations, the places have an enclosed, claustrophobic structure that, similar to his flat, bear with a cellular, panoptic schema. This is to say that these locations – both the interiors and the façades – are ruled by vertical geometric lines that, supported by the camera's jittering-hiding position, create disciplinary spaces that dominate the narrative. Furthermore, large, thick concrete walls, low headroom, and barred windows are peculiar of the locations of the film that not only frame the image, but divide it into several vertical pieces (figures 6.3.4-6.3.5).

Figure 6.3.4. Vertical stratification of space

Figure 6.3.5. Inter-frames

The claustrophobic set-up of Viorel's workplace and the Bucharest Heavy Machinery Factory for the Chemical and Petrochemical Industry (UGICP Sa), for instance, derives from the grids of the screen space 'whose geometric lines and sharp angles suggest mechanical, repetitive thinking', while, its inner place is ruled by 'the flawless arrangement of rectangular windows and vertical window bars' (Filimon, 2014:179) that hermetically close the space of the factory.

Consequently, Viorel's workplace, and his home, function as fortresses that supress him. Filmed in a long shot amongst the giant metal-structures, the figure of the man is dwarfed, and is placed in a psychologically-physically oppressed position that is illustrated by him constantly moving from foot to foot, thus changing his position while speaking to his colleague (figure 6.3.6). Whereas, in this case, Viorel is jailed by the machines around him, in other sequences he is encompassed by concrete columns, window frames and doors. For instance, in the hotel garage where he murders his first two victims, he is surrounded by massive vertical pillars that, besides dividing the physical as well as the screen space into smaller sections, cover the sight of the spectator, thus hiding the man behind these structures (figure 6.3.7). Similarly, in the house of his mother-in-law, the space is divided by a large window behind which Viorel and the woman stand. As the window is covered with a half-open, upright blind through which the camera monitors the protagonists, the man again gets into an incarcerated positon, thus emphasising his already mentioned outsider position (figure 6.3.5). Correspondingly, thanks to Puiu's camera work that emphasises the vertical obstacles within the frame, Viorel becomes subordinated to the space that surrounds him. This is to say that, due to the spatial coordination of the physical space and the positioning of the camera, the space controls the movements of the man and not the other way around.

Figure 6.3.6 Fortress places

Figure 6.3.7. Incarcerated

The claustrophobic constellation of space derives not solely from the barely lighted, narrow spaces and old, grey furniture, but the fixed positioning of the camera that pans along a 180-degree axis, thus creating a cellular space, whose centre is occupied by the device. The apparatus also follows a panoptic schema, that is, it hides behind walls and pillars, thus emphasising its trajectory as a metaphorical gaze that secretly follows Viorel. In addition, by constantly capturing the protagonists from a fixed, clandestine position, Puiu pays special attention to the (double) framing, and the off-screen space where the characters disappear to and talk from. Thus, the vertical spatial partitioning of the physical space, the panoptic schema that the camera follows, and the constant double framing create the vertical unity of the film that contributes to the narrative's claustrophobic constellation.

6.3.3. Reframing *Aurora*

In his essay on cinematographic framing, Des O'Rawe (2011) seeks to (re-)establish the definition of framing and deframing, and creates three framing-styles that can be identified in modernist cinema. As he argues, in opposite to the invisible, 'indiscernible' frame of classical cinema (O'Rawe, 2011:2), in the modernist approach to film, the frame functions as an active signifier. The first category, figurative framing 'comprises shots and sequences where the position of the frame decentres, distorts, or "disconnects" the image for deliberate figurative or metaphorical effect' (ibid), that O'Rawe analyses in the films of Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock where the images are constantly displaced, and the collage of frames generate a tableaux of cinema screens, as is the case with Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). Nevertheless, whilst O'Rawe does not emphasise the intertextual quality of the film, his third category does encompass the notion of reflexive framing that makes the frame the subject of the film, thus enclosing 'the flotsam and jetsam of experience' (Des O'Rawe, 2011:6). O'Rawe scrutinises Stan Brakhage's *Wonder Ring* (1955) as an example of this avant-garde technology where, to draw attention to the cinema as medium, the camera focuses on the architectural frames of the city. In this regard, the reflexive framing category overlaps with the figurative one, as both accentuate the role of cinematic thinking and the importance of spectatorship, and both emphasise the crucial role of the physical space in the composition of the image.

O'Rawe negotiates the last framing technique, the aleatory category as 'the behaviour of the frame' that is 'determined largely by chance and accident, by contingency, rather

than cinematography' (2), thus inhabiting 'improvisation, automatism and indeterminacy' (7). This frame type can be associated with documentary filmmaking where the camera explores, investigates and analyses its object without having a fixed visual conception of the recorded trajectory. This spontaneous technique can be also negotiated as a self-reflexive gesture that draws attention to the filmmaking process itself and the positioning/role of the camera in this practise. The theoretical base of O'Rawe's poetics of the cinematographic frame is structured according to its cinematographic referencing, that is, the camera's role as structured/unstructured spectator through which the viewer perceives the image. In this regard, although he does not comment on the role or importance of the author, O'Rawe unwillingly emphasises the director's supremacy behind the composition, and negotiates framing as a subjective act. Consequently, when analysing (de-)framing, one shall not omit to question whose point-of-view one sees the happenings from, and to analyse the optical system that the framing is part of (Deleuze, 1986).

In the case of *Aurora*, O'Rawe's categories exist simultaneously, often within the same sequence that create a fourth type of framing where improvisation, tableaux, and architectural framing melt together. I call this type of decoupage 'panoptic framing' since it forms a fusion of subjective filmmaking and point-of-view, while establishing still life-images that are framed by physical barriers, such as windows and walls. In this way, in an intertextual gesture, panoptic framing makes the impersonal spaces subjective, while accentuating the role of the filming apparatus. In *Aurora*, panoptic framing generates double frames, emphasising the space beyond the camera and the focalization strategies of the narrative. As Filimon has observed this:

> 'The artificiality, incompleteness, and ambiguity of any act of storytelling are also underscored by means of two dominant elements: the compulsive framing and reframing of events, and the protagonist's neurotic obsession with watching and being watched. Framing occurs at various levels of the text. The most immediate is the visual dimension of the film, where, with very few exceptions, characters are constantly observed through open or partially shut doors and windows, between gates and within mirrors, at the beginning and end of corridors, and in between the walls of their own houses' (Filimon, 2014:181)

Puiu's observational filmmaking thus derives from the way he utilises Bucharest's prefabricated, claustrophobic settings, and other (post-)socialist locations that assume an omniscient narrator who observes the happenings. As mentioned earlier, the gaze of the

narrator constantly barges against physical obstacles, which originates from the structure of the locations, as well as Puiu's decision to subsidise space through these barriers. In this way, the film's *mise-en-scène* is based on double framing which is already prevailing in the film's establishing shot.

Figure 6.3.8. The locked up, vertical arrangement of the screen image

Figure 6.3.9. The outsider positioning of Viorel

Aurora begins with the tableaux of Viorel and his lover Gina as they sit in the bed in silence. The woman is crying and soon leaves to the bathroom, while the man steps to the window, starts watching the awaking microraion and smokes a cigarette (figure 6.3.8.). In the image, Viorel is surrounded by the white frame of the window that looks on the neighbouring high-rise buildings. This is the first double framed composition of him that positions the man into an incarcerated staging, subordinated to the physical space – the city's prefabricated environment – which he is embedded in.

The vertical enclosure is further emphasised by the next shot as he turns towards the inner space of the flat and stops at the door that unites the anteroom and the bedroom (figure 6.3.9). As the latter is barely lit, it is only his contours that can be seen, stuck between the two rooms of the flat: Viorel walks up and down the bedroom and finally stops at the white frame, throwing his cigarette outside and eventually closing the window. Again, the scene emphasises his outsider position that is he cannot enter the private space where Gina and her daughter reside. While through the panoptic framing of him, it also accentuates the film's main theme of observation.

6.3.4. Out-of-field: beyond the screen space

When talking about the closed entity of the frame, where the parts 'are separated, but also converge and reunited' (Deleuze, 1986:17), Deleuze discusses the 'out-of-field' as the space outside the frame that refers to another, invisible set in the image. According to him, this 'relative aspect' (Deleuze, 1986:20) indicates the existence of a (hiding) object, while the closed system can also 'open on to a duration which is immanent to the whole universe, which is no longer a set and does not belong to the order if the visible' (Deleuze, 1986: 20-21). This philosophical category, that Deleuze calls the 'absolute aspect' of the frame is an imaginary, albeit 'subsisting' entity that, while being 'outside homogeneous space and time' (Deleuze, 1986:21), determines a transspatial trajectory. Consequently, the absolute aspect of the frame is strongly connected to what Lefebvre calls 'the representation of space', that is, a mental space filled with knowledge and ideology that mediates these mental constructs. In *Aurora*, this conceived space is depicted through the microraion that Viorel monitors, filled with the socialist, egalitarian dogma that, being in the post-revolutionary, capitalist social space, forms a spiritual trajectory. This forms a concrete unity; the spectator only perceives a part of the microraion when Viorel looks out of the window (figure 6.3.8). In this regard, the space outside the frame gets a relative aspect: the off-screen space gets dissolved in the constructions of the past, and creates a (post-)socialist mental space – the architectural representation of the socialist space – that connects Viorel's gaze with the absolute aspect of the frame, that is, its socialist entity.

In the establishing shot, Puiu shows the concrete environment where Viorel's whole life is being lived, and where his actions are going to take place. As seen in the first shot, this claustrophobic location is part of this larger, transspatial category that encompasses both its absolute (socialism) and relative (interior and exterior) aspect. By fixing the location of the film in the opening sequence, Puiu puts the interiors into a larger, connotative context. In the following locations, the protagonists are represented enclosed between door-, wall-, and window-frames that all signify an out-of-field, immanent of a concrete, socialist trajectory, and remarkable of its ideological existence. This is to say that, as already mentioned in accordance to the vertical stratification of the space, the characters are suppressed by the inter-frames that refer to the whole, the Open (Deleuze, 1986:20), a frame that frames, and oppresses the social space. The remnants of the socialist architecture thus create a mental space that subsists 'off-frame, but not off-film' (Metz, 1985: 86) and which intrudes into the very spaces of the interiors, following Viorel in the

city-spaces, and represents the characters as imprisoned subjects in the screen image. For this reason, although the screen space gets often rarefied, due of the vertical lines of the image, it never gets emptied out, but carries the features of the previously recorded spaces and their absolute aspect (figure 6.4.). Thus, when Viorel kills the notary and the unknown woman that accompanies him, the vertical pillars enclose the act and the murder remains unseen – similarly to the killing of the in-laws that remain in the off-screen space. Still, the pillars, the vertically stratified window frames and doors, all create an aesthetic and philosophical continuity between the locations, as well as the screen images. That is, even though the geometrical space gets rarefied, it is filled with power and signifies Viorel's oppression in space.

Figure 6.4. The absolute aspect of space

On the other hand, the 'insistent or obsessive framing' (Deleuze, 1986:83) creates a semi-subjective image[65], 'a reflexion of the image in the camera-consciousness' (Deleuze, 1986:84) that emphasises the subjectivity of the shot. In this case, the camera takes on an enunciative presence, an embodied existence, whereby it becomes a participant (Parvulescu, 2013), thus drawing attention to its attendance in the making of the artistic creation. Of course, as Orr (1993) puts it, a narrative film 'is never omniscient, never completely detached from the subjective point-of-view', that is, it always creates subject-object, viewed-viewing, looked upon-looking positions (Orr, 1993:10). These positions

[65] Re-thinking Pasolini's concept of the 'free indirect speech' on screen, that the Italian director calls 'free indirect subjective', Deleuze states that the camera consciousness transforms every image into a semi-subjective trajectory, opposite to Pasolini, who argued that a shot can be technically objective but belonging to the character's visual regime, that accentuates the role of the author behind the apparatus and his vision (Viano, 1993). The cinema of poetry, as Pasolini calls it, is thus 'a mixture of the character's and the author's vision' (Viano, 1993:95), and the free indirect subjective defines the level of the author's impact in the narration. For Deleuze, the distinction of objective from subjective is useless as an objective image can turn into subjective and vice versa. For this reason, he proposes Mitry's concept of semi-subjective image that is objective and subjective at the same time, which creates 'cinematographic *Mitsein*' (74), a being-with the character.

define to what extent the gaze of the camera influences relations within the image and, what, if any, purpose the device has in case it gets a perceptible, physical presence.

6.3.5. Panopticism

In *Aurora*, the presence of the camera is constantly emphasised the hand-held, jittering, fixed position of the device that presumes the fusion of the two narrative agents, the character and narrator (Chatman, 1990) that gives the camera a personalised trajectory. As Puiu himself argues,

> 'The camera can't be stupid. It's not just an artificial recording device. There's a human being observing. Cinema is an instrument for investigating the real, for investigating life (…). The camera isn't moving accidentally; there's an intention. So cinema can be a kind of anthropological device for you to look at the world outside yourself and the world inside yourself (…).' (Puiu, quoted by White, 2010)

Puiu thus endows the apparatus with the gaze of an observer that, besides the aim of mirroring the truth (Filimon, 2014; Nasta, 2012), highlights the role of the author as the artistic creator behind every camera movement. Consequently, the always moving camera and aleatory framing (O'Rawe, 2011) can mirror the viewpoint of the author – which is the case in every narrative film. However, because of its personalised existence and spatial context, in *Aurora* it is not solely the artistic intention that is present behind the image, but another, metaphoric eye that prevails over the space and the characters. This is to say that, while Viorel monitors his victims, he is supervised by the gaze of the camera that follows and captures him from hidden standpoints, thus to create double frames and subjective shots (figure 6.4.1). This self-reflexive gesture contributes to the omnipresent position of the camera-eye that, similar to Foucault's Panopticon-structure and its guards, is never seen but sees everything.

Figure 6.4.1. The panoptic gaze

As Filimon stresses, Puiu's observational camera;

> 'is a palpable presence that filters spectators' relationships with the narrative. It functions as a witness whose curiosity, moods, and emotions leave visible marks on the type, quantity and quality of information it provides. Not part of the diegesis per se, the camera belongs to a fictional narrative level that remains suspended between Viorel's world and that of the spectators, a level that, in turns, mimics and frustrates their reaction. This silent, inexperienced 'watcher' is often reluctant to enter spaces where it feels uncomfortable and responds to stimuli within the diegetic space that do not necessarily enhance viewers' knowledge of the protagonist's motivations and intentions' (Filimon, 2014:173)

Filimon argues for the camera's non-diegetic spatial presence that mirrors Viorel's psychological state, and overlooks its much greater, metaphorical trajectory that – because the camera is imbued with the vertical geometry of the screen image, as well as the enclosed structure of the (post-)socialist physical space – not only creates a palpable presence in the diegetic space, but testifies a personalised, socialist gaze that follows the characters. This observational gaze is most remarkable in the 'private' space of Viorel that is his flat, where the camera constantly hides behind the walls when capturing him (figure 6.4.1). The hand-held camera contributes to the sense of a spying person and is identical to the position of the camera that remains in a hidden, central, fixed position without being detected.

After he had returned to his flat from the factory, Viorel is observed from a hidden point-of-view, being covered by a concrete wall: he moves in the depth of the image and, as the camera remains fixed, often remains outside the screen. As if feeling the panoptic gaze, the man constantly investigates the flat's main entrance. First, he carefully checks the

lock on the door while, after the first murder, he goes in and out the staircase, and listens to the noises outside. Viorel repeatedly stops to observe his environment and his attachment to the details of his surrounding turns into a deeper, paranoid gesture. His constant analysis of the rooms, his own body, and his hesitant movements strengthen the sense of him being under constant surveillance that he reflects upon with looking for the source of the gaze. Puiu's figurative-reflexive composition, and the already negotiated spatial structure only add to the panoptic schema, thus creating a cellular, disciplinary space that keeps Viorel incarcerated.

The socialist physical space; the constant play with the watched-watching position that is underscored by the paranoiac atmosphere of the film, all recall the socialist surveillance apparatus that Viorel, both as the observed and the observer, is a part of. While the camera captures him from hidden positions, Viorel follows and monitors his victims, thus creating an observational chain in which Viorel acts as the object and subject of surveillance. Because of the self-reflexive gesture of the twitching camera, Puiu already works with very subjective images that make the spectator aware of the personalised apparatus. Yet the man's and the camera's point-of-view are often synchronised, they never merge together, thus the creation of subjective images are due to the personalised gaze of the camera, and not Viorel's point-of-view shots.

Before killing his in-laws, the man spends the whole night watching the house, while hiding behind two large trucks that keep him out of sight. Instead of identifying with Viorel's view, Puiu's camera focuses on the man as an observing-spying element in the narrative: it remains fixed, while following the murderer in a long shot and his movements in a 180-degree axis. Viorel first checks the yard of the house through the fence and then walks to the trucks. After a temporal ellipsis, we still find him in this position and it is only the last two sequences where Puiu shows what Viorel might be seeing. Thus, he records the happenings from another long shot, whereby the object of his vision is seen in depth. Staying between the two trucks, Viorel watches the walking people through the spatial gap that the vehicles provide, functioning as a movie canvas, centralised in the double frame (figure 6.4.3).

Figure 6.4.2. Spectatorship

Figure 6.4.3. Movies canvas

Through this self-reflexive gesture, Puiu draws attention to the process of the spectatorship itself that is also accentuated in the next shot, where Viorel watches the leaving family through the windshield of the white truck (figure 6.4.2). The camera stands behind him and follows the man as he steps back behind the vehicle, thus panning left. As if getting confused whether to capture Viorel or his family – that is the view that Viorel just had – the camera hesitates and begins to jitter while turning back to its previous position that does not contain the man.

In this scene, the process of observation is accentuated through external focalization (Branigan, 1992), where the camera sees the object of Viorel's vision. The narration, however, remains semi-subjective as we cannot maximally identify with his point of view. Yet, as the camera is present as a personalised agent in the diegetic space, it acts as an internal focalizor (Bal, 1981), that is, it does not function as a narrator but as a character whose gaze is followed by the spectator. In this way, similar to the semi-subjective narration, the focalization of the narrative functions both on the external and internal level. There is a spatial limitation between Viorel and the camera, as well as between Viorel and his family, that enables the man as well as the camera to witness the events while, from the point-of-view of the spectator, the camera becomes the mediator of a personalised narration.

To sum up, panopticism is the central motif of *Aurora* that is present both in the vertical stratification of the physical space and its screen space. The film's locations, as the legacies of the previous regime, bear the signs of the previous regime, and mirror its claustrophobic, enclosed architectural structure. Balta Alba thus functions as the set of what Czepczynski calls 'architecture parlante' (2008:37), a denominator of buildings and settings that convey their own message through their appearance. In *Aurora*, the portrayal

of claustrophobic interiors and socialist exteriors, and the vertical geometry of the screen image and the camera's metaphorical trajectory, all recall the socialist era whose authoritarian constellation comes back in every image of the film. Therefore, besides the colonised, physical space, a personalised gaze follows the protagonist everywhere that, through the panoptic framing, creates a disciplinary space that Viorel is subordinated to. Accordingly, whether he resides in the socialist absolute space of Balta Alba, or does his grocery in a capitalist shop – thanks to the cellular constellation of the space and the camera's role as reminder of a Securitate-agent – Viorel is always incarcerated in the very space that he resides in. Hence, as argued during the analysis of the film, the socialist imprint is present in the post-socialist era, and lives in the representation of space – that is the absolute aspect of the frame (Deleuze, 1986), which connects Viorel's living trajectory to the past.

6.4. Institutionalised panopticism: *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*

The disciplinary spatial structure prevalent in *Aurora* has its origins in Puiu's second feature film, *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (*Moartea domnului Lăzărescu*, 2005). *Lăzărescu* institutionalised the panoptic schema by moving out the microraion and choosing the hospitals of Bucharest for the main locations. As if going back in the socialist era, Puiu portrays the health care and hospital-system of Romania as a Repressive State Apparatus (Althusser, 1971) that functions by the despotism of negligent doctors who practice their superior position by verbal violence and carelessness towards their patients and colleagues. The oppressive atmosphere penetrates the film's every location and creates an authoritarian spatial constellation where the camera functions as an observer that records the misery of the sexagenarian, retired and alcoholic Lăzărescu Dante Remus (Ion Fiscutianu), who gets carried from one hospital to another, without being properly examined and medicated[66].

The old man's Dantesque voyage (Nasta, 2013:16) starts in his flat that he shares with his beloved cats. Lăzărescu feels sick but, though he calls for the ambulance, no one arrives. Because he lives alone and so cannot count on the help of his kin or friends, he visits his neighbours, Sandru Sterian (Doru Ana) and his wife Mikki (Dana Dogaru), who re-dial the ambulance and give the man some tablets to relieve his pain. Later, the paramedic Mioara (Luminița Gheorghiu) decides to hospitalise Lăzărescu, for she suspects that the old pensioner has colon cancer. After they apprise his daughter of the man's condition, Mioara and his colleague Leo (Gabriel Spahiu) carry the patient from one hospital to another. They visit three institutions in one night that all refuse to take the old man, for the doctors dismiss him as a drunkard who does not need treatment. After he falls unconscious, a medic finally admits him to the hospital, where he is captured awaiting for the operation in a coma: shaved, cleaned and ready for the surgery.

In *Lăzărescu*, the space of the locations is ruled by the oppressive state power and its practitioners, the doctors, which is illustrated both on the thematic, as well as the representational level of the film. Hence, similarly to *Aurora*, the spatial structure of *The*

[66] The film is based on a true story: Constantin Nica, a 52-year old man was left in the street to die by the paramedics, after he was sent away by several hospitals. Puiu also used his own experiences in the screenplay: he states that he suffered from Mallory-Weiss syndrome that remained undiagnosed for years which gave him enough time to get a glimpse into the failing medical system of Romania.
The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu is a part of a projected series inspired by Eric Rohmer's *Six Moral Tales*. Puiu's intention was to direct six films connected by the theme of love: 'the love between a man and a woman, love for one's children, love of success, love between friends, and carnal love. The *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* is the first film of the series called 'Six stories from the outskirts of Bucharest', and 'is predicated in the ancient Biblical command "Love thy neighbour as thyself" (…). (Teodorescu-Munteanu, 2010:52)

Death of Mr. Lăzărescu is based on prefabricated, narrow interiors and cramped corridors, while the camera takes an even stronger presence in the narrative by maximalising the jittering camera work and wobbling takes that dominate *Aurora*. Correspondingly, in *Lăzărescu,* the hand-held camera mirrors a much greater instability that is its immobility and shaking movements that often disturb the flow of the narrative and spatio-temporal continuity and, together with the vertical stratification of the diegetic space, it takes on a panoptic quality that, as will be argued, recaptures the surveillance structure of the socialist past.

6.4.1. Intertextuality: recapturing the socialist past

Lăzărescu's medical journey has several intertextual references[67] to the films of the socialist epoch. As already negotiated in the previous chapter, the hospital as a location, and healing as an impossible process, have been central to directors in transferring a hidden critique on the socialist regime in the pre- and post-revolutionary times. In Tatos' *Red Apples* (*Mere Rosii,* 1977) and Pintilie's *Oak* (1992), Romania's healthcare is depicted as a miserable, corrupt and deeply bureaucratic system that gives priority to the decisions of the central headquarters over the patients' health[68]. In both films, the hospital is led by a doctor who does not support the operation of a patient, and the scientific research of the main male character, Mitica, who rebels against the decision of the head of the institution by secretly operating on the sick man. The infirmary, as a Repressive State Apparatus, is ruled by a central figure who is ideologically connected to the political leadership. In the previous examples, the space of the institution functions as the projection of a larger constellation that encompasses it. Thus, similarly to the *Aurora*'s mental space, it projects the building into a political framework that, in the case of *Red Apples, Oak* or Stere Gulea's *State of Things* (*Stare de fapt,* 1995) is the socialist power-structure that rules over the place.

Similar to these productions, *Lăzărescu* depicts the hospital as an oppressed territory that functions according to a fixed hierarchy where patients and nurses stand on the bottom

[67]There is another intermedial connection between Puiu's *Lăzărescu* and *Aurora*. First of all, as Filimon (2014) notes, Puiu reassigns Luminița Gheorghiu the same fictional identity that she has in his next film: in *Aurora*, Mioara Avram is the neighbour of Viorel's mother who takes care of his daughter while the grandmother arrives. This parallelism is rather a reference to everydayness that is the focus on avarage characters that assist in the functioning of a society, while highlighting the interconnectedness of it.

[68] Thanks to this thematic continuity with the films of the pre-revolutionary period, Puiu historicizes the spaces of the hospitals.

level of the ladder, while doctors supervise and humiliate them from above. The intermedial reference to the films of Tatos and Pintilie thus alludes to the indifferent authoritarian structure of the health care system as a Repressive State Apparatus whose institutions, the hospitals serve as places where state power centralises. In this regard, Puiu's *Lăzărescu* does not differentiate between the socialist and the capitalist system, but evokes the abuses of the previous regime and puts them into a contemporary context by exchanging the character of Mitica with that of Mioara. With regards to the bureaucratic structure, the bribing of doctors and the humiliating circumstances, Puiu's film shows an absolute thematic continuity with the preceding productions, and, from an aesthetic point-of-view, it also bears several transtextual features taken from *The Oak* and *Red Apples*. For instance, Nela's or Mitica's murky home in *The Oak* resonates with Lăzărescu's cramped apartment that, just as Nela's flat, is dark, neglected and decayed. Also, akin to Pintilie's image of the socialist health care, Puiu's hospitals lack space and enough beds for the patients, thus they cannot accommodate the old man. The aesthetic and thematic overlap between the films of the elder filmmaking generation and that of Puiu's thus demonstrates the uniformity of – and the politico-social continuity between – the socialist and the post-transitional leadership of Romania.

The juxtaposition of past and present is already remarkable in the film's establishing shot. The dilapidated walls, tight windows and the old white *Dacia* car in front of the prefabricated block that Lăzărescu lives in, are all reminiscent of the socialist years. Similar to Viorel's home, the apartment of the old man is situated in Fetesti Street, Titan Balta-Alba and with its claustrophobic, suffocating territory, it has an analogous spatial iconography to *Aurora*. The opening sequence shows the old man in his kitchen while he is feeding his cats and phones the ambulance after. Thanks to the fixed camera position and the narrow place of the room, he is depicted incarcerated in this private space: his slow, vague movements, his outfit and actions all strengthen his helpless, lonely position that, due to the jittering camera work and the vertical stratification of the diegetic space, isolates him from the rest of the rooms (figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5. Verticality and graphic continuity

In the kitchen, the camera captures him in a tableaux-position as he phones the ambulance and informs the emergency operator about his headache that he has been having for four days. While having this conversation, Lăzărescu is visually entrapped in a medium shot and the pro-filmic space that closes upon him. As Haliluc (2015) notes, he is 'surrounded by "staples" of communist-era apartments: prominent gas pipes, yellow silk paint, transparent nylon drapes, vinyl tablecloths, and recycled plastic bottles' and the gas stove that is 'an iconic reminder of cut-offs from central heating during the communist economic crisis of the 1980s, when the gas stove was the next best available source of heat' (160). With his vertically striped shirt that creates a graphic continuity within the scenographic space, Lăzărescu is depicted as the prisoner of this socialist environment – and so the past – that is further accentuated by the crinkly curtain in the background and the barred motifs on it that contribute to and emphasise the vertical stratification of the narrative space. The socialist décor prevails over the man and makes him subordinated to its enclosed entity, which makes him interpellated (Althusser, 1971) in the very space of the flat. Lăzărescu is thus captive in his own apartment, which is expressed through the socialist interior that is supported by the references of the past[69] that the man lives in, and his spatial positioning in this 'representation of space' (Lefebvre, 1991). Accordingly, besides the socialist equipment and appliances, the sick man is captured in claustrophobic long takes (Haliluc, 2015) that put him in a disciplinary spatial structure: during his second conversation with the emergency operator, his medium close up fills out the image while the background gets more focus. The vertical gas pipes, the curtain, Lăzărescu's brown-white shirt and his positioning in the corner of the kitchen thus accentuate his incarcerated

[69] The film is framed by a song played at the beginning and at the end interpreted by Margareta Pâslaru, a husky voiced singer prominent on the Romanian musical stage of the 80s (see Popa, 2011). Also, the film is loaded with mannerisms of wooden language from socialist times.

situation, which is strengthened by the shaking image that presumes an omniscient observer being present in the place.

This panoptic scheme gets a special emphasis in the scene of the third telephone call that reveals Lăzărescu's powerless, vulnerable situation that the kitchen's spatial structuring and the man's non-dialogical universe have already alluded to. The sick man has a discussion with his sister from Târgu-Mureș over the phone, who suggests his heavy drinking is causing the pain, which Lăzărescu ironically disclaims. He answers that one cannot get an ulcer from alcohol, and continues to react to his sister's words with heavy sarcasm, thus stating that he drinks at his own expense. It also turns out from the conversation that Bianca – Lăzărescu's only daughter who lives in Canada – calls her aunt more often and has stronger ties with her than her father, which obviously offends the old man. At the end of the call, Lăzărescu angrily says goodbye to his sister and, after a sigh, silently starts to stare straight ahead.

Figure 6.5.1.-6.5.2 Lăzărescu: Panoptic context

During the sequence, the camera captures the sick man from the kitchen threshold and takes on a fixed, low-angle position, whereby he remains in the depth of the image whose borders gets uncovered by the fridge and the other appliances[70]. Thanks to this visual composition, Lăzărescu is shut in between the kitchen and the gas pipes in the depth of the screen that is, in a manner similar to Viorel in *Aurora*, he takes on an immobile position which expresses his physical-emotional collapse by the end of the talk (Figure 6.5.1.). Again, the carefully composed shot contains all the visual signs of the past regime, with only the washing machine referring to the post-socialist time-frame. Puiu's visual

[70] Puiu's usage of the red colour is also remarkable in the scene. Lăzărescu wears a half red-half black pullover and is put between his homemade, red booze and a red pot on the gas stove. The red colours can relate to the narrative events of the film, however, it is more likely that Puiu intended to open up the depth of the space with the intensity of the colour, thus motivating the spectator to look at the details in the frame.

choreography thus encloses Lăzărescu in the socialist space, while depriving him of social connections, be that the operator or his sister in the end of the line.

6.4.2. In-between spaces: the staircase

The implicit remembrance of socialism is further illustrated in the staircase-scene that extends the airtight atmosphere of Lăzărescu's flat and recalls the economic shortage of the previous era. Similar to the visual settlement of the kitchen-sequence, the camera remains at the threshold of the man's flat and at first it observes the happenings from a great distance, creating a double-framed composition, reminiscent of the previous sequence (figure 6.5.2). Here, the observational role of the apparatus gets special emphasis for it remains in the flat of Lăzărescu, while monitoring the man's interaction with the neighbours. As if it could not anticipate the actions and the next movement of the old man, the hand-held camera hesitantly moves right and left within the frame of the door, whereby it inherits a subjective trajectory and envelops the spectator into a panoptic schema. By doing so, the personification of the camera and its hidden position recalls the socialist surveillance apparatus: in the socialist era, the staircase (*scara*) served as the physical space of observation in Titan Balta-Alba where, as mentioned earlier, each apartment building (*scare de bloc*) had an informer that watched people's movements in the building and reported upon their actions. In this regard, Puiu's emphasis on the camera as a recording device in the semi-public space of the staircase strengthens the surveillance grid present in the film, while at the same time, it represents the legacy of the regime that is the atmosphere of distrust and the constant monitoring of each other. The light that repetitively switches off also recaptures the socialist past (Haliliuc, 2015) where the electricity shortage often resulted in entire darkness in the city. Thus, the omniscient camera-eye, the 'socialist style illumination system', the neighbours walking the stairs and the diegetic sound all enhance the atmosphere of fear and anxiety (Haliliuc, 2015:161) that prevails over the space.

Furthermore, as Pratt and San Juan (2014) emphasise while scrutinising Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (*Roma città aperta*, 1945), the in-between spaces, such as communal staircases or corridors function as passageways 'between the exposure of the outside and the claustrophobia inside' and 'open up complications that cannot be accommodated inside and cannot be revealed outside' (Pratt and San Juan, 2014:39). The

intermediate space of the staircase in *Lăzărescu* thus represents the enclosed spatial practice of Bucharest and the personal misery of Lăzărescu, thus modelling his conflict with/in the society through the relationship with his neighbourhood. In his own flat, the old man struggles with his family understanding him, while in the staircase, he faces the same failure of communication. The barely lit and ruinous staircase thus foreshadows the conflicts that the old man is going to have in the outdoor scenes; furthermore, it establishes a graphic model to be continued in the film that is the claustrophobic, vertically stratified space that prevails over the pro-filmic space of the hospitals, as well as the ambulance car that serves as another in-between location[71] in the story.

6.4.3. Cellular space and vertical stratification

The vertical stratification of the narrative space and architectural framing pivotal to *Aurora* is not only predominant in Lăzărescu's flat, but the hospital interiors as well. Together with the fluorescent-bulbed rooms (Scott, 2008) they create a rigid, prison-like unity which is further accentuated by the cellular spatial composition, and the tracking medium shots that build up a disciplinary space. In the St Spiridon hospital, the examination room is dominated by the vertical, blue hangings that separate the patients from each other (figure 6.5.3). In this case however, since it is only another woman being examined in the room, the curtains are open and, with their prominent blue colour in the white background, control over the diegetic as well as screen space, thus creating vertical sections within the image. Similarly, in the University Hospital, the room is divided by a wall in the centre that separates the space, thus setting up a barrier between Lăzărescu and the rest of the area (figure 6.5.4). This separation and prison-like structure is emphasised by the vertically stratified window curtains that, together with the radiator, creates parallel lines in the background, thus resonating the room's enclosed entity, whose physical, vertical objects contribute to the sense of prison bars that border the room. In Filaret, the

[71] Also, similar to *Aurora*, Lăzărescu's apartment lacks any kind of privacy: although the man lives alone, his place functions more like a passageway that is his neighbours intrude the territory at their leisure. After Miki and Sandu helped the man to lie down, another neighbour steps into this place: Gelu (Serban Pavlu) brings the drill of Sandu back, who, while discussing the possibility of another booze trip with the man, forgets about Lăzărescu in the bathroom who falls in the bathtub. Similarly, while Sandu stays with the sick, Miki discovers the kitchen of Lăzărescu and later discusses his condition with the neighbours there. To summarise up, Lăzărescu loses his control over his own place that in this way becomes another intermediate space in the film.

third hospital, the preponderance of the metal and door frames create a disciplinary constellation and establish vertical resonance in the room while dividing that with the stretcher that Lăzărescu lies on. In the University Hospital, the last location of the film, the emergency room is also vertically structured, thanks to the window curtains that rule over the background of the screen image. As was the case with the other institutions, this space is also partitioned: the long welcome desk horizontally divides the two-dimensional image into an upper and lower section, while Lăzărescu's body remains vertically enclosed by the two paramedics that stand at the front and end of the stretcher. Consequently, in whatever places Lăzărescu enters, his immobile body that lies horizontally on the carrier, is surrounded by vertically striped objects and the standing doctors that envelop him in an enclosed position.

6.5.3-6.5.4. Vertical sections

Besides this entrapped, segmented framing, the airtight atmosphere and disciplinary mechanism is established by the camera that, irrespectively of the 180 degree-rule, positions itself in the centre of the physical space and often moves along a 360-degree trajectory. In this way, it develops a cellular, 'faceless gaze that transform[s] the whole social body into the field of perception' (Foucault, 1977:214) thus establishing an omniscient observation-structure, whereby all the details of the space become visible, without the camera – that is the central gaze – revealing itself.

6.4.4. *Lăzărescu*'s two shots

Branigan (2006:65-91) distinguishes eight major conceptions of the camera including the value of narrativity for the society and the representation of present and absent entities in the narrative and style/history. His third and fourth categories, the 'Camera as Recorder of the Profilmic' and 'Camera as Agent for a Postfilmic Viewing Situation' are based on Bazinian theory and emphasise the use of deep focus technique in onscreen space and lateral depth of field in off-screen space. According to Branigan, these are activated through the spectator's gaze that offers him a certain kind of freedom, a 'non-selective focus' (Branigan, 2006:78) in spectatorship, so far as he scans the image according to his own will. Bazin and Branigan both negotiate the camera's position as a fixed recorder and an objective entity that lets the spectator discover the depth of the image, the photographic truth, thus concentrating on the perception of the image by identifying that with the human eye. As Branigan emphasises, 'in such a theory of meaning, the value of narrativity for society lies in releasing documentary reality and disclosing real conditions of viewing and vision' (79), thus connecting and combining the profilmic and postfilmic reality and conditions within the same image. In this way, representation and perception both get special emphasis as they aim to capture the reality that lies in front of the camera, while endowing the spectator with the ability of free observation and personal choice (Bazin, 1967, 1997). Depth of field thus contributes to the 'perfect neutrality and transparency of style' (Bazin, 1997:9)[72].

In Puiu's film we find two kinds of narrative composition: besides the distant takes that capture the events from a far position – that contribute to what Bazin (1974) calls the lateral depth of field that dissolves montage – *Lăzărescu* uses tracking medium shots that, because of the observational aesthetic of the film and the crowded diegetic space, create documentary-like, claustrophobic sequences. Furthermore, as none of the institutions wants to cure the old man, the deep focus technique and long takes, add to the freezing of temporal continuity. Puiu thus demonstrates how slow the time flows[73] when, instead of sending Lăzărescu to the operation room, the medical practitioners around him practice

[72] This is one of the reasons why *Lăzărescu* has been negotiated to have a neorealist transparency (see Parvulescu 2009, Teodorescu-Munteanu 2010, Gorzo 2007).

[73] As Puiu adds, 'When you watch [*ER*], (…) there's movement in every direction, the choreography of the characters is amazing … In my country, doctors and everyone else live in slow motion, as if they were on Valium and still had five hundred years to live'. (Puiu quoted by Jaffe, 2014:89)

socialist wooden talk (Haliliuc, 2015) and focus on their personal problems or the humiliation of the medical crew. The lateral depth of field therefore not only refers to the stillness of the narrative but, together with the socialist pro-filmic space, it creates a historic frame that refers to the immobility of time that indicates an analogy with the Ceaușescu-era. This is to say that, besides the socialist space that dominates over the scenographic space of the film, the slow – almost real time – flow of the film adds to the sense of the invariable national-social discourse, for it contributes to the spatial-temporal immobility of the narrative, thus alluding to the paralysed time of Romanian history. The tracking medium shots strengthen this assertion by creating a claustrophobic universe peculiar of the Ceaușescu-period that, with its airtight atmosphere and the jittering camera movements, recapture the surveillance apparatus of the past.

As negotiated earlier, the cellular, disciplinary mechanism is emphasised by the graphic installation of the pro-filmic and screen space; the deep focus technique and the lateral depth of field, which Branigan's (2006) cognitive categories suggest are essential tools of realistic representation. Since the *mise-en-scène* of *Lăzărescu* works with a realist style, one has to note, that, as Comolli (1986) has argued, cinematic technology is ideologically and economically determined and as so, the pro-filmic space, as well as the screen space it directs, are ideologically impregnated. In the case of *Lăzărescu*, the ideological determination is underscored by the camera's omniscient, 360-degree position that, reminiscent of a person standing in the middle of the physical space, represents the observing gaze of a human being that, as Heath (1976) puts it, 'is never seized by some static spectacle, [and] is never some motionless recorder':

> 'not only is our vision anyway binocular, but one eye alone sees in time: constant scanning movement to bring the different parts of whatever is observed to the fovea, movements necessary in order that the receptive cells produce fresh neutron-electric impulses, immediate activity of memory inasmuch as there is no brute vision to be isolated from the visual experience of the individual inevitably engaged in a specific socio-historical situation' (Heath, 1976:78)

With its jittering, wobbling movements, Puiu's camera evokes the functioning of the human vision and moving body that travels/turns around according to the sight it intends to

capture[74]. Thus, as Branigan (2006) states, the camera 'may be described as being analogous to a human property' which is 'based on the position of the camera in diegetic space' (Branigan, 2006:37), and the speed, rhythm, and acceleration of the apparatus. In the case of *Lăzărescu,* the camera is narrativized with the human traits of shaking hands and hesitating movements and the unlimited spatial motion it can describe.

In the first hospital, the old man is already half-naked and lies on the bed when the elder doctor decides to examine him. The camera is positioned at the bed of Lăzărescu and captures the resident, the sick and the nurse Mioara in a medium shot. Suddenly, the voice of the elder doctor fills up the off-screen space and the subsequent shaking image turns towards the source of the speech while it remains in the same fixed position at the bed. After it pans left about 60 degrees, we see the elder doctor and his patient in a medium shot in the corner as the woman gives him some money in an envelope that he rejects. Later, the medic steps towards the camera and Lăzărescu and is captured in a medium shot but, as he is called by a nurse from the off-screen space, he turns back and walks to the other corner of the room. While following his movements in a fly-on-the-wall documentary style, the camera extends the 180-degree line and describes a much wider trajectory. After a temporal ellipsis, the elder doctor starts from his previous position in the corner and steps closer to the camera, while turning his back to it as he is heading towards Lăzărescu. In this way, his movements describe a circle that is captured from a fixed camera position whose image is in constant move and reframes the doctor. This mobile trajectory not only produces a fluid continuity (Lightman, 1946) but, by following the doctor and thus constantly changing the compositions of the image, it indicates the presence of an omniscient observer that monitors the actions without any spatial barrier.

6.4.5. Disciplinary mechanism and panoptic spaces

The panoptic constellation gets an even greater emphasis in the next hospital where the coexistence of two actions in the same – albeit separated – space results in the absolute

[74] Puiu states that the strong presence of the camera - its jittering movements - is due to the heaviness of the equipment only: 'It was my decision to shoot using all these documentary devices, direct cinema devices, and it was very important to shoot on a handheld camera, and I wanted to shoot on film, on 16mm, because it was easier and lighter, for longer takes, but my DoP said no, we'd better shoot 35mm, and the camera was heavy, 25 kilos. And we rehearsed with the camera, and it was so hard, because we used it without shooting, just rehearsing, long takes – three minutes, four minutes, maybe 10 rehearsals before shooting- and he was exhausted. The film started with the phone call, and we rehearsed so much that when he started to shoot he was shaking and trembling and couldn't keep the camera still'. (Puiu quoted by Chilcott, 2006)

confusion of the camera. The University Hospital's examination room functions as a circular shooting area divided by a wall in the middle, whereby the square room gets sliced up into two rectangular planes. In one half of the room, the doctors examine Lăzărescu, while in the other corner the medic analyses the blood test of an elder woman. Moving across/along the wall, the camera occupies four main positions in the space of the examination room, that form four minor circles in which the equipment manoeuvres. Although the device does not leave these fixed points, the jittering of the image and the 360-degree panoptic movement of the apparatus give birth to an absolute cellular space in which all the movements and gestures that happen in the room get carefully registered. Correspondingly, the sense of an omniscient observer and the enclosed physical space create a disciplinary mechanism (Foucault, 197) that alludes to the medical staff as well as the patients standing under constant surveillance. In this way, the camera develops an anthropomorphic trajectory[75](Branigan, 2006), and becomes an invisible character in the diegetic space that follows the actions of the characters.

As it cannot anticipate the next movements of the protagonists, the device often hesitates what to capture and how to compose the shot. Similar to a human observer, the camera hunts the images (Chilcott, 2006), and – while it gets confused, looks for the source of the voice and steps closer to the protagonists – to personalise the vision – it constantly reframes the subjects of the scene. In this way, as Gorzo notes, Puiu's act of narration is more distinguished as observation (Gorzo, 2103:7) that, due to its documentary-like, realist footages and cramped, enclosed spaces, establishes a claustrophobic spatial constellation.

As was the case in *Stuff and Dough,* the camera mingles in the crowd of the space, stepping close to the medical crew and/or following the direction of the doctor's gaze. Because of this closeness with the characters, it is the tracking medium shots that dominate the compositions of the images which, together with the stratified physical space, closes the protagonists into vertical spatial segments. Correspondingly, the white glazed tiles of the walls of the room divide the screen space into smaller rectangles, similar to the physical barriers in the centre of the room that, akin to the radiator and window, emphasise

[75] See Branigan's thought on anthropomorphism: 'as an analytic category, [it] measures the degree to which a camera is being used to simulate some feature of human embodiment. One property of a camera, for example, that may be described as being analogous to a human property is based on the *position* of the camera in diegetic space: Is such a position in space a possible or usual place of viewing that a human observer might or would take in order to see a particular thing? Does the camera have a view and act in a way comparable to what we might imagine for a human observer? Also relevant are the height and angle of the camera, and the focal length of the lens (and perhaps also focus, film stock, and filters). In addition, if the camera is moving, then its speed, rhythm, and acceleration will be relevant if its movement is to be matched to a human movement, such as the movement of a person's eyes or body. (Branigan, 2006: 37)

the vertical geometry of the narrative space and incarcerate the protagonists (figure 6.5.4). The camera, that often hides behind the central wall and so double-frames the characters thus strengthens the claustrophobic setting of the space, while giving the sense of the medical crew standing under notorious surveillance. This happens when Puiu crosscuts in space whereby the camera looks beyond the wall that separates the examiners from the examined subject. For instance, while Doctor Filip (Clara Voda) calls Doctor Johnny (Adrian Titieni) for taking a scan of Lăzărescu's body, the device captures the doctors in a medium shot, while more than a quarter of the image is covered by the white-glazed tile wall (figure 6.5.5). The curtain that the female doctor stands against; the surface of the wall and the object itself close upon the figures that thus get enclosed in the middle depth of the screen image. Later, Mioara steps into the composition with her back facing the camera and looking towards the doctors that, in conjunction with the gaze of the camera, emphasises the panoptic scheme of the scene (figure 6.5.6).

Figure 6.5.5. Claustrophobic arrangement

Figure 6.5.6. Panoptic scheme

This theatrical structure is further underscored by the horizontal movement of the device that constantly monitors in and crosses a 180-degree line. After Popescu has finished the call, he leaves the space beyond the wall and approaches the bed of Lăzărescu, during which the camera describes a 180-degree space, while continuously reframing his figure. Because of the tracing shots and constant reframing, the device often eschews the 180-degree trajectory and pans around in a full circle, thus recording everything that happens in the very space of the examination room. This technique was remarkable in the St Spiridon hospital and also occurs here, when Popescu, who goes around the camera in order to leave the location, is followed by the device up to the door, at which point the whole space of the room becomes visible.

Besides the 360 degree pans, the circular shooting area is established by the 180-degree shots that scan the entire room from the above mentioned four camera positions. These spots are located on both sides of the central wall, almost in line with the separating object, whereby a part of the image gets blocked out by the white-glazed tiles. This composition not only double frames the characters, thus closing them into the centre of the image; but it also enables the camera to switch to the other action that occurs simultaneously in the other spatial segments beyond the wall.

Accordingly, the female doctor that first examines Lăzărescu is captured from a fixed position as she crosses the line between the two segments of space, when checking on two patients simultaneously. While giving out the orders to the nurses, the device follows the woman and constantly reframes her figure: in a similar way to the pan of Popescu, the space is subordinated to her movements in the examination room. The actions of the two doctors determine the narrative space of the location which also symbolises the hierarchical power relations of the institute. The wall thus separates the two patients, while the medics, as well as the camera, are free to move in the space of the room. Hence, they often describe circles in the diegetic space as they check on the old couple or Lăzărescu, or do the bureaucratic paperwork at the table. Whereas Mioara remains in the right segment of space where his patient is located, Popescu and his colleague walk the space of the room as if it was their private territory, without barriers or any hindrance. The spatial separation of the characters alludes to the interference of the private and public spaces of social interaction (Popa, 2011) and underscores the hierarchical structure of the institution. Their movement and action in space is controlled by the doctors, that is their spatial position is subordinated to their superiors who, besides the spatial oppression/segregation, terrorise Mioara by criticising her remarks related to the diagnosis and instruct the nurse to ‘know her place’.

In summary, the hospital room functions as a disciplinary space, divided into smaller spatial cells that are monitored in a cellular arrangement, where the anthropomorphic camera mirrors every segment of the room and alludes to the strong social hierarchy that structures the space. Correspondingly, the depth of field composition, the cramped medium shots, the socialist décor and standing time, and the ‘lingering effects of the totalitarian order’ (Jaffe, 2014:92) in the institutions, all paint a socialist tableau whose subject,

Lăzărescu's body, serves for the restoration of the totalitarian period[76]. His body as a passive entity becomes the show-piece of the previous generation, a site of the socialist memory; a subject that has been interpellated during that period and which now functions as a mnemonic device that still lives within the confines of the socialist, theatrical apparatus but whose existence becomes impossible as soon as he leaves his spatial practice (Lefebvre, 1991). In this way, Lăzărescu's death is a sort of reckoning with the socialist past, a possible transition from communism into capitalism (Arthur, 2006) that is expressed in the spatial construction of the film and change that, because of the death of the old man, never happens.

[76] His name refers to the resurrection of Lazarus from St John's Gospel (Nasta, 2013:158) that can be interpreted as the revivification of the past which is supported by the doctors ironically asking Lăzărescu to lift both of his hands as if resuscitating the dead. His second name, Dante, refers to the Divine Comedy and 'set up a double discourse about 'Hell on Earth' which oscillates between the hyperrealistic depiction of pain and suffering (…)' (Nasta, 2012:158). On the Biblical and mythological references of the film see also Ionita, 2010 and Teoforescu-Munteanu, 2010.

6.5. The cinema of geometrical observation: Corneliu Porumboiu

In its usage of cinematic space and realism, the cinema of Corneliu Porumboiu differs from the naturalistic-transparent tendency and aleatory framing followed by the directors of the Romanian New Wave. Unlike Cristi Puiu or Cristian Mungiu, he mingles realism with formalism (Ioniță, 2015) that is, while using the visual vehicles peculiar of the New Wave cinema – such as the long takes, minimal editing and observational aesthetics – Porumboiu complements the cinematic space with carefully planned flat-still images which result in a certain kind of geometrical abstraction (Șerban, 2013), whereby space becomes 'less populated by things and people, as by signs and substitutes for people and things' (Ioniță, 2015:183). As Ioniță emphasises, Porumboiu's compositions thus loses the revelatory power that Puiu's long takes have, instead, they build on repetition and symmetry that makes the locations 'sparse and anonymous' and the spaces 'flat and geometrical' (Ioniță, 2015:177-178). On the one hand, this flatness is generated by the elastic framing technique that accentuates the double act of vision (Filimon, 2014) by constantly double-framing the narrative space to create a *mise-en-abyme* structure. On the other hand, the use of linguistic signs and non-narrative optical forms – that put the vision into a story – also emphasise the double articulation of the image (Ioniță, 2015). Consequently, Porumboiu's realism is less of a socio-political verisimilitude (Filimon, 2014), but the process/act of perceiving images and signs in the depth or on the surface of the screen space. The result is, as Ioniță describes, 'not a replica of the real, but rather an attempted reconstruction, a play of often conflicting versions that take the place of, and often annihilate, the event itself' (Ioniță, 2015:178). This is not to say that Porumboiu does not apply the visual-spatial characteristics of the Romanian New Wave to his films, but that his *mise-en-scène* is less driven by the spontaneous documentary style adopted by the works of Cristi Puiu or Christian Mungiu. Instead, his films put more emphasis on the symmetrical visual field than on the subjective presence of the camera, where the still composition gets more attention in the syuzhet and accentuates the focalized-focalizer relationship. What becomes dominant is the grid of observational relations that implicitly evoke the socialist surveillance apparatus while, on the explicit level, the narratives reference on the Ceaușescu-era. Thus, whether it be the profilmic space, the *mise-en-scène*, or the story itself, socialism becomes the point of reference that links the films and emphasises the survival of the previous period that, albeit remembered from the present, is strongly perceptible in the everyday.

6.5.1. *Liviu's Dream*

In the early works of Porumboiu, the referencing of the socialist epoch becomes an explicit process. For instance, *Liviu's Dream* resuscitates the Ceaușescu-era by evoking the Decree 770, the infamous legislation that banned abortion and the use of contraception in 1967. The film uses black and white archive footage and television reports from the epoch, such as the 9th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party where the pronatalist decision was made, and the speech of Nicolae Ceaușescu who expressed his conviction of the country following the communist path. The newsreel is then followed by a sequence set in the socialist epoch, narrated by Liviu (Dragoș Bucur), who talks about the hardship of his parents during the totalitarian years and the abortion of his brother Doru.

After visiting the 1960s and the 1980s, Porumboiu cuts to present-day Romania where virtually no visual signs indicate the end of socialism. Liviu and his family and friends live in a large microraion and its dilapidated, ruinous buildings and cramped interiors evoke socialist time. Besides the visual reference, Liviu follows the path of his parents that is, similar to his father who lived by shifting stolen things back in the day, he trades with filched goods, thus trying to sell a bunch of wedding clothes for his friends and neighbours. Porumboiu's post-revolutionary Romania – that is depicted through Liviu's daily struggles in the microraion of Vaslui – is represented as a poverty-stricken, labyrinth-like universe, which is full of corruption, crime, and lost hopes. In this environment, everything is grey and hopeless and besides alcohol, migration seems to be the only option for the everyday hardness and depression. Working in Italy is the future for Liviu's best friend, who left his girlfriend behind to build a future for both of them. Similarly, Liviu's retired, alcoholic father wants to take a job in Israel to escape the impoverished, bankrupt family situation.

The dismissal of the socialist father (Andreescu, 2011) and the generation gap depicted in Puiu's *Cigarettes and Coffee* has a dominant presence in *Liviu's Dream* as well: Liviu has a fight with his father for he is incapable of providing financial support for the family and so his younger brother has to take money from his pocket. He despises his parents for their resignation and passivity during socialism, and for not providing a strong role model for him and his brother. Liviu accuses the elders for the hardship of the young generation and constantly fights with his parents because of their inability to change their very situation: 'they worked hard my ass. If you ask them what they've done with their

lives, they will start stammering. They'll say they built apartments and factories. When they realize they haven't done really anything, they put the blame on Ceaușescu. If they would be honest, they would at least look you in the face'.

For Liviu, the elder generation covers its passivity with the restrictive policy of the previous regime, which he cannot accept, and criticises his father for having started a family back then. He also adds that, even though he is only fifty years old, his father is incapable of providing a living for them, which is the reason why he later gives up upon his own child, thus letting his pregnant girlfriend leave for a better life abroad. Liviu's acts and accusations are serious critiques that refer to the whole socialist generation that, according to him, failed their offspring who now face a deep financial and moral crisis.

In Porumboiu's film, the youngsters live from hand to mouth, and spend their days gathering on the roof of a prefabricated block while dreaming about visiting the seaside. The coast is the metaphor of the joyful, uncomplicated and prominent future that they all fantasise about. This is further outlined in the narrative when, during a card game on the roof, the government announces a programme on the radio called 'Holiday for the young people' that would provide youngsters and poor students with the opportunity to visit the seaside, which promptly gets the attention of Liviu's friend, Fog (Constantin Dita). For this reason, later, when the two get drunk, Fog and Liviu decide to visit the coast and go to the train station to buy tickets, however, the two only face an empty building and a security guard who drives them away. Their dream to visit the seaside – that is to find a way out of their hopeless living situation – thus becomes impossible and Constanța, the Romanian Riviera continues to be an inaccessible city that the young people can never reach.

6.5.2. Socialist fortresses

In the end, Liviu visits the shore in his dream, and finds himself on an isolated building in the middle of the Black Sea (figure 6.6). The dilapidated, grey, ruinous edifice that he is standing on, symbolises his lonely fight in the post-socialist world, while alluding to the lost promises of the current political framework, and to those socialist resolutions that could not assure economic and moral stability. The lonely island thus makes Liviu face the fact that the shore as a possible way-out of the depressive everyday is nothing but an illusion that, similar to the town, does not provide him with an exit.

Figure 6.6. Socialist fortress

From an architectural point-of-view, the concrete fortress-like building is a reminder of the socialist-realist style and with its enormous walls, small, grilled windows and horizontal, toppled pillars, it reflects upon the suppressive character of the previous regime. Liviu thus stands alone on the physical remnants of the past that offers no way out of his current situation.

Besides the prison-like building on the sea, the other locations of the film bear the same characteristics of the socialist style of architecture, that is, in the same way as the spatial structures of *Aurora* or *Lăzărescu*, *Liviu's Dream* operates with narrow corridors and dark, claustrophobic interiors. Liviu lives with his brother and parents in a two-bedroom apartment, where he shares a tiny room with his sibling. Because of its cramped nature, the place only accommodates two couches that the siblings sleep on and, where if lying, their hands almost touch each other.

Along with enclosure, the old, grey furnishings of the flat establish an austere atmosphere: the green-grey walls, the dark corridor, the old bathroom whose tiles are peeling off, and the time-worn kitchen all allude to the poverty-stricken present of the family.

Liviu constantly escapes this place by spending time at his lover Mariana's (Luiza Cocora), in the dentist's office, or by killing time on the roof of the building. For the unemployed young people, the top of the building is a rescue from the harsh, everyday reality where they chill, do business and play card games (figure 6.6.1). Despite the broken concrete ground and rocks on the roof, Mariana simply lays down a towel for sunbathing, similar to the others who, despite the discomfort and danger of the place, enjoy it as if they

were at the Romanian seaside. While this location serves as their paradise, it is surrounded by a jungle of ruinous prefabricated blocks that suggest an enclosed atmosphere where the youngsters are incarcerated. Correspondingly, they are encompassed by the vertical signs of the past, that is, wherever they look, they find themselves in the centre of the microraion of the town, that serves as reminder of the socialist epoch, whose ghost constantly haunts them (figure 6.6.1).

Figure 6.6.1. The rooftop

Incarcerated by the past, the young people from the bloc spend long hours on this decaying spot that they – as Liviu on the fortress-island – cannot escape. The roof thus functions as a cage that immures the youngsters and freezes the temporal-spatial continuum of the (mental) space whereby, like Viorel in *Aurora*, the inhabitants of the bloc remain enclosed in the past.

The prison-like setting of the film is further accentuated by the grilled windows and bars through which the camera approaches the protagonists. The dentist's office where Mariana works, the local saloon where Liviu replaces his friend at work, and the rooftop are all introduced from an imprisoned point-of-view. Liviu watches Mariana through the bars of the office-windows, also, the roof is first seen through the rectangular fence that divides the space, while the tavern is depicted girdled by thick window bars, that all contribute to establishing a claustrophobic universe. Wherever the protagonists go, be this the rooftop, the local bar or the private, small sphere of their home, the characters are constantly depicted as encompassed by fences and/or are represented as enclosed in the given place. Porumboiu also often uses low or high angle shots in these crammed areas, whereby the protagonists seem even smaller in the narrative space. For instance, when Liviu talks to his best friend on the phone, he is positioned in a low-angle shot that, with

the surrounding door frame and black background, envelops him in a prison-like setting (figure 6.6.2). When he narrates the story of his father who wants to go to Israel, Liviu is captured in a high-angle shot that later follows his father as he disappears in the bathroom (figure 6.6.3). In this case, the high angle miniaturizes the interior and represents the father as a small point in the end of the corridor, thus alluding to his inferior position in the family apparatus. Both the low and the high angle compositions thus emphasise the claustrophobic setting of the space, while due to the jittering camera work, they also underline a panoptic scheme that dominates the *mise-en-scène* of the film.

Figure 6.6.2.
Low angle: Liviu's phone call

Figure 6.6.3.
High angle: Liviu's father in depth

This scheme becomes dominant in Porumboiu's first feature film, *12:08, East of Bucharest* that universalises the visual pattern of surveillance, and inaugurates the carefully organised symmetrical compositions peculiar of the director. This is to say that, instead of the twitching camera, the device captures the protagonists in linear, fixed compositions and emphasises the watching-watched structure by bringing a second screen into play that is part of the screen image, but creates a separate unity within it. In *12:08*, this structure is established through the framing technique and a television studio that both contribute to a *mise-en-abyme* structure.

6.5.3. *12:08, East of Bucharest*

12:08, East of Bucharest recaptures a television show that intends to find out whether there was or was not a revolution in 1989 in the Romanian town of Vaslui. The date is 22nd

December 2005, sixteen years after the famous uprising that led to the fall of the Ceaușescu-dynasty in the country, which gives Virgil Jderescu (Teodor Corban), the local television journalist a prod to recall the happenings of 22th December 1989. His guests include the alcoholic history teacher, Mănescu (Ion Sapdaru) and the retired Piscoci (Mircea Andreescu) who are all introduced in great detail in the first part of the film. The first fifty minutes of *12:08* portrays the three main characters and their everyday lives in the post-socialist, poverty-stricken Vaslui, a city east of Bucharest. As if there was no system change in Romania, the streets, the prefabricated blocks, the interiors and even the cars mirror the socialist epoch (figure 6.6.4). In this way, with the visual setting of *12:08*, Porumboiu already answers the question posed in the original title of the film: there has been no change in the landscape of the city since the revolution. The protagonists live in old prefabricated blocks, whose interiors and furnishings are all reminiscent of the totalitarian epoch. Besides, the television studio – both its technical equipment and design – the obsolete outfits of the protagonists, the socialist street cars and the bird-view images of the grey city all recall the Ceaușescu-era that is further emphasised by the film's opening and closing sequences that – similar to the kitchen-design of *Lăzărescu* – implicitly refer to the austerities implemented by the totalitarian regime.

Figure 6.6.4. *12:08,* socialist cityscape

The film begins with a series of tableaux showing how the public lights of Vaslui are getting switched off, thus leaving the town in the murk of the dawn. In the end of the film, the same images get repeated, but this time they portray the reverse process of the public lights getting turned on, while the voice of the narrator – the cameraman from the television studio – adds that the revolution was similar to the cityscape of Vaslui, 'peaceful and nice'. Thanks to the verbal comment and the symbolic end of darkness, the closing

sequences could allude to the start of a new epoch in the history of Romania; however, the same visual registers – the socialist cityscape and the static images – strengthen the sense of the unfinished revolution and create the image of an indifferent present that does not differ much from the socialist epoch[77] (Pusca, 2011). In this way, Porumboiu's sequences create a spatial-temporal bracket in the story and portrays a city that got stuck in the Ceaușescuian past.

6.5.4. Theatrical settings: The omniscient gaze

Along with the socialist exteriors, *12:08* operates with crammed, small interiors that are captured in carefully choreographed double frames. This compositional arrangement constructs a series of still paintings, while emphasising the enclosed universe that the characters live in. Accordingly, Mănescu is introduced in a stable long shot as he answers the call of Jderescu while sitting on his old couch in the socialist-style living room. Likewise, Jderescu is first portrayed standing in front of a brown, unorganised shelf made in the previous epoch, and Piscoci is also surrounded by objects mirroring the era: the old white vintage rotary dial telephone in the background, the grandiose brown shelf behind the man, and the rusty clock on his wall all represent the socialist epoch and its schematic, simplified style.

The sense of enclosure and unchanged time exacerbates the way the protagonists are all depicted in carefully framed visual arrangements, which strengthens the sense of a socialist portrait and creates an aquarium-like space. Mănescu is first positioned in the depth of the symmetrical image, surrounded by battered, red furniture and a painting above his head that portrays a blurred, black object with two yellow eyes (figure 6.6.5). His portray thus illustrates him shut in between the gaze of the painting and the camera opposite to it, whereby his figure gets an incarcerated position within the image. The introductory scene of Jderescu navigates along the same monitoring patterns, thus putting the journalist in the position of the absolutely monitored object (figure 6.6.6). On one hand, he is being looked at by the camera, while on the other, he is in the cross of the gaze of the miniature statue of Aristotle that his wife puts on the top of the shelf.

[77] Besides the public lightning, there are several metaphors that Porumboiu uses for referencing socialism, such as the queuing for the monthly payments in the school or the essay on the French Revolution that Mănescu's students have to write.

Figure 6.6.5.
Mănescu: incarcerated in space

Figure 6.6.6
Jderescu: the grid of surveillance

In addition to these implicit references to surveillance, Porumboiu uses the television – both as a medium and as an object – as a constant register for observation. It is always switched on and has a central position in the flats, often portrayed in a mirror – as is the case in the living room of Jderescu – or as a dominant element of the visual field – for instance when the wife of Mănescu counts the money she got from her husband. This sense of constant surveillance is also supported by the blond newsreader whose medium close up prevails over the television screen which not only creates spatial continuity between the physical spaces of the film but, thanks to her straight look into the camera, strengthens the above mentioned grid of monitoring.

In this way, Porumboiu puts his protagonists under constant surveillance that gets special emphasis in the second half of the film when the three men get metaphorically incarcerated in the television studio.

Figure 6.6.7. The television-set

Their portrait-like representation – created through the director's symmetrical compositions captured from a fixed, central standpoint, and the double framing technique used for bordering these images – now becomes a mutual portrait of the three men that face the omniscient, frontal gaze of the camera (figure 6.6.7). In this interview situation, they are incapable of escaping their subjected position as their every movement is exposed to the gaze of the camera. Thanks to the aquarium-like spatial composition that is emphasised by the plastic windows of the studio, and the topic itself, the three men become suspects of a trial that, instead of investigating whether there was or was no revolution in the town, scrutinises the role these men had in the previous regime[78].

Ironically, the three men are portrayed against the town centre of Vaslui where the alleged fight took place in 1989. As it soon turns out, the interviewed were all absent from the square that night, yet Porumboiu now positions them in front of the revolutionary background that encloses them into a historical frame. The narrow, purely geometrical space of the studio (Ioniță, 2015); its airtight atmosphere and the fixed camera position all create a cellular, panoptic scheme that, in conjunction with the revolutionary topic itself, establishes a socialist tableau. The interviewed are closely monitored by the questioning gaze of the camera which obviously embarrasses the men that do not know where to look, and how to answer the uncomfortable questions they get from the audience.

While trying to figure out whether Mănescu had visited the central square of Vaslui or not, the three men are constantly captured in close-ups that scrutinise their every facial movements and divisive comments. Their confused, distracted behaviour and controversial statements about the historical happenings thus get mediated through the television camera that now functions as a mnemonic device which, with its awkward shots, clumsy zoom-ins, wide angles and overly faulty camera-work (Bardan, 2012:141) comments on the remarks of the guests. In this way, Porumboiu emphasises the person behind the camera who 'tries to find out the truth in all the different versions of the story he is given, then he lets the camera fall, and at the very end he doesn't know what to think anymore' (Bardan, quoted in Rossini, 2009).

Thanks to the theatrical *mise-en-scène* and perpendicular camera, the second part of the film is told from a first person (Bardan, 2012) that is, as seen in the previous examples,

[78] Also, one must not forget the important role of the television during/in the revolution in 1989 that broke out during the broadcast of Ceaușescu's speech. The cameras not only documented the trial but the murder of the Ceaușescu-couple, thus following the happenings live. This had eventually re-written the television history in Europe (see Parvulescu, 2013 and Pusca 2011).

the device gets personalised, and becomes a subjective observer. Its subjectivity is illustrated through its questioning gaze whereby, after the controversial comments of Mănescu, it still monitors the facial expressions of the teacher whereas it should film Jderescu talking. In this way, the devices provide a visual commentary on the action thus focusing on the origami that Piscoci is making and scrutinises the shameful, compromising gaze of Jderescu when Costica Bejan, an ex-Securitate agent calls and threatens him with suing the television. Eventually, the device witnesses a 'debt-ridden society, poor and disillusioned, proving that the "revolutionary changes" acclaimed by the protagonists are mere empty words' (Bardan, 2012:136-137), thus highlighting the continuity of the socialist epoch and the failure of the revolution. For Porumboiu, the question whether there was or was not a revolution seems to be unimportant, and still considered as taboo: the director's attachment to visually depict the present as if no system change had happened, is an obvious reference to the survival of the socialist regime where people stood under constant surveillance.

6.6. *Police, adjective*

Following the central concept of observation, Porumboiu's next film deals with the theory of seeing and witnessing (Ioniță, 2015), and, similar to *12:08;* focuses on unravelling a chain of events, thus putting the pieces of an unseen crime together. *Police, adjective* centres on the investigation of the local police man, Cristi (Dragoş Bucur) who is assigned to inspect a group of pot-smoking teenagers. Later, he is eventually asked to arrest one of the youngsters for offering hashish to their friends. Despite the command of his superior, the detective hesitates to make a string operation as he hopes that, similar to other European countries, the strict drug laws will change soon and pot smoking will be decriminalised. He would thus rather focus on investigating the supplier, than to nab the consumers whose lives would be ruined by years of imprisonment. Despite his moral dilemma, in the end, Cristi gets persuaded by his boss Angelache (Vlad Ivanov) to proceed with the arrest, and eventually conducts the string operation.

6.6.1. The chain of observation

Similar to *Aurora,* the narrative structure of *Police, adjective* is built on the act of observation. Most of Cristi's time is spent with him spying after the high school students that is occasionally interrupted by his short visits home and the police station. Other than that, he devotes his days to his stake-outs, and spends long hours on the bare-cold streets of Vaslui. He follows the teenagers to school; observes them while smoking pot; collects the cigarette butts after them, and assiduously monitors the home of the suspect. As most of the narrative time of the film is consumed by surveillance, that is the passive activity of Cristi stalking the youngsters, the plot gravitates towards stillness that creates a merely optical drama (Ioniță, 2015) which, unlike classic police films, concentrates on the process of silent monitoring, and omits the scenes where the youngsters are arrested. By focusing on the observational process, Porumboiu's surveillance drama not only 'unveils the perverted workings of state surveillance and their absurd effects on ordinary citizens, itself' (Filimon, 2014:171) but through this gesture, he recalls the infamous socialist apparatus, the Securitate that is resuscitated by the figure of Cristi.

The atmosphere of mistrust and constant monitoring gets revealed through the scenes where the police man stalks after the hashish-smokers, while he himself is also looked upon by an invisible gaze. The sequences where Cristi spies on the drug users are captured from a hidden position that alludes to the subjective gaze of the detective. Nonetheless, after the camera reveals his position, it soon becomes evident that Cristi is only another observed subject in the grid of surveillance structure. For instance, during his first observation, the camera captures the three students through the fence of the kindergarten yard where the group usually smokes (figure 6.7). They are positioned against a concrete wall on the left that creates a visual balance within the image, while the fence that they are filmed through, encloses them in a restricted spatial area thought to be observed by Cristi. The youngsters are filmed for about a minute during which the camera remains fixed, while slightly panning right when one of the suspects steps back a little. Other than this small movement, the image remains still, and captures the smokers in a long shot. Nonetheless, the vision gets hampered by the blurred figures of some football-playing kids that constantly cross the image. This positioning of the camera and its still, panoptic image purports to represent the gaze of the policeman who follows the events from a great distance and who hides behind the children so that his observation is not noticed by the high school students. However, when the three finish smoking and leave the yard, the camera slowly follows them and when panning left, it discovers the figure of Cristi watching the teenagers leaving the place (figure 6.7.1). The device remains fixed and instead of following the smokers, it makes another pan back to the yard, thus following the police man as he collects the cigarette butts of the suspects (figure 6.7.2.). Through this camera movement, the detective gets into the very same spatial position that the students were captured some seconds before, thus referring to him as observed in the narrative that is further accentuated by the football-playing kids in the foreground who block the vision of the observer (figure 6.7.3). This is to say that, similar to the hashish smoker students, the figure of Cristi is represented as if standing under surveillance that he cannot escape. In this way, Porumboiu builds up a multifocalized narrative structure, whereby the police man watches the students, while he himself is being watched by an omniscient apparatus.

Figure 6.7.
Cristi's potential vision

Figure 6.7.1.
The camera reveals Cristi's figure

Figure 6.7.2.
Cristi's position

Figure 6.7.3
The observing gaze

The point of view of Cristi is entirely missing from *Police, adjective*. Instead, Porumboiu emphasises the subjective gaze of the camera that signals the omniscient power in the film. In the kindergarten yard, his figure is followed by the camera that pans according to his movements, while capturing him in a long shot as he collects the evidence against the smokers.

In another scene, Porumboiu plays with the same spatial choreography, thus revealing Cristi's missing point of view. The police man spends long hours monitoring his informant, the 'squealer' Alex (Alexandru Sabadac) that he thinks has a crush on the girlfriend of the main suspect Victor (Radu Costin), which is the reason why he denounces him. Suspecting jealousy as the main motive behind his actions, Victor becomes Cristi's number one suspect whom he follows through the city, and monitors the house he lives in. The young boy lives in a big family house that lies at the intersection of two small streets in the wealthiest district of Vaslui[79]. Thanks to its positioning – that is the large empty

[79]The reason to have opted for Vaslui as the main location for both *12:08* and *Police, adjective* is that, as Porumboiu puts it, 'it is a world that I know very well, and where I feel I immediately know the characters as well' (…) small towns are very different from places like Bucharest. What keeps the people busy, what they

space in front of the building and the roadblocks at the intersection that slows down the traffic – Cristi has a good view on the estate that he watches from behind an electric pylon. He observes the house for long hours, walks down and up the street, and smokes several cigarettes while waiting for any action to happen. During his monitoring, Porumboiu uses a closed point-of-view structure (Branigan, 1984). In shot A, he shows the long shot of the house, then, in shot B, cuts back to Cristi who stands at the pylon. This structure is repeated several times (figures 6.7.4-6.7.5).

Correspondingly, the succession of the point/glance (A) and point/object shot (B) refers to Cristi watching the estate. However, when the chairwoman leaves the house and the camera starts to pan after her, the device reveals the figure of Cristi who, in the meantime, left the pylon and now watches the woman from the corner of the street (figure 6.7.6). In this way, shot B cannot be his point-of-view. Similar to the yard-scene, Porumboiu tricks the spectator with believing that what he sees is the subjective vision of the detective, albeit his personal, visual experience is missing from the film. Instead, an invisible, albeit perceptible person takes over his standpoint. This creates a transition between a homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration (Genette, 1983), the former accentuating the presence and the latter the absence of the narrator.

That being said, while the person that follows Cristi cannot be seen, he is present in the story in the form of the power-figure of Angelache, who supervises the investigation of the detective. In this way, the omniscient gaze belongs to the boss, the main socialist character of the film, who decides upon everything within the police apparatus. Cristi's work thus comes to no avail for the last word in the case is that of his supervisor's. Although the figure of Angelache is absent and only appears in the final scene of the film, his metaphoric presence as power is dominant in the form of the above negotiated third gaze that checks upon Cristi. His presence and absence as narrator in the story contributes to the insecure atmosphere of the film, whereby the spectator gets confused as to whether what he sees is the view of Cristi, or that of the third gaze.

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are worried about are other things, smaller things. Things that I feel that I know (…) (Porumboiu, quoted by Pietersz, 2009).

Figure 6.7.4. Shot "A"

Figure 6.7.5. Shot "B"

Figure 6.7.6. Tricking the spectator: the third gaze

In sum, Porumboiu creates a narrative that utilises the elements of a first-person narration by constantly playing with the point-of-views and the suture-structure of the film. Thus, in a similar manner to *Aurora*, the narrative is told from the point of view of the omniscient, socialist power apparatus that is, *Police, adjective* uses a certain kind of internal focalisation (Bal, 1983)[80] for the events are told from the perspective of Angelache. In this way, Cristi becomes the object of the focalisation and his boss the omniscient focalizer and narrator. Moreover, as the young police man monitors the high school students, he himself functions as a focalizer too, whereby the suspects take the position of the focalised subjects. At the end of the scenes, the focalisation chain creates a semi-subjective shot (Mitry, 1965: 2009) as Porumboiu shows Cristi watching the youngsters while the camera follows the actions of the detective (figures 6.7.4-6.7.5). Thanks to the framing that puts the police man in the centre of the image – and the camera movement that, with its close panning, presumes a subjective gaze – Porumboiu exposes an internal focalisation. With the help of the semi-subjective shot – that signals a

[80] Although Bal distinguishes the person of the narrator from that of the character, Deleyto (1991) later points out that the two can coincide with each other and brings several examples for how the focaliser can act as a narrating agent, i.e. narrator (see 1991:162-163). In the case of *Police, adjective* this enables Angelache to be the omniscient narrator of the film.

personified device – the director refers to Angelache as a personified narrator, whose gaze monitors Christi's every act.

To conclude, the focalisation structure that the director establishes in *Police, adjective* is a well-choreographed change of perspectives that, while playing with the non-existent subjective shots of Cristi, builds on the invisible, third gaze that records the events. By doing so, this structure unfolds a multi-layered surveillance apparatus and, with Angelache in a leading position, contributes to an oppressive panoptic scheme that Cristi and the high-school student must both comply with. What is born this way is the scopic regime of power, a disciplined surveillance grid ruled and supervised by the omnipotent voyeur embodied by the head of the Repressive State Apparatus, who has absolute control over his subjects and establishes scopic control over them. Thus, by building the narrative around the concept of observation, Porumboiu implicitly refers to the information-gathering service of the Securitate that is further corroborated by the socialist design and architectural concept of the film that recalls the Ceaușescu-regime.

6.6.2. A duplicated, socialist vision: Securitate

Noticing the lack of Cristi's subjective vision in the film[81], Ioniță (2015) argues that the personal perspective of the police man is taken over by words and the duplicated images that Porumboiu constructs, which aims at demonstrating where the investigation stands. The importance of the semiotic pillar of the film cannot be questioned. The director's images of Cristi's hand-written reports not only refer to the linguistic structure of the film – the meaning of the words and even the grammar is often negotiated throughout the story – but, similarly to the focalisation chain, these reports have a connotative meaning. As will be argued, they demonstrate the functioning and pursuit of the Securitate that is supported by several aspects of evidences at the narrative-representational level of the film.

Cristi's long, detailed, hand-written papers recall the Securitate reports documented in other Romanian movies[82] that remember or resuscitate the Ceaușescu-era. First of all,

[81] As Ioniță remarks, '(…) what remains unseen, however, is precisely the crux of his [Cristi's] vision, the crucial events which create the conflict between moral law and penal law that he is unable to solve" (2015: 180).

[82] See for instance Valentin Hotea's *Roxanne* (2013) that portrays the psychological struggle of Tavi (Serban Pavlu) who, after visiting the Securitate Archives, finds out that he was closely watched for his activity at Radio Free Europe. In the opening scenes, Tavi goes through the hand-written reports that he later prints out

despite the fact that he has a computer in the office that he could work on, the detective writes these reports by hand. As in the old system, he keeps a dossier that contains the details of the investigation, which he carries everywhere with him, be that his home or the office of his boss. Surprisingly, despite the easily accessible digital tools that Cristi could utilise for his work in the 21st century Romania, he does not use the internet or digital camera, or any mailing system when he has to report to his superiors. Instead, his method of information gathering solely relies on surveillance and police databases.

Besides the formal resemblance, the content of these reports alludes to the time of socialism for they examine the daily activities of the accused – how often the suspect leaves the country and his home – and negotiate the potential danger that the young boy represents to the society. In this regard, the written reports of Cristi – both in context and visual form – recall the infamous file-producing machinery of the previous regime that, according to the film, still dominates over the investigation-structure of the contemporary Romanian jurisdiction.

6.6.3. Absolute control

Besides the hand-written files of Cristi and the surveillance-centred narrative, it is the personnel of Angelache and his authoritarian position that illustrates the restrictive apparatus of the Securitate. The narrative peak of *Police, adjective* – which is also the longest scene of the film – is a summary of the optical-verbal situation that the *mise-en-scène* is centred on, and portrays the omnipotent, central power of the superior, who gives Cristi and his colleague Nelu (Ion Stoca) a lesson on moral and juridical law that he wraps in a semantic-dialectic context. Angelache stands at the top of the police hierarchy, that is, both Cristi and Nelu have to report to him, while he has the final decision regarding the outcome of the investigations. He is the key person of the stalking apparatus who controls the actions of his men: through the gaze of his colleagues, he rules over the public space of the city and, as far as surveillance goes, he supervises the private realms of the monitored subjects. This being said, Angelache is analogous to the figure of the socialist *Securiști* – a metaphor for the omnipotent and omnipresent source of power that contributes to the establishment of restrictive terror and the creation of docile subjects and obedient citizens. As Porumboiu emphasised in an interview, his ‘character was useful in communist

and carefully studies. The contents of these documents, similar to that of Cristi’s in *Police, adjective*, are centred on the detailed activities, i.e. the time-table of the suspected subject and cover his daily actions.

societies for making sense of the world. (...) His authority was obviously legitimated and enforced by a police state, but it also helped people in these societies make sense of their own world. He's also a very believable character in the context of a postcommunist society' (Porumboiu, quoted by Porton, 2010: 29).

Although Cristi attempts to escape the centralised power or, as Andreescu (2013) puts it, 'the Other's law'; he is incapable of freeing himself from the chains of state law, and so the verbal-physical control of Angelache. In the office, while asking Cristi to read the meaning of words police, conscience and moral law, the superior is represented in the centre of the frame, in a tryptic form[83] (Pop, 2013) whose two distant points are occupied by Cristi and Nelu (figure 6.7.7). The superiority of Angelache is not solely expressed by his physical positioning – his lifted position behind his desk in the scenographic space – but through the language confrontation they have. The spatial structuring of the scene and the discourse on ethics and moral law gives the discussion a double aesthetic (Shapiro, 2013) that focuses on both the bodily senses of Cristi and the aesthetics of the discourse they are having. As the bearer of the power, Angelache prevails over the space that the others react upon with their recalcitrant body-language (Shapiro, 2013; Andreescu 2013). While Cristi takes on a stooped posture – with his shoulders bent forward, his elbows lying on his knees and his eyes facing the table in front of him; Angelache sits back relaxed in his chair and looks openly in the face of Cristi. He is not only rejected with his proposal to investigate the dealer, but is also humiliated through language when his superior gives him a lesson on what his duty is as a police man. In the end, humiliated and embarrassed, Cristi agrees to conduct the string operation and abides the Romanian law and Angelache, whereby he confirms his inferior position in the system built on the remnants of the socialist regime and its disciplinary mechanism of control.

[83] According to Pop (2013), with the tryptic form Porumboiu references on the Eastern Orthodox tradition of icon painting that he links with the theatrical development of the scene. As stated by her, in both *12:08* and *Police, adjective*, 'The Son and The Holy Spirit are represented in degraded values, in order to make the debasement of humanity even more abrupt' (Pop, 2013, 36-37). Supporting this argument, one has to note that the names of the characters (Angelache-Angel, Cristi-Christ) also refer to the Holy Trinity.

Figure 6.7.7. The tryptic-form

6.6.4. Scopic control: speaking interiors and exteriors

Besides creating confined and controlled subject positions, the surveillance grid of *Police, adjective* contributes to a detailed description of the environment both the suspected youngsters and Cristi himself live in. Thanks to the stake-outs of the police man, and the film's slow-paced narrative flow, his flânerie in Vaslui reveals the city in great detail. The camera often remains in a fixed position for long minutes and captures the police man standing against the polygon and/or follows him as he walks up to the central hill of the city. Furthermore, as the internal focalisation of the narrative supports the diegetic space to open up (Deleyto, 1991), the spectators get a wider glimpse into the lived space of the protagonists. In *Police, adjective*, this space is the streets of Vaslui that are captured in long shots and which, as seen in *12:08*, do not bear with any visual reference to the capitalist present (figures 6.7.8-6.7.9). Instead, with its 'dehumanized interiors and exteriors' (Stojanova, 2014), the film mirrors an impoverished and grey socialist world, whose lived spaces create a monochrome, uniform look. As emphasised by Ioniță (2015) the outdoors are built upon angular geometric forms, squares, triangles, and polygons that, with the heavily framed and blocked apartments, create a claustrophobic environment. The grey-black colours, the wintry weather and darkness all contribute to the depressive, prison-like atmosphere of the film that is further accentuated by the dilapidated interiors and walls of the police station. Consequently, similar to *Aurora, Lăzărescu* and *12:08*; the diegetic spaces of *Police, adjective* echo the old times (Florescu, 2015), be that the exteriors that mirror the labyrinths of prefabricated blocks, or the interiors that are equipped with tools and objects produced in the socialist era.

As already mentioned, the office[84] of Cristi is furnished as if the film took place in the 1970s Romania, with 'much-abused bank of rusty metal lockers', wooden desks, steel doors, a coat stand and a 'TRS-80 grade computer that is never switched on' (Smith, 2009). The room has no window and so no natural light can come into the working space of Cristi and Nelu, thus transforming the area into a prison-like establishment. The hermetic structure applies to the dark, labyrinth-like corridors of the police station, its old-fashioned rooms and Cristi's home too.

Figure 6.7.8-6.7.9. Socialist landscapes

Furthermore, whatever room the detective enters, he is captured in a spatially subordinated position that Porumboiu establishes by dominant, vertical geometric lines that prevail over his point in the two-dimensional film space or, as already negotiated, is represented as constantly framed and covered by fences and polygons in the exteriors that incarcerate his figure and put him in an isolated, monitored position (figure 6.8-6.8.1).

Figure 6.8-6.8.1. Vertical enclosure

[84] The location is a real police station and the objects and equipment were all taken by Porumboiu from the Ceaușescu era to give the film an authentic, socialist atmosphere (see Porton, 2010)

Accordingly, when Cristi meets his other superior, a large desk separates him from the other man that not only divides the space into two zones, but also illustrates his subjected position. His isolation is further emphasised by the camera that is positioned at the end of the desk, thus providing a lateral view of the two men in medium close-up, while accentuating the space between them.

Besides the horizontal barrier, Porumboiu composes the image along vertical lines that strengthens the separation of Cristi as the image is divided by the heavy doorframe in the background and the files on the desk that give a sense of a vertical fence between the two men. Cristi tells the man about his moral dilemma of arresting a young person for smoking hashish. His boss, however, rejects his appeal by stating that he 'is not qualified to comment on the law'. He gets the same answer from Angelache where, the superior-inferior position emphasising, the boss is again put behind a large desk. This time Porumboiu opts for a frontal, tableau-like composition, with Angelache in the centre of the frame, while Cristi is captured sideways, in a confessing, spatially subordinated position. By directly facing the camera, the boss takes on the film's first, fixed frontal position, thereby emphasising his full scopic control over the room and his superior position in the narrative, whereby the diegetic spaces become subordinated to him. Besides the panoptic scheme, it is the vertical geometric lines that give the office a claustrophobic, enclosed constellation: the metal locker, the wooden book-case in the background and the door and window frames are all visually privileged in the frame, thus highlighting the vertical context of the image. Thanks to this spatial structure, Cristi becomes entirely incarcerated in the image: he is being watched from both sides, while the objects of the room imprison him into the armchair[85].

To sum up, it is both the socialist character of the spaces of the film, and the spatial incarceration of Cristi that contribute to the vertical enclosure of *Police, adjective* that,

[85] This method of spatial partitioning can be also observed in the home of Cristi and in the restaurant where, while meeting his informer Alex, he is suppressed by the vertical lines of the window frames. The window and the geometrically divided screen space contribute to the already negotiated aquarium-like structure that is dominant in several other New Wave-films, such as Cristian Mungiu's *4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days* where Otilia (Anamaria Marinca) is constantly captured against physical barriers, such as the hotel desk or the large table at the birthday party of the mother of her boyfriend, while in the final scene she is looked at through a window, thus strengthening her incarcerated position. Similarly, Gruzsniczki's *The Other Irina* (Cealta Irina, 2009) works along the same visual patterns: when discussing whether Irina should go to work in Cairo or stay at home, the woman and her husband are captured in a lateral medium shot against the mall window, thus being in the middle of the scopic space. Gruzsniczki's composition not only alludes to the impossible financial situation that the couple faces but to their relationship crises and the forthcoming tragedy as well. In Florin Şerban's *If I want to whistle, I whistle* (2011), the date of Silviu (George Pistereanu) and his captive Ana (Ada Condeescu) is captured in a frontal shot against the geometrically stratified window-background that accentuates the prison-theme of the film and the enclosed position of the youngsters.

with playing with the acts of seeing/observing within the narrative (Filimon, 2014), creates a 'mixture of observational realism and geometrical abstraction in the treatment of space' (Ioniță, 2015: 178) while implicitly/explicitly recalling the socialist epoch and its infamous watching apparatus, the Securitate[86].

6.7. Conclusion: The case of aesthetical continuity in Romanian cinema

Beyond doubt, the restrictive terror apparatus of the Ceaușescu-regime has left a deep mark on the collective memory of Romanian people. The spatial-temporal symbolic terror implemented by the regime; the multi-lateral surveillance system and the citizens' forced transformation into docile and passive subjects have imprinted a sense of fear and claustrophobia into the social consciousness of the socialist and post-socialist generation.

This first part of this section made an attempt to provide an all-encompassing picture about the filmmakers' endeavour to avoid the omniscient state-censorship and reflect upon the oppression of the regime. It has been argued that in the pre-revolutionary period, directors gave the camera a metaphorical trajectory that alluded to the omniscient gaze of the Securitate. For depicting the state's penetration into the private realms of people, Pintilie, Tatos and Daneliuc organise narratives along an intermedial composition that,

[86] In his next two feature films, Porumboiu leaves the socialist areas of the city of Vaslui behind and shoots in Bucharest. Through a self-reflexive gesture, *When evening falls on Bucharest or Metabolism* (*Când se lasă seara peste București sau Metabolism*, 2014), focuses on the question of representation by capturing the rehearsals and personal relationship of a film director and an actress. Similar to *12:08* and *Police, adjective*, *When evening falls on Bucharest or Metabolism* works with precisely configured symmetrical images, with the claustrophobic constellation of the diegetic space getting special emphasis, as the protagonists are constantly enclosed in an aquarium-like composition. The theatrical setting and perpendicular, architectural framing creates a suffocating atmosphere. Porumboiu thus continues to work along the concept of vertical enclosure, although he makes no explicit reference on the socialist past. In his next film *Treasure* (Comoara, 2015) he returns to recalling the past by focusing on a treasure buried in a rural garden that was put there by the grandfather of one of the protagonists who feared that the communist power would confiscate his property. Porumboiu continues his well-known symmetrical geometry and monochrome, pale backgrounds, and utilises the vertical framing technique. Also, he recalls the socialist interiors of *Police, adjective* and the centralised, bureaucratic power-system that ruled the socialist everyday. When someone informs the police about the plan of the two treasure-hunters, the police start an investigation into the case, whereby they eventually get interrogated at the local station. Their treasure gets confiscated and its fate put in the hands of the central headquarters that eventually hand backs the Mercedes stocks. Similar to *Police, adjective*, Porumboiu portrays the station as a socialist trajectory, with all the remnants of the previous regime, while accentuating the hierarchy and inferior-superior relations.
While they work with enclosed interiors and claustrophobic images, *When evening falls on Bucharest or Metabolism*, and *Treasure* cannot be negotiated as part of the Romanian New Wave cinema, as they lack the panopticism central to the movement, also, the (socialist) physical space become less dominant in these works.

through a *mise-en-abyme* structure, reveals the presence of the camera and accentuates its capacity of modifying reality.

Pintilie's *Reenactment* uses the film-in-the-film structure to emphasise the paternalistic-totalitarian attitude of the socialist establishment through the figure of the prosecutor, who, thanks to his central-cellular scopic control, has an absolute view and influence on the events. *Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică?* and Tatos' *Sequences* emphasise the oppressed-oppression dynamic not only through the characters, but by several further metaphors for the economic austerities in the country, through referencing queuing, the lack of food and the blindness of Romanian people that act according to centralised dogmas. While Pintilie builds upon the muddy, sinking environment as a reference to the decaying epoch, Tatos uses the fragmentation of the pro-filmic space and its depth to exacerbate the sense of enclosure and the incarcerated position of the protagonists that are separated in clandestine representational spaces. The oppressed private-physical space received special importance in Daneliuc's *Microphone Test* that portrays the totalitarian regime by accentuating the decisive-manipulative role of the media and the camera device, which spies on the citizens and intrudes into their private realms. Consequently, in the socialist examples it is the visual presence of the camera that, as the omnipresent eye of the regime, has absolute access to the private as well as public spaces.

In the films of the transition, the metaphoric omniscient gaze is replaced by decaying spatial set-ups and the depressive thematic content that features rape, domestic problems and the suicidal demeanour of the characters, which all refer to the gloomy politico-social post-1989 situation. The post-apocalyptic visual environment of *The Oak, Look Forward in Anger, The Conjugal Bed and Too Late* provide a full description of the hardship of the transition whereby both the grey, desolate industrial landscape and the labyrinth-like, narrow and dark corridors of the prefabricated interiors act as representatives of the anomy of the Romanian nation.

This depressive, gloomy tone is the main peculiarity of the post-transition films that, as the thesis argues, can be categorised according to their implicit or explicit remembrance on the Ceaușescuian past. This is to say that, whether we talk about past-films, retrospective films, or the cinema of implicit remembrance that the Romanian New Wave is part of, the socialist past stands as a milestone, whose imprinted registers of etatization, time arrhythmia and enclosed spatial structures are explicitly or implicitly remembered in the post-2000 films. In the past-films and retrospective films, the past is openly cited in the plot and/or *mise-en-scène*, whereas the New Wave references the totalitarian epoch

through the enclosed structure of the pro-filmic and screen space and the twitching camera technique that recall the omniscient gaze of the socialist films.

Consequently, when examining the contemporary cinema of Romania and the New Wave in this context, we find an unequivocal aesthetic continuity between the socialist, the transition films and the New Wave cinema. The omnipresent capturing device that penetrated the private spaces of the examples of socialist epoch is now replaced by an anthropomorphic camera that, through its cinema verité-style twitching-oscillating movements, obtains a subjective trajectory that may be identified with the socialist power in the narratives. Opposite to the socialist examples however, in the case of the New Wave films, the device does not distort reality, rather, it intends to capture the truth of/in the physical, decaying space – the utopian interiors that were dominant in the transition films. Accordingly, the New Wave unites the omnipresent camera technique and the socialist representation of space and creates a spatial structure that I call vertical enclosure.

Vertical enclosure utilises the film's socialist, prefabricated locations – such as the labyrinth-like, narrow and dark interiors – that dictate the visual composition of the films and, as seen in the above examined examples, creates a socialist mental space that dominates the productions. For instance, Puiu's films are full with verbal and visual allusions that all recapture the past, be that the illumination system of the staircase, the position of the apartment, or the wooden language the characters use. Porumboiu's *12:08* and *Police, adjective* also contain several intertextual references to the socialist era, such as the duplicated images of the reports that recall the Securitate apparatus, or the socialist décor according to which the interiors are organised. One has to note however, that none of the analysed films evoke the socialist era explicitly, that is, they avoid any kind of non-visual commentary on the Ceaușescu-era, and only the spatial structure of the film, its bureaucratic thematic core and the oppressed-oppressor dominancy refer to the previous political establishment.

In addition to the urban historical-architectural framing, it is the films' observational aesthetics that contribute to the sense of vertical enclosure. The authoritarian-totalitarian subordination of space to the anthropomorphic camera in *Aurora* and *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* recalls the gaze of a Securitate agent who sees everything but he himself cannot be seen. The personified shaking-jiggling camera hides behind architectural frames, such as walls and doors, and creates double frames that, together with Puiu's reflexive and aleatory framing, strengthen the sense of spatial imprisonment and the omnipresence of the capturing device. Similarly, Porumboiu's figurative framing stratifies the pro-filmic and

screen space and envelops the protagonist in a cellular, theatrical space dominated by the scopic control of a camera equated with the power of socialism The identification of socialist power with the device itself not only derives from the socialist pro-filmic space and the blur between private and public realms, but from the theme of surveillance in the film that provides an unquestionable reference to the Securitate apparatus.

To conclude, the visual graphic of the pro-filmic space, the camera's absolute presence and the panoptic framing that recapture the socialist everydays, contribute to the disciplinary constellation of the narrative space that is called vertical enclosure in this thesis. This spatial structure gives the images a suffocating overtone, while functioning as a tool of implicit remembrance.

PART 3.

THE CINEMA OF HORIZONTAL ENCLOSURE: HUNGARY

CHAPTER 7.

SPACE IN THE SOCIALIST CINEMA OF HUNGARY

7.1. Socialist cinema and censorship

Similar to other colonised states in the Eastern bloc, after the communist takeover, the Hungarian film industry was soon nationalised. In 1948, film production became state-owned and subjugated to politics that resulted in several propaganda films[87] following the style of socialist realism, with the main objective of praising the new socialist political framework and possessing 'spiritual purity' (Rainer and Kresalek, 1991:24).

In the early stage of socialism (1948-1956), the political leadership practiced a script-centred censorship[88] in order to combat formalism and develop absolute control over the thematic and representational level of the productions (Petrie, 1974). Since political control was omnipresent and monitored the filmmaking process right from the start, in this stage we cannot talk about censorship per se (Kovács, 2000:105). Rather, there was a strict, authoritarian form of propaganda film production built around an annual thematic plan.

The actual socialist censorship for film productions was implemented in 1957 by György Aczél, the Minister of Culture (1957-74). To comply with the quasi-permissive Kádár policy, Aczél's restrictions[89] were concerned more with the screening and distribution than with the filmmaking itself, due to which several productions would be made that explicitly or implicitly criticised the regime – though could not been screened[90].

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[87] For instance, Félix Máriássy's *Full Steam Ahead*! (*Teljes gőzzel*, 1951); Viktor Gertler's *State Department Store* (*Állami áruház*, 1953) and *Honour and Glory* (*Becsület és dicsőség*, 1951) or Márton Keleti's *Singing Makes Life Beautiful* (*Dalolva szép az élet*, 1950).

[88] We have to note that, although we use the expression 'censorship' to describe and emphasise the political obstacles a director had to overcome, there was no official institute for censorship in Hungary.

[89] Although the head of the four studios and the General Manager of the Mafilm Film Studio had first say in which script to support (Cunningham, 2000) – while the Film Arts Committee (Ministry of Culture) and the Deputy Minister of Culture himself made the final decision – the political censorship was less severe in the filmic sphere than in other forms of cultural productions (Kovács, 2000; Rainer and Kresalek, 1991).

[90] We also have to mention that there were several underground film clubs and workshops in the socialist era where these movies could be watched (see Gervai, 2011).

Depending on their subject and form, Aczél's infamous 'three T policy' divided art works and their creators into three categories. The prohibited one (*tilos*) encompassed 'imperialist artists' and 'destructive works' that went against the 'democratic framework' (Eörsi, 2008:76), while, in contrast to this, the politically entrusted, Marxist personnel and socialist-realist art works were categorised as supported by the state (*támogatott*). Members of this category had absolute cultural power: they were allowed to exhibit their work abroad and, as authorised leftist persons, fully enjoyed nomenklatura-provided financial and political benefits. Lastly, the tolerated (*tűrt*) artists were positioned somewhere between the supported and prohibited category and presented a 'politically-ideologically correct endeavour' manifested in artistic productions that did not undermine public order (Havasréti, 2006:78). Nevertheless, as Cunningham notes, 'this classification appears, on the surface, to be rigid and dogmatic; in practice it left enormous room for manoeuvre and compromise for both government and artist' (Cunningham, 2004:95). This contributed to a relaxed, relatively liberal cultural policy. This is to say that, while Aczél had absolute authority in art-related matters and cultural issues, his approach was more pragmatic than dogmatic (Oikari, 2000:139). Being aware of the Hungarian intellectuals' influential role on public opinion, he developed close relations with leading artists and provided them with the opportunity to express their standpoint in less significant questions, thus maintaining the illusion of an even-handed, democratic process of decision-making (Gerencsér, 2015). Furthermore, although his cultural policy primary promoted socialist realist works, Aczél's categories 'were not defined by any finalised rules or regulations: they were slackened and tightened depending on the prevailing political situation' (Oikari, 2000:143) which resulted in a fluctuating, uncertain censorial structure.

7.2. Taboos on screen

As the erratic censorship illustrates, the cultural policy banned certain taboos on screen, while also sending anti-establishment films to foreign festivals[91] and thus maintaining the illusion of the democratic framework. Non-official taboos – according to which a production would be categorised banned – included any negative political reflection of the

[91]A well-known example is Miklós Jancsó, whose films obtained international recognition and were screened worldwide. Furthermore, Péter Bacsó's *Witness* (*A tanú,* 1969*)* received Un Certain Regard in Cannes in 1981, while István Gaál's *Falcon* (*Magasiskola*, 1970) was awarded the *Prix du Jury* in 1970. These films openly criticised the socialist regime, but were still exported and screened on festivals, while for people in Hungary, they remained inaccessible films.

current Hungarian leadership and/or the USSR, the portrayal of the Rákosi-epoch and the representation of 1956. Additionally, it was disapproved to have a discourse on various moral, cultural and ethnical questions, such as poverty, nationalism, national consciousness, sexuality, antisemitism, the situation of Hungarian minorities abroad and/or the émigrés that left the country (Havasréti, 2006). Also, it was not advisable to question the cultural significance of socialist realism and the ideological basis of the establishment, 'but as compensation, [artists] were able to freely express their personal discontent and problems' (Oikari, 2000:144).

With time, together with the easening of the censorship, the taboos were considered less serious and a whole wave had started which scrutinised the 1950s and the oppressive Rákosi-regime[92] (Murai, 2008; Petrie 1986). Furthermore, besides the politico-historical taboos, by the mid-1970s and 80s, films openly discussed banned topics, such as homosexuality (*Another Way/Egymásra nézve,* dir. Károly Makk, 1982), paedophilia (*Before the Bat's Flight is Done/Mielőtt befejezi röptét a denevér*, dir. Péter Tímár, 1989), or prostitution (*Tanmesék a szexről/Moral Stories about Sex*, dir. Szilveszter Siklósi, 1988). With the upcoming political changes, the censorship had eased and in the period of ideological and economic transition, cinema more and more embarked upon breaking with the taboos of the past (Bisztray, 2000).

7.3. Coding the screen

A peculiar characteristic of the Kádárist soft-dictatorship was that, while it prohibited certain topics being touched upon, it allowed Hungarian directors to communicate and criticise the regime in coded language on screen[93]. The party often overlooked the hidden critique that artists formed by composing parables and metaphors on canvas, thus giving directors a chance to start an implicit discourse on the failures of the actual political institution. In this way, a special collaboration evolved between the Kádárist establishment and artists that, as mentioned above, enabled the Hungarian leadership to look liberal and permissive in the eyes of the West by providing directors with a politically relatively

[92] *Oh, Bloody Life/Te rongyos élet* (Péter Bacsó, 1984); *Never, Nowhere, to No-One/Soha, sehol, senkinek* (Ferenc Téglásy, 1988), *Wasted Lives/Kettévált mennyezet* (Pál Gábor, 1981)

[93] Besides the political changes, the reason for the semi-permissive cultural policy was the television's leading position in media that took over the role of the film. In this way, because of its dominance, television stood under bigger censorial pressure than cinema (Gelencsér, 2002).

democratic platform for artistic experimentations. Yet, while we find several examples of the usage of coded language on screen in the 1970s and 1980s as well, the main epoch of 'conspiratorial alliance' (Gelencsér, 2002:128) was the 1960s. This decade gave birth to a distinctive sub-genre, the spatial and historical allegory and parable (Kovács, 2000) that, by setting the story into various pre-socialist historical epochs[94] and/or enclosed or open, national spaces, alluded to the individual's prison-like position in the current socialist structure. As Gelencsér (2002) puts it, the double structure of the parabolic narrative thus enabled directors to run two stories at the same time that would be interpreted on two levels: accompanied by an abstract meaning – that the spectator de-codes and applies to the present socio-political situation – the concrete, screened reality gets another, non-representational level that transforms the story into a parable.[95]

In the Hungarian context, the parable – that Ricoeur (1975) defines as a metaphorical process in narrative form that refers to something else than what it represents – is endowed with a political and a formal function. On a meta-(narrative) level, the parable makes the socialist political structure transparent (through historical metaphor), while on a representational level, abstract meaning is often complemented by and expressed through the visual style and pro-filmic space of the films (through spatial allegory). This categorisation corresponds to Ricoeur's definition of parable that is the combination of the 'openness of the metaphorical process' and the 'closure of the narrative form' (Kim, 2008:54) which indicates a structured composition (textual form), that allocates a referential, extra-linguistic meaning (metaphor). The context into which this form and the attributes are embedded in, function as a plus indicator for the connotative structure – as is the case with the historical parables that model a real historical situation by drawing parallels with the present – while this background can be complemented by the formal closeness of the filmic form. In this way, the rhetorical figure helped directors place their critique on an abstract level, while, as far as filmic expressional forms go, it also contributed to opening up new ways in artistic experimentation.

As far as the pro-filmic space of the films is concerned, a crucial characteristic of the parabolic productions of the epoch is the play with the shooting locations that expresses the enclosed entity of the socialist regime. While some examples use claustrophobic settings, and set their stories on isolated, tyrannised places, we find several productions that use the

[94] In the period of 1965-1987, 28.5% of the total film productions used not-contemporary settings (see Bisztray, 2000).

[95] The parabolic form will be investigated from a thematic point-of-view that is, while the *attributes* (allegoric, symbolic, absurd, documentarist) can vary, the main aim of the parable remains the same that is 'to say the unsayable' (Gelencsér, 2000:137).

Alföld and its endless horizon for the same purpose. In either case, the landscape – be that natural and/or cultural – gets an allegorical connotation[96], thus serving as a backdrop for the oppressed characters that reside in a prison-like place. In this way, landscape moves into a symbolic dimension of meaning that must be interpreted beyond the visible word (Melbye, 2010).

7.3.1. Parables 1. Historical, closed parables

There are several examples of filmic parables from the Kádár-era that set their story in a pre-socialist, historic context while, by means of the enclosed pro-filmic space of the film, mediate the oppressive atmosphere and structure of the socialist way of life.[97] In the case of this category, the historical approach is used only to bypass socialist censorship that put less emphasis on scrutinising historical scripts while, on the other hand, the past provided filmmakers with a rich ground for cross-referencing the tyrannical structure of the socialist regime.

For instance, Ferenc Kósa's *Beyond Time* (*Nincs idő*, 1970) refers to the oppression of the socialist establishment by depicting an underground prison's everyday life in the Horthy-epoch (1919-44). The story revolves around a group of political enemies that the dictatorial leadership of the prison intends to eliminate. Although the murder of the leading person of the group causes a hunger strike among the others, the director of the institution decides to use feeding tubes to obviate any further opponent movements. Similar to the political prisoners, another felon rebels against the system by swallowing silver spoons, whereby he gets operated over and over again. His resistance however, akin to his fellows, remains pointless as the system provides no way out of the tyrannical power structures and reckons with all the attempts that would aim to defeat it.

[96] As Melbye puts it, 'In the context of narrative cinema, a featured landscape only becomes allegorical according to a (…) clearly established psychological dimension to the film's main characters. (…) Filmmakers must also incorporate certain avant-garde techniques of framing, editing and juxtaposition to fully confer a deeper meaning upon natural settings (Melbye, 2010:13).

[97] For further historic parables, see Gyula Maár's *Press* (*Prés,* 1971); András Lányi's *The Myth-makers* (*Segesvár*, 1974); András Kovács's *Fallow Land* (*A magyar Ugaron*, 1972), Pál Zolnay's *The face* (*Arc*, 1970) and Ferenc Kósa's *Judgement* (*Ítélet,* 1970).

Figure 7.1.
***Beyond Time*: Incarcerated**

In Kósa's film, the prison becomes a symbolic space that refers to the repression of the whole society whose members, similarly to the convicts of the Horthy-prison, are captives in the authoritarian leadership of Kádár. In one of the film's most remarkable scenes, the felons – who, thanks to the generous director of the institution, are allowed to 'celebrate' Christmas – stand incarcerated in small cages in the prison's main hall, while, instead of celebrating per se, are forced to listen to the speech of the leader of the institution who, while commemorating the (murdered) felon, instructs them as to when to applaud him. The vertical cages where the felons stand, are surrounded by thick bars that are further encompassed by the room's large walls and small, barricaded windows that give the very space of the hall a suffocating atmosphere (figure.7.1). In this way, Kósa establishes an allegorical space that, both on a spatial level (prison) as well as in terms of its thematic content (totalitarian structure) can be associated with the structure of the Kádárist soft dictatorship which, albeit within limitations and at predetermined events, allowed citizens to 'celebrate'.

Likewise, Kósa's next film, *Snow Fall* (*Hószakadás*, 1974) uses pro-filmic space to support the parabolic narrative. The story of the film takes place in 1944 and follows a young soldier who, rewarded with furlough, leaves with his grandmother to the Carpathians to find his parents that are hiding in the mountains. On their way, they are stopped by the gendarmerie that, because of them breaking curfew, takes them as captives. Finally released from the camp, the family is re-united in the mountains, though they are soon found by the authorities that kill the father. To take revenge, Csorba Márton (Imre M. Szabó), the young soldier runs back to the farm, and starts to fire on the empty cottages,

thus leaving the grandmother behind who remains in the mountains and gets slowly covered by snow.

Snow Fall portrays the totalitarian political structure on the micro-level of the farm ruled by the despotic figure of a sergeant. According to him, the most important feature of the war is that everybody is a suspect and must be closely investigated. Therefore, he consistently interrogates the soldier and gives him moral lectures on war, life and death, while keeping the young man under constant psychological pressure. Yielding to the power, Csorba admits that he had to kill for the furlough, and his true reason to come to the mountains was to find his parents. By revealing his true intention, the long resistance of his in the farm becomes meaningless, just as the gunfire in the end of the film that points at no one. Ultimately, Csorba becomes the absolute passive figure of the ruling military structure who, despite never having been physically tortured by the gendarmerie, is put through harsh psychological torture that eventually breaks him.

Figure 7.2. ***Snow Fall:*** **Changing landscapes**

While the restrictive terror of the farm bears with several remarks to the soft-dictatorship of the Kádár regime[98], the representation of nature provides the story with an allegorical backdrop. With the peaceful, life-still images that are composed in extreme wide shots, the wilderness of the mountains and the forest stands in strong contrast with the farm's totalitarian structure that is portrayed as an enclosed universe at the foot of the hills (figure 7.2). Similar to the prison in *Beyond Time*, the desolate, heterotopic place of the farm alludes to the whole space of the society that is illustrated as a corrupt, unjust world ruled by a despotic figure who has absolute control over other people. The nature which Csorba and his grandmother escape into helps them to hide and survive; however, as the

[98] For instance, the typewriter's constant sound in the background refers to its bureaucratic characteristic, while the enforced suicide alludes to the self-censorship practiced in the epoch

story proceeds, the forest changes into a bare, craggy landscape with the upcoming winter forecasting the death of the protagonists. The extremely wide shots that portray Csorba and the grandmother as small points in the rocky hills, further accentuate the hopeless fight of the characters against the nature, as well as the totalitarian structure of the farm. Because the power reaches every corner of the society, as *Snow Fall* suggests, there is no possible resistance in the oppressive political context.

7.3.2. Parables 2. Present-day, closed parables

The heterotopic treatment of space is dominant in other productions too that, instead of embedding the stories into a historical context, lean on the closeness of the pro-filmic space to portray the prison-like structure of the regime. By using only one location that they depict as an enclosed universe, present-day parables[99] (Gelencsér, 2002) create an abstract, modelled space that portrays the whole Hungarian socio-political situation.
Sándor Sára's *Tomorrow Pheasant* (*Holnap lesz fácán*, 1974) depicts a micro-society on an unsettled island and tells the story of a couple whose summer residence is occupied by other tourists. Soon, a society comes into being, with all the rules and prohibitions that are implemented by Kozma (Ádám Szirtes), the head of the community. When the chaos and anarchy pervade the micro-civilization, Kozma escapes to be called to account and hurriedly leaves the island.

Clearly, the island functions as a heterotopic space where a micro-society is established whose birth, at many points, corresponds to the inauguration of the socialist directions in Hungary. For instance, people need several types of membership cards to stay on the island, thus cross-referencing the Kádárist bureaucratic establishment. Furthermore, members blindly follow the orders of Kozma, who implements pointless regulations and gives long, meaningless speeches that, with the enumeration of the goals and achievements of the socialist policy, recall the annual congresses of the Party. The festivities at the end of the film, the re-naming of the streets, the mandatory workshops and Kozma's central, absolute role on the island are thus all reminiscent of the totalitarian, paternalistic structure of the socialist regime.

[99] For further present-day parables see Ferenc Kardos' *A Crazy Night (Egy őrült éjszaka*, 1970); István Gaál's *Falcons* (*Magasiskola*, 1970) and Sándor Sára's *The Thrown Up Stone* (*Fel-feldobott kő*, 1968)

In a similar way to *Tomorrow Pheasant* where the remote, enclosed space functions as the socialist state itself; Gyula Gazdag's *The Whistling Cobblestone* (*A sípoló macskakő*, 1971) cross-references the totalitarian establishment with a socialist camp whose structure resonates with a concentration camp. The story takes place in a summer camping-ground where students must do pointless work such as digging around their tents and building cottages that they have to destroy at the end of the day. When, seeing the idleness of the teachers, some youngsters start to look for some practical jobs and decide to be self-employed, the leaders punish them by sending the boys home. In the end, the members of the camp continue the illusory work on the site.

Unlike *Snow Fall*, *Beyond Time*, and *Tomorrow Pheasant*, Gazdag's *The Whistling Cobblestone* complements the spatial allegory of the camp with very direct references to defection and further taboos of the illusory wellbeing of the 1970s; the student occupation protests of 1968 and the state's paternalistic-restrictive terror. In this regard, the narrative is an explicit-implicit revolt against the regime that goes further than the above mentioned parabolic examples. Accordingly, the leadership of the camp does not know how to distract the bored students and it devises pointless games and daily rituals to attract attention and avoid a possible protest at the same time. Thus, similar to the Hungarian socialist state that covered unemployment with fabricated positions, the leaders of the camp force the boys to pursue useless actions such as running around a camp and learning to fly a flag. Ironically, a group of students is expelled from the camp because of ploughing a peasant's field, thus doing productive work and finding reasonable time outside the fences.

Besides drawing on the misleading and illusory policy of the regime, *The Whistling Cobblestone* refers to the repressive mechanisms of the state by featuring a French university student who tells the boys about the countermeasures that followed the 1968 protests. According to him, the students used cobblestones to attack the police force during the riots, whereupon the streets were soon bituminized to avoid any similar incidents. The French student also informs the others about the ways one can protest against the establishment and encourages the boys to write a manifesto.[100] Ultimately, labelled as "unmanageable elements", the group must leave the site (defection) and are not allowed to enter the camp (Hungary) anymore.

[100]The revolutionary ideas also re-lived in *Petőfi'73* (Kardos Ferenc, 1972) that remembers the greatest poet of the Austro-Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849, Petőfi Sándor. As another parabolic narrative, *Petőfi'73* alluded to the possibility of another great revolution that however, was never fought. In this sense, the boys' refusal strengthens the inertia of the Hungarian society.

To conclude, as far as the films' spatial structures go, the historical and present-day parables operate with heterotopic spaces (Foucault, 1984) that refer to the whole Hungarian society and illustrate its prison-like establishment. The jail in *Beyond Time*, the farm of *Snow Fall*, the summer camp of *The Whistling Cobblestone* and the island in *Tomorrow Pheasant* all symbolise the Hungarian socialist structure by relying on the closeness – hence the naming – of the pro-filmic spatial structure. In this way, space itself becomes a metaphor that alludes to the enclosure of the individual within the confines of the socialist political framework. The allegorical space, the symbolic speech of the protagonists and the (satiric) statements that criticise the regime, thus all create parabolic narratives.

7.3.3. Parables 3. Historical, open parables: Capturing *Alföld*

Similar to the present-day and historic parables, the third group of parabolic films – what I call *Alföld*-parables – use the national space as allegory for expressing enclosure. In this case, the abstract meaning attached to the location gets a special connotation as these narratives are set in the very space of Hungary that provides a further metaphoric trajectory to the narrative.

Besides this political component, the poetical-representational level of the filmic structure gains in special importance. In the *Alföld*-parables, directors reckon with the classic story telling formula, and protest against the socialist, conventionalist-schematic methods of filmmaking by composing modern, minimalist narratives. The analytical minimalism (Kovács, 2007) followed by these productions feature long, complicated camera movements while creating a conflict between landscape and individual. In this way, the geometrical composition of the image and the trajectory of the camera function as metaphors, while the national, colonised space is converted into an allegory, whereby the wide landscape becomes an oppressed, prison-like territory. Some *Alföld*-parables set the stories into a historical context, thus bringing another abstract level in the fabula (Miklós Jancsó), while others use contemporary settings (István Gaál) to refer to the actual political situation. The parabolic narrative of these films thus constitutes a spatial allegory that is complemented by the metaphoric camera movements and the symbolic conversations and situations of the characters. As my investigation focuses on the tyrannised spatial relations

in Hungarian film, the following chapter scrutinises the fusion of the pro-filmic space and the metaphoric camera movements that make up the structure of horizontal enclosure.

7.4. The *Alföld* as symbol

Depicting rural life and natural landscape in order to accentuate the nation's connectedness to the land has always been central to Hungarian cinema (Sándor, 2015; Hirsch, 2015). The ancient authentic peasant life, the respect of old family values and the adherence to the soil have been crucial in forming the national self-image of Hungarians. While the pre-1945 films portrayed the constant slavish fight between man and nature and represented one's dependence on the land (Gelencsér and Pintér, 2015), a tendency within the Hungarian New Wave (1962-68) followed a folkloristic approach that contrasted the old rural and the modern city life by depicting the individual's existential crises (Hirsch, 2015). In Miklós Jancsó's first feature film, *Cantata* (*Oldás és kötés*, 1963) and in Pál Zolnay's *The Sack* (*Hogy szaladnak a fák*, 1966) the main protagonists return to the countryside to their families, hoping to find answers for their existential dilemma[101]. Although they visit home, with their intellectual behaviour and urban outfits, these characters remain outsiders in *Puszta'*s wide landscape. The young men are not familiar with the hard peasant way of life and cannot understand the hardship their families have to face working on the fields, similar to their relatives, who are incapable of identifying themselves with the problems of the younger, intellectual generation. In this way, the *Alföld* becomes a transitional, nostalgic space where the old rural and the new, modern values clash, while the death of the elder generation and/or the return to the city refer to the reckoning with the rural roots and so the national culture.

While in *Cantata* and *The Sack*, the landscape of the *Alföld* defines alienation, in other examples it serves as outward manifestations of the character's emotional turmoil. For instance, the *Puszta*'s constant sand-storm and lack of water in Károly Makk's *Obsessed* (*Megszállottak*, 1962) cross-references the barren landscapes with the psyche of the main protagonist, whose idea to establish fountains in the land is constantly refused by the authorities (Varga, 1999). Similarly, the extreme long shots of the youngsters that search for their friend who disappeared in the Tisza in István Gaál's *Current* (*Sodrásban*, 1963)

[101] Further examples that work with similar concepts are István Gaál's *Green Years* (*Zöldár*,1965) and *Baptism* (*Keresztelő*, 1967); Ferenc Kósa's *Ten Thousand Suns* (*Tízezer nap*, 1965) and Sándor Sára's *Thrown Up Stone* (*Feldobott kő*, 1968)

recall Antonioni's 'landscapes of the mind' (Melbye, 2010:1), thus reflecting the characters' inner transformations through the *Puszta*'s natural features.

Consequently, with the new wave, the *Alföld* as a location in film, takes on a symbolic dimension. In some cases, the barren landscape serves as a mirror for one's inner troubles (*Current, Obsessed*), while the representation of the old way of life – which is supported by several folkloristic motifs in the fabula – accentuates the main characteristic of the *Puszta* that is its key role as national space where the protagonists return (*Cantata, The Sack*). We have to emphasise however, that in the above mentioned examples, the *Alföld* does not serve as a parabolic territory of oppression, but a symbol for one's psychological state and/or connectedness to the old, traditional values.

7.4.1. The *Alföld* as parable

The *Puszta* as an ambiguous, paradox, and complex rhetoric figure on screen was introduced to Hungarian cinema by Miklós Jancsó whose narratives identified freedom and death with the Hungarian land (Hirsch, 2015). The abstracted representation of the barren, endless horizon; the historic context of the stories; the symbolism of characters' marching in space; and the choreography of complex camera movements that all refer to the restrictive structure of the establishment, made Jancsó the master figure of coded criticism in Hungary and one of the most prominent modernist filmmakers acknowledged in the West (Kovács, 2007; Ford, 2015).

Because the films of Jancsó rely upon the construction of filmic space (Burns, 1996; Maár, 1968, Bordwell, 1985), little or no attention is given to the characters and their motivation which results in fragmented narratives that are often difficult to comprehend. Instead, what becomes dominant is the metaphorical staging of the protagonists and the visual patterns of space through which Jancsó's hidden critique gets formed. As Iordanova states, in the art of the Hungarian director, the landscape and the camera movements collaborate with each other to dissolve into a political meaning:

> 'The camera is craned up and down to provide vertical balance to Jancsó's largely horizontal compositions, augmented by carefully choreographed moments of groups and people across, through and round on the screen frame. The purpose of focusing on these seemingly meaningless movements is to show that they all take place within a wide open but nonetheless confined space. Through the protagonists appear free to move across the wide spaces,

> the direction of their movement is more than limited, thus furtive.' (Iordanova, 2003: 69)

Accordingly, the abstract character of the space is 'intensified to such a degree that it becomes symbolic' (Kovács, 2007:330). This connotative trajectory is then strengthened by the camera movements that, independently of the characters, circulate around the pro-filmic space, whereby, as Iordanova (2003) has it, the location signals a limited, enclosed territory that the protagonists are locked into. This structure thus consists of a narrative and a compositional model and serves to support the narratives of persecution (Hirsch, 2002), whose dramaturgy is based on the steps of inquisitional ritualism of medieval investigation (investigation-judgement-punishment), and the dynamic role-relations between the judge, executioner, the public and the victim. Both in their visual choreography and thematic content, Jancsó's pre-1989 films thus build on the 'theatre of terror' (Hirsch, 2002:47) whose spatial pillar, the *Puszta*, serves as 'the original place of mentality and psychology of (…) human ritual' (Kovács, 2007:334). History, as was the case with the historical, closed parables, only serves as context for present-day criticism, and suggests an absolute continuity between the previous totalitarian structures and the Kádár-regime. In a similar way to the previous two forms of parabolic narratives, Jancsó's *Alföld* parables build upon the stylised composition of space, with the difference of setting the stories on the national space of the *Alföld* that, both as geographic territory (infinite space) as well as socio-economic unit (heart of the country), is to stress the colonised oppression of the nation.

7.5. *My Way Home*

Although the *Alföld* as location is already dominant in Jancsó's first feature film, *Cantata*; it is the director's second production, *My Way Home* (*Így jöttem*, 1965) that first features it as a pillar of the parabolic narrative. The story of the film is set in 1944 and centres on a high-school student József (András Kozák) who, on his way home, gets captured by the liberating Soviet troops that send him to tend a herd of cows with a Russian soldier, Kolya (Sergey Nikonenko) together. The two boys slowly overcome the language barrier and develop a close friendship that ends when, despite József's efforts to heal the boy, Kolya dies of a wound he acquired during the war. Devastated and angry, the

Hungarian boy leaves the herd, but gets beaten up at the railway station where, because of wearing the uniform of his friend, he gets mistaken for a Russian soldier.

Figure 7.3. Colonised spaces: the river

Figure 7.4. The *tanya*

Whereas, Jancsó's well-known, internationally recognised visual ars-poetica focuses on the Alföld, *My Way Home* combines the landscape of the *Puszta* with the images of Transdanubia[102], thus to create a single, disciplinary space that refers to the occupation of the Hungarian land. This is to say that, while in his later films, Jancsó concentrates on the *Alföld* as an oppressed territory, in *My Way Home* he accentuates the tyrannised structure of the whole national space by merging the very Magyar landscape images and Hungarian folklore together, that he contradicts with the images of the Soviet forces. In this way, as Burns (1996) puts it, the film 'manages, at a time in the history of Eastern Europe when forthright scrutiny has not been easy, a genuine examination of the stresses that must exist between a smaller state and a super-power' (Burns, 1996:60).

Correspondingly, Jancsó's landscape rhetoric provides an understanding of the coloniser-colonised relation that is embedded in a united Hungarian space. The setting of the camp for instance, where József is held as a prisoner of war, aligns all the *Magyar* national characteristics that now stand under Soviet influence. Therefore, the base is located on the bank of the Tisza River where the prisoners are ordered to take a bath, while the others – some of them Hungarian musicians that play folk songs – are lined up at the ruins of a *tanya* in the centre of the camp, waiting to be examined by a Soviet doctor. This pro-filmic space, that merges the national place of the *tanya* with the landscape of the Tisza and folklore music together, is filled up with the soldiers of the Red Army that control and supervise the Hungarian civilians that must act according to the will of the doctor who rules the camp. Recalling the images of the Nazi camps, Hungarians are

[102] Transdanubia (*Dunántúl*) refers to the Western territory of Hungary, its borders marked by the Danube and Austria. According to White (2000), this region is another core to the Hungarian national identity (see White, 2000: 78-84).

represented as undressed and their hair cut while, being surrounded by a wire fence, they are incarcerated in the yard of the *tanya*.

By re-creating and uniting the national characteristics of Hungary in the same place as the foreign power, Jancsó establishes a colonised, disciplinary constellation, with the landscape of national essentialism being oppressed by the Soviet power. The language that the captives do not understand, the barbed wire that frames the national space and the soldiers that form a circle around the *tanya* all strengthen the subordination of Hungarians to the foreign power.

The enclosure and suppression of József is further emphasised by the representation of space. For instance, the imprisoned bathing group that tries to trick the guards by splashing the water and so help their inmate to find a way out underwater, is captured in a long shot that amalgamates the wire and the back of the doctor looking over the place (figure 7.3). Thanks to this composition, the fence dominates over the image of the river, while the figure of the Russian man is stressed by his higher position of looking down the water. His orders in the Russian language and the outstanding white colour of his clothes make him an absolute stranger in this very national context.

Furthermore, the crane shots and slow, long takes that, following an enclosed trajectory, circulate around the camp, only add to the sense of imprisonment. As John Orr (2000) emphasises when introducing his concept of 'the cinema of wonder'[103] and meta-modern narratives[104], in the case of the films of Jancsó, the sequence shot has a double function, that is, 'it is instrument and form, a means of revealing but also part of the nature of revelation' that signifies 'a constant onward moving in space and time' (Orr, 2000:65). Following Orr's revealing-revelation angle, we can argue that, besides its aesthetic function to free up the images from the spatial-temporal restriction of analytical editing, Jancsó gives the sequence-shot a politico-ideological trajectory where the choreography of the characters and camera corresponds to the oppressive function of the pro-filmic space.

[103] Cinema of wonder, as Orr puts it, 'is an episodic chronicle of discovery which echoes and replicates the sense of wonder we experience in our daily lives by displaying things that are outside that experience, the new, the unexpected, the catastrophic, the marvellous' (2000:65). Furthermore, they (…) create parallel worlds to the official discourse of politics. It preserves the quest for totality, which it inherits from socialist culture, but shifts it quite radically away from the world of ideology. (…) This culture clash of the old and the new, of country and city, technology and nature, custom and freedom has been framed against the grain of a discourse using progress as its watchword and history as its end-goal. (2000:52)

[104] Cinema of wonder operates with meta-modern narratives where 'the sequence-shot is a core aesthetic, an instrument for choreographing the precise double movement of camera and characters through physical space. It becomes crucial as a means of exploration stressing, unlike montage, the visual and acoustic importance of the out-of-the frame, the constant unveiling of that which may be already heard, but which is yet to be seen' (Orr, 2000:64)

Accordingly, the crane shots that comprehend the whole space of the camp and the long takes that move around a 180 degree, reveal the power structures embedded in the space of the camp, while, thanks to the long shots, they also accentuate the significance of the location itself. In this way, movement – be that that of the camera or the characters' – becomes a symbol for the domination of space.

In *My Way Home*, this domination is strongly connected to the colonising powers that monopolise the pro-filmic space of the film. Thus, the representation of the place where József and Kolya are sent in exile per se, carries on the features of the previous camp and emphasises the enclosed nature of the pro-filmic space.

If the camp has symbolised the process of occupation, the world of the two boys signifies the already established norms under Soviet ideology. Illustrating the quasi-liberal life in socialist Hungary, the wire in this case is replaced by hidden grenades that surround the remnants of the *tanya* where the two boys reside. In this way, the open landscape that demonstrates infinite freedom, gets transformed into an imprisoned territory bombed by Soviet shells (figure 7.4). Leaving the very space of the *Alföld* would result in one's death, which is illustrated in the accident scene of the two cows that leave the safe place.

Similar to the dilapidated dwelling of the camp, the ruinous building of the *tanya* that accommodate the Hungarian and Russian men, alludes to the death of the national values and freedom that have been demolished by the foreign, imperial power. In the centre of the conquered land, the dwelling functions as an agricultural unit, the centre of the meadow where the cows pasture and which provides the Red Army with milk that Kolya and József collect. In the colonised, enclosed space however, the *tanya* functions as the epicentre of the exploited values and goods, thus getting transformed into a prison that keeps József as a slave. Because of the infinity of the landscape that would never hide his figure, and the bombs that would kill him, the young boy cannot escape this land. Instead, he adapts to the situation and identifies himself with his colonised identity: first, he learns to communicate basic Russian, then he takes on the clothes of Kolya, and finally, acts as a Russian soldier when trying to find a doctor. Although, after the death of his friend, he could get rid of the uniform, he keeps it on, for which he will be soon attacked at the station.

Eventually, József gets stuck between two identities and two places. His long, aimless run from the village on the dusty road in the end of the film illustrates his hopeless fight against the Hungarian/Russian landscape and his colonised self. On the one hand, he could go back to the *tanya* and live as a colonised subject, while, on the other hand, he could also turn back on the road and discover what the post-war urban life has to offer him. Finally,

the omniscient airplane-gaze that has been chasing the boy throughout the whole film, gives us a hint of which way he would go on. Being aware of his subordinated position in the landscape, the young boy stops on the road and looks straight into the camera, thus facing the gaze of the colonised power. This act of resistance provides the film with an optimistic end as it suggests a certain kind of opposition possible that, instead of identification, would aim at confronting the colonising power.

Despite its optimistic end however, *My Way Home* operates with the disciplinary constellation of a pro-filmic and visual space that contributes to the parabolic narrative of the film. For instance, the final chasing sequence resonates with the metaphoric crane shots of the camp and the *tanya* that all emphasise the imperial power's dominance over the Hungarian landscape and individuals. The extremely long shots; the slow, diagonal camera movements that, as a pen, describe and scrutinise the colonised/coloniser relation of Kolya and József and the sequences that capture the Hungarian landscape and boy from an omniscient position enclosed in the colonised space, all accentuate the sovereignty of the foreign power and build up a horizontal enclosure.

7.6. *The Round-Up*

As with *My Way Home,* Jancsó's next film, *The Round-Up* (*Szegénylegények,* 1965), shows how the tyrannised spatial relation between the imperial power and Hungarians may be illustrated through the symbolic use of the *tanya* and the infinite space of the Alföld.

Set in 1869, twenty-one years after the failed 1848 revolution against the Habsburgs, *The Round-Up* provides a glimpse into the structure of political repression exercised by the Austrian-Hungarian government that eventually executes a group of Hungarian ex-revolutionaries. Instead of physical torture, the gendarme practices psychological terror by imprisoning outlaws into small cells and making them wear blinded hoods over their head. Through symbolic violence and restrictive methods, the authorities offer the prisoner János Gajdor (János Görbe) a deal that is, if he finds anyone else among the outlaws that has killed more people than himself, he will be given parole. The informer slowly becomes obsessed with his task and, hoping to get released, soon betrays the others by revealing that one of the female visitors has strong connections to Sándor Rózsa, the leader of the outlaws who is not present in the camp. The same night, Gajdor gets killed by his fellows for informing against the great highwayman and revolutionary hero, but his murderers

soon get revealed. Continuing the psychological game, the suspects are tricked to expose the remaining outlaws of the group who, while Sándor has been pardoned, still have to face execution.

7.6.1. The aesthetics of circularity

While certain elements remain virtually unchanged, the motif of enclosure and encirclement dominant in *My Way Home* are further emphasised in *The Round-Up* that unites space, movement and context in absolute coherence (Kézdi-Kovács, 1981). Although the film presents no consistent plan behind the events (Kovács, 2007) – which results in an episodic narrative structure where the chain and logic of the events often remain ambiguous – the visual arrangement of the pro-filmic space and its screen composition create absolute harmony on screen (fig 7.5). The infinite, circular space of the Alföld that surrounds the deserted *tanya*, and its cyclo-yard where the outlaws reside, synchronise thoroughly in a way that is often emphasised by the high-angle shots that accentuate the formal overlap between the two spatial units[105].

Figure 7.5: *The Round-Up*. The aesthetics of circularity

The circular character of the pro-filmic space also resonates with the movements of the outlaws that march in circles in the yard and which also corresponds to the circular trajectory of the camera that tracks the protagonists. These camera movements are to support the concentricity of the visual field for they emphasise the presence of an omniscient observer that, as a fourth person, is present in the dialogue and comments on the power relations in the film. Whether it is the crowd of outlaws or the gendarme, Jancsó organises the figures into a circular form that he sets on three points in space. The fourth, missing pillar in this construction is the camera itself that contributes to the circular form,

[105] Also, the film was shot in 2.35:1 widescreen that enabled Jancsó to play with the interaction of deeper and shallow space and provide the viewers with more information regarding the location.

while, with its slow, descriptive movements, takes on the attributes of a human eye. As Hirsch (2002) argues, in the films of Jancsó,

> 'The vision of the moving camera is identical to the gaze of a human figure, who, as interrogator or hunted prisoner, circulates around the space. Even if the camera ascends high, we have to imagine a man lurking who watches the happenings from a place where – be that an airplane, a statue or the top of the building – he has climbed. (..) The camera circulates because the owner of the camera-eye itself interrogates and threatens [the crowd that it captures], or the opposite, recedes and escapes [from the location]'. (Hirsch, 2002:58-59)

Before the execution of Béla Varjú (János Koltai), who was sentenced to death for his attempt to escape the *tanya*, the guards organise themselves into a triangle-form around Béla, while the camera slowly descends from a high angled position to their eye-line level. The four men form a small circle enclosed by the gendarme, signalling the oppressed position of the man (figure 7.6). While the camera slowly cranes to show the infinite space of the land – thus contradicting the enclosed structure with the openness of the *Puszta* – the circle of the men slowly dissolves. Suddenly, the endless space of the *Alföld* opens up in front of Béla who, paradoxically, finds himself in the same situation as when he tried to escape the prison. The infinite space ahead of him that the high-angle shot emphasises, again suggests absolute freedom, yet the step into this free space means death. On his way to the gibbet, he is accompanied by Gajdor and a third outlaw that re-constructs the previous circle of the guards. The camera that took on a distant position in the previous scene to demonstrate the power-relations of the space, now follows the characters sideways and captures them in close-ups while, as a fourth member of the group, it closes upon the circle (figure 7.6.1). During this long shot, the camera remains an active participant that, while constantly moving forward with the protagonists, follows the men's every action. In this way, it not only creates a cellular unity of absolute observation but, by proceeding and moving with the outlaws together, becomes a personalised agent that comments on the conversation of the men (figure 7.6.2).

Figures. 7.6: The inner circle

Figure 7.6.1. Béla leaves the circle

Figure 7.6.2. The circle closes. The anthropomorphic camera

Figure 7.6.3. The gibbet

Accordingly, it hesitates, stops and concentrates on the figures by zooming, freezing in space and re-framing the shot. In the end, after his unsuccessful attempt to get the names of the people that Béla has killed, Gajdor hopelessly drops behind and stops, while the camera stays with the convict. Again, as depicted in the previous shots, Béla has the infinite space of the *Alföld* ahead of him, but, as this space is ruled by the gendarme, he cannot escape to be murdered (figure 7.6.3). For this reason, to identify the space of the *Puszta* with death, Jancsó empties the frame and, in the final shot of the scene, he only shows the long shot of the gibbet.

7.6.2. Structureless structures: the choreography of power

The carefully constructed choreography of people and camera in space where the action is dependent on the act of filming, alludes to an omnipresent observer that, by constantly circulating around the protagonists and the pro-filmic space, assumes an omniscient narrator that monitors the actions without any spatial barrier. As Bordwell puts it:

> (…) 'We cannot fail to recognize that the self-consciousness of Jancsó's narration derives both from the camera operations and from the manipulation of figures and setting. Jancsó's famous choreography flaunts the power of narration wholly to synchronize the profilmic event with its cinematic rendition. (…) It (…) flaunts omniscience' (Bordwell, 1985: 145)

Besides the paradoxical pro-filmic space that combines openness with enclosure (Burns, 1996), this omniscient, faceless gaze is another device that supports the 'narrative of punishment' (Hirsch, 2002). By emphasising the unpredictability of the camera movements that avoid absolute points of rest within a shot, Jancsó creates a 'plastically stretched space' (Bordwell, 1985) whose every corner is filled by the power that gets dissolved here. This is to say that, similar to the unpredictable camera movements, the reaction of the power and its next action are unforeseeable too. For instance, the doppelgänger Veszelka (Zoltán Latinovits), who is accused of murdering and taking the place of a gendarme, is both portrayed as an outlaw and a guard, thus exercising power on both sides. Similarly, Gajdor is first captured as captive who later turns into an informer, akin to the outlaws that are accused of murdering him. In this way, the spatial flux – the tracking-zooming lateral camera movements and the omniscient gaze of the faceless power – allude to the 'structureless structure of power relations' (Gelencsér, 1992: 110) prevalent in the syuzhet that gets dissolved in the infinite space of the *Puszta*.

7.6.3. The narrative of circles

In addition to the circular form of the pro-filmic space and the cyclo-choreographed, 'ornamental repetition of the movement patterns' (Kovács, 2007:331), there is a significant circular tendency in the fabula of the film. The repetition of certain narrative schemes, such as the circular marching of the hooded outlaws or the women's lining up on the empty *Puszta*, contribute to the circular flow of the events. The repetitive narrative form not only corresponds to the visual arrangement of the frame and the camera movements, but illustrates the circular form of Hungarian history. With his avant-garde approach to the visual style and narrative structure of the film that resists all the requirements of the classical storytelling formula, Jancsó also refuses the linear progression of history and illustrates it as a cyclo-formed, repetitive discourse, whose certain points match each other. Correspondingly, with the description of the tyrannical power-structure in post-1948

Hungary, *The Round-Up* cross-references to the post-1956 establishment[106], thus suggesting an absolute overlap between the two totalitarian structures that both punish subjects by harsh psychological terror.

There is no doubt that it is because of this political overlap that the film has an episodic narrative which refuses to create fixed dramatic nodes. Instead, Jancsó concentrates on the ritual of power that is 'the rule (…) to make the detained say and do things against their will' (Kovács, 2007:335), while structuring the narrative around fluctuating power and spatial coordinates that provide background for the parable.

To summarise, the metaphoric, circular movements of the camera and its omniscient, commenting gaze; the fluctuating power-relations that get dissolved in the paradoxical space of the *Alföld*, and the textual symbols – the hood, the small cells, the chain – all create a disciplinary constellation and refer to the tyrannical establishment of the Kádár-era. To emphasise the reference to Hungarian history, Jancsó set the story on the national, yet colonised space of the *Alföld* that not only signals the end of freedom but the death of the nation as well. This is further supported by using a *tanya* as the main setting, whose chambers, that once accommodated animals, are transformed into cells that imprison Hungarians. Deprived from its (national) function, the *Alföld* and its heart, the *tanya* form a heterotopic unity that signals the imprisonment of the socialist society, while, through the oppressor-oppressed game, it also cross-references to the restrictive terror and the information-gathering characteristic of the Kádár-era.

[106]In order to premier the film abroad, Jancsó was obliged to acknowledge that the film had no reference to the present-day, socialist Hungary per se. Later, after the immense domestic success of the film – that, despite or even because of the 'tolerated' category, had more than a million viewers – the director was obliged to officially stand by the socialist establishment – which he eventually did in an interview in the main socialist newspaper, *Népszabadság* (Marx, 2000). Later he corrected his statement and in an interview in 2010, admitted that *The Round-up* is an obvious allegory of the 1956 events (see Mihalcsik, 2000).
Also, because of referencing 1956, *The Round-up* is replete with anachronisms. As Honffy (1968) accentuates, the gendarmerie was a non-existent military force in Hungary – it was only set up in 1881, in addition, it is highly questionable that the authorities would use psychological terror instead of physical punishment (see also Mihalcsik, 2000 and Marx, 2000)

7.7. Conclusion

In his later films, Jancsó puts even more emphasis to the flat landscape and the *tanya* that, as in *The Round-Up*, symbolises decay and death (*Silence and Cry*/*Csend és kiáltás*, 1968) and the oppressed position of the individual. Whether he sets his film in a concrete historical period (*Hungarian Rapsody*/*Magyar rapszódia*, 1978; *The Red and The White*/*Csillagosok, katonák*, 1967) or uses an abstracted time-frame to refer to the actuality of the authoritarianist establishment (*The Confrontation*/*Fényes szelek*[107], 1968), the infinite pro-filmic space signals one's oppressed position within the power-structures that terrorise the protagonists. Moreover, as the films' epic quality slowly disappears, Jancsó more and more relies on the panoptic scheme and cellular staging that substitute the missing narrative causality, and dramatic situations. The visual patterns of his early movies – the endless circling of horsemen, the diagonal and circular camera movements, and long shots, the precise choreography of the characters and the anthropomorphic camera – and the poetical pillars of the parabolic narrative – the spatial-temporal isolation, the stylised compositions and the sententious dialogues – thus not only retain their significant role, but, by substituting the story itself, get even more emphasis in the *mise-en-scène* (Petrie, 1983, Gelencsér, 2002) thus to disclose the terms of ideological critique (Strausz, 2009). Because of the growing dominance of the fractured narrative form of the films, however, the parabolic structure slowly transforms into an allegoric-symbolic shape (Gelencsér, 2001). As a result, Jancsó's later films cannot be categorised as parabolic *narratives* but arrays of visual symbols (*Agnus Dei*/*Égi bárány,* 1971; *Red Psalm*/*Még kér a nép*, 1972) and mythical depiction (*Electra My Love*/*Szerelmem, Elektra*, 1974).

The last *Alföld*-parable of the socialist epoch, Miklós Gaál's *Falcons* (*Magasiskola*, 1970) follows the same visual patterns of wide, long shots that depicts the *Puszta* as an infinite space. This endless field is where falcons are trained and used to control birds considered as pests to farmers. The leader of the camp, Lilik (Bánffy György) trains his animals according to rigid, brutish and bloody traditions. When an agricultural student who arrives there for practice training, faces this cruel world, he decides to catapult himself from Lilik's universe. To train his falcons, namely, the master uses tied-up birds which, due to their standstill and belt beaks cannot protect themselves. Lilik thus tortures the weak

[107] Although, according to the critics (Bordwell, 1985; Edmond, 2015), the film is set in 1948, there is no reference to this year in the film, nor are there clues that would suggest the exact time-frame of the setting.

animals that act only as tools for practicing the authority over other creatures. The parallelism between the socialist totalitarian structure and the yard is clear, such as the role of Lilik and his birds as symbols of the oppressive leadership.

Thanks to Jancsó's absolute turn to symbolism, and the birth of the new schools of documentarism (Béla Balázs Studio, Budapest School) and new aestheticism (István Szabó, Károly Makk, Zoltán Huszárik), the parabolic form slowly disappears by the beginning of the 1970s (Gelencsér, 2002). This is not to say that filmmakers would not criticise the regime in the following decades[108], but that the space as a tool of criticism gets no significant role in the films.

The *Alföld* and the *tanya*-world as locations only return around the system-change and will be dominant motifs in the films of Béla Tarr who re-articulates the role of the *Puszta* and makes it the epicentre of decay and the symbol of lost national values. Tarr returns to the heterotopic usage of space and, continuing the panoptic scheme of the *Alföld*-parables, accentuates the scopic control over it. The *tanya* and the *Alföld* will be thus represented in a de-colonised stage where an enclosed structure is built upon the decaying, post-apocalyptic, post-1989 pro-filmic space and panoptic schema.

[108] See Lívia Gyarmathy's *Do You Know Sunday-Monday?* (*Ismeri a szandi-mandit*? 1969), Péter Bacsó's *Witness* (*A tanú*, 1969); János Rózsa's *Spider Football* (*Pókfoci,* 1976), István Tímár's *It's me, Jerome* (*Én vagyok Jeromos*, 1970); István Bácskai-Lauró's *Knight of the TV-screen* (*Gyula vitéz télen-nyáron*, 1970), and *Rabbits in the Cloak-Room* (*Nyulak a ruhatárban*, 1972), István Böszörményi's *Birdies* (*Madárkák*, 1971), Gyula Gazdag's *Swap* (*Kétfenekű dob*, 1977), Ferenc Kardos's *The Accent* (*Ékezet*, 1977), or Péter Bacsó's *Titania, Titania , or The Night of the Replicants* (*Titánia, titánia avagy a dublőrök éjszakája*, 1988) that all criticised the failures of the socialism establishment. (see Bíró, 2001:88-91)

CHAPTER 8.

BLACK SERIES: SPACE IN THE CINEMA OF THE TRANSITION

> "Stories and badly. Stories are all stories of disintegration. The heroes always disintegrate and they disintegrate the same way. If they didn't, it wouldn't be disintegration but revival. And I'm not talking about revival but disintegration. Irrevocable disintegration. So, what's about to happen here is just one form of ruin among the million that exist. So if they put you in jail because of your debts, don't count on temporary ruin. Because this ruin is always final as ruin generally is. At the same time, there might just be a way to stop this ruin. Mainly with money, and not by playing the hero." (Béla Tarr: *Damnation*)

8.1. The 1990s: Industrial change and reaction in Hungary

The economic struggles, the new socio-political atmosphere, the studio privatisation, the vast number of imported Hollywood films, the abolishment of censorship and the restructured distribution system have radically re-structured the Hungarian cinema of the system change.[109]

First of all, the film industry was re-structured. The newly established Hungarian Film Foundation in 1991 (Magyar Mozgókép Alapítvány, MMK) – designed by the Ministry of Culture to distribute funding among distribution, production and exhibition (Portuges, 1995a) – incorporated 17 organisations of film professionals and a directorate of well known, leading intellectuals that allocated state funding among art cinema productions.

[109] Because the socio-political transformation was a slow process that already started in the 1980s, the cinema of the 1990s and system change will be referred to as an epoch that corresponds to the political changes and starts with Béla Tarr's *Damnation* (*Kárhozat*, 1987), the opening film of Black Series. Also, 1987 marks a year of progressive, political films [(Ferenc Kósa's *The Other Person* (*A másik ember,* 1987); Kézdi-Kovács's *Cry and Cry Again* (*Kiáltás és kiáltás*, 1988) and Sándor Sára's *A Thorn Under the Fingernail* (*Tüske a köröm alatt*, 1987)] that, by openly criticising the socialist regime, referred to the upcoming end of the Kádár-era (Kovács, 2002:240-313).

The MMK was soon criticised for preserving the structure and the personal power positions of the late socialist era, yet others backed the organisation for setting up a democratic framework that supports film productions out of public resources (Szekfu, 1994). What is for sure, despite the efforts to resuscitate Hungarian cinema, the modest budget of MMK only favoured low-budget and/or documentary films that did not attract many viewers[110] (Csala, 1988). In addition, the growth of television and the DVD-industry only exacerbated the situation of the film industry in Hungary[111] (Csala, 1998).

The structural changes and the inauguration of the capitalist system without capital (Glenny, 1990) 'produced a sense of compromise and even failure' (Portuges, 2007: 526) amongst filmmakers that, as Portuges describes in 1995, had to

> '(…) resort to such familiar Hollywood strategies as citing or visualizing commercial brand names on screen, establishing personal relations with influential individuals or potential foreign co-producers. As a result of these shifts – a new censorship of the market – it [was] not unusual to hear nostalgic allusions to a time when bankers talked finance and artists spoke of art, whereas (…) the reverse held true, as financiers acquire[d] art, while artists [were] obsessed by money' (Portuges, 1995: 1009).

As a consequence, the new rules fundamentally changed the attitude of several directors and resulted in major modifications in the role of film as political device. A crucial point is that, although the socialist authorities precluded any liberal discourse on the failures of the regime, the prohibition of open criticism served as a catalyst for parabolic speech that gave birth to several outstanding artistic productions (Bíró, 2010). After 1989 however

> '(…) it was no longer the artists' subversive and audacious task to promulgate the goals of democracy, [and as a result,] film-making lost something of its earlier fantastic power and opportunity to be the leading art that it had been during those years. It became something more common, closer to entertainment (…) Political struggle is no longer the privilege of the artistic endeavour. Something has been achieved, but something has also been lost. The exceptional role of film in the 1960s and 1970s worldwide is no longer prevalent (Bíró, in Portuges, 2010: 99)

[110] In 1987, more than 55 million tickets were sold, while by 1994 this number had decreased to 15 million (Csala, 1998:79). Also, whereas in 1988, Hungary had 2,943 film theatres, in 1992 there were only 697 and in 1996 558 cinemas in the country (Csala, 1998:79).

[111] In the 1980s, Hungary produced an average of 8 feature films per year, while in the 1990s, this number fell back to 5 (Gervai, 1995)

The fact that there was no longer need for connotative language and no demand for oppositional artistic activity, resulted in the re-articulation of the duty of the filmmaker and the role of the narratives themselves, which eventually led to several directors leaving the industry (Gervai, 1995). As the former head of the Film Academy, Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács remarks, because his ars-poetica – that was based on the allegorical criticism of the socialist regime – was no longer accurate, he gave up upon filmmaking: 'I always had an enemy to track. (…) Now that the enemy is gone, one loses one's sense of purpose' (Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács, in Portuges, 1992: 531). While Kézdi-Kovács stopped filmmaking, some directors immersed themselves in film theory (Gyula Gazdag) and/or migrated abroad (Béla Tarr), whereas some others embraced the everyday misery caused by the system-change, and got preoccupied with translating the anomic climate to screen (Attila Janisch).

8.2. Cinematic trends in the 1990s. Explicit historical remembrance

Despite the immense growth and success of foreign films, Hungarian cinema remained 'a form of national belonging and a desirable alternative to dominant cinemas that de-legitimize cultural identities' (Portuges, 1995:1009). Soon, a new generation of filmmakers emerged that, whether in the form of retrospective or personal, contemporary narratives, reacted upon the politico-social changes. A second wave of retrospective films was launched that continued the process of explicit remembrance of socialism, and openly evoked 1956[112] and/or the restrictive terror of the Rákosi-era[113]. Although most of these films used history only as a set for personal struggles, associating dictatorship with domestic abuse and terror, many of these melodramas identified the politico-social oppression of the Rákosi-era with the psychological coercion of the Kádár-epoch and the instable, corrupt present (Murai, 2008). By breaking the (socialist) taboo of referring to 1956 as a revolution, and revealing the structure of the physical-psychological terror practiced by the socialist regimes, these films did not only address the historic trauma of the nation, a practice that Portuges call the 'dynamics of intergenerational memory'

[112] According to Schubert, Hungarians associated 1989 with 1956, in this way covering their passive role in the change that 'has just happened to them' (Schubert, 2002: 15-16). See for instance, Péter Gárdos' *Wooping Cough* (*Szamárköhögés*, 1986); or János Zsombolyai's *On The Death Raw* (*A halálraítélt*, 1989).
[113] See Gyula Maár's *Mills of Hell* (*Malom a pokolban*, 1987), Péter Bacsó's *Oh, Bloody Life!* (*Te rongyos élet*, 1982); Kézdi-Kovács's *Cry and Cry Again* (*Kiáltás és kiáltás*, 1988), or János Dömölky's *Roofs at Down* (*Hajnali háztetők*, 1986).

(Portuges, 2003:44) but also reckoned with the amnesia representative of the Hungarian social discourse (György, 2000). In this way, the collective amnesia that dominated the last two decades of socialism, and had been hindering the process of collective remembrance, was about to be conquered.

8.2.1. Explicit reflections, anomic narratives

In addition to the wave of past-analysis, there was another filmic phenomenon which, by opening a discourse on the anomic situation of the present, signalled the end of amnesia and passivity in Hungarian discourse. Similar to Romania, the narratives of the system-change aimed at discovering and illustrating the post-1989 socio-psychological milieu by laying emphasis on the drawbacks of the change (Csala, 1993). This wave of films reflected upon the growing financial crises, and delinquency as the only way to endure the economic hardship (Ferenc Grunwalsky's *Little but Tough*/*Kicsi, de erős*, 1989); or migration to the West as another possible solution (Pál Erdőss's *A Light-Sensitive Story*/*Fényérzékeny történet*, 1993), while emphasising the drawbacks of capitalist transformation and the risks that accompanied entrepreneurship (Pál Erdőss's *Countdown*/*Visszaszámlálás*, 1986). Other recurrent themes in these films would cover the lack of social security (Pál Erdőss's *Last Seen Wearing a Blue Skirt*/*Gyilkos kedv*, 1996; Gyula Gazdag's *Stand Off*/*Tásztörténet,* 1988), the changes' negative effects on domestic coherence and family life (János Rózsa's *Brats*/*Félálom*, 1990); and the depression and alcoholism that accompanied the economic crises (Ferenc Kardos's *Truants*/*Iskolakerülők*, 1989). Furthermore, the narratives encompassed the vulnerable situation of women (György Molnár's *Anna's film*/*Anna filmje*, 1992) and prostitution as their only way out of the miserable financial situation (András Salamon's *Je t'aime*/*Zsötem*, 1992; György Szomjas's *Fast and Loose*/*Könnyű vér*, 1989), and the lack of public safety and general security (Lívia Gyarmathy's *The Rapture of Deceit*/*A csalás gyönyöre*, 1992) caused by the socio-political change. Interestingly, the negotiation of the system change as a positive socio-political turn is entirely missing from the movies of the 1990s. On the contrary, some productions approached the present with a certain kind of nostalgia for the Kádár-regime (Péter Gothár's *Melodrama*/*Melodráma*, 1990), arguing that the new ideology and political structure did not result in better living standards (Gyula Maár's *Whoops*/*Hoppá*, 1992) and/or freedom (Péter Vajda's *Freedom is here*/*Itt a szabadság*! 1990).

It seems that, although there was a public disillusionment with the socialist regime in the 1980s, the high hopes connected to the capitalist transformation had immediately vanished. In this way, both socialism and democracy failed in people's eyes, as none of the political structures could put an end to unemployment, social inequality and poverty.

To sum up, the examination of the socialist past in film – that was rather a historical approach than a profound socio-political analysis of the epoch – and the reflection on the anomic situation of the present played a significant role in the social discourse and communicative memory (Assman, 2008) of the 1990s. However, as far as the thematic content of the films went, the change in political system was reflected as a bitter, depressing process that contributed to the loss of national values and coherence amongst people, and led to migration, delinquency and further economic struggles, whereas the Kádár-era itself remained an epoch of unfinished investigation.

8.3. A wave of implicit remembrance: dead space, dead time

Besides the cinema of explicit remembrance and reflection, the third tendency in the cinema of the change in system was the implicit filmic reaction to the anomy of the epoch. Named after their depressive tone and black and white images that gave the films an apocalyptic overtone, the so-called Black Series (Györffy, 2001) displayed ruined, deserted landscapes, while mirroring the post-system change 'wreckage of social relations' (Nagy, 2010:5). The films feature unemployed characters in crises who, because they do not fit into the society, escape the city-life, and reside in unknown, abandoned environments that lack any fixed spatio-temporal coordinates. The focus point of this heterotopic universe is a Hungarian rural society that consists of a long-forgotten, grey landscape with deserted, dilapidating buildings and dark, muddy streets.

In general, it can be argued that the rural signals a search for purer values in Eastern European cinema (Iordanova, 2003). As Skrodzka puts it, in the post-socialist world it represents the 'continuation of the (…) peripheral vision of communist filmmaking that depicted minority communities, local folklore and village life, thus evoking the image of 'small fatherland' (Skrodzka, 2012:36). However, in Hungarian cinema, the 'cinematic vernacularism' defined by Skrodzka (2012) is rather a reactionary movement that signals the loss of national coherence and change of social context. That is, while prior to the

change in political system, the pictorial life in Hungarian cinema – especially in the New Wave – meant a return to national values and served as an outward manifestation of the psychological-existential crisis of the characters, the village life in Black Series mirrors a dystopic, grey territory with crimes and corruption, and the absolute psychological and physical decay of the protagonists.

Within the films of Black Series, a central role is occupied by the phenomenon of sin (Forgách, 1997), be that murder (Ildikó Szabó's *Child Murders*/*Gyerekgyilkosságok*, 1992), adultery (János Szász's *Woyzeck*, 1993), or robbery (Attila Janisch's *Shadow on the Snow*/*Árnyék a havon*, 1992). Here, dead space symbolises the destruction of national values and illustrates the rural as a dangerous, immoral territory that is filled with numerous possible threats that eventually lead to/cause the death and absolute decay of the protagonists. The crimes committed in the films are therefore in absolute synch with the ruined, apocalyptic location that the characters are embedded into, thus creating a dangerous, homogenous unit that corresponds to the post-1989 psychological and social changes.

This apocalyptic territory is further accompanied by the dead time of the pro-filmic and scenographic space. The extremely long, slow takes that circulate around the characters and the apocalyptic setting itself, give time a standing duration. On one hand, this circular form refers to the zero point in history – the events always repeat themselves – while, on the other hand, the circular, sweeping camera movements re-create the disciplinary spatial constellation characteristic to the parabolic cinema of the 1960s. Accordingly, the films of Black Series follow the aesthetic tradition that the historical, closed (*Snow Fall, Beyond Time*), and open parabolas (*The Round-up, Falcons*) have established, that is to create a connotative, metaphoric-symbolic level in the narratives which, this time, aims to reflect the remnants of the socialist past and the indifferent, totalitarian present. As will be demonstrated, the narratives follow the closed form of the socialist parabolas by setting the stories in a desolate, heterotopic place of prison-like establishments, while they also utilise the enclosed space of the *Alföld*-parables. What is born this way is the structural-compositional mixture of vertical and horizontal enclosure that, working with both textual forms, develops an absolute claustrophobic narrative. In addition, the space in these films acts as a fluid, de-colonised territory, where both the colonised and the post-colonialist era is present. That is, signalled by the architecture of the narrative space, the present and past

get united in the spatial representation of the films, thus creating a post-socialist, pre-capitalist in-between unity.

Although the films of Black Series are not considered as examples for collective remembrance, the spatial representation of them evokes the narrative mode of the parabolas of the 1960s, thus framing an aesthetic continuity between the productions made in the socialist era and the present (1990s). The films of Black Series will thus be investigated as segments of the collective remembrance of Hungary.

The notion of implicit remembrance is further supported by the thematic concern of the films. The gesture to give the authorities (police) a key role in Black Series can be read as a reflection of the paternalist establishment of the socialist regime and their controlling role in society. For instance, Tarr's *Damnation* ends with Karrer (Miklós B. Székely) informing against his collaborators that, according to him, could not become 'honest citizens under the protection of law', while he himself is driven by a 'deep respect for order'. In *Child Murderers*, the police man slowly becomes the father-figure of the suspect who eventually lures the child into a trap and sends him to a state penitentiary. In György Fehér's *Twilight* (*Szürkület,* 1989), the tension between the inspector and a young detective leads to the escape of the paedophile murder, while in Árpád Sopsits's *Shooting Gallery* (*Céllövölde*, 1989) and Janisch's *Shadow on the Snow*, the police act as a threatening power that hunts the suspects throughout the country. *Satantango* also features the police in the end of the film and has several references to the informing culture of the socialist times, similar to *Woyzeck* that builds its whole narrative around observation and information gathering. Consequently, the enclosed spatial structure of the films is further supported by the police as an omniscient power in the stories that supervises and hunts the protagonists and, as an omnipresent authority, decides over their fate.

8.4. Gloomy landscapes. The cinema of Béla Tarr

Béla Tarr's *Damnation* (*Kárhozat,* 1988) is considered as the opening film of Black Series that, with its rainy-muddy set, decaying atmosphere and placid camera movements, established the very aesthetics of the transitional cinema of Hungary (Györffy, 2001). His later films, *Satantango* (*Sátántangó*, 1994) *Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák*, 2000) and *The Turin Horse* (*A torinói ló*, 2011) all follow the tendency

established in *Damnation* and as so, can be negotiated as parts of one, coherent art work and reaction to the socialist-capitalist transition and a sense of disenchantment in the promise of the new, democratic world (Rancière, 2016). Tarr's 'spirited miserabilism' (Skrodzka, 2012) that derives from shooting in depopulated, god-forsaken, rainy villages while using a very peculiar narrative and stylistic elements – such as the long, slow takes, deep focus staging, frame freeze and black and white images – made Tarr an acclaimed director of art cinema and gave him a quasi-legendary, mythical status on the international scene (Romney, 2003; Fergus and Le Cain, 2001).

Tarr himself noted in several interviews that, because 'the landscape is one of the main characters' of his films (Tarr in Sweeney, 2012), his most important task before shooting was to find the right location that 'has a face, (…) looks like an actor' (Tarr, quoted by Romney, 2003). For instance, in an interview with Kovács (1994), he argues that with *Satantango*, their very aim was to make a landscape-film where the visual environment gets more emphasis than the story itself (Kovács, 1994:13). Eventually, similar to Jancsó, Tarr set most of his stories of his second period (1988-2011) on the vast land of the Alföld[114] and its forgotten villages. The *Puszta*'s already negotiated paradoxical character which, while mirroring freedom, imprisons the protagonists, contributed to Tarr's aesthetic concept of establishing an enclosed, abstract universe that does not offer the characters any possibility of escaping the location. In this regard, his treatment of space shows similarities with Jancsó's parabolic constructions. As Powell points out, there is a significant artistic linkage between the two auteurs, 'a specific identity moulded from the consistent use of evocative landscape, spellbinding long takes and mobile cameras, and a fixation on huddled masses of humanity' (Powell, 2015). Nonetheless, even though Tarr acknowledges the influence of Jancsó on his cinematic oeuvre, he denies any direct connection with his films (Fergus and Le Cain, 2001). Indeed, when it comes to the thematic concerns of the productions, we find nothing common in the two Hungarian directors: Jancsó's historical anti-narratives and the dystopic, corrupt universe of Tarr depict two different worlds and result in two diverse landscapes. However, the ritual

[114] As Tarr puts it, 'the maddening characteristic of the *Alföld* is that you cannot decide about the endless field lying in front of you whether there is a real perspective or just the perspective of hopelessness. You never know whether it has anything behind – if it has another side, for instance – or not. Besides, there is the constant symmetry of the landscape and time (…)'. In the same interview, her co-director Hranitzky explains that, while shooting *Satantango*, it was very difficult to get rid of the Jancsóian solutions of space, for everything reminded them of the elder master. (Tarr and Hranitzky, quoted in KAB, 1994:13)

movements of the camera[115] and the fusion of the actors and the vast landscape of the *Puszta* are part of the same universe (Kovács, 2002). Similarly, another common feature is the directors' preoccupation with interrogating the history and present situation of Hungary by using the *Alföld* as an allegory to express enclosure. In this way, 'Tarr and Jancsó made films that exist both as universal works of art, as well as something uniquely Hungarian' (Powell, 2015).

Nevertheless, it has been argued that the films of Tarr present a universal image of the post-socialist Eastern European misery (Kovács, 2013; Dudková, 2013; McLaren 2015) and that no Hungarian historio-cultural context is needed to understand the films (Rosenbaum, 1995; Kovács, 2013), I argue that, behind the first level of interpretation that alludes to the universal decay and lost values of the Eastern European socio-political situation, the Hungarian director made very Hungarian films[116]. First of all, Tarr uses very Hungarian locations, such as the *Alföld* and the dilapidating texture of the well-known national village architecture of the *Puszta* that he mixes with socialist constructions, thus establishing an intermediate sphere. The epitome of this de-colonised, in-between space is the so-called '*kocsma*', usually translated for 'inn' or 'pub' in English. Although in the first years of socialism, these locations gave place to cultural gatherings and discourses to all levels of society, the cultural changes during the Kádár-era led to the decline of these bars that 'became simply drinking holes' (Valuch, 2004:658) where workers gathered before, (during) and/or after work. Because of its main principle to offer a place for cheap alcohol consumption, the interior of the *kocsma* has been structured as to accommodate the most guests in the smallest room possible. In this way, people gather at the counter and around few standing tables, thus transforming the space into a homogeneous – socialist, egalitarian-proletarian – unit, which provides the guests with a forum for discussion. The

[115] The video-study of Lee (2012) provides an excellent comparison of the camera movements of Jancsó and Tarr. As Lee demonstrates, Tarr's use of the long take both incorporates and rejects different elements of Jancsó's camerawork. Common features are, for instance, the 'pendulum-like rhythm of the camera movement as it moves back and both between two poles of activity'. Also, the usage of off-screen space to economise activity and the choreography of long shots connect the two directors. However, as emphasised by Lee, Jancsó's camera is usually mounted on a dolly track and elaborates a great variety of shots while tacking, panning and zooming in and out. In contrast to this, Tarr often uses a handheld camera on a steadicam mount and works with less busy staging, thus emphasising the tactile qualities of the image (Lee, 2012). Similarly, Kovács points out that, whereas Jancsó's characters are in constant move, the protagonists of Tarr are captured in frozen, 'theatrical, artificial postures' (2013:58) that gives the images a static character.

[116] Tarr himself too argues for a global understanding of his cinema. In an interview with Ballard (2004), he states that 'we make Hungarian films, but I think the situation is a little bit the same everywhere', while in a conversation with Schlosser, he admits that 'I have the hope that if you watch [Werckmeister harmonies], you understand something about our life, about what is happening in Middle Europe, how we are living there, in a kind of edge of the world. That's all' (Schlosser, quoted in McLaren, 2015:181).

crammed drinking hole thus functions as a social space that, because of its association with severe alcoholism, has a negative connotation within the Hungarian society (Tomasz, 2001).

This is not to say of course that the *kocsma*-phenomenon is a Hungarian characteristic, but that it has always played a key role in the social (trans)formation of the Hungarian society that makes it a unique space whose connotations deserve to be closely investigated. For instance, due to the increase in total alcoholic beverage consumption in the 1990s (Elekes, 2014) – that was mainly caused by the societal changes and economic hardship during and after the system change – the number of *kocsma*s in the country had rocketed (Andorka, 1999b). With their affordable prices, these places slowly became the main hub for the unemployed layer of the society – mainly men – that spent most of their days with alcohol consumption and conversation (Tomasz, 2001). For this reason, the *kocsma* became the symbol of the system change and the synonym of moral decay and lost hopes, while the very place of them has been associated with homelessness and lack of hospitality (ibid). The choice of Tarr to centre his stories on these drinking holes and make them the centre of the narratives' spatial unity, is thus a self-conscious decision that strengthens the decaying social milieu that the characters are embedded into. In addition, their positioning on the *Alföld* gives these pubs a special connotation that signals the transformation of the national space into a drinking hole, an anomic location filled with misery and agony.

In the spatial universe of Tarr, the *tanya*-world – that, in the analysed films of Jancsó, symbolised the colonised nature of space – is represented as absolutely destroyed, a territory no longer occupied by any foreign (Russian) power. Instead, Tarr illustrates the aftermath of the colonising process that Jancsó's films have depicted, and shows the rural dwellings and environment as wrecked as possible. Because this post-Jancsóian world is a space of national mourning, Tarr's cinematic iconography does not require Jancsó's ritual choreography but a close focus on the texture of the space that describes its actual, destroyed state.

Thus, on the second level of interpretation, *Damnation*, *Satantango* and *Werckmeister harmonies* mirror the Hungarian society during its post-socialist transformational process. The spaces of his trilogy thus bear 'the signs of a destroyed tradition and an unfinished modernisation blocked halfway to completion' (Kovacs, 2013:55), while the narrative structure of the films – built around a circular form – further emphasises the enclosed, hopeless entity of the present. The palpable duration of the sequences, the repetitiveness of

the actions and the pro-filmic and scenographic space all contribute to the aesthetics of circularity and standstill, and lend the filmic space an allegorical connotation.

Beyond doubt, Tarr depicts a very Eastern European universe (Kovács, 2013; McLaren, 2015), however, he builds his in-between world on the very ground of Hungarianness. Similar to Jancsó, he uses the very national space and symbols of the *Alföld*, be that the architecture of the villages, the landscape, the atmosphere of the *kocsma*s or the pálinka[117] the characters drink. Thus, Tarr's isolated, abandoned, heterotopic universe provides a platform of social remembrance that encompasses the whole Hungarian society and depicts it in its very mourning phase.

8.4.1. *Satantango*

Tarr's second feature film, the seven-hour long *Satantango* follows the exodus of a group of couples and another few inhabitants from a god-forsaken village somewhere in *Alföld*. The grey, neglected, muddy landscape of the town and the decrepit walls of its houses suggest a forthcoming apocalypse that the villagers seem to be aware of. Futaki (Miklós B. Székely), Schmidtné (Éva Almási-Albert) and her husband, Schmidt (László feLugossy) therefore plan to leave the settlement behind and escape with the annual salary of the villagers. The gossip that Irimiás (Mihály Víg) and Petrina (Putyi Horváth) are coming to the town stops them in proceeding with their plan, though the role of the two men in the village's life remains unclear. Irimiás is respected and adored by the inhabitants, so much so, that when he offers the dwellers the opportunity to move to a manor and leave everything behind, the others give him their annual salary and follow his every command. At the manor however, they face similar circumstances that they had in the village. Hence, in the end, Irimiás sends them off to the neighbouring cities of the *Alföld*, while he keeps the money and writes an extensive report on the group to the police.

8.4.2. Colonialist transformations

The degraded, run-down rural landscape of *Satantango* is structured around a meticulously composed visual formation of black and white images, long shots, and a

[117] Hungary's national sprit

rainy-muddy, autumn-like atmosphere that, as a metaphor of sorrow (Valkola, 2015), has a dominant appearance in *Damnation* as well as other films of Black Series.

Tarr's village is clearly a leftover location, a half-forgotten Eastern European residuum that Wendell (2003) describes as a 'Large Abandoned Object'. According to him, the desolated architecture of the region and its run-down shabbiness 'represent misfortunes and mistakes in central planning, economic crises and makers', as they portray '(…) uncompleted, unused and derelict half-bridges, half-roads, half-built towers or just derelict and empty houses, factories and offices, where everything sellable has been stolen' (Wendell, 2003:131). Consequently, this 'any-space-whatever' (Deleuze, 2013b) clearly resonates with the post-socialist scenery of Hungary, while mirroring the lost hopes of the system change and that of the new capitalist era[118]. On a textual level, the state of transformation is illustrated by the decaying social milieu and ramshackle walls, constant rain and melancholic atmosphere (Király, 2015) and the crumpled work clothes of the alcoholic inhabitants. On a narrative level, this in-between social situation is mediated by the figure of Irimiás who, albeit metaphorically, brings the group 'back' to the past. By re-creating the collective 'island' of socialism, where, according to the man, 'no one is powerless, everyone lives in peace and feels safe', he resuscitates the egalitarian ideology of socialism. Irimiás often argues that, since he is gone, 'nothing has changed, misery remained misery' that is, with the capitalist transformation, the troubles of the society remained the same. For this reason, he re-installs a manor where, just as in the pre-capitalist times, they would live from agricultural production. His figure thus represents a Messiah who, by moving the villagers into a new territory, resuscitates the dead, colonist space. However, his nostalgic gesture that aims to bring the socialist collective farm back, eventually fails for the *tanya* they would establish, according to Irimiás, 'is totally isolated and a long way from town, and as so, could hardly be brought under control'. Irimiás thus refers to the restrictive power of the socialist authorities that, as already outlined in the first section of the thesis, aimed at supervising the neighbouring scattered homesteads and eventually merged them into collectives. Irimiás plays a tricky game that is, he re-installs a socialist space in the manor while, he himself as an agent, makes working on the settlement impossible. His role as corrupt Messiah is thus two-fold: on the one hand, he

[118] Rancière also argues that the film's milieu is a historical landscape, 'a small industrial town which had probably been part of the big industrial and socialist project before being abandoned. We are among the wrecks of the socialist voyage into the future' (Rancière, 2015:246)

deceives the villagers by promising a better life on the *tanya*, while further betraying them by reporting on their activities.

Irimiás, who writes a long testimony for the police, follows the orders of the Captain (Péter Dobai) who forces him to inform on the group. As he states, surveillance is needed because 'people don't like freedom, they are afraid of it' and Irimiás has no other option but to collaborate – though the reason why to do so remains unclear. The Captain, who argues that people must be controlled for 'they are afraid of freedom', and the paternalist agent-figure of Irimiás all recall the infamous system of the secret police. This is further accentuated by the structureless structure of the city that lacks any institutes and only features a municipality as controlling centre (Dudková, 2013). Consequently, *Satantango* functions as the model of dictatorial power (Bikácsy, 2014), where Irimiás, the false prophet and spy, establishes a 'nationwide cobweb[119]', that helps him to monitor the villagers' every movement.

8.4.3. Observation and space: the realism of senses

Besides the narrative layer, the controlled subject-positions and the very surveillance-thematic of *Satantango* is portrayed in the representational level of the film: the observation structure is a recurrent pattern in Tarr's oeuvre and has a dominant role in all Black Series films. In *Damnation,* Karrer constantly spies after his lover (figure 8.1), while in *Werckmeister harmonies,* Valuska (Lars Rudolph) gets obsessed with watching the whale brought to town. Similarly, in *Child Murders*, the main protagonist spies upon the lonely gypsy girl in the abandoned train wagon (figure 8). In the same way, the detectives of *Twilight* obsessively scan the environment (figure 8.2), while in *Woyzeck*, the railway flagman of the train station is watched by his boss from a central building who gives him the orders through a loudspeaker (figure 8.3). Correspondingly, the panoptic scheme is a key pillar in the films of Black Series that, together with the constant threat of police forces, contribute to the disciplinary set of the narratives.

[119] The cobweb clearly cross-references to the secret police and is emphasised by the narrator: 'And for the tender sound of an accordion the spiders in the pub launched their last attack. They sewed loose webs on top of the glasses, the cups, the ashtrays, around the legs of the tables and the chairs. Then they bound them together with secret threads so that in their hidden corners they notice every little move and every little stir until this almost invisible web is not damaged. They sewed a web on the sleepers faces, their feet, their hands. Then hurried back to their hiding-place, waiting for an ethereal thread to move to start it all again'.

Figure 8. ***Child Murderers***

Figure 8.1. ***Damnation***

Figure 8.2. ***Twilight***

Figure 8.3. ***Woyzeck***

The extremely slow takes, the circulating trajectory of the omnipresent camera, the deep-focus cinematography, the voyeuristic behaviour of the protagonists and the director's reference to optical devices not only frame a chain of focalisation but, by reproducing the real way of seeing things, creates a natural perception (Valkola, 2015:99). These films provide the spectator with an almost real-time experience of observation and offer a participatory-effect (Kovács, 2013). De Luca theorises this kind of cinema as 'realism of senses' (de Luca, 2011:43) that he describes being

> 'fascinated by the physicality of animate and inanimate matter, bodies and landscapes, all enhanced by slow and/or static long takes that deflate narrative progression, and through which the perceptual and material qualities of the image are enhanced. (…) a common trope animating this tendency is the presence of solitary characters wandering through deserted landscapes. Devoid of psychological nuances, they interminably walk, stroll, and loiter, often aimlessly, precluding narrative interaction in favour of phenomenological and sensory experience. These aimless perambulations invite the viewer to protractedly study, in silent long takes, the sheer presence and literalness of the empty landscapes they traverse, a contemplative verve' (de Luca, 2011: 43).

When examining Tarr's *Satantango* – along with Ming-liang Tsai's *Goodbye Dragon Inn* (*Bu San*, 2003), Gus Van Sant's *Last Days* (2005) as examples for this new kind of realism[120] – de Luca (2012) accentuates the superior role of the camera in the narrative that not only preserves temporal and spatial integrity to hyperbolic extremes, but gives the spectator absolute access to the pro-filmic space and its calm observation. As he argues,

> '(…) the narrative is not only rarefied through unbroken shots which quickly exhaust diegetic motivation, if ever there was one, but is blatantly averted. Whether through a camera which is content to endlessly reveal a desolate landscape devoid of human presence or a stubbornly stationary camera which refuses to follow a character that has left the screen; or a slow-moving camera which ostensibly recedes from the main event while framing a much wider visual field, (…) the act of recording takes the upper hand over narrative progression thanks to a camera which seems in awe of its own ability to capture overstretched blocs of space and time' (de Luca, 2012:192)

Besides establishing continuity in the narrative and providing the viewer with an absolute duration of time and space, the act of recording in *Satantango* offers the viewer a historical frame of seeing. That is, the slow-moving, scanning camera and long takes give way to an absolute panoptic perception, thus making the filmic space subordinated to the gaze of the spectator/camera, which recalls the scopic control of the socialist regime.

The central point of observation is the position of the Doctor (Peter Berling) who watches the happenings of the town through his dirty window, while – as another reference to the file-producing manufacture of socialism – recording the view in his notebook[121]. Being in the centre of the settlement, the Doctor bears with a panoptic gaze that sees everything without being seen, while the camera captures his indirect perception (figure 8.4).

[120] Realism – as Buslowska (2009) points out in her analysis on Tarr – is by no means social realism, rather, it functions 'as a creative exploration of reality in the form of a thinking image where real is not a representation of reality and virtual is not a negation of the real' (Buslowska, 2009:109).

[121] In Krasznahorkai's novel, the Doctor is the narrator as well as the writer of *Satantango*. On the different perspectives of the book and film see Bátori, 2013.

Figure 8.4 The Doctor's observing position

Figure 8.4.1. Ending the panoptic scheme

That is, he sits with his back to the camera that encompasses his view, but at the same time, the device gives absolute access to the spectator of the film that thus sees both layers of the depth of field and gets a direct, spatial-temporal experience of his recording. In this way, the spectator is compelled to scan the image and analyse its chain of observation. In the end of *Satantango,* the window – that functions as a movie canvas for both the Doctor and spectator – is boarded up by the man, thus signalling the very end of the surveillance process and the (his)story itself (figure 8.4.1).

In addition to the full spectatorial unity, another crucial factor is the movement of the camera that Tarr endows with an omniscient presence. As a result, the device worms itself into the most intimate realms of the characters. Accordingly, the composition arrangement of *Satantango* operates along two main frames: the long shots – that establish the context of the scene – are accompanied by the close ups of the characters. The Hungarian director rarely uses any medium shot but starts the scenes in a stable, long frame that serves as an establishing point for examining the subject(s) of the image. Similar to a fly, his camera often descends to the narrative space and joins the protagonists during their activities, while examining every pore of their face in long plan-sequences. This technique, which is peculiar to the film – and Black Series in general – is expressed on the narrative level of *Satantango*, when the Innkeeper (Zoltán Kamondi) complains about the flies that, as he puts it;

> 'can't be removed, they soil everything. I could spend my whole life following them with a cloth. The legs of the table, the window, the stove, the crates. The worst is that you can't see them do it. If I start to watch them, they can feel it and they vanish!'

The words of the innkeeper – together with the spider-metaphor of Irimiás – cross-references to the position of the camera-agent, that, as a spy, follows the events from an absolute panoptic position. Thus, similar to the camera of Jancsó, Tarr' device bears with omnipresence, that, as an interrogating-examining gaze, constantly analyses the pro-filmic space that lies in front of it. In this regard, Tarr makes no difference between the muddy, wet surfaces of the buildings and the faces of the protagonists. Because they complete each other, that is, the furniture and walls are endowed with the human face of the passing time, and the figures act as part of the decaying set, the camera investigates both before leaving the pro-filmic space behind.

The humane behaviour of the camera gaze can be best observed in the *kocsma*-scenes of the film. After the death of Estike (Erika Bók), the villagers gather in the bar, and listen to one of the men spreading the rumours that Irimiás is coming to town. While he constantly repeats how he was plodding, the camera examines the faces of the protagonists, one after the other, so that the voice of the man remains off-screen.

As a hidden observer, the camera starts from behind the stove of the place that blocks half of its vision. It then captures the innkeeper in a fixed, long take as he puts wood on the fire, while the others in the background distribute their annual salary (figure 8.5). Then, as if getting curious why the innkeeper would not join the others at the table, it slowly zooms to the door that the man closed behind himself, while gradually ascending from its very low spatial position. Its focus is still on the man, when some other figures enter the image and gather around the bar of the *kocsma*[122], thus disclosing the vision of the camera (figure 8.5.1). As if giving up to examine the innkeeper, the gaze then catches up with Futaki who is followed in a long shot while joining the table of the Schmidts. At this point, the vision of the camera is again blocked by the stove, but, instead of the vertical obstacle of the first shot, it is the top of the object that horizontally confines the image (figure 8.5.2). Again, the camera captures the figures in a fixed position when the innkeeper appears in the depth of the image (figure 8.5.3).

[122]As Bordwell (2007) notes, 'In the films from *Damnation* onward, the deferred reverse shot has been put at the service of attached point of view, so that often when Tarr's protagonists peer around a corner or out of a window, instead of optical POV cutting we have an over-the-shoulder view that conceals their facial reaction'.

Figure 8.5 The hiding starting point

Figure 8.5.1 The innkeeper in focus

Figure 8.5.2. The horizontal block

Figure 8.5.3. The innkeeper appears again

Figure 8.5.4. The camera ascends

Figure 8.5.5. Getting the image

As if again trying to catch the man, the device leaves Futaki and the Schmidts behind and follows him to the bar, however, again he cannot be captured in his fullest presence as the other figures block the view. The camera thus moves from the innkeeper to the Halics-couple, while later, when the barista again appears in the image, drops the two figures by getting the focus back on him. This choreography continues in the whole sequence and only ends when the innkeeper finally steps forward and the camera eventually ascends to the eye-level (figure 8.5.5).

The gaze of the camera is thus closely linked to the movements of the innkeeper, yet he always disappears in the depth of the image. As a human gaze, the device starts to examine the context of the *kocsma*, with its guests and texture together, jumping from one figure to the other, while constantly returning to the figure of the man. Eventually, after the entry of the mother of Estike, it takes a 180 degree turn and – leaving the stove-bar trajectory behind – records the group from the innkeeper's possible point of view. Instead of investigating the others however, it captures the close up of the barista – the shot that it has been hunting so far – who turns his head towards the wall and drinks a shot of *pálinka*. While the other man's off-screen voice still fills the space – 'Irimiás and Petrina are coming!' – the sequence ends with his close up (figure 8.5.5.).

The camera-eye constantly draws attention to itself in relation to plot and story – that Branigan defines this as 'unmotivated camera movement' (Branigan, 2006:26) – and acts as a spy of the events of the space that, as the director emphasises with the very low angles of the shots, follows the movement patterns of a flying fly. Just as a beetle that has no spatial obstacles, the device ascends to a low angle position from where he captures the actions by remaining distant and shifts from one figure to another while keeping the innkeeper in focus. Later, as if transforming into a human – hence the eye-level shot – the camera-fly confronts the people in the *kocsma*, thus revealing its panoptic gaze that results in the shock of the characters that freeze in time (figure 8.5.4.).

Eventually, the human gaze again turns into a fly and, as if resting on the shirt of the man, scrutinises the physiognomy of Estike's mother. Then, in the last shot, it flies on the wall behind the man and, similar to the previous sequence, analyses the facial expressions of the innkeeper. This technique not only presupposes an omniscient gaze, but creates absolute continuity and fluidity in the pro-filmic space where nothing remains hidden: the fly crosses the place of the *kocsma*, while stopping and resting on the stove or other objects of the room, thus acting as a spy that can see everything but which can never be seen. In this way, the camera takes on an absolute panoptic gaze that makes the very space of the *kocsma* subordinated to the watching apparatus. Also, by contrasting the camera's free movements with that of the enclosed spatial position of the characters, Tarr accentuates their very imprisoned position in the narrative.

8.4.4. From vertical to horizontal enclosure

As mentioned above, the observation chain is further accentuated by Tarr's intermedial gesture to feature double frames in the screen image. While in *Damnation*, it is the geometry of vertical lines that defines the pro-filmic space, in *Satantango* – and the other films of Black Series – we find a unique mixture of horizontal and vertical enclosure. On the one hand, the walks in the never-ending landscape of the *Puszta* and the extremely long shots that the films operate with, give the protagonists an enclosed position that, as already negotiated in case of the open parables of the socialist epoch, imprison the characters (figures 8.6-6.6.4.). In *Satantango*, Irimiás and Petrina are often represented paddling through the *Alföld*, that Tarr captures in fixed, long shots as they first appear with their back to the camera and later almost disappear in the image (figure 8.6). However, wherever the protagonists walk, they find themselves at the same point and situation they started moving from. For instance, after leaving the town, Tarr shows the paddling of the dwellers through the landscape of the *Alföld* for 11 minutes, before he embarks upon analysing their close ups as they arrive at the manor. During this extremely long take, his camera follows the group in a long shot from behind, while keeping a constant distance between the last walking man and the very position of the device. Halfway, the group takes a pause, while the camera, moving around them on 180 degrees, changes its position and captures their walk from a frontal position. Due to the length of the journey, by this time it is only the contour of the protagonists that can be seen: the twilight and the dark clothes of the people melt into one, thus documenting the whole process as they become one with the darkness of the landscape.

Figure 8.6. *Satantango*. Barely visible figures in the landscape

Figure 8.6.1. Horizontal enclosure: *Woyzeck*

Figure 8.6.2. Open horizons. *Child Murderers*

Figure 8.6.3. *Shooting Gallery*

The Pannonian frame (Dudková, 2013:25) is thus converted into an allegory that emphasises the enclosed position of the people that walk through the landscape in vain. The 360-degree trajectory of the camera that encompasses the dwellers in a circle, and the circular texture of the landscape itself, illustrate a geometric coherence within the image, and contributes to the aesthetics of circularity. Moreover, the imprisoned position of the walkers not only assumes a disciplinary space – a cellular unity of surveillance – but converts the national space of the *Alföld* into the allegory of a (national) prison where people always return to the point that they started their journey from.

Figure 8.7. Vertical geometry

8.4.5. The space closes

The new *tanya* and new life – that the group is desperately longing for – could be said to re-establish the lost connection between man and land, and nation and national space, the inner threat – Irimiás as agent – and the lost socialist hopes (system change) predetermine the very fate of the project. Tarr thus sets the manor on a dilapidating ground, with large, ramshackle walls and a prison-like establishment. Whereas, on the road to the settlement, Tarr utilises a horizontal textual form, the imprisoning landscape of the *Puszta* changes to a narrow, vertical arrangement. In the castle-like fortress, the Hungarian director uses obstructing camera work (Kovács, 2013: 43) that covers the space of the action with various physical obstacles, thus controlling the view of the device (Bordwell, 2007). Although, in the previous scenes, the camera acted as an omnipresent fly that overcame any spatial barrier, here it constantly meets walls, windows and stones that hinder his vision.

At the manor, the story space is constantly double framed, which leads to the protagonists' vertical imprisonment into the small, concentrated space of the dwelling (figure 8.7.) and recalls the metaphoric window of the Doctor's room and his observing gaze. Furthermore, by limiting the space for character movements, the camera again presents a historic frame of surveillance that, together with the abandoned pro-filmic space of lost hopes, refers to the subjected position of the villagers. That is, although their original settlement was an isolated, god-forsaken universe, it at least had space for movement, whereas here, the physical obstacles of the manor obstruct their every action. In the three days spent at the place, they sleep, drink, eat, and bath in the *same* room that

lacks any kind of comfort or homeliness. The unpleasant circumstances generate several conflicts among the villagers that eventually ask for their money back. In this way, the double-framing of the pro-filmic space that portrays the people in metaphorical cells, signals the subjected position of the villagers. Although in the end, they leave the confined space and follow Irimiás into the town, they know that their dream to establish a new place for agricultural production has eventually failed and their move to the manor was nothing but a trap.

8.4.6. Circles of traps

The hopeless situation of the villagers is further emphasised by the already mentioned circular trajectory of the camera and the story-line itself that signals a persistent return to the zero point of history. Space and time both allude to a carefully planned trap that the characters are stepping into.

As Balassa (2009) notes on Krasznahorkai's novel, the writing is 'the choreography of a trap to the rhythm of the asymmetric melody of a hellish, slow-paced tango' (Balassa, 2009: 178) whose twelve chapters are divided into two sections (I-VI and VI-I) whereby the writing returns to itself and the story restarts. Similarly, the film resembles the steps of a tango – and so a cobweb – by constantly moving the story line in circles, first from outside inwards, then from the centre outwards. This dance consists of twelve steps, which intersect at three points. The first half of the film (IV; VI *The Work of the Spider* I-II) describes Irimiás approaching and the excitement of the inhabitants. The next two main plotlines then are complemented by an additional two: a scene reveals the suicide of Estike (V. *Unraveling*), while another one witnesses the commission given to Irimiás and Petrina (II. *We are resurrected*). The circle containing the first six chapters then finishes with the prophets arriving, which highlights the dramatic turn that the appearance of Irimiás represents.

To make up the full circle and to find the narrative's central point, the second half of the film continues with the narration of the events surrounding the death of Estike, positioning this act as the motivational centre of the story, which later prompts the villagers to move (VI. *Irimiás Makes a Speech*). Accordingly, the subsequent sequence first describes the departure of the locals (V. *The Perspective, as Seen from the Front*), that is followed by two summarising scenes that depict the vision of Irimiás (IV. *Heavenly*

Vision? Hallucination?), their report to the police (II. *Nothing but Work and Worries*) and revealing the film's *mise-en-abyme* structure from the Doctor's point-of-view (I. *The Circle Closes*).

In summary, through the tango-steps mentioned above, the cobweb is the shape that defines the structure of the story-line as well as the *mise-en-scène* of the film. All twelve diagonal threads pull their events towards the centre, where the Doctor stands. This position cannot belong to Irimiás because, although he is the saviour of the story, his role is controlled by the Captain, which assumes that he too proceeds along the circle. The only difference between him and the others is that he can visualise time, that is, he is aware that everything returns to the zero point. Thus, the cobweb structure forms a trap and signals the hopeless situation of the nation through the circular structure of the (hi)story. Furthermore, this form resonates with the spying-informing network of Irimiás and the police that, recalling the restrictive terror of the socialist times, creates a surveillance web along which the camera is moving along.

8.4.7. Visible circularity

Kovács (2013:118-119) also notes, that from *Damnation* on, Tarr's stories have a circular structure, which suggests an eternal turn where everything remains as it started. What the various critics and scholars writing on *Satantango* have not generally discussed is that, as Dudková argues (2013:29) this circular structure is explicitly recalled in the textual level of the story. The circular motifs on the curtains in the house of the Schmidts and that of the glasses in the *kocsma*; the lenses of the binocular through which the Doctor examines the landscape, the plates and ashtrays on the table in the home of Estike and the inn where Irimiás and Petrina stop for overnight, are all part of the circular *mise-en-scène* that Tarr – and the other directors of Black Wave operate with (figures 8.8-8.8.2). The circular textuality of the image is then complemented by circular camera movements that, as a threatening force, encloses the protagonists into the eternal circle of history. This is best illustrated in the scene where Irimiás words his letter to the authorities and later, when this report is being read by the police men. While in the *kocsma*-scene, the camera takes two full circles around the table where Petrina sits, in the case of the police, this number increases to six, with four full circles clockwise and another two laevorotary rings.

Figure 8.8. Circular textuality. ***Child Murderers***

Figure 8.8.1 ***Woyzeck***

8.8.2. ***Shadow on the Snow***

Tarr's choice to accentuate the circular trajectory of the camera in these key scenes reveals the repetitiveness of power-relations, that is, the permanency of the subjected-oppressor positions in the narrative. This eternal circle is emphasised by the analogy of the compositions that Tarr operates with (figure 8.9).

To sum up, the camera's metaphoric, circulating trajectory emphasises the observational aesthetics of the whole film, as well as the eternal circle of history, where everything returns to the zero point of the events. Hence, the story of *Satantango* ends with the Doctor blocking his and the spectator's view. Although the destruction of the window in one of the film's last scenes, it can be interpreted as the end of the socialist surveillance apparatus. With the compositional match of the films' two key scenes, Tarr accentuates the continuity of the despotic system that has been inherited by the very capitalist socio-political structure.

Figure 8.9. Overlapping composition

8.4.5. Conclusion

The black and white, muddy, tumble-down horizon of the *Alföld* in *Satantango* mirrors a lost, abandoned national space that, in contrast to Jancsó, is portrayed as a de-colonised territory that – already conquered and then destroyed by the colonisers – stands as a forgotten unit. There are no more foreign power-relations in this space, but a strict form of governance under the leadership of the squealer Irimiás who himself plays a subservient part in the cat-and-mouse-game. While being part of the group, he is controlled and supervised by the police he has to report to, whereby he himself steps into the betrayed-circle too. In this way, the national space of the *Puszta* – that gets subjected to a traitor of the same nationality – forms a tyrannical establishment that means everybody is part of as a prisoner. To signify the sense of psychological enclosure, Black Series and *Satantango* operate with both horizontal and vertical spatial forms that wrap the characters into a textual prison. These compositions also establish a historic frame of surveillance where the camera, as an omniscient gaze, takes on the attributes of a fly that moves freely around the protagonists, while the subjects themselves remain in enclosed territories. Accordingly, the spatio-temporal structure of *Satantango* reveals the form of a trap – a cobweb – that encapsulates the characters. Tarr emphasises this narrative arrangement by circular camera movements, as well as formal references to circles in the text of the film that, following Jancsó's aesthetics of circularity, allude to the eternal circle of history and its oppressed-oppressor structure.

Besides the circular *mise-en-scène*, the location achieves special emphasis in the Black Series: besides the national space of the *Alföld* (*Gallery Shooting*), Transdanubia (*Shadow*

on the Snow) and the Tisza (*Child Murderers*), the representation of the *kocsma* as a new national space is accentuated. By substituting the intimate, domestic spaces of the pre-transition films with drinking holes, the directors refer to this social space as a symbol for the loss of stability that defined the very anomic situation of the 1990s.

Tarr, as argued by Kovács (2013:1), has continued his permutation cycle and 'arrived at a point where only two possibilities seemed viable: returning to a more classical formal system, or abandoning his formal and thematic world altogether' (Kovacs, 2013:1). Eventually, the Hungarian director took the circularity motif to extremes, along with the length of the film shots[123] that, in *Turin Horse*, reached its peak and ended Tarr's implicit reflection on the past. Similarly, the cobweb narrative form in the films of Janisch reached an extreme point and resulted in a mosaic narrative form difficult to comprehend[124] while, similar to Tarr, the circular camera movements are emphasised to a greater extent in the staging of the shots. In this way, while the black and white form slowly disappears from the films, the compositional arrangement and the circularity – as a return to the zero point of history and as a trap – survives the series and, as illustrated by the next chapter, returns in the cinema of the 2000s.

[123] The average shot length (ASL) in *Damnation* was 2 minutes, while in *Satantango* it is 2 minutes 33 second, in *Werckmeister harmonies* 3 minutes 48 seconds (Bordwell, 2007) and 4 minutes in *The Turin Horse* (Kovács, 2013:81). Consequently, the ASL is by 51% longer in the last film than it was in Satantango (Kov, 2013:81).

[124] See Janisch's *After the Day Before* (*Másnap,* 2004) and *Long Twilight* (*Hosszú alkony*, 1997)

CHAPTER 9.

SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN CINEMA

9.1. The post-2000 cinema of Hungary: institutional changes

Similar to Romania, the Hungarian film industry experienced a severe crisis around the millennium. It was not only the accumulated debt and structural problems of the Hungarian Film Foundation (MMKA) that made shooting almost impossible in the country, but the weak financial state of film education too, meaning that by the millennium, there was a lack of any new, strong generation of filmmakers. The almost zero budget of MMKA[125] and its preference towards supporting commercial cinema and older filmmakers, forced Hungarian film critic Schubert (2000) forecast the death of Hungarian cinema. As he stated, 'the youngest director in the country is still Miklós Jancsó, which might be glorious for him, but a shame for the industry. Hungarian cinema is full of elderly works and secured filmmaking, afraid of risking anything. If someone dares to do something avant-garde, something brave, then in a year, he is out of the inner circles. Risking is death dangerous (…)' (2000:4). Indeed, prior to the millennium, there was a boom of crowd-pleasing comedy-remakes – and low-quality genre films in general – that favoured popular filmmaking, and put art cinema in the background (Pápai-Varga, 2010).

In order to resuscitate the national cinema, serious steps were taken on both the state's and the professionals' side. In 2004, a new tax credit system and rebate scheme was implemented that now provides indirect state subsidy through a tax certificate issued by the National Film Office (Cunningham, 2010). This system provides a non-recoupable, non-repayable 20% cash rebate for Hungarian films that pass the Hungarian cultural and industrial test[126]. Beyond doubt, the new film law 'is one of the most comprehensive pieces of film legislation to have been passed in Eastern Europe since 1989' that, as Cunningham notes, 'seems to be proving very beneficial to the Hungarian industry (…)' (ibid,

[125] In 2001, the MMKA had the very same budget as in 1991 when it was established. The state support of 420 million HUF (around 1.330.000 Euros) only enabled directors to work on very low-budget productions that, because of the lack of money in distribution, would not even be premiered (See Muhi, 1999)
[126] On the point-scale examination of cultural content and contributions. (See Cunningham, 2010)

2010:127). Indeed, the scheme has contributed to the recruitment of production companies and the immense growth of coproductions and Hungarian lease work in foreign productions (Muhi, 2010). In addition, thanks to the foreign capital, new studios were established that now host several big budget film productions which, together with leasing, constitutes the two-third of the Hungarian film's industrial costs (Muhi, 2010).

Nonetheless, after a boom in 2004 when Hungarian cinema produced about 400 films a year – with an average of 30-35 feature films – the MMKA now provides poor financial support and is still unable to fund filmmakers wishing to make high-budget and aesthetically high-quality productions (Muhi, 2011). Also, although the scheme – together with other European film funds[127] – contributed to some outstanding films, it did not bring a real breakthrough. The directors were still dependent on the decision of the MMKA that, while dividing the minimal fund among 40-50 films, still backed 'unwatchable productions' (Szilágyi, 2005:4) whose production, because of the missing financial support, would take many years. For this reason, in 2012, another film law was promulgated that aimed at structuring an independent financing system of Hungarian film that would not rely on the budget of the government anymore. With 80% of the tax revenue earned by the national lottery, a new source for public funding has been secured. Moreover, the central decision of support has shifted to the Hungarian National Film Fund (MNF) – supervised by the National Development Ministry – which was an evident proof of the industry's focus on secured international success (Nadler and Holdsworth, 2011). As Andrew Vajna, the Government Commissioner for the Renewal of the National Film Industry has stated, the emphasis of the amendment lies on producing a few, but outstanding productions (Muhi, 2012). For this, they have been focusing on new talents that get absolute support from the MNF which, if backing a production, provides the director with unconditional support. Accordingly, readers help the screenplay to reach its finalised form, the production is supervised by professional financial guards and the marketing lies in the hands of sales managers. In exchange, the MNF has the right to the final cut.

Although the new film law has been widely criticised for being 'the centaur of the socialist and Hollywood system' (Muhi, 2012:4), the success of the new structure cannot be questioned. In 2016, the main project of the fund – László Nemes's *Son of Saul* (Saul

[127]Among others, Hungarian films were backed by the Media 2007 Programme, Euroimages, the British Script Fund and the French CNC. Despite these sources, many filmmakers remained sceptical of foreign capital. As stated by Tarr, because of the conditions they offer, they only form another belt of censorship. (See Tarr in Bori, 2004).

fia, 2015) – won the second Academy Award in the film history of Hungary and put the country back on the map of world cinema.

9.2. The new generation(s)

As Varga (2011) highlights, contemporary Hungarian cinema is still a relatively unexamined research territory. Although the canonisation of the post-millennium Hungarian cinema has only started recently, most of the critics agree that the term 'Hungarian New Cinema' – also called 'Moscow Square generation' (Hoeij, 2010) after the title of the opening film[128] of the tendency – mainly covers the students[129] of two director classes from the University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) whose members

[128] The reason to have named the tendency after Ferenc Török's *Moscow Square* (*Moszkva tér*, 2001) lies in the thematic concern of the film itself that indirectly addresses and mirrors the whole SZFE-generation. The film – set in 1989 – is based on the personal memoirs of Török and the way he experienced the system-change. Along with his personal point-of-view, Török draws a picture on the whole generation by basing the story of true socio-historical happenings and the iconic space of Moscow Square in Budapest, the central meeting place for young people. Moscow Square thus recounts the memories of the first SZFE-generation that graduated from high school around 1989, while facing the drawbacks of the upcoming freedom that Török portrays through the migration of the main female character and the universal poverty of the post-1989 environment.

[129] The first class started in 1995 with eight students whose works later all achieved great domestic – and some of them international – recognition. The films of Dániel Erdélyi (*Forward*/Előre, 2002), Csaba Fazekas (*Happy Birthday*!/*Boldog születésnapot!* 2003), Gábor Fischer (*Montecarlo!* 2004), Diána Groó (*Csoda Krakkóban/Mircale in Cracow*, 2004; *Vespa*, 2010) Szabolcs Hajdu (*Tamara*, 2004; *White Palms*/*Fehér tenyér*, 2006; *Bibliothèque Pascal*, 2010; *Sticky Matters*/*Macerás ügyek*, 2011 and *Mirage*/*Délibáb,* 2014), Kornél Mundruczó (*This I Wish and Nothing More*/*Nincsen nekem vágyam semmi,* 2000; *Pleasant Days*/*Szép napok*, 2002, *Delta*, 2008, *White God*/*Fehér isten*, 2014) Bence Miklauzic (*Sleepwalkers*/*Ébrenjárók*, 2002; *Parking*/Parkoló, 2004; *Children of the Green Dragon*/*A zöld sárkány gyermekei,* 2011), György Pálfi (*Taxidermia*, 2006; *I'm not your friend*/*Nem vagyok a barátod,* 2009; *Hukkle*, 2002 and *Free Fall*/*Szabadesés*, 2014) and Ferenc Török (*Moscow Square*/*Moszkva tér*, 2001; *Eastern Sugar*/*Szezon*, 2004; *Overnight*, 2007; *Apaches*/*Apacsok*, 2010; *Istanbul*/*Isztambu*l, 2011; *No Man's Island*/*Senki szigete*, 2014) were praised for their direct approach to reality and were often grouped together by their method to refer to the whole society through the representation of the existential and identity crisis of the figures in the narratives (Rudolf 2012; Strausz, 2014; Benke, 2015).
The second generation of Hungarian New Cinema started studying directing in 2001 and was also lead by Simó – though later, because of his sudden death, Ferenc Grünwalksy took over the class that had Anna Faur (*Girls/Lányok*, 2007), Balázs Krasznahorkay, Áron Mátyássy (*Lost Times*/*Utolsó idők*, 2009; *Weekend*/*Víkend*, 2015), Ágnes Kocsis (*Fresh Air*/*Friss levegő*, 2006; *Adrienn Pal*/*Pál Adrienn*, 2010), Réka Szabó, Natália Jánossy, and Attila Galambos (*The Investigator*/*A nyomozó*, 2008). Opposite to the first generation that – thanks to Simó – was given the chance to work with 35mm material and graduate with a feature film, the second class finished the directing course in the midst of a turmoil in the film industry and, because of forming a less cohesive group than the first generation, could not yield the same breakthrough as their contemporaries. Also, they had to face new rivals in the industry. Besides the two Simó-class, other talented young filmmakers appeared on the horizon, such as Benedek Flieagauf (*Forest*/*Rengeteg*, 2001; *Dealer*, 2004, *Just the Wind*/*Csak a szél,* 2012), Virág Zomborácz (*Afterlife*/*Utóélet*, 2014), Nimród Antall (*Control*/*Kontroll*, 2003) and Viktor Oszkár Nagy (*Father's Acre*/*Apaföld*, 2009).

were guided by the Hungarian (new-wave) director Sándor Simó (Varga, 2000; Buzogány, 2008).

The young generation's protest against heritage films and low-quality comedies gave rise to the most dramatic narratives of Hungarian cinema since the 1950s (Schubert in Varga, 2002), that is, although their movement encompassed a large scale of film genres and topics, the productions depicted Hungary as the darkest place on the planet (Rudolf, 2012). Certainly, as Schubert argues (2000), the gloomy atmosphere of the films – that included sexist narratives, rapes, poverty and crime – can be regarded as protest against the main wave of comedies in the cinema of the millennium. However, it is more likely that, following the narrative trend of the 1990s, the return to the depressing everydays on screen is instead a reaction to the contemporary anomic situation. This statement is further supported by the fact that the new generation takes on a special in-between socio-historical position, that is, they were born in the 1970's socialist Hungary while starting filmmaking in the capitalist epoch. They have thus been socialised in the previous regime – though they experienced the least traumatic and oppressive period of it – but had to try themselves within the confines of market capitalism (Stőhr, 2007). This doubled position also led them to go through a double trauma: the end of socialism and the transformation of the world they were born into. The depressive tone of the films is thus more the result of the in-between position of the directors, whose films mirror the effects of both socialist and capitalist ideologies and stand as obvious examples for social remembrance.

9.3. The Hungarian New Cinema: apolitical or apocalyptical?

When it comes to the canonisation of the contemporary Hungarian cinema and the idiosyncrasies of the two generations, academic scholarship argues that, opposite to the pre-millennium filmmaking trends, the young filmmakers follow a seemingly apolitical and ahistorical cinema (Stőhr, 2007, Báron, 2003, Szilágyi, 2005). Indeed, a common point in the above mentioned productions is that the protagonists are not determined by the surrounding socio-political atmosphere anymore – as was the case with the New Wave of the 1960s (Báron, 2003) – but, through the portrayal of Hungary, they frame a universal image of a lost generation. The absent motivation of the protagonists thus both mirrors the effect of the socio-historical transition that the directors went through while, on the other hand, the depressive outcome of the stories also refer to the larger, contemporary European

context of lost values. The universal language of the films has been negotiated by many critics who argue that, instead of following the old Hungarian filmmaking traditions, the young directors draw on the aesthetic minimalism of international art cinema (Stőhr, 2007) and the genre-cinema of New Hollywood (Varga, 2000). This also means that the first generation of the Simó-class has established a truly European art cinema that, according to scholarship on contemporary cinema, veers away from any existing trend in Hungarian filmmaking. However, none of the studies clarifies what this Hungarian trend has been, how it should be defined and what aesthetic and political context it covers. Is there a truly national cinema of Hungary or, as argued by the critics, is the new tendency in filmmaking another proof for the globalisation of the film industry?

As mentioned above, while most scholars agree that contemporary Hungarian cinema has a universal, apolitical language, other filmmakers deny that their films do not concentrate on contemporary social problems or reflect the (socialist) past of Hungary. As Kornél Mundruczó explained in an interview, their narratives 'reflect exactly on what is going on today [in Hungary], yet not in the same way as the predecessors did. Those aimed at portraying the conflict between power and individual, but this is not actual anymore, so this kind of cinema is over' (Mundruczó, quoted in Stőhr, 2001:11). Mundruczó also adds that the distress and anxiety of the characters and their enclosed social position illustrate 'how smothery this country is' (ibid). His films are thus of a strong political nature and aim to frame the realities of the post-socialist epoch. In addition, in the same interview with Stőhr (2001), Ferenc Török and Szabolcs Hajdu accentuate that they had a strong drive to show the world they come from. Therefore, – driven by Simó, who asked for their personal (hi)stories on screen – many of the directors of the class shot and/or debuted with coming-of-age films (*Moscow Square, While Palms, Forward*) that addressed their youth in the Kádár-regime and/or during the transition[130]. In this sense, the statement that contemporary Hungarian cinema would be apolitical, ahistorical and entirely globalised, cannot be considered accurate.

[130] Also, besides the films of the Hungarian New Cinema, there were several other productions after the millennium that set their stories in the previous regime. See for instance, Sándor Kardos' and Illés Szabó's *Winning Ticket* (*Telitalálat,* 2003); Róbert Koltai's *Colossal Sensation - Dodo & Naphthalene* (*Világszám*!. 2004), Márta Mészáros's *The Unburied Man* (*A temetetlen halott*, 2004), Pál Erdőss's *Lads of Budakeszi* (*Budakeszi srácok,* 2006), Andor Szilágyi's *Mansfeld* (2006), Krisztina Goda's *Children of Glory* (*Szabadság, szerelem*, 2006), Tamás Pintér's *56 Drops of Blood* (*56 csepp vér,* 2006); György Szomjas's *The Sun Street Boys* (*A nap utcai fiúk,* 2007) and Péter Bergendy's *The exam* (*A vizsga,* 2011).

9.4. Mnemonic devices

In his study of contemporary Hungarian cinema, Strausz (2014) also argues against the apolitical-ahistorical quality of New Hungarian Cinema by stating that, although 'it is difficult to discover trends in the work of young Hungarian auteur filmmakers about the historical past' – that might be confusing for the scholarship – 'mnemonic themes are present in Hungarian cinema' (ibid). The Hungarian film scholar examines three interconnected thematic questions that function as reference points to the directors. First of all, he argues, there is a strong generational connection between filmmakers, that make the socialist past in their films 'thematised in order to serve as a reference point for the filmic subjects (...) as they attempt to construct their own contemporary identities' (ibid). That is, because the cultural and political identity of the characters is strongly connected to the socialist regime, they constantly struggle to make a living in the capitalist world, for they cannot identify themselves with the new market ideology (Rudolf, 2012). They often sell their bodies (*This is What I Wish and Nothing More, Pleasant Days, Bibliothèque Pascal, No One's Island*) or just comply with their fate and drift from one day to another in the society (*Fresh Air, Black Brush, For Some Inexplicable Reason*), while getting into suspicious businesses with the police involved (*Sleepwalkers, Father's Acre, Lost Times*). Indeed, the main characters of the films are unmotivated, bored youngsters whose search for a way out of the miserable circumstances usually ends with death or further humiliation: their in-between socio-political, cultural identity determines them to fail[131].

Finally, the last thematic question of Strausz deals with corporeality that is strongly connected to the generational antagonism discussed above. Because of the recurrent motif of prostitution, rape and sexual abuse, the corporeal cartographies (Goddard, 2008) of the New Hungarian Cinema receive special attention from scholars who have mainly discussed the films' aesthetic-corporal core as proof for the post-socialist male/female identity crisis (Havas, 2011; Dánél, 2011, Goddard, 2008, Stőhr, 2016, Győry and Kalmár, 2013). In contrast to these investigations, Strausz argues that the corporeal deformations and affections point towards the human body as a mnemonic device that serves the purpose of remembering[132], and analyses the bodies in the films as 'memory containers' that carry the

[131]Also, to escape the current, anomic reality and their own identity crisis, the protagonists often leave Hungary (*For Some Inexplicable Reason, Moscow Square, Pleasant Days*). However, as most of them return, migration – the second point of Strausz – does not provide a solution for their rootlessness and disorientation.
[132] Following Strausz, Vincze (2016) also argues that the bodies in *Taxidermia* function as tools of cinematic remembrance.

'imprints of the socio-historical context' (ibid). In this way, the body in film and its surface that signals history, form a socio-historical space that implicitly narrates the socialist past. In his reading, the wounds in *White Palms*, the obesity of the main protagonists in *Adrienn Pál* and that of the race-eater in *Taxidermia* all function as memory containers that mirror the abuses of the socialist regime[133].

In addition, the activities that the characters carry out recalls the previous regime too. For instance, village life, alcohol consumption and the *kocsma* as social space remained essential motifs of Hungarian cinema, while the claustrophobic set-up discussed in the previous chapters – albeit taking on new forms – remains the same. Accordingly, besides Strausz's categories – temporality (generational antagonism), migration and corporeality – it will be argued that space is the fourth mnemonic theme that indirectly reflects upon the past regime.

By focusing on the *Alföld* on screen, the chapter investigates how the national space has been transformed in the films and what role it has taken on in the post-2000 productions. As we will see, there is a tendency within the Hungarian New Cinema that, working with horizontal enclosure, encloses the protagonists in the endless horizon of the *Puszta*, while framing them in a colonialist spatial structure where they become mute (*No One's Island, Hukkle, Delta, Lost Times*) and/or lose Hungarian language (*Land of Storms, Mirage, Tamara*). In addition, the directors clearly follow the path of Jancsó and Tarr by establishing an abstract geo-political space that, without any fixed temporal-spatial coordinates, stands as a heterotopic island in the Hungarian post-millennium space. Accordingly, many of the directors work with long, metaphoric camera movements peculiar of the cinema of Tarr and Jancsó, through which the prison-like entity of the physical space is emphasised.

While the focus of the Hungarian part of the thesis is targeted specifically on the horizontal spatial aesthetics of the films, we also have to note that most of the productions of Hungarian New Cinema now work along the patterns of vertical enclosure (*Adrienn Pal, Johanna, Fresh Air*). The end of the *Alföld*-parables and the aesthetics turn from horizontal to vertical enclosure, will be negotiated through the spatial analysis of *Father's Acre* that, with stratifying the national space of the *Alföld*, stands as a milestone in the Hungarian corpus. Together with the close spatial analysis of *Delta*, the chapter thus examines how

[133] In agreement with the statement of Strausz, it can be argued that the constant sexual abuse of female bodies in the films (*Pleasant Days, Johanna*) is another form of implicit remembrance that mirrors the authoritarian regime's (male) force on the female body.

the *Alföld* loses its pure, symbolic role, and turns into an entirely deadly space that also signals the post-2010 anomie of the Hungarian nation.

9.5. Post-socialist spaces: the countryside

Tarr's apocalyptic vision of the rural certainly had a great impact on the members of Hungarian New Cinema, whose village-landscape mirrors an underdeveloped territory – a place of existential poverty that imprisons its inhabitants. As Sághy (2015) notes, there is a remarkable tendency within the films of the new cinema that contradicts village-life with the urban rhythm of Budapest[134]. He argues that the rural – including the *Alföld* – symbolises the uncivilised, instinct-driven way of life, where the bare landscape of dilapidated buildings, dirty-rainy streets and the poverty-stricken outfits of the characters correspond to the actions of the protagonists who, with their deviant behaviour, stand at the margins of the society.

In Mundruczó's *Pleasant Days* for instance, the main character Maja (Orsi Tóth) gives birth to her child – that she later sells – in a laundromat. The new mother of the baby, Mária (Kata Wéber) tries to keep their deal in secret so when her brother Péter (Tamás Polgár) gets out of the prison, she acts as if the baby was hers. Péter soon starts to flirt with Maja and, when the girl decides to take her child back, he brutally rapes her. Maja's plan to escape the small village and start her life over thus vanishes.

The deviant grid of human relations in *Pleasant Days* is complemented by the gloomy, decaying space that the characters are embedded into. The grey-blue, narrow interior of the laundromat and the claustrophobic constellation of the flat of Maja and Mária are in strong contrast with the open, empty spaces of the village where – aside from the characters – no one seems to live in. For instance, when Maja is raped in the barren parking lot – despite the central location of the place – no one witnesses the event (figure 9). Through this gesture, Mundruczó emphasises the isolated position of the village itself that, as a heterotopic entity, stands as a closed, abstract unit, ruled by deviance, unemployment and a strong desire to flee abroad. It is this both the spatial isolation of the locations and the

[134]See for instance *Vespa, No One's Land, Lost Times, Afterlife*, or Incze Ágnes's *I love Budapest* (2001). While village life mirrors the past, Budapest signifies modernism – yet wealth remains an unachievable dream in the city too (see Kránicz, 2013).

psychological segregation of the figures that separates them from any concrete space-time frame.

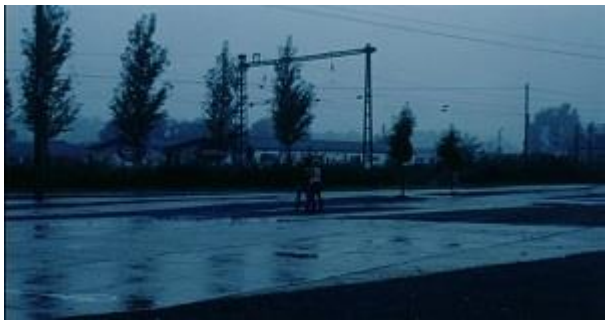

Figure 9. Open spaces. *Pleasant days*

Figure 9.1. *This I Wish and Nothing More*

Figure 9.1.2. Ruined architecture (*Afterlife, Tamara)*

The spatial treatment of *Pleasant Days* resonates in several other films. In *This I Wish and Nothing More*, the couple's dilapidated, narrow home is contrasted to the wide landscape of the *Alföld* (figure 9.1). In *Lost Times*, the mentally disabled female protagonist spends her days in a godforsaken, dusty village where she soon falls victim to rape. In *Afterlife*, the schizophrenic main character gets even more mentally unstable as he returns to his village that stands in ruins. In *Just the Wind*, the gypsy family lives in a cube house whose ramshackle walls mirror deep poverty, while in *Vespa*, the young gypsy boy tries to escape scarcity by running to Budapest. Consequently, in strong contrast with the films of the New Wave, the rural now signals the space of deviance where the characters, as captives, are imprisoned. Illustrating their cage-like situation, the directors of the Hungarian New Cinema often lock them into horizontal compositions by using the *Alföld*'s

wide landscape as the background that they contradict with the claustrophobic inner space of cube houses (figure 9.1.2).

In this regard, it is the absolute decay that, similar to the world of Black Series, dominates the space of the films. Therefore, as Hirsch (2015) points out, it is Tarr's apocalyptic depiction of the rural that returns in the post-2000 films where the village functions as 'a cursed macrocosm' (2015:42). He emphasises, that the 'films of the Cursed Land' – as he labels the modern narratives of the rural – stand as allegories for the crises of Hungary and, more globally, that of Eastern Europe.

Certainly, as was the case in *Pleasant Days,* the films that set their stories here, portray the countryside as a land where time has stopped in the socialist era as did the development of the physical space that now stands as a ruined realm of lost hopes (figures 9-9.1.2). Along with the ramshackle dwellings inherited by Black Series, the pro-filmic space of the rural films is dominated by cube houses and their dilapidated façades that, corresponding to the crumpled corporeality of the figures, mirror the wreckage of the socialist decades whose subjects have been left behind (*Lost Times, Only the Wind, Vespa*). The space thus puts the characters into an in-between socio-historical position: they live among the remnants of the past, while dreaming about fleeing to the capitalist Budapest or abroad. However, wherever they go, they bring their anguished bodies with, so that in the end, they always return to the village-context, to keep up their in-between spatial and social situation (*This I Wish and Nothing More, Afterlife, Eastern Sugar, No Man's Land*).

9.6. Cursed by history. The *Alföld* returns

There is a tendency within the post-2000 'films of the Cursed Land' that set their stories on the Alföld (*Land of Storms, Mirage, Only the Wind, Afterlife*) and other well-known national spaces, such as the delta of the Danube (*Delta*) or Transdanubia (*Hukkle*). Having said this, these films completely cut off the location from its context, thus creating an abstract, parabolic space. The fact that they utilise the very national spaces of Hungary for abstraction raises several questions. For instance, why do these directors choose the parabolic language in the post-millennium age when free speech is guaranteed? In case it is a protest, then what do they protest against? And finally, how do they use the parabolic spaces as tools for the implicit remembrance of socialism?

9.6.1. *Delta*

Along with Benedek Fliegauf (*Dealer, The Womb*), it is Kornél Mundruczó whose works resonate the most with Black Series (Gelencsér, 2008b). Certainly, the director's cooperation with Béla Tarr[135], who worked as producer and consultant of his movies, contributed to the slow cinema style (Flanagan, 2008) of *Delta*, and might have also inspired the long plan-séquences of *Johanna* (Stőhr, 2016). Similarly, the images of the endless horizon of the Danube in *Small apocrypha 1-2* (*Kis apokrif 1-2*, 2004) all recall the horizontal enclosure of *Satantango* and *Damnation*. In this regard, *Delta* (2008) functions as the summary, as well as continuation of the Tarr-universe.

Delta narrates the return of Mihály (Félix Lajkó) to his hometown where he is now treated as an absolute outsider. The young man does not seem to bother much about being accepted for his primary aim is to build a hut at a less frequented location of the Danube-delta[136] where his father's cottage once stood. As he returns home, Mihály learns that his mother has remarried and has a daughter, Fauna (Orsolya Tóth) who soon steps into a strong alliance with her brother. While Fauna helps Mihály to build the cottage, the siblings develop an intimate (sexual) relationship with each other that the family of the girl and the villagers are strongly opposed to. When Fauna leaves the village to live with her brother at the river, the villagers murder the lovers.

Mundruczó's choice to set the story in Romania and feature Transylvanian characters in the film is another gesture that accentuates the role of the pro-filmic space as national territory. Transylvania (*Erdély*) is often referred to as 'the other homeland of Hungarians' (White, 2000:91), 'the cradle of Hungarian civilization' (Kürti, 2001:15) that the mother country has lost to Romania after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. To this very day, the

[135] As Stőhr (2016) points out, the often quoted Yvette Bíró – the Hungarian film professor and dramaturg, and the co-author of the scripts of Mundruczó – has also had a big impact on the director, mainly in using myths as the basis of the stories (on myths and Biblical motifs in *Delta*, see Gelencsér, 2008 and Stőhr, 2016).

[136] Nevertheless, the story takes place at the delta of the Danube – hence the title of the film – the endless horizon of the pro-filmic space and the metaphoric camera movements according to which Mundruczó choreographs the film, show an absolute aesthetic continuity with the visual world of Black Series. For this reason, the location will be negotiated as equivalent to the national space of the *Puszta*, the mirage of the endless fields of the *Alföld*.

region is home to the largest Hungarian minority abroad[137] that, because of the preservation of the old *Magyar* culture and language, has transformed Transylvania into a truly romantic space in the eyes of most Hungarians, who keep up a strong connection with the old motherland (White, 2000). Therefore, together with the location itself, the Transylvanian characters in *Delta* add a strong national context to the narrative. In addition, similar to the films of Tarr, Mundruczó uses several references to the Hungarian culture and customs that – although the film certainly offers a universal reading (Stőhr, 2016) – make the pro-filmic space a uniquely Hungarian construction.

First of all, when Mihály arrives, his family is having the traditional bi-annual feast of pig slaughter at home – a custom popular in Hungarian culture. Later, he is offered pálinka, the national brandy of Hungary and enters the *kocsma* that further accentuates the Hungarian quality of space. Also, the film features Félix Lajkó[138] in the leading role who, as an internationally recognised Hungarian folk musician, stands for the absolute Magyar character in the film. The outfit of his figure – his beard, long hair and loose shirt – also resonates with the old Hungarian features of the *Puszta*'s highwaymen (*betyár*). In contrast to this, the stepfather's black leather jacket, black jeans and shirt signal a completely different quality: his oppressive figure – that is often emphasised by his over-the-shoulder shots that fill up the narrative space – signals the treat over the space that Mihály inhabits (figure 9.2).

9.2. The controlling gaze over Fauna

The two characters, as two poles, establish two kinds of spaces. Mihály stands for the Magyar character of the film who leaves the town behind to establish his own Hungarian

[137]According to the statistics, there are about 1.2 million ethnic Hungarians living in the region (Kapitány, 2015). From 2010 onwards, the Hungarian government began to grant citizenship to Transylvanian-Hungarian people.

[138] One also has to emphasise the role of his violin-folk music in the film that frames the national space of the Danube and which stands in strong contrast to the soundtrack of the *kocsma*.

tanya. The national quality of this space is further accentuated by the Transylvanian uncle whose help and presence at the hut doubles the national emphasis of the space.

On the other hand, the symbolic, authoritarian figure of the stepfather signals an ideologically impregnated counter-space that, with the help of the stepfather, controls the Mihály-created universe. For instance, the stepfather rapes Fauna on her way to help her brother with the cottage, and hampers the man's construction by stopping the timber-supply. His actions[139], and his position in the narrative as an omniscient observer who is present at every location in the village, makes him reminiscent of a socialist agent. Accordingly, through the two men, Mundruczó contrasts the Hungarian, smooth space of the delta with the socialist, striated space of the village (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013).
In his reading of the film, Strausz also emphasises that 'the secluded village can be regarded as an image of an isolated (state socialist) nation characterised by intolerance and segregation' (Strausz, 2014). As he states, the village-sequences mainly consist of claustrophobic close-ups, while the external compositions are structured along long shots and images of open sky, which accentuates the enclosed quality of the socialist town-space. Indeed, by filling up the narrative space with the faces of the characters, Mundruczó highlights their imprisoned position in the village-places and, as will be argued, establishes a disciplinary space reminiscent of socialism.

Similar to Black Series, the *kocsma* – the epicentre of this stratified space – serves as the social centre of the settlement where the inhabitants gather. Mihály, as a rebel who protests against this socialist context of the Hungarian space by moving out of the town, is an absolute outsider in this trajectory who, every time he enters the *kocsma*, is closely watched by the people there. Mundruczó uses long, slow panning shots of the physiognomy of the guests that stare at him, while the stepfather, as the owner of the space, excludes Mihály of the *kocsma*.

[139] Stőhr (2016) reads these actions as results of the post-socialist, patriarchal-phallocentric structure of the society. Certainly, the dominant male-position of the stepfather and the subjected female position of Fiona contribute to the oppressor-oppressed angle.

9.3 Panoptic gaze in the *kocsma*

Again, because the drinking hole functions as a state space ruled by the stepfather, the young boy has no place here: his marginal position is constantly accentuated by him being portrayed against the back of the stepfather and his panoptic gaze and the people that circulate around him (figure 9.3). Similarly, when Fauna decides to join her brother, the portrayal of her position changes too that, from this point, will be composed in the depth of the image dominated by the back of the stepfather (figure 9.2). In this way, the close ups, the narrow, claustrophobic pro-filmic space of the *kocsma* and its socialist texture, and the scopic control the stepfather practices, all constitute a grid of tyrannised spatial relations. The *kocsma* and the city places – the port, Fauna's home – are all subordinated to control and stand in strong contrast to the cottage-space of Mihály.

The delta is represented as a smooth, free space captured in distant takes and high angle shots and filled with the soundtrack of Lajkó's folk music (figure 9.4). In this *Alföld*-like unit, Fauna and Mihály build their own *tanya* that, far from the village and its controlling powers, might enable them to lead a free way of life. However, as the material of the construction is supplied by the city-dwellers – with the permission of the stepfather – the fate of the *tanya* seems to have been already decided. This is to say that Mihály builds his dwelling on socialist grounds that, by stratifying the smooth space, abolishes the liberal quality of the delta. In this way, the Hungarian national space where the siblings hide, is to be conquered by the city-dwellers that, as representatives of the Hungarian socialist power, vanquish the nomadism of it, and destroy the *tanya* at the end of the film.

Figure 9.4. Horizontal enclosure. The smooth national space and the *tanya*

In the final scenes of the film, the enclosed textual representation of the city returns. At the feast, Fauna and Mihály arrange to build peace with the inhabitants of the State space. Here, Mundruczó again operates with close-ups and claustrophobic over-the-shoulder shots that forecast the decay of the construction and the death of the two siblings. In this way, by re-colonising it, the Hungarian socialist space overcomes the Hungarian national space of the delta.

The transformation of the river into a socialist space is also emphasised on the textual level of the film that accentuates the captive position of Mihály. The more Mihály proceeds with construction and finishes with the walls of the hut, the more his position as an imprisoned subject is accentuated through the circulating movements of the camera. The device often captures him standing on the top of the cottage as he is looking over the space of the delta. Mundruczó uses the camera as a tool that, by taking on an enunciative presence, fixes the man into the very point that, as a transforming territory, eventually closes upon him.

The murder of Mihály is at once the elimination of the Hungarian, free space – the space of deviance and taboos (Gelencsér, 2008b) – that the villagers cannot tolerate. In the end, Mundruczó repeats the compositional arrangement of the mourning-scene where the drunkards head to the funeral of the old alcoholic of the town (figure 9.5). These sequences – as the only bird-eye-view shots in *Delta* – not only contribute to the circular, repetitive narrative of the film and, through the image of the sinuous Danube, build up a circular textuality – but, similar to Jancsó, accentuate the deterioration of the space's national quality. The metaphorical camera movement – that emphasises the paradoxical space of the river that was once the symbol of autonomy and death – signals the ever-flowing, circulating power relations that eventually overcome and kill Mihály.

Figure 9.5. Textual cyclo-continuum. The repeated bird-eye view

Both bird-eye view-sequences signal the deconstruction of the space of Hungary: in the first shot, the villagers stratify the space with their boats to conquer the national space of the river. Nevertheless, the people are captured on their way to a funeral, the landscape is green, with the sun mirroring in the water of the Danube.

In the latter case, after the death of Mihály, the natural environment changes and, signalling the beginning of a destroyed-authoritarian epoch, Mundruczó captures a dry landscape in its passing state, with yellow grass and grizzled tree leaves (figure 9.5). In this way, the director re-structures the various stages of the colonisation process: at first, Mihály returns to the (Hungarian) space where he belongs and which is later conquered/colonised by the villagers that transform it into a socialist, disciplinary space. As mentioned above, the fluctuation of power relations is emphasised by the composition of the shots, as well as the metaphorical camera movements that eventually enclose Mihály in the image and foreshadows his upcoming death.

9.6.2. The slow transition to the vertical enclosure. *Father's Acre*

In terms of the death of national space, Viktor Oszkár Nagy's *Father's Acre* (*Apaföld*, 2009) bears a striking resemblance with Mundruczó's *Delta*. Nagy's parabolic universe develops along similar patterns of horizontal enclosure, with using long takes in conjunction with long shots which, through the closed, geometrical composition of the pro-filmic space, emphasise the socialist conquer over the national space of the *Alföld* – that Nagy further accentuates through the intertextual references to Gaál's *Falcons and* Tarr's *Satantango*.

Father's Acre portrays the complicated relationship between father (János Derzsi) and son (Tamás Ravasz) who spend their days with the cultivation of a piece of land

somewhere in the Hungarian rural. The father, having been just released from prison, decides to lead a normal, ethical way of life that includes hard, physical work and an intimate relationship with the sister of his ex-wife. The son rebels against the father's every decision and soon gets involved in a burglary. This act favours the local policeman – also the head of the gangster-network of the village – who thus gets a chance to blackmail the father to hand the land over to him, in exchange for not arresting his son. Being under immense pressure that he cannot endure, the father eventually ends up in hospital, while the future of the land and the son himself, remains unanswered.

As far as space is concerned, *Father's Acre* follows the horizontal enclosure depicted in *Delta*, but also dwells on the vertical enclosure negotiated in Black Series. The film follows the claustrophobic filmic constellation of the 1990s' anomic cinema and the closed, historical parables while, by stratifying the national space, also signalling the end of the *Alföld*-parables. This is to say that, while the examined films so far have all treated the open landscape as a visually free territory, Nagy reckons with this tradition by putting fence posts on the land. By eventually *verticalizing* the pro-filmic space, he abolishes the smooth space of the *Alföld* and accentuates the absolute death of the pro-filmic space. This spatial change signals the beginning of a new cinematic approach in contemporary cinema that, as mentioned above, works with vertical enclosure. Whereas in the first half of *Father's Acre*, it is the landscape that dominates over the visual level of the film, with the progression of the story, the representation of enclosed places gets more emphasis, while in the end, vertical and horizontal enclosure melt in one textuality.

Figure 9.6. Horizontal games: the divided image

In order to emphasise the disciplinary constellation of the space of the *Alföld*, the figures are often depicted in extremely long shots in the bare landscape which, following the representational paradigms of the *Alföld*-parables, stresses their enclosed position (figure 9.6). Thus, Nagy emphasises the virtual freedom of the land by placing the camera at a long distance from the characters who thus shrink in the distance. Furthermore, the

landscape image gets often divided by the horizontal line of the ground that further accentuates the infinity of the space (figure 9.6).

Furthermore, in the nature, Nagy operates with slow, lateral tracking shots that, on the one hand, emphasise the standing duration of the sequence, while, on the other hand, as it tracks along the horizon, it also contributes to the sense of the infinity of the space. This infinity however, stands in stark contrast with the circular aesthetics of the *Alföld*-parables. Although, *Father's Acre* follows the paradoxical spatial representation of the land – by accentuating the enclosed position of the protagonists that are doomed to fail here – Nagy rejects the aesthetics of circularity, being one of the main characteristics of the so-far examined parables. Instead of the camera's circulating trajectory, he dwells on the periodisation of the lateral tracking shots where the camera, moving along the ground that covers a great part of the image, slowly moves from point A to B and then back to B to point A (figure 9.6.1).

Figure 9.6.1. Periodic camera movement: from A to B and B to A

In one of the film's scenes, father and son begin to stratify the field by knocking posts into the ground. The camera precisely tracks them as the two characters arrive from point A to B and also captures them as they make their way back from point B to A. The slow movement of the camera – whose tempo is in perfect match with that of the father and son – signals an anthropomorphic presence – and so the gaze of a hidden observer – that follows the actions of the couple. It starts moving rightwards when the father puts the first post down while stepping right, and later, following his path, the device returns to the starting point, when he walks back to point A. This scanning movement – that Branigan (2006:54) calls 'active follow shot' – not only establishes a panoptic scheme, but, signalling the power of the observer, divides the pro-filmic space into smaller slices, to emphasise the limited moving trajectory of the protagonists. Although the horizon seems to be endless, the periodic camera movement that presumes another person, encloses the characters into the very limited space that covers the trajectory of the device. In this way,

similar to the aesthetics of circularity, Nagy's scanning movements – that often resemble the observational aesthetics of Tarr – accentuates the absolute continuity and fluidness of space, while also pointing towards the claustrophobic establishment that the camera's trajectory creates.

Figure 9.7 Panoptic scheme (*Father's Acre*)

The observational aesthetics of the landscape-scenes get even more emphasis in the interiors of the cube house that is home to the two men and the aunt. The strong panoptic scheme that substitutes the dialogue with corporeal gestures and the way of looking, is established through the figure of the son who, just like a police man, constantly peeps on his father and aunt (figure 9.7). His threatening gaze and long, silent observation transforms the space of the cube house into a unit standing under omnipotent surveillance. This space is subordinated to the controlling gaze of the son who captures his family members during their most intimate daily actions, be that the showering of the father, the sleeping of the lovers or the dressing of his aunt. Because of the panoptic settings, the interior of the cube house loses its sense of privacy and instead, gives home to a theatrical structure where, thanks to the subjective shots of the spying son, the dwellers are portrayed as if standing under constant threat. The panoptic scheme, together with the narrow space of the interiors, create a suffocating atmosphere that is further complemented by the very socialist design Nagy uses. That is, it is not only the grey colours and battered objects pervading the space that set up a claustrophobic composition but, by using socialist furniture, kitchen equipment and textiles in the settings, *Father' Acre* establishes a very socialist space in the cube house. The television, the sofa, the curtains, the lamp, and even the currency the characters use, are from the previous epoch (figure 9.7.1). Accordingly, the socialist interior, the son's peeping gaze and the scenes' compositional arrangement that, by double framing the images, emphasise the narrowness of the place, set up a disciplinary space.

Due to being in a cube house that itself demonstrates a paradoxical place, this tyrannised constellation establishes an ambivalent spatial unit. From the one hand – similar

to the dwelling itself – it signals a new beginning for the father who, by moving home, enjoys the freedom-given luxuries, such as the company of the aunt who takes care of him. On the other hand, this space is ruled by the son, who, as bearer of the socialist gaze, constantly watches the movements of the elder man. In this way, when being in the cube house, the father stands under threat that is accentuated by the peeping scenes. In contrast to this, in the nature, he is a virtually free man captured in long shots. This autonomy eventually ends when Nagy brings the panoptic scheme to the land and merges the enclosed, panoptic interiors with the *Alföld*'s horizontal structure.

Figure 9.7.1 Socialist spaces

Accordingly, when the son makes a pact with the police man, the head of the socialist power structure, the future of the land as well as the boy is decided. The father, who put all his efforts into farming, is now facing the loss of the fruit of his work and his freedom. For this reason, the closer the crime of the son gets, the more stratified the national space of the *Alföld* is represented (figure 9.8).

Figure 9.8. Colonised-stratified space

In the end, the vertical geometry of the cube house's interior takes over the space of the land whose landscape becomes similar to a graveyard characteristic of the Transylvanian headstone-cemeteries (figure 9.8.1). This similarity signals the colonisation and death of the land that, after blackmailing the father so that he does not arrest his son for burglary, gets into the hands of the policeman.

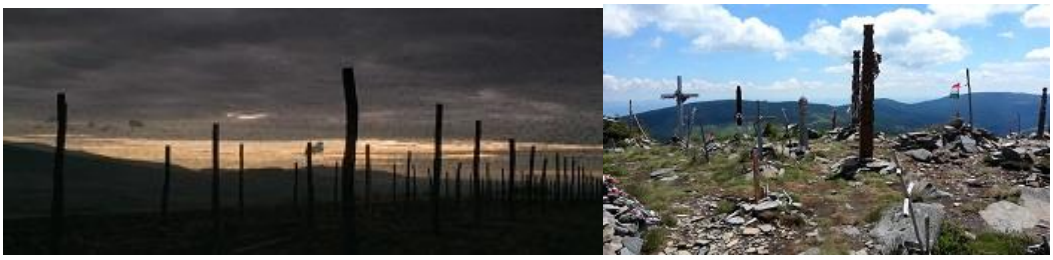

Figure 9.8.1. Landscapes of death: *Father's Acre* and headstone-cemetery

Hence, after the deal, the pro-filmic space gets more and more stratified while the dialogue slowly disappears from the film and the characters eventually become mute. In the final scenes, father and son silently face each other in the hospital, while the image slowly dissolves into the graveyard-like land, thus signifying the absolute death of the national land.

The colonisation process – the father's loss of control over the land to socialist power – is emphasised by the camera movements as well. While so far, it was the active follow shot (*Alföld*) and fixed, claustrophobic composition (cube house) that dominated the *mise-en-scène*, in the final scenes – where the vertical and horizontal texture overlap – the camera takes on impossible angles to stress the turmoil over the land. First, Nagy uses the boy's diagonal point-of-view shot to show how the father collapses (figure 9.9). Later, he demonstrates in another impossible angle how the new power (the boy) has taken over the land (figure 9.10). Nagy captures the son smoking in a composition where half of the image is covered by the body of the dying father, while the figure of the son is composed in a diagonal shot as he is watching over the barely-breathing elder man. The diagonal camera movements and shots thus suggest a change in power relations: while so far, active follow shots and the subjective images of the son dictated the *mise-en-scène*, in the final, vertical-horizontal scenes, the camera – and so the anthropomorphic gaze – become confused. It starts to oscillate, and zoom, and eventually falls down to the ground, signalling the new authority (son) over the land. Because of the son's take-over of the land, the space does not need monitoring anymore: the observing gaze thus dies on the ground.

Similar to his predecessors, Nagy uses the landscape of the *Alföld* as a spatial allegory for enclosure and changing power relations. In this regard, the socialist design of the pro-filmic space is an obvious reference to the pre-1989 authoritarian regime and its absolute presence in the post-socialist era. To emphasise this, Nagy references *Falcons* in one of the

film's scenes where the youngsters go to an open-air cinema that screens Gaál's famous parable. In the quoted scene, Lilik's birds are attacking the inert pigeons in the endless horizon of the *Puszta,* which has obvious references to the position of the son and the father itself. Imprisoned in the decaying national landscape of the *Puszta* and the paradoxical cube house, both the son and father are subordinated to the socialist power. In this view, the birds of Lilik and the son have the same role as to reckon with the enemy. For this reason, in the socialist space, both the inert animals and the father have to die.

9.9 Impossible angles

9.10. Ruling space

To sum up, Nagy implicitly resuscitates the socialist past on two levels. First of all, he works with the socialist design and objects from the previous era which indicates the presence of the previous totalitarian framework. In this space, the director openly references *Falcons,* the last parable of the Hungarian socialist cinema, while, in the police scene, he cross-references Tarr's *Damnation* and *Satantango,* which further accentuates Nagy's objective to establish a heterotopic-parabolic universe through which the oppression of the national land can be expressed. On the second level, the space in the film – that utilises the composition of vertical-horizontal enclosure of Black Series – has an obvious political function that recalls the tyrannised relations of the previous regime. The isolated, enclosed space of the *Alföld* and the cube house, the observational aesthetic and the muteness of the characters thus establish a unique parable that, on the one hand, follows the predecessors by composing wide shots of the *Puszta* that encapsulates and destroys the protagonists. On the other hand, however, Nagy refuses the circular aesthetics peculiar of Black Series and Jancsó, what is more, he destroys the national space by stratifying the wide horizon. Therefore, *Father's Acre* signals the very end of the *Alföld*-parables in Hungary. With transforming the space of the *Puszta* into a national graveyard, Nagy puts and ends on the colonisation process by leaving it ruled by socialist powers. In this regard, he also closes the eternal circle of history that Tarr's and Jancsó's films have

established. Thus, following the role of Irimiás in *Satantango,* the son in *Father's Acre* carries out the colonisation process and treachery from inside, that is, as the film suggests, the threat to the society always derives from an inside power that eventually sells the land to the colonising power.

9.7. Conclusion: Hungarian cinema

In Hungary, the focus on *Alföld* as the main location in the narrative of the films constantly signals a severe crisis within the society. As the very national space of the country, the representation of the *Puszta* gets special attention at significant socio-historical turning points which – as legacy of the socialist times – refers to the subjected position of the nation. The socialist and post-socialist space of Hungarian cinema has therefore been examined according to the colonised, de-colonised, and post-colonialist stages of the national space and its architectural epitome, the *tanya*.

As argued within the thesis, space in Hungarian cinema has always been a crucial part of the connotative language used on screen. While using the location as part of a heterotopic universe – peculiar to the films analysed from Black Series and Hungarian New Cinema – the historical, closed (*Beyond Time, Snow Fall*), and present-day, closed parables (*The Whistling Cobblestone Tomorrow Pheasant*) used pro-filmic space to mediate the enclosed position of the protagonists. The closeness of the location and the scenographic space itself, stood as reference to the socialist framework of the Kádár-regime that, while providing citizens with a relatively good standard of living, enclosed them into a fixed trajectory that, as a prison, kept them in the same place. To emphasise the captive-position of Hungarian people, Jancsó used the *Puszta* as a symbol of oppression and abuse, while accentuating the colonised position of the nation through the prison-like representation of the *tanya*. In *My Way Home*, the main protagonist is forced to live in a decaying homestead, surrounded by mines, while in *The Round-Up*, the dwelling – deprived of its original function – gives home to a prison. Consequently, both the *tanya* and *Alföld* function as a cellular, disciplinary territory that can only be escaped by identifying with the colonising power (*My Way Home*) or choosing death as a way-out of the oppressed position (*The Round-Up*).

The tyrannised spatial relations are further accentuated by the scopic control over the pro-filmic space. On the one hand, by using the camera as a personalised agent that,

through the crane and tracking shots, constantly follows and spies on the characters, Jancsó develops a cellular unity of surveillance, thus referencing the ever-seeing gaze of the socialist power. These circular camera movements correspond to the circular textuality of the pro-filmic space: the cyclo-form of the *Puszta*, the geographical lines around the *tanya*, and the choreography of character-movements in the films, all result in a circular iconography that takes on a metaphorical trajectory to signal the never-ending circularity of history. The cyclo-textuality and the repetitiveness of the events have been negotiated as pillars of the so-called aesthetic of circularity which, besides the omniscient camera and the play with pro-filmic space, contributes to Jancsó's historical setting to indirectly depict the present-day situation of Hungary. Consequently, the structure of the *Alföld*-parables, as negotiated above, consist of a spatial allegory (*Alföld, tanya*), the circular aesthetics of the film (camera movement, cyclo-textuality) and the symbols (hoods, uniforms) used in the productions that all refer to the oppressive socialist framework of the Kádárist Hungary.

As a movement of national mourning, the films of Black Series stand as first examples of implicit remembrance in Hungary. Wrapping their message into a parabolic form, *Satantango*, *Woyzeck*, *Shadow on Snow*, *Damnation* and *Shooting Gallery* – the main narratives of the tendency – return to the horizontal enclosure of the national space and, similar to Jancsó, represent it as a prison-like territory. In this case, the wide horizon of the natural landscape and its destroyed *tanya*-dwellings mirror the end of the colonised era. The end of socialism is, however, portrayed as *the cause* of the post-apocalyptic situation where corruption, abuse, and robbery are part of everyday life. The parabolic treatment of space in the films – that assumes a return to the connotative language of the socialist era – is an evident sign of the nostalgia of the nation that, disappointed in the post-socialist world, looks back in time and references the socialist years – albeit emphasising the negative features of it. That is, the films of Black Series compose their *mise-en-scène* along references to the restrictive political tools of the Kádárist apparatus, be that the ever-present surveillance-system (panoptic scheme) or the conquer of the national space (colonialism). As analysed in *Satantango*, the return to socialism – the socialist present per se – is emphasised by the aesthetics of circularity that, similar to Jancsó, assumes an eternal historical circle.

Whereas, in the case of Jancsó, the historical setting was a reference to the autonomy of the Hungarian nation and the revolutions fought for freedom, the cyclo-form in Black Series alludes to the journey into the socialist past and the protagonists' enclosed situation

in the various political epochs. In both cases, the directors emphasise the ever-present oppressed-oppressor power-relations that, by ruling over the national space of the *Puszta*, destroy the pro-filmic space. Consequently, what we witness in Black Series, is a narrative construction that references the post-socialist present and socialist power-relations by means of the visual patterns of the *Alföld*-parables. The directors use the *Puszta* as metaphors for prison, while the cobweb-structure of the films signal the trapped position of the nation.

The innovation of Black Series is that, besides the horizontal enclosure used by the open parables of the socialist era, the tendency operates with vertical spatial forms too, thus exacerbating the enclosed position of the characters. This results in an absolute claustrophobic narrative that accentuates the trapped situation of the nation – stuck into history and an unwanted transition period. This prison-like situation is mediated by a parabolic form that, similar to Jancsó's narratives, consists of a spatial allegory (*Alföld*, *tanya*), circular aesthetics (camera-fly, circular textuality) and the symbolic conversations of the characters.

In the post-2000 cinema of Hungary, the *Alföld* gets endowed with the meaning of socio-economic decay, an imprisoned territory dominated by poverty, rape, and physical aggression. On a representational level, the directors work with apocalyptic, grey images that show the once prospering *tanya* and cube houses in complete ruins. The traditional old values that once characterised the land have thus disappeared, but the role of the rural on screen remained symbolic. Instead of the connectedness of the old peasant life – that, in the New Wave, signalled the existential dilemma of the protagonists – the land is now home to a monochrome, depressive territory that signifies the post-socialist decay and loss of national values. Therefore, similar to Black Series, the rural – together with its symbolic architecture – now functions as a depressive land, ruled by deviance and anomie.

The death of national values is also signalled by the last *Alföld*-parables of Hungarian cinema that eventually *verticalize* the *Puszta*. While in *Delta*, the circular aesthetics of the parables of Jancsó and Tarr remains remarkable, Mundruczó emphasises the absolute death of the national space by choosing *the end of* the Danube for the location. By impregnating this space with socialist power – and a depressive, anomic atmosphere – Mundruczó eventually signals the completion of the colonisation process that, at first, Jancsó's film had signalled. *Father's Acre* goes a step further by visually imprisoning the national space of the *Alföld*. In both ways, the directors abolish the national value of the pro-filmic space

and, as examined above, turn it into a graveyard. Similar to the predecessors, the parabolic form in Hungarian New Cinema consists of a spatial allegory (Danube, *Alföld,* Transdanubia and *tanya*), metaphoric camera movements (scanning and circular shots) and the muteness of the characters.

The death of national space gives way to two new trends in contemporary cinema. First of all, the aesthetic turn from horizontal to vertical enclosure can be regarded as a sign that Hungarian directors, similar to their Romanian colleagues, have embarked upon utilising the crammed prefabricated places of the previous regime. This would mean the start of another wave of implicit remembrance that, opposite to the wide horizons, would focus on the urban architectural remnants of the socialist regime (*Pal Adrienn*). The *verticalization* of spaces in the post-2010 Hungarian cinema is thus indicative of the nation's self-examination, while it also refers to the hopeless socio-economic present situation of the country. In this regard, the enclosed spaces have a political meaning in so far as they signal the dissatisfaction of the society with the European Union and the austerities implemented by the Gyurcsány and Orbán-government.

On the other hand, there is a new tendency that resuscitates the *Alföld*, which takes on a new parabolic form that, this time, signals the dominance of the capitalist power over the land. That is, with the end of the traditional *Alföld*-parables, a new kind of connotative language is being born that, similar to the old tendency, is strongly connected to the rural. In Császi's *Land of Storms*, for example, the main protagonists, Szabolcs (András Sütő) returns home from Germany and re-builds his old *tanya*-house somewhere in the middle of the *Alföld*. Similar to the old *Alföld*-parables, the isolated location of the dwelling is emphasised by wide, high-angle shots that not only help to allegorise the space but also allude to the marginalised position of the boy who is despised by the villagers for being a homosexual. Soon, András develops an intimate relationship with one of the local boys, but they get disturbed by the German ex-boyfriend who intrudes upon the space of the *tanya*. His presence – and the domination of the German language in the dialogues – starts a series of conflicts in the narrative that eventually ends with the death of Szabolcs: the intrusion of the foreign power into the national landscape of the *Puszta* causes the demise of the Hungarian figure. Similarly, in Hajdu's *Mirage* – that represents the *tanya* as a modern slave camp somewhere in the *Alföld* – the protagonists speak several other languages but Hungarian. The dialogue is recorded in Romanian, English, and French, and Hungarian is only spoken with a very strong accent. The only characters that are fluent in

Hungarian, are the slaves themselves that are imprisoned in the *tanya* and the endless horizon of the *Puszta* that, as the dealer himself emphasises, cannot be escaped. Consequently, as we see, similar to the *Alföld*-parables, this new tendency within the Hungarian New Cinema uses the land as a spatial allegory, while the symbolic conversations and muteness of the pre-2010 films get substituted by foreign languages. In this way, the national land gets another symbolic meaning and parabolic role: a territory ruled by capitalist powers that put Hungarians in slavery.

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CONCLUSION

The main intention of the comparative analysis of the cinema of the two socialist extremes, Romania and Hungary, has been to model the implicit forms of socialist remembrance on screen and to set up two spatial models that offer a new approach to analyse the cinema of the region. On the one hand, these models – vertical and horizontal enclosure – are strongly connected to the physical, socialist space of the films, while on the other hand, the *mise-en-scène* of the productions centres around panoptic techniques that give the scenographic space a claustrophobic atmosphere. In this way, location and screen space set up a disciplinary space that indirectly references the restrictive terror of the socialist regimes.

The pro-filmic space of the films has been examined as a socialist product. The prefabricated, monstrous dwellings of Romania have therefore been analysed as socialist constructs that signal the subordination of the physical space to the socialist power. In contrast to this, the national space of the *Alföld* and its main edifice, the *tanya*, have been examined as spaces of independence that eventually become under foreign influence in the films, thus transforming the location into an oppressed territory.

Irrespective of the level of oppression in Romania and Hungary, both countries reference the socialist surveillance apparatus and its significant position in creating a socialist, disciplinary space. In the socialist cinema of Romania, it is the presence of the camera in the film text and the *mise-en-abyme* structure of the films that contribute to the set-up of tyrannised spatial relations (*Why Are the Bells Ringing Mitică? Reenactment, Sequences, Microphone Test*). In the transition cinema of the country, the metaphoric role of the device gets substituted by the decaying spatial set of the locations that refer to the gloomy post-socialist period (*The Oak, Look Forward in Anger, The Conjugal Bed and Too Late*). This is the first filmic epoch that gives special significance to the representation of the interiors of prefabricated dwellings that, as an indirect reflection on the restrictive policy of the Ceaușescu-regime, becomes a crucial representational tool in the New Wave. Accordingly, as it has been stated, while shooting in labyrinth-like interiors, Romanian New Wave dwells on the metaphoric presence of the camera – which indicates an aesthetic connection between the pre-socialist and post-2000 productions.

In the Romanian New Wave, the oscillating, anthropomorphic camera work and the panoptic framing that establish an observational aesthetic, and the suffocating pro-filmic space of the prefabricated interiors create the spatial construction of vertical enclosure. As

examined in *Police, adjective*, *Aurora*, *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*, this spatial set creates a claustrophobic atmosphere, which is one of the main indicators of the anomic-depressive tone of the films.

Similar to Romania, the connotative language of the socialist cinema of Hungary is built on a metaphorical use of the camera that, with its circulating trajectory, imprisons the protagonists (*The Round-Up*, *My Way Home*). The aesthetics of circularity, as named within the thesis, encompasses both the circular textuality of the pro-filmic space (*Alföld*) as well as the cellular unity of surveillance (camera), which also pertains to the circular form of history. The circular tendency and the parabolic narratives of the socialist times are inherited by Black Series (*Satantango, Damnation, Shooting Gallery, Woyzeck*) that indirectly recall the Kadarist times, while also referencing the gloomy present. As stated in the thesis, a tendency within the Hungarian New Cinema follows the aesthetic traditions of the predecessors and represents Hungary's national space as an oppressed territory while, thanks to the circular aesthetics, alludes to socialist imprisonment of the characters (*Delta*). However, the dominating spatial set of horizontal enclosure – which utilises the wide horizon of the pro-filmic space that gets emphasised by long shots and circular, slow camera movements – slowly disappears from Hungarian cinema and gives place to a vertical spatial composition that, similar to the Romanian New Wave, prefers to shoot in enclosed, narrow, prefabricated places.

While the thesis has touched upon the forms of explicit remembrance in Hungarian and Romanian cinema, its focus on implicit remembrance and reflection has aimed to demonstrate how two socialist extremes reflect upon their own past. We can state that both national cinemas recall socialism. On the first level, they use socialist spaces for locations, while, on the second level of representation, they constantly reference the oppressive surveillance apparatus of the socialist state.

Paradoxically, while Hungary enjoyed a semi-liberal socialist leadership under Kádár, its national space is constantly illustrated as a colonial unit, suppressed by the socialist power. Because the representation of the *tanya*-world and *Alföld* as tyrannical constellations was first employed by the parables of the socialist epoch, the return to the circular aesthetics and natural landscape can be negotiated as a nostalgic gesture. This would presuppose a certain level of longing for the paternalist context of the Hungarian socialist regime that, albeit only within a semi-oppressive structure that required absolute obedience, guaranteed people's wellbeing. On the other hand, the parabolic language of

certain contemporary art films can assume the start of a regeneration process that means, while facing the parabolic staging on screen, the younger generation can also re-articulate the past. That is, because cinema is another device for collective remembrance, where, in the case of Hungary, the audience gets confronted with its own, incarcerated position in the past, the parabolic form can start a unique process of eventually reckoning with the past. However, because of the special attention these films require when being read, the third option to negotiate the return to the allegorical language as protest against the post-colonial establishment might be more correct. This is to say that, by recalling the parabolic universe of the socialist films, Hungarian cinema refers to the capitalist-globalist colonialization of the country. Witnessing the growing nationalist, Eurosceptic tendencies in Hungary, I would argue that the reason for the allegorical use of space is rather a sign of a new period where filmmakers, following the traditions of the predecessors, allude to the subjected position of the nation. Of course, the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive: the longing for the Kadarist framework and the rejection of the globalised structure in Hungary go hand in hand and signal the nation's wish for a socialist-nationalist political set. More troubling however, the horizontal enclosure of the films underscores the masochistic characteristics of the nation that, as an ever-colonised country, requires a certain level of oppression from the leadership – as the wish to return to socialism demonstrates. This is further supported by the fact that, whereas Romania has several productions that openly dissect the negative effect of the socialist regime, Hungary is still missing a comprehensive reflection on the 1970-1980's epoch which, although we find several historical productions that set their stories in the socialist era, is still an unexploited subject.

Whereas Hungary seems to be incapable of leaving the socialist dreams behind, the post-2000 wave of explicit remembrance and the vertical aesthetics of the New Wave films indicate that, ten years after the revolution, Romania is ready to start the process of collective remembrance on its socialist past. It is most probably because of the draconian measures and the severe socialist dictatorship that Romanians have a stricter approach to closing down the past and looking into the future. Thus, although, as certain studies show, nostalgia towards the Ceaușescu-times is growing, the films suggest the opposite. Although some films approach the past with strong irony, and even nostalgia, the examined productions suggest that Romanians have a clear understanding of the past that they are ready to confront and leave behind. Also, because Romanian cinema is more preoccupied with analysing the past, the direct reflection on the capitalist present is still an unexploited territory – albeit we find several examples that deal with migration, working

abroad and the new, post-socialist corruption. Still, for now, Romanian cinema is more concerned with is its own past and the aftermaths of the Ceaușescu-regime – as Mungiu's last hit (*Graduation/Bacalauerat,* 2016) and Puiu's latest film, (*Sieranevada,* 2016) also demonstrate.

Nevertheless, vertical and horizontal enclosure have been examined as two socialist spatial constructions that contribute to the suffocating atmosphere of the films, the two categories can be extended to other national cinemas of the region – and beyond. For instance, it would be worth investigating what implicit forms of reflections on Titoism and the Yugoslav wars we find in the 'the cinema of normalization' (Pavičić, 2010) – a new aesthetical form that elaborated on the post-war reality in the Balkans. Most of the productions of contemporary Croatian art cinema – such as the films of Ognjen Sviličić (*Armin,* 2007; *These are the rules/Takva su pravila,* 2014), Dalibor Matanić (*Mother Asphalt*/*Majka asfalta,* 2010; *Fine dead girls*/*Fine mrtve djevojke*, 2002) and Branko Schmidt (*Vegetarian Cannibal*/ *Ljudožder vegetarijanac*, 2012) have a vertical *mise-en-scène*. Similarly, Bosnian art cinema (Jasmila Žbanić's *Grbavica,* 2006 and *On the Path*/*Na Putu,* 2010; *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*/ *Za one koji ne mogu da govore*, 2013 or Aida Begic's *Children of Sarajevo*/*Djeca*, 2012) prefers to shoot in ruined, prefabricated buildings, surrounded by a grey, dilapidating, and neglected urban environment. On the other hand, we find several examples for vertical *mise-en-scène* among the post-2000 films outside the Balkan region, such as Zdenek Jirásky's *Flower Buds* (*Poupata*, 2011), Petr Václav's *The Way Out* (*Cesta ven*, 2014) or Slávek Horák's *Home Care* (*Domáci péce*, 2015) – just to mention some examples from the Czech corpus. Similarly, films from the contemporary art cinema of Bulgaria – Kamen Kalev's *Eastern plays* (*Iztochni piesi*, 2009), Serbia – Srdan Golubović's *Circles* (*Krugovi*, 2013) – and Ukraine (Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy's *The Tribe* (*Plemya*, 2014) – use vertical compositions that gives the films a suffocating atmosphere. Also, as seen in the case of Hungarian cinema, even though directors shot in open locations – such as the Bulgarian *Sneakers* (*Kecove,* dir. Ivan Vladimirov and Valeri Yordanov, 2011), the Czech Bohdan Slama's *Something Like Happiness* (*Stesti*, 2005), the Serbian Nikola Ležaić's *Tilva Roš* (2010), the Estonian-Georgian *Tangerines* (*Mandariinid*, dir. Zaza Urushadze,2013), the Lithuanian Kristijonas Vildziunas's *You am I* (*As esi tu*, 2006) – the films signal an enclosed, prison-like landscape – an Eastern European anomic space that unites the cinemas of the region.

Certainly, the present conclusion did not aim at enumerating all the films that work with vertical and/or horizontal *mise-en-scène* from the Eastern European art film corpus, but, by bringing some examples from the national cinemas of the region, it has proposed directions for future research that would support the very argument of this work. That is, the majority of the contemporary Eastern European art films can be grouped according to the two spatial categories examined within the thesis.

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