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Alternative Histories of the Communist Past:
Typologies of Representation
in the Romanian Film and Novel after 1989

Abstract:

The article analyzes the extent to which the Romanian film and novel after 1989 propose a contrasting vision on the recent past as compared to the official, hegemonic discourse of the political realm. One important event was the official condemnation of the communist regime in 2006. Another objective of the paper is to analyze the artistic response of films to media and political events. The questions asked are: do the films from this period challenge the hegemonic anti-communist discourse? What are the strategies employed? How has the film or the novel influenced other discourses as well? Three typologies of representing communism are proposed and discussed.

Keywords: Romanian Post-Communist Film, typologies of representation, communist past.

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Remembering the communist period is a difficult endeavour, not only for the historian, but also for the filmmaker or the novelist. The attempt to represent the communist regime has been both a risky and a tempting challenge for post-communist filmmakers and novelists on many accounts. It is a tempting subject because it arrives almost as a ready-made narrative, a chain of plot sequences wrapped up in dramatic tension and ambiguities, with characters already divided into the righteous victims of its oppression (usually the protagonists) and the villainous agents of the system (the antagonists), featuring the struggle for freedom as a thematic invariant.

However, like Holocaust or the French Revolution, communism is not an ordinary subject; it is also a risky one, since it tests the limits of representation because of the crimes and innocent victims it produced. The communist period can also be integrated into the traumatic episodes of history, along with the Holocaust, and it puts forward similar dilemmas for those who attempt to narrate it, especially if the result is an artistic representation, not a factual, historical one. It seems that neither the historian nor the filmmaker can maintain a neutral, safe distance towards its shocking effects, which are demanded if justice is to be done.

Michael Rothberg's insights regarding the representation of the Holocaust are perfectly relevant here, especially regarding the divide between the realist tendency, a common practice for historians and sociologists (who tend to emphasize "the banality of evil", encapsulated by the emblematic figure of the bureaucrat) and the antirealist tendency, embraced by literary theorists and philosophers and emphasizing the impossibility to comprehend the event (Rothberg 2000, 6). In order to surpass the deadlock of previous debates about such an "extreme historical event", a combination of the extreme and the everyday, he identifies three demands resulting from the confrontation between Holocaust, understanding and representation: a demand for documentation, another for reflection on the formal limits of representation and another one concerning the public circulation of discourses on events (Rothberg 2000, 8). These three dimensions correspond to the categories of realism, modernism and postmodernism, no longer conceived solely as periods and styles, but as frameworks for the representation and interpretation of history (Rothberg 2000, 10).

Of all these three, realism is of special importance (for Rothberg, the key term is "traumatic realism"), not only in Rothberg's demonstration, but also as regards the particular resurgence of realism in Romanian films (with the Romanian New Wave cinema) and in Romanian novels (with the new generation of writers) in the 2000s. For nearly two decades, literary studies have been caught up in the debate regarding neo-modernism and postmodernism, neglecting the problem of the new realism.

These categories are surprisingly applicable to post-communist film and literature, but I will focus the discussion only on the representations of communism in film, which displays striking similarities with the novel. The best approach is thematic, as it has already been carried out masterfully by Doru Pop in his *Romanian New Wave Cinema* (Pop 2014). My approach will target different aspects, since it is not concerned solely with the aesthetics of the New Wave, but rather with the changes of paradigm in the representations of communism after 1989. In the last decade, the bibliography on the Romanian film has been seriously enriched, and the New Romanian Wave is the favourite subject of and the reason for a fresh interest in Romanian film (Valerian Sava, Dominique Nasta, Andrei Gorzo have each written or edited volumes about the New Wave Cinema).

A few unanswered questions still remain: can we divide the post-communist period into more distinct periods according to how the communist past is imagined in

films and novels? Can we trace the differences between these representations regarding their ideological output according to their historical context? Can we detect a transformation, a progression from a harsh, vindictive and blunt anti-communism towards a more nuanced perspective, an alternative vision on the past? Can we speak of nostalgic elements in this third typology? Can we locate this shift of perspective mostly after the official condemnation of communism and Romania's inclusion in EU? How do films and novels reflect this?

Anti-communism, from alternative to hegemonic discourse

The precise historical account of post-1989 attitudes regarding communism exceeds the scope of the present article. However, I will dwell on a single paradigmatic example from the post-communist present, that of the official condemnation of the Communist regime on 18 December 2006, shortly before Romania was integrated in the European Union. Although the historical importance of the first event has often been contested, the temporal proximity with the second is significant and indicates a historical landmark in post-communist history, a division between two main paradigms regarding the relationship with the troubled past. The first paradigm could be divided into two periods as well.

The first period manifested a certain resistance towards the investigation of the traumatic memory of communist crimes and never saw too many attempts to condemn the communist regime through political acts (see the first attempt by the Government and the Prime Minister Petre Roman on 27 December 1990). Those projects, such as the project that was initiated by Alianța Civică in 1994 to condemn communism, but was not adopted by Parliament (Andreescu 2008, 50), were failed attempts, even though the new democracy was born under the good auspices of the request that the ex-communist leaders should not be part of new post-communist structures of power (see the manifestation from January 1990) and of the famous Proclamation of Timişoara, released on 11 March 1990 (Abraham 2008, 9). The second, transitional period could be considered that of 1996-2000, when two important laws were adopted in Romania, the one regarding the victims of repression and the restoration of their rights (1997), reinforced through public speeches (for example the visit of President Emil Constantinescu at Sighet in June 1997), and the one granting the free access to one's secret file (1999), followed by the draft bill on lustration, initiated by George Şerban in May 27 1999, which never got into Parliament due to its radical demand regarding ex-communist politicians. These political responses to the strong anti-communist civic impulses were backed by Resolution 1096 issued by the European Parliament, initiated by Adrian Severin in 1996, regarding the elimination of the communist inheritance.

The second paradigm (and the third period) begun in 2004 was dominated not only by the fulfilled utopia of Romania as a EU and NATO member, but also witnessed the condemnation of the communist regime through a political document, delivered by President Traian Băsescu in front of the unified Chambers of Parliament

on 18 December 2006. However, the entire context of the period demanded such an act, and it was preceded by other institutional measures: in April 2005, Sorin Ilieşiu (Vice-President of Alianţa Civică) demanded the official condemnation of communism, which was met with the silence of President Băsescu. In 2005, The Liberal Party created IICCR (Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania) and Prime Minister Călin Popescu Tăriceanu extended the verification area for the persons who had collaborated with "Securitate", the secret information service.

These chronological divisions are, of course, still subject to historical debates, and there are at least two possible chronological accounts: one guided by the absence/presence of the problem of the communist past on the public/political agenda and the second according historical importance to both the official condemnation of the communist regime and the inclusion of Romania in the European Union (two paradigms, before and after the events). The combination between the two criteria results in three periods: 1990-1996, coeval with the difficult assimilation of the communist past and the relative absence of political decisions regarding the subject; 1996-2004, a few important laws in the first four years and a stagnation in the last four years of this period; 2004-present, the official political act (a "high politics" event) of condemnation, anticommunism becoming the hegemonic discourse of both the political space and the media agenda.

When we compare these well-known historical data from the three periods, we can notice the relative absence of the communist past as a problem for the political agenda of the years 1990-1996 (the first period) and the density of this problem/attempts to solve it in the political realm both during the period 1996-2000 and after 2004, reaching the culminating point with the official condemnation of the communist regime and the *Final Report* of December 2006. Although its historical importance has often been contested for various reasons, I will use it as a landmark for how anti-communism has become the hegemonic discourse in both the political and the cultural spheres during the last decade in order to compare it with the representations of communism in arts (literature and film), to investigate if and how these anti-hegemonic discourses choose to counteract it, and which strategies are employed.

The discourse of the films from the first period felt the utter need to condemn the communist past in various forms, mainly by describing it as totalitarian system. These elements can also be found in the final document issued by Tismăneanu's Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania: the policies and organization of the Communist Party during its ascension to power, the repressive apparatus – Securitate – the infamous national police agency, the way in which the penitentiary system was organized and anti-communist resistance. Both the films from the years 1996-2000 and, especially, those produced after 2004 developed different strategies of narrating and representing the communist years, either through postmodern intertextuality and fictionalization as in Dan Pita's *My Name Is Adam* (1996), or through the strategies of minimalist realism and black humour. The anticommu-

nist emphasis was colonized by historians and politicians after 2004-2007 and the artistic representations from the period shifted their approach towards relativism regarding the condemnation of communism and its direct violence, but also focused on other effects, such as routinized aspects of everyday life, bureaucracy, abortion, the way in which Romanians learned to cope with dictatorship, how they learned to adapt and even profit from the decaying system.

Typologies of representation

I shall describe three typologies of representation which are also, with a few exceptions, three phases in the assimilation of communism as an extreme historical event, three phases of representation which correspond to three possible attitudes towards the past (Rothberg 2000, 11). The first is the realistic, judgmental approach. Conducting an inquiry into it and the best way to approach it is through documentary films, diaries (in literature) or films/novels based on real events (according to Rothberg's classification, this outlook corresponds to the "figure of the survivor"). The second is anti-realist, starting from the premise that the communist period had a fantastic aura. The best way to represent it is through allegories, parables, or dystopian forms ("the figure of the bystander"). The third attitude is one of acceptance and assimilation of the traumatic event, dominated by humour, and considers that the best way to represent the past is through a minimalist/realistic approach ("the figure of the latecomer").

The first phase/typology was dominated by the discourse of the victims of communist repression, portraying communism exclusively as a totalitarian, repressive system, documenting the most extreme episodes of the communist era and especially the elimination of the armed anticommunist resistance (the partisans) through factual descriptions (memories, diaries and documentary films), the forced collectivisation of private rural properties, the prison experiences of torture, and the organisation of the vast surveillance apparatus, thus focusing on the "obsessive decade" of the 1950s. This typology is illustrated by films such as *Undeva în Est/ Somewhere in the East* (1991, Nicolae Mărgineanu), with its take on the forced collectivization of private rural properties and the repression of the partisans or the oppressive practices of "Securitate"; *Cel mai iubit dintre pământeni/ The Most Beloved of Earthlings* (1995, Șerban Marinescu) – the sufferings of an artist/intellectual in communist prisons and afterwards, his incapacity to adapt; *Stare de fapt/ State of Things* (1995, Stere Gulea) – the problem of historical truth regarding the Revolution of 1989; *Somnul insulei/ The Sleep of the Island* (1994, Mircea Veroiu) – depicting the consequences of the compromise with the system made by a famous exiled artist who returns to his homeland after a period of absence; *Trahir/ Betrayal* (1993, Radu Mihăileanu) – where the protagonist agrees to collaborate with the secret information agency and this Faustian pact has tragic consequences for every aspect of his life; and the documentary television series by Lucia Hossu-Longin, *The Memorial of Suffering* (*Memorialul durerii,* 1991), one of the most emblematic examples of anticommunist discourse from this period, dealing with dramatic episodes such as

the elimination of partisan resistance, the forced collectivization, and the anti-communist resistance of intellectuals such as Paul Goma and Monica Lovinescu. If we add Dan Piţa's *Hotel de lux/Luxury Hotel* (1992), also emblematic for the first typology, we can see that along with the desire to document the communist repression, a different, older strategy has survived. Of neo-modernist extraction, this strategy heavily employed a subversive style with a dystopian dimension, where symbols and metaphors have a special cinematic importance.

The tradition was established by Lucian Pintilie in *Reconstruction* (1968) and by Mircea Daneliuc, in the 1980s, with *Croaziera/The Cruise* and *Glissando*. It was continued by Mircea Veroiu in *Somnul insulei/The Sleep of the Island* (1994). In all these films, the mise-en-scène gains symbolic significance from the first shots, as they all depict the enclosed, suffocating space where the protagonist becomes gradually aware of his imprisonment. In most of the cases (with the exception of *Croaziera,* which ends on a comical note), the final escape is impossible and equals death. The opening shot of *Glissando* shows the small room of the protagonist Theodorescu in a pan shot, emphasizing the circular movement and the suffocating atmosphere of the crowded room. The next sequence unveils the absurd, labyrinthine space of the sanatorium/casino/Turkish bath, and its centrality for the film and for the protagonist: in spite of the frequent attempts to flee from its morbid influence, the final sequence of the film suggests the impossibility of escape and of survival.

Somnul insulei/The Sleep of the Island, adapted from Bujor Nedelcovici's *Al doilea mesager/ The Second Messenger* opens with the same idea of confinement, condensed in the close-up of prison-like black bars through which we barely see the shore of a sea and become aware of another enclosed space, the island isolating a dystopian Republic where the protagonist, Danyel Raynal, has just arrived. The film describes his crushed illusions and his increased awareness of being trapped in a web of lies about the real dystopian nature of the social experiment of his country (the spiderweb is a recurrent image).

Trahir/ Betrayal by Radu Mihăileanu confines its protagonist (George Vlaicu, excellently played by Johan Leysen) in a prison cell, opening with vivid images of the concentrationary universe (another thematic recurrence for the first type of representation) and continues with the hero's attempts to escape from his cell, then from prison, and finally from his country. The film ends ironically with George's voluntary confinement in a hotel (Hotel Terminus Est), where he commits suicide, convinced that he is a traitor. His final suicidal act has a wider significance: George attempts to liberate his child (the future) from the pressure and the trauma of the past, a sacrifice meant to eliminate the guilt and the long history of compromise with a criminal regime. The fact that this symbolic act takes place in a Western hotel called Terminus Est, after the protagonist has managed to liberate himself and his family from tyranny, is meant to be significant for the tragic destiny of East Europeans: even after communism was overthrown, its troubled memory still haunts its witnesses.

All these films centre their mise-en-scène on an ambiguous location (the sanatorium, the island, the prison, the ship, the hotel) which can be described as having heterotopian features, that is, according to the Foucauldian definition, the ability to refer to all other spaces (Foucault 1986), to allude not only to the rest of the fictional world of the protagonists, but also to the extra-diegetic reality of the spectator. This is one of the main reasons why it was preferred by the subversive, neo-modernist aesthetic, permeating the first phase/typology of representation. The sanatorium, the hotel, the cruise ship unveil the absurdity, confinement, chaotic, nightmarish aspects of the outer world, including that of the spectator of the film.

Another aspect of the typical characters of the first typology is the sharp dualism between the victims of the system/the protagonists and the agents of oppression (antagonists), the plot being the result of the dramatic confrontation between them, when the heroes are transformed into martyrs (the good who are sacrificed/ having a tragic destiny) and the antagonists into malefic agents, avatars of the Devil on earth. The agents are often portrayed as messengers of the devil, sent to torment their helpless victims, a shared feature both for the films of the first period and also for the novels. Ruxandra Cesereanu has analyzed the representation of the agents in novels such as *Playback* by Stelian Tănase, *Sertarul cu aplauze/ Drawer full of Applause* by Ana Blandiana and many others (Cesereanu 2013, 172). Radu Mihăileanu's *Trahir* offers a suggestive portrayal in this sense, that of the anonymous antagonist of George Vlaicu, the agent who proposes the Faustian pact: in order to escape torture and prison, but mainly in order to publish his poetry, George has to become an informer (in fact he has to sign the informative notes/to offer information that has already been delivered). The agent, who remains anonymous throughout the entire film, is the one who not only comes with the idea of saving the "poet" from the troubles of the man George Vlaicu, but also offers him a perfect life afterwards, when the utopia of literary fame and accomplished creation becomes palpable.

This division between "the good" and "the bad" simplifies the plot of the fiction film and even opens the possibility of ideologization, as Doru Pop has shown (2014). The same dualism, with different connotations (even religious) is noticeable in the documentary films of the period, the best example being the *Memorial of Suffering*, where the partisans of the armed resistance are referred to as martyrs and the "Securitate" agents as devils, the first being compared to the first Christians and the latter being clearly shown as ruthless criminals. Anticommunist discourse has preserved its stark opposition even in the *Final Report* of the Presidential Commission led by Tismăneanu and this has been an object of constant criticism (Andreescu 2008).

De-realization of communism: the second typology

The second typology implies a different relation to the traumatic episodes of history, mediating through fiction and fantasy, and manifests the intention to surpass the simplistic division between victims and authority, while remaimimg, at the same time,

relatively close to the factual historical events. The best example for this transitional type of representation is Dan Pița's *My Name is Adam* (1996). Although it focuses on the ideological pressure exerted on intellectuals and artists during the 1950s, the confrontation between the professor and the "Securitate" agents is shrouded in mystery, until they (and the spectator) can no longer distinguish between fact and fiction, between real historical events and fictional accounts, between invented characters and real figures. Although it may be considered a failed experiment, the film is also the result of a totally different approach to communism made by the same director (to be compared with Dan Pita's *Luxury Hotel*, his previous feature), where he adapts various fantastic tales by Mircea Eliade in a postmodernist fashion, making use of intertextuality and free juxtaposition, showing the pleasure to generate fiction as a refuge from history and memory.

Silent Wedding (2008, Horațiu Mălăele) could also serve as an emblematic example for this transitional representation. The film mixes the stylised representation of a historical period (the first years after communism ascended to power, precisely the year of Stalin's death, 1953), a traumatic event (the elimination of an entire village for disobedience on the day of the dictator's funeral) and it is sometimes close to the spectrum of magic realism: forced to cancel the wedding, the guests decide to carry on in silence, simulating a wedding, but eventually the joy of their game breaks loose. This could serve also as the perfect example for how the act of fiction attempts to break loose from the pressures of history. Eventually the film shows how the shared symbolic space of freedom performed through the silent wedding is literally destroyed by the violent intrusion of the Soviet tanks, an improbable event in a realist approach, but symbolically emphasized in this type of representation.

Somewhere in Palilula (2012, Silviu Purcărete) is another late manifestation of an older typology, a hybrid between the neo-modernist aesthetic of "imaginary provinces" (a type of subversive literature which was fashionable in Romanian literature during the 1970s and 1980s, with Ștefan Bănulescu, Eugen Uricaru or Matei Vişniec as its representatives novelists) and the baroque theatrical performance and symbolism of the first period (already discussed in the films of Dan Pița), describing a heterotopian space and complicated allegories about the Romanians' survival strategies during the last years of communism.

The transition to the third typology

The Great Communist Bank Robbery/ Camarades, gangsters, levez-vous (2004, Alexandru Solomon), like *Children of the Decree* (2005), is another chief example of a film that stages the trial of the Communist regime, relevant for the changes of representation occurring in the third pattern. Alexandru Solomon's filmography is also relevant for the shift from the condemnation of communism in both *The Great Communist Bank Robbery* and *Cold Waves* (2007) towards the criticism of the post-communist world in *Kapitalism. Our Improved Formula* (2010).

The Great Communist Bank Robbery must be compared with a similar attempt from the first paradigm, namely the documentary *The Memorial of Suffering*. In Lucia Hossu Longin's television series, the anti-communist stance of the narrator/director of the film was revealed and emphasized from the beginning through memorable formulas, assuming that this discourse was lacking in the Romanian public space at that time ("the history that is not taught in school" – read the intertitle from the opening of the film). Solomon's narrator (the voice of Victor Rebengiuc) sets a different perspective, far more distanced and more ironical, and the tonality is that of comedy, even though the spectator realizes that the bank robbers would eventually face the extreme penalty, death by execution.

Alexandru Solomon's film manages to perform the condemnation of communism indirectly, through a more distanced perspective and taking as a focus point an apparently marginal case/event from the 1950s (1959), the National Bank robbery, a specific capitalist accident in the perfect totalitarian environment. The film's director juxtaposes the accounts on the robbery taken from the surviving witnesses of the event, both the agents of the authority and victims of their acts, subject to their violence. This striking contrast between their versions of oral history becomes an indirect testimony on the government's policies of repression, showing a stark discrepancy between how the interrogatories really unfolded (the suspects were forced to admit the guilt through physical torture) and how the original film from 1959 (*Reconstruction*) presented them. The film confronts the agents of repression (a judge, a few Securitate and police officers) with their victims and relatives, a confrontation of discourses which was absent from the first episodes of *The Memorial of Suffering*, where only the victims testified, and only with the new series, started after 2008, the testimonies of the system representatives began to appear (a series focused on the torturers). Such a confrontation is also meant to reveal the hidden motivations and behaviour of the communist representatives through their own discourses (a method often used by Solomon in his films).

Solomon's film also illustrates one of the most important media and political concerns of the last decade: the archive of secret files and what it might reveal about communism and the individuals who put it into practice: a son of one of the victims starts a research through the labyrinthine archive to find out the truth about the robbery and how the punishment was organized by the authorities. This serves as a pretext for the film to reveal the real practices of interrogation (physical violence, terror and torture) as opposed to their official picture: one of the most significant scenes in the film is when the original propaganda film about the robbery (starring the real bank robbers) is projected in an empty cinema hall, contrasting with the testimonies of the surviving witnesses.

Surpassing the trauma: the third pattern

The third pattern is illustrated by films such as: *Tales from the Golden Age* (various directors, 2009*), The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* (Andrei Ujică), *How I Spent the End of the World* (Cătălin Mitulescu, 2006), *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (Cristian Mungiu, 2007). They all appeared in a different paradigm, when the hegemonic discourse was that of anti-communism: the mass media, the social sphere and the political factor were all caught up in the frenzy of investigating communism, as part of what can be termed "archive mania". The artistic response (film and literature) tends to shift from this perspective towards a more nuanced, complex approach, from tragedy to a comic tone, from dystopian divisions between victims and the annihilating system to the acceptance of the fact that Romanians had eventually adapted to the communist way of life, from the endeavour to encompass communism as a whole to a more subjective and personal approach, where the intimate dilemmas of the individual gained more attention. These films seek to deconstruct the simplistic division between victims and oppressors in order to resist the ideologization of anti-communism (Pop 2014), which is also a tendency of the new historiographical discourse and of the minimalist novel of the 2000s.

The New Wave filmmakers have a tendency to choose different episodes from the communist years: they prefer the last years of the regime (*How I Spent the End of the World*; *4 Months, 3 weeks, 2 Days; Silent River*; *Oxygen*; *Tales from the Golden Age*) or the days of the Revolution from December 1989 (*12:08 East of Bucharest*; *The Paper Will be Blue*). Very few return to a more distant past, and here the exception that should be discussed is *The Portrait of the Fighter as a Young Man* (2010, Constantin Popescu), which chooses a problematic topic, specific of the first type of representation: the brutal repression of the anti-communist resistance and the violence perpetrated by the "Securitate" and Party activists against innocent people. The director had difficulties in adjusting the traumatic, tragic force of the chosen subject to the minimalist approach and to combine the factual dimension of the story (accounted in different testimonies, including the *Memorial of Suffering* or the survivors' diaries) with the desire to improvise a new and fresh perspective.

Not only did the chosen episodes seem less and less charged with the historical confrontation between victims and oppressors, but also the topics were less about communism itself than about the characters and their personal dilemmas, their intimate life and problems, for which communism became the proper setting. Such is the case with Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days,* where the communist period is used as the best setting for the drama, since it offers a strong interdiction to be used in the plot: abortions are forbidden and punishable by law.

We no longer have stories of resistance through a heroic fight against and a direct confrontation with the system (as it was a staple of the first period), but stories of co-existence/adaptation, no longer insisting on the morally unacceptable compromise, but on a strategy of non-heroic survival and profit, as it has best been shown by Cristian Mungiu's *Tales from the Golden Age* (2009). Here different directors choose

to represent the strategies and the infinite capacity of the Romanians to adapt to and cope with the harsh realities of the last years of the communist past. The contrast between the viewer's expectations and these "urban legends" results in the comic output of the film. The implicit purpose of all the short films is to catch a glimpse of everyday life in communism (which has already become an exotic environment as in *Good Bye Lenin!,* a similar trend manifesting itself in the same period both in the novel (Dan Lungu, Ştefan Baştovoi, among many others) and in historical discourse (Peter Molloy, *The Lost World of Communism*, an oral history of everyday life, both a BBC book and a documentary series), as well as in Romanian literary and personal accounts regarding the same "Lost world of communism", by Ion Manolescu, Paul Cernat, Angelo Mitchievici, Ioan Stanomir.

As a consequence, the tragic tonality (a staple of the first and second types of representation) changes towards the comic approach and different stylistic resources are employed, along with the postmodern take on history. The fourth short film included in *Tales from the Golden Age*, *The Legend of the Party Photographer* has a postmodern approach to a well-known communist problem: how the vast propaganda system worked to construct the new reality. Instead of exposing it directly, as the films/ novels from the first typology would have done, the film selects a comic error made by the stressed workers of *Scânteia* (Ceauşescu is shown with two hats instead of one) and insists on the hierarchic labyrinth of the system, on its bureaucratic complication, signalling its imminent end. The importance of the artistic representation is also suggested, as is the way in which the spectacle of power was organized at a time when no one really believed in it.

The overthrow of the ethical division between bad (communism) and good (the victims) can be noticed in documentary films, a perfect instance of this vision being Andrei Ujică's documentary *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu*, also a clear instance of the second pattern of representation (although it may not be so evident), attempting to avoid any biased perspective by completely eluding any comment from a narrator (the images are left to tell the story by themselves, without the usual voice over of documentary films). We are left to contemplate by ourselves different hypostases of Ceausescu, starting with his execution in 1989 and his different moments of glory and moments of hesitation anticipating his downfall. The film equally combines fragments of hegemonic discourse (there is an archive footage of Ceausescu's speeches on different solemn occasions, his visits abroad) with the alternative depiction of his intimate moments (Ceausescu swimming, hunting, hugging his children, meeting the crowds). Even if the director's intervention in the subject matter of the film seems minimal, he manages to open some questions and ambiguities through editing: the ordering of the sequences of archive footage becomes significant in itself. The opening sequences of the film contrast the death by execution of Ceausescu with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's funeral (the former president, a representative of the Stalinist repression in Romania) whose ceremony resembles that of a national hero.

Conclusions

It would be an impossible task to sketch a chronological grid and to integrate in it, without any exceptions, the vast amount of films about communism according to these three attitudes towards the past, belonging to the three figures of the witness, the survivor, the bystander and the latecomer (to use Rothberg's terminology). I have tried to describe each typology according to the examples that I consider to be emblematic for each.

The exceptions appear when the typological grid meets the chronological one and could refer to the films that have maintained an aesthetic that was no longer dominant at the moment of their screening (as it is the case with *Silent Wedding,* by Horaţiu Mălăele, *Somewhere in Palilula* by Silviu Purcărete or *Kino Karavan* by Titus Muntean, all displaying a neo-modernist aesthetic which dominated the Romanian screens until the 1990s, and they all appeared in a time when the minimalist aesthetic had become almost mandatory). Another problem is that the attitudes towards the communist past are not to be found in the films discussed as pure essences as I have described them above, but in a more mixed form, especially regarding the first and the second types of representation, where neo-modernist elements become intertwined with postmodern ones (fabulation). The third pattern also uses a postmodernist view on the historical past, marked by relativism, comedy and the deconstruction of ideological stereotypes.

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