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The Evolution of Romanian cinema
during communism: 1949-1989

PhD Thesis Summary

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Abstract

Key words: **communism, socialism, post-communism, New Romanian Cinema, national film epic, Stalinism, thaw, Generation '70, national communism, scientific film, real-time filming, Buftea Film Studio**

My thesis, *The Evolution of Romanian Cinema during Communism (1949-1989)*, proves that – if we are to be objective, with no misconceptions or ideological bias – Romanian film industry begins with the coming to power of communists, after the end of WWII. Moreover, during the following 40 years of communist rule, Romanian cinema increased both in quantity as well as in quality. I am only focusing on fiction films here — documentaries and animations require a special analysis. Even if the title contains the powerful term *communism*, I have replaced it at times with *socialism*, depending on the context.

The Evolution of Romanian Cinema during Communism (1949-1989) does not aim to rehabilitate a certain period in the history of Romanian cinema, nor does it wish to reconsider its ideology. It simply concentrates on reconsidering a few decades of cinema during communism. The interval commences with 1949, the year when *Răsună valea / The Valley Resounds* (Paul Călinescu), the first Romanian film under socialism was shot, and 1989, the year of the Revolution, when the whole Romanian society and its political system was fractured. Of course, the change was not sudden. In the field of cinema, the results of a certain type of direction – metaphorical, elusive, eluding and sweetening (or exaggerating) reality with a few exceptions: Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Daneliuc, Alexandru Tatos, Iosif Demian, Lucian Bratu – are to be felt during the first decade of „post-communism”. The crisis reached a climax in the year 2000, when the Romanian film industry seemed to be forever kneeled. No Romanian film premiered that year, as the „seniors” (directors who had made films before 1989) were either exhausted or overcome by the changes, while the “newcomers” were prevented from opening any doors. There was hardly any debut in view.

Fortunately, this gloomy state of things was to change soon enough. The Romanian New Wave began without having any program, with *Stuff and Dough / Marfa și banii* (2001) by Cristi Puiu, and was consecrated by *The Death of Mr Lazarescu / Moartea domnului Lăzărescu* (2005) by the same Cristi Puiu. Thus, Romanian cinema not only resurrected, but

it also managed to gain international visibility as a coherent movement, with a common denominator and specific (though not entirely original) features. Yet, this New Romanian Cinema did not come out of the blue. It was preceded by the above mentioned decades — ideologically biased and, sometimes, marked by unquestionable achievements. Some aesthetic victories were reputed as a result of the directors' exceptional talent, endurance and resistance, others were merely the effect of the system's "thaw". Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Daneliuc and Alexandru Tatos are among the directors working during the socialist times who influenced the directors of New Romanian Cinema. Even if they had no common manifesto, no aesthetically elaborate program, the leading figures of the New Romanian Cinema freely assumed (at least in their early works) the principles and aesthetic lines drawn by Cristi Puiu. Unlike Italian Neo-Realism, The French New Wave or the British Free Cinema, The New Romanian Cinema is not completely original. It is a personal variant of a cinema that has already existed: formal minimalism, the "slice of life", unsweetened realism, "natural" dialogue, real-time filming, a rather elaborate kind of "naturalism" etc. Cristi Puiu has been faithful to an exceedingly formal type of cinema, while Cristian Mungiu, Radu Muntean, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cătălin Mitulescu, etc. started to gradually give up on the unwritten dogma of the movement. They were more or less successful in their attempt. On the other hand, Radu Jude has shown an amazing (yet, ostentatious and detrimental) versatility. The leading directors of such movement have been many a time awarded at top international film festivals. They are still expected to leave behind the already verified standards in order to reinvent themselves, in a way Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini or Luchino Visconti once managed to break away from Neo-Realism, without repudiating it. This short journey through the four decades of socialist Romanian cinema shows that they were a "germination bed" for the New Romanian Cinema. Their importance is far more significant, though.

The Romanian socialist cinema, as well as the Romanian film industry was born on November, 2, 1949, when the Decree No. 303 consecrated the nationalisation of film industry in Romania. As the infrastructure had been rather poor, new studios had to be built. They would match the ambitions of the new political power, which started to use the film as propaganda within a national cinematography. That very year, the Ministry of Arts began to design this industrial-artistic objective. Eventually, a Russian project with Bulgarian and Yugoslav support was commissioned to Romanian architect Nicolae Lupu, who adapted it to Romanian circumstances. The location had to have a diverse landscape and to be close to Bucharest. Since neighbouring towns Snagov and Băneasa were too close to the airport

(being exposed to noise pollution), and the regulations at Mogoșoaia forbidding deforestation of old trees represented a major impediment, the fate favoured the town of Buftea. Following the official resolution, “On June, 9, 1951, an important festivity was being held at Buftea, in the presence of several great personalities of the time. Dr. Petru Groza, the Govern’s president, read the inauguration act . [...] On an area of about 120 acres, a complex of 5,000 square meters started to be built” (Pivniceru 9). The studios and the five movie sets were built between 1954-1955. The sound studio started to be built in 1957; it had a room of 400 square meters to record the mixture of sound and image (a whole symphonic orchestra was then created for film music recordings), as well as rooms for dubbing. The laboratory of film processing was ready in 1958. Buftea Film Studio was completed in 1959, when the set for mixed shooting (equipped with underwater filming, a tunnel for filming through transparence, front projection and *iecție și retroproiection* on the set or underwater) was ready to use.

The Documentary Film Studio “Alexandru Sahia” began its activity in 1952. It produced documetaries, film journals accompanying screenings, and — since 1954 — popular science films. By the late 1970’s, “200 short documentaries were produced in Romania on a yearly basis” (Căliman 164).

Following a series of international accomplishments for Romanian animation films (*Brief History / Scurtă istorie* by Ion Popescu-Gopo had been awarded the Palme d’Or at Cannes, one of the first major successes of Romanian cinema), in 1964 The Ministry Council decided to open “Animafilm” Studio. It produced commercials, reaching an amount of 30 films per year in the 1970’s (164). (Both Romanian animation and Romanian documentary studios developed genuine film schools. Yet, the topic of this thesis is Romanian fiction film made under the four decades of communism.)

During the first years of socialist cinematography in Romania, film studies hardly had any tradition at all. In 1950 The Institute of Film and The Institute of Theatre “I. L. Caragiale” were opened in Bucharest. In 1954 they merged under The Institute of Theatre and Film “I. L. Caragiale” (today, The University of Theatre and Film “I. L. Caragiale”). Since very few professional film directors had emerged from the inter-war years (Jean Georgescu, Jean Mihail and Paul Călinescu), a few dozens of young students were sent to the USSR between 1949-1952, to study at The National Institute of Cinematography in Moscow and at The Union Institute Cinematographic Technique in Leningrad. They specialised there in various fields (film direction, cinematography, art direction, film music, sound design). Some of them became landmarks in Romanian Cinema: Lucian Bratu, Mircea Săucan, Nina Behar,

Tiberiu Olah, Laurențiu Profeta, Ștefan Horvath, Doru Papp, Silviu Camil, Anușavan Salamanian ș.a.m.d. (Jitea 31). Until 1989, The Theatre and Film Institute “I. L. Caragiale” was the only educational institution in Romania focusing on cinematography. The competition was tough, and the selection of candidates extremely rigorous, against the pressure of all ideological dogmas. It produced highly esteemed filmmakers, whose talent can hardly be disputed. Such artists managed to avoid official propaganda, making films that were significant aesthetically, and as an honest reflection of life, as well: Andrei Blaier, Mihai Iacob, Manole Marcus, Iulian Mișu, Lucian Pintilie, Radu Gabrea, Mircea Mureșan, Mircea Veroiu, Dan Pița, Constantin Vaeni, Mircea Daneliuc, Timotei Ursu, Nicolae Mărgineanu, Iosif Demian, Alexandru Tatos, Stere Gulea, Tudor Mărăscu, Ioan Cărmăzan, etc.

The 40 years of official communism in Romania (1948-1989) were not identical. There had been good periods as well as bad periods, all united by a single “guiding thread”. The oppressive system had its fluctuations, the standards of living varied, too, while the artistic freedom (and the freedom of movement) followed a meandering path.

The first stage (the so-called “obsessive decade”) started in 1948 and ended in 1960. It was the most violent of all, as it witnessed the destruction of the political aristocracy and a great deal of the cultural elite in all the fields. The new type of government seemed to impose itself by an endless, generalised, terror. However, the 1950’s saw the release of a few extraordinary Romanian films. They either eluded the political factor, or just used it as a pretext: *Directorul nostru / Our Manager* (Jean Georgescu, 1955), *La „Moara cu noroc” / The Mill of Luck and Plenty* (Victor Iliu, 1957), *Viața nu iartă / The Mist Is Lifting* (Iulian Mișu, Manole Marcus, 1959) or *Valurile Dunării / The Danube Waves* (Liviu Ciulei, 1960).

The second stage was a kind of “thaw” (a term coined by Ilia Ehrenburg in the USSR), corresponding to a “socialism with human face”. It lasted from the early 1960’s until the mid 1970’s. It was the most glorious of all — by far. The standard of living rose, while the arts somehow escaped from the rigid frame of proletarian culture.

The third stage developed during the late 1970’s. The so-called “Generation ’70” imposed a Romanian film school whose leaders were Dan Pița and Mircea Veroiu. It also included: Iosif Demian, Nicolae Mărgineanu, Dinu Tănase, Mircea Daneliuc, Constantin Vaeni, Alexandru Tatos, Stere Gulea, Timotei Ursu. etc. A crucial event occurred during the Theses of July 1971, a series of norms aiming at intensifying ideological control imposed by Nicolae Ceaușescu when he returned from a visit to China and North Korea. During the 1960’s and the 1970’s the films started to be produced in larger numbers, their themes became more and more diverse, with a visible result in a significant aesthetical evolution. In

spite of rigid censure and ideological conditioning, more and more films were surprisingly valid aesthetically.

The last period — the 1980's — was rather gloomy, with new restrictions of various forms of freedom as a result of the 1971 July Theses. In the artistic field, however, a certain amount of rights were not infringed. The so-called “nationalist communism” was blooming while an extensive, generalised, crisis was deepening. There was no elaborate strategy and no efficient management of debuts. New directors were launched randomly, while the ideology was drifting: neither brutal radicalism, like in the 1950's, nor flexibility and adjustment to the Eastern European political context, but rather bland demagoguery, hardly convincing at all in spite of the pressure. Paradoxically enough, the 1980's were tremendously creative for the directors belonging to the Generation '70. They managed to release a great deal of films of a great aesthetic value. Most of them were now „apolitical” or even subversively anti-system.

Naturally, all the changes during the four decades of communism were conditioned by external factors as well. World politics and the dynamics between the communist and the capitalist block had a major impact. They were also adjusted to the local scene with the support of the state leaders, who had a direct influence on the economic, social, and cultural politics. Thus, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, a convinced Stalinist who was the Party General Secretary between 1945 and 1965, managed to impose the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Romania, in 1957. He also established diplomatic contacts with the United States and other western countries. Nicolae Ceaușescu (the Communist Party General Secretary and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP, the President of the State Council, the President of Romania) continued some of the initiatives of his predecessor and was a clever “player” in world politics. Yet, after 1970, his Stalinist manners led to an aggressive cult of personality, with pharaoh-like ambitions and achievements, whose price was to be paid by the Romanians.

Since no social system is hermetically sealed, Romanian communism did not succeed in turning the whole film production into propaganda. Many a time, propaganda was either “eaten up” by the genre — comedy, action, war film, etc. — or it was nullified by the low aesthetic value of the film, caused both by the filmmakers' lack of talent, and by their lack of adherence to the film's theme. Some film directors, managing to overcome any ideological and political constraints, made important films, which had a tremendous impact on the audience at the time, as well as artistic value. Romanian cinema really evolved artistically during communism, and its aesthetic dimension cannot possibly be ignored.

However benevolent we may be, unlike Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary or Yugoslavia (not to mention the USSR), if we are to refer to the European “socialist block” alone, Romania did not have a well defined film school, apart from the series of “national film epic” (which does not stand for an important aesthetic contribution), and the above mentioned attempt at consolidating a film school under Generation ’70 – Mircea Veroiu, Dan Pița, Mircea Daneliuc, Alexandru Tatos, Stere Gulea, Iosif Demian, Nicolae Mărgineanu, Dinu Tănase, etc. Generally speaking, during socialism Romanian cinema evolved through copied synchronisation with a few trends and movements of the time, and — sometimes — through similitude. There were sparks of originality, possible centres of an (im)possible film school, such as *Viața nu iartă / The Mist Is Lifting* (1959), by Iulian Mihu and Manole Marcus, *Reconstituirea / Reenactment* by Lucian Pintilie (1970), *Nunta de piatră / Stone Wedding* by Mircea Veroiu and Dan Pița (1973) or the films Iosif Demian directed in the early 1980’s (*O lacrimă de fată / A Girl’s Tear*, 1980; *Baloane de curcubeu / Rainbow Bubbles*, 1983). A certain amount of the masterworks of Romanian cinema of those times can be validated through their dialogue with other movements and tendencies, especially from the European cinema.

This present thesis states that there are more ways to approach, study and interpret Romanian cinema during communism. I shall give two edifying and complementary examples. The first one is exclusively rigid, ideological / ideologising: *Filmul surd în România mută*, also known as *Politică și propagandă în filmul românesc de ficțiune (1912-1989)*, the book published by Cristian Tudor Popescu in 2011. The well-known writer, journalist and film critic is mainly interested in three aspects: relating the films made in communist Romania to political events, both at home and worldwide; the most exploited propaganda themes in the cinema; the most propagandistic films during communism (Popescu 9). Such a Procrustean view makes one blame any film for indoctrination, including an innocent fantasy like *Pantoful Cenușăresei / Cinderella’s Shoe* (Jean Georgescu, 1969). However, Cristian Tudor Popescu does not go that far. Sometimes, when he refers to *Zidul / The Wall* by Constantin Vaeni (1975), a propaganda movie about the underground, communist, anti-fascist fight during WWII, he explicitly writes that “The few people who went to see *Zidul* did not get out of the cinema more enthusiastic about their communist creed than they used to be before they entered, but they could experience a moment of authentic artistic emotion” (216). Those people were not that “few”, as the audience had reached 2,129,447 by 2005 (Rîpeanu *Filmat II* 101).

Yet another approach belongs to Bogdan Jitea from his book explicitly called *Cinema în RSR. Conformism și disidență în industria ceaușistă de film* (2021). As a historian, Bogdan Jitea visits the archives, exploiting the backstage of Romanian films made from the late 1960's until 1989. His interest lies in “deciphering” and publicising the resolutions and mechanisms by which party and state organisms, sometimes Ceaușescu himself, would ideologically control and dictate upon film production. Unlike a film critic, he has little interest in the film aesthetics, which is not really a problem. However, a historian should have a more flexible perspective. Jitea does have it, on one instance alone: when he writes about the system's victims, without ever introducing light and shade into the deeds and personalities of some of the leading figures of Romanian cinema at the time. For the sake of demonstration, Bogdan Jitea claims that the ideology behind the series of national film epic – a typical phenomenon during Romanian socialist cinema we are going to present in detail further on – carries on after 1989 as well. He then specifies that it now focuses on nationalism – it used to have a strong national element even in the films made before 1989! –, to the detriment of the “communist dimension”. In haste, he writes: „by the historical films made by Sergiu Nicolaescu in collaboration with C. V. Tudor, the ultranationalist leader of Greater Romania Party / Partidul România Mare” (Jitea 402). There were no “films”, but one: *Triunghiul morții / Death Triangle* (1999).

The present thesis suggests a different, more optimistic view. Provided that we manage to keep prejudices at a distance, we can easily embrace such an approach.

The Romanian Kingdom benefitted very soon from the invention by the Lumière brothers. The first screening of a film in Romania took place in Bucharest on the premises of the French newspaper *L'Indépendance Roumaine*, on May 27, 1896.

The first medium-length feature film made in Romania was *Amor fatal / Fatal Love* (1911), but, unfortunately, it was lost. Its author – the first “total filmmaker” in Romanian cinema: screenwriter, actor, director, a „total author” *avant la lettre* – was Grigore Brezeanu (1891-1919). He was very young at the time, and directed the first Romanian full-length feature film, *Independența României / Romania's Independence* (1912).

After that, the inter-war period is full of exploration, uncertainties, and instability. Romanian cinema evolved slowly, discontinuously, and fairly ascendently, in spite of the pioneers' enthusiasm. Most productions of the time were ephemeral so long as there was hardly any institutionalised framework to administrate the field of cinematography. The state involvement was virtually non-existing or very limited, while private funds – domestically-owned, foreign, or a combination of the two – were unable to provide continuity and a proper

dynamics within film production. In this respect, an important event was the foundation of a state sub-secretary, in 1933. It encompassed three rather non-existing fields in Romania at the time: tourism, radio broadcasting, and cinematography. As a result, on 9 June 1934, the Law of National Fund of Cinematography was passed. It enabled state involvement in film production and „film collecting by the Film Service, as part of the National Office of Tourism, ever since its foundation, in 1936” (Țuțui 15). After it was repeatedly renamed and changed its status, the Film Office becomes the National Office of Cinematography, on 1 September, 1938 (NOC).

A real film industry in Romania was only established after WWII, when the communists came to power. Propaganda was laid at the foundation of such an industry. The infrastructure and the material resources were established in the 1950's by the building (not merely improvising) the studios at Buftea, as well as by the foundation of the Institute of Theatre and Film “I. L. Caragiale” in București (1954), which was to produce professionals for film industry: directors, actors, DOP's, sound designers, editors, set designers, etc. If the film studios at Buftea went bankrupt after 1990, as a result of improvised privatisation, the Institute is still functional.

This thesis is promoting certain films which defy ideology by aesthetics as a result of the director's ability to miraculously convert propaganda into a sort of existential drama. There was a tremendous moment of originality in Romanian cinema, in the late 1950's: the film by Iulian Mihailescu and Manole Marcus, *Viața nu iartă / The Mist Is Lifting* (1959), preceeding the poetics of Alain Resnais, whose films *Hiroșima, mon amour* (1959) and *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) were subsequently released.

Before the 1970's, the “islands” of Romanian cinema (Victor Iliu, Paul Călinescu, Liviu Ciulei, Lucian Pintilie and a few others) did not form an “archipelago”. The filmmakers grouped for the first time in the early 1970's, when we can justly talk about a “generation”: Dan Pița, Mircea Veroiu, Stere Gulea, Iosif Demian, Mircea Daneliuc, Alexandru Tatos, etc. Yet, we still did not have a proper film school, as it happened in many other socialist countries: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and, of course, the USSR. Most films by these directors (and by other directors preceeding or succeeding them) were exceptionally interesting experiments, of high aesthetic value. The specific mark of the Romanian cinema at that time, though, is the above mentioned national film epic. It is the only element that singles our Romanian cinema among other cinematographies in the Eastern block.

National film epic was one of the system's large-scale projects, as massive as the greatest industrial achievements. It was initiated by Mihnea Gheorghiu, communist leader and master mind of the Romanian cinema for decades. The term "national film epic" was coined by him in an interview for American magazine *Variety* (12 May, 1965), then it was adopted by the party documents and it became norm for a good deal of the film production in Romania during the next decades (Jitea 198). The movie which pioneered the cycle – *avant la lettre*, one can say – was *Tudor* (1963), an ambitious and — in many ways — accomplished epic, focused on the historical personality of Tudor Vladimirescu, who lived at the beginning of the 19th century. The film was directed by Lucian Bratu and it was based on a script by Mihnea Gheorghiu. The following titles in this Romanian film epic are blockbusters with a spectacular photography, aping and rivalling with world hits of the '50-'60, such as *Ben Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963), *Theodora, Slave Empress* (Riccardo Freda, 1954), *The Fight for Rome* (Robert Siodmak, 1968). The most popular were: *Dacii / The Dacians* (1967), *Columna / The Column* (1968) and *Mihai Viteazul / The Last Crusade* (1971), all based on scripts by Titus Popovici, the most outstanding and versatile screenwriter in Romania under socialism. These four titles are the most successful in the series. A few years later, *Horea* (Mircea Mureșan, 1984), based on a script by Titus Popovici as well, is focusing on a peasant mutiny started by the Romanians in Transilvania, in 1784. It could be the fifth solid piece in the series. In the '70-'80, the epics are more and more rudimentary and blatantly propagandistic, such as *Buzduganul cu trei peceți / The Mace with Three Seals* (Constantin Vaeni, 1977) or *Burebista* (Gheorghe Vitanidis, 1980). The lines or monologues performed by famous historical characters in such movies seem to be borrowed from party documents and suffocate the director's cinematic discourse, devoiding it of virtually any aesthetic value, in spite of a few accomplished scenes which evaporate within the shapeless, overly discursive and simplistic ensemble. Although many of such films are merely schematic propaganda – with a few notable exceptions to be commented in detail in the complete body of the thesis — we should note that national film epic is a typical Romanian phenomenon during communism, unparalleled in other Eastern European cinema.

Socialist cinematography disintegrates in the 1990's and finally collapses in the year 2000, when no Romanian movie is released. There may well be directors from the communist times who go on making films after 2000, and some of them are still working. Yet, the paradigm of Romanian cinema is fundamentally changed by the Romanian New Wave whose leading authors are Cristi Puiu, Cristian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Radu Muntean, and Radu Jude. As I mentioned above, they are all inspired by the Romanian films made in the

previous decades — most of them flawed by ideological propaganda, and a few others remarkably anti-system. The latter's legacy has been cherished by the New Wave authors, who seem to be especially fond of the works by Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Daneliuc and Alexandru Tatos. Their authentic discourse and cinematic truth became the foundation for the aesthetics of the New Romanian Cinema. This could be the starting point for another thesis, but it also validates the best of Romanian cinema during communism.

Last, but not least, I will refer to the priorities of Romanian cinema. Even if they do not belong to full-length fiction films, their importance reflects a quasi-non-existing cinematography a few decades after the cinema was born.

The first priority for the early Romanian cinema is the first scientific film ever: *Tulburările mersului în hemiplegia organică / Walking Disorders in Organic Hemiplegia* (1898), by neurologist Gheorghe Marinescu (1863-1938), the founder of Romanian school of neurology, and DOP Constantin M. Popescu. It was followed by *Tulburările mersului în paraplegiile organice / Waling Disorders in Organic Paraplegia* and *Un caz de hemiplegie isterică vindecat prin sugestie hipnotică / A Case of Hysterical Hemiplegia Cured by Hypnotic Suggestion* (1899), *Tulburările mersului în ataxia locomotrice progresivă / Walking Disorders in Progressive Musculoskeletal Ataxia* (1900), *Paralizia pseudo-hipertrofică sau miosclerozică, din cadrul miopatiilor / Pseudo-Hypertrophic or Muscular Sclerosis Paralysis* (1901). In a letter to Romanian scientist, Auguste Lumière wrote in 29 iulie 1924:

Your reports on the use of cinematography for the study of mental diseases drew my attention when I used to get *La Semaine medicale*. Ever since I have had other interests, of industrial nature, which have prevented me from dedicating myself to biological research. I admit that I had long forgotten about such works and I am grateful to you for having reminded me of them. It is a shame that few scholars have followed in your footsteps. (Țuțui 7).

The Romanian scholar synthesised his theoretical conclusions to these medical studies in a “cinematic” medium in his work *Les applications générales du cinématographe aux sciences biologiques et à l'art*, published in 1900 at Paris. The Romanian scholar had a competitor: in 1898, the French surgeon Eugène-Louis Doyen filmed various techniques of surgery, mainly for the audiences. However, the films by Romanian scholar Gheorghe Marinescu had a scientific value and were of scientific concern: “In other words, Doyen was

mainly concerned with *the* cinema, while Marinescu used the cinematic medium because he was interested in the *disease*” (Căliman 17).

Between 1898 and 1901, Dr. Marinescu and his assistant, Constantin Popescu, made over 30 films on medical subjects. They were lost and found again in 1973, when they were generally released on the 110th anniversary of the scientist. TV reporter Corneliu Rusu went to Colentina Hospital to make a special material. He met there retired lab assistant Maria Stoica who used to work with Marinescu and “told him that ‘the professor made films’, revealing to him 13 negative reels, neatly archived on a shelf, which had been untouched for seven decades” (19). Documentary filmmaker Ion Bostan followed in the footsteps of “filmmaker” Marinescu and made two films on the subject: *Pe urmele unui film dispărut / On the Tracks of a Lost Movie* (1968) and *Și medicii au început să filmeze / Medical Doctors Started Shooting Films* (1972).

The second priority in early Romanian cinema focuses on the first sociological films. Thus, from 1929 on, sociologist Dimitrie Gusti (1880-1955) and his team made the first sociological films in the world. The first feature of the series was *Drăguș, viața unui sat românesc / Drăguș — Life in a Romanian Village*, shot in 1929 and released in 1930. Gusti then made three other films: *Un sat basarabean, Cornova / Cornova, a Village from Bassarabia* (1932), *Satul Șanț / Șanț — A Village* (1936) and *Obiceiuri din Bucovina / Customs in Bucovina* (1937). Apart from them, he also made *Echipele regale studentești / Student Royal Teams* (1938), focusing on the cultural-educational activity of the student teams led by the sociologist during the 1938 campaign, as well as a film made up from scenes from his previous three movies: *Locuința țărănească în România / Rural Accommodation in Romania*, screened at the Romanian corner of the European exhibition of rural accommodation in Paris (100-101).

These are some of the pioneering works in early Romanian cinema. Their authors were not professionals, yet we ought to remember them with pride. A history of Romanian cinema should not include Manakia brothers, Ienache (1878-1954) and Miltiade (1882-1964), Aromanians from The Pindus Mountains, who are considered to be the first filmmakers in the Balkans. Neither it should include Mihály Kertész (1886-1962), later known as Michael Curtiz, the director of *Casablanca*, or Sándor László Kellner (1893-1956), later known as Sir Alexander Korda. However, before they emigrated to the West, both Curtiz and Korda worked for the Cluj film studios at the beginning of the 20th century, when Cluj was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Romanian cinema can claim, though, Jenö (Eugen) Janovics (1872-1945), who went on making films in Cluj after 1918 as well.

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