

ROMANIAN NEW WAVE CINEMA

An Introduction



Doru Pop

Romanian New Wave Cinema

An Introduction

DORU POP



McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Jefferson, North Carolina

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA
Pop, Doru,
Romanian new wave cinema : an introduction / Doru Pop.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7864-7937-5 (softcover : acid free paper) ∞
ISBN 978-1-4766-1489-2 (ebook)

1. New wave films—Romania—History and criticism.
2. New wave films—History and criticism. I. Title.
PN1993.5.R6P67 2014 791.4309498—dc23 2014001051

BRITISH LIBRARY CATALOGUING DATA ARE AVAILABLE

© 2014 Doru Pop. All rights reserved

*No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form
or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying
or recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system,
without permission in writing from the publisher.*

On the cover: *Legături bolnavicioase* © Libria Film

Manufactured in the United States of America

*McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640
www.mcfarlandpub.com*

Table of Contents

Preface 1

1. Make Way for the Romanian New Wave	7
2. The Aesthetics of the New Wave Cinema	42
3. Antiheroes: Stories of Marginality	74
4. Cinematic Symptoms and Psychoanalytical Keys	101
5. Semiological and Iconological Interpretations	130
6. The Dark Humor of the Romanian Filmmakers	153
7. Representing Women: Towards a New Cinema	181
8. The Absent Spectator	206

References 229

Index 239

Messiah, she is a reversal image of the “holy maternity.” She is a non-mother, having decided to get rid of the remains of a child. All the events in this movie happen in a period of time close to Christmas.

Another question here comes from the fact that some of these “adaptations” belong to a wider Christian imaginary. They are not “Christian-Orthodox” in the narrow sense, but their references to the Christian source is intact. The best example is one of the most often transmuted images, Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper*. This is one of the most widely “exported” cultural goods in modern media, yet the source still carries its content over a variety of representations. From The Beatles to the sci-fi movie *Battlestar Galactica* to the HBO series *The Sopranos* to book promotions (as in the case of George Carlin) to fashion design (the advertisements for Marithé and François Girbaud) to various comics and postmodern paintings—they are built around a classical Christian visual archetype. Visual artists have always recanted “old” imaginaries; photographers, painters and cinematographers are notoriously borrowing mythological and theological narratives and turning them into new aesthetic discourses. This is the case with Susan Dorothea White’s *The First Supper*, where Jesus and the apostles were substituted by various women of various races, or with David LaChapelle’s version of *The Last Supper*, done in a totally mundane and burlesque context. This is also the case with *Viridiana*, made by Buñuel, one of the classical cinematic reenactments of this religious subject matter.

The young Romanian cinema-makers are no exceptions. As with the table scene in *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, which belongs to the same elaboration of a symbolic, deeply Christian stage, *The Last Supper* here is not explicitly put into place, since we don’t have the exact number of “apostles” and we do not have a male Christ. Nonetheless, the paradigmatic dimension is easily recognizable. We can interpret this scene as a symbolic transformation of the Eucharistic message, where the consumption of food and drink, in the middle of a tragedy, is built up as the exact reverse of the archetypal consumption of Christ’s body and blood, for the purpose of salvation. There is no salvation in a world without morals, and for the people on this cinematic stage their behavior (with mock references to priesthood and faith) is an indication of the profound de-sacralization of life.

Cristi Puiu’s most recent movie (*Aurora*, 2010) is also constructed around the same paradigmatic mutation of figures. The director plays the role of a man who ends up killing his in-laws and the lawyer of his former wife. Throughout the movie Viorel is portrayed as a demented Christ. Even the way his facial expressions are elaborated is symbolically tied with the expressions of the Christ, from the famous icon “non-painted by a human hand” (*acheiropoetos*). A silent, almost ascetic figure, filled with compassion and humanity, he proves to be a cold-blooded murderer. He is a Christ-like figure who does not save anybody, not even himself. Incapable of producing any miracle, the protagonists in the new Romanian cinema are surrogates of the archetypal hero, Christ the Savior.

Icons and Cinematic Screen

An icon is, in fact, the only “true image” of the Christ, the only possible access human beings have to “seeing God.” The invisible and immaterial God has presented himself in a visible form to his chosen ones (Moses, Abraham and the prophets) and later, in the form of Christ, God became flesh. The veil of Veronica was used as the first example for the material support of “fixating” this image of the unseen into the materiality of human perception. The very essence of the icon is based on this initial “copying” of the original; the veil of Veronica, who wiped the face of Christ on Via Dolorosa, constituted the basis for any future reproduction