

## Landscape after Revolution

### Contemporary Cinematic Narratives of the Romanian and Hungarian Revolutions<sup>5</sup>

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**Abstract:** There have been several political movements and protests in Central and Eastern Europe since the Second World War, but only Hungary and Romania had their own modern revolutions. Although the two events had very different outcomes, both have been retold several times in cinematic stories. 2006 was the year with the highest number of such films produced. After sketching up this landscape of movies about anti-communist uprisings in both countries, I select two of them, one from each country: *Children of Glory* by Kriszta Goda from Hungary and *The Paper Will Be Blue* by Radu Muntean from Romania. I will demonstrate that, despite the many similarities, the movies are built on very different narrative structures and cinematic elements. In Bordwellian terms, one adopts the *classical*, while the other the *art cinema* narrative model. As such, the act of representing history has very different results in the two films.

**Keywords:** art cinema, Bordwellian narratology, Hollywood narrative, Eastern European history, New Hungarian Cinema, Romanian New Wave

The Prague Spring and the Solidarity movement in Poland were indeed important political events with long term effects on society, but in the Central and Eastern European region only Hungary and Romania had their own national, anti-communist revolutions. These were significant events in the history of both countries, with massive rallies, involvement of the military, street fights, changes in government and, sadly, many human casualties. But while the Hungarian uprising against the Stalinist terror in 1956 was crushed by the invading soviet army, and Hungary remained a member of the Eastern Bloc, in the Romanian Revolution of 1989 the national army sided with the protesters, the dictator was given a trial and executed, and the country took the path of democratization, with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc disintegrating in the background. The significant Connertonian criteria of revolution (Connerton, 1989, 7), regicide, was fulfilled in Romania by the execution of the dictator

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Ceaușescu and his wife, while in Hungary, after the defeat of the revolution, those executed were the members of the revolutionary government.

In 1989 the communist regime in Hungary was replaced with a democratic government and this opened the doors for the much delayed representation of these tragic events.

Self-evidently, the cinematic representation in both countries has since been subject to many critical interpretations. As Romanian film scholar Doru Pop contends, an important characteristic of the European Cinema is “a thematic development focused on national self-image, centered on recovering recent memory and providing a historical recording or recounting of contemporary historical events” (Pop 2010, 27). This is true for both Romanian and Hungarian cinema, which are “products of – and reflections – of the same ‘trauma culture,’ in the sense that many of their protagonists face crises or traumas, or are on the way to processing traumas experienced in the recent communist past.” (Pieldner 2016, 89)

Andrea Virginás goes further and points to “a generational resemblance and a common sensitivity” in the working and creating methods of Romanian and Hungarian filmmakers, especially those who started to make films after 1989 (Virginás 2011, 132).

Such statements might make us think that the cinematic process of reinventing history works in similar ways in Hungarian and Romanian films, especially when the films are made by members of the Young Hungarian Cinema<sup>6</sup> and the Romanian New Wave<sup>7</sup>.

In this article, after an overview of Hungarian and Romanian films addressing the two national revolutions, I will apply some classical assumptions presented in David Bordwell’s seminal article *The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice* (Bordwell 1979), later developed further in his book *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Bordwell 1985, 2005). I will examine how the narrative structure, the characters, the time and space construction, and the cinematic representation can be expressive of the ways in which these films represent history.

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<sup>6</sup> Young Hungarian Cinema or Post-millennial Hungarian Cinema, since the directors belonging to this wave, such as Szabolcs Hajdu, Ágnes Kocsis, Kornél Mundruczó, Ferenc Török, and György Pálfi, started to make films after the millennium. Many of their films, such as *Moscow Square* (2001) by Török, *Taxidermia* (2006) by Pálfi or *White Palms* (2006) by Hajdu, discuss problems connected to historical memory and post-socialist identity.

<sup>7</sup> The Romanian New Wave is a realist and often minimalist wave in post-millennial Romanian Cinema ignited by Cristi Puiu’s *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* in 2004, awarded with *Un Certain Regard* at the Cannes Film Festival. Significant films followed by directors such as Jude, Mungiu, Muntean, Netzer, and Porumboiu cumulating more than a dozen prizes from Cannes, Berlin and other major festivals. The wave continues even now, the last film being Adina Pintilie’s *Touch Me Not* (2018) awarded with the Golden Bear in Berlin.

***Hungary: From forbidden fairytales to teenage traumas***

In the first decade after the 1956 revolution – which at the time was officially called a counter-revolution by communist propaganda – films which could be considered even slightly anti-regime were banned (cf. Roman 2013). The extent of the paranoid censorship is shown by the fact that even Tamás Banovich's *The Sneezed Empire* (*Eltüsszentett birodalom*, 1956), an allegoric fairytale about a tyrannical king, was forbidden.

Decades later, still under the communist regime, the Hungarian revolution remained a prohibited topic of any screenplay. Exceptions were made for the use of the revolution as a historical setting for personal and family dramas, such as in *Daniel Takes a Train* (*Szerencsés Dániel*, 1983) by Pál Sándor, *Whooping Cough* (*Szamárköhögés*, 1987), a tragicomedy by Péter Gárdos, and Géza Bereményi's *The Midas Touch* (*Eldorádó*, 1988).

Fifteen years after the fall of communism in 1989, the special government film grants for the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution in 2006 finally offered a special occasion for filmmakers to show, without restraints, their cinematic re-invention of this significant slice of national history. The first was Márta Mészáros, a doyen of Hungarian filmmaking and a survivor of the revolution, who retold the tragic story of Imre Nagy, the revolutionary prime-minister of Hungary, in her film *The Unburied Man* (*A temetetlen halott*, 2004).



[Fig.1.] Children and teenagers during the revolution. *Boys from Budakeszi*

Other directors who lived through the events, although very young at the time, represented stories of children and teenagers during and after the revolution. Their films include *Mansfeld* (*Mansfeld*, 2006) by Andor Szilágyi, *Boys from Budakeszi* (*Budakeszi srácok*, 2006) by Pál Erdöss, and *The Sun Street Boys* (*Nap utcai fiúk*, 2007) by György Szomjas. Gábor Koltai's *Colossal Sensation* (*Világszám*, 2004) again, uses the revolution merely as a pretext, this time for a comedy. Finally, there were a few younger filmmakers in their thirties or even twenties who had a different take on the Hungarian Revolution. Attila Vidnyánszky's *Liberté 56* (2007) and Kriszta Goda's *Children of Glory* (*Szabadság, szerelem*, 2006) both plant a love story in the midst of the events, on the fiercest days of the Hungarian Revolution.

### ***Romania: From biased B-films to the Trilogy of Revolution***

Romania needed less than two years for the first features about the 1989 revolution to be produced. Unlike *Bathunting* (*Vânătoare de lilieci*, 1991) directed by Daniel Bărbulescu, which is no more than an “incoherent subgenre detective movie” (Caranfil 2013, 17), *Red Rats* (*Șobolanii roșii*, 1991) by Florin Codre achieves an “objectivity filtered through personal experience and sensitivity” (Azap 2012), spotlighting the problem of those who served and benefitted from the old communist regime, and who subsequently grabbed power and success in the young and fragile Romanian democracy.

*Red Rats* signals the start of a long line of movies, continued by Nicolae Mărgineanu's *Look Ahead in Anger* (*Privește înainte cu mânie*, 1993), Stere Gulea's *Hunting Fox* (*Vulpe vânător*, 1993) and *State of Things* (*Stare de fapt*, 1995), and Marius Theodor Barna's *Timișoara Syndrome – Manipulation* (*Sindromul Timișoara – Manipularea*, 2004) and *Report on the State of the Nation* (*Raport despre starea națiunii*, 2004). All emphasised the deep delusion of Romanian post-revolution society, when ordinary people realised that the agents of the former communist secret police, the “Securitate,” had not lost their power after the revolution, but instead were thriving and remained influential, not just overshadowing, but frequently continuing to ruin the lives of their former victims. Călin Căliman went even further when affirming in connection with *Look Ahead in Anger* that “honest people had little chance to survive in the Romanian society [of transition]” (Căliman 2011, 579). These movies often slip into the pitfall of a rudimentary and retrospective anti-communist attitude (Gorso, 2017, 5),

very understandable from a socio-historical point of view – the personal involvement of the filmmakers as victims of the regime – but one that unfortunately can lead to a biased narrative. Just like Gulea, Sergiu Nicolaescu, the most prolific of Romanian filmmakers during the communist era and well known for his adventure and crime genre movies, directed two movies about the Romanian revolution. First, he wrote and directed *Point zero* (*Punctul zero*, 1996), a crime-detective movie set in the days of the Romanian revolution, using a largely English language dialogue in order to target the US audience (Fulger 2014). Nine years later, he co-wrote and directed “15” (2005), a drama retelling the fate of a sailor killed in Timișoara on the first night of the anti-communist demonstrations.



[Fig.2.] The cruelest atrocities of the Romanian revolution. “15”

“15” revisits the main plot motif of *State of Things*, one of the cruelest atrocities and unsolved crimes of the Romanian revolution: the execution of wounded and hospitalised revolutionaries by agents of the Securitate. While Nicolaescu’s first movie is mostly an imitation of Hollywood B-series action movies, the second has notes of nostalgia and melancholia, and an altogether more Eastern-European style of cinematic storytelling. A decade later, in the same year, 2006, when most of the films on the Hungarian revolution were released, the so called *Trilogy of Revolution* premiered across Romanian cinemas. The three movies, *The Way I Spent the End of the World* (*Cum mi-am petrecut sfârșitul lumii*, 2006), the directorial debut of Cătălin Mitulescu; *12:08 East of Bucharest* (*A fost sau n-a fost*, 2006), the first feature film of Corneliu Porumboiu; and the second feature of Radu Muntean, *The Paper Will Be Blue* (*Hârtia va fi*

*albastră*, 2006) hit the screen in the same year within a period of six weeks and were directed by members of the Romanian New Wave. But as Constantin Pârvulescu mentions, "...as we move away from 1989 and investigate it more impassively ... the relevance of these three feature films increases, and the interpretation given by them of the 22<sup>nd</sup> (TN: 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, 1989) increases in its pertinence. This, first of all, is by virtue of their immunity to the anticommunism virus. Free of this disease, the stories of their films are quieter and less prone to accusations" (Pârvulescu, 2013).

Thus, while in Romania the cinematic representation of the revolution started almost immediately, in Hungary filmmakers had to wait for decades until they could start discussing openly in their films the trauma of the crushed revolution. In Romania, after a few films in the nineties which were very emotional, delusional and fervently anti-communist, more balanced and pertinent films followed with the Trilogy of Revolution. But in Hungary an unconstrained cinematic reflection on the trauma started only around the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising.

### ***Not identical twins: Children of Glory and The Paper Will Be Blue***

As demonstrated above, there is an abundance of films to choose from when it comes to comparing Hungarian and Romanian movies representing the specific chapters of a national history. So, why choose these two films over the others?

To avoid those movies which were either produced under communist censorship, such as the Hungarian films made between 1957 and 1989, or those with a biased anticommunist attitude, which is the case of many Romanian movies made between 1990 and 2000, I confined myself to the rich output of the year 2006 and chose the most relevant movies from both countries. The term *relevant* here may require some explanation. While in Romania, *The Paper Will Be Blue* with its six international prizes and thirteen nominations is clearly the film with the largest international impact and recognition, there is no such standout film in the case of the Hungarian movies. But *Children of Glory*, although having only one international prize, was a widely circulated, internationally premiered movie, and garnered the biggest domestic and international box office from this thematic group (Varga 2007).

Though it is not a necessary criterion, what makes the comparative process even more interesting is the fact that the directors of *Children of Glory* and *The Paper Will Be Blue* are

both members of Generation X<sup>8</sup>, both falling within the criteria mentioned by Virginás above, starting to make films after 1989. Besides this, both directors were at the beginning of their careers with both titles being their second feature films.

Apart from these external similarities, there are many resemblances on the narrative level of the two films. Both movies are based on the historic facts of the Hungarian and Romanian revolutions. *Children of Glory* is built around the main stages of the revolutionary events in Hungary, while *The Paper Will Be Blue* focuses on the night of December 22 and tells the story of the accidental massacre of a militia unit.

Both films basically tell the story of two young men, friends, who drift into the turmoil of the revolution. In *Children of Glory* Karcsi and Tibi are members of the Hungarian water polo team. They spend their evenings flirting with Viki, a leader of the student movement and, because of her, flirting also with the idea of joining the revolution, while during the day they train for the Melbourne Olympics. Costi and Dragoş in *The Paper Will Be Blue* are soldiers in the Romanian Militia. They and their unit are ordered to patrol the streets of Bucharest with their ABI<sup>9</sup> on the night of the Romanian revolution.



[Fig.3.] Flirting with revolution and Viki. *Children of Glory*

In both movies, the friends face life changing decisions: shall they join the revolution and abandon their athletic training or military patrolling, or shall they close their eyes to the fight for national freedom evolving around them and stick to their appointed tasks? More precisely,

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<sup>8</sup> Generation X or Generation MTV is the demographic cohort following the baby boomers, with birth years ranging approximately from 1961 to 1980. In communist Romania Generation X appeared with some delay, but it is still true that the Music Television network had a significant impact on their audio-visual maturation.

<sup>9</sup> Romanian abbreviation for armoured squad car

what is one's duty in a time of revolution? The two protagonists, Karcsi and Tibi in *Children of Glory*, respectively Costi and Dragoş in *The Paper Will Be Blue*, choose opposite paths and try to convince their friend about the rightness or justness of their own decision and the wrongness or dangers of the other.

In both movies, there is an important third person. In *Children of Glory* this is Viki, the student girl with a symbolic name (Viki, short for Viktória=Victory). She challenges Karcsi, testing his courage, drawing him into the revolutionary events, so that for Karcsi, flirting with revolution and flirting with Viki are mirroring each other.

In the case of *The Paper Will Be Blue*, Lieutenant Neagu is the character who has the biggest influence on the two soldiers, but in the opposite direction. He tries to keep them in their platoon, attempts to keep them safe, away from the turmoil at the TV station and other sites of violence in the city.

### **Birth of two screenplays**

While we can find several similarities on the level of story elements, we should examine the origins of each movie. In the case of *Children of Glory*, producer Andrew Vajna was the catalyst person, who ignited the creative process. The successful Hollywood producer, who left Hungary as a child with his parents after the revolution in the winter of 1956, first co-produced a documentary called *Freedom's Fury*, about the events on which *The Children of Glory* is based. He then hired another Hollywood professional of Hungarian origin, screenwriter Joe Eszterhas, to sketch the treatment for a drama about the revolution, and Eszterhas added the love story line to the historical drama. Then, three other screenwriters from Hungary, Éva Gárdos, Géza Bereményi and Réka Divinyi, were commissioned to produce the final screenplay. From a statement in the official press release by Réka Divinyi, it is obvious that Vajna had a very close control over the screenwriting process: "I have never met a producer who knew so strongly what he wanted. Andy and Kriszta (the director) made me rewrite the dialogues until they were both satisfied. I have never rewritten anything as many times as this (2006)."

Vajna's very personal involvement becomes even clearer when we read the dedication at the beginning of the film, which is repeated before the end credits: "This film is dedicated to the loving memory of Clara and George Vajna, who made all this possible."



Vajna made a personal tribute film to the revolution and to his own parents, in Hungary, but in a Hollywood style. He found someone to write the treatment for him, and the screenwriters, who, under his close supervision, shaped the final screenplay. And only then did he bring in the director, Kriszta Goda. Goda was a Hungarian director, but was also an alumna of NFTS London and the film department of UCLA, Los Angeles, known at that time for her only feature-length light romantic comedy, *Just Sex and Nothing Else* (*Csak szex és más semmi*, 2005), and some TV productions.

Though *The Paper Will Be Blue* has three screenwriters as well, the process of writing was more of a collaborative effort led by the film director, Radu Muntean, with the participation of novelist and screenwriter Răzvan Rădulescu and screenwriter Alexandru Baciu. Besides the historical facts, Muntean also drew on his personal memories from his time as a soldier in Bacau during the Romanian revolution. As he reminisced for the newspaper *Romania Libera*, he had been permanently on duty and alert for more than a week, waiting for the so-called terrorists to pounce. (Blaga 2006)

Examining the creative processes, we can already identify two distinct models: one that is representative of Hollywood filmmaking, where the producer is the starting point and the delegator of tasks, and another, a more cooperative creative method, with the director in the center, usual for art cinema screenwriting, in cases where the director is not the sole creator of the script.

## **Ways of re-configuring history**

### **1. History and handrails. Strict causality versus verism**

Bordwell mentions strict causality as one of the hallmarks of Hollywoodian narrative structures, while “art cinema motivates its narratives by two principles: realism and authorial expressivity.” (Bordwell, 1979, 718). Pop, when referring to the grammar of the New Romanian Cinema explains that one of the key characteristics of these productions is “the preference for verism, the closeness of cinema to realism, that is, the importing of documentary style filming.” (Pop 2010, 32) How are these characteristics reflected in the two movies under discussion?

*Children of Glory* could be easily used as a teaching aid in any history class about the Hungarian revolution, since it is constructed from scenes in strict chronological order, thoroughly

respecting the cause-effect logic. The opening polo match scene, in which the Hungarians are defeated due to the violent Soviet team and a biased judge in Moscow, not only adumbrates the hopeless but heroic fight of a small nation against oppression, but also lays down the causes of the general dissatisfaction of the Hungarian people which lead to the upcoming revolt. This is further strengthened by the scene in which Karcsi is abducted and interrogated by “Feri bácsi”, the ÁVO<sup>10</sup> agent on his return to Hungary. The narration first presents all the causes which led to the revolutionary explosion, then all the significant stages of the revolution, from the spontaneous student rallies in Budapest to the siege of the Radio Center, from urban guerilla warfare and several changes of government to the departure of Soviet tanks from Hungary, and finally their return under cover of night to crush the revolution. During the whole film, through radio news, loudspeakers, posters or characters occasionally announcing events as they unfold, the audience is constantly and continuously informed; they are offered handrails in order to follow the timeline of the revolution.

By contrast, *The Paper Will Be Blue* is pervaded by the huge confusion so specific to the chaos of the days of the Romanian revolution. Who is shooting whom and why? Who is the enemy? What orders are to be followed? And what is the current password? A wrong answer to that final question costs the life of the protagonists. While the Hungarian movie has a conventional linear narrative, the Romanian film has a circular one, beginning at the end and then telling the story in a linear fashion until reaching the chronological closing scene, which has already been seen at the beginning. Using this single, but very significant flash-forward in the opening scene, is a risky directorial decision, as Daniel Goace mentions in his review (Goace 2006), because if one misses the first scene, he will not see the tragic ending of the fabula. But it is also a bold and wise decision, through which the film resembles a Greek tragedy. The viewer knows from the first moment that every member of the patrol will die. And he will wonder what they could have done differently in order to avoid the tragedy. As in any classical tragedy, they could not have done anything differently. The alternate journeys of the rebel Costi and the compliant Dragoș converge to the same fateful end, independently of their decisions along the way. And no matter how hard Lieutenant Neagu tries to avoid the hotspots of the revolution in Bucharest in order to protect members of his squad, whom he repeatedly calls “my children,” we know from the opening scene that his effort is utterly futile.

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<sup>10</sup> Acronym for *Államvédelmi Hatóság*, the Hungarian Secret Police between 1945 and the end of 1956



[Fig.4.] No way to avoid the tragedy. The opening scene of *The Paper Will Be Blue*

According to Bordwell, “the flash-forward is unthinkable in the classical narrative cinema, which seeks to retard the ending” (Bordwell, 1985, 210). By exposing the finale in the first scene – in sharp contrast with *Children of Glory* – the creators of the Romanian film relieve the spectator from any pressure to guess the end of the fabula, and encourage a more meditative approach and immersion in the dramatic and ironic documentarism of the movie.

## 2. Goal-oriented versus disoriented characters

While classical narration uses psychologically defined, goal-oriented characters, art cinema narration uses “realistic” – that is psychologically complex – characters (Bordwell, 1979, 153). Starting with the antagonists, in *Children of Glory* they are either ruthless villains like the secret police agent “Feri bácsi,” or faceless mercenaries (no matter whether Soviet soldiers or Hungarian ÁVO agents) whose only goal is to trample the revolutionaries.

Viki’s motivation is the clearest from the first moment and it does not change during the movie. Her parents were killed by ÁVO agents, so she fights against them, and all her decisions are subordinated to this freedom fight.

Tibi, Karcsi’s closest friend, plays the character of the opportunist type who breaks under pressure. He cooperates with the ÁVO and reports on Karcsi, but he sincerely hopes that this way he can help him and pull him back on the “right track”. His only motivation throughout is survival, something he even admits explicitly in the form of a personal philosophy, when trying to convince Karcsi to return to the team. However, Karcsi hesitates between joining the

revolution for the sake of Viki, risking his place in the water polo team heading to the Melbourne Olympics and possibly bringing trouble upon his family in the form of repercussions, and following his dream as a professional polo player. The decisive point comes when he witnesses the murder of his friend from the university in the shooting at the headquarters of the Hungarian Radio. Later he joins the students and fights alongside Viki, but no longer merely because of Viki. Now he is fighting for the cause of the revolution, until "the Ruskis," aka the Soviet army, leave his country – at least it seems so. He is the typical developing hero, so familiar from the classical Hollywood narrative, who gradually becomes conscious of his calling. In a way *Children of Glory* is also a kind of coming of age movie, where adulthood equals true patriotism versus adolescent egocentrism.

While in the Hungarian movie all the characters are psychologically driven and goal oriented, this is not the case in *The Paper Will Be Blue*. The characters of Muntean's movie are all carried along by events, and we are shown their different reactions, not actions. We could call them all reactionist, not in the political but in the narrative sense of the word. Though Costi takes the initiative to go and fight at the Television Building, this is more an instant reaction to the emergence of a group of revolutionaries than a goal-oriented decision. Dragoș follows the orders of Lieutenant Neagu, flirts during a routine check with a pretty woman whom he will never see again, becomes angry when Costi leaves, and smokes when allowed. Muntean's movie exemplifies the Bordwellian idea of the art cinema as being less concerned with action than reaction, with characters who frequently act for inconsistent reasons. (Bordwell, 1979, 718)

Screenwriting lecturer Robert McKee argues that true character is always revealed under pressure. "How the person chooses to act under pressure is who he is – the greater the pressure the truer and deeper the choice to character." (McKee 1997, 375). This is true for both movies, where the biggest pressure comes from the huge social force at work, namely the revolution itself. In the Hungarian movie this force helps in crystallizing the morality of its romantic characters, making it possible for them to make life and death choices, like saving their own life (Tibi), winning a match for their country (Karcsi), or even martyrdom (Viki). In the Romanian film, this social force is rather infringing on them, and reduces their choices to almost zero. They can choose on which street they want to drive their ABI, but they do not have the real chance to make life-changing decisions.

### 3. Narrative construction of time and space

The timespan of *Children of Glory* encompasses months of historical events, from which the relevant episodes for the story are extracted. *The Paper Will Be Blue* does not expand beyond the events of one night, maybe from midnight till dawn, so the film's syuzhet time does not exceed five or six hours. "Most of the films that belong to the new generation of directors take place during one day and one night," writes Pop, and this is perfectly true for this movie. This technique makes possible a much higher degree of unity in time and space, which is a constant interest for the Romanian New Wave directors (Pop 2010, 36). This is valid also for the space construction of the film. Muntean's film has three main locations: the interior of the ABI vehicle, the Television Building and Costi's parents' house. The Hungarian movie uses dozens of locations, not just in Budapest but also in rural Hungary, as well as scenes in Moscow, Prague and Melbourne. *Children of Glory*'s expansive and comprehensive time and space management is in sharp contrast with *The Paper Will Be Blue*'s reductive economy.

While in the case of the former movie the goal of narration is to represent as clearly as possible the cause-effect chain without altering too much the historical facts, the latter movie stresses a documentary factuality. We hear long conversations about the quality of Kent cigarettes produced in Serbia versus those made in Germany, or about popular disco hits. We witness a dinner in Costi's parents' house with Lieutenant Neagu and Dragos, while waiting for the return of Costi, and we overhear conversations between officers and soldiers and their superiors or their loved ones to reassure them. But besides the role of verisimilitude so specific to art cinema, these "temps morts," which first appear to be only continuous chit-chat, have another important role in the film; namely, to sketch a society in a complete state of confusion. In this full-fledged chaos Costi's internist MD father is believed to work for the Ministry of the Interior, a Roma revolutionary is mistaken for an Arab terrorist, and conspiracy theories about the Ceaușescu fleeing in a Dacia having his birth date as registration number are easily believed. In this context the sentence spoken by a weird middle-aged revolutionary man, who curiously gives orders to soldiers who are shooting at other soldiers without knowing – "we give you a *fair* trial, then we execute you!" – seems entirely normal.

### 4. Cinematic representation: filming, editing and use of music

The way in which the creators of each film use cinematography, editing and sound design also betrays the kind of cinema tradition they aim to identify with.

*Children of Glory* uses a wide array of shots from close ups to extra-long shots enhanced with CGI imagery when showing the siege of Budapest, with several camera angles and movements (dolly and pedestal with predilection) mixed with hand held camera images when showing close combat scenes. The movie is dense with graphic images of explosions (sometimes in slow-motion), human bodies being pierced by bullets, and spattering blood, all to create a strong emotional impact on the spectator.

The pace of editing is varied from medium in love scenes, to very fast in the action scenes. Crosscutting and montage sequences are also used in the manner of classical narrative cinema. *The Paper Will Be Blue* uses only a relatively static hand held camera with medium, medium long and a few long shots, medium long shots being the most prevalent. Several minute long single shot scenes strengthen the verism of the movie and the continuity of time and space. There is a complete lack of graphic violence. Gun fire is unpredictable and very loud, while killing is fast, accidental and does not spare the protagonists as it does in *Children of Glory*, where they survive several intense gunfight situations with no or little injury.

The Hungarian movie uses several non-diegetic mood music elements, ranging from motifs of the Hungarian anthem and other popular marches played on string and brass to Soviet-Russian army songs. The Romanian film uses only diegetic music (with the exception of the closing credits) coming from a jammed Bulgarian radio station, and recognised by the soldiers as the popular Brazilian hit *Lambada* from the band Kaoma and released in the year of the Romanian revolution.

Both films use some documentary footage from their respective revolutions. In *Children of Glory* the American Movietone newsreel called *Hungary's Agony* is non-diegetically inserted in the film's narration, with cross-dissolve from and then back to the fight scenes. However, in *The Paper Will Be Blue* the only scene from the first broadcast of the Free Romanian Television is seen on a real TV set in an army crisis cell room located in the besieged National Television Building; the sign on the door ironically reads "Scenography", a strong reference to the idea that several events of the Romanian revolution were staged by political actors behind the scene.

## 5. Genres and sentiments

*Children of Glory* is situated clearly within the boundaries of two well defined classical film genres, namely the *action movie*, mostly rejected by the European rooted art cinema (Pop 2010) and the *melodrama*.

*The Paper Will Be Blue* can be called mainly a realist and minimalist *drama*, similar to the majority of the films belonging the New Romanian Cinema. Though Gorzo calls it “an intelligent and ultra-controlled action movie” (Gorzo, 2006, translation by me, BZ), the accent here falls on the adjectives emphasizing the differences from the mainstream films of the action genre.

The Hungarian film tries to stir strong national sentiments, not only by presenting its protagonists as romantic heroes of a lost, but noble cause, who can only retaliate for their crushed revolution in the field of sport, but also by using some strong visual symbols, like the falling and breaking of the red star (the symbol of communism) on the ground floor of the university at the beginning of the movie, or the stereotypical smashing of the Hungarian flag by a Soviet tank toward the end of the film.

The Romanian film is far from stirring any national sentiment. Costi, who in a certain moment is overcome by a revolutionary fervor, is presented in an ironical manner and later has to pay heavily for his pathetic sentiment. *The Paper Will Be Blue* is more like a verist ballade or a lament for a revolution, where the cause might be noble, but has somehow become lost under the mountains of miscommunication, misunderstanding and mistrust, a total confusion which leads to a fateful end.

Gorzo actually compares the film to the very first film of the Romanian New Wave, *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (2005), by Cristi Puiu: “In both films there is a pair of eyes which can see with cold lucidity through the flames of the moment, and a couple of hypersensitive ears for the catastrophic comedy of verbal emissions and interactions, which humanity self-flatteringly calls ‘expression’ or ‘communication’.” (Gorzo, 2006 translation by me, BZ)

## **Conclusion**

Despite the many similarities specified at the beginning, if we thoroughly analyze the characters and the narrative and cinematic elements, we can see two distinct movies, belonging to very different cinema traditions. *The Paper Will Be Blue* is perfectly consistent with the art cinema tradition “where the Romanian New Wave perceive themselves as belonging” (Pop 2010, 29).

*Children of Glory* definitely speaks the language of the classical Hollywood narration, at least partly due to the strong influence of its Hollywood-educated producer, and does not blend into the landscape of Young Hungarian Cinema, which operates mainly within the boundaries of art cinema as defined by Bordwell, instead deliberately follows the rules and many times even the clichés of Hollywood.

But the difference between the two distinct strategies of representation cannot be explained entirely with personal reasons and the filmmaking traditions with which the creators identify themselves. The fact that the majority of the Hungarian films about the revolution could be produced only decades after the event took place, while in Romania they appear closely following the events, also suggests that the filmmakers in the two countries are at different stages of processing the trauma. It might need a few more years, maybe decades, until films with those more lucid eyes and hypersensitive ears will reflect on the 1956 uprising in Hungary.

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