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Tactical Modernism: Romanian Cinema of the 1960s and the Disputed Modernist Aesthetics

Abstract: Throughout the 1950s, during the heyday of socialist realism, “modernism” as a concept is virtually nonexistent in Romanian literature and arts. Only in the late 1950s and in the early 1960s theories about a modernist style – in literature, but also in cinema – start to reemerge. The main issue with modernism during that era is that it is closely associated with the so-called decadent and bourgeois Western art. In order to be adapted to a socialist framework, modernism has to be refashioned. As such, a hybrid, tactical modernism – political in content, open to experimentation in matters regarding form – slowly becomes, despite its fragile coherence, one of the dominant approaches of that era. By studying the debates about modernism in the main cultural journals of that era, such as *Contemporanul* or *Cinema*, this paper shows the manner in which modernist ideas about art are strategically integrated into the Romanian cultural discourse of the 1960s.

Keywords: Historical Modernism; Modernist Aesthetics; Socialist Aesthetics; Romanian Cinema; “Contemporaneity”.

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“Contemporaneity”

During the early years of the Romanian socialist regime, for more than half a decade, the term “modernism” was automatically associated with the reactionary literature and art of the capitalist West and, along with other terms such as “cosmopolitanism” or “formalism”, was used to publicly expose deviations from the cultural norms of so-called socialist realism. According to these norms, established in the mid-1930s in the Soviet Union, besides corresponding to socialist political and moral values, art had to be realistic in terms of content and accessible in terms of form and meaning. Alterations of these norms, until the mid-1950s, were promptly reported and summarily rebuffed in the cultural press, while the culprits for such transgressions could face serious consequences for their positions. On the other hand, the lack of flexibility in the vague descriptions of socialist realist art quickly became apparent in all countries within the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence at that time. The biggest issue facing the art produced in the context of socialist realism, from an institutional point of view, was its inefficiency.

In the Soviet Union, as well as in the countries under Soviet control, it became quickly evident that conforming to a single set of norms inevitably leads to a decrease in the cultural production, due to the artists' precaution against becoming the target of official criticism in the cultural press¹. Thus, following Stalin's death in 1953, this adherence to a single set of aesthetic norms was one of the first contested issues. Hence the first reaction against Stalinist aesthetics: the emphasis on the *variety* of modes of expression available to all artists living in a socialist society. But even in the context of an official condemnation of the political practices of the Stalinist regime, socialist realism could not be directly criticized. Instead, the tactic most often used was that of a demarcation between a so-called traditionalism (implicitly equivalent to the art produced during Stalin's time) and artistic forms that approached socialist themes in a more contemporary manner. Starting with the mid-1950s, one after another, the countries under Soviet influence more or less officially disavowed socialist realist literature and art, advocating a diversification of the means of artistic expression². In the process, a number of terms excluded from the debates during the aesthetic prevalence of socialist realism were revived. As Alex Goldiș shows, in the particular case of the Romanian culture in the aftermath of Stalin's death, one such term was "modernism" – at first, not in its time-honored form, but in a version cautiously adapted to the context, that of "modernity"³. Through his articles published in the literary magazine *Steaua* throughout 1957, the literary critic George Munteanu managed to launch a consistent dispute around the two main concepts he defined in his essay

"Tradiționalism și modernitate" ["Traditionalism and Modernity"]. Trying to adjust them to the ideological context of the time, Munteanu was not describing them as historical phenomena, but, instead, as tendencies inherent to socialist realist art:

The traditionalist and modernist orientations did not, of course, originate in our country outside socialist realism, but within it. Socialist realism equips writers with the fundamental principles which can lead to "the truthful, historically concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development" [...]. But finding concrete artistic *ways* and *means* of depicting reality – in the light of these fundamental principles – depends exclusively on the writers themselves, on the peculiarities of their development, the structure of their talent, etc., leading in practice to different creative orientations [...].⁴

As Goldiș notes, the blunt responses penned by certain critics to the advent of such attempts to broaden the possible aesthetic options attest to the fact that Munteanu's underlying stakes were well understood by those who viewed the hybridization of socialist realism with suspicion. For instance, in a reply that sought to dismantle point by point Munteanu's theoretical demarcations, Eugen Luca not only rejected the division of socialist realist literature into a traditional and a modern-oriented tendency, but cynically exposed the magazine's tendency to promote, in the name of modernity, Western canonical models for poetry such as Paul Valéry, Giuseppe Ungaretti or Rainer Maria Rilke, which were found to be incompatible with

socialist realist aesthetics. Furthermore, Luca's attempt to re-establish the traditional points of reference for socialist realist literature correctly aimed at precisely such strategy, which sought to bypass the traditional models of socialist realism by proposing an eclectic mixture of accepted and less accepted canonical authors:

Now, it is one thing to dogmatically legislate the norms of socialist realism and quite another to present this principle in such vague terms that you cannot even approximate its meaning. Moreover, [...] precisely because of the nebulous character in which this concept is used, G. Munteanu does not even take it seriously. Proof of this is that there was no talk of the need to use the experience of socialist realist literature in general and of Soviet literature in particular, although, less skillfully than before, in order to "cover himself", the author mentions Mayakovsky at some point.⁵

Such conflict between those who wanted an expansion of the socialist realist canon in the name of stylistic diversity and those who, opportunistically or not, wanted to keep it within the traditionally established limits is typical of the cultural climate (generally known as the "thaw") that followed Stalin's death in Romania and in other countries in the Soviet sphere of influence. In order to re-legitimize and recover forms of expression present in Romanian culture before the establishment of the socialist regime and to enter into dialogue with contemporary trends in the capitalist West, those authors who wished to renounce the rigid norms of

socialist realism had to sketch a selective version of modernist currents, identifying and emphasizing those authors who had links with the political left, mentioning names of modernist authors already canonized by the Soviet culture and differentiating, as Munteanu did, between two versions of modernity: one excessive and decadent, roughly equivalent to its Western manifestations, and one assimilable in socialist culture. Because of this cautious distinction, when the term "modernism" began to circulate in the Romanian cultural press (for reasons we will discuss below, this happened only in the second half of the 1960s), it was almost always contrasted with its excessive version, with those who used it advocating a tempered form of socialist modernism.

However, in the particular case of Romanian cinema, the debates taking place in the climate of liberalization after Stalin's death had very little to do with modernism. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that, even in the West, European cinema was in the phase of assimilating the innovations of Italian neorealism, while what would be retrospectively called modern art cinema was to make its appearance only in the early 1960s⁶. On the other hand, the beginning of the 1950s implied for the Romanian cinema both an effort of institutional organization and an attempt to overcome the inefficiency of the film production system. In the cultural isolation of early 1950s, when very few films from the West were screened in Romania, the dominant model for Romanian cinema was the Soviet one. It was only at the beginning of 1956, in the new atmosphere of liberalization, that a retrospective of contemporary Italian cinema was organized in Bucharest,

which included films by neorealist directors such as Vittorio De Sica (*Umberto D*, 1952), Luchino Visconti (*Bellissima*, 1951) or Giuseppe De Santis (*Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi*, 1950)⁷. At the same time, films from other Eastern European countries under Soviet influence began to be screened, in which attempts to break away from socialist-realist norms were evident – for instance, Andrzej Munk's *Człowiek na torzeł* / *Man on the Tracks* (1956) or Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* (1957) –, while films made in the Soviet Union in the second half of the decade also began to show neorealist influences. In this context, the most disputed concept in the debates between film industry officials and filmmakers, occasionally published in the cultural press, was that of “realism”. In an extension of the discussions on literature and the desired diversity of styles, concepts such as “individual style” or “national style” were proposed in the written interventions on cinema, trying to subtly undermine the monolithic dominance of Soviet socialist realism. As a common denominator, even the more culturally conservative articles or reviews seemed to agree that a new type of cinema, different from the one made during the heyday of socialist realism, needed to emerge.

As in the Soviet Union, however, the unpredictable and sometimes contradictory signals of the party leadership lead towards the end of the decade to a return of the old accusations of deviationism against those who implicitly or explicitly criticized socialist realist art. In Romania, this period of “freeze”, which signaled a conservative reaction to the period of “thaw” after Stalin's death, was felt in all cultural fields since early 1958. For almost half a decade, this meant a partial return to the old

theories about the functions and form of socialist art. The advocates of more modern forms of art needed in such circumstances a concept that could signal this openness, without coming into obvious opposition with the reinstated theories of socialist realism. This compromise concept was that of “contemporaneity” (*contemporaneitate* in Romanian).

Typical for all cultural debates in the first decade of socialism in Romania, the local intelligentsia carefully followed any change of vocabulary in the cultural field in the Soviet Union. As Susan E. Reid demonstrates, the term “contemporaneity” (*sovremennost* in Russian) began to be invoked in Soviet cultural circles as early as 1958⁸. It became, nevertheless, the subject of wide-ranging debates, including on cinema, in early 1960. The reason this concept became so important had to do with the way it could be used. The party leadership and those in charge of the development of Soviet culture understood by it a certain characteristic of the art to accurately represent the contemporary stage of development of the Soviet society. Those who wanted to break away from the old artistic norms signaled precisely this implicit opposition to the past by using the same term. In fact, in negotiating the meaning of this concept, various elements that could have been attributed to modernism became integrated into socialist art.

At first, the Romanian cultural press began to mention and question the new term in articles reporting on the Soviet debates or in interviews with Soviet artists. For instance, in an interview with the Soviet screenwriter Mikhail Papava – soon to be known for his script penned for Andrei Tarkovsky's *Ivanovo detstvo*

Ivan's Childhood (1962) –, published in the newspaper *Contemporanul* under the title “Cu M. Papava despre contemporaneitate în film” [“With M. Papava on Contemporaneity in Film”], the interviewee was noting a similarity between Soviet and Romanian films in terms of the new way in which they understand to represent socialist reality: “From the movies I saw, I realized that in certain points of view there are similarities between what is happening here and what is happening in your country. Us and you are also called upon to pay, each to the extent of his or her experience, an unpaid debt, by creating films about contemporaneity. It is also important for Romanian filmmakers to discover artistic forms that can embrace the full meaning of life today”⁹. Such formulations sometimes reproduced the triumphalist rhetoric of the socialist party leadership, but their profound role was to create equivalences between different types of contemporaneity, some of them of Western origin, and to include in the contemporary approach artistic means in principle refused by socialist realist aesthetics. For instance, a report on the recent Moscow Film Festival, where theoretical debates on the theme of contemporaneity had taken place, included passages referring to new Western modes of cinematographic expression, explicitly linked to similar traditions in Soviet cinema:

Marcel Martin distinguishes two main trends in today's film: the trend of subtle psychological analysis, materialized in the work of the Italian Antonioni, and the trend of “direct cinema”. It is very interesting to see how he defines the latter. “This trend

has its roots in the work of Dziga Vertov [...] and reappeared a few years ago, no doubt under the influence of television”.¹⁰

These amalgamations of names from both the socialist and the capitalist cultural sphere, not uncommon at the time, transformed the concept of “contemporaneity” into a transnational one and emphasized a utopian artistic communication between the two antagonistic political zones. Thus, a logical inversion of the traditional argument for a modernist approach in socialist art was taking place: it was not socialist artists who were under the influence of contemporary modernist Western styles, but Western and Eastern artists who were participating in the same phenomenon of artistic synchronization, as suggested, for instance, by a quote inserted in an interview with the Soviet director Grigori Chukhrai: “Here's what the well-known American critic Gedeon Bachman had to say after the screening: ‘I like Chukhrai. In my opinion he is one of the best Soviet directors. His creative method is akin to the style of some talented contemporary filmmakers – the Italian Antonioni, the Pole Wajda, the American director Shirley Clarke’”¹¹.

Very quickly, the new concept started to be used in the Romanian cultural press. In fact, after 1960, very few cultural fields were not analyzed from the perspective of their “contemporaneity”, as can be seen from the titles of the articles that appeared during this period: “Muzica și contemporaneitatea” [“Music and Contemporaneity”]¹², “Contemporaneitatea în operă” [“Contemporaneity in the Opera”]¹³, “Contemporaneitatea comediei

clasice” [“The Contemporaneity of Classical Comedy”]¹⁴, and so on. In some cases, an appeal to the contemporaneity of a work could conceal a plea for a less accessible type of art, as is the case, for example, in an article cleverly titled “Contemporaneitate accesibilă” [“Accessible Contemporaneity”], but which, in fact, raised the question of a type of art that requires a certain education in order to be understood, taking as an example sophisticated musical pieces such as those written by the likes of Dmitri Shostakovich¹⁵. Not only more difficult types of art were thus recovered through the appeal to contemporaneity, but also modes of expression that contradicted the cult of objective reality on which the method of socialist realism was based. An interview with two young screenwriters, Nicolae Țic and Radu Cosașu, about the form and content best suited for making films that mirrored the socialist present, “Filmele vieții de zi cu zi” [“The Films of Everyday Life”], shows the way in which two of the fundamental principles of modernism in cinema, the emphasis on psychology and the simplification of the plot, were beginning to be internalized:

– *And what would be – from an artistic point of view – the way to realize those films deeply rooted in contemporaneity?*

R. Cosașu: I think that giving up the cult of the external fact, the temptation of the spectacular, the idea that psychological processes are not “cinematographic” (an idea hard to sustain after having seen the films *Alyosha’s Love*, *The Island*, *Marty*, *The Long Absence*) would represent significant steps towards the realistic mirroring of life.

N. Țic: Even more concrete. I think, in the spirit of the interview with M.[ikhail] Romm, also published in *Contemporanul*, that we should use not many, but few events that transmit, in return, many ideas. A maximum simplicity of external action, coupled with an intense debate on the psychological level.¹⁶

In the Romanian cinema of the 1960, one of the probable consequences of these debates around the idea of contemporaneity is the solidification of another critical concept, that of the “everyday film” (*film de actualitate*, in Romanian), a descriptive label generally applied to films that had their action set in the immediate present. As can be seen from the interview with Țic and Cosașu, these contemporary-set films were no longer made primarily on the basis of realist aesthetics. In cinema, as in other arts, the debates concerning the contemporaneity of art thus paved the way for many modernist innovations – subjective perspective, psychologization, avoidance of overdramatization and sentimentality – and, to a large extent, functioned until the mid-1960s as a local surrogate for Western theories regarding cultural modernism.

A Well-Tempered Modernism

How about the term “modernism” *per se*? As noted earlier, one can hardly find until the end of the 1960s any mention of this term that is not accompanied by nuances relating to the *specific type* of modernism one was referring to. A good example of this conceptual caution can be found in a 1967 interview with the actress Irina Petrescu:

– *Do you like experiments?*

– You probably mean by that what is usually called modernism. I don't like modernism in form – but in content. The movie must belong to the people *who see it when it was made*. It is a prerequisite to reach the viewer in the screening room. I can't hope that the spectator who didn't understand what I did when he watched me will understand me in fifty days' time. It is a great mistake in our country to consider the public unprepared for more subtle art. But this is not so, because the public is not an amorphous mass that you can consider "as a whole".¹⁷

Petrescu's emphasis on the virtues of difficult art and on the public as a competent consumer of cinema that embodies contemporary issues is typical for the early years of the new socialist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu – roughly, from his seizure of power in 1965 to the first years of the following decade. This first phase of the new regime, from a cultural perspective, saw a hybridization of socialist aesthetics with specific elements of late modernism, resulting in a local formula labeled by Andrei Terian "socialist modernism"¹⁸. Of course, this integration of the aesthetic principles of modernism was not described as such by critics or theorists of the era. In general, as in the era of the first "thaw", the term "modernity" was used more than "modern" or "modernist". However, in addition to pleading for the autonomy of art in the face of overly rigid normative criteria, critics from various fields were beginning to emphasize creative subjectivity, form over content and style over everything else. In many cases, taking into account the

cultural references to which they often pointed out and the recommended artistic modes of expression, what was being instituted in practice was a form of modernism that lacked only the appropriate label. In parallel, the rare references to modernism as such served two purposes: to define modernism as a timeless reaction to academism and outdated art, and to place local modernism between two typical conceptual extremes – traditional art and excessive Western modernism.

An example for the first attitude towards modernism can be found in a brief note published in *Contemporanul* in 1964, authored by a certain Gabriel Daiani:

I have the impression that the word "modernism" has too much put into it. "Modernism" is, after all, the way of thinking and an artistic expression of the present – a present, of course, extended to many years past and future –, a statement in the best sense of the word. Goethe was a modern in his time, today he is a classic. So was Beethoven and Mozart. Hugo was a modern, today we classify him among the Romantics. Surrealism has lived its age and not a few no longer consider it a modern trend. I would dare to say that, personally, I would take the word "modern" out of our vocabulary so that we no longer stumble over it, and I would ask creators of all genres to speak to consumers of art in a contemporary, consistent, moving language, and perhaps to help those who are... "left behind". Modern art is art that satisfies the needs of the present on all levels, and its important function is to make man more alive.¹⁹

This detemporalization of modernism was one of the strategies most used in the second half of the decade to detach the term from the excesses that were blamed on historical modernism. In relation to these excesses, often mentioned in the cultural press but seldom analyzed in detail, it could be understood that only a moderate version of modernism was acceptable in a socialist society. However, the fact that art and especially literature were discussed in terms close to the theories of historical and/or Western modernism did not leave all of the critics of the time indifferent. Thus, in late 1966 and early 1967, a series of articles appeared accusing a real obsession with modernism, especially in the field of literature, the alignment of contemporary authors with modernism being described as a literary fashion without substance. One of the most violent indictments of this kind, signed by the writer Horia Lovinescu, entitled "Obsesia de a părea modern" ["The Obsession to Seem Modern"], declared as irrelevant the formal innovations embraced by those authors who wanted to practice a more radical kind of modernism: "It is true that the pulverization of forms, the disarticulation of reality, the disregard of 'characters' (in the classical sense of the word), the abandonment of the plot, etc., are phenomena in modern art and literature. But to see in them the essence of modernity is to take the written letter as meaning, the symbol as reality. Taking advantage of this widespread error, imposture flourishes with impressive virulence"²⁰. Such interventions brought back into question the very issues that the theorists of a timeless modernism were trying to avoid – those relating to aesthetic form.

In the field of literature, the critic who succeeded in sketching a genealogy of local

modernism, while at the same time synthesizing the arguments regarding the opposition between traditionalism and modernism, was Adrian Marino. First in his articles published in the newspaper *Iașul literar*, then in his seminal essay published in 1969, *Modern, modernism, modernitate* [*Modern, Modernism, Modernity*], Marino tried to define, in line with the debates of the time, modernism as a current in opposition to everything perceived as academic, traditional or culturally conservative. This strategy, in principle not substantially different from the attempt to define modernism as timeless, was however in this case accompanied by numerous examples of modernist opposition to tradition in the history of Romanian culture. In this respect, Marino's contribution to legitimizing the term "modernism" in cultural debates should not be underestimated. At the same time, it should be emphasized that, in fields other than literature, the terms in which modernism was discussed, sometimes in the absence of a local tradition of modernism that could be reclaimed, were different. Such is the case of Romanian cinema. Given the fact that the precarious Romanian film industry had been virtually untouched by modernist influences in the pre-World War II period, that is, before the establishment of the socialist regime, discussions of modernism had to take only contemporary developments as points of reference. This is why one can hardly find in the pages of the cultural press of the 1960s any analysis of the modernist movement in cinema penned by Romanian authors. The most extensive article on the subject is actually a translation of an essay by the Polish film critic Jerzy Plazewski, published in 1965 in the magazine *Cinema* and titled

“În definitiv ce este filmul modern?” [“After All, What Is a Modern Film?”]²¹. In this text, Plazewski distinguishes between an “objectivist” (meaning a preference for a realist approach) and a “subjectivist” tendency (i.e. a psychologizing approach) in recent cinematic modernism. This is also one of the few texts in which, among examples referring to the modernist contributions of Soviet cinema, arthouse films by Western directors such as Alain Resnais, Michelangelo Antonioni, Francesco Rosi or Chris Marker are discussed in detail.

A double paradox results from the relative lack of distinctions regarding contemporary cinematic modernism in the Romanian cultural press. On the one hand, since the mid-1960s, the influence of the type of modernism with “subjectivist” tendencies described by Plazewski began to be felt in Romanian cinema, in films such as Lucian Pintilie’s *Duminică la ora 6/ Sunday at Six* (1966), Andrei Blaier’s *Diminețile unui băiat cumintel/ The Mornings of a Sensible Youth* (1967) or Savel Stîpopul’s *Ultima noapte a copilăriei/ The Last Night of Childhood* (1968). However, the reviews or articles in the cultural avoided as much as possible to mention the term “modernism”, even in a context in which the development of a modernist direction in Romanian cinema was obvious. On the other hand, even though in the late 1960s books began to appear with phrases associated with modernism in their titles, their authors theorized a version of modernism that was meant to keep its distance from modernist excesses.

Along with Adrian Marino, one of the most well-known authors of that era who ventured into such theorizing was Marcel Breazu. After being appointed in

the mid-1960s as professor of aesthetics at the Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest, he subsequently published some of his lectures, with titles such as *Modernitate și decadentism în artă* [*Modernity and Decadence in Art*] (1967) and *Realism și modernitate în artă* [*Realism and Modernity in Art*] (1973). Breazu’s writings are among the most symptomatic of the way modernism is conceptualized in art in the 1960s, mainly through a skillful avoidance of the main concept under discussion. For instance, in *Modernitate și decadentism în artă*, he sketched a history of “modernity” in art, starting from representative names of modernism such as Wassily Kandinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust or James Joyce²². Breazu’s interdisciplinary and informed approach, however, reduced the modernist gesture, in accordance with the theoretical discussions of the time, to an opposition to what was traditional in art. This cautious formulation of the principles of modernism, which generally leaves aside observations about form, is obvious from the way in which he minutely analyzed, without ever mentioning the word “modernism”, the formal novelty of Alain Resnais’ film *L’Année dernière à Marienbad/ Last Year at Marienbad* in a brief chapter of his volume *Convorbiri despre artă* [*Conversations about Art*], published in 1971²³. Persistent in Breazu’s analyses are the objections to normative theories of socialist art, by which are meant the more dogmatic theorizations of the past. On the other hand, in his attempts to define the essence of modernity, Breazu often warned against the falsity of adopting a type of modernity that could only be described as an artistic gesture detached from the social context

that generated it. Taking up in his writings the theory of a modernity that cyclically redefines the tradition that precedes it, Breazu advocates, like other authors of the time, a type of modernism that is equally conformist and non-conformist.

The particular case of the Romanian modernist cinema of the 1960s is, therefore, an instance of a cultural movement which lacks an adequate contemporary theorization. In order to preserve modernism – often defined as “modernity” – at a distance from the criticisms that might have been leveled against it because of its affiliations to aesthetic ideas prevalent in the West, although its formal innovations were clearly understood in the era in which

it appears, its characteristics were usually theorized in terms of a timeless conflict between tradition and modernity. Therefore, although the formal innovations of the Romanian modernist films were noted at the time of their appearance, the broader aesthetic framework that took into account only a timeless modernity eventually limited their reception within the culture that produced them.

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NOTES

1. See, for instance, George Faraday, *Revolt of the Filmmakers: The Struggle for Artistic Autonomy and the Fall of the Soviet Film Industry*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 53-54.
2. See Hans Günther, “How Socialist Realism Was Exported to Eastern European Countries and How They Got Rid of It”, in Evgeny Dobrenko, Natalia Jonsson-Skradol (eds.), *Socialist Realism*

- in Central and Eastern European Literatures under Stalin: Institutions, Dynamics, Discourses*, London, Anthem Press, 2018, p. 17-24.
3. Alex Goldiș, *Critica în tranșee: de la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului*, București, Cartea Românească, 2011, p. 56-58.
 4. George Munteanu, "Tradiționalism și modernitate (II)", *Steaua*, no. 1, VIII, p. 21: "Orientările tradiționalistă și modernă n-au luat naștere la noi, evident, în afara realismului socialist, ci în cadrul lui. Realismul socialist îi înarmează pe scriitorii cu principiile fundamentale care pot duce la 'înfățișarea veridică, concretă din punct de vedere istoric, a realității în dezvoltarea ei revoluționară' [...]. Găsirea căilor și a mijloacelor artistice concrete de zugrăvire a realității – în lumina acestor principii fundamentale – depinde însă exclusiv de scriitorii înșiși, de particularitățile dezvoltării lor, de structura talentului lor, etc., ducând în mod practic la diferite orientări în materie de creație" (author's emphasis, my translation).
 5. Eugen Luca, "Despre ce 'orientare' este vorba?", *Contemporanul*, no. 1 (535), January 4, 1957, p. 22: "Or, una e să legiferezi dogmatic norme ale realismului socialist și alta, cu totul alta, e să prezinți acest principiu în termeni atât de vagi încât să nu-ți poți apropia măcar sensul lui. Mai mult încă, [...] datorită tocmai caracterului nebulos în care e folosit acest concept, G. Munteanu nici nu-l prea ia în serios. Dovadă, nici nu se vorbea despre necesitatea folosirii experienței literaturii realist-socialiste în general și a literaturii sovietice, nu deosebi, deși, mai puțin dibaci de astădată, pentru a se 'acoperi', autorul pomenește undeva și de Maiakovski".
 6. For a discussion on the modernist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, see András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950-1980*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 51-81.
 7. For a historical sketch of the Romanian cinema's break from socialist realism, see my article "The Slow Break from Socialist Realism: Romanian Cinema in the Late '50s and Early '60s", in Irina Trocan (ed.), *Romanian Cinema Inside Out: Insights on Film Culture, Industry and Politics (1912-2019)*, București, Romanian Cultural Institute, 2019, p. 39-57.
 8. Susan E. Reid, "Modernizing Socialist Realism in the Khrushchev Thaw: The Struggle for a 'Contemporary Style' in Soviet Art", in Polly Jones (ed.), *The Dilemmas of Destalinisation: A Social and Cultural History of Reform in the Khrushchev Era*, London, Routledge, 2006, p. 209-230.
 9. Ana Maria Narti, "Cu M. Papava despre contemporaneitate în film", *Contemporanul*, no. 11, March 3, 1960, p. 4: "Din filmele pe care le-am văzut, am înțeles că din anume puncte de vedere există asemănări între ceea ce se petrece la noi și la dv. Și noi și dv. suntem chemați să plătim, fiecare pe măsura experienței sale, o datorie neacoperită, creând filme despre contemporaneitate și pentru cineăștii români este important să descopere forme artistice care să poată cuprinde întreaga semnificație a vieții actuale".
 10. *Idem*, "Adevărul vieții – substanța artei cinematografice" ["The Truth of Life – the Substance of Cinematic Art"], *Contemporanul*, no. 31, April 8, 1961, p. 5: "Marcel Martin deosebește două direcții principale ale filmului actual: tendința subtililor analize psihologice, materializate în opera italianului Antonioni, și tendința „cinematografului direct“. Este foarte interesant de urmărit cum definește el această din urmă orientare. "Tendința aceasta își are rădăcinile în creația lui Dziga Vertov [...] și a reapărut în urmă cu câțiva ani, fără îndoială sub influența televiziunii".
 11. ***, "Festivalul Filmului de la Moscova: Premiile", *Contemporanul*, no. 30, July 28, 1961, p. 5: "Iată ce a declarat după vizionare cunoscutul critic american Gedeon Bachman: 'Îmi place Ciuhrai. După părerea mea este unul dintre cei mai buni regizori sovietici. Metoda lui de creație se înrudește cu stilul unor talentați cinești ai contemporaneității – italianul Antonioni, polonezul Wajda, regizoarea americană Shirley Clarke'".
 12. C. Corbu, "Muzica și contemporaneitatea", *Contemporanul*, no. 7, February 12, 1960, p. 5.
 13. C., "Contemporaneitatea în operă", *Contemporanul*, no. 12, March 18, 1960, p. 5.
 14. Lucian Giurchescu, "Contemporaneitatea comediei clasice", *Contemporanul*, no. 34, August 19, 1960, p. 4.

15. Ada Brumaru, "Contemporaneitate accesibilă", *Contemporanul*, no. 45, November 4, 1960, p. 5.
16. Al. Racoviceanu, "Filmele vieții de zi cu zi", *Contemporanul*, no. 30, July 27, 1962, p. 5: "– Și care ar fi – din punctul de vedere artistic – calea spre a realiza acele filme profund ancorate în contemporaneitate?!! R. Coșașu: Cred că renunțarea la cultul faptului exterior, la tentația spectaculosului, la ideea că procesele sufletești nu sunt "cinematografice" (idee greu de susținut după ce am văzut cu toții filmele *Dragostea lui Alioșa*, *Insula*, *Marty*, *Absență îndelungată*) ar fi pași însemnați spre oglindirea realistă a vieții.// N. Țic: Și mai concret. Consider, în spiritul interviului cu M. Romm, publicat tot în *Contemporanul*, că trebuie să utilizeze nu multe, ci puține evenimente care să spună, în schimb, multe idei. O simplitate maximă a acțiunii exterioare, dublată de o intensă dezbateră pe plan sufletesc".
17. Smaranda Jelescu, "Carnet de lucru: Irina Petrescu", *Scânteia tineretului*, no. 5699, September 17, 1967, p. 2: "– Vă plac experimentele? // – Probabil vă referiți la ce se cheamă de obicei modernism. Nu-mi place modernismul în formă – ci în conținut. Filmul trebuie să fie al oamenilor care îl văd atunci când el s-a creat. Este o condiție obligatorie să ajungi la spectator în sala de proiecție. Eu nu pot spera ca spectatorul care n-a înțeles ce-am făcut atunci când m-a privit să mă înțeleagă peste cincizeci de zile. La noi se face o mare greșală, se consideră publicul nepregătit pentru o artă mai subtilă. Dar nu este așa, căci publicul nu este o masă amorfă, pe care s-o consideri 'în bloc'".
18. See Andrei Terian, "Socialist Modernism as Compromise: A Study of the Romanian Literary System", *Primerjalna književnost*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2019, p. 133-147.
19. Gabriel Daiani, "Modernism", *Contemporanul*, no. 5, January 29, 1965, p. 2: "Am impresia că în cuvântul 'modernism' prea se amestecă multe. 'Modernismul' este în fond maniera artistică și de gândire a prezentului – un prezent bineînțeles lărgit la mai mulți ani trecuți și viitori – afirmație făcută în cel mai bun sens al cuvântului. Un modern a fost Goethe la vremea lui, azi e un clasic. La fel s-a întâmplat cu Beethoven și cu Mozart. Un modern a fost Hugo, azi îl trecem printre romantici. Suprerealismul și-a trăit veacul și nu puținii sunt cei care nu-l mai consideră curent modern. Aș îndrăzni să spun că, personal, aș scoate cuvântul 'modern' din vocabular pentru a nu ne mai împiedica de el și aș cere creatorilor de toate genurile să vorbească consumatorilor de artă într-un limbaj contemporan, de calitate, emoționant, să-i ajute eventual la învățarea acestui limbaj pe cei... 'rămași în urmă'. Arta modernă e arta care satisface nevoile prezentului pe toate planurile, iar funcția ei importantă este să-l facă pe om mai viu".
20. Horia Lovinescu, "Obsesia de a părea modern", *Scânteia*, no. 7171, November 23, 1966, p. 1: "E adeverat că pulverizarea formelor, dezarticularea realității, desconsiderarea 'caracterelor' (în sensul clasic al cuvântului), abolirea intrigii etc., sunt fenomene în arta și literatura modernă. Dar a vedea în ele esența modernității înseamnă a lua litera drept spirit, simbolul drept realitate. Profitând de această eroare atât de răspândită, impostura înfloarește cu o virulență impresionantă".
21. Jerzy Plazewski, "În definitiv ce este filmul modern?", *Cinema*, no. 10, 1965, p. 9-11.
22. Marcel Breazu, *Prelegeri de estetică: Modernitate și decadentism în artă*, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1967, p. 6-7.
23. *Idem*, *Convorbiri despre artă*, București, Editura Politică, 1971, p. 100-102.