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The Birth of the Post-Socialist Eastern European Televisual Collectivehood: Crime and Patriarchy in *Shadows [Umbre, 2014–]*

Abstract: The global proliferation of media distribution platforms, such as Amazon Video, Netflix, Hulu or HBO Go, and their support for local productions have entered the Eastern European region into a new quality televisual age. Thanks to the innovative industrial and technological framework and the transformation of production, exhibition and distribution practices in the era, the post-2000 epoch gave local filmmakers and media practitioners the opportunity for national self-expression that contributed to the birth of new narratives and aesthetic forms. By focusing on the Romanian series *Shadows [Umbre, 2014–]*, the present article investigates the very local tone of Eastern European crime series produced by HBO Europe. This paper examines and enumerates the reasons for the proliferation of the genre, while discussing its local characteristics that, as argued below, gave birth to a collective Eastern European televisual collectivehood.

Keywords: crime; HBO Europe; *Shadows*; *Wasteland*; *Golden Age*; socialism; capitalism; television series

Introduction

In Eastern Europe, HBO Europe, the subsidiary of the American premium cable and satellite television network, launched its first channel in Hungary in 1991 that, by the end of the 1990s, was followed by acquiring broadcasting license in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Romania.¹ By 2010, the channel was made available in Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia.² In November 2017, HBO introduced its online distribution platform, HBO

¹ Peter Szczepanik, "Transnational Crews and Postsocialist Precarity: Globalizing Screen Media Labor in Prague," in *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Global Labor*, ed. Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson (California: University of California Press, 2016), 98.

² Jean K. Chalaby, *Transnational Television in Europe: Reconfiguring Global Communications Networks* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 195–207.

Go, in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania,³ thus offering the Central European audience a transnational television experience. Together with the video-on-demand services of Netflix, Amazon Video and Hulu, the cultural value of television programming has been significantly raised in the region, eventually “detaching it from the industrial-controlled broadcasting”.⁴ As argued by scholars, convenience technologies not only changed broadcast flow, but disrupted traditional models of production.⁵

Besides focusing on distribution, HBO Europe – that now includes 17 countries – acts as one of the largest television production companies in Eastern Europe that delivers local quality programs. The production of original drama in the region started in 2010 and has since broadcast over 270 hours of fiction to Hungarian, Romanian, Czech and Polish audiences.⁶ As Steve Matthews, HBO Europe’s executive producer for drama development stresses, the company aims to “[...] focus on local and regional production from local talent. [...] [Because] an original is of more interest to both the viewer and the market, [and] business-wise they have more potential for international distribution.”⁷ Besides producing big-budget miniseries like the Czech *Burning Bush* [*Horící ker*, 2013], HBO Europe broadcasts licensed regional formats of global productions⁸ that include successful series, such as the Polish *The Pact* [*Pakt*, 2015–], the Czech *Wasteland* [*Pustina*, 2017], the Hungarian *Golden Life* [*Aranyélet*, 2015–] or the Romanian *Shadows* [*Umbre*, 2014–] and *The Silent Valley* [*Valea Mută*, 2016–]. These productions all deal with the question of crime in different forms, be it murder (*Shadows*, *Golden Life*, *Wasteland*), rape (*Shadows*, *Wasteland*), robbery (*Golden Life*), prostitution (*Wasteland*, *Shadows*), drug consumption (*Wasteland*, *Golden Life*), juvenile crime (*Wasteland*, *Shadows*, *Golden Life*) or corruption (*Shadows*, *Golden Life*, *The Pact*) that, according to the series, characterize contemporary Eastern European underworlds. Besides the central, elder male figure who supervises the actions of the characters, these series are strongly connected by the very institution and crisis of family that gets eventually disintegrated in the narratives.

Given the fact that Central Europe’s popular cinema has been mainly dominated by comedies,⁹ the post-2010 proliferation and dominance of crime genre in the

³ Stewart Clarke, “HBO Launches Streaming Service in Central Europe,” *Variety*, November 13, 2017, <http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/hbo-go-launches-in-central-europe-1202613413/>, acc. April 1, 2018.

⁴ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV. The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2015), 52.

⁵ Todd M. Sodano, “Television’s Paradigm (Time) Shift. Production and Consumption Practices in the Post-Network Era,” in *Time in Television Narrative. Exploring Temporality in the Twenty-First Century Programming*, ed. Melissa Ames (Jackson MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 27–43.

⁶ Scott Roxborough, “HBO Europe: The Best TV You’ve Never Seen,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 10, 2017, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hbo-europe-best-tv-youve-never-seen-1048497>, acc. April 1, 2018.

⁷ Matthews in “HBO Europe’s Steve Matthews on the company’s push into the Balkans,” *Screen Daily*, August 15, 2017, <https://www.screendaily.com/news/hbo-europes-steve-matthews-on-the-companys-push-into-the-balkans/5120831.article>, acc. April 1, 2018.

⁸ See Szczepanik, “Transnational Crews and Postsocialist Precarity,” 87–97.

⁹ Balázs Varga, “The Missing Middle: Transformations and Trends in Hungarian Film Comedies After Political Change,” in *Transformation Processes in Post-Socialist Screen Media*, ed. Jana Dudková and Katarína Misiková (Bratislava: Institute of Theatre and Film Research, 2017), 97–117.

region's quality television is a surprising and unexpected turn. Because crime films in the socialist period were mediators of the central ideological message and mirrored a false political context where criminality was considered to be basically non-existent,¹⁰ the genre had no authenticity or real filmic heritage in the area. Although there were crime films or films with crime elements in the socialist film corpus, these examples often became self-parodies,¹¹ with no credibility given to the story, the background or the characters.

Crime in television and film in the post-2010 visual corpus thus signals a new start for Eastern European media and collective remembrance. On the one hand, the insistence to produce crime series may be considered as a gesture or attempt to fall into line with the American practice, and experience the boundaries and possibilities of the genre in the post-socialist region. On the other hand, the dominance of crime on the region's televisual screen functions as a visual and narrative representation of a collective post-socialist identity that reflects upon the pre-capitalist epoch by re-working the trauma of the previous political and ideological period. In this context, the criticism of capitalism and crimes accompanying it, and the after-effects of the socialist period are not mutually exclusive. Rather, the banal way of national identity-building and cinematic nationhood – as Michael J. Shapiro¹² refers to a form of visual representation consumed and set within everyday contexts – both re-articulates the socialist period by referencing its corruption-laden framework and the collective social, economic and political influence it has up to this day. What we witness this way, is the birth of a new post-socialist televisual collectiveness that translates and locates the American genre into an Eastern European social reality by reworking its specific historico-political trauma and collective problems, while focusing on the disintegrated institution of the family as a metaphor of the post-socialist, neoliberal crisis.

Shadows

All of the three locally produced HBO Europe series in Romania, *Shadows* [*Umbre*, 2014–] became the most popular in the country.¹³ The idea of the production is based on the Australian crime-comedy *Small Time Gangster* (Boilermaker Burberry Entertainment, 2011), that follows Tony Piccolo (Steve Le Marquand), a carpet-cleaner and underworld gangster whose unmaintainable double-life soon forces him to

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gábor Gelencsér, “The Paradox of Popularity. The Case of the Socialist Crime Movie in Hungary,” in *Popular Cinemas in East Central Europe: Film Cultures and Histories*, ed. Dorota Ostrowska, Francesco Pitassio, Zsuzsanna Varga (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 85–102.

¹² Michael J. Shapiro, *Methods and Nations: Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject* (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), 141–50.

¹³ Julia Blaga, “Romanian and Polish HBO Series Get Pan-European Distribution,” *Filmneweurope.com*, October 4, 2017, <https://www.filmneweurope.com/news/romania-news/item/115259-hbo-romanian-and-polish-series-get-pan-european-distribution>, acc. April 1, 2018.

choose between his family and his profession as a blue collar enforcer. The shooting of the Romanian version of the Australian show started in June 2014 and the first episode was soon launched on December 28, 2014. After its immense success and popularity with the Romanian audience, HBO Europe decided to continue the show and run the second season with an original screenplay. In 2017, *Shadows* was aired in 19 countries – mainly in Eastern Europe, Spain and the Nordic states – and earned international and local critical acclamation. The show was premiered in the United States as well, and has soon been acquired by Hulu and Amazon Prime for screening.

Written by Bogdan Mirica and co-directed by Igor Cobileanski, *Shadows* centers on the taxi-driver Relu (Serban Pavlu) who works for The Captain (Doru Ana), one of the main underworld figures of Romania. Relu is a family man with a wife and two teenage children who tries to conceal his petty crimes from his loved ones. After his secrets unravel, the soon-to-be fulltime gangster not only faces losing his family but sinks deeper in the dirt of the Romanian underworld. Eventually, his attempts to leave the Captain's gang by making a dangerous pact with Mr. Toma (Dorel Visan), the leader of the rival mafia group, fails when his 17-year old daughter Magda (Madalina Craiu) gets pregnant from Teddy (Gabriel Huian) the son of his boss. The love of the two forms an unbreakable tie between The Captain and Relu, who finds himself in a dreadful position with no possibilities to exit the hazardous underworld.

The second season starts with the marriage of the two teenagers and the vengeance of Mr. Toma whose gang causes a fatal car accident where Magda loses her 6-month old son. The Captain entrusts Relu with finding the perpetrator of the crime who thus embarks upon a series of actions that culminate in the murder of Mr. Toma. Things get even tougher when the police start a manhunt after the Captain's gang, which puts Relu in a bind where he must decide whether to confess his crimes he committed against Mr. Toma and The Captain, or remain silent and continue working for the boss he betrayed earlier.

Shadows is a mix of crime, social drama and irony whose fusion makes it a unique show entirely different from the original *Small Time Gangster*. As Mirica acknowledges, he changed a lot in the adaptation by building the series on his own experiences growing up in Romania.¹⁴ As he adds, "The Australian show felt more like a soap opera, rather than a show with real criminals. I made it grittier, funnier, bloodier. Like a punch to the gut."¹⁵ The change had a great effect on Romanian audience, which applauded the series. As Mirica stresses, "People recognized the world in front of them on screen. They liked the fact that it is realistic [...], because the criminal world is something you see in Romania every day, on the streets and in the news, but it's not something you usually see on Romanian TV series or in Romanian movies. *Umbre* [is] a slice of life: gritty, funny, violent, sexual."¹⁶ With its realistic description of

¹⁴ Nick Holdsworth, "HBO Europe Launching Romanian Crime Drama 'Umbre,'" *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 17, 2014, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hbo-europe-launching-romanian-crime-759028>, acc. 1 April 2018.

¹⁵ Mirica in Roxborough, "HBO Europe: The Best TV You've Never Seen."

¹⁶ Ibid.

the post-socialist crime-laden and corrupt Romanian atmosphere, the creators of the show gave birth to a thoroughly Romanian production that not only speaks of the contemporary social problems and the inheritance of the socialist power structures in the country, but strengthens its national value by contextualizing the show within the aesthetics of the Romanian New Wave. What is born this way, is a very national production that reflects upon the impact of the past and present ideologies in the Eastern European country while, besides its thematic core, highlights its Romanian quality through the visual textuality of the show.

The legacy of the past: socialism, post-socialism and patriarchy in *Shadows*

Having had one of the most oppressive leaderships within the Eastern European socialist context in the shape of the Ceaușescu-regime, Romania had and still has to undergo a complicated process of political, social and cultural recovery.¹⁷ As often argued by scholars, “[...] the continuity in political elite between the Communist and post-Communist periods, the overwhelming fear of change pervading both the political sphere and society at large [...], have delayed the reevaluation of the Communist past,”¹⁸ and put Romania in a deep crisis, with fear from – and distrust in – the authorities being one of the central drives of the society.¹⁹ As Cristina Petrescu adds, the former Romanian secret police, the *Securitate* “haunts not only the memories of the traumatic recent past, but also the perceptions of the troublesome present. The strong belief that the Securitate lies at the origin of everything wrong in Romania did not die with the communist regime.”²⁰

Illustrating the post-communist atmosphere of anxiety, Alice Bardan examines how the Big Brother reality show was received in Eastern European countries by dissecting the attitude of viewers towards accepting some of these programs’ “grand

¹⁷ See Vladimir Tismeanu, “Democracy and Memory: Romania Confronts its Communist Past,” *The Politics of History in Comparative Perspective* 617 (May, 2008): 166–80.

¹⁸ Oana Popescu-Sandu, “Let’s Freeze Up Until 2100 or So: Nostalgic Directions in Post-Communist Romania,” in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 120.

¹⁹ See Tismeanu, “Democracy and Memory,” 178 and Cosmina Tanasoiu, “Intellectuals and Post-Communist Politics in Romania. An Analysis of Public Discourse, 1990–2000,” *East European Politics & Societies* 22, 1 (February 2008): 90–106. One has to note that violence, bribery, poverty, social stratification, the gradual deregulation of rights and social injustice are part of the post-communist political and social establishment (see: Enache Georgata, “Economic and Social Situation in Romania,” 2015, available at <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/resources/docs/qe-01-15-435-en-n.pdf>). Corruption, one of the most significant phenomena and symbols in contemporary Romania is one of the main pillars of national identity developed during the communist era, which – together with regular anticorruption protests – also illustrate the continuation of the past in present-day Romania. The topics of contemporary crime narratives clearly resonate with the overwhelming corruption and social injustice in the country.

²⁰ Cristina Petrescu, “The Afterlife of the Securitate: On Moral Correctness in Postcommunist Romania,” in *Remembering Communism. Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe*, ed. Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou, and Stefan Troebst (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2014), 407.

narrative about surveillance and privacy in contemporary societies.”²¹ While, as Bardan outlines, the format had great success in the post-socialist region, it did not attract a Romanian audience that associated the show with the surveillance regime of the Ceaușescu-epoch. After being on air for two weeks, the National Audiovisual Council disapproved Big Brother for “being an Orwellian nightmare that had come true”²² and accused the creators with abusing human rights. This sensitive reaction to the show clearly demonstrates the Romanian society’s irritability and intolerance towards the surveillance-apparatus associated with the socialist past and also outlines the effect the socialist leadership has on the Romanian audience.

The influence of the Ceaușescu-epoch and the deeply embedded fear that accompanies everyday life in Romania is remarkable in the visual productions of the country. In her psychoanalyst approach to Romanian cinema, Florentina Andreescu categorizes Romania’s pre- and post-socialist productions according to their relation to the Other and the way they create and re-invoke the country’s national, masochistic identity whose origins lie in fundamental Romanian myths folded around heroes who identify themselves with the suffering, subjected position and acquiesce in their defeat. As she notes, the socialist films “[...] include within their frame the basic elements of the three fundamental Romanian myths: the presence of a seductive and righteous Other, the romantic aspect conferred to passively accept pain and privation of liberty, the lack of agency and submission to an all-potent Other.”²³ She goes on arguing that, irrespectively of the dominant ideology, the Other – that, as seen in the national narratives, always incorporates pain – symbolizes the absolute power over individuals that are subordinated to it. In the socialist epoch, the Other is “the nexus of power”²⁴, the “fatherly, stern, but righteous figure of the secretary general of the Communist Romanian Party”²⁵ represented by the socialist state and nation, that requires people to disavow their identity in order to fulfil the ideological requirements and maintain social order on the screen. After the death of the socialist father-figure, Nicolae Ceaușescu, it is now the person of the corrupt businessman who fill the role of the Other, who “lost the righteous aspect of the socialist father, and [...] is exposed indulging in an obscene enjoyment of his position of power.”²⁶

Shadows illustrates the very contemporary social anxiety via a nostalgic gesture to re-establish national order. The resurrection of the socialist father figure happens via the character of the Captain, the head of the underworld who, as an ex-Securitate officer who worked for the International Affairs bureau in the Ceaușescu-regime, has

²¹ Alice Bardan, “Big Brothers and Little Brothers: National Identity in Recent Romanian Adaptations of Global Television Formats,” in *Popular Television in Eastern Europe During and Since Socialism*, ed. Timothy Havens, Anikó Imre, and Katalin Lustyik (London: Routledge, 2012), 178.

²² *Ibid.*, 181.

²³ Florentina C. Andreescu, “The changing face of the Other in Romanian films,” *Nationalities Papers* 39, 1 (January 2011): 77–94.

²⁴ Florentina C. Andreescu, *From Communism to Capitalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 57.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁶ Andreescu, “The changing face of the Other in Romanian films,” 89.

built a great network of connections that enable him to smuggle goods from abroad, launder money and threaten people who stand in his way. The Captain has omniscient power and stands out of the legislative Romanian framework by controlling the police forces and politicians in the country.

As the absolute male power and father figure in the series, The Captain joins together his group of gangsters as a family that slowly leads to the annihilation of Relu's domestic stability and manhood. First, he becomes impotent and unable to satisfy his wife's needs, while he also fails as a father for neglecting his children due to his double-life activities. Relu takes on an absolute subjected position whose deeds are controlled by The Captain who constantly monitors his actions. Being under the threat of the omnipotent power, Relu attempts to gain back his manhood by turning more and more violent in the series. In the beginning, he is a family man who wants to support his loved ones by taking on a job offered by The Captain and by the end of the second season, he becomes a cool-blooded murderer. Driven by the sudden political and economic changes, Relu, the simple working man – which is constantly emphasized by his unsophisticated speech and lack of lexical knowledge – transforms into a less heroic character who kills to save his family's life.

As *Shadows* suggests, violence – be that physical or psychological oppression – is a key to manhood that helps to sustain a leading position in society and provides wealth and financial security. While The Captain practices mental abuse and discipline in order to subjugate his victims, his gang commits bloody and torturous crimes upon the orders of their boss. The vacuum of socialist power is thus substituted by the oppressive presence of The Captain, who reinstalls suppression by directing everyday law, and introduces the demand of violence as a form of economic survival in the capitalist age. This new order however, requires great sacrifices from society, which turns into a deeply patriarchal and sexist structure on screen.

Rape, prostitution and the domestic abuse of women are recurring motifs in the series where no female is in a safe position. In the very masculine framework of *Shadows*, they are treated as second citizens who can be sexually and mentally exploited, be that done by gangsters, everyday men or the police themselves. In the second season, this is taken to another level where Gina (Maria Obretin) gets abused by a taxi-driver and then her superior at work, while Nico (Andreea Vasile), the right hand of The Captain gets beaten up by her boss as well as her partner and gets raped by the policeman who leads the investigation against the gangsters. In *Shadows*, women disavow their identity and take on a subjected position that corresponds to their subjugation to the Other. Be it the streets of Bucharest, pubs in the city or the area where prostitutes work, females get constantly harassed and hurt. Accepting this position, they not only become hostages of the system, but take on a martyr-like role by passively admitting to physical and psychological torture. What is born this way, is the image of a society that accepts the omniscient position of the all-potent Other – the post-socialist business-man. This dreadful fatherly male figure directs and supervises moral order, while law enforcement is represented as an impotent, corrupt institution that stands under his absolute supervision.

Beyond doubt, besides its realistic tone, one reason for the success of the series in Romania lies in its attempt to reinstall national order on screen, even if that structure is a corrupt, sexist and unjust system. Relu, the only semi-positive character in the series must collaborate with the new law that rules present-day Romania, and he plays his cards according to the governing political and legislative structure. In this way, his transformation into a cold-blooded gangster is a logical step that helps him to overcome his impotence and gain back his manhood that he had lost at the beginning of the series. The more violent he gets; the more respect he gains from his surroundings. However, this comes at the price of him failing as a father figure. After all, in *Shadows*, there is only one omniscient father figure, The Captain, that he cannot combat, nor compete with. His boss slowly takes over his life and acquires his family as well when he decides to marry Teddy and Magda and provide them with a luxurious home and stable financial ground.

The absolute disintegration of the family institution is, on the one hand, a socialist gesture that illustrates the patriarchal care for citizens. In this way, The Captain becomes the absolute father of all the characters by taking financial care of his constructed family. On the other hand, *Shadows* clearly criticizes the contemporary neoliberal, capitalist framework that annihilates social and family relations. It is not only Relu who has to dwell in the underworld in order to support his family, but his wife is also incapable of providing financial stability for their children. Despite working long shifts, she cannot afford to take a taxi or rent a flat in the centre of the city while, without parental supervision and care, his teenage son commits petty crimes and gets into trouble with the police. The disintegration of the family structure in the series is thus due to the impossible post-socialist, neoliberalist economic situation and the lack of domestic stability. Youngsters smoke, drink, rob and take drugs without any responsibility or consequences, while their parents are incapable of handling the situation. While Relu obviously cares about his children, the only way of parental correction and form of supervision he knows is violence: he beats up Magda for meeting Teddy and constantly shouts with his son for his behavior. Similar to the other characters in *Shadows*, Relu only knows the language of aggression when it comes to communication and cannot function as a father figure.

The Romanian aesthetics of crime

The very realistic – and Romanian – tone of *Shadows* that depicts a deeply corrupt, crime-laden social and political context where the socialist power structure has been inherited to the present, gets an authentic visual atmosphere that follows the aesthetics of the Romanian New Wave. While depicting contemporary social conditions, directors of the New Wave – such as Cristi Puiu, Cristian Mungiu or Corneliu Porumboiu – work with a minimalist narrative form based on documentary-style filmmaking that relies on location-shooting, natural lighting, limited plots and the refusal of

artificial editing.²⁷ The preference for tableau-like images and long takes,²⁸ the jittering camera work that creates a documentary observational tone,²⁹ the urban settings,³⁰ the dominance of black humor and irony³¹ are all characteristics of the Romanian New Wave that Bogdan Mirica and Igor Cobileanski carry on with themselves.

Shot with a handheld camera, while using low lightning and realistic locations, the creators of the show have established a unique, minimalist visual atmosphere. Emphasizing the central character of Relu in the show, the man is often depicted in extremely long shots framed from behind as he is walking or driving on the streets of Bucharest. These over-the-shoulder shots that dominate the series, give an insight into the street reality of the city, while also embracing the visuals with a claustrophobic tone. The double-frames combined with the hand-held, always moving camera give the sequences a suffocating atmosphere that corresponds to the thematic core of *Shadows*.

Besides the ruling following shots, the second season gets dominated by close-ups that concentrate on the very physiognomy of the characters, while highlighting every gesture and mimic that appear on the face of the figures. In the fourth episode of the second season for instance, when Teddy is ordered to take care of the badly beaten man who co-planned their accident with Magda, the young boy is represented in a close-up throughout the whole scene as he first approaches the man and then lights a cigarette. It is only the suffering man's non-diegetic voice in the background that prolongs the space of the scene, for the camera concentrates on the face of Teddy as he realizes what the man had done. The scene ends with his close-up looking sideways that gets directly connected to the next shot in which he is represented facing the other direction as he travels up to his flat in the elevator. The two shots get thus connected by his facial gestures while the show changes locations.

Besides close-ups and over-the-shoulder following shots, the suffocating atmosphere is due to the double-framing technique and the vertical lines dominating the images. The characters are often depicted sideways driving a car, or are positioned against window bars, doors and other physical obstacles that imprison their figures. This aesthetics of vertical enclosure prevalent in the films of the Romanian New Wave³² is thus a central characteristic of *Shadows* too and gives the images an addi-

²⁷ On the neorealist-minimalist aesthetics of the Romanian New Wave see Dominique Nasta, *Contemporary Romanian Cinema. The History of an Unexpected Miracle* (London, New York: Wallflower Press, Columbia University Press, 2014), 155–60 and Elena Roxana Popan, "Recent Romanian Cinema: Is It a Real New Wave or Just a Splash in the Water?" *The Communication Review* 17 (July 2014), 217–32.

²⁸ See Sam Littman, "The Long Take as a Reaction to the Past in Contemporary Romanian Cinema," *Senses of Cinema* 71 (2014), <http://sensesofcinema.com/2014/feature-articles/the-long-take-as-a-reaction-to-the-past-in-contemporary-romanian-cinema/>, acc. April 1, 2018, and Doru Pop, *Romanian New Wave Cinema. An Introduction* (North Carolina, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014), 35–41.

²⁹ Nasta, *Contemporary Romanian Cinema*, 157.

³⁰ Popan, "Recent Romanian Cinema?" 217–32.

³¹ Duma Duma, "Are we still laughing when breaking with the past?" *Kinokultura*, <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/6/duma.shtml>, (2007), acc. April 1, 2018.

³² Anna Batori, *Space in Romanian and Hungarian Cinema* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 30–52.

tional entrapped feeling. The barely-lit, urban locations that are captured with a hand-held, jittering camera, the dominance of over-the-shoulder shots, double-frames and close-ups, all build up a uniquely Romanian style.

Conclusion

The dominance of crime in series produced by HBO Europe in the post-socialist region suggests both a collective gesture of remembrance of the past and reflections on the neoliberalist present. The success of the genre in the television of Eastern Europe not only illustrates the thirst of the region's audience to experience something new on screen that was basically non-existent in the socialist period and which had to establish itself from scratch after the system change, but illustrates the viewers' desire for justice as well. Whether it is provided by the police (*Wasteland*), the press (*The Pact*) or gangsters (*Golden Life*, *Shadows*), these series all re-establish national order. In the case of Romania, this structure resurrects the socialist father figure. His symbolic revival in *Shadows* brings about a new form of justice that reveals the impotent institution of the police and illustrates the omniscient control of a businessman who leads the capitalist market.

As the ban of the Big Brother show illustrates, the impact of the previous oppressive, monitoring socialist system materializes in an ever-present fear from the authorities that goes hand in hand with the wish to see the revival of the socialist paternal leading figure who re-establishes state order. In the capitalist age, however, this action causes the disintegration of the institution of the family (*Golden Life*, *Shadows*, *Wasteland*), where the male as well as female figures become subjugated to the Other.

This revival of suppression has diverse forms in the region and the present article did not aim at elaborating all the thematic and aesthetic ways these series function on local levels. Rather, it drew attention to a post-2010 televisual collectiveness in Eastern Europe that signals a collective remembrance on the past and reflections on the less positive present that followed the system change.

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