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Exploring the portrayal of women in Romanian films during Ceaușescu's regime: A feminist analysis of *Cine mă strigă?* (Who is calling me?) and *Angela merge mai departe* (Angela moves on)

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Abstract

This paper explores the representation of women in Romanian films during the communist period under Ceaușescu's regime, especially after the implementation of the July thesis in 1971, when additional restrictions were imposed on the population. The paper examines two audiovisual productions that focus on the portrayal and position of women in society. The films, *Cine mă strigă* (Who is Calling Me?) and *Angela merge mai departe* (Angela Moves On), are analyzed in order to explain issues and topics related to women's lives. The paper argues that despite the prevailing censorship and self-censorship, these films can offer insight into women's emancipation with respect to their rights and the social context in which they live.

Keywords: film studies, feminism, gender, Romanian Communism,

1. Introduction – critical background

Films that focus on women's lives can have an impact on female audience, particularly in terms of shaping personal identity. Attitudes, values and role models are expressed through films and certain representations may either reinforce, perpetuate or challenge stereotypes created around masculinity or femininity. Additionally, films can also offer insight into women's emancipation with respect to their rights and the social context in which they live. This is particularly relevant in the context of Romania, which was under a socialist government after the Second World War, when the rights and freedom of the people began to be increasingly limited. In this paper, I will explore how female characters were portrayed in Romanian films during the socialist period under Ceaușescu's regime, specifically after the implementation of the July theses in 1971, which led to the imposition of restrictions on the Romanian population. While the initial period of Ceaușescu's regime (between 1965 and 1971) displayed a degree of openness towards Western influences, this changed following Ceaușescu's famous visit to Asia in 1971, when these theses were introduced to promote political, social, economic, cultural visions and initiatives from Romania, while prohibiting any contact with the West.

Under these laws, artists were obliged to refer to the prevailing reality in which they lived and worked. Furthermore, they were forced to see their works censored if the topics were not in accordance with the party's ideology. Ceaușescu considered that films should adhere to socialist principles, and artists who wanted to create something different would have to fund it themselves instead of relying on public funding (Jitea, 2021: 79). It is important to note that also most of them self-censored their works in order to avoid potential repercussions.

This paper endeavors to examine two audiovisual productions by female screenwriters, that centre on the portrayal and position of women in society. I will focus on the analysis of these films in order to explain what were the issues and topics related to their lives and how female characters were invented, described and acted in a socialist context, such as the Romanian one. My aim is to emphasize the significance of the women's contribution, perspective and participation in the realm of television during the communist years.

I will focus on two films, *Cine mă strigă?* (Who is Calling Me?), released in 1979, directed by Letiția Popa with a screenplay written by Rodica Padina and *Angela merge mai departe* (Angela moves on), from 1980, directed by Lucian Bratu, with a script by Eva Sârbu. With regard to the first film, Iulia Necșulescu observes that

"the complexity of female characters remains a rare asset in the cinema of the time" (2023: nd). Despite being directed by a man, the second film presents an interesting case to analyze the narrative construction from the pre-production stage, involving script development. *Angela moves on* is considered a feminist film (Popovici, 2010; Dima, 2020) within the context of the 1980s, taking into account the promotion of equal rights between women and men, and opportunities according to communist ideology.

Andrei Gorzo argues that Lucian Bratu had a "reputation as an intransigent, uncompromising artist", and his desire "seems to have been to make films that were less mendacious about 'the life we live today and here' (the underlining is his own)" (2018: 45). Bratu is a film director who highlights situations in which women find themselves, in a progressive way, without being moralistic towards them.

In the chapter dedicated to the representation of women in his book *Romanian New Wave Cinema*, Doru Pop argues that there are "no explicit 'feminist' traits in the contemporary Romanian cinema, as there is no feminist filmmaking movement in the Romanian cinema, before or after 1989" and argues that not even films written and directed by women (for example, the films of Malvina Urșianu) are part of the "women's cinema" (2014: 191). Pop analyses Romanian films from the communist period having in mind a Western feminist perspective, without taking into account the local, political, economic and social context, nor the fact that there is not a monolithic feminism or one dictated by the West, especially when the realities are different in each country. In fact, between the 1960s and 1970s, in Europe and the United States, the mainstream feminist movement was led by educated white women from middle-class backgrounds and it was a lack of attention to the experiences and concerns of working-class women together with women of colour and queer. Consequently, the movement was critiqued as being too narrow and exclusionary, but created the conditions for the development of intersectional feminism in the decades that followed.

In 1975, Laura Mulvey argued that Hollywood cinema had historically been created and consumed from a heterosexual male perspective that objectified and sexualized women. Mulvey develops the concept of the "male gaze" in order to show the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the perpetuation of harmful attitudes towards women. The 1980s and 1990s marked a complex and nuanced period for feminism, especially since the movement became more diverse, with women from different fields and social classes which challenged the dominant white feminist discourse. Theorists such as Jane Gaines (1986), Teresa de Lauretis (1987), and bell hooks (1992) emphasize approaches influenced by cultural studies and focus on these issues related to feminism, film production and image reception. Furthermore, taking into account the evolution of feminist research and the limitation of the concept "feminine cinema", Barbara Zecchi proposes the concept of "gynocine" to highlight the advancement of female perspectives and experiences in films but not necessarily that they have to be directed by cisgender women if the approach is feminist (n.d). She also argues: «gynocine also includes other "authors" since movies aren't just created by their director. A screenwriter, or even an actor, can be considered as "authors"» (Zecchi: n.d). This concept acknowledges the multiple ways in which films can be created and interpreted, and emphasizes the importance of including diverse voices and perspectives in feminist film analysis.

Through the examination of these two films, I aim to demonstrate that, despite common stereotypes, there exists a nuanced representation of female working class characters who raise significant issues concerning their status, bodily autonomy, and desires.

In this sense, the plurality of female subjectivities, the diversity of experiences and perspectives during a particular period emphasize the impossibility of a homogeneous identity. Furthermore, the visual representation of female practices underlines the transformation of the viewers' imagination as they observe how women live, think and organize themselves in a specific context, where they are expected to perform the roles as wives, mothers or obedient workers. These female characters have their own personalities and their own vision of life, not necessarily playing a secondary or passive role. Although there was pressure on them under Ceaușescu's regime, to a certain extent, women had visibility in public life, they could have access to free education, they had a job and took decisions.

Before the communist party came to power, the visibility of women in the public sphere was quite limited, considering that most of the women lived in the countryside in precarious conditions, they did not have access to education like those who lived in the cities and they were under the tutelage of their husbands. Luciana M. Jinga explains that "the decisions of 1973 and 1976 were taken to legitimize the communist regime and eventually to improve the results of various state policies, such as the demographic program, or to encourage women to join the workforce" (2015: 95). In practice, there were occupations reserved for women, seen as an extension of domestic work, because those allowed women to combine housework with a professional career. In addition, Jill Massino argues that "expansion of educational and occupational opportunities reduced women's economic dependence on men and broadened their roles and aspirations. Although marriage continued to be a central component of many women's lives, the role of laborer or professional increasingly

coexisted with -and in some cases supplanted- the role of wife" (2019:196). Unfortunately, instead of resulting in liberation, the delegation of new responsibilities led to a greater degree of domination. According to Petruța Cîrdei women's emancipation was insufficient in terms of achieving significant changes in society. It was necessary to be a shift in men's perspective, whereby they were aware of their dominant position and were willing to relinquish it (2012: 78).

The film *Who is Calling Me?* follows the story of a young woman, Ina, but at the same time it shows the perspective of two other women of different ages, who have to live and fulfill their work obligations on a construction site. Ina (Mariana Sterian), who is 19 years old, is accused of behaving in a manner deemed inappropriate by the law and she is subsequently sent to a construction site for re-education. Another character, Anica (Tora Vasilescu) is an educated and self-sufficient woman, but she also holds, to a certain extent, traditional beliefs regarding family, marriage and gender roles. The third character, Adina (Tatiana Lekel), has lived a good part of her life on the construction site but she has no long-term relationship, and this detail is tormenting her, making her feel guilty about her past experiences. For the most part, the outline of the female characters is based on the relationship between freedom and shame towards one's own destiny. The three types of characters are seen from a perspective in which they come to support each other, create their own space, have personality by challenging norms and breaking down barriers. In the second film, *Angela moves on*, the story develops around a character named Angela (Doina Lazăr) who works as a taxi driver and divides her time between shuttling passengers, caring for her elderly mother, and finding relaxation in front of the television at night. In almost every scene of this film we notice alternating moments of resignation mingled with reflections on her own life as a single person.

2. Who is Calling Me? – stages of representation of women's experiences and aspirations

In *Who is Calling Me?*, the female characters are constructed in contrast, with a series of traits that individualize each of them: Ina is forthright, rebellious, makes no concessions, does not accept any limitations, Anica wants a predictable and peaceful life, and Adina is a combination between them, she has tried to enjoy every moment of life without attaching much importance to marriage and she has a privileged social position. The relationships between women are represented also in the films *Brief Encounters* (1967) by Kira Muratova and *Adoption* (1975) by Márta Mészáros. These films are about the bond between women of different ages who constantly defy society's expectations of them. On top of that, those films are focused on women's subjectivity in order to point out their experiences by exploring their thoughts and emotions, their relationships with others, and the ways in which they live. In *Who is Calling Me?*, although we see an attempt to highlight women's freedom and actions, in the end the female characters are drawn into a zone of conformity and resignation.

This film mostly represents the vision of women, although the approach is quite conservative, but nevertheless prioritizes their experiences and perspectives. Ina, the main character, was fostered by her grandmother. The scenes in which we are able to see her connections with her grandmother appear interspersed in the film's narrative as flashbacks. At the beginning of the film, in the courtroom, the mother also appears, but Ina throughout the film remembers conversations that she had only with her grandmother. Her mother is only present at the trial, at a critical moment in her life, but Ina does not accept any help from her because she does not recognize her as an authority figure. In an elliptical representation, before entering the courtroom, the mother wipes lipstick off her lips because she finds it inappropriate, perhaps makeup is associated with certain stereotypes or stigmas, such as promiscuity or superficiality. In this context, it is also important to point out that the father figure is completely missing from the film, and the judges blame the mother for not taking care of her daughter's education.

In fact, in the film, the reason why the mother leaves her daughter in the care of her grandmother is not clear. It could be because she wants to devote herself to her job because she considers that her daughter is already an adult. On the one hand, such a situation may set an example in line with the principles of the totalitarian regime, because women were expected to find a balance in their lives between childrearing and their work. On the other hand, there is another aspect in the film, which is that the heteronormative family is missing from Ina's life, replaced by the grandmother figure as though the father had no responsibility for her upbringing and all this care belongs to the mother. Gail Kligman argues that

Under the ideological banner of supporting gender equality, such measures were designed to facilitate the state's utilization of women's labor power. In turn, the state took upon itself some of the more 'traditional' nurturing and care-given roles that were the responsibility of women in the patriarchal family. But despite the ideological heralding of gender equality in all of the formerly socialist states, the progressive legislation regarding women's rights as workers often conflicted with their obligations as reproducers of the labor force - that is, with their roles as childbearers (1998:26).

When Ina moves into the studio at the construction site, which she shares with her colleague Anica, she is pushed by circumstances to do domestic tasks unfamiliar to her, because she is used to a comfortable life. She is depicted as a privileged and inexperienced person who has not encountered the hardships of life. However, her acquaintanceship with Anica provides her with an opportunity to engage in dialogue and exchange perspectives about life. During a conversation about their monthly income, Anica offers Ina advice on the importance of working diligently to earn sufficient money. The dialogue between the two women in the film highlights their divergent perspectives on life, as well as their different backgrounds. The flashbacks show Ina's style of life (care and attention from her grandmother, the relationships with wealthy men), which contrasts with Anica's more pragmatic views. While these differences serve to emphasize the contrast between them, they also bring forth the topic about women's earnings.

In this sense, Jill Masino argues that "[...] the monetary benefits of work offered women greater freedom in directing their lives, engaging in consumer culture, and in choosing a partner. This in turn increased women's quality of life and self-confidence, in some cases emboldening them to challenge patriarchal attitudes and renegotiate relations with their husbands and male colleagues" (2019:14).

The conversations between Ina and Anica regarding family, material situation or social status are intended to highlight the different desires and motivations of the two women within the framework of societal norms, including obedience, submission and adaptation. In opposition to Anica's adherence to order and discipline, Ina resists conformity to the imposed regulations. Metaphorically, in this film, the construction site can symbolize a space for personal development, where persons like Ina are obliged to adapt to societal norms and expectations in order to become good citizens as required by the ruling regime.

The physical appearance of Ina is an important aspect of her characterization as it conveys information about her personality. Ina is depicted as a beautiful woman that is aware of her attractiveness and the attention she elicits through her clothing and her way of being. Despite the challenges she faces, including tearing her heels and getting stuck in the mud on the construction site, Ina remains steadfast in her refusal to conform to societal expectations of appropriate attire and behavior in her new environment. Her determination to resist punishment is evident in her appearance, as she is elegantly dressed with her hair down, exuding sensuality. In contrast, Anica is portrayed as traditional, wearing a beret on her head and dark sweaters. Through this juxtaposition, the intricate portrayal of their personalities and perspectives is accentuated, revealing how the two women's diverse experiences and needs shape their understanding of life.

The relationship developed between the two women is intriguing, which at first is based on collegiality, without any interest from Anica. As the plot unfolds, Anica grows increasingly annoyed by Ina's rebellious behavior and, at the same time, she is jealous of her. Anica perceives Ina as a *femme fatale* who has the ability to captivate the attention of men. In fact, the *femme fatale* breaks down taboos, she is not just a character who cheats or schemes as she has been portrayed in Hollywood films, but a free, intelligent, daring woman. As Ina explains her past relationships with different partners, the use of close-ups shots serves to emphasize her points of view, and her attempts to justify her actions but also reveal a sense of nostalgia reflected in her expressions. Therefore, the flashbacks showing Ina's perfect life (the rich meals, her home, her relation with her grandmother, the money she receives as gifts) serve as indicators of her introspection. Although Anica never explicitly expresses her admiration for Ina's lifestyle, she is tempted by it. This is apparent in a particular film scene where Anica can be seen using Ina's makeup kit (17:21- 17:28).

The third female character, Adina, holds an important work position and lives a solitary life. During her visit to Adina's studio, Ina finds her alone, with a cosmetic mask on her face and baking a cake for her birthday celebration, which no one attends. Witnessing her loneliness, Ina expresses empathy towards Adina and keeps her company. In this sequence, we are also able to see the two women alone, sitting at table, facing the camera, highlighting the awkward and uncomfortable intimacy between them as they discuss sensitive topics such as loneliness. But besides that, the women are together as an act of sorority, they are sharing their experiences and points of view about life and marriage.

Ina is straightforward and trenchant in her words, while Adina maintains a polite demeanor and expresses her hope that someone will come to her party. In the following cinematic shot, Ina watches Adina worried how she tries to uncorks a bottle of champagne. This an awkward moment for Ina because she realizes that Adina does not want anyone to know she is alone. Having in mind that being a lonely old lady without a family was understood as a social stigma. Under Romanian Communism, marriage was viewed as a social and political institution. Jill Masino says that "the expansion of industry and education offered women new professional opportunities, which lessened their economic dependence on men and afforded them greater freedom in choosing a spouse" (2010:35). What is interesting in this film is that the perspective is always put on the choice between two options, loneliness or marriage, and this detail is reflected in Adina's words: "All my life I have been waiting! All the nights! You feel like screaming and everyone is sleeping and no one hears you" (50:14-

50:17). She claims that she did not marry because her partner was involved in another relationship but she had fun, lived her life, did whatever she wanted. Their conversation is interrupted by flashbacks of Adina and Ina's joyful past, dancing at parties and a glimpse of her grandmother sitting in a chair watching it all and also includes a moment of intimacy between her and a man. Even though Adina is aware of her privileges (having a house by herself, good position and money), she advises Ina to change her life and not be alone. Starting from this scene, Ina's transformation begins and she realizes that her life needs to take a different path.

Throughout the film, we gain insight into the male characters' perspective as they advise each other on how they should handle their relationships with women. In the first part of the film, during a meal, the engineers from the site talk about Ina's punishment. They are determined to re-educate her and she is judged harshly for her behavior and actions (12:02 – 12:56). This sequence shows the effects of sexism, as it reinforces gender stereotypes and perpetuates inequality. Moreover, one of the engineers, Tudor, falls in love with Ina but she constantly snubs him. The film presents a heteronormative ending, with a reference to the trope of Prince Charming coming to rescue the girl. The male character's actions, such as Tudor's desire to protect Ina, can also be seen as an example of benevolent sexism, as they maintain gender roles and expectations.

In closing, as I tried to point out, in this film the female characters' experiences and perspectives are prioritized with a focus on their agency and subjectivity and this way of cinematic narrative highlights the value of women's voices regarding some important aspects of life. Moreover, it is important to consider the historical context of the film, in which it was difficult to tackle feminist issues, partly due to limited access to information about progressive approaches from the West. Therefore, promoting more inclusive and diverse representations in media was crucial to advancing gender equality.

3. Feminist representation from different perspectives and voices: *Angela moves on*

The second film centers around Angela, a taxi-driver who faces social challenges alone. It presents a thought-provoking socialist feminist perspective by emphasizing the role of women in society. Instead of advocating for women rights, the film depicts situations from the life of a working-class woman.

Angela, as the central character, propels the plot and asserts control over her life, challenging societal expectations and stereotypes concerning women's positions. Her story offers an inspiring portrayal of woman's emancipation, demonstrating how she is an agent of change.

According to Andrei Gorzo, Bratu's 1967 film, *Un film cu o fată fermecătoare* (A movie with a charming girl) "faced a negative press campaign and was removed from screens. It was later re-released with a modified, more realistic ending, more severe towards the main character, the director and screenwriter had to pay the costs of the film" (2018: 5). Influences from French new wave cinema can be noted in this film, particularly the works of Truffaut, Godard and Varda, through its non-linear narrative structure, self-reflexivity, and intertextual references that challenge norms and subvert traditional cinematic conventions. This connection is significant as it allowed the director to show women as active agents in these representations and serve as an example for exploring women empowerment.

Having this in mind, Flavia Dima, in the article "Videograms of a Nation, Representation, Canons, History and Politics", points out that Angela's feminism is as grassroots as it gets: from deflecting the advances of her male customers and their condescending attitude at her "unwomanly" profession, to showing solidarity to other women (be they co-workers or clients), while keeping in line with the tropes of the taxi-film, as an entire diorama of society passes through her back seat. Here, too, we see some normative attempts at play: initially portrayed as a loner, a romance soon begins to shape up between Angela and one of her male clients. He quickly emerges as being abusive and manipulative—although Angela remains smitten with him after he seemingly repents, she instantly resumes her previous life as he leaves on an overseas work assignment, retaining her independence (2020: nd).

From the very first scene, Angela is depicted when she performs tasks that are traditionally considered manly: she changes the tire on the taxi she drives, she works hard and remains dedicated to her work amidst the bustling city. The car she drives symbolizes her microcosmos in a vibrant and hectic Bucharest of the 80s.

The script emphasizes the life of an emancipated working-class woman that has diverse experiences, knows how to handle herself in different situations and at the same time is constantly willing to make sacrifices in both her professional and personal life. Her sacrifice is voluntary and a way to express love and devotion for her mother because she is the only one who gave her support in order to get over the difficult love relationship she had, while also urging her not to be alone.

The main character's personality is revealed through her interactions with various clients in the taxi. Angela's ease in engaging with diverse people highlights her ability to express empathy and understanding towards others. One such interaction occurs when she is called to pick up a woman who has recently given birth, during which Angela expresses interest in the sex of the baby, commenting on the relative ease of raising

a boy versus a girl. However, upon noticing the mother's tears, Angela shifts the conversation and speaks to the woman in a kind and comforting manner, in order to show sympathy and understanding for her situation. This scene shows the mutual support and solidarity among women. Moreover, there is another one where we are able to see a Roma female florist who adorns her with a flower. This moment is important because it increases the visibility of marginalized persons. Viorel Achim explains that Roma people were not officially recognized or represented from 1948 to 1989, resulting in a lack of institutions to address their specific needs and promote their interests. Despite a new form of representation for minorities introduced in the late 1960s, Roma people did not have a national council of workers like other minorities from Romania (2004:190). The marginalized position of Roma individuals is further highlighted in this particular film, wherein the Roma woman's presence is relegated to a minor, episodic role, indicative of their exclusion from the central narrative.

Overall, the dialogues between Angela and her clients serve as a means of revealing her complex personality, which is defined by her ability to deal with new people and situations. During a conversation with a male customer, Angela finds out that taxi driving is not a suitable job for women. Nevertheless, in this scene, she defies this gender stereotype by asking him what he does for a living. The moment she hears that he works as a cook, she points out that his job is not meant for men either. This is an example of how roles and traits are assigned based on gender in society. Despite this, the man persists in questioning Angela about her salary and other personal details, revealing his superiority and a lack of respect for her privacy. However, Angela handles this uncomfortable situation with fortitude and astuteness, drawing upon her prior experiences to address intrusive inquiries with a sense of humor. This episode exemplifies Angela's powerful and confident demeanor in the face of societal norms and gender-based discrimination.

In another film sequence, the protagonist is portrayed attempting to conform to societal expectations by dressing up and wearing a wig for a date with a man. However, upon arriving, she realizes that those clothes and hairstyle do not align with her true self. She feels observed and ridiculed by different persons in the street. Angela's motivation for dressing up is rooted in a previous situation from the film when a man, one of the customers, invites her to go to a party and asks her to dress up like a "lady". However, this demand offends her, as it suggests that her work uniform was not conducive to beauty. In this part of the film, she cancels her date and, on her journey back home, she removes her wig and earrings in a fit of disappointment and anger. Her actions signify her lack of comfort in her new attire. John Berger explains that: "men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (1972: 47). He suggests that gender roles and expectations shape the behavior and self-perception of men and women. In other words, women are socialized to view themselves as objects to be looked at, rather than as active agents with their own agency and desires. These gender roles and expectations are deeply ingrained in our society and can have a negative impact on women's sense of self and their relationships with others.

Moreover, Angela is depicted at her job meeting surrounded by several male colleagues. She has a central role in that reunion, she does not shy away from voicing her opinion and resolving conflicts that may arise in the workplace. Angela firmly rejects any attempt to place her in an inferior position compared to her male counterparts when it comes to decision-making. She is supportive of her colleagues, yet she maintains an objective and equitable stance when called upon to make decisions. Additionally, she reflects a sense of warmth and congeniality into the seriousness of discussions and meetings. In this context, Angela is able to assert her own values and principles without feeling constrained by external pressures or expectations.

Nevertheless, a particular sequence in the film portrays the protagonist dining alone in a restaurant, where she observes an elderly woman sitting across from her. The old woman proceeds to describe different fish species and their habitats, which impresses Angela. In fact, the conversation between the two women is depicted in alternating close-up shots, which convey a surreal atmosphere. The scene is further enhanced by visual synecdoche, using detail shots of other characters' lips moving, giving advice that intensifies to the point of cruelty. The words of these strangers become poignant, especially since there is no intimacy between them and the main character. Their voices echo in Angela's mind, as if pressuring her to be someone other than herself. These episodic characters, such as the florist and the old woman, also suggest that Angela may have doubts about her marital status, appearance, and domestic roles, but that she can still love and value herself, prioritize her own desires and needs, and be content with her choices.

An interesting topic explored in this film is motherhood, particularly in light of the restrictions imposed by the Ceausescu government. During the 1980s in Romania, abortion was not permitted, and mothers were praised in political speeches. Through a conversation with one of her clients, the audience learns that Angela comes from a small family of widowed women, which serves as a reminder that unforeseen circumstances can

arise, and women can face hardships that are beyond their control. Angela expresses the idea that life's intricacies often defy resolution, and not all predicaments have a clear-cut solution. She says: "Life is not a dress, to make it, to remake it, to transform it. Either it turns out well from the beginning, or it's ruined" (33:45 - 33:49).

The character also reveals that she suffered physical abuse from her husband while pregnant, resulting in the loss of her baby. Domestic violence is subtly addressed in Angela's conversations with her clients, serving both as a justification for the decisions she has made and as a reminder of the issues that women face but cannot openly discuss. According to Jill Masino, "since no specific legislation existed with regard to domestic violence and since domestic violence was typically ignored by state authorities, battered women had no real legal recourse for dealing with it" (2010: 44). When faced with challenges, women should not simply accept their situation and move on, but carefully consider whether it is worth staying or seeking alternative options.

The film sheds light on the multifaceted dimensions of Angela's character and her nuanced experiences, effectively challenging the conventional stereotype of women as submissive and excessively emotional beings. Through her actions, Angela offers a compelling example of female empowerment, transcending the conservative prevalent during Ceaușescu's time.

In conclusion, my analysis of these two film productions demonstrates that the inclusion of women in the creative process of filmmaking lends a distinctive perspective to the portrayal of complex female characters. The involvement of women in filmmaking was crucial, as it enabled the production of narratives that reflected the diverse experiences and viewpoints of women. Although not all of these problematizations aligned with Western feminist programs due to the constraints of the political regime, they contributed to the creation of a cinematic representation of women that held significant potential to shape societal attitudes towards them. Cineastes such as Letitia Popa, Rodica Padina, and Eva Sârbu, who were involved in the creative process of the discussed films, were well-regarded during the Ceausescu dictatorship but were forgotten after the regime's fall.

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