“THERE IS GOOD FOR THE BODY, BUT HERE IS BETTER FOR THE SOUL”

The representation of Romanian work migration in the Romanian New Wave films

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Over the past ten years, two growing Romanian cultural and social phenomena made waves abroad: the films of the Romanian New Wave (RNW), and the wave of Romanian work migrants. Romanian work-migration grew in stages after the 1989 revolution and intensified after 2002 following legal and fiscal relaxation in the EU. The dynamic demographic structure of Romania had an impact on all levels of society and did not go unobserved in the newly developed Romanian New Wave cinema.

Using the method of social semiotics, this paper’s aim is to analyse how films of the little-studied RNW represent the Romanian work migration from 2002 to 2011. The analysis of the films centres around the transformations occurring within the characters’ family, home and nation, the integrity of which is challenged by the event of migration. The study is positioned within a larger theoretical framework of film genre theories of art, national and European cinemas and their role in nation building.

Transmigration is used as the main theoretical lens for observing the representation of migrants and migration in the films. According to this framework, characters fit the portrait of the frustrated achiever wanting to reach their potential and financial aspirations abroad. However, the post-national, but not yet transnational, society represented in the films is unable to support such cosmopolitan traits. Consequently, there is a duality in the discourse of the films. If the characters perceive migrating as enriching, the meta-discourse of the films suggests that the same forces which facilitated migration tend to disembody communities and uproot individuals.
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1. Introduction

The past 25 years in Romania represented an effervescent period of transition from the restrictions of the communist era, to the demands of capitalism. The transformation in the society was profound particularly in terms of demographics. Romanians’ need to travel abroad to work was triggered by the loss of state-provided jobs during the chaotic decentralisation and eventual shut-down of industry and agriculture activities while the private sector was not sufficiently developed. The work-migration phenomenon grew in waves after the 1990s and particularly intensified after 2002.

The history of Romanian cinema is as tumultuous as the country’s itself. Over a 60-years period cinema in Romanian went from being a prolific industry centralized under the communist party, screening the essence of an idealised Romanian identity, to almost disappearing and recently reforming as a small, but strong cinema current known as the Romanian New Wave (from now on ‘RNW’) which include films produced as early as 2002 and continues to the present time.

Romania’s dynamic demographic structure impacted all levels of society and did not go unobserved in the cinema as the narratives of the RNW films are based on the quotidian affairs of Romanian life. Consequently, the RNW covers the complexity of the migratory process in a significant number of films. Characters of these films are most often work migrants, or family members of work migrants. Having to work abroad is an issue debated among the characters of the film, or it otherwise impacts indirectly on the lives of the characters and the society represented.

The Romanian work migration has been intensely studied from many different socio-political, economic, and cultural perspectives both by scholars and researchers outside the academia. The RNW however, did not receive too much attention in the world of academia and research in general. The RNW has mostly only been reviewed by journalists and film critics in the press. There has been no universal consensus on where the wave belongs in the world of cinema. Concepts like national/indie/art/new wave/transnational cinema are used to describe RNW, but until now, no comprehensive academic paper has been published to delimit the borders of the RNW. Thus, another
purpose of this dissertation is to suggest features that could assign the RNW a place within the world history of cinema. This is a very ambitious goal, and I do not claim to be putting any definite label on the cinematic movement. Nevertheless, understanding the genre mechanism is necessary for supporting the scope of this study – the representation of a social phenomenon in national cinema.

1.1 Research aim and question
The aim of this study is to understand how the films of the Romanian New Wave represent work migration between 2002 to 2011?

To Answer the main research question above, and to facilitate the analysis, the study will also answer these three sub-questions - How do the RNW films represent:

- The migrants’ reasons to leave and the outcome of their migration?
- The changes triggered by migration within society and the migrant’s family?
- The migrants’ relationship with nation and foreignness

To reach the results, the method of social semiotics as defined by Leeuwen and Jawitt (2004) will be applied. The added value of this is that while film semiotics look at the different levels of film (textual, structural, and ideological) separately, social semiotics interconnects them. This method is most appropriate for looking at both a cinematic wave and a social phenomenon as it puts films – their narratives, style and making of, into a broad social context.

The temporal simultaneity of the two waves alone is not enough to justify this study. The reason for focusing on films’ representation of work migration is the interest and sensibility the directors show towards the social phenomenon. The RNW cinema coveres the migration theme in full-length fiction films (*The Other Irene* 2009; *First of all, Felicia* 2009; *Francesca* 2009, *The Italian Girls* 2004), short-film (*Home* 2007), documentary (*Flower Bridge* 2008), and even animated productions (*Crulic – The Path to Beyond* 2011 – the first Romanian animated production in the last 20 years), just to name a few. This is a clue towards the scale of the migratory phenomenon and its implications for society. Studying how the migratory phenomenon is represented in national cinema is of interest due to the amplitude of both of the waves and to the way
they reflect in each other. In other words, “the interrelation between representations and social reality is noteworthy, i.e. how representations are both the outcome of and support for social structures” (Slatis 1998: 23).

Morley and Robins (1995: 90) consider this kind of study relevant since media industries are the “‘memory banks’ of our times”. What the authors suggest is that films inevitably capture the realities of a certain moment in history, both in their tone and perspective on the world, in their narratives and character typologies, and in the landscapes or cityscapes they represent. Consequently, these films are documents of how an era envisions itself almost in real-time, while financial, demographical, and sociological studies take longer to be produced and are less effective in reaching mass audiences. The answers to the research questions will reveal the films’ own diagnostic on what are the Romanian’s dissatisfactions, needs, desires, fears, anxieties, ideas of self, and the compatibility with his native and adoptive countries. Above all, it will give an overall picture on how the films envision the impact of migration on all the previous mentioned elements.

1.2 Theoretical framework
The literature which supports the study covers theories of migration (Sandu 2006, Taran 2009, Dorigo and Tobler 1983, Chindarkar 2012), diasporic and transnational communities (Fiast 2010, Cassarino 2004, Moreley 2000), remittances (Vertovec 2004), women migration (Cohen 2000, Kaufman 1999) and the concept of home and family (Levin 2004, Spisak 2009). Based on these concepts, the Romanian work migration will be put in broader context (Sandu 2009, Toth 2006).

Secondly, the RNW will be filtered through theories of genre like European cinema (Elsaesser 2005), Easter European cinema (Mazierska 2010) and its relation with art. This is necessary as the RNW has not yet been a topic of research for the academia. Most importantly, to connect the two topics of migration and cinema and understand why the way they reflect in each other is meaningful, issues of cinema (Mazaj 2011, Higson 2000) and its relation with (national) identity (Hjort 2000, Morley and Robins 1995, Cheng and Fleming 2009) and ideology (Hall 1996) will be studied. Further
concepts like Heimat cinema, diasporic/transnational cinemas (Mazaj 2011) and imagined communities (Anderson 1983) come to reinforce this relationship.

1.3 Structure of the study
The literature review of this study is extensive as it covers two very different topics: migration theory and film genre theory. The two topics will each first be presented in broad terms and then will be further detailed in relation to the Romanian migration and cinema and their development.

In what concerns the analysis chapter, here is a strong causation relation reflected in it coming from the conflict between the represented desire to migrate and the outcomes of migration. This is a result of the very structure of the films, as their narratives give little to no importance to the actual migratory episode when the characters are abroad. None of the films include in their narratives instances of the characters in the foreign country. Instead, the films concentrate on the dynamics of the relations between the migrant character and his family and the changes in the society represented.

Accordingly, the analysis chapter will have three main sections mirroring in the research sub-questions looking at the representation of the reasons and outcomes of migration; the representation of nation in relation with foreignness and own nation; and at the representation of family and societal changes. In more detail, I will be looking at the migrants’ desires, motivations, expectations, and actual plans to emigrate. Then, I will observe the characters’ discourse on Romania and foreignness, in the representation of the society’s status quo, but also through more salient elements like cinematography and mise-en-scene. Further on, the analysis covers the changes in the society represented, especially at the family level; the identity crisis of both those who return, and the ones who remain; the reassessment of roles in society.

In conclusions I will focus on those elements that are shown in dramatic transformation on the background of migration: the portrait of the migrant and the myth of foreignness, the reassessment of the notion of home, the shifting structure of the family empowering women, and, answering the research question – the films’ understanding of migration.
2. Romanian migration

Migration is a dynamic phenomenon which can manifest under many patterns depending on its scope, purpose and outcome. This chapter will focus mainly on two of these types - diasporic and transnational migration and provide evidence to why the latter is most appropriate theoretical framework for describing the Romanian migration.

2.1 Diasporic and transnational migration

According to push-pull theories, international migration in Europe has its origins in the differences in income levels, work conditions, social security, and living standards between European counties (Taran et al. 2009). On the background of globalisation - characterised by the disappearance of the nation-state, blurring of borders, and, thus, ease of mobility and communication, a pattern of migration from East to West emerged in the last decades across Europe and Russia. People of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) emigrated towards Russia, Moldavians towards Romania, and Romanians and Bulgarians towards Western Europe, Germany, the UK, Austria, Denmark and Belgium (Taran et al. 2009). This mobility, and in particular the economic/labour migration, is determined by financial factors in both the sending and receiving countries. The push factors are the economic, social and political hardship in the poorest pasts of nation-states (Taran et al. 2009) and the pull factors refer to the demand for work abroad. From this perspective, migration is “an outcome of poverty and backwardness in the sending areas” (Dorigo and Tobler 1983: 89).

Dorigo et al. (1983), however, disagree with the push and pull theory, which they consider to be a simplistic and apparently logical observation, but which is contradicted by practice. If the push and pull factors were to play such an important role in migration, the immigration inflow should have diminished in countries hit by a financial crisis. In reality, however, the numbers of incoming migrants remains constant in the same destinations over many years, defying financial factors on short and medium term. The authors conclude that international migration flows are rather a social phenomenon than an economical one because the migration destinations are ‘inherited’ from past generations and “depend on the continuing existence of supportive networks” (p. 45), while the “factors that originally spurred it become less relevant” (Dorigo et al. 1983: ...)
Based on these arguments, Dorigo et al. (1983) dismiss the traditional theories on migration and instead propose an “assimilationist” approach, modelled on “origin of flow” concerned with the conditions for adaptation of the migrants abroad not with financial incentives. Dorigo and Tobler’s (1983) assimilationist theory suggests there is a permanent exchange of information between the migrants abroad, but also between migrants and their co-nationals who also desire to emigrate. Depending on the type of exchange migrant populations links, networks, and diasporic or transnational communities have been established.

Diasporic migrants have generally settled abroad for an indefinite period of time, and the term ‘diaspora’ “has been often used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland” (Fiast 2010: 9). Transnational migrants, as the name indicates, are in a recurrent move back and forth between the home and the host country. Sheffer (2003) argues that one further difference lies not necessarily in the permanence of the migrant’s settlement abroad, but what matters is if the decision of settling abroad was taken before or after settling in the host country. ‘Migration’ thus starts at home in the sense that one is already a migrant when expressing his desire to leave, even if he eventually does not manage to actually go abroad after all.

The theoretical transformation from ‘transnational’ to ‘diasporic’ happens the moment when the individuals and groups become motivated to get actively involved in the diaspora’s existence, become members of diaspora organizations and lobby for it (Sheffer 2003: 16-17). Transnationalism on the other hand, describes not a community which reproduces the nation abroad, but the strong social and economic links between migrant’s host and origin countries (Cassarino 2004). While diasporic migrants form static communities, transnational migrants are dynamic individuals.

The life of the transnational work-migrant splits once he leaves his homeland. On one hand he builds a new life, routine, identity, home, entourage, and habits abroad; but on the other, his life in the native country does not stop. These two lives, however, are not independent from each other, but they interact. Contemporary immigrants cannot be characterized as ‘the uprooted’. Many are transmigrants, becoming firmly rooted in their new country but maintaining multiple linkages to their homeland (Schiller et al.
1995). The ‘transmigrants’ Schiller (1995) refers to are “immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across national borders”. Their identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state (Schiller et al. 1995). Beck (2003: 18) argues that for transnational migrants, “the binary of either/or is replaced by this and that” meaning the migrant can neither display loyalties to the country of origin nor to the country of settlement. Habermans (2000) explains this lack of cultural commitment under the concept of “cosmopolitam solidarity”, that goes “beyond the affective ties of nation, language, place and heritage” (Fowkers 2010) in a post-national context.

Work transmigrants thus are not cultural hybrids of two nations. Delanty (2009) explains this by assessing the phenomena of cultural hybridisation or cosmopolitanism at all levels of society of being by far optimistic. According to Delanty (2009), cosmopolitanism is reserved for the intellectual and/or the rich, as the chores of everyday life are too burdening for the poor to be also opened to adopting a new culture. According to Bauman (1998), today’s global society is truly global only for the rich who can easily move between countries, while for the poor, immigration controls of one sort or another (residence laws, zero-tolerance policies) are increasing in force, leaving the work migrants in a position of either “incarceration” or “vagabondage”.

Vertovec (2004) defines the above mentioned attitude of the transmigrant as a dual frame of reference and names it ‘bifocality’, which is according to Rouse (1992: 4) “stemmed not from transitional adjustments to a new locale, but from a chronic, contradictory transnationalism”. Gardner (1995) exemplifies the ‘contradiction’ in how Bangladeshi migrants in the UK associate ‘home’ with the country of origin – or ‘the locus of personal and social identity and religiosity’, while ‘abroadness’ is associated with ‘material bounty and economic opportunity’ Morley (2000: 168) explains this phenomenon in relation to the Turkish community in Germany. Turks keep investing the money earned in Germany in their native country, where it is easier to convey monetary wealth into social status, and they never give up their residence there. However, “their much-planned return there is often endlessly delayed” (Morley 2000: 168). Mamattah (2007: 15) explains that setting such time frames provide reassurance
as the possibility of return is ever present – knowing they have the possibility to return is more important than actually needing to return.

Taran et al. (2009: 110) calls transnational migrants “persons settled in their mobility” underlining the trapping nature of transnationalism, as in some cases, the transmigrants can get stuck in limbo, “in an eternal situation of transience, neither belonging where they work nor having much real sense of connection back to the homes they have left” (Moreley 2000: 227). Cassarino (2004) on the other hand, sees this situation as enriching, rather than disruptive, explaining that the migrants develop new transnational identity. For Cassarino (2004) transnational identities result from the combination of migrant’s origins with the identities they acquire in their host countries. Thus, transmigrants develop “double identities” and not conflicting identities (Cassarino 2004). Whichever the case, the transnational migrant is expected to display both his native and foreign traits, use foreign words, and look differently from both his co-nationals and his host country members.

Transnationalism was born on the background of globalisation, and the access to new technologies facilitated mobility and communication between the migrant and his relatives in the native country (Moreley 2009: 99). Sandu (2011) appreciates that “the fact that more and more migrants are keeping a close connection with those back home, from the origin country, is, without a doubt, the effect of globalisation. The phenomenon is not new (Guarnizo et al, 2003; Pries 2008:13), but its amplitude, yes (Sandu 2010:141). Vertovec (2004) even defines the phone calls migrants can make home as “the social glue of immigrant transnationalism”.

Nonetheless, these technologies, are just an aid for, and not the cause or essence of transnationalism. These transmigrants keep close links with their native country not because technology facilitates it, but rather because “in a global economy contemporary migrants have found full incorporation in the countries within which they resettle either not possible or not desirable” (Schiller et al. 1995). Thus, a transnational migrant, even though spending a considerable amount of time in a host country, is not culturally a member of the host nation, but neither necessarily an active patriot of his home country.
2.2 The Romanian transmigrant

This section will give a brief introduction on how the Romanian migration started and evolved in the form of transmigration according to the definitions described previously.

After years of forced living within autocratic state borders, starting in 1990 one of the most exerted newly regained freedoms for Romanians was that of mobility. The newly regained freedom, however, came at a cost. After 1990 the state was no longer providing homes or jobs for the people and Romanians found it more and more difficult to financially support themselves and their household. Due to a very unstable economy and a period of uncontrolled transition to capitalism, Romanians left their country in search of a better living abroad.

Their migration was a complex, took place in distinct waves and triggered permanent changes in the Romanian society. The work migration led to modified consumerist behaviours, an exodus of high-end specialists and a rearrangement of social structures. The migration triggered a demographic change especially in the countryside, bringing modernity to the Romanian peasant but leaving the villages without a young workforce (Anghel & Horvath 2009) as approximately a fifth of the Romanian households had at least one member working abroad after 1989. Above all, the migratory phenomenon had consequences on how the individual perceived himself and his relationship with others, especially within the family. (Sandu et al. 2006: 23).

The Romanian work-migration began with the fall of Communism and grew gradually after a number of political events that facilitated the possibility of travel. For example, starting January 1st, 2002 Romanians no longer needed visas to travel into Schengen space, and migration quickly became a trend. Later, when Romania joined the European Union in 2007, the circumstances of the migration process changed radically, and Romanian migration took off to the amplitude of what the press often labelled as an ‘exodus’ (Neag 2012, Exodul romanilor in strainatate! Unde au plecat cei mai multi muncitori si cat au castigat! 2010 Nov, 17, Mateas 2012 June, 18, Padureanu 2010).

Statistics show radical changes in the social dynamics at the demographic count in 2012, when 2.6 million Romanians were “missing” from the country due to temporary
work migration (Etves 2012, Feb 3). In 2011, Romanian migration was the second largest within the EU space after the Turkish one (Eurostat 2011). Romania is now labelled as a country of net immigration (Taran 2009).

There are several waves of Romanian migration which have similar causes but lead to different outcomes in terms of scale and impact on both the host and home countries. Sandu et al. (2006: 24) identifies three distinct stages of migration in the recent history of Romania: 1990-1995, 1996-2001, and after 2001. Starting as an innovation, work migration escalated quickly since the Revolution, the maximum rates of emigration being 3% in the first period, 7% in the second and 28% after 2001 (Sandu et al. 2006: 24).

Within the intervals of migrations mentioned, certain patterns can be identified in relation to the migrant’s destination and return preferences. Firstly, there are the Romanians who illegally escaped Romania before 1989 and those who left immediately after the revolution, 75% of which were of German or Hungarian ethnics. These migrants most likely settled permanently abroad (Danacica 2010: 1). After 1990, migration shifts more and more towards patterns of temporary work migration. In the first stage between 1990-1995, the favoured countries of immigration were Israel, Turkey, Italy, Hungary, and Germany, in this order (Sandu et al. 2006). In the second period, 1996-2002, Canada, Spain and the United States of America also become attractive for Romanian workers (Danacica 2010: 2). After 1995, the permanent migration decreases significantly from 30,000-100,000 people per year to only 9000 people migrating in 2007-2008. This trend is in an inverse relation with the temporary migration line which surged after 2002.

Beginning January 1, 2002, the conditions for migration changed radically, as Romanians did not need visas to travel into Schengen space anymore. In this second wave, the number of Romanian migrants doubled in a very short period of time, and consequently, Romanian migrants also gained more rights abroad and improved the conditions of work (Anghel 2009). The similarities in language encouraged most Romansians to leave for Italy and Spain.
The ultimate peak in Romanian migration was reached after January 2007 when Romania became a member country of the European Union. Romanians could now cross the borders back and forth with no restrictions. Migrants of this wave generally fall in the category of transmigrants, working abroad for delimited periods of time, returning home regularly, sending remittances, and keeping close connections to home.

From the perspective of social stratification, in the initial waves migrating were married men with high-school or vocational education from the urban space. Over the years, the age average dropped significantly and young adults, women, and the rural population became the dominant social category of transmigrants (Sandu et al. 2006: 20).

In popular culture, migrants are often portrayed as those Romanians who left the country side after 1995 to pick strawberries in Spain, grapes in Italy, or olives in Greece. These migrants went abroad season after season, bringing more and more relatives and friends with them. They are generally referred to in the press (eg. Tatucu 2006 April 16, Neag 2012 March 1) and society as ‘strawberry people’ (‘Căpșunari’) as in popular culture the early process of migration became symbolically associated with the activity of picking strawberries.

Today, migration became a life strategy for Romanians defined as the “perspective of the long-term relationship between the assumed ends and the required means” (Sandu 2005). Romanians leave with certain expectations and specific plans of return, and migrating is a carefully weighted compromise. The success of migration is reflected in the projection of their return envisioned even before leaving the country. If the results do not meet these expectations, the migrant will most probably migrate again.

2.2.1 The frustrated achiever and the desire to emigrate

The desire to emigrate is still present among Romanians today. A study carried out by CURS (Aproximativ 20% din romani vor sa plece la munca in strainatate in 2012, 2011 Dec, 29), shows that 1 in 5 Romanians (approx. 20%) would go to work abroad in 2012, but only 8% of those questioned would do this for touristic purposes. Also, among those between 18-59 years old, 11% would like to go work abroad within the following year (Sandu et al. 2010: 96).
There are many theories to explain the desire to emigrate. Traditional economic theories are the most quoted in the political and the media’s discourse, but sociologists (Sandu 2010, Sadu 2006, De Jong 2010, Chindarkar 2012, Fischer et al. 1997) assess that the economic model is not sufficient to explaining the dynamics of migration flows. A critic is that this theory fails to explain why other people, under the same financial circumstances, chose to stay. In the quest for a theory to cover the complexity behind the migratory decision, De Jong (2010: 309) quotes the network frameworks theory which claims that migrants follow embedded emigrational network systems. This theory however only explains the direction of migration, not its volume.

A more inclusive theory for understanding migration intentionality comes from social psychology. The theory of planned behaviour explains that intentions are the primary determinant of behaviour, and are a product of social norms – perceptions of what significant others think about the behaviour – and expectations that one will attain valued goals as a consequence of the behaviour (De Jong 2010: 309).

This theory draws greatly on the values and expectations people have and their relation with life satisfaction. When projected on an alternative location, these values and expectations, or rather the “expectations of attaining valued goals” (Jong 2010:309) become key determinants of migration intentions.

Expectations and values are quantified also as measures for one’s ‘life satisfaction’. This concept is itself a dimension of the broader idea of ‘the subjective well-being’ - a controversial concept often criticised for its validity issues due to its dynamic response to a very large number of uncontrollable factors. This concept was recently introduced in the study of international migration. Previous studies covered mostly rural-urban mobility (De Jong 2000). Chindarkar (2012) is one of the few researchers who expanded the theory on international migration while testing the hypothesis that higher education and lower life satisfaction strengthen the intention to emigrate in a South American population.

Based on these concepts, Romanian sociologist, Dumitru Sandu, applies the grounded theory method to adapt them to the Romanian work migration model. The author
develops the concept of ‘state of spirit’ in the Romanian literary translation, but understood as ‘state of mind’ in English. The concept developed by Sandu (2010) is used identically as that of ‘life satisfaction’ used by scholars like De Jong 2010, Chindarkar 2012, et al. 2002, Graham & Pettinato 2002, but the author never refers to such similar literature. Consequently, Sandu’s research has the downfall of being weakly embedded in existing theory due to the author’s preference for developing equivalent concepts without a clearly supported argument for this need. Nevertheless, the author is consistent in his use, definitions, and interpretations of the concept across his publications from 1992 – 2009.

Keeping in mind these important theoretical shortcomings, Sandu’s (2010) research is valuable for its statistical data on Romanian migration covering a very large sample and data gathered starting 1993 up to 2007. This data provides information on the Romanians’ reasons for migrating, their expected consequences of migration, and for providing a profile of the Romanian most likely to emigrate, results which are to be presented further on.

Sandu (2010: 21) understands ‘state of spirit’ as an important conceptual instrument when analysing the decision to live abroad and its reasons. He chooses the state of spirit of a person as an etalon for it because a “state of spirit” is something that people either wish to have, or not have, and because they are quantified in relation to a certain context, space, time, or social life.

Sandu measures the state of spirit through four variables: (life) satisfaction, optimism, trust/confidence, and one’s public/personal agenda. For example, one can be satisfied if what he owns (goods, information, relations) corresponds with his aspirations; but dissatisfied if there is a rupture between the resources he owns and the project he wants to attain. Similarly, one can quantify his state of spirit of ‘today’ in relation with the day before and this will generate either an optimist or pessimist state of mind. Thirdly, one’s social position can limit one’s choices and life strategies, thus is also very important for one’s satisfaction. Lastly, one’s expectations and his trust in the agent of change, like for example a political party’s governance, are also a measure for one’s good spirits.
Based on the interaction between the mentioned variables, Sandu (p. 25) discusses the concept of ‘dynamics of satisfaction’ as the state of satisfaction, not a stable, definitive status, but varying across years. For example, based on data collected since the Revolution until 2007, the researcher finds the state of satisfaction to be correlated with electoral cycles and their respective economic cycles (p.61).

Overall, Sandu (2010: 25) determines five social types of ‘state of spirit’ – continuity satisfaction – it is all good and it will be good in the future as well; continuity optimism – it is good and it will be better; pessimism continuity – it is bad and it will be bad or even worse; dynamic optimism – it is bad, but it will be good; recent pessimism – it is good, but it will be bad. These five states are tightly connected with the Romanian’s intention to emigrate or return, the last two being associated with change.

Based on these criteria and correlating them with data on age, genre, residence, and education, Sandu (2006) constructs the portrait of the Romanian most likely or eager to emigrate. The wannabe migrant is most likely a young male living in the urban space with above average income, and with a rich network capital, who speaks some Italian but is frustrated with his financial revenues and has higher aspirations, particularly career-wise (Sandu 2010: 104). However, half of those who fit the profile have no clear plans of migrating. Sandu (2006) calls this type of migration ‘frustration migration’ as the person is not poor, but is dissatisfied with his income and living standards, believing that he could do better.

The concept of “frustrated achievement” has traditionally been developed in economic studies to demonstrate that ‘money does not bring happiness’ and that "men do not desire merely to be rich, but to be richer than other men" (Mill 1920). Defined in economics

a frustrated achievever is an individual who reports, in a given year with respect to the previous one, a negative variation in his/her self-declared life satisfaction accompanied by a positive variation in his/her real household income. (Becchetti & Rossetti 2009:161).
Sociologists borrowed the term and used it in relation with the intention to migrate to explain the reasons behind the so-called “brain drain” (Faist et al. 2010). In this sense, frustrated achievers are “those who are highly educated (college and higher), have strong intentions to migrate abroad, with low life satisfaction and relative deprivation, driven mainly by higher aspirations, lack of opportunities offered by the home country, and weak future economic outlook of the home country” (Chindarkar 2012).

Accordingly, Romanian’s desire to emigrate is a correlation of low life satisfaction, high income expectation, and good education. The desire to return, and thus become a transnational migrant rather than a diasporic one, is however determined by other factors.

Besides life satisfaction and the state of spirit, which explain the presence of the desire to leave, there are two more tangible factors that realistically delimit one’s likeliness to both leave and return. Sandu’s (2006) research shows that the degree of decisiveness to leave is strictly related with the network one has and with his knowledge of a foreign language. One is more likely to emigrate if he speaks the language of the host country and if he already has acquaintances abroad. Corollary, same is true for the negation. On the opposite end, the most likely to return are those who do not speak the foreign language too well, have earned above average while working abroad, and are not particularly educated. In this case, their desire to return depends greatly on their assessment of the effects the migration has on their family which are to be analysed next.

There are also more romantic interpretations of the factors might push one to emigrate, that equally explains the transmigrant’s desire to return. Said (1984) describes two attitudes in relation to what it means to be travelled, helping explain the duality displayed. On the one hand, travelling can be seen from the romantic perspective of a nomad’s life starting with the biblical expulsion from the Garden of Eden. On the other hand, the traditional perspective values settling down and the stability of a home, as proved by folklore sayings like “home is where your heart is”, “homemade” or “feel like home” (Said 2000: 228).
2.2.1 Dynamics of satisfaction

The attractiveness of going to work abroad is measured mainly in financial incentives, but the overall success of the experience also depends on the emotional wellbeing of the migrant which in its turn depends on the relations with its family and friends. The relation between the financial and emotional wellbeing of the migrant is the focus of this section.

In a study conducted in Ecuador, Borraz, Poza & Rossi (2010) investigated whether international migration impacts the assessed ‘happiness’ of the families who have at least one member working abroad. The researchers measured the ‘happiness’ of the migrant’s family in relation with that of non-migrant families. The authors started from the presumption that the absence of a family member will create emotional discomfort, but also will burden the stay-at-home with extra household chores, and thus reduce the ‘happiness’ of the family (p. 8). Yet, their hypothesis failed to be supported by evidence as no difference in level of happiness could be identified between migrant and non-migrant families by the end of the research. On a second look, it was obvious that the researchers failed to consider the matter of remittances and the differences between the well-being of the families who receive remittances and those who did not receive any financial support from the member abroad.

Remittances are one of the most important traits of transnationalism, their frequency and value suggesting the migrants’ attachment to their place of origin (Bagade 2012, Yang 2011, Vertovec 2001, 2004). Sending remittances can have many reasons, among which Dean Yang (2011: 136) names altruism, exchange (compensation for services rendered to the migrant by recipients), insurance, loan repayment, and investment, some or all of which could be operative simultaneously. Remittances can impact greatly on the native country, especially in developing countries whose economy can even become dependent on foreign currency. Furthermore, not only can the money from abroad have financial consequences, but it can also stimulate change within a variety of socio-cultural institutions - such as local status hierarchies, gender relations, marriage patterns, and consumer habits (Vertovec, 2000). For example, as discussed further in this chapter, women’s work migration and the remittances they send to their families empowered them as providers for the family, a position traditionally assigned to men.
What the researchers (Nemeny 2012, Sandu 2006, Toth 2006) generally agree on is that the family’s well-being is in strict correlation with the amount of remittance. Studies have shown that families that receive remittances assess their well-being as generally better than before migration. Taran et al. (2009: 99) confirms that “sending money to the country of origin to maintain a family’s standard of living may be an alternative to family reunification” and that “remittances may be compensating for the absence of a loved one” (Borraz et al. 2010: 20).

In the case of Romania, studies (Sandu 2006, 2010, Nemeny 2012, Toth 2006, Stanculescu & Stoiciu 2012) are not very clear on what is the precise relation between remittances and the family’s well-being. What is clear though is that especially in the rural areas, the family’s survival is most often dependent on the financial support from abroad (Stanculescu & Stoiciu 2012). Consequently, the Romanian migrant sends important amounts of money and goods back home. For example, in 2008, the remittances topped a historical maximum since the Revolution adding up to 9.4% of the country’s GDB (Cati bani trimit in tara muncitorii romani din strainatate (2012, Dec, 26) even though 40% of the money sent home did not follow the official financial flows (Euractiv.ro 2006). This might be due to the fact that in 2005, half of the Romanian migrants abroad were from the rural area, and allegedly not accustomed with the bank system (Euractiv.ro 2005), another effect of which is that the remittances sent home are quite quickly spent on daily living, rather than saved or invested (Sandu et al. 2006: 115). A FES-CCSB (2011) study showed that migrants’ financial priorities were daily consumption (78%), paying debt (51%) and refurbishment (28%) rather than businesses investments (3%) or savings (15%).

The consequences of work-related migration impacts more, both positively and negatively on the rural Romanian families, particularly on those members who remain at home (Nemeny 2012). The author notes that the most obvious changes are financial, but also emotional as the rural families work together much closer and share much more time together. For example, in the year 2011, 3,987 couples divorced in Romania out of which only 554 were in the rural area (Aproximativ 4000 de Romani au divorat in 2011, majoritatea in Bucuresti 2012 Juli, 6).
Alexandru and Georgiana Toth (2006) also observe that the family’s well-being is strictly correlated with its financial well-being. Their statistics show that only 3% of those interviewed evaluated that their relation with their spouse or children worsened. However, Toth et al. (2006: 65) also talk about “invisible side-effects” like dysfunctional processes that appear in the nucleus of the family due to the unsatisfied needs of the migrant and/or the remaining family members. The authors mention lack of affectivity, sexuality, and education as key factors. Nemeny (2012) separates these overall effects in five categories: financial, spousal relations, children, old family members, and the population’s demographics. (Nemenyi (2012) concludes that 37.3% of the migrant families she interrogated assess that migration resulted in a worsened family dynamics, significantly more than Toth’s (2006) results of 3%. Nemeny (2012) assessed that the relationship between spouses deteriorated after them being apart for long periods of time due to temporary migration. Sometimes this resulted in the dissolution of their relationship - 6.3% of the couples studied divorced. This constitutes a high percentage in a population where 96.5% of those interrogated answered that family life is very important (Nemenyi 2012: 130).

Despite a lack of clear consensus between the authors’ data and interpretations on the assessed consequences of migration on the family, what is less contested is that in general, there is a public appreciation for migrants. Sandu’s et al. (2006:62) reports that over 50% of the Romanians interviewed on their general opinion of work-migration assessed it as ‘good’, and a further 20% as ‘both good and bad’. Most positive about work migration are those who plan to leave, with 73% good assessment. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the opinion of the ones who left, and that of the ones who stayed. In general, the ones who remained home consider that the situation between them and the ones abroad has worsened, although not in significant degrees (Sandu, et al. 2006: 67). Furthermore, 60% of those interviewed consider that those who have worked abroad “think differently”.

The Romanian mentality clearly favours migration. The mentality is that working abroad improves one’s financial status and changes one’s mentalities to good. When describing the attitude on change, Sandu (2010:182) assessed that this is a type of
'evaluative projection’, meaning that the ex-migrant projects in his answer judgements about his own transformations.

To conclude, temporary migration cannot be labelled as strictly ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for the family, and it is still debatable to what degree remittances impact its well-being. Nevertheless, in a form or another, migration alters the status quo of the family and produces change in society, as further discussed.

2.2.2 Women’s migration and changing family structures

The most important transformation work migration triggered in the structure of the traditional paternal family concerns the role of the women. To an increasing extent, women are the ones going to work abroad, providing for their families. The impact of this change will be discussed in this section.

Kofman (2009) reassesses the importance women were given in sociological studies on migration. The author observes that prior to the 1970s, women were given little attention in the academic works on migration and did not make the object of study in matters of international mobility (p. 32). The focus instead fell on the “adventurous men seeking new opportunities abroad, joined later by wife and family or returning to hearth and home with cash in hand” (Stahl 1988: 153). The traditional models of migration were either that of male migration or family reunion, the women being understood solely as dependant and “part of the private sphere of the migrant male” (Kofman 2009: 36).

Starting in the 1990s, however, new models of migration emerge, and women start migrating in larger and larger numbers (Kofman 2009). In the case of the Romanian migration to Italy, for example, between 1990 and 1996, 88% of those migrating were men; however, after 2001, only 45% of those leaving for Italy were men. EU statistics show that by 2009, women accounted for 53% of the total number of migrants in Europe, and 45% of the regular temporary migrants (Taran et al. 2009: 98). What is more, in migrant’s family plans, it is often the women who make the decision to stay in the host country or return in the country of origin. Women migrants are more
independent financially, and in many cases, migration is their first opportunity of working and earning a living. (Taran et al. 2009: 99)

What can be witnessed is a “feminisation of the labour migration” (Taran et al. 2009: 98) suggesting that women have become ‘independent agents and initiators of migration, unconstrained by the other genre’s mobility.’ The fact that more women are migrating than men can be attributed to economic pull factors like the demand on the domestic labour market, the background of population aging in the most popular immigration countries (eg. Spain, Italy, Germany the UK), or the employment rate among Western mothers (Cohen 2000: 2). Consequently, migrant women are employed particularly in domestic jobs like cleaning and taking care of the elderly and children.

By working within the private sphere of foreign families, Vertovec (2010) observes that women are more likely to get accustomed with the host country’s values and lifestyle than migrant men, who usually work less domestic jobs. On the other hand, Taran et al. (1999) also observes that despite having the possibility to adapt more easily, women migrants often face a “threefold discrimination of gender, class, and nationality”. Thus, while migration can empower women and elevate their social status in the native country, abroad, women immigrants are often “the new domestic servants” (Pyle 2006).

What is more, even though women migrants can become financially independent due to earning abroad, they may lack the emotional stability caused by living abroad alone. Their migration also greatly impacts the family remaining in the country of origin. The absence of the mother/wife can lead to emotional distress, and her contributions at home need to be assumed by less experienced members of the remaining family (Borraz 2010: 14). Also, despite the fact that most mothers often work abroad to support their children through school, and the children are expected to perform well in school, Nemeny (2012) observes that most of the time, the children’s academic performance decreases in families where the parents are abroad due to emotional instability and lack of parental guidance and control. Consequently, migrant women find themselves in a contradictory position as they are “expected to earn money and be responsible for their families at the same time” (Pyle 2006: 290).
When working abroad for many years, “family relations are maintained transnationally” (Cohen 2000: 1); however, the absence of the mother/wife can result in the destruction of traditional family roles, or even the family altogether as “spouses may have affairs or find other partners. Some women develop relationships with same-sex partners. Spouses grow apart from each other, grow hostile, jealous, depressed, or simply indifferent” (Cohen 2000: 7). Even in the case of family reunification years after, tensions and conflict can occur (Pyle 2006, Cohen 2000:1).

Whichever the case, what is incontestable is that on the background of the new feminine migratory mobility, the family structure has been reconceptualised. Levin and Torst (1999) define by LAT (Living Apart Together) a relationship where the two partners have separate residences, each of them lives in a household where there may live other persons too, but both of them define themselves as a couple, as so does their company. Above all, while women took the role of the family provider, the men have to take on the household chores (Spisak 2009: 89). Consequently, not only has society faced a feminisation of labour migration, but simultaneously, a domestication of the men is favoured by the new demographic mobility, breaking gender role mentalities embedded in the dominant ideology for years.

The above chapter presented the main concepts and themes relating with work migration that will be used in the analysis of the films: transnational migration, the reasons for leaving and expectations set (dynamics of satisfaction), the impact of remittances on the family’s wellbeing and the transformation of family structures as result of women’s migration. The chaotic transition from communism motivates Romanian’s desire to work abroad to earn more money faster and gain a new social position back in Romania. Their migration is not permanent, instead, these transmigrants have settled in their mobility. Their absence from home, especially as in increasing numbers migrants are women, impacted on the role of family members, their understanding of happiness, wealth and class.
3. The Romanian New Wave

In the previous section, a plurality of perspectives on migration in general, and Romanian migration in particular, were presented. This section is intended to follow a similar structure in order to put the Romanian New Wave cinema into historical and theoretical context.

Unlike the migratory waves, the cinematic one has not received as much attention from scholars, and thus, there is little literature on the topic to be consulted. For example, even a 2010 study by Ewa Mazierska dedicated to the history of ‘Eastern European Cinema’ did not include Romania within its data. Consequently, most of the literature on the RNW comes from the perspective of the film critic, particularly foreign ones.

Among the reasons for which post-communist European cinemas are highly understudied is the fragmentation of academic disciplines, the specialization of scholars on only one national cinema, and their reluctance to go beyond it, thus, avoiding being regarded as ‘eclectic’ or ‘journalistic’ (Mazierska 2010). Mazierska (2010: 14) also considers that

   Eastern European cinema is now regarded as even less fashionable as it was pre-1989. This has an impact on the employment policies of academic institutions as well as the priorities of publishing houses, which tend to stay away from what is unknown, rather than trying to make the unknown known.

Considering the reduced theoretical guidance on the topic of the RNW, to study it one must do so by breaking it down into its components. Consequently, this section will discuss an array of elements from genre to ideology in order to find those that fit best the films of the RNW and describe the profile of the cinematic wave – one of the goals of this paper.

The conceptual universe of post-communists cinemas, including the RNW, is highly complex and draws from studies in European cinema, art cinema, national and transnational cinemas. The lines bordering the definitions of these concepts are very fine and can overlap, include or exclude each other. Art cinema is the most inclusive category of all, its features being used as attributes for European, national and
transnational cinemas. Nevertheless, scholars feel the need to constantly redefine and redraw categories with the emergence of each new significant film movement to underline the special character of the movement and its contribution to the enrichment of film history. Consequently, the RNW will also be discussed from the point of view of ‘small country cinemas’, ‘auteur cinema’, and “counter-national cinema”. The wave’s relation with national and transnational identity, ideology and audiences will also be scrutinised. The purpose of this section, thus, is to first present existing literature and afterwards to assess the RNW in relation with it.

3.1 Cinema as a tool for identity and nation building
Films construct certain ideas of the why’s, where’s and when’s of life that have the potential of shaping one’s ideas of one’s identity. This section presents films’ relation with national and individual identity. However, different film genres have particular approaches to the representation of nation so I will first define those.

3.1.1 The many labels of European cinema
Classic Hollywood cinemas, European cinemas, national cinemas, and art cinemas are closely interlinked and can only be discussed in relation to each other. At the intersection of these concepts stands the RNW, one of the youngest members of the European art cinema genre. European art cinema is difficult to study as a homogenous discipline, as there are many different approaches to it. Films can be studied from the point of view of their relation with Hollywood or mainstream films, with nation, audience, aesthetics, social themes, but none of these are fixed concepts either.

The development of European art cinema came as a reaction to the ascension of Hollywood into an organised, coherent film industry dominating the film market. Fearing cultural and financial imperialism, films produced in Europe started marketing themselves as such and defined their own distinct aesthetics, discourse, financial, and distribution models (Everett 2005, Bergfelder 2005). This, however, was not an organised, controlled, or uniform movement across Europe. It developed gradually into waves, and was thus named as such - ‘New Wave Cinemas’. The New Wave cinema germinated at the end of the 1950s and among its prominent initiators were the French New Wave and the Italian Neorealism (Kovasc 2007, Bergfelder 2005). European art
cinema consequently consists of a collection of national films with a set of specific characteristics. These cover, among other things, state funding, a certain aesthetic associated with art, specific production system centred on the auteur, transnational audiences, and a claim for nation-building (Kovasc 2007). Nevertheless, each wave also has its own particularities and exceptions derived from the country’s unique history.

What the Waves have in common is the national cinemas’ development as a reaction to forces which challenged the status quo of the nation. Schilesinger (2000) claims that there would be no national if it weren’t for ‘international’ and in the case of cinema, “awareness of exteriority is a shaping force”. For example, post-colonial states in the 1920s responded to industrialisation and the loss of colonial territories by developing a romantic nationalism expressed in their cinemas. Representative romantic nationalist cinemas are the British Heritage films and the German Heimat cinema. These genres made a nostalgic representation of the nation’s past, celebrating classic authors, work of arts and natural landmarks which were promoted as ‘authentic’ and ‘good’ in comparison with ‘the new’ which was ‘bad’ (Hjort et al. 2000).

However, national cinemas of the New Wave genre can also challenge the status quo. The New Wave cinemas had more critical representations of their nations. What defines the New Wave is what Pop (2012) calls ‘political significance and aesthetic renewal’, meaning that, the New Wave is seeking alternative narratives and aesthetics which are associated with national identity and art, respectively.

### 3.1.2 Challenging the concepts of ‘European’ and ‘art’ in ‘European Art Cinema’

Some scholars (Mazaj 2011, Halle & Willis 2000) challenge the association of the European/national cinema with art, and also question what national or European identity signifies. After the 1960s, national cinemas were associated with the notion of ‘art’. Behind this association stand embedded cultural beliefs that connect the ‘old continent’ with art and tradition, while ‘the new continent’, America, is associated with commercialism, as if the two are mutually exclusive (Bergfelder 2005). They are ‘art’ films because they are not interested in the action itself, but rather in the aesthetics and meta-text, making the films more difficult to follow and decode. Halle and Willis (2000:
44) say that the development of European film in art film is both historical, but also economical. In order for a European film to ‘make a place’ on the Hollywood dominated market, it needed to come up with alternative aesthetics.

Pop (2010) underlines that European films are associated with art in contrast with the ‘lay’ popular productions because their role in aesthetical renewal is made ‘European’ through their distribution across the continent. Nevertheless, their audience are often criticised as being an elitist and pretentious ‘national bourgeoisie”, dismissing and even dreading popular appreciation. These films are almost always seen in larger numbers only at European film festivals but fail to attract the public in theatres outside these events. Nevertheless, participation in film festivals is part of these films’ European character, because as Pop (2012) suggested, the European film festivals are constructed as symbolic spaces, where a “new” European identity is developed.

With the development of the European Union and its desire of a single European market, organisations like the MEDIA programme were established to promote European culture, identity and values; and to protect, promote and encourage the production of ‘European films’ (Bergfelder 2005: 316). Despite these efforts, ‘European cinema’ remains highly fragmented, and most films produced across the continent are addressed as national cinema, rather than European. What is more, even from a scholarly point of view, national cinemas and even new wave cinemas across Europe, are distinguished through different terms like ‘neorealism’, ‘eastern European’, ‘post communist’, ‘small country cinema’, and so on. These smaller inclusive or intersecting categories were developed to cover the diversity of European productions. Crofts (2002: 27), for example, identifies seven ‘varieties of ‘national cinema’ which define national cinema based on its opposing character to Hollywood.

The main features of all these national cinemas boil down to a certain production system, a certain aesthetic, and a particular relationship with national identity and values. Nevertheless, the value of ‘European’ in these productions is relative, and there is no clear cohesion on the common identity of the films labelled as such. One of the claims is that ‘European films’ are not about a common, single-entity Europe, but instead “they should address issues like immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, diasporic
communities and those outside of the European Union who move from the periphery to the metropole” (Mazaj 2011: 192).

In other words, the films’ discourse should challenge and promote the diversity of the so called ‘Europudding’ (Vitaly & Willemen 2006: 56). Such films should address the motif of the journey and include themes like migration, diasporic communities, cross-border mobility, homelessness, displacement, exile, and experiences that concentrate on characters who can be defined as ‘the other’ (Mazaj 2011: 193). Consequently, Mazaj (2011: 192) criticizes films like Chocolat and other Western European productions for not fully exploring those themes and doesn’t consider their discourse a post-colonial one. Mazaj (2011) thus suggests that in order to find an authentic discourse on the ‘other’, one should not look at “cinema that speaks not of, but from the peripheral spaces” (Mazaj 2011: 189), such as the cinemas of Eastern Europe.

Mazaj (2011: 189) refers to the cinemas of Eastern Europe such as the RNW, the Slovenian New Wave, and Bulgarian cinema, as ‘the cinema of small nations’ as defined by Hjort et al. (2000) and Petrie (2007). This reinforces my previous statement that scholars constantly re-label similar cinemas in order to underline their particularities. In the case of ‘small nation’s cinema’ of Eastern Europe, one of the unique features lies in their geopolitics, namely, the “traumatic reconfiguration and fragmentation of spatial boundaries in the former Eastern bloc: the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the disintegration of Yugoslavia” (Mazaj 2011), but also the integration of those regions within a single, common Europe. This process of both disintegration and homogenization created a unique national identity and this triggered increasing interest in how this identity is represented in national cinema. As Mazaj (2011: 190) states, “of particular interest is how this cinema marks a shift in the politics of representation of ‘nation’ and ‘other/stranger/immigrant’, issues that are central to new European cinema.” The authors thus suggest that these films are most relevant for exploring social issues like immigration and perceived threat to national and personal identity (Mazaj 2011: 194).
3.1.3 Cinema, identity and ideology

One’s identity and ideologies are constructed through dynamic processes that depend on a variety of internal and external factors. Through its representations, cinema has the power to influence one’s or even a country’s identity, and the other way around. Hall’s (1993) approach on identity and cinema was highly influential as it defined cinema not only as a tool for representing the current state of a certain subject, but also as a medium powerful enough to influence the future development of that subject. Hall (1993: 236) sees identity “as constituted, not outside but within representation”.

According to Hall (1993), cinema is not “a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists” but in itself a form of representation able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, “and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak”. Films present “not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the re-telling of the past” (Hall 1993: 236). Hall’s (1993) stand on cinema suggests that films have the capacity to trigger social change (eg. feminist or anti-racist social movements).

Cheng and Fleming (2009: 4) on the other hand, do not see cinema as a producer of identity, but rather as a product of its own realities. Authors claim that cinema is rather an ideological machine that reproduces the dominant ideological models. Cheng et al. come to this conclusion by making an analogy with Althusser’s (2001) theory of personal identity and cinema. Althusser (2001) states that one’s identity and ideological frame are produced even before birth, and the individual is “always-already a subject.” Applied to the birth of cinema, it can be deducted that cinema similarly “reproduces the ‘reality’ of its embedding ideological framework and apparatus” (as quoted in Cheng et al. 2009: 2). According to this perspective, films are not products independent of the world around them.

Just like a new-born child, before even being produced, a film has an inherited identity, and, what is more, it also inevitably reproduces pre-existing ideologies. This makes Comolli and Narboni (1969) affirm that “every film is political”. Cinema and art thus become reproducers and enhancers of the current ideology of the environment one lives in. Not surprisingly, films can be and were used as ideological weapons of control, promoting specific standards of national identity. Cheng et al. (2009) support their claim with an example of gender essentialism resulting from the perpetuation of a
certain representation across arts. Their argument is that cinema has borrowed the ways of female representation and framing based on already constructed gender identity patterns taken from the older arts of sculpture and theatre and did nothing more than to reproduce them (Cheng et al. 2009: 3). According to these representations in films, in national cinema in particular, the women’s portrait is the embodiment of the nation.

Hayward (2000: 99) observes the relation between women and nation in the representations from films produced at moments when a certain nation was going through significant political and social transformation. In particular, the image of women shifts accordingly and serves the image of the nation-state. The consequence of this according to Hayward (2000) is for example that maternal body of the 1940s cinema in France might well give way to the liberated female body of the 1950/1960s.

3.1.4 Imagined communities
Films are not a perfect reflection of reality, but a construct, a representation of the world, the degree of accuracy varying depending on the production style, genre, scope and so on (Morley and Robins 1995: 90). This section looks at how films construct a certain representation of nation and how they themselves make up an element of national identity.

Leeuwen and Jawitt (2004) identify two main types of images: those produced to be used as record or those used as construct. Images utilised as record are analysed for their value “as documentary evidence of the people, places, things, actions, and events they depict” (Leeuwen et al. 2004: 7). Images used as construct are analysed “not as evidence of the who, where, and what of reality, but as evidence of how their maker or makers have (re)constructed reality, as evidence of bias, ideologically coloured interpretation, and so on” (Leeuwen et al. 2004:7). However, the line between these two types is very fine, and cinematic images can play a dual role.

For example, even though some films have not been specifically produced to document a certain event, place, or attitude, they nevertheless have an embedded documentary value. One of the most celebrated films for its historical value, despite being produced as a fictional film, is Carol Reed’s 1949 *The Third Man*. The film has been used as an
accurate source of reference on Vienna’s post-war society and urban architecture due to “its excellent photographic style and concept” (Weihsmann 1993: 73), otherwise undocumented by official sources. Accordingly, the RNW films covering the post-1989 Romanian society or the Revolution can be understood as documentary constructs, valuable for their representation of urban or rural life of the period.

According to this perspective, films are not only for entertaining the masses but also have value as collective memories by mirroring and recording the past and the present. Collective memory is a dynamic process made up of a myriad of stories which people tell each other. These ‘stories’ include also “the mass mediated narratives of a nation's 'official' history” as that told in books and other cultural artifacts like television and feature films. (Iturralde 1995)

Storytelling is important because according to the constructionist perspective on identity, “identities are constructed and negotiated in interaction” (Prins, Stekelenburg, Polletta & Klandermans 2013: 81). Films thus, through their narratives, become a source of national and cultural identities by engaging audiences in what Benedict Anderson (1983) defines as “imagined communities”.

‘Imagined communities’ is a theory developed by Anderson (1983) to explain the rise of nationalism in modern societies. Nations in themselves are imagined communities in that give their members (citizens) a sense of identity and belonging even though as a member one does not get to know all the other members. Anderson (1983) uses the example of print media as one element constructing imagined communities “by providing their readers with narratives that unfold in specific places, they give them a sense of community, as well as a sense of shared history and identity”. Despite Anderson not making reference to film, many scholars (Baumagartel 2011, Tilman 2011, Hall 1997, Higson 2000, Thompson 2002) use his theory to understand film’s role in constructing imagined communities and supporting a certain idea of nation.

3.1.5 What makes a film ‘national’

Both Hall’s (1993) and Cheng et al.’s (2009) views on the relation between cinema, national identity, and ideology will be further explored. This section will discuss the
characteristics of films as part of the national cinema genre and what it take for a film to be assessed as national, but also how this changes across time and under the pressure of international forces. In Romanian legislation, for example, under the name of ‘national cinema’ fall all cinematic productions which meet the minimum requirement of being created in the language of the respective country, by a team whose majority of members are of the respective nationality (Centrul National al Cinematografiei, CNC 2012).

Hedetoft (2000: 281) considers that national cinema is ‘national’ through the association of the film with its “locus of ownership of production”, its “national character of distributive networks”, and its “themes and contents”. This means that a national film is expected to be produced in a certain country by a respective national or resident, should be consumed by national audiences, and should reflect in its narratives the specifics of its nation. In other words, the chief institutional reasons that national cinema has become the norm are according to Nestingen et al. (2005: 10) production, state support, and critical reception.

An important dimension in this definition is the significance given to the nationality of a film’s director. If the so called ‘mainstream Hollywood cinema’ is usually labelled according to genres such as ‘action’, ‘horror’, ‘drama’ and so on; European art films are categorised by their production system - the so called ‘auteur system’ (Dirks 2012). While in commercial Hollywood cinema intellectual rights are divided between a number of stakeholders, in European art cinemas (with the exception of Luxemburg), the owner of the film is the director (Pascal 2004). This empowerment of the auteur further deepens the association of national and European cinema with art products, as the films are the vision of a person (the artist) with an established and expected approach to the film’s narratives and aesthetics.

Another key element for a national cinema is its audience. At first, national cinema followed a “by us, to us model” referring to “films produced in the national tongue, funding from within national borders, and marketed for specific national tastes” (Nestingen et al. 2005:). With the development of the New Waves in the 1960s, films started addressing international audiences. This was partly due to a lack of popular success of the films with their local public, creating a need to extend their distribution
market. The reason for their unpopularity was that starting with the New Waves, cinema became critical of the existing aesthetic, social, and ideological models around them. The film’s representations of the world become abstract, fragmented, and overall uncomfortable for audiences. Rentschler (2000: 264) gives the example of the German New Wave when “for the average viewer, New German features were slapdash and soporific, irritating and downright hard to look at, prone to protracted long takes and confusing plot lines, to under-narrated stories, unappealing character and unsatisfying conclusions”.

These films’ controversial reception at home, however, attracted international attention, to the effect that the films came to communicate their nation abroad. Again referring to the German New Wave, Rentschler (2000: 264) considers that the wave “was taken seriously abroad because it was spurned at home”. Films became cultural ambassadors of their nation, by speaking against it.

The relation between art films and nation is paradoxical. The country of origin’s audiences reject the film for its representation of nation - which makes them attractive to foreign audiences where they are praised and awarded - which eventually arouses a sense of pride and nationhood among home audiences. The fact that art cinema encourages debate both at home and abroad, and that, despite the controversy, it eventually has a positive impact on the way a nation is represented and understood, is the reason why Vitaly and Willemen (2006: 45) find art cinema relevant: “National pride and the assertion at home and abroad of national cultural identity have been vital in arguing for art cinemas”. Despite national cinema being dismissed in the short term for its “arrogance and introspection, its artistic indulgence, intellectual pompousness, and economic incapacity” (Rentschler 2000: 264), in the long run, the state investment in cinema still reaches its goals of creating a sense of nationhood.

Besides the audience’s model changing, the production system also becomes increasingly transnational through the upsurge in co-productions. The reasons behind this are possibly financial, as the state funds could be insufficient; commercial, as co-productions could provide better distribution channels; but also cultural because due to facile mobility possibilities, communities become increasingly multicultural. Besides
co-productions, national cinema becomes transnational through the development of diasporic cinemas productions.

On the background of globalisation and an intensification of ‘the outside forces’, national cinema was developed to fend off these norms and loosen or even undermine them, becoming more and more trans-national (Bergfelder 2005) and the nation-state is losing its sovereignty under the pressure of transnational forces, multiculturalism, and cultural hybridisation. (Vitaly & Willemen 2006).

3.1.6 The role of national cinema
The above section concluded that it is becoming harder to delimit the national and the international in cinema due to changing production and distribution models. If the legislation defining national cinema presents criteria which is measurable, there are other more ontological criteria for a film to be understood as ‘national’. Some examples are the representation of nation-specific themes, attitudes, values, or spaces. The way in which these nation-specific themes are represented also makes a difference in the role cinema has in defining national identity. Films can be either more critical towards the world they are representing, or more eulogistic of it. Through their representations, films can question or undermine assumptions and myths associated with national identities, but can also flatter and reinforce them (Jarvie 2000).

Morley and Robins (1995: 90) support this latter perspective and claim that “definitions of national cinema always involve the construction of an imaginary homogeneity of identity and culture, apparently shared by all national subjects”. Higson (2010), Hjort (2000), Mazaj (2011) and Galt (2006) however, disagree that a film should promote a ‘homogeneous’ representation of nation, criticizing it as being limited. Instead, these authors promote the idea of national cinemas as “a site of conflict, heterogeneity and change” (Hjort 2000: 13). Both these perspectives will be explored in this section.

Morley’s et al. (1995) definition of national cinema was drawn from the historical development of national cinema, previously stated in this section. Respectively, national cinemas were developed for protectionist reasons, opposing international forces, or what
was perceived as ‘otherness’. In the words of Higson (2000), “national cinema is the product of the tension between home and away, between the identification of the homely and the assumption that it is quite distinct from what happens elsewhere”. In Higson’s definition, ‘home’ is to be understood as ‘nation’ to which ‘otherness’ is a threat. Nestingen and Elkington (2005) consider that when faced with global and transnational ‘threats’ to the nation state's homogeneity, the state should respond with national romantic perspectives on national identity.

In what concerns a country’s national cinema, the necessity for state intervention for the protection of national interests can be motivated by cultural and financial reasons. The rationale can be cultural, in which case the nation’s image, identity, and values are concerned. Especially significant factors are the ones that can be seen as sustaining national values and cultural traditions, elements that are significant for national identity. The other starting point sanctioning state intervention is an economic one. The economic grounds for state intervention are often connected with either internal or external threats. Examples might be a recession in the national cultural industry or the perceived dominance of foreign cultural products in the domestic market (Pantti 2005: 168).

Jarvie (2000: 76) formulates three arguments for the existence and maintenance of national cinema – the protectionist, cultural defense, and the nation building arguments. His first argument is economic, as the state finances the national film industry which would otherwise not be able to support itself on a market dominated by foreign (and particularly American), more commercially successful productions. This financial protectionism is one instrument in which to nurture national cinema. By itself, it is culturally indifferent – a charge often levelled at capitalism (Jarvie 2000: 78). More ideologically charged arguments are the ‘cultural defence argument’ and the ‘nation-building argument’. The first of these refers to the film’s role in promoting the national language and national values and behaviours. For example, Wolfenstein and Leites (1950) claim that in European films, figures of authority are respected, while in American films, the intrigue lies precisely in challenging them. Lastly, and probably the most controversial argument, is that of ‘nation-building’. Because cinema appeared after nations were already formed, this argument is questionable. Jervie (2000: 80) thus
considers cinema’s role is not so much about nation building, but rather about creating a ‘sense of citizenship and culture’ in a way that serves the elite. The development of national cinema coincided with the development of mass politics, as the right to vote became universal to all adult populations. In dissimulating the political message, mass media became a key tool. Through cinema, even the population with no political affinities was still reached by the unifying social message.

3.1.7 Disguising nation in the banal

National cinema as a nation-builder, Jarvie (2000:81) suggests was a project “to socialize newly emancipated populations away from radicalism and towards acceptance of the mores, outlook, and continuing hegemony of the governing and cultural elites”. In the extreme of the latter category, cinemas were part of the romantic nationalism current such as British heritage films or German Heimat films. Films of this type present the nation as a place of safety and happiness in contrast with ‘otherness’ which is dangerous and disruptive. For example, the German Heimat films present the nation as one’s ‘home’, ‘Heimat’ meaning “homeland”. Heimat films are rich sources of national representation through natural landmarks, vernacular architecture, and events of performing culture clearly indicating their belonging to a certain nation. Jarvie (2000)

The representation of space is particularly important in such films. Heimat and heritage films idealize the country side as the heart of a nation, the place of its birth, the origin of national ideals, and even ethnic particularities specific to a certain area (Moltke 2005). In the representation of space, the rural space in particular is considered to be a richer source of identification with ‘authentic’ national values (Edensor 2002). Smith (2000) extrapolates the link between the peasant and his farm, to that between citizen and nation. The representation of rural space is a rich source of elements of banal nationalism, and even more specifically, particularities that define the identity of a specific region, defined as “ethnoscapes” (Smith 2000: 56).

As defined so far, national cinema seems to be an ideal unifying ideological tool, aiding in creating homogenous communities, as defined by Morley et al. (1995) in the introduction to this subsection. However, not all scholars agree that national cinemas
follow national representations and criticise its romantic-nationalism ideas. For example, the use of the earlier mentioned mise-en-scene is criticised for being propagandist and ‘regressive’ (Galt 2006). Galt (2006: 8) criticizes films which make use of mise-en-scene to always show the positive, most beautiful and spectacular side of a nation because they are distracting the spectator from any political content of the narrative. Scholars who criticise such film practices aspire instead to the contemporary ‘counter-cinema’ of Kusturitca, Trier, Almadovar, and others alike, which unmask, denaturalize, and challenge national cinemas (Halle and Willis 2000: 13). What the authors understand by counter-national cinema are films which also belong to the national cinema genre, but which question assumptions of a homogeneous national identity.

These films do not look for the spectacular, but are instead interested in the mundane and banal. Tim Edensor (2002) claims that the quotidian is an equally rich source of national identity as any landmark or spectacular landscape of the Heimat films. Bennet (1998: 28 as quoted by Edensor 2002) suggests that in fact “the cultural expression and experience of national identity is usually neither spectacular nor remarkable but is generated in the mundane, quotidian forms of conduct”, or what Schlesinger (2010) calls ‘banal nationalism’. Edensor (2002) claims that nationalism is still a powerful constituent of identity precisely because it is grounded in the popular and the everyday. Hjort (2000: 108) relates banal nationalism with the concept of ‘habitus’ defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1987), adding that nationalism is embedded so deeply into daily life that is not even observed conscious. Thus, banal nationalism means that symbols of the nation can be present in all things surrounding one, including those so habitual they do not require any focal awareness (Hjort 2000: 108).

Going back to the question that opened the previous section, ‘what makes a cinema national?’, and to sum up the discussion so far, national cinema is more “than the on-screen representation of language, attitudes, beliefs, and practices typically associated with a nation-state” Nestingen et al.’s (2005: 282). National cinema also covers matters of the economical state, audience tastes, production process, and marketing strategies, but most importantly, it represents embedded instances of “banal nationalism”.
By surprising such intimate instances of national identity, national cinema not only has the power to reinforce or challenge national identity, but also to communicate to a nation abroad. For example, European art cinemas generally address transnational audiences. What is more, the production of films relies more and more on co-productions. On the background of globalisation, thus, the understanding of national cinema is changing once again towards the concept of ‘transnational cinema’ (Mazaj 2011) which will be further developed in relation with the RNW below.

3.2 Introducing the Romanian New Wave

As mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, the RNW is an understudied field – possibly because of its young age and historical lack of cinematic tradition in Romania. This section will thus present a brief history of the Wave and further discuss its characteristics in accordance to the concepts described above.

Justin Philpot (2010) underlines the importance of studying film and its message not just through aesthetics and narratives, but also by analyzing the historical context in which they were created and by paying attention to the stakeholders involved in the process. He particularly addresses the history of American cinema, but the theory is transferable across countries. According to Philpot (2010), the conditions under which the RNW films were created (eg. the stakeholder interest, the technical facilities, social context) favored the particular style of the RNW and the ways it was received by the public. This section will thus give information on the historical context under which the RNW developed, and give possible explanations to why it developed as it did.

Romania’s national cinema after WWII was similar to that of many other countries going through a period of social reconstruction. The films were produced under state supervision to reflect national character and serve national interest. During the following communist period, this character was accentuated. Understanding the power of cinema as an ideological weapon, the Communist ruling party enforced Law 303 which started the nationalising of film production (Hentea 2011) in the 1960s. Subsequently, the films were solely produced under strict state supervision not for their artistic or entertaining purposes, but as an instrument of ideological influence and
national identity formation (Oporiu1976). During the 42 years of Communism, the Romanian cinema flourished, at least in numbers. Buftea Studios alone were constantly releasing about 20 films per year, some of which gained international recognition (Media Pro Studios, 2012). The most celebrated director of the period was Sergiu Nicolaescu whose films followed in the tradition of heritage films presenting great battle scenes (War of Independence 1977), and the formation (Dacii 1966) and unification (Mihai Viteazul 1970) of the Romanian nation. Nicolaescu has been an extremely prolific popular films director, as he was one of the very few allowed to produce films. He directed and managed impressively grandiose productions under the close supervision of the state, although he never associated himself with the Communist Party. Nicolaescu’s most popular films were either historic dramas or police thrillers, but their narratives were oblivious to the totalitarian reality.

After the 1989 Revolution, the socio-political and economical post-communist transition took off immediately; however, cultural transformation in cinema needed a few extra years to find a new direction. In the 1990s, the feature film production and consumption fell radically because the producers and the public preferred the televised soap opera and the sitcom instead. Cinema theatres were abandoned, demolished, or transformed into train stations, bars, or discotheques (Iolu 2013). Up to the day, Romanian cinema attendance is the lowest in the European Union (Romania, tara cu cei mai putini spectatori la cinema din Europa 2007, Oct 31).

Fifteen years after the Revolution, in 2005 when the national film industry finally recovered, it did so in full force and on an international scale. Romanian cinema immediately won critical acclaim with The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (2005) by Cristian Mungiu – the leading director of the current cineaste generation. Shortly after, a wave of similar style films hit the international festivals where they triumphed. Their appraisal transformed a singular success case into a cinematic phenomenon. This new national trend was marketed under the name “Romanian New Wave”.

Considering the unfavorable conditions in the cultural landscape, the development of the RNW was unlikely. Nonetheless, once it did develop, the fact that it followed in the tradition of European art cinema, is not surprising. The centrality of the author and the
unpopular reception with audiences followed by critical foreign success, are just some of the common characteristics. Despite these unpromising perspectives, the current directors of the RNW dedicated themselves to cinema and got schooled in film. The film-making community was small and exclusive, ran on an internal circuit of production and distribution. The few people involved were making the films among and for themselves (Negoescu 2012). Thus, even if RNW directors are criticized for making films which lack popular appreciation due to their cryptic style, their approach is a consequence of their artistic development in an exclusive group of film connoisseurs.

The position of the director is central in the making of the RNW. Like in other European art cinemas, creative credits are attributed to their auteur who is perceived as an artist and a visionary with a particular style and discourse (Bergfelder 2005). This perceived uniqueness of the auteur together with the Wave’s unorganized development explains why the directors of the RNW reject the idea of their films being part of a wave of similar productions.

Even though later on the films started to diversify in theme and style, the ‘Romanian New Wave’ remained the brand of most of the films produced after 2005 which were distributed internationally and resembled the aesthetics and acting style of Mungiu’s masterpieces. Some directors and critics however (eg. Scott 2008) claim the RNW is not a genre per se. There is even less consensus on defining the nature of the RNW and its place among the European cinemas. As with the general definition of European art cinema, RNW’s quality of national, European and art film are not clearly delimited.

The ‘Romanian New Wave’ is a controversial concept that does not fully deliver what its name suggests. Firstly, the RNW is assessed by some critics as being inspired by the honesty of Italian neo-realism (Pop 2010), but others have doubts about its genre membership. For example, RNW director Paul Negoescu (2012) states in an interview that the “New Wave” is neither similar with the better-known French or German New Waves, nor does it fully abide in the New Wave genre in general. He adds that the RNW was never theorized, and it was never part of an organized or strategic movement, thus it is not actually a ‘wave’ either. Furthermore, the title of “RNW” was not attributed by a school of film, or by scholars. Negoescu assessed that the RNW is “more
like a coincidence than something programmatic” (quoted in Kuzma 2012). In contrast, the New Serbian Cinema for example aroused from the initiative of a critic, Dimitrij Vojnov who defined a set of preconditions on which a film could be defined as such (Velisavljević 2012).

Nonetheless, the cluster of films was labelled by international film critics surprised at the vitality with which the cinema developed in a country previously missing from the international cinematic stage. Undoubtedly, the RNW is indeed ‘new’ to Romanian cinematic history, the novelty being its freedom of expression, realism, aesthetics, auteur-centred production, unconventionality, reflectivity, international recognition, and the cryptic and minimalist narratives portraying quotidian themes. (Dawson 2010)

3.2.1 The RNW as national and European cinema
In film festivals, the films of the RNW are introduced as ‘Romanian’. They are about everyday life situations, attitudes, and typical conflicts in Romanian society. According to institutional conventions that define national films, they are produced in Romania, are generally financed by the National Council for Audiovisual, undergo a national script contest, use mainly Romanian actors and staff, and are spoken in the Romanian language. However, they do not necessarily address a national audience. Instead, these films introduce the Romanian culture to the global cinema scene. What is more, they are not a unique product to Romanian cinema. They carry traits found across a number of other national cinemas of Europe, traits that unite them under a common, symbolic, European identity.

According to Elsaesser (2005), what makes a film ‘European’ is its auteur-centred production, an orientation towards aesthetical renewal, and Pop (2012) adds “thematic development focused on national self-image centred on recovering recent memory and providing recording or recounting of contemporary historical events”. The ‘European’ traits of the RNW will be discussed further on. In Romania, cinema is a medium where the director is empowered with most control over his film, and RNW is characterized as an auteur medium. The directors of the RNW are integrated across the entire production chain, and their name becomes synonymous with their films. For example, the
renowned *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days* was directed, written, produced, and distributed by Mungiu himself. The directors of the RNW are distinguished representatives of Romanian culture, but are also part of an awarded European community of artists, who, through their art, communicate the local in global language. Rugg (2005: 221) considers the auteur to be at the same time both transcending national borders while still being a national entity.

The auteur is important for translating the film across cultures and the heart of the transnational community of film. The RNW is part of what Pop (2010) called a "festival grown" generation of directors that characterises the contemporary European Art Film. The RNW films are distributed abroad with great critical success. Pop (2012) argues that European film festivals are constructed as symbolic spaces, where ‘new’ European identities are developed.

Sarris (1968) affirms that auteur films are the “high aesthetic medium” in which “the language of the film transcends the language in which it is produced”. Thus, despite the film’s talk in a different language about events that the foreign public has not experienced and might find difficult to decode, the cues for understanding the film lie in the aesthetics specific to the respective directors. When auteur films are released in the cinemas, they are always understood in relation with previous work of that respective auteur or artistic wave he belongs to. What is more, before the films are released to the public, they have already been reviewed by international critics. Thus, when an auteur film reaches its lay audience, there is already plenty of literature available on how to understand a film, providing the spectator cues in advance to decoding the film and building expectations.

In what concerns its aesthetics and narratives, the RWN is described as ‘house-style’ cinema (Roddick 2012), cryptic, austere (Dawson 2010), minimalist, distilled, ultra-naturalistic, unsensational, and satirical (Srinivasan 2012). The filming is done often using only one camera (Pop 2010) and the soundtrack lacks any music. The storyline does not always align with the rhythm of the editing, sound, or cinematography which tend to be stubbornly slow or static. Despite an introspective aesthetical construction, the character’s actions are rarely motivated or fully explored in the narratives, and cues
need to be found outside the storyline. Consequently, the film is accessible to only a small, specialised public, and generally fails to attract audiences outside film festivals. This characteristic relation the European art film and the RNW have with audiences is relevant since it also explains the aesthetics and the discourse of the films. Therefore, I will give more details on this theme before going back to discussing Elsaesser’s (2005) last characteristic of European art cinemas, its narratives drawing from and challenging national identity.

3.2.2 RNW’s troubled relation with nation

Like the migrants, the RNW films have difficulties finding their place in the Romanian society and most often ‘migrate’ to foreign screens. The RNW films had great success to critics and audiences abroad, but were not as enthusiastically received at home where only they failed at the Box Office. This section will look at the style and representations of nation of the RNW films in trying to explain the reasons why the RNW are not to the like of the Romanian public or state institutions.

As mentioned previously, RNW auteurs reject any sources of inspiration outside themselves. They also are virally against any alignment with their predecessors in the history of Romanian cinema, particularly despising the cinema of the Communist era which Mungiu criticizes for its use of filmic clichés, theatrical acting, pompous dialogue, and lack of realism (Pop 2010). Due to this rejection of patronage, Pop (2010: 28) calls the RNW “a wave without a father figure”. He was referring to the lack of a role model to provide mentorship for the development of their cinematic language, and to the directors rebelling against any form of authority. The author explains that directors like Mungiu do look up to some older generation filmmakers, but they are not considered ‘mentors’ and reject patronage, a fact that reflects in the narratives and the characters they construct as well (Pop 2010:28).

The acting style also impacts the way characters are constructed and is a result of the lack of cinematic tradition in Romania. There are only about ten renowned directors and a few recurrent actors involved in the production of most films. Dragos Bucur, for example, is one of the most prolific stars in Tuesday, After Christmas; Police, Adjective;
The Paper Will Be Blue; The Death of Mr. Lazarescu, and Liviu’s Dream to name just a few of the most successful RNW films (Dawson 2010). Before he was starring in films, he was acting in theatre. His career evolution is usual for most Romanian actors as it was not until the success of the RNW abroad that Romania opened a serious acting school dedicated strictly to film-acting. Before that, all actors were trained for theatre roles. This had an important impact on how the characters were constructed and interpreted. It also impacted the public perception of the film. The actor’s performance in RNW films is described as honest, real, without being melodramatic, (Dawson 2010, Zeitchick 2010) in an “unofficial acting style, based in extreme naturalism and relaxed unselfconsciousness” (Dawson 2010).

The handful of people involved in the production of a modest number of films, together with the lack of precedent in Romanian cinema, determines some scholars and critics to be retained when assessing the RNW and its future impact. For example, Scott (2008) is cynical about the realistic size and impact of the RWN. He observes that Romania has only “around 80 cinemas serving a country of 22 million people, and 7 of the 42 largest municipalities have no movie screens at all” and Berke (2009) adds that discussing cinematic trends in this case “sounds like an exercise in arcane futility”.

These critics infer that, while not diminishing its artistic value, it is important to be aware of the impact of the Wave on national audiences (Berke 2009). Berke (2009) observes that despite the critical buzz abroad, this cinematic wave was not received with equal enthusiasm back in Romania. The films have insignificant box office revenues (Romania's new wave could dry up if it doesn't get home support 2013 March, 12) and most are released straight to DVDs in their home country after touring international festivals. Mungiu’s 2007 Palm D’Or Winner, 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (short 4, 3, 2), one of the most popular RNW film, was the one that raised the most interest and the one which received the most attention and support with distribution (Filmul lui Mungiu, batut la incasari de desene animate 2007 Oct, 5). In contrast, other RNW films with great success abroad like Mitulescu’s 2006 How I Spent the End of the World were released in Romania straight on DVD (Dawson 2010).
Like in the case of other national art cinemas, the target of the RNW is not the Romanian viewer, but a niche of highly educated, foreign public. A similar relation with audiences has been discussed in concern with Malaysian cinema. Like the RNW, independent Malaysian cinema is small, “at the margin of the national film industries and circulated mostly outside national borders to non-Malaysian audiences” (Baumagartel 2011: 6). Cheng (2007) describes these cinemas, among which I claim the RNW can be included, as “cosmopolitical” because they defy state barriers in their representation of nation which does not align with the mainstream national cinema, and get these representations circulated abroad to a foreign public.

Despite the language and cultural barrier, Halle and Willis (2000: 44) appreciate that no matter how dark or banal for Romanians, they are refreshing and new for the foreign public. For example, Romanians do not necessarily subscribe to the representation of life during Communism. However, foreign audiences, who did not experience the era themselves, are building an image of those times based on their understanding of the film. This is a controversial issue. The RNW directors are suspected of making films for winning prizes, and not spectators. Film critics like Sachs (2012) suspect that directors of the RNW “greet unpopularity at home as a point of pride” and that the films’ lack of approval from popular audience is a desired outcome, reinforcing the films’ artistic traits and belonging to the European art waves.

RNW’s relation with home and foreign audiences fits to the description given in the previous section to European art films and their relation with spectatorship: The country of origin’s audiences reject the film for its representation of nation, which makes them attractive to foreign audiences, where they are praised, and awarded, which eventually arouses a sense of pride and nationhood among home audiences.

3.2.3 RNW’s cinematic language

The filmic techniques of the RNW also align to those of European art cinema, underlining the interest for introspection rather than action. The films are characterised by a lack of special effects, visual or audio, and the absence of music. With the exception of a few scenes in which the characters give a voice-over narration, all of the
sound in the films is diegetic. Furthermore, out of seven films to be analyzed, only three even use music and that just in the opening or ending credits.

The lighting plays with claire-obscur and colours are generally dull. Blue is a particular shade used in RNW films. The unpretentious use and quality of image and sound sometimes make the films difficult to follow. In particular, the cinematography is distracting as the camera is either still, taking very long, static shots, or handheld, closely following its subjects, often from behind as if stalking them. The overall rhythm of the films is slow and sometimes fragmented. This is mostly due to the (lack of) movements of the camera.

Romanian film scholar Doru Pop (2010: 31-37) observes the RNW’s film grammar from the Deleuzian perspective describing cinema as a “language without a language” (p. 31). Pop (2010) particularly refers by this to the technique of using static and long shots, indicating RNW’s preference for verism – “the closeness of cinema to realism, that is, the importing of documentary style filming” (Pop 2010: 32). Such shots have an accentuated depth of field and do not require editing, capturing the action within a single frame, suggesting an objectivism based on lack of interference. This long shot technique is called “plan sequence” (Pop 2010: 32) and has the purpose of dividing the film into narrative sequences and punctuating them.

These scenes present the characters as having a rich inner world and give the viewer time to access their personal universe. For example, the camera has the habit of lingering on its subjects in close-ups or medium shots for minutes in a row, assigning higher meaning to the actions of the characters. Continuous scene can follows characters while not engaging in any particular action, arriving home or abstemiously grabbing food while standing in the kitchen.

This reflects in the mise-en-scene as well. Pop (2010: 33) observes that location shooting in the RNW seeks for an exaggerated forms of authenticity to favour the representation of the characters. By ‘exaggerated forms of authenticity,’ he refers to the “concrete jungle” of tall blocks arranged in a grey labyrinth of no escape for the middle-class. In these settings, the person is represented not as an individual, but as part of a uniform mass of people devoured by urban space.
3.3 Connecting the two waves

How the films represent their nations’ past and present brings the discussion back to the theme of the dissertation - the Romanian migration phenomenon of the last 10 years, how the two topics are inter-related. The societal transformation on the background of the appearance of new forms of migration is captured in contemporary forms of art. The migrant in particular has been associated in art with exile and nomads (Fowkes 2010).

Mazaj (2011) considers this representation to be a definitory trait of Eastern European cinema and that the films’ ambiguous representation of the past and present and the film’s relationship with national identity and otherness is essential for a cinema’s European character. European films must be about a nation in transition, about otherness, about characters in search of their identity. A film “truly” European is “preoccupied not with the question of integration, the redrawing of national space and the nature of transnational identity, but rather with the ambiguous status of the national question” (Mazaj 2011). While films of the communist era explored the grand narratives of “memory, trauma and collective identities of the socialist past” (Fowkes 2010), the current Wave is characterized by a sense of cosmopolitan solidarity and ‘inward self-analysis’ (Elsaesser 2005) – as the stories are about the individual, most of the time inner-struggle of characters.

The RNW generally follow two thematic lines – the last decade of Communism, or their respective quotidian. The first category of films chose the pre-1989 quotidian and the Romanian Revolution in particular, as inspiration. Doing so, the auteurs avenge the previous generations of cineastes deprived of the liberty of expressing themselves freely during the totalitarian regime, but also try to deal with the Communist legacy. Films like The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (2005, Cristi Puiu), 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (2007, Cristian Mungui), California Dreamin’ (2007, Cristian Nemescu), and Tales from the Golden Age (2009, Cristian Mungui), “are all different explorations of Romanian national identity or rather failed attempts at establishing one, where a transnational context still seems like a distant reality, yet the national one is already suspended” (Mazaj 2011: 200).
Romania’s most recent history is unclear, forgotten, or remembered differently by characters, while the present identity is still negotiated. The most relevant example of how the RNW represents a nation caught in a confused transitory state is Porumboiu’s *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006), or in its literal translation from Romanian, “Was it or was it not [a revolution]?” The characters of the film gather in a television studio where they discuss how the Romanian Revolution of 1989 took place, but they do not have a common remembrance of the event, coming to question if the revolution even happened. For them, the revolution did not bring any change and thus, it is unimportant. Nevertheless, the characters cannot escape their past either. (Mazaj 2011: 200)

The second category of films draws from the films’ respective quotidian of which migration became a constant phenomenon. The characters of these films are trying to negotiate their identity in what Mazaj (2011) calls a “no-more-national but not-yet-transitional” country. These are the films I will be focusing on in the research. Their particularity stands in the fact that instead of directing the attention to the migrant himself or his life abroad, these films don’t cover the migrant’s life abroad except tangentially. Their focus is more on the migratory process’ impact within the Romanian society, and even more, on the consequences within the migrant’s intimate universe – his family, friends, and community.

To understand why migration is represented as such, all theoretical aspects discussed in the sections above on both migration and cinema will be scrutinised in the following analysis chapters in relation to the RNW’s representation of migration – its reasons and outcomes. By following these elements, I will be able to answer the guiding sub-questions: What are the migrants’ reasons to leave and the outcome of their migration? What changes are triggered by migration within society and the migrant’s family? What is the migrants’ relationship with nation and foreignness?
4. Research Strategy

I chose to have a qualitative approach in this study as I set to understand the representation of a social phenomenon in a cinematic wave – unquantifiable abstract processes. Understanding how migration is represented, and how collective memory, imagined communities, and identity are constructed in the RNW demands more than an analysis covering the so-called ‘bricks and mortar’ of film production (like cinematography, editing, lighting, sound, composition) or the processes of pre- and post-production aspects (like writing the script, financing the film, casting the actors, and distribution and reception of the film). A complex phenomenon like migration and its representation in film asks for an equally complex analysis to cover the textual, historical, and cultural perspectives. These are three different methods which complement each other when trying to decipher not only how the narratives and aesthetics construct meaning, but also analyze the film from the cultural studies perspective. This is important to understanding the film not just as a stand-alone product, but as a product of its times as well. These methods are difficult to handle separately if the desired outcome of the study is to understand a social phenomenon in its entirety.

Consequently, for this study an appropriate method is one that enables the researcher to understand a film as an inter-dependable whole. Such a method is that of social semiotics which helps observing the interaction in between the language of the film (understanding how by means of cinematography, editing, lighting and sound, meaning is constructed), its discourse (the narrative text), and its historical and socio-cultural context (how and why the cinematic wave took this shape, chose particular contemporary themes like migration, but also how and why it chooses the representation it like it did).

According to Leeuwen et al. (2004) this method not only deciphers the language of film, but it is also sensible to its “socio-political intertextualities”, meaning that it connects the film’s with the society’s discourse. Social semiotics is concerned with political understandings and how the viewer is positioned in relation with the film.
4.1 Social Semiotics

A film communicates its message at many different levels that can be analyzed through textual and visual analysis, critical discourse analysis, cultural studies, semiotics, and historical analysis. Each type of analysis focuses on different elements that make up a film, like discourse, cinematography, sound, and so on. In order to cover all these separate elements under one method of analysis, Harries (1995: 40) suggests social semiotics “which encompasses textual, intertextual, contextual, pragmatic, and ideological realms of inquiry”.

Social semiotics is a much more manageable method than traditional semiotics for the purpose of this research because it decodes the way in which a film represents issues of national and cultural identity. Film semiotics treat the different levels of film (textual, structural, and ideological) separately, while social semiotics interlocks them. Bottom line, social semiotic analysis connects the text with its context (Stam et al. 1992: 241). A social semiotic analysis applied to film theory is used for “analysing the meanings established by the syntactic relations between the people, places, and things depicted in images” (Leeuwen et al. 2004: 5).

As described by Leeuwen et al. (2004) there are three steps in conducting a social semiotic analysis: representation, orientation and organisation. Representation is about defining the theme and how it is represented visually, verbally, musically, or sound-wise. Orientation shows how we position characters and ourselves in relation with them due to cinematography, setting, etc. Lastly, organization shows how meanings are sequenced and integrated into dynamic text.

Considering the amount of material to be researched, I will avoid being too detailed about the number and timing of each frame or scene and so on, but will provide thick descriptions of the narrative. In particular, I will focus on the scenes in which the migrant is interacting with the relatives or friends who remained home, when the clash between desire and reality is strongest and the scene is very rich in introspection and representations of one’s family dynamics.

The method of social semiotics offers the researcher plenty of freedom in his or her approach to decoding the films. There are no strict outlines or systematic steps one
should follow to conduct the analysis as long as it covers all the three levels of film described by Leeuwen et al. 2004: the textual (otherwise called representation), structural (orientation), and ideological (organisation). Harries (1995:45) presents these levels further as “the textual analysis (micro-structure), the pragmatics revolving around the production/reception dynamic (mesostructure), and the historical/ideological implications of such semiotic encounters (macro-structure)”. Each level covers respective elements that influence the production of the films (its stakeholders and the behind the scenes), the relation of the film with audiences, the narratives and discourse of the films, and the aesthetics of the film. Through this method the films can be studied in historical and theoretical context.

All these levels of analysis are equally important because social semiotics claims that meaning is not only produced by the film’s text alone, but is the result of interaction with the reader (Harries 1995: 46). Bakhtin (1986: 118) underlines that the text itself does not carry “meaning”, but “potential” for meaning, a potential reached differently by each spectator. A text is understood according to one’s own specific set of values and social semiotics centers on the issue of how the viewer sees certain social allegiances and values prominent over others and “in that sense, social semiotics denies there is a gap between text or product and audience” (Leeuwen et al. 2004: 7).

The approach of social semiotics is thus the reason for dedicating part of the previous literature review to studying the audiences of the RNW and its distribution, as the understanding of the film largely depends on who watches the films.

4.2 The selection of films

The material of this research consists of a selection of seven films focused on the theme of migration which were part of the Romanian New Wave produced from 2002 to 2011. The films represent the work of different directors and belong to various genres from fiction, documentary, and animation.

The criterions of selection for the films were their theme (characters being engaged at any stage of the process of migration), the films’ production year (so that the research
covers the entire period of development of both the work-migration and the RNW within the timeframe studied), and the reputation of the films (so they have been distributed, appreciated, and awarded both abroad and in Romania). Not lastly, the films chosen employ different filmic techniques and present a wide variety of characters covering an array of genders, ages, migratory generation, class, environment, and education. In this way, the portrait of the migrant, the phenomenon of migration, and its impact on the Romanian society represented are observed in their complexity.

The films chosen for analysis are Nap Toader’s *Italiiencele* (2004 *The Italian Girls*); Paul Negescu’s *Acasa* (2007 *Home*); Thomas Ciulei’s *Podul de Flori* (2008 *Flower Bridge*); Melissa Raaf & Razvan Radulescu’s *Felicia inainte de toate* (2009 *First of all, Felicia*); Bobby Paunescu’s *Francesca* (2009); Andrei Gruzsniczki’s *Cealalta Irina* (2009 *The other Irene*) and Anca Damian’s *Crulic – Drumul spre dincolo* (2011 *Crulic - The path to beyond*). These films will shortly be introduced below to familiarise the reader with their plot.

**The Italian Girls** covers the story of Lenuta and Jeni, two young adult sisters living in the countryside and dreaming of Spain, Italy, or America. Giovanni (the Italian for the Romanian ‘George’), one of Jeni’s ex-boyfriends, a fellow villager who apparently has some business in Spain, promises to take the girls to work in Spain. The girls are happy with the perspective of picking strawberries abroad, especially since before 2002, working in Spain and going abroad without a visa and a work-permit was not allowed. The experience abroad is not covered in the film, but the viewer later discovers that instead of being taken to Spain, the girls are sold as prostitutes in Albania and eventually rescued by American soldiers. Upon return to their village, the girls pretend to have been picking grapes in Italy and try to reconstruct their lives. Giovanni, who also returns, reveals their secret in public, and a competition starts between him and Jeni for becoming mayor in the village. Despite Giovanni humiliating the girls in public, Jeni wins the elections.

**Home** is a short film that captures a day in a taxi driver’s life. In the evening the driver picks up one of the migrant workers who has returned from Spain by bus. The man is in his 40s, a father of two, and works as a construction builder abroad. The action is set
just before Romania joined the EU in 2007, and the man is back for the Christmas holidays, overwhelmed with his many pieces of luggage. The discussion between the two men reveals their view on the future of Romania; their perspectives within its borders; the EU; their families and the sacrifice made for it; what being a Romanian abroad is like and why; what home means; and what, in their view, is wrong with Bucharest. A duality between nostalgia and revolt is constant across the film. Upon arriving at the destination, the taxi driver helps the father to the door. However, instead of seeing a happy scene of family reunion, he witnesses a dull, unemotional, routine welcoming of an equally disappointed father.

The title of the next film, Flower Bridge, refers to the 90’s eponym event that announced with pomp the opening of the borders for Moldavian people to go to Romania freely. It is a documentary that follows the life of the Arhir family in a Bessarabian village for a few seasons. The father, Costica, is taking care of his children Maria, Alexandra, and the youngest, Alexie. Their mother left for Italy in the hope to find work and send money home for the children to go to a better school and to refurbish the house. However, she is not earning as much expected, and the family is more in debt than before. Because of not having the required legal papers, she has no possibility to return to Romania. At home, the father and children have to cover for her responsibilities.

First of all, Felicia is a fiction film covering one day in Felicia’s life. She has left Romania immediately after the revolution to become a librarian in Holland. There she got married and later divorced and has a young boy with whom she speaks both Romanian and Dutch. She is now in her 30s and on a short holiday at her parent’s home in Bucharest. On the particular day covered in the film she is supposed to return to Holland, but misses the plane. The film is structured as a continuous dialogue between Felicia and her mother and the film talks about family dynamics, generational differences, and cultural clash. The game of power and blame reveal Felicia’s feelings, needs, and values after almost 20 years of living abroad.

Francesca is also a fiction film following Francesca in the rushed, confusing, and traumatic process of emigration. Francesca is in her 20s and is a kindergarten teacher.
She has a long-term boyfriend but is living with her mother after her parents’ divorce years before. Francesca has been thinking for a long time about leaving for Italy, but the opportunity comes when a black-market intermediary finds an Italian family for her to work for. She has less than a week to pack; tell her parents, boyfriend, and friends; collect the money needed; and leave her job. The film is very detailed on the technicalities of the process, but there is little direct information on why migrating is so important. Once on the bus to Spain, Francesca receives the news that her boyfriend, who was involved in an illegal real-estate business, has been killed. Her trip ends even before crossing the border.

*The other Irene* is inspired by the real-life drama of middle-aged Aurel Jianu, a happily married, security worker in a mall whose beloved wife, Irina, takes the opportunity of working in Cairo for a short period of time. Her leave is motivated by her desire to escape their middle class lifestyle and build a career. Upon her return three months later, Irina seems different to Aurel - she wants to buy a dishwasher, uses foreign words, and dresses differently. A few days later after receiving a phone call, Irina leaves again. Another phone call brings Aurel the news that Irina has died. From then on, the film follows Aurel’s emotional crisis. Trying to discover the circumstances of his wife’s death, Aurel is told that Irina had an affair abroad, got pregnant, was abandoned by her lover, and finally killed herself. This news is shocking for him, and he feels like it is all a conspiracy, which he refuses to accept.

*Crulic-The path to beyond* is an animated film based on a true story recounting the life of Daniel Crulic, a Romanian from the rural area of Moldova. The film is narrated from the perspective of the main character in voice-over. Crulic has been abroad many times over the years where he used to buy and resell all kinds of goods in Romania. On this occasion, Crulic leaves for Poland where he has lived before. This time, however, things go wrong as he gets confused with a Romanian gypsy thief and is wrongly accused of the crime and imprisoned. While in custody, he starts protesting to different authorities such as the embassies and the police, clearly demonstrating his innocence. Sadly, he is ignored, and he decides to go on hunger strike. Due to doctors’ and authorities’ lack of interest, Crulic eventually dies after a long and painful process of starvation. Being
narrated in the first person, the film represents Crulic’s views on himself, Romania, and emigration – its purpose and consequences.

4.3 Limitations of the study

In the case of this qualitative film analysis, there are no ethical considerations applicable since the study does not deal with human subjects. Nonetheless, the research does have some limitations generated by the research method employed.

Social semiotic analysis is a very demanding method that asks for a solid background on all the other methods it refers to – textual, cultural, and historical. However, this method does not impose a strict systematic framework to be followed analyzing the films. It can be very difficult to track of all the information gathered, labelled, and organised for a coherent theme for the study. On the other hand, this looseness has the advantage of giving the researcher more freedom in making his own appreciations based on his own set of social, ethnic, economic, and gender perspectives. Despite the advantages, as the saying goes, with freedom comes responsibility, as while employing social semiotics there is always the danger that the researcher might be biased in his analysis. As a Romanian migrant, I myself have experienced some of the situations represented in the films, including a change in my values and beliefs, but I have also come to question my national identity. To fend off any risk of being biased, I will support all my arguments with a thick description of the material analyzed.

Another danger is to get lured in by the RNW’s realistic style and not treat it as a representation but as a real-life study case. The research includes many observations based on statistical data drawn from research on the topic of Romanian migration. This empirical data will be used to contrast the film analysis findings, not for validation, but for enhancing further discussions about the films.
5. The representation of work migration

This chapter will present the results of the analysis answering the research question - how do the films represent work migration, but also the sub-questions. Accordingly, the chapter will have three main sections looking at the representation of the reasons and outcomes of migration; the representation of nation in relation with foreignness, and the representation of family and societal changes.

5.1 The representation of nation and foreignness

This section will first explain the character’s fascination with foreignness and aspiration to what they understand as being civilised. Secondly, the character’s own spaces they inhabit will be examined in order to understand how the films construct the image of the nation and the individual’s relation to it.

5.1.1 Characters’ fascination with foreignness

The variety of social classes present in the films suggests that the phenomenon of migration is widely spread in the Romanian society represented. There is a lot of talk about foreignness among characters, all of which seem to have an opinion about migration and most have considered it for themselves at least once. For example, before leaving, Francesca (Francesca) runs errands across town, and all people whom she meets give unasked for advice or opinions on life in Italy. Nevertheless, none of the characters themselves have been abroad, but many of their friends and family have.

Despite the talk about foreignness, the action never leaves the borders of Romania. Francesca’s preparations to leave are presented in detail, but she never actually makes it across the border before having to return. The story of Home starts just as the migrant father returns to Bucharest, and The Italian Girls’ episode abroad is absent. The action covers the girls’ preparations to leave but then jumps from the moment the girls cross the border to the moment they return to their village. Little is being questioned about the Flower Bridge mother’s life in Italy; Irina’s life abroad is a mystery, and Felicia’s journey abroad is reduced to the flight she has to catch but fails to do so. ‘Foreignness’ is present in films only through the characters’ opinions about it, how they assess themselves to it, and their appropriation of what they understand as ‘foreign’.
Leaving is done in a rush as soon as the opportunity to emigrate appears, and often the characters do not have a clear motivation or destination. For example, Francesca is aided by a black market intermediary to find a job working for an Italian family near Milano. All she needs to know is the possible payment, and she accepts the conditions despite not having any guarantees for the deal. Even though information about foreignness is available through for example news broadcasts, the films represent the characters as having little interest in these sources as well. Aurel, for example, turns off the TV as the news bulletin presents the story of two sad children whose mother left for Spain and their family disintegrated. This scene announces Aurel’s own family destiny, but he chooses to ignore it. The scarceness of their knowledge about the country of destination is apparent also through the fact that the characters do not even question what might be abroad prior to leaving. Francesca does not know how to commute from the bus to the address she will be working at, but says she will figure it out there. Irina learns in a pharmacy she is not allowed to carry liquids on planes while she was buying the most basic pills to take with her to Egypt.

Despite the lack of active seek of information about it, among the characters of the films there is a fascination with going abroad. The Italian Girls constantly daydream about being rescued by foreigners; Francesca goes through humiliations just to leave for an uncertain destination in Italy, solely on the basis that it is “near Milano”; and Irina is so absorbed by her experience abroad that she does not hesitate to leave her husband for a second time. Costica Arhir, the father from the Flower Bridge, also insists on going to Italy despite spending the previous three years caring for his children in the absence of the mother. He saw his children suffer and go through the difficulties of living without one of the parents, and yet he is willing to migrate as well. The Western dream conquered the imaginations of all these characters, and long for travelling abroad.

The characters’ universe is invaded by a constant buzz about foreignness and emigration. In Francesca, Home, and The Other Irene, the television or radio sets broadcast news about the Romanians working in Spain and the work market in Bulgaria directly in the intimacy of their homes. In the idyllic landscape of the Italian Girls, a megaphone on a car breaks the natural silence as it goes through the village announcing
the start of work selections. Villagers are invited to apply for jobs like picking olives in Greece, strawberries in Spain, or oranges in Italy.

The publicly broadcasted information on migration similarly only covers financial issues or the technicalities of migration. Nevertheless, in the society portrayed, the discourse on the West and migration goes deeper into social issues, but remains ambiguous. For example, there is a whole spectrum of urban myths about the life abroad. Many characters tell about someone else’s’ traumatic experience abroad in stories about violence. For example, in *Francesca* their discourse draws from overheard stories of violence like rapes, murders, kidnappings, and unfair accusations against Romanians. Francesca’s father explains, based on abounding details he overheard in the media, that in the Italian’s perspectives, all Romanians are gypsies, murderers, and thieves. Italians want the Romanians dead. He is convinced he will be called to recognize his daughter’s body or to pick her up from the streets.

5.1.2 Proud of and shamed of being Romanian

In the migrants’ and the stay at home’s discourse on migration, there is also a duality between being ashamed for being Romanian and for being proud of it. On the one hand, Romanians perceive themselves as the castaways of Europe and perceive their image abroad as inferior. One character even recounts a story about Romanian migrants in Italy being kidnapped for their organs, but on the other hand, she is proud of Romanians having “the healthiest organs in Europe” (*Francesca*). Romanian national pride is represented in decay. Francesca’s grandfather is ironical about Francesca leaving for Italy, as in his youth, Italian men were coming to Romania for the women, and not the other way around. He extrapolates to characterizing Romania as Italy’s slave. He says that before entering the EU, Romania had dignity.

Francesca’s ambition is to restore Romania’s image abroad and open a kindergarten for the Romanian children in Italy. She states that she wants to make a better name for Romanians in the eyes of Italians. Yet, Francesca is by no means represented as a patriot, or as a dedicated teacher. Also, there is no reference to Francesca trying to fulfil her career ambitions in Romania before deciding to do so abroad.
In *Home*, the taxi driver’s discourse on Romania joining the EU oscillates between feelings of anger and pride. On the one hand he accuses Romania of being subjugated to the authority of EU, but on the other hand, he is also proud of his country being accepted in the “West”. Furthermore, he is revolted that Romania was not considered as being part of Europe before, but he is angry with the changes the EU will bring to the Romanian lifestyle despite praising the EU lifestyle and Western values to which he aspires. He is also angry with Romanian authorities for not having enough parking spaces in the city. Nonetheless, he is proud that a new central parking space was recently built, but states that he does not plan to use it because he has to pay for it.

Characteristics of foreignness and national identity surface from his discourse. For example, from his point of view and the other character’s in general, to be civilised is equal with having a developed infrastructure. Civilization is inherently an attribute of the West. For example, when Francesca fears her daughter will not have a place to change clothes in the train station abroad, Francesca reassures her by saying that “there it is civilised, not like here”, meaning that there must be a place she can change clothes, which is not possible in a Romanian bus or train station. The Italian girls also dream of ‘moving to civilisation’ in the city. They associate this superior lifestyle with living in an apartment and using expensive perfume. Civilisation in the films is represented as a matter of earning expensive goods, especially electronics, living in an urban environment, and having access to a free, state-provided infrastructure. Having a big house is one of the criteria for the characters represented for being “civilised”, the house being understood as “infrastructure”. An important upgrade to the infrastructure are electronic appliances. Irina’s motivation to leave was to move into a bigger, nicer apartment, and her first initiative upon return from Cairo is to buy a dishwasher.

To be equally ‘civilised’ when living abroad, Romanians make sure they look good. Irina dyes her hair blonde, and Francesca’s mother arranges her daughter’s hair in a sophisticated coiffure to impress the Italians despite the fact she will travel by bus to Italy for a couple of days. For Romanians, changing or improving their looks is a boost of self-esteem and a cover-up to the damage done by their nationality while abroad, but also a way of showing off their newly acquired social status upon return.
5.1.3 The representation of ‘home’
Continuing on the representations of nation and identity, this following section will focus on the representations of ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ through the portrayal of the space characters are inhabiting. ‘Home’ is such a central theme in the films, that the film about the father returning from work to Romania is even titled “Home”. The film’s simple title written in white letters lingering on the black background as the film begins, invites the viewer to build his own understanding of ‘home’ and build expectations of the story before the action even begins. Three quarters of the short film take place in a taxi, the dialogue between the characters building expectations about the forthcoming family reunion and idealizing it. Upon arrival at the destination however, the wishful thinking carried on the trip does not materialise. Consequently, the reading of the film’s title becomes ironical while the idea that work migration benefits the family is ridiculed.

The word ‘home’ is understood in the films as “family”. It is not their country these migrants are missing or particularities related to Romanian culture, but solely their families. What is more, for ‘home’ to be understood as ‘family’, the family should be united and provide the migrant with unconditional love, care, and support. *First of All, Felicia’s* motto “There's no place like home. As long as you know where your heart is” suggests that if there is no one to love one, the family is disintegrated, and one no longer has a home.

In the beginning of the films, before the possibility of migration occurs, the characters live all together in small apartments or houses. Having young adults living with their parents sometimes creates awkward situations due to the lack of intimacy. Francesca, for example, needs to send her mother away to the neighbours for a game night in order to spend the evening with her boyfriend. Consequently, all of the characters aspire to having more intimacy and comfort by refurbishing, enlarging or building their houses. The only intimate space is the couple’s small studio where objects like messages on the fridge and Irina’s clothes on the bed create an emotional bond between Aurel and his house. Once Irina passes away, Aurel tries to compensate for the loss of his wife by maintaining homey rituals like reusing old post-it messages they left to each other on the fridge and reconstructing her presence by spreading her clothes on the bed.
The personality of the characters is also reflected in the objects they surround themselves with. For example, in *Crulic – The Path to Beyond*, the animation reserves considerable time to present in detail all of the migrant’s belongings and everything material he left behind after his death. As a migrant, Crulic is represented by two mobile phones, a few orthodox pocket-size icons, a prayer book, and unsent letters. These are the only goods left for the family to pick up after his death.

Religious artifacts stand at the basis of the Romanian’s spirituality. Orthodox calendars are present in the homes of almost all of the characters. In *The Italian Girls, Francesca*, and *Flower Bridge*, rituals of purification or good luck are performed around the home. For example, in preparation for Easter, the Arhir family cleans the entire house, and afterwards the father spits water on the flowers and other objects to purify them. The Italian girls also take care of their mother’s spirit. The girls put a glass of water at the window, as the water and the window are both symbols of crossing between the physical and spiritual world. The films consequently present the home as a blessed place, protected by higher spirits.

At the heart of the houses’ universe stands the kitchen. All the important conversations, decision-making, and introspection are carried out in this space: Felicia has breakfast with her parents and stands up for her father while at the table; Francesca asks for her father’s approval and discusses her migration plans with him in the kitchen; Irina makes the decision to leave while sitting in the crowded kitchen; a scene in *Francesca* shows her boyfriend for two full minutes in a moment of silence in the kitchen. The kitchen is a space that provides the intimacy for discussing important matters privately and informally. The kitchen is a neutral, clean, and transitory space, a buffer space between the hallway where one keeps unwanted guests and the living room where the space between people is wider and less intimate and where one invites guests in, serves them, but keeps a more formal atmosphere. Discussions in the kitchen are made on more equal terms than in any other space of the house where people might censor themselves on grounds of politeness.
5.1.4 Representation of space as source of identity
For all of these characters the desire to migrate was driven by material desire, particularly in what concerns their homes, that the characters feel they cannot fulfil in their country. Consequently, this next section will attempt to provide insight into how the character’s environment is represented, revealing salient elements that drive the characters away from their country or tie them to it. This section will focus on how the films incorporate features of national identity in the representation of space and the quotidian using the concepts of Heimat and banal nationalism.

Although they struggle to leave Romania, the characters never sell their houses or goods. Instead, they prefer to keep the houses for their relatives to use, or abandon them, even if they have no clear plans to return. Through this physical attachment, their ‘home’ remains Romania. Nonetheless, having a house to fit their standards is so important that characters chose to leave their homes. They do so with clear plans to renovate their houses with the money earned abroad, even before leaving - Irina, Arhir family, Lenuta and Jeni all left with this in mind. Refurbishment of the house is a very important feature for Romanians as it shows their newly earned status and it brings the house up to date with their newly acquired cosmopolitan mentalities.

5.1.5 Concrete jungles – the representation of urban environment
The films will be further analysed in two categories depending on the location of their action either in the urban or rural space. This results in very different representations of the relations between the characters and their environment.

Francesca, The Other Irene, First of All, Felicia, and Home all take place in Bucharest in very similar neighborhoods of eight to twelve story high blocks of apartments built during the Communist regime. These neighborhoods are overwhelming in their appearance, blocking the view to the sky, and generally restricting the depth of field. Nature is absent and the mise-en-scene is reduced to the surroundings of the blocks - their parking lot, the block’s staircases, and corridors (Figure 1). The films’ have a preferences for impersonal spaces. For example, more than half of the action in Home and First of All, Felicia takes place in taxies or airports, impersonal places by definition.
Remarkable is the character’s lack of attachment between the characters and their outside environment. They are connected with their city through their families, lovers, or friends, but do not seem to be attached to anything else. For example, despite covering road-trip-like scenes, these films do not include moments of contemplation that are traditional to the genre.

Neither Francesca nor Felicia are shown looking nostalgically through the window while on the bus or taxi. This reinforces their determination to migrate, as well as a disinterest for the city they inhabit. In the case of Francesca, an explanation of the lack of emotional connection with her city and home might be the legal complications related with the property rights over her apartment. At the beginning of the film, Francesca is stopped on the street by a woman who claims she is the true owner of the apartment. It is unclear why she claims so and the film gives no further details. In the absence of an episode in which Francesca meets a friend on the street, the city is represented as an alienating, unfriendly environment. Further on, while on the tram, Francesca looks absent-minded, standing in a crowded space, surrounded by people with whom she has no connection, presents the city as if its inhabitants are “isolated beings in a world void of content” (Pop 2010: 33).

Another explanation for the characters’ lack of attachment with their urban environment is represented through the city’s state of perpetual reconstruction or renovation. For example, Francesca passes through Lipscani area a few times, a landmark of old Bucharest – the most famous promenade area – considered the “old town” and praised for its inter bellum architecture. However, the houses in Lipscani are derelict, and the area is being dug-up chaotically, Francesca having to move through dust and dirt and improvised bridges and sidewalks.
5.1.6 Lonesome landscapes - the representation of rural environment

In the films located in the rural space, a lot more time and attention is given to establishing the space and time of the action and depicting the universe of the characters, than in the urban-set films. *Crulic*, for example, opens with a zoom into what can be considered an example of vernacular rural establishment identifiable as belonging to the Moldova region of Romania. However, the house is presented in a cold, desolated landscape, in the same urban shade of neon blue. The craw in the tree adds to the gloomy image, as this bird is associated with the death of a person (Figure 2).

*Flower Bridge* is set in a Moldavian village which, at first sight, seems not to have been affected by the passing of time. Moldova is associated with one of the most picturesque regions of Romania. Moldova is represented by extensive agricultural work, is technologically less developed, and is renowned as highly spiritual region hosting hundreds of churches and monasteries giving the region’s name of ‘the land of monasteries’. Nonetheless, the film breaks this mythicized image where the picturesque is represented as underdeveloped, the agriculture is unsustainable and spirituality is lost.

*The Flower Bridge* is the most descriptive of all films when it comes to mise-en-scene. The documentary applies the cinematography technique of “fly on the wall” where the camera follows the family’s routine. The action takes place mostly outside the house. The presence of nature is extensive. A strong focus is put on the representation of everyday works around the home - feeding the animals, putting poison for the mice in the corn, sending the geese to grass, assisting goats giving birth. The manner of representation is very detailed, directed at audiences from the urban space who are not accustomed with the self-sustainable traditional and rudimentary life style in the
country-side. The village is represented thus both as idyllic, natural, pure and honest, but also as being threatened by changes in the economy and society as agricultural work does not pay enough for the family to sustain itself. Villagers are thus pushed to migrate and work abroad which breaks the very essence of the rural life, the family’s integrity, and collaboration among members. Unlike films set in the urban space, attachment with the environment is represented as very close, or even necessary. Crulic’s death is announced by a craw, and his soul, represented by the white sheet that covered his body is flying through the woods.

*The Italian Girls* establishes the space of the action through the motif of the road. The viewer is taken to the village where the girls live and the soundscape contributes establishing space through the sound of cymbal, dog barks, and cow mooing in a comic-arrangement. The viewer can never really take the rural lifestyle seriously, as the film represents it as inauthentic and contaminated with ‘modernity’. What is more, none of the villagers seem to remember their traditions; however, they reject the upgrade to the future EU requirements which they blame as breaking tradition.

Many other scenes reflect the contrast between these characters’ views and reality. One of the first scenes of *The Italian Girls* introduces (in tight close-ups) the sisters very seriously debating important life decisions, their dream of foreignness and aspirations to a life in the city. The scene is set in the field while cows are grazing around them, the comic effect being given by the fast shift from Lenuta’s grave face to a very wide frame of the cows. Through camera framing techniques and editing, the film is very critical about the girls’ obliviousness to the reality around them. Their world is a paradoxical blend between traditional rural life and invasive new technologies. For example, the girls are reading women’s magazines while washing each others’ backs at the river; are lifting each other up a tree in order to have mobile phone reception; and trying to learn Spanish using a walkman and headphones while ploughing the field with a bull.

Jeni and Lenuta’s obliviousness to the values their village was built on is cynically criticised through the insertion of short narrative episodes parallel to the main action. The episodes show a team of French film makers and their efforts to shoot a documentary about the beauty and traditions specific to the girls’ village. Unfortunately,
none of the villagers remember the traditions very well and improvise. The villagers are ignorant to some of Romania’s most important cultural artefacts and traditions that were born in the rural area they live in - the world-famous sculptor Brancusi and the traditional dance “Calusarul”.

A similarly scene takes place in the Flower Bridge. The children’s homework is to comment on the saying “‘eternity’ was born in the country-side” (“vesnicia s-a nascut la sat”). The saying refers to the maintenance of the status quo in the slow-changing rural life and the village’s importance as a place for the safe-keeping of values, traditions, and overall morality of a nation. The children however have not heard the saying before and do not know how to interpret it.

The experience abroad teaches migrants to appreciate their life and home in Romania. For example, it is only after the disastrous migratory experience that Jeni and Lenuta learn to appreciate what they have back home. They return and reconstruct their lost parent’s house, and get involved in the community as Jeni decides to run for mayor against her former lover and abuser. The film suggests that the girls belong in their village and are responsible for its destiny.

5.2 The reasons and outcomes of migration
The title of this paper reflects the dual nature of the narratives all the films studied follow. When doubting her decision to leave Romania and work abroad, Lenuta (The Italian Girls) asks an old priest if he thinks she should leave or not. The priest responds “there is good for the body, but here is better for the soul”. The priest has traditionally been the teacher in Romanian villages and is still a symbol of wisdom and faith, being looked up to and asked by villagers for direction. Despite the moralising, patriotic, and theological connotations of the priest’s answer, his reply is a good indicator of the direction in the film’s discourse and its critical stand on the issue of migration which can be found across all the films studied.

Characters are in a catch-22 trying to make a compromise between what they (think they) want and what they need. This tension between an imagined life abroad and its implications for the life at home is at the center of all the films’ plots. This bifocality is
not present only in the migrants themselves, but also in the stay at home relatives. These will be further analyzed.

5.2.1 The desire and the decision to migrate and return
In this section, I am interested both in the ‘practicalities’ of migration (like financial or networking aspects which will be described in another section) which weight more on the decision to leave, but I am also interested in the less quantifiable feelings and mentalities which trigger the desire to leave. The reason for doing so stands once more in the nature of the films which are constructed on mood and atmosphere rather than action. The films explore one’s inner experiences more than his acts. Also, some of the characters never actually leave the country, and only their desire to migrate is explored, as they do not engage actively in doing so.

Thus, the event of migration is used just as a pretext and as context for themes like cultural identity, family relations and society to be observed. Instead of focusing on the action of migration, the films focus on the characters’ emotional evolution. This structure is most visible in the case of Aurel from The Other Irene who is portrayed in the process of mental and emotional disintegration once he realizes his life was not what he thought it was after Irina’s migration. The occurrence of the possibility of migration, or the return of a migrant, are the intrigue of the stories - the catalyst to the character’s journey to reassessment of identity and their belonging.

5.2.2 “I feel I should do it. I think you should not”
 Despite the general admiration for foreignness in the Romanian society represented, the films display a duality in the mentalities of those who want to leave and those who chose to stay. When asking her father for his blessing to emigrate, Francesca reassures him “Dad, I know you find it hard to believe, but I feel I can do it”. The verb ‘feel’ is in contrast with her father’s ‘thinking’ about her decision. The migrant’s motivations for leaving are based on emotions – dreams, inner needs, and desires – while for the non-migrant, the reasons and envisioned outcomes of the possible migration are filtered through reason. Migrants most of the times cannot challenge reason, so they ignore it or
run away from it. Francesca does not get her blessing, and the Italian girls run away from their disapproving father, making everything possible so that he does not find out.

The authority of reason over emotion, and consequently the difference between the migrant and the stay at home characters is constructed not only through language, but also through the visuals. The camera conveys meaning on how one character is positioned in relation with other characters and in relation with the viewer.

Both in Francesca and The Other Irene, there are many scenes in which the camera is placed in the corner of a room where it surprises its subjects in a fly-on-the-wall manner. In the scene where Francesca informs her father of the decision to leave (Figure 3 top), the camera contributes to building the tension and intimacy between the two characters. This dialogue-heavy scene, filmed from a fixed point of the small kitchen, frames the two from their profile, assigning each the opposite thirds of a frame with the middle section being left empty. Tension is built when one of these characters crosses the invisible middle line of their private (safe) space. In this scene, not only is the textual information important, but putting the characters face to face also allows for a clearer representation of the power relations between them.

Another ‘over the table’ scene from Francesca takes place in her uncle’s office from whom Francesca needs to borrow money to be able to migrate (Figure 3 down). Despite the framing assigning the characters equal shares of the screen, Francesca’s humped and cramped position with her hands hidden under the desk makes her look smaller in relation to her over-weight uncle who holds his hands on the desk and bends over towards the girl. With the aid of cinematography, editing, and mise-en-scene, Francesca is represented as the weaker character in the way that the visuals built up the viewer’s expectation that she might be wrong and unsure in her ambitions to leave. On the other
hand, such representation also suggests her strong will and determination in comparison to the older generation portrayed as resigned and losing faith. Emotion seems to be the winner in the debate about migrating or not in the films representation, as characters, driven by their dreams, do all possible to migrate, despite warnings.

5.2.3 The decision to migrate as a family strategy
Migrating is often done in the name and for the sake of the family’s well-being. For the characters, working abroad is seen first and foremost as a source of fast money to support the family’s ambitions to improve their homes and lifestyle. The Arhir parents in the *Flower Bridge* decided that by temporarily working abroad, they will have enough money to send the children to a better school and to refurbish the home. Sacrificing the family for a few months of hard work abroad is taken for granted as a good deal. The father complains about not being with his family for very long, but on the other, he is happy to “have what to put on the table” on celebrations like Christmas.

Since family is key in taking the decision to leave and making the preparations, leaving Romania is represented in the film as a relational maze. One needs to have strong network capital to arrange the migration. For example, Francesca involves her entire entourage in the process. Her parents and boyfriend are there for approval, financial and emotional support, her friends help with finding an intermediary who helps her find a job, her uncle finances her leave, most people whom she meets lend her small sums of money, and everybody offers her advice about life in Italy. There is even a black market work migration mafia at any step in the migratory process. One can choose a future husband abroad (*Occident 2002*), find host families abroad (*Francesca*), find a working place (*The Other Irene*), cross the border (*The Italian Girls*), obtain emigration the papers, collect all the money needed (*Francesca, Flower Bridge, Home*) or even chose to prostitute (*Francesca, The Italian Girls*).

At the basis of this social structure stands the family, represented as the nucleus of Romanian society and, with the exception of Crulic, it provides the context in which the action takes place. The film *First of All, Felicia* is dedicated fully to representing family dynamics. This film is almost entirely based on dialogue between Felicia and her
mother, and how they feel about one another and about themselves. Despite their mutual accusations of ingratitude, in the end, each reassumes her initial role and the family remains together (at least until the next crisis). Nothing changes in the original dynamic.

5.2.4 The plans to return

Leaving in itself is not the ultimate goal of the migration, but the return is. This section looks at these plans.

The rhetoric on the migrant’s reasons for leaving cover financial difficulties, fulfilling career ambitions, or less pragmatic reasons such as a belief that life abroad is more civilized, free, or exciting, and that travelling is going to bring them a new social status. The characters rarely voice their motivations for migrating in the dialogue of the films, and when they do, they use generic phrases like “we have no future in Romania”, “we cannot live here”, “what good is staying”. These statements are accompanied by gestures of resignation like raising the shoulders and sighing. Most of these rhetorical phrases are continued with discussions about money. The characters represented in the film want to go abroad thinking they will earn a lot of money, an idea embedded in popular belief. However, very few consider the consequences on their family lives. Most assume, and even promise, they will be reunited with their loved ones abroad.

Since the reasons for leaving are seldom explored, the decision to emigrate is made in a rush and without much debate. Work migration is ubiquitous in the society represented, and migration is portrayed as endemic. Francesca, the Arhir mother, the Italian girls, the father from Home, Irina, and Cricic all made the decision to leave for about three months at the end of which they planned to return to their old, but improved life.

However, the films portray the possibility of return as an unrealistic safety net: Crlic keeps returning to Poland “for one more time”; Irina wants to go to Cairo for 3 more months; the father of Home has been working for many years in different countries for a few months at a time where job opportunities existed; the Arhir mother planned to leave for 3 months but has been in Italy for over 3 years and has no possibility of returning. None of these migrants seem to be able to renounce their migratory habits.
5.2.5 Deconstructing the image of the migrant
The line between the ‘then’ and ‘after’ migration is not clearly traced in the films, sometimes because the narratives are not linear, other times because the ‘before migration’ episode is not presented. Nevertheless, all characters have vivid a memory of ‘what it was’, and build their ‘after’ migration expectations on how it used to be, convinced that upon return nothing has changed about them and their families. As suggested, the characters’ expectations about and plans for migration are not met. Adding to that, their migration, successful or not, has destructive effects on their family members and themselves, and to a bigger level, on the society represented. If the previous sections concentrated on the expectations, the following ones will focus on the realities of migration represented through its outcome.

The ‘before and after’ polar refers to the conflict between expectation and reality. For example, the title of the film Flower Bridge refers to the 1991 political event where Moldavians gained the right to cross the Romanian border without restrictions. The title and the action are oxymoronic suggesting the naivety with which Moldavians greeted the opportunity, but which proved to have a less positive outcome in the long run than expected. The revolutionary character of the Flower-bridge event is undermined as the action of the film never leaves the surroundings of the Moldavian village despite the title announcing the opening of borders. Even if the film is about migration and its effects, and even if the Arhir mother is in Italy, there is no imagery of the migrant or foreign country, fully absent from the action.

5.2.6 The shattering of the western dream
The idea of success in going abroad to provide for the family is so embedded in the mentality of those represented in the films that the migrants go through significant efforts and even humiliations to be able to emigrate. For example, the Arhir family had to borrow a large amount of money to go abroad and is now more in debt than it was before; Francesca has to borrow money from a sexually-abusive uncle with a fetish for children’s poems; and Lenuta and Jeni abandon their old father against his will and risk their lives crossing the border illegally, becoming victims of human trafficking.
Migrating is not carefully thought through, and once the opportunity to leave occurs, the characters take it in the shortest time possible - Francesca leaves in four days, Irina in three, the Italian girls the next day. The characters are sometimes risking their lives by crossing the border illegally (*The Italian Girls*), while others travel by unsafe, uncomfortable buses for days (*Francesca, Home*). Once on the bus, migrants are treated like goods, and not humans – no tickets or seats are assigned on the bus and people crowd to get on the bus first; the company assumes no responsibility in case the bus breaks down; and stopping the bus is not done on request. Migrants are portrayed as permanently being burdened by numerous, voluminous, and heavy luggage, having to rely abroad only on what they brought from home.

Migrants who have engaged in work migration are represented as destined to be stuck in limbo. The mother in the *Flower Bridge* cannot earn more in Italy because she has no legal rights, but cannot return to Romania either. This is ironically exemplified in *Crulic, the path to beyond*, as Crulic has to struggle to leave for Poland and does so illegally, but once dead, he receives a passport and the right to transit legally across Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary with no problems. What is more, his post-mortem trip is by a Mercedes car which he had never driven while being alive.

Not only are their lives abroad are not ideal, but it also carves deep scars in the way the migrant perceives himself. Mental and emotional distress is very common. Felicia’s problem might not be financial, but emotionally and culturally she is also stuck between two worlds – her son and job are in Holland, but she misses the love and support of her family in Romania where she returns on every occasion. Trying to return is made impossible not so much by the change of oneself, but of the more abrupt change in post-communist society represented. Felicia is still considering herself Romanian, but Romania is not what it was 19 years ago.

The transformation in society, family, and way the migrant perceives himself is represented as an identity crisis in *The Other Irene*. Paradoxically, while Irina undergoes both physical and personality changes after her first stay in Egypt, it is not her who undergoes an identity crisis, but her stay at home husband. The film introduces Irina in the beginning of the film, however, due to the non-linear narratives, the viewer
only begins to understand her character after her death and removal from the screen. It is not clear if Irina changed as a result of her experience in Cairo, or if she had always lived a double life to which Aurel was oblivious. Whatever the cause, he never accepted her transformation. The viewers, however, understands that Irina was hiding something from her husband upon her return from Egypt or maybe even before that.

Nonetheless, cinematic techniques encourage a doubtful reading of Aurel’s mental stability. At the same time, his struggle and the disrespectful way in which he is treated by authorities makes the viewer empathise with him. From this position of duality, the spectator cannot really be sure who Aurel or Irina truly are. This leads to a representation of the migrant as inaccessible and hidden, reinforcing the concept of “otherness” suggested in the title of the film - *The other Irene.*

### 5.2.7 Objectifying the migrant

In contrast to *The Other Irene, Crulic, The Path to Beyond* brings the migrant character close to the viewer through the film’s voiceover. Crulic narrates his life in first person from birth to his death, describing his experience abroad and how he understood then, but also in after-life his existence. The voiceover changes tone many times while discussing the different sides of Crulic – the image of Crulic abroad in contrast with his persona at home, or the portrayal of Crulic when he was alive in contrast with the one surfacing from his post-mortem voiceover. The post-mortem voiceover of Crulic reflects on the actions, motivations, and beliefs while he was alive. In these re-evaluations of his life the voiceover is at times self-critical or self-empathetic, but most of the time the discourse shapes the image of someone who simply renounced life, gave up trying and accepted his faith.

A contrast is constructed between the way he is represented abroad and the way he describes himself at home. The action placed in Poland presents Crulic’s fight for justice, a principle that he keeps until his death. He is represented as a strong, complex, intelligent, and ambitious person fighting for truth and justice. However, his post-mortem voice-over in the passive tense is far less rebellious. His tone suggests resignation with what has happened to him, as if he does not see the absurdity of his
faith anymore. Life is something that ‘happened’ to Crulic. He compares it to a bus ride where he is just a passenger: He gets on the bus, the bus drives a little bit, he gets off for a while, gets back on, and so on. His attitude towards life after the experience of migration, as viewed from after-life, is represented as passive. Crulic perceives himself as being in the hands of something beyond his control.

Foreignness depersonalizes the migrants in the films. For example, as a migrant, Crulic is represented as having no power of decision, no personality, and no rights in front of the foreign authorities. His personality and identity are step by step deconstructed through layers upon layers of law procedures to the point where he is fully dehumanized. First his identity is replaced when he is confused with a gypsy thief. Then his identity is depersonalized by authorities who treat him as nothing more than a paperwork formality. They refuse to listen to his story. The doctors don’t even react to his physical and mental suffering, and eventual death caused by starvation.

Another example comes from Francesca where a fellow migrant on the bus to Italy tells Francesca about her son, a chemistry graduate who, claiming he has no future in Romania, preferred to work in Italy and care for Italian elders, but ended up being unfairly accused of theft. The mother describes Romanians working abroad as slaves and doormats with no rights, and whose word does not matter in front of the Italian law.

In the case of The Other Irene, once the migrant character is pronounced dead, she is also depersonalized and dehumanized, a fact represented through the character’s removed from the screen from that part of the film onwards. The migrant character is
further-on replaced by a casket sealed in lead and layers of wood and wool, carried around by the confused husband. The background sound of the morgue, airport, or state institutions in *The other Irene* are ‘brought to front’ on the soundtrack and have a mechanical nature, suggesting lifelessness. The white, dull, empty, and resonating corridors lack feeling or empathy. The authorities want to make sure Aurel understands the procedures, but no one aids him in understanding and accepting that his wife committed suicide.

The contrast between sound and image and the framing of Aurel in the office represent him as ridiculous. Some scenes even resemble a parody. For example, despite the gravity of the situation, the scene when Aurel is transporting the casket to forensic medicine (Figure 5) has a hilarious effect. Seeing a small, absent-minded morgue employee struggling to push the casket, his feet slipping in the empty, resonating corridor, contrasts with the corridor’s rigid manner of framing with a fixed camera taking a very long single-shot. The strong shade of cold blue light makes Aurel’s and his friend’s grave faces appear ridiculous.

A wide range of cinematic techniques are used to reinforce this inferiority of the migrant. For example, the cinematography of *The Other Irene* undermines the image of the all-successful, powerful, and socially established migrant.

The framing specific to the RNW films is done through the use of only one camera placed either extremely close to the character, or very far away from the characters. This framing of dialogues either is to tight and leaves out one of the interlocutors (reaction shot) or includes is very wide to include two distant characters. Both framings techniques result in a distancing of the viewer from the characters who can focus instead on the relationship between the interlocutors (Figure 4). This framing technique is omnipresent across all films and comes to replace the traditional over-the-shoulder
technique. The over-the-shoulder framing puts both characters on equal position, focusing on the exchange of dialogue lines, while RNW’s framing puts the accent on the individual reactions of each character, capturing moments of introspection.

Most of the film covers Aurel’s struggles with authorities to find out what happened to his wife while she was in Egypt and how she died. Consequently a great part of the film’s action takes place in a variety of office spaces. Within the office space, Aurel is always framed in a position of subordination – either framed from above or from a distance, usually in secondary planes of the frame, behind doors or tables (Figure 4). Through this technique, Aurel is represented as insignificant and powerless in front of other characters, and as a man of few words with a rich inner living.

Also in *The Other Irene*, the use of only one fixed camera makes the viewer disconnect from Aurel’s drama even more. In a scene where Aurel goes about his daily routine after Irina’s departure, the camera captures the character’s actions from a corner and never moves, even if the character gets out of the frame or does not fully fit in it (Figure 6). The viewer thus feels the need to move his own head to ‘find’ the character. This technique breaks the so-called “fourth wall” (Bordwell and Thompson 2004) and it transforms the process of watching films which historically has been a passive, static activity. Fiction films generally try to immerse the viewer in the universe of the film, making him unaware of the process of film-making. Consequently, through cinematography, the characters are distanced from the viewer, and thus the possibility of empathising with the migrant.

5.3 Family dynamics and societal transformation

The previous sections looked at how the migrant and foreignness are both glorified and demystified abruptly. The following sections will look more in depth to how society and its structures are changing due to the dynamics of migration.
5.3.1 A new social class – the migrant
Since migration is such a widespread, socially accepted and encouraged phenomenon in the Romanian society represented, not surprisingly, the migrant starts to be established as a social class in itself. Migrants are organized in distinct communities abroad, and have different hierarchies at home, depending on the duration of their stay abroad, the host country and amount of money earned. Paradoxically though, despite the action being triggered by the event of migration, migrants are not always the main characters. Some remarkable examples are in The Other Irene which is in fact the story of the migrant’s husband; First of All, Felicia and the Flower Bridge which focus on the stay at home families.

Due to their absence, characterisation of the migrants is done indirectly through the impact their actions have on the stay at home relatives and the expectations these stay-home characters have of the migrant. Becoming or being a migrant is seen as a life accomplishment that puts one above others. For example, Felicia’s mother talks of her daughter with great pride, but never offers more information about her daughter’s life beyond the fact that she is living abroad. The status of ‘migrant’ is in itself sufficient for describing one’s activities, social and financial status.

Upon return, a migrant is expected to display his newly acquired status. Signifiers of their migrant status are home appliances (mobile phones, dishwashers), foreign words (salutes, singing Spanish karaoke), cuisine (diets), nicknames (‘Giovanni’ instead of the Romanian equivalent of ‘George’), exotic items (like pepper spray), looks (Irina has changed her hair colour) and above all, attitude (toreador-like movements while singing in Spanish to impress a girl). These attitudes are all depicted in the films as ridiculous appropriations of foreignness.

The films suggest that the display of appropriated foreign habits is meant to hide one’s lack of success abroad. The characters do not really talk about their experience abroad after returning to Romania. Their profession, once home, is not relevant as long as they earned enough money abroad, because when it comes to financial success, the results, not the means, matter. The Italian girls struggle to hide the fact they were prostitutes in Albania. Francesca claims she will be a kindergarten teacher in Italy when in fact she
will be caring for an elderly Italian, and the father of *Home* is vague about what kind of construction work he does abroad. The romanticised view on the migrants’ life abroad is gradually deconstructed in the films.

5.3.2 The representation of different generations of migrants
The films explore their quotidian, and thus, it is possible to identify in their representations a change in the patterns of migration based on the film’s year of production and temporal setting of the action. For example, Felicia is part of a generation of migrants who left just after the Revolution. After more than 19 years abroad, Felicia built her life in The Netherlands and integrated herself in Dutch society. Abroad, Felicia learnt the language, found a job, got married, and built a family with a Dutch man. Her bi-lingual child considers the Netherlands as home, rather than Romania. Felicia acquired cosmopolite traits and expresses beliefs uncommon to Romanian culture. She dismisses Romanian habits. Her attitude deepens the gap between she and her family. For example, Felicia brings her own cereals for breakfast, refusing the rich Romanian breakfast her mother prepared, and she refuses a present from her parents to her son for being old-fashioned.

The migrant character, Felicia, confesses she left Romania pushed by her mother’s ambitions rather than her own. Felicia comes from an intellectual family, part of the upper middle-class (they have a piano in their small apartment and both sisters took music lessons) with an ambitious and controlling mother who “sets to control the destinies of all the other” as Felicia condemns her. Felicia blames her mother for the lack of love and support, for sending her away, and for going through very difficult times with little support abroad. The mother, not having the opportunity to build a free life abroad, does not consider sending Felicia abroad a mean or cruel decision, and in her own turn, accuses Felicia of being ungrateful. The film’s conflict is built on this generational, ideological, and cultural clash, the characters exchanging the roles of victim and abuser many times in a game of power and will.

Felicia is most surely bound to remain abroad. Her ties with Romania remain strong only through the love she bears for her father who she wants to protect from the
puissant mother. Nevertheless, as her father health degrades, so is her attachment to her native country. In this representation, ‘home’ is strictly related to family and not nationality, and she does not make references to any Romanian habits, people, or places she might be missing or craving for while being abroad.

Crulic (*The path to beyond*) is also part of the incipient waves of migration, but unlike Felicia, he never fully settled abroad. He started going to Poland in the beginning of the 1990s to buy goods to resell at home in a time when the consumerism started developing in Romania. Crulic confesses reselling things he bought abroad was a source of easy money as “after the revolution, people [Romanians] were buying anything as long it was not made in Romania”. Once the post-revolutionary enthusiasm wore off and foreign brands invaded the Romanian market, Crulic worked random jobs aboard and adapted to a life of temporary migration. He kept postponing settling back home because he never thought he saved enough money to sustain in Romania his new lifestyle developed abroad.

Lenuta and Jeni of *The Italian Girls* are part of a first boom of migration around 2001, when foreign companies were recruiting Romanians to work abroad in agriculture. Those who were not recruited but wanted to leave anyway, were turning to the black market for work placement. Although such a recruitment is called in their village, the girls chose to go abroad with Giovanni, Lenuta’s boyfriend. From the position of illegal immigrants, the girls have no rights abroad and are at the mercy of authorities. The young girls are from the rural area where agriculture is not very profitable anymore once removed from under State control. They engage in physical labours, are not particularly educated, but have access to technologies (like mobile phones, cars, computers, and karaoke discotheques) that invaded village life, feeding their dreams of an urban life which, the film suggests, they are not prepared for.

Francesca (*Francesca*) and Irina (*The other Irene*) are part of a less dense wave of migration long after the emigration boom of 2002 when the network of Romanians abroad was extensive and consolidated in Italy and Spain. Both of the women are entrepreneurial figures. Francesca, for example, wants to benefit from the Romanian communities abroad and open a kindergarten, but she is lacking the financial capital for it. Consequently, her ‘plan’ is just to get to Italy, and take it from there. Irina has some
sort of idea about the job she might be doing in Egypt, but she also plans to deal with the situation as it develops.

At the time Irina and Francesca plan on migrating, the immigrant job market abroad was over-saturated. One had to either rely on the relatives abroad to find him a job or to contact a middleman on the black market. The portrait of the middleman in *Francesca* resembles that of a mobster. There is no room for negotiations and the arrangements are on the middleman’s terms. At a point in the conversation, he misunderstands that Francesca wants to go to Italy as a prostitute, and he is willing to arrange that just as easily. He is a man who can provide anything, anytime, with no qualms as long as he is being paid and is not held responsible for anything that might happen to his clients.

The father from *Home* is the most experienced work migrant who started migrating soon after the Revolution and has ever since been temporarily working abroad, already entering a travelling routine. He has been abroad many times, in many countries, depending where the job market was most attractive. The father has a Romanian network of friends in Spain, but confesses he does not spend a lot of time with his co-nationals because of working too much. He is not represented as carrying any particularities that would suggest Spanish traits appropriation – he speaks Romanian correctly, does not have remarkable clothes, and does not refer to any Spanish habits.

5.3.3 Family dynamics

Migrations impacts on the migrant’s identity as discussed above, but the most dramatic effects are on the level of the family. Since the decision to migrate is usually taken for the good of the family, the disintegration of the family to which the migrant was planning to return, is received as a shock. The critical stand the films have on the effects of migration on the family, surface through the techniques of framing and cinematography employed by the RNW. Through mise-en-scene, the films favour the image of a united, compact, and even holy structure which contrasted with the emotional state in which the family members actually find themselves.
The long static scenes of the *Flower Bridge*, for example, show the family around the round kitchen table, eating or working together, (Figure 8-up) leading to a representation of family as a compact organism dependent on working together closely, while the general tone of the film is one of sorrow. Representations of the family around the table are typical of the RNW films, but *First of All, Felicia* gives a different reading from the other films. In the scenes where Felicia’s family is gathered around the table for breakfast (Figure 7), the central space is assigned to the mother. She is put in a position of control over Felicia and her father, reinforcing the discourse which presents her as over-controlling and manipulating. Nonetheless, the power of this image comes from its inference to the sanctity of the family.

The image stands as a representation of a “mundane holy trinity”, a construction observed by Pop (2010: 37) across an array of RNW films like *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006) or *Police, Adjective* (2009) “referencing the Eastern Orthodox tradition of icon painting”. The films clearly refer to the sanctity of the family headed by a strong woman. In *Francesca*, this trinity is broken by the absence of the mother who her father divorced many years before. In *Felicia* however, the reference to orthodox spirituality, while the family is gathered in a moment of crisis during a meal, recreates a ‘Da Vincian-like’ *Last Supper* scene. The characters constantly exchange the role of the
forgiver and the betrayer in an on-going power game. As mentioned previously and as Pop (2010: 35) observes, these kitchen table scenes are dedicated to moments of introspection, despair, and difficult moral decisions, portraying the migrant as both a victim and a traitor.

In the aftermath of the migratory process, the family is represented in degradation, contrary to the initial representation of a united, supporting family which stands at the base of a much broader network that facilitates work migration. In Home, the viewer discovers the reunion of the family is neither jolly nor warm despite the father’s wishful thinking during the taxi trip; Irina (The Other Irene) not only abandons her husband in order to migrate, but also misses the chance to build another family in Cairo. When she dies, even the relations between Aurel, his in-laws, and his friends fracture.

The films are radical and merciless in the ways they represent the consequences of migration on the family. Crulic (Crulic, The Path to Beyond) dies and his family loses its main financial supporter. The Arhir family (Flower Bridge) disintegrates because the children lost the emotional bond with their mother, and the parents fight over the mother not being able to return. Similarly in Home, it is clear that the absence of the father became so routine, that he is not even missed anymore. In Felicia’s family (First of All, Felicia), everybody is absorbed by their own person so much they fail to understand the needs of others, and Felicia is in a constant fight with her mother and sister while trying to make a stand for her father. Irina’s (The Other Irene) death abroad leads to her husband’s mental decay and his being forbidden in his parents-in-law family. The Italian Girls film starts with the burial of the girl’s mother. However, while they are abroad, their father also dies (without the girls even saying goodbye to him) and their beloved dog is killed. Francesca’s (Francesca) parents are divorced already at the beginning of the film; however, her future family is destroyed with the death of her boyfriend. Even if in this case migration is not to blame for the loss, his death is represented as a punishment for Francesca’s hasty departure.

The drama of the Arhir family’s disintegration is more powerful and important than in the other films because in the Romanian country side, family as a social structure is stronger for traditional and practical reasons. In the rural space, the family needs to be
numerous and close together to undertake all the work around the house, care for the animals, and work in the fields. Missing one member of the family burdens the others, especially the children.

Another myth broken is that of being able to communicate home. All characters promise to remain in contact with their families, but their communication is permanently either misunderstood or disrupted altogether. For example, the Arhir children only have one short conversation with their mother on the fixed line phone, while for the rest of time they write letters to her, suggesting a lack of immediacy and availability of the mother. Costel Arhir, the father, also feels that he is held at a distance, as he is discouraged by his wife to join her in Italy. There is a disruption of communication between home and away – in The Other Irene Aurel’s conversation on the phone with Irina abruptly ends and the signal is lost; in The path to beyond Crulic’s letters for home are never sent; and in Francesca the eponym character cannot connect with her relatives as her phone does not have network coverage.

5.3.4 Women’s role in the RNW

The RNW films include both a traditional portrait of women as the mother and housekeeper, but also a more complex portrait. This section will analyze the main female characters, part of a younger generation of women who, due to the possibility of migration, are reassessing their wants and needs. Four out of the seven films studied focus on this type of strong feminine main characters and also include their names in the title. Irina, Francesca, Felicia and ‘the Italian girls’ Lenuta and Jeni are all migrants and main characters in the films. A direct consequence of work migration, the newly gained social position of these women generated three directions of change in the society represented: the emancipation of the women in parallel with a domestication of the men and a forced growing up of children.

The films also construct instances of gender essentialism in the representation of women. Francesca, in particular, is objectified and subdued to the masculine gaze in many different circumstances across the film. She is presented during the intimate routines of getting dressed or undressed in front of her boyfriend, doing her hair and
make-up, and she is desired both by her boyfriend’s friends and business partners, but also by her own uncle. The Italian girls are treated as merchandise on the prostitution market by Giovanni. Giovanni convincingly plays the role of Jeni’s boyfriend to gain her trust and agreement to travel with him, but betrays her. On the other hand, a fellow villager who is truly in love with Jeni also treats her like an object. He kidnaps her, ties her down, silences her, and forces her to marry him. Jeni only gets to have her say or make her own decisions after the traumatic experience abroad. Returning to her village, not only does she successfully resist new abusers, but she also manages to bring together and inspire all the other women in the village to fight for their right to be represented in the local city hall. The women unite in exerting their right to vote and support Jeni for the mayor elections. The possibility to go abroad – whether successful or not, had an empowering effect on these women.

This shift in attitude developed in the Romanian society represented has to do with the cultural gap between parents and children in the post-communist period. It has been mentioned in the previous sections that the characters are rebelling against the lives of their parents. Francesca, Irina, and the Italian girls are living with the image of a mother who, 20 or 30 years ago, did not, or could not, take the chance to make themselves a different life. They accepted their destiny as housewives in a patriarchal society. The daughters, despite loving and respecting their fathers, dread their abusiveness and fear having the same fate as their mothers. Having to be in kitchen is their greatest anxiety. Irina even accuses her husband, of keeping her in the kitchen just as her father did to her mother. She makes the decision to leave for Egypt based on this argument.

Irina has an ambitious, strong, and stubborn personality which she conceals from her husband. In order to protect him, she is hiding information from Aurel that might make him worry, as she carries on with her plans. Also, in contrast to her husband’s lack of interest for foreignness, Irina is open to assimilating foreign habits and develops cosmopolite traits – she uses foreign words, eats exotic food, changes her appearance, is curious in knowing more about Egypt, and talks about it to others.

While women in the films generally encourage migration, the men oppose it. For example, Francesca’s father is against his daughter’s decision to leave as he finds it too
dangerous for a young girl. He blames Francesca’s mother for giving her the idea, while indeed, the mother is eager to have Francesca migrate, encouraging her to leave without further questions, and doing ‘magic’ rituals to confirm it is the right decision. In *The Italian Girls*, the death of the girls’ mother is the ultimate reason Lenuta and Jeni need to make the decision to leave. Helping their mother around the house has been their reason for staying. The girls plan to run away to work in Italy despite fearing repercussions from their alcoholic father who wants them to stay and work the fields.

On the background of women’s enthusiasm migrating, men’s role within the family and society transforms because of their reluctance to leave home. Aurel, for example, is deeply in love with his wife and even before Irina’s migration, he takes on the role of housekeeper. Aurel follows a daily routine around the house, washing and cooking, meticulously taking care of his shoes and clothes. In contrast with his wife, he feels content with his lifestyle, and he has no career or life ambitions other than being with Irina. Similarly, the father in the *Flower Bridge* has to fill in for the mother’s attributes as adviser and caretaker of the children, and keeper of the house. He is represented as engaging in inherently feminine roles like making bread and cookies, cleaning the house, reading bedtime stories, and caring for his sick son, Alexie.

Yet, these men don’t seem to be very good at these jobs. Aurel lives in a shabby apartment, and the father in the *Flower Bridge* is clumsy at work in the house and impatient with his children. The degrading, or at least incapable image of the male constructed in the films can be explained by the general attitude the RNW directors have towards authoritative images, and male figures in particular.

5.3.5 The reassessment of roles for children and the elderly

The films represent another remarkable change in Romanian society besides the emancipation of women. While in the Romanian society the extended family is important and its members keep close ties, what changes is that in the case of the migratory family, adjacent relatives gain greater importance as they take on the role and attributes of the working parent abroad. It is not an accident there are so many aunts, uncles, grandparents, and godparents present among the characters in the films. In these
roles, the ‘substitute parents’ are represented as centers of spiritual guidance and disappearing examples of authenticity. Their role will be further discussed now.

In the selection of film for this paper, with the exception of Flower Bridge, children are not at the center of the narratives, but the range of RNW films that refer to the Romanian migration is so broad and covers so many perspectives that there are an abundance of examples which discuss the impact of migration on children. To demonstrate my claim that the roles of children and elderly are changing, I will build my argument using the example of Flower Bridge, and also of a different film than those described so far, focused more on the transformation of those left at home.

The film is Catalin Mitulescu’s 2011 Loverboy – a film that was not selected to analyse because its references to migration were indirect as the migrant characters are not at all present in the action. This RNW film tells the story of 20 year old Luca who is seducing unsuspecting girls for a prostitution network. He is the younger and more complex version of Giovanni from The Italian Girls who seduces and then sells his girlfriend, Jeni. Luca however truly falls in love for the first time with one of the girls he was supposed to sell, Veli. Their love is proving to be very dangerous for Luca who is pressed into selling her to the network, or suffer the consequences. There are no references directly related to migration, however, the state of Luca’s family clearly matches the profile of a family disintegrated by the work migration of Luca’s parents.

Luca lives in the countryside with his old, sick, and almost senile grandfather. Luca never mentions his parents, but clues are given to the viewer that they might once return from abroad where they are working very hard, according to his aunt, Sava. As a consequence of the parents’ absence, Luca is represented as burdened with having to financially support himself, while not being mature enough to handle it.

The responsibility intake from a young age shows in his lifestyle and radical attitudes. Luca has the ability to engage in any task, no matter how cruel or emotional, in an almost autistic manner. He cares for his helpless grandfather, seduces and sells girls, identifies their dead bodies, has discussions with the police, all seemingly unaffected, sketching no emotion. Despite this coldness, Luca is not represented as a bad person, but as one who lacks spiritual guidance. He is ‘redeemed’ through his love for Veli and,
in fact, the viewer sympathises with him, indirectly transferring the blame for his attitudes on the parents who abandoned their parenting responsibilities. The blaming of the parent, the migrant parent in particular, is recurring across all the films analysed.

The children of *Flower Bridge* address their mom with no affection across the action or in their letters to her. The children’s relation with their mother is explored in very few scenes across the film. They mainly connect with her through rare phone calls and the unusual presents she sends from Italy like plastic casseroles or spaghetti, which they know as ‘macaroni’, a Romanian version of the dish.

From the point of view of cinematography, the scenes in which the children relate to their mother appear ‘constructed’, despite the film being a documentary where the degree of constructiveness should allegedly be reduced (Leeuwen and Jawitt 2004). For example, each child is captured in a one minute scene towards the end of the film in which he or she is shown sitting alone on the grass, on a hill, having a moment of silence, while in voice-over they read the letters they wrote to their mother. The scenes seem staged because they are similar for each child, who appear to be fully aware of the presence of the camera, despite allegedly holding a ‘moment of meditation.’ The scenes (Figure 8 right-down) are constructed so that the children appear lonely and sad because of their mother’s absence. As a result, the child-mother relation is represented as one of desertion. Consequently, the accent in these scenes does not fall on the child, but on the mother, as the viewer is encouraged to blame her for abandoning her children.

Discussing the migrant’s portrait is most difficult in the case of the Arhir mother as she makes no physical presence in the film and has only one audio intervention. Nevertheless, even if absent, the long, stubbornly still images of the *Flower Bridge* create the impression of an eternal wait for the mother to return and life to continue from where it stopped when she left for Italy (Figure 8 down left). What is more, the mother from Flower bridge does not have a name, while the rest of the family members do. She is simply addressed as ‘the migrant’, ‘the wife’ or ‘the mother’. Her absence from these functions she would traditionally fulfill is what characterizes her. Her personal identity is blurred.
The Arhir children also seem to have lost the emotional bond with their mother as their letters are distant and formal, describing facts and not expressing feelings. Similarly, the mother seems interested only in the children’s’ performance in school which was one of the reasons for her going abroad. The disintegration of the Arhir family can also be blamed on the fact that the mother cannot fulfil the plan of financing school for the children since she is not earning as much as she thought she would.

Like Luca, the children of the *Flower Bridge* also have to take upon themselves the chores that their mother was supposed to be doing. This is why the children are much more mature for their age and do not play as much. Yet they are still not experienced enough to make wise decisions. Nonetheless, if in the case of the *Flower Bridge* the role of the mother is still performed by the father, in the case of *Loverboy* where both parents are migrants, the extended family gains importance.

In *Loverboy*, the film introduces an episodic character - Madame Sava, who is paid by Luca (or his parents, the actions does not make it clear) to keep the house and look after the grandfather. Madame Sava’s relation to Luca is not clearly defined, but she portrayed as a strong character with plenty of life experience who can advise Luca, but cannot control him. She is constantly reminding him to be kind, empathetic, and choose his entourage carefully. She is disapproving of his language and bossy attitude towards his ill grandfather and herself.

Characters like Madame Sava have a specific role in the narrative structure, and in literature are so-called ‘raisonneur characters’. Raisonneur characters are episodic characters that are not necessarily involved in the main action, but interfere at key times.
to provide reasoned comment on the action of the main characters (Herzel 1975). In the RNW, these characters have the role of voicing collective ideas of good and bad. They represent the ‘authentic Romanian’ who lives with the same beliefs and follows the same traditions as their ancestors, especially in the countryside, where people are superstitious and attentive and critical to what the ones around them are doing. They are archetypes based on an original, exemplary model of morality, and reflect the identity of a certain category the main character should also adopt.

A similar character like Madame Sava is also developed in The Italian Girls as the aunt of Lenuta and Jeni. In this film, due the death of their mother, Lenuta and Jeni reconsider their wants and needs, and, in the absence of the strong emotional link to their home like their mother was, the attraction with foreignness grows ever more. The disappearance of the mother leaves the girls unprepared for the duties of keeping the farm and living as ‘true’ peasants. This lack of dedication to country living and their lack of authenticity as true peasants is signified by the girls’ lack of spiritual training in performing burial and post-burial rituals and by their dream of an urban life, while being unappreciative of their land. In the absence of the girls’ mother, their aunt becomes their sole support and role model of justice and morality.

The aunt is represented as a strong woman who accepts her role in the village, knows the works of the field and how to take care of the spirit. The aunt is not idealised and is not presented as a superior being, but as a lay women who perpetuates traditions and rural life the way she knows them. She appears at key moments of the action to guide the girls, to remind them of what is important, or to support them. The aunt teaches the girls how to take care of their mother’s spirit by putting a glass of water in the window and by performing other burial rituals. What is remarkable is the emancipation of the aunt, despite fitting into the traditional role of the village woman. She starts out representing the authentic peasant performing the traditional roles of women in the village and subordinate to men. By the end of the film, however, she supports Jeni to run for the mayor position, mobilises the village women to exert their right to vote, and encourages them to vote according to their own thinking and not that of their husband’s. The aunt becomes the bridge between the girl’s integration in the village as authentic.
6. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand how the RNW films represent the Romanian work migration in general, but also the reasons for and the outcomes of migration, how it affects one’s relation with self, family and nation, and what social changes migration triggers.

To reach this goal the analysis presented both the pre- and the post-migration state of the migrants, their families and the society in general. The analysis showed some paradoxical results like the glorification and then demythologization of the migrant and foreignness, the characters’ rush to leave while planning the return, the love-hate relation of characters have with their country, and the thinking and feeling binary about the decision to migrate.

From the duality of the films’ discourse a few distinct themes surface and set the lines of discussions for this last section of the paper. They centre around the representation of work migration as forced migration, the portrayal of the migrant as naive and irrational, the representation of foreignness as dangerous and unappreciative of the migrant’s value, family as unable to exist in the contemporary society, women as the backbone of society, and home country as a not yet transnational space, but no longer national. Based on the theory discussed and the analysis of the films I will now summarize and discuss the findings of the research.

6.1 The Romanian migrant between myth and reality

As a member of the Eastern European art cinema genres, the RNW’s narratives have a character-centered causality, focusing more on the inner-life of the characters and their relations with others (Pop 2010, Mazierska 2010). Thus, the characters of the films analyzed are complex, establishing a relation with the audience more through the emotions they transmit and less through their actions. The viewer has access both to understanding why a character feel or does a certain thing, but also to a position of omniscience from where he can anticipate the greater meaning and the outcome of the character’s actions.
The migrant portrayed in the films fits that of the Romanian transmigrant as understood by Vertovec (2004) – persons engaged in an international work dynamic enabled by globalisation and advances in communication technology. Both in the films and in Romanian society (Anghel & Horvath 2009), migrants are an established social class, with the characters being settled in their mobility between home and host country (Morley 2000). Most of these migrant characters have high ranked jobs abroad and very few even work or migrate legally. They work seasonal, physical jobs, are either from the educated urban population, or the uneducated rural area and fit to the popular culture profile of the so-called ‘strawberry people’ (Sandu 2010).

The type of occupation, income and return patterns depend on the migration generation determined by the respective economic and political context (Sandu 2005) and the films follow their characteristics accordingly. All categories of migrants since 1990 up to 2012 are represented in the films, starting with the category of post-revolution migrants who settled abroad (Felicia), to the initial waves of opportunity-workers or merchants (Crulic, the father from Home), to the wave of work migrants of the 2002 and 2007 migratory booms (the Italian Girls, mother of Flower Bridge), but also those who still migrated even once opportunities of work abroad started to dry out (Irina, Francesca).

Only those Romanians who migrated in the early 1990s settled abroad and adapted foreign traits. Migrants after 2002 became settled in a routine mobility between work abroad and home in Romania and do not borrow cultural traits of the foreign nation, but remained in a state of cosmopolitan solidarity as explained by Habermans (2000) with no particular affective ties with any country. The films confirm the theory according to which cultural enrichment is reserved to the rich (eg. Felicia), the poor being absorbed by the needs of the everyday life (Schiller et al 1995, Bauman 1998, Delanty 1999).

The characters keep strong social and economic links between host and origin countries and, as Cassarino (2004) observes, this suggests the migrants’ strong intentions to return. Yet, in the process of back and forth migration, most of the time migrant characters end up being stuck in limbo, in between a house abroad, and a home in Romania, or even most often, in having no home at all. The talked-about globalisation and network society (Vertovec 2004, 2010, Morley 2000 or Habermans 2000) are not at
all represented in the films. This underlines the idea that emigration generates a rupture in communication between the migrant in his family that cannot be undone. Technology in the films is not ubiquitous, and surely not the “social glue of transmigrationalsim” (Vertovec 2004).

While the physical borders might have blurred, the characters are not global citizens and travelling is more than an issue of shifting location – a description closer to Bauman’s (1998) sceptical assessment of globalisation. While the characters have the right to free travel, they are bordered by legislations and bureaucratic procedures. For example, the work migrants represented have very few rights abroad and end up in a state of vagabondage, or impossibility of return (the mother of Flower Bridge, Crulic, Italian girls). The films suggest this possibility is very high and that freedom of movement and work does not guaranty also safety or justice. Migrants are simply paperwork in the hands of state authorities, while in the host country the migrant is by default considered inferior, unimportant, and dangerous in the host country, overall reinforcing the idea, that there cannot be any such thing as a global citizen, contradicting theory.

In what concerns the emotional portrait of the migrant, while theory refers to the migrant’s state of “bifocality” (Vertovec 2004, Rouse 1992, Gardner 1995, Morley 2000), where “home” is associated with the country of origin, while “abroadness” is associated with ‘material bounty and economic opportunity, the films presents this rupture to be much deeper. The characters represented do not seem dedicated to their nation nor have ideals of globalisation. The characters are neither patriots, nor can they feel happy outside their country. They are fascinated with foreignness, but they do not plan to settle there. Consequently, the films do not represent the integration of the national within the European, but on the national as a suspended space in itself.

What is particular is that these characters are presented as displaced and feeling like not belonging neither in Romania nor abroad even before leaving. Migration only deepens their personal identity crisis, or, in the case of The Italian Girls, it helps them regain their identity. Generally however, these characters have an acute feeling of being unrooted and do not feel fulfilled in any of the spaces. Rather, they continue the back and forth dynamic between two spaces – one which holds the their family, and the other
which offers the means to sustain that family financially, as if the two were mutually exclusive and as if people cannot be ‘as one’, of fulfilled in a society disrupted by the forces of modernity which facilitated migration.

6.2 The push and pull factors of migration

In what concerns the process of migration, both statistics (Aproximativ 20% din romani vor sa plece la munca in strainatate in 2012, 2011 Dec, 29) and the films represent it as an option embedded in the dominant ideology. Consequently, the films describe migrating as a routine alternative to living in Romania, so banal and recurrent in popular discourse that it does not require further insight. The same push and pull factors which encourage the Romanian migrant to go abroad according to Sandu (2010) and Taran et al (2009), are present in the society represented. Characters are motivated to leave in order to gain more money.

Yet, leaving is represented in the films as an escape attempt – spontaneous, desperate, risky, difficult, like from a dammed place to promise land. Having to go abroad to find better-paid work is represented as forced migration, and not work-migration, as if those characters see no other way of survival. The migrants are portrayed permanently being burdened by numerous, voluminous, and heavy luggage. Such representation denotes migrants belong to a lower social class, with no certitude of return (Delanty 2009).

Migrants motivate their leaving for economical reasons but the films do not focus on the characters’ poverty. Quite the contrary, all of the characters live a very modest, banal life, but their basic needs are fulfilled. These migrants come from a low-middle or middle class, most have jobs in Romania, have stable relationships and are houses owners. Consequently, at a meta-level, the films suggest their migration is more likely a case of low life satisfaction (Sandu 2010) with characters being frustrated achievers (Chindarkar 2012) who feel they deserve a better life financially.

For these migrants, working abroad is represented as a taken-for-granted solution when ‘something’ is not to the character’s liking, but that ‘something’ is not clearly defined. The viewer thus can judge the character have a “the grass is always greener on the other side” attitude with which is difficult to empathise. This type of representation and
audience relation is characteristic of art cinema films, constructing mainstream characters outside the mainstream, in emotional distress (Mazaj 2011, Vitaly & Willemen 2006) in a cryptic language inaccessible to the broad public (Rentschler 2000).

As represented, migration falls into the patterns of assimilationist migration (Dorigo et al. 1983), where migrants chose already established destinations. However, despite the preparations indication of well-established routes, the migration process is in fact represented as a solitary experience. For example, Francesca is in a bus to Italy with tens of other migrants, yet, there is no one to help or understand her. The Father of Home migrated to popular work-destinations for more than 15 years, yet he confesses he has no friends abroad, nor he spends time with fellow Romanians. Also, despite routes of migration being well established, they are still dangerous and for example the Italian girls get scammed into sex trafficking, Crulic is jailed and Irina dies.

The goal with which Romanian migrants and the migrants represented are similar. Upon return the Romanian migrant sets to displays this success by upgrading their daily living standards, paying the debt accumulated when trying to migrate, and refurbishing their homes (Nemeny 2012). The films however do no present a positive outcome of migration, although all migrants set to leave with these three main goals in mind. Instead, when the migratory episode proves to be a failure, or the means of earning success is degrading, the characters hide or lie about their experience. The work abroad remains a hidden part of the migrants’ life which, if revealed, would endanger their newly gained social status. Consequently none of the migrant characters talk much about their life abroad and migration is represented as a hidden, obscure experience, where each men stands for oneself and the goal justifies the means.

In contrast with the Romanian migrant’s own assessment of their and their family’s wellbeing as largely positive due to migration (Nemeny 2012), through the way the narratives are built in the films, the concepts of money, migration, family, and wellbeing are represented as incompatible with each other. In the films, as also suggested by various literature (Nemeny 2012, Toth 2006, Chindarkar 2012), work migration erodes family ties and breaks societal status quo. Nonetheless, both migrants
and migrant characters have the similar belief that migration is generally a beneficial experience for them and their families.

6.3 The disembodied family and the solitary migrant

Migration is a disruptive force within the family. While literature proposes different models that rethink the structure and roles within the traditional family (Cohen 2000, Levin and Torst 1999), the representation of family in the films dismisses this possibility. The films suggest that a requirement for the family to stay together is that its members live under the same roof. The moment one member leaves abroad, the family disintegrates. This necessary connection reflects in the space the family inhabits – generally small houses or apartments which give little intimacy to individual members.

To migrate and be happy the characters are in need of her family’s love, approval, appreciation, and support. In return, for the family to be happy, migrant members need to send back remittances. Thus, like suggested by empirical data (Sandu 2006), migration is a family decision and strategy for financial improvement. Yet, if remittances abound in real life (Nemeny 2012, Toth 2006), in films their impact is limited or absent, supporting the theory that the family’s well-being is in strict correlation with the amount of remittance (Bagade 2012, Yang 2011, Vertovec 2004).

Despite migrant characters being old enough to make their own decisions, they do not want to leave without the ‘blessing’ of their family and friends, and discussing their plans with them. However, despite the migrant’s emotional dependence on their families, their decision to leave is actually represented in the films as a reaction to their parent’s lives. For example, while Francesca, Irina and the Italian girls respect their parents, they also blame their mothers for being her fathers’ victim. These characters’ life decisions reflect their parents’ past which they want to avoid, particularly those of their mothers. This aspect has not been given much attention in studies on Romanian migration, where in fact data shows people from many different age groups chose to migrate, in particularly older adults and parents providing for their children, not the other way around (Sandu 2005, Nemeny 2012).
The most important observation emerging from the analysis is that while the films represent family as the nucleus of society, vital for one’s life and wellbeing, and migration as breaking it apart, none of the films present the family in a condition of harmony to begin with. The Italian girl’s mother has just died, Francesca’s parents are divorced, Crulic confesses he never really had a family, and Felicia is a single mother. Thus, what migration destroys is not necessarily their current families, but the chance at having a new one. This suggests that once one becomes a migrant one is uprooted from society, and becomes a loner.

6.4 Towards a feminine society

Cheng & Fleming (2009: 4) claim cinema inherited the modalities to depict women specifically from the disciplines of painting and sculpture. In particular, the authors claim that, generally, women are represented not as themselves, but as one dimensional stereotypes. Despite the claimed essentialist depiction of women in the arts of sculpture and theatre, RNW films constructs a much more complex portrait, much in line with the actual description of the Romanian transmigrant women. The films chose to represent strong women characters: a mother of three children living alone in Italy (Flower Bridge); ambitious career women as Francesca (Francesca) and Irina (The Other Irene) who financially support their men; and courageous young girls like Jeni and Lenuta (The Italian Girls) leading their community. Women are represented as wives, daughters, mothers, and workers at the same time, contrary to the representations suggested by theories of gender essentialism (Borraz 2010, Spisak 2009).

The RNW emancipates the image of the woman in comparison with the traditional representation of women in national cinema of the heritage/heimat type. In this genre, the image of women is equivalent with the image of a glorious nation (Mazaj 2011, Hayward 2000). There, female characters embody the struggles and successes of a nation in transformation and are usually represented as heroines. The women of the RNW films, however, are rather portrayed as anti-heroines. On one hand, women are represented as ambitious, liberated, and stronger than men. On the other hand, they are also represented as betrayers of family, stubborn and destructive. For example, the Italian girls might be represented as naïve, but they are not innocent – they have been
working as prostitutes in Albania, and they abandoned their father looking for luxury. Irina is ambitious and hardworking, but she is also a cheating wife and Francesca is so absorbed by her desire to leave she does not realise the danger in which her lover is.

The fact that most migrant characters are emigrants reflects the growing social phenomena identified by Taran et al (2009) and Kofman (2009) that society is facing a feminisation of labour migration. Yet, abroad, migrant women character work in traditionally domestic, feminine services like cleaning and taking care of the elderly and children, becoming what Cohen (2000) defined as “the new domestic servants”. At home however, due to their migration, the role of the women in the house is filled in by husbands, but also by children, grandparents and other relatives. The effects of women migrating in larger numbers impact broadly in the society represented. Children need to mature sooner, but are represented as burdened by the chores they have to perform and not experienced enough to do it. The resulting representation is that although women provide for their families and supports it financially, they find themselves in the contradictory position described by Pyle (2006) where they are still expected to also be fulltime mothers at the same time.

Women are represented as more ambitious and more demanding, but also less responsible. Men are largely represented as rational when it comes to making life decisions, but also less determined to change their lives, with which they are generally satisfied, while their wives and daughters aren’t. The choice to empower women as migrants might come to the RNW more aversion to father figures as suggested by Pop (2010). Pop (2010) observes the director’s rebellious attitude towards masculinity reflects in the films through the representation of defective authority figures, lacking power. In conclusion, in the RNW travelling is not an adventurous male fantasy, but a financial duty for the women who are preferred on the foreign labour market precisely because their traditional role as carers.

6.5 Foreignness and its impact on ‘native-ness’
Vertovec (2004) suggests that one of the great facilitators of work migration was the possibility of a continuous communication between migrants and home country. Yet,
the films cut all forms of communication once the migrant leaves home. Foreignness is represented as inaccessible, hidden and disruptive, and always a mediated experience. In most of the films studied, foreignness can be heard (on the phone), can be seen (on TV news), and experienced (through presents received from abroad), but never fully and directly known. The RNW shows little interest with foreignness other than through its impact on ‘native-ness’. The RNW, as national cinema, reinforces Higson’s idea that national cinema is “the product of the tension between home and away”.

The narratives suggest that the Romanians know little about what awaits them abroad but have big dreams of changing themselves and the world while being there. When their expectations are not met, foreignness is also represented as an unfulfilled promise. Because of the character’s lack of preparation and their obliviousness to how living abroad might be, the shattering of their expectations comes as a shock for them. Thus, migrants are portrayed as victims of foreignness. The characters never contemplate their experience, never reassess their failure, and never rethink their actions and decisions. Thus, foreignness is represented as dangerous, absurd, and merciless, and the migrant is represented as insignificant in the eyes of the foreign or even national authorities. For example, the process of recovering the migrant’s corpse is shown as degrading and disrespectful for Crulic and Aurel, as if a migrant, even more if dead, counts for very little with state or foreign authorities.

Most characters are well educated, having good jobs, but feel are not paid enough and prefer working unqualified work abroad for better money. The films however suggest that foreignness does not appreciate Romanians for their true value and ambitions. Francesca is a teacher who wants to open a kindergarten abroad, but ends up in a job caring for an old man; The Italian girls are hardworking persons who want to work the fields in Italy, but end up in prostitution; Crulic is an honest merchant, but is imprisoned for theft with no evidence to prove his guilt.

Consequently, the overall representation of foreignness is one of threat – they type of global and transnational threat that according to Nestingen and Elkington (2005) challenges the nation state’s homogeneity and cinema should respond to with national romantic perspectives on national identity.
6.6 There is no place like home

The films have a preference for impersonal spaces: more than half of the action in *Home* and *First of All, Felicia* takes place in taxies or airports, impersonal places by definition. By doing so, the viewer’s attention is digressed from the ‘shape’ to the ‘content’, meaning to the dialogue and the relation between the characters. Location can thus be ‘read’ as a reflection of the inner-living of the characters, or a ‘diagnosis’ for the society represented (Halle & Willis 2013). These impersonal locations deploy the films of any explicit national symbolism, and even from banal elements generally embedded in the mise-en-scene (Hjort 2000), to the effect that the society is represented as depersonalised and disrupted before the action even begins.

In the representation of location, the RNW is in accordance with the definitions of New Wave, Art and European cinemas. In this highly aesthetic medium, mise-en-scene is a language in itself (Pop 2010, Galt 2006). In the RNW films, the space dimension is not so important for providing a location for the action, but for developing the narrative.

Yet, while European films constructed symbolic spaces and global citizens (Elsaesser 2005), the RNW suggests precisely that such space is destructive. Instead, in the RNW the forces that facilitate transnational migration are disintegrating local communities – uprooting one from his safe-space. As an effect, places no longer hold a clear support of identity, meaning that one’s feeling of belonging do not depend on one’s physical presence within a space. Instead, the RNW films suggest that the space of belonging is the family, and family should be united under a single space – which makes one’s home. There is a duality however to which the films approach the concept ‘home’. The ‘house’ and the ‘home’ are two elements at the center of the reason and failure of the characters’ migration.

The desire to refurbish the house is deeply embedded in both the Romanian migrants described by Sandu (2005) and the characters represented. The migrant characters understand comfort and upgraded infrastructure as status symbols and sign of being civilised. The characters see themselves as hard-working, better than their parents, have aspirations to become civilised, but feel they can only reach their potential in the West, as Romania lacks the infrastructure necessary. However, instead of adapting to the life
abroad with the money earned there, these people plan to return and reproduce the infrastructure of the West back in their country. This attitude is has been described by Gardner (1995) and Morley (2000) in relation with different transnational migrants who convey their financial efforts abroad, into social status at home.

The rural area is also represented in a state of decay, but the degradation has a different interpretation in this case. While in heritage films, the representation of ethnoscapes is a collection of poetic landscapes (Smith 2000), in the RNW, the rural environment is surprised in a state of degradation, accelerated by the phenomenon of migration and the people leaving their farms. By abandoning the village, and by forgetting the values of rural life, Smith (2000) also concludes films suggest the country itself loses its identity. This transformation of the rural area on the background of migration is even more striking than the urban one as the characters living in the country side depend more on nature, the land and animals they own, and the fields they cultivate and according to Nemeny (2012) they should also feel more rooted in the rural space. Yet, the characters most often are not aware of their attachment to nature, and the films tend to be moralising in this direction. This is obvious in The Italian Girls where dreaming of foreignness, talking of euros, speaking in Spanish while in an idyllic landscape portrays the girls as naive, smart but uneducated, well-intended but unrealistic.

The films have different stands on what ‘home’ is for the main characters. For Francesca and Irina home is something to be escaped, for the Arhir family and the Italian girls is something to be upgraded, while for the father from home and Felicia home is something to be regained. From this perspective, these RNW films do not construct a representation of home as national identity close to the one of Heimat films discussed by Jarvie (2000).

Foreignness is indeed presented as a dangerous, destructive place, but the character’s fears and anxieties come from within the country. With the exception of the Italian girls, whose return is represented as salvation, all the other films deprive their characters of any ‘home’, both before and after their leave. On the one hand the films have a ‘there is no place like home’ moral, but the entire action is concerned with the Romanian’s desire and struggle to leave their home and the country. In the end, migration and home
are not only represented as incompatible concepts, but home itself is not supported within the society represented.

6.7 Conclusion - No place for the body, no rest for the soul
The expected location for studying a migrant is outside of one’s native country. Yet, the migrants of the RNW are never presented outside the borders of their native country. Thus, in the view of the RNW, and as Sheffer (2003) observes, what makes a migrant is not location, but rather one’s desire to leave the native country. Once the desire to migrate surfaces in one’s mind, one can already be considered a migrant.

Even if some characters never actually cross the border, they make extensive emotional and practical preparations to do so. This tension between an imagined life abroad and its implications for the life at home is at the centre of all the films’ plots. In other words, the reasons for and migrating, and the actual outcome are both the intrigue and the moral of the plot. Even if the characters’ fears and anxieties are generated by having to live in Romania and their pleasures and aspirations are related to foreignness, the experience of migration eventually suggests the opposite is in fact true. Foreignness is merely the butterfly in the butterfly effect – the possibility of financial improvement causing a real storm in one’s society at home.

The expectations of the migrants are related with financial success which they believe will provide their families with better houses, their children with superior education and themselves with a new social status and life security. If for the characters migrating is seen as salvation, and there is data to support this as a real possibility, the overall discourse of the film is one of loss, suggesting that having a ‘home’ and a ‘house’ is not an option in a country in a perpetual transition.

Consequently, the films have a strong moralising cue. The migrant is represented as unappreciative of what he was, as he never looks for alternative solutions before going abroad. Migration is portrayed as destructive and the migrant as the victim of his own decisions. Not even the dog of the Italian girls is spared in the row of deaths across the films which include the Italian girls’ father, Irina, Francesca’s boyfriend and Crulic who
has passed away before his story even starts. There is no life after migration and the migrant is both the victim and the accused.

What is more, the films put the viewer in the position of the accuser. There is a general ‘I told you so’ feeling which prevails through the films as the spectator is given clues that migration will have negative consequences on the characters, so their deaths or their problems do not come as a surprise. This conclusion is important because the films surprise a society in transition where roles and life views are negotiated, just as the characters of these films are trying to negotiate their identity in what Mazaj (2011) calls a “no-more-national but not-yet-transitional” country like Romania. Having such power in triggering introspection and, in this case, encouraging one to reassess one’s relation with how he views native-ness and foreignness, the films of the RNW have an important role in building an imagined Romanian community and reassess the importance and role of ‘home’ and ‘abroad’.

The ambiguous and paradoxical relation between reasons and outcomes are characteristic of new wave cinemas. Overall, the RNW questions the status quo, but is not willing to accept the consequences. Characters are forced to break established routines in the search for better, but are unequivocally punished for doing so. For example, the emancipation of women is represented as a good thing, but the fact that the family suffers also shades a light of guilt on the women migrants portrayed. The films state that there is no place like home, and that there is no happiness equal that of having a family, but in fact home, family and happiness are unreachable all in all. Consequently, the reasons and outcomes for which one migrates are eventually not even so important, because ‘body’ and ‘soul’ are already ruptured and the migrant, his family and the society are doomed in any case once migration becomes a possibility.

6.8 Further Research
Due to its short history of only 10 years, and recent political developments, the evolution of the RNW is difficult to predict. Yet, the future development of RNW films focused on the topic of migration is interesting to follow from two perspective: legislative change and thematic approach.
In what concerns the first issue, during the writing of this paper new important legislative developments question the RNW’s definition as ‘national cinema’. While RNW films continue to win prestigious international awards (*Beyond the hills* 2012, *Child Pose* 2013), the Romanian government dismissed the old administration of the Romanian Cultural Institute’s (ICR). ICR was the main promoter and supporter of the cinematic wave, while the new ICR agenda gives little importance to the RNW. Recently, the new ICR cancelled RNW film festivals (eg. New York Making Waves 2013) (Rother 2012 Nov, 27) and modified the application process for receiving funding for production to the disadvantage of RNW (Romanian Filmmakers Protest Delay of Application Deadlines for Public Funding 2013, December, 16). The motivation behind such decisions is lack of founding and a general disapproval for the RNW’s representations of nation – assessed by the state as unflattering (Zorzor 2012). Due to the political and economical incertitude at home, the RNW is also losing the trust and support of foreign investors (Rohter 2012 Nov, 27).

If left with little financial and state support, directors of the RNW can either opt for internalisation or integration of film production, independent production or co-production – which would radically modify the factors that enabled to development of the Wave in its present form. Keeping in tune with their dismissal of authority, the RNW directors already started to distance themselves from state’s supervision and most importantly, become independent financially by setting up their own production companies to ensure creative autonomy (Pop 2010). This situation makes Vitaly & Willemen (2006) wonder if the RNW should be better discussed in terms of ‘cinema and the nation’ rather than ‘national cinema’. A film does not become less national for not following the dominant ideological trajectory within the nation (Vitaly et al. 2006), and that as long as new financing models are developed, the RNW will not dry out.

The second interesting perspective of change the RNW films might face is their discourse on migration. During the writing of this paper two more RNW films focusing on the topic of migration have been released in cinemas – *D’Ora* (2014) and *Matei, miner child* (Matei, copil miner 2013). *D’Ora* tells the story of a young woman Romanian work migrant to London where she faces harsh discrimination and loses even the little she had in life. The second film tells the story of Matei who is left alone with
his grandfather after his parents left to work in Italy and ends up a vagabond in the capital city’s main train station.

While the plots of these films are not unlike those analyzed already, what is remarkable on a first view is the much more radical and unforgiving approach these films have on portraying migration. Firstly, foreignness is more present and themes such as ‘discrimination’ and ‘otherness’ are introduced and explored in more depth. Secondly and most importantly, unlike the films analyzed in this paper, in the new releases it is not a question anymore if migration is or not destructive, but a given fact and the starting point of the discourse. The films thus bring further and detailed examples of the ways and extent to which migration affects the lives of the migrants, their families and society. These films, come with the accumulated experience of 20 years of work migration. Explored retrospectively, the films could offer an entire new perspective on RNW’s representation of the reasons and outcomes of migration.

To conclude, the history of the RNW is young and still to be written. Similarly, the dynamics of Romanian migration are also changing, and so do its reasons and outcomes. How the two waves will continue to reflect in each other remains to be seen, as the future of the RNW depends on the access to finance sources, but also largely on cultural policies to reassess the definition of national and art cinema. Thus, how the RNW will represent a variety of social phenomena like migration, and how it will reassess its relation with nation is unpredictable and recommended for further research.
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