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Music, Shadows on the Screen and Politics (II)

As a pendant to the previous issue of the journal, the current one offers a new exploration of the topics discussed at the conference *Film Music, Moving Images and Politics*, organized by Professor Nicolae Gheorghită at the National University of Music Bucharest, November 16-18, 2023. The five studies presented this time provide new perspectives on the role of music in the cinema of the second half of the 20th century, with examples drawn from both Greece and Romania.

Nick Poulakis addresses a landmark period in Greek cinema, the 1950-1970s, known as the era of Old Greek Cinema, during which the traits of a national film industry took shape. His investigation focuses mainly on the integration of popular music into these films and the various functions attributed to it – such as that of a narrative framework, a bridge between cinematic fiction and extra-filmic reality, a marketing tool, and so on. Using as a case study the film music of Giorgos Mouzakis, Poulakis emphasizes its major impact on shaping the sonic style of Old Greek Cinema and, at the same time, its role in defining the aesthetic and cultural identity of Greek film.

In Romania, cinema from the second half of the 20th century provided fertile ground for the expression of nationalist-communist ideology. The biographical film *Ciprian Porumbescu* (directed by Gheorghe Vitanidis, 1973), discussed by Cătălin Cernătescu, is a prime example. Its protagonist – a Romanian musician who in his short life (1853-1883) distinguished himself through patriotic activism – was fervently promoted by the communist regime as a forerunner of its own ideology. Cernătescu's study offers a nuanced perspective on how the film served this kind of propaganda. Naturally, it does not overlook the role played by the soundtrack – which features some of the most well-known themes composed by Porumbescu and arranged by Richard Oschanitzky – in crediting the protagonist as the most prominent Romanian musician of his time.

The emphasis on elements of communist ideology and propaganda, such as class struggle and the harsh life of peasants oppressed by nobility and authorities, is also evident in *Osânda* [The Punishment] (directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu, 1976), an adaptation of the interwar novel *Velerim și Veler Doamne* by Victor Ion Popa. Olguța Lupu's study focuses on the music composed by Tiberiu Olah for this film – his 27th out of about 40 film scores. By correlating the composer's ideas and principles regarding film music with a detailed analysis of the *Osânda* score, the author manages to highlight Olah's compositional strategy, centered on “the balance between unity and diversity”, as well as the fusion between a “surface level, lyrical, song-like, accessible” and a “deep one, modern and avant-gardist”.

Another Romanian film adaptation is discussed by Antigona Rădulescu: *Moromeții* [The Moromete Family] (directed by Stere Gulea, 1987), based on the first volume of Marin Preda's eponymous novel. Published in 1955, the novel aligned with the official themes of the communist regime in Romania, portraying the difficult life of a peasant family from southern Romania, marked by poverty and political turmoil during the interwar period. Focusing on the film made more than three decades after the novel's publication, the author analyzes from different angles the music composed by Cornelia Tăutu, an experienced composer in the field of film music. Rădulescu deconstructs the layers that compose the film, highlighting the moments when music appears in the story. She also compares the (considerably different) reality of the written score with its cinematic rendering, identifies traits and functions of the music, and ultimately reveals the multiple levels at which music can be understood within the framework of the cinematic narrative.

The final study in this issue, authored by Costin Moisil, proposes an original investigation into the presence of Orthodox church chant in Romanian films of the communist period. The research findings are presented through three researcher-characters assumed as the author's alter egos, despite their differing views. The first focuses on the most popular films of the time, as well as those regarded by critics as the best. The second shifts the emphasis to epoch movies, exploring the association of specific chants with the historical moments depicted and also the ideological relevance of these choices – given the use, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, of medieval church chants as nationalist propaganda tools in the absence of other written sources of early music. The third employs oral history methods, drawing on insights from interviews with directors, composers, and others involved in the soundtracks of those films. Thus, the complex interplay between artistic, technical and ideological factors that influenced the selection and integration of religious music in Romanian cinematography during the communist period is highlighted.