The subtitle of Radu Jude’s new feature, *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World,* is “A dialogue with a film from 1981.” This means that, like Jude’s 2018 short *The Marshal’s Two Executions* or his 2020 feature *Uppercase Print,* it is an exercise in montage. It is a fiction incorporating fragments from an older fiction—a 1981 Romanian film called *Angela Goes On* (directed by Lucian Bratu); it presents itself as a sequel to that Ceaușescu-era picture, while also treating it as a documentary time capsule of 1980s Bucharest and using it for a series of evocative the-city-then-and-now juxtapositions. A scabrously witty anti-capitalist broadside (with claims to being the most relentless cinematic attack on capitalism in the history of Romanian cinema—not excluding its state socialist era), *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World* is also considered as a critique of contemporary global capitalism, as an argument against slick filmmaking, and as a demonstration of Jude’s stated interest in the cinematic possibilities of TikTok and Zoom.

**Abstract:** The article analyzes Radu Jude’s 2023 feature film *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World.* The analysis focuses on the “dialogues” or “conversations” conducted here by Jude with several other films, including his own first feature, *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009), and his 2020 feature *Uppercase Print,* it is an exercise in montage. It is a fiction incorporating fragments from an older fiction—a 1981 Romanian film called *Angela Goes On* (directed by Lucian Bratu); it presents itself as a sequel to that Ceaușescu-era picture, while also treating it as a documentary time capsule of 1980s Bucharest and using it for a series of evocative the-city-then-and-now juxtapositions. A scabrously witty anti-capitalist broadside (with claims to being the most relentless cinematic attack on capitalism in the history of Romanian cinema—not excluding its state socialist era), *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World* is also considered as a critique of contemporary global capitalism, as an argument against slick filmmaking, and as a demonstration of Jude’s stated interest in the cinematic possibilities of TikTok and Zoom. Finally, Jude gives the film a militantly junky and scrappy look, wielding that look as a weapon, raising a sort of neo-punk (and slightly campy) argument against all strictures concerning ‘well-made’ art, recruiting the notoriously “bad” director Uwe Boll as mascot, while tipping his hat to Andy Warhol (an homage visible in his choice of filming on 16mm, the minimalist credits design, and the only-one-take-for-each-shot shooting ethos). In short, *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World* is Jude’s most multilayered work yet. What follows is just an early attempt to unpack its significance.

**Keywords:** Romanian cinema, Radu Jude, anti-capitalism, neo-punk, intertextuality, Uwe Boll, TikTok, Zoom.

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1. The film opens with an alarm clock going off at a very early hour in the day and an obscenely muttered by the protagonist (Ilincu Manolache) as she reluctantly gets out of bed. (There will be a lot more swearing before the
end of this more than two-and-a-half-hour-long film.) The protagonist’s name is Angela Răducanu, she is a woman in her thirties, and she works as a production assistant (while also doing some Uber on the side). She is project-based (hence has no stable income) and her current assignment is to shoot casting videos for the benefit of an Austrian corporation. What the corporation needs is a mutilated worker to appear in a workplace safety video and – in exchange for a few hundred Euro – basically state that the accident was his/her own fault. In other words, the mutilated workers are made to compete against each other to appear in what is essentially an ad for the company and its safety standards. The ‘lucky’ chosen mutilee wins the privilege of being paid off.

The first two hours of Jude’s film are set over the course of a single day, during which exploited, overworked Angela, who sometimes looks on the verge of driving her car into a ditch from lack of sleep, keeps driving from one location to another, interviewing four candidates, borrowing some lenses from a film studio, arranging a conference for later in the day, taking part in a Zoom meeting (where the winner is decided), and finally, late at night, going to the airport to pick up the German corporate strategist (Nina Hoss) who is to supervise the making of the ad. In between the many professional appointments, exhausted Angela tries to solve some grotesque family business: a real estate developer has taken over the cemetery where her grandparents are buried – their remains (which in the case of her grandmother are rather recent) are to be exhumed and reburied somewhere else. Angela somehow manages to also squeeze a sexual encounter in her frantic day: it takes place in the same car in which she works (and sometimes naps), between two professional errands.

So, for more than two thirds of its duration, Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World unfolds a day-in-the-life-of narrative which, in its sense of daily grind as constant crisis, resembles those of New Romanian Cinema classics like 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (Cristian Mungiu, 2007). However, Radu Jude’s narrative is broken from time to time by those clips from the Ceaușescu-era film Angela Goes On. His own Angela – his protagonist – is also, in some ways, a highly original creation.

2. The protagonist. One of the original things about Angela is that she is also a TikTok vlogger in the very little spare time she has left. She uses a bald-head-and-beard filter effect to turn herself into a foul-mouthed young man called Bobiță – a wannabe influencer and Andrew Tate-like spouter of violently misogynistic garbage. At the drop of a hat, Bobiță can spin deliriously scatological fantasies involving characters from the soap opera Dallas (enormously popular with three generations of Romanians). He only has to take a glance at the cover of a book – it happens to be a copy of the 1973 Romanian rendition of Muriel Spark’s The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie – to go on a jaw-dropping pornographic riff mixing the Scottish author with her heroine (to many Romanian viewers, his imitation of Romanian ex-monarch King Michael’s stuttering speech will probably be much more offensive).

As a creation, Bobiță precedes Jude’s film (and the Andrew Tate affair). He is a character created by Ilinca Manolache, the actress who plays Angela. As wielded by Manolache on her TikTok channel, he is unambiguously a satirical creation. Manolache is known in Romania not only as an actress, but also as an outspoken feminist. But in Jude’s film, Bobiță becomes Angela Răducanu’s – and not Ilinca Manolache’s – conceit. And as such, he develops more disturbing overtones. Angela also claims satirical intent: having to defend herself against and again against TikTok followers who, without giving her work much thought, dismiss it as obscene or vulgar (she is a bit like Radu Jude in this predicament), she explains that all she does is “criticize [misogyny] by extreme caricature.” But Manolache’s savage satires play somewhat differently in Jude’s film, where to a certain extent they cease being hers and become Angela’s. For Angela, to the (debatable) extent that she functions as a realistic character with a consistent background and a coherent psychology, is a bookish and talented representative of the precariat, trapped in a job which turns her stomach. She has no illusions about what the Austrian company is doing in Romania – its business is furniture and it is apparently destroying Romanian forests for wood – nor about the purpose served by the occupational safety video she works on. She hates the people she works for, but she is impotent – as the ‘good’ people often are in contemporary Romanian cinema, from the nurse in Cristi Puiu’s seminal The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu (2005) to the constable in Jude’s own Aferim! (2015) –, able only to spit on her exploiters’ food while they’re not looking or affecting wide-eyed naïveté while perversely asking the Austrian company woman, “Is it true that your company is actually destroying Romanian forests for wood?” The corporate strategist, who is probably used to native lackeys being socially clumsy, brushes off the faux pas with a Taoist maxim. Bobiță comes across as a vessel for Angela’s anger and lack of dignity, as a device for venting off steam, but her riffs in character also carry a possible hint of masochism and self-hatred, of Stockholm-Syndrome identification with the oppressor. Even as herself, Angela can exchange scabrously misogynistic jokes with people she has just met. At other times, instead of dirty jokes, she trades high-brow anecdotes. While at yet other times, she can come across as sullen and heavy-souled, despite the touch of campiness about her – the histrionism, the unexplained glittering sequined dress she works in. There’s a remarkably lovely black-and-white shot of the sequins sparkling on her in the afternoon sunlight as she naps in her car; she looks a little like a mermaid reached by the refracted sunrays in her underwater cavern.

3. Two Angelas, Two Bucharests. Angela Coman (Dorina Lazăr), the heroine of Lucian Bratu’s Angela Goes On (or Angela Moves On), also has to drive a lot in order to earn her living. Radu Jude’s cross-cutting invites his audience to compare the Bucharest patrolled by Bratu’s fictional Angela in her capacity as a taxi driver, as the Ceaușescu era was just entering its final decade, with the Bucharest criss-crossed by his own Angela more than 40 years later. There are strata of an older
Bucharest underneath the contemporary one, and there are city documentaries waiting to be excavated – and released – from cinematic fictions like Bratu’s and his own.

It is impossible to avoid the impression that the Angela of 1981 is driving through incomparably milder traffic in what generally looks like a happier world. Of course, this is partly because Bratu shot in color and in mostly good weather (composer Marius Țeicu subsequently pouring over his images a relentlessly light-hearted musical theme), while Jude worked on 16 mm black-and-white, with the attendant graininess and flare (and the occasional effect of rough beauty – the play of sunlight on Angela’s sequins as she rests in her car). The political-cinematic conventions of the Ceaușescu era also have to be taken into account: the representation of the city was mandatorily positive, the locations were carefully chosen and the shots carefully framed to keep out undesirable details, the language used by angry drivers in traffic was clearly sanitized (although Romanian audiences at the time probably perceived it as salacious enough); in short, the approach had little of the French New Wave let’s-just-take-the-camera-to-the-streets freedom. But all that does not diminish its worth as as a time capsule of what the city looked like in the early 80s, and, at times, Jude slows the film down to better inspect it, to isolate glimpses of street life which don’t seem to have been staged, to scan a passer-by’s expression, his glancing towards Bratu’s camera, or the peaceful look of a street which later in the 80s would be torn down to make place for Ceaușescu’s gigantic People’s Palace (Jude’s slowing-down-the-film-to-analyze-it effects are possibly inspired by the work of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, which Jude has often spoken about with great enthusiasm).

And the contrast with (what Jude shows of) contemporary Bucharest is revealing: it is striking how much more crowded it is now. The monstrousness of the city’s growth is one of Jude’s satirical themes: the real estate developer desecrating the cemetery (the ground may be sacred, but not as sacred as his right of ownership over it), the blocks of flats being built everywhere, seeming to suffocate everything. This used to be the complaint against the blocks of flats built by the communists: that they occupy all the space and air, stunting individuality, etc. But Jude’s then-and-now montage suggests that it is worse now. The aggressiveness of Romanian car culture is another topic that Jude repeatedly touches on (he had also tackled it in Bad Luck Banging): when Angela mentions to a foreign visitor the hundreds of Christian shows of) contemporary Bucharest – (a car, a city), while both Angela and the heroine of Through Dusky Ways (Pogonat again) are 40 years old, divorced from abusive husbands, and eager for a chance to rebuild their lives. Angela begins a romantic relationship with another divorcee, who, in another unusual touch (especially given the growing nationalism of the Ceaușescu regime at the time), is a proud, ornery Romanian of Hungarian origin, Gyuri. It is probably significant that the actor playing Gyuri, Lázló Miske, was billed in the film’s credits as “Vasile” Miske – his ethnicity thus de-emphasized. Jude playfully corrects this: in the credits of his own film, the Romanian name “Vasile” is crossed out and “Lázló” is written over it. The most politically daring development in the Angela-Gyuri love story is that at a certain point she has an abortion. It happens off-screen – she just tells her lover about it much later – but Bratu and screenwriter Eva Sirbu (who was also a film critic at the time) completely refrain from taking any sort of moralistic stance regarding it, which is truly remarkable in a Romanian film produced at a time when abortion was outlawed and infamous repressed. In Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World, Jude cuts from his own Angela having sex in her car in 2022 to Bratu’s Angela confessing her abortion to her lover in 1981 – an extraordinary moment for a Romanian film of the late-Ceaușescu era. Somehow, the most grotesque incongruence of Marius Țeicu’s light-hearted music brings out even more strongly the singularity of the material.

Jude’s conceit is fully realized when Angela – 2023 eventually meets Angela-1981, still played by Dorina Lazăr, still vigorous after all those years and still living with Miske’s Gyuri. We are told that they married, that they had some ups and downs (it is Angela herself who tells this story, Jude using scenes from the 1981 film as illustrative flashbacks), and that they had a son, Ovidiu (Ovidiu Pirșan), now married (his wife is played by Katia Pascariu, the star of Bad Luck Banging) and middle-aged. Ovidiu is one of the injured workers interviewed by Angela – 2023 Angela – for the part in the workplace safety video. And later in the day, he would win the part.

4. Contemporary Romanian cinema, global capitalism and Toni Erdmann. Though set in Bucharest and co-produced by Ada Solomon’s HiFilm (producer of Radu Jude’s movies since the very beginning), Maren Ade’s 2016 arthouse sensation was not a Romanian film, but a German one. However, American critic J. Hoberman, who had been an enthusiastic and astute observer of the Romanian film scene since The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu, saw Toni Erdmann as a sort of “extension of the no-longer-quite-so-new Romanian cinema.” Indeed, although Romanian film culture did not pay much attention to it at the time, Toni Erdmann did give something to Romanian cinema. Its satirical realism, strikingly different from that of the New Romanian Cinema, pointed out aspects of contemporary Romanian reality that NRC filmmakers, though justly acclaimed as realists, had mostly neglected or missed – and not only for lack of access, but also because of
a local post-communist internalized taboo against criticizing global capitalism. The story of a German corporate strategist (Sandra Hüller), whose mission in Romania is basically to help an oil company save money by laying off many local workers, *Toni Erdmann* depicted Bucharest as no Romanian film had done before – by emphasizing its place in the new world order. And its place, as it emerged from Ade’s clear-eyed vision, was that of a colonial outpost. What *Toni Erdmann* gave its audience was a vision of neocolonial masters at work and play in a generically internationalized Bucharest of “conference rooms, hotel lobbies, restaurants, night clubs and impersonal apartments of the international corporate elite.” A basic insight – one that it shared with films made by Olivier Assayas in his transnational thriller mode: *Demonlover* (2002) or *Boarding Gate* (2005) – was that globalization has made all places resemble each other, and all of them ultimately resemble transit zones and nonplaces like malls, airports, and office buildings. With her very precise ear for colonial condescension (a German CEO congratulating Romania for having shown “great economic strength in overcoming the [post-2008] economic crisis” or assuring his colleagues that they can have a really good life in Romania, a better country than its reputation would suggest) and casual colonial cruelty (the heroine complaining about an unenthusiastic masseuse to a hotel under-manager whose winning reaction is like an automatic guarantee that the hapless girl will suffer), Maren Ade basically opened new territories for Romanian cinema.

The NRC had been more at home with Romanian state institutions – hospitals, police stations, etc. It excelled at evoking their corrupt shabbiness, their decrepitude, their inability to catch up with the rules of global development. It mostly stood away from the new world of multinational companies operating in post-communist Romania. For the generation of filmmakers (most of them born in the late 1960s and early 1970s) who constituted the NRC, the main object of suspicion was the state. Capitalism tended to get a free pass. In the Romanian public discourse of the 1990s and 2000s, capitalism was an aspirational horizon; it was where we wanted to go. Wherever you looked, there it was. Wherever you looked, there it stood: a commercial comedy, *Angela Goes On*, the cinematic treatment, it was already 2022; and it was not in a NRC film, but in a commercial comedy, *Teambuilding*, which proved phenomenally popular. That’s why Maren Ade’s *Toni Erdmann* could be said to show 2016 Romania in a whole new light. However, it was apathetically received in Romania.

But not by Radu Jude. *Toni Erdmann* is one of the texts with which *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World* finds itself in conversation. In a private communication to the authors of the present article, the writer-director confirmed this aspect of his film and went on to say that, at a certain point in the development of the project, he had fleetingly thought about acknowledging this influence more explicitly – by having *Toni Erdmann*’s Sandra Hüller as the German corporate supervisor who comes to Bucharest for the shooting of the work safety video. In the film that Jude ended up making, the character is named Doris Goethe (Angela amusingly asks her whether she is a descendant of the writer, and it turns out that she really is) and, as played by Nina Hoss, she first appears during a Zoom meeting, addressing the Romanian team gathered around a table. Her face floating over a virtual background representing Trump Tower, she serenely hovers over the Romanians – a goddess from Trumpland – as they crowd together so that she can see them. The composition is very comical. Jude, who has earlier filmed Angela’s cell phone as she was scrolling on TikTok, is interested in filming the new world of images. In this regard, he is a bit like Assayas, who is his 2022 television remake of his own *Irma Vep*, kept filming the other screens – cell phone screens, laptop screens – which are pushing the traditional cinematic screen to the margins. The Romanians nod sycophantically to everything she says – things like, “What we are doing here are not commercials, but films about the care our company has for its workers”. The decision is quickly reached: one of the candidates is eliminated for being too disfigured (one of the Romanian film people callously alludes to Tod Browning’s *Freaks*), another for being a Roma (the racism of eliminating her for this reason is blamed on the Romanian audience); the chosen one is Ovidiu, the son of the lovers from the 1981 *Angela Goes On*, although someone explains that his family name, Bucă, will make Romanian audiences laugh – “It means ass... actually half-ass... buttock.” On the Romanian side, the whole meeting is conducted in wonderfully mangled English (someone says “shoreshouse” instead of “warehouse”) spiced with Zoom-speak (“Are you frozen?”). “We included him out,” someone says about a candidate, thus echoing Hollywood producer Samuel Goldwyn as quoted by Fritz Lang in Jean-Luc Godard’s *Contempt*.12
With *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World*, Jude breaks the pattern of – as Jonathan Rosenbaum had critically put it in his analysis of *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* – “discussing social problems that are shared around the globe as if they were specifically or even exclusively Romanian”; in *Bad Luck Banging*, Jude remained “stubbornly and exclusively within his own country, refusing to step outside apart from his use of literary quotations, which come from a wider geographical spread.” According to Rosenbaum, a potent critique should go further: “Perhaps this is related to the dictates of global surveillance capitalism: even if the big companies tend to do the same things everywhere, they still depend on a divide-and-conquer strategy through the isolation of national markets from one another. Viewing problems globally might lead to global boycotts, whereas keeping things provincial makes the world more manageable from the standpoint of multinationals.” And the critique finally does go further in *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World*, whose critical inspection concerns global capitalism just as much as its local capillaries. As such, it should not nurture Western condescension towards Romanian backwardness, but Western critical reflexivity on its own role in producing this subordinated, dependent, reactionary position for the semi-peripheries of capitalism.

5. *The happiest in the world.* In the first two hours of his film, Jude has shown us a day in the life of an exploited and sleep-deprived production assistant as she rushes about Bucharest, struggling not to pass out in her car while she makes preparations for the shooting of a workplace safety video, in fact nothing more than a corporate ad. In the last 35 minutes, Jude shows us the shooting itself. It is a fixed frontal shot of Ovidiu and his family. He sits in his wheelchair while his mother (the Angela who used to be a taxi driver in the Ceausescu era) sits in an armchair next to him. His wife and their teenage daughter stand behind them. They are at the entrance of the furniture factory where Ovidiu used to work. Behind them, we can see the factory wall on the left and an old nuclear fallout shelter on the right (reminding us of the film’s apocalyptic undertones). There is also a dog shed with the name “Bella” on it – and, sure enough, Bella will eventually walk into the shot. There’s also a barrier, which Ovidiu describes to the camera as just a “heavy rusty iron metal bar on a cylinder.” It was that metal bar that (through no fault of his own) hit him on the head (when a car hit it), putting him in a coma from which he emerged after a year, paralyzed from the waist down. Ovidiu had no reason to wear a safety helmet: he was leaving work (he had been working unpaid overtime) – he was just exiting the factory area when the accident happened. The driver of the car could not see the barrier, the place being so badly lighted. It is so glaringly clear that it couldn’t have been Ovidiu’s fault that it is a bit of a stretch to believe a company would try to transform his case into a cautionary ad about worker negligence, or that Ovidiu and his lawyers – for he has opened a lawsuit against the company – would play into their hands by agreeing to appear in the safety video. But it works as satirical exaggeration: the company confident that, by deploying its formidable resources of intimidation, cajoling, etc., it can twist any truth; its victims bewildered and easily cowed. And the skit has a satirically satisfying punchline in which the worker gets literally silenced: after doing everything to purge both Ovidiu’s scripted speech and the shot itself of anything that could possibly incriminate them (they even dismantle the rusty barrier, although they neglect to work with Ovidiu on adapting his speech and his performance, so in the next take he keeps pointing at the iron bar behind him as if it were still there), they decide to just have him hold a series of blank sheets of paper, on which they will later add whatever messages most suit them.

The camera setup doesn’t change during the whole 35-minute scene. The point of view is that of the camera shooting the ad. Crew members – like the director of the video, played by Șerban Pavlu – wander in and out of the shot. Others – like the director of photography – are only heard, not seen. The voice of the DOP is that of actor Andi Vasiluianu, who also played the DOP in Radu Jude’s first feature – *The Happiest Girl in the World*, which was about the shooting of a commercial for a soft drinks company – where the director was also played by Pavlu. It is perfectly plausible that both Pavlu and Vasiliuianu are reprising their *Happiest Girl* characters. In *The Happiest Girl in the World*, Pavlu’s character was sometimes acting on the set as if he considered the work to be beneath him, as if he was taking time away from worthier or loftier things in order to do the ad – purely as a favor to the advertising agency and the soft drinks firm. But it was perfectly clear that, underneath his schtick, the character was complicit with the agency and soft drinks people in their consolidation of social stereotypes, in their contempt for viewers or consumers, in their callous, patronizing, humiliating treatment of the film’s epymous character – the 17-year-old non-professional actress appearing in the ad. Here, too, the director insists on assuring Ovidiu that he is on his side and against the Austrian company; he assures the worker’s family that he wouldn’t do anything against his principles. But it is the company which is calling all the shots, from the choice of the lenses to the final decision to write and add Ovidiu’s speech in post-production, without consulting him about it and without even asking him to deliver it. The director is plainly just a mercenary and the little noise he makes (a little grandstanding in front of Ovidiu, a little bad-mouthing of his masters behind their backs) is all for his own easily assuageable conscience. As they all wait for the shot to be prepared (sunshine turning to rain and Ovidiu’s family getting all wet), the DOP (always off-screen) starts talking film history. His monologue is about how ads and corporate films are as old as cinema itself – it is pointed out that the Lumière’s cinematic document of the workers exiting the factory gates was also an ad for the Lumière factory itself (and it is believed that, dissatisfied with the first filming, the Lumières made the workers stage another exit). So film began as a tool in the hands of capitalism (although someone adds that workplace safety films made under the Romanian communist regime were also about putting the blame on the injured worker). The
director played by Pavlu makes a point of pride of informing his corporate employers that, aside from many ads for the likes of Procter & Gamble, McDonald’s and OMV Petrom, he also has an art film on his résumé: an adaptation from Mircea Eliade, it sounds like a suitably highbrow, apolitical, art-for-art’s-sake counterpoint to his work for hire. In 2000s, when he was just beginning to establish himself as a filmmaker, Radu Jude was also shooting a lot of commercials. In order to support themselves, other NRC directors (Radu Muntean, Cristi Puiu) were doing the same. The difference is that the others kept the two lines of work separate, whereas Jude saw a tension between them, and made his unease – his guilt about the kind of work he had to do in advertising in order to support his ambitions as an arthouse director concerned with subtle moral issues – the subject of his first feature. He chose to poke at what he perceived as a contradiction instead of compartmentalizing it out. The director played by Pavlu in Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World is a Radu Jude from an alternative existence, who went the opposite route.\(^{41}\)

6. Andy Warhol and Uwe Boll. Jude’s critique of advertising goes hand in hand with a rejection of technical slickness. Jude has recently talked and written\(^{45}\) about his enthusiasm for Andy Warhol’s filmmaking, and, in the light of those comments, his casual tableau treatment of the video shoot, including a bit of glaring clumsiness, evokes Warhol’s brand of minimalism. The intentional clumsiness consists in the fact that the 35-minute scene is composed of two shots joined as if in an inexpert attempt (the light suddenly changes, etc.) to make it look like a single shot. It is as if Jude wanted to distance himself from the macho vanity involved in a lot of long-take filmmaking (although conspicuous non-compliance with the rules of refinement can also be construed as macho vanity).

An additional layer of punk belligerence is added when (present-day) Angela, visiting the film studios of Buftea, near Bucharest, in order to pick up some lenses, runs into a set presided by none other than German schlockmeister Uwe Boll. Notorious for adapting video games and repeatedly presiding by himself, he has been left on their own, some of the opinions they have developed can be obnoxious.

As in porn movies, the face of Angela’s sex partner, like the face of Eastern political-modernist filmmakers’ reflections on “the vocabulary of sexuality or from the negative dialectics of historical options that had pre-structured Makavejev’s and his generation of the World films in general), nor in Jude’s intellectual formation of a Reichian orgasmic liberation, never takes place. Sex is not even tender – neither in Bad Luck Banging (and in Jude’s earlier films in general), nor in Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World. In fact, nothing that characters do or could do is particularly emancipatory or redemptive – although it is difficult to see Jude, as Rosenbaum seems to see him, as heir to a post-Marxist melancholic political tradition that has lost any hope for revolution or radical change (Jude’s intellectual formation is not essentially Marxist). For Angela, sex is more release than liberation – legitimate as an individual act (maybe with a pinch of masochism), but completely disconnected from the political vocabulary of sexuality or from the negative dialectics of historical options that had pre-structured Makavejev’s and his generation of Eastern political-modernist filmmakers’ reflections on “the possibilities as well as the limits of the Cold War” (Rosenbaum). As in porn movies, the face of Angela’s sex partner, like the face of Emilia’s sex partner in Bad Luck Banging, cannot be seen clearly. Partners are rather casual, instrumental parts of a process that has to deal with something else.

7. Up-to-the-minuteness. Jude, who shot the film in the early autumn of 2022, has managed to include in the dialogue a reference to Godard’s death in September. Other up-to-the-minute references include the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the rampant post-pandemic inflation. As in Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn and the earlier “I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians” (2018), Jude cultivates a Godard-inspired effect of five-minutes-ago topicality. Characters in the new film also reference already forgotten local scandals from the summer of 2022 – one involving a priest who was sexually assaulting female parishioners, another concerning a social media personality who lost some of his lucrative contracts when a misogynistic rant of his (a specialty) drew an outraged reaction on Facebook.\(^{46}\)

8. No paragons. Olivier Assayas – some of whose work as film director may have provided Jude with a rival model of a filmmaking practice that tries to “seize” the contemporary – once wrote a review for a Ken Loach film, in which he noted that no working class character in that type of cinema can ever be expected to voice a racist opinion.\(^{6}\) There is no such sanitizing here. The Angela who used to drive a taxi has aged into a casually racist lady; her husband, Gyuri, is now a Hungarian nationalist, a Viktor Orbán fan. Out of the blue, their son Ovidiu voices his admiration for a notoriously crooked Romanian politician (“He was all for young people and fun.”). In Radu Jude’s films, people – nice or good people as these certainly are – are usually eager to talk and say things like these. In an individualistic world in which they have been left on their own, some of the opinions they have developed can be obnoxious.

9. Unredemptive sex. Comparing Radu Jude’s Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn with Dušan Makavejev’s 1971 WR: Mysteries of the Organism, Jonathan Rosenbaum remarked that sexuality is, for Jude, a mark of his Freudian – also also political – pessimism.\(^{8}\) While in his cinema, oppression is prudish and it sometimes targets sex, it is also obscene; on the other hand, the opposite, a Reichian orgasmic liberation, never takes place. Sex is not even tender – neither in Bad Luck Banging (and in Jude’s earlier films in general), nor in Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World.
10. The open grave as swimming pool. While scrolling on TikTok, Angela comes across a video of a happy-looking young man splashing around on a sunny day in an open grave which he has apparently turned into a pool. This arresting vision is like a delirious extension of the heroine’s waking nightmare and Shakespearian. And it encapsulates the film’s mixture of the apocalyptic and the buoyant, of the death-haunted and the high-spirited.

Notes:
1. The startling injunction that gives the film its title is borrowed from Polish aphorist Stanislaw ‘Jerry’ Lec (1909–1966).


3. Or, as Jessica Kiang has pointed out in her Variety review of the film, Manolache’s Angela is “a highly relatable avatar for a generation swindled out of the very idea of leisure time or job satisfaction by the con that is the gig economy. But she is also wholly herself, an outlier weirdo with a brilliant magpie mind that throws off sparks like the sequins on her T-shirt dress [...]” Jessica Kiang, “Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World Review: Radu Jude’s Brilliantly Bizarre Work-Culture Satire Won’t Quit (But Maybe You Should),” Variety, August 7, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/reviews/do-not-expect-too-much-from-the-end-of-the-world-review-radu-jude-1235688740/, last accessed on August 8, 2023.

4. Lucian Bratu’s insistence on making an uncompromising cinema that kept away from mystificatory depictions of contemporary life led him more than once to reject work proposals for feature films. He worked instead for the Sahia Studio, crafting utility films.


6. Andrei Gorzo, “Un film cu o fata fermecatoare – Un studiu critic” (Societatea Culturii NExT/LiterNet, 2018), is a critical guide to another film by Lucian Bratu, A Film with a Charming Girl (1966; also known as Charming Girl). It includes a discussion of Bratu’s “feminist trilogy” in Romanian (pages 28-29). It is downloadable here as a PDF file: https://editura.liternet.ro/carte/15/Andrei-Gorzo-Un-film-cu-o-fata-fermecatoare-Un-studiu-critic.html, last accessed on August 9, 2023. Bratu’s wise, warm, middle-aged female characters in the trilogy are a real departure from the poetic, moody, flirty, hedonistic, immature (and, one might suspect, empty-headed, economically and emotionally dependent) type of girl characters who had drifted through 1960s films (including Bratu’s own “charming girl”, obviously inspired by Godard, Truffaut and Antonioni heroines).


11. Jude, who likes to quote Mel Brooks’s boast of a film of his (The Producers) “rose below vulgarity”, has recently used the phrase on Facebook as praise for Teambuilding.


2022, 17-22. It was Warhol who, according to Langlois (as quoted here by Jude), embraced the liberating principle of making “good bad movies.” With “un bon mauvais film”, “include me out”, “rising below vulgarity” and “infaillible imprecision”, the oxymoron lately seems to have become Jude’s favorite verbal dialectics of disruption.

16. For Jude’s deployment of such references in “I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians”, see Veronica Lazăr and Andrei Gorzo, “An updated political modernism: Radu Jude and ‘I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians,’” Close Up: Film and Media Studies 3, no. 1-2 (2019): 17-18. Substantially revised, that article was turned into a chapter in Gorzo and Lazăr, Beyond the New Romanian Cinema.


Bibliography


