

**Violated Intimacy or Procreation non Sequitur
in Cristian Mungiu's Film 432¹**

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*The sense of self is only an intersection of
multiple, overlapping pasts*

(Cubitt 288).

The time is out of joint
(Shakespeare Hamlet 1.5.663).

Directed by Cristian Mungiu, *4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days*³ interprets abortion as political metaphor for Romania's former totalitarian regime, which restricted women to being controlled, reproductive machines. The notion of mother as the nurturing and stable point of a household was questioned in this upside-down, maddening filmic universe. Who would want to give birth in a society that misrepresents human rights, where freedom of speech is inexistent, and where there is a lack of social integrity? Who wants to procreate in a place where basic food and produce are rationed? Or where electricity is shut off daily and where decent clothes are almost impossible to find? Shot eighteen years after the Romanian revolution of 1989, which marked the end of Communism in Romania, Mungiu's film terrified both national and international audiences. While for Romanians, the film resuscitated events from a traumatic past, for international audiences it was extremely shocking. Nonetheless it *had* to be released to function as a *ça-a-été* reminder of unpardonable historical

¹A shorter version of this paper was delivered at the 126th MLA Annual Convention, Los Angeles, 2011.

²I dedicate this essay to my father who never met his son.

³This film was awarded the prestigious *Palme d'Or* distinction at Cannes, France in 2007.

times, when women could not find contraceptive products and abortion was illegal. Mungiu urges his audience to think that as long as love is not coerced upon us, procreation should not be either.

Otilia and Găbița, the two female protagonists, are introduced from the very first cadre. The latter has not yet decided what to pack for her forthcoming journey, of which we do not know any details at this point. She is concerned about leaving her two goldfish unattended and about taking her notebooks with her to study for an upcoming college exam. Otilia disregards her roommate's petty concerns. She possesses her own agitated mood, moving frantically back and forth. Then Otilia leaves their dormitory room to meet Adi, her boyfriend, from whom she will borrow some money to complete this mysterious trip. Once Otilia exits the room, she will be in an unstoppable, centrifugal motion. She is in charge of borrowing money, confirming the booking for the hotel room, and meeting a vaguely described middle-aged man, Mr. Bebe.⁴

The plot depicts rapid and concise actions that must not be delayed or complicated. Mungiu presents the events the way they unfold in front of the camera. That is, everything occurs in the present, subtly revealing the gravity of the moment so that the film apparently does not rely on sophisticated cuts, intricate editing, montage techniques, flashbacks, or philosophical embellishments. Furthermore, there is no soundtrack; the residual background sounds result from cacophonous street noise, slammed doors, footsteps, and vehicles caught in traffic. The director's vision follows a straightforward formula, where viewers are advised not to stop and question what is about to happen because they may easily miss the point of the film.

⁴ The male protagonists' names are very significant. Adi is short for Adrian, and it could suggest a term of endearment and/or infantilism. Mr. Bebe is quite potently chosen since it basically means Mister Baby.

It helps to note that, '[a]ctuality is the most intense moment of presentness, which, by definition, passes unnoticed. In George Kubler's poetic account: Actuality is when the lighthouse is dark between flashes; it is the instant between the ticks of the watch' (Bal 2006, 224). Actuality in Mungiu's film is like an avalanche: the rolling and rolling of snowballs will eventually hit the ground violently, revealing an ugly, unbearable truth.

Now we find out that the mysterious trip is a secretive, highly risky abortion. A sense of entrapment sets the tone for the film. Before Otilia leaves the dormitory, she searches for some foreign cigarettes, which are clandestine, too, but which she may use later for bribery. The corridors are not illuminated, hence the eerie sensation of incarceration. We hear Otilia's footsteps as evidence of her moving, but we barely see her. The only patch of light comes from outside. It is crucial for Mungiu to catch this aspect early in his film, before the abortion scene, to parallel the mysterious intricacies of architectural and biological 'cavities', and the vague sense of protection that they project. In communist Romania, the one who was silent and submissive was the one who could have a long life. Put differently, the one who stayed in *darkness* was safe.

According to Gilles Deleuze, 'Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed' (1994, 139). Once they are all seated, Mr. Bebe proceeds with minimal routine questions. He is interested to know if Găbița has high or low blood pressure, her blood type and allergy history. He informs her that he will not perform curettage, but, instead, insert a probe in her vagina that will induce abortion. He instructs her to stay still during the entire intervention, otherwise the

probe may fail. He also tells her that he will not use an anesthetic because he does not want to numb her body.

After these brief instructions, he changes to a more serious tone, and he declares firmly: ‘Eu a doua oară nu pun’, that is, ‘I won’t put it twice’. Otilia and Găbița are overwhelmed and dizzy because everything is presented too rapidly, which empowers Mr. Bebe as an authoritative figure. He asks for the plastic table cover that Găbița was instructed to bring. She excuses herself timidly for having left it in her dormitory room. He is irritated by her negligence because they cannot afford to leave any blood trace behind. Then, he proposes using a plastic bag. He reminds Găbița to be cautious of infections as a potential side-effect. Finally, she should not call an ambulance because that would equate with their freedom being *terminated*.

Afterwards, he proceeds with a quick physical examination. Găbița lies on the bed. Before Mr. Bebe starts palpating her belly, he asks if her period is regular, to which she replies vaguely ‘yes’. As the man examines her, he discovers that Găbița has told him a lie; she could not possibly be in her second month of pregnancy, but rather somewhere in her mid-fourth. He interrupts his examination confessing: ‘E de pușcărie după 4 luni,’ that is, ‘After four months, it is not abortion any longer, but murder’. If caught, he could get a sentence from five to ten years.⁵ Still, what he proposes to Otilia and Găbița next defies moral sanity. He tells them casually that he will not risk his life for 3,000 lei, or the typical fiscal equivalent for an abortion. Instead, he wants to have sex with them. Shocked, Găbița implores him to leave Otilia out of this since this is her own fault. But he refuses. Then Otilia proposes a slightly increased payment, at which point he becomes visibly irritated, starts cursing,

⁵ Throughout the film, Mungiu remains secretive or, perhaps, he is intentionally careless about Mr. Bebe’s professional background. He could be a locksmith, an engineer, a butcher, a truck driver, or, worse, anything. He could be a doctor whose license to practice medicine was removed, yet whose liberty has been preserved.

and almost leaves the hotel room. It's either forced sex, or he will not *help* them, thus exploiting the delicate situation shamelessly.

In a society with questionable moral principles, this rape will pass unnoticed. In other words, Mr. Bebe's major offense has a perfect alibi; how could these women report the rape to authorities, since that is part of a secret, desperate deal? They are in a 'dead end' situation, which, unpredictably, turns out to be even more harrowing than an unwanted, advanced pregnancy. They face the malign, abnormal ramifications of traumatic communism where people kept their mouth shut in order to preserve their liberty. Sadly, Mr. Bebe knows this fact and is ready to attack their intimacy.

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth explains:

What causes trauma is a shock that appears to work very much like bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time. [...] The breach in the mind [...] is not caused by a pure quantity of stimulus, [...] but by 'fright,' the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly. It is not simply, that is, the literal threatening of bodily life, but the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind *one moment too late* (63).

Yet Mungiu points to a different type of present, felt trauma: there are no adequate laws to protect women against unwanted pregnancies. Therefore, they accept the non-negotiable terms of abortion. Unlike Caruth's commentary on how trauma works, Otilia and Găbița have time to recognize theirs, but, since they lack freedom and abortion is illegal, they submit to Mr. Bebe's horrible demand.

This moment may actually clarify why Mungiu opted to leave flashbacks out of his film. 432⁶ is meta-cinematic; namely the director alludes to the process of

⁶ 432 is how the movie is usually abbreviated.

remembering. According to Elizabeth Grosz, '[t]he past is the virtual that coexists with the present' (2003, 17) and '[h]istory is not the recovery of the truth of bodies or lives in the past; it is the engendering of new kinds of bodies and new kinds of lives' (23). On the one hand, the director resuscitates dreadful images from the past of those who actually lived this nightmare; on the other hand, he lets those who did not experience this agony envision it artistically. In fact, Mungiu's initial title for his movie was 'Amintiri din Epoca de Aur'⁷ or 'Tales from the Golden Age'.

The film's action takes place in 1987, two years before the Romanian moral revolution. After decades of stricter and stricter communist anomalies, such a decline was recorded that, on a spiritual level, people could not even attend mass for fear that they may be arrested and imprisoned for their religious beliefs. In her book, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*, Susan R. Bordo claims that, '[t]o be able to mentally represent an object in its absence is to conceive of the object as constituted not by this or that transitory perception of it by the subject, but as sustained by a projected multiplicity of perspectives' (1987, 46). Let us now imagine a real, degenerate experiment, where children and their parents discover the unfortunate, gradual disappearance of objects. Little by little, everything is taken away or rationalized – from clothes to food and electricity. Goods start to vanish gradually, such that there is no mistake to compare this situation to a surreal vacuum.

Otilia and Găbița consider that a child born in such unpardonable conditions would be traumatized. Therefore, they accept Mr. Bebe's infamous blackmail. After the rape, he continues his *ad-hoc* 'training session'. He tells the women not to cut the cord until the placenta is out. Găbița should stay still regardless of her aching

⁷ Ceaușescu deluded himself that his country lived in a megalomaniacal, self-proclaimed 'Golden Age,' namely, that its citizens were having the time of their lives and were very grateful for their good fortune.

physical discomfort. Once the dead foetus is expelled, they should not flush it in the toilet for it may become blocked and inevitably call attention to the hotel maintenance office. They should also not bury it because dogs may dig it up. The best option would be to wrap it and throw it down in a trash chute from a ten-story apartment block located in a different neighborhood, far away from the hotel. Finally, should Găbița develop fever, she may take an aspirin or an antibiotic, which he will leave on the nightstand. He exits the room by reminding them firmly to not to call an ambulance if they want to preserve their freedom.

On his way out, Mr. Bebe wishes them ‘good luck,’ using what is by now his trademark, although completely inappropriate, dispassionate tone. Neither Otilia nor Găbița utters a word, and Mungiu captures their agonizing silence. They are still under the shock of the volitional rape, no matter how oxymoronic this may sound. Găbița finally breaks up the silence, and, vividly embarrassed, thanks Otilia. She is outraged and disturbed, and asks her who recommended this monstrous man. *Post-factum*, it might have helped if they had used a female doctor, paid her more, but, at least, avoided the rape. It’s too late now. Hence, they can only hope that the abortion will not bring other unforeseen complications.

Noticing that Găbița is not seated comfortably, Otilia puts a pillow under her head, and observes a painting that hangs on the wall. She remarks that that *nature morte* ‘is really weird’. This painting, a décor-must in any hotel room, is placed above Găbița’s head as she lies in a crucified position waiting for the foetus to be pushed out from her uterus. The painting is highly significant if we consider the mirrors in the delivery rooms that help mothers to monitor their moves. In this case, the painting has the capacity to look back and be reflective since its theme is stillness, death, and decay. Finally, the painting functions as a *fascinum*, or ‘evil eye’, which, for Jacques Lacan, ‘[h]as the effect of arresting movement’, and, literally, ‘of killing

life'. Hence, once more, the necessity of the picture as an apotropaic transformation: 'it is a question of dispossessing the evil eye of the gaze in order to ward it off' (Foster 2004, 281). Lying motionless, as Mr. Bebe urged her to stay, the evil eye of the painting protects Găbița, and keeps any distractions away.

This is also the moment when Otilia assures Găbița that she will be fine as she has to leave for a couple of hours. As it happens, today is also Adi's mother's birthday, a party invitation she cannot decline. Otilia is introduced to Adi's parents' guests, of which, ironically, half are doctors. Otilia does not have the appropriate disposition or appetite to eat anything and finds this whole gathering a charade. In fact, after ten minutes, she goes into Adi's room. She finally confesses why she has borrowed money from him, without divulging the exact *price* of the abortion. Then, she quizzes him because she is curious to test his real level of maturity. Basically, she wants to know his reactions *vis-à-vis* unwanted pregnancies. Adi has one dumb and insensitive solution: 'I would marry you'. Then to appease her, he adds: 'come on, this did *not* happen to us', and while touching her arms, Otilia bursts violently: 'Don't put your hands on me!'

Her epiphany reveals that Adi is an ordinary man who does not think of the consequences of unprotected sex. She becomes aware that he has not *and* will not care to take responsibility during their sexual intercourse. She has found her 'minotaur' unguarded and unprepared to be part of a mature conversation and relationship and she is not exactly sure if he deserves to be released from her 'labyrinth.'⁸ As argued in Luce Irigaray's book, *Sexes and Genealogies*,

[t]he labyrinth, whose path was known to Ariadne, for example, would thus be that of the lips. This mystery of the female lips, the way which they open

⁸ On a coincidental note, one may wonder if Otilia has just been contaminated herself with the 'sting' of exploitation, as a result of the rape.

to give birth to the universe, and touch together to permit the female individual to have a sense of her identity, would be the forgotten secret of her perceiving the generating the world. [...] I believe that by forgetting the importance of the lips, a labyrinthine omission has been opened up in the deciding of the universe and language, just as an enigma has been lodged in the interpretation of sexual differences. [...] The enigma of woman would largely reside in the enigma of her lips and all they keep unmanifested (1993, 101-02)

As opposed to the rigid, patriarchal, phallogocentric version, Irigaray argued for the development of a more fluid, ‘vulvomorphic’ form of discourse and thinking. In communist Romania, however, there exists only one form of language, which is opaque to genre, but, which, instead, relates exclusively to power. Few had sex protection products: dignitaries, their wives and mistresses, stewardesses, gymnasts and other promising athletes. This was one crass violation of freedom: while certain people enjoyed food, clothes, and other items that made their lives civilized, the majority of Romanians could only project these as remote fantasies.

Over the years, Adi’s parents consolidated their social status, so it is unusual that Adi prefers *coitus interruptus* or the ‘calendar method’— the two commonly employed contraceptive methods. Is he ashamed to admit he has started his sexual life? (That would seem absurd, since he is a college student). Does he perhaps consider Otilia a fluke? Once Otilia decides that Adi is no better than any other man, she feels suffocated in his room, and chooses to leave it immediately.

Up to this point in the film, there were two major stops, the rape and the dinner, respectively. The next scene requires ample discussion. Otilia arrives at the hotel and finds Găbița in bed, covered in blankets. With a faint voice, she admits: ‘I got rid of it’. The dead fetus lies abandoned on the bathroom floor. The look in Găbița’s eyes signals desperation when she begs Otilia, ‘Please, bury it’. The stills--juxtaposed below – come from two distinct moments in the film, yet they have a

subtle silent dialogue. The first presents Mr. Bebe and the two women seated, as they have just started to discuss the procedure of abortion. They form a triangle that is repeated in the second still, where Găbița looks scarily into Otilia's eyes, who seems transfixed and yet invincible, miraculously resourceful to conclude this agony. Although not present in the still per se, the image of the dead fetus was exposed seconds earlier, which explains the women's terrified looks. In the second still, the trio is represented by the two women, while Mr. Bebe has been symbolically 'replaced' by the dead fetus.



Figures 1 and 2. Stills. *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days*. BAC Films, 2007.⁹

Much has been debated over the exposure of the dead foetus image. Arguments were made to the effect that it was not absolutely necessary; that it was too graphic; and that it undermined the phenomenal performance of the two women. According to Susan Sontag, '[a]s everyone has observed, there is a mounting level of acceptable violence and sadism in mass culture: films, television, comics, computer games. Imagery that would have had an audience cringing and recoiling in disgust 40 years ago is watched without so much as a blink by [everyone] in the multiplex'

⁹ <http://www.comingsoon.net/imageGallery/4_Months__3_Weeks_and_2_Days>

(2003, 100-101). Despite this accurate explanation, Mungiu was criticized for his close-up shot by Western reviewers. However, it is arguable that the more we hide our participation from coping with the brute message of graphic images, the more we persist on living in a suspended, ideal, never-really confronted life. In other words, by keeping shocking images out of our lives, we stagnate and re-present pain from the same abstract perspective, when we should perceive it as a crude experience that unearths our comfortable roots and habits, and motivates us to reflect on life's intricacies. Or, as Deleuze claimed earlier, it introduces us an encounter whose effect, in Mungiu's case, is to purge us from terror by deconstructing terror.

Therefore, the shot of the dead foetus had to make its cathartic appearance as a confirmation for these two women's untouched dignity. In other words, after they have concealed an abortion and a rape so maturely, the dead foetus was something to atone for their recently undergone horrible experiences. Găbița did not want that pregnancy. Otilia approved her friend's choice without questioning her decision, and, the indirect, implied message is that no one should do that either. Mungiu's women's bodies are fluid means of communication, and, thus, the scene of the dead fetus plays an irreplaceable, salient piece in this controlled, invalid communication that existed in communism. Communication reaches a break in this uninterrupted filmic tempo. The close-up on both the dead fetus and the two women impregnates profusely Mungiu's otherwise large cadres.

Afterwards, Otilia restarts her hallucinating run since the nightmare is not quite over. Temporally, this is the moment when the day approaches its end. Almost impossible to believe, yet not a single day has passed since we met Otilia and Găbița. Paralleling the beginning of the film, we squint our eyes again to see Otilia in these pitch-dark final cadres. Lost and tired, she searches for a place to get rid of the bloody evidence. As advised by Mr. Bebe, she finds a ten-story apartment block, and throws

the dead fetus down the trash chute. When she returns to the hotel, Găbița is downstairs, in the restaurant. Both are famished after a long day's journey into securing their womanhood's self-esteem. They are relieved no one is suspicious of anything, and that their lives are out of danger.

For Grosz, '[c]arnal experience [...] is like an ever-increasing hunger that supplements itself, feeds itself, on hunger, and can never be content with what it ingests' (1995, 195). This is a nice image that contrasts effectively with Găbița's and Otilia's literal hunger. The pregnancy was a result of an erotic hunger without thinking about its consequences. The final scene shows the two women savoring a different type of carnal pleasure, this time epicurean. As they eat, Otilia urges Găbița 'never to talk about *this* again'. Their hunger is a positive sign that their bodies signal as they have started to move into a much-deserved stage of healing. The very last shot presents Otilia facing us exhausted, yet still somewhat satisfied with the outcome of the illegal intervention, in which, for once, *they* fooled the communist system. Otilia dares to look straight into the camera to disclose us, or, perchance, she just wakes up from her dream.

In *Film and the Dream Screen: A Sleep and a Forgetting* (1984), Robert T. Eberwein affirms that '[f]ilms in general seem both real and dreamlike because they appear to us in a way that activates the regressive experience of watching dreams on our psychic dream screens. The actual screen in the theater functions as a psychic prosthesis of our dream screen' (192). As mentioned before, light plays a vital role in this film, which Mungiu started at dawn and ended at night. Light is a medium which allows us to view ourselves and our surroundings, but it also illuminates the corridors of transpired nightmares, whether personal or political. If we add these numbers, $4+3+2$, we reach a symbolic digit, 9, which equates with the nine months of pregnancy. Could 432 be *Otilia's* very bad dream? Strong evidence may support this

point of view. For example, Găbița's boyfriend, the one who got her pregnant, is absent throughout the film; Otilia's is not. Moreover, Otilia orchestrates the abortion, addresses the uncomfortable issue with Adi, and, finally, her eyes confront us in the end.

It is also highly realistic to imply that this could be any woman's bad dream in the context of communism. Otilia becomes the prototype for all women who refused a pregnancy. In *The Cinema Effect* (2004), Sean Cubitt argues that '[e]ach flashback takes us to a *memento mori*, and functions as a present simultaneous with the diegetic present of the main narrative [...] The flashbacks, like the slow-motion shots, are part of an extended present with roots deep in the past, but whose future is only a memory' (212). If we continue this line of reasoning, then Mungiu's whole project may be an ambitious, *non-stop* flashback into the narrow 'shafts' of communism and its discriminatory politics. Or it may be about a 'black day' in two women's lives, when they have tried to solve a delicate 'problem', and thus, do not have the luxury of time to reminisce scenes from their past.

Most importantly, the experience relates a stylized shock: '[t]he cinematic event is not identical with an event in the real world: it relates real or fictitious events. [...] The verb 'relates' should be understood to mean 'establishes a relationship', not as 'tells a story'. To relate is to make a statement' (Cubitt 2004, 38) and '[n]arration tends toward gestalt. [...] The cinematic event tends toward incompleteness' (40). Mungiu unveils one abuse of communism, without making a statement pro-choice or pro-life, or labeling characters as good or bad. Mr. Bebe is a result of an abnormal regime, but he is not, nor should he be, *the* villain. He is a mutant offspring of an irrational system whose sick principles he embodies. Adi is not a bad character either, considering he cannot modify *la règle du jeu* imposed in communism, where people were tacitly submissive. The women are not victims, if we think how they manage to

flawlessly keep hidden the whole abortion procedure. In this, Mungiu avoids clichés and unproductive dichotomies.

Then what is the great achievement of 432? The postmodern man lives in a society of control, where he monitors his body by checking his blood pressure, cholesterol level, takes vitamins and supplements, protects himself against AIDS and other STDs, commits himself to do regular exercises and learns relaxation techniques to cope with stress. In a society *with* control, however, even sexual pleasures have disappeared. How can one enjoy sexual intercourse if there is the *fear* of pregnancy? How can one possibly establish a coherent, simultaneous formula between one's terror (as coerced by an outside force) and one's pleasure (as internal stimulus)? If our bodies do not perform this basic function, namely enjoyable sex, then they destroy their biological capacity and turn into inefficient, mechanical systems.

Ironically, this was something that worked against the ideology of the Romanian communist party, which set to achieve an increased productivity, disregarding the sacrifices. This country, along with other communist countries, had an aggressive pro-natalist agenda after World War II ended. The communist dream equated having more people that would lead to having superior economy, more places to work, more efficiency, more goods, and a better life. In 1957, the Romanian government legalized abortions, because there were too many women who had died during clandestine procedures. Unfortunately, a year after Ceaușescu came to power he issued Decree 770 of 1966, where women, with few exceptions, were not permitted to terminate a pregnancy¹⁰.

¹⁰ Here is a translated summary of the decree: Article 1. Interruption of pregnancy is illegal. Article 2. Under exceptional circumstances, a woman may end a pregnancy: a.) When a pregnancy endangers a woman's life; b.) When one or both of the parents have an hereditary disease that may be transmitted to the child; c.) When the pregnant woman has suffered some severe physical and/or psychical injuries/misfortunes; d.) When the woman's age is over 45; e.) When the woman already gave birth to

Ceaușescu obsessed about having a country with many proletarians because he was ‘hungry’ for power. By so doing, he would rule over many people, who, in return, would gaily contribute to his paranoia of achieving the perfect communist illusion. All inhumanity aside, the effects of this decree were visible during its first years of implementation. Namely, many children were born immediately after the decree became official. However, over the years, when they were of age to start their education, there were not enough schools, just as there were not many strongly qualified teachers. Students learned in shifts (like workers), cramming and skipping over their curricular activities. The other thing that Ceaușescu did not bother to consider was that when standards of living were not uniformly met, then disadvantaged people may need to refuse to have a (big) family. Consequently, women were terrified when their period was late, and started to lift up dangerously heavy things or to take very hot baths — to name two insane ways commonly performed to provoke the elimination of the unwanted fetus. When these methods failed, women would continue their agonizing ‘crusade’ by looking into illegal options.

According to a statistics requested by the National Agency for Monitoring Population Growth, more than 9,000 women died between 1966 and 1989 on account of poorly conducted abortions. With so many women dead, Ceaușescu’s fantasy of having a very large nation swerved into an unavoidable fiasco. Decree 770 of 1966

two kids; f.) when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. Terminating a pregnancy may be performed during the first three months of pregnancy. However, when there is an increased visible pathological decline in the evolution of the pregnant woman, her pregnancy may be terminated up into the sixth month. (<<http://www.comunismulinromania.ro/aspecte-documentare/legislaie-comunist/13-1966-decret-770-intreuperea-sarcinii.html>>).

was finally abrogated on December 26, 1989¹¹ and, as a tragic ‘national statement,’ over a million of abortions were recorded in 1990.

To conclude, Otilia and Găbița are two examples from an unnamed list of extraordinary women, who have fought against a primitive, patriarchal view of domesticity, which reduces woman to the standardized roles of mother, housekeeper, and wife. A woman is more than these social roles. As Grosz believes, ‘[b]odies are never simply *human* bodies or *social* bodies. The sex assigned to the body [...] makes a great deal of difference to the kind of social subject’ (1995, 84). The navel ‘scar’ is particularly relevant for women and it stands as a permanent reminder of the undeniable relationship that they have established with their mothers; however, their decision to become mothers themselves is something of a private matter, in which no one should ever intrude, so that their intimacy and bodily integrity would never be grossly violated.

¹¹ Just one day before, on December 25th, Ceaușescu and his wife were killed.

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