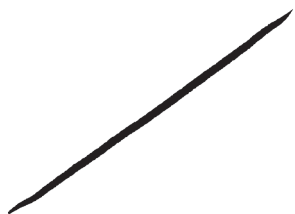


PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE **FILMOGRAPHY OF** **LUCIAN PINTILIE**

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Abstract: Model for an entire generation Lucian Pintilie, a creative genius, takes on the role of revealing the world as it is, with all its shadows and ambiguities, as depicted in his films through absurdity, grotesque or farcical elements. The artistic approach of director Lucian Pintilie becomes redemptory, aiming to foster responsibility and awaken a collective consciousness. Lucian Pintilie's intellectual preoccupation provides solid study material for the creators of the New Wave in the Romanian cinema, both through his films and through the volume *Bricabrac*, which includes his directorial poetics.

Keywords: absurd, aesthetics, creator, directorial poetics, discourse, ethics, film, grotesque, history, magical realism, model, modernism, the New Wave of Romanian cinema, opus, pedagogy, political film, vision.

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Introduction

Throughout his entire cinematic oeuvre, which stands at the crossroads between modernity and postmodernity, Lucian Pintilie professes the creed that guided him in all he achieved: the courage to express his inner freedom through art. Although embarking on a war he knew he could never win, Lucian Pintilie understood that experiences and trials are worth more than victory itself. His rebellion against the communist regime, death, and illusory happiness took on a metaphysical direction, explored through both theatre and film.

The example set by director Lucian Pintilie through his cinematic creations captures the profile of an artist with social responsibility, needing to cultivate a sense of morality and act accordingly. Without his fundamental contribution, the birth of the New Wave in Romanian cinema would have been impossible.

An intellectual per se, passionate about knowledge and reading, Lucian Pintilie is one of the conceptual artists with a strong theoretical concern. Though impossible to imitate, his style offers a series of best practices that new creators will assimilate and incorporate into their own films. Not only does his cinematic activity, but also his theatrical one, share a stylistic unity specific to Lucian Pintilie. Here we talk about elements such as the grotesque, slapstick humour, transcendental farce, apocalyptic vision of the world or denunciation of imposture in all its forms.

Lucian Pintilie's films are composed of bitter comedy and laughter, which can sometimes be cheerful but at other times indicate inner despair. However, each of his feature films represents his creative genius: cynical, subversive, disturbing, intelligent. They inherently contain a true academy of cinematography, which has inspired and developed creators of the New Wave, including figures like Corneliu Porumboiu or Cristi Puiu.

Regarding the creative personality of Lucian Pintilie, director Andrei Șerban says:

Who was Lucian Pintilie? What remains behind an artist who was an example of courage for us all, who took the risk of showing us that distorted mirror of the world so we could see clearly what surrounds us, but, most importantly, the most difficult thing to accept: to see ourselves as we are, without illusions, to receive that necessary shock to awaken us from passivity and sleep. (Șerban, A., 2018)

Lucian Pintilie proved to be the only victor who was not crushed by the totalitarian utopia before 1990, nor was he dulled (or embittered) by the utopia of unrestrained freedom afterward (Rădulescu, M., 2016). Silenced by the communist regime, the director chooses the solution of imposed exile, and for 20 years, he no longer creates films in Romania. This absence is compensated for by an extremely well-controlled fury, which he will transpose into his cinematic creations after 1990.

Through his films, Lucian Pintilie aimed for and achieved the transition from a bourgeois cinema to a political one. With his unparalleled ability to dissect human psychology transversally and the effects of politics on social and individual behaviour, the director gives rise to truthful films with layered depths.

Reconstituirea (The Reenactment) – a decisive moment in the history of Romanian cinema

Three years after his debut in cinema with the film *Duminică la ora 6 (Sunday at Six)* in 1965, Lucian Pintilie directed *Reconstituirea (The Reenactment)*. The film only had one month of screenings, being subsequently banned despite full theatres and positive reviews from critics. “It failed to replace a cinema of mystification with a faithful cinema, fanatically faithful to the truth,” but – more prominently or more faintly – found echoes in some important moments in the filmography of other top directors, such as Mircea Daneliuc, Dan Pița, Alexandru Tatos, Mircea Veroiu, Andrei Blaier, Dinu Tănase, Stere Gulea, Iosif Demian, Cristi Puiu, Cristian Mungiu, Radu Muntean, Radu Jude (Rădulescu, M., 2016).

Considered by specialized critics as the best film in the history of Romanian cinema, *Reconstituirea (The Reenactment)* was directed by Lucian Pintilie and Horia Pătrașcu, based on the homonym novella. Horia Pătrașcu wrote the story inspired by a real event. A group of young people, graduates of the evening high school in Caransebeș, celebrate on the terrace of a garden near the Teiuș railway station.

After getting drunk and engaging in a fight, the authorities reconstruct a filming, aiming to provide a negative example of the events. The film was declared one of the most courageous Eastern European creations, criticizing the oppressive system. Additionally, its quality is confirmed by the fact that it was acquired by one of the world's most important art institutions, the Museum of Modern Art – MoMA in New York.

Reconstituirea (The Reenactment) marks the debut of two valuable actors: George Mihăiță and Vladimir Găitan. It was filmed under the pressure of rumours that Romania was to be invaded like Czechoslovakia after Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech on August 21, 1968, but also with the hope that it would produce a cultural thaw in the Romanian space. However, the film's effect was not the desired one, but, on the contrary, it generated so many echoes that it was almost swallowed by the stories surrounding it. The film also addresses a phenomenon in full swing at that time: the National Film Archive contained numerous reconstructions of crimes, focusing on more or less relevant criminals.

Lucian Pintilie's approach has numerous meta-cinematic notes, despite the fact that the film seems to unfold in real-time. The author uses visual quotes from recognizable sequences in cinema history. Pintilie's staging, coupled with the abstract and humorous strokes of the script, cleverly employs both long takes and scenes with a brisk pace, creating both visual metaphors and complex choreographies. A remarkable moment in this regard is an ambulance appearing on a television watched by a character and then passing by them, all within a single frame. (Dima, F., 2018)

The main action of the film parallels the way the cinematic process itself works, how the artistic and technical team operates, and how a directorial act is perceived as tyrannical. Another element used by Lucian Pintilie is playing with the subjectivity of the camera. The film assumes the representation of the things it sees through the lens, moved and chaotic in its stupid play (Dima, F., 2018).

Shortly after the film's release, in an interview with journalist Max Bănuș, director Lucian Pintilie offers an objective perspective on the state of Romanian cinema at that time, its relationship with politics, and cultural liberalization.

I have a position of ferocious intolerance. [...] Romanian cinema does not exist in a problematic and aesthetic aspect. Its representative works were either produced entirely by chance or under the sign of solitary bursts of talent. [...] The successes of Eastern cinema are well known:

Hungarian, Czechoslovak, Polish, Yugoslav, and even Bulgarian. I consider its lag even more serious, considering that many more countries around us, and even further away, in Latin America, are energetically bursting from the start. And we remained stuck, paralyzed, amazed by our helplessness. All the more serious because the prestige of a country's culture is established most rapidly, most dynamically, most modernly, in a consumer society, through this fantastic means of propaganda, which is cinema. (Turcuș, C., 2017)

Lucian Pintilie demonstrates radicalism in his field. From the director's point of view, Romanian cinema bears the aesthetic mark of the socialist direction and influences from South American third cinema. Lucian Pintilie excels in underlining the relevance of comparisons for a better understanding of Romanian cinema. Phrases like "modern society" or "propaganda" can have a double meaning, the former referring to both the socialist modernization cliché and the censorship of a society that wants to be progressive, while the latter indicates an efficient means of cultural promotion.

Lucian Pintilie calls the Romanian cinema of the 1960s a typical bourgeois film, considering it a particular case, as national art did not follow this trend.

Put all these works face to face with our cinema, and the important fact is not that the opposition is disappointing, but that Romanian films seem to be the product of another unreal and idyllic country. Film should be a moral, political discourse. It should not be entertainment, but a means of knowledge and analysis. (Dima, F., 2018)

He draws attention to filmmakers' predilection for a romantic or backward-looking evasion into history or even evasion into eroticism, which the state should condemn, not encourage, because it does not reflect the needs of current society, but rather a mimicry taken from Western films. All cinematographic creations of that period declared themselves apolitical. However, the rise of historical film undermined Ceaușescu's nationalism, which later turned into an entertainment tool in the nationalist propaganda of the 1970s-1980s. Conversely, Lucian Pintilie advocates for the need for political films that are capable of truly problematizing socialism. He supports lucid revelations of concrete situations, addressing serious questions that resonate with the individual's intellect.

Reconstituirea (*The Reenactment*) was conceived as a political film, accusing and highlighting Stalinist abuses, through a new aesthetic dimension of social life at the end of the 1960s. The core of the film is based on concepts such as

constraint, manipulation, and denial of freedom. Lucian Pintilie explores through this film how the mechanisms of operation of the communist state impact social communities, interpersonal relationships, the creation of new hierarchies, but also the effects on the psyche and destiny.

Regarding the importance of the film *Reconstituirea* (*The Reenactment*) and the pedagogical impact it generated, director Corneliu Porumboiu states:

It is very important and influenced almost all directors of the New Wave. Perhaps the most important film in Romanian cinema so far. It influenced me a lot personally. I saw it three or four times. It's very good in terms of the relationship between fiction and reality, the way it's made, and the actors' performance. We're talking about a great theatre director and a great film director. I was fascinated by the way he wrote his scripts because at some point they turned into a kind of director's notebooks. (Porumboiu, C., 2018)

De ce trag clopotele, Mitică? (Carnival Scenes) – a lesson about the lights and shadows of Romanian society

An important moment in Lucian Pintilie's cinematic creation is *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică? (Carnival Scenes)*, released in 1981. Appearing in parallel with the "intellectualization" process of Romanian filmmakers, the film approaches, from a unique, raw perspective, the overwhelming world of Caragiale.

Lucian Pintilie's admiration for the work of playwright Ion Luca Caragiale is evident from the early years of his artistic career. The fact that he directed *Dale carnavalului* in 1966, and a decade later, in 1979, he released *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică? (Carnival Scenes)* based on his own script derived from the same text, proves his affinity for this Caragialian play. The cinematic production becomes a masterpiece.

The revolt, the repression, and the internal scream that Pintilie feels towards the apathetic Romanian society coincide, artistically, with Caragiale's feelings. Although expressed differently from an aesthetic perspective, their visions overlap and complement each other. The playwright selects fragments from the carnivalesque landscape of our people, which he weaves with intelligence and boundless doses of humour into mirror plays. You recognize yourself, you identify with his characters, so real and theatrical, yet you maintain distance and mix guilt and shame inside your consciousness, which, in the end, disappear with bursts of laughter and applause. In contrast, in Pintilie's work, the dramatic situations acquire deeper dimensions. Caragiale's understanding encompasses numerous texts, with distinct hypotheses and themes, which, in Pintilie's cinematic puzzle, individually bring value and meaning.

The political delirium (a degenerate form of bourgeois liberalism, whose irreconcilable enemy was Caragiale, thirsty for order and authority - Situation, A Gap, Charged Atmosphere... and of course, primarily A Lost Letter), as well as the delirium of irresponsible living, from which the delirium of mockery, the deep, eternal pleasure for the macabre farce (April 1), will intertwine, in a terrible organicity, with the other delirium characteristic of the Caragialian hero, the delirium of passion. (Pintilie, L., 2017, p. 457)

The director seeks the fullness of the world evoked in all of Caragiale's writings and refers to the enormous sensitivity and monstrous vision declared in the playwright's work. Pintilie resonates with Caragiale's hyperbolic instinct to translate Romanian weaknesses, excesses, and pathos with a note of irony. Following this artistic encounter, two worlds merged and gave birth to another with the character of a work of art.

In Lucian Pintilie's personality, there is this healthy inclination towards a synthesis of universal character, in which the oldest and most enduring moments of theatre find themselves with the newest and most interesting experiences, where the elements of literature, theatre, cinema, television fuse into a unified methodology, and the art of the actor and the director together provide clear and complete knowledge of the stage. (Silvestru, V., 1964, p. 23).

Balanța (The Oak) – the phenomenology of the past

The first film made by Lucian Pintilie after the fall of communism was *Balanța (The Oak)*. Its purpose was to urge Romanians to look at the past with more lucidity, to stimulate critical thinking, and to gain a deeper understanding of what they had experienced. Under the sign of a carnivalesque delirium, the film captures Romanian entities and representative typologies placed in total ridicule.

In *Balanța (The Oak)*, the pastoral landscape becomes intertwined with small, grey, and cold industrial towns. The film proposes a universe in which the protagonists are two nonconformists who treat reality with indifference. Their lives have been so wasted and worn out by the communist regime that it has led to a sinking into existential fatigue and their inability to react to the injustices committed by the system. Their lack of response and reaction represents the only way to revolt.

The society shaped by the communist ideal represents, therefore, an imbalance: people who fit the established pattern, according to current concepts, cannot be called people; they are just traitors – traitors to morality, traitors to humanity; the two (...) are also, obviously, placed under the sign of a very well-defined imbalance: in them, there is so much humanity that every action of theirs seems like a dramatization of life. These are the two opposite ends of the axis. Two extremes that compensate for each other's exaggeration. (Albu, Ș., Grădinaru, D., 2021)

The characters in *Balanța (The Oak)* live by their own rules but do not have the power to change or stop the tragedy of an entire population. However, their power lies in provoking internal changes. We also find in this film the theme of the struggle between life and death, translated through the opposition between man and regime.

The image of Romania, as depicted in the film, is disastrous and desolate. The scenes are set in schools, hospitals, presenting images of sick children and brutal people. Recurrent in the depiction of the hospital are squalor, poverty, and suffering.

An enlightening sequence for *Balanța (The Oak)* is the one in which Nela and Mitică, the two protagonists, bury their past, being witnessed by an old oak tree, a guardian of secrets. Up to that point, the film seems to split into two separate narratives evolving in parallel but, from this point on, the two stories become one.

The characters' struggle unfolds on two levels: the exterior, where they encounter the oppression of the communist regime and the elimination of people's freedoms, and the interior, where they find the strength to preserve their humanity in the face of this unjust existence.

Discussions and Conclusions

Lucian Pintilie manages to give a positive meaning to the evolution of Romanian cinema. For younger creators, his films become milestones in understanding their own past and finding a voice that speaks accurately, in aesthetic language, about the issues of today's society.

We find Lucian Pintilie's penchant for the idea of carnival, a term he often uses when discussing his films. The justification was provided by the director in an interview with critic Mihai Chirilov:

Carnival attracts me, seduces me as one of the riskiest and most provocative attempts to parody death. As I reach the end of my life and, whenever I mock the name of God, I immediately look around in

fear, in case there are informers nearby jotting down notes in a hidden notebook. I am superstitious. Not at all religious. Pretty pathetic, isn't it? Carnival therapy is enormous. (Pintilie, L., 2012)

Another influence that Lucian Pintilie exerts on the creators who follow him is reflected through extremely specific temporal references he uses in some titles: *Duminică la 6* (*Sunday at Six*), *O vară de neuitat* (*An Unforgettable Summer*), *Prea târziu* (*Too Late*), *După-amiaza unui torționar* (*The Afternoon of a Torturer*). And the action in *Reconstituirea* (*The Reenactment*) unfolds over the course of 24 hours. Thus, the sensation of overlap with real time is amplified. The same mechanism is found used in certain films of the New Wave creators, whose narrative thread covers the duration of a single day or provides exact temporal clues – *4 luni, 3 săptămâni, 2 zile* (*4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*), *A fost sau n-a fost (12:08 East of Bucharest)*, *Măști, după Crăciun* (*Tuesday, After Christmas*), *Povestiri din Epoca de Aur* (*Tales from the Golden Age*) etc.

Stere Gulea's film *Stare de fapt* (*State of Things*) was based on an idea of Lucian Pintilie, after he produced the documentary *Piața Universității – România* (*University Square – Romania*), in 1991. Lucian Pintilie expresses his predilection for editing and mixing, and the friendship that is created between the two stages. The director places special emphasis on the sound universe of his films, through the exploitation of diegetic sounds and the expressive power of silence. In his films, silence becomes oppressive, loaded, and generates unrest. We frequently encounter sounds of car horns, trains, cameras, rustling leaves, the noise of crowds, or acapella melodies.

Another technique that Lucian Pintilie uses is the repetition or reiteration of frames, such as frames with people at the train station, the movement of going down into the basement of the building or the elevator. "Repeating frames fits into the puzzle structure of the film: it's as if their repetition attempts a gradual understanding, putting together the parts of an ambiguous and incomplete story." (Tăbăleț, A., 2013)

In Lucian Pintilie's films, we know almost nothing about the characters' history, and the dialogues they have with each other are marked by ambiguity. There are some references to things that only the characters know and understand. It is the duty of the viewer to gather clues throughout the film, which they then assemble and find an explanation for at the end.

In most of his films, Lucian Pintilie maintains the unity of time and place invoked by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. This is the case in films like *Reconstituirea* (*The Reenactment*), *Salonul nr. 6* (*Ward Six*), *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică?* (*Carnival Scenes*), *O vară de neuitat* (*An Unforgettable Summer*), *După-amiaza unui torționar* (*The Afternoon of a Torturer*), *Tertium non datur* and *Niki Ardelean, colonel în rezervă* (*Niki and Flo*). The action

in each film predominantly takes place in unique and well-defined spaces, such as the sanatorium, the restaurant, the hair salon, the household in the Dobrogea village, the torturer's house, a former classroom. Regarding temporal unity, the action in *Reconstituirea* (*The Reenactment*) unfolds over the course of just a few hours, as does *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică?* (*Carnival Scenes*) or *După-amiaza unui tortionar* (*The Afternoon of a Torturer*), where the duration is indicated even in the title. Regarding time, another aspect must be mentioned: in the process of making *Reconstituirea* (*The Reenactment*), there are constantly disruptive factors that block the outcome, thus introducing unforeseen events.

An important category that Lucian Pintilie introduces into his creations is that of outsider characters, who come from other backgrounds. Here, we bring the example of Theresa from *O vară de neuitat* (*An Unforgettable Summer*) or Dumitru Gosta in *Prea târziu* (*Too Late*). Additionally, we encounter protagonists who are disregarded, marginalized, or who contrast with the world they live in through their beliefs and way of life. This is the case with characters like Nela and Mitică from *Balanța* (*The Oak*), Norica and Mitu from *Terminus Paradis* (*Next Stop Paradise*).

Lucian Pintilie undertakes the mission of a creator who must show the world as it is, yet the stylistic methods he chooses to represent it involve a taste for exaggeration. In his films, reality appears distorted, hyperbolized, sometimes even grotesque. However, this exaggeration could be understood as an assertion.

Lucian Pintilie's artistic endeavour aims to be a redemptive one, to awaken and hold accountable a consciousness that has lost its vibration and become inert. Through the grotesque and exaggerated dimension of the world, Lucian Pintilie indicates that people fail to perceive the misery around them because it has become implicit. Presented aesthetically through his films, this degraded and grey reality becomes more visible and evident to the spectator.

"Young filmmakers are, fortunately, unfortunately, I have no idea anymore, the only chance of Romanian cinema." (Pintilie, L., 2003) The generations that have claimed influence from Lucian Pintilie include directors like Mircea Daneliuc, Alexandru Tatos, Mircea Veroiu, Dan Pița, Cristi Puiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cristian Mungiu, Tudor Giurgiu. The fact that he has inspired and become the model for such different creative personalities reaffirms the uniqueness and power of transmitting his artistic belief further.

As the creator of magical realism in Romanian cinema, Lucian Pintilie leaves an extremely important imprint through his work. For a fair appreciation of contemporary Romanian cinema, the genesis of his creation must be understood. Realism taken further by representatives of the New Wave renounces the dimension of the absurd and uses the mundane to highlight the surrealist elements emanating from a society still deeply marked by the period of communist

dictatorship. Cristi Puiu is the first to valorise this detailed naturalism in his film *Moartea domnului Lăzărescu* (*The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*) (2005). In the same series of courageous films are Corneliu Porumboiu's *A fost sau n-a fost* (*12:08 East of Bucharest*) (2006) and Radu Muntean's *Marți, după Crăciun* (*Tuesday, After Christmas*) (2010). In these films, absurdity manifests as melancholy, a sadness of young creators generated by Romania's inability to fully rid itself of the shadow of communism.

One of the qualities of the new Romanian cinema refers to the exceptional quality of the actors, but it removes the concept of the star. The method of making films fosters a sense of teamwork, almost as if reacting against the cult of personality.

The most important concept that Lucian Pintilie invests in the artist is the desensitization of the camera apparatus and the profession of truth. Lucian Pintilie's model emphasizes the importance of forming a program that involves resolving tensions between ethics and aesthetics to achieve the authorship of a new vision of the world. In his view, real change can only be brought about by a radical rupture, by people who revolt, who challenge the limits of what is known or tolerated. Lucian Pintilie's pedagogy encourages courageous voices that manifest through radical and uncomfortable speeches, through an unquestionable verticality.

Regarding the direction that Lucian Pintilie's films have imposed on his own creation, director Tudor Giurgiu mentions:

For me, as a person who was forming in those years, *Balanța* (*The Oak*) and, afterward, *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică?* (*Carnival Scenes*) have become flagship films. [...] Seeing him at work, I didn't necessarily learn about cinema, but a way of relating to cinema, a way of extracting things from life, a way of working with actors, of being demanding with those around you, of understanding that without this sometimes maniacal demand, you can't achieve what you want in a country where there is this myth that it can be done anyway. (Giurgiu, T., 2018)

At the end of his professional career, Lucian Pintilie offered an extremely generous legacy to the generations that followed him and to the entire filmmaking community: 11 landmark films, the volume of memoirs *Bricabrac*, a collection of four screenplays, and a monograph in Italian. Lucian Pintilie's creative genius will be carried forward by the young creators who have learned and adopted principles and techniques from him, with the most important urging them never to turn their gaze away when confronted with evil.

Lucian Pintilie's invitation to young creators, as well as to audiences, is to succeed in seeing and perceiving the distorted world, to set aside the ugliness

once they have known it, and to recover the latent beauty. Lucian Pintilie's cinematography is, ultimately, an act of patriotism and profound love for the beauty within us, which still exists hidden in some corner of the soul or mind.

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Filmography:

1. *Duminică la ora 6* (*Sunday at Six*) (1965) Bucharest Film Studios
2. *Reconstituirea* (*The Reenactment*) (1968) Bucharest Film Studios
3. *Salonul nr. 6* (*Warð Six*) (1973) Centar Film & Radiotelevizija Beograd
4. *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică?* (*Carnival Scenes*) (1981) Unu și 5 Film Studios
5. *Balanța* (*The Oak*) (1992) Parnasse Production, Scarabée Films, MK2 Production, La Sept Cinéma, Canal+ & Romanian Ministry of Culture Cinematographic Creation Studio
6. *O vară de neuitat* (*An Unforgettable Summer*) (1994) Filmex (Romania), Romanian Ministry of Culture Studio (Romania), MK2 Productions (France), Cinema La Sept, Canal +, Ministry of Culture and Francophonie (France). With support from the National Center for Cinematography
7. *Prea târziu* (*Too Late*) (1996) Romanian Ministry of Culture Cinematographic Creation Studio, MK2 Productions, La Sept Cinema, Canal+, French National Center for Cinematography, Les Productions Traversiere & Filmex Romania
8. *Terminus Paradis* (*Next Stop Paradise*) (1998) MK2 Productions, Filmex Romania, Romanian Ministry of Culture Cinematographic Creation Studio, Canal+, French National Center for Cinematography, Montecinema Verita Foundation Locarno (Venice), La Doc & Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
9. *După-amiaza unui torționar* (*Afternoon of a Torturer*) (2000) Romanian Ministry of Culture Cinematographic Creation Studio – Filmex. With CNC support.
10. *Niki Ardelean, colonel în rezervă* (*Niki and Flo*) (2003) Filmex Romania, Movimento Production (Paris). With the participation of the Romanian Ministry of Culture and Cults Cinematographic Creation Studio and the French National Center for Cinema
11. *Tertium Non Datur* (2006) Romanian Ministry of Culture Cinematographic Creation Studio – Filmex & Pavillion Rouge France.

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