

Religions 360°

Bucharest / 20–25 September 2026

FILMS & VIDEO SESSION

FILM 1

Pilgrimage of the Gitans in France

by

Ryoko Sachi-Noro

Professor, Department of Global Diversity Studies, Faculty of Sociology, Toyo University, Tokyo

Every year on May 24, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in southern France hosts the procession of Saint Sara. The event attracts nearly twenty thousand Gitans/Tsiganes—terms used by the communities themselves—along with other Travelers and tourists. Music, performances, and caravan encampments make “Gitan culture” highly visible. At the same time, increasing touristification has created tensions. Local authorities have introduced stricter regulations, moving the Travellers’ market to the outskirts and replacing it with curated displays of “Gitan culture.” Many Gitans/Tsiganes see this as commodification. Similar concerns arise over caravan areas, which are placed on the margins despite the town’s image of coexistence.

On the eve of the procession, activists in nearby Saliers hold a memorial for victims of the World War II “Nomad Camp.” This event recalls histories of forced internment and challenges the celebratory image of the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage thus becomes a complex space where pilgrims, traders, performers, tourists, municipal authorities, and the church bring together different memories and values.

The ethnographic film *Pilgrimage of the Gitans* (2024, 50 min) follows these overlapping practices and shows how multiple versions of the pilgrimage take shape at once. Drawing on Strathern and Mol, it understands the pilgrimage as “more than one but less than many,” and shows how Gitan/Tsigan identity and cultural difference are continuously reshaped within the shared time and space of the festival. Terminological Note: This paper uses the terms Gitans/Tsiganes, following local usage in France, where many people do not identify as Roma.

FILM 2

Tarantism Revisited

An essayistic documentary film

by

Michaela Schäuble, University of Bern &

Anja Dreschke, University of Siegen

Apulia, 1959: Women in white dresses dance ecstatically in a small chapel. They jump around, spin in circles, roll on the ground, some even climb the altar. They are said to have been bitten by a poisonous spider. Images of this ›dancing mania‹, which requires a ritual exorcism with music, have inspired Italian anthropologists to travel to southern Italy. Equipped with tape recorders, film and photo cameras, they tracked down the phenomenon known as tarantism. **Tarantism Revisited** follows the extensive archival traces of these research trips and visits the places and landscapes of their origins. This cinematic quest is framed by the unique correspondence between the anthropologist Annabella Rossi and Michela Margiotta alias Anna, a 'tarantata'. By interweaving images and voices from the past with the present, the film questions the complex history and diverse forms in which tarantism lives on today.

<https://www.tarantism-revisited.net/>

FILM 3 **Transmission: Revisited**

Kristina Eiviler

by

Shibaura Institute of Technology, Tokyo

URPP Digital Religion(s), Postdoctoral fellow, University of Zürich, Switzerland

Transmission: Revisited is a video collage of interactions between humans and social robots (including religious and android robots), juxtapositioned to the videos of interactions between humans and sacred, magical, and historical objects (statues of saints, monuments, plaques) from Harun Farocki's video installation "Transmission" (Original title "Übertragung", 2007, 43min). Farocki and his team recorded a fascinating collection of everyday interactions in which people experience objects such as memorial stones, statues of saints, the tomb of Christ, etc., through physical contact. The observed phenomena are related to the common belief that physical contact with these objects can transmit their powers and healing capabilities to those who touch them. Drawn by the idea of researching how these types of transmissions coincide with robotics, I recorded human-robot encounters at the Robotland Tenoha Exhibition (Milano, Italy, 2024). The robots appearing in the video are SanTO, the first Catholic robot resembling a saint figurine; DarumaTO, the first robot prototype resembling a Japanese Daruma doll, a talisman of good luck; BlessU-2, a Protestant robot giving blessings to people; and Alter-2, an android robot that mirrors behaviour of people in front of it, to then create movements based on his "memory." The length of the "Transmission: Revisited" video is 20min and 3sec, and it can be played in a loop, the same as Farocki's inspiration video "Transmission." This work hopes to inspire a dialogue about the dynamic changes in the materialization of the sacred, embodiment, and touch when encountering emerging technologies.

FILM 4 **Ex Utero**

by

Ileana Bîrsan

Center of Excellence in Image Studies (CESI), University of Bucharest/The Faculty of Roman-Catholic Theology, University of Bucharest

Synopsis. For a middle-aged woman the confession of a past trauma opens the path to healing.

Film Card *Ex Utero* (2025) A **WEAREBASCA** production **DIRECTOR: ILEANA BÎRSAN**
SCRIPTWRITER: ILEANA BÎRSAN & ALIN BOERU **PRODUCERS: CLAUDIU MITCU, IOACHIM**

STROE PRODUCTION COMPANY: WEAREBASCA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: ALINA TARBĂ
DOP: LUCHIAN CIOBANU CAST LIST: Ramona Solomon (Mother) Richard Bovnoczski (Priest) Clara
Solomon (Daughter) Luca Fumuru (Son) Rarinca Solomon (Young Mother) SET DESIGNER: MIRUNA
BĂLAȘA COSTUMES: MIRUNA BĂLAȘA EDITING: ȘTEFAN SCHULTZ SOUND DESIGN ALIN
ZĂBRĂUȚEANU COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION: ROMANIA RUNNING TIME: 13 min FORMAT:
COLOR 16:9/1.77:1 LANGUAGE: ROMANIAN.

FILM 5
Marie, Heart of Romania

produced by
John M. Florescu

Film presentation by John Florescu, Dan Drăghicescu and Wargha Enayati.

So many women in one queen: Marie Alexandra Victoria de Saxa-Coburgh and Gotha, Princess of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (born into the British Royal Family, granddaughter to Queen Victoria and the Czar Alexander II of Russia) had chosen Crown Prince Ferdinand to be her husband and Romania to be her country. She was Romanian's only crowned queen, who made possible the First World War and the unification of Romania.

As we are still celebrating 150 years since her birth, many movies and documentaries were dedicated to her charismatic personality and prominent role in strategic, diplomatic, political life of last century Europe (and America). Her literary works flooded the bookshops, exhibitions inspired by her, events dedicated to her just radically changed the presence of this beloved queen in Romanian society. Recently, the Romanian Parliament officially appointed Her Majesty's birthday as *Queen Marie Day*, a national commemoration celebration to honour her historical role to the Great Union and the configuration of the modern state.

Among all these welcomed events, *Marie, Heart of Romania* is a comprehensive exhaustive documentary about the life, political presence, diplomatic influence, and historical legacy of the only crowned queen of Romania. Some of the controversies related to Queen Marie of Romania, among which her admiration and promotion of the Bahá'í Faith as the World Religion is also presented.

Narrated by Romanian actor Marcel Iureș, the film charts Queen Marie's extraordinary role during World War I and the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where she tirelessly advocated for international recognition of Greater Romania. It explores both her public achievements and her private challenges, including her complex family dynamics and the political tensions that shaped the monarchy.

The documentary focuses on Her Majesty's charisma, courage, intelligence, really shaped Romania's destiny during the early 20th century. The immense historical research, spanning nine countries and fourteen national archives, incorporates original footage, and even the Queen's own voice recordings (cleaned and adopted to present day exigency), offering viewers an authentic and immersive historical experience. The original footage has been masterfully and scientifically colorized, meticulously studied in the minute details of military archived material.

A woman of infinite power, standing beside her hesitant king, she conquered the highest men dominated political and diplomatic circles of the beginning of 20th century, being adored and cherished by multitudes.

The documentary also reflects Marie's influence on Romania's cultural identity, her international diplomacy, and the symbolic power she maintained long after her death. This year we also celebrate the centennial of Her Majesty's American and Canadian tour, very well documented in the film. She also was an outstanding artist revealing real memorable artistic skills from photography to interior design, art landscaping, theatre costume design (she even played few roles in theatre plays), an authentic *performer* beside a sovereign. She wrote almost exclusively in English (German and French) an impressive quantity

of novels, children literature, her life-long diary, Queen Marie could be considered the most prolific Romanian writer. Her enormous correspondence is still awaiting to be published.

Executive producer John Florescu described Queen Marie as “brave, beautiful, and the woman who doubled the size of her adopted nation,” emphasizing her role as a national icon. The documentary was part of a national tour accompanying various exhibitions dedicated to the Queen Marie, it had a special screening at the Royal Palace in Belgrade, attended by members of European royal families—highlight the deep emotional and historical resonance of her story.

Marie – Heart of Romania has earned critical acclaim, winning awards at TIFF, the Râșnov Film Festival, IPIFF, and international cultural institutions. This year the movie will be presented by the Romanian diplomatic representatives all over the world.