



REVISITING THE INTERWAR PERIOD. IMITATION, SYNCHRONISM AND THE ARCHIVE IN THE FILMS OF RADU JUDE

Cezar Gheorghe

Abstract – The theory of synchronism was one of the most influential ideas in the Romanian interwar period. Eugen Lovinescu championed the powers of imitation as a means of development for Romanian culture and society. At the same time, it was a case of illegitimate filiation that led to the uncritical importation of several types of ideas from Western European culture. By analysing Radu Jude's found footage montage films, I argue that not all versions of imitation are in fact as positive as Lovinescu considered and speak about a newer concept of genealogy, one that relies on archives and that constructs a new regime of knowledge in the case of the representation of recent history.

Keywords: Synchronism, Imitation, Genealogy, Archives, Montage

Introduction

In his seminal book¹ about the Romanian far-right political movements in the 1930s, the literary historian Zigu Ornea has shown the attachment some of the prominent Romanian intellectuals of the time had for anti-democratic values. The book analyses several types of discourse that indict democracy and rationalist thinking, as well as the imitation of European values. He quotes Mircea Eliade, who criticised the 1848 generation of intellectuals for imitating a foreign European way of life, urging his readers to dispel the imitation of Europe and to rely on national creative works². Ornea has shown that the discourse

against the 1948 generation was followed by criticism of democracy as a political order in society. The multi-party system, the Constitution, parliament, were all under harsh indictment. Instead of democracy, a totalitarian type of political organisation was preferred, as well as a single ruling party. Both the far-right and the far-left had in common the antidemocratic discourse. For the Far-Right, the models were Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, and for the Far-Left the model was Soviet totalitarianism³. Among the democratic intellectuals of the time, E. Lovinescu was criticised for promoting literary modernism and aesthetic values⁴. As I will show in the following pages, the theory of imitation is central to Lovinescu's *The History of Modern Romanian Civilization*. While advocating for the modernization of Romanian literature, Lovinescu championed the imitation of western aesthetic models and western civilization, especially liberal values. For Lovinescu, imitation is one of the most important tools for cultural development. But what are the limits of imitation? And what are the consequences of imitation when it is used for the importation of non-democratic values?

Imitation: "Europe Was Antisemitic. So, We Became European"

In Radu Jude's 2018 film, *"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"*, the protagonist, Mariana Marin (played by Ioana Iacob), catches on TV a glimpse of the 1993 film *The Mirror*, directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu. The film is about the far-right interwar leader, Ion Antonescu. *The Mirror* is a hagiography of Marshal Antonescu as a political personality, it is a monument to the leader of one of the most criminal political regimes in Romanian history. There is no mention of the role that his rule played in the Holocaust, no critical distance in tackling the subject. She talks about the film with her lover (played by Șerban Pavlu):

Imagine that in Germany! Films on TV paying homage to Hitler.
 When was the film made?
 In '93-'94.
 It's funny.
 In a way.
 Why did he call it *The Mirror*?

Maybe the Marshall is the mirror of the nation.
 [...]

Have you ever seen a debate about this in Romania?

You're obsessed with Romanian pogroms.

What we Romanians did is too sinister to understand. I can't understand.

What's to understand? All of Europe was anti-Semitic. So, we became

European. We did what we do best. We imitated their behaviour⁵.

The conversation between them continues by using the main tropes of the discussion of the Romanian role in the Holocaust. The film suggests the idea that imitation is used as an excuse. In the discourse of the Holocaust deniers, the comparison with the crimes of communism is very often used to minimize the Romanian role in the Holocaust. Michael Shafir has analysed this phenomenon by using the term “comparative trivialization”⁶. What is specific to the area is the former Communist legacy, with its own crimes against humanity under totalitarian rule. Going back to the Romanian interwar period, the concept of imitation played a significant role in Romanian culture and society.

The Role of Imitation. Eugen Lovinescu and the Theory of “Synchronism”

In his *The History of Modern Romanian Civilization*, Eugen Lovinescu argues that the main guiding principle in the process of modernizing Romanian society was the principle of synchronism:

In reality, the formation process of our civilization [...] is not evolutionary, but revolutionary. [...] The principle can be expressed in the formula of the synchronization of contemporary life [...] so our civilization could not have been formed in any other way but in a revolutionary manner, which is to say suddenly, by complete importation and without reenacting the phases of evolution of the more developed people through organic growth⁷ (*m.t.*).

One of the most influential theories of the Romanian interwar period, the so-called theory of “synchronism” was based on the idea that *imitation* was at the core of the formation of the entire Romanian culture and civilization. The guiding principle was the synchronization of local culture and society with the values of liberal Western countries, such as France. According to Lovinescu, this also translates as an aesthetic

principle, imitation being the first form of originality by means of adaptation of the imported ideas to the ethnic and racial specificity of a certain people. With time, imitation acquires specificity. He also makes a critical point about tradition:

For the peoples formed in a revolutionary manner, without a certain past, traditionalism, in the sense of imitation of this inexistent past and not of the development of the racial characteristics, is a sociological impossibility⁸ (*m.t.*).

For Lovinescu, the lack of a strong tradition made possible the sudden transformation of Romanian culture and civilization. Lovinescu is seen as one of the pro-Western Romanian literary critics of the time, with great influence on Romanian literary modernism. Unlike Maiorecu, Lovinescu accepted the idea that, beginning with the nineteenth century, Romanian historical development was based upon external Western impulses that led to the modernization of the country. He argued in favour of the transfer of social forms and values from one culture to another.

The *Sburătorul* review was central to the influence exercised by Lovinescu on Romanian literature and culture, especially from 1921 onwards. The main idea it promoted was that of *synchronism*. Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu has argued that Lovinescu considered modern Romania to be the by-product of Western influences, the work of bourgeois liberalism, with a focus on the concept of civilization:

In *Sburătorul*, there was a lot of talk about civilization, without any mention of what it stood for, of the social ground it stood on. [...] That the theory of synchronism was closely related to the ideology of Romanian neoliberalism is transparent in the way they envisaged the future. They saw the world as organically evolving into an ever more developed form of capitalist industrial life. Lovinescu regarded fascism and communism as epiphenomena of the imbalance produced by war. [...] The group was set on announcing our quick and precise synchronism to the lifestyle of the grand European capitals, although such a change would only touch the upper classes (26-27)⁹ (*m.t.*).

Crohmălniceanu also emphasizes the hostility that the modernists around *Sburătorul* manifested against all the political stances that argued for an organic growth that was based on the past. This anti-traditionalist aesthetic and political position were at the core of the review and of the

literary cénacle of the same name. The role that Lovinescu and the movement created around him played in modernizing Romanian literature cannot be denied. Carmen Muşat has emphasized this in a recent reassessment of his theory of synchronism:

Lovinescu's analysis brilliantly demonstrates the extent to which even the most particular cultural manifestations are ultimately *phenomena of synchronism* achieved through absorption, assimilation, and adaptation of a foreign cultural ideology to the national geo-historical context¹⁰.

As a tool for cultural growth, imitation seems to be a failproof method. But is synchronization as attainable as Lovinescu seems to consider?

“The Romanian Paradox” and the Obsession for Synchronization

Let us come back to the notion of synchronization, which was central to the debates at *Sburătorul* and the spark for countless polemics in Romanian intellectual debates of the interwar period. The idea that synchronism and the imitation of Western aesthetic and social ideas could be the solution for the growth of the then-new Romanian State, the insistence on form over substance is problematic. The issue with imitation is that one can imitate the good with the bad. In *The Romanian Paradox*¹¹, Sorin Alexandrescu has described a series of paradoxes of Romanian modernity. The first one was related to the position the Romanian culture occupied in the European cultural space between Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, a Latin culture among Slavic and Hungarian cultures¹². The second paradox is related to the fact that Romanian culture has not really tried to create the historical steps developed organically in Western culture. Sorin Alexandrescu deems it “the paradox of simultaneity”¹³. The third paradox that he describes is what he calls the paradox of “continuity/ discontinuity”. Despite its homogenous structure, Romanian culture is plagued by two major discontinuities. Sorin Alexandrescu identifies the relation between oral/rural culture and written culture as the first discontinuity¹⁴. Oral, traditional culture was perceived as eternal and, as long as the idea lasted, a strong sense of national identity was fostered by this

belief. In contrast, Alexandrescu argues, written culture was considered historically anchored, subjected to change, and prone to dissolution. There was always an imbalance between written culture and oral culture. This led to another discontinuity, which is visible especially in the interwar period when the newly founded Romanian state had to look towards the West for models of cultural and societal development.

We keep on searching for our identity, but we look for it somewhere else. The break with the local cultural milieu is also a break with the recent past. The bourgeois culture and state are born from a violent negation of the medieval and Balkan world. [...] The newly formed bourgeois state staggers especially because of the opposition of the intellectuals. The great rupture is between the state and its culture, between the political and the cultural, between synchronizing at any cost with the Western values and the remains of a still beloved and respected past¹⁵ (*m.t.*).

The rupture that Sorin Alexandrescu writes about also lies at the core of the critical reassessments of the Romanian interwar period. The Sergiu Nicolaescu film that Radu Jude references in his film marks the uncritical reassessment of the Romanian interwar culture in the nineties. After several decades of communist censorship, Romanian culture was nostalgic after the interwar generation, largely banned before 1989. *"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"* is about the public reenactment of the Odessa Massacre, a traumatic event in recent history when Romanian soldiers, helped by civilians, massacred the Jewish population in Odessa on the 22-24th of October 1941. The war crimes committed by the Romanian army on the Eastern Front are often a source of controversy in Romanian public debate. In this context, the film made by Jude offers a discussion on what speaking about history, especially about traumatic events in history, entails. It also deals with Holocaust negationism in contemporary Romanian society.

Going to the Archives

"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians" starts with a shot of a digital monitor playing archival footage. The material is from a propaganda film about the Romanian Army conquering Odessa and the role it allegedly played in liberating the people of Odessa from the

Bolsheviks. At that point, Romania was an ally of Nazi Germany. Radu Jude has been very vocal about his criticism of traditional historical period films and about their capacity to represent historical events. In a recent analysis of the film, Andrei Gorzo and Veronica Lazăr have argued that Jude is updating a tradition of political modernism:

Barbarians... is impossible to confuse with an ‘illusionist’ historical film. It unmistakably situates itself in another, very different aesthetic tradition: that of the so-called ‘political modernism’ of the late-1960s and early-1970s. Part of the importance of Jude’s film resides in the fact that it is an attempt – very rare in contemporary world cinema – to resuscitate and update ‘political modernism’¹⁶.

The Romanian Anti-Soviet propaganda film from the forties is about the “liberation” of Odessa by “the soldiers of the cross, the soldiers of justice” (a name to designate the soldiers in the Romanian army under the Antonescu regime. This is the first in a series of archival footage that sets out to restore a different type of genealogy of the historical event, one that is conscious that there is no representation of history that is not highly mediated. The audio-visual material is there to be viewed, to be processed, edited, and interpreted by the viewers of the film. We are also confronted with the idea that any rendering of historical events is highly subordinated to ideological discourses and that this ideological mark left on the film creates a barrier for representation. The clip with the archival footage stops and the screen goes white while the title of the film is superimposed on the screen. The title is written in quotation marks. The remark is credited to Mihai Antonescu, the Deputy Prime Minister under the Antonescu regime. As Ágnes Pethő¹⁷ has argued, the quotation marks suggest the time of the historical events. She comments on the Brechtian distancing strategies in the film:

The film then shows a film crew at work in a museum among glass cases filled with guns. The film’s clapperboard appears in close-up, identifying this to be the shooting of a Radu Jude film, *Is This What You Were Born For?* (*Pentru asta te-ai născut?*), which, as we learn from several sources, was the original, provisional title of the film. Thus, the two titles are connected to objects belonging to different phases of a film production (editing and shooting) and have divergent connotations: the final version, closely linked to the evoked historical time, and the embedded provisional title, linked to yet another time frame and to the mere idea of a film preserved, encapsulated within

a work that has already surpassed this incipient stage. Jumping from the archival images to the museum as a shooting location, the film conflates a reflection on history with a reflection on the means of reflections on history, as well as a preoccupation with its own history, with the recording of its own progress both as an act of physical creation and as a thought process¹⁸.

The film includes material taken from archives. When I use the word archive, I give a wider meaning to the term. It is not just films, photographs, and documents but also books, propaganda materials. Veronica Lazăr and Andrei Gorzo have made a real inventory of the materials used in the film:

Other texts foregrounded by Jude in this manner throughout his film: a number of anti-Semitic slogans on placards and leaflets used by the Romanian army in Odessa; a photograph of hanged Odessa Jews, shown to us in a three-minute-long close-up; long fragments from books (Giorgio Agamben on Hannah Arendt, Isaac Babel on a case of Polish anti-Semitic violence from the 1919-1921 Polish-Soviet war), read by the film's heroine in fixed frontal shots (two-minute-long and four-and-a-half-minute-long, respectively); a three-minute-long excerpt from the Romanian film *Oglinda – Începutul adevărului / The Mirror – The Beginning of Truth* (Sergiu Nicolaescu, 1994), a historical fiction that Jude's heroine accurately describes as a 'hagiography of Antonescu'; another photograph, taken during the 1941 Iași pogrom, showing dead bodies lying next to a wall, and shown to us in a two-minute close-up; a nearly one-minute snatch of a Nazi march that Jude's heroine listens to intently for professional reasons; footage of Gheorghe Alexianu – Field Marshal Antonescu's Governor of Transnistria (the Ukrainian region occupied by the Romanian army between 1941 and 1944) – being tried in 1946 for his 1941 war crimes; the text of Antonescu's telegram ordering the massacre ('the execution of all the Jewish Bessarabian refugees in Odessa'), projected on the façade of Romania's National Art Museum for the climax of Jude's film¹⁹.

All these materials contribute to the Brecht-inspired aesthetic that Jude is using throughout the film. He creates a cinematic situation in which the spectator is made to understand that what he watches is highly constructed and that the representation of history is highly mediated. There is no immersion into the world the narrative presents, but it depicts a situation that the spectator is invited to criticize, to create his own reading and interpretation.

Foucault, “the Historical *A Priori* and the Archive”

At the same time, the role of the archive is one that creates another type of genealogy, closer to what Foucault has called *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Like in the case of the diverse materials used by Jude, Foucault speaks about a wide range of materials, which he calls *texts*, that make up discursive formations. There is a positivity about statements made about historical events and “that positivity plays the role of what might be called a historical *a priori*”²⁰. By employing this term, *the historical a priori*, Foucault speaks about a condition of reality which is given to an event, “the *a priori* of a history that is given”²¹. This is problematic because statements are articulated in accordance with historical *a priori*. We now come to the definition Foucault gave to the archive:

We are now dealing with a complex volume, in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed, in accordance with specific rules and practices that cannot be superposed. Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call archive. [...] The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events²².

It is very hard to approach the archive and to research the information contained in it because we are part of its system, Foucault seems to suggest. An archive can’t ever be fully described. It is always offered to us in fragments. “The description of the archive deploys its possibilities (and the mastery of its possibilities) on the basis of the very discourses that have just ceased to be ours [...] it is valid for our diagnosis”. This permanent, never-ending interpreting and excavating of the archive is related to the description of discursive formations. But an interpretation of archival material, whether of a textual or audio-visual nature, must consider the fact that archives are configured in a way that privileges power structures. Derrida has given the concept of the archive an etymological interpretation:

“archive” refers to the *arkhe* in the nomological sense, to the *arkhe* of the commandment. As is the case for the Latin *archivum* or *archium* (a word that is used in the singular, as was the French “archive”, formerly employed as a masculine singular: “un archive”), the meaning of “archive”, its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee’s house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents’ guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this stating the law, they needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence²³.

Derrida relates the concept of the archive to the concept of authority. The archive is a construction of an authoritarian nature. It is a place where privilege – a hermeneutical privilege – is exercised. Any theory and use of the archive must consider the history of its institutionalization:

Asciences of the archive must include the theory of this institutionalization, that is to say, at once of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right which authorizes it. This right imposes or supposes a bundle of limits which have a history, a deconstructable history, and to the deconstruction of which psychoanalysis has not been foreign, to say the least. This deconstruction in progress concerns, as always, the institution of limits declared to be insurmountable, whether they involve family or state law, the relations between the secret and the nonsecret, or, and this is not the same thing, between the private and the public, whether they involve property or access rights, publication or reproduction rights, whether they involve classification and putting into *order*²⁴.

It is precisely because the archive is bound to the notion of authority and patriarchy that another term needs to enter our discussion of archives. As a construction of power, as a space in which several types of documents are kept, in which the privilege of interpretation is exercised, the archive presents its artifacts after an interpretation has been

made, after its *archontic* function has been activated. So, in order to critically approach a piece of archival material, dismantling and reassembling of the archival configuration are needed. This can be achieved through montage. And montage plays a crucial role in the films of Radu Jude that use archival footage.

Montage. Against Linear Time

In Radu Jude's films, the archives play multiple roles. They are a part of the distancing machine he has constructed for the spectator. This, together with the visible Brechtian construction, creates an experimental film narrative in which traditional dramaturgy does not play an important role. For this, he uses montage techniques inspired by Eisenstein²⁵. In this sense, he is close to the remark that Georges Didi-Huberman makes regarding the Holocaust images taken by several members of the *Sonderkommando*:

We use the term 'montage' for two reasons. First, because the simple 'shred of film' extracted from Birkenau by the members of the *Sonderkommando* presented not one but four images, each distributed according to a temporal discontinuity: two sequences, from one end to the other, showing two distinct moments of the same process of extermination. Second, because the 'readability' of these images – and thus their potential role in providing knowledge of the process in question – can only be constructed by making them resonate with, and showing their difference from, other sources, other images, and other testimonies²⁶.

This is exactly what Jude does in some of his found footage films. It is what he does in *Țara moartă*, where he makes a photomontage out of the images taken in Slobozia by the Romanian photographer Costică Acsinte during the late thirties and forties. In the film, he constructs the soundtrack by reading in voiceover format the notes found in the diary of Emil Dorian²⁷, a doctor who documented in his diary the crimes committed during the interwar period against the Jewish population as a result of antisemitism and the harsh racial laws passed by the far-right government of Ion Antonescu. He also adds excerpts from political speeches, sound effects of fighting and crowds to create the atmosphere of the time. What is the link between the crimes that Emil

Dorian documented and the images of ordinary citizens presented in the montage? Andrei Gorzo and Veronica Lazăr have also asked this question in their analysis of the film:

The question then arises, what kind of meaning is created by adding that score to this gallery? The subtitle of the film, *Fragments of Parallel Lives*, hints at a separation between the occasions recorded by Acsinte's camera and the atrocities being committed elsewhere. Still, the soundtrack alerts us to look for convergences, to inspect the images for traces of mass-murderous barbarity. [...] Does simply getting on with their lives make these people guilty? It is hard to avoid such a conclusion after seeing multiple pictures of groups raising their glasses as horror escalates on the soundtrack. Dr. Dorian quotes a woman deploring Romanians en masse as a people unworthy of having its own state; Thomas Mann is also quoted as he condemns the German people: the issue of collective national guilt is thus formulated explicitly. The anonymous people in Acsinte's photographs become stand-ins for a nation which is 'dead inside' (one way of interpreting the film's title)²⁸.

Lazăr and Gorzo do not give a definite answer to this question, but their analysis makes visible the dense texture of texts present in Radu Jude's found footage films and highlights the role that the present plays in his rendering of historical events. This type of archaeology inspired by Michel Foucault is a way of describing several types of discourses as practices to be taken up inside the archive. This work inside the archive is for Jude a way of critically deconstructing ready-made ideas about the past inherited as a result of the dominant narratives of Romanian modernity and the interwar period. Sorin Alexandrescu has also pointed out the extreme diversity of ideas in the period in *The Romanian Paradox*:

The actions and texts of this period manifest norms and points of view so different that they can hardly refer to a common historical reality. Although circumscribed to the same time and space, they do not seem to reference the same cultural and political reality, but several different versions of Romania²⁹ (*m.t.*).

After the Unification of 1918, there were groups in the Romanian cultural and political space that argued for democracy, constitutionalism and a multi-party parliamentary system in direct confrontation with traditionalist views and the extremism of the far-left and far-right³⁰. In the race for synchronism, it seems that the Romanian society

of the interwar period is not ready for democratic rule. Romanian intellectuals (and Lovinescu is no different) are eager to imitate and import Western values but also prone to immaturity. Bourgeois liberalism is preferred in the case of many more moderate intellectuals. But, at the same time, like other members of the Romanian society, some of them are antisemitic and intolerant towards minorities, others are elitist and refuse the participatory role of the poorer classes in the act of government. This temptation for imitation is also obvious in the film *"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"*, especially in the reaction to the reenactment that Jude's character, Mariana, makes of the Odessa Massacre. Instead of being outraged by the violent events, the people in the square applaud the murderous Romanian army and join in the antisemitic tirade.

For Jude, as for Didi-Huberman, what is important is not the temporality that montage creates, the fact that several types of materials are edited together to create duration. Rather, the emphasis falls on the way in which this bringing together of all the images releases the temporal "whirlpool" in all of them. Didi-Huberman's theorizing of historical time and the idea of origin in *Devant le temps* are relevant in this regard. He is in favour of a history that defines the origin in terms of what is new. He takes this idea from Benjamin. Alison Smith clarifies his analysis:

For Benjamin, historical time is not to be conceived of as a simple flow, stemming from an 'origin' conceived as a source or spring, unique and upriver from everything. On the contrary, the origins of historical phenomena, for Benjamin, evoke rather the idea of 'whirlpools', which form in 'the river of becoming', bringing what plunges into contact with what rises and generating something different – a new direction of flow. New phenomena are thus constantly being generated from the chaotic recombination of existence. 'The origin in this sense', observes Didi-Huberman, 'dialectically crystallises novelty and repetition, *survivance* and rapture: it is first and foremost *anachronism*'³¹.

For Jude and for Didi-Huberman, film has the potential to emancipate images from the flow of linear time. This anachronistic potential of images and archives makes it possible to disrupt traditional notions of genealogy. Using montage, film has the capacity to put the viewer in contact with the making of new images and the making of a new

type of thought, one in which the narrative about identity and origin is permanently disrupted by a type of thinking through montage. This is achieved through several strategies. But I will only refer to the ones used in *Țara moartă* [The Dead Nation] and *Ieșirea trenurilor din gară* [The exit of the trains], both of which deal with the Romanian Holocaust. As I said above, in *The Dead Nation*, there is a tension between what the photographs show and what the soundtrack describes, between the visual track and the soundtrack, between the indexical nature of the photographic image and the symbolic nature of the linguistic order. This tension is achieved through montage, through the refusal of constructing a linear film narrative in which images and sound complement each other. In *The Exit of the Trains*, a film that deals with the Iași Pogrom, we also have a montage of photographs of victims of the pogrom. But in the first part of the film, these photographs are mostly family portraits of the victims. The soundtrack gives voice to testimonies of the crimes given by family members and survivors, which are read by close collaborators of the director. We are given a verbal account of the murders, and, at the same time, we are forced to look at the faces of those victims. The first can be considered a deposition, a testimony of the events, in which the text takes precedence over the images. In the second part of the film, we see another montage of photographs, this time of the actual murders during the Iași Pogrom in 1941. The soundtrack is completely silent. What we are offered is a silent film about the pogrom. This is a complete refusal of any cinematic spectacle regarding the murders. As if plot and language itself have collapsed and only images of the murders are left. The temporality of the montage of photographs has given the archival materials another dimension, a new order, which is no longer inscribed in the *archontic*, patriarchal function of the archives but one in which the events of the pogrom are edited together with the spectator's ideas of the present, with his own notions of identity and difference.

In Radu Jude's montage films that use archival footage, traditional dramaturgy and narrative are abandoned, leaving way for a flow of images that is designed to rethink the relation of the present to that of the past. Jacques Aumont was correct in writing that, beginning with the artists of the historical avant-gardes, montage was a way to bypass plot-based thinking. He gives several examples of artists using

photomontage, artists working in the theatre, such as Brecht (Jude's inspiration). But, above all, he gives the example of Walter Benjamin and his *Arcades Project*:

The crowning work of them all, in Walter Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*. It was Benjamin who stated most clearly that montage (like development, the camera flash and other new image production techniques of the nineteenth century), was, in his eyes, nothing less than an epistemology which revealed new regions of consciousness³².

Like in the case of Benjamin, Jude's montage experiments create a new epistemology that reveals new regimes of knowledge about recent Romanian history in the images brought forth in the present. Montage has never been just a dramaturgical tool, responsible for the task of representing past events. In this view, history has never been just about going back to the source of the event but about the images of the past that we look at in the present. We are all invited to become curators of these images, we are all invited to create our own genealogy, one that no longer goes back to the origin, to create an archive that is no longer bound to a hermeneutic tradition. The archive is no longer bound to a nomological principle. It is no longer the place in which a connection with the origin is established. The archive is no longer a collection of artifacts about the past, but the intersection of different temporalities.

- ¹ Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, Editura Cartea Românească, București 2015.
- ² „O singură și mare primejdie ne pîndește în acest ordin al realităților spirituale: pașoptismul. Pașoptism care înseamnă, înainte de toate, maimuțăreală europeană. Și astăzi, din motive care nu ne privesc, Europa este *antispirituală*. Noi nu avem nici un motiv să imităm și de data aceasta, așa cum am imitat la 1848, Europa. Forțele creative ale neamului nostru trebuie să-și spună cuvîntul. Și-l vor spune... prin creații spirituale”, Mircea Eliade, *Destin românesc* quoted in Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească...*, p. 32.
- ³ Ivi, p. 36.
- ⁴ Ivi, pp. 344-345.
- ⁵ “*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*”, 2018, directed by Radu Jude, official subtitles.
- ⁶ Michael Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*, Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, in *ACTA*, XIX, 2002, pp. 1-84; *Nationalities Papers*, XXXI, 3, 2003.
- ⁷ „În realitate, procesul formației civilizației noastre [...] nu e evolutiv, ci revoluționar. [...] Principiul se poate fixa în formula sincronismului vieții contemporane [...] civilizația noastră nu se putea deci forma decât revoluționar, adică brusc, prin importație integrală și fără refacerea treptelor de evoluție ale civilizației popoarelor dezvoltate pe cale de creștere organică”, Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, Editura Minerva, București 1997, p. 353.
- ⁸ „Pentru popoarele formate pe cale revoluționară, fără un trecut cert, tradiționalismul, în sensul imitației acestui trecut inexistent și nu al dezvoltării în cadrele datelor rasei, este o imposibilitate sociologică”. Ivi, p. 354.
- ⁹ Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două Războaie Mondiale*, vol. I, Editura Universalia, București 2003, pp. 25-27.
- ¹⁰ Carmen Mușat, *After “Imitation”: Aesthetic Intersections, Geocultural Networks, and the Rise of Modern Romanian Literature in Romanian Literature as World Literature*, edited by Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian, Bloomsbury Academic, New York 2018, pp. 117-118.
- ¹¹ Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român*, Editura Univers, București 1998.
- ¹² Ivi pp. 32-33.
- ¹³ Ivi, pp. 34-35.
- ¹⁴ Ivi, p. 35.
- ¹⁵ „Continuăm așadar să ne căutăm identitatea, dar o căutăm în altă parte. Ruptura cu mediul cultural apropiat înseamnă și ruptura cu trecutul apropiat. Statul și cultura burgheze apar în urma unei negații violente a lumii feudale și balcanice. [...] Statul burghez abia format se clatină, în

- primul rând datorită opoziției intelectualilor. Marea ruptură are loc, așadar, între stat și cultură, între politic și cultural, între sincronizarea cu orice preț cu valorile occidentale și balastul unui trecut încă iubit și respectat”, *ivi*, p. 37.
- ¹⁶ Veronica Lazăr and Andrei Gorzo, *An updated political modernism: Radu Jude and “I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians”*, in *Close Up: Film and Media Studies*, III, 1-2, 2019, p. 7.
- ¹⁷ Ágnes Pethő, *The Exquisite Corpse of History. Radu Jude and the Intermedial Collage*, in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies*, XXI, 1, 2022, pp. 36-100.
- ¹⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 45.
- ¹⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 9-10.
- ²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London 1989, p. 143.
- ²¹ *Ibidem*.
- ²² *Ivi*, p. 145.
- ²³ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, in *Diacritics*, XXV, 2, 1995, pp. 9-63; pp. 9-10.
- ²⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 10-11.
- ²⁵ On this topic, see my interview with the director regarding another film where he uses archives. Radu Jude, *Tipografic majuscul este un film de montaj în sensul stabilit de Eisenstein*, in *Observator cultural*, e.g. <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/tipografic-majuscul-este-un-film-de-montaj-in-sensul-stabilit-de-eisenstein/> [November 4th 2023].
- ²⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All. Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2012, p. 120.
- ²⁷ Emil Dorian, *Jurnal din vremuri de prigoană (1937-1944)*, Editura HaSefer, București 1996.
- ²⁸ Veronica Lazăr, Andrei Gorzo, *Radu Jude’s Montage Experiments with Documents of Oppression and Mass Murder*, in *Revista Transilvania*, IX, 2022, p. 3.
- ²⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 16-17.
- ³⁰ For a complex analysis of the Romanian far-right intellectual groups in the interwar period, see Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească...*
- ³¹ Alison Smith, *Georges Didi-Huberman and Film: The Politics of the Image*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London 2020, pp. 114-115.
- ³² Jacques Aumont, *Montage*, trans. by Timothy Barnard, Caboose, Montreal 2022, p. 44.

