



RADU JUDE'S MONTAGE EXPERIMENTS WITH DOCUMENTS OF OPPRESSION AND MASS MURDER

Andrei GORZO & Veronica LAZĂR

National University of Theatre and Film "I. L. Caragiale," Bucharest
University of Bucharest

E-mail: andrei.gorzo@unatc.ro; veronica.lazar@yahoo.com

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Abstract: The article discusses critically the following films—short and feature-length—by Radu Jude: *The Dead Nation* (2017), *The Marshal's Two Executions* (2018), *Punish and Discipline* (2019), *Uppercase Print* (2020), *The Exit of the Trains* (2020), *Caricaturana* (2021), *Memories from the Eastern Front* (2021), and *The Potemkinists* (2022). In four of them—*The Dead Nation*, *The Marshal's Two Executions*, *The Exit of the Trains* and *Memories from the Eastern Front* (the last two co-directed with historian Adrian Cioflâncă)—Jude cinematically curates Holocaust-related archives, exposing Romanian antisemitic atrocities. *Uppercase Print* and *Punish and Discipline* explore state apparatuses of repression from other periods in Romanian history, while *The Marshal's Two Executions* and *The Potemkinists* interrogate the relation between art and historical memory. A number of these films work by juxtaposing two different sets of documents, using one set to tease out a narrative that the other set represses. Jude himself has described these works "as timid explorations" into the possibilities of montage (possibilities that the New Romanian Cinema of the 2000s had largely neglected), presided over by the spirit of Sergei Eisenstein. That spirit is explicitly (and playfully) conjured in *Caricaturana* and *The Potemkinists*.

Keywords: Radu Jude, antisemitism, Holocaust, found footage, montage, Eisenstein, Gianina Cărbunariu, Adrian Cioflâncă, archives, archival documentary, historical memory, politics of history.

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An Underacknowledged, Underrepresented Holocaust

Radu Jude's systematic exploration of historical antisemitism in Romania began in 2016 with *Scarred Hearts*, his adaptation of Max Blecher's writings from the 1930s. Set far from home, in France, in an isolated sanatorium for tuberculosis, Blecher's homonymous novel was unconcerned with public events such as the rise of the antisemitic far right all over Europe; they did not intrude—not even as background noise. Transplanting the story to a Romanian sanatorium, Jude decided to have the young Jewish protagonist go through his experiences with terminal sickness and literature, love and friendship, against an implied background of rising antisemitism, increasingly widespread support

for the local Iron Guard, and for Hitler, too. It was a controversial decision—again and again, Jude had to defend it in interviews' against Romanian critics who preferred their Blecher abstracted from the unpleasant historical context which Jude had insisted to put back in. For Jude, failure to address that context would have meant complicity in the perpetuation of 1990s myths about the 1930s as national golden age.²

Field Marshal Ion Antonescu had been executed for war crimes in 1946, but the antisemitic (and generally racist) character of his crimes—and of those committed by the Iron Guard, too—had been downplayed from the very beginning in mainstream communist discourse (or else blamed on the alliance with Nazi Germany). Later, when Romanian communism under Nicolae Ceaușescu

took a heavily nationalistic, even anti-Soviet turn, the official narrative about Antonescu became distinctly ambiguous: of course, being an anti-communist and a Hitler ally, he could never be actually recuperated and deemed respectable; on the other hand, his 1941 campaign on the Eastern Front could be regarded at least with some covert sympathy as a patriotic war (waged in order to recover from the Soviets territories that had belonged for two decades to the kingdom of Greater Romania)³. The 1989 fall of the communist regime meant that, for a while at least, the Antonescu cult could be celebrated openly: streets and squares were named after him, statues were erected, and film director Sergiu Nicolaescu, who during the Ceaușescu era had served as the main builder of a cinematic pantheon of Ceaușescu-approved national heroes, finally gave his standard hagiographic treatment to the figure of the field marshal in *The Mirror* (1994)⁴. There was even a push to rehabilitate some of the Iron Guard thugs. Romania's NATO and EU-bound trajectory eventually put an end to this—at least officially. Statues were taken down, the antisemitic atrocities committed in Bucharest, Iași and Odessa were acknowledged.⁵

However, there was little dissemination or popularization of these truths—and almost none through the cinema. The main pre-Jude exceptions are Radu Gabrea's fiction film *Gruber's Journey* (2009), which cast an oblique look at the Iași pogrom of June 1941, and Florin Iepan's 2013 documentary *Odessa*. (Neither of them made a big impact at home or abroad.⁶) Romania had instead a long tradition of films peddling nationalistic myths or being ready to bend any historical facts to the interests of political power: for instance, a filmmaker like Paul Călinescu (1902–2000), who had served the Antonescu regime with documentary glorifications of the campaign on the Eastern Front (*România în lupta împotriva bolșevismului* [*Romania in the Fight Against Bolshevism*], 1941; *Pagini din Războiul nostru sfânt* [*Pages from Our Holy War*], 1942), resurfaced a few years later (in 1950) as director of Romania's first Stalinist railroad-building epic, *Răsună valea* [*The Valley Resounds*]. To be fair, Călinescu's professional survival after World War II probably had a lot to do with the scarcity of professional filmmakers—a problem which was addressed through the creation of a Romanian state-sponsored film industry and the quick training, with Soviet assistance, of a new class of film workers.

For a filmmaker of Radu Jude's generation (the generation of the New Romanian Cinema⁷), no director personified this tradition of opportunism and subservience to political power—the dominant tradition in our cinema—better than Antonescu's 1994 hagiographer, Sergiu Nicolaescu. But, while the other NRC filmmakers chose to simply ignore this tradition—setting their films no farther in the past than the waning years of the Ceaușescu era and trying to maintain an apolitical stance—, Jude chose to pick an explicit quarrel with it in his own films.

The Dead Nation: Question Mark or Pointed Accusatory Finger?

Jude's next film after *Scarred Hearts* was *The Dead Nation* (2017). It was a nonfiction feature—an artistic interrogation conducted upon a collection of photographs from the 1930s and 1940s, by means of words and sounds dating from the same era.⁸ The photos had been taken by Costică Acsinte, who had opened a studio in the city of Slobozia (in South-Eastern Romania) in 1933. Stored in the Ialomița County Museum, they had been forgotten for many years, until another photographer, Mario-Cezar Popescu, proceeded to restore them—8,000 plate-glass images (of which Jude used a small part). Jude's film—the images and the soundtrack—primarily covers the years after 1937, when a Jewish doctor from Bucharest, Emil Dorian, started keeping a diary, bearing witness with admirable precision to the proliferation of antisemitic persecutions (escalating into atrocities) and the fascization of the country.⁹ The soundtrack is made up of excerpts from Dorian's extraordinary writings (cool-headed and sometimes hair-raising, these are read by Jude himself), and also political speeches, radio announcements, military, monarchic and fascist anthems, and some sound effects (of falling bombs, for example).

What do these images—documents of life in a certain region of Romania, recorded at a time when the country was slipping into fascist barbarity—yield to Jude's interrogation? There is a remoteness about these physiognomies—the men's (and the boys') shaved heads, the signs of malnutrition, the general air of rough rusticity: they clearly belong to an era of widespread hunger and child mortality. They are mostly pictures of special occasions—family celebrations, weddings, baptisms, deaths. An extraordinary one—one among many—stands out, depicting Madonna-like women leaning over two small coffins where children are laid to rest. The photographs are formally posed, with the subjects generally facing Acsinte's camera. Facial expressions often seem tense; there is not a lot of smiling. To the modern eye, the poses are sometimes strange, even grotesque—for example, there is a picture of four children in folk costume, three boys and a girl, the girl spread at the boys' feet in what to our eyes looks like a lascivious posture. Some are strikingly beautiful—for instance, a picture of a child doing gymnastics, standing with one extended leg in a woman's (perhaps his mother's) palm. Sometimes, the advanced state of deterioration—these plate-glass photographs are partly torn, erased, burnt, or cracked—contributes to their suggestiveness. There is a beautiful image of a couple—the woman dressed in fur, the man standing behind her in his military uniform: the man is partly erased—he looks like a ghost in a movie. While creating specter-like effects, the deterioration also emphasizes the materiality



of these plate-glass images. Some of them have been completely destroyed: there is nothing recognizable in them, only abstract patterns.¹⁰ Visually, *The Dead Nation* is gripping in a very sophisticated way.

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. As Ágnes Pethő has observed, Jude never enlarges details, never lends them significance through close-ups—"we always behold the pictures in their entirety."¹¹ But of course we notice guns (some of them in pictures of hunting parties), military uniforms, nationalist symbols. And, soon enough, the film (in its fifteenth minute) gives us a montage of people (including children) giving Roman salutes: the parallel realities have converged. And once they have, there is no way back to a state of disconnection. In the eyes of the viewers, the reality of the massacres and marches documented by Dr. Dorian is bound to taint and contaminate, to invade and incriminate, Costică Acsinte's snapshots of "parallel lives." It is a variation on the "Kuleshov effect": here it is the soundtrack which invests the images with meaning. Peasant kids posing with knives held over the heads of cows or pigs become sinister when juxtaposed with Dr. Dorian's stoic litany of rights taken away day by day from the Jewish population. And even though there are plenty of images with no knives, guns, uniforms or fascist salutes—instead there are children playing in the snow, women workers at their sewing machines, peasants posing with their oxen-drawn carts, there is a lovely series of portraits of women posing with hand holding chin—the innocence of such occupations is also spoiled. The very absence of the manifestly sinister can turn sinisterly suggestive. In post-screening conversations with audiences, Radu Jude has repeatedly argued that the juxtaposition of sight and sound in *The Dead Nation* was meant to produce a question mark—an interrogation of those mysterious lives which left a trace on Costică Acsinte's emulsion-coated glass plates. But some viewers feel that the question mark comes across more like a pointed accusatory finger. 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).

Such an indictment would clearly mark Jude as a heir to director Lucian Pintilie (1933–2018), who had emerged in the Ceaușescu era (with his banned adaptation of I. L. Caragiale, *Carnival Scenes*) as the one major cinematic dissenter to the dominant culture of nationalism, who continued to scourge "Romanianness" in his films of the 1990s and 2000s. (One of them, *An Unforgettable Summer*, ranks among Jude's favourites¹² and, as an anti-nationalistic Balkan western, this film is Romanian cinema's clearest precursor to Jude's 2015 *Aferim!*.) Outside cinema, critiques of national cowardice circulated widely in the 1990s, with that put forward by soon-to-be-public intellectual Horia-Roman Patapieviçi in his 1996 *Politice [Politics]*, being particularly influential. In general, those did not touch on the Romanian role in the Holocaust; usually, the Romanian people was indicted for having put up for so long with communist regimes and for having elected as Ceaușescu's successors former high-ranking figures of the Romanian Communist Party. Those critiques, which often defined "Romanianness" in essentialist terms as an eternal—and eternally despicable—condition, were influential among future artists and intellectuals of Radu Jude's generation (who during the 1990s were in their teens or twenties). Disgust for the chest-thumping myths of nationalistic history and a thirst for debunking those myths were very strong among this cohort. The anti-nationalist disgust was generally fueled by inferiority complexes related to Romania's economic and civilizational underdevelopment, to the 'minor' status of Romanian culture, etc. Some of that may have played a role in Radu Jude's formation.¹³

Still, if it is fair to describe Jude's film as a collective incrimination or blanket condemnation of the Romanian people (a dead-souled nation?) for antisemitic crimes, then the fact that he has constructed this statement by manipulating photographs of unknown civilians from a particular region of Romania raises ethical and political issues. As far as we know, the individuals depicted in Acsinte's photographs may have nothing to do with those crimes. They may not even be antisemites. For what we know, some of them may have been Jewish or Roma. Some of them may have even found their deaths at the hands of the fascists. Jude's mixing of levels of literalness and abstraction, of particularity and generalization, makes for powerful rhetoric, but it is also problematic.¹⁴

The brand of filmmaking that Jude was experimenting with in *The Dead Nation*—filmmaking as recycling, as critical appropriation of preexisting images and sounds—had little tradition in Romania. In his interviews, Jude has mentioned several sources of inspiration: "Errol Morris's book on the relationship between images and reality [*Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2011], the [literary] works of W. G. Sebald, Susan Sontag, the essay of the film critic Andrei Gorzo on Andrei Ujică's films [a

critical guide in booklet format to Harun Farocki's and Andrei Ujică's 1992 *Videograms of a Revolution*, published in Romanian by Societatea Culturală NexT, 2016], the discovery of *Found Footage Magazine*, some found-footage films I watched..."¹⁵ Yervant Giankian and Angela Ricci Lucchi's *Oh! Uomo [Oh! Man]* (2004)—which uses footage of fascist military pomp, footage of World War I veterans undergoing plastic surgery and rehabilitation in Italy, and footage of crippled children from Russia and Austria¹⁶—must have been particularly influential: in 2019, Jude named it as one of his ten favourite films of all time.¹⁷

But the most important Romanian precursor is surely Andrei Ujică's *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu* (2010), which compiled 25 years of footage of Ceaușescu—mostly on official occasions, sometimes in more intimate circumstances—into a nonfiction epic which can be seen as the last of the “historical films” supervised by the Ceaușescu regime. Andrei Ujică provides no explicit commentary and uses no documentary signposts (he does not identify characters by name, nor does he provide dates, etc.). What he presents us with is a Ceaușescu-approved narrative of personal and national grandeur. Playing on the viewer's awareness (or at least suspicion) of alternative realities that have been kept out of the frame, Ujică invites us to inspect this narrative for cracks, tensions and traces of what is missing, of what has been repressed. But, unlike Jude, he does not serve that repressed narrative up on a plate.

Staging the Contents of Secret Police Files and Demystifying the TV Version of 1980s Romanian Reality

In 2020, Jude premiered his own archive-based montage film on the Ceaușescu regime, *Uppercase Print*. *Uppercase Print* had initially been a play by Gianina Cărbunariu about the 1981–82 identification and interrogation by the secret police (the dreaded *Securitate*) of a high school student, Mugur Călinescu (1965–85), who had chalked on the walls of his city (Botoșani) political messages protesting against the lack of democracy while calling for free unions (like Solidarity in Poland) and access to food. Staged by Cărbunariu herself, it was a piece of documentary theatre: using theatrical means, but with no recourse to fictionalization or dramatization, it presented to the public a series of documents from the two *Securitate* files on the case—statements, records of interrogations, transcripts of various conversations taking place in the boy's bugged apartment.

In his film, Radu Jude alternates scenes from his own staging of the play with various materials broadcast by the Romanian National Television in 1981–82 (the period in which Mugur Călinescu was investigated by the secret police) and also 1985—the year of his shockingly premature death of leukemia. (There were rumors of poisoning.)

Directing *Uppercase Print* on stage, Gianina Cărbunariu had made extensive use of screens, dynamizing the documents she was working with by giving them a ‘cinematic’ presentation. Adapting *Uppercase Print* for the screen, Jude chooses to work in the opposite direction: his staging is blatantly theatrical—it is all set in a television studio, with a highly stylized minimum of props and the actors simply reciting passages from the secret police files, usually while facing the camera; even when facing each other—as actors Șerban Lazarovici and Șerban Pavlu do when enacting a *Securitate*-recorded quarrel between Mugur and his father—they largely refrain from dramatizing the material, sticking as much as possible to flat, uninflected line-readings.

Whatever ‘dynamism’ this staging has comes from Jude's strategy of regularly breaking it up with insertions of archival TV materials. What Jude does, in other words, is to confront two ‘families’ of documents. Cărbunariu's theatre piece was also an assemblage of documents; Jude raises the ante by drawing on a second archive. As the filmmaker himself put it,¹⁸ Cărbunariu's work is built on the principle of collage, while his own work here is built on the principle of montage; he uses Cărbunariu's collage as one of two elements in a juxtaposition—or an exercise in cross-cutting. After *Aferim!*, Jude has become Romanian cinema's tireless experimenter; here he experiments with fusing theatre and television into cinema.

Of course, the experiment has a different objective, too: one set of documents (the Mugur file) is used to interrogate a second set (the period TV footage). The TV clips are treated as a capsule of Romanian life in the 1980s, but one in which much of the period's reality is in fact repressed, buried under a surface of artifice and innocuousness. The Mugur file acts on it as a kind of litmus test. It makes more visible the traces of the repressed. It makes the viewer more alert to what clues those old TV broadcasts may contain regarding the conservatism, repressiveness, austerity and paranoia characteristic of the Ceaușescu regime in its last decade.

For example, the cheerful TV materials about new refrigerators and cooking recipes trigger associations with the severe lack of food and consumer goods afflicting Romania in the 1980s. Watching a fragment from a television program inviting us to follow the example of a citizen who, by doing a lot of physical exercise in his apartment, has become a lot more resistant to cold weather, we think of how badly heated the era's apartments were. We watch “TV investigations” consisting in the catching and chastising (before millions of television watchers) of those drivers who have overused the car horn—especially if they also happen to wear their hair too long. (Such sermonizing interviews and finger-wagging programs documenting the improper behavior of unruly citizens were at the time a TV genre in its own right. This genre is an object of subtle criticism in Mircea Daneliuc's 1980 *Microphone*



Test, a politically courageous film that Jude included on a ten-title list submitted in 2012 to *Sight & Sound* for their “greatest films of all time” poll.¹⁹ We watch a reportage on divorce, in which the idea is to moralize those citizens who make themselves ‘guilty’ of it and to discourage the viewers from following their example. (This makes us think of Mugur Călinescu’s divorced mother, who was raising him on her own.) We sample “lyrical television essays” (also a genre in itself at the time) on subjects like the significance of Romanian folk dances (Ceaușescu is inevitably featured dancing the traditional *hora*) or the significance of femininity (which the voice-over defines in very conservative terms: “Woman has offered her face so that the artist could use it to personify the concept of Motherland... Woman’s beauty and delicacy attract poets...,” and on it goes). We see a lot of the Ceaușescu personality cult (which by the 1980s had hypertrophied to grotesque proportions): actors with frozen expressions and too-practiced tremolos in their voices recite to him, detachments of militarized school children march in his honor, operetta singers serenade him with booming voices. There are also glimpses of a more harmless kind of kitsch—women dancers snapping castanets while sombreroed men pirouette to the strains of “Brazil.” There are even glimpses of programs which are not kitsch at all: a presentation of literary novelties, all very respectable, including a translation of Paraguayan novelist’s Augusto Roa Bastos’s *I, the Supreme* (describing it, the presenter uses the frisson-inducing word “dictator”); or a serious political program on the resurgence of Nazism in the capitalist world.

As Ágnes Pethő and others have noted, Jude’s selection of television entertainment from the late Ceaușescu era can stir complex mixtures of feelings in Romanian viewers²⁰—more so, perhaps, in TV-watching Romanian children of the 1980s, for whom, as Christian Ferencz-Flatz has suggested, a clip of singer Mihai Constantinescu performing while surrounded by happy children can be very resonant.²¹ At the same time, non-Romanian viewers or younger Romanians may find some of the material fascinatingly quaint and exotic: for example, they could be fascinated by the aesthetics of a black-and-white clip in which two tuxedoed actors keep throwing a terrestrial globe in each other’s arms while they sing an anti-capitalist and anti-nuclear song; it was probably recorded in the early 1980s, but it has an out-of-time, twilight-zone quality, as if the local entertainment industry had somehow stood still at some point in the 1960s while continuing to churn out the same kinds of product in increasingly decrepit versions. (This quasi-Lynchian quality is also noted by Pethő when she describes the television shows as “eerily sugar-coated.”²²) Still, for all the interest of this material, Jude’s cross-cutting between the two archives operates rather mechanically on ironic and didactic principles.

According to Jude, his exercise in montage was

Eisensteinian in intention. He describes it thus: “Put briefly, the main idea is that joining two pictures through montage can generate a third, formed in the mind of the viewer, whose meaning results from the juxtaposition of the two pictures and is absent from either one of them, being born only through their joining. Eisenstein was, of course, referring to the cinema, but the golden age of montage is right now: anyone who sees a meme on the internet actually sees, most times, a variant of Eisensteinian montage. (To pick a random example: the stupid meme in which the photo of Romanian President Iohannis is put next to a picture of Hitler, generating the idea that Iohannis is a Nazi. The idea is absent from either of the two pictures, and only appears when they are put together.) This was more or less what I tried to do—systematically breaking up Gianina’s story (her collage) and turning it into a work of montage, in which each picture collides with another and their joining generates new ideas for the public.”²³

There is a lot to unpack in this very stimulating artist statement. Jude’s explanation of montage echoes the one offered by André Bazin in “The Evolution of the Language of Cinema”: “[Montage is defined as] the creation of a sense of meaning not objectively contained in the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition. The well-known experiment of Kuleshov with the shot of Mozhukhin in which a smile was seen to change its significance according to the image that preceded it, sums up perfectly the properties of montage. [...] The substance of the narrative, whatever the realism of the individual image, is born essentially from these relationships—Mozhukhin plus dead child equal pity—that is to say an abstract result, none of the concrete elements of which are to be found in the premises; maidens plus apple trees in bloom equal hope.”²⁴ However, the example given by Jude—a picture of Hitler juxtaposed with a picture of Romanian President Klaus Iohannis—does not really illustrate the ideas above. We are not really dealing with two images generating a third, “whose meaning is absent from either of [the original two].” In this case, the juxtaposition—aiming to brand Iohannis as a crypto-Nazi—works by reducing Iohannis’s image to that of Hitler. To accomplish that, it relies on the existence of a common element in the two images (Hitler was a German politician; Iohannis—a Romanian politician—is also an ethnic German) and it also relies on a popular stereotype (all German politicians have at little of the Nazi about them).

Jude’s montage in *Uppercase Print* also works by reducing one set of images (the TV version of 1980s Romanian reality) to the other (the reality of state oppression, as experienced by Mugur Călinescu). One reality (the televisual one, with its fabricated cheeriness and triumphalism) is systematically contradicted by the other (the reality of what happened to Mugur), which brings out the grimness beneath the fake gaiety. Hence a

certain discursive monotony.

Once again, a comparison with Andrei Ujică's found footage epic *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu* is instructive. Ujică's opening move is to frame what the audience is about to see as Ceaușescu's version of reality. After that, he basically leaves the viewer alone with it—with Ceaușescu's narrative of glory, of a life lived (up to the very end, the moment when his regime is overthrown and he finds himself under trial for various crimes) within a charmed circle of applause, of what looks like almost universal approval. It is like an enchanted dream lasting 25 years—a dream of parades and motorcades and rallies and mass pageants succeeding one another endlessly, with more intimate moments, epiphanies of family life, interspersed throughout. It is Ceaușescu's dream of being a major player on the world stage and an engine of history. It is a dream of limitless industrial and agricultural growth for a self-sufficient, autarchic Romania. Andrei Ujică leaves occasional cracks in the reverie—echoes of distant dissent, disturbing shadows of repressed realities passing quickly across the walls of Ceaușescu's bubble—but he does not puncture or contradict it at every step. As fascinating as *The Autobiography* is as a record of megalomania, Ujică does not frame Ceaușescu's propaganda as fabrication and nothing else, fit only to be sneered at. His delicate handling leaves room for the possibility that it may provide some access to a more objective narrative—a narrative of personal and national élan followed by degeneration, against a background of massive geopolitical change, of tectonic shifts in the global landscape. In Romania, this made the film shocking at the time of its release. Yes, it is the story of Ceaușescu's deluded overreaching, of his gradual disconnection from historical reality, of his morphing into a gargoyle, a handy symbol of the decrepitude of Eastern European state socialism, but it is also about networks of states in the Cold War world order; obliquely, it is about the global terrain shifting, with capitalism mutating and surviving, while Eastern European communism stalls, tied as it is to a model of development depending on heavy industry; and last but not least, it is a story of debt—the foreign debt that Ceaușescu rages against at one point, accusing the powerful states of using it to keep under control less developed nations.²⁵

In 2010, Andrei Ujică's approach to his images of Ceaușescu was an unprecedented antidote to both the cult of Ceaușescu's personality and his subsequent post-1989 demonization. Radu Jude's irony is much more obvious. He is an "overcooperative author" here (in the Susan Sontag sense of the term²⁶): he serves up on a plate both the Ceaușescu version of reality and its demystification. The case of Mugur Călinescu—a teenager who was harassed by the secret police for having complained about living conditions in Romania (the result of Ceaușescu's policies of austerity) and the lack of democratic rights and freedoms—sensitizes the

viewers to the narrative of oppression, cold apartments and empty refrigerators buried in the early-1980s TV images. Of course, a lot of viewers need not much sensitizing because they already know those things and they were expecting them from a film set in the late Ceaușescu era. To a larger extent than Jude's other films, *Uppercase Print* plays on the already known and the already riddled with stereotypes: unlike his reappraisal of the pre-communist historical inheritance, his critical assessment of the late communist period brings him on a terrain which is already densely saturated (not least in art) with all shades of anti-communist undertakings.

Deeper into the Archives

Just as the New Romanian Cinema of the 2000s stood away from explicit political stands and also from the sore spots of less recent Romanian history, it was also a cinema which minimized editing. In its aesthetics, as they crystallized between 2005 (the year of Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*) and 2007 (when Cristian Mungiu released his *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*), realism was bound up with the long take.²⁷ Along with his interest in archives, intermedial experimentation, 'Brechtian' or 'anti-illusionistic' aesthetics, and political commitment, Radu Jude's growing interest in montage sparked possibilities of renewal for Romanian cinema.

Jude's short film *The Marshal's Two Executions* (2018) is a footnote to his "*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*" (2018). Subtitled *A Comparison*, it cross-cuts between footage of Field Marshal Antonescu's 1946 execution and its reenactment by director Sergiu Nicolaescu for his 1994 epic *The Mirror*—a film slammed by a character in "*Barbarians*" as an attempt to whitewash Antonescu.²⁸

That verdict is voiced by Jude's heroine, an outspoken, politically-minded theatre director (as Ágnes Pethő remarks, she is not unlike Jude's *Uppercase Print* collaborator Gianina Cărbunariu²⁹) who is staging a military reenactment (funded by the Bucharest City Hall) of the Romanian army's 1941 Eastern Front operations, while planning to subvert the militaristic-patriotic pageant and use it didactically to confront the citizens of Bucharest with the massacre perpetrated in 1941 in Odessa by the Romanian army. (The title "*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*" is a quotation—the quotation marks are officially part of it: it was Mihai Antonescu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of the massacre, who declared that he did not care if Romania went down in history as a barbaric nation. Mihai Antonescu was at the time the second most powerful man in the country, after Prime Minister and Field Marshal Ion Antonescu. The two men, who were executed together in 1946, were not relatives. In international reports on Jude's film, the quotation was sometimes misattributed to Ion Antonescu and the quotation marks were sometimes



dropped from the title.) The heroine of *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* has set herself a mission, and, as Mónica Dánél puts it, it is part of that mission “to confront Nicolaescu’s shadow.”³⁰ This is also Radu Jude’s position—throughout *Barbarians* he develops a polemic targetting Nicolaescu’s conception of “historical cinema.”³¹ And the confrontation continues in *The Marshal’s Two Executions*.

Shot by the legendary Romanian cinematographer Ovidiu Gologan (who would go on to film two foundational works of Romanian art cinema: Victor Iliu’s 1955 *The Mill of Good Luck* and Liviu Ciulei’s 1965 *The Forest of the Hanged*), the footage of the real Antonescu’s death is silent and in black-and-white. Nicolaescu’s color recreation—complete with a glimpse of a Gologan-facsimile at work—is scrupulous in its attention to details (actor Ion Siminie has a good likeness to the marshal), while insistently tugging at the heartstrings: a drumbeat soundtrack which gives way to a mawkish piano, magic-hour lighting, an Antonescu voice-over from beyond the grave invoking the fatherland (in Siminie’s very stilted reading). But even if Nicolaescu’s staging were less bombastic, placing his simulacrum next to the authentic film of Antonescu’s death would still expose it instantaneously as kitsch. André Bazin wrote long ago about the “metaphysical obscenity” of filmed death. He remarked that a photograph “can only represent someone dying or a corpse,” whereas film can capture “the elusive passage from one state to the other.” Bazin mentioned “a haunting documentary about an anti-Communist crackdown in Shanghai in which Red ‘spies’ were executed with a revolver on the public square. At each screening, at the flick of a switch, these men came to life again and then the jerk of the same bullet jolted their necks. [...] Before cinema there was only the profanation of corpses and the desecration of tombs. Thanks to film, nowadays we can desecrate and show at will the only one of our possessions that is temporally inalienable: dead without a requiem, the eternal dead-again of the cinema.”³² Ágnes Pethő also refers to the “uncanny” quality of the Gologan footage.³³ Any attempt to recreate such horror (is Antonescu grimacing or is that a smile on his face, right before he is shot?) cannot help but look like mere mockery next to the real thing.

The short film *Punish and Discipline* (2019) is another exercise in montage and further testimony (following *Aferim!* and preceding *Uppercase Print*) to Jude’s interest in apparatuses of repression. It is a study of two authority figures from two different eras of Romanian history; more exactly, a study of their styles of self-presentation. In the first part of this dyptich, titled “Major Lăcusteanu Arrests Some Revolutionaries,” Jude gives us excerpts—filmed in close-up and simultaneously read in voice-over by an actor (shades of Bresson and Straub-Huillet)—from a memoir by a second-rank Wallach boyar and career officer who took part in the

repression of the 1848 revolution. The gusto with which this major Grigore Lăcusteanu relives his exploits as a crusher of rebels recalls the constable in *Aferim!* The second half of *Punish and Discipline* is wordless and consists in a chronological series of photographs—dating from the 1950s to the 1980s—from the life of a more obscure historical figure: an unnamed country policeman from the environs of Slobozia, the South-Eastern Romanian city where photographer Costică Acsinte (also the source of the *Dead Nation* images) plied his trade. Over the years, we see this lawman posing with guns and a succession of police dogs. We see him riding on motorcycles and bikes, patrolling the village on horseback. We see him with wife and children. We see him surrounded by villagers, sometimes drinking with them. A stout man, he sometimes seems to tower over them. The props of his self-staging—a particular dog, a particular gun—are sometimes isolated in close-up. We infer his narcissism, the pleasure he takes in himself as pillar of the community. Over the years, he becomes increasingly jowly and portly. The dyptich created by Jude is more evocative, more open to interpretation, less clear-cut in its meanings than some of his other exercises in juxtaposition.

The Exit of the Trains, a 175-minute documentary which received its world premiere at the 2020 Berlinale (where *Uppercase Print* was also screened for the first time), is the culmination of Radu Jude’s archival work on the Romanian Holocaust. Co-directed with historian Adrian Cioflâncă (who was credited as consultant on *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*), it is another film constructed from photographs—most of them portraits of people killed in the Iași pogrom.

On June 29, 1941, the large Jewish population of the city of Iași was rounded up by Romanian soldiers, policemen and members of the fascist Iron Guard, with some help from the German SS. A lot of people were shot in the courtyard of the city’s police headquarters. Many others were boarded onto unventilated freight cars, in which they died of asphyxiation en route to work camps. 13,000 people were thus massacred in a few days. Some of the perpetrators were tried for war crimes in 1948, but their atrocities—like the ones committed by the Romanian army against the Jewish population of Odessa—were largely expurgated from Romanian public memory in the decades that followed. It was only after the year 2000 that the Romanian state officially acknowledged its responsibility in the victimization of the Jews during World War II. And even then, little was done to spread awareness of these facts in a country where Marshal Antonescu continued to be admired by many for his nationalistic anti-Sovietism.

As no images were ever given a large circulation, contemporary Romanians had no visual representation of the horrors and their victims. Until Jude and Cioflâncă, filmmakers had contributed very little to

raising awareness. The subject of the Iași pogrom had been tackled just once, by veteran director Radu Gabrea, with the help of screenwriters Răzvan Rădulescu and Alexandru Baciu—key contributors to the New Romanian Cinema, there making an uncustomary, even unique foray into a more distant past. Avoiding direct representation of the June 29 atrocities, they had built the story of *Gruber's Journey* around Italian writer Curzio Malaparte's passage through Iași in the aftermath of the pogrom. Though not devoid of merit, that 2009 film had failed to provide a large audience—or even the small audience which had actually seen it—with a resonant, powerfully haunting cinematic image of Iași at the end of June 1941.

Adrian Cioflâncă has managed to put together a collection of photographs of the victims—only 364 of them. (Many of these photographs were hard to find.³⁴) For many of these no-longer-faceless victims, the historian has found police statements or other testimonies given later (at the end of the war) by surviving relatives, presenting the circumstances of their deaths. We see the faces in succession while these accounts of deaths are being read to us in voice-over by various friends or habitual collaborators of Radu Jude's. For the most part, the accounts are short and highly standardized due to the statement format and also because they cover the same succession of events: the posse breaking into the victim's house; the victim getting beaten; the victim marched to police headquarters and either shot in the courtyard or marched to the train station after more beatings; the victims boarded onto those sealed trains, most of them dying atrociously, few surviving. The expanding gallery of faces works together with the short, dry litanies of repetitive facts—the same scenario of murder occurring again and again, with some variations—for a cumulative effect of nausea and numbness, as knowledge of the mass murder is being hammered in a way meant to make it feel more concrete for the viewer. This strategy gives an idea of the elusive dimensions of the massacre while compensating at the same time for the impression of abstraction sometimes induced by the systematic, industrial scale of the Holocaust extermination methods,³⁵ and also for the phantomatic effect of the Lanzmannian injunction against direct representation of the events.³⁶ After this photographic memorial of faces (taking up most of the film's running time), Radu Jude gives us a 15-minute silent film of the pogrom: a chronological succession of photographs (some taken by the German military, others by Romanian secret service agents) showing the Jews being marched to the police station among curious or oblivious passers-by, passing dead bodies lying by the tram lines or piled on sidewalks, being ordered to lie down on the ground of the police headquarters' courtyard, being forced onto death trains; and later the dead bodies being taken out of the train cars, stripped naked, stacked up by the side of the railroad (as regular trains pass by and passengers

look at them through the windows), finally loaded onto trucks or horse-carts and taken away.

For ethical-documentarian, and also for metaphysical reasons, *The Exit of the Trains* refuses to select a few representative figures among the victims. The film dictates to the viewer a stance of stoical piety, the moral demand of patience and the modernist expectation of anti-hedonist austerity fusing into one.

In a comparative talk on recent archival documentaries by Jude and Sergei Loznitsa (*The Trial*, from 2018; *Babi Yar. Context*, from 2021), Zsolt Gyenge remarked that both filmmakers are concerned with finding ethical ways of curating documents of crimes that were created by the perpetrators themselves.³⁷ Jude's short *Memories from the Eastern Front* (2022) is a continuation of his work on Romanian World War II crimes. Co-directed with Adrian Cioflâncă, it consists of a silent slideshow presentation of a photographic journal kept by the 6th Regiment of the Romanian Army advancing through Ukraine in 1941-1942, broken up by intertitles featuring fragments of army reports. As Mónica Dánél has noted, this regiment's photographic record of its campaign suggests a "family album"—perhaps documenting a family vacation.³⁸ The photographs' handwritten captions increase this resemblance upon which Jude and Cioflâncă play sardonically. There are photographs of sunsets and picturesque riverbanks. Another motif in the album has the Romanian military presiding over religious ceremonies—baptizing children, sanctifying crosses, etc. Apart from the occasional photograph showing a group of Jews, or a Soviet female prisoner (ironized in the handwritten caption as a Bolshevik "soldier," with the word "soldier" framed in nasty inverted commas), not much else disturbs the blandness of the album. It is left to the juxtaposed intertitles—those terse excerpts from headquarters reports—to supply, with dry irony, the repressed narrative of the regiment's advance. It is a narrative of undisciplined soldiers on a rampage, blazing a path strewn with casual killings, rapes and lootings. The reports allude to the displeasure of the German allies confronted with this Romanian brand of disorganized mayhem. The reports also hint at an ongoing comedy of corruption, incompetence and dishevelment. (The Germans also disapprove of the Romanians' "Oriental" negligence towards haircuts and shaving; the Romanians try to please them by declaring war on facial hair.) There are also hinted stories of desertions, of soldiers deliberately missing their targets when forced to take part in summary executions, of soldiers resorting to self-mutilation in the hope that they would be sent home (they were executed instead).

Eisenstein Again and Again

Like other Jude films—*The Dead Nation*, *Uppercase Print*, and *The Marshal's Two Executions*—*Memories*



from the *Eastern Front* confronts two sets of documents (in the *Marshal's Two Executions* it is two documentary objects), using one set to tease out a narrative that the other set represses. Jude himself has described these films “as timid explorations” into the possibilities of montage (possibilities that the New Romanian Cinema of the 2000s has largely neglected), presided over by the spirit of Sergei Eisenstein.³⁹ That spirit is explicitly conjured in two other shorts: *Caricaturana* (2021) and *The Potemkinists* (2022).

The 9-minute non-fiction *Caricaturana: A Flip Book* further testifies to Jude’s affinity for traditions of caricature, vaudeville and intellectual montage. Jude starts with a voice-over evocation of Eisenstein’s interest in a series of lithographs by Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) featuring the character of swindler Robert Macaire. A montage of the Macaire cartoons invites us to verify Eisenstein’s hypothesis that they owe their dynamism to the fact that the character’s gestures pertain to different moments: the legs are in one moment, the hands in another, the head in yet another. Following this, Jude plays at bringing some of the caricatures to life by providing voices. He ends with a mock-Kuleshovian experiment which turns the gestures from Daumier’s lithographs into reactions to a recent item of tabloid news (“Gwyneth Paltrow Sued as Man Claims Vagina-Scented Candle Exploded”).

Eisenstein opened a 1926 essay with the claim that he was often asked about the fate of the battleship *Potemkin*: where does it go at the end of the film?⁴⁰ We watch as, in Gilberto Perez’s words, “the rebel battleship meets a czarist squadron deployed to subdue it which instead greets it with a cheer of solidarity. In the last shot the ship’s prow, seen from below, seems to break forth from the screen and to sweep over us in the audience.” But where did it actually go? In 1926, Eisenstein satisfied his public’s curiosity by titling his article, “Constanța.” That is the historical answer to the question with which the article opens: the mutinous sailors sought refuge in the Romanian port of Constanța. Of course, in the film that Eisenstein made, such an answer would have been “a letdown,” as Perez explains: “Out of the revolt of the *Potemkin*, an actual incident from the suppressed 1905 revolution in Russia, Eisenstein made a myth of revolution on the rise.”⁴¹ It is left to Radu Jude’s *The Potemkinists* to follow the discarded Constanța trail. Jude includes in his short film a few clips from *The Battleship Potemkin*—the baby pram rolling down the Odessa steps, but also the above-mentioned moment of fraternization between mutineers and czarist soldiers. Jude has a character sneer at Eisenstein’s ending. From there it is on to Constanța, letdown or not.

Jude imagines the following story: in present-day Romania (right after the film’s title, a subtitle informs us that it was filmed in the summer of 2021), a sculptor (played by Alexandru Dabija) plans to convert a derelict

monument from the late Ceaușescu era (located near Constanța) into an homage to the 700 *Potemkin* sailors to whom Romanian King Carol granted political asylum in 1905 (not before they had threatened to raze Constanța to the ground). He is hoping that the Ministry of Culture will finance his project and he has brought a Ministry official (Cristina Drăghici) to show her the monument. As they climb the broken, not-quite-Eisensteinian stone steps towards the huge wing-like (or maybe flame-like) metal structure, both of them out of breath (and sometimes on all fours) under the fierce sun, but continuing to debate the project, the viewer becomes increasingly aware of the official’s scepticism. The Ministry, she says, would open itself to accusations of eulogizing communism, especially, she adds, given the location of the monument: in the immediate vicinity of the Danube-Black Sea Canal—a quintessentially communist construction, partly made possible by forced labor. But that had been in the 1950s, the sculptor protests, whereas this particular stretch of the Canal was completed in the 1980s and did not involve any forced labor. However, the official shoots back, it did involve the relocation of a village. Nevertheless, pleads the sculptor, the fact that those sailors defied the czar—as did King Carol when he let them settle in Romania—should go down well with contemporary public opinion: it should inspire healthy anti-Putin sentiment. And so the argument goes on under the clear summer sky as Jude sometimes cuts to deceptively pastoral-like shots (flowers, the shimmer on the water) of what emerges as a heavily contested site: a palimpsest-like site accumulating strata of traumatic and contentious 20th-century history. The back-and-forth between the two characters is, to a certain extent, a reprise of the memorable artist-versus-official sparring in Jude’s “*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*,” with Cristina Drăghici taking on the part played there by Alexandru Dabija, and Dabija playing now the artist. The woman from the Ministry of Culture comes across as a homophobe, a racist and a rather primitive anti-communist, but she is less of a philistine than she first appears: it is true that she has not watched *The Battleship Potemkin*, but on the topic of Stalinist purges she confidently drops names like Yagoda and Kamenev, and she also references Yugoslav brutalist architecture. As for the sculptor, he is a motormouth artist-cum-salesman letting loose at her an unending stream of (sometimes free-associative) high-cultural references, laced with vulgar jokes and other flashes of roguish charm. It is difficult to say to what extent he believes in his own patter. His description of the cinematic sculpture he is planning becomes increasingly absurd as he elaborates on it, and Dabija delivers it with a wry sense of its absurdity: “At the top, to make this the tallest statue in Europe, I’d add the figure of a Potemkinist: Vakulinchuk. I would respect the style of the existing monument and make him a stylized silhouette,

flame-like, and at its top a sailor's cap on a mustachioed head tilted back—the way he dies in Eisenstein's film, hanging from that hook.”

The compromise they eventually reach is to turn the sculpture into a jumble of everything, putting in not only the Potemkinists but also the victims of 1950s forced labor and those of 1980s forced relocation. As the sculptor breezily improvises, the resulting mess would be easy to defend on both aesthetic (postmodern collage, etc.) and political-philosophical grounds (hasn't the 20th century been called “the century of all horrors”?). The view expounded here with slippery buoyancy is not exactly of the cynically postmodern, levelling kind that makes all ideologies indistinguishable from one another.

It is a view combining sympathy for the political idealism of a historical moment when nothing had been decided yet with awareness of how history runs over myths and symbols, tossing them every which way. Fueled by Jude's characteristic mixture of insolence, a sense of melancholy and a sense of the absurd, *The Potemkinists* riffs satirically on the relation between art and historical memory, alludes to Romanian traditions of anti-Russian sentiment, touches on contemporary debates about who is worth a statue and who is not (and whether such monuments should exist at all), and surveys the remains of the early-20th-century hopes symbolized by the *Potemkin* (the boat as well as the film).

Notes:

1. For example, when Jude, producer Ada Solomon and actor Lucian Teodor Rus were jointly interviewed in Iulia Blaga, “*Inimi cicatrizate: Despre capacitatea artei de a reprezenta viața*,” *Suplimentul de cultură*, November 21, 2016, <http://suplimentuldecultura.ro/11770/inimi-cicatrizate-despre-capacitatea-artei-de-a-reprezenta-viata/>, last accessed on July 24, 2022.
2. For detailed discussion of Jude's *Scarred Hearts*, see Andrei Gorzo and Veronica Lazăr, “Literature, Jewishness and Period Drama in Radu Jude's *Scarred Hearts*,” *Transilvania*, no. 8 (2022): 1-10.
3. Marshal Ion Antonescu was head of the Romanian government during World War II, after King Carol II gave him dictatorial powers. He is held responsible for massive deportations of Jews (over 150,000 according to the most conservative estimates), Roma (tens of thousands), communists, anti-fascist fighters, and members of religious sects, many of whom died of hunger, cold or epidemic diseases. He is also held responsible for ethnic massacres—among them the Iași pogrom and the Odessa massacre—and not lastly for the Romanian army assisting the German ally in invading the Soviet Union as far as Stalingrad. In May 1946, two years after Romania had changed sides, he was prosecuted and executed following a political trial; according to historian Dennis Deletant, any Western Allied court would have found him similarly guilty for the same war crimes. Under communism, Antonescu was initially held accountable, alongside Nazi Germany, Romanian fascists and bourgeois capitalists, for dragging Romania into an imperialist anti-Soviet war, supposedly against the will of the people. However, his ethnic crimes were referred to elusively or not at all in the official historiography. At the beginning of Ceaușescu's rule, “[c]ontemporary Romanian historiography assumed a vision of preordained history which portrayed the Socialist Republic of Romania as the natural continuation of the pre-war national unitary state, and in this context the Iron Guard and Antonescu were, broadly speaking, seen as ‘aberrations’ from the natural course of Romanian history.” Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, 1940-1944* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 264. Also see Comisia Internațională pentru Studiarea Holocaustului în România, *Raport final* [International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania: *Final Report*] (Iași: Polirom, 2005); Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies Under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008). Nevertheless, in the mid-1960s, when Ceaușescu started to voice claims that Bessarabia, a former Romanian territory, should justly pertain to Romania (Deletant, 266), Antonescu's war record—more precisely his occupation of Bessarabia and Bukovina—was partly rehabilitated. Again, ethnic crimes were either overlooked or the responsibility for them was outsourced. After 1990, Antonescu became a popular figure as an anti-communist war hero and found no few advocates among professional historians, while Romania's entering war as an ally of Nazi Germany was easily accepted by many as having been dictated by the perfectly natural and justified fear of Soviet communism. Meanwhile, a strong current of public and intellectual opinion started to ask for the canonization of a number of political prisoners who had died in communist prisons; many of those had actually been affiliated with far right movements before or during the war.
4. The most domestically successful two installments of the so-called “national cinematic epic,” *Mihai Viteazul* [*Michael the Brave*] (1970) and *Dacii* [*The Dacians*] (1967), were both directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu; *The Dacians* was his first feature. (For an introduction to the “national cinematic epic”—a cycle of historical spectacles from the state socialist era, most of them dealing with either mythic Thracian tribes or medieval warrior-statesmen—see Onoriu Colăcel, *The Romanian Cinema of Nationalism: Historical Films as Propaganda and Spectacle* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018). During the Ceaușescu era, Nicolaescu also made war films, gangster films, boxing films, swashbucklers and comedies, establishing himself as Romanian cinema's foremost genre specialist. He cast himself in increasingly prominent parts, and his narcissistic self-staging in heroic postures magnified his legend. Some of his films were also hugely popular in countries such as post-Maoist China and 1980s



Iran. On the occasion of Nicolaescu's death in 2013, London-based Iranian writer and filmmaker Ehsan Khoshbakht penned a moving reminiscence of growing up during the Iran-Iraq War—when all “the Western countries were backing Saddam Hussein” and isolating Iran—, watching Nicolaescu as Inspector Moldovan in a Romanian action trilogy set in the days of the Iron Guard: Khoshbakht adds that Nicolae Ceaușescu, who visited Iran in June 1989 for Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral, was introduced to him as “the president of Inspector Moldovan's country.” Ceaușescu would return to Iran in December 1989, just a few days before being deposed and executed. See Ehsan Khoshbakht, “The Ceaușescu Era's Last Action Hero,” January 4, 2013, <https://notesoncinematograph.blogspot.com/2013/01/Nicolaescu.html>, last accessed on July 24, 2022. In December 1989, when Ceaușescu's downfall could be watched on TV, Nicolaescu himself could be seen among the revolutionaries who had taken the headquarters of the national television by storm. Denounced by some as a Ceaușescu propagandist who was belatedly attempting to jump ship and pass himself off as an opponent of the dictator, he nevertheless transitioned successfully to post-communism. His louche mystique additionally burnished by persistent rumors of secret service connections and counting among the few who knew what had ‘truly’ happened behind the scenes of Ceaușescu's downfall, he became a senator in 1990, serving almost continuously until the end of his life. He also continued to make films, and in some of them he continued to hymn past eras of supposed Romanian greatness in the Ceaușescu-approved style of “the national cinematic epic”: the Antonescu biopic *The Mirror*, but also *Triunghiul mortii* [*The Death Triangle*] (about Romanian battlefield heroism in World War I) and *Carol I* (about the modernizing first king of Romania). Of course, a film glorifying Romanian monarchy (with Nicolaescu himself playing the monarch) would never have been approved under Ceaușescu's communist regime. Nor would *The Mirror*—with its anti-communism and its pro-Hitler sentiment—have passed muster before 1990. Still, it is far from unfair to say that, with films like these, “the national cinematic epic” survived, in mutated form, into the 1990s and 2000s: anti-communism may have replaced what was officially called the communist regime, but the brand of nationalism, the admiration for strong leaders and military virtues, stayed very much the same.

5. “In the early 2000s, the young democratic state made known its wish to join NATO and form partnerships with former Allies in Western Europe and the USA. When in 2001 then Romanian president Ion Iliescu, attending a commemoration of the Jewish victims of the pogrom of Iași, 28–30 June 1941, declared that ‘no matter what we may think, international public opinion considers Antonescu to have been a war criminal’, international pressure mounted and the government was advised that in order to join NATO, it must face its past [...] In response to international pressure, in October 2003, president Iliescu convened a Holocaust commission, headed by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel and Jewish Romanian historian Jean Ancel, to investigate and to develop an expert account of Romania's roles and responsibilities in World War II. In 2004, the Commission published a report on the crimes perpetrated by the Romanian state independent of Nazi Germany, crimes which became known as the Romanian Holocaust. It concluded that between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews and over 11,000 Romani people were murdered or died because of the deliberate ethnic cleansing policies implemented by Romanian civilian and military authorities.” Diana I. Popescu, “Staging Encounters with Estranged Pasts: Radu Jude's *The Dead Nation* and the Cinematic Face of Public Memory of the Holocaust in Present-Day Romania,” *Humanities* 7, no. 2 (2018), <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/7/2/40/htm#B34-humanities-07-00040>, last accessed on July 24, 2022.
6. Florin Iepan's *Odessa* focuses, in fact, on the difficulties faced by the filmmaker in his attempts to raise awareness of the massacre. Alexandru Solomon has quoted Iepan's description of the film as the “making of” of this awareness campaign. Alexandru Solomon, *Reprezentări ale memoriei în filmul documentar* (Iași: Polirom, 2016), 153. Diana I. Popescu notes that the film “captures the disbelief and indifference of ordinary Romanians at the news that ‘after Germany, Romanian people killed the largest number of Jews’, and the reluctance of former president Emil Constantinescu, and of King Mihai of Romania to speak about this topic.” Diana I. Popescu, “Staging Encounters with Estranged Pasts.” Also interviewing director Sergiu Nicolaescu, Iepan confronts him with the fact that his Antonescu biopic *The Mirror* does not include a single mention of the word “Jew.”
7. For a general discussion of the New Romanian Cinema, see Andrei Gorzo and Veronica Lazăr, “A Slight Unease About Capitalism: Radu Jude's *The Happiest Girl in the World* and the New Romanian Cinema,” *Transilvania*, no. 4 (2022): 1–14.
8. As Diana I. Popescu recalls, “[t]hese archival sources were retrieved with great difficulty from the film collections stored at the National Film Archives. Jude was refused access to the sound collections of the National Radio Archives which remain largely inaccessible to the wider public.” (Diana I. Popescu, “Staging Encounters with Estranged Pasts”) Popescu's article also documents the reactions of a number of Romanian viewers.
9. Emil Dorian, *The Quality of Witness: A Romanian Diary 1937–1944*, translated from Romanian by Mara Soceanu Vamos (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1982).
10. As Eugene Reznik has written in *Time Magazine*, [t]ime has rendered these portraits virtual abstractions. Beyond the psychedelic swirls of their shrinking, peeling emulsion, next to nothing is known about the subjects of the photographs, and very little about the photographer who made them. The greater part of their allure comes not from the information revealed, but from what is obscured and denied to the viewer. Eugene Reznik, “Romanian Ghosts: The Race to Save a Hauntingly Beautiful Photo Archive,” *Time Magazine*, February 4, 2014, <https://time.com/3398839/romanian-ghosts-the-race-to-save-a->

- hauntingly-beautiful-photo-archive/, last accessed on November 23, 2022.
11. Ágnes Pethő, "The Exquisite Corpse of History. Radu Jude and the Intermedial Collage," *Acta Univ. Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies* 21 (2022): 51.
 12. See, for example, Jude's 2019 list of 10 favourite films, published on the Spanish-language cinephile website *Con los ojos abiertos* with the title "El canon de Radu Jude": <http://www.conlosojosabiertos.com/canon-radu-jude/>, published on August 20, 2019, last accessed on July 24, 2022.
 13. Reviewing Jude's 2021 *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn*, American critic Jonathan Rosenbaum detects in it a remnant of this provincial exceptionalism: "[A]t times [Jude is] discussing social problems that are shared around the globe as if they were specifically or even exclusively Romanian." Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Dangerous Sex and Scattered Focus, Fifty Years Apart: WR: *Mysteries of the Organism* and *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn*," *Jonathan Rosenbaum blog*, June 11, 2022, <https://jonathanrosenbaum.net/2022/06/dangerous-sex-and-scattered-focusfifty-years-apart-wr-mysteries-of-the-organism-and-bad-luck-banging-or-loony-porn/>, last accessed on July 16, 2022.
 14. It is worth reflecting on the use of human faces in *The Dead Nation* in light of the following story, told by Jude himself in his more recent *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn*: "When Pasolini made his *Gospel According to St. Matthew*, he declared that he had cast the roles of priests and pharisees with people who looked to him like 'fascist morons'. In fact, those extras belonged to the Communist Party or to workers' unions."
 15. Interview with Marina Caitlin Watts for the website of the Hamptons International Film Festival, September 21, 2017, <https://hamptonsfilmfest.org/features/qa-radu-jude-the-dead-nation/>, last accessed on July 25, 2022.
 16. Robert Lumley, *Entering the Frame: Cinema and History in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2011), 85-94.
 17. "El canon de Radu Jude," *Con los ojos abiertos*.
 18. See, for example, "Radu Jude Introduces His Film *Uppercase Print*," *MUBI*, February 17, 2021, <https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/radu-jude-introduces-his-film-uppercase-print>, last accessed on July 25, 2022.
 19. "Radu Jude," British Film Institute website, <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/sightandsoundpoll2012/voter/1135>, last accessed on July 25, 2021.
 20. "Although these are not home movies, they trigger a home movie kind of spectatorship, as each frame recalls a whole world outside that frame (including one's own personal lives) that people knew so well." Pethő, "The Exquisite Corpse of History," 69.
 21. Christian Ferencz-Flatz, "Despre *Țipografic majuscul*," *Vatra*, no. 3-4 (2020), <https://revistavatra.org/2020/04/04/christian-ferencz-flatz-despre-tipografic-majuscul/>, posted on April 4, 2020, last accessed on July 25, 2022.
 22. Pethő, "The Exquisite Corpse of History," 72.
 23. Director's statement included in *Uppercase Print* press kit on Big World Pictures, http://www.bigworldpictures.org/films/uppercaseprint/UppercasePrint_presskit.pdf, last accessed on July 25, 2022.
 24. André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. I, translated from French by Hugh Gray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 25-26.
 25. For an extended discussion of *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu*, see Andrei Gorzo, "History Moving, Reshaping the Landscape: The Representation of Historical Processes in *Carlos* and *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu*," *Bright Light Film Journal*, August 23, 2021, <https://brightlightfilm.com/history-moving-reshaping-the-landscape-the-representation-of-historical-processes-in-carlos-and-the-autobiography-of-nicolae-ceausescu/#.Yt6uBS2Q3ow>, last accessed on November 8, 2022.
 26. Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *A Susan Sontag Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 99.
 27. Călin Peter Netzer's 2013 *Child's Pose* counts among the few major exceptions: it deploys a somewhat different realist aesthetic, indebted to the Dogme films, which combines hand-held shooting with fast cutting.
 28. Raluca Durbacă provides an in-depth analysis of *The Mirror*'s politics in Raluca Durbacă, "Naționalism și negaționism în cinemaul românesc. Strategii discursive pre- și post-decembriste" ["Nationalism and Negationism in Romanian Cinema: Discursive Strategies Before and After the December 1989 Regime Change"], in *Filmul tranziției. Contribuții la interpretarea cinemaului românesc "nouăzecist"*, eds. Andrei Gorzo and Andrei State (Cluj-Napoca: Tact, 2017), 145-162. Durbacă's careful analysis confirms the lapidary verdict voiced by Radu Jude's heroine in "*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*."
 29. Pethő, "The Exquisite Corpse of History," 65.
 30. Mónika Dánél, "Embodied Archival Images—Strategies of Re-collection and Re-enactment in Radu Jude's Films," paper presented at the NECS 2022 Conference, Bucharest, June 2022.
 31. For an extended discussion of "*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*" see Veronica Lazăr and Andrei Gorzo, "An updated political modernism: Radu Jude's '*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*,'" *Close Up* 3, no. 1-2 (2019): 17-18.
 32. André Bazin, "Death Every Afternoon" [1951], translated from the French by Mark A. Cohen, in *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, ed. Ivone Margulies (Duke University Press, 2003), 27-31.
 33. Pethő, "The Exquisite Corpse of History," 43.



34. As Anastasia Eleftheriou notes, it took Cioflâncă ten years to compile this documentary material from archives, institutions and other sources from all over the world. Anastasia Eleftheriou, "Documentation and Imagination: The Role of Montage in Radu Jude's *The Exit of the Trains* [Ieșirea trenurilor din gară, 2020]," *East European Film Bulletin* 112, February (2021), <https://eefb.org/perspectives/the-role-of-montage-in-radu-judes-the-exit-of-the-trains-iesirea-trenurilor-din-gara-2020/>, last accessed on May 25, 2021.
35. "This is a film about identification as opposed to the dehumanizing facelessness of genocide." Pethő, "The Exquisite Corpse of History," 62.
36. Interviewed by Flavia Dima, Adrian Cioflâncă explained that the film attempts to change "the status of the gaze": "Where the Holocaust is concerned, the gaze itself has a bad reputation: as Susan Sontag and others have suggested, gazing upon it means being passive, a voyeur, even an accomplice. On the other hand—and this is often forgotten—Sontag herself has retracted that criticism; see *Regarding the Pain of Others*, where she revisits her argument from *On Photography*, admitting that the viewer is not the prisoner of the photographer's conceptual apparatus, doomed to look at the scene through the murderer's eyes. Gazing can be a form of patience, an attempt at reparation. That's what we propose in our film." Adrian Cioflâncă, "One World Romania 2020. Adrian Cioflâncă, despre *Ieșirea trenurilor din gară*," interview by Flavia Dima, *Films in Frame*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.filmsinframe.com/ro/banner-featured-homepage/interviu-adrian-cioflanca/>, last accessed on January 6, 2021. It is also worth noting that Jude's director statement on the film refers to art historian Georges Didi-Huberman. As Anastasia Eleftheriou has commented, Didi-Huberman is "at the forefront of representability debates, having written a whole book to show that four photographs of Auschwitz taken in August 1944 (that are the basis for *Son of Saul*) are sufficient to reconstruct and represent the Holocaust, arguing against people like Claude Lanzmann who believe that the Holocaust is best remembered in forms where it is not visually reproduced. According to Didi-Huberman, on the other hand, we must say that Auschwitz, precisely because forgetting it was systematically inscribed into the event itself, 'is only imaginable.'" Anastasia Eleftheriou, "Documentation and Imagination: The Role of Montage in Radu Jude's *The Exit of the Trains*."
37. Zsolt Gyenge, "Curating Archives on Screen. Radu Jude's and Sergei Loznitsa's Archival Documentaries," paper presented at the NECS 2022 Conference, Bucharest, June 2022.
38. Mónika Dánél, "Embodied Archival Images."
39. For example, in an interview with Ionuț Mareș, "Simt nevoia de cât mai multe reacții negative, violente, față de filme" ["I Feel the Need for Violently Negative Responses to My Movies, as Many of Them as Possible"], *Ziarul Metropolis*, March 5, 2021, <https://www.ziarulmetropolis.ro/radu-jude-simt-nevoia-de-cat-mai-multe-reactii-negative-violente-fata-de-filme/>, last accessed on July 27, 2022.
40. Sergei Eisenstein, "Constanța. Whither *The Battleship Potemkin*." See S. M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works, Volume 1, Writings, 1922-1934*, edited and translated by Richard Taylor (London and Bloomington: BFI Publishing / Indiana University Press, 1988), 67.
41. Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 156-157.

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