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The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal

Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain

MARTOR

— 24 / 2019 —

Politics of Memory

People and Archives

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Contents • Sommaire

POLITICS OF MEMORY: THE COLLECTING, STORAGE, OWNERSHIP AND SELECTIVE DISCLOSURE OF ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

(EN) Corina IOSIF, Bogdan IANCU
Introduction. Inside and Outside the Archive: the Uses of Archives and Archival Practice 7

I. In the Beginning Was the Archive: Storing as Production of Memory

(FR) Mădălina VÂRTEJANU-JOUBERT
Débuts de la photographie, débuts de l'archive photographique :
Bonfils au Harvard Semitic Museum 13

(EN) Viviana IACOB
Looking for Bauh: Negatives and Prints in the Romanian Peasant Museum Image Archive 27

(EN) Alexandru IORGA
Archives as Ruins: Means of Understanding the Future in an Era of Wrecks 43

II. Archives: the Purposes of Remembering, the Purposes of Forgetting

(EN) Maria CRISTACHE
The "Socialist Modernism" Platform: Online Archives and Knowledge Production in Central and Eastern Europe 57

(EN) Inis SHKRELI
Communist Politics of Archives: The Case of the Ethnomusicology Archive at the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana 69

(EN) Astrid CAMBOSE
"Whose Property Are My Letters?" Inside Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca's Archive 85

(EN) Raluca MATEOC
The Aliyah *of 1949: Unpublished Migration Requests of Jews from Romania as Vehicles of Memory* 97

III. People and the Never-Ending Archive

(EN) Claudia CÂMPEANU, Mara MĂRĂCINESCU
Sounding Out the Personal Archive 111

(EN) Iris ȘERBAN, Ioana POPESCU, Andra TARARA
The Little White/Black Book of the Ethnological Archive of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. 2009-2019 127

(EN) Rucsandra POP, Alexandru IORGA
Making the Documents Speak—A Creative Exploration of the Mihai Pop Fonds 151

https://biblioteca-digitala.ro

IV. The Archive as Artistic Language

(EN) Iosif KIRÁLY
When Document Becomes Art and Art Becomes Document. Several Art Projects Based on Photographic Collections or Archives 173

(EN) Szilárd MIKLÓS
The Passenger Retrospective of the Minerva Press Photo Archive: Publishing of a Research Infrastructure 183

V. Fieldnotes and Dialogues

(EN) Ionuț MAREȘ
"Now Is the Time to Include the Films Produced by the Alexandru Sahia Documentary Studio in Our Conversations About the Communist Past." An Interview with Adina Brădeanu *194*

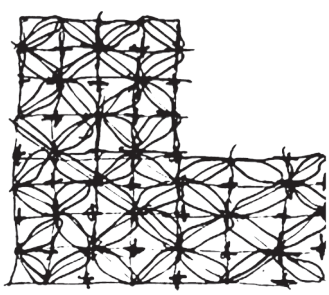
(EN) Călina BÂRZU
Reclaiming the Visual Archive of the Furniture Factory in Iași 203

VI. Book Reviews

(EN) Alexandra Urdea, *From Storeroom to Stage: Romanian Attire and the Politics of Folklore*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Publishers, 2018, 210 p.
(reviewed by Călin COTOI) 214

(EN) Inge Daniels, *What Are Exhibitions For? An Anthropological Approach*, London and Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, 256 p.
(reviewed by Gabriela NICOLESCU) 216

(EN) *Sahia Vintage 5: Ephemeral Film—An Argument for a More Inclusive Film History*
(reviewed by Andra PETRESCU) 221



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Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

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Introduction. Inside and Outside the Archive: the Uses of Archives and Archival Practice

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The ensemble of texts to be found between the covers of this issue of *Martor*, whose subject is archives, might at first sight seem to be a revisiting of investigations that already have a history, albeit a relatively recent one. It is needless to explain this in great detail, since it is part of our daily experience, but we may just say that postmodernity has brought about major changes in regard to the relationship between remembering and forgetting, the act of fixing things in one's memory and the act of recalling these things. Thus archives are now more than ever a *lieu de mémoire*, a concept whose re-evaluation and re-working have come to occupy the foreground of current debates regarding memories, history, power, politics and ethics.

The work of archives, which originates in the relationship between recalling and forgetting, between individual and collective remembering, is today giving a new form to the relationship between contemporary societies and their past. "Memory has been wholly absorbed by its meticulous reconstitution. Its new vocation is to record; delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing them there, as a snake sheds its skin," Pierre Nora (1989: 13) wrote. The growing importance of archives in the dynamic functioning of today's archive-dependent societies makes them the guardian and legitimising court of collective memory.

According to the exhaustive definition given by Blouin and Roseberg, the contemporary archive is:

> a complex of structures, processes, and epistemologies situated at a critical point of intersection between scholarship, cultural practices, politics, and technologies. As sites of documentary preservation rooted in various national and social contexts, archives help define for individuals, communities, and states what is both knowable and known about their pasts. As places of uncovering, archives help create and re-create social memory. By assigning the prerogatives of record keeper to the archivist, whose acquisition policies, finding aids, and various institutionalized predilections mediate between scholarship and information, archives produce knowledge, legitimize political systems, and construct identities. In the broadest sense, archives thus embody artefacts of culture that endure as signifiers of who we are and why (Blouin and Roseberg 2006: 1).

The idea for this issue of the Journal sprang from the feeling of unease that is already a recurrent feature of the relationship between individual and archive, a feeling complained of by researchers in Eastern Europe working with various kinds of archives both in existence and in the process of being established. This feeling of unease is in the first place methodological in nature and linked to the defining of archived documents and to their political significance, but ultimately has to do with the meaning the documents yield when interrogated. There is, however, also an unease that stems from the diversity of the practices associated with archives and archiving, practices connected with access to memory; in Eastern Europe, this access is still the object of very strong indirect political interest. The phenomenon is made more intense by the fact that since the fall of communism the importance of archives as a "place of memory" has come to greatly outweigh their content: "The

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archive as a deliberate project is based on the recognition that all documentation is a form of intervention and, thus, that documentation does not simply precede intervention, but is its first step. Since all archives are collections of documents (whether graphic, artifactual or recorded in other forms), this means that the archive is always a meta-intervention" (Appadurai 2003: "Aspiration and Memory Gap," para. 2).

In recent decades, a number of cases involving archives in Romania have attracted public attention in various ways and given rise to lively debate. The *Securitate* archive was up to a point the resource drawn on by projects inherently designed to recall significant episodes in the lives of individuals who suffered as a result of the activities of this now-defunct political police and so provide them with a measure of moral cleansing within the process of transitional justice. On the other hand, as Stan (2002: 52) highlights: "Romania's secret police files are used more to fight current political battles than to expiate the sins of the communist regime." More recently, this archive has also begun to be quarried as a source for the study of practices used in the production of documents; we are referring here especially to two books, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police* (2014) and *Viața mea ca spioană* [My Life as a Spy] (2018) by the American anthropologist Katherine Verdery. After reading her own surveillance file, she was in a position to make, through this exercise in historical ethnography, an essential contribution to the understanding of social relationships woven around people under surveillance, of the effects of the logic of suspicion during the Cold War, and of the institutional and professional practices of the Securitate. A second noteworthy case is that of the archive of the Alexandru Sahia Cinematographic Studio. The films produced here are now in the National Film Archive, and some of them have come to the attention of the researcher Adina Brădeanu, who since 2014 has been curating a series of thematic DVDs, SAHIA VINTAGE, released by One World Romania; the fifth in the series was released in 2018.

The written materials (plans for stage sets and cut-outs, film scripts, plans for film production, records of state subvention and payrolls etc., dating from 1950 until the 1990s) were discovered in 2016 in the basement of a building belonging to Sahia Film Limited, the successor institution that followed the privatisation of the Alexandru Sahia Cinematographic Studio. This happened in the course of a work party undertaken by representatives of the working group involved in the project to revitalise the National Film Archive and of the Ministry of Culture.[1]

Some of the articles in this issue are the fruits of a 2018 workshop that addressed issues concerned with collections and archives connected with the period of the communist regime—archives which were either opened or closed or came into existence after the fall of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe.

The workshop focused on the following topics: informal practices developed by non-institutional actors—akin to "forensic investigation" (Brădeanu 2007, para. 8)—to access a great range of types of archives and collections; methodologies for the reception, interrogation, processing / making use of and (re)interpreting of archived objects/documents; the role of institutional actors who have shown interest in "vehicles of memory" (Confino 1997) and brought them out of the "biographical shadow" into which they had been consigned as a consequence of invisibility-targeted government policies or as a consequence of so-called historical accidents.

Two themes stood out from the discussions that took place at the close of this workshop. The first was the discrepancy between institutional policies and private initiatives with regard to the emergency storage of documents/information as a way of preserving recent memory (since archives would now seem to exist as the sole guardian of a recent history that is plural, heterogenous and dynamic). This memory has major sociological significance, but nothing currently hangs on it in political or institutional terms. As Iosif Király pertinently notes in this issue, the archives of various socialist organisations (institutions devoted to research, planning, production, food supply, medical care, the media) were lost or destroyed during the process of privatisation "due to the indifference and on occasion complicity of those involved in this process and also to the fact that these documents were not seen as potential sources of income" (see the present volume, p. 173).

The archives of state businesses and institutions of various kinds, together with the private archives of people who were important in public life during the communist regime, do not figure

1) It is no coincidence that this work party could take place during the period of the technocratic government, when the Ministry of Culture was headed by Corina Șuteu (2016-2017), an expert with a civil society background.

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as a priority for institutional policymakers, primarily because they are regarded as too voluminous for institutional storing and maintaining. However, the real reasons for this political indifference are more complex. They include a wish to escape from the residual burden of a traumatic past, a lack of the resources that would be needed to digitise records (written, visual, sound recordings) and make them available via the mass media, and also, in the context of Eastern Europe, the weakening of the ideological grip of the nation-state as the central political authority.

Individual investment in this process of putting together memories that are inaccessible and already encrypted into an archive-that-needs-to-be-born leads to the reproduction as a social practice of institutional behaviours (archiving) and raises complex legal and juridical issues in regard to the collecting, storing, holding and management of the archived material.

The second issue is that of the broadening and diversification (sometimes in ways that are unfamiliar) of methods of selecting, describing, archiving and then re-interrogating archived materials as a consequence of information technology. The effect of this advance on already established criteria for archiving is frequently to leave the responsibility for the putting-together of recent memory as archived memory in the hands of individual decision-makers; from the technological point of view it inevitably puts control of memory and forgetting at the mercy of the media (Hoskins 2016: 14). This is a phenomenon that has not only major socio-cultural implications, but also epistemological and not least methodological consequences (see Gilliland *et al.* 2017). The relationship (dynamic and emotional) with the archive, as Arlette Farge (1989) describes it—inexhaustible in the meanings it can generate—to which the researcher adapts—becomes the sociological reality of a generation for whom the production of archives is an imperious necessity. Archives (and databases, their analogue in the digital world) thus become a way in which contemporary social memory exists, in a context in which the instantaneous way we learn about events and processes reported by the media is driving the perception of the everyday in the direction of non-historicity.

The 24th issue of *Martor* (2019), *Politics of Memory*: *the Collecting, Storage, Ownership and Selective Disclosure of Archival Material,* crystallises the experience of the 2018 workshop. Following its established and well-known format, it opens with academic studies and articles that focus on the concept of archives and especially on the process of archiving as a contemporary social practice. These texts are as usual complemented by others dealing with museology and more broadly with the realm of art and exhibitions (in images and words). Field notes and dialogues offer still further perspectives on the question of archives, as do the three book reviews with which this issue of the journal ends.

The texts are arranged in six sections.

The first of these, entitled *In the Beginning Was the Archive: Storing as Production of Memory,* is made up of three studies. The first, by Mădălina Vâtejanu-Joubert, and the second, by Viviana Iacob, both discuss, but from different perspectives, the origins of image archives and the historical and cultural and equally the political and ideological implications of the establishing of such an archive. The third, by Alexandru Iorga, provides a theoretically and historically based benchmark definition of the concept of an archive, angled towards ethnographic archives and their importance for today.

The second section, *Archives: the Purposes of Remembering, the Purposes of Forgetting,* contains four texts that look at the process by which archived memory is constructed. The first, by Maria Cristache, opens up the subject from the perspective of establishing a digital archive in connection with the production of knowledge (here with reference to the history of Central and Eastern Europe) by looking at visual representations of modernist architecture. The second, by Inis Skhreli, concentrates on strategies for preserving memory through archiving in connection with identity politics, political power and the institutional structures linked to this in Albania. The remaining texts, one by Astrid Cambose and the other by Raluca Mateoc, while being concerned with different types of archive documents (correspondence, and records of emigration), are linked by their theme, which is a discussion of the relation between preserving, recalling and forgetting in the establishing of archives and by implication in the production of history.

The third section, *People and the Never-Ending Archive*, comprises three studies by, respectively, Claudia Câmpeanu and Mara Mărăcinescu; Iris Şerban, Ioana Popescu and

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Andra Tarara; and Rucsandra Pop and Alexandru Iorga. Though written from different thematic viewpoints, all of these texts open up the subject of moving beyond the boundaries of the archive as a place of memory/*lieu de mémoire* that has a pre-defined structure and use. At the interface between the individual-human experience and art, or through a reinterpretation of our understanding of the storing and organising of objects to be archived, the archiving process thus gains the flexibility to transgress its historical and institutional use and become a part of the modern era as a multivalent socio-cultural practice.

The fourth section, *The Archive as Artistic Language*, addresses the theory of museums by presenting two texts, the first by Iosif Király and the second by Miklós Szilárd, that dialogue with each other on the subject of possible relationships between art and document. Both are accompanied by visual (photographic) presentations that complement them and explore the world of the "thing with suitable images" from an angle that is artistic but intersects with the anthropology of the visual. This section is thus a presentation, in artistic-visual and also narrative form, of the concept of an archive.

Fieldnotes and Dialogues, as the title suggests, is the section devoted to interviews, dialogues and fieldnotes. It consists of two texts: a transcript of Ionuț Mareș interviewing Adina Brădeanu about the documents held in the Sahia Romania national film archives, and a text by Călina Bârzu entitled *Reclaiming the Visual Archive of the Furniture Factory in Iași.* Both interview and fieldnotes discuss the issue of the abandoning of archives—in fact of memory—and the significance of such an abandoning.

Finally, the sixth section, *Book Reviews*, is a set of three reviews, two of books and one of a collection of CDs; all three texts describe the value of archives and museums and address issues related to them. The first book reviewed, *From Storeroom to Stage: Romanian Attire and the Politics of Folklore* (Alexandra Urdea, 2018) explores the role that material culture plays in the production of value and meaning by examining how folk objects (belonging to an ethnographic collection in London) are mobilized in national ideologies, transmissions of personal and family memory, museological discourses, and artistic acts. The second book, *What are Exhibitions for? An Anthropological Approach* (Inge Daniels, 2019) questions what might happen if people and objects were freed from the regulations currently associated with going to an exhibition.

The review by Andra Petrescu of the fifth DVD in the series *Sahia Vintage 5: Ephemeral Film* regards it as a clear statement in favour of investigating the studio's most *marginal* productions, a selection of ten "utilitarian films" from the 1960s-80s.

All three reviews contribute to the outlining of a historical and theoretical context for the broader topic of debate addressed in this issue of *MARTOR*: access to archives as a way of defining the archive as a place of memory.

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I. In the Beginning Was the Archive: Storing as Production of Memory

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Débuts de la photographie, débuts de l'archive photographique : Bonfils au Harvard Semitic Museum[1]

The Beginnings of Photography, the Beginnings of the Photography Archive: Bonfils at the Harvard Semitic Museum

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ABSTRACT

The article highlights the creation of the Maison Bonfils photographic collection and its transformation into a museum archive by the Harvard Semitic Museum. On the one hand, it examines the archiving of reality through photographic practice and analyses the epistemological premises of documentary photography applied to the object "The Holy Land." On the other hand, it describes the transformation of the Bonfils collection into a corpus and its reception by the scientific community of the Ancient Near East. In both cases, we observe the implementation of a literal conception: on the one hand, the geographical territory is interpreted as the perfect equivalent of the biblical text and, on the other hand, the photographs of this territory are used as an immediate and totally transparent document of the historical reality of the 19th century.

KEYWORDS

Bonfils, Harvard Semitic Museum, Palestine in the 19th century, ancient photography, biblical archaeology.

Introduction

Dès son invention et jusque dans les années 1950, la photographie est perçue non pas comme une possible expression artistique mais comme une technique de production documentaire : c'est la *photographie-document* qui prévaut. Elle fait partie de et accompagne la modernité, ce processus historique qui bouleverse l'Occident au XIXe siècle et qui se manifeste, entre autres, dans le rejet du subjectivisme et la naissance du positivisme, dans la valorisation de la machine aux dépens de l'homme, dans la dilatation enfin, d'un réel qui demande à être fragmenté, ordonné et archivé.

Dans ce contexte général, les domaines d'application de la photographie sont essentiellement les sciences et parmi elles, la discipline naissante de l'archéologie. Initialement science des monuments, l'archéologie devient progressivement celle des vestiges enfouis que tout un procédé bien maîtrisé fait ressortir des entrailles de la terre, catalogue et transporte dans un ailleurs bien éloigné : celui de l'institution muséale occidentale. L'archéologie fixe comme premiers centres d'intérêt l'Orient et notamment l'Egypte et la Terre Sainte, qui deviennent ce faisant des destinations photographiques privilégiées. Précisons d'emblée que les visées épistémologiques sont différentes pour l'Egypte et pour la Palestine-Syrie. Tandis que la première fascine par son exotisme, la seconde attire par le désir de faire correspondre ce que la mémoire a retenu avec le réel géographique[2]. L'Orient comme entité géographique nourrissant un imaginaire des origines formatrices, se trouve également au centre d'une nouvelle pratique : celle des jeunes gens occidentaux qui se doivent de

1) Nous remercions vivement pour leur aide documentaire et conseils bibliographiques, Joanne Bloom et Andras Reidlmayer, conservateurs à la Harvard Fine Arts Library – Special Collections Department, où sont déposées actuellement les collections photographiques du Harvard Semitic Museum. Une première version de cet article a fait l'objet d'une intervention dans le cadre du Scholars Seminar, Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Université Brandeis, 15 novembre 2013 ; nous remercions vivement Ilan Troen pour l'invitation et l'opportunité offerte de présenter ces recherches.

2) Nous n'aborderons pas ici la manière dont ces photographies participent au processus de *reconstitution* de la topographie de la Terre Sainte. L'ouvrage classique à ce sujet demeure celui de Maurice Halbwachs (1941 ; à consulter l'édition 2008, préparée par Marie Jaisson avec les contributions de Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Jean-Pierre Clero, Sarah Gensburger et Éric Brian).

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parcourir le Grand Tour dont les étapes incontournables sont la Grèce, le Levant, l'Egypte et, plus rarement, l'Irak. Le tourisme se développe ainsi de plus en plus, jusqu'à prendre les proportions d'un phéno-mène de masse lequel exige des souvenirs et, par conséquent, images photographiques et cartes postales. L'archéologie et le tourisme sont les deux principaux moteurs d'une très riche production photographique portant sur le Moyen Orient. Nissan Perez (1988) compte dans son dictionnaire biographique 200 photographes dont la moitié a pour origine la France, suivie de la Grande Bretagne, et ceci loin devant les autres nationalités représentées. Mentionnons parmi les pionniers, Maxime Du Camp (1852)[3] et ses explorations égyptiennes ainsi qu'Auguste Salzmann (1856)[4] et ses captures de Jérusalem. Sociologiquement parlant, la plupart des photographes ne réside donc pas au Moyen Orient ; ils sont chrétiens, catholiques, arméniens ou convertis, comme ce fut le cas de Mandel Diness[5], premier photographe s'étant établi à Jérusalem et qui était un juif passé au protestantisme. Ce n'est que dans une deuxième phase que des photographes locaux fondent leurs studios, comme par exemple le studio Abdullah Frères ou encore celui de Pascal Sébah, à Istanbul. Cette dichotomie peut être néanmoins relativisée car, comme le montre Irini Apostolou (2013), les photographes étrangers employaient et collaboraient de façon systématique avec du personnel recruté sur place. Félix Bonfils emploie, selon toute vraisemblance, « deux ouvriers photographiques de nationalité turque » (Carney 1982 : 8), mais aussi l'opérateur Qayssar Hakim (Fani 2005 : 292) et le photographe local Georges Sabounji (Jurji ou Girgis Sabunji), auteur de nombreux clichés effectués en Egypte et en Palestine (Carney 1982 : 25-26). Compte tenu de ces agentivités imbriquées, l'interprétation de cette production photographique comme reflétant un imaginaire étranger, en occurrence occidental, souvent qualifié de manière péjorative d'orientaliste, doit être nuancée.

3) Voir Aubenas et Lacarrière (2001).

4) Voir Brossard-Gabastou (2013).

5) Voir Rosovsky et Wahrman (1993).

J'ai commencé, personnellement, à m'intéresser aux collections de la Maison Bonfils après ma visite au Harvard Semitic Museum en 2011. Mon attention a été attirée par la présence de certaines de ces images parmi les documents illustrant l'exposition permanente « Maisons de l'Israël antique ». Puis, à la librairie du Musée, j'ai pu acheter l'inventaire de la collection de photographies de Bonfils détenue par le Harvard Semitic Museum et me rendre compte de la « relation spéciale » que le Musée entretenait avec cette collection.

Dès lors, un double questionnement vient à l'esprit : d'une part, il s'agit de comprendre quel fut le sens de cette production photographique dans son contexte d'origine et, d'autre part, quelle mutation de sens entraîne son archivage et sa mise à contribution dans le cadre de l'historiographie contemporaine. Pour lui trouver des éléments de réponse, l'enquête doit suivre un double fil : explorer le *contexte originel* de production des images photographiques – c'est-à-dire la seconde moitié et la fin du XIX^{e} siècle – ainsi que le contexte de leur exégèse. Ce deuxième aspect est important pour l'historien dont l'intérêt principal est de découvrir les mécanismes et les modalités de la mémoire collective ainsi que l'implication des disciplines universitaires dans la réception publique du travail sur le passé.

Dans un tel contexte, la place et le rôle joués par la Maison Bonfils peuvent être considérés comme une métonymie de la place et du rôle attribués à la photographie depuis ses débuts jusqu'au milieu du XX^{e} siècle. Ses deux principaux domaines d'application étaient le tourisme et la science. Dans la situation décrite ci-dessus, ces deux domaines convergent puisque la photographie touristique de Bonfils a été récupérée par le Harvard Semitic Museum, soigneusement achetée, oubliée pour un temps et redécouverte dans les années 1970 par les étonnants détours de l'histoire politique.

Il est donc intéressant d'observer comment se croisent deux pratiques d'archivage :

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l'archivage de la réalité à travers le cliché photographique et l'archivage de ces mêmes clichés à travers l'institution muséale. Les informations ne sont pas nombreuses en ce qui concerne les deux institutions dont il est question ici : la Maison Bonfils et le Harvard Semitic Museum (HSM). Les archives papier de l'une ne sont pas parvenues jusqu'à nous et les informations retraçant l'acquisition par HSM de ce corpus sont extrêmement sommaires. Nous sommes donc réduits à des conjectures formulées à partir du contexte épistémologique général et des pratiques connues par ailleurs.

La création de la Maison Bonfils

La Maison Bonfils, atelier photographique fondé en 1867 à Beyrouth, est considérée à l'époque comme la meilleure référence en matière de prise d'images et de diffusion internationale de ces « morceaux de réalité » que sont les souvenirs de la Terre Sainte ou de l'Orient en général, succédanés de voyage pour ceux des Européens que la distance et la fatigue dissuaderaient. Sa production est surtout à visée commerciale et cherche à satisfaire les goûts les plus larges, contribuant ainsi à l'internationalisation de la culture visuelle et de l'imaginaire de la Terre Sainte. Les cartes postales de la Maison Bonfils sont distribuées et achetées partout en Europe ainsi qu'aux Etats Unis : ainsi, les mêmes prises de vue, ayant le même programme iconographique, font l'objet d'une consommation de masse qu'on peut désigner, avec toutes les précautions nécessaires pour l'époque, comme globale (Renié 2007).

Le fondateur, Félix Bonfils, né en 1831 dans le sud de la France, vit à Alès où il exerce la profession de relieur et d'imprimeur. En 1860 il participe à l'expédition du général Beaufort d'Hautpoul au Liban dont il garde le meilleur souvenir. Il commence à apprendre la photographie à son retour du Proche-Orient et produit, dans son commerce provençal, des héliogravures, procédé qu'il avait appris auprès d'Abel Niepce de Saint Victor. De son mariage avec Marie-Lydie Cabanis naîtront une fille, Félicité-Sophie, en 1858, et un fils, Paul Félix Adrien, en 1861. Touché par la coqueluche, Adrien fait avec sa mère un premier voyage au Liban, région du monde dont le climat était considéré à l'époque plus favorable à la guérison de cette maladie. C'est à la suite de ce voyage que la famille prend la décision de s'installer en Orient et de fonder un studio photographique, d'abord à Beyrouth, puis au Caire et à Alexandrie, le tout étant complété par la distribution de la marchandise outre Atlantique grâce à une agence spécialisée de New York. Sa collection de tirages compte, dans les années 1870, environ 15000 tirages albuminés, 9000 vues stéréoscopiques et 590 négatifs[6]. Les négatifs sont réalisés sur des plaques de verre recouvertes d'une solution de collodion rendue sensible par le nitrate d'argent. Ces plaques sont préparées sur les lieux mêmes de la prise de vue, dans des tentes qui accompagnent l'expédition photographique, ce qu'atteste un certain nombre de clichés. Elles sont utilisées et développées sur le champ, les tirages ayant besoin de la lumière naturelle étant remis à plus tard : le papier albuminé imprégné d'une solution de sel d'argent est étalé sur la plaque de verre puis exposé aux rayons du soleil.

Que savons-nous de sa production[7] ? Félix Bonfils publie en 1872 chez Ducher, à Paris, un album intitulé *Architecture antique. Égypte. Grèce. Asie Mineure. Album de photographies*. Quelques années plus tard, sa collection s'étoffe et son catalogue de l'année 1876 nous informe sur la manière dont il avait structuré sa collection, à savoir en cinq sections : Egypte, Palestine/Terre Sainte, Syrie, Constantinople et Grèce, Costumes, scènes de genre et types ethnographiques. En 1878, enfin, il produit une série en cinq volumes à l'occasion de l'Exposition universelle de Paris, volumes réunis sous le titre *Souvenirs d'Orient : album pittoresque des sites, villes*

6) Lettre adressée par Félix Bonfils à la Société Française de Photographique *(Bulletin de la Société Française de Photographie*, XVII, 1871 : 282).

7) Voir Carella 1979 : 26-33 ; Carney 1978 : 442-470 ; Thomas 1979 : 33-46 ; Sobieszek et Carney 1980.

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et ruines les plus remarquables. Les deux premiers portent sur l'Egypte et la Nubie, le troisième sur la Palestine, le quatrième sur la Syrie et la Côte d'Asie et le cinquième sur la Grèce et Constantinople. Cette série est publiée dans l'imprimerie de l'auteur, à Alès dans le Gard, chaque photographie étant accompagnée d'une « notice historique, archéologique et descriptive en regard de chaque planche ». Félix n'est pas l'unique maître d'œuvre de son atelier : non seulement sa femme, Lydie, est elle-même à l'origine de nombreux clichés, mais son fils Adrien ainsi que des photographes originaires du Gard comme Tancrède Dumas (1830-1905) et Jean-Baptiste Charlier (1822-1907) figurent également parmi les auteurs. Félix Bonfils laisse sa femme et son fils gérer les ateliers de Beyrouth et s'installe à Alès afin d'organiser la distribution internationale de ses photos, notamment grâce à la vente par correspondance.

Félix Bonfils meurt en 1885, mais l'entreprise qu'il a créée lui survit jusqu'à la veille de la seconde guerre mondiale. C'est d'abord Lydie et Adrien qui se partagent la direction jusqu'à ce que le fils décide de se tourner vers l'hôtellerie, laissant le studio à la charge de sa mère, plus exactement entre 1895 et 1909. Sous la direction de Lydie Bonfils, paraît un *Catalogue général des vues photographiques de l'Orient* (Beyrouth, 1907).

Adrien Bonfils nourrit le projet de publier un récit illustré des voyages de Saint Paul et collabore avec Frederick Gutenkunst de Philadelphie pour produire une série de photogravures. On lui attribue l'expérimentation d'un nouveau procédé de photochromie en collaboration avec une société suisse non identifiée.

En 1909, Abraham Guiragossian, photographe de studio installé à Jérusalem, devient associé et finit par acheter l'entreprise en 1918, à la mort de Lydie. Celui-ci publie également un *Catalogue général des vues photographiques de l'Orient* dont la date demeure inconnue. Le studio, qui a gardé la signature Bonfils jusqu'à la fin, ferme en 1938.

Le statut épistémologique de la phôtographie a ses débuts

Ces sommaires données bio-bibliographiques dont nous disposons au sujet de la Maison Bonfils laissent transparaître quelques caractéristiques intéressantes des idées photographiques de l'époque. Ses créations sont jugées parfois médiocres d'un point de vue esthétique, de cadrage et de composition. Ce n'est pourtant pas ces aspects qui nous importent ici, mais plutôt le statut épistémologique de la prise de vue et les raisons du choix du sujet et du format.

Le procédé de développement des négatifs à la lumière du soleil incarne à lui seul la principale critique faite à la photographie dès son invention : son incapacité à opérer des distinctions. Contrairement au dessin et à la peinture, arts auxquels elle fut comparée, la photographie *capte tout*. Le peintre ou le dessinateur *sacrifie* des choses afin de réaliser sa composition, le photographe n'a pas cette maîtrise, le vrai auteur étant non plus l'artiste mais le soleil. Quelques exemples de ces acerbes critiques nous sont rapportés par André Rouillé dans son ouvrage sur l'histoire de la photographie datant de 2005. Parmi ces critiques on peut mentionner Jules Janin qui, en 1839, écrit déjà :

> La plaque daguerrienne accueille, sans distinction aucune, la terre et le ciel, ou l'eau courante, la cathédrale qui se perd dans le nuage, ou bien la pierre, le pavé, le grain de sable imperceptible qui flotte à la surface ; toutes ces choses, grandes ou petites, qui sont égales devant le soleil se gravent à l'instant même dans cette espèce de chambre obscure qui conserve toutes les empreintes[8].

Deux décennies plus tard, le critique Gustave Planche, surnommé « Gustave le cruel » par ses contemporains, écrit à l'occasion du Salon de 1857 :

> Le soleil transcrit tout ce qu'il a touché ; il n'omet rien, ne sacrifie rien, alors que l'art

8) Jules Janin, « Le daguerréotype », *L'Artiste*, nov. 1838-avril 1839 (*apud* Rouillé 2005 : 66).

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1. Puits de la Samaritaine, ou de Jacob : Bonfils 350 – Sing.C. 146, par la courtoisie de la Harvard Library for Fine Arts, Special Collections.

> doit choisir ce qui lui convient et répudier ce qui ne lui convient pas. […] L'œuvre du soleil envisagée comme document est une chose excellente ; si l'on veut y voir l'équivalent de l'art le plus parfait, on se trompe de manière absolue[9].

Eugène Delacroix, dans son *Journal*, fait la réflexion suivante :

> L'infirmité de la photographie est paradoxalement sa trop grande perfection. A force de précision et de justesse, elle offusque et fausse la vue, elle menace l'heureuse impuissance de l'œil d'apercevoir les infinis détails[10].

Le régime de vérité de la photographie est donc, en ce milieu du XIX[e] siècle, celui du positivisme et non celui de l'illusion artistique. Il dépasse la *mimesis* et s'inscrit dans celui de l'identification entre le réel et son reflet sur la plaque argentique. Non seulement elle résulte d'un procédé chimique, mais les images qu'elle produit sont « accrochées à une chose originale », étant le résultat d'une empreinte et d'un contact direct entre la chose et le support de l'image. Nous avons affaire ici à un régime de connaissance où, comme l'exprime si bien Rouillé, on considère que la vérité est « entièrement contenue dans les objets, tout entière accessible par la vision » (Rouillé 2005 : 79)[11]. La photo renvoie à la chose « nécessairement réelle » qui a été placée devant l'objectif, ce qui revient à réduire la réalité aux seules substances. Elle garantit l'existence de la chose : la *mimesis* décrit tandis que l'empreinte atteste. C'est donc dans cet esprit que la photographie servira l'archéologie et *a fortiori* l'histoire. Par exemple, dès sa parution en 1856, l'album réalisé par Auguste Salzmann, *Jérusalem*, est conçu comme appui aux thèses de Félicien-Joseph Caignart de Saulcy ayant trait à la datation des remparts de Jérusalem (Brossard-Gabastou 2013).

Les photographes ont tenté de répondre au reproche paradoxal d'absence de hiérarchisation dans leurs photographies et de fragmentation du réel. Ces réponses

9) Gustave Planche, « Le paysage et les paysagistes », *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 juin 1857 (*apud* Rouillé 2005 : 127).

10) Eugène Delacroix, *Journal*, 1[er] septembre 1859 (*apud* Rouillé 2005 : 126).

11) Également : « Face à la fulgurance du monde, à son accélération et à sa dilatation, face au trouble causé par la conscience récente de l'étendue de l'ailleurs et de l'inaccessible, face à la confrontation réitérée avec le nouveau et le différent, bref, face à la difficulté croissante d'entretenir un rapport physique, direct et sensible, avec le monde, la photographie-document joue un rôle de médiation. » (Rouillé 2005 : 124).

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2. Champ de Booz : Bonfils 895 – Sing.C. 219, par la courtoisie de la Harvard Library for Fine Arts, Special Collections.

3. Sources de Moïse, preŝ du Mt Nébo : Bonfils 972 – Sing.C. 159, par la courtoisie de la Harvard Library for Fine Arts, Special Collections.

4. Monts de Gilboa vus de la plaine de Jezraél (Ker Aïn) : Bonfils 1314 – Sing.C. 162, par la courtoisie de la Harvard Library for Fine Arts, Special Collections.

ne portent pas sur la technique, dont la nature ne peut pas fondamentalement changer, mais sur le genre photographique. Comme dans le cas de Bonfils, nous assistons à une tentative de reconstituer la totalité du réel par la publication d'albums photographiques, sorte d'encyclopédies des empreintes solaires d'un paysage éloigné et aussi fantasmé par un public en quête de correspondances entre la vérité textuelle biblique et son existence « historique »[12].

Le deuxième procédé utilisé pour saisir la totalité du sujet est la photographie panoramique qui cherche, quant à elle, à embrasser la vue la plus large d'un site ou d'une ville. Les vues panoramiques des villes proche-orientales sont nombreuses mais aussi, plus généralement, les plans larges et les vues d'ensemble.

Dans l'ensemble de ces *Souvenirs d'Orient*, la photographie de la Terre Sainte recèle un cachet bien à part. Certes, le Grand Tour faisait que l'Orient était perçu comme un tout, comme une région présentant des caractéristiques uniques. L'imaginaire visuel ainsi créé est lui aussi unitaire car le même centre d'intérêt porté aux monuments, le même plan large, le même type de cadrage ne vont pas sans formater cet imaginaire. Néanmoins, des différences se font jour quant à la signification de la photographie, surtout lorsque celle-ci concerne des lieux à résonance biblique. Ainsi, les images de la collection Bonfils, mais aussi celles de presque tous les auteurs ayant porté leur regard et leur appareil sur la Terre Sainte, ont pour référent textuel la Bible, ce qui a pour effet d'augmenter pour ainsi dire sa canonicité. C'est là l'un des paradoxes de la photographie, mais probablement des images en général : on nourrit l'illusion qu'elles parlent d'elles-mêmes et produisent *sui generis* des preuves, mais dépourvues de « légendes », elles se révèlent en fait complètement silencieuses :

> Une photographie-document n'est jamais seule, ni jamais face à face avec la chose qu'elle représente. Elle est toujours inscrite dans un réseau réglé de transformations, toujours emportée dans un flux de traces en mouvement. Seule, elle ne veut rien dire. Nue, elle n'a pas de référent ou, ce qui revient au même, elle en a mille… (Rouillé 2005 : 119)

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Cela est d'autant plus vrai lorsque l'idée que la prise de vue fait preuve se télescope avec la conviction que la Bible dit vrai et qu'elle possède, outre le référent historique, un référent géographique. C'est dans ce sens-là que s'engagent les légendes des photos de la Terre Sainte comme, par exemple, celle de James Graham. Parmi les intitulés de ses photographies mentionnons-en deux : *Ephratah. Micah V.2* qui représente des prés entourés de murs à proximité de Bethléem[13] et « *I will make Samaria as an heap of the field.* » *Micah I.6* qui donne une vue générale sur un tas de pierres accompagné de colonnades[14]. Le sens de cette pratique est rendu explicite dans les introductions aux ouvrages de plus en plus fréquents décrivant les voyages en Palestine. A titre d'exemple on peut citer l'extrait suivant :

> What those who cannot themselves visit the Holy Land desire, above all things, to have, is something which they can rely upon as an exact and faithful representation of it. A merely fine picture is not, in this case, what they care to possess, but a life likeness of the original. This desideratum photography alone can, with absolute certainty, supply[15].

Dans le catalogue Bonfils, les exemples abondent.

De ce désir de faire correspondre un texte antique avec un référent géographique largement postérieur, résulte une conception nostalgique du temps et de l'histoire. Née de la révolution industrielle et de l'idée de progrès, la photographie proche-orientale nourrit paradoxalement l'illusion de la fixité et le désir de faire perpétuellement demeurer le passé dans le présent. Au XIX^{e} siècle, les photographes de la Terre Sainte ne cherchent pas à documenter un présent en mouvement, mais à créer des icônes, à préserver en images un paysage en train de s'abîmer. Des indices étayant cette hypothèse se retrouvent dans le choix redondant des sujets, dans le cadrage inchangé d'un même endroit à des années distance et dans la fabrication d'un compendium des types

5. Damas. Hôpital des lépreux sur l'emplacement de la maison de Naaman : Bonfils 788 – Sing.C. 182, par la courtoisie de la Harvard Library for Fine Arts, Special Collections.

ethniques tels que reflétés dans l'apparence du costume et des postures. Cette vision est aussi énoncée de manière explicite dans l'introduction à son projet de Bible illustrée :

> Dans ce siècle de la vapeur et de l'électricité, tout change, tout se transforme, même les localités. Avant que le progrès ait complètement achevé son œuvre destructrice, nous avons voulu fixer le présent dans une série de photographies que nous offrons à nos lecteurs. […] Costumes ! Types ! Coutumes ! Tout semble figé dans cet Orient immuable, comme pour nous confirmer, dans les moindres détails, l'authenticité et la sincérité de ce que nous ont dit les Evangélistes […] Vingt siècles sont passés sans changer le décor et la physionomie de cette terre incomparable ; mais dépêchons-nous si nous voulons encore profiter de la vue. Le progrès, ce grand frivole, détruira aisément ce devant quoi le temps s'est incliné… Déjà dans l'ancienne Plaine de Sharon... L'éternel chemin de Damas est devenu rien d'autre que … un chemin de fer[16] !

Comme le laisse entendre Adrien Bonfils, ce sont non seulement les paysages qui sont figés depuis des millénaires, mais également les types humains qui vivent au Proche-Orient. La Maison Bonfils pratique cette forme d'encyclopédisme ethnographique qui s'inscrit dans le courant

12) Dans sa préface aux *Souvenirs d'Orien*t de Bonfils (1878), Gratien Charvet écrit : « Les photographies relatent l'histoire mieux que l'histoire elle-même ».

13) [Walled fields in the vicinity of Bethlehem] 1855-1857 Albumen process on paper, Harvard Fine Arts Library Special Collections, GraC.001-028.

14) [General view of the mound and colonnade] 1855-1857 Albumen process on paper Harvard Fine Arts Library Special Collections, GraC.001-028.

15) Introduction à l'album réalisé par John Cramb (1860).

16) Voir Carney *et al.* (1981 : 14). Voir aussi Bonfils (1895).

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6. Femmes juives en costume de sortie : Bonfils 637 – CC 0632, par la courtoisie de la Harvard Library for Fine Arts, Special Collections.

historiographique identifiant les Hébreux anciens avec les Bédouins nomades de Palestine et les distingue des Juifs habitant la même Palestine. Cette forme d'ethno-histoire est très en vogue à la fin du XIX[e] siècle, comme en témoigne, entre autres, la création de l'Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem dont la nouveauté épistémologique annoncée était d'étudier la Bible dans son contexte humain et son milieu géographique d'origine. Le fondateur[17] de l'Ecole, le Père Lagrange, énonce à plusieurs reprises ce principe dans ses textes[18]. La photographie s'affirme ainsi comme un vecteur puissant de cet ethno-biblisme qui gagne le large public à travers la distribution de cartes postales[19] et les magazines de vulgarisation. Le *National Geographic* consacre régulièrement des articles à la Palestine, articles illustrés par des photos qui, pour ne pas provenir de l'atelier Bonfils, révèlent le même esprit. Citons ici le préambule de l'article signé par John D. Whiting, lui-même photographe de l'American Colony à Jérusalem, en 1914 : « A description of the life of present days inhabitants of Palestine, showing how, in many cases, their customs are the same as in the Bible times »[20].

Il est à noter que les prises de vues ethnographiques des Bonfils se font soit en studio, soit avec des modèles humains qui changent de costumes, dans une mise en scène aussi savante que soignée. C'est le cas par exemple de la scène champêtre du champ de Booz illustrant le récit du livre de Ruth. Une autre figure récurrente est celle du pasteur ou celle du bédouin avec ses chameaux. Enfin, les femmes dont le port et les bijoux sont considérés comme des marqueurs ethniques, sont elles aussi présentes dans les prises de vue réalisées en grande partie en studio et probablement par Lydie Bonfils – c'est là du moins ce qu'on peut déduire compte tenu des règles strictes régissant l'exposition des femmes et leur proximité avec les représentants de sexe masculin.

17) Voir Montagnes (2005).

18) « Je dois dire [...] que je fus remué, vraiment saisi, empoigné par cette terre sacrée, abandonné avec délices à la sensation historique des temps lointains. J'avais tant aimé le livre et maintenant je contemplais le pays ! Aucun doute ne subsista dans mon esprit sur l'opportunité de pratiquer les études bibliques en Palestine. » (Lagrange 1967 : 31). Voir aussi Lagrange (1903).

La muséification des photographies Bonfils et leur transformation en archive

Archivage de la réalité selon des taxonomies préétablies et communes à l'époque, les photographies des Bonfils se transforment elles-mêmes en archives, et ce dès la fin du XIX[e] siècle. Aujourd'hui plusieurs bibliothèques et musées possèdent des « collections Bonfils » ; c'est le cas, notamment de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Library of Congress à New York, University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Tel Haï Museum of Photography en Israël. Ce qui fait, cependant, la spécificité de la collection conservée à Harvard est la date et le processus d'acquisition : elle est achetée par le Harvard Semitic Museum à ses débuts, alors même que la production

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photographique est en cours. Il s'agit par conséquent d'un choix délibéré visant à la création d'une archive de sources pour étudier le monde sémitique.

La muséification de ces photographies « de leur vivant », si l'on ose dire, est révélatrice de l'*épistémè* de l'époque dont les grands traits ont déjà été esquissés ci-dessus : la prééminence de la preuve visuelle et la foi en la connaissance et son progrès par l'amélioration des outils techniques. A cela s'ajoute le contexte particulier du projet intellectuel ayant présidé à la création du Harvard Semitic Museum et les ressorts multiples de l'engouement pour l'Orient.

Le maître d'œuvre de la constitution de la collection Bonfils à Harvard est le fondateur même du musée, le professeur David Gordon Lyon. Lyon fut le détenteur de la chaire de théologie de Harvard entre 1882 et 1910 (Hollis Professor of Divinity), et de la chaire d'Hébreu et autres langues orientales (Hancokck Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental languages) de 1910 à 1922, année où il prend sa retraite[21]. L'histoire de ce Musée est brièvement reconstituée, à l'occasion de sa réouverture en 1982, par Janet Tassel (Tassel 1983 : 101-108)[22], dans un article qui retrace les tribulations de cette institution pendant et après la deuxième guerre mondiale, ainsi que le sort étonnant subi par la collection Bonfils.

Après une période faste, le projet du Musée sémitique, soutenu par le président de l'Université de Harvard, Charles W. Eliot, et financé par un des principaux leaders de la communauté juive américaine, Jacob Schiff (Wiener Cohen 1999), connaît une période de déclin occasionné par la mort du principal donateur, en 1922, et par la nomination à Harvard d'un nouveau président, Abott Lawrence Lowell, plutôt hostile au Musée. En 1942, le bâtiment est loué à l'armée pour qu'elle y installe une école d'aumôniers et, ultérieurement, la Navy y établit une école de langue japonaise. Les différentes composantes du Musée sont démantelées progressivement, à commencer par l'évacuation des collections, comme celles des tablettes de Nuzi. De même, les livres vont intégrer la Bibliothèque Wiedner en 1942-1943 ; quant aux cours d'Ancien Testament, ils commencent à être dispensés exclusivement dans le cadre de la Divinity School ; les cours d'histoire du monde sémitique et de philosophie sont transférés dans les départements d'histoire et de philosophie, les cours de langues sémitiques se tenant dans divers autres bâtiments. Après la guerre, la dotation du Musée a été affectée exclusivement à l'achat de collections, rien n'étant réservé à l'entretien, ce qui eut pour effet de prolonger sa période de déclin. En 1957, injonction est faite par l'Université soit de vendre le bâtiment soit de le rendre à ses fonctions initiales. La solution adoptée consista à louer la majeure partie de ses locaux au Centre des Affaires Internationales, ce qui entraîna le déménagement des collections restantes au sous-sol jusqu'en 1979. En 1970, le bâtiment est endommagé par un attentat commis en signe de protestation contre la politique de Henry Kissinger, ce dernier y conservant de ses années d'enseignement à Harvard un bureau. Le récit transmis depuis lors, relie la redécouverte du fonds Bonfils à cet événement qui aurait occasionné sa sortie de la mansarde où il gisait depuis des décennies. Gavin Carney, le conservateur du Musée à l'époque, rapporte la découverte, sous les décombres, de dizaines de caisses poussiéreuses, apparemment non ouvertes depuis l'époque de Lyon. Il s'agissait, selon Carney toujours, d'environ 28000 tirages, lamelles de verre et négatifs, achetés par Lyon à un distributeur londonien. Plus récemment, l'actuel conservateur, Joseph A. Greene, relativise ce récit jusqu'à le qualifier de légende[23].

Quelles que soient les causes réelles de cette redécouverte, qu'elle soit due au hasard ou finement orchestrée, l'entrée du corpus Bonfils dans le circuit universitaire et intellectuel est effectif.

Nous aimerions revenir brièvement sur les motivations de Lyon en situant notre propos autour de la relation épistémologique qui se noue au XIX[e] siècle entre l'archéologie

19) Pour l'étude des cartes postales voir Moors et Machlin (1987 : 61-77) ; Moors (2010 : 93-105).

20) Whiting (1914 : 249-314) et Bryce (1915 : 293-317). Republiés dans Schlesinger et Israel (1999).

21) « Founder of Semitic Museum, Professor of Languages, Dies : David G. Lyon Had Been Teaching at Harvard Since 1882 », *The Harvard Crimson* (1935).

22) Voir aussi les documents accompagnant l'exposition *David Gordon Lyon and the Harvard Semitic Museum,* notamment les conférences lors du vernissage le 4 décembre 2014 : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kAWnKnOKoc.

23) « According to Greene, there was no great moment of discovery, no forgotten trove of photographs, and no excited rush to develop a new exhibit. Instead, most of the photographs had been catalogued and stored in the museum basement, and their number was far below 28,000 at the time of the bombing. Moreover, the exhibit, while real, opened almost a decade after the bombing, in the early 1980s. But these facts were lost in an effort to generate excitement for the photographs before the opening of the exhibit. » (Swett et Wallace 2019).

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et la photographie. Un certain nombre d'études ont abordé cette question en lien avec la naissance de l'archéologie en Inde[24] ou avec l'archéologie de la Mésopotamie[25]. Nous n'avons pas connaissance de travaux ayant exploré l'apport épistémologique de la photographie à la naissance de l'archéologie biblique, malgré l'intérêt manifesté par Amara Thornton et Edna Barromi-Perlman[26] pour l'histoire sociale de l'archéologie britannique en Palestine. Le travail de fond reste à faire, et c'est sans doute dans ce contexte qu'il faut comprendre l'intérêt très marqué du fondateur du Harvard Semitic Museum pour l'achat de catalogues complets de photographies, dont celui de Bonfils. En achetant systématiquement ces catalogues, David Lyon révèle une des convictions intellectuelles de l'époque : considérer que la photographie est au service de la recherche en archéologie et en histoire ancienne. Son intérêt était évidemment encyclopédique, de la même façon que l'esprit de la photographie ancienne était encyclopédique, comme nous l'avons déjà mentionné. Son échange épistolaire avec l'intermédiaire britannique Mansell témoigne en ce sens : « I hear from Bonfils [Adrien] that he has made an addition of 150 views to his Egyptian series – shall send these to you when I receive them »[27].

Comme nous l'avons souligné à maintes reprises, à ses débuts, la photographie était tenue pour une technique et un outil scientifique, et non comme un art. En tant que telle, elle a été considérée comme une méthode révolutionnaire servant à créer des répliques visuelles. Citons par exemple le révérend F. Stratham :

> The photographer will point his camera at each pinnacled niche or floriated doorway, he will take his sun painted sketch of each figured corbel or grotesque gargoyle; and in fact carry away in his portfolio every nice architectural detail long before time with his destructive hands shall have the opportunity to mar any more of the beauty of the original. (Stratham 1860 : 191-192).

Les photographies des fouilles et des découvertes archéologiques étaient considérées comme totalement transpa-rentes, parlant d'elles-mêmes et faisant preuve dans le processus de constitution des savoirs. Dans le cas de l'histoire ancienne indienne, la prééminence de l'archéologie sur l'étude du texte en sanskrit et en indologie est un fait établi : les monuments attestent tandis que les textes inventent. Un processus plus complexe est à l'œuvre dans le domaine de l'histoire des Hébreux anciens, puisque l'archéologie est devenue la preuve objective du récit textuel. Comme Guha le dit de façon très suggestive : « By roping photography as a part of the archaeological method, the archaeological epistemology was convincingly strengthened. For, the camera could establish spade work as a truth-making enterprise »[28].

Vers la moitié du XIX[e] siècle, les illustrations sont devenues partie intégrante de l'iconographie archéologique : cela comprenait le paysage, les artefacts et les tâches physiques accomplies pendant les relevés archéologiques, comme par exemple le déplacement des objets découverts. Même si la pratique de fabrication de « répliques » pour des monuments antiques était bien établie parmi les chercheurs, la photographie constitue un meilleur moyen d'apporter les « sites aux chercheurs », d'accéder aux données de terrain et de transmettre la « vérité ». Le fait d'« apporter les sites aux chercheurs » engage des attitudes épistémologiques spécifiques. Ceci nous est rendu explicite par les réflexions d'un James Fergusson (1910 : IX) par exemple, qui, en 1876, écrivait ce qui suit :

> No man can direct his mind for over forty years to the earnest investigation of any department of knowledge, and not become acquainted with a host of particulars, and acquire a species of insight which neither time, nor space, nor perhaps the resources of language will permit him to reproduce in their fullness. I possess to give a single instance, more than 3,000 photographs of

24) Voir Guha (2013 : 173-188) ; (2002 : 93-100) ; (2017 : 65-85). Voir aussi son blog « Archaeological Photography and the Creation of Histories in Colonial India », http://www.harappa.com/photo-archaeology/physical-distancing.html.

25) Voir Thornton et Perry (2009-2011 : 101-107), portant sur l'institut archéologique de l'University College London ; Bohrer (2011).

26) Voir Barromi-Perlman (2017 : 49-57).

27) Lettre de Mansell, le revendeur britannique, à David Gordon Lyon, en 1892, Lyon Papers, Harvard University Archive.

28) Voir Guha, « Archaeological Photography and the Creation of Histories in Colonial India » [disponible en ligne : http://www.harappa.com/photo-archaeology/physical-distancing.html].

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> Indian buildings, with which constant use has made me familiar as with any other object that is perpetually before my eyes, and to recapitulate all the information they convey to long continued scrutiny, would be an endless, if not indeed an impossible undertaking.

Les mutations au sein des disciplines ou la création de nouvelles disciplines ont souvent conduit à la création d'archives d'un type nouveau. Ce fut le cas, par exemple, du travail pionnier de William Mathew Flinders Petrie, considéré comme l'un des pères fondateurs de l'archéologie scientifique en Égypte et en Palestine. Dans son ouvrage bien connu, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology* (publié en 1904), il consacre un chapitre entier de la technique photographique appliquée aux fouilles. Le Palestine Exploration Fund conserve certaines de ses photographies prises à Tel el Hesi, dans la plaine côtière sud d'Israël.

Lyon avait lui-même pratiqué la photographie lors de ses expéditions archéologiques au Proche-Orient, à Samarie notamment, et ses archives conservées à Harvard en gardent la trace. Il avait également réuni des objets de toutes sortes, amenés à constituer la collection du Harvard Semitic Museum : des vestiges archéologiques mais aussi ethnographiques (costumes, objets du quotidien) et zoologiques (des oiseaux empaillés). Traces visuelles et traces matérielles se rejoignent dans le projet d'exhaustivité objective qui a présidé à la fondation du HSM.

Outre le cadre général des liens entre photographie et archéologie, il y a un autre aspect à souligner, plus spécifique à l'histoire de la Terre Sainte et des Hébreux anciens. Là aussi la photographie se voit confier un rôle très important en tant que procédé d'administration de la preuve. Il s'agit de l'idée très en vogue à la fin du XIX[e] siècle, selon laquelle les habitants de la Palestine ont préservé le mode de vie originel des Hébreux antiques. Cette affirmation implique que le mode de vie des Hébreux anciens transcendait l'ethnicité, la nationalité et la religion, et ne retenait que la territorialité comme facteur déterminant. Les habitants de Terre Sainte étaient donc vus comme des descendants directs du Peuple Saint. L'archéologie a ensuite été associée à l'ethnographie et à la photographie ethnographique. Ainsi, le goût touristique rencontre, dans une certaine mesure, les idées historiographiques de l'époque. Il est difficile d'évaluer la manière dont Lyon concevait cette relation. Il travaillait en étroite collaboration avec des savants juifs et avec le principal donateur pour la création du HSM, Jacob Schiff. Lyon s'intéressait surtout à l'influence de l'Assyrie et de Babylone sur l'Ancien Testament mais, en tant que baptiste, il partageait une vision chrétienne traditionnelle des Juifs et du judaïsme (Lyon 1893)[29].

7. Berger bédouin et son troupeau : Bonfils 731 – Sing.C. 161, par la courtoisie de la Harvard Library for Fine Arts, Special Collections.

L'histoire de la recherche ne garde pas trace de l'utilisation des photographies Bonfils pendant les décennies ayant suivi leur achat et leur conservation. On ne peut pas exclure la possibilité qu'elles aient servi à l'enseignement ; selon Gavin Carney, Lyon les avait cataloguées et leur avait donné des titres en anglais puisque les titres originaux étaient en français.

Toujours est-il que les années ayant suivi l'explosion de 1970 ont entraîné aussi l'entrée dans le circuit académique de cette collection photographique.

29) Consultable en réimpression dans la collection Classic Reprints Series chez Forgotten Books, Londres, 2018.

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C'est certainement grâce au travail de Carney Gavin, conservateur du HSM nommé par Frank Moore Cross, que les archives de Bonfils ont pu atteindre le public et le monde universitaire. Carney a organisé de nombreuses expositions aux États-Unis, en Europe et au Moyen-Orient, a publié de nombreux articles sur les archives de Bonfils et a fondé le groupe FOCUS dont l'objectif était de rechercher des archives photographiques personnelles et institutionnelles.

En quoi consiste ce regard contemporain ?

Notons que Gavin Carney semble éprouver le même sentiment de nostalgie que celui exprimé par Adrien Bonfils. En effet, il voit les photographies Bonfils comme une archive dont le principal mérite est de préserver l'image traditionnelle du Moyen-Orient :

> Bonfils' activity spanned the period when the most profound changes began to alter Eastern landscapes and ways of life irretrievably, so that the family was consciously able to record scenes unchanged for millennia as well as (towards the end of Adrien's activity) the advent of occidental technology and mores. (Rockett 1983 : 8-31, 20)

L'interprétation de ces photographies fait *grosso modo* l'objet d'une approche qu'on peut qualifier de littéralisme et qui prend plusieurs formes. Parmi celles-ci, l'archéologie des bâtiments aujourd'hui disparus est certainement le domaine qui vient immédiatement à l'esprit. Les prises de vue de Bonfils témoignent de l'état d'un certain nombre de monuments antiques tels qu'ils étaient encore préservés au XIX[e] siècle : c'est le cas par exemple de certains bâtiments de Petra, écroulés depuis, ou du forum romain de Philadelphie enfoui dans les constructions de l'Amman actuelle. Une autre forme de littéralisme prolonge celui du XIX[e] siècle, en appuyant les propos historiques sur les Hébreux anciens par des pratiques des habitants de la Palestine à l'époque qui précède la modernisation : c'est le cas par exemple de l'usage des photos Bonfils comme illustration de l'exposition permanente « Houses in Ancient Israel », visible au HSM[30]. Un type d'exégèse des photographies Bonfils qu'on ne saurait pas situer entre le littéralisme et le détournement fut lancé par l'équipe de Gavin Carney[31] : en regardant à l'intérieur des photos des détails « cachés », en y cherchant quelque chose de différent de leur intention première, l'accent se déplace et le cadre d'origine se retrouve détourné. Selon Gavin Carney, on peut expliquer par exemple, l'absence quasi systématique de gens dans les rues de la manière suivante :

> We were looking at a photograph of Istanbul, for example, and I commented on how busy everybody must have been in this imperial capital; there were no people in the picture. But a man named Clark Worswick, who has written on the early photography of China, countered that there were indeed people - the beggars, under the shadows of the trees in front of the Great Mosque, gathered in little groups of two and threes. And there were. We just hadn't seen them." […] "It may have been, Dr. Gavin went on, that everyone with a place to go to was already inside. Under the hot noonday sun favored by mad dogs, Englishmen and photographers - because it shortened their exposure times - the beggars would have only the trees for shelter. (Rockett 1983 : 8-31 ; 27)

Est-ce la vraie raison ? Ne serait-ce pas plutôt parce que, à l'exception des modèles posant pour incarner des types ethnographiques ou des scènes bibliques, les photographes ne s'intéressaient que très peu à la figure humaine ? On ne voit jamais de gens devant le Dôme du Rocher ou sur l'esplanade de la Mosquée El Aqsa. Les photographes, outre le temps de pose très long, ont choisi le bon moment pour prendre des photos afin de capturer des monuments, des pierres, des paysages mais pas des personnages.

30) L'idée de continuité est également assumée comme propos politique, par exemple chez Serge Nègre qui invente la chrono-photo-fusion: « L'idée de la chrono-photo-fusion m'est apparue comme une évidence. Si au début de mes expériences j'ai choisi la juxtaposition des images anciennes et de mes prises de vues actuelles, je me suis vite rendu compte que pour insister sur la continuité historique, sociale et culturelle de la Palestine il était bien plus judicieux de fondre les clichés de Bonfils et les miens. » [http://old.ebaf.edu/?p=2882&lang=fr]. Voir Nègre *et al.* (2013).

31) Gavin Carney: « In digging into such a project the first thing we learn is not merely to look, but to see. » (*apud* Rockett 1983 : 8-31, 20).

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Une sorte d'hyper-réalisme ou d'hyper-positivisme nourrit le regard de ces photos à travers une loupe ou en les agrandissant avec une résolution maximale, afin qu'elles livrent *tous* leurs détails : le reflet de deux garçons dans des miroirs alors qu'ils regardaient leur mère se faire prendre en photo, un petit bâtiment près d'une des portes de Jérusalem qui n'était pas là une décennie plus tôt, et qui a disparu à nouveau une décennie plus tard, des cicatrices sur le visage d'une femme bédouine, les écritures sur les murs, les détails des bijoux, les marchandises et les panneaux publicitaires :

> "There's a limit, of course," said Dr. Gavin, "but we can go into a window, and if somebody was not too far away inside, we can turn up the brightness controls and catch them. Or we can read the labels on the tins of goods inside a Jerusalem shop." And by turning to today's new technology – video and motion picture lenses, and TV's easy control of image contrast and brightness, which makes it possible to almost literally enter these images – photo-archeologists are able to find things that the Bonfils probably didn't notice. (Rockett 1983 : 8-31, 30)

Les photographies de la Maison Bonfils constituent une archive à plusieurs titres : en tant que captation à l'aide de la lumière solaire, elles préservent des « morceaux de réel », en tant que production systématique d'images, elles sont organisées selon la taxinomie de l'époque en chapitres géographiques et ethnographiques – elles forment à ce titre, un corpus. Enfin, ces photos sont archivées par un tiers : le musée qui en fait ses archives documentaires. L'interprétation contemporaine, comme nous l'avons constaté, ne se départit pas fondamentalement du littéralisme qui a présidé à leur fabrication. Ce tableau laisse transparaitre des thèmes de réflexion à approfondir : la photographie Bonfils comme objet ayant une rhétorique propre et le lien épistémologique entre photographie et archéologie biblique.

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MARTOR

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Looking for Bauh: Negatives and Prints from the Romanian Peasant Museum Image Archive

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses a number of Aurel Bauh prints and negatives from the collections of the Ethnological Archive of the Romanian Peasant Museum. The present study uncovers visual documentation relevant to the history of sociological research in Romania, while also proposing a new periodisation for some of the prints and negatives found in the Ethnological Archive collections. This research is at the core of a visual literacy and digital curation project developed by the Romanian Peasant Museum in 2018 entitled *Rețelele Privirii*. The project was imagined as a starting point for a program of digitization and publication that will make available to the wider public the entirety of the Ethnological Archive collections in the following years. In this context, the pilot project developed around Bauh's work is representative not only for the type of artefacts amassed by the museum, but also for the manner in which this cultural heritage was handled throughout this institution's history. Bauh's work bridges several research fields that are relevant for recent cultural history in Romania. It also points to a number of instances and contexts that can shed light on the local history of photography. Furthermore, Aurel Bauh's life and work make him an excellent case study for an artist tackling the ideological fluctuations that characterized the European cultural landscape in the first half of the twentieth century.

KEYWORDS

Aurel Bauh, photographer, photography, ethnographic campaigns, movable heritage, Romanian Peasant Museum, Ethnological Archive.

The title of the article suggests a detective's work, as one attempts to discover origin stories for each of the photographic negatives that are today part of the image archive collections at the Romanian Peasant Museum (Muzeul Țăranului Român, MȚR). It also implies *looking at* Bauh, at the images that he produced, not simply as visual cues that fuel ethnographic queries, but as means to understand the photographer's work in context. Aurel Bauh's photographs are analyzed here as cultural artefacts. The format, the notes on the photographic film, the publication and exhibition history and the minute differences that are revealed by such research show Aurel Bauh's relevance for the history of art photography in Romania. Moreover, his work connects the museums' collections, and therefore the making of this institution, to recent cultural history.

The Ethnological Archive housed today by the Romanian Peasant Museum contains several collections that amass visual and audio documentation spanning the entire history of this institution, from its first iteration under director Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș to the present day. The scope of the project *Rețelele Privirii*[1] was to build an online platform that would comprise this heritage and make it available to the wider public so that it could engender active participation. In this respect, the platform does not simply mirror the digital repository, but proposes a structure that allows the viewer to pursue independent associations for each artefact. They are enabled both by a series of key words and tags that facilitate quick searches within the platform, and by connections that are curated projects in themselves, in Romanian *conexiuni*. For example, a print from 1955 might be connected to an audio file from 1995 or a glass plate from the interwar period, because they refer to the same subject matter or connect to the

1) Available at: https://arhiva.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/retelele-privirii; accessed 25.08.2019.

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same creator. These connections are the result of a research and debate process around each item of the Aurel Bauh collection, the starting point of the online platform project. The documentation presented in this article informed the approach taken in exhibiting his work online: the publication of a photography collection in its entirety with a set of metadata that is common to similar artefacts uploaded to the platform.[2] The Aurel Bauh collection donated by the critic and art historian Radu Bogdan in 1995 is the first to be published in its entirety interconnected with artefacts from nineteen other collections from the Ethnological Archive. The donation of the eighty-nine 6x6 celluloid black and white negatives was accompanied by a general periodization (1939-1946) and by a description that identified them as "images picturing the Romanian village." Each negative was catalogued with a short description (man walking on a dusty road, cattle fair, etc.) accompanied by the periodization specified by the donor. However, these negatives are not the only Bauh(s) in the archive. During communism, the institution, known at the time as the Folk Art Museum *(Muzeul de Artă Populară)*, also acquired some prints by Bauh, and so did the one that preceded it, the museum under Tzigara-Samurcaş' directorship (1906-1947). The Radu Bogdan collection of negatives (BA collection henceforth) was therefore ideally placed to illustrate not only the richness of the material gathered throughout the museums' very long history but also the aesthetic, temporal and ideological discontinuities that characterize this heritage.

Present-day bibliographic sources referring to the life and work of Aurel Bauh are mainly focusing on the Berlin (1921-1923) and Paris (1923-1936, 1961-1964) periods of his life, and less on the time spent in Romania by the photographer. Although in recent years Aurel Bauh enjoyed a growing visibility (see for example, the current project and website published by MOMA[3]), most of the works created in Romania are today quite difficult to identify and date. A notable exception in this respect is the minute documentary work carried out by collector Michael Ilk (2011). Sanda Golopenţia's work with a focus on Aurel Bauh's involvement in the ethnographic research led by her father during the peak years of sociological inquiry in Romania, and Raluca Muşat's (2012) study of photographers Berman and Aurel Bauh in connection to the Bucharest sociological school during the interwar years, show the importance of an interdisciplinary approach. In local context however, no research has been done on a collection of photographic film created by Bauh, nor has any analysis been carried out on the history of publication of the negatives from the MŢR archive, even though many have been included through the years in the museums' publications. The context outlined above makes then the BA negative collection, and the project *Reţelele Privirii*, entirely unique.

The lack of research that puts Bauh's work in a coherent narrative including both his aesthetic pursuits and his commissioned projects from 1936 to 1961 can be explained mainly by the penury of local archival collections that could fuel such a research. The ideological fluctuations characteristic of the 1936-1961 period (in 1961 Aurel Bauch returned to Paris) and the post-1989 context and its consequences (the loss, disarray and even destruction of institutional archives and collections characteristic of all transition societies) make the retrieval of Aurel Bauh's works from the debris of recent history a difficult task. At a careful analysis, the eighty-nine celluloid negatives extend beyond the initial periodization and thematic indicated by the donor. They show in fact a different chronology and point to subjects that are not limited to ethnographic commissions. The collection comprises negatives documenting the ethnographic campaigns carried out in Văleni, Prut (1938), Dâmbovnic (1939), Gurghiu-Mureş (1945-47), but the BA collection also captures city fairs, vistas from interwar Bucharest and from Balchik, or the miners from Valea Jiului.

2) The metadata for moving image or sound artefacts were also discussed and debated by the project team members as a means to achieve a coherent architecture for the entire platform.

3) *Object Photo. Modern Photographs: The Thomas Walter Collection 1909-1949.* An Online Project of the Museum of Modern Art. [available at: https://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/artists/24394.html; accessed on March 11, 2019]. See also Golopenţia (2015: 163-4) for an enumeration of projects around Bauh's work since 2009.

4) Published in 2011, the catalogue Michael Ilk dedicated to Bauh is the starting point for this chronology. Collector Yves di Maria or authors such as Sanda Golopenţia or Petrişor Militaru also take Ilk's work as a point of reference.

5) Here he became friends with Sasha Stone. See for example, Yves di Maria's biography of Bauh. [available at: http://www.yvesdimaria.com/pages/km-14nov-2013/bauh.html; accessed on March 11, 2019].

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A short biography[4]

Aurel Bauch was born in Craiova on February 6, 1900. In 1917 he had an accident that left him with a mobility impairment for the rest of his life. Between 1921 and 1923, he attended Alexander Archipenko's school in Berlin,[5] one of the reasons why photography collectors place Bauh's early work under the influence of the Bauhaus School. From 1923 to 1926 he attended F. Léger and A. Ozenfant's Académie Moderne in Paris.[6] In 1925 he worked on the preparation of *L'exposition d'art roumain, ancien et moderne / Musée du Jeu de Paume* (Paris), organized by Al. Tzigara-Samurcaş, the director of the National Art Museum (Muzeul de Artă Naţională), a fact which connects him to the history of the Romanian Peasant Museum. In the following years he would show his work at exhibitions organized by the Académie Moderne (1926 and 1927) and at the Salon des Indépendants (1927). In 1929 he starts exploring photography and experimenting with new techniques such as superposition, solarisation or the photogram. In 1934 he publishes his first photographs in magazines such as *Viaţa Studenţească*, *Fantasio*, *Secrets des Paris*, *Arts & Métiers Graphiques*, *Revue Moderne*. In 1936 he participates in the international exhibition of contemporary photography in Paris (*Exposition Internationale de la Photographie Contemporaine,* Musée des Arts Decoratifs / Pavilion de Marsan) where he is noted for the first time for his work. He also published photographs in a series of catalogues such as A. Bonard and R. Duval's *Poèmes. 28 études de nus* (Paris 1936), Francis Jay's *My Best Nude Study* (London, 1937), and in the journal *Photography Yearbook* (1936-1937).

In 1937 Bauh opened *Studio 43* in Bucharest.[7] In April 1938, his first personal exhibition took Bucharest by storm, proving a great success. The studio productions of this period were often showcased in the window of the ARO building, a modernist architectural landmark in Bucharest. Starting with 1939 he took part in photography exhibitions organized by the National Office for Tourism (O.N.T.) and published in the institution's magazine *România*. The O.N.T. was founded in 1936, coincidently the year when Bauh returned to Bucharest.[8] In 1939 he published in the O.N.T. magazine two photographs: *Winter Fantasy* [Fantezie de iarnă][9] and *Wheat Field* [Spicul holdelor],[10] the latter being the winner of the fifth O.N.T. contest exhibition organized that same year. His success with the 1938 solo exhibition functioned probably as a recommendation for him to work for the ethnographic campaigns of the Gusti School. By all accounts, he starts this collaboration during the *60 villages* campaign carried out by student teams under the direction of sociologists A. Golopenţia and M. Pop (1938). This particular study was the subject of a five-volume work published between 1941 and 1943.[11] Văleni Cahul, today in the Republic of Moldova, is one of the villages studied in this survey (Volume IV). However, the study was also published in the journal *Sociologie Românească* in 1938, in the October-December issue. The text signed by Al. Ştirbu (1938) is accompanied by Bauh's photographs, with one of them featured on the cover. Between 1938 and 1947 Bauh documented the Dâmbovnic and Făgăraş campaigns (1939) and the one in the Gurghiu-Mureş (1945, 1947). But these projects are not limited to the field of sociology and can be traced in publications that do not necessarily cater to this subject.

The artist's work cannot be exclusively linked to enquiries that focus on the history of art photography or to those that document sociological research. The two directions inform each other, they are connected. Clearly these campaigns represented an opportunity for Bauh, but the idiosyncrasies of the age were always a predicament for the Jewish artist. His life was affected by the specific historical context of anti-Semitic legislation in Romania, the deportation and

6) While in Paris (1926), he changes his name from Bauch to Bauh, since after the First World War the word *bauch* had negative connotations, a pejorative term used for German soldiers. The source for this information is the biography that accompanied an auction of Bauh prints organized by collector Yves di Maria in 2013.

7) Between 1937 and 1949 Bauh had studios at the following addresses: Victoriei 43 (hence the name of his first studio in Romania), Popa Rusu 7, Luigi Cazzavilan 25. Another information for a studio where Bauh might have worked after 1947 comes from an interview by Z. Rostas with Gh. Retegan, where the latter mentions Bauh in connection with the Julietta studio on Calea Victoriei. See Rostás (2006: 388).

8) Researchers and collectors use both 1936 and 1937 as the moment when Bauh returned to Romania.

9) *România* (1939, no. 1: 11).

10) *România* (1939, no. 1: 21).

11) See Golopenţia and Georgescu (1941-1943, vol. IV).

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mass killing of Jews in Moldova, Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria. For example, in 1942 Bauh was suggested as a team member for an ethnographic campaign to be carried out east of the Bug River (Golopenția 2006, I: 44; II: 682). The suggestion was not pursued. His ethnicity was clearly an impediment, even a threat, if we are to look at how A. Golopenția's proposal for Bauh to join the campaign was discussed by his superiors: "Aurel Bauh cannot be sent over the Bug. Or, in any case, not by the Institute. It may be that in a short while, you might find him there" (Golopenția 2015: 172).

Anton Golopenția met Bauh personally in 1939 during the Făgăraș campaign, and was impressed by his artistry: "I met him in 1939, when he accompanied us [to Făgăraș] to work on a monographic study for the Romanian Social Institute. We stayed in touch, because his skill in illustrating the problems investigated in the field and the art of his photographs were a must for me" (Golopenția 2015: 165). But Golopenția was aware of Bauh's work before meeting him personally. Photographs accompanying the study on Văleni, mentioned earlier, were published in the journal *Sociologie Românească* when Golopenția was the magazine's editor. One might posit that the Racial Laws in effect since 1938 had also affected his participation in the 1940 O.N.T. contest exhibition, where Bauh received only the second prize for his work *Peasant form Argeș* [Moșnean din Argeș]; the first prize was not awarded.

Besides taking part in the 1945 Gurghiu-Mureș campaign, Bauh was also working on a project on Valea Jiului all the while publishing his photographs in the O.N.T. magazine. In autumn 1946 Bauh opened his second solo exhibition. Today the photographs documenting this event from the Ager Press Archive show not only its high profile, as Prime Minister Petru Groza attended the exhibition, but also Bauh's choice in showing his work (the frames at an angle direct forcefully the gaze of the viewer) and the focus of the show itself (the urban and industrial landscape).[12] Works from the BA collection that can be clearly attributed to his journey to Valea Jiului were exhibited, which suggests that the project might have been an official commission. In 1947 Bauh's photographs from Valea Jiului accompanied Geo Bogza's essay *Oameni* și *cărbuni* [People and Coal], which shows the hardships of the miner life, a raw realism picturing bodies contorted by work. The working body revealed in these images will not grace the pages of another publication after 1948. Showing socialist society now required its reinvention. Bauh's miner, his naked body covered in coal dust toiling in the bowels of the earth, was soon replaced by images of joyous workers and peasants building a communist future.

Work or the body at work was a subject that Bauh pursued throughout the 1946-1948 period. In 1946 his collage from the O.N.T.'s magazine entitled *Munca românească* [Romanian Work] also focused on the working body. It accompanied this time a text by poet Tudor Arghezi.[13] Between 1937 and 1945 Bauh also made a series of portraits that showed his circle of friends and his political affinities and aesthetic preferences: Saşa Pană (1937), Radu Bogdan, the eventual donor of the collection (1940), playwright Mihail Sebastian (1944), Andrei Vishinski—the Red Commissar (1945).

In 1948 an editorial version of one of his photographs was used on the cover for Zaharia Stancu's novel *Desculț* [Barefoot]. This is also the year when he documented the Peleș estate for the specialists' commission organized after the abdication of the king. It is quite difficult to map his activity between 1949 and 1955, although thanks to researcher Sanda Golopenția we know that he was under Securitate surveillance in connection with Golopenția's incarceration file (Golopenția 2009: 155-156). In 1955 we find him exhibiting again, this time as a member of the jury for the exhibition *Patria noastră* [Our Homeland].[14] In 1956 he was listed as a founding member of the Artist Photographers' Union and in 1957 he was a member of the jury of the First International Salon

12) Available at: https://foto.agerpres.ro/?is_search=1&searchtxt=aurel+Bauh&searchbtn=&tipCautare=0&id_foto=&perioada_foto=0&date_start_end_from=&date_start_end_to=&locatie=&author_image=; accessed on March 11, 2019.

13) Bauh will publish numerous photographs in this journal through the years. Among them, a visual essay from 1946 entitled *Munca românească* [Romanian Work] *(România* 1946, no. 1), showing a strong connection to the Bauhaus aesthetic.

14) See the catalogue *Patria noastră* (1955-1956).

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for Photographic Art organized in Romania[15] after 1948. In 1957 he also published his work widely known today, *București*, a photo album illustrating landmarks of the city; a demure and sanitized aesthetic (expected in the circumstances) that has little to do with the work of the interwar period or that of the post-war years.

Exhibition and Print History

Since the eighty-nine celluloid black and white photographic negatives were not accompanied at the moment of the donation by any information from the author or from the donor other than a minimal description for the entire collection, and since the online platform required a structured set of metadata that in the case of this collection were far from being complete or even sufficient in order to build relevant connections between artefacts, the only course of action was to research the print and exhibition history of these negatives. Although for some of them a date has been sometimes narrowed down to weeks or even days, for the most part of the collection a time frame was inferred from corroborating records such as journal articles, oral history, the photographer's biography—his travels and interests—exhibition brochures and review articles, or from involving people with expertise in subjects such as the history of urban planning in Bucharest or vintage photography techniques.[16] Pinpointing the negative date required then putting together sources from different disciplines such as art history, sociology, ethnography, cultural history, history of architecture and urban planning. Compiling this information created a context for these artefacts, which in turn informed a timeline. In this sense it appears that the BA collection might contain several series. The series is understood here as "a number of images strengthened by context where an implied narrative is created" (Emery Hulick 1992: 77). Consequently, we might say there is a series corresponding to each of these places, Văleni, Dâmbovic, Gurghiu-Mureș and Valea Jiului, as well as

15) See the catalogue *Primul Salon de Artă Fotografică al R.P.R.* (1957).

16) The team of this pilot project consists of Viviana Iacob, Mara Mărăcinescu, Ioana Popescu, Iris Șerban and the RIZI design team (Alina Rizescu and Bogdan Ștefănescu). However, contributions, advice and directions were also given by photographer Ștefan Dinu, architect Costin Gheorghe and assistant curator, MȚR textiles collections, Silviu Ilea.

Fig. 1

Ba551 | Ba552

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an urban and an industrial landscape series. As Hulick argues, the photography series is a rather fluid construct. "Removing any image from a series to present it in another context requires an understanding that if it joins other photographs, it will become part of another series. Series in the history of photography appear to be determined in part by subject rather than by period or style" (Emery Hulick 1992: 78). That being said, upon further research a Bauh series from the BA collection could grow or diminish in size. In any case the structure of the online platform and the layout of the connections are not fixed from the get-go. In fact, its design can accommodate fluidity of content in future years.

Negatives Ba 590[17] *(Gospodărie într-un sat de câmpie* / House in a village on the plains[18]), Ba562 *(O gospodărie distrusă de incendiu* / A house ravaged by fire), and Ba539 *(Femeie din Văleni* / Woman from Văleni) were published in connection to the Văleni Prut campaign. In addition to them, Ba551 and Ba552 (Fig. 1), both entitled *Echipieri documentând viața satului* [Student teams documenting village life], could also belong to the 1938 campaign surveying the *60 villages*.[19] However, if we consider Sanda Golopenția's statement that most of the *60 villages* team was also recruited for the Dâmbovnic campaign where the student teams (*echipieri*) and the monographers (*monografiști*) worked together (Golopenția 2016: 249), and information on the Dâmbovnic region costume and dress (provided by visual anthropologist Ioana Popescu and textile collection assistant curator Silviu Ilea), Ba 552 (Fig.1, right) could belong in fact to the Dâmbovnic series.[20]

All photographs during the Dâmbovnic campaign could have been taken in two stages, according to the publication that disseminated the results: between June 12 and September 6 and between September 15 and October 13, 1939 (Pop and Golopenția 1942: 5). Sanda Golopenția (2016: 261-63) mentions that Mihai Pop was doing fieldwork between July 12-September 7 and September 23-October 15 and that he urged A. Golopenția (in a letter dated July 22) to bring Bauh to Dâmbovnic before the harvest would end. This information places the negative Ba582 *(Târgul de vite din Pitești* / The cattle fair in Pitești), illustrating the study on Dâmbovnic,[21] anytime between July 22 and the end of November 1939.[22] However, the publication history does not secure a title for a particular photograph, nor can it be the sole reason behind attributing a date

Fig. 2

Ba548 | MAP 2601

17) The entry code serves here as a means of identification both in the physical and online MȚR archives. [available at: https://arhiva.muzeultaranului roman.ro/arhiva/gospodarie-intr-un-sat-de-campie; accessed on August 6, 2019].

18) The negative was used for the cover in a different framing; with a focus on the couple standing next to the house.

19) The publication celebrating the fourth exhibition of the Royal Student Teams, organized in June 1938, features the Pietriș camp and the second school for student teams (April-May 1938) with ample visual documentation. The uniforms worn in these pictures are identical to those featured in the two Bauh photographs. *Fundația Culturală Regală Principele Carol, 1934-1938, Cu prilejul celei de a IV a expoziții a echipelor regale studențești, 6 iunie 1938*. Furthermore, in his interview with Zoltán Rostás, sociologist Gh. Retegan mentions that the uniforms were used only beginning in 1938, although the student campaigns were organized since 1934. See Rostás (2006: 238).

20) It should be mentioned here that attributing location, let alone period, from ethnographic description is notoriously difficult. Photographic documentation accompanied by rich description is core methodology for folk dress documentation. However, when field photography is not accompanied by such description, caution should be exercised since a mere detail of dress can place two apparently similar photographs in very different locations.

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Fig. 3
Ba 554 | MAP 2606 (print)

and place for a negative in the collection, especially under ideologically volatile circumstances. Some examples will be discussed below in support of this argument.

In 1940 Bauh participated in the sixth O.N.T. contest exhibition. On this occasion, he showed a number of ten prints : *Înălbitul Pânzei* [Sun bleaching homespun cloth], *Fântâna cu Troiţe* [Wood crosses next to a fountain], *Moşneni din Argeş* [Peasants from Argeş], *Domniţă din Maramureş* [Lady from Maramureş], *În Biharia* [In Biharia], *Pod peste Argeş* [Bridge over Argeş], *Valea Vişeului* [Vişeu Valley], *Pe Argeş în sus* [Upstream on the Argeş], *Procesiune la Mândra, Făgăraş* [Procession in Mândra, Făgăraş], *Drum de* Ţară [Country Road].[23] Although the small brochure only mentions the titles of the exhibited photographs, they suggest the time of execution during the Dâmbovnic campaign (Argeş), but also the presence of the photographer in areas such as Făgăraş or Maramureş.[24] A photograph similar to Ba548 *(Femei înălbind pânza la soare* / Women sun bleaching homespun cloth) was published in the 1942 Dâmbovnic study. It shows a woman bleaching woven cloth in the sun, bearing the title *Înălbitul pânzelor* [Sun bleaching homespun cloths]. The negative in the BA collection is a variation of the latter indicating therefore the same context and periodization (Fig. 2, left). The museum archive did acquire eventually a print of the negative used in the Dâmbovnic study, which is currently in the M.A.P. collections. They consist of material amassed by the Folk Art Museum, an institution that functioned from 1952 to 1978. Today the M.A.P. collections reflect not only the history of acquisitions practiced by the institution during the communist years, but also the history of the museum before that. MAP 2601 is a 6x9 cm print on black and white photographic paper acquired by the museum in 1954 (Fig. 2, right).

The subject and the title of the photograph exhibited in 1940 suggest therefore that Bauh showed a print similar to Ba548 or MAP 2601,[25] pointing to the fact that this title might have also been indicated by the artist. The M.A.P collections function at times as a historiographical supplement, a means to complete and illuminate a lost record. Thus, the Bauh 1995 collection donated by Radu Bogdan could be virtually extended by adding prints that were acquired by the museum during the post-Stalinist years. For example, prints MAP 2606 (Fig. 3, right) and

21) The image has a slightly different frame, but we can safely argue that it is indeed Ba 582 from the BA collection.

22) It is possible that the team extended their research until the end of November. See Golopenţia (2016: 248, 287).

23) See the catalogue *A şasea expoziţie – concurs de fotografii pentru propaganda turistică* (1940: 3).

24) Based on ethnographic description, Ba 528 could be from the Făgăraş area. The same approach placed Ba 537 and Ba 564 in Maramureş, indicating a possible timeline for these negatives between 1938 and 1940.

25) The entry for this print in the archive inventory does not mention Bauh as the author.

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Fig. 4 MAP 1012 — front | back

MAP 1012 (Fig. 4) are also by Bauh. The latter is attributed to the artist in the collection inventory, the former is not. Nonetheless, MAP 2606 could be included in the Gurghiu series. The market of the Reghin Fair is clearly visible in the background as is in Ba 554 (*Târgul din Reghin* / The Reghin fair), a negative from the BA collection (Fig. 3, left).

The MAP 1012 print belongs to the Dâmbovnic series. The image printed in 1942 in the Dâmbovnic study (Pop and Golopenția 1942: 8) illustrates a holiday gathering and bears the title *Horă în Gliganul de Sus* [Round Dance in Gliganul de Sus]. Like the print showing the homespun cloth bleaching in the sun, MAP 1012 also shows a different angle for the same event. Unlike MAP 2606 however, it is possible that this particular print was acquired by the National Art Museum under Tzigara-Samurcaș, so anytime between 1939 and 1947. The entry number in the register and the print format (13x18) are indications in this respect. MAP 2606 (Fig. 3, right) was purchased during the communist period. In the M.A.P. register, MAP 2606 is accompanied by the following note: "bought with invoice number 1071 on August 11, 1954." The same invoice is mentioned as a provenance document for prints 2601 (Fig. 2, right) and for 2602, 2604, 2607, 2611, 2612 (Fig. 5). This particular discovery coupled with the format of the print[26] and the style of the photographs point to the fact that these prints were made after negatives documenting at least two ethnographic campaigns.

Bauh published and exhibited throughout his career photographs taken during the ethnographic campaigns in various contexts. A case of reference in this respect is negative Ba 520 (*Moșnean din Argeș* / Peasant from Argeș) (Fig. 6), the portrait of a peasant, taken during the Dâmbovnic campaign. The portrait has been published in various formats and contexts for fifteen years. Ba 520 was first published with Aurel Bauh's signature on the cover of *România Literară*, a magazine headed by Cezar Petrescu on May 12, 1940 (issue no. 55), with the title *Cap de țăran* [Peasant portrait]. Perhaps this publication was due to the prize awarded for the photograph at the sixth O.N.T. competition organized in March 1940. Bauh was awarded here the second prize worth 4,000 lei for the photograph *Moșneni from Argeș* [Peasants from Argeș] (no. 12 in the exhibition). In the 1940 April issue of the O.N.T. magazine, the results of the contest were published, and this time the photograph was accompanied by a caption reading *Moșnean from Argeș* [Peasant from Argeș].[27] A similar image (the same man photographed from a different angle) entitled *Bătrân din Gliganul de Sus* [Old man from Gliganul de Sus] and published in *Sociologie Românească* in 1942[28] places Ba520 during the 1939 Dâmbovnic campaign.[29] Fifteen years later,

26) A small-size print that mirrors the standard dimensions of the negative (6x6) used for research purposes by museum curators.

27) The list printed in the small brochure shows the title with a plural version for the noun *peasant(s)*. The entry is clearly a mistake since the publication of the contest results lists the correct caption. It should be mentioned here that unlike the publications in *România Literară* or those accompanying the work dedicated to the Dâmbovnic study, Bauh's name is spelled here as Bauch, a spelling which the artist had given up since his Paris days.

28) Pop and Golopenția (1942: 3 – illustration).

29) Ba 520 is exemplary in proving the need to corroborate multiple sources when establishing a timeline for a negative. For example, collector Michael Ilk dates a print showing the same portrait in 1938, adding that it was exhibited during Bauh's first solo exhibition in April that year. The sources mentioned earlier, however, seem to contradict this statement and suggest that Ba 520 was created sometime between end of July and late November 1939.

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Fig. 5

MAP 2602	MAP 2604
	MAP 2607
MAP 2611	MAP 2612

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in 1955, Bauh exhibits again Ba520 negative at the photography exhibition *Patria Noastră* [Our Homeland].[30] He exhibits as a member of the jury[31] the following works: *Brazdă din Brazdă* [Furrow from furrow, a wordplay suggesting a connection between deep wrinkles and hard work], *Un cocoş între cocoşi* [The rooster of all roosters], *Pornirăm la prăşit* [On our way to hoeing], *Leliţa moaie cânepa* [Peasant woman retting hemp], *Predarea cotei e sărbătoare* [Meeting the quota is a celebration], *Mitruţ visează* [Mitruţ dreams], *Se destramă ceaţa la Lupeni* [Fog dispersing at Lupeni], *Aşa incepe dimineaţa în Maramureş* [Morning start in Maramureş], *Pictorul Pallady* [Pallady, the painter], *Pictorul G. Iuster* [Iuster, the painter]. Except for the two portraits, these titles are highly suggestive and they could all refer to negatives from the BA collection. *The rooster of all roosters* (Fig. 7) might suggest the title of a print documented by one of the negatives, namely Ba 602[32]; *On our way to hoeing* (Fig. 8) might be Ba 550; *Peasant woman retting hemp* (Fig. 9), Ba 558.

From all the titles listed here, however, only one is accompanied by an image: *Furrow from furrow*,[33] which is in fact the image exhibited at the O.N.T. event, *Peasant from Argeş* and therefore a copy of Ba 520 from the BA collection (Fig. 6).

This line of argument shows that attributing a title in the absence of one specifically indicated by the artist is highly problematic. In 1955, these titles were a means to publish and exhibit works that encapsulated an undesirable intellectual history for the communist regime. Through them Bauh reinvents his work for the new political context. It is therefore possible that both the title of the sixth O.N.T. exhibition and the 1955 exhibition were indicated by the author, while those used by publications such as *Sociologie Românească* and *România Literară* might have been editorial choices. The same can be said of two other photographs published in *Scînteia* (the official paper of the communist party) on the occasion of Bauh's 1946 solo exhibition: *În pragul porţii ea aşteaptă*

Fig. 6
Ba520

[She waits at the gate's threshold],[34] and the portrait of a man with the caption *Valea Jiului.*[35] Negatives Ba 521 (*Femeie ţinând un copil în braţe* / Woman holding a child in her arms) and Ba 527 (*Portret de miner* / Portrait of a miner) correspond to the two images published in *Scînteia* (Fig.10).

Between 1945 and 1947 Bauh worked on the project dedicated to Valea Jiului in collaboration with Geo Bogza (the exhibition mentioned earlier and the book *People and Coal* published in 1947 are part of the same endeavour), and on the Gurghiu ethnographic campaign led by sociologist Anton Golopenţia. The campaign was undertaken in two stages, in 1945 and again in 1947. In his extensive interview with sociologist Gheorghe Retegan, one of the representatives of the Gusti School, Zoltán Rostás inquires not only about the Gurghiu-Mureş campaign but also on Bauh's work in this context. According to Retegan, Bauh accompanied the Gurghiu campaign both in 1945 and in 1947. The campaigns mapped the Gurghiu valley with a focus on Reghin and Hodac.[36] In

30) See the catalogue *Patria Noastră* (1955-1956).

31) Bauh is now listed as a member of the Visual Artists Union (UAP). The Association of Artists Photographers will only be created in 1956. Bauh was a founding member.

32) There is one other negative whose purpose seems to be the recording of an image that is no longer in the possession of the photographer, Ba 596 *(Viţel*/Calf). Both negatives are black and white Agfa film.

33) *Patria Noastră* (1955-1956: 9).

34) Traian Şelmaru (1946: 2).

35) *Scînteia,* Monday, March 18, 1946: 1.

36) Rostás (2006: 402-406). (1945: the entire month of August: Hodac – villages Glăjăria, Gurghiu, Hodac, Ibăneşti and Toaca, but also Reghin; 1947: after the month of August (Glăjăria and Gurghiu – Gurghiu – Ibăneşti – Hodac).

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her numerous publications describing her father's work, Sanda Golopenția places the first ethnographic campaign in the Gurghiu region during the entire month of August 1945, from the 9 to the 31 (Golopenția 2015: 172), and Bauh's trip to document the research between August 10 and 15.[37] The letter fragment, reproduced in Golopenția (2012, Vol. III), also shows the subject matter Bauh was interested in while accompanying the documentation team. Golopenția enumerates a Sunday feast in Hodac, the fair in Reghin, a funeral, and a number of images illustrating forest work. From the negatives in the BA collection two items referring to these particular subjects can be safely placed during the Gurghiu campaign: Ba 554 taken during the Reghin fair (the town's buildings are clearly distinguishable in the background, today an area delimited by the Central Park and Sării Street) (see above, Fig. 3, left) and Ba 579, taken in the centre of Hodac village (the house in the background still exists today) (see below, Fig. 11). But there are other negatives that can also be placed during the Gurghiu-Mureș campaign such as Ba 532 (*Meșter de fluiere din Hodac* / Flute craftsman from Hodac), which shows a peasant testing a flute typical of the area,[38] Ba 565 (*La târg* /At the fair), and Ba 574 (*La târg* / At the Fair), which, if we are to take in consideration costume description, show the same Reghin fair (Fig. 12).

This enumeration is of particular interest for the history of sociological research in Romania. In her study on Bauh published in 2015, Sanda Golopenția states that the film documenting this campaign is yet to be found. The research carried out here proves that some of the photographs taken by Bauh in the Gurghiu region have survived in the museum archive. Identifying a whole series within the BA negative collection and extending it with prints from the MAP collections makes the pilot project for the online platform of the MȚR image archive a relevant contribution to the historiography of sociological research between 1936 and 1947.

The publication history of Ba 558 (Fig. 9), showing a woman softening hemp or flax fibers, also makes a case for the inclusion of this negative in the Gurghiu series. Published in the O.N.T. magazine on the back cover on June 13, 1947, the photograph is not signed. The subject of Ba 558 suggests that it might be the photograph that Bauh exhibited at the 1955 exhibition *Lelița moaie cânepa* [Peasant woman retting hemp] or a similar one. The fact that this particular photograph was published in June 1947, coupled with ethnographic details that place the women's attire in the Gurghiu-Mureș area, suggests that Ba 558 was taken dur-

37) "78. A. Golopenția către D. Gusti (letter fragment from August 14, 1945)" (Golopenția 2012, vol. III: 457).

38) Ethnomusicologist Saşa Liviu Stoianovici identified the instrument as *a caval*, a wind instrument typical to the area.

Fig. 7
Ba602

Fig. 8
Ba550

Fig. 9
Ba558

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Fig. 10

Ba521 | Ba527

ing the first campaign in 1945, a temporal placement that one cannot make in the case of other negatives from this series.

For example, Ba 554, *The Reghin Fair* (Fig. 3, left) graced the back cover of the O.N.T. magazine *Turismul Popular* [Tourism for the People], on September 4, 1948. The publication date in this case indicates a wider time frame which must include both the 1945 and the 1947 campaigns in the Gurghiu region. From the documents we have today at our disposal, it seems that most locations documented during the 1945 Gurghiu campaign were revisited in 1947, placing the negatives in the BA collection (with the exception of Ba 558) anytime between August 10, 1945 and the end of September 1947.

Peasant woman retting hemp and *Peasant from Argeş / Furrow from Furrow* show a history of publication and exhibiting that extends after 1947, displaying outcomes of interwar sociological research at a time when the discipline as such was taboo (Bosomitu 2017). After *Patria Noastră,* the following event Bauh took part in was the first International Photography Exhibition organized in Bucharest after the war. It took place in October 1957 and gathered representatives from forty-eight countries. Bauh was a member of the jury. He exhibited four photographs: (416) *Transparenţe* [Transparencies] (also featured in the auction catalogue put together by collector Yves di Maria and dated 1929-1934),[39] (417) *Apele au fost otrăvite* [The waters have been poisoned] (featured in the same catalogue with the same dates),[40] (418) *Ca-n basme* [From Fairytales], and (419) *Tocmeala* [The Bargain]. This event points yet again to the imperative of taking context into consideration when looking at Bauh's work. In 1957 Bauh published his well-known photography album, *Bucureşti*. I would like to suggest a connection between the two projects. It is informed by practices employed by the communist regime in its cultural diplomacy program: both the exhibition and the album were meant to improve the country's image in the post-1956 international context. Such an event (the exhibition took place with the support of the International Federation for Photographic Art, FIAP)[41] was usually accompanied by books or brochures that could advertise the country's progressive regime. *Bucureşti* was most probably an official commission and should be seen therefore in tandem with the international photography exhibition.

39) In Michael Ilk's catalogue (2011) this photography has a different dating (no. 6 in the catalogue, 1929-1936).

40) Michael Ilk provides a second title for this photograph, namely *The Last Cry* (no. 5 in the catalogue). The title is also used by Yves di Maria. The date is similar in both cases. Ilk also mentions that this particular photograph was exhibited at an event organized by the Association of Art Photographers in Romania in 1954. Although this information is not correct, Ilk probably refers to the 1957 international exhibition. This event seems to confuse all existing narratives about Bauh. Gheorghe Retegan, for example, talks about a last "international photography exhibition", but it is unclear if he refers to the 1955 or the 1957 event. See Rostás (2006: 387).

41) For a discussion on Romania's affiliation to FIAP, see Bădică (2012: 47-54).

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Fig. 11

Ba579

Fig. 12

Ba565 | Ba532 | Ba574

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Fig. 13
Ba563

The history of publication, corroborated with the cultural and ideological contexts of the interwar and post-war years, place Bauh's negatives from the BA collection within a chronology that can indicate the 1938-1961 period as a larger time frame. Most negatives in the collection are still impossible to date and place, allowing for an approximation at best.

For example, Ba 563 (*Vânzător de usturoi la târg* / A man selling garlic at the fair) (Fig. 13) was published in *România,* a magazine headed by Cezar Petrescu's, in November 1938, as part of a collage. This photograph might belong to a series that shows urban landscapes. Such is the case of Ba 572 and Ba 576 (both illustrating the Bucharest Fair/ *Târgul Moșilor*), as well as Ba 567 showing flower girls on the Magheru Boulevard (today the square demarcated by the National Theatre and the Intercontinental Hotel). Although it is hard to pinpoint a year, these three photographs (Fig. 14) have been located in Bucharest by architect Costin Gheorghe. Negative Ba 592 (*Drum de iarnă* / Winter trail) was probably taken during the 1939/1940 winter. For example, in two consecutive issues of the magazine *România Literară*, in January 1940 (nos 39 and 40), Bauh published two such winter vistas.

Another photograph published in *România Literară*[42] is Ba 580. Printed on the back cover, it is entitled *Toamnă in Balcic*. This is not the only photograph from the region; an earlier issue shows women wearing șalvari.[43] In the BA collection there is one negative that clearly shows women wearing the same type of garb, namely Ba 584 (*Femei stând de vorbă* / Women talking).[44]

The work carried out by collector Michael Ilk's has been taken as a guide for further research for a number of negatives from the BA collection. One such example is Ba 599 (*Oi păscând* / Sheep grazing). It could be argued that a similar negative was used to create the advertising project exhibited at the International Exhibition of Contemporary Photography in 1936 (Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Pavillon de Marsan, Paris, 16.01-1.03.1936, cat. No. 105) entitled *Evolution, Sheep, and Wool*. Ilk dates this project within the 1930-1934 time frame,[45] which would indicate that Ba 599 was created prior to Bauh's return to Romania. Another photograph for which the BA collection holds the negative is Ba 569. Entitled *The Last Way* in the catalogue dedicated to the photographer by Michael Ilk, it probably shows a wake. Ilk dates the photograph between 1937 and 1946.[46] However, the subject of the photograph indicates that this might have been a commission with an ethnographic end and therefore it could be placed in a time frame that reflects Bauh's work with the Gusti School, namely 1938 to 1947. The same could be said of Ba 556, *Procession for Rain* in Ilk's catalogue.[47]

Reproduction no. 116 in Ilk's album is yet another example where the publication of a Bauh print illuminates the history of the negative. Entitled *Portret de dorobanț*[48] [Portrait of a peasant soldier], the portrait is placed by Ilk within a very short time frame: 1937-1938. This particular print is however a smaller frame of Ba 545 (*Bărbat purtând căciulă* / Man wearing a fur hat). The wider frame shows two other men in the background and links the photography to another negative from the BA collection, namely Ba 553 (*Zi de sărbătoare* / Holy day) and Bauh's ethnographic commissions.

42) The magazine *România literară* (1939, no. 29). The photograph is not signed but this is not unusual for Bauh's work. This vista of Balchik seems to be part of a series of back covers that show autumn landscapes. Back covers for issues nos 28 *(Troiță pe drumul Făgărașului* / Wooden cross on the *Făgăraș* Road), 30 *(Peisaj de toamnă* / Autumn landscape) and 31 (Cad fruzele.... / Leaves falling...) might also be Bauh's.

43) *România Literară* (1939, year 1, no. 4: 28).

44) For the following issue *(România Literară* 1939, no. 5), Bauh signs both covers. The back cover is entitled *Spring in Balchik*. The shadow of a nearby tree frames a closed window on a wall; a frame within a frame.

45) The photograph was valued by Ives di Maria in 2013 between 800 and 1,200 €.

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The few cases discussed above show the opportunities offered by a perspective that proposes to look at Bauh's photographs as cultural artefacts. This is by no means a comprehensive study, the examples discussed here are but an attempt to open up avenues of research that extend beyond looking at ethnographic photography as illustration or documentation.

The current research of black and white photographic negatives by Aurel Bauh is an attempt to both uncover much needed information and to connect it to areas of scholarly interest outside the purview of ethnographic queries. Aurel Bauh's work bridges several areas of study that are relevant for recent cultural history in Romania. His work points to a number of instances and contexts that can shed light not only on the history of sociological research during interwar Romania but also on the local history of photography. Bauh's life and work also make for an excellent case study of an artist tackling his own ideological affinities in historical contexts that were constantly unfavourable. In the interwar years his identity posed a serious threat to the life he was able to build in Bucharest. During the Stalinist period his aesthetics proved lacking when pitted against the new goals the regime had set for the photographic art. Although not entirely successful, Bauh does manage to navigate the ideological fluctuations characterizing Romanian cultural history in the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, a study of Bauh's work as it connects to several institutional contexts illuminates the study of movable heritage from the interwar and communist period into post-communism.

The publication of Aurel Bauh collection as the pilot project that launches MȚR's online Ethnological Archive addresses the need to discuss the role this heritage might play in uncovering the recent past. The digital medium can trigger a physical turn.[49] By bringing to the forefront forgotten objects, online archives show the potential such artefacts have for a democratic and inclusive approach towards a better understanding of the recent past. In this respect the publication of Bauh's work, interconnected with nineteen other collections from the MȚR archive, is a means to open a public conversation not only on issues such as the history of photography or that of sociology in Romania but also on matters such as conservation, digitization, and digital curation practices, all the while facilitating object identification across national and international heritage institutions.

46) Ilk 2011 (cat. no. 119, dim 11.5x16.6, 1937-1946).

47) Ilk 2011 (cat. no. 120, dim 24x17.8, 1937-1946).

48) Ilk 2011 (cat. no. 116, dim 23.9x17.9, 1937-1946).

49) On value enhanced by digital collections, see Bertacchini and Morando (2013).

Fig. 14

Ba576 | Ba572 | Ba567

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MARTOR

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Archives as Ruins: Means of Understanding the Future in an Era of Wrecks

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ABSTRACT

Archives are not all the time talking about themselves—as if a self might be forced on them until their disappearance. Why are we so much into archives, museums, collections, and accumulation? What is the purpose of individual and public archives? How are they imagined, built and used? What are the ends of archives and museums in an era of breaking off with the past? The paper aims to discuss some possible answers to these questions. It scrutinizes the ways in which archives are storage places and knowledge producers, as well as the manners in which they are and can be instrumentalized. It will examine the meanings of archives and museums in post-colonial, neo-colonial and national environments.

KEYWORDS

Archives, ruins, knowledge production, museums, anthropology and ethnology.

"*What is fundamental is to understand that your great Project . . . is profoundly modern.*"
"*No, we are talking of something profoundly modern. It is well established—and indeed it has been incontrovertibly proven by many of those I have earlier cited—that nowadays we prefer the replica to the original. We prefer the reproduction of the work of art to the work of art itself, the perfect sound and solitude of the compact disc to the symphony concert in the company of a thousand victims of throat complaints, the book on tape to the book on the lap.*"

— Julian Barnes, *England, England*

Introduction

In early April 2016, under the heading Syrian Civil War, BBC announced: "Palmyra's Arch of Triumph recreated in London" (Turner 2016). According to the news, Palmyra's Arch of Triumph had been successfully printed using 3D technology to be displayed in downtown London, after the destruction of the original. Two years later, artnet.com ran the headline "The Ghost of Iraq's Lost Heritage Comes to Trafalgar Square as Michael Rakowitz Unveils His Fourth Plinth Sculpture." The story said that "the lions in Trafalgar Square in London will get a strange and powerful companion that is part lion, part bull, and part eagle, when the Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz unveils his Fourth Plinth . . . . Rakowitz has recreated a full-scale version of the sculpture of a Lamassu, a protective deity which guarded the Nergal Gate at the entrance of the ancient Assyrian city of Nineveh for almost three millennia. The winged creature stood fast from 700 BC until 2015, when it was destroyed by Daesh after the Islamist extremists gained control of the site near Mosul in northern Iraq" and he "has clad

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his sculpture with empty cans of date syrup, referencing Iraq's now-decimated date industry" (Rea 2018).

In 2018, in Brazil, due to underfunding and negligence, the largest and most comprehensive museum of the history and prehistory of South America has burned down. Losses were considered incalculable (Phillips 2018). Thousands of years of history have quickly vanished into dust and ashes, together with tens of thousands of working hours and the last records of extinct peoples and local languages. In 2013, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews was inaugurated in Warsaw—a museum of the Holocaust memorial of Jews settled in Poland. Since the museum did not start from capitalizing on a consistent material heritage—there were not many artefacts around to build the contents of a museum—it was rather a call to memory, devotion and remembrance: "a journey of a thousand years" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2016). More and more former colonies have claimed from former colonizers the return of cultural and patrimonial elements—be it the recognition of rights (sovereignty, self-determination, etc.) or the return of some goods and artefacts. As far as the last category is concerned, the repatriation of objects is only a part of a more substantial process aiming to enhance the emancipation of former colonies, including symbolic and de facto recognition of colonial rule. It is also a process through which colonial history is set aside in favour of a post-colonial local one (Brown 2018).

The above examples were not randomly chosen. Each of them has a complex story behind and is largely related to what Derrida called *archive fever* (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995). In Derrida's terms:

> The *trouble de l'archive* stems from a *mal d'archive*. We are *en mal d'archive*: in need of archives. Listening to the French idiom, and in it the attribute *en mal de*, to be *en mal d'archive* can mean something else than to suffer from a sickness, from a trouble or from what the noun *mal* might name. It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it archives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. No desire, no passion, no drive, no compulsion, indeed no repetition compulsion, no *mal-de* can arise for a person who is not already, in one way or another, *en mal d'archive* (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995: 57).

In the case of the destruction caused by Daesh, there are several keys in which this new history is being produced. On the one hand, there is the rupture with the past—which is used to legitimize some powers, ethnicities and/or states—and the physical and also symbolic destruction of the very legitimating object—which only undermines the classical criteria of legitimacy (factual history, territory, language, etc.), proposing some other based on religion and on the dissolution of the ethnic, territorial and national (see Jones 2018; Roberts 2015). On the other hand, we are dealing with a Western European post- and neo-colonial attitude in the practice of appropriation of destroyed artefacts. But this symbolic appropriation is perfectly justified if we look at the perspective suggested by Said in terms of the West's relationship with the East:

> The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other (Said 2003: 1).

Even more, as Mitchell pointed out in his paper "The World as Exhibition," the image of the Orient was constructed by the West by representing the world into an exhibitory order" inside museums and exhibitions:

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> Everything seemed to be set up as though it were the model or the picture of something, arranged before an observing subject into a system of signification, declaring itself to be a mere object, a mere "signifier of" something further (Mitchell 1989: 222).

When Mitchell introduces his findings about the image of the Orient as imagined and exhibited in Western Europe and later seen through the eyes of the Arab scholars visiting it, he clearly states: "What they found in the West were not just exhibitions of the world, but the ordering up of the world itself as an endless exhibition" (Mitchell 1989: 218).

Understanding humanity's past and constructing the Other's image through artefacts, their accumulation, display (see Mitchell 1989; Sahlins 2008), and, in opposition, their destruction, once again confirms that these heterotopias are specific to Western nineteenth century culture and are not universal practices:

> The idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century (Foucault 1986: 26).

Yet, archival production is not only about *them*, it is also about *us*. Archival practice might be looked upon as modern and contemporary complex processes through which the vanishing ancestral memories are safeguarded, as oral traditions are constantly fading away (see Nora 1984).

It seems more and more clear that three elements have contributed massively to the birth of archives: paper, print and state (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995; Stoler 2009). The term *archive*, by its etymology, is closely related to governance and power, but more to the idea of centrality, governance and centralized power (Stoler 2009). In spite of the ambiguous meaning of the term emphasized by Derrida "nothing is thus more troubled and more troubling today than the concept archived in this word 'archive'" (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995: 57), archives always have a history, a genealogy, and a context:

> Because the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilized so as to take on a signification, will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory. There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995: 14).

Archives—as both processes and practices and specific places in which various documents with a sort of historical meaning are stored—are the products of specific contexts and also one of the instruments of power through which the governing of particular populations is ensured by centralized political structures (see also Stoler 2009). Anderson discusses them in the final part of his landmark *Imagined communities*, stating:

> The census, the map, and the museum: together, they profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion—the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry (Anderson 2006: 183-4).

From that viewpoint, it became very clear why the former colonies are more interested in the restitution of the colonial archives than in the return of artefact and museum

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collections. It is the historical truth embedded in the colonial past they want, it is the past exploitation they want to recall, reclaim, and re-establish. As Gathara puts it in his recent article "The Path to Colonial Reckoning Is through Archives, Not Museums":

> The colonial archive, the thousands of official records and documents that trace the history of subjugation, oppression and looting of the continent by the European powers is largely resident in Europe. And it is not a history that the Europeans have been eager to reveal, preferring to think of their time as overlords of the continent as something of a benevolent occupation (Gathara 2019).

And indeed, it is not about the wish of former colonial entities to physically possess the archives, it is not archival fetishism; what they are after is the contents of the archives that they want to make public in order to start decolonizing their history. To some extent, all these practices seem to be part of a larger process of post-colonial and de-colonial emancipation from the hegemony of the Western world. It seems to be a backlash of the situation described by Said:

> Reflection, debate, rational argument, moral principle based on a secular notion that human beings must create their own history, have been replaced by abstract ideas that celebrate American or Western exceptionalism, denigrate the relevance of context, and regard other cultures with derisive contempt (Said 2003: XX).

Even if Anderson discusses the colonial situation, his findings might also be used to investigate the histories of national states, namely those states that did not have direct colonial relations or an Imperial history. The archive seems to be a category that unites and transcends these three institutions of power. Because the map, the census and the museums are ultimately collections, palpable testimonies and ordered products of scientific knowledge—witnesses of an unreachable past, with abstract contents and a physical representation. At the same time, archives represent technical, bureaucratic accumulations and allow the creation of contexts in which power relations become manifest. As Poenaru put it:

> The archives not only delineate a social terrain in which legacies of the past are intensely fought over in the present, shaping it, but also create a social space in which the present has the power to retrospectively determine the past (2013: 183-4).

Through the mediation provided by the archives, the past can be reshaped by the present, including the memory of the past and the historical facts recorded at a non-mainstream level. This does not exclude the magic veil of the archives; rather it enforces it alongside the archives' [perceived] ability of enclosing and carrying secrets and truths (see Verdery 2014; Poenaru 2013).

While the post-colonial countries regard archives as both tremendous collections and accumulations of the colonial bureaucratic system and sources for historical truths (Gathara 2019; Stoler 2009), East European countries, having none or limited colonial experience, traditionally see archives as accumulations of documents (including ethnographic ones) of a highly historical value in terms of nation-building and national and ethnic identity (Mihăilescu 2004; Karnoouh 2011).

A few histories

In Romania, the practice of archives—in its contemporary understanding, as well as museum practice—is relatively recent compared to other European countries. The official web page of the National Archives of Romania states that archives and archival practice in Romania are quite young:

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> As an institution, the Archives on the territory of the Romanian extra-Carpathian Principalities were officially established in the context of elaborating the first modern administrative laws, namely the Organic Regulations, between 1831–1832. For the period prior to the nineteenth century, however, the existence of archives outside the chancellery is not to be overlooked, namely the ones preserved by the ecclesiastical authorities, as well as private archives constituted by the various ranks in the boyar hierarchy. Among them, the oldest places to store documents were the monasteries, which, due to their safe nature, allowed the grouping of secular documents as well (Romanian National Archives).

Medieval documents and especially those related to centralized bureaucracy and to state potentiality have backed the process of archive building. Personal[1] and professional[2] collections contributed as well. Long before that, collections converted into archives became disciplinary instruments with a three-fold purpose: firstly, to order materials, secondly, to lend disciplinary legitimation, and thirdly, to be an instrument designed to save the testimonies of worlds that were about to disappear. The third reason relates to a practice of building and protecting national memory, generally with the aim to be of use to others. Piling up things in the hope that the present world will become a better one and a future generation will manage everything in order to find the [historical] truth, gathering records in the present time archives for the future, this is in fact the very purpose of archives: to facilitate access to and the use of all their records for scholars from various disciplines and for other interested individuals.

The myth of the archives holding the historical truth is still active, and it increases proportionally with the new fascination for old epochs, distant times in the history of humanity (see also Poenaru 2013; Verdery 2014; Derrida and Prenowitz 1995). But these distant worlds are also created and re-created. In the last chapter of his book *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot insists on the relationship of historians with the construction of the socio-historical past stating that:

> Professional historians have made good use of the creation of the past as a distinct entity, a creation that paralleled the growth of their own practice. That practice, in turn, reinforced the belief that made it possible. The more historians wrote about past worlds, the more The Past became real as a separate world. But as various crises of our times impinge upon identities thought to be long established or silent, we move closer to the era when professional historians will have to position themselves more clearly within the present, lest politicians, magnates, or ethnic leaders alone write history for them (Trouillot, 1995: 152).

On the other hand, in his epilogue to *Provincializing Europe*, about reason and the critique of historicism, Chakrabarty discusses the relation between historical evidence and the creation of a historical consciousness and reality:

> Historical evidence (the archive) is produced by our capacity to see something that is contemporaneous with us—ranging from practices, humans, institutions, and stone-inscriptions to documents—as a relic of another time or place. The person gifted with historical consciousness sees these objects as things that once belonged to their historical context and now exist in the observer's time as a "bit" of that past. A particular past thus becomes objectified in the observer's time. If such an object continues to have effects on the present, then the historically minded person sees that as the effect of the past. It is through such objectification—predicated on the principle of anachronism—that the eye of the participant is converted into the eye of the witness. This is how a participant in an historical "event" becomes an "eyewitness" for the historian, affirming the "rule of evidence" of historiography. . . . If historical or anthropological consciousness is seen as the

1) These have become visible in private or private collections open to the public, and later in public museums.

2) Since the nineteenth century, professional associations have carried out a consistent collection and research activity with the clear purpose of creating archives.

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> work of a rational outlook, it can only "objectify"—and thus deny—the lived relations the observing subject already has with that which he or she identifies as belonging to a historical or ethnographic time and space separate from the ones he or she occupies as the analyst. In other words, the method does not allow the investigating subject to recognize himself or herself as also the figure he or she is investigating. It stops the subject from seeing his or her own present as discontinuous with itself (Chakrabarty 2000: 238-239).

From that viewpoint, an archive seems to be the depositary of old truths, secrets, secret recipes and silenced events and facts—all of them part of a larger, seemingly far-reaching picture: everything one does not know or would like to know could be potentially found inside an archive (see Burton 2005; Blouin and Rosenberg 2011; Blouin and Rosenberg 2013). The practice of archives appears to be future oriented; what matters for the present time is not so much the archival contents, but accumulation. Even more clearly put:

> Archives are generally taken for granted as places of knowledge, that is, institutions that help to preserve, make available, and create knowledge. According to conventional usage, archives are "repositories" or "storerooms," and thus are often reduced to their function of providing the prerequisites or structuring principles of knowledge. But we should not declare archives places of knowledge generically without further ado. The path from archives to knowledge was and remains neither necessary and inevitable nor simple and self-evident (Friedrich 2018: 5).

In Romania, for example, a growing body of trained historians are practising a peculiar kind of historiography, namely publishing "books" made up entirely of reproduced and reordered archival documents on various topics, which are not however accompanied by a critical or even theoretical apparatus, with the clear purpose of making the documents available to a wider public. Their work strongly contrasts with the public openness facilitated by the National Archives. Despite their intention to make historical documents public, generally these historians' undertakings turn out to be estranged in relation with public concerns when comparing the scholarly discourse with the intellectual one.

Museums, both as practices and places of displaying objects, stories and histories, including ethnographic museums, in the Western world are deeply rooted in the sixteenth and seventeenth century history of cabinets of curiosities or "wonder rooms," in which exotic, extraordinary, abnormal things were displayed. In presenting the evolution of museums from simply exhibiting the exotic to a more pedagogical approach as an important feature of museum history, Fromm highlights the birth of the intangible heritage:

> As the tangible collections were transformed from displays of the exotic to different types of didactic exhibits, they were reunited with aspects of intangible heritage to tell more complete stories (Fromm 2016: 89; see also Fromm *et al.* 2014).

At the same time, the practice of museums consists of assorted processes of object and ritual laicization and silencing (Karnoouh 2011: 150). For Bennett, museums are not just places of instruction of the general public, but they are informed by reformatory commitments regarding social routines—memory of the state development as well as social memory. All these things put museums at the forefront of the discussion about modern relationship between culture (i.e., official *vs.* popular) and state centralized political power (Bennett 1995; Burton 2005).

I mentioned above that museums and archives were and still are disciplinary apparatus of accumulation and education, and also the fact that in the process of archive and museum creation in Romania, professional associations have had a huge impact. In

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what follows, I shall highlight the evolution of some Romanian professional associations and discuss the role of the museums they established. I shall focus mainly on museums related to ethnography and ethnology because they were highly instrumentalized. It is acknowledged by historians of social sciences that ethnography and sociology

> produced notions, metaphors, and views that offered not only society tools for self-description, but also provided […] plans for policy making (Brunnbauer *et al.* 2011: 4).

In 1875, the Royal Romanian Society of Geography was founded, which, together with the Romanian Academic Society (founded in 1866), contributed fundamentally to the institutionalization of geography as a discipline. Its establishment also created the conditions that further made possible the institutionalization of ethnography and ethnology in Romania. Moreover, the Royal Romanian Society of Geography, at the proposal of the Romanian Academic Society, included an ethnology section because the main model at that time regarded geography as a broad discipline. Thus, material or non-material culture elements that could be empirically quantified were subjects of interest to geographers. In other words, the science of the people was the model that successfully imposed itself in Romania.

Shortly after the establishing of the first Department of Geography, in 1902, at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest, Simion Mehedinţi[3] introduced a course of anthropogeography and a few years later, a course on ethnography. Known as the founder of modern geography, Simion Mehedinţi was one of the most important Romanian geographers and ethnologists in the first part of the nineteenth century. He also introduced the German-Austrian diffusionist ideas in Romania, which later led to methodological developments that helped and simplified the professionalization of other researchers who, in their turn, played an extremely important role in the disciplinary development of ethnography and ethnology.

In 1905, through the efforts of ASTRA, the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Romanian People's Culture (founded in 1861), the ASTRA Museum of History and Ethnography was established in Sibiu. The official website of the present-day museum states that the museum "was born from the desire of Transylvanian Romanians to define their own ethnocultural identity within the Austrian-Hungarian ethnic conglomerate and in the context of the cultural emancipation of Central and Southeast Europe peoples." Its aims were "to highlight the most representative testimonies about Romanian specificity, what differentiates us when compared with other peoples, things and phenomena that could explain to all who we are."[4]

In Bucharest, in 1906, the Museum of Ethnography, National Art, Decorative and Industrial Art was created, and Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş[5] was appointed its director. The name of the institution changed several times, first the Museum of Ethnography and Decorative Art, then the Museum of Ethnography and National Art. In 1924, it became the Carol I National Art Museum. The purpose of the museum was very clear: "to gather all the documents regarding the culture, art and ethnography of the Romanian people from ancient times until today" (Tzigara-Samurcaş 1936: 39). At that time, such endeavours were very popular across countries in Europe. The spread of such ideas, practices, and local interest, aiming for synchronization with other European countries while trying to delineate a national identity, was common place. Museums and sciences were instrumentalized to support it. Tzigara-Samurcaş, after reviewing the actual state of museums in neighbouring countries, concluded that everyone "beat us to it," especially as regards the political vision related to museums, but also in terms of the state's interest in these issues—an interest that the author describes comparatively via the amounts of money allocated to staff and collections (see also Tzigara-Samurcaş 1936).

3) Member of the Romanian Academy, he studied in Romania, France, and Germany. He was heavily influenced by the geographer and ethnographer Friedrich Ratzel, whose student he was and from whom he has taken over the term "anthropogeography". He was a professor at the University of Bucharest at the first geography department in Romania and played an important role in the development of geographic research.

4) The ASTRA National Museum Complex official web site: http://www.muzeulastra.ro/.

5) Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş was an ethnographer, museologist, art historian, journalist, and professor. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Tzigara-Samurcaş is advised to go to Germany where he attends Wilhelm Riehl's courses, and then continues his studies in Berlin. He had internships at the Bavarian Museum and other museums in Germany, as well as museums in Denmark, Italy, and France. He finally returned to Romania in 1899, with a doctoral degree in art history. Tzigara-Samurcaş set up a collection of glass slides photography, and in 1906 he succeeded founding the "National Museum"—the core of the present-day Romanian Peasant Museum.

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In the interwar period, Romulus Vuia[6] founded the Ethnographic Museum (1922-1923) in Cluj, and a few years later, the National Ethnographical Park near the Hoia forest (Vâlsan 1924a: 55-59). In 1930, the literature section of the Romanian Academy decided to establish the Folklore Archives in Cluj, under the direction of I. Mușlea[7] and S. Pușcariu,[8] as a result of the scientific reconfiguration of folklore studies (see also Fruntelată 2017).

In 1928, in Bucharest, Constantin Brăiloiu, ethnomusicologist and one of the most active and important collaborators of Dimitrie Gusti,[9] establishes the Folklore Archives of the Romanian Composers Society. In 1936, the Sociological Museum[10] is established in Bucharest by Dimitrie Gusti as an important part of his Sociological School.

In a speech before the Romanian Ethnographic Society in Cluj, on January 24, 1924, G. Vâlsan started by stating that: "Four fundamental sciences can explore the creation of a country and the nations that belong to it: Geography, Ethnography, History, and Philology" (Vâlsan 1924b: 101). From Vâlsan's perspective, ethnography is "the science of nations and varieties of nations" (Vâlsan 1924b: 102).

Obviously, these are just snippet illustrations and jottings of a rich and not fully documented history of Romanian social sciences and the production of archives and museums. Nonetheless, we can conclude that, from its very beginning, ethnography was a discipline interconnected with rural studies (peasants) and the making of archives and museums (see also Karnoouh 2011). It was instrumentalized and put to work in order to collect historical documents and to produce scientific knowledge to define Romanian national identity. In short, "the national ethnographic museum represents the place of a new secular cult, that of the ethnic-nation and of its many embodiments, practised under the patronages of the two muses of modernity: Culture and Science" (Karnoouh 2011: 150).

The many fears of archives and museums

The roles and purposes of museums in Romania, including critical discussions about their contents—exhibitions, collections and archives—is a subject rarely approached, although there have been efforts in this respect. Critical research on this topic is scant. After 1989, many archives and museums were reconfigured while new ones were established. Many archives have disappeared as a consequence of decommunization and privatisation processes—intentionally or unintentionally (Verdery 2014), while others were made public (Verdery 2014; Poenaru 2013). Before 1989, archives and small exhibition rooms were an important part of each and every factory, sports club, etc. The need to record every action has led to an important accumulation of materials and documents about various activities related to work and everyday social life. After 1989, the lack of funding to support small archives and libraries has led to their decommunization and/or de-Stalinization,[11] and even demise. Their disappearance from our present does not mean that during the communist period there were only state and secret police archives. Archiving, collecting, indexing and exhibiting were practices as important as they are today, at all levels. Some of the evidence provided by the various ways of ordering and reordering things has disappeared, some was reassessed, and some turned to dust.

In Foucauldian style, Cotoi starts his paper with the following statement: "Museum displays are never innocent ones. They are always revealing and hiding at the same time, always instituting an alterity between Self and Other, between the knowing subject and the known object" (Cotoi 2006: 203). And indeed, if we pore over the Romanian museums' profiles, we find the *national* label in many of their titles. This is accounted by two things: firstly, museums are national because they safeguard a patrimony of enormous value for Romanianness past and

6) Romulus Vuia held a PhD in Geography at the University of Cluj (1924), with an "anthropogeography and ethnographic study." In 1920 he became George Vâlsan's assistant at the Institute of Geography in Cluj. He is a well-known ethnographer.

7) Ion Mușlea was a graduate of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Cluj (1922) and defended his PhD thesis in 1927. Mușlea played an important role in the institutionalization and development of folklore studies.

8) Sextil Pușcariu was a philologist, linguist, journalist and academician. Among other contributions he initiated the project of the Romanian Linguistic Atlas.

9) Dimitrie Gusti was a Romanian sociologist and philosopher. He was elected member of the Romanian Academy in 1919, and became President of the Romanian Academy (1944-1946). He also led the Minister of Public Instruction, Cults and Arts (1932 to 1933), and was an active professor at the Universities of Iași and

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present and, secondly, the values they keep are related only to Romania and Romanians. There is a notable exception among the museums in Romania, namely the Franz Binder Museum of Universal Ethnography (Muzeul de Etnografie Universală "Franz Binder"), which is part of the larger ASTRA museum in Sibiu.

From that viewpoint, it seems that the museums and main archives are devoted precisely to documenting the history of the Romanian nation-state, producing "static truths," under the assumption that the state "has always existed" (Herzfeld 1997). At the same time, they also characterize an essential process that Anderson (2006) named "museumizing imagination," namely the capacity of a nation's self-representation [image] to be endlessly reproducible and at the same time to acquire the representations of the image of the others. As the image of the others is a crucial part of nationalism and self-representation, it seems peculiar to imagine and only display the otherness that could be found inside the country—be them peasants or minorities (for more, see Chatterjee 1993; Mihăilescu 2004; Chelcea 2009; Şerban and Dorondel 2014). Besides, a simple visit to the Village Museum or to Grigore Antipa National Museum of Natural History can provide strong evidence of how the peasants' homes stand for the "real" history of Romanian rural society and, correspondingly, how some glimpses of ancient human culture and history are displayed following the truths of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, the exclusive national character of Romanian museums and archives seems to enter into contradiction with the very disciplinary particularities of ethnology (see also Grosu 2016; Grosu Candale 2017). For Kirshenblatt–Gimblett the heritage kept in museums seems to be in contention with ethnology:

> Heritage is predicated on a different set of claims. But, ethnology is deeply implicated in the production of heritage, first, for the historical reasons outlined above – its role in making culture disappear and then salvaging what remains—and, second, because of ethnology's own complicated relationship to its own past. There is a double move here, two alienations. The first alienation occurs when ethnology makes culture disappear in the world and reappear, as ethnology, in the museum. The second alienation occurs when ethnology repudiates its own history, particularly as a museum field and in the museum itself (Kirshenblatt–Gimblett 2005: 5).

But this is not a new perspective on museums and archives; rather it appears to be dominant in East European countries and to be specific to those with no colonial history (see Kürti 1996; Baskar 2008). But then again it is long gone worlds that need to be reconstructed and reconnected both with the present and the future—which seems to be the hardest task archives have to tackle.

Conclusions

In line with Stoler (2013), we might look at archives as ruins, as evidence of an undetermined past. However, we might also see them as the process through which the past (whether nationalistic in its various forms, colonial, bureaucratic, ethnographic, and so on) occupies and inhabits the present, or through which the past is silenced (see also Trouillot 1995; Karnoouh 2011; Chatterjee 1993; Conrad 1998). Stoler understands ruins as "privileged sites of reflection—of pensive rumination. Portrayed as enchanted, desolate spaces, large-scale monumental structures abandoned and grown over, ruins provide a favoured image of a vanished past, what is beyond repair and in decay" (Stoler 2013:9). And he goes further and shifts the focus from ruins to "ruination," emphasizing that it is:

> Also a *political project* that lays waste to certain peoples, relations, and things that ac-

Bucharest. He studied in Germany (Berlin and Leipzig) with Wilhelm Wundt, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies and in France with Émile Durkheim. Dimitrie Gusti is considered to be the creator of Romanian sociology and the leading figure of the Romanian School of Sociology in the interwar period.

10) Currently, the Romanian Village Museum.

11) The de-communization and de-Stalinization of libraries, for instance, are still in effect nowadays.

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> cumulate in specific places. To think with ruins of empire is to emphasize less the artefacts of empire as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime than to attend to their re-appropriations, neglect, and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present (Stoler 2013: 11).

Archives as places of epistemological inquiry are firstly subject to human imagination and ordering, in the absence of which they are what they appear to be: a multitude of objects piling up on shelves and in boxes. Generally, archival collections do form an epistemological maze. It is no coincidence, therefore, that archives seem to be the wardens of the truth embedded into a past that keeps our memory safe and sound, but the main issue is that archives have nothing to do with the way that the human mind and memory work (Blouin and Rosenberg 2011; Blouin and Rosenberg 2013). At the same time, the maze-like organization of archival collections and the obstinacy to make them public transforms archives into, in Weberian terms, instruments of power (see also Friedrich 2018).

Since the past, the archive, and the museum do not have a voice of their own, scholars are entitled to give them one, but without forgetting that history "does not belong only to its narrators, professional or amateur" (Trouillot 1995: 153; see also Chakrabarty 2000). The ways in which they are carrying out this task needs further discussion, with the clear purpose of shedding light on superstitions related to archives and with a critical approach of the "truths" the archives allegedly hold in relation to documents regarded as *a priori* sources and producers of knowledge. Returning to the "closeness" and instrumentalization of archives and museums in Romania after 1989, we ask ourselves again: Why are we so much into archives and museums since "nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive'" (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995: 57)?

The post-colonial efforts to return and repatriate colonial archives and artefacts have put bureaucratic and ethnographic archives into the limelight of historical, social and political examinations. These debates are important for post-colonial countries and for East European ones alike, especially in terms of their usage and instrumentalization by both sides—from the colonizer's perspective, the imperial history, and from the perspective of the colonized, the national, local and/or ethnic identity. In order to imagine alternative futures for archives and collections, they need to be of public use. Still more, making archives public and thus demystifying their contents seems the best way to preserve and learn from them.

From the time when some of the nineteenth century grand projects were summed up at the end of the twentieth century, we still nurture the idea that we will finish all the nineteenth century projects this century. And thus the archives and museums will find ways to reconnect the future with the present.

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II. Archives: the Purposes of Remembering, the Purposes of Forgetting

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The "Socialist Modernism" Platform: Online Archives and Knowledge Production in Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT

In this article I explore the relationship between online archives and the process of knowledge production by looking at visual representations of modernist architecture. I focus on the project "Socialist Modernism," developed by the Bureau for Art and Urban Research (B.A.C.U.) with the purpose of collecting photos of buildings erected in Central and Eastern Europe. The goal is to determine what this project reveals about the built environment in socialism and its post-socialist transformation. For this purpose, I look at the content produced and disseminated by the project team through a visual studies methodological approach. Namely, I am interested in how the images are received, used, and (re)interpreted in visual studies.
I discuss the case study of the Romanița Collective Housing Tower from Chișinău with the aid of theories of landscape, space, and architecture as a form of knowledge. This entails analyzing the content generated by B.A.C.U., the pictures themselves and the ways in which the public reacts to the material circulated. In addition to the visual and textual forms of knowledge produced by B.A.C.U., the viewers place these images into a wider context, reinterpret their significance, and sometimes contest the claims made by the project team. Based on these observations, this new type of archive seems to be shaped by the interaction between different actors, such as users of digital content, professional groups, and the state.

KEYWORDS

Architecture, knowledge, images, online archives, visual research methodology.

Introduction

The "Socialist Modernism" platform[1] has been developed by the Art and Urban Research Bureau (B.A.C.U.)[2] for the documentation and protection of the architectural patrimony of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The project team collects pictures of buildings erected between 1955 and 1989/1991 in order to monitor their status, and plans to elaborate regulations that will help preserve these buildings ("Socialist Modernism. About" n.d.). Besides the practical focus of this initiative on the conservation and rehabilitation of the built environment, the project has the potential to shed light on several aspects that are relevant for research on socialism and post-socialism, such as the role of the socialist states in shaping the urban and cultural landscape, and how this landscape changed after 1989/1991 due to privatization and decentralization.

This paper uses "Socialist Modernism" as a starting point for discussing the link between visual representations of modernist architecture and the process of knowledge production. The main objective is to determine what this online archive can reveal about the built environment in socialism and its post-socialist transformation. This task is approached as a methodological exercise in visual studies that entails reflecting on the benefits and challenges of using this source in research. An important component of this approach is the focus on how images are circulated, used, received, and (re)interpreted.

1) http://socialistmodernism.com/

2) In Romanian: *Biroul pentru Artă și Cercetare Urbană.*

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These initial observations and concerns are part of a larger project that aims to understand images as a source of knowledge at the intersection between visual studies, critical history of architecture, and sociological studies focused on architecture and the built environment. Several visual culture studies point to the merits of interdisciplinarity. For example, understanding the changing ways in which images are produced, stored, and shared requires an interdisciplinary approach to visual culture, using insights and practices from other fields and contexts, such as digital culture, art, and pop culture (Favero 2014: 166-167). In addition, issues raised by the lack of an academic discourse about visuality in architecture and the underrepresented study of architecture as a field of cultural production can be addressed through a critical interdisciplinary approach (Emerling and Gardner 2016: 1-4; Stierli 2016: 311-312).

This interdisciplinary approach can be consolidated through several conceptual and methodological avenues. One way is to connect sociological and anthropological perspectives on knowledge production with the research of historians and cultural geographers on changes in the built environment in post-socialist cities. This can be further linked with the methodology of visual studies that approaches images as active creators of knowledge, and not as mere forms of "visual note taking" (Pink 2003: 190) to be analyzed.

Instead of approaching this archive as the "true" or objective representation of the built environment in CEE, I engage critically with its material by reflecting on its production, content, and reception. For this reason, my analysis of the case encompasses the pictures, the accompanying texts, and the responses from the public. This allows me to follow the process of knowledge production by the project team, the content of the images, and the ways in which this content is received by a broader audience. This will also be an opportunity to advance some preliminary claims concerning the ways in which images are made meaningful by the viewers (Pink 2003: 186).

In the following pages, I connect concepts and ideas from the study of place, social space, and cultural landscapes with research on architecture as a field for cultural production and social relations. In the fourth section, I provide contextual information about the online archive and activity of B.A.C.U. followed by a presentation of methodological considerations from visual studies. I apply this theoretical and methodological framework to the case study of the Romaniță Collective Housing Tower from Chișinău, Republic of Moldova by looking at the content from the "Socialist Modernism" website, the images themselves, and the reactions of the audience. I conclude with reflections on the need to engage critically with the archive and on its potential to contribute to general fields of study. While this is a preliminary analysis focused on only one building, it is a starting point for analyzing the knowledge produced by visual material and for addressing the issues raised by visual research methods.

Relational landscapes and spaces

The urban landscape and its buildings are material expressions of the ways of thinking, the experiences and values found in specific socio-cultural contexts (Czepcyński 2008: 2-3). Researching the landscape and architecture of CEE has the potential to shed light on social, economic, and cultural transformations in post-socialism. Historians and cultural geographers have been conducting research on this topic, engaging especially with questions concerning the changing cultural landscape of cities in post-socialism (Diener and Hagen 2013; Czepcyński 2008; Murzyn 2008; Light 2000).

This article posits that the visual material from the online archive depicting architectural objects can be interpreted in a more nuanced way through anthropological and

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historical perspectives on relational landscape and place as an event. This entails analyzing "the cultural landscape as an *entity reflecting relationships*" (Czepcyzński 2008: 2) and places as containers of things, experiences, histories, languages, and thoughts (Casey 1996: 24).

Making sense of these photographs in a larger context—defined not only by the producers, but also by the audience—requires paying attention to various segments of the general public: the residents or users of the building, the inhabitants of the city, and the viewers of the digital content. An emphasis on the experiences and practices of those who directly interact with the buildings depicted in the pictures would lead to interesting observations about how the built environment is shaped by and gains meaning from its inhabitants (Ingold 2000; Casey 1996). This direction of inquiry is beyond the scope of this article that focuses on how the archival material is received and (re)interpreted by the online viewers. However, it opens up the discussion about the importance of connecting the online images with the materiality of the buildings as a way of de-centering the digital (Pink *et al.* 2016: 28) in order to understand the role of these images in people's lives.

Another important aspect highlighted by research on landscape and place is the complex relation between political, social and cultural processes that shape the built environment of each society. In line with this, Drazin (2005) analyzes the development of modernist architecture in socialist urban Romania by rejecting the notions of opposition or struggle between the household and the state. Instead, he approaches it as a set of complex processes resulting from the interaction between the state, the professionals, and the people (Drazin 2005: 195-196; 216).

Lefebvre's reflections on the dialectical relationship between spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces (1991: 39) reinforce this point. Through their work, architects and representatives of the state shaped the conceived space (or representations of space), that is "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (Lefebvre 1991: 38). The residents of modernist buildings constitute representational space, "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols" (Lefebvre 1991: 39). The same author claims that anthropologists, ethnologists and psychoanalysts should describe these spaces in parallel with "representations of space which coexist, concord or interfere with them" and with social practice (Lefebvre 1991: 41).

These observations about the complex relation between producers and users of space and architecture provide a starting point for the analysis of the visual material produced and circulated by the "Socialist Modernism" initiative. They can help integrate the visual material into studies focused on broader issues pertaining to the built environment, for example by emphasizing that the quality of life maintained in a building is not limited to economic aspects, but the result of multiple political, social, and cultural factors.

Architecture and knowledge production

The general question of the relation between architecture and knowledge production at the core of this discussion is approached here by focusing on the sources of knowledge and the interaction between different agents and media that generate knowledge. It is important to zoom in on the topic of sources of knowledge since the empirical part of this article is based on a relatively new source of information[3] that has an impact on understanding the production of landscape and the development of architecture in CEE.

The first step in consolidating this conceptual framework is to think of architecture as a particular form of knowledge in and of itself, the result of cultural, social and philosophical demands that developed in time. Architecture as knowledge is also linked to conflicts about how the discipline is defined and how open it is (or not) to "social, spatial,

3) "Socialist Modernism" and the other comparable archives and projects have been developed in the 2010s.

https://biblioteca-digitala.ro

conceptual concerns" (Tschumi 1996: 152, 154). However, the manner in which knowledge is understood when talking about architecture has not been addressed enough. In response to this, Cunningham proposes a critical reflection on what the modern status of architecture as an institution entails and a discussion of architectural knowledge, in which critical knowledge is in itself a form of intervention, a reflection on the broader social contradictions that determine and constrain practice (Cunningham 2007: 32-33).

One way of approaching architecture as a form of knowledge is to think of how it functions as a form of cultural production and as an "arena" for social relations and practices. Jones raises several questions concerning the conceptual development of sociology of architecture, which entails analyzing "architecture as a form of cultural production and the social contexts in which it is embedded/from which it emerges" (2016: 465). For example, he suggests combining observations about the aesthetic and semiotic components of architecture with political and economic approaches of the same topic (Jones 2009: 2520). This would facilitate empirical research on "the role of architecture in the embedding of economic projects into distinct social formations" (Jones 2009: 2532).

Furthermore, according to Jones, research that connects architecture with broad concepts, such as modernity, identity, and culture needs to be refined by paying attention to "the embedded practices through which architecture becomes culturally meaningful in a specific context" (Jones 2016: 468). Delitz takes this argument further in her discussion of architectural modes of collective existence by pointing to the constitutive and transformative power of architecture: "Architectures establish specific relationships between social beings and also between human beings and the earth, thereby mediating human territorialism. Every architectural space, every architectural disposition, enables, encourages, or discourages various movements, perceptions, feelings and other human responses" (2018: 2).

The visual representations of modernist architecture found in the online archive give the viewers a window into the changing social and cultural meaning of those buildings from socialism until today. However, the archive alone is not the only "true" or legitimate source of knowledge about (post)socialist landscapes. The general public viewing and reacting to these images on social media is part of this process as well, underscoring the broader socio-cultural relevance of the built environment.

"Socialist Modernism" project

The number of similar online sources focused on modernist and/or brutalist architecture has increased in the past few years. These emerged in different forms, from large, systematized online projects to Facebook discussion groups where the members share pictures and discuss more freely, similar to a community of practice. Comparable projects with online archives, maps, and social media presence are Spomenik Database,[4] gathering pictures of World War II monuments built in Yugoslavia, and #SOS-BRUTALISM,[5] collecting images of brutalist buildings from all over the world and aiming to safeguard those that are in danger. There are also other sources available on Facebook[6] and Instagram[7] where information is shared more informally, and the type of visual material is more diverse, including pictures taken recently and old images from archives or magazines.

My ongoing research project, which serves as a framework for the discussion in this paper, will focus on a wider range of such sources, as well as on data collected from offline sites located in different cities. However, the platform Socialist Modernism is a useful starting point and a key source overall for several reasons. It is a more comprehensive and systematized collection that includes an online archive with over 500

4) https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/

5) http://www.sosbrutalism.org/cms/15802395

6) The Brutalist Appreciation Society, Brutal Tours&Friends, Utilitarian Architecture, BRUT.

7) brutgroup.

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pictures of buildings from 28 countries, 12 extensive case studies, and a strong social media presence.[8] In addition, the fact that the project explicitly focuses on architecture originating in the socialist period in CEE allows me to explore directly the links between architecture (namely its practice, design, and profession) and the socialist past.

B.A.C.U. is a non-profit officially founded in 2014, and it consists of a team of architects, artists and curators from Romania and Republic of Moldova, with "Socialist Modernism" being one of their main projects.[9] The first phase of their project entails building a database or online archive with photos taken in the present by the team and their collaborators, but depicting buildings from the period of socialist modernism in Central and Eastern Europe. They are also centralizing these images in an interactive map and accept contributions from architects, urban planners, artists, activists, historians, and the general public ("B.A.C.U. About" n.d.; "Socialist Modernism. About" n.d.).

For the second phase the team plans to take specific measures to restore, rehabilitate and renovate the buildings that are in ruin, to propose a legislative program, and to educate the local authorities and the inhabitants about how to protect these buildings ("B.A.C.U. About" n.d.; "Socialist Modernism. About" n.d.). B.A.C.U. association recognizes the historical and architectural value of these buildings and is critical towards the ways in which authorities and architects have been treating this heritage of socialism (Popescu 2014: para. 7). The fact that a lot of these buildings are in a state of degradation and in danger of being demolished and replaced has been the main motivation for the foundation of B.A.C.U. (#diez 2014: para. 4).

From the information provided on the website and in some newspaper articles, it seems that B.A.C.U. defines architectural modernism as a time period in which features of Western architecture reached Central and Eastern Europe and influenced the local style. The general features of modernist architecture—such as form follows function, the use of mass produced materials, an industrial aesthetic, simplicity and clearly defined shapes—are visible in the urban landscape of former socialist countries, but they intersect with representative local elements (Popescu 2014: para. 3-6). This understanding of modernism is reminiscent of discourses from other former Soviet and socialist states—such as Lithuania, as discussed by Drėmaitė (2013), and Hungary, as discussed by Molnár (2005). In these cases, modernism in architecture was seen as a turning point in the Baltic political reform (Drėmaitė 2013: 82) and as cultural link to the Western European professional discourse, making it seem free from the socialist ideology (Molnár 2005: 115-116).

The project website already has an archive with images of buildings from Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine. The images are accompanied by explanatory texts about the architectural composition, historical context, and current state of the buildings. Pictures from these and other former socialist countries are also shared on various social media platforms, with information about the name, address, year of construction, and name of the architect. The discussion in the remainder of the article is based on one of these case studies from the archive, the Romanița Collective Housing Tower. I look at the website content, the pictures, and the reactions of those following this project.

Methodological reflections on visual analysis

The building I have chosen for this case study is situated in Chișinău, Republic of Moldova, and it was designed and built between 1978 and 1986. It is a 77 meters high tower that includes 16 residential floors, four floors of rooms for utilities, the last two upper levels—that have not been

8) The project has approximately 76,000 followers on Facebook only, and it also has dedicated Instagram and Twitter accounts.

9) They are also developing the platform „SocHeritage" that has the more practical goal of achieving recognition and protection for socialist architecture and art works seen as cultural landmarks and historic monuments (http://socheritage.com/). In addition, the activity of the association is expanded into more informal Facebook groups, such as: Socialist Realism (focused on the period 1933-1955) and Defense Architecture (architecture linked with war and the consolidation of rule in certain territories).

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completed—and the ground floor, where there used to be commercial spaces. It is clear from its name that the main role of the building is to offer collective housing. During the Soviet era the residents had the rooms assigned by the state and had access to the communal areas on each floor. Currently, most of the building is privately owned with the exception of the technical facilities and the last two upper floors ("Socialist Modernism. Archive" n.d.).

I decided to choose this case study not only because of the abundance of material (text and photos) provided in the archive of the Socialist Modernism website, but also because several pictures of this building have been often shared on the social media accounts of the project. The building seems to be a strong illustration of the essence and aim of this project, given that its photographic representations have been used in its promotion, for example, when asking for contributions to the interactive map or when raising funds. For the purpose of this case study, I limited my analysis to the 32 pictures shared on the Facebook page of the project and to the comments posted by users on these pictures.[10]

The methodological approach I use in this article is based on debates from the interdisciplinary field of visual studies that place images at its center, as more than illustrations of textual arguments (Elkins 2013: 1). On a more abstract level, this requires a general reflection on how images guide the field of visual studies by setting the terms of the discussion, determining and directing the interests and arguments of the viewers (Elkins 2013: 28). This means that visual studies scholars should refrain from attempting to explain and fully control the pictures (Elkins 2013: 29, 59), and instead pay attention to "how images already work as arguments, resisting, speeding, slowing, affirming, contradicting, and sometimes partly ruining the arguments that surround them" (Elkins 2013: 26).

This does not mean that the arguments in visual studies publications should be driven by images alone and omit the text. Researchers in this field often "see word and image as one indivisible unit of analysis" (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001: 7). However, it does require reflection on the after effect of including these images in our writing:

> after we are startled, bemused, entranced, and possibly persuaded by what we find in visual objects, we then write about them, and in our writing those objects become passive: they serve as reminders, examples, and illustrations of things we end up arguing in the texts that surround them (Elkins 2013: 29).

On a more concrete level, this entails pinpointing the types of images we work with and the position of the producers and users of these images in our analysis. Van Leeuwen and Jewitt distinguish between image as record of reality, providing, for example, factual information, and image as construct, showing how its creator (re)constructs reality (2001: 4-5). Oftentimes, images have elements of both record and construct, which leads to the need to analyze them using several methods in order to be sensitive to both components (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001: 5).

Furthermore, depending on the perspective of the study and the type of pictures analyzed, the creators and the viewers of images can be included or involved in the analysis in different ways. A study that interprets images within a context of social practices might underline the diminished difference between the producers and viewers of images (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001: 8). The case of the residential building discussed in the following section is approached in a similar way, by linking the perspective of the archive with that of the viewers of the digital content.

My analysis of the Romanița building is also based on approaches from visual studies that pay attention to the changing meaning of images in today's context (Favero 2014: 167). Favero looks at the practices generated by or in parallel to the increasing production and distribution of images and notices that these

10) The analysis is based on the 32 pictures and 48 comments posted between February 2014 and August 2018.

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practices are "more attentive to context, relations and materiality, and hence to the world surrounding the frame" (Favero 2014: 167). Pink also reflects on how scholars from various fields, such as cultural studies, cultural geography and anthropology, have been approaching the interpretation of visual material. These recent approaches point to the need to take into consideration: "(a) the context in which the image was produced; (b) the content of the image; (c) the contexts in, and subjectivities through, which images are viewed; and (d) the materiality and agency of images" (Pink 2003: 187).

While I delineate between similar areas in my case study—namely the knowledge produced by B.A.C.U., the content and form of the images, and the reactions of the public—I interpret these areas together in order to understand the knowledge produced by this source as a whole. Similarly, Pink underlines the importance of looking at the intersections between these areas of visual interpretation in order to understand "the relationship among people, discourses and objects" (Pink 2003: 187).

The *Romaniţa* Collective Housing Tower

The most visible level of knowledge generated by the project team is the factual information contained by the images and the accompanying text about the building, namely the address, location in the city, name of the architect and the engineer, as well as technical details, such as height, number of levels, techniques of design and space division. A part of the factual information (name, address, year of construction, and name of the architect) is also found in the captions for the photos shared on Facebook.

However, a closer look at the knowledge produced by the source as a whole (B.A.C.U., the images and the audience) reveals a more complex relation between the sources of knowledge that can be approached through the methodology of visual studies discussed earlier. The images are constructs of the archive creators, but they also guide and direct the viewers who in their turn (re)interpret them in various ways.

One prominent dimension is that of material degradation and decay, especially visible in the balconies of the building that have been closed or altered in other ways by some of the residents after 1990. The text available on the website conveys this aspect in material and technical terms, by emphasizing the bad quality of the construction materials and the (possible) effects of closing the balconies on the structure of the main building. Otherwise the text is rather ambiguous in tone, pointing to the illegality of the interventions, but not placing responsibility explicitly on one group of actors. For example, the author states that the alterations "were not authorized," which could be interpreted as the fault of the state for not regulating the activity, but also of the residents for acting on their own.

The first photograph analyzed here is a close up of the residential floors and the balconies (Photograph 1), showing the current state of the building and thus supporting the argument of the gradual decline of the housing tower. According to Jewitt and Oyama, the focus of the images "creates a meaning potential" (2001: 135). This doesn't mean that by identifying the point of view we can objectively say what the image "is about." It is rather a tool that allows image producers and viewers to create different types of meaning

Photograph 1: Since 1990, the balconies of the building have been closed or altered in other ways by the residents. © B.A.C.U. photo department /2016.

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Photograph 2: Wide shot emphasizing the aesthetic and architectural value of the building integrated in the urban landscape. © B.A.C.U. photo department/ 2016.

(Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 135). In terms of point of view, Photograph 1 depicts the balconies at eye level and from the front, making them salient elements in the photo and symbolically confronting the viewers with the present state of degradation of the building.

The audience's response to this picture acknowledges, for the most part, the degradation and decay. At the same time, the comments problematize these issues affecting the built environment and point to further questions concerning this transformation of Romaniţa in connection with the socio-economic context of post-socialism. This exchange of comments illustrates this aspect:

> Comment 1: Beautiful tower but vandalized by the people living in it...
> Reply 1: not only by the people... lack of maintenance....
> Reply 2: Reply: The people are responsible for the maintenance of the place they live in, though. At least certainly so when they have been passed on private ownership of these apartments, which usually is the case with these apartment blocs [*sic*] in Eastern Europe.

However, what happened to the balconies of Romaniţa has to be approached as more than a wrong decision in architectural and aesthetic terms. For instance, analyzing these material components can be useful for interpreting the housing tower as a framing device or medium for something outside and beyond architecture, thus contributing to the generation of meaning (Stierli 2016: 313-314). The balcony appears similar to other types of apertures (windows, galleries, thresholds, loggias) that allow looking beyond the building, at the landscape, cityscape, public squares, and so on (Stierli 2016: 314).

During socialism, the architects and engineers that created the housing tower framed, through their actions, a surrounding landscape that was turning into a new livelihood and that was "deeply invested with economics, power, and politics" (Stierli 2016: 314). In turn, the actions of the residents, here closing their balconies after 1990 when they became owners of their apartments, shape the post-socialist urban landscape indicating changes in their economic aspirations and in the ways in which people relate to components of their material surroundings: the city as a whole, the shared residential space, and the private space of the home.

A second dimension identified in this case study is the appreciation and interest in preserving this building because of its architectural value. The text from the website archive describes the building as architectural patrimony through phrases like:

> In terms of structural engineering, the building is an important achievement of 70s-80s—all the living units on all 16 levels are designed and built in console, thus enhancing the slender image of the building—a rare shape for that time ("Socialist Modernism. Archive" n.d.: para. 1).

Modernist architecture was embraced, for the most part, by professionals during socialism especially since it came after the Stalinist period, in which another architectural style, socialist in content and national in form, was imposed. In Hungary, for example, modernist architecture "came to be seen as the antithesis of totalitarian architecture, and its preservation seemed to stand for the defiance of direct political control over architecture" (Molnár 2005: 119).

Czepcyński (2008) and Ingerpuu (2018)

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also discuss a recent revival of the appreciation and interest in protecting socialist modernist architecture expressed by experts and research institutions working on architecture and architectural history. These specialists oppose the destruction of modernist architecture and the plans to modify certain buildings that stand as achievements of architects from the "recent past" (Czepcyński 2008: 134).

The aesthetic and architectural value of the building and the importance of preserving it are also conveyed by the content of the images, especially by the wide shots that show how the architectural object is integrated in the urban landscape. The second photo analyzed has the building in its centre, presenting it as what holds the "marginal" elements of the picture together (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 149), namely the objects, nature and people depicted in the photo (Photograph 2).

In addition, other pictures from this category place emphasis on the architectural features of the building, such as the shape, the structure, the last two levels, and the height. Some of the more aestheticized photos of the housing tower, for example, the black and white pictures[11] taken from the distance and showing the building in the mist, seem to work as some sort of advertisement for the project in general (Photos 3, 4, 5).

A large number of the comments analyzed here are appreciative of the architectural composition of the building. Some of them compare it with other objects, like a rocket or a cigar, while a few others reinterpret this aestheticized representation of the building. The comment: "This one is a perfect pic [*sic*] for the cover of an album made by a Communistic Black Metal band!" is an example of the subjectivity through which an image is viewed (Pink 2003: 187). These three photos in particular seem to determine and direct the interest of the viewers who, through their comments, reinforce this aestheticized representation.

The last and perhaps most important dimension of the Romanița Collective Housing Tower case is the potential of this source to "speak" about the wider social and cultural aspects pertaining to urban change and housing in particular. The text written by the project team includes some general information on the historical context of the Soviet period by mentioning the state regulations on architecture and residence. This quote that details the specificities of collective housing during that time includes some information about the context:

Photograph 3: Aestheticization of modernist architecture through black and white photos. © B.A.C.U. photo department/2016.

Photograph 4: Aestheticization of modernist architecture through black and white photos. © B.A.C.U. photo department /2016.

Photograph 5: Aestheticization of modernist architecture through black and white photos. © B.A.C.U. photo department/2016.

> Going back to the time of USSR, we find all architectural design controlled by political authorities' directives. For that reason, each person had an area of 6 square meters assigned in the concept phase of the project. The principle of the housing unit/housing

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Photograph 6: Current state of the building illustrated through a picture of the former commercial spaces on the ground floor. © B.A.C.U. photo department/2016.

> cell was applied, consisting of two rooms assigned to each two people, with a hall and a bathroom. Communal kitchens, recreation rooms and technical areas were provided on each residential floor.
>
> This type of compartmenting represents the reality of the socialist period, when experts had to comply with the imposed rules of the living spaces, without being able to make any changes without approval from authorities ("Socialist Modernism. Archive" n.d.: para. 2).

The text also includes information on the socio-economic context of the post-1990 period, when the apartments became private property, the commercial spaces on the ground floor were vandalized, and the residents made alterations to the apartments in order to deal with the lack of space.

The last picture analyzed in this case study places the building in a socio-economic context, for example, by providing a close-up of the ground floor spaces that are no longer in use (Photograph 6). By focusing the visual representation only on these former commercial spaces and leaving aside the rest of the building, this picture takes the viewer away from the previous emphasis on the aesthetic and architectural qualities of the building. It opens up a different discussion about the effects of decentralization and privatization on the post-socialist city by focusing on a space that looks like it was abandoned by the state.

However, when it comes to the contextual dimension of the Romanița residential building, this last photograph alone and the accompanying text from the archive are not enough for building a nuanced discussion of the social, economic, and cultural context. The content generated by the project team focuses on polarizations, such as experts vs. state and residents vs. state, for example, when discussing the political control on the architectural professional practice during socialism or the changing ways in which residents have been experiencing the lack of space in the building.

Lefebvre looks at the social production of space through a conceptual triad characterized by a dialectical relationship between the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. He rejects dualisms because they "boil down to oppositions, contrasts or antagonisms" and have unwanted effects, such as "echoes, repercussions, mirror effects" (Lefebvre 1991: 39). Drazin also criticizes this approach in his article on the building of modernist apartment blocks as homemaking, pointing to the need to acknowledge the historical and social character of modernist blocks and showing that these architectural structures are not automatically disconnected from homemaking activities (Drazin 2005: 217).

Through their comments, the audience places the Romanița Collective Housing Tower into a wider context, for example, by comparing it with buildings from other countries: Armenia, Poland, France, Germany, and with Gaudi's work. This is a valuable observation because it reinforces the fact that modernist architecture was not exclusively communist, it was present also outside the Soviet Union and the socialist states (Drazin 2005: 200). This observation can also be placed in the larger framework of studies that criticize the approach of the "East" and "West" regions as exceptionalist and essentialist (Tickell *et al.* 2007: 154) and the subordination of CEE knowledge production to a "metropolitan agenda" (Petrovici 2015; Buchowski 2012).

Some of the reactions from the audience also point to additional elements of

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the social and cultural context that would be worth exploring in future studies focused on transformations of the built environment in post-socialism. Capturing the experience of the locals by comparing the exterior with the interior of the buildings could lead to interesting observations about the presumed contradiction between modernism and domesticity (Reid 2009: 465), but there is not enough space here to address this topic.

The small sample of comments analyzed here includes almost no reaction from the residents (with one exception), but this case study as a whole also advances some methodological questions concerning the inclusion of local voices in future research. This could be done, for example, by taking pictures of the building *and* the people, by supplementing with pictures taken inside, or by showing pictures taken by the residents themselves. The involvement of local actors could be taken even further by asking them to draw maps of the building in order to analyze how they "narrate" their memories about the building and how they relate with their material surroundings.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to analyze the knowledge about Central and Eastern Europe produced by the "Socialist Modernism" project aiming to document and protect buildings erected between 1955 and 1989/1991. By focusing on the case study of one particular building from Chișinău, Republic of Moldova, I applied concepts from the study of place, cultural landscapes, and architecture, and I reflected on some of the methodological aspects of visual studies.

The first conclusion is that, in order to critically engage with the archive, it is important not to take it for granted as an inherently objective tool. This can be achieved by reflecting on the professional discourse of the architects and artists who created the archive, the content of the pictures and the reactions of the viewers and on the intersections between these components. Including in the analysis the reactions of the audience, who reinterpret, contest or expand their initial claims, is especially relevant since the circulation of images on social media plays an important role in the activity of B.A.C.U.

In connection to this, the archive in itself is powerful in evoking the post-socialist transformation of the built environment, even conveying explicitly the effects of privatization and decentralization. However, it can only work as a nuanced source of knowledge if it is considered together with the content generated by the general public who views, interprets, and consumes these images.

The analysis also underscores the potential of this source of visual data for research in general fields, such as post-socialism, sociology of architecture, and heritage studies. For example, the archive documents the material degradation and decay of the urban environment, which is a prominent topic in studies about the transformation of cities in post-socialism. Furthermore, by emphasizing the architectural value of the buildings and the need to preserve them, the project starts a discussion about the "heritagisation" of socialism in the digital age. For instance, it can raise questions about how the distribution of digital photos of "socialist buildings" shapes the concept of heritage.

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Communist Politics of Archives: The Case of the Ethnomusicology Archive at the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana[1]

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ABSTRACT

Constructive identity strategies articulated by cultural elites and cultural policies, starting with the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century, have instrumentalized tradition to communicate local identities within a multicultural world. This is why reactions in favor of the initiation of cultural policies for the collection and preservation of tradition, such as the archives, have increased with the establishment of these valuable nationalist sectors.
In this study I focus on the role and dynamics of the ethnomusicology archive at the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana between two political epochs: communism and postcommunism. I discuss the politics of culture and the importance of the archive under the communist regime as it made the object of special attention from the government. In this context a reciprocal relation was established, between the archive activities and the state funding for the dissemination of Marxism-Leninism, the national-communist ideology. Ultimately, I depict how the Soviet paradigm and the methodology continued also after the fall of communism, and how some young scholars, ethnologists and ethnomusicologists attempt for a paradigm shift (Roth 2014).

KEYWORDS

Cultural policies, Albanian folklore, Institute of Folk Culture, archival politics, national-communism.

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Comparing the paradigms of folklore during communism. Albania versus the Balkan states

The presence of folklore studies in Albania is primarily related to the nation-state building tradition, as part of a large movement in the European history of the eighteenth century. The nation-state building process in Albania, between the end of World War II and when the communist regime came to power in the region, unfolded in parallel with similar processes in Eastern Europe and in the Balkan states.

This was a time when the "Nation" defined the political context and the epistemological framework, with strong references to "nationalist folklore," encouraging anyone who studied the history of the discipline to consider the matter.

In all Soviet countries, the second reformation generation, namely the "nationalist communists," took the place of the first generation of Stalinist orthodox leaders (Johnson 2001: 190). Along with this new vision, the international engagement of the proletariat was abandoned and national interests were placed in the foreground.

While in the Yugoslav case in order to forbid hostile nationalism, the strategy headed for a controlled version of socialist federalism, later on, after the late 1960s, party elites of each republic began to turn to a flamboyant advocacy for their nations.

In the meantime, in Romania, the link between communism and nationalism had different initial dynamics, more specifically it was developed by Ceaușescu in what some

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scientists consider to be "the most eccentric form of national Communism" (Johnson 2001: 191).

In Bulgaria, by the end of the 1950s, there appeared to be a softer version of it because the country remained a reliable satellite of Moscow, and in these circumstances the level of nationalism allowed was much more limited. Although differently instrumentalized, *national communism* was a socialist phenomenon across countries.

The emergence of the nationalist ideology in socialist countries required a revision of the national agenda, which provided "folklore" as a science that was deeply connected with nationalist issues. In this way, with the most complex and comprehensive methods, the "nation" was at the heart of the discipline and the identity of its practitioners—and in some countries it continues to be.

As a result, new institutions were built and new political slogans were established. These products directed the discipline towards a new "folklore," but mainly a new folklore of the proletarian people. Officially everything focused on folk culture and traditions, fueling national communism. In this way, "folk production" was initiated under the strict control of the Party, but always with the help of folklore experts. At the time, the European scholars of the Soviet Communist bloc (Romanian, Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and Albanian) focused on examining the culture of the working class, youth movements, and the collectivized peasantry. These were the three main categories of a people's values to which the Party gave a prominent place in studies. Hence, it was hoped that these categories would furnish experts in their efforts to modernize the socialist state.

In Albania, the discipline was born as an interest in self-legitimization. It was initially developed as a "national science" out of an apparent need for conceptual tools to make an analysis of the people inhabiting this particular land. Thus, unlike the British case of Tylor or the American case during Morgan's time, where the discipline was formulated as "science of culture," in Albania it was formulated as the "science of people," i.e., ethno-logy. In essence, it was meant to stand for a true, valuable and natural connection between the people and the land they lived in. Scholars were tasked with the mission to express the "soul" of the people as found in arts, myths, beliefs and rituals (see the directives of Hoxha in *Kultura Popullore* 1985: 19-74; Filja 1989: 14-152).

Nationalism and the nationalist movement were to be developed not only in the political context, which by changing its image needed to produce a "nationalist science," but at the same time the position and the role of "nationalist scientists" characterized strongly their functional peculiarities. This is reflected in Slobodan Naumović's thesis of "the double insider syndrome" (1997: 2), where scientists consider themselves to belong to the group with which they share the same language, tradition, essential values, and the same political interests. As a consequence, folklorists do not face *the distance of the profession*; a kind of distance that does not have a positive effect on participant observation in the long term. On the contrary, it is assumed that folklorists, who observe the views of the people, should avoid emotions and not form affections. They should keep their distance from the informants in order to better understand them (Iosif 2008).

In this context, folklorists perceived themselves and were simultaneously perceived by the public as part of the intellectual elite of their country, and consequently society tasked them to study, consolidate, invent, and finally defend the "cause" of the social group they belonged to. This double insiderness aspect is a powerful factor of the folklore discourse ideologization. The only difference is that the folklorist may, on one hand, engage in ideologization, but is not entirely aware of this fact, and on the other hand, the folklorist ideologizes his own discourse in a deliberate way. In reality these two ideologized cases do not exclude one another. On the contrary, the combination of the ideologization effects in these coun-

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tries is the result we are talking about. Precisely "this mutual stimulating combination of unconscious and at the same time intentional ideologization" was what the Serbian anthropologist termed "the double-insider syndrome" (Naumović 1998: 14). This syndrome explains the fact that in any of these Balkan countries folklore/anthropology has not engaged in post-national criticism the same way the west has done with post-colonial anthropology (Todorova 1997).

Institutionalizing criticism in the Albanian context: the new generation as the only salvation

In 2012, the German-British anthropologist, Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers published an article about international challenges of Albanian ethnology in postcommunism. As a scholar of Albanian Studies, she argues and simultaneously is concerned about the fact that Albanian ethnology remained unaffected by the political changes during the period of democracy. Schwandner-Sievers underlines that after decades of isolation and separate development, the relationship between foreign and local scholars, as well as the contact with new theories could have already echoed in the interpretations of Albanian ethnology and its role as archivist of ethno-national traditions and culture. In this context, Schwandner-Sievers raised the question whether Albanian scholars had accepted the challenge of the discipline internalization, finding response in young scholars (Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 219-255).

And indeed, fifteen years after the fall of communism, young scholars living in Albania started to contribute to an increasing number of publications and scientific activities highlighting a critical perspective on the discipline of folklore or ethnology as it developed under the nationalist communist ideology in Albania (Hysa 2010, 2011, 2013; Kodra-Hysa 2014; Dalipaj 2008, 2012; Shkreli 2009; Shkreli 2011; Shkreli, Sîrbu 2010; Sîrbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015; Doja 2015; Abazi and Doja 2016; Bardhoshi and Lelaj 2018).

The two-volume edition *Studying Peoples in the People's Democracies: Socialist Era Anthropology in South-East Europe* (Hann *et al.* 2005; Mihăilescu *et al.* 2008) was a high influence on the postcommunist generation of ethnographers and folklorists. The analyses of folk studies as a nation-state project developed under Marxist ideology were very revealing for the young generation. On the other hand, the debate about the notion of *Volkskunde* used to define the discipline as it developed in postcommunist countries caught their attention as a response to many issues which were found in the early years of their work at the Institute.

These scholars, particularly those who enrolled at the Institute of Folk Studies after 2002, had to follow a long and difficult route before they could disseminate their studies. The communist tradition of isolation and the conceptualization of the discipline as a political instrument of communist propaganda had already established them as a marginalized community of scholars in Albania. As a result, the new generation in the Institute found themselves deeply divided from the rest of the world (Kodra-Hysa 2014: 29). The heritage of the regime's self-isolation gave rise to multiple difficulties, from collecting theoretical and methodological knowledge and literature on social anthropology to network-building. The works referenced above, by Armanda Kodra-Hysa, Gerda Dalipaj, Nebi Bardhoshi, Inis Shkreli, constitute an essential contribution and illustrate these authors' perseverance in changing the paradigm of folk studies and ethnology in Albania from within. In 2004, this group of young researchers from the Institute of Folk Studies, who gathered in the Ethnology and Ethnomusicology Departments, openly rejected the ideologized "old-fashioned" paradigm embracing instead a trend toward cultural anthropology.

As new enrollees, their duty was to work as apprentices or successors of their su-

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pervisors who were senior scholars working in the Institute's different departments. The sources of information in the libraries were very limited and available only in Russian and other Slavic languages; very few monographs could be found in French or German. But given the political environment in which this new generation grew up, that is after the break off of diplomatic relations between Albania, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, they didn't receive an education in Russian as the senior scholars had and therefore lacked knowledge of Slavic languages. From 2006, several international scientific activities relating to social anthropology took place at the Institute, organized by these young scholars; furthermore, they published their views in several journals and publications (*Revue Ethnologie Française*; *Journal of Urban Anthropology*; *Ethnologia Balkanica* edited by International Association for Southeast European Anthropology which for them became a crucial reference for networking and dissemination) that were part of the European Ethnology network. These papers and articles focused on reflections and criticism arising from analyses of the communist nation-building ideology based on "folk culture" or "peasant studies" approaches ranging from sciences to literary criticism; the papers treated different aspects of the discipline (in ethnology and ethnomusicology) in detail. While these studies tend to come close to western cultural or social anthropology, the old principles taught at the Institute of Folk Culture are still present and continue to influence the paradigm shift (see also Kodra-Hysa 2014).

The young scholars' academic degrees were associated with different disciplines in psychology, law, history, musicology, philology. At least 10 per cent of the scholars had attended ethnography or folklore courses. Once in the Institute, they had to follow the tradition as they were introduced to the discipline with readings about local ethnology and empirical folklore studies within the frame of "ethnology at home." Their first duty was to read Albanian ethnographical notes, focusing mainly on the collection of journals published by the Institute of Folk Culture which did not include anthropological theory; *Etnografia shqiptare* (Albanian Ethnography), *Kultura Populllore* (Folk Culture), *Çështje të folklorit shqiptar* (Questions of Albanian Folklore).

In 2010, the Department of Social Sciences at a nonpublic university named Universitas Fabrefakta Optime (shortly UFO University) organized a conference on socialism and Albanian society in Tirana,[2] targeting the anthropology of socialism. The conference gathered Albanian scholars working in Albanian research institutes and universities, as well as researchers who were attached to western universities. It was clear that the discipline in Albania was on its way to shifting from Marxist ideological and theoretical grounds to the western paradigm of cultural anthropology. Critical perspective and analytical debate were the focuses of the debate, how the Stalinist-Soviet paradigm and methodology were utilized in humanities for ideological and political purposes (Roth 2014: 3). The papers took a close look at the Marxist ideology and Herder's theory, discussing on how it affected humanities, mainly the disciplines of folklore and ethnology and the tradition.

In the following years, when the post-communist generation became part of the Institute's leadership, the discourse started to be integrated in the Institute's activities and publications.

2)The conference Socialism and Albanian Society took place at Universitas Fabrefakta Optime (present Albanian University of Tirana), organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Department of Social Sciences, in April 2010. The ethnomusicologist Corina Iosif Sîrbu and I presented a paper on the topic "Cultural Policies and Folk Studies in Communist and Post-communist Albania" (see also Sîrbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015).

The Institute of Folk Culture, the archive of the peasant music collection: the construction of folk culture institutionalization

The sound of national identity in the audio-visual archive

Audio and video collecting processes of urban and rural Albanian music in modern Albania go back seventy years and cover the

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most important political and historical periods of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The diachronic institutionalization of the archive corresponds to the perspective of political decision-making in the Albanian state. Regardless of the impact it had on different political and historical contexts, the politics of culture and the importance of the archiving tradition during the nation-building process were specific concerns of governments, whether before, during or after communism (Kultura Popullore 1985: 19-74). Under both King Zogu I and communist leader Enver Hoxha, traditional culture was the only form of power for the new nation state, so it had to be investigated, collected, documented, classified, preserved, and disseminated. During the twentieth century, the nationalist paradigm was an appropriate method to approach the disciplines of history, linguistics, archeology and culture, leading to the scientific label: Albanological Studies (Studimet Albanologjike).

The twentieth-century nationalist approach was the continuance of the nineteenth-century nationalist movement in Southeast Europe, with the Albanian elite being also oriented toward the patriotic essentialist paradigm of the time (Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 222). The movement, namely, the Albanian National Awakening/ Revival (Rilindja Shqiptare) and the elite involved, Rilindasit (mainly historians, writers and poets), were strongly influenced by Johann Gottfried von Herder's nationalist and Romantic view of promoting culture and language.[3] With political desire for national determination and nation building, Rilindasit clung to the paradigm of essentialist patriotism which held centrally the virtues and the origin of the people, and their very task was that these ideas be effectively articulated and also spread (Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 224-228; Pujol 2013: 50). Following these views, through historical references to the roots of ancient Ilirians, they tried to prove the evolution of Albanian society using the ethnogenesis thesis.[4] Led by Herder's theory, Rilindasit aimed to depict Albanians as a great civilization and, by adding to it the Pelasgians thesis, they strengthened the claim to and recognition of racial supremacy, connecting Albanians with the Indo-European race (Indo-Iranian, Arian) descent (Ceka 2007: 106). Of course, in supporting these theories, they had to stress the virtues of society, shielded by cultural elements found in mythology, folk songs, customs, and natural laws.

The intervention of the state in the nationalist discourse at the heart of the modern identity construction is first encountered in the establishment and creation of cultural institutions during the reign of Ahmet Zogu I (1928-1939). An example is the history of the Institute of Cultural Anthropological and Art Studies in Tirana, including its archives. The audio and video archive has an important role in the founding history of the Institute. In different periods, the archive records remain proof of national presence, making up the core of the Institute's nationalist work.

The music archive was created in 1939, serving as an archive of Radio Tirana (1939) and located in a three-floor villa with an Italian fascist architectural style. Under the special care of King "Ahmet Zogu I," Radio Tirana's mission was to establish the first Albanian-speaking radio and broadcasting programs with the intention of disseminating Albanian culture in the newly formed state. Apart from its broadcasting role, it also started to publish twice a month a journal named *Radioprogram*, which later changed its name to *Radiorevista Tirana*, *Vatra shqiptare* (Albanian Hearth) and *Jeta shqiptare* (Albanian Life) (Këlliçi 2018). In its early years the journal dealt with local cultural and art topics, with ethnographic reports from the field, and short research works on folklore matters (until 1944).

The archiving of culture became a third role for Radio Tirana, one strongly connected with traditional music. Urban songs were recorded in the Radio's studio by professional technicians or in Italy by Italian state radios, while the rest of the songs and

3) Herder himself was not a Romantic, but his ideas about "ethnicity," *Volk* and *Geist*, had a strong influence on the political Romanticization of "the new nations" and their founders (Sîrbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015: 11).

4) The rhetoric was continued during communism and even strengthened. Historical references and the ethnogenesis thesis were the pillars of the nationalist communist ideology (see also Hoxha's Plennary speeches at Party Congresses, *Kultura Populore* 1985: 19-74; about ethnogenesis in folk songs, see Filja 1989: 141-143).

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dances were collected by a number of patriotic professional musicians, who had studied abroad through scholarships funded by the kingdom. They traveled to different regions of the country, to urban and rural areas very rich in traditional elements, and they recorded and transcribed songs and dances. For example, Tish Daija, a prewar composer made a great contribution recording songs from the north to the south Albania,[5] as well as publishing field reports with brief descriptions about the performance of the song (Hajati 2006). In general, there were no analyzes, only reports that indicated the existence of songs within the geographical area.

5) Interview in 2004 with Robert Çollaku, Head of Ethnomusicology Archive at the Institute of Folk Culture.

During all this time, the building served as a political institution; first, in the prewar period, it had the function to support the kingdom's nation-building agenda, nourishing the public with nationalist propaganda; second, it acted as a paramilitary unit, when in November 17, 1944 the Radio aired the first news claiming the liberation of Tirana by the Nazi occupation.[6]

6) Conversations with researchers at the Ethnomusicology Department between 2003 and 2008 (See also Këlliçi 2018).

In all aspects, in its fascist architecture, cultural and political functions, the building has something important to contribute to the formation of local and national history, concerning material and immaterial culture (Anglin 2008: 241). Currently, the building contributes to Albanian national and cultural policies, as it is recognized by the Ministry of Culture as a cultural monument.

In the early years after the World War II, Radio Tirana remained in the same building along with the folklore audio collection (traditional music, fables, etc.).[7] When the Ethnographic Research Sector was founded (1947) under the direction of the Institute of Sciences (see also Minga 2017: 35), it was located in the same building as Radio Tirana, making good use of the archival materials. The materials collected during fieldworks continued to be stored in the music archive.

7) Conversation with Robert Çollaku at the Institute of Folk Culture.

During this time the scholars' task was completely focused on collecting, transcribing and disseminating national folklore materials (music and texts). Folklore had to respond to the necessities of the new communist nation and the nation building process; it had to emancipate the society in the domain of education and culture (Sokoli 1965). In this context, in 1959, folklore was integrated in all the academic curricula as a course and in History, Music and Literature text books (Sîrbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015: 10).

The Marxist-Leninist methodology for the process of collecting folklore songs and dances

Recording, archiving and classification methods of folk music fully reflected the ideological orientations of Enver Hoxha and the Party. Hoxha's political messages communicated in the plenary sessions of the Party's Congresses were transmitted through a variety of media. Political communications at the Institute came through the Ministry of Education and the attached bureaus for different domains. In 1950 the Committee for Arts and Culture was established under the Laboratory of Music with the task of orienting science, art and literature towards specific thematic and methodology classification, everything based on Marxist-Leninist ideology, of course. Hence, we see how the archiving process of musical folklore started to reflect every single speech of the Party's leader, seeking to emphasize the national evolution, as well the national revolution (Sako *et al.* 1972: 2-4).

In its early years, the Ethnographic Research Sector did not conduct any planned and collective expeditions as it lacked logistics, methodology, and practice to conduct them. Song collection depended entirely on individual contributions, mainly from musicians or passionate music or literature school teachers who lived in urban and rural areas. These passionate folklore collectors also transcribed the materials, which can still be found in the music archive.

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However, they started organizing collective expeditions after the 1950s when the Marxist-Leninist ideology along with Soviet methodology were introduced and delivered to the Institute's scholars through various actions: workshops and seminars, joint experiences of fieldwork, experiences of visiting communist places, practices illustrated from international ethnographic exhibitions[8] (Gjergji 2006), as well support with equipment supplies.

The year 1957 marked the first organized official ethnomusicology expedition, which in fact was an endeavor of the Eastern German Academy of Science in collaboration with the Institute of Folklore in Albania. "A venture of two socialist sister states" as Pistrick (2017: 42) calls it, the expedition was financed and methodologically supported by the German partner, while logistics on location were covered by the Albanian state. The Germans were led by the successful ethnomusicologist couple Doris and Eric Stockmann, and the scholar Wilfried Fiedler, as for the Albanian team it was led by the ethnomusicologists Ramadan Sokoli (Stockman *et al.* 1965). As a matter of fact, Sokoli, a composer, flautist, musicologist, founder of Albania's ethnomusicology discipline, was actually a contested figure in the eyes of the regime who belonged to the former Albanian bourgeoisie. And here in this expedition he was the leading scholar, representing the Albanian partner.

The collaboration resulted in the collection of an estimated 620 recordings of around thirty-five hours, and 900 photo negatives, as well as an exemplary publication, which set new standards in comparative musicology (Pistrick 2017: 245). With its methodology and collection, the expedition opened a new era for the Ethnomusicology Department's archive. The Stockmann's archive is even now considered quite important among the Institute's collections: the archive section was named the "Stockmann collection."

In 1959, a second experience, but not central like the German experience, brought Albanians and Romanians together for an international collaborative expedition with scholars from the Romanian Academy of Science.

In the meantime, the discipline of folklore got more attention from the state, and the sector was redefined under a new name and a new structure. It became the Institute for Folklore Studies[9] (1960) with two departments, the Department of Folklore and the Department of Ethnology. In 1979, the Institute of Folklore was again reorganized under a new name *Instituti i Kulturës Popullore* (IKP) (Institute of Popular Culture). In this period, IKP started to work under the direction of the Albanian Academy of Sciences (*Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë*), a typical organizational structure, analogous to others of the communist Eastern Block which until 1990 followed the Soviet model.

Due to institutional changes, in 1960, Radio Tirana and the music archive were restructured and moved to another place. The original materials were stored on the same 6,3 mm magnetic tape in the Radio Tirana Archive, a copy being kept in the Institute's Archive with registering numbers from 1 through 142 (Qafoku 2009: 105).

Along with institutional reorganization, funding also increased, which in turn led to an increase in the number of expeditions and the quantity of recordings that would furnish the audio archive. The audio and video archive would acquire upgraded recording equipment, particularly those used in the field, Nagra-audio portable 4.2L recorders and Uher Report 4000, which in the early 1960s were available all around the globe. Uher recorded on 5 inch reels at speeds of 7½, 17/8 ips. The quality was excellent, they were considerably lighter compared to the Nagra-audio portable 4.2L recorders, but still quite heavy given that the researchers had to carry the equipment around remote villages, sometimes for hours.

Once the discipline and the archive were institutionalized, expeditions became very organized and followed a system of regulations oriented by the Soviet methodology

8) In 1976 a Romanian collection from the National Museum was opened to the Albanian public, continuing with an ethnographic exhibition from Swedish tradition (Gjergji 2006: 143-145, 168-170).

9) The Institute remains attached to the University of Tirana.

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of research. Collective expeditions were organized in two ways: (1) *stationary expeditions* which involved ethnographers using a set of observations/questions to explore the thematics; and (2) *moving expeditions* which involved ethnomusicologists in recording songs and dances. Fieldwork, both collective and individual, was led by scholars at the Department, with the participation of technicians of the musical archive,[10] as well as external scientific collaborators (school teachers in urban or rural areas).

The Party's institutional directives were very precise in propagating the Marxist-Leninist ideology concerning collecting methods, classification of tradition, as well as the thematics. As a first step the ideology was applied through the compilation of a standardized questionnaire (Dojaka 1972: 137) consisting of a large number of questions which were carefully formulated and discussed in departmental meetings by scholars of the Institute, leaders of the Academy of Science, as well specialists at the Ministry of Education (*Kultura Popullore* 1980: 123). Each question targeted those specific ideologically oriented thematics connected with both historical evolution and social transformations. Epics and legendary songs, lyrical and ritual songs, dances, they were all part of these thematics. Following the national homogenization orientations, the songs had to be contextualized within the regional classification; in preparing the survey questions, the scholars who were ethnographers, ethnomusicologists and oral folklorists had to exclude the presence of linguistic and ethnic minority group songs, or at least the text (Slavic, Greek, Vlach) had to be sung in Albanian. A systematic survey had to be undergone during the time in which the archive had to be updated with songs from new folklore focusing on thematics, such as the family, collectivization, emancipation, agriculture, farming etc. (Panajoti and Kruta 1985: 89-108). Through the new folklore, archival materials along with the studies had to narrate the progress of the socialist society and the formation of the cult of the individual, the New Man. Another aspect which accompanied the collective and individual expeditions was the verification of the informant's political background which, in coordination with vigilant representatives from local (urban or rural) authorities and other institutions (school teachers, cultural center directors or specialists), mapped the political situation of each informant, making sure that the informant's political biography was "spotless." In this way the recorded data on analogue tapes reflected the orientations given to the archive, which had strictly followed the ideological and political content of the orientations.

Here is a representative example of a questionnaire:

> The title of the song;
> The singer's gender (man, woman or group);
> The performance (a Capella or with accompaniment);
> The instrument;
> The singer's age and name;
> Place where they are recorded (village, town, festival, or recording studio);
> The date of the recording;
> The person who made the recording;
> The transcriber and the date of notification;
> The name of the publication and the year and name of researcher who published the lyrics.[11]

Mikaela Minga, an ethnomusicologist at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies (IAKSA), argues that since their establishment "the functions of the audiovisual archive were oriented . . . on an ongoing principle of collecting, cataloguing, and preservation . . . The indicators for this are two guidelines for folkloric research in 1968 and 1975" (2017: 39). The same claims come from Eftim Dheri, one of the founders of the Institute's Ethnomusicology Department: "The guidelines and the structured questionnaire conceived by the Institute's researchers were central for the methodology" (Dheri 1965: 15), as they highlighted the association with oral folklore and the product

10) As you will note I use different labels for the audio and video archive, as during the time I spent at the Institute the archive had assigned various names. These names, audio-video archive, music archive, ethnomusicology archive were given by the scholars and which I also found them in the Institute's documents.

11) The data were collected in the audiovisual archive of the Institute of Folk Culture, from 2006 to 2008.

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itself, while performance and participation of the audience had to be secondary (Minga 2017: 39).

The formative influence of Bela Bartok's nationalism emphasizing the methodology of melody recording had an effect on the folklore scientific community as a whole. Bartok's advice "to catch the last intangible treasure of our people" was published under the Party's directives in *Popular Culture*, the journal of the Institute of Folk Culture (*Kultura Popullore* 1982: 4-12). Under these directions, ethnologists, folklorists and ethnomusicologists scrupulously collected materials from all over the country, from the most remote villages in Albania and other Albanian-speaking territories (Kosovo, south Italy, Macedonia, etc.).

Whether Bartok himself at a certain moment shifted his point of view, when in the 1970s a revolution occurred in sociocultural anthropology,[12] it began to be felt in ethnomusicology and became a great challenge (Titon 2015: 176). Bartok became skeptical of the methodology according to which music was to be construed like an object to be analyzed. He asserted that: "Up to this point we have discussed the collection of melodies as if they were isolated items" (Titon 2015: 179). Instead, for Bartok and others (Merriam, Lomax), since they were considering a shift of paradigm, music was to be understood as a text to be interpreted, as they did in the humanities (Merriam 1964; Lomax 1968, 1972, 1976).

But as ideology would dictate in the communist camp, Albanian ethnomusicologists had to avoid the new western theoretical flow. The Albanian scholars never considered the comparative approach and music understood as praxis; instead their primary duty was collecting. Secondly, the interest was in text production of song transcriptions,[13] technical analyses of the pitch, rhythm tempo, and harmony. The social and cultural aspects assumed a third role, while music as a productive activity in the social world with an economic basis and political implication had to be left aside (Titon 2015: 176).

A wind of change for the discipline: the restructuring of the institution in order to reform the discipline

With the change of political system, forty years after its foundation, the Institute's research production was drastically reduced. On the one hand, there was the exodus of scholars who left the country for a better life; some of them were awarded scholarships to acquire western knowledge, but never returned to Albania. On the other hand, the postcommunist transition period put the Albanian academic reality into chaos by what later came to be termed the "brain drain" or "the emigration of intellectuals."

Another aspect of the degradation of science was the cuts in research funding and the impoverishment of libraries of the Academy of Sciences. There were very few scientific collective field trips. The conditions caused by the political and financial climate gave rise to a deficit of new materials in the archive collection. And, of course, the participation in international activities was covered from the scholars' own pockets or with some support from international associations.

At this point, a political action had to be undertaken to deal with this situation. After two decades after the fall of communism a reform in science was to be implemented. With the coming to power of the Right Wing Party in 2005 under the slogan "Time for a change," (Progni, 2015) a new program was revealed to reform the whole academic system, of what had remained as a legacy of Soviet colonization. The reform project initially took different forms—from "a deconstruction of the academic system" to "the melting down" of the Academy of Sciences of Albania and its fourteen dependent institutes (Vendim 2007).

With the victory of the Right Wing, the proposed project on science and higher education was adopted between 2007 and 2008 (Vendim 2009). To tell the truth the objectives of the Reform were welcomed by

12) Itself centered in ethnography and influenced by literary and philosophical theory, particularly from France and Germany, and bristling with ominous sounding words like phenomenology and hermeneutics (Titon 2015: 176).

13) A prolific period between the 1950s and the 1980s, it saw the publication of anthological works with transcriptions and texts; loads of song transcriptions and texts were disseminated from the Department of Ethnomusicology and Folklore (Daja 1982, 1983; Dheri *et al.* 1964; Vasili and Doja 1990).

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postcommunist scholars who were already interested in a "paradigm shift" (Roth 2014). Some of these scholars were part of the successful results from a brain-gain strategy, a cohort who had studied, researched and taught at the western universities and now returned to Albania. The other fraction of scholars were the young researchers of the Academy of Science who, thanks to the opening of the Albanian market to western texts, had had the possibility to gain knowledge from a new critical perspective.

The Reform was part of the national policy strategy for *Science, Technology and Innovation* with an Anglo-American approach to science, targeting the transformation of the higher education system and the reorganizing of the Academy of Sciences by separating the institutes from its jurisdiction and then placing them under the superintendence of the Ministry of Education and Science.[14] The institutes which dealt with the humanities, or Albanian studies, were grouped together in a new interdisciplinary center, the Center for Albanological Studies (in spring 2008).

At the time of the Reform implementation, a harsh rhetoric was used toward research institutes and the Albanian Academy of Sciences presidency. The media scorned the institutes as *vegetative* or *parasitic units* with *useless* scholars who, since 1991, had not produced science but rather had squandered state funds (*Gazeta Shqiptare* 2007: 8).

As a matter of fact, the final results of the reform for the Academy of Sciences were drastic—the funding was not increased, on the contrary, the budget was reduced, and more than a hundred academicians and technical staff lost their jobs. Besides, no effort was made to consolidate the research and create closer links between researchers and research projects (UNESCO Science Report 2010: 195).

The Center for Albanological Studies (Qendra e Studimeve Albanologjike-QSA) (March 2008), with four research institutes in the humanities (History, Linguistics and Literature, Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies, Archeology), was the new structure given the role to produce science under a new vision. Conceived as an interdisciplinary research directorate using a westernized methodology in empirical studies and analyses, it expanded its functions also as an Inter-University Service Center. The new structure fitted the new government's "modernization" objectives for the democratization of science and education.

On the other hand, the Academy of Sciences remained an honorific title, with very limited research functions, a few academic members, and very little influence on research policies.

Institutional change under the new vision and paradigm also influenced the change of the name of the Institute of Folklore that became the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies *[Instituti i Antropologjisë Kulturore dhe Studimit të Artit]*. The departments also were restructured as the Department of Ethnomusicology and Ethnochoreology and the Department of Oral Folklore became the Department of Folklore. The restructuring affected human resources too, many academicians and technicians were replaced, raising the question of the fate of the archives and their maintenance. The same applied to the audiovisual archive. The archivists who had dedicated a lifetime to cataloguing and preserving materials were dismissed as old and useless; the reform replaced them with new entry-level employees, inexperienced in archiving, field work, and folklore.

Post-communist techniques of preserving folklore music

In Albania, conservation programs on cultural heritage include different organizational entities, which have the responsibility of the archives' physical maintenance and supervision. For years, the Institute of Folk Culture has been undertaking efforts to protect the records in their original format. The

14) See also *Albania Progress Report* (2008: 34) and *UNESCO Science Report* (2010: 195).

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audiovisual records database, including the content of the tapes, is found in handwritten or typed form, but since 2007 the information was digitalized.

In this section I will try to depict the conditions and the quality of the archive's collection and the efforts the Institute and the Albanian state made to preserve the intangible cultural heritage. The first step of the conservation process concerned its very core elements, archive infrastructure and technical maintenance equipment for archive maintenance:

The archive room.
The audio and video station with technical recording machines that are used to duplicate tapes, from tape to tape, and from tape to digital form.
A recording studio.
The listening room of archival units for researchers.
Transportable field recording equipment.

Due to generous state funding over the years, the archive collection built up a considerable variety of inventory: phonograph records from 1920; audio recordings on magnetic tape, amounting to 3,000 tapes with a total duration of approximately 2,000 hours, 60,000 linear m of 16 mm magnetic tape; approximately 500 video materials / videocassettes (Schüler 2008: 24; Qafoku 2009: 105; Shkreli 2010); and digital audio and video recordings from folk festivals which date from 2005 to the present. The registers inventorying the recordings date from 1957 up to 1992. The content of the registers classifies the recordings into three categories: rituals, customs, and entertaining, as well as subcategories that are shown in Tables 1 and 2.[15]

The analogue recording system continued until the postcommunist period but fell out of use by the end of 2005, when ethnomusicologists integrated in their individual fieldwork digital MP3 recorders. Only a small

15) The tables are created by Klodian Qafoku, ethnomusicologist at the Institute of Folk Culture/IAKSA, involved in the digitalization project (Qafoku 2009: 110-111). The project was implemented and finalized thanks to the ethnomusicologists at the Institute, Robert Çollaku, Klodian Qafoku, Armand Zaçeliçi and Bledar Kondi.

Table 1

Këngë djepi [Lullabies]	*Këngë dashurie* [Love songs]
Këngë dasme [Wedding songs]	*Këngë trimërie* [Heroic songs]
Këngë kurbeti [Migration songs]	*Këngë të epikës legjendare* [Legendary epic songs]
Këngë nizami [Ottoman military songs]	*Këngë atdhetare* [Patriotic songs]
Vajtim / Gjamë [Laments]	*Këngë historike* [Historic songs]
Thirje Majekrahi [Mountain signals]	*Këngë të realizmit socialist* [Songs of Socialist Realism] Or *Këngë të folklorit të ri* [Songs of the new folklore]
Këngë kalandarike [Calendar songs]	*Këngë shoqërore* [Social songs]
Këngë fetare [Religious songs]	*Këngë humoristike* [Humoristic songs]
	Imitime kafshësh [Imitaion of animals]

Table 2

Vocal music
Instrumental music
Dance instrumental music
Vocal-instrumental music
Danco vocal-instrumental music

Original	
Copy	Studio recording
	Stage recording
	Field recording

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number of these recordings were delivered to the Institute archive, the rest became part of the researchers' personal archives.

Archival digital recording was also used at folk festivals when digital equipment was introduced, thanks to an Austrian digitization project.

According to the information in the registers, the numerous songs, dances and rituals were collected not only through fieldwork but many came from recordings at the Institute's recording studio, in the studios of Albanian Radio Television, at the National Festival of Gjirokastra,[16] and different thematic folk festivals. The period from 1962 to 1987, when state funding for folklore was on the rise, was the most intensive one for material collection.

16) This is the biggest folk festival in Albania organized in the medieval Ottoman town of Gjirokastra in south Albania, which happened to be the home town of Enver Hoxha. The festival was founded in 1968, and during the regime was an institution that celebrated the birthday of the dictator.

The archive's structure, content and classification[17] can shed light on the political situation as it actually was, that is, the archive held a dual ontology: in form it used a Stalinist-Soviet methodology and in content, the Marxist ideology; this was what the scholars were obliged to follow. The task of scholars and volunteers, as we have already discussed, was to show facts that prove the linear evolution of the Albanian people from the archaic period to the modern one, whether they lived inside or outside the state's territory (Bardhoshi and Lelaj 2018: 33). Trying to explain the table above, the archive documents indicate the presence of social and historical myths; the myth of origin, the myth of wartime, the myth of national resistance against the enemy as found in basic prototypes of popular culture in northern homophonic songs and epic songs (see also Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 228). In form and content the archive reflects the nationalist orientation which, over the years of collecting and recording, has tried to maintain ethnic homogeneity of the nation as visible in the classification of songs and dances. Again, the table illustrates the basis of the classification system that emphasizes regional aspects, mainly the rural areas, trying to prove that the peasant songs contain the ancient characteristics of the nation. Another aspect that can be read from the table is the lack of songs and dances of minority populations that remain confined to the regional category. Their songs were translated into Albanian and attached to each village's folklore. In trying to affirm the evolutionist theory, for the scholars who focused on ethnic homogenization, the minorities' presence did not correlate with the nationalist communist agenda.

17) In order to understand the classification method of the archive materials, there were suggested the Registers of phonotech from the year 1964 till 1990 (AM-ASH, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Despite the difficult economic conditions of postcommunist Albania, the visual audio archive was organized and maintained in good condition. The Institute was able to maintain the UHER Report 4000 transportable and NAGRA 4.2L recorders in optimal condition. But as time passed, keeping the archive up to the required standards was quite difficult, especially when, in spring 1997, the financial and political situation in Albania collapsed (Duka 2008). The lack of state conservation funding enormously affected the physical condition of the tapes, which after 2000 were considered at risk. In the meantime, the Institute of Folk Studies kept in touch with the international scientific community, especially with European folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and audiovisual archivists.

In 2005, a digitalization project was implemented by the Vienna Phonogram Archive of the Austrian Academy of Science, the world's oldest sound archive. This was part of a larger project, which involved five Eastern European audiovisual archives: the Academy of Sciences, Tirana, Albania; Skopje, Macedonia; Bucharest, Romania; Warsaw, Poland; Saint-Petersburg, the Russian Federation. The project was proposed by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Austrian Development Cooperation Agency, with the aim to preserve cultural heritage collections in Eastern Europe. The project was led by the director of the Phonogram Archive, Dr. Dietrich Schüller, and other scholars and archivists from Vienna (Schüller 2008).

The project was based on national and international cultural policies for preser-

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vation and promotion of cultural heritage in Albania in 2005. Not only was it a good opportunity to preserve the audiovisual archive of the Institute of Folk Culture of the Albanian Academy of Science, but it was also a good time for the Albanian Academy to show to the public that the science reform of 2005 had already started from within. The international cooperation aspect of the project supported open access and democratization in research, particularly of folklore. It was also a new vision and perspective in line with the Open Archive access movement, making the data in the Institute's audiovisual archive accessible for scholars.

The Austrian project supported the archive with funding, knowledge and methodology in digitization, technical support, a digital workstation, and a server with sufficient capacity to store the digitalized materials.

The strategies and methods of digital recording were based on a standard document set by the International Association of Audio Archives (IASA) that applied to video archiving (Schüller 2008: 23). Furthermore, the collection was transferred from analogue tape to original tape and to digital discs, and videos to DVDs. Increasing the quality of the collection was the only way to ensure a longer life of the ethno-documents. Besides, the digitalization process opened the possibility to observe in detail the quality of the tapes, to preserve them in the longer term within a platform, and avoid possible future information loss.

On the other hand, the conversion of the collection from analogue to digital enabled duplication, thus, a copy of the collection was also deposited for conservation in the Phonogram Archives in Vienna. From a nationalist point of view the process seemed extremely revolting, "selling your soul for nothing," said some nationalist scholars. But at the level of heritage preservation, opening a conservation corner in a highly maintained archive institution turned out to be a positive choice. What all archivists fear the most is time, conditions and circumstances, and, in fact, after the completion of the project at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies in Tirana, approximately in 2011, the server that held the collection's metadata collapsed, and the digital copy of the collection was irretrievably lost.

Conclusions

Communist politics connected with peasant culture and communist ideology was also connected with "tradition" as a model for the construction of the New Man. The soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology strongly influenced the evolution of Albanian society during and after the communist era. The interest of the communist authorities in folklore as a discipline of the masses led to the formation of folklore consumerism.

This situation characterizes communist politics that strongly oriented and controlled archival activities—collecting, classifying, cataloguing, and preserving—and text publications. The Ethnomusicology Archive at the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana was a repository in which materials of traditional significance were/are stored and controlled (Brown and Brown 1998: 17). As a national research archive, along with the discipline of ethnomusicology, it played an important role as an ideological tool in the construction of the communist nation state. However, peasant cultures, which were converted by the communist regime into "cultural traditions," remain one of the most important domains in Albanian studies.

Today, postcommunism and the west have already contributed to the change of the nationalist communist approach in folklore studies. The transition from old concepts of Marxist-Leninism to contemporary paradigms of cultural anthropology thus became necessary and useful for the young generation of the Institute of Folk Culture as they replaced the object of research, theory and methodology with the western comparative approach.

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MARTOR

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"Whose Property Are My Letters?" Inside Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca's Archive

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ABSTRACT

Public use of objects belonging to private memory is what concerned me while writing this article. Under discussion will be the collection of letters received by Romanian couple Lovinescu–Ierunca during their more than sixty-year exile in France (1946-2008) from hundreds of fellow intellectuals confined to Romania by the communist regime.
The documents belonged to the couple until their death. "Whose property are my letters?" is a question that may now—once the recipients are dead—be raised by any of their surviving correspondents. (The recipient becomes the rightful owner of all the letters he or she receives; but what if the recipient dies without any legal heirs? Who is entitled to the final and legal decision about the fate of those letters?) The politics of memory—issues most germane to public policy—will therefore be the main focus of the first part of my paper.
Next, I shall address the special situation of the letters Monica Lovinescu received from her mother, Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu, a fonds which I managed as follows: recovery, selection, translation into Romanian (given the fact that most of them were written in French in order to evade political censorship), publication by Humanitas Publishing House, followed by the transfer of the physical collection to the Humanitas Aqua Forte Foundation. Editing that private correspondence was an occasion for me to fully experience what Arlette Farge (1989) has called "the allure of the archives." I shall present this experience in detail in the second part of my study.

KEYWORDS

Politics of memory, archives, heritage, letters and diaries, Monica Lovinescu, Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu.

"*Everything is a memory case.*"

— Alon Confino

"L'acquis de la nouvelle histoire se révèle à travers la pluralité des regards, l'ouverture du champs d'observation, la variété des pistes de recherches qui mènent à l'histoire contemporaine. Quittant le régistre de la mémoire, le passé devient de plus en plus vite objet d'histoire."

— Sonia Combe

"Je qualifie l'histoire d'étude scientifiquement menée, non de science."

— Lucien Febvre)

If under pressure from the intellectual fashion of the day, and especially due to the impact of what has been considered "un certain terrorisme politico-intellectuel" (Le Goff 1988: 327), history as an ideological (usually Marxist) interpretation of the past has clearly dominated the twentieth century, towards its end the scientific world slowly began to awake from the fascination of these all-too-coherent patterns of understanding and started to ask itself how much credit should be given to the smooth, linear and logical explanations of social

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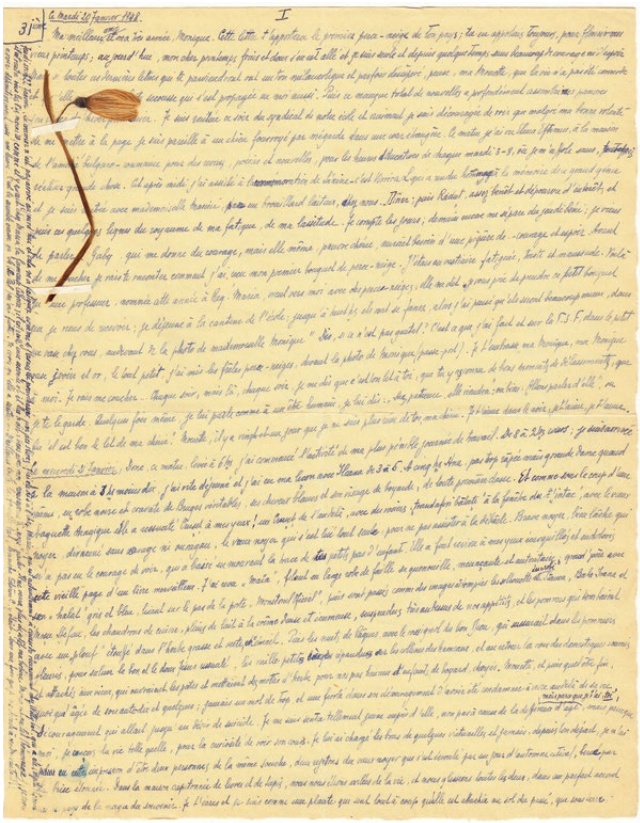

Memorabilia: portrait (photography) of Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu in the 1950s and snowdrop letter, 1947.

history. Although no pervasive frame of reference is to be found within the humanities, too much coherence[1] appears to be rather the sign of a self-satisfied *artificial* inquiry, lacking depth, honesty and truth. Human deeds are an endless puzzle, which historical consciousness cannot take reliable control of. Here we must recall Raymond Aron's words about uncertainty, which does not mean scientific failure, but on the contrary mimics a kind of ambiguity very much connected to the essence of our human consciousness and to the interval that separates knowledge from life itself (Aron 1997: 135), or those of Lucien Febvre chosen for the motto of these pages.

Holistic hermeneutics have thus been slowly set aside, together with the ideal of having *one* single history, based on a unique truth and on a mechanical chronology, one and the same for everybody. All of the contesting ideas have consequently gained ground. Considering the increasing need for authenticity, Michel Foucault (1966, 1971) has placed *discontinuity* in a new scientific light. Indeed, of what relevance can be the closed, complete and self-sufficient patterns of knowledge when some newer events show up and want to take their place within the whole? How shall they find a place, if our explanations are already complete and there is no room left? If a particular science must be conceived by strict comparison to systematic sciences, then maybe history should no longer covet its place on the list.

A new objectivity emerged, aimed at "un savoir faillible, imparfait, discutable, jamais parfaitement innocent, mais que sa norme de vérité et ses conditions professionnelles d'élaboration et d'exercice permettent d'appeler scientifique" (Le Goff 1988: 350). Within the "immediate history" / "la nouvelle histoire," a remarkable turn has already taken place under the influence of the so-called *memory revolution*.[2] The scholar's aim seems to be not so much to diagnose the re-

1) "Coherence cannot be the major test of validity for a cultural description. [...] The force of our interpretations cannot rest, as they are now so often made to do, on the tightness with which they hold together, or the assurance with which they are argued. Nothing has done more, I think, to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose actual existence nobody can quite believe" (Geertz 1973: 17-18).

2) "The notion of 'memory' has taken its place now as a leading term, perhaps the leading term, in cultural history" (Confino 1997: 1386).

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alities he/she is discussing, but to converse with them; a kind of extended anthropological field study is more alluring nowadays, seemingly in search of difficulties, controversial issues and multiple reasoning (see the famous principle "Pas de problèmes, pas d'histoire," Febvre 2009: 25). A change of scale[3]—from "big" history to the everyday life of individuals—has led historians to notice things that never interested them before. New topics correspond to the new perspective on how and for what purpose history should be practised. Moreover, the view of history as a social *practice* gradually makes its way into the scientific world.

Various policies respond sooner or later to all social practices. If memory, considered to embrace all "the ways in which people construct a sense of the past" (Confino 1997: 1386) draws public attention today, one can expect an official *mainstream memory* to be (as it has always been) consequently forged by political rulers.[4] In response, popular collective or individual memory, recorded in informal archives—namely oral or written narratives of life stories, ordinary people's letters and diaries, private memorials and celebrations, rumours, blurbs and fame itself, etc.—add to the general knowledge of history, sometimes opposing the mainstream and dismissing false explanations. The phenomenon was characterized by John Bodnar (1994) as "*vernacular* versus *official* memory."

The *politics of memory* is a notion that was coined in the 1990s, in reference to the conflicting accounts of Nazi crimes in the Allies' official history, in German official history and in the narratives of different ethnic groups that carry collective memories of the Second World War. The notion has been revisited from many perspectives: "One of the questions that arises when reflecting on key moments of the past concerns the role of the archive in disseminating political memoryscapes" (Cohen 2018: 17). Policy makers build the *official archives* according to political interests. (Of course, there have always been private archives as well, with more or less open access, but the amount of information required by historians is mainly found in public archives.) The funny thing is that when, driven by our particular scientific needs, we access a certain archive, we usually expect to find more than what we were initially looking for. And if we are lucky, we really do! But what is it that makes many of us feel this way?

Once he enters the vast domain of a public archive, the researcher is at the archivist's disposal—a situation that Arlette Farge suggestively rendered in her study on the allure of archives. Many of us have felt the impact of archivists' generally narrow concept regarding the property regime[5] of the documents they own. They are also responsible for the physical condition of the pieces they are entrusted with. But do they really *own* those documents? Comprehending how archives work within the general administration of the social and cultural life of a given society entails investigating the *politics of memory* imposed by the state. Depending on the degree of transparency (and democracy), the time lapse between the registration of a certain event in an archive and the moment when its declassification for public access is permitted may vary from instant access to thirty years in the USA, fifty or more in Europe, and up to sixty or one hundred years for state secrets or documents touching the secrets of private life. Sonia Combe deplored this interval, which she refers to as a ripening time or "temps de lattence": "Ce temps du passage de l'archive du registre de la mémoire à celui de l'histoire qui consacre sa libre communication en fait *un objet froid*, car dépourvu d'incidence sur le présent, [et] une *archive morte*" (Combe 2001: 88, italics mine). In 1996, the French archivists organized a conference[6] on private life and state secrets, examining the legal practices meant to protect those secrets, in light of a new question: In whose service are the archives when it comes to the possible proofs of repression? Are they in service of the (oppressive) state, or in service of the citizens who righteously ask for clas-

3) "Ce que la notion d'échelle comporte de propre dans l'emploi qu'en font les historiens, c'est l'absence de commensurabilité des dimensions. En changeant de l'échelle, on ne voit pas les mêmes choses en plus grand ou en plus petit, [...] on voit des choses différentes" (Ricœur 2000: 270).

4) "By sanctifying the political while underplaying the social, and by sacrificing the cultural to the political, we transform memory into a «natural» corollary of political development and interests" (Confino 1997: 1394).

5) "Tout fonctionnaire a le sentiment que ses papiers *font corps* avec lui" (Combe 2001: 111).

6) "La communauté des archivistes est en proie à une crise de conscience qui la conduit à s'interroger à la fois sur sa mission au service du publique et sur la fonction, qui lui a été implicitement dévolue, de gardienne des secrets de l'État" (Combe 2001: XVII).

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sified information presumably containing shards of evidence? In 1993, Shentalinsky, a Russian poet, published a book in France on the literary archives of the KGB, selecting different documents and commenting on them; the work was so generous in details that it was compared to a Baroque artefact, but the most important thing the author did was to contextualize every document so as to make it transparent with regard to the circumstances of its creation (for example, testimonials obtained under extreme pressure meant—as the author pointed out—almost the opposite of what the torturer made his prisoner say or sign[7]). It was only the beginning of a huge interest in such archives and documents. Seuil, one of the most important publishing houses in Paris, dedicated a new collection to them in the 1990s (*Archives du communisme*), coordinated by Stéphane Courtois and Nicolas Werth, who called the phenomenon "a true documentary revolution" (Courtois 2009: 401). Indeed, the archives of former communist regimes contain billions of files, many of which had once been classified "top secret." Secrecy was a social pathology in totalitarian states. Everything had to be *secret* in order to concentrate all the power into the hands of those who controlled information. At the same time, everything that happened or was supposed to happen in society had to be *reported* (of course, secretly reported) to the superiors; reporting replaced reality, as words replaced (or hid) facts. What I mean is that few of the things that were reported really had taken place, and even if they had, reality was distorted in order to match ideological prescriptions. If communism taught us anything, it was schizoid hypocrisy. Everybody learned to pretend being what they were not and doing what they did not. Truth was considered not only the *worst policy*, but in time it became almost unrecognizable among the general lies. Mixing all of these practices resulted in counterfeiting reality on a social scale by attempting to avoid any personal responsibility, and also in the general practice of looking for scapegoats[8] whenever naked reality menaced to come out. The archives of communism speak a language (see the Orwellian *newspeak*) of their own, conventional, artificial and encoded, by means of which they translate reality into ideology. Nevertheless, historians need to know and understand that idiom in order to understand the core of twentieth-century life.

Monica Lovinescu deplored the delay imposed by Romanian laws before permitting access to the archives of the former regime—"to extend the 'secret' character of such documents for yet another forty years means to annihilate the past" (Lovinescu 2008: 415). She added that historians must have free access to all the registers; it is they who must choose, it is they who should sieve the documents. For archives to really "confess," the first historians who open them should have been themselves—in real life—among the witnesses[9] to whatever the documents refer to. Indeed, it takes a former repression subject to recognize the hidden elements that smell of terror within an ideologically reshaped document—this is what David Rousset, survivor of the Buchenwald concentration camp, meant in 1949, when he asked his fellow prison mates to investigate the communist repression sites *as trauma experts* (Todorov 1999: 44).

How about the private archives and their property regime? What patrimonial laws apply to them? Should private collections be entitled to shelter valuable pieces that are potentially relevant for the general history? A comparison could be made here between the regime of art collections, on the one side, and history relics, artefacts and other findings on the other: as everybody knows, in Romania art is almost free to be traded among private collectors, on condition that it is legally sourced, whereas historical items belong mainly to the state and cannot be traded. In other words, if somebody accidentally finds an antique object, he must give it up to the state; but what if he finds a bundle of letters or a diary? Holocaust history benefited a lot from such acciden-

7) See Lovinescu (2008).

8) A striking communist social practice, still alive in Romania today, is *to find someone to put the blame on* for everything that goes *overtly* wrong, in no matter what field of activity. The general rule is that somebody has to be found guilty and punished, but never the real responsible or offender! Nevertheless, a scapegoat *must* exist. *"No guilt"* in such cases is not an acceptable logic (see the *sabotage* verdict, largely used to explain some of the most dramatic past or present failures).

9) "Nowadays [the] historian, still an eyewitness [to the events], should be the first to gain access to the files in the archives, in order to write, on each and every page, the subtext without which the historians of the future risk not ştbeingţ able to decipher what really happened to the people of the twentieth century" (Lovinescu 2008: 416).

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tal findings—though private, the cultural objects accidentally found have been put to good scientific use and in fact they now serve the general interest at least as much as the private interest of their owner. The saddest situation occurs when the actual owners of such cultural objects (*memorabilia*) either dispose of them (for instance, the first owner dies and his inheritors do not understand the value of the archive, therefore they get rid of whatever they consider mere "useless papers"), or, on the contrary, they keep the archive only for themselves, denying anybody else (including the researchers) access to the documents. There must be many such silent archives all around us that we are not even aware of … Whatever materials we reach on this matter is just the tip of the iceberg; and what we successfully use is even less. We will return to this topic below.

Given the possible and quite frequent abuses to which memory is subjected by official policies,[10] the researcher should find a good spot to conduct his survey on the social practices of the period he is interested in. It is no simple job. He must place himself in what has been described as a symbolic clash: "la région des conflits entre mémoire individuelle, mémoire collective, mémoire historique, en ce point où la mémoire vivante des survivants affronte le regard distancié et critique de l'historien" (Ricœur 2000: 105-106). He must find reliable witnesses, and to do so he must take cognizance of commingled beliefs. If he encounters opposing or merely different opinions concerning the same social events, he is on the right track, because the phenomenological existence of groups shows off in such conflicting views.[11] Victims, eyewitnesses, decision-makers, torturers and so on implicitly *act as groups*, even if they don't assume a group identity; they share the same memories, engraved in their minds from a similar perspective, regardless of the psychological differences among the group members. In different shades, their past is essentially one and the same within each group. *Collective memory*—a notion coined by Maurice Halbwachs, who has analysed it in terms of positivist thinking—cannot designate the "general" memory, for there exists no such thing: collective memory is but group memory and it stretches as far as the identity of each group.[12] Therefore, where social history is concerned, collective memories will compete and fight for supremacy. If merging them is the goal of the historian, they will prove difficult to merge. Alon Confino has mentioned this apparently paradoxical situation: "A similar problem of narrative emerges when we attempt to write the history of memory by separating its construction from its contestation. But are these competing claims not an integral part of the construction of memory?" (1997: 1397-1398). On the contrary, as Tzvetan Todorov (1999) put it, the *monopoly on memory* is a psychotic characteristic of totalitarian states (a familiar tune for Eastern Europeans).

To conclude: the very process of *establishing/producing the archives* by choosing what to introduce in them and what to leave aside, the decision about the new collections to be added, and the practice of permitting or restricting access to the information they stock are among the hints that tell a lot about the state policies. Even so, the archive is never entirely available in practice: researchers must be picky because they cannot afford an endless study in order to reach their conclusions; in this matter, they need the help of archivists as guides through the archive. Public archives are nowadays labyrinths.

The situation is less difficult when a researcher or a team is able to assemble their own archive and can make professional use of it. Such cases usually refer to witness-centered, private and mostly oral archives, gradually submitted to transcription and interpretation. A recent example would be *The Archives of Memory* (Cojocaru *et al.* 2016, 2017, 2018), a study conducted during the past four years by Moldavian researchers and historians on the social trauma inflicted by the communist regime in the small Republic of Moldova. The team gathers oral and written testimonies of survivors, papers concerning their deportation, readmission

10) *Mémoire instrumentalisée :* "[…] des abus, au sens fort du terme, résultant d'une manipulation concertée de la mémoire et de l'oubli par les détenteurs du pouvoir" (Ricœur 2000: 97).

11) "[…] l'importance des mémoires plurielles, portées par des communautés linguistiques et nationales différentes, mémoires souvent antagonistes, mais toujours en référence les unes par rapport aux autres. […] Voilà l'élément central de notre réflexion sur l'application de l'idée de lieu de mémoire à un niveau européen: embrasser la pluralité de mémoires qui renvoient à un même objet" (François and Serrier 2018: 148).

12) See Halbwachs (1925).

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and relocation, other documents on the historical context, material evidence transmitted within the families (such as old pictures), symbolic objects (*memorabilia*), proofs of changes in social habits, documents concerning the current relationship of former repression subjects with the political decision-makers, etc. They also take into consideration the particular cases when memory is self-suppressed by those who, having gone through the ordeal of political repression and deportation, are still suffering and refuse to speak about what happened to them. *Narration* is considered in psychology to be the fundamental mnemonic act (Janet 1928). People are generally prone to what Jacques Le Goff has termed "la conduite de récit," therefore, as the author notices, "les oublis, les silences de l'histoire sont révélateurs de ces mécanismes de manipulation de la mémoire collective" (1988: 109), concluding that: "La réflexion historique aujourd'hui s'attache également à l'absence des documents, aux silences de l'histoire. […] Il faut faire l'inventaire des archives du silence. Et faire l'histoire à partir des documents et des absences de documents" (1988: 302). As long as entire communities pass over their traumatic past in silence (usually because they are forced by the new establishment to remain silent about the former political establishment or about the circumstances of transition), what has been called "le travail de mémoire" is not accomplished. As Maurice Halbwachs or Théodule-Armand Ribot have put it, our past is the present representation[13] we create from the actual events.[14] We use these representations as connectors between the past and present of our lives. If remembrance is shaken, our identity is directly threatened. The same goes for societies. If remembrance is forbidden at a higher scale and memories stop being transmitted from one generation to the next, social identity is gradually destroyed. Totalitarian regimes forbid memory because they reject painful truths. But, regardless of their decision, historical truth remains the same and representations of trauma continue to nourish a subterranean collective memory—which is obviously a good defence mechanism, but a costly one, too. Social wounds remain horrendously open; *the deafening silence* imposed by political rulers makes those wounds bleed continuously. I strongly believe that ideological *omertà* is one of the worst possible wrongdoings when it comes to the future of a country. Try as they might, the rulers will finally be defeated by commoners.[15] When the silence is finally broken, those who break it are not "perpetrators" in the realm of collective memory, but healers of the deep, unseen and devitalizing social wounds. By speaking out, by appealing to remembrance and inclusion of former trauma in various hermeneutics, the past finally ceases to be present and is broken into various (conflicting) representations.

Social trauma may be the main theme of an archive. In such cases, the whole archive could serve for the prosecutor as well as for the historian, because memory renders past events in such a light that moral judgement is inherent to the study of the pieces of evidence themselves. Many of them are narratives of eyewitnesses, descendants of victims or persons who experienced trauma and are able to offer first-hand views of events. History itself originates in the basic gestures of memory transmission: "L'histoire a commencé par être un récit, le récit de celui qui peut dire *j'ai vu*, *j'ai entendu dire*. Cet aspect de l'histoire-récit, de l'histoire-témoignage, n'a jamais cessé d'exister dans le développement de la science historique" (Le Goff 1988: 20). But what credit can or should we give to oral relations more or less supported by documents? As Marc Bloch noticed, every trace of the past is a mix of overt testimony and hidden hints; in fact, "we should look for memory where it is implied rather than said, blurred rather than clear, in the realm of collective mentality" (Confino 1997: 1395). Narratives of repression offer a lot of factual information, as well as a lot of suggestive hints. Anything in them may be useful to the historian in building a scientific perspective, because it is the researcher who

13) "If we could compare our past, as it has really been, fixed before us objectively, with the subjective representation which we have in memory, we would find the copy formed upon a particular system of projection; each of us is able to find his way without trouble in this system, because he has himself created it" (Ribot 1887: 62).

14) "Le passé, en réalité, ne reparaît pas tel quel; tout semble indiquer qu'il ne se conserve pas, mais qu'on le reconstruit en partant du présent" (Halbwachs 1925: x-xi).

15) "The past cannot be [indefinitely] suppressed" (Tismăneanu 2006: 7).

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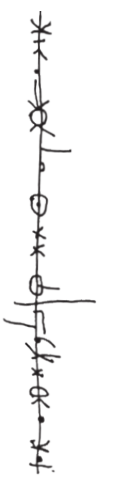
gives scientific relevance to an object of the past by questioning it and thus transforming it into a proper document (Ricœur 2000: 216). That is exactly what has happened in the particular case which I mean to discuss in the following pages. The case has a subjective edge to it as well.

In 2010 I went to Paris on a personal mission: to look for any important remains of Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca's archive that might have been left in the abandoned house of the late couple. Born in 1920 and 1923, respectively, Virgil Ierunca and his wife, Monica Lovinescu, have been two leading figures of Romanian cultural exile. While in the country, they studied literature, philosophy, and theatre art. Before 1947, the year he left Romania, Virgil Ierunca had been a cultural journalist, a rebel against all official currents, and a promoter of existentialism. In 1946 he inaugurated the difficult debate about the crisis of Romanian literature. From 1947 to 1990, in France, he added an even sharper edge to his journalism, which became very much politically involved; Paris made him grow into a real writer, whose essays, literary criticism, and poetry evolved around the theme of exile and forbidden homeland. Monica Lovinescu, after having tried herself as a theatre director and translator and founded some avant-garde companies, became an essayist, journalist, and art critic; she worked for Radio France (1951-1975) and for Radio Free Europe (from 1962), within the RFE Romanian service, where both she and her husband starred in well-known and very influential anti-communist broadcasts. The couple chose not to leave the French exile after Romania's so-called Revolution of 1989, seemingly because of their disappointment with the slow pace of political change towards democracy. They died in Paris, in 2006 and 2008.

I said "abandoned" house because at that time the legal situation of the house—left by the couple to the Romanian state, on condition of transforming it into an accommodation for Romanian students on scholarships, who are in need of material support—was quite complicated. This was initially because of the delay of the Romanian part in paying the inheritance taxes, and later because of their explicit refusal to pay both taxes and penalties. Thus, the house with no actual owner was in danger of being broken into and the profusion of documents gathered there by the couple during their more than half a century's exile could have been lost forever. Immediate action had to be taken. So I suggested going there in order to recover and bring back to the country all the important documents.

I was not the first person to visit the archive left in the house. Other researchers, either friends of the family or helping hands, had seen it during the last years of Monica Lovinescu's and Virgil Ierunca's lives, and immediately after their death. Some personal belongings, manuscripts, pictures and letters had already been recovered, along with most of the books, records and compact discs. I knew that and hoped there would not be too much left. But much to my astonishment, I found the house still full of documents. The archive was engulfing every spare inch of space, in the entrance hall, in the basement, in the living room, in the attic. Everything was full of papers. In official terms, Monica Lovinescu and her husband Virgil Ierunca were the owners of a rich *family fonds*, valuable for many fields of study, from the history of Romanian literature to recent history, political studies, sociology, cultural anthropology and so on.



As this paper deals with the question of public use of private memory, I will bring into discussion a major part of that archive: the collection of letters received by the late Romanian couple Lovinescu–Ierunca during their French exile (1946-2008) from hundreds of fellow intellectuals confined back in Romania; some of those intellectuals are still alive today. The collection consists of thousands of documents, all unconventional. They belonged to the aforementioned couple until their death. Whose property are my letters? is a question that may *now* be

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raised by any of their surviving correspondents. Indeed, many of those who wrote to the couple are important contemporary personalities of Romanian cultural life. Anyone is entitled to ask: "If I wrote some letters to someone who died, and someone else has recovered them (else they would have physically disappeared), to whom do the letters belong now?" The sender no longer possesses a letter once he mails it; the recipient becomes the rightful owner of all the letters he receives. But what if the recipient dies without any legal heirs? Who is entitled to decide the fate of those letters? To whom do they legally belong? Contemporaneity may seem an intellectual bliss due to our free and quick access to all kinds of information, but on the other hand, it may seriously hinder *the researcher of memory*, who is by definition prone to listen to each document as an individual messenger, and yet bound to follow some (often bushy and obscure) legal, deontological and ethical paths, while struggling to handle his research topic. What one would think reasonable and convenient from an ethical point of view may be subject to an unexpected reversal when dealt with from the official perspective imposed by the law. The politics of memory—issues most germane to public policy—have been the main focus of the first part of my paper.

From the already mentioned archive, I shall address the special situation of the letters Monica Lovinescu received from her mother, Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu, which I managed as follows: recovery, selection, translation into Romanian (given the fact that most of them were written in French in order to evade political censorship), publication by Humanitas Publishing House—since the legal trustee of the entire archive is Gabriel Liiceanu, the owner of Humanitas—followed by the transfer of the physical collection to the Humanitas Aqua Forte Foundation. Editing that private correspondence was an occasion for me to fully experience the feeling that Arlette Farge has called "the allure of the archives" (in my case, it was the allure of the letters). I shall focus on this experience in the second part of my study.

There were plenty of documents in the house, waiting to be classified and recovered. I spent a few weeks inside the archive, sorting manuscripts and papers and trying to make sure that nothing of value escaped unnoticed. There were many valuable pieces, and I had to go to Paris for a second time in order to get all of them. The first thing I brought back to Romania was the massive collection of letters received by Monica Lovinescu from her mother, Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu, during the eleven years of their forced separation that ended in 1960 with the latter's death in prison. There were about 2,500 letters, all kept in perfect chronological order. The recovery was followed—to my considerable surprise—by the request to publish them, a proposal I received from Humanitas Publishing House. We agreed on a selective edition,[16] with complementary apparatus and index; as most of the letters were written in French to thwart the attempt of communist censorship to break the secret of their private correspondence, translation into Romanian was needed; thus, the edition benefited from an inspired and accurate translation by Gabriela Creția, who also contributed some of the notes.

How did the collection look? I must confess that when I accepted to create an edition, I had only a vague notion as to what it contained. Scanning the letters allowed only a reasonable expectation that they would reveal interesting details.

There were about two hundred long letters, written on bluish paper with blue ink, in a minute handwriting resembling a lace made of strings of words; every such letter contained a few days' reporting, detailed over four to six pages. There were also thousands of postcards, also entirely covered in handwriting, so full of characters that one couldn't have found place to add a pinhead on them. Most of the long letters had been secretly sneaked out of the country by various means during the first and most fero-

16) Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu (2012 and 2016).

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cious years of Romanian communism (in the 1950s); later on they were sent by official means, but nevertheless with much concern about their arrival at their destination. The small letters (disguised as postcards) had been sent more regularly, and they had a peculiar composition: apparently everything they contained was plain and uninteresting family matters, unappealing to the eyes of the Romanian secret police, the *Securitate*, but in reality they were written in an encrypted manner which permitted the sender a lot of freedom as to the truths she meant to express. The *Securitate* let the letters pass (after copying them) only because they were building a case against Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu. When she was eventually arrested, in 1958, those letters—whose content was severely distorted by some uneducated *Securitate* employees who pretended translating them into Romanian—became evidence in a court trial. On that thin basis, the sender was politically sentenced to eighteen years of hard prison.

The loving daughter had kept her mother's letters for decades without ever being able to touch them[17] after their sender died. From this point of view, they may be considered *subjective memorabilia*. We define *subjective memorabilia* as personal (or family) belongings of somebody who voluntarily treasures them in remembrance of important persons, events or contexts of their life. They represent our most valuable patrimony. We all have such *memorabilia*; they support the effective bringing of past into present and thus sustain our self-memory. Dramatic contexts can turn simple souvenirs into subjective *memorabilia*—the main difference between the two categories of objects being the emotional response triggered by their presence and, of course, their intrinsic resistance to being forgotten. The letters under discussion could not have been mere souvenirs; but their importance was further enhanced by the tragic circumstances of the family's rupture. From the point of view of their content, most of the narratives in the letters sent by Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu to her daughter are *first degree memorates*, as they would appear in the schema of stages in fictionalization that Ileana Benga and Bogdan Neagota have proposed (Benga 2005: 79). *First degree memorates* are self-referential narratives in which the narrator is also the main character and certifies the truth of everything he describes. Of course, *second degree memorates* (relations certified by friends or acquaintances) are also delivered in the letters, and even *third degree ones* (general facts, as part of the social knowledge) appear, but the focus is on the first person narratives. Corroborating these elements of composition with the fact that the letters were secret, even dangerous, and with the intimate relationship of the two correspondents who knew a lot about each other, the *authenticity* of the content is guaranteed. Ecaterina Bălăcoiu-Lovinescu and her daughter Monica Lovinescu have conceived their letters as a kind of diary that each one kept for the benefit of the other; their minute notation of small day-to-day facts was an impressive battle of memory against time and distance, even more impressive when there was not much to say, aside from what had already been said many times before: that life in the People's Republic of Romania (communist Romania) was miserable, full of drudgery and pain, in spite of which Ecaterina preserved her hope to be someday permitted to go to France and see her beloved daughter again. The letters spoke most of all about maternal love. What gave a tragic turn to the whole correspondence is the "reality test": after a few years of surveillance, Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu was finally arrested in 1958 and the following year she was sentenced to eighteen years' imprisonment for "high treason" (she was already seventy-two years old and ill). Knowing that she could be used (as indeed she was!) as an emotional blackmail tool by the communist authorities that were offended by Monica Lovinescu's anti-communist activity at Radio France and in the cultural magazines of the exile, Ecaterina refused the sparse medical treatment she could have

17) "[...] our letters were such a frantic expression of the fear that we would never see each other again, that even today, after forty years, I dare not read them" (Lovinescu 2008: 264), translation A.C.

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been offered in the prison hospital and thus she chose an early death (which occurred in 1960, less than two years after the moment she was arrested). All the way, she had had accurate premonitions of her trial and death in prison. Knowing the way she died, whenever I ran into one of those premonitions during my reading of the letters, I was overwhelmed by the accuracy of her foresight; I wondered how she could have sharpened her inner attention to the point where her future became so clear years before it really happened. The only answer I could come up with was that she had a kind of mystic connection to her daughter, one that separated her from some of the tricky aspects of ordinary life (the so-called appearances that generally draw our attention) and made her aware of things beyond herself.

It was a time when political trials were conducted as brutally as possible in order to make an example of each victim and suppress any future resistance on the part of other society members. Merciless convictions were frequent. Former social elites were the main prey. Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu fell into the category of those who had to be destroyed at any rate[18] and she knew that all only too well, unlike her daughter Monica, who desperately hoped to buy[19] her mother from the state.

Why are these letters important for the general public? What qualified them for being saved from physical and cultural disappearance? Are they mere *traces* of the past, or are they more like *documents*? (Whoever asks these questions should also reverse the terms: What good comes from the disappearance of *any* traces?) The letters I am talking about are relevant to us because they offer a reliable narrative concerning important protagonists. Romanian social, political, economic and cultural life of the 1950s and '60s is there in stark outline. Some influential figures in early Romanian communist society also used to be preeminent personalities in the former political regimes; as Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu knew them from the times of *Sburătorul* literary circle,[20] their evolution through successive changes of mind is disclosed in these letters. The whole society suffered a major upheaval in the '50s, and that is exactly the period that these letters refer to. One can also see in them Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu's own struggle to adapt her behaviour to official hypocrisy: she learned to suffer in silence and to pretend social conformity, but not all the way (apart from writing her daughter, she revealed her true feelings to some of her friends and acquaintances, some of whom betrayed her trust and later served as prosecution witnesses during her trial). From this point of view, such documents add to the body of existing evidence against the official fake history of those years.

Less than one-third of the written material of the letters was selected for the book. When I made the selection, I tried to include all of the relevant details regarding Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu as a person, as an intellectual, as a member of the persecuted former social elite, as a mother, and as a woman subject to the deepest political experiment of the twentieth century. I looked mainly for the *history* in her memory. But I also looked for the *anthropology* and for the *literature* that her letters have to offer. She was a gifted writer, one whose only work comprises these letters. I tried to follow Monica Lovinescu's wish and contextualize the events and characters in extended footnotes, so as to help future readers understand to what or to whom the author was referring. What I myself learned while working on the edition was *to read between the lines*: I would never have imagined to what extent writing between the lines could be taken, if I would not have had to struggle with Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu's successful attempts to tell her daughter not only some of the truths in her oppressed life, but *the whole truth*, and to do it *without seeming to*. From this point of view, her letters are a masterpiece. She invented codes and secret signals, she hid real persons beneath nicknames, references and allusions were carefully chosen so as to be deciphered only by her daughter, she de-

18) "Better convict a hundred innocents than let one *bandit* escape!" was a famous motto of the communist "justice" system, mainly in the 1950s.

19) See Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu (2016, vol. II, Afterword).

20) Eugen Lovinescu, ex-husband of Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu and father of Monica Lovinescu, had founded in 1919 a literary society called *Sburătorul*, later to become an influential literary magazine and a famous literary circle. *Sburătorul* disappeared in 1948, after being led for the last four years after Eugen Lovinescu's death by his daughter, and after 1947 by his former wife, Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu.

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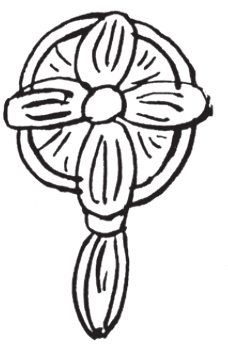
vised new uses for old words and so on. And she continuously changed the codes, partly as a defence strategy and partly because she herself probably couldn't remember all of them. Her letters are a labyrinth, and reading them was a fascinating trip.

The rest of the letters I mentioned at the beginning of this article are yet to be published, each in due time, taking into account the peculiarities of each sender's situation. In fact, they are being kept as a compact (private) fonds, from which different pieces will be separated only in order to be published by *researcher-editors* as myself, with the full agreement of the fonds' owner. This might slow public access to the information hidden within the documents, but it seems to be the only way to deal with the ethical, deontological and legal issues raised by the complexity of an archive comprising more than fifty years of recent memory.

Nowadays, memories and related materials are among the most appealing sources for the historians who want to draw a new, more accurate sketch of the recent past. They are the kind of evidence that successfully fights social amnesia. When history fails or betrays people, memory takes the torch. As a matter of fact, such documents are by far more *convincing* for us than scientific reasoning on the same matters could ever claim to be. Some things are meant to be lived and transmitted directly from person to person, from soul to soul. They will continue to speak to us because we all have a feeling for authenticity and know that life comes packed in small details which only literature or memorials can properly convey.



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The *Aliyah* of 1949: Unpublished Migration Requests of Jews from Romania as Vehicles of Memory

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ABSTRACT

In 1949, the political context of the People's Republic of Romania and of the newly founded Israeli state formally provided a framework for the immigration of Romanian Jews to Israel, upon the opening of the Israeli Legation in Bucharest in 1948. Our paper proposes an analysis of the *Aliyah* in 1949 as portrayed in migration requests addressed by members of the Jewish community all over Romania to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest. The requests, never published before, have been hosted since 1997 by the Center for Research on Romanian Jewry within the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. First, we address the history of the fonds, the hypotheses of historians on the submission of the requests, the shape of the material and characteristics of the documents. Second, our in-depth textual analysis allows a refined understanding of writing patterns, engagements, and reasons for requesting migration. Overall, our study contributes to the understanding of archives as "vehicles of memory" (Confino 2011) and of individual and group responses to historical transformations.

KEYWORDS

Aliyah,[1] immigration, Israel, memory, archives.

1) *Aliyah*, in Hebrew, ascent. The term is used in literature for referring to the immigration of Jews to Palestine (Land of Israel) and later, after May 14, 1948, to the State of Israel. The terminology used in the case of immigrating to Israel is *Aliyah*, or going up, while the opposite, *yerida*, is going down.

Introduction

The migration of Jews from Romania is approached in longue-durée studies which establish specific temporal divisions and related landmarks: the arrival of the first olim (immigrants) in 1882 and their founding of colonies in Palestine, the British Mandate period, when around forty thousand olim arrived in Palestine and the aliyot after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Our work takes a novel approach and addresses the *Aliyah* phenomenon as related to one specific year (1949) while using unpublished migration requests addressed to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest by Jewish community members from all over Romania. The material offers rich ground for exploring the reasons for migration, the needs and desires of individuals and groups, and the role of archives as "vehicles of memory."

The year 1949 belongs to the *Aliyah haamonit* (the mass *Aliyah*) time frame (1948-1952), when one-third of the postwar Jewish population, or 120,000 Jews, left Romania (Bines 1998). At the end of World War II, the surviving Jewish population in Romania amounted to approximately 380,000 people, making up the largest Jewish community in all of Europe except for the Soviet Union (Ioanid 2005). Prior to 1949, the 1945-1947 period was a time of illegal immigration (*Aliyah bet*), a solution undertaken both by Zionists and by those who did not find their place in the new sociopolitical realities. The migration of Jews from Romania dur-

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ing that period was possible solely with the support of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee[2] and took place over land. The clandestine migrants were using the so-called "lifts" (huge transport cases) in which they could stock their belongings. They travelled to Italy by way of Vienna and from there embarked for Haifa, then intercepted by the British Navy and detained in Cyprus, and from there they left for Palestine after months or years (Nastasă 2003). It was a time when the Romanian government was indifferent to the migration problem, and during which the Party documents do not reflect a clear conception of the matter. Emigration was formalized in 1947, and the Jewish Democratic Committee[3] was tasked with its organization. In that year, emigration was made possible through "collective passports" and the Jewish Democratic Committee organized "educational" courses for those listed for departure. By the end of 1947, thousands of individuals organized into thirteen groups emigrated. They could carry luggage with them, while having the possibility to send furniture and other objects left with family members in Romania. In the background however, emigration was no longer tolerated, and the Jewish Democratic Committee propaganda counterbalanced the migration-related activity of Zionists. In parallel, migration still took place through regular departures from the Constanța port to Haifa. Until May 1948 and the founding of the Israeli state, around thirty-two thousand Jews had emigrated from Romania; after that, the administrative organization of the migration was undertaken by the Israeli Legation in Bucharest, opened in 1948 (Nastasă 2003).

The postwar realities of 1949 found the Jewish community of Romania in a situation of deprivation, loss, and upheaval. Social assistance institutions such as hospitals, shelters or canteens were forbidden, and the Jewish schools were closed; the international Jewish organizations acting in Romania, the JDC or the Jewish Agency[4]—which covered the necessities of local communities while the state was ruined by the war effort and the maintenance of the Soviet Army—were dissolved; the nationalization of factories, banks and expropriation of buildings affected the members of the community; the Law of December 16, 1944 on the restitution of the assets belonging to the Jewish community was late in its implementation and did not have any immediate effect on the Jewish population, but on consolidating the image of the Jew as an entrepreneur (Rotman 2004; Lazăr 2018; Oțoiu 2009). The resulting material deprivations and ideological challenges generated confusion and led to divided options for members of the Jewish group: some participated at the installment of the communist regime and others projected their lives into the possibility of emigration.[5]

After 1949, emigration was possible only through individual passports, obtained at the Ministry of the Interior, or the General Headquarters of the *Miliția*. Even if procedures were complicated, the idea of emigration attracted large numbers of people. The applicants received a form several pages long and could pick it up in alphabetical order, on specific days of the week. Upon handing in the form, the *Miliția* was responsible for releasing the passport and scheduling the boat journey, which happened after several months of waiting, or often between one and three years. There was no logic for approvals or rejections even if, semiofficially, the authorities considered the "social importance" of the applicant, with those with high qualifications (doctors, technicians, architects, engineers, etc.) having virtually no chance of departure (Nastasă 2003).

What do the migration requests dated in 1949 reveal about the *Aliyah* of Romanian Jews one year after the creation of the Israeli state? How is the wish to immigrate accomplished textually? What can we learn about the power of archives in stocking, indexing, and revealing specific documents? What can we learn about archives as "vehicles of memory"? These are a few questions that our work aims to answer.

2) The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), founded in 1914, is the world's leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization.

3) The Jewish Democratic Committee was created by the Romanian communist government in 1945, with the aim of counterbalancing the other representative organizations of the Jewish population.

4) Founded in 1929, the Jewish Agency for Israel is an international, non-governmental body centered in Jerusalem which is the executive and representative of the World Zionist Organization.

5) Our further work will examine declarations for renouncing migration written in 1951-1952 by members of a Romanian urban Jewish community as ways of securing social benefits (employment, children's schooling, etc.) and responses to the fear of the Jewish Democratic Committee propaganda.

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The *Aliyah* of Romanian Jews in the literature

The Holocaust-related history, the proclamation of the State of Israel, and the changes brought about by the communist regime paint the background picture of the migration-related literature. Rotman (2004), by looking both at the Jewish communities and the Communist Party, shows that the Jewish Democratic Committee JDC, the institution that was supposed to represent the Jewish community, served the political order and led an anti-*Aliyah* propaganda. Ioanid (2005, 2015) examines the "transfer" of Romanian Jews to Israel during the two presidential regimes of 1948-1989 and demonstrates that the Romanian government treated Jews as an export commodity. Ioanid (2015) emphasizes the difference between the two presidential regimes on the Jewish emigration question and the nature of the agreements between the two states.[6] Oțoiu (2009) looks at "the price to pay" for the *Aliyah* and examines the connection between the *aliyot* throughout the communist period and the state-enforced expropriation of "Jewish goods."

In terms of the migration-related literature *per se*, Bines (1998) or Leibovici Laiș (2000) take a longue durée perspective and examine the migration of Romanian Jews starting with 1882 and related temporal markers: the year 1882, when organizations in Moldova started targeting the immigration to Palestine before the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897; the British Mandate period (1919-1948); the mass migration period of 1948-1951; the interruption of migration between 1953-1957; the restart of migration between 1958-1965; and the migration during the rest of the communist and post-communist period. In her turn, Babeș (2014) makes a long-term periodization for the migration of Romanian Jews while considering three periods: before the World War II, during that war, and after the establishment of the State of Israel.

The first *Aliyah* (1948-1952) of Romanian Jews, which increased the population of Israel by eighteen percent (Bines 1998: 92), was studied in light of the agreement between the Israeli minister of external affairs and his analogue, Ana Pauker (Levy 2008). Under this agreement, the conditions for emigration set by the Romanian authorities were as follows: each Jew who was going to hand in a departure request had to give up Romanian citizenship; no emigrant could own a national passport, just a "one way" travel document; each requester had to leave all of their belongings in Romania; the organization of the departure was assigned to the Jewish Democratic Committee (Lazăr 2018). At the same time, this period (end of the 1940s) was affected by intervening changes in Stalinist policy, namely the anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist reversal, and the beginning of anti-Semitic purges and campaigns. Consequently, the attitude of the Romanian Communist Party regarding emigration is ambivalent: *Aliyah* was tolerated, but at the same time a strong anti-Zionist and anti-*Aliyah* propaganda was organized (Oțoiu 2009). After 1952, the authorities started to slow down the pace of emigration, fearing a negative external image and concluding that Jews should remain in Romania in order to help build socialism. At the same time, the mass emigration of Jews could have had an unwanted effect on the Romanian economy. The international context dominated by the Cold War atmosphere led to the complete blocking of migration until 1958 (Lazăr 2012).

6) The Gheorghiu-Dej regime of the late 1950s and early '60s involved a barter agreement under which exit permits were granted in exchange for funding the construction of farms and food-processing complexes. After 1965, the "transfer" was based on obtaining "cold dollars."

Methodology and theory

This publication results from the postdoctoral project *The Jewish Community of Oradea, Romania, and Its Immigration Waves to Israel: 1948-1989*[7] examining the configurations of the *aliyot* for a Romanian urban Jewish group in archival documents and in-

7) Jean Nordmann Foundation postdoctoral grant, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Center for Research on Romanian Jewry), 2018.

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terviews. For this analysis, we chose to focus only on previously unpublished migration requests submitted in 1949 by members of the Jewish community all over Romania and addressed to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest, opened in 1948 and raised to the rank of embassy in 1969. The requests addressed to the newly founded Legation offer rich ground for exploring the ways in which the wish to emigrate was put in textual form. Consequently, they provide a valuable typology for emigration-related reasons related to the year 1949, or one year after the creation of Israel and three years before the pause in official emigration policy.[8] The reasons or sums of reasons motivating the desire to reach Israel and the relationship between the individual and the state are richly explored based on the requests in question.

Secondly, our analysis is highly enriched by the shape of the fonds itself. The requests are not typical for a specific community type, and do not disclose unique details of those communities. Thus, they are not organized in relation to specific communities. Therefore, the content of a single file is a miniature mix of the fonds itself and opens the way to read into a puzzle of requests. The fonds consists of ten files totaling around two thousand requests. Our analysis randomly selects one file out of the ten, totaling 204 requests.[9] Upon a description of the fonds, we look at the intrinsic value of texts and propose an analysis on two levels: the patterns of formulation and the reasons for requesting emigration.

Together with books, films, museums or commemorations, archives are "vehicles of memory" through which the past is represented in specific ways and formed into shared cultural knowledge by successive generations. The notion of archives as vehicles of memory guides our interpretation, narration and explanation of the emigration requests. This notion is related to a specific understanding of "memory," namely *kulturelles und kommunikatives Gedächtnis*—cultural and communicative memory (Assmann 1999). This concept views communicative memory as interactions of individuals and groups on the everyday level, while it sees cultural memory as knowledge that shapes behavior and experience through generations in repeated practice that is distanced from the everyday. Thus, the notion of "memory" in the "vehicles of memory" concept is a fluid, malleable one that includes specific individuals and groups: the authors of the requests, the historians who interpret the material, the archivist who undertakes its indexation, presentation and dissemination, and, last but not least, the researcher who endows the material with a specific interpretation.

Origin of the archival material

The migration requests and related fonds belong to the Center for Research on Romanian Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Established in 1973, the Center has a unique and highly specialized collection of books and archival documents. The materials stored in the archive include a rich collection of newspaper clippings, articles and documents arranged in more than two hundred file folders according to topics such as: personalities-biographies; Jewish communities in Romania; education and schools; the Jewish press; Jewish theater; the Zionist movement; migration; anti-Semitism; the Holocaust period; Romanian Avant-garde; and others. The archive currently holds more than fifteen private archives that include documents (originals and copies), correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, microfilms, CDs and videocassettes.[10]

The examined fonds consists of ten files of around two thousand migration requests in total. The *Preliminary Report Regarding the Study of Migration Requests Submitted to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest in 1950*, dated September 1997 and signed by Zeev Ellenbogen,[11] is the only source of this fonds. Zeev Ellenbogen followed the request of

8) We choose to privilege the unpublished requests of 1949 as they have the power to reveal the start of the *Aliyah* process in a formalized context, after the opening of the Israeli Legation in Bucharest. The following *Aliyah* waves of Romanian Jews deserve a separate analysis.

9) We made a random choice in view of the requests not being organized in relation to communities. The requests are indexed by the archivist in the form and order in which they were received at the Center.

10) For a more detailed description of the Center, see: http://jewishhistory.huji.ac.il/Centers/center_for_research_on_romanian_.htm. For the history of the Center, see Goshen (2010). For a volume related to the initiator and founder of the Center (Fondul 147, Theodor Lavi-*Löwenstein)*, see Gligor and Caloianu (2014).

11) Zeev Ellenbogen brought the requests to the Center in 1997. Dr. Miriam Caloianu, researcher at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, historian and archivist, set up the fonds upon its receipt. From a legal point of view, the fonds belongs to the Center. There are no copies of these requests elsewhere.

12) The Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History was established by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Education and Culture of the State of Israel in July 1974.

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Dr. Aaron Kedar, the Director of the Dinur Center,[12] to revise the migration requests of Jews from Romania in 1950, which had been collected at the Israeli Legation in Bucharest. Some of the requests had been in the possession of the Dinur Center after the State Archives and the Central Zionist Archives were not ready to absorb the material at that time. It seems that only a small part of the requests sent to the Israeli Legation at that time were transferred to Israel in September 1997.[13] In 1950, the Legation was used as a "secondary center" for absorbing the pressure of Romanian Jews emigrating to Israel. The main center was the Passport Bureau (archivist's note, of the Bucharest *Miliția*). Regarding the submission of the requests to the Legation, the report presents two hypotheses of those who lived in that period: 1) Shlomo Leibovici-Laiș,[14] who participated in the initiative of transferring the material to Israel, considers that the requests were spontaneously submitted during a sustained period in 1950 and were not initiated by a source from the Legation; and 2) Shmaya Avni[15] believes the whole material was gathered during a two-week period in February 1950. At that date, he had received information that a source within the Legation had "refined" the requests, probably without coordination with the Israeli minister plenipotentiary. There were also those who ensured the transfer of requests, in large quantities, from places outside Bucharest. There is room for confirming these hypotheses.

1. Overview of the fonds

The authors of the requests in the ten files come from communities all over Romania and from all population groups: members of Jewish communities who returned from camps in Transnistria as well as survivors of extermination camps in occupied Poland; those deported there in 1944, when northwestern Transylvania was under Hungarian rule, as well as members of communities who have not been deported (from the Old Kingdom and south of Transylvania). The requests confirm the known fact that the wish to leave Romania and emigrate covered the whole Romanian Jewry.[16]

There are three recommendations for arranging the material. First, as the requests were submitted in very close periods of time and many are undated, it does not make sense to arrange them in chronological order. Second, as the requests are not typical for some communities and they do not disclose unique details of those communities, organizing them by communities adds no value. Third, the report recommends that the material be arranged in an accessible way, while mentioning the "special interest" documents.[17] For Zeev Ellenbogen and Shmaya Avni, the special interest documents are the biographies of Zionists, or documents which go beyond the limited question of migration requests. The two documents are: 1) The curriculum vitae of one of the first Zionist activists in Piatra Neamț, a city labeled the "Jerusalem of Romania," who was born in 1890. He told that he had been among the founders of the first Zionist circles since he was young and was very active in spreading the Hebrew culture and language as a living language. His activities coincide with the activities of those who became prominent members of the Zionist leadership of Romania, A. L. Zissu and Mișu Weisman.[18] Consequently, the report states that the CV is an important document related to the history of Zionism in Piatra Neamț, and in Romania generally. 2) The permits released by the institutions in the detention camps in Cyprus for illegal immigrants from Palestine in 1948.[19] The permits were released in order to give priority to younger parents to do *Aliyah* in their turn, and were indeed annexed to the migration request submitted to the embassy.

Many requests mention that the family members, especially children, are already in Israel. One may notice that the parents of children who are in Israel are "overrepresented" among applicants. These applicants often note the fact that their son serves in the Israeli Defense Forces (*Haganah,* in He-

13) Preliminary report regarding the study of migration requests handed in to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest in 1950, dated September 1997 (original in Hebrew).

14) Shlomo Leibovici-Laiș (1927-2014), Israeli historian of Romanian origin; president of ACMEOR (Asociația Culturală Mondială a Evreilor Originari din România / World Cultural Organization of Jews Originating from Romania).

15) Shmaya Avni (1923-2003), Israeli journalist and writer of Romanian origin. He published books and articles regarding Zionist activities in Romania (in Hebrew).

16) Preliminary report regarding the study of migration requests handed in to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest in 1950, dated September 1997 (original in Hebrew).

17) See the previous note.

18) A. L. Zissu was president of the Zionist Executive, leader of the Jewish party and theoretician on Judaism.

19) Preliminary report regarding the study of migration requests handed in to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest in 1950, dated September 1997 (original in Hebrew).The camps in Cyprus created by the British government in an effort to stem illegal immigration to Palestine were in place between 1946 and 1948.

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brew, the Defense), indicating sometimes a prejudice or a reward. The expressions in Romanian are "the Hagana army" or sometimes just "Hagana."[20] It is surprising that the applicants are single families (archivist's note, husband and wife) or small families. Families with many children are few. When the requests were submitted, many of the Holocaust survivors did not live in their communities of origin, from where they had been deported to camps. Thus, it seems that this state of things implies a migration process of Holocaust survivors to other communities after their return from the camps.[21]

The archivist left the requests in the shape and order of their arrival at the Center and indexed them in a chart per file organized around the following categories: "name," "year of birth," "birthplace," "residence," "observations." Under "name" stands the information for all family members involved in the migration request, and not only the name of the signer.[22] The family members are indexed by their names or, alternatively, with "wife of," "son of." The residence (understood as the place where the individual lived when submitting the request) is mentioned for all individuals. The mentioning of the year of birth, birthplace and/or observations varies by request. When dated, the requests bear dates from February 1949. There are forty-five indexed residence places from all over Romania. The most represented historical province is Moldova (459 people), followed by Wallachia (121) and Transylvania (91). The residence is indexed as a city or small town, e.g., Gherla, Satu Mare. When the residence is a village, it is mentioned in relation to the closest large town or county, e.g., Moldovița (Câmpulung), Borșa (Maramureș).

2. A file of 204 emigration requests

Our randomly chosen file contains 204 requests indexed in a chart following the above-described model. The indexed families are made up of two (76 requests), three (53 requests), four (22 requests), five (8 requests) and six (4 requests) members. Forty-one requests were made by single individuals. These numbers confirm the statement on the dominance of single families among the applicants. The residences with the highest number of requests are: Bucharest (57); Galați (42); Botoșani (37); Târgu Neamț (32); Piatra Neamț (29); Roman (29); Suceava (28); Bacău (26, among which 11 villages); and Iași (23). We notice that most applicants in our sample reside in places from the Old Kingdom.[23] The birthplace and the residence place differ for 127 individuals. Three individuals have birthplaces outside Romania (Paris, New York, and Budapest). A separate analysis could reveal the shifts of the living place for the multigenerational families, and specific patterns of requests based on regions of origin or residence.

Under the category "observation" stands input related to the postwar situation of the applicant or their family. Some entries have additional remarks, for example: *survivor Transnistria* (39 requests)—"Djurin camp," "first wife and two children perished on Transnistria," or "survivor Bershad camp"; *pogroms* (5 requests)—"widow pogrom Iasi" (husband and son of 11 years old perished)," "pogrom widow (Iași 1941)," or "widow pogrom București (1941)"; *prisoner* (3 requests)—"prisoner for 6 years in Soviet Union (forced labor in Hungarian labor detachments)" or "prisoner Soviet Union until 1948"; *forced labor* (4 requests) —"prisoner for 6 years in Soviet Union (forced labor in Hungarian labor detachments)," "forced labor (1942) / prisoner Soviet Union until 1948" or "Forced labor 1941-1945 (Fălticeni and Cernăuți) / 1944-1946—soldier in Red Army"; *survivor Auschwitz* (4 requests) —"survivor Auschwitz (entire family perished)," "orphan; parents perished at Auschwitz"; *war orphan* (1 request)—"orphan; Parents perished at Auschwitz." Other entries related to the postwar situation of the applicant have no additional remarks, e.g., *survivor Holocaust* (3 requests) or *repatriate* (3 requests). The observation field is also filled with the age of the applicant or left blank.

20) See the previous note.

21) See note 19.

22) For example, there is a single request for Ioil Benianim, Bety, Iancu – born 1909, 1913, 1939 – Iași – three people, but the family members (parents and son) are indexed separately.

23) In terms of the demographic evolution of the postwar Jewish population of Romania, an estimate of the Romanian section within the World Jewish Congress at the beginning of 1947, based on information provided by the communities, reveals a total of 428,312 persons (representing fifty-six percent of the number registered in 1930). (Gyémánt, 2018: 16)

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In terms of the predominant "observation" type, the category *survivor Transnistria* corresponds to the highest number of requests. At the same time, we notice a shift from the birthplace to a new residence after the war within the country (e.g., for a "prisoner" category—born in Maramureș, resident of Zalău) or as "repatriate" (born in Bukovina, resident of Timișoara). Through this highly nuanced indexation of "observation" types, the archivist does justice to the life details mobilized by the applicant is their request. At the same time, the information under "observation" is a precious departure point for looking at the war contexts described by the subjects.

As for the writing style, most of the requests are handwritten. Some are in calligraphic manuscript. The handwriting of the signers is usually different from the one on the requests. Some requests are typewritten. Most are formulated in a personal form, but there are some with a repetitive formulation as well. The requests show a large spectrum of educational statuses, from "illiterate" to those with a complete education.[24]

3. Analyzing the requests

3.1. Writing patterns

Our outlook on writing patterns could identify the recurring styles for beginning and ending the request, the references to Israel, the profession.

The addressee of the requests varies between Minister, Ambassador, Your Excellency, Honor to the Israeli Embassy, to His Excellency the Ambassador of the State of Israel, Honor to the Consulate of the State of Israel, to the Legation of the State of Israel, Bucharest, to the Minister of the State of Israel, or Honored Ambassador of the State of Israel in PRR.[25] At the bottom of the page, the addressee is re-mentioned: e.g. to the Minister of the State of Israel in PRR, to the Office of Emigration, Honor to the Consular Section of the Legation of the State of Israel.

The first phrase of the request mentions the name, date and place of birth, age, current address, the composition of the family, profession and consists of the claim itself: "the undersigned (…) with honor, please be so kind as to dispose of my repatriation to the State of Israel"; "I kindly ask the repatriation to the State of Israel"; "I wish to be inscribed on the emigration lists"; "I wish to be registered and pre-noted for our immigration in Medinath [in Hebrew, State of] Israel"; "I wish to inscribe me and my Family on the departure Lists to the State of Israel"; "we wish to emigrate, please inscribe us on the list of Immigrants"; "I wish to be inscribed on the Emigration Charts"; "please award us the entrance visa in the State of Israel"; "please intervene to the concerned authorities so that I can be repatriated with the first transport to the State of Israel permanently, together with my wife"; "I wish to be put on the repatriation Lists"; "please admit our Repatriation in the State of Israel"; "we would like to become citizens of the State of Israel."[26] Sometimes the wish to leave is presented as an urgent matter: "we kindly ask you to include us in the first *Aliyah* / with the first transport."[27] One year after the creation of the Israeli state, the applicants used the term "repatriation," as they saw the immigration to Israel as a return to the land of their ancestors.[28] At the same time, "repatriation" is also used in the documents—fiction, biographies or newspapers—written in Israel by Romanian Jews during the first immigration years (1950s). On the other hand, the applicants use the term "repatriation" because in 1949 emigration was not yet part of state policy and therefore not part of everyday language.

When listed, the profession appears in the first phrase, together with the personal information. Some identified professions are: hatter, private clerk, carpenter, machine knitter, hairdresser, locksmith, trader, clerk, qualified driver, qualified tailor, tractor driver, precision mechanic, qualified mechanic-driver, fellmonger, lingerie tailor, lawyer, binding foreman, gardener, electrician, clerk in metalworking, shoemaker, coach driver, baker, agricultural worker, watchmaker, mirror maker, belt maker, dentist, purse

24) Preliminary report regarding the study of emigration requests submitted to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest in 1950, dated September 1997 (original in Hebrew).

25) PRR –People's Republic of Romania, in place from 1947 to 1965.

26) Center for Research on Romanian Jewry (CRRJ), DR / 101, file 2, selections of typical formulations from all requests.

27) *Idem.*

28) My interviews with Romanian Jews who did *Aliyah* in the 1970s and '80s, reveal, in their turn, specific representations of the migration idea—the interviewees speak of "immigration," of going "to the country" *(în țară)*, or simply of "leaving."

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maker, charity sister, cobbler, housewife, trade clerk, worker, dyer, washer, weaver, student, accountant.[29] In one request, the author gives a profession-related detail—"I am a precision mechanic owning a repair workshop especially for typewriters and calculators"[30]—and the company stamp appears on the request. Sometimes the profession is used to strengthen the request: "we are healthy and ready to work in Israel, in agriculture, for which we have aptitudes"[31]; "I am a carpenter and I will be able to work this as well." Sometimes the professions of both husband and wife or of the extended family are mentioned. Others just add, "we are healthy people and apt for work," or "we want to bring a contribution to our state too." One request says: "We eat in the community canteen and have no profession for subsistence."[32] Or, "we wish to put all out energy and work at the service of the State of Israel that we consider the homeland *[patria]* of all Jews, and therefore ours also." Or, "I guarantee that I will not be a burden for the Society or State, I will work with my augmented powers to maintain the integrity of this State and for stimulating its eternal existence for the good of the whole people scattered for millennia."[33] The connection between the profession and the wish to emigrate shows that the applicant sees *Aliyah* as a lifelong project in which he or she puts their full energy, skills and knowledge.

The attachment to Israel can be detected in the various ways in which the country is referred to in the requests, such as "my country" or "our precious country." Israel is labeled as Israel, Eretz, our Land, the Israeli Country, my Country (capitalized), State of Israel (Statul Israiel), Medinath Israel, Ereț, Eretz Israel, "State of Israel," Izrael, State of Izrael, The Holy Land *[Țara Sfântă]*, our precious country Israel. The reference to Israel is made in two contexts—the longed-for destination and the place where a part of the family already lives. The use of both "my country" and "our country" reveals the manifestation of both an individual and group belonging to Israel.

The requests end with specific greetings: some with "Long Live PRR," others with "Long Live the State of Israel," or two slogans together: "Long live the PRR, Long Live the State of Israel / Long Live the Young State of Israel." Others say "we salute you with the traditional greeting *Techi Medinat Israel*" [Hebrew, the State of Israel will live] or "*Shalom uv'raha*" [Hebrew, peace and blessings]. Our analysis of the reasons for emigration, in the next section, shows that the use of the slogan "Long Live PRR" reveals a formal compliance with the customary slogans in use at that time, noting the sharp contrast between the use of the slogan and the engaged tone of the request for emigration. Other applicants use "double" slogans, one related to PRR and one to Israel, thus also complying with the customs in use in PRR, or in the country where the request needs to be approved. Others stick to slogans in Hebrew. An interesting outlook on the use of the slogans comes from the report, which states that the requests mirror the doubts between the presentation of a connection to Israel and a manifestation of loyalty to the People's Republic of Romania. Many requests end with the call, "Long live the People's Republic of Romania" *[Trăiască Republica Populară Română]*, together with "long live the country / the fight against the Anglo-Americans, the invaders."[34] Regarding the mentioned contrast between the use of the slogan "Long Live PRR" and the engaged tone in the main body of the request (including the reason for emigration), we follow the belief of the automatic use of the slogan. Furthermore, a graphological analysis could reveal more on those who wrote the slogans.

3.2. Reasons for requesting emigration

In 1949, the members of the Romanian Jewish community were subjected to the postwar nationalization laws and related dispossession of goods, the dismantling of traditional assistance institutions and also to personal loss. In this context, the creation of the Israeli state offered this community

29) For a division of professions for Romanian immigrants related the *Aliyah* of 1948-1952, see Bines (1998: 94-95).

30) Center for Research on Romanian Jewry (CRRJ), DR / 101, file 2, No. 480.

31) No. 548.

32) In the autumn of 1944, the social assistance organizations for Jews – canteens, orphanages or hospitals – were reactivated for a short while.

33) No. 336.

34) Dr. Miriam Caloianu (personal communication) points out that these slogan phrases do not reflect the loyalty for PRR but rather the automatism of writing a letter or official request, or even the hope that, if the letters reached the *Miliția* or the *Securitate*, they would be an asset for the applicant.

35) CRRJ, DR / 101, file 2, selections of typical formulations from all requests. The *Haganah*—the forerunner of the Israeli Defense Forces—was the clandestine Jewish defense organization.

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the chance for a long-awaited dream. The depicted reasons for migration—the family in Israel, the postwar situation, the projection of migration as an Ideal, and the Zionist merit—allow us to understand the needs and desires of the Jewish community members in this specific sociopolitical context. A request includes a single reason or a sum of reasons, and in the following we propose a typology of these reasons.

The first reason is connected to the wish of reunification with children, siblings or extended family members who are in Israel. Children are mentioned in relation to their military service and to the circumstances of their previous migration context. The child "is mobilized in the army," "defended the State of Israel," "fought on the front," "is under arms in the State of Israel," "is recruited in the Israeli army taking part in the Neghev campaign," "is in the Hagana,"[35] is "a soldier in the Army, at Tel-Lypinsk"[36] or "leads the liberation fight of the Israeli state."[37] When no specific details are given about children, they are just said to live in "Eretz" for a long time. The address of the child or family in Israel is occasionally mentioned. Or, children left as *halutzim*[38] to Israel or are now in a *hachsara* (preparation camps for agricultural work). Other applicants mention how their children were withheld in Cyprus[39] before their arrival in Israel, where they activated in Zionist movements: "I have a 20-year-old son who left on December 22, 1947, with the last *Aliyah*, being held in Cyprus until now when I think he already is in Eretz. He was a leader in *hanoar* [Hebrew, Youth Zionist Movement], and distinguished himself in all the activities required by this quality: lecturer, propagandist, etc. And in Cyprus, among other activities, he also has the quality of *Madrich* [in Hebrew, instructor] in the *Hagana* commandment"[40]; "I currently have two children in Israel who were detained in Cyprus in a camp from December 1947 to February 1949." In other requests, parents show that children had already immigrated through the Zionist organization ICHUD[41]: "with respect I beg you, to help me and my family to be able to immigrate soon to Eretz Israel. As for reason, I have three small children who did *Aliyah* in December 1947 through the Zionist organization ICHUD." Last, the applicants show that their children have their domicile in a kibbutz or colony. Thus, the children of applicants are defenders of the Israeli state, left as *halutzim*, are former illegal immigrants detained in Cyprus, are Zionist activists, or part of a kibbutz or colony and their profiles are the core reason for requesting immigration. Others request the reunification with the siblings, parents or "the whole family" (sisters, in-laws or parents). Then, there are aged parents who want to be with their children. Sometimes, in addition to the argument of having family in Israel, the applicants write that the family can support them to start life in Israel: "they could help us with our beginning"; "I am 70 years old, and my daughter has a good situation and can support me"; "my brother who actively took part in the fights in Negev obtained and sent me entry certificates to the State of Israel."[42]

The second reason is related to the postwar situation of the applicant. In this respect, the narratives are organized around specific historical events: the Hitlerist pogrom of 1941, the deportation to Auschwitz or the deportation to Transnistria.[43] The authors show that they were "raised in work detachments in 1942 by Horthy's government," they were "prisoners in USSR," did "forced labor" or were "evacuated from Podu Iloaiei Iași." One identifies as a "widow of the Iași pogrom of 1941." While giving the details related to war sufferings, the applicants request the immigration to Israel, where they have family. The camp survivors describe their situation in terms of loss, suffering and loneliness, destitution and lacking basic needs, or living in a shelter for Jewish orphans. Some write that their children living in Israel insist that they come and live with them, or that they are aged and miss their children.

Some applicants mention precise details related to the war period: "I was deported to

36) Center for Research on Romanian Jewry (CRRJ), DR / 101, file 2, No. 382.

37) CRRJ, DR / 101, file 2, No. 3.

38) Jewish immigrants, mainly from Eastern Europe, trained in agriculture and capable of establishing self-sustaining economies.

39) The years 1945-1948, when the British politics was against the migration of Jews from Eastern Europe to Israel, were difficult. These migrations took place illegally as well, and not all attempts were successful.

40) CRRJ, DR / 101, File 2, No 421.

41) No. 530. After World War II, the nuances of the Zionist movement in Romania were reborn. The strongest social-democratic organizations were "Ichud" (the Romanian branch of the "Histadruth Haovdim" party) and the "Hapoel Hamizrachi" organization.

42) CRRJ, DR / 101, file 2, selections of typical formulations from all requests.

43) Another analysis, which groups the requests by historical provinces, will reveal the nuances of motivation related to the postwar situation of specific communities, or between the Jews of northern Transylvania and those of the Old Kingdom.

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Transnistria (1941-1944) and in 1946 repatriated to Romania in order to immigrate to Israel"; "I motivate my request with the fact that my parents, together with my whole family, with my first wife and my child, were deported and exterminated in Auschwitz"; "On 11 October 1941 we were deported to Transnistria where we stayed until May 3, 1944. Then, we returned to our native town Rădăuți"; "I did forced labor in 1941-1943, in Fălticeni and Cernăuți, and after this enrolled in the Red Army in 1944-1946."[44] Others just mention that they were "deported to Transnistria" or are "former deportees to Auschwitz, poor people," "repatriated from USSR" without giving further details.

Third, the *Aliyah* is also the achievement of an Ideal: "having a wife and a child in Palestine, I wish to emigrate to the State of Israel in order to achieve my Ideal and at the same time to collaborate for the rebuilding of our state"; "having kids in the State of Israel who fought for the liberation of our Eretz, we wish to emigrate in Palestine, thus, our Holy Ideal will be accomplished"; "this country in remaking is impregnated into my soul, where for two thousand years our ancestors shed their blood for the accomplishment of this Ideal. I personally put considerable efforts in preparing this day when the Jewish people would have a COUNTRY, a NAME, and A FAMILY bound together in a State with a diplomatic representative in PRR to whom we could address for the facilitation of our departure to Israel."[45] Thus, the immigration idea is paralleled with an Ideal, which embodies the rebuilding of the long-awaited and cherished Israeli state. The group identity is reinforced with the use of *our* country, *our* ancestors, *our* Ideal.

Fourth, applicants see the *Aliyah* as the deserved outcome of a long-term Zionist merit. The authors show that they contributed to Keren Hayesod[46] and Keren Kayemet[47] funds with very important sums. Or they "founded a Kibutz de Hashera[48] of the Gordonia organization in the locality."[49] Others describe the Zionist environment in which they lived: in the Zionist environment of Piatra Neamț, they acquired knowledge of Hebrew language and culture and spread it, founded a Zionist synagogue in the city, were the organizers of a great Zionist library and administered the local Zionist newspaper, *Săptămâna.*

Thus, based on the 204 studied requests, the first motivation for migration is the reunification of the family with the children in Israel. Other reasons, which are added to the first one, are the loneliness and lack of contact with members of the family in Romania, especially among the camp survivors, the economic situation, the projection of an Ideal, the long-term Zionist merit. In a single case, the petitioner explains the fact that his factory was nationalized after the return from the camp.

Conclusion

Our work examined the *Aliyah* of Romanian Jews related to the year 1949 as reflected in migration requests addressed to the Israeli Legation in Bucharest. The archival sources of that period regarding the emigration problem contain, on the one hand, the Zionist propaganda actions for emigration, and on the other hand, the answer of the Jewish Democratic Committee in holding endless sessions within the country in order to convince the Jewish population to give up emigration.[50] The analyzed requests are highly valuable due to their potential in revealing the perspective of the Jewish community members on emigration related to the year 1949. At that time, emigration was not yet part of state politics—before becoming a state policy, emigration for the Jewish community was an individual and group practice, involving two authorities which dealt with formalities—the *Miliția* and the Israeli Legation in Bucharest (as "secondary center").

Our analysis could reveal the individual and group practices in terms of migration,

44) CRRJ, DR / 101, file 2, selections of typical formulations from all requests.

45) CRRJ, DR / 101, file 2, selections of typical formulations from all requests.

46) The Keren Hayessod (KH) is a global organization established in 1920, which collects funds for socioeconomic projects in Israel.

47) Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael–Jewish National Fund, founded in 1901, is Israel's largest environmental organization and the oldest environmental organization in the world.

48) *Hakhshara* (in Hebrew, preparation) was a Zionist agricultural training center where Zionist youth would learn technical skills necessary for their emigration to Israel and subsequent life in *kibbutzim*. Gordonia is a Zionist youth movement established in 1923 in Galicia, Spain.

49) CRRJ, DR / 101, file 2, No. 420.

50) See Leibovici-Laiș (2010) for an overview of archival sources for the study of Jews from Romania.

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in the context of the People's Republic of Romania and of Israel. By analyzing the writing patterns and reasons for requesting migration, we reveal that the impetus for emigration to the newly founded Israeli state covered Jewish communities all over Romania. The wish to leave, motivated by reunification with children or postwar loss and loneliness, shows that the Jewish community members, who project their lives in terms of being in Israel, wrote the last chapter of Jewish history in the Romanian space (Rotman 2003). The requests of 1949 have the exclusive potential of revealing the textual form in which the desire to immigrate was portrayed by Romanian Jews, one year after the creation of Israel. They mirror the interaction between the individual and the state, the personal meanings of migration as well as belonging and attachment forms to a place considered one's own.

The fonds is extremely valuable in terms of its shape and mix of requests it offers – the previously unpublished files are "untouched," the requests being kept in the shape in which they arrived at the Center. As shown, they are not typical to specific communities, and therefore there is no value in organizing them by communities. It was highly interesting to delve into the "random" mix of what one file has to offer. The recommendations of the historians and the action of the archivist in preserving the file as such shows that the archival institution does justice to the past, by leaving it "untouched," or by leaving the requests piled in their received order.

We look at the emigration requests as "vehicles of memory," or as objects with multiple definitions, representations, understandings, mobilized by various actors: the authors of the requests themselves, the archivist, the historians commenting on the documents, or the researcher. Thus, we point at the multiple ownership of the requests, both material and symbolic, and open an inquiry on the right to ownership of individual memory as archived (and therefore institutionalized) memory. According to the Archival Law in effect, the names and personal information of the request writers can only be published after one hundred years. To date, we are unable to reveal whether or when the applicants made it to Israel.

In a similar vein, together with museums and commemorations, archives are *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989) which replace memory, or living contexts of memory. The *lieux de mémoire* are more volatile and multiple memory forms because they are dependent on the input of different groups and individuals. Like archives collectively, the individual document, such as a migration request, is not just a repository of historical content, but also a reflection of the needs and desires of its creator when viewed in the context in which the document is made meaningful, together with all related interventions over time.

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MARTOR

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III. People and the Never-Ending Archive

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Sounding Out the Personal Archive

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about working with archives—finding, accessing, making them intelligible, producing and curating them—and what this process looks like when we privilege sound as material, process, instrument, and logic. In our audio project, we took personal archives as a starting point and through audio recording we produced two more related archives: a carefully edited and curated one, the podcast *Americanii*, and an unedited "rough" one, the totality of audio recordings (and some photographs) we produced in several weeks of fieldwork.

Americanii is a curated oral archive that preserves personal stories gathered in the field while creating new narratives from them. It employs different storytelling structures that show the potential of the sound medium as a way to access and mediate these oral histories.

Through this project, we interrogate the way personal archives can be understood and approached, not just as material collections but rather as complex assemblages of objects, stories, memories, and sounds purposefully collected, managed, and produced in non-institutional settings. We show the potential and limits of the intimacy inherent in the process of audio recording, and how intimacy can be a way not just of accessing archives, but also of producing them.

KEYWORDS

Sound recording, informal archives, storytelling, intimacy, podcast.

Introduction

This paper is about working with archives, and what this process looks like when we privilege sound as material, process, instrument, and logic. By archive we refer to an informally organized collection of objects, documents and oral histories, inherited and preserved by a person who is a family or community member, interested in early Romanian emigration to America. We took these personal archives as a starting point and through audio recording we produced two more related archives: a carefully edited and curated one, the podcast *Americanii*, and an unedited "rough" one, the totality of audio recordings (and some photographs) we produced in several weeks of fieldwork in Romania.

Through this project, we interrogate the way personal archives can be understood and approached, not just as material collections but rather as complex assemblages of objects, stories, memories, and sounds purposefully collected, managed, and produced in non-institutional settings. We show the potential and the limits of the intimacy inherent in the process of audio recording, and how intimacy can be a way not just of accessing archives, but also of producing them.

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Americanii is a six-part narrative nonfiction podcast about Romanian emigration to the United States in the early twentieth century, financed by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund and developed by Claudia Câmpeanu, Diana Meseșan, and Mara Mărăcinescu. It recounts the stories of life in America that were preserved by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of early Romanian migrants and touches on several themes, such as the role of women in these migrations and the impact of migrants' resources on the development of their community back home. These stories were born out of both the memory of those who continue to share them and the incredible documents they have amassed: diaries, photographs, various physical objects, newspaper clippings, birth certificates, and other records.

In order to produce the podcast, the three of us (a journalist, a sound artist, and an anthropologist) embarked on a research journey that lasted several weeks and took us to towns and villages in eight counties in central and western Romania.

Our research resulted in a total of around forty-five hours of audio recording, hundreds of photographs, many pages of notes and sketches. We recorded interviews, informal conversations, ambient sound, and sometimes just our presence and interactions.[1]

Below, we analyze how the negotiations and performative speech inherent in the act of recording affected the production of the podcast. We show how writing with sound compares to ethnographic writing, and how the future listener's presence always acted upon this writing. We debate storytelling as a tool for increasing visibility of these personal archives.

Through discussing the production process of the podcast, we also contribute to conversations about the particularities of accessing, collecting, producing, and publishing archives when working with sound and privileging this form.

1) We used two different sound recorders: a handheld stereo recorder (Zoom H2n) and a recorder with a shotgun microphone (a Sound Devices Mix-Pre3 with a Rode NTG2).

2) We use personal names with the interviewees' permission to make their stories and their participation in the project public, through the public podcast and related materials.

Personal archives

The archives and their keepers

During our research we discovered several personal archives preserved by the descendants of these early migrants to America. These were informally organized private collections of documents, objects and oral histories inherited or obtained through research that our interviewees kept at home. Some of them had amassed an impressive amount of physical objects, either brought over from America or connected to those who worked there: letters, diaries, trunks, birth certificates, and photographs. Some heard the stories of migration first-hand. Walking around their village, they would hear stories about these migrants, the Americans ("Americanii"), as they were called by the villagers. While their search for their own family history is what drove them, they also archived the stories of their village. For them, the search for answers or validation of the stories they heard growing up is still an ongoing project.

Ioan Radu-Coman[2] is a regular at the Sibiu Public Library. When we met him, he brought over several folders of handwritten notes transcribing information that he found about his village, Deal, from materials in the library. He showed us several texts that he had discovered in newspapers published by the Romanian communities in America: articles about the donations to the Church made by other men from his village or advertising for services by and for Romanians. He told us of the objects and knowledge these Americans brought back to their village, and mourned objects that were lost, such as his grandfather's Colt pistol, which rusted away hidden in the ground from the Communists. He heard stories about America from his grandmother and father, but not only from them:

> I spent time with many Romanian Americans, after I went to high school: I have an entire bag of notebooks with notes from

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> these people, not only those who worked in America. For those I had a sweet spot. You know... I still have one and will always have. Because, you know, these people, they sweat for America.

We saw the same connection with these stories and the same importance given to preserving them with Adam Măran from the village of Ilidia. One of the first things he told us after we met was: "I'm going to tell you some stories I heard. I read a few excerpts, some letters, some other stuff, so not much, but for me it's a lot."

During our interview, he showed us letters his grandparents had sent each other, photographs taken in America and sent back home, and also marriage records he had found in the forest, an artefact thrown away by an institution that likely lacked the resources or interest to preserve it. He still had his grandfather's tools, and spoke very fondly of them and the space his grandfather had worked in, located on the same property his own house was built on. Mr. Măran had also heard many stories of America when he was young, from people in the village, some of which were still alive.

Another keeper was Dana Velțan. Her aunt gave her family documents relating to her grandparents' and her father's experience in America shortly before she died. It was the first time Mrs. Velțan saw them, since they had been kept hidden because of the stigma this American experience (her father was born there) brought to her family during communism. He rarely talked about this, so it was Mrs. Velțan's mother who shared these stories, not her father. When her aunt gave her the documents, for Mrs. Velțan:

> It was like a series of surprises and discoveries. And the year I retired . . . I dedicated a few months to studying these papers. I asked for translations from Hungarian for some of the documents, the school certificate is in German, and I discovered Drutzu's book[3] about Romanians in America, written very close to that period, so not from documents but from oral histories, from real life, it was extraordinary.

It was a lack of context around her father's birth in America that drove Mrs. Velțan to find out more about her grandparents' experience there. As she gathered more details, the best way for her to preserve them was to write them down as a straightforward family story. When we visited her in her home in Cluj, she presented us with a kind of altar made of rescued and preserved photographs, documents, objects, and even a school notebook of an aunt born in America, who had returned to Romania as a girl.

Accessing and re-sounding the archives

In sum, the personal archives we worked with and tried to access through our research encounters were eclectic assemblages of written texts, oral stories and anecdotes, objects, photographs, documents, monuments, and in some cases even buildings and yards—which served as anchors for our interviewees' stories and helped legitimate their right to bear and tell them: houses where their relatives had lived or were built/bought with migration money. But, beyond these, what we seemed to have accessed was an entire archive of feelings (akin in some ways to Cvetkovich 2003) that not only invoked but also re-enacted the trauma of migration or that of being left behind, the wonder of the migration experience and that of returning home. This affective archive seemed to reveal itself to us not only discursively ("These are tears that I have inherited," Mrs. Budiu from Arad told us) but also through the very act of remembering and telling these stories. For some of our interviewees this connection with the experience of their relatives and the stories they left behind was constitutive of their own identities, and therefore the complex archives they had amassed were deeply *personal*.

While we initially framed our research as one of accessing these archives, during our encounters it became clear that we were actively

3) Drutzu, Șerban. 1922. *Românii în America* [Romanians in America]. Chicago, Illinois: S. Alexandru Typography.

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participating in the process of producing them. These archives—especially in their immaterial form, but not only—were produced and reproduced in these instances, re-invested with significance and protected against forgetting. Our interlocutors expressed their gratitude to us for allowing them to tell these stories and show us their many objects, as if occasions like these were crucial to feed those stories' continued existence.

Some of these stories, as expected, sounded rehearsed (because they had been told many, many times) and some were even finished texts, written down in the form of historical studies, monographs, notes, or short stories. What we noticed was that for the family members of these early migrants writing their story down was a guarantee that these stories will live beyond them. Where *Americanii* came to complicate the situation was in turning these texts back into oral histories, as well as trying to turn the physical artefacts into sound objects that would speak to our listeners.

As rehearsed as these stories might have been, the interview situation (we could call it a social-technological situation) made room for improvisation, filling in gaps (through our questions and interventions), and, more generally, for producing and re-presenting the personal archive anew. What is significant for this situation is the fact that we were recording sound, not only for *preservation*, but also for *presentation,* and our interviewees were keenly aware that they and their stories were going to be represented by what we and our machines recorded. The act of recording not only made their own archives present, but also produced another one, one that would travel and live a life of its own, and one that had to translate the complexity of what they had shown us. The pressure, for all of us, was about how to adequately do that.

The personal archives we worked with, in their multitude of forms, were also restructured and re-signified in relationship to the very act of recording. Turning the recorder on, pointing or repositioning the microphone, often acted as an index for how important, significant, or useful the information was (similar to photography), and helped re-orient our interlocutors in what they offered or re-presented to us. Similarly, for us it was often a guessing game trying to figure out what we should record, and how to use the equipment to interact with the different layers and possibilities of the stories we tried to access.

In the rest of the paper we will explore the particular possibilities and limits that working with sound can offer in translating and re-presenting such *personal* archives.

Sounding objects

We started off knowing we wanted to gather intimate personal accounts of the impact this circular migration had on the family history, but along the way we encountered many physical artefacts. The work we did, talking about and sonifying these objects, showed us the limits and possibilities of sound as a medium for research and representation.

For Măran, Coman and Velțan, it was a joy to speak of their family artefacts and this enthusiasm came out into the recordings. Mr. Coman spoke fondly of a tablecloth from one of the companies whose cruise ships took Romanians to America; he uses it to this day to celebrate the Fourth of July with his family. Also, Mrs. Velțan teared up when he read from her great aunt's diary, a first generation Romanian-American, who died at nineteen, after returning to Romania. In these moments, we as researchers were in sync with their special passion for the subject of early emigration. Often, this translated into the way they spoke of these artefacts and the intimacy that was created among us, and exposed the vulnerability they were willing to show regarding their own family histories.

The sonification of the physical artefacts proved an interesting challenge. In the case of Virgil Rogozea from Drăguș, who had his great grandfather's diary, sonification of the artefact was relatively straightforward.

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He read directly from it. Similarly, we made others read excerpts from birth certificates, or handwritten letters, and describe photographs to us, if they didn't offer to do it themselves. But sonifying the most visual of these objects usually failed.

In our interview with Mr. Coman, for example, he brought several objects, including a dictionary that his father had given him. When we saw it, our instinct was to encourage him and the other people present there to describe to us what they were seeing. From the conversation below, it is clear that it was something they were uncomfortable doing.

> Bianca Karda (BK): Hey, look. Favorite...
> Ioan Radu-Coman (IRC): I think Vasile Radu brought this . . .
> BK: Pictorial Dictionary . . .
> IRC: My grandfather.
> BK: Sure, wait and we'll photograph it also. Yes.
> Mara Mărăcinescu (MM): Please put it aside and I'll be asking you, Bianca, to describe what you see.
> BK: OK, I'll try.
> MM: Yes, just try.
> BK: What we're seeing . . .
> MM: Yes, go on . . .
> BK: We're looking at Mr. Coman's things . . .
> BK: There's a dictionary called The Favorite Pictorial Dictionary. What I'm seeing is a stamp on the back of the cover, with an address from Philadelphia, a name, Lexicon, and I don't understand this here, English . . .
> IRC: Probably.

Later on, after Mr. Radu-Coman factually described one of his photographs, we tried to imbue it with feeling, thus rendering the act completely staged:

"Diana Meseșan: He looks very proud, or it's just the moustache . . . . …IRC: It's probably the moustache."

In staging the story, we tried to recreate the situation that generated that object, but at the auditory level, it came off as an example of our work process rather than a focus on the story the artefact told.

When we didn't encourage them, the descriptions were brief—probably because it was difficult for all of us (interviewers and interviewees) to transcend the moment and imagine how the situation would be experienced by future listeners. To most of us, the objects seemed self-evident. We tried asking questions that would require descriptive answers, or we proceeded to read from the texts ourselves. We rarely used the descriptions of the more visual objects in our podcast because they were forced and did not do justice to the archival object itself. The only time these descriptions worked on a sonic level was when more than one member of the family was there and so we "captured" the natural excitement surrounding a photograph. This happened once in Drăguș, where one of the women we spoke to showed us a famous picture of her grandmother that everyone around the table recognized and clamored to comment on. Another instance was in a Skype interview where one of the family members took out a photo that they had not seen in a long time. Generally, to resolve these awkward exchanges in the editing phase, we used voice-over narration instead of the recorded material. Did this lessen the authenticity of the artefact for the listener? Most likely it did.

After public auditions of several episodes of *Americanii,* we often heard people were frustrated because they would have liked to see the physical object. Our editing created unique visual landscapes for the listeners. This, we thought, allowed the audience to use their imagination, but when it came to the photographs, describing what we were seeing was not enough. It worked against the main advantage of the sound medium: offering the listener the chance to have any visual reference she desires when she listens. In this case, because of the nature of the artefacts we were speaking of, real, concrete objects, imagining them as something other than what they were proved frustrating.

Our failure to adequately sonify the objects, and thus translate an important part of these personal archives, was partly due to

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the limits of working with sound, our own personal limits as interviewers, and possibly the limits of the genre that we tried to work within. The finished product that we envisioned was a conversational, discourse-rich podcast, which required turning such material artefacts into texts that worked with the rest of the texts we recorded.

The process of audio recording

In our fieldwork we treated sound as an artefact, rather than merely a document. This implied working with and prioritizing different layers of sound and led to a particular methodology of recording, which came with its own limitations and questions of authenticity.

The object of recording

We came to this project with some experience in recording interviews for research, as well as in recording interviews and ambiances for podcasts or other sound works. Our differing experiences and backgrounds brought us to viewing the audio recording simultaneously as a form of documentation (a document of something else) and as an artefact in itself. This dual quality had, at times, competing consequences for how and what we recorded, as well as how we saw the relationship of the material to the larger project (and implicitly to the finished product, the podcast).

In other words, the recording as document could be satisfactory and valuable even if fragmented, partially inaudible with competing sounds in the background, while thinking of it as an artefact introduced requirements of coherence, clarity, sufficient length and quality of sound. A recording that was interrupted by the barking of a dog or the passing of an airplane or truck would have been perfectly fine by the standards of documentation used in an anthropological or journalistic research project, while these characteristics rendered it (almost) unusable in an audio production project such as our own. Thinking of our recordings as audio artefacts also introduced concerns of form, adequate representation of the story, as well as complementarity with other materials we had previously recorded or were planning to record. Also, this made us privilege longer stretches of speech as opposed to lively but fragmented conversations, which we knew were harder to edit and use.

Thus, the purpose of the process of recording was not (only) understanding, but rather building a large and diverse collection of building blocks for our podcast, a coherent, usable sound archive. This influenced our interviewing technique, limiting the presence of our voices in the interview material. Still, the actual recording was, to a large degree, the result of tactical negotiations between us and our interviewees, negotiations that took place within the opportunities and constraints of the concrete events of our encounters. We met in people's homes, in their yards, in dark restaurants, and in public libraries. We socialized with them while they played the good hosts and offered us food, drinks, and the hospitality of their homes, so small talk and conviviality were unavoidable. We had to tend to complex dynamics between them when we interviewed more than one person at a time. We also had to accommodate complicated home situations (such as the presence of pets or interrupting family members).[4] While we would have liked to let the prefiguration of the finished product shape the object of our recording, we actually had little power to do so.

Hierarchies of materials

We recorded three types of material: interviews, ambient sound, and documentation of the research process. We worked with this typology from the very beginning, attempting to collect sufficient material in each of these categories, with fairly clear intentions of building the finished audio product using all three.

4) In our interview with Galeni Mârza, her son would interject and often complement or "translate" for the listener what we heard from his mother. You can hear him, for example, at 24:36 in Episode 3 adding "she was the host" to explain who the woman that was rumored to be in a relationship with her mother-in-law's husband was.

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However, we clearly privileged interviews and designed the encounters and the activity of recording around collecting this particular kind of material. The meeting with the interviewees was therefore structured (in intention, at least) around this event: we waited respectfully until sufficient rapport was created, made small talk, accepted hospitality, explained the project, all in anticipation of the moment when the *interview* actually started. After the interview was finished we often received a tour of the house/yard, were shown objects and photographs that were related to the stories we had heard. The interview situation was marked by various cues: finding a quiet, protected space, sitting down comfortably, arranging our bodies for the most effective auditory access, positioning and turning the shotgun microphone on, removing objects that could interfere or interrupt the process of recording, switching our attention mode into a more formal, involved one. The sound we recorded, therefore, was the result of a fairly contrived situation that was meant to produce a type of material that *would count as interview*: coherent, articulated, cleanly recorded. This is what we were there for, we would have said. This was going to be the material that counted.

There were instances, however, when the reality of the fieldwork challenged our intentions, as we have already outlined above (in particular when more than one person was present for the interview). Also, no matter how hard we tried to clearly demarcate the types of situations and sounds we recorded, they often bled into each other. For example, important information was recorded accidentally or while one of the recorders was left running.

Each interview created a different auditory setting. We had the quiet, controlled space of the one-on-one interviews, the loud, overlapping space of a spontaneous group interview or the interrupted space of the online interview. These settings directly affected the intimacy of the encounter, and consequently the nature and tone of the interviewees' speech. While their voices were the central focus, recordings of our own workflow and of general ambiances were also important sonic layers. Thus, the other two types of sounds we recorded were intended to serve different functions, and not necessarily be the main material.

We recorded ambient sound with the intention of using it mainly for stylistic and supporting effects: to create a sense of place, to give texture to the other types of sounds we were using, or fill in moments of no speech/silence. Thus, we recorded church bells in Sântimbru, the sound of wind and our steps on the grass while walking to a monument in Vinga, the sound of rain, tires on gravel, and the car engine while driving to Ilidia. Although we recorded plenty of sound, we used it less than we thought we would. Somehow, in the process of editing, its subordination to the main material and to the structure of each episode as well as the tight economy of time/length made it unnecessary. Again, sadly, what mattered was the discourse, or sound that could be turned into discourse, missing out on the valuable possibilities that field recordings could provide in telling a story.

The rest of the recordings fell somewhat in-between interviews and ambient sound, constituting a category of material that was to serve the purpose of authenticating our other recordings and, overall, our project. We kept the Zoom H2n recorder on during most of our visits, and oftentimes turned it on a few minutes before arriving, in order to capture the moments of meeting and introductions. We turned it on while we were driving from site to site, when discussing plans, as well as when we were debriefing after the interviews. We thought of these kinds of recordings as ways of documenting the research and recording process and a device of building authority and credibility, in ways not dissimilar to the ways in which anthropologists build their own authority, writing it in into their texts (Clifford 1983). It was our way of showing that "we were there."

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Authenticity in sound: intimacy, spontaneity, and "the natural"

These ambient and documentary recordings were important for two reasons. Firstly, this awareness of the ambient sounds was meant to enhance our storytelling and offer "authenticity." Secondly, we needed as much descriptive sound as possible in order to help the audience visualize what we were seeing—both at the level of our own workflow and the presentation of the artefacts.

What we discovered through our research was that having the best setup for high-quality recordings came into conflict with being in the moment (having spontaneity and authenticity). In the same way, spontaneity and authenticity sometimes caught us off guard and resulted in sound that was often unusable (the speaker was too far away from the microphone, too many people talked over each other, and so on).

Steven Feld, an anthropologist, musician and sound artist, said that, for him:

> the real joy and pleasure of recording is an enhanced sociality, an enhanced conviviality, an enhanced way of engaging with listening to people, to places, to objects, to all manner of sound-making things, including the sound of myself breathing, myself walking, the sound of my heart beat, the sound of myself recording. The sound recording process and object always is a recording of social relationships in action; that's why I think of the sound recorder as a device to produce an enhanced social, physical co-present relationship with objects, with others, with myself, through the medium of sound (Carlyle 2013: 209).

Feld speaks here not only of the importance of voice or songs, but of all the other sounds that surround the ethnographic process. His work with the Kaluli people of Bosavi in New Guinea clearly makes audible this relationship of people to their surrounding soundscape, something we also tried to achieve by recording for as long as possible. Our initial intention was to document this soundscape and use it as the basis for an immersive experience into our interviewees' soundworlds. Expectedly, what we ended up with was documenting the soundscapes of our research encounters. As Feld said: "Someone . . . will hear this and immediately want to know about who was present and where, in other words, they will want to link an idea of authenticity to the experiential authority of somebody who was physically present to hear these things in their moment" (2010: 113). We offered this presence by recording ourselves outside the actual interviews.

One of the most significant instances of being in the moment, both physically and technologically, happened while driving to Ilidia. It is a great example of how the unpredictable nature of recording ambient sounds leads to the recording of a meaningful interview, which also reflects our own research process.

On the day of our interview, it was pouring rain and the road was awful. We were worried that our rental car would not make it all the way to Ilidia, and we were impressed by the water that was pouring down the roads. On our first field trip to Cluj-Napoca, an orange warning of severe weather was issued, so we thought perhaps the rain would follow us on all our field trips, becoming an interesting sonic element. So, while slowly driving on the roads, we started recording the rain pouring down, and in a moment of respite from the rain, the sound of the car on the gravel. It was right after pulling the handheld recorder back in the car that we spotted a man trying to hitchhike.[5] What followed was a spontaneous, warm interview on our way to Ilidia. Had we started recording after he got into the car, we would have missed the entire transactional conversation of the actual pick-up. Also, having him tell us on record how bad the road was further certified our previous recordings and helped our auditors visualize the bumpy road that they could already hear.

This experience goes hand in hand with instances of intentional ambient recording.

5) Excerpt from the first episode of *Americanii*.

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We started all of our recordings long before actually sitting down for the interviews. We recorded ourselves walking, opening and closing doors, meeting people, discussing how we drink our coffee, or asking around for directions. For example, during the interview with Francisc Stoianov in Vinga, he mentioned a monument built with the money that Bulgarian emigrants had made while working in America. After our interview we went to see this monument. Because we had brought the two recorders with us, we could focus both on the person being interviewed about the history of the monument and the ambient sounds.[6]

In Arad and Covăsânț though, our process of recording all these ambient sounds at length was less successful, as it did not give us the material we would have liked to use in the editing phase. Being fully in the moment and interacting spontaneously with the situation and the objects we were looking at meant sometimes taking our attention and ears off the equipment, which affected the nature and the quality of sound.

For example, in Covăsânț, our interviewee left to speak with his parents, and we remained in the interview room alone with some archival documents, some divorce papers. The plaintiff had filed for divorce because of physical abuse, and one of us was reading the document full of dramatic details. At this time, the microphone was on the table. Full of frenzied enthusiasm and caught in the moment, we didn't realize its role and position until later on. We didn't give it enough technical attention and missed the chance to record the moment properly for the listeners.

The very thing that gave our experience authenticity and dynamism—that we were all equally involved in the research process, in the interactions with the interviewees, and to some degree in the technical act of recording—created risks and limitations for the actual material we produced. Just like for an ethnographer, participant observation came at a cost, splitting attention between the act of observing and recording.

The same way for Carlyle "the sound recorder [acts] as a device to produce an enhanced social, physical co-present relationship with objects, with others, with myself, through the medium of sound" (2013: 209), for us, these were recordings of the social relations in action that produced the material for our project. Authenticity for us then was our attempt to make these relations visible, or to allow the listener to at least catch glimpses of them in the podcast. We wanted the archives of sound we produced to bear the sign of the conditions and social relationships that produced them.

The interview as performance. The audience as an absent presence. Intimacy and technology

We also negotiated this authenticity with regards to our interviewees' speech. For a lot of them, the written text, whether as preserved artefacts or originally produced text, acted as an anchor for their stories. Some had the diaries of their relatives, such as Virgil Rogozea and Dana Velțan. Several told us that they verified the details of their stories by checking out the official village histories, known as monographs. Some even began writing such monographs, for example, Gheorghe Tătaru, who had a working copy of a text about his family history when we met him. While reading it, we realized that he wrote down not only stories that he knew from his family, but also details that were clearly taken from sociological articles written by ethnographers that came to his village a couple of decades after the migration.[7]

Our interviewees' knowledge of stories about America thus came not only from first-hand accounts, but also from secondary texts that then became part of their own discourse. It was important for them to get the *historical facts* right, probably in order to offer some authenticity to the village narrative and to support their own personal reputation. There were many informal layers to their discourse, but they did not always translate into informal forms of speech. We

6) In this particular situation, while Mara Mărăcinescu continued speaking with our interviewee, Claudia Câmpeanu was recording the ambient soundscape, and Diana Meseșan was taking pictures. It was a multiple tracing of our research.

7) Drăguș was one of the first villages studied by Dimitrie Gusti's Sociological School in 1929.

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often encountered a tension between wanting to present a coherent speech, worthy of radio, and having a more spontaneous conversational tone. Often, when going door-to-door or with a larger group of interviewees, many told us they wish they had been better prepared for our visit.

We often worked against this prepared/performed speech, something that did not always sit well with them. The only way to ease their nerves was to give them time and the opportunity to read out their own texts or act out their speech. For example, Mrs. Velțan was very friendly and welcoming, but was clearly nervous around us. Shortly after meeting, we explained to her our approach to recording, that is, having the recorder on from the very beginning, even before sitting down for the actual interview. Despite her being initially comfortable with the situation, within the first ten minutes she made us stop recording because she wanted to rehearse the text she wrote before starting to tell us the actual story.

We had a similar situation in Drăguș, with Virgil Rogozea. His speech sounded very different when he was the center of attention (microphone pointed at him) compared to when he was part of a group conversation. In Episode 2, he is reading directly from a written text, while in Episode 5, he is participating in a free dialogue. His tone is more relaxed in the latter situation, a sign of greater intimacy.

In all these different interview settings, this intimacy was always framed by the use of the microphone, a very visible presence because of its size (almost 30 centimeters, covered in a fuzzy wind protection). We constantly negotiated its presence with the interviewee: through our own physical positioning, by having the microphone on for the longest possible time, or by ensuring that the person holding the microphone wasn't the main interviewer. We had to keep the microphone present and physically close to the interviewee because of the listener; in a way, with the microphone we carried the listener along with us.

On our trip to Ormeniș, we had an interesting moment of technical negotiation. We interviewed a village elder of German ethnicity, Regina Roth, and because we didn't speak German we were not the ones asking the questions. At one point, while Mrs. Roth was speaking, Cătălin, our local guide and the interviewer, gestured and whispered towards us to hold the microphone further away from her mouth. In that moment, she did not visibly object to the microphone, but it was interesting to see him act on behalf of the interviewee and feel entitled to comment on the way we were recording, while we were acting on behalf of the audience.

Feld often speaks of a "technical mediation" that is found in his work. In describing his piece about European church bells, he recognizes that the transparent sound that comes through in the composition is the result of many hours of recording and careful layering, the result of a meticulous construction (Feld 2010: 101-102). The choices he made while recording, the different perspectives he chose, or the particular times when he would record, are all the result of mediating the natural soundscape through his recording. This transparency is perceived as such by the audience in spite of all the hours spent on the technical details of recording and editing.

For us, this "technical mediation" translated into qualms about the limits of transparency and the meaning of authenticity in presenting our research and production process. The more immersive episodes of the podcast relied heavily on erasing the seams of the research and the production process and the fragmentary nature of the material (which would be an assumed matter in academic writing).

Managing the archive. Interpreting in the field

Recording while doing the research meant that the archive we were collecting posed logistical challenges, especially because of the particular format we worked in, namely sound. Audio recordings are not immedi-

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ately transparent to those who want to manage them, they have to be translated and made visible through techniques of cataloguing and all kinds of metadata.

Every day, after the field sessions, we saved all audio materials, made back-ups, and added textual information to every recording, information that would make it later recognizable (the metadata was encoded into the recording). As simple and straightforward as the process might seem, at the moment of the first archiving we had to make choices about *what this material actually was*, to select a handful of details and use them to describe the whole piece of recording, with consequences for later retrieval and use. It was a first interpretation that rendered the material visible in particular ways and obfuscated it in others.

The formal interviews didn't pose many problems, and the process of archiving them was straightforward, especially since we had already planned to have them all transcribed. What proved more difficult was deciding what to do with the long stretches of ambient sound and the more tactical recordings of informal conversations and interactions with the interviewees. We knew we couldn't listen and re-listen to them in the process of producing the finished audio product in order to locate interesting and relevant information. Therefore, we used our emerging analysis and understanding of what we were documenting in order to produce a scheme of archiving with keywords and brief descriptions that were primarily about what moved/excited us in the moment and what we thought would be usable or particularly eloquent during editing. While this was necessary, given the limited time we had for producing the podcast, our indexing and descriptive principles greatly reduced the material and, again, subordinated it to the interviews and to how we envisioned the podcast's final form.

At the same time, we supplemented this kind of metadata with fieldnotes and explanatory sketches (in particular kinship charts we needed to build in order to understand the complex family relationships that were being described to us) that proved useful in the editing phase.

Producing the podcast

The podcast can be thought of as a carefully edited and curated public archive, an archive of the stories we collected as well as of our experience in the process of collecting them. It is a collective archive, whose authorship and production is distributed temporally and, in some ways, among the many people who participated in the process of documentation, recording, and editing. As we have already pointed out, it was not simply the result of *collecting*, but it was also produced in complicated ways through our interactions and expectations of the finished product.

Getting to the final cut involved moving the material through several technical operations: transcribing the interviews, uploading them into the editing software, selecting and cutting the usable bits, assembling them into the final sequence, adding sound effects and music and mixing them all for quality. Some of these operations can be seen as ways of visualizing the material, of transforming sound into either discourse (text) or images (the editing software had an important visual component). This filtering and processing raises the question of whether the material we produced (sound) could be addressed only or primarily as sound, or had to become something else in order to be worked with? How similar is editing and curating sound to editing and curating other types of materials, and can we escape our visual and textual conditionings in working with sound? In what ways can we allow sound to be just that, and in what ways do we approach it with the same tools and impulses we approach visual and textual materials? Is listening and engaging your hearing enough to escape these impulses? And how

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can we counter the ephemeral quality of sound, as it has to be constantly recreated—through various technologies—in order to be accessed, understood, consumed?

Editing sound versus journalistic and ethnographic writing

The main advantage of sound for us was to make somebody or something present, in ways writing would never be able to, to preserve voices and all their extra-textual content, to minimize the filters we inevitably use when telling any kind of story. We soon realized that working with sound for the purpose of producing an audience-oriented podcast was going to be a balancing act between staying close to the material and valuing individual voices, on the one hand, and communicating a coherent and convincing story, on the other.

Working with actual voices to be preserved in the finished product was very different from our previous work with ethnographic and journalistic writing. In ethnographic writing, the interview material, for example, is turned into discursive data and figuratively thrown into the analysis machine with all the other voices. No matter how personally close we are with the interviewees, their actual voices disappear and make it to the final text as bits of text that fit in with the argument and all the other data being used. With all the experimental and reflexive turns in ethnographic writing, with all the drive for polyvocality and political responsibility, the individual voices of the research participants are, in the end, subordinated to the main argument and invariably, to the voice of the ethnographer, the author. The required anonymity actually frees (emotionally, at least) the writer from some of the responsibility she has towards the people whose voices she is trying to represent. But, when you're working with voice, you cannot do that. What struck us was that we could not stray from the actual recordings, and that any kind of "theorizing" had to be done and shown with the material itself.

We also had to heed journalistic conventions and expectations, especially in the choice of materials to be included in the finished podcast. After long discussions and negotiations, we decided we needed convincing and charismatic (articulate) characters and strong stories, which made us uneasy about losing some of the richness and texture of the totality of materials we had collected and also the complexity of the story we were trying to tell.

Editing for story

We constructed our episodes having the audience in mind and using the tools of storytelling. The editing was not about the archival objects as much as it was about the stories told by them, and the way they fit into a larger theme for an episode. We carefully crafted the rhythm, chose sound design elements, and wrote the narration to serve a particular story.

Stories, either as a narrative thread that could carry an entire episode or as long quotes that also had a stand-alone value, were what gave structural coherence to all six episodes. In other words, the main principle for selecting and organizing the materials into the podcast was the narrative quality of the material that had to be strong enough to sustain the episode.

For example, for Ilidia, we could have worked with multiple narratives. We eventually structured the episode by telling the story of an entire village of migrants through the individual story of Adam Măran. Alternatively, we could have spoken more about his grandparents' love story and the way their relationship survived while they were apart, or we could have focused on the story of Adam Măran more closely, as the dedicated keeper of these stories. We chose to focus on Ilidia because it helped us prove our point: migration to America at the beginning of the twentieth century was truly a phenomenon. We also took elements from Mr. Măran's story and used them in the episode focusing on the theme of women's

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migration, Episode 3, to serve the story of exceptional working women, either in America or back home.

We wanted the stories to be told by the interviewees and only when lacking supporting recordings to be retold and reframed by us through narration. This was the case with Episodes 1, 2 and 5. Instead of a classical voice over narration, the action in these episodes is driven by our direct interventions during the interviews. In Episode 4 for example, narration was needed to fill in gaps in the narrative, where the interviewee's speech was unclear and lacked important details, or, if it was the case, to shorten a story that dragged out and wouldn't fit in the length of the episode. Lastly, those episodes that required heavier narration retold multiple stories gathered around a particular theme. For example, for Episode 3, we share stories of the women that left for America, and we explore the reasons why we do not hear more of these stories.

The use of sound design was limited to bringing out the potential of the stories told in the past tense. For the second episode, in which we retell the story of how migrants travelled to America and how they lived there, it was important for us to help the listener imagine this trip and the conditions there. The design more closely resembled that for a movie than for other episodes because it included more sound effects rather than just added ambiances.

On the other hand, there were those episodes where the unfolding of the action was important—in Ilidia and Drăguș. In both Episodes 1 and 5, the structure of the episode follows the linear time structure of the interview. In Episode 1, we start with the hitchhiker that we mentioned earlier, continue with the sit-down interview and end with our walk around the village asking the older folks if they remember stories told by the Americans. In Episode 5, we start off at the mayor's office and end up in the yard of Lavinia Rogozea where the ladies from the choir sang for us "Arz-o focu America/ Damn you, America", the song that sparked our interest in the topic. For these, we only used musical elements to support different moments in the narration (the introductions or the arrivals of new characters in our story). We thought sound design elements would crowd the auditory space, not leaving enough room for the listener to focus on what was said, or interpret it in her individual manner.

Storytelling as a tool is important to keep the audience engaged. Stories of these Americans had been made visible before. There are several scholars studying these stories, and the Romanian magazine *Historia* had even published a special issue on early American emigration.[8] But the podcast is a digitally native format that would allow new audiences to experience these stories in an immersive way. We also worked with our publishing partners to make a mini website to include further written information and some of the photographs we took in the field.[9] Thus, having an online presence and employing these different types of narratives worked to secure a wider audience for these stories.

Americanii *as an active, public archive*

We conceived *Americanii* as an active, public archive: public, because it is online and free to access, and active, through its openly active curating.

We started working on *Americanii* knowing fully well the potential of the sound medium for accessing personal oral histories, sometimes difficult ones, or larger social arguments.[10] The intimacy inherent in the medium (we are speaking to individual listeners through their personal devices directly in their headphones) was something we were counting on. We knew that for the end result we had to have the listener in mind. We were creating an inherently intimate archive, one with which people could interact and access directly.

Being a public archive raises questions of adequate representation, dignity, and ethics. We felt a keen responsibility towards

8) *Historia*. n.d. "Historia, special nr. 8, septembrie 2014" [available online at: https://www.historia.ro/revista/historia-special-nr-8-septembrie-2014; Accessed on March 1, 2019].

9) Sunete pe bune, 2018. *Americanii* [The Americans]. Last modified December 2018 [available online at: https://scena9.ro/Americanii].

10) The previous podcast we worked on addressed the issue of violence in adolescent couples *(Sunt în casă cu răul/I live with evil)* and tied domestic violence to gender politics.

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the people whose voices we were going to let have a public existence and also towards those whose voices and stories we were not going to include in the finished material (for various reasons).

From the very beginning, we told people who we were, why we were recording, and how we were going to use the finished material. Also, we told them when we turned the recorder on (or that we had it on) and asked for permission to record or keep and use the recording. One person asked us not to make his name and identity public (and we didn't use any recordings or photos taken in that meeting), and another one wanted us to make sure his speech was grammatically correct before including any quote in the finished podcast. What definitely helped was that the act of recording—through its intimacy and through its resembling any other unrehearsed encounter—was very different from other ways of collecting testimonies (for example, signing a paper or a document).

The question of adequate representation and relationship to various master narratives was a delicate one, for this public archive we produced was obviously not an un-curated one. We definitely wanted *to say something* with this finished material, and the way we produced and assembled it says a lot about ourselves as people and professionals, and also about our views, sensibilities, and positionalities. Just like Roshanak Kheshti pointed out in an interview, we should be more aware of this and what we *do* with the sound recordings we produce as ethnographers, journalists, and sound artists: "If contemporary ethnographers considered this question vis-à-vis sound recording in the way that we have come to expect of their 'writing culture,' then perhaps we'd have a different way of relating to sound recording, one that understands the use-value of these media beyond just being passive archives" (Chatlosh and Kheshti 2018: para. 4). Our archive was then active in the sense that it was meant to *do* something beyond making some stories and memories public.

For Episode 3, the one about women migrants, we felt that we needed to counter the master narrative of the man hero who travels alone across the seas, works hard, and supports his family. These men certainly did this, but the story of migration to America was not only about them. We felt it was important to intervene, with our small writing of history, in the larger History, and show that women also migrated and worked, that the story of migration was also about the women who were left alone at home to do the work of two people, tending to the family, household, and the fields. We wanted to sound their voices, the few ones that were preserved in the memories of their descendants, in photos and writings. We told stories of the rebel women who escaped their marriages and left for America, who worked in factories and pretended to be men in order to be paid more, women who defied their communities by staying home and working alone or challenging the norms of a still conservative society by wearing modern clothes or driving cars.

On the other hand, we had to decide what to do with certain themes and master narratives that were invoked in the stories of some of the interviewees, themes that we were not necessarily comfortable endorsing, such as nationalist readings of the historical contexts or various events. Should we just let the material be, without any critical commentary (which could be read as a tacit endorsing on our part)? Should we frame it and qualify it in relationship to our own positions? Or should we just leave it out altogether, even if it was good audio material? How do we mitigate the responsibility we have towards the people we worked with? In the end, very little of this nationalist point of view was kept in the material—it was a curatorial decision we had to assume responsibility for.

At the same time, we were clearly not the only ones actively curating the materials we worked with: we were part of a chain that had started long before us. What surprised us was the way the recording process

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interacted with the personal archives of our interviewees. During our fieldwork we realized that the type of preservation work done by Mr. Coman, Mrs. Velțan, Mr. Măran, one that started from a type of self-archiving, mirrored our workflow with the sound medium. Their interest for understanding the larger context in which their family stories existed spoke of the same self-awareness that we had as recordists, of our own place in the soundfield and our relationship to others. Similarly, our own work process is very present in the podcast much in the same way their personal drive framed the production of their own archives. Lastly, we faced some of the same issues they did when it came to preserving our research, in particular how the archive we had amassed could have an existence at all outside an institutional context. The podcast was one partial solution, but what should happen to the rest? What happens to the rough archive of all our recordings if it is not given over to an institution that could preserve these artefacts beyond the life of the online platforms they live on now? How would we tell/share this archive's production in order for it to be preserved?[11]

Afterword

For us, this project revealed some of the potential of working with sound (as material and technology) when it comes to personal archives. Sound offers possibilities to record the complexity of an encounter, with all its textual and experiential layers, and also to archive and make it available in ways other more material and visually/textually oriented methods can't. Sound, being so closely tied to the body and its immediate experience, works with intimacy and what that can bring to any research endeavor: trust, spontaneity, credibility. Also, its availability on a wide range of mobile and browser listening applications, alongside entertainment-oriented content, makes it more accessible and susceptible to random discovery by a wider public.

As simple as it may seem, sound quality matters and it drives not only the chances of any piece of material to be included in the finished product, but also the direction and the nature of the finished product itself. Variations in sound quality are, of course, partly a technical question, but they are also the result of our discriminating treatment of recording situations, as well as of our democratic and enthusiastic immersion in the excitement of the moment. What would alleviate this problem is treating all recording time as formal recording time (from a technical point of view) and clearly assigning technical responsibility in particular moments to specific people, even if it means that some persons cannot participate in the immersion inherent in the documentation process. This raises particular problems in situations like ours, where all members of the team are interested in interacting with the interviewees and actively participating in the process. Our solution would be to take turns and rotate responsibilities. Alternately, the production process could be opened up to include other types of interests and competencies in working with sound, in particular technical ones, by working with sound technicians.

In other words, we need to develop more appropriate methods, we need to enter into productive dialogue with other sound artists, acoustic ecologists, or sound professionals, with people who come to this process through other professional and personal trajectories less encumbered than our own limits. This would open us to the possibilities of using and learning from all kinds of sound-based research. We also need to further explore the use of publishing and research contexts other than the academic ones, contexts that can be more democratic and more appealing—to both the public and the participants—such as audio documentaries and podcasts.

As a curated active archive, *Americanii* allowed for the keepers' stories to become

11) There is an ongoing project called Preserve This Podcast (http://preservethispodcast.org/) that addresses these very issues. Perhaps by implementing their guidelines we will be able to keep this curated archive alive outside of the personal space.

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publicly available and provided the general public with straightforward access to these personal archives. The podcast was aligned with the keepers' own need for their personal archives to be recognized and "kept alive", since their archival work is centered on building, maintaining and preserving these stories. At the same time, the podcast, through its structure, implied curating the available recorded material by balancing and taking into account at all times both the keepers' and the listeners' needs.

For us, coming from three seemingly competing fields (journalism, anthropology, sound art) and collaborating on a single project exposed some of the limits these disciplines have when it comes to working with materials, audiences, and representations. At the same time, it offered ways of addressing these limits. The public nature of a podcast, the ephemeral, personal, and less mediated nature of working with the human voice, and the immersive quality of the research experience all make for a more publicly responsible and more attractive and accessible anthropology, a more socially grounded sound art, and a more analytical and relevant kind of journalism. The podcast form can be a valuable methodological resource for artists, journalists, and anthropologists.

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THE LITTLE WHITE / BLACK BOOK OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL ARCHIVE OF THE MUSEUM OF THE ROMANIAN PEASANT 2009–2019

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ABSTRACT

In the last 10 years, the Ethnological Archive of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant has gone through different stages during a period marked, on the one hand, by the settling down of the Museum, and on the other hand, by the passing of the torch from the "old" to the "new" generation. At present, the Archive is facing an ambiguous era: while the team blossoms, the lack of vision and financial resources in the wider Romanian cultural context pulls it back. We tell the journey of an Archive kept constantly alive by the people who managed, explored and contributed to its growth; we look back at the successes and the failures, in order to open up the Archive for reflection and possible solutions.

KEYWORDS

Museum, archive, ethnology, subjectivity, captivity, interdisciplinary team.

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The past lives, it is alive, it changes depending on what happens.

Octavian Paler

The adolescent archive

The ethnological archive of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant (MRP) is made up of the fruits of field investigations carried out over time by researchers, together with acquisitions and donations as selected and appropriately conserved by archivists. Categorised in accordance with the demands of each period—its preferred academic areas, methodology, currents of thought and trends—these are subsequently studied and exploited in the course of individual and institutional projects. If we trace this process step by step we will be able to see that the supposed objectivity of the testimony provided by the physical items has to be set against the subjectivity inherent in the human factor—inevitably involved in the putting-together of the Archive.

The position of the Archive at the outset of the decade in question was as follows. The archive had finally been recovered in its entirety from the places of storage in which the avatars of its history[1] had dispersed it; it had experienced a visible and positive growth as a result of the research associated with the work of establishing the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, had taken on a distinct personality and was already on the way to attaining organic coherence in its efforts to achieve an identity of its own.

Thus, in 2009, the Archive was swinging in an adolescent way between enthusiasm at what had been achieved and the demons of entropy.

1) The Museum's archive of ethnological documents came into being at the same time as the National Art Museum (1906); at the beginning of the 1950s, when the political order changed, it was moved along with the Museum – which became the Museum of Folk Art – when its building was requisitioned to house the Museum of the History of the Communist Party; in 1990 it returned to its former premises in Kiseleff Avenue, to the newly-established Museum of the Romanian Peasant, and at this point it also took under its wing a part of the communist archive.

Enchantment and captivity

If the Archive were a person, it would be a young girl who had recently become an adult, inquisitive by nature and always open to what was new. Brought up in the city as one of a numerous family, her childhood would nevertheless have been shaped by the stories told by her countryside grandparents, with whom she spent her summers and holidays. She was compelled to move from house to house, always in search of a place to live and managing time and time again to make a home for herself in fresh surroundings. She wears fine jewellery and makes collections of small objects, scraps of life that she regards as valuable goods. She likes to put things in order and knows where each of her possessions is to be found—but this is an order known to her alone. To understand her you will need to arm yourself with great patience. She is reluctant to reveal her secrets, and not everyone is permitted to know them.

If the Archive were an object, it would be a colour-enhanced X-ray painted in layers. An image of everyday reality created using modern scientific recording techniques would be overlaid by a succession of subjective impressions produced over the decades by the spon-

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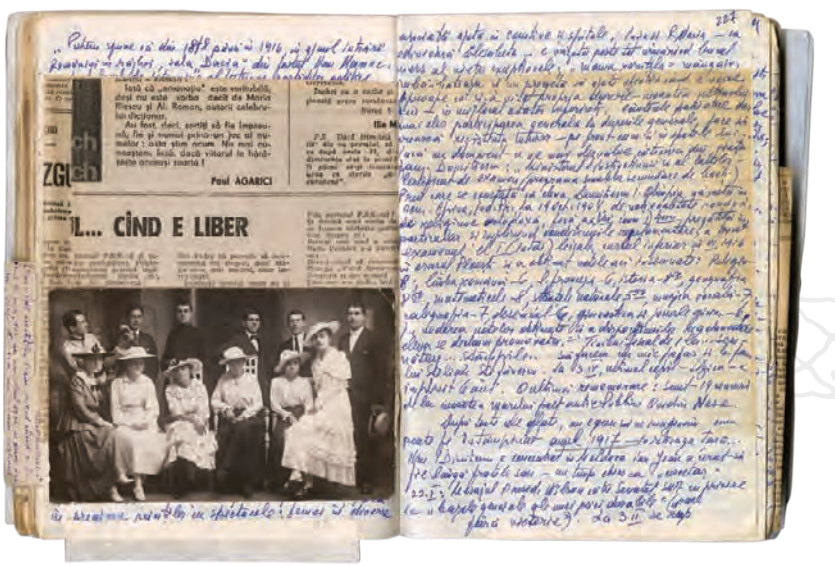
taneous actions, decisions and visions of the people who chose what should be produced, preserved and archived and how this should be done.

In either case, by making it hard for its depths to be plumbed and by amassing over time secrets prepared to tell a story, any genuine archive becomes a captive world in the mind and heart of those who care for it. And the more honestly the Archive allows itself to be known, the more it will enchant its users by (in its turn) taking them captive.

Mish-mash and inspiration

Frustrated by the awareness of their own ephemerality, people often seek the purpose of life in leaving behind them something that will last. These pieces of evidence about the world—as experienced—have formed around the Archive a community of people who have entrusted it with the task of safeguarding an enormous variety of artefacts which they considered to be important ways of keeping alive the memory of their families or of the places and events that had shaped their lives. Some of these objects, donated together with their life stories, initially seemed to be of merely personal and emotional value but have been shown through research to be symbolic testimony to the urban and rural daily life.

The opening up of the Archive to a developing community has led to a diversifying-by-theme of materials held that is so "ex-centric" that it has at times become extremely difficult to manage. However, it has become clear that the users of the Archive not only enjoy the way surprises occur during the search process but even frequently feel inspired by their struggles to find their bearings. That being so, the way materials are organised by deposits and collections has been greatly refined over the past ten years, and search systems—including digital search engines—have been constantly rethought, although not in such a way as to rule out intuitive methods.



Eugenia Ionescu's journal. Excerpt from notebook no 01, 1976-1992.

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Some facts and figures about the Ethnological Archive of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant

- One hermetically sealed 125 m³ container with movable, adjustable-height metal shelves;
- Over 80,000 artefacts, divided into three institutional fonds inherited from the Museum of National Art, the Museum of Folk Art and the Museum of the History of the Communist Party, along with the Museum of the Romanian Peasant's current fond for anthropological and museum research;
- Over 60 collections that have been put together according to creator, provenance or recording technology;
- Eight categories grouped according to support medium:
  - *Negatives collection* (1880-2000): over 20,000 negatives of various formats on glass, metal and film showing images taken during fieldwork recording, rural and urban scenes, family portraits, museum objects and museum halls. There is also a series of stereoscopic[2] slides showing photographs of city scapes and of the First World War;
  - *Transparency collection* (1932-2000): over 18,000 colour slides, some from field research and other recordings exhibitions held at the Museum;

2) Glass transparencies giving a 3D effect (using two images viewed through a stereoscopic viewer).

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- *Photograph collection* (1870-2000): original prints signed by famous photographers (Carol Popp Szathmari, Ianaki and Milton Manakia, Franz Duschek—father and son, Franz Mandy, Adler Leopold, Alexandru Roșu, Kiruleanu, Emil Fischer and others), contact prints, and enlargements of up to 100 x 200 cm intended for display;
- *Sound collection:* shellac and vinyl discs of propaganda speeches from the Communist period, audio cassettes and CDs of oral history interviews, recordings of traditional music and exhibition soundtracks;
- *Video collection*: rolls of 16 and 35 mm film of Communist era propaganda, video cassettes (VHS, SVHS, Hi8, UMATIC, Beta, DAT) of footage and edited recordings introducing the MRP; CDs and DVDs of visual anthropology;
- *Graphics collection* (1870 to the present day): old administrative documents, diaries, oracle books,[3] peculiar written materials, correspondence;
- *Art collection* (1880 to the present day): paintings, drawings, architectural boards;
- *Born digital items* (2000 to the present day): photographic, audio and video documentary materials;
- *Objects*: vintage devices.

3) Notebook of a youngster, having a different question on every page, to be answered by friends.

Bucharest panoramic view, cca. 1872-1882, most probably made by Franz Duschek. Excerpt.

https://biblioteca-digitala.ro

Irrespective of medium or scale, the contents of these collections stand as testimony to two interpenetrating worlds, rural and urban, captured over a period of more than 140 years.

× *The most overwhelming collection*: *Eugenia Ionescu*—the personal diary of a nun who used to be an accountant in a provincial town; it runs to 75 x 300 page volumes, in tiny handwriting, with family photographs and contemporary press cuttings. It would take us 10 years merely to transcribe this journal.

× *The most heterogeneous collection*: *Communism*—socialist-realist art, administrative documents, graphics, propaganda photographs and films, testimonies to everyday life.

× *The most famous collections*:

◎ *Iosif Berman* (730 glass and film negatives)—these images have been part of the majority of the Museum's editorial (http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-3-supplement/) and curatorial projects and have provided the material for a film (*Omul cu o mie de ochi* / The man with a hundred eyes, directed in 2001 by Alexandru Solomon), the theme of a documentary exhibition (*Fotografia documentară interbelică între romantism și militantism* / Inter-war documentary photography between a romantic and a militant mentality) and of an event held in Helsinki and entitled *Strămoși în călătorie* [Forefathers journeying];

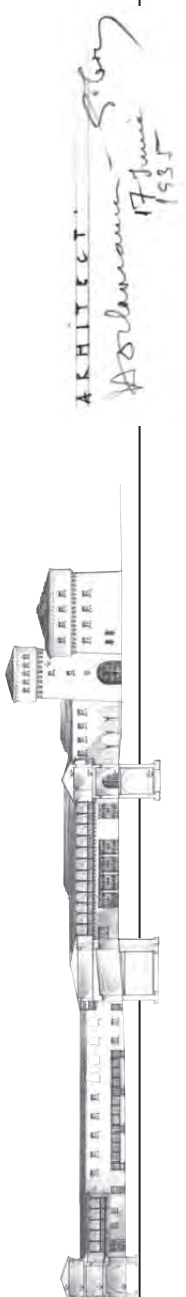
◎ *The Manakia brothers* (200 photographs on board, in their original cardboard mounts) featured in three exhibitions abroad (London, Tel Aviv, New York), on view throughout the Museum's displays and in projects concerned with cultural minorities, and published in an album, a booklet and a set of postcards.

× *The oldest collection: Carol Popp Szathmari*—graphic art from the second half of the nineteenth century (over 300 drawings, watercolours, engravings, chromolithographies).

× *The most recent donation*: the archive of the Bucharest Institute of Fashion (2019).

× *The longest archiving process*: 20 years—*Henrieta Delavrancea-Gibory*—over 5,000 architectural boards, originals and copies, along with field notes, sketches and the architect's personal writings and photographs.

× *The least-known collection*: shellac records from the Bolshevik period (the speeches of Stalin).



The team. The Rashomon effect

a. Ioana's story.

Even today I feel frustrated that I did not think right from the beginning, to keep a working diary as a tool that could be used by the future experts who will take over responsibility for the archive when we "old ones" have retired. Now I know what hard work it was for the current team to "declassify" this archive.

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× *The most endangered collection: Iosif Berman*

This collection consists mainly of glass slides that are extremely fragile and in danger of deteriorating over time. Their survival depends both on the provision of a controlled storage atmosphere and on action being taken to stabilise their silver-containing coatings.

At the present time Romania has neither officially accredited experts with first-hand experience in the rescue conservation and restoration of glass plate negatives nor any centres for training such specialists. The Museum lacks the funds to send a young person to undertake the necessary training abroad, and the bureaucracy that such an endeavour would entail is a further discouraging factor.

Ensuring a controlled atmosphere in the Archive would require the installation of a suitable heating, ventilation and air conditioning system. The Museum does not have the money to do this.

Not only the Berman collection but all the Archive's glass and film slides are facing the same problems.

Damaged glass plate negative from Clișee Sticlă [Glass Plate Negatives] collection.

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Very briefly, this is more or less how things happened. The Museum was (re)founded in February 1990. By 1993, hundreds of items of photographic, audio and video documentation had already been brought together, as a consequence of research activities and of the work of installing the permanent exhibition. These documents had already been deposited in wooden chests of drawers and glass-fronted display cabinets in a room in the basement of the building, together with inventories created ad hoc. Possibly because Irina Nicolau[4] had shared with me her vision for an original (how could it not have been?) system for organising the archive and carrying out searches in it, an adaptation of the cross[5] indexing system, it was decided that I should take over and manage the Museum's intended documentary ethnological archive. In the drawers of the cabinets we had inherited from the fittings of the Museum of the History of the Communist Party, I discovered the Iosif Berman negatives collections and another one of 6x6 film negatives showing the permanent exhibition of the former museum. Mihai Oroveanu[6] regularly brought in huge donations of glass plates depicting country life—the fruit of his weekly visits to antique fairs, where he used to discover these and haggle over the price. Two photographers had been taken on, and they, along with Horia Bernea,[7] were busy documenting field research and recent acquisitions. At the same time, an ever-increasing volume of donated official documents, photographs, and all sorts of old informal written materials were waiting to be sorted and recorded. We started to receive already-formed collections, family histories, old documents about which there was no longer any complementary information, and black and white holiday snaps. Our policy was to refuse nothing—thus arousing the indignation of some colleagues, who rightly called for the use of selection criteria. I, however, was of the opinion that our eagerness to collect evidence that was at last honest and non-falsified was coinciding with the donors' wish to emerge from anonymity and find a voice. If only to document that moment of enthusiasm, it was a barricade worth keeping.

It was not long before problems began to appear. Many items had arrived without any accompanying information. It was clear that a genuine archive was starting to take shape, but the need to organise it faced us with a new question: was it to be an ethnological archive? Should it be a social history archive, or a museum-style one? Given that the priority in that initial period was to facilitate rapid searching, the simplest compromise was to name collections by provenance/donor. It was at this point too that the archives of the Museum of National Art and the Museum of Folk Art were recovered from the darkness of exile. Extensive collections, accompanied by inventory catalogues in webbing bound A3 cardboard covers, very hard to consult. We tried to simplify things, to copy out in a fragmentary way the series of documents that the Museum made most frequent use of in this phase of establishing the concept and deciding on the layout of the exhibition halls; we kept the codes of the large catalogues, but stored them in a separate place so as to be more accessible. Meanwhile our attention was repeatedly drawn to new piles of documents that had been left to the mercy of fate; we would rescue them in the nick of time but did not have a moment to also conserve and inventorise them. We would become attached to every item and began to keep even those that were "sick," showing signs of degradation or already in fragments. This was the origin of the collection called *Quarantine*, which we put in a place of its own, known only to us, in the hope that one day a specialist conservation or restoration expert would be taken on.

4) Irina Nicolau, 1947-2002, writer and anthropologist, doctor in philology, passionate about oral history and the city of Bucharest. Alongside with Horia Bernea, she laid the foundations of the Romanian Peasant Museum and of a new museology. She was also a book writer and author of numerous anthropology works that have stood out due to a very unique style of writing.

5) It may seem hard to imagine it today, but when the Archive was set up one could not think in terms of an electronic search system, which meant that in order to locate a single artefact you had to open the inventory register and scan an entire page. Irina Nicolau had made some cardboard lists, numbered from 0 to 9, thematically and topologically organised and easily interchangeable. A kind of Excel on playing cards?

6) Mihai Oroveanu, 1946-2013, art critic, passionate art collector, founder and manager of the National Museum of Contemporary Art. He curated extensive exhibitions of contemporary art, he published art catalogues and albums, and constantly lobbied for the establishment of a Museum of Photography.

7) Horia Bernea, 1938-2000, internationally renowned artist, possessor of numerous international awards, great connoisseur of the Romanian village and of European museums. Founder and manager of the Romanian Peasant Museum (1990-2000), he established an original style in European Ethnomuseography which he liked to call nascent or flickering museology and that brought the Museum the EMYA Award in 1996.

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Studio photograph from Popescu Nicolae collection (author, date, place unknown).

In the absence of any centre where one could specialise in learning how to restore old photographs, the Museum sent a prospective conserver of paper documents on a higher-level course.

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Even in this initial period, the Archive, as constantly enriched, was used as an illustration by the print media of the day and began to exhibit and publish material from its collections. Finally, in the decade after 2000, the artefacts in the archive were given a space designed specifically for them and some state-of-the-art furniture that had been designed to provide storage units of the correct size for the entire range of materials and shapes. Once again, the way the collections were organised had to be fine-tuned and new places assigned to the items.

Throughout this period of heart-in-one's-mouth activity there was not a single archivist working in the team. It was as if the multidisciplinary make-up of the department was a reflection of the diversity of themes and materials to be found in the documentary collections. Those working in the archive were an ethnologist (coordinator), an ethnomusicologist (researcher), a physicist (photographer), a musician (treasurer), and a chemist (photographic technician). Over the decade 2009-2019 the team expanded, became more specialised and achieved its present equally diverse form: an anthropologist with a particular interest in the urban world (who has been in turn, stock controller-custodian, research assistant and office chief, while along the way doing a course in archiving[8]), a sound artist (sound technician), a director of documentary films (archivist), an architect (curator), a student doing a Master's in Image Studies (graphic artist), and a technician (treasurer), together with an assistant professor at the Music Academy (ethnomusicologist) and the founder of a group that plays traditional music (ethnomusicologist). They have been aided by collaborators with a very extensive range of interests: an architect who loves Bucharest (adviser), a poet (events organiser) ... and the list could continue.

8) A professional training course at the Police Academy School of Advanced Archiving *(sic!)*.

This part of the story should have been recorded on the black page, but in fact the large number ------
Each person's area of expertise constantly opens up new perspectives on the researching, ----------

b. Iris's story

I remember the absolute silence in the office when I started my job: glass-topped slightly sculpted wooden tables bearing numerous inventory numbers, imposing—and extremely uncomfortable—chairs upholstered in green velvet, metal cabinets with multiple locks—all recycled from the Museum of the History of the Communist Party. It was fascinating and totally static. The colleague with whom I shared the office used to pass the time reading job adverts or news on religious sites. She was bored, and wretchedly paid, as one is in cultural work. But I did not understand how anyone could be bored when, in the next room, there was a wall of special cabinets filled with things arranged in an order that I did not yet understand but which was waiting to be challenged, like Aladdin's lamp.

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Even if dangerous/toxic, working with the Archive can be fun at times.

---------- of disciplines that the members of the team are experts in makes the strength of the Archive.
---------- exploring and exploitation of the Archive.

My first monthly salary was 777 lei, like those low-quality batteries, the cheapest brand on the market called "777" (and this was in 2015, not sometime BC). Only a passion for it keeps you in cultural work...

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My then boss, Simina Bădică—the person responsible for the strategy of actively opening the Archive to the public and for much besides—gave me a very clear job description: *The Archive is all stored in Ioana's mind. Your role is to help her out*. An archive can be held captive in many ways: under lock and key, for fear that being touched by the public will harm it, or shut up in a box, for fear that the slightest contact with artificial light will contribute to its gradual deterioration; kept away from artists, researchers and the wider public, for fear that archival evidence will be interpreted in an inappropriate way; or by being taken into possession like a piece of personal property, so that it can only be accessed by a handful of experts. And there is one more form of captivity that any archivist worth their salt will tell you is one of the greatest dangers. And this is one that we, in our enthusiasm as museum workers, were unaware of how to avoid, for years on end: the captivity of exclusively oral sharing. Moved from building to building, dispersed and then reassembled, constantly being enriched with new documents, the Archive today resembles a puzzle whose user manual (rolls, registers and other forms of documentation) is unintelligible. You can be happy when you succeed in matching up a few pieces of puzzle here and there, but you are happiest when you can put all of them together. Every researcher and artist is like someone involved in doing a puzzle; they need written instructions and cannot manage the task simply by relying on the accounts of those who have previously made sense of the plot of the brain-teaser in its entirety.

Captivity can also be caused by lack of interest, by lack of strategic investment in storage systems and modern digitising equipment, or by lack of research.

I like to talk. I like to talk a lot. So I began to tell everyone everywhere I went about the Archive. I created guided tours, I invited a variety of experts, acquaintances, and potential collaborators from all kinds of fields who I knew might be interested in what the Archive has to offer. Students doing their internships, volunteers... lots and lots of them!

I went on with my strategy: open up the Archive, invite people in, open up the Archive, invite people in. There was one day when it became impossible for us to continue with our usual activities because we were swamped by the teams of students and volunteers who had been invited in to get to know the Archive and work with it. For several hours there were too many protective gloves and masks, too many exclamations of excitement, and too much movement. But it was so alive!

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What use is an archive if no one knows what it contains or can enjoy the stories it has to tell?

What use is an archive if everyone leafs through it and it ends up being destroyed too quickly?

Finding a compromise between these two extremes is what I have been concerned to do.

Inviting people to work with the Archive and find new meanings in it was not simply a personal whim. It was an extremely practical strategy. When you do not have sufficient specialists in a museum to know about - or be interested in - all the subjects represented in the Archive, when you do not have the money to pay extra helpers when the volume of work keeps growing but the team does not, bring in enthusiasts. Pay them in enjoyment. Promise them that in the Archive every image, recorded sound and document is a way of learning about recent history, promise them that if they read Bernea and Nicolau they will be unable to stop until they have devoured their complete works, promise them that they can paste, cut out, exhibit alongside us, promise them that their expertise will find its place in the Archive, promise them honesty and reciprocal learning. Promise them that their ideas will surely somehow, somewhere be put to work, because spontaneity is honoured in the Museum. Later I was to learn that in Irina Nicolau's time this was called "eating clouds."

Guided tours into the Archive.

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Donations and acquisitions

In the past 10 years the Archive has received:

× *In 2019*—from the closed down Bucharest Institute of Fashion, 8,078 slides and prints documenting peasant attire and cottage industries; from Oltea Pârvulescu, 10 family photographs;

× *In 2017*—from Peter Jacobi, 95 digitally processed collages and framed photographs of fortified churches;

× *In 2017, 2015*—from Vasile Mănăstireanu, 468 colour slides, strips of negatives, black and white prints, a VHS cassette, a DVD of field recordings;

× *In 2016*—from Andrei Pop-Jora, five files of biographical papers that had belonged to Professor Mihai Pop; from Cristian Mărșanu, six digital copies of family testimony, donated as part of the "Letters from the Front" project, among which we should mention one of the most striking letters ever seen, written on tree bark and dating from the time of the First World War (see next page);

× *In 2015*—from Bogdan Plecan, one photograph; from Elena Almăjan, 50 drawings of village life by Eugen Drăguțescu;

× *In 2014*—from Teodor Răducan, 10 drawings;

× *In 2012*—from Aurelia Bălan Mihailovici, three paintings by Ioan Isac and one exhibition catalogue; from Cornel Mirescu, 222 black and white photographs, copies of images from *Musee de l`Homme* in Paris; from Eduard Lazăr, two framed photographs;

× *In 2011*—from Roxana Mihaela Tincu, excerpts from a scanned copy of a notebook of folk motifs as collected by Olimpia Tincu;

× *In 2009*—the Museum acquired from Elena Ghițiu 1,860 glass plate negatives of Mărginimea Sibiului, taken by Mircea Iuga.

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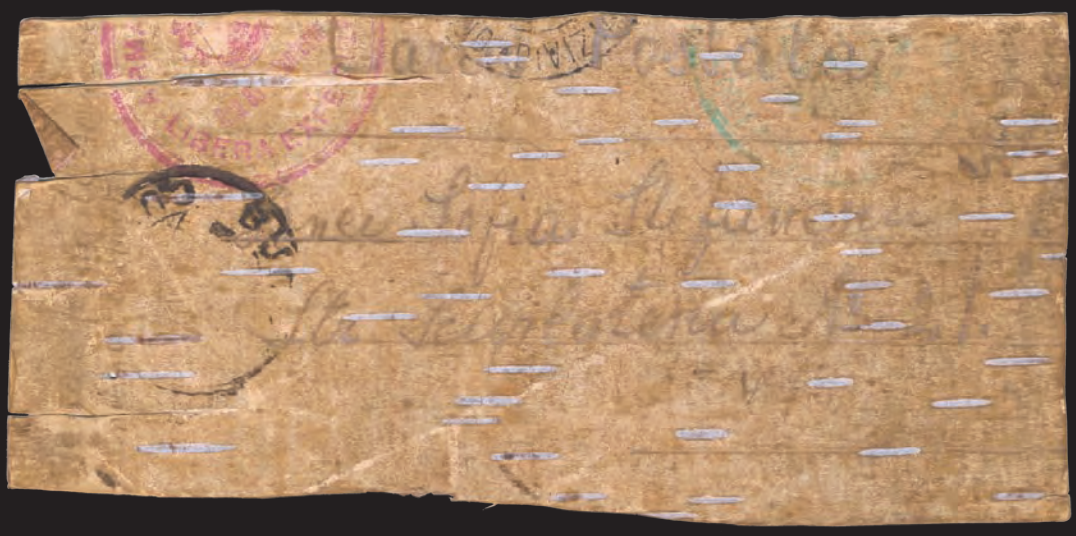

× *In 2017* we set in train the process of acquiring a new major collection of prints developed by Iosif Berman in his own laboratory. Expert advice was taken, the most favourable price possible was negotiated, but subsequently, although the vendor was persuaded to wait a long time, the necessary funding did not become available. We thus lost a rare opportunity to grow an already renowned collection.

And we are constantly facing similar situations...

× We are still receiving generous donations of collections of documents. Unfortunately, these are building up in an area which we have dubbed *the black hole*, because the team is too small and there are too many calls on its time, besides the demands of an over-bureaucratic system, for us to be able to devote ourselves to examining, cataloguing and conserving this slice of recent history.

× Working with new donations is becoming more difficult, as the protective equipment (gloves, disposable overalls, masks etc.) is now a luxury that the Museum cannot afford.

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Researching, staging exhibitions, publishing

Between 2009 and 2019 the Archive ran permanent programmes and annual projects, both in-country and internationally.

Its ongoing research programmes have concentrated on the enrichment of our collections of artefacts by documenting contemporary rural and urban life, with all this implies, from changes in mentality to details of the way local realities are evolving:

1. The *Archives of the Present Time* focus on studying the "recent countryman" and the local heritage.

2. *The Oral Archive* involves a systematic approach to recording oral memories, with an emphasis on collecting the life stories of country people.

3. *Ethnophony* is concerned with the researching, in situ recording and subsequent publication of traditional songs, both Romanian and from ethnic minorities.

4. The *Image Salon* is the programme under whose auspices exhibitions of documentary images are held. Apart from wanting to make visitors more aware of the rich diversity of meanings to be found in the images, this programme also aims to encourage debate about principles connected with the archiving, conservation and communication to the public of the artefacts held in the Archive.

5. *Digitisation and the creation of an online platform for presenting the Archive.* Throughout the period 2009-2019, the team has given thought to finding methods for the digital conservation and secure communication of the Museum's archival heritage. In order to keep in step with European practice in the relevant methodologies and technologies, the programme has undergone changes, modifications and fine-tuning.

For all these programmes linked to the particular vision of the Museum and its plans for future development, the Archive has been working under the aegis of a number of domestic and international projects, of which we will mention only the major ones. These have found concrete expression not only in the enrichment of the Archive's collections via the recording of field work but also in the displaying and publication, in a variety of ways, of the highly complex associated research findings.

Ultimii povestitori [The Last Storytellers]—audio-visual study and recording of the phenomenon of storytelling as it still survives on a local scale. An illustrated children's book[9] and a documentary.

Ivire din privire [Appearing from watching]—discussing the relationship between the documentary image, the context in which it was made and the contemporary viewer/receiver. Publication of a set of three small-format albums: *Înfățișările țăranului,*[10] *Dincolo de oglindă,*[11] *Coconi și copii.*[12]

Ethnophonie [Ethnophony][13]—the production of four CDs of recordings of traditional music: *Traditional music of Transylvania, Church music form Transylvania, Music from Gorj* (two CDs).

9) Pascu, Ana. 2012. Moșul-cu-Trupul-de-Flori-și-Barba-de-Mătase [The Old-Man-With-Body-of-Flowers-and-Silk-Beard]. Bucharest: Martor.

10) Popescu, Ioana, and Sebastian Sifft. 2007. Înfățișările țăranului [Faces of the Peasant]. Bucharest: Martor.

11) Popescu, Ioana. 2010. *Dincolo de oglindă* [Beyond the Mirror]. Bucharest: Martor.

12) Popescu, Ioana. 2012. *Coconi și copii* [Infants and Children]. Bucharest: Martor.

13) http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/etnophonie.html

https://biblioteca-digitala.ro

The *Visual Observer* was conceived as a programme of visual anthropological research of contemporary realities, the ultimate aim being the enrichment of the MRP's image archive. Sadly, visual research cannot be undertaken without high-quality equipment for recording data and processing results. Therefore, after a number of years of proposing projects but being unable to access funding for them, the programme was shelved.

Although the scanning of the negatives collection had begun as long ago as the late 1990s, it was only after 20 years that we were able to hammer out a coherent plan to create a digital store. What held us back was a lack of strategies and of ring-fenced infrastructural and financial resources.

In 2019 we finally received sponsorship to purchase a high-quality graphic scanner. The sum needed was obtained with help from Samsung Romania and Gemini Solutions and from the friends of the Archive, with a contribution from the Museum.

In 2009-2019 we had repeatedly submitted requests to the Ministry of Culture to approve and finance the purchase of a high-quality graphic scanner.

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Privește! Frații Manakia[14]—an album of the *Manakia Brothers* collection of old photographs.

Childhood. Remains and Heritage—an European project under the umbrella of the Culture 2007-2013 programme. Creating a virtual museum of childhood.[15] Seven exhibitions, a brochure, a CD, an album, three international exhibitions, a colloquium, a website and a virtual tour, and an animated promotional film. During this project the Archive gained 10 interviews with collectors, 10 digital collections of toys and 20 toys from rural and urban contexts, donated to the Museum.

Imaginea-Martor [The Image as Witness][16]—an interactive exhibition, with hands-on workshops that led to visitors creating approximately 100 mini-exhibitions. This was followed by a book *Mic tratat de dezarhivare* [Little treatise on de-archiving] discussing dilemmas that arise in connection with conserving and communicating the archival heritage.

La Fotograf [At the Photo-studio][17]—an interactive exhibition and workshops based on a series of contemporary-design objects, created in collaboration with a team of young designers and artists that draw their inspiration from the collections in the Archive. This has produced 36 boxes whose contents illustrate fragments of daily life and include objects specific to four cultural communities who live in Romania: Aromanians, Hungarians, Romanians and Saxons. This project was co-financed by the Embassy of the German Federal Republic in Bucharest.

To enable this project to take place, the main financial contribution came from the sponsor. Every project we have undertaken in recent years, whether large-scale or otherwise, has obliged us to seek funding from outside the Museum.

Rețelele Privirii [Networks of the Gaze]—the first interactive digital platform to be devoted to a museum archive in Romania, an innovative curatorial experiment that explores the new media and makes available to the public a virtual space designed for collaborative exploration and research. In its pilot stage, users can consult, through an interactive layout and a number of digital special functions, over 200 photographs, audio and video excerpts, and written documents from the Archive.

https://arhiva.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/

Ever since 2015 we have been providing *guided tours* of the Archive, an opportunity to invite the public to come and discover what a museum archive involves and how we work with the artefacts.

14) Popescu, Ioana. 2013. *Privește! Frații Manakia* [Look! The Manakia Brothers]. Bucharest: Martor.

15) http://childhoodmuseum360.ro/en/.

16) http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/acasa/imaginea-martor-ateliere-de-arhivare-performativa-ro.html.

17) http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/acasa/la-fotograf-ro.html.

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Sadly,

this publication is still in pdf format, for lack of funds to print and distribute it;

the platform has not been sufficiently advertised, due to the absence of funds.

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Day-to-day housekeeping activities

A week in the Archive begins early in the morning with the aroma of freshly-brewed coffee and a short planning meeting at which we decide on the priorities for the day's work and each person's duties. Activities are divided into either pleasant, or, more accurately, creative (for example, devising a concept for an exhibition, studying a collection, writing a curatorial or promotional text, producing graphics, audio-video montages and so on) or unpleasant, i.e. administrative (obligatory summaries, lists of acquisitions, reports, analyses, Excel tables, replies to requests and writing letters asking for funding). We share all these out in a brotherly way and do them together, but each of the large-scale jobs has its person in charge or project manager. We work in a quite large room divided into an office area and another area designated for access and research. As it is an open space, we do not have much privacy: all of us, users and researchers alike, work alongside each other. At times this becomes tiresome; at other times a spontaneous exchange of ideas gives birth to a project. Near this multi-functional space, but separated from it by a fire door, lays the Archive itself.

On a standard day, there is archiving going on at one desk, at another someone is sketching an installation that will put the Archive in a new perspective, at another a sponsorship request is being composed, in a corner people are negotiating how to change the official admission charges for access to the Archive, in another digitising is taking place, and, finally, on the central table there's something spread out—perhaps a collection in the process of being investigated, or maybe a large piece of cloth soon to become a banner, on which we all sew and write our contributions in turn. And some unexpected visitor is sure to turn up—a student or intern, a researcher, a colleague, a technician...

The working day ends at 4 pm, 8 pm or 1 in the morning. It depends on the day...

***

Archives... sleeves black up to one's elbows... overalls in colours that do not show the dirt... white cotton gloves, or blue or black rubber ones... face masks... liquid disinfectant that smells of hospitals... all kinds of protective equipment, far from attractive, but compulsory.

Archives... stacks of yellowed paper... faded images... shelves, drawers, boxes, files... silence... padlocks.

The Ethnological Archive of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant... boredom? By no means! When we're on holiday we miss our gloves. Our minds are consumed by impatience to decipher as-yet-unresearched documents. We enjoy taking people on tours round the cabinets, drawers and boxes. And opening the padlocks.

"Archives embody the mystique of boredom […]. Boredom is a front cover preserving archives from intruders looking for easy excitement: you have to fight your way in a flattening environment, which puts the context above the individual value."[18]

18) Dan, Călin, and Iosif Kiraly. 2006. "Politics of Cultural Heritage." *The Archive*. London: Whitechappel Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. (First published in *subREAL – Art History Archive*, Venice: Romanian Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 1999, n.p.).

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The system for fixing admission charges, which operates according to broad categories of documents, is less than functional since it does not take into account either the value of the artefact or the specific needs of the user.

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MARTOR

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Authors: Rucsandra Pop, Alexandru Iorga

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Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

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Making the Documents Speak—A Creative Exploration of the Mihai Pop Fonds

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ABSTRACT

In 2016, the Mihai Pop Fonds was established as part of the Image Archive at the Romanian Peasant Museum, and this past year has seen a real effort to organize the documents left behind by the scholar. The Fonds brings together key documents: a rich correspondence with Romanian and foreign researchers; Mihai Pop's field notes from the sociological research campaigns; his PhD thesis, which has yet to be published; documents related to his participation in national and international congresses; his notes for the folklore lectures he gave at the University; and many other documents.
The paper aims to present how an interdisciplinary team of ten researchers and artists organized various types of documents from the personal archive of Mihai Pop in order to make it accessible to both specialists interested in the topic and the general public. The paper highlights the contents of the Fonds and focuses on the difficulties involved in organizing a personal archive. The paper will show not only how the Mihai Pop Fonds was shaped in the process, but how the network of people interested in his work has grown and come together in this process, generating new knowledge and new perspectives.

KEYWORDS

Mihai Pop, personal archives, interdisciplinarity, social sciences in Romania.

Introduction

Born in 1907, Mihai Pop first developed an interest in linguistics—attending the meetings of the Prague Linguistic Circle in 1930s and studying in Poland. He continued with sociology and ethnomusicology, as a participant in the research campaigns initiated by the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti,[1] before he finally turned to the study of literary theory in Bonn. From 1949, when the Folklore Institute was established, he became a specialist in folklore studies, which he started teaching in the 1950s. In the 1960s, he became interested in semiotics, and, along with Tudor Vianu[2] and Alexandru Rosetti,[3] he ran the Circle of Poetics and Stylistics. On his visits to the United States, Pop discovered the American school of anthropology, and, in addition to studying anthropology, he made an important contribution to the spreading of anthropology concepts and literature in Romania. "Looking into someone's life with help from instruments such as pictures, recordings, letters feels almost sacred. It feels strange, sometimes voyeuristic, and it comes with a deep responsibility of holding in your hands a snippet of someone's personal history." It is with these words that the Black Horse Mansion[4] video collective captured

1) Dimitrie Gusti (1880 – 1955), Romanian sociologist who taught at the University of Iaşi and the University of Bucharest and served as Romania's Minister of Education in 1932–1933. Being the creator of the Bucharest School of Sociology and of several other Institutes, he led, between 1925 and 1948, research campaigns in several Romanian villages.

2) Tudor Vianu (1898 – 1964), Romanian literary and art critic, poet, philosopher, and translator.

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the experience of working for almost one year on a project meant to shape, categorize and showcase to the public the Mihai Pop Fonds. Indeed, immersing yourself into a professional yet very personal archive is an intimate experience and a powerful way to connect different generations and histories. The experience is even more intense if the owner of those documents has touched so many lives, as professor Mihai Pop has.

This paper aims to present how an interdisciplinary team of over ten researchers and artists[5] immersed themselves into the massive body of documents that constitute the Mihai Pop Fonds to structure it and to make it visible for both the specialists interested in the topic and the general public. The paper, while obliquely highlighting the contents of the archive, mainly focuses on the exploratory research challenges involved in structuring a personal archive. It includes many voices, with the purpose of showing that, while the people involved in the project had different approaches, personal motivations, and findings, there was a clear common purpose: to stimulate critical thinking around Mihai Pop's cultural legacy and bring to light as many facets as possible of his complex personality. The diverse points of view of the researchers led to different ways of understanding and processing the material. We treated the body of documents as a living organism that was being structured by the researchers and, in return, (re)structured them, their way of thinking, and their research methods. The paper shows not only how the Mihai Pop Fonds was shaped in the process, but also how the network of people interested in his work has grown and come together in this process, generating new knowledge and new perspectives in a reflexive and multi-vocal way that we further develop here (see also Kaplan 2002 and Zeitlyn 2012).

To our knowledge, this is a singular attempt to discuss the long neglected personal archives in the context of Romanian archival practices in an institutionalized environment and from an interdisciplinary perspective. It is largely acknowledged among Romanian scholars and practitioners (Grosu 2014; Chirilă 2016) that archives were and still are depositaries of materials and documents about various issues and elements related to national identity. Although the very first archives in Romania emerged from personal initiatives and collections, the conceptual structure of archives is that they should follow a specific institutionalized agenda oblivious of the personal fonds, data, and collections which were incorporated into larger archival projects to varying degrees. Unlike other traditions of archival practice based on personal fonds and collections, archives in Romania, more specifically professional ones (*vs.* bureaucratic and state archives), were collective efforts documenting specific elements considered for preservation and further investigation. Dealing with personal archives involves new challenges (Chirilă 2016). What happens with personal archives of prominent figures that were discovered by serendipity?

In line with Kaplan's 2002 seminal paper, as well as Pop's own thoughts (further developed below) and Barthes' point of view (1972), we deemed it necessary to use an approach both interdisciplinary and anthropological in organizing the materials from the Mihai Pop Fonds as part of the Image Archive of the Romanian National Peasant Museum (Arhiva de Imagine a Muzeului Național al Țăranului Român). In this paper, we have chosen to engage in a descriptive and a self-reflective approach to files, documents, and the whole work involved in organizing the Fonds and less in issues related to their content, as we decided to emphasize the practice of managing a personal archive and no theoretical and content related issues were at stake. Personal objects and formal/institutional items from the Fonds shed light on Mihai Pop's biography as well as on the history of European linguistics, semiotics, sociology, ethnology, folklore, and anthropology. As our paper emphasizes, the Mihai Pop Fonds goes straight to the heart of the history, iden-

3) Alexandru Rosetti (1895 – 1990), Romanian linguist, editor and memoirist. He was the promoter of new research directions, such as mathematical linguistics and structuralism. In 1961, Rosetti established the Romanian Academy's Center for Phonetic and Dialectological Research. In 1974 this Center merged with the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore.

4) Black Horse Mansion is a video production studio born out of the pleasure of creative collaboration. Miruna Vasilescu, Ana Banu and Alina Manea are collectively exploring the world of video art, site-specific installations and performance, creating inspiring video content.

5) Project team: Rucsandra Pop, Grațiela Bădescu, Cristina Țineghe, Denisa Pleoscariu, Paul Drogeanu, Alex Iorga, Mirela Stan, Andrei Roșca, Ramona Barbu, Ana Banu, Miruna Vasilescu, Alina Manea, Alexandru Vlad, Simona-Ioana Ghiță. In the second part of the article the role of each member will be described in detail.

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tity and memory of these disciplines. Our purpose is to highlight both a general and a personal process of experiencing *memory, history and forgetting* (Ricoeur 2004) related to working with the Mihai Pop Fonds from an interdisciplinary point of view.

In the case of this project, things are all the more exciting as the subject itself is interdisciplinary. Mihai Pop was one of the key figures in the institutional continuity of a number of disciplines—linguistics, folklore, sociology, anthropology and semiotics—but also an innovator and an important agent of interdisciplinary mediation, theoretical change, and modernization during communism. We understand interdisciplinarity as Barthes defined it:

> Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary is not enough to choose a subject (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one (Barthes 1972: 1).

Interdisciplinarity was actually one of the theoretical issues tackled by Mihai Pop on several occasions. In the interview conducted by the sociologist Zoltán Rostás in the 1980s and published in *The Bright Room [Sala Luminoasă]*, Pop distinguishes between *multidisciplinarity* and *interdisciplinarity*, pointing out that the first real interdisciplinary researches conducted in Romania in the field of social sciences took place in the 1970s in the Cosău Valley, Maramureş. The statement is intriguing, given the fact that the research campaigns led by Dimitrie Gusti almost annually in the 1930s were supposed to have had an interdisciplinary approach.

> *Multidisciplinarity*, says Mihai Pop, is what the sociologists did. I mean they were people from different fields, each of them investigating a certain reality from the perspective of his or her discipline, and afterwards working towards a synthesis of that unit. For example, considering that a village was a unit. But it was not interdisciplinarity. In order to speak about interdisciplinarity, it is necessary for the researchers in the team to try to think the same, to have the same view of the reality that they are investigating (Rostás 2003: 345).

In his view, interdisciplinary research involves the whole of the researched reality as an object of research itself, which must be defined in a unitary vision. Pop continues by highlighting that the interdisciplinary researchers do not have to be specialists in all the fields; they just need to know the principles of each discipline. He sees the necessity of training a new type of researcher who is capable of thinking about culture by assuming a method of embracing the techniques of various atomized disciplines. The ambition of the project was to create the space for this new type of researcher to manifest creatively, while not abdicating the imperative rigor of scientific research.

Looking at Pop's definition of *interdisciplinarity*, we notice that there are too few contexts and initiatives in which Pop's personality and legacy are investigated using interdisciplinary formulas. He is usually trapped in a box where researchers look at him as one of the founding fathers of modern folklore studies in Romania, while the other aspects of his intellectual persona are being completely overlooked. One proof of this oversimplified reading of such a complex intellectual is the fact that Mihai Pop is rarely studied outside the folklore studies curricula. In the opinion of anthropologist Vintilă Mihăilescu, formulated in an interview conducted by Rucsandra Pop in 2009:

> It is complicated to say what the role of Mihai Pop was in the development of social sciences in Romania. At the Institute (of Folklore) he had a role, at the University a different role, and a completely different role internationally. And he contributed to importing a structuralist-semiotic vision

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Photo 9. In the Image Archive at the Romanian Peasant Museum, even the gloves are smiling as the documents in the Mihai Pop Fonds are being organized. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

to Romania, vision which he promoted, encouraged and, to some extent, shaped (Mihăilescu, February 19th, 2009).

That is why we have called on an interdisciplinary team consisting of archivists, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists, writers, actors, and film makers: to make sure that we capitalize on the full potential of the documentary material and that we will be able to trace and reveal as many as possible places of memory (Nora 1984) throughout the process. The project has also brought together several generations of researchers—from scholars who worked closely with Pop to students who interacted with him only through his works. As the Mihai Pop Fonds requires an understanding of its uniqueness and complexity, we felt the need to recreate this complexity at the level of people who brought their diverse expertise into the project. Each specialist involved in the project had a different understanding of Mihai Pop's personality and most of them already had interdisciplinary training and the ability to see how a new space is born at the intersection of the disciplines they served. This team studied, classified and digitized the documents in an effort to offer to both academics and a wider audience a more sophisticated, unprejudiced understanding of him and his activity. Moreover, we wanted to innovate and to use new technologies to bring Pop's intellectual biography to the attention of a wider audience, and to encourage researchers already interested in the topic to look at it critically, from new perspectives. At the end of the project, part of the materials were used in an artistic project—a performative installation—with the purpose of offering to the specialized and general public a coherent image of Mihai Pop, as he is reflected in these documents.

The Mihai Pop Fonds is hosted by The Image Archive of the Romanian National Peasant Museum in Bucharest. The Museum is a partner in the efforts of the Mihai Pop Association to provide researchers with open access to this information, thus encouraging them to critically approach the work of a Romanian scholar with major contributions to the international history of these disciplines in the twentieth century. The idea of a museum hosting the Fonds was both salutary and future-oriented. In Kaplan's words:

6) Harry Brauner (1908 – 1988), Romanian ethnomusicologist, composer, and music teacher. He managed the Folklore Archive, as deputy director, he founded the Folklore Institute, and led the first ethnomusicology laboratory in Romania. During his career he recorded about 5,000 Romanian folk songs.

7) Constantin Brăiloiu (1893 – 1958), Romanian composer, music critic, ethnomusicologist, folklorist, and professor. He founded, along with other composers, the Society of Romanian Composers and he initiated the Folklore Archive. He had a prolific international career in ethnomusicology and he is considered the founder of the Romanian School of Folklore and Ethnomusicology.

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> […] practice is the archivist's *raison d'ĕtre*. Archival ideas could never be an end in themselves: archivists do what they do so that others (scholars, students, administrators, government officials, citizens, genealogists), whether now or in the distant future, can do what they do (2002: 217).

The Mihai Pop Fonds consists of a rich correspondence with Romanian and foreign researchers (Harry Brauner,[6] Constantin Brăiloiu,[7] George Călinescu,[8] Roman Jakobson,[9] Piotr Bogatyrev,[10] Julien Greimas,[11] Alan Dundes,[12] Margaret Mead,[13] or Katherine Verdery,[14] to give just a few examples); Mihai Pop's field notes from the interwar sociological research campaigns he participated in; his PhD manuscript—which has yet to be published; documents related to his participation to national and international congresses; notes of lectures he gave at various universities, and many other documents. Another part of the Fonds is composed of materials (mostly video and audio interviews) collected over fourteen years of research by Rucsandra Pop—currently a PhD candidate at the University of Bucharest working on Pop's intellectual biography.

Short bio

To put in context this archival work, one needs to have an overview of Mihai Pop's life and career. Mihai Pop's family life as a whole offers an interesting plunge into Romania's recent history. He was born in 1907 in Glod, Maramureș, then part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, in a family of Greek-Catholic priests from Maramureș. His mother's brother, Ilie Lazăr (1895-1976)—with whom he had a very close relationship—was a politician and a Member of the Romanian Parliament in the interwar period. Under his influence, Mihai Pop started a political career at a very early age, which he did not pursue. It was also due to his uncle that he came to study in Bucharest. In 1940, Mihai Pop married Irina Sturza (1916-2000).[15] The two had met in 1939 when Pop was conducting field research in Dâmbovnic. The marriage with Irina Sturza was in itself a gesture with great political and social implications, considering that at that time the marriages between Transylvanian noble families and the boyar families in the Romanian Old Kingdom were an exception.

Pop belonged to the generation of Romanian intellectuals who emerged between the two World Wars. With graduate studies in Prague, Krakow, Warsaw and Bonn in the 1930s, he earned his PhD in Bratislava, where he served as a diplomat during the Second World War. After completing his BA studies in Bucharest, he decided to continue his studies in Prague, because of his interest in linguistics and Slavic languages. Soon after he arrived in the capital of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Romanian scholar connected with the Prague Linguistic Circle, notably with its Russian core members—Roman Jakobson, Piotr Bogatyrev, and Nikolai Trubetzkoy. He became part of an international network of scholars who were invited to take part in sessions held by the Prague Linguistic Circle. By participating in these meetings, as well as attending the First International Congress of Slavists that took place in Prague in 1929, Pop had the chance to witness the birth of structuralism, the theoretical paradigm that dominated the first half of the twentieth century.

While studying abroad, Pop returned to Romania for the summer months each year. It was during that time that he engaged in the most important Romanian social sciences project—the monographic campaigns led by sociologist Dimitrie Gusti. During the campaigns which took place at Fundu Moldovei (1928), Drăguș (1929), Runcu (1930), and Cornova (1931), he worked in Constantin Brăiloiu's team, the famous musicologist. Surrounded by specialists from so many different disciplines, the young Pop also became interested in various aspects of the community. In time, Pop became one of

8) George Călinescu (1899 – 1965), Romanian critic, literary historian, writer, journalist and member of the Romanian Academy.

9) Roman Ossipovich Jakobson (1896 – 1982), Russian thinker who became one of the most influential linguists of the twentieth century, laying the foundation for the development of the structural analysis of language, poetry, and art. He was one of the leaders of the influential Prague Linguistic Circle and, later, of the Linguistic Circle of New York. He had a profound influence on general linguistics and Slavic studies, but also on semiotics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, ethnology, mythology, communication theory and literary studies.

10) Petr Bogatyrev (1893 –1971), Russian folklorist, ethnologist, linguist, literary scientist, theatre scientist and translator. He was one of founding members of the Prague Linguistic Circle and a member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle.

11) Julien Greimas (1917 – 1992), Lithuanian literary scientist who wrote most of his body of work in French while living in France. He is considered one of the most prominent French semioticians.

12) Alan Dundes (1934 – 2005), American folklorist at the University of California, Berkeley. His work is said to have been central to the establishing of the study of folklore as an academic discipline.

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the core members of the teams gathered by Gusti around the Romanian Social Institute. In 1936, he was given the task of relocating a wooden church from Maramureș to the newly created Village Museum in Bucharest, contributing to the birth of this ambitious project. In 1939, he conducted field research in Dâmbovnic, following a methodology developed by Anton Golopenția,[16] which was slightly different from Gusti's.

His encounter with sociological research impacted Pop's future career. The materials collected in Brăiloiu's archive during the interwar campaigns constituted the basis on which the Folklore Institute[17] in Bucharest was built. The creation of the Institute was put in motion as early as 1948, when, together with his friend and colleague Harry Brauner, Pop began to plan its future development. Mihai Pop worked in this Institute for almost thirty years, until his retirement. While the years in Prague gave him a strong theoretical background and international openness, the experience with the Gusti teams offered Pop not only solid research know-how, but also a good understanding of the art of managing a research institute. As director of the Folklore Institute (1965-1974), Pop initiated numerous fieldwork trips, which culminated with the campaigns in Cosău Valley, Maramureș, in the early 1970s, where he led interdisciplinary teams of Romanian and foreign researchers. Pop was also the editor of the *Journal of Ethnography and Folklore [Revista de Etnografie și Folclor],* the scientific publication of the Institute. From 1958 onward, and parallel to his activity at the Institute, he taught Folklore at the University of Bucharest. In 1976, Pop published two books: *Romanian literary folklore* (*Folclor literar românesc*), written in collaboration with Pavel Ruxăndoiu[18]—book that became "the Bible" for generations of folklore studies students—and *Romanian traditional customs [Obiceiuri tradiționale românești].*

The 1960s were marked by Pop's interest in semiotics. Beginning in 1963, Pop headed The Circle of Poetics and Stylistics, along with Tudor Vianu and Alexandru Rosetti. Together they formed a generation of semioticians. Mihai Pop also participated in the summer schools organized by the International Centre for Semiotic and Linguistic Studies, in Urbino, Italy. There, together with his younger Romanian colleagues, he worked with Umberto Eco,[19] Julien Greimas, Maria Corti,[20] and other major semioticians of that time. It was also in the 1960s that Pop was reunited with his interwar international connections and resumed his international activity. Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) played the role of intellectual godfather for Pop, connecting him with prestigious scholars and institutions in the United States and Europe.

Unlike other social sciences, ethnology and folklore survived in Romania during communism, mainly because it was instrumentalized by the political regime, but this only after the 1950s.

> First, they were perceived as 'too national' in an era of Soviet imposed internationalism. Secondly, in Romania, folklore and ethnography were traditionally associated with the peasants, initially suspected in the Leninist vein everywhere in the Soviet sphere of influence (Leonard and Kaneff 2002), and later on barely accepted as a secondary ally of the proletariat. Consequently, folklore and ethnography, in their original form, were also suspected—or had to adjust their interests to the new imperatives of the proletarian culture (Hedeșan 2008: 24-25).

Things changed in the early 1960s, after the death of Stalin and the emergence of the nationalist type of communism promoted by Ceaușescu. Due to Ceaușescu's policy of independence from Moscow, Romania became an interesting research area for American, French and Belgian sociologists and anthropologists. Katherine Verdery, Gail Kligman[21] (United States), Claude Karnoouh,[22] Jean Cousinier[23] (France), Marianne Mesnil[24] (Belgium), and others were all introduced to their Romanian fieldworks and supported by

13) Margaret Mead (1901 – 1978), American cultural anthropologist who served as president of the American Anthropological Association in 1960 and held various positions in the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She worked with Mihai Pop due to their common interest in ethnographic films.

14) Katherine Verdery (b. 1948), American anthropologist and author, Professor at City University of New York. Starting with 1973, she did extensive fieldwork in Romania.

15) A young agricultural engineer descending from an old boyar family. She was part of the research team that did fieldwork in Dâmbovnic in 1939. The campaign was coordinated by Anton Golopenția and Mihai Pop.

16) Anton Golopenția (1909 – 1951), Romanian sociologist and statistician. In 1932-1933, he worked as chief of cabinet— and then secretary to his professor Dimitrie Gusti, who held the office of Minister of Education. Later Golopenția became editor of *Sociologie Românească,* a teaching assistant at the Gusti-chaired Sociology, Ethics and Politics Department, and a director at the Social Institute founded by Gusti. Due to differences of opinion regarding the methodology and purpose of sociological research, he left both the department and Gusti's Social Institute in 1939, after conducting field research with Mihai Pop in Dâmbovnic.

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Pop. Paradoxically, during the 1960s and 1970s, there was no lag between Romanian ethnology and Western research.

Pop was a member of various international associations and had lectured in Germany, France, and the United States. In 1975, Pop retired but continued to advise generations of PhD students, as Professor Emeritus at the University of Bucharest. He set up "his office" at home, in a house in central Bucharest. No longer having a full-time institutional affiliation, he became an institution himself. His home was a meeting place for researchers from Romania and abroad, as well as a place where new ideas and initiatives came to life. Just after the fall of communism, Pop contributed, among others, to the creation of the Romanian Society of Cultural Anthropology. In addition, he was an advisor to the team of researchers that left the Folklore Institute in order to start the Romanian Peasant Museum in the early 1990s. He died in 2000, at the age of 93. After Pop's death, his intellectual portrait was completed with the publication of a series of articles he had written between 1937 and 1940, signed with the pseudonym Peter Buga. The articles were accidentally discovered by the sociologist Zoltán Rostás, in 2009. The collection of articles, published in *The Romanian World [Lumea românească]* and *Today [Azi]*—two Romanian interwar publications—were gathered in the volume *I also want to be revised [Vreau și eu să fiu revizuit]*. Many of the articles cover topics of national and international politics, revealing a young Pop with interests going beyond the scholarly realm.

Even without producing an extensive theoretical work, Pop held a prominent position in the field of ethnology and anthropology in Romania, as well as in Europe and, partly, in the United States. Considered the creator of the Bucharest Ethnological School, Pop did not leave behind a one-sided vision. Instead, he opened up several lines of research and reflection, which were later adopted by various groups of ethnologists and anthropologists.

The seasons of the archive

Winter was about dusting and sorting a heap of documents that had belonged to Mihai Pop. The documents were kept in big plastic bags in a basement belonging to Anisia and Gheorghe Stănculescu—Mihai Pop's niece and nephew who took care of the documents left behind in the Caragea Vodă Street house, where the Pop family had lived for almost half a century. The work was done by the project core team and a few volunteer undergraduates from the Faculty of Letters (University of Bucharest). In the meantime, other students were transcribing interviews about Mihai Pop and doing more interviews with people that had known and worked with him. Some of the students later joined the research team as full members.

Dressed in doctors' gowns, armed with masks and gloves, we went through the papers one by one and jumped with joy for

Photo 3. Before being brought to the Romanian Peasant Museum, the documents in Mihai Pop's personal Fonds were stored in the basement of the house belonging to Anisia and Gheorghe Stănculescu—Mihai Pop's niece and nephew who took care of the documents left behind in the Caragea Vodă Street house. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

17) Since the Folklore Institute has changed its name several times over the decades, further in the text we chose to simply name it the Institute.

18) Pavel Ruxăndoiu (1934 – 2015), Romanian folklorist, who worked closely with Mihai Pop at the University of Bucharest. He co-authored with Pop the book *Romanian Literary Folklore*.

19) Umberto Eco (1932 – 2016), Italian novelist, literary critic, philosopher, semiotician, and university professor.

20) Maria Corti (1915 – 2002), Italian philologist, literary critic, and novelist.

21) Gail Kligman (b. 1949), American sociologist, Professor UCLA and Director of the Center for European and Eurasian Studies. Her research and teaching focus on ethnographic and historical comparative studies of politics, culture, and gender in Eastern Europe, during and after communism. Kligman has done extensive fieldwork in Romania.

22) Claude Karnoouh (b. 1940), French anthropologist and sociologist, who has done extensive fieldwork in Romania.

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Photo 7. Sanda Golpenția and Constantin Eretescu, both former collaborators of Mihai Pop, visited the archive in June 2018. In the image, Sanda Golopenția, Rucsandra Pop and Paul Drogeanu trying to decipher a letter from the Fonds. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

every treasure we found. Then we went for a coffee and a pretzel and discussed how to shape the Fonds. It was not simple, as this was the first project of this kind that we had ever worked on.

In spring we dusted off once more all the documents we found and put them in boxes. The boxes were sent to the National Institute of Materials Physics for decontamination with gamma-ray irradiation. The operation is supposed to kill off all living organisms in the papers, but it does not remove the dust. The dust remains no matter how much you shake it off. So do the coughing and skin irritations that come with it. In spring we started enlarging the team, as the funding from The Administration of the National Cultural Fund (Administrația Fondului Cultural Național) had finally come. Nature awakened and so did we. We took the boxes of documents to the Romanian Peasant Museum and put them next to those donated to the Image Archive by Andrei Pop-Jora, Mihai Pop's youngest son. We were satisfied with our work so far. We did not realize how much work still lay ahead of us.

In the summer we began the sorting process. We spent our time poring over letters almost impossible to read, matching papers with the same texture and written in the same ink, pulling out and throwing away all the office clips from the papers and the rusty rails from the folders. We bundled, indexed, catalogued, and scanned documents. And when we finally felt like we knew what we were doing, Cristina Ţineghe came and initiated us for the second time in the art of archiving. And we realized we had to restructure the Fonds completely. And also our minds. We should have paid more attention to Cristina in the beginning, when she told us it was not easy to organize a personal archive. Luckily for us, she was by our side throughout the stages of the project. After all, she was the only specialist in archives and the history of Maramureș, the only one to have dealt with a personal archive before. We began inviting Pop's close collaborators, all of them specialists in his life and work, to join our project: Ioana Popescu,[25] Zoltán Rostás,[26] Sanda Golopenția,[27] Constantin Eretescu,[28] and Nicolae Constantinescu.[29] Each of them brought a bit more light into the process, helping us to connect the dots and better understand the content of the documents.

In autumn we began to reap the fruits of our labor. After long conversations and many hours of work, the "skeleton" of the Fonds began to take shape, and now we could add muscles to it. Every facet of Pop's personality became clearer right after a first round of sorting through the documents. We discovered many artifacts: a rich correspondence with Romanian and foreign researchers; Mihai Pop's field notes from the research campaigns part of the Gusti School of Sociology; personal notebooks with Slavic words and verb tenses; flash cards with the notes he made while studying in Prague and Bonn, his unpublished doctoral work; documents related to his participation in national and international congresses; telegrams; flight tickets; notes from courses he attended or taught; lists of books; documents related to his work at the Folklore Institute and many more. And we realized that each piece of the archive could be turned into a book. After prioritizing what should reach print first, we started scanning documents. The opinion was unanimous: the correspondence should be published as soon as possible,

23) Jean Cuisenier (1927 – 2017), French ethnologist, specialist in French and European ethnology, in particular Romanian folk arts and traditions, and more particularly rural architecture. Starting with 1973, he did extensive fieldwork in Romania.

24) Marianne Mesnil (b. 1944), Belgian anthropologist, specialized in the study of Romania, where she went for the first time as a student in 1967. She then made many field trips throughout the period marked by the Ceaucescu regime. She is now an honorary professor at Université Libre de Bruxelles.

25) Ioana Popescu (b. 1949), Romanian ethnologist, who worked closely with Mihai Pop at the Folklore Institute. After 1990, she was Research Director at the Romanian Peasant Museum and was in charge with the Image Archive.

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because it highlights the many roles that Pop played, his stature, and the value of his relationships.

The Mihai Pop network

The Mihai Pop Fonds could be defined by drawing up the list of the people with whom he collaborated throughout his career spanning nearly seven decades. Pop was a member of many important scholarly networks and international professional associations in the field of ethnography, anthropology, and semiotics. He lectured at over twenty universities in the United States and Europe, and he participated in an impressive number of international congresses and events. Actually, his international career could be the topic of a PhD research, and there are many folders containing documents that could inform such research. An address book from the 1970s is perhaps the most eloquent and condensed document of the Pop Fonds. It includes many of the names and contact details of the researchers he worked with—some of them renowned, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss or Umberto Eco, others known mainly in their fields, like the German ethnologist Ingeborg Weber Kellermann or the folklorist Carl-Herman Tillhagen.

Photo 5. The Mihai Pop Fonds contains hundreds of business cards showing how extensive Mihai Pop's professional network was, both nationally and internationally. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

The archive is about:

Data and information: In many of the texts about Mihai Pop, there appears a long list of international scientific bodies of which he was a member. Beyond the fact that this long list is only partially correct and is usually carelessly copied from one article to the other, very few scholars go deeper into the roles these professional organizations played, and how the history of the respective fields flows through them. One cannot understand the development of folklore or anthropology unless one has background data on the history of these professional associations. And there is a lot of this data in the Pop Fonds. Now that the data is available, the biography of Mihai Pop will surely be re-written in a more detailed and precise manner.

People and stories: Apart from Mihai Pop, whose archive we were researching, the papers bring to light other people with whom even the most cold-blooded researcher would fall in love. One of the scholars whose personality is revealed by the documents in the Fonds is Constantin Brăiloiu. When reading letters signed by the well-known musicologist, he turns from a Wikipedia entry into flesh and blood. A letter addressed to Harry Brauner, brought Brăiloiu to life for us, the research team:

> I'm glad Pop arrived and brought all the stuff. I included a note for him, too. I'm also glad that the latest concerns of His Magisterial Serenity (Dimitrie Gusti) confirm beyond any doubt all the flattering views I have always had regarding His brilliant intelligence. Don't forget my devilish Decalogue for the 1931 monograph, consisting of four points (*as any respectful Decalogue should):
> 1. Thou shalt not kill, respectively commit suicide.
> 2. Thou shalt beautifully gather beautiful things.
> 3. Thou shalt form a state within the state.
> 4. Thou shalt crush monographic sociology

26) Zoltán Rostás (b. 1946), Romanian sociologist of Hungarian origins. He is specialized in the history of the Gusti School of Sociology and founder of the research group Cooperativa Gusti. In the 1980s, he has done extensive oral history interviews with the researchers who participated in the monographic campaigns initiated by Dimitrie Gusti, including Mihai Pop.

27) Sanda Golopenția (b.1940), Romanian linguist, now Emeritus Professor at Brown University, Providence, Long Island. She worked at the Folklore Institute, doing extensive fieldwork with Mihai Pop. She published several books on linguistics and semiotics and edited the work of her parents Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția and Anton Golopenția, both members of the Gusti School of Sociology and close friends of Mihai Pop.

28) Constantin Eretescu (b. 1937), Romanian folklorist, who worked closely with Mihai Pop at the Folklore Institute. In 1980, he fled to the United States and taught cultural anthropology at Rhode Island School of Design, Providence.

29) Nicolae Constantinescu (b. 1934), Romanian folklorist and professor, who was Mihai Pop's assistant at the University of Bucharest.

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under smiles of contempt.
Here, I enjoy moments of perfect silence, propitious to a radical concealment.
(…)
With all my love, Constantin Brăiloiu.[30]

30) This letter is very revealing for the differences between Constantin Brăiloiu and Dimitrie Gusti on how to approach field research.

This witty letter made us look for more information on Brăiloiu, it made us look at his photographs with different eyes. This man somehow came to life in the generous office of the Image Archive. And this was the case with all those other deceased people locked in these files and boxes—for a few minutes, or for a few days, they would become alive in our minds and our souls. It was emotionally intense for us to realize that our team found a letter from Marcela Focșa at the same time the Museum team found one of her notebooks with her drawings and her notes from the Gusti campaigns. Another project that connected our work with the activity of the Museum was the research they were conducting on the interwar photographer Aurel Bauch.[31] The two had worked together in the Dâmbovnic campaign—Bauch even took photos of Pop at that time and on different occasions. Of course, the two teams cooperated. In fact, working on the Museum premises, the Mihai Pop Fonds benefited from having an extended research team. It was a continuous dialogue between the different fonds and their researchers.

31) For more about Aurel Bauch, see the study by Viviana Iacob in this *Martor* issue.

The research team

As a professional exercise questioning subjectivity and reflexivity, we asked team members to write down statements about their experience working with the Fonds. The reflections were an important part of the general framework of the project. We have reproduced them below with minor changes regarding biographical notes only.

The team was led by Rucsandra Pop, who had a triple affiliation—first with the family, as granddaughter of Mihai Pop, secondly with the University of Bucharest where she is working on her PhD, and last but not least with the Mihai Pop Association *[Asociația Academician Mihai Pop],* the organization which initiated the research project.

It was equally difficult and intriguing to wear all the three hats at once. As a granddaughter, it was an emotionally difficult period. Digging into your family's history always is. While doing such work it is impossible not to re-discover yourself in relationship with your ancestors. The information about my family I have access to goes back seven generations, both on my grandfather's and on my grandmother's side. And this is a lot of information to process. It generates internal processes and it changes the relationship with other members of the family. Intense is a soft word, when it comes to such a journey of self-discovery.

The role I played as a scientific coordinator of the entire project was also intense. It was my first time coordinating such a big research project, a project that was outside the realm of my expertise. Working with archives was also a first. I took an exploratory approach. The wisest thing to do was to find specialists with more expertise than I had. But as the work was very time-consuming, and it involved a lot of attention to details and digital skills, it was also important to find young people willing to participate in a project that could open for them new professional perspectives. The team was very mixed: the people came from both different fields and generations. It took a long time to put the team together and to find a method that would fit us all and guarantee the best possible results.

I also had to deal with the institutional side—the cooperation with the Museum was excellent, both in practical terms and at the level of expertise we could access. There were also other partners—the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Bucharest and the Faculty of Letters from Brașov. I felt great satisfaction to see that my project, which had started as

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Photo 1. Part of the Mihai Pop Fonds project team during a working session. From right to left: Ramona Barbu, Mirela Stan, Andrei Roşca, Paul Drogeanu, Alex Iorga and Rucsandra Pop. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

an independent project, was embraced and supported by institutions that understand the importance of the role that Mihai Pop played in the development of social sciences throughout the twentieth century. The biggest gratification I had working on this project was to bring together such a large community of researchers interested in my grandfather's work.

A few months before the project was awarded AFCN funding, a group of undergraduate students and a group of graduate students at the Bucharest Faculty of Letters volunteered for the project, as part of their fieldwork practice. An important contribution by the students was transcribing the interviews and documents and starting to build a virtual map of Pop's professional network. Another contribution was to sort the papers. With each day they spent among the papers, some of the students took one step further in becoming specialists of Mihai Pop's biography and work. In fact, the volunteering turned into a talent hunt for the project. Some of the undergraduates were recruited as full-time researchers in the project.

The graduate students were given assignments closer to their area of interest—e.g., editing the interviews, conducting new interviews or even creatively reinterpreting the archive material.

Working with archive material has always intrigued me, so when Rucsandra Pop offered us the opportunity to "drift" into the universe of the Mihai Pop Fonds, I became quite enthusiastic about it. I personally enjoyed the freedom given by Rucsandra—to explore the archive in a rather creative way. It was a challenge to work with the material, applying

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my own artistic view to it, which led me to uncover one of Mihai Pop's many portraits, as shaped by people who knew him. Furthermore, I actually got the chance to exercise a few new skills, including collage-making and drawing calligrams (Felicia Hodoroabă-Simion, graduate student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, 2018).

Rucsandra's project of bringing to light and, why not, to life, Mihai Pop Fonds has rewarded me in an unexpected way. As a child, my first dream was to become an archaeologist, but life had different plans for me. However, anthropology got me closer to my dream than I had ever hoped. So, getting to know better Mihai Pop's personality was like diving into one of the most colorful oceans, full of unimaginable life. It was enthralling to get to know him even if vicariously, through the eyes and stories of the people who met and worked with him. Listening, transcribing and translating interviews with collaborators, former students and professors, etc. who crossed paths with Mihai Pop was like looking through a stained-glass window, where all the colored pieces recreated the great ethnographer's personality. He was a strong, restless, highly erudite man who kept his feet on the ground and easily related to all kind of people. (…) I am grateful to have met him, even though the meeting was mediated by other people (Andra Samson, graduate student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, 2018).

Photo 4. The students of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest had their practical training in the Peasants Museum Image Archive, helping organize the documents in the Mihai Pop Fonds. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

Working with Rucsandra Pop to develop the Mihai Pop Fonds has given me the opportunity to learn and apply research methods, to think and build an interview, and last but not least to grow as a researcher. My contribution consisted of conducting an interview with Ștefan Petreuș, one of the Petreuș Brothers—folk musicians, who were famous for performing songs from the Maramureș area. The Petreuș Brothers were born in Glod, the same village where Mihai Pop was born. In this interview, I attempted to capture Ștefan Petreuș's life history focusing on the village of his childhood, the community and the relationship with the church, the mentalities of the people, the institutionalization and the dislocation of the folk artist, the relationship with Mihai Pop, and the way the means of mass reproduction and dissemination of folk music influenced their career. The fact that I come from the Maramureș area helped me a lot, as I understand the thinking of the people there, the way they speak and their connection to their ancient traditions. I had had the opportunity to meet Ștefan Petreuș many years before, but the interview gave me the chance to find out more interesting details about how he entered the field of music, to which I am no stranger, as well as important information about Mihai Pop (Delia Kohut, graduate student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, 2018).

Denisa Ploscariu enrolled herself in the "army of Pop" one evening when the project was at an early stage, and everything was still very unclear. Denisa expressed her discontent towards the way things were organized and offered her help in setting up an effective work flow for the students volunteering for the Mihai Pop Association. Shortly after, Denisa was invited to join the management team.

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Photo 2. Rucsandra Pop and Ramona Barbu organizing a pile of documents. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

The work in the archive was a true challenge for me as I took care of the managerial part of the project alongside the identification of the documents. I was in charge of work strategies, organizational methods, new working techniques—like describing and categorizing the documents. The most interesting activity I participated in was deciphering Pop's correspondence, which allowed me to discover the professor's essence through the letters he wrote to people. At the same time I had access to some different types of documents, one example being the documents from the folder "Manuscript—The Ethnographic area of Lăpuș" which I had to actually piece together in order to digitally archive it. During the project I discovered a lot of things related to Mihai Pop's field of research, as well as the methods he used. I felt gratitude every time I realized how precious are all the documents that passed through my hands, all of them emanating history and life at the same time. It is amazing to see how the past transcends the future, projecting the future. For me it was important to be involved in this project. Together with the entire team we succeeded to keep alive the personality of Mihai Pop and to make it possible for the next generations to have access to it (Denisa Pleoscariu, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, 2018).

Andrei Roșca, Mirela Stan and Ramona Barbu were also "recruited" for the project among those undergraduate students who did practical training at the Mihai Pop Association. It was their curiosity and their interest in the project that got them the job. To some extent, one can say now they are the best specialists in very specialized aspects of Mihai Pop's intellectual biography such as his participation to national and international congresses and his affiliation to various scholarly organizations.

For me, working with the Mihai Pop Fonds was like reading a story and, with time, becoming a character in it. Dealing with the old documents was challenging in the beginning—at first trying to decipher all the documents I had in front of me—from letters to Pop's personal notes—and then arranging all the pieces of the puzzle into a story that had to be presented, to be told. I would say that this was the most beautiful part of the project, alongside working with the people involved in it. Rucsandra, the project's coordinator, was always saying that this whole archive is about Pop as much as about our own perspective, about us trying to understand Pop, his professional life as a scholar, and as a human as well. And knowing that, I personally tried to do this, and that's the reason I felt like a character in this whole story. Understanding Pop was the starting point of the archival work, and with time it happened to be about understanding myself as well as understanding the people involved in the project. The reflections of each of us on what a document meant and is supposed to mean in the present are reflected in the way the archive was defined in the end (Mirela Stan, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, 2018).

My archival work in the summer of 2018 included the classification of the documents and papers concerning Mihai Pop's participation to congresses and his affiliation to professional associations. The experience of eight hours spent every day, for a month,

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among papers and documents that had belonged to one of the most important Romanian ethnologists was impressive. During this month, I sorted the documents according to the name and year of every international meeting that Pop had attended. Working in the archive was an extraordinary chance to study the documents of an anthropologist and to understand what it meant to be in contact with international associations and scientists all over the world, and what it meant to participate at the highest level of anthropological studies. The letters exchanged between Pop and the organizers make up the main part of the congress documents, and they have the value of a temporal instrument that anyone who is interested in these documents can use to follow the congresses. It was therefore astonishing to have access and to read simple documents such as the conference invitations or programs, letters to and from important anthropologists and ethnologists, such as Richard Dorson,[32] Jean Cuisenier, Sigurd Erixon,[33] or Alan Dundes. As all the documents were ordered chronologically, whenever a folder was completed, I had the impression that in front of my eyes some kind of a story had come to an end. The most impressive folder was the one on the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore, containing documents from almost every year Pop was a member of it, from 1965 to the 1990s. As I was indexing the papers, the sequence of documents gave me a bizarre feeling of melancholy when I reached the end of those international meetings. At some point, while working on the documents of another folder, for a Tokyo congress, I was so immersed in arranging the documents (dinners, restaurants, congress program, brochures, notes) that I had the impression that I left Tokyo with Mihai Pop (Andrei Roșca, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, 2018).

The folklorist Paul Drogeanu, a former student and collaborator of Mihai Pop at the Folklore Institute, gave us precious insight, especially since many of the documents came from his student years or the years he spent working at the Institute, and he personally knew the documents' theme or the people they referenced. Paul was probably the one who got totally immersed in the archive as pieces of it contained him as well.

> What I liked most from my 2018 journey into the archive hosted by the Romanian National Peasant Museum (as part of a group led by Rucsandra Pop) were the stories. In fact, it was not so much like a trip but like a residence or a workshop, hosted by the Museum's Image Archive, which became a kind of research hub for the Mihai Pop personal archive. *Why was it enjoyable?* Because the stars lined up at each stage. The Museum was the perfect place where an unconventional archive could be put together rigorously. The hosts had as a legacy from the Museum's founders the appropriate mindset for such an approach. It was *enjoyable* because cubic meters of papers in cardboard boxes (dusty or cleaned and even irradiated) had to be converted into linear meters of documents. Then they became hundreds of elements, some humble (like business cards, airplane tickets, invitations to balls or congresses), others impressive (geo-political analysis reports, research papers, columns, cultural policy strategies), but each of them representing a surprise and anticipating an amazing body of work.
>
> The experience was different for each member of the team. The diversity of the team was subtle and apparently random, working together in a fruitful compatibility. It was enjoyable because I had stage fright (and only a talented actor can feel stage fright, as a director of the National Theater once said). I felt just like before an exam with a beloved professor, an exam where I finally got an A+ without too much effort. There was great anxiety due to the fact that most of the team had no training in working with archives. But it was gratifying to see that, after the work had been done and honored, our ethnological intuitions (trained or being

32) Richard Dorson (1916– 1981), American folklorist, author, professor, and director of the Folklore Institute at Indiana University.

33) Sigurd Erixon (1888 – 1968), Swedish ethnologist and culture historian.

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trained through studies of philology or history) were confirmed even by modern archivists. In many of our discussions it was said that this is not a typical archiving project, and so it cannot conform to the common practices and definitions. I had mixed feelings of incompetence and doubt. But in the end we managed to archive the documents, on time and almost "by the book." Although we had been congratulated on our work, both by a competent authority in archives and by Rucsandra Pop, the initiator of the project, I turned to the intellectual's most faithful servant: the available literature. I still felt unsure about a few things, including the status (still ambiguous) of some personal documents (in the case of a famous figure in a given field). And the ever faithful literature confirmed my expectations, although *post festum,* on topics like: closed fonds, but not completed; private archives belonging to researchers *vs.* personal public archives that are produced as part of a public scientific activity by a public figure. "The originality of the ensemble consists, in fact, in the juxtaposition of private archives (family correspondence and other personal notes) with documents produced by public bodies."[34] In an effort to set up, in 2005, at the *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme* in Dijon (France), the personal fonds of researcher *Andre Varagnac* (1894 – 1983)—a personality just as famous as *Mihai Pop*—in the field of folklore as a distinctive scientific discipline (and we know that notoriety is decisive for the creation of fonds), it was noted the original nature of this archive, the result of a personal production, that of the researcher, while being of public interest, as long as it is produced in public institutions.

Why were there so many stories? Not only because we had a personal, subjective and emotional relationship with Mihai Pop, both Rucsandra as his granddaughter and PhD candidate working on his biography and myself as a disciple and former employee of the Folklore Institute, but because the public reason for an archive to exist is the *notoriety* of its author/producer. And that notoriety is the result of facts that deserve to be told, on the occasion of these interpretive acts. The identification of the documents, decisive for their classification, is done by putting them in context. *Excursus*: the documents speak of action—the actions create reality—Pop created institutes, research projects and education fields, vocations and careers. His actions left behind a trail of documents. When you put a document into context, you ask a witness to tell a story. The stories are not just behind the document you need to classify. They go beyond it. What you read in the document you just classified is not a simple text anymore, it becomes a palimpsest. In this manner I have read—sometimes for myself, other times for my colleagues—the admirable actions of Mihai Pop. For example: a manuscript shows that Mihai Pop, while working with Gusti's royal teams and thus involved in the Sociological School in Bucharest, had the vision of creating the Folklore School of Bucharest (sic!). Another document shows that at the time when he was in charge with the academic study of folk culture, he tried to support the establishment in Bucharest of an Institute of Ethnography, precisely to separate folklore (seen as ethnology) from ethnography (seen as museography). Being given the chance to interpret the documents as a story or as proof of an untold story was the privilege I enjoyed during this journey into the Mihai Pop Fonds at the Peasant Museum (Paul Drogeanu, 2018).

The one who linked the current academic perspective with Pop's years of teaching was Alexandru Iorga, who had undertaken the sorting of the lecture notes in the Fonds. He also invited the students of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work to get acquainted with the project and contribute to the organization of the archive, thus rebuilding a natural link between Mihai Pop and sociology. Alexandru Vlad was the man who dug into other archives in search of documents to help us deepen our understanding of what we already had. As

34) Alazard, Céline. 2011. "Fonds personnel de chercheur : André Varagnac." *ArchiSHS, Archives scientifiques des sciences humaines et sociales*, August 11 [available online at : https://archishs.hypotheses.org/514].

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Photo 6. Actress Grațiela Bădescu performing in front of the audience at the performative installation showcased in November 2018 at the Romanian Peasant Museum in the villa that belonged to Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

a historian, Alexandru Vlad was in charge of the documents accounting for the time when Mihai Pop worked at the Ministry of Propaganda and was delegated to the Foreign Affairs Ministry as Press Secretary at the Romanian Legation in Slovakia.

Grațiela Bădescu (actress and art performer) juggled between the role of project manager and the much more creative role of artist in the performative installation. Together with the Black Horse Mansion team—Ana Banu, Alina Manea and Miruna Vasilescu—Grațiela built the final moment of the project in which we planned to bring Mihai Pop to the audience through a performative video installation. The Black Horse Mansion team created two video collages: one that was portraying Mihai Pop as a scholar and another looking at his family life. The videos were projected in separate rooms: one imagining an auditorium at the University, where Pop had taught for two decades, and the other re-creating the atmosphere of Pop's family home, an old house situated in the center of Bucharest. The audience was guided from one room to another by Grațiela Bădescu, who performed parts of the letters sent or received by Mihai Pop. The actress also interacted with the video material, enriching it with dance movements, a symbolic recreation of traditional folk dances. The installation also included a culinary experience, as the audience was offered *horincă* and *slănină,*[35] as any guest in the Pop house would have been. The performative installation was designed as an invitation for people to step into Mihai Pop's universe not only through words or pieces of paper, but also through image, music, food, drinks or objects that belonged to him. The installation was performed twice—the first time in Grațiela's apartment, as part of the HomeFest, a "home-made" art festival, and the second time at the Romanian Peasant Museum in a villa that belonged to Alexandru Tzigara Samurcaș.[36]

> When it comes to video, the feeling of holiness is even stronger because the person

35) Plum brandy and cured pork fat, drink and food from Maramureș.

36) Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș (1872 – 1952), Romanian art historian, ethnographer, museologist and cultural journalist. Tzigara was the founder of the National Museum, the nucleus of the present-day Romanian Peasant Museum. His house now hosts the Museum's offices.

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you are searching for is right there inside a file—moving, talking and reacting, giving you precious real content, stuck-in-time, contributing to your own understanding of time and people. Putting together a video installation based on the archive documents of Mihai Pop's life and legacy felt like working with a rough diamond to find ways to expose it to people, while keeping some of the dust time had laid on it—this "dust" is time itself, making the object of pursuit shine brighter. For a short while, it felt like we were inside Mihai Pop's life, being able to take a good look, while taking turns to play the parts of people in his life: a student, a friend, a colleague, a niece, or even his wife. And when the video experiment was shown, we got to observe conversations build around it, as everyone who had anything to do with Pop held a piece of his memory, triggered by the images. A rich experience of present and future came together (Black Horse Mansion 2008).

I became acquainted with Mihai Pop Fonds long before the project even started to crystallize, by listening to Rucsandra's stories about her PhD research. When we wrote together the funding proposal for AFCN, the project seemed clear, at least on a theoretical level. The idea of making a performance installation came to us while we were brainstorming the best possible way to give the general public access to Mihai Pop's legacy. Although while working on ways to organize the overwhelming amount of documents we had, I became also responsible for the management of the project, my role as a performer was never sidelined. The fact that I was involved in moving the documents from a basement to the Museum's Image Archive, and the time spent in Rucsandra's house, where I was a guest and had access to the room where some of the original documents were stored, kept me in close contact with all the information that was surfacing. On one hand I was discovering a fascinating professional trajectory, and on the other, an alluring personal component, especially as showcased in the letters. Meanwhile, the management side had begun to absorb me, but Rucsandra was sending me a photo or a message from time to time with what she had found in the correspondence. These small details kept me motivated, while the team crystallized the structure for sorting the papers.

The video was put together in such a subtle and elegant way, almost Dadaist, by the Black Horse Mansion girls. What needed to be done now was the text. It seemed essential to me to capture the human component of Pop's written conversations (without invading his privacy/personal space), but also the perspectives of those who saw him, and whom Pop had "changed." The main pillars to build the text on were two letters. One of the letters was written by Irina Pop, his wife. It was a playful letter in which she invited him to the movies and scolded him with elegance, ironically signing her letter as "your humble wife, committed and obedient." The second letter was written by Pop, in 1935, when he was 28. The letter is in fact a meditation on the way people have transformed both life and love into bourgeoisie: "This is how bourgeois love was born and how true love died, just as people killed the life given to them by God to create their own lives." The two spaces that hosted the performance installation also contributed to its final structure. The first was the house where I had just moved in, an interwar apartment that became the space for hosting a culture

Photo 8. Screen shot from the video installation made by the Black Horse Mansion collective. The collage has in its center an image from the interview with Mihai Pop taken by Gheorghe Deaconu and Ioan Șt. Lazăr in 1997 and on the sides items from Pop's field notebooks during the monographic campaigns led by Dimitrie Gusti. Photo credit: Mihai Pop Association.

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festival in my home, called HomeFest. The living room became the Caragea Vodă room, and what we called "the office" became the University auditorium. Nearly thirty viewers walked about the rooms freely, looking for Pop in documents printed from what we had digitized from the Fonds, in videos and the music from the Gusti campaigns, in which Pop had taken part. The second house that hosted the show was Villa Tzigara Samurcaș at The Romanian Peasant Museum, where the experience was inaugurated with *slănină* and *horincă*, and the audience had the opportunity to get somewhat closer to "Moșu." Each of the performances ended with discussions, where people displayed their emotions and memories that the installation had stirred. The most exciting thing was that now I was able to see how the things I had found in the documents resonated with the personal history of the people in the audience. A piece of the lives of some of the people in the audience was being reconstructed in front of their eyes (Grațiela Bădescu 2018).

Cristina Țineghe was the specialist who guided us by making a diagram for the Fonds and sharing with us secrets of the archivist's profession. Cristina taught us how to make the papers speak, but also how not to let ourselves be swept away by each document and thus lose sight of the bigger picture and miss the common thread of the archive.

The archival processing of the Mihai Pop Fonds started with the attempt to classify the huge number of documents according to the main issues they were reflecting. The principle is simple but its implementation was difficult to achieve due to the huge complexity of the activities carried out by Mihai Pop in the course of his life. Another difficulty was the fact that the documents revealed successively many aspects of his personality, more or less known, some even surprising. After this fascinated scrutiny of the records that make up the Mihai Pop's personal Fonds, we still have the impression that, despite the substantial volume of new information, they only outline the main directions of Mihai Pop's activity, and to highlight his real contribution would require the completion of the documentary corpus with testimonies found in the archives of the institutions he worked for (Cristina Țineghe 2018).

Throughout the process, we learned many things from Iris Șerban and Mara Mărăcinescu working at the Image Archive of the Romanian Peasant Museum, who have gathered around them a community of archive-minded people, people who are willing to share knowledge and to professionalize in this domain. Luckily we have teamed up also with Ioana Simona Ghiță, who is more than a financial manager, because she is passionately supporting independent cultural projects, helping artists or researchers to keep their budgets from the brink. Neither was Adnana Cruceanu only our communication manager—with a Master's in Anthropology, she has come up with a double perspective, a person passionate about the discipline and a communicator who knows how to put complex things into simple words. We have tried and will continue to keep close to the project the "elders of the tribe," people who were close to Pop and who understand the layered depths of the documents and the times in which he lived.

Final remarks

Given the overall lack of tradition in working with personal archives in Romania (Chirilă 2016), the project is innovative mainly because it involves a public-private partnership—the Academician Mihai Pop Association and the Romanian Peasant Museum have assumed a common mission to structure, make it grow, and leverage the Fonds. Moreover, the project partnered with

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Photo 10. Between 1971 and 1982, Mihai Pop was the president of the International Society of Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF). The participants at the City Rituals conference - the 13th conference of the The Ritual Year working group of SIEF - visited the Image Archive at the Romanian Peasant Museum. During the visit, they learned more about the Mihai Pop Fonds and the contribution of the Romanian researcher to SIEF. Photo credit: Irina Stahl.

three important academic institutions—the Faculty of Letters, the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work (University of Bucharest), and the Faculty of Letters (Transylvania University). The project was not only presented and promoted among the students, but the students have enormously contributed to the archival work—some on a voluntary basis, others as paid staff. Through these partnerships, a personal research project is institutionalized, open to other researchers or institutions in the field, and also to the general public. This project is an invitation to openness and collaboration for other institutions in the country or abroad that have valuable documents that could contribute to a better understanding and visibility of Pop's personality. Mihai Pop's cultural influence and career are little known in Romania, despite the fact that his work has been and still is extremely important in terms of institutional development and the history of ethnology, folklore, sociology, semiotics, and anthropology.

Although he led the Folklore Institute and taught this discipline for twenty years, Pop cannot be reduced to the role of founder of modern folklore in Romania. With a European formation at the intersection of several disciplines—linguistics, literary theory, sociology, ethnography, and folklore—he became interested in semiotics and cultural anthropology at a later stage in his career, being among those who imported ideas from these disciplines into the Romanian academic environment. Pop was a Socratic personality. He had the great ability to engage in dialogue with people from all social backgrounds and to influence the destinies of many of those he met. Mihai Pop embodies almost perfectly the Socratic model, as his written work is far less consistent than the influence he exercised through direct contact with his disciples. That's why

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his published works offer a limited view of the influence his personality had in the field. The archive offers numerous documents that create a much broader picture. Mihai Pop's legacy is an intersection, and the more light we put on it, the more sophisticated and clearer it becomes. To borrow the notorious Saussurian terms, Mihai Pop needs to be analyzed at both a syntagmatic and paradigmatic level.

Moreover, the experience of working with the personal archive, which contains so many elements from different periods of Mihai Pop's life, not only offers a better knowledge of his intellectual practices, but also complements the intellectual elements with pure biographical ones, which have either become myths in the absence of concrete factual references, or have been considered to be of minor importance.

The project's aim was to disseminate and enhance the cultural heritage of Mihai Pop, a charismatic personality of the twentieth century, who influenced in a subtle, but profound manner several areas of Romanian and international intellectual life, connecting the local scientific scene with the international market of ideas. One of the ambitions of this project is to inspire new critical approaches. Another ambition is to popularize the activity of this "niche personality" and to bring in the forefront this modern Socrates—who can still be a valuable mentor for the younger generations at a time when the Romanian society seems to have lost its compass. Told in a creative and convincing way for the young generation, Mihai Pop's story can be a plea for the fact that socio-human sciences can represent an exciting career choice, as they offer keys to understanding the society we live in. Using the digital environment and innovative approaches, Pop can be brought closer to new specialists in the field and to young people interested in the recent history.

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MARTOR

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Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

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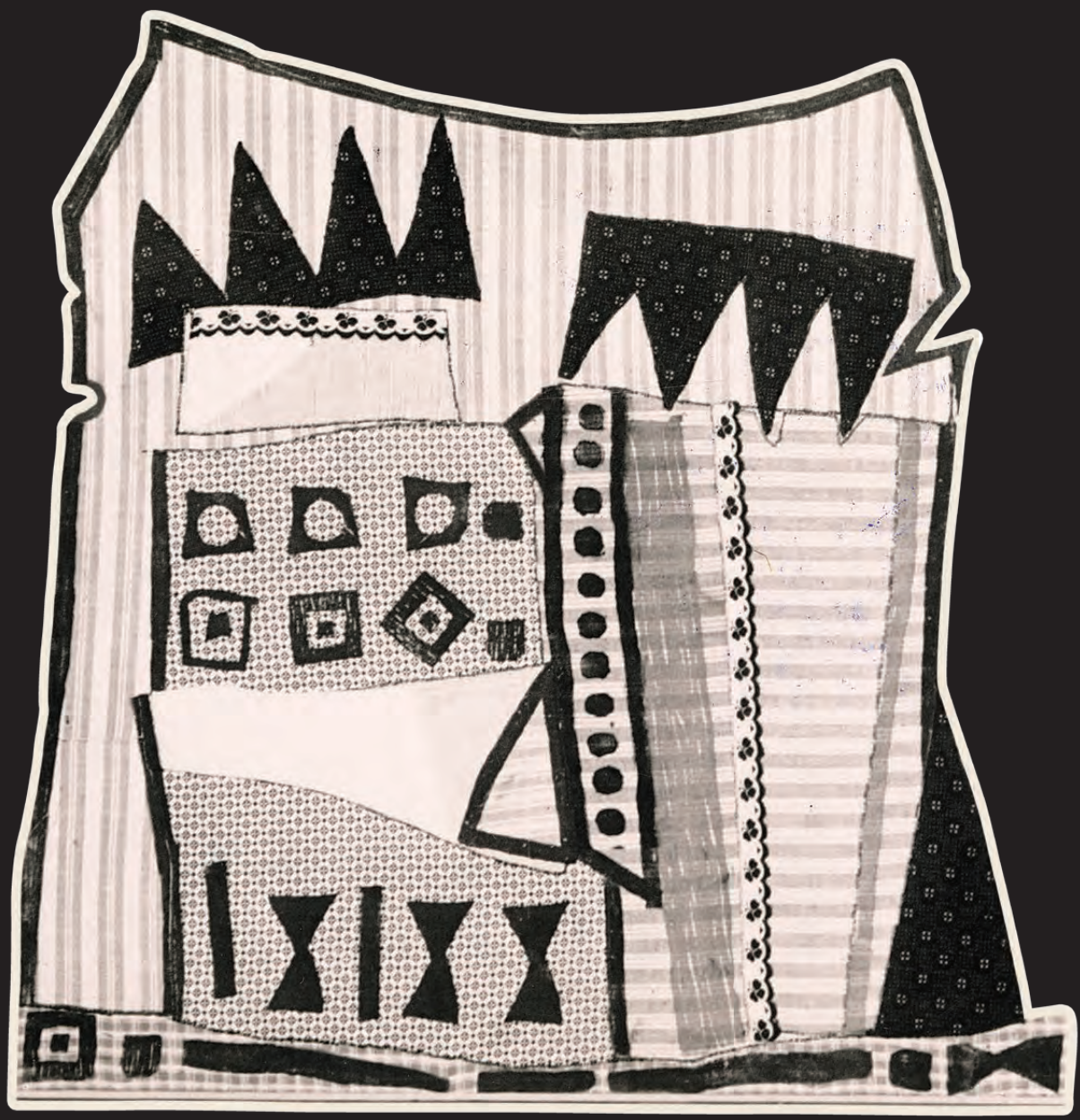

IV. The Archive as Artistic Language

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When Document Becomes Art and Art Becomes Document. Several Art Projects Based on Photographic Collections or Archives

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ABSTRACT

What are the necessary conditions for a photograph to surpass its status as document and to become an art object? What is more important: its aesthetic qualities or the context in which it is displayed? Does the perception of the same photograph change in time? Are there any ethical rigors that we should consider when using in our creations photos belonging to people whom we do not know and/or are no longer alive? These are some of the questions that I have asked (or had to ask) myself over the years as I often used appropriated photographic images in my work.

KEYWORDS

Time, memory, archive, photography, subREAL.

Introduction

Along with the fast shift from analogue to digital systems, there are more and more photography collections that have been, for various reasons, abandoned or made redundant, thus becoming easier to access by those who want to. In Romania, this phenomenon was accelerated in the years following the 1989 Revolution also by the privatization process the country was engaged in. Every research, design, production, food, medical, media institution held its own collection, smaller or larger, of both written and photographic records. These archives were damaged or lost to a large extent during the process of privatization due to the indifference and, sometimes, the complicity of those involved in it, but also to the fact that these documents were not seen as possible income sources as there was not, at that time, a market for them—unlike the fixed assets those economic entities owned that could be (and they were) sold in a more or less legal way.

The country, its politicians and its leaders were busy with privatization—the path recommended by foreign experts for the transition from a planned to a market economy—as they wanted to be free from a past that was unanimously perceived as a traumatic one. Few were those who thought that all those visual documents were worth keeping, and they didn't have, anyway, any administrative or decision power in this situation.

For several decades, working with appropriated images has become a quite frequent practice among artists across the globe. It's enough to look into the Photo-Video Department of the Bucharest National University of Arts, where I carry out most of my teaching activity, to see that an increasing number of students build their Bachelor and Master's theses using various photography collections they found or inherited in the family. Working with "archives," together with using film cameras, represents a critical po-

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sitioning against the invasion of digital technology and "smart" phones (sometimes smarter as far as image creation goes than the persons using them) and against the consequences of the wave of insignificant photographs from social networks on the way we treat photographs.

My relationship with photographic image collections is a rather long one. Even though I have had, since early childhood, a fascination (like all children probably) with looking at and leafing through family albums for hours, only in the 1990s I actually started using this kind of pictures as a source of inspiration and actual working material in my creative process.

In the early 1990s, while working as a photographer and editor for *Arta* magazine and being a member of the subREAL group, together with several friends and colleagues, I was trying to establish a photography and dynamic image department at Bucharest National University of Arts (UNArte), where I taught an optional course that was very successful among students. I was taking part in local and international art exhibitions and, at the same time, I was finishing my architecture studies (interrupted in 1980, after just three years) with a Master's thesis without which I couldn't have taught at UNArte. A multilayered activity as my whole life has been ever since.

Arta magazine, forced both in the 1980s and the early 1990s to change offices several times, owned several cabinets filled with envelopes containing photographs and boxes of photographic films, of which some were used to print some of the pictures in the envelopes. Unfortunately, due to consecutive changes of headquarters and the fact that with every move the space assigned for the editorial room was increasingly smaller, eventually becoming insufficient, all those documents, together with other accounting records and written documents, were stored squashed together, virtually all records of them or classification being lost.

Right after the 1989 Revolution, the Union of Visual Artists (UAP) entered a troubled period when, because of restorations, it began losing studios, galleries, and even its headquarters. In 1991, as UAP could no longer finance the magazine, it was taken over by the Ministry of Culture until 1993, when their financing also stopped. In 1993, the last space where the editorial room was moved to—which couldn't actually function as an editorial room, but only as storage place for furniture, other fixed assets, as well as all documents accumulated over four decades of functioning—was assigned as a studio place to a young artist. He immediately requested that the room should be cleared in a few days and, since that wasn't possible, he broke in and moved into the hallway everything that belonged to the magazine. Then, a few days later, some of the objects (typewriters, pieces of furniture) were taken away by UAP and stored somewhere else, while others remained there for several weeks and began disappearing as the building was not secure and didn't have a doorman. That's when, together with Călin Dan, the editor-in-chief of the magazine, we decided to store the boxes of envelopes and negatives in a studio I had close by. All these documents remained there for one year. Our curiosity and interest grew slowly but steadily, and we wanted to investigate them and do something based on them. But unfortunately, as it usually happens, we always seemed to have other priorities and couldn't manage to dedicate enough time to their examination. One thing we started considering was to apply for an artistic scholarship that would provide us with the necessary time and conditions to generate projects based on these materials.

In 1994, we wrote an application to Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin, proposing to move together with the entire photography and negative collection of *Arta* magazine in one of the studios provided by the foundation and to develop, every month, a project based on those visual materials. Our application was successful, and we obtained a studio for one year along with a grant from the Philip Morris Foundation. Although

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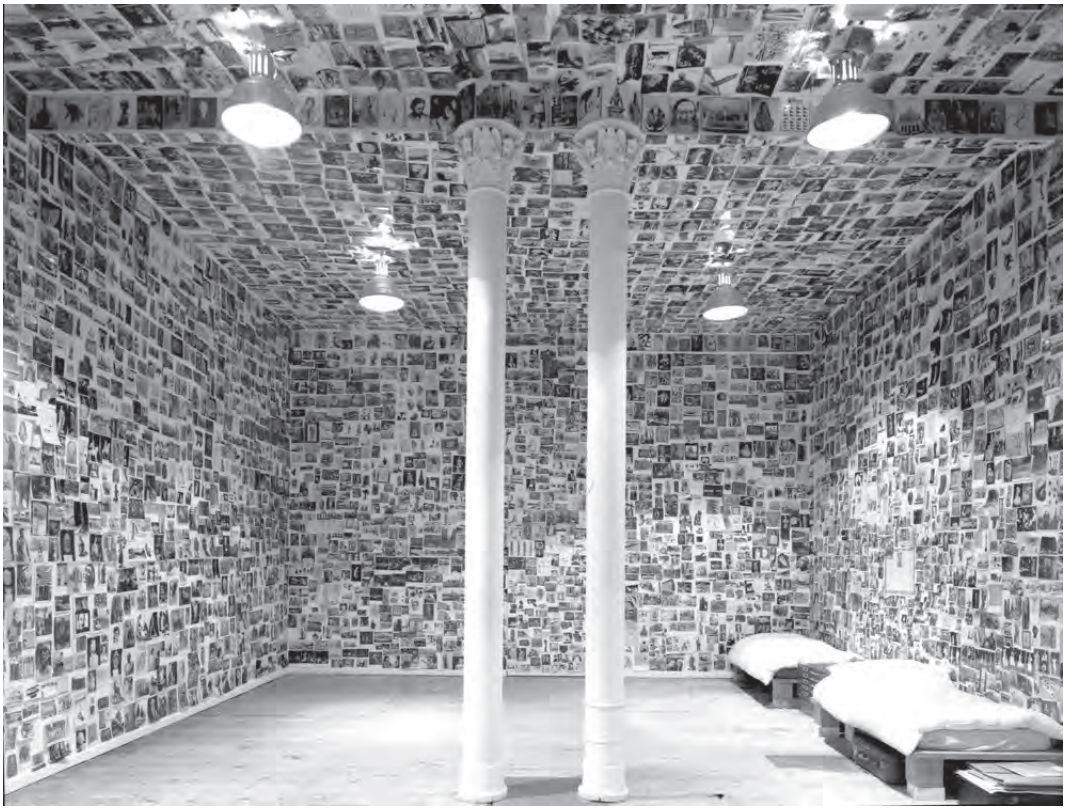

subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *Dataroom (How to Change your Wallpaper Daily)*, Art History Archive series, Lesson 1, installation, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 1995. © subREAL.

there were two of us, we worked as one artist (subREAL), sharing the studio and the grant.

This is how the *Art History Archive* project was born, in which we committed to create, for a year, various events called "art history lessons" offered to the public every month in open workshops. These took various forms: installations, talks, art performances. At the end of our scholarship, we had an exhibition in a well-known art center in Berlin (Neue Berliner Kunstverein) and we released a publication that summarized the activity for the year we spent in Berlin (from March 1995 to March 1996).

I will briefly present only a few of these events that became stand-alone projects and used the boxes of photographs of *Arta* magazine. All those images were about art objects, artists and their lifestyle, their work and social life in Romania during the second half of the twentieth century.

In the first project, called *Dataroom*, the walls and the ceiling of the subREAL studio at Künstlerhaus Bethanien (a room measuring 10 x 8 x 4.5 m) were entirely covered in photographs from the magazine's image collection. The room served as both living and working space for Călin Dan and me, so visitors could see, alongside pictures, our two blankets and daily use objects.

After a month of living in the studio plastered with photographs, they began to fall off, covering the floor, the furniture and the working space. After repeatedly trying to remedy the situation, we realized the potential conceptual value of this process and decided to transform it into a new installation, *Deconstruction, AHA lesson 3*, that was presented to the public during an open workshop.

Another project, called *What Does a Project Mean?*, consisted of an installation with visual references to "small sculpture salons." For the most part, the *Arta* magazi-

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subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *What Does a Project Mean?* Art History Archive series, Lesson 2, installation, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 1995. © subREAL.

ne archive included negatives and ready for press photographic prints, reproductions of Romanian artists' works published over time in the magazine. For this installation, we chose images representing the sculptures of Ion Irimescu (1903–2005), an important figure in the official Romanian art landscape for over sixty years—before the communist rule, even more so under it, and after it was overthrown. Professor at the Belle Arte Academy of Iași (since 1940), Cluj (in the 1950s) and then at the Nicolae Grigorescu Visual Arts Institute of Bucharest (since 1966), Ion Irimescu was also the president of the Romanian Visual Artists Union (the one that published *Arta*) for a very long time (1978-1990). In all of these positions, he had an ambivalent role: an official decision maker, both politically and esthetically, as well as a subject of times, a prolific creator of small or public sculptures adapted to the formal needs of the moment. In *What Does a Project Mean?*, subREAL uses reproductions of his sculptures, as published over time in the magazine, cut out on the outline and mounted on a simple piece of plywood providing vertical support to the photographic paper.

Viewed from the front, the resulting objects, individually mounted on miniature pedestals, looked, as in an optical illusion, like three-dimensional objects, small sculptures on various subjects—from quasi-abstract allegorical interpretations and generic modernism to traditionalism, folk inspiration or realist-socialist formulas. If the angle changed (a typical movement when contemplating sculptures), the theatrical property, the staging, the two-dimensionality of the "artistic object" were revealed. In the background, at the end of the route among the statue-photographs, another element of the archive was installed: a portrait of the artist

subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *What Does a Project Mean?* Art History Archive series, Lesson 2, installation detail, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 1995. © subREAL.

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in the middle of his studio, surrounded by a selection of images showing Ion Irimescu handing in awards or shaking hands with fellow artists, but at the same time offering awards and distinctions from UAP to political figures. For almost his entire life, he gravitated around political power, being an interface between the political and the artistic community.

The photographs seemed interesting to us as they nuanced a preconception widespread in the 1990s, namely that good artists were excluded and never received any recognition, while awards and benefits were only for those making compromises in the relationship with political power. In those photographs we can see that not only the clients of official commissions and Ceaușescu's portraitists received awards from and shook hands with Ion Irimescu, but also honorable artists and art critics, as well as various artists who, after 1989, became very verbal in their anti-communist and monarchist stance, presenting themselves as former dissidents, discriminated by the infamous regime.

The installation was completed by an application letter from the sculptor to the Bethanien residency (an ironic document conceived by subREAL as a complement to the illusory montage of sculpture reproductions) and a biography of Irimescu reproduced from a monograph dedicated to him that was trying to place him in an international landscape. By this, *What Does a Project Mean?* also referenced the obsession of Romanian art to place itself in sync with universal art. In the early 1990s, the myth of the creator begins to compete with the model of the artist who is a project author; the term "art projects" gains more and more prominence, and the need to adapt leaves behind, in an undecided sea of significations, the most part of the Romanian art after 1945.

Treffpunkt Kreuzberg. A Voyage Through the Inner Space of Europe (*AHA* lesson 7) was made in collaboration with Agentur Bilwet from Amsterdam, and it also took place in the subREAL studio at Bethanien. It contained images from the *Dataroom* installation in association with three oil paintings, each reproducing a selected photograph from the archive. Basjan Van Stam, one of the Bilwet members, received an envelope with archive photographs of which he painted reproductions. subREAL was thus emphasizing, for the first time, the relationship between the painted photograph and the photographed painting, a theme that would be continued in *Serving Art 3.* The other objects in the installation came from the collections of the two groups, subREAL and Agentur Bilwet, most of them having sentimental value. The participants in the action (Geert Lovink, Lex Wouterloot, and subREAL) were seated in the middle of the installation, around a table, talking over a glass of vodka and a cigarette. The discussion was analyzing the common places marking the political narrative of the then topical Romanian accession to the EU. From time to time, visitors looking at the installation would sit down at the table and take part in the conversation. From today's perspective, we could say it was a "relational art" project *avant la lettre*. The video camera, mounted on the ceiling, recorded images of the table around which discussions carried on. The images were simultaneously displayed on a monitor. Agentur Bilwet, also known as Adilkno (The Foundation for the Advancement of Illegal Knowledge), was a collective of media theoreticians coming from the Amsterdam's 1980s squatting scene.

The projects made during the Berlin residency used the images printed on photographic paper from the *Arta* magazine archive as a starting point. Most of them were art object reproductions (paintings, sculptures, ceramic objects, textiles, design, etc.), images from exhibitions and openings, a variety of other artistic events (art camps, meetings, symposiums, conferences, etc.). Most of them were taken in Romania by photographers hired over the years by the magazine or collaborating with the magazine for various events or specific periods of time. However, there were also many pictures

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subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *Serving Art 1*, black and white prints of negatives from the *Arta* magazine archive. © subREAL.

subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *5 Suitcases*, photo installation, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, 1997. © subREAL.

subREAL (Călin Dan,Iosif Király) - *Serving Art 3*, acryl on canvas. © subREAL.

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received from foreign art magazines with which *Arta* magazine was collaborating and was exchanging articles. Most of these images were coming from "sister" countries, that is from the group of socialist countries (USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, GDR, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Albania, North Korea, Yugoslavia, etc.), but also from art magazines from Western Europe, USA, Canada or Egypt, India, etc.

Upon the completion of the Berlin residency, the photographs returned to Romania and, by courtesy of Mihai Oroveanu, they were first included in the archive of the National Exhibition Office (Artexpo). In the early 2000s, when the National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) was established, they became part of the archive of the new museum together with other photography collections. Around that time, we began examining the content of the boxes of negatives. There, among numerous reproductions from art albums, images from exhibitions and other less interesting things, we found a category of pictures that stirred our curiosity. Most negatives in the archive were in a square format (6 x 6 cm). The magazine's usual practice was to photograph works of art in wide shots, and then, when transposing them on photosensitive paper, only the object to be published in the magazine would be cut out/reframed from the negative. Therefore, the art work became a detail surrounded by an aura of events, objects, and people.

The following projects, using the negatives from the collection of *Arta* magazine, were carried out during another residency in Germany, at Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart.

For the *Serving Art 1* project, the first of this new series, we selected around 1,200 negatives that were printed in standard size (18 x 18 cm) and organized by theme, depending on a chosen element from the background (people, chairs, vegetation, radiators, photo props, etc.). They thus acquired a dominant position in relation to the art object in the middle of the image, even if the work of art had been in fact the focus of the photographer's attention.

For the second project, *5 Suitcases*, we edited the negatives in a reversed manner from what the magazine photographers had done, eliminating precisely the central parts that had been published in the magazine representing the works of art. Instead, we magnified the details we deemed significant representing people, the spaces where the art works were created or photographed, and the objects around them. This is how the concept of the five suitcases emerged. Four of them each contain one of the cardinal areas around the art work. The fifth suitcase, the size of the negative, contains the whole image as a witness.

In the third project, *Serving Art 2*, the same "editing" method of negatives used in the *5 Suitcases* installation is applied, with the difference that in this work we only selected fragments containing people. These anonymous characters helped with taking the photograph, most of the times holding a neutral background behind the art works. Technically, in order to obtain a diffuse and as neutral as possible background, the exposure time used was long, over one second, and the assistants needed to wave the background cloth. This is how the ghostly appearance of art "servants" is explained. The installation was conceived in relation with the architecture of the exhibition space as the intention was to engulf/dominate the space by "blowing up" those marginal characters.

After completing the Akademie Schloss Solitude residency, the boxes of negatives followed the same path as the photographs had, being first included in the Artexpo archive and then in the MNAC one.

Continuing the deconstruction-reconstruction project of the *Arta* archive, in *Serving Art 3,* subREAL commissioned the painter Dumitru Gorzo (a student at that time) to paint reproductions of around 400 selected pictures from *Serving Art 1*. The images were painted on pieces of oilcloth, and the display was done using the technique of wallpaper application. This procedural

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translation deliberately mixed up the mediums. Painting undermines the objectivity claims of photography, generating a blending effect of representation, which collapses the hierarchy between secondary and central elements of the image. Copyright was transferred to subREAL group under a contract concluded between the group and the person who performed the job.

The art work, first exhibited in an exhibition at the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2000, raises several questions such as: (1) What is the author in contemporary art (relationship between concept and financial resources on one hand, and craft on the other hand)? ; and (2) How to apply the relationship *icon* versus *index* to photography and painting? Can a painting be a *document*? Does the right to a good name apply if an individual portrayed in a painting does not agree with the content of the painting or the context where the painting is displayed—an increasingly common situation in case of photographs of people, especially published online?

With this project we basically concluded working directly with the images we appropriated from the *Arta* magazine photo collection, symbolically closing the circle where the work of art was reproduced with the help of the camera and turned into photography, and then photography was, in its turn, transposed (painted) into a work of art.

For the next photographic projects, we decided to continue a certain type of composition rooted in *Serving Art,* but at the same time to create our own archive related directly to our personal experiences in the wider context of the contemporary art world.

The idea behind the *Interviewing the Cities* project took shape during the residencies in Künstlerhaus Bethanien and Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart and was crystallized in Wien during a KulturKontakt residency. Work on the project continued in Amsterdam (Stichting De Appel), Helsinki (Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art), Montreal (Vox Gallery), Strasbourg (Apollonia), Turku (Art Academy), Stockholm (IASPIS), Zürich (BINZ Foundation), and Lisbon (Gulbenkian Foundation).

The project tactically used the institutional context of the artistic residencies following two directions: on the one hand, building a subjective archive with agents in the cultural landscape from the cities where the residencies were taking place; on the other hand, the critical investigation of the representation of history with analog photographic means, which had become, at the time of the project, a historical method. The deconstruction operated in *Serving Art* would leave its mark on projects of the *Interviewing the Cities* series.

The *Re-enacting* series included portraits of members of the art community with which subREAL had been in contact during residencies: artists, curators, collectors, architects, etc. The portraits are reenactments of the photography technique identified in the *Arta* magazine archives. If *Serving Art* was about a deconstruction process of some images taken over from an archive, the *Re-enacting* project was rather about reconstruction using a known technical method. This time the art "servants" are the two subREAL members themselves, respectfully holding the background cloth. In a first ver-

subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *Interviewing the Cities / Reenacting,* black and white photograph, Harald Szeemann, Ticino, Switzerland, 2004. © subREAL

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subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *Interviewing the Cities. Listening to Sculptures,* black and white photograph, Bucharest, 2002. © subREAL.

subREAL (Călin Dan, Iosif Király) - *Interviewing the Cities. Framing,* black and white photograph, Amsterdam, 2000. © subREAL.

sion, each portrait was made into a diptych reproducing an object (possibly art object, but not necessarily) that defined the interests of the portrayed person.

Framing was a travel diary where photography served as a tool for exploration and deconstruction of some cultural and urbanistic spaces imposed by literature, arts, and the media. The black and white photographs show the two members of the subREAL group holding up a black cloth with a baroque frame in the middle as they used this device to frame a fragment of a site well-known to tourists because of the tourism industry. The series questions the representation policies and the landscape as a social construct.

In *Listening to Sculptures,* Călin Dan and Iosif Király took on the role of two reporters armed with a microphone, headphones and video camera interrogating public figurative monuments. The performative aspect specific to the entire *Interviewing the Cities* project was intensified in this series, critically highlighting both the public sculpture phenomenon and the dominant position of the media in contemporary culture. Focusing the video recording on details introduced a note of mocking, chipping at the monumental dimension of the sculptures.

I continued working with image collections beyond the *subREAL* projects, which, as they were derived from *Arta* magazine, focused on art and artists, although opening up to other fields as well. Below I will mention just a few of the projects accomplished as an individual artist, which were presented in several exhibitions and publications.

Old People Feel the Weather in Their Bones is a meditation on the limits of photography to "freeze" time. It is a project about memory and getting old, about normality of life in an oppressive political system. Each work consists of a multilayered montage of vintage photographs (shot in communist Romania and taken from my own family albums), superimposed on relatively recent images capturing certain anatomic details of the characters depicted in the old pictures.

In *Echoes* I followed the way certain moments and contexts repeat themselves, how they can be relived from different perspectives. I tried to find visual formulas for the feeling of déjà vu and/or *false recognition*. Within these photographic objects, several image layers coexist as photomontages that open like windows allowing views of fragments of images in a more or less obvious relation to the main image.

Open Sky. Revisiting Public Space[1] is the name of a digital montage series created by juxtaposing surveillance camera images recorded by political police agents in Bucharest (from 1950 to 1980) and excerpts from the *Securitate* archive with images from

1) Project carried out as a collaboration between CNSAS (National Council for Studying the *Securitate* Archives), UNArte, and MNAC in 2012.

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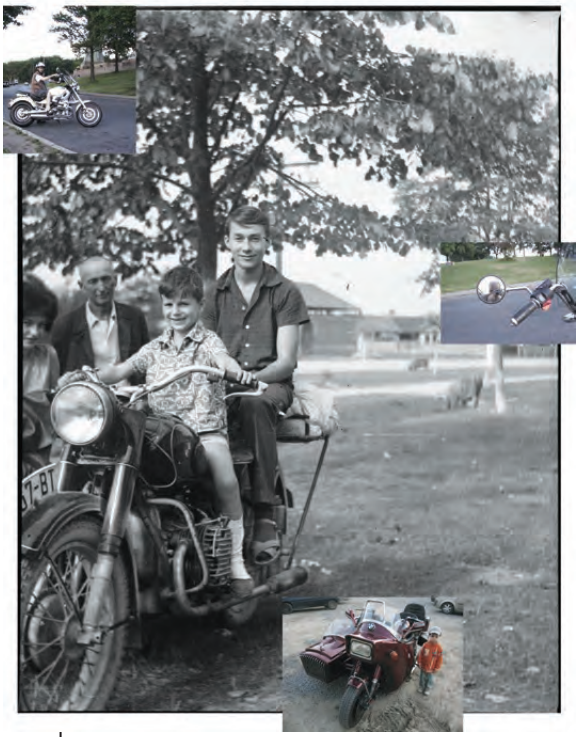

Iosif Király - *Echoes: Birchiş – I*, 2013, photomontage. © Iosif Király.

Iosif Király - *Old People Feel the Weather in Their Bones – VIII* (diptych), 2016, digital image. © Iosif Király.

Iosif Király - *Old People Feel the Weather in Their Bones – IX* (diptych), 2016, digital image. © Iosif Király.

Google Maps Street View of the same places as they look today. By joining the two observation/surveillance methods together, I tried to represent how the perception of old surveillance camera images changes when examined through the lens of much more advanced contemporary technologies.

Beside the above-mentioned projects, I also initiated other group projects[2] (together with other artists and/or photographers, but also architects, anthropologists, philosophers) to document in an organized (archived) way the major changes (good and less good) that occurred in everyday Romania over the past decades. They focus on subjects that are many times intertwined, and I can imagine them in the future next to other documentary projects initiated by other groups of photographers or artists. Together they will provide study materials for future historians and researchers from various fields. I find such approaches important, the more so as there is no interest (or vision that today's reality is tomorrow's history) from policymakers or managers of central or local administrations for documenting and archiving the historical period in which they temporarily exercise their power.

1) *Tinseltown* (on the architecture of rich Roma from the commune of Buzescu, Teleorman County), *Cross Section* (on the architecture and public spaces of Bucharest in the early 2000s), *RO_Archive* (on the mutations in numerous lines of work in Romania), *D_Platform* (on the Romanian Danube area).

Iosif Király - *Open Sky. Revisiting Public Spaces*, digital photo montage. © Iosif Király.

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MARTOR

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The Passenger Retrospective of the Minerva Press Photo Archive: Publishing of a Research Infrastructure

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ABSTRACT

Minerva Archive consists of more than 30,000 negatives that belonged to some of the largest daily newspapers of Cluj-Napoca: the Hungarian daily *Igazság* and the Romanian daily *Făclia*. The pictures were taken between 1965 and 1990 by several photojournalists. The collection has been saved and stored ever since by the Minerva Cultural Association in Cluj. The collection was finally digitized in 2015 with the support of a private foundation, and since 2016 it has been available online in its entirety. The fonds first became part of the Conset Studio program thanks to Dénes Miklósi, in 2014. Conset Studio has been involving various actors in the activation of the archive in the public domain. The practice of reintroducing the archive to the public included an exhibition that brought together several other types of collections and disciplinary perspectives, as well as a month-long daily newspaper campaign to reach out to the community of workers represented.

KEYWORDS

Romania, post-socialist transition, press photography, archive, public domain, appropriation, contemporary art, Conset.

The following is a brief retrospective and an account of the thoughts and experiences accumulated during activities that finally led to the publishing of a press photography collection from Cluj. The fate of this collection is probably similar to that of many collections of this kind that were integral part of various publishing houses in socialist Romania. Because of ideological closure, any historical evaluation of these archives was cut short, and all their material traces were doomed to degrade and go to waste.

As the systemic changes caused by the collapse of the socialist system in 1989 kicked in, the infrastructure supporting all industries and sectors of production in society, including the arts and the press, previously managed by state monopoly, fell into ruin. Under the guise of liberalization and re-adaptation to the market economy, a paradoxical process of privatization started—although there was no capital in private hands, a process of privatization ensued, which has yet to be clarified by means of research and publicity. The phrase "they stole everything" is recurrent in all discussions one has with workers from those times; the technicians operating the oversized industrial sector became a reserve army, whose abilities got inevitably wasted. Communities that were ideologically bound together by the previous regime evaporated overnight into individuals under existential threat and in competition with one another. Before they were definitively laid off, the last assignment of the remaining workers was to take the machinery from their factory to the place where it would be melted as scrap iron.

In this sense, the 1989 Revolution was indeed a revolution. It represented a radical break with previous infrastructures and institutional structures, and implicitly the belittlement of all the supporting historical arguments that had kept them in place. Cases of exception were being created,

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when institutions of power needed a new license. For example, the fueling of inter-ethnic conflict from Târgu Mureș in 1990 was used to legitimize the reinstatement of the former *Securitate* (the communist Secret Police) as the new secret service.

In every other aspect, the big piles of burning books and documents in front of public institutions are representative. The memorable images by Csilla Könczei from December 22, 1989 capture these moments well. Probably the first independent video recording in Cluj, it is unique for the peculiar long line that it traces through the stupefying confusion in the city. The camera is passing by the pools of blood and piles of burning books that constitute the very vectors of the scene.[1]

A few years later, the visual anthropologist Csilla Könczei became the director of the longest-lived independent cultural center in the city. Tranzit House coagulated civil society in the 1990s and early 2000s with a program that stood for inter-disciplinarity and inter-ethnic dialogue from the very beginning of its existence.

Building on the philosophy of the House, a collaborative studio program called Conset was initiated there in 2014. This program was designed to take the form of an open studio program, were the authorship of the invited artists was put under question and, in the process, their activity was to be distilled into a larger social thematic or structural problem that could be autonomously addressed by any participant or member of the public. In this way, one of the aims of this program was to "take away" the work from the artists, in the name of whom the studios are initiated. Confiscated, but still bearing the authors' names, it was supposed to be rearticulated in *Conset*—thus giving a meaning to this made-up word and making it operational.

One such invitation was extended to Nita Mocanu. Her studio distilled the conflicting problematic of the pedagogy of art as it was laid down in the state curricula—generally based on a mixture of modernist formal concerns and classicist academicism—as opposed to the experience of teachers who are also active as artists, and whose practice addresses more specific issues of contemporaneity.

In the framework of the Conset Studio program, Dénes Miklósi[2] introduced a dormant press photo collection, comprised of several boxes that contained at that time an unknown number of photo negatives. He discovered the unprocessed fonds while working on a research for one of his projects in the Archive of the Minerva Cultural Foundation.

Through his artistic practice, Dénes Miklósi has dealt often with the medium of photography. As early as the 1990s, sometimes spanning several decades, he has worked on projects through which he examined and abstracted the conventions and technology of photography by means of artistic conceptualism. In other cases, he contrasted photography with performativity or appropriated the military use of photography to draw a parallel with its use in private memory.

With the gesture of bringing this fonds in the Conset Studio, he turned the whole institution of photography against a frame that was simultaneously trying to articulate itself critically.

Because Conset Studio was placing its activity somewhere between the autonomy of the individual and the use value to be found in institutions, it was forced to reflect on a recurrent symptom afflicting civil organizations as well. These are quite often tied to the vision and strength of a leading figure. Because of this, their social roles are quite hard or even impossible to pass on/transfer. In this way, their institutionalization remains partial and limited. (I call this format the "authorial institution," a term that I will elaborate on in my doctoral thesis.) The notion of authorship can be used to describe even the NGOs working on environmental protection. These organizations quite often are ahead of state institutions, filling their roles in

1) "Romanian Revolution - 22 December 1989, Cluj (Full Version)," YouTube video, 34:15, posted by Csilla Konczei, Dec 21, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uazf0Wsr8ng.

2) Visual artist and assistant professor at the University of Arts and Design in Cluj-Napoca.

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establishing standards. They are generally serving the public interest where the state is only lagging behind.

This institutional format is typical especially of contemporary art organizations, where the state institutions are virtually missing. This goes back historically to the lack of modern art museums under socialism. After 1989, when the different conflicting conceptions about art could be openly expressed, those with an experimental artistic practice distanced themselves even further from state institutions. They stayed away with defiance for reasons of incompatibility of views, but also because of the incompetence they encountered there. The critical toolkit at their disposal, with its genealogy rooted in the opposition to the internationally dominant western art institutions, is however not applicable without reserve in the context of the institutional legacy of the former socialist states. The route that led from conceptual art to institutional critique and new institutionalism is structurally not supported in the artistic geographies where the state centrally organized and implemented a different version of modernism. This institutional legacy transferred the role of photography as a principal tool in shaping the post-revolutionary world, a tradition already articulated by the constructivists in the early years of the Soviet Union. During the post-1989 transition period, the practitioners of contemporary art were racing against the canonizing functions of the missing art museum that they were carrying within themselves. At the same time, the ultimate legitimation in the field was coming from the western art world. Today contemporary art has reached a state of universality. Its contesting character was appropriated, and most of its authorial institutions reached a form of structural limbo. This is the context we have set out from.

Minerva Press Photo Archive consists of a locker filled with boxes of 6x6 cm photo negatives. The archive belonged to the shared photo laboratory of the two major dailies in Cluj, the Hungarian *Igazság* (Truth) and the Romanian *Făclia* (Torch). The photos cover the period from 1960 to 1990. The collection was saved from garbage, they said. In this sense it had a similar fate to the photo collection of *Arta*, the official magazine of the Romanian Artists Union. In both cases, the former editors of the abandoned publications rescued the boxes from piles of belongings left there to waste. The *Făclia-Igazság* photo collection was preserved by Zoltán Tibori Szabó, the former editor of *Igazság* and the current editor-in-chief of the well-known *Szabadság* (Liberty), and was kept in the archive of the newly established foundation—the current owner of the newspaper.

Dénes Miklósi discovered the untouched collection in 2014. This black box of history was incubating there until it was taken to the Conset Studio to be opened up.[3] The photographs were used in the publishing activity of the two newspapers. They were the official assignments that the photographers had to cover for the dailies. They show an "official" view of society and in this sense they can be regarded as propagandistic. They played their role in the centrally planned economy, of which photography was an integral part. The photographs cover a wide range of topics, documenting the process of industrialization in the county, the everyday life in the factories, the construction of the socialist city, agriculture, sports, cultural and official events. Given the large amount of photographic material, it became obvious that they should be treated above all as a huge research infrastructure to be published. Following this principle, we treated the aesthetics of these images as secondary, although most of them are of very high quality standards. The biggest challenge that we faced was a historical one as we were already greeted with a tradition of public incrimination. Different phases in the interpretation, publication and the technicalities of digitalization succeeded each other. We tried to avoid a quick artistic appropriation and privatization of the material at hand and instead we tried to treat it

3) For details on the trajectory of Minerva archive after its discovery, see www.conset.ro/atelier-minerva-archive.html.

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as a public collection, despite the fact that it had never been entirely public before.

In the first Conset Studio we set up a scanning station, where we started the first systematic digitalization. Miklósi had already started the scanning process; with the help of volunteers, he had scanned about 9,000 images during the three months of the studio. At that time we still did not know exactly how many tens of thousands of images we had to process. In the earlier years, the films were cut in strips by every three-four frames and labeled with the year and the location. Towards the end of the timeline we noticed that the films were simply rolled and stored in the boxes—as if the need to revisit them faded in time—indicating perhaps a slightly lower working morale. The photographers visited the locations where they took sometimes more than twenty photos. Out of these, only very few reached print, and they were cropped and in very poor print quality as well. The rest had remained practically invisible until now.

Parallel to this, we started consultations about the methodology of archiving. In our environment there was no precedent for digitizing photography archives. We consulted librarians and technicians who implement digital databases and sell their services to museums. We organized a public seminar—a general introduction into digital archiving by Liviu Pop, who has recently led the digitalization program in the Ethnography and Folklore Institute of the Romanian Academy of Sciences in Cluj. We deemed the mapping of the very few precedents in our environment essential. The artistic appropriation of the photo archive of *Arta* magazine was the obvious one.[4] The public presentation of that archive during the 1990s, in the context of contemporary art institutions, coincided with a wave of interest in the artistic use of archives internationally and the ongoing frustrations about the delay of the opening of the *Securitate* archive locally. The latter functions as a meta-reference for archives and, after it became public, a tool for unmasking collaborators. Incrimination—the ultimate purpose of interpreting the *Securitate* archive—has thus come to be projected on every potential fonds from that period. We were looking with curiosity towards the photography collection of Mihai Oroveanu, the person credited for the establishment of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in 2001, the only public institution in the field. We knew about his plans of establishing a separate museum for photography, based on his extensive private collection. Since then, a project publishing his collections has been developed and is currently in progress.[5]

Within the framework of Conset Studio, we initiated discussions and associations that come about more rarely and are not immediately available in one's close social and professional environment. From the two roundtable discussions that we organized, one was centered on the topic of the archive in contemporary art. The other was focused first of all on the different institutional framings of the fonds at hand. Zoltán Tibori Szabó, representing the organization currently holding the collection, shared his experiences with reorganizing the press after the change. His role was instrumental in the re-institutionalization of various historically constituted public landmarks. One of them is the historical Minerva—the publishing house and printing press that was established by members of the Hungarian bourgeoisie in Cluj, after Transylvania was united with Romania in 1918. As the supplies from Budapest were cut off, *Minerva* was established to print and publish the local press, books and school books in Hungarian. The other was the relaunch of the daily *Igazság* newspaper as *Szabadság* in 1989.

To the talks, we also invited Enikő Bitay, the chief secretary of the Transylvanian Museum Society (EME)—an academic research institution, whose heritage constituted the basis for the Central University Library and the National History Museum in Cluj, and currently a sister

4) From 1995 to 1999, the artist duo subREAL developed a series of projects and exhibitions entitled the *Art History Archive* series based on the photo archive of Arta, the official art magazine of socialist Romania.

5) The program "Photographic archive and history in transformation / memory and research," starting from the photographic collection of Mihai Oroveanu, a program initiated and organized by Salonul de Proiecte association.

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organization of the Hungarian Academy of Science. As part of the Technical Sciences Department of the same institution, Bitay initiated a research program on the industrial heritage of Cluj. They organized a yearly reunion for the workers of various factories from the city. Each time a former engineer would present the history of one factory, the participants were asked to bring along any documents or material traces they held, which could be incorporated in the newly established archive. This way the workers and technical intelligentsia could contribute to the writing of the history of their factory and the technologies developed there. We have found these meetings very inspirational for our future work.

We also consulted and made interviews with Ferenc Csomafáy, the only press photographer we could contact at that time. These roundtables created the basis for future actions to publish the archive.

At the end of the first Conset session, we organized a small studio exhibition. This was the first time the archive reached a wider public. The title of the exhibition *Napoca Hotel* was a reference to the mass displacement of population that was justified at the time by the forced industrialization process. At the same time, by writing it in the reverse order, according to the rules of Hungarian language, the name *Hotel Napoca* was taken apart, as a reference to the ethnic unbalance created within a very short period. It was also a reference to the addition of "Napoca" to the name of the city (Cluj) starting with 1974.

The neon lamp was used as a recurring symbol in the different exhibition pieces. From inside a light box, it illuminated a blown up strip of transparent film containing three consecutive images, as a photographer took them. So the viewer had the possibility to look either at the images or at the lamp. The neon stood for the architecture behind the exposing of the archival image. Probably one of the longest reportages documenting a factory visit by a delegation of the Communist Party in Gherla was re-used as a photo essay in film-noire style. Images of the ceilings filled with rows of neon lamps from various factories were inserted in the montage. This created the illusion of the inside of a huge sci-fi dome—just one of the possibilities of travel the archive affords. In two other rectangular light boxes, an accumulation of images was assembled in a grid. These were intended to show the largest two categories as they arose from the archive, before the implementation of any search tools. The categories are images from industry and from agriculture—the hammer and the sickle. The exhibition refers back to the press with two staged photographs and their printed versions from the newspaper layout. The two images were taken at different times and in different locations. They show a typical scene, a group of workers gathered around an open newspaper. Their gesture of eagerly reading the news was probably used as a key frame in the feedback loop that corroborated the planned economy. The original photographs show the group from head to toe in graphic detail, while the newspaper story illustrates the only public context these images ever reached.

After this, a new chapter in the digitalization of the archive followed. A new institutional partnership was established, this time with financial support that could see the digitizing and the online publishing to an end. The pragmatic involvement of the visual artist Răzvan Anton was important in the further development of the project. Soon a new reprography station was assembled in Tranzit House, the host of the archiving project. Romania One was the foundation that financed the digitizing, and Minerva Cultural Association provided the fonds and was responsible for the implementation of the digital database.

This time using a photo camera instead of a scanner and with the proper indexing and applying of meta-data to the files, the sped-up and standardized digitizing took almost a year to complete. While the digitizing was still in progress, a new Conset Studio was opened for the work on the context of the archive.

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Public meeting of former workers' collectives from Cluj factories, photo-performance by Miklósi Dénes. From the exhibition "Where Have You Worked?," Tranzit House, 2015, Photo by Răzvan Anton.

Due to the previous experiences and the complete archive already under way, the second Conset Studio could have a more conscious approach to the directions it could develop. We decided to work on a bigger documentary exhibition centered on the industrial past of Cluj and to organize a parallel community event. Our approach was twofold. On the one hand, we aimed for a reflection on the evolution of the archive, we wanted to present it in its becoming, to draw a parallel with other institutional structures and authorial initiatives, which could help to build a nuanced view of the relation one can build with the recent past. But while creating a functional archive, we were also building the critique of the archive. Conscious of the fact that the archive might turn into a tyrannical force, imposing a false sense of wholeness and an optics for interpretation, we tried to counter this by giving it back to the community it was taken from. Publishing the archive meant for us to place the images foremost in the possession of the people who were represented in it, but from whom it was taken away in its becoming. These were the premises under which we started a campaign entitled "Where have you worked?" The campaign was used to reach out to the communities of workers, some of them quite elderly, almost three decades after the industry was destroyed. Because the archive contained such an abundance of industrial images, and we knew so little about them, Dénes Miklósi proposed to organize a "photo-performance" where the workers could come to label the places and the people and to overwrite the photographs with their memories. The central element in our campaign was a half-page newspaper insert that we had published almost daily for a month in *Szabadság*. We assembled a small editorial team and put together a daily selection of three photographs from the Cluj factories, as well as a collage of texts. These included fragments from a range of topics like sociology of workers' clubs from the period, interviews with workers, history of the Romanian economy, political and sociological analysis of the regime change, proletcult literature, philosophy, theory of photography, conceptual art, etc. We translated these also in Romanian, but unfortunately we could not publish them. *Făclia* newspaper was not interested, although the archive belonged to the shared photography lab of the two newspapers, and both continued to reach out to mostly the same audience. We would have been offered the space only if we had paid the advertising price per square centimeter.

We found out about the annual meetings of the workers' collective of the former Unirea factory, one of the biggest manufacturers

At the meeting of the workers' collective of the former "Unirea" factory from Cluj, 17 September 2015, Photo by Szilárd Miklós.

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of machines in the city. We asked permission to take part in their event and were introduced by a former worker, Mr. Dabóczi. We went there without any previous experience of anthropological fieldwork, but teamed up with Tibor Schneider, a cameraman and editor of TVR Cluj, in order to allocate a channeling recipient to the events. Later Schneider made a television story based on the "Where have you worked?" project that the TVR Hungarian-language broadcast has shown several times. The event resembling a 1st of May celebration of white haired workers is organized every year. There are people who come back for this event from other continents. After a few brief moments remembering those departed since the previous year's gathering, we got the chance to present our plans of publishing the archive. Some of the newspapers were circulated for people to recognize the workshops and the situations. It was a rewarding experience to see a pensioner point at one of the photographs in the newspaper and say: "That's me at eighteen, working as a trainee in the workshop!" We made a few short video interviews with simple questions, following the advice of anthropologist Corina Iosif (How did you experience those years? What did the regime change bring for you?).

Unirea was only one of almost forty industrial companies operating in the city in the 1970s. The factory employed about 4,000 people, hundreds of engineers and thousands of workers. Unirea was manufacturing machines for the textile industry and equipping factories all around the country and has produced many for export. The workers remember with pride the saying "There is nothing we cannot make at Unirea." Indeed, it is hard to imagine the huge technical abilities of the engineers and skilled workers that could build from scratch complex machinery, sometimes more than ten meters in length and composed of 4,000 small components. For a couple of years during the transition to the free market, the factory attempted to produce vacuum cleaners and drilling machines in small series, before being eventually closed and its machines taken away to be turned into scrap iron. If you bring up the propagandistic nature of these photographs in front of these people, they simply laugh in your face.

The most significant answer to our newspaper campaign came from Cornel Rus, the retired foreman who used to be the head of the repair and maintenance workshop at the former Iris porcelain factory. According to him, the factory once secured the livelihoods of 2,500 families. In the workshop that he headed, about 200 skilled workers worked on repairing the machines and making sure that the factory ran smoothly. Cornel Rus spent forty-three years in the factory, practically the whole of the socialist period, from 1947 to 1990. Not long after he retired, the factory was closed and, like all the others, its machines sold as scrap iron. The history of the factory sank into oblivion. In 2014, twenty-four years into his retirement, Cornel Rus started to recall from memory the machines of the factory and did a long series of technical drawings. With this last symbolic gesture, initially probably to fill his old years, he managed to erect a monument to the community he had worked in. "I wish to give thousands of thanks to those who are still alive. Without them, there would be no Cornel Rus, but there would be no factory either without Cornel Rus," he wrote in a statement accompanying his drawings in the exhibition. These drawings are like scars on his psyche, and a matching analogy to the archive.

We have planned the exhibition in such a way as to present various archives in becoming and authorial positions on the same footing, next to each other. According to this principle, we have borrowed several pieces from the recently launched Industry Collection of the Transylvanian Museum Society. We have selected different types of documents connected to Tehnofrig, another technologically advanced factory, which produced machinery for the food industry.

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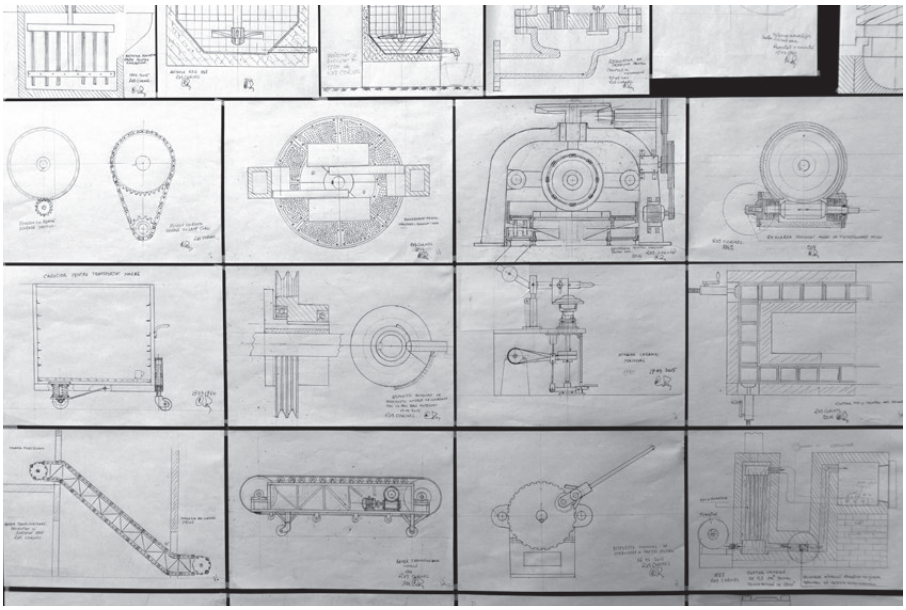

Cornel Rus, technical drawings of industrial machinery made from memory, 2014-2015, installation view from "Where Have You Worked?," Tranzit House, 2015, Photo by Răzvan Anton.

From the few photographs we included in the exhibition one can sense a clear difference between the engineers' view, that is, conscious about the machines in the image, and the press photographers' perspective, who often treated these like props in a set. Some of the photos from the EME collection depict teams standing next to a new machine, while others were taken when the Romanian engineers were setting up assembly lines in China. We have also presented some pages from the diaries the engineers kept while on longer trips to various factories across GDR, where they did maintenance work on the machines they had sold there. These diaries could inspire novels as they include details ranging from the price of beer in the various German cities to what went wrong with the machines, and how it could be fixed. In another diary, the deals and negotiations at an industrial fair in Syria are recorded along with inquiries about spare parts for machines already in place. Among the exhibits we placed a few English catalogues of Uzinexportimport. The privatization of this company went very smoothly according to the story, since only a few pieces of office furniture were on its inventory. In reality, this company was the one managing the sales of products from various sectors of the Romanian industry on the international market. The maxim according to which the socialist state was actually state capitalism can be illustrated by this company. Its privatization is the privatization of its relational capital—another black hole in the history of "transition." Still from the document cabinets of EME, we presented a collection of operating manuals for the machines produced in the factory. Evident from the timeline of their graphic design styles is the stratification of time, with clearly differentiated periods.

The documentary film *Poplars on the Bank of Reed: Portrait Sketches from a Machine Factory* by Stefan Fischer provides a penetrating look into the stratifications of generations. The film has been discovered recently in the TVR archive. We presented it in a small cinema, separated by a wall from the big exhibition space in Tranzit House. The film tells the story of Tehnofrig, from the time the production started, amid the ruins left behind by WWII bombardments, to the machine factory in 1972. Fischer was a worker himself in this factory for a while.

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Because of the post-1956 retributions, he was forced to abandon his studies and work in a factory. He had regarded these years as his real school. He rose from the lowest job, working with toxic materials, to being knowledgeable about the machines the factory produced and being sent all around the country for maintenance work. He returned after many years, already a film director working for the TVR Hungarian-language broadcast to make a documentary about the factory he knew so well. The achievements of this film are not only attributable to Fischer's bold directorial talent, but also to the social commission to which he responded by proposing to make this film. It can be regarded as a beautiful counterpoint to Harun Farocki's essay, *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995). Starting from the first motion picture in history, *Workers Leaving the Factory* by the Lumière brothers, and going through a series of film quotes, Farocki argues that the medium of cinematography stands for the workers escaping the factory into their free time. Fischer also starts his film with a reference to the Lumière film, saying that the factory gate represents the shutter-release. Only that his film takes the viewer inside, along with the workers who fill the factory and give life to the inanimate pile of cold matter. This film is on the top of its historic possibility. These portraits are unique in the way the communal spirit is captured in the struggle with the harsh realities of work; their joy is squeezed between generational conflicts and a strange obsession with work.

Another element in the exhibition was the research project of Area3 association. They claim this is the first attempt at a comprehensive architectural study dealing with the "brownfields" that were left behind by the deindustrialization process. The aim of this kind of study is to be used in the development of a coherent strategy for the decontamination and reintegration of these sites in the urban tissue. Their research was stalled, partly because of obscure ownership status and real estate speculation masking these spaces. We presented a chapter from their study that gave a good idea of the size of the industry in Cluj. We asked them to make a map showing all the factories that were functioning during socialism in the city. These occupied most of the land beyond the railway tracks. According to their study, in 1970 there were 49,511 people employed in industry. Practically half of the working population was filling those sites daily.

Among the authorial contributions to the exhibition that were referencing directly the archive, we also presented work that correlates with the socialist past. Such is the oeuvre of Șerban Savu, who became known for a type of painting described as *postsocialist realism*. In his paintings, Savu is depicting figures that would be labeled working class, camping or wondering around the peripheries of cities, and abandoned industrial sites. They are perfectly idle in this landscape that they can no longer master.

Poster of the launching event of the digital archive, Tranzit House, 2016, Photo by Alex Clinci.

Later contributions in the framework of Conset Studio to the Minerva Press Photo Archive came from the artists Claudiu Cobilanschi and Iulia Toma. In a poster campaign that juxtaposed photographs from the archive with headlines borrowed from the contemporary press, Cobilanschi contrasted the oversaturated public interest in the press photos from socialism and the deception of private interest presented as

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the public good in the contemporary press. Toma responded to the jubilant decorations and motivational slogans visible in the factory interiors. She created a row of black triangular shaped flags that were hanging from the ceiling. The installation gave the exhibition space an atmosphere of post-celebratory melancholy. The little corners cut out of black textile have their margins un-replicated. The fuzzy edges bring a potentially infinite tissue to mind. Looking at the abyss from the edge, one questions the social tissue that was taken apart. The sort of geography this might have covered is a historic one. This is a geography that such rudimentary tools as the weaving mill and the scissors cannot cover up.

Minerva Press Photo Archive was published online in 2016, using an open source platform.[6] With the labeled images, it permits long journeys exploring its contents or more refined searches. The whole collection comprises about 30,000 photographs that include even the last few shots used up on the corridors and corners of the editorial office, so the films could be quickly taken to the lab and developed.

The archive since then has prompted further public contributions in the form of exhibitions, a book, a Master's thesis, articles, and musical compositions. The name Minerva has entered the public conscience for the photography of socialist Romania. And it is likely that the name still has some surprises in store in the future. We already know about plans for a public center for contemporary art that will bear the name Minerva.

6) Available at http://www.photoarchive.minerva.org.ro/.

1972c4, installation by Răzvan Anton & Dénes Miklósi, "Uzina de fapte," curator Alina Şerban, Domino, Cluj, 2016, Photo by Roland Váczi.

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MARTOR

Title: *"Now Is the Time to Include the Films Produced by the Alexandru Sahia Documentary Studio in Our Conversations About the Communist Past." An Interview with Adina Brădeanu*

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Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

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V. Fieldnotes and Dialogues

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During the socialist period, the Alexandru Sahia Film Studio was one of the core institutions involved in creating cultural material. While its products represented a minor genre—small-scale documentaries, reportages and journal-type films, all concentrating on documenting realities of the socialist era and being shown in cinemas before the main feature—they enjoyed a guaranteed position of their own. The institution which for almost four decades had been synonymous with Romanian domestic documentary film was privatised shortly after the fall of the socialist regime in December 1989. Becoming an autonomous authority in 1991 and then a commercial company in 1996, the studio lost its connection with the film distribution franchise network and, like so many other such entities, went bankrupt. In the middle of the decade 2000-2010 the Sahia archive of documentary material was placed in the National Film Archive. Relatively little interest was shown in it by any researcher until Adina Brădeanu undertook to curate it in the course of her doctoral studies; her research took concrete form in a series of five DVDs, each with its own theme, released by One World Romania. The deliberate aim of these was to introduce the Sahia films into cultural debate as an aid to decoding the constraints and practices of documentary film-making in relation to the social history of the period in which they appeared. We took the decision to allocate space in this issue of *Martor* to a long interview that Adina Brădeanu recently gave to the film critic Ionuț Mareș, our aim being to bring the case of Sahia into the wider discussion about processes characteristic of the post-socialist period in regard to the use of archives.

(Bogdan Iancu)

Adina Brădeanu has been working on the subject of documentary cinema since 1994, initially as a researcher at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest and later as a doctoral student (her thesis was on the professional culture of the Bucharest-based "Alexandru Sahia" studio) and visiting lecturer in the Contemporary Media Practice department at the University of Westminster (London). She subsequently worked as a Web and Project Consultant at DocWest, the Centre for Production and Research of Documentary Film at the University of Westminster. She is currently Subject Consultant for the Romanian collection of the Bodleian Library, Oxford and Research Associate for a project based at the Linguistics Faculty, University of Oxford ("ISTROX: the Istro-Romanian Language and the Oxford University Hurren Donation").

She co-programmed the One World Romania Documentary and Human Rights Festival (Bucharest) between 2012 and 2018. Since 2014 she has curated the SAHIA VINTAGE DVD series, released by One World Romania. According to the booklet which accompanies the first DVD in the series, this collection, launched on the 25th anniversary of the fall of Romania's communist regime, was conceived as an archaeological engagement with (both) the output and the production culture of the Alexandru Sahia studio, which was socialist Romania's only studio specialized in documentary production.

For almost four decades (1950-1989) the studio operated on the basis of a political mandate which required the documentary film-makers to immerse themselves in the daily life of the country and record its dramatic transformations under the political guidance of the communist party. According to the introduction written by Adina Brădeanu to the booklet accompanying these DVDs, "As this was the only studio in Romania that specialized in documentary cinema, it became identified with documentary practice itself; today, the history of the documentary cinema produced in socialist Romania - is, with only a few exceptions, the history of the Sahia films."

Most films produced by the Sahia studio were short format (approximately ten minutes long). They were usually shown in cinemas as "support" films to the feature-length fiction films. Four DVDs have been published as part of the series so far with the following themes: "Documentary, ideology, life," "work," "children," and "political commissioning." The fourth DVD was released in March 2018, during the One World Romania documentary festival. Apart from publishing these DVDs, the festival includes a curated Sahia programme every year, which introduces Sahia films, not included on the DVDs.*

In the following interview, Adina Brădeanu explains the relevance of this collection, the meaning of the term "vintage" which describes the DVD series, the value of these films today, and the curatorial process behind the DVDs.

*) One more DVD has been published between the moment when this interview was originally published in the Romanian language and will be re-published in an English translation. This DVD focuses on the so-called "ephemeral production" of the Sahia studio, that is the films commissioned by a wide range of institutions of the Romanian state, such as the National Tourism Office (ONT), the Ministry of Education, and industrial plants and factories.

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"Now Is the Time to Include the Films Produced by the Alexandru Sahia Documentary Studio in Our Conversations About the Communist Past." An Interview with Adina Brãdeanu[1]

Ionuț Mareș
Metropolis Cultural Daily, Bucharest, Romania
https://www.ziarulmetropolis.ro/

ABSTRACT

An interview with researcher Adina Brădeanu (University of Oxford) around the topic of curating film heritage. Since 2014, Brădeanu has curated a DVD series (SAHIA VINTAGE) which rediscovers the output and the production culture of the Alexandru Sahia studio (1950-1990), which was socialist Romania's only studio specialized in documentary production. Brădeanu discusses the relevance of this collection, the curatorial process behind the DVDs, and the meaning of the term "vintage" in the context of a project that invites reflection on Romania's socialism as lived experience.

KEYWORDS

Film archive, curation, film studio, documentary cinema, Romanian cinema, collective memory.

Ionuț Mareș: Why is it important for these films to be rediscovered through the means of a DVD collection?

Adina Brădeanu: Firstly, because the films are part of Romania's cinema heritage. They have been largely forgotten so far, for reasons that include the complex baggage of associations connected to the Sahia studio in the 1990s (following the 1989 anti-communist revolution), given its former role as a "political propaganda" studio that had acted as a mouthpiece for the communist regime. More than a decade had to pass before documentary film as a genre was able to rebuild its place in the Romanian public consciousness, as evidenced by the extreme paucity of Romania's documentary production in the 1990s, a time when the country was in most need of documentary film-makers willing to record the changes in the country. I believe the time has come for the Sahia films to be brought back into present-day conversations about the past, mostly via a thematic, rather than an author-focused curatorship, in order to show these films to today's audiences.

These films not only belong to the history of Romanian documentary cinema, but they also outline a social history of Romania—that is, a country that is still struggling with unsettled memories, both nostalgic and traumatic, of the communist period, in an attempt to reach an acceptable perspective on the past. I believe the Sahia films can work as *aide-mémoires* for a nation interested in reconnecting with its past and in reconsidering this past beyond the various labels that have been attached to it in recent decades. These films invite reflection on both an individual and a collective level.

Apart from the potential relevance of these films for lay audiences, we started publishing this DVD series for the benefit of students and scholars whose research topics, within various disciplinary frameworks, touch on the experience of lived socialism—that is, on issues such as work, housing, everyday life, gender and childhood experience. For them, some of these films, as official representations produced in the past, may be able to introduce new perspectives or nuance existing ones.

For this reason, the DVDs are accompanied by booklets that contextualize not only the films but also the production culture of the studio. The rationale for this is that our aim with this series is not only to rediscover a number of documentaries produced in Romania between 1950 and 1990,

1) This interview has originally been published on 19 April 2016 in Metropolis Cultural Daily, as "Adina Brădeanu: 'A sosit momentul ca filmele Sahia să fie reintroduse în conversațiile culturale.'" [It's time for the Sahia films to be reintroduced in cultural conversations].The text and its title have been amended for clarity and concision. See https://www.ziarulmetropolis.ro/adina-bradeanu-a-sosit-momentul-ca-filmele-sahia-sa-fie-reintroduse-in-conversatiile-culturale/.

https://biblioteca-digitala.ro

but also to pay attention to the way in which documentary film became institutionalised at the Alexandru Sahia studio. The role of institutional structures is crucial in the media and the creative industries, as in time these institutions can shape entire domains of production. Their ethos and development influence production in the long term within specific creative fields, so that over time they may catalyse dramatic changes in the way one field or another works. This also applies to the relationship between the Sahia studio and documentary film practice in Romania, where the evolution of the studio constantly impacted the understanding and practice of documentary film on a national level. From this point of view, our DVDs aim to uncover the complexity of an institution and of a number of individual professional paths associated with it during its four decades of cohabiting with the communist regime, as well as the concrete results of this cohabitation in the form of the films produced by the studio.

I should add that while responsibility for the content of the DVDs rests with me, fundraising and production were covered by my colleagues and friends from One World Romania. I am very grateful to all those involved for their hard work on this project, which in recent years has expanded to include film screenings in high schools and in a number of Bucharest neighbourhoods.

What does the term "vintage," which you included in the title of this DVD series (VINTAGE SAHIA), mean in context?

We included it as a friendly warning regarding the risks of a present increasingly dominated by a seductive nostalgia for the (communist) past—a nostalgia that, I believe, needs to be handled responsibly. "Vintage" is a term in common use today, frequently employed to define quality objects or styles characterized via their intersection with historical time, a reason why it is readily applied to a range of products from fashion to wine. At the same time, it is a term used to chart the intensification of our relationship with the technology and media of the past: that is, the way nostalgia infiltrates popular culture and creative practice, or the way various forms of media display nostalgia for types of content or aesthetic that are associated with the earlier stages of their existence—take, for example, today's nostalgia for the analogue as a vintage media format. We are living in a time defined by an increased interest in archives; today we are easily impressed by such black-and-white images from the past.

Speaking of the nostalgia that interferes with our experience of these "vintage" Sahia films, I cannot help thinking, for example, of the delight with which one of the films released on our first DVD was shared on Facebook by hundreds of people, after somebody uploaded it on Youtube. The title of the film is *Pentru strănepoți, încă ceva despre București…* [For Our Heirs, More Stories about Bucharest…], Paula and Doru Segall (1980). It is quintessentially the kind of film that invites you to take a trip down memory lane through the Bucharest of the 1980s.

And since we are discussing our vulnerability vis-a-vis these images from the past, I should also mention that, after we published this film on DVD and started this hype around it, a TV station (Antena 3, considered by many Romanians a somewhat partisan TV station) broadcast it accompanied by captions such as "The Secret Film Left Behind By Nicolae Ceaușescu" and "Documentary Images Kept Secret For 25 Years!" This kind of fake news was indeed fit for our "post-truth" era! Of course, the film had not been "left behind" by Ceaușescu, neither was it ever kept secret. Rather, it had simply been forgotten, as have been most of the other Sahia films.

We rediscover the Sahia archive while Romania undergoes a complex memorial process that has started a while ago and continues in the present—namely, the reconsideration of socialism as lived experience. In parallel with this process, we are rethinking the perspectives or frameworks of analysis that we have normalized so far with regard to this period of history: from the focus we put on works or modes of expression that were subversive or censured in the past, to the "visceral" anti-communism of the 1990s that has endured almost unchanged up to the present day. This memorial work that happens in the background makes the reception of these films

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today even more interesting as it adds new layers of meaning to our encounters with them: these are not only encounters with forms of cinema from the past, but also confrontations with that (still disputed) past.

In fact, this is what the title of our DVD series hints at: the memorial ambivalence that becomes part of our project. On one hand, we acknowledge the seductive power of these films for today's audiences, but on the other we point to the risks implicit in this seduction, that is, to our vulnerability as an audience located in time and space, and coming with a specific memorial luggage regarding this portion of our historical past.

Just like us humans, films are objects vulnerable to context—this is the reason why they need to be revisited regularly with an open mind. For instance, the production of certain documentaries (which include archive footage) is directly connected with broader historical and memorial contexts: a documentary essay such as *Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceauşescu* [The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu] (Andrei Ujică, 2010) could not have been conceived of immediately after the fall of the Ceauşescu regime. Firstly there had to be a realignment of our collective relationship with history and, by implication, with the film archive, a realignment which happened in stages after the year 2000.

A related thought is that these films can be read in different ways at different times (as long as the interval between these times is sufficiently generous); in the 1990s, when we were still close, historically speaking, to the communist regime, many of us might not have been able to follow with the amused interest of today a sequence from an experimental documentary musical such as *Tehnologie nouă, oameni culţi* [New Technology, Educated People] (Alexandru Sîrbu, 1963; lyrics by Nina Cassian), where the soloist of the "Electronica" Factory agitation brigade sings directly into the camera something like: "My boyfriend is an engineer, / We never know enough/ There's always one more riddle to solve/ So that eyes are clearer, and shoulders/ straighter, and the forehead purer." This "my boyfriend is an engineer" (in Romanian: "iubitul meu e inginer"), spoken softly into the camera by a nicely coiffed young woman, delights today's audiences, partly because it is simultaneously sensual and ideological (in context), and therefore it confuses our expectations about the forms of expression representative for that historical moment.[2]

This film—which I find particularly interesting for the way in which it integrates, on an aesthetic level, the notions of social and technological progress—was "forgotten" by the canonical history of Romanian documentary film on account of what was regarded at the time as an excessive revolutionary fervour on the part of the film-maker, which was evident in the film. Today, more than half a century since its production, time had applied a "vintage" patina to it. Paradoxically, in the meantime the director of this film had himself come to regard it as natural that it should have been consigned to oblivion. When we announced him that we were considering inclusion of his film on this DVD, his first reaction was to plead for us to let the film remain "buried in the archive" as it was "not worthy of saving." Luckily, he changed his mind and we could include this film on the second DVD of the series.

What is the value of these films today, given that their original purpose was strictly propagandistic, which means that documentary cinema was abandoning its mission to question reality?

The value of these films is constantly open to renegotiation. This process is part of an ecosystem which includes our opinions, the opinions expressed by the film critics, the journalists and the lay viewers who encounter these films. The circulation and availability of the films is therefore crucial, as it allows them to become part of wider cultural conversations. We should not limit ourselves to fiction film when discussing the cinema production of the communist era and we should also make these films available on the market for the general public, to test their experience and memories of that time against these representations which belong to that time.

Quite often, what happens in the background in these documentaries is more significant than

2) Proof of the said delight is the fact that this sequence has been included in a recent documentary *(Distanţa dintre mine şi mine / The Distance between Me and Me,* Mona Nicoară, 2018) about the life of poet Nina Cassian, who composed the music and lyrics of *New Technology, Educated People.*

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the carefully curated stories that we see in the foreground. That is, beyond the more or less ideological "message" that these films are meant to carry forward, they inevitably capture day-to-day life. Look, for example, at the streets and squares in *Letopisețul lui Hrib* [The Journals of Hrib] (Slavomir Popovici, 1974) or *Seraliștii* [Evening Classes] (Copel Moscu, 1982), the life of the work colonies captured in detail by films such as *Cota Zero* [Elevation Zero] (Laurentiu Damian, 1988) or *Pe Valea Frumoasei* [Along the Frumoasa Valley] (Felicia Cernăianu, 1986), the prostitutes and so-called "social parasites" (the political jargon of the time) in *Iarna unor pierde-vară* [The Winter of Summer Idlers] (Iancu Moscu, 1974), or the sweater with the hammer and sickle *and* the American flag knitted into it that one pupil is wearing in *Ședință cu părinții* [Parents Meeting] (Paula and Doru Segall,1980).

3) See an interview, in Romanian language, with Ștefan Pop, now retired: https://www.scena9.ro/article/adina-bradean-sahia-vintage-stefan-pop.

Certainly, political pedagogy was a central objective of the studio *qua* institution. But when we are speaking about individual films, we are speaking about an intersection between specific production contexts and the personal agendas, whether aesthetic or ideological (or both) of the film-makers, which means that these films are always more than mere illustrations of a party programme. It is time, I believe, for us to look at these films differently, firstly by moving beyond the binary model in which we are still living, which still prefers to operate with the oppositional pair "dissident"/"collaborator." It is time we accepted that in the area of film-making, as in other areas of cultural production, between these two poles of one's relationship with the ideology of the time, and with the political bureaucracy, there was a myriad of daily negotiations, small complicities, survival or adaptive strategies that need to be considered if we really wish to understand what being a film-maker entailed at the time. In addition, let us not reduce the whole equation to one's relationship with the state; let's try to also take into consideration other determining factors and relationships that influenced the production and public visibility of films in that era.

4) Romanian language: *Și dacă tot e vorba de fapte de partid, păi da' mai construit de socialism decât la noi aicea, unde poate să fie?*

To return to your question, it was not documentary, as a genre, that abdicated its mission, but rather some of the documentary film-makers—actually, a significant proportion of the Sahia community, the closer we come to the end of the 1970s. In time, they developed a wide range of evasionist or adaptive practices which shaped documentary practice in Romania in the long term. See, for example, the practice of creating some sort of "covers" for their films—that is, sequences affixed in the beginning or at the end of a film, which were crudely political, often incomprehensible or unpalatable (e.g. quotes from N. Ceaușescu's speeches), but which ensured a measure of flexibility and freedom of expression throughout the film. Felicia Cernăianu's *Pe Valea Frumoasei* begins with a totally obscure monologue about Empedocles, "the power of the elements" and "the communist production plan," but continues as an entirely believable and truly remarkable film about an engineer (Ștefan Pop) who is also the head of the Oașa Reservoir (which was under construction at the time).[3] This film made by film-maker Felicia Cernăianu in collaboration with her husband, Director of Photography Willy Goldgraber, was a subtle engagement with their political mandate to portray the collective effort of the working classes to build a Romania of the future. They filtered this mandate, and kept themselves both inside and outside it. For instance, in the final minutes of the film, Pop condenses the reality of the reservoir as a work site where socialism was genuinely being built day by day, without, or even despite the political jargon of the time: *And on the subject of Party achievements, if we're not building socialism here, then where else?* This comes naturally, almost as a joke in Pop's monologue, and therefore it is credible and even somewhat funny in the way it is said in the original.[4]

When we look carefully at the ways in which the film-makers positioned themselves vis-a-vis official expectations, we see an entire spectrum of behaviour, rather than the aforementioned binary model of dissenters and collaborators. I curated the fourth DVD of the series with the intention of providing a range of examples of such different positionings. Speaking of this, I believe that today we are not talking enough about the genuine political enthusiasm shown by some of these film-makers to the

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new regime while it was still in its early years. A question I am asking myself at present—triggered by a somewhat animated discussion during the launch of this fourth DVD—is why, in 2018, almost three decades after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime, we are still making strenuous efforts to attach notes of political subversiveness to some of the truly remarkable personalities affiliated to this studio, and when we will be prepared to acknowledge their initial political commitment—which was, indeed, in most cases followed by disenchantment with the regime that they had trusted in their youth. I am thinking here of some of the luminaries of our film industry, such as Victor Iliu and Slavomir Popovici. This is the reason why I have not only included on this DVD the film which epitomizes the latter's political enthusiasm at the beginning of the '60s (*Uzina* / The Plant, 1963), but have also allowed myself the curatorial licence of including a film produced by the RomFilm State Company before the Sahia studio was established (*Scrisoarea lui Ion Marin către Scînteia* [Ion Marin's Letter to The Spark—the official paper of the Communist Party], Victor Iliu, 1949). This is a documentary that occupies a central place in the national imagination relative to Romania's collectivisation of agriculture. In fact, the film is a docudrama, based on the true story of a peasant who sends a letter to *The Spark*, in which he pours a triumphalist version of the collectivization narrative. The part of peasant Ion Marin is played by peasant Dragu Vulcan. The political bias is straightforward: nothing of the political violence that accompanied actual collectivisation filters through to the screen. Yet the film has remarkable aesthetic appeal - the trademark of the camera operator, Ovidiu Gologan, and also of Iliu's own perspective, shaped by his studies at VGIK (The All-Soviet State Institute of Cinema) in the late 1940s. Six years after this film, the same team produced one of the essential films of Romanian cinema, *La moara cu noroc* [The Mill of Good Luck] (Victor Iliu, 1957).

Interesting enough, the story of this film does not end there. Twenty-five years later, young film-maker Nicolae Cabel, a former student of Iliu, travelled to Sudiți village to seek out the peasant who played the part of Ion Marin in the film directed by his former professor. In this second film (*A doua scrisoare* / The Second Letter, Nicolae Cabel, 1974), one is struck by the gulf between the melancholy tone of the musical soundtrack and the crude political commentary, as well as by the visual flair of the sequences where the film-maker ignores his political mandate and follows his own agenda, by trying to establish an aesthetic dialogue with Iliu's œuvre. Cabel's film is essentially an elegy for Iliu disguised as the odyssey of a Romanian village under communism. It is in this sense that I would speak of the complex ways in which the professionals from inside the studio positioned themselves in relation to the political: they were always doing more than simply following official indications and producing "propaganda."

How should we view these films today?

I am trying to approach these films from two angles: firstly, in relationship to their histories and contexts of production from the past, which I cannot overlook, and secondly, by trying to always be open to what these films can tell us today, if we go beyond our habitual ways of interpreting material from the communist era. By this I mean that I am trying to resist the "compulsory" enthusiasm in the face of a film which was subject to censorship in the past. While I always acknowledge this kind of production context, I am trying not to read them by default as a sign of value. Rather, I am trying to approach these films at the point of intersection of what or how they were meant to be (if I have access to the sources which allow me to learn about that) with what they are, concretely, in the present.

Let us take the film *Adolescența* [Adolescence] (Florica Holban, 1970) as an example. This is a somewhat conventional educational film which was meant to teach parents how to treat their teenage offspring. Most films produced by Sahia portrayed children and adolescents exclusively in institutional contexts such as schools and nurseries, but this one includes that very rare thing, a sequence showing adolescents in the private space (a party in the block), and also some memorable street interviews about the lack

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of sex education in 1970s Romania.

When we screened it in a number of Bucharest high schools in 2017, the film drew smiles for it appeared anachronistic, but it also provoked genuine concern around the lack of sex education in schools in Romania in the present day and the fact that so little had changed since 1970. And apropos of the datedness of this film, a sequence featuring a "girls only" conversation on a balcony[5] became a favourite of the adolescents who watched the film, and I include here my own daughter.

5) *Tell us then, do you love him? / I'm not sure whether I love him. What about you? / I definitely love him. I'd ask my mother, but she's never talked to me about love. / Mine neither!*

To return to your question about how these films should be viewed: first and foremost, with genuine yet critical interest, resisting the temptation to cast them in the role of stories whose main use should be to validate our prejudices about the past. These films can tell us more than (we think) we already know. Take for example *Elevation Zero,* a fairly well-known film that gives us an insight into the process of ideological vetting at Sahia. I included it on the second DVD of the series not so much in order to perpetuate the "censored film equals good film" approach, but rather to take advantage of an opportunity that came up at the last moment. As the DVD was ready to go to production, I found out that the director had kept a VHS copy of the original version of the film before it passed through the censorship screening and the subsequent rounds of re-editing. After I consulted with Alexandru Solomon (the head of One World Romania), we decided to invite a comparative viewpoint by including on the DVD both versions of the film: the official version, available as the standard copy held in the Romanian National Film Archive, and the director's cut, complete with VHS aesthetic.

I do not know of any other case in the history of Romanian cinema where two such versions exist: virtually everything has been changed from one version to another, from the visuals, where segments which were essential in the original version are missing, to the soundtrack, where the striking juxtaposition of Nina Hagen / Michael Jackson / Armenian duduk flute from the director's cut is entirely expunged and replaced by a harpsichord and a poetic ideological commentary that actually silences both the film-maker and the human community that he wanted to represent in his film.

When examined alongside each other, these two versions give a revealing picture of the official expectations regarding the function and aesthetic of documentary film in Romania in the 1980s. Today, the film lives on independently of its history, undeniably traumatic as it was for its director, as a fragment of social and cultural history. It captures not only the conditions of life and work in a workers' colony (in the Poiana Ruscă mountains, Western Romania), but also a fascinating context of media history, when Romania lived out its "VHS moment" feverishly: that is, the years when the VCR (Video Cassette Recording, an early domestic analogue recording format) won over Romanian audiences from the capital to the remotest corners of the country, in response to the absence of entertainment on the national television. This is what film-maker Laurentiu Damian found when he went to Poiana Ruscă to document the lives of the workers: that those lives were divided equally between their hard daily work and their evenings spent watching bootleg videos. He put this in the original version of his film, but nothing was kept in the officially approved version. Today, his original film is significant as it points to a specific technological context, while these two versions taken together provide us with a revealing example of how films were transformed by the process of censorship.

After "documentary, ideology, life," "work," and "children," the themes of the first three DVDs, you chose "political commission" as the theme of the fourth DVD. How did you decide on this theme?

I endeavour to maintain a balance in terms of the attention that I pay to the output of the studio, and to the studio as an institution. One of the most striking aspects of my early encounters with this studio in the mid-2000s, when I started being interested in it, had to do with the dramatically different, even opposite ways in which it was remembered by its former members and by members of the film community who had no previous connection with Sahia as an institution. From the outside, Sahia was always

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viewed through the lens of its official function as an institution involved in the propagation of an official social and political pedagogy. At the same time, the community formerly associated with the studio have wrapped themselves in a positive, nostalgic, memory of the studio, which they remember as a beautiful, happy family that stood up to the trials of history and was shaped by heroic confrontations between the film-makers and the political bureaucrats.

I have curated the DVDs released so far with the intention to allow room for the contradictions and ambiguities that become apparent at the point where these two perspectives meet. A good example of this would probably be the film I have included as a bonus on the DVD about political commissioning: *Noi la cinci ani* [Us, Aged Five] (Mirel Ilieșiu and the Sahia collective, 1955), is an oddity, an "institutional home-movie" of sorts, produced by the employees of the studio to mark Sahia's fifth anniversary. This film gives a surprisingly laid-back, self-deprecating view of the "private life" of this supposedly propaganda-focused studio in the midst of Romania's Stalinist decade as an institution pervaded by an air of *dolce far niente,* where nothing happens when or in the way it is meant to: the film directors roll into work around lunchtime, the cameramen get moving so slowly that they miss the events they are meant to be filming, and all involved seem to be aware that life has cast them in an absurdist game of chance where they feel as "Don Quixotes of Sahia" whose "glorious deeds in the service of lost causes would make Don Quixote of Mancha feel jealous." So *Us, Aged Five* looks like a jolly performance by a community which, only five years after it came into existence, seems to have a strong sense of belonging and is already constructing its own mythology as a studio-cum-family.

It is an amusing film, but at the same time a moving one, as it features some of the studio's most important figures: film-makers Mirel Ilieșiu, Alexandru Boiangiu, Paula Segall and Titus Mesaroș, and film redactor[6] Marion Ciobanu. At the same time, this film about the "small," private history of the studio casts an unexpected light upon "big" (national) history and upon the studio's own political mandate in relation to this history: just think about the fact that less than a year after the first screening of this film during Sahia's five-year anniversary party, three Sahia staff were sent to Budapest to cover what in the spirit of official history was to be termed the Hungarian "counter-revolution" (*Evenimentele din Ungaria* [The Events in Hungary], Herman Rabinovici, 1957)—a film to be found on the same DVD.

And still apropos of the theme of this DVD: a further reason for my choosing political commissioning was that the previous, third DVD of the series had had a somewhat sunnier theme —children and childhood. I came to the theme of that one by looking at the present, rather than at the past: while I was thinking about a potential theme, a powerful wave of nostalgia could be felt on social media—a nostalgia expressed above all by the 40+ generation (my generation) which somehow made me feel uncomfortable. I remember seeing somewhere on Facebook a post which combined a photo with a slice of moistened bread with sugar on it—an improvised dessert in the subsistence economy of the 1980s—and the following comment: "If you know what this is, you had a happy childhood!" I told myself then that this was a good time for us to try to compare our personal memories with what Sahia had left us in the form of documentaries depicting the lives of the children of socialist Romania. I mean, any of these films having been produced at the precise time when we, the 40+ generation, were ourselves children. At the time when these films were produced, many have been regarded as an easy way out of the political engagement which was part and parcel of the documentarians' work.

So, once we published the DVD on children, I wanted to return to the political production of the studio which remains the most substantial section of its entire output throughout four decades of existence.

What selection criteria do you use when choosing films for each DVD?

When I curate the content for each of the DVDs I aim to remain faithful to the production context that I know from my previous research on Sahia and the archival context that I encountered during my preliminary research at the National

6) A position somewhat equivalent to that of today's commissioning editors, with less authority and more ideological responsibilities.

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Film Archive (ANF). I try to place each of the films in the context of their time and also in the context of the Sahia production: for instance, by mentioning in my accompanying text whether a certain film is representative of a wider trend or, rather, an exception from what was regarded as the "norm" at the time of its production. On the level of the DVD series as a whole, I am keen on a thematic, rather than an author-based curation, as I believe that this keeps the series more open to the lay and academic public from beyond the field of Film Studies. I arrange the films in chronological order on each of the DVDs, as I believe that this enables the public to follow more easily the relationship between social/political history and the theme, approach, and style of the films. Also, I always look beyond the documentary canon, towards lesser known or forgotten films, or towards films which belong to so-called "minor" production categories (also known as "ephemeral" films).

8) The fifth DVD of the series, published in the year following the publication of this interview, is dedicated entirely to the ephemeral production of the Sahia studio.

I believe that these ephemeral films in particular carry a great potential for historical knowledge and for bringing fresh perspectives into our conversations about cinema and the communist past. Let's take Ada Pistiner's film *Protecția cui?* [Whose Workplace Safety?] (1992) as an example. The first topic that she submitted as a proposal to Sahia after her return from Israel, where she had spent the final years of the Ceausescu regime, was a film about the health and safety of those working in various industries of newly post-communist Romania. This may seem like a minor subject for somebody who returns to a country undergoing dramatic changes. However, Pistiner described this film as a "duty of conscience." *Whose Workplace Safety?* is a film that she felt she had to make: after her debut, in the mid-1960s, with a health and safety film, and a career marked by the industrial commission genre, Pistiner (who initially read Philology) wanted to make one more film that would deal with notions of health and safety — this time a "real" film into which she was finally able to pour all the experience accumulated during a lifetime spent examining the harsh realities of industrial Romania and being unable to make them public. On the one hand, this film looks back to a past when Pistiner as well as her peers from Sahia directed hundreds, perhaps thousands of health-and-safety films. Yet on the other hand it is also rooted in the present of the early 1990s, when she proposed this film: *Whose Workplace Safety?* is one of the very few films of its time which capture the newly uncertain position of Romania's industrial working class, whose pauperisation in the vortex of history had already begun by 1992, when the films was made.

Starting from the second DVD of the series, I have increased the number of so-called "minor" categories of productions included on each DVD.[7] This is, indeed, the least known segment of Sahia's output, which includes a wide range of educational, industrial and tourism films, and festival trailers. I am fairly confident that these films which are a sort of "periphery of the periphery" (that is, a fringe product of documentary film, itself on the fringes of feature-length fiction film), have a remarkable potential to open-up fresh perspectives both on "mainstream" documentary production of the time (one learns about the centre by looking at its peripheries, isn't it?), and on areas of social life that lay beyond the reach of mainstream documentary film-making.

Finally, one more thing about these films produced by this studio. Sahia is not an island; I have included on our DVDs a number of films which prove that the documentary film makers collaborated with major cultural figures from outside the studio such as Nina Cassian, Perahim, Marin Sorescu, Radu Cosașu and Ecaterina Oproiu, and also that occasionally their work intersected with the work of (future) international personalities—as in the case of film-maker Márta Mészáros, who spent several years in the studio and whose film *Să zâmbească toți copiii* [Let All the Children Smile] (1957) can be found on our third DVD.

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Reclaiming the Visual Archive of the Furniture Factory in Iași

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ABSTRACT

After the fall of the communist regime, many Romanian archives were destroyed, dismantled and sold on the black market, while others were neglected or abandoned. A particular case is the photographic archive of a furniture factory in Iași, a city in the northeast of Romania. In 2016, when some of the remaining buildings were rented, a series of objects, photographs and other materials were found on the premises, standing as visual evidence of the history of the Factory. In this context some questions arise, such as: What happens to an archive once a factory has been closed? How can the archive be restored and valued? What measures can be taken to ensure the future of such visual documents?
Based on my work with archives, I have undertaken the study of this material by managing the photographs to obtain an overall image of the archive and its visually recorded contents. The archiving process brought to light valuable information about the activity of a factory that during the communist period was at the forefront of the furniture production in Romania. In the following case study I will describe the context of the archive, the history of the Factory during and after the communist period, the steps involved in restoring the archive, and the results of the research.

KEYWORDS

Archive, photography, documentary, communism, factory.

After the fall of the communist regime, many Romanian archives were destroyed, dismantled and sold on the black market, while others were neglected or abandoned. A particular case is the photographic archive of a furniture factory in Iași, a city in the northeast of Romania. In 2016, when some of the remaining buildings were rented, a series of objects, photographs and other materials were found on the premises, standing as visual evidence of the history of the Factory. In this context some questions arise, such as: What happens to an archive once a factory has been closed? How can the archive be restored and valued? What measures can be taken to ensure the future of such visual documents?

Based on my work with archives, I have undertaken the study of this material by managing the photographs to obtain an overall image of the archive and its visually recorded content. The archiving process brought to light valuable information about the activity of a factory that during the communist period was at the forefront of the furniture production in Romania. In the following case study I will describe the context of the archive, the history of the Factory during and after the communist period, the steps involved in restoring the archive, and the results of the research.

The place where the Factory stands to this day has a rich history rooted in carpentry and furniture production. Moldomobila was the first furniture factory founded in the

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Figure 1. Street view of the Wood Manufacture Enterprise Iași building.

city of Iași in 1928. The name is an abbreviation of Moldova, the northeast region of Romania, followed by the Romanian word for furniture. It operated until 1944, when it burned in a fire, and the remaining premises were converted for lumber storage in 1946. On the same foundation stone, from 1953 to 1954, a new carpentry workshop was built, subordinated to the Iași Upholstery and Furniture Cooperative. In 1960, the workshop was administered by the Ministry of the Wood Processing Industry that established the IPROFIL—Iași Furniture Wood Processing Company *[Întreprinderea de Prelucrare a Lemnului IPROFIL "Mobila Iași"]—,* giving continuity to the local carpentry tradition.

In the twenty-five years following its opening, the Factory developed at a high speed, constantly expanding by being modernized with advanced technology, machines, innovative designs, efficiency in the production, reducing costs, minimizing waste, improving the overall production and profit. By this time the Factory had in total ten departments in the county of Iași as follows: I. Furniture Pieces and Carving; II. Style and Art furniture; III. Seating; IV. Small Furniture; V. Furniture; VI. Chairs and Furniture Pieces; VII. Semi-finished Elements and Centralized Cutting; VIII. Mechanics and Engineering; IX. Plywood; X. Plastics; XI. School Workshop. In 1985 the Factory's output reached impressive numbers: over 28,500 conventional furniture sets, 10,000 art and style furniture sets, one million conventional chairs, and 45,000 small furniture items and sets, while employing over 4,000 trained and skilled employees (Fig. 1). The high quality products were sold all over the country, but most of the production was exported. Over 80 percent of the production was exported to more than twenty-five countries, some of which were: the United States of America, Russia, England, France, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands,

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Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Canada, Mongolia, Japan, Israel, and Australia.

The Factory manufactured a variety of finished products such as parquet, barrels, panel or upholstered furniture, chairs, tables, bookcases and furniture sets designed for the living room, kitchen or hallway. The raw materials consisted of a diversity of timber made from beech, oak, ash tree, mahogany, walnut, fir, cherry or maple. The designs accommodated many tastes and functions; besides traditional and classic furniture, the offer also included modern furniture, French, German or Romanian rustic styles. The Factory took part in international and local fairs and also won the first prize at the national contest with the "Iași 85" model released in 1985. After the first furniture set, "Iași 60," the Factory had gone on to produce 250 different types of furniture, creating each year ten new designs on average (Fig. 2). For example, there were seventeen types of chairs that came in twenty-five versions, depending on the upholstery and variations in the basic design.

In this golden era, the Factory was the most successful, productive and relevant both nationally and internationally, being the national market leader until the 1989 Revolution that brought down the communist regime. In 1991 the former state-owned enterprise was privatized, and the S.C. Moldomobila S.A. Iași was established.

Figure 2. Display panel showing the new products made in the Second Department - Style and art furniture.

The new factory was producing the same high quality furniture, but there was a lower demand on the national market. At the same time Romania started to import furniture from Italy, France, and Germany. The most destabilizing factor that influenced the Factory's decline was the loss of a large part of the international market, to which it used to provide almost 90 percent of its production. It continued to export furniture, but on a much smaller scale to countries like Germany, France, Italy, England, Japan, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

Over the last three decades, the Factory has been relying on a reduced number of international orders, lower demand from the national market, while facing competition from international companies. In this context, it has become increasingly difficult to continue to operate, maintain sales, and increase profit. Out of the eleven fully functional departments it used to have, there were only five left: I. Furniture Pieces; II. Rustic and Art Furniture; III. Chairs; IV. Mechanics and Engineering; V. Prefabricated and Plywood. By 2015 the Factory was working with a couple of employees, had only three departments left, an even lower production, and was threatened by bankruptcy.

In these turbulent times, in 2016, an independent group of architects, designers, street artists, carpenters and craftsmen rented the former furniture design workshops and converted them into working spaces and studios. Access to the space is not restricted to the public, on the contrary, it was also intended to function as a platform to gather and grow the local community, to interconnect individuals from different fields, to raise awareness on local issues, and to develop initiatives towards resolving them. In this context Hubrica was formed, a combination between a hub and a factory (*Hub* + *brica* from the Romanian word for factory, *fabrica*), continuing thus the tradition of production, with the people being now the resources and ideas, the raw materials. After they refurbished the space, Hubrica

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was opened in September 2016 for the White Night of the Art Galleries event when they displayed some of the photographs, posters and some other recovered objects for the public to see.

After 1989, when the Factory was privatized, it continued to operate with only a reduced number of departments, while those that fell into disuse remained mainly untouched. Bits and pieces of the former manufacturing plant are still present in the buildings and the surrounding courtyard. Many traces of its activity were left behind and some exist to this day. Machines, tools, metal signs, items of furniture, books, personal objects, registers, furniture blueprints and sketches, posters, albums and photographs bear witness and are palpable proof of its glorious past. The machines deteriorated in time and the photographs were preserved under the dust. In the 1990s, after the old factory was closed, the photographs were not collected by the state authorities because they were not relevant at that time. Since the state authorities were only interested in the financial records, the archive was left behind and forgotten in time. Under these circumstances, the photographs were saved from being destroyed, lost, or misplaced and remained sheltered in the Factory until their rediscovery in 2016.

In collaboration with Hubrica, I undertook the initiative to archive and digitize the photographic material as an independent research project, to reconstruct the narrative of the Factory and make its story more visible. Initially, there was a box of approximately 400 photographs that were found scattered in the main building. The second box was found untouched and contained more than 500 black and white prints. Along with these, cardboard instructional photomontages depicting workplace safety procedures, albums, and only one roll of black and white negatives were found. Gradually more material surfaced, including color images that exclusively depict furniture items, rolls of projection film, color and black and white film slides, booklets that present the Factory over the years, and product catalogues. Based on the compiled material, more details about the Factory were brought to light, and it was possible to visually restore a fragment of its history.

The photographic archive consists of mostly mixed photographic prints, and in this particular case most of the negatives were not found; a large share of the photographs are copies or test prints. The photographs were sorted and regrouped into series following the reconstruction of the rolls of the negatives from which they were printed, in order to establish the original sequence, context and time when they were taken. In the archiving process, relationships and connections were established between the photographs both as physical objects and what they depicted, to provide more coherence to the visual archive. In this manner more series of photographs were reorganized by the type of the paper of the print, size, format, nature of deterioration and annotations. The prints vary in size, and they were done on thin or thick paper with a matt, shiny or textured surface. In terms of image printing options there are bleed prints, with white margins, while others have jagged edges. The black and white gelatin silver prints were developed manually in a dark room between the years 1970 and 1985. The 1990s color negatives were developed using a machine in a studio and were printed on standard size Kodak and Agfa photographic glossy paper. There were also a number of copies of these latter images printed on regular office printer paper.

The type of print was a reliable clue in tracing the sequence of the photographs, but in other cases the connection between the pictures was more accurately determined with the help of the annotations and markings made on the front or back of the photograph. Some images had numbers marked with the same handwriting revealing that they were part of an established sequence (Fig. 3). More series of a single sequence were printed, other photographs were missing, so by putting all the copies together the

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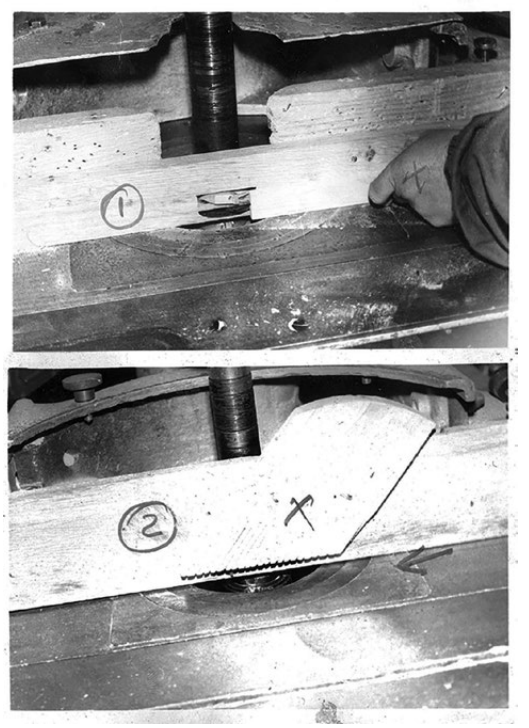

Figure 3. Numbers and marks indicating a sequence.

full sequence could be completed. Most of the color analogue photographs present handwritten standard information about the furniture item such as name, dimensions, and weight on the back. The annotations that were done on the front of the photograph included X signs, circling of objects or parts of the image, pointing arrows or actual handwritten text (Fig. 4). Besides the physical photographic object and its distinctive markings, the image itself presented minor details that would point to a connection between the disparate pictures. For instance, the pictures of furniture items were taken on the premises, in a setting using a limited decor and set of props. Another indication was the use of the same carpet or flower pots in arrangement with different furniture items that could be traced in more photographs.

In the sorting and classifying process the photographs were arranged into fifty-eight black and white series and twenty-three color series. After the archiving process was over, a final inventory was made with the following results. There are four albums, six labor safety photomontages, seven rolls of projection film, one roll of negatives, 530 slides, eight booklets and catalogues. Including the 1,031 print copies, the total number of loose photographs is 2,129, out of which 931 are black and white and 1,198 are color. Altogether there are 338 photographs in the albums and twenty-four in the photo collages. The total number of the photographic images in the overall visual material is 3,021. Including the back of the prints, the total number of scanned images is 1,783. From the furniture product photographs, 259 designs of sets and individual furniture pieces were identified. Considering the timeline and dating, based on the available material, the markings on the back of the photographs, the printed images from the published booklets and the photo albums, the photographs have been made between 1970 and 2000.

Photography played a very important role in the activity of the Factory and was mainly used for documenting, commercial product display, and to illustrate the evolution of the Factory. In terms of themes and subject matter, what really connects all the images at a basic level is the purpose for which they were made, and how they were used. The photographs were taken by the assigned photographer in order to visually record, illustrate and promote the production of the Factory. The black and white photographs depict the many aspects of the manufacturing plant, describing the production process that was carried out with precision

Figure 4. Notes that say "What rules are observed? What rules are not observed?" referring to the work procedures.

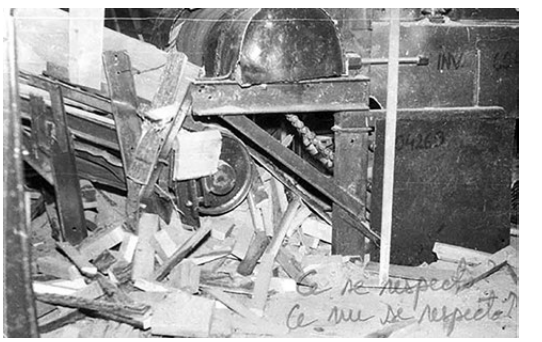

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Figure 5. View of the Wood Manufacture Enterprise, the building that hosts the Design Workshops and where later Hubrica rented space for their studios.

Figure 6. View from the site of the wood deposit.

Figure 7. Aspects of the production process.

Figure 8. Varnishing with lacquer the furniture parts.

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by skilled laborers in the Factory's various departments and workshops (Fig. 5).

The technological process of furniture production was complex and started with logging in the nearby forests; the logs were then carefully selected and transported to the Factory where they were processed into timber that had to pass a quality assessment (Fig. 6).

The next step was drying the wood, a process that could take up to a month and a half. The timber was then smoothed and cut into the basic components using predefined dimensions, and then the pieces were put together in the assemblage department (Fig. 7).

The finishing process consisted of gluing, staining of the wood, upholstering, painting and varnishing to transform the product into its finished version (Fig. 8). After an item of furniture was completed, it went through a final quality control. These images show the forest, the timber storage, how the wood is shaped into furniture, as well as the departments with the machines that were operated by the workers. Besides documenting the production process, these photographs were also made to promote and display the activity of the Factory in anniversary brochures and furniture catalogues (Fig. 9, Fig. 10).

One of the basic and most important purposes of photographic documentation was to illustrate workplace safety, i.e., correct and incorrect practices. This was part of the standard mandatory training of the employees in using the machines and following the right steps to avoid accidents. The images along with descriptive texts were used in instructional photo collages that were mounted on panels or appeared in the factory brochures. Similar pictures accompanied by instructions are found in the slides. A large portion of the photographic material depicts accidents or their re-enactments because it was crucial to visually document these occurrences and their circumstances. In this case the photographs were used as actual visual records of the accidents that occurred at the Factory. The most common

Figure 9. Workers operating the machines.

Figure 10. Dusting the furniture corps.

ones involved broken limbs, cut fingers, loss of a hand or arm, eye and head injuries, but there were also cases of deadly accidents caused by lack of attention, misuse of the machines, and non-compliance with the correct workplace safety procedures. These images would make their way in the official reports, and they would be also used in the re-enactment photomontages that described the circumstances of the accident (Fig. 11).

Events that took place in the Factory and outside of it were also part of the photographic documentation process. The photographer was present at staff meetings, employee evaluations and exams, celebrations, contests and parades organized for national holidays or the Factory's anniversary. These images show the Factory's head offices in Iași, including other departments of pro-

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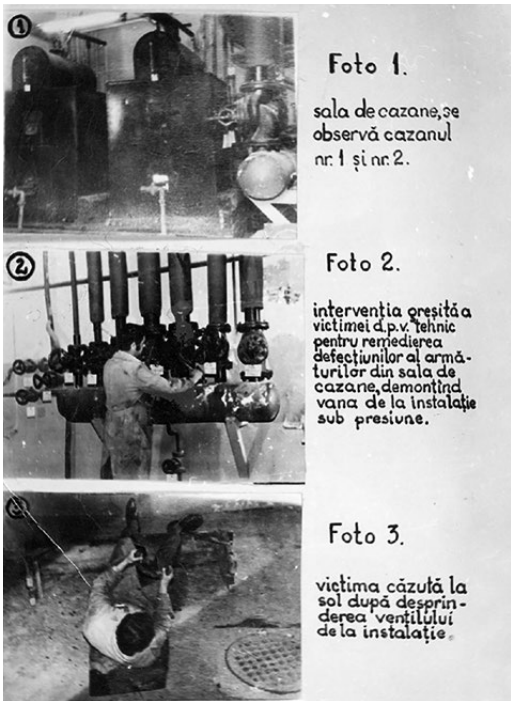

Figure 11. Accident re-enactment photo-collage.

duction in the county, as they were meant to promote its overall success. Other pictures show the city of Iași and a large portion of the workers holding banners and flowers as they attended parades celebrating events like the 1st of May, Labor Day, or the 23rd of August, the National Day (Fig. 12). Among the black and white photographs, there were also random and mixed loose photographs with portraits of the employees or personal family photographs that got left behind.

The color photographs represent another large portion of the visual material, depicting the individual products such as chairs, tables, bookcases, dressers and furniture sets designed for the living room, kitchen, bedroom and hallway (Fig. 13). The photographs of the furniture pieces were actual commercial product photographs that were made in order to be printed in catalogues. The photographs were taken inside the building and sometimes in the courtyard. The indoor images were done in a couple of spots in the Factory, in an improvised décor, using two Persian rugs or a plain carpet with a few props. Often flower pots or fresh flower bouquets were used in order to display items of furniture or to decorate the frame. Because the flower pots and carpets were in a limited number, there were few combinations and the props appeared in more images, indicating that the photographs were taken during the same photo session, especially when fresh flower bouquets were used (Fig. 14). Fewer black and white photo-

Figure 12. Parade for 1st of May Labor Day in 1979.

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Figure 13. Kitchen corner set.

Figure 14. Images that show the same flower pot.

graphic prints were found that depict the furniture products, but thanks to one remaining catalogue more designs are visually available.

Apart from the photographic prints there are also both black and white and color slides that illustrate first aid instructions, standard workplace safety procedures, and mandatory training on the use of the machines, the production process, and safe work practices. The photographs from the slides are different from the ones in the prints, expanding the visual collection of the archive and showing new images of the Factory and workers.

The four photo albums differ in terms of contents. One, for example, looks like an incomplete presentation album because it is almost blank, has just a couple of pasted photographs showing aspects of the production process and lacks text or captions. Two albums stand out because they were specifically designed to record the accidents that took place from 1974 to 1975 and then from 1978 to 1979. This was another way of keeping track of the accidents, but in this case there were no explicit images from the scene or re-enactments, only small identity card photographs of the injured employees. The record included a brief handwritten description of the circumstances, causes, those involved in the accident, and the person(s) responsible for the accident. It was also mentioned how those responsible for the accident were penalized. Besides documenting purposes, the albums were a means to illustrate incorrect practices so that the staff of the Factory would pay more attention and take all the correct steps to avoid accidents. The last one is a presentation album from 1982 of the cigarette factory in the town of Sfântu Gheorghe.

The activity of the Factory and its separate departments was presented in the eight brochures published from 1970 to 1988. In these booklets, some of the images can be traced to the paper photographs that depict the activity of the Factory. They were made to promote the progress and successful completion of the five-year plan, providing a retrospective overview of the Factory's evolution, complete with actual numbers, statistics, graphs, lists of names of the employees and heads of departments. The brochures were issued by the Propaganda Department of the Iași County Commitee of the Romanian Communist Party. Considering the large amount of photographs that were taken at the Factory, only two of them show the photographer in the frame, appearing as a shadow (Fig. 15).

For almost thirty years the visual archive was frozen in time until it was rediscovered and brought back to light. Unfortunately, in 2018 the threat of bankruptcy worsened, making the future of Moldomobila and the archive uncertain. The fact that the archive managed to survive untouched in the same place for all this time is remarkable, but now it was facing the risk of being left behind

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Figure 15. The shadow of the photographer.

once more. In this context, at the initiative of the Hubrica community and through a collective effort, the archive was taken to the State Archives in Iași. In this way the visual documents are now in a secure place and under the guardianship of a state institution that allows the public free access to this reclaimed piece of history.

The trajectory of the photographs is impressive because they started as documentary photographs, then became significant due to their contents and shifted their status to historical photographic documents. The timing and context were fortunate considering that in the last years photographs and archives all over the world are receiving more and more attention and appreciation from institutions and the public. With their new found glory the photographs from the Factory are part of the official state archives and officially acknowledged as visual historical records.

In addition to their initial use as documentary photographs, they now also represent a means to see and rediscover the past. The images show the role of photography, and how it was used for documenting accidents, the production process, marketing of the furniture items, and even for propaganda. Apart from documenting the activity of the Factory, the photographs also present the workers in different contexts and depict what it meant to be part of the factory workforce in the communist period. Because the events featured in the images are relatively recent, some of the former workers can relate to that reality since it is still part of their own personal history.

The contents of the archive can also be relevant for the general public because of the rich information they provide, which can be used for research on topics as diverse as history, social studies, communism, industrial architecture, wood processing industry, furniture factory, machines and technical aspects, workplace safety, economics, marketing, furniture design, and documentary photography. This photographic heritage is valuable because it represents actual fragments of history that illustrate the evolution of a prominent furniture factory during the communist regime in Romania. By recovering this forgotten visual material the traces of the furniture Factory are saved from being erased from history, and its glorious past is preserved for the future.

Note: Images courtesy of the National State Archives of Iași County.

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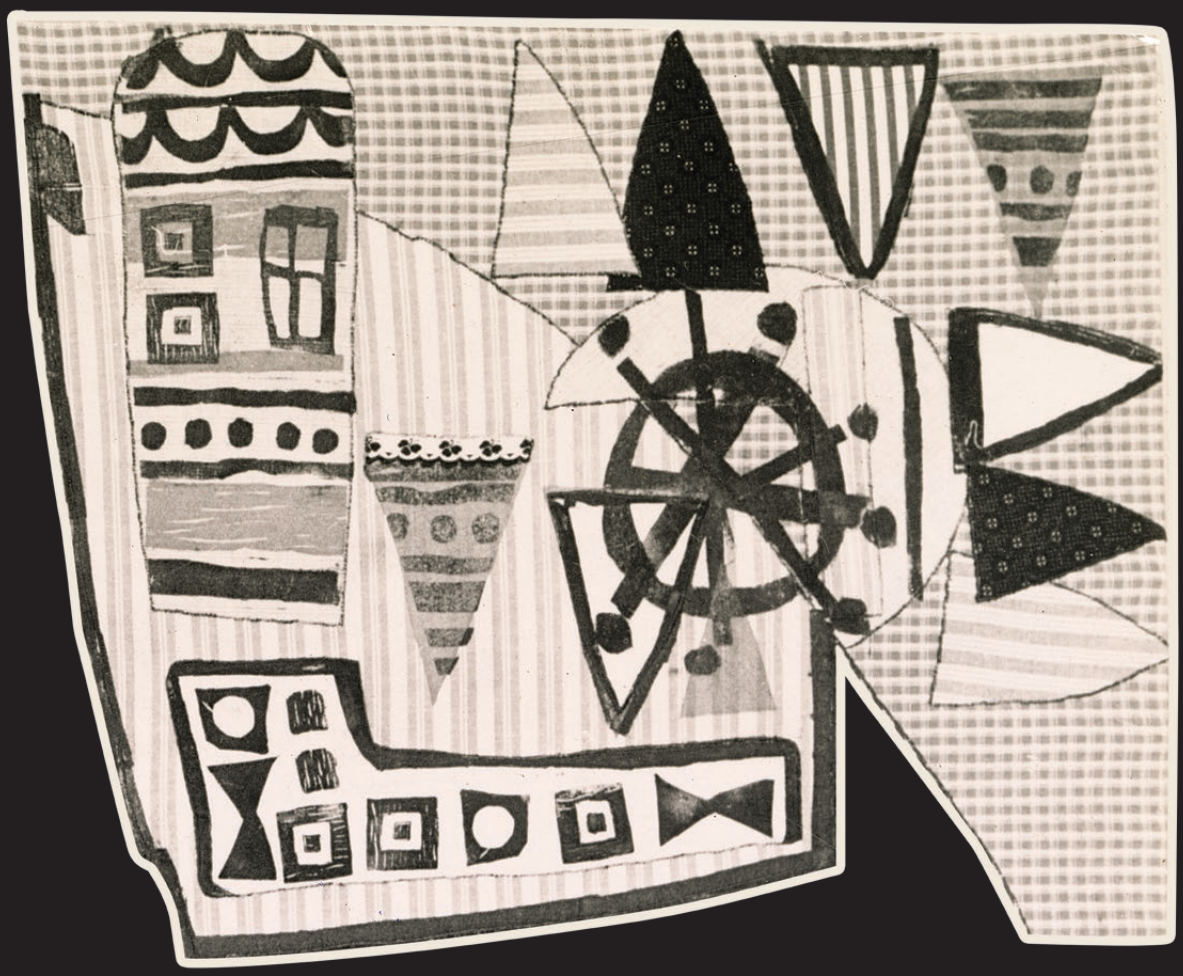

VI. Book Reviews

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Alexandra Urdea, *From Storeroom to Stage: Romanian Attire and the Politics of Folklore,* New York and Oxford: Berghahn Publishers, 2018, 210 p.

Reviewed by Călin Cotoi
Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Bucharest, Romania

In the mid 1950s, during the Cold War, an important number of ethnographic objects from Romanian villages arrived as representatives, exhibits, and gifts to the Horniman Museum in London, via the Folk Art Museum in Bucharest.

As all ethnographic objects are objects of ethnography, results of an art of excision and redeployment, they keep a hidden mobility and capacity for redefinition inherent in their displayness.[1] The return of traditional artefacts to their place of origin or to the peoples and culture where they originated from has become a complicated but urgent museal endeavor. The journeys of the excised objects are complex and fraught with tensions, with the always-possible reproduction of colonial power and representational relations between museums, humans, and material exhibits.[2]

1) See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1991).

2) See Clifford (1997).

Alexandra Urdea's book is, in a way, the result of this large trend in museum related research and financing—but it unfolds in a different cultural, political, and ethnographic landscape than the usual post-colonial one. It describes the convoluted journey of an anthropologist and a host of rapidly changing objects (and contexts), between the storages and displays of the Horniman Museum and Romanian villages, museums, craft shops, and TV studios. It is not only a complex research and interpretation of objects of ethnography—always already removed, even on their way back to origins—but also a disciplinary journey, a translation between two different ethnographies-anthropologies: imperial and national.

George W. Stocking Jr. (1982) introduced an important distinction between two different ways of doing anthropology: "nation-building anthropology" and "empire-building anthropology." The fate of ethnography in Central and Eastern Europe can be read through this bifurcation, but also through its special way of reaching a closure of discourse, an internal coherence. Even if this closure was sometimes evolutionary backed or culturally tainted, the specific element was the national one, embodied in a national state construction. The place of the "primitive" from empire-building anthropology was occupied by an even more ambiguous figure: *the peasant*.

The trope of the peasant was apt to sustain apparently adverse discourses. The discourses of modernity and modernization were thus not necessarily opposed to the one talking about the authenticity of peasantry. At the same time with its dissolution and radical exploitation at the dawn of modernity in Central and Eastern Europe, the peasantry suffered a symbolic transubstantiation. Its authenticity was removed—sometimes by means of science, other times by means of politics alone—from the real, concrete population sustaining that life, and used in the process of legitimizing social strata and political constructions totally different from the peasant ones. The nation was the idea, discourse, political setting, and global affect that kept these processes in check, the power that was creating a unifying background.

Urdea's anthropological travel that takes her across this fractured ethnographic and national-disciplinary landscape is also a personal homecoming, as the author grew up in socialist and post-socialist Romania. Not only the objects but also their human companion are travelling back, as the eth-

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nographer sets on a Cliffordian "roots and routes" ambiguous return journey.

The first chapter sets the scene for taking stock, through theoretical anthropological lenses, of the various ways in which "objects change in different settings," and, at the same time, how they "are used to maintain the distinction between these settings" (2019: 12).

As the story starts in a museum, the author is interested not only in the movement but also in the long periods when objects are kept safe, living a "fascinating life while in keeping" (2019: 13). The second and third chapters focus on objects in store. In London, in the Horniman Museum, artefacts are collected and filed in archives just as in the "parent" villages, the related objects are kept in wardrobes and in the family's and neighbors' memories. Temporalities, regimes of value, and identities are part of the semiotic and material life of folkloric artefacts in both London and Romanian villages from Vrancea.

Part three of the book enlarges the perspective and attempts to bring in the history and the long series of modernization projects from the region of Vrancea. Chapter four presents, on fast forward, one of the most interesting regions of folkloric, anthropological, and sociological Romania: Vrancea, as Urdea tries to deconstruct the national(ist) folklorization and idealization of the history of the region.

In chapter five, one of the most interesting chapters of the book, Houses of Culture occupy the front stage and bring to light the ways local folklore and its artefacts played an important role in the creation of local hierarchies, while being part of the larger process of socialist nation-building. The Horniman Museum collecting practices mirror the ways in which the Vrâncioaia village House of Culture "was instrumental in the framing of 'folklore' as a discrete activity, able to represent 'our culture' and 'our memory'," and capable to create complex historical contexts of objects displayed, or unable to be displayed (2019: 118).

The final part marks another shift of framing, as well as topic. Folklore and its objects are now analyzed specifically as objects on stage. Chapter seven looks, again on fast forward, at the (in)famous "Song to Romania" nation-wide socialist show, and how folklore local performances supported the large-scale socialist nationalist folkloric nation-building project, while also providing spaces for personal achievement and local contestation of the same phenomenon. Chapter eight, where the present day folklore mass media star system is presented, switches again the narrative thread to a fascinating world, where folklore artefacts function, again, in another regime value, as tokens of authenticity, especially through the negotiations of musical repertoire, personal professional trajectory, and spectacular folk dresses.

The story of the book ends with another return. The journey from modern exhibitory complexes to the authenticity of origins and local traditions has failed. But it was, apparently, a productive failure. The Horniman Museum, the origin of the story, becomes, with a new exhibition, both the recipient and the origin of at least a part of the ambiguous thing that is Romanian folklore. From London to the niche folklore TV channel and its singing stars, the

> Romanian collection at the Horniman was caught up in the networks of shifting museological discourses in Britain and in Romania, the demise of cultural institutions in Romania, and the post-socialist market economy—processes that cannot be seen as separate, and that can only together account for the ways in which the folk idiom is used today (2019: 183).

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Inge Daniels, *What Are Exhibitions For? An Anthropological Approach*, London and Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, 256 p.

Reviewed by Gabriela Nicolescu
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What are exhibitions for? is the recent book of anthropologist and curator Inge Daniels. The book is about the making of the At Home in Japan exhibition at the Geffrye Museum of the Home in London in 2012, curated by Inge Daniels. This book challenges some deep rooted assumptions in Western museography by drawing on the making of this exhibition and by integrating visitors' experience into the research itself.

The book talks about the importance of everyday objects in museum displays, multisensory exhibitions, theatricality, using photography not as object, but as context and as a facilitator of creating atmosphere, and last but not least, about objects which end up not in museum's stores, but in visitors' homes.

More recently, increasing numbers of anthropologists have conducted anthropological research in museums and heritage institutions (Macdonald 2002; Sansi-Roca 2007; Butler 2007; Harris 2012; Joy 2012) and collaborated in the actual making of exhibitions.[1] Their position as anthropologists involved in making displays allows them to not only show the "behind the scenes" view of public engagement, but also provide insight into the actual outcomes of the impact and dissemination of anthropological knowledge taking place in various types of museums. The dual role of participant academic means that the relationship between theory and practice, and the ways they inform and reinforce each other, has become an important concern, discussed in recent publications (Nicolescu 2016). From this perspective, the book of Inge Daniels is fresh and innovatory. The author tells the story of how the idea of the exhibition took shape, how she started to receive donations of every day Japanese items for the exhibition, integrates analysis and research conducted with the visitors in the museum space and in their homes, following the closing down of the exhibition and the dissemination of most of the items on display.

Adding to and sometimes challenging some recent publications on the future of ethnographic museums (Thomas 2016), Inge Daniels offers us a fascinating account of the usefulness of exhibitions by questioning the general trends subtly. The author allows us to see that in the present as well as in the past there have been other ways of constructing exhibitions, making use of literature about past and contemporary innovative displays from a variety of un-conventional angles of perception and conceptualisation. This review discusses five fields in which Inge Daniels' book explains how the exhibition she curated at the Geffrye Museum innovated in the field of ethnographic museum displays.

According to this review, Inge Daniels' exhibition and book on the exhibition she curated elaborates on five such myth breakers: 1) What is a valuable object on display; 2) How photography is to be used in an exhibition space; 3) Label writing; 4) Performance and enjoyment; 5) Conducting research with the visitors.

1) Emma Tarlo was the main curator of *Hair. Human Stories* (2018) at the Library Space in London. Mark Johnson and Deirdre McKay experimented with exhibition making for *Beyond Myself* exhibition in London, Hong Kong and Manila – as part of the project *Curating Development* (2017-2018). Rebecca Empson participated in the *Assembling Bodies: Art, Science and Imagination* (2009-2010) at the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Daniel Miller was involved in *The Power of Making* (2011), which was very well received at the V&A Museum.

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1. What is a valuable object on display?

How many of you are familiar with the way a Japanese house looks like? How do contemporary Japanese people sleep, eat, cook, organise the space of their home? As part of *At Home in Japan* exhibition at the Geffrye Museum in London, visitors could learn about Japanese homes by practically entering into a reconstruction of one. They were allowed to enter the exhibition space, as you would a house, through a hallway where they could leave their own shoes and put on some of the slippers there, they could stroll and look into some other rooms, sleep on the tatami mats, use cutlery, sit on the sofa, wear kimonos. This use of the everyday items on display made one wonder, what is more valuable in a museum display: the object with an aura—that very often in most museum displays is not possible to be touched—or the object bought from a shop, like slippers, cockroach poison, cutlery, kimonos, tatami mats?

As Inge Daniels explains in her book, much of this free and new approach to using objects came from the fact that after the exhibition was closed down, the Geffrye Museum of the House in London was not interested in keeping the objects. Consequently, the organisers of the exhibition organised a raffle at the end and gave away most of the items on display. This allowed for new forms of experimentation with objects: letting visitors perform in the museum space, wear the objects, reflect on the use value of the objects, compare the objects in the museum with the objects they bought on their trips to Japan, and even take the exhibited objects at home, at the end of the display. As the curator put it herself, "(t)his display really fought with what some people call 'the deadening effect' of museums (Bouttiaux 2012: 35)—when the objects on display are static and primarily associated with the past" (Daniels 2019: 138). "This exhibition merged the shopping and the museum experience, by allowing visitors to handle mass-produced mundane objects (with the manufacturer name and the price tags attached) that were displayed in interiors which simulated both the home and the store" (Daniels 2019: 156). By exhibiting objects with prices on them "(w)e cultivated rather than severed the connection between commodities and artefacts / art (…) by stressing the importance of consumption practices in the creation of value in people's everyday lives" (Daniels 2019: 157).

2. Experimenting with photography

Elisabeth Edwards, a historian and anthropologist working in the field of visual anthropology, argues that very often in classic ethnographic displays photography is a complementary device to the object, and that photography very often is used in conventional boring ways: "Within ethnography museums (...) positivist and realist ideas of photography [are] applied uncritically to illustrate and explain" (Edwards 1997: 87).

According to Edwards, in very few cases, curators working in museums manage to get rid of this practice and exhibit images to create an atmosphere. One such case is that of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, where Horia Bernea[2] used framed photographs of nuns planting flowers.

An equally fresh way of using photographs was in Inge Daniels' exhibition, where images from Japanese domestic spaces were exhibited as life-size photos. As Inge Daniels said, she did not want to "treat photographs as subordinate to objects" or to exhibit them as "objects" (2019: 64-67). In order to liberate images, Daniels chose to mount images on MDF boards (A2b) suspended on the wall and to use huge light-boxes for their display. I find this innovation extremely valuable for the field of museum exhibitions.

The visitor could feel the spatial dynamics, and the play between rooms made for getting in and other spaces created as visual illusions. The experimentation with the spatial perspective (both in the museum space and in photography) and the illumination worked perfectly well.

2) Horia Bernea (1938-2000) was a Romanian painter. Between 1990, and 2000, he was director of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, in Bucharest.

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Figure 1: View onto a domestic garden in Nara, Japan. © Susan Andrews.

Working in collaboration with photographer Susan Andrew, Inge Daniels managed to gather in the exhibition space a series of very good takes of interiors of houses, like the bathroom space or the terrace in the image below (Figure 1). As Susan Andrews explains in the book, this *View onto a domestic garden in Nara, Japan* was taken after more than half an hour of sitting still with the camera and waiting for the composition to be proper: the girl looks towards the garden while the cat looks towards the viewer / camera. In front of this image, one could seat on the sofa and dream for hours. And in fact, this is exactly what happens in the exhibition space. (Figure 1)

The place where most of the visitors spend most of their time in the exhibition space is the sofa from where the visitor can see the image presented above. The explanation to this is given not only by the fact that the image is a wonderful composition, but because visitors like to find spaces where they can sit and think, dream, imagine. The living room contains also the living room table and the kitchen space with drawers, where visitors can open the drawers and search for domestic items. As Daniels explains, "knowledge is formed also bodily" (Daniels 2019: 67)—museums transmit much more than what the label says.

3. Label writing

Deriving from the previous use of photography and of the space and objects on display, and the fact that for Daniels museums transmit much more than what the label says, the curator prompted to two important consequences: first consequence is that "labels were written in a less authoritative language – they were made for visitors to also contribute with their own understanding" (Daniels 2019: 140). The second consequence was shortness. As Daniels was not afraid to admit, "labels need to be short—allow for ambiguity" (2019: 42).

A perfect example of the use of short labels and the creation of ambiguity happened exactly at the entrance in the exhibition space, in the hallway. The label informed visitors that in many Japanese houses people

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wore slippers. Indeed, at the entrance there were several pairs of slippers to use, also some disposable plastic shoe covers. But the use of slippers was not mandatory. Many visitors hesitated—to wear or not to wear slippers, and this ambiguity was productive for some. Some visitors feared their shoes are going to disappear, others knew they were not in an "authentic" Japanese house but in a recreation of one. At the opening of the exhibition, Jeremy Corbin entered the exhibition and, in the hallway, took off his shoes and wore slippers. As the curator explains, Jeremy Corbin lived for more than a year in Japan and he was familiar with the Japanese culture.

As the curator affirmed, by keeping texts to a minimum, "they reduced curatorial authority (…) people could do their own 'creative' connections" (Daniels 2019: 202).

4. Performance and enjoyment

The curator Inge Daniels introduces ideas of performance and enjoyment as part of the future of exhibitions, to demolish another myth that exhibitions cannot successfully combine scientific findings with spectacle and amusement. In order to show a functioning of these two faces of education, she talks about the usefulness of dressing up (in kimonos) exercises. She argues that dressing up and posing is not always controversial and should not always be seen from a post-colonial perspective. Some of the contemporary visitors are people who travel themselves and have authority over what happens to them in the space of the exhibition. Overprotecting visitors is in fact the effect of the post-colonial trauma and of the refusal to see that contemporary visitors are citizens of the world. In the same line of argumentation, Daniels argues that letting visitors take pictures in the exhibition space helps them to create a feeling of closeness.

Daniels explains these performative trends in museum experiments as part of larger artistic experiments where visitors are invited to immerse themselves in the space of the exhibition. She gave the example of a famous artistic experiment such as Tate Sensorium at Tate Modern in London in 2015, where visitors were invited / allowed to sit on the pavement of the exhibition space and gaze at a huge plastic sun lit from inside. I particularly appreciated the accent she put on the everydayness of the museum visit and the many reasons that draw people in the museum space. For Daniels, art is not reified. I think more analysis on the use of artistic experiments still needs to be added. If in many displays, "(o)bjects are the stars of the show" (Daniels 2019: 134), Daniels points to the fact that we should try to operate with a new conceptualisation of authenticity, based not on the aura of the object but on creating an atmosphere, and on "mimesis," as a faithful reconstruction of reality. In the contexts of ethnographic displays, Daniels' suggestion to create exhibitions that transpose visitors in different spaces might prove resourceful. In the context of historical displays, this technique was criticised for the different types of manipulations of meanings and feelings that it can lead to (Rév 2005).

5. Conducting research with the visitors

Inside the book, the author inserts, in blue, fragments from the interviews with the visitors. The interviews cover aspects from the experience of the visitors inside the space of the exhibition, the time they have spent in different parts of the exhibitions, people's personal interests, but also, outside of it, following the life of some of the objects visitors collected at the raffle at the end of the display. Inge Daniels uses the research conducted with visitors to prompt to other pieces of description or theoretical elaborations. One understands how certain preferences inside the exhibition space but also outside of it have to do with people' s personal lives, experiences, and education. However, the research conducted with visitors shows that despite the many differences between most of the vi-

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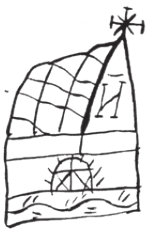
sitors, many of them have been attracted by specific rooms and corners in the exhibition space. I found also interesting the fact that for many visitors objects that came from the exhibition space were used for personal needs. For example, the book shows how one visitor is asked if she would return some towels she used for personal hygiene, so that they can be used in a future exhibition. With no hesitation the visitor said yes. This shows that the limit between the display in the museum and the everyday life is loose, but also shows the potential of museum exhibitions to be used for projects which deal with more personal topics.

The book is very well documented, greatly illustrated with photography by Susan Andrews, Inge Daniels, and by visitors themselves. I believe all the findings presented here—in the form of five myth breakers—make so that Inge Daniels' book contributes to developing new ways in which contemporary social researchers and curators deal with contemporary displays about culture, civilisation, the world. This book indicates a need of the ethnographic museum to rethink the topics put on display and to choose more contemporary topics to be exhibited, making use of new affordable objects, photography and labels in fresh and innovative ways.



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Sahia Vintage 5: Ephemeral Film—An Argument for a More Inclusive Film History

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Sahia Vintage is a pioneering curatorial project focusing on the documentaries produced by Alexandru Sahia Film Studio during the four decades of communism in Romania. Initiated in 2014 by Adina Brădeanu and One World Romania with the launch of the first DVD in the series—*SAHIA VINTAGE 1: Documentary, Ideology, Life*—this multilayered program consists of periodical DVD releases, film screenings followed by presentations, workshops for filmmakers, film critics, and journalists. In addition to its popularizing efforts, *Sahia Vintage* is also about changing the discourse on the communist nonfiction films produced in Romania, which have been long neglected by film critics and the film industry alike. It encourages a more contextualized view of Sahia as a system, an approach that can do away with the propaganda stereotype and bring to light the culture of that period in terms of the documentary practice, the discourse, and the everyday activities.

The newly installed communist government built the Romanian film industry on the remains of a precarious cinema system (a small state-owned studio supported by a public fund) and a frail production specialized both in fiction and documentary filmmaking (Căliman 2000: 137), inherited from the former nationalist regime. Two main studios were inaugurated in the early 1950s: while Bucharest Film Studio (Buftea) was designed for fiction films, Alexandru Sahia Film Studio was in charge of all nonfictional productions: newsreels (politics, sports, agriculture, industry, education, etc.) and documentaries on various topics (science popularization, ethnography, work and leisure, everyday life, education, tourism, work safety, etc.).[1] The studios were prolific during the four decades of communism, but went into sharp decline during the post-1989 transition from a planned economy to the free market, as the film sector had to reconnect itself to the European model of a film industry based on national funding. This process took more than ten years and was symbolically marked by the emergence of the New Romanian Cinema in the 2000s.

However, if both Bucharest Film Studio and Alexandru Sahia Studio failed to transition to a new economic and political reality (because of the lack of financial resources among other reasons), only the heritage of Sahia as an archive had been completely lost until a few years ago.[2] By *lost* I don't mean physically—the Sahia films are preserved at the National Films Archive in Jilava—but *forgotten* by the public and the professionals to such an extent that during my film studies at the UNATC (the Bucharest National University of Theatre and Film) in the late 2000s there was not one course on Sahia. The causes of this phenomenon are many and slightly speculative, as the documentary practice has been marginal in relation to filmmaking in general, with most of the internationally acclaimed festivals being focused (or rather having been focused in the past) chiefly on fictional films, and with a special market for documentaries developing in parallel (i.e., IDFA, Dok Leipzig,

1) In 1964, Animafilm was the third studio to be inaugurated.

2) Several screenings and efforts to popularize the Sahia film archive have been made before or simultaneously with *Sahia Vintage*, most notably perhaps the book written by former Sahia filmmaker Laurenţiu Damian and his TV show for the Romanian National Television. However, the present context seems to be more favorable for reasons that we can only speculate on—the revival of the found footage film amongst filmmakers, the technological advances that make digitization more accessible, national and European funds for stimulating archival research, a more detached view of the past, etc.

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Jihlava Film Festival, East Doc Platform, etc.). However, some answers can be obtained by mapping out the context and mode of production of Sahia, where documentaries had been limited to a short format and screened in cinemas only before feature films—all these institutional practices placed it on a lower position in the film industry hierarchy. There was never a proper context for the audience to engage with the (Sahia) documentaries, therefore the studio's disappearance went unnoticed by many. At the same time, it may be that some of the functions previously fulfilled by the Sahia films have been transferred to other institutions: private and public televisions, advertising companies, private producers, or new, state-owned, less expensive studios.[3]

3) Founded in the early 1990s, Video Art Studio is a documentary film studio subordinated to the Ministry of Culture, which absorbed some of the traditional topics of Sahia like films about art.

To be fair, the 1990s were characterized by an effort to save Sahia films from an auteurist perspective, which proved to be useful to demonstrate that, in spite of the political commissioning, some filmmakers did develop personal styles—and there is no question about it, they did. Nonetheless, how can we approach the rest of the Sahia films in a fruitful manner? It is here that *Sahia Vintage* distinguishes itself from former attempts to popularize these artefacts, as Adina Brădeanu's curatorial strategy is to restore and contextualize the remarkably diverse categories of the Sahia productions. Each DVD has a thematic approach—ideology, representations of everyday life, work, childhood, political and institutional commissioning—which includes the actual selection and a theoretical brochure (general essays on the topic and short introductory reviews for each of the films). No matter how much the style of some directors stands out compared to others, the main focus of this collection remains on the ensemble and how each film reflects the style of the studio, the personal preferences of the filmmakers, the inter-institutional relations that Sahia had with factories (work safety, promotional videos), ministries, universities and researchers (through its program of science popularization), collective farms, tourist resorts, to name only a few.

The fifth DVD of the series—*SAHIA VINTAGE V: Ephemeral Film*—more than the other DVDs, is a clear statement in favor of investigating the most *marginal* productions of the studio, offering a selection of ten utilitarian films from the 1960s to the 1980s. An interesting mix, this selection (films & brochures) is structured around several main topics: 1) the relativity of what marginal cinema means nowadays as theoreticians and archivists argue for a more inclusive film history; 2) the representations of Romania meant for tourists (a main target were the Romanians who had emigrated before communism) and educational films (traffic rules, the dangers of using makeshift gas cylinders, or how to be a good spouse).

Two films by Slavomir Popovici are listed on the DVD, as well as two versions of a commercial for the Mamaia Black Sea resort. "Cum circulăm?" ["How Do We Follow the Rules of the Road"] (1963) appears to support quite many interpretations—it serves well for a discussion on modernism and reflexivity in Romanian films, as the director engages a young couple in a comic dramatization of an absurd scenario of hectic urban traffic. It can also be useful for a survey of rare portrayals of youth against authority during the epoch, or as a document of what Bucharest looked like during the 1960s. "Victime și vinovați" ["Victims and Guilty Practices"] (1970) deals with the dangerous habit of people in rural areas to use improvised gas cylinders. A sober and disturbing film, it stands out for its honest interviews with survivors of tragic accidents, a rather rare practice for Sahia, which specialized in docu-dramas with narrators that imposed a certain narrative over the images—an example of this kind is another film from the DVD, "Catastrofa" ["The Catastrophe"] (1971), by Constantin Vaeni, a dramatization of a bus accident caused by the driver's negligence.

"Mai mulți vinovați și o victimă" ["Guilty Parties and a Victim"] (1983) is another work safety utilitarian short film by Ovid-

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iu Bose Paștina (another of his industrial films can be found on the first DVD, namely "Oameni care povestesc" / "People Telling Stories", 1983). These films were screened inside the commissioning institutions, were less susceptible to close readings by the censors, and therefore allowed young directors to experiment more freely. Here we encounter once more the talking heads technique, this time very different from what Slavomir Popovici had done earlier—in Popovici's case it is even unclear if all the interviews were recorded by him or if he also used archival footage. Ovidiu Bose Paștina stages his interviews and makes a very interesting essay on the alienation and the futility these workers experience under a regime which was supposedly on their side.

On a more optimist note, there are the tourist propaganda sections of the DVD: "Remember" (1973) and "Nuntă la Lerești" ["Wedding in Lerești"] (1976), both directed by Eugenia Gutu, as well as Mirel Ilieșiu's "Scrisoare din România" ["Letter from Romania"] (1973)—the latter being also the most dramatized of all. In her two films, Eugenia Gutu keeps to a more observational mode, with interruptions in the film's key moments by a narrator voice who suggests the correct conclusions. While "Remember" depicts a family reunion where Romanians who had emigrated to the United States come to visit their grandmother in Romania, "Wedding in Lerești" can be seen as a classic wedding documentary presenting an American couple that decides to marry in the homonymous village. The brochure written by A. Brădeanu explains more of the context of all these films.

Olimpia Daicoviciu's "Să ne pregătim de viața de familie"["Let's Get Ready for Family Life"] (1984) is a docu-drama centered on how to be a good spouse, reflecting the pronatalist policy and the condemnation of divorce through restrictive legislation.

Apart from this, *Sahia Vintage V* also includes a science documentary—"Efemer" ["Ephemerae"] (1967) by Dona Barta. Although this was not a commissioned filmed, the traditional category of Sahia productions, the curator was interested in the way it connected with the theme of this DVD. An important addition, science popularization documentaries are rarely viewed nowadays, as their relevance was even more dependent on the context of the time than with other genres.

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