

## **Confronting the Archive: Found Footage Filmmaking, History, and Archival Practice in *One Man's War* and *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu***

Rachel Webb Jekanowski

---

### **Abstract**

The use of found footage in cinema inescapably draws attention to the images' recycled status and to the filmmaking process. Despite the various aesthetic and ideological approaches directors adopt towards found footage in their films, the imageness and archival nature of the found footage fragment are consistently present. In conventional documentary, as well as in a host of fiction films, found footage is used to signify the historical past through the archival image's indexical authority. Similarly, experimental essayist filmmakers often endorse cinema's indexical nature within their historiographic discourse. In this paper, I will address the relationship between the found footage artifact and the archive through an analysis two experimental documentaries: Edgardo Cozarinsky's *One Man's War* (1982) and Andrei Ujica's *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* (2010). In *One Man's War*, Cozarinsky selects, manipulates, and juxtaposes archival images to reconstruct (and deconstruct) the historical traumas in Nazi-occupied France during World War II, as well as the act of filmmaking itself. Drawing on previous archival studies, notably Paula Amad's exploration of the counter-archival properties of film, I will discuss how Cozarinsky, through his manipulation of found footage images, challenges the indexical authority of the cinematic image and therefore the authority of the archive. In contrast, Ujica reasserts the concept of historical truth beneath the traumatic spectacle of the image by capitalizing on the counter-archival properties of film.

### **Keywords**

Found footage, archive, indexical authority, trauma.

Within the past three decades, as cinema has made the rapid transition from celluloid to digital production and exhibition, documentary films that rely heavily or even exclusively upon found footage have become more prominent across a variety of distribution networks and filmmaking modes. Increasing numbers of experimental documentaries, such as Andrei Ujica's archival footage *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* (2010), and the animated *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008) that uses found video footage for its emotional conclusion, have debuted and won accolades on the international film festival circuit. At the same time, Ken Burns' documentaries, famous for his talking-head interviews and extensive archival images, and the ubiquitous History Channel documentary have become established formats on television. Sprouting from this phenomenon is a mode of documentary filmmaking with its own historical lineage, dating back to Esfir Shub's experiments with found footage in *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) and shaped by the films of Emile de Antonio, Philippe Mora's *Swastika* (1974), and *The Atomic Café* (Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty and Pierce Rafferty, 1982). This mode, which I categorize as compilation documentaries, shares an essayist approach to historical documentation that interrogates documentary film's function as a visual and investigative record, while engaging with the archive on a conceptual and practical level through a reliance upon found footage.<sup>1</sup> This loose body of films recycles state archival materials such as newsreel footage, home movies, and other moving image ephemera to grapple with the representational limits of history by engaging with the complex indexical relationship between the photographic image and lived historical events and with the state-sponsored archive. The term compilation documentary derives in part from William Wees' distinction between three types of found footage montage—compilation, collage, and appropriation—outlined in *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (1993). Given the process of assembly from multiple sources which opens the door to multiple readings of these archival materials,<sup>2</sup> compilation documentary's engagement with the archive lies beyond Wees' initial distinctions.

Two such compilation documentaries, Romanian director Andrei Ujica's *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* (*Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceausescu*, 2010) and *One Man's War* (*La guerre d'un seul homme*, 1982) by Argentinian-born Edgardo

Cozarinsky, exemplify compilation documentary's engagement with documentary practice, the archive, and an experimental approach to visual historiography. Although different in many respects (and separated by eighty years and a continent), the thread that runs through both films is the filmmakers' investigation of the relationship between the found footage artifact and the archive. Ujica and Cozarinsky select, recycle, and juxtapose archival images to discuss periods of historical trauma as well as the act of filmmaking itself. Drawing upon state archival footage from the Romanian National Television and National Film Archives, along with excerpts from Ceausescu's commissioned home-video footage (also preserved in Romanian state archives), Ujica reconstructs the leader's fantasy of a successful Communist Romania during his harsh dictatorship (1967 – 1989). Similarly, Cozarinsky weaves together a complicated narrative of Parisian life under Nazi occupation during World War II from pro-Vichy propaganda newsreels and the *Paris Diaries* of German writer Ernst Jünger. In stitching together found footage from state-sanctioned archives to form their unconventional documentaries, both Cozarinsky and Ujica engage in the archival process itself through their filmmaking. While Ujica capitalizes on what Paula Amad describes as the counter-archival properties of film (the unruly abundance of visual data not easily contained or controlled by the archive) in *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu*, Cozarinsky problematizes the process of filmmaking and the concept of the archive through manipulation of the archival fragment. By posing his psychological study of Ceausescu within the realist framework of the compilation documentary, Ujica reasserts the "underlying truth of a historical past hidden behind the distorted spectacle of the image."<sup>3</sup> Cozarinsky, in contrast, challenges the documentary authority of the sampled archival footage and, in doing so, attempts to confront the establishment of the archive itself.

As a mode of filmmaking, documentary rests upon the assertion that film functions as a temporal record and, as such, may lay claim to some level of historical accuracy. While neither *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* nor *One Man's War* can be considered conventional documentaries, both films share a critical approach to historical documentation that interrogate film's role as record. Whereas documentary cinema typically relies upon the indexical sign of the photographic image—the chemically produced analogue of the profilmic visual and temporal field<sup>4</sup>—to assert the image's claim to reflect a historical reality, compilation documentaries directly engage with and complicate assertions of historical authenticity through, to draw on Catherine Russell, "a montage of memory traces, by which the filmmaker engages with

the past through recall, retrieval, and recycling” of found footage.<sup>5</sup> Bill Nichols, in examining documentary cinema’s claim to authenticity, notes the paradox between “a close physical or existential bond” between the referent and representation in a photographic image that creates a “seemingly irrefutable guarantee of authenticity” through the indexical sign.<sup>6</sup> Yet the reality that the photograph or film depicts is, he asserts, “the model but [...] not the model,” an authentic photographic “likeness” but not *historical* authenticity.<sup>7</sup> Although the referents did in fact appear before the lens at a particular special and temporal point (barring postproduction manipulation of the image), making the “likeness” of the cinematic image “authentic,” the film’s “*historical* authenticity” as a correct record of the past, its causes, and its intent remains in doubt.<sup>8</sup>

Analyzing found-footage texts addressing historical traumas and ethnographic temporality in *Experimental Ethnography*, Russell proposes that the archive serves as visual evidence of history.<sup>9</sup> Invoking an “aesthetic of ruins” that appropriates “technologized mass culture,” found footage inevitably invokes ghosts of history, as well as the archive as a site of memory by serving “as visual evidence of history.”<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Skoller supports Russell’s assertion, agreeing that filmmakers often regard archival images as “documents, evidence, or the raw material with which to understand another era in relation to how such images are discovered and understood in the present.”<sup>11</sup> Each film can therefore be characterized as Benjaminian or “self-consciously allegorical” in the ways filmmakers appropriate images from the past and recycle them as a reflection on, or critique of, the present.<sup>12</sup> Focusing on the aesthetic connotations of found footage, William Wees asserts that all found footage films, regardless of the extent to which the original images are manipulated, “invite us to recognize it as found footage, as recycled images.”<sup>13</sup> That self-referentiality, in turn, encourages “a more analytical reading [...] than the footage originally received.”<sup>14</sup> Manipulation of an image or sequence through, for instance, the repetition of shots or the accentuation of an image’s graininess, draws attention to its material status as a mechanically produced (and reproducible) collection of crystals on celluloid. Because Wees focuses only on found footage that originated in celluloid form in *Recycled Images*, not all of his conclusions are transferable to digital filmmaking and new media. Given Ujica and Cozarinsky’s experimental approaches to historiography through their use of found footage printed from celluloid archival films, Wees’s observations still provide a crucial link between the aesthetics of found footage and its authenticity as a signifier of the past. Although both *One Man’s War* and *The*

*Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* exploit the “discrepancies between the image’s original and present functions,”<sup>15</sup> Ujica reinforces the “appearance of *history itself*”<sup>16</sup> in the former through his employment of realist editing conventions to yoke the image fragments to his psychological portrait of Ceausescu and his fictional Romania. In the latter, Cozarinsky critically engages with the archive through a formal destabilization of the archival image’s ability to bear witness to history.

In her lengthy investigation of Alfred Kahn’s Les Archives de la Planète in Paris (1908 – 1931) in *Counter-Archive*, Paula Amad discusses the challenges offered by the invention of cinema to European archives, which had been institutionally restricted to text-based collections until the early twentieth century. Reactions to the new technology, she argues, generally fell into one of two camps. As a technologically unique visual and temporal record, “the film reel resembled a sort of time capsule or time machine [...] in which time is stored for future reference, marking the indexical, irrefutable, and reproducible trace of past events as they unfolded in duration.”<sup>17</sup> As Alfred Kahn and his contemporary, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, believed, film’s superior abilities (at the time) to document, store and revive the past would revolutionize the practices of text-based state archives.<sup>18</sup> Yet critics resisted this notion of an orderly and controllable record of reality, pointing to film’s equally potent nightmare of “infinite memory” in its documentation of reality, thus challenging “the positivist archive’s sacred myths of order, exhaustiveness, and objective neutrality.”<sup>19</sup> Amad describes this unruly abundance of visual and historical data offered within any filmic image—the “endless chronicle” of “unmanageable detail, unhealthy curiosity, and a pathological surfeit of memory”—as film’s counter-archival potential.<sup>20</sup> Film therefore contains both a positivist archival impulse to capture the desired minutiae of reality and a counter-archival challenge in its documentation of abundant and unanticipated details of whatever reality passed before the camera. Although the historical ‘film-as-archive’ discourses Amad discusses are rooted in nineteenth-century attitudes towards documentary evidence and an encyclopedic archive, her observations are nevertheless applicable to the conflicting relationships with the state archive in *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu*, as well as in all compilation documentaries.

Like Ujica’s two previous films *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992) and *Out of the Present* (1995), *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* evaluates the excesses and traumas of communism in the Soviet Union and its satellite states. In his third

film, though, Ujica returns to a recent national and personal trauma: the rise to power of Ceausescu in Romania and his trial in 1989 after the collapse of his dictatorship. *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* documents Ceausescu's rise to power as the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, his numerous state visits with foreign leaders, the elaborate public spectacles organized in his honour by sympathetic authoritarian regimes, and his hasty show trial and execution in 1989, all in roughly chronological order. As in his previous films, Ujica relies on historical footage from Romanian state archives as well as non-professional footage recorded by civilians as home video usage proliferated. In *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* however, Ujica's approach to historical and cinematic montage crystallizes in order to reveal not only Ujica's approach to Ceausescu's psychology but, more significantly, his understanding of film's counter-archival properties. By drawing on more spontaneous images of Ceausescu (outside of his carefully cultivated public persona) available in some of his unreleased home videos and footage at the beginnings and ends of official film reels, Ujica salvages nearly three hours of footage that capitalize upon cinema's encyclopedic and counter-archival nature to construct an alternative account of Ceausescu's rule. In doing so, Ujica does not challenge the representational nature of the archival images themselves so much as he addresses the original propaganda behind the images.

Ujica relies on the counter-archival potential of cinema to reveal the historical artifice of state-sponsored and preserved images of Ceausescu and his concocted image of a prosperous Romania cultivated in Romania's media. Working neatly within the definitions of compilation filmmaking, Ujica also employs conventional realist editing in the construction of his sequences. As a result, he offers the propaganda of the archival footage's content for critique but he does not, returning to Wees, "treat the compilation process itself as problematic."<sup>21</sup> In using Ceausescu's own fantasy images to build a cinematic text, Ujica reveals the propaganda images of a prosperous Romania as pure cinematic fantasy. While reading the images against their original purposes undermines Ceausescu's manufactured images of wealth and brings to light aspects of his megalomaniac psychology, the film nevertheless operates on the "assumption that there is a direct correspondence between the images and their profilmic sources in the real world."<sup>22</sup> Ujica recognizes that many scenes are staged for state cameras, especially public events such as Ceausescu's visits to fully stocked state-run bakeries during the latter half of his rule,

but he does not question the indexical nature (and the historical trace) of the archival images.

The press kit disseminated at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010 for the film's international debut provides an initial clue as to the way in which Ujica employed and understood the concept of the archive in his filmmaking. The press kit consists of several short texts, including an essay by Alex Leo Serban, a brief biography of Andrei Ujica, Milo Rau's interview with the director, a film synopsis, a director's note and the contact information for press agents. Both Rau's interview with Ujica and Serban's essay "The third eye of Ceausescu/Le troisième oeil de Ceausescu" provide glimpses into the film's production. Pointing out that Ujica had access to the Ceausescus' home movies from their mountain holidays and seaside trips, as well as to television broadcast footage, Serban emphasizes the "alternative look" of *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu*.<sup>23</sup> The contrast between the official images—"strictly coded" and "apparently neutral and "impersonal"—and the intimate nature of Ceausescu's home movies points to film's ability to provide a cross-reading or alternative approach to historical material.<sup>24</sup>

Taking Serban's argument a step further, *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* approaches the archival source in a similarly alternative manner. Amad defines the traditional archive as "a repository for state, unpublished records no longer in use," though she admits that the contemporary notion of the archive includes collections of personal or corporate papers, as well as the building that houses these fonds—that is, the collections of documents originating from the same source.<sup>25</sup> Ujica describes the process of compiling *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* in his interview with Rau as a secondary form of archiving. First and foremost, Ujica emphasizes the process of collecting and excluding visual records. From over one thousand hours of footage depicting Ceausescu, Ujica hired two researchers to select material related to Ceausescu's significant moments as head of state in chronological order.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the National Film Archive, which had taken over the archives of the former Alexandru Sahia Documentary Studio, and the Romanian National Television Archive, the "series of 'state home movies'" was found in a "Recollections" fond at the National Film Archive.<sup>27</sup> Limiting the scope of the selection process to the twenty-five years of Ceausescu's rule, from 1965 when he took power to 1989, Ujica then sorted through the remaining two-hundred-and-fifty hours of pre-selected material to compile the final film narrative.<sup>28</sup> Notably, Ujica also uses the vocabulary of the archive to describe the final project: "since our memories are both

black-and-white and color, both mute and 'with sound,' they are a lot like a film archive."<sup>29</sup> With the help of his editor Dana Bunescu and Titus Muntean, head of archival research, Ujica mimics the job of the archivist to compile his own, smaller archive of visual texts.

While the resulting film deftly weaves disparate archival fragments to compose a powerful indictment of Ceausescu as a harsh and out-of-touch leader, Ujica's focus remains firmly fixed on repurposing the image's indexicality rather than confronting it. Highlighting the formal qualities of film, Ujica explains how *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* "proves that it is possible to only use existing images to yield films focused on recent history" through montage, with the construction of scenes that "do not exist as such in the rushes" and classical editing to connect the scenes together.<sup>30</sup> He describes most of the footage as "protocol, ritualized images," housed in the "protocol archives" conventionally built by heads of state.<sup>31</sup> To compile his counter-archive, he turned to what he identifies as "the so-called remains"—not unlike Russell's aesthetics of ruins that also capitalizes on the fragments and debris of history—which "preserve the genuine moments."<sup>32</sup> In claiming that "every man is—before knowing he is being filmed and after he thinks the shooting has stopped—his true self,"<sup>33</sup> Ujica mythologizes the act of filming in a manner not unlike Alfred Kahn and other positivist archivists Amad references. Unconsciously echoing Kahn's film-as-visual-archive stance, Ujica also follows André Bazin's assertion of the camera's ability to bear "cinematographic witness" to reality,<sup>34</sup> offering "cine-allegories" of the past that are still firmly rooted in the "notion of an underlying truth of a historical past hidden behind the distorted spectacle of the image."<sup>35</sup> By contending that there is a "true self" to be discovered within the archive's reels of celluloid and a more accurate vision of Romania's past, Ujica "implies that there *is* a 'real' to these found images that can be uncovered and presented properly."<sup>36</sup> Or, as Skoller reminds us, a 'real' that more accurately reflects the filmmaker's conception of an ideological and historical reality.

From the very first frames of *One Man's War*, evidence can be found of Edgardo Cozarinsky's interest in images that convey an awareness of their own status as historical documents. German soldiers in rigid uniforms march through the streets of France behind the opening credit sequence, in footage reminiscent of many historical documentaries and fictional dramas. Yet, Cozarinsky very quickly departs from the hackneyed images of goose-stepping German soldiers. A brief sequence of a soldier posing with a camera, facing the viewers as he records the military's triumphant entrance into Paris, establishes two motifs,

that of seeing and filmmaking, through this inclusion of the humble handheld camera. Cozarinsky revisits both the apparatus of the camera and the complications of recording history on film throughout the *One Man's War*, doing so by manipulating the archival footage and including images of cameras.

As the film unfolds, the montage of archival fragments depicts the occupation of Paris by Nazi German troops, wartime fashion and cultural events in Paris, and the eventual Liberation of Paris in 1944, all in an initially linear (if haphazard) narrative. Cozarinsky's composition is paired with a voice-over narration derived from German writer Ernst Jünger's personal journals, preformed by French actor Niels Arestrup. Over images of Parisian streets, Jünger describes his quotidian activities including frequenting popular cafés and witnessing the execution of a German deserter. As the scene continues, however, the correspondences between the images and soundtrack become increasingly thin as the image-track diverts radically from the spoken narration. As Jünger debates whether he must be present at another execution after describing his distaste for violence, images of Marshall Phillippe Pétain suddenly intrude upon the screen. Jünger's monologue is interrupted further, this time aurally, by an excerpt of an unidentified newsreel's narrator, who begins to discuss the success of France under the firm and successful stewardship of Marshall Pétain and the new Vichy government. Despite an initial seeming correspondence between soundtrack and image-track at the beginning of the scene, the introduction of two narrating "voices," that of Jünger and the pro-Vichy newsreel narrator compiled from multiple archival sources, and the nonsequential arrangement of Jünger's entries undermine the ideological claims of the newsreels. The images, although arranged roughly from May 1941 to 1944, in fact jump between unrelated topics and locations to enforce this disruption of a linear and realist composition. The narration and interrupted chronology in effect force the viewer to contend with conflicting versions of the same history.

Cozarinsky's manipulation of archival footage and temporal progression in *One Man's War* speaks to his personal mistrust of film as a temporal record. In an interview for *Cahiers du cinéma* with Pascal Bonitzer, Cozarinsky remarked upon his uneasiness regarding the acceptance of an image's "authenticity" within documentary filmmaking: "Dans la plupart des films qu'on appelle documentaires on trouve un présupposé qui m'est profondément étranger, même antipathique: qu'on saisit la vérité par le document."<sup>37</sup> Throughout his oeuvre, and most noticeably in his first

film *Puntos Suspensivos* (*Dot Dot Dot*, 1971) and *One Man's War*, Cozarinsky maintains an experimental approach to montage and narration that compels the viewer to participate in meaning making. In this film, he employs various techniques designed to destabilize the realist framework of the archival images and passive spectatorship, including the use of contradictory narration, freeze frames, opening titles, intervals of black leader, and frame repetition. Olivia Lory Kay asserts in her essay "Gathering in the orphans" that the "interrogation of images" through such techniques employed by experimental and essayist filmmakers create rupture between obvious readings of a cinematic text, effectively 'opening up' the text to alternative and pluralistic meanings.<sup>38</sup> Manipulation of the archival footage in *One Man's War* therefore creates a "separation of self from history" as well as the literal "separation of image from text and sound from image."<sup>39</sup> Cozarinsky's manipulation of found footage does not only splinter the indexical sign from the real, but furthers his critique to a destabilization of the archive's authority as well.

Ernst Jünger, described by Cozarinsky as "[un] écrivain allemand" in the film's opening titles, was a highly regarded German officer during the First World War who came to reject the moral emptiness he witnessed during the Second World War in his writings. Stationed in occupied Paris from February 1941 to August 1944 with the task of representing the German armed forces among the Parisian cultural elite, Jünger recorded his personal experiences in two *Pariser Tagebücher*, or *Paris Diaries*.<sup>40</sup> Marcus Bullock argues that the journals "show the self-consciousness of a man who knows he is keeping a private record for a public readership.... He constructs perspectives from the historical past, and considers how his time will look to the eyes of future history."<sup>41</sup> Author of multiple essays, as well as the editor of a collection of war photographs from World War I, Jünger established a strong literary reputation in both his native Germany and post-war France. Despite Cozarinsky's selection of the more perceptive and sympathetic excerpts from his *Paris Diaries*, Jünger's political and literary past carries complicated ideological baggage. A one-time participant in right-wing opposition groups to the socialist-led Weimar government, Jünger continued to be involved with conservative politics even as he shifted away from National Socialism to an ideological rejection of the moral sickness of war.<sup>42</sup> Despite Jünger's conservative politics, Cozarinsky includes his personal notebooks as one of the two foundational texts in the film specifically because of the writer's complex positioning within a traumatic and volatile period of history and his complicated relationship to the documentary image.

In his analysis of Ernst Jünger's writings and his popularity within contemporary French intellectual circles, Bullock contends that Cozarinsky chose to incorporate Jünger's war diaries into *One Man's War* because of Jünger's literary emphasis on the technologies of seeing and his shared distrust of the photographic image. Despite the shifts in his political allegiances, Jünger maintains an interest "with seeing, with discovering and penetrating by means of spectacular powers, and with tracing the link that ties capacities of seeing to domination and violence" in his writings.<sup>43</sup> While Cozarinsky selects fragments from Jünger's journals specifically related to the occupation and liberation of Paris, Jünger's presence carries additional implications for the relationship between the camera and a history with which Cozarinsky, given his relationship to the Parisian intelligentsia, is undoubtedly familiar. In his essay "Über den Schmerz" ("On Pain") published in the collection *Blätter und Steine* in 1934, for instance, Jünger declares that photography is "an expression of a way of seeing that is cruel and characteristic of us".<sup>44</sup> As a mechanical device, the camera only records and objectifies all that falls within the profilmic field. By imposing the camera's own temporality on the material world, it exercises a power over it that is devoid of humanity or conscious thought, which enables individuals to wield recorded images as ideological as well as political weapons. Bullock also contends that Jünger's distrust of documentary photography and "a false materiality of the image" originated with the German political left's use of photographic images from World War I in the production of anti-war propaganda.<sup>45</sup> This distrust is evident in Jünger's earlier publications as well, including *Das abenteuerliche Herz* (*The Adventurous Heart*, 1929) in which Jünger remarks that he begins to dislike "all photographs from the war" because of their potential to validate ideologies through their status as indexical evidence. Cozarinsky clearly shares many of the same hesitations about the value of the archival newsreel footage in *One Man's War*. While Cozarinsky himself compiles a political rejection of war and human brutality, he maintains a critical approach to the archive and newsreel footage in line with Jünger's own criticisms. Cozarinsky's appropriation of Jünger's *Parisian Diaries* as a found literary text becomes a strategy of disruption in and of itself through the contrapuntal montage of the visual track and film sound, in effect forcing the spectator to contend with conflicting versions of the same events.

In addition to the vertical montage, Cozarinsky manipulates the archival images themselves. This manipulation takes two primary forms: the use of black leader to punctuate segments and

the arrest of particular frames. While each technique disrupts a recitation of the traumatic historical events captured within the footage, the use of all three techniques together problematize the act of filmmaking in his cinematic critique of historical documentary, found footage, and the archive. Since a “film image is not simply an indexical sign of a real event but an image of an image of an image, ad infinitum,” Skoller notes, found footage can reveal “the machinelike workings of historical narrative construction” through the strategic disruption and manipulation of the image and the film’s montage.<sup>46</sup> Deploying archival footage not to reveal concealed historical truths but to push archival images’ meaning past their historical referent, engaging with the process of montage itself, Cozarinsky questions the realism of conventional documentary practice, thereby diverging from Ujica’s counter-archival approach to visual historiography.

One such method of disrupting documentary conventions that Cozarinsky employs is to emphasize the intervals and spaces in between—between narratives, between film frames, and between ideologies. He repeatedly includes short segments of black leader, often only a second long, to punctuate specific, traumatic sequences while emphasizing the intervals and spaces in between preserved archival fonds and between film frames. In one scene recounting the execution of Jewish civilians in the Lodz Ghetto, for instance, the visual montage jumps between images of holidaying passengers aboard a luxury liner, a magnificent mountain vista, and graphic images of emaciated prisoners. Jünger’s voice-over explains how Nazi officials switched from shooting prisoners to less intimate methods of electrocuting victims before cremating their bodies. He ponders: “These methods were devised, it seems, because the SS in charge of shooting victims suffered nervous breakdowns. Ovens need little personnel.” As he speaks, shots of identical white houses in a residential German neighbourhood cut to a long shot of a large ocean liner with waving crowds watching it pass from shore, and finally to scenes of well-fed German civilians enjoying their outdoor recreation back aboard a steamship. After a shot of a magnificent mountain vista, the scene cuts to several seconds of black leader when Jünger’s narration continues. His voice-over explains how the head of the Lodz Ghetto had the odious task of selecting which Jews would be sent to the crematorium. The sequence focuses on the emaciated bodies of male victims, most of whom are so ill and malnourished that they cannot lift themselves out of their beds. Several black frames once again interrupt this graphic montage. Instead of building emotional momentum, these visual pauses interrupt the non-linear sequence, while reaffirming Cozarinsky’s refusal to offer

a causal relationship between the images and an historical narrative. These ellipses also subtly allude to the invisible spaces between the individual frames when projected at 24 frames per second, as well as the gaps in the archival record. Given the pro-Vichy stance of the newsreels, the few historical moments recorded which fell outside this ideological bias, such as the footage of the starving camp prisoners, become traces of the other undocumented traumas absent from this archival record.

At several significant points in *One Man's War*, the footage also freezes momentarily, giving the impression that the projectionist has halted and then restarted the film's projection. In one scene towards the middle of the film, Cozarinsky stops on the image of a young woman offering bouquets of white flowers to German soldiers aboard a train during a sequence of shots depicting soldiers as they're being transported across the European countryside. In five of the shots leading up to the freeze-frame of the young woman, the camera is continuously on the side of a train, echoing late nineteenth-century phantom ride actuality films. All the shots are rapid fragments, with scenes of the blurry onlookers positioned next to the tracks in the countryside followed by a brief image of soldiers looking out a train window from their boxcar with the camera positioned behind them. The film cuts to another phantom ride POV shot of a station platform, where a few individuals are watching the train go by. A man reaches out to give a hand, barely visible from the upper right side of the frame, a box of cigarettes. Like these previous shots, the fragment of the woman carrying flowers is only a few seconds long. She walks towards the camera, once again filmed as a phantom ride, moving into center frame as she holds out the flowers. At the moment she is positioned directly within the middle the frame, Cozarinsky freezes the image for the duration of two seconds before cutting to the next shot of French crowds throwing more flowers before a German soldier's car. This brief arrest of the frame interrupts the viewing practice, reminding the spectator that she or he is watching a montage of disparate images, not history itself.

Cozarinsky employs this tactic a handful of times, and most notably in the film's conclusion. In the final sequences, crowds rejoice in the streets of Paris as the American forces with their French partisan allies roll into the liberated city. After several close-ups on individual men and women as they stand on the edge of the crowds, shouting their support and waving at the incoming troops, Cozarinsky again returns to the freeze-frame to break the linear nature of the montage and add a layer of uncertainty to the sequence's meaning. He begins with a shot of a French policeman

holding a small personal camera in profile. The uniformed man squints as he points the camera at the cars and tanks driving by, visible in the background in the right half of the frame. This shot then cuts to a freeze-frame of three children looking off-screen to the right, presumably also watching the liberating forces. After two or three seconds, the image of the children is reanimated. This lasts only one second, however, barely giving the children time to move their hands together to clap, before the shot once again becomes motionless. This second freeze-frame is shorter, and the sequence then cuts to a shot of a blond woman also holding a camera. She is positioned on the left side of the frame, looking down at her camera. As the shot pans to the right, she looks up quickly; the image freezes, effectively holding her gaze as she looks to the left of the newsreel camera. Once again, this freeze-frame is held for a moment and the play of dark lines and discolorations left by various projectors upon the original film stock are the only movement visible.

The image proves to be a powerful final frame for *One Man's War*, as this anonymous woman is merely one of countless civilians preserved on celluloid by the nameless newsreel cameraman, and whose likeness was then retrieved from the French archives. In using a number of freeze-frames to halt, and then reanimate, the shots of the three children and the young woman with a camera, Cozarinsky effectively underscores the unidentified filmmaker's initial act of capturing the event for his newsreel. These individuals immortalized on celluloid grasping their cameras and documenting the historical events unfolding around them create a *mise en abyme*. Likewise, the freeze frames create a short "montage within a montage" of the children, consequently proposing this footage as the subject of the man's camera: a film record of a film record, both equally removed from the temporal moment they depict. In addition to its emphasis on looking and film apparatus, the freeze-frames also force the viewer to recognize the material nature of the original film stock itself, from which Cozarinsky printed copies for his own montage.

Given these manipulations and their consequential destabilization of the archival footage, conclusions regarding his scepticism of the indexical sign in documentary film can be extended to his approach to the archive itself. As a repository for documents and other historical traces, the archive "reflects what individuals, institutions, states, and societies imagine themselves to have been, as well as what they may imagine themselves becoming."<sup>47</sup> What is excluded from the archive therefore becomes as important as what was originally included. The materials

declined by the archivist, the gaps in the historical narratives and records, and those people or events that can only be inferred through their absences all make the archives a site of constant mediation and contestation.<sup>48</sup> Like Ujica's persistent interest in the state archive's preservation and solidification of historical truth in *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu*, Cozarinsky seeks both the consistencies and absences in the official archival record. The difference between these two compilation documentaries then rests in the latter's scepticism towards the archive's authority, as a concept and an institution, to offer "an underlying truth of a historical past hidden behind the distorted spectacle of the image."<sup>49</sup> Because the authority of the archive as a repository for artifacts (literary and visual) rests upon the authority of these documents, if the artifacts lose their historical status, the archive then also loses its power. Cozarinsky expresses this point within the opening moments of *One Man's War* through the allegory, delivered in Jünger's voice-over, of a safe that holds important papers: "I keep under key at the hotel my personal diaries," Jünger explains, "As my mission is to report on military manoeuvres and on the struggle for power between Army and Party in France, I had a steel safe put in my room... If this is questioned, no lock resists." If the value of Jünger's official military papers (held under lock and key like papers in an archive) is questioned, Cozarinsky claims, then the safe, with nothing of value to protect, likewise loses its authority. As a repository for state artifacts, the institute is therefore both a vehicle for preservation and means of conveying status.

In addition to challenging this relationship between the indexical sign of the archive fonds and of the found footage through the manipulation techniques described above, Cozarinsky is also quick to reveal the archival sources of his footage. Before a single image can crawl across the screen, the opening titles of *One Man's War* briefly describe the production and significance of the weekly newsreels, the source of his footage samples. Upon a silent dark screen, Cozarinsky offers the following:

Actualités Mondiales (1940-1942) et France  
Actualités (1942-1944). Journaux cinématographiques hebdomadaires. En une époque antérieure à la télévision, où la fréquentation des salles de cinéma était massive, ces magazines étaient la seule occasion, pour un très large public, de voir des images animées de l'actualité.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to providing the historical context for the production and distribution of the images he stitches together, his title frame

positions his newsreel footage as a type of informal, accessible archive. The act of archiving itself, though, is potentially as problematic as the act of filmmaking in Cozarinsky's view. Achille Mbembe echoes this connection, pointing out that the process of selecting and making sense of archival documents is akin to assembling pieces of time. The attempt to "formulate a story" with a "montage of fragments" inevitably creates an "illusion of totality and continuity."<sup>51</sup> It is this illusion of continuity that Cozarinsky repeatedly targets both in respect to filmmaking and the film-as-record throughout *One Man's War*.

Although different in filmic practice, cultural references and geography, a fruitful comparison can be drawn between two under-analyzed compilation documentaries given their use of found footage and approach to the archive: *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* (2010) by Andrei Ujica and Edgardo Cozarinsky's *One Man's War* (1982). Both filmmakers grapple with cinematic representation of traumatic periods within European history entirely through archival footage, composing cinematic narratives that alternatively embrace and critique the authority of the archive as an indexical record of history. Olivia Lory Kay further develops this relationship between the filmmaker and the archive by drawing a comparison between the act of compiling a film through found-footage montage and the role of the archivists in compiling an archive. As a site of mediation, Kay argues that the archive is "paralleled by the way a film essayist interrogates images."<sup>52</sup> Selecting, cataloguing, and juxtaposing images to compose a cinematic narrative is akin to the writing of an historical narrative from archival artifacts. Or, as Mbembe asserts, "writing history merely involves manipulating archives."<sup>53</sup> Since both found footage filmmaking and archiving are means of organizing data on a fundamental level, Ujica and Cozarinsky's interaction with the archive through filmmaking is an established leap within the compilation documentary mode. While Ujica relies upon the counter-archival potential of film to construct his own cinematic archive of Ceausescu's rise and fall to power in Romania from state-sanctioned archival fragments, Cozarinsky's scepticism regarding film's effectiveness as an indexical sign within visual historiography leads him to manipulate the archival image and disrupt documentary convention, thereby calling the archive itself into question. These divergent yet complementary experimental approaches to filmmaking and the archive demand a new conceptualization of the relationship between the two.

*Rachel Webb Jekanowski is a Vanier CGS recipient in the Film and Moving Image Studies Doctoral Program at Concordia University in Montréal, Canada. She completed a Master's degree in Film Studies from Concordia University, and earned her BA (Honors) from Queen's University in Ontario. Her current research focuses on archival practice, non-theatrical cinema and documentary. Additional interests include: Yiddish cinema, postcolonial theory, and animal and agricultural studies. She has presented at a number of conferences, including SCMS in 2013, and writes for the French online film blog Bref Ciel. Ms. Jekanowski hails from the United States, but has lived in a number of countries, including Canada, Israel and the United Kingdom.*

---

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term “found footage” is a controversial one given its linguistic emphasis upon authorial discovery, salvage and cinema’s pre-digital state, that is to say celluloid film. Nevertheless, I will use this term because it is the most recognized term for this form of filmmaking. I would like to note another, and perhaps more accurate term, for the reuse of archival footage (notably distinct from stock footage) offered to me by Canadian filmmaker Caroline Martel: the “research film.”

<sup>2</sup> William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), 33.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>4</sup> A special thanks to the unidentified reader at *Shift: Graduate Journal for Visual and Material Culture* for supplying this concise definition of indexicality.

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Russell, “Archival Apocalypse: Found Footage as Ethnography,” in *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 238.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 149-151.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 151.

<sup>9</sup> Russell, “Archival Apocalypse,” 240.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 240.

- <sup>11</sup> Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, xxxviii.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), 11.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. 12.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid. 42.
- <sup>17</sup> Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 135.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. 134.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. 134.
- <sup>21</sup> Wees, *Recycled Images*, 36.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> "Press Kit [The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu]," *Festival des Cannes*, accessed 4 April 2012, <http://www.festival-cannes.com/assets/Image/Direct/033819.pdf>.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Amad, *Counter-Archive*, 1.
- <sup>26</sup> "Press Kit [The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu]."
- <sup>27</sup> Rob White, "Interview with Andrei Ujica," *Film Quarterly* 64.3 (Spring 2011), 69.
- <sup>28</sup> "Press Kit [The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu]."
- <sup>29</sup> White, "Interview with Andrei Ujica," 69.
- <sup>30</sup> "Press Kit [The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu]."
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?*, translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 161.
- <sup>35</sup> Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, 29.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> "In most films considered documentaries there is an assumption that I find profoundly alien, even repulsive: that truth can be captured by means of a document" (my translation). Pascal Bonitzer, "Entretien avec Edgardo Cozarinsky," *Cahiers du cinéma* 333 (March 1982), 15.
- <sup>38</sup> Olivia Lory Kay, "Gathering in the Orphans: Essay Films and Archives in the Information Age," *Journal of Media Practice* 11.3 (2010), 257.
- <sup>39</sup> Kay, "Gathering in the Orphans," 258.

<sup>40</sup> Marcus Paul Bullock, "A German Voice over Paris: Ernst Jünger and Edgardo Cozarinsky's Film *One Man's War*," *New German Critique* 59, Special Issue on Ernst Jünger (Spring-Summer 1993), 78.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 81.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>46</sup> Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, 29-30.

<sup>47</sup> Kay, "Gathering in the Orphans," 262.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 262.

<sup>49</sup> Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, 29.

<sup>50</sup> "World Actualities (1940-1942) and France Actualities (1942-1944). Weekly newsreels. In the period before television when cinema attendance was massive, these newsreels were the only opportunity for a wide audience to see moving images of the news [my translation]."

<sup>51</sup> Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 21.

<sup>52</sup> Kay, "Gathering in the Orphans," 262.

<sup>53</sup> Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and its Limits," 25.

---

## Bibliography

Amad, Paula. *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

*Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceausescu (The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu)*. Dir. Andrei Ujica. Romania: 2010. 35mm.

Bazin, André. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?* Trans. Hugh Gray, 9-16. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Bonitzer, Pascal. "Entretien avec Edgardo Cozarinsky." *Cahiers du cinéma* 333 (March 1982): 15.

Bullock, Marcus Paul. "A German Voice over Paris: Ernst Jünger and Edgardo Cozarinsky's Film *One Man's War*." *New German Critique* 59, Special Issue on Ernst Jünger (Spring-Summer 1993): 77-103.

- Festival des Cannes. "Press Kit [The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu]." Accessed 4 April 2012. <http://www.festival-cannes.com/assets/Image/Direct/033819.pdf>.
- Kay, Olivia Lory. "Gathering in the orphans: essay films and archives in the information age." *Journal of Media Practice* 11.3 (2010): 253-266.
- La guerre d'un seul homme (One Man's War)*. Dir. Edgardo Cozarinsky. France: 1982. DVD.
- Mbembe, Achille. "The Power of the Archive and its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid and Razia Saleh, 19-26. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002.
- Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Russell, Catherine. "Archival Apocalypse: Found Footage as Ethnography," in *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, 238-274. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Skoller, Jeffrey. *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Wees, William C. *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993.
- White, Rob. "Interview with Andrei Ujica." *Film Quarterly* 64.3 (Spring 2011): 66-71.