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## Flaneurish Mechanical Eye Seeking Physical Reality

**Abstract:** This paper is intended to explore Radu Jude's camera dexterity in first part of *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* (2021), by using Siegfried Kracauer's idea of realism based on physical reality and with the help of Walter Benjamin's notion of flaneur which he developed out of Charles Baudelaire's poetry. Despite the large number of researches on Romanian New Wave moviemakers, few studies have been carried out to examine this young director's movies belonging to the so-called second wave. This study aims to take steps towards filling this gap in knowledge by conducting an analysis of his camera craftsmanship development in his last movie which despite the apparent cinematography resemblance with his contemporary directors, slightly differs in function. It is posited that Jude's camera lens possesses an artistic quality cracking the seeming order of contemporary modern society which is less detectable with naked eyes.

**Keywords:** Camera dexterity, Siegfried Kracauer, Physical Reality, Walter Benjamin, Flaneur.

Jude begins his filmmaking career with a short film called *The Tube with a Hat* (2006) recorded by handheld camera and continues with long takes and self-reflexivity in *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009) where a marginal family entwined with advertisement and consumerism. Then after *A film for Friends* (2011), where he tries his hands in an experimental one fixed single-take movie, in *Everybody in Our Family* (2012) he chooses a fluid diegesis in similar fashion to Puiu's *Stuff and Dough* (2001). Jude in his black and white *Aferim* (2015), breaks completely off with his previous camera style by taking typical mainstream camera style and keeps the same style in *Scarred Hearts*

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(2016), adding long takes and colorful images in 1:1 aspect ratio. *The Dead Nation* (2017), entirely constructed by still images like Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962). In *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* (2018), he picks up handheld camera, self-reflexive documentary style, fix long shots of the female protagonists reading history books, old photography images of Jews executions to question Sergiu Nicolaescu and Romanian role in the 1941 Odessa massacre. In *uppercase Print* (2020) he embarks on adapting Gianina Carbutariu's stage play dealing with the Ceausescu era with brightly colored images, state TV footages, direct talks to camera and a short diversion of camera at the end of the film toward advertising billboard and city life in long shots with over voice narrator. This very last camera style is fully developed in the first part of *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* (2021) without any narrator's voice, followed by compressed essayistic filmmaking, recalling French New Waves movies and finally the Emi Cilibiu's three different trials ending with fantastical Wonder Woman.

As can be seen, he has experienced numerous ways of filmmaking which could be easily traced back in early movies of first New Wave directors, especially Cristi Puiu. Yet, it appears that a new "visual and sensory experience" has emerged which in its austerity heavily censures the "modern environment" (Aitken 17), leading to a new appearance of "material reality" or "physical existence" (28) proposed by Siegfried Kracauer in *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*.

Development of material realism was made in 1960, after his immigration to United States of America from Germany. However, it was ignored and misunderstood by both structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers of the time to be rediscovered in 1970s. Dudley Andrew, one of the important figures in film theories, in his book *Major Film Theories* (1976) describes his idea as a form of "naive realism', normative system building, or conservative humanism"(129). On the other hand, in Aitkin's reading "Kracauer's film theory is founded on the critique of modernity" (168). Emphasizing on the existing material reality before the camera, he took a detour from the French film theorists of his time, chiefly André Bazin's concept of realism which was widely taught in academic course and practiced by both European and American filmmakers.

From his perspective, the essence of cinema or the main unit of cinematography speaks through two distinctive level, cinematic material and technique. The former deals with the raw material cinema used to capture it and the latter concentrates on the technical dimension of cinematography. Kracauer believes that camera captures flow of life and thus, recording temporality and impermanence of flowing moments, which other forms of art such as literature or painting could never attain as comprehensively as cinema does. Moreover, hardly ever any modes of arts come as close as cinema to display unprejudiced intervention. Camera never meddles with the material objects being put before it, nor adds or enhances any sort of interpretation on it. Thereby, favoring the cinematic materiality, he claims that cinematic or

artistic techniques, lightening, set design, costumes and makeup to name but a few, which have been improving and developing as technology advances through the last century, seeks to intervene actively in this immediate experience of time and space; accordingly, adding its own interpretation upon the image.

Advancement of techniques comes at the cost of fading or obliterating the material aspect of movies. In the early infancy of cinema, the represented images on screen were mostly immediate and non-mediatory. Take *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895) and *The Photographical Congress Arrives in Lyon* (1895) as examples. Despite the technical naïveté of The Lumière brothers, the intended material aesthetics or realism could be witnessed. In other words, the greater the technological advancement, the lesser realism we have.

Realism is not opposed to modernism, as Bordwell believes so. Here Realism stands in contrast to Idealism because of its material nature. Yet, history of cinema moves towards the manipulation of raw and physical materials. Both German Expressionism Cinema under Weimar Republic and Soviet Montage Cinema present their ideal by intelligent and systematic manipulation of cinematic techniques, enlightened montage and set design and lightening respectively. In this regard, Andrew argues that,

Kracauer associates the basic means of photography with cinema's raw material. He labels all other aspects of the film medium supplementary "technical" properties. These luxuries of the medium include editing, the close-up, lens distortion, optical effects, and so on. (82)

In a sense, in these cinema everything is predetermined from the outset ideally speaking, therefore the outcome will be to some extent subjective and determined. Technical developments, in this respect, takes over raw materials and by that means expropriates movies of its inherent power.

The concept realism in Romanian cinema should be dealt cautiously due to the fact that it has undergone substantial changes since the establishment of cinema as form of art. Absolute post-war dominance of Soviet movies left no space for filmmakers to present reality other than the regulated political one, condemning the capitalist values and idolizing the communism's principles. Liehms support this fact in their book, *The Most Important Art: Soviet and Eastern European Film After 1945*, as they argue that:

After 1948, Romania's cinema was less favored than its counterparts, and its development was slower. The artistic community, decimated by purges and emigration saw film as a prolonged arm of an unpopular regime. [...] Romanian film created its own style based on realistic bathos of commercial silent films, on dialogues of socialist-realist jargon. (139)

Thus, any other forms of realism than socialist-realism, which was mostly similar in aesthetics and narrative, was literally intolerable. In the post-Stalinism movie-making practice, known as “thaw”, the Eastern Bloc filmmakers, including Romanian ones such as Lucien Pintilie and Liviu Ciulei, attempted to discover new form of artistic expression, aiming to “defrosting” the socialist realism dogmas (Pop 213). Following this bright interval of demythologization, to borrow Nasta phrase, “a new wave of repression” (Nasta 18) washed back Romania to communism’s shore once again, with Nicolae Ceaușescu’s captancy, lasting until 1989. Amalgamation of communism and nationalism in the new regime push Romanian filmmakers toward mythmaking cycle again; hence, lionization of Romanian historical figures have increased enormously. Having been used as a “massive tool for nationalist propaganda” (Pop 213), cinema once more has become party-centered practice representing constructed reality. In other words, reality, in its almost pure sense, was constantly intimidated and manipulated in favor of higher objective or cause imposed by an outside power as a readymade product to be consumed.

When Cristi Puiu produced *Stuff and Dough* (*Marfa și banii*, 2001), he intelligently and primarily concentrated on camera role capturing the reality before it. There is an affinity between what Puiu did to Romanian Cinema and what Kracauer expounded in his film theory. Bringing and representing the world as closer as possible to the material world we are living in is the major goal of cinema in Kracauer’s belief because camera could captures the real world with all its incidents, unpredictability and uncertainty. In this sense, Puiu’s camera adopts what Andrew has cited, in relation to cinematic realism in which

medium tends to turn back to its material. Instead of projecting an abstract or imaginative world it descends to the material world. The traditional arts exist to transform life with their special means, but cinema exists most profoundly and most essentially when it presents life as it is. The other arts exhaust their subject matter in the creative process; cinema tends on the contrary to expose its matter. (81)

By stressing the matter, Kracauer seeks the unembellished flow or fact of life characterized by uncertainty, fluidity, transitory and indeterminacy. By abandonment of the controlled old traditional cinema principles known as “rule of the tripod”, Puiu cuts the cord to his predecessors for he knows he has “nothing to lose but your chains”. Breaking the chains of camera from the tripod, manifested in hand-held technique, which could be traced in French modern cinema as well, results in a kind of fluidity which later picked up by other New Romanian directors such as Mungiu (*4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, 2007), Nemescu (*California Dreamin’*, 2007), Jude (*Everybody in Our Family*, 2012). Besides hand-holding camera, Romanian New Wave filmmakers practice minimal or natural lightening and everyday unremarkable costumes which are in sharp contrast to nationalistic epic movie

productions; such as *The Dacians* (1966) & *Columna* (1968), indulging themselves in lavish set designs and costumes of 70s, illustrating the historical figures of Romania so as to provoke and solidify patriotism in Romania intended by Ceaușescu (Nasta 21).

In contrast to adherents of old traditional filmmaking practice representing the one and only truth of lived experience, Romanian New Wave movies are mostly revolved around getting as close as possible to the unornamented life, “Sweeping away all bourgeois theatricality and falseness” (Rodica 23). According to Kracauer, this fabricated realism screened on should be removed simply because this is not reality we witness in the outside world with our naked eyes. The invention of camera should assist human to discover the suppressed reality of our daily life, no to become the alleged accomplice of the falsified world, as practiced in American Studio System before and after WWII. With all the sophisticated cinematic equipment they had back then and have now, the American filmmakers and its supporters desire to represent the constructed world out of images as an ultimate possible order of reality; whereas, Puiu and other material-reality enthusiasts attempts to put a crack on given reality, shattering it down to reveal the physical realism. Hence, this fabricated realism should be removed simply because this is not reality we witness in the outside world with our naked eyes. The invention of camera should assist human to discover the suppressed reality of our daily life, no to become the alleged accomplice of the falsified world.

This fabricated world was the number one enemy of the new generation of Romanian filmmakers, each criticizing it in their own cinematic aesthetics, including Radu Jude. In regards to Romanian New Wave filmmaking style Doru Pop in his book, *Romanian New Wave Cinema: An Introduction* (2014) claims that “we can say that there is no Romanian New wave, and if it were to exist, it would simply be the way Cristi Puiu makes movies,” and his filmmaking development falls into four phases beginning with “realism to naturalism, and documentary-style authenticity to anthropological approaches” (42). Undoubtedly apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, as Radu Jude also belongs to this family trees. Heavily influenced by the European Modern Cinema, he recapitulates the New Wave Cinema’s cinematographic styles as,

Sequences shot in long takes, cinéma vérité camera style, minimalist lighting and settings, on location mise-en-scène and on-location shooting, mostly in urban settings. The storytelling also follows the minimalist logic, with antiheroes and marginals as key characters, with an austere treatment of time and space. (34)

Through these new physical characteristics, New Romanian directors clearly distinguish themselves from their ancestors or other contemporary European counterparts. What Pop asserts as ‘aesthetics of observational documentary’ in Puiu’s moviemaking style (63), in Anna Batori’s idea opens the door for new exploration, enabling “the director to gain access to the inner world of the characters and the reality of life” illustrating “everyday happenings in their

absolute duration and spatial coherence” (79). Batori’s emphasis on “everyday happenings” is in tally with Kracauer’s “observation of everyday life”, desiring to “return to the things themselves” rather than concealing it with ideological ends (367).

Radu Jude in the first part of *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* (2021) accentuates this particular everydayness with his camera craftsmanship. The movie is divided into three parts by intertitles of “One-way Street”, “Short dictionary of anecdotes, signs and wonders” and “Praxis and innuendos”. The story of the movie revolves around a female history teacher, Emi Cilibiu, whose sex video goes viral on the internet, a home-made porn recorded and uploaded on private site by his husband, Eugen, arousing fierce anger among parents. She is summoned up by school master to defend herself on parent-teacher conference despite Covid-19 rules and regulations. In a heated debate with parents, Emi attempts to defend herself, as well as, casts doubts on their accepted beliefs regarding social norms, nationalism, literature and history. Jude provides three alternative endings for the movie; first, she is acquitted, in the second she is accused and in the final alternative she is transformed into a Wonder Woman revenging the parents by penetrating dildo in their mouths!

Having shown the amateur homemade video sex, the title and subheading appear in white words on a floral pink invitation-like card as light-hearted music is being played. The lightness of the sound and color juxtaposes with a Sanskrit quotation taken from one of the epics of ancient India, the Mahabharata, “No one understands that the world is sinking on the ocean of Time that is so very deep and that is infested with those huge crocodiles called decrepitude and death,” (Santi Parva, Section XXVIII). In an explicit reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, Jude touches on imminent danger of death, devouring thousands of people all around the world at the time of making the movie. Next in line, the viewers are told in words that the movie falls into different parts, starting with “one-way street”.

Before the parent-teacher conference is held at school, Emi Cilibiu, a history teacher, heads to schoolmaster’s home so as to explain and discuss the issue with her. That is when she and camera embark upon a short journey. As she runs some errands, the camera runs its lens over the city, as if doing Flânerie capturing a series of ordinary commonplace happenings. This flaneurish wandering that reflects the distinguishing characteristic of the modern man, derived from poetry of Charles Baudelaire, wandering and observing the new emerging buildings and architectures in streets of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century modern Paris. Developed and expanded by German Jewish philosopher and thinker, Walter Benjamin, the flaneur has been put to practice in the early years of photography and later cinema.

Victor Fournel in his most important book *Ce qu’on voit dans les rues de Paris* (*What We See in the Streets of Paris*, 1867) elaborates the flaneur as a “roving and impassioned daguerreotype that preserves the least traces, and on which are reproduced, with their changing reflections, the course of things, the movement of the city, the multiple physiognomy of the public spirit, the confessions, antipathies, and admirations of the crowd”

(268). The American filmmaker and philosopher, Susan Sontag, in her collection of essays *On Photography* (1977) also highlights the flaneurish quality of photographer capturing the physical reality of the world through its camera lens before the development of hand-held cameras;

The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the flaneur finds the world “picturesque”. (36)

After buying a bunch of flower at indoor grocery market, the scene cuts to Emi walking down and next crossing a busy street while holding the flower upside down. As she passes the camera, instead of a typical cut, it slowly pans right to show passengers waiting in tram station. After some pedestrians passing and staring directly at the camera and arrival of a tram, reminiscing *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, it resumes its pan, showing Emi at back waiting for the green light. The camera then leaves Emi to show the Romanian Orthodox Church in wide shot, fenced off by construction hoarding, an image which in the second part will be frowned upon from the Jude’ perspective. Then it begins window shopping in front of the bookshop, where Lulian Vlad’s *Confession for History* book is next to school bags with pictures Elsa and Olaf on them, two popular Disney characters from the computer-animated musical fantasy franchise called Frozen. In left pan, then, we see two people standing in line keeping social distancing in front of camera, as Emi is lost in distance and so on.

The mechanical Flâneur wanders around the city to observe an artless daily routines of a history school teacher in the following places; indoor grocery market, stationery store, bus and metro stations, fitness center, café, open market and department store, fast food restaurant, game and gambling salon, drug store, an building of the Bucharest cinema, and bookshop. Despite the total coherence of first episode, it could be rendered as series of passages through which Emi, camera, and accordingly, the viewers are drifting freely to look seriously at suppressed aspect of reality of Bucharest, which, to borrow Benjamin words from *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) “escape natural vision” (9).

A phenomenon emerging from the camera lens, according to Benjamin, is failed to be obtained by man’s eyes which surprisingly two times more in quantity. Camera’s lens uniqueness, in its literal and figurative meanings, lies in its sheer mechanical eye. Despite the wide spread disapproval of its peculiar nature, unlike human’s eyes, it could look at and into things disinterestedly and thoroughly. The former quality refers to the showing the object as it appears in front of camera, without adding or assuming an attribute; that is, displaying objectively and the latter one, in psychoanalytic perspective, points out the unconsciousness of the object before it.

Jude, like most of Romanian New Wave filmmakers, “follows the logic of outdoor, urban location filming” (Pop 16), the busy streets and ordinary city spaces of Bucharest to pierce through the prevailing order. He would not pierce through the city’s flesh, unless he uses the drifting mechanical eye. In addition to that, the long shots enhances the effect of realism, helping us to re-experience the lost experience of the real, one that purposefully cut out by visual and aural montage technique in classical cinema and Hollywood movies. Pop characterizes the long shot as a rebellious filmmaking techniques against the dominant cinema industry of communism era in Romania,

Another rebellion, in terms of classical cinema- making techniques, was at the level of montage, where the fast cut was perceived as a form of the past, thus rejecting the authoritarian intervention on the “matter” of the film, which resulted in editing techniques that favored slow paced cutting. All in all, they changed the rules and canons which prescribed what “a good movie” was, as part of a more profound rejection of the dominant super-ego. (118)

Applying the Benjamin’s fundamental perspective on Flânerie, the best material reality one can achieved is through the spatial experience and direct contact with the outside world. It is in this sense that Jude takes us to an observational excursion, inside both city and its citizens. Despite the apparent beautiful look of the city, an important cultural site, in this case the building of Cineatograful Bucharesti (Bucharest cinema), architectural masterpiece built in 1884, has gone to rack and ruin. A panoramic view of this dilapidated building is given to us with left and right pans of the camera, as the five Greek deities statues are standing at the top.

Human consciousness is solely capable to look an aspect of the perspective (the conscious part of nature), whereas the eye of the camera observes and reveals something undiscovered and unexpected. To put it in a Freudian terms, naked eyes could catch sight of superficiality or consciousness of object while the armed eye, i.e. mechanical eye or camera possesses inspection, or better say, unconsciousness quality, “The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses” (Benjamin 27). Undoubtedly, suppression happens every day like the air we breathe in involuntarily. Not only do ordinary people or in larger scale government in Romanian Communist era suppressed the taboo subjects within the social reality (take abortion issue as an example in *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*), but also in minor aspects such as feeling and emotions. That is where the camera steps in, so as to expose what we are being dispossessed or, to borrow cinematic terms, cut. In a sense, it could be argued that aim of invention of camera is unveiling and reviving the unconscious part of the social texture and individual space, which are both manifested in materials.

Physical reality of Kracauer is directly lined with topic of space, where materials are in. Regarding the represented spatial texture of Romanian movies, Lisiak states that “juxtaposition of two main power structures — the socialist past and the depressive present —

represents the former and the current colonizer” and despite the western globalization which he calls “violation of space” (199), he argues that the basic socialist texture of the city would not change. In *Looney Porn*, Jude’s camera shows both communist (blocks of flats) and post-communist urban structures (Supermarkets and department stores). However, if we take Czepczynski’s statement regarding space into consideration, “Architecture is one of the main representing languages of modern society that signifies ... economic, social and cultural processes” (2), the represented spaces by the mechanical eye of Jude’s camera are greatly show tendency toward capitalism, which are explicitly manifested in the medium shots of department stores, cafes, and street billboards and advertisements. Close similarity can be spotted here with *They Live* (1988) a science-fiction movie directed by John Carpenter, in which a drifter named Nada (played by Roddy Piper) accidentally discovers a box of seemingly useless sunglasses which later on turns out to be see-through glasses, detecting aliens and the hidden ideology beneath the city. In other words, Sunglasses help Nada’s unaided eyes to penetrate through the daily objects. Striving for the same goal, Jude astutely uses the mechanical eye of the camera itself, freeing the viewer from a typical cinematic narrative, to display the reality of economic transformation of Romanian government toward free market-oriented capitalist economies.

Not only we enter, pass through, and exit the urban spaces, but also the city dwellers, acquainting with the psychological and mental disorders such as anxiety and anger. Exploring the modernist inclination of Antonioni’s ‘interior psychological landscapes’, Gandy posits that the environments reflects the “psychological state of the character” (224). Take the quarrel between the two female customers at supermarket cashier, where the woman loses her temper over a short delay of the apparently governmental female worker at line because of the decision she has to make to cut down her purchases so as to fit the limited meal ticket received by government. Or take illegal parking on sidewalks Emi Cilibiu bumps into. Although she asks the man politely to remove the car from the sidewalk (please park your car somewhere else), she is threatened to be raped, unfairly commented upon her appearance (mug face) and belittled for not owning a car. In another shocking scene, a man in shorts and a white vest gets out of his massive four-wheel SUV at a snail’s pace unsympathetically as he parks his car on a pedestrian sidewalk. Last but not least, a young man is run over by a red car because of his complaint about the illegal sidewalk parking. Government is also reproached for its strong inclination toward military operations and radical nationalism. In a drugstore scene, an old man raises strong criticism against government’s policies for cutting down budget for education, culture and health, and increasing in intelligence budget, as well as overlooking children transplant mafia in city.

The invitation-like frame at the begging of the first part, in Jude’s viewpoint, is the invitation to an unveiling ceremony of everyday realism, covered up by the so-called widely accepted order of things, which in reality is a big illusion. As far as Kracauer is concerned,

Jude's camera like a sharp surgical scalpel slowly incise city's skin as to show the concealed deep infections. The constructed order or unnatural represented image, patched together by advancement of cinematic montage techniques, is exposed as the stereotype mainstream narrative disappears back into the 'flow of life', giving it a "permeable" quality which Kracauer attributed to Italian neorealism, "in the sense that the plot is constantly interrupted by images of physical reality" (Aitken 177).

Besides the literary thinkers of the period mentioned above, the importance of reality was also foregrounded by the famous Russian filmmakers, Dziga Vertov, as well. While a large number of directors were seeking social-realist atmosphere of Russia in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, he shifts his attention towards everydayness banal reality of everydayness. He believes that,

The movie camera was invented in order to penetrate deeper into the visible world, to explore and record visual phenomena, so that we do not forget what happens and what the future must take into account....the genuine purpose of the movie-camera - the exploration of the phenomena of life. (34-5)

What attracts the new generation of Romanian moviemakers is the phenomena and essence of life that they assist to move and circulate. In his analysis of realism in Romanian cinema, Rodica also points out similar attitude with different name, "realism-without-borders" and he claims that "everything is worthy of being the subject of a film (A Kino-eye premise) and everything can be represented as it, in its momentary occurrence" (25).

One should not forget the importance of cinematographer of the movie who attempts to catch the images. Radu Jude and Marius Panduru, the renown Romanian cinematographer who has filmed other famous Romanian New Wave movies such as Corneliu Porumboiu's *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006) and *Police, Adjective* (2009), Florin Serban's *If I want to whistle, I whistle* (2010), Ruxandra Zenide's *Ryna* (2005), Nae Caranfil's *The Rest is Silence* (2007), have been making movies together since 2006 when they collaborated on *The Tube with a Hat* (2006). Over a decade, he shot over half of Jude's feature movies including his last two movies. In *Uppercase Print* (2020), after showing Louise Vuitton shop, the camera pans left to show a picture of notorious Vanessa Stone, half-naked blonde stripper, on a vertical street billboard, exchange stores, fast food restaurant, exotic travel destination advertisement, Valentine's concert in the biggest shopping center of Bucharest on medium-size billboard and Barbie doll advertisement on the giant street wall, a shot of Romanian Orthodox Church and finally Euro media broadcast services. In a three-minute panorama ride, Jude shows that we are bombarded with the capitalism and consumerism. The subject of consumerism is not new to Jude, as he dealt with it in *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009), where an 18-year old girl has to perform in a juice promotional spot, sipping an smiling before the camera saying "she is the happiest girl in the world", so as to able to collect a brand new car she has won in a juice brand's lottery. In *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn*, the commercial ad takes

one level further and adopts a sexual quality. On a large billboard advertisement, a woman is sticking her tongue out and pointing down her throat, while the captions says “I like it deep”, insinuating overtly to act of fellatio, an act which Emi is harshly reproached for and shockingly revenge with in the third trial.

As a result of dropping the conventional filmmaking style and bypassing epistemic filters, Jude gives us first-hand experience of substance and essence. His camera and he himself are in pursuit of running up a crack in *The Truman Show* world, whereas mainstream cinema is in search of one uncut total existing reality. The extensive representations and productions and of the real world have imbued people that what they have shown is the only possible version of reality. Jude’s camera as a conscious eye does not consider resemblance to reality as the power of salvation; what is practiced at either in American or European movies, putting all their attempts to present a more credible picture of reality on screen, gaining as much credibility and reliability as possible, pretending to be the ultimate existing reality, nor accepts “realism is supposed to create reality — a socialist reality” which is “new generation of filmmakers working after 2000 from a pure cinematic point of view — because of its illusionist function.” (Pop 46)

Romanian New Wave in its core principle is political in a sense that the young directors not only criticize the totalitarian Romanian regime of pre and post-communism, but also the current republic Romania for its widespread capitalism through the everydayness. Generally speaking, Aitken believes that their movies,

are political statements about society — again in the tradition of Neorealist and French New Wave films. And, again, as is the case with all European filmmaking practices, the young Romanian directors, with their constant references to the political and social problems of their time, became a part of a long tradition of European art as political statement. (23)

In his definition of new cinema, Pop defines the overall objective of the New Cinemas as “bring the realities of a nation (or a country) to the world, to present globally that which is relevant locally” (30). Despite his general, it must not be forgotten that the capitalism and consumerism the young Romanian filmmakers, including Jude, try to represent on screen is not by any right mind local anymore, but a global malady; to paraphrase it with current vocabulary of the word, is pandemic disease. On a surface level, and to highlight the era when COVID-19 is pandemic, masks are worn by characters, but on the deep level, Jude detects larger and far more dangerous diseases. Bucharest is a microcosm of modern world we all living in, infested with diseases of consumerism, sexism, and racism. He has uncovered a can of worms in which we fail both physically and mentally.

In his rejection of the “metaphorical” cinema of his Romanian forefather “as well as all the artificial forms of realism practiced by the communist film-makers” (Pop 41), Jude attempts

to reveal the *Lebenswelt* behind the false veil and shows a novel essence of life to the viewers. As Ian Aitken argued in *Realist Film Theory and Cinema* (2006), Kracauer's film theory is heavily influenced by profoundly "influenced by his interpretation of both Husserl's conception of the *Lebenswelt* and Freud's theory of the unconscious and the psychological symptom"; and, which the former "had the greatest impact upon him" (157). Edmund Husserl in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936) proposed and developed his idea of *Lebenswelt* (Lifeworld) as he was after unprejudiced consciousness and immediate present. In this regard, Aitken argues that,

"his theory of cinematic realism is best described as a form of phenomenological realism which, like the Kantian aesthetics and Husserlian phenomenology from which it is derived, seeks a basis for knowledge and representation through close observation of the material world" (2006–178)

As far as phenomenology is concerned, it could be claimed that the invention of camera was to assist human to capture this immediate present, this uncertainty and indeterminacy of physical reality which has become more and more impossible for us to grasp. In fact, camera could be rendered as the resuscitation machine so as we could resume and revive the immediate experience of world we are living in. While common realistic drama cinema attempts to offer its viewers an objective and coherent understanding of the lifeworld, the nature of the world is indeterminate and fluid. Redemption of physical reality, as Kracauer's claim, is achieved provided that one eliminates all these paradigms and (embellishing cinematic technical) knowledge.

Like Pintilie's *Reenactment* (1968) which shocks its audiences through "directness" (Serban 5), undoubtedly this kind of realism would be shocking for us, as Jude's audiences were genuinely amazed with unraveled episodic narratives, first by a homemade porn, next by flaneurish camera style, then by dense essayistic movie and last by its time loops and Marvel-style ending. In each episode, Jude's storytelling style breaks the network of power, gender and politics relations and shows a heterogeneity inherent in reality which was avoided in communist period. *Lebenswelt* exists as a result of existing flaws and contradictions, not the coherence of the whole; sharing this idea with his viewers that the conceptual realism is open to fissures, dissimilarities and extensiveness. New waves directors as well as Jude, as can be seen in *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* is seeking new means of cinematic visual and narrative expressionism, an alternative ways thinking the relationship between reality and truth which in here could be described as window shopping camera.

To conclude, the new adopted cinematographic style, use of Flâneurish mechanical eye by Radu Jude has genuinely cracked through the assembled unnatural reality and opened our eyes toward the physical material and immediate surroundings, as well as its impact on people's social life. Taking Kracauer's idea of film production into consideration, "representing the

fragmentation and abstraction characteristic of the modern condition" and "transcending that abstraction, and redeeming reality", it could be claimed that "true value of film (Jude's film included) lay in its potential to redirect the spectator's attention to the texture of life which had been lost beneath the abstract discourses which regulate experience" (170). Jude's camera style not only possesses the intended realism, but also 'redemptive' value through which the "repressed 'real' of contemporary Romanian society could be made "visible". If "Gorzo goes as far as to label Puiu's approach as "Bazin"-ism, which is to say that Puiu's works must be linked directly with the tradition of early French theories on realism in cinema" (Pop 48), I would like to claim that Romanian New wave moviemakers share a close affinity with Kracauerism, considering and practicing cinema as a redemptive worth, releasing reality from the ideology of communist era by their handheld camera flow and above all, Radu Jude's flaneur-like camera crawling Bucharest's streets and spaces criticizing the modern era in post-communism Romania swallowing up by capitalism.

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