

GROWING UP WITH LAUREL AND HARDY: EXPLORING RADU COSAȘU'S "CINEMA WRITING"

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Abstract The aim of this paper is to offer a different understanding of the way Radu Cosașu writes, emphasizing the cultural background and the passion that the author has in relation to cinematography. A summarized look at Radu Cosașu's career as a writer provides a sufficiently fertile foundation to understand the importance he gives to the art of cinema, as well as the influence this art exerts on his writing. Having as a focal point the volume *A Living With Laurel and Hardy*, which was included by the writer in his series of *Works*, the present approach is focused on identifying the methods through which Radu Cosașu links his writing to cinema.

Keywords Radu Cosașu, cinema, biography, writing style, montage.

In the preface entitled "A world without tears" of the second volume of Radu Cosașu's *Works*, C. Stănescu presents how memory is a core element for the writer's work, and then he extends his analysis on the matter of style. In this sense, C. Stănescu underlines the elements that define Radu Cosașu's literary and non literary texts: irony – directed towards himself or the outside world –, melancholy, wit and a "cinematographic view" of the world:

Radu Cosașu's 'Survivals,' including or especially those of cohabitation with Stan and Bran, are 'moments and sketches' of the long war for independence of a writer who, like his great predecessor, feels the enormous and sees the monstrous. It is obvious that this structural Caragialism is actualized in Radu Cosașu's stories seen through the camera lens, through a cinematographic world view.¹

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¹ C. Stănescu, *O lume fără lacrimi* [A world without tears], in Radu Cosașu, *Opere*, vol. 2: *O viață cu Stan și Bran; Sonatine* [Works, volume II: A Living With Laurel and Hardy; Sonatine], preface by C. Stănescu (Iași: Polirom, 2009) 11: "«Supraviețuirile» lui Radu Cosașu, inclusiv ori mai ales acestea din conviețuirea cu Stan și Bran, sunt forme, episoade, «momente și schițe» din lungul război de cucerire a independenței unui

C. Stănescu considers that Radu Cossașu's way of recording life through the "camera lens" is specifically influenced by the nineteenth century writer I. L. Caragiale and, furthermore, the very film stock is the paper on which Radu Cossașu writes and lives:

The cinematographic film is the paper on which Cossașu writes – and on which he lives –, whose creature we could imagine as appealing to the baroque genius Arcimboldo, with his famous portrait of the librarian made of covers – in our case, wrapped in cinematographic film.²

Here lies the starting point of this paper's aim. Adding to this the fact that several Romanian film and literary critics suggested that there is a strong connection between Radu Cossașu's texts and cinematic methods, my aim is to identify and analyse the different ways in which cinema represents a foundational element in his writings.

The birth and life of a cinephile writer

Radu Cossașu's life was, in one way or another, connected to cinematography even before he assumed his literary pseudonym. While still a child, his father was taking him to the cinema, and this habit facilitated the birth of the cinephile in him, as he repeatedly remembers: "I think the cinephile was born in that kid at the movie (with Laurel and Hardy, of course) where he got scared to death by the car on the canvas that was going to come down and run him over"³ – because, as the author himself suggests: "nothing can be born without a cry of pain, horror and wonder."⁴ From this point onward, Radu Cossașu managed for the most part of his life to keep in touch with his cinephile side, mainly by going to the cinema and writing about movies. As the film critic Victor Morozov indicates, Radu Cossașu even has some notable contributions in the Romanian cinematographic culture:

When he was not writing his autobiographical fictions (collected in the series *Survivals*), Radu Cossașu went to the cinema. In fact, his relationship with the 'seventh art' – not a sudden meeting, but a piece of the road traveled arm in arm, comparable only to his passion for football – was fruitful: we owe him the script of a wonderful film, *A Film With A Charming Girl* (1966) directed

scriitor care, ca și marele său înaintaș, simte enorm și vede monstruos. Că acest caragialism structural se actualizează la Radu Cossașu în povești văzute prin lentila camerei de luat vederi, printr-o viziune cinematografică a lumii, este un lucru evident."

Note: All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

² Ibid.: "Película cinematográfica e hârtia pe care scrie — și pe care trăiește — Cossașu, a cărui făptură ne-am putea-o imagina ca atrăgând atenția geniului baroc al unui Arcimboldo, cu celebrul său portret al bibliotecarului făcut din coperti — în cazul nostru, înfășurat în peliculă cinematografică."

³ Cossașu, *Opere*, vol. 2: *O viețuire cu Stan și Bran; Sonatine* [Works, volume II: *A Living With Laurel and Hardy; Sonatine*], 21: "Cred că cinefilul s-a născut în copilul acela la filmul (cu Stan și Bran, desigur) unde s-a speriat grozav că mașina de pe pânză va coborî și-l va călca."

⁴ Ibid.: "Nimic nu se poate naște fără strigăt de durere, groază și uimire."

by Lucian Bratu, several decades of publicist work (mainly between 1967 and 1987, in the *Cinema Magazine*) and two books: *Life in Cinema Films* (Ed. Meridiane, 1972) and *A Living With Laurel and Hardy* (Ed. Eminescu, 1981).⁵

Morozov's assertion not only summarizes the writers connection with cinema, but also indicates the way in which this connection was maintained: firstly, he wrote a movie script – so he engaged directly with the cinematographic art –, secondly he maintained a constant relation with the cinema and the community by writing about movies, and lastly he published two books that are very directly connected to his cinephile experience – in this regard, one might add that many of his other books can be related to the cinema in one way or another.

The apparition of the movie *A Film With A Charming Girl*, which was based on the script written by Radu Cosașu and was directed by Lucian Bratu, and the subsequent reception mark an important milestone in the history of Romanian cinema, as it represents “the first production censored by the communist regime during Ceaușescu.”⁶ In the book *Cinema in SRR: Conformism and Dissidence in the Film Industry During Ceaușescu*, Bogdan Jitea tackles the censorship of the film co-written by Radu Cosașu, summarizing the criticisms that were made: the film was accused of formalism, “unhealthy foreign influences” and “lacking morality.”⁷ This is a crucial cultural episode in terms of the evolution of Romanian cinema and Radu Cosașu's relationship with cinematography (at least regarding film production). Bogdan Jitea's presentation of the different criticisms of the movie also outlines an interesting scheme for the way Radu Cosașu understood cinematography and how he would have liked to approach it. This mainly concerns the protagonist's modes of construction, which were strongly influenced by the new wave of French cinema (Agnès Varda and Jean-Luc Godard) and British cinema (John Schlesinger), and which were opposed to the “schematic models of communist propaganda.”⁸ Bogdan Jitea believes that the censorship of this movie has had a discouraging effect on the Romanian cinema scene in general: “What is certain is that the censorship of this innocent movie, which did not raise any political issues, alienated filmmakers from current affairs. It's similar to the situation in

⁵ Victor Morozov, “Radu Cosașu, scriitor de cinema” [Radu Cosașu, cinema writer], in *Scena9* (9 July 2020): <https://www.scena9.ro/article/radu-cosasu-scriitor-de-cinema>: “Atunci când nu-și scria ficțiunile autobiografice (culese în seria *Supraviețuirile*), Radu Cosașu mergea la cinema. În fapt, relația acestuia cu «a șaptea artă» – nu o întâlnire fulgerătoare, ci o bucată de drum parcursă braț la braț, comparabilă doar cu pasiunea sa pentru fotbal – a fost fructuoasă: îi datorăm scenariul unui film minunat, *Un film cu o față fermecătoare* (1966) în regia lui Lucian Bratu, câteva decenii de publicistică (în principal între 1967 și 1987, în *Revista Cinema*) și două cărți: *Viața în filmele de cinema* (Ed. Meridiane, 1972) și *O viață cu Stan și Bran* (Ed. Eminescu, 1981).”

⁶ Bogdan Jitea, *Cinema în RSR: conformism și disidență în industria ceaușistă de film* [*Cinema in SRR: Conformism and Dissidence in the Film Industry During Ceaușescu*] (Iași: Polirom, 2021), 270: “prima producție cenzurată de regimul ceaușist.”

⁷ See *Ibid.*, 271.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Soviet cinema in the 1920s and 1930s, when there was a dearth of topical films, even though critics were clamoring for them.”⁹

Radu Cosașu himself indicates that his own cultural development is strongly related to the movies that he had watched growing up. In *A Living With Laurel and Hardy*, Radu Cosașu declares: “The most enjoyable autobiography, and perhaps the most accurate in the series of autobiographies I have been working on for as long as I can remember – dreaming at least here of ‘complete works’ – would be the one written in the light of the movies seen from childhood to the later childishness,”¹⁰ hence this kind of “autobiography,” the one that starts from cinema experience (and not major life events) could be the most “accurate” autobiography that he can write. Victor Morozov considers that Radu Cosașu demonstrated, through his two books on the topic of cinematography, that he is a “great cinema writer,” and then he continues to describe what being a “cinema writer” means: “What does it mean to be a cinema writer? I would say at least two things: to know that a beautifully crafted sentence is always preferable to a wooden tongue, and to understand that film is more than just literature + illustrative images.”¹¹ Morozov’s article is essential in understanding that Radu Cosașu is more than just a storyteller, enthusiastic about football, music, french culture and cinema, showing that his cinematographic knowledge is worth taking into consideration. But what about his literature?

From cinema to writing or vice versa?

When discussing Radu Cosașu’s books, the first point that one has to make in order to fully comprehend the object of study is that his books are hard to categorize – at least in the traditional sense. On the one hand, his first seven books were strongly controlled by the censors of the communist regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, thus resulting in producing a “socialist realism” literature which isn’t the most representative work for his personal literary or artistic intentions – this idea could be relatively easy to demonstrate by comparing his first pieces of literature with the books that he publishes after 1968, at least from a compositional point of view. On the other hand, his second publishing phase, marked by the publishing of *Personal*

⁹ Ibid., 271-272: “Cert este că cenzurarea acestui film inocent, care nu punea nici un fel de probleme politice, i-a îndepărtat pe cinești de subiectele de actualitate. Este o situație similară celei din cinematografia sovietică a anilor ’20-’30, în care se înregistrează o penurie de filme de actualitate, deși critica le cerea cu asiduitate.”

¹⁰ Cosașu, *Opere*, vol. 2: *O viață cu Stan și Bran; Sonatine* [Works, volume II: *A Living With Laurel and Hardy; Sonatine*], 22: “Cea mai simpatică autobiografie, poate și cea mai corectă din șirul de autobiografii la care lucrez de când mă știu – visând măcar aici la «opere complete» – ar fi cea redactată în lumina filmelor văzute din copilărie până la copilăria din urmă.”

¹¹ Morozov, *Radu Cosașu, scriitor de cinema* [Radu Cosașu, cinema writer]: “Ce înseamnă să fii scriitor de cinema? Aș zice că cel puțin două lucruri: să știi că o frază condusă frumos e întotdeauna preferabilă unei limbi de lemn și să înțelegi că filmul înseamnă ceva mai mult decât literatură + imagini cu funcție ilustrativă.”

Monkeys (1968)¹² – the book that Radu Cosașu considers his “true literary debut”¹³ –, shows another side of his writing style. After escaping the frustrating constraints imposed through the “socialist realism” agenda, Radu Cosașu’s writing becomes more subjective, analytic, and profoundly biographic. His books begin to resemble an amorphous object that cannot be exclusively defined through the usual understanding of the term “literature”. Although some of Radu Cosașu’s books, like *Life In The Cinema Movies* (1972)¹⁴ and *Five Years With Belphegor* (1975)¹⁵, contain essays on cinema and sports reports (formerly published in Romanian journals and newspapers of the decade), all of his books expose, to one degree or another, the same two distinctive components: the personal, subjective experience and a notable degree of literariness. This is one of the reasons why I consider Radu Cosașu’s books hard to categorize and why I intend to treat them as being related to his literary production, directly or tangentially.

A Living With Laurel and Hardy was published in 1981, after Radu Cosașu got to publish three volumes of the series *Survivals* and the book *Life In The Cinema Movies*. Taking this into consideration, one can assume that the Romanian cultural scene was already familiarised with his style and theme of writing very personal literature until he got to publish the autobiography that was composed starting from the experience of cinema. On one hand, this marks an important point in this writer’s literary journey, because he got the opportunity to establish his writing style. In 2003, the Romanian literary critic Mircea Iorgulescu expressed a very important idea regarding Radu Cosașu’s writing habits, by underlining the fact that he is transforming his biography, his big life events, into a writing theme:

If other authors have tacitly or quietly repudiated their «on the line» writings from the first period of the communist regime, Radu Cosașu is the only one who has made a literary theme out of their insistent to obsessive evocation. It is perhaps the major «survival». He saved himself as a writer by remembering, not forgetting.¹⁶

With the volume *A Living With Laurel and Hardy*, Radu Cosașu got to write about his life, but he changed the theme: it was no more about the life of Oscar Rohrligh, but about the countless cinematic experiences that formed the cinephile in him. In a manner that became more and more specific for Radu Cosașu, this book was another volume that placed together apparently random essays and short stories that are held together by a bookbinding and by a theme: the

¹² Radu Cosașu, *Maimuțele personale* [Personal Monkeys], (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1968).

¹³ Radu Cosașu, *Opere*, vol. 1: *Maimuțele personale; Povești pentru a-mi împlânzi iubita; Alți doi ani pe un bloc de gheață* [Works, volume I: Personal Monkeys; Tales To Tame My Sweetheart; Another Two Years On An Ice Block], preface by Sanda Cordoș (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 6.

¹⁴ Radu Cosașu, *Viața în filmele de cinema* [Life In The Cinema Movies], (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1972).

¹⁵ Radu Cosașu, *Cinci ani cu Belphegor* [Five Years With Belphegor], (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1975).

¹⁶ Mircea Iorgulescu, “Adevărul integral și artistic” [The Integral and Artistic Truth], in *Revista 22*, no. 719 (23 December 2003): <https://revista22.ro/cultura/adevarul-integral-si-artistic>: “Dacă alți autori si-au repudiat tacit ori fără prea mult zgomot scrierile «pe linie» din prima perioadă a regimului comunist, Radu Cosașu este singurul însă care a făcut din evocarea lor insistentă până la obsesiv o temă literară. E, poate, principala «supraviețuire». El s-a salvat ca scriitor amintindu-și, nu uitând.”

cinema. However, with this volume, Radu Cosașu had the opportunity to present himself in another light: not as a Jewish kid that grew up in a bourgeois household and achieved to help and represent the communist agenda, but as a cinephile. This book's starting point has at least two ramifications: it is slightly less political focused – only slightly, because Radu Cosașu could never separate himself from the socio-political problems of the world –, and it is a way through which the writer could prove that he is more than a sports reporter with a keen eye. The latter result represents a point of interest in our case because, combined with Victor Morozov's affirmations about the contributions in the cultural sphere of the cinema, represents the next focal point of this approach.

Radu Cosașu's *A Living With Laurel and Hardy* could be summarised as an esoteric book on cinema. This characteristic is, first and foremost, the result of his own understanding of cinema. He offers the reader a collection of essays and short stories that deconstruct the main elements that form the cinematic experience. The fragment about James Dean is a great example for such a perspective. His reflection on James Dean starts from comparing him to an angel that fell from the Garden of Eden on Earth, and continues to present the "revolution" that he started:

The revolution accomplished by James Dean, in the middle of the sixth decade, among the first young men of the screen, is the seduction of that anguish with which seldom, I say never, the first young man, the male star, the fatal man of the canvas, thought of conquering the crowd of women in the theater and on the screen.¹⁷

What can be of interest here is the critical perspective that he offers regarding the role of the actor in the cinematic universe. Radu Cosașu sees in James Dean acting the counterpart for the famous *femme fatale*, which starts another comparison with the popular masculine figures presented in literature, the whole fragment underlining the importance of a good casting and the major role that the actor plays in the cinematic universe:

James Dean brought and put into circulation a different kind of weaponry, another male arms race proliferated; he was a rocket never seen before in the black and white sky, which was also crossed like a meteor, driving mad the girls and even the ladies who had forgotten Hamlet, Péciorin and Werther, the first young men with whom literature – long before cinema – had realized the fascination of the psycho-astenic.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cosașu, *Opere*, vol. 2: *O viață cu Stan și Bran; Sonatine* [Works, volume II: *A Living With Laurel and Hardy; Sonatine*], 93: "Revoluția realizată de James Dean, la mijlocul deceniului șase, printre junii-primi ai ecranului, e seducția acestei angoase cu care rareori, nu zic niciodată, junele-prim, vedeta masculină, bărbatul fatal de pe pânză s-a gândit să cucerească mulțimea de femei din sală și de pe ecran."

¹⁸ Ibid.: "James Dean a adus și a pus în circulație un alt tip de armament, a proliferat o altă cursă a înarmărilor masculine; el a fost o rachetă nemaivăzută pe cerul alb-negru, străbătut de altfel ca un meteorit, înnebunind fetele și chiar doamnele care uitaseră de Hamlet, Péciorin și Werther, junii-primi cu care literatura — cu mult înaintea cinemaului — realizase fascinația psihoastenilor."

He considers his work a revolution because it is fundamentally changing the model, the archetypal masculine figure, and it does so only through the means of the cinema. His text delivers the same kind of deconstructivist theoretical perspective on different aspects of the evolution of movies, such as the situation of transforming canonical writers' books into movies. For example, whilst talking about Hemingway, the author affirms:

Like Scott, like Faulkner, he had no luck with movies. This bad luck is a good reference to the endurance of his prose. It cannot happily convert itself into something other than what it is. It's pointless and silly to screen the old man's dream of lions. Even with Spencer Tracy, this movie is but a skeleton of the marvelous story, the marvel being eaten – as the poet intended – by the sharkiness of the real, said and seen.¹⁹

Here, Radu Cosașu's perspective is very important in understanding the tensions that such a project (of transforming literature into movies) can generate. Moreover, he underlines the very distinctive features of literature and cinema that differentiate one from another. Every art form contains its limits, and transferring content from one to another can be sometimes impossible, even with great additional help (in this case, the actor Spencer Tracy).

His writing provides not only a fresh and not necessarily professional perspective on cinema, but also contains a point of view specific for age of cinema. For example, he compares the works of Charlie Chaplin or the Marx Brothers with the work of Walt Disney, the latter representing the perfected and method that lacks raw and rough elements that make up the world:

Disney is suspect to me because he's too cute, as they say. His adorable humor is more often than not the humor of the well-to-do man, haunted for a day or two, once, by a lack of money that has long since been solved, and for good... His poetry has no dizzying spell, but effectiveness. His conflicts are obsessed with success, in the struggle waged in a barnyard with nothing infernal, though mischievous mischief and bang-and-pop gags abound. But there's little pain, the tears are easy, the laughter easy, the tickles long.²⁰

Lastly, the picture of the essay fragments that make up the volume *A Living With Laurel and Hardy* are placed together with pieces of personal experience that offer insight into how cinema directly

¹⁹ Ibid., 92: "Ca și Scott, ca și Faulkner, el n-a avut noroc cu cinemaul. Ghinionul acesta e o bună referință despre rezistența prozei sale. Ea nu se poate converti fericit în altceva decât este. E inutil și caraghios să ecranizezi leii visați de bătrân. Chiar cu Spencer Tracy, filmul acesta nu e decât un schelet al poveștii minunate, minunea fiind mâncată — precum voia poetul — de rechinăria concretului zis și visual."

²⁰ Ibid., 226: "am recunoscut că Walt Disney mi-e suspect și nu-l prea iubesc. Disney îmi este suspect fiindcă-i prea drăguț, cum se zice. Umorul lui adorabil e mai întotdeauna înlesnit, al omului îndestulat, hăituit o zi, două, cândva, de lipsa de bani care s-a rezolvat și ea demult, cu bine... Poezia lui n-are vrajă amețitoare, ci eficacitate. Conflictele lui sunt obsedate de succes, în lupta dusă într-o ogradă fără nimic infernal, deși abundă năzdrăvăniile drăcești și gagurile cu poc și bum. Dar durere nu prea există, lacrima e ușoară, râsul facil, gâdilitura îndelungă."

relates to or affects the particular experience of the individual in society. A great example in this sense is the fragment that relates how he came to understand Charlie Chaplin's creations:

I understood the essential fraternity radiated by Chaplin not from chronicles and monographs, but through toil, through a grain of sweat, on a basis, so to speak, economic, from which an aesthetic was born, an aesthetic of the film, but not only of him, but also of work, of spadework, of freedom and fraternity. The revelation of the first paycheck took me that afternoon – teary-eyed as at *Cuore*, but with the tears of an unknown realization – I think I laid the foundations of my cinematic culture.²¹

This fragment emphasizes the power that personal experience has over rigid discourses that are only theoretically grounded in terms of an individual's contact with a foreign art. It also emphasizes the strong connection that a work of art (cinema or literature) has with the historical and socio-political context from which it emerges.

Radu Cosașu's connections to the art of cinematography seem to exceed the barriers of his biography and personal interest. In a recent broadcast dedicated *in memoriam* to Radu Cosașu (May 4th, 2023), while talking about his cultural habits, Andrei Gorzo expressed a very important and brief idea in this regard: he said that there is an important "cinematographic principle" in Radu Cosașu's texts, the "principle of montage."²² He added to this the fact that he considers Radu Cosașu one of the few Romanian intellectuals that truly understood cinema, in the sense that he understood that cinema is about what you see and what you hear. Victor Morozov also agreed on this and added the fact that Radu Cosașu is truly a *monteur*. Furthermore, regarding the volume *A Living With Laurel and Hardy*, Andrei Gorzo adds that the writer's option for montage isn't related to aestheticization, it just encompasses the way in which he perceives the world. But this way of analysing Radu Cosașu's literature isn't characteristic only for our contemporary film and literary critics. For example, his first volume of *Survivals* (1973), which is not composed specifically around the cinematic theme – like *Life In The Cinema Movies* or *A Living With Laurel and Hardy* – got a considerable amount of good receptions from the critics, even regarding his cinematographic manner. In 1973, Adrian Georgescu was writing this about Radu Cosașu's *Survivals*: "The poetry of the places described, a certain poetics of the psychology of the characters give this volume by Radu Cosașu an original touch. The technique used is that of cinematographic narrative, made up of independent cutouts

²¹ Ibid., 65: "Esențiala fraternitate iradiată de Chaplin am înțeles-o nu din cronici și monografii, ci prin trudă, printr-un bob de sudoare, pe o bază, să-i zic așa, economică, din care sigur că se naște și o estetică, o estetică a filmului, dar nu numai a lui, ci și a muncii, a caznei, a libertății și fraternității. Revelația primului salariu m-a dus la după-amiaza aceea – cu ochii în lacrimi ca la *Cuore*, dar cu lacrimile unei necunoscute înțelegeri – cred că am pus bazele culturii mele cinematografice."

²² See "Intrare Liberă" [Free admission], "In memoriam Radu Cosașu," TVR Cultural, Mirela Nagâț, guests: Raluță Dună, literary historian, writer Liviu Ornea, film critic Andrei Gorzo and literary critic Victor Cobuz. Joining via Zoom are literary historian and critic Bogdan Crețu and film critic Victor Morozov: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mhNyrCsRoY>.

with common interference waves.”²³ Even though his analysis is rather brief, he points out that the technique used is that of the “cinematographic narrative,” being composed by “independent cutouts” or “decoupages,” which is just another way of expressing the montage technique – thus marking Radu Cosașu’s reception as a “cinema writer” even more valid, considering that 50 years after some of his books debuts this is still a topic of interest for the critics that get to analyse them.

Although Andrei Gorzo was talking about montage in Radu Cosașu’s books referring, mainly, to the way they are composed, this technique can be seen at work on a microstructural level as well. In this sense, my analysis of this cinematographic technique is based on two different and somewhat complementary ways of understanding montage. On the one hand, the “analytical” or “dramatic” montage, in André Bazin’s terms, based on the laws of cropping that “had been developed by 1915 in American cinema.”²⁴ This is the “frame-counterframe” mode of construction, which aims to present “reality more effectively, firstly by allowing the viewer to see it better and secondly by emphasizing what is valuable.”²⁵ On the other hand, the “dialectical montage in Soviet Marxism,” according to Gilles Deleuze’s classification, which “replaces the lost unity with a real source of conflict, which is class conflict, and derives the principle of montage from the creation of contrasts to the realization of a spiral, which advances from one state to a better position.”²⁶ Bogdan Popa adds to the description that:

In Soviet Marxism, montage is not a *cut and paste* of various empirical elements (as D.W. Griffith seems to theorize in his parallel montage), but the capture of an organic whole where elements are determined by each other. Montage seizes reality not simply as a process of development, but as a development where contradictions constitute its internal engine and qualitative changes appear gradually.²⁷

Although the process of montage may seem similar in the two descriptions, the second understanding might be more functional in terms of discussing Radu Cosașu’s writings because it is not based exclusively on contrast but on the “spiral” type of connection that is established between the elements that make up the frame realized through montage, which finally reproduces reality more faithfully following the logic of becoming rather than by imitating it.

²³ Adrian Georgescu, “radu cosașu: supraviețuiri” [radu cosașu: survivals], in *Viața românească*, no. 10 (1973): 157-159: “Poezia locurilor descrie, o anume poetică a psihologiei personajelor dau acestui volum al lui Radu Cosașu o tentă originală. Tehnica utilizată este aceea a narațiunii cinematografice, alcătuită din decupaje independente cu unde de interferență comune.”

²⁴ Andrei Gorzo, *Lucruri care nu pot fi spuse altfel: un mod de a gândi cinemaul, de la André Bazin la Cristi Puiu* [Things that cannot be said differently: a way of thinking cinema, from André Bazin to Cristi Puiu] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), 24: “fuseseră puse la punct până în 1915, în cinematograful American.”

²⁵ André Bazin in *ibid.*, 25: “prezintă realitatea într-un mod mai eficace, în primul rând permițându-i spectatorului s-o vadă mai bine și în al doilea rând punând accentul pe ceea ce merită.”

²⁶ Bogdan Popa, “‘Reanimating the spirit of the avant-garde,’ but with Ideology Critique: Montage in Solomon and Jude’s films,” *Transilvania*, no. 8 (2023): 67.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

In his recent book entitled *What I Learned From Graham Greene: A Family History* (2024), Andrei Gorzo offers the perfect example in which one could analyse a literary fragment from a cinematographic point of view:

But Greene's picture is a cinematic one, realized largely through an accumulation of fugitive impressions – things caught in motion, glimpsed from cars and trams, things happening simultaneously in different parts of the city, at different times of day, as in those experimental documentaries of the 1920s that were called 'urban symphonies' [...]. It is an imagistic, lyrical prose, relying not on verbal inventiveness, but on the effects of juxtapositions of details: that is to say, on montage.²⁸

The film critic Andrei Gorzo indicates that this scene is "cinematographic," rather than literary, because it uses cinema means of construction. First, it is realised by "accumulation of fugitive impressions" (this being the elements that compose the world), and, secondly, it is based not on "verbal inventiveness" but on the "juxtapositions of details," which represents the technique of montage. We can identify a similar formula in the first chapter of Radu Cosașu's *A Living With Laurel and Hardy*. After the protagonist is banned from relating film plots to the children by his father, the following scene is narrated:

Then,/ through a mix that I had never encountered/ in any sequence of my life, from the courtyard, there/ began to be heard what I might call/ the *Imperial*, that is, a concert of screams that/ chanted: 'We want the sound! We want the sound!'. My grandmother/ lifted up her curtains and/ gasped. Despite the order to 'don't get up/ from the table until it's over,' I jumped up/ from the chair and Dad followed me. In the courtyard was an/ Eisenstein picture (also seen by him, in/ Stiller) – a long line of people coming/ on the snow to the palace, to the Tsar's feet,/ to conjure him to save them, with the profile of/ Cerkasov in the foreground, black beard waving/ over the white plain. When they saw me, framed/ like a cocoon between father and grandmother, they broke into/ applause, and a little girl, Angi, came under/ the window and begged father to/ let me tell them movies, that they/ would be bored without me. To which my father,/ now a grown-up, didn't know what to say to them, and/ then I, knowing how to handle an emotion, told them that I thanked them,/ that I had no words, that I would ask my father,/ and everything would be all right, if our parents love us.²⁹

²⁸ Andrei Gorzo, *Ce am învățat de la Graham Greene: o istorie de familie* [What I Learned From Graham Greene: A Family History] (Iași: Polirom, 2024), 119: "Dar tabloul lui Greene este unul cinematografic, realizat în bună măsură printr-o acumulare de impresii fugitive – lucruri surprinse în mișcare, întrezărite din mașini și tramvaie, lucruri întâmplându-se simultan în diferite părți ale orașului, la diferite ore ale zilei, ca în acele documentare experimentale ale anilor 1920 cărora li se spunea «simfonii urbane» [...]. E o proză imagistică, repezit-lirică, mizând nu pe inventivitate verbală, ci pe efectele juxtapunerilor de detalii: adică pe montaj."

²⁹ Cosașu, *Opere*, vol. 2: *O viațuire cu Stan și Bran; Sonatine* [Works, volume II: A Living With Laurel and Hardy; Sonatine], 29: "Atunci,/ printr-un mixaj pe care nu l-am mai întâlnit/ în nici o secvență a vieții mele, din curte, a/ început să se audă ceea ce aș putea numi/ *Imperialul*, adică un concert de țipete care/ scandalu: «Vrem sonorul! Vrem sonorul!». Bunica/ a ridicat transperantele și a rămas cu gura/ căscată. În pofida ordinului de «a nu te ridica/ de la masă până nu s-a terminat», am sărit de/ pe scaun și tata m-a urmat. În

First of all, this scene is constructed on the same logic of accumulating “fugitive impressions” generated by the sense of hearing: the big group formed by children and their chanting being associated with Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 5* also known as *Emperor Concerto*. Secondly, the scene is heavily invested in overwhelming the sense of sight by juxtaposing many short visual sequences: from inside the dining room, the “long line of people” walking in the snow, the whole parallel drawn between the reality of the protagonist and the movie *Alexander Nevsky*, where the actor Nikolay Cherkasov plays the main role, the saviour prince – all culminating in the short scene when, the protagonist, having a great authority, assures the children that his right of relating film plots will be reinstated. Here, the change of the focal point and the shift from the cinematic reference to the textual “reality” follow the same logic of “analytical” montage that creates tension and emphasizes the important elements. But at the same time, one can also see how the whole scene is constructed in a manner similar to the “dialectical montage in Soviet Marxism” model, as the scene is constructed not from opposing elements put together, but through a development in which the constituent elements are complementary and derive organically from one another. Thus, the transition from the interior scene to the events in the exterior space, drawing the parallel with the movie and ending the sequentiality with the scene in which the protagonist is presented to the audience, this whole progression reproduces the symbolic investment and relevance that the protagonist’s act of relating movies has for the community of which he is a part. Lastly, this whole scene follows the principle of montage through a formal manner, the text being written in verses, in opposition to the standard and continuous textual form of prose. By following poetry structure, the different elements which constitute the scene are being delivered in a segmented manner through the form of verse, which moves the focus point from one information to another, highlighting every constitutive element and, consequently, imitating the cinematographic montage.

Conclusions

Radu Cosașu represents a very interesting case for Romanian literary history, because his works and his cultural presence always floats above many areas of interest (sports, cinema, music and French culture, and politics only to name the main ones), which made him a relatively known and important figure in the cultural space. Consequently, his areas of interest being so divided, he was not always considered a top representative in his works, this idea being the most valid especially when discussing Radu Cosașu as a writer – considered mainly a “second shelf writer”

curte era o/ imagine de Eisenstein (văzută și de el, la/ Stiller) – un șir lung de oameni venind/ pe zăpadă, la palat, la picioarele țarului,/ să-l conjure să-i salveze, cu profilul lui/ Cherkasov, în prim-plan, barba neagră fluturând/ peste câmpia albă. Când m-au văzut, încadrat/ ca un cocon între tată și bunică, au trecut la/ aplauze, și o fetiță, Angi, a venit sub/ fereastră și l-a rugat pe tata să/ mă lase să le povestesc filme, că ei/ se plictisesc fără mine. La care tata,/ de mult adult, n-a știut ce să le spună, și/ atunci eu, știind cum trebuie stăpânită o/ emoție, le-am comunicat că le mulțumesc,/ că n-am cuvinte, că-l voi ruga și eu pe tata,/ și totul se va aranja, dacă părinții ne iubesc.”

or maybe an “underground” one. I believe that the main reason why critics perceived him in this way derives from the fact that Radu Cosașu is not a creative writer – understood as a great fiction composing mind –, but rather a great technician, a great technical writer. His writings do not, usually, astound the reader with the ideas that are being presented, but through the methods that said ideas are being written.

His writing methods vary depending on the subject, and represent the main particular element in his writings. The “cinematographic” style is one example in this sense, a way through which he individualised his life writings. Radu Cosașu’s cinema writings result, on one hand, from the themes that he focuses on – directly writing essays about cinema, movies, actors, etc., and indirectly through the biographic experience of the cinephile, which can be understood as his “cinephile survivals,” following his trademark theme of survivals. On the other hand, this “cinematographic” style is a direct result of the formal methods that he opts for by trying to reproduce, in text form, the very specific cinema techniques – mainly by structuring his writings following the compositional logic of the cinematographic technique of montage.