

Abstract. Emil Otto Hoppé (1878–1972) fut l'un des photographes les plus importants de la première moitié du XX^e siècle, tombé, pourtant, dans l'obscurité, à la fin du siècle. Né en Allemagne et, tout d'abord éduqué en tant que dessinateur d'après nature et graveur, Hoppé a débuté, en 1902, dans la photographie et s'est installé à Londres, où, l'année suivante, il devient membre dans la Société Royale Photographique. Encouragé par ses premières réussites, Hoppé ouvre un studio photographique et commence à faire les portraits des beaux et des fameux. Le succès fut rapide, ses images apparaissant régulièrement dans les nouvelles revues illustrées, ce qui lui a statué la réputation de chroniqueur marquant de l'élite de la société britannique.

En 1923, Gheorghe Boncescu, un ami, diplomate roumain, lui propose de l'accompagner dans une excursion de six semaines à travers la Roumanie, où Hoppé aurait pu être le premier documentariste de la "Grande Roumanie". L'excursion a débuté au mois de juillet de la même année et a couvert une grande partie du pays, des villes et des villages, de l'élite jusqu'aux classes les plus basses de la société, y compris, les tsiganes qui l'ont beaucoup impressionné. Il en résulta une étude ethnographique et typologique de la population et de la culture roumaines. En 1924, Hoppé publie *In Gipsy Camp and Royal Palace*, avec une préface de la Reine Marie qu'il avait connue et lui avait fait plusieurs portraits, lors d'invitations au déjeuner au Château de Pelișor ou pendant plusieurs excursions à Sibiu et Bran.

Pour lancer le livre à Londres, il a décidé d'arranger une exposition dans les galeries de la Maison Millais, où il y avait de différents tissus traditionnels, des costumes et de la céramique de Roumanie. Le vernissage a été un grand succès, beaucoup de ses amis britanniques s'amusant en s'habillant en costumes traditionnels roumains pour que Hoppé les photographie.

Beaucoup d'années plus tard, après une illustre carrière en tant que "le photographe

A LONDONER WANDERING IN ROMANIA: E.O. HOPPÉ'S PORTRAIT OF A COUNTRY

Graham Howe
(Pasadena)

le plus fameux dans les années 20", il fait un mouvement fatal qui le met presque entièrement hors de l'histoire. En 1954, tout prêt pour sa retraite à 76 ans, Hoppé, manquant totalement d'inspiration, décide de vendre à une bibliothèque londonienne d'images, Collection Mansell, toutes ses archives photographiques, résultat de presque 50 ans d'exemple productivité photographique. Décision qu'il a plus tard regrettée. Pour presque une demi-siècle, ces importantes œuvres d'art photographiques ont été enterrées dans cette bibliothèque générale, empêchant les historiens de la photographie d'étudier la création de Hoppé dans des archives unitaires.

La récupération est venue en 1993, lorsque la Collection Mansell a été d'accord à vendre les images Hoppé à Curatorial Assistance de Pasadena, Californie, pour assurer la conservation d'une rare collection d'exemplaires créations photographiques.

Keywords: photography; E. O. Hoppé; Greater Romania; Millais House; Curatorial Assistance.

Emil Otto Hoppé (1878–1972) was one of the most important photographers in the first half of the twentieth century, yet he

fell into undeserved obscurity by the century's end. Born in Germany and initially trained in life drawing and print-making, Hoppé took up photography in 1902 and moved to London where he became a member of the Royal Photographic Society. Here, as an amateur, he regularly exhibited his work, culminating in a highly celebrated one-man exhibition in 1907. During this time, Hoppé was associated with The Linked Ring Brotherhood, whose members included Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966), Henry Peach Robinson (1830–1901) and George Davidson (1854–1930), all of whom maintained close ties with important international art photography groups such as the Vienna Camera Club and the Photo-Secession, New York.

Encouraged by his amateur successes, Hoppé opened a photography studio and began making portraits of the beautiful and famous. He soon saw his photographs appearing regularly in the new photo-illustrated magazines, and he quickly earned a reputation as the premier chronicler of style amongst the elite in British society. Among Hoppé's elite sitters were celebrated dancers from the Ballet Russes, Karsavina and Nijinski, the opera singer Chaliapin and many contemporary modernist writers, including Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf and the famed playwright and essayist, George Bernard Shaw. A staunch socialist deeply concerned with class differences, Hoppé began exploring Shaw's ideas through his own medium of documentary photography to look closely at aspects of class mobility across the notoriously rigid British class system.

As if offering photographic comment on Shaw's ideas, Hoppé made a series of portraits of working-class "characters." Although his studio photographs of a Covent Garden flower girl and British housemaid were met with applause and awards for his artistry, Hoppé soon realized that the artificiality of the studio environment was not conducive to his newfound subjects. By photographing his "types" in their found

environment using a hand-held Graflex camera, Hoppé was not only able to take pictures on the streets less conspicuously than if he were using a tripod-based camera but also produce a more authentic and representative documentation of individuals in British society.

Making a conscious effort to redirect his practice, Hoppé regularly assigned himself to photograph the British in many different parts of the cities, to record people across diverse racial, social and economic backgrounds. Hoppé's contemporary and German counterpart, August Sander (1876–1964), pursued a similar project in 1911 titled *People of the 20th Century* which involved documenting individuals representative of different levels in German society.

Hoppé's exploration of national typologies coincided with an enticing proposal from one of his close friends, George Boncescu (1883–1962), the financial attaché at the Romanian Legation, the headquarters of which were, conveniently, situated across the street from Hoppé's studio. Boncescu proposed that Hoppé join him on a six-week trip throughout Romania, where Hoppé would serve as the primary documentarian of "Greater Romania."

In July 1923, Hoppé arrived in Bucharest, eager to exercise his ideas about human typology on a country truly foreign to him. Hoppé set out to describe the diversity of the Romanian culture, showing the distinctive traditional dress, customs and rituals across the country and the rich texture of the nation's historic churches, mosques and synagogues. He was, for example, fascinated by "Gypsies," a wandering people who were itinerant in Europe. The photographer learned more about Gypsies from Konrad Bercovici's writings. The Gypsies were, as Hoppé perceived, at the lower end of the social ladder. As he had also been invited to photograph the king and queen of Romania, he fixed upon the social and class contrasts to demonstrate the range of cross-culturalism that would be the subject of his proposed book about Romania.



Fig. 1 – Tamara Karsavina.



Fig. 2 – Vaslav Nijinski.

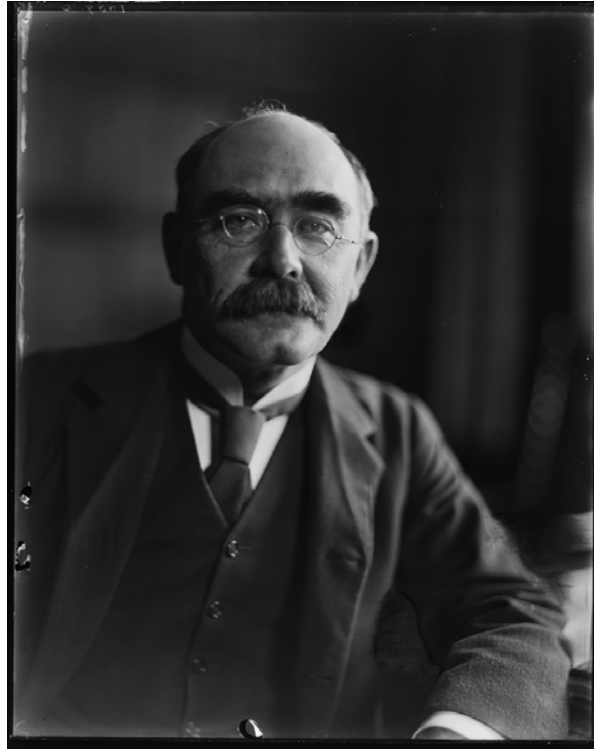


Fig. 3 – Rudyard Kipling.

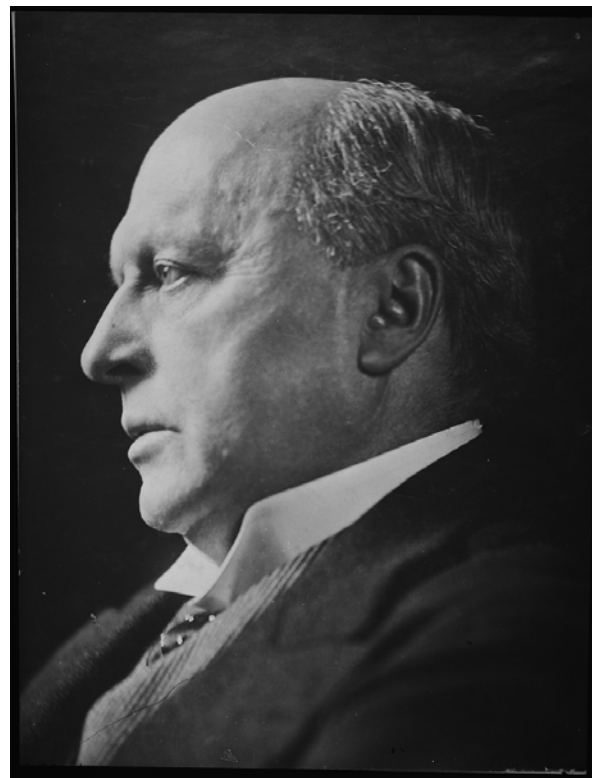


Fig. 4 – Henry James.

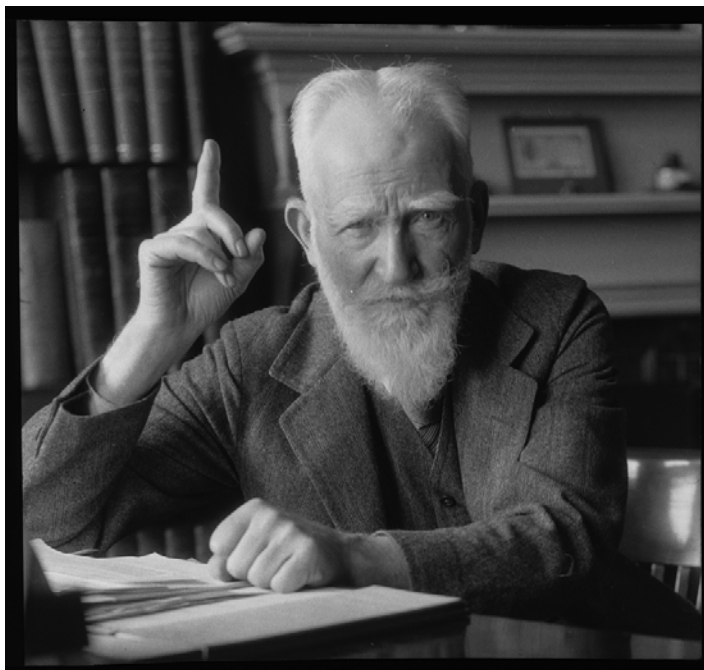


Fig. 5 – George Bernard Shaw.



Fig. 6 – Feodor Chaliapin.

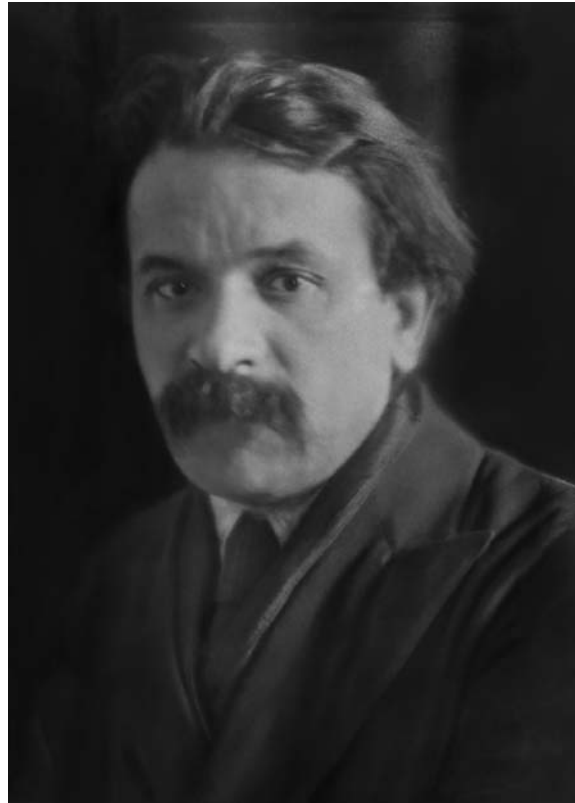


Fig. 7 – Konrad Bercovici.



Fig. 8 – Gheorghe Boncescu.



Fig. 9 – PEN Club, from left to right Maxwell Aley, Millais Rawrell, Marcu Beza and Unknown gentleman, London 1923.



Fig. 10 – Ada Beza at Romanian Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Millais House, London, 1924.



Fig. 11 – Adina Titulescu, Millais House, London, 1924.



Fig. 12 – Miss Marion Locke, daughter of John Locke, head of the Romanian Bank in London, 1924.



Fig. 13 – Miss Alice Locke, daughter of John Locke,
head of the Romanian Bank in London, 1924.



Fig. 14 – Mrs. Locke, wife of John Locke,
head of the Romanian Bank in London, 1924.

Returning to London in August 1923, Hoppé developed his photographs, edited his text, and successfully published his first trans-national photographic survey under the title, *In Gipsy Camp and Royal Palace: Wanderings in Rumania*. Implied within the title of this book was Hoppé's idea of a typological representation of the social range of society, with individual representations of each class, trade and tribal group. To launch the publication of his book, Hoppé arranged an exhibition titled *Romanian Arts and Crafts* at Dorian Leigh Galleries in Millais House to bolster a Romanian-British cultural exchange in Greater Romania's campaign for cultural diplomacy. The exhibition succeeded in affirming the fascinating diversity Hoppé saw essential to the Romanian national identity, presenting not only displays of Romanian rugs, furniture, and hand-crafted traditional costumes (in which guests could be photographed) but also a representative cast of Romanian leaders in folk history, literature and art. Hoppé's attention to an accurate representation of Romanian culture proved successful, producing an exhibition that, according to an article in the *Daily News* in 1924, brought "Romania to England, through its arts and crafts, literature, music, and painting."

The first trans-national survey of his typology-based work, Hoppé's book and exhibition succeeded not only in providing one of the first narratives on Romanian culture in London, but also in establishing a Romanian cultural following in London. Hoppé had proved the viability of a new economic model of self-assigning his subject, photographing and writing about it, and then selling his edited photographs and

text as a book to a publisher, paving the way to the next chapter of his career as a travel photographer.

After an illustrious career in which he was once known as "the most famous photographer in the world in 1920," he made a fateful move that almost lost him to history. In 1954, Hoppé made the grave misstep of selling his photographic archive to a London picture library, the Mansell Collection. Hoppé's exemplary photographic output was filed away by subject, mixed in with the photographic hoi polloi of general stock pictures, thus preventing photo-historians from examining Hoppé's work as a singular archive. Many photo-historians visited the Mansell Collection in search of the Hoppé work, only to discover that such a search was largely impractical. Consequently, most photo-histories written from the 1960s onwards did not mention Hoppé, and his work was largely forgotten.

But redemption was forthcoming. In 1995, the Mansell agreed to sell their Hoppé holdings to be managed by Curatorial Assistance in Pasadena, California, to ensure their preservation, saving this rare collection of photographic achievement from obscurity. Then, with the help of the Hoppé family, Hoppé's archival material, including diaries, notebooks, and a vast number of written articles both by and about the photographer, was acquired and reunited with Hoppé's photographic holdings to become the E.O. Hoppé Estate Collection. After more than a decade of cataloguing and organization, the archive was opened to research scholars, enabling them to retrace this man's extraordinary achievement.

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