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INTRODUCTION.

REPRESENTATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS TO REALITY AND ILLUSION

The current issue of “Ekphrasis” is dedicated to the problem of representation and the limits of reality and virtuality in contemporary visual arts. This issue provides examples from cinema, theatre, online gaming, comic books and graphic novels, traditional paintings and naïve painting as well as from other public visual displays.

In a critical comparison of three movies, *Solaris* by Andrey Tarkovsky, *Artificial Intelligence* by Steven Spielberg, and *Surrogates*, by Jonathan Mostow, Doru Pop is developing in “Cinema as surrogate reality – representation, substitution, artificial and virtual in the aesthetics of cinema” a reading of the relationship between body and its representations. Starting with some of the earliest forms of artistic expression, and using examples from the first philosophical debates, the author looks for a constant theme in theoretical discussions on visual representations of the body. Be it the “tomb of the soul”, as it was for Plato, a mechanism

governed by Reason and obeying the rules of the Reason, as it was for Descartes, or, as in the case of the phenomenology of the body, who equates the body with a mirror of the surrounding world, the Western intellectual world has debated the relationship between body and the reality of the world, or between the bodily existence of the world and the (un)Real. One fundamental question that derives from this debate is that of the relationship between humans and non-human beings (mechanical, artificial or imagined) in cinema. Using the correlation from Čapek’s work, who is the “slave” and who is the “master” in this relationship between the represented and the representation, and how does this centuries old debate can be transformed into cinematic art and the theory of cinema? The fundamental question becomes, in terms of cinema theory, what is “real” and what is “illusion” in movies? In this article the three movies are the basis for interpretation of the self-reflexive

nature of cinema. Cinema is an art that integrates illusion with the reality-effect in order to obtain a new understanding of humanity.

Ruxandra Cesereanu's article sums up the history and the works of the famous Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini. "Pier Paolo Pasolini and His Inquisitors" examines the charges of blasphemy and obscenity levelled against the Italian author and discusses the problems of the "folk corporeality" of Pasolini. The author considers that Pasolini found it necessary to project this corporeality into the twentieth century and that he was one of the last Gnostics of the century, rather than a cinematographer in the rear-guard of atheist blasphemers. Through the interpretation of the images used by Pasolini, Ruxandra Cesereanu analyses the techniques used by the Italian author to project an aesthetics of the free body, beyond moral censorship and the violence of representation.

Alexandru Istudor looks for the problems of adaptation in "The cinematic adaptation of Ondaatje's *The English Patient*: motifs, reflections and criticism". This paper provides a critical interpretation of *The English Patient*, both the movie and Michael Ondaatje's novel from the premise of the transformations at the level of representations. Comparing the movie and the original text, the author looks for the reconfigurations that take place in the representation of the novel into the visual language. The author searches for references in Herodotus, Boccaccio and in other books that make up the Western canon, while describing

the inter-textual level of discourse of the novel within the Hollywood production canons. Having as the main focus the postcolonial discourse of the novel and its disappearance in the entire film, the paper shows how political discourses generate narrative transformations. Developing a critical reception of the fictionalized works, the paper identifies the "moral message", "responsibility", "influence" as key elements in any contemporary fiction productions. Analysing *The English Patient*, the author manages a critical interpretation of movies and novels, and, more importantly, of the role political discourse plays in cinema narratives.

Raluca Sas Marinescu, in "Typologies of everyday theatricality – a game and a movie", studies the virtual theatricality, considered to be a part of everyday theatricality. Through the interpretation of a specific number of case studies, using a computer game and a movie, the author shows how virtual theatricality became fundamental for the role assumption at the level of the individual imaginary. For Raluca Sas Marinescu, the key argument is that communication is split by an interface and the virtual role assumption is perfectly conscious and allows the interaction with the character created by the one with whom the communication is carried out, but never with the individual as such. Applying theatricality in interpreting RPG's, this paper provides an in-depth understanding of the relationship between characters, audiences and cultural products in contemporary representations.

In the article entitled “The artistic reconstruction of the body and the aesthetic death of representation”, Liviu Malița starts a fundamental discussion about the problem of representation. His main question is what happens in modern arts today if there is “no more representation”. The author offers us a map of the role played by the body in the contemporary civilization and culture, from the vantage point of artistic body representations caused by the aesthetic transformation of bodies in arts and their respective mirroring in the theories of art. The exposure of the materiality of the body, the penetration of virtual bodies in visual arts, the transmutations of human bodies into forms of aesthetic representation, mortification of the flesh and displaying the nudes as art objects de-voided of their corporeal relevance are the signs of this transformation. All these “conversions” of the body are seen in their relationship to the changes in the society of the spectacle, as Debord defined them. The conclusion of the paper is that we are witnessing a change of aesthetic regime, one that, by using the human body for a multitude of representations, loses the reference power of the bodies themselves, by an inflation of representations, which lead the forces of desire and imagination.

Ștefana Pop-Curșeu moves the discussion to the field of religious imaginary and to the period of the birth of religious medieval theatre. The paper entitled “The dissensions about the problem of sacred images in the Middle Ages and their role in the birth of religious medieval theatre” the author follows the social and cultural

role played by religious images. Using specialised literature, written documents, fragments of dramatic texts, scenarios or scenic indications, the paper describes the impact of pictorial images. This is a study focused less on the images and more on the attitude adopted by the Church in front of the problem of their sacred character, from the point of view of the social and cultural praxis they implied. The main hypothesis is that there is a connection between the way of perceiving the relation of images to the cult of relics, between icons and miracles, in the way that the ecclesiastic and the political power knew how to govern the social connection of man to image in the church as well as outside, and most of all in the attitude towards the presence of a divine nature conveyed by the image-icon, between these conditions and the premises of the birth of medieval religious theatre take form, conditions which are practically nonexistent in the case of the oriental Christianity.

Ioan Pop-Curșeu provides, in “Some observations on the anthropological basis of artistic practice: the Merry Cemetery, Săpânța (Maramureș)” a change of perspective. His paper is based on the interpretation of the images taken from the so-called Merry Cemetery (Săpânța, Maramureș, Romania). The paper aims at showing the strong relationship between tradition and innovation in visual culture and the author uses the representations in an eccentric cemetery in Romania, that contain many richly decorated blue crosses showing, in verses and images, episodes of the villagers’ lives. The Merry

Cemetery is considered to be the fruit of Romanian traditional culture (born at the crossroads of multiple influences, pre-Roman, Roman, Slavic, Hungarian and so on) and analyzing the dialectic fusion between tradition and originality, allows the author to elaborate on the nature of visual representations in an environment that remains somehow intact from the pressures of modern imaginary. Although the artist who created this unique graveyard, Ioan Stan Pătraș (1908-1977), took many elements from the popular tradition of Maramureș (typical versification, traditional colours, decorative motives), he was also very opened to the innovations that came from the contact with the urban world and the historical changes in Romanian society (the communist period). The author discusses the synthesis stemming from these elements that marked the profound originality of Ioan Stan Pătraș's creation and the birth of a local "new tradition" that continues today.

Raluca Mărginaș has another object of interpretation, the comic books and the graphic novels. In her paper entitled "Beginnings of comic books and graphic novels: A sequence in sequential art" the author starts with an introductory study of the imaginary of graphic novels and their role in the evolution of contemporary popular culture. On the other hand, this is not only a history of comic strips and their yellow journalism resources, but it provides an understanding of the social impact of these very specific forms of visual expression. The discussion of the

impact the "fantasy-and-phantasms-producing machine" of the comics had on the public imaginary moves from the "codes" of the comic books to the fundamental idea of "auteurism". From an applied interpretation on comic strips, done in correlation with the "author theory", comes a description of the roots of the "comics environment".

Dan Curean uses his knowledge as an experienced documentary film-maker to discuss some of the most important questions in contemporary documentary cinema: the way images are connected to ethical references. His paper "On the turn of values in the practice of «hunting images»" uses many examples taken from an interesting parallelism, between moviemaking and hunting. This paper begins with focusing on the attempt to demonstrate/ convince that between the creator of a documentary movie (called here "the hunter of reality"), and the ancestral hunter (who survived by hunting animals) we can draw several analogies. Starting with these analogies, the author provides a deep understanding of the practice and describes the deontological aspects of mass media, through the perspective of the deontology of hunting, and implicitly tries to identify connotations in the practice of "hunting" images. Discussing media ethics in documentary, observational cinema and cinema-direct the author challenges some of the most important problems in representational arts, those of moral responsibility.