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## Introducing New and Older Versions of Apocalypse in Film, Media and Visual Arts

The current issue of *Ekphrasis. Images, Cinema, Theatre, Media* is dedicated to *New Images for Old Myths. Representations of the Apocalypse in Film, Media and Visual Arts* and it seems that it could not be a more proper moment to analyse the apocalyptic imagination than in the proximity of another settled date for Apocalypse, the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 2012. The preparations of this number have encompassed both the pre-apocalyptic frenzy and the post-apocalyptic disappointment. The articles have surveyed a vast series of issues, have covered of a vast body of works, from the general aspects to the particu-

lar problems, attempting to answer a few questions. What is really new in contemporary representations of the end of the world? Can we speak of a new apocalyptic conscience? What has been preserved from the great apocalyptic tradition? What are the elements of the new apocalyptic imagination?

The first section of our issue, *Cinema Studies*, is opened by Marion Poirson-Dechonne's article on the *Book of Revelations* and its contemporary avatars in films, videogames and media, a very good starting point for the discussions regarding the changes in the apocalyptic imagination that suffuses the contemporary world of images and an original overview on the whole genre. The article also proposes an interesting comparison between films and videogames and their treatment of the same imaginary pattern, the apocalyptic, with some rewarding analyses on the apocalyptic motifs present in a few important films such as Tarkovski's *Stalker*, *The Matrix*, *Shadow of Tchernobyl*, and *La Jetée*.

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Doru Pop's study dwells upon a few features regarding the concept of *eschaton* understood as an interruption in the linear unfolding of human time and history, starting from the assumption that the personal end is as powerful as the end of an entire civilization. The author's key concept is "minimalist apocalypse", a concept that reveals how the ends are perceived and projected by an individual, and explains our fascination with apocalyptic themes and ends, our condition of "apocaholics". The second part of the article is focused on a surprising case study regarding the loss of the world and its representation in the Romanian cinema, especially in *The Way I Spent the End of the World* by Cătălin Mitulescu (*Cum mi-am petrecut sfarsitul lumii*).

Daniel S. Larangé and Åbo Akademi's article develops a survey of the post-apocalyptic imagination and its symbolic counterpart, the road, the passage, the highway as metaphor for the quest, for retrospection. Their article takes into account numerous connections between the post-apocalyptic imagination and its preference for spaces like the desert and the sea, in films ranging from *Fahrenheit 451* to some more recent examples such as *The Road* and *The Book of Eli*.

Delia Enyedi's article analyses the reverberations of an apocalyptic event of the year 1910 in the mass media of the silent film period, with a special focus on August Blom's *Verdens Undergang*, an early example of an apocalyptic film inspired by a cosmic event (the comet).

Jennifer Boum-Make's paper investigates the apocalyptic myth in the

American context of culture, revealing its particular features and its new meaning that it achieves as seen from an American perspective, its close connection with religious fundamentalism, the confrontation between religion and history, the analogy between the disintegration of the nuclear family and the forthcoming end.

The section of *Cinema Studies* concludes with my article on the concept of psycho-apocalypse in film, a term that is able to reflect the changes underwent in the last years by the apocalyptic imagination, very visible in some relevant examples, taken from the 2011's films: *Take Shelter*, *Another Earth*, *4: 44 The Last Day on Earth* or *Melancholia*.

The second section, consisting of case studies on some iconic films representing apocalypse, is opened by Michel Arouimi who focuses on the apocalyptic symbolism that is to be found in Antonioni's *L'Eclisse*, Lynch's *Lost Highway* and Desplechin's *Un conte de Noël*, read as modern apocalypses, through the myth of the divine Word, the crisis of the modern ego and many apocalyptic symbols such as the number six, the Beast, the double and many others.

Robert Dean focuses on a few ethical dilemmas faced by a group of survivors in a post-apocalyptic environment as it is described in the TV series *The Walking Dead*. Robert Dean's reading of this popular TV series detects a few intriguing references to Kant's moral reflections, Fletcher's Situationalist behavior and Mill's Utilitarianism, as the conflict between their ethical behavior and their need for survival unfolds dramatically.

Elena Tyushova proposes a comparison between two apocalyptic films of Ingmar Bergman, *The Seventh Seal* and *The Serpent's Egg*, in order to define Bergman's personal apocalyptic vision, rendered in existentialist and moralistic terms.

Claudia Hulpoi's paper analyses *The Matrix* from a philosophical perspective, guiding her inquiry through some key assumptions about the nature of the real (Plato's metaphor of the cave, Descartes and Baudrillard).

Iulia Micu proposes an in-depth analysis of the works of art that inspired Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*, a thorough survey of his sources, most of them to be found in the history of art, especially those related to the representation of *Melancholia*, but also important paintings that are echoed in the film such as Millais' *Ophelia*, *The Woodman's Daughter* and Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Hunters in the snow*. Iulia Micu also investigates a few mythological motifs such as Psyche, but also the cultural implications and influences of Wagner's music (the *Prelude* from *Tristan and Isolde*) in Trier's film.

The third section, the *Essays* begins with Till R. Kuhnle's article about the new millenarian atmosphere and the rise of apocalyptic expectations in the media after the 9/11 attacks, seen as a major event, generating a new paradigm. After a general survey of millenarian theories and a brief reference to Houellebecq's *Elementary Particles*, Kuhnle focuses on the 9/11 attacks and its consequences on apocalyptic thinking, with a case stu-

dy on *Windows on the World* by Frédéric Beigbeder.

Ioan Pop-Curseu focuses on the infanticide and on the differences between the representational strategies of painting, literature and cinema, in the works of Shakespeare, Ghelderode, Goya, with a special focus on the case of Gilles de Rais, and then with some reverberations in cinema, from Benjamin Christensen's *Häxan* to many other films (*Rosemary's Baby*, *Nero Veneziano* etc).

Alessandra Mascia analyses the figure of the martyr in a few relevant Jesuit paintings in the XVIth century from Pomarancio to Mathias Grauter and Louis Richeome, a comparison between the representations found in the churches of St. Stefano Rotondo and Thomas of Canterbury, with some interesting and well documented comments on the Jesuit iconography and sources (the emphasis on the martyrs' ferocious torments).

Martin Lang's paper dwells upon an important feature connected with apocalypticism, its revolutionary content and potential, establishing a link between John Martin's paintings, their revolutionary message and the apocalyptic Zeitgeist, both in our times and in John Martin's. In author's opinion, the renewed interest in Martin's works and his huge influence on contemporary paintings reveals the crisis of late capitalism and mostly the concern about a forthcoming radical change that is about to take place in our civilization.

Dan Curean's article investigates the new functions of the image in the digi-

tal age, speculating upon a few elements of Baudrillard's theory about simulacra, describing through personal examples the behavior of the "homo digitalis", the direct result of this new age, examining a few important issues regarding the relationships between the real and the image, film and the real etc. Dan Curean concludes with a few remarks about the new significance achieved by Orwell's novel *1984* in the context of the infinite proliferation of images and simulacra.

Daria Ioan has taken an interview with Mr. Marcell Jankovics, a master of apocalyptic animation, who speaks about his films and the process of their conception and production.

The *Film and Book Reviews* section contains a brief analysis of the last film from the Batman series (*The Dark Knight Raises*) by Ioan Pop-Curșeu and a book review by Claudiu Turcuș about Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema I. L'Image Mouvement*, recently translated into Romanian.