



Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana
ISSN: 1315-5216
ISSN: 2477-9555
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Universidad del Zulia
Venezuela

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Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana, vol. 25, no. Esp.7, 2020

Universidad del Zulia, Venezuela

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=27964362006>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4009598>



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Spiritual Independence of an Artist's Personality in Postmodernity

Independencia espiritual de la personalidad de un artista en la posmodernidad

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4009598>

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Received: 09 August 2020

Accepted: 15 September 2020

ABSTRACT:

Using the example of Takeshi Kitano's film *Achilles and the Tortoise*, the authors attempt to identify the criteria of artistry by answering the question whether the main character of the film is a true artist or a pathetic copyist. Carrying out a comparative analysis of Mathisu's paintings and contemporary artworks represented by Paul Klee, Yves Klein, Pete Mondrian, and others, the authors testify both to the interpretation of the source and its reinterpretation. Such experience allows arguing that the character of the film is a creative person who does not lose its value outside the cinema.

KEYWORDS: Artist, authenticity, dialogue, simulation..

RESUMEN:

Utilizando el ejemplo de la película de Takeshi Kitano *Aquiles y la tortuga*, los autores intentan identificar el criterio del arte respondiendo a la pregunta de si el personaje principal de la película es un verdadero artista o un copista patético. Llevando a cabo un análisis comparativo de las pinturas de Mathisu y las obras de arte contemporáneo representadas por Paul Klee, Yves Klein, Pete Mondrian y otros, los autores dan testimonio tanto de la interpretación de la fuente original como de su reinterpretación. Tal experiencia permite argumentar que el personaje de la película es una persona creativa que no pierde su valor fuera del cine.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Artista, autenticidad, diálogo, simulación..

INTRODUCTION

The essence and nature of creativity are perhaps among the most difficult problems that mankind has faced over the centuries. In the authors' opinion, its particular relevance in the modern era, positioned as the society of the spectacle (Guy Debord), the consumer society (Baudrillard), and schizoreality (Rudnev),

is due to the following circumstance. These days, the status of art is often acquired by simulacra, whose authors aspire to worldwide recognition and authenticity. However, such “masterpieces” are sometimes characterized by a secondary and momentary need, without going beyond the boundaries of the place and time of their occurrence. At the same time, against the background of terror of secondariness, putting the reader, viewer or listener in the position of a consumer of “reproductions of past production” (Deleuze), there are also such artistic patterns through which the dialogue between the creator and the connoisseur takes place. Going beyond the framework of local interaction, realized at the level of a particular work of art, such dialogue takes place on a global scale, initiating the formation of a personality different from “spiritual puppets” (Mamardashvili: 2019, p. 480), of which the present is full.

From this point of view, the authors denoted the number of questions that determine scientific interest and simultaneously set a special vector for this research:

- Does the state of postmodernism enable the modern text to cross the threshold between a “masterpiece” and a masterpiece, or is this border slipping away today like a horizon?
- What can be called art in the culture of postmodernism?
- What is the role of reinterpreting precedent pictorial texts in a situation of “spoken words” and total citation?

In this case, the focus of attention will be on a synthetic literary text based on the parallel position of words, images, and music. It is about modern cinema. The authors’ choice seems justified because, despite the blurred line between the mass and independent cinema, the cinema continues to encode deep and multi-layered cultural philosophical meanings (Borodina et al.: 2019, pp. 226-245). At the core of the research, there is the story of the desperate run of the artist (Achilles) for the ruthless historical-artistic process (tortoise) written by the Japanese director Takeshi Kitano. This refers to the film *Achilles and the Tortoise*, which became the last in the autobiographical trilogy. The film creates scenarios for the tragicomic race of Achilles for the tortoise: “the artist as such and the history of art”, “Mathisu and recognition”, “Kitano-painter and Kitano-director”, “creativity and living life”. Since in all variations of the race, Achilles does not keep pace with the tortoise, it seems that the artist loses and this inevitably creates in enlightened critics and the sophisticated viewer a persistence sense of the master’s failure. Is it true? Is the lack of huge success an indicator that the path of a true artist is “equilibrium in becoming” or else – the ongoing concern “about the unprecedented realization of our life, its justification in this world and not in some other possible world”?

Being one of the tools to create a worldview, in which the meaning is an open set of meanings, a feature film appears at the level of a certain type of state of society, completed and frozen in a certain historical time, as an artificially modeled reality (Shcheglova & Saenko: 2019, pp. 111-124). In this explanatory paradigm, cinema is sensitive to the transformation of cultural phenomena, in particular, art itself. From this point of view, operating with at least two basic attitudes of consciousness, which form the theoretical basis of this article, seems very promising:

1. Feature cinema has heuristic functions;
2. Feature cinema is the most fruitful ground for the reinterpretation of precedent texts.

In the first case, the research schools studying the heuristic function include K.E. Razlogov Moscow School (analysis of anthropological explications of the cinema language) and V.V. Savchuk St. Petersburg School (media philosophy). In turn, foreign science is represented by the experiments made by Žižek. Developing a method of working with visual cinema material in the process of transmitting specific knowledge, in the documentary film *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema*, Žižek showed how individual scenes from various films could, on the one hand, be interpreted in the light of psychoanalysis and, on the other hand, serve as its illustrations. The concept of the French film theorist Metz is also close to Žižek’s methodology. To combine psychoanalysis with the elements of semiotics, Metz introduces such new discipline as “film semiology” into

science, leaving behind the scenes the fact that long before him, the national culturologist Lotman partially used this principle in the semiotic analysis of the film *Blowup* by Antonioni, as well as his other works on the semiotics of film text (Lotman: 1998, pp. 365-372).

As for reinterpretation as one of the basic phenomena of the postmodern era, its essence is revealed by the Latin prefix *re*, the dual nature of which is recognized both in returning to what has already been or otherwise – in repeating what has been done and in refusing it, i.e. in the total rethinking of existing experience (Khaliullina & Savina: 2020, pp. 645-663; Gabidullina et al.: 2020, pp. 267-280). In this capacity, reinterpretation is opposed to secondariness, which is devoid of ambiguity inherent in reinterpretation. Based on experience, as well as relying on their own experience, which provides the opportunity for an author to read the film text to diagnose the current state of culture, the authors will try to identify the criteria for artistry by referring to the fiction film by Kitano

METHODS

The methodological foundation of the work is based on such hermeneutic methods as:

- Inclusion of the third element;
- “Implantation” in the logic of the text;
- Expanding the context.

Also, the cultural-philosophical analysis of the film text required the actualization of the semiotic method, in the framework of which a synthetic literary text appears as a symbolic structure.

At the same time, the method of intertextual analysis, the authorship of which belongs to Barthes, a representative of connotative semiology developed in line with the French scientific school, became important in the process of finding an answer to the questions posed at the beginning of the article, arising in the space of directorial work by Kitano. There is a culturological approach, generalizing the methodology of the humanities and providing a projection of the methods developed in philosophy, literary criticism, and linguistics on the field of cinematographic art as a single system of signs, codes, and ciphers of modern culture.

RESULTS

Reflecting on the conditions that protect the artistic person from simulacra, the authors suggest that in the case of Kitano, nothing more than the borderline nature of his creativity acts as a “writ of protection”. This refers to a feature specific to the representatives of the Land of the Rising Sun, which is due to the island type of Japanese culture, its isolation, the impenetrability of cultural borders for other cultures, which became the key to its originality. It is no accident that in different eras in Japanese linguistic culture one could find analogs of the modern word “gaijin”, which includes many negative connotations. Evidence includes certain facts of biographies of such famous contemporary writers as Murakami and Ishiguro. Suffice it to say that despite their worldwide recognition, the Japanese contemptuously say that they “stink of oil”, referring to the gaze of these writers to Western music and literature, which is understandable: Murakami lived in Europe for many years, in the USA and then returned to Japan, Ishiguro has been living in London since he was 6 years old. However, everyone else perceives them as Japanese writers, finding in their works the evidence that each of them is a representative of his culture.

In particular, researchers of the iconographic aspect of Kitano’s films note that “...despite stylistic experiments, Kitano’s ‘fiction’ lies in the plane of Japanese traditional culture”. At the same time, it is obvious that, first, Kitano’s aesthetics is very attractive and understandable to the Western audience. Second, the character of the analyzed film is focused on European and American fine art, avoiding borrowing from the works of Japanese artists. At the same time, the organic synthesis of the Japanese and Western that is ever-present in Kitano’s poetry makes both himself and his character, the artist Mathisu, invulnerable to the corrosive effects of simulation. Limit ability becomes a departure from the simulation.

The connection of the unconnectable provides both of them with a reality-filled being. In general, the productive paradox of the artist Takeshi Kitano consists, in the authors’ opinion, of its borderline nature

of marginality: he is also a director, actor, artist, showman, stand-up artist; he is simultaneously and equally Japanese, Western, a subject of multiculturalism and a product of globalization. The synthetic and dialogical nature of creativity makes it possible for a modern text to have an original being in a situation of late postmodernity.

In the culture of accomplished postmodernism, the criterion of artistry belongs to the very process of interpretation and reinterpretation, building up the meaning; a game technique in quotes, and allusions to precedent texts.

Summing up the work done, first of all, answering the questions posed earlier, the authors tend to answer them as follows:

- The current state of culture, marked by transformations caused by postmodernism, makes it possible for the modern text to cross the threshold between a “masterpiece” and a masterpiece;
- Due to the artist’s uncontrolled mobility of their borders, the viewer is faced with the need to respond to which extent a particular text of culture implements the purpose of making a harmonizing dialogue as a co-existence of the given and the created, which consistency is, in the authors’ opinion, the main criterion of genuine art;
- At the same time, the role of reinterpreting precedent pictorial texts in the situation of “all the words said” and total citation is the artist’s ability to demonstrate a new look at old truths, introducing the viewer to the age-old wisdom of mankind.

DISCUSSION

Realizing the need to define art, one should be aware of how ambiguous and contradictory the answers can be. Nevertheless, the authors try to focus attention on the universal characteristics of art as an experience of otherness of a creative person, the inclusion into which provides the perceiving subject with an entry into the space of the spirit. Agreeing with Ilyin that the spirit appears in the trinity of freedom, love, and objectivity (Ilyin: 1993, p. 478), it should be noted that the experience sought is always aimed at creation. In other words, not excluding the possibility of positioning art as something artificially made, directly opposite to what exists naturally, which justifies the point of view on art as a fraud – as one of the characters in the film by Kitano says the authors consider that the awakening of creative potential on the viewer’s part is essential for art if it is about fine art, and the reader or listener if it is about literature (poetry and prose) or music. Accordingly, in all cases without exception, the criterion of artistry will be the consistency of the dialogue between the author and the recipient, the relevance of which is in no way determined by the physical presence of the creator in the life of the subject who perceives his work: “vita Brevis, ars longa”.

Significantly, the mentioned dialogue generally determines the space of the artist’s development, who thus masters the previous experience. Moreover, having become an original master, the author often demonstrates addiction to some technique developed by his colleague. Braque’s painting *The Musician* (1917- 1918), which corresponds to Picasso’s paintings *Three Musicians* and *Untitled*, sounding in unison with *Dove of Peace* by Picasso (1949) and other paintings, also appears in the dialogue space. It is significant that Picasso acting in unison with Braque – it is enough to recall his reinterpretation of the painting by Delacroix *Algerian Women or Menin*, which are the “echo of the original painting” by Velazquez (Volkova: 2019, pp. 48- 58), admitted that an artist was “a collector who picks up a collection for himself, painting pictures of other artists he liked. I start with this, and then something new comes out” (Picasso: 2019).

Similarly, the character of the film by Kitano *Achilles and the Tortoise* searches for his identity. In the film context, Zeno’s aporia can be considered a metaphor by which the film director reveals the problem of the timelessness of art and, at the same time, its modernity: no matter how an artist tries to keep up with his era, only focusing on the eternal he can become consonant with both the present and the future. According to Stravinsky, the truly important “... artist’s business ... is the repair of old ships. He can reproduce in his way only what has already been saying”. A similar attitude can be seen not only in painting or music. The essence

of literary creation is recognized in a no less original point of view on the process of creating an artwork, which Eckerman connects with the name of Goethe: “Everything I have is mine!. Whether I took it from life or books does it matter? The only question is whether I did well or not!” (Eckerman: 1934, p. 965).

The fact that in the name of art Mathisu is ready to sacrifice his own life, making experiments with borderline states of consciousness, indicates only one thing. Kitano’s character, along with many other artists, could justifiably agree with what Kurt Glezer, the first biographer of Edward Munch, wrote in 1915: an artist “belongs only to his art” (Koroleva: 2015, p. 72). Thus, at the moment when Mathisu was trying to capture a sunflower in a burning barn, he faints, and the last thing that the viewer can see on a stretcher carried by emergency doctors is the artist’s hand with the brush, which became a continuation of his burnt flesh. Being obsessed with art, Mathisu even perceives his own body as a material that can be used as an improvised means for creativity. He has a similar attitude toward other people, including members of his family – a devoted wife, who does not lose faith in Mathisu’s talent, and his daughter who has lost faith in his talent. Mathisu paints her face with lipstick, being at the head of the deceased, after that he resorts to a scarf that serves as a shroud.

In this context, the experience of another “famous artist” is quite remarkable, and he is famous so that “it is unlikely... to find a person with a brush in hand who could compare with him” (Akutagawa: 1974, pp. 117-140) – a character of the novel by Akutagawa (Akutagawa: 1974, pp. 117-140) *The Torments of Hell*. Having received an offer to capture the suffering, an artist Yoshihido asks the customer to set fire to the carriage, in which there should be one of the court ladies. Arguing his request, Yoshihido says that only having seen firsthand the torments of a woman, he can be convincing in their embodiment in the picture. The customer goes to meet the artist, hiding the fact that in the carriage in flames there will be not some court lady, but the artist’s fifteen-year-old daughter. Having realized the substitution and having passed the test, Yoshihido finally fulfills the order in the best way, creating a masterpiece; however, after he finishes the work, the artist ends his life by suicide.

The fact that Yoshihido’s appearance resembles a monkey – a primate, which, according to Darwin’s theory, is considered to be the ancestor of man – does not seem accidental. It seems, similarly to how an animal implements a program laid down by nature in the structure of its brain, so Yoshihido, obsessed with art, cannot resist his gift, which completely subordinates the thoughts and actions of its carrier. Is not that why one of his fellow students, Mathisu, commits suicide because he cannot overcome his demon? (It should be recalled in parentheses that for the ancient Greeks a demon or a daimon, a genius was a kind of inbeing acting as an analog of a guardian angel or inner voice). Moreover, the dominance of the irrational over the rational that is so characteristic of creative personality provides Mathisu with powerful intuition, as a result of which, even before the artist finds out about the death of his daughter, he paints the walls of his home in blood-red, as if trying to prevent trouble.

Having tried a variety of techniques and mastered many artistic styles, by the end of the film Mathisu creates a painting that combines such diverse elements as a word, color, image, and a tape measure designed to measure length. The latter symbolizes the life path, on which there can be both recognition and wealth.

Moreover, the fact that the path starts from born and ends with die eliminates both possible gains and losses. In other words, the experience captured on canvas by Mathisu sounds in unison with Pasternak’s words. This refers to the famous lines of the poem “To Be Famous Is Not in Good Taste”. The justification of the indicated parallel is associated with the fact that throughout the film Mathisu, who is in constant search, pays almost no attention to his canvases, which catch the viewer’s eye either at the modern art exhibition or on the wall of a cozy café.

Also, his difference from the general mass of artisans, hungry for fame, is that Mathisu is trusted by the village holy fool, who is also endowed with the ability to capture the world around him on paper. Moreover, each of them prefers to draw from life, which requires special chosenness. For example, Pierre Bonnard wrote about himself as follows: “I am too weak ... and it is difficult for me to paint from life for a long time.

Perhaps only the great Titian could do that" (Pulikova: 2015, p. 72). Finally, poor Mathisu, in his service to art, humbly accepts his outcast when, in response to a request for money needed to buy paints, he hears derogatory remarks from his daughter-prostitute: "Disgusting to see you, artist! I'm so sick of you..."

Finally, the name of the main character is consonant with the name of the French Fauvist artist, about whom the following words are known: "... very few of those who have been granted vision can see in the right way... One of those who succeeded is Henri Matisse" (quoted in Pulikova: 2015, p.). Significantly, the points of contact between Mathisu and his great namesake are also revealed in the fact that the main theme for the recognized genius, like the character of the film by Kitano, was the idea of the need to search and find beauty everywhere: in the sky, in birds, in flowers. It is appropriate to recall here that Matisse acted as an artist-decorator in the ballet *The Nightingale*, written by Igor Stravinsky based on Andersen's same-name fairytale. The fact is that the eastern exoticism of this sophisticated fairytale story hides a problem of mechanism and organism that is very important for the representatives of the Land of the Rising Sun, as described by the modern Japanese philosopher Imamichi.

In general, even though the majority of Mathisu's works are an imitation of artists of the Western culture, including pop art, such as Andy Warhol, his works made in the mainstream of naive art are not mechanical crafts-copies noted by total secondariness. Mathisu looks at people through almost every painting in which a special manner and characteristic forms are known for a famous contemporary artist, which makes his works original and unique.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the similarity discovered by Akutagawa (Akutagawa: 1974, pp. 117-140) between the artist Yoshihido and a pet monkey – the favorite of his daughter, it should be noted that this external analogy can in no way be considered an argument in favor of the statement by Allan and Barbara Pease that people are "hairless apes that have learned to walk on two limbs and have a clever, advanced brain", obeying "the same biological laws" that "govern our actions, reactions, body language and gestures" (Pease: 2018, p. 496).

Both the character of the novel *The Torments of Hell* and the character of the film *Achilles and the Tortoise* are genuine creators who sacrificed their lives for the service of art, i.e. which no animal has and may ever need. Moreover, despite a series of hardships and disappointments, each of them remains true to himself, his vocation, remaining alive to the end, since only the search for one's ego justifies the presence in this world. As Mamardashvili has repeatedly emphasized, man is a constant reincarnation (Mamardashvili: 2019, p. 480).

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