

## CALL FOR PAPERS

for a volume edited by the 'Lucian Blaga' publishing house in Sibiu, in partnership with the academic journal Jurnalul Artelor Spectacolului / Journal of Performing Arts

### **Representation vs. representability. The new taboos of contemporary discourse**

**Deadline: June 15, 2025**

In 2016, Romeo Castellucci presented *Sur le concept du visage du fils de Dieu* (*On the Concept of the Face, Regarding the Son of God*) in Rennes, drawing the ire of Catholic demonstrators who denounced the production as blasphemous and criticised the Italian director for hypostasising faith and old age in an overly naturalistic manner. In 2024, Florentina Holzinger's *Sancta*, performed at the Stuttgart Opera, provoked an outcry because of its portrayal of lesbian love, which was considered too 'explicit'. The same year, in Romania, a transgender spectator interrupted a theatrical performance, reproaching the director for having given a transgender role to a cisgender actor. On the other side of the Atlantic, in the United States, several recent film productions adopting the codes of political correctness have sparked controversy. The choice of certain directors to portray emblematic historical or literary figures in a way that contradicts their original reality is dividing audiences: for example, Anne Boleyn and Queen Elizabeth are played by black actresses, while characters from the fairy tales of the Grimm brothers or H.C. Andersen are subject to similar reinterpretations.

Creators of shows may wish to adapt or revisit existing works to express a singular artistic vision. In this sense, freedom of expression, enshrined as a fundamental right since 1789, was strengthened in France for the first time by a special law stating in its first article that artistic creation and its dissemination were free, and providing that violent interference with this freedom would be punishable by law. However, copyright, and particularly its moral aspect – perpetual and inalienable – guarantees the integrity of the original work, enabling the author or their successors to oppose any unauthorised modification.

Although recurring, the tension between the protection of copyright and the assertion of the director's and performers' freedom of expression is growing, as illustrated by several recent disputes. For example, the Comédie-Française objected to the wishes of Bernard-Marie Koltès' brother regarding the casting of *Retour au desert* (*Return to the Desert*): should a non-Arab actor be given the role of Aziz? Similarly, can the staging of *Dialogues des Carmélites* (*Dialogues of the Carmelites*), without betraying Francis Poulenc's ideas, spare the nuns originally destined for the scaffold? There are so many visions, each legitimate, that are likely to clash: that of the author, anxious to preserve the integrity of their work, and that of the director and the artists, demanding the freedom of interpretation that is essential to the vitality and

diversity of theatrical productions. In conclusion, the Koltès affair, like others, underlines the need for constant dialogue between creation and interpretation in order to strike a balance between respect for the author's original intentions and the artistic freedom of the performers, thus guaranteeing fruitful and lively theatrical expression.

The reception of contemporary works of art, like the recontextualization of museum collections, continues to raise fundamental questions, referring to ancient 'taboos' that plague the balance of power between ethics and aesthetics. Sex, death, disease, old age, race, dictatorship and the condition of ethnic, religious and sexual minorities remain sensitive themes for the public, whether in terms of contemporary artistic expressions or new stagings and interpretations. By confronting heritage and creation, these approaches challenge established narratives and question the tensions between memory, identity and critical engagement, in the face of creative or curatorial visions that seek to defy conformism and puritanism.

Where do we draw the line between what can be represented and what cannot? Who is entitled to set the limits of artistic, museum or heritage discourse? To what extent do copyright and the legal issues that define the ethics of representation influence – or even compromise – the work itself? How, as writers, visual artists, museographers, etc., can we illustrate genocide, incurable disease or sexual abuse without transgressing the limits of 'acceptable' discourse? How far can we go in reinventing our cultural heritage without infringing the principles of an approach deemed 'academically' correct? Can we conceive of an authentic artistic discourse if dogma and morality impose precise limits? To what extent can ideological approaches of any kind be justified in the face of the demands of aesthetics and authenticity?

These questions will be addressed in this volume by the 'Lucian Blaga' publishing house in Sibiu, in partnership with the academic journal Jurnalul Artelor Spectacolului / Journal of Performing Arts, and we invite you to take part.

This call is open to researchers from a variety of fields: literature, the arts, cultural heritage, sociology, museology, museography, historiography, law, gender studies, digital humanities, etc. Publication of articles in the volume is free of charge.

Please send a 250-word abstract and a 100-word short bio in English to [andrei.serban@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:andrei.serban@ulbsibiu.ro) and [diana.nechit@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:diana.nechit@ulbsibiu.ro) by June 15, 2025.

Following a selection of manuscripts, the full-text articles, written in English, will be published in a volume at the 'Lucian Blaga' publishing house in Sibiu, in partnership with the academic journal Jurnalul Artelor Spectacolului / Journal of Performing Arts.

Collaboration between two or more researchers (from the same or different institutions) is encouraged, but not compulsory. Priority will however be given to joint contributions involving a researcher from the 'Lucian Blaga' University of Sibiu, in collaboration with researchers from other universities that are members of the FORTHEM Alliance.

Provisional timetable:

Call for proposals sent and circulated: 10 May 2025

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15 June 2025

Deadline for acceptance or rejection of proposals: 1 July 2025

Deadline for submission of full papers: 31 August 2025

Return of revisions to authors: 30 September 2025

Deadline for receipt of revised versions, including the introduction by the coordination team: 31 October 2025

Final revisions (if necessary) for finalisation: 15 November 2025

Expected publication date of the volume: 15 December 2025



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