

Intermedial references and signification

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The paper discusses the issue of *intermedial references*, – the matters of conditions, necessity and relevance of their interpretation. It considers the lack of congruence between the theoretical propositions of intermedial studies and the practice of analysis. In theory, every intermedial reference, whether an individual or a system one, has to compel the viewer to see it as configuring the meaningful dialogue between artworks or media. Yet, the practice of analysis reveals another pattern: the “inscription of the voices” of other artworks or media usually inspires the receiver to perform the process of selection, to differentiate the references involved into the processes of signification from those that perform the other (e.g. exclusively aesthetic) functions. The first group of references insistently requires interpretation necessary to reveal the meaning(s) of the film. The second one does not imply any demands for interpretation. Thus the key issue could be articulated as follows: whether a film does classify the value of a reference, whether it marks the demand for its interpretation, and, if yes, how does it indicate both the value and the demand.

To explore a possible solution of the issue I will focus on the intermedial references of cinema to painting in the films that do not “tell” the story of a painter or a painting (as the “films on art or artists” represent a specific case of intermedial dialogue). I will examine the films that either directly inscribe the existing paintings (as it happens, e.g., in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, Stanley Kubrick’s *Lolita*, Paul Schrader’s *Comfort of Strangers*, Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, Martin McDonagh’s *In Bruges*, etc.) or represent them in the form of *tableau vivant* (as it happens, e.g., in Quentin Tarantino’s *Django Unchained* or in Peter Greenaway’s films). The solution presupposes the close attention to the technical mode in which the film inscribes a reference, to the specificity and logic of narrative, i.e. to the aspects of filmic tissue. It is based on the revision and modification of the “model of codes” proposed by Roland Barthes in his “Textual Analysis of a Tale by Edgar Poe”. His textual analysis of literary artwork gives attention to the level of the plot rather than to the level of its expression, namely, to the material form of its presentation and to the mode of its reception. However, the application of Barthesian model within the framework of intermedial studies calls for the necessity of differentiation of the levels,

and this differentiation helps to identify the code that appears to be the essential “sign” of the filmic demand for interpretation of intermedial reference.

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