

REALITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF PAINTING: SIMULACRES BY MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ

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The article examines the code of painting and the media codes of other sign systems that are inseparable from it, forming a peculiar picture of the modern information world as a world of simulacra in M. Houellebecq's novel "La carte et le territoire" ("The Map and the Territory" in English translation). The purpose of the work is to reveal the role and functions of the painting code and related to it media codes of photography, video art, architecture, advertising, and the Internet in the author of "The Map and the Territory" narrative strategy, that permits to identify some general laws of, typical for postmodern art, intermedial thinking and to clarify the concept of intermediality itself. We have applied intertextual, intermedial, hermeneutic, historical and literary research methods to conduct the research.

The simulation, real world depiction imitation, which is replaced in the novel by its numerous "copies of copies", begins with the first appellative structure of the text, the title itself – "The Map and the Territory". The title announces the principle of replacing reality (territory) with its conventional image (map), which makes an emphasis on the intermedial prism as a decisive idea of world reproduction in the novel. Painting, as one of the most expressive forms of world depiction, is presented in the novel as a product of the simulacra multiplication technology, which is the leading one for the modern information society, where secondary modeling systems occupy an increasingly significant place. Painting, as a kind of litmus test, allows Houellebecq to show how various media zones, that create a distorted picture of the real world, interact and influence a modern person. Painting as "The Map and the Territory" central hero's profession underpins the intermedial discourse of the novel, being in the focus of characters' philosophical discussions and revealing its dominant role in the plastic accuracy of Jed's paintings and photographs description. In the novel the literary text is consistently synchronized with the works of painters Koons and Hirst, whose images are depicted in the painting "Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons divide the art market" which opens "The Map and the Territory". There is a verification of the painting by a word and vice versa. Multimedia spaces are superimposed on each other, giving birth to an intermedial, whimsical image of the modern world, which is successively destroyed by man, giving it to secondary sign systems. The idea of the simulacrum as a marker of modern culture determines both the form and the content of Houellebecq's novel which carried out a "realist-postmodern synthesis" through an intermedial narrative strategy.

Conclusion. The principle of simulacrum thinking, as a leading in modern art, was born by the world of simulacra in which modern man lives. The narrative strategy chosen by Houellebecq to demonstrate the secondary nature of modern ways of representing the world should prove to the reader, not only through the content but also through the intermedial narrative form itself, that it is necessary to wake up in order not to perish in the artificial world created by man as a "second nature": a culture that, thanks to technological progress, erases a person from the planet's map, leaving a free area covered with vegetation waves, where there are no people and cannot be. The pictorial code is dominant in Houellebecq's narrative, through the prism of which the real world is shown in the novel. It demonstrates the modeling principle toxicity in the artworks based not on a mimetic mechanism but on the technique of simulation, simulacrum.

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