

## WORD, SOUND, IMAGE: INTERTEXTUALITY IN MUSIC VIDEOS

The goal of the project is to investigate selected music videos which refer intertextually to particular motifs and conventions in literature, painting, music and film. A research group, which includes three literary scholars, a musicologist and a film scholar, will focus on the music video as an art form which makes it possible to transmit familiar messages in an innovative and condensed way. The researchers will seek to answer the question of whether there are any differences in music videos from specific cultural contexts. If so, how can these differences be explained? Also, how does the music video reflect the literary, filmic and musical traditions of particular regions? In order to answer such questions, the researchers will carefully investigate the message of music videos which have been selected for the corpus on the basis of their connection with particular topics. Six topics have been identified for the purposes of the current project: 1. Allusions to fairy tales, folk tales or texts for teenagers; 2. Widespread references to the Gothic novels (e.g., *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*) and their contemporary technological, post-humanist transformations; 3. Biblical themes from paradisiac to apocalyptic intertexts; 4. Works of art quoted in music videos (ekphrasis). 5. The portrayal of male and female artists; 6. Music videos in which meanings are produced through the coexistence of two or more of the first five topics.

Despite its immense popularity, music video has remained a peripheral subject for academics. Few books and scholarly articles in the world focus on this phenomenon. Musicologists and film scholars occasionally concentrate on music videos, but the form rarely becomes crucial for their investigations, as has been the case of Carol Vernallis from Stanford University, who defines the music video as “the relation of sound and image,” bypassing the role of “the word,” which comes first in the title of the current project. “Word” does not only imply lyrics, but also the cultural context that is directly or indirectly connected to stories, the Bible, myths, tales and many other sources. Artistic music videos are not opposed to traditional forms but they transform and complete familiar motifs in a creative way.

The project will have an impact on all three disciplines involved in research. Literary scholars will gain materials, the analysis of which will raise awareness of literary and cultural motifs through encountering them in a transformed version in music videos. This will affect the attitudes to literature, which is often discussed in isolation from new and accessible media, and thus becomes elitist or archaic. In fact, literature has often anticipated new forms, as Mieke Bal contends, drawing attention to the fact that Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* contained “cinematic” passages, even though cinema did not exist then. Investigating literary motifs in music videos and intermediality in literature paves the way for the fusion of arts. Music and film will be crucial here. Aficionados of Musicology will become sensitive to the presence of the “word” co-existing with “sound and image.” Music video shares features of opera, even if it lacks opera’s scale and monumentality. Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody” which was released in 1975, and has been regarded as the beginning of the era of the new art form, contained parodic allusions to the opera. Music videos have been of little interest to Film Studies, where they have come as derivations of more “serious forms” (i.e. short film). Research focusing on music video as an autonomous form will reveal the huge potential of a phenomenon which conflates different arts, genres and conventions. Music videos make it possible to explore the constructions of ethnicity or sexuality, stereotypes and their deconstruction, cultural and national contexts. This medium begs for separate research because it disseminates social or ideological messages which affect the audience in a much more direct way than literature, music and film.

The project will give rise to a dialogue between the groups that are often isolated from each other, i.e. literary scholars, film scholars, musicologists, film-makers and students. The variety of analyzed materials (American, British, French, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian music videos) will add an intercultural dimension to this dialogue. The fact that research results will be available in open access in English will contribute to this.