

## MULTIMEDIA CONCRETE POETRY AS A CLASS OF VIRTUAL LITERATURE

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Literary texts created in virtual environment find their close relations to the works of a new generation of Concrete poetry. The possibilities of text fragments colouring, providing them with audio accompaniment, and activating their code make multimedia texts the most adequate way to realise the creative idea of a writer working in the aforementioned fields. The main questions that we pose in this study are: the differential features of the poetic form that we place at the centre of our attention in the context of virtual literature; the specifics of the existing samples of Concrete poetry created and intended for perception in a virtual environment provide and what are the poetic features of this class of poetic texts. At the intersection of the results of the reader's perception of the graphic side of this text and their comparison with the results of reading the units that make up the text, the semantic landscape of the text emerges. The search for the most adequate term to designate the array of texts that are created and perceived with the participation of modern computer technologies is an important moment in the theoretical and literary understanding of the literature of the virtual environment. The material for our analysis is the works that represent the main classes of the virtual literature. This investigation was made in the context of wider problem, that we are aimed to describe in the fullest extent possible: namely it is the practice of transferring a literary text from one media to another together with all the specific consequences that may occur. This problem needs to be discussed in the case of the publication of *hypertextual* and *multimedia* literary texts. These works are examples of literary forms that significantly change traditional ideas about the structure of a literary text, the boundaries of literary genres, involving means of expression from other classes of art – painting, cinema, animation, music.

**Key words:** *virtual literature, concretism, concrete poetry, visual poetry, multimedia, new media.*

# МУЛЬТИМЕДІЙНА КОНКРЕТНА ПОЕЗІЯ ЯК РІЗНОВИД ВІРТУАЛЬНОЇ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

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Літературні тексти, створені у віртуальному середовищі, мають тісний зв'язок із творами нового покоління конкретної поезії. Можливості кольорового оформлення фрагментів тексту, супроводу їх аудіо та активації їхнього коду роблять мультимедійні тексти найбільш адекватним способом реалізації творчої ідеї письменника, який працює з вищезазначеним жанром. Основні питання, які ми ставимо у цьому дослідженні, такі: диференціальні особливості поетичної форми, яку ми ставимо у центр нашої уваги в контексті віртуальної літератури; особливості існуючих зразків конкретної поезії, створених і призначених для сприйняття у віртуальному середовищі, та які поетичні особливості цього класу поетичних текстів. На перетині результатів сприйняття читачем графічного боку цього тексту та їх порівняння з результатами читання одиниць, що становлять текст, виникає семантичний ландшафт тексту. Пошук найбільш адекватного терміна для позначення масиву текстів, що створюються та сприймаються за участю сучасних комп'ютерних технологій, є важливим моментом у теоретичному та літературному розумінні літератури віртуального середовища, тому матеріалом для нашого аналізу є твори, що представляють основні класи віртуальної літератури. Це дослідження було проведено в контексті ширшої проблеми, яку ми прагнемо описати якомога повніше, а саме, це практика перенесення літературного тексту з одного носія на інший разом з усіма конкретними наслідками, що можуть виникнути. Ця проблема потребує обговорення у разі публікації гіпертекстових та мультимедійних літературних текстів. Ці твори є прикладами літературних форм, які суттєво змінюють традиційні уявлення про структуру літературного тексту, межі літературних жанрів, залучаючи засоби вираження з інших видів мистецтва: живопису, кіно, анімації, музики.

**Ключові слова:** *віртуальна література, конкретизм, конкретна поезія, візуальна поезія, мультимедіа, нові медіа.*

**The problem description.** The material for our analysis is the works that represent the main classes of multimedia Concrete poetry: «My Name is Captain, Captain» by J. Morrissey and L. Telley, «The Dreamlife of Letters» by B. K. Stefans, «Hearthead»

by A. de Campos. These works are examples of literary forms that significantly change traditional ideas about the structure of a literary text, the boundaries of literary genres, involving means of expression from other types of art – painting, cinema, animation, music. The study was based on the main available materials and theoretical texts, and the subject of specific consideration were texts that were singled out in literary criticism and theoretical works as demonstrating the properties of the new class of literature.

In the study we approach contemporary literary studies, namely the works of scholars devoted to the problems of virtual literary forms, among which it is worth highlighting the works of E. J. Aarseth, J. D. Bolter, K. Fitzpatrick, M. Joyce, A. Kroker, R. Landow, M. Bernstein, R. Trigg, S. Moulthrop, M. McLuhan, T. Nelson. We consider the works in a broad scientific and cultural context.

**The aim of the research.** The main questions that we pose in this study are: what are the differential features of the poetic form that we place at the centre of our attention in the context of virtual literature; what data do the existing samples of concrete poetry created and intended for perception in a virtual environment provide to the researcher and what are the poetic features of this class of poetic text. The subject of our research is samples of Concrete poetry that are created and intended to be perceived in a virtual environment. We analyse texts using the tools proposed by abovementioned modern researchers, which are in use in the theory of new media, digital art, and virtual literature. Our hypothesis is to distinguish multimedia poetry (concrete poetry, visual poetry, etc.) as a separate class of literature created with the help of digital technologies and perceived in a virtual environment.

The search for the most adequate term to designate the array of texts that are created and perceived with the participation of modern computer technologies is an important moment in the theoretical and literary understanding of the literature of the virtual environment. These works differ from the rest of the literature by the following essential features: the dependence on the means offered by computer technologies: with the replacement of the virtual environment by a printed edition or manuscript, the literary text of this class of work loses its essential features, and its structure is disrupted; non-linearity of the text of the work: the theoretical model of this class of work assumes the absence of any sequence of fragments of its text pre-arranged by the author, which determines the probability of the formation of a different work in the reader's mind with each reading based on the rearrangement of these fragments; nonlinearity parallelly programs such a feature of virtual information units as interactivity; the presence in the text of the work of extra-linguistic units that significantly affect the formation of the aesthetic impression of the work, being invariable components of its text; this characteristic is best denoted by the term «multimedia» borrowed from computer science. Multimedia literary texts find their embodiment in the works of a new generation of *concretists* and poets working in the field of «visual poetry». The possibilities of text fragments colouring, providing them with audio accompaniment, and activating their code make multimedia texts the most adequate way to realise the creative idea of a writer working in the aforementioned fields.

The impetus for our work is the presence of only a small number of studies in the field of virtual environment literature in the literary studies. Accordingly, it should be noted that the novelty of our study can be determined by its very focus on the problems of *virtual literature* within the framework of literary studies and the involvement of a wide range of multilingual material in order to study and generalise theoretical research in this field. To date, we have not come across works that would widely present the typology and poetics of virtual environment literature on the material of literary studies.

## **Presentation of the main research material**

### **1. Background**

The combination of different genres and classes of literature, and even art forms in one object, is a tendency that has been extremely evident since the early twentieth century. Contemporary art overcomes genre boundaries and species restrictions, which at the same time complicates the scientific study of its creations. The development of new approaches and methods in the comprehensive study of artistic objects, including works of so-called virtual literature, is an important task of contemporary humanities. The study of narrative structures of virtual literature allows us to answer such important questions as typology of virtual literature and a clear definition of its genre tree; peculiarities of virtual literature poetics and distinctive features of works belonging to it; prospects for the development of virtual literature forms and the possibility of its mutual penetration with other art forms.

This investigation was made in the context of wider problem, that we are aimed to describe in the fullest extent possible: namely it is the practice of transferring a literary text from one media to another together with all the specific consequences that may occur. This problem needs to be discussed in the case of the publication of *hypertextual* and *multimedia* literary texts. We have a suspicion in this case that in this case, that we face a change, if not a loss, in the literary text that affects the formation of the reader's aesthetic impression, even if this literary text was not conceived, created, and presented to the reader as non-linear, multimedia, etc. It is obvious that the environment in which a literary text is perceived has a great impact on the perception with the impact of all components of this environment. In the case of printed literature, this includes the formatting of the book's text, its placement on the page, the design of the book, the quality of printing, paper, the way of work with the book (its belonging to a certain cycle, series, invitation to discussion, etc.), and most importantly, the reader's state of mind and all his or her preconceptions and ready-made models of perception of a particular literary type by means of a particular text medium. *Virtual literature* requires the use of other practices: the reader must use a computer or similar devices connected to the network, the reading process uses appropriate software, which determines the availability of certain opportunities in the process of text perception, and so on. These components of the environment of perception of a literary text determine the existence of a «writing space» (term used by J. P. Bolter) – one for real (printed) literature and another for virtual literature. However, it is important to emphasise that the question of whether

the books mentioned above, which are so insistently included by the speakers in the virtual literature, belong to the array of literary texts that we have defined as virtual literature, is answered in the negative. The theoretical model of the type of literature that we propose, no matter what we call it – «network literature», «virtual literature», «virtual fiction», «cyberliterature», «hyperfiction», «cybertext», «hypertext literature», etc. – does not allow us to refer to the aforementioned literary texts as its samples. We see that this is the way to resolve the methodological conflict between our study and the spontaneous use of the term virtual literature.

Nevertheless, in order to designate a special kind of fiction and poetry, the features of which we have listed above, we have chosen a term that actualises the main opposition that gives us grounds to consider this kind of literature as a separate one – reality/virtuality, and this term is *virtual literature*. Moreover, by replacing the term, we intend to emphasise the subject matter of our study rather than the terminology that defines it. The introductory nature of our work requires terminological and methodological flexibility, especially given the lack of development of such issues in actual literary studies. It is for these reasons that we consider the term *virtual literature* to be acceptable for use in our research.

In the context of virtual literature, special kind of visual poetry is distinguished as a separate class, which is usually called Concretism or Concrete poetry. The term *concrete* and its derivatives appeared in art theory at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was used by the Dadaists to refer to a new type of music that used the sounds of the environment without processing them or using musical instruments. Concrete music is closely related to such art forms as Dadaist simultaneous poetry, theatre, which later took the form of happenings, and the ready-made form, which is mostly associated with Marcel Duchamp. However, the term Concretism itself dates back to the 1950s, when it was used to describe a literary trend that was most fully manifested in the works of Swiss, Swedish and Brazilian writers at that time. The essence of the artistic practice of the participants of this movement was to address the graphic side of the linguistic sign, to delve into its expressive possibilities and to emphasise its material form in order to create the necessary aesthetic impression on the reader. Being, perhaps unwittingly, an integral part of the global shift of that time towards the conceptualisation of art and the minimisation of the plan of expression in an art object, the artists of Concretism embodied in poetry ideas that were in tune with the artistic inventions of their contemporaries. The closeness of Concretism to Op Art, Pop Art, Happy Art, Art Cinema, Minimalism, and finally Conceptualism becomes apparent in the process of in-depth analysis of the means of expression and the treatment of linguistic material in the text.

The leading artists of Concretism were Brazilian writers and artists from the Noigandres group, including Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, Decio Pignatari and others. Their work was joined by artists from abroad, including Max Bense and Eugene Gomringer from Switzerland, and later a large number of artists and writers from Canada and the United States. At the same time, in 1953, «Manifesto for Concrete Poetry» by Öyvind Fahlström, a writer, director, and painter already known in artistic circles at



that time, was published in Sweden in a literary periodical. Without any creative ties with artists from Switzerland and Brazil, Fahlström created his own artistic system, which was nevertheless extremely close to the Noigandres and Gomringer's doctrine.

The beginning of the global *concrete* movement was marked by a joint exhibition in 1956 in São Paulo, Brazil, which brought together many writers and artists from around the world who were experimenting with forms close to Concretism at the time. Since this exhibition, the history of world literature has been marked by the concept of Concretism as a literary movement.

## **2. General approaches**

The definition of Concretism is still not sufficiently clear from a theoretical point of view. However, there are certain dimensions in relation to which we can position Concretism as an artistic practice or a literary movement. Having exhausted itself back in the 1960s, it as a relatively independent literary movement has lost its relevance today. There is a reason for granting it the status of a literary movement, since it can be defined without hesitation as: «a relatively monolithic and internally ordered set of literary (ideological and artistic) trends, established in a number of outstanding or epochal works that appeared at approximately the same time» [4, p. 418]. The cohesion of the artists who formed the core of Concretism as a movement was evident, as evidenced by the existence of the Noigandres group, close communication between writers to develop a common relatively coherent doctrine and joint implementation of new artistic techniques, as well as joint exhibitions of artists as the most adequate way to present their works to the general public at that time.

The simultaneous emergence of Concretism in different parts of the world, the existence of an ideological exchange and the development of a theoretical framework allow us to consider it as a literary movement that emerged, developed and declined between 1950 and 1970. However, as an artistic practice, Concretism is still present today. For example, contemporary Brazilian writers, who are strongly influenced by Concretism, use the descriptive expressions «text in the style of Concretism», «Concrete poem», «Concretismo» as a genre definition of a work.

In Concretism, as Jean Arp says, «sequences of words, sequences of sentences remind the reader of an endless flow, an eternal development of things» [7, p. 238]. After all, the similarity of linguistic units to real objects within Concretism was hinted at by members of the Noigandres group in their manifesto «An Outline of Concrete Poetry»: «the word is seen in itself – an attractive field of possibilities – like a dynamic object, a life lattice, a complete organism, with psycho-physical and chemical properties» [13, p. 71].

The metaphorical nature of the manifesto conceals the actual practice of the Concretists, which is to focus on certain properties of a linguistic unit or grapheme, whether it is a letter, a sound, a word, a statement, or a period. By «certain properties» we mean the properties that were discussed by the Concretists in the early 1950s – these are the verbal/vocal/visual properties. The probable division of the expression plan of a Concretist text into three levels according to the programme documents seems to us to be as follows: semantic (exploited

by such movements as Conceptualism, Social Art, and Performance), phonetic (used and still used in the so-called Sound poetry – poetry kind that cannot be written down using traditional linguistic graphics), and graphic (this is actually Visual and Concrete poetry, belonging to which texts cannot be articulated and have no meaning in the traditional sense).

Proclaiming a three-level structure of the text, the Concretists in their work emphasised one of the three levels, went to extremes, creating a text that can either sound like a sound recording or recitation, but cannot be transmitted in writing in the usual way, or can be perceived as a sequence or array of signs (linguistic and non-linguistic), but cannot be reproduced orally without the slightest loss. In his attempt to define Concrete Poetry, Robert Clover, a researcher of contemporary art from the United States, notes that «Concrete Poetry, or Visual Poetry or verbal/vocal/visual poetry, embodied the desire for intermediality that is present in all the arts, corresponding to them and at the same time shaping the contemporary sensibility that emerged from the interaction of different sign systems in art and life, and for which the attempt to define the difference between art and non-art is increasingly losing its meaning» [13, p. 23]. The term intermediality, given the special nature of Concretism, acquires a particularly important meaning. It is the use of many means of transmitting information to the recipient that defines the so-called intermediality of this artistic technique.

### **3. Examples**

The combination of graphics and sound and the assignment of their respective meanings to a single artistic construction or work has been possible since the beginning of the use of the computer, in the virtual environment of which it is possible to create an object containing text, sound, animation and controls without significant effort for the personal use. This is the unity of virtual tools that is commonly referred to as multimedia in computer science. With a deep understanding that today it is no longer possible to speak of Concretism as a trend, contemporary writers who use multimedia technologies in their work point to the closeness or genre similarity of their works to those of the Concretists. In the preface to «The Dreamlife of Letters», Brian Kim Stefans talks about the process of creating his text as part of a writers' forum dedicated to gender issues: «...I had to respond to the person who was listed as number one, and in my case, it was the poet and feminist literary theorist Rachel Blais Duplessis. Duplessis wrote a very structured, detailed, almost incomprehensible response. I decided that I would respond to her text in a special way, but I realised that normal prose would not be enough, so I alphabetised the words from her text and created my own sequences of very short 'concrete' poems based on random word juxtapositions. <...> More importantly, it was like an ancient 'concrete' technique, even reminiscent of an older aesthetic once introduced by Gomringer, de Campos brothers and many others in the past fifties, and it was not very interesting for me» [15]. This prompted the artist to create an 11-minute film, which can be viewed in two ways – the whole thing from beginning to end or selectively each poem. In our opinion, the work of Stefans is one of the possible examples of contemporary visual poetry that includes part of its works in virtual literature.

In order to understand the specifics of the functioning of a visual poetic text implemented in a virtual environment, we will highlight its main structural levels. A simple example is the text «Hearthead» by Augusto de Campos [10]. The text of the work consists of two alternating inscriptions:

*he(in(st(hea(my)d)arts)my)art*

*he(in(h(he(my)art)eats)my)ad*

In the framework of literary studies, we can deconstruct this text and obtain the following two expressions: «my head starts in my heart» and «my heart heats in my head». It should be emphasised that the text is written in yellow and placed on a bright red background. The two inscriptions alternate so quickly that it is impossible to read both at once. The first thing that catches the reader's eye is the similarity of both inscriptions with the combinations of letters «he», «ad», «arts», «hea», «eats». To understand the text, the reader has to solve its code.

The process of communication between the reader and the text belonging to Concretism is extremely similar to the process of communication between the reader and the Baroque text. B. Krysa, a researcher of the Ukrainian Baroque, says that «I. Velychkovskyi's poetic norm is a kind of code, the decoding of which makes it possible to read it in a certain way. <...> The reader needs special knowledge to read the text, and he receives this knowledge from the author. The inexhaustibility of the poetic meaning is emphasised by the possibility of other ways of this writing-reading» [10, p. 25].

The works of Ivan Velychkovskyi [1], a famous Ukrainian baroque poet and theorist, are similar to contemporary virtual Concretism primarily in the way they combine graphics and linguistic signs into a single aesthetic integrity and create poetic structures that not only allow for different readings of the same text, but also invite the reader to do so. Examples are texts such as the «Chvorogranystyi» poem or the poems «Yedynoglasnyi» or «Yedynopadezhnyi». These texts are organised not as natural statements, constructed functionally and rationally, but as fragments selected according to certain parameters (in «Yedynoglasnyi» «each syllable is closed with a single vowel», and in «Yedynopadezhnyi» «ends in a single cadence, in which all the stems fall into the single name ANNA»), and the semantics accordingly depends on the combinations of these fragments.

The symbolism of the red colour is obviously related to the semantics of A. de Campos's text, and its role in emphasising the meaning of individual units of this moving text: «heart», «heat». And the speed of the text's movement forces the reader to resort to different practices of deciphering the text's code than he or she would use with a printed static text. With the rapid change of frames, it is not enough for the reader to read or rather look through the text once to unravel its code. The reader is forced to continue to pause over it, watching the change of frames and focusing his attention on different fragments of the text, until the reader comes to a complete comprehension of the text and receives a kind of illumination of the unravelling structure and meaning of the text: in Aarseth's words, *epiphany* [6, p. 91–92].

Judd Morrissey and Laurie Talley's extraordinarily ornate poem «My Name is Captain, Captain» [12] is a set of texts created in Flash technological environment. This



work is one of the most popular animated texts in the United States, representing a new generation of literature alongside hypertext prose. Like the aforementioned texts by Augusto de Campos and Brian Kim Stefans, this poem is neither static nor «timeless» [8, 130] as it has a certain temporal dimension. Nevertheless, some of its fragments require the reader's intervention, which, first of all, reveals the interactive nature of the poem and a certain degree of dependence on the time of the reader's perception of its fragments. In the practice of reading this poem, such activities as reading the text, visual perception of pictorial forms, choosing among an array of alternative ways of reading, and managing the flow of the text in separate, as Jay David Bolter puts it, «spaces of writing» [8, p. 130] are distinguished.

The poem invites the reader not to immediately plunge into the text, but, if possible, to undergo training to acquire skills in working with the text, since each text fragment, whose elements are placed in a certain space on the computer screen, not only presents its text to the reader, but also requires the reader's activity, which can visualise hidden fragments in the text space by moving the cursor. There are 31 such text fragments. Some of them are nodal texts, and the reading begins with them. These nodal texts offer either to start reading or to be instructed about the possibilities offered by the whole work: how to behave within the text or how to dynamise reading, how to open the text for reading or how to choose the way of reading. The nodal texts are equipped with a navigation bar that allows the reader to navigate to specific sections of the work.

«You don't need to know Morse code to enjoy the genius in this triumph of literary design. With their flirtatious interface, Judd Morrissey and Lori Talley have built more than a poem – they've built a pioneering poetics based on animation, recombination, and exploration. Messages read like broken radio communications of early women aviators. Language harmonizes literary forebears Gertrude Stein and Keith Waldrop with their estranged heirs' electroacoustic music and Chicago math rock. Sound (it's all in your head) supplies the coordinates for lost flights. «My Name is Captain, Captain» might make dit dah dit dah a household word», – says critic and writer Bobby Rabyd about the poem «My Name is Captain, Captain» (Eastgate). And indeed, in this work, language, graphics, animation and hypertext are naturally combined into one aesthetic complex, which, despite its multi-layeredness, is quite easy to perceive. By carefully examining the text, searching for its hidden fragments and directing his reading in a certain way through certain references, the reader reveals its semantics for himself. The high lyricism of the work is undeniable: phrases rich in tropes fly to the reader as if through a broken radio, and his task is to find the logic and connections between them, establish their meaning and, ultimately, read the pilot's message in them. The work «My Name is Captain, Captain» is an embodiment of a complex multimedia art object, which can also be called interactive, and nonlinear in computer science terms.

#### **4. Poetics**

Within the framework of Concretism, which is realised in the field of virtual literature, the author and the reader are subject to somewhat different factors than it was with hypertext. First of all, we have to remember the somewhat shocking, but really

effective principle of Concretists' creativity in literature – «absolute responsibility to language» [2, p. 71–72]. The proclamation of this principle summarises the specifics of the literary practice withing Concretism. This «responsibility to language» means not only attention to language and subordination of creativity to its laws, but also creativity in language, when language becomes the only ideology that determines the text and is its meaning.

For example, in the preface to the above-mentioned poem «The Dreamlife of Letters», Brian Kim Stephens says that he «created his own sequences of very short «concrete» poems based on random word juxtapositions» [15]. It is possible to extract meaning from the random juxtaposition of words, but we must bear in mind that this semantics is accidental and not essential for the comprehension of the text. Instead, the main semantic load of the text is carried by its graphics – the letters are coloured in certain colours, have a certain shape, move and change in a certain way.

At the intersection of the results of the reader's perception of the graphic side of this Concrete text and their comparison with the results of reading the units that make up the text, the semantic landscape of the text emerges. We see the same thing in the case of narrative hypertext, which offers the reader the opportunity to create his or her own sequence of reading. Both in the Concrete poems, which is a ready-made sequence of meaningful units composed by the author in violation of communicational purposes of language, and in the narrative hypertext, which requires the reader to intervene in its structure and thus destroys and simultaneously rebuilds its text, we see the use of techniques close to Dadaism: the compilation of a text from unrelated units, as was the case, for example, in Hugo Ball or Tristan Tzara, leads to the formation of a text that has the features of openness, inconsistency, and is close to pastiche and collage.

When reading hypertextual works by M. Joyce or S. Jackson, we are forced to search for connections between the texts we are reading on our own. We see narrative disruptions in their texts, we encounter insignificant units that resemble interjections or fragments of words, and all of this constitutes a unity, the belief in which is given to us by the context: a conditionally complete work that we have purchased on a CD or opened as a web page on a computer network. It is also worth mentioning the similarities between hypertextual examples of virtual literature and visual poetic texts that use computer technology, the so-called «postmodern poetry», which is «very different from traditional poetry (i.e. the page no longer contains a neatly crafted poetic fact, but rather a place where the poet works with a specific theme): The postmodern poem is a pastiche of prose, quotations, and poetic lines that draw their content from a wide range of interests and themes, and the postmodern poet highlights the fact that the poetic work (like the poet himself) is woven into a network of connections to other texts, ideologies, genres, and poets» [2, p. 313].

Our attention is drawn to the problem of reading a text of Concretism because it is suspected that such texts force the reader to resort to different practices in the course of decoding these texts. The main obstacle facing the reader in this case is the shift in the meaning of the main constituent elements of the literary text. Just as in hypertext, the

reader must «uncover the hidden structure of the text» [10, p. 41] and it is this activity that brings him or her true satisfaction. The realisation of aporia is the essence of the perception of a Concrete text – the search for connections between elements and the reconstruction or restructuring of its components is the main activity of the reader in the case of perceiving a Concrete text.

The semantics of a Concrete poem, on the other hand, is secondary or better to say equivalent to the structure of the text, as it often arises as a consequence of the structure. The semantics of a such text is the sum of the meanings of the elements that make it up. Indeed, language is understood as a meaningful generation of certain more general (thought and material) schemes, that is, in relation to them it acts as an *ideology*. It means that the combinability or incompatibility of language units, language laws and habits are the main subject of the image and are depicted through them. For example, the text «Lecture Notes» by the Ukrainian Canadian poet Jars Balan consists of only two English words that repeat themselves, like a ticking clock: «Tick talk tick talk tick talk tick» [5, p. 30]. The words *tick* and *talk* refer to certain actual actions or phenomena, but they are tied to the structure of the text and are determined by it. The text reflects the ticking of a clock, in which one recognises speaking, the clock itself, writing, and, obviously, the expectation of the end of the lecture: in the poem, «the ticking of a clock is clearly heard, slowly counting the minutes of the longed-for break, though the second component of this ticking is presented in the form of the pronunciation of the noun ‘talk’, that is, speaking’ tick» [5, p. 32].

In the context of virtual literature, Concretism seems to be a complex aesthetic phenomenon, the perception of which requires the use of specific tools, since a its text in a virtual environment, created on the basis of certain computer technologies, is likely to contain not only text (as a set of linguistic units), but also extra-textual elements, as well as graphic components that are characterised by time and space dimensions. The text is placed in the space of a computer monitor and is perceived by the reader with all its changes, animations, colours and other dimensions. Since the text is animated (moving), it also has a temporal dimension. The same was the case with the aforementioned text by Augusto de Campos, which contains only two frames, but they alternate over a certain period of time. Let us emphasise here that the temporal dimension is not the reading itself, as it is in printed literature (in the sense of «codex literature»), but the text itself «takes place» in a certain period of time, just like an animated film or a movie.

**Conclusions.** By involving the means of other types of art and the contemporary technologies, that take virtual environment to existence, the analysed literary texts require multi-channel contact with the reader:

1) the reader must use hyperlinks to read the text, and this implies: the possibility of an *alternative choice of reading path*, which is provided to the reader in the text; the need for the reader to choose one hyperlink from the array of proposed ones, that is, the creation of a situation of ergodic discourse (according to E.J. Aarset [6]); the construction of a reader’s reading path, which may include certain texts in its series and omit others;

2) the reader must explore the «writing space» [8] in order to read the text, and this in turn requires: conducting not only the usual reading practice, but also *conducting research tactics in the reading process*, which includes studying the possibilities of working with the text, searching for ways to influence the text, studying how to work with navigation; working with the poem's interface, being active in the «writing space», because the appearance of individual fragments of the text depends on the movement of the cursor within its boundaries; independent study of the poem's motif, establishing the logic of the presentation based on the read fragments in order to achieve understanding of the text, that is, *epiphany* (according to E. J. Aarset);

3) along with the linguistic canvas of the work, the *reader also perceives its graphic side*, which includes: animation interspersed with either extralinguistic elements of the text and require the reader's experience of perceiving visual arts, or they originate from linguistic units and are distorted and dynamic linguistic units, which obviously emphasizes certain motifs of the work and visualises its expression; static and animation elements of the text (linguistic and extralinguistic), which manifest their properties as hyperlinks, that is, they exist in the text as functional objects designed to build a reading path and create a choice situation.

Virtual literature as a cultural phenomenon is multilayered and combines features of different art forms, uses different technologies and means. Nevertheless, we define it as literature according to the two factors mentioned above: its products perform aesthetic tasks and use language as a valuable carrier of aesthetic information. Among such works, we cannot name multiplayer computer games or text production programmes, as their goals are different from art. Instead, the list of types of virtual literature includes, along with hypertext, such a new genre of literature as multimedia poetry (concrete poetry), which cannot be adequately reproduced on paper, as it uses the capabilities of computer technology, primarily animation and hyperlinks.

Multimedia poetry belongs to one of the branches of contemporary virtual literature, which can be proved, firstly, by its dependence on the electronic medium, which cannot be easily replaced by any other, for example, a book; secondly, it shows features of interactivity, uses hyperlinks and the possibilities of programming languages (for example, JavaScript, PHP, ASP, etc.); thirdly, the texts that we consider to be multimedia poetry have a characteristic way of being presented to the reader on a computer screen, tablet or similar device; fourthly, they contain multimedia elements and have a specific design of the text itself, which together is part of the author's intention and is perceived by the reader as an integrity along with the text itself.

We note that the artist, as a rule, is one of the first to propose completely revolutionary ideas in his work and begins to comprehend new phenomena and opportunities that open up to humanity. A deep study of television begins with a postmodernist understanding of its functioning in the modern world. The use of its capabilities in aesthetic communication clarifies its specific features and opens up paths for theoretical comprehension. The works of Marshall McLuhan, Theodore Nelson, Vannevar Bush no longer seem utopian and anti-scientific, since almost all the revolutionary ideas that



they put forward have been implemented. The only clear direction that science and art can advance in today is the improvement of technologies and techniques.

In his doctoral dissertation, the famous Belgian writer and scientist Hugo Heyrman proposes a special term to describe a situation similar to our case of multi-channel communication. By the author's term «telesynesthesia» he calls the situation in which «new media and the Internet allow us to receive various types of information that have a specifically telematic nature and for this reason are fundamentally different from ordinary forms of communication. <...> In the future, our consciousness, our body and our senses will encounter new experiences, with synesthetic qualities that are instantaneous, primarily multi-sensory, as a result of new media» [2, p. 420]. In European and American science, researchers have long been engaged in the problems of new media. Since the publication of the first works devoted to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of television, computers and means of communication, research into the possibilities of applying modern technologies in art has begun.

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