THE ROLE OF CHRONOTOPE IN ORGANIZING
A NARRATIVE SPACE OF HYPERTEXT FICTION

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Digital computers engendered new ways of reading and writing that undergo transformation together with the rapid evolution in the field of digital technology. Possibilities of the net have encouraged imagination and creative abilities of its users leading to innovative writings that reflect experiments with the net. Immediate access to textual material affects the principles of work with computers and influences the way literature evolves. The function of the reader has also been transformed from passive, to active reading through making selective choices in reconstructing the meaning of the text.

A net structure of computer-mediated texts, in which every point can be connected with any other point, changes the role of the reader from interpretation to intervention with the aim to gain control of a narrative and likening reading of hypertext fiction to a game, as accessing the message is as important as the message itself. Thus, reading a hypertext is often seen as a co-authorship of readers creating their own versions of a text. A feedback loop between the reader and the text is regarded as one of the main distinguishing features of electronic fiction.

Another important feature of electronic literature is a code [2, p. 5] which needs to be activated in order to read the text and appreciate its literary and technical peculiarities. The code and the linked structure are the main manifestations of the principles of composition of hypertext fiction which were inspired by the non-linear approach to time, as expressed in Jorge Luis Borges`s short story *The Garden of Forking Paths* where time is viewed as a non-uniform and non-absolute notion.

The idea of non-uniform time is used to create a panoramic depiction of connected and parallel events with the aim of showing an integrated picture of a fictional world. The structure of a hypertext provides a way to link and access to multiple parts of a text that are joined by various types of association, or cause-effect relations to one another as a web of nodes. By choosing a certain link from an available number of options,

the reader makes a leap in time and, consequently, in space, that is changes a chronotope [1], the intrinsic unity of temporal and spatial relationships that are depicted in literature.

Chronotope is the term for a constitutive unit of form and content in literature that combines spatial and temporal parameters into one whole, into a system of coordinates for a certain narrative action. It represents an intersection of the axes and the background on which actions unfold and images are depicted. The notion of *chronotope* acquires an intrinsic significance for hypertext fiction that resorts to the method of changing chronotopes to show a panoramic picture of narrative events. A linked structure of a hypertext, organized into networks of fragments and connections between them, may be compared to a mosaic of chronotopes. Narration in hypertext fiction is anachronous. The time dimension changes from present to flashbacks and flash forwards (prolepsis) that entail the change of space dimension, and results in constant change of chronotopes.

As a new trend in the development of literary works, electronic, or hypertext fiction demonstrates ever-lasting, inexhaustible search for novelty and new ways of self-expression by human mind. Inventions of new technologies have always been accompanied by investigations and exploitations of new possibilities these technologies provide. As N.K. Hayles stated at the beginning of the age of electronic literature, "*the evolution of Homo sapiens has co-developed with technologies* [2, p. 112]." Hypertext fiction demonstrates an inventive way of using new media for new means of composition of works of fiction that belong to the age-old literary genres. Experiments with the linking structure of hypertext reflect the search of new possibilities the net provides.

References:

1. Bakhtin, M. Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel // The Dialogic Imagination. – Austin: Univ. Texas Press, 1981. – pp. 84–258.

2. Hayles, Katherine N. Electronic Literature. New Horizons for the Literary. – University of Notre Dame Press, 2008. – 223 p.