

ERGOCRITICISM. AN (EVENTUAL) ERGODIC LITERATURE INTERPRETATION INSTRUMENT

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Abstract: *The aim of this research is the advancement of a direction of literary criticism of the ergodic text, named Ergocriticism and the formulation of an applicable instrument in the interpretation of ergodic literature. This research is based on the studies of E. Aarseth, R. Ingarden, A. Marino, E.-M. Kontopoulou et other literary theorists. Advancing a theoretical direction of the interpretation of the ergodic text – Ergocriticism, supported by an inventory of critical grids, we facilitate the analysis of this literary phenomenon. The literary forms of ergodic literature (cybertext, hypertext, Interactive Fiction, Hyperfiction, MUDs etc.) evolve Bakhtinian dialogism, permuting the reader in the hypostasis of (co) author, in direct relation to spatiodynamic metaphors, whose interpretation can be achieved only by merging critical tracks such as Roman Ingarden's grid (the treated vision of the literary work), the Markov's chain (which analyzes the probability of choice in an ergodic text) and the medium-support of the text which, according to E. Aarseth, is represented by a set of variables with possible values that describe them. This article presents our attempt to structure a possible inventory useful to the critic, a model (pilot) of ergodic criticism.*

Keywords: *literary theory, literary criticism, ergodic literature, Ergocriticism, ergodic text, cybertext*

Introduction

Attempts to theorize the ergodic literary phenomenon have been largely viewed with skepticism as an attack on traditional, canonical literature, and only now is it clear that they are a way out of the crisis of literary theory and criticism in which, more than a century, we are.

If we were to offer a formula for this negative reaction, the right one would be the one in the *The Barbarians. An Essay on the Mutation of*

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Culture of Alessandro Baricco: "people are afraid of what they don't understand"¹, which explains the denial of the ergodic literature.

Outlining a new direction in literary criticism such as Ergocriticism, we want to provide space for the theorizing of the ergodic literary phenomenon and to propose a set of tools that would facilitate the interpretation of ergodic literature.

Our research tends to emphasize the importance of the study of ergodic literature, and through the tools outlined in this article, we want to inspire the academic space in opening to new specialties and faculties, as it does for example University at Buffalo, where it operates a Department of Media Study, which Electronic Literature is one of the specialties².

This article probes the territory of literary criticism with reference to ergodic literature, advancing a discipline called Ergocritica (from the analyzed literature, because the ergodic text involves an interaction, not just a reading, so a work "ergon" on one / more paths "hodos" offered by it). The tools described in this research start from the traditional practices of literary theory (such as those of R. Ingarden, A. Marino, M. Bakhtin, etc.) and culminate in updating, supplementing them with those directly related to the ergodic text, the ICT environment, such as those of E. Aarseth, E. Kontopoulou, M. Portela, etc, which demonstrates that the ergodic literary phenomenon requires an interpretation that combines the analysis of the layers of the literary work, according to R. Ingarden, Markov's chains, the values of E. Aarseth's variables and the study of the environment in which the text is produced and "read".

Materials and methods of Ergocriticism

The first formulation and theorizing of the concept of "ergodic literature" is due to the Norwegian researcher Espen Aarseth, who, in his work *Cybertext. Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, presents ergodic literature and its forms of manifestation: from the oldest texts (I Ching - 770 BC), to today's cybertexts (hypertexts, IF, MUDs), from the virtual space, arguing that they are literature, because they produce an aesthetic effect through their verbal structures, and through their paraverbal ones they offer literature incomparably deep dimensions, opening it to the triviality of spatodynamic metaphors³.

¹ Alessandro Baricco, *Barbarians. An essay on the Mutation of Culture*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014, p. 164.

² https://arts-sciences.buffalo.edu/media-study/research/electronic-literature.html?fbclid=IwAR1_OtmyXcijfQx256P3CNdVKt9IeyWq7MiNE3859-03paY16MQVldZyJFc [Accessed 15.01.2022]

³ Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext. Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press Ltd., 1997, p. 202.

The ergodic text exceeds the qualities of the literal, because it does not contain only the letter, the written sign, but combines a lot of other elements, which makes it difficult to analyze from this perspective, but does not make it impossible to qualify in the literary field. The effort made by the reader, presents an ergodic phenomenon, (*ergon* and *hodos* (gr.), meaning *thing* and *way*), the key principle of which is the possibility of choice, from which the reader of traditional texts is deprived. In the ergodic text, the reader has the role of co-author, depending on the choice of which the narrative thread is constructed⁴.

Being prevalent in the digital environment, the contemporary ergodic text acquires the characteristics of electronic, interactive and presents various forms of appearance, of which cybertext stands out as an "integrative genre", represented by species such as: hypertext, IF (interactive fiction), hyperfiction, MUDs, etc. These forms of cybertext are part of the ergodic literature, representing a first pragmatic compartmentalization, common in the field of literary theory when a literary phenomenon is presented.

Contemporaneity has confronted us not only with the discovery of literary phenomena, but also with an intense process of digitization, which provides an interface to analog and digital literature, seen by researcher Mihaela Ursa as an integrative system called "Literature 2.0"⁵, and later developed by Lidia Kulikovski in "Library 2.0"⁶.

Digital literature is a part of ergodic text, rather, a form of it, active in electronic space.

About digital literature and the problems to define and understand the genre wrote Rey Rowland and not only defined this phenomena, but also outlined some of its species: Twitterature, Hypertext fiction, Generators, Video Poetry⁷. In this article, he refers to an organization that study and promote this kind of literature: Electronic Literature Organization (ELO).

The study of this organization is necessary in our theoretical-practical course because its archives, conferences and projects offer us not only study material, but also potential interpretive tools, applicable in Ergocriticism.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Mihaela Ursa, *Cybernetic Literature*. In *Vatra*, no. 491, 2/2012, p. 29-31.

⁶ Lidia Kulikovski. *The Library and the Virtual World*. In *Dialogica. Journal of Cultural Studies and Literature*. No.3, 2019. p. 37-42.

⁷ Rey Rowland, *What is Digital Literature? Understanding the Genre*. Book Riot, Jul, 2021. https://bookriot.com/digital-literature/?fbclid=IwARo_SEjbooTi88m_aSvf6Bll9f6HYuoyozJH7Q3LFd3UMOIInJDIOyK2Lyc [Accessed 01.03.2022].

More about ELO, we found on his website: <https://eliterature.org/> and noticed many projects:

- *Electronic Literature Collection* with 3 volumes: Volume 1(October 2006), Volume2 (February 2011) and Volume 3 (February 2016). These are published on the Web and each volume has a physical version.

- *Electronic Literature Directory*, when you can browse featured article, recently added individual works, recently added resources, recently added e-lit antecedents.

- *Electronic Literature Archives* - a repository for Electronic Literature Archives (ELA) of online journals, works of electronic literature, community archives, and other digital material

- *CELL Project*, an international organization, Consortium on Electronic Literature, led and managed by the ELO that currently includes 11 member organizations, research labs, and research centers. Since 2010, their collaborative network has been developing the information architecture needed for making born digital creative works and scholarly criticism findable across databases, world-wide.

- *Publishing Activities* – a list of books and projects arising under the auspices of the ELO, for example: Electronic Literature book series with Bloomsbury Press, eBook Pathfinders: Documenting the Experience of Early Digital Literature, book Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary, essay Electronic Literature: What Is It? etc.

- *Teaching E-literature*- a project making facilitate and promote the teaching of electronic literature in academic settings. In Presentation on *Teaching Electronic Literature*, Jan., 2020, Seattle WA, Katherine Hayles say: “In this website, you will find answers to your questions and resources to meet your pressing needs. First, we offer reasons why electronic literature should be taught in academic settings, from universities to community colleges and secondary schools. These may be useful not only to convince you but also to provide rationales for administrators responsible for approving curricula. We also offer resources for teachers new (and not-so-new) to electronic literature so you can successfully implement courses or modules on electronic literature and integrate them into your classrooms. The site includes sample syllabi to aid in course construction and design, as well as various schema for organizing courses around electronic literature. We also offer useful links to curated collections of electronic literature so that you can easily identify and access high-quality works from an international community of writers in several languages, including Spanish. In addition, we provide links to the history of electronic literature and information on archival works to facilitate a sense of how the field has changed over time and to make available works that may not otherwise be accessible to current platforms and software

packages. Welcome to the world of literature-as-it can-be in the computational era!”⁸.

ELO is also presented by David Heckman in their article *Tracing the Development of an International Field through ELO, ELMCIP and CELL*, published in *Electronic Literature as Digital Humanities. Contexts, Forms & Practices*, where he describe this organization founded by Scott Rettberg, Robert Coover and Jeff Ballowe, in 1999 and say that “The scope of the ELC (Electronic Literature Collection) is ambitious, each containing a broad selection of edited work by a rotating cast of artists and scholars active in the field, creating a competitive venue for publication that nevertheless manages to provide a sample of exemplary work in an ever expanding landscape of creative activity.”⁹.

This evolving landscape represents, de facto, the digital literature - an electronic form of the ergodic text. The analysis of its forms and the study of works that focus on the presentation of national literatures in the digital age is one of the methods used in our research. Besides ELO, we have also identified projects involving the ergodic text, especially digital literature, in the Russian literary space. These are discribed in articles such as *Collection And Analysis Of Data On Publications Of Online Literature For The Period From October 2019 To September 2020*, by K. N. Urban and L. I. Petrova, where is presented the history of the development of online literature in the modern Russian- speaking space¹⁰. In this research we found the statistical data and analysis, which determined us to outline in the set of tools of Ergocritica the analysis of the environment in which the ergodic text is located.

Another interesting study for our research is *Russian literature in the digital age*, by Vladimir Shunikov because it examines the influence of digital technologies on literature, language renovations and other experiments that form the “digital poetics” of the newer literature in Russian literary space¹¹.

⁸ <https://eliterature.org/> [Accessed 10.01.2022]

⁹ David Heckman. *Community, Intitution, Database: Tracing the Development of an International Field through ELO, ELMCIP and CELL*. p. 55- 70. In *Electronic Literature as Digital Humanities. Contexts, Forms & Practices*. Edited by Dene Grigar, James O’Sullivan. USA: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021, p. 382.

¹⁰ K.N. Urban, L.I. Petrova, *Collection and analysis of data on publications of online literature for the period from october 2019 to september 2020*. In Works BGTU, S.4, Nr.2, 2020, pp. 116-121. <https://elib.belstu.by/handle/123456789/36562> [Accessed 20.02.2022]

¹¹ V.L. Shunikov, *Russian literature in the digital age*, RSUH/RGGU Bulletin. *Literary Theory. Linguistics. Cultural Studies*, no. 3, 2021, pp. 102–114, DOI: 10.28995/2686-7249-2021-3-102-114.

The innovation of digital technologies has long marked the literature, but this phenomenon is not developed in a critical way, we need to develop a new critical paradigm for ergodic literature, for these forms, that are accused of an aggression on the old environment (paper). A study that develops a new critical paradigm for appreciating the innovation of digital literature is the book of Richard Hughes Gibson, *Paper Electronic Literature. An Archaeology of Born-Digital Materials*¹².

The dehumanization that this literature is accused of is hilarious, because, if we are talking in terms of Bakhtinian dialogism, the courts of communication remain the same, as are the aesthetic values of the environment, which did not become technological, but only performed some possibilities, which depend on man. It is realized with and thanks to man, maintaining in close relation the elements of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical triad: *I-the other / otherness-the environment / the collective opinion*¹³.

This literature demands its literary theory, history and critique which could be properly investigated and appreciated, without omitting aspects and fields. The literary theorist is faced with a metamorphosis of literature, which requires the metamorphosis of concepts and methods with which it operates, because it has not only to study new literature, but also to integrate it into the pre-existing literary space, which involves performing Ergocriticism.

Being familiar with the specifics and forms of ergodic literature to a much higher degree than a century ago, the critique is put in the situation where they have to coagulate a strategy of approaching, interpreting and presenting these texts. Thus, the proposal of Ergocriticism, as a field that would study the ergodic literature, is an imminent solution following the attested evolution of the literary phenomenon and its theorizing.

Given that the object of study is ergodic literature, a term launching by Norwegian researcher E. Aarseth, taken from physics, derived from the Greek words *ergon* and *hodos*, meaning "thing" and "way", the name of the discipline concerned with its critical analysis, seems to be fully justified, because Ergocriticism also involves making that "non-private effort to allow the reader to traverse the text"¹⁴, in the case of the critic - and to interpret it.

Emphasizing the idea that emerges from the above sequences, that ergodic literature has a much older tradition and does not involve the

¹² Richard Hughes Gibson, *Paper Electronic Literature. An Archaeology of Born-Digital Materials*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2021, p. 216.

¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Question of Literature and Aesthetics*. Paris: Gallimard, 1987, p. 488.

¹⁴ Espen J Aarseth, *Cybertext. Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press Ltd., 1997, p. 202.

demolition of traditional / canonical literature, we note that at the level of literary criticism is the same situation: Ergocriticism does not deny traditional criticism techniques, it capitalizes on and complement them, because the ergodic text is a much broader phenomenon than the traditional text.

The first thing the critic does, being in the immediate area of ergodicity, is the abandonment of stereotypes, such as the one mentioned by A. Marino in *Biography of the Idea of Literature*: the orientation towards a non-literal literature and the acceptance that the written text / word it is not the only form of representation of literature¹⁵. Another movement is the one mentioned by Gheorghe Crăciun in *Introduction to Literary Theory* - awareness of the difficulty of segregating oral and written literature, due to the impossibility of drawing a rigid boundary between given forms, which is further exacerbated in the study of ergodic literature, where orality merges with the written text¹⁶.

Once the topic of genres is reached, it is inevitable to ask ourselves whether ergodic literature can be differentiated into literary genres (traditional: epic, lyrical and dramatic or a new classification is needed). In this case, in order not to rush things, we update one of the premises presented by E. Aarseth in his study *Cybertext. Perspectives on ergodic literature*, where the Norwegian researcher argues that, being slightly distinct, new and old forms of ergodic literature are not divided into categories or genres according to the environment in which they are (paper or digital) but are studied by him according to the mechanism of operation / reading, and the digital environment, that of the computer remains a direction that still needs to be capitalized in studies. So, first of all we need the inventory of the forms of ergodic literature, the definition and characterization of each one, so that identifying a set of common features, we can submit a hypothetical classification by gender, which at the moment is still an unmitigated or extremely brave and unmotivated act.

What we can say at the moment about cybertexts, namely about text-generating programs, is that they take into account the three traditional literary genres and capitalize on them in a parodic way, but establishing a new grid of genera and species is premeditated.

We remind that R. Schoenbeck, in *Playing with chance: on random generation in playable media and electronic literature*, divides text-

¹⁵ Adrian Marino, *The Biography of the Idea of Literature*, Vol. 6, p. IV. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1991-2000, p. 150.

¹⁶ Gh. Crăciun, *Introduction to the Theory of Literature*.

<https://vdocuments.mx/teoria-literaturii-55c60d14800fc.html> [Accessed 11.01.2022].

generating programs into three categories: parody of genre, blend and purely generative¹⁷; this is a testament to the revaluation of traditional genres and the fact that the ground for new genres is untapped.

Some arguments in support of Ergocriticism

In this article we will present our attempt to structure a possible inventory useful to the critic, a model (pilot) of ergodic criticism. Thus, Ergocriticism capitalizes on the features of the ergodic text and presents a critical "point of view" on them.

As we mentioned above, ergodic literature is not a total revolution of literature, but a later stage of its evolution, a completion, extension and updating. Starting from the fact and from the observation of E. Aarseth that the verbal structures of the ergodic text produce aesthetic effect, we update some viable critical approach models in the case of ergodicity and outline their insufficiencies motivated by the differences between the traditional and ergodic text.

An applicable grid is that of Roman Ingarden, who supports the stratified vision of the literary work, and once the operative feature of the ergodic text is demonstrated, it means that we can try to apply the Ingardenian model¹⁸.

Any ergodic text, such as M. Joyce's work *Afternoon* or any MUD (*Adventure*, *World of Warcraft*) can be interpreted in terms of the four layers:

1. The sound layer of words, which does not show major differences from the interpretation of the word flattened on the surface of a tab, but performs in the spoken, vociferous, sonorous word for the reader's hearing, which can not only examine the suggestion of vowels and consonants, but can complete its analysis with terms from music: timbre, tonality, tempo, etc.;

2. The layer of semantic units, the interpretation of which the critic does not make much difference between what R. Ingarden assumed, because oral or written, the word is invested with a signification, with a meaning that the critic can decode;

3. The layer of the represented aspects, the "world" of the author is, in the case of ergodic literature, advanced to an extreme degree of materialization, because it involves computational graphics, in which the

¹⁷ Robert Schoenbeck, *Playing with chance: on random generation in playable media and electronic literature*. In *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, Vol.7, Nr. 3, Boston, 2013, <http://digitalhumanities.org:8081/dhq/vol/7/3/000165/000165.html> [Accessed 02.02.2022].

¹⁸ Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*, Translated by George G. Grabowicz. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 415.

word / idea has shape, color, size and therefore transposes the literary critic in the field of visual arts, putting in his hand a new set of tools - those of the art critic (in this case visual). The ergodic text is characterized by the "triviality of space-dynamic metaphors", embodying a broad, logical metaphor, associating concrete images with a much higher degree of illustration than the literature we know can afford. The world of ergodic text is much more credible than that of traditional literature because it is visible, in it the reader is a character, acts and interacts, and the subject moves from the author's subordination to the area of cooperation with the reader, because the ergodic text is related to the interaction between these two, so the visions are no longer authorial, but belong both to the one who created / programmed / launched the work, and to the one who "reads" it following certain steps, opting for certain sequences that lead him to a point different from that of another reader, so the represented world also has multiple versions, it is a mobile one and dependent on the movements of the reader through the text.

5. The layer of metaphysical qualities, where R. Ingarden outlines the aesthetic categories that a literary work can represent, is also valid for the ergodic text, because it is possible to identify the tragic, the sublime and especially the playful in most of the textual forms presented above.

However, the stratified structure of the literary work is not the unique or, rather, complete track that Ergocriticism wants to draw. R. Ingarden's model admits an adaptation of the ergodic text and even seems functional, but does not fully cover the interpretable aspects of this literary form.

Once the ergodic literature presents dynamic texts, open to editing and based on the principle of choice, which is not provided by the traditional text, the critique must be able to characterize this dynamism, to be able to sketch a matrix that would allow conclusions to be drawn about the degree of openness or breadth of the alternative ways of the text. Relevant to this hypothesis is the study *Onomatology and Content Analysis of Ergodic Literature* by researchers from CEID, Patras Rio University in Greece, Eugenia-Maria Kontopoulou, Maria Predari and Efstratios Gallopoulos who states: "If 21st century literature is 'computational', it is natural to look for the application of mathematical techniques, algorithms and the computer to analyze it." ¹⁹ Greek researchers apply *Markov's chain* to the analysis of the ergodic text, a concept invented by Russian mathematician Andrei Markov and defined as a stochastic process that has the property of creating an interdependence

¹⁹ Eugenia-Maria Kontopoulou, and Maria Predari, and Efstratios Gallopoulos, *Onomatology and content analysis of ergodic literature*. In *Proceedings of the 3rd Narrative and Hypertext Workshop*. Mai 2013. Article No.: 5.

<https://doi.org/10.1145/2462216.2462221>. [Accessed 03.09.2021], p. 1-5.

between its present and future states. What is happening at the moment in an ergodic text is the "history" (the sum) of all the evolutionary stages of reading, more simply, the sum of the reader's choices. Using the Markovian chain formula, Greek researchers analyze *Mystery of Maya* (a book from the CYOA collection, abbreviated as CYOA_MM) and demonstrate the applicability of this mathematical algorithm to the study of choice probabilities in an ergodic text. Which determines us to indicate in the model of ergodic criticism the implementation of the Markovian chain, as a next step in the interpretation of the ergodicity of the literary forms of ergodic literature.

Another movement in Ergocriticism is towards the environment in which the ergodic text is read / written. What was not essential in canonical literature - the analysis of the support of the text, becomes a necessity in the interpretation of ergodic literature.

E. Aarseth argues that it is extremely important not only to look at the words we encounter in the ergodic text, analyzing their meanings and form, but also to study the environment from which we read, the mechanism according to which from the multitude of options and ways we go through the text, precisely on the path we are on at the moment and which places us beyond the text, behind its scenes. So, the technical part is also relevant: the software, the environment, the mechanism, the technology that serves as a support for the interpreted text. Its description requires knowledge in the field of ICT, which is vital to the critic, being that "what we read from" is part of "what we read" and does not serve as a writing space, but is a writing environment, which is manipulated by the reader and as a result of this interaction, the text appears in its unique version for each user / reader.²⁰

Although the ergodic text involves the theories and practices of traditional literature, the critic cannot rely only on them, but beyond the "zone of interference" and ergodic is the much more complex structure that requires combining theories in other fields, such as ICT , music, visual arts, etc.

However, before interpreting ergodicism from the perspective of technology and studying the "typewriter", the literary approach is paramount, in which the critic, armed with a set of new concepts, will describe the ergodic text from the perspective of those features of the literary work, valid regardless of environment and era and known as a mark of literarity:

²⁰ Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext. Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press Ltd., 1997, p. 202.

✓ They will study the stylistic procedures used in writing, techniques that can be both traditional and inspired by the digital environment.

✓ The emphasis or stake of the critic will be the artistic character, then the mechanical one of the text.

✓ Regardless of its form, the text is the product of the manipulation of language, then of software, so the study of language is also vital in Ergocriticism.

✓ As an aesthetic object, generator of an aesthetic experience, the ergodic text will be studied from the perspective of the political and philosophical impact reflected on the reader.

✓ The way it is organized becomes more than an aspect of the text, but a key to interpretation, in which the description of the component parts and the way of cohesion between them is part of the text.

✓ Given that the ergodic text is dynamic, the change observed in interacting with it also requires the attention of the critic. The connections, relationships, paths and choices offered and exploited require special examination, which would provide a much more complex picture to the critic than a simple track. Here we can implement mathematical formulas and spreadsheets.

✓ Being, however, an artistic object, the ergodic text is an expression of the creative individuality, which requires decoding.

✓ As a literary phenomenon, to a greater or lesser extent it is fictitious, so fiction and the degree of relation to its cultural reality is also a premise in critical study.

✓ Because it is the result of one experience and the generator of another in reading, Ergocriticism distinguishes not only the axiological relation of the reader to those presented in the ergodic text, but also the experience lived by him directly when he is in the text.

✓ The role of the reader is also an immanent aspect of the literary work, which performs in the ergodic literature, because the reader becomes a co-author, being directly involved in the text and determining its structure with the decisions he makes when reading. This directly places the text between the author's experience and the collective one.

The literacy capitalized above is supported by a digital environment, by an interface in which the reader not only browses, but co-writes, interacts with the cybertext provided.

This space of virtuality brings changes in reading, writing and communication, components that occur primarily through text / speech. In their new format - electronic - they are undergoing substantial transformations and innovations, and their study has become a staple for humanities specialists, not just for representatives of the exact sciences.

Technology offers literature a high-performance environment, in which it materializes and exaggerates its features. From a narratological point of view, time, voice and mood are updated from the cybertextual dimensions presented above by Manuela Portela: textual dynamics, determinism, ephemerality, perspective, accessibility, link and user function²¹ and described by Espen Aarseth.

The variables that can describe an ergodic text, define the ergocritical analysis model, because they represent the specificity of the given text, its individual and innovative part, whose interpretation allows the assembly of the final picture and offers the possibility to complete the track drawn here.

The set of variables described by E. Aarseth capitalizes on the specificity of the ergodic text, offering to the critic the possibility to interpret the phenomenon of ergodicity, so the variables are:

1. Dynamicity, which involves the analysis of the scriptons of the ergodic text, which varies or not depending on the evolution of the reading;

2. Determinability, which studies the connections and influences of the scriptons, that is, a text is determinate if the adjacent scriptons of each scripton are always the same; if they change their relationship and position, the text is indeterminate;

3. Ephemeris, which divides ergodic texts into transient and intransitive, the first are those in which the scriptons appear by themselves after a time sequence, and the intransitive are those in which they appear if the user activates them;

4. Perspective, which can be personal (when the user has a strategic role, is a direct participant) and impersonal (when it is a simple reader that does not depend on the fate of the character);

5. Access, which can be controlled (as in hypertext, where to get to a certain point, you have to pass a series of other points) and free (when text scripts are available at any time);

6. Linking, which describes the presence of the link with another medium, making a reference that removes the reader from the text (defining feature for hypertexts and less for MUDs or text generators);

7. User functions, which present the idea that the reader is an active part of the text, not just a contemplator, which has only the function of

²¹ Manuela Portela, *Theoretical Permutations for Reading Cybertexts: A Review of Markku Eskelinen „Cybertext Poetics: The Critical Landscape of New Media Literary Theory” and C.T. Funkouser „New Directions in Digital Poetry”*. In *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, Vol.7, Nr. 3, Boston, 2013,

<http://digitalhumanities.org:8081/dhq/vol/7/3/000162/000162.html> [Accessed 16.03.2022].

interpretation. In the ergodic text it can explore, configure, decide, choose, rearrange, (re) write the subject and the real interaction with the text.

The set of variables can be represented, as E. Aarseth suggests, in relation to the values they can have:²²

Variables	Possible values
dynamicity	static, IDT, TDT
determinability	determinate, indeterminated
transitivity	transient, intransitive
perspective	permanent, temporary
access	randomized, controlled
linking	explicit, conditional, missing
user functions	explorative, configurative, interpretative, textonic

The tools presented above are applicable in analyzes such as those of M. Joyce's novel "Afternoon. A Story" and other epic works, however, the most receptive form to any evolution remains poetry, which has proliferated in various species, marking a fruitful development of digital lyricism. Among the forms of digital poetry studied, we would like to mention a few to outline this genre:

E-poetry- being located in the Internet space, its text works in electronic or digital format, it can take any form, it can omit the rules of punctuation, it can be written anywhere and by anyone, this is both a premise and an impediment in its appearance and promotion. quality poetry and in the interpretation of e-poetry. For the extension of this type of poetry, the literature "Oulipo", the project "Flarf" and the Web itself are open and welcoming domains. The word-image relationship is fully emphasized in visual poetry, which supports the idea of symbiosis of these elements and is highlighted by the proliferation of two types of visual poetry: pictopoetry and concrete poetry.

Pictopoetry - is the one that through the construction of its text takes on the shape, the contour of a certain object / geometric shape. Concrete poetry is a more complex form of visual poetry, because playing with the physical aspect of the text creates pictorial images, such as the poems of E. Gomringer, M. E. Solt, A. Knotek, A. Chira and others.

Digital poems with "visual noise"- combine texts with images, sounds and even digital operations, and for the work to be read the reader

²² Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext. Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press Ltd., 1997, p. 202.

must be directly involved in it. "Visual noise" is a strategy based on hypermedia with poetic features, and this is best revealed by the poems of A. Campbell, A. F. Wysocki and J. Rosenberg.

In **sound poetry**, the pronounced letter - the sound - prevails over the written letter. This type of poetry has seen the rise of the 20th century, through generations of authors, including H. Chopin, B. Heidsieck, T. Tzara, K. Ladik and others.

Video poetry is a special form of video art, which includes poetry texts elaborated at different acoustic and visual levels; offering the reader / viewer a new poetry experience that can be viewed through electronic applications, or in the Internet space.

Holopoetry is created using holograms, presenting the fluency of the word and semantic interpolation. Among the authors of holopoetry is E. Kac, who coined the term "holopoetry" and preferred the word 3D sensation to the word.

Click-poetry combines text and audio file, which appears at a click on the poem. Impressive are the click-poems of D. Knoebel, who places them in the web space, uses VRML, includes sound readings, random words and animations.

These forms of ergodic literature represent a sufficient degree of maturity in their evolution to be subjected to critical interpretation and to no longer be classified as experiments, avant-garde, anti-literature, etc. An (eventual) ergodic literature interpretation instrument presented in this article is apt to open to the public the splendor and complexity of this type of literature.

Conclusion

What we can observe, along this path, is that Ergocriticism harmoniously combines the practices of traditional literary criticism, the interpretation of other fields of fine arts, algorithms described by mathematical formulas and ways to characterize a process in the ICT environment to capitalize on all the features of the ergodic text, which coagulates forms inspired by such different environments. The polyphony of this critical track is determined by the polyphony of the interpreted object, being intrinsic and highlighting a thread that leads to Bakhtinian dialogism, materialized so concretely by ergodicity.

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