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THE INTERMEDIAL DISCOURSE IN WALT WHITMAN'S “LEAVES OF GRASS”

Summary. The study is devoted to intermedial discourse in Walt Whitman's collection “Leaves of Grass”, one of the key phenomena of nineteenth-century American poetry. The aim of the research is a comprehensive analysis of the interaction between Whitman's verbal text and other artistic codes (visual, musical, corporeal-performative, and synesthetic), as well as the identification of the role this interaction plays in shaping the artistic space and the poet's dominant worldview. The paper analyzes the poetic features of the collection, including free verse, rhythmic organization, pictorial imagery, corporeality, and synesthesia, which contribute to the text's openness to intermedial interaction. Based on the analysis of selected poems, the main types of intermedial connections are identified: visual, musical, corporeal-performative, auditory-rhythmic, and synesthetic. The research demonstrates that intermedial discourse in Whitman's poetry functions as a universal medium for the realization of key ideas such as democracy and universalism, the unity of humanity and nature, corporeality and self-knowledge, the cyclic nature of time, and the idea of immortality, as well as active participation in the social sphere. Intermediality in “Leaves of Grass” creates a multidimensional artistic space in which meaning, emotional experience, and sensory perception are integrated, enabling a deep and comprehensive interpretation of the text. The results confirm that Whitman's poetry is characterized by a high degree of medial openness and a synthetic mode of artistic thinking. The application of the intermedial approach makes it possible to reinterpret the poetics of “Leaves of Grass”, revealing hidden mechanisms of meaning-making and the interaction of different artistic codes within poetic discourse.

Key words: intermedial discourse, poetic space, pictorial imagery, musical discourse, corporeality, synesthesia, intermedial interaction.

Introduction. In contemporary literary studies, there is a persistent trend toward reinterpreting classical literary texts through the lens of the latest methodological approaches, particularly intermediality, which involves the interaction of various art forms and media within a single artistic space. In this context, the analysis of intermedial discourse in poetic works, characterized by high levels of imagery, synesthesia, and openness to cross-artistic interpretations, becomes particularly relevant. Walt Whitman's (1819-1892) collection “Leaves of Grass” (1855) is a unique phenomenon in world literature, representing an innovative poetics of free verse and a distinctive type of artistic thinking oriented toward the synthesis of various forms of sensory and aesthetic experience. Whitman's poetry exhibits distinct signs of intermediality: it draws on visual imagery, musical rhythms, corporeality as an aesthetic cat-

egory, and the performativity of speech, bringing it closer to other art forms.

The relevance of studying intermedia discourse in this collection also stems from the lack of a systematic analysis of this issue in Ukrainian literary studies. Despite the significant number of works devoted to Whitman's poetics, the issue of intermedia connections in his texts, particularly the mechanisms of interaction between verbal imagery and visual, musical, and bodily-performative codes, remains only fragmentarily explored. Furthermore, engaging with intermedia discourse allows for a new interpretation of Whitman's key ideas, such as universalism, democracy, corporeality, and the unity of humanity and the cosmos as concepts realized not only at the level of content but also through the interpenetration of various artistic languages. This opens up new perspectives for a deeper understanding of the specifics of his poetic thought. Thus, the relevance of this study stems from the need for a comprehensive analysis of the intermedial discourse of the collection “Leaves of Grass” as a key factor in shaping its artistic integrity and aesthetic novelty, as well as the need to expand the toolkit of contemporary literary analysis.

Analysis of recent studies and publications. Walt Whitman's collection “Leaves of Grass” has been the subject of numerous literary studies examining its poetics, ideological content, and artistic originality. At the same time, the intermedia aspect of this collection has not yet been sufficiently and systematically explored, although its separate manifestations are indirectly examined in contemporary scholarly works. A significant portion of the research focuses on the poetics and rhetorical features of Whitman's poetry. In particular, C. Carroll Hollis [1] and others analyze the oratorical nature of Whitman's poetry, which manifests itself in the use of pauses, intonations, and rhetorical structures that bring the poetic text closer to the oral arts and performance. Other studies focus on corporeality as a key category in Whitman's poetics (A. Rimby [2], M. B. Suhail [3], Sh. G. Southard, [4]); intertextuality and cultural codes in “Leaves of Grass” in the context of Whitman's profound influence on the subsequent development of American poetry (C. Nelson [5], I. Piven [6]). In particular, scholars focus on biblical allusions and parallels that form a complex system of semantic references within the text. Such studies indirectly touch upon intermediality, as they document the interaction of different levels of experience representation. However, despite the diversity of approaches (rhetorical, hermeneutic, cognitive, intertextual), the intermedial discourse of the “Leaves of Grass” collection remains insufficiently explored as a holistic phenomenon. Existing works only partially address this issue, necessitating a comprehensive analysis within the contemporary literary studies paradigm.

The aim of the study is a widespread analysis of intermedial discourse in Walt Whitman's collection "Leaves of Grass" to reveal the specific features of the interaction between the verbal text and other artistic codes, and to determine their role in shaping the work's poetics. Achieving this goal involves addressing the following tasks: to clarify the theoretical foundations of the concept of intermedial discourse in contemporary literary studies; to analyze the poetic features of "Leaves of Grass" from the perspective of intermedia interaction; to identify and systematize the main types of intermedial connections in Whitman's poetry (visual, musical, corporeal-performative, etc.) as well as to determine the role of intermedial discourse in expressing the key ideas and worldview dominants of Whitman's poetry. Within the hermeneutic methodological framework, the integrity of Whitman's worldview is examined, particularly through the intermedial context of his creativity.

Results and Discussion. In contemporary humanities scholarship, the concept of intermediality holds a significant place, reflecting the trend toward integrating various art forms and media (music, painting, theater, cinema, etc.) in the creation and interpretation of a literary text. The theory of intermediality concerns the semantic and visual interaction among different art forms within the text of a literary work. It functions as a distinct mode of textual organization and as a specific methodology. The phenomenon of intermediality consists of expanding the possibilities for interpreting a literary work beyond the limits of literary critical tools, including art-historical terminology. Olga Shikirinskaya emphasizes: «The analysis of modern theoretical-methodological basis in the field of Sister Arts Studio lets formulate the following paradigm of types of interspecific interactionism in the system of interaction of arts: association of spatio-temporal characteristics (G. Lessing); interspecific interpolation of art criticism codes (theatricality of prose, emblematic of discourse, musicality of poetry/prose, etc.); representation of one kind of art ("media") with the help of expressive means of the other with complementarity of the system of signs of each of them (ekphrasis, painting in cinema, architecture in photos etc.)» [7, p. 143]. Thus, intermediality is viewed as a specific form of interaction between sign systems, in which one medium is represented or transformed through the means of another.

The concept of "intermedial discourse" expands the category of intermediality by focusing not only on the fact of interaction between media, but also on the ways meanings are organized within this process. Intermedial discourse can be defined as a system of artistic and communicative practices within which different media codes interact and interpenetrate, forming a multidimensional space of interpretation. From the perspective of the discursive approach, intermediality appears as a dynamic process of meaning production that presupposes the active participation of the recipient. In this case, the reader serves as an interpreter, recognizing and correlating various media codes (visual, auditory, corporeal, performative) within a single artistic whole.

Intermedial discourse acquires particular significance in the analysis of poetic texts, since poetry, by its nature, is a syncretic form of art. It combines features of music (rhythm, intonation), painting (imagery, coloristic effects), theatre (the performativity of speech), and even cinema (montage and the dynamic framing of images). Such multidimensionality of poetic language creates the preconditions for intermedial analysis as one of the most productive methods in contemporary literary studies. Thus, intermedial discourse in modern literary scholarship is regarded as a complex,

multilayered phenomenon that integrates different sign systems and opens new possibilities for interpreting literary texts. Its application reveals hidden mechanisms of meaning production and provides a deeper understanding of the author's artistic thinking.

Several poetic features that make it naturally open to intermedial interaction and allow the text to be considered as a synesthetic and performative phenomenon characterize Walt Whitman's collection "Leaves of Grass". Free verse and the rhythmic organization of the text, the pictorial and painterly quality of the imagery, corporeality and performativity, synesthesia as a mechanism of intermedial interaction, as well as the democratic openness of the text, all determine the intermedial basis of the discourse of Whitman's collection "Leaves of Grass".

Whitman actively employs free verse, which liberates his poetry from traditional metrical constraints. This creates an internal rhythmic dynamic resembling musical improvisation or the rhythm of a live performance. Repetitions, anaphoras, parallelisms, and variations of intonation allow the text to function as a musical or rhetorical "medium", bringing it closer to oratory, music, and theatre. Such rhythmic flexibility facilitates the adaptation of poetry to auditory perception and stage performance: "*We confer on equal terms with each of the States, / We make trial of ourselves and invite men and women to hear, We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid <...>*" (On Journeys Through the States [8]).

Whitman creates the effect of a "wandering gaze" by describing geographical and social spaces (*every city and town, Kanada, the North-east, the vast valley of the Mississippi, and the Southern States*). The use of the words "vast valley" and "every city and town" adds depth and perspective, allowing the reader to "see" the space and simultaneously experience the movement through it. The text functions as a verbal landscape, where words serve as a visual medium. The excerpt has a distinct rhythmic pattern created by repetitions and anaphora (*We dwell a while..., We pass..., We confer..., We make trial..., We say...*). This structure resembles a musical motif with variations: the rhythm repeats, while the intonation and meaning of each line change. The combination of long and short lines creates a sense of breathing, bringing the text closer to an auditory form: it "sounds" when read aloud and can be perceived as a vocal or choral-poetic composition. Pictoriality, musicality, and performativity intertwine, creating a multidimensional artistic space.

In the collection "Leaves of Grass", images are conveyed through detailed, often panoramic descriptions of nature, urban life, and the human body. The use of "cataloging" techniques through long lists of objects, phenomena, or impressions creates the effect of a moving visual composition reminiscent of painting or cinematic montage: "*Densities, growth, facades, / Strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees, / Far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave, / Eidolons everlasting*" (Eidolons [8]).

Such pictorial quality allows the poem to function as a visual medium, enabling the reader to "see" the text through an artist's eyes. The enumeration ("densities, growth, facades; strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees") resembles an artistic sketch in which each element appears as a separate "stroke" of a painting. This technique is similar to the method of Impressionist painters, who sought to capture not the details of a single object but the impression of an entire scene through a combination of sensory impressions. Short, noun-heavy fragments create a visual and rhythmic structure reminiscent of a multi-layered panoramic painting (moun-

tains, soils, rocks). The words “strata of mountains, soils, rocks” emphasize the geological and temporal depth of nature. These “layers” become a metaphor for the world's historical and natural multidimensionality. The visual perception of such “layers” brings the text closer to landscape painting, where spatial depth is conveyed through perspective and the overlapping of objects within different planes. The poet combines micro- and macro-perspectives: “densities” and “growth” refer to local, almost tactile impressions, while “giant trees” and “eidolons everlasting” evoke a large-scale, cosmic vision. This creates an effect of “vital depth” in the imagery, similar to how painters combine a foreground with distant mountains to produce a sense of volumetric space.

The word “eidolons” (“ghost,” “image,” or “phantom” of a living or dead being) transforms the description of nature into a symbolic realm. Here, the visual image is combined with a metaphysical dimension, reminiscent of paintings in which concrete objects take on symbolic meaning. The poet creates not only a visible but also an imaginary, “ideal” picture of the world. Although the passage is primarily visual, it also conveys a sense of time (far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave). Whitman creates a non-static, dynamic image that is simultaneously perceived as movement and development, reminiscent of a combination of painting and cinematic montage.

Whitman’s lyrical protagonist appears not only as an author but also as a “performer” of poetry, enacting his experiences and observations. Direct addresses to the reader, the use of the first person, and declarative and exclamatory tones create the effect of an oral performance. Physicality in the texts combines with the verbal image, becoming a medium for conveying meaning: poetry “lives” in the body and voice, bringing it closer to theater and performance.

The musical code of aesthetic perception plays a special role in Whitman’s poetics: “*Chants of the prairies, / Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican sea, / Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, / Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence equidistant, / Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all*” (Starting from Paumanok [8]). A key musical element is the repetition of the word “Chants” at the beginning of each line. This anaphora creates a rhythmic effect, reminiscent of a melody or a choir, in which each line functions as a note or a motif. The rhythmic repetition reinforces the musical unity of the text and sets a wave-like dynamic for the reading. Lines of varying lengths and varied syntactic structures create a sense of pulsation that mimics the rhythm of music (“Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all”). The image of “pulses of fire” conveys dynamic movement and a rhythmic energy, similar to a drumbeat or a heartbeat in music. The poet uses onomatopoeia and vowel repetitions (prairies, Mississippi, Mexican) to create a melodic quality in the text. The words “going forth,” “equidistant,” and “vivify” form a natural internal accent, similar to a musical crescendo or a climactic phrase. The rhythmic and melodic properties of the words, combined with imagery and symbolism (“pulses of fire,” “vivify all”), form a synthetic, intermedia experience: a fusion of poetry, music, and performance. Musical rhythms, panoramic descriptions, and performative addresses allow the poetry to convey the spirit of democratic interaction, openness to other ideas, and cultural contexts.

Walt Whitman’s poem “Beat! Beat! Drums!” (1961), written during the American Civil War and included in the cycle “Drum-Taps”, represents a significant example of a poetic text that demonstrates the active interaction of different media codes. Within

the framework of intermedial studies, this work can be regarded as a manifestation of intermedial discourse, in which the verbal text interacts with musical, performative, and visual elements, forming a multidimensional artistic space. First of all, the musical dimension of the poem attracts particular attention. Already in the opening line (“Beat! beat! drums! – blow! bugles! blow!”), one can perceive the imitation of the sounds of military instruments, which creates a powerful rhythmic impulse. Repetitions, exclamations, and short syntactic constructions form a rhythmic structure similar to the tempo of a military march. In this way, the poetic text functions as an acoustic medium in which the rhythm of language transforms the auditory experience of war into verbal form. In this respect, the poem approaches musical performance, while its rhythm reproduces the dynamic movement of a military march.

Equally important is the performative aspect of the poem. The use of imperative forms, exclamations, and rhetorical appeals creates the effect of a public proclamation or urgent call. The language acquires the character of a command, reinforcing the sense of the inevitability of historical events. In this context, the text becomes closer to an oratorical speech or a theatrical declamation, where the word functions not only as a means of description but also as an act. Thus, the poetic discourse acquires features of performance, in which the reader or listener becomes a participant in the communicative situation.

The poem is also characterized by pronounced visuality, as it sequentially enumerates various social spaces and situations: schools, churches, farms, cities, and courtrooms. Such a composition creates the effect of rapidly changing scenes, reminiscent of the principles of montage. Each fragment serves as a separate visual episode, forming a panoramic representation of a society engulfed in war. In this way, the poetic text acquires the properties of a visual medium, and its structure resembles a sequence of frames that gradually unfold a large-scale image of historical reality. From the perspective of the intermedial approach, it is also significant that the drums’ sound in Whitman’s poetry serves as a symbolic medium of historical communication. It penetrates all spheres of life, dissolving the boundaries between private and public space. The drums and bugles operate not only as musical instruments but also as signs of collective experience, symbolizing the mobilization of society and the dramatic transformation of social reality.

Thus, in the poem “Beat! Beat! Drums!” the poetic text appears as a synthetic artistic medium in which musical, performative, and visual elements are combined. Its rhythmic organization recreates the acoustic image of war, the imperative intonation gives the text the character of a public performance, and the compositional structure produces the effect of a montage-like sequence of scenes. As a result, an intermedial discourse emerges, allowing Whitman’s poetry to be interpreted as a multidimensional artistic space in which different media codes interact and mutually reinforce the process of meaning-making.

Whitman’s poetry not only masterfully captures the winds of change brought about by the historical events of his time through a cross-media and cross-cultural discourse, in which music, visual imagery, physicality, and symbolism interact to form a complex, multi-layered picture of the world. The poem “Salut au Monde!” (Book VI) reflects the author’s global perspective and his interest in progressive ideas of cultural diversity. The poet mentions various people and regions (*Australians pursuing the wild horse, Spanish dance, the Thames, French liberty songs, an Italian boat sculler;*

locusts in Syria, the Coptic refrain toward sundown). Each cultural element combines sounds, movements, rituals, and traditions, forming an intermedia space in which musical, visual, and bodily-performative codes integrate to convey cultural multidimensionality. The excerpt becomes a “cultural mosaic” where local traditions and natural phenomena interact, shaping the overall rhythm of human life. The lyrical subject functions as a mediator between the reader and the world, where sounds and images become interpretive codes that must be “read” and “felt.” Every sound or cultural image has a multi-layered meaning: for example, “fierce French liberty songs” function both as musical elements and as symbols of the struggle for freedom, social activism, and political consciousness.

The hermeneutic approach makes it possible to reveal the interconnection between emotional experience and the cognition of the world: listening, seeing, and bodily perception (dance, singing, the rhythm of nature) become ways of understanding the poet’s universal ideas. The recurring opening of the lines “I hear” creates a musical anaphora that establishes the text’s rhythmic framework. The lines vary in length and melodic quality, producing a sense of pulsation and a “polyphony of sounds”. The passage combines different types of sound: human singing (“the workman singing”, “the farmer’s wife singing”), children’s voices, musical instruments (castanets, rebeck, guitar), and natural sounds (locusts striking the grain). Each element possesses its own rhythm and timbre, which brings the text closer to a polyphonic musical composition. At the same time, the combination of natural and cultural sounds creates the effect of a “sound journey” through time and space, emphasizing the musical universality of Whitman’s poetry.

The passage is saturated with vivid imagery: “Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut shade”, “locusts in Syria striking the grain and grass”, “the Coptic refrain toward sundown falling on the breast of the Nile”, and others. Words form a “painterly effect,” in which the reader can simultaneously perceive the dynamics of dance, the movements of animals and people, as well as natural phenomena. The gradual shift in the geographical focus (Australia – Spain – England – France – Italy – Syria – Egypt) creates a panoramic, large-scale space akin to a series of paintings or cinematic frames. Sounds are combined with visual and tactile images, and the words simultaneously generate auditory, visual, and emotional impressions, forming a synesthetic experience. Consequently, the combination of concrete sounds and cultural symbols (music of different countries, natural phenomena) creates a universal intermedial artistic space.

The cited passage demonstrates the poem’s openness to a global space: the sounds and rhythms of different peoples and continents are integrated into a single composition. Its polyphony emphasizes the ideas of democracy, universalism, and human unity characteristic of Whitman’s worldview. Intermedial devices (sounds, rhythm, visual images) become a means of conveying cultural and natural diversity within the artistic space of the text. Anaphora and rhythmic variations create a polyphonic, multivoiced effect that allows the reader to “hear” the text. Panoramic geographical and cultural images form an imagined pictorial space. Addresses and intonational variations bring the text closer to oral, theatrical, or choral poetry. The combination of sound, movement, light, and tactile imagery creates a complex and interactive experience. Moreover, the text unites different peoples, cultures, and natural phenomena, emphasizing Whitman’s democratic and universal ideas.

Conclusions. The poetic features of the collection “Leaves of Grass” (free verse, rhythmic organization, pictorial imagery, corporeality, and synesthesia, among others) create a natural openness of the text to intermedial interaction. They form a multidimensional artistic space in which verbal, visual, musical, and performative codes are organically combined, ensuring deep aesthetic and sensory interaction with the reader. Whitman demonstrates a high level of pictorial and painterly imagery. The enumeration of natural elements, the stratification of space, the combination of different scales, and the symbolic dimension form in the reader’s imagination a “landscape” that unites concrete and abstract elements. Intermedial discourse in Whitman’s poetry performs the function of a universal medium for the embodiment of his worldview and ideological dominants. It enables the simultaneous realization of democratic ideals, the unity of humanity and nature, corporeality and self-knowledge, the fluidity of time and the idea of immortality, as well as active participation in the social sphere. The combination of visual, musical, corporeal-performative, and synesthetic elements creates a multidimensional artistic space in which Whitman’s key ideas become not only semantic but also sensory, emotional, and experiential. Thus, intermediality in “Leaves of Grass” functions not as an auxiliary device but as an integral structural and meaning-generating component of its poetics, intensifying the depth of perception and interpretation of Whitman’s texts. In this sense, intermedial discourse operates as a universal means of conveying the poet’s key ideas, organically integrating musical, visual, corporeal-performative, and synesthetic dimensions.

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Шевчук Т. Інтермедіальний дискурс у «Листі трави» Волта Вітмена

Анотація. Дослідження присвячене інтермедіальному дискурсу у збірці Волта Вітмена «Листя трави» як одному з ключових явищ американської поезії XIX століття. Метою роботи є комплексний аналіз взаємодії словесного тексту Вітмена з іншими художніми кодами (візуальними, музичними, тілесно-перформативними та синестезійними) та виявлення ролі цієї взаємодії у формуванні художнього простору і світоглядних доміант поета. У роботі здійснено аналіз поетичних особливостей збірки, включаючи вільний вірш, ритмічну організацію, картинність, тілесність і синестезію, що сприяють відкритості тексту до міжмедіальної взаємодії.

На прикладі окремих поезій виявлено основні типи інтермедіальних зв'язків: візуальні, музичні, тілесно-перформативні, аудіально-ритмічні та синестезійні. Дослідження демонструє, що інтермедіальний дискурс у поезії Вітмена виконує функцію універсального медіуму для реалізації ключових ідей: демократизму та універсалізму, єдності людини і природи, тілесності та самопізнання, циклічності часу й безсмертя, а також активної участі у суспільному просторі. Інтермедіальність у збірці «Листя трави» дозволяє створити багатовимірний художній простір, у якому зміст, емоційний досвід і сенсорне сприйняття інтегруються, забезпечуючи глибоку і комплексну інтерпретацію тексту. Отримані результати підтверджують, що поезія Вітмена характеризується високим рівнем медіальної відкритості та синтетичності художнього мислення.

Використання інтермедіального підходу дозволяє по-новому інтерпретувати поетику збірки «Листя трави», розкриваючи приховані механізми смислотворення та взаємодії різних мистецьких кодів у межах поетичного дискурсу.

Ключові слова: інтермедіальний дискурс, поетичний простір, картинність, музичний дискурс, тілесність, синестезія, міжмедіальна взаємодія.

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