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Visualising Deixis in Avant-Garde and Contemporary Poetry "On and Off the Page"

This article deals with the linguistic poetics of deixis as one of the key mechanisms for expressing subjectivity in poetic communication.[1] The aim of the study is to discuss the specifics of deictic words and constructions in visually innovative poetic discourse. The particular focus of analysis is on the functions of personal, spatial and discourse (textual) deixis in the visual layout of a poetic text (spatial design of verse). The material for analysis extends from early avant-garde practices of visualising deixis (in e.e. cummings' experimental verse) through neo-avant-garde conceptual poetry (in Moscow Conceptualism and American Language Writing) to contemporary poetry that foregrounds the deictic units as carriers of new subjectivities in the age of digital media (namely in poems of the Covid pandemic as well as Ukrainian anti-war poems). We will argue that the deictic means of language, interacting with the visual space of the poetic text, actualise the dynamic subjectivity of the aesthetic utterance "on & off the page" (Perloff 1998).

In poetic discourse, the spatiality, length, and duration of the utterance (message) as such is a particularly active field of indexicality. Thus, the visual properties of poetic texts become tightly intertwined with poetic deixis that locates the reader's attention in the space of the poem. Before we turn to contemporary poetic examples of visualised deixis, we will, firstly, give insight into the theoretical linguistic premises and, secondly, into the historical context from poetic practice. The first section, then, presents an overview of theories of deixis in relation to poetry. More precisely, the role of spatial deixis is highlighted with respect to the texts' visuality. In the second section, our linguo-poetic analysis focuses on how experimental deixis interacts with the visual layout of the poem in cases from avant-garde (e.e. cummings) and neo-avant-garde (Luis Camnitzer, Lev Rubinstein, Vsevolod Nekrasov, John Cage, Robert Grenier, etc.) language-centred writing. Further on, in section three we consider new deictic functions in the poetry of the Covid pandemic analysing the poem "Notzeit (After Hannah Höch)" by one of the leading American Language poets Barrett Watten. This discussion focuses on transcoding between paper and digital forms of the texts (and vice versa) that

underlies several deictic shifts that the poet himself highlights with colour and italic font. Finally, the fourth section dwells upon the spatial deixis in cases of contemporary Ukrainian anti-war poets, such as Olga Bragina, Lyudmila Khersonskaya, Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach and Danyil Zadorozhnyi who publish their texts online. In Ukrainian poetry dealing with the ongoing war's consequences, the deictic "here" acquires complex meanings, functioning as a spatial, discourse and personal marker of displacement and catastrophe.

Deixis in poetic discourse: theoretical premises

Being a basic linguistic mechanism, deixis serves as one of the tools for shaping up the subjectivity of a statement or text. It assembles and reassembles the subject from disparate words and phrases in the process of speech production. It binds language units and expressions to specific spatio-temporal coordinates and living subjects of speech, making each communicative event unique and personalised. Deixis is furthermore commonly studied within the framework of the theory of performativity as a manifestation of a subject's utterance in his/her speech act. Modern linguistics defines deixis as "the name given to those aspects of language whose interpretation is relative to the occasion of utterance: to the time of utterance, and to times before and after the time of utterance; to the location of the speaker at the time of utterance; and to the identity of the speaker and the intended audience" (Fillmore 1966, 220). Deixis therefore becomes an operating mechanism only in a specific language use, in particular kinds of discourse.

Our focus in this paper is on visual properties of deixis in poetic discourse. In linguistics, the German scholar Karl Brugmann was the first to study deictic words, in the early twentieth century, paying attention to how personal pronouns function in Indo-Germanic languages (see Brugmann 1904). Another prominent German linguist, Karl Bühler, further developed this approach in his studies of the "indexical field of language." He identified the basic scheme of deixis in language, consisting of three components: "I – here – now." The convergence of these components in the act of utterance marks the "starting point" of subjectivity, which Bühler calls "origo" (Bühler 2011, 102). Bühler's theory of indexicality is based on the analysis of everyday language and does not contain any literary references. He does not move beyond a discussion of everyday language, only once appealing to poetry to equalise the powers of deixis in ordinary and poetic speech.

Roman Jakobson, however, who named deictic words "shifters" (Jakobson 1957), and some other scholars in linguistic poetics made further observations on the functioning of deictic units in poetry. The Russian linguist Vyacheslav Ivanov,

for example, noted the increasingly active role deixis played in twentieth century lyric poetry, which focuses on "the expression of the poet's personality in the moment of the very act of poetic speech" (Ivanov 1979, 106; own translation). Worthy of note in this regard is the study by British literary scholar Keith Green (1992), devoted to the problem of deixis in lyric poetry. This work is an attempt at a systematic and consistent linguistic approach to the functioning of various deictic categories in a poetic text. He posits that the instance of the self in poetry is the starting point for the spatio-temporal coordinates of the deictic context. In this case, the deictic context is not the external context of the utterance, but the very space of the poetic text, the world that is created anew each time in each specific poem. In lyric poetry this origo may be unknown, hence the deixis is not determined in advance by the knowledge of the reader but is constituted in the organisation of the text. Stephen Levinson distinguishes five types of deixis in language: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis (cf. Levinson 1983, 68–94). In poetic language, with its peculiar subjectivity, materiality and spatiality, personal deixis (the poetic persona) is intricately intertwined with discourse deixis (the focus on the message as such) and spatial deixis (the visual layout of the poem on the page or on screen).

The visual culture of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been highly dependent on the transformation of media. Poetry of the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde was intensely experimenting with the space of the poem within the book, the picture, the environment. Towards the late twentieth century, the digitalisation of print media foregrounded the importance of the *interface* between the author, the text, and the reader/user. The new interfaces of poetic practices reconfigured the relations between the person, the text, and the space in the process of aesthetic communication. The personal deixis sets the coordinates of the subjects participating in poetic communication, whereas discourse deixis organises the situational frame of the act of utterance, and spatial deixis positions this act of utterance in the real or imaginary space of the text. Focusing on spatial deixis in early modern English lyric, Heather Dubrow claims that "since 'here'/'there,' 'this'/'that,' and 'come'/'go' often involve subjectivity, they interact with pronominal deixis" (Dubrow 2015, 5). Dubrow also emphasises that it could be productive to look how "recent media inflect the issues about spatiality and temporality that deixis introduces" (Dubrow 2015, 63), which we will examine further in this paper. In addressing the issue of space in the poetic text, we will make use of Marjorie Perloff's notion of "spatial design" (Perloff 2010, 69), which includes, among other things, the composition of language units within the visual layout of the text. We will argue that deictic units constitute a considerable part of the text's linguistic design contributing to the overall spatial design. First, we will address several cases from the history of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde poetry, which actualise the experimental effects of deixis in the visual configuration of the poetic text.

Deictic markers as elements of spatial design: experimental poetry

We have elsewhere discussed such concepts as bodily deixis and vocal deixis (cf. Proskurin and Feshchenko 2019), in cases where markers of corporality or physical voice are involved in the indexical field of a work of art or literature. One of the first modern poets to exploit bodily and vocal deixis together with the text's enforced iconicity was e.e. cummings, who was not only a poet but also a talented painter. Visually eccentric verse was for him an experiment with the typescript and the typeset, a modern technical medium reinforcing the graphical potentialities of the poetic text (Fig. 4).
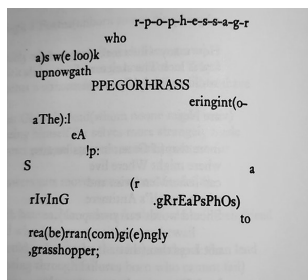

Fig. 4: e.e. cummings. "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r." *Complete Poems, 1904–1962*, 2013. 396.

In cummings' famous 1932 "grasshopper" visual poem, deictic markers make up a significant part, including the personal deictics ("who," "we"), the temporal ("now"), the spatial ("up," "to"), and the articles as shifters of (in)definiteness ("the," "a"). cummings tries to capture the moment of transition from the symbolic and iconic way of signification to the indexical-deictic one. The poem models the very process of reading and conveying the meaning of the verse, with the help of experimental deixis located within the space of the poem. In poems like "ecco a letter" (1940), discourse markers are foregrounded both linguistically and graphically:

> ecco a letter starting"dearest we"
> unsigned:remarkably brief but covering
> one complete miracle of nearest far
>
> "i cordially invite me to become
> noone except yourselves r s v p"
> (cummings 2013, 504)

Subjectivity is transferred from the author to the message itself, which, in turn, opens many possible subjective relations: "dearest we," "i cordially invite me," "noone except yourselves." The Italian word *ecco* ("here") used in the first line is

a deictic particle that not only refers to the entire origo (this – here – now), but also includes the subject in the emphatic act of pronouncing the word itself (as in the Latin phrase *ecce homo* – "behold the man"). The "r s v p" (French abbreviation of "please answer") in the final phrase is addressed simultaneously to the recipient of the "letter" and its sender (as the anomalous personal deixis testifies: "i invite me"). The use of speech marks ("") visually highlights the shifting subjectivity of who writes this poem/letter to who reads it. Miscapitalisation of the pronoun "I," characteristic of most of cummings' work, serves as a graphic tool of foregrounding the personal deictic. Particularly interesting is cummings' treatment of the pronoun "I," miscapitalised and recapitalised as the noun "eye" in this 1963 poem:

> i
> never
> guessed any
> thing(even a
> universe)might be
> so not quite believab
> ly smallest as perfect this
> (almost invisible where of a there of a)here of a
> rubythroat's home with its still
> ness which really's herself
> (and to think that she's
> warming three worlds)
> who's ama
> zingly
> Eye
>
> (cummings 2013, 827)

Here, the indexical field of the poem, comprising numerous deictics ("I," "never," "any," "a," "so," "this," "where," "there," "here," "herself," "she," "who's"), coalesces with the iconic field – the poem is laid out as a visual representation of the eye-ball. The longest central line in it is a cluster of spatial deictics pointing to the message itself, which turns out to be a language game between "where," "here," and "there": "(almost invisible where of a there of a)here of a." This iconicity reflects cummings' orientation towards visual perception by the author and reader, which seems to be peculiar to him as a "poet-and-painter." Abstract painting, as the cutting-edge technique in arts of his time, served as a visual model for the poem's linguistic and spatial design.

Deixis, as a powerful linguistic mechanism, becomes even more involved in the poetics of the neo-avant-garde after the Second World War, on the wave of the "performative turn" that went hand in hand with the spatial and pictorial/visual turns (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2016). Simultaneously with scientific interest in linguistic per-

formativity (e.g., by John Austin, John Searle and by Emile Benveniste), artistic discourse begins to experiment with locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of statements in the space of a text, art object or performance. New forms of interaction between verbal and visual matter play an important role beyond the borders between a poem and a picture as stable traditional formats of expression. The most striking manifestation of this turn was John Cage's famous maxim "I have nothing to say, and I'm saying it" – a classic performative statement from the point of view of the theory of speech acts, and a "liar paradox" from the point of view of logical analysis.[2] In fact, this statement is part of Cage's visual and poetic composition published under the title "Lecture on Nothing" in his book *Silence* (1961). The text begins with the deictic phrase "I am here" and unfolds as a series of fragmented sentences, many of which deliberately emphasise their deictic constituents ("and there is nothing to say," "If among you are," "somewhere," "any moment," "now," "and that is," "for I'm making it," "an i-dea may occur in this . . . talk," etc.; see Cage 1961, 109–127). The spatial configuration of the "Lecture" is reminiscent of cummings' "grasshopper" poem, with the breakdown of the text into columns and clusters. This lecture-poem speaks about itself and about the process of performative creativity. With its spatiality, combined with rich deictic markup, it marks a new type of verbal art – performance writing.

Similar visual-verse experiments were undertaken, since the 1950s, all over the world. For example, in textual objects by the Uruguayan conceptual artist Luis Camnitzer, an ordinary statement placed in a frame and divided into lines, reads like a poem with an indefinite deictic reference (Fig. 5):
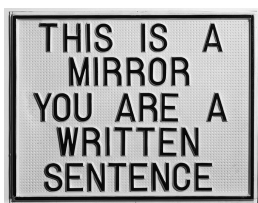

Fig. 5: Luis Camnitzer. *This Is a Mirror. You Are a Written Sentence*. 1966–1968.

On another plate containing the phrase "THIS IS A MAP YOU ARE HERE," there is only one proper content word ("map") surrounded by mere deictics, which makes viewer-reader participation the only valid way to actualise this statement. The plates, being exhibited in a gallery hall, serve as 'mirrors' that reflect the reader/viewer's thoughts about these art objects. Particular locations within the space of

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2 A liar paradox in philosophy is a statement of a liar that they are lying, in declarations such as "I am lying," "this statement is not true," "a majority of what Jones says about me is false," etc.

an exhibition will shift the viewer's deictic focus, or origo, in relation to these artistic statements. Conceptual art and poetry sought to reconsider the deictic frameworks of an artistic text, opening up new ways of interaction between word and image, verbality and visuality.

Within the same period of the 1950–80s, in the former Soviet Union, performative art and poetry was developing within a highly censored underground environment and manifested itself to a greater extent in the deconstruction of the official language of power. Poetry was increasingly inhabited by everyday expressions that opposed the poeticisms of official Soviet literature. Already in the first conceptualist paintings and objects by Ilya Kabakov, deictic expressions play a major role. The replicas of the characters (Soviet citizens) organise the composition of the canvases, which, in turn, resemble book pages or bureaucratic Soviet documents with poetic-like verbal structures. The new pragmatics of poetry in Moscow Conceptualism consisted in the critique of ordinary and political discourses. Some of the texts, like the ones by Vsevolod Nekrasov, are overwhelmed by deictic words such as "we," "itself," "here," etc., turning poetry into a machine for dismantling the official language of Soviet society. Some of the poems are entirely made of deictic and performative words:

<div style="text-align:center">

верю

верю что верю

верю

</div>

In this minimalist poem (Nekrasov 2012, 290), the recursive use of the epistemic verb in "я верю что я верю" ("I believe that I believe") is placed in the visual composition of a Suprematist cross, actualising both the semantics of religious belief and the pragmatics of certainty. On the opposite page of this edition, the expression containing the same verb "believe" is rendered differently: The poetic line "верю верю в" ("I believe I believe in") is located right against the margin of the page, on the upper right side, actualising the dual reference of the deictic preposition "в" ("in"): the conceptual *believe in something* and the visual-performative *I believe inside this*, an anomalous use of the word *believe* as a spatial, rather than mental, verb. In much of Moscow Conceptualist poetry, the reader is faced with fragments of inner or outer speech performed on the page, as if it was performed on the (theatrical) stage. This principle of staging the ordinary discourse is probably most vividly realised in the poetry of Lev Rubinstein. The poetic text here is transformed into verbal performance, with utterances sporadically interspersing each other:

1
Well, what on earth is there to say?
2
He knows something, but won't tell.

3
Who knows, maybe you're right.
4
It's good for you, and tasty too.
5
At seven, by the first train car.
6
It goes on about the student.
7
Let's go. I'm also heading there.
8
Have you decided something now?
9
I rode the bus to the last stop.
10
Hey, listen to what I just wrote.

　　　　　　　　(Rubinstein 2014, 139)

The lines in this poem are visually arranged as a numbered list, parodying the official Soviet bureaucratic documents that contained often senseless and endless enumerations of actions to be performed by a Soviet citizen. The typical Soviet concept of 'standing in line, or queue' is embodied into a poetic sequence. Each line reads here as an everyday phrase heard from people standing in a queue for something. There are no logical connections on the surface between these utterances, yet, if interpreted poetically, they acquire metaphorical or even metaphysical meanings: What is saying? What is writing? Knowing? Deciding? Going where? Etc. They sound as replicas by anonymous characters, mystical as much as ordinary, who play a language game in a ruled grid of the page's layout.

In the USA, a close analogue to this kind of performativisation of the word and verbalisation of the visual image was the Language Writing movement. One of the principles of its poetics was the emphasis on writing, that is, not so much the sound form of verse, but rather the graphical and spatial. To a large degree, this spatial turn was inspired by Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" theory and practice of spatial arrangement of language on the page (cf. Olson 1950). But in language writing, the metalinguistic function of the utterance came to the fore in order to challenge the boundaries of poetry and non-poetry, yet staying within the poetic function. Robert Creeley's visually condensed verse was another forerunner of the 'turn to language' in the American tradition. Discourse markers and deictic units as carriers of metalinguistic reflection were a characteristic feature of his poetics, which can be seen already from the titles of his poetic works: *The Kind of Act Of; If You; Listen; His Idea; Away; Thanks; Was That a Real Poem and Other Essays; Later; It; So There; If I Were Writing This*. Quite often, Creeley's

poetic line consists of only one deictic word or short expression, which creates a minimalistic space of the verse's subjectivity and materiality.

It is characteristic of Language Poetry that the name of one of the first journals was *This*, which is both a spatial and discourse deictic marker, indicating both the actualisation of the utterance itself ("this message") and the space that surrounds it ("the journal itself"). The first issue of the journal was logically called *This 1*. Minimalism became one of the basic features of Language Writing. For example, Robert Grenier's cycles of the 1970s and 1980s are made out of a special typographic placement in the space of the book. In this special format, his series *Sentences* (1978) was created, consisting of five hundred large-format index cards, each of which contains a short poem of just a few lines. Freed from the constraints of a bound book, this work can be read in any order, either as separate texts or as one long poem with dynamic relationships between its parts. The deictic shifts both within and between the separate pages are actualised by particular deictic units, such as in: "why you say you see later" (Grenier 1978, n. pag.). These short performative poems appear to be prototypes for instant messaging in Internet communication.

Discourse, or textual deixis, serves in Language Writing as a tool of self-reflection, as in Clark Coolidge's "Larry Eigner Notes" (1984) and many writings of this kind, blending the genres of poem and essay. The self-reflexivity and the spatiality of language poetry can probably be best illustrated by Rachel Du Plessis's poem called, as it is, "DEIXIS" (*Drafts* series, 2001), exposing an interest to this phenomenon both on conceptual and on practical poetic planes. In addition, one of the major language poets, Ron Silliman, draws a lot from Internet genres in writing and publishing text such as in the blogging format of writing, for example, in his large poem deictically called "YOU" (Silliman 2008). He published parts of this poem daily throughout the year 1995 as prose poetry miniatures on his personal blog. In the following sections, we will investigate new functions of the above-mentioned types of deixis in contemporary poetry, in particular, in poetic texts published on the Internet. Digital media have changed the communication model influencing both ordinary language and poetic discourse by focusing on the interface as the new communication tool between the author, the text, and the reader/user.

Digital interfaces of poetry: cases from the Covid pandemic

Building upon Perloff's concept of "spatial design" (Perloff 2010), we will project the 'on' and 'off' distinction onto a specific interface that is being formed in recent poetry in the space of new media. It is the digital interface that conveys new com-

munication forms and displays the transformation of all communication parameters, according to Roman Jakobson's communication model, beginning with the dominance of information channels and including the modification of codes and roles of communication participants. Contemporary poetry is characterised by increased attention to the structural and pragmatic organisation of the utterance, which allows us to consider it in terms of media theory based upon Vilém Flusser's model of a "significant surface" (Flusser 1984, 6) and as a "two-dimensional plane" both, from a material and metaphorical perspective (Galloway 2012, 30). According to Lev Manovich, the interface "far from being a transparent window into the data inside a computer, [. . .] brings with it strong messages of its own" (Manovich 2001, 65). The interface is not just a tool for accessing data, but the medium that "shapes how the computer user conceives of the computer itself" and "determines how users think of any media object accessed via computer" (Manovich 2001, 65). Shifting attention from material interface objects to virtual processes, Alexander R. Galloway argues that "interfaces are not things, but rather processes that effect a result of whatever kind" and points out the idea of "interface effect" (Galloway 2012, vii). Poetry of our times uses the digital interface as an interactive structure in which relations are distributed between different layers of information, message and meaning formation codes, in the creation of which both the addresser and the addressee take an active part. It is a consistent theme of the recent humanities that a great social shift brings about a great discursive shift in the era of the pandemic. The discursive shift is common for various discourses, including media, political, medical, etc. Unlike other discourses, in poetry the shift manifests itself in emphasising the pragmatic coordinates of the utterance.

The problem of textualising new deictic and pragmatic coordinates in the period of self-isolation and lockdown was actualised by several American and Russian contemporary poets. For example, many American poets posted their texts written during the pandemic in the "poets corner" of the *gchschautauqua* web-page.[3] Publishing their texts during the pandemic, some contemporary poets mark the reference to the lockdown in the titles of poetic books like Italian poet Valerio Grutt in *L'amuleto. Appunti sul potere di guarigione della poesia* (Grutt 2021; "The Amulet. Notes on the Healing Power of Poetry") and Charles Bernstein in "Covidity" (Bernstein 2021, 144). The authors also comment on poetic texts to emphasise the period of writing like Barrett Watten in his "Note for online publication" to his *Notzeit (After Hannah Höch)* (2020): "'Notzeit (After Hannah Höch)' was written over a five-week period, from 23 March to 26 April 2020 [. . .]. I de-

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3 https://www.gchschautauqua.com/bl-poets-corner.html.

cided I would continue writing on a daily basis through the duration of our pe-
riod of isolation, not knowing how long that would be" (Watten 2020c, 26). Similar
statements can be found in the content of various "pandemic" art platforms.[4]

Considering the manuscript *Notzeit (After Hannah Höch)* by Watten as a rep-
resentative example of the above-mentioned issue,[5] we can argue that the author
gravitates here toward the conceptualist method, deliberately refraining from
such traditional means as metaphors in favour of pragmatic means: The most ac-
tive elements of his poetic language are deictic markers. The poet describes his
text as "the poem of the COVID duration" (Watten 2020b) as it is a hybrid text of
the diary-testimony of the lockdown period. Limited communication of the lock-
down period expands to include components of self-communication and numer-
ous digital discourses. The poem consists of headlines and banners, fragments of
conversations and news feeds, political and social events. We can trace how the
scale of cognitive perspective created in the text has changed during and after the
lockdown. Watten posted fragments of his poem daily on his blog: The text was
originally called "Isolate flecks" (Watten 2020a) and referred to William Carlos
Williams' text "To Elsie," including an epigraph from Williams: "It is only in iso-
late flecks that / something / is given off / No one / to witness / and adjust, no one
to drive the car" (Watten 2020a; Watten 2020c, 1). Watten emphasised the idea of
self-isolation as a new form of communication that breaks the standard connec-
tions between people with the help of the visual text. Above the epigraph, the
poet placed an abstract digital image of spots that centrifugally diverge and multi-
ply with the help of mirroring.

Watten finally changed the poem's name using the title of a watercolour by
the Dada artist Hannah Höch from her period of "inner emigration" in 1940s Ber-
lin. The picture is filled with images of people with sketchy bodies and faces. The
artist uses a broken, non-linear, perspective, which blurs the line between static
and dynamic human bodies. Their faces are like spots, at the same time scattered
over the sheet and compressed by the page boundaries. Compared to the digital
image of the spots, which the poet used for the first version of the poem, this ab-
stract watercolour expresses the sense of suffering and sadness. It conveys the
relationship between tragic loneliness in the crowd and the impossibility of har-
monious unity with oneself even in isolation. Höch's title *Notzeit* (1943) translates

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4 See, for instance, https://www.pandemia-art.com/250/#unghigno0.
5 A great resonance of this book can be confirmed by a recent issue of the Russian literary mag-
azine *Nosorog*, which was published with the subtitle "Travel Around the Room (Following Bar-
rett Watten's *Notzeit*': Six Poets on the Experience of Isolation)" (2020), focusing on the
experience of self-isolation through the extensive use of pragmatic markers of transcoded subjec-
tivity and addressing such subjectivity-related strategies.

to "Time of Suffering," but Watten explained that he prefers "the sense of duration," namely "not time": "Höch's title means 'Time of Suffering,' but I like better the sense of duration: 'not time.'" (Watten 2020c, 27) This interpretation can express the idea of metalinguistic translation of words in poetic language, which converge on the ground of paronymic attraction, namely a similar sound. Bridging the boundaries between languages extends to other boundaries including time and space: suffering exists beyond any limits, as a part of human existence.

The concept of inner immigration, 'going in,' is obviously a central concern of the poem (cf. Watten 2020c, 27). The last meaning refers to the pragmatic and deictic coordinates. In the poem, not only has the title changed, but also the communication perspective. The first version of the poem, as it was published on the poet's blog, included diary dates, and did not have any graphic coloured emphasis:

> 21 MARCH 2020
> What I am to think about, in a room with others, is the nature of Zero Hour—our new life.
>   Our colloquy is an opening to that question.
> 22 MARCH 2020
> The poet often sees oneself as an *isolato*, "a person who is physically or spiritually isolated
>   from others." We are collectively isolated, as well.
> This is the common condition we have sequestered ourselves within. These are the occa
>   sions for what I am now writing: *here begin*
>
> (Watten 2020a)

If we compare the text posted on the blog with the final version published after the end of the lockdown with the new title, we can see the accents that were placed by the poet himself in the final version. He highlighted egocentric words in red to emphasise them:[6]

> **I**
> What **I** am to think about, in **this** room without others, is the nature of
> Zero Hour—the new life. **Our** inquiry is an opening to **that** question.
> **II**
> The poet sees **himself** as an isolato, "a person . . . physically or spiritually
> isolated from **others**." **You** are collectively isolated, **each** in **their** turn.
> **That** is the common condition **we** have sequestered **ourselves** within. **This** is the occasion
>   for what *I* now undertake to write: **here** begin
>
> (Watten 2020c, 1)

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6 For the printed version of this volume we have marked emphasised words in terms of colour in the following excerpts (which are both red and formatted with italics in the original) with bold and italic formatting, instead.

As Watten commented in the afterword to this last version, "I have italicised and highlighted in red all pronouns, relative pronouns, and deictics of time and space. I have done this in order to foreground their varying patterns and to point out the possibility of their mutual substitution" (Watten 2020c, 28). We would like to underline that the poet not only highlights egocentric words but also changes the interpretation mode.

According to the theory of linguistic pragmatics, there are two main modes of interpretation: primary deixis, which underlies the dialogue mode, or the classical situation of communication, and deictic projection (cf. Lyons 1977, 579), or secondary deixis (cf. Lyons 1995, 310). The deixis of literary discourse also belongs to the second type. Whereas "I – here – now" has a literal meaning in the dialogue mode, the deictic center in the narrative mode can refer not to the speaker's position, but to the object of the story's position. For example, in the phrase "He only now realised how much he loves her," the "now" can mean both the time of the utterance and the moment in the past preceding it, when the hero of the story realised something important (cf. Apresjan 1995, 276). Watten reflects on different deictic shifts: between dialogic and narrative types of deixis, as well as the shift between narrative and discourse types of deixis. So, a lack of communication during a period of isolation has become a trigger to experience new perceptions and to broaden traditional communication frames using deictics markers. The poet experiments with online communication, rethinking each deictic sign in a new way: "here," "now," "this," "that," etc. All of them become ambiguous when there is a shift between an everyday speech situation to an online communication mode and – vice versa.

We can trace the pragmatic shifts that occur between two versions of the text. The following types of shifts can be distinguished as an intermediate zone between different interfaces and communication modes: "a room – **this** room"; "our new life – **the** new life"; "The poet often sees oneself as an *isolato* – The poet sees **himself** as an isolato"; "We are collectively isolated, as well – **You** are collectively isolated, **each** in **their** turn"; "This is the common condition – **That** is the common condition"; "These are the occasions – **This** is the occasion." Such shifts express an overlap of the cognitive "zoom-in and zoom-out" mechanisms when the object is simultaneously approaching and moving away from the addressee. The deictic shift "near speaker – away from speaker" is rendered with the help of various language markers. The poet changes the degree of determinativeness. This function expresses meaning on a scale from definiteness to indefiniteness of the object. Its indicators are articles, possessive pronouns, and demonstratives which refer to the place where the speaker finds him/herself such as "here" and "there." The shift of determiners leads to the change of the degree of object proximity. At the same time, there is a shift along the line of distance – from the personal pronoun to the

definite article or from the first person pronoun to the second person, as well as between the demonstrative pronouns, from a proximal deictic expression to a distal one. These shifts express by verbal means the change in visual perspective reminiscent of Hannah Höch's watercolour.

The verbal description of a visual work of art, in this case, a depiction of the crucial elements, namely in the form of a non-linear perspective, operates as ekphrasis by combining different types of artistic media to express a common idea. Another function of these shifts is to convey a communication strategy of transcoded subjectivity along the referential line of zooming in and zooming out. Building upon cognitive linguistics research (Foulsham and Cohn 2020; Hill and MacLaury 1995), we use the "zooming in" and "zooming out" conceptions in the meaning of a semantic shift aimed at switching between full and close-up scenes and bringing the object to the spotlight of attention. These conceptions are significant for our study since they function as visual metaphors conveying the idea of visual perception of verbal text. This perception is similar to the impression from Hannah Höch's watercolour also using the shift from zooming in to zooming out because of the broken, non-linear, perspective.

In the case of personal deixis, the poem activates a shift from possessive pronouns of the first and second person in the function of determinativeness as more definite and direct participants in communication (such as "the displacement of *my* body onto *yours*") to the quantifier "both" and, further, to the third person indicator "it," which goes beyond boundaries of the communicative act. According to Émile Benveniste, the "third person" "represents the unmarked member of the correlation of person" as a "non-person" (Benveniste 1971, 221). Such a shift signals the distancing of the subject – both grammatical and pragmatic – in relation to one's own "I," which, paradoxically, moves away in a communicative situation of self-isolation: "The displacement of *my* body onto *yours* signifies the destruction of *both*. / *It* is the universal figure, projected onto a macabre display" (Watten 2020c, 24). This deictic shift denotes a change in distance, the imposition of zoom-in and zoom-out mechanisms within one utterance. The poet here complements the direct nomination with deictic markers indicating the distance and degree of objects' remoteness: "*his* Great Isolation"; "*each* must find *their* place."

The shift from the distal to the proximal deixis goes along with nominalisation of the deictics with the help of quotation marks and violation of the ordinary collocation due to the use of 'out *there*' and 'in *here*' in an isolated position: "The only mitigation between 'out *there*' and 'in *here*' is doubt about / social hierarchies and the boundaries of the property system" (Watten 2020c, 5). Actualisation of polysemy leads to the increase of expressiveness of the deictic "out *there*," which at the same time means 'over there,' 'outside,' and 'someone or something

that is out-there is very extreme or unusual,' whereas "in **here**" signifies 'the inner part of a building or room.' The indefinite article ("a person") is an indicator of the determinative change, shifting between abstraction and concretisation, as well as within the boundaries of visual perspective. This indefinite nomination forms a rhetorical question in combination with an interrogative construction ("What is . . .?"): "**What** is a person and **what** do **you** care? **I** care about **himself** and **those** dear / to **us**, **who** have been statistically modeled to an optimal number" (Watten 2020c, 12). The third person reflexive pronoun "**I** care about **himself**" marks an increase in the degree of determination and concretisation. The same effect is achieved by the use of a definitive subordinate clause related to the pronoun "those" ("**those** dear to **us**, **who** . . ."). At the same time, as we can see from the context, the lexical meaning turns out to be the opposite, expressing indefiniteness, and denotes abstract "dear" ones, who have become a part of the digital reality: "**those** dear / to **us**, **who** have been statistically modeled to an optimal number."

In addition, let us point out the shift between animateness and inanimateness as a characteristic for the distancing strategy, which marks the loss of human contact and the mechanisation of communication. Grammatically, this phenomenon manifests itself through a shift from the third person pronoun "he" to the pronoun "it," denoting inanimate objects: "**He** would be a bar graph, a projection curve, a downward spiral of case / acceleration, a bubble on a map **that when we** clicked on **it** got larger" (Watten 2020c, 10). Thus, the deictic shift leads to the automation of the communication participants themselves. This shift transfers the idea of digital procedures and can be compared with pseudo-communication with Internet bots, namely software application imitating human activity such as messaging on the Internet.

Numerous shifts in the field of personal deixis mark the physical coordinates of the subject's position and indicate the current communicative situation. The variation of deictics as well as the designation of corporality ("embodiment") in a situation of distancing and loss of connections between the subject and the object allow us to apply the concept of "deixis in carnal form" by Norman Bryson (1983, 88). The more the physical coordinates of communication dissolve in the new conditions of media technologies, the more the poetic subject seeks to grasp the elusive coordinates. Lexical ("The displacement of **my** body onto **yours** signifies the destruction of **both**"; Watten 2020c, 24) and pragmatic markers such as reflexive pronouns ("When **you** see **yourself** in a clear light, **you** will know the body as **it** opens / up"; Watten 2020c, 24) come to the fore, signifying, on the one hand, corporality through the frequent use of deictics and their graphic highlighting with colour and italic type. On the other hand, the loss of corporality is implied here, which is performed through the deictic shift. It also refers to the non-linear visual

perspective in Hannah Höch's watercolour, which is also manifested through verbal means. In Watten's own view, his text marks a temporal and technological "zero point" (Watten 2020c, 26). Thus, at the centre of Watten's metapoetic reflection is the transcoding of the text between digital and everyday reality and vice versa. In the text, there is an emphasis of the shift between the virtual and the real, performed through linguistic markers of subjectivity – deictic words and deictic shifts. Following Galloway, we can claim that the poet's focus is on the dynamic interface processes, or the "interface effect," which manifests itself not in stable objects, but in their dynamics.

The last case we would like to discuss is spatial deixis in poetry in digital media. It acquires new functions in contemporary anti-war Ukrainian poetry, where space comes into focus. The Ukrainian poets express – with the help of deictic markers – a new and changed sense of the habitual space, which has three dimensions: the surrounding as well as remote and virtual aspects.

Contemporary anti-war poetry: shifts of spatial deixis

The last section of the paper investigates texts of very recent social and political poetry, which were written by Ukrainian and Russian poets as reaction to the war of Russia against Ukraine and published from the end of February 2022 onwards. There is still no definite term to designate Ukrainian and Russian poetry against the war. Some authors use the terms "war poetry" (Ivashkiv 2022), "poems of war" (Kelly 2022), or "anti-war" literature and poetry (Kobylko et al. 2022, 94). In our paper, we will use the last term – "anti-war poetry" as it allows to express the poets' attitude towards the atrocities of the war. We have collected a corpus of texts that were published in various sources: poems with hashtags on Internet portals such as #nowar on Sigma, #StandWithUkraine and #TranslationMonth on the pages of Ukrainian and Russian poets on Facebook; in poetic magazines and collections such as in *Ukrainian Poetry in Translation Part I* and *Part II* published by the National Translation Month (NTM 2022); in the volume *Invasion. Ukrainian Poems about the War* (Kitt 2022); and in anti-war poetry online projects, such as "Dear Ukraine" by Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach (2022). All these projects use virtual space of the page to combine verbal texts with visual images, such as representations of sunflowers, known as the symbol of Ukraine, on the one hand, and shelters, and bombed-out buildings, on the other hand. Visual representations serve to draw the reader's attention to a huge contrast between a peaceful past and a terrible present as two remote times and spaces.

Much of this poetry is designed not so much by means of specific text graphics, but with the help of interactions of poetic discourse with everyday speech. Anti-war poetry employs fragmented diary narratives close to those specific in "docu-poetry." Quite often, such hybrid media texts are made up of Facebook posts that poets begin to write during the war, and which look like reformatted fragments of everyday speech in off- and online communication. Such is the cycle *Kyiv Diary* by Ukrainian poet Olga Bragina (February–March 2022), which comprises a selection of Facebook posts written during the siege of Kyiv. In the analysed anti-war poetry, poetic subjectivity emerges as a process of transition between non-historical, histor-ical and individual experience, as a result of the forced relocation from the be-sieged Ukrainian cities to the European Union. The trauma of the war presence translates into fragmented poetic testimonies about the war. We have detected sev-eral new functions of deictic markers that come into focus in anti-war poetry. The most representative of them is the shift of spatial deixis with the function of determinativeness.

In a fragment from *Kyiv Diary* by Olga Bragina, the marker "here" is com-bined with the locative predicate "to stay," denoting 'in this situation' and ex-pressing the common meaning of location in a definite place:

> I tell Dad: "The best people in the city are here. If it weren't for the war, you'd think it was New Year's Eve."

> I tell Mom: "We are here, like in Akhmatova's poem Requiem."

> Mom says: "We are standing our ground now—here—so that things don't get worse, as they did in the poem."

> (Bragina 2022)

The marker "here" acquires a narrower and more specific meaning 'at the point where the speech act takes place,' namely, in besieged Kyiv. The temporal marker "now," which is graphically marked "now—here," as well as the verbal indicator of a present continuous tense emphasise the synchronism of what is happening in re-lation to the poetic speech act and the desire to involve the addressee in the inter-action. The publication of *Kyiv Diary* on the Internet combines text and visual presentation of a shelter, one from the thousands, where Ukrainian people have to seek asylum, which allows a reader to achieve deeper immersion in the actual com-municative situation of the text. The picture of the basement shelter presented on the site resonates with the visual image of the fragmented text of the diary (Fig. 6).

it was New Year's Eve."

I tell Mom: "We are here, like in Akhma-
tova's poem Requiem."

Mom says: "We are standing our ground
now—here—so that things don't get
worse, as they did in the poem."

Mom also says: "It says on the internet
that one of our rockets sat idle for thirty
years. And then they launched it and it
blew something up in Russia."

I say: "A rocket sat for thirty years and
then it blew something up? This sounds
like a miracle performed by Bartholomew

Fig. 6: Olga Bragina. "Excerpts from
'Kyiv Diary'." 2022.

In this text, we can also detect the intertextual dialogue with the poem "Requiem"
(1934–1963) by Anna Akhmatova, notorious as the narrative about human suffer-
ing under Stalin's genocidal policy, known as the Great Terror or Great Purge that
targeted political oppositionists, academics and artists, ethnic and national minor-
ities as well as rivals in the Communist party in the Soviet Union among many
others. The reference to Akhmatova's "Requiem" signifies the eternity of the ter-
ror machine, which continues to grind people's lives even in the post-Soviet
space. Another Ukrainian author, Lyudmila Khersonskaya, includes in her text
the word "here" in the adversative construction, the first part of which is speci-
fied by the nominative group "a carnival in venice." The second part to this con-
struction, which is opposed to the first, is marked by the adversative conjunction
"while here":

> she says it's a carnival in venice, it's spring,
> while here a leader is peeling open his eyelids swollen with sleep,
> while here, a louse is readying itself to drink some blood,
> she says it's carnival time, your partner is masked,
> and here we have masked fighters, slits instead of their eyes,
> she says, over there the masks are different, fancy masks,
> and here a new death is added to the anniversary of a death,
> to call a war a provocation – this takes some smarts [. . .].
> (Khersonskaya 2022)[7]

The indefinite article "a" in the context "a carnival in venice" expresses the abstract
nomination of the 'holiday, peaceful life.' This abstract idea of a 'peaceful life' is
opposed to the war, which is not named directly, but denoted with the deictic
"here" and descriptions in the present tense: "while here a leader is peeling,"
"while here, a louse is readying itself." The deictic marker "here" denotes not only
a specific communicative situation, but also a specific country – Ukraine, and a spe-
cific historical time – the ongoing war. Moreover, the comparison of two opposite

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7 The original text is written in Russian and was translated by Nina Kossman.

events ("carnival" vs. "war") marks a highly grotesque dimension of the text, emphasising destruction not only at the material, but also at the cultural and communication levels. The text presents and is written in the form of an indirect dialogue between two persons who cannot understand each other. They discuss the same things, like "masks," but employ different meanings. The terms "carnival mask" and "military mask," or "balaclava helmet" evoke different visual images of two masks and different sentiments in the reader: the joy of the holiday and the horror of the war. Using this grotesque dimension, the poet draws the reader's attention to the misunderstanding between communicants, presented in the form of a dialogue where interlocutors cannot come to a mutual understanding.

Another issue that became the focus of Ukrainian poets' self-reflection is the lack of understanding between people speaking in different languages, who can have common pro-Ukrainian interests, but cannot engage in a dialogue. The interactive poem "Dear Ukraine" with the subtitle "A global community poem" by Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach offers the opportunity for people to communicate with each other as part of a "poetic community." Kolchinsky Dasbach comments on the idea of the project as a platform, where one can submit a text to express involvement in the anti-war movement: "We believe poetry and the arts can be an essential way to respond to trauma, make meaning, and connect communities across languages and borders." (Kolchinsky Dasbach 2022) The poem is recorded in three languages (English, Ukrainian, and Russian), so readers with the knowledge of these languages can enter a poetic dialogue by clicking on the link with their native language. This digital project is open to further poetic comments and allows for every poet supporting Ukraine to share their voices in a feedback mode. In Kolchinsky Dasbach's poem "Dear Ukraine" the discursive marker "even" emphasises an indication of a specific location of the subject, denoting a referent known to the addressee, namely Ukraine: "Even here, they soak the earth." In addition, the "here" expresses a metatextual meaning, that is, "in this song": "Take shelter, if only in this / song and soil, if only / for a moment, take shelter here." (Kolchinsky Dasbach 2022).

The metatextual use of "here" in the poem "Russian Warship, Go Fuck Yourself" (2022) by Danyil Zadorozhny signals several deictic shifts: from the poetic communicative situation in which the subject finds him/herself, to another alternative communicative situation presented in the form of a video recording of Russian prisoners of war: "Watch the video of Russian prisoners of war / saying on camera that they didn't know where and why they were sent. That they are not welcome here and have no need for this war / to happen." (Zadorozhnyi 2022) Importantly, the poem indexes the markers of Russian invasion through visual modes and technological media ("photographs," "camera") describing them as visual pictures rather than real people, such as "photographs of the bodies of their

dead soldiers." The first deictic shift is from the indefinite pronoun "where" to the demonstrative "here." However, several grammatical functions and pragmatic perspectives are hidden within the "here" itself. The "here" corresponds to two deictic centres at a time. Firstly, to the point at which the soldiers found themselves against their own will: "They are asking their / mothers to please bring them back." (Zadorozhnyi 2022) Secondly, to a distant point of presence of the poetic subject – his homeland, Ukraine, in which he would like to be, but which he had to leave. In this case, the spatial deictic "here," which implicitly includes both proximal and distal deictic positions, "introduces issues about spatial, temporal and affective distance and proximity" and renders the idea of "othering," to use a term by Heather Dubrow (2015, 63). "Othering" here has different meanings depending on the subject (persona) of perception: it marks the poet's 'homeland' which is far away, but the text allows to zoom it in with the help of homonymy of spatial and discursive meanings. The "here" also has an opposite meaning: Russian soldiers are physically located at the "here" point, but this space is zoomed-out by them as they feel themselves as "others," who got here against their will.

The use of the deictic marker "here" in contemporary anti-war poetic texts reflects an attitude towards increasing definite reference in the poetic statement. "Here" acquires a communicative meaning, indicating a position in space or time relative to the deictic centre, including both subjective and historical parameters. The specific functioning of deictic "here" in anti-war poetry indicates, firstly, a dichotomy of a movement between a "close" home and forced removal from it. Secondly, "here" takes on a metatextual function, when the meaning of war shifts from the remote category to the point 'here-and-now' of the subject, becoming a part of his/her personal communicative space and an element of discourse deixis – the "here" of the poetic text. Thirdly, the deictic "here" acquires a new meaning according to new media as a (non-)site position of the subject on the Internet (off the page): It can signify 'everywhere' and 'nowhere' at the same time. The idea of the subject's remote presence in digital media can be compared with the technological affordance of 'telepresence,' allowing a person to go beyond any space limitations and overcome the basic oppositions of 'local – distant,' 'material – virtual,' and 'human – digital.' Performing this function, discursive and spatial deixis also serve as a trigger to involve the addressee in the interaction, which is carried out due to shifts between the categories of verbal and visual, personal and technological, local and distant, abstract and concrete, empirical and metatextual.

Conclusion

Deixis in experimental poetry, thus, is a powerful mechanism for the subjectivation of the author, the lyrical persona, and the reader through poetic discourse and through specific texts. Numerous shifts in the field of personal deixis mark the physical coordinates of the subject's position and – through spatial design "on or off the page" – provoke the reader's active reconsideration of themselves in this world. The interfaces of the Internet era have suggested new modes of operating with subjectivity both in ordinary and poetic discourses. Poetry has been making productive use of the recent communicative transformations, which is especially the case with language-centred poetry, experimenting with the very materiality of the text's creation.

We have analysed the key types of deixis in experimental poetry over the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: personal, spatial and discourse deixis. The tendency towards the visualisation of deictic markers signifies an increased attention of poets to the spatial design of a poetic text and their interest in experimenting with multimedia, especially in avant-garde and neo-avant-garde poetry of the twentieth century. The poetic discourse of the twenty-first century increasingly interacts with everyday language and digital user interfaces, which contributes to a more active involvement of the addressee in the communicative interaction. Both in avant-garde and contemporary poetry, visualised deixis becomes a specific tool of metareflection and is a participant in the formation of new strategies of artistic subjectivation. Among these strategies we distinguish the transition from interiorisation to exteriorisation within the poetic reference, the use of zooming in and zooming out mechanisms, and the combination of different positions in one deictic centre ('here,' 'everywhere,' and 'nowhere' at the same time). Deictics as linguistic subjectivisers significantly contribute to the enhanced role of the poem's visuality in avant-garde and contemporary poetry writing, typesetting and publishing practices.

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