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EMOTIVENESS OF ENGLISH BLACKOUT POEMS

The article is devoted to studying the features of emotiveness of English blackout poetic texts, a subtype of so-called «found poetry». Blackout poems are also known as erasure or redacted poems. This genre is relatively new in contemporary poetic practice, although its origins can be traced back to the artistic experiments of Dadaism. A blackout poetic text emerges as a result of the transformation of a fragment of an original literary or non-literary text and takes the form of a poetic miniature (created through the selection of a set of necessary words and the blacking out of irrelevant ones), supplemented by elements of a visual code. Accordingly, such texts are characterized by specific multimodal imagery, conceptuality, and emotiveness. In the article, emotiveness is interpreted as a set of emotives – explicit and implicit expressive means selected by the author from the original text and combined into a new configuration of the target text, marking, on the one hand, the emergent imagery of the blackout text and, on the other, its emotive content. The study establishes that the emotiveness of blackout poetic texts is characterized by such features as emergence (the dominant emotional image is formed and unfolds during the process of creating blackout poetry, relying on the inherent emotive features of the source text while disregarding its adherent emotiveness), constructiveness (which implies the formation of emotiveness during the process of text creation rather than its reproduction from the author's lived experience), and staccato-like rhythm of unfolding (which is ensured by a number of one-word enjambments that typically structure blackout texts). These characteristics of emotiveness in blackout poetic texts contribute to the formation of unexpected emotional images with transformed intensity.

Key words: blackout poetry, emotiveness, image, enjambement, genre.

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ЕМОТИВНІСТЬ АНГЛОМОВНИХ ПОЕТИЧНИХ ТЕКСТІВ ЖАНРУ БЛЕКАУТ

Статтю присвячено дослідженню особливостей емотивності англійського поетичного тексту жанру блекаут, що є підвидом так званої «знайденої поезії». Такі поетичні тексти ще відомі як «поезія викреслення» або «редагована поезія». Цей жанр є відносно новим у сучасній англійській поетичній практиці, хоча його витоки пов'язані з творчими експериментами дадаїзму. Поетичний текст жанру блекаут постає внаслідок трансформації фрагмента оригінального художнього або нехудожнього тексту та має форму поетичної мініатюри (створеної шляхом виокремлення низки необхідних слів і затушовування зайвих), доповненої елементами візуального коду. Відтак такий поетичний текст характеризується специфічною мультимодальною образністю, концептуальністю та емотивністю. У статті емотивність трактується як сукупність емотивів – експліцитних та імпліцитних художніх засобів, які відбираються автором з оригінального тексту та поєднуються у нову конфігурацію новотвору, маркуючи, з одного боку, емерджентну образність блекаут-тексту, а з іншого – його емотивний зміст. У результаті дослідження встановлено, що емотивність поетичного тексту жанру блекаут характеризується такими ознаками, як емерджентність (домінантний образ емоції формується й розгортається у процесі створення поезії блекаут, спираючись на інгерентні ознаки емотивності тексту-оригіналу та ігноруючи його адгерентну емотивність), конструйованість (що передбачає формування емотиву/емотивів у процесі творення тексту, а не його/їх відтворення з безпосереднього досвіду автора), а також розгортанням у ритмі стакато (що зумовлюється використанням автором однослівних анжамбеманів у більшості поетичних текстів). Зазначені характеристики емотивності блекаут-тексту сприяють формуванню неочікуваних образів емоцій із трансформованою інтенсивністю.

Ключові слова: поезія жанру блекаут, емотивність, образ, анжамбеман.

Problem statement and analysis of previous studies. Blackout poetry (also referred to as *erasure* or *redacted poetry*) constitutes a form of found poetry. Found poetry, in general, involves the transformation of pre-existing texts into new artistic compositions. In this process, selected portions of the source text are preserved, while others are obscured, removed, or visually suppressed (e.g., through crossing out or redaction) generating new semantic and aesthetic meanings (This Ocean of Texts). In this sense, the lexical resources used in such writing do not originate from the author's internal cognitive or imaginative repertoire, but rather from the vocabulary extracted from a randomly selected page of either fictional or non-fictional prose.

The process of composing blackout poetry has been noted for its potential to mitigate writer's block, as it provides structural constraints that can stimulate creativity (Potash, 2024). Furthermore, its practical value is considerable: the technique of redacting text can serve as an accessible entry point for students and novice writers, enabling them to engage with poetic creation and develop confidence in their expressive abilities. Notwithstanding its unconventional nature and the specific compositional procedure, blackout poetry exhibits all essential features of poetic discourse, including *imagery*, *conceptual depth*, and *emotive expression*.

Blackout poetry constitutes a relatively recent genre within contemporary poetic practice; however, the artistic trends that preconditioned its emergence date back to the beginning of the twentieth century (The History of Blackout Poetry). To date, scholars in this area of poetics have addressed several key aspects: (1) the distinction in creative strategies and compositional procedures between erasure poetry and blackout poetry (This Ocean of Texts); (2) the multimodal dimensions of blackout poetic texts (Sienkiewicz, 2026); and (3) a general perspective on the shaping of emotiveness in blackout poetry (Glatch, 2025; Sienkiewicz, 2026).

Objectives of the study. The aim of the current study is to elucidate the specific features of emotiveness in texts belonging to the genre of blackout poetry, with particular emphasis on how the inherent emotive qualities of the source text elements shape the emergent emotiveness of the resulting text (i.e., the blackout poem itself). This becomes possible if the original text remains perceptible through the artistic design of the new text. This entails taking the following steps: 1) to examine the notions of inherent and adherent emotiveness in fictional texts; 2) to establish the correlation between imagery and emotiveness in blackout poetic forms; and 3) to

delineate the specific characteristics of emotiveness in blackout poetry.

The **methods** employed in the article embrace: 1) the method of contextual analysis; 2) the methods of stylistic analysis and text interpretation; 3) the method of multimodal analysis.

Materials. This paper examines cases of blackout poetry retrieved from *Pinterest*. This platform is widely used as a space for creative expression, including blackout poetry. Although the authorship of both the source material and the resulting poems is often unacknowledged, this form deserves scholarly attention, as it exposes underlying mechanisms of poetic text construction.

Results and discussion. A blackout poem is created by transforming a fragment of an original literary or non-literary text into a poetic miniature, formed by selecting essential words and obscuring the rest, and often enhanced with visual elements. Austin Kleon, the author and artist, explains the essence of blackout poems writing through the following comparison: «*It's sort of like if the CIA did haiku*» (as cited in Potash, 2024). This quote is illustrated by the artist himself (see Fig.5). Austin Kleon pays attention to the act of blacking out words, stating that it also contributes to the creation of the meaning on the poem. Thus, a blackout poem is a multimodal text within which several codes interact creating new meanings. Let us take a look at the blackout poem by an unknown author which appropriates fragments from Beatrice Warde's essay «*The Crystal Goblet*» (1932), recontextualizing them through erasure and graphic intervention (Fig. 1):

The text produced through the act of blacking out acquires the essential features of a poetic composition. It incorporates: (1) a semantic code, manifested in the aphoristic message concerning the power of a rebellious mind; (2) an emotive code, organized around three principal emotive nodes – namely, the images of *dullness*, *enthusiasm*, and *revolt*; and (3) an aesthetic code, characterized by laconic verbal expression and the use of stylistic devices that form an antinomic pair (*dull mind :: revolting enthusiasm*). This opposition is further intensified by visual elements, particularly the use of colour, which introduces inverted symbolism and generates a form of paradoxical aesthetic effect within the text.

In order to explore the peculiarities of emotiveness of blackout poems, let us first refer to the definition of this category of poetic text. **Emotiveness** of poetic text is defined as a linguistically expressed, conceptually, and pragmatically conditioned system of text signals of various emotions (emotives), reflecting the author's emotional intention at the moment of an artistic

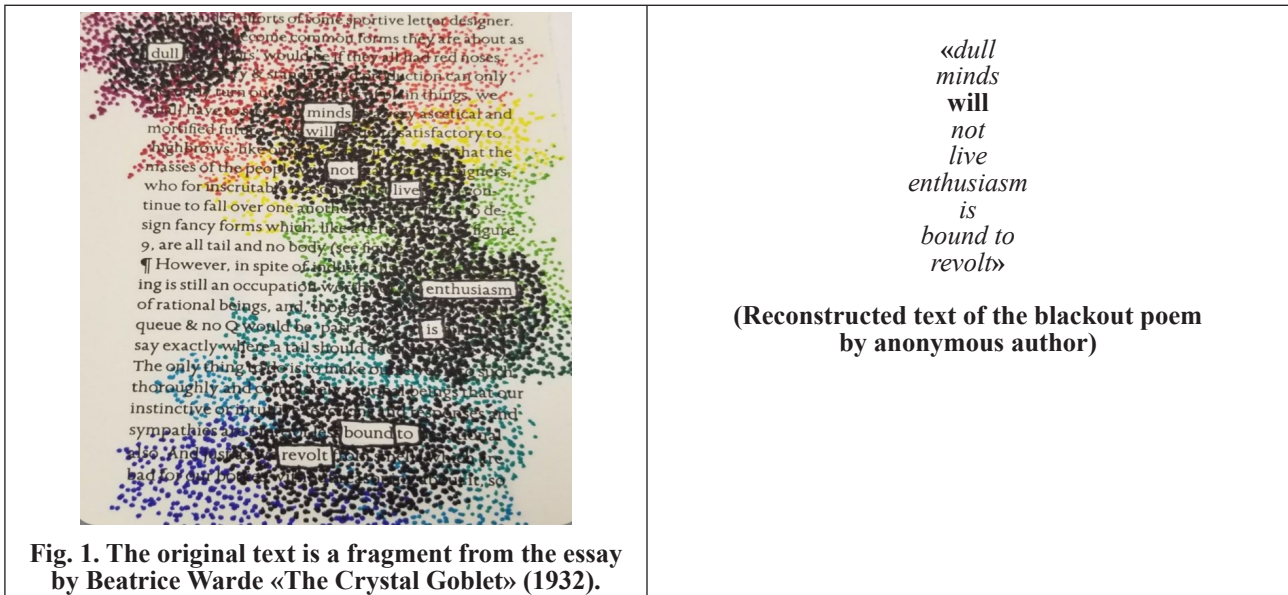


Fig. 1. The original text is a fragment from the essay by Beatrice Warde «The Crystal Goblet» (1932).

text creation. The emotiveness of any fictional text may represent itself through inherent and adherent properties (Селіванова, 2006: 142). *Inherent emotiveness* is realized in the vocabulary denoting emotions. Inherent emotiveness is a component of 1) connotations, which represent the speaker's emotional attitude to the signified (Селіванова, 2006: 142; Єрмоленко, 2000: 157); it is closely related to the assessment, expressiveness, and functional-stylistic coloring of a linguistic unit; 2) denotative meaning of a word (lexical units denoting such emotions as *fear, delight, love, etc.*) (Єрмоленко, 2000: 157); 3) exclamations that act as signals of emotions (Єрмоленко, 2000: 157). The third feature is rarely observed in blackout poetry, as punctuation marks are inherited from the source text, and the punctuation that would be desirable in the target text seldom coincides with them. *Adherent emotiveness* is an emergent formation which forms itself within the context. It is a text category that expresses the author's emotional attitude to the text world they create (Селіванова, 2006: 142).

It has been observed, that within the blackout poetry the given configuration of words in one and the same page given to different people to create a poem through blacking out will be highlighted differently by different people. Thus, L. Sienkiewicz notes: «No two people will choose the same words. What we select often reflects our emotional state in that moment – what we're wrestling with, longing for, or quietly noticing» (Sienkiewicz, 2026). Therefore, the inherent emotiveness of the original text can be reshaped by the author of a blackout poem, creating new emergent emotive effects, while the adherent emotiveness may simply be ignored during the creation of the new poem. So, emotiveness appears to be an

attempt of the author to communicate their feelings through textual means of a poem to the recipient. In poetic texts of the blackout genre, emotiveness is marked by such features as 1) *emergent properties*; 2) *constructiveness*; 3) *staccato-like rhythm of unfolding*. Let us consider them in more detail.

Emergent properties. This feature springs from the interaction of two main characteristics of the emotiveness of poetic text: inherent (registered emotive connotation) and emergent (adherent) emotiveness (that spontaneously appears as the author construes the text). The blackout poem ignores the adherent emotiveness of the input text and out of its inherent properties construes new emotives. The emergent properties may be enhanced by the elements of other codes (for example, visual).

Elements of inherent emotiveness of the source text can be reflected in the blackout poem itself which can be illustrated with the poem on Fig. 2.

The emotional tone of the original text is largely disregarded in the black-out poem. Instead, selected words and phrases from the fantasy text are reshaped into a new form – a nature lyric poem. This shift brings forward a series of simple, soft, or bright images: *blue sky, orange leaves, transparent gossamers* – that suggest a fleeting flow of feeling and a quiet fascination with fragile, short-lived details that may vanish in a moment. The frequent use of one-word enjambments, typical of black-out poetry, strengthens the sense of delicate, shimmering beauty in this impressionistic scene. The acts of choosing and arranging these details work as a kind of visual pattern: leaves and gossamers blend naturally, creating an autumnal mood that reintroduces a subtle emotional quality.

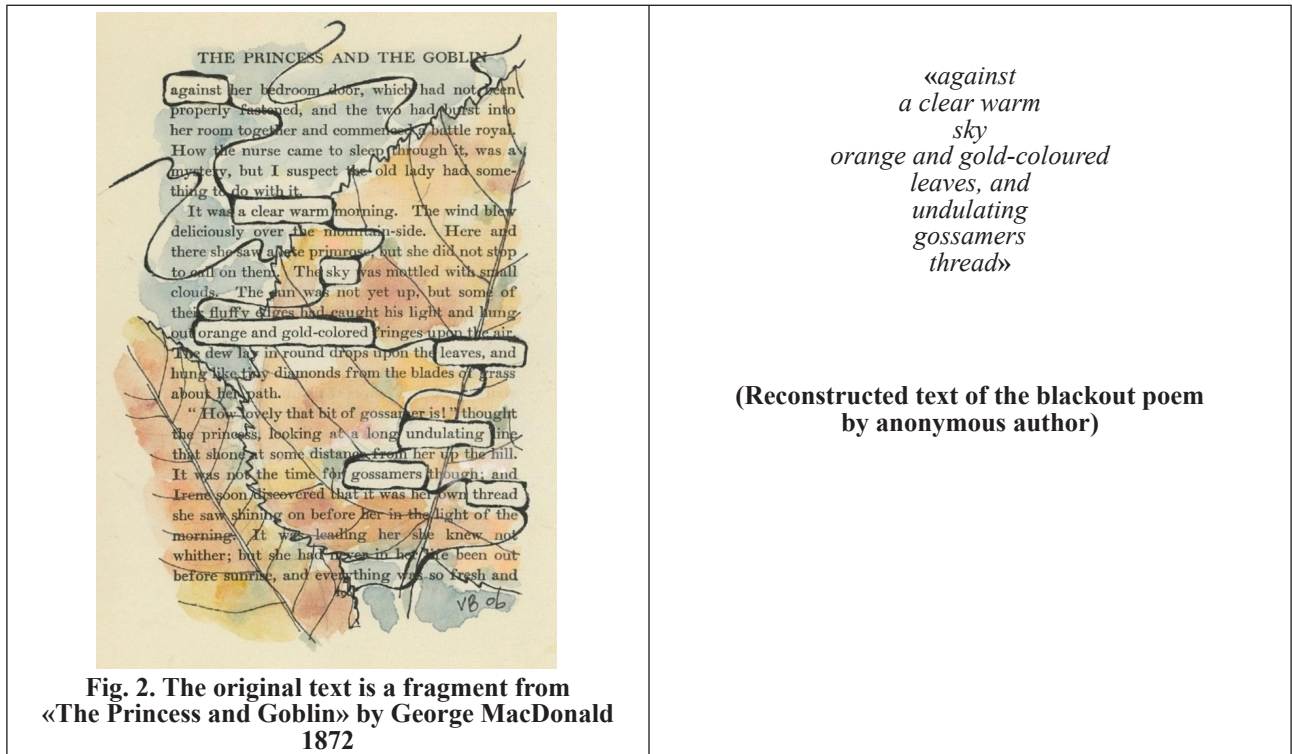


Fig. 2. The original text is a fragment from «The Princess and Goblin» by George MacDonald 1872

The emotiveness of a blackout text largely depends on the verbal design of the original text. However, it is the author of the blackout poem who «finds» new striking images within the existing text, thereby creating strong emotive effects. Let us illustrate it with the blackout poem on Fig. 3.

In the analysed text, the image of a «voiceless» child acquires symbolic significance, giving rise to multiple interpretations: the child may be perceived as mute, silenced, oppressed, unheard, ignored, or traumatized. Consequently, the text is characterized

by semantic layering. These interpretive possibilities contribute to the emergence of bitterness and even resentment, while the intensity of the resulting emotive effect depends on the particular interpretive trajectory.

Constructiveness. Emotions are not «sewn» into a person and can be consciously constructed / reconstructed from basic parts and subsequently bodily experienced by the individual according to the theory of constructed emotions (Фельдман Барретт, 2018: 16). In other words,

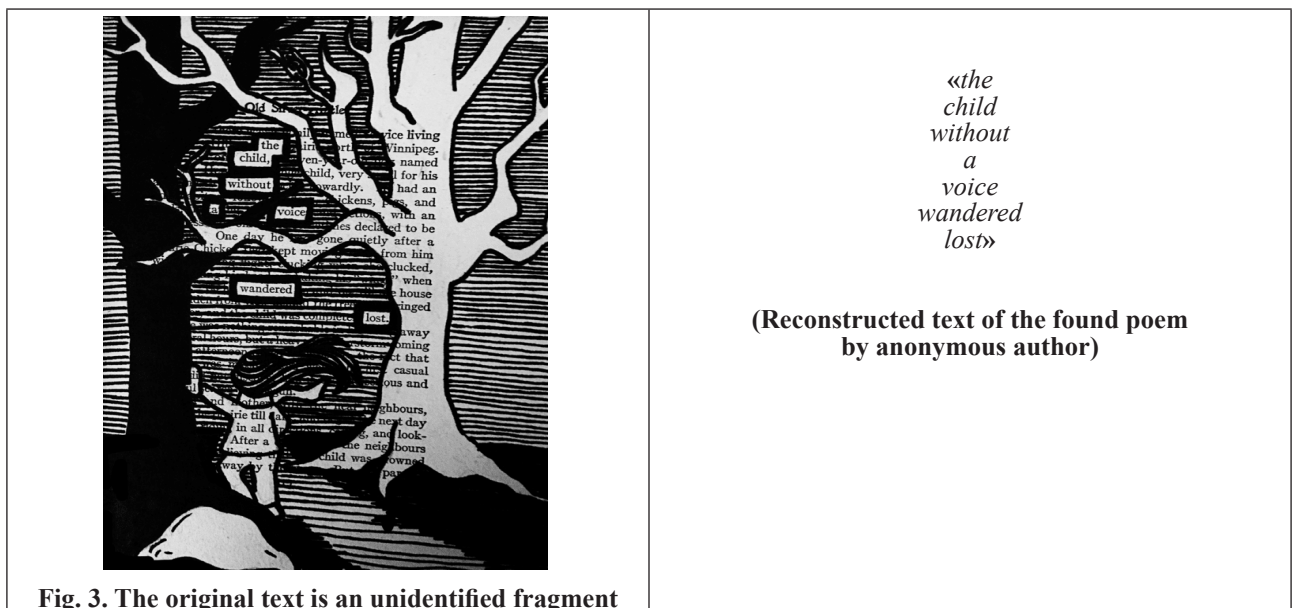


Fig. 3. The original text is an unidentified fragment

the individual «does not trigger emotions, but creates them» all the time (Фельдман Барретт, 2018: 16), that is, a person is the «architect of their emotions» (Фельдман Барретт, 2018: 65). Having certain ideas, the brain creates meaning from sensations, and sometimes this meaning is one or another emotion (Фельдман Барретт, 2018: 65). Within a blackout text, the image of emotion is constructed from elements of the pre-existing source text. Consequently, the «found» image-bearing configuration may give rise to a paradoxical emotive effect. The text in Fig. 4 has been selected to illustrate the point.

The text in Fig. 4 foregrounds an ekphrastic image – a photograph that fixes people in a state of being together. The photo functions as a kind of CONTAINER that preserves what it holds. The people captured in it are laughing, suggesting that they are experiencing a positive moment and, therefore, happiness. This gives rise to an image of happiness that is not fleeting, but extended in time, lasting as long as the fragile container can sustain it.

The verbal imagery of the poem is reinforced by the elements of the visual code – multiple frames closely linked through curved lines, which may suggest a movement from a single, specific moment toward a sense of universality and even timelessness. The visual elements of the found text thus support and deepen the verbal idea. Structurally, the poem relies on one-word enjambments, which shape the

unfolding image of emotion in a dynamic, almost impulsive way, guiding it from a neutral state toward a strongly positive and intensified feeling. This growing intensity ultimately reaches toward a sense of permanence.

A closer look at the readable fragments of the original passage in Fig. 4 shows that the photograph is described as a container of memory. However, it is through the act of blacking out that the new text acquires a more powerful and focused meaning. In this process, the emergent emotiveness surpasses the original inherent tone, both in the novelty of the image and in the strength of its emotional impact. The resulting constructed emotive can be understood as an image of enduring happiness.

Staccato-like rhythm of unfolding. From a structural perspective, the analysed above texts, as many other blackout poems, employ one-word enjambments, which produce a staccato rhythm and thereby shape the fragmented, discontinuous emotive trajectory of the poem. Let us illustrate this feature with the blackout poem in Fig.5.

The message of the analysed text aligns with well-known sayings such as «God helps those who help themselves», «Heaven helps the self-reliant», or «No cavalry is coming» conjuring up the emotion of self-reliance.

At the same time, the use of one-word enjambments produces an uneven, almost jerky rhythm that gives the statement a firm, categorical tone by placing emphasis on each individual word. This stop-and-start rhythm

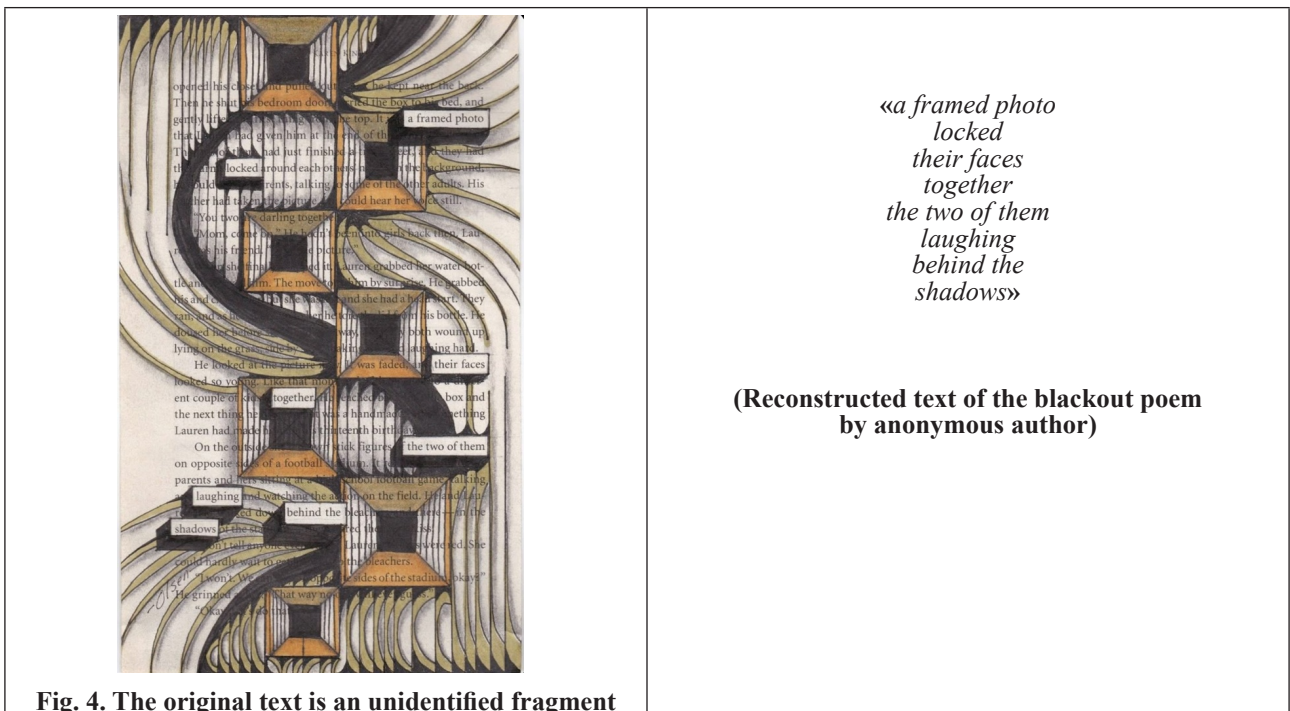


Fig. 4. The original text is an unidentified fragment

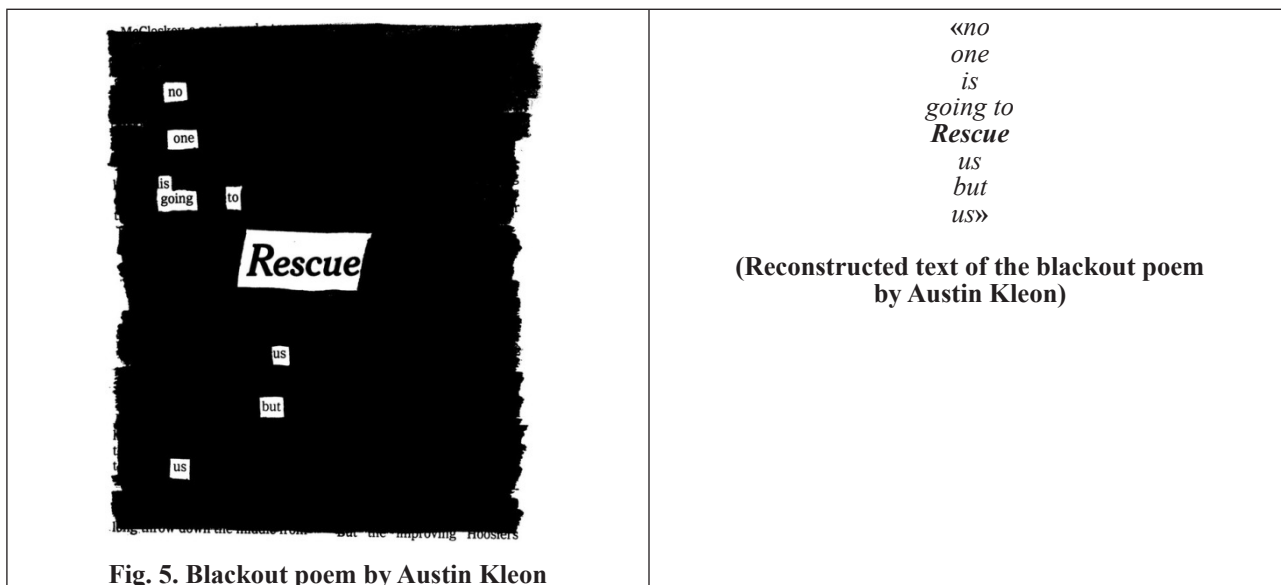


Fig. 5. Blackout poem by Austin Kleon

adds a layer of tension to the found poem, slowing down the reader's understanding and creating a subtle sense of delayed realization or disrupted expectation, even within the poem's brevity.

Such one-word enjambments are typical of the genre, yet they also affect the reading process by extending it, making the text feel more drawn out and impulse-driven despite its short length.

Conclusions. The article examines the peculiarities of emotiveness formation within the relatively new genre of blackout poetry. A blackout poem emerges through the transformation of existing fictional and non-fictional texts, in which the author erases irrelevant elements and retains selected ones to create

poetic miniatures that may be further supplemented with visual components.

The emotiveness of a blackout poem is grounded in the inherent emotive properties of the source text, while the act of blacking out may disregard its adherent emotiveness. At the same time, emotiveness of blackout poetry is characterized by emergent properties, constructiveness, and a staccato-like rhythm of unfolding. This implies that emotive effects arise in the very process of textual reduction; the resulting emotiveness may assume paradoxical qualities and develop in a fragmented, jerky manner, thereby intensifying the impact of the «found» emotive.

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SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

Fig. 1. The original text is a fragment from the essay by Beatrice Warde «The Crystal Goblet» (1932). The found text by anonymous author is retrieved from *Pinterest*.

Fig. 2. The original text is a fragment from «The Princess and Goblin» by George MacDonald 1872. The found text by anonymous author is retrieved from *Pinterest*.

Fig. 3. The original text is an unidentified fragment. The found text by anonymous author is retrieved from Washington Middle Library – Blackout Poetry.

Fig. 4. The original text is an unidentified fragment. The found text by anonymous author is retrieved from *Pinterest*.

Fig. 5. The blackout poem by Austin Kleon retrieved from https://64.media.tumblr.com/4f37cb7ebb33d4e04e1825faeb7e6876/tumblr_olxtq1iR5d1qz6f4bo1_500.jpg.

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