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Visual Dimensions in Ukrainian Futurist Poetry and Prose

Ukrainian Futurism (1914–1930), like the avant-garde throughout Europe, had a distinctly polyartistic profile. Although literature was its mainstay, other arts played a prominent role in the movement's consciousness and activities. Significantly, two of the three co-founders of Ukrainian Futurism were painters (Vasyl' Semenko and Pavlo Kovzhun). Later, their undisputed leader Mykhail' Semenko (himself a poet) repeatedly sought out allies in the theater (Marko Tereshchenko, Les' Kurbas) and cinema (A. Dovzhenko). Many a Futurist (e.g. Mykola Bazhan, Geo Shkurupii, Dmytro Buz'ko, M. Semenko) was associated with the Ukrainian film industry (VUFKU — Vseukrains'ke fotokinoupravlinnia) either as editor or screenwriter and sometimes as both¹. Futurist literary publications were nearly always collaborative ventures involving artists. V. Tatlin, for example, designed the cover of *Zustrich na perekhresnii stantsii* (Meeting at a Junction Station, 1927). The major Futurist journal *Nova generatsiia* [heneratsiia] (The New Generation, 1927–1930) had its layout fashioned by prominent figures in set design (Vadym Meller), photography (Dan Sothyk) and painting (Anatol' Petryts'kyi). In fact, with the possible exception of Valerian Polishchuk's Constructivists, one cannot point to any other literary group from this period that so consistently and consciously set for itself such high publication standards². *Nova generatsiia*, a forum for avant-garde writers, was exemplary in this respect. Not only was it a very attractive journal but it pursued a comprehensive, all-embracing approach to the arts, paying particular attention to West European avant-garde painting, theater, film, photography, and architecture.

At the heart of this artistic universalism lay a theory called "Panfuturism". The brainchild of M. Semenko, its premise was that the centuries-old "process" known as "Great Art" had finally come to an evolutionary dead-end. The entire avant-garde (which Semenko considered a single, historically unprecedented phenomenon) was construed both as proof of art's immanent demise and as the promise of a new "system" that would rise from the ashes of art's "atomized" elements. Under these circumstances, the vanguard had a duty to stimulate the collapse of art by deliberately "destroying" old forms while concurrently creating new ones through "fusion" or "synthesis".

These views account for the proliferation in the Ukrainian movement of such hybrid "genres" as letter-poems, editorial-poems, speech-poems, radio-poems and "facto-stories" (faktoopovidannia) — i.e. the synthesis of journalism and fiction. The visual arts were also harnessed toward these ends. Experiments in synthesis involved coupling written genres to a variety of non-verbal media such as painting, film, the poster, and photography. The end result included "poezo-paintings" (poezomaliarstvo), "poezo-films" (poezofil'my), and a "screen-novel" (ekranizovanyi roman). One writer and photographer set out to combine literature and photography into a new form. The point

¹ On Semenko's relationship to the cinema see M. Sulyma, "Bilia dzherel. Mykhail' Semenko — redaktor VUFKU", *Kul'tura i zhyttia*, No. 51, 20 Dec. 1987, p. 4.

² Prefiguring this trend was *Mystetstvo* [Art], a non-futurist journal edited by M. Semenko during 1919–1920. With artistic contributions from A. Petryts'kyi, H. Narbut, and M. Zhuk, *Mystetstvo* ranks as one the best designed Ukrainian journal of the 1920s.

of their collective exercise was to see if photography could be used “not as an illustration to the text, but as an inseparable part” of it³.

In *Zhovtnevyi zbirnyk panfuturystiv* (The Panfuturists’ October Miscellany, Kiev, 1923) Futurists established a symbiosis between posters and poetry. They also used film techniques (montage) to bind “words,” “posters,” and “slogans” — the constituent elements of this agitprop publication — into a single whole⁴. Although only two texts in this miscellany were actually designated as “posters”⁵, most so-called “poems” succumbed to the requirements of this promotional graphic art. In terms of its loud, highly politicized content, linguistic style, striking layout, and great typographic variety, the miscellany clearly strove to endow writing with the function and formal properties of posters.

In their attempt to “destroy” the traditional structures and genres of “Literature” (and more broadly — of writing in general), the Futurists found the visual arts particularly useful. At a minimum these were a source of new compositional techniques and narrative strategies. Semenکو’s “poezo-films” (i.e., “Step”, “Vesna”, and “Okeaniia”) were long narrative poems that employed montage techniques. Leonid Skrypnyk’s “screen-novel” *Inteligent* [The Intellectual] chronicled events taking place on a silent movie screen⁶. But the greatest impact of the visual arts lay in the shift they effected in literature from an exclusively semantic dimension to a new graphic plane. Text ceased to be treated as a mere sign. It acquired instead an independent functional significance as a material object. Futurist works as a result assumed an entirely new ontological existence: the unit of meaning was no longer the “word” alone; the “page” and the “line” garnered relevance, as did the size and placement of text. In short, a concerted effort was made to draw attention to the technology of writing and printing itself. On an elementary level, this meant a new approach to the construction of the verse line and the poem’s layout. At another, it meant recognizing typography as an integral part of the work. Various means were sought to bring the alphabet into relief. For example, to give the Ukrainian language a new, tangible quality, Futurists periodically turned their backs on Cyrillic in favor of Latin transliteration. On other occasions they banned upper case letters from their publications (Cf. *Nova generatsiia* for 1930). Such actions were a form of visual “interference”; they contravened habitual responses to the printed word by drawing readers away from the denoting text to its physical form.

Visual metaphors and graphic considerations played a large part in Geo Shkurupii’s early collection of poetry *Psykhetozy* (1922)⁷. From the subtitle (“Vitryna tretia”, i.e. — Third Shop Window), to the visually arresting cover, to the sporadic use of Latin script

³ O. Poltorats’kyi — D. Sotnyk, “Donbas na pivdorozi”, *Nova generatsiia*, No. 6, 1929’ pp. 7–21. The comment appears on p. 2.

⁴ The cover was designed by Henke Meller; the “montage” was done by Geo Shkurupii and Nik [Mykola] Bazhan.

⁵ V. Iaroshenko “Zhovtnevyi plakat A”, *Zhovtnevyi zbirnyk panfuturystiv* (Kiev: Hol’fshtrum, 1923), p. 5; Ia. Savchenko “Zhovtnevyi plakat B”, *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ The novel was initially serialized in *Nova generatsiia* under Skrypnyk’s pseudonym Levon Lain. It was published separately as: Leonid Skrypnyk, *Inteligent* (Kharkiv: Proletarii, 1929). For details on Skrypnyk himself see: Oleh Il’nyts’kyi [Oleh Ilnytzkyj], “Leonid Skrypnyk: *Inteligent i Futuryst*”, *Suchasnist’*, No. 10, 1984, pp. 7–11.

⁷ *Psykhetozy*. Vitryna tretia (Kiev: Panfuturysty, 1922), [p. 1].

and, finally, to the layout of its twenty-three poems (printed without capitalization or punctuation, with titles running vertically in large block letters beside the body of the text) *Psykhetozy* made a dramatic claim to being more than a typical “reading” experience. Shkurupii provided additional visual stimuli in the form of four illustrations depicting Futurism’s favorite subject — the machine. Each of these was graced by a slogan that oscillated between earnestness and humor. “Science, Technology, Sport and Art of all Countries, Unite!” declared one placard in Ukrainian and German. Beneath an image of a turbine, this futurist/dadaist message continued: “Build New Machines and Factories, New Instruments and Sound Orchestras! Let us Perfect the Music of Noise.” Another picture of a locomotive had this statement: “By Means of Engines, by Means of Engines of the Intellect, We Will Destroy the Prejudices of the Heart.” On a more personal and clearly comic note, Shkurupii included an advertisement for his very own “word products”. Written partly in Ukrainian and partly in French (“Fabrication Mecanique et Non Chimique”), it lists, among other things, real and fictitious publication sites for Shkurupii’s works (Kiev, Kharkiv, Moscow, Vienna, Prague, and Winnipeg). At the bottom of this placard, Shkurupii gives his prospective customers a timely warning: “Beware of Imitations”.

Some of this exhibitionism is prefigured in the very first poem of the collection, “Avtoportret” (Self-portrait), a work with strong visual appeal. The transliteration system used by Shkurupii (where “W” stands for Ill and “Q” for X) had been inaugurated in *Semafor u maibutnie* (Semaphore into the Future, 1922). The poem looked like this:

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geo O ge
ego
geo Wkurupij
geometr i
ja
geograf i
ja
geo
log i ja ego
evrop A      frik
si A      A      vstrali
merik      A      ego
geo O ge
Geo Wkurupij

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A V T O P O R T R E T

7

As is evident, in this collection Shkurupii amalgamated poetry with visual and marketing stratagems. This is made explicit in one of his works: “pereplavliu slova chudesni/ivystavliu u vitrynakh” (“I will smelt wonderful words/and exhibit them in shop windows”)⁸.

⁸ “Ia”, *Ibid.*, [p. 2].

In 1922 Mykhail' Semenko had argued that the final "death throes" of traditional poetry demanded "energetic experimentation" on "the material of poetry" (i.e., "the word") so that "new ways of writing poetry" might be found. Words were to be "dissolved" into their "primary" (i.e., "visual" and "aural") elements. In fusing them into a new art — one which would be "completely unlike [any] previous" — the writer was to govern himself by principles derived from painting or music⁹. Relying on the former, Semenko began work a year earlier on a genre he called "poezomaliarstvo" (poezo-painting).

Semenko eventually published two cycles in this genre: "Kablepoema za okean" ("Cablepoem Across the Sea", begun in 1920, completed in 1921), and "Moia mozaika" ("My Mosaic", 1922). One and the other is composed from a series of separate "cards" ("Cablepoem ..." has 8, "My Mosaic" — 10) which sport elaborate typography and text (one "card" in "My Mosaic" even employs mathematical symbols). Each "card" of the "Cablepoem ..." is printed on an off-white cardboard page in black and red colors¹⁰. "My Mosaic", presumably, was executed in the same manner — unfortunately, there are no extent color reproductions of this work¹¹. Cyrillic (in various styles, shapes and sizes) predominates, but Latin transliteration appears in both works. Virtually all these texts (or, if you will, verbal constructions) are enclosed in a frame-like border. The works, therefore, take place not directly on the "page" but within a secondary and independent environment defined by Semenko. Hence, one can speak of a "canvass" — a notion reinforced by the fact that "cards" bear the author's (painter's?) name, are titled, and (in the case of "My Mosaic") even dated in small print which runs beneath the bottom of the "frame".

For all these similarities, "Cablepoem Across the Sea" and "My Mosaic" are wholly different works¹². The title of "Cablepoem ..." suggests it to be a synthesis of at least two types of "written" media: the telegram and the narrative poem. This is reflected in its style: on the one hand, the poem is terse, compressed, elliptical; on the other, it is distinctly narrational. A consecutive numeration of the cards largely predetermines just how this visual work will be "read." The "Cablepoem's" continuity and unity is further underscored by a consistent graphic format and single theme. Two vertical panels (rectangles), one of which is additionally segmented into horizontal boxes, alternate

⁹ Myqail' [sic] Semenko [Mykhail' Semenko], "Poezomaliarstvo", *Semafor u maibutnie*. Aparat Panfuturystiv, No. 1 (May), 1922, p. 32.

¹⁰ "Kablepoema za okean" appeared first in *Shliakhy mystetstva* (No. 2, 1921, pp. 11–14) as a straightforward text in two columns. Its only full, color publication as "poezopainting" occurred in *Semafor u maibutnie*. Aparat Panfuturystiv, No. 1 (May), 1922. Half of the text (minus formatting and layout) is also extent in a Russian translation (cf. M. Semenko, „Tekst iz Kablepoemy za okean (1920)“. *Perevod s ukrainskoho Iu. Nikitina. Katafalk iskusstva*, No. 1, 13. XII. 1922, p. 3). It was reprinted in a reduced format and without color in M. Semenko, *Kobzar* (Kiev: Hol'shstrom, 1924) and again in *Kobzar* (Kiev: DVU, 1925), pp. 575–582. My references are to the latter source.

¹¹ "Moia mozaika" first appeared in the *Kobzar* of 1924; reprinted in *Kobzar* (Kiev: DVU, 1925), pp. 607–616. Reprinted again in M. Semenko, *Povna zbirka tvoriv*, Vol. 2 (Kharkiv: Literatura i Mystetstvo, 1930), pp. 221–230. There are minor differences between the 1925 and 1930 editions of this work (see below).

¹² The reader may wish to compare my discussion of these two works with one that has appeared in Myroslava M. Mudrak, *The New Generation and Artistic Modernism in the Ukraine* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), pp. 161–181. I have expressed my views on this publication in "Futurism in Ukrainian Art: A New Study". *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, No. 2, Vol. 12, Winter 1987, pp. 95–103.

from left to right on each consecutive card. The theme, developed in a provocatively futurist manner, is a celebration of the new industrial and cultural world order.

Within this graphic framework, the unsegmented panel always contains a syntactically coherent text, in other words, a poem in free verse complete with title¹³. In contrast, the horizontal boxes of the segmented panel contain individual words or brief phrases realized in large, bold and, occasionally, oddly shaped type.

If arranging words into a graphic pattern is Semenko's way of fusing the literary and visual arts, his heterogeneous verbal material indicates a desire to exploit and combine seemingly incompatible levels of language. The "Cablepoem" uses discourse reminiscent of telegrams, political slogans ("Proletarians Unite!"), even graffiti ("Semenko—idiot"). All this linguistic material is mounted on the cards for the amusement of the reader. He, however, cannot possibly approach it in a uniform manner. Some texts (the free verse, for example) must be read for content in the normal manner. The large single words — and the card as whole — make more sense when "viewed". Still other words (e.g. the slogans) encourage vocalization.

Unlike the preceding work, the individual cards of "My Mosaic" do not combine to produce a thematic, narrative, or visual whole. Each card in this instance is a separate work. More light-hearted and less political than the "Cablepoem", "My Mosaic" has two conspicuous motifs running through the cards: one tends toward the personal, the other toward the literary/artistic. Both are handled in a futuristic and dadaesque manner: the humor is irreverent and absurdist, while the polemics are strident and bombastic.

As visual poems, the works of "My Mosaic" fall into two broad categories. At the core of one group, there is normally a text with a linguistically coherent sequence of words. One could argue that these are graphically embellished poems. Another group consists of works whose text is deliberately disconnected, nonsequential, arranged without recourse to syntax. These give the impression of being random arrangements of separate words and phonetic sounds. This latter group is the more ambiguous since the reader has no common, ready-made system to fall back on when deciphering their meaning. In such cases the message, if it exists at all, must be laboriously extracted using the implicit, largely spatial "syntax" of the works themselves.

Works of the first category, i.e. those with normal sentences and syntax, tend to use visual and typographic elements primarily as aids for oral or semantic interpretation. Large or bold text, for example, helps establish the proper intonation of an utterance, its relative volume in relation to other words. In lines of pure phonetic text such stylistic features may indicate correct stress (e. g. "a-KA, a-KA, a-KA"). Some typographical devices serve as visual tautologies, reiterating semantic meaning through graphic means. Take an example from the card entitled "Panfuturysty." The word "down" (vnyz) is rendered as:

B
H
H
3

While the phrase "at the bottom" (na dni) appears as the lowest element in a block of words:

¹³ The first poem, on "Card No. 2" is called "Introduction". "Card No. 1" has no poem for it is designated as the "Cover".

червоїди
 В МУЛІ
 НА ДНІ
 worms
 IN MUD
 AT THE BOTTOM

Of the works in which syntax plays no role, “Suprepoeziia” and “Systema” are especially worthy of note. “Suprepoeziia” is constructed as four identical and adjoining rectangles, each of which is filled with discrete words (arranged either horizontally or vertically) in stern typefaces of different sizes and styles. In addition, one rectangle contains numerals identifying pivotal years in Semenko life (1892 — birth; 1914 — the publication of his first collection; 1917 — his return to the Ukraine from Vladivostok; 1922 — The Association of Panfuturists, i.e. Aspanfut, inaugurates its activities). These dates as well as other words — e.g. “Kybyntsi” (Semenko’s birthplace) — give this enigmatic and evasive work a certain autobiographical patina. Some words (“rozbyshaka”, “xvorist” — scoundrel, illness) allude to the literary scandals in his life; still others, by their proximity and juxtaposition, seem to be designed to do little more than provoke the ire of literary traditionalist (“liryka,” “kurka” — lyric poetry, chicken). But what the poem lacks in semantic clarity, it more than makes up by its direct homage to Kazimir Malevich. The very title, the simplicity and pureness of its geometrical arrangement, its studied flatness makes this an unambivalent adoption of Malevich’s artistic ideas (suprematism) to literature.

“Systema” is entirely different. In place of rectilinear order, this poem gives us “words in freedom”. It is composed almost entirely of place names, personal names, and literary titles that float at odd angles and arcs. A variety of typographic styles and sizes create a dynamic, circus-like mood — quite appropriate for a work whose theme is modernism and the *avant-garde*.

There are, so to speak, two basic semantic groupings in this poem. One is “western”, consisting of the following words: Picasso, Marinetti, New York, London, Paris, Cézanne, Van Gogh, [Umberto] Boccioni, Gérard de Nerval, Walt Whitman, Gauguin. The other grouping is “Ukrainian.” This set evokes Futurist personalities and publications from 1914 to 1922. It is interesting that the “western” and “Ukrainian” set are clustered separately. Western names occupy the upper third of the page. They are segregated from the bottom (“Ukrainian”) two thirds by the word “Revolution” which is repeated four times across the page and lodged between two black horizontal bars. Below the lower bar stands the word “Moscow” — the only Russian reference in the poem.

Despite an absence of syntax, this work is manifestly “meaningful”. Not only is the lexicon here less subjective and private than it was, say, in “Suprepoeziia” but the spatial positioning acts as a form of substitute “syntax”, a relational code that allows the reader to engage in interpretation and evaluation. Thus, although at first glance “Systema” seems disjointed, closer inspection reveals that this jumble of words functions sensibly. It not only has a “message” but actually succeeds in being polemical, humorous, and self-deprecating.

“Systema” is arranged to be read from the bottom up¹⁴. One infers the merit, quality, and stature of the various items by noting their relative distance from the bottom of

¹⁴ In *Povna zbirka tvoriv*, Vol. 2, “Moia mozaika” received a new set of arrows that pointed upward.

the page: the higher a name, the more importance it carries. Naturally, the value system of this work is avant-gardist. Consequently, Taras Shevchenko and the *Kobzar* occupy the lowermost position. In contrast, Semenko's own *Kobzar* is centrally located. Just above Shevchenko stand the modernists poets (O. Oles', M. Voronyi, and H. Chuprynka) and next to them, in a gesture of self-criticism, Semenko places his first collection, *Prélude*. As the eye travels further up the page, it re-traces a rough chronological history of Futurism, its various theoretical and organizational stages (Kverofuturyzm, Aspanfut), its major publications and personalities. The schemata also include Futurist foes (Dmytro Zahul, Pavlo Tychyna). Semenko even has fun at the expense of a fickle member of his movement, Iakiv Savchenko: by adding the initial of his name to the surname of Zahul, Semenko creates the phrase "Zahulia Savchenko" (i.e. Savchenko will begin to dance)¹⁵. Finally, towering above all this is the word "Panfuturism", the theoretical "system" to which the title alludes.

The visual language of this work seems to suggest that art in the Ukraine has been severed from that of the West by the October revolution. Nonetheless, what prevails is the Panfuturist notion that there can be only a single universal artistic process for both East and West. "Systema" implies as much by containing both phenomena within the body of a single work.

The placement and size of "Moscow" speaks rather loudly about Semenko's politics of culture. The word has a lofty position in the work, but it is small and easily dwarfed by "New York" and "London." By putting it adjacent to the word "revolution", Semenko seems to be assigning Russia a political role, but denies it a role in the Ukraine's cultural process. It is rather striking that not a single Russian avant-garde artist or writer is incorporated into this composition.

The visual experiments we have examined thus far involved poetry. A noteworthy exception to this rule is the novel *Vedmid' poliuiie za sontsem* [*The Bear Hunts the Sun*] by the largely forgotten writer Andrii Chuzhyi¹⁶. Serialized in *Nova generatsiia* during 1927 and 1928, this incomplete novel numbers about forty pages¹⁷. It consists of twelve brief chapters, all with enigmatic titles¹⁸ that foreshadow an equally strange, somewhat surrealistic, prose. A highly fragmented narrative, the novel does not so much have "characters" as effusive "voices". Plot and setting are reduced to a minimum, as an elevated, life-affirming tone prevails.

A large portion of *Vedmid' poliuiie za sontsem* is given over to a description of the narrator's childhood, especially the loving relationship with his mother. Scenes include descriptions of the narrator's own birth, his prenatal consciousness, his learned conversations with the mother (when he is one week old and again when he is 396 days

¹⁵ This visual critique of Savchenko appeared only much later, i.e., in the 1930 edition of "Moia mozaika" (cf. note 11). In the 1924–5 editions, Savchenko ranks low (together with Zahul and Tychyna) but is not yet ridiculed. Semenko's harsher treatment is a reflection of the animosity he felt toward Savchenko, who briefly joined the Futurists (1923) but then turned his back on the group.

¹⁶ For some background on A. Chuzhyi see O. Poltorats'kyi, „Znaiomtesia zanovo," *Vit-chyzna*, No. 12, 1968, pp. 172–181.

¹⁷ *Vedmid' poliuiie za sontsem* appeared in the following issues: No. 3 (1927); No. 3, 4, 7, 10, 11 (1928).

¹⁸ E.g. "Tvorchist' od 13 do 17 misiatsiv, vid beky do olivcia"; "Bat'ko vdrue vchyt'sia khodyty nakarachky"; "Ia ovolodiv tr'oma pal'tsiamy livoi ruky Moskvy".

old). Other episodes focus on his alcoholic father as well as on anti-revolutionary "bandits". Within this context we encounter reflections on class differences, freedom, and liberation. This is rendered in a diffuse, opaque, rhythmic prose that frequently resorts to onomatopoeia. Dialogues sometimes acquire the ritual quality of incantations.

As this incomplete description perhaps suggests, *Vedmid' poliuiie za sontsem* is an anti-mimetic, anti-realistic, consciously "difficult" piece of avant-gardistic prose. Yet this is just one side of its complexity. What sets the novel apart, what gives it unique status both in the Futurist movement and in Ukrainian literature of the Twenties is the liberties Chuzhyi takes with the layout of the text. His is definitely not the average linear prose with its straight horizontal lines and aligned margins. Most of the novel unfolds visually more like poetry than prose: sentences are indented in mid stream, short phrases are centered on the line or aligned to the right margin, groups of words are arranged in step-ladder formation. Nor does it end here. In some parts of the novel, text is employed to create large outline figures on the page (e.g. animals, arrows)¹⁹. Where one expects a rectangular block of text, one gets instead undulating or sharp graphic shapes.

By violating the traditional appearance of the page, Chuzhyi not only compels his reader to navigate a conceptually difficult prose, but he compounds the problem for him by presenting it in a physical form that fails to maximize semantic meaning. To the extent that Chuzhyi's sentences and words are subordinated to the images they are forming, they stop functioning as efficient signifiers. Frequently "meaning" is suspended as the eye roams through blank space searching either for the next line, the logical end of a sentence, or tries to piece together in the mind a word that has been left unnaturally truncated at the outer edge of an image. A novel like this turns "reading" into a completely new and disquieting experience: the knowledgeable consumer of literature becomes virtually a stumbling illiterate.

Some of the images Chuzhyi creates with text extend beyond the boundaries of a single page. Their continuity is vertical, that is, the bottom of an image on one page is logically continued at the top of the next page. The convention of the "bound" page, however, disrupts the continuity. To be truly appreciated, these pages need to be removed from the environment of the journal in which they appeared and joined together to form a seamless scroll. When read thus, the pages of the novel would properly be "unrolled" rather than flipped or turned, thereby revealing the textual image in its entirety. In short, Chuzhyi visual novel forces a re-examination of some of the most basic conventions of both "reading" and "writing".

The scenario was another genre which reached for the expressive powers of typography and page-layout techniques.

In 1928 *Nova generatsiia* published "Dynamo", an eleven-page film script inspired by H. G. Wells' short story, "The Lord of the Dynamos".²⁰ The author, Favst Lopatyns'kyi, was a professional director of theater and film who had become frustrated by the "boring" and "useless" scripts that encroached on his artistic prerogatives with pointless and uninspiring camera directions. To set an example for young screenwriters, Lopatyns'kyi proposed an entirely "new structure for the scenario", one which would

¹⁹ See especially *Nova generatsiia*, No. 7, pp. 22–27.

²⁰ Favst Lopatyns'kyi, *Dynamo* (Asotsiia vid Vel'sovocho "Boh dynamo"). *Kino-stsenarii. Nova generatsiia*, No. 7, 1928, pp. 9–21.

convey “the screenwriter’s emotions directly to the [...] director”. Toward this end he harnessed typography’s physical properties (what Lopatyns’kyi called *faktura*), musical notions (to endow scenes with rhythm), layout, and highlighted words²¹.

Lopatyns’kyi was explicit in stating that “Dynamo” was not a traditional literary work, that he was not interested in the “subtlety of words”. Yet, visually this scenario does give the impression of being free verse. Only closer inspection shows the layout to be much more complex than that of an average poem. Above and beyond the expected pattern of unpredictable line lengths, “Dynamo” exploits an array of symbols and punctuation marks in an unorthodox manner. The text contains equal signs, slurs, braces, arrows, lines, parenthesis, and endless m-dashes. The size and style of print varies frequently; words occur at forty-five degree angles and some are boxed to suggest placards. Although “Dynamo” could conceivably be read as a poem, the graphic organization of the text discourages it: oral interpretation of some signs is nearly impossible and a purely aural apprehension of the work would be quite problematic. To be wholly appreciated, “Dynamo” must be seen.

Lopatyns’kyi employs typography, text, and layout as kind of graphic notion system which tries to create on the page analogues to the language of cinema. His dynamic narrative is entirely biased toward visual action. Text is arranged to suggest the rhythms of a motion picture and to invoke its devices. Words function as equivalents to the shot or scene, they can both describe actions and mimic them. By modifying the physical appearance of a word and its placement on the page, Lopatyns’kyi can suggest certain cinematic attributes, for example, the illusion of a changing (zooming) perspective, of action approaching or receding into the distance:

Пішли...

 Пішли...

 Пішли...

 Пішли...

Other typographical and graphic devices simulate slow motion and simultaneous occurrence of various actions.

This brief survey has tried to show that visual experiments in the Ukrainian Futurist movement were part of a broad attempt to tear down art and genre barriers. Literature (and “writing” in general) was targeted for amalgamation and infusion with properties inherent in other arts. Essentially, this meant returning to the word its materiality, overcoming its predominantly semiotic, symbolic function, transforming “reading” from a scanning for abstract information into a creative activity.

It is apparent that Ukrainian Futurists rarely pursued visual experimentation for its own sake. For the most part, it occurred in conjunction with other types of goals (e.g., destruction of traditional genres, synthesis). Moreover, there is no indication that they wanted to endow their visual works with pure iconic properties, distill from language only the graphic element and elevate it to a position of complete autonomy. Virtually

²¹ F. Lopatyns’kyi, “Druhy lyst do moioho priyatelia — stsenarysta”, *Nova generatsiia*, No. 7, 1928, p. 8. See also F. Lopatyns’kyi, “Lyst do moioho priyatelia — stsenarysta”. *Nova generatsiia*, No. 5, 1928, p. 361–363.

all the visual works remain highly charged semantically and make a strong appeal to an "idea". Semenko clearly assigned an ideological function to poezo-paintings ("It is necessary to embody great liberated thoughts in appropriate form")²². This explains why so many "visual" works are at the same time "narratives". Ideally, Ukrainian Futurists aspired toward a verbal art that would simultaneously communicate on several levels: as sign, as image, and as sound. Chuzhyi, for example, referred to his poems of 1921 as "drawings for the eyes and ears"²³. Characteristically, there is no sharp boundary between an acoustic and a visual poem in the movement: both will be found in a "pure" form, but most works indicate that Futurists preferred to see these elements fused into a greater whole.

²² Myqail' [sic] Semenko [Mykhail' Semenko], "Poezomaliarstvo", *Semafor u maibutnie*. Aparat Panfuturystiv, No. 1 (May), 1922, p. 32.

²³ Cf. Andrii Chuzhyi, *Poezii. Virshi ta poemu* (Kiev: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1980), p. 9.