AVANT-GARDE TOTAL BOOK PROJECT: INTERACTION OF THE VERBAL AND THE VISUAL IN *FOR THE VOICE* BY VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY AND EL LISSITZKY

by

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(Under the Direction of Thomas Cerbu and Alexander Spektor)

ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine the interaction of the verbal and the visual dimension of the "total book," Vladimir Mayakovsky's and El Lissitzky's collaboration *For the Voice*. I posit that the pragmatic effect is foregrounded in the poetic texts and adapted by the illustrations. In doing so, I argue that the book was conceived of as a script for public performance. In the absence of a real performance, the visual interface becomes the context in which a new, virtual performance might be realized in the reader's mind. I demonstrate how this poetic performance incorporates the poetic tendencies and pragmatic intentions of the artistic movement Mayakovsky was involved in and, on the other hand, transforms them into a new aesthetic whole through the mediation of Lissitzky as a representative of International Constructivism.

INDEX WORDS: avant-garde, visual and verbal, total book, Mayakovsky, Lissitzky

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INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The object of the present study is *For the Voice*[1], the book co-produced by Vladimir Mayakovsky and Lazar (El) Lissitzky and published in 1923 in Berlin. The book is a collection of poetry written by Mayakovsky over the course of ten years, with visual design by Lissitzky accompanying the texts.

As a verbo-visual collaboration, this book reveals an obvious connection between the verbal and the visual component of the text. The co-presence of two media prompts the reader to consider the relationship between the text and its visual accompaniment. The question I would like to articulate is this: **How does a literary work exist in the form of a multimedia project, an illustrated book? How is the reading of a verbal text affected when it is incorporated into a verbo-visual collaboration?**

As Lissitzky himself states, the visual did not play a merely subservient part, as we would expect:

> My pages stand in much the same relationship to the poems as an accompanying piano to a violin. Just as the poet in his poem unites concept and sound, I have tried to create an equivalent unity using the poem and typography (Lissitzky 1992, 95).

[1] A facsimile of this book is available at wdl.org (see https://www.wdl.org/en/item/9609/view/1/1/) [Retrieved 03.30.2018]. In this study, we use the bilingual edition published in 2000 by MIT Press when citing the poems and their translations (See Mayakovsky and Lissitzky 2000).

Lissitzky intimates that his job was one of the translator, adaptor of poetry to another "language," namely, a visual language. But what exactly is adapted? We argue that the book was, first and foremost, **a script of a public performance, and it is that particular aspect – the effect of the poem on its audience – that was taken up by Lissitzky as an adaptor.**

The book itself was a result of a public reading that took place in 1922, when Mayakovsky visited the city for the first time. In Vladimir Wolpert's description, the event attracted about a hundred listeners, and the orator switched between "rousing the audience" and reading in a more intimate register: "He would change his voice between loud and soft, and certain parts he shouted" (Wolpert 2000, 34). It can be inferred that Mayakovsky turned the reading of a poem into a public performance (which was typical of him, given a long history of similar performances during his public readings when he was part of the Ego-Futurist group).

Presumably, the book was compiled right after the performance in order to serve as a script for future readings / performances. Lissitzky himself confirms that in 1939:

> We selected thirteen poems. The book was intended for reading aloud. To enable the reader to locate the individual poems quickly, I hit on the idea of using thumb index…A special reading from the book *Dlia golosa* was arranged at the Café Nollendorfplatz. Victor Shklovsky gave the performance. It developed into a truly uproarious evening. (Lissitzky 2000, 35-36).

Hence, *For the Voice* is no ordinary book but rather a typographic product that attempts to recreate and stage the performance by the means of a book as a medium. Moreover, *For the Voice* was not only meant to be used for an actual performance, but also to stage the performance in the mind of the reader, in the absence of a real public reading. As a book, *For the Voice* is supposed to immerse the reader into a performance she can virtually actualize in her head. Thus,

its function is to be a blueprint and an outline that is intended to model an individual experience of being exposed to a vicarious "reading." Hence, as a book, *For the Voice* goes beyond "the text," or a set of verbal signifiers attached to verbal signifieds, into the reality of performance, the reality of the effect the poem brings to its audience.

As it can be inferred, *For the Voice* demonstrates a complex process of adaptation of the verbal text to the visual dimension and presupposes an interaction of these two components. What is adapted, however, is not just the "meaning" of the text, but, rather, its effect, what it makes happen in a public space. How is the effect of the poem adapted by the visual language? What repercussions does it have for the reading of poetry? **Finally – how is a "literary" utterance transformed as a part of the so-called "total book," combining the verbal along with the visual?**

By answering these questions, I would like to begin an investigation of the relationships between different media cultures (visual and verbal) in avant-garde and modernist literary practices. Taking into account the media-specific nature of an artistic collaboration allows us to comprehend more accurately how the avant-garde and modernist movement changed the modes of literary communication.

Avant-Garde / Modernism: Engagement of the Visual

As a book that bring about a performance, *For the Voice* can be situated in a wider context of avant-garde / modernist practices. In various modernist experiments it was common for writing to be performed across different media. Multimediality of artistic experiments enabled the artists "to break down the boundaries between 'world' and 'text,' between the reality out there and the art construct that re-presents it" (Perloff 1986, xvii), turning the poem into "an event, a happening" (Perloff 1986, 11).

The works in questions comprise (but are not limited to) Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés,* Cendrar's *The Prose of the Trans-Siberian,* as well as various products of the Dadaist experiments in Zurich and New York, the Italian Futurist and Russian Futurist movements in the 1910s, as well as the Constructivist projects in 1920s. In all of these experimental works "[t]he media – verbal, visual, musical – are increasingly used in conjunction" (Perloff 1986, 38). Due to the simultaneous use of different media, the reading experience of such works became immersive and performative.

What enabled the modernist writers to blur the distinction between the reality of the text and reality of a "happening" was, ironically, a heightened awareness of the "mediality" of art, resulting in a search for the new use of the medium. Contrary to the wide-spread view that modernist writers sought to emphasize the medium in order to make the language and art non-communicative (see critique: Williams 1989, 33), I would argue exactly the opposite: the media aspect of the literary work was foregrounded so as to transform the artistic communication, to make the text into an event, something that is performed and is communicative inasmuch as its effect is taken into account (see Ioffe 2012).

As Julian Murphet argues, "avant-garde works of literary modernism were deeply aware of themselves as media artefacts" (Murphet 2009, 4). However, those works did not just emphasize the texture of the medium for its own sake, but, as Clement Greenberg argues,

> …[r]ealistic, naturalistic art had dissembled the medium, using art to conceal art; Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitations that constitute the medium of painting – the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of the pigment – were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly

or indirectly. Under Modernism these same limitations came to be regarded as positive factors and were acknowledged openly. (Greenberg 1993, 86-87)

Responding to this, Boris Groys criticizes Greenberg for "ascribing" to Cubism (and, by extension, Modernism) "the discovery of the mediality of a medium" (the translation from Russian is mine (Groys 2003)). However, as Groys elaborates, a modernist author discovers not just the mediality of a medium, but he also appropriates a message of a medium and uses it to particular ends. To a certain extent, modernist writing exploits the affordances of the medium at hand, so that artists rely on the use of media-technological assemblages as prerequisites for their work – in order to integrate the work of art into life, to turn it into a performance (also see Bornstein 2006; Ayers 2013; Stephens 2015; Nieland 2016).

In their performative activity, modernist writers were especially attentive to the impact of and the difference between various intermediaries, such as the typewriter, printing press, and a drawing hand. They accentuated the presence of media in order to cultivate a new "sensuality" (Kittler 1986, 13) and new ways of reception, dependent not only on hand-writing, but on procedures of typing, cutting and pasting, bringing disparate elements together to make a collage. More precisely, modernist writers sought to revolutionize the procedure of writing by integrating technology into it – and, consequently, to revolutionize the process of reading and dealing with a text by presenting a text in an unusual format, which would require a new mode of attention.

The disappearance of the boundary between the text and its various contexts of presentation led to an intensive engagement with the visual elements of textual production. Modernism evinced a particular cultural interest in the expressive possibilities of the visual image as an accompaniment to the word or as its rival.

According to Marjorie Perloff,

> The visual dimension of the text is, not surprisingly, a cornerstone of twentieth-century poetics. From Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés* to Futurist *parole in libertà* and Dada manifesto, to Apollinaire's *calligrammes*, to the verbivocovisual games in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Pound's visually orchestrated *Cantos*, to the Concrete Poetry of mid-century and the centrality of typography, pictorial device, and elaborate page-layout in the work of such contemporaries as Tom Raworth, Johanna Drucker, or Susan Howe, the "look" of the poem has become central to its meaning. (Perloff 2006, 249)

Thus, various modernist experiments comprise "visible words," or typographic experiments, "visual poetry," illustrated texts, collages, constructions. All these works share a common feature: a printed page as a basic unit of text (see Perloff 1986; Andel 2004, 13) replaces conventional units, such as a line, a stanza, etc.

The space of a printed page as a prerequisite for a performance was exploited in many ways. Mallarmé first "substituted dynamic and open typographical composition for the traditional linear structure of text" (Andel 2004, 24), and made text a visible phenomenon, read non-linearly, almost simultaneously, with the meaning being generated by the non-textual matter of spaces and type fonts. Marinetti invented *parole in libertà* by "setting free" the words on the page and foregrounding their role as, first and foremost, visual images, as material entities and typographical artefacts. As Bartram states, in such verbal artifacts "[t]he excitement was created solely by type and type matter" (Bartram 2005, 21), i.e., by the elements that would be considered non-verbal. Parallel experiments in the field of visual poetry led to the emergence of texts existing "simultaneously as poem and picture" (Bohn 1986, 2), such as Apollinaire's

Calligrammes. Visual poems utilize a "dual sign," turning a set of linguistic signs into a visual signifier, read immediately and quasi-simultaneously.

Using the visual along with the verbal, modernist artistic production attempted to reach simultaneity and immediacy of perception by making the meaning easily accessible, almost "natural," not arbitrary and conventional, comprehensible to everyone, *happening* in the process of reception. This, in turn, fostered "the idea of communication across national, cultural, and linguistic barriers" (Andel 2004, 21), "creat[ing]…a new accessible language" (Bartram 2005, 20), unmediated, as it were, and needing no translation. The visual dimension, being an environment in which a verbal text thrives, played the key role in the process of shaping meaning as a performative event.

The Evolution of the Avant-Garde Book in Russia

Not unlike their French and American counterparts, Russian Modernists displayed a preoccupation with the work of art as a performative act, stressing "mediality" of writing process and integrating media technologies into it. As a consequence, this focus on performative aspects of the work also led to the valorization of the visual element of the text.

Russian avant-garde movements (such as Cubo-Futurism, for instance) are represented by a series of verbo-visual productions, *livres d'artiste,* or Futurist books of the 1910s, as well as Constructivist book projects of the 1920s. These works manifested a strong performative charge that meant to turn text into an event. Nevertheless, these book projects differed in their goal. Futurist book productions aimed at destroying the canon and destabilizing the field of "art as an ordered, homogeneous system" (Gurianova 2015), and can be understood as subversive attacks on cultural ideology (coming from the "underground," as it were). Constructivist books, on the contrary, served as an official vehicle of social change and were supposed to actively implement

a new artistic and social ideology of the new Soviet state. This distinction accounts for a number of differences between them, especially in the engagement of the visual element. It is essential that all these texts do not conform to a single unified model but exist in a relationship of "family resemblance." All the authors engage with the visual element of the book, albeit in a different way.

The Futurist book productions include *Old-Fashioned Love, Worldbackwards, Pomade, Forest Boom, Explodity* by Kruchenykh, *A Game in Hell* by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov, *Transrational Boog* by Kruchenykh and Aliagrov (pseudonym of Roman Jakobson), *Tango with Cows* by Kamensky, *Yanko king of albania, Dunkee for Rent, lidantYU azabEEkan* by Zdanevich etc. (see Janecek 1984). All of these were published in a short period from 1912 till 1920. These books were meant primarily as "a reaction against" the symbolists' book and magazine culture, with its emphasis on a visual portrayal of "suggestive meanings that could not be paraphrased in prose" (Perloff 2016, 61). Unlike the lavishly designed symbolists' books and magazines, the Futurist books were often printed on rough wallpaper and exhibited a distinct "texture" of the material, stressed a particular material quality, attracted the reader's attention to its form.

Some of the Futurist books, such as Kamensky's *Tango with Cows*, capitalized on tendencies inherent to visual poetry. In his "ferroconcrete" (*zhelezobetonny*) poems, Kamensky comes close to creating "figure poems," or poems that possess a pictorial dimension, an iconic representation of what they refer to. However, as Gerald Janecek observes, in these poems, "the shape reflects not some object but rather the process," be it an airplane takeoff or wandering down the streets of Istanbul, etc. Nevertheless, the appearance of the poem in the book intentionally resembled a painting: "the reader is free to read the poem in any order he chooses, letting his eye wander over the page as if examining a painting" (Bartram 2005, 32). In *Tango*

with Cows, the visual image is superimposed on the verbal structures, and the meaning emerges out of the interaction between the verbal and iconic.

The books collaborated on by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov visually demonstrated a metonymical, indexical link between the word and the act of its creation. In them, the artists reproduced their handwriting through lithography and made the look of the word, the way it was written by hand, essential for its meaning. In their manifesto *Letter as Such* (1913) Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov asserted that "the handwriting, idiosyncratically influenced by mood, conveys this mood to the reader independently of words" (Janecek 1984, 90). For instance, visible curves of a written word might render the mood and the emotional state in which the poem was conceived, etc. The reproduction of handwriting allows a communication of the emotion not only through words, but through the way they are displayed on the page.

The same goal was set by those who experimented with typography (Zdanevich, for example): exploring the visual potential of different type fonts, they aimed "to create a directly expressive language of emotion" (Bartram 2005, 49). Zdanevich used purely typographical devices as a means of language transcription, i.e., as a means of fixing emotional, intonational meanings, and other additional nuances of a spoken word. As Bartram puts it, "[t]heoretically intended for recitation, typography has got the better of the vocal form" (Bartram 2005, 49).

The Futurist books underscored their material and media dimension, evoked by rough "textures," foregrounded techniques and technologies of writing (writing by hand, type-setting, making visual poems). For that reason, these books were also turned into "happenings," "events" of reading. Word as "the main event of art" (Gurianova 2015) seemed to be deinstrumentalized and turned into an object of aesthetic contemplation. The visual word no longer allegedly served as a means of communication – on the contrary, it purportedly exhibited, almost boasted, its

intransitivity and lack of transparency. In Gurianova's phrasing, "we can define the Futurist book as nothing less than a book in its aesthetic function: a book that loses its instrumental 'usefulness' — its communicative function—and acquires the self-sufficiency of an autonomous work of art" (Gurianova 2015). Nevertheless, I would argue that making a word non-transparent and non-communicative was not a final intention of the Futurist book production. Rather, it can be more accurately defined as turning a communication failure into a specific mode of communication, subversive and opposed to a "normal" communicative interchange, conventional and easily comprehensible. The visual element of the book was deployed to make the communication more difficult, to accentuate the texture of the medium, but at the same time in order to make the communication possible between those sympathetic with the Futurist movement and perhaps belonging to the group.

Unlike the Futurist books, Constructivist books possessed a different communicative intention and a different function. Constructivists declared the primacy of utilitarian art products: the new Soviet society needed works of art that would also be functional and conducive to establishing a new social order. The old ideal of an intransitive and incommunicable word and, consequently, of art as such, with Constructivists fell out of favor and was abandoned.

The functional differences between Futurists' book productions and Constructivist books are easy to notice. "Futurist books were unconventionally small, and whether or not they were made by hand, they deliberately emphasized a handmade quality" (Rowell 2002, 50); the Constructivist book productions were mass-produced and printed in greater numbers, abandoning "hand-done techniques" in favor of "mechanical processes" (Compton 1993, 12). Futurists' collaborations were meant to promote individual visions and "were…designed to

transmit a subversive message," Constructivist books, on the contrary, were praised as a "vehicle of a collective ideology," and were "anonymous in style and societal in purpose" (Rowell 2002, 51).

As a result, Constructivist books differed radically from their predecessors in terms of the visual accompaniment of the words, "show[ing] an attempt to establish and propagate a standardized, rational, visual language, considered more appropriate to sociopolitical preoccupations" (Rowell 2002, 51). In general, Constructivists designed books with an eye to making them functional (Andel 2004, 158), but nevertheless relied heavily on the visual accompaniment of the words since it helped communicate the information more easily. The illustrations and other visual additions to the text proper were regarded from the point of view of functional expediency and societal purpose.

Lissitzky's Book

Lissitzky's and Mayakovsky's book occupies a unique position with regards to both Futurist and Constructivist book projects. On the one hand, Lissitzky designed the book with a Constructivist pragmatic intention in mind, namely, with an eye to making it functional, "useful" as an art object (to achieve this, Lissitzky even hit upon the idea of "thumb index," enabling the reader to locate the poem more quickly). Nevertheless, it still bears traces of the Futurist artistic experiments with the materiality of the medium, as the book transcends its utilitarian purpose and is also aesthetically pleasing. In other words, while it heralds the utilitarian aesthetics of a Constructivist work, it also diverges from a Constructivist doctrine, being reminiscent of Futurist projects.

Our argument consists in treating *For the Voice* as a visual interface for a virtual poetic performance of the "voice," rendered by visual means, serving not only a utilitarian function, but

also attuning the reader to the poetic texture of the "spoken" word. In other words, we insist that the visual component of the text picks up not only on the text's semantics, but also on its *pragmatics*, i.e. what it intended to *do*, as opposed to what it *means*, as it strives to affect the social space.

Broadly speaking, pragmatics, as a discipline, studies "the relation of signs to interpreters" (Morris 1938, 6), and focuses not on meanings that are pre-given semantically, but on those that are inferential, communicated through "implicatures" and actualized by the recipient of an utterance in a particular context in the process of communication (see Grice 1967; Levinson 1983; Sperber and Wilson 1995). In other words, meanings – or, rather, effects – are seen as context- and recipient-dependent. What is of interest to us, then, is a particular *effect* the book intended to produce, the meaning that arises in the specific context of communication.

The pragmatic orientation of the avant-garde has been explored by numerous scholars. By drawing on Bakhtin-Medvedev's theory of "communicative ideology," "refracted" (not reflected) by a work of art (see Medvedev 1978), they argue that the stress on a pragmatic impact was especially pronounced in the communicative ideology of the Russian avant-garde. As M.I. Shapir stresses,

> …in [Russian, but not exclusively – A.S.] avant-garde art *pragmatics is foregrounded.* The ability of art to act becomes the most important factor – the art is called upon to impress, shock out of complacency, elicit an active reaction from a stranger. It is desirable that this reaction be immediate, knee-jerk and running contrary to a long and focused contemplation of aesthetic form and contents. (Shapir 1995, 136. Translation from Russian is mine).

Drawing on Shapir's conception of primacy of pragmatics, Vladimir Feshchenko argues that at stake here is not only the "pragmatics of the recipient," but also "the pragmatics of the

speaker," not only the ultimate effect produced on the audience but the artistic gesture, intended to produce an effect (Feshchenko 2010, 335). To put it in different terms, we should pay attention not only to the actual reactions of the recipients (in case we have any), but to the implied pragmatic intention, communicated in the gesture the artist performs.

Along these lines, Denis Ioffe also highlights the importance of what he calls an inaugurating gesture in Russian avant-garde practices. According to him, a gesture cannot be used as a means of establishing a conventional code for a transmission of pre-given meanings, but, on the contrary, generates new meanings. The basic intention behind the gesture is, first and foremost, to shock the audience, to produce an effect upon it, and to create a new signifying system through a performative activity (Ioffe 2012).

Therefore, I will focus on the pragmatics of gesture initiated by the speaker and translated to a visual dimension, with the social effect being *implied*, not actually staged, since (in Mansbach's testimony) "*For the Voice* never reached the ears of its intended audience" (Mansbach 2000, 174), Russian and international, at least in Mayakovsky's lifetime. In a sense, the book became an unperformed performance, an attempt to promote avant-garde poetics that did not work. Nevertheless, this book still was a social act, a gesture meant to be performed in public with a particular pragmatic intention, which resulted in a particular use of the visual element along with the verbal.

Several scholars similarly approach *For the Voice* as an example of visual translation, but not all of them have defined the procedure of translation as a performative activity picking up on the pragmatic effect of the poem, not only on its semantic meaning. For instance, *For the Voice* is oftentimes read as a translation of social agenda, or a set of ideas, or simply textual "meaning." Thus, Martha Scotford argues that *For the Voice* relies on visual translation as a mode of

communication motivated by the necessity to convey ideas to "a largely illiterate" Russian populace (or an international audience of non-Russian speakers), which prompted constructivist designers to "present ideas…visually" (Scotford 1988, 198). New socialist ideology was represented by the means of a universally recognized expressive language, "written with a different set of symbols" (Scotford 1988, 200). Perloff also comments on the unique case of *For the Voice* as a means of "teaching poetry in translation," since it offers an easily comprehensible, almost universally acknowledged – or acknowledged with a minimal application of effort – "visual counterpart" (Perloff 2010, 105) of the textual semantic meaning. However, what is implied here is that the visual translation mostly deals with the contents, or with what the poem means, not with what it does.

Other scholars contend that the other function of visual translation in *For the Voice* is to communicate the emotional, expressive content of the poems. They argue that the visual translation of the text is needed in order to adapt the effect of the poem. Hence, in Stephen Mansbach's claim, visual design was meant to "motivate the reader to a level of emotional agitation, so that he would be prompted to read the poetry aloud and thereby spread the revolutionary content" (Mansbach 1978, 52). Alan Birnholz even suggests that what has been translated is the *effect* produced by the poems. In his view, what is translated visually is the oral quality of the voice and its emotional import, non-graspable by the verbal code: "[T]he size, color and organization of letters change both to make the book more interesting visually and to push the reader beyond reading silently to himself and toward declaiming in public. One does not just read these poems, one speaks them out loud and, when the typography suggests, begins to shout as well" (Birnholz 1980, 99). Along these lines, Barry Seldes states that in his visual translation Lissitzky attempts to render visually the act of "violating the field," breaking the

common frameworks of signification, thus performing a gesture inherent to Mayakovsky's poetry. In order to do this, the artist relies on a quasi-cinematic embodiment of a verbal text, in which a visual "ideogram" might be read as a simultaneous representation of several "shots." To put it in different terms, Lissitzky provides us with a visual summary of the *event* enacted in the poem: "Whereas Mayakovsky's poem deals with the titanic struggle against *byt* [everyday grind – A.S.], Lissitzky's…[ideograms – A.S.] more clearly demonstrate the results and the expected gains from such struggles. Mayakovsky's declarative sentences tell of mighty deeds; Lissitzky's sequences record victories" (Seldes 2000, 149).

Research Objectives

Having proposed a historical framework and having done a brief survey of the works in the field, our **objective** now will be to describe the pragmatic function and the poetics of verbal and visual components in *For the Voice* as well as to describe the pragmatics of their interaction. In order to reach that goal, I will

- offer a description of wider poetic and discursive frameworks in which the book appeared,
- analyze the text of the poems in the book,
- analyze the book's visual elements.

CHAPTER 2

DIFFERENT CULTURAL POETICS IN *FOR THE VOICE*

For the Voice includes poems written by Mayakovsky over the course of ten years. Hence, the poems exhibit particular poetic tendencies shaped by Mayakovsky's involvement in various literary movements. These tendencies include futurist poetics and constructivist aesthetics that followed in its wake. However, the book does not simply reflect those poetic strategies, but rather "refracts" (to use Medvedev's term) them and re-arranges the old material into a new aesthetic whole, spawning a new communicative ideology. The creation of the new aesthetic ideology – and a new pragmatic intention – is achieved through the use of a new form, namely, a bioscopic book, invented by Lissitzky as a result of his revision of Constructivist aesthetics.

However, before we delve into the analysis of the book proper, it is important that we give an account of the poetics that Mayakovsky used and then transition to the "refracting" prism, namely, Lissitzky's vision of Constructivism and Constructivist book projects. It is needed in order to account for pragmatic intentions in the texts of *For the Voice*, which is based on the poet's exposure to various movements and their aesthetics.

Cubo-Futurism: Poetics

Mayakovsky started off as a poet in Moscow where he joined the so called Cubo-Futurist movement. To characterize Cubo-Futurism as a movement, it is important to stress that the group's artistic activities were mostly informal and voluntary, and, in the majority of cases, lacked institutional support and official recognition. Cubo-Futurists preferred to exist on the

margins of the field of literature as a system, fiercely opposing "official" literary institutes. In their manifesto opening "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste", futurists unambiguously expressed their disdain for "official" literary culture:

> Wash Your hands which have touched the filthy slime of the books written by those countless Leonid Andreyevs.
>
> All those Maxim Gorkys, Kuprins, Bloks, Sologubs, Remisovs, Averchenkos…need only a dacha on the river…From the height of skyscrapers we gaze at their insignificance! (Burliuk et al.1988, 51)

In other words, the futurists "mocked and rejected the most sacred cultural figures" (Ioffe, White 2012, 13) of Russian literature, and refused to be a part of that recognized culture. Their goal was to shock and provoke the mass readership, which they considered complacent and idle. Their nihilistic revolt was directed against the official and recognized institutional frameworks in the field of literature, against "literary tradition and society" (Barooshian 1974, 108), its "culture, aesthetic canons" (Barooshian 1974, 109), and its "spiritual and social ambience" (Poggioli 1968, 53; qtd in Barooshian 1974, 108).

Futurism avoided institutionalization, instead being a vehicle of a non-institutional, purely negative impulse. Consequently, the movement lacked organization and programmatic coherence. According to Vahan Barooshian, one cannot see Cubo-Futurism as a "unified movement" since the poetics espoused by the practitioners of futurism were oftentimes markedly different. While Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov experimented with transrational language, i.e., with suggestive neologisms, Mayakovsky was more inclined to explore the theme of urbanism and use metaphorically vivid, yet still more standard, language. In the words of one of the Cubo-Futurists, Benedikt Livshits, the only common aspect that united the group was that in this

"stream of heterogeneous and diversely oriented minds" everyone shared "*the unity of negative goals*" (Livshits 1933, 282; qtd in Barooshian 1974, 108).

As a result, Cubo-Futurist activities partook of that informal, "diversely oriented" and negatively charged spirit. Cubo-Futurist books were published on rough wallpaper due to a lack of supplies (see Compton 1993), but also out of the desire to provoke bourgeois tastes. Futurist poetry readings and public lectures were characterized by scandals, as members of the group enjoyed shocking the audience with bright clothes, dousing first rows with tea dregs, directly addressing the audience in a derogatory manner, etc. (Lawton 1988, 16).

In an attempt to reject the conventional significations and oppose the official art, futurists often emphasized the concept of the "word as such," without, however, making it part of a positive program. "Word as such" meant a close attention to "sound patterning, to phonemic play, punning, rhythmic recurrence, rhyme" (Perloff 1984, 76), as Marjorie Perloff rephrases it, or focus on the language-centered practices of writing, foregrounding the texture of the signifier. Broadly speaking, stress on the word as such can also be interpreted as a negation of one of the staples of artistic communication. The futurists, as Anna Lawton summarizes, "proposed to treat the poetic word as an object in itself devoid of any referent" (Lawton 1988, 11). The Cubo-Futurists rejected the traditional model of artistic communication, relying on the primacy of conventional verbal codes, in which the word is meant to transmit cultural meanings. They negated the conventional idea of a word as a transparent conductor of meaning.

By making the link between the word and referent problematic, Cubo-Futurists shifted emphasis on the signifier's material, visual and acoustic aspects, as well as on its media-specific texture. The materiality, "palpability" (Lawton 1988, 14) of a word was exploited across the representation of the word in different media. Cubo-Futurists insisted on what Victor Shklovsky

called “deautomatization,” estrangement of perception. Deautomatized, “impeded” perception, unable to use familiar routes, enables us to “recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony” (Shklovsky 1965, 12). For Shklovsky, our goal is not to recognize objects, but to “experience” them, learning about them for the first time, as it were, through our perception of them. As Shklovsky argues, “[t]he technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object” (Shklovsky 1965, 12).

Similarly, one of the Cubo-Futurists’ main accomplishments consisted in awaking the artist and his audience to the materiality of the medium and its affordances. They demonstrated that the work of art is an object made and produced in a specific way. Despite their negative orientation or rather because of it, Cubo-Futurists closely attended to the operations involved in the production of a work of art and were implicitly interested in productive possibilities and affordances that the texture of the medium has opened up.

Constructivism: Poetics

After the events of 1917 the situation in the field of art changed dramatically, with a new course towards the political engagement of literature, and Mayakovsky was one of the first to embrace it. The increasingly political orientation of art led to the emergence of Constructivism as a movement in 1920.

Constructivism as a movement began in the circles of artists and painters, some of whom were previous members of the Cubo-Futurist movement. The new movement’s agenda was

devised and debated in INKhUK[2], and it led to the focus on art as production with the emphasis put on art's utilitarian purposes. Unlike the Cubo-Futurists, who displayed a pronounced lack of a positive vision, Constructivists worked in close groups, possessing a positive theoretical and practical program, a course of action, and a plan of individual and group activities. The program espoused by the members of the Constructivist working group, OBMOKhU[3], consisted, first and foremost, in the production of utilitarian objects as opposed to works of "pure" art. The group's program, formulated by one of the main Constructivist theorists, Alexei Gan, proclaimed "death to art" (i.e. to non-utilitarian art, such as easel painting) (Gan 1974, 35), and stressed "artistic labor" (Gan 1974, 36) in industrial environment that would lead to the awareness of the specific texture of the "material" and a formal construction of objects, having applications in real life.

As a consequence, constructivist artists preferred the engagement of the material aspect of the work of art, so-called "texture," over its "idea". As Christina Lodder puts it, Constructivism championed "an approach to working with materials, within a certain conception of their potential as active participants in the process of social and political transformation" (Lodder 1983, 1). Art was conceived of not as a creative process of a solitary genius, but as a form of collective labor, aimed towards the creation of real, tangible objects, endowed with practical value and possessing practical applications. As Lodder puts it, the constructivist "sought to develop a new form of creative activity, one that would fuse utilitarian, ideological, and formal objectives" (Lodder 2003, 27).

[2] Institut Khudozhestvennoi Kultury, Institute of Art Culture. That organization provided an institutional basis for the emergence of concerted artistic groups, spawning Constructivist ideology. See (Kiaer 2005; Gough 2005).

[3] Obshchestvo molodykh khudozhnikov, The Society of Young Artists. They had a series of exhibitions and were the first institutional organization, within which Constructivism was born as a movement.

Constructivism is the next step after Cubo-Futurism in the wake of radical formal experiments in art. Bold innovations initiated by the Cubo-Futurists and artists from Cubo-Futurists circles alerted the artists to the materiality of the medium, to its texture and its "constructedness." As Boris Arvatov, one of the contemporary leading theorists of Constructivism, states,

> Artists gradually adopted abstract painting, withdrawing into the study and construction of painterly materials…The most important thing about this is that the artist began to regard the picture not as a space for the illusional transmission of objects, but as a practical object…In other words, the artist became an organizer of elemental activity…The artists began to show interest in the surface of the picture, its materials (Arvatov 1974, 45).

Nevertheless, Constructivists in general maintained a skeptical relationship towards other "modern" trends in visual arts, considering them as outlived and belonging to the past rather than to the future. As Gan asserted, "[t]he suprematists [original spelling – A.S.], abstractionists, and 'nonideaists' came nearer and nearer to the pure mastery of the artistic labor of intellectual-material production, but they did not manage to sever the umbilical cord that still held and joined them to the traditional art of the Old Believers." As it can be seen, Constructivists preferred to build their doctrine on certain accomplishments of the abstract art, but at the same time they tended to reject the values of such art. Malevich's 1919 studio in VKhUTEMAS[4] was an extremely short-lived project – in a year he broke with that institution and moved to Vitebsk to set up UNOVIS[5]. Kandinskii, another great artist and champion of abstract painting, left INKhUK in 1920, proving to be "irksome" for his fellows and later left Russia for good, joining

[4] Vysshiye Khudozhestvenno-Tekhnicheskiye Masterskiye, Higher Art and Technical Studios.

[5] Utverditeli Novogo Iskusstva, Champions of the New Art.

Bauhaus and feeling himself not understood by his Russian peers, "shunned…ignored or condemned by the leftist critics," ideologists of Constructivism, such as "Boris Arvatov, Gan, and Punin" (Bowlt 1981, 217). It is tempting to say that these artists rejected Constructivism, but it seems more likely to be the case that Constructivism rejected them and forced them into cultural and political exile.

As such, Moscow Constructivism moved "into a range of more directly practical areas of production that embraced agitational projects, typographical layouts, graphic work, three-dimensional design, and architecture" (Lodder 2003, 28). The artists were considered to be "craftsmen" and "technicians" rather than creators (Lodder 1983, 76). Often, as Lodder informs us, in order "to emphasize the collective nature of their creativity and organization and to stress their rejection of individualism all the works exhibited [by the Constructivists] were anonymous" (Lodder 1983, 69). Paintings, sculptures, and numerous types of texts were regarded as obsolete since they did not have a direct practical use. Art was considered to be a form of labor and organization targeted at mass production of objects of everyday life. Pure and abstract forms of modern painting were considered to be insufficient by the Constructivists. In other words, the Constructivists consciously blurred the line between art and life, pushing art to be indistinguishable from everyday "life" both in its means of expression and in its message.

International Constructivism

Constructivism's expansion beyond Russia westwards was associated with Lissitzky's activity in Berlin as a cultural emissary, whose primary goal was to advocate a Constructivist / Soviet approach to art and export Constructivism to the West. However, Lissitzky was not an ardent supporter of the vision informed by INKhUK debates. Rather, there existed an implicit tension between him and his Moscow-based colleagues. Despite his brief exposure to Moscow

Constructivism in 1920, Lissitzky remained devoted to the cause of Suprematism as a movement (Lodder 2003, 28). Malevich, to whom Lissitzky was heavily indebted, experimented with the new type of picture, composed of a white surface, representing "an infinite space," and "two-dimensional elements" floating in that space (Khan-Magomedov 1990, 38). However, Suprematism was not confined to paintings: it tried to spread into other spheres of applied art. As Selim Khan-Magomedov writes, "[w]hat Malevich had in mind was a two-dimensional suprematist adornment of real objects – and that is how Suprematism embarked on its mission to conquer the real world. Not just objects were painted, even the houses and streetcars in Vitebsk were painted" [6] (Khan-Magomedov 1990, 38). From the picture, in which the flat elements floated in the infinite space, the artists attempted to transition to a work of art deeply embedded in the real world. Nevertheless, the transition did not occur "by going from…two-dimensional [object – A.S.] to three-dimensional, but by breaking through the frame of the painting…" (Khan-Magomedov 1990, 38). According to Khan-Magomedov,

> Malevich expanded, so to speak, the space in which the white elements floated into the infinite. But the space was essentially imaginary: any white…plane became an infinite space for the two-dimensional suprematist elements. They [the Suprematists – A.S.] left the painting and went into the world of objects, but they did not…enter the real space, but an imaginary space that could be formed by the surface of random objects. The expansion did not begin with the conversion of two-dimensional to three-dimensional elements. Instead, it involved the transfer of two-dimensional real elements from the canvas onto real objects (Khan-Magomedov 1990, 38).

[6] Basically, what is implied here is that at that stage Suprematist art consisted not in painting abstract figures on the canvas, but painting on real objects.

As a result, UNOVIS made a step towards applied design and the production of "forms" that remained, however, tied to abstract art. "Solid objects were produced, such as interiors, ceramics and the like, and were painted, but planeness ruled in both the image as well as the solid forms" (Khan-Magomedov 1990, 42). In other words, the new forms, embodied by real objects, did not rule out the decorative, suprematist elements; instead, real objects became the background for a suprematist picture.

The commitment to UNOVIS Suprematism is explicitly stated by Lissitzky. In his 1922 lecture, given in Berlin and titled *The New Russian Art*, Lissitzky says:

> Now comes the period of construction…Two groups claimed constructivism [original spelling – A.S.], the Obmokhu…and the Unovis…[original spelling – A.S.] The former group worked in material and space, the latter in material and a plane. Both strove to attain the same result, namely the creation of the real object and of architecture. They are opposed to each other in their concepts of practicality and utility of created things. Some members of the Obmokhu…went as far as a complete disavowal of art and in their urge to be inventors, devoted their energies to pure technology. Unovis distinguished between the concept of functionality, meaning the necessity for the creation of new forms, and the question of direct serviceableness…The new form gives birth to other forms which are totally functional. (Lissitzky 1992, 336)

It seems highly unlikely that UNOVIS was the immediate source of Constructivism. According to Lodder, "Lissitzky seems to have been trying to justify his own appropriation of the term by providing that with a UNOVIS lineage" (Lodder 2003, 32). Thus, Lissitzky's vision of Constructivism as a movement was not circumscribed only by the members of INKhUK and does not come down to the production of solely utilitarian objects. For Lissitzky, as Lodder

argues, "[c]rude emphasis on technology and utility" (Lodder 2003, 29) does not rule out artistic activity of an individual within a group. On the contrary, it is the individuals who unite into groups and create new forms in art, communicating with their environment but not losing their individuality. The new forms are "functional," as they form a balanced and dynamic composition. They must not, however, be necessarily "serviceable," or directly applicable to real life. Rather, a new form suggests a new principle and opens up a new perspective on life or a new vision. Out of the new principle of artistic form and on its basis, directly serviceable objects emerge.

As a result, Lissitzky put forward his own vision of Constructivism, making it the basis upon which Constructivism as an international movement was founded. Lissitzky formulates the new outlook and the new doctrine of Constructivism in his manifesto *Die Blockade Russlands geht ihrem Ende entgegen / Le blocus de la Russie touche à sa fin / Blokada Rossii konchaetsya*, co-written with Ilya Ehrenburg, that opened the first issue of their journal *Veščʹ – Gegenstand – Objet.* In the article, Lissitzky and Ehrenburg define the program of their journal and promote it as an outlet for the new art. Both reject futurist and Dadaist art, considering it to be "negative," lacking a transformative program. In its stead, Lissitzky proposes "the constructive method" (Lissitzky 1992, 340). the goal of which is "the creation of new 'objects' " (Lissitzky 1992, 340). "Object, - states Lissitzky, - will champion constructive art, whose mission is not…to embellish life but to organize it" (Lissitzky 1992, 340). Significantly, pure utilitarianism and stress on mass production is altogether foreign to their program:

> Naturally, it is our opinion that useful objects produced in the factories – airplanes, perhaps, or automobiles – are also the products of true art; but we do not wish to see artistic creation restricted to these useful objects alone. Every organized piece of work – whether it

> be a house, a poem, a painting – is a practical 'object,' not intended to estrange people from life, but on the contrary to call upon them to take part in its organization. Thus, we have nothing in common with those poets who announce in verse that they will not write any more verse, or painters who use the picture as a means of publicizing their renunciation of painting. Basic utilitarianism is far from our thoughts. 'Object' regards poetry, plastic form, drama, as essential 'objects' (Lissitzky 1992, 340-341).

Expectedly, the promotion of Constructivism and its transmission in the international artistic circles in Berlin was not unmediated. Despite some similarities the dogma of Moscow constructivists underwent a significant revision. The similarities and differences between Moscow and Berlin versions of Constructivism became especially pronounced with the adoption of Constructivism by international environment, fostered and facilitated by Lissitzky through the publication of his programmatic articles in Berlin.

In late May 1922, Lissitzky and Ehrenburg participated in the International Congress of Progressive Artists in Düsseldorf (Kongress der Internationale fortschrittlicher Künstler) and, in collaboration with Hans Arp, Theo van Doesburg and Hans Richter, established the International fraction of Constructivists (Internationale Fraktion der Konstruktivisten). The newly-founded group, consisting mostly of the representative of *De Stijl* and *Veščʼ – Gegenstand – Objet*, presented several statements that summarized the program of "International Constructivism."

Like their Moscow colleagues, international constructivists renounced "the old subjective and the mystical conception of the world" in favor of an "objective basis" (Lissitzky and Ehrenburg 1974, 63). Rejecting art for art's sake in favor of art that has social implications, they sought to organize artistic production similar to the work of "engineers, scholars and workers"

(Lissitzky and Ehrenburg 1974, 63), an approach that implies a certain accessibility and approachability by those who do not belong to the "boheme" and possess specific education.

This, however, does not mean that the new art was supposed to be purely utilitarian and "serviceable" as it relinquishes artistic activities, such as creative writing or abstract drawing, altogether. Rather, the new art must foreground its social function, without ceasing to be art and remaining distinguishable from life. The means of expression still possess a distinct aesthetic and artistic quality, with the message being adapted to the demands of social life. This constitutes an important difference between the work of Moscow constructivists and the international fraction of constructivists. In fact, International Constructivism appears to be closer to Cubo-Futurism in its aesthetic quest, also expressing a strong interest in the materiality of the medium and its artistic dimension, although International Constructivism obviously does not share Cubo-Futurist "negative goals."

The most obvious difference between the two branches of the movement can be most easily observed in their productions. While Russians focused on producing utilitarian objects (agitation posters, textiles, buildings, etc.), their Western counterparts produced art objects that were supposed to change people's view on life. Groups associated with *De Stijl* and Hans Richter's journal *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung* (it emerged in the wake of *Ješč' – Gegenstand – Objet*, which had only two issues printed) were focused on the design of forms as an artistic activity.

Importantly, the term "Constructivism" was used by the Western artists as a label under which they promoted new art, focused on the materiality and manipulation of the medium. It was not a well-concerted movement, nor was it a school, as opposed to Russian Constructivism (see

Mertins and Jennings 2010). In Hans Richter's testimony of 1924, the term was borrowed simply to be filled in by completely different meanings:

> The word "constructivism" [original spelling – A.S.] originated in Russia. It refers to art that uses modern construction materials…At the congress in Düsseldorf in May 1920 (in fact, that happened in 1922 – A.S.), the name constructivism was adopted in a broader sense by Doesburg, Lissitzky, and me, as the opposition...At that time, the name constructivism was taken up as a watchword of those who sought rules for artistic expression and meaningful contemporary projects…Meanwhile, the art market…has adopted the name; and the individualists, the dealmakers, the oil-painters, the decorativists – all the speculators – now march under the name constructivism. (Richter 2010, 174)

As a result, Western Constructivism differed from its Moscow counterpart in terms of its programs and agendas. Lissitzky, in fact, was closer to the former. Moscow Constructivism embraced orientation towards the production of utilitarian objects, with a close focus on texture and specificity of the materials, opened up by avant-garde art. The distinction between art as a production and the production of objects needed for life was discarded. International Constructivism was less intent on eradicating art as an activity: rather, it insisted on the redefinition of the relationship between art and the real world. The distinction between art and life still remained, in the sense that art was seen a separate activity of producing new forms, and only then giving birth to the new, purely utilitarian inventions.

Lissitzky's Projects: Towards the New Book

As an "International Constructivist," Lissitzky was primarily interested in transforming the viewer's "readerly" habits and patterns and in blurring the boundary between the space of the picture and the space of the real world. Therefore, it can be asserted that he worked, first and

foremost, on the level of pragmatic effect. His art projects possessed a strong pragmatic orientation, aiming at engaging the viewer / reader, making him interact with the work of art.

This intention goes back to UNOVIS times. Malevich's experiments bore heavily on Lissitzky's development as an artist. Prompted by Malevich, Lissitzky started to work on what he called Prouns[7] and complied a portfolio of "proun"-pictures. Prouns were the necessary stage in "accelerating the process of developing three-dimensional Suprematism" (Khan-Magomedov 1990, 42). They were "axonometric projections of assorted kinds of geometric forms in equilibrium, sometimes resting on a firm base, sometimes floating…in a cosmic space" (Khan-Magomedov 1990, 42). What is important about seemingly "flat" Prouns is that they were outlines and blueprints for new spatial constructions, such as buildings. In Lissitzky's view (which he fully articulated later in 1923 in *De Stijl* in the article *Proun – nicht Weltvision, sondern Weltrealität*) Proun is "the interchange station between painting and architecture" (Lissitzky 1992, 21). One of the Prouns was called *The Town* and implicitly served as an architectural blueprint. As Lissitzky wrote to Malevich in 1919, "[o]n such a foundation ["a new communist foundation" – A.S.] – thanks to the Prouns – monolithic communist towns will be built, in which the inhabitants of the world will live" (Lissitzky 1992, 21).

Prouns were a half-way house between Suprematism and Constructivism that Lissitzky partly embraced, and later revised and reinterpreted. In September 1921, Lissitzky delivered a lecture at INKhUK, in which he elaborated on the Suprematist program and the goal of Prouns. Suprematism, in his view, suggested a new conception of space, through which the viewer was able to change his view of the real space ("we take [the viewer – A.S.] via the canvas into the real space" (Forgácz 2006, 56)), while the Prouns were a logical continuation and extension of

[7] Prounen; Proekty utverzhdenia novogo, Projects for affirming the new.

the Suprematist vision. While Suprematist heritage was mostly presented by paintings and framed objects that only suggested space beyond the picture, the Prouns actually led the viewer "beyond the image into the real space," indicating the "pure way of action" and used "color" as "materialized energy" (Forgácz 2006, 56). In Lissitzky's definition, Prouns were "no longer pictorial" but "like a geographical map, like a design" (Forgácz 2006, 57). Ultimately, "Proun painting were models that could relate to material reality in much the same way that architectural models made of paper, rods, and canvas related to real structures" (Forgácz 2006, 56).

In Prouns, Lissitzky explicitly manifested his interest in the staging of two-dimensional objects in three-dimensional space. Earlier, in Vitebsk, this interest led him to participate in the process of decorating along with Malevich and other UNOVIS members puppet figures for the staging of the futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun*. Both Proun paintings and drawings-sketches for the play were exhibited in Berlin in 1922, at the First Exhibition of Russian art. These projects also point to Lissitzky's preoccupation with the pragmatic import of the work of art, i.e. what it *does* in social space.

Lissitzky's engagement with the pragmatic dimension even became more pronounced as he completed another project, coterminous with the publication of *For the Voice* and leading to a series of similar architectural projects. In 1923 Lissitzky presented the *Prounenraum*[8] at the

[8] As described on the web-site of Van Abbe Museum, in which one might see the reconstruction of *Prounenraum*, 'Prounenraum' by El Lissitzky is a small square space which can be entered through a doorway. Rectangular black and grey fields have been painted on the white walls and reliefs have been attached to these which partly continue from one wall to the next. There is a large square opening in the ceiling and cheesecloth is stretched over the top. In this opening, two bars painted black form an asymmetrical cross. The reliefs are mainly made of wood and are composed of thin sheets, slats and bars, largely coated with transparent varnish. In addition, they contain elements

Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung. which later evolved into the *Raum für konstruktive Kunst*, exhibited in 1926 in Dresden, and into *Abstraktes Kabinet*, exhibited in 1927-28 in Hannover. These three rooms were examples of interior design, in which the viewer / visitor was predisposed to certain patterns of interacting with the space and acting within it.

In these rooms, Lissitzky's goal was the same as with the painting in Prouns: to break the frame, think "outside the box" of the museum exhibition hall, design a new kind of exhibition space that would be interactive and ambient. The new space, he proclaimed, "neither needs nor wants pictures" (Martín 2014, 144) as a traditional exhibition hall does, but rather destroys the wall between the spectator and the exhibits (Martín 2014, 144). Consequently, as Isabel Martín puts it, the space was supposed "to be organized in such a way that the viewer felt 'stimulated to explore it,' a formula for activating the visitor's experience and self-awareness" (Martín 2014, 144). As a result, instead of a familiar pattern of passive contemplation, "the Russian artist proposed tactility and corporal action, confronting contemplation…with experience" (Martín 2014, 146). Through that experience, Lissitzky attempted to change "visual habits" (Martín 2014, 145) and behavioral patterns of the spectators, making them "'dance' through the room" rather than walk (Martín 2014, 147). Again, this project reinforces Lissitzky's lineage to the futurists. Along the lines of Shklovksy's "estrangement," Lissitzky attempts to defamiliarize the experience of spectatorship and turn it into an estranged "object" of his work.

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which have been painted an even black, white or grey. Here and there, there are narrow edges of red. One exception to the otherwise rectangular shapes is a small sphere which forms part of a relief on the back wall. URL: https://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/collection/details/collection/?lookup%5B1673%5D%5Bfilter%5D%5B0%5D=id%3AC969 [Retrieved 03.30.2018]

All three projects developed and elaborated the concept of a "demonstration room." In other words, the ultimate intention was not to devise a room one could live in (which would have been the case with Lissitzky's Russian counterparts). In Éva Forgács phrasing, "Lissitzky repeatedly and polemically declared that 'this space is not a living room' but a 'demonstration room' " (Forgács 2006, 60). Lissitzky attempted to design not a living space but the new interactive space for aesthetic experience, which would be transformative and have real social ramifications. "Neither purely aesthetic nor purely functional, neither living room nor exhibition area, his space was meant to anticipate a future condition," Forgács argues (Forgács 2006, 61). In other words, the Proun room and its sequels provided the viewer with a real yet transient, indeterminate space for aesthetic experience, defining the viewer's responses to it but not necessarily making this experience part of the everyday grind.

A side-project that similarly emphasized the pragmatics of artistic communication was Lissitzky's engagement with the conception of the "new book." His work on this paralleled the work on Prouns and interior projects. Hence, in 1923, Lissitzky published a manifesto in Schwitters' *Merz* titled *Topography of Typography*, to be followed by *Typographical Facts* in 1925 in *Gutenberg-Festschrift* and by the treatise on *For the Voice*, called *Our Book*, in 1926 in *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch.*

Through these projects, Lissitzky argued for the notion that the old book, as well as the painting and the exhibition hall, should be overcome. In his view, an ordinary printed book would soon be regarded as an obsolete artifact. "The new book demands a new writer. Ink-stand and goose quill are dead," asserts Lissitzky, metaphorically implying that the book as a technology is outdated and must be supplanted and replaced by a new way of presenting information.

The invention of a new book, in Lissitzky's view, anticipates the completion of the book "by sound recordings and talking pictures" (Lissitzky 1992, 357), as he writes in *Our Book*. The new book must be more interactive and more easily comprehensible, as it uses more than just one medium to engage the reader. It renounces the old typographic principle of linear representation of meaning by the means of the printed word. As Lissitzky posits in *Typographical Facts*, "[T]he pattern of thought cannot be represented mechanically by making combinations of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet" (Lissitzky 1992, 355). The old typography, he continues, represents "a passive, non-articulated lettering pattern" to be disposed of in favor of a new "active, articulated pattern" (Lissitzky 1992, 355). As "the pattern of speech" is accompanied by "a gesture sharply imprinted," the same should happen to typography: "the pattern of thought" must be complemented by its clear, concise and easily digestible typographical representation.

The new typographical pattern should be articulate and active since it is predicated on the "economy of expression." This new, economical way of typographically representing the idea is based on the supremacy of the visual dimension. "[B]ook…find[s] its channel to the brain through the eye, not through the ear," argued Lissitzky in *Our Book* (Lissitzky 1992, 358). As a consequence, the preference is given to "optics instead of phonetics." (Lissitzky 1992, 355). In *Our Book* Lissitzky further elaborates that the idea might be represented either by hieroglyph or by letters, or the visual form and the more conventional mixed form, making reference to sound. The hieroglyph is "international" (Lissitzky 1992, 357) in the sense that we are able to comprehend it immediately, without any prior knowledge of the verbal codes. The letters are "national" (Lissitzky 1992, 357) and require more effort on the part of the reader, since in order to decipher the meaning, you have to be acquainted with the system of linguistic conventions,

and, moreover, process the word(s) temporally. Hence, while a phonetic representation of a word is linear and does not make economies with regards to its means, an optic representation relies on non-linear, economic (in comparison with linear) representation of a word as a visual image and is grasped simultaneously and read instantaneously.

Furthermore, in *Topography of Typography*, Lissitzky affirms that the typographic design of the "ideas" "must correspond to the strains and stresses of the content" (Lissitzky 1992, 355), or must render visually, ostensibly, on the level of image, a clearly recognizable figure, which is implied by words semantically, without making much use of words as conventional representations. Thus, the "perfected eye" is capable of contemplating the "supernaturalistic reality" of visually expressed thoughts, communicated through "active, articulate patterns" (Lissitzky 1992, 355).

The inspiring direction, according to Lissitzky, is defined in *Our Book* as the work on the project of "simultaneous" book (Lissitzky 1992, 358) (here Lissitzky refers to Cendrar's and Delaunay's collaboration *The Prose of the Trans-Siberian*). As Lissitzky explains, the succession of visual representations in the book should also be smooth and "continuous," in the way that the book becomes "bioscopic" (Lissitzky 1992, 355), resembling the workings of a primitive motion-picture projector (bioscope). In other words, the succession of visual images, formed by typographic patters, in new books utilizes the communicative modes of a cinema. Finally, it leads Lissitzky to propose the new conception of "THE ELECTRO-LIBRARY," or "pre-digital" books, akin to films, that perform their contents through their medium.

On the level of its pragmatics, the new book performs the same gesture of blurring the boundaries between art and life as Prouns and interior design projects. The work of art is realized in and through its effect on the reader. It elicits an active interaction on the reader's part and is

immersive, prompting the reader to be submerged in the experience it communicates. Thus, the book stages the text as an interactive perceptual experience, not unlike that of a film or a play.

Conclusion

Lissitzky's and Mayakovsky's collaboration could be situated within a wider framework of artistic movements and schools they both were involved in. Most notably, these movements are represented by Cubo-Futurism, (Russian) Constructivism and International Constructivism, a revision and reinterpretation of Russian Constructivism, mediated by El Lissitzky. The poetic tendencies and formal strategies inherent to those movements were integrated into the book and recomposed into a new aesthetic unity (we will focus on that more closely in the third and fourth chapter).

As I have shown, those movements possessed different aesthetic programs and agendas. Cubo-Futurism had a distinct set of negative goals (such as shocking the bourgeois) and placed emphasis on the material aspects and texture of the medium in order to produce an experience of "estrangement" and defamiliarization. Constructivism, on the other hand, was characterized by a strong positive program and rejection of "art." It intended to exploit material affordances of the "texture" of the medium in order to produce concrete objects for "everyday life" and use (which might seem as implicitly opposite to Shklovskovian "estrangement"). These movements were instrumental in shaping Mayakovsky's poetic career.

Nevertheless, International Constructivism – in Lissitzky's reinterpretation, and, by extension, in series of multimedia projects he had been working on – did not exactly fit squarely within that paradigm. On the contrary, International Constructivism – and Lissitzky's projects – did not rule out "art" as the mode of expression. As a "Constructivist," Lissitzky created several works, possessing simultaneously an artistic and an applied dimension. His projects immersed

the spectator into the aesthetic experience and made him an active participant in the co-production of the work art. Thus, most of his works exhibited a strong performative charge and were supposed to make the reader participate in a virtual performance, enacted by them. This view of his works had repercussions for his projects of a “total book,” also emulating a performance by the means of new typographical and visual practices. Due to a simultaneous display of letters and visual forms, Lissitzky conceived the “total book” as a form reminiscent of cinema, with its succession of images, immediately grasped by an eye.

CHAPTER 3

POETIC PERFORMANCE IN *FOR THE VOICE*

For the Voice as a Performance

For the Voice is, first and foremost, a script for public performance. This implies a conscious ordering of the poems in the book, which corresponds to the presumable drama staged in the process of a public reading.

What is the source of this drama and how is it enacted? The drama brought about in the course of public reading occurs on the level of the pragmatics of the utterance.

In the book, we see a number of "speech genres"[9] in action, from "marches," invectives, and provocations to "orders" and moralizing "tales." As far as the pragmatics of genre is concerned, each of these genres (march, invective, order, provocation, a moralizing tale) somehow blurs the boundary between the text and the reality, the content of a poetic utterance and the context of its realization. By blurring the boundary between the text and the reality, the poems not only describe a hypothetical situation or communicate an emotional state but invite the audience to participate in it. By inviting the audience to take part in what is communicated by the text of the poem, the speaker manages to shape a new attitude and found a new "community."

[9] Speech genres are "relatively stable types of…utterances" (Bakhtin 1986, 60), "standard forms" (Bakhtin 1986, 62) of language use, deployed to achieve a particular communicative goal and associated with a particular pragmatic intention.

A close examination of literary form, or, more precisely of its denotative and connotative[10] aspects, yields an insight into how this process of blurring the boundary between a text and its context occurs and what conditions this shift in the pragmatic intention of the text.

Poems in the book can be subdivided into three groups, based on different pragmatic intentions. Consequently, we will see a host of different formal strategies deploying either connotative or denotative elements. These groups are:

1) The appeal to the audience, intended to form a community *Left March, My May, Third International*);

2) Addressing the other with either provocation or call to action, enforcing (sometimes aggressively) a new attitude (*Scum, First Order to the Arts Armies, Order №2 to the Arts Armies, And could you?*);

[10] Every sign consists of a signifier, a plane of expression, and a signified, a plane of content, and by the dint of this denotes a particular meaning (see Saussure 1998). However, if a sign as a whole is used as a signifier, as a plane of expression, for a new signified, then it becomes connotative. As Barthes tells us, "connotative semiotics" takes place when the system of signification "becomes the plane of expression, or signifier, of the second system" (Barthes 1977, 89). The difference between connotation and denotation is thus the difference between first-order and second-order signifying systems (see Eco 1976, 55). However, there is no hard and fast line between denotative and connotative meanings. According to Stuart Hall, every sign possesses potential denotative and connotative shades – rather, there are dominant meanings (Hall 1993, 98) actualized as the most relevant in a particular setting. They are construed in the process of reception in a particular context "within a set of …performative rules – rules of competence and use, of logics-in-use – which seek actively to enforce or prefer one semantic domain over another and rule items into and out of their appropriate meaning-sets" (Hall 1993, 99). As it can be inferred, the distinction between the denotative or connotative meanings is realized on the level of pragmatics.

3) The exemplification of an attitude with a means of a moralizing tale (*The Tale of a Red Cap, The story About a Woman Who of Vrangel Talked without Rhyme or Reason, Naval Romance, Proper Respect for Horses, The Most Extraordinary Adventure that Happened to Me, Vladimir Mayakovsky*).

The first group of poems can be characterized as having the pragmatic intention of forming a unified community by directly addressing the audience. In the second group, on the contrary, the speaker opposes himself to the community, either provoking it, judging its attitudes and sensibilities or forcing an alternative course of action on it, new attitudes towards life and art. Finally, the third group of poems exemplifies the new mindset put forward in the previous poems in the form of moralizing tales.

The Appeal to the Audience

The first group pertains to the recognizable genre of a march (song). This genre is used to boost morale, inspire to action and so on. In order to achieve this effect, march as a genre relies on the use of connotative elements and devices, suggesting a vigorous and exhilarated mood, such as rhythm and rhyme, alliteration and assonance.

In the first three poems (*Left March, Our March, My May*), the implied speaker of the book uses the march genre to appeal to his audience in order to establish a new community and create a new type of solidarity, united by a common goal and shared (political) sensibilities. By engaging the generic conventions of march in these poems, he sets the frame for a collective action and a communal act, for the operation of coalescing and merging into a single whole.

Left March

Left March combines the components of genres of march and public speech. As a public speech, it works on creating a sense of community with the audience; as a march, it sets the

pattern for its activity, manifesting itself in a decisive break with what is external to it. In an attempt to define the community, the speaker relies on the oppositions "we vs. the other" and "what should be done vs. what should not be done."

On the level of its form, the poem manifests a dynamic pattern of rapid progression followed by a break. This description is applicable both to its rhythm and to the shifts in its semantics and can be observed in the first six lines:

Р***а***зв***о***р**а́**ч***и***в***а***йт***е***сь в м**а́**рш***е*** (_ _ X _ _ _ X _)

Сл***о***в**е́**сн***о***й н***е*** м**е́**ст**о** кл**я́**уз**е**! (_ X _ _ X _ X _ _)

Т**и́**ш***е***, ***о***р**а́**т***о***р***ы***! (X _ _ X _ _)

В**а́**ш***е*** (X _)

сл**о́**в***о***, (X _)

т***о***в**а́**р***и***щ М**а́**у***з******е***р. (_ X _ X _ _)[11] [12] (ML 7)

(Form ranks! / Forward march! / No squabbling ad nauseam. / Silence, speakers! / Your turn to speak, Comrade Mauser) [13]. (ML(e) 7)

Rhythmically, all the lines display an uneven distribution of syllables. The first line has eight syllables, the second, nine. In the first line the stress pattern is more hectic and unpredictable, whereas in the second it exhibits a tendency towards regularity. The third is

[11] Stressed syllables marked by the sign of stress, unstressed italicized; all vowels in bold. From here onwards we employ boldings and italicizations in order to stress the formal strategies in the poem, but it is important to note that they are absent from the original.

[12] From here onwards we quote the MIT Press edition of *For the Voice* (Mayakovsky and Lissitzky 2000). For the sake of brevity, we will refer to Russian original as (ML), and to the English translation as (ML(e)).

[13] MIT Press edition of *For the Voice* is quoted with my corrections.

suddenly shorter, with six syllables; it is also the first line, starting with a stressed syllable. The fourth and fifth lines are two-syllabic, both starting with a stressed syllable. Finally, the last line comprises six syllables, with an unpredictable stressing pattern. Since the first two lines have roughly the same length and both begin and end with an unstressed syllable, they suggest a continuous rhythmical movement as a whole. However, this pattern is broken by the third line, beginning with a stressed syllable and being significantly shorter. The reader, as she tends to pronounce these lines in her head, feels as if she has come to an abrupt halt. This pattern of sudden breaks is echoed by the new two lines, in which the reader encounters two-syllabic structures, consisting of a stressed and an unstressed syllable. The last line sets up a new continuous pattern, suggesting a new progression forward, but since it has six syllables, it rhymes with the third line that was perceived as a partial break.

The pattern of the break is similarly reflected on the level of semantics. The first two lines enact an aggressive call to action, while the third begins a new topic. If the first two lines urge us to march, the third calls to "silence," addressing not "us," but those who are presumably opposing us. Then the fourth and the fifth line bring about a rupture, by giving the word to "Comrade Mauser," i.e. to a gun. Thus, the first two lines communicate a powerful rhetorical charge, a call to march forward, addressing a presumable audience (sailors), while the last three lines are perceived as a series of breaks and halts, of decisive ruptures with the "orators" and their art, rhetorics, addressing the opponents of the speaker.

The rest of the poem is similarly formed by the alteration between shorter and longer rhythmic units, between vocal expansion and abrupt contraction, between a continuous advancement and a sudden stop. For example, this tension marks the following stanzas:

Довольно жить законом, данным Адамом и Евой.

Клячу истории загоним.

Левой!

Левой!

Левой![14] (ML 8)

(No more ancient laws! / Eve and Adam are dead…By the left! / Left! / Left!) (ML(e) 8)

and

Пусть,

оскалясь короной,

вздымает британский лев вой.

Коммуне не быть покоренной.

Левой!

Левой!

Левой! (ML 8)

(Let / the crowned British lion / snarl and roar his best. / We'll defend the Commune. / By the left! / Left! / Left!) (ML(e) 8)

Semantically, these stanzas also exhibit the pattern of opposing two propositions. In the first two lines of the first stanza the speaker refers to Adam and Eve, the symbols of the "old" world, while in the last line we encounter a decisive break with it, aggressively calling to march with the "left!". The same is applicable to the second stanza, which begins with a reference to the British monarchy and ends with a "Left!" again, intended to enact a break from it.

[14] Longer sections are italicized, shorter are put in bold.

Finally, the last stanza replicates this pattern in the most straightforward way:

Грудью вперед бравой!

Флагами небо оклеивай!

Кто там шагает правой?

Левой!

Левой!

Левой! (ML 9)

(Chests out with pride! / Stick flags on the heaven! / Who marches by the right? / By the left! / Left! / Left!). (ML(e) 9)

The long question "Кто там шагает правой?" ("Who's marching there with the right?") is counterbalanced by the thrice repeated "Left!", thus juxtaposing a long phrase with a series of exclamatory breaks on the level of rhythm and semantics.

In this poem the new community is established and distinguished from its "opponents." This intention is brought about by a series of breaks and ruptures enacted both on the level of rhythm and semantics. It can be noted that in order to have an impact on his audience, the speaker uses mostly connotative devices, by manipulating the rhythmical structures and juxtaposing conflicting propositions.

Our March

Our March carries forward the intention of *Left March.* Here, the lyric subject of the poem takes for granted that the community is founded, addressing it as a whole, mapping out a future course of action. To a certain extent, this poem takes up the urge to break with what is not intrinsic to the community from *Left March* yet elaborates on that. The activity of the community

here is defined more precisely. As such, this poem, in terms of its pragmatic intention, calls to "rebel," establishes revolt as a mode of communal activity.

The central device in the poem is the heavy use of alliteration, deployed in order to communicate a pugnacious mood:

Бей**т**е в **п**лощад**и** **б**ун**т**ов **т**о**п**о**т**!

Выше **г**о**рд**ых **г**олов **гр**я**д**а!

Мы разливом в**т**орого **п**о**т**о**п**а

перемоем ми**р**ов **г**о**р**од**а**.[15] (ML 11)

(Beat the squares with rebellion's tread. / Raise your heads higher still with pride. / We shall wash clean with a second Flood / towns and cities universe-wide). (ML(e) 11)

The first pattern of alliteration is "бей*т*е – бун*т*ов – *т*опо*т*" (beat – revolt – tramp) with an emphasis upon "т" (t). This pattern overlaps with "*б*ейте – *б*унтов," where "б" (b) is foregrounded, and "*п*лощади – то*п*от," stressing "п" (p). The second line foregrounds "г" (g, as in Guy), "*р*" (close to Spanish "r") (italicized in order to be distinguished from "p" – A.S.) and "д" (d) through "*г*о*рд*ых – *г*олов – *гряд*а". The rhymes in the third and the fourth lines (*пото*па, *город*а) support the established patterns of alliteration ("п – т – п"; "г – *р* – д"), being enhanced by repetitions of "*р*" and "п" in "*р*азливом" and "пе*р*емоем – ми*р*ов." The sequences of "б," "п," "т" and "г," "*р*," "д" sounds plot a sonic structure, conveying the noise of marching steps.

In the next few stanzas sound play is carried to yet another level. The speaker revels in clashing similarly sounding words that have the same amount of syllables and are often distinguished by just one vowel. Here are some telling instances:

[15] Recurring consonants are in bold.

Дней *бык пег*,

Медленна лет арба,

Наш *бог бег.*

Сердце наш барбан. (original spelling preserved – A.S.) (ML 12)

(The bull of days is pied. / Slow the years' ox-cart. / Our god is speed. / A drum is our heart.) (ML(e) 12)

Зеленью *ляг луг*,

Выстели *дно дням*,

Радуга *дай дуг*

лет быстролетным коням. (ML 12)

(Meadows lie green / beneath days outspread. / Rainbow's arc, rein in / the years' swift steeds.) (ML(e) 12)

Радости *пей, пой!*

В жилах весна разлита.

Сердце *бей бой!*

Грудь наша медь литавр. [16] (ML 12)

(Sing songs, drink joy! / In our veins spring has come. / Heart, beat for war / on the breast's bass drum!) (ML(e) 12)

These lines display a monotonous repetition of monosyllabic words. Sometimes these are words that do not have much in common in terms of sonic structures ("бык," "пег," "дай," "дуг"), and sometimes these are words that sound very much alike ("бог – бег," "ляг – луг," "дно – дням," rhyming "пей – пой" and "бей – бой"). The profusion of monosyllabic units

[16] Monosyllabic units italicized.

makes the utterance punctuated by the rhythm of their stress patterns (i.e. by a congestion of stressed syllables). For instance, in “Дней бык пег” each syllable is stressed, since each word has only one syllable. In a way, monosyllabic words play the role of a drum beat, establishing the monotony of punch-like sounds and conveying a belligerent atmosphere.

The use of sound patterns obstructs the comprehension of these lines to the point of being almost impenetrable in terms of meaning. This poem offers a large number of idiosyncratic utterances, and an astonishing array of convolute, recondite metaphors, the meaning of which never becomes quite clear. For example, “бейте в площади бунтов топот” (beat the squares with the tramp of revolt) comes close to being a non-grammatical phrase, since the word combination “бить в площади” (beat the squares) is not ordinarily used and is, in fact, modeled after the structure “бить в барабан” (beat the drum). Also, one cannot “beat the squares” with the “tramp of revolts,” since the “tramp” is semantically incompatible with “бейте” (beat). One could beat something (a drum) with a stick or any other instrument, but not with the “tramp,” the noise produced in the act of beating. Such an utterance can only be understood metaphorically, if we assume that the tramping sound, engendered by the revolt, is emitted by the drum of squares, beating against people’s feet.

The same is applicable to other sentences, such as “Дней бык пег,” “Наш бог бег,” “Зеленью ляг луг,” “Радуга дай дуг [лёт]” (“The bull of days is pied,” “Our god is speed,” “Meadows lie green,” “Rainbow’s arc, rein in”) and “Радости пей, пой,” “Сердце бей бой!” (“Sing songs, drink joy!” “Heart, beat for war on the breast’s brass drum”). The meaning of each phrase has to be deciphered, since it is a metaphorical, indirect way of communicating the meaning. However, besides semantic meaning, what is said, these utterances also possess a strong pragmatic impact, i.e. what an utterance does. For instance, “Дней бык пег,” meaning

“the bull of days is skewbald,” suggests a dull routine of *byt*, everyday grind to be dealt away with. “Наш бог бег” (Our God is speed) implies that acceleration of life, brisk movement is valorized over all other activities. “Сердце бей бой” (Heart, beat for war) is a metaphorical imperative to share joy and happiness.

In terms of their pragmatics, those utterances do not *mean* as much as *incite* to action. Thus, they might not be clear semantically, but they are easily comprehensible as utterances. When seen as an integral part of the poem, those sentences set up a staccato rhythm that complements their meaning. This rhythm conveys an abrupt, brisk marching movement forward; it forms a sound pattern inspiring to move and march, what the speaker calls “bass drum.” As far as their pragmatic import is concerned, these sentences do not communicate referential information, but connote an emotional attitude and an incentive to fight against the “Other.” The emotions suggested by those utterances are those of extreme and sometimes even aggressive excitement, joy and frenzy. This mood suggests that the reader should renounce everyday routine and embrace the cult of speed and velocity, the cult of military march.

My May

Finally, *My May* also operates on the assumption of an established community and suggests a pattern for its communal activity. Nevertheless, unlike *Our March*, *My May* suggests a more constructive approach. Pragmatically, it valorizes not a rebellion but a communal celebration and establishes a preferable mode of communal interaction.

In my *My May,* we might observe the same device of relying on similarly sounding monosyllabic units as the primary means of manipulating rhythmical structures. Still, the organization of stanzas in this poem differs from *Our March.* In *Our March* the reader encounters terse, short stanzas while in *Our May* each stanza displays a two-part structure,

beginning with a lengthy appeal to the addressee and ending with a shorter laudatory call. The first part of the stanza is usually used to hail its subject, to include her into the field of poetic discourse through an apostrophe. On the contrary, the second part of the stanza already implies the union of the speaker and the listener in their shared emotional response to the holiday and is meant to encourage both to celebrate it together. Let us look at an example:

Всем –
на улицы вышедшим,
тело машиной измаяв.
Всем
молящим о празднике
спинам,
землею натруженным –
Первое мая
Первый из маев
встретим, товарищи,
голосом в пение сдруженным.
Веснами мир мой
солнцем снежное тай.
Я рабочий –
этот май мой.
Я крестьянин –
это мой май. (ML 13-14)

(To all / who are out on the streets / with bodies worn on the lathe, / To all / who dreamed holidays / with backs bent to the ground – / comrades, let us welcome / The first of May, / The first of Mays, / with voices joined / singing out loud. / Let spring wash the world's care away, / snow melt in the sun's shine. / I am a worker – / this is my May. / I am a peasant – / this May is mine.) (ML(e) 13-14)

The first part of the stanza, which I will provisionally term as "address," begins with "Всем" ("Vsem," "To all") and ends with "голосом в пение сдруженным" ("голосом в пение сдруженным," "voices joined singing out loud"). The pragmatic goal of this utterance is to hail the addressee, "all," performatively creating the new subject of utterance. The speaker, as he proceeds with the speech, presumably refers to the people around ("всем, на улицы вышедшим," "to all who are out in the streets"), perhaps, to specific groups of people ("молящим о празднике спинам," "to all who dreamed holidays with backs bent to the ground," meaning first and foremost those working). Through this address, a new social entity comes into being: those being referred to become "all," "comrades."

In the second part of the stanza, however, we see the speaker perform an utterance on behalf of the communal entity he has just created. This new community speaks in the language of imperatives and appropriation. It commands and it claims possession. This tendency is accentuated through the use of verbs in the imperative mood and of possessive pronouns. These are such words as "тай" (melt), "мой" (my).

Significantly, in this part of the stanza we again observe the use of monosyllabic units, creating a distinct rhythm. "Тай" (tai, melt) and "мой" (moi, my) are complemented by "май" (mai, may). The imperative commands and possessive claims are enhanced through the use of abrupt, short verbal units, forming a series of beats. This beating rhythm creates a drum-like

sonic accompaniment of speech, corresponding to a triumphant and boastful mood that unites the community.

Conclusion

The first three poems, on the level of their pragmatics, enact a gesture of inaugurating the community and defining its modes of activity. The first poem sets off the community and defines it in opposition to the extrinsic forces. The second poem proclaims the rebellion as its program and primary mode of activity as a means of creating the identity of that community. Finally, the third poem offers a more constructive approach towards communal life, assigning value to a more peaceful activity of celebration. Hence, in terms of their pragmatic impact, these poems use traditional poetic devices (mostly located on the level of phonetics) in order to manipulate the emotional state of the audience and encourage it to a future social action (such as the formation of a group). This becomes the first step in blurring the boundary between the text and the world.

The effect is achieved through the use of connotative devices, mostly having to do with phonetics, such as rhythm and alliteration. Rhythmic and alliterative patterns as signifying systems become signifiers for a new emotional attitude, channeled by the poem. Significantly, the devices employed by the speaker are similar to those used by Cubo-Futurist practitioners, with their emphasis on the materiality of sound and its suggestive qualities. Nevertheless, here, these devices are used in order to bring about a pragmatic intention close to Constructivist aesthetics, namely, that of merging art and life in a communal activity.

Engaging the Other

The second group of poems is different from the first in terms of its pragmatic effect. Here the speaker for the most part either addresses the other, with an intention of provoking or excluding him, or sets the agenda for the future on behalf of the founded community. Such

poems, as *Scum, And Could You* accomplish the former task, while "orders to the armies of arts" and *Third International* fulfill the latter. In these poems, the speaker, on the one hand, attempts to give a prospective projection of what has to be done and what will be done. On the other hand, he also affronts his "opponents" with an aggressive provocation, condemning them and daring them to break the conventions.

Scum

In *Scum* we hear the speaker accuse (on behalf of the community established by the "march" poems) his ideological opponents of being responsible for a major human-caused disaster, namely, lethal famine. A sudden change is enacted here: from the formation of a community and the appeal to the audience as a community the focus shifts to the real events, to the life the community is invited to participate in and addresses presumable reactions by the members of this community. Here the speaker for the first time introduces "facts" into his speech, framing the discussion of those facts by an emotional attitude and shaping a stance to be shared by the community.

In terms of its pragmatic ideology, *Scum* is meant to incite hatred against the "bourgeois," the representatives of the Western world, émigrés, and those not sympathizing with the new regime. In terms of its aesthetics, it manages to do so by interpreting the "facts" of life through the prism of emotionally engaged speaking. On the pragmatic level, this poem prefers to work with extremely non-poetic material in order to achieve a poetic effect, namely, the excitement of strong feelings.

The key device at work in the poem is once again the movement from the denotative meanings to the connotative, when the denotative sign is assigned an additional emotional value. The poem opens with the demand to give the speaker a rich man, in order to present him with

some figures from the Famine Committee records ("отчёт Помгола"). These figures are used to elicit a certain emotional experience in the audience. Figures ("bare digits" on the page) are supposed to denote the numbers of dead, but they do not express anything, like Famine Committee records in general. The intention of the speaker is to make his listener "see" the emotional content (i.e., second-order signifying system, digit plus its emotional value), which is enhanced by an aggressive question "Do you see?" ("Видишь?").

The movement from the denotative to the connotative is clearly seen in the rhetorical organization of the poem. First, the speaker begins with figures (that are denotative) and then passes on to describe the ills of famine in gruesome details, such as cannibalism. After having created a picture of devastating consequences, the speaker starts to shuttle back and forth between the denotative and connotative modes, reporting fragments from London, Paris and Berlin newspapers. Each fragment receives a bitter evaluative commentary on the part of the speaker as he juxtaposes the comfortable life of Western citizen with the misfortunes of Samara dwellers. In the end, the poem digresses into a purely connotative dimension when the speaker condemns those who are blind to the famine and urges his listeners to rebel against them in a revolutionary fight and "be merciless."

Connotative shades of meaning are also brought into play on a micro-level of form, through rhyme. In this poem, Mayakovsky often introduces unanticipated rhyme, laden with strong affective overtones. We read a plain descriptive word in order to see it accomplished by a powerfully connotative rhyme, producing a shocking effect. Very often the connotative meaning is supplied or amplified by the context, in which a descriptive word might receive a powerful affective charge. Thus, we can speak of connotative *units* as essential components of the rhyme.

Connotative rhymes might be illustrated by the following examples: “снова снегами сгрёб – волжских селений гроб” (swept up snow – …roofed grave of Volga villages down below) (ML 19; ML(e) 19); “дымясь – зажариваемых мяс” (the smoke and the stench – ripe with roasting flesh) (ML 19; ML(e) 19); “дочери – в людоедчестве очередь” (daughter – turn for cannibal slaughter) (ML 19; ML(e) 19); “в 10 губерний могилу вымеряйте – вымрите” (measure out graves through ten regions – lie down, go rigid) (ML 20; ML(e) 20); “головой венчанной – питаемые человечиной” (eaters of human flesh – feed on your royal heads) (ML 21; ML(e) 21). As it can be noted, only such words as “мяс,” “человечиной,” “вымрите” (the imperative) (roasted flesh, human flesh, lie down) can be considered to be purely connotative, i.e. communicating an emotionally charged shade of meaning. Such words as “гроб,” “очередь,” (grave, turn [for slaughter]) gain their connotative meaning from the context. It is also true in the case of a purely connotative neologism “людоедчестве” (stands for “cannibalism”).

Sometimes, however, Mayakovsky prefers to rhyme two connotative units:

Эй – толщу непроходимых шей (Rise up! – choke…their thick-skinned necks…with rope) (ML 22; ML(e) 22)

место, где более больно – мячище футбольный (where most it pinches – kick the football [of your swollen paunches]) (ML 23; ML(e) 23)

желудок жег – вспарывая стенки кишек (burn in your gut – cut your stomach apart) (ML 24; ML(e) 24)

In all these cases rhyming words are not inherently connotative: they rather become affectively laden because of the immediate context. For instance, words with suggestive suffixes like “вспарывать,” “мячище,” “толща” (to cut, football, thick-skinned necks) supply an additional, connotative meaning to the neighboring rhymes.

This shift from denotation to connotation that unfolds temporally, as the speaker goes from one rhyme to the other, produces the effect of "nailing" or freezing the reader / listener on the spot. It further blurs the boundary between the text and the audience that becomes involved in it.

Third International

Third International also exhibits a tendency to include (or pretends to include) the community into a real political event in terms of its pragmatic import. This poem as an utterance attempts to manifest a political orientation and a political goal. In other words, it is less focused on the communication of the emotion *per se*, than on generating a real social change through the communication of the said emotion. If the first group of poems exploited the emotional effect in order to produce a community without specifying a concrete action, this poem (and other poems in this group) goes further, enmeshing the community into a real world, asking it to participate in a concrete event and execute a particular action. Since the first group of poems has successfully blurred the boundary between the world and the text, from now on poetic and public communal activity can merge together.

Third International displays a dominance of connotative meanings over the denotative. This poem relies on the use of pithy slogans, borrowed from the agitational language of revolutionary propaganda. These slogans might be construed as connotative, since here the denotative language is turned into a second-order signifying system, referring to meanings, ideologically (in the political sense) and emotionally charged. The slogan operates on the workings of a metaphor, sometimes rather crude and primitive, but nevertheless effective (such as "I like Ike!" in which the intention is easily understood but the play on words produces an effect).

This poem abounds in the use of slogans meant to bring about a second-order signification, leading to a direct social effect. The speaker uses metaphors in order to signify an emotional experience of the revolution. However, in doing so, he pretends to blur the line between an arbitrary character of metaphor and its meaning, pretending to "naturalize" the sign, turn it into a Barthesian "myth," creating an impression that the connotative meaning of the metaphor is its primary meaning, not a second-order one.

Thus, in this poem the connotative slogans pretend to figure as denotative elements. This impression is corroborated by the use of purely denotative (in the context of the poem) statements or calls to action, devoid of any metaphoric constructions and possessing a "direct" meaning. These are, for instance, plain: "Рабочий мира, слушай, / Революция идёт…Мы идём. Вставайте, цветнокожие колоний. / Белые рабы империй – / встаньте" ("Workers of the world, give ear. / Revolution is marching… / We march. / Rise up, coloured colonies,/ white slaves of empire – / stand.").

In order to see how the connotative metaphor attempts to perform the work of naturalization, let us have a look at the first stanza:

Мы идем
революционной лавой.
Над рядом
Флаг пожаров ал,
Наш вождь
миллионоглавый
Третий интернационал. (ML 27)

(We march, / revolutionary lava, wedded / to scarlet flags / flaming over us all. / Our leader – / the million-headed Third International.) (ML(e) 27)

In this stanza, the crowd of marching people ("Third International") is compared to an "avalanche of revolution" ("lava"). This metaphor becomes, in fact, extended later in the poem and supported by the other metaphors:

Рядов разливу нет истока,

Волнам красных армий нету устья,

Пояс красных армий

к западу

с востока,

опоясав землю,

полюсами пустим. (ML 28)

(The flood will never cease. / The waves of red armies know no end, / with the ring of red armies / to West / from East / girdling the earth, / by the poles we net / the nations to land.) (ML(e) 28)

In this stanza, we see at least three metaphors – the "flood," the "waves" of red armies, "girdling" the earth. Those metaphors again respond to the metaphorical image of "lava," "avalanche," the stream of hot magma flowing down the slope.

Revolutionary march here is compared to a natural disaster, inevitable and beyond the power of men. Thus, the revolutionary movement also acquires the characteristics of inevitability and irreversibility. Since any revolution is predicated on a common belief that its cause will prevail, its description as a "natural" one, the one that captures its essence without any mediation seems apt enough. I am inclined to interpret a series of extended metaphors as "denotative,"

operating on the level of first-order signification and conveying the information that we presumably already know.

Here an important shift is effectuated. Denotation and connotation are blurred, as well as the boundary between the text and the communal activity it presupposes on the level of its pragmatics. Significantly, it is also the first poem in which the speaker transitions from the manipulations of phonetic devices (such as rhythm, rhyme etc.) to the work with the lexical units, such as slogans.

Orders to the Arts Armies

The two "orders" continue merging poetry with "real" life. Pragmatically, these poems try to indoctrinate the artists with an ideology of integrating art within other non-artistic, utilitarian activities. The genre of "order" is preferred precisely because it operates on the assumption that there is no boundary between the text and its recipient (see Sirotkin 2001); it also directly engages the listener, turning him into a subject of the order, and directly addresses the situation into which the listener is placed.

In N. Sirotkin's description, from a formal point of view, this genre is based on lexical repetitions and parallel syntactic constructions, which make for a creation of slogan; one of this genre's characteristics is that it usually abounds in imperatives (Sirotkin 2001). The genre of order is also predicated on the use of plain language and easily comprehensible rhetorical proclamations, enhancing direct appeal and the charge of the slogans.

Order to the Arts Army

The *Order to the Arts Army* contains a number of devices that also manifest a decisive transition to a lexical unit as a unit of the device deployed by the speaker. If we approach the poem as a rhetorical whole, we will see that it is composed of plain, lucid phrases with an easily

detectable function – imperatives, strict condition statements and descriptions of the situation in which this order is urgently needed. The speaker alternates between these functionally different statements, shifting from the critique of the situation to the imperative and then to the qualifying condition statement. Let us look at some examples of this.

Канителят стариков бригады

канитель одну и ту ж, **[1]**

Товарищи!

На баррикады!

баррикады сердец и душ. **[2]**

Только тот коммунисты истый

– кто мосты к отступлению сжег. **[3]**

Довольно шагать, футуристы –

В будущее прыжок! **[2]**[17] (ML 32)

(They fiddle, the oldies' brigades, / the same old-fashioned parts. **[1]** / Comrades! / Man the barricades! / barricades of souls and hearts. **[2]**/ All genuine communists / have burnt the boats of retreat. **[3]**/ Don't just walk, you futurists – / into the future – leap! **[2]**) (ML(e) 32)

As for their pragmatic import, we start with the poet's description of an unsatisfactory situation which should be changed and calls for an "order" ("They fiddle, the oldies' brigades, / the same old-fashioned parts."). Next, we encounter a direct appeal to the audiences ("Comrades") and the order, addressing both the real listeners and the implied ones and thus once again blurring the boundary between the world and the text ("Man the barricades! /

[17] [1] corresponds to the critique, [2] corresponds to the imperative, [3] corresponds to the qualifying condition statement.

barricades of souls and hearts"). Next, we pass on to the condition statement that is supposed to install a norm of complying with the order (Don't just walk, you futurists – into the future – leap!).

The pragmatic intention speaks to that merge between the real and the implied audience. The intention brought about by the "order" consists – once again – in crossing the divide between "art" and "life," between the creation of poems and social action. "If your song doesn't deafen the station / Why have AC and DC?" proclaims the speaker, adding that "The streets are the brushes we'll use, / our palettes the city squares." Anticipating the statement by Daniil Kharms that "a poem, thrown at a pane of glass, should break the glass," the speaker suggests that the act of poetic diction must become a real action in the social world. In light of this, the speaker turns on to criticize the "transrational" art of the futurists and suggests a reorientation toward an art form that performs what it creates:

Громоздите за звуком звук вы,

и вперед,

поя и свища,

Есть еще хорошие буквы,

э**Р**

Ша

Ща (ML 32)

(Sing and whistle, pile sound on sound, / and forward / march. There are still good letters around. / **R** / **Sh**a / **Shch**a.) (ML(e) 32)

"Pile sound on sound" obviously refers to "zaum," the linguistic experiments with the transrational language (such as the famous "Dyr byl schchil" by Kruchenykh), implying that a

sequence of sounds does not by itself produce the desired effect. Not all letters are capable of "deafening" the station, as the speaker seems to suggest. Thus, Mayakovsky tries to accomplish the break with those whom he once considered comrades in arms. "eR," "Sha," "Scha" sound similarly to those sounds that predominate *Dyr bul Shchil,* but despite that resemblance they are deployed towards a different end, a practical one. Therefore, they appear to be precisely those letters capable of "breaking the glass," being turned into the brushes of the street, since they resemble prelinguistic aggressive cries, rallying the squares, or sounds of the turmoil.

Order № 2 to the Arts Armies

Order № 2 to the Arts Armies manifests similar tendencies of the order genre. Unlike the first order, this one is clearly polemical in nature and is directed "against" those who represent old-fashioned art and those art forms that are no longer needed.

As an "order," this poem contains repetitions and parallel syntactic structures that mark this genre and that are mostly missing from the first order. Among frequently repeated units I find the constantly recurring "это вам" ("to you") with which a number of stanzas begins. Parallel structures include strings of predicates (imperatives: "Бросьте, забудьте, плюньте"; "Give it up! Forget it") and complements ("[плюньте] и на арии, / и на розовый куст"; "don't worry / about rhymes / or arias"; "[я] – гениален ли я или не гениален, / бросивший безделушки и работающий в Росте"; "I say – I, who, genius or not, having given up baubles to do posters").

In terms of its rhetorical organization, the poem seems to have a more articulate structure. It consists of a series of addresses to various groups of artists followed by the doctrine of the new art, formed mostly by imperatives and statements of condition (such as "Мастера, а не длинноволосые проповедники, нужны сейчас им!" ("It's not arty prophets we need now, but

master craftsmen"). Thus, rhetorically this order creates the figure of its addressee and then directs an order at him.

Noticeably, the addressee of this poem is defined in negative terms: the mode of addressing these groups of artists is based on the use of derogatory words, almost to the point of calling names: "упитанные баритоны" ("well-fed baritones") (ML 36; ML(e) 36), "раздобревшие [пентры]" ("*pittori,* plump as thorough breads") (ML 36; ML(e) 36), "футуристики, имажинистики" ("mystics misty in print") (ML 36; ML(e) 36), "пролеткультцы, / заплатки кладущие на вылинявший пушкинский фрак" ("proletwriters sewing rough patches on Pushkin faded coat-tails") (ML 36; ML(e) 36).

These verbal units are negatively charged in terms of their connotative meaning, indicated by the use of suffixes and vulgarisms.

The order issued by the speaker can also be defined negatively, as a statement that at first seems to lack a positive program. The addressee is urged to "give it up," "forget it," "not worry about rhymes or arias or pink hayricks." Again, the words employed by the speaker have an array of derogatory connotative meanings: "плюньте…на прочие мерехлюндии / из арсеналов искусств" (Give it up! Don't worry about…pink hayricks) (ML 37; ML(e) 37) Thus, the intent of these appeals (at least, the first part of the order) in terms of their pragmatics is to shock the listener out of his complacency, aggressively attacking him and discursively defining him in negative terms.

However, this poem does have a positive program. Significantly, this program consists in the rejection of any verbal art for art in favor of real things (the same way it was articulated in the first order).

Пока канителим, спорим,

Смысл сокровенный ища:

“Дайте нам новые формы.”!

несется вопль по вещам. (ML 38)

(While we all fiddle and fight / over meanings hidden within, – / “Give us new forms”, we cry – / but a howl goes up for things.) (ML(e) 38)

The new art, in the speaker’s opinion, must be the equivalent of “coal” and “oil” urgently needed by workers, something as tangible and utilitarian as what is used to generate electricity and heat. Significantly, the new doctrine of “art objects as material things” is not expressed with the same amount of detail employed to condemn the doctrine of old art. The definition of new art almost eludes verbal articulation and is packed into an almost prosaic, non-poetic language of generic imperatives: “дайте новое искусство, / такое чтоб выволочь Республику из грязи” (“give us the new art, so that we could pull out the Republic from mud”). Thus, the new art presupposes, first and foremost, practical activity, not verbalization.

As it can be noted, both “orders” seem to gravitate towards the use of denotative meanings as dominant meanings, employing first-order signification, when the utterance seems to possess an unambiguous and direct meaning, without any additional value being ascribed to it. This tendency is indicative of a general move towards “things” as opposed to “art.”

And Could You?

And Could You?, the last in this group of poems, continues to underscore the necessity to eliminate the gap between the reality of poetry and the reality itself, between the action in poetry

and a real action in life[18]. As such, it is a provocation addressed to the listener, including him in the dialogue with the poet almost immediately. In terms of its pragmatics, the poem merges the real world and the world of poetic diction, the poet and the listener.

This poem belongs to a different genre than the previous three, that of explicit provocation. It is akin to an act of bargaining or bantering. As an act of provoking the reader, the poem consists of two parts: the speaker begins with verbal attacks and finishes with a provocative question addressed to the listener.

The key device at work in the poem is metaphor. Metaphors in this poem perform the work of enmeshing the world of art into the real world, erasing any distinction between them. It occurs in a series of metaphoric exaggerations: "Я резко смазал карту будня," "я показал на блюде студня косые скулы океана," "на чешуе жестяной рыбы прочёл я зовы новых губ" ("I have blurred the map of everyday," "I have shown in aspic on the plate the slanting cheekbones of the ocean," "In the metallic fish's scales / I have read the call of future lips") (ML 41; ML(e) 41). The objects described in these statements pertain to everyday routine while at the same time being elevated to the status of art. "Map," "карта," probably corresponds to restaurant *carte de vins;* aspic is a dish, that the poet associates with the ocean; metallic fish, perhaps, stands for a signboard. At the same time, those are the very objects the speaker uses to perform a creative act: he "smashes" the map in his poem, he shows the "ocean," he reads the "call of future lips." What the speaker performs in this place and with regards to this place is an act of crossing the boundaries between life and art, between convention and anarchy: he splashes the paint, crossing

[18] Significantly, this poem is a much earlier work that fits perfectly with the futurist/neo-primitivist aesthetics, since it was written in 1913. However, in the context of the book and in the context of this group of poems it acquires a totally new meaning and pragmatic intention.

the boundaries of what is commonly accepted; he turns the dish into an object of art; he reads the signboard in an unconventional way.

As it can also be noted, this poem foregrounds the connotative dimension of the metaphor. The first-order system of signification, denotations of real objects (carte de vins; aspic; metallic fish, a signboard), becomes a signifier for a second-order system of metaphoric signification. This second-order system refers to the process of creating a work of art. Thus, by enhancing the connotative possibilities of metaphors, the speaker manages to blur the real world and the world of the poem.

Conclusion

In this group of poems, the boundary between reality and poetry is not only blurred but almost eliminated, enmeshing the real world with the world of poetic utterance. The poet moves from the realm of "words" to the realm of "things." The speaker switches to exploring the potential of the devices located on the level of lexical, not phonetic units. He heavily exploits the connotative affordances of the poem, although sometimes pretends to renounce them in favor of "naturalized," almost denotative utterances, supposedly "reflecting" the reality and turning us back to it. The connotative devices deployed by the speaker manifest a move away from Cubo-Futurist aesthetics[19] towards devices that are simpler and more easily comprehensible, devices that appear to be almost denotative, devoid of second-order signification. Thus, in these poems the speaker moves in the direction of an aesthetics informed by a Constructivist vision, although not entirely liberated from Cubo-Futurist formal strategies.

[19] Even *And Could You?* plays into that pattern since it is placed in a different context.

Moralizing Tales

The third group of poems strikingly differs from the previous two. Before that, we dealt exclusively with non-narrative poetry. In this section, we encounter five narrative poems, each of them tells a particular story. These stories contain topical subjects, referring to the reality of a post-revolutionary state. Each poem as a narrativized utterance seeks to re-establish the relationship between poetry as an act of story-telling and the reality of life. Therefore, these poems might be said to exemplify a new kind of art needed by the new community, the art produced through the union of the world of aesthetic autonomy and the social world.

The Tale of a Red Cap

This poem explicitly points to a specific genre: it is a "tale" (fairy-tale), or a story for children. As such, it presupposes certain generic expectations such as the use of stock, clichéd narrative structures, a relatively uncomplicated plot, a few characters, and a clearly stated moral in the end. In other words, both the plane of narration and the plane of content appear to be rather unsophisticated and easily comprehensible. Although on the surface *The Tale of the Red Cap* appears to follow the genre conventions, it will be more accurate to say that, in fact, it is more of a parody of a tale, a tale with a double address, told as if it were narrated to kids but at the same time oriented toward an adult audience.

As a parody, the poem engages traditional narrative formulas inherent to the genre of tale, but undercuts them in terms of transmissible content, using the formulae in order to communicate topical matters. The poem begins with a familiar sequence of the formulaic structures:

Жил да был на свете кадет,

В красную шапочку кадет был одет. (ML 43)

(Once upon a time there lived a Cadet, / this Cadet he wore a red cap on his head). (ML(e) 38)

At first sight, we encounter a typical description of a hero borrowed from a folk tale, slightly undermined by the mention of modern realia, "cadet" (a member of the constitutional-democratic party). However, this set of expectations is thwarted by the following lines:

Кроме этой шапочки, доставшейся кадету,

Ничего в нём красного не было и нету.

Услышит кадет – революция где-то,

шапочка сейчас-же на голове кадета. (ML 43)

(Apart from this cap, his inherited headdress, / The Cadet was completely untouched by redness. / If he heard revolution, the sound that he dreaded, / Straight away on his head the cap will be ready.) (ML(e) 43)

These lines bring us back to topical matters, or to the struggle of the political parties during the revolution. These lines set a satirical tone, enhanced by the next lines, that unfold a simple plot: suddenly "a big wind rose up" and blew the red cap into shreds. As a result, "the wolves of the revolution" "grabbed" the Cadet, since they "don't eat bread." This tale is followed by a straightforward moral: "Когда будете делать политику, дети, / не забудьте сказочку об этом кадете" ("So if you play politics, kids, don't forget / this little sad story about the Cadet").

The genre of the "tale" is subverted from inside as the tale unfolds. We see numerous markers of topicality pop up in the poem. Such is the mention of the revolution, and an implicit commentary on the Cadet's political allegiances. In addition, there are also sarcastic references to his "gaiters" (манжеты) and to the "diet" (диэта) adopted by wolves (Известно какая у

волков диета). Those lexical units are markedly modern, representing a sign of times, unimaginable within the context of a tale.

It seems that in this poem the frame of the "tale" is undone from within with references to the real world of politics. Instead of offering us an entertaining tale, this poem parodies the genre and addresses a topical concern in order to leave us with a propagandistic conclusion. Thus, in this poem we see a traditionally artistic form (tale) being turned into and destroyed by a maximally non-artistic, utilitarian mode of diction. In that sense, this poem is obviously in line with the invectives (like "Scum!") and "orders" to the "arts armies," that stress the prevalence of things over words, the preference of "real art" over avant-garde formalistic experiments.

Therefore, in terms of its pragmatics, the poem as an utterance seems to intimate that it is an example of the new art, needed in the new community. It is not a "tale," an imaginary construction, but a parody of a tale engaging topical concerns, the events happening in reality, in plain terms. Here the seemingly denotative, first-order, plain signification triumphs over the connotative one.

The Story About a Woman

This poem is another example of how the form is reproduced only to be undercut by the signs of topicality and the presence of primary referential reality.

The poem starts off by recounting the gossip of two women, introducing the topical subject of their concern: prices for food. Their gossip is placed in and refers to a larger context of the struggle between the White and Red armies. This struggle figures as a prominent and necessary factor in determining the standards of living. Thus, the thematic focus of the poem, its referential content, turns out to be relevant to the present-day situation, not to a universal moral judgment concerning human experience.

The "tale" form is used to frame the drama arising from earthly and topical concerns of two gossiping women. As it happens in a folk tale, a woman gets a pair of "seven-league boots" (ML 46; ML(e) 46) and becomes capable of paying a visit to Vrangel and seeing a "land of skittles and beer" (ML 46; ML(e) 46), where "a pound of flour" (ML 45; ML(e) 45) costs twenty roubles flat. She finds herself at a restaurant in Yalta in the company of Vrangel where she sees that everything "as cheap as cheap" (ML 47; ML(e) 47). Thus, the woman stuffs herself and is ready to foot the bill, but, much to her dismay, the waiters do not accept Soviet currency and insist on the inflation of currency, making everything "cheap" worth millions. A comic incident follows, in the course of which the woman regurgitates back what she has eaten and flees back to RSFSR. The poem concludes on an explicitly propagandistic note: "Do you still want / to taste the life / in Vrangel's pure heaven?" (ML 49; ML(e) 49). In terms of its pragmatics, the poem is another example of the valorization of utilitarian art over the imaginative, of real-life realities over fantasy. The denotative signification is again valorized over the connotative one.

Naval Romance

This poem also uses the genre of a tale, or even fable. The presence of topicality in this poem is diminished (yet is not completely absent); hence, historically concrete mundane routine is elevated to the level of an imaginary art world, a story in which an experience is framed by the means of a totalizing judgment.

The plot of the poem is rather simple and narrates the story of an unhappy love between two destroyer ships, a "girl" and a "man." Their romance did not last long because of a searchlight, leading to the destruction of the destroyer-man. Nevertheless, in contrast to the first two narrative poems, the focus in this poem is not on the "what" but on the "how," not on the message but on its articulation.

In this poem, we can note an overabundance of diminutive suffixes that form new coinages (such as “миноносица,” female destroyer) and supply a number of connotative meanings. Here are the forms the word “миноносец” (destroyer) takes on:

миноно**сиц**а (literally: little female destroyer)

миноно**сочк**а, миноно**сочк**и (literally: little and lovely female destroyer)

миноносье (миноносьему, миноносином) (this adjective indicates possession and means that something belongs to “destroyer”)

миноно**син**а (literally: large and unpleasant destroyer, the opposite of “миноносочка,” the second example)

Each of these forms is laden with affective meanings, suggested by suffixes (the effect of which is completely lost in translation). For example, in the first four lines, the suffixes, used to form neologisms, communicate the meanings associated with the expression of tender feelings, such as love, attachment and affection:

По морям, играя носится

с миноносцем миноносица.

Льнёт, как будто к меду ос**очк**а,

к миноносцу миноно**сочк**а. (ML 51)

(Over the oceans, gamboling gaily, / sailed a destroyer with his lady. / They stuck together like wasps to jam, / the destroyer and her destroyer man.) (ML(e) 51)

The lines in which the vilified searchlight appears, on the contrary, display the use of suffixes that are associated with the expression of aggression:

Как взревёт медноголо**син**а:

“Р-р-растакая миноносин**а**!” (ML 51)

(And a voice reared out[20], like a brassy sermon: / “K-K-Kill that lousy destroyer vermin!”)

(ML(e) 51)

Thus, the shift from the expression of tender emotions to the aggressive assault occurs on the level of additional, second-order, connotative meanings, communicated by suffixes. This change in connotations enables the reader to emotionally respond to the plot of the poem and approach it in affective terms. Therefore, this poem is rich in experience, a participation in a particular situation or state. Despite some topical markers and references (such as destroyer and searchlight), in terms of affective experience this poem offers us an example of an almost existential situation.

In terms of the pragmatic import, the speaker makes us see a deeper emotional meaning in a topical event (“the destroyer sank”). Thus, he uncovers a new affective reality beneath the world of events, and offers us a totalizing judgment: “И чего это несносен нам / мир в семействе миноносином?” (And why don’t we love / the peace and happiness in the destroyer family?). If *The Tale of a Red Cap* and *Story About a Woman…* relied on the engagement of the real world and political realities as a mode and communicated value judgments, this poem operates in the realm of emotions and relies on communicating an affective experience. Thus, if the poems about “Cadet” and a “woman” sought to create a sense of community through the indoctrination of common values, this poem goes further in cultivating new emotions arising from topical matters. The connotative dimension, second-order signification, brought about

[20] Nevertheless, the translation here is not quite accurate. In Russian, we read: “And a voice reared out, like a brassy sermon: ‘You, terrible female destroyer, how dare you!’ ”. Understandably, the translator sacrificed the literal meaning for the sake of preserving rhyme.

through the use of suffixes, becomes prevalent in the text as a whole and turns it into a story that communicates an emotional experience.

Proper Respect for Horses

This poem also fits within the genre of a tale, in which a deeper affective meaning arises from what seems to be a story marked by topical references. The plot itself might refer to the realities of pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary years, with horses being used as a means of transport and often starved to death, especially during the years of War Communism.

In the poem, the horse falls over and is assaulted by "gawpers" up until the speaker addresses the poor animal and encourages "him" (or "her," since in the Russian text it is clearly intimated that the horse is female) to get up and start over again. This poem, like *Naval Romance*, offers an almost existential experience within the frame of an everyday situation.

This effect is reached through the use of alliterations and sonic repetitions. These devices imitate the sonic environment in which the accident happened and suggest a mood. For instance, let us look at the alliteration in the beginning of the poem:

Били копыта

пели будто:

– ГРИБ

ГРАБЬ

ГРОБ

ГРУБ (ML 53)

(Hoofs drummed, / sang their song: / – CLIP / CLAP / CLOP / CLUP) (ML(e) 53)

Here we see a familiar pattern of using monosyllabic units, similarly sounding and potentially replaceable within a sound sequence. The speaker plays upon sounds "г," "*р*," "б"

that presumably imitate the sound of the horse's hoofs beating against the pebbles, or, perhaps, her neighing. Semantically, those words are associated with death, violence, and aggression: "грабь" is the imperative form of "to rob", "гроб" stands for coffin, "груб" means "rude" ("гриб," meaning "mushroom," is probably an accidental addition to that group, motivated by its sonic similarity). Thus, this group of words both imitates the sounds of the environment (the horse's neighing and the clattering of its hoofs) and communicates a gloomy, turbulent mood associated with this sonic ambience.

Let us examine other examples of sound-play that simultaneously work to render the sonic landscape and convey a mood:

Ветр**о**м **о**пита, / льд**о**м **о**бута, / улица ск**о**льзила. Л**о**шадь на круп / гр**о**хнулась. (ML 54)

(The street slid, / wind-drunk, / ice-shod, / and suddenly up- / side down went a horse) (ML(e) 54)

Сра**з**у / **з**а **з**е**в**акой **з**е**в**аки / …смех **з**а**зв**енел и **з**а**зв**якал. (ML 54)

(And hey presto / gawper after / gawper bumming down the street / gathered / with hoots of laughter) (ML(e) 54)

Лишь **о**дин я / г**о**л**о**с св**о**й не вмешивал / в в**о**й ему, / п**о**д**о**шел и вижу: / глаза л**о**шадиные… / улица **о**пр**о**кинулась… / течет п**о** св**о**ему…(ML 54)

(and only I / didn't join the throng. / I went and saw: / horse's eyes… / street upside down… / all flowing along…) (ML(e) 54)

…за ка**пл**и**щ**ей ка**пл**и**щ**а / …прячется в **ш**ерсти, / и какая-то об**щ**ая / звериная тоска, / **пл**е**щ**а, вылилась из меня / и рас**пл**ылась в **ш**елесте. / Ло**ш**адь, не надо. / Ло**ш**адь, слу**ш**айте – / Чего вы думаете, что вы их **пл**о**ш**е? (ML 54)

(drop after drop, / running down the muzzle, / hiding in the hide… / and some common / animal grief / poured out of me / and whispered far and wide) (ML(e) 54)

…**р**ванулась, / … / **ржа**нула / и пошла. / Хвостом помахивала – / **р**ы**ж**ий **р**ебенок. … / И все ей казалось – / она **ж**е**р**ебенок, / и стоило **ж**ить, / и **р**аботать стоило! (ML 54)

(shook itself / …snorted… / set off with a leap / Like some red-haired lad /… came home to his stall / with a smile / He felt as if / he was just a foal / and life and work / were still worth while!) (ML(e) 54)

The first and third alliterative patterns abound in "o" sounds, evoking a howling sound of wind and a roar of "gawpers," the sounds of the street. The second pattern evokes the sounds of laughter, referred to in the line itself, by playing upon "з" (z) and "зв" (zv) sound structures. The fourth pattern capitalizes on the use of "пл" and sibilant sounds ("ш," "щ"). It mimics the "whisper," "rustle" of consoling words and crying sobs. Indeed, the sound of tears "hiding in the hide" and accompanied by sobs (probably) is captured by sibilants, reproducing the "whispering" sound of silent cry. The fifth pattern makes the use of "*р*" and "ж," marking the shift to a more major tonality, in which the horse is up again and neighs. This pattern can be said to replicate the sounds of the horse.

On the level of communicated emotion, the first and third pattern, emulating the sounds of the street, simulate an aggressive and hostile atmosphere. The second pattern, imitating laughter, carries that line further, while the fourth pattern, on the contrary, offers a sonic equivalent of consoling ambience. Finally, the fifth pattern sets up a joyful, enthusiastic mood (enhanced by the conclusion: "И стоило жить, и работать стоило!"; "…and life and work were still worth while!").

This poem, although taking an inspiration from a topical, routine incident, uncovers an existential emotional dimension beneath it. From an instrumentalized means of transportation the horse is turned into a human-like subject, worthy of empathy. In order to do so, the speaker relies on sonic devices, integrated into the poem as a whole, to suggest a particular sonic ambience and communicate a mood. Again, pragmatics-wise, here we see an example of the attempt to instill a culture of emotions. In order to do so, the speaker relies heavily on the connotative, second-order signification, manipulating sound patterns as part of the story to produce emotional response.

The Most Extraordinary Adventure…

This poem offers us a provisional balance between topical poetry (utilitarian) and a more aesthetically universalizing story, managing to combine both the aesthetics of "real art," art of things and utilitarian poetry, and a less engaged aesthetics. The plot of the poem is the speaker's meeting with the sun, in the course of which his goals and tasks as a poet are redefined.

The narrative of the poem is centered on a gesture, not altogether foreign to non-narrative poetry in this volume: an act of provocation, when the speaker directly addresses the sun:

…в упор я крикнул солнцу:
"Слазь!
довольно шляться в пекло! –
я крикнул солнцу:
"Дармоед!
занежен в облака ты,
а тут
не знай ни зим, ни лет
Сиди –

Рисуй плакаты!”

Я рявкнул солнцу:

“Погоди!

Послушай злато-лобо –

чем так без дела заходить

ко мне

на чай зашло-бы”. (ML 58)

(I shouted out loud: / “Come down! / Stop lazing in the heat!” / I shouted to him: / “You parasite! / lying on your bed of roses, / while down here, / come rain or shine, / it’s just sit / and draw more posters.” / I roared to the sun: / “Just you wait! / Golden-browed one, you’ll see – / instead of lying about in state, / come and have tea / with me.”). (ML(e) 54)

As such, this attempt to address the sun is purely provocative in its intent, reminding of “And could you?”. The speaker insults the sun, which is marked by the use of vulgarisms (“Слазь!”, “Дармоед”, “шляться”; “Come down, you!”, “parasite!”, “lazing in the heat”). The sun is pictured as the same “other” familiar to us from “Scum” – a complacent, passive bourgeois, not investing much effort into his work.

However, once insulted, the sun engages in a dialogue with the poet, without resisting him. As it turns out, the poet’s accusations were not justified, and his provocation seemed to be rather childish, as is intimated in the sun’s response: “I’ve put my flames into reverse for the first time since creation” (ML 59; ML(e) 59). In the end, both adopt a more collaborative and constructive attitude towards life: “shine and praise in this gray dump of ours,” “[s]hine all the time” (ML 61; ML(e) 61).

This dialogue between the poet and the sun might be read metaphorically as the dialogue between the poet and authority, the subject representing a collective body of people and their will. Insulting and provoking the sun metaphorically stands for accusing and hailing the authorities. In the course of the poem, the two subjects decide on collaboration, agreeing to work on both fronts, one being day and the other night, or, if we push the metaphor further, one being life and the other, art.

Thus, in pragmatic terms, this poem offers us an easily decipherable fable, which refers to the actual relationship of the poet with his implied audience. It might even appear that in this poem we have an unambiguous allegory, which would raise the topicality of the poem, referencing primary reality, the world of politics, exclusive of artistic activities.

However, in this poem we encounter the potential for semantic ambiguity, stressed by the use of purely literary devices. This is, first of all, hyperbole, indicating a fictional, imaginative character of an utterance. In fact, the whole poem is focused on hyperbole. The sunset blazes with "a hundred suns" (to be more exact, "with a hundred and forty suns"). The poet addresses the sun, a celestial object that cannot be reached in any way. What is more, the sun goes to the village, without burning everything on its way, becoming a friend of the poet. Such a hyperbolical plot of the poem is obviously supposed to be taken with a grain of salt. Thus, this story can be read as a tale told for amusement, with a slight moralizing judgment in the end – one ought to be "like the sun," or "shine," i.e., serve a large body of people committing oneself to it devotedly.

Thus, in this poem we see a balance of denotative, first-order, and connotative, second-order systems of signification. The purely referential here is counterbalanced with the literary; semantically unambiguous references, with semantically ambiguous devices. The speaker

manages to reach a compromise between "things" and "art," utilitarian and non-utilitarian and propose it as an example.

Conclusion

As I have shown, in this group of poems the speaker tries to establish a new kind of art, as far as the pragmatic effect of the poems is concerned. The poems either use a poetic utterance to speak about the real world or turn topical, mundane events into a piece of art, so that their effect, in turn, transforms reality.

What also has to be noted is that in these poems the speaker engages the devices that operate on the level of the text as a whole. The reason for this is that this group of poems differs significantly from the previous two in terms of genre, since here for the first time we encounter narrative poetry. All the poems in this category (*The Tale of a Red Cap, Story About a Woman Who of Vrangel Talked…, Naval Romance, Proper Respect for Horses, The Most Extraordinary Adventure…*) narrate a story with an unambiguous, clearly stated moral conclusion. Therefore, the devices the speaker chooses to work with are related to the text as an example of a particular narrative genre. Nevertheless, we cannot but notice that despite all attempts to attain the "art of things," the speaker never manages to do so; the predominance of the connotative devices over the denotative ones aligns him with the aesthetic tendencies of Cubo-Futurist poetics rather than Constructivist ones.

Conclusion to the chapter

Mayakovsky's poems in *For the Voice* follow each other in a sequence that is conducive to staging a carefully structured drama in the reader's mind. By playing with particular speech genres and switching between connotative and denotative devices and systems of signification, the speaker manages to

1) establish a single community out of the heterogeneous audience,

2) chart a program to be executed in art and life by that community (more precisely, stressing the necessity to integrate art into life, enhance its utilitarian aspects, replace words with things),

3) give an example of the new art as part of life.

In doing so, the speaker strives to attain the goals of a purely utilitarian art, the degree zero of art, but, as we see, never really manages to accomplish this task, since he falls back on relying on highly connotative devices and is not capable of eschewing the purely literary dimension of art. Thus, the art of things, delineated as a prospect and as an ideal goal, remains a utopian undertaking. In the end, the tendencies of Cubo-Futurist poetics dominate over the tendencies of a Constructivist vision.

CHAPTER 4

THE VISUAL DIMENSION OF THE BOOK

The Book as a Material Object

In this chapter, I am going to focus more closely on the interrelation between word and image in *For the Voice*, or more precisely, on the role Lissitzky's images play in the book. I will treat the image (or the illustration, as a means of its communication) as a material object, the thing meant to be an active agent of social change.

To begin with, in order to make the case for the "materiality" of images, let us first look at the book as a material and physical whole. Its material embodiment is accentuated by a particular element, the remark preceding the book itself: "Book constructor El Lissitzky" ("Konstruktor knigi El Lissitzky"). The indication that the book is a "constructed" artifact underscores the fact that it is, first and foremost, a material entity, composed of physical elements.

Why do we need illustrations in a book, the purpose of which was, as I have said, to serve as a script for public performance? If it were its only purpose, then, probably, it could have been printed out without the help of a "constructor" and without any illustrations since the speaker only needs the text as a score. Nevertheless, the presence of the illustrations in a purposefully "constructed" book helps to emulate the context of a public performance in the absence of actual performance. In other words, the book not only serves as a script, but also performs and enacts a reading by and through its material characteristics. In light of this, the illustrations might be regarded as decorations for a vicarious, imaginative performance, allowing for the increased investment from the reader.

To put it in different terms, in the absence of an actual oral performance, the texts in the book are subject to the procedure of being read out of context. It implies that the meanings communicated by the text are no longer fixed, and that it enters into a play of signifiers. As a result, the meaning becomes deferred, since there is no context that anchors it (see Derrida 1977). It is precisely here that the visual context comes into play in this book. As a material and visual entity, inseparable from the text printed in a book, the visual context of *For the Voice* is deployed in order to emulate a context in which the poetic text might be read. In that new context, the meanings are fixed and anchored by their visual environment.

Primacy of Visual Perception

Thus, *For the Voice* can be treated as a material artefact, with the visual component playing an essential role – namely the role of making up for the context and atmosphere of a public performance. The primacy of visual perception is emphasized in the two independent illustrations opening the book. In other words, the visual mode is the channel through which the vicarious performance "for the voice" is enacted.

The first illustration (see fig. 1) represents an abstract figure consisting of a combination of what at first sight seems to be a trumpet with several lines and geometrical two- and three-dimensional shapes, like semi-circles, circles, squares, parallelepipeds and cylinders. This figure is organized around two crossing lines that connect to "circles" – the white circle inside the black part of the picture and the mouthpiece of a trumpet. The two lines intersect each other in the way rays of light do when they come through the lens of a pupil or a camera. The black figure thus might figure as part of the pupil or part of the film in the camera. The parallelepipeds at the bottom might resemble the legs of a camera tripod. Thus, we see that the image of a natural / mechanic eye, albeit abstract, is again foregrounded and placed in the center of the picture. Even

the mouthpiece looks like a second eye, with its round shapes. At the same time, it resembles both an ear and a trumpet, again accentuating the necessity of translating the vocal dimension into the visual.

The second illustration (see fig. 2) is, at the same time, a dedication. It is Mayakovsky's homage to his lover, Lily Brik, who facilitated his visit to Berlin (where he met El Lissitzky). What we see is, again, an abstract figure, with a circular line encompassing the triangle, three letters (Л, Ю, Б, standing for Lily Iurievna Brik), the black dot and the gray square.

Seen as a whole, this image is, again, similar to the depiction of an eye. The circular line suggests the contours of an eyeball whereas the triangle stands for the lens and the rays of light passing through it. The light is turned into the image of the black dot, located near the square, which can be interpreted as the image of the retina. At the same time, this image makes one think of a movie projector, disassembled into a series of abstract geometrical planes. The black dot stands for the source of light coming from the projector, and the triangle is a figure for the light while the square represents either the screen or the film inserted into the projector. The circular line suggests another view of the projector, seen from the front, not from the side, and facing the viewer directly.

Accordingly, the three letters inside the "eye" are read in a different way. Obviously, L.Iu.B. stand for Lily's initials. Moreover, repeated quickly several times over, the letters "L," "Iu," "B" form a word "l'iubl'iu," or "[I] love" in Russian ("люблю"). Mayakovsky, in fact, employed that pun several times and even had "L.Iu.B." engraved on a ring, so that it not only meant the initials of his beloved, but the word "l'iubl'iu" formed by an endless repetition (Jangfeldt 2014, 114). Thus, the dedication is both a reference to a concrete individual (L. Brik) and a performative statement addressed to this individual ("I love you").

When placed inside the picture, the letters are accommodated by a different mode. As it can be inferred, this picture underscores the primacy of visual perception as opposed to traditional vocal "reading." The traditional, linearly transcribed form of the word gives way to its spatial layout. The letters, in a way, bear resemblance to a visual poem, being both a word and a picture of an abstract form (a triangle formed by the letters). Thus, the letters are read both linearly (l-iu-b-l-iu), letter by letter, and simultaneously as an ideogram. It can be even suggested that the ideogram as a form of the word takes over its linear transcription, and thus the words, formed by the letters, are supposed to be read at once, simultaneously, the way an image is read off the screen by an eye.

Hence, the function of the dedication is to call attention to the importance of visual mode of reception by emphasizing the imagery of the eye and mechanical apparatuses for projecting images. Second, the dedication suggests that along with traditional, linear "reading" we should also simultaneously read the book in a different way, grasping the verbal ideogram as a whole. In other words, this image offers *a different way of reading as seeing.*

Materiality of Illustrations: Physical Interface for Reading

Similarly, the material character of the illustrations becomes of utmost importance in the discussion of their functional role as visual context of a vicarious performance. Despite the fact that the illustration is a two-dimensional abstract picture, I would argue that it is firmly embedded within the context of the page as a material object.

First, illustration are inseparable from the text they accompany. The illustrations always precede the text *per se*. Such an order is suggested and supported by the materiality of the printed book as a medium.

Second, illustrations are integrated into the physical context of the page as a material unit since they are coupled with a thumb index, combining the title and an element of the picture. Thus, the thumb-index functions as a reference to both the text and the illustration. In other words, illustrations form a single material whole, inconceivable apart from the book as a physical object together with the thumb index as an instrument of reference.

Finally, each illustration is composed out of typographical blocks, elements of the letters, and letters proper. In the text, the letters and their elements are regarded as transitive elements, communicating meaning as if they were absent from the page, but when used in illustrations, each element becomes significant *qua* material element, an integral part of the picture. It turns out that the letters and their elements as constitutive parts of the picture possess a specific materiality and texture (*faktura*).

As the material embodiment of visual meaning, the illustration is used to make up for a context of a performance, which remains absent. As such, taken in its materiality, the illustration figures as a decoration and as an immediate context in which the poems, read silently, are staged in the reader's mind as if they were performed for the voice. To put it in other words, the illustration supplies the *environment* within which the text thrives as a performative utterance and resonates as a public speech. The reader has to imagine the illustration as the systemic totality within which the poem is placed, as space for accommodating the text.

To elaborate on this idea further, the illustration functions as a *material interface* within which the text is performed and actualized. Indeed, if we understand by interface a space or "a place at which independent and often unrelated systems meet or act on or communicate with each other" (Merriam-Webster) or even "a program" supposed to enable the interaction with the information, then the visual design functions precisely as that kind of space or program,

facilitating the performative communication of meaning. The visual interface of *For the Voice* possesses a spatial structure, materially reinforced by the text and enabling its perception against this background, resembling a physical equivalent of a web-page.

Thus, the reader interacts with the illustration as the interface for realizing the poem as a performative utterance in the absence of the actual performance and the speaker. In this way, the material interface of the illustration could be used to fix free-floating meanings, proliferating in the text, divorced from the context of its reading (see Derrida 1998). It restores the context and diminishes the multiplication of signifieds, and, at the same time, translates the original context of an oral performance into a visual dimension.

In the next paragraph, I am going to pass on to the analysis of the illustration, with the idea of demonstrating how they function as a material visual interface of staging a vicarious performance and examining the particular techniques that enable that process.

Illustrations as Interface: Staging the Meaning

As the visual interface (often accompanied by a visually designed title), illustration always gives an almost immediate access to the dynamic structure of experience communicated by the poem and rendered visually. Additionally, the illustration supplies such contextual details as the information concerning the referential field of the poem or its main intention.

In our analysis, I decided to subdivide the poems into three groups based on the degree of abstraction used in the illustration-interface:

1) Illustrations based on the representations of real objects or figures (*Left March, Tale of a Red Cap, The Most Extraordinary Adventure…*).

2) Illustrations based on the representations of schematic, symbolic images (*My May, Scum, Third International, The Tale of Woman…, Naval Romance*).

3) Illustrations based on the representation of abstract figures, bearing no resemblance neither to real objects nor to symbols (*Our March, Order № 1 to the Army of Arts, Order № 2 to the Army of Arts, And Could You?, Proper Respect for Horses*).

The functions of the illustrations might be described as follows:

1) to summarize the plot or point to the situation / context invoked in the poem through the use of an object / symbol as a pictorial reference or the manipulation of abstract forms, corresponding to particular poetic devices,

2) to reproduce the dynamics of a reading experience by the means of visual representation, alerting us in advance to the performative effect that is supposed to be staged by the poem.

3) to pick up on formal devices, intrinsic to the poem as an utterance.

Illustrations-Representations

The first group includes three poems, accompanied by the illustrations that represent objects from the real world, albeit in a schematic, suprematist-like manner. In *Left March* we see the picture of a ship (see fig. 3), accompanied by the illustrative title, the visual design of which is also important in its relation to the illustration. In *The Tale of a Red Cap*, we have a man-like figure and a laconic typographic layout of the title (see fig. 4). Finally, in *The Most Extraordinary Adventure…* we encounter a schematic image of a sun (red circle) complemented by the visual design of the title (see fig. 5). The functional role of these illustrations is to chart a map of reading, to project particular accents onto the text and to channel the reader's attention in a particular way.

Left March

Left March is introduced with a recognizable image of a boat / ship (see fig. 3), followed by a more abstract illustrative title that evokes movement. The two illustrations are put in dialogue with each other, with the major role granted to the figurative representation. The picture of a ship refers to the implied audience of the march, namely, to "the sailors," as it is explicitly stated in the title. By invoking the implied reader, the two illustrations also supply the context of the performance: if the speech was addressed to the sailors, then, presumably, it took place somewhere in the close proximity of boats and the sea, in open space where it is possible to have a meeting and to march.

The ship as a pictorial representation of an object is composed of simple typographic / geometrical shapes. This picture communicates a peculiar dynamic pattern. As we read it from top to bottom, we first follow the movement suggested by three zigzag-like lines. This is a rapid movement down and forward, a thrust repeated rhythmically three times. Suddenly, our gaze stops, blocked by the cross of vertical and horizontal lines, forming the mast. Following the rhythmical repetition of crosses (altogether, there are five cross-like structures, symmetrically mirroring each other), we tend to slow down in the process of reading and experience each cross as a stop, a break in the movement. Finally, two mirroring patterns of three diagonal lines speed our gaze a little bit, so it finally reaches the symmetrical image of a ship, also suggesting a complete stop.

The same pattern seems to be repeated in the illustration blending with the text. "Левый" (Left), written vertically, suggests a movement upwards, so that we encounter "Марш" (March), written horizontally, and proceed from right to left, more slowly. A rapid progression is superseded by a steady advancement forward, the way it was done in the first illustration. Then

we have a diagonal line, also speeding up our reading, and implying a swift descent. It is at this point that we again reach a block represented by the word "матросам" (to the sailors) which is perpendicular to the line. The same pattern (movement – block) is played out in the picture with the ship.

Thus, the two illustrations have a common dynamic structure of reading: first, the viewer is carried away by an energetic thrust; then the viewer is suddenly stopped and prompted to proceed more gradually, until he is again provoked to speed up until he hits a final stop. This alternation of swift thrusts, steady advancements and stops renders visually, as we intend to demonstrate, the dynamic pattern intrinsic to the poem as an utterance.

It should be noted that this illustration picks up both on the plot of the poem and on its formal specifics. First, it allows us to learn what the poem will be about in terms of content, namely about the sailors and the related marine theme. Second, the two illustrations communicate the dynamics of movement and halt manifested in the text. In other words, they suggest an alternation of breaks and continuations as a pattern for reading, thus containing an instruction for the reception of the text.

The Tale of a Red Cap

Two illustrations framing the reading of *The Tale…* (see fig. 4) represent a simplistic depiction of a human figure composed of red and black blocks, and the title, also printed in black and red. The two illustrations are interconnected. The picture represents the protagonist of the narrative poem. The protagonist is "the Cadet" who had a red cap. The title, as a "visible word," points to the genre of the poem: "tale" (or, more precisely, *The Tale of a Red Cap,* a naïve girl eaten by the wolf). Thus, the situation described in the poem is constructed (and plotted in

advance) by visual means: the viewer infers that he is about to listen to a narrative about a certain character and his misadventures (similar to that of the Red Cap).

On the level of its form, the illustration ensemble speaks to the pragmatic intention of the poem. The figure of the cadet resembles a straw-man figure crowned by a red cap. Basically, it offers a depiction of a scarecrow. Thus, the Cadet becomes a caricature of a man. It is enhanced by the fact that both in the poem and in the picture the figure of Cadet is composed by two colors: red and black. In other words, the illustration intimates that in the poem we will be given an oversimplified, reduced portrayal of the protagonist. The parodic impulse of the poem is enhanced by the illustration. Also, the illustration emphasizes its use of simple graphic forms, revealing the poem's tendency to stick to a utilitarian, seemingly non-artistic format.

As an instruction mapping out the course of reading, the illustration again picks up on plot details and some formal aspects of the poem. It focuses our attention on the figure of the main character and the way it is represented. The illustration supplies some details of the plot, making us familiar with the situation described in the poem in advance. Also, it graphically recreates the parodic manner of presenting a human figure and draws our attention to parody as the mode of diction in that poem, making us see the speaker's intention to subvert the convention of a tale by deploying denotative, referential devices.

The Most Extraordinary Adventure…

With this poem, we also have two framing illustrations (see fig. 5), the picture *per se* and the illustrative title. In the picture, we see what seems to be the representation of the sun (large red circle). The title, like in *Left March*, suggests movement, since the word "Необычайнейшее" ("The Most Extraordinary") is broken into two parts, one printed vertically, the other horizontally, reminding one of sunrise and sunshine. The combination of the two

illustrations serves to map out the situation described in the poem and its plot. We anticipate that the sun will be one of its protagonists, that it will follow a familiar pattern of rising and setting, and that perhaps there will be something extraordinary about this activity.

On the level of its graphic form, the second illustration also hints at the key motif of the poem – the stress on hyperbole as the key device. The word "необычайнейшее" (the most extraordinary) is split into two parts, with the last letter E magnified several times. The act of magnifying a letter is repeated in the name of the protagonist ("с ВладимироМ Маяковским"; "with Vladimir Mayakovsky"). The use of letters that are larger than the rest of the word points to the use of visual hyperbole, when the attention is drawn to an insignificant part of the word (in both cases these are inflections) typographically turned into the word's most visible part.

As it can be seen, these illustrations also enter into a relationship with the key elements of the plot and the formal features of the poem. The first illustration centers our attention on the protagonist of the poem, while the second introduces us to what might be happening in the poem, i.e., the pattern of rising and setting sun. In fact, the poem operates on the assumption that this pattern is broken, so that the illustration sets up anticipations that will be revised later and will lead to a feeling of surprise. In terms of form, the illustration attunes us to the use of hyperbole, the key device at work in the poem.

Conclusion

To sum up, the figurative illustrations represent the real-life object and have two important functions as a material interface for the reception of the poem. First, they make the reader familiar with the plot or with the situation in which the poem takes place in advance. Therefore, the illustrations establish certain expectations that are either confirmed (in the case of *Left March* and *The Tale…*) or somewhat frustrated (in the case of *The Most Extraordinary Adventure*).

Second, the illustrations alert us to the central tropes employed by the speaker by integrating them as a part of the mode of visual representation.

Symbolic Illustrations

In the second group we have poems in which the illustrations are based on the representations of symbols, conventional signs, rather than on the depiction of real, tangible objects. This applies to the badge of honor in *My May* (see fig. 6), dots with the names of the cities and skulls in *Scum* (see fig. 7), the hammer and sickle in *Third International* (see fig. 8), the two-headed eagle in *The Tale of a Woman…* (see fig. 9), hearts split by an anchor in *Naval Romance* (see fig. 10).

These illustrations also attract our attention to the settings in which the poems are placed and to the formal strategies operating in the poems.

My May

With this poem, we have only one illustration (see fig. 6), with the title integrated into it. The illustration is formed by the red circle and number one (merging into an image of a badge of honor) and the words "мой май" (moi mai; my may) blended into a single ideogram. This image, uniting the symbol of badge with a text, conjures a context addressed in the poem: the socialist holiday, the 1st of May, International Workers Day. Therefore, it sets up certain anticipations for the viewer-reader, making him think that he will perhaps read a poem about a workers' demonstration.

If we turn to the form, we will see that the visual ideogram, set off against a recognizable symbol uniting the workers, speaks to that formal tendency of using monosyllabic words to enhance the expression of solidarity. The blending of the words "мой" and "май" renders the idea of unity and stresses the use of easily replaceable monosyllabic units as formal devices.

Moreover, the ideogram is placed within a circle, which suggests an integrity of the ideogram and the visual form, thus speaking to the integrity of the community.

As it can be observed, here the illustration primarily picks up on the social context invoked in the poem. It supplies additional information with regards to the social situation the reader will be placed in when reading the poem. Also, it singles out the key formal device, or the heavy use of alliteration and similarly sounding monosyllabic units, and turns it into a visual device, or ideogram. Thus, the illustration not only captures a concrete context, but also comments on the poetic texture of language by visual means, thus enhancing our responsiveness to the creative use of words.

Scum

With this poem, we have a combination of two illustrations (see fig. 7). The first one represents what might look like a map (with London, Paris, and Berlin on it). Each city is linked to a visual form of the word "Самара." This word has several forms. It is written in a regular, linear way, with A's capitalized, then it is turned into an ideogram, and then reduced to the "A A A" sequence. The second illustration, or a visual text integrating the title, is the poet's address to the audience, printed diagonally and almost crossing the title, printed vertically.

These illustrations communicate contextual information, relevant for the understanding of the poem. In a way, both illustrations manage to tell a story. As we read the picture and move from one city to the other, and from one form of the word "Самара" to the other, we see that each inscription is accompanied by the picture of a skull and bones, a commonly accepted symbol of death or lethal danger. As it can be noted, three diagonal inscriptions turn the name of the city into a desperate cry by capitalizing the vowels and ruining the look of the word, breaking it apart into vowels and consonants (the second inscription) and then getting rid of the consonant

part altogether. Thus, it can be inferred that a terrible catastrophe struck “Самара” (Samara), and that the degree of the atrocity gradually increased. Also, the reader / viewer suggests that this terrible incident is somehow interwoven into the global economic and political network of European states. The author’s address, turned into a visual text, clarifies the initial impression by stating that this poem is an invective, directed against those who let this catastrophe happen:

Гвоздимые строками,

Стойте немы!

Слушайте этот волчий вой,

Еле прикидывающийся поэмой!

(Nailed by verse / Stand there dumb! / Listen to this wolf’s howl / Hardly trying to be a poem!).

The illustrations also communicate the dynamics of a reading experience on the level of form. As we progress from London to Berlin, we progress from the denotation of the city (“Самара”) to the connotation of what happened to its dwellers (“A A A”). Besides, the domination of connotative meanings over denotative ones is manifested in the second illustration. As such, it is an appeal to those listening, mobilizing the connotative meanings of the words to produce the intended effect. First, the word “scum” itself, when used to address someone (which is the case here), is purely connotative since it expresses an emotional reaction. The next four lines carry this impulse further, explicitly stating that the listeners are supposed to be “nailed by verse,” “stand dumb,” listen to the “wolf’s howl.” In other words, here the primacy of the emotional effect on the reader, reached through the use of highly connotative words like “scum,” is underscored. The visual arrangement of the words reflects the desired connotative

effect: the word “scum” really appears to be nailed by the diagonal lines, aggressively pointing at it.

These illustrations also neatly summarize what will be told in the poem and in what chronological order, providing the reader with a literal “map” of reading. By playing with the visual image of the word, the illustration manages to stage the drama that occurs in the poem, namely, a decisive shift from bare digits to their emotional value. It can also be noted that the illustration mostly refers to the social reception of the event rather than the event itself.

The formal aspects of the devices employed by the speaker are also translated into the visual dimension of the two illustrations. The first illustration visually renders the shift from denotation to connotation, as displayed by the transformation of the word “Самара” (Samara). The second illustration clarifies the pragmatic effect the poem is about to produce. Thus, the illustration also informs us about the key devices in the poem. Moreover, here the verbal device is also turned into a visual one, with the “visible word” (sAmArA; smrA; A A A) visually translating the work of rhyme (“spoken word”), and the diagonal lines translating the aggressive thrust of an invective.

Third International

This poem is accompanied by two illustrations (see fig. 8). The first represents the hammer and sickle, the second turns the title into a visual text, with the word “интернационал” (international) crossing the word “третий” (third) and the letter “т” (t) in common as a point of intersection.

The hammer and sickle, set off against the background of the Roman “three” as a symbol, unambiguously fixes the context of the poem. This symbol obviously refers to Communism as a movement and thus indicates the presence of a political theme in the poem. Moreover, through

the use of a Roman numeral three coupled with the Communist symbol and the title of the poem, it points specifically to "Third International" as an international communist organization. This illustration attunes us to the major theme of the poem and implies that we should pay attention, first and foremost, to the expression of political sensibilities.

Speaking of how the illustration foreshadows formal strategies employed in the poem, let us pass on to the second illustration, namely the title. The title, being more abstract, connotes a movement, suggested by the huge vertical "Т" and diagonal "интернационал" (International). The pattern of movement, conveyed by this arrangement of letters, is complex: the large "Т" implies a brisk movement downwards, followed by a steadier rise. This again sets up a march-like rhythm, similar to the one we observed in *Left March.* Therefore, it directs the viewer's perception of the poem as a song, where the effect is produced through the manipulation of rhythm and sounds.

Consequently, the first illustration, first and foremost, invokes a social setting and a cultural ideology in which the poem takes place. The second illustration underscores the formal mechanisms the speaker uses, namely the presence of a peculiar rhythm, which is turned into a visual rhythm organizing the title. What distinguishes these two illustrations is their relative simplicity and lack of visual complexity, partly in response to the poem's tendency to place emphasis on the seemingly simple, naturally sounding slogans, appearing to be "denotative."

Story About a Woman…

This poem has only one illustration, combining the visual accompaniment to the poem and the title (see fig. 9). On the illustration we see a double-headed eagle with both heads cut off. Some words forming the title of the poem (in particular, "Врангеле" and "толковала") interfere with the picture. Each of the words from the title is printed in a different font.

Thematically, this illustration attunes us to two key motifs in the poem. The first is the motif of food, the second is the motif of power, and the two are inextricably linked. The first motif is easily decipherable in the way the emblem of the eagle and the title are represented.

The eagle resembles a chicken on a cutting table, with the heads already missing; the words from the title are imposed on it like a stamp of quality; the use of different type fonts is reminiscent of café and restaurant signboards. Thus, illustration highlights the central theme of the poem – and the most topical one: food as commodity. The food motif is also associated with the imperial motif in this picture, i.e., the two-headed eagle. Therefore, the illustration strives to render the topical subject creating the conflict driving the plot: a functional link between the social order and food conditions.

On the level of form, the illustration comments upon the extensive use of markers of topicality. The illustration is designed in a way that is reminiscent of a newspaper headline. "Рассказ про то," "как," "кума," "Врангеле," "без всякого ума," "старая, но полезная история" ("Story about," "Woman," "Vrangel," "without rhyme or reason," "an old tale but a moral one") are all in different typefaces, with some of the phrases put in a frame. It reminds of the first page of a newspaper, where you might see different types of titles and visual designs. In other words, the illustration is visually and formally associated with a medium, predicated on the manipulation of topical matters.

As we can see, the illustration highlights the central theme and the central motifs in the poem. It also comments on the constructive tendency to deploy the topical markers by making use of those typographical forms that remind one of a topical medium in a newspaper. The seeming lack of "artistic" qualities in the poem is also echoed by the illustration, since it is composed of ready-made pictorial and typographical elements, superimposed on each other and

brought together in a collage-like manner, resembling “copy-paste” operation. Thus, the illustration emphasizes and foreshadows the gravitation towards a utilitarian, non-artistic mode of diction.

Naval Romance

The poem is also accompanied by an illustration that merges the title and the picture into a single whole (see fig. 10). We see a white and red heart with a black anchor superimposed on it. The title also possesses a distinct visual design, with the word “военно-морская” (naval) diminishing in size at the center and then magnified at the edges. The word “любовь” (love) is printed in large red letters, sending us back to the red heart.

Most importantly, the illustration highlights the key elements of the poem’s plot. The word “военно-морская” (naval) is typed in a way that resembles the antihero of the poem, the searchlight. The heart is a reference to the story of a romance described in the poem, and the anchor symbolizes its unhappy end, splitting the heart into symmetrical parts and forming a cross-like sign. Thus, the illustration as a visual context succinctly summarizes the story. It also anticipates the plot: we learn that the story, most probably, will not have a happy ending.

Visual devices also hint at the formal moves performed in the poem. As it has been mentioned, the word “военно-морская” (naval) has a strange visual form, being diminished and then magnified. The act of playing with the size of the word points to the manipulation of diminutive suffixes and its opposites, as in the opposition “миноносочка” (diminutive suffix “очк” that is used to denote either small size or an emotional attitude, usually a tender one) and “медноголосина” (suffix “ин”, used to denote big size or emotional attitude, usually one of fright and terror). The speaker plays with suffixes that denote size and connote attitude, while the illustrator plays with the size of the title, hinting at the same tendency.

Here we can observe that the illustration furthermore evokes an emotional attitude the reader is supposed to empathize with (namely a feeling of love). It also tries to integrate the formal strategy manifested in the poem and adapt it by visual means.

Conclusion

As we see, the symbolic illustrations respond to the plot and the formal devices of the poem adapting them to the visual dimension and creating a visual "summary" of the text. While sketching out the plot, these illustrations, unlike these in the first group, tend to invoke social conventions, emotional scenarios, or social attitudes, rather than a mere plot / story-line or a generic situation. At the same time, the illustrations attempt to adapt the formal strategies of the text and translate them into a visual dimension, creating specifically visual devices that make us attend to the poetic texture of language.

Abstract Illustrations

In the third group of poems we encounter a number of illustrations that make use of extremely abstract figures in order to produce the visual context for the actualization of the poem. Here we first see the red square accompanied by a verbal ideogram in *Our March* (see fig. 11); in the first "order" to the army of arts there are three letters floating in space among grid-like abstract planes (see fig. 12); in the second "order" the viewer is confronted by a cross and an inscription (see fig. 13); *And Could You?* also deploys letters as parts of the ideogram, seen against the background of a grid filled with question marks (see fig. 14); finally, *Proper Respect for Horses* is introduced by a verbal ideogram writ large (see fig. 15).

All these illustrations make use either of letters as visual images or ideograms and phrases formed by letters. More often than not, the letters / words as visual images are combined with abstract geometric forms, be it figures or planes. These illustrations do not seem to pick up on

the plot, setting or social context; they operate mostly on the level of the adaptation of a poetic form.

Our March

Here we have two illustrations, one of which is independent from the text and the other is bleeding into the text (see fig. 11). The first illustration represents a red square with an inscription-ideogram beneath. It is a combination of two words, "бей", "bei," meaning "beat!" (imperative mood) and "бой," "boi," meaning "a fight." The second illustration is the graphic rendering of the title of the poem, *Our March*, representing the word "Наш" (Our) in red, behind the word "Марш" (March) in black, so that "Наш" partially appears to be a shadow, cast by "Марш."

The illustrations reflect the effect the poem is supposed to produce and the specifics of its form. We see a bright red square that is supposed to be almost irritating. When translated into sonic terms, this visual shape can be construed as a metaphor for the sound of the gong (or a "copper kettledrum"). Thus, this shape is supposed the evoke the effect of a march song, moving one to action by shocking one out of his/her complacency, often through loud, noisy sounds.

These illustrations also comment upon the central device in the poem. The ideogram of "бей" / "бой" reflects the tendency of using monosyllabic words differentiated by a single vowel. This is a visual representation of the poem's main rhythmical devices packed into a hieroglyph. The propensity to use similarly sounding words is also reflected in the design of the title. As we have indicated, the word "nash" looks like a shadow cast my "march" since the two letters, "А" and "Ш," are set off against each other. Thus, one word partially mirrors the other and is visually "rhymed" with it, the way similarly sounding words are rhymed when pronounced aloud.

These illustrations, unlike those to the previous poems, focus precisely on the pragmatic intention of the text and the adaptation of its formal devices. To put it in different terms, here the illustrations are not as attuned to the plot or situation but rather the texture of poetic language and its impact on the reader.

Order to the Arts Army

In this illustration, we see three letters (mentioned in the poem), Р, Ш, Щ (R, Sh, Shch) among diagonal grid-like structures (see fig. 12). The letters are positioned in a real space, separated by grids. Р, Ш, Щ do not seem to be floating in space but instead are located at different distance from the viewer. While Щ and Р preserve a flat typographic form, Ш seems to be three-dimensional, indistinguishable from a row of columns. Also, Ш is perceived as the closest to the viewer, while Щ and Р are pushed further into the background.

We might regard this illustration as a reference to the line of the poem: "There are still good letters around, / **R,** / **Sh,** / **Shch**." However, we cannot quite say that this line is a reference to the plot or a social / emotional situation described in the poem. Rather, these letters stand for a new poetic ideal of art merging life and creative activity; they embody that ideal on the level of their pragmatic effect, since they are obviously *zaum* elements (transrational language) employed in order to produce an unanticipated effect (namely bridging art and life).

The illustration offers us an adaptation of the pragmatic effect of the poem. As the three letters, Р, Ш, Щ are interspersed with all kind of grids and barricades, these superimposed grid constructions give a sense of volume and three-dimensionality. Thus, each letter becomes a real, tangible object. We proceed from the flat two-dimensional background of the page, indicated by the letter Щ, to a more tangible Р standing on a sort of pedestal and separated from us by the

grids, and finally we encounter a physical form of Ш. Thus, it looks as if the letters step from the page into the real world.

Moreover, the illustration foregrounds those three letters as a key formal device used in the poem. These letters – and their corresponding sounds – do not possess any meaning, yet they are used to form an utterance pointing towards an action. By saying "р ш щ" the speaker pretends to cross the boundary between artistic experiments and life. Thus, these letters displayed in the illustration metonymically become associated with an "order," turning into a short-hand formula for it.

This illustration also captures the pragmatic outcome of the poem and its formal means. It focuses our attention on the desired effect and the formal strategies deployed to achieve it, thus making our reading informed by the knowledge of poetic mechanisms at work.

Order № 2 to the Arts Armies

This illustration speaks to one of the components of the "order," visually adapting its address ("Это вам," "This is for you"). On the illustration, we see an inscription "это вам" and a big cross, with a hand pointing at it. It is accompanied by a typographically designed title (see fig.13).

This rather abstract illustration also references a recurring line in the poem, interpellation "to you," and complements it with pictures of a cross and a hand. Thus, it singles out a formal device, structuring the poem as an utterance. At the same time, it focuses on the device, responsible for the creation of the pragmatic effect of the poem.

In the first place, this illustration reproduces visually the supposed effect the poem. The hand, added to the text, immediately switches our attention to the cross, the symbol of rejection

and denial. Thus, we encounter here an unambiguous statement of rejection, articulated visually, and related to the "old art."

In addition, it has to be noted that the first illustration implicitly assimilates the critique of the old art by the fact that it is composed of two mirrored images: the second "this is for you" is a distorted reflection of the first in the mirror. One part of the illustration reflects the other, but at the same time projects an inaccurate picture. Here one might read it as an implication that those belonging to the old art are also unable of "reflecting" nature but instead only distort it.

This illustration is almost devoid of any structural complexity. The same is applicable to the title-illustration printed in large bold letters. Both illustrations are relatively unsophisticated, demonstrating nothing but simple typographic forms. It seems to be a way of enhancing the plain form the poem makes use of as an order; it is indicative of the absence of any refinement and ornateness, the propensity to engage simple forms.

Thus, here the illustration also adapts the rhetorical and poetic features of the poem as an utterance, not only its content. It exposes the workings of the rhetorical and poetic organization of the poem visually, making us aware of their use by the speaker.

And Could You?

In the illustration we see a grid filled in by question marks. Against the grid we can make out four letters forming the words "А вы бы?" (And could you?) depicted as an ideogram (see fig. 14). The question mark pours out of the grid and seems to break its space. The illustration seems to capture the dynamics of the poem, more precisely, it also takes up its pragmatic effect and exposes the key formal device at work.

In terms of form, the illustration adapts the key device of mixing the ordinary and the poetic, everyday life and artistic creation. In the illustration we see variations of a question

presented visually – first, through the presence of question marks in the grid, second, through the question mark pouring out of the grid.

The illustration plays out the pattern of destabilizing the familiar routine, present in the poem and represented by the grid as a visual metaphor for regulating structure. The destruction of the grid occurs from inside, through the use of question marks that fill in the grid and finally lead to a huge question mark stretching outside the grid. The letters in the ideogram also enhance the idea of breaking with conventions. A is followed by "в" and then "б," thus implicitly violating the established alphabetical order of "а б в." On other words, the alphabet as a conventional signifying structure is reversed when the letters form an ideogram.

We can also say that the illustration picks up on the formal strategy and the pragmatic effect enacted through that strategy. It makes us more attentive to the texture of *And Could You?* as a poetic utterance.

Proper Respect for Horses

This poem is accompanied by an illustration that takes up the whole page-spread (see fig. 15). In it, we see four monosyllabic words (гриб, грабь, гроб, груб; clip, clapp, clip, clup), united into an ideogram. The consonant letters Г, Р, Б (C, L, P) are printed large and belong to the ideogram as a whole, while smaller vowel letters are interspersed between Р and Б.

The illustration speaks to the main device of the poem: the use of alliteration in order to emulate a sonic atmosphere. The similarly sounding words are displayed visually as a single ideogram. On the one hand, this ideogram is a visual reflection of a sonic device. On the other hand, it is also a commentary on it, namely, on its artefactuality, conventionality and on the fact that the sounds are manipulated in the same way letters are.

This ideogram is also reminiscent of a street signboard, which is supported by direction guidelines, dots and dashes, indicating a direction of reading. Some of the dashes resemble pebbles on the street, and some, marks on the signs. Thus, the ideogram also creates an atmosphere in which the action of the poem takes place. Nevertheless, it does not replicate the plot; by recreating the atmosphere through the use of an ideogram as a visual metaphor it performs visually what the poem performed sonically through the use of alliteration.

As a result, the illustration to this poem also renders its formal specifics and effects. It adapts the formal devices used in the poem to the visual dimension and uses them to the same end (namely, for the creation of an emotionally charged atmosphere).

Conclusion

The last group of illustration is predicated on the adaptation of "form" rather than "content" and does not seem to pick up on plot or social context. Instead, it offers the adaptation of the formal devices used in the poems by visual means and the recreation of their effect in the visual dimension.

Conclusion to the Chapter

As our analysis has demonstrated, the visual design, or illustration, plays a crucial role in the book. Being predicated on the primacy and immediacy of visual perception, it functions as a visual-material interface for staging and foreshadowing the pragmatic effect of the text. The illustrations are used as a context that fixes the meaning of the poem as a public utterance and maps out the future course of reading for the reader. Some illustrations pick up on plot details or the characteristics of settings and social context. There is also, however, a group of illustrations where this is certainly not the case. Nevertheless, what all the illustrations have in the common is that they all adapt the formal devices used in the poem to visual means. Thus, they attune the

reader to the strategies the speaker employs to reach the desired effect and reproduce that effect by visual means.

Therefore, it can be suggested that the adaptation of the text to visual means, performed by Lissitzky, alerts us to the poetic texture of the poems and thus is more in line with the practices of International Constructivism and Lissitzky's own projects. Since Lissitzky and other advocates of International Constructivism sought art that would be extended into life, without losing its artistic quality, *For the Voice* appears to be a strong example of that attitude. It immerses the reader into a poetic performance while extending it into real life. Lissitzky creates a new space for engaging an aesthetic experience of reading, recognizing its artistic potential and exploring its applications in real life, without getting rid of the aesthetic element *per se.*

Ultimately, the illustrations perform several basic functions. They

1) provide a summary of the plot or evoke the situation / context in the poem,

2) translate the dynamics of a reading process into the visual dimension, stage the effect produced by the poem,

3) awaken the reader to the formal texture of the poem, stressing its artistic quality.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study we have demonstrated that *For the Voice* is a typical avant-garde *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which the text is inseparable from its visual accompaniment. In our analysis it has been proven that in the text the pragmatic effect is foregrounded and valorized over the semantic content. It is the pragmatic intention of the poem that is adapted by the visual means in the first place.

In describing the pragmatic effect of the text and its adaptation by the visual means, we have posited that *For the Voice* as a corpus of texts incorporates and reworks the pragmatic intentions and poetic tendencies of the different artistic movements Mayakovsky was involved in. As we have shown, in terms of its pragmatics, *For the Voice* stages a particular drama, namely the performance of renouncing and negating the old art and moving towards the art of "things." In doing so, the speaker manages to turn the audience into a community and chart this decisive movement towards the new art as an aesthetic program. As a performance, *For the Voice* integrates pragmatic tendencies of the Cubo-Futurists and Constructivist artistic programs, reconciling them in a new poetic unity.

Nevertheless, this performance cannot be completed by means of the text alone. Presuming that there is no context of an actual public performance, we might say that Lissitzky's illustrations play the role of a visual interface that supplies the reader with a context for the creation of a virtual performance. The illustrations put an end to the proliferation of meanings and anchor the text in the context that delimits its possible significations. In our analysis, I have shown that the illustrations serve three basic functions: first, they map out the plot of the poem;

second, they reproduce a reading experience by visual means; and, third, they attune the reader to the formal strategies deployed by the speaker. As a consequence, the visual interface underscores the aesthetic dimension of the text and allows us to engage an aesthetic experience of reading in a more immersive way. This is not unlike other Constructivist (in the sense that they belonged to International Constructivism) projects Lissitzky accomplished.

What remains to be explored is the link between Lissitzky's book project and other modernist artistic productions, such as Dada experiments, Futurist books, etc. What is also of interest and has not been covered in this study is the connection between the book and a wider publishing context, including various magazines such as *Ve*š*č – Gegenstand – Objet.*

One of the wider implications of our research is that avant-garde multimedia projects transform and modify readerly modes of engagement with the text through the use of different media and their interaction. This suggestion might serve as a basis for future research in that direction, including other multimedia works such as *livres d'artiste,* little magazines, and other verbo-visual collaborations. On the other hand, a perspective on avant-garde productions, informed by an awareness of media, might benefit from a comparison with later multimedia works, such as post-modernist poetic projects, from the Black Mountain School and Moscow Conceptualism, to a newer generation of poets engaged in play with digital media.

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APPENDIX

A. FIGURES (*FOR THE VOICE*)

Fig. 1. Abstract Proun on the opening pages of *For the Voice* (Russian)

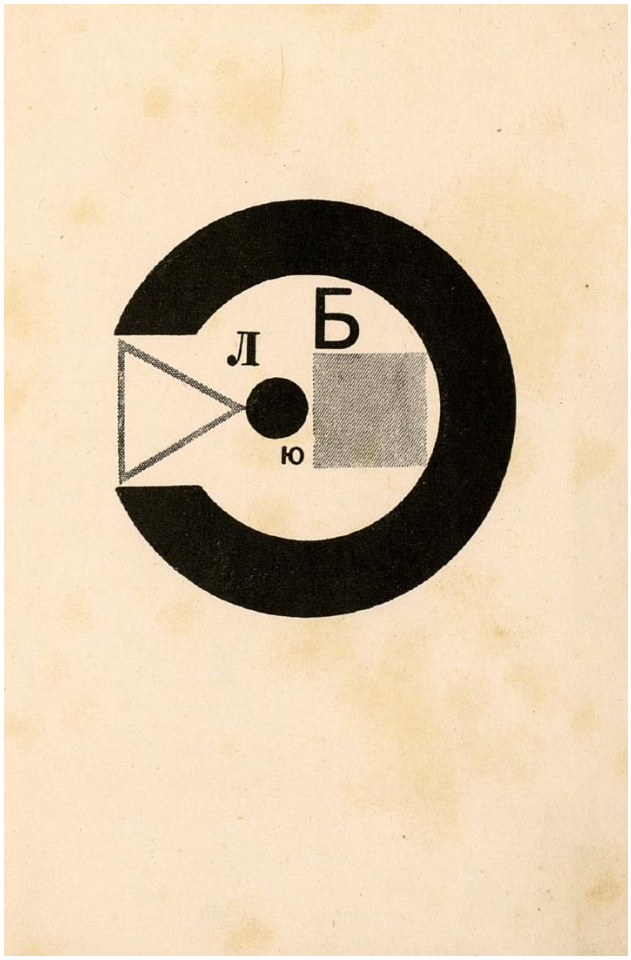

Fig. 2. Dedication

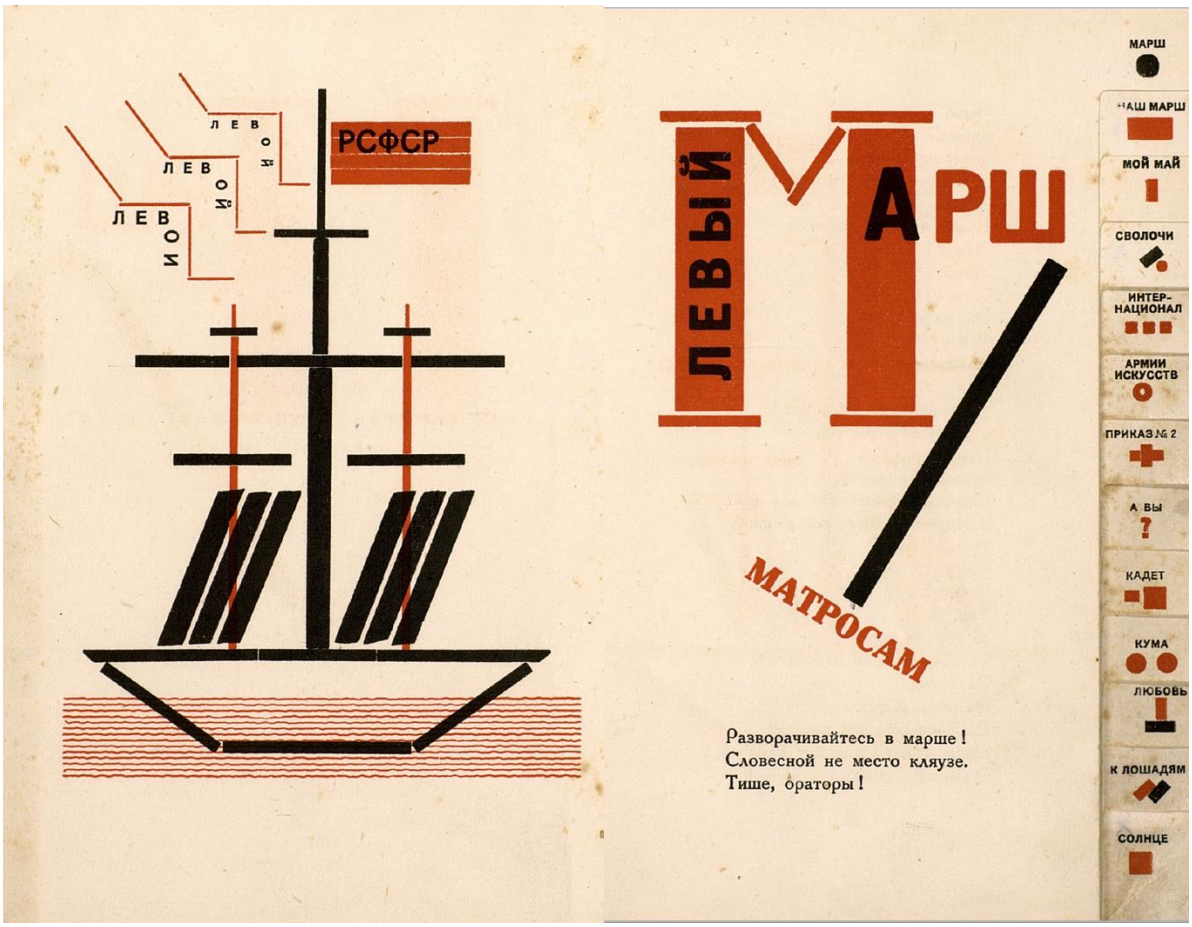

Fig. 3. Левый марш.

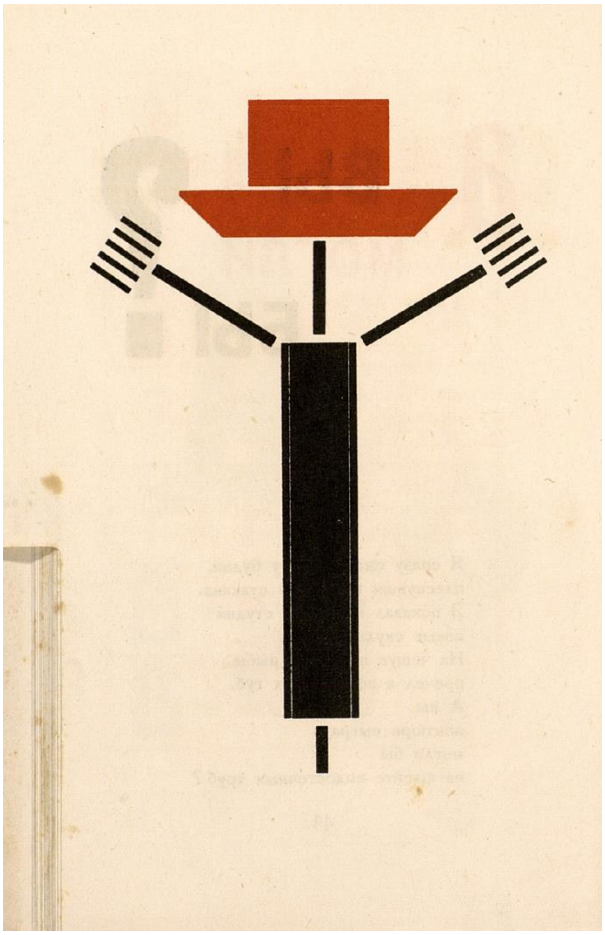

Fig. 4 Сказка о красной шапочке.

Fig. 5. Необычайнейшее приключение, бывшее с Владимиром Маяковским.


1 Мой Май
Всем
на улицы вышедшим,
тело машиной измаяв.
Всем
молящим о празднике
спинам,
землею натруженным —
Первое мая
Первый из маев
13
МОЙ МАЙ
СВОЛОЧИ
ИНТЕР-
НАЦИОНАЛ
АРМИИ
ИСКУССТВ
ПРИКАЗ № 2
А ВЫ
?
КАДЕТ
КУМА
ЛЮБОВ
К ЛОШАДЯМ
СОЛНЦЕ

Fig. 6. Мой май.

Fig. 7. Сволочи.

Fig. 8. Третий интернационал.

Fig.9. Рассказ про то, как кума о Врангеле толковала.

Fig.10. Военно-морская любовь.

Fig. 11. Наш марш.

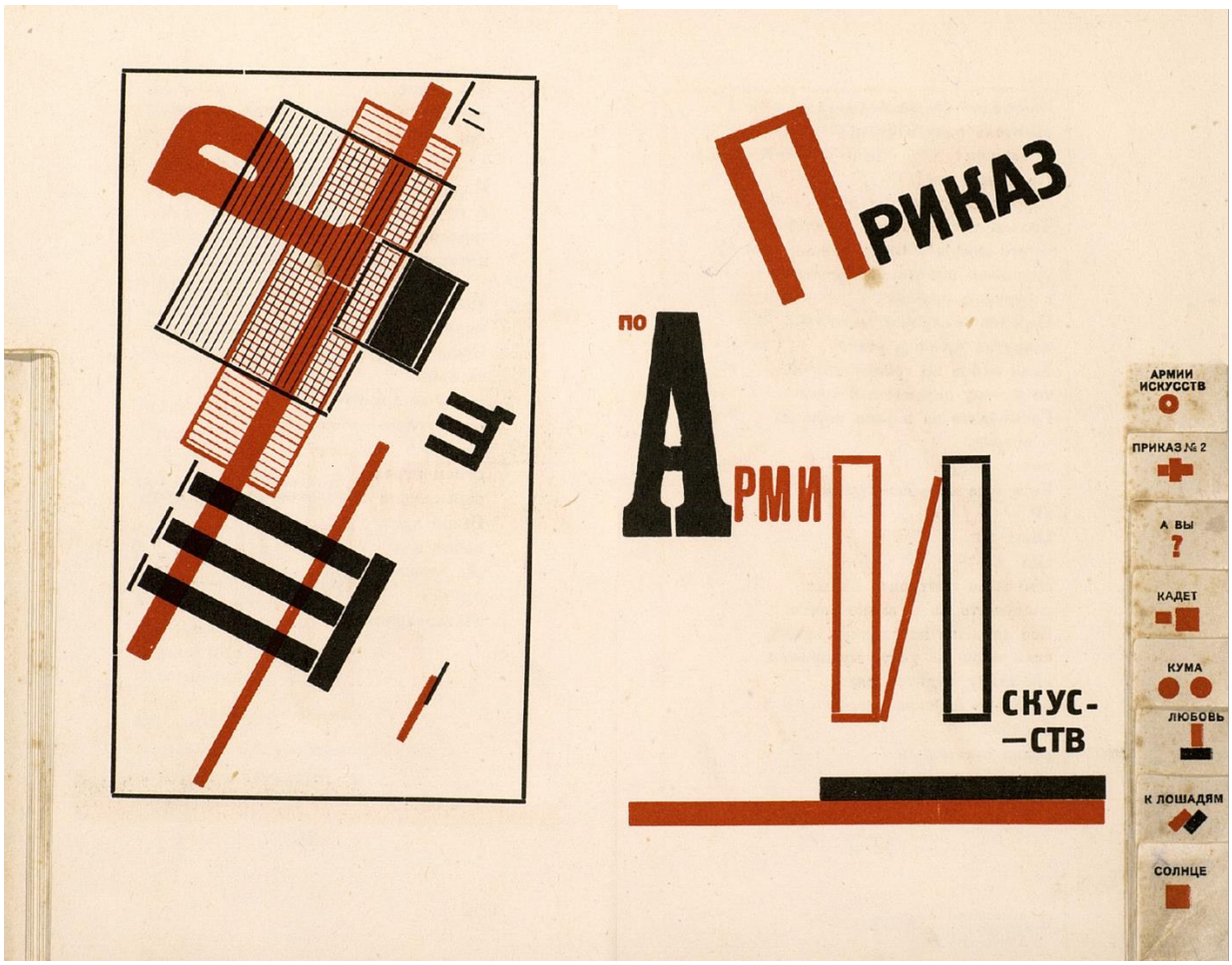

Fig. 12. Приказ по армии искусств.

Fig. 13. Второй приказ по армии искусств.

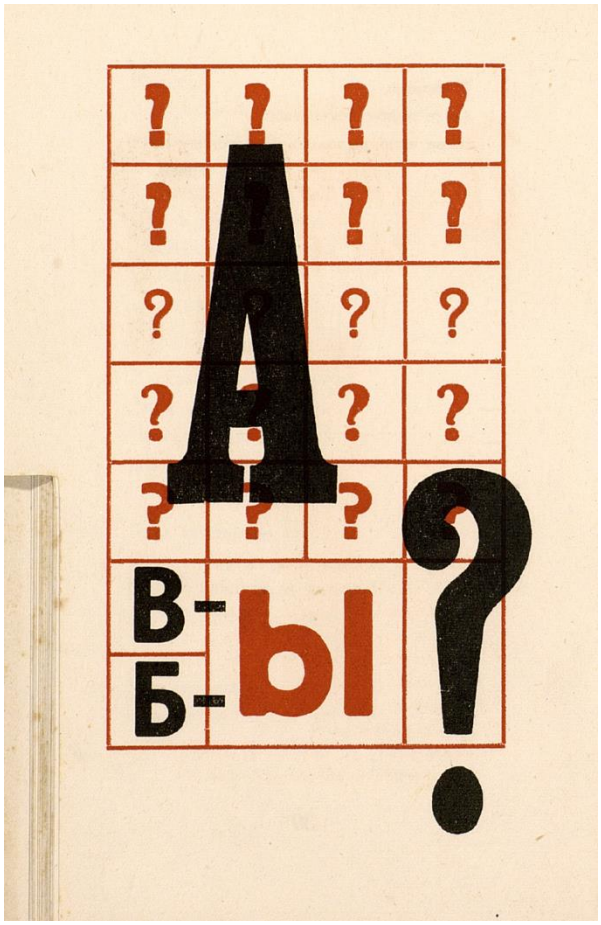

Fig. 14. А вы могли бы?

Fig. 15. Хорошее отношение к лошадям.