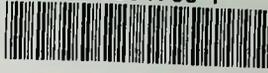


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FORM, LANGUAGE AND TYPOGRAPHIC EXPERIMENT AS A PURE MEANS OF  
EXPRESSION IN THE AVANT GARDE POETRY OF RUSSIAN FUTURISM AND  
ITALIAN FUTURISM.

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1991

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My main concern in this thesis is to explore the new awareness of form in Avant Garde literature and how this brought about the integration of language and form in an original and exciting way. This 'integration', a kind of chemical bond, is impossible to separate; for to separate the word from the image is to destroy the essence of this visual poetry.

I plan to trace this integration of language and form briefly, up to the early 20th Century and then specifically to show its development in Russian Futurism. I shall then compare this to Italian Futurism and briefly draw links between aspects of Russian Futurism and more recent Avant Garde visual poets of the 1950's and 1960's.

In this new 'poetry' differences between the poet's language and the typographer's form disappear. Wim Crowel states in Typography Today that there are basically two sorts of experimental typography: that which searches for a means to solve a particular problem and that which uses typography as a pure means of expression 1. In the former group he includes typographers such as El Lissitzky, Jan Tschichold and Piet Zwart. To them, typography was functional. It was used as a vehicle to communicate verbal language and ideas. They developed ways of structuring information into a logical easily accessible framework. Legibility was of essential importance.

On the other hand, the latter group, my concern in this thesis, experimented with type in order to express poetic meaning. Through typography, they wished to communicate something of a poetic sensibility which was 'deeper' than mere verbal information and they wished to express this not only literally, but also by translating the verbal content into visual typographical form.

Among these 'typographers of pure expression' Crouvel includes Apollinaire, Marinetti, Tzara, Schwitters and Diter Rot. Of these, only Diter Rot is essentially a typographer. He creates poetry in his typography: ... 'we find the roles reversed: an evidently typographic mind, ordering type into a poetry, rather than the essential poet wrenching the printers' form into an art' 2. There is a fine line of difference between the two. Language and words are an integral part of visual poetry. The typographer expresses through form, using words and language: In visual poetry, the poet expresses through words and language but with an awareness of the expressive force of form. What Avant Garde visual poetry and typographical expression have in common is the integration of language and form, both to produce equally the poetic expression. Thus, the difference between the two is not really important as they share the same aim.

Fig.1. Lewis Carroll 'The Mouse's Tail ' 1865

Fig.2. Dylan Thomas Vision of Prayer

We lived beneath the mat,  
Warm and snug and fat,  
But one woe, and that  
Was the Cat!

To our joys  
a clog, In  
our eyes a  
fog, On our  
hearts a log,  
Was the Dog!

When the  
Cat's away,  
Then  
The mice  
will  
play,  
But alas!  
one day, (So they say)

Came the Dog and  
Cat, hunting  
for a  
Rat,  
Crushed  
the mice  
all flat,  
Each  
one  
as  
he  
sat,  
Underneath the mat,  
Warm and snug and fat,  
Think of  
that!



## BACKGROUND

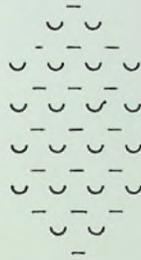
The integration of language and form was not a new concept before its use in Avant Garde poetry. Its history may be viewed more in terms of word/imagery - the imaged word and the worded image. This goes back to Babylonian and Egyptian pictograms, where their means of 'writing' consisted of a system of communicative pictures, each depicting a particular verbal meaning. Also, in early Christian manuscripts such as the Book of Kells we can see images and words being used together, both with equal emphasis but more inter-related than integrated.

An example of the worded image can be seen in Lewis Carroll's The Mouse's Tail 1865 (Fig. 1). This is a short amusing poem in which the words flow into what looks like a mouse's tail. The message is representational and is very successful as such.

Dylan Thomas' Vision of Prayer (Fig. 2) is a piece of writing that forms diamond shapes on the page. Richard Kostelanetz says that Vision of Prayer and The Mouse's Tail as representational word/imagery are essentially shapes filled with words, and tends to trivialise them as such. I'm inclined to disagree with this view in relation to Vision of Prayer. I cannot categorise it quite so simply. I suppose that its image is representational of a vision of prayer but this concept is essentially a spiritual and not a physical thing, as in The Mouse's Tail. The images of diamond shapes in Vision of Prayer are very expressive. To say that this imagery is merely representational is to underestimate the power of the image in portraying the spirituality of the piece - something words alone cannot do. The image for me is physically representative of a shape of hands praying. But on a spiritual level - the words are subtle, the shapes are definite, suspended in a space perhaps embodying prayers. This comes across through the image and this is what I find expressive about the piece.

Fig.3. Christian Morgenstern 'Fisches Nachtgesang' 1905

Fisches  
Nachtgesang.



3.

In Avant Garde Visual poetry, the idea of the image representing something does not really exist. Form goes beyond representation, at least in the physical, figurative aspect.

Christian Morgenstern's Fisches Nachtgesang 1905, (Fig. 3) is, in my opinion, a poem pre-dating the Avant Garde which keys into the spirit of Avant Garde visual poetry. It is a beautiful poem. It consists of a title - 'Fish's nightsong' - then underneath, a series of dashes and curves which form a pattern which visually conveys the title. The title directs our thoughts or clues us into the poem and the pattern of dashes and curves evokes, very eloquently, the essence of the poem - the fish's nightsong.

Form is essential in this poem. Form expresses something that words could'nt. It is this aspect of form that we see in the Avant Garde poetry, and it is this which is vital to its success as poetic expression.

Fig.4. Toby Lurie Colour Improvisation

Toby Lurie

*Color Improvisation*  
for three voices

154

1) } ovop                    ogheeeee                    pplepple                    ooo  
 2) }                    DFKL                    oooooooooommd    md    md                    wewewe  
 3) }                    mnzz                    zzz                    zzzzz                    zzzzzzoosommm

1) } pedpedcf            ped            d            d            d            llllllmmmm  
 2) }                    padfpadf                    ueivugje                    ddi                    kkkkkkkkkbbkkb  
 3) }                    SSSSH                    h VBVBVB                    ppppppp

1) } kdogkdokgokdgkodgkoko                    keike                    kie                    ko  
 2) }                    bnbnbn                    bnnnnn                    bnb                    bnnnnn                    lkiklkiklk  
 3) }                    dddd                    dddd                    ddddpppp                    pppd                    pppppddd                    ppp    p!

1) } rrrd                    rrrd                    rrrd                    rrrd                    rrrd                    grrrrrd  
 2) }                    lk                    lk                    lkdf                    lkdfg                    lkdfgh                    gh                    gh  
 3) }                    mn                    mn                    mn                    mn                    mn                    mmmmmmmmmm

1) } fe                    FFFFFFFFDFDFDFDFDFDFDFDFDTFFDFDFTDTDTDTDTDTDT  
 2) }                    lllllllld                    d                    saasaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaasdsd                    sdksdksdksdksd  
 3) }                    b                    m                    v v v v v v v v                    zzb                    zzbv                    zzbvvvvvv                    bvv                    v

1) } <sup>T</sup>                    <sup>T</sup>                    <sup>T</sup>                    <sup>T</sup>    P                    <sup>T</sup>                    P                    <sup>T</sup>    P                    <sup>T</sup>    P  
 2) }                    D                    LLL                    LLLLL                    jj                    jj                    jdd                    jjjjddd                    jd                    jd  
 3) }                    mmmmmmmmmmmm                    v                    v                    mmmmmmmmmm                    v                    v



BREAKDOWN OF TRADITION IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

Avant Garde poetry was born out of a breakdown of the traditional, a questioning of the constituents of literature, a disregard for limits and constraints, and experiment in the new. It follows the path of a general upheaval in the early 20th Century. This upheaval was not just in the arts, but covered social, economical, political and scientific life as well. On this point Stefan Themerson says

"A Kaiser is a Kaiser" or "an underdog is an underdog" was no longer a self-evident, indisputable truth, if a bus ticket is a bus ticket was no longer true either. And it was just demonstrated that a bus ticket was not a bus ticket once and for all. It became part of a picture. Punched by the conductor, it still possessed its full value in a different category...Old a priori conceptions which mind used to apply as frames to what was coming from the outside world through our senses, were no longer true 3.

It was in this spirit that the Avant Garde poets experimented in creating poetry that could not be categorised as literature in the traditional sense. Indeed, some Avant Garde poetry would appear to cover literature, fine art, music and performance. To the poets it was simply 'poetry'. An example of this may be seen in Toby Lurie's Colour Improvisation (Fig. 4) where the letters are arranged in three lines - for three voices. The 'music' in this piece is conveyed through the particular arrangement of letters within the lines, in other words, the form.

Language in traditional literature was referential. It described thought, conveyed thought or was the product of thought 4. Through this thought came meaning, which was defined, clarified and reasoned through language. It became real and believable. The Avant Garde rejected this idea that meaning was essentially real 5. To them, meaning was an essence, an idea conveyed which could not

LANGUAGE - TRADITIONAL AND AVANT GARDE

Language involves the spoken word and the written word. In comparison to writing, speech is a process which flows along, devouring language in its onward, ongoing way 8. Speech is dependent upon the speaker. Writing on the other hand is 'always rooted in something beyond language ... it manifests an essence ... it is intimidating' 9. Because of its physical nature it imposes upon the reader in a way that spoken language cannot.

In classical language words are relational. They always connect with other words. No word has a density by itself. When we read a word, instead of propelling us toward an inner reality, the word leads us to another word and so on, producing 'a superficial chain of intentions' 10. Barthes likens this movement of flow in classical poetry to a mathematical language which requires that each relation be read explicitly. Even words themselves are neutralised, to fit more smoothly into the flow. The idea was not to invent words that were stunning or individual but to produce a flow of words, each with the same emotional density. It was the function of classical poetry, 'to perfect the symmetry or conciseness of a relation ... to bring a thought exactly within the compass of a metre.' 11

Avant Garde poets rejected this use of language. For them, the word itself was all important. The traditional reality of word relationships was gone. The word alone possessed a power and intensity itself, not being rooted in any environment. Without any ties, the word was free to project towards an infinite amount of possible connections.

Fig.5. John Cage A Bird Flies 1979

A bird flies.

To obtain the value of a sound, a movement, measure from zero. (Pay attention to what it is, just as it is.)

sound movement

Points in time, in space

Slavery is abolished.

Each now is the time, the space.

The emotions

- love
- mirth
- the heroic
- wonder
- tranquillity
- fear
- anger
- sorrow
- disgust

are in the audience.

War begins at any moment.

the woods

ears?  
lights

Is there a glass of water?

Each person is in the best seat.

A sound has no legs to stand on.

Are eyes open?

The world is teeming: anything can happen

inaction?

Where the bird flies, fly.

The telephone rings.

Activities which are different happen in a time which is a space: are each central, original.

The word in Avant Garde poetry does not have a selected meaning, as in Classical poetry. There is something whole and complete about the word in Avant Garde poetry. Its meaning or significance is total. In John Cage's poem A Bird Flies 1979 (Fig. 5) we can see how the traditional verse has disintegrated, and words and phrases are separated, giving each one an importance - a meaning in itself. We are free to linger on one or probe out to others, perhaps linking or expanding or opposing its meaning. In this way the use of form here is fundamental in the experience of the poem.

Barthes says that the disintegration of language can lead only to the silence in writing. 12. When the word is spoken it is gone, but the written word remains indefinitely. It reasserts itself from a distance - a distance in terms of thought, but also, in physical distance, due to the formal nature of written language. Written language can exist as an entity in itself, not depending on speech to be 'revealed'. Barthes says that written language, essentially in nature is introverted'. 13. I take this to mean that when written language is freed from speech, it exists on a different level - a purely formal level. This visual aspect gives written language an autonomy. It can now be appreciated or experienced in the way that line, shape, colour are experienced in fine art.

When language is not based on speech, as a means of pure expression, it becomes free. Speech dictates that writing take a specific, restricted form. Written language was obliged to be the slave of speech. And so, looking again at John Cage's A Bird Flies, we don't speak the way this poem is written. We may think in this way but tradition has taught us not to speak this way. We speak, using the 'properly constructed sentences' of classical language. This is why Avant Garde's written language had to reject speech as a means to structure language. And so, with the Avant Garde, written language takes on not a new form to replace an old, but rather a formlessness, so that poets themselves could structure language, in order to meet their own needs of expression.

The danger with this is that language now becomes a personal ideosyncratic thing as its nature as a means of social communication is abandoned. In this respect written language becomes like fine art. Now the language is to the writer as the painter's pallet is to the artist. Written expression now is intrinsic to the writer's instinct. It doesn't have to be channelled through particular lines of structure as in traditional writing, where expression is presented by the pre-ordained structure of thought, through speech, through the written word.

Avant Garde writing actually is not silent, despite what Barthes says. Although form has become integrated with the essence of the written word in a visual way, language because of its nature, is full of sound whether it is based on speech or not. In fact, a lot of Avant Garde poetry is rooted in literal, visual and aural expression also.

The Russian Futurists were obsessed with sound and how this sound was presented in a visual way. In other words, they took elements of literature - letters, vowels, consonants - sounds, and presented these in a visual way to express in a deeper way the essence of sound.

Fig.6. Vasili Koren Picture Bible 1696

fig.7. A Kruchenykh A Game in Hell 1912



RUSSIAN FUTURISTS

The period of 1912-1918 in Russia yielded a movement in art and poetry which produced many books, manifestos and ideas during its short life span. The Russian Futurists, as they came to be known, exploited their ideas on art and poetry with extreme conviction. They developed a new language, Zaum, which they proclaimed to be the only language for poetic expression. They stood by their Russian heritage. However, in their manifesto, A Slap in the Face of Public Taste 1913, they declared, 'Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy etc. etc. overboard from the ships of modernity' 14. The Futurists rejected their immediate predecessors traditional form of literature which they deemed to be useless. They also denied bitterly any links to Italian Futurism or any other Western influences.

Poets and painters collaborated to produce books. Quite a few poets were also painters and vice versa. In this new Russian Futurist art the word of the poet and the image of the painter became one. The page as a whole became the medium of expression and the book as a whole became the artwork.

As an Avant Garde movement, Russian Futurism was distinct in itself. Its main group of poets and artists were called the Hylea group. They named themselves so, after Hylea, a place near the Black Sea, which was a specifically Russian ancient artistic centre that pre-dated Classical Greece and Rome - before the start of Western Art. Their ideal was to go back to a pre- Classical time, to begin again with a new way of making art. By rooting themselves here, ideologically, and so by-passing all of Western Art, they could achieve this.

Thus, Russian Futurism had an interest in the Primitive, unlike the Italian Futurists whose ideals and principals bluntly disregarded all things past and whose obsession was wholly based on the machine and the 'Industrial Age of the Future'.

Russian Futurism strove to find its own Russian way of creating a new art. They rejected completely any suggestion that their movement was a rip-off of European Avant Garde styles. In its nationalistic spirit, the Russian Futurists looked to the ordinary speech of the native Russian language and used its particular qualities in their work.

Of significance also is the traditional Russian art of the Lubok. This was a type of popular literature equivalent to the comic-strip of today. It combined text and image within the illustration (Fig 6). Its old-fashioned folk-art style appealed to artists such as Goncharova, Larionov and Rosanova who looked to this to escape realism 15. We can see this in Goncharova's primitively drawn figures in A Game in Hell, 1912 (Fig 7).

The main thing, however, that distinguishes Russian Futurism is its invention and development of Zaum language. This was a transrational language which went beyond the representational and was based on the sound qualities of the Russian language.

#### ZAUM

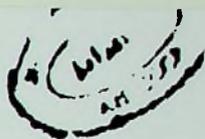
The modernist movement brought with it a drawing together of all the arts. Finding no satisfaction in representation, painting turned to music. It found there a desire for rhythm. Tones and rhythms in music helped painters to analyse colour and movement in painting. Relationships between colour and form were related to harmony and dissonance. Colour took on a meaning in itself, as colour, not as a way of defining objects. Line also could have meaning without functioning as depicting an object. Different qualities of lines could express movement and direction. The inner content of colour and the inner content of line had a significance in themselves in affecting our emotions.

Stemming from this belief the Russian Futurists believed that sound in language had an inner content which was in direct correspondence with our emotions. In music, sound is movement

Fig.8. V Kamensky 'K (Klinok)' 1917

К

(Клинок)



КАК

Кирка Колко

КОЛЕТ КАМ(К)ЕНЬ

ТАК КуКушки

Крик Ку-Ку

КовКА ГАЛКА

КОВКА ПАЛКА

КА-КЕ-КИ

1918

КО

КАМЕНСКИЙ  
ВАСИЛИЙ.

V. KAMENSKY, from 1918, 1917

and form. Apart from the fact that physical sound is symbolised by letters, the Russian Futurists believe that the inner content of sound in language is revealed through movement and form. This is why the word as an object is so important in Russian Futurism. The word is an arrangement of sounds when spoken, or letters which reveal the inner content of sound when written.

Sound is the fundamental essence in language. The descriptive or thought attribute of the word follows the sound 16. JJ Rousseau stated that language was born out of feelings, not thought. The first language was a language of tones, the expression of our feeling. The Russian Futurists believed that language was, first and foremost, sound, and that this is where its importance as an expressive force lay. The inner content of this sound is what affects us emotionally - what we feel in our inner beings. Thus, Zaum is stated to be, 'the language that art is, so to speak, personal, with words having no definite meaning, but affecting the emotions directly' 17.

What the Russian Futurists tried to do through Zaum was to get around the Classical process of structuring thoughts in language which could be understood by the reader in a logical way, thus communicating a specific meaning, in turn affecting us emotionally. Through Zaum, the sound qualities of language, which they believed to be the true essence of language need not go through an artificial process in order to affect our emotions. Rather, language as sound and the inner content of this sound is what is 'felt' directly by our inner beings.

Perhaps we can understand this a little bit better by looking at Kamensky's K(Klinok), 1917 (Fig 8). Here, the sound of the letter K is presented in a simple way. The letter K, 'is "sharp and light",.. (it) can be

extremely aggressive in its percussiveness . It 'cuts cleaves, carves, clips as with a keen sharp-edged blade' 18. The pointed, angular, sharp graphic form of the letter K appears throughout the text, reinforcing the words listed beneath the title - pickaxe, anvil, forging stick sharply, pierce, cuckoo and jackdaw.

In a later poem, Sundry of Springstresses 1918, Kamensky describes each sound in the word Kamen (stone):

Derivation of word Kamen  
 + K - shark - cold-hard  
 + A - conjunction - liquid - beginning  
 + M - world creation  
 +En - sound of falling 19.

The visual aspect of Russian Futurist poetry is important because they believed that the visual form of language revealed the inner content of the sound of language. Letters were the images of sound. Vowels embodied space and time, whereas consonants embodied sound, colour and smell 20. It is the pictorial aspect of sound which is central to Russian Futurist poetry.

In their poetry, the Russian Futurists sought to reveal the reality of this inner content of sound which they discovered was the content of nature and the universe 21.

By developing the consciousness of the inner content of their art... the artist's work was at one with the truths and laws of a higher reality, a reality far greater than that reality which we perceive with our physical senses, for these senses are only receptive to the outer manifestation of the natural world 22.

Whatever about the reality of this inner content of sound in Russian Futurist poetry being 'the content of nature and the universe,' the sound itself comes from language. And the inner content of such sound, I believe relates to our essence as human beings.

The function of sound in our lives is to express something,

Fig.9. (a) A Trap for Judges II 1913  
(b) A Trap for Judges 1910 (c) The Crooked Moon 1913  
(d) Explodity 1914 (e) A Slap in the Face of Public  
Taste 1913 (f) Te Li Le 1914 (g) Four Birds 1916  
(h) A Game in Hell 1912 (i) Transrationals 1922



9.

Fig.10. N Goncharova, cover illustration for  
Worldbackwards 1912-13

10.



to respond to a feeling. Sound is a response in our physical lives to a spiritual thing. Sound itself is physical but the inner content of this sound embodies the spiritual thing. The inner content of sound is a spiritual thing. The question is, is this 'spiritual thing' related to the essence of our beings or is it related to the essence of 'nature and the universe'?

### THE BOOKS

Russian Futurist art and poetry were 'made one' in the form of a book. This they considered to be the total artwork. The idea of the artist's book was not a new idea but, previously artist's books had usually consisted of texts with separate illustrations. In Russian Futurist books we see an integrated text and image or a marrying of text and image which gives a completeness to the page and to the actual idea of an 'artist's book'.

Russian Futurist books were standard in size and format. They took the forms of a folio book - not a new idea. They, did, however, reject the preceding Symbolist's luxurious, elegantly laid-out books. The visual impact of Futurist books attests to this. Fig. 7 shows the covers of some Futurist books. They are all small and have the look of the handmade book, being roughly bound.

A Trap for Judges, 1910 (Fig. 9a) is printed on the reverse side of wallpaper. Worldbackwards 1912 (Fig. 10) cover consists of a cutout collage flower by Goncharova which was cut out in several colours and pasted onto the cover of each issue. A Slap in the Face of Public Taste, 1913 (Fig. 9e) is covered in sacking cloth with the title pasted on. This book outraged the public with its denouncement of Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, elite figures in Russian Literature. The Russian Futurists set way for the 'new coming Beauty of the Self-sufficient (Self-centered) Word' 23.

The reason that their books have this 'handmade quality'

Fig.11. A Kruchenykh Old Fashioned Love 1912

drawing - N Goncharova



was perhaps partially due to the cost factor of publishing them. Cheap papers are used and the method of printing chosen was Lithography. This was to reproduce both image and text. They used a Lithographic Transfer process which meant that they didn't have to work directly onto the stone. This process allowed the writing and drawing to be done at once, and then transferred to the stone. This meant that no extra costs were incurred for typesetting. It also meant that the unity of text and image was more complete. It also allowed for handwriting. The Futurists claimed that through the handwritten letter the artist's mood could be conveyed. This allowed for mistakes which were a natural part of the artistic process.

Old Fashioned Love, 1912 (Fig. 11) is a book by Kruchenykh and Larionov. The book consists of seven poems which parody nineteenth century romantic love. Kruchenykh, the poet, juxtaposes romantic clichés with non-aesthetic details (e.g. pus, vomit)' 24. The drawings follow the romantic mood as they show a nude and a vase of flowers. They follow a story as the book progresses. Throughout the book, a feeling of unity between text and illustration is achieved this is due to the fact that the complete page, text and image, is lithographed (in black). The hand written text and loose rayonist drawings seem to marry together and hold as one on the page.

The cover shows a drawing of a vase of flowers, with a title, both lithographed. What is interesting about this cover is the lines of force which depict the vase and bunch of flowers. They seem to possess an energy which breaks away in two butterfly - like shapes, which in turn seem to evolve into letters. The letters and the image seem to come from the same force. They are bound together by the graphic line and the force of energy with which they are drawn. This 'oneness' on the page is a quality which is developed further in other futurist books.

Fig.12. A Kruchenykh Worldbackwards 1912-13

12.



(a)

Из плесей сагир иши  
 нависая пач лотом вавилонские  
 заморские тоботай ~~сидящие~~ тоши  
 лани над собой увидав но ж  
 Фенлю падаст уласт пач  
 хабей выкиркет усатый пач ~~араса~~  
 и престо паче Залта Кат. а  
 с ж хлопци весело тертви  
 тошии камнями в гудилом гудорил  
 гандь славилса по ролан  
 фогери ходил по рудам  
 Била веселая пора  
 И с стувкою башто шла игра

Яки нам служил как драго кабылто  
 пач и вей имену мило сидит  
 Маш свалге то неже  
 Тарга отейной от лотожки



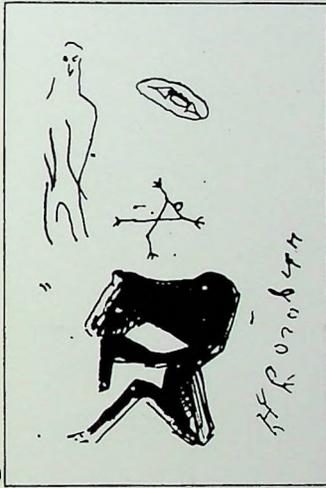
(b)


 О Дое-Девеке  
 Мо  
 Фену уца турн  
 О Пучкинаша шипно  
 \* Хизь сиритса как  
 Момилет  
 Заинпрое Бодипр  
 Пар  
 ния

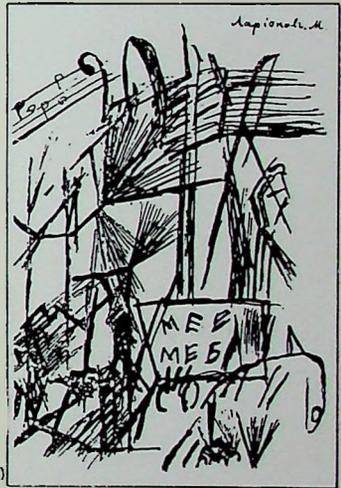
(c)



(d)



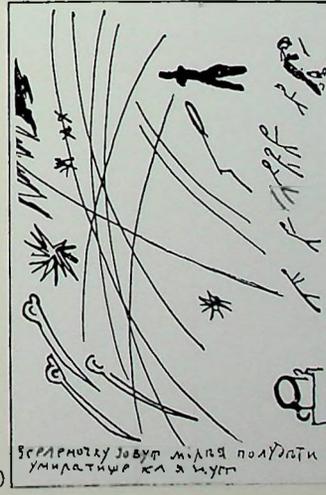
(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)



(i)

G. Janecek says of Worldbackwards 1912/13, (Fig. 12). In terms of visual effects, Worldbackwards is the most Avant Garde of the Avant Garde books in this set because of its anti-aesthetic disunity... 25. At first glance we can see this to be true. The pages look experimental and chaotic. There is no apparent structure. The styles are loose and diverse, as two artists work on the book -- Larionov and Rogovin. Kruchenykh and Klebnikov wrote the text.

In this book, there are different paper weights used and blank pages. colours are mixed and both Lithography and rubber stamp techniques are used. Some pages have to be turned ninety degrees to be read. 26.

There is a such a mixture in this book. The text appears in traditional verse, as in Fig. 12b. In Fig. 12c the text becomes looser, reaching out to the illustration and the fusion of text and image is furthered. In the following pages of the book, (Figs. 12d-i) this fusion of text and image reaches a point where we can barely distinguish one from the other. Fig. 12h is particularly exciting. Here letters become image and run along the bottom of the page. Letters become marks and are made from marks. This page seems to say that it doesn't matter what the letters/words are saying. They are marks and have qualities as marks. The expressiveness of the line can also come across in the letters.

In Explodity (1913/14), entirely by Kruchenykh, we find an equal balance between word and image, between verbal and non-verbal. There is no emphasis on one or the other. Both are equal. The reason for this integration and balance is, I feel, due to the use of Zaum. Because the written words don't mean anything literally, the visual aspect of the written word becomes an extension of the image. The image and the word become one.

Kruchenykh said in Declaration of the Word as Such (1913) that Russian Futurist poetry was 'impossible to translate

Fig.13. A Kruchenykh F / Nagt 1918  
(complete book)

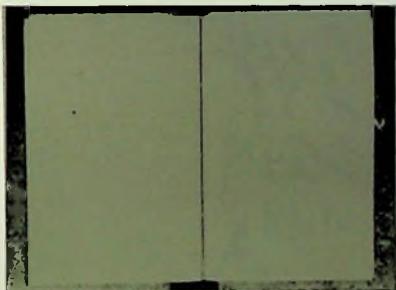




Р е / г у к о  
т  
А у К  
л щ и К

п е  
] р и  
з а т

РА-  
ВР  
ХАНО  
РАНИ



У Ч  
ХИНАА  
ХАНН  
ЛАННО  
ЭРАД  
А И

into other languages', and 'as aesthetic texts, they are nothing more than coarse vandalism'. 27. This should'nt be a problem to non-Russians, as the words don't actually mean anything. Nevertheless, the letters and sound groups have associations that only Russians could pick up on. I think the most that non-Russians speakers/understanders can do is to translate the sound groups and relate these to the graphic presentation within the total image on the page.

Kruchenykh was perhaps the most extreme of the Russian Futurists. It was he that said, "Emotional experience cannot be put into words... Therefore, we strive for a transrational, free language, that is the means of expression a person resorts to at crucial moments". 28. He took this idea of Zaum to its absolute summit. A good example can be seen in his book F/Nagt (1918), (Fig. 13). This book is a composition of letters, lines and white space. G. Janecek says of this book, 'It is at this point that literature and painting intersect. All that is left of "the book" are its pages. All that is left of "literature" are its letters'. 29. I think Zaum is the crucial element, in order to come to this end. Here, words reach the same level of perception as Fine Art. This is something which does'nt happen in Italian Futurist poetry. In Italian Futurist poetry, words have a literary significance aswell as Fine Art significance. Words in Russian Futurist poetry reject all literary significance. Instead, they are perceived on a Fine Art level, which is a means to revealing the inner content of their sound qualities. And this is the ultimate means of expression. I find that F/Nagt appeals to me very much. As a book, the use of white space and blank pages gives a wonderful impression that the actual graphic marks are precious - precious, as in 'of great significance'. Most of the double-spreads have marks on one page only. The blank page contrasts with the written page. Because there is no

Fig.14. I Zdanevich 'zokhna' 1919

Fig.15. I Zdanevich 'zokhna and her suitors' 1919



structure to the written marks, the blank page draws our attention to the marks. Without the blank page there would be a claustrophobic, cluttered feeling.

There are no restrictions. Neither letter nor line need conform to any structure. Kruchenykh uses letters and lines and sounds in a free arrangement that seems simple and naive but which I find, is actually very expressive. Letters do something other than what they normally do. They take on a different quality. They become a different medium of expression, that of High Art. Letters form constructions, they float, they sommersault with the line. They lead the eye. They hold a force. They make space and rhythm. But because they actually are letters - from an alphabet, from a language - they hold another significance, other than the qualities of lines and marks in Fine Art. But, is this significance, as the Russian Futurists claim, the revelation of the inner content of sound, which directly affects our inner being?

While most of the Russian Futurists were concerned with the graphic form of the letter, the word and the poem, few were interested in typography. Typography did not fit into the Lithographic method of reproduction and it would have been expensive to use two methods of reproduction for the one book. However, Ilya Zdanevich and Vasilli Kamensky are the exception. They were both interested in using typography itself to create poetry.

Zdanevich provides a link to Italian Futurism. G. Janecek says of his Zokhna and Zokhna and her suitors 1919 (Fig. 14,15) "they are tours de force of typesetting and compare favourably with Marinetti's most elaborate efforts of the same time". 30. Kamensky's invention of ferro-concrete poetry predates the concrete movement in visual poetry of the 1960's.

Fig.16. I Zdanevich Yanko, King of Albania 1918

Fig.17. I Zdanevich Eester Ailend 1919



ZDANEVICH

The look of Zdanevich's work is immediately different from that of the other Futurists. He uses typeset techniques rather than lithography, which means that images, be they rayonist drawings or loose hand-drawn letters, do not appear in Zdanevich's work. Nonetheless, Zdanevich is considered a Russian Futurist, through his use of Zaum language. At one stage Zdanevich teamed up with Kruchenykh to form a group called 41° in Tiflis, a peaceful southern state, where they fled from the Bolchevic Revolution.

Zdanevich was concerned with the written representation of Zaum. He tried to bring his spelling 'close to the pronunciation within the confines of the Cyrillic Alphabet'. 31. In Fig. 16. Yanko, King of Albania, 1918, pages two and three, 'stress is indicated by setting the stressed vowel and preceding consonant in bold face. This changes the look of the text, giving it a strange quality.

This is furthered in Eester ailend, 1919 (Fig. 17) where the text, although still in horizontal lines, but, with the aim of stressing the pronunciation of secondary vowels and consonants and showing sound differences between for example e and é, each letter gains varying degrees of importance by size and space and boldness. This makes for an unusual visual conglomeration of letters, though neatly structured.

Zdanevich's aim was to blur the boundry between ordinary Russian language and Zaum. As a means to this end he developed certain devices. These 'conditions for reading' were set out in lidant - YUazabE - Ekan, 1923.

Fig.18. I Zdanevich lidantTUazabEEkan 1923

граЖани

юОяня наЯканая дЕтнами Оли лшкОвая  
 калЕла вот А<sup>к</sup> В-яЛ  
 ыУжир ыЕ лидантЮ иканалИси жмыИ тоалУлшио  
 никспмтА фпатырЕта иЕлниккавая  
 гасИица мнАхарю Оная ни<sup>в</sup>ЕсТ<sup>м</sup>  
 ЗданЕИ<sup>в</sup>чя ил<sup>в</sup>Ю  
 тьИжод твщпниИла цАрьство ибОжюи  
 аВ<sup>в</sup>ида л<sup>в</sup>Вкр са<sup>в</sup> .0  
 илЕтис тУжаса чЕтвиря загрОискии всуюОи  
 кадА шЫлса усОпсав дс НИи  
 срЕдчая икаАк ибальшОи  
 тьрибразавАния жОишчины каДУ тк<sup>в</sup>ЮуюЮ  
 икзиска тринаИ С<sup>в</sup>наи патырЕ<sup>в</sup> а<sup>в</sup>и  
 чи кзнатАриусв климансО  
 слУшайтжюи пака ижиралОж  
 Р<sup>в</sup>Утаму фк<sup>в</sup> нУна хАру  
 илЕт<sup>в</sup> ош<sup>в</sup> умирАйт<sup>в</sup>  
 нажЕсти трупЕрд<sup>в</sup> начЯла  
 вэрипуОфка  
 ар<sup>в</sup>лЕк скп Офк<sup>в</sup> а<sup>в</sup> Ы<sup>в</sup> 9

гофлЕнчи

1 жЮ. ннчЯ  
 2 жЮ. жЮ. ннчЯ  
 3 жЮ. жЮ. ннчЯ  
 4 жЮ. бжЮ. ннчЯ  
 5 жЮ. жЮ. ннчЯ  
 6 жЮ. лжЮ. ннчЯ

1 айНшшифь. киферкЮв  
 2 шнИфь. шнИфь. ркЮв. ркЮв  
 3 шнИфь. снИфь. ркЮв. скЮв  
 4 шнИфь. кнИфь. ркЮв. чкЮв  
 5 шнИфь. чнИфь. ркЮв. фкЮв  
 6 шнИфь. кнИфь. ркЮв. шкЮв

26

1 пхИшпнрж. рухИржкэ  
 2 рэЯ рэЯ ннчЯ  
 3 рэЯ рэЯ рэЯ  
 4 рэЯ рэЯ рэЯ  
 5 рэЯ рэЯ рэЯ  
 6 рэЯ рэЯ рэЯ

висаетисЮмчи

1 висаетисЮмчи  
 2 мЯ. мнЯ  
 3 мЯ. скЯ  
 4 мЯ. пнЯ  
 5 мЯ. фнЯ  
 6 мЯ. шнЯ

27

1 сжвЕкнжи. фисЕрр  
 2 лнИ. лнИ. смрр. смрр  
 3 лнИ. скИ. смрр. смрр  
 4 лнИ. хнИ. смрр. бндр  
 5 лнИ. мнИ. смрр. шдр  
 6 лнИ. рнИ. смрр. др

1 сфЯнь. зЮлпнсь. мЮлсч  
 2 фЯнь. фЯнь. мнИсь. мнИсь хсЯ хсн  
 3 фЯнь. сЯнь. мнИсь. снИсь хсЯ. сн  
 4 фЯнь. жЯнь. мнИсь. фнИсь. хсЯ. фн  
 5 фЯнь. бЯнь. мнИсь. рнИсь. хсЯ. рн  
 6 фЯнь. гЯнь. мнИсь. шнИсь. хсЯ. шн

He would use various depths of indentation. Tone would be stressed by the vertical line and volume by the horizontal. Tempo would be indicated by numbers.

If we look at the text of lidant YUazabEEkan, (Fig. 18) it is clear that graphically it is very interesting, but it is barely readable. By now Zdanevich was living in Paris. He saw Russian Futurism as a by-gone era and he knew that these pieces would not be performed. And as they would not be read, Zdanevich enlivened them graphically.

So, all his efforts towards improving the pronunciation of written text, ultimately made way for a visually stimulating text.

Zokhna and her suitors is a piece that G. Janeczek compares favourably to Marinetti's work in terms of typesetting techniques. 32. This piece uses verbal and non-verbal signs. The verbal elements are Zaum and so, don't have any literal meaning. Things like butterflies and a cross are used in the same context as letters. Not that they have the same values as letters. The letters are not merely pictorial or decorative. They have the deeper significance of Zaum language - that of revealing the inner content of sound.

These pieces are visual experiences, with both the letters and the pictorial symbols forming shapes. The large bold letters forming a cross shape arrest the eye. The eye jumps from the large circle at the top to three surrounding O's then moves to the other O's that dot the composition. The straight lines allow the eye to move through the piece quickly whereas other elements slow down and command longer attention, such as the group of letters to the left of the butterfly.

Fig.19. V Kamensky Constantinople 1919



Zokhna and her Suitors has an energy that is also seen in Italian Futurism although in Italian Futurism this 'energy' is taken to an extreme - to convey the dynamism of modern life. In comparison, Zdanevich's compositions seem quieter.

#### KAMENSKY

Kamensky believed in the idea of the page as a blank canvas and that the boundaries of the page had a say in how the letters and words were spatially arranged on the page. This led to the development of what he called Ferroconcrete poems. In this Ferroconcrete poetry mainly nominal words were to be used. There was to be a general lack of syntactic structures and the text was to be organised by word association, made by semantic, contextual and visual links between words. 33.

Kamensky was a bit unusual in the Russian Futurist movement, in that his use of language was more orthodox. Zaum is not something that features strongly in his work. Instead, Kamensky used language that had literal meaning but he didn't use his language conventionally. Rather, he broke it up and rebuilt it in a way that is very like some concrete poetry of the 1960's.

Kamensky's first Ferroconcrete poem was published in The Naked Among The Clad, 1914 and was called Constantinople (Fig. 19). Patricia Railing says of this poem,

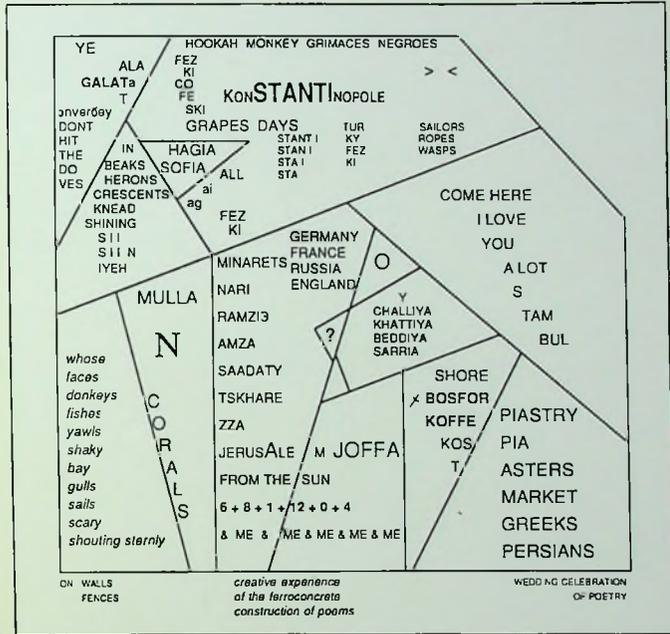
The poem becomes a picture we see with our mind's eye. With all its sounds and colours Kamensky "paints" a poem through the word and letter and he even arranges each image or 'stanza' as one would a plane of colour in a cubist painting. 34.

This accurately describes this poem. Kamensky, in his evocation of Istanbul lists words and sounds that are typical of Istanbul and he arranges them in such a way that evokes the memory of the essence of Istanbul.

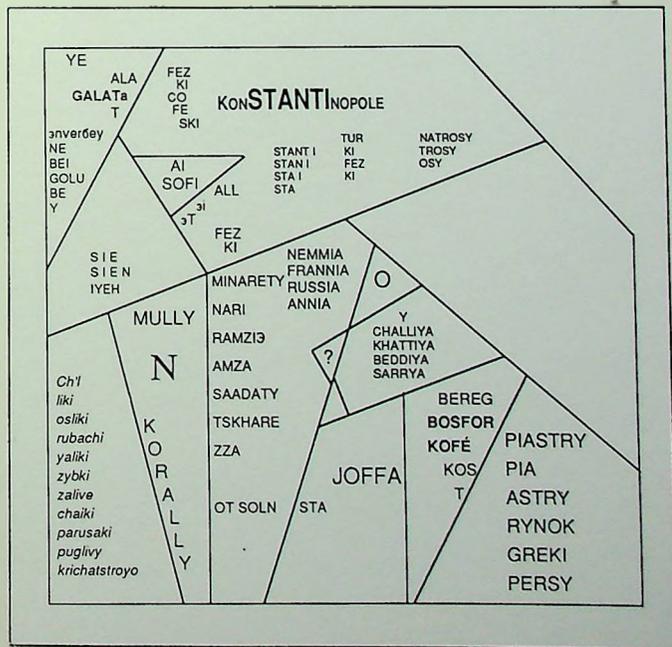
We can see from the English literal translation (Fig. 20) that the words are not Zaum. They actually represent

Fig.20. V Kamensky Constantinople 1919  
(literal translation)

Fig.21. V Kamensky Constantinople 1919  
(sound translation)



20.



21.

real things. Different sounds are stressed through the progression of words but this is lost in the English translation. For example, we can see in the sound translation (Fig. 21) that the Russian sounds for 'sailors, ropes, wasps' is 'natrosy, trosy, osy'. Also, in the Russian version appears a motive in the top left corner, a Russian letter which looks like the minaret of a mosque with the crescent shape moon of Islam on top. 35.

Visually, the overall structure does not represent anything. Rather, it is a construction, a way of building words and sounds into a particular structure that leads the eye/mind around the various parts of Istanbul. It is not a haphazard structure but a carefully planned one. The mind makes links all the time. The way in which words are written in a narrow vertical column leads the eye down through the progression of sounds. Then something in the list projects our view to a different part, like the big A in 'Jerusalem' which leads us over to 'Joffa' which leads us to 'a' sounds of 'Piastry ...pia....asters'. The big N links visually to the Ñ. Also the 'Hagia Sophia... Galata' at the top left refer to the huge mosque and Galata tower which are dominant high points on the Istanbul skyline. We make a link with these and the low 'Bosphoros' shoreline.

Having been in Istanbul, I find the poem successful in recapturing its essence. Kamensky actually wrote it on the boat back to Russia from Istanbul. The cluttered formation of lists and lists of different words and sounds and places truly evoke its essence. Istanbul needs all of these words to describe it and Kamensky's poem makes these words important and gives a feeling of Istanbul, I feel, perhaps better than a long prose passage could.

Tango With Cows, (1914) (Fig. 22, 23, 24) was Kamensky's next book. It features more Ferroconcrete poetry but these are treated in a much more exciting typographical way. He uses an unusual mixture of typefaces and sizes. The poems themselves are composed in type. There are no pictorial images.

Fig.22. V Kamensky 'summons' 1914

Fig.23. 'Vasya Kamensky's Aeroplane Flight in Warsaw' 1914

Fig.24. 'Telephone' 1914





This contrasts with the floral imagery of the wallpaper, on the back of which, the poems were printed.

Vasya Kamensky's Airplane flight in Warsaw, (Fig. 23) is not a figurative poem. It is what Janecek calls a 'brilliant visual and sonic evocation of an aeroplane taking off'. 36. Starting off at ground level, we read upwards - 'aerodrome, crowd, mechanic, hurries'. As we rise up the words get shorter, the thoughts fragment. The three columns of white space lead us up and up until we reach the high pitched 'i' at the top. Then there is nothing, and we realise that now we are up high and looking down, the poem becomes the crowd below.

At first glance, Telephone (Fig. 24) looks like a jumbled up disarray of typefaces and numbers. This composition, with its use of various faces and sizes, is comparable to Zdanevich's Eesterailend. But whereas Zdanevich was concerned with exploring the visual aspect to solve a problem, Kamensky was concerned with presenting the poem in as visually expressive a way as possible.

Telephone is in fact, one side of a telephone conversation. Janecek says, 'What emerges is the perception that the poet seems to be physically sick of the urban bustle and longs for escape to the country'. 37. This comes across in the typography. The numbers seem to represent the formality and artificiality of city life and their distraught looking typographical treatment seem to reflect the persons emotions. Wherever the countryside is mentioned - 'Somewhere/far away/peace/and fields' and 'stowed oars, merryvillages', the typogrpahy seems to calm down. The blank space around it gives the reader time to slow down and linger on these thoughts.

Kamensky refers to the line reading 'ProTSeSsIya' as a funeral march. Each letter, in a different face is

Fig.25. Bliem Kern It's Finally Happening



loving loving loving loving loving loving loving loving  
loving loving loving loving loving loving loving loving  
loving loving loving loving loving loving loving loving

loving you ike leaves  
ike loving you is like  
trees is like loving you trees ike trees  
leaves leaves ike loving you trees ike ike  
ike is like loving you like ike ike  
leaves is like loving you leaves is like  
trees ike loving you trees  
loving you ike

loving you is like loving you is like loving you is like  
loving you is like loving you is like loving you is like

loving you is like lending money  
loving you is like lending money

lending money lending money lending money lending money  
lending money to someone you know to someone you know  
lending money to someone you know won't pay you back  
someone you know won't pay you back  
someone you know won't pay you back

trees the trees

trees yellow

trees trees trees

trees the

green trees empty trees

trees trees

the park empty

yellow

park park

leaves

leaves

park empty park

everything full

leaves

leaves

now empty

with leaves

leaves

greenleaves

leaves

yellowleaves

leaves

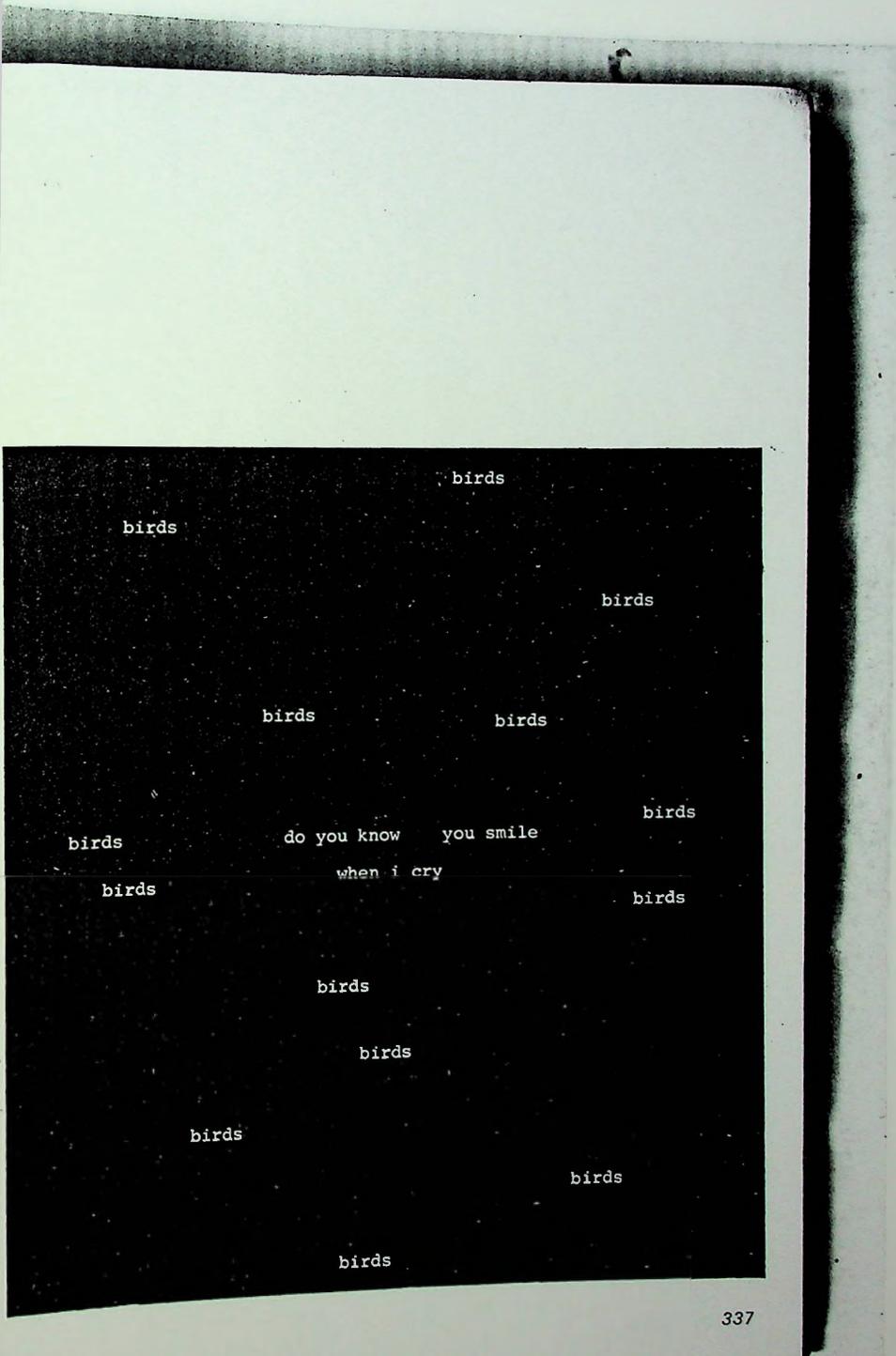
yellowtrees

greentrees



leaves r leaves  
y ou r r  
leaves ou  
r leavesring  
leavesring ou m i u ou  
y ring ou leavesring  
i ou  
l a e ring r leaves ring i i'm off  
e v s ring r here  
o somewhere ou  
ou leaves ring leavesring  
ring n your mind n  
ve ou n  
m ou lack of communication ou  
d leavesring ou i my mind leavesring  
i s n ou  
a d what's in her mind d  
n leavesring m ou leavesring  
y d e leavesring n g  
e l o v leavesring what's in my mind leavesring  
o l m a n d  
u i n yourmind mymind yourmind mymind i d  
d r your mind my mind your mind my mind your mind n  
i my mind your mind my mind your mind your mind my mind i d  
n d my mind your mind my mind your mind your mind my mind your i n  
your mind my mind your mind my mind your mind your mins my mins my mind your mi

you ou you ou you ou you ou you  
 leavesring ou leavesring ou leavesring  
 ou you you you you ou  
 you don't love you  
 leavesring birds  
 ou you don't love you  
 leavesring ou  
 birds you don't love you  
 leavesring  
 ou you don't love you  
 leavesring ou  
 ou you dont love you  
 as i do  
 leavesring leavesring leavesring  
 ou ou birds  
 birds i feel trapped  
 stop the pressure  
 stop the pressure  
 stop the pressure birds  
 birds your solution for your problem  
 now i have the problem with your solution birds  
 birds birds birds



birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

do you know you smile

when i cry

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

suffer for love kill myself suffer for love

birds

for this for love

birds

for love for this

romantic bullshit

birds

control over suffering

hung up on you  
hung up on you  
hung up on you  
hung up on you

birds

suffer suffer suffer

birds

suffer suffer suffer

you do it to

yourself

birds

birds

depression  
depression  
depression  
depression  
depression  
depression

birds

repressed feeling

depression

birds

repressed feeling

depression

birds

repressed feeling

depression

you do it to

birds

birds

yourself

birds  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer

give up the romantic dream

birds  
i'm afraid  
i'm scared  
i'm afraid  
birds

birds  
i'm afraid to move  
i'm afraid to love  
i'm afraid of rejection  
i'm afraid of being afraid

birds  
depression  
repressed feeling  
depression  
repressed feeling  
depression  
repressed feeling  
birds

birds  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
suffer suffer  
birds

birds  
you do it to yourself  
birds

birds

birds

yellow leaves

green trees

birds

birds

birds

you seem to have grown  
closer away

yellow trees

green leaves

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

yellow trees

birds

birds

birds

yellow leaves

birds

birds

birds

green trees

birds

yellow

birds

birds

birds

my reality

your reality

yellow leaves

green

leaves

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

birds

green leaves

birds

i'm growing

you're growing

we both are growing

green

birds

apart

birds

birds

as new sources

leaves

trees

of energy are found

Fig.26. Bliem Kern Dream to Live

# Dream to Live, by Bliem Kern

dream to live

dream to live to dream to live to dream to live  
live to dream to live to dream to live to dream  
dream dream dream dream dream dream dream dream  
dreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdream  
dreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdr e  
putting distance between each embrace each embr a ce  
each embrace returns to soon to soon too soon  
dreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdream  
dreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdreamdream  
each embrace returns to o s o on t o s o o n to o  
too soon to lose too soon to lose toosoon to l o se  
to dream to live to dream to live to dream to  
live to dream to dream dream dream dream dream  
dream too soon too soon to lose to dream too s oo  
to lose o to lose o toosoon  
o pain oo pain o  
o to lose o to lose o to lose  
o o o

stretched out along one line. The narrow 'O', placed horizontally, is the coffin. Kamensky says, 'In this way the word is designed for conveying the most precise concept in the given case'. He also says, 'This especially concerns verses where the verbal conception is raised to a cult, where the concrete form exalts content'. 38.

This idea of concrete form exalting verbal content is seen also in Italian Futurism and in the 1960's Concrete movement. Kamensky's expression of emotion through typography is something which is not seen in Italian Futurism. However, some poets in the concrete movement took this idea and developed it much further. A good example is seen in Bliem Kern's It's Finally Happening, (Fig. 25) and Dream to live, (Fig. 26).

It's Finally Happening is a particularly appealing poem to the eye. The arrangement of words at the start of the poem is given an almost architectural quality, with some words seeming to break away from this structure. As the poem progresses, words float and even the words themselves break up and the letters float away. At the start of the poem we are keyed in to what the poem is about and then as the poem develops, our eye catches a particular message, which seems to echo in the scattered 'birds' and 'leaves'. A rhythm is built up in the repetition of words and their spatial arrangement. Thoughts and feelings resonate throughout the poem. Typographical form is used to express these thoughts and feelings. Form provides emotional impact.

In Dream to Live words are grouped together in a strong column shape, most of which gives us the meaning of the poem, in a way that we can read. Its language is simple. He uses it economically. There is no syntax structure. Words are built up in a plastic way. The poem starts with the title 'Dream to Live'. This is repeated within the column shape. The words run into each other until we see a visual murmur. Then his thoughts change and are presented

in a clear and legible way, until this, mixed with the 'dream', intertwine and mingle with each other and then float away, leaving us with pure feeling. This feeling is the essence of the poem and it comes across through the words and their typographical form.

The links between these poems and Kamensky's poem, especially Telephone are seen in their use of language - ordinary, readable language, but broken up and rebuilt in an expressive way - and expression of emotion through typographical form.

#### ITALIAN FUTURISM

The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism was brought to public attention in the Paris newspaper Le Figaro in 1909. It was a manifesto by artists and poets, meant to impose and shock. It declared 'anarchaic vitalism ... destruction of academies and museums ... urbanism, celebration of the machine as a symbol of the new aesthetics, love for beauty of speed'. 39. With all the new changes that the 20th Century brought with it in science and machines, this meant that the development of fast cars, aeroplanes and such was made possible. Mechanical speed and noise were new elements of modern life. It was Marinetti's view that such changes in life brought about changes in the human psyche. 40.

'The Futurist poet's task was to devise a language capable of expressing this new perception of the world instantaneously and directly'. 41. This new language, a new visual and literary language, was an attempt to change our perception of art. How could the artist's expression of a new modern life be expressed in an old way? The new language of the Futurists was to tap into the essence of modern life, to affect the human psyche by bringing it into tune with this essence.

In the literary context, Marinetti declared the new 'liberated words' and 'wireless imagination'. 'Elements central to the logical linguistic structure (conjugations,

Fig.27. TF Marinetti Les Mots en Liberte 1919



adverbs, adjectives, verbal conjugations and punctuation marks) had to be eliminated. 42. There would be no more flowing transitions. Only the essential parts of language/nouns and verbs in the infinitive were to remain. The new 'liberated words' were to be free from syntactic constraints. We can see this in Fig. 28. Onomatopoeia was stressed. The 'wireless imagination' would come from words being juxtaposed, which would produce surprising analogies. Words would be taken from their contexts and put together. Resulting analogies would be unpredictable and intuitional.

These ideas on a new language and the freeing of the word, inspired a typographical revolution. This revolution would emphasise the freedom and autonomy of the word through a new 'painterly, typographic representation on the printed page'. 43.

'The book will be the Futurist expression of our Futurist Consciousness. I am against what is known as the harmony of typesetting. When necessary, we shall use three or four columns to a page and 20 different typefaces'. 44

The Futurists were opposed to art for art's sake. They had a principle. They would not indulge in typographic innovation for its own sake. Their experiment in form and typography was strictly to develop their new artistic language, which would express the essence of modern life, as they saw it to be.

The Futurists were very much influenced by collage. The techniques of collage broke with traditional visual syntax. Collage induced, 'abrupt juxtapositions of images and materials'. 45. As a visual medium, collage was quick and immediate. The essential idea of movement in collage, of pieces and fragments before sticking them, allowed for experiment in form. Form could emerge instantly and be changed instantly. This collage influence can be seen in a composition such as Les Mots en Liberte Futuristes, 1919 (Fig. 27) where separate elements seem to be arranged together.

Fig.28. Paolo Buzzi A Moment in my Day at  
Pallazzo, Monforte 1916

Fig.29. TF Marinetti Respiration of the Earth c.1915



6-26

# TIÉDEUR DES LACS = ~~reservoirs~~

de soleil absorbé durant l'été  
qui se répand durant l'hiver  
sur les élégantes vitesses  
des routes



## RESPIRATION DE LA TERRE ÉCHANGE RÉGULIER DE GAZ ENTRE L'INTÉRIEUR DU GLOBE ET L'ATMOSPHÈRE

de 7 heures matin à 5 heures soir pres-  
sion des gaz terrestres < pression atmo-  
sphérique inverse durant la  
nuit

TERRE ABSORBER EXHALER

10

In Futurist art and poetry the piece as a whole is important. The ideal was to 'recreate a perceptually complete moment, in which all aspects of experience were simultaneously present'. 46. The visual expression of the sensory experience was central to their work. We can see this in Paolo Buzzi's A Moment in my day at Palazzo, Monforte, 1916 (Fig. 28). Through the use of onomatopoeic words, Buzzi recreates the sounds of the moment, thus evoking the atmosphere. He makes an attempt to structure the information of these sounds into groups. The form of these groups doesn't represent anything, physically. Nor does it particularly embody the sound of the words. Rather, it just separates each happening or activity, letting the sounds themselves give the impression of the day.

For the Italian Futurists, sensory experience was of the mechanical - a physical, sensory experience. They were not interested in emotional themes and disregarded anything to do with feelings. Sensory experience was to explicitly express the dynamism of modern life - a hard, fast, noisy, shrill, chromatic, exciting, all the time moving, sensory experience.

The focus was on the mechanical rather than the human. Subject matter in Futurist art and poetry include aeroplanes, trains and cars. Speed was represented by these vehicles, which were the 'tangible manifestation of dynamic experience of modern life'. 47. An example of this is seen in Fig. 29.

Noise, weight and smell come across in Futurist poetry. In language, vowels are alleged to possess sound, and consonants, noise. The Futurists claimed the sensation of sound and noise to be 'integral aesthetic components of the written word'. 48. Weight had to do with movement and flight. The smell of a captured moment could be expressed through dispersion within in composition. 49.

Fig.30. TF Marinetti Vive La France 1914



Form plays a different role in Italian Futurism to that in Russian Futurism. Both the Italians and Russians were concerned with sound and how sound could be presented visually. But unlike the Russians the Italians were concerned with the physical aspect of sound and noise, and it was this which form embodied. In relation to the word, form and onomatopoeia had a similar function. They echoed the content of the word but on a literal level. Form also expressed the sensation of the word, but on a physical level.

We can see this in Vive La France, 1914 (Fig. 30). This composition presents the glory of war through sound and form. The sonic quality of war is conveyed through the dissonant noise of battle - The high pitched 'zang' and low rumbling 'U' and 'M' sound. We can see how form enforces these sounds - the sharp zig-zag 'Z' and 'M' shapes, the long line of repeated 'U's/the large 'U' shape on the right strengthens the loudness of its booming sound. Aswell as enforcing sound, form also works on another level. The small cries of 'Vive La France' from behind the defensive 'M' shape appears to be on the ground, while the curved lines not only resound the noise but give the feeling of action in the air, creating height. Are the narrow columns an advancement of troops, or cannons or do they just add to the dissonance of composition?

In the Russian Futurism, on the other hand, because of the very conceptual nature of Zaum, form takes on a 'higher' role. Form in Russian Futurism affects us on a 'fine art' level. Form is not the instrument of the literal or the physical as it is in Italian Futurism.

In a piece such as F/Nagt (Fig. 13) the function of form is to reveal the inner content of the sound of the word. The way form is used here in the letter and the word is in the way a painter uses colour or space. The Russians, by

exploring the form of the letter and the word were trying to discover the meaning of spoken sound.

The Italians, as we can see from pieces such as Vive La France used the form of the letter and word to imitate sound. Patricia Railing says that the Russians felt that the Italians were not actually questioning the word itself: its content, essential meaning, as the source of deepest human expression. 50. The Italians were merely in pursuit of a new syntax and new visual forms.

However, form does not exist in Italian Futurist poetry free from literal context. But it seems to be enslaved to another function: to express in movement the dynamism of modern life. In its fundamental aim to express modern life, does Italian Futurism surpress form as a medium of art? The Italian Futurists used form simply to describe objects and events in the modern world around us. They stop at this. One feels that there are only so many aeroplanes and 'vroom' noises that can express this modern world in this physical way. Because of this, one feels that the new language of the Italian Futurists is doomed to die out. The Russians, by using form in the non-representational way of discovering the expressive qualities of sound itself, gave form a freedom that is not found in Italian Futurism.

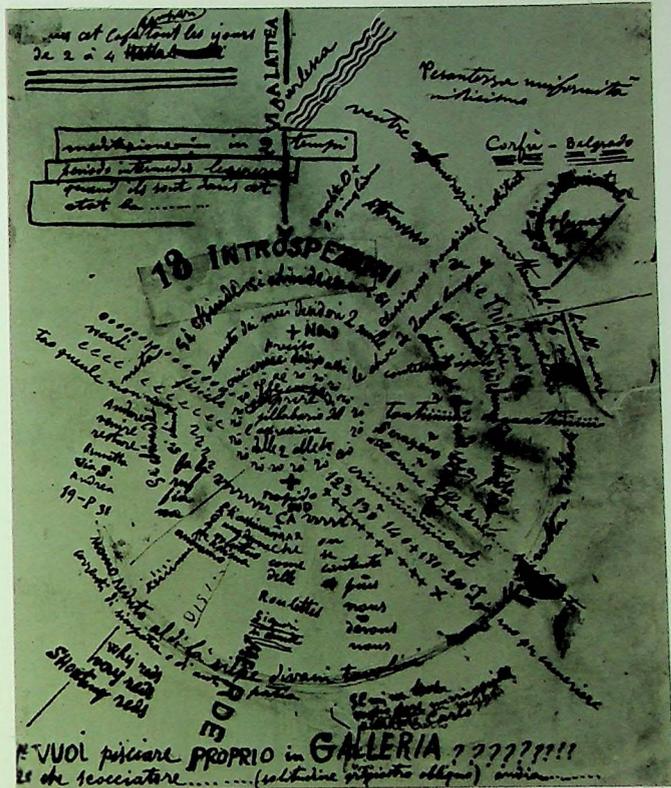
The Italians shook up traditional language but instead of leaving it at this, open and free, they developed a new language, a new syntax and this restricted language again.

However, in their breakdown and search for a new artistic language - the interegration of form and the word juxtaposition of form with language in a surprising way - the Italian Futurists produced amazingly expressive poetry. Italian Futurist poetry is wonderful, but within the Futurist ideology and I feel that this ideology tended to enslave the intense expressive capacity that their new artistic language held.

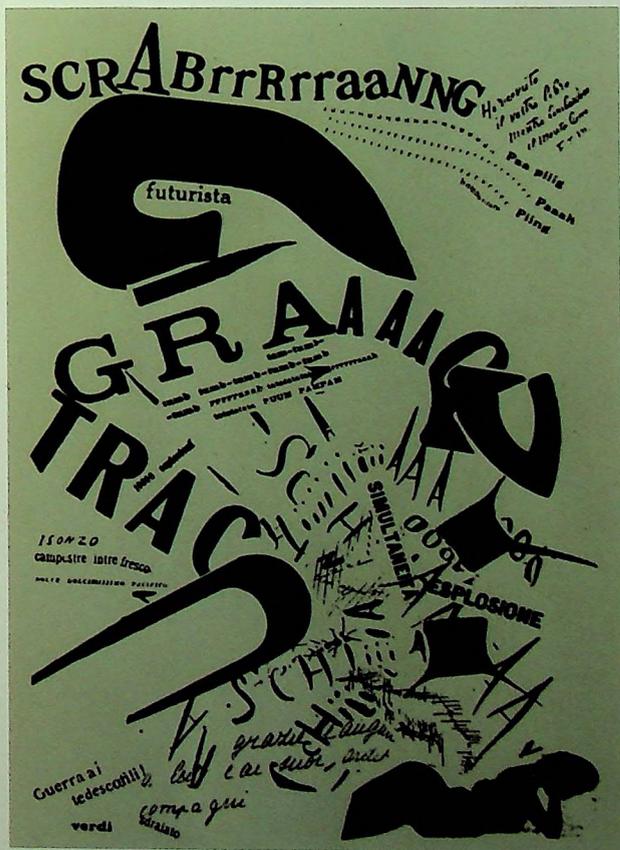
Marinetti, in The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature, 1912 stated, 'One must destroy ... in literature, that is, all psychology'. 51

Fig.31. Carra Trieze Introspections 1914

Fig.32. TF Marinetti In the Evening, Lying on her Bed, She Reread the Letter From her Artilleryman at the Front 1917



31.



32.

Marinetti was concerned with presenting the new modern life in a new way. Linda Lewis says that during the war people had a different perspective on life. Especially with overhead bombers, the person did seem to be in the centre of all that was going on around him. 52. Marinetti destroys the 'I in literature' but in his poetry he presents the essence of modern life to the individual viewer. The viewer is the centre of the sensory experience.

We can perhaps see this in Fig. 31, a wonderful Italian Futurist piece. This burst of energy and dynamism is presented to us head on. Our eye circulates through it with a propeller - like speed, catching various sounds, word fragments and figures. I think this piece epitomises the aim of Italian Futurists and it is successful as such.

However, there are some pieces which particularly appeal to me which I think are not totally typical of Italian Futurism. In the Evening, Lying on her Bed, She Reread the Letter from her Artilleryman at the Front, 1917 (Fig. 32) not only presents war to us, it also seems to present a psychological aspect to us. Figs. 33-36 present, I feel, not an individual depiction of war, as would be the Futurist aim, but a depiction of the individual experience of war. There is a difference. The individual depiction of war tends to be objective, depicting life, with a view to expressing its 'dynamic' elements. A depiction of the individual experience of war, I think, which is seen in Figs. 33-36 give a more personal record of life. I suppose an analogy would be a journalistic report on the one hand and a diary account on the other.

In, In the Evening, Lying on her Bed ... the viewer is confronted immediately with a force that seizes our attention. The composition seems to be chaotic but there is in fact, an order that leads our eye through it. At the top 'ScrABrrRrraaNNG' flows, wave-like across. This curve is

Fig.33. TF Marinetti Telegram 41 1914-15

Modello 88 Telegrammi.  
(Edizione 1926).

Indicazioni di urgenza  
**4**



**Ufficio Telegrafico di  
TELEGRAMMA**

Cognome del mittente ed indirizzo completo del telegrafante

Il telegramma non ha valore giuridico e non è ammesso al servizio della telegrafia. Le comunicazioni per mezzo di radiotelegrafia sono a disposizione del telegrafante. Le comunicazioni per mezzo di radiotelegrafia sono a disposizione del telegrafante. Le comunicazioni per mezzo di radiotelegrafia sono a disposizione del telegrafante.

Spazio di \_\_\_\_\_ per il telegrafante  
all'Ufficio di \_\_\_\_\_

esec.	DESTINATARIO	PROVENIENZA	NUM.	PAROLE	DATA DELLA PRESENTAZIONE	ORA D'INTELLIGIBILITÀ E DURATA

INDICAZIONI EVENTUALI TANG. \_\_\_\_\_

DESTINATARIO \_\_\_\_\_ **2+3+7+8x5**

DESTINAZIONE \_\_\_\_\_

TESTO \_\_\_\_\_

Cognome, nome e domicilio del mittente

VEDANSI A TERZO AVVERTENZE IMPORTANTISSIME.

Roma - Stampato Esap

33.

echoed in the three lines of small letters underneath the large black 'G' shape, 'GRAAAG', the 'U' shape projection at the side and the woman's curvy body at the bottom. The shapes on this path are dominant. They hold our eye to the path. Through the curves, we are brought through the noises of the battle - tinny, metallic sounds in the 'rraaang', further echoed in the 'GRAAA'. This path of curves sort of encloses the forcefulness of the explosion below, leading our eye around it, but yet allowing us to experience the chaos of the battle from a distance.

I feel that this particular piece is unusual. The handwriting at the bottom suggest the lines of a letter. Human interaction is suggested - his letter about the war and her reading of it. Is the letter about his experience of the war or is it her interpretation of what the war is like for him? In any case, this piece suggests a human, if not emotional, aspect aswell as a mechanical, dynamic evocation of war.

Another piece by Marinetti is Telegram 41, 1914-15 (Fig. 33). Here, Marinetti seems to shrugg off, without the slightest remorse, the correct way in which to fill in a telegram sheet. Instead, his message is presented in a new dynamic language. The '2+3+7+8x5' progresses in a regimented order, contrasting with the speed of movement with which the lines and arrows seem to fly off the page. The word 'PPPPiromaKeKa ...' is presented visually in a way that expresses its sound, seeming to come from different places. This ties in with what is happening in the lines, which does'nt seem to be stationary, but moving all the time. The O's and X's form a motif, whose presence adds a significance. It's almost like a code or plotting system. We wonder, is this a message, or a communication of Marinetti's personal expression?

Fig.34. TF Marinetti Ledro Valley 1915

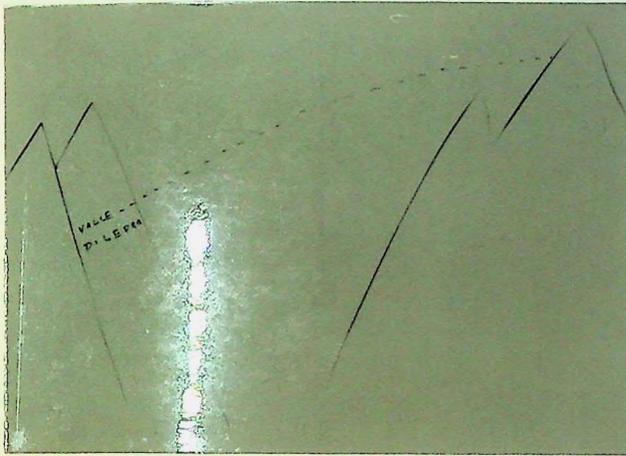
Fig. 35. TF Marinetti Lake in a Mountain Gorge I 1915

Fig. 36. TF Marinetti Lake in a Mountain Gorge II 1915

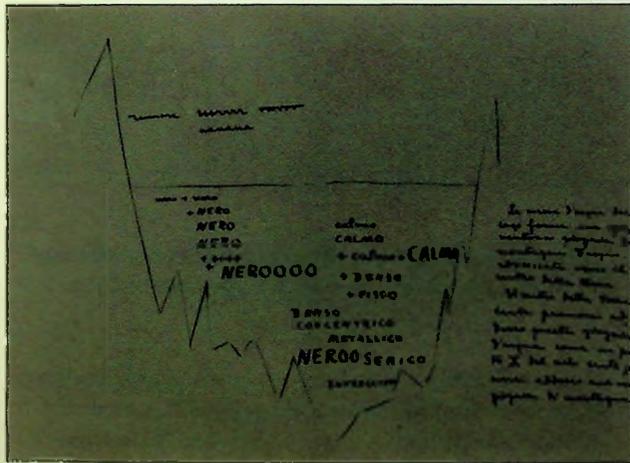
Fig. 37. TF Marinetti (a) Diary 1915 (b) Diary 1915

(c) Peschiera 1915 (d) Lake Garda at Riva 1915

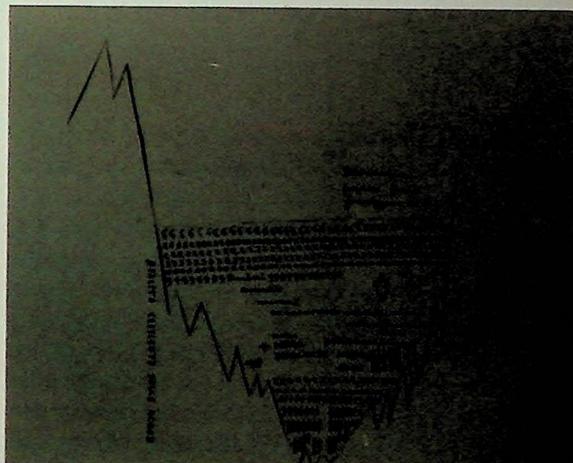
(e) Lake Garda at Dossa Casina 1915



34.



35.



36.



Fig.38. TF Marinetti

Battle at 9 Levels of Mount Altissimo 1915

# Bataille à 9 étages

## du Mont Altissimo

**3000 mètres** nez aéroplane autrichien + balles sifflantes = vent violent + vacarme d'ordures  
ironie légèreté écoles hygiéniques sur les terrasses gratte-ciels

**2500 mètres** ciues ensoleillées  
réclames lumineuses de l'Italie

*10 mètres 1778 mètres 1848 mètres 1918 mètres*

**2070 mètres** canonnade de 149 invisibles ouah ouah départ de trains suicides  
sur des ponts aériens et fragiles  
fatalité des rails convergeant à la gare unique  
chaque 27 secondes PLOUM PLOUM PLOUM PLOUM

**1800 mètres** Alpini en vedette  
= badigeonneurs sur le fronton des gratte-ciels

*descend dans les attics*

**1200 mètres** tepip tepip trhip de mésanges = couturiers  
américaines odeur de ramphre ammoniacale vaudle

**1190 mètres** volontaires en réserve sensible d'une  
bataille électorale les pieds dans le barriolage des  
prospectus de l'automne ronces giffantes le  
capitaine demande 20 hommes vite descendeons  
glissades on tombe cul-par-dessus-tête limitimanzinn  
de gamelles gourdes batonnelles

**800 mètres** pic pam pam crépitation d'incendie  
TOUM TOUM couchez-vous c'est le Brion qui ture  
ssssrrrrrappnella... PIIING... sssrrr zit zit PAAC  
= explosion d'un gazomètre à droite  
candidat autrichien fichu incendie dompté  
les pompiers reviennent

**50 mètres** patrouille tapie = viande  
congelée

### **30 mètres LAC DE GARDE**

cave-églout des montagnes paix nostalgie  
ciel tombé amour ferasé sous  
l'insurrection folle des montagnes futuristes  
popopopo de canot-automobile = naufrage d'un  
cœur de femme 2 torpilleurs moustachus  
de réflecteurs = veilleuses de la Malone

*PLOUM PLOUM PLOUM*  
*entres gères de la montagne*

**TOTAL:**

METALLIQUE  
MATHÉMATIQUE  
ÉLASTIQUE  
VOLITIF  
VICTORIEUX  
QUOTIDIEN  
ITALIEN

Tranchées de Duomo Cusina (Altissimo)

25 Octobre 1915

Figs. 34-37 I think shows Marinetti's experience of war in the Alps. They were done when he was stationed at Lake Garda - a flat, calm lake with spiky mountains covered in snow all around it. These pieces were done in a sketch book and this seems to give them a personal, intimate quality which is not portrayed in the typeset version (Fig. 38).

Unlike most of Marinetti's compositions, these do not hit us with such forcefulness. They are expressive I think, but in a subtle way. They would seem to contradict Marinetti's 'destruction of the I in literature'. The restrained line in Ledro Valley (Fig. 34) evokes the stillness of the valley and the crispness of the icy air. There is a calmness which comes across in most of these sketches but the underlying knowledge that these depict a war zone, is perhaps unsettling and this unsettling feeling is reinforced by the piercing mountains. The lines are not cluttered or shaded, suggesting the nothingness of a still snow landscape. On the back of Ledro Valley is a diagram of the two mountains with the words 'silenzio quasi totale' between them. Also, are notes on the total silence between when a missile is launched and its thunderous landing in enemy territory.

Lake in a Mountain Gorge II (Fig. 34) shows the contrast between the snow covered mountains and the calm lake. The water seems to be black and dense in relation to the mountains. All activity seems to have drained from the blank mountains and sunk into the depth of the ice cold water.

In Lake in a Mountain Gorge I (Fig. 33'), above and across the lake is a repeated 'r' sound, possibly the constant murmur of an aeroplane or motor. However, this is separate from the lake. The lake just goes down and down in a hypnotic descent of repetition of 'nero' and 'calmo' and the 'x' motif. In Lake in a Mountain Gorge II, the

density of water is portrayed in a series of lines and numbers. Starting with the '6's', the next line changes to '8's', then '2's', '3's', '0's' and then '9's', which in shape are '6's' turned upside down. There is some looseness and activity in the centre, below the opaque lines of numbers, perhaps some mysterious goings on that are hidden from view by the lakes' exterior appearance.

It could be, in fact, that these are an impersonal objective view of war. The fact is, it was silent there. It was cold and the mountains were jagged. Are these pieces merely representational of the place, or even of Marinetti's physical sensory experience of it, or is there something else? I think they evoke a tremendous feeling, a non-physical feeling of being there.

The idea of Italian Futurism had too many rigid principles. There were conditions for 'using' their 'new language of art', based on the 'New Age of the Machine' and our experience of it. Because of this, Italian Futurism is too specific. Poetic expression is reduced/limited to conveying the 'dynamism of modern life'. However, there are exceptions to the rule, I believe, and these are seen in pieces such as those I have discussed - Marinetti's series of drawings from Lake Garda and In the Evening... These pieces seem to possess a human emotional aspect as well as a dynamic mechanical one and this gives them a depth, perhaps a spiritual aspect that is missing from most Italian Futurist pieces.

Russian Futurism and Italian Futurism were born out of a rejection of their immediate past. In fact, they owe to this, in that had there not been something to reject, a new art movement of their nature could not have been born.

Rejection/ negation/ condemnation of the past seem to make up a substantial part of the essence of Russian Futurism and Italian Futurism. This is perhaps a valid point in accounting for their importance as Art movements. However on a positive note, I feel that their importance as art movements lie in their creation and development of a totally new and original approach to art and poetry.

Russian Futurism and Italian Futurism produced poetry which was valid as 'poetry', even though it was totally different to the preceeding idea of what 'poetry' was. Russian Futurism and Italian Futurism did not merely invent a new sort of poetry. They sought to dissipate the language, style and very idea of what poetry was, breaking it down to its very roots - its essential elements - and then recreating poetry anew, in a free way.

This recreation involved an awareness to visual form. The distinction between poet and artist in Russian Futurism and poet and typographer in Italian Futurism became void. Thus, the visual aspect of their Avant Garde poetry - its language, ideas, feeling, sound and imagination - was fundamental to its essence. This poetry is presented to our senses and this is how we experience the poem.

The function of poetry, ultimately is to affect our inner being with its essence. The Russian Futurists and the Italian Futurists achieved this, not by putting language through an artificial process through which a verbal meaning was communicated, as in traditional poetry, but by affecting our inner being directly. This was done by using visual form in an integrated way with language. Form did not have a specific or limited 'function'. Nor did it work by itself. It very much depended on the words of the poem. Sometimes form itself provided the experience, with the integration of word and image becoming so complete that the literal meaning of the word is lost. In other cases, where the word

form itself provided the experience, with the integration of word and image becoming so complete that the literal meaning of the word is lost. In other cases, where the word held sound, and the 'sound' was the essence of the poem, form integrated itself with the word to embody this sound. The visual impact imposes upon us. It has an immediacy. It is direct. Language itself was broken down and reconstructed. It was used on a different level. The word itself became important as an expressive force and not what it referred to literally.

Typography need not only be visible and legible

Typography needs to be audible

Typography needs to be felt

Typography needs to be experienced. 53.

This is what Russian Futurism and Italian Futurism explored in their poetry and this is where my interest in them lies. Perhaps their ideas on language and poetic expression - Russian *zaim* language and the Italian 'expression of modern life' - were too radical to uphold themselves but their work in exploring the visual possibilities of making 'the word' more expressive has had a lasting effect not only in the Concrete movement of the 1960's but also on typographers/poets of today.

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