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TWO TYPES OF VISUALITY IN RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE POETRY: VLADIMIR MAJAKOVSKIJ AND BORIS PASTERNAK

ANNA HAN

Abstract

In this article two contrasting types of visuality, embodied in the poetry of Vladimir Maiakovskii and Boris Pasternak, are analysed. The principle of visuality is primarily regarded as a specific form of artistic sensitivity, organically linked with the translatability of verbal signs into the language of visual images. Between Maiakovskii's and Pasternak's poetic worlds there are essential differences, but a number of points of contact as well.

Keywords: *B.L. Pasternak; Vl. Maiakovskii; M. Tsvetaeva; Visuality*

The contrastive study of two types of visuality on the example of the opposing characteristics of Majakovskij's and Pasternak's poetry has a pre-history in philology and the history of art (Cvetaeva 1932; Flaker 1977, 1979, 1986, 1987; Buzás 2001). In the present paper I would like to examine the principle of visuality in some of the forms it appears in.

First of all, the phenomenon of visuality can be interpreted as a specific type of artistic perception. In this case, in the system of the interaction between the various senses (artistic perception) reflecting the constructive activity of the mind (artistic apperception), one component (in this case the plane of visual perception) becomes dominating and becomes the organizing prin-

ciple of the whole process of artistic perception. There cannot be pure manifestations of visuality in the process of artistic perception, because it would lead to reducing the whole system of the working of the artist's mind to one plane.

Secondly, the principle of visuality raises the question about the system of verbal means conveying the artistic experience in which the visual perception of the world dominates. This also gives rise to additional questions about the possibilities of translating verbal signs into the language of visual forms and representations; the orientation of literature towards the related fields of art, especially painting, sculpture and architecture; and the devices for "performing" the specific regularities of the artistic language of these art forms in verbal space.

Thirdly, visuality can be viewed as a form of self-expression of the lyrical subject in Avant-garde poetry. In this case the process of visualization of the inner workings of the creative mind and their projection into the outer, physical world of objects, which can be physically perceived in their visually perceptible forms, is in the focus of our attention (cf. Faryno 1981). In this case the task is to decrypt the parabolic meaning of these visual forms along with their immediate sensual tangibility.

And last but not least, the problem of visuality also appears on the level of the whole artistic view of the world of an author's system, which eventually emerges in the perceptual and creative act of the artistic consciousness. In this case the principle of visuality can be viewed as one of the constructing parts of the multi-layered architectonics of the artistic universe. Since the creative process can be considered a multiphased activity, during which the first visual impressions and the lyrical subject himself undergo a number of metamorphoses, the artistic picture of the world in its final verbal embodiment and coherence already demonstrates a new level of visuality, which is qualitatively different from the first stage of visual impressions.

The above questions will serve as a context for the contrastive study of the differences in the forms of visuality in Majakovskij's and Pasternak's artistic worlds.

Cultural and Philosophical Preconditions of the Phenomenon of Visuality in Avant-Garde Poetry

In literary research dedicated to the study of the period of post-Symbolism and Avant-garde as cultural paradigms which replaced Symbolism, it has become a generally accepted conviction that this change also moved the emphasis from auditory perception of the world to visual perception. In consequence, the focus on music was replaced by the focus on the visual arts. While in the age of Symbolism verbal art with its enormous expressive pos-

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