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## Ukrainian Futurism: A New Anthology of Writings by Mykhail' Semenko

*Mikhail' Semenko i ukrainskii panfuturizm: Manifesty. Mistifikatsii. Stat'i. Lirika. Viziopoeziia* [Mykhail' Semenko & Ukrainian PanFuturism: Manifestos, Mystifications, Essays, Lyric Poetry, Visiopoetry] Sost., per. s ukrain., stat'i, komment. i bibliografiia A. V. Beloy i A. A. Rossomakhina [Selected, edited, translated, commented, bibliography and essays by Anna Belaya and Andrey Rossomakhin]. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2016. (AVANT-GARDE; vyp. 9). 400 + [16] pp., 8pp. facsimile inserts, 100 B/W illustrations and 45 in colour. ISBN 978-5-94380-203-4. RUB 360,00; US\$ 21,00; € 19,10 EUR; £ 14,00.

This anthology provides a compelling and comprehensive overview of the Ukrainian Futurist movement, centering on its founder and enduring leader, Mykhail' Semenko, while also embracing other significant figures, who either supported or resisted Futurism in Ukraine. A variety of seminal literary, critical and polemical texts (all amply annotated), introductory and explanatory essays, illustrations, bibliographies, and facsimile reproductions stretch the boundaries of the anthology as a genre, but the result is a very useful, revealing and engaging publication that borders on a mini encyclopedia of the movement and Ukrainian culture of the 1920s. Directed squarely at the “Russian (*rossiiskogo*) reader”, this is the first attempt ever to present Ukrainian literary Futurism within this market as an independent national phenomenon.

Aesthetically, the book makes an excellent first impression. The design and layout by Alexandr Iurii Khodot is a worthy tribute to the care and experimentation that characterized not only Ukrainian Futurist publications, but the European avant-garde as a whole. With the exception of eight pages, which show book and magazine covers in colour (this is an “illustrated bibliography”), the whole volume is lavishly illuminated with high quality, black-and-white reproductions that complement and amplify the content. Paintings, photos, caricatures, documents and Futurist promotional materials are just some of the items reproduced. Pagination is playfully restricted to odd-numbered pages and realized through large digits placed outside the margins. Perusing the book is a pleasure, indeed.

The anthology is the product of a binational effort by Ukrainian and Russian scholars Anna Belaia (Anna Bila) and Andrei Rossomakhin, both of whom have

previous accomplishments in the field of the avant-garde in their respective countries. The two co-editors and co-translators divided their book into ten sections, a preface and an introduction by Belaia. She presents a succinct but enlightening account of Ukrainian Futurism from 1914 to 1930, which is intertwined with biographical information on Semenko. His life is further explored in Belaia's second essay that appears in a section devoted to biographical materials. Rossomakhin offers his Russian readers a lucid appreciation and summary of Semenko's qualities and directions as a poet, a task he performs well, having translated all the poems that appear in the volume. As Rossomakhin explains, his translations are, in effect, the first translations of Semenko into Russian, barring a handful that appeared over the last century. Semenko makes his debut before the Russian audience with a selection of eighty poems, most of them examples of his diverse and eccentric love lyrics, but some other poems are included as well. Overall, this is but a tiny fraction of Semenko's large *œuvre*. While the translated selection gives a somewhat one-sided picture of the poet, it is balanced out by a series of facsimile reproductions of his visual poems, which, of course, are not translated. Furnished with these translations, originals and the explanatory essays, readers will walk away with a good awareness of Semenko-the-Poet.

Semenko's poetry occupies the very middle of the anthology. Flanking both sides are several other sections. Arguably, the most important – for purposes of understanding Ukrainian Futurism – are the first two sections: “Manifestos and Articles by Mykhail' Semenko” and “Manifestos and Articles by [Semenko's] Colleagues.” Together, they showcase twenty-two programmatic/theoretical declarations, heavily favouring documents from the early 1920s. In addition to Semenko, authors included are Geo Shkurupii, Marko Tereshchenko, Mykola Bazhan and Volodymyr Hadzins'kyi. Regrettably, there are no texts by Oleksii Poltorats'kyi or Leonid Skrypnyk. Missing also is one Semenko's key articles, “Art as a Cult” (*Mystetstvo iak kul't*, 1924).

A section titled “Mystifications” shows the mischievous side of Ukrainian Futurism, its penchant for satire and irony. Here we find several rare references to Russian Futurists (Maiakovskii and others), which raises a question: Why did the editors provide relatively little information on the relationship and polemics between Ukrainian and Russian Futurism (for example, between *Nova generatsiia* and *Novyi Lef*)? This is strange for a work like this. An interesting and wise decision, however, was to include a series of articles about Semenko and Ukrainian Futurism in a section aptly titled “Responses by Contemporaries”. These include views, both negative and positive, about Semenko and Futurism by literary critics and historians. As such, the section not only fleshes out the essays by Belaia and Rossomakhin, but also sheds light on the cultural and social ferment in Ukraine during the 1920s, helping to contextualize the Futurist movement.

As mentioned above, one of the unexpected and very welcome aspects of this anthology is the great number of facsimile reproductions, of which Semenko's visual poems are the most important. They have been republished before in Ukraine, but never in Russia. Even without translation, they make an impact visually. A particularly useful reprint (in the form of a free-standing insert) is Semenko's very first publication "Derzannia" (Bravado, 1914), which opened with the manifesto "Alone" (Sam, 1914), inaugurating Ukrainian Futurism with what contemporaries took as an attack on Taras Shevchenko, the father of the nation. The manifesto appears in a Russian translation as the first item of the anthology, but the facsimile insert contains the entire eight pages of this scandalous pamphlet in its outdated orthography. Until now, it has been quite rare and virtually inaccessible even to Ukrainian specialists.

In a word, this is a first-rate anthology, quite original in its conception and realization, and, actually, without equal in any other language, including Ukrainian. The European University in Saint-Petersburg and the editors should consider issuing a Ukrainian version. In the meantime, Russians and Russian readers will find it an excellent introduction to Ukrainian Futurism. It is a shame though that the publisher released only 1000 copies.