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This book would not have been possible were it just an anthology of poetry. It owes its existence to another anthology—one comprised of people. Here we acknowledge a diverse crowd, oblivious to borders, time zones, languages, and generations. We thank a group of individuals and institutions that unanimously agreed, and often reassured us, that this book simply had to be written.

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Thank you all.

Lev Fridman
Oksana Rosenblum

Preface

When Lev and I first met sometime in February 2018 to discuss Mykola Bazhan, we could not have known what would eventually emerge from those fragmentary and tentative discussions about publishing a small book of Bazhan's early poetry in English translation. Right now you are holding in your hands the simultaneously improbable and inevitable product of that work: a snowball of inspiration rolling down a mountain of effort and support.

Lev came to this project through an emotional encounter with Bazhan's gut-wrenching poetic response to the Babyn Yar massacre, having compelled a group of translators to work on a poem called "Iar" (Ravine, 1943), and was awed by the poet's efforts to document the horrors that occurred on his native soil. I, on the other hand, emerged from three months' work on the translation of Bazhan's long poem "Rozmova serdets'" (Heart-to-heart conversation, 1929), and realized that I had become completely engrossed in the intensity of the emotions and dreamlike quality of the text that transformed my understanding of this—as I used to think of him before—conventional poet. I kept wondering why, having studied Ukrainian poetry of the 1920s–1930s in the past, I had never heard of this oeuvre, filled with the overwhelming internal monologues of a lyrical hero, who in the first part of the poem finds himself stuck in a building-coffin structure: "Arching over me/The building lifts, like a maddening hearse. The floors, immobile and silent coffins/Are stacked on top of one another."[1] This feeling of being stuck epitomized the situation in which an entire generation of Ukrainian writers, poets, and artists in general found themselves toward the end of the 1920s. Furthermore, Bazhan's poetry, the trajectory of which encompassed various movements and creative platforms, was far from conventional, eclectic in style, and not easy to categorize.

Our selection of Bazhan's early poetry took into account a few seemingly simple principles: we wanted to showcase the work that is lesser known, more

1 Quoted from this volume.

experimental, and speaks to the sensibility of the contemporary reader. With that being said, Bazhan's work is known for its linguistic complexity, so there is nothing simple about it, which might be one of the reasons why this kind of a collection has not been put together before. Despite continued interest in Bazhan's life and work in Ukraine, he has received little attention in the West, and it is our humble hope that this book will fill in this gap.[2]

Our anthology includes poems from the three early Bazhan collections: *Simnadtsiatyi patrul'* (*The Seventeenth Patrol*, 1926), *Riz'blena tin'* (*The Sculpted Shadow*, 1927), and *Budivli* (*Edifices*, 1929). It also includes translations of Bazhan's important long poems, written in 1929–1930: "Getto v Umani" (Ghetto in Uman'), "Hofmanova nich" (Hoffmann's night), and "Sliptsi" (Blind bards). Additional material is represented by the book of both prose and poetry *Zustrich na perekhresnii stantsii: rozmova tr'oh* (Meeting at the crossroad station: a conversation among the three, 1927), which contains a polemical exchange between three leading poets of the time: Mykhail' Semenko, Geo Shkurupii, and Mykola Bazhan. *Zustrichi* sheds light on Bazhan's creative thought process behind his collection *Budivli.*

The rationale behind publishing the originals in Ukrainian is that up until now there has been no collection of Bazhan's early work. One has to scout various Ukrainian and North American libraries in order to find the poems, quite a few of which are scattered among journals and almanacs of the 1920s. Because of the rarity of some of Bazhan's early poems and collections, such as *Riz'blena tin'* (*The Sculpted Shadow*), there has been confusion among scholars of Bazhan's work as to the content of each particular poetry collection, as well as with the dating of the poems. As a result, some poems have been mistakenly assigned to collections to which they did not belong. This anthology consolidates this material and clarifies the confusion.

In addition to creating the critical apparatus for the early works of Bazhan, clarifying the content of the collections and dates of the poems, the translation process itself represents a new milestone in the process of expanding Bazhan's literary canon in both Ukrainian and English. Only a few of Bazhan's poems from the 1920s and early 1930s have previously been published in English.[3]

2 See Aheieva, *Vizerunok na kameni. Mykola Bazhan: zhyttepys (ne)radians'koho poeta* (*Pattern on a stone. Mykola Bazhan: a chronicle of a [non-]Soviet poet*) (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo staroho leva, 2018).

3 "Hofmanova nich" (Hoffmann's night) appeared in *Kenyon Review* 2, no. 3 (1980): 35–40, in a translation by Bohdan Boychuk and Mark Rudman. "Getto v Umani" (Ghetto in Uman') appeared in *Agni* 52 (2000): 217–220, in a translation by Michael M. Naydan.

His poetry has been described as dense, rich, and syntactically complex. His vocabulary is unusually varied, even for a poet of this caliber. It is no wonder that contemporary readers of Bazhan have to reach for numerous dictionaries and encyclopedias, as well as post their inquiries on Facebook forums.

The translators' essays that supplement almost every chapter of the book were conceived as experimental pieces, as a common ground for testing out various ideas about the process of translation itself. Inevitably, every translator has their own approach. Some are more literal, while others prefer to wander off into unknown territory and take risks by conveying the emotional component of the poetry, rather than its literal meaning, in the target language.

We know that not every poem and its translation in this anthology will resonate with the reader, yet we hope that everyone finds something here that presents Mykola Bazhan's early creative output from an unexpected angle.

A few words about the title of our book: it comes from Bazhan's 1929 poem "Hoffmann's Night," a tribute to Romanticism and early Modernism. The strikingly dark imagery of the poem speaks volumes about the role of the unconscious in the creative process, something that Bazhan must have been acutely aware of:

> Наказую я привидам-словам:
> Із прірв свідомості, з найглибших людських ям
> Ви павуками тихими вилазьте!
>
> I order the word-ghosts
> To creep out from the deepest manholes of the mind,
> Like quiet spiders of the hidden soul![4]

Oksana Rosenblum

"Krov polonianok" (The blood of captive maidens) appeared in *Hundred Years of Youth: A Bilingual Anthology of 20th Century Ukrainian Poetry*, ed. Olha Luchuk and Michael M. Naydan (Lviv: Litopys, 2000).

4 Translated for this book by Svetlana Lavochkina.

Oh, to vex me, contraryes meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vowes, and in devotions.
John Donne, *Holy Sonnets*

The Ukrainian Avant-Garde and Its Roots: The Poetics of Mykola (Nik) Bazhan

HALYNA BABAK

In his nomination of Mykola Bazhan for the 1970 Nobel Prize,[1] Omeljan Pritsak, the founder of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, proposes Bazhan's early period—his most controversial and stylistically diverse—as crucial for understanding the nature of his poetic talent. It is the works of Bazhan's first literary decade, ranging from his debut publication in 1923 to a panegyric for Stalin in 1932, that secured him a place in Ukrainian Soviet literature.[2] Pritsak especially singles out Bazhan's second poetry collection, *The Sculpted Shadow*, and

1 The nomination was doomed from the very beginning because of the political realities of that time. Mykola Bazhan refused to send the bibliography of translations of his poems needed for the nomination because he knew too well how dearly he would have to pay for it if it came to pass.

2 Mykola Bazhan, "Rura-marsh" (Ruhr-March), *Bil'shovyk*, May 17, 1923, 10. Mykola Bazhan, "Liudyna stoït' v zorenosnim Kremli" (A man stands in the star-bearing Kremlin), in Mykola Bazhan, *Poezii* (Saratov: Ukrvydav CK KP(b)U, 1943).

also such poems as "Edifices," "Ghetto in Uman′," "Hoffman's Night," and "Blind Bards." For Pritsak, Bazhan's poetry of the 1920s represents the European experimental style. But at the same time he stresses that it is deeply rooted in the late seventeenth-century Ukrainian Baroque tradition,[3] "with its profusion of grotesque emblematic details, extended metaphors, often enigmatic metonymies, and an approach which is at the same time furiously sensual and icily detached."[4]

The poet himself emphasized the dichotomy between the avant-garde and Baroque in his work. In 1927 Bazhan wrote: "I love the Zaborovs′kyi Gate and the Dniprel′stan.[5] I love organic and robust culture, and Ukraine produced such culture only once: the culture of feudalism, the culture of Mazepa. Now it'll have it the second time: the culture of proletariat and the culture of building a socialist society."[6] The two architectural symbols of the radically opposing styles that Bazhan names are Dniprel′stan, part of the Dnipro hydroelectric station, which had just been started in 1927, and the former main entrance to Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, Zaborovs′kyi Gate, one of the most vivid examples of Ukrainian Baroque. He thereby indicates the two poles of his poetics. On the one hand, he is a member of the avant-garde; on the other, from the mid-1920s he turns to the Baroque tradition and to philosophical epic poems. The coexistence of these different stylistic approaches is demonstrated in his two earliest poetry collections.

Bazhan's first Futurist book *The Seventeenth Patrol* (1926) was an attempt to pay tribute to the revolutionary years; it consequently required decisive gestures and new forms of expression. However, his second collection *The Sculpted Shadow* (1927) struck a completely different tone in addition to that of experimentalism: its speaker tries to develop an understanding of life with all its contradictions. The same philosophical orientation can be detected in the poems Bazhan wrote in the late 1920s and early 1930s. They are marked by accumulating images that are perceived as separate and chaotic, but together the poems uncover the very essence of things through the objectification—both in the sense of focusing on concrete objects or details, and in the sense of refraining

3 For the Ukrainian Baroque, which flourished during the Hetmanship of Ivan Mazepa (1639–1709), see Giovanna Brogi Bercoff, "Plurilinguism and Identity: Rethinking Ukrainian Literature of the Seventeenth Century," in *Ukraine and Europe: Cultural Encounters and Negotiations*, ed. Marko Pavlyshyn et al., 45–72 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

4 Omeljan Pritsak Memorial Library, Archival Collection, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, collection 10, file 983, pages 101–118.

5 *Brama Zaborovs′koho.* More can be found at http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CZ%5CA%5CZaborovskyGate.htm.

6 All translations are from the current volume, unless otherwise specified.

from personal emotion—of the sensory world.[7] The initial chaos, divided and solidified by the description of disparate objects, is perceived by the reader as a sequence of fragments, built frame by frame in the manner of montage, conveying the complexity of the artistic experience.

Thus, objectification and montage become the main techniques that connect avant-garde with Baroque aesthetics in Bazhan's poems of the late 1920s. In broader terms, these principles may be said to characterize European art and literature of the 1920s in general: the emergence of Surrealism and Neue Sachlichkeit from Dada, and of Constructivism, Bauhaus, and other forms of engineering-oriented art from Cubism and Futurism. The employment of these techniques also indicates an understanding of art and literature as autonomous spheres, governed by their own laws, as the focus shifts to the formal aspects of a literary work. The ontological autonomy of art was a foundational tenet of the Russian Formalists and, a bit later, of the Anglo-American New Critics. Both movements developed as a reaction to the older literary history schools that considered literary work only as a product of the author's personality, status, or attitudes toward their own social reality.

In his essay "Art as Device" (also translated as "Art as Technique"), published 1917, Viktor Shklovsky, one of the founders of Russian Formalism and its main proponent, considered the complexity of artistic form as the main principle of defamiliarization or estrangement, which is also a "way of experiencing the process of creativity."[8] If avant-garde technique defamiliarizes the object by dividing it into parts and reshuffling them, then Baroque technique is avant-garde avant la lettre in its desire for asymmetry, logical leaps, semantic and rhythmic shifts, conjunction of distant ideas, and its ambition to surprise. Hence concretization of detail and, at the same time, the transition from linear connections to juxtaposition and montage are features common both to avant-garde and Baroque. Later in his 1931 essay "The Golden Land" Shklovsky wrote: "People of our time, people of intense detail are people of the

7 This could be compared to the destruction of the lyrical "I" in Marinetti's Futurist manifestos, Pound's principle of "Direct treatment of the 'thing,'" or William Carlos Williams's dictum "no ideas but in things." See Paolo Tonini, *I manifesti del futurismo italiano 1909–1945* (Gussago: Edizioni dell'Arengario, 2011); Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound,* ed. and introd. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 3–14; William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, ed. Christopher McGowan (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1995).

8 Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. and ed. Benjamin Sher (Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 6.

Baroque. … The Baroque, life of intense details, is not a vice, but an attribute of our times."[9]

It is no coincidence that T. S. Eliot, in his shaping of the principles of modern poetry, appeals to the English Baroque tradition. In his famous essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), along with ascribing a new level of significance to early modern English poetry, he concludes "that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult.* … The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."[10] In another essay "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919), Eliot provides a more precise formula: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."[11]

Bazhan's definition of poetry appears in his 1927 manifesto "Put On Your Glasses." Although he calls it "revolutionary materialism," his idea is similar to those of both Eliot and Shklovsky: "To properly see things, browse, and touch them—means to be unlike the impressionists. To touch things that are material and objective—means to differ from the Expressionists. To not contemplate, not photograph them—means to differ from the naturalists. To be a revolutionary materialist."[12] The same overt objectification becomes the foundation of modern aesthetics, and is also effective in Bazhan's poetry of the late 1920s, where it is given the task of defamiliarization.

Bazhan was thirteen years old during the October 1917 revolution. This partly explains the romantic perception of the events in his first poetic collection *The Seventeenth Patrol*, published under the name Nik Bazhan.

In 1921 Bazhan set out from Uman' to study in Kyiv. From the beginning of the February Revolution until the final establishment of Communist rule in

9 Viktor Shklovsky, *Gamburgskii schet. Stat'i—vospominaniia—esse (1914–1933)* (*The Hamburg reckoning. Articles—memoirs—essays*), ed. Aleksandr Galushkin (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 444.

10 T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 287.

11 T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet and Its Problems," in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1921), 87–94.

12 Mykola Bazhan, "Odiahnit' okuliary" (Put on your glasses), *Bumerang. Zhurnal pamfletiv* 1 (1927): 25. My translation.

1920, Kyiv was controlled by various powers, changing hands fourteen times. In the spring of 1920, the city suffered a terrible famine. Still, this hardship and turmoil did not stop an intense whirlpool of literary life. Among the first to appear in the literary arena were the Futurists, headed by Mykhail' Semenko. The history of Ukrainian Futurism began as early as 1914, when Semenko invented "Quero-Futurism" (Searching-Futurism) and published his collection *Daring*, containing the manifesto "Myself."

The manifesto challenged the most canonical of Ukrainian poets, Taras Shevchenko, who for Semenko symbolized the rustic backward Ukrainian culture of the nineteenth century. Semenko called upon Ukrainians to "burn *The Kobzar*," Shevchenko's main poetry collection. The text caused a large debate among the intelligentsia, primarily because the Romantic poet was perceived not only as poet but as liberator, prophet, and messiah. Although inspired by Italian and Russian precedents, this gesture was much stronger than Marinetti's call to "burn libraries and museums" or the Cubo-Futurist command "to throw Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and others off from the ship of modernity."[13] Of course, Pushkin and Shevchenko were the main representatives and symbols of their national literatures. But the difference is that Pushkin, unlike Shevchenko, was a poet of an imperial, multinational Russia. Shevchenko, on the other hand, had been installed as a symbol of Ukrainian national liberation during his lifetime. At this point, further development of Ukrainian Futurism was interrupted by World War I.

At the end of the 1910s the Futurist movement in Ukraine began gaining more power, pushing earlier Symbolist practices into the background. The demands of Communist ideology to destroy the old "bourgeois" world and build the new "proletarian" society were to a certain extent consistent with the Futurist vision of art. Therefore, after the revolution the avant-garde movement saw itself as the righteous art of the new proletarian class.

Here it would be helpful to introduce the term "Late Futurism" to help define some versions of 1920s Futurism. The term "Late Futurism" can be applied to avant-garde groups and movements in those national literatures which either never had the first phase of so-called "High Futurism" (in the prewar period) or in which this phase was not original or quickly aborted. We can see examples of

13 Filippo Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism," 1909; "Slap in the Face of Public Taste," 1912. See also Tonini, *I manifesti del futurismo italiano 1909–1945*; S. Dzhymbinova, ed., *Literaturnye manifesty ot simvolizma do nashykh dnei* (Moscow: XXI vek—Soglasie, 2000), 142.

Late Futurist movements in Poland and Slovenia.[14] "Late Futurism" arises as a more mature form of the radical avant-garde and—this is very important—as an artistic consciousness that is much closer to national traditions.

Ukrainian Futurism started its quick development after World War I and 1917, at the time when the main European Futurist movements began to transform. Whereas prewar Italian and Russian Futurisms were anarchic and anti-establishment, especially anti-state, after the war both movements tried to position themselves as the artistic arms of their respective regimes. In 1922, former Russian Futurists formed a new organization, LEF (Left Front of the Arts), and no longer called themselves "Futurists." Furthermore, after the war, Italian Futurists started to support the fascist movement, and embraced the state after Mussolini's "March on Rome" in October 1922. In Western literatures, nationalism and communism were the two paradigms between which "Late Futurism" played its brief role.

As for Ukraine, the development of a separate Futurism was minor before the war and interrupted by it. The period from 1918, when Semenko came back to Kyiv, until about 1922, can be described as Late Futurism. At that time, Ukrainian Futurism was one of the vocal factions offering competing visions of artistic form and social function in the initially dynamic Soviet environment. But in the early to mid-twenties, political pressure began to distort and dilute avant-garde aesthetics. The mechanism of "social demand" played a substantial role in literature: it empowered the creation of works that fit into state discourse.

It was in 1921 that Semenko invented "Pan-Futurism"—a "post-art of the future" that aimed to synthesize the achievements of all experimental movements in art. In terms of its theory and artistic practices, "Pan-Futurism" s was close to Constructivism, even though the followers still called themselves "futurists" or "pan-futurists". Bazhan joined the Association of Pan-Futurists (Aspanfut) that same year. As he later explained in his memoirs:

> By the time I moved to Kyiv, I had already become a full-scale "leftist," and so I did not join the Neoclassicists[15] but instead went to meet up with Mykhail'

14 See Nina Kolesnikoff, "Polish Futurism: Its Origin and the Aesthetic Program," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 18, no. 3 (1976): 301–311; Marijan Dović, "Anton Podbevšek, Futurism, and Slovenian Interwar Avant-garde Literature," *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies* 1 (2011): 262–276.

15 The Neoclassicists (from the word "neoclassicism." In Ukrainian: *neoklasyky*) was a group of Ukrainian poets as well as literary critics and theorists of Ukrainian Modernism in the 1920s. Unlike other groups, they had no organized structure. Their works were characterized by aestheticism, an appeal to Greek and Roman themes and plots, and an interest in the formal

> Semenko. Semenko persuaded me and Iurii Ianovs'kyi to move to Kharkiv. … He discovered us all. He supported us and helped us to get settled.[16]

Bazhan's other mentor was the avant-garde director Les' Kurbas. Kurbas, the leader of *Berezil'* theatre, was one of the most outstanding figures in the Ukrainian arts:

> When he [Kurbas] came to Uman' with his theatre lab, I read him Tychyna's "Like Harps, Like Harps." He was stunned. … Tychyna and, of course, Mayakovsky: these were my first teachers. I happened to get hold of Mayakovsky's "150000000" in Uman', and this book greatly influenced me. … When I moved to Kyiv, I used to visit Kurbas quite often, and I followed Berezil' theatre all the time. I really felt the influence of expressionism through the plays of Berezil'. …"[17]

Apart from Kurbas, the influence of Vladimir Mayakovsky and German Expressionism can be discerned in Bazhan's first poetry collection *The Seventeenth Patrol* (1926), which includes twenty-four poems written during the years he spent in Kyiv. The poems are clearly identified with Futurist poetics: they aim to affirm the heroic pathos of the revolutionary years, and feature sound polyphony, sophisticated metaphors, pronounced emotion, and asymmetric rhythm. Bazhan plays with the formal and semantic aspects of word-creation, capitalizes on the nuances of meaning, and searches for new techniques to effect dynamism.

Perhaps unexpectedly for a Futurist, the poet appeals to traditional songs and ballads, but he fills them with unusual content. For example, the poem "Trooper's Song" (1925) reflects the author's perception of the revolutionary years. What it lacks in plot development it makes up for in revolutionary and romantic pathos. As Red Army guards leave for a battle, figurative sound patterning evokes the clanking of steel stirrups. The reader is meant to be immersed in the atmosphere of the battle and to experience the ringing of weapons and the smoke of the battlefields:

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aspects of literature. From the mid-1920s, Marxist critics accused them of formalism. The main representatives of this movement were Mykola Zerov, Maksym Ryl's'kyi, Pavlo Fylypovych, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, and Iurii Klen. See http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CN%5CE%5CNeoclassicists.htm.

16 Nataliia Kostenko, "Razgovory s poetom" (Conversations with the poet), in *Vospominaniia o Mykole Bazhane* (*Memories of Mykola Bazhan*), ed. Nina Bazhan and Evgeniia Deich (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1989), 272.

17 Ibid., 271.

The troopers set off, their horses were neighing
(Soft steady clanking of stirrup steel).

Original:

Бійці виїжджали і коні іржали
(Стрименo в стременах сталь дзвенить).

The motif of self-sacrifice in support of the revolution appears in Bazhan's poem "Imobe of Galam" (1924). The poem uses the fight against colonialism in the French colonies for its thematic framework. Surrounded by "exotic" nature, a black slave named Imobe rises against his European oppressors. Bazhan's original again employs sound patterning, this time to convey the atmosphere of tension against the backdrop of a mystical night:

When in the papyrus sedge
birds scream aghast
And the sky is congealed
in a clot of black musk,
A knight
of the old Maghreb faith
prowls in the wildwood.

The reader is not provided with any context or details, but the poem functions as a manifesto for fighting a violent social order. As a consequence of this kind of work, *The Seventeenth Patrol* was highly praised by critics. One of them wrote: "The thing is, Bazhan does not make you wander through the watery prairies of boring lyricism, instead he immediately captures your attention with the plot."[18]

As a Futurist, Bazhan also carried out linguistic experiments which, however, were not included in any collection. For example, "Hops of Green Legs" (1924) offers examples of semantic *zaum*:[19]

18 Ihor Shakhivets', "Mykola Bazhan, '17-i Patrul'" (*The Seventeenth Patrol* by Mykola Bazhan), *Kul'tura i pobut* 14 (1926): 8. This is a review of Bazhan's *The Seventeenth Patrol*.

19 *Zaum* (Rus.: *zaum'*, also *zaumnyi iazyk* [trans-sense language]) was the most radical expression of the new concept of poetry proclaimed by the Russian Futurists in their manifestos. According to this concept, the word had to be treated and perceived "as such," a phonetic entity possessing its own ontology. *Zaum*, therefore, is an experimental language which consists of neologisms that are rich in sound but devoid of any conventional meaning. See

The hops of green legs lull me,
of bodies, tulle.
O, one who eyes in the evening
the shimmering shingles of waves.

Original:

Мене зелених ніг,
тіл тюль люля хміль.
О, хто зазирає ввечері на зорі
в хвиль сльотну толь?

Such semantic shifts attempt to communicate the *mood* of night. The poem replaces sense with sound. The author uses a purely avant-garde strategy of creating an image by emphasizing impulsive forms of utterance.

In 1925, Semenko's Pan-Futurists settled in Kharkiv, which from 1919 was the capital of Soviet Ukraine. Having moved there as well, Bazhan found himself at the epicenter of Ukrainian cultural and artistic life, where most of the literary groups and publishing houses were concentrated. *Berezil'* moved to Kharkiv in 1926. Bazhan befriended the future film director Alexander Dovzhenko, who worked as a magazine illustrator there. The poet also encountered the avant-garde artists led by Vasyl' Iermylov, who had collaborated with Russian Futurists Velimir Khlebnikov and David Burliuk. Vladimir Mayakovsky also frequented the city. Kharkiv in the 1920s lay at an intersection of Ukrainian and Russian cultures.

A new period in Bazhan's artistic development began in 1926. In his search for a suitable cultural paradigm, he turned to the Ukrainian folklore tradition as well as to classical forms. This turn testified to an ideological discrepancy between Semenko and Bazhan. Bazhan's avant-garde strategies—unlike those of Semenko or Geo Shkurupii—never entailed ideological gestures against the national literary canon.[20] He became a member of the more

Gerald Janecek, *Zaum: The Transrational Poetry of Russian Futurism* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1996).

20 In 1925, Semenko published his complete collection of poetry in one volume (1910–1922) provocatively titled *Kobzar'*. In 1930, Geo Shkurupii published his unfinished novel *A Tale of the Poet Taras Shevchenko's Bitter Love* in the journals *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia* (the first three parts) and *Nova generatsiia* (another two parts).