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**ТИПОГРАФІЧНЕ ВИСУНЕННЯ У СУЧАСНІЙ ПОЕЗІЇ: МАЙСТЕРНІСТЬ
МАНІПУЛЯЦІЇ
(НА ОСНОВІ ПОЕЗІЇ «dreems» БІЛЛА БІССЕТТА)**

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**TYPOGRAPHIC FOREGROUNDING IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY:
MASTERY OF MANIPULATION: THE CASE OF Bill Bissett's *dreems***

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню типографічного висунення у сучасній англomовній поезії та його маніпулятивного аспекту. Подано визначення очуднення, описано такі типографічні прийоми, як шрифтово-розмірна альтерація, зміна кольору тла викладу в комбінації з паралелізмом та супутніми девіаціями, що вияляються на різних мовних щаблях (фонологічний, семантичний і лексико-граматичний). Такі тактики можуть бути використані як маніпуляційні засоби не лише задля багатовимірного сприйняття поезії як такої, а і літературного перформансу автора, що вирізняє його/її з-поміж інших митців. Ця маніпуляція слугує технікою формування емоційної та когнітивної реакції читача, тим самим посилюючи взаємодію з текстом. Результати дослідження базуються на аналізах як твору канадського поета Білла Біссетта, так і власного поетичного зразка, створеного в рамках курсу Соні Зінгер, що дає змогу стверджувати про універсальність досліджуваного поняття не лише у літературних колах, а і у буденному житті, і такого, що може бути доступне кожному, хто зацікавлений у жанрі «фігурної поезії» та/або «візуальних віршів». Висновки ілюструють дуальність використання типографічного висунення з точки зору форми самовираження світогляду автора та маніпулювання читачем і водночас набуття ним (читачем) поетичного досвіду на рівні психопоетики. Подальшою перспективою дослідження вбачається аналіз творів маловідомих авторів Великобританії та США, а також зразків сучасного графічного дизайну та діджиталізованих продуктів, що є на сьогодні широко розповсюдженими. З огляду на сучасний стрімкий розвиток цифрового мистецтва та поетичних онлайн-платформ, стає зрозуміло, що типографічне спрямування більше не обмежується традиційними друкованими виданнями, а натомість перетворюється на динамічний, доступний інструмент, який продовжує формувати те, як поезія переживається і сприймається в сучасному суспільстві.

Ключові слова: типографічне висунення, сучасна поезія, типографічна маніпуляція, фігурні вірші, Білл Біссетт, поетичний аналіз.

The article focuses on the semantics of typographic foregrounding and its divergence in contemporary English poetry as well as the author's own production from the manipulative standpoint. The paper defines defamiliarisation and describes such typographic tools as font-size alteration, change of background colour in combination with parallelism and related deviations that occur on different language levels: phonological, semantic, lexical and grammatical. These tactics can be used as exploitative tools not merely for a multidimensional

perception of poetry per se, but for a literary performance of the author to distinguish him/her from the cohort of other artists. This manipulation serves as a technique to shape the reader's emotional and cognitive responses, thereby enhancing the engagement with the text. The results are based on the analyses of a poem by Bill Bissett as well as on the own sample of the author produced during the course by Sonia Zyngier, which supports the claim that the concept under consideration is universal not only in literary circles, but also in everyday life and may be accessed by everyone who is engaged into 'figure poetry' and/or 'visual poems'. This breaks the idea of a partially stereotypical, yet established overview upon the investigated phenomenon and introduces subjectivity into the style and manner of presentation. The conclusions indicate the duality of the use of typographic foregrounding in terms of a form of self-expression of the author's worldview and manipulateness of a reader, while, at the same time, acquiring a poetic experience at the level of psychopoetics. Research perspective includes the analysis of other works by lesser-known authors in the UK and the USA, as well as of contemporary graphic design and digitalised products that are widespread nowadays. With reference to recent developments in digital art and online poetry platforms, it becomes clear that typographic foregrounding is no longer confined to traditional print media, but has evolved into a dynamic, accessible tool that continues to shape how poetry is experienced and perceived in modern society.

Keywords: *typographic foregrounding, contemporary poetry, typographic manipulation, Concrete poetry, Bill Bissett, poetic analysis.*

Introduction. Literature is associated with various strategies and methods of textual arrangement. Their dominant purpose is to mould a particular impression through the psychological impact upon its reading audience (van Peer and Chesnokova 2019; Chesnokova and Zyngier 2022). When we feel captivated by the books, the author via tangled fonts or unusual punctuation attempts to resonate with our inner self. This is what makes us experience literature (van Peer and Chesnokova, 2022). According van Peer and Chesnokova (2024), any mode of literature has yet ever to impress the readers as much as it has been performed by poetry. Within prose and plays, solely poetry is able to make the audience experience stanzas on a perceptual and emotional scale due to the complexity of poetic techniques such as rhyme and meter. This, in turn, encourages us to explore the degree of authorial manipulation behind the veil of rhyming lines.

Topicality. Typographic foregrounding has been recovered several times in the modernity of a poetic utterance, for instance, by Rupi Kaur in her "Milk and Honey". It is a visual poetry as Kaur presents her verses with various drawings and no particular rhymes. However, it remains open whether the usage of visual constituents as well as other graphic deviations is a deliberated act of manipulating the audience or a means of self-expression and emphasising vital themes of modern humanity through the magnifying glass of literature. In what follows, we will look at it via works of a Canadian poet Bill Bissett.

Literature review. While foregrounding is generally defined as "a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes" (Simpson 2014: 52), van Peer and Chesnokova (2024) claim that typographic foregrounding affects and distracts the readers psychologically owing to the several methods as spacing and textual representation (van Peer and Chesnokova, 2024: 235). At the same time, Masturzo (2023) looks at the movement of Concrete Poetry. It is claimed to have owned distinguishing parameters that might be kept either separately or at once by any poet. As of today, typographic foregrounding is frequently used not only in literature, but also in graphic design, advertising, and digital content creation. In graphic design, the example is the title "The Dark Knight" (IMDb, 2008), written in bold yet white in order to intricatively emphasise the darkness of Batman's personality. Whereas advertising is monetising typography on a full scale, bringing "Open Happiness" by Coca-Cola in various colour combinations within distinguished fonts for evoking a festive atmosphere of Christmas (PrintMag, 2017). Digital content creation is focused on the tools like Canva, with which everyone is capable of accomplishing the desired effect, abusing

textual particularities and playing with colour palettes. Moreover, amateurs are also able to create such pieces in poetry. Considering Nikita Gill, she develops the movement of Instapoetry, concentrating on precision and visual characteristics of her productions rather than poetic devices and highlighting live issues of LGBT rights and domestic violence (Gill, 2017). Leveraging Instagram, modern poets such as Amanda Lovelace, Aja Monet and Rupī Kaur, spread their impactful messages, emphasizing its brevity and clarity. This enables to capture the audience's attention with short captions either in the photo or under it, for nowadays users tend to scroll their feeds swiftly without paying a lot of attention to details. Being paired with striking visuals, such as illustrations or photographs, poems create a strong connection between the words and the imagery. In case poetry is placed in the photo, its words or lines are tangled or appear to be messy despite its arrangement as a caption where it is written in plain lines.

The aim of the article is to investigate foregrounding through the lens of typography and define separate manipulations implemented into the poetry, focusing on two examples: of a literary work by Bill Bissett and our own.

Results of the article. The notion of defamiliarisation is associated with poetic deviations (Leech 1969; Jakobson 1981; Chesnokova and van Peer 2016), which implies introducing the newer and fresher concepts that can ever exist in the stylistic world. It is a distracting approach "from the word to the sound and its representation" (van Peer and Chesnokova, 2024). If we take into account a typographic type, this one involves writing manipulation, for it may contradict the entire meaning as well as its background, giving the floor to *visual deviation*. Overall, the term of typographic foregrounding comprises: 1) font change; 2) parallelism; 3) objective embodiment; 4) phonological repetition. Despite the fact that the last three points are not related to typography, in combination with violation of text arrangement, they encompass the effect that leads to versatile experience of poetry. Such deliberate alterations in the text are visible and easily comprehensible as typographic manipulation. As a handful of poems are presented with a colourful background, the phenomenon of font deviation and colour contrast takes its place. For example, the usage of red hues in Bill Bissett's poetry might reflect warnings or action items. Moreover, in digital art such as promo campaigns or setting banners, there is a widespread tendency of using text over images, which is a win-win situation both for consumers and the business per se, for the captions are being outlined and visualised simultaneously with the extra instruments of shadowing. The text often appears in bold or neon colors against contrasting backgrounds to captivate the viewer's attention, enhancing both readability and impact.

The second phenomenon states for parallelism that, within the borders of typographic foregrounding, could be realised, using similar typographic styles or structures on purpose of cohesion. It has obtained the term of typographic parallelism that discloses the structural consistency and harmony within the text, emphasizing thematic unity or progression. Objective embodiment is about visual essence of the text. For example, a soft text has rounded fonts and softer colors, when an alarmed text is bold and bright. Its lines are arranged according to the author's intentions not publishing house's ones and their format requirements. Phonological repetition can be visually represented through typography, for instance, repeated visual patterns or repeated use of certain typographic styles (like italicising repetitive sounds) to mimic the phonological repetition in the text. It gains a rhythmic visual element that echoes the auditory experience (Nordquist, 2020).

As typographic foregrounding accounts for characteristics' emphasis, the usage of "graphic space on the page" is rather significant (Nordquist, 2020). The spatial arrangement of text contributes to its emotional tone and interpretive depth, inviting readers to engage both with the content and the presentation simultaneously. Being one of the most vital criteria of shape poetry, it includes poetry printing and its location. Furthermore, deliberated textual deviation of visual arrangement that evokes permanent relations of ideovisual reference is important, too (Nordquist, 2020). In Concrete poetry, it juxtaposes structure and content as commensurate ones, yet does not allow the usage of subjectivity that contradicts our statement concerning manipulation of readers (Schaffner, 2010). Hence, it avoids unnecessary ornamentation in favor of pure visual and verbal clarity, which allows for a more direct, unambiguous interaction with the reader. Typographic constituents in Concrete poetry are often

minimalistic, highlighting the intrinsic relationship between form and meaning without relying on overt stylistic manipulation. Whereas the modern one is more likely to embrace the dynamic use of typographic devices, such as color, size, and spatial arrangement, to create emotional or conceptual depth, potentially manipulating the reader's perception and response. This manipulation is not necessarily deceptive, but rather aims to enhance the reader's experience by guiding their attention or influencing their interpretation of the text.

In what follows, we will look at several poems. The first one is "d r e e m s" by Bill Bissett and the second one is our own production. Beginning with Bissett, his works are prominent for its unconventional typography and orthography, which serve as an integral part of his artistic expression. His deliberate use of visual elements, such as varying font sizes, selecting a proper background, unexpected line breaks, and unorthodox punctuation, challenges traditional norms and engages readers in a more interactive reading experience. In many ways it is similar to the style of writing of e.e. cummings.

In the poem by Bissett, the first captivating element is a scarlet background that engenders a thought that it is dual. At first, it might imply that the dreams originate in our blood so we should not abandon, but unfold them. Secondly, the font color chosen is rather manipulative as it may refer to daydreaming that seems to be divine and horrendous simultaneously.

The first line reiterates the title and is the focal point of the escalating suspense. The title itself is already marked by graphic deviation through putting a single space between letters, a double one between *r* and *e* as well as replacing *a* in 'dreams' with the second *e*, so it is being pronounced longer than usual:

d r e e m s

"dreems" (D R E E M S, 1980)

The applied phonographic deviation, in particular, doubling of *e*, including the echo of *ees sm*, which creates a hallucinatory impression, has a manipulative effect on the audience, causes vertigo and a sense of disintegration:

"me em mee seems ees ms
see sm eem "(D R E E M S, 1980)

Bissett highlights the fluid, unstable nature of dreams themselves. This manipulation extends beyond phonetics and enters the realm of visual poetry, turning the text into an art form where the layout becomes as important as the words themselves.

The next stanza presents philosophical reflections of the narrator and his interlocutor. Due to the loss of vowel sounds, the narration resembles a muttering in the morning as we see the repetition of the pattern *undr th self*, which expresses the problem of self-identification:

"dr whn i wake up skreeming
is it th self undr th self undr th self th self most" (D R E E M S, 1980)

The only elements that are not subject to deviation, there are the phrases *no time* and *by accident*, enable the reader to focus on something visually and orthographically standard, while containing the implication that there is no time for accidents, as society is used to:

"undr whos amayzd at thers no time 2 meet
on
sumwun by accident like thr usd 2 b whn was that" (D R E E M S, 1980)

Remarkably, in the poem, there is no punctuation, regardless of the sentence type. In general, it becomes a vibrant particularity of Bissett's poetry. The tendency of maintaining punctuation is neglected. Instead of periods at the end of sentences, triple space is being used. We also see the blending of the word *Island* with *Well. Navigatend* is another example of word agglutination. Guiding oneself through a life will only lead to the same end, while love dreams quickly melt in the searing light of society:

"on th islawell wanting 2 navigatend uv plentee th seeming place
uv evree being n whn thn we wake up
opportunittee glayshul lov dreem s e always melting dr fan"
<...>

“lessr dreems whers anee hierarkess uv othrs espeshulee
all ok feeling that hat n endlesslee
wundring dr mees eems sr deem meed rs eemlesslee en” (D R E E M S, 1980)

The author’s most cherished fantasy is the journey to his higher spiritual self, through the development and degradation and challenges of the present, by arranging daily meetings. A deviation is employed to illustrate this motif. Through it, the author manifests the necessity to change oneself in the flow of time:

“tasee heers th voyage yu eem me yu dreem me all th
lerning n unlerning n trying myself thru if yu had turnd
round 2 me i wud have stayd tho i was happee bizee
making my appointments ” <...> (D R E E M S, 1980)

Another conspicuous feature of the analysed text is the fact that Bissett frequently uses simplified or alternative forms of spelling, such as *dreem* instead of *dream*, *repeetid* instead of *repeated*, *aktivitee* instead of *activity* or *uv* instead of *of*. This evokes a sense of infantilism or a dreamlike state. Additionally, the examples emphasise the idea that repeated actions (*repeetid aktivitee*) lead to the formation of habits (*leeds 2 habits*). Further, these habits form approaches to interaction (*habits uv deeling*) and thinking (*habits uv thinking*).

The second example of poetry we would like to focus is our own production of *typographic foregrounding* (Zyngier, 2002). Structurally, the poem is divided into two verses, in which every stanza is represented only with two words that belong to different lines.

downs.
Whatever
the
about
thing
no
have
You
gonna
focus
on
your
ups.
The
matter
happens
you
are
the
best.
next.
is
life
our
of

Having produced our own visual poetry, we argue that the right to introduce manipulation remains with the author. In the aforementioned poem, typographic deviation occurs, which entails a number of stylistic and compositional changes:

1) The opening of the poem is placed at the bottom, which is characteristic of figure poetry from the point of view of typography as it visually forms an hourglass. Given the shape of the production, it is comparable to the flow of life and may be identified as a poem that carries philosophical overtones about the meaning of existence and the current priorities of humanity in relation to the time spent and time available. This metaphor conveys the idea that time is running out;

2) Each lexeme, regardless of its part of speech, occupies a separate place on the line. This typographic choice emphasizes the disjointedness of human experience — how, in life, moments and thoughts are often fragmented, with no immediate connection between them;

3) There is an ingrained element of paradox: the antonyms *Ups* and *Downs* are placed on axes opposite to their semantics, which suggests the Yin-Yang principle, where each component has a certain counterweight;

4) The motivational leitmotif of the poem confronts the textual design, manipulating the idea of *man versus time*, or human centrism versus chronotope;

5) The absence of kerning, but the presence of a multitude of spaces within the poem evokes a sense of desolation. Outside of all the everyday affairs, there is only one thing left – the emptiness,

in which the individual has to cope with everything alone, which will probably either form him as a person or break him, given the remaining time for the realisation of further intentions.

Conclusions and further research perspectives. To conclude, typographic foregrounding offers both an artistic expression and a deliberate means of manipulation. It involves deviations on such linguistic levels as phonology, lexis, and syntax. For authors, it is both a way to express their genuine identity and make their poems a work of art and the tool which is intentionally introduced in order to appeal to the audience. In our analysis of Bill Bissett's "d r e e m s" and our own production, it is demonstrated how typographic manipulation moves beyond traditional poetic forms to engage readers on both a perceptual and emotional level. By altering the structure and appearance of the text, poets invite readers to experience the poem in a dynamic, often disorienting, way, forcing them to reconsider how meaning is constructed through both language and its presentation. Thus our own production creates and deconstructs senses simultaneously, owing to the textual arrangement and several visible manipulations. Moreover, typographic manipulation is not restricted to poetry alone but is increasingly found across various forms of digital and visual communication. From advertising to social media, typographic choices are made to elicit specific emotional responses or to draw attention to key messages. This crossover between literary and commercial uses of typography highlights the growing awareness of the psychological impact of visual elements in text. It is no longer sufficient to simply consider the content of the message; its presentation, shape, and form play a crucial role in how it is perceived.

Further research might involve other works of British or American poets of the XXI century and could explore how these techniques evolve in the works of poets in the digital realm, such as Instapoets as Morgan Harper Nichols, Nouvelle Lune or Asmita Pandey, who are experimenting with digital platforms, mostly Instagram, downloading their works in an aesthetic ambience as separate pictures or quotations under their family shots. Additionally, examining how typographic manipulation interacts with other visual media could provide insight into how literature is evolving in response to the demands of contemporary communication.

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