

Literature Against Visual Media: Discourses on the Visuality of N. Gogol's Language

Kyohei NORIMATSU

1. Against illustration / film

What is the visuality of language? Literally, it may mean nothing but the shapes of typography or handwriting. In this paper we discuss visual representation by language as one of the effects of its signification, but it should be kept in mind that we never "see" what language represents or "depicts." It's very easy to say that visual representation by language is no more than an illusion. Nevertheless, it is also true that there are few literary works without this illusion. Why are literary works always challenging the impossible? Examining several discourses on Nikolai Gogol in terms of literary and media history, we will argue here that the interplay between the visible and the invisible plays an important role in the process where literary language produces sense.

To begin with, let us read a passage from Gogol's novella "The Overcoat" (1842), which describes the appearance of the hero, Akaky. "[He was] short, somewhat pock-marked, with rather reddish hair and rather bleary eyes, with a small bald patch on his forehead, with wrinkles on both sides of his cheeks and the sort of complexion said to be hemorrhoidal..."¹ It is clear that this passage visually represents the protagonist, but don't we feel a sort of excess? The description seems too detailed², and perhaps too humorous to be regarded as just a visual representation.

In *The Demon and the Labyrinth*, Mikhail Iampolski offers an intriguing analysis of Gogol's texts³: the writer's language, which is full of absurd puns and redundant detailed descriptions, is not merely a vehicle of meaning or narrative. It transmits some feeling of its own movement, speed or materiality. Iampolski critically reviews the famous article by the Russian

¹ Nikolai V. Gogol', "Shinel'," *Sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh*, vol. 3-4 (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1994), p. 109.

² It was pointed out just after the publication of his first major work *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* (1831-1832) that Gogol was too absorbed in details. This would become one of the main issues in the history of criticism on the writer. Paul Debreczeny, *Nikolay Gogol and His Contemporary Critics* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1966), p. 6.

³ Mikhail Iampol'skii, *Demon i labirint: diagrammy, deformatsii, mimesis* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), ch. 1.

Formalist Boris Eikhenbaum "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' Is Made" (1919). Eikhenbaum, who also finds the significance of Gogol's text not in its story but in the language itself, proposes the idea of *skaz*, that is, style based on the colloquial language of the narrator. To support this idea, Eikhenbaum quotes the fact that Gogol was a master of recitation – the writer often read his own works aloud in public.

Iampolski's main criticism of Eikhenbaum concerns his phonocentrism: the specificity of Gogol's language is attributed to the unique tone and intonation of the narrator's speech associated with the author's recitation. The lively tone of the voice is regarded as the origin of the text, and thereby the text is given some "substantial depth," praise for which is often found in the memoirs of contemporaries on the writer's recitation. The reference to such memoirs, blurring the distinction between fictional texts and reality, underscores the living nature of the narrator's voice.

On the other hand, Iampolski finds a more radical possibility in Eikhenbaum's article. Eikhenbaum compares the narrator of Gogol to an actor or comedian whose exaggerated grimace and gestures are reflected in the text. Iampolski cites an interesting passage from Eikhenbaum's article:

This *skaz* has a tendency to not only relate and tell but reproduce by facial expressions and articulation. Words and sentences are chosen and linked not so much in accordance with the principles of logical speech as with those of expressive speech, in which a special role is assigned to articulation, facial expressions, acoustic gestures and so on. [...] Moreover, his speech is often accompanied by gestures [...] and turns into reproduction, which is still evident in its written form.⁴

Iampolski pays attention to the words "reproduce" and "reproduction" here. The intention of these words is very vague, because Eikhenbaum deliberately leaves unsaid what is "reproduced." He may be suggesting that there is a strange mimetic function particular to Gogol's language. It doesn't have any external referent; in essence, it is self-referential. Quoting the words of Jacques Derrida about Stephane Mallarme's mimes, Iampolski says Gogol's narrator-actor "imitates imitation." Thus, what *skaz* transmits may not be "substantial depth" given by the living voice, but just the movement of language or the "actor" without any sense.

⁴ Boris Eikhenbaum, "Kak sdelana «Shinel'» Gogolia," *O proze. O poezii* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986), p. 48. All the italics involved in quotations are in originals. The opinions of the Russian Formalists on Gogol are summarized in the following work, though it focuses on Viktor Vinogradov, not necessarily regarded as a Formalist. Robert A. Maguire, "The Formalists on Gogol," *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance*, ed. by Robert L. Jackson, Stephen Rudy (New York: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1985), pp. 213-230.

Indeed, later in the article, Eikhenbaum rather clearly explains what the “reproduction” means. The following is his analysis of Gogol’s passage describing Akaky’s appearance we cited before:

[...] this sentence is not so much a *description* of Akaky’s appearance as it is a *reproduction* of that appearance through facial expressions and articulation. The words are selected and placed in a certain order not according to any principles of character delineation but according to the principle of sound semantics. The inner vision remains unaffected (there is nothing more difficult, I believe, than drawing pictures of Gogol’s heroes). What is most likely to remain in our memory of the entire sentence is the impression of a certain sound sequence which ends in a resounding word, almost devoid of logical meaning yet nonetheless unusually expressive as articulated sound – the word “gemorroidal’nii [hemorrhoidal].”⁵

This insistence is interesting for two points: first, Gogol’s text doesn’t give a visual image of the hero. Secondly, instead of this, Gogol’s text acoustically “reproduces” the hero’s appearance. It is not the meaning but the sound of the word “gemorroidal’nii” which inspires the image of Akaky. The word is strangely connected to its referent through sound.

Let us consider the first point. A few years after Eikhenbaum’s article, Yuri Tynianov published an article entitled “Illustrations” (1923). To show how pointless it is to insert illustrations into a literary text, he draws on the case of Gogol:

To be more precise, the specificity of poetic concretion is the opposite of the specificity of pictures. The more vivid and sensuous a poetic word is, the harder it is to draw. The concretion of a poetic word consists not in a visual image behind – this side of a word is extremely loose and vague [...] – but in a particular process where *the significance of a word changes*. This change makes a word vivid and new. The normal means of making a word concrete – simile, metaphor – have nothing to do with pictures.

The most concrete, and the most illusory of writers, Gogol, is the hardest writer of all to translate into pictures.⁶

This passage is all the more interesting because there is no Russian writer who has been illustrated as much as Gogol, especially his major novel *Dead Souls* (1842). Eikhenbaum’s *skaz* and Tynianov’s “concretion of a poetic word” are different, but both are considered as the essential feature of Gogol’s language which, importantly, is resistant to visual representation or description. In fact, since the 19th century various illustrated editions of

⁵ Eikhenbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁶ Iurii N. Tynianov, “Illiustratsii,” *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), p. 311.

Gogol's text have been published. Most of them were printed for working class readers who might not have fully appreciated Gogol's elaborate style. For example, the popular illustrated magazine *Niva* published abridged versions of Gogol's works many times. In 1909 *Dead Souls* was also made into a movie in which the influence of the famous illustrators of Gogol is evident.⁷

The articles of Eikhenbaum and Tynianov should be read in the context of the media revolution which took place at the beginning of the 20th century. As Friedrich Kittler has showed, the emergence of film deprived literature of the imaginative appeal that it had enjoyed in the 19th century. Letters ceased to be the origin of sensuous images and became just dead printed types or spots of ink. In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Kittler quotes a German's lament on the status of visuality in literature in the 1920s:

The writer of yesteryear employed "images [pictures (Bilder)]" in order to have a "visual" effect. Today language rich in images [pictures] has an antiquated effect. And why is it that the image [picture] disappears from front-page articles, essays, and critiques the way it disappears from the walls of middle-class apartments? In my judgment: because with film we have developed a language that has evolved from visuality against which the visuality developed from language cannot compete. [Adolf Behne, *Die Stellung des Publikums zur modernen deutschen Literatur* (1926)]⁸

Eikhenbaum and Tynianov searched for something positive in the new status of literary language, independent of visual representation.⁹ What they discovered was, on the one hand, the materiality or concretion of language, and on the other, the imaginative power of the acoustic side of language, especially in the narrator's voice. Tynianov writes about Nikolai Leskov's text as follows:

Russian *speech* with various intonation and mischievous popular etymology is so enhanced in him as to make the illusion of the hero: behind the speech, the gesture is felt; behind the gesture is the figure, which is almost tangible.

⁷ Ono Tokiko, "Reproductions of 'Dead Souls': A History of P.M. Boklevsky's Illustrations," [in Japanese] *Bulletin of the Japanese Association of Russian Scholars* 35 (2003), pp. 51-58.

⁸ Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, Michael Wutz (Stanford, Stanford UP, 1999), p. 153.

⁹ It may seem contradictory that Tynianov worked on the film adaptation of "The Overcoat," but what he objected to was the direct translation of literary language into visual images, as in the case of illustrations we see simultaneously reading texts. In this sense, the film *Lieutenant Kizhe* (1934), the scenario of which he wrote on the basis of his own novella, is interesting in that the hero is an imaginary, invisible person. See: Mikhail Iampol'skii, *Pamiat' Tiresiia: Intertekstual'nost' i kinematograf* (Moscow: Kul'tura, 1993), ch. 6.

But this tangibility cannot be grasped, for it is concentrated in the articulation of speech [...]¹⁰

Looking upon these concepts of the Formalists in terms of the relationship between language and the body, it is clear that the visual representation of the protagonists has lost its appeal. Instead, a narrator's or author's body behind the text – for example, Gogol's recitation – comes to matter. According to the psychological interpretation of literature popular in the 19th century, a literary text is often seen as the expression of its author's inner world. For the Formalists, in contrast, the author's body is essential. This body also helps literary language to perform its representative function again, though in a different way. A narrator's or author's voice serves as a new means for literary language to represent characters – it is not visual, but a vague representation that “cannot be grasped,” based on the acoustic effect of language.

2. Against “daguerreotype”

Now let us go back to the middle of the 19th century. Gogol, who worked as a writer in the 1830s and 1840s, occupies an ambivalent place in the history of Russian literature: is he a romanticist or a realist, politically progressive or conservative? In his own time, his works provoked hot dispute between literary camps. He was admired both by the writers of the Natural School, who were led by the Westernizer Vissarion Belinsky, and by the Slavophiles, such as Stepan Shevyrev and the Aksakovs. Some elder critics, however, viewed Gogol's works as mere muckraking.

The contemporary dispute on Gogol concerns the visuality of his language. Valerian Maikov, a literary critic of the Natural School who nevertheless opposes the views of Belinsky, categorizes the various public opinions on Gogol in the following way: 1. “a statistical record of Russian customs”; 2. “the daguerreotypization of reality”; 3. “naturalism with rudeness and dirt.”¹¹ The word “daguerreotypization” derived from daguerreotype, the original apparatus of photography which was invented by a Frenchman, Louis Dagguerre, in 1839. This new device was soon imported to Russia, and photography studios started appearing in cities in the 1840s. As a result, the miniature portraits which were in mode in the first half of the century lost their popularity, just as they did in other European countries.¹² There was rivalry between the new technology and older forms of art from the beginning. In literary criticism, the word “daguerreotype”

¹⁰ Tynianov, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

¹¹ Valerian N. Maikov, “Stikhotvoreniiia Kol'tsova,” *Literaturnaia kritika* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1985), p. 71.

¹² Tat'iana Saburova, “Early Masters of Russian Photography,” *Photography in Russia 1840-1940*, ed. by David Elliot (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 31.

came into use as a kind of insult. For example, in 1845 Belinsky reviews a book called *Types of Today's Customs* as follows:

[...] there are no *types* at all [in this book]: thus, it is very boring to read. Many people think it is nothing to write a humorous thing; then, try to sketch something as it is. Of course, the result will be good, if you can accurately sketch something as it is: it's a kind of talent, though talent of the lowest rank. For who can sketch better than daguerreotype? – On the other hand, how much lower is the best daguerreotype than a more or less proper artist! [...] In this [book] five or six people in the whole of Russia may recognize themselves; all the others would not, and this little book cannot be interesting but in the place where its originals live, because there is nothing general or *typical* in it, although the book claims otherwise...¹³

To understand this review, we should look briefly at Belinsky's theory of literary types. He develops it mainly through his evaluations of Gogol, starting with the early article "The Russian Story and Mr. Gogol's Stories" (1835). In an 1839 review, he defines a type as follows: "What is a *type* in creative works? It is a person-people, face-faces, that is, such a depiction of a person as includes many, a whole group of people expressing the same idea."¹⁴ Then the critic cites as examples of types Shakespeare's Othello and Kovalev, the hero of Gogol's short story "The Nose" (1836):

[...] he is not just Major Kovalev, but *Major Kovalevs*, so that after an acquaintance with him even if you met a hundred Kovalevs at once, you would be able to distinguish them from thousands of others. Typicality is one of the basic laws of creative works, and there are no creative works without it. [...] Creative works have still another law: it is necessary that the person who represents a whole special world of persons should at the same time be *one* person, coherent and individual. Only under this condition, only through the reconciliation of these contradictions can he be a typical person [...]¹⁵

Here we may recognize the influence of German idealism, but in addition to this, we can detect some correspondence with contemporary zoology, which also inspired Honore de Balzac, as is evident in his preface to *Human Comedy* (1842). According to him, "There have always been and will always be Social Species as well as Zoological Species."¹⁶ The later influence of zoology on Belinsky's theory of types can be confirmed, for instance, in his

¹³ Vissarion G. Belinskii, "Tipy sovremennykh нравов," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 9 (Moscow: ANSSSR, 1955), p. 56.

¹⁴ Vissarion G. Belinsky, "Sovremennik. Tom odinnadtsatyi. Sovremennik. Tom dvenadtsatyi," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (Moscow: ANSSSR, 1953), p. 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁶ Honoré de Balzac, "Avant-propos," *Ceuvres completes*, t. 1 (Paris: Louis Conard, 1931), p. XXVI.

praise for a poem by Ivan Turgenev "How Many People" in 1845: "No naturalist has composed the history of a certain genus or species of the animal kingdom as well and exhaustively as the history of a human kind is related in these eight lines."¹⁷

What matters here is that "social species" or types don't exist independently. They derive from one common origin. Balzac says, "There is only one animal. [...] [Each] animal is what this principle takes as its external form, or, more exactly, the differences of its form [...]"¹⁸ As Michel Foucault remarks on the zoology of that time, "animal species differ at their peripheries, and resemble each other at their centres." So, "the more extensive the groups one wishes to find, the deeper must one penetrate into the organism's inner darkness, towards the less and less visible [...]"¹⁹ A writer cannot depict "social species" unless he or she "penetrates into" the invisible "principle" of society.²⁰ This is why a daguerreotype doesn't make a type: it just reproduces the "external form" of a particular object. Belinsky opposes such a "daguerreotypical" writer to Gogol in the preface to an anthology *The Physiology of Petersburg* (1843):

In *The Panorama of Petersburg* Mr. Bashutsky attempted not only to describe the *externality* of Russia's first capital (streets, buildings, houses, rivers, channels, bridges and so on) [...] but also to cast a look at characteristic differences of customs and habits in Petersburg; but somehow his attempt, useful and well begun though it is, was doomed not to be completed [...] Above all, Mr. Bashutsky's book aims at *description* rather than *characterization* of Petersburg, and its tone and nature are more official than literary. [...] [T]he moral physiognomy of Petersburg is reproduced with artistic maturity and depth in many of Gogol's works.²¹

In order not to describe but to characterize externality, a writer should look at the "differences" between visible phenomena, and, we can say, unless he or she knows the common "principle" of the whole society, a writer cannot grasp the differences deriving from the "principle" in "inner darkness." In other words, to depict types, it is necessary to understand each

¹⁷ Vissarion G. Belinsky, "Russkaia literatura v 1845 godu," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 9, p. 380.

¹⁸ Balzac, *op. cit.*, p. XXVI.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 267.

²⁰ In Belinsky's aesthetics nationality may fill a role corresponding to Balzac's "principle." Here we cannot look into the details of Belinsky's theory of nationalism, but it is high on the agenda of the controversy between him and Maikov, which we will see below. The latter regards nationality not as an inner "principle" but as an "external inevitability" distorting human nature.

²¹ Vissarion G. Belinsky, "Vstuplenie k «Fiziologii Peterburga»,» *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8 (Moscow: ANSSSR, 1955), p. 383.

external phenomenon within the system of difference of the whole society. Externality becomes a semiotic field. Photography can't meet such a demand because, as Roland Barthes has pointed out, "it is the absolute Particular, [...] what is as it is."²² Visible forms don't have value by themselves; they must be understood in the context of some invisible "principle" or system. This is relevant to why Belinsky uses such a phrase as "the moral physiognomy of Petersburg." It may refer to the study of physiognomy which was in fashion in Europe since Johann Kaspar Lavater.²³ He insists that the visible externality of a person's face is determined by his or her inner character. In the meantime, however, we shouldn't overlook the fact that it is to the externality that Belinsky directs his words. If he makes much of the inner "principle" of society, it remains an ideal entity which is impossible to explain positively. The critic's argument concentrates on how writers should treat visible forms.

Maikov also distinguishes Gogol from "daguerreotypical" writers, but his way of thinking is different from Belinsky's. In his longest article "Koltsov's poems" (1846), the young critic proposes "a theory of sympathy." It argues that the attraction of art is not in new or novel things but in familiar ones: "*The secret of creation consists in the ability to depict reality correctly from its sympathetic side.*" "In order to realize such sympathetic depiction, one must be penetrated by compassion for the depicted object and feel his own essential sameness with it."²⁴ Maikov calls a writer not equal to such a task "a copier":

Only dead forms of life exist for a copier. Between him and the object which he is daguerreotyping there is no organic ties that would prevent him from being indifferent to the object [...] This is why the lines by which he tries to draw reality never unite with the organism, the wholeness [...] [I]n the case of Gogol, every line is animated by compassion, love, hatred for the object.²⁵

Maikov's critique of daguerreotype varies from Belinsky's: the former pays little attention to the visible externality which so troubles the latter. A writer and his or her object must be united through sympathy, and

²² Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, Gallimard, Seuil, 1980), p. 15.

²³ Lavater's book *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (1775-1778) was soon introduced to Russia, and its abbreviated translation had undergone three editions by 1817. Edmund Heier, "Elements of Physiognomy and Pathognomy in the works of I.S. Turgenev (Turgenev and Lavater)," *Slavistische Beiträge* 116 (1977), p. 8. It was still popular in the 1840s; interpretative articles appeared in journals, and such writers as V.I. Dal, I.A. Goncharov and Turgenev mentioned it. Aleksandr G. Tseitlin, *Stanovlenie realizma v russkoi literature (Russkii fiziologicheskii ocherk)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), pp. 202-203.

²⁴ Maikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 108, 105.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

daguerreotype is accused of a lack of this unity. Taking notice of the relationship between a photographer and his or her object, Maikov hints at the association of a photographer with a voyeur, an association often discussed by modern critics. The insistence on the “essential sameness” of all human beings leads the critic to keen distinction between the inner nature common to every person and the external effect which mars the former. “[...] to whichever nation a person belongs and under whatever circumstances a person is born and brought up, he is by nature a member of the same category called *people* [...]” “[...] only shortcomings can be accounted for by external circumstances without exception, while all virtue is innate to human nature as the power composing its essence.” “What we call shortcomings must be caused by the external distortion of virtue or will [...]”²⁶

Unlike Belinsky, who attempts to relate the visible externality to the invisible “principle” or the system of difference, Maikov demands that anything external be removed. It is natural that he should turn his back on the theory of types, which are made possible by the interface of visible externality and the invisible principle:

[...] we are confident that a person who may be called a type of a certain nation can never be great, or even extraordinary.

It has always seemed to us too childish or too violent to regard the principle of *external inevitability* – that is, powers made up by the total influence of climate, locality, a tribe and fate – as the origin of the autonomy of every person.²⁷

It can be said that Maikov purifies the idea of common origin from which external differences derive. As we have seen, Belinsky has few words which explain positively the invisible “principle” of society, and he appeals to fellow writers to illuminate it through the depiction of various types living there. Maikov rejects such a detour and tries to extract the inner “sameness” in its pure form. His “essential sameness,” however, is no less ideal than Balzac/Belinsky’s “principle.” In fact, Maikov has no means to confirm the existence of the “sameness” but only to attack on its opposite, externality. Here arises a dilemma for all critics confronted with the materiality of externality, which thickens as they attach more and more importance to some invisible or inner value.

3. The interplay between the visible and the invisible in Gogol’s language

All the critics we have discussed find something beyond visuality in Gogol’s language. Of course, there are fundamental differences between the

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127, 127, 128.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

discourses in the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, while Eikhenbaum and Tynianov object to reducing literary language to any visual forms, including illustrations, in the articles of Belinsky and Maikov, pictures, together with literature, work against the new visual technology, daguerreotype. Indeed, many illustrations are inserted into *The Physiology of Petersburg*, the preface to which by Belinsky we examined. In conclusion, let us compare the status which the visuality of literary language occupies in those discourses.

For Belinsky, what is beyond visuality is the system of difference to which external forms should be related. Maikov expands this “principle” in the “obscure sphere” of society into the “essential sameness” of different entities. Visible “lines” of pictures are no more than the expressions of sympathy, the feeling of this sameness, and visual externality itself, identified with a daguerreotypical image, is abandoned. The origin of sense is located beyond visuality. Maikov, however, seems to overlook the fact that one can reach that origin only through externality. It is this medium that enables us to perceive invisible sense. Belinsky, who insists that writers make the visible externality a semiotic field of characterization, is very aware of it.

Such tensions between sense and nonsense are more intense in Eikhenbaum’s article, though in a different way. By his time, literature had lost its monopoly on illusory visuality. What was supposed in the 19th century to be the mechanism by which literary language produces sense – that is, visual representation as the medium of invisible sense – was already behind the times. Eikhenbaum offers a positive understanding of this loss by celebrating the meaningless materiality of language in a modernist way.²⁸ At the same time, the two Formalists discussed above propose another possibility: the sound of language would function as an illusory medium of representation. It is worth remarking that they repeatedly emphasize the antagonism of this new sense of literary language to visuality. The sense is again located beyond visuality, though this time expressed not by visible but

²⁸ The way the Russian symbolists understand Gogol suggests a transitional step from Belinsky and Maikov to the Formalists. They remark that Gogol’s characters have an inhuman appearance lacking in psyche or soul. Vasily Rozanov, for instance, says: “He was a genius in painting external forms and attached some magical liveliness, almost sculptural, to their depiction, so that no one noticed that there is nothing covered under these forms, no soul, nobody putting them on.” Vasilii V. Rozanov, *Legenda o Velikom inkvizitore F.M. Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Respublika, 1996), p. 18. Similar evaluation is made by Dmitry Merezhkovsky, and Andrei Bely’s book *Gogol’s Craftsmanship* (though published as late as 1934) also examines the physical movement of Gogol’s protagonists independent of its psychological meaning. The impact this monograph had on the filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein is analyzed in: Anne Nesbet, “Gogol, Belyi, Eisenstein, and the Architecture of the Future,” *The Russian Review* 65:3 (2006), pp. 491-511. It is easy to see how visual externality devoid of inner meaning can appear to be an ideal material for montage. Here we can see another aspect of the relationship between literature and film in the early twentieth century.

by acoustic forms. It seems that literary language confirms itself as the opposite of visuality.

Gogol is a good example for us to probe this ambiguous relationship between literary language and visuality. For instance, let us read again the phrase from "The Overcoat" cited in the beginning of this paper: "[He was] short, somewhat pock-marked, with rather reddish hair and rather bleary eyes, with a small bald patch on his forehead, with wrinkles on both sides of his cheeks and the sort of complexion said to be hemorrhoidal..." We have seen various interpretations of how literary language represents a human body here. Belinsky would regard these details as characteristics metonymically constituting the *type* of low-rank clerks represented by Akaky. Maikov would feel the sympathy of the author towards the hero. And Eikhenbaum finds in this phrase the "reproduction" of Akaky's image through the sound of words. We could say that these interplays between the visible and the invisible form the visuality of Gogol's language, and are not reducible to any visual media. Literary language may go through such interplays before it expresses any articulated meanings, and the way the critics grasp these interplays varies from time to time in relation to other media.