

Title: Performing on Edge: The Disabled Body as Stage in Plays by Elena Guro
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Shortly after Elena Guro died in 1913, a grieving Mikhail Matiushin met with Kazimir Malevich and Aleksei Kruchenykh to begin work on the opera *Pobeda nad solncem*, the bold benchmark of Futurist theater. While studies of Guro's own writings focus primarily on her poetic prose, studies by scholars like Milica Banjanin and Nina Gourianova have seriously begun to address her dramas as well. Guro's plays can be fruitfully understood in terms of a naïve-style *comedia dell'arte* or pre-Futurist symbolism. But Guro's experience as a trained painter may inflect such interpretations in important ways. In this regard, one aspect that appears to invite exploration is the interplay between her drawn images and word texts and between the verbal and nonverbal languages in her plays. From this vantage, while nonverbal body language serves as a means of expression, the physically challenged and gentle heroic body in Guro's syncretic texts emerges a powerfully destabilizing force, a nexus for consilience of the seemingly unrelated, and a site for social editing. Guro's plays exploit disjunctures between action and speech acts, and redefine bodily relationships to objects and space in ways that anticipate post-Symbolist, avant-garde aesthetics. To demonstrate such shift, this study draws on insights from disabilities studies, on scientific paradigms from complexity theory, and on visual analogues from work by avant-garde painters like Aleksandra Exter. Although Matiushin with the Enders would stage Guro's plays in the early 1920s, this paper focuses on the performative in her "visual" texts themselves in contrast to their staged performance, and is part of my book-length study of a "Futurist Feminine."

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