

**Keywords:** avant-garde, modern poetry, photography, photomontage, photopoetry, bioscopic book, cine-dispositive.

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the theoretical premises of the intersection of poetry and photography within the hybrid form of the photopoetry book, characteristic of the historical avant-garde's artistic experiments. Surveying relevant theoretical accounts from Baudelaire to contemporary literature and media scholarship (Matei Calinescu, Pericle Lewis, Payle Levi), the author provides a short comparative history of similar multimedia artworks across European cultures and their respective avant-garde movements (German expressionism, Russian Futurism and Constructivism, French Cubism and Surrealism, Czech avant-garde). The author's concluding remarks propose the theoretical explication of photopoetry books as avant-garde cine-dispositives.

The inclusion of photography in books became a standard practice in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it was essentially the avant-garde that started using photography in conjunction with fiction and poetry. The extraordinary junction between poetry and photography and photomontage—defined as photopoetry—flourished in avant-garde books and journals throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s (Toman 2009: 284-311). At this time artists became more attuned to the expressive potential of layout and graphic design, bringing about a complete transformation of the page in order to convey text's visual impact and its tactile existence. The written text became increasingly responsive to the surrounding context of mass culture and industrial production. Many artists imagined the printed page cinematically, while many poets started to envisage the poetic realm of the imaginary by means of photography and photomontage.

Photopoetry offered an apt response to the challenge that the advance of mass-circulated and new media of communication—the telegraph, newspapers and advertisements, illustrated press, posters, and cinema—posed to traditional art forms, the understanding of art, culture, and society as a whole. The Russian Futurist poet Mayakovsky and Constructivist artist Rodchenko, the French and American Surrealists Eluard and Man Ray, the Czech poet Nezval and graphic designer and theorist Teige, to give a few examples, invented a new forms that aspired to appropriate the products of technological culture in creating poetry more alert to the “mass sensibility” of a rapidly changing mechanical age. As a new, hybrid form that embodied what Renato Poggioli called “the fusing of genres,” photopoetry was ripe for poetic experimentation and for the production of optical provocations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Poggioli's syntagm “fusing of genres” stands for both a romantic doctrine and a prominent feature of the avant-garde literary works to escape traditional definitions of literary genres. (Poggioli 1968: 58).

Although the avant-garde photopoetry book can be seen as the offshoot of a long tradition of illustrated books, it rather represents an innovative and unconventional instrument. The most salient features of photopoetry books are embodied by diverse examples from European avant-gardes published during the 1920s and 1930s, the period of its heyday, such as Yvan Goll's *Paris Burns* (*Paris burnt*, Zagreb, 1921), Mayakovsky's and Rodchenko's *About It* (*Про это*, Moscow, 1923), Nezval's and Teige's *Alphabet* (*Abeceda*, Prague, 1926), Stern's and Szczuka's *Europe* (*Europa*, Warsaw, 1929), Matić's and Vučo's *The Exploits of 'Five Cockerels' Gang* (*Podvizi družine "Pet Petlića"*, Belgrade, 1933), Eluard's and Ray's *Easy* (*Facile*, Paris, 1935), or Heisler's and Toyen's *On the Strongholds of Sleep: Materialized Poems* (*Z kasemat spánku: realizované básně*, Prague, 1940), among others. In this article, I argue that the avant-garde photopoetry book is a specific "piece of technology" created in an attempt to overcome the crisis of verbal and visual representation by combining "conceptual thinking" and "magical thought" into a *cinematic dispositif* that aimed to create new practices of reading, seeing, and comprehending, combining them into the more flexible and active processing of our relation to the world, which I call montage thinking.<sup>2</sup>

### Poetry of Modern Life

Baudelaire's text "The Modern Public and Photography" marks the departure point of our discussion of the dialectical relationship between and avant-garde convergence of poetry and photography. As a section of his lengthy review of the Paris Salon of 1859, this text stands at the beginning of the first stage of the relationship between photography and modernism. Baudelaire's derision of the daguerreotype in his oft-quoted 1859 diatribe stands in a sharp contrast with the apology for the "new technology" and its practical dominance in the art of the 1920s and 1930s. In his essay, the "founder of modern poetry" described photography as a "new industry" which threatens to "ruin whatever divine remained of the French spirit," and denounced it along with the cult of an "abject society" obsessed with its own "trivial image." Baudelaire indicted photography, strictly limiting its proper role to the menial and feminine status of the "maid of the sciences and arts," and proclaiming it the absolute antagonist of poetry and imagination. He famously stated that photography should not encroach upon "the domain of the impalpable and the imaginary," the prime medium of which is poetic language.

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<sup>2</sup> Taking cue from François Albera and Marija Tortijada's discussion of *dispositif*, I follow Ruggero Eugeni's definition of *dispositif* and *apparatus* as two different and connected concepts to which the French term *dispositif* refers. Thus, an *apparatus* is "a network of discourses, pieces of knowledge, values, etc., reciprocally linked and governed / defined by strategies of management of power" (Eugeni 2016) while a *dispositif* is "mechanism of a device, instrument or machine" which allows spectators to attend a representation (Albera and Tortijada, 2015: 21).

Poetry and progress are two ambitious men that hate each other, with an instinctive hatred, and when they meet along a pathway one or other must give way. If photography is allowed to deputize for art in some of art's activities, it will not be long before it has supplanted or corrupted art altogether, thanks to the stupidity of the masses, its natural ally. Photography must, therefore, return to its true duty, which is that of handmaid, like painting and shorthand, which have neither created nor supplemented literature. Let photography quickly enrich the traveler's album, and restore to his eyes the precision his memory may lack; let it adorn the library of the naturalist, magnify microscopic insects, even strengthen, with a few facts, the hypotheses of the astronomer; let it, in short, be secretary and record-keeper of whomever needs absolute material accuracy for professional reasons. So far so good. Let it save crumbling ruins from oblivion, books, engravings, and manuscripts, the prey of time, all those precious things, vowed to dissolution, which crave a place in the archives of our memories; in all these things, photography will deserve our thanks and applause. But if once it be allowed to impinge on the sphere of the intangible and the imaginary, on anything that has value solely because man adds something to it from his soul, than woe betide us! (Baudelaire 1980:88)

Baudelaire's sally was motivated by the inclusion, for the first time, of photography in the Salon, as well as by his attack on Realism or, more precisely, Naturalism and the popular ideal of "exactitude" in modern art.<sup>3</sup> As it is known, the French poet was tried and convicted in 1857 for the "gross realism" exercised in his "notorious" volume of poems *The Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du mal*) and censored for its "public indecency." His invective against photography's utilitarianism and verisimilitude in the text from two years later can be, therefore, read as a sort of self-confession. His revolt against the veracity and industrial precision that he recognized as threatening to the free flight of imagination, was thus accompanied by a general critique of vulgarity and modern taste, as well as of manifold displays of "industry," "commerce," and "Americanization." All these phenomena that Baudelaire so resolutely discarded returned to the public stage in the 1920s and 1930s and gained under a lustrous spotlight a considerable currency in the imagination of the avant-garde poets, designers, and artist-engineers.

From a more historical standpoint, Baudelaire's essay was a reaction to the popularization of photography in the late 1850s that was augmented through the collodion process, the *carte-de-visite* format, the stereoscope and the stereograph. In the following passage of his essay, Baudelaire linked the taste for allegorical compositions promoted by the *tableaux*

<sup>3</sup> Since mid-nineteenth century, the daguerreotype and photography were associated with the rise of the new literary school alternatively called "realism" or "naturalism." In this context, Baudelaire's attack merely exemplify a debate that gained more acuity in 1857 with the critic Champflury's manifesto on Realism, "which included a parable pitting ten daguerreotypists and ten painters in an open field to conclude that the ten mechanical images turned out identical, whereas among the ten paintings 'not one was like another'" (Brunet 2009:70).

*vivants* and the “avidity” of “thousands of hungry eyes” peeping into “the holes of stereoscope,” offering them as two examples of a “love of obscenity” that he attributed to the influence of “some democratic writer:”

By bringing together and posing a pack of rascals, male and female, dressed up like carnival-time butchers and washerwomen, and in persuading these *heroes* to *hold* improvised grimaces for as long as the photographic process required, people really believed they could represent the tragic and the charming scenes of ancient history. Some democratic writer must have seen in that cheap means of spreading the dislike of history and painting amongst the masses, thus committing a double sacrilege, and insulting, at one and the same time, the divine art of painting and the sublime art of the actor. It was not long before thousands of pairs of greedy eyes were glued to the peepholes of the stereoscope, as though they were the skylights of infinity. The love of obscenity, which is as vigorous a growth in the heart of natural man as self-love, could not let slip such a glorious opportunity for its own satisfaction. (Baudelaire 1980:87)

The passage chronicles the photographic merging of art and entertainment, high culture and everyday life, linking it with the fascination for obscenity and its increasing social significance.<sup>4</sup>

Baudelaire’s two references are additionally significant as they record the emerging techniques of image manipulation and the reorganization of the observer: the photomontage and stereoscope. First, the *tableau vivant* scene that Baudelaire describes is particularly reminiscent of the allegorical compositions developed by the artists of the “pictorialist” movement in the Victorian era, Oscar Gustave Rejlander and Henry Peach Robinson, who dressed up models in costumes and posed them in scenes out of history or literature in order to create the first illusionistic photomontages known as the “combination prints.”<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Robinson’s combination

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4 Baudelaire’s essay was strongly resonant with the two Anglo-American contemporary texts: the long essay by Lady Eastlake published in 1857 in the *Quarterly Review*, and the first of Oliver W. Holmes’ three essays on stereoscope and stereography published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1859. Eastlake’s essay is concerned with the social issues of photography, and simultaneously represents one of the first attempts of approaching photography as both a sign and a language (Eastlake 1857). In comparison to Baudelaire’s critique, her essay is much more predictive of future critical developments, as are the three papers by Oliver W. Holmes, who tells a story based on his browsing through a collection of stereo-views. Holmes reads “infinite volumes of poems [...] in this small library of glass and pasteboard,” and describes his immersion in this virtual library as an experience of disembodiment (Holmes 1859).

5 Oscar Gustave Rejlander, a Swede living in England, made one of the most assertively self-conscious attempts at producing art through photography with *Two Ways of Life* (1857). This photograph juxtaposed figures representing Religion, Charity, and other virtues with figures representing Gambling, Wine, and other vices. To create this ambitious image depicting the life-choices of a young man, Industry and Dissipation, Rejlander took six weeks to create a seamless combination print from 32 separate negatives of costumed actors whom he had posed and photographed individually. *Two Ways of Life* was first shown at the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition of 1857, when many objected to the nudity. Many photographers criticized Rejlander for resorting to manipulation with combined negatives, but

prints were the first examples of the early forms of photomontage printed and published along with the verses of various poets such as Shakespeare, Percy B. Shelley, William Wordsworth, Edmund Spenser, Mathew Arnold, and Alfred Lord Tennyson (Gernsheim 1984; Rabb 1995: 59-64). Second, the stereoscope—a nineteenth-century optical device soon to be proclaimed obsolete and “phantasmagoric”—not only signaled “an eradication of ‘the point of view’ around which, for several centuries, meaning has been assigned reciprocally to an observer and the object of his or her vision,” but also introduced the transformation of the apparently passive observer of the stereoscope into an active “producer of forms of verisimilitude” (Crary 2004: 87). Furthermore, the “reality effect” is achieved differently by these two techniques. While combination prints blend a multiplicity of arrested moments into an unitary representation, rendered plausible through the created illusion of the linear perspective and its central point of view, the stereoscope’s “realism” builds upon the inherent binocular disparity of the human body and, due to the physical proximity of the objects to the observer, presupposes the latter’s perceptual experience “to be essentially an apprehension of differences” (Crary 2004: 84). In other words, there are some specific *technical* secrets behind the magical effect, both *produced by* the techniques of image and *productive of* the transformation of the observer, that escaped Baudelaire’s critical reflection.

It is exactly this technical quality of mechanically reproduced images that the avant-garde artists later recognized as valuable. What is more, this technical realm is as significant for the artists in the 1920s as the “eternal, invariable, and immutable element” is for Baudelaire’s idea of double nature of art, beauty, and modernity, which he articulated in his 1863 essay “The Painter of Modern Life.”<sup>6</sup> According to Baudelaire, the

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his ambitiously artistic aims influenced a generation of photographers bent on extending acceptance of their medium. Under Rejlander’s influence, English painter and photographer Henry Peach Robinson used multiple negatives to produce soap-opera-style tableaux such as *Fading Away* (1858), which showed a young girl’s death due to tuberculosis and her grief-stricken family, a common occurrence that probably contributed to the Victorian cult of childhood. He also employed actors to recreate bucolic scenes of peasant life. In his 1860 lecture, “On Printing Photographic Pictures from Several Negatives,” Robinson explained the manipulation of photography as an artistic process and proposed, way before the historic avant-gardes: “Art can be extracted out of almost anything” (Robinson 1860). He became an eloquent advocate for art photography, although he preferred the “scissors and paste-pot” rather than combination printing for most prints (Gernsheim 1962: 80). Both Rejlander and Robinson appealed to a Victorian taste for allegory, symbol, and sentimentality, and both shared the same impulse toward the creation of seamless, illusionistic photomontage that appears as taken in the one shot.

6 “Beauty is made up of eternal, invariable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severally or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions. Without this second element, which might be described as the amusing, enticing, appetizing icing on the divine cake, the first element would be beyond our powers of digestion or appreciation, neither adapted nor suitable to human nature. [...] By the ‘modernity’ I mean the ephemeral, the fu-

artist needs *creative imagination* to give expression to modernity, and this imagination is a forgetful immersion into the present as a real source of originality. The eternal half of beauty can be reached only through the experience of “the transitive, fugitive, and contingent” modern beauty that is the pulchritude of the present in its present-ness. Many avant-garde graphic artists, yet, cherished flexible and cultivated *algorithmic imagination* founded on the laws of natural science and technical innovations, which—similarly to the rules of a game as, for example, the laws of chess—placed no limitation on imagination, invention and originality, allowing for an infinite number of the most diverse possibilities and solutions. These artists, therefore, recognized in the means of technological reproducibility useful modern tools for producing reality, changing the surrounding environment of present-ness, forging consciousness through representation and re-appropriation, and manufacturing truth.

Baudelaire perceives modernity as a spiritual adventure for which one has to arm him or herself with the “heroism of modern life,” in order to venture into and explore the realm of evil—whose flowers are dangerously beautiful. The avant-garde artist perceives modernity not only as a spiritual but also a material adventure, for which one has to arm her or himself with “revolutionary heroism” in order to venture into the exploit full of risks and difficulties and plant new, more beautiful yet even more dangerous flowers in the same garden of evil, fertilizing its soil with utopian projections into the future. By creating artworks with immediate effects on the individual and collective experience of “the transitive, fugitive, and contingent,” the avant-garde artist intervenes into the present, thus changing our conception of reality, if not reality itself.

For Baudelaire, the artist should be a *flâneur*—a “passionate spectator” of modern life, who dives into “the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow” of people moving within the city attending to their daily tasks; the one who plunges into the city’s hubbub, “in the midst of fugitive and the infinite.”<sup>7</sup> And yet, he must always retain an aesthetic distan-

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gitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is eternal and the immutable” (Baudelaire 1995: 3;13). It seems that in his idea of double nature of modernity, Baudelaire draws upon the basic Kantian dichotomy of the noumenal world of unchanging existence versus the phenomenal world of our ordinary sensory experiences.

7 “For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—such are a few slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. [...] Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and flickering grace of all the elements of life. He is an ‘I’ with an insatiable appetite for the ‘non-I,’ at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive” (Baudelaire 1995: 9).

ce toward this contagious activity of daily life; he must ceaselessly resist the compulsion to join in the city's running and gasping haste; he must remain alert, vigilant and constantly on guard while bombarded with a plethora of stimuli that cannot be completely assimilated. This aesthetic distance, in turn, enables him to reveal that immutable, "eternal" element of beauty in the bustle of the fleeting moments of everyday life. The artist is able to establish such distance due to his possession of a vast historical memory, his wide knowledge in the realms of history, geography, arts and customs (in Baudelaire's words: "every age had its own gait, glance and gesture"). With Baudelaire, the Romantics' escape from trivial reality into distant lands and epochs is altered by the poet's return to the daily life of a modern European city. The poet of modern life himself becomes a bearer of the aesthetic distance—the dandy, whose high-class loftiness, haughty exclusiveness and arrogance serve as an external expression of that distance. Baudelaire describes the dandy as a sort of "new aristocracy," which appears "in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall" (Baudelaire 1995: 28).

Only half a century after Baudelaire, a new generation of artists emerged, deliberate in their decision to trade in the dandy's costume for the worker's jumpsuit and engineer's jacket, and to alter the easel painting with the means of technical reproducibility and the machine. The generation of avant-garde artists completely inverted Baudelaire's thought about incompatibility and mutual enmity between "poetry" and "material progress," and persisted to integrate the former into the later. The protagonist of "The Painter of Modern Life" is Constantin Guys—the artist whose name today, as a rule, is more associated with Baudelaire's essay than with his own drawings. Comparing Baudelaire's text with Guy's illustrations and watercolors, one eventually arrives at the impression that if Guys had a camera instead of a brush, he would have embodied the ideal of "the poet of modern life"—of the reporter vigilantly perceptive of details and able of documenting the fleeting and flickering images of the beauty—with much greater consistency.

It is photography that becomes the "poetry of modern life" at the beginning of twentieth century, taking that function over from easel painting, which in consequence has been largely transformed into the poetry of painting itself—abstract painting. "Up-to-date, mechanical, perceived as impersonal and objective, saturated with reality of the world outside the studio, capable of reaching a mass audience," writes Peter Galassi in his text on Aleksandar Rodchenko, "photography was also taken to be blessedly free of the cultivated pieties of the past. It offered a welcome alternative to existing artistic practices, a path of escape from bourgeois convention and pretension, which many progressive artists blamed for the devastating war" (Galassi 1998: 104). During this period of artistic experimentation, photography came back with a vengeance to colonize

the aesthetic sphere, from which it was long barred by artistic prejudice. Mechanically reproduced photography played a crucial role in departing from the imitative modes of representation, which was the effort shared by all avant-garde movements both before and after the First World War.

### Photography and Crisis of Representation

Inner contradictions, innumerable aporias, and a long association with the praxis and idea of cultural crisis characterize both modernism and the avant-garde. The artistic avant-garde, as Matei Calinescu argues in his *Five Faces of Modernity*, developed from its very outset as “a culture of crisis.” Recognizing modernity *en générale* as a culture of crisis, the same author asserts that the avant-gardist tries to “discover or invent new forms, aspects or possibilities of crisis” (Calinescu 1987: 124). In *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, Pericle Lewis takes Calinescu’s observation as a departure point for his own insightful definition of modernism as “the literature that acknowledged and attempted to respond to a crisis of representation beginning in the mid-nineteenth century” (Lewis 2007: xviii) According to Lewis, modernism differs from earlier movements, such as Romanticism, “in its emphasis on the need continually to reinvent the means of representation” across different arts (Lewis 2007: 8).<sup>8</sup>

The lively interaction between photography and painting in the formative years of the early avant-garde illustrates both the aforementioned crisis of representation and the different paths that the visual arts explored in order to overcome this crisis. In trying to find a place and legitimate task for painting in the age of rapid technological advancement, artists fully engaged in projecting, creating, and testing radical departures from photographic imagery and alternatives to imitative functions of their art. It was actually the *mimetic function* of all the arts that came under attack at this point.<sup>9</sup> If the Impressionist painting—which took the aforementioned critical essay by Baudelaire for its philosophical program—was already showing the first steps of departure from Realist and Naturalist modes of representation, all three conceptions of art and artistic production were consigned to the past with the emergence of Cubist, Futurist, Expressionist, Dadaist, and Surrealist painters. Moreover, the latter “isms” star-

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8 It should be mentioned that Lewis under the term “modernism” understands both the “high” modernism and avant-garde artworks and authors, that is, both “the relatively mainstream works of the 1920s” and “the more radical experiments of the prewar avant-garde or of such later avant-gardes such as dada and surrealism.” (Lewis 2007: 96).

9 This common notion one can find also in Benjamin’s famous essay “The Work of Art,” in which he raises the question “whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art” (Benjamin 1969: 227). In his *Theory of Avant-Garde*, Bürger iterates the same notion in a slightly changed form, “Because the advent of photography makes possible the precise mechanical reproduction of reality, the mimetic function of the fine arts withers” (Bürger 1984: 32).

ted to compete for the *renommée* as the most contemporary, advanced, and innovative art movement at a much more rapid pace. What all these painters shared, nonetheless, was a great concern with the advances of the rival medium of photography, and a perceived need to respond to photographic triumphs.<sup>10</sup>

The modern painters started exploring new domains in the art of painting, while reserving the traditional mimetic function of the arts for photography. The search for new tasks, techniques, and languages of painting was chiefly driven by the goal to discover modes of representation and perception that would differ from those of photography. The fruits of such a quest were a series of innovations conceived by Cubist painters, such as the particular treatment of space, the abandonment of the spatial illusionism of one-point perspective and its replacement with a combination of multiple view-points in a single image, the reduction of the human figure to geometrical shapes, the fragmentation and faceting of depicted objects, the use of letters and figures in painting, as well as “the invention of collage.”<sup>11</sup>

While the Cubist painters explored the properties of artistic materials and techniques, both Futurist and Expressionist painters started with research concerning the subject matter, developing their specific pictorial styles and techniques accordingly. The Futurists celebrated the “frenetic life of our great cities,” the “whirling life of steel, of pride, of fever and of speed,” declaring as their primary goal the inscription of “universal dynamism” through “movement and light” (Boccioni et al 1973: 25, 30). They adopted the Cubist practice of fragmentation and the multi-perspective organization in painting for their own particular aims, such as superimposing successive phases of motion and inscribing rays of energy into their paintings (especially prominent in the case of the Cubo-Futurist paintings of Russian Rayism).

Simultaneously, Expressionist painters emphasized the inner urges of the artist and the “inner side of nature” that which determined their approach to the pictorial organization of their paintings. The main pictorial strategies that the Expressionist painters developed were the reduction of natural forms and the non-representational use of color. The use of color as an emotional and mental indicator signaled the beginning of a new era of Expressionist painting, reaching its ultimate forms in abstract compositions with remote ciphers of objects and freely float-

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10 For a compilation of statements by Cubist and Futurist, Expressionist, Dadaist and Surrealist painters expressing the concerns, see Scharf 1983.

11 Between high and low due to its technique and hybrid materials, the collage absorbs the external world and gives expression to an enriched and intensified type of reality, such as Lautreamont’s chance encounter between a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissection table. In a collage, several realities morph into one and create the effect of surprise by the image they render and by the perspective they entice, and in so doing they evoke entirely new fictional worlds.

ing colors. Each of these various artistic movements developed its own strategies, specific styles and techniques; yet they all shared a common feature: their aesthetic innovations emerged as a response to the advances of photography.<sup>12</sup>

Although most readily illustrated by the visual arts, the crisis of representation was also reflected in verbal art and exacerbated by questioning the very medium out of which literature is created—language.<sup>13</sup> The early twentieth century introduced the work of several linguists and philosophers, Ferdinand de Saussure and Ludwig Wittgenstein being the most prominent, who analyzed the way language functions as a system of representation. De Saussure emphasized the double nature of the linguistic sign comprised of what he called “the signifier” and “the signified,” and assigned a particular role to each of the two elements in the signification process. He recognized the arbitrary nature of the relationship between the two elements of the sign, proposed the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, and acknowledged the possible effect of materiality in the signifying process. In this way, De Saussure reinserted *writing* into the domain of language. He admitted the existence of writing, granted it a presence, an actuality, by making it clear that the language and writing are “two distinct systems” and that “the written word” is *the image of* (spoken) *language*. This emphasis on the actual materiality of the visual sign—the materiality of the signifier—consequently had a large significance on the awareness of both poets and theoreticians that the poetry has its own “verbal mass” and material substance.

Wittgenstein studied language as a rule-guided practice and a set of games whose conventions are rooted in the speakers’ shared way of life, suggesting that the rules of the game—rather than the reality it is meant to describe—govern how language is used. The Austrian philosopher proposed a model of language that rejects the distinction between literary and ordinary language, and approached aesthetics as yet another

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12 It was, however, non uncommon that the painters’ response to photographic technique was affirmative. Among others, such were the cases with Picasso, who experimented widely with “photographic compositions” and a variety of transformations of these compositions into graphic drawings, with Marcel Duchamp and the futurist painters, whose canvases depicted motion based upon the discoveries made by the Eadweard Muybridge’s and Etienne-Jules Marey’s chronophotographic studies of motion, as well as with the Dadaist painters, who integrated photographic material and technical processes into their paintings and eventually into newly furnished arsenal of artistic possibilities. I discuss these and similar issues in the following section.

13 In his influential *Discourse Networks* book, Friedrich Kittler writes on Herman Ebbinghaus’s memory experiments of the 1880s and the emergence of the new discipline—psychophysics—that marks “a discursive event,” a mutation of linguistic materiality, which introduces both the perception of language as a medium and the crisis of language as representation. Psychophysics takes language to a point where it stops making sense, or rather, it shows that all sense making has its frontiers (and therefore its definition) in domains of nonsense and in automatized operations that no longer belong to a subjective authority. See Kittler 1990, especially chapter “The Great Lalulā.”

her realm for investigating the everyday practices by means of which we communicate and produce meaning. This exposed the situatedness and conventional nature of language: the fact that language practices could be organized differently and remain just as meaningful. In this context, communication emerges not as a process in which we choose one option over another from some deep structure of language that functions as a blueprint for possible games. The novelty and profundity of Wittgenstein's inquiry, as Stanley Cavell has noted, reside in the realization "that everyday language does not, in fact or in essence, depend upon such a structure and conception of rules, and yet that the absence of such structure in no way impairs its functioning" (Cavell 1969: 48).

Poetic language itself underwent profound crises before the First World War and many avant-garde poets found a solution in embracing the idea of literary work as a specific language game. In their sophisticated language games, the relations among the words became more important than the relations of words to nonlinguistic reality. The response to the crisis of verbal representation resulted in the creation of the autonomous, self-sufficient word, such as the concepts of "liberated words" (*parole in libertà*) and "the word as such" (слово как таковое and самовитое слово), fabricated by Italian and Russian Futurist poets respectively, as well as in the turn toward abstraction, such as the latter's concept of "trans-rational language" (заум). Many Dadaist experimental poetic forms emerged as yet another project that aimed toward the renovation of poetic language. Their works forcefully demonstrated how language, that foremost guardian of reason and the socio-symbolic order, might itself be "savaged" and transformed into a crude substance of pure enjoyment: Tristan Tzara's simultaneous poem (read in different languages, with different rhythms, tonalities, and by different persons at the same time), Hugo Ball's phonetic poem (*lautgedichte*), Richard Huelsenbeck's bruitist poem, or Raoul Haussmann's opto-phonetic and poster poems, are the most salient examples of such experiments.<sup>14</sup> The Dadaists' sound poetry swiftly evolved into visual poetry, enriching the Futurists' use of typographical strategies by creating poems that used mechanically reproduced images in innovative ways.

Many avant-garde artists throughout Europe quickly recognized photography as a useful tool for overcoming the extant crisis of the word and representation. By 1919 photography hardly resembled the medium that France had announced as its gift to the world eighty years before. There were three main paths of development, all significant in themse-

<sup>14</sup> It may be said that Dadaist sound poetry puts into practice the type of ahistorical and meaningless language that Jacques Lacan termed *lalangue*, the goal of which is not merely communication but a nonsensical, narcissistic enjoyment, the "satisfaction of blah-blah" (Lacan 1995: 45). For the same sound poetry, Annette Michelson is instead prone to use the term "cacophony" after the word "caca," which is used by children to refer to excrement. (Michelson 1982). More on opto-phonetic poetry, originating with Christian Morgenstern and subsequently actively pursued by the Dadaists, see Lista 2005.

lves but especially powerful in concert. First, the invention of versatile hand-held cameras revolutionized the way that photographs were made and set the photographer free. The second concerned the ways in which photographs reached their audiences: the innovation introduced a cheaper and more efficient way of multiplying the photographic image, as well as other advances in printing technology which enabled the press run of a daily newspaper to reach millions of people. Finally, the third was the creation of motion pictures, with which came the unique vocabulary of montage. These three developments in applied photography—its extreme ease, mobility, and availability; its prominent and polymorphous presence in the mass media; and its extension into film—were just achieving maturity at the close of World War I. Consequently, although photography was much older than the skyscraper and the airplane, it was rightly regarded along with them as a symbol of modernity.<sup>15</sup>

At the time, poets started to perceive the poetic realm of “the impalpable and imaginary” to be almost impossible without photography and photomontage that turned mirages into reality, and reality—into illusions. While prewar artists opened up new domains for the art of painting and illustrated art books, reserving the traditional mimetic function of

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<sup>15</sup> This brief summary of the technological revolution in photography is deeply indebted to John Szarkowski (Szarkowski 1990: 125-245).

In his recent book on Dada photomontage, Matthew Biro offered a more detailed summary of the photographic advancements, using a number of sources: “Before the development of the halftone process between the late 1870s and the 1890s, newspaper and magazine illustrations were created through several different methods including lithography, woodcut engraving, and copper plate engraving. New techniques, such as photogravure, photolithography, collographic printing, and the Woodburytype, became popular in the 1870s and 1880s for printing photographs in magazines and books; however, these techniques, like the ones mentioned above, could not be used with type and thus required that image and text remain on separate pages or for the page to be printed twice in order to combine them. With the advent of halftone engraving, however, photographs and texts could finally be printed together; as a result, printing time was reduced, as were printing costs. Daily newspapers started regularly publishing photographs around 1900, and rotogravure, the printing of text and image in massive rotating presses, which was introduced in the early 1900s, allowed halftone illustrations to be printed at an extremely rapid rate. As a result of these developments, illustrated newspapers proliferated during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also witnessed rapid changes in photographic technologies. The dry plate process of Dr. Richard Leach Maddox, celluloid negatives, orthochromatic film, exposure calculators, anastigmatic lenses, handheld cameras, new forms of shutters, new types of printing papers, flash powder, and the science of sensitometry, which were all developed by the early 1900s, allowed for photographs to be taken more easily and rapidly as well as in places where it was previously too difficult to obtain an image. These innovations, along with the burgeoning of amateur photography since the 1880s, led to the increased production of—and demand for—instantaneous photographs of life: candid images of fleeting events (everyday and historical) that prepared the ground for photojournalism. In addition, phototelegraphy, the telegraphic transmitting of photographic images, was first put into use in 1907, thus making photographs even more readily (and quickly) available for publication. For these various reasons, after World War I, press illustration became largely photographic” (Biro 2009: 90).

the arts to photography, the postwar avant-garde artists adopted mechanically reproduced photography and photomontage as more efficient means for communicating a progressive message.<sup>16</sup>

### Photomontage

The use of photomontage was the turning point for postwar avant-garde art.<sup>17</sup> The use of this “new” artistic medium, re-discovered and popularized by the Berlin Dadaists, shows that the response to the advance of photography was a dialectical process in which the avant-garde developed a range of radically new, non-mimetic techniques and styles, integrating photographic material and technical processes of montage into its newly fashioned artistic practices.<sup>18</sup> The Dadaist photomontage recognized the basis for this new art form in mass-produced photographic material, which questioned the validity of many traditional artistic concepts such as “originality” and “uniqueness,” “handicraft” and “personal style,” “unity” and “organicity” of the artwork, as well as the demarcation of art and technological reproduction (including in industrial and everyday life). The Dadaist photomontage stands as a turning point after which technological reproduction was recognized as an integral part of artistic production.

The Dadaists recognized photomontage as a new artistic technique and art form inhabiting the conspicuous realm between painting and cinema.<sup>19</sup> Although this recognition came much later in theoretical writings dating from the early 1930s, one may argue that it was already present in the Dadaist photomontage practice from the very moment of its inception, as art historian Matthew Biro does in his book *The Dada Cyborg*.<sup>20</sup>

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16 Thus, photopoetry books superseded the handcrafted avant-garde poetry collections that were usually printed in small sizes and small numbers of copies, habitually combining handwritten text with illustrations and drawings as, for example, poetry collections of the Russian futurists before the First World War (Rowell and Wye 2002).

17 Despite many attempts, there is no established distinction between the terms montage and collage and they are often used interchangeably. According to Marjorie Perloff, collage mainly connotes static visual practices, while montage refers to the practices developed in time, most notably film (Perloff 1998: 385). From historical perspective, the term montage gained currency in conjunction with film theory. This study uses the term montage as denoting a broad aesthetic principle of combination and juxtaposition, which encompasses a variety of practices ranging from verbal and visual collage, photomontage, assemblage and last but not least, combination of the text, photography/photomontage and typography on the printed page. For a discussion of collage in the context of the historical avant-garde see Perloff 2003: 42-79; Poggi 1992; and Banash 2013. For an historical overview of the development of collage and montage practices in Western art see Taylor 2006.

18 The art of photomontage is, however, much older (Toman 2009: 32-54).

19 Peter Bürger also asserts that the photomontage “occupies an intermediate position between montage in films and montage in painting,” whereas for the very same reason he discards it as a useful departure point for his discussion of the concept of montage. (Bürger 1984: 76).

20 Here, I follow the argumentation by Mathew Biro, who takes the example of Hausmann’s text “Synthetisches Cino der Malerei,” “as well as the print he created with the same title using the first two-thirds of the text and a collage of cigar bands in 1918. Hausmann first presented “Syn-

In his introductory essay to the catalogue of the notorious First International Dada Fair (1920), Wieland Herzfelde, John Heartfield's brother and a prominent member of Berlin Dada group, provided an insightful account of the power of photomontage to resist traditional representation, recognizing it as a weapon for undermining the familiar illusionism of academic painting, and the frivolous abstraction of experimental practices through a radical attack on both representation and the institution of academic art:

Dadaism is the reaction against all those attempts to disavow the actual that were the driving force of the Impressionists, Expressionists, Cubists, and Futurists [...], but the Dadaist does not undertake, once again, to compete with the photographic apparatus [...] The Dadaist says: When in the past colossal quantities of time, love, and effort were directed toward the painting of a body, a flower, a hat, a heavy shadow, and so forth, now we need merely to take scissors and cut out all that we require from paintings and photographic representations of these things. [...] Any product that is manufactured uninfluenced and unencumbered by public authorities and concepts of value is in and of itself Dadaistic, as long as the means of presentation are anti-illusionistic and proceed from the requirement to further the disfiguration of the contemporary world, which already finds itself in a state of disintegration, of metamorphosis. (Herzfelde 2003: 100-102).

Raoul Hausmann, "Dadasopher" and one of the most active members of the Berlin Dadaists, in his 1931 text "Photomontage" also acknowledged its revolutionary form: "[A]s revolutionary as the content of photomontage was its form—photography and printed texts combined and transformed into *a kind of static film*. The Dadaists, who had 'invented' the static, the simultaneous, and the purely phonetic poem, applied these same principles to pictorial expression." Further, he provided a precise and convincing account of the artistic techniques employed, and the aesthetic effects produced by photomontage:

[P]hotomontage in its primitive form was an explosion of viewpoints and a whirling confusion of picture planes more radical in its complexity than futurist paintings [...] Photomontage in particular, with its opposing structures and dimensions (such as rough versus smooth, aerial views versus close-up, perspective versus flat plane), allows the greatest technical diversity or the clearest working out of the dialectical problems of form. [...] in short, the dialectical form-dynamics that are inherent in photomontage—will assure it a long survival and ample opportunities for development. (Hausmann 1989: 178-180).

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thetic Cinema of Painting" under the title "The New Material in Painting" at the Berlin Sezession on April 12, 1918 [...]; in addition, he also created a second print with the same title. Although Hausmann does not discuss film directly in his text, he was, as the title suggests, interested in how cinema could be merged with traditional forms of art such as painting. Presumably under the influence of film, cubism and futurism, Biro notes, Hausmann took steps toward representing the "fourth dimension" and the contradictory nature of human experience, which interweaves contrasts. Dada, Hausmann argued, would develop this cinematic tendency even further, thereby leading to "the true experience of all relationships" (Biro 2009: 88, 276 (fn 65), 126).

This “new” artistic medium, as Hausmann’s reflection clearly pointed out, builds on advanced techniques that had already been developed by the prewar Cubists and Futurists: decomposition, fragmentation, combination of multiple view-points, simultaneity, dynamism, and cinematic effects, such as double exposure and montage. These devices not only prevented recourse to any realist mode of artistic production, but actually pushed photomontage to the forefront of the avant-garde revolution in the arts. Hardly elsewhere can we find the spatial illusionism of the central, one-point perspective more radically destabilized and substituted by a multitude of visual facets than in the early forms of Dadaist photomontage. Nowhere else do we encounter a more visually explosive combination of interlocking planes, different levels and angles of perception. In no other form can we find a greater affinity to cinematic effects than in the early forms of photomontage. Quite correctly, Hausmann acknowledged and emphasized the cinematic relationship of the new art form by identifying it as “a kind of static film,” a motionless moving picture.<sup>21</sup>

The second important feature to which the “Dadasopher” referred in his essay is *the formal dialectic quality* of photomontage. The “dialectical-form dynamics” are not only “inherent in photomontage,” but also frequently palpable through the juxtaposition of fragmented, faceted materials of different origins, perspectives and proportions, provoking an active contribution from the viewer in establishing a relationship between the disparate materials displayed. It is, actually, the viewer who puts the static images of photomontage into the motion, who makes the motionless picture move. And the viewer is able to become the producer of diverse meanings and interpretations based upon the complex set of relations s/he establishes between the heterogeneous elements into which the surface of the photomontage is split, only because s/he has been invited to do so by the photomontage’s structure. The inherent dialectics is embedded in the structure of photomontage, constituted *as* and constitutive *of* the tension between the factographic element and abstract configuration (construction).

Photomontage is, just as any montage, endowed with an unequivocal and unresolvable *duality*. This distinct doubleness—the tension between construction and element embedded in the foundations of montage—is

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21 One of the first photomontages produced by George Grosz and John Heartfield and reproduced in the catalogue of the First International Dada Fair accompanying Wieland Herzfelde’s introduction—*Life and Activity in Universal City at 12:05 in the Afternoon (1919)*—undeniably foregrounds the aforementioned photomontage’s cinematic affinity. This artwork alludes to a Hollywood studio complex in its title, featuring many references to film and “photoplay” within a picture (Pachnicke and Honnef 1992: 68). The examples of textual references to cinema and cinematic iconography can be found in the works of several Berlin Dadaists, such as, among others, the word “cinémademapsée” or “cinema of my mind” written across the forehead of Hausmann’s 1919 collage *Gurk* (Levi 2012: 34), the film projector sitting on the head of the figure in Hausmann’s 1920 “*Self Portrait of the Dadasopher*” (Biro 2009: 118) or the faces and bodies of film stars in Hannah Höch’s 1919-20 photomontage “*Cut With the Kitchen Knife*” (Biro 2009: 72).

both its aporetic and defining feature. The construction is simultaneously the labor or the process of production (in the sense of “constructing”) and its result: an artifact that successively lays bare the procedure of its formation. In this respect, the term “construction” correlates with the Marxist comprehension of the world as a product and an effect of “the forces and relations of production” (where the latter evolves on the basis of the former). The world of things, created in the labor process, appears at the same time to be a disguise concealing the forces and relations of their production. Dadaist photomontage aimed to disclose the very processes (the forces and relations) of production that are lying veiled behind the culture’s visual discourses.

In terms of visual culture, this translates into the following: those who were maintaining the cultural conventions sustained by photography frequently disguised its social instrumentality. For those critiquing the same cultural conventions, however, this social disciplinary practice of photography was just as frequently exposed. “That is why the successful critique of whole-world views,” as Stephen C. Foster remarks, “occurred most productively where the power of their representation was greatest: the photograph. That is, re-thinking cultural space (views on the world) became primarily a question of rethinking photographic space or rethinking space photographically. The photograph became the touchstone of rethinking culture, whether it was a question of entrenchment, revisionism, or critique” (Foster 2000:53). The creation of heterogeneous and discontinuous space of photomontage, therefore, becomes a gesture of both rethinking space photographically and rethinking cultural space. I argue that not only photomontage, but also the avant-garde photopoetry book functions as a site for reflections, negotiations, and transformations of the abstractions we call world-views, and a forum for the formulation of new cognitive models by which we come to know and transact the cultural world.

### Montage Thinking

If the construction in montage connotes production, constantly reminding us of its hidden forces and relations, the element of construction represents an application of this labor. The element constitutes the smallest unit of the construction, possessing a distinctive homogeneity in relation to the other similar, corresponding units. This sameness of the element is tied with the undifferentiated, unshaped world that is external to the artistic or technical construction. The element is in unresolvable dialectical tension with the construction, without the possibility of resolution. The element is the material captured by the construction in which it occupies its unique place but against which it withstands or points to the prospects of de- and re-construction. In its relation to the construction as a space of reflection, transparency, and consciousness, the element forms a field of non-transparency, inscrutability, and materiality—being an indexical signifier of substantive reality.

The basic characteristic of the element is *faktura*—understood in the same way the Russian productionists assigned it its specific meaning within the vernacular of their formal method (Rowell 1978: 91, 94; Buchloh 1984: 82-119; Gough 1999: 32-59). For them, *faktura* implies “asperity, harshness, sharpness” (шероховатость), which holds our attention, interrupts the automatism of perception, reminds us of the existence of an exterior world and makes the entire process of our interaction with this world palpable. This feature of *faktura* correlates with another important Formalist idea, the concept of “making [forms] difficult” (затруднение формы), of increasing “the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.” In other words, art, according to Formalist theory, allows for “the resistance of material” as the indispensable factor of how construction functions (Shklovsky 1990:12).<sup>22</sup>

Both the construction and the element are double-coded, but in different ways: the construction is both the process and result of production, and the element functions as a part of the new context while it points back to the context(s) from which it was extracted. This “productive double-coding” or “double signification,” as Patricia McBride remarks, is “engendered by montage techniques, which operate via a transfer of materials from one context to another. In this transfer, materials become functional parts of the new context while maintaining allusions to the previous one(s).” This is why the collage or montage, according to McBride, is characterized by its “fruitful double talk” and an “insuppressible semantic ambivalence” (McBride 2007: 253).<sup>23</sup>

In Formalist terms, this productive doubleness of the photomontage, manifested as a tension between transparency of the construction, which forms the sector of total control and rationality, on the one hand, and opacity, density and *faktura* of the element, on the other, may be described as a struggle, but a struggle with varied ends. The inner meaning of such a struggle consists of the fact that each of the two involved require its opposite for its own realization. In other words, the hypertrophy of “constructivity,” which suppresses the “material” aspect, unavoidably results in the loss of the effect of operating construction, inasmuch as that operation is palpable only in its application of a certain irreducible substrate, which articulates “the external in the internal.” On the other hand, the

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22 The semantic layer contained in Formalist terminology implies the priority of tactile experience over the purely perceptive, and also action over reflection, which is visible in the distrust the Formalists express toward the traditional aesthetic category of image. Instead, they put accent on the technique, “device,” and immediate, physis contact and constructive work with the material, which enables us to experience its intransigent factography.

23 Johanna Drucker defines the double nature of the element of montage/collage in a similar way: “The collaged element remained an object in-itself, present and replete, as well as serving in its capacity as a stand-in for an absent signified and an absent referent. Its undeniable material presence introduced considerable complexity into its signifying function” (Drucker 1994: 84).

tangibility of this substrate presupposes its enclosure by construction: the construction reveals and exposes the element, makes it visible or, as we would say today, turns it into the sign of itself. I argue that the avant-garde photopoetry is a technology for furthering this dialectics.

The avant-garde recognition of photomontage, with its inherent dialectical qualities, as a powerful tool for overcoming the existing crisis of representation was a symptom of the much larger cultural shift happening on an international scale—a turn toward montage culture. As defined by the Finnish scholar of Russian imaginism and avant-garde, semiotician Tomi Huttunen, montage culture stands for the predominance of “montage philosophy” and the “montage principle discernable in various art forms and artistic texts” across the European cultures of the first part of the twentieth century. In the context of post-Revolutionary Russia alone, it is possible to speak of a montage philosophy throughout different arts.<sup>24</sup> The most salient feature of such a culture—in which montage functions as “a comprehensive example of the predominant polyglotism in a culture, a mutual interaction on the sign systems, and the attitude to the culture itself as a whole”—is the concept of “montage thinking” (МОНТАЖНОЕ МЫШЛЕНИЕ). According to Huttunen, montage thinking, which encompasses both montage philosophy and montage principle, defines “conditions for making certain kinds of art in both the author’s and the reader’s minds” (Huttunen 2006: 187-205; 2007: 57-99).

Montage thinking is closely related to both the creative process and allegorical procedure of reading/seeing prompted by the specificities of the medium. The creative process in question (*poiesis*) is not based on mimesis understood as *imitation*, which hinges on capturing the semblance of things and whose character as a copy has a subordinate status vis-à-vis reality, but rather on mimesis understood as *reproducibility* or a duplication of forms that erases the hierarchical relation between the original and the copy. This type of *poiesis* is based on what Patricia McBride calls “mimesis as mimicry,” a complex and medium specific artistic process “in which interaction with the forms of the experiential world produces other forms in an imitative process in which each new form is not an inferior copy of the one that triggered repetition, but is rather situated on the same phenomenological plane” (McBride, 2016: 29). Montage thinking enables the receiver, in turn, to recognize these reproduced forms as

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24 Although the montage theory develops specifically among the film theoreticians (experiments with reediting, “Kuleshov effect,” Eisenstein’s conflictual montage, Kuleshov’s syntactic montage, Pudovkin’s narrative and metonymical montage, and Vertov’s rhetorical-transformative montage), it simultaneously becomes a domineering principle in other arts, including painting (Malevich, Lissitzky, Puni), sculpture (Tatlin, Rodchenko, Iorgenson), theater (Eisenstein’s montage of attraction, Lyubov Popova’s stage designs), literature (imaginist montage, writers around Lef), graphic arts (posters and photomontages by Rodchenko and Stepanova, Klutskis and Kulagina, Steinberg brothers and Yuri Rozhkov among others, made both for the commercial and propaganda purposes) including here also diverse photo-books (devoted to Lenin, children books, ceremonial books, photopoetry books), etc.

copies, while simultaneously treating them as if they were invested with the power of the original. This process is, essentially, both enabled and determined by the very materiality of the media of communication, which plays an important role in the procedure of reading/seeing. While the acts of watching a film, observing a photomontage and reading a photopoetry book all activate montage thinking, the specific materiality of each of these media simultaneously requires and disciplines (allows for and limits, obstructs and directs, confuses and abuses) particular procedures and different practices of reading/seeing.

### **Conclusion: Towards the Avant-Garde Bioscopic Photopoetry Book**

In this regard, the avant-garde photopoetry *book* is a specific technology-based object; a medium defined by the centuries-old yet still peculiar materiality that combines printed text and photographic image(s), thus exposing the technique of montage (thinking) as an integral part of the new conceptual order of modernity. Montage breaks down distinctions between unity and fragmentation, continuity and interruption, necessitating the dialectic of disjuncture and conjunction. By calling attention to the fact that the work of art is made of bits and pieces of reality, montage “breaks through the appearance of totality” (Bürger 1984: 72). “Montage appears,” as Klaus Honnef remarks, “not only as a symbolic form of our time but also as a model of a view of the world and its experience, as self-evident [to us] as perspective was to our ancestors” (Honnef 1992: 13). This study argues that the photopoetry book, just as cinema itself, could be redeemed as a medium of such experience. By emulating film’s power to stimulate interest and participation in its fantasies, photopoetry provided a space for the reprisal of myths and rituals that trace and condition individual and collective experience, and advanced new models of understanding and behavior. The formal structure and material specificities of the avant-garde photopoetry book, nonetheless, significantly differ from those of cinema.

Following Pavle Levi’s concept of “cinema by other means,” I propose the concept of the avant-garde photopoetry book as the *cinematic dispositive*, or what El Lissitzky envisioned as the “bioscopic book.”<sup>25</sup> The ma-

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25 In his article and book of the same title, film scholar Pavle Levi argues that the art forms fitting this category are not made “under the influence of, or referring to, the cinema.” Rather, they conceptualize the cinema “as itself a type of practice that, since the invention of the film apparatus, has also (simultaneously) had a history of execution through other, ‘older’ artistic media” (Levi 2010: 53; Levi 2012: 27). These forms are, among others, the Dadaist’ photomontages, Raoul Haussmann’s “optophone,” the diagrammatic drawings of Francis Picabia and Man Ray, avant-garde theatrical performances (such as Eisenstein’s “Montage of Attractions”), projects such as Kuleshov’s “cinema without film,” Lissitzky’s “bioscopic books,” László Moholy-Nagy’s “Typophotos,” Karel Teige’s “static films,” or surrealist sculptural assemblages (such as *The Frenzied Marble* by Belgrade Surrealists

teriality of the medium plays a key role in this vision: the bioscopic book transforms from a mere object into a concrete piece of “technology” due to its operational body, that is, due to its continuous page-sequence and dialectics inherent to the montage of the poetic text and photomontages featured. In other words, such dispositive is *sequential* and *cinematic*, and involves a set of subjects, objects, and physical spaces reciprocally linked, defined, and governed by both a spatial disposition (topology) and a series of defined events (narrative program). Further, such dispositive is “programmed” to be “a dynamic conceptual design,” a “suggestion apparatus” set in motion by the reader/viewer who, as an important part of this conceptual-material circuit, operates as a producer by conducting perpetual *transfer* from one medium and its narrative program to another. In this process, the *alternating current* of the dispositive’s multimedia narrative programs is both *controlling* and *controlled* by the reader/viewer who herself becomes a channel, a medium, an active “influencing machine,” a *prosumer*.<sup>26</sup>

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Aleksandar Vučo and Dušan Matić). All these art forms, by circumventing existing technological apparatus (photo camera and cinematograph), tend to create an alternative cinematographic apparatus (Levi 2010: 56). El Lissitzky proposed in his 1923 manifesto-like essay “Topography of Typography” the idea of the “bioscopic book,” which he defined simply as “the continuous page-sequence” (Lissitzky 1992: 359). It should be underlined that Lissitzky borrowed this term from the name of a particular type of film projector.

26 “This word is becoming fairly common but can be confusing, as it has two meanings. It was coined in 1980 by the futurist Alvin Toffler – in his book *The Third Wave* – as a blend of producer and consumer. He used it to describe a possible future type of consumer who would become involved in the design and manufacture of products, so they could be made to individual specification. He argued that we would then no longer be a passive market upon which industry dumped consumer goods but a part of the creative process.” <<http://www.worldwidewords.org/turnsofphrase/tp-pro4.htm>>

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*Avangardna Fotopoezija*

*Rezime*

Rad polazi od opisa terminoloških i teorijskih pretpostavki trans-žanrovskog proizvoda spajanja pesništva i fotografije-fotomontaže u hibridni oblik “fotopoetske knjige / zbirke” karakterističan za (evropsku) avangardu 20-ih i 30-ih godina. Nakon pregleda relevantnih teorijskih izvora od Bodlera do savremenih autora (Kalinesku, Luis, Mekbrajd, Levi), autor daje kratak komparativni istorijat multi-medijalnih pokušaja avangarde ove vrste (nemački ekspresionizam, ruski futurizam i konstruktivizam, francuski kubizam i nadrealizam, češka avangarda), da bi u poslednjem delu rada izneo sopstvene poglede na datu problematiku.

*Ključne reči:* avangarda, moderna poezija, fotografija, fotomontaža, fotopoezija, bioskopična knjiga, kino-dispozitiv.

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