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How Many Pages in a Single Word: Alternative Typo-poetics of Surrealist Magazines

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the experimental design, typography and editorial strategies of the rare avant-garde publication *Four Pages – Onanism of Death – And So On* (1930), published by Oskar Davičo, Đorđe Kostić and Đorđe Jovanović, probably the first Surrealist Edition of the Belgrade surrealist group. Starting from its unconventional format and the way authors (re)shape and (mis)direct each page in an autonomous fashion, I further analyze the intrinsic interaction between the text, its graphic embodiment and surrounding para-textual elements (illustrations, body text, titles, folding, dating, margins, comments). Special attention is given to the concepts of depersonalization, free association and automatic writing as primary poetical sources for the delinearisation of the reading process and ‘emancipation’ of the text, its content and syntax as well as its position, direction, and visual materiality on the page. Resisting conventional classifications and simplified distinctions between established print media and genres, this surrealist single-issue placard magazine mixes elements of the poster, magazine, and booklet. Its ambiguous nature leads us toward theoretical discussion of the avant-garde magazine as an autonomous literary genre and original, self-sufficient artwork, as was already suggested by the theory of Russian formalism.

KEYWORDS

Serbian Surrealism, avant-garde magazine, typography, typo-poetics, automatism, poster/placard

INTRO

Are there publications that change the very concept of reading conventions and affect the way we perceive and receive texts today? If such a publication exists and is a part of the historical avant-garde, how is it that we understand that heritage today: do we recognize in the new forms of textuality that surround us signs that the radical spirit of the avant-garde is still alive, not just as an assimilated element of popular and consumerist culture, but as an element that still provokes us and our theoretical concepts? Is it possible that the most radical experiments are the very ones that we fail to detect, recognize, assimilate

and read, because they remained hidden by some of the strategies of hierarchization and selectivity that define the (academic) territory of the avant-garde? Maybe such a publication exists where we do not think to find it. A serious candidate for a printing enterprise that still broadens the limits of our understanding of the reading process, page layout, text, genre, publication, editorship and authorship, may be found in an almost lost and unknown placard magazine, *Four Pages – Onanism of Death – And So On* (1930), produced by the Surrealist group in Belgrade. Despite or through this publication's disregard for the public and publicity, it has the potential to regenerate our theoretical approach to avant-garde press genres, but in order to appreciate its significance we will first need to briefly delineate the historical and geopoetical space within which it operated.

Among the panoply of artistic practices, groups and magazines to emerge from Serbo-Croatian culture between the two World Wars, there are three movements that were closely intertwined with some of the predominant European avant-garde movements. First, one of the most elaborate and acknowledged avant-garde projects in the Balkans was probably *zenitism* and its international magazine *Zenit*, passionately edited by Ljubormir Micić in Zagreb and Belgrade between 1921 and 1926.¹ Through its 43 numbers, *Zenit* underwent several phases and corralled many acknowledged artists of Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Constructivism. Ivan Gohl signed a zenitist manifesto in 1921; Ilya Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky edited an issue in 1922; the final list of 'collaborateurs de Zenit' included Archipenko, Delaunay, Doesburg, Gropius, G. Grosz, Hausmann, Kandinsky, Kassák, Lounatcharsky, Malevitch, Marinetti, Moholy-Nagy, Seifert, Teige, and others.² Second, the Dada movement influenced Dragan Aleksić and his magazines *Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz* (1922), as well as anti-Dadaist magazine *Dada Jok* (1922) published by Micić's brother Branko Ve Poljanski. The third movement that was effectively transnational, deeply rooted in the poetics of one of the core European avant-garde movements and concurrent with its activities was Serbian Surrealism.³

In contrast to some other Central and East European surrealist movements (Czech Surrealism for example), and despite its vital engagement with the French movement since the early twenties, Serbian Surrealism lacks adequate international visibility and critical recognition.⁴ The dynamics of the Serbian surrealist movement correspond with the evolution of the French movement in both of its stages (marked by the First and the Second Manifesto), though as an officially established and self-declared group, the Serbian movement can be traced from 1930. Private contact, meetings, correspondence and the

¹ A digitized version of *Zenit* is available at the World Digital Library (www.wdl.org).

² See the reprint of *Zenit* followed by a monograph: V. Golubović & I. Subiotić, *Zenit 1921-1926*. Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, Narodna biblioteka Srbije, SKD Prosvjeta, 2008 [cyr.].

³ For a broader overview of the Serbian avant-garde in periodicals, see: V. Golubović & S. Tutnjević (eds.), *Srpska avangarda u periodici*. Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost 1996 [cyr.].

⁴ A standard academic introduction to Serbian surrealism is provided by researchers such as H. Kapidžić-Osmanagić, J. Novaković, B. Aleksić, and more recently, Milanka Todić (*Nemoguće – Umetnost nadrealizma*. Beograd: Muzej primenjene umetnosti 2002). See also www.serbiansurrealism.com and the repository still under construction www.nadrealizam.rs. For a more extensive summary of international literature on Serbian surrealism, and commentary on possible reasons for its weak visibility, see S. Bahun-Radunovic, 'When the Margin Cries: Surrealism in Yugoslavia'. *RiLUne* 3, 2005, 37-52.

exchange of books notwithstanding, the collaborative exchange between the French and Serbian movement was mostly conducted via periodicals. The first Serbian translations of Breton, extracted from the magazine *Littérature* (Nouvelle Série, no. 4, 5, 7), appeared in the Belgrade magazine *Roads* in 1923 (*Putevi*, New Series, no. 1). Even before the first issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1 Dec. 1924) was launched, Marko Ristić had published an article on French Surrealism and translated a fragment from Breton's *Manifesto* in the first issue of the Belgrade magazine *Testimonies* (*Svedočanstva*, 21 Nov. 1924), and later wrote the first automatic text ever written in Serbian (no. 3, 11 Dec. 1924).⁵ *Testimonies* was heavily influenced by the sub-cultural currents that were to become known as *art brut* and outsider art. Its thematically compiled issues consistently published the documentary, spontaneous 'poetry' of those untouched by culture: the texts and drawings by common and mad people, prisoners, children, the deaf and the blind, etc. The graphic novel *Vampire* from its 6th issue – an issue partly inspired by the French magazine *Les Feuilles Libres* (no. 35, Jan-Feb. 1924) and dedicated to the art of madness – was later translated and reproduced in *La Révolution Surréaliste* (no. 5, Oct. 1925).

The official inauguration of the Belgrade Surrealist group was announced through a multimedia and bilingual poetic-philosophical almanac *Nemoguće/L'Impossible* (May 1930), distributed in both Belgrade and Paris (by the Librairie José Corti). In the following two years, the main organ of the movement was the magazine *Surrealism Here and Now* (*Nadrealizam danas i ovde*, 1931-1932). French Surrealists sent their original, at times previously unpublished, visual and literary work to both of these magazines. The Belgrade Surrealists also formed an autonomous publishing entity, Surrealist Editions, which, besides periodicals, published original works, programmatic brochures, collective pamphlets, and declarations of the group and its members. The magazines and editions produced by the Belgrade group were clearly modeled after French Surrealist publications and considered part of the cosmopolitan and international web of Surrealist movements.

The publication titled *Four Pages – Onanism of Death – And So On* is a placard magazine published by Oskar Davičo (1909-1989), Đorđe Kostić (1909-1995) and Đorđe Jovanović (1909-1943) at the beginning of 1930.⁶ It emerged precisely when the Belgrade Surrealist movement was undergoing reorganization. Like in the French movement, the turning point coincided with the breaking up with many old collaborators and the influx of several young artists. The co-authors of *Four Pages* were those youths (all born in 1909), who, having returned from their 'studies' in Paris, joined the older Surrealist kernel (M. Ristić, D. Matić, M. Dedinac, A. Vučo) and provided the impetus for the (re)structuring of the Belgrade movement. Their placard magazine *Four Pages* was the first

⁵ Cf. Sanja Bahun-Radunovic, 'When the Margin Cries' (42).

⁶ This publication is extremely rare and unexplored even in Serbian literature. Only two copies of this publication are known to have been preserved: one of them in the private collection of prof. dr. Aleksandar Kostić, a son of Đorđe Kostić, and the other in the Archive of the Serbian Academy of Science and Art, in the archive of Marko Ristić (Historical collection 14882). I am thankful to prof. Kostić and the Archive for providing me with the originals and copies of this valuable document. I am also thankful to the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade and Rabbi Isak Asiel for the opportunity to consult an edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

publication to bear the logo of the Surrealist Editions, and it was published even before the first collective expression and manifesto of the Belgrade group – the almanac *L'Impossible*.⁷ Before editing this unusual publication, Davičo, Kostić and Jovanović were involved in several magazine projects – the little magazines *Panes (Okna, 1925)*, *Becalming (Stišavanja, 1926)*, and *Traces (Traгови, 1928–1929)* – and this sort of collaborative periodical engagement constituted the main form of their public expression and artistic activity up to that time.

So far, nothing is known about the initial number of copies and the distribution of *Four Pages*. The fact that it was printed in a distinctively hermetic poetic environment, in which the micro-generation of younger Belgrade surrealists worked before the movement's first programmatic publications and collective activities, suggests that it might have had a similar destiny as Davičo's *Anatomy*, which had a print run of just 60 copies, 10 of them being distributed among close friends and the rest stored in a private basement.⁸

TYPO-POETICS

The traditional printed page, basically unchanged since the advent of the Gutenberg printing press, follows numerous conventions that promote the reading of a text/book in a linear and standardized fashion. In the avant-garde, the traditional printed page was, as we know, essentially questioned and recognized as a fruitful space for artistic intervention. Through the extended domain of typography and the revolutionized belief in the potentials of new media forms, avant-garde publications shifted, as Lissitzky said, from the passive, non-articulated lettering pattern to an active, articulated one.⁹ The new man, psychology, society and art required a new typography, a self-conscious art of printing.

We find the most striking experiments with typography in the Dada and Futurist concept of words in freedom (*les mots en liberté*), in the Cubo-Futurist art books collaborated on by writers and painters, and in the constructivist re-standardization of typography and book design. Most Surrealist magazines, however, return to the more conventional printed page. The basic format of the illustrated page separated into two text columns in *La Révolution Surréaliste* takes its form from the scientific magazine *La Nature*. After the movement's ideological shift in the thirties, *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* suggests an even more standardized page layout. The same is true of the Belgrade publications *L'Impossible* and *Surrealism Here and Now*. *Four Pages*, on the other hand, represents this self-conscious shift in the avant-garde culture of print. It focuses on printing conventions *per se* and is one of the Surrealist Editions' most experimental and striking undertakings.

⁷ The rare critical recognition of this publication can be found in Marko Ristić, 'Jedna plaketa i jedan plakat', *Politika*, 11 Feb 1930 (reprinted in *Književna politika*. Beograd: Prosveta 1952, 136-139). On the same date, Ristić wrote in his *Diary* that this was the first time that the Surrealist Editions were mentioned (*Oko nadrealizma*. Beograd: Clio 2003, 73). Since Ristić's review was published at the very beginning of 1930 without mentioning Davičo's *Anatomy*, the only publication that might have preceded *Four Pages*, this placard magazine can be considered the first Serbian Surrealist edition..

⁸ Cf. Oskar Davičo, *Ritualni umiranja jezika*. Beograd: Nolit 1974, 136.

⁹ El Lissitzky, 'Das Buch'. In Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers (ed.), *El Lissitzky: Maler, Architekt, Typograf, Fotograf: Erinnerungen, Briefe, Schriften*. Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst 1967, 356-360 (356).

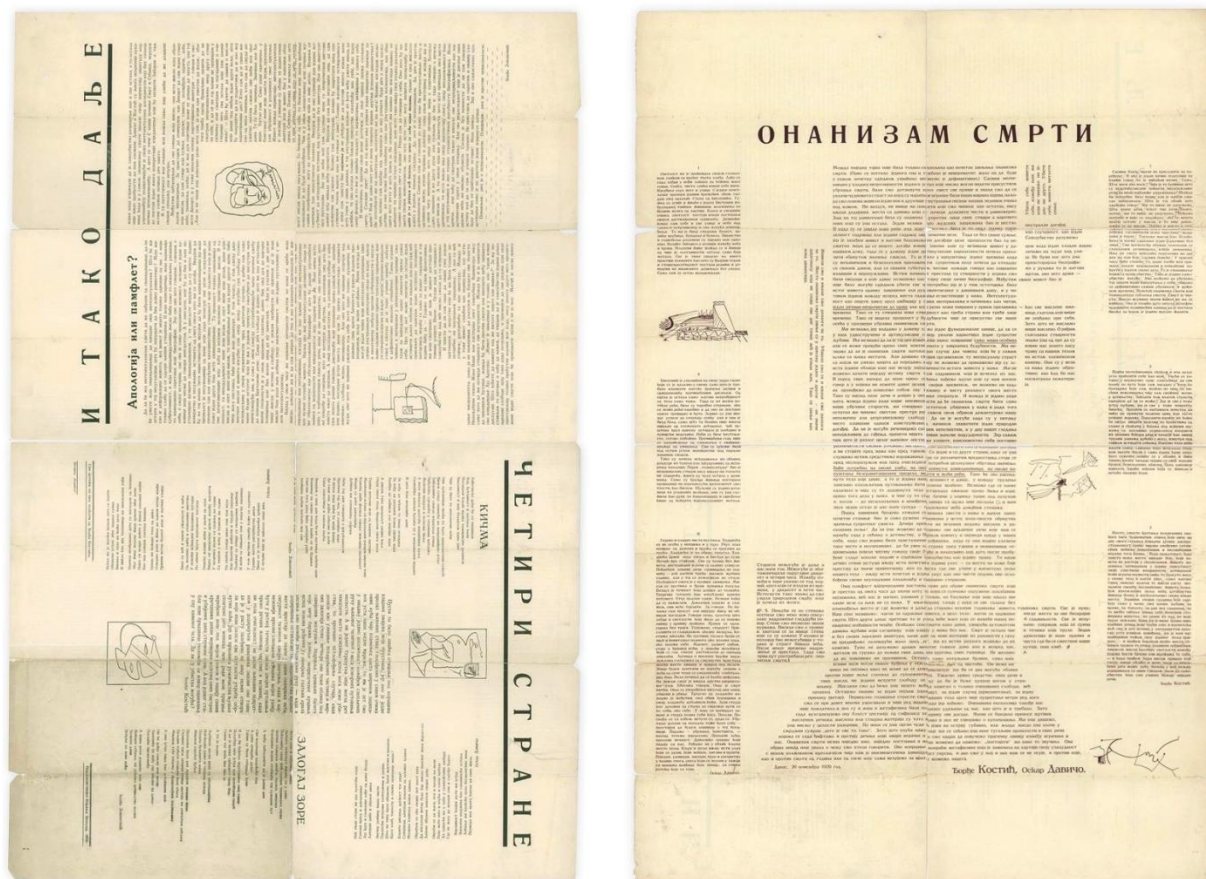


Fig. 1: *Four Pages – Onanism of Death – And So On* (942 x 625mm, 1930). On the left: the two pages (*Four Pages, And So On*) of the outer sheet. On the right: the full inner sheet of *Onanism of Death*.¹⁰

The most extravagant and atypical aspect of this publication is undoubtedly its large paper size, and dynamic, flexible and multifunctional format. In its most extensive variation, it is almost a large B2 sheet (942 x 625mm), printed on both sides (Fig. 1). The text occupies the whole space of the inner form of a sheet, which is therefore used as a *page*. By folding this sheet once, we get a *folio*: two leaves or *four pages*. Two pages of an outer form of a sheet – *Four Pages* and *And So On* – represent this stage of 'imposition'. By folding it two more times, in order to reach the smallest unit identifiable as a 'page' in this unpaginated publication (1/4 of the page titled *Four Pages*), we get an *octavo*: eight leaves or sixteen pages. All these possibilities, as different stages of the process of imposition, are simultaneously actualized in the synchrony of the material body of the publication. Since *Four Pages* makes use of the large unfolded sheet, the prerequisite for any format, as a page, and at the same time signals further possibilities of its imposition (*folio, octavo*), it could even be said that this publication does not have a format. It is rather based on a sort of *meta-format* that activates both the conventional formats and the very convention of folding the sheet into the publication body/leaves/pages. The process of imposing is materialized, petrified in its micro-diachronic stages represented by the different page units, in order to dramatize the way we manipulate the physical material of

¹⁰ Illustrative materials in the paper designed by Nemanja Đorđević.

a sheet of paper to get to some of the basic printing forms, such as a book.

Format manipulation was a frequent exploratory strategy in the avant-garde press. In their attempt to win public appeal and democratize the conventional literary magazine, Avant-garde periodicals often employed the large formats of the daily newspaper, or, at the other extreme, the very small formats of private press.¹¹ We can compare *Four Pages* with the experiments with format, folding and (un)binding of Theo van Doesburg's magazine *Mécano* (1922-1924), or the co-authored scroll of *La prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France* (1913) by Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay, that 'simultaneous book', as Lissitzky called it, printed on a folding strip of paper, one meter and a half in length.¹² *Four Pages* is perhaps most similar to a placard or poster, which became a vital form of artistic expression in the late 19th century and played an important role in avant-garde printing as well. But *Four Pages* does not adopt poster aesthetics for the illustrative, pictorial features; even if it is illustrated, it is a predominantly *textual* poster. It would be hard to conclude that the editors were deeply interested in the propagandist or constructivist qualities of message transparency and fast communication either; the (automatic) poems and lyrical prose they published are her(m)etical: polemical but introverted and self-analytical. Poster/placard aesthetics is just one of the faces and (pre)requisites that *Four Pages* implicitly uses in an attempt to probe, discuss and materialize broader alternations between the media and printing genres. The true visual qualities of *Four Pages* are based on the dynamics of the typographic elements, and the format is re-activated as a typically typographical feature: a large press sheet with several different options for execution and (un)folding.

In addition to their semantic extravagance, the headings are emphasized by their position on the page, size, bold font weight and underlining. Determining how many titles this placard magazine has depends on the reading strategy one chooses to adopt. Apart from the inner page, where the page heading is equivalent with the text heading (*Onanism of Death*), the two other headings are a distinctive page headings (*Four Pages, And So On*). Interrelated by underlining, these two headings are markers of an outer form of a folio sheet and (al)so 'privileged' and suggested as possible publication headings. With the proliferation of headings, of the possibilities of combining them and ascribing to them different paratextual functions, the basic bibliographical identity of the publication is called into question. We do not know where to start reading this publication, and whatever strategy and direction we choose, the logic of the publication will resist it. A magazine as a mosaic form that affirms fragmentary and selective reading 'in jumps' may function as a deeper structural model for composing such a dehierarchized publication. Most importantly, one of its headings is self-referential and explicitly refers to a typographical element: *Four Pages*. In Serbian, the word *strana* (page) is itself polysemic; it means

¹¹ The magazine *Večnost* (1926), edited by Mony de Bully and Risto Ratković, two interesting 'outsiders' of Serbian Surrealism, was similarly printed on four pages/two leaves. It does not experiment with the intersection of pages, but demonstrates the extremes of format change within the same periodical. Its first issues were printed in the minimalized format of a notebook (15,7 x 22,2 cm), while the last ones had the maximized format of a daily newspaper (29 x 43 cm).

¹² El Lissitzky 1967 (359).

page (i.e. of a book), side (i.e. of a page/leaf), and direction. This polysemy is a condensed linguistic form that confuses in a word the indeterminacy of reading that we are faced with in *Four Pages*.

The destabilization of the layout interferes with the linearity of reading, which is a strategy very carefully and systematically contrived in this publication. If the large inner page is to be read vertically, the two outer pages are centered horizontally (or vice versa). Every page was evidently headed, designed and modeled separately; they are detached, disconnected, incongruous and mis-imposed units brought together through a sort of typo-cubistic montage. The self-referential page headed *Four Pages* is itself deconstructed into four pages or directions of reading: verses flow in both vertical directions around a small prose unit (Fig. 2).

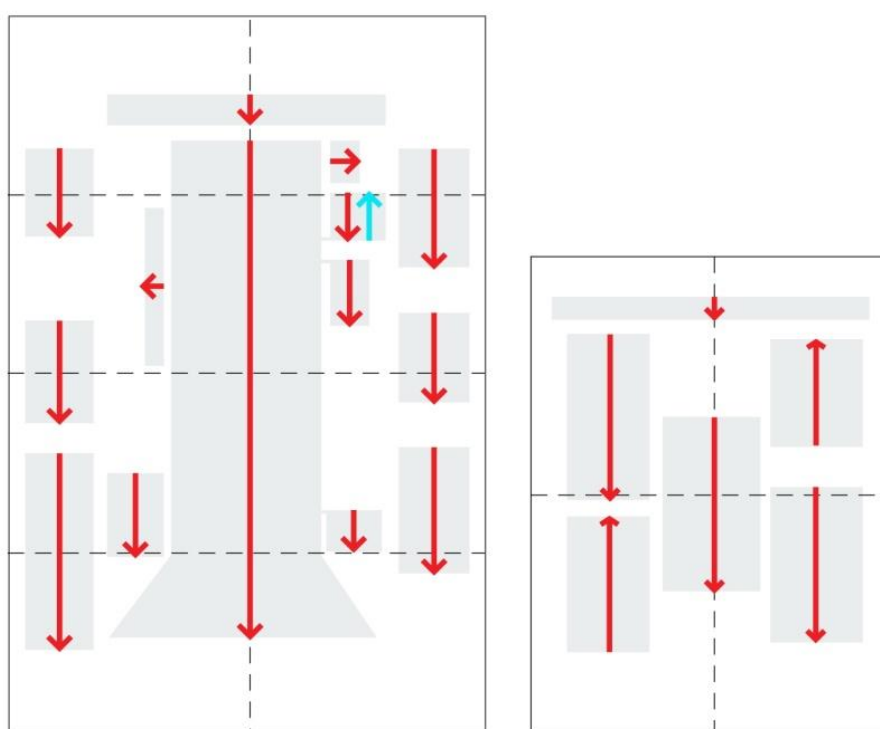


Fig. 2: The multiple directions of the type set and/or reading format on the pages *Onanism of Death* (on the left) and *Four Pages* (on the right)

The abstract and geometrical vignettes of Đorđe Kostić, in most cases, do not help to stabilize the reader's perception or orient the reading flow, but support their ambivalence. The publication becomes a sort of misleading map of reading. But, despite being detached and disconnected, the pages are still parts of the same totality, incongruous units integrated by the materiality of the sheet on which they are printed. Since the dynamic typographical principle of diagonals and the dispersive principle of Dada-Futurist words in freedom are not explicitly used in the layout, a certain tension between structure and destruction is preserved. This tension is highly characteristic of Surrealism as post-Dadaism, and it served as a useful platform in the attempt to articulate a deeper cultural critique and materialize the abstract processes of printing/reading, with all their implicit ideologies, as an event in/of publication.

From the perspective of the category of co-authorship, we can trace a certain structural logic in this publication. Different combinations and stages of trans-individualization are successively explored: the ‘first’ page (*Four Pages*) is the only page where the prose, verse, texts and graphics of all three co-editors ‘coagulate’; the ‘second’ (*Onanism of Death*) consists of textual fragments by Kostić and Davičo and a text they co-authored; while on the ‘last’ page (*And So On*) we find the conventional, individually signed text of Đorđe Jovanović. Collaborative work is an important feature of the avant-garde, especially in multimedia and book design enterprises. In the poetics of Serbian Surrealism, this trans-individualism – polemically directed, with psychoanalytical and Marxist inspirations, against bourgeois psychology, society and art – informed their explorations of active and passive, individual and collective *automatism*. Of particular interest to us here is that a magazine, even more than an illustrated book, is by definition a trans-auctorial, trans-individual, multi-authored form and space. One of Marko Ristić’s articles may be of particular significance in this context. In a critical review of *50 in Europe* (*50 u Evropi*, 1928-1933), an unofficial pro-Surrealist magazine edited by Zvezdan Vujadinović, and *Traces*, the previous magazine project undertaken by Davičo, Kostić and Jovanović, Ristić introduces the idea of the magazine as a communal trans-auctorial inter-textual organism. He describes this particular effect, that we could call the *magazine effect*, as a ‘practice of modern mechanics’ that blurs the boundaries between texts, which can then be ‘indifferently ascribed to one or the other of its collaborators, and mutually transposed, thus demonstrating, through their inconclusive and communal atmosphere, that they represent the application and practice of *modern mechanics*’.¹³ Though Ristić’s valorization of this quality in the magazines mentioned is quite ambiguous, his concept demonstrates how montage and collage techniques may support a theoretical consideration of the avant-garde periodical.¹⁴

The largest and most interesting page of *Four Pages*, that resembles a printed page of the Talmud or Derrida’s *Glas* (Fig. 3), makes it possible for readers to consider some of the more complex relationships between the poetics of Surrealism and experimental typography. In the left and right margins, we find Davičo’s and Kostić’s separately signed fragments. The central text is a text they co-authored, a eulogy of a suicide, of weak subjectivity and the so-called ‘onanism of death’. The body text is extended to fit the large sheet and it overflows the limits of the geometrical block usually assigned to text. This (t)extension suggests the uncontrolled flow and delimited nature of textuality, writing and time, just as the title of the last page (*And So On*) and the ellipsis with which Jovanović’s text ends (-----) quite explicitly refer to an ending/limit of a sentence, text or publication as only provisional and arbitrary. The small but very important fragments

¹³ Marko Ristić, ‘Marginalije I’. *Letopis Matice srpske*, 103:319, 3. mart 1929; republished in Marko Ristić, *Uoči nadrealizma*. Beograd: Nolit 1985, 142-153 (151).

¹⁴ Marko Ristić was a key theoretical and organisational figure of Serbian Surrealism. He was a passionate archiver, librarian, bibliophile and periodical collector, reader and editor. His doctoral thesis, submitted to the Parisian Ecole normale supérieure in 1927, dealt with the philosophy of the periodical form, with the metaphysics of *faits divers*. This thesis remained unfinished, but fragments have been translated into Serbian. See M. Ristić, ‘Metafizika novinskih vesti.’ In *Uoči nadrealizma*. Beograd: Nolit 1985, 243-254).

around the central text help us to theoretically correlate questions of automatism, chance, textuality, printing and publicity. These decentered annotations imitate the text markups usually made by hand in the margin and attempt to reproduce them in print form. However, it is not possible to accurately reproduce these polycentric side notes in standard print, as demonstrated by the example of the *Collected Works* (1969) of Oskar Davičo.¹⁵ Some of these supplemental comments attach themselves directly to a certain fragment or word from the main text, as a sort of automatic free association that *embodies* the intrinsic a-linearity of text, textuality itself.¹⁶ Through these spontaneous, unsystematic and accidental glosses, the very nature of textuality breaks through on/into the visible typographic surface. We could say this represents the specifically Surrealist automatism ‘organically’ materialized in print. Every word, all language, and all text is a hybrid, polylinear and unfinished structure that is ideologically repressed by traditional typography, printing and literature. Re-press-ion: what is repressed by traditional press, here tries to break free and find its adequate typo-poetical figure.

But most importantly, here the annotated, finished text is understood in a purely typographical manner. Those subsequent notes attach themselves to a (typo)graphically already-positioned and (post-)formatted text. They are free associations under the press machine. Some corrector or proofreader is freely inscribing his *and so on* around a text that is finished not only in the sense that it is already written but in the sense that it is ready for printing, fixed on a page that is already made-up. The comparison with the printed page of the Talmud or Derrida’s *Glas* was not arbitrary. Modern theory (Susan Handelman) has recognized a deep structural correspondence between Hebrew hermeneutics and the rabbinical treatment of a holy text (inseparable from the tradition of its commentaries and interpretation) and poststructuralist textuality and exegesis (in Freud, Lacan, Derrida, Harold Bloom).¹⁷ For our basic hermeneutical understanding of a text, an understanding that is deeply rooted in religious traditions, every literary text is a ‘holy scripture’, a structure fixed (by the author) and unchangeable (by society) so as to emanate the endless contingent polyphony of its particular concretizations and interpretations. Every interpretation is a free/individual/historical association that is already pre-scripted in a text, immanent to it.¹⁸ Davičo, himself of Jewish origin, here comments on

¹⁵ Here they were printed as/on a separate page(s), *before* (side notes on the left) and *after* (side notes on the right) the main text. However, their syntactical (re)connections with the main text needed to be preserved and (re)printed in a different (italic) type style.

¹⁶ That the *linearity* of reading was one the basic targets of their experiment is shown by the interference of visually and typographically regular text composition, and irregular syntactic and semantic flow. In one of these side notes, the text is printed regularly in a horizontal line, but vertically it should be read from the last line up to the first one (Fig. 2, blue arrow). Read in a conventional way, it is illegible. This ironic editorial remark is invisible on the visual level; only a *reader* can recognize this discrepancy between typographic illusion and the disenchantment of/in reading. However, in the standardized edition of Davičo’s *Collected Works*, this fragment is ‘falsely’ re-printed in a conventional, legible manner.

¹⁷ See: Susan A. Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory*. New York: State University of New York Press 1983.

¹⁸ Cf. Bourdieu: ‘A book changes because it does not change while the world changes around it’; citation in Žerar Ženet, *Umetničko delo: imanentnost i transcendentnost*. Novi Sad: Svetovi 1996 (326).

the finished text, revealing the immanent psycho-textual productivity, before the text becomes fixed, 'holy' and unchangeable through the act of publishing. Finished text is but a literary convention, a very basic and strong one. Through a specific Surrealist affinity for automatism, the textual and cultural subconscious and the repressed power of textual productivity finds its way to a (typo)graphic surface. As Lissitzky once said, we can see how it is that where new areas are opened up to thought- and speech-patterns, we find new typographical designs originating organically.¹⁹ Subject in process and writing in process call for typography in process; and the publication is perceived as an open laboratory of editing and (re)writing. It is not a placard, a magazine, a text, or a book in its conventional finished form, but a sort of *pre-print copy*, still open to various possibilities and reshaping.

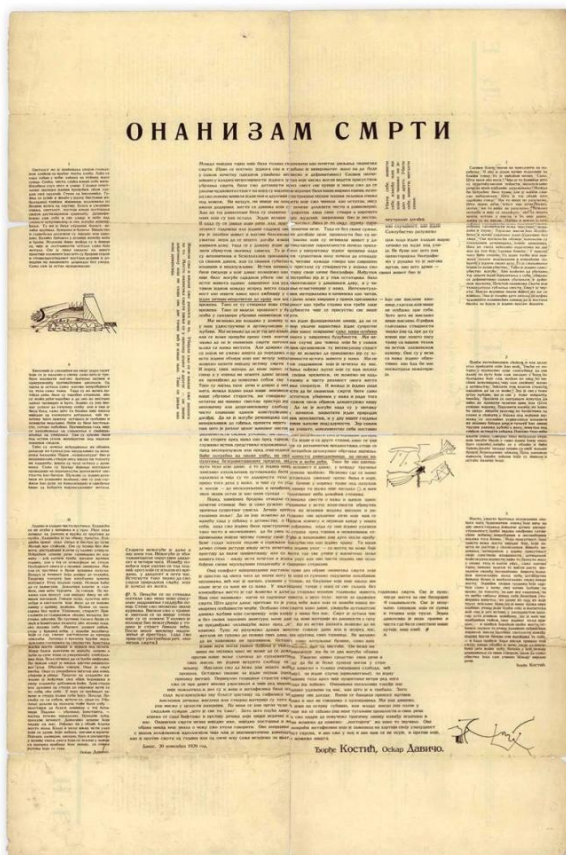


Fig. 3: On the left: the page *Onanism of Death*. On the right: a sample page from the Babylonian Talmud (Folio 61, side 2).

After the co-authored text is finished but before it is printed and published, in that small but fundamental interval between written and published, private and public, the process of writing is still in effect, resisting the ideology of conventional textual completion. Surrealism is theoretically very sensitive to that gap between the written text and the act of publishing. We can trace a specific anxiety of publishing in the epilogue dilemmas of such fundamental Surrealist works as Breton's *Nadja* (1928), Ristić's anti-novel *Without a*

¹⁹ El Lissitzky 1967 (357).

Measure (*Bez mere*, 1928) and Davičo's *Anatomy* (*Anatomija*, 1930).²⁰ To publish an (automatic) text is a highly ambivalent and dramatic act in the anti-aesthetics of Surrealism. Through it, one recognizes that every publication is an implicit poet(h)ical *drama of publishing*, and that the meta- or archi-genre of every publication is a genre of publicity, the public sphere (Habermas). If Surrealism resisted being literature it still needed to be public, or counter-public, in order to express this resistance. Paratextual and typographical space, elements and conventions, that bear the strong and silenced ideology of post-Renaissance and post-Enlightenment bourgeois societies, were discovered as the privileged means for articulating this deep cultural critique.²¹

THE MAGAZINE AS A WORK OF ART

This experimental publication challenged some of the basic elements, conventions, and hierarchies of the traditional press: paper size, format, folding, imposing, binding, headings, page/leaf, inside/outside, recto/verso, the direction and linearity of reading, authorship, publishing and publicity. The calling into question of typography and print is analytically taken as the basic editorial preoccupation and is realized in accordance with some of the fundamentals of the theory of Surrealism. Therefore it is possible to conceptualize the editing policy of this Surrealist publication as *typo-poetics*, predominantly concerned with the elements and standards of typography, press, and publishing. The broader context of the poetics of Surrealism – with the specific confusion of experimental *écriture*, unorthodox Marxism and psychoanalysis that it implies – provides this co-editorial experiment with the self-reflectivity, cultural depth and historical extension that direct it towards postmodern sensibility and thought.

Still, we need to discuss why we consider this publication a magazine. It is not self-evident that we should do so, although it would not contradict the fascination with periodical forms and the various experimental media and literary genres that proliferated in the historical avant-garde. One of these 'brave new forms' was the artist magazine, perceived as a non-mimetic, hybrid but innovative literary and artistic genre. That is how Russian formalists, closely related to the Russian avant-garde, considered the literary magazine. Jurij Tynjanov remarked that newspapers and magazines have existed for a long time, but they existed as a fact of everyday life, while his time was witnessing a growing interest in newspapers, magazines, and yearbooks as distinct literary works, as

²⁰ See: Biljana Andonovska, 'Bez-Nađe.' In D. Bošković (ed.), *Srpski jezik, književnost, umetnost*, knj. 2, *Žene, rod, identitet, književnost*. Kragujevac: Filološko-umetnički fakultet 2011, 239-282 [cyr.]. Davičo's *Anatomy*, published in the same year as *Four Pages*, is an automatic text that (also) ends with an incomplete sentence, three dots and the trans- and inter-textual words '... and so on'.

²¹ For a more extensive discussion of the avant-garde periodicals, the Enlightenment and the *public sphere* see: Biljana Andonovska, 'Avangardni almanasi: nacrt za jednu poetiku efemernog.' *Književna istorija* 43:145, 2011, 797-829 [cyr.]; Biljana Andonovska, 'Dijalektika javnosti: nadrealizam, prosvetćenost i publikacije.' In T. Jovičević (ed.), *Tradicija prosvetćenosti i prosvetćivanja u srpskoj periodici*. Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost 2012, 357-381 [cyr.].

‘constructions’.²² Viktor Shklovsky also wrote about the magazine as an original literary form. As he said, if a prose writer often considered publishing a magazine, it was not just because of his need to be alone with his readers, since such a need was well satisfied by the book, but it was also because of an interest in the magazine understood as a ‘literary form’.²³

Theoretically, the fact that this placard is a single-issue magazine should not be an obstacle to defining it as a periodical. On the contrary, in the case of avant-garde magazines it would even be poetically representative. Small avant-garde magazines are characterized by a quasi-periodicity, a convulsive and irregular rhythm of publishing; they often take the form of a yearbook or almanac; they are single issues or short-lived. This poetics of ephemerality and inclination towards singularity can be approached through conceiving the magazine as an autonomous work of art and a distinctive literary and artistic genre. Some longer-lived avant-garde periodicals cover several different, singularized magazine and editorial projects under the same title (for example Tristan Tzara’s *Dada* magazine, or the Belgrade magazine *Roads*). Even when they have the same title (or other cohesive signs of continuity), they are edited and conceptualized as separate creative acts, autonomous units of a convulsive chronological unity. The program of *Roads* explicitly affirms the new form of an open magazine, magazine in progress, with such a flexible meta-structure that its issues could proceed through/as different literary and media genres: ‘*Roads* will introduce a new way of editing, and, instead of the usual uniformity, it will change its content with much more freedom —: so, each number will be, according to need, an anthology, a novel, an album, etc. In accordance with such flexibility of content, *ROADS* reserves the right to change the format and design of the magazine’ (*Roads*, no. 2, 1922). Here we see that, to rework Shklovsky’s observation from above, a magazine editor often considered publishing prose, editing as writing a novel (an anthology, an album, etc). So, it is not a magazine understood as a ‘thick’ periodical publication published at regular intervals, with standardized sections, tables of contents, differentiated conventional genres, one editor in chief, a broad net of subscribers and collaborators, etc. On the contrary, it is a print form that gravitates towards the singularity and uniqueness of a work of art, painting, poster, or book. The question of seriality and periodicity is posed differently in the avant-garde print culture, deeply affected by innovations in the visual arts, book design and developing competitive media forms (film as well as advertisements, posters, prospectuses etc). When a magazine gravitates towards singularity, it actually gravitates towards the non-periodical form of a book, as much as that of a poster/placard. Therefore it is important that from among the avant-garde periodicals it is possible to distinguish the specific form of the auctorial magazine (e.g. the single-issue magazine *Svetokret* by Branko Ve Poljanski, brother to Ljubomir Micić)²⁴ – a magazine that

²² Jurij Tinjanov, ‘Književna činjenica.’ In A. Petrov (ed.), *Poetika ruskog formalizma*. Beograd: Prosveta 1970, 267-286 (283).

²³ Viktor Šklovski, ‘Časopis kao književni oblik.’ *Itaka* 1:0, 1995, 155-156 (155) [cyr.].

²⁴ About *Svetokret* as an auctorial magazine see: Vidosava Golubović, ‘*Svetokret* Virgila (Branka Ve) Poljanskog.’ In M. Maticki (ed.), *Zbornik u čast Aleksandra Petrova*. Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost 2004, 131-138 [cyr.].

would consist only of its author-editor's texts, just like a book, a collection of poems, essays or stories. On the other hand, when a book gravitates towards singularity – for example by reducing the number of its printed copies or by increasing the differences between copies of the same edition – it approaches the ultimate non-serial form of a traditional work of art and its *aura*. Cubo-Futurist manuscripted books are characteristic of this structural interference of book and painting, singularity and seriality, which can be examined through Benjamin's concept of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.²⁵

Lissitzky wrote that if, in his day, a number of posters were to be reproduced in the size of a manageable book, arranged according to theme and bound, the result would be a most original book.²⁶ Or a most original magazine, we could add. Especially if the editors did not try to reproduce but to produce, rearrange, refold and rebind a poster in the size and form of a booklet/magazine. Placard aesthetics is an important starting point in the composition of *Four Pages* but it does not fully explain this heterogeneous and dynamic publication. They present only one element of the editorial strategy, a strategy equally interested in the folding and imposing that transform the broadsheet into a pamphlet, booklet or magazine. A further reason to interpret *Four Pages* in terms of magazine aesthetics is provided by the (co)auctorial context in which it was edited and published. The joint periodical enterprise of Davičo, Kostić and Jovanović immediately preceding *Four Pages*, the magazine *Traces*, might be an example of a short lived (co)auctorial avant-garde magazine (3 issues) intentionally printed in such a small number of copies (8) that it gravitates towards a one-copy magazine, an entity that seeks the uniqueness of a non-serial and non-reproducible work of art. The evident chronological and poetical continu(n)ity between *Traces* and *Four Pages*, marked by an intentional misunderstanding of the press work and genres, supports the thesis that *Four Pages* might and should be considered as a magazine. It is a (co)auctorial placard magazine explored as an autonomous, self-sufficient, collaborative work of art and an expressive medium where avant-garde works can be seen in their natural fragmentariness, incompleteness and inter-medial and inter-textual overflow. Between the poster/placard and the book, advertising and editorial typography (J. Tschichold), poetics and publicity, the experimental single-issue placard magazine *Four Pages – Onanism of Death – And So On* embodies the basic ambiguity of the reading and publishing process and calls for theoretical reconsideration of the genre of the (avant-garde) magazine, positioned between the literary and visual arts. It is (not) a poster/placard, it is (not) a book/brochure, and it is (not) a magazine/journal. In a single word, it is *printing*.

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²⁵ Cf. Gerald Janecek, 'Kruchenykh contra Gutenberg.' In M. Rowell & D. Wye (eds.), [The Russian Avant-garde book 1910-1934](#). New York: MOMA 2002, 41-49.

²⁶ El Lissitzky 1967 (359).